

Hegel: Philosophy and Human Freedom

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ABSTRACT

To define freedom as the absolute or Philosophy is a necessary prerequisite of understanding the political and social actualizations of freedom through history. According to Hegel's articulation of philosophy, what makes philosophy a self-supporting realization of human freedom is that which is based upon the speculative thought (*Speculation*). Speculative thought is the process of philosophical actualization that is able to gather all contingencies within its own realm of freedom. Two approaches to interpret Hegel's relation of philosophy and freedom are still dominant: First, the relation might be accepted as the enclosed totality of philosophy since Hegel's practice of philosophy can conceptualize all actualized formations of reality; second, the relation might be criticized based on the supremacy of praxis over theory. In other words, the first approach considers philosophy as a closed totality; on the contrary, the second approach is based upon the supremacy of the power of unforeseen praxis over the power of interpretation. I attempted to propose a new way that would be another sort of reading Hegel's understanding of the relation as a combination of unforeseen openness and an absolute totality at the same time. Accordingly, this article is a conceptual approach to explicate how philosophy is first and foremost able to conceptualize all historical realizations within its own totality as the last moment of the Absolute Spirit; second, how Hegel's articulation of philosophy still remains a freely open totality to face new social and political realizations in the future.

1. Introduction

The entirety of Hegel's philosophy of spirit is an attempt to develop an adequate understanding of the conditions under which a being can justifiably be called spiritual, and thus free. According to Hegel, spiritual beings are

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those that are not merely natural (Hegel, 1971:381; Hegel, 1969:127/118). This should not be taken to understand that spiritual beings are supernatural. Human beings as spiritual beings are also animals, i.e. natural. But our animality cannot account for our freedom. Contrariwise, in Hegel's view it is the fact that humans are not merely natural, but also spiritual, that allows us to be free. Freedom is the power of internalizing every external thing. Hegel states: "We must designate as the distinctive determinateness of the concept of spirit, ideality, that is . . . the process of turning back (*Zurückkehren*) – and the accomplished turning back (*Zurückgekehrtsein*) – into itself from its other . . . What we have called the ideality of spirit [is] this triumph (*Aufhebung*) over externality. . . Every activity of spirit is nothing but a distinct mode of leading back (*Zurückführung*) what is external to the inwardness which spirit itself is, and it is only by this leading back, by this idealization or assimilation, of what is external that it becomes and is spirit." (Hegel, 1971:381; Hegel, 1991: 343).

Hegel's understanding of philosophy as system in addition to his expectation of philosophy as *Sophia*, leading him to reach the System or the absolute spirit, demands the unity of theoretical and practical dimensions of humanity within an absolute whole. The only possible source to pursue the foregoing unity is history, and the only possible method to philosophize it is dialectic. Therefore, definition and model of rationality to grasp such a united reality was changed for Hegel. He changed the logical method of the fixed categories in order to approach the fluidity of historical reality, and dialectical logic is correspondent with it. In addition, according to Hegel, epistemology should be transformed into phenomenology since there is no fixed subjectivity to grasp reality from outside, but the dialectical movement of the subjectivity is identical with its historical realization. In other words, to Hegel movement of the Idea and history of humanity as freedom are two aspects of the same subjectivity. Accordingly, philosophy as the last moment of the Absolute Spirit is the most actualized moment of freedom. He states: "The entire development of the concept of spirit presents only spirit's freeing

of itself from all its existential forms that do not accord with its concept, a liberation which is brought about by the transformation of these forms into an actuality perfectly adequate to the concept of spirit.” (Hegel, 1971:382).

He explains the same concept in another way: “the entire development of spirit is nothing other than its self-elevation to its truth,” truth being understood as the “agreement of the concept with its actuality.”(Ibid: 379).

