

Kant, hegel and kierkegaard on free will, god, and moral laws

[Profession](#), [Philosophers](#)



Philosophy is a critical reflection of religion and its content, and as such it only moves within the limits of the mind. According to both Kant (58) and Kierkegaard (64), philosophy is in a certain paradoxical situation of the human mind because it disturbs some of the questions that cannot be answered, as they cross over a possible experience. In addition to the traditional interpretation and understanding of religion, certain philosophical lines are positioned here to rationally contemplate the origin, development, destiny, and meaning of religion. In this paper, the philosophical and religious notion of freedom, in terms of how they differ considerably from the goal set before man will be discussed by analysing Kant's, Hegel's, and Kierkegaard's theories on the subject of free will, God, and moral laws. Philosophical freedom as a freedom of action, which Kant (98) terms as a natural necessity will be analyzed, as well as religious freedom and freedom of belief as it concerns that which Kierkegaard (25) considers unselfish existence, and the philosophical concept of freedom that Hegel (418) argues can be defined as freedom to act.

Freedom is a constant struggle for confirmation and responsibility of man all that diminishes or negates that responsibility and affirmation of the sword in the sphere of freedom. According to this view, freedom of belief (religious freedom) is the maximum denial of freedom as man's mode of practice in the real world. Criticism of religion is nothing but a struggle against the world in which thinking is completely outdated. It is a struggle against the world in which religion is one of the means of government in which religion justifies and maintains the relations of authority in human society, imagining God as that which is "very great and true" (Hegel 153). Such an attitude is based on

the fact that religion always justified the existing evil, injustice, and human misfortune.

According to Kant (98), “ God is the creator of appearances, and a cause of actions in the world of sense, he is the cause of existence in the acting of beings”. Taking this approach, one cannot perceive a thing by itself, and cannot survive in idealism, nor is it the creation of an individual subject in the idealism the concept of the absolute subject. An absolute subject, which must not be confused with an individual subject that sensitively perceives objects can be used to explain reality as a process of manifestation of infinite thought. From Kant’s point of view, philosophy is a system of reconstruction of dynamic activity, not analysis of the meaning of what one faces. In this sense, man does not accept divinity through his own thinking and seeking, but through faith. Kant attributes this to a divine command, and acknowledges it as a subject to be revealed, and the one in which we must first know that it is a duty to it could be recognized. “ It is possible to affirm freedom without detriment to the natural mechanism of actions as appearances, then the circumstance that the acting beings are creatures cannot make the least difference to the argument, because creation concerns their intelligible but not their sensuous existence” (Kant 106). Thus, for him, faith is subjective, private, and emotional, and it arises as a result of adopting certain teachings about religion as a complete system of ideas, beliefs, and values.

In addition to Kant who gave an extraordinary contribution to the development of critical thinking about religion, Hegel’s reflection on religion

is also complementary to the problem of freedom that each religion necessarily entails. In this sense, freedom is not about self-sufficiency or anarchy. Instead, according to Hegel (152), freedom is an understanding of necessity, and a human ideal shaped to the natural necessity. Freedom in necessity is a form of attachment to certain content, meaning that the world of nature is an essential necessity for us, and therefore only within this natural necessity we determine the possibilities of its manifestation. “ This concern is the true liberation of the human being and is freedom itself, true consciousness of the truth” (Hegel 152). For Hegel, considered one of the most prominent thinkers of metaphysical idealism in which the reality of absolute self-reflection is through the human mind, a system explaining the manifestation of the infinite Absolute is through the subjective, objective, and absolute spirit. Hegel prioritizes that which for Kierkegaard is most significant the existence of an individual.

As “ evidence of the necessity of any coming into existence”, Kierkegaard (64) argues that there are three stages of human existence: aesthetic, ethical, and religious. In the aesthetic stage, there is no conscious choice but man lives in a way of fulfilling current desires, which are related to the experiences that a man comes into contact with. A man living in an aesthetic stage is determined by these passages from that stage to the next ethical stage, whereby man is no longer excluded from the general because he is aware of himself as an individual. Indeed, Kierkegaard (64) posits that “ only in equality or in unity is there understanding all coming into existence [therefore] occurs in freedom, not by way of necessity”. This means that a

man becomes aware of the choices, and aware of himself as a part of the whole. As such, he is no longer oriented towards fulfilling current desires, but following his own choosing. The last and highest stage of man's existence is religious where man goes beyond what is common and puts himself in relation to that Absolute, and that for Kierkegaard is God.

For the aesthetist, a characteristic of despair in which a man is still unaware of his own spirit is the synthesis of the ultimate and infinite which is the relationship that within itself is related to itself by relating to God who establishes this relationship (Kierkegaard 75). There are two types of despair: despair with regard to moments of own process of dialectical reasoning (which in Hegelian (154) philosophy is known as synthesis), and despair with regard to consciousness. In Kierkegaard's (81) view, for ethical stage, there is an anxiety resulting from freedom of choice, and only when he becomes aware of himself, man understands that he has the option of choice. Kierkegaard (83) considers faith as the highest expression of hopes for redemption. Man has a purpose, but if he does not know himself, he can not even contribute to the true progress of all mankind.

