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HEGEL I POSTMODERNIZAM

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HEGEL AND POSTMODERNISM: A REENGAGEMENT[1]

ABSTRACT
This paper introduces and addresses fresh perspectives in the engagement between Hegel and his postmodern critics and detractors. The first part of the paper examines some of the central discussions on postmodernity, specifically in the works of Lyotard and Habermas, and how they, in different ways, reengage Hegel. The second part focuses on Vattimo's deployment of the concept of the postmodern *credo* as a way of returning to Hegel's own interrogation of modern belief. The paper shows that the common thread linking the modernity of Hegel with the "postmodern moment" remains belief, and in particular, belief in belief itself. The final part provides a brief introduction to all the contributions in this issue.

KEYWORDS
Hegel, Lyotard, Habermas, Vattimo, belief, history, faith, modern, postmodern.

(Post)Modernity as an Incomplete Project

Modernity, in the eyes of Jürgen Habermas, is an unfinished project, as one of his famous text states in its very title.[2] The expression "unfinished project" immediately reveals its Kantian flavour and leads us to Kant's notion of the regulative idea and to the ideal of a permanent moral emancipation of the humankind. Similarly to Kant's ideal of moral progress, Habermas' modernity is an ongoing process guided by the regulative idea of rationality. In other terms, according to Habermas, human being has never stopped emerging from the state of their self-incurred immaturity. If the emancipation is an unfinished project, then, consequently, the state of immaturity is always present, constant and, in some sense, completed.

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On the other hand, by declaring modernity an unfinished project, Habermas intends to counteract all those denials of the fundamental postulates of modernity that he pinpoints in postmodernity. From the point of view of an open regulative ideal of modernity, every stance that declares itself postmodern appears as anti-modern or pre-modern. Habermas clearly associates the postmodern attitude with neo-conservative politics: "Postmodernity decisively presents itself as a form of Antimodernity", writes Habermas, quoting an article from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and adds that postmodernism is just a diagnosis of our times (Habermas 1997: 38), that is, a sign of the crisis of the project of modernity which, unable to cope with its limits, starts to negate its own foundations – rationality, subjectivity, progress, etc. It seems that there is nothing more modern than finding modernity exactly in the act of its self-negation. However, Habermas' vision is premised on two unspoken ideas: unidirectional linearity of historical time and a partial historization of modernity. The first indicates a homogeneous time of modernity measured by its universal axiomatic framework, the object of critique in Walter Benjamin's theses on the concept of history; the second implies a historization of the very process of modernity only with reference to what has preceded it, to what is constructed as an ancient pre-modern period. In other words, modernity serves to historicize its past but is not able to historicize itself in terms of its future.[3] The future of modernity is then seen only in the act of resistance against the "forces of the past" that struggle to undermine it. The temporality of modernity is a sort of defensive present that wants to keep modernity in its unfinished, unrealized state, again similarly to the Kantian moral subject. Habermas therefore fixates the epoch of modernity in a sort of a-historical state which, in political terms, means maintaining the current political power relations. His argument against postmodernity points that it exists and finds its *raison d'être* only as a delegitimizing force that aims at disavowing the achievements of the Enlightenment. Nonetheless, this logic applies equally to Habermas' project of refurbishing modernity through communicative rationality and the institution of consensus: it legitimizes itself also through a delegitimization of its postmodern critique. An "open project" needs its "enemies". By insisting on the incompleteness of modernity, as a sort of Kantian regulative idea, Habermas misses seeing that the problem does not reside in the faulty realization of this ideal but in the very modality of its setting. In sum, Habermas proposes to re-launch the constitutive nexus of modernity (rationality – emancipation – universality) against the postmodern declaration of its end as exhaustion of the emancipatory charge of the modern. Only in this way can one believe and hope to keep alive the incomplete project of modernity.

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3   Habermas defines modernity precisely via the criterion of the dimension of the future: unlike ancient times, modernity is a new world open to the future (Habermas 1985: 15). But then he claims that the living presence of modernity is validated through a permanent repetition and reconfirmation of the rupture with the past. Modernity seemed truly opened to the future only once and in the past.

For Lyotard, conversely, modernity cannot be kept alive anymore. Contemporary societies revealed the crisis of its legitimation (what he calls "grand narrative"). All grand narratives evaporated and dissipated into heterogeneous discourses and a plurality of irreducible language games that cannot be translated into one universal metalanguage. For the French postmodernist, simply saying, modernity collapsed and we have to take this failure seriously, that is, it has to be raised as the flag of new times: "Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name" (Lyotard 1984: 82). In philosophical terms, the failure of modernity would mean a failure of the Hegelian system of absolute spirit, of reason in world history, as well as of Marx's prospect of universal revolutionary emancipation.[4] Wittgenstein's model of language games, therefore, provides Lyotard a conceptual tool to understand the condition of fragmented rationality and perished universality, where every discourse, every language game, legitimizes itself according to an inner and flexible dynamic. Paralogy – another Lyotard's concept that expresses the need for new legitimation[5] – aims at providing a certain coordination of differences and particularities, a local coordination deprived of systemic and universal regulation. The questions here can be the following: is a local determinism of paralogy a satisfactory framework for the flourishing of differences? Is the "paralogic" coordination just a regime of knowledge that serves to not obstruct the flow of exchange between "linguistic games" within the still dominant "narrative" – the one dictated by capital?

Lyotard thinks, and this is important to stress, that postmodernity is not a new epoch that simply comes after modernity. It is rather the rupture of the logic of modernity that occurs within modernity itself and is somehow constitutive of it. It is curious to recall Lyotard's claim that inverts the linear order of postmodernity and modernity and calls our attention to the paradoxical character of the prefix *post*: "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state and this state is constant" (ibid.: 79). A few lines after, Lyotard suggests a specific temporal character of the postmodern: "*Postmodern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*)" (ibid.: 81). Future anterior or the future perfect grammatically expresses those actions that will happen as if they were already finished or even those hypothetical actions that could have happened in the past but without certainty. In other words, the postmodern is a hypothetical realization of modernity, an uncertain event; it is both an already-happened future and the past that is not over. But does it mean nonetheless that the postmodern for Lyotard would be a sort of incomplete

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4   In Lyotard's text published in May 1985 in "Critique" (See: Vattimo 1986: 20–21), he explicitly states that the metanarrative of the Hegelian rationality of the real is refuted by Auschwitz, the metanarrative of communist revolution by Stalin and the gulag, the metanarrative of free-market economy by constant crisis of capitalism and the metanarrative of democracy by May 68. It is not necessary to comment, but just to question, why didn't Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 or the Vietnam war refute any metanarrative?
5   See: Lyotard 1984: 60–66.

condition/project as well? If the postmodern is not the end of the modern but its nascent state which is "constant" does it mean that every postmodern act at the same time abolishes and reconfirms modernity? In other words, is postmodernity an unfinished act of doing away with modernity within modernity?

Lyotard and Habermas converge on saying that postmodernity is the sign of the fundamental crisis inscribed in modernity itself.[6] The difference is, however, that Lyotard accepts the sign of crisis as "a condition" of an almost inevitable process that must be accepted as, in a certain sense, emancipatory, while Habermas sees the postmodern as a sign of a risk or danger for the very idea of modern emancipation that must be preserved. For Lyotard, the postmodern is a chance to finally do away with the violence of modern subjectivity. For Habermas, instead, the postmodern is a regression due to a stagnation into which this modern subjectivity has fallen. For Lyotard, the Enlightenment has to be deconstructed; for Habermas, it must be reconstructed, that is, to enlighten the Enlightenment (Habermas 1985: 353). But is there another level of convergence between these two authors? Is not a certain proximity guaranteed by the substitution of the paradigm of production with the paradigm of communication (Habermas) and with the paradigm of pragmatics of knowledge (Lyotard)?

> While faith is without content and cannot remain in this emptiness, or while it goes beyond the finite, which is the sole content, and finds only emptiness, it is a *pure longing* (*ein reines Sehnen*). Its truth is an empty *other-worldly beyond* for which there is no longer any adequate content to be found since everything now stands in a different relation. – With that, faith has in fact become the same as the Enlightenment, namely, the consciousness of the relation between the finite existing in itself and a predicate-less, unknown and unknowable absolute. The only difference is *that* the *Enlightenment* is *satisfied Enlightenment*, whereas *faith* is the *unsatisfied Enlightenment* (Hegel 2018: 333).

This is how Hegel resolves the dialectical tension between faith (*Glauben*) and Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) in the famous passage of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Balibar calls this dialectic "the crux of Modernity" (Balibar 2020: 24). Two opposing figures of consciousness – faith and Enlightenment – find themselves reduced to the same falsity, because they share the same "rationalistic" presuppositions. In Hegelian terms, each finds its truth in its own opposite, since each figure needs the other for its internal development, and, in such a way, both prepare the terrain for their overcoming. Can we recognize in Hegel's words a possible resolution of the contradiction between Lyotard's postmodern condition and Habermas' unfinished modernity? Is not Habermas the truth of Lyotard and *vice versa*?

It would be too easy and immediate to identify Habermas' position with Enlightenment and Lyotard's with faith in this analogy. However, what makes

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6   On the polemics between Lyotard and Habermas, see: Huyssen 1984; Rorty 1984; Frank 1988; Wellmer 1985.

Lyotard's position actually closer to Enlightenment, as represented by Hegel, is the state of satisfaction: the postmodern functions as an ultimate realization of this satisfaction of Enlightenment with itself, fulfilled however in its self-negation, in the condition of its consummation. It is a pleasure of free play between linguistic games spiked perhaps with a frustrating and painful feeling of inadequacy. On the other hand, Habermas' stance, like Hegelian faith, figures as an unsatisfied Enlightenment, locked in the ideal of its absolute completion and expressed as pure nostalgia toward something that has never been realized. In this sense, it is not surprising that for both Habermas and Lyotard, Kant remains an explicit point of reference: for the former in the ideal of permanent progress, for the latter in the experience of the sublime as the allusion to the unrepresentable. But does this mean that the only theoretically and politically legitimate employment of Hegel today, after postmodernity, must go through Lyotard and postmodern theory, rather than through Habermas' communicative normativity?

Postmodernity as Historical Event

For Gianni Vattimo, like for Lyotard, modernity has failed. However, Vattimo explicitly translates this condition of failure into a discourse on the end of modernity, which, in his view, is nothing but the completion of the end of metaphysics, as announced by Nietzsche and articulated by Heidegger. The important distinctive feature of Vattimo's theory of postmodernity is its focus on the concept of history. In his programmatic book *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*[7], which represents one of the first original philosophical responses to Lyotard's "postmodern challenge" in the Italian panorama, Vattimo builds upon Gehlen's concept of "posthistorie" and claims that the end of modernity is possible only as the end of metaphysics, which in turn is realized as the end of history, or better, as the experience of such an end.[8] Postmodernity, therefore, cannot be an epochal *novum*, a new stage in comparison with modernity. On the contrary, the postmodern is thought of as the dissolution of the identity between being and the *novum*. In this way, the modern conception of history as a progressive production of the new loses its ontological grounding. Vattimo is aware of the significant conceptual problem that the declaration of the end of history embraces: what is the position of this declaration in historical terms? It cannot be external to the very course of history and therefore must belong to a certain historical horizon. But then how is it possible to declare the end of history from within history itself?

Rather than a descriptive declaration, the end of modernity and its historical teleology is the result of the very weakening of history, of its self-dissolution. In other words, the end of modernity is not a factual, objective truth

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7   Vattimo 1985 (for an English translation, see: Vattimo 1991).
8   Vattimo speaks about dehistorization of experience (1985: 18). On the topic of the end of history, see Vattimo 1986 and Vattimo 1987a.

with universal validity, but simply a historical judgment, i.e., an interpretation staged by historical events. The postmodern moment is an event in the history of being that cannot be a matter of subjective choice or a style of thinking. The postmodern is a consequence of the weakening of the Being, a sort of kenosis, a self-emptying of metaphysical categories. The first event that announces postmodernity would be the Death of God expressed in Nietzsche's philosophy. As Nietzsche claims, God is dead since He was killed by the believers themselves who could not stand the old truth; God had become unworthy of belief. In other words, history delegitimized God as the absolute ground of reality. The end of metaphysics is the very result of the history of metaphysics and culminates in the late modernity. The end of history thus has its own history.

The concept that helps Vattimo think through this process of weakening historical being is that of *Verwindung*, which he adopts from Heidegger. Modernity is not overcome or dialectically sublated, according to the concept of *Überwindung*, but rather subjected to *Verwindung*, which means getting over modernity, recovering from it, and coming to terms with it, incorporating modernity, but also twisting or distorting it.[9] In other terms, the position of the postmodern remains within the history of modernity with an attitude of its radicalization. The Italian thinker of postmodernity is aware that the horizon of history remains the only pivot for the legitimization of postmodernity, which does not lie in absolute foundational principles with universal validity (such as truth), but rather in the multiplicity of different temporal and spatial contexts. In this way, the philosophy of history becomes an important part of the theory of postmodernity, and Vattimo will emphasize this point increasingly in his later works. In an interview from 2008[10], as a sort of self-criticism, he asserts that discourse on the end of history would be another "metaphysical truth" and that the post-metaphysical vision of the end of history can only be one that breaks with the idea of a unitary, encompassing, and linear history of universal progress, but not with history as such. The end of modernity would be, in some sense, the re-opening of history which, according to Vattimo, has its precise political contents (for example, anti-colonial struggles). Precisely these historical events delegitimize the Western ideology of progress. Unlike Lyotard, Vattimo tries to give social and political substance to the formal discourse on the delegitimization of modernity. In that regard, he often quotes Benjamin and his idea that unitary linear history is nothing but the victorious ideology of dominant classes. What Vattimo was less apt to see is that the fragmentation of histories and their discursive localization can also serve as a weapon for dominant ideologies.

What is at work in Vattimo is not history determined by the teleology of progress or by any sort of theological providence, but history as an open process of interpretations, a radicalization of Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Already

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9   For a better grip on the term, see: Vattimo 1987b and Chiurazzi 1999.
10   Ida Dominijanni, "Il pensiero dei deboli. Intervista al filosofo torinese in occasione delle Opere Complete." *Manifesto*, 12/01/2008.

here we can see some analogies with Hegel, which explains why Vattimo's intellectual itinerary was constantly in dialogue with the Hegelian position, with moments of lesser and greater disagreements.[11] However, not dissimilar to the flight of the owl of Minerva, postmodern theory takes its flight after history itself has delegitimized the foundationalist principles of modernity, after modernity has weakened the metaphysical identity of being and history. It would be too ambitious to reconstruct here all the complexity of Vattimo's relationship to Hegel, but it seems that Vattimo's position boils down to that of his *maestro*, Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his hermeneutical partial reappropriation of Hegel: phenomenology of spirit but without the absolute. It might not be too exaggerated to say that Vattimo's "absolute knowledge" is the very consciousness of the historical genesis of the postmodern moment, understood as the process of weakening.

It is true that Vattimo's theory can be seen as a historico-ontological response to Lyotard's formal epistemology of the postmodern and its system of knowledge. However, the formality seems an inevitable consequence of Vattimo's position as well. What kind of formality is at issue here? An answer can be found in late Vattimo's notion of "credere di credere" or "believe to believe". In trying to construct a certain post-metaphysical Christianity, Vattimo concludes that the only legitimate Christian *credo* is one that can be certain about the very act of believing ("I believe to believe") because it remains defiant toward any attempt to provide objective grounds to faith and at the same time uncertain concerning its effects in terms of salvation. By being wary of all metaphysical theological foundations of religion, as well as of the authoritarian institutionalization of the Church, Vattimo counteracts the dogmatism of those who believe in God but do not believe in their belief. "I believe to believe" makes sense only as a personal double performative act expressed in the first-person singular. It is an empty, formal act of weakened belief that practices nothing but hope combined with an attitude toward Pascal's wager. Therefore, the contents of such an act of "weak belief" can be acquired only in the intersubjective praxis through an ethic of dialogue, cooperation, and interpretation. Vattimo's credo could be summed up as saying, "Thank God I am an atheist", but it can be reformulated as following: "Thanks to metaphysics I am a postmodernist".

Hegel's Modernity and Belief

The question of belief remains central to the distinction between the modern and the postmodern, as much as it remains one of the guiding threads of Hegel's philosophy in general. Lyotard's definition of postmodernity rests on this

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11   Vattimo deals with Hegel already in an early piece, long before his postmodern orientation, where he attempts to employ Bloch to propose a dialogue with the German philosopher and give a non-metaphysical reading of his system, see: Vattimo 1970. Hegel is also an interlocutor in discussions in his later works as well, see: Vattimo 2014.

same concept. He defines postmodernity as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984: xxiv). But this definition encompasses, in his view, modernity itself because the latter cannot exist "without a shattering of belief" (ibid.: 77). Incredulity persists throughout both conditions, because, as noted above, the postmodern is "undoubtedly a part of the modern" (ibid.: 79). While the modern remains caught up in nostalgia for the sublime and attempts to provide a proper form to point to the unpresentable as a "missing content" (ibid.: 81), the postmodern dispenses with nostalgia (ibid.: 41), positing formlessness as the proper form for the unpresentable.

> The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable… (ibid.: 81)

In this perspective, Hegel appears as the paradigmatic modern thinker and could even, as Jameson claims, anachronistically be called "an ideologist of the modern" (2010: 2). This perspective implies that Hegel was confronted with the "postmodern" moment, which belongs to modernity itself. The difference is that for Hegel, the incredulity that characterizes the postmodern condition remained limited to a particular sphere of life — civil society — where incompatible truths were subject to mutual disbelief and could, therefore, be discarded not as truths in the full philosophical sense, but as "mere opinion" (Hegel 1991: 132). At the level of truth as opinion, the social bond results in nothing more than a *crowd* or *aggregate* (ibid.: 342). The mechanisms that would undermine the "grand" narratives, just as they would demolish any sublimity and grandeur, are already in place within Hegel's description of civil society. The philosopher's "ideological" role, following Jameson's characterization, resides in his attempt to place limitations on this disorganizing effect of the social sphere. Civil society, in Hegel's eyes, must remain presentable in the form of a political whole — the state — which in turn is embedded in the narrative of world-historical progress. In other words, Hegel's modernity still relies on credulity, or rather, on the idea that the task of politics, and by extension of philosophy itself, is to raise the community above what he saw as the bonds of cynical and atomized relations of "means" and "ends" (ibid.: 220).

On the other hand, the postmodern condition appears as incapable of fashioning a comprehensive doctrine that can transcend the level of what Hegel termed particular relations. Consequently, these relations appear to possess no real hold over the social order, which now functions, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, without the need for belief (2000: 375). Belief in a "grand narrative" is superfluous in such a condition and cannot appear as a collective undertaking. Hegel, however, was concerned only with the anticipation of such a condition[12] and the predicament that the disorganizing forces of civil society would expand beyond the confines of the Westphalian state. To him, this fear manifested in

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12   On this anticipatory attitude in Hegel's philosophy of right, see: Hristov 2022: 252–254.

the image of the "crowd" – a collection of individuals held together by contractual relations alone. But according to Lyotard, this fear was predicated on a "paranoid" image of an organic society, since the "breaking up of the grand Narratives leads to what some authors analyze in terms of the dissolution of the social bond and the disintegration of social aggregates into a mass of individual atoms thrown into the absurdity of Brownian motion" (1984: 15). He adds that "nothing of the kind is happening: this point of view, it seems to me, is haunted by the paradisaic representation of a lost 'organic' society" (ibid.).

However, this "total" and "organic" image of society, for Hegel, still functions as a condition of a higher certainty [*Gewissheit*], since a disposition of trust must be related to the political whole. "The political *disposition*, i.e. *patriotism* in general, is certainty based on *truth* (whereas merely subjective certainty does not originate in *truth*, but is only opinion)" (Hegel 1991: 288). It is obvious, then, that any certainty which could transcend the mere sphere of "only opinion" must be renounced as an object of modern "nostalgia". The postmodern, instead, "must be characterized as a situation in which the survival, the residue, the holdover, the archaic, has finally been swept away without a trace" (Jameson 1992: 309), giving way to a thoroughly "cynical reason" (Jameson 2010: 4). Hegel would then represent one of the last attempts to attain certainty at the intersection of community and belief.

But an understanding that presents modernity as the last "condition" of belief, following Lyotard's diagnosis, oversimplifies the question. Jameson found his inspiration in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who had no qualms about presenting capitalism as a whole — both in its "modern" and "postmodern" moments — as an "age of cynicism" (2000: 225). Although the "postmodern" moment appears to have come to terms with the loss of certainty, modernity, as Hegel also observed, was itself confronted with the problem of cynicism. Already in his *System of Ethical Life*, Hegel regarded the protagonist of civil society, the *bourgeois*, as a figure with propensity toward "hypocrisy and mutual hostility" (Harris, in Hegel 1979: 69). This is why he believed that the principle which should make this figure socially competent was "honesty" (Hegel 1979: 153). His *Philosophy of Right* would later present a more developed institutional arrangement where the *bourgeois* could express their cynical attitude, but only under the conditions of sublation [*Aufhebung*] into a comprehensive political whole. In retrospect, such an arrangement appears as an untenable compromise between the "nostalgia" for the whole and the seeds of postmodernity, which already reside within. But it was no coincidence that Hegel became the first thinker to theoretically delimit the modern state's capitalist interiority. Just as modernity may appear "less cynical" due to its "nostalgic" outlook, the cynicism pervading that condition made modern thinkers "look back" to history. Hegel is among the many authors of his day who tried to comprehend his own time by marking a difference with past ages, particularly with antiquity. This could be the reason why, by comparing the modern political community to its ancient counterpart, he was able to discern the difference between what should belong to his conception of the state and what should remain contained

only by being first excised.[13] What he expelled from the political state and re-integrated into it as a self-sufficient "whole" — the contractual relations of *bourgeois* — came to form the body of civil society.

The modern habit of "looking back" made many of Hegel's contemporaries, such as Benjamin Constant, reflect on this habit itself. For instance, Constant remarked that while the ancients could possess "complete conviction about everything", the moderns had almost no convictions, "save about the hypocrisy of convictions" (2003: 360). Despite the political divides between the two thinkers, this observation was not foreign to Hegel. By comparing two kinds of hypocrisies, he also wrote about a curious new form of disbelief characteristic of the moderns. Hegel argues that ancient hypocrisy corresponded to its concept to a higher degree, in other words, it conformed to what we understand under the term. The ancient hypocrite carried a "cloak of goodness" (1991: 183) behind which they could hide their malicious interests, but the modern hypocrite operates under a "subtler guise" (ibid.). Hegel argues that the moderns do not hide behind a facade anymore because everyone can see through it (ibid.). Modernity is marked by a change in the nature of deception, no longer able to rely on the childlike naiveté of the ancients. Modern thinking's preoccupation with doubt, since its inception in Descartes' meditations, has been driven by the idea of truth as certainty. This is why, as Constant claims, the modern human type — the *bourgeois* — remains always vigilant against "ulterior motives" (Constant 2003: 359), a disposition that gives way to the bonds of civil society. The Greeks were capable of believing their myths even when interrogating their "truth", but modernity faces something more than the erosion of this ability. It must deal with an altogether distinct modality of belief, one that simultaneously transforms the nature of disbelief. This is why Hegel claims that the character of modern hypocrisy does not primarily reside in deceiving others; it can act as such deception only to the degree that it is first and foremost an exercise in self-deception. The modern hypocrite, instead of hiding their "true" interests behind a facade, tends to elevate their subjective opinion to the level of firm and indomitable belief. They take their own opinion as a measure of all certainty, thus turning their individual beliefs into a benchmark of universal conviction, "thoroughly persuaded of its truth" (Hegel 1991: 184).

> This implies that objective goodness is merely something constructed by my conviction, sustained by me alone, and that I, as lord and master, can make it come and go [as I please]. As soon as I relate myself to something objective, it ceases to exist for me, and so I am poised above an immense void, conjuring up shapes and destroying them. (ibid.: 184)

He continues to argue how "this supremely subjective point of view can arise only in a highly cultivated age in which faith has lost its seriousness" (ibid.). Such an observation aligns with Nietzsche's later finding that "hypocrisy belongs to an age of strong faith" (2005: 200), one not yet subdued by nihilism,

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13   See, for example, Hegel 1991: 222–223.

while modern hypocrisy is merely "imitated" (ibid.) in an act of self-imposed blindness. This blindness, to return to Hegel's terms, manifests when subjective opinion seeks to occupy the position of universality without mediation. Another name for this phenomenon is fanaticism, which aspires "to find the whole in every particular, and could accomplish this only by destroying the particular, for fanaticism is simply the refusal to admit particular differences" (1991: 304). An example of this hypocrisy, in Hegel's eyes, took the form of belief paraded during the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution. Along with Constant, Hegel regarded this event with disdain, as a self-deceptive attempt to recover ancient principles as a supplemental ground for modern social bonds. However, the event also signalled modernity with all the self-doubts about its own ability to believe, something evident in the fanatical urge to "imitate" (Constant 2003: 366) a previous age, more adept at believing, foregoing centuries of "mediation" and "development".

Following from this, it would be more correct to name modernity as a condition in which, as Vattimo has put it, one still believes in belief, and based on this belief, seeks to recover a more comprehensive ability to believe. Modern fanaticism appears then only as an extreme symptom of a much more pervasive "condition". Does this mean that Lyotard is too quick to associate Hegel's project of "totalization" with the idea of "real unity", and accuse this "illusion" (1984: 81) for the political terrors of modernity? Hegel himself already recognized this "essence" of terror, and the destructive dangers which rest in the unmediated attempt to recapture certainty. This undertaking is from the outset both politically and philosophically bankrupt, which is why "the whole of Hegels philosophical production is an elaborate refutation of all possible concepts of immediacy" (Jameson 2010: 13). Any type of certainty that would be taken for granted in modernity, is in some shape or another, an "illusion" imposed in an act of self-deception.

However, does this mean that Hegel's project presents us with a higher order illusion, which rests on the idea that mediation can reconstitute certainty? He still looked for continuity with the preceding ages, but not to perform a direct imitation, but to mark its difference by claiming a new kind of certainty, to be constituted by movement of doubt itself. The loss of certainty is not an event to be lamented for Hegel, because, as Jameson shows by commenting on the famous chapter of "sense-certainty" from *Phenomenology of Spirit*, "the breakdown of the relationship between words and things is for Hegel a happy fall insofar as it redirects philosophical thought toward new forms of the universals themselves" (1992: 139). Premodern certainties, despite any nostalgia attached to them, had to be lost due to their internal inadequacy and their immediate nature. They were simple and given certainties, inherited and reproduced through the channels of tradition, with varying degrees of self-reflection, but incomplete when considering the criterion of reflection itself. They could not survive the waves of "repeated interrogation" (Muldoon 2014: 105) unleashed with the inception of modernity, which infected every "shape of spirit", from religion to art and philosophy. Despite this, certainty remains the goal for

Hegel, with its organic form intended to provide solutions for quintessential issues such as alienation and loss of authenticity. In seeking to tame doubt, so that it would cease to act as an external threat to truth which can be believed, Hegel is very much modern. Doubt should become the engine through which difference affirms itself. In other words, as Frederick Weiss argues, doubt becomes the work of the negative:

> Doubt challenges the claim on the part of any assertion to be the whole truth; it brings to bear upon that assertion its own "negativity" or limitedness, the recognition of which alone allows that truth to maintain its limited status as a positive function of a larger whole (Weiss 1972: 88).

Certainty gains its "modern" legitimacy in the interaction of two elements: difference, which is internal to doubt, on one hand, and truth, which must take on the form of a "whole" truth on the other. The experience of the whole necessitates a labour of doubt, which is why even the destructive mechanisms of civil society gain a positive and constitutive sense. However, the task of modernity resides in the attempt to overcome the condition of civil society, and regardless of the method itself, the realities of hypocrisy, cynicism, and disbelief still weigh heavily on the "modern subject".

Reengaging Hegel after Modernity

If modernity, as Lyotard claims by quoting Horkheimer, was still haunted by the "'paranoia' of reason" (1984: 12), then the postmodern moment, still enveloped in modernity, reveals a different kind of paranoia. This paranoia is not based on the illusion that all phenomena can be grasped in their self-regulated and interconnected wholeness, but on the suspicion that our belief in having abandoned this illusion is itself an illusion, which in turn delivers us back to the whole. That this paranoia belongs to postmodernity itself, however, is evident to authors such as Deleuze. The image of capitalism from Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* testifies to this, since the authors position this regime between the two poles of schizophrenia (the loss of meaning and an unprecedented capacity for self-differentiation on one hand) and paranoia (the resuscitation of premodern patterns of belief and representation on the other) (2000: 340). As Jason Read has pointed out, Marx and Engels' famous image of capitalism, in which "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned" (2010: 16), is correct to the degree that it has to be supplemented with the observation that this process of continual melting and profanation is accompanied by resuscitation of archaic forms of certainties (Read 2008: 152), which are invoked in order to "supplement" capitalism's "impoverished structure" (Jameson 1999: 20). If the postmodern moment belongs to the modern, as Lyotard argues, then it presupposes a return to the problems of modernity. The postmodern shares with the modern the same problem of belief, but with the added conundrum that this need itself comes to be regarded with suspicion.

The "positive task" (to use Deleuze and Guattari's phrase, 2000: 322) of the postmodern condition, then, cannot be the recovery of certainty but the eradication of the need for certainty. In other words, we must overcome that hangover effect characteristic of modernity. The task is now explicitly identified as "destroying beliefs and representations" (ibid.: 314). True movement of difference and the most radical doubt, therefore, do not entail modernity's propensity to "look back", let alone to "go back" and preserve. Similarly to Vattimo, Deleuze argues that the Death of God left an "empty place" (2002: 175) unoccupied, which is why we should not look for the "empty tomb" anymore (Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 208) but "change" (Deleuze 2002: 175) the place itself. But the question remains whether this place can be changed at all, and if so, what role does Hegel play (and should he play any role at all) in this undertaking?

This issue of *Philosophy and Society* is dedicated to interrogating Hegel's relationship with the problematic intersection between modernity and postmodernity. While the issue aims to place Hegel within the discourse on this relationship, it also seeks to engage Hegel with various authors of postmodernism, while also questioning the label itself, as many postmodern authors have done. We believe that the contentious status of the concepts of postmodernity and postmodernism is itself a crucial point of the debate. The issue contains nine original articles from various Hegel scholars from around the world.

In "Hegel and Postmodernity: Towards In-Finitude", Bara Kolenc examines the complex relationship between Hegel, modernity, and postmodernity, arguing that postmodernity is a transitional phase leading to the decline of modernity rather than a succeeding epoch. The paper suggests that significant recent shifts have unsettled modernity's frameworks, while Hegel's philosophy still provides insights into transcending modernity through a revised human engagement with finitude and infinity, what Kolenc terms "In-Finitude" or "Un-Endlichkeit".

In "Hegel and the End of the End of Grand Narratives", Gary Browning argues that Lyotard heralds the end of grand narratives and the rise of postmodernity, while rejecting Hegel's grand speculative theory for stifling difference and creativity. However, despite the decline of postmodernism and its critique of grand theories, Browning argues that grand narratives can be beneficial if critically engaged with, and Hegel's philosophy remains relevant when viewed as open-ended rather than closed.

Manuel Tangorra, in the piece entitled "Peoples, Nations and Social Heterogeneity. From Hegel to Laclau and Back", proposes that a dialogue between Hegel's philosophy of history and Laclau's post-foundationalism can help overcome the issue of persistent poles of identification. Tangorra achieves this by exploring Hegel's distinction between "people" and "nation", offering insights into the situational and affective roots of historical identities and broadening the understanding of political subjectivation beyond nationalist rhetoric.

In the paper "Hierarchies of the Dialectic: Hegel on Identity and Difference" Ionuț Văduva argues that a categorial reading of Hegel's notions of identity and difference is essential to grasp their non-hierarchical relationship. Văduva shows that commentators misinterpret these concepts as merely instrumental. By focusing on Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the paper shows the internal linkage and co-structural nature of the two concepts, preventing any hierarchy and emphasizing their movement and immanent relatedness.

In their co-authored paper "After Hegel: A Postmodern Genealogy of Historical Fiction", Angelo Narváez León and Fernanda Medina Badilla explore the relationship between modernity and postmodernity by examining the evolution of criticism's role as a philosophical narrative. The article discusses key moments in modern critical discourse, the influence of Kantian criticism on postmodern thought, and, from a Hegelian perspective, the relevance of universal history and its link to emancipatory narratives.

Iñigo Baca Bordons, in "The Empire Never Ended: Hegel, Postmodernism and Comedy", shows that Hegel's account of modernity aligns with Fredric Jameson's definition of postmodernity as the cultural logic of globalized capitalism. By examining the interplay of Athens, Rome, and Christianity in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the contrast between tragedy and comedy, the paper connects social, political, and economic structures with their representations, arguing that Hegel's relevance today lies in linking Jameson's periodization with Hegel's aesthetic categories.

In "Madness and Subjective Destitution: Toward a Possible Exit from Capitalism", Cynthia Cruz tackles the concept of madness, showing that for Hegel, madness is an inherent state experienced when acquiring new habits, akin to the inherent state of subjective destitution present at the start of being. These states converge during habit formation, when one is momentarily without nature and submerged in madness, creating a unique configuration that parallels but differs from the process of spirit's becoming, suggesting that engaging in subjective destitution and madness can be a path to emancipation.

Timo Hendrik Ennen shows in "Countering Postmodern Genealogies: Brandom, Hegel and the Logic of Self-Determination" that Robert Brandom's interpretation of Hegel offers a conception of normativity that addresses the flaws of both modernity and its critics, advocating for a "hermeneutics of magnanimity" over a "hermeneutics of suspicion". While critiquing Brandom's interpretation, the paper upholds his view that Hegelian philosophy counters subversive postmodern genealogies by emphasizing Hegel's logic of self-determination, which argues that true explanation stems from internal coherence rather than external contingencies.

In the final text of the thematic issue, "Deleuze and the Hegelian State", Julián Ferreyra delves into Gilles Deleuze's political philosophy through the lens of the Hegelian concept of the State, examining three interpretations of the term "State" in Deleuze's work. While Deleuze harshly criticizes the State, the paper argues that his critique doesn't advocate for societal fragmentation. Instead, it compares Deleuze's philosophy with Hegel's to show that the forms

of *socius* in Deleuze's system occupy a conceptual space like the State in Hegel's framework. This analysis lays the groundwork for exploring the dominant social relation in modernity and the potential for a new political *socius*.[14]

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14   The first and second sections, "(Post)Modernity as an Incomplete Project" and "Postmodernity as Historical Event" (pp. 203–209), are written by Saša Hrnjez while the third and fourth, "Hegel's Modernity and Belief" and "Reengaging Hegel after Modernity" (pp. 210–217), are written by Đorđe Hristov.

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Đorđe Hristov
Saša Hrnjez

Hegel i postmodernizam: ponovni susret

Apstrakt

Ovaj rad uvodi i razmatra nove perspektive u odnosu između Hegela i njegovih postmodernih kritičara i protivnika. Prvi deo rada ispituje neke od centralnih rasprava o postmodernosti, posebno u delima Liotara i Habermasa, i kako oni, na različite načine, referišu na Hegela. Drugi deo se fokusira na Vatimovo korišćenje koncepta postmodernog creda kao načina povratka Hegelovom sopstvenom ispitivanju modernog verovanja. Rad pokazuje da je zajednička nit koja povezuje modernost Hegela sa „postmodernim trenutkom" verovanje, posebno verovanje u samo verovanje. Poslednji deo pruža kratki uvod u sve priloge ovog tematskog broja.

Ključne reči: Hegel, Vatimo, Liotar, Habermas, verovanje, istorija, vera, moderno, postmoderno.

Bara Kolenc

HEGEL AND POSTMODERNITY: TOWARDS IN-FINITUDE

ABSTRACT

The article delves into the multifaceted interplay between Hegel and postmodernity, as well as between postmodernity and the contemporary era. Both perspectives grapple with the notion of modernity, intricately tied to considerations of history, the idea of ending, and the concept of historical breaks. Deriving an analysis of the leading ideas of modernity and postmodernity, focusing especially on their relation to Hegel's philosophy, we propose the thesis that postmodernity is not an epoch that succeeded modernity, but rather a transitional phase contributing to the decline of modernity itself. The contours of this new epoch, as yet indefinable or explicable, are revealed through significant shifts that have recently unsettled the fundamental frameworks upon which modernity was constructed. In doing so, we show that Hegel, who is certainly not a postmodernist, points to precisely the mechanism through which modernity can be transcended, which concerns human relation to substance, being, and time. Moreover, as it entails a revised human engagement with finitude and infinity, we term this relation "In-Finitude", or "Un-Endlichkeit".

> It has been repeatedly shown that the infinite progression as such belongs to a reflection void of concept; the absolute method, which has the concept for its soul and content, cannot lead into it. (Hegel 2010: 749)

Introduction

In 2020, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, which now feels much further in the past due to the intensity of the subsequent political upheavals, we convened a conference in Ljubljana to celebrate Hegel's 250th anniversary. Titled "Hegel 250: Too Late?", the conference prompted us to contemplate whether it is too late for Hegel in today's context, or perhaps if it is too late for us – and it is through Hegel's philosophy that we can make sense of the situation in which

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we find ourselves. It turned out, due to the contributions, that it is by no means too late for Hegel – which we cannot definitively say for us.

Future is a risky word. Especially if one follows the flight of Hegel's owl of Minerva painting its grey on grey: we could use Lyotard's voice here and say that "we know that it is unwise to put too much faith in futurology" (Lyotard 1993: 3). On the other hand, however, if we have learned something from Hegel in the last two centuries, it is that the very insight into the structures of the present constitutes the future.

From Stigma of Totality to Differen*c*iation as Uni-Formation

Through the period of the Cold War, a stigma of totality was all the more inflated, and a counter-idea of dissolution of any totalitarian inclinations of thought (i.e., Truth, Ideology, History) prevailed, promoting a permanent production of relative truths and the parallel realities, giving preference to the rhizomatic structures over the hierarchical ones. In accordance with this, Hegel's dialectic was widely criticized for allegedly imposing an identity vision upon the disparate courses of events.

In 1968, Deleuze summarised the Zeitgeist in the preface to *Difference and Repetition*:

> The subject dealt with here is manifestly in the air. The signs may be noted: Heidegger's more and more pronounced orientation towards a philosophy of ontological Difference; the structuralist project, based upon a distribution of differential characters within a space of coexistence; the contemporary novelist's art which revolves around difference and repetition, not only in its most abstract reflections but also in its effective techniques; the discovery in a variety of fields of a power peculiar to repetition, a power which also inhabits the unconscious, language and art (Deleuze 2001: xix).

All these signs, Deleuze posits, may be attributed to what can be called a "generalized anti-Hegelianism": "The primacy of identity, however conceived, defines the world of representation. But modern thought is born of the failure of representation, of the loss of identities, and of the discovery of all the forces that act under the representation of the identical. The modern world is one of simulacra" (Deleuze 2001: xix).

