

## Artículo de investigación

# The structural principles of hegel's the phenomenology of spirit narrative

Los principios estructurales de la narrativa de la fenomenología del espíritu de Hegel.  
Os principais estruturais da narrativa da fenomenologia do espírito de Hegel.

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Written by:  
Vyacheslav I. Korotkikh  
Bunin Yelets State University

## Abstract

The paper dwells on the making of Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* narrative. The author aims to substantiate the idea that the creative process was determined by a combination of two principles, both introducing a conceptual structure that was not related to the specific historical and cultural content. Firstly, the structure of the expanding text corresponds to the structure of *The Phenomenology's* object that encompasses the observing consciousness, the observed consciousness and its object; secondly, the movement of experience on each of the three specified levels ends with reaching the same logical form of relating consciousness to *the infinity*. The object is highly specific as it implies the need for revealing semantic structures covertly present in the Hegelian text. This predetermines the need to use special methodological approaches (that would allow separating the formal aspect of the "experience of consciousness" from its content and present it in as an independent complexly organized conceptual construction) along with traditional methods of historical and philosophical research. Such approaches include identifying of three types of consciousness, acting as subjects of "experience"; revealing the structural isomorphism of "experience of consciousness", hidden behind *The Phenomenology of Spirit's* external variety of topics. Finally, the author comes to the conclusion that the method of constructing the narrative chosen by Hegel leads to the liberation of the subject of consciousness, which is characterized at each of the stages of the movement by meaningful diversity. It leads from the connection with "sustainable existence" and tracing it to the structure of "infinity" toward self-consciousness. This analysis of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* narrative is novel in that the conceptual integrity of the work is based on identifying the structure of the narrative, and not by trying to establish a single epistemological, psychological and historical line of content development. In addition, since one of the main difficulties in justifying *The Phenomenology's* integrity has always been associated with the heterogeneity of its content and the seeming unexpectedness of passages and shifts in the process of describing the experience of consciousness, the author considers the

## Resumen

El artículo se centra en la elaboración de la narrativa de Fenomenología del espíritu de Hegel. El autor pretende fundamentar la idea de que el proceso creativo estuvo determinado por una combinación de dos principios, ambos introduciendo una estructura conceptual que no estaba relacionada con el contenido histórico y cultural específico. En primer lugar, la estructura del texto en expansión corresponde a la estructura del objeto de la Fenomenología que abarca la conciencia observadora, la conciencia observada y su objeto; en segundo lugar, el movimiento de la experiencia en cada uno de los tres niveles especificados termina con alcanzar la misma forma lógica de relacionar la conciencia con el infinito. El objeto es altamente específico ya que implica la necesidad de revelar estructuras semánticas presentes de forma encubierta en el texto hegeliano. Esto predetermina la necesidad de utilizar enfoques metodológicos especiales (que permitirían separar el aspecto formal de la "experiencia de la conciencia" de su contenido y presentarla como una construcción conceptual independiente, organizada de manera compleja) junto con los métodos tradicionales de investigación histórica y filosófica. Tales enfoques incluyen la identificación de tres tipos de conciencia, actuando como sujetos de "experiencia"; Revelando el isomorfismo estructural de la "experiencia de la conciencia", oculto detrás de la variedad externa de temas de La Fenomenología del Espíritu. Finalmente, el autor llega a la conclusión de que el método de construcción de la narrativa elegida por Hegel conduce a la liberación del sujeto de la conciencia, que se caracteriza en cada una de las etapas del movimiento por una diversidad significativa. Conduce desde la conexión con la "existencia sostenible" y la rastrea a la estructura de "infinito" hacia la autoconciencia. Este análisis de la narrativa de La fenomenología del espíritu es novedoso en el sentido de que la integridad conceptual del trabajo se basa en la identificación de la estructura de la narrativa y no en el intento de establecer una única línea epistemológica, psicológica e histórica de desarrollo de contenido. Además, dado que una de las principales dificultades para justificar la integridad de *The Phenomenology* siempre se ha asociado con la

result as an important argument in defending the vision of Hegel's *opus* as an integral and coherent one.

**Keywords:** German idealism, Hegelian philosophy, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, *The Phenomenology of Spirit's* subject structure, notion of infinity, *Phenomenology of Spirit's* structure, dialogical text pattern, self-consciousness.

heterogeneidad de su contenido y la aparente inesperada de los pasajes y cambios en el proceso de descripción de la experiencia de la conciencia, el autor considera el resultado como un resultado importante. Argumento en la defensa de la visión de la obra de Hegel como integral y coherente.

**Palabras clave:** idealismo alemán, filosofía hegeliana, La fenomenología del espíritu, La fenomenología de la estructura temática del espíritu, noción de infinito, Fenomenología de la estructura del espíritu, patrón de texto dialógico, autoconciencia.