2. The Absolute: Radical Freedom and Expressive Unity

Hegel's absolute knowing sublates (*Aufheben*) skepticism of the finitude of knowledge with the infinity of the dogmatic metaphysics to a new kind of ontology, on the one hand, and a combination of Kant's finite autonomous subjectivity with Spinoza's infinite all-encompassed substance, on the other hand. According to Hegel, it is supposed to be the final sublation of such seemingly non-reconcilable opposites. The other expression of the absolute as the synthesis of such opposites is Charles Taylor's account where he introduces the combination of Herder's expressive unity theory with Kant's rational autonomy as the intellectual background of Hegel's era. (Taylor, 1979:12). The idea of expressive unity defines human life as an undividable unity that expresses itself through society, culture, and history. It is thus based on the concept of cultural life as the essence of the human being. Kant's rational autonomy defines a human's free will as distinct from nature and its chain of cause-effect relations. To explain Hegel's concept of the absolute in *the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 1977:4) first and foremost requires considering his early philosophy and the intellectual atmosphere in which he begins to philosophize. Except for Kant's concept of autonomous will Herder's concept of human being has influenced young Hegel; this is the reason why I outline theoretical frameworks of humanity through history established by Kant and Herder as an introductory basis to explicate Hegel's understanding of freedom.

Herder's vital philosophical achievement lies in the development of an idea contradicting Enlightenment philosopher- historians such as Hume and

Voltaire, that there are fundamental discrepancies between historical eras, that people's concepts, beliefs, perceptual and affective sensations, etc., differ in major ways from one era to another. This idea is already delineated in *On the Change of Taste* (1766). It exercised an enormous influence on Hegel's historical thought as his most important successor. He finds a shared human common ground and defines the human being as an expressive unity of sensation, thinking, and acting: "It is an inner characteristic mark of the truth of religion that it is entirely human, that it neither sentimentalizes nor theoretically ponders, but thinks and acts, lends force and resources for thinking and acting. Its cognition is living, the epitome of all cognition and sensations, eternal life. If there is a universal human reason and sensation, it is in religion, and precisely this is its most unrecognized side." (Herder, 2004:243). Despite the Kantian gap between human thinking and acting, which are explained by two separate philosophical categories, Herder's definition of humanity is, and should be, a united being that acts and thinks. Such a unifying approach is named "life" by him. It is the same approach that influenced the young Hegel to see the human as a unified living being whose sensations, desires, thinking, and acting are united within a whole without any pre-established practical gap. Although the period of his early thought seems to be theological, it is of deep philosophical effects on his later philosophical thought in Jena, especially on *the Phenomenology of Spirit*, regarding the problem of the absolute. Although for the young Hegel, the main problem is the relation of finite with infinite, which comes out of his theological background, he expands and formulates it within a practical philosophical framework.

The young Hegel had been inspired by Kant's philosophy, especially his practical philosophy, as expanded by Fichte, to shape his early philosophy, specifically by three Kantian moral motives; moral law; the kingdom of humans as ends; and the evident principles of morality. All in all, Kant's idea of the kingdom of ends would seem to be the most important aspect of Kant's practical philosophy which influenced young Hegel, and some of

scholars have emphasized this (Pompa, 1992:188). Kant's third critique beside his religious and historical works is the conclusion of his philosophical itinerary where he reaches the concept of humanity as end. According to such works, to understand humanity reason's practical and teleological aspects presented within a historical perspective are more important than its theoretical ability. That is to say, humanity is the realm of freedom that it reveals itself not in nature but only by the human through history. Therefore, Kant defines humanity through freedom from a historical standpoint. In other words, the principle of humanity or the freedom of humans as the kings of the ends is what distinguishes humans as the hidden plan of nature, and it reveals itself only through history.

Hegel accepts the autonomy of humanity derived from Kant's practical philosophy, but Kant draws a rigid discrepancy between the necessity of nature and human freedom. The young Hegel attempts to connect the freedom of humanity to nature, although he accepts the supremacy of humanity as the end of nature over it. It is the very same point he concludes in the final part of his phenomenological standpoint where he traces consciousness from sense-certainty to Absolute Knowing, from a human individual to the absolute as such.

Although Kant expressed freedom as an ideal that is going to be actualized in nature through history, the insurmountable gap between the free will of humanity and determinism of nature had been left out of his practical philosophy. Young Hegel does not admit the foregoing gap since he thinks it has been brought about due to Kant's belief in the transcendental principles in his definition of practical reason. Hegel denies any sort of transcendental principle in practical reason. Therefore, he concludes that there is no transcendently external objectivity outside of practical reason. Young Hegel puts the practical reason within human emotions, requirements, and empirical desires. He puts all the practical aspects of human being within his new concept of an all-embracing subjectivity. According to the young Hegel, this sort of comprehensive subjectivity is

thus able to grasp the synthetic concept of freedom of finite spirits and nature within itself. There is only one more step to capture the concept of absolute as such, and it is his radically new method entitled phenomenology.

