

Philosophical Dualism in Hegel's Philosophy

Sattar Tahmasebi^{1*}, Mehdi Dehbashi²

¹PhD Candidate, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Literature and Humanities,
University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

²Professor, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of
Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

*Corresponding Author E-mail: Sattar.tahmasebi@gmail.com

Received: 23 January 2017, Revised: 22 February 2017, Accepted: 29 March, 2017

ABSTRACT

The great German philosopher, Hegel established the magnificent foundation of his absolute Idealism, benefiting from Greek's Idealism, and criticizing and rejecting Kantian noumenon and based on the principle of identity of knowledge and being. He believed that dualism is the source of need to philosophy, and that to prevail up this dualism is the responsibility of philosophy. Hegel's Absolute Idealism, with this presupposition, ought to deduce all the being from pure thought or primal reason. But Hegel's philosophy, in undertaking the burden of this responsibility encountered problems such as ambiguous deduction of nature from logic, the absence of exact interpretation of existing probabilities in nature, the return of Kantian noumenon at the time of explaining the probable details of nature and Hegel's unsuccessful manner in "phenomenology of spirit" in undertaking the above mentioned responsibility.

Keywords: Hegel, Absolute Idealism, Dualism.

Preface

Based on the history of philosophy, we understand that removing the duality and creating unity has been the fundamental problem for majority of philosophers including Hegel. Before Hegel, many philosophers in the West focused on this subject, among others Plato, Aristotle and Kant. Plato and Aristotle, accepted the matter as an eternal and underivative origin, in spite of believing to "ideas" and "form" respectively as a real aspect of universe, therefore, they accepted a kind of dualism in their systems.

The father of modern philosophy, Descartes, called the extension as the original property of "body", and thought as the original

property of "spirit". He recognized the former as dividable and the latter undividable, as a result, a strong dualism to modern thought was presented.

Kant as the follower of rationalism and empiricism schools tried to establish a critical philosophy taking elements from both schools, which had the subject and object dualism in itself as well.

Hegel considered his philosophy as inclusive of all these philosophies, therefore, he attempted to cope with the dualism therein but the extent to which Hegel's Absolute Idealism has been efficient in solving this problem is the subject of this study.

2. The approach of philosophers to dualism problem before Hegel

2.1 Plato

When the founder of the first magnificent philosophical foundation of the world, Plato, did not find the sensible world qualified for true knowledge, He considered "Heraclitus' becoming" as the property of sensible world, and "Parmenides' stability" as the property of reasonable world, and presented universal as the belonging of true knowledge. Therefore, he considered the universal universe or "ideas" as true universe and the sensible world as shadow universe; such interpretation required a kind of dualism. Plato's effort in making a compromise between these two universes was unsuccessful, therefore the dualism between sensible and reasonable realms as was left an inheritance for the future.

Aristotle

After Plato's death the greatest student of his school, Aristotle, challenged his teacher's belief about forms. Rejecting "Plato's ideas", Aristotle called it as the real world, but like Plato, he believed that knowledge belongs to universal. Separating matter and form, he considered the matter as the potential aspect and form as the actual aspect of things but he considered the matter as an eternal origin, therefore a kind of duality dominated his system.

Descartes

Distinguishing between spirit and body, the father of modern philosophy, Descartes, presented a strong dualism to modern thought. In "meditations" he says as we observe, there is a strong distinction between spirit and body, since body is always dividable but spirit is never so (Descartes, 1641). Descartes' solution was to believe in hypophysis as a link between these two realms. That appeared to be insufficient when applied to the same problem.

Kant

The Hegel's great predecessor, Kant, who was the follower of rationalism and empiricism schools had a tendency to empiricism in believing to matter of knowledge and tendency to rationalism in believing to from of knowledge.

Accepting time and place and the twelve categories as necessary concepts of knowledge, he recognized them as belonging to subject and considered recognized things in the form of these concepts as object. Therefore he accepted a kind of dualism. He believed that we merely understand the phenomenon and we are unaware of noumenon.

The necessity of Hegel's focus on dualism

Hegel believed that duality is the origin of need to philosophy and declared that to cope with duality is the responsibility of philosophy. To realize the importance of this responsibility in Hegel's thought, we ought to refer to the *first type of ideal* in his philosophy.

