

THE DETERMINATIONS OF REASON IN HEGEL

CONSIDERATIONS UPON THE GENEALOGY OF REASON IN HEGEL'S ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE ENCYCLOPAEDIC PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT

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Abstract. The Hegelian philosophical anthropology can be considered a “sublation” of the rationalist, the empiricist and the Kantian anthropological accounts, preserving their valuable arguments, yet, at the same time, negating their shortcomings. Thus, Hegel constructs his anthropological framework by trying to reconcile the free rational individuals with their natural embodiment and their historical and cultural embeddedness. The purpose of this study is to follow the winding road of the successive determinations that the human beings, as subjective spirit, have to take in order to become what they implicitly are: free rational subjects.

Key words: Hegel, reason, determination, freedom, self-consciousness, self-determination

1. Introduction

The problem of the individuals' rationality and, in strong connection to this, the issue of subjective freedom, has been considered a very important and long-time debated philosophical topic since the Age of Reason. The paradoxical relation between the free rational individuals and their particular historical embeddedness still needs to be further discussed. After more than three centuries of philosophical controversies, a comprehensive solution has not (yet) been agreed upon. The Enlightenment's attempt to transform reason into an Archimedean point has, on one hand, determined prompt reactions in philosophy from thinkers like Kant or Hegel, and, on the other hand, has occasioned the rise of Romantic Movement in humanities. The Hegelian philosophical system could be seen as an answer given to Enlightenment and Romanticism, but equally as a reply to Kant's limits of the theoretical use of reason. Considering freedom as the defining element and, at the same time, the history's mere purpose, Hegel develops his complex philosophical system by trying to reconcile reason, subjectivity and autonomy with cultural tradition, community and authority. Thus, his theory combines perspectives that

were and continue to be considered antagonistic in their very nature, wherefrom the difficulty of comprehending the Hegelian approach of the human being's nature. The main focus of the present paper is the investigation of the complex relationship between historical context and reason, and, more specifically, the natural and cultural determinations on free rational subject in Hegel. My thesis is then that, following Hegel's line of argumentation, the embodied subject undergoes several alterations in order to overcome the antagonistic tendencies within him and in relation to the natural determinations, but succeeds in the end to become what he implicitly is: a spiritual rational being autonomously self-determining himself inside a larger rational plan. From this perspective, Hegel's understanding of natural and cultural determinations does not stand against the free rational individual but, on the contrary, they are dialectically integrated into a larger scheme in such a manner that they enhance the individual's capacity to self-determination (freedom) and self-knowledge.

The project of investigating individual rationality in its relation to natural and cultural determinacies may be seen in itself as a Sisyphean task, on the one hand because of the monolithic structure of the Hegelian system and, on the other hand, because the attempt to trace back the concept of reason in Hegel involves scrutinizing his entire work, for rationality is Hegel's lodestar. Being aware of these difficulties, I will confine myself and concentrate on Hegel's philosophical anthropology (understood here in a broader sense than the Hegelian one) as it is dealt with in Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*. Hegel's account of human beings is presented in part three of the *Encyclopaedia*, following *The Logic* and *The Philosophy of Nature*. In the general structure of the *Encyclopaedia*, the philosophy of Spirit is not accidentally dealt with in the last section of the book, for "the knowledge of Spirit is the highest and hardest, just because it is the most concrete of sciences."¹ The *Subjective Spirit*, by which we refer to Hegel's more complex theory on human beings, precedes *The Objective Spirit*, thus underlying the development of the Hegelian concept of *Spirit* towards the *Absolute Spirit*. The *Subjective Spirit* is not just a treaty on anthropology as such, but a development from naturally determined forms of self-awareness to free knowledge. In Hegel's opinion this constitutes the true essence of the humans: the realization of the free rational thinking subject through spirit's continuous self-actualization and self-determination. Yet this process is by no means abstract but it takes place within a historical society, a cultural milieu which conditions the realization of the individuals' freedom. The subjective spirit can be considered as a bridge since it insures the transition from *Logic* through the *Philosophy of Nature*

¹ *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 1. (In citing Hegel's works, I made use of the available translations but I have confronted them also with the original and changed them when I considered necessary. Therefore, I take full responsibility for the translations.)

to the higher levels of spirit, the *Objective* and *Absolute Spirit*.² Since Hegel is one of the last creators of philosophical systems and his argumentation indeed gradually unfolds from *Logic* to *Absolute Spirit*, although our project mainly deals with the *Subjective Spirit*, I believe it is of high importance to also provide the context of the Hegelian systematic development.