Both Deleuze and Althusser question monocentricity of the circles in Hegelian dialectics, where "all the possible beginnings and all the presents are distributed within the unique incessant principle of a grounding circle, which includes these in its centre while it distributes them along its circumference" (ibid.: 273). Against the convergent and monocentric world of Hegel's dialectics, Deleuze aims for "power to affirm divergence and decentring" (Deleuze: 2010). Further on, Althusser criticizes Hegel's "internal principle of contradiction" as the ultimate lever of identity which operates as a "reduction of totality", that is, "the infinite diversity of a given historical society" (Althusser 1969: 103). Deleuze, who fully embraces Althusser's critique, proposes his vision of

a decentralizing totality evading identity and contradiction: "The totality of circles and series is thus a formless ungrounded chaos which has no law other than its own repetition, its own reproduction in the development of that which diverges and decentres" (Deleuze 2001: 69).

If we look closely at Deleuze's and Althusser's statements, however, we can detect a certain conceptual discrepancy, which can serve as a prototype example of the master signifier logic that characterized the ideological landscape of postmodernity. In the dominant Western discourse accompanying the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the idea of totalitarianism was demonized to the extent that the authors of the French school were superficially read as advocates of non-totalitarianism. However, if we pay attention, we can see that exactly the opposite is true. The thrust of Althusser's and Deleuze's critique is not directed towards Hegel's dialectics as a theory of totality, but, quite the opposite, towards a certain internal principle that precisely prevents Hegel's system – and hence philosophy – to grasping the totality of the world. What Althusser understands as totality is not Hegel's system itself, but, on the contrary, the infinite diversity of realities which Hegel's system, employing the unifying and identity principle of contradiction, in his view, truncates and reduces to conceptual skeletons. But in doing so, both Deleuze and Althusser seem to forget that it is precisely Hegel who determines the abstract by the concrete, the universal by the particular, and for whom any conceptual skeleton can only move with the muscles of the flesh (hence, the true critique of Hegel cannot be executed from the perspective of philosophy as "creativity in concepts", but of anti-philosophy, which is, however, dialectical).

What is the true perversion of our time is not only that the utopian vision of the postmodernist generation – *the difference that will make a difference* – has been realized, in some depraved way, in the multiplication of varieties and variations that make precisely *no* difference, but the fact that this principle of "making no difference" has established itself as the *inherent impossibility* of making a difference whatsoever. What is worse than indifference is *indifference towards indifference* – a systemic impossibility of even grasping a certain problem, of even recognizing it *as* a problem. (Perhaps, we could say that compared to the generation of Tik-Tokers, the cynicism of the postmodern era was the last epistemological position to recognize indifference as a conceptual and practical problem.) In a strange, seemingly sporadic way, it is precisely the infinite field of "differen*c*iation that differen*c*iates", to use Deleuze's expression, that ultimately generalizes and monopolizes the realms of thought and the world – without necessarily, and herein lies its cunning, establishing hierarchical relations. What has been put in place in the past decades, is the domination of a certain self-referential structure that functions in a manner of *uni-formation*, and this is on a global scale. The very concept of "global" is in this sense uniform.

Uni-formation is at work not only in the prevailing of certain discourses and representations within the spheres of the so-called "civil society" and the so-called "politics", and the complementary zones of science, art, and academia,

where, instead of *universality*[1], that is, a direct engagement of certain ideas, values and guiding principles (such as equality, freedom, and democracy, but all the more such as respect, care, solidarity, and responsibility), with particular existences and experiences, we get *abstraction*, that is, a withdrawal of these concepts from any concrete content.[2] That along, uni-formation also takes place on the very material level. The infinite variety of (consumer) choices, that is to say, the multiplication of products of all different sorts, does not supplement but rather tramples over and destroys the diversities that had hitherto constituted the world: cultural diversities, diversities of local communities, rural and urban landscapes, and the biodiversity. What we have got as the after-effect of this multiplication of differences that make no difference are, finally, gentrified cities, monocultural farmlands, Balenciaga billboards on every spot on the Earth, multinational corporation chains like Hilton, McDonald's, and Zara chaining other systems away, standardization on all scales, identification bubbles of social platforms, a trend towards single currencies, orientation towards global language, and so on (into infinity).

In the context of such a uniform world, differences are not substantive, but merely abstract. That a luxury yacht *essentially* differs from a fisherman's boat is one of the major persuasion strategies of today's global advertising: what is wrapped in a shiny paper of a qualitative difference as a token for a "good life" is nothing but a quantitative scale of profit calculations. The promise of the *better* always leans on the execution of the *more* or *less*: to achieve a good life, one needs more comfort, more space, more time, more money, more security, more workouts, or less stress, fewer signs of aging, less weight, and so on. (A qualitative difference, for that matter, would mean reaching out for a good life beyond the normative parameters of the accumulation of wealth and goods.) What we get, eventually, is not a "totalitarian" one-party system, but rather a "democratic" puppet theatre of the parliamentary system orchestrated by the financial elite, resulting in mono-culture and monopoly.

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1   As Simoniti shows in his reading of Hegel's master-slave-dialectic, the universal stance is not one of respecting deeply ingrained particularities of the manifold of every individual, but in the act of the singular individual renouncing her innermost conceptual structure. This is what the master-to-be accomplishes in his struggle for life: "He could be imagined as someone who allows a glimpse into his inside and admits there is literally nothing there" (Simoniti 2023: 166).

2   From a Lacanian perspective, identity tendency is inscribed in language as its very condition of possibility, which means that universalities are produced in language as its structural effect. On the other hand, language itself forms a realm of representation – there are no sub-representative linguistic forms. The flip side of the identity tendency of language is a radical non-identity forming its core, the gap opening around the inscription of the subject into the signifying chain. What constitutes ideology is therefore not just (a specific aspect of) identification, universality or representation, but its phantasmal component, which engages desire circling around the gap. For a more detailed elaboration on the principle of the correspondence between universals and particulars that can be derived from the Lacanian algebra, see the article *Manifesto: Commonism Now!* (cf. Kolenc 2023a)

In the past decades, we have been persistently confronted with the fact that the idea of the dispersion of realities and the accompanying conception of the permanent production of the new, (un)intentionally supporting the neoliberal ideology of the end of ideologies and the *laissez-faire* economy, might lead (not only capitalism but also humanity) to an end. From the epoch of postmodernity, if there is one lesson we have gleaned, it is that paradoxically as it may seem, it turns out that it is precisely the system that claims no boundary that eventually terrorizes, and totalitarianizes the world. Ultimately, we face the following (political, existential) choice: either we go for a regulatory idea that controls the distribution of wealth, or we promote de-regulation, which ends up in a totalizing wealth that controls the distribution of ideas.

A Non-Totalitarian Totality

What would be then, alternatively, a non-totalitarian totality? Let us turn the spotlight on Hegel. At the ending pages of *The Science of Logic*, he puts down the following lines:

> In one respect, the determinateness that the method generates for itself in its result is the moment through which it is self-mediation and converts the immediate into a mediated beginning. But conversely, it is through that determinateness that this mediation of the method runs its course; it goes through a content, as through a seeming other of itself, back to its beginning, in such a way that it does not merely restore that beginning, albeit as determinate, but that the result is equally the sublated determinateness, and hence also the restoration of the first immediacy in which it began. This it accomplishes as a system of totality (Hegel 2010: 749).

A system of totality here refers both to the method of knowledge and to knowledge itself. It demarcates the moment when the substance reveals itself as the subject. In one of his early works, Slavoj Žižek writes about the surprising logic of the non-whole in Hegel. He states that Hegel is the only one who, by distinguishing between concrete and abstract universal, puts forward the claim that "the Whole is built on the limit, that the Universal is built on exclusion", meaning that "the universal is universal only as limited and as such again particular since it excludes exactly the particular", and hence, "it is not all-encompassing" (Žižek 1980: 138). Therefore, a certain logic of lack (and excess) is established in Hegel's dialectics. This is however at the same time subdued at the moment when "'we grasp the substance as subject', i.e., when we make the 'substance' (of One) out of this very movement of 'mediation'–differentiation" (ibid.: 139–140). This is why Žižek can say that in Hegel, totality is "the whole of the whole and the non-whole" (ibid.: 139).[3]

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3   From Slovenian translated by B.K. First quote in original: "Hegel je edini, ki – z razlikovanjem konkretne in abstraktne univerzalnosti – postavi trditev, da se Celota gradi

We can imagine Hegel's dialectics as a coil spring: on the one hand, we see a linear line drawn through the spring, the progress of dialectics towards its phantasmal goal. This goal is not set somewhere in the "bad infinity" but is determined as the final stage of the development of spirit. On the other hand, if we look at the coil spring from the front, we see a circle. The circle that is the last in the row overlaps with all the previous circles. The ending point of the top circle and the beginning point of the bottom circle touch each other: this is how we understand that the end, in dialectics, is stapled with the beginning. The beginning is "pregnant" with the end, while the end carries its beginning along. Hegel himself often used the metaphor of a circle to describe the dialectical method. Hence, he was often (mis)judged for allegedly establishing a teleological vision of the prescribed wholeness of the world and, on the other hand, of centering the circles of sublation through a "transcendental" principle, that is, the principle of contradiction.

But there is yet another aspect to take into account. Often, especially in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel operates with the mysterious perspective "for us" (*für uns*). This is the position of consciousness somehow stepping out of itself (from its self-reflective "for itself", *für sich*) and crawling behind its own back. At this point, a certain split takes place, a cleavage between the position of consciousness, where we, the readers, had been dwelling all along, and the position of us, the outside observers, suddenly observing the consciousness from afar. What is at work here, is nothing less than a proper Lacanian split between the eye and the Gaze. On the one hand, the consciousness sees the world with its eyes, and sees itself seeing, creating thereby the illusion of self-identity. On the other hand, it is itself put under the Gaze, i.e., the Other, which is floating around as some sort of omnivoyeur. The tricky thing here is that both perspectives are the perspectives of the same consciousness. With this, a certain parallax view is established as the inherent principle of dialectics. What we see, simultaneously, is both a centralist perspective, that is, the circles exactly overlapping, and a de-centered view (each time different), where each circle is always slightly decentered according to all the others. It is exactly this parallax view that enables us to perceive dialectics as a simultaneously

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na meji, da se Univerzalnost gradi na izključitvi, tj. da je univerzalno univerzalno zgolj kot omejeno in kot tako spet partikularno, saj izključuje prav partikularno, torej ni vseobsegajoče" (Žižek 1980: 139). Second quote in original: "Heglovsko zatrtje manka pa poteka ravno tako, da 'dojamemo substanco kot subjekt', torej ko naredimo 'substanco' (Enega) iz samega tega gibanja 'posredovanja'-razločevanja: (-)" (ibid.: 138–140). Third quote in original: "Totalnost v strogem smislu je ravno Celota celega in ne-celega (če naj parafraziramo znamenito Heglovo postavko o istovetnosti istovetnosti in neistovetnosti), je ona sama in svoje drugo" (ibid.: 139). For an insightful analysis of Hegel's notion of totality see the article of Jamila M. H. Mascat *Hegel and the Ad-Venture of the Totality*. As she puts it: "Indeed, despite being some kind of whole, Hegel's totality paradoxically is not *all*, since it is possible and to some extent necessary to recognize that there is *more*, namely a conceptual overflow that resides precisely in the complex asymmetrical temporal relations that make the Hegelian totality conceivable" (Mascat 2017: 132-133).

open and closed system, where we return to the same place and produce a new one each time.

Thereby, a specific temporality is established. As shown by the Ljubljana School, spirit and time are perplexed in a logic of retroactivity, *Nachträglich-keit,* driving the movement of repetition.[4] It is important to understand, however, that *Nachträglichkeit* is not just about a simple retroactive arrangement of the past, about a simple reversal of the causal logic (in the sense that, for example, the trauma did not cause the illness, but the illness retroactively produced the trauma as its alleged cause). It is not only in turning the result into a beginning or the beginning into a *telos*. There is a more complex mechanism at work there. What retroactivity brings about is a certain slip of causal logic. The point here is that a certain *presence* (the presence of the now, e.g., a present event) *retroactively* produces its own origin, which means that this presence is at the same time the cause *and* the effect of this origin. Thereby, the presence of the now is doubled – it is *the same* (for it is one single presence) but *other* (for it bears two different causal functions). Because of this, *Nachträglichkeit* is not only directed backwards: within the very return to the past, a certain "intentionality" towards the future is established. The "paradoxical" moving forward through the eventual moving backward is possible because of a slip of causality at work in the constitution of the signifying chain that produces (the subject's and the world's) history. Based on this, we can suggest that it is precisely the logic of *Nachträglichkeit* that fundamentally temporalizes Hegel's dialectics.

What we have got in such reading of Hegel's dialectics, is an example of a non-totalitarian totality. The system indeed employs a fundamental principle, i.e. the principle of contradiction, which can be called transcendental, but this principle is not exclusive, or reductionist. It arises from the proposition of a confrontation with every (possible) reality. On the other hand, the system is not inclusivist in the sense that it does not allow externality. Quite the opposite, it produces it all along. Totality here means that nothing is left outside: any (possible) externality is itself always already a limit. But at the same time, every interior has always already turned into an exterior. In a constant transition between the outside and the inside dialectics sets itself as a process of becoming that cannot be completed. It forms a totality that is not whole – it is but an irreparable non-wholeness. Or, as Hegel puts it: "Each new stage of *exteriorization*,

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4   That there is a logic of repetition inscribed in Hegel's dialectics has been argued and explicated in the works of the Ljubljana School (cf. Dolar 2013a and 2013b, Zupančič 2007, Žižek 1980, Kolenc 2020, Moder 2021). Gregor Moder, for example, argues that even Hegel's notorious concept of the "End of History", which was at the forefront of Althusser's criticism, should not be reduced to a kind of theological fantasy, but related to what is described in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* as the constitutive too-lateness of philosophy: "The end of history is precisely the point of no return for a *specific* historical epoch, the turning point at which the 'owl of Minerva' can begin the work of knowledge of that period, the point at which that particular period has already began morphing into another 'world', another historical 'shape of life', another historical social formation" (Moder 2021: 132).

that is, of *further determination*, is also a withdrawing into itself, and the greater the *extension*, just as dense is the *intensity*. The richest is therefore the most concrete and the *most subjective*, and that which retreats to the simplest depth is the mightiest and the most all-encompassing" (Hegel 2010: 750).

Walking in Circles on the Event Horizon

Since Hegel's era, during which discussions of the Old and New Worlds reflected a limited comprehension of regions beyond Europe, the Earth has transformed into a small sphere. Nevertheless, it is quite evident that the happy manageability of the "global village" through internet surfing and tourist travel is nothing but the flip side of yet another manageability: faster than any place in the world can be reached by an individual, it can be reached by a rocket launcher. Manageability also means that there is no room for retreat.

Today, we stand in front of the abyss. We see a future that is already our past. The relativism prevalent in the late post-modern era appears weak to those who peer into the depths of time. What unfolds before us is not merely what Hegel termed the "contentful nothing" (cf. Hegel 2010: 78), a determinate nothingness like darkness, silence, or void, which we have been anticipating in the last decades – from the comfort of our living room sofa and with our imaginary largely supported by the blockbuster Hollywood production – through visions and fantasies of the apocalypse. What we face now, instead, is something radically different: something that has no content and no image, like Hegel's "pure nothing" lacking any determination. We are not anticipating the catastrophe, we are in the midst of it. Imagination has been replaced by experience. Collectively, we find ourselves gazing into the Real, the pre-ontological chasm where being and nothing *inter-pass*[5].

And indeed, the abyss gazes back at us, echoing Nietzsche's notorious line from *Beyond Good and Evil*: "when you stare for a long time into an abyss, the abyss stares back into you" (Nietzsche 2002: 69). A confrontation with the abyss is experienced by many today as the edge of the West (which has been the edge of its interest for centuries) is increasingly moving inwards, shrinking the West's "zone of indifference" with refugee flows, decrease of life quality, and cracks in execution of democracy and freedom. From today's point of view, it seems that the age of postmodernity is at its demise and that we are standing on the threshold of a different historical reality that has outstripped its very denomination.

With its very name, postmodernity denotes both attachment and detachment to modernity. In terms of attachment, we could perceive postmodernity as a spoiled child that never manages to emancipate from its mother (despite its talk of "emancipation"), instead lingering in a sort of narcissistic self-referentiality until it silently dissipates, in contrast to its pompous arrival. Immaturely,

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5   This obsolete English verb, which was derived from French word *entrepasser* meaning "passing through", has not been in use since early 17th Century. We aim to rehabilitate it here to grasp with one term the sense of "passing into one another."

it demands that the definition of its concept depends on the definition of modernity. Although this gesture can be interpreted as an inversion of Kant's demand for the way out of immaturity, serving as a sarcastic critique of the Enlightenment's idea of "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity", this reversal – and here lies the trick – is but a symptom of the repressed fact that postmodernity still firmly holds on to modernity. In terms of detachment, conversely, the shiny upheaval of postmodernity seems to be akin to a successful symbolic killing of the father, in the sense that precisely as it is overcome, the modern persists within the postmodern.

But a more radical question arises at this point: has postmodernity itself already come to an end? If so, does its demise signal the twilight of modernity as well? Or is it perhaps the contrary, with modernity persisting while postmodernity has already concluded? Or, should we nevertheless align with postmodernists who assert that postmodernity emerges after the end of modernity, thereby suggesting that postmodernity is an epoch that has only just commenced? Naturally, these considerations hinge on how one defines modernity and postmodernity.

Subtitled "A Report of Knowledge", Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition* advances a thesis regarding the fundamental shifts in the status of knowledge taking place after Europe's recuperation from the war: "Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age" (Lyotard 1993: 3). The central issue here is the widespread commodification of knowledge resulting in its detachment from the educational process traditionally referred to as "Bildung". In this form, knowledge itself has become the principal force of production, thus fundamentally shaping the postmodern condition.[6] Jameson's definition, on the other hand, defines postmodernity as follows: "Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good. It is a more fully human world than the older one, but one in which 'culture' has become a veritable 'second nature'" (Jameson 1991: ix). Similarly to Lyotard, Jameson perceives postmodernity as a period succeeding modernity, representing the next great epoch that has only just begun and will endure indefinitely.

Perhaps, though, the very notion of the end as a *historical rupture* implies that we are still operating within the framework of modernity. Modernity has programmatically built on the narrative of breaks, particularly what J. C. Milner

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6   This phenomenon, termed by Lyotard as "the exteriorization of knowledge with respect to the 'knower'" (Lyotard 1993: 4), disrupts the traditional transfer of knowledge from those who possess it to those who are learning. Changes in knowledge are happening both in the process of its formation as well as its dissemination: "With respect to the first function, genetics provides an example that is accessible to the layman: it owes its theoretical paradigm to cybernetics. Many other examples could be cited. As for the second function, it is common knowledge that the miniaturization and commercialization of machines is already changing the way in which learning is acquired, classified, made available, and exploited" (Lyotard 1993: 4).

terms a "major break" (Milner 2021: 49), which signifies its inception from the decline of the "ancient world" and its transcendence of humanity's primitive connection to nature and the sacred. Milner conceptualizes this major break, an epistemological shift "between *epistèmè* and modern science" (ibid.: 49), as the Core Doctrine of modern science. The major break, with minor variations, roughly marks the emergence of modern science with Galileo, the development of the modern subject with Descartes, and the establishment of the modern state with French Revolution.

Within the French context, the narrative of the major break was solidified by Koyré and Kojève, profoundly influencing postwar French philosophy. In his thorough analysis, Milner illustrates how French postmodernists, or, for that matter, poststructuralists, rejected the narrative of the major break, instead emphasizing the logic of breaks as inherent moments within any structure. Most notably, Foucault advocated this stance through his anti-historicist approach of "archaeology" and his substitution of "History" with the multiplicity of parallel and interconnected epistemes. What we need to add here, however, is that while distancing themselves from the "grand narratives", postmodernists themselves fell into a certain conceptual trap: with their gesture of breaking with the major break, they nevertheless established their position as a (major) break with the past. What will bring modernity to an end, is thus exactly *not* a story of an end.

Hegel and Marx are, in the sense of the narrative of modernity, no exception – they both substantially contributed to it. However, they also uncovered some of its underlying mechanisms, which are, so to speak, structural rather than historicist. What they delineated is not merely how the principles of modernity function, but also the existence of certain frameworks that enable modernity to transcend itself. Perhaps therein lies the fundamental fallacy of postmodernism – we cannot surpass the idea of the end by avoiding it, by pushing it out of the realm of thought, but, on the contrary, by bringing it to its extreme.[7] It is in this sense that postmodernity can be seen not as the beginning of a new epoch, but rather as a brief transitional phase which, through a confluence of circumstances, brought modernity itself to a certain brink.

What has taken place recently are some fundamental reconfigurations of the known parameters of the world and humanity brought about by the digital revolution on the one hand (along with the prospects of artificial intelligence), and, on the other hand, the climate crisis. It may not be too bold to say that these unprecedented changes point to the probable dusk of modernity.

Postmodernity (1979–2008)

In 1979, postmodernity was given a name: this was the year of Lyotard's publication of *The Postmodern Condition*.[8] In the same year, 1979, Margaret Thatcher

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7   This is further elaborated in the article *Is it Too Late*? (cf. Kolenc 2020)

8   To be precise, Lyotard's book did not actually invent the name, but popularized it and significantly contributed to its prevail as a master signifier. Lyotard himself gives the list of its antecedents: Alain Touraine (1969) *La Société postindustrielle* (Paris:

took power. As a historical period, postmodernity is closely linked to the out-spread of neoliberal ideology, and, most importantly, to Thatcher and Reagan opening the gate to the unrestricted free market economy, consumerism, and financial capitalism.[9] Both leaders were about dismantling decades of legis-lation in their countries that had hitherto built up the public sector, lowering taxes, and loosening the laws to enhance the growth of the private sector. It worked well: American and British economies started to flourish. But what was happening in parallel to the loosening of the laws that had hitherto protected citizens' rights and maintained a certain degree of social equality, was a disin-tegration of the moral law of which the effects are only being recognized to-day in retrospect with the observations of the dissolution of the ego ideal. One should just take a look at the newspapers from before World War II report-ing people being sent to prison for reselling goods: a couple of decades after, resale, trafficking, extortionate interest rates, and stock market speculations, became a new norm, and new measure of societal success.

The end of the Cold War, marked by 1991, was not at all a reconciliation between the two sides, or a "natural" progression towards the best possible form of society as, for example, Fukuyama advocated – it was simply a defeat of capitalism over socialism. It was not a triumph over totalitarianism, but a victory of one form of production over another, of one ideology over another. This is only clear to us today, as we stare into the abyss and watch the Cold War turning into a hot one. Nonetheless, what will forever remain a mystery of history is the following question: would the Eastern bloc have collapsed if there were no "Reagan Revolution" and "Thatcher Experiment"? Was it the violence of the free market expansion that weakened the Eastern Bloc from the outside – more than its internal frictions? And, finally, what was the "ma-terial historical" impact of the ideology of postmodernism as the privileged theory of the West on this?

The demise of postmodernity, however, is not dated to the breakdown of the Eastern bloc. On the contrary, with the conceptual massacre of communism,

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Denoel), Daniel Bell (1973) *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books), Ihab Hassan (1971) *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Post Modern Lit-erature* (New York: Oxford University Press), Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello, eds. (1977) *Performance in Postmodern Culture* (Wisconsin: Center for Twentieth Cen-tury Studies & Coda Press); M. Kohler (1977) "Postmodernismus: ein begriffgeschicht-licher Uberblick", Amerikastudien 22, 1.

9   Postmodernity is often associated with *late capitalism*. However, as Jameson points out, the widespread use of the term late capitalism originated with the Frankfurt School (cf. Jameson: xvii). Jameson stresses that their notion of late capitalism was still rough-ly consistent with Lenin's concept of a "monopoly stage" of capitalism. Therefore, the postmodern era should be considered as the second phase of late capitalism, wherein the bureaucratization and technocratization of the state have become "naturalized", that is, accepted as the non-negotiable state of affairs. There is a certain perversion at work here: a crucial consequence of this naturalization is that, in this phase, the vision of a global capitalist system perceives itself as fundamentally distinct from older colonial imperialism.

this collapse produced a certain void of the ideological space, in which the postmodern illusion took its most audacious leap. The premonition of the end of the postmodern era came quite unexpectedly exactly ten years later, in 2001, with an event that traumatically stuck both in the seeming infinity of the postmodern condition and in the immaculateness of the American dream.

The end of postmodernity was indicated by the collapse of the New York Twin Towers, which once mirrored in their glass windows the Statue of Liberty. This was an "impossible event" the images of which we watched over and over again on television and of which anniversary we began to commemorate as a reminder that a certain picture of the world had come to an irrevocable end. A collective shock that shattered the concrete foundations of the neoliberal dogma, a trust in the stability, and robustness of the West, confronted the world with the most immediate doubt of the rightness of its doing. The pictures of flaming, falling people leaping from the two phallic symbols of power, financial success, the prosperity of the neoliberal cosmic order, and most importantly, its inviolability and its complete safety, had such a surreal effect that surrealism lost all meaning in an instant.

The collapse was not metaphorical – it was real. The fire site of the twins turned into a *scar* – a physical remnant of the past in the present, and a dumb witness of the Statue of Liberty started sinking due to climate change. The scar is indelible and, as long one does not identify with it, it has a certain cathartic effect (remember Tyler Durden). But the problem of those who consider themselves invincible is that they find it hard to bear their scars. They turn them into reminders, and monuments, and repress the real experience of the wound. September 11th was declared US Patriot Day, and international war against terrorism was announced. September 11th was, in this sense an "absolute event", to use Baudrillard's expression.[10] It was not so much a *symbolical* event (this is in what it turned to be retroactively, precisely by commemorating it as a sort of "reminder"), but a *real* event that had (or still has) effects in the symbolic, that is, on the level of discourses and ideologies. Thereby, it turned into a *symbolic* event, of which the effects are again – real.[11] In a purely Hegelian sense of an event *in* history that *makes* history, 9/11 was a historical event.

What collapsed, irreversibly, was the dream of the eternal stability of the West. What emerged on the surface, akin to the return of the repressed, was a fundamental falsification that had previously underpinned the neoliberal

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10   In his essay *The Spirit of Terrorism* from 2001, Baudrillard labels the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center as the "absolute event", viewing them as a symbolic reaction to the growing dominance of commodity exchange in society. Without getting into the heated debate he has sparked, we can say that to understand the notion of the "absolute event", the matter should be seen strictly in terms of the "logic of structure", and not in terms of whatever (moral) absolutization. Only from this point of view, as a consequence of some structural necessity, can we say that 9/11 is an absolute event (cf. Baudrillard 2003).

11   Here we draw a differentiation between something being *symbolical*, that is, symbolizing in the sense of an emblem, and something being *symbolic*, that is, functioning on the level of signification.

position. Liberal democracy, criticizing the alleged "totalitarian regimes", has itself turned out to be an ideology of repression. And, as everyone knows, repression in the sense of *suppression*, and repression in the sense of *external violence* are just two sides of the same coin.

While 9/11 was the event that signaled its demise, the era of postmodernity factually ended with the 2008 financial crisis. The 2008 crisis was the first domino in a row that triggered a cascade of crises. For the first time in the history of global capitalism, these crises surpassed or outpaced the political capacity of the West to regulate them within the frame of maintenance of market, social, and ideological stability. What we observe now, as Alex Williams would say, are only the leftovers, the "ideological ruins" of what once was the dream of the end of history.

It is important, however, to draw a distinction between *postmodernity* and *postmodernism*. With the notion of postmodernity, we mean a historical period determined by a certain economic, social, and ideological constellation. With postmodernism, in contrast, we demark an intellectual current, that is, both an aesthetic theory supported by artistic practice and a philosophical worldview. Postmodernism defined and accompanied the postmodern era – both as its critical observer and as its visionary inventor. It began earlier than postmodernity, paving its way already in the late 1950s, and started to disintegrate before the definite end of the postmodern period.

The Auto-Immune Disease

Within the neoliberal stance, there exists a certain vicious cycle, an entrenched self-referentiality of which the lever was traced by the Ljubljana School as the phenomenon of the "enjoyment in the symptom". What is the core of this problem is not only that enjoyment as such is essentially masochistic (remember only the magnetism of toxic relationships), as Freud discovered through his analysis of repetition compulsion, and that, moreover, such nature of enjoyment perfectly corresponds to a certain "perverse inversion" of the big Other's *prohibition of enjoyment* into the *injunction to enjoy* taking place in consumerist society. There is yet another part to this problem, which establishes the real impasse of the current state of the Western world.

What is at stake here is a certain shift in the mechanism of identification. Because of the disintegration of the instance of the ego ideal known in the psychoanalytic parlance as *the subject supposed to know,* i.e. the authority of knowledge, and the authority of the carriers of knowledge such as teachers, scientists, and specialists in all different fields which used to function as the backbone of the apparatus of the social state (one can only read Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* from 2009 to understand the effects of this disintegration), the individual no longer identifies with a specific knowledge, responsibility and moral law transmitted to them by society, that is, the instance of the ego ideal pertaining to the big Other. One no longer identifies with the resolution of the symptom in order to be able to function effectively (a demand for the

resolution of the symptom may also, of course, produce new symptoms, but what is decisive is the existence of the very possibility of resolution), but rather with the symptom itself, that is, with their fundamental incapability to resolve the symptom. And this, in the self-referential loop, produces a situation where resolution as such is no longer possible, where there is no longer even the possibility of resolution, which makes the reproduction of the symptom the only way out of the unbearability of the symptom-producing condition. This is why the major symptom of the West today is identification with the symptom.

It is not (only) the specific bodily symptom, social or mental disorder that an individual identifies with, but, on a much more fundamental level, one identifies with the very *symptom of the identification with the symptom*. The mass phenomenon of mass shootings in schools is exactly the symptom of such identification with the symptom. On the level of the libidinal and political economy, such an identification pattern can be subsumed into the following sentence: "I cannot resolve the problem because I am the problem". This is one step further from the cynical position of postmodernity, where the declaration was something like "I partake in the problem which I know I should wish to resolve". And because, ultimately, every symptom is the symptom of a symptom, the aim to detect the (phantasmal) traumatic core as the (alleged, that is, always retroactively produced) origin of the symptom, is replaced with hunting the external cause, that is, with blaming the random suspect. Finger-pointing is thus another ubiquitous symptom of the unresolved symptom, where the old predictable "repressive apparatus of the state" has been superseded by the capricious, insane repression of the anarchic market governance that has no logic whatsoever and is therefore virtually impossible to confront.

This echoes somewhere with the postmodernist vision of the endless multiplication of copies and simulacra with no original referent or no orientation grid. In such disposition, a line of copies, or symptoms, turn into an indistinguishable jumble of innumerable differences with mutual reference that fail to cut the knot and to *make* a difference. There is no (external) enemy or culprit to point to. And there is no easy way out. *Free market capitalism has an auto-immune disease – it fights against itself, and any medicine you give it only makes it worse.*

Unlimited

"Unlimited" – this could be the slogan of postmodernity. Today, the ideology of unlimitedness as a state of mind and state of the world – no limits, no borders, and so on – is increasingly difficult to sustain. Its repressed side effects are bursting out to the surface. The unlimited freedom (that is, the unlimited growth of capital) has been all the more visibly "protected" by concrete walls and barbed wire fences on the borders of Western countries, by immigrant camps and enhanced visa restrictions, and, what is most horrifying, by frontlines, warfare, and enclosed human cages for massive extortion and genocide. Concurrently, the so-called "planetary boundary" is setting up as the looming

external limit not only to all different ideologies but to humanity as such.[12] Therefore, to confront the reality we live in and create, we need to rethink the question of the limit.

The question of the limit, exactly, is one of the central problems addressed by postmodernists. At its core, postmodernism is a contemplation of the stifling constraints of ossified structures of thought and action – and a demand to dismantle and transcend them. It is a call for a fundamentally different principle of distribution (of ideas, realities, particularities), which is as much radical as it is utopian: "Even among the gods, each has his domain, his category, his attributes, and all distribute limits and lots to mortals in accordance with destiny. Then there is a completely other distribution which must be called nomadic, a nomad nomos, without property, enclosure or measure. Here, there is no longer a division of that which is distributed but rather a division among those who distribute themselves in an open space – a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits" (Deleuze 2001: 36).

Although postmodernists were generally closer to Kant's idea of the limits of human knowledge than to Hegel's (apparent) attempt to delimit the realm of absolute knowledge, a certain sensitivity to the inner logic of Hegel's dialectic shows that their ideas, in general, are not as far from Hegel's as it might seem at first sight. Taking a closer look, it turns out, not in the least paradoxically, that the critique that can be addressed to the postmodern era from the perspective of the Hegelian dialectic often parallels the critique that the postmodernists themselves addressed to the realities of the late twentieth century. Although they are critical of Hegel's concept of the limit deriving from negation as a determining principle, they are equally critical of the abstract ideological assumption of the unlimitedness pumped by neoliberal ideology. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, for example, Baudrillard exposes a certain paradox that is symptomatic of the West. He speaks of the Americans flattering themselves for having brought the population of Indians back to pre-Conquest levels, and for even exceeding the original number: "With sinister derision, this overproduction is again a means of destroying them: for Indian culture, like all tribal culture, rests on the limitation of the group and the refusal of any 'unlimited' increase, as can be seen in Ishi's case. In this way, their demographic 'promotion' is just another step toward symbolic extermination" (Baudrillard 1994: 11).

However, the postmodern setting of the limit also faces a certain problem. Established in opposition to Hegel, or, to be precise, in an aspiration for transcendence of Hegel's principle of oppositions, postmodernists hit the hard rock of the logical asset Hegel takes as his starting point: a negation of negation, a denial of negation, is *per se* its very confirmation. The central logical problem

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12   According to the scientific consent, which is, as is the case with today's de-hierarchized truths, subject to relativization, we have recently exceeded the 1.5° C limit which demarcates the rise of global temperature compared to the pre-industrial era and which, by the conclusions of the Paris Agreement from 2015, marks the absolute limit of the possibility of preserving the world as we know it and the non-endangerment of the human species.

addressed by Deleuze and other postmodern thinkers is therefore the following: how should one set a limit as a positive principle? What they suggest, and most meticulously Deleuze, is an unlimited nomadic distribution of differences forming a well-functioning, egalitarian, tolerant, and all-encompassing totality which is set as an "open space", that is, as non-whole.

Yet upon closer examination, two issues become apparent. The first is the logical problem of the expulsion of negation, contradiction, and, along, also similarity and identity, which, as a radical proposal to overcome the "dogmatic image of thought", indeed introduces a groundbreaking conceptual realm – but does not resolve the question of the limit. The second is the problem of a certain unfortunate encounter: ideas espoused by postmodernists align closely with the neoliberal dogma of a boundless distribution of freedom among disparate individualized entities. But this dogma – and this is the core of the problem – is only a phantasmal shield, ideology at its purest. The truth is, however, that negation is inscribed in the very mechanism of capital as its lever. *The very fact that their ideas coincide with neoliberal rhetoric while simultaneously disregarding negation* – meaning the negation inherent in the capitalist mode of production – *is what renders the postmodern critique of neoliberalism ineffective.*

And, to turn things around, we can say that precisely because capitalism is driven by a logic that can be detected by the conceptual apparatus invented by Hegel, *negative dialectics is the most effective tool of its critique* – and this is what Marx did brilliantly. "It is the inner limit, the inner contradiction", says Žižek, "that drives capitalism to a constant evolution, to a constant revolutionizing of the material conditions of its existence" (Žižek 1980: 136). The lever of its self-revolutionizing process is, of course, surplus value, of which the flip side is nothing but surplus enjoyment.

To take a step further from Žižek, we can suggest that one can find in Hegel not only the negative logic that drives capitalism through surplus value and surplus enjoyment but – taking into account Hegel's distinction between the abstract and the concrete value – also its dead end.

Two Falsifications of Capitalism: Eternal Being of Finitude and Infinite Progress

In *The Science of Logic,* Hegel uncovers a significant conceptual error that persisted throughout the history of philosophy. He identifies this as the unfounded, yet commonly assumed presupposition of a *qualitative difference between being and nothing.* This distinction revolves around the perception of being as eternal and absolute, contrasting with nothingness, which is viewed as the complete absence of being. Similarly, this dichotomy extends to the qualitative difference between finitude and infinity: finitude is seen as limited, impermanent, and associated with nothingness, while infinity is perceived as boundless, everlasting, and linked to being. From this foundational error, which seeks to establish a hierarchical order within the realms of existence, thus providing a metaphysical justification for the (moral) structure of the world, Hegel

specifically critiques two logical fallacies. One is the idea of the *eternal being of finitude,* the other is the conception of *infinite progress.*

It is not hard to see that the prevailing mindset of the late twentieth century was grounded in the idea that things do perish; however, it is the very perishing that persists. Fukuyama claims that there are of course individual and societal events going on, but that these constitute the post-historical state of the eternal being of liberal democracy concretized in the production form of a free market economy. Even if every single existent thing is doomed to finitude, the world is nevertheless eternal. The perverse twist of capitalist production underlying this rather naïve posture is the following: *it is precisely the inevitable ephemerality of things that makes the world eternal.* The ideology of novelty is rooted in the acknowledgment that things are transient and perishable, yet economic progress allows them to be eternally interchangeable and replaceable. That is, *the limitless production of finite things destined for extinction* (the sooner they spoil the better) is made *the eternal being of capitalism.*[13]

This misconception, that is, the claim that things do perish but it is nevertheless perishing that persists, is stuck in what Hegel calls "the sorrow of finitude". An opposition between the existence of a thing and a limit immanent to this existence, states Hegel, constitutes the thing's *finitude.* Because of this specific constellation, for an existent thing, a denial of its finitude also means a denial of its very existence, that is, a denial of the thing itself. For this reason, a further dialectical move, a negation of finitude as a reach beyond its determination, does not protect the existent thing against its finality – it does not make it infinite or immortal, but, on the contrary, condemns it once more to its inevitable end. The understanding, claims Hegel, persists in this sorrow of finitude and fails to transcend it. Therefore, it tries to extricate itself from this impasse by positing a qualitative difference between finitude and infinity. It declares that finite existence is transient and decays into nothingness, whereas the very process of their disappearance pertains to the infinity inscribed in it. "The understanding", states Hegel, "persists in this sorrow of finitude, for it makes non-being the determination of things and, at the same time, this non-being *imperishable* and *absolute*" (Hegel 2010: 102).

