

**AN ANALYSIS OF *PHENOMENOLOGY*:
THE WAY TO OVERCOME CLASSICAL DICHOTOMIES***

[Geleneksel İkiliklerin Aşılmasının Yolu Olarak

***Görüngübilimin Bir İncelemesi*]**

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I analyze the Hegelian sense of *phenomenology* through the well-known parts of Hegel's celebrated work of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, starting with "Sense-certainty" to "Master-Slave Dialectics". In this volume, Hegel begins with where Kant left. That is, Kant solves the ongoing problems of philosophy such as appearance-truth, subject-object, and theoretical-practical with generating new dichotomies. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel attempts to dissolve those divisions into the uniqueness, called spirit. However, he does not prefer to posit the spirit before and then exposing how such an entity overcomes those splits. Instead, he begins with taking the Kantian dichotomies granted which are in fact taken so in that age. Hegel tries to write from the perspective of an ordinary human being living in that period. Then, we, as readers, witness the transformation of the ordinary thinker through the transformation of the spirit. So, step by step while the spirit transforms itself, it begins to understand itself and unity. Thus, all those splits dissolve into one encompassing all contradictions. I explore the dialectical process of spirit on the way of defeating classical dualisms.

Key Words: Hegel, Kant, dichotomies, phenomenology, consciousness.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, Hegelci anlamda *görüngübilimi*, Hegel'in *Tinin Görüngübilimi* adlı ünlü eserinin üzerinde çok durulan kısımlarını, yani, "Duyusal Pekinlik"ten başlayarak, "Köle-Efendi

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Diyalektiği'ne kadar olan bölümlerini inceleyeceğim. Hegel, bu eserinde Kant'ın bıraktığı yerden devam eder. Diğer bir ifadeyle, Kant felsefenin var olagelmiş sorunlarını, yani, görüngü-gerçeklik, özne-nesne ve kuramsal-pratik karşıtlıklarını yeni ikilikler, bölünmeler yaratarak çözer. Hegel *Tinin Görüngübilimi*'nde bu ayrımları, ikilikleri tekliğin yani *tin* dediği varlığın içerisinde çözmeye, eritmeye çalışır. Ancak, önce tin kavramını ortaya koyup, sonra bu türden bir varlığın bu bölünmelerin üstesinden nasıl geleceğini göstermeyi tercih etmez. Bunun yerine, Kantçı ikili karşıtlıkları verili kabul ederek başlamayı seçer, zaten, o dönemde bu karşıtlıklar da verili kabul edilmektedir. Hegel o dönemde yaşayan sıradan bir insanın bakış açısından yazmaya girişir. Biz de okuyucular olarak, sıradan düşünürün tin dönüşürkenki dönüşümüne tanık oluruz. Böylece, tin adım adım dönüşürken, kendisini ve birliği anlamaya başlar. Bu şekilde, bütün bu ayrımlar, tüm çelişikleri bünyesinde barındıran "bir"in içerisinde çözünür. Bu makalede, tinin diyalektik sürecinin klasik ikili karşıtlıkların nasıl üstesinden geldiğini ortaya koyuyorum.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Hegel, Kant, ikili karşıtlıklar, görüngübilim, bilinç.

Although G. W. F. Hegel became celebrated with his volume *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the *Phenomenology* is actually an attempt to get rid of phenomenology (Hegel, 1977). The literal meaning of the term ‘phenomenology’ [*Phänomenologie*] is “the study of appearances.” Speaking of appearances, we should remember the Kantian dualism between the realm of appearances, which is called “phenomena”, and the realm of things-in-themselves, “noumena”. For Kant, the realm of noumena cannot be known whereas phenomena are the only knowable realm. Therefore, Kant deals only with the phenomena, that is, how things appear to us, to the knower. However, what Hegel tries to do is to close this abyss created by Kant between phenomena and noumena. Hegel overcomes this dichotomy by moving phenomenology into the practical realm. Therefore, Hegel rescues philosophy from being a contemplative discipline and yield it as a practical inquiry. At the same time, Hegel unites the two realms which Kant separated as theoretical (speculative) and practical realm. How he binds the theoretical and the practical can be seen in the section “Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage”. Hegel exposes that the phenomenological dichotomy can be exceeded through a practical relation. Before going into details of Master-Slave dialectics, it would be helpful to look at the *Phenomenology* in general and present the Hegelian terminology.