2. From Logic to Subjective Spirit

The necessity of giving a short overview of the *Logic* is two-folded: on the one hand it is the first part and therefore the cornerstone of the Hegelian system, and on the other hand, it provides the methodological background for understanding the higher developments towards the subjective spirit. *Logic* does not only introduce the conceptual framework or the definitions needed for the Hegelian system, but it is “the science of the pure Idea, that is, of the Idea in the abstract element of thinking.”³ At this incipient level the Idea is just an abstract form because it is considered in itself (*an und für sich*) as a movement of the concept and not as it will manifest itself in actuality, science of the Idea in the sphere of Nature (*an sich*) and, afterwards, science of the Idea as manifested in Spirit (*für sich*).⁴

Logic structures the determinations of thought and deals with distinct abstractions like being, becoming, nothing, quantity etc. The initial and the simplest concept is being which is pure thought, undetermined and immediate. Since being is pure abstraction, it is therefore negative *i.e.* nothing. The unity of being and nothing is becoming.⁵ These are the primary necessary determinations of thought and their development accounts for the reality of objects, existence or actuality; it is a kind of “devolution” from pure unmediated abstraction to more and more concrete determinations, eventually ending with spirit. This inner development continues in the *Logic* until it reaches the moment in which it has itself as an object; the concept identifies itself both as subject and object of thinking. This must be, according to Hegel, an inner process and not an application of external principles because this development is at the same time the method by which the entire system will unfold. The development of thought determinations with respect to objectivity proceeds in three positions or moments, from abstract universal to particular and determined. The method is an internal negation of the previous

² I am aware of the fact that in order to have an adequate grasp of the Hegelian system one has to consider it in its articulated integrality. However, given the space constraints of the present paper, I will confine myself to Hegel’s *Anthropology* and *Phenomenology of Spirit* as treated in *Encyclopaedia 1830*.

³ *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. by T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991, p. 45.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

⁵ Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 141-145.

moment which does not have as a result the nothing, but an integrating unity (synthesis). The verb used by Hegel for the process is *aufheben* and is translated into English with the neologism *to sublatae*⁶, meaning negating and preserving at the same time. Thus, the sublation does not dissolve the previous moment but it contains it and thus, the concept moves to the next position. As a result, in the third moment, the singular (*das Einzelne*) arises and the determinations of thought which potentiate human thinking are set forth.⁷ It is a complete system because the three positions of method encompass all the determinations of thought, by which all possible objects are comprehended: “These thought determinations are also called ‘concepts’; and hence to ‘comprehend’ an object means nothing more than to grasp it in the form of something conditioned and mediated.”⁸

This three-position process as part of the *Logic* is the self-development and self-determination of the Idea, but confined within the sphere of thinking. While this is still an abstract level of the Idea, the next step in Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia* is his *Philosophy of Nature* i.e. the manifestation of the Idea externally. Although we are step by step ascending towards the concrete realm of spirit, Hegel considers nature as being “the Idea’s falling short [*Abfall*] of itself”⁹ (in a sense, nature refuses or declines the spirit), because in the *Philosophy of Nature* the concept is posited not as an object for itself but externally, for thinking.

The *Philosophy of Nature* is defined, according to Hegel, by its *otherness* in relation to the Idea. While in the *Logic* the determinations of concept arise from each other by means of sublation, nature, being an external manifestation of the Idea, appears to “participate” in some sense to the Idea. Nature is not self-moving and self-determining; it is determined by necessity and contingency and therefore not free. It is an implicit development in the sense that the concept is embedded in the nature and the different forms that nature takes do not emerge by themselves as a result of contradictions (as it happened in *Logic* with the concepts). Contingency is what characterizes nature, because its foundation is not the concept but experience and the sensory immediacy cannot provide firm grounding. Although the *Philosophy of Nature* cannot be based on experience, experience is still

⁶ *sublate*, negate, deny; to negate or eliminate (as an element in a dialectic process) but preserve as a partial element in a synthesis; from Latin, *sublatus* (past participle of *tollere* to take away, lift up), from *sub-* up + *latus*, past participle of *ferre* to carry; Cf. Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

⁷ Cf. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George Di Giovanni, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 530-549.

⁸ *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. by T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991, p. 109.

⁹ „So ist die Natur auch als der *Abfall* der Idee von sich selbst ausgesprochen worden, indem die Idee als diese Gestalt der Äußerlichkeit in der Unangemessenheit ihrer selbst mit sich ist.“ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* §248; “[...]and nature has also been regarded as the Idea’s falling short of itself, for in this external shape the Idea is inadequate to itself.” *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*, Edited and Translated by M. J. Petry, Michael, London: Allen and Unwin, 1970, p. 209.

important because it verifies the congruence of the conceptual development with actual nature.