## Resumo

El artículo se centra en la elaboración de la narrativa de Fenomenología del espíritu de Hegel. El autor pretende fundamentar la idea de que el proceso creativo estuvo determinado por una combinación de dos principios, ambos introduciendo una estructura conceptual que no estaba relacionada con el contenido histórico y cultural específico. En primer lugar, la estructura del texto en expansión corresponde a la estructura del objeto de la Fenomenología que abarca la conciencia observadora, la conciencia observada y su objeto; en segundo lugar, el movimiento de la experiencia en cada uno de los tres niveles especificados termina con alcanzar la misma forma lógica de relacionar la conciencia con el infinito. El objeto es altamente específico ya que implica la necesidad de revelar estructuras semánticas presentes de forma encubierta en el texto hegeliano. Esto predetermina la necesidad de utilizar enfoques metodológicos especiales (que permitirían separar el aspecto formal de la "experiencia de la conciencia" de su contenido y presentarla como una construcción conceptual independiente, organizada de manera compleja) junto con los métodos tradicionales de investigación histórica y filosófica. Tales enfoques incluyen la identificación de tres tipos de conciencia, actuando como sujetos de "experiencia"; Revelando el isomorfismo estructural de la "experiencia de la conciencia", oculto detrás de la variedad externa de temas de La Fenomenología del Espíritu. Finalmente, el autor llega a la conclusión de que el método de construcción de la narrativa elegida por Hegel conduce a la liberación del sujeto de la conciencia, que se caracteriza en cada una de las etapas del movimiento por una diversidad significativa. Conduce desde la conexión con la "existencia sostenible" y la rastrea a la estructura de "infinito" hacia la autoconciencia. Este análisis de la narrativa de La fenomenología del espíritu es novedoso en el sentido de que la integridad conceptual del trabajo se basa en la identificación de la estructura de la narrativa y no en el intento de establecer una única línea epistemológica, psicológica e histórica de desarrollo de contenido. Además, dado que una de las principales dificultades para justificar la integridad de *The Phenomenology* siempre se ha asociado con la heterogeneidad de su contenido y la aparente inesperada de los pasajes y cambios en el proceso de descripción de la experiencia de la conciencia, el autor considera el resultado como un resultado importante. Argumento en la defensa de la visión de la obra de Hegel como integral y coherente.

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## Abstrato.

O artigo trata da produção da narrativa de Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. O autor pretende fundamentar a ideia de que o processo criativo foi determinado por uma combinação de dois princípios, ambos introduzindo uma estrutura conceitual que não estava relacionada ao conteúdo histórico e cultural específico. Em primeiro lugar, a estrutura do texto em expansão corresponde à estrutura do objeto da Fenomenologia que engloba a consciência observadora, a consciência observada e seu objeto; em segundo lugar, o movimento da experiência em cada um dos três níveis especificados termina com a mesma forma lógica de relacionar a consciência ao infinito. O objeto é altamente específico, pois implica a necessidade de revelar estruturas semânticas presentes secretamente no texto hegeliano. Isso predetermina a necessidade de usar abordagens metodológicas especiais (que permitiriam separar o aspecto formal da "experiência de consciência" de seu conteúdo e apresentá-lo como uma construção conceitual independente organizada de forma complexa) juntamente com os métodos tradicionais de pesquisa histórica e filosófica. Tais abordagens incluem a identificação de três tipos de consciência, atuando como sujeitos de "experiência"; revelando o isomorfismo estrutural da "experiência de consciência", oculto por trás da variedade externa de tópicos da Fenomenologia do Espírito. Finalmente, o autor chega à conclusão de que o método de construção da narrativa escolhido por Hegel leva à libertação do sujeito da consciência, que se caracteriza em cada uma das etapas do movimento pela diversidade significativa. Ela leva da conexão com a "existência sustentável" e a traça até a estrutura do "infinito" em direção à autoconsciência. Essa análise da narrativa da Fenomenologia do Espírito é novidade na medida em que a integridade conceitual do trabalho se baseia na identificação da estrutura da narrativa, e não na

tentativa de estabelecer uma única linha epistemológica, psicológica e histórica de desenvolvimento de conteúdo. Além disso, uma vez que uma das principais dificuldades em justificar a integridade da Fenomenologia sempre esteve associada à heterogeneidade de seu conteúdo e à aparente imprevisibilidade de passagens e mudanças no processo de descrever a experiência de consciência, o autor considera o resultado como um importante argumento em defender a visão da obra de Hegel como integral e coerente.

**Palavras-chave:** idealismo alemão, filosofia hegeliana, fenomenologia do espírito, fenomenologia da estrutura do sujeito do espírito, noção de infinito, estrutura da fenomenologia do espírito, padrão de texto dialógico, autoconsciência.

## Introduction

The analysis of the structural (formal) principles of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* plot composition is relevant because previous attempts to perceive the conceptual unity of the Hegelian work on the basis of various content interpretation patterns were unsuccessful (Bonsiepen, 1975; Haering, 1932, 1934; Pöggeler, 1973). To some extent, the difficulties associated with “external” history of the book, are to be accounted for that (Hegel, 1980). However, the fact that some sections are, essentially, sketches of varying degrees of elaboration still does not allow us to answer the question why it was so difficult for Hegel himself to determine the book’s place in the system of philosophy (Puntel, 1981). The history of *The Phenomenology’s* perception (within the first hundred years of its existence the book was almost forgotten later to become the subject of countless contradictory and, as a rule, fragmentary interpretations) is also unlikely to instill the usual hope that the commentary will make the task easier for the readers of philosophical texts. But the greatest difficulty is, of course, *The Phenomenology of Spirit’s* content itself, which is ultimately counters any kind of simplification and seems to rebel against the syntax of the ordinary language. Charm and bewilderment are, perhaps, the two main feelings that embrace the reader, plunging again and again into the Hegelian text. Even today G. Spet’s remark that “*The Phenomenology of Spirit* is considered to be a philosophical text that is one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult to understand” (Spet, 1959) should caution every reader against hasty judgments and assessments.

