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# **DIALECTICS AND HUMANISM**

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*Jerzy Pelc*

ON SOME MEANINGS OF THE WORDS "SENSE", "TO MEAN"  
AND "MEANING"

1. INTRODUCTION

Wherever we reflect on the meaning of something or on whether something makes sense — do our considerations belong to semiotics? One would think — yes; at any rate many people think it is so. Semiotics — they say — is a science about signs. And signs mean something. Therefore he who deals with meaning is engaged in semiotics.

In reality, this is not really so. It is even justified to suppose that by far most considerations concerning the meaning of something or whether something makes sense lie outside the sphere of semiotics. For the words: "sense" and "meaning" are commonly understood in a multitude of ways. For instance, we say that "this behaviour did not make any sense, and that made sense", that "this matter means very little, and that means a great deal", that "these words make another sense than these ones", that "the meaning of this expression is pejorative, and of this one — indifferent", that "the meaning of this invention relies on this, and the sense of that invention — on that", that "the sense of this conduct was such and such, and the sense of those pains will be different". Therefore it is clear that both sense and meaning are ascribed to various objects, events and phenomena; and not to signs alone.

The fact of the matter is that only when meaning or sense is attached to words, linguistic expressions, to sentences, texts, indications, symptoms, syndroms, signals or to symbols — shortly speaking, to signs — do we deal with the semiotic concepts of meaning or with the semiotic concepts of sense. In all other cases, i.e. when we think of the meaning or sense of something which is not a sign, we have to do with non-semiotic concepts of meaning and with nonsemiotic concepts of sense. And then our considerations not in the least belong to the sphere of semiotics. At the most, they are wrongly included into semiotics. The error lies here in the negligence of the ambiguity of the word "sense", of the word "to mean", and of the word "meaning", and in treating each of those words as if they had a semiotic character always and everywhere, whenever they occur.

In order to avoid this error, it is necessary to get acquainted with the meanings of the word "sense", of the word "to mean", and of the word "meaning". But first of all, it is indispensable to distinguish the

Looking in this way at the Unification theory of history, we might restate it in a different manner, without changing its essence which is theistic and Christian. One such way might be as follows:

The reality which we witness leads us to accept God's existence. This God is infinitely good. He is the creator and provident cause of man's existence.

Man, as a conscious and free existent (subject) acts with other men and also with his material environment (objects). His activity exhibits direction and progress. Man improves, changes and adapts the material environment to his needs. Thereby he makes some development and progress in cooperation with other people.

From time to time outstanding leaders appear who greatly influence the course of events. Their appearances are not explicable naturalistically by the forces of production and their relationship alone. History must be explained by forces lying beneath our material drives. Our best results must be understood in terms of God's intervention on our behalf.

Why is this intervention needed? It is needed because man is limited in his knowledge and not always good. Consequently, there exists a struggle between men in which the good man is not always the winner. Hence, God intervenes to make sure that His goal, and thus the goal of mankind, will be achieved.

The question arises: why is man so weak? Why is there so much suffering? Here we must refer to the paradisiacal fault, sin. This sin was not God's will but the choice of man's free will. Yet God's creation had a good purpose, namely, to make man happy. Thus we can see the need for a process of restoration.

This restoration will lead men to achieve his true and original destiny, the Kingdom of God, even on this earth.

This seems to be the logic to the Unification theory of history. It is obvious that it may be accepted by some and rejected by others. Yet, objectively speaking, it is a theory that is well justified.

In this theory man appears as a person of cosmic dimension (everything is for man; he is the encapsulation of all realities, visible and invisible) with a transcendent theistic direction (friendship with God) tending toward man's well being even on this earth. To this effect man has to contribute his share by following Divine guidance. The inevitable result will be man's happiness even on this earth.

