

REVIEW

For the Dissertation “*Ontological Determinations of Universality in the Philosophizing of Hegel and Adorno*”

By **Nikola Miroslavov Ginev**,

PhD Candidate in Ontology,

Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

For the acquisition of educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

In the professional field **2.3. Philosophy**

By Associate Professor Dr. Silviya Kristeva, SWU “Neofit Rilski”

Nikola Ginev’s dissertation research seeks an answer to the current question of the current status of philosophy and how Hegelian philosophy and its reconstruction in a new dialectical paradigm by Adorno answer to the power of philosophical methodology to resolve and evaluate the genesis of modernity and the new horizon that has opened up before the worldliness of late modernity. The dissertation proposes as a basic hypothesis in this large-scale question within the scope of all philosophy: the constitution of modernity and its late self-realization have the fundamental claim to develop in the stage and spheres of the absolute idea and absolute knowledge. N. Ginev undertakes a comprehensive study of this hypothesis, which encompasses the central areas of Hegelian dialectics and especially its methodologizing as a tool for evaluating and extracting the course of natural and historical development, taken on the side of human becoming and the universal human civilizational course. Therefore, the dissertation mainly intersects dialectical ontology and philosophy of history. There is no way such a study could not also touch upon questions about the work and essential transformations of the dialectical method and tools after their development by Hegel.

The dissertation is 127 standard pages long, structured in three chapters, which embody the Hegelian triad of universality by setting the general methodological platform of the researched issues in the first chapter, its mediation in the sphere of objectivity of the contemporary spirit at the current stage of historical development, and in the third chapter, formed conceptual constellations and figures are extracted as single phenomena of the manifesting type of dialectical method. The bibliography covers fundamental sources for the thesis in Bulgarian and English: a total of 111, in Bulgarian – 65, in English – 46. The sources are used actively and with precise reference, the theses and the extracted ontological figures are argued and modeled on them. The doctoral student is particularly precise in his work with

Theodor Adorno's original writings, demonstrating his excellent knowledge of them and a comprehensive reflection on Adorno's philosophizing.

The first chapter, "Dialectic of the Pure Moments of the Concept in the Philosophizing of Hegel and Adorno," aims to explore and show the transformation of Hegel's dialectical method into the new type of "negative dialectics" proposed by T. Adorno. N. Ginev takes the position of fulfilled universality, as announced in the dissertation topic, as a stage of the most complex levels of Hegel's dialectical system, in order to develop the own construction of Adorno's new dialectical methodology. The starting premise is on the foundation of universality itself, of the pure concept, and N. Ginev convincingly demonstrates that Adorno's philosophizing after Hegel does not abandon this position in any thesis or construction. This, according to the doctoral student, is the role and irrevocable service of philosophy, the task of which is always the achievement of truth (p. 10). N. Ginev builds a comprehensive genesis of Adorno's attitude towards the second position in the dialectical triad – the particular – and shows how it is precisely the criticism of the frozen, unmediated universality, taken purely in itself in Hegel, that leads Adorno to strengthen this second, negative element in the developing universality as the foundation for the negative type of dialectic in Adorno, following Adorno's thesis that singularity does not have the status of an independent element of universality, but rather is the extinction and powerlessness of the universal. This is also a new thesis in relation to Hegel's methodological basis for the trinity of the universal, the particular and the singular in the general realization of the concept. The particular also requires an interest in ontological constructions of the extraordinary, the different, the always antagonistic, with which N. Ginev deduces a comprehensive assumption of predestination and the direction of modernity towards a new ontology of the world and human manifestations. This new ontology must also master the particular through what is other in relation to the pure method – the spheres that are opposite to the pure universality, and these are nature and the social, which will raise the question of their becoming and even anew construction in the ontology of the particular, of the new phenomena of modernity and its self-overcoming. That is why, according to the doctoral student, a natural field of the new dialectical methodology is the connection and parallel with Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit", and not so much with his logical construction or with his project for the philosophy of history. Here a question arises about the connection of the type of construction and concept for the becoming and telos of history in Adorno and in Hegel.