Renewed stabilization of the ideal of classical unity, as opposed to modern worldview, was Hegel's great achievement and that of romantic generation. In Hegel's opinion the perfect goodness was the unity of living; unity in all aspects of being whose appearance comes in three stages: 1. Self-unity, 2. Unity with others and 3. Unity with nature. Dualism is the main opposition of such unity. (Beiser, 2005).

On the one hand, Hegel was a philosopher who lived in the modern world after Descartes; a kind of world that – influenced by Descartes' thought- encountered dualities between spirit and body, individual and other as well as human and nature. On the other hand, he tried to establish an inclusive philosophy devoid of the deficiencies of previous systems. This duality was the main deficiency of those systems- what Hegel tried to cope with. So, he considered dualism as the source of need to philosophy. Hegel accepted the main idea of Greek's idealism,

i.e., what is true does not exist and true is whole and whole is reasonable. It required a kind of monistic philosophical idealism that showed believing in a principle basis in which subject and object are united.

Hegel's claim in the logic of encyclopedia of philosophical sciences about this issue is "the idea is truth in itself and for itself the absolute unity of the notion and objectivity" (Wallace, 1975 P. 274). Hegel who recognized coping with Plato's and Aristotle's dualism as a path to monism school, considered Kantian noumenon as an obstacle in this way as well, as a result, he tried to reject it.

In Hegel's view, unknowable existence concept is a contradictory thing, since applying existence to it means knowing it, and knowledge is but applying the concepts (Stace, 1924).

From the viewpoint of Hegel, both form and matter of knowledge belong to subject. According to Stace (1924), if both form and matter are created by subject, it will be necessary that all objects of human's knowledge and any object and all beings are created by subject and this will result in *Absolute Idealism*. This *Absolute idealism* is the same title that is applied to Hegel's philosophy and we are to explain its monisticality.

Hegel's *Absolute Idealism* as a monistic idealism

Most scholars appropriately recognize Hegel's philosophy and his school as an absolute idealism. The term *Absolute Idealism* is generally used to characterize the metaphysical view that Hegel presents in his philosophy.

Although this concept does not often appear in Hegel's work, he does use it to describe his own philosophy. The position taken up by the concept is that of absolute idealism. Since Hegel used "the term "the concept" to signify a set of philosophic categories that contain an accurate description of the real, we can take this statement to indicate that

the term "absolute idealism" is an appropriate means of characterizing his philosophy" (Beiser 1998, P.102).

The Hegel's idealism- via accepting the title of absolute- distinguished itself from other kinds of Western idealism that give an important role to human's mind. "That Hegel reject the role attributed to the human mind in the constitution of objectivity by Berkeley and Kant emerges in his discussion of Plato's idealism, a form of idealism that Hegel thinks is superior to the modern versions" (Beiser 1998, P. 105).

"However, the idealism of Plato must not be thought of as being subjective idealism, and as that false idealism which had made its appearance in modern times, and which maintains that we do not learn anything, are not influenced from without, but that all conceptions are derived from out of the subject " (Beiser 1998, P.105).

Based on the above opinions, it can be inferred that Hegel didn't consider the individual human subject as the origin of concepts, as a result, his idealism is not a subjective one, but he agrees with the classification of modern European idealism of material objects as something dependent, though he generalizes that classification to include all finite entities not just material objects.

As a piece of evidence, in the 'Science of Logic', Hegel states that "the proposition that the finite is ideal constitutes idealism. The idealism of philosophy consists in nothing else than in recognizing that the finite has no veritable being "(Miller 1969, P.154).

If we focus on Hegel's intention of 'finite' in the ' Science of Logic' once again, we can realize that material and finite being are dependent. "The finite not only alters, like something in general, but it cease to be"(Miller 1969, P.129).

It means that merely an infinite being can be true and independent, namely absolute mind, and it points to the monisticallity of Hegel's absolute idealism, because "all the

physical objects that we encounter as well as ourselves, are finite in this sense, for we all will cease to exist "(Beiser 1998, P.105). Believing in infinite being as the mere independent being, Hegel's absolute idealism considers it as the only truth and intends to deduce all beings and finite beings from it in order to prove its monisticality.

The challenges of Hegel's *Absolute Idealism* in confrontation with dualism

In dealing with dualism, Hegel's absolute idealism faced the following challenges:

5.1. The deduction of nature from logic. Hegel believed that the purpose of philosophy is to explain beings, therefore he considered unsensory pure system of categories or pure thought as the first reason of universe and attempted to deduce the world out of it.

