

PhD thesis

The invisible labyrinth

Reflections on arts, religion, consciousness
in the mirror of the Hegelian phenomenology

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1. Aims and topic of dissertation

Our dissertation has two main objectives: on the one hand to analyze the quality and certain imagistic-conceptual representations of the relation of consciousness and sacrality, on the other hand to contribute to the Hungarian Hegel-dialogue by this analysis depicting of some areas of the Hegelian phenomenology in a new perspective. Spotting all of the possible consequences, value judging and textual polemics are out of scope of the objectives.

Above mentioned relation builds an organic unity with a historical-ontological horizon in Hegel's philosophy. To avoid the downfall of the reasoning in the depths of this topic, we concretize the topic of our investigation: we attempt to enlighten the correlation between the modalities of human consciousness and ancient Greek cult and in the meanwhile we examine the capacities of the Hegelian concept of consciousness regarding myth, cult and art–artwork. The very object of the study in fact is the Hegelian category of force, which feeds the dissertation from the background. We are going to be steadily approaching this very object through one of its own utterance (the mutual relation of consciousness and sacrality).

Human consciousness is actually the unity of the spiritual structures of „consciousness”, „self-consciousness” and „reason” moving in sync in Hegel's thinking. With ancient Greek cult we mean in a general sense the complex trinity of myth–cult–art; and in a more specific sense the statue of the deity with its surroundings, the hero of the Ancient Olympic Games, and the first appearance of the literality which describes both of those. In our dissertation we only consider the epic as we reflect Homer's *Odyssey* through the glass of Hegel's concept of consciousness – the tragedy and comedy, just as the hymns and oracle are only mentioned in brief.

The central texts of our study are certain sections of the chapters *Consciousness*, *Self-consciousness*, *Reason* and *Religion* from Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, but we also look at other textual coherences. In addition to Hegel's lecture texts on the philosophy of arts, the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of history our main references will be the writings of Nietzsche and Heidegger, Taubes and Loszev, Kerényi and Jung whose reasoning results will essentially support our analyses. In our opinion the cognition-mode „being permanently on a devious route”¹ as it is represented in the *Phenomenology* and related to human empirical knowledge by necessity playing a part in the interpretation modality of the Hegelian opus. That's why we interpret for instance the contents of the *Consciousness* chapter – i.e. the hidden speculativeness of the immediate world – not on its own but by considering Hegel's arts- and

¹ See Bacsó Béla: *Hegel és Heidegger a tapasztalatról*, in: *Világosság* 2008/3-4, 75-81.

religions-phenomenological perspectives. We use the word „speculative” absolutely *not* in its shallow – „empty speculation” – pejorative meaning but in accordance with the original Hegelian intention; that is to denote the from- and the mirror images of on another– *speculum* – relations of reality and the reflecting – *speculare* – on those relations. As a result of these we consider the arguments on the functioning of the natural consciousness – as applied logic – from the start as valid also to the consciousness confronting with mythical/cultural phenomena and with works of art.

The terms of speculative nature, dialectics, reflection and mediation are playing a central role in Hegel’s philosophy from the beginning. Also an examination of the relation of consciousness and sacrality cannot be imagined without considering them. „The Speculative stage, or stage of Positive Reason, apprehends the unity of terms (propositions) in their opposition – the affirmative, which is involved in their disintegration and in their transition. [...] Speculative truth, it may also be noted, means very much the same as, in special connection with the religious experience and doctrines, what used to be called Mysticism. [...] Thus the world of reason may be equally mystical – however not because thought can neither reach nor comprehend it, but merely because it lies beyond reason.”²

The last sentence is of crucial importance because we can gain some essential conclusions of what in Hegel’s opinion is accessible for human thinking. He closes for instance his inaugural address at Heidelberg as follows: „The Being of the universe, at first hidden and concealed, has no power which can offer resistance to the search for knowledge; it has to lay itself open before the seeker — to set before his eyes and give for his enjoyment, its riches and its depths.”³

The main criticism against this position (since the death of Hegel) is that it broadcasts facile optimism and overcomes (re)cognitive challenges too easily. But if we really consider the characteristics of the above mentioned detour and also the most important basic requirement what Hegel addresses to himself and everyone else who is willing to follow his train of thoughts („that one take the rigorous exertion of the concept upon oneself”⁴), it becomes apparent that it is not a triumphal march. Hegel signals this on several places of the *Phenomenology*, among others – partly coded – in its closing lines when he paraphrases a Schiller-poem applying its

² Hegel, G. W. F.: *The Encyclopedia Logic* (translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1991, 82. §.

