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ETHICS AND RELIGION IN HEGEL. OR ON HOW REASON SPEAKS
DIFFERENTLY THAN IT THINKS

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Abstract: Hegel is often considered as obscure author. This means that for him, reason speaks differently than it thinks. It is at stake, first of all, the Hegelian terminology and the invocation of Heraclitus. It is interesting that Hegel himself had spoken out against an obscure terminology and against the abuse of abstractions. Initially, as a professor, he was not taken very seriously. He was a bad story-teller, although an exceptional thinker. He could not narrate, however, he could explain. But, people would eventually understand, since Hegel was one obsessed with method. For him, the method had a far greater significance than the system. In the present text, I will focus on these things, trying to see whether Hegel was, indeed, obscure and if, for him, reason really does speak differently than it thought. For this, I have chosen a few fragments that I believed to be exemplary from Hegelian philosophy. The purpose is to show that Hegel is not, however, as Papini maliciously named him, a philosopher of the incomprehensible. On the contrary! And the considerations on Hegelian ethics do not come to help, as an application of the theme that I assumed as starting point for the present text.

Key Words: ethics, religion, philosophy, spirit, phenomenology, dialectics, dominance, servitude, Hegel

Introduction

At the beginning of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel affirms that the object of the philosophy of religion is the highest and it answers to the domain where all mysteries of the world are solved and where all the contradictions of thought become peaceful. Primarily, man is mind, is thought in general and, more precisely, a concrete thought. Moreover, the multiple forms of sciences, arts and man's interests emerge from here. However, the supreme center is to be found in religion, i.e., in Hegel's opinion, in the intuition of God. Religion thus becomes the beginning and the end and everything in religion is presented as a strive towards this unique object – God. Strive including the ethical one, is absolutely free, so free that it becomes goal for itself. This is *the* object of the philosophy of religion. In what regards the content of the philosophy of religion, philosophy was criticized that it reduces the value of the content of the revealed religion, case in which philosophy could, itself, through natural light, make God accessible. Of course, philosophy does not destroy the dogma and Hegel knows this very well. He does know, however, something even better: namely that theological significance may be easily accepted and understood if it is passed through the filter of ethics. For him, Ethics is the one that keeps the essential. The modernity which is referable to Hegel is linked to the fact that he offers a privilege to ethics. It is important to believe that a concept of transcendence is at work, no matter how we name it.

Is Hegel obscure?

For Schopenhauer, philosophy's reputation is re-established by Kant. Hegel will take into account the degradation of philosophy, with his new tribalism and with the authority of the Prussian state behind. Hegel is nothing but a clown, states Popper, a clown inspired by hidden motifs and who imagines himself as a creator of history¹. Hegel writes in an illegible manner, he has no talent, he understands Plato sporadically and he shows a desultory and bad understanding of Plato, hence the “bombastic Platonism” practiced by him, therefore, he is an opponent of the open society. Peter Singer is not as vehement: the rational state described by Hegel is not the Prussian state, even if the philosopher is not exactly a liberal².

An extremely relevant “note on Hegelian language and terminology” could be found in Koyré³. Right at the beginning of the note, in some kind of “phenomenological” synthesis (since phenomenology is, as Singer understands it, the study of how things appear to us), Koyré says that Hegel's interpreters, even if they do not agree on anything that comes from his philosophy, reach an agreement:

- on the intrinsic difficulty of his thinking;
- on the extra difficulties (extrinsic) required by the understanding of Hegelian language and terminology (the language seems untranslatable even for Germans).

Hegel takes advantage of a terminology created arbitrarily, his interpreters are not capable of explaining a whole sentence, therefore it is necessary to have a “study-commentary”, “stories” by Hegel, or a *Hegel Lexicon* as Ch. Andler suggested, but such a lexicon would imply an already existing comprehensible Hegel. It is obvious that most of the comments made by the historians of philosophy would amuse Hegel⁴, as he would be displeased by the reproach of having used an artificial language. It seems that Hegel was convinced of the fact that the excess of terminology would be an obstacle for thinking. His interest lies in controlling and resurrecting the history of the words, the hidden wealth of language. The monochrome significance reduces the language and thought; the different significance forbids thought to reduce itself. Language, says Koyré following Hegel’s steps, is the inferior frontier of the spirit. Not recognizing its spiritual reality means to kill the language.

Is Hegel obscure? Paul Valéry, quoted by Jacques D’Hondt, says he is not: “he is accused of obscurity, a reproach that is always made to the clearest spirits, which cannot normally find their clarity in the common expression”⁵. Hegel says that Heraclites was “obscure” because the language was still little developed; Aristotle and Demetrius, including Socrates, whom Hegel calls upon, believed the same thing. “What is obscure in this philosophy is due, however, to the fact that a profound speculative thought found its expression in it. Such a thought is always hard to understand by the intellect [...]. The concept, the idea, disgusts the intellect; it cannot be attached to it”⁶. Hegel quarrels with Cicero for being “badly inspired” when the Roman says about Heraclites that he has done it on purpose “when he described nature in a very obscure manner”, even if the author of *Hortensius* says that “the obscurity of discourse is determined by the subject, not by the words, as in the dialogue *Timaios* by Plato”⁷. Anyway, Hegel does not hesitate in stating: “here we stand on firm ground; there is no thesis of Heraclites that I have not included in my *Logic*”⁸. Obscure or not, Hegel chooses the being, and he does that for good.

Hegel clarifies this thing once and for all, and we are talking here about the same Hegel about whom people say that he has compromised himself with the *Phenomenology of Mind*, a masterpiece of the incomprehensible, as Papini calls it. We tend to be on Hegel’s side, and in the following we shall explain our arguments. In the “Preface” of the *Phenomenology of Mind*, preface about which Hegel himself writes that it is “useless”, “inappropriate” and “contrary to the followed aim”, one may read: “truth is the bacchanalian drunkenness where no member is sober”, as this drunkenness “is both the transparent and simple rest”⁹. A few lines

further, Hegel is decisive: “the method is nothing else but the structure of the whole presented in its pure essentiality”.