In his Preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, similar to Kant’s *Copernican Revolution*, Hegel begins with the subject as an observer observing the appearances and seeking what is beyond them. In the “Introduction”, he tells that the *Phenomenology* is a journey of the subject-which he calls consciousness (ibid, p. 78). In fact, the original subtitle of *Phenomenology of Spirit* was “The First Part: Science of the Experience of Consciousness.” But *Phenomenology of Spirit* went beyond Hegel’s intentions; it becomes an important part of the system as well as introduction to it. Hegel describes the *Phenomenology* as a new kind of knowledge and a declaration of science. That is, in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel provides a detailed phenomenological description of the experience of consciousness and declares that science is nothing more than the experience of consciousness. The reason why Hegel is criticized by most of the post-modern thinkers is that the *Phenomenology* is a story of the subject, namely consciousness. However, what Hegel calls “subject”, “consciousness” [Bewußtsein], or “self-consciousness” [Selbstbewußtsein] is something in need of the object, which can only construct itself in contrast to the object. I will explore in detail what consciousness and

self-consciousness are later in this paper, but here I want to emphasize that when considering Hegelian philosophy, the line between subject and object cannot be easily drawn in contrast to other previous philosophies. It is really difficult to determine where subject begins and where object comes to an end. On the other hand, it is not so difficult to see why Hegel begins with the subject. The reason why Hegel begins with consciousness is because he writes for the ordinary reader and tells the reader's tale. While reading the *Phenomenology*, the ordinary reader will observe the transmitting stages of philosophy and realize the misconceptions, misunderstandings, and mistakes committed by the previous philosophers. Disposing of them, at the same time the reader will understand that those misunderstandings are very natural phases of this adventure (ibid, p. 73). So, none of them can be annihilated, on the contrary they are accepted as stages on the way to "the truth" [*Wahrheit*]. However, Hegel never gives any description of truth. He only speaks of the way, which is the truth itself that the reader following the steps of the *Phenomenology* will notice. Similarly, Hegel does not prefer to give definitions of the concepts he often uses in the *Phenomenology* such as consciousness, self-consciousness, and spirit and so on. Since definitions fix what they describe, Hegel's dynamic understanding of reality cannot be bind by definitions.

In the Hegelian sense, truth is nothing but grasping the stages of the journey or the adventure of consciousness as a whole. Hegel describes this journey as the progression of Spirit [*Geist*], which is again one of the most criticized concepts in Hegel's philosophy. Spirit is actually a whole but condemned to be divided, since it always moves and a moving body cannot be undivided (permanent). Although Hegel uses the concept of Spirit in various senses, the Spirit is a unique entity that embodies both objectivity and subjectivity. Spirit is not merely a mental entity, but at the same time, something physical and practical (Inwood, 1992, p. 277). However, the uniqueness of Spirit is dividable into "various shapes and forms which have become its moments" (Hegel opcit, p. 12). The term consciousness should be taken in this context. That is to say, consciousness and spirit are ontologically both distinct and not so distinct entities, because Spirit can expose itself as both consciousness and what is external to consciousness. Positing itself as both consciousness and its externality is the first moment of Spirit, called "sense-certainty". In the *Phenomenology*, one of the subsequent moments is "self-certainty". I will explore these two moments of Spirit—especially, the phase of self-certainty—since Spirit recognizes itself through an interaction with actual Life or nature, which is very significant because of the implications of materialistic philosophy.

Hegel believed that he lived in a very special time. Therefore, according to Hegel, partial knowledge can be thrown away and science can be performed only in this age, for the reason that Spirit has matured and the veil on it is uncovered, so the Spirit has got the possibility of knowing itself. Consciousness, having the capability of apprehending the reality, which is of course the Spirit it self, is a mode of Spirit. With Hegel's expression, when the Spirit returns into itself, it at the same time reveals itself to the knowledge of consciousness, that is, it has lifted its veil to be accessible to every one. That is why Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology* in that special time, in which the Spirit and its various forms as the stations are open to the eyes.

In this special age that the *Phenomenology* was written, consciousness turns into the form of Spirit having capability of knowing itself. But while yet not know anything about Spirit, consciousness attempts to know the object, appearing in front of consciousness. So, the journey begins with a phenomenological relation. Consciousness wants to know object's essence but it already has the Notion of object. Therefore, consciousness wants to reach a point where the Notion and essence correspond to each other i.e., Truth or Absolute knowledge. This attempt implies both that consciousness distinguishes itself from the object and that consciousness characterizes itself as thought or the Notion of the object. Therefore, when consciousness tries to know the object, it investigates whether the Notion and the object correspond to each other (ibid, p. 78). Howard P. Kainz defines this relation between the knower and what is known as "spiritual interaction between thought and being". He says:

One of the most essential characteristics of Hegel's philosophical viewpoint is that it involved the realization that our objective world is permeated with the alterations made by subjectivity; and that subjectivity itself is essentially oriented to, and conditioned and determined by, some type of objectivity. Obviously, the reality which we encounter is the result of the interaction between these two poles. (Kainz, 1976, p. 9)

Kainz claims that Hegel contends with both Aristotelian and Kantian perspectives. For Aristotle, reality is external to the subject and exists independently of the mind or the act of the subject. So, in this sense, reality is objectivity. However, for Kant, thought or the subject determines the being in accordance with the a priori forms of intuition and the categories of understanding. Nevertheless,

Hegel indicates that reality is “the total view of subjective-objective dynamism” (ibid, p. 9-10). Hegel, in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, speaks of Kant’s subjectivism:

... objectivity of thought, in Kant’s sense, is again to a certain extent subjective. Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are *only our* thoughts—separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge. But the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essences of the things, and of whatever is an object to us. (Quoted by Guyer, 1993, p. 171).