However, according to the words of Hegel himself, a great man condemns (foredooms, *verdammt*) other people to have him explained (Hegel, 1971). As new papers and interpretations come along, the process of these “readers’ travels for discoveries” requires embracing the concepts that are absent in the Hegelian text itself arises. However, it was Hegel, who met this need, by finally replacing the original title *The Science of the Experience of*

*Consciousness with The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Our methodological approach towards *The Phenomenology* endows the concept of “structure” with special significance. I will try to show that the principles of analyzing *The Phenomenology of Spirit* will make it possible to identify the plot, as well as to understand the need for content movement only if they are of a “structural” nature, that is predetermining the content’s selection, direction and regularities.

Several levels of text can be distinguished in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the process of analyzing the content of Hegelian thought each one of them is appropriate to be described in terms of structure. Firstly, it optimally characterizes the ratio of the observing consciousness, consciousness as a subject of consideration and the object of the latter. This ratio, which sets the conditions for the consideration of any content that will be included in the “experience of consciousness”, is precisely a “structure”, as it remains unchanged in the movement of experience and acts as a prerequisite for its description. The “behavior” of its elements is not determined by their content, internal characteristics (in this case, the Hegelian understanding of “experience” would have been analogous to Kantian one that requires “contact with reality” and going beyond the boundaries of consciousness), but only by the place they occupy in the system. Secondly, the analysis of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* reveals the homogeneity of the text’s fragments in which the “formal” relations of the elements are reproduced, constituting different in “phenomenological appearance”, but logically homogeneous structures. Thirdly, these stages of the movement of “experience of consciousness”, which we will call *The Phenomenology’s* “circles”, end with the same structure of the mediation of opposites (“knowledge” and “object”). This structure is “infinity”, which in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is achieved solely as an object of consciousness, and which, as the definition of the nature of

speculative objectivity, will become the starting point of the movement of *Science of Logic*. Realizing that it is impossible to highlight the entire complex of these most complex and still insufficiently studied aspects of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* within the framework of one article, I intend to draw attention only to two structural principles of plot composition, namely, its dependence on the Hegelian concept of the structure of the object and the role of the concept of infinity in *The Phenomenology's* movement. These are principles that differ in their origin and "nature", but it is their combination that mainly determines the specifics of the plot of Hegel's book. The problem that this study is aimed to solve, therefore, is to develop a unified model for the development of the plot, based on the formal, structural, principles of plot composition.

### Methodology

The basis of the research's methodology is a combination of traditional historical, philosophical and hermeneutic methods. However, by drawing attention to the formal aspects of the development of the plot we attach more significance to the methods of structural and logical-linguistic analysis. Thus, the article attempts to identify the structure of the narrative's subject, which comprises three levels: the consciousness of the author and the reader ("our consciousness", "we"), consciousness as an object of direct examination ("consciousness itself") and its object. In the process of experiencing "our consciousness" looks at the object of "consciousness itself" with "its eyes", and compares it with the understanding that "consciousness itself" makes up for itself about the object. From the very beginning the reader has to be aware of the dialogical nature of the Hegelian narration, as well as clearly differentiate among the "words" of these three "characters". Each of the "voices" has its salient individuality, so the interpreter should try to recognize and convey it with using the language of his culture and his time. Just as each type of consciousness in the original book, responding to the gesture of the "director" (the author), played its distinctive role in the "philosophical performance" of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, so the interpretation should be watchful not allowing these "voices" to be confused.

In the original German text, their distinction is clear (although the "technical clarity" of the text of *The Phenomenology*, of course, does not

exclude the need for a theoretical understanding of the dialogical nature of the work within the framework of German Hegelian studies). But to convey this most important component of Hegel's book in translation into another language is extremely difficult. In the original, the borders of the "speech" of "our consciousness" are usually marked with *wir*, *für uns*, and the "voice" of the "consciousness itself" is separated with the help of *es*, *ihm*. The Hegelian text seems to be stitched by these pronouns; however, the variability of conveying the attribution of statements in the existing Russian translations does not allow the reader to determine definitely the relevance of one or another fragment of the "experience of consciousness" to the speech of "our consciousness" or "consciousness itself".

In addition, the text highlights entire fragments that, instead of presenting a "conversation" of "our consciousness", "consciousness itself" and "object" with the exchange of short phrases, give extensive descriptions made by one of the "characters". As a rule, the descriptions of the experience of "consciousness itself" are more extensive and sophisticated, since it, being included in the process of generating objectivity, "does not see" (like "our consciousness") patterns in its movement and makes many "mistakes", as well as experiences many ways of comprehending objectivity. On the contrary, "our consciousness", occupying a "more convenient" place in the structure of objectivity, does not have to repeat the "mistakes" of "consciousness itself", and the way of its experience turns out to be "straighter" and "shorter". Even these cursory remarks show how important it is to use the methods of structural and linguistic analysis, (even in seemingly classical historical-philosophical studies), when formal-structural — belonging to plot and "narrative" — aspects become their direct subject matter.

Since from the very outset of discussing the contents of *The Phenomenology* it is important to represent accurately the structure of its objectness (or what "participants" will take the floor in the upcoming action, and what "elements" of consciousness they will set in motion), it is not surprising that this structure is present in the first sentence of the main text: "Knowledge which is our object at the outset, that is, immediately, can be nothing but immediate knowledge, knowledge of the immediate, that is, of what is" (Hegel, n.d.) (hereinafter, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is cited

in Terry Pinkard's translation). Thus, the description of the upcoming "experience of consciousness" has a kind of stratification of consciousness, the discernment of the points of view of the "observing" and "observed" consciousness, as its prerequisite. Then, after crossing the boundaries of the original idea of the Chapter VI, the same stratification affects the self-consciousness of its "object" as well.