The otherness of nature is overcome only in the realm of spirit. The spirit emerges from the sublation of nature's externality, which has as a result the revelation of the spirit's essence *i.e.* the formal freedom. It is formal freedom because it is merely implicit and spirit has to actualize the freedom according to an internal necessity. Since freedom is the spirit's essence insofar it is considered in its subjectivity, yet as potentiality, the actualization takes place not according to some external laws (as in the case of nature, which develops from seeds to plants, for instance) but according to the spirit's own self-determination. This is Hegel's conception of freedom: "action can be free only when it is determined by the agent's essence. Spirit thus determines its development in accord with its own essence. [...] Freedom as self-determination also precludes random or arbitrary action, precisely because such action is not determined by the self."¹⁰

At the same time, the negation of nature determines through reflection another self-revelation of spirit: spirit returns to itself and knows itself as spirit. In the sphere of spirit the concept is once again identical with itself (as it was in *Logic*) in the sense that "the concept (as subject) is comprehending itself (as object)."¹¹ This does not mean that we are back in the *Logic*, for in the realm of spirit the concept's unity is mediated by the *otherness* of nature. The negation of nature leads, just like in *Logic*, to further manifestations which constitute the spirit's continuous development. Spirit is always active and self-manifesting, aiming at self-knowledge, which is in fact the driving force of the spirit's development. Being at the same time the subject and object of reflection, spirit dissolves its own otherness and reveals itself as unity. It is in this sense that Hegel uses the "absolute commandment – Know thyself"¹² in the introduction of his *Philosophy of Spirit*.

3. Subjective Spirit

Although we are moving forward towards the concreteness of the Idea by arriving at the realm of spirit, getting further into the subjective spirit will be much less abstract. It is here that Hegel deals with anthropology, again, understood in a broader meaning as the theory of human beings and not in the Hegelian, more restricted definition of the term. The account of subjective spirit is both a philosophical anthropology and a continuation of the spirit's development as an aftermath of the concept's unfolding in *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Nature*. Given

¹⁰ Lewis, Thomas A., *Freedom and Tradition in Hegel: Reconsidering Anthropology, Ethics, and Religion*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, p. 38.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

¹² *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 1.

that the method brought forward in the *Logic* is not just a framework externally applied to a given content (here spirit), for Hegel there is no gap between objects and the way they are comprehended by thinking.¹³ Subjective spirit is here the object as developed by the two previous moments of the system, while in the *Logic* the concept was considered in its abstract element. In the subjective spirit we find Hegel's articulation of human beings, since spirit is actualized only in the human world and embodied subjects. On the other hand, this actualization is not yet there but it is an implicit possibility of actualization. The term that Hegel uses in this context is *Anlage* which means talent, ability, aptitude, tendency or predisposition; another sense of *Anlage* is plan, structure, conception. Hence, we can speak of an implicit human being (*an sich*) who has to actualize its *Anlage* – we can even use potentiality/actualization in the Aristotelian understanding of the terms. And this because at this level the individual is at a natural level, one that provides him only with the aptitude to develop according to the plan that nature has for him *i.e.* to become self-conscious, free spirit. We will follow this development towards reason (*Vernunft*), as Hegel exposes it, by focussing on the systematic movements that spirit has to undergo.

3.1. *Anthropology* – The Movement from the Naturally Determined Spirit to Reason: Pre-reflective Determinations

Being the next position after the realm of nature which is spirit “in the form of otherness”¹⁴, Hegel's “Anthropology” considers the human being as spirit that is still determined by nature's immediacy. The subject at this level is a mere general or universal soul¹⁵ (*allgemeine Seele*), constituted by its natural impulses and drives beyond its control such as the influence of seasons, inherited temperament or idiosyncrasies. The soul at this stage is subdued to its natural desires and impulses, while spirit is “merely implicit, not yet explicit.”¹⁶ The natural soul (*die natürliche Seele*) is in fact the spirit in its most untrue existence determined by nature and its immediacy. In this immediacy we can also include the culture and the society we are born into, for they constitute a “natural givenness” in which the soul is enclosed. But the spirit seeks to delineate itself from the natural determinations by assimilating them as its own determinations¹⁷ and for this reason

¹³ As it is the case in Kant's methodological framework.

¹⁴ “Die Natur hat sich als die Idee in der Form des *Andersseins* ergeben.“, Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* § 247; *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, edited and translated by M.J. Petry, Michael, London: Allen and Unwin, 1970, p. 201.

¹⁵ It is interesting how Hegel's subject evolves from an undetermined mere *soul* (*Seele*), through consciousness to *I* (*Ich*) and finally to the self-determining *free subjective spirit* (*Geist*).

¹⁶ Lewis, Thomas A., *Freedom and Tradition in Hegel: Reconsidering Anthropology, Ethics, and Religion*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, p. 49.