Sebastian A. Matczak

Marek N. Jakubowski

### THE MEANING OF HISTORY IN AUGUST CIESZKOWSKI: BETWEEN HEGEL AND ROMANTIC HISTORIOSOPHY

The third decade of the last century in Germany was dominated wholly by Hegelianism, then held to have solved all the basic problems of philosophy. "Absolutist idealism" was then considered to be especially responsible for the final reintegration of thought and being, which had been so radically separated by Kant. The philosophico-historical optimism of the Enlightenment had broken down as the result of the catastrophes of the turn of the 18th century and it seemed that it had gone for ever. Hegel, however, managed to restore faith in the rational nature of history. Even so soon after his death his pupils began to voice doubts as to the validity of his interpretation of reality. At first they were doubts mainly concerning the problems of theology, but they soon moved to the central issue of Hegel's interpretation of history as the sphere of the realisation of the spirit. Having doubted the complete merging of Being and idea the next step was to introduce man into the historical process as the conscious creator of social reality. Thus Hegel's reason was stripped of its "clever" character. This stream of post-Hegelian thought produced many interesting thinkers and its outcome was the appearance of historical materialism.

Cieszkowski's great contribution was that he was one of the first to join this movement in European philosophical thought and, although there was much that divided him from Hegel's followers, he was undoubtedly one of the creators of the line of philosophy which aimed at removing the fatalistic nature of history and to give it a humanistic dimension.

In his doctoral dissertation, written in 1838, Cieszkowski says: "It follows therefore from all this that Hegel is a great force in all philosophical questions which from now on must be taken into account. Indeed, on close examination we see more than one of his weak sides but it is those weak sides that are already becoming or soon will become the necessary conditions and reasons for progress".<sup>1</sup> Cieszkowski then, seeing the greatness of the Berlin master believed that he had not finished the work which he himself had considered completed. It was the dialectical method which in Cieszkowski's eyes decided Hegel's greatness; his weak side was his philosophy of history (and the notion of the spirit). Let us now turn our attention to dialectics since at that time it no longer represented in the Hegelian school a single unified method. We know that the basic concept of Hegelian dialectic was that all development

<sup>1</sup> A. Cieszkowski, "Rzecz o filozofii jońskie" (On Ionian Philosophy), in *Prolegomena do historiozofii* (Prolegomena to Historiosophy), Warszawa, 1972, p. 254.

takes place within a strict logical syllogism containing two contradictory premises and a resolution-synthesis. By the end of the thirties the relations of the components of the dialectical triad posed the basic problem. According to Hegel, the mutual cancelling of the two opposites, the two contradictory poles of reality, comes about through the third element which causes this dialectical tension to explode thus leading to a union which reconciles the two opposing elements. Thanks to the principle of *Vermittlung* and *Versöhnung*, the category of *Aufhebung* receives a double meaning, on the one hand, *Aufhebung* is the negation of the starting point, on the other, the preservation of that which is negated. In other words, in the process of superseding there is no annihilation of the superseded elements: they are introduced (though not totally) into the new part of the dialectical syllogism. This system of mediation became the object of attack for the radically minded followers of Hegel. Their transformation of dialectics questioned the possibility of development through mediation and reconciliation and this changed the meaning of the fundamental category of the syllogism — superseding. The Hegelian “*Aufhebung*” meant both the negation of the starting point and the preservation of what was negated. The young Hegelians, however, stressed its negative destructive character, thus rejecting any possibility of mediation.

Cieszkowski was here more faithful to the original Hegelian idea. According to his conception, the principle of mediation is basis for dialectically developing reality. “All those theses and antitheses”, he writes, “aim at a synthesis. All positing and negation merge into a higher and fuller affirmation, every switching and turning refers to a linking”.<sup>2</sup> We have here a terminus medius, so characteristic for the Hegelian understanding of dialectic. As we shall see later, in his periodization of history Cieszkowski maintains that the third stage develops from two earlier stages and constitutes not merely their sum but a new quality. It is an excellent illustration of his conception of dialectics.

However, in his system it is not only the synthesis which has a polymorphous character, neither the thesis nor the antithesis are intrinsically homogeneous. The thesis already bears the marks of its future dualism, containing elements alien to its own principle which are the “embryo” of further opposition. It is those elements which are the basis of the antithesis which, at the same time, absorbs characteristics typical for the thesis as negated. The antithesis is then both the external (that is turned against the position) and internal opposition. This is so because, as Cieszkowski writes, “what has been overcome is in no way destroyed. It exists both ideally, as a moment in the new, and really, taking refuge in a forgotten corner of existence, having placed itself there to serve as a direct witness of the past”.<sup>3</sup> Thus both the thesis and the antithesis contain the same qualities; their opposition in

<sup>2</sup> A. Cieszkowski, *Ojciec Nasz* (Our Father), vol. I, Poznań 1922, p. 119; in volume III (Poznań 1923, p. 279), Cieszkowski writes: “Perfection includes Negation which is already accomplished, that is, a negated Negation. It is the destiny of any stage or part to be negated by the very fact of its being determined (according to the axiom: *omnis determinatio est negatio*). Any imperfection strives for its end, for its appropriate destiny, so it is the destiny of any standpoint to be transcended and of any one-sided position to be superseded; however, that supersession is by no means a mere privation but an affirming Negation of Negation”.