Unlike Aristotle and Kant, Hegel establishes the phenomenological relation as a practical process. First, consciousness regards the object as in-itself, the pure reality, the truth. This moment can be called “moment of truth”. However, when consciousness attempts to know the truth, the object in-itself becomes *for-consciousness*. That is, knowledge becomes our object, something that exists for us. In Hegel’s words, “Yet in this inquiry knowledge is our object, something that exists for us; and the in-itself that would supposedly result from it would rather be the being of knowledge for us” (Hegel opcit, p. 83). This is the “moment of knowledge”. In brief, while consciousness is searching for the truth, in fact, it does not know whether it confronts the object as it is in-itself or the notion of it in consciousness. Hegel observes that the dilemma is itself the answer. What is known is related with how it is known, and how it is known is related with what is known. The truth is our way of knowing; there is no independent truth (ibid, p. 73-83). Consciousness realizes the truth that while the object is mediated by consciousness, consciousness is also mediated by object.

After those moments between consciousness and object, the relation would not be the same as before because both the immediacy of consciousness and the independency of object are destroyed. Hence, consciousness becomes aware of itself as a unity of itself and object. Hegel maintains “the Notion of the object is superseded in the actual object” (ibid, p. 166). This awareness of consciousness, i.e., a consciousness of consciousness, is called “self-consciousness”. Self-consciousness is a further stage within in the journey of Spirit. There is a considerable difference between these two moments, namely, consciousness and self-consciousness. Consciousness can be defined as awareness of itself. However, this awareness is bare or unfilled. Therefore, consciousness does not know itself as being something. But it only knows that it is a being in contrast to the object, something external to it. On the other hand, self-consciousness knows itself as a being in which the notion and its object are identical (Inwood opcit, p. 61). That is, self-

consciousness has two ingredients: awareness of the sensible world and awareness of itself because appearance and truth are united and one in the self-consciousness. When these two components are revealed as identical in self-consciousness, then both the object and the notion turn out to be “I”. In other words, if sensible world is self-consciousness, then I, and if the notion or the knowledge of the sensible world is again self-consciousness, i.e., I, then self-consciousness becomes the union of “I am I”, which leads to a motionless tautology (Hegel opcit, p. 167).

The previous moment is called sense-certainty, since consciousness tries to achieve sense-certainty according to its way of thinking. “In fact commonsensical everyday consciousness takes itself to be real knowledge just because it is naively certain, without questioning the matter at all, that it knows the world-in-itself” (Solomon, 1983, p. 425). In contrast, in the next moment, self-consciousness aims at self-certainty. The motionless tautology mentioned above does not satisfy a certainty about self for self-consciousness. In my opinion, this point is the beginning of the disparity of Hegel from Fichte. Unlike Fichte, Hegel regards the dialectical interaction between I and its externality. “Dialectic, on Hegel’s view, accounts for all movement and change, both in the world and in our thought about it” (Inwood opcit, p. 83).

Man achieves the illusion of self-identity by defining himself as an inner spiritual being, by fooling himself that he coincides with himself as a mind or spirit. Hegel refers to this often with the Fichtean formula $I=I$; the error expressed here being precisely the belief in simple self-coincidence. For we have seen that a subject is necessarily a being who incorporates his other and ‘returns to himself’ through this other, that is, comes to self-consciousness. To achieve self-coincidence as spiritual beings is thus ontologically impossible; or otherwise put, its achievement could only be the abolition of subject. Or, in other terms again, the subject is not only ‘self-consciousness’; he necessarily has the structure of ‘consciousness’ as well, with its inescapability bi-polarity between subject and independent object. (Taylor, 1977, p. 150).

As Taylor explains, self-consciousness’ movement inclines towards self-satisfaction, which can be achieved through encompassing everything. In other words, self-consciousness seeks a “condition in which the subject is not limited by anything outside” (ibid, p. 148). After the duality of consciousness and object (or the otherness of the object) is superseded in the moment of self-consciousness, there is still an otherness opposing to self-consciousness. This otherness is called “Life as a living thing” (Hegel opcit., p. 171). Indeed, the otherness is there – namely, external, sensible, vivid life. “Life constitutes the first truth of self-consciousness and appears as its other”

(Hyppolite, 1974, p. 161). The interaction with Life is not a knowing relation since the otherness of Life is so independent that self-consciousness cannot make Life belonging to its own self. Thus, self-consciousness tries to destroy the otherness of Life. To reach a satisfaction, self-consciousness needs completion, which “contains nothing alien” (Taylor opcit., p. 148). This drive toward consumption is called Desire. Hegel even goes so far as to say “self-consciousness is Desire”, self-consciousness attempts to achieve self-certainty through *Desire to Life* (ibid, p. 167).