One should suggest, following Hegel, that what determines capitalism and is further expanded in its consumerist form, is not only persistence in such sorrow of finitude but even its "cultural expansion". This manifests, on the side

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13 As we have shown elsewhere, capitalism cannot end *not* because the end is not inscribed in its very structure, as some critics of Marx's utopianism would argue, it very much is, but because *the end is inscribed in its structure in such a way that finitude and infinity are held apart in a falsification* that, supported by the ideology of neo-liberal conservatism, deeply represses their fundamental intertwinement. The problem (and the prosperity) of capitalism is therefore *not in its infinity*—any criticism taking this position is itself subject to the misconception that perishing is the eternal being of finitude—, but, just the opposite, in its *finitude.* In finitude (deadlines, expiration dates, unemployment of the elderly, etc.), which is proclaimed to be eternal (as a forced flag bearer of the alleged infinite progress) (cf. Kolenc 2020: 105).

of commodities, in the hyperproduction of breakable and disposable things, the manufacture of short-lived and soon-to-be outdated machines and other goods following the now outwardly acclaimed principle of "planned obsoleteness", i.e. their deliberate breakability. On the side of the production process, on the other hand, it manifests in deadlines, short-term jobs, dismissals, forced retirement, and general precarization of work.

It is widely agreed today that the foundational economic principle of capitalism rooted in the mechanism of the surplus value is *exponential growth.* The practical application of this principle manifests itself, as Marx foresightedly noticed, in the creation of a novel mode of production. This mode of production, unlike all the preceding ones, is not *conservative*, but *revolutionary*, that is, it does not preserve the same principles and working routines over the centuries maintaining thereby the balance between labor as a contributor to societal well-being and the corresponding reward neither does it maintain as the equilibrium between extraction from nature and replenishment. This mode of production is therefore not only new – in relation to all the previous ones – but it is *ever new*, meaning that it constantly reinvents itself. It is new, in every particular moment, in relation to itself – and this is exactly what distinguishes it from all the previous modes: "Modern industry never views or treats the existing form of a production process as the definitive one. Its technical basis is therefore revolutionary, whereas all earlier modes of production were essentially conservative" (Marx 1976: 617).

The industrial evolution demarcates the shift from the manual to the machinery production of goods. However, as Marx insightfully saw, this historical transformation of the mode of production is not just a matter of a simple replacement of the labor of human hands with machine labor. A much more complex dialectic is at work there, stemming from what Marx called the *machines' law of self-reproduction*, which he posits as the second fundamental condition (and law) of industrial capitalism – apart from the reproduction of the worker. The accelerated growth of capital due to the principle of the surplus value is additionally boosted by this phenomenon of the accelerated self-reproduction of the machines. The machines, says Marx, far from taking the burden off man's shoulders, install the "economic paradox that that the most powerful instrument for reducing labour-time suffers a dialectical inversion and becomes the most unfailing means for turning the whole lifetime of the worker and his family into labour-time at capital's disposal for its own valorization" (ibid.: 532).[14] A fundamental historical question, but also a question of

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14   The weird thing that happens with a machine at the very moment it starts to operate is a certain transposition of its value: "however young and full of life the machine may be, its value is no longer determined by the necessary labour-time actually objectified in it, but by the labour-time necessary to reproduce either it or the better machine" (Marx 1976: 528). This is what Marx calls "the moral depreciation of the machine", which stems from a certain superimposition of two different functions of the machine in the production process: every machine, besides being a working force, is itself also a product, a commodity. This means that a machine is not only competing with other machines

the future arises at this point: is the machines' law of self-reproduction a law of capitalism or the machines themselves?

So-called infinite progress, says Hegel, which has been seen throughout the history of philosophy as an image of infinity, is nothing but a repetitive game of setting a limit and transcending it.[15] In such a conception, which Hegel notoriously names the "bad infinite", finitude and infinity are connected only externally and in abstraction, while in truth, they are held apart as each is attributed a different content. Infinity, conceived in such a way, is burdened with a "rigid determination of a *beyond* that cannot be attained", (Hegel 2010: 113) while finitude is perceived as something terrestrial, lowly, and lateral, which as a qualitative opposite of infinity cannot participate in it. This leads to the extrema being understood as radically different and therefore incompatible but as oppositions nevertheless inseparable, connected in an abstract external way. The progress to infinity is, therefore, nothing but a "repetitious monotony", that is, the same tedious alternation of such abstract notions of finitude and infinity.

Hence, the disposition of global capitalism is clear: the false and logically unproductive concept of infinite progress is established as the ideological flagbearer and master signifier par excellence presented as the "ultimate truth" measured in a (demonstrably flawed) criterion of GDP. But this is only to cover the true dark side of capitalist expansion: what is growing exponentially is not "human wellbeing, democracy, and freedom", but rather capital owned by the elites, the yawning gap between the richest and the poorest, public debt, global human population (especially that part of it which Marx called the "industrial reserve army", that is the "surplus population"), the temperature of the atmosphere, the amount of waste and microplastics, dying off of numerous living species, and the area of the colonized terrestrial, cybernetic and cosmic space. Numbers are telling: what we have got, in the past few years, is an accelerated increase in the exploitation of natural resources (the material footprint of raw material

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to see how fast it can produce the same product, but it is also competing with itself to see how fast it can produce itself – so that a copy of itself can produce another copy of itself in the future, which will produce a copy of itself even faster – and so on ad infinitum. A machine, unlike a human being, cannot exhaust itself; the rate of its production can, in principle, be accelerated indefinitely. For more on this topic please see the article *Earthlings and Spacemen: Life-and-Death Struggle* (cf. Kolenc 2023b: 119-121).

15   This process takes the following detailed shape: "We have the finite passing over into the infinite. This passing over appears as an external doing. In this emptiness beyond the finite, what arises? What is there of positive in it? On account of the inseparability of the infinite and the finite (or because this infinite, which stands apart, is itself restricted), the limit arises. The infinite has vanished and the other, the finite, has stepped in. But this stepping in of the finite appears as an event external to the infinite, and the new limit as something that does not arise out of the infinite itself but is likewise found given. And with this we are back at the previous determination, which has been sublated in vain. This new limit, however, is itself only something to be sublated or transcended. And so there arises again the emptiness, the nothing, in which we find again the said determination – and *so forth to infinity*" (Hegel 2020: 112).

consumption from 1910 was 10 billion tons per year, while today it is as large as almost 100 billion tons per year), exponential growth of the world population (1.5 billion in 1910, almost 8 billion today), and a fast-growing inequality from the 1960s on (today, approximately, the 1% of the "super-rich" owns 50% of the world's total wealth while 50% of world population altogether owns 1% of it).[16]

Marx was well aware of *exhaustion* as the inevitable counterpart of exponential production both in industry and agriculture: "In modern agriculture, as in the urban industries, the increased productiveness and quantity of the labour set in motion are bought at the cost of laying waste and consuming by disease labour-power itself. Moreover, all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil" (Marx 1976: 638).[17] That there is a possibility of a capitalist system based on a true equilibrium is a narrow utopia or rather a straight-selling lie, which has been given names (usually abused, that is, stolen from the public initiatives) such as "circular economy" or "sustainable development", and is usually accompanied by the ideology of eco-liberalism as a new guise of neoliberalism. As long as we have exponential growth of capital, and the core of capital is exponential growth, we cannot speak of any kind of equilibrium.

For Hegel, the image of the progression into infinity is a *straight line*. Where we find the infinite in this image, he says, is just at the two limits of this line. The infinite here is only where "the latter (which is existence) is not but *transcends itself*" (Hegel 2020: 119). It *is* in its non-existence, that is, in the indeterminate:

> Only the bad infinite is the *beyond*, since it is *only* the negation of the finite posited as *real* and, as such, it is abstract first negation; thus determined *only* as negative, it does not have the affirmation of *existence* in it; held fast only as something negative, it *ought not to be there*, it ought to be unattainable. However, to be thus unattainable is not its grandeur but rather its defect, which is at bottom the result of holding fast to the finite as such, as *existent*. It is the untrue which is the unattainable, and what must be recognized is that such an infinite is the untrue (Hegel 2020: 119).

As opposed to the bad infinity of a straight line (recall the progress graphs we are constantly bombarded with as the quantitative seller – and a copycat – of a dehydrated idea of goodness), for Hegel, the image of the true infinity is a *circle*. Therein, the infinite is bent back upon itself: "the line that has reached itself, closed and wholly present, without *beginning* and *end*" (Hegel 2010: 119). It is not an indeterminate, abstract being, for it is posited as negating the negation; consequently, it is also existence or 'thereness': "It *is*, and *is there*, present, before us" (ibid.: 119).

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16   Sources: Jason Hickel (Hickel 2022), Krausmann et al., internet, Christian Dorninger et al. (2020), Stefan Bringezu (2015) and materialflows.net (viewed 2 June, 2024).

17   Here is another quote: "Increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility. The more a country starts its all progress in development on the foundation of modern industry, like the United States, for example, the more rapid is this process of destruction" (Marx 1976: 638).

In-Finitude

The concept and the perception of a boundless opening of time after the end of history, which defined the postmodern era, has recently been replaced by a vision of the limited amount of time we have at our disposal. A subtle yet significant shift in perspective has occurred during this transition: a reconsideration of the interplay between finitude and infinity.

The point is, stresses Hegel, that is not the transition from finitude to infinity or the other way round that is conceptually incomprehensible, but rather the very divide between them: "As has earlier been shown, finitude is only as a transcending of itself; it is therefore within it that the infinite, the other of itself, is contained. Similarly, the infinite is only as the transcending of the finite; it therefore contains its other essentially, and it is thus within it that it is the other of itself" (Hegel 2010: 116). The determination of each is implicit in the other, and "to have a simple insight into this inseparability which is theirs, means that we comprehend them conceptually" (ibid.: 123). Let us call such interconnection of finitude and infinity, which stems from the fundamental intertwinement of being and nothing, *in-finitude*, Un-Endlichkeit.

Contrary to Deleuze's claim that Hegel, with the principle of negation as determination, subordinates totality that has no limit to the principle of identity, and thus reduces it to a totality of representation, we have to turn things upside down and say that it is *precisely because Hegel establishes negation as an exception, as an internal limit, that he makes it possible to think a totality that is non-whole*. The concept of the non-whole does not imply an absence of boundaries or an infinite expansion without negation. Instead, it refers to a totality whose inner boundary, like a notch or exception, also serves as an outer boundary. This inward expansion contrasts with outward expansion. It involves a complementary but displaced movement that does not lead to an endless accumulation of surplus and residue – instead, it redirects this surplus inwardly. The residue is not wasted: because it inherently contains its deficit, it fosters inward growth and constantly reinforces its developmental process. It is, as Hegel puts it, simultaneously a *retrogressive grounding* and a *progressive determination*: "It is in this manner that each step of the *advance* in the process of further determination while getting away from the indeterminate beginning, is also a *getting back closer* to it; consequently, that what may at first appear to be different, the *retrogressive grounding* of the beginning and the *progressive further determination* of it, run into one another and are the same" (Hegel 2010: 750).

The realization of infinity in the form of a circle, does not, as one might suggest, lead to an exhaustive monotonous repetition of the same, but rather enables an inexhaustible evolution, an infinite development bent over into itself, in its very finitude. Only in this way, namely, universality is stapled with particularities while form and content transition into each other. Whatever performs this circle, whether consciousness, spirit, or society, returns to the same place, and, in an ever-new sublation, invents a different one *at the same time*.

Overall, modernity draws an image of a line, that is, the oblique line of acceleration. It is not hard to see that the dismantling of hierarchical structures and formation of horizontal or rhizomatic striations performed by postmodernity act merely as a change of pattern within the big picture of the line. However, despite the lines of infinite progression are still growing in all the misleading absolute measures (for example global wealth, which in terms of its distribution forms a pyramid), the fundamental premises of modernity have been shaken in the past decades: states are losing their function as political unions of individuals, the subject is becoming an increasingly ephemeral and marginal entity, and nature is disappearing as an object of research separate from culture or technology. *The question of bending the line over is hence the question of transcending the mind frames of modernity.*

The dusk of modernity and the dawn of the new times – whether or not we can see the outlines of it yet (perhaps there is no hope for it, and we should all subscribe to the accelerationists' vision drawing on the inevitability of technological development in conjunction with global capitalism, along with its transhuman consequences) – would mean, at its fundament, raising human self-awareness to a new level, which would no longer celebrate infinity while silently practicing finitude, killing, and mortality, but rather celebrate finitude and practice infinity within finitude itself. What is to be transformed, however, is not only our attitude towards finitude and infinity and the correspondent "revaluation of all values", but along with that, also the mode of economic production that would take the form of an ever-improving and self-sufficient circle. The least we can say is, especially due to the current concentrations of political and military power and the self-revolutionizing nature of technology itself, that this is by no means a simple task. Nevertheless, it is a task – a task towards *in-finitude.*

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Bara Kolenc

Hegel i postmodernost: ka bez-konačnosti

Apstrakt

Članak se bavi višestrukom interakcijom između Hegela i postmoderne, kao i između postmoderne i savremene epohe. Obe perspektive se bore sa pojmom modernosti, zamršeno povezanim sa razmatranjima istorije, idejom kraja i konceptom istorijskih prekida. Izvodeći analizu vodećih ideja moderne i postmoderne, te fokusirajući se naročito na njihov odnos prema Hegelovoj filozofiji, predlažem tezu da postmodernost nije epoha koja je nasledila modernost, već prelazna faza koja doprinosi propadanju same modernosti. Konture ove nove epohe, još uvek neodredive ili objašnjive, otkrivaju se kroz značajne promene koje su nedavno poremetile temeljne okvire na kojima je izgrađena modernost. Time pokazujemo da Hegel, koji svakako nije postmodernista, upravo ukazuje na mehanizam preko kojeg se modernost može transcendirati, a tiče se ljudskog odnosa prema supstanciji, biću i vremenu. Štaviše, pošto podrazumeva revidirani ljudski angažman sa konačnošću i beskonačnošću, ovaj odnos nazivamo „bez-konačnost" ili „Un-Endlichkeit".

Ključne reči: Hegel, postmoderna, postmodernizam, modernizam, granica, totalnost, bez-konačnost, uni-formacija, kapitalizam, socijalizam.

Gary Browning

HEGEL AND THE END OF THE END OF GRAND NARRATIVES

ABSTRACT

Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) announces the end of grand narratives and the advent of postmodernity. The two go together. Moreover, they both involve the renunciation of Hegel and his philosophy. Hegel is condemned as the arch-exponent of grand narratives, framing a speculative theory that effaces difference and creativity in the interests of an overweening closed system. The popularity of postmodernism waned by the end of the twentieth century. Its rejection of grand theory was seen as neither novel nor unproblematic, in that analytic philosophy had long criticised theoretical speculation and the claims of postmodernism to put an end to large-scale theories were increasingly seen as unconvincing as theories of the historical development of globalisation and colonisation proliferated. The end of the end of grand narratives allows us to review how we might consider grand narratives today. The argument here is that they are to be seen as helpful and productive if engaged with in a critical spirit. More particularly, it is argued that Hegel remains a highly relevant theorist for today's world if his thinking is seen as open-ended rather than being fixed and closed.

Introduction

The end of grand narratives was declared at the end of the 1970s. The timing of Lyotard's signature dismissal of grand theorising and the rationalist assumptions of the modern world was perfect. The disintegration of state socialism, the demise of Keynesianism, continued Anglo-American philosophical scepticism over speculative metaphysics, and a simultaneous rise of assertive strands of cultural pluralism, combined to cast doubt on philosophical traditions claiming general truths. The claims of reason clashed with particular aspects of the present, which did not fit with supposed rational essences and unities. The triumph of postmodernism was short-lived. Its impact was less momentous than its sloganizing. By the end of the century, its appeal was waning. Its decline in popularity reflected discrete and contrary causes. On the one hand, with the

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passage of time, the novelty of its standpoint seemed less evident, and, on the other hand, doubts about the strength of its claims deepened. Criticism relating to the power and reach of reason had long been maintained before the advent of postmodernism. British empiricism was a persisting down-to-earth tradition, dedicated to undermining the claims of speculative reason. Well before the heyday of postmodernism, Lyotard himself had delivered a series of sceptical verdicts on the standing of philosophical truth, and his references to historic arguments of Wittgenstein and Kant in his later work indicate a philosophical pedigree for postmodernism. At the same time, doubts over the strength of the claims for postmodernism grew as the energy of the new creed dissipated. Lyotard, himself, in *Postmodernism Explained to Children: Correspondence 1982-1985*, and in later essays, admitted that he had overcooked the notion of narratives. He cast doubt himself on a neat reading of the postmodern as representing a historical succession to modernism, and warned against inflating the idea of narrativity (See Lyotard 1992: 29). Likewise, critics noticed how the very notion of the end of grand narratives implied a grand ending to history, which simultaneously drew upon and denied the validity of grand entrances and exits on the stage of history (See Connor 1997: 27 and Browning 2000: 21–40). Hence, for a variety of reasons, grand narratives refused to die. Indeed, one aspect of postmodernism that remains of value is its inspiration to consider and refine grand theory. It provokes defenders of grand narratives to analyse more closely the conditions of their possibility.

The continued relevance of grand narratives is underlined by the persistence of big questions and global developments. The ongoing aggrandisement of capital, the global reach of corporations, persisting inequalities within and between states and the historical implications of colonialism demand the re-reading of grand narratives, particularly in respect of an author, such as Hegel, who produced a notable large-scale theory of history. If Hegel is not to be granted an uncritical reading, critical readings of his works can reveal how he continues to be relevant to the task of interpreting the world. Lyotard, Derrida and Foucault focus upon Hegel in their critiques of modernity, and yet, in the aftermath of postmodernism, Hegel retains a relevance, particularly if his thought is read in a critical, open spirit, which refuses the absolutist guise by which postmodernists identified him. If Hegel, in response to postmodern critique, is read in an open non-absolutist spirit then he can continue to offer sanctuary for critical insightful readings of the late modern world. The call for the end of grand narratives rightly prescribes that there is to be no final reckoning with the problems and vicissitudes of modern society. Hegel's subtle reading of the latter, however, recognises the inescapability of its problems, while exploring possible ways of reducing its tensions, and offers a considered analysis of the modern conundrums with which we are involved. Ironically, a postmodern critique of Hegel, with its characteristic stress upon difference and particularity, can provide the incentive to read Hegel as open to the divergent and the dissident, while maintaining the connectedness of experience that confronts us. Hegel is a theorist, who can be interpreted as at the same time pointing to the

precarity of individualism, and the possibility of recognising and developing a common public good.

In this essay, we examine the credentials of Lyotard's postmodern critique of Hegel. Lyotard assumes an absolutism in Hegel's thought which is not justified by the openness of Hegel's thinking, which, against Lyotard, can be read as allowing for difference and a lack of closure. Moreover, the project of providing an overall philosophical review of experience, which takes account of diversity and experiential inter-connections, remains a reasonable project. It makes sense to fit things into an overall picture. In her late novel, *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987)*,* Iris Murdoch frames a novel, a major theme of which is the immense value of the writing of a text setting out a grand theory of politics, even if, in her later thinking, she herself retreated from recommending a form of collectivist radical democracy in favour of a sceptical liberalism, which guaranteed individual rights. Throughout her philosophical and literary career, Murdoch recognised the value of metaphysics and grand-scale thinking, notwithstanding the current philosophical criticisms of speculative metaphysics and broad thinking about politics. In defending Hegel against postmodernism, we can appreciate the value of Murdoch's defence of grand texts of social theory, even if at the same time, and like Murdoch, we can see the point of their critique.

Hegel as a Focus for Postmodern Critique

Grand narratives served as a metaphor for Lyotard's critique of the essentialism that he identified as the defining feature of modern thought. As Fraser and Nicholson observed, his critique of grand narratives focused upon their functioning as meta-narratives whereby understanding the world involves so many patterns, which in turn can be seen as framing a meta-pattern of those patterns (Fraser and Nicholson 1988: 376). In a letter referring to *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* Lyotard takes Hegel to be a classic exponent of this framing of an immense meta-pattern. He observes, "Hegel's philosophy totalizes all of these narratives (metanarratives) and in this sense, is itself a distillation of speculative modernity" (Lyotard 1992: 29). It is true that Hegel was a systematic philosopher, whose philosophy, from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* onwards, rested upon the commitment to reflect upon consciousness so as to recognise the layers of thought within experience. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel avers, "The completeness of the forms of unreal consciousness will be brought about precisely through the necessity of the advance and the necessity of their connection with one another" (Hegel 1971: 137). Philosophical thinking, for Hegel, constitutes the comprehensive and considered reflection back upon thought patterns that emerge within experience. Hegel did not even stop at nothing in his drive to reflect upon our concepts, and to see their interconnections. Hence, nothing is not to be considered apart from being and the particularities of being. Nothing is nothing special in its conceptuality. Nothing is included within Hegel's notion of the infinite, which is "beyond beginning

and end" (Hegel 1987: 149). For Lyotard, it is a profound mistake to locate differences in an overall scheme of things. To do so is to reduce the significance of differences, which is what Lyotard accuses Hegel of doing.

Lyotard critiques Hegel for misrecognising diversity by imposing a philosophical scheme upon diverse phenomena. Schemes imply a sameness, which does injustice to the particular. In *Just Gaming*, Lyotard expressly denies that justice is susceptible of being understood in terms of a formula, whereby different claims are integrated with one another (Lyotard 1985: 30). The sophists were right to deprecate general schemes of justice. A system of thought, such as Hegel's, misses out on the sheer particularity and distinctness of things. The supreme virtue of thinking for Lyotard is not the Hegelian capacity to link concepts and forms of experience, but rather to be inventive in thinking something new, and breaking through frameworks of thought to register distinctness and the incommensurability of concepts and forms of life. For Lyotard, sameness is an enemy and what is needed is inventiveness and a normative relishing of difference.

Lyotard critiques modern thinkers for their prioritising identity over difference. Essences proliferate, purporting to unify reality, and, in the process, differences are glossed over. Even an avowedly post-metaphysical theorist such as Habermas is taken as privileging the pursuit of consensus over dissensus, and hence denies the power of difference (Habermas 1987: 1–23). Lyotard strikes out against recognising and valuing consensus. Dissensus matters for Lyotard, normatively and descriptively. Differences resist unifying manoeuvres. Styles of thinking and acting are not the same. Describing, ordering, disputing and joking are not of a piece. Lyotard's commitment to difference is affiliated to Derrida's notion of *différance*, and Derrida identifies *différance* by its opposition to Hegel's treatment of difference, which joins contradictory standpoints in a series of syntheses. In an interview with Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta in *Positions*, Derrida maintains that *différance* resists the Hegelian move to raise concepts by resuming them in a subsuming one, "If there were a definition of *différance* it would be precisely the limit, the interruption, the destruction of the Hegelian *relève* wherever it operates" (Derrida 2004: 38). In *Glas* Derrida highlights the conservatism and inappropriateness of what he takes to be Hegel's taming of differences by juxtaposing the radicalism of Genet's homosexual otherness with Hegel's conservative treatment of marriage as uniting the sexes (for juxtaposition of the father in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and sexuality in *Saint Genet*, see Derrida 1986: 13–15).

Grand narratives were pronounced dead by Lyotard. Like Derrida, he assumed that the dissonant would disrupt any fixed totalizing system. Sheer difference is not to be trammelled by the monotony of a one-dimensional scheme of things. The dissonant disrupts the epistemological and normative claims of grand narratives. This is true even for those grand narratives, such as Marxism, which challenge the established order. For Lyotard, as for Derrida, the identification of labour with value in capitalist exchange is to deny the libidinal in pursuit of an imaginary essence (Lyotard 1993a: 95–103, and Derrida 1994:

206–9). Meanwhile, Lyotard diagnosed contemporary society as concentrating attention upon the pragmatics of what will work to maximise performance. The sociological imperative of the contemporary world is to maximise performativity, to make things more complex and to enable time to be saved so that more can be produced. What is actually to be done does not matter. The point is to maximise what we do. Against the backdrop of this remorseless performativity, and his own sense of an incommensurability of differences that demand to be recognised, the ghosts of grand narratives are of no consequence. In *The Differend*, a dense text subsequent to *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard urges that there is no overall frame of language whereby judgments ranging across particular forms of language can be maintained. He follows the logic of this thought to its conclusion. It means that the truth of his own understanding of meta-language notions, such as the notion of a *differend*, cannot be explained as a general truth. Like Kant's assessment of aesthetic judgments in the *Third Critique*, the capacity of a *differend* to suggest differences, which underpins our multiple genres of discourse, can be intimated, but not demonstrated. Just as a beautiful scene or the immensity of a mountain might be intimated by aesthetic judgments of beauty and sublimity, so political disagreements are not to be resolved by demonstrable argumentation (Lyotard 1988: 101–105).

Conflicts between perspectives, for Lyotard, are irresolvable by meta-argumentation. It is this perspectival character of perspectives, their mutual incommensurability, which renders conflict chronic. This incommensurability, underlying an enduring disputatiousness, establishes a language of the political, for the political implies the lack of clear criteria to decide upon things.[1] The political is constituted by the incommensurability of the judgments informing its practices. Hence, all engagements, which involve discordant irresolvable elements, are political. Notably, Lyotard maintains that the struggle between workers and management is a clash of perspectives that is not susceptible of argumentative resolution. Workers in an industrial dispute can combine and express solidarity in a struggle against management. They are liable to highlight exploitation and the injustice of practices that fail to meet their demands. They will be opposed by management or business owners, who appeal to arguments relating to the need to maintain or increase profits and to achieve efficiency in the face of unreasonable demands by the workforce. For Lyotard, there is a stand-off in this conflict, which many involved in industrial disputes will recognise. It is a political struggle without a pre-formulated script ensuring or presaging victory for the proletariat. Marxists might see the conflict as perhaps forming part of an overall set of historical developments signalling the demise of capital, or heightening the consciousness of workers in recognising their true interest. Hegel would see conflicts between classes as indicating the inadequacy of particular perspectives, which in turn implies the imperative of

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1   In his *Political Writings* (1993b) Lyotard recognised how a variety of differences, including ethnic and colonial differences evident in the Algerian war of independence, cannot be easily assimilated to an integrative overall Marxist perspective.

superseding the stalemate by achieving a more inclusive standpoint. Hegel's response to the problems developed under market conditions was to look to corporations and the civil service to establish non-partisan ways of alleviating problems. Lyotard, in contrast, sees and emphasises irresolvable conflict and incommensurability.

Hegel after Postmodernism

Lyotard's critique of grand narratives turns upon his insistence upon sheer difference. It is true that differences matter and that they are ubiquitous. Normative judgments differ from descriptive terms, jokes from exhortations, political economy from aesthetic experimentation and sexual behaviour from business partnerships. We cannot assume, with Habermas, that consensus can be reached between disputants. The dispute over Palestine does not lend itself to compromise. Conflicting and plausible claims are made for the same area of land, and opposing views are maintained relentlessly, and armed conflicts yield endless bloodshed. Yet pure differences do not exist, they always assume a point of sameness, or we could neither conceive of them nor discuss them. To conceive of otherness is to see it in some sort of relationship to what is other than other. The dismissal of grand narratives implies, mistakenly, that we do not require a wider picture to focus upon particularities, and different standpoints. Hegel's perspective, his form of grand narrative, makes sense of differences by drawing upon wider contexts. Large scale integrative theories, such as Hegel's, bring together aspects of the world, which are connected while being different. Differences do not preclude connections. Political economy does not operate outside a cultural frame, which sets limits on how welfare might be conceived and goods distributed. Aesthetics is not divorced from everyday life. Surrealism makes a point about reality, even if it is critical of standard forms of logic. It registers a point about the standardisation and monotony of forms of practical life. Art can imagine the exigencies of practical life and contributes to the economy. Without responding to normative demands, such as delivering general welfare and establishing equality, a market cannot obtain legitimacy. There are connections between forms of experience. Sometimes these forms of life are in apposition, at other times in opposition.

In his *Philosophy of Right* Hegel responds to connections between forms of experience. He recognises how modern civil society creates problems, observing how "...despite an excess of wealth civil society is not rich enough, i.e. its own resources are insufficient to check excessive poverty and the creation of a penurious rabble" (Hegel 1967: 150). In the intervening years since Hegel's death, his sense that the emerging market economy brings problems for the community has only intensified. The advent and subsequent waning of neoliberalism refocuses attention upon shortcomings of the market. Markets cannot exist in pure form; they require frameworks in which to operate. Banking systems can, and indeed, have collapsed, as the basic trust on which they depend needs to be supported continuously and adequately by non-market

foundations. Likewise, poverty is not to be eradicated or lessened automatically by a trickle-down effect of the market. Hegel was right to look to state action, such as welfare provision, the stimulation of demand and public education, to remedy defects of the market. If his reliance upon corporations to furnish co-operative awareness of mutual needs appears dated, then the need to establish and work with institutions and organisations attending to the public good in ways that supersede a mere aggregation of individuals, remains alive and important.

A controversial aspect of Hegel's thought, which Lyotard critiqued as representing the core of his grand narrative, is his large-scale conception of philosophical history, whereby the meaning of particular historical episodes is related to a wider appreciation of historical development. For Hegel, pragmatic or reflective histories provide limited historical perspectives, and are framed in terms of limited conceptions. Hegel's overall philosophical history is framed in terms of the key concept pertaining to human activity, namely freedom. Freedom is expressed in history because it is in the nature of freedom to be developed and realised. Without freedom historical action is inexplicable, and yet the full meaning of freedom cannot be ascertained without recourse to historical development. Retrospectively, the meaning of a historical development, in which freedom has been realised, can be gleaned. For Hegel, the ultimate meaning of history is tied to this revelation of freedom. In his *Philosophy of Right* freedom is his starting point, but Hegel recognises that even if freedom is central to political life, at times, historically, human beings have been regarded as slaves, and the truth of freedom is to be recognised in historical development in which slavery is abolished (Hegel 1967: 48). Hence, the present is not divorced from the past philosophically as well as historically. Philosophical history is needed to understand the world (see Hegel 1956: 17–18). To imagine a present without a past is impossible, and to establish pertinent connections between present and past is to understand a situation concretely. For Hegel, the most important connections between past and present are philosophical ones, which supervene on historical events so as to reveal their ultimate meaning. Our hold on the past is framed by the present, and the past bears upon the present. The past is a construction from present experience, and possible future directions shape how we conduct ourselves in the present. Grand narratives link aspects of our present experience to the past and open us up towards an unknown future. They are vital in enabling an understanding of our situation. Jay Bernstein commented perceptively on how the self of self-consciousness is constituted by the practices and frameworks in which it is situated, and hence a grand narrative is the appropriate form of self- knowledge. In 'Grand narratives', he observes, "Self-consciousness in its full sense, which of course can never be complete, requires the self to traverse the conditions of its own comportment in and towards the world, which is just as Heidegger, Hegel and others have argued, to recollect and appropriate the traditions to which the self in question belongs ... narrative repetition, grand narration, just is the collective form of human self-consciousness" (Bernstein 1991: 120).

The relevance of a broad and philosophical perspective on historical development is evident in the aftermath of the end of grand narratives towards the end of the last century. As postmodernism rose and fell, other currents of theoretical and real-world activity were happening, which raised questions over postmodernism's assumptions and in turn demanded a return to grand narratives. Global theory represented reflection on large-scale historical development that was conducted in various styles. Global theorists from Giddens to Hardt and Negri engaged in large scale theorising that presume general developments in history that resemble what was critiqued by postmodernism (see Giddens 1990: 20–30). Indeed, Hegel can be seen as a notable precursor of contemporary global theory (Browning 2001a, and Browning 2011b).[2] Likewise, the dominance of neoliberalism at the outset of the twenty-first century in Western economies and in the Global South has been understood and critiqued as a large-scale historical development, which has impacted upon the present. In recent years, the persistence of colonialism as a general historical force has been urged in decolonial critiques of political attitudes and practices in the West, which, ironically given Hegel's positive support for colonialism, recall Hegel's notion of unfolding historical trends (Sandew 2017). Recent political theorists, such as Hardt and Negri might repudiate Hegel, dismissing what they perceive to be his invidious teleology, but in their own theoretical practice they adopt historical perspectives which, like Hegel's, order the past in terms of its development into a form within the present. Likewise, decolonial critics of the present echo Hegel in highlighting the significance of historical legacies, which they take to be of supervening significance in the present.

Both the rationale underlying grand narratives, and the problems associated with their postmodern critique, have become clearer since postmodernism has declined in popularity. Lyotard's rejection of grand narratives suffers from internal tensions. His reading of Hegel, for instance, represents a very particular and controversial construction, whereby Hegel is taken to be an absolutist, imagining a subject, *Geist*, larger than and distinct from empirical individuals. *Geist* is held to exert an imperial control over the world and the course of history. This postmodern version of Hegel runs counter to sympathetic scholarly readings of Hegel, in which Hegel's *Geist* is not distinct from the patterns of meaning, with which human beings engage in a variety of cultural and historical contexts. Hegel's metaphysics does not replace human activities and history, but rather represents a synoptic undogmatic reading of events and practices, making sense of their inter-relations within an overall framework of meaning (see, for example, Pinkard 2000, Hardimon 1997 and Browning 1999).[3] Moreover, the presumptions of Lyotard's postmodernism are decidedly

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2   See Browning (2011a: 42–82) for an account of how global theory draws upon philosophical predecessors. More particularly, note the review of Hegel as a global theorist in the above (Browning 2011b: 42–61).

3   But note that I am critical of Hegel's reading of the history of philosophy, particularly Greek philosophy. See G. Browning (2013) *Plato and Hegel: Two Modes of Philos-*

questionable. His thought does not stand outside history, as the renunciation of grand narratives implies. In fact, Lyotard imagines history as taking shape according to the construction and his own deconstruction of comprehensive systems of knowledge. The end of grand narratives is itself a sort of narrative, which is neither local nor minor. Perhaps it is a variant of critical theory or Hegelian Marxism, in that Lyotard, in his reading of the present, mirrors the Frankfurt School in emphasising the overweening role of the instrumental in exerting pressure on all areas of life to save time or to enhance performativity. Lyotard observes, "This is the way in which Marxism has not come to an end, as the feeling of the differend" (Lyotard 1988: 171). Lyotard's theoretical formulations of postmodernism can be seen to be either variants of critical theory or venturing into new territory but with the proviso that grand claims, redolent of Hegel, are being made. Moreover, the assumption that language games in *The Postmodern Condition* or phrases and genres of discourse of *The Differend* are discrete non-communicating forms of activity, is questionable. For instance, Lyotard's separation of normative from non-normative language is far from clear-cut. In retrospect, postmodernism can be seen as responding to a particular historical conjuncture, when state communism in Europe was falling, and ethnicity and gender as markers of identity were becoming more visible. Rather than expressing a fundamental truth, postmodernism represented a stage in history, which can perhaps be best comprehended by a Hegelian overview of how forms of understanding succeed one another in history.

Of course, reflection on the continued value of grand narratives and the shortcomings of postmodernism, does not insulate grand narratives from criticism. A positive value of postmodern critique is that it provokes critical engagement with grand narratives. Grand narratives must operate at a high degree of abstraction if they are to offer large-scale explanations of developments in theory and practice. However, the price of abstraction is often a loss in capacity to deal meaningfully with concrete particular empirical developments. A general theory might suggest lines of historical development and affinities between forms of phenomena. Hegel, for instance, traces historical patterns of individualism and subjectivity in art, economics, religion and the provision of legal rights. However, he offers neither failsafe predictions on particular empirical developments, nor uncontroversial readings of the world. His endorsement of the nuclear family and heterosexuality, and his dismissal of non-European civilisations, are now rightly criticised on philosophical, historical and moral grounds. Critique of grand theory also rightly raises questions over how we might establish and corroborate the frameworks of explanation that are enabled by means of grand narratives. Teleological commitments to a future, which holds past and present tightly to a speculative overview, are to be avoided. Hegel is best seen as a critical theorist, whose philosophy is framed via critique of prior and rival theories and aspects of reality where inner and external tensions point to the need for developments that incorporate partial

ophizing about Politics, and also Browning 1987: 475–480.

problematic forms of theory and practice within higher, more inclusive unities. Hegel's dialectical arguments are framed by immanent criticism of styles of thought and empirical developments, which are open to experience and preclude dogmatism. His philosophy operates at a level of abstraction that admits, but does not anticipate unpredictable concrete historical developments. The internal dynamic of his argument depends upon his identification of internal tensions and interrelations within and between conceptual worlds. For instance, Hegel recognises the significance of rights, contracts, the rule of law and markets, and yet he sees these components of modern social and political experience as requiring their intricate and careful incorporation within an ethical community, in which representative forms of corporate life are maintained (Hegel 1967: 105–110).

Conclusion

Revisiting the postmodern call for the end of grand narratives can be instructive. What was the motivation for the postmodern repudiation of grand narratives? How plausible was the postmodern case for their demise? "The end of grand narratives" was more a slogan than a considered argument, and was used metaphorically by Lyotard to stand for a critique of modernist claims to provide clear rational knowledge of a complex world. Lyotard, himself, recognised that he was perhaps inflating the claims of narratives both on the part of modern theorists and in his own call for little narratives to play a role in orienting thought and action. The postmodern project, as a whole, tended to overplay the novelty of its questioning of grand theory. Analytic thought, in many guises, had adopted a critical sceptical approach to theory and the growth of science and the decline of metaphysics since Kant contributed towards an uneasiness over grand theory. Throughout the twentieth century, a general scepticism towards metaphysics and theory developed. At the same time, postmodernism exaggerated the rationalism of a diverse set of modern theorists, to which it contrasted its own supposed novelty. Hegel, for instance, is a rationalist in that he purports to provide a synoptic and systematic account of reality. But there are limits to Hegel's rationalism. He recognises that the contingent practical world is not susceptible of precise theoretical understanding, and he acknowledges that historical developments are not to be predicted. His understanding of reality allows for the unforeseen and concrete imperfections. However, Hegel's synoptic perspective holds out the reasonable prospect of comprehending how areas of social life bear upon one, so that the family, the market, the state, religion and art all reflect individualism and a persisting sense of universal meaning.[4]

Iris Murdoch was a modern twentieth century philosopher, who embraced Continental and Anglo-American analytic styles of philosophy (See Browning

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4   For a reading of Hegel as a communitarian, restraining market practices, see M. Hardimon, (1997) *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation.*

2018: 1–27). She was preoccupied with the realities of modern life, and observed the erosion of myths in the ongoing intensification of modern society. The loss of mythical formulations, for Murdoch, affects politics, religion and philosophy, in that metaphysics, ideology and supernaturalism contract under the impact of modern sceptical empiricism. Murdoch recognises the modern impulse to limit the reach of reason and imagination, yet aims to revive metaphysics in the interest of seeing things as a whole. Her post-war novels track the state of play in modern social, political and intellectual life. Her philosophy and novels show how postmodern critiques of grand narratives are far from novel in that they register the recessiveness of metaphysical claims and the waning of supernatural and ideological beliefs. In her first novel, *Under the Net* (Murdoch, 2002) the laconic European, Hugo Belfounder, rejects the claims of theory, and shows a Wittgensteinian scepticism towards general explanation. Likewise, the philosopher Dave Gellman is constantly impugning his students for longing for metaphysics, while the lead character Jake Donaghue is a socialist, but feels that its justification is problematic in modern circumstances. While familiar with signs of cultural dislocation in modernity, Murdoch herself aimed to revive metaphysics, most notably in *The Sovereignty of Good* (Murdoch 1970), where she develops a Platonic form for morality, and in her late and imposing *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, where a metaphysical sense of reality as a whole underpins morals (Murdoch 1992: 504–513). For Murdoch, metaphysics plays a continuing role in orienting our thinking, though she maintains that it should be conducted in a non-dogmatic and critical form. Hegel is relevant to Murdoch's enterprise. She recognises the problems with Hegel's philosophy while appreciating its richness. He is seen by her as "...a paradigmatic metaphysician, whose work can contribute to reviving metaphysics in the late twentieth century" (Browning 2022: 227).