The notion of freedom becomes a means of salvation, or freedom of man derives from his relationship to salvation. For Hegel (413), a religion in which a man loses his freedom has to be overcome in such a way that elevates man to a moral subjectivity dogma is a permanent barrier to every thought approach to religious content. Freedom does not imply an individual doing what he wants but wants what God wants and doing as God " himself is the resolving of these contradictions" (Hegel 153). Such freedom frees an

individual from fear and he becomes carefree because all worries are taken over by God. Faith's demand for absolute trial and freedom is, therefore, in the sense becomes a task because everyone will be judged by belief.

Kierkegaard, who is considered to be the initiator of philosophical existentialism, does not try to objectively explain human existence but to point to the importance of dealing with it. His goal is not to reach the objective truth, but he wants to encourage ideas about its existence through the paradox of life. Both Kant's and Kierkegaard's philosophy refers to the questioning of one's own existence. For them, philosophy is not a theoretical thought, but the idea that is the guiding principle, the decision, and thus the action (Nancy 91). Kierkegaard (81) sees no possibility of an individual in assuming responsibility for himself, his existence, but his idea of individualism and his thoughts on responsibilities and the role of each individual in the life of the community concern universal abstraction. These are paradoxes that Hegel, on the other hand, deals with in his works, point to the complexity of human life, which can not be described by a system that implies an attempt to capture the whole and strive for completion. It is similar to Kierkegaard's argument that the one who lives aesthetically lives as an individual in a bad sense. The one who lives ethically is common, and only the one who lives in the religious sphere becomes an individual who goes beyond the commonality, and even beyond necessity (Kierkegaard 28). The difference between the philosopher and the religious person, according to Hegel (418), is that the philosopher must be understandable to others, and free the people of bonds of untruth to show them a truth that is not

based on dogma, while a religious person relies on dogma if in his religion exist.

On the other hand, from from Kierkegaard's point of view, an ethic in consciousness chooses himself to know what he is already, without some external determinations, that which does not really belong to him. The aestheticist only sees the possibilities of performing the present, while an ethic in his approach sees the goal. For him, satisfaction and suffering can be explained both paradoxically and dually. Satisfaction can be perceived as the pleasure of aesthetics by fulfilling current wishes, but it can also be understood as the pleasure of the ethic of the awareness of the necessity. Kierkegaard (93) thinks that it is not essential to choose, but to be able to choose at all. By choosing, man enters the ethical stage of existence, but not only by choice, but by awareness of the choices. The aesthetic choice, which is not a choice in the true sense because the individual is not aware of himself, so he can not be, nor is he aware, of what is good. For a man living in an ethical lifestyle, giving up the choice is a choice that brings with it some sort of consequence. Unlike the aesthetics, he chooses himself, does not try to determine something that he is not, something external to him.

Kierkegaard's ethical stage could be compared to the free will concept, in which man possesses awareness of the choices, as well as awareness of the possibility of giving up having choices. In choosing the fulfillment of only current desires, there lies an awareness of the possibility of choosing something higher. However, given the interdependence of the stage and the complexity of human existence, the notion of necessity should be conditional

(Kierkegaard 9). Namely, if someone is truly aware of their choices, they will probably strive to choose the unchangeable good, but even if an ethic decides on changeable goods, or fulfilling immediate wishes, it is the choice of that person, but it thus disables God's doing. The religious stage of man's life is above the general through the paradox that morality is not the foundation of faith, but that the foundation of faith had to be grounded (Kierkegaard 104). The paradox of belief is that the individual is above the general, and that an individual determines his relationship to the general by his relation to the Absolute, rather than his attitude towards Absolute in relation to the general. In a religious state, according to Kierkegaard (81), a man performs an act of infinite desolation, a preliminary act of faith, and consists in leaving the demands of reason, accepting his limitation and mood for God's action in his life.

The problem of Kierkegaard's philosophy is that the vision of human existence is based on the fact that the attitude of self-reliance on the one who sets this relationship, according to Kierkegaard, is directed against God. One of the reasons for Kierkegaard's dealing with human existence derives from his relationship with his father who built his sense of repentance. It can not be said that one condition is strictly related to one stage in life, or that they are each followed strictly and separately. In fact, all states are intertwined at every stage of man's life, and given that every human being is the one for himself, the way of entering into state and strength differs from each man (Nancy 78). A multitude of situations that man meets and all are important to his self-determination, are how a person moves from one stage

to another. Kierkegaard (64) writes about peoples' ability to come into existent, and so at one point reveals the characteristics of life stages according to the choices in which faith plays a key role in the religious stage and man goes beyond what is universal and stands against that absolute, which for Kierkegaard is God.