3. Hegelian Absolute Freedom: Philosophy as Totality of the Absolute Spirit Through History

3.1. Kant proposes the a priori idea of history as the natural itinerary of humanity. He attempts to prepare the formulation of a plan that he calls a *purpose in nature* behind the seemingly senseless course of human events as history of creatures who are devoid of plan of their own activities. (Kant, 1989:42) He attempts to establish a rational plan, like the laws of nature explained in Newtonian mechanics, in order to clarify the hidden natural meaning of human history. In other words, He sees history as the natural plan of humanity and something distinct from the status of all natural beings at the same time. Kant defines the human as the only rational being on earth whose natural capacity is reason. Therefore he states: "Those natural capacities which are directed towards the use of his reason are such that they could be fully developed only in the species but not in the individual." (Ibid: 42).

As far as he considers humanity with regard to its nature, it turns out to be a rational race. However, reason is a natural capacity that enables humanity as a race to extend far beyond the limits of natural instincts, rules and intentions by using the power of reason. It is fascinating that reason itself is not an instinct, but it is natural thing. It would be an interesting problem to see how something could be natural and not to be instinct at the same time. The answer is that reason requires trial, practice and instruction to enable itself to progress gradually from the stage of instinct (state of nature) to the rational stage which is beyond the instinct in the end. (Ibid, 43). Therefore, rationality is not a pre-established power, but it is a gradually historical potentiality. The original intention of nature is thus to transfer humanity as a race to the state of reason since it is impossible for humanity to reach such a state individually. The human race can realize rationality in the end.

The third proposition of *Idea of a history from a cosmopolitan point of view* states that nature has willed that humanity should produce what he is able to do in order to go beyond the mechanical ordering of his animal existence. Furthermore, he should not partake of any other happiness or perfection than that which he has produced for himself without instinct and only by his own reason. This statement seems to be distinct from what Kant states in *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*, according to which, humans can see themselves from two different standpoints. The first one is the mechanistic framework that shows the human's place in nature, like any other natural thing, which is based on the law of causality. The second standpoint is the teleological framework that shows the special status of the human being in nature as the rational being who can see himself free from the cause and effect chain since he possesses the good free will by which he can freely act as an autonomous being.

The third proposition clearly states that nature does not do anything unnecessarily. Therefore, human reason and the freedom of the will based on reason have to be taken into account as the fulfillment of nature's intention. The human being thus produces everything out of himself, from barbarism era to the ethical union stage which is called the state of culture. History is the realization of human reason. Consequently, reason as the final end of nature will be realized only and only through human beings as a unique species, namely as a whole race. Kant thus states that nature should thank humans, because its final perfection is fulfilled only through humans (Ibid: 44).

The vital question is that how the human's rational capacity is to be fully realized through history. The fourth proposition clearly answers the question. The human being possesses two dispositions that they coexist at the same time. Firstly, he tends to live individually in order to be free as much as he can, without any burden. He is therefore antagonist within society. Secondly, nature has decided that the human being can realize his rational capacity only through the social order. Therefore, Kant defines humanity as "unsocial sociability" which is his tendency to come together in society, despite with a

permanent resistance which constantly threatens to destroy this social order (Ibid: 44).

The society, namely the social order, is therefore the only way through which human reason can be realized according to nature's plan. Kant is forerunner of Hegel to admit the conflicts between individual and society as the contradictions within society as truly undeniable reality, which not only it is not a negative characteristic, but also is a positive and the only way which functions as the productive element of human history.

According to Kant, human being wants to live as an individual in order to isolate himself since he finds in himself the unsocial tendency of willing to direct everything in accordance with his own unlimited freedom. Therefore, he is always inclined to admit resistance within society, and he is also inclined to offer this resistance to others. It is fascinating that it is the same resistance awakens all human's natural capacity, specifically his reason. Nature therefore drives hum being to accept society and to seek his status among others. This is the first step by which humans can move from the state of nature, namely the unlimited freedom, to the state of culture. I call it the state of recognition, although Kant himself never uses such a technical term. The specific term he uses is the state of culture.