¹⁷ “[I]n the soul the unity of the physical and the spiritual is present.” Ferdinand Walter's version of the Lectures' text reads: “One must not regard the physical as foundation; the spiritual refers to the physical and can be known as ground and consequent, cause and

Hegel proceeds to a differentiation of spirit in local spirit – corresponding to nations (*Völker*), and individuals (*individuelle Subjekte*). Yet this individual should not be understood as exclusively constituted by natural determinations nor should it be seen as autonomously self-determined; the individual at this level is the particularization of natural determinateness taken up as minimal self-determination. The subject is determined by external/physical factors and it is the role of education, understood in its broadest sense of *Bildung* (in the sense of the equivalent of the Greek *παιδεία*), to form the individual by assimilating the culture in form of habits, customs and mores. Once this acculturation has taken place, the soul alters any contingencies or particularities and can be educated in a more specific manner (*Erziehung*)¹⁸. The role of the soul's reshaping is to sublimate the particularities in the sense of internalizing them as “the determinations of the concept.”¹⁹ In this manner spirit can continue its development towards what is most essential yet implicit to humans, *i.e.* free actualized spirit in a real integrating universality. But in order to attain this stage, the soul has to undergo some more alterations such as the sensations in which the soul is already substantially posited; for it *has* these sensations. If in the state of natural determinateness the soul *was* its desires, now it *has* sensations and thus it moved to a superior stage.

The feeling soul (*die fühlende Seele*) is the next movement of spirit which still has particular sensations but which will be overcome in the third stage of development: habit (*Gewohnheit*) as the second nature. The habit mainly constitutes what an individual is in the routine of daily existence, such that Hegel will affirm that “what I am is the totality of my habits.”²⁰ Though Hegel initially treats habit in strong relation to sensations and feelings, he will later consider habit in a broader sense. For this reason Hegel distinguishes three forms of habit: the first form is the toughening up [*Abhärtung*] against external sensations (cold, heat or weariness of the limbs) such that one is not dominated anymore by them and thus becomes unaware of their existence by internalizing them. The second form is apathy or “indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] towards satisfaction: the desires and impulses are by the *habit* of their satisfaction deadened. This is the rational liberation from them; [...]”²¹ At this level, the human being learns to resist the immediacy of desires and lusts and subordinates them to a common structure (rational common will in the sense of practical spirit). The indifference towards satisfaction is not to be understood as directed *against* satisfaction but as being appropriated by me and

effect.” Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University press, 2007, p. 95.

¹⁸ “With cultivated persons these [regional] differences are dropped, because these people live according to general determinations.” *Ibidem*, p. 93.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 153.

²¹ *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 142.

being part of my self-feeling such that I transcend it and I am indifferent to achieving satisfaction itself.²² The third type of habit described by Hegel is one involved in aptitude or skill such that “the abstract being of the soul should not only be maintained for itself but it has to be imposed as a subjective aim upon the bodily part (corporeality), which it subjects and thoroughly permeates.”²³ Thus, the body has to be subjected to the self’s purposes and has to effectively answer to the soul’s demands such as learning a foreign language or standing upright. If in the first two types of habit the emphasis was on overcoming by integrating the external natural sensations, in the third type we deal with a transition from natural impulses to *acquired* and *exercised* motivations. Moreover, the particular sensations are not identical anymore with the soul (as it was the case in the previous stages), for the soul possesses these determinations although he is not completely detached from them: “neither distinguishing itself [the soul] from them, nor being absorbed in them, but having them and moving in them, without feeling or consciousness of the fact.”²⁴ Habit is the soul’s capacity to abstract itself from physical sensations and to become free from them. Thus, the individual is not a mere satisfaction of desires but a subject with particular habits and, in this sense, these constitute *what* and *how* the subject is. At this particular stage the acquired habits and customs provide the content of the soul and *in-form* the soul. It is for this reason that Hegel affirms that: “[h]abit is there not only as a particular, momentary satisfaction; rather I am this habit. It is my universal mode of being – what I am is the totality of my habits. I can do nothing else, I am this.”²⁵ On the other hand, even though the soul is elevated above the bodily humours through habit, thereby attaining more freedom, it is not reflected upon. As such, the soul is not yet filtered through consciousness, and thus is still at the level of natural existence.

It is important to emphasize the role of habit in Hegel’s development towards free spirit, for habit is the first step by which the soul posits itself over against natural determinateness. However, because it is done mechanically, a thoughtless act such as walking or writing, habit involves a kind of necessity which situates it in the liberation from natural determinacies to the conscious will. As a result, we can consider habit in its dual aspect as being at the same time free and not free, depending on the perspective we take it. In any case, the role of habit is not only negative – in the sense of overcoming/accommodating natural impulses, but also positive by providing the basis from within the soul for further development towards free spirit. Consequently, being more than a subordination of natural determinations, according to Hegel, habit is also present at higher levels of

²² Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 155.