Faced with method, the formal intellect is guilty. Which is its fault? It is a huge and devastating one, and because of this devastation, which is impossible to be assumed, the entire science suffered. The formal intellect might be only a small one; it can offer only “the indication of content, it does not offer the content itself”¹⁰. The intellect suspends, and it is not guilty of suspension, but of its’ forgetting. It forgets that substance is itself subject and that any content is nothing else but its own self-reflection. “Will” and “power” are just other ways of telling the subject and the substance that it should be in one way rather than another. This “one way” is described by Hegel as *cunning*, because, “seeming to refrain from activity [...], precisely where it thinks that it follows self preservation and its private interest, it forms the opposite”¹¹. This is the speculative aspect of the will applied to the private case of power. It is, therefore, about circularity and “the understanding of this circularity is the goal of the philosophy of religion”¹².

Here is Hegel’s example: “*God is the being*. The predicate is *the being*; it has a substantial significance, in which the subject passes. *The being* cannot be here a predicate, but it must be the essence”¹³. The quest of the subject is not to get lost, and not to rest, i.e. the subject’s nature must be directly found in the predicate. God, as subject, goes in his predicate. This is the speculative sentence and it must follow these rules, and it should not evoke the normal relation between subject and predicate. By means of subject, the sentence returns in itself and engenders itself. So, “the absolute, of which Hegel speaks, answers the request of the *Phenomenology of the Mind* to conceive it as subject, not only as substance”¹⁴. The rest is, Hegel says, only talk. The speculative method starts with the division of being. If it had been confined to the relation between subject and predicate, its speculative aspect would have been denied. Starting as a division, philosophy (especially the speculative one) differs from other empirical sciences and leaves the mathematical method as prey to the imperfection due to the finitude (poverty) of its object. In fact, as A. Véra said¹⁵, the small infinite of mathematicians is indefinite not only in its applications, but in its concept itself (the small infinite, or bad, as Hegel calls it, is nothing else but the small indefinite). Why does mathematical knowledge fail? Because in its case, we do not have an adequacy between the method in itself and its object, between form and content, between thought and being. In mathematical knowledge the terms are separate, the movement of thought does not coincide with that of reality.

In brief: philosophical thinking is for Hegel¹⁶:

- *concept*: i.e. it is neither sentiment nor enthusiasm (the mysticism is profound, says Hegel, but it is a form of a empty profoundness); by this philosophy differs from the allegorical, illogical and indemonstrable forms of spirit;

- *universal*: the philosophical concept is universal, not general; by means of this type of concept, philosophy differs from empirical and natural sciences;
- *concrete*: the philosophical universal is concrete, and the concrete is not the skeleton, but the complete understanding of reality. The philosophical abstraction is necessary and adequate to reality only until it tries to replace reality. Then it proves its inadequacy, so that philosophy takes an inferior position compared to that of mathematical sciences as well.

One cannot deny to Hegelianism the sympathy of the concrete and its constant presence. Hegel is however cautious; it is not in philosophy's advantage the demand of being edifying. Kojève, as a late Hegelian, is convinced that *Phenomenology* is nothing else but an introduction to Hegel's system, and it is part of the *Philosophy of the Mind*. Only in the *Encyclopedia* the parallelism between *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind* is abandoned; the absolute is not real either in presence, or in/as nature; the nature is the negation of the essence; the only possible synthesis is concrete. Moreover, Kojève knows that the dialectics in three moments (thesis-antithesis-synthesis) is not a method and that concrete reality is not made dialectically, it is itself dialectics¹⁷. The same author, in a text made by the conferences from 6-9 (the course from 1934-1935) answers the question – “what is dialectics?” How does he do it? By sending us to paragraph 79 from *Encyclopedia* where Hegel speaks about the division of logic. Logic has, in what concerns its form, three aspects:

- *the abstract aspect*, the one accessible for the intellect (and which stops at the strict determination and at its differentiation from other determinations);
- *the dialectical aspect* or the rational negativity (it is the self surpass of rigid, finite determinations and the transition into the determinations which are opposite to them);
- *the speculative aspect* or the rational positivity (it surprises the unity of determinations in their opposition)¹⁸. This text from *Encyclopedia* lends itself to a double misunderstanding. On the one hand, we could think that dialectics is the second aspect of logic (Hegel is warning us that all three aspects are inseparable). Logic is not dialectical, unless it involves a negative meaning, or something that negates, called dialectics, but this is the narrow sense. On the other hand, we could believe that dialectics is “the specific” of logical thinking, that it is a method or an investigative process. But it is none of all these: Hegel's *Logic* is nothing else but ontology; the three aspects (abstract-dialectical-speculative) are ontological, not logical, categories, they are neither gnoseological, nor simple methodological artifice. It is understandable why Hegel insists (and even in two additions) on the dialectical and speculative (“the speculative is nothing else but the rational”)¹⁹.

What follows is that dialectics is the personal nature of things themselves, and not an exterior “art” objectifying them. Thus, the *Phenomenology* surpasses its notorious status and becomes phenomenological description, and Kojève concludes that Hegelian dialectics is a Phenomenology, and, at the same time, of course, the *Phenomenology of Mind* is an Anthropology²⁰.

It is almost obvious that Popper is having fun on the account of the dialectical method and of the philosophy of identity. However, he does that in a malicious and rarely useful manner; as he mistakes the part with the whole, the dialectical moment with the whole of the method and sees “dialectical tricks” everywhere. The result is to be found in Hegelian historicism, in the so-called philosophy of identity which, of course, for Popper is only an application of dialectics by which Hegel wants to justify the state order from his time. The conclusion of the philosophy of identity fails in an *ethical and juridical positivism* and wants to demonstrate, according to Popper, that everything “that is, is good”, and such doctrine “identifies the right with the power”²¹.

In the following, we would like to discover, along with Hegel’s thought, and beyond Popper’s, what happens with power in a particular case. The second part of the *Phenomenology of the Mind* is entitled “The Self Consciousness”, and one finds here one of the most disturbing fragments produced by the philosopher. He entitled his paragraph – “The Independence and Dependence of Self Consciousness; Possession and Servitude”. It is about the famous master-slave relation²².