All the human's natural capacities, specifically his reason, are gradually to be developed only in the state of culture where he lives in society (Ibid: 44). The final step should now happen as enforced social union. It should be transformed into a moral whole, which is the same kingdom of ends from the ethical point of view and it is the same people of God from the religious point of view. Only after entering the social order humans are able to constitute a moral community in which they can develop their talents, especially their reason. Otherwise, all human talents would remain hidden forever in the state of nature.

As far as Kant considers social incompatibility, competitive vanity and insatiable desires for possession or even power (Ibid: 44). are the hidden motivating plan of nature in order to let human reason realize itself. Kant

admits the non-sociability as well as the continual resistance as real elements which are always progressive from the historical point of view since they encourage humans in finding new exertions of their reason and thus further realization of their natural capacities, especially rationality. Therefore, this seemingly negative characteristic of human nature is at the same time the same nature's plan to create moral union, the ethical state, in which reason is the highest potentiality that nature can completely realize. The next point Kant adds to the concept of moral union with regard to its historical dimension is that the kingdom of ends, the people of God, is built up only through a universal cosmopolitan existence (Ibid: 51) in which the human's rational and moral capacities are developed. However, Kant states that nature's plan should be considered as a rational plan, practical idea, (Ibid: 52) with which only the philosopher is able to explain history as a whole, on the one hand, and humans can hope for the future which enables them to partake in a meaningful social life, on the other hand.

Kant's idea of history, i.e. the end of humanity as realization of its rationality within the kingdom of ends is the final stage of Kant's practical philosophy. The kingdom of ends is a movement from morality to history in order to show the explanatory primacy of history within Kant's practical philosophy as a whole. Therefore, if one considers his practical philosophy retrospectively, namely, through a movement from history to morality, that foregoing primacy will strikingly reveals itself. Practical importance of Kant's idea of rationality relies on his optimistic hope for the *Enlightenment* (*Aufklärung*). However, rationality is not merely an a priori idea devoid of content, but it is the permanent endeavour to realize humanity, i.e. the state of culture through history. In conclusion, although Kantian subjectivity moves through history to realize different potentialities of humanity, it keeps being transcendental as well as formal. I delineated the expansion of this subjectivity through history so that I show why and how Kantian transcendental subjectivity is not able to be systematic, i.e. holistic philosophy, on the one hand, and why and how it cannot explicate the

relationship of logic, knowledge, society, culture, state and philosophy with history respectively, on the other hand. On the contrary, Hegel's conception of philosophy as absolute can make such a connection between them, but his totalizing of philosophy starts with Kant's gap between theoretical and practical aspects of reason. The lack of a systematic whole with regard to the Kantian gap allowed me to begin with Kant's idea of history before clarifying how Hegel's absoluteness can go beyond that gap.

3.2. Hegel finishes the enterprise Kant could not do, or he did not want to do so since if there is an insurmountable gap between *noumen* and *phenomenon* philosophy is not able to be a system. In other words, science, art and religion should be explicated separately since theory and practice are separate. In other words, life does not penetrate cognition and vice versa. Therefore, as I delineated earlier, although Kant attempts to philosophize science, art and religion within a historical perspective of human subjectivity, the inherent philosophical gap between thing-in-itself, i.e. Being, and human's subjectivity does not allow his philosophy to arrive at a totality in which there is not only a systematic co-dependence of subject and object but also a historical context of such a relationship.

Kant provides a framework of revolutionary subjectivity based on which the relation of subject and object is dependent on a transcendental theoretical subjectivity, on the one hand, and he also discovers, as I demonstrated earlier, the universal idea of history in which a practically autonomous subjectivity acts as free agent through history grasped as a universal idea, on the other hand. The next step is the unity of theoretical and practical subjectivity within an absolutely holistic Subjectivity. Such absoluteness requires a systematic philosophy, and Hegel provides a system of philosophical science that it is able to explicate subjective and objective spirituality of humanity through history. The last manifestation of this system is philosophy. What happens in the last stage of Hegel's System is a unity of art and religion as philosophy within the Absolute Spirit. He states: He states: "This science is the unity of art and religion." (Hegel, 2010:267).