In Murdoch's late novel *The Book and the Brotherhood*, a number of post-war Oxford graduates establish a *Gesellschaft*, a society, which is dedicated to creating and promoting a grand book about politics. They entrust one of the characters, David Crimond, a radical iconoclast, to write a wide-ranging speculative book on the political. Time goes by. The book is not written, and the novel's characters, who have shifted to the right politically, have no continuing interest in a wholesale critical reading of the present. Meanwhile, they have bankrolled Crimond, whose behaviour is wild and morally problematic. What are they to do in a world that has turned against grand theory, and where leftist views are no longer fashionable? Should they end the enterprise? The leader of the group of friends, Gerard Hernshaw, reluctantly, allows the continued financing of Crimond's enterprise. To the surprise of Gerard and the reader, the book turns out to be excellent. Gerard finds it stimulating, because it makes him think. The ghost of his youth returns to haunt him, but it is not unfriendly. It is a ghost that provokes him to rethink his ideas and to engage in a dialogue with the grand narrative he has nurtured. The moral seems to be that we should engage with grand narratives, for even if they are not to be accepted uncritically, we need to think with and against them, to sharpen our thinking.

While we might now be at the end of the end of grand narratives, the historic critique of grand narratives is valuable, like grand narratives themselves. Hegel offers a classic grand narrative in that it enables a broad understanding of the course of history and the role of politics in historical development, and while Murdoch adopts a critical approach to Hegel's speculative philosophy, she recognises that such an enterprise possesses value.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, and now in the twenty-first century, it remains important to think through our situation from a number of vantage points. We live in a world of interconnected activities, where the present emerges from past developments. To understand our situation requires framing wide-ranging ideas about politics, embracing past and present, and the different sides of social life, to allow for a critical synoptic reading of our identity and possibilities. Lyotard is sceptical over the possibilities of finding agreement between distinct perspectives. This scepticism is neither wild nor unconsidered, but divergences presuppose a measure of common ground, and politics is about working with what we share, to develop perspectives that can accommodate differences. Hegel's struggle for recognition is an absolute conflict to the death between different individuals, but ultimately Hegel takes the conflict to highlight how differently situated individuals are driven to achieve a common recognition of their identities. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is an elaborated review of the public conditions that are necessary to achieve equilibrated social recognition between modern individuals conscious of their differences. We should read it critically, but with a sense of its merits, and we should not allow postmodern critique to condemn Hegel's writings to be mere museum pieces. If we read his grand narrative critically, it will help us make sense of our lives within the modern world.

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Geri Broauning

Hegel i kraj kraja velikih narativa

Apstrakt

Liotarovo *Postmoderno stanje: Izveštaj o znanju* (1984) najavljuje kraj velikih narativa i dolazak postmoderne. To dvoje idu zajedno. Štaviše, oboje uključuju odricanje od Hegela i njegove filozofije. Hegel je osuđen kao glavni eksponent velikih narativa, uokvirujući spekulativnu teoriju koja briše razlike i kreativnost u interesu preteranog zatvorenog sistema. Popularnost postmodernizma je opala pri kraju dvadesetog veka. Njeno odbacivanje velike teorije nije viđeno kao ni novo ni neproblematično, jer je analitička filozofija dugo kritikovala teorijske spekulacije, a tvrdnje postmodernizma da se stane na kraj teorijama velikih razmera bile su sve više viđene kao neubedljive budući da su se širile teorije istorijskog razvoja globalizacije i kolonizacije. Kraj kraja velikih narativa omogućava nam da razmotrimo kako bismo danas mogli da razmatramo velike narative. Argument ovog rada jeste da ih treba posmatrati kao korisne i produktivne ako se bave u kritičkom duhu. Tačnije, tvrdi se da Hegel ostaje veoma relevantan teoretičar za današnji svet ako se njegovo razmišljanje posmatra kao otvoreno, a ne kao fiksno i zatvoreno.

Ključne reči: Hegel, veliki narativi, Liotar, postmodernizam, dijalektika, razlika.

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PEOPLES, NATIONS AND SOCIAL HETEROGENEITY. FROM HEGEL TO LACLAU AND BACK

ABSTRACT
Ernesto Laclau's work, *On Populist Reason*, is a crucial landmark in the attempts of post-modern political philosophy to grasp the logic of contingency at work in the production of political subjects. However, in recent years, this post-foundationalist approach seems to have reached an impasse when confronted with the persistence, success and efficacy of certain poles of identification that seem to resist the idea of a radical contingency of collective engagements. I argue that a new dialogue between the Hegelian philosophy of history and Laclau's post-foundationalism can be fruitful in overcoming this stalemate. Rather than reigniting the debate surrounding historicism, Laclau's evocation of the notion of *peoples without history* allows for an exploration of the radical heterogeneity implied in the situational, somatic, and affective rootedness of the formation of historical identities. I ground this hypothesis in a detailed examining of Hegel's own take on the a-historical spiritual formations and on the difference he makes between the "people", as institutionalized collective consciousness and the "nation" as its situated genesis. I claim that this Hegelian dialectic approach to nationhood far from does not limit the political horizons to the "nationalist" or "nativist" rhetoric. Instead, it offers a new light on the challenges of post-foundationalist approaches when it comes to understanding the concreteness of political subjectivation.

Introduction

In a text from the late 1980s entitled "Politics and the Limits of Modernity", Ernesto Laclau addresses the differences between modern and postmodern accounts of political and historical identities. Unlike modern intellectual traditions – including, above all, the Hegelian-Marxist conception of history (Laclau 1989: 66) – postmodern political thought "does not seek to establish the causes of a certain process", but rather aims to explain "the dissolution of the foundation by revealing the radical contingency of categories linked to this foundation" (ibid.: 72–73). These passages outline the driving idea of what Olivier

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Marchart calls the "post-foundationalist constellation" (2007: 31–33), an influential strand within continental political philosophy for at least the last three decades and which, in addition to Laclau, comprises thinkers such as Lefort, Nancy, Badiou or Rancière. Such an epistemological stance emphasizes the contingency that underlies political agency and opens up a new approach to the discursive, rhetorical and symbolic construction of the social. This perspective does not propose new social identities to replace the old ones – otherwise the "foundational" attitude would still be at work – but instead introduces, in Laclau's terms, a new "logic of construction" that acknowledges the inescapable ambiguity of any process of political identification (Laclau 1989: 64–65).

Towards the end of his text, however, Laclau introduces a nuance that is crucial to grasping the postmodern momentum in political philosophy: "The dissolution of the myth of foundations does not dissolve the phantom of its own absence" (ibid.: 81). This last statement anticipates an uncertainty in the post-foundationalist narrative that will only accentuate over time. Postmodern critique is increasingly confronted with the *persistence* of certain poles of identification that seem incapable of being conceived solely through the intellection of the logic of contingency. The contemporary emergence of populist identities, which is the main subject of Laclau's later work, reveals both the assets and the difficulties of his analytical framework. His perspective succeeds in explaining the *logical functioning* of the discursive articulation of "the people", understood as a signifier that symbolizes the absent totality and offers an object of investment for collective identification. Nevertheless, as various scholars have pointed out, the post-foundationalist approach to social identities – and to the construction of the people – struggles to explain the *actual genesis of symbolic articulation*. In this sense, Yannis Stavrakakis poses a question that remains unresolved in Laclau's thought: How to distinguish "discourses that successfully function as objects of investment" from those that fail? (Stavrakakis 2007: 99) Judith Butler expresses a similar concern by pointing to the corporeal dimension of the performative act of assembly: "I suppose my question might be formulated this way: What are the bodily conditions for the enunciation of 'we the people'"? (Butler 2015: 177) While these thinkers are themselves committed to a post-foundationalist approach, they point to an important blind spot in postmodern accounts of social identification: the logic of contingency, as advanced by Laclau, rightly undermines the allegedly essential content of identities, but it takes for granted the *conditions* for the actual performance of identitarian constructions.

To address this challenge to post-foundationalist political philosophy, this article revisits the dialogue between Laclau's thought and Hegelian dialectics. This is not to argue for some kind of return to a historicist narrative of political agency, but rather to present a different perspective on the internal tensions of political post-foundationalism. The dialogue between Laclau and Hegel will lead us to an examination of the relationship between the concept of the people and that of the nation. The concept of nation, which I will reconstruct by means of the Hegelian text, will not be mobilized to identify a new

given foundation – be it natural, ethnic or cultural – but rather as an element that points to the *situated genesis* of discursive constructions. This article argues that Hegelian philosophy of history can make a substantial contribution to the challenges of contemporary political philosophy by emphasizing the *situatedness* of the symbolic making of the people.

In section 1, I reconstruct Laclau's reading of Hegel's philosophy of history and its evolution through the different texts of the former. The relationship between these two thinkers has often been addressed in terms of their opposing philosophical logics and Laclau's critique of the Hegelian-inspired Marxist conception of history has been extensively commented.[1] This paper takes as its starting point a different element of friction which – with a few exceptions (cf. Fiorespino 2022: 174–78; Mihkelsaar 2020) – has barely been addressed by the scholarship, namely Laclau's use of the Hegelian notion of "peoples without history". Through an analysis of this notion – employed in *On Populist Reason* [*OPR*] to introduce the concept of social – I intend both to examine the dialogue between dialectics and post-foundationalism and to expose the internal tension of the latter in its account of political identification. In section 2, I turn to Hegel's text in order to analyze the status of the a-historical spiritual formations to which Laclau refers. As it is well known, in his Berlin Lectures, Hegel situates African, Native American and Asian nations at the border of the historical development, which has modern Europe as its ultimate realization. I argue that, according to Hegel, these societies do not constitute *peoples* in the proper sense of this concept, since they lack the corresponding form of historical consciousness. By emphasizing this heterogeneity within historicity, I hope to clarify the specificity of Hegel's concept of nation, as the unconscious counterpart of the historical spirit of the people. Finally, in section 3, I return to the internal tensions of Laclau's theory in order to see whether the Hegelian understanding of historical agency can allow us to address the crucial blind spot of post-foundationalist perspectives, namely the apprehension of the concrete emergence of political identification. In order to build this new dialogue between Hegelianism and postmodern approaches to politics, I will turn to another dialectical philosopher referred to by Laclau in *OPR*, namely Frantz Fanon.

Laclau's Reading of Hegel

Published in 2005, *On Populist Reason* had a remarkable impact, both on the field of political philosophy and on the way political science analyzes empirical political phenomena. If the book had such a diversified reception[2], and if it continues to be the subject of debates to this day, it is because its aim is not simply to provide a new understanding of a particular, local phenomenon,

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1   Cf. Dallmayr 2004; Dotti 2004; Frilli 2014; Howarth 2004; Lovato 2016; Muñiz and Rossi 2014; Perez Soto 2006; Retamozo 2017.
2   For a thorough account of the impact of Laclau's theory, cf. Jäger and Borriello 2020.

i.e. "populism". *OPR* provides a general framework for understanding the organization of social demands within political movements. In this sense, the book has introduced a new key for reading the current state of emancipatory horizons, characterized by the profound fragmentation of traditional vectors of identification. Rather than attempting to reconnect with a foundation capable of underpinning the convergence of demands, Laclau proposes to embrace this radical plurality as the ground of symbolic association. Thus, the populist logic is not a pathological deviation of contemporary democracies, but a phenomenon that reveals their inner truth. According to Laclau, populism is nothing other than the constructive operation that locates the structural absence of totality in the desiring core of collective agency.[3]

In order to determine populist reason as a political logic, Laclau builds on the concepts of *articulation* and *antagonism*. The unsatisfied demands of different subjects – intrinsically plural and irreducible to one another – are not, and cannot be, bound by any *a priori* law of historical development. In Laclauian terms, "articulation" means the assembly of different elements, which neither abolish nor mitigate the particularity of demands: "demands share nothing positive, just the fact that they all remain unfulfilled" (Laclau 2005: 96). Discursive articulation then operate through an element that is always particular and contingent, and that expresses the non-identity of society without saturating it. This element is what Laclau calls an "empty signifier", which functions as a vector of association *precisely* because of the indeterminate nature of its semantic content. If the signifier brings people together through the enunciation of the absent fullness of society, it can only be enunciated on the surface of an *antagonistic* frontier through which "the people" determines itself as "a partial component which nevertheless aspires to be conceived as the only legitimate totality" (ibid.: 81). Universality and particularity interact here in a very specific way, since the idea of a substantial totality underlying social processes is abolished. It is precisely through the antagonistic boundary – and thus *through its partiality* – that the people can proclaim itself as the bearer of the inevitably absent totality. The political logic of semantic indeterminacy is the result of Laclau's quest to construct an *explanation of the becoming-subject of political agents that is free of any meta-narrative based on the necessary laws of history*. In this sense, the main conceptual tools of *OPR* can be read in opposition with the dialectical conception of history: on the one hand, "Articulation" is the concept advanced by Laclau to counter the more organicist notion of "necessary development" and, on the other hand, the idea of "antagonism" marks the departure from the dialectical conception of "contradiction".

However, Laclau's critique of Hegel has not always been the same, and a brief historization can help to fully grasp the scope of Laclau's anti-dialectical position in *OPR*. In the texts he wrote with Chantal Mouffe during the 80's,

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3   "The need to constitute a 'people' (a plebs claiming to be a populus) arises only when that fullness is not achieved, and partial objects within society (aims, figures, symbols) are so cathected that they become the name of its absence" (Laclau 2005: 116–17).

the debate with Hegel's work is not yet characterized by a categorical rejection, but rather by an acknowledgement of its internal complexities and ambiguities. The target of objection was not dialectics *per se*, but a specific reception of Hegelianism in teleological and linear understandings of class struggle. This explains, for example, why in 1980 Laclau's own definition of antagonism still refers to the notion of *contradiction*.[4] In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, co-authored with Mouffe and where the distinction between contradiction and antagonism is already well established, Hegelian dialectics remains ambivalent: although it is certainly a rationalization of the world according to the laws of social transformation, dialectics also bears "the seeds of the dissolution" of social rationality (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 95). This ambivalence seems to disappear in the first references to Hegel in *OPR*. Hegel's dialectic is here directly criticized and presented as a perspective that inescapably leads to a teleological conception of history. The reason for this is not its applications to a determinist understanding of material interests, but its own logical operation. As Laclau puts it, "contradiction in its dialectical sense is completely unable to capture what is at stake in social antagonism" (Laclau 2005: 84). At this point, the break with the dialectical framework is complete, and the logic of contingency seems to require a rupture with any reference to the dialectical rationality of historical subjects.

As I stated in the introduction – and although there are important remarks to be made about Laclau's conception of Hegelian contradiction – I will not focus on Laclau's criticism of Hegelian logic.[5] My purpose instead is to address

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4   Of course, historicism is already criticized here, but what is important is that the notion of contradiction is not reduced to this horizon: "We know already that every antagonism at the level of discourse supposes a relation of contradiction, a relation in which the reality of one pole is purely and simply the negation of the other. Two consequences flow from this. First, the strictly contradictory element is not to be found in the allegedly causal chain, which has led to the emergence of the antagonism, but in the brute fact of the negation of a positionality, which constituted the agent as subject" (Laclau 1980: 90).

5   One might have some important remarks to make about Laclau's interpretation of Hegel's notion of contradiction. Laclau treats dialectical contradiction as a relationship between poles that are, on their side, identical to themselves: "That is, in both cases we are concerned with full identities. In the case of contradiction, it is because A is fully A that being-not-A is a contradiction — and therefore an impossibility" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:124). For a long time now, Hegelian literature has been contesting such a reading. Contradiction does not relate two self-identical determinations; on the contrary, it challenges the primary identity of the poles themselves. The very definition offered in the Logic provides enough material to problematize this reading of contradiction as a relationship between self-subsistent identical elements [*Selbstständig*], which would only be contradicted in their external relationship: "Since the self-subsisting determination of reflection excludes the other in the same respect as it contains it and is self-subsisting for precisely this reason, in its self-subsistence *the determination excludes its own self-subsistence from itself*. For this self-subsistence consists in that it contains the determination which is other than it in itself and does not refer to anything external for just this reason; but no less immediately in that it is itself and excludes from itself the determination that negates it. And so it is contradiction" (GW 11, p. 279.).

another scene of the discussion with Hegel that is at the heart of Laclau's proposal. After explicitly dismissing the dialectical framework for explaining political antagonism, Laclau unexpectedly resorts to Hegel when it comes to complexifying the logic of populist articulation by considering the element that *exceeds* the symbolization of the political scene. While in chapter 4 of *OPR* Laclau laid out the initial architecture of populist logic, chapter 5 is devoted to presenting an irreducible excess that remains beyond the articulation of society in antagonistic fields. Hegel's concept of the "peoples without history" will appear precisely "where heterogeneity comes into the picture" (ibid.: 149):

> So an equivalencial chain is not opposed only to an antagonistic force or power, but also to something which does not have access to a general space of representation. But 'opposed' means something different in each case: an *antagonistic* camp is fully represented as the negative reverse of a popular identity which would not exist without that negative reference; but in the case of an outside which is opposed to the inside just because it does not have access to the space of representation, 'opposition' means simply 'leaving aside' and, as such, it does not in any sense shape the identity of what is inside. We find a good example of this distinction in Hegel's philosophy of history: it is punctuated by dialectical reverses operating through processes of negation/supersession, but, apart from them, there is the presence of the 'peoples without history', entirely outside historicity (ibid.: 139–40).

Laclau's purpose in these passages is not simply to expand the original structure of articulation. Chapter 5 introduces a new register, it is no longer a matter of differentiating between demands that are articulated in a chain of equivalences, or even opposed in antagonistic chains. On the contrary, what is presented now is an exteriority that has no established place within the space of representation and is therefore excluded from the system of differentiation itself. Laclau calls this *sui generis* type of difference *social heterogeneity*. In this context, the reference to Hegel can only come as a surprise. If, in the first presentation of his theory in the book, Laclau completely rejects the dialectical structure – emptying it of the "ambiguity" he identified in his earlier works – Hegel reappears to indicate *another type of opposition*, which, according to Laclau, constitutes a "non-dialectical" relationship between the interiority and exteriority of the space of representation.

The evolution of Laclau's attitude toward Hegel that I have outlined above then has a systematic implication on his theory. In my view, the ambiguity of dialectics that Laclau recognized in his early texts has not disappeared. Rather, it is repositioned within the structure of *OPR*, in order to highlight the limits of political representability. It is true that Laclau adds that "when approached from a totalizing logic" heterogeneity is "denied" (ibid.: 142). Yet Laclau's own elaboration shows that the rupture of historicity within dialectical thought is not regional or occasional. This is the reason for Laclau's reference to Hegel's understanding of the "social question" and the concept of the rabble [*Pöbel*] which is another materialization of radical heterogeneous alterity.

As paradoxical as it may seem, Laclau draws on Hegel's work to define the element that hinders the totalization of historical rationality.

Before examining the question of the "people without history" within Hegel's text itself, I shall insist on the implications of the introduction of radical heterogeneity in the structure of *OPR*. Social heterogeneity brings, into symbolic structures, a dynamic dimension, which was still missing in the purely formal operation of the empty signifier. If we confine our reading to chapter 4 of *OPR*, then the populist articulation of demands – and, more generally, any political identification – would be defined exclusively by its relation to its antagonist. This would lead to a mirror relationship – in which "the resistance of the antagonized force" could be "logically derived from the form of the antagonizing force" (ibid.: 150) – that saturates the possibilities of *dislocation* and *rearticulation* of political actors.[6] Laclau foresees the danger of a purely structuralist explanation, which would fail to explain how the chains of articulation are themselves subject to transformations. Social heterogeneity thus allows Laclau to propose an alternative position somewhere between "dialectical historicism" – which conceives political temporality in terms of necessary laws of change – and the structuralist conceptualization that inevitably leads to "the static affirmation of a binary opposition" (ibid.: 149). In order to capture the constant variations in symbolic constructs, Laclau refers to an exteriority that is no longer *merely* external, but lies at the heart of the establishment of the "inside" of representation (ibid.: 152). In other words, heterogeneous alterity reshapes political identification in terms of a *post-structure*, i.e., an understanding of the articulation of the subject that presupposes the un-articulable – or the "irrepresentable", in the words of Etienne Balibar (2005: 15) – in order to explain the transformations of symbolic horizons.

To characterize this complexification, Laclau repeatedly draws on the conceptual language of Lacanian psychoanalysis. In his words, social heterogeneity "is equivalent to the Lacanian real" (Laclau 2005: 107). This means that the heterogeneous excess acts as the un-symbolizable rest that is nevertheless presupposed in every process – psychic and political – of structuring a community: "The people will always be something more than the pure opposite of power. There is a 'real of the people' that resists symbolic integration" (ibid.: 152). In this sense, Laclau accurately perceives how this *incompleteness* is always presupposed within the structure itself: "Heterogeneity inhabits the very heart of a homogeneous space" (ibid.: 152). Nevertheless, the question of the actual emergence and the conditions of the real success of the populist discourse remains unanswered. How does this social heterogeneity interact with the *concrete genesis* of symbolic articulation? Before offering an answer to this question, I will explain how this border of historicity plays out in the Hegelian

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6   "[...] if the excluded other is the condition of my own identity, persisting in my identity also requires the positing of the antagonistic other. On a terrain dominated by pure homogeneity (that is, full representability), this ambiguity in relation to the enemy cannot be superseded" (Laclau 2005: 140).

text itself. As I announced before, the aim of my reading of Hegel's philosophy of history is to examine the contribution that his conception of radical alterity can make to approach the *situated emergence* of symbolic articulation of the people.

The Blurred Beginnings of Historical Consciousness

Laclau's interpretation of the notion of "peoples without history" takes the Hegelian notion of "people" [*Volk*] for granted, as if the latter could be applied generically to both historical and "unhistorical" phenomena. A somewhat hasty reading might indeed take the "spirit of the people" [*Volksgeist*] to be the name given to certain social entities concatenated over time through reciprocal negations. Hegel's own passages on the concept, however, offers a more complex picture. Historical negativity not only constitutes the relationship *between* peoples – implying the passage from people A to people B by means of a determined negation of the former – but it also shapes the internal constitution of each people as such. In one of the first presentations of the concept in Jena, Hegel clarifies how the people finds its substantiality in a constitutive becoming-other [*anderswerden*]: "As absolute consciousness, the people is only insofar as it makes itself become another [*er sich ein andres wird*], and insofar as in this becoming-other [*anderswerden*], it is immediately itself" (GW 6, p. 315).

Identity and difference are then not mutually exclusive. According to Hegel, what defines the structure of historical consciousness is the becoming-other of a collective in an institutional self-production.[7] Rather than constituting a simple, determined entity – which would only be negated externally, as if the negative were no more than an "epiphenomenon" as Laclau argues (Laclau 2005: 84) – it is the own negative movement of *objectifying itself* that is the vector of the symbolization of the totality. In my view, this lies at the core of Hegel's conception of the people: there is no collective self-consciousness prior to social objectification. Accordingly, Hegel ultimately posits the state as the objective reality that ensures the construction of historical agency. The people finds its symbolic structuring through its activity of becoming-object, which Hegel in Jena calls its "work" (GW 6, p. 315). Political institutionalization, broadly understood, is not the representation of a prior and already given identity, but rather the *medium* for the construction of the people as a political and historical agent.

What happens, then, to the "peoples without history" referred to by Laclau? In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* Hegel gave in the 1820s, he considers non-European spiritual formations to be excluded from the path of world history and not belonging to the "sphere of culture" [*Kreis der Bildung*]

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7   The same bond between identity and difference is what defines the relationship between the individuals that belong to that people: "The substance of the people must be as much that in which singular consciences are one as that in which they oppose each other and that against which they are active" (GW 6, p. 315.).

(GW 27/3, p. 833). He considers African[8], indigenous American[9] and – to a certain extent – Asian[10] populations as unable of objectifying their freedom in an *institutionalized* self-consciousness. In such cases, the becoming-other is not codified into the institutional shape that Hegel praises as the elementary form of objective spirit. According to him – in a blatantly Eurocentric and racist assertion[11] – these cultures are thus entangled in a compulsive spiritual activity in which no objective fixation is possible.[12]

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8   "As preceding the state of culture-formation [*Bildung*] proper, Africa must be regarded as that which does not belong yet to world history" (GW 27/3, p. 833). For similar passages, see also GW 27/1, p. 84; GW 27/2, p. 516 and 526; GW 27/4, p. 1230.

9   "America presents itself in all these aspects as a weak, new country, little advanced in culture and powerless in every respect: it must therefore be excluded from the course of world history, as must the larger part of Africa" (GW 27/4, pp. 1205-1206). For related passages see GW 27/3, p. 821.

10   The situation of the Asian peoples – China and India – within Hegel's schema implies a supplementary ambiguity. Those cultures have no positive participation in history, but they are already the first level of historicity. They are the "access point" to history: "China and India are in the calm for-itself, they do not intervene in progress, but they are the access point [*Ausgangspunkt*] for the progression of history" (GW 27/3, p. 833).

11   Which has provoked a major controversy among Hegel's scholars. Essentially, the discussion opposes those who maintain that racial exclusion is not a structuring element of Hegel's philosophy of history against those who, on the contrary, see in it a systemic function. The debate between J. McCarney and R. Bernasconi is exemplary in this sense. McCarney argues: "As hoped, peoples, not nations, spiritual not natural entities, are the vehicles of this process. Indeed, groups whose principle is nature, such as nations, tribes, castes and races, cannot figure as historical subjects." McCarney's conclusion, however, is highly questionable: "From this it follows that for Hegel there can be no racist interpretation of history" (Bernasconi & Mccarney 2003: 33). Here, we follow the argument of Bernasconi's response when he indicates that the problematic point is that "only certain races produce peoples" (Bernasconi & Mccarney 2003: 36). In other words, the national and racial element is not a positive moment within historical subjectivation, yet it predisposes its *conditions*.

12   It is important to specify the scope of this ethnic-racialist thesis on the a-historicity of non-western societies. In Hegel's view, these populations are not, *in themselves*, *naturally unable* of performing a historical action. The cause of their exclusion is not a potential or natural (in)capacity. It is rather their *actual condition* – somatic, territorial and driving – that hinders the stable institutionalization of the collective in a fixed objectivity – the law, God, the family and, ultimately, the state – and prevents them from reaching the rational regime of historicity *for themselves*. A passage of the *Lectures on the philosophy of subjective spirit* on the African "character" displays in a very clear manner the difference between the *potential capacity* and the *actual drive* towards culture and history: "They cannot be denied a capacity for education [*Fähigkeit zur Bildung*]; not only have they, here and there, adopted Christianity with the greatest gratitude and spoken with emotion of the freedom they have acquired through Christianity after a long spiritual servitude, but in Haiti they have even formed a state on Christian principles. But they do not show an inner drive [*Inneren Trieb*] towards culture" (GW 25/2, p.958). By allowing the possibility of becoming historical – even if not *for themselves* – Hegel legitimizes the "pedagogical" mission of western colonialism. This justifies my choice of using the term "a-historical" rather than "un-historical" peoples.

Therefore, these spiritual formations "without history" do not constitute "peoples" in the proper and accomplished sense of the term, and I take the lack of this distinction as the source of Laclau's misguided reprise of the concept. When it comes to asserting their a-historicity, Hegel points to a dimension that somehow precedes the objective and institutional articulation of the people. Rather than the cultural content of these societies, Hegel focuses on the geographical, somatic and driving-affective embodiment of the political construction of the community. Accordingly, in the context of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel introduces another concept that is intimately linked to "the people" but cannot be reduced to it. A people without history – and without state as the objective form of identification – is not yet a people [*Volk*], but remains only a *nation* [*Nation*]:

> In the existence [*Dasein*] of a people the substantial aim is to be a state and to maintain itself as a state. A people without state-formation (a nation as such) has, strictly speaking, no history, as the peoples existed before their formation of states and others still exist now as savage nations (GW 20, p. 526, § 549).

Apart from a few rare exceptions[13], the specificity of the concept of nation is scarcely addressed in Hegelian literature. Many commentators translate "*Nation*" and "*Volk*" indistinctly as "nation"[14], while others insist on the "insignificance" (Bienenstock 1979: 175) of the term in Hegelian philosophy, arguing that it is the consciousness of the people as state – the "*Volk als Staat*" of the *Grundlinien* (GW14/1, p. 269, § 331) – that constitutes for Hegel the true historical agent.[15] While it is true that Hegel sometimes uses the terms as synonyms[16], the case of ahistorical nations underscores precisely the *non-coincidence* of "*Nation*" and "*Volk*". The passages on non-European spiritual formations reveal the specificity of the concept of nation which functions, within Hegelian discourse, to designate a *border zone* of historicity.

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13 For a remarkable exception, see the text by von Bogdandy (1991). However, after rightly distinguishing it from the people, von Bogdandy associates Hegel's concept of the nation with a naturalistic view with a "low" political significance (von Bogdandy 1991: 535).

14 "ISBN":"978-3-031-29661-1","language":"en","note":"DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-296 62-8","publisher":"Springer International Publishing","publisher-place":"Cham","-source":"DOI.org (CrossrefCf. Oittinen 2023: 109; Wolsing 2022; Ostritsch 2021; Mowad 2013: 171; Moland 2012. In this respect, L. Carré's critical review of L. Moland's book is highly pertinent (cf. Carré 2015).

15 Everything happens as if Hegel's interpretations of the question of the nation – as an anthropological reality – remain absolutely caught up in the debate on "nationalism" as a political option. All commentators' efforts are aimed at distancing Hegel from nationalism – understood as the consecration of the natural and sensible singularity of a given community – in particular that which emerges in other variants of German idealism and Romanticism. More specifically, Hegel is confronted with the last Fichte, as an example of the opposition between nationalism and statism, between particularism and universalism. Among other works, see Avineri 1962; Pelczynski 1984; Losurdo 1997.

16 For instance, see GW14/1, p. 159, §181.

While the concept of nation cannot be assimilated to institutionalized consciousness, Hegel does not relegate the national dimension to the realm of nature. In the *Encyclopedia*, the relationship of the nation to the people is one of the expressions of the relationship between soul [*Seele*] and consciousness.[17] In this respect, I believe that certain naturalist interpretations of Hegel's anthropology overlook the specific status of his conception of nation[18]. The latter does not denote nature itself, but rather the natural side *of* the spirit [*Naturseite des Geistes*] (GW 25/2, p. 926)[19], i.e. a naturalness *of* the people's spirit, which is not constituted by physical or biological nature as such. According to Hegel, there is no extrinsic causality from nature in the spirit, and he explicitly rejects the naturalistic language of the "effect" [*Wirkung*] or "influence" [*Einflüss*] that nature would have on human freedom.[20] The concept of the nation introduces a different, non-deterministic relationship between spirit and nature or, more specifically, between the people and their *situatedness*. Instead of referring to external natural conditions, Hegel resorts to the nation in order to explain the *emergence* of the people in a geographical, somatic, and desiring reality.

This gives the nation a kind of liminal status: it is neither an internal moment of the life of the spirit, nor a mere natural physical condition. The nation designates the local spirit [*Lokalgeist*], "the outward manner of living and occupying oneself, the bodily conformation and disposition, but even more, the inner tendency and aptitude of the intellectual and ethical character of peoples" (GW 20, p. 392). The concept of nation – of "national character" [*Nationalcharakter*], or "national spirit" [*Nationalgeist*] – captures the embeddedness of collective consciousness in a *territoriality* – which is not just physical

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17   "The first thing here, then, are the qualitative, totally universal determinations of the soul. These include the physical and spiritual racial diversity of the human race, as well as the differences between national spirits [*Nationalgeister*]" (GW 25/2, p. 950).

18   In addition to the aforementioned article by von Bogdandy, there are other recent interpretations of Hegel's anthropology in a naturalistic key (See, among others, Ikäheimo 2021; Testa 2013).

19   "The reason for this is that, in history, spirits are as naturally existing existences [als natürlich daseiende Existenzen sind], because we are not here on the field of pure thought, but on that of existences. The spirit is thus present as the natural determination of a people, or rather of a nation, for the nation is what a people is in its natural form" GW 27/1, p. 47). "This is because the people, which is the representation of a particular stage in the development of the spirit, is a nation, whose natural determination corresponds to what the spiritual principle is in the region of spiritual configuration" (GW 27/2, p. 507).

20   "There is a general, common and widespread idea that the particular spirit of a nation is linked to its climate [...]. However necessary the relationship between the spiritual principle and the natural principle may be, we must not stick to the general discourse, and attribute to the climate effects and influences too particular" (GW 27/2, p. 508). In the very same passage in which Hegel evokes the national dimension of peoples, he rejects the determinist approaches that assume they can derive the spirit from a climatic or physiological configuration: "the naturalness of the spirit does not have the power to assert itself as the pure imprint [*abdruck*] of the determinations of the concept" (GW 25/2, p. 962).

space – in a *lived corporeality* – which is not just physiological constitution – and in a drive – which is not, of course, a set of instinctive inclinations. In short, *the concept of nation raises the implications of the embodied-condition of conscious self-institutionalization.* Thus, far from evoking a natural basis that would have an after-effect on an already constituted spirit, the nation concerns the relation of the people to its own emergence in concrete existence. In defining this specific status of the nation, Hegel brings the etymology of the word to the fore: "A nation is a people as native, as *being born* [*als nativ, gebornes*]" (GW 27/2, p. 508).[21] The spiritual formation of a people, which culminates in social institutions and in the state, has an underlying condition that involves lived territoriality and affective disposition.

Once the specific dialectic between these two concepts is clarified, it is now possible to fully grasp the difference with Laclau's concept of "peoples without history", which, if we follow Hegel's presentation, should be called "nations". Within Hegel's discourse, nations on the margins of history are not an indifferent exteriority or a mere exception to the norm of historicity. They reveal the complexity of the *nascence* of the construction of the people.[22] The "nations without history" are a *pure birth* of consciousness that does not stabilize the product of its *natality* in an objective, rational self-institution. The capacity of social agents to become political subjects is affected by the unconscious background of their own emergence. Within Hegel's system, I take the "nations without history" to be more than an isolated, regional case. They are the symptom of the *birth* of political subjectivation, which is *affected* – rather than *determined* from the outside – by its own genesis in a shared corpo-geo-affective situation.

In Laclau's terms, Hegelian discourse shows that social heterogeneity lies at the heart of the symbolic formation of the historical arena. This radical alterity constitutes the edges of historicity, as the dysfunctional threshold of the historical intelligibility of social existence. Now, I propose that this border of historicity – and the concept of nation it highlights – points precisely to the blind spot of Laclau's theory of populism: his account of the *functioning* of symbolic construction takes for granted, or naturalizes, the actual *emergence*

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21   We can find an analogous passage in the *Lectures of the Philosophy of Right*: "'Actual peoples' in general have a side by which they belong to nature, they are thus in external effectivity, thus they are born (Nationen) [...]" (GW 26/1, p. 580).

22   As P. Purtschert puts it, non-European social formations are the expression of a limit figure [*Grenzfigur*], of a "beginning of reflection that always remains a beginning" (Purtschert 2006:71). According to Purtschert, it is this pure birth of the African situation, for example, that prevents Hegel from decisively objectifying radical otherness in a definitive characterization: "The figure of the African, situated at the limit of history, becomes the constitutive rest of the movement of history that Hegel systematically seeks to grasp. This boundary, however, is not static; on the contrary, it is constantly produced in the text. The shifting positions of African consciousness mark the points of a beginning that, while continually re-staged as a beginning, is constantly shifting" (Purtschert 2006: 64).

of this process. At this point, Hegel's distinction between nation and people allows us to question the genesis of political subjectivation at a different level. According to Hegel, human beings do not immediately possess the constructive procedure for producing a symbolic or institutional community. I believe that this non-immediacy of the constructive process is related to the aforementioned challenge that post-foundationalist theories currently face: the logic of subjectivation does not explain its own emergence. The question of nationhood then highlights the conditioned status of the collective capacity to articulate social existence in a political symbolical horizon. A reflection on the nation is therefore needed to explain the unconscious and affective formation of the very capacity that allows the task of making the people. In what follows, I will argue that the concept of the nation, makes it possible to address what remains only presupposed in Laclau's work, that is, *the desiring conditions of the articulatory performance itself*.

The Nation, the "Real" of the People?

I hope to have shown that the distinction between "people" and "nation" goes beyond a terminological nuance, internal to Hegel's system. In order to demonstrate its relevance to contemporary debates on political identification, I propose to address the debate that Laclau undertakes with another figure of the "dialectical" tradition broadly understood, namely Frantz Fanon. In *OPR*, Laclau evokes Fanon's reflections on the constitution of the revolutionary subject in Algeria as an example of how social heterogeneity – the colonized "classless", excluded from social representation – operates within the political articulation of "the people". Laclau's assessment is ambivalent. On the one hand, he praises the idea of a radical exteriority, which cannot be assigned to any pre-established social interest representable within the system and which constitutes nevertheless the driving force behind the anticolonial antagonism. On the other hand, Laclau criticizes Fanon for having "identified the 'outsiders' with too rigid a referent", which makes him incapable of "perceiving the problem of heterogeneity in its true generality" (Laclau 2005: 151). Finally, Laclau contests Fanon's "return to dialectical inversion" (ibid.: 152), which he believes fails to understand the volatility of social heterogeneity within a process of articulation. According to Laclau, the heterogeneous is not a given reference, but a function – as "a real" that *resists* symbolization – that is always *iterable* beyond its concrete content.

However, this objection is only valid if one assumes that Fanon considers political subjectivation at the level of symbolic articulation, i.e., at the level of the rhetoric making of the people. Yet, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon refers to an instance *prior* to that of discursive articulation, an instance that links political subjectivation to a shared affective condition that underlies any symbolic institution. More precisely, Fanon refers not to the people but to the nation: "These classless idlers will, by militant and decisive action, discover the path of the nation" (Fanon 1961: 126).