The comments presented show, how the comprehension of the structure of *The Phenomenology of the Spirit's* object and the specificity of the method suggested by the author in the *Introduction*, is important for the understanding of the book. Therefore, it is impossible to accept the attempts of some students of Hegel to present the *Introduction* as an "early" fragment, which allegedly does not correspond to the content of the final work. For instance, O. Pöggeler had great doubts that the *Introduction* analysis can serve as a basis for understanding Hegel's opus, since it was written in the context of making *The Science of the Experience of Consciousness*. Moreover, he even argued that after changing the name, the author had to get rid of the text that was originally supposed to open the book (Pöggeler, 1973). It is not difficult to notice, however, that such a move would contradict not only the German researcher's own intention to understand the philosopher through understanding his creative path, but also the task of an adequate understanding of *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* as being born as a result of the "substantial conversion" of *The Science of the Experience of Consciousness* at the point of its movement, where the spirit opens to consciousness as a unique objectness, embracing and substantiating all previous images of consciousness. *The Science of the Experience of Consciousness* defines the beginning of the work, its main idea and method, whereas *The Phenomenology of Spirit* marks its completion. The latter does not replace the former, but develops and fulfils its purpose.

Out of the set of consequences of the Hegelian theory of the structure of the phenomenological objectness here we will indicate only the sequence of "experience" stages, as its comprehension is extremely important for determining an adequate method for interpreting Hegel's work. To begin with, it is natural for Hegel and characteristic for his whole work and not only for *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, to correlate the structure of the work

with the structure of objectness disclosing in it. However it is at odds with the popular in historical and philosophical literature (see, for example, G. Lukács's paper) comparison of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* content with the notions from Hegelian philosophy of spirit, such as "subjective spirit", "objective spirit" and "absolute spirit". Highlighting these rubrics (mainly taking into account pedagogical goals) within the boundaries of the encyclopedic system, Hegel takes into account not only the differences in the degree of expression of the content of the spirit, the depth of its "certainty", but also the nature of the "carriers" of the spirit, which is in no way relevant for "experience of consciousness", described in *The Phenomenology*, as its evolution is determined only by the structure of the phenomenological objectness.

In accordance with this structure, the "experience", culminating in the achievement of the same (from a logical point of view) goal, first accomplishes "our consciousness", then "consciousness itself" and, finally, the "object". Of course, it is unacceptable to present the phenomenological movement in a simplified, unnecessarily "mechanical" way, as if its stages can be represented as parts that are indifferent to each other. According to Hegel himself, *The Phenomenology* is a whole, which "by its very nature is ... a plexus of passages" (Hegel, 1971). But taking into account the specified interaction and "roll calls" "inside" each of the "experience" stages, it is still possible to distinguish the main lines of the narration interlocking at some highest point of the phenomenological movement, or more precisely, the "circles" that culminate in achieving the same goal, the same result, even if they acquire a different "phenomenological guise". Only this path can make one see the meaningfulness and harmony of the Hegelian text as a whole and assess the merits of the method chosen by the thinker for constructing the plot of the book.

## Results

The experience of "our consciousness", the experience of "consciousness itself" and the experience of the "object" are completed with achieving the same goal and result from a logical point of view. What is the goal and what is the result? Actually, Hegel definitely answers the first part of this question in the *Introduction*. The goal, he writes, is where "the concept corresponds to the object and the object to the concept" (Hegel,

n.d.). In the “experience of consciousness”, “the concept” and “the object” are opposites. Their “correspondence” means that, going beyond its limits, the consciousness again finds itself.

A reader familiar with *Logic* will easily recognize a fundamental dialectical-speculative structure behind these formulations, which, when first achieved in the course of a phenomenological movement, gets the name “infinity” (“true infinity” - in *Science of Logic*). “Infinity” is the single logical (formal-structural) result of the phenomenological movement, specifically seen and described by each of the participants of the “experience of consciousness”. How does Hegel represent “infinity” in *The Phenomenology*? As an “absolute concept of distinction ... as an inner distinction” (Hegel, n.d.), or “absolute restlessness of pure self-movement” (Hegel, n.d.), as “the pure alternating fluctuation, that is, the opposition within itself, the contradiction” (Hegel, n.d.). However the opposites as sides of internal contradiction receive “being” only because of each other, in relation to each other, and not in connection with some kind of “sustainable existence”, that is, “infinity” is no longer associated with “existence”, but is a “pure” structure, which will act as a model for constructing categories of *Logic*. Moreover, it can be said that such an understanding of “infinity” even goes beyond the boundaries of the image of “true infinity” that we will see in the “Doctrine of Being”, approaching “reflection” as an image of the dialectical-speculative method, revealed only in the “Doctrine of essence”.