So far, Hegel affirms, the truth has been for conscience something else than conscience itself. How do we achieve everything? By facing self consciousness with another self consciousness, i.e. a self consciousness goes beyond itself and becomes otherness. This otherness must be suppressed, but when I say that the other one must be suppressed, I have already passed from *I* to *we*, because until there is a *we* involved, the mind does not exist. This is the movement of mutual gratitude. *I* and *Other* go together and, from their confrontation, history is born (will and power). The two of them joined the battle, one in order to be recognized, the other one, after being defeated, in order to recognize. The winner is the master. He had will, as well as the other one had; now he also has power. But, is he, really, also the complete man as it was intended at the beginning of the conflict? The winner believes so, since he rules over the servant and, at the same time, over the thing, since he rules over one by means of the other. But does he really rule over? Is his will completed by an effective power? No! At the time of victory, the master realizes that he is recognized by someone whom he does not recognize. Then what kind of recognition is this? Who recognizes me? A slave!, someone that I do not recognize! In this moment the self consciousness of the master remains suspended. However, he does not lose his head; he changes from the imagined ruler to the servile one. Even if it shutters, the history follows its

course once with the slave, because the slave finds himself in the act of ruling whoever and whatever follows him and does not, at least for now, forget him.

The victory of the slave is placed somewhere else than in history, as Popper believes. “Gradually releasing his servitude, the slave eliminates little by little the pagan *theology* of religion”²³. In other words, if we were to use a Marxist language, according to Hegel: “religion is nothing else but an ideological supra-structure”²⁴, and the difference between master and slave resides in the fact that the master fights but does not work, while the slave works without fighting, and, for Hegel, “to work” means exclusively that action made in the service of other/ that kind of action which is lend to the service of the other. “To work” means to satisfy an instinct that is no longer mine, which means to give up the result of my action for the satisfaction of the other’s desire (of the master). In fact, only by that, the ruling of the master turns into an existential impasse, because to be always satisfied means to never be aware. On the other hand, the condition of the slave is freedom; suppressing the master, the slave in fact suppresses himself as slave. The master is the catalyst of history, not history as such; the history is following its course, with the slave becoming citizen, ideologist, and also interpreter. Only the slave is the one who feels the fear of nothingness and who analyzes his existence as a postponed death. The reason why history is ended and revealed by the slave is that “the excess of man in relation with world’s phenomenological totality could not be proven but in the experience of the man who survives death. And his excess in relation with the historical totality of this world could not be proven unless ethics or mystics would literally receive the task of building absolute counter-histories liberated from what concretely forms history”²⁵. The servile consciousness becomes self consciousness and the master no longer exists, but by means of the one whom he has tried to abolish²⁶.

On an obscure place

The abyss invokes abyss and precisely there is the place where the slave thinks he should start the quest of searching himself. It is true that from there also begin his torments, the torments of making (stoicism, skepticism, unhappy consciousness). Let me follow them up/ We will follow them up, but not before fining the terrible success of an obscure place that accompanies Hegel. The place in question has a form: *the being and the non-being are identical*. Hegel insists a lot on the method as such, especially in the “Prefaces” of the *Science of Logic*. He tells us that dialectics is immanent to method as it represents its moment. He reproaches to Plato that by means of dialectics he has nothingness as result and he appreciates Kant for the fact that he supported, in front of dialectics, not the antinomy (where Kant does not deserve too many praises), but the

idea of appearance's objectivity, on the one hand, and of the necessity of contradiction on the other. Kant's limit could be found in the fact that he stopped at the abstract-negative aspect of dialectics, so that the immediate result is reason's inability to know the infinite. "Strange result, affirms Hegel, to say that reason is not capable of knowing the infinite, since the infinite is rational"²⁷. The *Phenomenology of the Mind*, just like the *Logic*, states that only the result is presented as absolute basis. The *Phenomenology* shows us that the beginning is the direct being, the pure one. The *Science of Logic* views the beginning as *given* in the *Phenomenology* and looks at it from the perspective of the result. The beginning depends on its nature, and the beginning should be regarded as being and as nothing else. Wherefrom the common place? It comes from the fact that the inclusion of the determination of the accepted being as beginning can be omitted. What does there remain from the representation of the beginning? Hegel answers: "it is still nothing and it must become something". However, he continues the doctrine on being ever since the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, and he does that by arguing as follows: "the beginning is not pure nothing, but a nothing from which something must proceed; therefore, the being is already included in the beginning. Hence, the beginning includes both being and nothingness, it is the unity of being and nothingness or it is non-being which is at the same time both being as well as being that is at the same time non-being"²⁸.

This fragment seems to confirm that being and nothingness are identical. Hegel himself seems bored with this issue and wants to clarify it by taking a distance from Schelling, who is guilty for seeing the beginning as the simple direct concept from which the movement starts. The beginning must be the concrete itself, and the issue of beginning is so simple that this beginning does not need any preparation. The reflection on the beginning does not make it; it only removes the preliminaries which may accompany it. We find here a constituent vacuum, and Hegel does not miss the opportunity to mention, on this occasion, the concept of God. The beginning, after all, is made with the being as such, with the qualitative being, because quantity is already formed quality, while size is a suppressed quality (and conserved, therefore, a quality that became indifferent). The beginning is made once with the being, and quality is the direct manner of becoming the first determination of being (of beginning). The being is pure being, without any other determination. In a section from the *Science of Logic*, dealing with quality, Hegel speaks about being, nothingness and becoming. He says: "the pure being and the pure nothingness are the same"²⁹, they are different, although inseparable in the way in which, in a direct manner, each goes into the other one and their truth is this movement of the direct disappearance of one into the other. We could well specify that Hegel does not speak as opposing to the being the non-being, but the nothingness. Moreover, in the chapter about

being, Hegel inserts four notes which take into account his own aversion towards the being and nothingness, as well as their confusion.

