

The Infinity of Freedom——On Education of the Individual in Hegel's Absolute Spirit

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Abstract: Individual Education (*Bildung*) is an important theme in Hegel's philosophy of spirit, symbolising the different levels and stages of individual freedom reached in the spiritual system. Individual education is embodied in the subjective spirit as the living individual of the natural soul, in the objective spirit as the political citizen and in the absolute spirit as the nation-state. In these sessions, the individual acquires the possibility of freedom in the subjective spirit, then the prescriptive nature of freedom in the objective spirit, and finally the infinite nature of freedom in the absolute spirit of education. In theoretical education, the theoretical spirit of the finite is reshaped and the theoretical spirit of the subjective without absolute essence is elevated to the spirit of subject-object unity as pure form. In practical education, the finite spirit of the individual needs to be raised to the universal spirit of the infinite, thus raising the finite free will of the individual to the absolutely infinite free spirit of the oneness of man and God. In this regard, individual education requires access to three different levels of perception experiencing artistic representations, religious beliefs and philosophical concepts, in other words, the individual as a subject of the absolute spirit shapes in himself the different manifestations of his spiritual freedom fixed in himself.

Keywords: Hegel; absolute spirit; education; freedom; infinity

1. Introduction

The freedom of the individual through theoretical and practical education is the main thrust of Hegel's Philosophy of spirit, yet this work was not clearly disposed of before the logical institutions of the philosophy of spirit were perfected. After the formation of the Encyclopaedia-System(1817), Hegel devoted himself to the construction of a system of philosophy of spirit covering the whole of human life in which the individual spirit as the object of study in the philosophy of spirit became a conceptual product. In the Encyclopaedia-System, Hegel divided it into subjective spirit, objective spirit and absolute spirit. The individual, as a rational being with free will, corresponds to the natural soul in the subjective spirit and the family member in the ethical life(*Sittlichkeit*) of the objective spirit, as well as to the nation-state in the history of the world.

In the Philosophy of spirit, Hegel divided the development of spirit into three stages, namely subjective spirit, objective spirit and absolute spirit. The subjective spirit is the spirit of the individual which exists within oneself and is not yet connected to the external world, that is, the spirit in the form of connection with oneself. The objective spirit is the unfolding of the subjective spirit in the external world, i.e. the spirit that acquires the form of reality, when freedom belongs to the existing necessity. The absolute spirit is the unity of the two aforementioned, when freedom is the unity of subject and object, the reality that reveals itself completely. The subjective spirit describes the development of the individual from a natural animal soul to a theoretical and practical spirit that attempts to realise free will.[1] In other words, the subjective spirit emerges from the ego and its opposites and recognises itself, and this dialectical inner tension drives the human spirit towards self-knowledge, so Hegel stated that the subjective spirit must be seen as a product of the development of the soul, that is to say, the subjective spirit is a free spirit that does not yet know itself, a free spirit that can only arise from the knowledge of itself in the objective spirit.

The subjective spirit is divided into three stages: soul, consciousness and spirit. Of these, anthropology has the soul as its object, spiritual phenomenology has consciousness as its object, and psychology has spirit as its object. The soul, in Hegel's Philosophy of spirit as the all-prescriptive and absolute entity of spirit, is still in a primordial, natural spirit practically indistinguishable from the