He discussed the realm of pure thought or system of absolute wisdom in logic and the theme of his logic in following words: "Accordingly, logic is to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. This realm is truth as it is without veil and in its own absolute nature. It can therefore be said that this content is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind "(Hegel 1812, cited in Miller, 1969, P.50).

The deduction of nature from logic is the problematic point of Hegel's philosophy and we should doubt how successfully he has made this deduction. According to Inwood (2002, P.348), "the transition from the logic to the philosophy of nature has generally been regarded as a major difficulty in Hegel's system.

The major question to which Hegel doesn't give a satisfactory answer is: How empirical, individual and sensory nature can be deduced from necessary, universal and unsensory pure thought. Hegel's approach is not consistent with such deduction, since he criticizes those who try to explain being by causality in his 'Logic', on the basis of the inconsistency of cause and effect and it's

insufficiency in explaining universe as a whole.

He says "further and above all, we must note the inadmissible application of the relation of causality to relation of physico-organic and spiritual life. Here what is called cause certainly reveal itself as having a different content from the effect» (Hegel 1812, cited in Miller, 1969, P. 562).

He believes that in causality we always encounter with this problem, that the effect is completely different from cause. For example, according to Hegel, "it is inadmissible to say that food is the cause of blood, or certain dishes or chill and damp are the causes of fever and soon "(Hegel 1812, cited in Miller, 1969, P. 562).

But Hegel's effort in deducing nature from logic suffers from the same problem.

We cannot really understand how from pure thought something completely different (for example Kruk's pencil or a piece of stone) emerges. Referring to Stace's (1924), a great interpreter of Hegel's philosophy, we can find out the problem of Hegel's philosophy more clearly; the transition from logic to nature is the critical point in Hegel's system of philosophy, the point in which his system comes to things from thoughts. From though only thought can be deduced not things which are real and exist.

Even if we consider the deduction of nature from logic as species and thoughts - but not things-, still we can criticize him as if so Hegel's philosophy should always remain in the realm of abstractions and never enter the realm of reality (Stace, 1924). So, the transition from logic to nature is a serious problem in Hegel's philosophy in coping with philosophical dualism.

5.2. The probabilities of nature and re-emergence of Kantian noumenon. The realm of Hegel's logic which is the realm of pure thought, is the realm of necessity and wholeness, but nature is a world full of a probabilities and exceptions, therefore explaining the probabilities in nature is one

of the serious problems of Hegel's philosophy.

Believing in the unity of knowledge and being, Hegel considered the deduction of thought as a deduction of thing; however, such explanation does not solve these probabilities because the principle of unity of thought and being proves the unity of thoughts with universals (which have beings but not temporal and local existence). As a result, it cannot clearly be applied to the realm of individuals (which have existence). Special conceptual distinctions utilized by Hegel cannot be a solution of the probabilities of nature. According to Beiser (1998), the distinction between the *in itself* and the *for itself* does not provide any account of how such transformation from logic to nature would take place.

As Hegel rejected Kruck's request regarding the deduction of his pencil from pure thought based on his philosophy, we come to this conclusion that individual entities cannot and should not be deduced from the philosophy of nature. Individual entities follow probability and passion, not wisdom and reason; as a result they are all illogical. To be illogical amounts to be out of thought and not to be captured by thought; this is Kantian noumenon.

In Stace's (1924) opinion, regarding the Kruck's pencil, Hegel is wrong and Kant is right.

5.3. Insufficiency of Hegel's approach in the 'Phenomenology of Spirit' in coping with dualism. In one sense, the purpose of *'Phenomenology of Spirit'* is the study of the mind, which appears to itself. The hidden purpose of the author is coping with dualism and proving monism of the foundation of being (i.e., believing in absolute mind). Singer's (1982) opinion provides a piece of evidence in support of our claim; only based on imagining reality as a creation of mind, Hegel can fulfill the responsibility he has taken in the introduction of this book and indicate that our knowledge of reality is the true knowledge. All assumptions on the

basis of knowledge as an instrument were downgraded by Hegel; because they all separated knowledge and reality. Kant was also criticized for his belief in noumenon.