It is noteworthy that, having exhausted the logical possibilities of describing “infinity” as an experience of thinking contradiction, Hegel creates a haunting image of “infinity”: “the simple essence of life, the soul of the world, the universal bloodstream, which is omnipresent, neither dulled nor interrupted by any distinction, which is to a greater degree, itself both every distinction as well as their sublatedness. It is therefore pulsating within itself without setting itself in motion; it is trembling within itself without itself being without agitated” (Hegel, n.d.). The origin and significance of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*’s imagery is one of the most interesting topics, which until now has rarely attracted the attention of researchers (with D. Ph. Verene’s book as an exception (Verene, 1985), as well as the works of other American authors, who were influenced by his thought, on the regularity of the appearance of figurative speech elements in *The Phenomenology*

of *Spirit*, for example, (Magee, 2010; Ricci, 2013; Speight, 2001). Without pretending to cover the entire issue in this article, we will note that the need for addressing the figurative means of expression of thought is intensified in Hegel (and not only in the process of describing the experience of “our consciousness”, but in all the subsequent presentation) in presence of escalations of speculative concreteness. It can be assumed that figurativeness is a natural equivalent for consciousness to the concreteness of philosophical thought. The ground for this is already prepared by the language itself, which allows constructing philosophical terms from the same morphemes that are used in the vocabulary of everyday or poetic idiom.

However, in our theoretical perspective the above-mentioned expressive characteristics are of interest not so much because they testify to the power of intuition of infinity in Hegel, but rather because having this intuition is the most important event in the movement of the “experience of consciousness”. The process of complication, “concretization” of the ratio of consciousness and the subject in the “infinity” reaches the highest degree of intensity. The absolute, complete and infinite nature of the mediation of opposites makes “pure self-movement” indistinguishable from peace, therefore “infinity” should be defined precisely as a speculative structure that functions as a container for the movement of the categories from *Science of Logic*.

The characteristic of “infinity” as a link between *The Phenomenology* and *Logic* brings us closer to understanding the relationship between the elements of the Jena project “Systems of Science”. Discussions about whether *The Phenomenology* should be presented as an “introduction” to the system or as its “first part”, which have been conducted in Hegelian studies for decades, turned out to be unproductive. It proved to be a mere “dispute over words”. It is important that *The Phenomenology* defines a structural model of logical objectivity, which makes primarily its self-movement clear.

In the text of *The Phenomenology* there are fragments that suggest the possibility of direct correlation of its content with the future *Logic* (Hegel, n.d.). My own research, however, confirms the assumption that *Logic* should be correlated not with *The Phenomenology* as a whole, but with the logical content of its individual “circles”, which will be explicated in

the most detailed way in *Science of Logic* (Korotkikh, 2011, 2015). At the new stages of the phenomenological movement, this logical content does not deepen and does not change at all; it only appears to the “other consciousness”, while taking, as noted above, another “phenomenological guise”. Only the rhythmic appearance of the already familiar “infinity” structure (even if not already called by this name) clearly marks the narrative space of the future movement of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In the concluding remarks of Chapter III, Hegel clearly says that “infinity” is achieved here not by “consciousness itself”, but only by “our consciousness” (Hegel, n.d.). So, only “our consciousness”, perceiving the same object (substrate) as “consciousness itself” comprehends it “in an essential form”, that is in the form of a pure concept, or sees “infinity” in its movement. And the consciousness that has reached “infinity”, or directly distinguishes the distinction in its subject, acts as self-consciousness (Hegel, n.d.).

If we take into account only what was said above about the structure of the object of the phenomenological movement and “infinity” as its goal (namely that first “infinity” is achieved by “our consciousness” as occupying a “more convenient” place in the structure of objectivity, and then if it should open itself to “consciousness itself”), one could conclude that immediately after reaching the “infinity” in Chapter III by “our consciousness” — the completion of the “first circle” — the movement in the “second circle” of *The Phenomenology* should begin. But in reality, “our consciousness”, “consciousness itself” and “object”, as mentioned above, are participants in a single “dialogue” of the “experience of consciousness” that binds them: they “exchange words” in the course of the movement of experience, therefore the fundamental for our understanding of the plot of Hegel’s book is the question about the correlation between the representations of the movement of “our consciousness” and the movement of “consciousness itself”.

*The Phenomenology*’s “storyline” implies that the evolution of all participants within the “phenomenological dialogue” occurs “concurrently” in the same “timeframe” of the “experience of consciousness”. But how, then, should the “plot” of the story be organized? Should the description of the movement of “our consciousness” in the narrative be combined

(intertwined) with the image of the movement of “consciousness itself”, which, it would seem, after reaching “infinity” by “our consciousness”, should recapture the initiative? Or, on the contrary, should it take shape in a separate form pattern? At this point, the author should have chosen the optimal order of plot composition, that is the order most natural for reflecting “experience of consciousness” as a whole, embracing all its “passages” and “intertwinements”.

We note, however, that this question is not only “formal”, it is not only about “order of chapters”. If Hegel had preferred the first version of the plot, it would mean that the subject of experience — “our consciousness” — would be put in dependence on its object, “consciousness itself”, which, in turn, would conflict with Hegel’s transcendentalism, which is so clearly and unambiguously presented in the *Introduction* as a principle of constituting objectness in the activity of consciousness. Hegel chooses the second version of plot composition, whereby the description of the “object” (“dependent”) line of presentation of “experience” cannot begin earlier than the description of the evolution of “our consciousness” ends. Therefore, after the evolution of “consciousness” is over, self-consciousness stands in as a separate form, actualizing the model of “infinity”. This completes the development of the experience of “our consciousness”; and for its further development the “concept of spirit” will appear in Chapter IV: “The concept of spirit is thereby on hand for us” (Hegel, n.d.). This decision of Hegel is also reflected in the additions that he makes to the table of contents of the book: “above” the division into chapters, with individual “experiences” being denoted by Roman numerals (on the sheets printed by this time they are the only ones indicated (Hegel, 1807), there is the division of the entire content into (A) “Consciousness”, (B) “Self-Consciousness” and (C), for which the author himself did not manage to find the title, and G. Lasson later suggested to label it “Absolute Subject” (Hegel, 1907).