Here I should pose the same problem with regard to the Absolute Spirit, i.e. philosophy as such. That is, how is philosophy as the last stage of the Absolute Spirit, but nonetheless still open to further possibilities of the future? In other words, I have to raise two essential questions as to the problem of Hegelian absolute. First, how should an absolute be at the last moment of the Absolute Spirit? Second, how can it be still open, although it is the last moment of the process of Spirit? The second question is the problem of the identity of beginning and end, which Hegel puts it as the core of his systematic conception of philosophy. Starting point and outcome are one and the same thing, they indeed converge each other in a circular movement, but outcome is the final moment encompassing all mediated moments within itself. It curves in a circular movement and returns to the starting point. Natural consciousness takes up its manifestation as phenomenal knowing in the *Phänomenologie*, and absolute knowing goes over to the content of the system of the *Enzyklopädie* as the system of its absolute determination due to the reciprocal necessity that the subject knows not only itself absolutely but also the absolute as subjectivity.

The mediation of absolute knowing presented by the system in the *Enzyklopädie* accounts for itself as philosophical self-consciousness, but presents formations, i.e. configurations, which are systematically antecedent to this philosophical cognition and are determined by this result as their presupposition. This means that the logical place of these formations within the system is a function of the self-conscious totality moving between presupposition and result. For instance, *Das Recht* and *Die Moralität* are systematically antecedent to *Die Sittlichkeit*. This relation is not a historical succession but it is a dialectical interdependence. The result of the system is philosophical self-consciousness which encompasses all previous formations within itself.

4. Hegelian Freedom: From Absolute Knowing to the Absolute Spirit as Philosophy

Robert Grant McRae discusses the function of philosophy as the final presentation of Hegel's system that it is the conceptual basis upon which I build my interpretation of the Absolute Spirit. He discusses the relation of speculative presentation to historical evidence, which is important to introduce the function of the Absolute Spirit within Hegel's system. According to him, the only formal discussion of historical configurations in the *Philosophie des Geistes* occurs in that section of objective spirit dealing with the interaction of nation-states and the *Weltgeist*, and we must assume that all historical phenomena are meant to be understood within the context of the nation-state as the over-riding hermeneutic principle. He is sure that much of the prior discussion of the spiritual formations that constitute absolute knowing obviously has its foundations in historical evidence, and he says that it is vital that we understand the relation of speculative thinking to this historical evidence if the content of the system is to invoke the interest of natural consciousness. He concludes that the discussion concerning the historical determination of the nation-state has crucial implications for the national basis of philosophic presentation (McRae, 1985:117).

He states that the relation of speculative presentation to historical evidence poses a number of crucial questions. Are the appearances of formations in history already implicitly determined from the dialectical standpoint, and if so, is the *Philosophie des Geistes* both a history and a logic of these spiritual formations? He asserts that the succession of spiritual formations that present the mediation of the absolute subjectivity is strictly a dialectical succession, and no direct reference is made by Hegel to their appearing in time. While it is tacitly accepted, for instance, that the "absolute as ideal" is in particular a Greek appropriation of the absolute, the historical content of this appropriation is used merely as an external access to the discussion of the place of this formation within a dialectical process.

Historical formation is based on, but not identical with, the absolute ontology presented by the system. (Ibid: 117-118). He states that the historically objective content which makes up the presented formations is found in experience, content first presented by the empirical sciences in the formulation of general determinations and laws. The reception of these concrete materials into speculative thought at the same time brings thought out of itself. Speculative thought, then, owes its development to the empirical sciences, while giving this concrete material the necessity and universal form of the freedom of thought. He refers to Hegel's assertion: "The fact becomes a presentation (*Darstellung*) and reproduction by the original and complete independent activity of thought." (Ibid: 118).