<sup>3</sup> Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena*, op. cit., p. 26.

relation to each other is based on the fact that a different quality prevails in each. According to Cieszkowski, every phenomenon contains manifold forces — “in every present we see the fusion of the past and the future”<sup>4</sup>, for contradiction is a condition of progress which is a harmonious and fluent transition from a lower quality to a higher. This is why when talks about synthesis he very often has in mind an incomplete, relative and thetic or antithetic synthesis and not a complete and absolute one. In the complete synthesis (the last part of the dialectic triad) “we must differentiate between the three moments of thesis, antithesis and synthesis as such”.<sup>5</sup> Hegel’s error, according to him, was that he treated such partial synthesis as complete; art, for example, which, it is true, is a synthesis of being and thought but on the thetic level (with the first moment predominating). Similarly philosophy is a synthesis, but on the antithetic level (where the abstract predominates). Thus Cieszkowski did not follow the young Hegelians in his interpretation of dialectics. He remained faithful to Hegel in that, according to his understanding of the category of *Aufhebung*; preservation was much more important than negation.<sup>6</sup>

As we have noticed, Cieszkowski, unlike Hegel, wants to make a universal principle out of dialectics not only in the sphere of consciousness but also in the material-sensual aspect of human existence. This problem had already appeared for the first time in the work of D. F. Strauss. Cieszkowski goes further when he says that man is also a creature of flesh and a part of the material world, part of nature. The material and social surroundings are also part of human existence. In this situation the laws of dialectics must refer not only to consciousness but also to human history, even to nature. “Nature”, writes Cieszkowski, “has no vision of spirit but is itself its representation”.<sup>7</sup> In this extended field of dialectics he distinguishes three “categories of general history”: the logical, defining the mechanism of historical process; the physical, attempting to dialectalize nature as linked with history; and the spiritual, defining the way in which man fulfils the essence of his species.<sup>8</sup> In his attempt to overcome the Hegelian philosophy of consciousness Cieszkowski opens up a wide avenue of thought — leading from Hegel through Bauer and Feuerbach to Marx and Engels — by introducing real and material world (social in the first place) into the domain of dialectics. We must point out, however, that his attempt to introduce dialectics into sensual reality is not so much derived from Hegel’s thought as it is achieved by introducing into the sphere of dialectics romantic elements totally foreign to Hegel. The most important of these are the idea of the “rehabilitation of matter” and the “spiritualization” of absolute idealism, typical for the French romantic social thought (among others, Cieszkowski mentions Buchez). Undoubtedly this separated his thinking from that of the young Hegelians and from Marx. Those elements foreign to Hegel define the difference of Cieszkowski’s thinking

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> See A. Sikora, “Filozofia polska pierwszej połowy XIX wieku” in: H. Hinz, A. Sikora, *Polska myśł filozoficzna. Oświecenie. Romantyzm* (Polish Philosophy: The Enlightenment and Romanticism), Warszawa, 1964, pp. 81—83.

<sup>7</sup> Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena*, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> See, J. Gebhardt, *Politik und Eschatologie. Studien zur Geschichte der Hegelschen Schule in den Jahren 1830—1840*, Stuttgart, 1963, p. 141.

in the post-Hegelian quarrels about the dialectic of history, this is not always noticed in the literature on the subject. The terms which he put forward in his first and highly important work *The Prolegomena to Historiosophy*: "action", "future", and "turning philosophy into life" seemed to be identical with those terms which shortly afterwards appeared in the writings of the Young Hegelians: but they must be understood within the context of a different interpretation of the dialectics. The fact is that it was he who created this new horizon of thought into which the Young Hegelians entered and which was finally transcended by Marx and Engels.