The concept of Desire and the actual consumption of Life are very novel concepts in philosophy and they are peculiar to Hegel. That is why self-consciousness, Life, and Desire are the most difficult notions in Hegelian philosophy. In order to understand, especially the concept of Desire and its role in self-satisfaction, Kojève’s book *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* will be helpful. Kojève maintains “...the I of Desire is an emptiness that receives a real positive content only by negating action that satisfies Desire in destroying, transforming and “assimilating” the desired non-I”.

But negating action is not purely destructive, for if action destroys an objective reality, for the sake of satisfying the Desire from which it is born, it creates in its place, in and by that very destruction, a subjective reality. The being eats, for example, creates and preserves its own reality by the overcoming of a reality other than its own, by the “transformation of an alien reality into its own reality, by the “assimilation”, the internalization of a “foreign”, “external” reality. (Kojève, 1969, p. 4).

As seen in the quotation, the satisfaction of self-consciousness through assimilation of the otherness of the other is not a real satisfaction, since self-consciousness makes the other its own. With the help of desire, self-consciousness tried to return into itself from the mirror of life. But abolishing the independency of life did not provide a satisfaction to self-consciousness. However, when self-consciousness confronts another self-consciousness, it realizes that the independency of the other self-consciousness cannot be consumed. If self-consciousness can neither annihilate nor exhaust the other self-consciousness, then self-consciousness demands being recognized by the other self-consciousness. Nevertheless, the other self-consciousness also demands the same thing. Therefore, the meeting of the two self-consciousnesses is the setting for a struggle for recognition. “Each is indeed certain of its own self but not of the other” and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth” (Hegel opcit, p. 186). Thus, both self-consciousnesses try to achieve self-certainty through being recognized by the other as an independent self-consciousness. Hegel calls the struggle

between two self-consciousnesses “Life and death struggle” since in this struggle, the one who has not risked its Life will lose essentiality of its self-consciousness whereas the one who will not be attached to any specific existence and not attached to Life will gain its recognition (ibid, p. 187). The individual losing essentiality turns out to be a thing, called Slave but the other being risking his Life becomes Master (ibid, p. 189).

Although, at first the Master seems to win the struggle and become self-consciousness, and the Slave who is addicted to Life loses self-certainty, the assembly turns out to be the opposite: the recognition of the Slave is nothing for the Master, because the Slave is not a self-consciousness. Meanwhile, the Slave continues its journey, whereas there is no further path for Master. While serving its Master, Slave relates itself with Life and gains its recognition through Life. That is, Slave ends of better than the Master does in that it covers more ground in attaining self-consciousness (ibid, p. 193).

As a result, phenomenology is the analysis of reality, the moments of the journey of the Spirit. Through the journey, progressing Spirit intends to achieve its unity. To complete itself, Spirit first overcame the duality between consciousness and object. Then it posited itself as Life and self-consciousness, so as Desire. In this moment, self-consciousness seeks its own certainty, its own essentiality as an individual. For self-consciousness, the other, which is considered as ordinary objects like being of Life, is a negatively characterized unessential object. With the help of Desire, self-consciousness tried to return into itself from the mirror of Life. But abolishing the independency of Life did not provide a satisfaction to self-consciousness. Afterwards, self-consciousness needs to settle accounts with another self-consciousness. Repeatedly the two self-consciousnesses are nothing but the self-division of Spirit. (ibid, p. 177)

To be precise, the aim of the *Phenomenology* is to close the gap between its appearances and its truth by revealing different modes of Spirit. At the same time, it purports to close the gap between epistemology and ontology. Those works are achieved by Hegel moving contemplative philosophy into the practical realm. The attitude of the subject towards Life determines whether he/she will be Master or Slave. If the subject is addicted to Life and fears death, then he/she becomes Slave of the

Master, but if he/she accepts the risk of death or abandons Life, then he/she will be Master. Again, it is Life that determines whether it is the Master of Slave who is in a better position. Reversing the reader's initial expectations from this Master-Slave tale, Hegel shows that the production of Life provides a certainty for Slave as self-consciousness. As a result, the Master-Slave dialectics demonstrates that Hegel's *Phenomenology* is the philosophy of vivid life and actual labour. Therefore, starting with the dichotomy between appearances and truth, namely, phenomena and noumena, Hegel abolishes the division between contemplative and practical.

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