

## Standpoint

**From:** Nikolay Ivanov Turlakov, Assoc. Prof., PhD, IPS at BAS  
**Regarding:** The dissertation of Martin En. Akanaefu, a doctoral student at the "Logic, Ethics, Aesthetics" department of Sofia University "St. Kliment, Ohridski", on the topic "The Dialectical Unfolding of Spirit in Hegel: A Fallibilist Account of Knowledge" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 2.3. Philosophy/

**Reason:** Order of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohredski" RD 38-277/ 03.06.2024

Martin Akanaefu received his M.A. in philosophy from Loyola Marymount University – Los Angeles in 2017 and his M.A. in psychology from California Coast University – Santa Ana in 2018. In 2020, Akanaefu entered as a doctoral student in philosophy at SU "St. . Kliment Ohridski", and in 2023 he was dismissed with the right of defense.

Martin Akanaefu has submitted a dissertation on "The Dialectical Unfolding of Spirit in Hegel: A Fallibilist Account of Knowledge" in a volume of 215 standard typewritten pages. The work consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The bibliography includes 78 titles in English. The abstract corresponds to the content of the work. Akanaefu has three publications on the subject of the dissertation. The dissertation student fulfills the minimum national requirements of the ZRASRB and the Regulations for the implementation of the ZRASRB regarding the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor". No violations were committed in the procedure for admission to defense.

The subject of the dissertation suggests an unusual but curious reading of Hegel's theory of knowledge and the self-development of the spirit. Akanaefu sets out to interpret "the dialectical path of Spirit toward the absolute as a fallibilist account of epistemic justification", arguing that "Hegelian speculative philosophy and dialectical skepticism inevitably incorporate fallibility principles" (p. 2). Considering Hegel's dialectical method as a kind of "recall" of the Spirit, which collects in one whole all degrees and points of view of philosophical knowledge, without dividing the latter into true and false, but revealing the positive and negative in each of them, Akanaefu contrast the theory of the knowledge in Hegel's philosophy and the theories of epistemic infallibility, including metaphysical dogmatism, foundationalism, and

Kant's critical philosophy. Noting the insufficient research on this topic, the disertant expect that the examination of Hegel's dialectical method in the field of epistemology as a fallibilism will contribute not only to the reception of Heger's philosophy in general, but would help a deeper evaluation of epistemological theories about the infallibility and fallibility of the knowledge. In this plan, Akanaefu's main goal is to "analyse fallibilism comprehensibly within the context of the dialectical movement" and also to clarify and examen"epistemic justification based on Hegel's dialectical fallibilism " (p, 6).

In the introduction, which is designated as the first chapter of the work, the definitions of the main epistemic terms and concepts are given and it is shown, on the one hand, the fundamental difference between infallibilism and fallibilism, and on the other hand, the difference of fallibilism from traditional skepticism. The distinctive features of fallibilism have been usefully identified through by analysis of the philosophical conceptions of the nature of knowledge in Karl Popper, Willard Van Quine, Pierre Duhem and Thomas Kuhn.

I want to note that in itself the idea of interpreted Hegel's dialectical method as opposed and adversarial to metaphysical dogmatism and foundationalism is as strong as it is an intriguing proposition, which, if worked out successfully, could be very fruitful. In any case, this is a task that requires not only a good knowledge of Hegel's philosophical system in the context of the history of philosophy, but also familiarity with modern achievements in the field of epistemology.

The second chapter of the work follows the structure of Hegel's "Philosophy of Spirit", and the individual stages in the dialectical movement are clarified through content from "The Phenomenology of Spirit". The entire chapter is simply a retelling of Hegel's texts, but the author's purpose in this exercise is to show, or rather to recall, how each stage in the development of the spirit manifests an inner contradiction which removes the absolute claims of the old form of knowledge and leads to a new one. The point that Akanaefu wants to emphasize in dialectical contradiction as an intrinsic nature in the development of knowledge is precisely the refutation of absolute claims to the possession of truth. According to the author, "this shows that the truth is open-ended and always in need of justification or actualization throughout the period of the unfolding of the Spirit" (124). Akanaefu does not address the question to what extent and whether the Hegelian system itself, and Hegel's understanding of truth in particular, is open-ended. From the point of view of Hegel's

speculative justification of philosophy as an absolute science, the thesis that "knowledge or truth is incomplete, open and always in need of additional justification" could hardly be supported. For Akanaefu, however, it is important to show that the very dialectical movement of Spirit towards Absolute knowledge exhibits these characteristics, and this gives him reason to call Hegel's dialectical method "dialectical skepticism". Akanaefu defines the Hegelian method in this way, because he perceives the manifestation of internal contradictions in the development of the Spirit as a form of skepticism, and insofar as he considers skepticism as an element of fallibilism, for him the Hegelian method "captures" or, in other words, demonstrates the essence of fallibilism".

In the third chapter of the work, Akanaefu sets himself the task of showing Hegel's dialectical skepticism as a fallibilistic conception of knowledge that "overcomes the fatalism and pessimism of traditional skepticism" and thus appears to be forerunner of the modern fallibilistic theory of knowledge. It is helpfully shown how "dialectical skepticism acts as a second moment between the two extremes of traditional skepticism (which upholds the global possibility of error) and dogmatism (which upholds absolute certainty) by upholding non-final justification, avoiding the fatalistic pessimism of traditional skepticism" (See: 142 ).

In my opinion, chapter four is conceptually very important and central to the argument. Here, Akanaefu examines the question of truth in Hegel's speculative philosophy, analyzing the "speculative process of Hegel's categories" as an example of "incomplete justification" in the field of knowledge. Also of interest is the comparison between Hegel's speculative philosophy as fallibilistic and critical philosophy as infallibilistic.

In chapter five, Akanaefu examines Hegel's dialectical fallibilism in contrast to such theories as foundationalism, infinitism, and reliabilism.

The main conclusion in Akanaefu's work is that Hegel's dialectical method, being a fallibilist account of knowledge, refutes traditional epistemic reasoning. An important result of the study is the demonstration through the fallibilist interpretation of Hegel's method that "natural laws, mechanical laws, and self-evident truths, such as logical principles and metamathematical truths, have no convincing justification and do not avoid fallibilism" (188). In the conclusion, the author makes a kind of summary of the individual chapters and points out some of the main criticisms, especially Kierkegaard's, towards absolute claims of Hegel's philosophical system.

The stated main contributions from Akanaefu correspond to what was actually achieved in the study. Although I come from a different understanding and tradition of interpretations of Hegel's philosophy, I found Martin Akanaefu's work very interesting and my overall impression of what he achieved is very good. In addition to philosophical literacy and good knowledge of the subject, Akanaefu demonstrates an ability to conduct independent philosophical analysis. The work is interesting and contributing to the horizon of epistemological interpretations of the principles of Hegel's theory of knowledge.

### Conclusion:

Based on the achieved results, scientific merits and contributions of the dissertation work, as well as on the basis of the theoretical knowledge and skills of philosophical problematization demonstrated by the author, I believe that the dissertation work of Martin En. Akanaefu "The Dialectical Unfolding of Spirit in Hegel: A Fallibilist Account of Knowledge " covers the national scientific requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "PhD". I will vote Yes and propose to the members of the Scientific Jury to award Martin Akanaefu the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Sofia, 2024-08-25

Assoc. Prof Nikolay Turlakov, Phd