³ Hegel, G. W. F.: *Lectures on the History of Philosophy I-III*. (translated by E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson), University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1995, xiii.

⁴ Hegel, G. W. F.: *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (translated and edited by Terry Pinkard), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2018, 36.

content to the absolute spirit: „Out of the chalice of this realm of spirits / Foams forth to him his infinity” („aus dem Kelche dieses Geisterreiches / schäumt ihm seine Unendlichkeit”). The original Schiller lines are as follows: „From out of the chalice of the whole realm of the soul / Foams for him – infinity” („Aus dem Kelch des ganzen Seelenreiches / Schäumt ihm – die Unendlichkeit”). Hegel uses on one hand „realm of spirits” (*Geisterreich*) instead of „realm of the soul”, on the other hand „seine Unendlichkeit” instead of „die Unendlichkeit” so only his infinity foams forth to him. The end of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is not a jubilation, much more a word of warning for the danger of the omnipotent, untrue since not externalized imaginations”.⁵ And at the same time Hegel „looks back upon the whole of the work and sees it as a *Geisterreich*, an exposition of the rich varieties of Spirit itself. Through this work, we have been brought to recognition of our own identity with the true infinite. In more specific terms, Spirit at the end of the *Phenomenology* has transcended finite consciousness, which is always opposed to some specific object, and has readied itself to achieve Absolute Knowing.”⁶

Discovering the depths of the universe and within it the depth in ourselves and of the Others – and by this discovering the sublation (*aufheben*) of those depths – is a process of self-sacrifice and also self-healing. It is more than a spiritual-psychological effort which „only” requires patience. This is a slow thus true heroic action in the sense as Dostoevsky depicts it in his *The Brothers Karamazov*. Dostoevsky contrasts the slow heroic action with the fast, „the-sooner-the-better” – we can say: with romantic vehemence conducted, even disregarding one’s own life – heroic action, and votes definitely favoring the former. Those romantically vehement „youths do not understand that the sacrifice of life is in most cases perhaps the easiest of all sacrifices, and that to dedicate, for example, five or six years of their exuberant youth to hard, painstaking study and the acquisition of knowledge for the sole purpose of enhancing tenfold their inherent capacity to serve just that cherished truth, that great work which they are committed to accomplish – such a sacrifice as this remains almost completely beyond the capabilities of many of them.”⁷ All of these spiritual energies are working in the objects of our study, so the radius of the respective analyses points far beyond of the focal points of the present elucidations.

⁵ Köhler Ágnes: *Hegel és a pszichoanalízis*, Doktori értekezés, Budapest, 2008, 147.

⁶ Glenn Alexander Magee: *The Hegel dictionary*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London / New York, 2010, 95.

⁷ Fyodor Dostoevsky: *The Brothers Karamazov* (Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Ignat Avsey), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, 33.

2. Methods Applied

In order to reach the above defined two objectives we lean upon the wide range of Hegel-literature (both in Hungarian and in foreign languages) and we also bring into play thoughts and thinkers who are apparently remote from the Hegelian concepts. In the course of our explanations we're using a kind of bi-/multifocal view as we try to find the balance between micro-textual and perspectivistic interpretation techniques; we are taking several looks at our objects from different perspectives so as to motivate the Readers to follow us.

It is a rather challenging task to write about Hegel, his *Phenomenology*, and the concept of Hellenism described in this opus. That's why it is important to us to make transparent what the main motivating factors for us to take this challenge are. Firstly the line of thought of this Hegelian work in general. It is an instrument and a medium at the same time, which puts its reader into a safe orbit around that conceptual epicenter he studies and unveils. Along this way the reader himself will be „studied” and „unveiled” by the text and himself –in Hegelian terms: sublated (*aufheben*). This phenomenological „method”, the *dialectics* is present in the whole book, sets its tone and its impact history points towards the influential thinkers of the 19th and 20th century already mentioned.