The difference is not terminological. Fanon also occasionally uses the term "people". The difference with Laclau lies rather in the fact that Fanon raises the difficulties of forming *the mere capability of rhetorical elaborations*. The conditions for the discursive production of the people are not always in place. Throughout Fanon's work in Algeria – including his analysis as a psychiatrist – the problem of the nation is related to the question of the somatic, psychic and driving conformation of the very possibility to institute a political agency. The entire political analysis of *The Wretched of the Earth* – paradigmatically in the first chapter – focuses precisely on the somatic and affective modalities – "libidinal" but also "muscular" and "respiratory" (Fanon 1961: 53–57) – that embody the production of the revolutionary symbolic horizon. The colonial context in which Fanon was engaged is thus perhaps the situation *par excellence* in which a radical heterogeneity emerges that affects the very *capacity to constitute* a historical identity and thus a people. In this context, Fanon's aim is to identify a kind of conditionality of the symbolic synthesis of both the individual and the collective subject. The synthesis is not immediately ensured by any *logic* of subjectivation. Nor does it depend on a simply empirical or physical condition. Instead, this preliminary level entails the formation of the embodied experience of the political agent. In this sense, I argue that – in very different ways and with opposite political tendencies – Hegel and Fanon raise the same point: *the emergence of political agency is not immediately contained in the logic of its articulation.*

I take Fanon's insistence on this preliminary layer of political subjectivity to be a possible answer to the question of the success and failure of articulation: in order to explain the actuality of political agency, political philosophy must address the primary capability of identification, which may be lacking, and which, in any case, needs to be thematized. Thus, in my view, the "rigidity" to which Laclau refers does not suggest a fixed semantic reference that can be localized in the structure of variation of the semiotic apparatus. Instead, Fanon points to the somatic, experiential and desiring existence that allows this subjectivation to *begin*. Contrary to what one might expect, there is no naturalism in Fanon's perspective. The bodily and psycho-affective existence of the political agent is also mediated by social structures, but is not reducible to the rhetorical articulation of the subject. On the political level, Fanon's point is that the discursive making of the people is conditioned by and inscribed in a psycho-affective situation. In order to reach the mere possibility of discursive articulation – which cannot be taken for granted – Fanon emphasizes the primary political task of the revolutionary process in Algeria as the task of bringing the nation into being: "Those action obey a simple instruction: 'Make the nation exist!' There are no programs, there are no discourses, there are no resolutions, there are no tendencies" (Fanon 1961: 127).

The controversy with Fanon illustrates, in my view, how the problem of the nation implicitly haunts Laclau's theoretical program, as some readers have suggested (Balibar 2010; Sibertin-Blanc 2013). Of course, the question is explicitly addressed by Laclau within *OPR* when he reflects on what he calls

"ethno-populism" (2005: 243–44).[23] For Laclau, thought, this tendency is only one of many variants of the combination of signifiers through which collective demands are articulated. The problem I tackle in this paper is quite different. It is not a matter of knowing how "the nation" intervenes as a signifier in symbolic construction. The considerations proposed by Hegel and, after him, by Fanon, focus on a deeper level. The emergence of any identification – regardless of the signifiers that articulate it – presupposes a shared drive, which can be interrupted or even annihilated, as in the case of colonialism analyzed by Fanon. The problem of the nation is thus distinct from, or at least not limited to, the question of "nationalism" – "chauvinism" or "nativism" – as a particular rhetorical strategy. Rather, it raises the dimension that Vladimir Safatle has recently addressed with the notion of an "autochthony" of political action (cf. Safatle 2021)[24], of a *nascence* of identification that is not limited to the signifying games of rhetorical composition.

In psychoanalytic terms – which are also Laclau's – the problem of the nation concerns the dimension of *jouissance* that is implicated in the articulatory procedures.[25] Social heterogeneity, conceived by Laclau as the *rest* of antagonistic construction, implies a constitutive *incompleteness* of symbolization, an exteriority that is already implied within the field of representation. Accordingly, in *OPR*, the heterogeneous does not concern the symbolization performance itself, it merely implies a constitutive limit. Both Hegel's and Fanon's accounts of the nation open up the possibility of locating the radical heterogeneity at the level of the emergence, or the *nativity*, of this collective practice of construction. This prior condition cannot simply be situated in the past – as represented in

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23   A similar strategy can be seen in the distinction between "inclusivist" and "exclusivist" populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2013). There are also some works that, while drawing on Laclau, make a distinction between populism and nationalism, as different discursive arrangements that can possibly coexist in discursive constructions (see De Cleen 2017; De Cleen & Stravakakis 2017). Yet in all these cases, the nation remains addressed as a semiotic nodal point and not as an affective condition of identification.
24   From my perspective, the concept of "deep historicity" mobilized by Norman Ajari in his critique of C. Mouffe points in the same direction (see Ajari 2021).
25   The imperative to go beyond the question of the nation as a mere ideological content to be deconstructed is posed by several commentators who orbit a critical interpretation of Laclau. For Sibertin-Blanc, the question of the nation returns to the heart of the populist question, when it comes to identifying which "identifications are performable on a political stage" (Sibertin-Blanc 2013: 293). In a similar vein, S. Žižek and Y. Stavrakakis: "To emphasize, in a 'deconstructivist' mode, that the Nation is not a biological or transhistorical fact but a contingent discursive construction, an overdetermined result of textual practices, is thus misleading: it overlooks the role of a remainder of some real, non-discursive kernel of enjoyment which must be present for the Nation qua discursive-entity-effect to achieve its ontological consistency" (Žižek 1993: 202). In a book that I already mentioned, Stavrakakis states: "The force of national identity – or of any other identity for that matter – is not wholly attributable to the structural position of the nation as a nodal point (or of other signifiers and discursive elements). [...] There is also a much more 'substantive' – but not essentialist – dimension that has to be taken into account" (Stavrakakis 2007: 200).

a timeline – but is, on the contrary, what constitutes the affective background of every present experience of collective selfhood. Understood in this way, the *nativity* of political synthesis goes far beyond the "nation" in the current sense of the term. It leads to the implications of the *being born* [*gebornes*] of social processes of identification.

As a result, it becomes possible to reconsider Laclau's account of the un-articulable "real". Laclau establishes social heterogeneity as the un-representable that is presupposed in every symbolic political identification. In this view, heterogeneity sets then a constitutive *limit* to articulation, but the *procedure* of symbolic construction remains unaffected. I argue that the "real" implied in the question of the nation is not only what *resists* symbolization, this still would preserve the idea of a function to be fulfilled in an iterable post-structure. By contrast, the nation is what shapes the emergence of the *constructability* of collective identities. Does this point to a sort of natural basis for politics? To a new foundationalism perspective that would try to provide a ground, "in the last instance", for political identification? At this point, I hope to have presented the elements for a negative response. The level of the affective, somatic and territorial experiences implied by the problem of the nation is not an immutable and reassuring natural background. On the contrary, by highlighting the problem of the nation, it is possible to address the fluctuations of the process of articulation and the impossibility of any definitive stabilization of collective identities.[26] The "real" of the nation is therefore not a fixed natural ground for politics but the inescapable *situatedness* that haunts every elaboration of symbolic horizons.

Conclusion

The hypothesis of this article is that the dialogue between Laclau and dialectical thought is key to responding to the challenges of postmodern political philosophy and, more specifically, to tackling the problem of the emergence of political identities. In order to support this claim, I have first analyzed the ambivalent relationship between Laclau's theory of populism and the dialectic understanding of history and the way in which the former resorts to Hegel's concept of "peoples without history" to define social heterogeneity. I then argued that Laclau's reading overlooks a distinction between people and nation that is crucial to grasping Hegel's account of historical agency. Hegel's concept of nation reveals an aspect of political identification that Laclau seems to downplay, namely the conditions for the symbolic institutionalization of the people. In the same line, I finally confronted Laclau's reading of Frantz Fanon as based on a similar overlooking of the somatic psycho-affective situation that enables discursive

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26 Fanon's considerations on the "misadventures of national consciousness" (Fanon 1961: 145–193) confirm that the assertion of a "national" rooting of the symbolic construct provides no definitive psycho-social stabilization. On this internal tension of *The Wretched of the Earth* see Sibertin-Blanc 2014.

articulation. The gap between nation and people, I argue, manifests the need for a philosophical insight into the actual genesis of political identification.

In my view, Hegelian and post-Hegelian reflections on the affective investment of rhetorical formations provide such an insight without completely abandoning the "post-foundationalist" or "constructivist" perspective on political identities. I have argued that the dialectical account of the nation introduces the *conditionality of political construction* as a philosophical problem that cannot be disregarded. The analysis of the situated embodiment of symbolic identification is crucial to counter the naturalization of political identities. In this respect, political philosophy faces two parallel dangers: on the one hand there is the peril of taking identities as naturally given, and with all the exclusionary consequences this entails on a normative level, which post-modern philosophy rightly deconstructs. On the other hand, there is yet another risk that a post-foundationalist perspective such as Laclau's incurs, namely the naturalization of political articulation itself, as an operation that can always be performed, reproduced and resumed. I have argued that the dialectical comprehension of the nation, by raising the conditionality of articulation, avoids reifying the formal iterability of identification.

In this paper, I have exposed the problem of the conditionality of politics by distinguishing between people and nation, that is, between discursive articulation and its embodied conditions. Nevertheless, my analysis does not confine political horizons to the "national" contexts in the strict sense, as if psycho-affective collective enactments were only possible within communities empirically defined as nations. What I called in this article the "problem of the nation" is in fact a more general focus on the constitution – troubled and contradictory – of the *collective capacity to articulate social heterogeneity*. This new angle of analysis makes it possible to address, under new lenses, a number of concrete political phenomena: in particular, the affective "success" of European conservative nationalisms, but also postcolonial investments of the nation, and even contemporary elaborations on the possibilities for plurinational states. All these phenomena, in their diversity, reveal the problematic embodiment of discursive political practices. The latter do not spontaneously proceed according to a pure logic of articulation, but also depend on a situated emergence, an affective *birth* that makes their performance *real*.

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Manuel Tangora

Narodi, nacije i društvena heterogenost: od Hegela do Laklaua i nazad

Apstrakt

Rad Ernesta Laklaua *O populističkom razumu* predstavlja ključni orijentir u pokušajima post-moderne političke filozofije da shvati logiku kontingentnosti na delu u proizvodnji političkih subjekata. Međutim, čini se da je poslednjih godina ovaj post-fundacionalistički pristup zapao u ćorsokak kada se suočio sa istrajnošću, uspehom i efikasnošću određenih polova identifikacije koji se, čini se, odupiru ideji o radikalnoj kontingentnosti kolektivnih angažmana. Tvrdnja koju branim jeste da novi dijalog između hegelijanske filozofije istorije i Laklauovog post-fundacionalizma može biti plodonosan u prevazilaženju ovog zastoja. Umesto da ponovo podstakne debatu oko istorizma, Laklauovo evociranje pojma *naroda bez istorije* omogućava istraživanje radikalne heterogenosti koja se podrazumeva u situacionoj, somatskoj i afektivnoj ukorenjenosti formiranja istorijskih identiteta. Ovu hipotezu zasnivam na detaljnom ispitivanju Hegelovog sopstvenog shvatanja a-istorijskih duhovnih formacija i na razlici koju pravi između „naroda" kao institucionalizovane kolektivne svesti i „nacije" kao njene situirane geneze. Pokazujem da ovaj hegelijanski dijalektički pristup nacionalnosti daleko od toga da ne ograničava političke horizonte na „nacionalističku" ili „nativističku" retoriku. Umesto toga, on nudi novo svetlo na izazove post-fundacionalističkih pristupa kada je reč o razumevanju konkretnosti političke subjektivacije.

Ključne reči: Hegel, Laklau, nacija, narod, politički identiteti, post-fundacionalizam.

Ionuț Văduva

HIERARCHIES OF THE DIALECTIC: HEGEL ON IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

ABSTRACT
In my paper, I contend that it is necessary to rely on a categorial reading of Hegel's notions of identity and difference in order to properly understand their non-hierarchical relationship in Hegelian dialectics. Many commentators reduce their speculative nature to a merely instrumental use of the terms in analyzing Hegel's work. In this way, identity and difference are only formally employed and thus ontologically obscured, leaving room for subsequent shortcomings and hierarchizations. I maintain throughout the paper that the best way to elucidate the hierarchical question and prevent dialectical thought from such errors is by inquiring into Hegel's speculative configuration of onto-logical categories. If anything, Hegel replaces the primacy of identity over difference with an internal linkage that determines the structure of these notions, thus granting their immanent relatedness. For him, the relationship between categories is necessarily a movement. The constitution of identity and difference, as determinations of reflexion of essence in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, proves that they are equiprimordial and co-structural, hence preventing any possible hierarchy.

Introduction

In the following sections, I will argue that the Hegelian speculative dialectics does not hierarchize identity and difference. The accusations leveled against Hegel, such as conferring primacy to identity over difference through the logic of self-mediation and negativity, epitomized by Deleuze, are nevertheless legitimate starting point from which one should inquire into Hegel's Logic. The existing responses to the accusations portraying Hegel as a philosopher of identity miss the core of the Hegelian ontology: the categorial nature of identity and difference. It is imperative to analyze them in their constitutive movement, as evident in Hegel's second book of *Science of Logic*, in order to grasp how Hegel conceived them in and for themselves, beyond mere conceptual instruments.

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There is a whole history of such accusations against Hegel. I do not intend to reduce them to our particular issue, but only consider them to the extent to which they prepare the field for debate. Marx, for instance, argued that self-consciousness eventually consumes every object because it regards materiality as intrinsically spiritual. Eventually, there is no legitimate exteriority to self-consciousness, as Nature itself is considered a 'dialectical defect'. Adorno, examining Hegel's relation to exteriority, asserts that the Hegelian totality collapses when left with no external object. The central critique I consider during my account is Deleuze's. From the perspective of the philosophy of difference, he accused Hegel of reducing difference to the production of identity, rendering it only a function of the latter, and therefore reduced to negativity and contradiction. I find Deleuze's account very valuable because it is promising for the Hegelian account itself. However, it represents only a starting point in determining Hegel's immanent response to such a critique.

In the third section of the paper, I will address Hegel's notion of the speculative in order to articulate his philosophical program. Then, I will examine the contributions of authors like De Nys, Maker, or Williams, stressing their strengths and their fundamental shortcomings. I will contend that an exclusively instrumental usage of the notions of identity and difference is illegitimate and non-dialectical. Following this, I will tackle Hegel's movement of essence to identity and difference. At various points, I may overlook elements of Hegel's sophisticated argumentation. Except for some minor instances, any hermeneutical errors is solely my fault.

Logical Monsters: Hegel as *Identitätsphilosoph*

Hegel has probably been the subject of most accusations of articulating a philosophy of identity. Some authors argue that it traces back to Kierkegaard (Maker 2007: 15) and certainly to Young Hegelians such as Marx. There is no extensive space here to delve into this fully, but it is however relevant as a starting point. Through Maker's (2007: 23–24) remark regarding the criticisms against Hegel for conceiving the Real (Nature here) as the Idea in otherness – i.e., the reduction of being to thought – we can observe that Marx reads Hegel in a similar vein, as exhausting the ontology of the object by making it into an abstract and estranging entity mediating self-consciousness. For Marx, Hegel envisions the Logic as the philosophical mind's self-comprehending abstract process. Speculative dialectics represents a form of thought abstracted from nature, conceiving of the latter as an external object or 'self-loss' (Marx 2007: 148). The return of pure speculative thought to itself is thus presented as a return of abstraction to itself after a process of self-estrangement into thinghood, i.e., objectivity. Moreover, Marx argues that, when Hegel understands the object of consciousness as alienated, the estrangement only takes a *thought-form*, so that the retractive process itself isn't but a conflict *within* thinking between abstraction and sensuous reality. This leads Hegel to contend that the object of consciousness is nothing but objectified self-consciousness

(ibid.: 152). The reappropriation of man's essentiality would thus only take place in consciousness. Objects are only thought entities, subsisting subject-like abstractions. If the object is estranged essentiality serving the self-mediation of the subject, it follows that, Marx argues, its reappropriation nullifies and exhausts objectivity as such; thus, the object itself turns out to be nothing but an *intrinsically* abstract entity, making man into an exclusively spiritual and non-objective being. The annulment of alienation is thus only a false negation, taking place at the level of thinking and restricted to a dialectic of pure thought, proving *Phenomenology* an obscure and mystifying criticism (ibid.: 150).[1] The subject totalizes and reduces the object to a consumed abstraction. However, when it is for Hegel to conceive a non-absorbable point of externality – Nature – it is displayed as a dialectical *defect* (ibid.: 170), whose only purpose consists in confirming abstraction. It is rather striking to see how this call for exteriority – which is not developed at all by Marx, but rather indicated – is pervasive in Adorno. Notwithstanding the different – both historical and theoretical – respective backdrops, Adorno argues, in this same vein, that the intrinsic tendency of Hegel's absolute subject is to make any difference into its own moment, eventually *consuming itself* when left with no exteriority – when integrating every object –, becoming an objectless subject (Nicholsen & Shapiro 1993, p. xxiii). Because Hegel's totality is hence a self-contradictory subject-object dialectics in the service of identity, the whole turns out to be the untrue (Adorno 1993: 87), leaving the dominating impulse of the Absolute for the 'non-identity of identity and difference'.[2] Adorno's critique – as well as Marx's to some extent – is, however, anti-Hegelian only to the extent to which it is Hegelian. It explicitly pertains to Hegel's language, system, and vein, in a disarticulating form still dialectical in nature. This is not the case with the poststructuralist camp.

Postmodernists and poststructuralists alike have reshaped the issue in a different language from various positions, but essentially treating Hegel as an

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1   The promising 'rational kernel' of Hegelian dialectics, encapsulated into a mystifying shell, is also reiterated by Marx in the "Postface to the Second Edition" of *Capital Vol. I* (Marx 1992: 103). But Marx's focal criticism of Hegel is probably related to the *Philosophy of Right*: see Marx 1977. Even though the continuities and disjunctions of Marx's concern with Hegel might prove interesting, I only want to underline Rose's 2009 account on this – Marx reads Hegel in a non-speculative way: "Marx's reading of Hegel overlooks the discourse or logic of the speculative proposition. He refuses to see the lack of identity in Hegel's thought, and therefore tries to establish his own discourse of lack of identity by using the ordinary proposition" (Rose 2009: 231). Even though her statement is grounded, I believe that her own reading might turn non-speculative by not proving very sensitive to the overall historical determinacies of Marx's reading which subjectivized him. Rather, she revolves around the fact that Marx did not get beyond formal propositions simply because he did not understand Hegel properly: negativity has therefore no historical positive backing, mediation is refused from its contextual determinations.
2   See also the different tackling of Maker 2007 and De Nys 2007 of the issue, defending Hegelian otherness.

Identitätsphilosoph (Maker 2007: 15). Although Derrida's accounts on Hegel's dialectics is by no means neglectable – as, say, apparent in *Positions* (1981: 43ff) – Deleuze chiefly remains the harshest foe of Hegelian dialectics among poststructuralists with an overtly stated despise towards it (Pezzano 2014: 89; Widder 2013: 18). Even though he had never devoted a work or an extensive and particular concern to Hegel, he has written entire passages formulating well-articulated criticisms to him. Sauvagnargues (2013: 38) even identifies three distinct stages in Deleuze's critique of Hegel: through Nietzsche, a critique of negativity (see Deleuze 2002: 156–164); then, in *Difference and Repetition*, through Gilbert Simondon, an account of Hegelian metaphysics; lastly, after 1968, the concern revolves rather around history and politics than metaphysics and ontology in, for instance, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Probably the most consistent treatment of Hegel is to be found in the first part of *Difference and Repetition* – also of most interest here – where Deleuze explicitly locates his attitude in the line of anti-Hegelianism (Deleuze 1994: xix). Above all, Deleuze distinguishes himself by addressing a critique of Hegel from the assumed position of philosophy of difference (ibid.: 52), with the clear task of replacing the Hegelian (subordinating) relationship between identity and contradiction with difference and disparity, and to save difference from contradiction. Pezzano (2014: 91) correctly holds that Deleuze's anti-Hegelianism relies on two focal points. Deleuze thinks, first, that *in Hegel identity dominates difference*. Every particular object subsists only subordinated to the general identity of the concept or the specific identity of some other difference. Second, *contradiction exhausts difference*; difference is either negated from the general identity of a concept or from another difference. According to Deleuze, difference isn't to be conceived as difference *from* or *of*, but rather "*for, with, between,* or ... difference *in-between*" (Pezzano 2014: 91). Difference has only been conceived as differences *within* concept, within the identical. The particular is par excellence subordinated to the universal; differences between particulars are nothing but meditations of identities stating their own particularities. Difference is therefore only the non-identical in the way to identity, only the interspace between identicals, thus negative by nature. The core of the issue rests therefore in confusing the *concept of difference* with *conceptual difference* (Deleuze 1994: 27) and hence in reducing difference to negativity and contradiction between identicals. Let's have a closer look at Deleuze's remarks about dialectics. Starting with the negative and its relation to the principle of sufficient reason, he states:

> Hegelian contradiction does not deny identity or non-contradiction: on the contrary, it consists in inscribing the double negation of *non*-contradiction within the existent in such a way that identity, under that condition or on that basis, is sufficient to think the existent as such. Those formulae according to which 'the object denies what it is not', or 'distinguishes itself from everything that it is not', [i.e., the ontological relationship between identity and difference] are logical monsters (the Whole of everything which is not the object) in the service of identity (ibid.: 49).

Difference is made into negativity as a logical precondition of identity. Thus, moreover,

> It is said that difference is negativity, that is extends or must extend to the point of contradiction once it is taken to the limit. This is true only to the extent that difference is already placed on a path or along a thread laid out by identity. It is true only to the extent that it is identity that pushes it into that point. Difference is the ground, but only the ground for the demonstration of the identical. Hegel's circle is not the eternal return, only the infinite circulation of the identical by means of negativity (ibid.: 49–50).

Dialectics turns out to be an accumulative spiral of the self-mediating identical, whereby difference is subordinated to the reflexive desires and needs of identity. Hegel thus does nothing but articulate a *hierarchical dialectic* whose structure crowns identity and totalizes an oppressive concept through the logic of negativity and self-mediation. Difference becomes pure negativity, only a pretext for the affirmation of the identical and hence reduced to a means, doomed to contradiction, subsistence and self-negation. It is haunted by the logical monsters of dialectics in the ghostly castle of Identity, with no ontological status of its own for it is always a *conceptual difference*, encapsulated in the identical, and therefore at the mercy of identity itself. Hierarchically structured, within dialectics "difference remains subordinated to identity, reduced to the negative, incarcerated within similitude and analogy" (ibid.: 51). For Deleuze, in Hegel, difference only responds to the coercive structure of identity through the confusion of difference with contradiction (as also highlighted by Widder 2013: 20), as an always-already negative determination. By contrast, difference cannot be reduced or always traced back to opposition since this movement *forces* difference back into a "previously established identity, when it has been placed on the slope of the identical which makes it reflect or desire identity, and necessarily takes it where identity wants it to go – namely, into the negative" (Deleuze 1994: 51). Then, in Hegel, difference is only derived from dialectical opposition, reduced to negativity; it must rather be affirmative, non-recognizable and non-reiterative of identity (Williams 2007: 32). Otherwise, dialectical difference only responds to the production and reproduction of the identical, with no genuine space for itself. It seems thus to be in Deleuze an intrinsic temptation of regarding Hegelian identity as an articulated notion before encountering difference or at least articulating itself through conceptual subjugation. Difference is nothing but opposition, contradiction. But Deleuze doesn't really delve too much into the function of contradiction within the relationship between identity and difference in Hegel. Moreover, he does not – as we will see later on, some Hegelians do not as well – tackle Hegel's particular notions of identity and difference as if it were irrelevant how the latter articulates them as onto-logical categories. This constitutive silence clearly conveys that the reading of Hegel is non-speculative; it perversely oversees the Hegelian conceptual architecture and analyses it through the lens of a formal identity – the very thing Hegel looked forward to

overcoming. However, this is not to say that Deleuze only understands Hegel at 'the level of *Verstand*', for this is a hierarchical understanding itself naively opposing the formal and the speculative I am not fond of. It also does not mean Deleuze is a poor reader of Hegel. The legitimacy of the problems he raises makes him a rather informed one. II am merely suggesting that his reading is incomplete and thus distorted, and the ambition of exhausting the object of inquiry through implicitly rejecting a conceptual framework explicitly designed by Hegel to surpass the insufficiencies of what Deleuze would later call arborescent judgement is unjustified. In this light, there are some authors even suggesting very strong similarities between Deleuze and Hegel on the issue of rhizomatic judgement, where conjunction takes the place of the copula (the universal/particular non-signifying existential relationship), escaping the hierarchical structure of traditional metaphysics. Sommers-Hall argues that Hegel's description of the plant in the *Philosophy of Nature*[3] is rhizomatic: with no centralizing subject, each element is an individuality of its own with no conceptual *sub*jugation, but rather *con*junction. It is a non-hierarchical structure with no supposed underlying identity of thought (Hall 2013: 63–65). Moreover, from a Hegelian point of view, one can criticize Deleuze for falling into the traps of spurious infinite: if a form of judgement articulates only the conjunction, it eventually becomes an incoherent and indeterminate series of differentials with no underlying unity, hence incomprehensible. I would only suggest that Hegel does not only overcome arborescent judgement but also the rhizomatic through a speculative articulation of both within a non-hierarchical dialectics; the conflict, if existing, between conjunction and existential, is conciliable; in this way, the Hegelian framework supersedes both the universal/particular dominating temptation and the *spurious conjunction* through a dialectics of relationship I will explore below. Some other authors, such as Widder, argue that strong similarities and affinities are to be found between Hegel and Deleuze regarding the theory of forces because Deleuze places his ontology of sense on an already established Hegelian terrain (Widder 2013: 34). Nonetheless, Widder argues that however close Hegel and Deleuze would get, there are still separated by an unbridgeable gulf.

My aim here is not to build such a bridge. I will further underline neither the similarities nor the differences between Hegel and Deleuze. This task has already been comprehensively carried out, for instance, in Houle & Vernon 2013 or Pezzano 2014; literature is still to be written. My only intention here is to *(re)situate* Hegel's notions and articulation of identity and difference as onto-logical categories; only from this standpoint can their relationship be legitimately analyzed. Deleuze's critiques are therefore only a pretext backed by an authoritative – though not without its lacunae – reading of Hegel. Therefore, they are only indicative and serve as a starting point. In tackling them, I will only articulate elements *within* Hegel himself with Deleuze at hand; for the temptation to respond to a critique can turn into an external treatment of

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3   As apparent in Hegel 1970: 56–57; also see Hegel 1991: 237–238.

the object of inquiry due to the ambition of abolishing the critique itself; I will argue below how certain commentators on the topic have fallen into such a trap. Taking critique as a pretext safeguards the inquiry itself from remaining confined within the inscribed susceptibilities of such objections. Critique is thus turned into *suggestion*: the object of inquiry is not underlined by a conceptual imperative of self-critique; it doesn't coercively have to continuously justify itself. Rather, it has to internally respond to externalities and integrate them. In this light, I want to start with three methodological questions. Firstly, is there any dialectical primacy of identity in Hegel's program? Secondly, what is the relationship between identity and difference for Hegel and how is it articulated? Thirdly, is, or can speculative dialectics be hierarchical? In the following section, I will briefly explore Hegel's notion of the speculative and how some authors have shaped the issue at stake.

The Status of the Issue

Relation as Subject

The ironical point to be first and foremost emphasized is that Hegel himself explicitly debates and opposes what he calls 'philosophy of identity', deemed at the time to be the feature of speculative philosophy. In effect, Hegel distinguishes between a formal understanding of identity and a speculative one, safeguarding dialectics from such an accusation and directing it against the empiricists:

> Among the reproaches that have been levelled against recent philosophy, the one that is heard very frequently is the claim that it reduces everything to identity; and hence it has even been given the nickname 'Philosophy of Identity'. But the argumentation that we have just presented shows that it is precisely philosophy that insists on distinguishing between what is, both conceptually and experimentally, diverse; on the contrary, it is the professed empiricists who elevate abstract identity to the highest principle of cognition, and whose philosophy should therefore more properly be called 'Philosophy of Identity' (Hegel 1991: 164).

> although recent philosophy has frequently been nicknamed 'Philosophy of Identity', it is precisely philosophy, and above all speculative logic, which exhibits the nullity of the mere identity that belongs to understanding, the identity that abstracts from distinction. This philosophy then also insists, to be sure, that we should not rest content with mere diversity but become cognizant of the inner unity of everything there is (ibid.: 184).

There is no reason to insist on Hegel's constant demand for a speculative reading of his work; Hegel himself explicitly and aimfully articulates the dialectics as he does to overcome the issues of (post)Kantian philosophy. It is pervasive from the very *Differenzschriften*, especially in *Faith & Knowledge*, where Hegel attacks the hierarchical separation of Reason and Absolute by

Kant and post-Kantians. Faith, by having infinitude as object, is rejected from reasonable concern, which is supposedly confined to finite objects. This contention actually turns out to be a counterintuitive movement, for the making of the Infinite into an exteriority of Reason rather places the former *above* the latter even though Reason essentializes itself through such an ejection based on Reason's own criteria (Hegel 1977a). This perverse hierarchy makes Hegel to suggest, through the critique of Kant's antinomies of Reason, that such an inquiry reduces difference to opposition: the Absolute as otherness of Reason, through its noumenal form, is externally appropriated as a negative object (Kant 1998). Kant then excludes God, freedom, and immortality from philosophical concern in order to save philosophy itself, casting them out as unattainable exteriorities. But by imposing limits to thought, separating the Finite and the Infinite as irreconcilable objects of critical philosophy, *the antinomies of reason become themselves antinomical*: in order for the subject to recognize the limits of thought, it has to actually overpass them.[4] Moreover, if the subject is thus concealed to phenomenal objects, i.e., only concerned with the non-essential-in-itself par excellence (appearance), it simply follows that it becomes finite and a phenomenon itself, thus non-essential (Hegel 1977a: 77; Hegel 2010: 342–343). Kant's system implodes once again through Hegel's speculative reading; whenever the former tries to draw the boundaries of thought in order to save the subject from antinomies, he fuels the antinomies themselves. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel would reshape the the issue peculiar to the Kantian inquiry by articulating a speculative dialectic in all its rights which could eventually surpass antinomical antinomies by centralizing the object's self-movement, an ambition translated into the distinction between *Verstand* and *Vernunft*, which is of no immediate interest here but only due to its conceptual consequence apparent in Hegel's 'Preface'. The distinction is established in order to overcome the predicative, or what Hegel calls formal, sentences, pointing to different forms of identity between subject and predicate. For Hegel, the formal – or *Verstand*'s – thought, Understanding, essentializes the propositional subject through the predicative relationship: 'the self is a *Subject* to which the content is related as Accident and Predicate. This Subject constitutes the basis to which the content is attached, and upon which the movement runs back and forth' (Hegel 1977b: 16–17). This subject is, in Hegel's view, conceived as fixed, bearing its predicates as logical attachments attributed in an external way. This view is comprised as follows:

> The Subject is taken as a fixed point to which, as their support, the predicates are affixed by a movement belonging to the knower of this Subject, and which is not regarded as belonging to the fixed point itself; yet it is only through this movement that the content could be represented as Subject. The way in which this movement has been brought about is such that it cannot belong to the fixed point; yet, after this point has been presupposed, the nature of the movement cannot really be other than what it is, it can only be external (ibid.: 13).

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4   See Hegel 1977a and Jameson 2017: 28–29.

For instance, in the following sentence, 'God is being', 'God' is employed as the underlying (*sub*-ject) passive logical entity and as an already articulated self, from which proceeds the movement towards determinations or predicates (ibid.: 37). But, if anything, in order for such a statement to be substantial, it has to make the predicate into the fundamental moment of judgement in which the subject, as Hegel puts it, dissolves; therefore, 'being' has to become the essential logical instance. Hence, predicative language itself implodes because its form limits and coerces the content[5], and thus cannot grasp the real 'philosophical' relationship between subject and predicate. Hegel has to reshape and articulate a different linguistic discursivity. In order to have any real meaning, the subject/predicate relationship must become internal, so that neither of the two logical entities is fixed and essential in itself. This change does not involve the abolishment of subject/predicate logical distinction. For Hegel, the superseding of the formal proposition only consists of overcoming its *form* (ibid.: 43), for the content to move freely and self-determine itself. The alternative speculative proposition presents itself as follows:

> it is not a passive Subject inertly supporting the Accidents; it is, on the contrary, the self-moving Notion which takes its determinations back into itself. In this movement the passive Subject itself perishes; it enters into the differences and the content, and constitutes the determinateness [...] the content is, in fact, no longer a Predicate of the Subject, but it is Substance, the essence and the Notion of what is under discussion (ibid.: 37).

To put it this way, whereas in the formal sentence the *propositional* subject is made into the *onto-logical* one, the speculative dialectic turns *the very relationship* between subject and predicate into the actual Subject. Neither the propositional subject nor the predicate, is in and for itself, but attains any essentiality through conceptual inter-movement. Subsequently, through this change, the subservience of predicate and 'accidents' to the *sub*-ject is abolished; the traditional logical structure, hierarchizing subject over predicate, is unintelligible in a speculative understanding.[6]

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5   See also Yovel 2005: 108–109.

6   Hegel's abolishment of the predicative sentence has immediate consequences over a Hegelian 'theory' of truth, entailing the need to revisit the idea that truth consists in the accordance of predicate to subject. Hegel himself distinguishes, in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, between conceiving truth as 'correctness', covering empirical, mathematical and historical objects (see also the 'Preface' to *Phenomenology*), and as 'deeper, philosophical truth' (i.e., speculative), contending that the latter should rather be conceived as the correspondence of the object to its concept or essence. For an insightful debate around the topic, see Stern 1997, Harris 1997 and Giladi 2022. I myself believe that, unlike the authors just mentioned, the object-concept correspondence compels us to think of Hegel's notion of truth not as a property, but as an *ontological quality* of an object (hence Hegel speaks of a 'true state', 'true friend' or 'true work of art').

Identity and Difference in Hegelian Literature

However, the establishment of Relation as Subject doesn't exhaust the issue at stake, but only opens it up. Hegel's articulation of a speculative dialectic represents the framework of his treatment of identity and difference. The issue regarding Hegel's view on the topic has already been object of exegetic scrutiny (as comprised in Grier 2007), often starting from the very prejudices or readings I have highlighted above. They are very valuable, but nonetheless incomplete. I will briefly sketch their strong and weak points. Maker (2007) tries to safeguard Hegel's view of difference by underlying the general conceptual architecture of his metaphysics, centralizing the notion of a presuppositionless science of philosophy. From his point of view, neither identity nor difference is assumed by Hegel from the very outset, which otherwise could grant one's systematic primacy over the other. Through this onto-logical ambition, Hegel articulates categories only through difference in a process of *mutual* self-determination and self-grounding, making the whole process into a bi-constitutive relationship. Moreover, the demand for systematic completeness peculiar to Hegel's program – which represents for critiques the ground of a totalizing identity with no exteriority – leads Hegel to rather establish an irreducible difference, which is Nature; without this point of exteriority as a conceptual need, systematic completeness couldn't be achieved (Maker 2007: 19). From the very outset of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, we can see that "difference is not denied, diminished, or derived, but is equally originary with identity, as the two can be thought neither as at one nor as separate" (ibid.: 21). The equiprimordiality of identity and difference in Hegel warrants the non-privileging structure of his inquiry. Even though I believe Maker's general argument is correct, two points need to be made.

First, Maker states that Hegel should be regarded as '*the* philosopher of difference, otherness, and nonidentity' (ibid.: 16). But this thesis contrasts with the general argument that identity and difference are inter-determining each other. Maker seems to be subject to a confusion partisan to the perspective he criticizes; it falls into the trap laid by the very object of criticism, suggesting that in Hegel *there can be* such a primacy as to define Hegel as an advocator of either of them. But Maker himself turns against this idea, making his stated thesis either into a rhetorical evocation or into an inconsistent equivocation. Second, Maker states at some point that "Hegelian thought turns the traditional notion of identity inside out. Unlike traditional metaphysicians, he does not fetishize identity, and unlike postmoderns, he does not fetishize difference" (ibid.: 19). However, he doesn't suggest at any point throughout his account the Hegelian meaning of identity and difference, explicitly stating to rest on 'their usual philosophical sense' (ibid.: 29). But this 'usual' sense – a formal understanding – is explicitly refused by Hegel. How is he then changing their meaning? Again, Maker writes from the point of view he is actually criticizing. There is, however, some legitimacy in this approach. For one has firstly to use the notions of identity and difference in a non-speculative manner in order

to eventually use them in Hegel's sense. However, in Maker, the discourse on identity and difference does only revolve around a common usage of the notions, leaving in shadow Hegel's 'meaning'. Maker is not the only one to respond to criticisms only from a formal point of view. Robert Williams correctly holds, against William Desmond, that the kernel of Hegel's *Science of Logic* is the double transition, a trans-categorial principle preventing mediation from being one-directional; this movement is, of course, speculative in nature. It saves difference from subordination to a self-mediating identity, replacing it with the conceptual coercion of a double mediation. Thus, "instead of a simple subordination of one term to another, double transition implies a mutual, joint a reciprocal mediation in which both terms are sublated and together constitute a new whole" (Williams 2007: 39). Williams' insights will be fundamental for my later development of the issue. However, he himself doesn't delve too much into the issue of Hegel's notion of identity and difference, but rather, like Maker, he only applies a formal understanding of identity *within* a speculative framework. The issue is to *speculatively* read *speculative* Hegelian categories. For, essentially, if the notions of identity and difference are not tackled comprehensively, they are obscured; and sustained silence isn't but concealment. Finally, I find De Nys' account also very valuable, especially for addressing the categories of identity and difference in their Hegelian meaning. He contends that, starting from a Hegelian totalizing subjectivity of thought, it cannot follow that otherness (or Being) is suppressed and consumed into identity (Thought); for him, in Hegel we find otherness integrated as *difference* through the conciliation of consciousness and self-consciousness in the Absolute and exhausting of exteriority as a source of knowledge. However, this perpetual integration, surpassing the externality of the object, carries with it two implications: "a negative and a positive meaning. It means that the object belongs to the unity of self-consciousness with itself. And it means that the unity of self-consciousness with itself preserves and does not annul objectivity, so that self-consciousness is 'in communion with itself in its otherness as such" (De Nys 2007: 92). Hence, neither Thought nor Being are reducible to one another, but rather *recognize* each other in the process of speculative integration. Otherness is thus preserved. De Nys' account, though comprehensive, leaves an aspect unanswered. The process of integration does not necessarily mean that, if the object is preserved, it is not ontologically consumed or doesn't meet fundamental changes of status determined by the subject's movement. Certainly, it seems to shift from exteriority to interiority, from objectivity to subjectivity and from negativity to conciliation. Aren't these changes affecting the object internally? In the meantime, the object still seems to be reduced to negativity, placed under the conceptual imperative of integration. A response on this matter will be provided below in the discussion of determining reflexion. Thus, what De Nys and the other commentators do not properly tackle is Hegel's purported reduction of difference to contradiction – the kernel of Deleuze's critique. Even though after speculative integration the objectivity is not annulled and difference shares its due, it still leaves

unclear what difference *as* contradiction means. It doesn't therefore focus *on* the process of integration as such, but rather on its effects.