animal, and anthropology examines the process of transition of the individual human being from the natural state to the physical itself. [2]In the section on the anthropological 'Physical Soul', Hegel examined human consciousness as a human animal, in other words, the human spirit is influenced by nature as it relates to formality (*Leiblichkeit*), and the dialectical relationship between individual life and perception has a structural importance. Anthropology consists of The Physical Soul (*Die natürliche Seele*), The Feeling Soul (*Die fühlende Seele*) and The Actual Soul (*Die wirkliche Seele*). The physical soul is in the state of "in its immediate natural stipulation", it exists only in itself. Hegel divided it into two parts: A. Physical Qualities (*Natürliche Qualitäten*). The influence of the external world on it is expressed in its own regulations, i.e. in the quality of physic. First of all, it is the influence and effect on the soul of the climates and seasonal changes caused by the planetary movements of the solar system, in which the soul is also present. Secondly, the differences in geography cause differences in the character and psychology of various peoples, or of the same people. Thirdly, the differences in temperament, character and other endowments that nature gives to the individual make the souls of individuals distinct from each other. B. Physical Alterations (*Natürliche Veränderungen*). The nature of the individual is the corresponding change of the soul caused by the change of the body. It manifests itself in three ways: firstly, in the change of psychological consciousness as the individual ages through childhood, youth, adulthood and old age. The second is the change in the psyche caused by the relationship between the sexes, i.e. the individual seeks himself in the other. The third is sleep and waking. In the state of waking, the natural soul develops a third aspect, the feeling (*Empfindung*). Feeling is the simultaneous sinking of the soul into the universality of the soul in the immediacy of what it finds in itself, and the idea established in this negative immediacy is that of feeling, which, although the soul returns to itself in the immediacy of the external, is only a form of vague activity of the spirit in its unconscious and irrational individuality, and man and animal are not yet able to the human and the animal are not yet distinguishable from each other. [3]Hegel distinguished between feeling (*Empfindung*), which remains under the category of the natural soul, and sensation (*Gefühl*), which is divided into the sensory soul, emphasising the idea that man can acquire selfhood (*Selbstischkeit*).

Hegel used the opposition between the individuality of the soul and the universality of the entity to explain the life-process of the individual soul, which can only be transformed from abstract universality to concrete universality by adapting the immediate individual soul to the universal, and thus the individual can truly become a genus (*Gattung*) within itself. It was in this process that Hegel was able to distinguish the essential difference between man and animal. [4]Hegel's comprehensive examination of the phenomena of physical philosophy from the Jena period onwards, but unlike Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's and Charles Robert Darwin, who emphasised the evolution of species, was more concerned with the logical, rather than the temporal, variation of physical phenomena. Hegel concluded that while plants, animals and humans as embodied individuals possess natural forms of life and death, it is only in humans that spirit is born. For there is the creature which both contains and excludes its own genus within itself, which contradicts its genus. Within the scope of anthropology, such individual natural spirits also belong to the form of naturalness, that is to say, they take place in time. Unlike the fixity of the universal physical spirit in different races, this sequence of different states shows a fluidity i.e. a sequence of ages (*die Reihe der Lebensalter*). This sequence begins with the immediate, unity without lack of gender (birth) and reaches its end (death) at the entry of the genus into the individual or of the individual into the genus. Hegel saw the genus as a provision for the inner universality of reason, the genus embodied in the creature itself, embodied in the spirit as rational (*Vernünftigkeit*), and the unity of these two encapsulates the grounds for the phenomenal change of the individual spirit and body, but Hegel highlighted the higher independence developed by the spiritual development of the individual prior to the physical development. The child emerges as the beginning of the individual's indoctrination in the sequential process of the individual's natural life. In the subjective spirit, however, the individual education can only acquire freedom in the abstract. To complete the realistic aspect of freedom, it must be realised in the objective spirit, which also requires that the individual's knowledge and will need to know universality. Hegel argued that only the schooling system can fulfil this figure, and that this work is undertaken by civil society. Here in the subjective spirit, Hegel presented two aspects of the education of the child, on the one hand discipline (*Zucht*), where parents establish subordination and attachment by disciplining their children's caprice. On the other hand, there is the *Unterricht*, in which schooling replaces home schooling in order to free children from their physicalness and in the process of teaching them to acquire a spirit capable of perceiving universals.

