

Marek Kozłowski

**DOES DIALECTIC RETAIN ITS COGNITIVE VALIDITY
ALSO BEYOND THE REALM OF PHILOSOPHY?
SOME REMARKS CONCERNING CIESZKOWSKI'S CONTRIBUTION
TO CORRECTION OF HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY**

Both in Cieszkowski's immanent criticism of Hegel's philosophy and in his attempts to overcome the limits of all philosophy past and present dialectics plays the role of an unquestionable scheme of reference. As a set of „universal and immutable” laws of development, as a „general leading idea of history, which is no less necessary in the process than the laws of nature are”¹, dialectics is to become the very method of transforming the abstract reflexiveness of past and present philosophy, notorious for its contemplative character, into action, the final fulfilment of a reality, which was only thought about before. The ground for the transformation is to be found in Hegelian philosophy of history. Granted as the value of Hegel's speculative solution of the principles of dialectics may be, the „principles are not reflected clear enough in his philosophy of history”.² Therefore, Cieszkowski charges Hegel's historiosophy with formal error. He claims, namely, that Hegel was unable to overcome the inertia of the historiographic material he had gathered and, therefore, instead of presenting the „organic and ideal *whole* of history” he had analysed only *a part* of it, i.e. the past, already closed in history. For Cieszkowski, the visible sign of that speculative incompleteness is the tetrachotomic division of Hegel's historiosophy, which – according to the laws of dialectics – „should be absolutely and unconditionally subject to speculative trichotomy”.³ The change in the way history

¹ A. Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena do historiozofii. Bóg i palingeneza oraz mniejsze prace filozoficzne z lat 1838–1842*, Warszawa 1972, p. 6, 11.

² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

is divided into epochs is by no means a solely mechanical act. Cieszkowski intends not only to re-arrange the past, i.e. to correct its division into four epochs introduced by Hegel, but also and first of all to open the prospect for the future thus including it into the „organic and ideal whole”. In this way history becomes the domain of absolute spirit, for only it can make the open, unrealised future its *internal*, integral part of the organic whole. As a result, such history can no longer be adequately placed among the potentialities of philosophy; on the contrary, philosophy itself, even in its most perfect shape given to it by Hegel, becomes a historical phenomenon, essentially incapable of expressing the sense of history as a whole. It must, therefore, give way – together with art – for another realm of absolute spirit, i.e. religion, since „God’s reign in universal history, where history itself reigns, is the final conclusion of our studies and, at the same time, its premise...”⁴ Philosophy can at best learn the *essence* of the future and of God, which are both only necessary conditions for conscious human *practice*, endowed with theoretical self-knowledge, in which the future shall find its fulfilment as realisation of God’s will „on earth as in heaven”. „Let us have no fear to say that we shall henceforth *practise* philosophy”⁵.

This way philosophy, having culminated in Hegel’s work, is forced to *retreat* by *progress* itself: „it ceases to be the most important centre of spirit and becomes *relatively* subservient”⁶. The immediate destiny of philosophy is, according to Cieszkowski, becoming popular and hence – trivial: it must become „inwardly flattened” in order „to develop the absolute dialectic truth not only in the given reality but also in the one created by itself”⁷. To acquire the ability to create new reality philosophy must be transformed from a reflexive *act* of the philosopher who creates it into *a fact*, it must be reduced to „universal and immutable” principles of dialectics described by Hegel, i.e. to the method everyone is supposed to follow and everyone who *wants* to think *is chosen* to follow. Only such „inward flattening” guarantees that philosophy can become a moment of true and not merely intellectual act constituting actual unity of thought and being. In the meantime, however, the immediate effect of the promotional flattening of philosophy is its ability to create mere *forms* of future reality: „Hence it is very easy to understand the almost monomaniac passion of creating social systems and building society *a priori*...”⁸. On the other hand, reaching the *content* that would fill the formal procedures and become