Representation of self-consciousness as a separate form also corresponds to a change in the way of regarding “infinity”: it loses the character of an object appearing to the consciousness, while the structure itself or pure definiteness becomes meaningful, and not the connection with “sustainable existence” or “carrier” (as the subject matters of Hegel’s

time's physics in Chapter III). In this regard, it becomes clear why in Chapter IV Hegel is distracted from the "object mode" of "experience" and describes only the development of the attitude of "our consciousness" to "self-consciousness", and of "self-consciousness" to "life". The steps made by the consciousness, says Hegel, are preserved in self-consciousness not as entities, in-itself-being, but as its own moments: only their "simple self-sufficient durable existence" is lost (Hegel, n.d.). So after completing the "first big circle", wherein the structure of the phenomenological objectness was presented as a whole, the "first small circle" appears with the "object" ("me") being "non-objective" (Hegel, n.d.). Only in the Chapter V ("Observing Mind") there is a return to the consideration of the movement of the relationship between "consciousness itself" and "subject". Thus, the "second circle" of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* begins.

The presented statement is fundamentally important for understanding the method of constructing the structure of the finally formed text. But, apparently, not wanting to load the description of the "experience of consciousness" with considerations of "external reflection", Hegel does not justify his choice systematically. It is only by separate remarks that we can judge that it was precisely the his choice, that is to say, Hegel does not leave the results generated by "experience" naturally (or even, as it were, "spontaneously") in a "random" order, which seemingly gives us the right to speak about the conscious authorly composition of the book's plot and the setting of exact relations between its constituent lines of development of "consciousness" ("big circle", covering the structure of objectness as a whole) and "self-consciousness" ("small circle", limited to considering the ratio of "our consciousness" and "consciousness itself"). Only the last page of "The Phenomenology" sees Hegel speak twice, in the solemn tone of the final fragments, about the problem of "organizing" the plot of the work. He speaks of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* as being comprehended in the concept of organizing the realm of the spirit (Hegel, n.d.), that is, about the inner and essential side of world history.

However, the source of the problem we are dealing with is pointed out by Hegel in the Introduction: "n the one hand, consciousness is consciousness of the object, and, on the other hand, it is consciousness of itself; and it is both consciousness of what in its own eyes is the truth

and consciousness of its knowledge of that truth" (Hegel, n.d.). M. Mamardashvili in his "Kantian variations" notes that Kant "saw that when we describe something in the world, the description of the world implicitly contains the terms of ourselves as the ones who understand this description" (Mamardashvili, 2002). Actually, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel purposefully and methodically completes the process (started by Kant) of identifying and comprehending self-consciousness as the main "hidden prerequisite" of describing the world. In that he is relying on the concepts of "experience" and "consciousness", which are widely used in philosophy due to the Kantians, above all (Reinhold, 1963). The Hegelian conclusion to the comprehension of the role of self-consciousness in the movement of "experience" reveals that "not merely is consciousness of things only possible for a self-consciousness; rather, it is this self-consciousness alone which is the truth of those shapes" (Hegel, n.d.). Self-consciousness as the truth of all the preceding forms of (objective) consciousness, is the "truth" within Hegel's method of constructing the plot of *The Phenomenology*, and it completes the movement of the "first circle". A description of self-consciousness, albeit still being revealed only for "our consciousness", and not as "a unity with consciousness itself" (Hegel, n.d.), should - before the movement of the narration returns to the phenomenological objectness as a whole - to act as a separate form: "consciousness as it immediately possesses this concept ones again comes on the scene as its own form or as a new shape of consciousness" (Hegel, n.d.).

However, an even more important circumstance that confirms the significance of the decision taken by Hegel to coordinate the "big" and "small" "circles" in the structure of *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* is the reproduction of the relationship between them throughout the whole further narrative, that is, on the material of the second and third "circles". So, in the "second circle", despite the fact that the Chapter V is clearly not a complete text, but rather a sequence of sketches of varying degrees of completion, "consciousness" corresponds to V.A and "self-consciousness" corresponds to V.B and V.C, while in the "third circle", respectively, there are Chapter VI, Chapter VII and Chapter VIII (Korotkikh, 2011); these fragments can be considered as the equivalent of "consciousness" and "self-consciousness" in the movement of "consciousness itself" and "object".



## Discussion

The fact that the emergence of the concept of structure in the analysis of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* can be regarded as natural is associated with the present tendency towards revealing the integrity, orderliness and the consistency of the components of Hegelian *opus*, as well as with the desire to get rid of the aftermath caused by the decades of unreasonable use of “evolutionary historical” method, which excludes the possibility of raising the question of the “synchronous” interaction of elements within the Hegelian system of philosophy.

It should be noted that it was A. Losev among Russian philosophers, who pointed out the absence of the term “structure” in Hegel’s aesthetics: “Hegel does not use the term structure. However, that original objectivity, created by the artist’s genius, according to Hegel, undoubtedly has its own original structure...” (Losev, 1994); “Hegel uses neither the term structure, nor the term model. Yet, it is clear that in his argument about the artistic situation and artistic action, he, of course, means the same thing as we do when we talk about the artistic structure” (Losev, 1994). Sure enough the “original construction” of objectness, which in the modern philosophical language is indeed most clearly expressed in the concept of structure, is characteristic not only of Hegel’s aesthetics, but even more so of his *Phenomenology and Logic*.