²³ *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 142.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

²⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 153.

spirit: “the form of habit includes all kinds and stages of spirit’s activity.”²⁶ Hegel affirms in this sense that in order to reach a superior level of spirit, one has to train his attention in such a way that it becomes habituated to thinking and philosophizing; habit has to become a “second nature” as opposed to the immediate, uncultivated nature.²⁷ Only when thinking and reflection become second nature through habit can the content of the further stages of subjective spirit’s development (morality or religiosity) be comprehended by the individual. And it is not to say that this comprehension is an external action of the individual; on the contrary, the content is appropriated by him as its own constitutive being:

habit is indispensable for the *existence* of all intellectual life in the individual, enabling the subject to be a concrete immediacy, an ‘ideality’ of soul – enabling the matter of consciousness, religious, moral, etc., to be his as *this* self, *this* soul, and no other, and be neither a mere latent possibility [*als Anlage* – implicitly], nor a transient emotion or idea, nor an abstract inwardness, cut off from action and reality, but part and parcel of his being.²⁸

Thus, the function of habit, extended also to the other spheres of the spirit’s movement, is essential to the constitution of our spiritual being. Habit is in fact our substantive existence in the world and together with our beliefs it determines our identity and our apprehension of reality to a certain degree. Although habits were at some point considered something distinct from our self and opposed to it, they became our self, our being. This perspective on habit constitutes Hegel’s explanation of how subjective spirit operates in such way that the soul is in-formed by the environment and the cultural context. By cultural context here we may understand the traditions and customs which are unconsciously assimilated by individuals and which determine to a great extent their identity and existence. This level of existence is obviously just a lower stage in the spirit’s development. The purpose of spirit is to abstract itself further from habit and overcome it through reflection. Only in this way can freedom be achieved and appropriated so that the individuals’ choice will be the synthesis of rational choice and habit and not a thoughtless automatism.

The next subsection of Hegel’s systematic development of spirit is the actual soul [*die wirkliche Seele*]. After the overcoming of the natural determination in habit directly mediated by spirit, the actual soul discovers itself as a unitary subject. The

²⁶ “Die Form der Gewohnheit umfaßt alle Arten und Stufen der Tätigkeit des Geistes.” *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 142.

²⁷ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 153.

²⁸ *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 143.

habit subordinated the body to the soul in the sense that the body does not desire separately, but according to the soul's incentive. Thus, the body is idealized, it is a sign of the subject and consequently the actual soul "finds itself there a single subject."²⁹ The actual soul is the identity between the corporeity and the soul so that the soul feels the body as itself. Furthermore, the soul is not raw existence but actual and actuality means, in Hegel's terms, rationality³⁰: "it [soul] is actual, effective, and something other than mere existence (what is rational is actual and vice versa). A bad soul has existence, but no actuality."³¹ On the other hand, the actual soul constitutes the final stage of the process by which the soul determines the body and transforms it into an ideal moment and the power therein. However, this is just a transition to the higher stage of consciousness in which the actual soul – by going from an indifferent attitude towards the immediate to an opposition or exclusion of it – awakens itself as I (*Ich*).

3.2 *Phenomenology of Spirit* – The Dynamics of Overcoming the Givenness of the Habit in Reason: Reflection

While Hegel's Anthropology is preoccupied with human existence at a pre-reflective level, the second section of the subjective spirit, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, investigates the reflective individual as moving through three different stages of development: consciousness as such, self-consciousness and reason. Through the process of reflection and self-reflection, the pre-reflective givenness of feelings and tradition appropriated by the soul through habit are overcome and the implicit potentiality of the individual to become free is loomed. However, from the point of view of content this is not changed; the individual pursues freedom having the same internal constitution as in the previous stage and thus he does not yet have the capacity to transform his content as he will have it in the following stage of movement. In this *Phenomenology*, the subject posits a difference in itself and thus he becomes at the same time the subject and object of reflection. Thus the individual reflects upon itself and by positing itself as the object it recognizes itself as an I (*Ich*). But the I is constituted through the individual's consciousness of itself by positing himself over against the content of the soul. It is by reflecting upon this inherited content that the I becomes more and more aware of itself as an object. "The immediate identity of the natural soul has been raised to this pure 'ideal' self-identity; and what the former contained is for this self-subsistent reflection set forth as an object."³² On the other hand, this object is identical with the subject of

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 147.

³⁰ "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational", Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen Wood, trans. by Hugh Barr Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 20.

³¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 159.

³² *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 153.

reflection and hence the I progresses in self-knowledge and freedom. Nevertheless, by the very fact that the I has the ability to abstract itself from all the determinations of the soul and to become thus an ideal, a universal, the I relates somehow to the context in which the process takes place. The identity of the I is given by means of sublation of a specific content which is already and also embedded in a cultural context. The I thus transcends its own situation through consciousness and needs to be recognized by the society. Hegel argues that this recognition highly depends on the stage of development of the society and the culture in which the I develops. If the structure of society and the cultural context of a nation are not developed enough, the subject's capacity to abstract itself from the particular determinations becomes more difficult and thus, the development of the subjective spirit is hindered from advancing towards the higher spheres. In other words, the subject's capacity of self-knowledge and universality, thus his freedom, is directly proportional with the structure of the society and the "qualitative stage" of his culture. This does not mean that Hegel ascribes different constitutions to human beings in different contexts; on the contrary, all people are the same regarding the potential to become an I. The *Anlage* is present in all of them in equal measure but what is different is the possibility to actualize the *Anlage*: "[w]hether this potential is actualized depends to a great extent upon the context in which human being lives. Without the necessary cultural context for developing this potential, it remains merely a potential, lacking the necessary conditions for it to become actual."³³