The acceptance of the Hegelian dialectic did not prevent Cieszkowski from looking critically at "absolute idealism". His critique was very specific, resting on a belief that Hegel's thought had a special place in the history of philosophy, crowning its achievements so far. Thus if there is a fault in "absolutist idealism" it lies with philosophy itself and with the limitations of the philosophic discipline.<sup>9</sup> According to the Polish philosopher, those limitations were caused by the fact that all philosophy up to that time had tried to grasp reality in a purely internal, reflexive form. In his own concepts he set out to surpass philosophy conceived as pure knowledge. Before he did that he saw the necessity of introducing a correction into Hegel's concepts. His analysis of Hegel in *The Prolegomena to Historiosophy* is carried out on two levels. Firstly, Cieszkowski wanted to show an important inconsistency in Hegel's system, attempting an immanent correction of it. Without this correction it would have been impossible to carry out the second, positive, point of his programme, that of the restructuring of philosophy. This positive aspect of his critique of Hegel required a system which taking into account the achievements of philosophy to-date (primarily of Hegelianism) would at the same time transcend it and by abandoning its speculative position bring it "into life".<sup>10</sup>

Cieszkowski joins here the wide stream of European thought which for almost a century had tried to find the key to the meaning of history, the latter, having undergone acceleration, appeared so complex that naive providentialism could not explain it satisfactorily. All scholarship up to that time had been confined to the "philosophy of history"; our philosopher aimed at creating a true "historiosophy", a real "wisdom/knowledge of history" which would replace the old "love of the wisdom of history". The process of uncovering the meaning of history, which Cieszkowski identified with an increase of self-knowledge, was originated by Vico, continued by Herder and finalised, as we know, by Hegel when he defined the laws of dialectic. In "absolutist idealism" those laws govern the process of the development of spirit which in accordance with the principle of the dialectic triad appears in three stages as "subjective spirit", as "objective spirit" and as "absolute spirit". Those stages appear simultaneously in reality, not subject to chronological order. This is

<sup>9</sup> Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena*, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>10</sup> See, H. Stucke, *Philosophie der Tat. Studien der Verwirklichung der Philosophie bei Junghegelinern und den Waren Sozialisten*, Stuttgart, 1963, pp. 114—116. The author rightly says here that Cieszkowski's "philosophy of action" is build on a two point programme of critique of Hegel. The first point is the critique of Hegel's philosophy of history, the second — the critique of the *Versöhnungsphilosophie*.

why Hegel did not subject the history of mankind to this trichotomy. History for him is a gradual shaping of the spirit in the conditions and actions of nations and states. During its development the spirit utilises nations whose actions are the motor of the progress of history. Hegel divided history into four epochs in which nations personified the objective of the spirit: the Eastern period, Greek, Roman, and Germanic. It was this historiosophical structure that Cieszkowski criticised. He deemed it inconsistent not to subject the division of history to the principle of the dialectic triad. "The laws of logic", he wrote, "which he was the first to show, are not reflected with enough clarity in his philosophy of history; in other words he did not arrive at the notion of organic and ideal unity of history, its speculative division and its final structure".<sup>11</sup>

In the opinion of the Polish philosopher, the Hegelian tetrachotomy should be replaced, in accordance with the laws of dialectics, with the trichotomy and this division should take into account the whole of history including the future. Cieszkowski thus distinguishes three basic epochs: the antiquity or the past, the middle ages or the present, and the future. The antiquity, originated by Adam, was the period of man's direct contact with nature; it was "the state of Nature". Man considered himself part of nature with which he had direct sensual contact and cognition was achieved through feelings. The spirit was in the period of beauty and Cieszkowski calls it a period of art. The second period in the history of mankind came with the coming of Christ and this epoch was like an antithesis to the thesis in relation to the former epoch. The latter was a period of materialism, the Christian period was one of idealism, the turning of man to himself, an era of reflection. This stage of human history is concluded with Hegel's system which crowns the long process of consciousness coming close to truth. Lastly the synthetic period — the future — is to be the third link in the dialectical triad, the period of general reintegration, the overcoming of the antinomies of the two preceding epochs.