The sentence in question – *the being and the nothingness are one and the same thing* – contradicts and cancels itself. Such sentence contains the movement of disappearing through itself and in the content of this movement is formed what should form the becoming. For Hegel, this sentence contains the result in itself. And, since it has the form of a judgment, it cannot express speculative truths. Such judgment represents a relation of identity between subject and predicate, as long as the speculative content is expressed by what the subject and predicate have as different. The identical ones are not restless, which is why they cannot become. One cannot pass from the being without further relation, but by exterior, although this already means a second beginning. In the dialogue *Parmenides*, Plato answers to a dialectics of the exterior reflection and he does this because Parmenides, the philosopher, had stopped only at the being. Parmenides accepts a beginning, without any doubt, but with it, and in the way he thinks it, he cannot go further, because to go further means to make something foreign interfere. If Hegel had seen an identity between being and nothingness, self consciousness would be either only in the state of servitude, or only in that of ruling.

B. Croce is outraged by the fact that Hegel mistakes the being with nothingness and argues in the best way that suites Hegel, so that Croce's objection is transformed into the opposite of what he intended. What does Croce say? If the being and nothingness are identical (as Hegel proves it or, at least he thinks he does!, as Croce banters), how can the becoming which must be the synthesis of opposites, not of the identical ones for which there is no synthesis be formed? But the being (continues Croce well, but falling into the Hegelian trap!) is not identical with nothingness, unless both of them are poorly designed or, rather, if they are not truly thought. In the real thinking, *being and nothingness* are not identical, but rather they are opposed, battling, and the battle (which is at the same time union, because two fighters, in order to fight, must be interlinked) is the becoming, it is not a concept added to the first ones taken separately (and here Croce is no longer in Hegel's trap, he is in his own trap) or derived from them, but an unique concept³⁰.

I close this parenthesis by coming back to the *Science of Logic*. Towards the end, Hegel lingers – and we could well ask ourselves: for how many times? – upon the method. He says that the beginning is made by the concrete totality that contains within itself the very beginning of advancing. He prophesies on: “the fundamental preconceived idea in this respect (of the beginning – *n.m.*) is that dialectics would have *only a negative result*³¹. If things were different, no one would talk, as Bochenski does, about a logic applied to religious language³², and we would also not speak of faith as a form of direct knowledge³³. It is clear that “language and religion are both central themes in the evolution of the human species

and these phenomena have contributed to the process of meaning-making in very specific ways”³⁴.

The moment of ethics

“Love, says Hegel, generally means the conscience of my unity with another, so that I am not isolated, but I acquire the conscience of myself in the renouncement of my creation for myself, and by the fact of knowing myself as my unity with the other”³⁵. With love, Hegel arrives to the field of Ethics, and love’s first moment is my *will* of not being an independent person anymore/ and the first moment of (expressing) love is when one is *willing* to give up being an independent person, and being exclusively for me. Other moment of one’s love means that “I acquire myself, in another person, [...]. Love is the most prodigious contradiction which cannot be solved by the intellect”³⁶.

Lukács calls this identification Hegel’s “*second ontology*”. The identity subject-object or the passing of substance on the subject rises, however, the issue of the ontological position of *present* in Hegel’s philosophy. Since identity forms in itself *in present*, it seems that “society has accomplished its concordance to the idea from which it would result, basically, that an exit beyond that present should be considered as an impossibility of the logical order”³⁷. The question whether things are so (or not) symbolizes the “end of history”. Following this idea, which is by no means Hegel’s conclusion, we found Mannheim’s concept of “total ideology”, on account of which D. Bell releases the thesis of “the end of ideology” (a process of *de-ideologization* determined by the progress of sciences). How are things? The fact that Marx and Engels understand ideology as false or alienated conscience is well known. Later on, K. Mannheim sees ideology as a misinterpretation of reality, a spontaneous interpretation, hence ideology’s inefficiency from the perspective of knowledge³⁸. In 1949, A. Gramsci talked about the double significance of the term “ideology”, in which he saw an ideational superstructure, on the one hand, and the representations of the individual, on the other. Lukács will criticize the Gramscian position and will reach an analysis of ideology from the very perspective of the relation merchandise-money-merchandise (M-M-M).

If we were to come back to the “end of history” in Hegel’s philosophy of history we have to mention, right next to Lukács, that this position implies two important ontological premises:

- The history is by excellence teleological and, through teleology; the Hegelian theory on history comes back to theodicy;
- The idea’s concordance with the present has some logic as methodological basis; therefore, says Hegel, the idea’s concordance with the *present* is the result of logic, not of revelation. In Lukács’ words: “the idea’s coincidence with the present does not mean the mere general dispute of any possibility

of movement”³⁹, even if thus “the antinomies of the idea of an end of history do not disappear”.

In essence, “what formal traditional logic could not understand from the Hegelian standard is the subtle procedure of breaking the identical and finding the anxiety of the difference in the very middle of indifference and the postulation of the identity of difference and indifference. Hegel manages this because he inserts mediation in what to classical logic appears as being direct”⁴⁰. Hegel creates here an advantage for himself: “on the background of postulated unity between subject and object, between ontic and logic, one could find the universal relations and the universal features”⁴¹.

The ethical substance and neutrality

Any philosophical doctrine can be reduced to a relation of vexation which is expressed as being the relation private-universal. It is therefore logic passed in dialectical, it is not made dialectical. It is participation, not neutrality. A doctrine hit by the virus of neutrality loses its essence. Its ethos being a neutral one, it loses the proximity of the metaphysical character. It tarries in logic. Such ethos of neutrality is called by Noica “feminine ethos” because, in such an ethos, the philosophical essence is lost and the weak term coexists right next to the strong term, showing the same power. “Feminism, says Noica, represents the reflex of the priority of intellect over reason”⁴² and three men are responsible for establishing the ethos of neutrality in the modern era. He is talking here about Goethe Nietzsche and, among them, Hegel. Fertility reaches a peak in Goethe’s work. *Phenomenology* is not accused; *Logic* is. We have in it something “monstrously” that does not take into account the construction itself, but the “indifference” of construction. If the domain of the formal places itself between logic and things, the neutrality of the domain or the formal domain alienates twice. And if, often, Kant has been accused of making a philosophy of intellect and not one of reason, Hegel seems to fall here in the same trap, i.e., that of making a philosophy of the intellect, not of the mind. This does not equally apply to Hegel, for whom the ethos of neutrality justifies even the non-being and “maybe that is the reason why the ethos of neutrality is connected philosophically, ultimately, with the acceptance of non-being”⁴³ Plato discusses the *non-existence* instead of non-being, and the dialogue entitled *The Sophist* mentions this meaning using it as an argument against the dialogue *Parmenides*. The moderns lose their interest for non-existence and its place is rather taken by the non-being which now needs to be thought in itself.