The implicit identity of the I – which will be fully revealed only by its mediation through spirit in Psychology – undergoes a specific transformation in the next stage of consciousness as such (*das Bewußtsein als solches*) in which the determinations of the soul have to be overcome through their negation/sublation. As a result, in consciousness the I relates to its sensations as if they were an external object and not itself, whereas as I, it tries to distinguish between the object of reflection and a mere appearance. In trying to discern between the object and its appearance, the I becomes *conscious* or *understands* (through *Verstand*) that "the object is rather appearance and its reflection-in-itself is on the contrary, for itself, an inward universal subsistence. The consciousness of such an object is the understanding (*Verstand*)."³⁴ In other words, the I becomes conscious of the external objects and understands them, thereby overcoming the otherness of the object. Furthermore, when the independence between subject and object is dissolved by the judging I – the I reflects upon the object which is itself as upon another I – consciousness moves to the next level, self-consciousness (*Selbstbewußtsein*).

Self-consciousness is the sphere in which the human beings acknowledge themselves and the others as I's, more particularly in recognition as a moment

³³ Lewis, Thomas A., *Freedom and Tradition in Hegel: Reconsidering Anthropology, Ethics, and Religion*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, p. 65.

³⁴ *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 162-163.

comprised within self-consciousness. It is one of the central movements in Hegel's system by which the individual transcends the particularities from the previous sections thereby discovering itself more than the fabric of physical and natural givenness. For Hegel, self-consciousness and self-knowledge is a result of individual (historical) development and is made available to us in the present because it has been embedded in the process of constituting our society and cultural milieu. The possibility of becoming self-consciousness is a pinnacle in humanity's continuous development. While as conscious subject the I encountered the external other as an object, as self-conscious the I meets itself as another I and thus self-consciousness becomes the truth of consciousness.³⁵ The self-consciousness of the subject is a continuous process by which the I wants to know itself and provides thus its own objective existence. The I is continuously striving to prove itself more than a thing or an immediate givenness. For this reason the negation of the immediate object is just a step in the articulation of the self-consciousness and its certain realization necessitates the relation to itself as consciousness. Only when self-consciousness overcomes the contradiction which occurs in the consciousness confronted with the negation of the other, the I is capable to fully realize itself as freedom. Hegel emphasizes this aspect by affirming that "self-consciousness is the abstraction of freedom in humans" and "[t]he substance of self-consciousness is freedom, I = I. I know myself."³⁶ Freedom is abstract insofar self-consciousness still relates to consciousness as to the other. But it actualizes freedom in the moment self-consciousness realizes the unity of its subjectivity with its objectivity and relates only to itself: "through this process it gives itself content, coincides with itself, gives itself objectivity and makes itself actual."³⁷ The individual is thus satisfied and free in its objectivity and thereby its identity as I is determined. The I is a subject, a free person (in its juridical aspect).³⁸ On the other hand, the identity of the I thus circumscribed encounters the other equal I which is external in its otherness. This raises a contradiction which Hegel solves through the process of recognition. The I tends to negate the other I which he meets in his immediacy and vice-versa: the other self-conscious I wants to annul its immediacy. The result is a struggle in which both subjects are involved and in which both jeopardize not only their life but also their own freedom. In fact, the struggle takes place in order for the individual's freedom to be recognized. And freedom will eventually be acquired, even though the fundamental conditions for recognition will be lost if one of the parties dies;³⁹ for, in order for recognition to be eventuated life itself is prerequisite. Yet, more important for Hegel is the mutual recognition that takes place through the master-servant dialectic which is the result of the initial struggle. Although subdued by the master in a first stance, the servant's self-consciousness

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

³⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 182.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 184.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 189.

will eventually acquire master's recognition, and master's confirmation of his "mastership" already presupposes the existence of a servant who recognizes him as a master.⁴⁰ Thus, the two self-consciousnesses are now separately posited and distinguished as it were, and mutually recognized.