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 88.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 88–89.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

a unity with them shall only be the result of a „direction philosophy is going to take”. Hence, only in noticing that for Cieszkowski the direction leads to a sort of theodicy and that the content, which is to contain and finally fulfil the formal procedures of dialectics, is, most generally, the social and political reform programme discovered by him in the Lord’s Prayer one can find a glimpse of Cieszkowski’s idea and thus localise the source of doubts raised by the idea. The doubts are raised by the way Hegel’s philosophy of history is confronted with formal demands of dialectics. It requires a truly deep interest in mechanical schematising to accept a rigid trichotomic division into thesis, antithesis and synthesis as a long sought for philosophers’ stone, which can work miracles but that was precisely the way Cieszkowski treated Hegel’s dialectics. Reducing dialectics to a „universal and immutable” procedure „which must be absolutely and unconditionally dependent on speculative trichotomy” may well help pass around the treasures of the recently discovered „philosophical stone” but it makes dialectics too primitive a tool for understanding and evaluating Hegel’s philosophy of history.

Dialectical trichotomy, the key issue and a commonplace for Cieszkowski, is by no means an obvious problem. If the model for dialectic procedure is to be found in Hegel’s lectures on logic, then it is clearly visible that though each of the three parts represents another phase of development, the third part does not necessarily end up the sequence of development, lose its status of a part and become an embodiment of the whole. After all, for Hegel the whole is something more than a mere sum of its parts and itself composes the „fourth phase” in respect to them in which the whole process of development is dissolved. No different is it presented in the formal trichotomic historiosophy of Cieszkowski. There are no reasons why the „future”, the third part of history which is not realised yet, should realise the whole of it, as its last phase in Cieszkowski’s model. Following the logic of dialectic procedure in describing the sense of whole of history he refers to God, who – being „everything and more” – stands „above history”⁹, even if it is „properly” divided into three epochs. As a result, Cieszkowski’s formal charge that Hegel’s philosophy of history does not meet the demands of dialectic procedure is untenable. It does not undermine, however, Cieszkowski’s right to formulate his own historiosophy, different from Hegel’s – but then its claims to overcoming Hegel’s philosophy and thus all philosophy past and present do not have any grounds. Instead of being a teacher of practical use of dialectics, Cieszkowski becomes Hegel’s competitor, who would, in his reference to Lord’s Prayer, break the second Commandment rather than enrich the spiritual life with a new eschatology

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

and solve the puzzle of the future. He may think that possibility of cognition of the future results from the „reason’s potential to get to know the essence of God, freedom and immortality”, yet it is difficult to say in what way it should be superior to Hegel’s opinion that rational cognition of the essence of God, freedom and immortality is possible only inasmuch as the future is no longer a problem, i.e. if the question of historiosophy is already solved within the objective spirit in such a way that the absolute aspect of the spirit is not burdened with the necessarily arbitrary tasks of promoting the Polish or the Slavic element. For Cieszkowski, too, the cognition of the future is at best the speculative conceiving of its *essence*¹⁰, which – though it does not determine the way and the speed the conceived essence is realised – does not leave any doubts that anything *essentially* new can happen in the future known in such a way. Whether it is so that people making history are only tools of the „cunning reason” or they are „conscious and independent” executors of its „universal and immutable” principles, the difference is only in the way they execute the plans of the reason but the *content* of their past or future actions remains beyond dispute. What is more, Cieszkowski does not seem to consider the situation in which the cunning of the universal reason becomes, due to the speculative cognition of the *essence* of the future only, the cunning of particular individuals, presenting their particular and arbitrary actions as *acts* of executing the will of God. Instead of concrete analyses of actually functioning institutions of ethnicity, Cieszkowski presents mostly sublime declarations, wishful thinking and expectations that individuals will become „artists, scientists and public people” permeated by the conscience of common end, both national and universally human.