Hegel's objective spirit consists of abstract right, morality and ethical life, and ethical life emerges as the unity of the reality of abstract right and morality. Since abstract right is objective but not subjective, and morality is only subjective but not objective, the realisation of the idea of right requires

the unity of reality, namely ethical life. Ethical life, which Hegel calls on the one hand the idea of freedom and the living good (*das lebendige Gute*), has its knowledge and will in self-consciousness and achieves its reality through the action of self-consciousness; on the other hand, self-consciousness sees the existence of ethical life as its absolute foundation and driving purpose. In other words, ethical life is the concept of freedom that becomes the nature of the existing world and of self-consciousness (PR§142). The ethical entity which is the unity of self-consciousness and concept as self-existence (PR§156) is the objective substantiality of spirit itself, i.e. the family, civil society, and the state. Hegel emphasised the relationship between the entity and the individual in the ethical life, where the ethical entity has its rights and powers before the individual and its supreme independence creates binding obligations on the will of the ethical individual. According to Hegel, the individual can only be emancipated and acquire a corresponding subjective substantiality within the obligations imposed by the ethical entity, which are embodied in the subjective substantiality of love (family), integrity and trust (civil society) and patriotism (state) respectively. In this sense, the manner in which the individual is immersed in the ethical entity gives rise to customs and habits, which replace the individual's natural spirit as second nature. In turn, the duties and rights of the individual are united in the ethical life. Thus free will will attain its most developed objective form of freedom in the state, but the freedom acquired by the individual in the objective spirit remains a freedom of limited form.

In the process of the objective spirit moving into the absolute, world history becomes the pivot for spiritual transit. At the stage of the absolute, education again becomes the unity of the theoretical spiritual sphere, which is the unity of the human spirit with the absolute. In this sphere it involves the forms of absolute spirituality in general: art, religion, philosophy. Ethical education (*der sittlichen Bildung*) in the practical spiritual realm of the objective spirit corresponds at this stage to religious education (*die religiöse Bildung*), which takes three forms according to the final stage of spiritual development: art, revealed religion and philosophy. Further, it is only in the absolute spiritual stage that individual education can best attain its highest universality and complete the true emancipation of the individual.

2. Art

For Hegel, art is also a religious spirit that appears as a lower form of religious spiritual development, i.e. polytheism (*Vielgöttereizerfällt*) or as a limited national spirit (*beschränkter Volksgeist*) (ENZIII§558), in other words, art does not yet provide the central function of the absolute spirit of placing the individual. In other words, art has not yet provided the central function of the absolute spirit to place the individual in unity. In symbolic art, art itself cannot yet attain the infinite form of subjectivity and the spirit of freedom. In romantic art, the spirit is displayed through beauty by abandoning the external image. It is only in the art of beauty that the idea can move from limitation to the universality of the same wireless form, and that sensual knowing transitions to self-mediated knowing as revelation. It should be said that Hegel condemned art to the highest kind of religion linked to sensual externality, and at the same time to its purpose, because it frees it from the limits of matter and elevates it to the realm of pure spirit. It follows that art, at least the ancient and medieval art of which Hegel spoke, can only be fully and effectively understood in relation to the religious spirit of the nation from which it originated.[5] It is only when art acquires a spiritualization that it emerges an understanding that goes beyond the mere pleasure of the form of beauty and is able to interpret it as a form of expression. Hegel, for example, situated ancient sculpture and drama, Gothic architecture and the Italian art of painting in the context of the religious spirit prevalent at the time. Although Hegel understood the history of art as the journey of its spiritualisation, he revealed that art was no longer able to satisfy the highest needs of the human spirit.

No matter how highly Hölderlin valued art or Schiller's efforts to introduce aesthetic education, Hegel never started from the perspective of considering the particular aesthetic education of the individual, but rather saw the education of art as a by-product. In his interpretation of aesthetics, Hegel implied that the unity of the individual and the absolute in artistic aesthetics is achieved more through a general immersion in a universal spirit that remains unconscious to the individuals involved, which occurs when the individual submits to it. This is also true in the field of ethical life, and religious education proceeds along the same lines.