According to Noica, three consequences emerge from the acceptance of the concept of non-being as non-being: the degradation of the concept of becoming, the degradation of the being itself and the decline of dialectics in logic. Or, the moment in which, Hegel discovers in *The Logic*,

the dialectical dimension is the exact time when he falls back again in the trap of logic. Until *The Logic* was issued, Hegel's philosophy seems to be a philosophy of the reason; once *The Logic* was written, it becomes a philosophy of the intellect and its ethos gains a feminist bias. There is as much being as we can think – the Parmenides' say, hence the fact that they cannot think the non-being. And if this represented for them a tautology, for the moderns it became a "temptation" – that of thinking the non-being. "At least formally, Hegel was the one who had set on this track and favored *the start towards neutrality* which, in fact, he used to *constantly dissolve*"⁴⁴.

In *The Phenomenology*, before becoming "the reason that dictates law", conscience must be honest, and it has to reach the recognition of *fact* itself, the idealism of the unity of action and being, of work and individuality.

Two significant examples

Hegel proves it by the means of two examples which show that the fact of duty is a disguised command and, consequently, that reason speaks differently than it thinks. Let us follow the argumentation of the first case. The deliberated duty is that: "Each one must speak the truth"⁴⁵. Hegel explains that here one deals, at least at a first glance, with a duty. But in reality, this is actually a command which, in order to be valid, it has to accept the following condition: each one has to speak the truth *if* he/she knows the truth. The subtlety consists in the fact that if reason said that each one had to say the truth, this represents only what it is *stated/outspoken* by reason, but, on a more profound level, reason *thought* that each should speak the truth, if and since he/she knows it, because he/she understands the subordinated condition. The conclusion is stupefying, if we take into account the fact that we talk about the first steps in the world of ethic: reason talked differently than it thought, or, this equals with not telling the truth. Therefore, the truth wins "the complete contingency", the initially determined content of law becomes the suppressed determinant and the truth remains only formal.

The same thing happens to the moral law "love your neighbor as yourself" in pure Ethics. These kind of laws, says Hegel, "stick only to what they *should*, have however no *reality*; they are not *laws*, but only *commands*"⁴⁶. To command it is left the formal universality, i.e. the fact of not contradicting itself. But such universality lacks content; it is a difference that is not difference. By lacking content when formal contents are present there, reason's role remains only to examine the law, since it cannot create the law. Reason is thus downsized, and the laws are already given for it. It is as if reason discovered a content to which it would only have to apply a form. Law is thus subject to the tautological exercise. And tautology is indifferent to content. What we mean to say here is that even

if one does not reach the truth one beholds, at least, its infallible criterion. Here is where mind begins and the stage of conscience ends. Reason's only sovereignty remains that of examining, it cannot go further because of its criterion. It is about the ways in which reason tries to capture the universal. It failed in the attempt of capturing as active conscience; what is left for reason is to try this in knowledge. And through this, it settles, gradually, in the world of Ethics, preparing the transition from reason to mind. The reason of each and every one, the healthy reason or the geniality of common sense, is founded on an ethical substance. That means, from an ethical perspective, reason wants to be in the situation of creating the law. If it creates it, it would also know it directly, and the law would tell reason what is good and right. The content of reason is validated therefore as determined law. But its content is only formal.

Ethical conscience does not see itself in the reason that gives the law and examines it, but it sees only its *moments*, moments without consistency. The individual resentment of man is extinguished. Man, as a rebellious individual, comes back to the universal in the real substance of the two moments, in the spiritual essence.

Ethical reality (or on the steady eradication of neutrality)

This is how the introduction to the mind is done. And what before was ethical substance, becomes now ethical reality. "The mind, since it is the *direct truth*, is the *ethical life* of a nation - , the individual who is a world"⁴⁷. In its direct truth, the course of the mind does not take on, as before, only the formations of conscience, but the formations are of a world. The abstraction of the course of mind until now (conscience, self consciousness, reason) is transformed in the current concrete, in the true spirit with it – the community, in the moral world together with the man and the woman. Thus, another kind of history starts to form. In its abstraction, the law is its divisibility. The mind is divided and, after it had been divided in sensation and perception, it becomes subject to another type of division. Thus, it is then divided into the divine order in community (the woman) and of human order in public life and dominance (the man). The mind manifests itself into the human law as real substance (the nation) and the spirit/ soul as real conscience (the citizen). The human law opposes family (the woman) and government (the dominance and constraint) to the divine law. This way, the ethical substance will cover two moments: state power, or real universality, and an interior essence, i.e. family. The family represents the direct ethical substance, and its structure is built on the intimacy of a secret. The dead one is the family's secret. It is not the relation of a contingency, it is the universal. The individual is not important, but generality is. What matters is not the becoming of the dead one, but his being; not the present, but the destiny of the family. This is how the ethical character of the family is made

substantially. That is why the family, viewed from the perspective of the secret, disclaims the singular. The singular cannot escape sensitive reality, and what can escape the sensitive and can be incorporated in universal does not take into account the living one, but the dead one “who rose to the silence of mere universality”. “The singular individual, since he is not citizen and belongs to the family, and because he cannot be *real* and *substantial* otherwise than as a citizen, is only the *unreal* shadow with no consistency”⁴⁸ Family’s secret is thus placed between the law of day and shadow’s right. The last one founds the destiny, the law of day, the moment. And destiny is history, i.e. the formed essence of a family is given by its dead ones and that is why the cult of the dead ones comes to open history⁴⁹. Divine law receives power because it has behind only shadows. Transcendence becomes thus immanent, in family and woman. The human order starts with dominance. And between the two orders the Penates appear as mediators.