Eventually, you cannot miss an impression that in his theory of history Cieszkowski finds a place for the „future” not in overcoming the philosophy of Hegel but through its „inward flattening”, through negating its autonomy and making it an object of external uses. He seems to misunderstand both Hegel’s philosophy and dialectics when claiming that though Hegel had invented dialectics, he misused it in philosophy of history and that he – Cieszkowski would use it better. I think he is wrong in his *Prolegomena to historiosophy* when suggesting an analogy, according to which his philosophy transcends that of Hegel as Hegel’s transcended that of Kant, since

in Hegel the problem of incognoscibility of the future plays the same role as that of inaccessibility of the absolute does in Kant. [...] In the same way as later philosophy dared to transgress the limitations of Kant the present philosophy of history ought to transgress analogous superstitions of Hegel.¹¹

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 9–10.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

The special reason why this task must be executed is that though the before mentioned limitation in Kant was a „necessary result of his consciously taken position and system” the belief that the future is incognoscible is only an alien and irritating denizen in Hegel.¹² It is well known that Kant, accepting the validity of scientific cognition only within limits of possible experience, refused to grant it to all speculations transcending those limits to grasp the metaphysical whole. It is known too that Hegel had opened way to the previously „unattainable absolute” transcending cognition, which was inasmuch scientific as it was modelled by mathematics and physics, at the same time making the cognition speculative, which also gave cognitive validity to rational speculation itself. However, his synthesis of scientific cognition and rational speculation resulting in „science in general”, i.e. dialectics, which makes the absolute accessible, is valid only within the limits of philosophy. Dialectics has, therefore, no cognitive validity beyond philosophy and when Cieszkowski wants to make use of it to transcend philosophy, he commits an error, similar to those of the representatives of „rational” cosmology, psychology and theology, who were unmasked by Kant when trying to transcend the limits of possible experience by methods which lose their validity beyond its limits. Therefore, if in his historiosophy belonging to the realm of absolute spirit (and thus already post-Hegelian) Cieszkowski degrades philosophy to the role of spiritual manifestation of a just ending, but by no means final, second epoch (the nature of the first one was characterised by art), then in the presentation of the epoch of the future – the third and final one, whose nature is characterised not simply by religion but by an *action* which is religious in its last instance – dialectics, led beyond philosophy and transformed into a direct element of action, must become something between a „hotline” to the Holy Ghost and a razor in a child’s hand. Obviously, in the case of Cieszkowski, indulged in economy or politics on his own account, and whose public activity concentrated on supporting journals and learned societies, the dangerous possibility of making use of dialectics to justify cynically any cause whatsoever could not take place. His proper *action*, i.e. his creative activity breaking up the existing reality, is an action belonging to the realm of literature and prayer and so it cannot cause any damage beside some reading pains. However, 150 years after publication of the *Prolegomena*, it is already well known that direct use of dialectics in the practice of economy, justice or indeed any institution of social life for execution of some speculative vision of the whole can be dangerous. Such practical application of an „inwardly flattened”, trivialised, post-philosophical dialectics may

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 8.

become a source of problems which would go far beyond Cieszkowski's own view of action as the means to fulfil the „social epoch”, which is to crown history.