He [the other person] is recognized as free by the other. The other is the one in which the other determination – the preservation of life – is affirmative, and is posited not in a negative way, but rather, as an essential moment. In this relation, both moments are posited but in such a way that they are divided between the two self-consciousnesses, so that the totality does not exist on each side. This constitutes the relationship of mastery and servitude.⁴¹

Hegel argues at this point that struggle and force is the external legitimate and necessary process by which states have arisen but he distinguishes it from the substantial originating principle *i.e.* reason.⁴² In any case, the important element is that in the external process of constituting the state, individuals come into relation with each other thereby forming a community even if that community is built on force and strife. For Hegel this is a necessary process because self-consciousness has to confront itself with another self-consciousness, the individuals have to interrelate with each other inside the community, in this manner realizing a unity. As a matter of fact, this demand for unity is determined by reason.⁴³ Notwithstanding, it is fundamental that the unity be accomplished and the possibility for this unity is underlain by the self-consciousness of other individuals. True universality, that everyone can take the position of the other as the same, as well yields from this struggle; until the confrontation in recognition, freedom as the independence of self-consciousness is only implicit in the individuals who are inwardly free but they have to demonstrate their freedom, their independence. It is in the struggle that the

⁴⁰ The master-servant dialectic is a fundamental theme and still an extensively debated issue in Hegel's philosophy. However, given that the passage is foremost central to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (B., IV., A. *Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage*) and also due to paper's space limitations I confined myself to a schematic presentation of the account. In any case, what Hegel emphasizes is the fact that through this relationship the master and the servant mutually recognize themselves as self-consciousnesses and only after this recognition servant's freedom occurs. The paradigm is reversed by the servant who masters things by transforming them through work and remaking them according to concepts and universal models. In this manner, the servant raises himself to the level of conceptual thinking and thus acquires freedom. Cf. Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 153-157.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 189.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 191.

⁴³ "Reason demands that reciprocal recognition be the result", Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 191.

individuals mutually affirm and confirm the freedom that was only in themselves. The individuals become free in their relationship, and as such, the reciprocal recognition of self-consciousness is universalized. This reciprocity means also that one's freedom acknowledges the other's subject freedom. By the affirmation of my freedom I acknowledge the other's freedom as well. And even though my freedom would seem to be edged by the other's freedom and vice-versa, this does not mean that I am unfree. On the contrary, this is a kind of edging forward or expansion into freedom which becomes a warranty for the universality of freedom. For Hegel this is the realization of consciousness as self-consciousness and afterwards the realization of immediate self-consciousness as universal consciousness, "namely, that I as I exist absolutely free, not according to my self-seeking but according to my universal nature."⁴⁴ I know myself as free in the other and hence I acknowledge my universal self-actualization of freedom.

The final movement of spirit in Hegel's Phenomenology is Reason (*die Vernunft*) which unites the consciousness and the self-consciousness from the previous moments. The truth of reason resides in the identity of the concept's subjectivity with its objectivity and universality.⁴⁵ This self-actualization of the subject's concept has been developed throughout the entire Hegelian system. Reason is then the subject that has an object and this object is the I itself but which includes all the universal determinations in itself. The object is universalized and hereby incorporates the content of self-consciousness, *i.e.* the free subject. The development of the subject is objective and includes all the determinations of my being⁴⁶ such that the things are identical with my thoughts.⁴⁷ The subject has this certain knowledge of things not in its particularity but this certainty is granted and insured to him because it is raised to universality. Moreover, this universality of knowledge is underlain by the spirit for "spirit is nothing other than reason under the form of knowing."⁴⁸ Spirit is providing the access to knowing objects and this knowledge of mine is objective because objects are the determinations of my thoughts. On the other hand, the object is rational as well and thus the unity between the rationality of the subject and the rationality of the objective

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 195.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 165.

⁴⁶ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 195.

⁴⁷ [...] "und daß diese Bestimmungen, die Bestimmungen meines Wesens, die Dinge ebenso meine Gedanken sind." Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes Berlin 1827/1828*. ed. by Franz Hesse and Burkhard Tuschling, Vorlesungen, vol. 13. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994, p. 176. "[T]hese determinations are determinations of my being. The things are just as my thoughts are." Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Williams, Robert R., New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 195. This reminds us of the Parmenidian Fragment 3 which affirms the identity between thinking and real existence: "... τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι." (... for it is the same thing to think and to be).

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 195.

world is acquired through spirit. All the particularities are overcome in this unity and the subject is free in the object. The content of the object and the subject is the same in the sense that they are inseparable and interconnected and Hegel calls this “the freedom of spirit in general.”⁴⁹ The particularities, previously subject and object, still exist in the content but the differences are sublated and rationality pervades all the content. Precisely because of this, the rationality of the spirit finds itself at home in the content of the world and penetrates everything. Hegel paraphrases Genesis 2: 23 in affirming that “[s]pirit says to the world: you are reason of my reason.”⁵⁰ Spirit encounters only its reason in the world, its universality and its freedom is actualized in and by the subject as well as in the object/world. From this perspective the self-conscious subject wills in accordance with the universal rationality determined by the spirit’s movement which in fact is thoroughly subject’s own essence. It is a necessity of rational acting but not in an unfree manner; on the contrary, the subject knows and recognizes the rationality in this necessity and because of this fact he wills fully free. It is spirit that is at work here and for this reason the knowing subject is in fact a moment in the knowing of spirit. As Hegel puts it “spirit is the knowing of the totality, which is equally subjective and objective in it.”⁵¹ Spirit is the all-encompassing rationality in which subject-object determinations do not operate anymore. If at the level of consciousness this was blurry, at this moment, in reason, spirit is reconciled in itself.⁵² Reason has its content as its own concept and this concept is reason’s object as universal for only there is spirit. The subject partakes to this process as an I in a two folded aspect: as consciousness apprehends the object objectively (*Gegenstand gegenständlich*—as if there were a split), while as spirit, the I regards the object as a moment of the common totality, of the possible coherence which is reason, and reason is I’s very nature.⁵³ “Spirit is the evolution of reason and rationality is what spirit is” [...] “since reason appears as something out there [in the world] spirit is the consciousness that this world is rational, that spirit finds in the world its own thought-determinations and the system of its thought.”⁵⁴

