

## **ABSTRACT**

Is there a world in G. W. F. Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*? This is the central question my doctoral thesis aims to address. Both scholars and philosophers alike tend to consider Hegel a thinker who, having formulated the philosophy of absolute spirit, has surrendered the world. Despite this suspicion, the consciousness finds itself at nearly every level of Hegel's oeuvre in a place called "the world". At every stage, the world changes its shape – along with the consciousness – but its function seems to remain the same. The world is a conception of totality; thus, the world is an object of the consciousness that, by definition, surpasses the consciousness and thus reveals its limits. This moment of a "worldly" estrangement is especially pronounced as the consciousness sets itself into action. One of the most recurring motives in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is the inability of the consciousness to realize its intentions as planned. The consciousness fails to recognize itself in the deed, and thus devises strategies to distance itself from the deed. In my interpretation, this testifies that the deed is the door to the world, and obviously this world is not one that would be in the power of the consciousness. Instead, it is the consciousness that needs to subordinate itself to the deed and thus to the world. Thereby, the consciousness does not renounce self-governance, since the world that has burst into the I by means of the deed is – to a considerable degree – a dimension of the I, itself. The world appears thus as a dynamic of misappropriation; it is not governed by the I, but by a constant logical structure, the structure of self-relation. However, this self-relation is not immediate but mediated by the other. Thus, every being realizes in itself the structure of the identity and the non-identity. In the case of the I, this means that the I is only real insofar as it does not remain with itself, but manages to objectify itself. In its externalization, the I makes a difference that is no difference, since every externalization is, itself, governed by the self-relating structure. This insight into the logical nature of one's own externalization, or of this "ironic" structure of any other being, does not lead to a consciousness who can no longer be "surprised" by reality. It only means that such a spiritual consciousness realizes that being is constituted by the same structures as spirit itself. As consciousness reaches this knowledge, it no longer wants to interfere with the world, but recognizes it as an accomplished world, of which it is a part.

## **KEY WORDS**

world, spirit, self-consciousness, the absolute, irony, Hegel, Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Jacobi, Diderot, Sophocles, Plato