As a result, Cieszkowski's only notable contribution to the correction of Hegel's philosophy of history seems to be that relatively small part of his observations, comments and proposals which can be adapted within Hegel's philosophical system as its *immanent* correction. First of all, it would be the postulate to keep the discussion about historiosophy on the level of „objective spirit” and to retain tetrachotomic division of history into epochs, i.e. to admit that last, fourth epoch presented, in contrast to trichotomically divided past, the totality of history irreducible to a mere sum of its three parts, in which the *present* can be treated as a solution to the mystery of the *future*, a solution only opening the possibility of a cognitively valid analysis of the nature of absolute spirit. Against all appearance, even such restrictive approach to the work of Cieszkowski exposes his thoughts which shed new light on some solutions in Hegel's historiosophy without any immediate and inevitable alteration of its unity. First of all, the way in which Cieszkowski perceives his times prevents its closure within the frames of „Christian-German world” which in Hegel plays the role of the crown of history, its fulfilment as a complete totality. Christianity, in its past and present institutional, doctrinal and liturgical form, can actualise freedom only in the consciousness of its believers. Its union with the German element, functioning as a system of collective life institutions, which implements the Christian, essentially „conscientious” idea of freedom, does not form such totality, which – according to Cieszkowski – could be treated as a fulfilment of the whole of history. Though it is difficult not to agree with Cieszkowski that Christian-German syndrome is rather a long farewell to feudal Middle Ages than a prospective view of the present, his right criticism of the diagnosis of modernity from the *Lectures in Philosophy of History* does not have to result in transgressing the theoretical basis of Hegel's philosophy or, all the more, philosophy in general. In other words, one can (and should) correct the view of history presented in Hegelian historiosophy but not necessarily through adding a new chapter on the „future”, thus changing it into a whimsical theodicy, in which God's will is actualised directly through free actions of individuals purposefully building the institutions of their „sociality”. Not everything in the Christian-German syndrome presented by Hegel is reminiscent of the past.

Hegel enriches the syndrome with an imported Anglo-French element, namely the modern civil society, which is the central, antythetic element of the syndrome and, by the same token, the main source of its dynamics. What is also important in the perspective of the doctrine of *act*, the society, contrary to traditional institutions, which are only cultivated, is set up

through a *contract*, i.e. through the constituent individuals' conscious acts of will. And though the creative activity of particular members of the civil society threatens it with loss of control over its development as a unity, the established institutions (the State) make the whole system function harmoniously, controlling it as if from the outside. Obviously, a harmony, which is arrived at in a brutal clash of inertial traditionalism of the institutions of the past (the State, the family) with the impetuous expansion of modern civil society does not seem to agree with the vision of God's kingdom on Earth. It is fulfilled somehow beyond particular individuals or, at least, beyond their influence. For Cieszkowski, it is a sufficient reason to claim Hegel's doctrine of *ethicity* is a proof that he accepts alienation of collective life institutions, characteristic of the just ending Christian-German epoch. As a result – says he – overcoming that alienation can only be realised in the *future*, which is a new, separate and truly final epoch of universal history, in which the realm of true ethicity (*sociality* in the Polish writings of Cieszkowski), transforming individuals into conscious creators of both their institutions and history, rests not on the crippled and unstable balance in the system of social life institutions but on the internal harmony of God's kingdom on Earth.

However, the postulate to make individuals conscious creators of their institutions and history raises some doubts concerning inclusion of the Christian-German *past* (together with other institutions of ethicity) also into modern civil society. As a result of the passion to „build a society a priori” originated by the political revolutions of modern times it is not only a factor of decline of the old Christian-German order but also a constructive act of implementing the previously designed new institutional order and thus an activity, which is to characterise the epoch of the *future* discovered by Cieszkowski. And though the difference between the intentions of individuals and actual effects of their actions shows how much spontaneity and chaos is still contained in their collective activity and how much the results of that activity become alienated, modern civil society with all its vices and limitations is a new, relatively heteronomous institution within the „Christian-German world”; one which would have to take over the lead in the fourth and final epoch of Hegel's philosophy of history, internally modified under the influence of the work of Cieszkowski. Therefore, it is the civil society which is to set the standard of ethicity defining the direction of change in traditional State and family. It would also have to become the institutional correlate of a reform of religiousness devised by Cieszkowski, which – through overcoming the petrified Christianity, no longer able to satisfy the religious needs of individuals – would make religion directly supportive in the institutionally creative human activity. Only then does the passion to design and build new institutions, encoded both in origin and functioning principle

of civil society, find its ultimate fundament and sanctification in a new post-Christian religion. Contrary to Cieszkowski, however, the symbiosis of religion and ethnicity could not lead to their total identification. Neither has ethnicity the possibility to become direct realisation of God's kingdom on Earth nor does the religious need lose anything of its specificity and become the means to promote political, national and other interests. For Hegel, who undoubtedly appreciated the role of *absolute* religion in establishing the *objective* order of ethnicity, it was clear that it can play its role of a source and background of ethnicity only when it is not identified with it.