In the former epochs two opposing principles dominated, being and thought, in the future practical life was to be the dominating principle containing both the elements of the material and of the ideal. The spirit having overcome the primary stage of beauty and the opposing it stage of truth was to elevate itself to the highest stage of the good, the final mediation of Being and thought achieved by praxis. This ultimate mediation was to be achieved because will, the essence of the spirit, according to Cieszkowski, would reach its synthesis, that is freedom. The former dominating powers of the spirit were love (in antiquity) and wisdom (in Christianity). The Hegelian system holds that the spirit becomes aware of its freedom whereby will is subjugated to thought. Of course, Cieszkowski was not the first to introduce the future into the domain of philosophy or to apply trichotomy in the division of history, both had a long tradition in the history of European thought. Such a futuristic approach within the sphere of Christian thought characterised all millenaristic conceptions arising an awareness of the tragic rift in reality moved their main point of interest from the present to the future.

The affinity between Cieszkowski's ideas and the thinking of Joachim de Fiore and other "dissident" Christian thinkers became all the more

<sup>11</sup> Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena*, op. cit., p. 4.

apparent in his *Our Father*. In it the third epoch, the future, was the promised and long awaited "God's Kingdom on Earth". The three epochs of history reflected the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, in agreement with the Chiliastic tradition. Cieszkowski considered Chiliastic views as a premature dream about social justice which stood no chance of being put into practice. It does not mean that he did not value them, on the contrary, he considered those views as a necessary stage in mankind's achievement of the knowledge of the Kingdom of God. The trichotomic division of history had also been applied by Shelling, though any affinity with his system is more of a formal nature. The same can not be said about the likeness of the views of the Polish messianist and certain ideas functioning at that time in French philosophy. Cousin, for example, whom Cieszkowski knew personally through C. L. Michelet, became fascinated with dialectics during his stays in Berlin, and although unable to apply it consistently in his system had also introduced the Hegelian trichotomy in history and, what is more important, considered the future.

The convergence with the thinking of the French, namely with Utopian socialism, is especially noticeable when we closer analyse the social ideal and the critique of existing reality. Such importance attached to the future and the activist ethos was one of the basic features of Polish romanticism. There was another Polish thinker who at the same time or even before Cieszkowski defined a very similar historiography. He was Hoene-Wroński — it was he that gave rise to the notion of Messianism, so differently understood by the poets and Cieszkowski. He also attempted to comprehend the history of mankind as a correct and teleological progress of social life which aimed at achieving the "happiness of mankind". Similarly, he divided the whole of history into three basic epochs, in which he differentiated seven periods. According to him, mankind was at the beginning of the second epoch. It was, however, the idea that man should himself create his social reality that brought together those two most distinguished Polish thinkers of the nineteenth century. The same thought appears under many guises in the writings of almost all Polish philosophers between 1831 and 1863.

However, the idea of universality and continuity of the historical progress was something new for Hegelianism; the stress of cognition based on the future simply contradicted the Hegelian notions. To Cieszkowski it was a logical outcome of the dialectical method. For the division of history into three periods one of which included the future was not simply a formal subordination of history to the dialectical principle of the triad. The change goes much deeper that it would at first appear. This confinement of philosophical knowledge to the present was the result, in idealist absolutism, of having accepted that the highest manifestation of the spirit is self-consciousness as expressed by philosophy. As Hegel's thinking formed the highest expression of philosophy, the peak of its development, it meant the end of the formation of the spirit of the historical process. Hegel did not of course deny that mankind will have a further history; however, that problem was to remain outside the domain of philosophy. The future is of no importance to him as all historical events are powered by absolute necessity and we gain knowledge of them *post factum*. Any digressing on the future must necessarily bear the mark of day-dreaming (*Schwärmerei*) and belong to Utopian thinking. Cieszkowski, on the contrary,

believed that it was quite valid to talk about the future at the stage of knowledge at that time. In his letter to Michelet, dated 18th March, 1837, he says that the charge of Utopianism is not applicable to his concept. "Has philosophy become", he wrote, "an exact science or not? If it has, then from the moment we know its principles all we have to do is to deduce its results".<sup>12</sup> Hegel was correct when he considered his system as the highest manifestation of philosophy. The problem lies in the fact that philosophy (thought) is not the ultimate stage of the spirit. The full manifestation of the spirit is realized not in the realm of philosophy but in the field of human history and its final manifestation is practical activity in the sphere of social life. Cieszkowski thus shifts considerably the Hegelian hierarchy of the manifestation of the spirit. It is history that fully reflects the dialectical process of the development of the spirit and its triadic principle. "General history", he writes, "is a process of development of the spirit of mankind within the perception, consciousness and active confirmation of beauty, truth and goodness which we must learn with its necessity, contingency and liberty."<sup>13</sup>