Nikola Ginev builds a picture of negative dialectics through its specific moments. Working with mediation, with the negative is anti-systemic, it casts a method that includes the true other of the concept, the "aspects of non-identity" – non-conceptuality, non-expressibility,

the inclusion of “new spheres of uncertainty” (p. 20), which is a challenge to rational discourse and will pose the questions of its field and its manifestation, which will join this deeper realization of universality. N. Ginev points out the characteristics of the new approach – multi-layeredness of definitions, as conceptual constellations around the object, which create its determinacy and through a peculiar disintegration and negativity of the subject, which is cast in fragmentation, in a spontaneous play of definitions and chosen approaches. N. Ginev, however, emphasizes Adorno’s remaining in the sphere of the universal, in the integrity of the object, with the method concentrating from the universal side on the determinacy of the object as a work in depth, as a “micrology” (p. 21). The debate about the limits of rationality and especially its true instrument – the language – is wonderfully shown. N. Ginev argues here the difficulty of leaving language as the proper field of the rational, therefore such a leaving will be undertaken towards aesthetic and empirical experience. Language is confirmed as a tool remaining in the sphere of the universal, unable to give the particular and, above all, unique characteristics of the objects. However, in the light of the criticism of Hegel’s dialectical method, a new possibility emerges for taking language as a mediating, even in its own reality, medium, which means that it will have its own particularities – in relation to the era, and the entire complexity of human relations and structures, and why not beyond the particularities – as a living instrument of developed subjectivity.

The positing of negative dialectics also requires a change in the objective scope of the method, making it relevant to a whole new area. According to N. Ginev, the transformation of the dialectical method requires and leads to this new objectivity. This is determined by the direction and verification of the cognitive scope and cognitive telos of the dialectical method – Hegel explicitly defines it in the “Phenomenology of Spirit” as developed in the sphere of absolute knowledge, as the sphere of higher objectivities – art, religion, philosophy. For N. Ginev, this new direction results in Adorno’s turn to the social, and as a sphere of the other, of the entirely human in relation to the pure spheres of the concept, and also as an embodiment of the model of the universal as a social model and, most importantly, as a social ideal. This defines a whole new program for the Frankfurt School – the study of the social dimensions of universality. N. Ginev also points out the stable connection here with the pure concept: and this is the social and universal ideal of a “synthesis of freedom and reason”, as a full manifestation and reconciliation to a “harmonious whole” (p. 55) of the constitution and contradictions of universal human development. For Adorno and for all postmodernity, however, absolute knowledge is only a “utopia”, and the vision of this development is rather with the characteristics of an “anti-utopia”, as an operating model of history. Here N. Ginev also gives

the starting point, which persists even in the full course of postmodernity – the inviolability and integrity of the “pure concept”, of the “sacred” in Derrida (p. 66), which also testifies to one of the solutions to the main hypothesis of the study – modernity and its development take place on the own sphere of the universal, in its higher stages. Specifically, the dissertation takes the position announced as “prehistory”, with Marx’s concept that modernity is epochally at the stage of entering the world of “freedom and reason”, without having achieved them at all yet (p. 67).

The second chapter of the dissertation work “Manifestations of the pure moments of the concept in the objective spirit” provides evidence and interpretation of the above statement, and this as an indication of the manifestations of the “objective spirit” of the modern era. The study develops on the premises of philosophizing on history and social progress and ideal, growing out of the turn to a new dialectic. First of all, there is the question of the universal goal of history and the course of its unfolding as a universal progress towards a sustainable and achievable ideal. Adorno’s criticism of Hegel and the formation of an anti-history are presented in detail: non-progressive, catastrophic, antagonistic and inhumane, if we rely on this universal telos of history. N. Ginev shapes the general concept of “nature-history”, as a connection and mediation of nature and society, in a comprehensive process. My question here is does this comprehensive *nature-history* have its own construction and regularities and possibly its own end?