Dominance completes a negativity. In its act it is gotten and practiced the right of the singular individual. It means the impertinence of believing that one can make history on one’s own. That is why the universality reached by the singular individual is death or pure being, i.e. the individual purloined from nature. This is how death becomes work: the work for universal, and, in fact, for ethics. The deceased one liberates his being from its action. It cannot be more; he cannot liberate his being from the action of any individuality that lacks reason (the nature). The family intervenes now for the accomplishment of the work of the deceased and the establishment of the cult. It “keeps this action of the unconscious desire and abstract essence, which dishonors him, away from him, it replaces this with its own action and entrusts the related one to the middle of earth, to elementary individuality”⁵⁰. Through this, the divine law becomes complete.

If the community is impossible without family, it is also impossible without government. The pulse of community is the government and in the act of governing the community is regarded as individual. “The government is the real mind *reflected in itself*, the simple self of the entire ethical substance”⁵¹. By means of the act of governing, the mind spreads into the community and, therefore, each individual receives a “being for himself/herself”. The mind has its reality in these beings for themselves, and family is the element of this reality. The spirit works, therefore, on the whole. The feeling of independence, which would also mean the dissociation of the whole, is removed periodically by the mind (by governing), by means of war. By death, the mind does not want to dissolve the form of existence, but it intends to introduce the individual’s inability to fall from ethical existence into natural existence and, thus, to maintain the self of his conscience in freedom. The triptych is: government, war, negative power. It is in the triptych where the ethical relation of man and woman as brother and sister appears. Therefore, structured in divine

order, the family includes three essential reports: husband-wife, parents-children, and brother-sister.

The first relation is the knowledge of mutual recognition. The relation is direct self recognition of a conscience in another. Within the framework of the first relation the mind is not itself; it is only a representation or it is just imagining it, because a recognition is a natural one, not an ethical one. The reality of the image reflects in something else than in itself, it reflects in the child. Its real content is the child and the relation husband-wife disappears, it is lost in the child. With the children, parents assure their permanence, their contribution to new generations for the nation. The first relation finds thus “its return in itself”.

The second relation (parents-children) is founded on the feeling of mutual piety. Parents relate to children; the conscience of their reality loses its self-reported validity. The conscience of their reality is only in another, in the child. The child thus gains its own being for himself/herself and he/she does not give that in return to the parent; the latter does not gain it back and, thus, although it is still a personal reality, it remains a foreign one. For the child, piety is manifested in the emotion of seeing his becoming dependent on someone else; his in-self still remains in someone who is disappearing; he cannot possess his being for himself/herself otherwise than by separating from his parents' being. And separation means parting and, within it, the origin extinguishes.

The first two relations remain suspended in a certain instability. The pure relation is the one between brother and sister. It is by excellence the unmixed relation. They are united by the blood that had found in them balance and peace. They are independent because they did not give life to one another, nor do they want each other. The woman, as mother, daughter or sister, has the ethical essence in her and this is not done by a natural line. The woman, as wife and mother, purloins, in the fact of family, something from divinity.

The woman sees the law of family in the universal, in woman and daughter, not in that one or the other husband or man. The man is structured following the line of generality as man of the citadel, of the public life and of individual desires. Something like this is considered an impurity for the woman. The generality of woman is to be found in family, the generality of man, in public life. The singularity of man's desire is opposed to the direct universal pleasure of woman in which she remains foreign to the singularity of desire.

As daughter, the woman sees her parents disappearing, so that she can find her being for herself. In parents, the daughter has the intuition of her fact-for-itself in a negative manner.

For the sister, the brother is the peaceful being. And if for the man the two sides (the universal and the individual) break up and he becomes, as citizen, a universal and, as desire, a singular, in the woman those are not separated. Her ethical life is not pure. She is purified only through the

relation with her brother. The fact that she recognizes herself in her brother does not include the supposition of no desire, of no contingency. This is the reason why the loss of her brother is, for the sister, irreplaceable, and the sister's piety towards him is the highest.

If these three relations form the citadel, the last relation also means the transformation of the first two laws one into the other. The brother-sister relation completes the citadel and marks its decline. This relation is the visible border of the family and the hidden border of the citadel. Within and on the limit of relation, the family goes beyond it. In the person of the brother, the family's spirit returns to individuality. The immediate dull of the family is left by the brother for the conscience of universality. But this means to abandon divine law just for human law. The sister or wife keeps the divine one. "The brother leaves this ethical life, *direct, elementary*, and that is why it is in fact negative regarding the family, in order to acquire and make ethical life look real, aware of itself"⁵². But once crossed the limit of ethical world as infinity, i.e. totality, once both the brother and sister surpass their natural condition and appear in their ethical significance in the shape of two universal essences with their individuality, therefore once all these happened, the equilibrium becomes alive and an inequality is born in it, as it is born in any equilibrium. Human law and moral law are in balance. The fellow (brother) feels wronged, and since he cannot rise, before making likewise, against the divine, he finds his negative in nature. In front of it there shall be the deed done, a deed that disturbs the harmony of the two laws by passing the opposites one into the other. As opposites, they lose the power to affirm (confirm) each other and, by destroying themselves, they become faith. The ethical conscience, laying on the line the action, determines its option. And the option is either for a law, or for the other one. In the election act, the universality of ethical *in-itself* becomes *for-itself*. As *for-itself*, the ethical conscience, by choosing, becomes *character*. And justice becomes, after the choice made by the ethical conscience, the right of the chosen law. I choose the divine and then I see in human law the violence; I choose human law and I see in the divine one "the interior stubbornness of the being for itself". Individuality and essence, says Hegel, come into conflict. Because in individuality we have the fact, and fact means ignoring the determination of ethics. And then self consciousness becomes, by fact as such, guilt. And guilt follows partiality because it was made after only one law. The division, through fact, is "the moment of crime". Man has chosen one law, but he wants both; hence its division with self and a generalization, on the two laws, of guilt. But the fact gives birth to the contrary fact. If I do according to a law I ignore the justification of doing according to the other law; then it appears the hostile fact, "hurt and hostile". And it can take revenge by hiding reality. As happened to Oedipus. The revenge of the ignored one does not defer. And if we have within the ethical substance the opposition conscious-

unknown, now, within ethical conscience, the opposition is between known-unknown. By doing it, you ignore the opposite fact. And this, being ignored, punishes. Hiding the reality is her ignorance and, by revealing itself in the moment of the fact, she takes revenge. Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother; the moment of crime is however the same with the one of abolition – Oedipus finds out the truth and maims himself. Ethical conscience admits its fault, but the price is the non-fact. You cannot do anything; not even deny your guilt.