So, Cieszkowski's trichotomy of history is not, regardless of what he says himself, just an addition to or a correction of the Hegelian system. That would have been the case if the three afore-mentioned epochs were confined to the past, if he had just replaced the Hegelian tetrachotomy with his trichotomy. Hegel himself had attempted to do that when at first he divided history into three epochs: Eastern, Classical and Christian. He soon abandoned this division seeing too great a difference between the Greek and the Roman world. Cieszkowski departs from Hegel when he thinks that he only provides an addition to his thinking. "Going beyond Hegel" is thus not a consequence of a correction within his concepts of history, which would lead to the ultimate historiographical interpretation of his method, for it is this correction itself that takes Cieszkowski beyond Hegel. It was impossible to introduce the category of the future into Hegel's system, it would have required a reformulation of his category of spirit.

For Hegel general history reflects the process of the development of the objective spirit which manifests itself in law and state. The objective spirit is not the highest form of spirit, however. Art, religion and philosophy develop independently of the political history and are not subject to those laws which so inexorably govern the sphere of the objective spirit. It is those three spheres of human creativity that form the highest manifestation of the mind — the absolute spirit incarnate in the world. If we remember that three epochs distinguished by Cieszkowski were called by him the epoch of art, thought and action it becomes obvious that his transformation of the Hegelian division of history implied the necessity of abandoning the standpoint of "absolutist idealism". Cieszkowski while preserving the logical order of the three forms of spirit at the same time puts them in a historical perspective. The realization of the human being (the subjective spirit), of the institutions and social relationships called into being by it (the objective spirit) and of the absolute spirit are all achieved in history.

Here a difficulty appears in his concept. Our philosopher (a Catholic)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

wanted to reconcile in his system the revealed truth with science, that is with dialectics. He acknowledges that the absolute spirit — God, is ahistorical and that it is only knowledge about him that develops in history. On the other hand, every spirit possesses the same essence as an ideal material being. God therefore depends on the material and social state of reality which is both historical and dialectical. Cieszkowski tries to solve this problem by a hypothesis that in the future the three forms of spirit will become one. Man will become a free creator of his social reality which shall thus lose its alienating nature. Here the line dividing up to now the subjective and the objective spirit disappears. Man in this system will also realize consciously the will of the Providence so that his will (the essence of spirit) and the will of God will become one. The will of God, however, has always been the same it is only the process of uncovering it that is historical. In this sense the absolute spirit is atemporal. So what appeared to be a minor correction within the Hegelian philosophy of history proved to have far more reaching consequences than Cieszkowski himself suspected, when he wrote: "We have, on both sides, only adapted the philosophy of history to its method and to the nature of its argument, its content to the position that philosophy generally occupies in Hegel's thinking. For our considerations above clearly show that Hegelian philosophy of history did not in any way fit his system".<sup>14</sup>

The science of the absolute spirit which crowns Hegel's work gives way, in Cieszkowski's system, to historiography which proves to be all-embracing knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Philosophy, which according to Hegel was the highest manifestation of the absolute spirit, is degraded by our philosopher, or as he saw it, is put back into its proper place. "Philosophy is bound to discover many things; however, it has already discovered itself and this is why it is dying out in this moment. The epoch of philosophy was in no way hindered in the development of the spirit for it progressed from Aristotle to Hegel. Therefore if thought has achieved its peak, fulfilling its most essential aims it is progress itself that forces it to back away or, in other words, to transform itself from its pure form into another element".<sup>16</sup> That other element is practical life. In this manner Cieszkowski's historiography seriously shook the foundations of the Hegelian philosophy of reconciliation and its basic principle of the harmony of the idea and reality. Those theses were soon to become common among the Young Hegelians.