McRae continues to delineate how these "facts-become-configurations", i.e. spiritually historical formations, must constitute a system if their mediation is supposed to be absolute. He states that based on Hegel's conception only the system is scientific because its development (*Entwicklung*) is in-itself. In other words, Hegel's definition of system is a self-related whole, and its content has its justification only as a moment of the whole. Outside of this systematic shape, any thinking of the mediation of the absolute subject is ungrounded presupposition and merely subjective certainty. Speculative thinking is the mediation by thought of the empirical content necessary to absolute knowing, an empirical content made necessary by the systematic descent to its absolute presupposition. According to McRae, Hegel asserts that the presented content of absolute knowing exhibits the presentation of a circle which closes with itself, and has no beginning outside of the infinite subjectivity of thought itself. This absolute knowing is completely satisfied, and is in a sense final, when the totality of its mediation accounts for, and is at the same time accounted by, its subjective presentation (Ibid:118).

Again, to build my interpretation of the position of philosophy within Hegel's system McRae's thick description of philosophy is very helpful. He entitles the position of philosophy within Hegel's system as "philosophic

presentation". According to him, if we tentatively concede the efficacious supersession of natural consciousness by philosophy we do not, on the other hand, know how philosophic presentation appears to this natural consciousness as its true self on the level of consciousness. The hypothesis he wishes to put forth is that philosophy appears as a complete response to a requirement that becomes self-apparent to natural consciousness. However it seems that this requirement which precedes philosophy occurs only at a specific moment in the process of spirit, and is always related to the demands of a specific people, such that one must speak of philosophy as intrinsically a local response (Ibid:126).

He asks that what is this requirement which brings about this appropriation of the absolute, and in what sense is the system a "true" response to this requirement? He states that the moment of philosophy as what pure thought wills to resolve is a starting moment neither arbitrary nor subjective, but determined by the totality of a comprehended epochal requirement.(Ibid:126) Accordingly, the history of philosophy is an epochal speculation manifested along with the other historical configurations.

He states that speculative thinking is connected to the history of philosophy in two basic ways: (i) it is a result, and comes at the end of a determinate spiritual epoch; (ii) it contains the principles of previous philosophies raised from their contingent appearances, and repeats them in a systematic form, i.e. in their truth (Ibid:131). According to him, Speculative thinking is only situated by the history of philosophy since the system looks back and comprehends its principles, raising that historical contingency to subjectivity, and the realization of this subjectivity through the historical configurations defines the determined horizons of an epoch which has achieved self-consciousness. Not only speculative thinking, but also philosophy in general, *the Philosophy*, looks back on its genesis and encompasses previous principles. He reasserts what Hegel has already asserted that why the latest philosophy, and not only speculative thinking, is the most concrete and true at any point in history. (Ibid:132).

5. Absolute Freedom

Thus far, I have provided a general description of Hegel's articulation of philosophy based on what McRae depicts. I should delineate my account of Hegel's formulation of philosophy as the last presentation of the system. According to my interpretation, the fundamental element of Hegel's history of philosophy is sublation, *Aufhebung*. Therefore, I should explicate my own conceptualization of *Aufhebung* in order to show the possibility of such an approach to Hegelian concept of philosophy. *Aufhebung* means negation, gathering and ascending at the same time. But nonetheless it could be considered from a different point of view so as to grasp a certain sort of openness. It negates itself internally; and it keeps both oppositions together in a different way from both; and finally, although it goes beyond the previous situations, dialectic is not a linear progressive movement of *λόγος*. It is a dialogue between two oppositions within a two-sided dependent relationship instead. What Kant's universal idea of history is able to do is to define a brand new relation of freedom and history as context of the actualization of this freedom, but it still remains an abstract context of freedom since it does not actualize its own formations. Contrariwise, Hegel extends the relation of freedom and history in order to discover human's inherent dependence on actualized formations of history within which *Geist* still realizes itself. This raises a vital question that whether or not philosophy as consummation of art and religion is totality of *Geist*. To answer it, I require consider philosophy as the last manifestation of the Absolute Spirit is an open totality of all contingencies of history within "the Concept".