The non-speculative reading of identity and difference in Hegel is, no doubt, necessary. What I believe the forementioned authors have done has been to correctly start from their common understanding in order to display the way in which certain structures of Hegel's thought are configured non-hierarchically; they use the formal in order to articulate the speculative. But the movement stops here. Doesn't this mean that the notions employed to *determine* are themselves left *undetermined*? Aren't identity and difference used to understand the speculative, but themselves not understood speculatively? And, after all, isn't this movement, by using Hegel's categories only to clarify others, one-directional and therefore non-speculative itself? Isn't the very 'principle' of double transition thus violated? We have to turn back to the notions of identity and difference themselves, *back from their estrangement*, in order to complete the movement and understand the very instrument of understanding: and thus, to genuinely understand understanding itself. The transition must therefore be completed, rearticulating the whole effort of determining the dialectics of identity and difference in Hegel.

The Birth Pains of Identity and the Dialectics of Essence

Essence and Seeming

Identity and difference cannot be understood within Hegel's framework without first and foremost understanding and dealing with the dialectics of essence. In the existing analyses on the issue, even when identity and difference are considered in their categorial meaning, as in De Nys, essence is entirely neglected as if it were irrelevant or at best secondary.[7] Hegel's account of essence is both the prerequisite and their intrinsic logic, for both identity and difference are, for Hegel, *determinations of reflection* of essence, which only means that they can be understood categorially only through the moment of essence. As Hegel recognizes, the dialectics of essence is the hardest part of his Logic (Hegel 2010: 207; Houlgate 2011: 139) mainly because it responds to the dialectical need of overcoming immediacy by means of immediacy itself. The first part of Hegel's Logic, the *Doctrine of Being*, is mainly concerned with immediate being, opening with pure being and nothingness, reaching to quality, quantity and finally to measure. Although from the very outset pure being turns out to be mediated by its opposite, therefore implying some form of mediation, the movement remains *immediate* in nature because the determinateness is not yet negative in itself; or, as Houlgate puts it, "each category retains a character of its own, and in that sense remains *itself*, even though it turns into its opposite'" (2011: 140); categories are not primarily evolving through over-determining

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7   However, Yeomans 2007 is the exception here, dealing with essence as self-identity.

contradictions as Hegel would prove through reflexion to be the case;[8] the *relationship* between concepts as the main catalyst is still to be developed. Even though, of course, these categories are dialectically deduced, their opposition is somewhat external; their object is determinate being – which is not yet 'materiality' or 'concreteness', but rather the very *determinations* onto-logically previous to it (but nonetheless dialectically intertwined). It is only the *structural configuration* of immediacy, standing for the manifoldness of determinate being (Trisokkas 2016: 99). Thus, it is not concerned with necessity: how is an object intrinsically and thus necessarily identical to itself? For instance, this piece of paper has a quality, a determinacy: it is made of wood, cellulose etc.; it is also *a piece*, so it is limited: thus, it retains a quantity; then, it has a certain extent, a measure, that is, a quantity out of a quality (Burbidge 2006: 53). But these categories themselves cannot explain why this piece of paper is essentially itself rather than another piece of paper. What is it beyond this determinate being that exerts so much force but nonetheless itself is not immediate? With this question, we have already stepped into the realm of mediated being (reflexion). Moreover, this movement subsequently represents a passage into the dialectics of finitude and infinitude: essence is, if anything, non-finite itself but always contained *within* the object without which it cannot exist;[9] essence thus rearticulates this dialectic, already tackled by Hegel in the *Doctrine of Being*. In the same respect, essence gives rise to the dialectics of materiality and immateriality: for an object is material only as immediacy mediated by essence, therefore by something immaterial in itself.[10] Because essence will prove to be the unity of immediacy and non-immediacy, it represents for Hegel the posited concept (Hegel 1991: 175). Even though anticipating, essence seems from the very outset nothing but a bubbling cauldron of contradictions. Fundamentally, in order to comprehensively tackle the categories of identity and difference, we have to follow the movement of essence in three main steps: the essentiality and unessentiality, shine, and reflection. This movement steadily articulates identity and difference to the point where identity generalizes essence from simple self-identity to the mediation of difference (Hegel 2010: 356).

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8   I use the notion of 'over-determinate contradiction' in Althusser's 1967 sense that contradiction is placed into a dynamic relationship with its domain: it is both determining it and lets itself be determined, both subject and object interchangeably. Even though Althusser directs this understanding of contradiction against Hegel himself, I think that a close glimpse into Hegel's Logic proves that it is as close to Hegel as it is to Marx.

9   Or, as Stace (1955: 180) puts it, if an object is destroyed, essence is destroyed as well. Moreover, when an object as immediacy is destroyed, it ceases to exist only when 'the essential' disappears as well. Their relationship is therefore both guaranteeing their ontological status and limiting it.

10   This does not, however, mean that I conceal Hegel's analysis of essence to ontology. It is also a logical analysis of essence disregarding the object of inquiry. So 'material' here is content-sensitive.

The dialectics of essence can be regarded as an extensive self-critique of essence. The *Doctrine of Essence* opens with Hegel's same ambition as the first book: to build a presuppositionless science of philosophy. Therefore, we do not know what essence is from the very outset, be it 'the true nature of things' or a 'substrate' (Houlgate 2011: 140–141), but we can only find it out by making the conceptual movement of categories into the object of inquiry. All we know about essence at this stage is that it is something other than immediate being which is trying to articulate itself but meeting and integrating accumulating contradictions that need to be resolved. Trisokkas states that essence might be regarded as the *superstructure* sublating immediate being (Trisokkas 2018: 102) it seems to me that Hegel suggests rather the opposite: essence is the *base* on which qualitative-quantitative determinations of being had been tacitly articulated on so that they themselves call for an explicit treatment of essence in order to achieve genuine 'immediacy'. Being itself cannot get any further without mediation. Therefore, Hegel states that essence is the truth of immediate being (Hegel 2010: 337). From this point of view, it has both cancelled and preserved immediacy; it is now simultaneously immediacy and non-immediacy; therefore, the previous immediacy of Being has turned into 'illusion': *what only seemed to be true* (Houlgate 2010: 141). However, essence defines itself through the negation of immediacy; only in this form does it relate itself to itself or be equal to itself as negative and as higher unity. In this respect, non-immediacy articulates itself as *the essential*, whereas immediacy represents the unessential. However, Hegel contends that this movement is somewhat problematic: non-immediacy achieves essentiality here only contrasted with the unessential and therefore *relative* to the same object: immediate being. It is therefore only a negation of a determinate being, not immediacy as such.[11] Moreover, as mere contrast, it is relative to a knowing subject – a 'third' – and thus external. Essence must therefore make the immediate into something unessential *in itself*, an object which is 'null *in and for itself – a shine*' (Hegel 2010: 342). If the first movement still renders immediate being on the part of essence (ibid.: 341) – unessential in relation to an object – immediacy as shine [*Schein*] is reduced to absolute negativity. As such 'appearance' or 'seeming' (as used by Houlgate 2010), it is nothing but 'the negative posited as negative' (Hegel 2010: 342). Hegel defines its ontological status as follows:

> Since the unessential no longer has a being, what is left to it of otherness is only the *pure moment of non-existence*; shine is this *immediate* non-existence, a non-existence in the determinateness of being, so that it has existence only with reference to another, in its non-existence; it is the non-self-subsistent which exists only in its negation (ibid.: 342).

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11   Another way of looking at this movement is the following one, though Hegel doesn't address the problem this way: if the essential negates only the unessential in order to negate immediacy itself, it falls into the logic of spurious infinite: it is an undeterminable negation of immediate qualities-quantities which cannot make the leap to the negation of immediacy itself.

Seeming is the nothing in the form of being. It subsists only by virtue of mediation of its negation. However, even though seeming is reduced to this status, it still retains an immediate presupposition (ibid.: 343), and is therefore relatively independent from essence. It cannot be abolished as such, but only reduced to negative subsistence. The contradiction intrinsic to seeming is that it denies its being and subsists only through this perpetual denial without cancelling itself thoroughly. However, the nothingness 'intrinsic' to seeming is not seeming's internal nature as external to essence; its self-denial is nothing but essence's denial of its immediacy. Shine's nature is thus determined by essence: seeming is nothing but *the seeming of essence itself* or essence in the form of immediacy it negates: "its inherent *nothingness* is the *negative nature of essence itself* ... shine is essence itself in the determinateness of being" (ibid.: 344). Seeming is thus turned into a moment of essence. All this time, it has actually been internal to it. Essence has proven to be the unit of absolute negativity – as the negation of immediate being in general – and shine or immediacy. It is now its own negative object: the movement from immediacy to essence is the movement from the external negativity of immediacy to the *internal* negation of immediacy, and therefore the coming back of the negative to itself. It is the turning back of essence into itself, and thus *reflexion*.[12]

Essence as Reflexion

This first movement of essence into itself – from nothing to nothing and hence from seeming to seeming (Houlgate 2010: 141) is called by Hegel absolute reflexion. For Hegel, there are three (other) ways in which the relationship between essence and seeming becomes a subject which configures the internal structure of essence: as positing reflexion, external reflexion and determining reflexion. I will tackle each one briefly.

As seen above, seeming is internal to essence. The latter is now the simple equality of the negative with itself; it still preserves the contradiction between immediacy and non-immediacy, but shifts its domain. As essence's *return* to itself, immediacy isn't but a *self-sublating* immediacy turning back into essence. Reflexion, as the sublation of the immediacy (Hegel 2010: 347), makes the latter into the activity of self-negation and *turning back* into the negative. It is therefore intrinsically reflexivity. But in this sense immediacy is *posited* as turning back, and a result of essence's activity. Thus, essence *creates* immediacy now (as also underlined by Houlgate 2010: 144), and doesn't exclusively destroy it.

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12   As already noted by Houlgate 2010; 2006: 115–143 or Trisokkas 2016: 98 against Pippin 1989 or Burbidge, reflexion isn't concerned solely with the structure of thought; I will just note that Hegel underlines the necessity of regarding this movement of essence "neither [as] the reflexion of consciousness, nor the more specific reflexion of the understanding that has the particular and the universal for its determinations, but reflexion in general" (Hegel 2010: 350): that is, reflexivity is an internal structure of both to thought and being, in contrast with Kant's reflexive and determining judgements. It seems to me that otherwise Hegel's Logic is not even intelligible.

However, this movement turns out to be pretty shady. As Trisokkas underlines, positing reflection gives out "the illusion of having a starting point, that from which the return-to-self is made" (Trisokkas 2016: 106). In other words, this posited immediacy is actually '*pre*-supposed' in the very act of positing, generating a *speculative circle*: "Reflection thus *finds* an immediate *before it* which it transcends and from which it is the turning back. But this turning back is only the presupposing of what was antecedently found" (Hegel 2010: 348). Once generating immediacy, essence has to continuously suppose that there is always something *beyond* itself which has to be reflexively integrated in order to justify itself as the negative of immediacy. A constitutive lack is necessary. Still, since essence creates immediacy now, it can find beyond itself only what *it itself* puts there. An *essential* or reflexive object must always be supposed to exist outside essence itself. Thus, there cannot be established a legitimate point of departure of reflexion which is not itself presupposed: "essence is as much *prior* positing as it is positing" (Trisokkas 2017: 106). In this way, positing reflexion cancels itself out. We escape this speculative circle by the very notion that, through presupposing a beyond, essence is rather affirming the independence of immediacy which it perpetually integrates and eventually fails to. If there is always a beyond, it means that immediacy is not intrinsically dependent on essence. It is non-reflexive immediacy. Thus, Hegel turns the issue upside down in order to analyze the opposite movement: external reflexion.

Immediacy is not anymore a result of reflexion, but explicitly presupposed as external to essence and as independent or already given: "[essence] therefore *finds* this presupposition before it as something from which it starts, and from which it only makes its way back to itself" (Hegel 2010: 349). However, this movement soon proves problematic as well; if essence finds and appropriates the object *as it is*, the external reflexion makes its relationship to immediacy into a polarizing external and non-immanent one; it therefore 'freezes' essence and the movement itself (Trisokkas 2016: 107). The formalization of the speculative is depicted by Hegel in a non-dialectical language with ironical overtones: "This external reflexion is the syllogism in which the two extremes are the immediate and the reflexion into itself; the middle term is the reference connecting the two'" (Hegel 2010: 349). However, the movement is consumed through formalization because it represents just one part of the relationship between external reflexion and immediacy. On a second line, the immediacy itself is *reflexively posited as external*. Fundamentally, external reflexion (still) presupposes immediacy, but negates its own generative activity of positing (Houlgate 2010: 146) by setting an *external* relationship with an independent object. The latter is thus both external and internal. For Hegel, this movement results in determining reflexion, which is the unity of the positing and the external one. We have seen that, in positing reflexion the one-sidedness of the movement of essence annulled immediacy through the totalizing logic of reflexion. In the external one, the reflexion is sacrificed when the movement reaches a non-speculative point. Or, as Trisokkas captures this situation, "positing reflexion is too much of a reflexion; external reflexion is too little of

a reflexion" (2016: 106). Now, in determining reflexion, immediacy must be understood as independent even though it is presupposed: for it is posited *as* genuine immediacy and thus not *generated* by essence. It has escaped both the logic of absolute self-negation and that of non-speculative unrelatedness. It is genuine *and* reflexive simultaneously; reflexivity does not annul its independence, but *makes it possible* (Houlgate 2010: 147).

Identity and Difference[13]

Essence is now the simple unity between absolute negativity and immediacy. By positing genuine immediacy, it has achieved equality-to-itself as sublated immediacy. Hegel names this new state *immediacy of reflexion* (Hegel 2010: 356) or absolute self-related negativity, one that has nothing as an object but itself – identity. An identical object is one whose fundamental relation points to itself only: this tree defines its own identity from within, not without; it is self-related. This identity, Hegel states, is internally produced by essence – a 'pure production' (ibid.: 356). At this very moment, it is neither related nor characterized by any object outside itself. Nevertheless, Hegel points out that we risk getting back to external reflexion; our identity is speculatively derived, but behaves formally, as simple self-relatedness abstracting difference and externality, remaining only in itself (Hegel 1991: 179). The external relationship between identity and non-identity is described by Hegel as follows:

> such a thought [the formal one] will always have only abstract identity in mind, and, outside and alongside it, difference. In its opinion, reason is no more than a loom intertwining warp (say, identity) and woof (say, difference), joining them externally; or, if it turns to analysis, now specifically pulling out identity, and *at the same time also* obtaining difference *alongside* it; now a comparing, and *also* a differentiating *at the same time* – a comparing in that it *abstracts* from difference, and a differentiating in that it *abstracts* from comparing (Hegel 2010: 357).

However, Hegel points out that identity speculatively derived is not 'simple' self-relatedness, indifferent to non-identity. It is essentially the self-relating of the self-negating negative, or essence (Houlgate 2010: 148). It is intrinsically compelled to be reflexive and mediated. In this way, identity as absolute negation is an identity of a self-differentiating unity that constantly collapses back into itself. Any mediation, though negating and being a difference, still

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13   The similarities between the configuration of identity and difference here and the way in which the moment of perception articulates the object of knowledge in the *Phenomenology* is interesting. Hegel states that, in perception, "the object is *in one and the same respect the opposite of itself: it is for itself in so far as it is for another,* and *it is for another*, so far as it is for itself" (Hegel 1977b). The dialectical movement is furthered by this mutual negativity. This form of relatedness represents, for Hyppolite, essential for the genesis of the concept: "the object of perception is simultaneously the site of properties … and the unity in which these matters dissolve" (Hyppolite 1974: 103). See also Pinkard 1991 and Kojève 1980: 203–205. Even though such a comparative analysis might be fertile, it exceeds the scope of this paper.

remains identical: "as absolute negation, [identity] is negation immediately ne-
gating itself – a non-being and difference that vanishes as it arises, or a distin-
guishing by which nothing is distinguished" (Hegel 2010: 357). In other words,
identity is actually a self-identical difference. Its internal self-differentiation
is the affirmation of the non-being of the other and hence a re-affirmation of
itself as identical. It is concomitantly the sublation of differentiation itself,
since it falls back again and again into identity. But then identity is actually
defined by *a lack of identity* – a constitutive non-being which is the being of
identity. Identity is thus in itself *difference*, defined by what it lacks. Still, it is
difference *from* itself, difference *within*; identity is not defined by an exter-
nal lack, but by its immanently negative constitution. This tree, to recall Yeo-
mans' example[14], remains identical to itself despite the fundamental changes
it meets during spring, summer, fall or winter. It is differentiating itself *from*
itself through change and preserve itself this way. Moreover, in order to be this
tree, it has to actually *identify* with the very difference, to appropriate it as its
own, hence Hegel states that 'identity is absolute non-identity' (ibid.: 358). In
this way, identity must be mediated by difference; an object is identical to it-
self only by changing. Therefore, identity becomes a mediated unity: it is now
"the whole, but as reflexion it posits itself as its own moment, as the posited-
ness from which it is the turning back into itself" (ibid.: 357–358). Identity is
the whole which contains identity and difference as moments.

   Difference mediates identity. It is confined by identity *in* the identical and
its movement and serves to its reflexion. It is intrinsically reflexion, since it is
mediation. Deleuze seems then right. Difference is only the negative of iden-
tity, the necessary trade-off that the concept has to make with the dialectical.
Difference is contradiction, the fertile negative, which reproduces the identi-
cal within it; it is deduced from the essential constitution of identity as a need
for its development. It actually takes the place of seeming in positing reflexion,
since it is posited by identity as something that always turns back to fuel and
extend the circle of identity. Difference is totalized and reduced to negative
subsistence; as reflexivity, it is contradictory in itself, and hence its ontolog-
ical status depends on identity. Then, the poststructuralist critique of Hegel
seems right. Difference is nothing but contradiction mediating identity, get-
ting only where the identical wants and needs, not smuggling any border. It is
the contradiction that takes the form of the other of identity in order for the
latter not to totally collapse into itself and become an ontological tautology.
Difference is consumed as negativity; it does not move freely by itself: but is
chased by the logical monsters of the dialectic.

   Or is it really so? Let's reevaluate the above-analyzed movement. We have
seen that identity is, in the first instance, relating to nothing but itself; it is the
'negation immediately negating itself' (ibid.: 358). It is so because every differ-
ence and differentiation eventually turns back into itself. Differentiation col-
lapses as differentiation, *annuls itself as activity*: it is the non-being in relation

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14   Yeomans 2007: 64.

to itself. However, Hegel points out that this moment is crucial: the self-relatedness of the non-being actually confers some autonomy on the part of difference. Then this non-being and indeed non-activity is rather affirmative within identity: without this very collapsing as process of its own identity would die out. Hegel states that, due to this constitutive nature of the non-being, difference becomes *reflexive* and therefore *absolute* itself (ibid.: 357). *Change* has an ontological status of its own; it is not merely the change of something; or, the existence of change is not canceled out once an object changes. Rather, change actualizes as *changing*, but is not reduced to it. Difference is not consumed by identity. Instead, this autonomization of the former points to the co-structurality of identity and difference. As reflexive, difference itself has gained essentiality: the self-related non-being is *in and for itself*; it is not reducible to the identical: "not different through something external but *self-referring*, hence *simple*, difference" (Hegel 2010: 362; Hegel 1991: 181). Difference is not only mediating the identical in order to justify its subsistence. Rather, its reflexive essentiality guaranteed before the act of mediation makes possible the mediation itself. Difference is self-related through reflexivity; therefore, as in the case of identity, it mediates itself. It is not the difference of another, but difference *in* itself and *from* itself. However, that which differs from difference is identity. Therefore, difference is both itself and identity. But difference is thus, as co-structural with identity, the *whole* and its own moment doubled by identity. Therefore, identity and difference are both in themselves – reflexive – and for the other – mediative. Or rather, *because* they are reflexion and thus essentialities, they have to mutually mediate each other. In this light, Hegel points out that the relationship between the two categories "is to be regarded as the essential nature of reflexion and as *the determined primordial origin of all activity and self-movement*" (Hegel 2010: 362). The archetype of the speculative is co-substantiality. This is actually where all discussion on the relationship between identity, difference or their relationship in Hegel starts. Only now, after the analysis of essence and why identity cannot stay in any other relation to difference, have we reached the movement of double transition in its essentiality; only at this point is the speculative affirmed in its entirety. We have followed the conceptual movement of essence, identity and difference and found out that its very development perpetually nullifies any form of hierarchy and *instantiates the moment of cancellation as the defining one*. Without the treatment of essence, without finding out the way in which essence shapes identity and difference as mutual categories, the whole inquiry into Hegel's supposed hierarchical dialectics is hollow – it responds to an external object and thus makes itself external.

Conclusions

Let's now, conclusively, make explicit the answers to the underlying questions of the paper which represented our point of departure. The logic of the relationship between identity and difference is, as seen, one of sheer mediation. The initial being of identity as exclusively mediated by difference, giving

nothing in exchange, has turned itself to be a mere *seeming*. With the movement completed, a direct answer must be provided to the initial thorny questions. First, is the relationship between identity and difference hierarchical in Hegel's view? The answer is not a simple 'no'; actually, this question cancels itself out. It supposes that there can be such a relationship between identity and difference, imposing a conceptual framework which compel us to adopt a language Hegel didn't speak. Instead, not only is a supposed primacy of identity non-sensical in Hegel's view, but the speculative dialectics abolishes this priority's very conditions of possibility – external reflexivity and formal understanding – by making the relationship between identity and difference into a subject, a movement that defines categories as self- and other- related through over-determining contradictions. Categories instantiate themselves as mutually constitutive and necessary. Second, is difference reducible to contradiction, to the 'needs' of identity? It is not, for two main reasons: on the one hand, difference *is prior* to the relationship with identity; on the other hand, it is *in itself* difference, autonomous, self-related. However, we have seen that both identity and difference must mediate each other; their mutual negativity is constitutive, not simply destructive. Neither is reducible to the other. Contradiction is thus nothing but conceptual intimacy. Identity and difference are equiprimordial and co-structural. Dialectics is not hierarchical and cannot be so.[15]

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15   The analysis of the essence and the immanent relationship between categories have immediate consequences regarding social ontology. Lukács, in his *Ontology of Social Being*, already stressed that Hegel's determinations of reflexion are instructive for the relationship between theory and practice, arguing that 'the elucidation of the character and realm of operation of the reflection determinations can also cast light on an often used, very popular but seldom analysed concept, that of the abolition of contradictions' (Lukács 1982: 112). By also pointing to the fact that the determinations of reflexion define a concrete dimension within a complex of being (ibid.: 112), he argues that the overcoming of contradictions implies different actualizations in a logical realm and an onto-social one. Hence, this movement synthetizes thought and being as follows: "in social being, social consciousness is involved in the series of real components of the abolition … An adequate knowledge of the complexes that press towards or away from abolition can thus in certain circumstances become an ontologically real component in the process of abolition" (ibid.: 113). It seems to me that Lukács places on another footing his early thesis that the proletariat's self-understanding represents the understanding of the whole social realm, an essential step in theorizing the proletariat as the subject-object of history (Lukács 1971: 2–3). The notion of totality central to his *History and Class Consciousness* articulated specifically against the reification of Marxist consciousness, represents the cornerstone of Orthodox Marxism, elevated at the rank of method (ibid.: 1; 10–15). The fact that the dialectics of essence proves once and for all the non- and anti-hierarchical structures of categories can only have as a consequence the centralization of concrete totality in social analysis. Essence and how the dialectics of immediacy and non-immediacy configure ontology represent a crucial moment not only in the progression of Hegel's *Science of Logic* but also in the logic and history of dialectical thought. Lukács is, as far as I am concerned, the first to point to and to theorize the importance of this relationship between Hegel's *Science of Logic* and social ontology (see also Lukács 1982: 67–68). I am indebted to the reviewer of the manuscript for pointing to the analogy between this paper's thesis and that of Lukács.

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Ionut Vaduva

Hijerarhije dijalektike: Hegel o identitetu i razlici

Apstrakt

U ovom radu tvrdim da je neophodno osloniti se na kategorično čitanje Hegelovih pojmova identiteta i razlike kako bi se pravilno razumeo njihov nehijerarhijski odnos u hegelijanskoj dijalektici. Mnogi komentatori svoju spekulativnu prirodu svode na samo instrumentalnu upotrebu termina u analizi Hegelovog rada. Na taj način se identitet i razlika samo formalno koriste čime se ontološki zamagljuju, te ostavljaju prostor za naknadne nedostatke i hijerarhizacije. U radu tvrdim da je najbolji način da se razjasni hijerarhijsko pitanje i spreči dijalektičko mišljenje od takvih grešaka ispitivanje Hegelove spekulativne konfiguracije ontologičkih kategorija. Ako ništa drugo, Hegel zamenjuje primat identiteta nad razlikom unutrašnjom vezom koja određuje strukturu ovih pojmova, dajući im na taj način imanentnu povezanost. Za njega je odnos među kategorijama nužno kretanje. Konstitucija identiteta i razlike, kao određenja refleksije suštine u Hegelovoj knjizi *Nauka logike*, pokazuje da su oni ekviprimordijalni i ko-strukturalni, čime sprečavaju svaku moguću hijerarhiju.

Ključne reči: identitet, razlika, spekulativna dijalektika, Delez, Hegel, filozofija identiteta, Marks, hijerarhija.

Angelo Narváez León, Fernanda Medina Badilla

AFTER HEGEL: A POSTMODERN GENEALOGY OF HISTORICAL FICTION[1]

ABSTRACT

In this article, we analyze a possible form of the relationship between modernity and postmodernity by examining the transformation of the place of enunciation of criticism as a philosophical narrative and using it as a historical and philosophical criterion. To achieve this, we first focus on key moments in the critical discourse of modernity, and then analyze the role of Kantian criticism in the formation of a postmodern imaginary associated with the notions of useful fiction and linguistification. Finally, from a Hegelian perspective, we consider the validity of the idea of universal history and its connections to emancipatory narratives.

Introduction

An important aspect of the debates on postmodernity has been the singling out of the criteria under which it would be coherent to think not only of a historical, political, economic, and cultural break with/of modernity, but also of an epistemic inflection. The simultaneity of global space in the era of digitalization, the normativity of the link between capitalism and liberal democracy, the complacency with authoritarian and fascist impulses, the subordination of criticism to denunciation and its subsequent volatility, and a long *etcetera*, have acted at different times as a kind of frame of reference for the contemporary world: that is, as limits of what the speakable and therefore possible, is.

Especially within the philosophy of language, although not reduced to it, the problem has also been in the debate between the antecedent of each; between

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what is speakable and what is *possible*. If language had sufficient character, it would be enough to name the *possible* for it to become a real reference, guideline, etc., as if language preceded the transformation of reality. On the other hand, if language were insufficient in this matter, naming the *possible* would only have meaning after its realization. Between one position and the other, as an unwanted mediation, there are usually conflicts regarding the present and the real existence of references, thus also regarding the translations of reality and its representation. One could ask a classic rhetorical question as an example: is it enough for us to define ourselves as free to realize freedom; or, precisely because of the lack of immediate real references, freedom can only be named retrospectively? Or, more precisely, under what conditions is freedom speakable and possible; under these really existing conditions or those of the imaginable political imagination of historical subversive perspective? Of course, there is another option that freedom is not possible at all. Several of the most famous pages of Hegelian philosophy deal precisely with this conflict of representations and the validity that logic can have concerning the variability of reality in general. In this sense, what is at stake in Hegelian philosophy, among other things we could say, is the problematization of the *fixity* of this conflict as an expression of the freedom of the spirit, i.e., as history, and its logical form.

Since the middle of the 19th century, debates on the Hegelian philosophy of world history oscillated between two apparently contradictory positions: if, on the one hand, it was said that Hegelian logic legitimized the (reactionary and Prussian) present, on the other it was said that it constituted the foundations of the (atheistic and republican) subversion and transgression of reality: i.e., the famous debate of the "young and old" Hegelians, their terminology, their intentionality and the place of philosophical discourse in the public space expressed more about the urgency of the present than about the consistency of Hegelian philosophy. Now, beyond the history of the early reception of Hegelian philosophy, one of the fundamental aspects of the German philosophical debate after the *Befreiungskriege* was the place of inflection in a long process of continuous transformation that, depending on the logical criterion of the historical representation, could be conducted by religious, philosophical, economic, and/or political impulses; or, in other words, the question was the moment and the limit where the transformation process has no way of turning back, where the inflection is *fixed* as a real historical present (*wirklich*). Certainly, from this perspective, contemporary debates on the postmodern inflection do not differ radically from the question of inflection of modernity in the context of German philosophies of history.

As an example, let's take two texts that stand out among French philosophy's critique of the Hegelian idea of history: Deleuze and Guattari's *What is philosophy?* and Foucault's *Theatrum philosophicum*. When Deleuze and Guattari say that the great conflict of modern philosophy is its need for "reconstitution of universals", (1994: 12) they are translating what Foucault sees in the liberation "from the opposition of predicates, from contradiction and negation, from all of dialectics" (Foucault 1996: 186) as a real political horizon and perspective.

However, the rejection of universality is not as relevant in this context as the subtext of criticism that dialogues with the development of modernity as a challenge to the validity of universality. That is to say, it is not so much about the rejection as about the subversion of universality. At first, the moment of criticism could be granted, that universality supposes a closed reality, but that also allows us to ask if the universality necessarily has a fixed closure; and if not, the issue lies in the possibility of an essentially *unfixed* closure.

Starting from these premises, this article argues that the notion of historical present has a dimension referring to the validity of the representation of reality that is related at the same time to the notion of fiction as an expression of the link between necessity and possibility. In other words, although modern philosophy did not formulate its own reflection on the present in the terms associated with postmodern discourse, it is possible to read some aspects of modern philosophy from the genealogical perspective of postmodernity within a broad genealogical reconstruction of the problem.

To address this hypothesis, we first expose the ambiguity of the historical limits of modernity within the framework of classical German philosophy, giving special emphasis to the place that Spinoza and Kant directly or indirectly occupied in the demarcation of what was then considered properly "contemporary". In this context, our objective is to show how Heinrich Heine's reading of Kantian philosophy as a transposition of the critique of the means of reason to those of the will, a transposition driven by the presupposition of transcendental ideas, is at the basis of a "postmodern reading" of classical German philosophy itself. Secondly, we analyze how the Kantian argument acquires a greater dimension when the emphasis falls on the assumption not of transcendental ideas as conditions for the representation of reality, but of the idea of representation itself. To achieve this, we outline Vaihinger's debate and retrospectively trace how this epistemological warning can act in the philosophical discourse of modernity as a criterion to resituate the notion of possibility within the framework of necessity as a critique of the dogmatism of the representations of modernity. Finally, we address how this criticism of dogmatism implies at least the conversion of the sense of criticism already present in what we understand as a trajectory of indeterminacy of language. For this last moment, we will begin with a brief discussion of the concept of *Versprachlichung*, and we will end with an exposition of the philosophical link between it and the Hegelian notion of *Bestimmungslosigkeit* within the framework of the philosophy of universal history.

Overall, our purpose in this work is to contribute to the philosophical discussion about freedom in the debate between modernity and postmodernity.

1. What Modernity?

When Hegel says that "Spinoza becomes a proving point in modern philosophy [*Hauptpunkt der modernen Philosophie*], so that one can really say: either you are a Spinozist or you are not a philosopher at all" (Hegel 1995: 283),

he suggests a provocation to public opinion of the German philosophical Enlightenment: Spinoza's philosophy, and with it modern philosophy in general, belongs to the past. After the *Hauptpunkt*, after Spinoza's philosophy as a historical criterion, comes the decadence or, at least, the transformation that represented the change of perspective and the new place of enunciation inaugurated by Kantian critical philosophy. Kant, Hegel says, objects precisely to the relationship between being and thought that grounds the Cartesian principle of Spinozism. However, Hegel insists, the Kantian objection is itself "already old [*ist schon alt*]" (ibid.: 145). As much or more Kantian than Kant, for Hegel, the contemporary present belongs to critical thought.

There's a quite old objection that suggests that the formulation of Rudolf Haym's 1857 Munich lectures clearly implies that in the social context brought up by the experience of the Spring of 1848, the coherence, consistency, and representativeness of the Hegelian criticism also belongs to *his* time and not to ours (Haym's); to the past of pantheism and atheism and not to the present of the "democratic" political Enlightenment. Schelling seems to use a similar criterion in his Munich lectures on the "*neuere Philosophie*", where he criticizes Hegelian logic for having included all the concepts existing in *his* time, explicitly relegating it to the final moment of modern philosophy: "In Hegel's *Logic* one finds every concept which just happened to be accessible and available at *his* time [*seiner Zeit*] taken up as a moment of the absolute Idea at a specific point. Linked to this is the pretension to complete systematization, i.e. the claim that all concepts have been included and that outside the circle of those that have been included no other concept is possible" (Schelling 1998: 144). So, for Schelling, Hegelian dialectics represents a logical representation of the past.

However, this objection can be challenged on its own terms: in 1832 Karl Göschel published the pamphlet *Hegel und seine Zeit*, with a rather suggestive subtitle: "*zum Unterrichte in der gegenwärtigen Philosophie*". In his characterization of the present, Röschel inscribes Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel in the same contemporary moment despite their differences and mutual "spiritual contradictions" (Göschel 1832: 137). Thus, assuming the historical character of the terminology, during the first half of the 19th century the debate on formal post-modernity as a philosophical and political gesture of overcoming the conceptual framework of modernity is a process already *in actu*. The problem nonetheless is that while Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel read Kantian critical philosophy in such a way as to be able to raise post-modern questions informulable by Kant, the critique of the 1840s will focus its critique on the same systemic principle and that's the reason why they'll argue that Hegel was not Hegelian enough to throw himself into the incessant movement of the present and to assume the consequences of such a logic of the possible inscribed in this (or, *that*) precise present.

That's the late critique Engels will make in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, and it is also the foundation of the critique of the restitution principle of Hegelian logic that Feuerbach emphasizes in the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*: a philosophy (Feuerbach's), moreover, in which the movement of the present moves forward rather than backward, a

philosophy for which Hegelian logic, the "culmination of modern philosophy [*neueren Philosophie*]", (Feuerbach 1986: §19) is still *too* modern: "the contradiction of modern philosophy [*neueren Philosophie*], especially of pantheism, is due to the fact that it is the negation of theology from the point of view of theology or the negation of theology which itself is itself again theology; this contradiction especially characterizes Hegelian philosophy" (ibid.: §21). Perhaps even *too* Cartesian:

> The secret of the Hegelian dialectic lies, in the last analysis, only in the fact that it denies theology by philosophy and then, in turn, denies philosophy by theology. Theology constitutes the beginning and the end; philosophy stands in the middle as the negation of the first affirmation, but the negation of the negation is theology. At first, everything is overthrown, but then everything is put back in its place; it is the same as with Descartes (ibid.: §21).[2]

The critique of Moses Hess highlights this limit of modern philosophy identifying the problem with Descartes, "only the first word of the Cartesian philosophy is true; it was not really possible for Descartes to say *cogito ergo sum*, but only *cogito*", (Hess 1964: 249) while stressing at the same time the absence of possibility in the enunciation of historical time prior to the post-Cartesian *Neuzeit* that underlies Spinoza's *Ethics* and decays into the Fichtean self-positioning of the "I" without transgressing the limits of intrinsically German idealism. Hess translates the Hegelian rhetoric into a criterion of reality, "the value of negation was perceived in Germany in the realm of thought, but not in the realm of action" (ibid.: 267). Germans, Hess concludes, failed *to repeat* Kant, for "in order for Germany to achieve socialism, it must have a Kant for the old social organism, as it had for the old structure of thought" (ibid.: 267).[3]

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2   We have decided to leave the original reference in German between square brackets [ ] to emphasize the difference between "*modern*", "*neue*" and "*gegenwärtig*", which English translations usually translate as "modern", neglecting the philosophical and political nuance that the terminological difference entails.

3   The full reference continues to be an inevitable statement in the history of literature: "Without revolution, no new history can begin. As strong as was the approval of the French Revolution in Germany, its essence, which consisted in nothing less than tearing down the pillars upon which the old social life had stood, was just as strongly misunderstood everywhere. The value of negation was perceived in Germany in the realm of thought, but not in the realm of action. The value of anarchy consists in the fact that the individual must once again rely upon himself, and proceed from himself. But Kant's philosophical criticism brought about this state of anarchy nowhere but in the realm of thought, and so his immediate successor, Fichte, laid the groundwork of modern history only, once again, in the realm of thought, and not in the realm of the whole life of the spirit, of free social activity. In this respect, people were happy simply to appropriate 'the results of the French Revolution' for themselves. But nothing more than that is done about it. In History, in the life of the spirit, results mean nothing; it is only the carrying out of legacies that is effective. The 'realizing', not the 'realization' is the important thing. With the 'realization', the spirit has nothing more to do, nothing new to realize, to work out and strengthen. Simply to appropriate results is to place old patches upon old clothes. People in Germany have become satisfied with just this kind of patchwork as far as

Hess, like Heinrich Heine before him, inscribes the radicality of the new enunciation in Kant or, rather, in what to do with Kant while accepting that Germans weren't Kantians enough.

The project of a tribunal of the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general was intended to be grounded in rational *a priori* principles; paradoxically this also meant the possibility of an interpretation of critical thinking as a guillotine that dismantles any pretension of transcendental grounding of any political and religious relation. Kant, "the great destroyer in the realm of thought, [who] far surpassed Maximilian Robespierre in terrorism", (Heine 2007: 79) put the King and God in their place, Kant "has stormed heaven, he has disposed of the whole crew, the ruler of the world swims, unprovable, in his own blood, there is now no more mercy, no fatherly benevolence, no reward in the hereafter for abstinence now, the immortality of the soul lies in its final agonies – moans and death rattles" (ibid.: 87).

Of God, the soul, and the world, Kant says, we cannot formulate sufficient but only satisfactory logical reasons. What we can do is to satisfy the existential need to avoid at all costs the *horror vacui* of logical insufficiency: in God, the soul, and the world we must believe as if (*als ob*...) they were really justified as logical and narrative fictions of the experience of reality. For Heine, against the Kantian claim to establish a solid scientific foundation for all future metaphysics, what Kant did was to transform God into a volitional and decisional possibility. Kant's atheism, as unforeseen as Spinoza's at the time, became the model of philosophical radicalism for the post-revolutionary Germans. Philosophy then had the task of giving a name to the empty signifier of secularized power: the French political revolution had shown that where God used to be now there was nothing but men – not just any men, but the French white male proprietor, the *citoyen* of the *Déclaration*, and therefore, *that* specific type of men became the object and model of all definition of men.