In recent decades, this concept has already been used in Hegelian studies (Labarriere, 1968; Puntel, 1981; Stewart, 1998), although, perhaps, it has not yet become a familiar, “technical” term in the process of interpreting Hegelian texts. To what extent, however, does it contradict the current practice of using the evolutionary historical method? If we understand, O. Pöggeler does, “the idea of Phenomenology” as *Denkweg* (Pöggeler, 1973), even in this case “Logic” as the implementation of the “Absolute knowledge” achieved in *Phenomenology* does not leave any doubt that the “way of thinking” nevertheless merges into *Denken*, which is indifferent to “worldly” time and therefore is available to structural analysis as a system of synchronous relations. We surely must take into account that the dramatic story of the birth of the book left an imprint on the nature of the fulfilling the author’s intention; but it is unlikely that the students of Hegel’s thought, who have already come to realize the meaning of the concept of structure

for understanding his heritage, will ever return to understanding *The Phenomenology of Spirit*’s content as “chaotic” (Gajm, 2006) or to regarding its creation as “spontaneous” and its composition as “inorganic” (Haering, 1932, 1934).

Obviously, the attitude towards revealing the integrity and coherence of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is also backed by the evolution of interest in the substantive aspects of Hegelian book. It can be said that past interpretations have focused on the social, historical and existential components of *The Phenomenology*. It is unlikely that today someone will decide to assert that the book can be presented as an understanding of history and culture of mankind, as the specifics of this “understanding” have not yet been determined by any of the supporters of the “realistic” reading of *The Phenomenology*. In recent years, Hegelian studies community has been increasingly occupied by the task of studying the significance of *The Phenomenology* for the development of the logical and methodological aspects of humanitarian knowledge. According to its plan, *The Phenomenology* does not provide some “information about the world”, but rather restores the “structure of consciousness” as a whole, which makes its understanding possible.

At the same time, the greatest difficulties are associated with the understanding of the nature of “our consciousness” with its “point of view” text most often delimited in the Hegelian by means of “we”, and “for us”. What is the main difficulty of an adequate understanding of the nature of “our consciousness”? In my opinion, it is the fact that the “living” consciousness of the author (or the reader) and the element of the transcendental structure that represents the “subject pole” of the “consciousness itself” has to coincide in it. A “pole” like that has the “consciousness itself” as an object of “The Phenomenology’s” experience. The “living”, actual consciousness of the author or the reader is, as it were, “embedded” in the “consciousness itself” subject to direct examination. “Beneath its gaze” it moves and evolves. At the same time, the direction and nature of this evolution does not depend on the random, historically and biographically determined content of the real consciousness of the author and the reader, but only on the steps that the “experience” had made along with the “consciousness”.

In the process of studying the logic of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*'s plot development a key step was made by the American scholar K.R. Dove (1970), who showed the fundamental importance of the author's and the reader's stance ("observing consciousness", the point of view that the philosopher himself fixes using the pronouns "we", "for us") to realize the internal structure of the objectness of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Some essential characteristics of this aspect of *The Phenomenology*'s method are given by W. Bonsiepen, who directly speaks of the "central role of the philosopher" in the narrative movement process. He argues that consciousness is led by the philosopher, in particular, "the emergence of a new real object and the accompanying 'conversion of consciousness' are both carried out through the activities of the philosopher" (Bonsiepen, 1975). The circumstance noted by Bonsiepen is extremely important for a proper understanding of the "reading strategy" that "The Phenomenology" imposes upon us. It is indicated by the words from the second sentence of the main text: "Likewise we ourselves have to conduct ourselves immediately, that is, receptively. We therefore are to alter nothing in the object as it presents itself, and we must keep our conceptual grasp of it apart from our apprehension of it" (Hegel, n.d.). In fact, this provision applies only to the historical and individual components of the consciousness of the author and the reader mentioned above, but does not revoke his activity at all. It is "our consciousness", as the unity of the "real" and transcendental components that acts as the source and initiator of the "experience" systematically described in *The Phenomenology*.

As is known, in the past century, the thesis of "phenomenological" (in the Husserlian sense) nature of Hegel's method was very popular, although it clearly contradicts both the specific mechanism of movement of the "experience of consciousness" and the characteristics of the method of growing creation, which in the final part of "Introduction" is presented by the philosopher himself. However, on the other hand, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the activity of "our consciousness" didn't escape the attention of certain readers, and was not reduced to the "living" consciousness of the author and the reader. Thus, the advantage of the point of view of "our consciousness" over "the very consciousness" was noted, for

example, by J. Erdman: "Since our business is only to facilitate the understanding of the consciousness of ourselves, the forward movement in *The Phenomenology* is always carried out in such a way that consciousness sees what we already know that in itself it is exactly that (or that it is for us)" (Erdman, 1973). Hegelian studies regard the role of "our consciousness" as the initiator of the phenomenological movement and the systematizer of "experience", revealing its "scientific" character. This line of thinking is present in the most consistent way in the insightful works of W. Marx (1975, 1981).