In order to show how philosophy is freest activity of the absolute spirit Hegel writes:

"Intelligence as such in its manifestation, its utterance, only goes as far as the word, this fleeting, vanishing, completely ideal realization which proceeds in an unresisting element, so that in its utterance intelligence remains at home with itself, satisfies itself internally, demonstrates that it is its own purpose (*Selbstzweck*), is divine and, in the form of comprehensive

cognition, brings into being the unlimited freedom and reconciliation of spirit with itself.” (Hegel, 1971:444).

Philosophy depends for its content only on its own form, that of conceptual thought. It has no external content, and is thus not finite in either of the senses in which willing is. (Hegel, 1991:133Z). Philosophy is absolute free of any sort of externality. Therefore, it is “absolute absoluteness”. He also explains this absolute absoluteness in a phenomenological way:

“Pure self-recognition in absolute otherness, this ether as such, is the ground and soil of science or knowledge in general . . . [In philosophical science] the moments of spirit . . . no longer fall apart into the antithesis of being and knowing, but remain in the simplicity of knowing . . . In thinking I am free, because I am not in an other, but rather remain completely with myself (*bei mir selbst*) . . . My movement in conceptual thinking is a movement within myself (*in mir selbst*).” (Hegel, 1977:29/14, 39/22, 156/120).

Furthermore, philosophy is absolute free in term of its absolute openness. The openness of philosophy refers to the suspension of subject/object gap. Accordingly, philosophy goes inside towards its own determinate formations so as to dissociate itself from all of them. If it is the case, philosophy as the most conceptual formation and the third syllogism of the System is the fullest presentation of the freedom. When Spirit comes to appear as its own fullest formation there would be no further external determination of the Absolute Spirit. From now on, philosophy stands at a flexible perspective to see all the previous determinations coming to the fore. Thinking who thinks on itself as thought sees all its content from within in a flexible perspective. This is a specific situation in which suspension of all fixed perspectives occurs in a radically new way.

Catherine Malabou provides a radically new interpretation of Hegel’s *sublate* and *sublation* based on a new concept, i.e. *plasticity*. She considers it as a concept that has a defined and delimited role in the philosophy of Hegel, only in order to transform it into the kind of comprehensive concept that can

‘grasp’ the whole. She states that it has the double sense of grasp as ‘seizing’ (*prendre*) and ‘understanding’ (*comprendre*), which is authorized by the etymology of the ‘concept’ (*Begriff*). According to her, transforming plasticity into a concept is a matter of explicating that plasticity ‘seizes’ (*prend*) the philosophy of Hegel and allows us as contemporary readers to ‘comprehend’ it, “appearing at one and the same time as a structure and as a condition of intelligibility.” (Malabou, 2005:5).

As Malabou (Ibid:156-157) refers to the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel has already described such fluidity or suspension of all determinations that I insist to call ‘suspension of perspectives’ rather than ‘suspension of subject-object gap’. Hegel writes:

“Thoughts become fluid (*die Gedanken werden flüssig*) when pure thinking, this inner immediacy, recognizes itself as a moment, or when the pure certainty of self abstracts from itself – not by leaving itself out, or setting itself aside (*auf die Seite setzen*), but by giving up (*aufgeben*) the fixity of its self-positing, by giving up not only the fixity of the pure concrete, which the ‘I’ itself is, in contrast with its differentiated content, but also the fixity of the differentiated moments which, posited in the element of pure thought, share the unconditional nature of the ‘I’ ”. (Hegel, 1977:20).

‘Suspension of perspectives’ does not entail the closure of all perspectives. On the contrary, it means absolute sublation of all perspectives. Such an absolute sublation makes ‘the I’ as the fullest as well as the most mediated Self without attachment to its determinate perspectives. Rather, it is able to grasp any further possible perspective in the future. It is the Concept that moves onwards and develops. The Concept which engenders and enjoys itself as absolute freedom. “Onwards” should be considered from the standpoint of ‘sublation of perspectives’ so that it can be interpreted not only as retrospective act but also as prospective and ongoing movement. How is it possible? It is possible only within ‘sublation of perspectives’ or the negation of negativity.

‘Sublation of perspectives’ or absolute sublation seems first of all to be a

bad infinity. But nonetheless it performs a certain sort of negative standpoint in which there can be an absolute limit to consider all determinations and formations of Spirit. It is a 'from now on' refers not only to the past but also to the future. What occurs as accident in the future is grasped by the totality of absolute sublation in so far as to be comprehended as necessary.