Now, when Kant tries to show the natural tendency of men toward good, he is forced to assume a parallel dimension concerning the "I" of reason so that the apperception of the transcendental order expresses itself as the person in the practical and social order. The problem in this case is not the supposition of the "I" in its double transcendental and practical variable, but the consequences of the supposition. For Kant, "true politics can take no steps forward without first paying tribute to morality" (Kant 2006: 104), and so he is confronted with a problem paradoxically derived from the consistency of his

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social life is concerned, and they believe that they have thus wrought justice. Only in France was the spirit given its due in the matter of free social activity. From the anarchy of terrorism stepped forth Babeuf, the French Fichte, the first communist, who laid the groundwork for the further development of the new ethic with respect to social activity, just as Fichte, the first true atheist, laid the groundwork with respect to thought. On the other hand, matters pertaining to thought were not set right in France, and as much as people there strive to appropriate the 'results of German philosophy' for themselves, they have not been able to make any sense out of it all, for the same reason that this appropriation of 'results' miscarried in Germany" (Hess 1964: 267).

critique in relation to the hypothetical universalization of the transcendental and practical self as a valid assumption. If the "I" of pure reason makes possible the continuity and consistency of individual representations, that same "I" is a necessary condition for the "I" of practical reason that acts in society in accordance with morality, but the "I" in its double dimension, being a logical supposition that operationalizes the system of thought as if it really exists, it remains referred to a decisional dimension. Here the problem with the Kantian assumption lies not in the universality of the "I", or in the hypothetical idealism of the assumption but in the abstract character of universality.

When Heine places Kant beside or rather above Robespierre and associates the critique of reason with the guillotine of universality, he is also saying that a Kantian terror analogous to that of the Jacobins would be thinkable – a terror that, like Robespierre's, takes itself to the revolutionary scaffold. In that precise sense, for Kantians, Kant also belongs unfailingly to the past, even if he announces the present within the realm of the possible. Like Robespierre in French politics, he constitutes the liminal moment of contemporary critique by refereeing its own assumptions into the past – and, in doing so, according to Heine, he denies any possible restitution. Thus (for Heine) post-modernity starts unexpectedly and utterly with Kant.

2. Present As If

In the 20th century, Hans Vaihinger took the Kantian argument to a logical dimension not only unsuspected by Kant but openly contradictory to his epistemological framework. For Vaihinger the philosophy of the "As if" expresses the so-called new idealism, a representation of the present that resembles contemporary social needs when dogmas come back into play as a sort of imaginary, figurative and anthropomorphic covers of ethical thoughts, where "the fiction can be regarded as a 'legitimatized error', i.e. as a fictional conceptual construct that has justified its existence by its success" (Vaihinger 2009: 106). However, Vaihinger points out, "it would be wrong to argue from the success of such a logical procedure to its logical purity or real validity. Fictions are and must remain circuitous and indirect mental paths, which cannot, because they conduct us to our goal, be regarded as really valid or free from logical contradiction" (ibid.: 106). Let's assume this insight for now.

When Feuerbach argued in favor of the sufficiency of atheism in showing the anthropological essence of Christianity, he was taking a position that presupposed the sufficiency of language as a codification of reason and of error as opposed to some kind of truth: "every limitation of the reason, or in general of the nature of man, rests on a delusion, an error" (Feuerbach 1989: 7); confusion, Feuerbach continues, is the reason why, as Hegel would say, the stage is confused with the curtain of the *Schauplatz* of universal history (ibid.: 7). Unlike Feuerbach, Vaihinger's emphasis is that the existence or non-existence of God is not logically demonstrated but functionally assumed, which implies granting a double game of sufficiency and insufficiency of language and its

representative function of reality. Language is sufficient because it expresses useful fictions in a social context, but at the same time, it is insufficient because the usefulness or uselessness of a category cannot be regulated by decree. Ultimately Vaihinger's point is that useful fictions do not express a relativism of any kind, nor do they express a social manipulation but rather introduce the contested consistency of essentially variable essences into the representation of reality as a whole. Speaking in a Hegelian fashion, useful fictions are determining essences, but they are not invariable substances, and precisely in this sense they are also transgressions of the *Ding an sich*, the "foreign body [*Fremdkörper*] of the Kantian system" (Scholz 1921: 32).

If for Kant, "under the government of reason our cognitions cannot at all constitute a rhapsody but must constitute a system, in which alone they can support and advance its essential ends", (Kant 1998: 691), thus opposing any prosaic model, what Vaihinger and Scholz emphasize is precisely the arbitrary character of the Kantian anti-prosaic critique, its inconsistency with the *Diesseitigkeit* of the absolute.[4] The Hegelian philosophical project, to conceive of the present as it is without going beyond concrete reality, which exists "God knows where", (Hegel 2008: 13) is partly a radicalization of the Kantian critique at least in this sense: if the three regulative ideas of experience are conditioning and necessary assumptions of every possible representation, then every representation is by definition also an assumption, a narrative useful fiction – a "Marxian" *bestehenden Voraussetzung*.[5] This is what Hegel refers to in the Introduction to the *Science of Logic* when he says that the error of Kantian philosophy does not mean a mistake but a limitation, i.e. not having submitted

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4   "Of course, one knows from the introduction to Phenomenology how far Hegel went beyond Schelling in just a few years. So much so that it led to a complete break between the two thinkers. But this Introduction, for all its greatness, is an act of ingratitude against Schelling. Schelling had a right to be angry. With disproportionate sharpness, this Introduction only reveals what separates them: the spiritualistic rather than the identity-philosophical conception of the absolute and the new dialectical method. But it hides the basic idea that, despite everything, connects Hegel with Schelling and continued to do so until the end; the unshakable conviction of the this-worldliness of the absolute [*die unverrückbare Überzeugung von der Diesseitigkeit des Absoluten*] — an idea that makes his phenomenology possible in the first place. Given this situation, it seems hopeless to judge Hegel directly against Kant. There are so many incommensurable events between the criticism of reason and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* or even Hegelian *Logic* that the transformation of Kant by Hegel has become a complete revolution [*zu einer völligen Umwälzung geworden ist*]" (Scholz 1921: 32).
5   When Marx and Engels say in their now famous formulation that "communism is for us not a state of affairs [*Zustand*] which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself" but the "real movement [*wirkliche Bewegung*] which abolishes the present state of things", they do so assuming that "the conditions [*Bedingungen*] of this movement result from the premises now in existence [*bestehenden Voraussetzung*]" (Marx and Engels 1976: 57). That assumption can be read as a transposition of the place of enunciation of the transformation of reality from the plane of pure possibility to that of the necessity of possibility, from the assumption that for something to be possible it must first be necessary for it to be possible.

the critique of pure reason itself to the tribunal of reason as such. Hegel grants Kant the merit of having demonstrated the necessary and non-arbitrary logical character of dialectics, but criticizes him for having focused only on "the negative aspect of dialectics", which unfailingly implies affirming that reason "is incapable of knowing the infinite – a peculiar result indeed, for it says that, since the infinite is what is rational, reason is not capable of cognizing the rational" (Hegel 2010: 35).

When Kant is forced to deduce the *Ding an sich*, he not only reaffirms the decisional character of the analytic position but also suspends the logical process where the speculative consists precisely in the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative. If the affirmation of negativity does not mean a radical skepticism that presupposes the effective possibility of the non-existence of God, the soul, and the world, for Hegel Kant is not wrong in affirming the three presuppositions but in stopping too soon and leaving aside what there is of nothing in the being of all possible experience. The Kantian antinomies, Hegel says, are logically grounded in the "common dialectic" which is based on "fixing the opposition of being and nothing" (ibid.: 79); and, if this opposition is preserved, "nothing can begin, neither insofar as something is, nor insofar as it is not; for insofar as it is, it does not begin to be; and insofar as it is not, it does not begin to be" (ibid.: 79). The presupposition of the absolute split implies then that nothing was, and nothing will be, but there is only experience of the presupposition of what is. Quite on the contrary, Hegel concludes, "becoming is the non-separation of being and nothingness, not the unity which is abstracted from being and nothingness; as unity of being and nothingness it is rather this determinate unity, or that in which being and nothingness are equally. However, insofar as being and nothingness are each not separated from their other, each is not. In this unity, therefore, they are, but as vanishing" (ibid.: 80).

This reading focused on the dialectic as the becoming of the opposition-unity of being and nothingness operated as a hermeneutical key for 19th-century Hegelianism because it meant that the structure of reality is the dynamic of change and transformation itself. From that perspective, the problem was not the assumption itself but the moment of validity of presuppositions, or the moment of utility of fiction. Now, in Hegel's philosophy there is no infinite regression to the presupposition of assumptions – what Marx and Engels called the "critique of critical critique", (Marx and Engels 1956) because the balance remains on the side of reality; and, in this or that present assumptions appear as the essential foundations of reality and representations of reality, of its *Bedingungen*.

That's precisely why modernity and post-modernity are in this sense not a matter of pure temporality and historic succession, but of historical enunciation. Let us take the classic example of the 19th century. The essence of the *ancien régime* was indeed the assumption of monarchical power, but with the revolutionary process, this essence became ineffective in the face of the rise of the bourgeoisie and the new secular assumption of capital and legal

constitutionality. After the Revolution of 1789, the King is still *a* King, but he's no longer King as he used to be – and one could say the same about God after Kant. Thus, the revolutionary aspect of Hegelian philosophy does not lie in the rationality that reality has at one moment or another, but in the structural irrationality of reality itself. Now, irrationality here does not refer to a kind of unknowability of reality, or a possible unknowable character of the subject; what it refers to is the necessary mismatch between the concrete configuration of the social organization and the society it represents, to the vanishing moments of becoming or to the vanishing useful fictions of reality, because one could ask if anyone really believed in the divine character of monarchy or the universality of the *Déclaration*, in the representativeness of modern democracy, or the promise of equity in capitalism – and if so, most likely not as real, but *as if*.

Engels asserts that the problem of the Hegelian dialectic is not its idealist "mysticism" or in the analytical limits of a bourgeois consciousness as Lukács supposed. For Engels, the main problem of Hegelian logic is the necessity of closure, the form and formality of the system, and its internal functions. What Hegel criticized of the revolutionary terror of subjectivity, of its political or religious fanatical form, forced him to slow down, Engels says, or to suspend the logical process and to decide the position of the "I" in the collectivity without further criticism of that place, for the affirmative character of Hegelian logic is not so much an acceleration as a suspension of critique. Engels' critique is the same critique that Hegel made of Kant, namely not to have submitted to the tribunal of reason – here, of dialectics – the exposition of the realization of the absolute Idea. Hegel, Engels says, was coerced by the need to construct a system because by definition a system "must conclude with some sort of absolute truth", and while Hegel insisted in the *Science of Logic* that an absolute truth is nothing more than the logical (and, respectively, historical) process itself, he is forced to arbitrarily establish an end and a closure (Engels 1941: 13). With that final proposition the whole dogmatic content of Hegel's system is erected as absolute truth, in contradiction with his dialectical method which destroys every dogmatic assumption. Hence Engels reads the *Doppelsatz* of 1820 as a sort of systematization of the critique (dogmatic, in his terms) of all dogmatism, epistemological or social: "In accordance with all the rules of the Hegelian method of thought, the proposition of the rationality of everything which is real is dissolved to become the other proposition: All that exists deserves to perish" (ibid.: 11). Just as rational concepts at a moment of inflection no longer represent reality, so do social institutions err at an analogous moment in attempting to represent society. Now, if the paradox of Hegelian logic is the production of a logical dogmatism in order to dismantle all possible dogmatism, the question is, which critique dismantles Hegelian dogmatism itself?

In that order, we can say that the *fixed closure* that Hegel saw in Kantian philosophy acquires a wider meaning in the scope of Engel's critique of the Hegelian *fixed closure* of dialectics; so dogmatism – as Heine foresaw – does not rely on the closure of universality but on its *fixity*, and as we will argue now, that is a problem regarding freedom and language.

3. The Realm of Language

The reading that Žižek has popularized of Hegelian philosophy proposes a variable or counterpoint to the interpretation that Engels popularized at the end of the 19th-century. The main feature of historical thought, Žižek says, "is not 'mobilism' (the motive of liquefaction or historical relativization of all forms of life), but the full confirmation of a certain impossibility: after a real historical break, one simply cannot return to the past, or continue as if nothing had happened – even if you do, the same practice will take on a radically changed meaning" (Žižek 2013: 193). At first instance Žižek establishes this principle of impossibility in relation to the course of historical events; however, he rhetorically asks: "is not Hegel's speculative idealism the exemplary case of such a properly historical impossibility?" (ibid.: 194).[6] If, as Žižek says, Hegelian philosophy is possibly the best example of that impossibility, the problem is related to but somewhat different from that of Engels'.

When Carla Lonzi criticizes Hegel for the patriarchal character of the spirit of the *Phenomenology* (1974: 28) we are faced with a problem analogous to Moishe Postone's criticism of the capitalist character of the Hegelian *Geist* (2003: 75). What Lonzi and Postone claim is that the Hegelian spirit is capitalist, colonial and patriarchal, and what Žižek implies is that it could not be otherwise. The affirmation of a different possibility would paradoxically dismantle the power of criticism of capitalism, coloniality, and patriarchy both by assuming a self-sufficiency of the formulation of criticism through language, and by producing a representation without concrete content. The question should be how vanishing the patriarchal fiction of modernity is, assuming of course that behind the fiction there is no originary proto-phenomenon, no *Urphänomen*.

When Hegel says in the *Phenomenology* that, "it is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless *we* go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen", (Hegel 1979: 103) he emphasizes the vanishedness and the effectiveness of phenomena, which translates into assuming the constitutive and alienated weight of social fictions. Hegelian philosophy can be read in this sense as a radically

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6   This change is obviously expressed in the course of Hegelian philosophy itself: "The big political shift in Hegel's development occurred when he abandoned his early fascination with the Romantic vision of the non-alienated society of Ancient Greece as a beautiful organic community of love (as opposed to the modern society of the Understanding, with its mechanical interaction between autonomous egotistical individuals). With this shift, Hegel began to appreciate the very thing that had previously repelled him: the 'prosaic', non-heroic character of modern societies with their complex division of professional and administrative labor, in which 'no one simply could be heroically responsible for much of anything (and so could not be beautiful in action)'. Hegel's full endorsement of the prose of modern life, his ruthless dismissal of all longing for the heroic old times, is the (often neglected) historical root of his thesis about the 'end of art': art is no longer an adequate medium for expressing such a 'prosaic' disenchanted reality, reality deprived of all mystery and transcendence" (Žižek 2013: 241).

realist philosophy because in its form and content it seeks to express the long and contradictory process of substantiating the experience of historical reality. If someone reads in the substantiating an exercise of *legitimation* of reality as it is, as Engels did, he is perfectly within his rights to do so although that is precisely what Hegel criticized his contemporaries as non-philosophy for. The request is equivalent in both cases, even if the answer is completely different and in the long run imponderable: is the civilizing project of modernity capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal? Yes, of course, but not only that, that same project only gets its concrete sense from the post-modern anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, and anti-patriarchal horizon of the speakable and possible, of reality *as if*. Nonetheless, the coming into existence of as-if reality is not that of present reality as-it-is, but instead of what Hegel called the *Bestimmunglosigkeit* of historical transformation (Hegel 1981: 125). This is the historical importance of the relation between identity and non-identity of Hegelian logic, and as a narrative statement here Hegel stands beyond Kant and one can read this *Bestimmunglosigkeit* as the post-modern moment of Hegel's logic *par excellence* – a total break with the past without any (religious) premonitory or (Kantian) anticipatory really existing *state of affairs*.

In *The Communist Postscript*, Boris Groys discusses how the fundamental gesture of modernity consists in subordinating the world of language – of politics – to the world of calculation – of economics. The Soviet Union, Groys says, was not a modern or accelerated modernization experience precisely because it subordinated economics to politics, or calculation to language. The multiplication of decrees and provisions on the most everyday aspects of daily life in the Soviet Union recall, on the one hand, the typification and codification of feudal behavior and, on the other, that the instrumental rationalization of reality is executed precisely against codification. But, if "politics functions in the medium of language", it operates "with words – with arguments, programs and petitions, but also with commands, prohibitions, resolutions and decrees", and thus, "the communist revolution is the transcription of society from the medium of money to the medium of language. It is a linguistic turn at the level of social praxis" (Groys 2009: xv). Conversely, "in capitalism, the ultimate confirmation or refutation of human action is not linguistic but economic: it is expressed not with words but with numbers. The force of language as such is thereby annulled" (ibid.: xvi). In a way, the Soviet Union was not only an inefficient State, but an institutionalization of a non-modern inefficient and ineffective *state of affairs*.

Now, Groys calls linguistification [*Versprachlichung*] the process of subordination of economics to politics, of calculation to language or of a flow to codes, for

> The critique of capitalism does not operate in the same milieu as capitalism itself. From the point of view of its means, capitalism and its discursive critique are incompatible and therefore can never meet. Society must first be altered by its linguistification in order to be subject to any meaningful critique. Thus,

we can reformulate Marx's famous thesis that philosophy should not interpret the world, but change it: in order for society to submit to critique, it must first become communist. This explains the instinctive preference for communism felt by all those endowed with critical consciousness, for only communism realizes the total linguistification of human destiny that opens the space for total critique (ibid.: xviii).

The question would then be, is not linguistification precisely a gesture of transposing the necessary and the possible, of rendering the possible necessary and really speakable? Or, in other words, is not linguistification the post-modern, post-Cartesian ultimate gesture?

"In no sense", Groys states, "does the total linguistification of social being promise any quietening of social conflicts; on the contrary, it promises to intensify them", i.e. "if communism is understood as the transcription of society into the medium of language, then it promises not an idyll but rather life in self-contradiction, a situation of the utmost internal division and tension. No idyll is discovered when, having once seen the effulgence of logos, the Platonic philosopher returns to the hell of human society" (Groys 2006: 72). Here both English and Spanish admit a distinction, because the problem of *Versprachlichung* will be completely different if we understand it as "verbalization/ to verbalize" or "linguistification", for in the first case the problem refers to the limitation or productive insufficiency of language assuming that its representational limit has been exceeded because it would mean recognizing that the formulation of a proposition would suffice to transform reality; but in the second case the problem lies in the field of the transformation of the conditions of representation of reality, i.e. of its experience.

If we go back to Hegel, that reference is only possible linguistically once it has already happened without a name and without any anticipatory dimension. We know that a revolution has happened only once it has already happened, only once the experience of reality cannot go back — or, as we have said, Kant knew the dimension of his revolution just when there was nothing left to do, when Robespierre was already facing the guillotine. Louis XIV, Hegel says, had the legitimate right to resist change because although the historical impulse makes transformation itself a law, it "has met with disfavour both from religions – for example Catholicism – and from States, which claim a genuine right to a *fixed* (or at least stable) position" (Hegel 1981: 125). The problem is that this reaction expresses a scenario in which a transfer and transformation of power or a defeat has already been done, even if the problem of victory is not resolved. The triumphant forces of the Revolution of 1789 showed their definitive face only in 1848, when the ascending bourgeoisie concretized narratives and really existing fictions succeeded – for a moment – in giving themselves their own norms of realization, or when they vanishingly linguistified the verbalization of 1789. So here is where the argument finds its own narrative in a Hegelian sense: as we already said, the problem is not closure, but *fixed* closure. That is why Hegelian historic *Bestimmungslosigkeit* can be read

as a radical *Versprachlichung*, for the "*statarisch oder wenigstens stabil*" state of things ultimately "*bleibt es offen*", remains open and *unfixed*.

This affirmation of Hegel entails a double background: on the one hand, to assume that there is no transcendental dimension that assures or glimpses this same realization – there is no providence, neither theological nor secular: that's why freedom is never assured, and why the outcome can be even worse than the previous regime. On the other hand, to assume that freedom is the liberation of the one who liberates himself, means that freedom does not stands in a supra-signifying order, but rather in the self-determination of the conditions of representation and realization of the subject's experience, which implies circumscribing the previously hegemonic otherness to the conditions of historical change.[7]

The bourgeoisie frees itself from feudalism, Protestantism frees itself from Catholicism, capitalism frees itself from protectionism, etc., and in this process the vanishing hegemonic moment that follows is transformed into an otherness that is realized under the conditions to which it is now circumscribed. This was the debate between Soviet and Yugoslav economists in the 1960s regarding the control of unsatisfied desire. How to prevent someone from having two cars? The first possibility is to rely on the disengagement of the post-revolutionary subject, the second was to decree the impossibility of the second car. What happened was something different, there was simply no second car available. Beyond the verbalized debate, what happened linguistically was that it was in fact impossible to satisfy that particular need even if the desire for the automobile did not disappear by reason or decree. Lacanian readings of Hegel have insisted on the infinite character of desire and the unrealizable character of the *jouissance* of the object, and on the regression of desire by desire; however, this infinity for Hegel is purely formal precisely because concrete infinity is realized in the particular object. Although someone might cry out in front of Lenin's Mausoleum in 1960 that he *truly* desires a second car, that desire is purely formal and therefore empty – a useless fiction. As an abstraction, everyone desires the empty X, but as a concrete relation the former Russian, Ukrainian, Kazakh, etc. bourgeoisie began eventually to desire "sovietly". By the same time, the workers of the former Latin American protectionist States

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7   This is why Badiou's position regarding Hegel is so inconsistent, because he seeks to place him at the beginning of an original sin of the really existing processes of, if not liberation, of the verbalization of the contraction: "The long-term effects of the Hegelian origins of Marxism are evident in this short-circuiting. For Hegel in fact, the historical exposure of politics was not an imaginary subjectivation, *it was the real as such*. This was because the crucial axiom of the dialectic as he conceived of it was: 'The True is the process of its own becoming' or – what amounts to the same – 'Time is the being-there of the concept'. As a result, in line with the Hegelian philosophical heritage, we are justified in thinking that, under the name of 'communism', the historical inscription of revolutionary political sequences or of the disparate fragments of collective emancipation reveals their truth: to move forward according to the meaning of History" (Badiou 2010: 241).

began to desire concretely in a neoliberal way in the last quarter of the 20th century. That is the great counterpoint that Groys points out.

Hegel, unlike Kant, assumes that the pulse of universal history tends not toward the best but toward indeterminacy: the concept of perfectibility in the philosophy of history lends itself to ambiguity precisely because of its literalness, although it refers to something almost as indeterminate as the concept of variability itself. However, that realization of freedom is indeterminate does not mean that it has no determinations, but that these determinations do not exhaust the possibilities of experience. Here the radicalism of Hegelian logic lies in bringing to the constituent limits of reality what in Kant appeared as an impossibility of conceptualization of reality, in a "shift of perspective which turns failure into true success" (Žižek 2006: 27). This failure, unlike the insufficiency of verbalization, does not appear as a limitation but as a limit from which something is what it is by virtue of what it is not. The internalization of what something is not shapes the reality of what it is, or in other words, it is the disposition of otherness as a condition of possibility of identity. In the case of universal history this could well mean that the radicalism of its formulation is its own failure to signify what it represents – a necessarily existent and necessarily failed communist attempt in the best sense of the word, a realist *wirkliche Bewegung*.

Conclusion

When Susan Buck-Morss says that if we understand the experience of historical rupture as a "moment of clarity in act", (Buck-Morss 2006: 75), she is pointing at the core of the notion of possibility within the Hegelian *Weltgeschichte*; i.e., the transposition of reality from the dimension of anticipation to that of incalculability. The universality of the non-historical histories that Hegel leaves aside are precisely the moments of lucidity that make explicit the necessary failure of universal history in a Hegelian key, not because they do not exist but because being unspoken, they make possible the existence of universal history. This unspeakable character, of course, does not have a Hegelian heroic or honorific sense, but neither does it have an inverse one. If universal history demands that we liberate ourselves, it does so from the place of interpellation of desire, imagination, experience, expenditure and language, from the system of symbolic references of the ethical fictions of the experience of reality, and in this sense, we can interpret this liberation as a moment of associative dissociation from our selves – to free us from ourselves. If history is always escaping our field of vision moving in unspeakable and incalculable spaces, then the problem is not universality as such but the gaps in the actually existing universality. This means that after the Soviet experience as a non-modern exercise of contestation for universality, neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat as categories can mean the same thing. This, we can say, constitutes the radical Hegelian gesture that Vaihinger emphasizes in his own way: fiction is useful not because it will be diluted, but precisely because it has already been diluted.

Hegel refers to this relationship between the vanishing and existence precisely at the beginning of the *Logic* assuming the function of what we have called a useful fiction or a suggestion for an *unfixed closure* of the universality of reality:

> The equilibrium in which coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be are poised is in the first place becoming itself. But this becoming equally collects itself in *quiescent unity*. Being and nothing are in it only as vanishing; becoming itself, however, is only by virtue of their being distinguished. Their vanishing is therefore the vanishing of becoming, or the vanishing of the vanishing itself. Becoming is a ceaseless unrest that collapses into a quiescent result. This can also be expressed thus: becoming is the vanishing of being into nothing, and of nothing into being, and the vanishing of being and nothing in general; but at the same time it rests on their being distinct. It therefore contradicts itself in itself, because what it unites within itself is self-opposed; but such a union destroys itself. This result is a vanishedness, but it is not *nothing*; as such, it would be only a relapse into one of the already sublated determinations and not the result of nothing *and of being*. It is the unity of being and nothing that has become quiescent simplicity. But this quiescent simplicity is *being*, yet no longer for itself but as determination of the whole. Becoming, as transition into the unity of being and nothing, a unity which is as existent or has the shape of the one-sided *immediate* unity of these moments, is *existence*" (2010: 81).

It is for this same reason that, since the mid-19th century criticism of Hegelian philosophy was focused on the apparent insistence on the "quiescent unity of existence": from Haym's claim of Hegelian logical absolutism, to modern French philosophy criticism, Hegel's fate was sealed from the "Beginning": from the *Anfang*. With the aim of not saving Hegelian philosophy from itself but rather reading it as a creative possibility with and despite itself, we have proposed a genealogical reconstruction of the representation of the present in modern philosophy to insist on the notion of universality as a critical perspective, allowing us to dialogue with further complementary readings and criticisms: or, as Adorno said, "universal history must be constructed and denied" (2004: 320) in order to fully grasp the contradictions of our time.

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Anhelo Narvaez Leon
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Posle Hegela: Postmoderna genealogija istorijske fikcije

Apstrakt

U ovom članku analiziramo mogući oblik odnosa između modernosti i postmodernosti ispitivanjem transformacije mesta enuncijacije kritike kao filozofskog narativa i njenog korišćenja kao istorijskog i filozofskog kriterijuma. Kako bismo to postigli, prvo se fokusiramo na ključne trenutke u kritičkom diskursu modernosti, a zatim analiziramo ulogu Kantove kritike u formiranju postmodernog imaginarija koji je povezan s pojmovima korisne fikcije i lingvistifikacije. Najzad, iz hegelijanske perspektive, razmatramo validnost ideje univerzalne istorije, kao i njene veze s emancipatorskim narativima.

Ključne reči: Kant, Hegel, Grojs, modernost, postmodernost, istorija, jezik.

Iñigo Baca Bordons

THE EMPIRE NEVER ENDED: HEGEL, POSTMODERNISM AND COMEDY

ABSTRACT
This paper argues that Hegel's account of modernity is already an account of postmodernity, according to Fredric Jameson's definition of the cultural logic of globalized capitalism. First, Hegel's account of the problematic of modernity will be sought in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* by considering the constellation of Athens, Rome and Christianity along with Hegel's contrast between tragedy and comedy in the "Religion" chapter, in order to present a philosophical account of a concrete problem connecting social, political and economic structures with their own self-representations. The core problematic will become instantiated in the legal figure of the "person" and the social world-structure of "empire", associated with both Roman legality and comedy. It will be argued that Hegel's socio-historical relevance today hinges on drawing a connection between Jameson's periodization of Realism-Modernism-Postmodernism and Hegel's aesthetic cultural categories of Epic-Tragedy-Comedy, and not Greece-Rome-Christianity. On this basis, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* stands as Hegel's own "cognitive map", for which comedy designates a problematic extreme of a social regime of representation commensurate with the contemporary cultural logic of late and imperial capitalism.

15. The Sibyl of Cumae protected the Roman Republic and gave timely warnings. In the first century C.E. she foresaw the murders of the Kennedy brothers, Dr. King and Bishop Pike. She saw the two common denominators in the four murdered men: first, they stood in defense of the liberties of the Republic; and second, each man was a religious leader. For this they were killed. The Republic had once again become an empire with a caesar. "The Empire never ended."

VALIS, Dick (2011: 216).

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Introduction

Hegel's account of modernity is already an account of postmodernity. At the risk of playing into the well-known Foucauldian cliché[1], it will be argued that Hegel's considerations of art, religion and philosophy seek to make the constitutive problems of modernity intelligible, and can thereby account for our 'postmodern' present. In particular, a philosophy of history concerned with the problem of modernity will be sought within the *Phenomenology of Spirit* by tracing the constellation of Ancient Greece, Rome and Christianity and finding an outline of historical truth beyond the particular Hegelian designations. The argument will be concerned with how Hegel's contrast between tragedy and comedy in the "Religion" chapter is a way of grasping a concrete problem connecting social, political and economic structures with their own self-representations. Therein, 'modernity' is understood as the name for the problem tying together the passage from Athens to Rome, coalescing around the problematic legal figure of the 'person' and the world-structure of 'empire' – a world of indifferent property owners, themselves totally subservient to an arbitrary rule of law. The argument will take Fredric Jameson's account of postmodernity as reference, in order to show that there is a fundamental continuity between our contemporary concerns and Hegel's: what he called 'comedy' can be understood as a problematic regime of representation and therefore appear as the cultural logic of late, imperial capitalism.

Jameson's Definition of Postmodernism

Fredric Jameson's project throughout the 1980s was "to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically" (Jameson 1992: ix). He famously deems "postmodernism" to be a "cultural logic" (rather than a time-period or an artistic or philosophical movement) which corresponds to the titular "late capitalism", a new "moment" in the development of historical capitalism beyond its national-market and monopoly-imperialist stages as theorized by Marxist economist Ernest Mandel (ibid.: 35).[2] Postmodernism is characterized by a whole host of interrelated technological, aesthetic and theoretical problems which coalesce around a handful of symptoms: a "new depthlessness" and a "weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality" (ibid.: 6), such that "our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time" amounting to a "waning of affect" (ibid.: 16) and a "nostalgia mode" whereby "[t]he past is thereby itself modified" to fit "consumers' appetite for a world transformed into sheer images of itself and for pseudo-events

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1   "We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us" (Foucault 1972: 235).
2   See Mandel (1976).

and "spectacles" (ibid.: 20, 18). Jameson refers this constellation of symptoms back to a fundamental double loss of 'History' and 'Nature' as socio-cultural frames due to the intensification of the essential reification of capitalist social relations: "This purer capitalism of our own time thus eliminates the enclaves of precapitalist organization it had hitherto tolerated and exploited in a tributary way. One is tempted to speak in this connection of a new and historically original penetration and colonization of Nature and the Unconscious" (ibid.: 36).

Jameson can perhaps come across as deceptively straightforward when he posits that: "my own cultural periodization of the stages of realism, modernism, and postmodernism is both inspired and confirmed by Mandel's tripartite scheme" (ibid.: 36). But the core of Jameson's intervention hinges on the problematic and unstable distinction between postmodernism and modernism, as the initial opposition inherent in the given term unfolds into the question of "finding out what modernism really was" (Jameson 2007: 152). On the one hand, it seems like maintaining that our present is 'postmodern', means that whatever 'modern' stood for, we can no longer claim to be. But on the other, the very distinction by means of determinations internal to the development of something called 'capitalism', betrays a continuity of modernization throughout. It is crucial then, that Jameson distinguishes between 'modernization' (as a political, social, and technological process), 'modernism' (as a constellation of artistic movements) and 'modernity' (as a conceptual problem and theme) (Jameson 1992: 309).

'Modernity' must then be grasped, not as a phenomenon pertaining to a specific period of 'modern' history, but as a conceptual problem linked to describing "the way 'modern' people feel about themselves", that is, "the conviction that we ourselves are somehow new, that a new age is beginning, that everything is possible and nothing can ever be the same again" (ibid.: 309–10). Jameson's key reference is Ernst Bloch's notion of the "simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous"[3] (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitige*): "Modern art, in this respect, drew its power and its possibilities from being a backwater and an archaic holdover within a modernizing economy" (ibid.: 306.) Grasping this quintessentially problematic notion of the 'modern' provides the key to clarifying the phenomenon of postmodernism:

> [T]he postmodern must be characterized as a situation in which the survival, the residue, the holdover, the archaic, has finally been swept away without a trace. In the postmodern, then, the past itself has disappeared (along with the well-known "sense of the past" or historicity and collective memory). [...] Ours is a more homogeneously modernized condition; we no longer are encumbered with the embarrassment of non-simultaneities and non-synchronicities. Everything has reached the same hour on the great clock of development or rationalization (at least from the perspective of the "West"). This is the sense in which we can affirm, either that modernism is characterized by a situation of incomplete *modernization*, or that Postmodernism is more modern than modernism itself (ibid.: 309–10).

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3   See Bloch (1977).

Jameson thus reverses a widespread periodization that holds that something called "modernity" ran through the 15th century to the 20th, and then seeks an explanation for the mysterious phenomenon of 'postmodernity' which happened to bring it to an end in our present. Instead, it is modernity which constitutes a temporal anomaly in the process of capitalist 'modernization': "Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good. It is a more fully human world than the older one, but one in which "culture" has become a veritable "second nature" (ibid.: IX).

If the aesthetic and political problems of globalization, instant communication and digitalization which seem to preoccupy Jameson seem alien to Hegel's philosophy, surely, the question of 'culture' and 'second nature' is unquestionably apposite. And while the strictly Marxist sense of 'modernization' as capitalist development seems to have appeared too late to become a proper object of study for Hegel's, some version of the problem of 'modernity' undoubtedly concerned him. We should deny the suggestion that a Hegel-Jameson "homology" lies simply in following an infamous tripartite, easily deployable and teleological development of social forms – if anything is dead in Hegel, this is surely it.[4] Jameson's work helps bring the "postmodernity" problematic back into relation to a broader and still problematic question of modernity and modernization, and as such, it becomes less outrageous to link Hegel to it. My claim will be that Jameson's problematic is prefigured in Hegel's thought as the main concern of his whole philosophy of history under the interwoven figures of the 'person' and 'empire', and that therein lies the most significant question of Hegel's relevance for the postmodern present.

Hegel: Culture, Representation and History

The history of Hegelianism has been largely characterized by epigones attempting to sever the stale elements from his body of work (usually his philosophies of nature, history or his systematic metaphysics) with the aim of rescuing elements which may have social and philosophical significance. Though much is made of a "Hegel renaissance" in English-language philosophy and scholarship from the 1990s onwards, earlier studies taking place around 1980 are not only key to understanding these further scholarly developments, but they furthermore capture a certain implicit concern concomitant and contemporary to Jameson's worries about our 'postmodern' condition, and Hegel's capacity to speak to it.

It should right away be remarked that though Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* amounted to the focal point of his fame and reception

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4   Though the contemporary so-called "Hegel renaissance" has been marked by flourishing debates, it is surely united by the successful collective banishment from the realm of acceptable scholarship of the "Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis" caricature as having ever pertained to Hegel's work. See, F. C. Beiser (2008), D. Moyar (2017), and C. Baumann (2021).

up to the 20th century, the rejection of his philosophy of history (when not the very idea of any philosophy of history) became widespread, and all sorts of neo-Hegelianisms faithful to the spirit of his philosophy sought to find the "living" and "modern" part of his thought elsewhere. In particular, it must be granted without reserve that insofar as his philosophy of history consists in a parade of static, simplistic, and Eurocentric[5] museum pieces, very little can be said to be worth saving from it – if not worth "spitting on".[6]

The following analysis will instead focus on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*PhG*). While it is undeniable that the *PhG* presents an unparalleled structural complexity which makes it both an inexhaustible source of commentary, as well as misunderstandings, its problematization of linear structure and discipline boundaries also allow the reader to grasp the importance of the relationship between social relations, art and religion.[7] This way, Hegel's otherwise misleading three-step hierarchy – where art is supposed to give way to religion, before in turn giving way to philosophy – is not accepted unproblematically, and a vantage point opens up which is able to capture a fundamental throughline from Hegel's youthful concerns to the development of his mature system.

The *PhG's* opening "Preface" deals doubly with the task of philosophy as system of science in general (*PhG* §5: 10) and the present social crisis which demands it (*PhG* §7: 12).[8] Hegel lays out a project around the crucial notion of

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5 The academic work taking stock of the fact of Hegel's racism is somewhat divided on the specific consequences we should draw therefrom. For instance, R. Bernasconi's very thorough studies into the concept of race and racism in Classical German Philosophy clearly prove that Hegel's history lectures were undergirded by Eurocentrism, but also by a sense of race (Bernasconi 2000), as well as presenting racist accounts above and beyond the facts from contemporary travel literature (Bernasconi 2002). However, Bernasconi refrains from making claims about the impact Hegel might have had in the spread and justification of such ideas throughout the European 19th century, as opposed to work like T. Tibebu's, which claims that: "All Eurocentrism is thus essentially a series of footnotes to Hegel" (Tibebu 2011: xxi). The most critical position in this regard is, however, that Hegel's philosophy as a relational universal logic is to be rejected *tout court*, since Hegel "makes the 'openness' of the negative into the measure of authentic development and then uses it to generate racist images of Africans who 'lack' it" (Terada 2019: 16). This last kind of argument seems harder to substantiate, though the idea that there is little of merit in the history lectures or Hegel's comments on non-Europeans is even harder to disagree with. I agree with Allison Stone that any attempt at "rescuing Hegel from himself is set to be a complicated process, not quick or straightforward" (Stone 2020: 18). In seeking something worth engaging with in Hegel's preoccupations with modernity exclusively in the terms of the Greece-Rome-Christianity connection, I take it that Hegel's considerations regarding the 'modernity' or 'historicity' of pre-colonial America, Africa, or Asia, must not be thought of as empirically unknown to Hegel, but rather overdetermined by a projection of his real Eurocentric concerns onto peoples he never cared to understand.

6 Lonzi (1991).
7 Rose (2009: 164).
8   References to Hegel are given by paragraph number and page number from the Meiner Gesammelte Werke. The English quotes are taken from the translation by T. Pinkard (2018).