The main evidence of the hypothesis of the study is offered by deriving the assessment of the contemporary status as a manifestation of the unhappy and comic consciousness, which are precisely the stages before entering the stage of reason in the “Phenomenology of the Spirit” and the “dawn of the synthesis between reason and freedom” (p. 67). N. Ginev states the manifestation of the unhappy consciousness as “always searching for wholeness”, which is reflected in the superficial and cheerfulness of the comic consciousness, as signs of contemporary phenomena in art, in the “culture industry”, in youth movements, even in the “multicultural model”, at the stage of the globalization process. In its most contemporary manifestations, perhaps a new trend is manifested, attested by Habermas’s “communicative reason” and the transition to a “philosophy of communication” and to instrumental rationality (p. 81), but according to N. Ginev, these are rather signs of a retreat from the dialectical platform of the Frankfurt School and a refusal to work on the field of the universal, which can be assessed as extreme forms of negation and even freezing in the particular and its intellectually separated and broken moments of purely instrumental and extremely parceled existence.

The third chapter “Dialectical figures and images of the pure moments of the concept” presents individual forms of universality at the current stage of its development, which are

reconstructed using the method of negative dialectics. In the sphere of aesthetic searches, such are the images of the unusual, the incredible, of interest in the mythological, in the miracle, which are cast in the artistic forms and themes of the 20th century, and can also be found in the art of the 21st century, including with the pronounced boom of artistic projects of utopias and dystopias, – which could be an interesting thematic line for diagnosing what is happening in late postmodernity. N. Ginev also notes phenomena in the second sphere of the objective spirit – religion, with the interesting observation of the new attitude towards infinity, as a “fashionable topic”, but also controversially assessed as a confirmation of the identical forms of the universal. Here the assessment is also contradictory: stretched between the two extremes – of Hegel’s “absolute religion” and of the existential side of faith as a “happy passion” in Kierkegaard (p. 108). N. Ginev also notes the appearance of super-sharp figures of the singular – with the manifestation of “extreme singularity” (p. 97) and with the particularly interesting concept of the realization of Nietzsche’s “super-man” as the pushing forward, super-dynamized subjectivity in the “leap” towards new industry and technologies (p. 100). Thus, rationality is stretched between extremes: between myths and the taste for metaphors and the purely instrumental, dry positivist rigor of knowledge. N. Ginev’s general finding in the procession of the concrete phenomena of universality in late modernity is the reaching of these two extremes of the universal and the particular, which only “touch”, without being sublated, and this is the only guarantee for the future and for a transition in the stages of late modernity: only a basis for the “end” of prehistory (p. 115) and for an upcoming “reconciliation of the elements of history: nature, reason and freedom” (p. 114).

I accept the contributions presented by Nikola Ginev, which are clearly formulated and argued in the course of the dissertation. The presented abstract corresponds to the dissertation. I have no joint publications with the doctoral student.

The doctoral student has fulfilled the national minimum requirements with five scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation research. A report on the lack of similarity with other works is presented. I did not identify any similarities in the proposed dissertation text of Nikola Ginev.

Given the retained dialectical problematic on the ontologization of the universal in the course of history and the assessment of the processes generating and determining the modern era and development of all humanity, based on the conceptualized and demonstrated new type of dialectical method as a continuation of Hegelian dialectics in the philosophizing of T. Adorno, in view of the resolved hypotheses of the dissertation research and the argued

contributions therein, I will vote with “**YES**” for acquisition to **Nikola Ginev** the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” for his dissertation on the topic: “*Ontological Dimensions of Universality in the Philosophizing of Hegel and Adorno*” and I invite the members of the Scientific Jury to vote in the same way.

01.03.2025

Assoc. prof. Dr. Silviya Kristeva