Seeing from a determinate perspective cannot grasp the totality of each singular moment. But 'From now on' is a sublation of previous perspectives, which enables speculation to see all previous moments along with their perspectives in a negative way. There is therefore no last and final 'from now on' since it is not a meta-perspective, i.e. meta-historical but it is a flexible totality of perspectives. Accordingly, there would always be multiple 'from now on' to grasp speculatively reality as totality.

There is a crucial point to which I should pay attention. Malabou understands the situation of absolute sublation and abrogation as "the dual process of suppression/preservation detached from the subject-object relation". (Malabou, 2005:159) Her interpretation has two aspects without which it would be impossible to distinguish the process of the *Aufhebung* from that of the bad infinite (Ibid:160): first, it refers to *automatism* of the System, i.e. Spirit itself, which means the condition of auto-determination and auto-momentum; second, it refers to the suspension of subject-object attachment. I agree with the former but totally disagree with the latter. From the absolute sublation point of view the subject-object inter-dependence would not be cancelled but it would be overwhelmed into a fluid perspective. Philosophy as the last moment of the Absolute Spirit does not entail the rejection of the subject-object relation which is necessarily ontological condition of knowing the world. In other words, the process of knowing the world always occurs within the world itself. Therefore, the subject-object inter-dependence is an insurmountable mutual relation, although philosophy as absolute knowledge can suspend all specific determinacies of the relation in order to see all determinations and formations within the process of the relation as such. In other words, philosophy indeed suspends any

determinate subject-object relation through which we have seen the very relation. It suspends all previous perspectives attached to those subject-object relations in order to arrive at a flexible perspective detached from all of them. This is the exact meaning of 'from now on' from the Absolute Spirit standpoint. Accordingly, there would always be possible to freely appeal to such a point of view to grasp the true meaning of what has happened in the past.

Absolute sublation does not entail absolute cancellation of subject-object relation but it refers to the suspension of any determinate perspective in which there is a specific formation of subject-object inter-dependence. This would be a substantial difference between Kant's kingdom of ends as the final stage of history and Hegel's philosophy as the free totality of 'here-now'. Kant's idea of history is abstract due to the lack of the past within the present. His general idea of history is as much as abstract that it cannot explicate the present by seeing what happened in the past. On the contrary Hegel's idea of history is as freely concrete as possible due to its fullness of the past within the present. Kant discovers the substantial importance of 'here-now' as a fundamental task of idea of history, but its conception of 'here-now' could not grasp the open totality of 'here-now' through history, which his philosophy is supposed to do so. Accordingly, his conception of 'here-now' still remains abstract and dissociated from the past. Hegel finishes the task of totalizing 'here-now' within a freedom framework. His conception of historical subjectivity allows him to totalize 'here-now' within a 'from now on' perspective that is absolutely free. The absolute sublation is not a meta-historical point of view free of subject-object relation but it is the totality of all subject-object formations within a flexible free fluidity of all perspectives. That is, absolute freedom is 'suspension of all perspectives'.

6. Conclusion

What makes philosophy a self-supporting realization of human freedom is that it is based on the speculative thought (*Speculation*). Speculative thought

is the process of philosophical actualization that it is able to gather all contingencies within its own realm of freedom. I attempted to explicate two aspects of freedom as to the speculation: first, how total freedom is able to encompass all historical contingencies within its own free activity; second, how Hegel's conception of freedom as philosophy considers the openness of the speculative thought in order to grasp new contingencies of historical reality. The absolute sublation as freedom is a final situation in which there is no gap between form and matter. How does the absolute overcome the gap as such? To answer this question I expounded how the absolute sublation as freedom is a 'threshold' perspective in which knowing looks back on all differences between its determinate forms and reality as matter to 'show' form and matter are the same at the outcome. In other words, the absolute sublation as freedom is the absolute form, i.e. 'formality' that already operates as 'absolute freedom' through all steps of knowing as actualizing reality. 'Absolute freedom' already functions throughout the process of actualizing reality. But it is inexplicable since it is indeed a form of the process, which makes possible the whole process of knowing-reality.

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