I have to admit that such shift of priorities within Hegel's philosophy hardly reflects Cieszkowski's idea of overcoming Hegel's philosophy (rather than correcting it) and substituting it with his own post-philosophical philosophy. It reflects, however, my own unwillingness to accept the solutions put forward by the author of *Prolegomena* as satisfactory. Granted, in the climate of intellectual inquiries of 1830s and 1840s both rehabilitation of utopian thinking and treating philosophy as a tool for speculative visions of the future are almost commonplace. Also transcending the philosophical system of Hegel must have then seemed to be a condition for opening new development perspectives for philosophy. Finally, considering that the situation of Poland made it rather difficult to analyse historiosophic or national issues in the atmosphere of disinterested contemplation the philosophical *action* of Cieszkowski deserves not only our understanding but also acclaim. Cieszkowski deserves it especially for his erudition, which – together with his extraordinary invention – allowed him to avoid the traps awaiting those, who wanted to defeat Hegel with his own sword, and those, who found their intellectual vocation in planning the society of the future. However, just after the fall of a „scientific” and thoroughly dialectical plan of glorious future reminding a doctrine, which contained a blueprint for God's kingdom on Earth, can cause certain irritation, which would be an unsuitable air for right assessment of the contributions of the author, who had such sublime ideas concerning both humanity and history. Drawing inspiration from the French utopians and the philosophy of Hegel Cieszkowski places himself close to that orientation of thought, whose later development was marked by the influence of Karl Marx and his epigons. And though it was not the portrait of Cieszkowski that adorned the assembly halls or was carried in pageants, nor was the Lord's Prayer the object of analysis at the Evening University courses, the idea – shared also by him – to make people aware creators of the society of the future can cause certain irritation today. On the contrary, Hegel, who is overcome by Cieszkowski, is free from such associations, as he does not hide that his internally well balanced system, keeping off from religious exultation, is and should remain nothing more but philosophy. Even certain latitude to Prussia ascribed to Hegel

must seem very discreet especially in comparison with megalomania and messianism of the prophets of national cause. Therefore, aspirations to overcome the philosophy of Hegel and philosophy in general through a newly read Lord's Prayer, which are expressed in the work of Cieszkowski, must remain today a document of the past epoch rather than an open intellectual offer.

University of Łódź
Poland

Marek Kozłowski

**CZY DIALEKTYKA ZACHOWUJE SWĄ POZNAWCZĄ WAŻNOŚĆ
TAKŻE POZA FILOZOFIĄ?
KILKA UWAG O WKŁADZIE CIESZKOWSKIEGO
W POPRAWIANIE HEGLOWSKIEJ FILOZOFII DZIEJÓW**

Zarówno w dokonanej przez Cieszkowskiego immanentnej krytyce filozofii Hegla, jak i w jego próbie wykroczenia poza ograniczenia całej dotychczasowej filozofii rolę niekwestionowanego układu odniesienia spełnia dialektyka. Autor skupia się więc na przedstawieniu użycia i nadużycia dialektyki przez Cieszkowskiego w celu przekształcenia abstrakcyjnej refleksyjności dotychczasowej filozofii w czyn, w ostateczne spełnienie rzeczywistości wcześniej tylko przemyślanej. Krytycznej analizie poddany zostaje zwłaszcza zarzut Cieszkowskiego, jakoby heglowska filozofia dziejów nie spełniała formalnych wymogów dialektycznej procedury.