The conflict is between divine law and the human one, somehow between Eteocles and Polynices on the one hand and Antigone on the other hand. The conflict is related to the contingency of two brothers with the same rights of governing. But government is the simple spirit and this simple spirit, as the self of the nation's spirit, does not bear the duality of individuality. The nation's spirit unity of self is connected with the ethical necessity and it is opposed to it now nature's contingency by means of the two miserable ones. The equality of rights destroys them and none is right; they are both guilty. One is guilty because he goes against his own citadel after he had withdrawn from it. The other one, the one who stayed in the citadel, considered the first as detached from community, as singular, and therefore without power and, consequently, chased him away. The fault attributed by the second one to the first one, resides in the fact that the latter had detached from the community. Therefore, the first one, singularizes himself by denying the community. The second one, as king, connects the life of the community to his singular person and he will be the one who will be honored by the community. Eventually, they will both fall; the citadel preserves itself, for now, and will honor the one who remained inside its walls. The body of the other one will be thrown over the wall of citadel without giving him the honor of the deceased spirit. The guilt does not start here; here it is sublimated. The right of the dead one was to be married with the rest of the earth. This right is being denied and then he takes revenge. The other citadels appear and "they become hostile and destroy the community which dishonored and destroyed its force, family's piety"⁵³.

Or, the essence of family is the woman. The action of citadel is, in the end, one against the woman; the happiness of the family is thus destroyed, not at all paradoxically, the citadel symbolically transforms the woman in its inner enemy. By winning, the citadel will be defeated even if, at first, the divine law (personified in Antigone) is defeated by citadel's law. Antigone does not consider that Creon's order is directed towards her, as sister. She violates his order by claiming the law of gods: the sacred duty of funeral. The confrontation of the two worlds has as consequence the collapse of the divine citadel (as family) and of the human citadel (the citadel as such). Undermined, the woman undermines. The woman, this eternal irony of community, as Hegel calls her, takes revenge. And her imagination knows no limits when her Penates are disturbed. Through

plot she accomplishes the division of the goal of governance which, from universal, is thus transformed into private; she transforms her initial universal activity into the work of a specific fellow; she transforms the universal property of state into the family's property; the king, once known for his wisdom, becomes now a target for mockery. Moreover, the woman has youth in her hand with three moments: as son – in the son the mother sees man as her master; as young man – it is the most subtle relation of dependency towards woman; the daughter is taken out of her dependency on the family by the young man, thus getting both the pleasure and dignity of being wife. And this happens because the woman is acutely aware of the fact that a citadel cannot maintain itself otherwise than by the oppression of individuality. Even the nation behaves in two different ways when it comes to the individual mind. Firstly, when the nation itself is seen as a whole, as individuality, they place it on the outside; then, on the inside, we have the negative side of community, which interests the action of the woman. The community oppresses the individual mind, and the aim is the preservation of the whole. But the individual mind, instead of succumbing under the power of oppression, is intensified. Nobody would take the rebel into account, if the government did not imagine him as the place where the force's conscience enters the citadel. And, here, oppression is specified, shaded, since the power asks the rebel to participate at war and even to sacrifice himself. Thus he discovers, in war, a double aspect. First of all we can depict the right of the community over its fellows, a right which has been gained in the war; then, the war awakes the community's spirit of dissolution. Gradually, at the moment when the Penates have been disobeyed, the community, condemned to decay, is being destroyed. Without the soul of the citadel he has just destroyed, it is only him, the fellow who remains.

The ethical substance is thus reduced, because the ethical, taking the form of consciousness, regards the law. And since law is fact, and the fact means guilt, only the directness of non-being is the one that remains. The solidarity of the individual has broken and it is no longer a living spirit. His individuality collapsed after the ethical substance had divided two times: once, in what regards the content, it divided into family and government and, then, and in what concerns knowledge, it divided into knowledge and ignorance: "present reality is one in the self and another for the knowledge"⁵⁴.

Notes:

1. Karl R. Popper, *Societatea deschisă și dușmanii ei* (vol. II, Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House, 2005), 37, 40, 41.