3. Revealed Religion

In revealed religion, the individual finds a unity with the absolute that best corresponds to the

individual's own turmoil in opposition (ethical individual vs ethical entity). As Hegel put it: religion both comes from and in the subject and is seen as objectively coming from the Absolute. Insofar as the individual experiences in religion an infinite return to himself from the natural immediacy of his being, the religious spirit, like the ethical spirit, constitutes the individual's self-consciousness, personality, and the good, and thus the goal of religious education is the same as that of the ethical state: the independence of man in this supreme immanence of his being and his self-relations. Religion is an "absolute" spirit, and a part of religious feeling placed in the hands of another person (priest or confessor) is not religious feeling, for the spirit is only one (Einer), and it will dwell in me. The unification of being-in-and-for-itself should belong to me (PR §66).[6]

The self-conscious subject is initially linked to God in a way that contains opposites in itself. Subject feels connected to it in a direct and substantial unity, which is the feeling element in religion. On the other hand, man can have religion because he is a thinking person. This is why there are two "languages" to express its content, one of sensation and the other of concrete concepts. Thought now turns against the immediate certainty of religious consciousness and, through its critique, exposes the contradictions in it, shattering the position of many faiths. It thus demands that faith enter into the process of dialectical spirituality itself and receive itself through the mediation of thought. Now this can also have a positive effect by shaping the content of the idea of God in a way that is not possible with faith alone. God as the spiritual content of man is only given when man reaches it.

Hegel believed that the highest form of religion was Christianity, which conceived of God as a purely spiritual counterpart of the Trinity (Dreieinigkeit) consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [7]In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1827), Hegel elaborated on the notion that spirit forms itself through the dialectical constitution of the Trinity, and that God becomes the absolute spirit. In other words, God is not only believed in, but also cognizable. Where faith and doctrine constitute the antithesis of the development of a religious worldview, this must therefore be equally taken into account in the process of man's indoctrination into religion. The spirit does not allow this contradiction in subjective religiosity and its manifestations to be reconciled, which means that the kingdom of heaven will only come when all earthly things are absent. The individual as rational being is different; God is everywhere and it knows that it is animated by the spirit of God. When rational consciousness approaches knowledge through the evidence of God's existence, it immediately realises that its highest task is to know God and thus to know itself and the world, the 'eternal alliance' (ewigem Bunde) to which all philosophies and religions aspire. In other words, the individual creates his unity with God through worship where he takes the form of sensuality as the means of expression of the inner spirit and raises himself to the spirit through his own acts, and this is the value of the act of worship for the development of the individual in religious spirituality, which is an important tool that the religious educator must master in this field.

The highest universality that the individual can attain is through the unity of the religious spirit with its ethical spirit. Kant and Fichte placed faith and God in practical reason, but Hegel explicitly rejected this presupposition. Hegel insisted on the ubiquity of discursive reason, which gives itself the sense that this thing that is offered at present as something that appears subsequently and comes into being is in fact the truth of that which is absolutely prior to that which it appears as indirectly, and which is here known in the spirit as well (ENZIII§552). Just as the Absolute is in fact that which first makes its form possible, but in its temporal development it appears as the result of the movement which leads it through all its revelations, so the true religious spirit does come later than the form of morality. But since it is "the consciousness of absolute truth, what is valid as right and justice, duty and right, that is, as truth in the world of free will, is valid only insofar as it is related to that truth, subsumed in it and proceeds from it. But this can only happen if religion has real content, that is, if the idea of God as it is known to it is real content.

As religion permeates ethical life itself and develops and realises the substance of this ethical state, it keeps the three links of ethical life separate, but now retains itself in its truth. According to Hegel, the individual who has mastered the most essential aspects of religion cannot act in any other way, for religion and ethical life are inseparable, or rather, there are not two consciences, one religious and one ethical with a different content and substance. Thus we see that Christianity also reduces all moral precepts to its fundamental precept, namely love, and that ethical education without a religious basis is unthinkable in Hegel's view.