We must mention here that there are certain trends in D. F. Strauss' *The Life of Jesus* which are similar to those expressed by Cieszkowski in his *Prolegomena*. As we know, Strauss questioned the basic Christian dogma that in the person of Christ was achieved the incarnation of God (*Menschwerdung Gottes*). According to Strauss, a full and single incarnation in a human person is impossible as the infinite cannot manifest itself in the finite. He sees in the dogma as an infinite process of the manifestation of the absolute in the history of mankind. In this context

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 33: "This is how we see the history of the world, as the purpose and aim not only of the spirit but of the whole cosmos, and it stems from our considerations that all possible qualifications, abstract and real, which philosophy is to develop, must appear in history's ultimate stage, that is in the world spirit".

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

history must exist in this future as the domain for the realization of this process. In this way one of the most important theses of Hegel, which said that Christianity (especially Protestantism) was an absolute religion, was refuted. From here it is only a short way to rejecting the thesis which said that the idea was already absorbed by empirical in the sphere of state activity and to saying that Hegel's philosophy itself cannot be "absolute philosophy".

When Strauss acknowledges history as the sphere in which the essence of God is realized he at the same time makes man co-responsible for this process. Cieszkowski goes further: if history is the process of redeeming mankind, the process of the humanity getting closer to the absolute, then history must be subjected to human will. The future is seen as a potential quality which it is man's duty to implement. Cieszkowski and the Young Hegelians go against the Master, whose system attempted to unite the rational idea with the given reality, when they separate the essence and existence stressing the antinomy between them. It is in the future that those two qualities are to be reunited. In Cieszkowski's trichotomic view of history the future has a very special role, as the interpretation of all history up to now is subordinated to the knowledge of its form or, putting it more precisely, to the substantiation of an apriorically accepted vision. It is the present that is the key for the understanding of the whole of history as in every real state there are, in accordance with the philosopher's understanding of dialectics, both potential and negated qualities. How does then Cieszkowski see the nature of the present?

Dualism is the basic characteristic of the modern epoch. If the antiquity was a period of Being — man felt himself part of nature — Christ directed man onto the path of inner search. A new epoch began in which the principle of sensualism gave way to the principle of ideality. However, because in a dialectical syllogism the negated principle becomes part of the negation the second stage of the historical process has the unavoidable trait of a disjunction. Cieszkowski's historiography is a typical symptom of a consciousness of crisis (consciousness of this kind accompanies of course all kinds of millenaristic conceptions). Cieszkowski tries to answer three basic questions: 1) What symptoms characterise the crisis of his own times? 2) What are its causes? 3) What is its historical meaning? The answer to those questions solves the problem of the meaning of the whole of history. "The true principle", writes Cieszkowski, "the real origin of the Dualism dominating the Middle ages is the awareness of the world and of the nether world"<sup>17</sup>. From this basic antinomy of the second epoch stem further oppositions of the body and the soul, God and the world, religion and politics, the Church and the state, and the individual and the society. This dualism, although immanent throughout the second epoch, became apparent in the shape of a crisis by the end of the period. This happened because the humanity having become aware of the one-sidedness of the Christian epoch could not (not knowing the laws which governed its development) understand it. Hence the attempts at overcoming that one-sidedness aimed at a return to the primary quality which had already been crossed. Such was the historical meaning, according to Cieszkowski, of religious, scientific and political revolution of the last three hundred years. Those

<sup>17</sup> Cieszkowski, *Ojczyzna Nasza*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 68.



revolutions did not give rise, as Hegel had thought, to a new epoch in history; they ended the old epoch. The French Revolution was not the dawn of a new day; it was "a bloody glow of a setting sun". Like the Saint-Simonists, Cieszkowski held that the evolution of history has two phases. Those two phases are the organic phase and the critical phase. The development starts with the primary unity of mind and reality which break up later to be reintegrated at a higher level. Generally speaking, this assumption was also shared by the Young Hegelians and Marx. As Cieszkowski puts it, "in the certain stages of the spirit the mind is congruent with reality in order that they can later dialectically go beyond one another and to give rise to disharmony in the history of an epoch"<sup>18</sup>. This is his interpretation of the Hegelian thesis on the rationality of reality.