2. Peter Singer, *Hegel* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House, 1996), 72-73. Popper's thesis, according to which Hegel is a defender of the totalitarian state, Singer believes, is not as solid as it seems, in spite of the eccentric language used by Hegel.
3. Alexandre Koyré, *Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 191-224. Jean Hyppolite, in *Figures de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: PUF, 1971), 340-352, deals in a special chapter with the structure of philosophical language according to the "Preface" of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He says, shortly, that for Hegel language is the instrument of wisdom since it is consubstantial to thought.
4. Alexandre Koyré, *Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique*, 191-193. Koyré quotes well known interpreters of Hegel: W. Moog, Th. Haering or Ch. Adler. It may seem paradoxically, but Hegel is claiming to react violently against the abuse of abstract terminology.
5. Jacques D'Hondt, *Hegel și hegelianismul* (Iași: Polirom Publishing House, 1998), 40. On the other hand, "Hegel would not be so obscure for the others, if he had been perfectly clear for himself" (Jacques D'Hondt, *Hegel și hegelianismul*, 42). And maybe, others say, Hegel could have been less obscure if he wanted (Jacques D'Hondt, *Hegel și hegelianismul*, 44-50).
6. G.W.F. Hegel, *Prelegeri de istorie a filozofiei* (vol. I. Bucharest: Academiei Publishing House, 1963), 263.
7. Cicero, *Despre supremul bine și supremul rău* (Bucharest: Stiintifica si Enciclopedica Publishing House, 1983), III, 5, 73. Hegel's reproach also regards *De natura Deorum*. I, 26; III, 14.
8. G.W.F. Hegel, *Prelegeri de istorie a filozofiei*, 260.
9. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului* (Bucharest: IRI Publishing House, 1995), 34.
10. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1995), 38.
11. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1995), 39.
12. Ioan Alexandru Tofan, "On How God Does not Die in the Idea. The Hegelian Project of the Philosophy of Religion". In: *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, volume 8, no. 22, Spring, 2009, 93.
13. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1995), 43.
14. Ioan Alexandru Tofan, *Logica și filosofia religiei. O re-lectură a prelegerilor hegeliene* (Bucharest: Academiei Publishing House, 2010), 256.
15. Auguste Véra, *Introduction á la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique de Ladrangé, 1864), 171.
16. Benedetto Croce, *Ce qui est vivant et ce qui est mort de la Philosophie de Hegel* (Paris V: Girard et E. Brière, 1910), 5-6.
17. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 37-38.
18. G.W.F. Hegel, *Enciclopedia științelor filosofice. Logica* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House, 1995), 145, 148, 154.
19. G.W.F. Hegel, *Enciclopedia științelor filosofice. Logica*, 149-152, 153-155.
20. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 178, 179, note 1.
21. Karl R. Popper, *Societatea deschisă și dușmanii ei*, 44-51.

22. In another register I have dealt with this issue in Anton Adămuț, „On the False Crisis of Faith (or on how that Theology cannot up in Ideology)”. In: *European Journal of Science and Theology*, volume 6, no. 4, (December, 2010): 35-55, as well as in the study Anton Adămuț, „Peter Singer vs. John Chrysostom-About People and Animals”. In: *Revista Română de Bioetică*, volume 7, no. 3, (July-September, 2009): 11-16.
23. Alexandre Kojève, *Introducere în lectura lui Hegel* (Cluj-Napoca: Apostrof Publishing House, 1996), 63.
24. Alexandre Kojève, *Introducere în lectura lui Hegel*, 68.
25. Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Timpul. O fenomenologie teologică* (Sibiu: Deisis Publishing House, 2005), 146.
26. See here, in our cultural space, the decryption and re-narration that Noica makes for this Hegelian episode in *Povestiri despre om. După o carte a lui Hegel* (Bucharest: Cartea Romaneasca Publishing House, 1980), 41-42, 135-139. Follow also the analysis made by Jean Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Les Éditions Rieder, 1929), 158-193, 251-258.
27. G.W.F. Hegel, *Știința logicii* (Bucharest: Academiei Publishing House, 1966), 38.
28. G.W.F. Hegel, *Știința logicii*, 55-56.
29. G.W.F. Hegel, *Știința logicii*, 64. Ever since 1812, Hegel said that the right time has come to transform the science of logic, which represents the true metaphysics, into pure speculative philosophy. Hegelian logic is therefore defined badly: it is, in reality, a metaphysic whose essence is the negation of the principle of identity and the affirmation of the identity of the opposed ones in the world of real ideas and of becoming.
30. Benedetto Croce, *Ce qui est vivant...*, 21.
31. G.W.F. Hegel, *Știința logicii*, 833. The triple Hegelian is associated by the author himself with a syllogism, because the triple is the universal form of reason.
32. Ioan Biriș, „On the Logic of Religions Terms”, In: *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, volume 8, no. 22, (Spring, 2009): 63. The author wonders: “Is there any logic of religion? This is a simple question, but the answer is not simple at all”. And then he sends to Bochenski, Otto, scholastics and Hegel (“belief is itself knowledge, but a direct knowledge”).
33. G.W.F. Hegel, *Prelegeri de filozofie a religiei* (Bucharest: Academiei Publishing House, 1969), 20.
34. Chantelle van Heerden, „How Religion Might Inform our Conceptualisation of Reality. A Cognitive Linguistic Investigation”. In: *European Journal of Science and Theology*, volume 5, no. 4, (December, 2009): 1.
35. G.W.F. Hegel, *Principiile filozofiei dreptului* (Bucharest: IRI Publishing House, 1996), 168.
36. G.W.F. Hegel, *Principiile filozofiei dreptului*, 169.
37. Georg Lukács, *Ontologia existenței sociale* (vol. I. Bucharest: Politica Publishing House, 1982), 204.
38. See here Mannheim’s considerations regarding ideology, utopia and practical in *Idéologie et utopie* (Paris: Marcel Rivière Publishing House, 1956), 225-229.
39. Georg Lukács, *Ontologia existenței sociale*, 205.
40. Ioan Biriș, *Totalitate, sistem, holon* (Timișoara: Universitatea de Vest Publishing House, 2007), 24.

41. Ioan Biriș, *Totalitate, sistem, holon*, 24. One can see how, in the virtue of the principle of identity, “the being will appear rather as property of identity, than the identity property of the being: 25, 215.
42. Constantin Noica, “Etos neutral și Etos orientat în rațiunea hegeliană” (In: *Revista de Filosofie*, no. 2, March-April, 1976), 194.
43. Constantin Noica, “Etos neutral și Etos orientat în rațiunea hegeliană”, 195.
44. Constantin Noica, “Etos neutral și Etos orientat în rațiunea hegeliană”, 196.
45. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1965), 237.
46. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1965), 239.
47. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1965), 249.
48. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1965), 253. It is in other way that Hegel thinks in his reality of little Prussian bourgeois when he admits as honorable and credible four institutions: monarchy, church, property and marriage.
49. Erwin Rohde, *Psyché* (Bucharest: Meridiane Publishing House, 1985), 163-188.
50. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (Academiei Publishing House, 1965), 254.
51. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1965), 255.
52. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1965), 258.
53. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1965), 268.
54. G.W.F. Hegel, *Fenomenologia spiritului*, (1965), 414. That if Hegel himself does not see in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* some sort of “philosophical autobiography”.

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