Hegel's insight, gained from the *Encyclopaedia-System*, is that the individual can only truly attain the absolute spirit of reality by uniting religion (church) and state, by uniting the highest religion and the highest ethics. In short, the subject is given spiritual certainty as an object of God's grace, and this true union is achieved through the ethicalisation of religion. Although religion (church) and the State

belong to the absolute and objective spirits of spiritual philosophy, Hegel unites them with the idea of freedom. Hegel developed the following view after the whole book: on the one hand, Hegel again emphasises that the relationship between religion and state needs to be defined by returning to the idea of the two themselves, and that the difference between the two lies in the lack of an objective orientation in the tendency of religion towards the absolute spirit. [8]The relationship between religion and the state and ethical life is explained by Hegel in his principles of the Philosophy of Right (PR §270R), his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion and Philosophy of spirit(ENZIII§552A), where the state is the realisation and development of the ethical spirit, where the ethics itself and the solid spirit of the state are derived from religion, and where religion is the foundation of ethics and the state for the ethical individual. In other words, Hegel recognized the religious community as a state as well. On the other hand, in addition to the subjective basis of religion (doctrine), Hegel specified the objective basis of religion's dependence on the state, i.e.that the cause of religious edification requires real estate, property and service people to provide the impetus for its operation. Hegel believed that religion should not form the basis of the state and should not interfere with politics, but should be attached to the overall structure of the state, but this union was not the unified system (institutionelle Einheit)of authoritarianism, but the unity of the idea of the ethical state.[9]We are able to find that Hegel achieved the shaping of ethical religious in the objective spirit which leads to a real spiritual unity between church and state.[10]

4. Philosophy

Because of the divided form which the spirit takes in religion, it is the way in which the Absolute comes closest to man and appears most comprehensible. But because it combines within itself the most contradictory thing and dissolves it only in the idea of unity, which it insists on existing as an entity in actual existence, it is not yet the purest realisation of the Absolute and because of its own bondage to external forms, it opposes (in many cases) in a hostile way the realisation of the different shapes of the spirit: the church against the state, religious consciousness against mature reason. Despite the fact that it shares their substance, Hegel insisted that only through philosophy can all contradictions be completely eliminated and dissolved. Philosophy has the same purpose as art and religion, namely to grasp the idea of the spirit and to give it existence in itself. For Hegel, philosophy is the highest way of grasping the absolute idea, because the concept is the highest universals. In philosophy the separation of content and form disappears and all the spiritual formation of the individual reaches its zenith. For Hegel, there is no metaphysics for the uneducated (Ungebildete) man.For the individual, philosophy (science) gives him the inner freedom he craves, for philosophy offers complete unity with the Absolute. It is this doctrine that liberates man from unlimited finite ends and intentions and makes him indifferent to them, so that whether they are or are not, they are all the same to him.

Hegel, in his discussion of ethical life in the Philosophy of Right, repeatedly suggests that human education is subject to the multiple influences of the universal spirit and the destiny of individual realities and thus to different forms of contradiction, but that philosophy as a science is self-sufficient and is the highest goal set by man, even though it cannot be achieved by all. Philosophy requires the most arduous work of conceptual thinking, the painstaking dialectical overcoming of opposites within itself. Scientific knowledge of truth was a special consciousness for them. It is also the case that philosophical education only arose at a certain time in world history, so that we cannot regard it as an element of education (Bildungsfaktor) in the same way as immortal religion.

Philosophy does not reveal itself in time and in reality until the spirit becomes aware of itself. Philosophy enters only when practical life and its antithesis have come to an end, as in the preface to Hegel's philosophy of Right:the owl of Minerva only begins its flight only with the falling of dusk. This is precisely the reason why a one-sided philosophical education is too incompatible with human nature and spirit itself for it to find full satisfaction in it,for it is only in a profound and comprehensive activity in which everything right, moral and religious is concentrated that the spirit rises to its fullest. This is the fact, already established above, that the main task of individual upbringing is to shape the will through practical education, but it does not necessarily entail leading him individually on a cognitive journey. The human spirit eventually advances according to its own needs, when it has reached the goal of its development; it needs the help of a profound, all-embracing work in which all right, moral and religious is concentrated.[11]

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