Hegel-readings are also very inspirational for the possible narratives of the above targeted topics, in our time. Due to the above mentioned commitment to the contribution to the contemporary Hungarian Hegel discourse it is also important to us that our analysis can be followed not only by the philosopher community (of course they are our primary target group) but also by the culture- and humanities-savy readership. The sum of the bi-/multifocal views will give – as we hope – a unique picture. For that reason the dissertation itself is by design a fringed-left tablecloth, a textual corpus with the intention of teasing the reader to start twisting and fidget with the endings of the affected threads – yes even pull them out and weave in into their own tablecloths. We typically call attention to these loose ends by signaling that in the given point we won't get into a deeper analysis regarding the affected topic.

The applied methods express our assent to Marquard's position and also the basics of the dissertation were born in the ascendant, namely: writing philosophy only for professional philosophers is almost as absurd as like sock producers who only produce socks for other sock producers.⁸ „Because philosophy, art history are human matters, you don't need to impress the

⁸ Marquard, Odo: *A szkepszis mint a végesség filozófiája* (ford. Mesterházi Miklós), in: Marquard, Odo: *Az egyetememes történelem és más mesék* (szerk. Székely Mária és Miklós Tamás), Atlantisz Könyvkiadó, Bp., 2001, 7-13., 12.

other expert but to dialogue with the audience craving after the remains of culture,”⁹ including „the right for arbitrariness and mistakes,” since „the »how« is much more important than »what«”.¹⁰ The result of this rigorous exertion with the thinking-representations of Hegelian forms and contents is a kind of peculiar text- and opus-understanding (and in some measure also self-understanding), a quasi-commentary.

3. Results

Our analysis is based on the main Hegelian theme that reality is an organically flowing dynamic vividness which conveys itself through a progression of reflective relations. We are examining the balance of this vividness permanently vibrating in Hegels phenomono-logical concepts of consciousness, arts and religion (by taking certain „slices” from the sections *Consciousness*, *Self-Consciousness*, *Reason* respectively *Religion* of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* – see the first and third chapter of this dissertation), and – in order to test the functionality of the above theme – in the complex phenomenon of myth–cult–art (see the second chapter of this dissertation).

The first chapter starts with a reflexive investigation of the Hegelian ideas of „dialectic”, „unity” and goes forth with a graphic description of the potential imagistic denotation of these by showing the inner functionality of the phenomena described by them as reversible figures (*Kippbild*). Reversible figures are ambiguous figures in which partly hidden information can be recognized only after long and intense observation because the „obvious” and hidden shapes and contours are concurring. Ambiguity is their essence. The observer realises the different figures only when he „switches” from the one meaning to another – the observer feels often not being able to control this „switch” but rather the meanings of the reversible figure are shifting „by themselves” morphing into each other. From this point we move further to the compressed presentation of Hegel’s phenomenological consciousness-structure concentrating on its ontological configuration, all the time closely following the Hegelian texts. Summing up the chapter, as a marriage of the discussed contents so far, we provide an outline of an alternative interpretation of this consciousness-structure.

In the second chapter we reflect the phenomena of myth, cult and art especially from the perspective of importance of the heritage of the ancient Greek religion. This time we step

⁹ Almási Miklós: *Kis Hegel-könyv*, Athenaeum Kiadó, Bp., 2005, 14.

¹⁰ Gyenge Zoltán: *Kép és mítosz II.*, Typotex Kiadó, Budapest, 2016, 9-10.

back a bit from the Hegelian texts. Using the possible interpretations of the consciousness-structure handled in the first chapter we show the organic unity of the three key-phenomena and as a counterpoint we also show some consequences which emerge if we want to understand them as separate. In the summary of the chapter we contemplate the phenomenon of art considering the concepts previously dealt with.

In the third chapter we return to the text analysis of the *Phenomenology* and attempt an alternative interpretation of Hegel's phenomenology of art/religion by uniting the conclusions found in the first and second chapters. After the historical, conceptual, and imagistic studies so far we attempt to encapsulate the implications into a structure by demonstrating it on the specific Hegelian texts to reveal the birth of conceptuality from the complete wordlessness (statue of the deity) of *logos*¹¹ until its first appearance (epic). By studying the epical consciousness we observe and analyze the functioning of dialectical reflection in a key circumstance and some aspects of this circumstance of Homers *Odyssey*. The chapter – and the contentual part of the dissertation – is closed by a historical-structural summary.