In recent years, new incentives for analyzing the structural aspects of Hegelian philosophy have emerged in connection with attempts to present a non-metaphysical image of Hegel's philosophy (Gupta, 2004; Kreines, 2006; Lumsden, 2008). Despite the variety of interpretations of Hegelian philosophy that have appeared over the course of two centuries, the common feature was the desire to "tie" its objectness to one or another type of "existence". As a result, the understanding of the uniqueness of Hegelian thought, which frees objectness from the connection with "existence" and makes it possible to determine the nature of philosophical knowledge and the place of philosophy in the system of sciences more accurately was lost. The solution of this very problem is associated with the old idea of Hegelian philosophy as the end of the history of entire classical European philosophy. If we consider only *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, then it should be noted that the prevailing Marxist or existentialist interpretations have so far presupposed the possibility of exclusively "realistic" readings of Hegelian book. Using the concept of structure, indicating that the internal content of elements is equivalent to a set of external relations and, therefore, their "behavior" can be understood on the basis of establishing a place in the system, we fend off the need to search for "real" correlates of phenomenological gestalts, although, as we said above, the coincidence of the point of view of "our consciousness" with the "living" consciousness of the author and the reader represents, indeed, a very subtle aspect of the search for an adequate method of reading *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Among Russian scholars it is A. Vlasov, who shows a fairly accurate understanding of the structure of *The Phenomenology*'s object, where "our consciousness" occupies a position that

provides it with an advantage in understanding “experience” (Vlasov, 1997) (although he does not use this expression). Some researchers describe the difference in the presentation of “experience” of “our consciousness” and “consciousness itself” as an author’s technique, pursuing a “pedagogical” goal, which, of course, does not to any extent mean denying its significance for the “experience” movement (Westphal, 2010). At the same time, it should be stated that the exact characteristics of the structure of the subject *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and the specificity of the method due to it were absent in the scientific literature so far, and, which is especially important in the context of the problems discussed in our article, none of the researchers did not consider the structure of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* objectness as a basis for solving the problem of establishing the structure of the text.

The above presented characteristics of the Hegelian method shows that the “leading” role of “our consciousness” in the movement of *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* is due to the place it occupies in the structure of objectness. In the “Introduction” Hegel brilliantly shows that “our consciousness” is “one step” ahead of “consciousness itself” precisely because it sees the emergence of its object, and this process is inaccessible for observation for a consciousness submerged in experience, occurring “as if behind the consciousness’s back”: “it takes place for us, as it were, behind the back of consciousness” (Hegel, n.d.). Things that “consciousness itself” experiences “only as objects” appears “at the same time as a movement and a coming-to-be” (Hegel, n.d.) for “our consciousness”. Due to the fact that, modeling the phenomenological situation by means of the above-mentioned “stratification of consciousness”, “our consciousness” is freed from a direct connection with the object (it looks at it with the view of “consciousness itself”), it also sees the need for the entire sequence of forms of consciousness. Therefore it elevates the “experience of consciousness” to a systematic form, that is, to the status of science.

The construction of *The Phenomenology* with all its passages and intertwinements of “gestalts” that form its movement is possible only due to the special position and status of “our consciousness” in the structure of phenomenological objectness. But, historically and “biographically”, a certain content of “our consciousness” doesn’t affect the performance of this function. In this connection, it is necessary

to recognize as erroneous the widespread assertion that “we” should be identified with a kind of “absolute” view of the object, (see, for example, (Pöggeler, 1973). Indeed, an identification like that would deprive the author and the reader of the need for a real “experience”; from the very beginning they should have possessed the knowledge necessary for recreation of the “experience of consciousness”. This knowledge can be “conquered” only after passing through all the stages of the “phenomenological ladder”. Actually, we know that the “real” author did not possess such knowledge: that was his reason to define *The Phenomenology* as a “journey for discoveries” (Nikolin, 1970). It would be even stranger to demand it from the reader.

### Conclusion

Long-term studies of the problems associated with understanding the nature of the object and the method of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* consistently led to the question of the nature of the principles that underlie the way the plot is constructed. It is the “plot”, in contrast to the “storyline”, that determines the specifics of the author’s view of the subject matter that a philosopher can reveal. It seems that these studies, outlined in this article, justify our intent to class the principles of constructing the plot of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* as “structural”. In fact, the “behavior” of elements in the Hegelian system at all levels does not depend on their specific content, but is determined solely by the ratio of elements in the system as a whole; and this is the main feature of the structural methods used over the past one and a half centuries in linguistics and literary studies, anthropology, religious studies and a number of other humanitarian disciplines. I hope that this article, re-creating the two main principles of organizing the content of *The Phenomenology* and showing how they interact, not only enriches the methodological tools of Hegelian studies with the concept of structure, but also indicates possible directions for future studies of Hegel’s work, since studying the structure and dynamics of the plot encourages the question of the specifics of the narrative practices reflected in the book, in particular, the role of dialogism in the process of creating *The Phenomenology*’s content and the method of its presentation to the reader.

Within the confines of the present study, it can be stated that the analysis of the problems of the plot composition of Hegel’s work, the content of

which is rich with heterogeneous material, and where, as it may seem, the author admits an inexplicable self-will in regard to the sequence of historical and cultural phenomena chosen as a subject, that the plot composition yields to two basic principles: the structure of objectness as the starting point of the “experience of consciousness” and “infinity” as the purpose of its two movement in each of the “circles” of *The Phenomenology*. These two principles, while having different nature, are intertwined in the Hegelian concept of self-consciousness, which, like a peak, attracts the climber’s view, no matter what slope he chooses, binds together all the individual lines of the “experience of consciousness” movement and finally opens up to oneself the very source of the infinite content of the “realm of spirits”, which the philosopher uses to crown his work.

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