For Singer, All these denials and criticisms is the key to understanding *'Phenomenology of Spirit'*. To Singer (1982), absolute knowledge is achieved when mind realizes that what it is trying to recognize is the mind itself.

Hegel rejected any effort related to objective reality independent from mind after the period of sensible certainty. He believed that the concepts of 'this', 'here' and 'now', which are considered as a reason for individuality of entity, are all universal and sensible certainty, as partial pure knowledge, cannot in principle be expressed via language. As a result, it is not knowledge. The following issue arises here: it is possible that Hegel is right about 'this' and 'here' but regarding 'now', it is much more complex. As time is relative, and since the content of the whiles of times are different the concepts applied to 'this' and 'here' cannot be applied to 'now'.

The same differences among the whiles of the time and their dissimilarity with place and the concepts of 'this' and 'here' prevents the nature to act similarly. As a result, we are not capable of understanding the nature accurately and we are not able to accurately predict the future. As Hegel, to prove himself, applies the same rule for the concepts of 'this' and 'here' and 'now', not considering the difference between 'now' with other two concepts, he cannot be in the right line.

In addition to the above one, other problems are also mentioned by Singer (1982) on this issue. Hegel believes that knowledge without universal concepts is impossible. Two problems can be addressed in this regard; a. proper names are exceptions of this rule and b. it is possible one cannot put into words the knowledge gained through sensory certainty, but it is knowledge after all. Why should it be assumed that any knowledge

could be expressed by words? Mystics believe that the deepest types of knowledge cannot be put into words. Hegel does not deny that there are things beyond the limits of language; however, they are but irrational, things which are merely believed. Playing with different meanings of the German word 'meinen' (to believe) and the noun derived from it, i.e. 'meinung' (belief), Hegel tries to prove himself.

If we ignore this of philosophization with words, what remains is merely a claim not reasoning. Reflecting on Hegel's thought in 'Phenomenology of Spirit', many more challenges that Hegel faces in proving monism and denying Kantian noumenon would emerge. His weak approach in coping with philosophical dualism is another challenge which leaves many question unanswered. As Singer (1982) asserts, the first problem refers to Hegel's idealism. It is possible to accept that knowledge is not possible without a type of mind configuring the input received by senses. However, the fact that there must be something out there – the input that mind categorizes – independent of our experience is left untouched. Hegel can deny that this type of input is not knowledge, but he cannot deny the input implies that something exists out of mind. The viewpoint of those who believe mind can form the world through manipulating it is a better example. It was possible for Michel-Ange to think about 'David', then change a piece of stone into a statue according to his thoughts; however, if there had not been any stone, he would not have created anything.

This line of thought (of course in theory not in practice) made Kant take an unknowable thing called noumenon for granted. It is true that Hegel has criticized this idea, but to what extent he has revealed we do not need it.

Conclusion

From the viewpoint of Hegel, the responsibility of philosophy is coping with

dualities. So, he introduced the concept of pure thought or first reason as the foundation of universe; for an absolute idealism school of thought, this means deducing all beings out of it. But in undertaking the burden of his responsibility, he faces the two challenges. A. *the serious problem of transition from logic to nature*; the problem for which Hegel never provides any satisfactory solution is how he deduced empirical and individual nature from true and necessary reason. B. *The probability of nature*; Hegel's belief in irrationality of individual matters of nature amounts to belief in matters out of the realm of reason; as a result, it is unknowable. This is to accept the Kantian noumenon which is denied by Hegel. In this regard, Hegel's solutions in 'Phenomenology of Spirit' do not provide a strong relation between logic and nature either. These solutions cannot explain the probability and individuality or real world. Therefore, not explaining the probability admitting the existence of something irrational in the world means a kind of dualism which has dominated the previous philosophical systems (the dualism of Plato, Aristotle and Kant) has dominated that of Hegel as well. Even if, considering Hegel's criticism to subjective idealism and his belief in *Absolute Idealism*, we take all of the individual matters, basic elements of knowledge and all beings as a thought within perfect thought – i.e., absolute spirit – it is to acknowledge a kind of pantheism and monism which is rejected by Hegel; this is incompatible with logical bases of his rational school of thought.

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How to cite this article: Sattar Tahmasebi, Mehdi Dehbashi, Philosophical Dualism in Hegel's Philosophy. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Science*, 2017, 6(2), 140-146. http://www.ijashssjournal.com/article_83867.html