4. Conclusion

As we have already mentioned in the introduction, Hegel’s anthropology can be considered a straightforward answer to modern rationalists from the Enlightenment, Romanticism and, as well, to the empiricist accounts on human beings. The objections raised by Hegel to his philosophical predecessors are manifold: firstly, the attempt to divide and reduce spirit into a collection of different faculties which function independ-

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 196. The Biblical reading says: “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Genesis 2: 23, King James Version.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 196.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

ently (at least in the Cartesian dualist account) or in isolation from each other, and more important distinct from spirit's unity and activity. Secondly, it would be absurd to posit the universalizing role in knowledge and self-knowledge of such a divided and scattered spirit. Thirdly, the rationalist account attempted to provide an empirical basis for anthropology which would underlie all the metaphysical and philosophical developments. Unfortunately, Hegel concludes and this stands for a last critique, not only the rationalist-empiricist philosophical systems did not succeed in their attempts of rationalizing anthropology but they also diverted metaphysics and philosophy in their quest to know what is most essential for them: the concept and the truth.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Hegel is not dismissing every single conclusion of his predecessors but he re-evaluates them. Hegel is "sublating" the rationalist, the empiricist and the Kantian anthropological accounts, preserving their valuable arguments but negating their shortcomings, thus restoring spirit's unity and comprehensiveness. Thus, Hegel constructs his philosophical anthropology by trying to reconcile the free rational individuals with their natural embodiment and their historical embeddedness.

Does Hegel succeed in this endeavour? The journey from Natural Soul to Reason stands as the evidence for his accomplishment. Rationality is for Hegel not an inborn (extra)-quality of individuals but an achievement which is acquired through toil and struggle. In sublating one by one all the natural determinacies which would obstruct the self-realization and development of individuals, Hegel is in fact integrating the bodily tendencies of the individual into an all-encompassing/per-vading spiritual framework of a higher level. In this framework the embodied subject is not set against the spiritual subject as in the Cartesian account, but the two are a unity which cannot exist but as a unity in reason and freedom. The rational subject can exist only embodied and through this body the subject participates in the raw natural life with all its impulses and tendencies and therefore he feels a contradiction within himself; he is at odds with himself. However, this inner tension only requires that the individual must fight in order to become what he implicitly but really is: a rational spiritual being. Yet, he is not supposed to deny his corporeity as it happens in forms of bad mysticism or extreme Neo-Platonism. He has to "rationalize" or, using Hegel's own terms, to idealize the body in such a way that the body will also reflect spirit's highest purpose of self-knowledge. Furthermore, in following spirit's development, the embodied rational subject ceases to see his corporeity as opposite to his own aspirations but as part of nature which is in its turn imbued by spirit's rationality, and which participates in the rational plan that underlies everything. It is here that Hegel emphasizes the fact that the subject recognizes the object as himself; reason apprehends itself.⁵⁶ "The rational subject identifies himself with this larger reason, the rational plan underlying the whole, and as such no longer sees himself as opposed to nature which has itself been made over to be an apt expression of

⁵⁵ Cf. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 171.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

rationality.”⁵⁷ For Hegel to remain at the level of opposition and antagonistic relations between rational individual and natural determinacy or cultural context is to stay at the level of understanding (*Verstand*) which only discerns between the things and their appearances and not to move forward to reason (*Vernunft*) representing the higher mode of living. In this higher mode of living, the rational subject is conscious of the oppositions and still considers it a necessary step in integrating and cultivating nature but elevates himself above this opposition thereby becoming conscious of the comprehensive unity of reason. And this unity has to be distinguished from the undifferentiated one of *Logic*, for it is a mediated unity. It is mediated through spirit’s movement and because of this is fully rational and overarching. This higher unity dissolves any opposition and it is the task of individuals to become conscious of it by continuously self-actualizing their spiritual essence. Only in this manner the embodied spirit can overcome and integrate the contradictions that he inevitably encounters in his particular social, cultural and historical embeddedness and become what he actually is: the free, rational subject.

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⁵⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 86.