

STATEMENT

On the dissertation *The Dialectical Unfolding of Spirit in Hegel: A Fallibilist Account of Knowledge* by Martin Akanaefu

Martin Akanaefu's dissertation consists of 216 pages in total (approximately 190 pages according to the BDS), including a bibliography of 76 cited sources. The structure of the dissertation is divided into an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion (following English-language conventions, the introduction is marked as the first chapter, which does not conform to Bulgarian standard, but is perfectly acceptable in an English-language dissertation), followed by an annotation, technical data, main contributions, and a bibliography. The doctoral candidate has three publications in English. He has been awarded the right to defend his PhD in Philosophy at the Program Taught in English at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. He meets all the legal requirements for admission to the defense, including the Bulgarian minimum national requirements.

The most significant achievement of the doctoral candidate consists, in my opinion, in the presentation of the spirit of Hegel's philosophy and logic in relation to a problematic that has very little relevance to Hegel: the debates concerning the fallibilist and infallibilist approaches to the epistemic justification of knowledge. This theme, developed by analytic philosophy, allows Akanaefu to take and sustain a productive stance towards Hegel's legacy in the perspective of continental philosophy as well as of the historical approach to philosophical problematics.

The doctoral candidate is fully justified in adopting the position that contradictions, errors, doubts and dialectical skepticism are an inseparable part of the process of arriving at truth in Hegel. Truth therefore unfolds through rational argument, but in a circular movement that represents progressive evolution. While agreeing with such a position and acknowledging that progressive movement implies purposiveness, I would still note that the issue of teleology in the manifestation of Spirit should have received a little more attention in the dissertation.

I could not object to the claim that Hegel's dialectical method is fallibilist on the grounds that it refutes any conclusive justifications that presuppose absolute certainty. It follows that the dialectical method is indeed a fallibilist type of justification of knowledge and is entirely different from common epistemic infallibilist justifications such as dogmatism, foundationalism, coherentism, and critical reflection. Furthermore, given the above difference, the overall Hegelian

system could be seen as a fallibilist approach to epistemic justification. The given approach, according to the dissertation, is based on two principles: 1. justification indicates the truth of that which is justified, but at the same time does not exclude falsity; 2. in this approach, truth is distinguished from certainty, whereby what seems evident in each phase of the Spirit's development is certain, and what is true is the unfolding contradictoriness of conscious experience in each phase of the dialectical movement.

As another merit of the dissertation, I would note the treatment of the question of the relation between Hegelian fallibilism and traditional skepticism. Akanaefu rightly points out that skepticism is essentially infallibilist, because insisting on the total erring is tantamount to accepting the absolute truth of erring. This is precisely why Hegel's fallibilism is not skepticism, because in the speculative system total erring is completely ruled out.

Although Hegel's *Science of Logic* speaks of a "speculative" rather than a "dialectical" method, I take the use of the term "dialectical method" in the dissertation to be perfectly permissible: the emphasis on the role of negativity in Hegel's fallibilism allows the method to be seen from the side of its dialecticity. Alongside this, the dissertation lucidly and at length develops the theme of speculative in Hegel by convincingly interpreting the phases of the speculative movement. Moreover, Akanaefu clearly explains the centrality of differences and oppositions to Hegel's understanding of the basic laws of logic, and, correspondingly, their role in the formation of the method as well as in the formation of the German philosopher's overall system.

As far as the structuring of the main ideas in the context of the dissertation is concerned, I believe that the writing is organized in a way that allows to consistently reach the set goal by presenting relevant argumentation. The introduction outlines in detail the main ideas and the main lines of their pursuit in the proposed text. The four chapters thoroughly expound Hegel's system, mostly based on the third volume of the *Encyclopedia*, the *Philosophy of Spirit*—but also with references to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and even to the *Science of Logic*. Here the doctoral candidate manages to touch from different angles on the relation between Hegel's system, on the one hand, and fallibilism and infallibilism, on the other. The conclusion provides a condensed overview of what has been presented in the main body of the work and highlights several theses that demonstrate the achievement of the goal of the dissertation. I believe that the stated contributions to the field of research are in line with the text, have the merit of philosophical achievements, and have been clearly and convincingly articulated by the doctoral candidate. Last but not least, I would like to point out the merit of the expert supervision of Prof. Dr. Sc. Stefan Penov for the completion of the present dissertation, which I judge to be a remarkable achievement in the Hegel studies.

I would be interested in the doctoral candidate's answer to the following question: How would he interpret the difference between the terms "Absolute Knowledge," "Absolute Idea," and "Absolute Spirit" and, consequently, would he see a difference between the recollection approach in *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the speculative method in *Science of Logic*?

Finally, I am pleased to express my opinion that the present dissertation is fully in line with the requirements of the educational and scholarly degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and I therefore appeal to my esteemed colleagues on the scientific jury to vote in favor of its award to Martin Akanaefu.

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Prepared statement:

/Prof. Dr. Sc. Alexander L. Gungov/