The essence of a crisis is that it is to be superseded. The crisis character of reality guarantees the coming of a new social reality. The meaning of a crisis is in that it prepares the transformation of history into a higher level of development. In *Our Father* he millenarises his historiosophical conception and this new stage of history, where the present contradictions are to be superseded, proves to be nothing else but the Kingdom of God on earth. In this way, Cieszkowski on the one hand sanctifies history by giving it an eschatological dimension and on the other he terrestrialises eschatology by introducing the final aims into the sphere of history<sup>19</sup>. The end of the world is for him nothing else but the end of an era, a closing of a quality state of history and a passing into the next stage. "Temporality is to eternity as a part is to a whole"<sup>20</sup>. The historical time is, for Cieszkowski, a continuum of former and potential states which belong to the future in so far as they are to become, in a given moment, historical reality. The nether world introduced into history is seen as yet an unrealized state of human history, or simply as the future. Cieszkowski coupled his notion of time and history with palingenesis, both individual and social. History is a process of self-perfection of the spirits of man and nation through a number of transformations to the full realization of their essence.

Here the Polish Messianist introduces features typical for Polish romanticism which have their origin in the works of the French thinkers, Ballanche and Leroux among them. The conviction that their times were only a temporary, passing period was strongly upheld by both the Polish romanticists and the French thinkers of post-Napoleonic period. The loss of contact with the earthly reality by the Church was seen in those circles as the reason of the antinomial nature of reality. Hence they advocated a religious restoration in order to annihilate the irrational character of social reality. Although the traditionalist de Maistre still expected a new explosion of Christianity, the other French social thinkers thought that religion had become outdated in its contemporary form. Putting words into action they split from the official Church and founded their own sects. Polish romanticists were much more careful here, under pressure from the situation in which they found themselves. And although they thundered statements against the

<sup>18</sup> Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena*, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> See A. Walicki, "August Cieszkowski", in: *Polska myśl filozoficzna i społeczna* (Polish Philosophical and Social Thought), Warszawa, 1973, p. 427.

<sup>20</sup> Cieszkowski, *Ojciec Nasz*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 184.

Church bordering on heresy (if we only mention Mickiewicz here), they never went openly into war against the Church<sup>21</sup>.

Cieszkowski also thought that the coming future was to be a period of a new religiosity. The religion of the new era could not be Christian. Christianity belonged to the second period, to the epoch of dualism, and not to the harmony which was shortly to rule. Even more so then, the new religion could not be a new confession as then it would be a negation of the former religion. It was to be, as a synthetic quality, a superseding of Christianity (and of all other religions as well) and superseding assumes fulfilment. Both the ancient materialism and the "medieval" Christianity had a one-sided view of man's relations with reality. The annihilation of this one-sidedness was facilitated by introducing matter into the domain of spirit and thus also into the domain of God. The full manifestation of the absolute spirit — God, will come about through the subjective spirit (man) reaching its highest level of evolution — free and creative personality, and the objective spirit (social relations, culture) appearing as a realized social ideal. Religion, which for Cieszkowski was a way of understanding and establishing links between men and between men and God, is in this way identified with the totality of actions of men building the new reality. In his opinion, creativity in the field of the arts is "the ceremony of the spirit", corresponding to liturgy in religions up to that time; and activity in the field of science is "the dogmas of the spirit", corresponding to theology, and lastly the shaping of new forms of social life is "a duty and a pious action" — the practical life of religion<sup>22</sup>.

"The words 'let there be' uttered by God when he created Cosmos are to be uttered by Mankind itself when it creates its own world", writes Cieszkowski.<sup>23</sup> In this way the Hegelian man — the unconscious executor of the plans of the "clever reason" — is to change into a free and creative individual able to create himself and his reality. This is the meaning of history.

While in Hegel the meaning of history transcended human history — it is true that the absolute spirit attains in it full self-consciousness, but people play the role only of unconscious executors in this process — Cieszkowski attempts to give to history a truly humanistic dimension. For him the essence of history is the process of the realization of the social ideal, inseparable from the process of man's own perfection. However, having made man the subject of history, Cieszkowski is not able to show, within his idealistic system, the real force which would motor the progress of history. Consequently, he refers social relations to God, depriving thus (in part at least) history of its autonomy.

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<sup>21</sup> For example, the fact that Trentowski had belonged to the free masons became known only after his death.

<sup>22</sup> Cieszkowski, *Ojciec Nasz*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 464.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 164—165.