The results of our study are as follows. Thanks to the above depicted dual text-interpretation strategy we put several areas/aspects of the Hegelian phenomenology/*Phenomenology* into new light.

- 1) We provide insights into the depths and multi layered Hegelian ideas of „dialectic”, „unity”, „good” and „bad infinity”.
- 2) We depict a structure of consciousness coming from these ideas as a combination of the spiral and the Moebius strip such we show the inner functionality of the phenomena as reversible figures (*Kippbild*).
- 3) We examine and prove the original unity of myth, cult and art by using this structure of consciousness and the inner functionality of the phenomena.
- 4) By analyzing the sections *Natural religion* and *The Art-Religion* we enrich specialized literature of in Hungarian language still largely unexplored areas of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

¹¹ *Logos* is meant here as a merging unity of language–thinking–consciousness and not as one side of the myth–logos opposites. These two aspects of *logos* are examined in the first and second chapter.

In our dissertation we did not aim at a total completeness in terms of unfolding each and every aspect and tracing each and every possible argumentation stream. We also did not target value judging and textual polemics. We „only” attempted to present a *possible* interpretation of the investigated area and to highlight its *possible* centers points. We hope that during these attempts we produced some basic material worth discussing and to thinking about. These highlighted centers points which could be developed later, are e.g.

- a) the dynamics of the reversible figure in Hegel’s phenomenology,
- b) the hermetic characteristics of the *Phenomenology*,
- c) similarities and differences of the concepts of „ultimate situation”, „bud-alike”, and „ontic ideality” in Hegel’s and Kerényi’s way of thinking especially related to the topic of mythological consciousness,
- d) complementary elements Hegel’s and Jung’s way of thinking and the aspects of these elements in their concepts about mythological consciousness,
- e) the emergence of the dialectics of reflection in the epical consciousness,
- f) the kindred characteristics of Dostoevsky’s „slow heroic action ” and Hegel’s „rigorous exertion of the concept” and the appearance of those characteristics in the *Odyssey*,
- g) the question of the heroic existence considering Hegelian intentions.

We believe that alternative interpretations like ours can incrementally complete that multi-colored tableau, painted by Hegel’s religion, and art phenomenology – from the very beginning—by his own hands.



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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapters (1)

1. **Krivánik, D.:** Mítosz, kultusz, művészet.

In: Huszonöt fennsík : a művészetektől a tudományokig. Szerk.: Valastyán Tamás, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 49-65, 2011, (Nagyerdei Almanach Könyvek : A Debreceni Egyetem Filozófia Intézetének sorozata ; 1.) ISBN: 9789633181003

Hungarian scientific articles in international journals (3)

2. **Krivánik, D.:** Az igazság mint módszer: Megjegyzések a dialektika hegeli fogalmához.

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3. **Krivánik, D.:** Gondolatok a mitikus tudatosságról.

Erdélyi Múzeum. 82 (4), 107-119, 2020. ISSN: 1453-0969.

4. **Krivánik, D.:** A görög istenszobor jellemzői A szellem fenomenológiájában.

Többlét. 2, 53-69, 2019. ISSN: 2067-2268.

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5. **Krivánik, D.:** Die Wahrheit als Methode: Anmerkungen zum hegelschen Begriff der Dialektik.

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Hungarian abstracts (1)

6. **Krivánik, D.:** A szellem hajnala - a mítosz, a kultusz és a művészet megjelenése A szellem fenomenológiájában.

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List of other publications

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7. **Krivánik, D.**, Andrejka, Z.: Tudat és mű: Spekulatív vonatkozások a műalkotás elsajátításában.
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Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

8. **Krivánik, D.**: Az alap fogalmának színeváltozása.
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Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

9. **Krivánik, D.**: Schönheit vs. Erhabenheit: Zweckmäßigeitsprobleme (in) der Natur bei Kant.
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Other journal articles (2)

10. Koch, A. F., ford. **Krivánik, D.**: A tudás vizsgálata mint e vizsgálat zsinórmértékének tesztje: A szellem fenomenológiájának módszeréről.
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11. Ostritsch, S., ford. **Krivánik, D.**: Tanulmányúton a tudat: A szellem fenomenológiája.
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