Speaking of one's free will, Kant (78) argues about the limitation of will, and about a radical departure from the theological and even the teleological view of the world and the great role of the human mind. According to this, all our knowledge begins with the senses that pass the content of the empirical call to the lower power of knowledge, above which there is nothing more on the subject of the thought process. The same idea of freedom for Kant has a special meaning, as the notion of self as a free being will determine freedom as the first idea. The only argument left, which nevertheless does not solve the problem, is the existence of an absolute beginning from which the cause of causality or the possibility of nature is initiated as an opportunity to overcome that causality. Mind, unlike reason, never refers directly to experience. but, using its knowledge, to reason. For Kant (62), there are laws and norms that apply to natural things, such laws and norms can come up and meet the needs at the theoretical level, while they are powerless and harmful to proving a priori knowledge beyond the limits of experience. Kant's autonomy of the will becomes the highest principle of justice in which it is the law itself. Only with the notion of freedom will it be possible to resolve the importance of autonomous will in Kant (93). Kant's idea of God, freedom, and immortality are not needed for the sake of natural knowledge, but

precisely because of their ability to emerge from the natural necessity to give priority to the practical mind. One of the topics that has captured Kant's thought was a differentiation between reason and mind.

Being free, man is subject to moral law, Kant (109) requires that man should never be used as a means, but as a purpose, and this condition is also attributed to God's will with regard to the minds of the beings in the world as his creatures, because it is based on their personality, which is why they are the only purposes by themselves. Such an emphasis on freedom can mean that freedom is understood as a goal and as a goal in itself. Therefore, the distinction between personal freedom and moral freedom can be made.

When it comes to personal freedom, it is considered that it is a possibility that man possesses in choosing his own desires and appropriate orientation of his life (Nancy 104). This form of freedom can mean that there is no place for morality, but there is the possibility that a man as an open being is placed against the morals. There is a desire to understand a free-willed individual, and to understand his interest in behaviour. In moral freedom, according to Kant (102), a person is free when not guided solely by own goals, but is characterized by the general behaviour of all rational persons.

In Kant's arguments, on the other hand, there is religious subjectivism, rejection of all authority in religious affairs, subjecting the religion of mind. Kant posits that our knowledge does not adapt to objects of knowledge but objects of knowledge have to adapt to our cognition possibilities (Nancy 92). It is clear to him that God could not prove any analysis, so he opts for a man to be guided by reason and free will. Kant (162) argues that every man must

be autonomous in science, but also in morality. This moral for the starting point must be the dignity of man and never be a means of achieving a goal, but must always be a means to oneself. This requires a free will that must be independent and which is good in itself and not what it produces. According to Kant, it is necessary to subject religion to the mind because the human mind is a criterion for true religion, whether it is published or natural, and faith provides two supreme values of human life and action: morality and freedom (Nancy 98).

This is nothing but the formula of the imperative and the principle of justice. That is why Hegel is able to say that the free will and will according to the laws of justice are the same “ following aspect of the idea, the concept that has determined itself, that has made itself into its own object, and thereby posited finitude in itself” (Hegel 64). Such free will may in a peculiar way be thought of as a causative cause without beginning, which in some sense would be confined to the concept of freedom. What contradicts Hegel’s (123) philosophy of consciousness, of knowing things by themselves is the assumption that reality is a rational process whose essence is a dynamic structure in which this philosophy can penetrate. Similarly to Kant, this is the idea that the universe is perceived through the mind of man, and philosophy can be interpreted as the process in which the Absolute can be understood.

When discussing the existence of God, it is necessary to look at the criticism of these attempts. As one of the leading thinkers who dealt with the analysis, and who became known for his critical re-examination of God, Kant (118) does not deny the mechanical laws that shape the universe, but he argues

that these natural laws are the ones that make the body move. Kant criticizes the teleological evidence, believing that not every event in nature is to be interpreted by God's interference, yet natural laws can not be considered without the participation of God. Similarly, Hegel (124) in his philosophical orientation pointed to the contradiction and its overcoming of experience in a way that is able to perceive what is beyond space and time, and thus disproved the possibility proving God. The argument here is that, according to Kant, God is unknowable to man, as man is given no evidence of God's existence proves the existence or reality of such a being, that is, there is no absolute proof of existence of the divine being. But this type of approach is the realization of man's spiritual freedom by Hegel attests to the meaning the resistance deterring man from the problem of his mind and his life. Based on Kant's idea of freedom, other representatives of classical German idealism have developed their thought structures. For example, pointing to the boundaries of the pure mind controlling his actions under natural laws governed by the laws of causality, Kant sees the mind's inability to accept the theoretical speculative discipline, and therefore turns to the critique of the practical mind, and the science that will be treated in it will call metaphysics of maturity as it continues where theoretical metaphysics could not go any further (Nancy 127).

What is clear from all three positions is that free will must indicate the possibility for everyone to think in their own way, take a certain position, and make judgments. The essence of free will is that any idea can be critically debated which results in the right of an individual to self. Similarly, content

of belief is taught and interpreted for generations, that everyone, despite belief, has their own desires and opportunities to take the right attitude. Thus understood, this thinking serves as the tool of achieving the social conditions for the free development of man and his true affirmation, which cannot be separated from the process of his spiritual liberation, from the freedom of personality development.

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