

OPINION

for the dissertation of PhD student Martin Akanaefu (SU “St. Kl. Ohridski”)
The Dialectical Unfolding of Spirit in Hegel: A Fallibilist Account of Knowledge
for the obtaining of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in philosophy
by Prof. emeritus DSc. Vesselin Petrov (IPS-BAS)

The dissertation *The Dialectical Unfolding of Spirit in Hegel: A Fallibilist Account of Knowledge* of PhD student Martin Akanaefu (SU “St. Kl. Ohridski”) is written in English and has the volume of 216 non-standard pages; it consists of five chapters (every one with several sub-chapters), conclusion, principal contributions, list of publications of the author on the theme of dissertation and bibliography of 77 publications in English.

Chapter one is “Introduction to the Study”. Here the author points out that the subject of the dissertation is the dialectical path of the Spirit to the Absolute as a fallibilistic description of epistemic justification. The thesis of the author is that Hegel’s speculative philosophy and dialectical skepticism unavoidably include principles of fallibility, and that Hegel’s dialectical method is a rejection of the epistemic fallibilism and of the universal skepticism, dogmatism, foundationalism, and critical reflection. According to him, the dialectical method of Hegel can be read as a fallibilistic narrative of justification. The aim of the dissertation is to consider fallibilism within the frameworks of the dialectical movement of the absolute Spirit. Two problems of investigation are in the focus of attention: first, how Hegel’s dialectical method explains fallibilism, and second, does Hegel’s narrative of knowledge disprove the traditional epistemic justification. In its scope the investigation is within the frameworks of epistemology, logic, metaphysics and continental philosophy. There is a gap up to now in the philosophical literature in respect to the problem of the dialectical unfolding of Spirit as a fallibilistic description of knowledge, and the aim of the dissertation is to fill up that gap.

The **second chapter** is entitled “The Dialectical Evolution of Spirit in the Hegelian System”. This chapter is limited to the Hegel’s Philosophy of Spirit and *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the author outlines that philosophy of Spirit consists of three basic triadic stages: subjective Spirit (thesis), objective Spirit (antithesis), and absolute Spirit (synthesis): the structure of the chapter follows namely that sequence. This is the longest chapter in the whole dissertation. The author exposes Hegel’s teaching for the unfolding of Spirit relying also on some investigations of contemporary interpreters of Hegel.

The **third chapter** is “Fallibilism in Hegel’s Dialectics of Skepticism”. That comparatively short chapter has important tasks: First, to outline how dialectical skepticism and

the truth of Hegel include the principles of fallibilism introduced by Peirce in the 19th century, and how dialectical skepticism makes the truth unconvincing, and second, how dialectical skepticism is a solution of the problem of the criterion of truth. For Hegel skepticism is inherent to the dialectical process, because it is necessary for the following of the path of Spirit. In that sense, dialectical skepticism of Hegel is a fallibilistic conception, but the author argues that dialectical skepticism preserves and overcomes fatalism and pessimism of traditional skepticism.

Chapter four is “Hegel’s Speculative Philosophy and Fallibilism”. The author stresses here that speculative philosophy takes the truth as a whole or absolute. He points that the absence itself of a property of something can be considered as a property and that this limitation of truth is similar to the non-finality of fallibilism. One of the ways for speculative philosophy to be considered as being a fallibilistic narrative of knowledge is the differentiate speculative philosophy from critical philosophy. The author considers speculative philosophy of Hegel as a counterbalance of critical philosophy and points to Descartes and Kant as examples of philosophers of critical reflection.

Chapter five is entitled “Hegel’s Dialectical Fallibilism and Epistemic Justification”. Here the author again stresses that the dialectical path of absolute Spirit of Hegel is a defence of the fallibilistic understanding of knowledge. According to the author Hegel’s dialectic questions the foundationalistic view of the final traditional logical truths as self-evident or self-proving truths (the principles of identity, non-contradiction and excluded middle) saying that they are work of the understanding whose truthfulness is incomplete or one-sided.

In the **Conclusion** the author generalizes that he has considered Hegel’s dialectical movement in the evolution of absolute knowledge as fallibilistic description of knowledge and the problem how it disproves the traditional epistemic justification, as well as the view that Hegel’s teaching is a dialectical fallibilism. Dialectical skepticism of Hegel is not a skepticism in its traditional sense, but is a fallibilistic explanation of knowledge in its proper sense. Natural laws, mechanical laws and the self-obvious truths such as logical principles and metamathematical truths do not have convincing justification and do not avoid fallibilism. It is pointed also that though the presence of some criticisms to Hegel’s teaching, they do not reject fallibilistic explanation of justification that is in the basis of the dialectical evolution of Spirit.

In respect to the contributions, the author points out three basic contributions of his dissertation and I would stress especially here the first two of them, namely: the investigation fills up the presence of a gap in the investigations in the specialized literature up to now, outlining the interpretation of Hegel’s dialectical unfolding of Spirit as fallibilistic exposition

of knowledge. Besides, according to the author, the interpretation that is made demonstrates that natural laws, mechanical laws and logical principles, geometrical and metamathematical truth exhibit fallibilism.

I entirely accept the contributions of the dissertation. And I have no critical remarks to the author.

The abstract of the dissertation adequately and enough detailed reflects the contents of the dissertation itself.

The author has pointed to three publications by him on the theme of the dissertation: that is quite enough for covering the minimal requirements.

I do not know the author personally and I have no co-authored publication with him, so I am not in a conflict of interests with him.

In conclusion: On the basis of all that I have said up above my estimation is that with the present dissertation Martin Akineafu has demonstrated more than enough knowledge on the topic of dissertation and he has made his own original contributions to the specialized literature devoted to that topic. That is why I shall vote convincingly “for” the achieving by Martin Akineafu of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in philosophy. And I ask the other members of the scientific jury to do the same.

Sofia

Prof. em. DSc. Vesselin Petrov

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