Bildung, beyond the mere schooling of an individual person or the particular sense of a local culture, it consists instead of an integral process of cultural and social development towards universality (*PhG* §11–12: 14–5).[9] But most importantly, consciousness' development out of immediacy requires that it "take upon itself the prodigious labor of world history, and because it could not have reached consciousness about itself in any lesser way, the individual spirit itself cannot comprehend its own substance with anything less" (*PhG* §29: 25–6). It is crucial, then that this *phenomenology*, which demands that its reader "must laboriously travel down a long path" (*PhG* §27: 24) towards the development out of "natural" or "immediate" consciousness, cannot be accomplished without constantly recurring historical coordinates. This is Hegel's way of registering what Jameson called 'modernity', the sense of newness and reflexive displacement as social, moral, and political progress above and beyond more parochial senses of personal development or technological refinement.[10]

The particular weight which concerns over the Ancient Greek *polis* (chiefly Athens), the Roman Empire, and Christianity have for Hegel's account of 'modernity' may be underappreciated if Hegel's earlier work and socio-political context are not accounted for properly. Hegel's earliest written work already constitutes an attempt at grasping his time and situation: the social and political relevance and actuality of Christianity for a post-Revolutionary Europe. Today, there seems to be a consensus that Herman Nohl's "theological" denomination for Hegel's youthful fragments and drafts in 1907 was too arbitrary and superficial, and it resulted in the suppression of political concerns underlying Hegel's extensive considerations of religion.[11] These texts provided a key source for reframing his later work in for 20th century Hegel reception in line with his historical context, but the ambiguities of the relationship between religion and politics remain highly controversial to this day, especially regarding the extent to which they run through Hegel's mature system.

For instance, José María Ripalda takes Hegel's oscillation between Christian interiority and Greek nostalgia as a political symptom and finally ideological

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9   Note the implicit contrast to *Kultur* and the explicit contrast to *Erbauung* ("edification*")* (*PhG*, §7: 12–3). See also, Espagne (2014: 111–9).

10   Hegel's 1821 *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (2009,GW 14,1) likewise seeks to mediate Roman property legalism, Christian morality and Greek political *Sittlichkeit* into a modern and self-critical structure instantiating political actuality. Despite sharing many of its concerns with the *PhG,* it is a matter of controversy whether their accounts of modernity are the same, complimentary, or contradictory – for instance, G. Rose argues that they seek a similar goal through a different structure and methodological perspective and considers the *PhR* deficient relative to Hegel's other work (Rose 2009: 53–4, 85–6, 97). An alternative, much more positive view is presented, for instance, by T. C. Luther (2009). Further consideration of the *PhR* or thorough comparison with the *PhG* is beyond the scope of this paper, which will limit itself to pointing out some parallels with significant points made in the *PhG*.

11   The classic critique is G. Lukács (1975: 3–16), but also J. M. Ripalda (1978: 15) and W. Jaeschke (2020: IX–XIII)*.* However, the "theological" label remains widespread in the English-speaking world today, because Nohl's title was retained by T. M. Knox.

reconciliation of an up-and-coming 19th century European bourgeoisie expressed philosophically (Ripalda 1978b: 173, 194–5). By contrast, Axel Honneth's work remains the paradigm of contemporary Habermasian Critical Theory today, engaged in an on-going modern self-critical project, which stands out for seeking to ground a politically effective theory of recognition on some of Hegel's earliest work, rather than anything after the *PhG* (Honneth 1995: 5). A further alternative is Gillian Rose's monumental *Hegel contra Sociology* (1981), which foregrounds the importance of the consistent line of critical remarks referencing the Roman Empire as a way of reading contemporary significance into Hegel's ambivalence towards both Christianity and Ancient Athens (Rose 2009: 86).[12] Though Ripalda acknowledges the negative role of the figure of the Roman Empire, he finds it reduced to a *merely* transitory step towards Christian ideological reconciliation. Rose's work remains unparalleled, by contrast, because she identifies the core of Hegel's political thought and its potential relevance in his Jena work, and especially the *System der Sittlichkeit*, but instead of opposing this "rational kernel" to the rest of Hegel's work, she traces it throughout the entire Hegelian oeuvre, not just the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right*, but also the *Science of Logic* and the various versions of lectures on art and religion (ibid.: 50). Rose explains the meaning of *Bildung* for Hegel as:

> a series of formative experiences in which religious and political consciousness' definition of itself comes into contradiction with its real existence. This experience of the repeatedly enforced unity of the definition on the reality has caused changes in both the definition and the existence. [...] Whatever the cost of these contradictions, of these various forms of domination, they are comprehended as formative, as educating abstract subjectivity towards an ethical realization of the trinity, of substantial freedom without domination (ibid.: 124).

Rose insists that the stakes lie on whether a form of experience – a society's forms of art, religion, philosophy – can be or has ceased to be "politically formative" (ibid.: 125–6).[13] Her account emphasizes Hegel's critique of the aporias constitutive of Kantian epistemological and aesthetic categories and seeks to develop a "sociological" account of speculative experience able to critically comprehend societies whose presupposition of subjective autonomy can only lead to cultures of "re-presentation" and misapprehension of their own social conditions (ibid.: 101–112).[14]

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12   On the ideological role of Rome in Hegel's early writings, see also V. Rocco Lozano (2012, 2017). For the centrality of the Roman empire as a figure for the post-Reformation "German Ideology" in general, see R. Comay (2020: 14–17, 85–6).

13   For the case of art (Rose 2009: 157) and for philosophy (225).

14   "[T]he division between theoretical and practical philosophy in Kant and Fichte prevented them from conceiving of substantial freedom [...] the fundamental structure of their thought reproduced the lack of freedom of real social relations" (Rose 2009: 101) For a critique of the "transcendental" character of A. Honneth's recognition theory from G. Rose's perspective, see K. Schick (2015).

Her account is then a critique of social representation grounded on the epistemological work of German Idealism: "*Vorstellung* means representation (*Vorstellung*) and 'pictorial' or 'imaginative' thinking. It is also translated as 'ordinary idea' or 'conception'. Religion is not the concept or thought of the absolute, but some form of its misrepresentation" (ibid.: 98).[15] What Hegel's phenomenological method offers, by contrast is a *Darstellung,* a mode of "'Presentation' [which] takes the place of Kantian justification and Fichtean faith. A phenomenology is the presentation of the contradiction between natural consciousness' definition of itself and its experience" (ibid.: 114).[16] Hegel's contribution to social theory appears then as the possibility of grasping the speculative unity of presentation and representation as the recognition of actual social contradiction:

> Greece stands for a society in which there is no subjectivity and hence no representation. It stands for a society which contains conflict and injustice, but which is substantially free, and hence the conflict and injustice are transparent and intelligible. [...] Hence Greece provides the fictional but logical basis for the subsequent determination of substance (ethical life) as subject, for the exposition of the relation between subjectivity and representation (ibid.: 134).

> Presentation refers to a meaning which both distinguishes itself from the natural world and acknowledges nature. The meaning is present in the physical, sensuous world as configuration. [...] Greek society is not perfectly just, but its injustice is recognized, and hence transparent and visible. Tragedy, not epic poetry or the statue of the god, is the form in which a specific kind of conflict is presented (ibid.: 140–1).

Thus, Rose's work hinges on making the socio-political concerns motivating Hegel's early exploration of Christianity explicit by contrasting it to the figures of Athens and Rome.[17] Hegel's "theological phase" would thus expresses an ambivalence over Christianity's capacity to fulfill its conciliatory vocation in post-Revolutionary Europe, and his mature work would be driven by an attempt at critically grasping cultural forms as a misrepresentations of formal

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15   Pinkard translates *Vorstellung* as "representational thought" (Pinkard 2018: xliii), whereas Jameson takes up A. V. Miller's translation of "picture-thnking" (Jameson 2010: 21). See also, Jameson (2017).

16   This approach closely resembles M. Theunissen's more detailed treatment of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, which purportedly takes up metaphysics as its object by a method by which its truth is presented (*dargestellt*) by means of the critique of its appearance (*Schein*) (Theunissen 1978: 70–91). The *Science of Logic* thus contains a critical account of metaphysical truth insofar as "Hegel's *Logic* too, at least its Objective part, is a phenomenology" (ibid.: 80).

17   "Hegel implies at the end of the text of the lectures on the philosophy of history that the principle of Christianity has been realized in Germany. But it is clear from the lectures on the philosophy of religion and other writings that Hegel did not believe that this had occurred. Germany had had a reformation and an Enlightenment but no revolution. As a result, the meaning of the Enlightenment in Germany, like the meaning of the Revolution in France, became distorted." (Rose 2009: 125).

social relations: "The overall intention of Hegel's thought is to make a different ethical life possible by providing insight into the displacement of actuality in those dominant philosophies which are assimilated to and reinforce bourgeois law and bourgeois property relations. This is why Hegel's thought has no social import if the absolute cannot be thought" (ibid.: 223).

A Christian-theological Hegel can hardly speak to our present, but neither can a Hegel reduced to a moral theory of recognition or an ideological "expression" of a 19th century bourgeoise. Rose's account of Hegel's philosophy instead allows us to make him our contemporary, not by dint of his purported claims or prescriptions, but by demonstrating that the problems he wrestled with are ours too. Hegel's great merit would then lie in his capacity to grasp the fundamental core of the problem of modernity's *Bildung*, which he laid out in the *PhG* by foregrounding the problematic relationship between Greece and Rome.

First as Greece, then as Rome

The Greece-Rome-Christianity sequence appears three times in the *PhG*: first within "IV. The Truth of Self-Certainty" (*PhG*: 103–131), then in "VI. Spirit" (238–362), and finally in "VII. Religion" (363–421). Whereas "Self-Certainty" foregrounds the Roman-Christian pair, the course of "Spirit" follows the Greece-Rome connection most closely.[18] But then, "Religion" takes them up again to try to grasp the figures of "Self-Certainty" alongside "Spirit", in order to bring the work to a close – marked by the explicit introduction of the aesthetic categories of tragedy-comedy pair.[19] The focus will lie on the difficulty and ambivalence Hegel shows in the transition from Greece to Rome as somehow analogous with the difference between tragedy and comedy, and its significance for Hegel's historical account of modernity and *Bildung* via the figures of the 'person' and its corelative imperial social-formation.

The historical singularity of Greece, the moment of "beautiful ethical life" (*PhG* §440–1: 240), is supposed to mark a division between East and West, Asia and Europe, bondage and freedom.[20] But this typical Eurocentric trope

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18   Though the historical references in "VI. Spirit" are very explicit, the historical status of "IV. Self-Certainty", and the "Herrschafft und Knechtschafft" section especially, has been very controversial and widely debated. Not only did Kojève famously insist on the historical correspondence of the moments of "Self-Certainty" to Greece, Rome and Christianity (1980: 59–64), as well as the importance of the Battle of Jena (1980: 44). More recently too, S. Buck-Morss (2009) and Andrew Cole (2014: 24, 66–72) have argued for the significant Haitian and Medieval valences of "Self-Consciousness." Though we should clearly resist reducing the developments in these sections to historical references, it seems likewise undeniable that they prefigure explicitly historical developments to come in Hegel's work, even if their status at the general level of self-consciousness in turn demand exceeding the historical baggage which Hegel cannot help but bring in.
19   "In the penultimate sections of the *Phenomenology* on art and religion, the earlier stages which were misunderstood by natural consciousness as individual or 'moral' experiences are re-experienced in their specific historical locations" (Rose 2009: 131).
20   G. F. W. Hegel (2015, GW 27,1: 97). Trans. Brown & Hodgson (2019: 207).

should be contrasted with the explicit doubling likewise structuring Hegel's schema: the Athenian singularity lies between two imperial moments (Persia and Rome). The figure of Rome thus appears as a polity which "is devoid of spirit, is dead" (*PhG* §474: 260) – strongly distinguished from its bookending moments of living freedom: Greece and Christianity. Whatever nostalgic traces one may sense in Hegel's account of the emergence of Greek ethical life, he is likewise determined to take its dissolution seriously in "Spirit":

> This demise of ethical substance and its transition into another shape is determined, as a result, by this: That ethical consciousness is *immediately* directed towards the law, and this determination of immediacy means that nature itself enters into ethical life's action. Its actuality only reveals the contradiction and the germ of corruption which ethical spirit's beautiful unanimity and motionless equilibrium have in this motionlessness and beauty itself, for immediacy bears the contradictory meaning of being the unconscious restfulness of nature and the self-conscious restless restfulness of spirit (*PhG* §475: 260).

> Personality [*Persönlichkeit*] has thus here stepped out of the life of ethical substance. It is the *actual* self-sufficiency of consciousness which *counts and is in force*. The *non-actual thought* of such self-sufficiency, which comes to be through the *renunciation* of *actuality* is what earlier appeared as *stoical* self-consciousness. Just as stoical *self-consciousness* itself emerged out of mastery and servitude as the immediate existence of self-consciousness, personality emerges out of immediate *spirit* – emerges out of the universally dominating will of all and their servile obedience. What to stoicism was the *in-itself* only in *abstraction* is now an *actual* world (*PhG* §478: 261).

The emergence of the Roman world, here called '*Rechtszustand*' (*PhG*: 260–5), hinges on the highly ambivalent figure of "personality".[21] On the one hand, its actuality and self-sufficiency supersede the natural unconsciousness and submission to fate which ethical substance demanded. But on the other, it represents a regression to the unhappy series of figures from "Self-Consciousness", and "the dispersal into the absolute *plurality* of atoms of personality" furthermore develops into the "powerless embrace of their tumult" under the submission to the "monstrous self-consciousness" of the emperor as "lord of the world" (*PhG* §480: 262–3).[22]

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21   Notably, the first and most abstract moment of the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is the 'person' and is as such the problematic cornerstone for Hegel's social thought: "The will which has being for itself, or the abstract will, is the person. The highest achievement of a human being is to be a person; yet in spite of this, the simple abstraction 'person' has something contemptuous about it [...] Personality is thus at the same time the sublime and the wholly ordinary" (*PhR* §35). English trans. H. B. Nisbet (2003).
22   Likewise, Hegel calls the historical Roman realm one where "the infinite diremption of ethical life into the extremes of *personal* or private self-consciousness and *abstract universality* [...] ends in universal misfortune and the demise of ethical life, in which the individualities of nations perish in the unity of a pantheon, and all individuals sink to the level of private persons with an *equal* status and with formal rights, who

It is easy to see, however, that this long stretch of abstract interiority and "harsh actuality" of "Spirit, henceforth estranged within itself" is precisely what constitutes *Bildung* and eventually leads to the Christian world (*PhG* §440: 240). Hence, the sense that Christianity represents a reconciliation of the Greek and Roman opposition.[23] But in fact, we should not presuppose that Christianity can work as a moment of closure and solution, since we find the same opposition reproduced internally to Christianity: an early moment of ethical substance bound by love, a Roman Catholic feudal period of vassalage, and the purported reconciliation of Christianity with itself at the twin moments of Revolution and Reformation. And neither can we assume the contrary and fall for the "temptation" of taking the intricate and highly evocative end of the "Spirit" section to account for Hegel's final word to this problem, as if the very title of the "Religion" section announced that there was nothing there for us 'postmoderns'.[24] Instead, it has become clear that the crossing announced in the "Preface" from substance to subject is mediated by the matter of personality as an "abstract universality" and an "aloof [*spröde*] self", which now appears as the condition on which we may judge the historical significance and success of Christianity in reconciling and redeeming the travails of spirit (*PhG* §477: 261)[25]

"Religion" (*PhG* 363–421) is not concerned with theology, but with spirit's capacity to grasp more clearly the acts which it has unconsciously performed and repeated by means of representations (*Vorstellungen*): "The content and movement of spirit, which is here an object to itself, has been already examined as the nature and realization of the ethical substance. In its religion, spirit attains a consciousness about itself, or it puts itself before its consciousness in its purer form and its simpler figuration" (*PhG* §746: 393). This can help clarify a potential tension in "Spirit", when Hegel seemed to treat Sophocles' *Antigone* as if held the same status as the French Revolution, rather than being fictional. From the standpoint of "Religion" we can see that *Antigone* acquired significance because it amounted to the way a social formation represented itself to itself.[26] The ambiguity of the resulting fate of tragedy and

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are accordingly held together only by an abstract and arbitrary will of increasingly monstrous proportions." (*PhR* §357).
23   For instance, at the very end of "Spirit": "The breaking of the hard heart and its elevation to universality is the same movement which was expressed in the consciousness that confessed. The wounds of the spirit heal and leave no scars behind" (*PhG* §669: 360).
24   Most notoriously: R. Brandom (2019: 583–4). Cf. S. Houlgate (2020) and R. P. Horstmann (2020).
25   T. Pinkard's translation of *spröde* as 'aloof' is somewhat eccentric, but the literal meaning of 'brittle' is clearly being used by Hegel in a metaphorical sense as something detached, whose fault lies in its inflexibility and impermeability. It is worth comparing with P. Fuss's "obdurate" (2019b, §255: 295) or M. Inwood's more literal "rigid" (2018b, §477: 191).
26   "Hegel's notion of religion, in this final substantive chapter of the *Phenomenology*, may be grasped as an attempt to conceptualize, in advance and in the form of a groping historical anticipation, the problematic lineaments of what we call *culture* in our own

Christianity in "Spirit" gives way to "Religion" as a remediation of tragedy's earlier appearance as an intermediate position between the epic and comedic forms. The epic expressed a quasi-natural harmony of ethical substance, "the sense of the *completeness* of the world" (PhG §729: 389). By contrast, tragedy appears as the immanent moment of social rupture:

> The content of the world of representational thought plays its game unbound and on its own within the *mediating middle* of its movement; it gathers round the individuality of a hero, who in his strength and beauty feels his life broken and who mourns the early death he sees ahead of him. [...] This higher language, that of *tragedy*, combines more closely the dispersal of the moments of the essential world and the world of action (*PhG* §732–3: 391–2).

> [T]he truth of those powers emerging into opposition with each other is the result of each having an equal right, and for that reason, in their opposition which acting brings forth, of their being equally wrong. The movement of acting itself demonstrates their unity in the mutual downfall of both powers and of the self-conscious characters. The reconciliation of the opposition with itself is the *Lethe* of the *netherworld* in death – that is, the *Lethe* of the upper world in the form of absolution not from guilt, for consciousness cannot deny that it acted, but rather absolution from the crime itself and the absolution's atoning appeasement. Both are *forgetfulness*, the disappearance of actuality and of the doings on the part of the powers of substance (*PhG* §740: 396).

Tragedy arises by consciousness of a contradictory collision of rights internal to ethical life, where neither side can claim right over the other without putting the social order itself at stake.[27] Moreover, from the vantage point of "Religion", tragedy is both a presentation and re-presentation of social relations, both an account of a real problem and its aesthetic and symbolic redeployment. Initially, this aesthetic representation of this tragic contradiction still brings the community together to feel "compassion" [*Mitleid*], to suffer in concert, even though its outcome can only be a form of social absolution via forgetfulness: the "the empty wish for reassurance and with feeble talk about appeasement" [*Besänftigung*] which Hegel attributes to the chorus (*PhG* §734: 393).

But the ambiguity between tragedy as real and fiction, presentation and representation, is then intimately connected with tragedy's doubling into the functions of stabilizing social form and dissolving event, from which comedy emerges immanently when the "germ of corruption" grows too large to purge cathartically (*PhG* §475: 260). Comedy is not just another genre alongside tragedy, but a logically posterior development of an immanent element which comes to stand for the very dissolution of Greek ethical substance. Already the emergence of tragedy signifies that "the gods fall into this contradictory relation" between their eternal nature and their particular actions, since "according to

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period [...] a system far more immanent to social relations and production than anything characterized as a superstructure or an ideology in the modern world." (Jameson 2010: 126-7).

27   Cf. The discussion about tragic "collision" between rights in the *PhR* §30.

the opposition it involves, that relationship to others is a battle with those others, a comic self-forgetfulness about their own eternal nature" (*PhG* §731: 391). This comedic element implicit in tragedy is made explicit when the ambiguity between the heroes' actions and the actors' acting is made self-conscious:

> Because actual self-consciousness is still distinguished both from substance and from fate, it is *in part* the chorus, or rather is instead the crowd looking on, which this movement of the divine life as something *alien* suffuses with fear, or in which this movement, as something close to them, as touching them, brings forth an inactive *compassion*. Partly to the extent that consciousness acts in unison with the characters and belongs to them, is this union an external one, because the true union, namely, that of self, fate, and substance, is not yet present and available. This union is thus *hypocrisy*, and the hero who appears before the spectators fragments into both his mask and into the actor, into the persona [*Person*] and the actual self (*PhG* §742: 397).

If the core of tragedy was collision, comedy's is duplicity. Comedy constitutes the step from consciousness to self-consciousness; taking a meta-perspective from which the tragic social role is only a mask the actors are wearing, and thus amounts to irony and detachment. Such a deflationary attitude brings down the deeds of heroes into the everyday lives of the polis:

> It, the subject, is thus elevated above that sort of moment as it would be elevated above a singular property, and, wearing this mask, the subject expresses the irony of something that wants to be something for itself. The posturing of the universal essentiality is revealed in the self; it shows itself to be trapped in an actuality, and it lets the mask drop exactly as it wants to be something rightful. The self, coming on the scene here with the sense that it is actual, plays with the mask which it once put on in order to be its persona. – However, it just as quickly makes itself come out from this illusion [*Scheine*] and again come forward in its own nakedness and ordinariness, which it shows not to be distinct from the authentic self, from the actor, nor even from the spectator" (*PhG* §744: 397–8).

A unity of feeling within the polis made tragedy possible because it could still hold together presentation and representation of social contradictions, but comedy grows from its element of forgetting and takes it further, into an ironic stance freed from the capacity for compassion by its flight into interiority. As in "Spirit", Roman *Persönlichkeit* emerges, but now from the Greek *persona,* or mask, by this comic development of a self-consciousness indifferent to its world:

> The art-religion has completed itself in it and is completely inwardly returned into itself. As a result, singular consciousness, in the certainty of itself, is that which exhibits itself as this absolute power, so has this absolute power lost the form of being something *represented*, something *separated* from *consciousness* per se and thus alien to it, as was the case with the statuary column and also the living embodiment of beauty, or as was the case with the content of the epic and the powers and persons of tragedy (*PhG* §747: 399).

At this point, the problematic ambivalence of periodization reasserts itself. Firstly, Antigone has once more appeared as tragic precisely insofar as it expressed some Ancient Greek limitations in its bondage to unconscious duty to local custom and merely acting out the necessity of its substance, as opposed to a sense of interiority. Consequently, it is quite common to come across accounts which emphasize the superiority of comedy over tragedy for Hegel by mapping tragedy and comedy onto the opposition between Greek and Christian qua Ancient and Modern.[28] This approach is further supported by the strong association which Hegel makes between comedy's irony and the Socratic moment of philosophy, a discovery of interior conscience, which connects the abstraction of ideas in thought with the processes of social abstraction which emerge in the process of dissolution of ethical life (*PhG* §746: 398). Such accounts contrast Antigone's Ancient impasse with a Socrates-Jesus modern reconciliation, in order to find that comedy might be the living part of Hegel for us today. It is just as common, however, to find accounts which take Hegel's last word to be tragic rather than conciliatory, and highlight the persistence of the tragic into the Christian and the Modern moments as the trait making him our contemporary.[29]

However, by taking Hegel's preoccupation with the Roman *Rechtszustand* seriously, comedy appears to bind the "achievements" of interiority and subjectivity with a world of atomization and bondage, of a dissolution of substance and unhappiness: "In the state of legality, therefore, the ethical world and its religion have been absorbed into the comic consciousness, and the unhappy consciousness is the knowing of this entire loss" (*PhG* §753: 401). The very choice between tragic impasse and comic reconciliation must then be undermined: comedy has the last word, not because it amounts to a more proper reconciliation than mere tragic catharsis, but because it belies a significantly *more problematic* condition.[30] What Hegel might have intended or believed at different points regarding the world-historical significance of Christianity is less fundamental than understanding that at its core it seeks to address this "comic condition", grasped as a concrete socio-political problem. Today, it is this problem that must be in turn taken as the immanent criteria for judging his thought and its relevance.

Taking Hegel's account of comedy as a problem seriously, we find a Hegel haunted by the problem of "person" and "personality", and whose deep ambivalence over the depth of subjectivity rests on a socio-political recognition of the problematic nature of an imperial world of atomized individuals strictly constituted by abstract property relations. Comedy is the cultural logic of imperialism as a representation *without* presentation. But nevertheless, it also constitutes the space where the utopian break of a "an alternative property

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28   For instance, S. Žižek (2006: 43, 106–7), A. Huddleston (2014), A. Speight (2021) and P. Wake (2021).
29   For instance, the very different accounts of R. Williams (2012: 4, 321) and B. M. Pérez (2019).
30   A later account by S. Žižek reaches this different conclusion (2016: 227–8). See also P. T. Wilford (2021) and W. Furlotte (2023).

relation" and "freedom without domination" *may* take place (Rose 2009: 86, 97). Hegel's philosophy would then amount to holding fast to the duality of comedy as both profane domination and divine condition for universal freedom. Or paraphrasing Jameson: Rome "is at one and the same time the best thing that has ever happened to the human race, and the worst" (Jameson 1992: 47).

A Phenomenology of Postmodernity: Globalization as Empire

Jameson's own reading of Hegel's *PhG* explicitly suggests that Hegel's concerns with "modernity" cannot be easily dismissed as outdated. Instead:

> Hegel's system itself thereby calls in its very structure for the subsequent en-largements of later history: first the moment of imperialism (or the 'modern' in the technical sense) and now that of globalization. These subsequent enlarge-ments are very much in the spirit of the Hegelian dialectic and also explain why Hegel's own practice is no longer to be associated with dilemmas of 'mo-dernity'[31] [...] but must now be reconjugated in terms of a world market that is only in the process of finding and inventing the conceptuality appropriate to it (Jameson 2010: 115).[32]

While it should be clear that Hegel and Jameson share a broad problematic concerning modernity, some of the valences of this mapping of multilayered transformations are clearly problematic. Although some of the aspects which Hegel uses to characterize comedy are easy to map onto Jameson's cultural logic of late capitalism, some appear deeply contradictory. Nevertheless, it will be argued that they are addressing a single continuous problematic from different perspectives. Indeed, the key question cannot be about what Greek comedy or the socio-political structures of the Roman Empire *in fact* were like. What matters rather is the grasp of a fundamental common problem by way of a cultural periodization pointing out that a world constituted by the principles of abstract law, incapable and unwilling to acknowledge singular-ity beyond the dispersion of legal equality for property holders, also involves dissembling its own presentation in the form of cultural, artistic, religious and philosophical representations.

Matters are clearest when Hegel's postmodern relevance is argued for by mapping Jameson's Realism-Modernism-Postmodernism, not onto the Greek-Roman-Christianity triad, but onto Epic-Tragedy-Comedy. Tragedy registers the modern simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, not only in the in-compatibility of social duties which the Epic seemed to take for granted, but their incompatibility with any form of universal demands, which endangers the stability and intelligibility the social-whole. Tragedy is modern insofar as

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31   Jameson means: not *strictly* with the concerns of a "modernity" which has been left behind by the postmodern present.
32   Jameson's argument in *The Hegel Variations* is essential, but does not work at the level of detailed analysis of Hegel's text which the present argument puts forward.

it focuses on the moments of non-coincidence between social institutions, and presents the downfall of the individuals caught up in between them, thereby raising the specters of the undermining of fundamental social institutions, as well the potential for bringing about different ones (Rose 2009: 140–1). Instead, the characteristic trait of comedy is that conflicts e.g. between old and young (*The Clouds*), or men and women (*Lysistrata*), are in fact *solved* – they depict *mundane* social conflicts, where the social order may become unbalanced, but will nevertheless bounce back into shape by the end.[33] But furthermore, and in stark contrast to the tragic temporarily of history, comedy addresses social conflicts related to generational renewal and reproduction by reinscribing them onto a nostalgic and naturalized image of life and temporality of the *polis*.[34] The temporality of the heroic act, which forced the whole polity to face the risk of its own dissolution by its drive to self-destruction, is cordoned off by the actors' unmasking – though the only polis which these newly atomized people can return to is the presupposition of an empty and abstract spatial unity which merely contains them.

But a fundamental incongruity appears when we try to take stock of each authors' accounts of *forgetting* and *remembering*. The problem is especially acute because Hegel seems to establish an opposition between the forgetting of tragedy and the self-conscious *Erinnerungen* of comedy – so Jameson's tropes of the preponderance of the spatial over the temporal, and the forgetting of nature, appear to characterize tragedy, rather than comedy. But first, it must be clarified how Hegel's analysis of the tragic situation is constituted by an opposition between consciousness and unconsciousness:

> As consciousness, *acting* spirit faces up to the object on which it is active, and which is thereby determined as the *negative* of the knowing subject. As a result, the knowing subject is situated in the opposition between knowing and not knowing. He takes his purpose from his character and knows it as the ethical essentiality; however, through the determinateness of his character, he knows only the one power of substance, and, for him, the other power is concealed (*PhG* §737: 394).

Insofar as the unity achieved by living ethical substance becomes dissociated by the opposition between the hero and the oracle, between doing without knowing and knowing without doing, it amounts to *forgetting* (*PhG* §739: 395). By contrast, comedy is "the former unconscious fate, which consists in an empty motionlessness and forgetfulness and which is separated from self-consciousness, now united with self-consciousness" (*PhG* §747: 399). Comedy is thus characterized by *Erinnerungen*, which simultaneously means: the characters

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33   "[T]he classical conflict in comedy is not between good and evil, but between youth and age, its Oedipal resolution aiming not at the restoration of a fallen world, but at the regeneration of the social order" (Jameson 2015: 116).
34   "Essentially, Aristophanes' strategy is conservative, or at best apolitical. He displaces the real antagonisms generated by social conflicts within the ancient city-state with a vision of communal solidarity and well-being" (Konstan 1995: 89).

remembering that they are actors pretending on stage, but thereby also the *interiorization* of a self beyond their society's symbolic acts and its bind to the necessity of fate.[35] Insofar as Hegel's recollection is bound to an all-too-modern sense of interiority with ironic detachment, it could no longer correspond to Jameson's diagnosis.

In order to address this obvious misalignment between postmodernity and Hegel's thought, the ambiguity of each authors' references to "irony" must first clarified. For Hegel, irony clearly stands for the *advent* of interiority opposed to the cathartic emotions which allowed the tragic form to bind the polis together into a living unity. But on the contrary, Jameson's talk of an ironic and detached "waning of affect" actually stands for a *divestment* of a sense of self, and the disappearance of "the great modernist thematics of alienation, anomie, solitude, social fragmentation, and isolation" (Jameson 1992: 11). The biggest obstacle to the whole argument amounts then to this divergence between the relationship between modernity and postmodernity with regards to the meaning of depth and interiority.

It must be noted then, that Hegel's irony is very specifically referred to a sense of self which is *not yet* a Christian 'subjectivity': the stoic consciousness is not yet unhappy, since it does not yet "[know] of this entire loss" (*PhG* §753: 401). Likewise, his explicit critique of Romantic irony in the *Philosophy of Right* reproaches those contemporaries of his who failed to conceive of a sense of interiority which could escape from the abstract conception of personality (*PhR* §140: 132–4). A negative valence clings to the person and comedy, insofar as Hegel wants to single out a form of depth and self-consciousness which is in fact a total depthlessness: "However, in the way that there is an empty breadth, there is also an empty depth [...] an intensity without content, which, although it makes out as if it were a sheer force without dispersion, is in fact no more than superficiality itself" (*PhG* §10: 14).

The conflict between emergence and waning can thus be taken as differing but concomitant historical perspectives: Hegel's narrative frames the conflict from the perspective of an upcoming Good Friday, whereas Jameson's account designates a "post-Christian" world, which turns out to closely resemble the pre-Christian qua pre-subjective *Rechtszustand* made up of aloof or obdurate selves. Postmodernity is not alien to Hegel's preoccupations, but already occupies a place within his thought precisely as the historical outcome which he both diagnosed and tried to conjure away – it amounts to the outcome where the Christian sense of subjective depth is not, in the end, politically formative and is unable to constitute a new world beyond the dispersion and indifference of the regime of abstract law and domination.[36]

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35   *Erinneren* usually means to remember, remind, or recall a memory, but the word's composition of *er-inneren* is used by Hegel to imply a sense of interiorization or inward movement. See also, McLaughlin (2004: 646–7).
36   "The Christian religion inherits the 'infinite value' of personality from the Romans. It is a legal value on the one hand, but, on the other, a principle of 'inwardness and

The matter of "empire" must now be brought to the fore – after all, who exactly forgets and what is forgotten? On the one hand, it is the gods who "forget" their own eternity when they act tragically in the world of mortals (*PhG* §731:391). On the other, the social order very much rests upon a mythological *Handlung* (act, plot) whereby the chthonic pre-Olympian gods were vanquished and supplanted, so that spirit could split from nature and history begin:

> [T]he *essence* of the god is the unity of the universal existence of nature and of self-conscious spirit, which, in its actuality, appears as confronting nature [...] it is nature transfigured by thought and united with self-conscious life. For that reason, the shape of the gods has its natural element as that which is sublated, as an obscure memory within itself (*PhG* §707: 379).[37]

The polis arose from the form of the "cult", which reciprocally linked a people's unity in language and religious imaginaries with common practical activities and economic development (*PhG* §718–9: 383–5).[38] The move from epic to tragic forms, however, already gives way to a "depopulation of Heaven", because it manifests the incongruencies of social institutions under the guise of subjection to divine whims, and results in an "expulsion of such essenceless representational thoughts" (*PhG* §741: 396). The tragic hero thus already stands for a form of proto-modern disenchantment, whose reification of the self as negativity endangers the local form of political unity – no Athens without Athena. The collapse comes about, however, when the ironic self further develops immanently from the figure of the hero: "The singular self is the negative force through which and in which the gods, as well as their moments, those of existing nature and the thoughts of their determinations, disappear" (*PhG* §744: 399). Hegel immediately jumps from what should be a period of protracted disintegration and weakening of socio-political institutions to the structures of *Rechtszustand*:

> [S]imple singular individuality [*einfache Einzelheit*] elevates itself out of this content, and its levity refines it into a person, into the abstract universality of law. In the latter, the *reality* of the ethical spirit is lost, and the contentless

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subjectivity', 'soulless personality' [...] The cosmopolitan idea of freedom cannot reaffirm the freedom of the polis, for it no longer recognizes ethical life as divine, as triune, but rejects it as corrupt and remains in the agony, the passion, of religious and political dualism, of religious separation and political domination." (Rose 2009: 122–3).

37   See also, *PhG* §454: 246.

38   "The person making the offering reserves for *his consumption* the greatest share from that first offering and what is useful from the latter offering.[...] the cult goes further and, as a result, initially replaces this defect by giving its devotion an *objective stable existence*, as the cult is the common work, or the work of each and every singular individual, which produces a dwelling and adornment for the honor of the god [...] The dwellings and halls of the god are for the use of man, the treasures preserved there are his own in times of need; the honor that the god enjoys in his ornamentation is the honor of a magnanimous people rich in the arts." (*PhG* §718–9: 384–5).

spirits of individual peoples are collected together into *one* pantheon, not into a pantheon of representational thought [*Vorstellung*], whose powerless form lets each do as it likes, but rather into the pantheon of abstract universality, of pure thought, which takes their lives and confers on the spiritless self, on the singular person, being-in-and-for-itself" (*PhG* §750: 401).

Disenchantment really becomes a political problem when comic selves, *persons* who are no longer *a people* (*Volk*), are susceptible to become "collected" under a single spiritless banner and integrated them into a world where the universality of formal law is enforced by an imperial system. The depopulation of heaven is much more than an individual existential issue, it is simultaneously the dissolution of *political* national unity and the dissociation from a concrete *economic* relationship to nature (Rose 2009: 138). Therefore, when the *Rechtszustand*, "collects" the gods out of their temples and into a single pantheon, it is in fact the people who are being subsumed by under the unity of imperial authority, and local metabolic processes are disrupted by continental networks of exchange. "Nature" and "History", under the forms of the mythological mode of representation which brought together the concrete social relationship to nature of a singular polis, are now turned into an object of abstract contemplation and consumption for obdurate property-owning persons:

> The statuary columns are now corpses from which the animating soul has escaped, just as the hymns are now words from which belief has fled. The tables of the gods are without spiritual food and drink, and consciousness does not receive back from its games and festivals the joyful unity of itself with the essence. [...] With those works of art, fate does not give us their world, does not give us the spring and summer of the ethical life in which they bloomed and ripened; rather, it gives us solely the veiled remembrance of this actuality. – In our enjoyment of them, our doing is thus not that of the divine worship, which would result in its complete truth filling out our consciousness. [...] we erect the extensive framework of the dead elements of their outward existence, their language, their history, etc., not in order to live in those elements ourselves, but only to represent them as they were (§753: 402).

Once more, this should not be taken to mean that Hegel's thought amounts to Hellenic "nationalist" nostalgia, but rather point to the fact that "Greece plays an impossible role in Hegel's thought" (Rose 2009: 120). Athens is a necessary and problematic moment used to grasp the paradigmatically modern collision between the local particular and the global universal – there can be no Manichean contraposition between *Volk* and *Person,* no straightforward quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. Nevertheless, thinking through the process of dissolution of national political, cultural and economic forms becomes a primary concern for any analysis of modernity and the intensification of modernization. It is not enough to say that newly "modern" Athenians became ironic and detached and thus their ethical substance waned – it is fundamental that the real abstraction of the "person" gives rise to law as an autonomous realm which

makes the imperial political form actually possible.[39] Today, 'empire' appears as the drive towards political, economic and cultural world-unity enforced by the forgetting of any alternative social forms, making sure the world's peoples stand under the single pantheon of postmodern globalization.[40]

When Jameson says that "the past itself has disappeared (along with the well-known 'sense of the past' or historicity and collective memory" and that "nature is abolished" and recreated as simulacra for the purpose of consumerist nostalgia, what is at stake is a cultural logic of 'forgetting' which facilitates the production and reproduction of capital globally by creating a depthless and frictionless space for its circulation and expansion (Jameson 1992: 308, 35). But crucially, the countermeasure cannot be simply to prescribe 'remembering': "the great high modernist thematics of time and temporality, the elegiac mysteries of *durée* and memory" are no longer actual today (ibid.: 16). Whereas Hegel seems convinced that forgetting must give way to 'recollection' as self-discovery of oneself as a Christian 'subject', Jameson seems to be trying to diagnose a situation where all attempts at self-knowledge and memory have run aground. The problem of postmodernity is not just that we forget, but that all attempts at remembering have become ineffective.

The dismissal of a sense of subjective depth's capacity to bear the weight of a political vision is indeed a refusal of Hegel's narrative foreclosure via the ideology of the world-historical significance of Christianity. But nevertheless, Jameson's work on postmodernity can be misread if we ignore his broader concern with the relation between social impasses and their aesthetic representations, where he argues that: "all ideology in the strongest sense […] is in its very nature Utopian" (Jameson 2015: 289).[41] This double valence should be read into the triumphal ending which brings the Hegel's considerations of the Ancient world to an end:

> [T]he world of the person and legal right, the devastating savagery of the content's elements cast out into free-standing status, as well as both the person of

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39   Surely an account even slightly more concerned with the facts of history would have to develop these themes in relation to the Athenian's own imperial ventures, as well as the early social dynamics of the Roman republic.

40   Jameson's contrast between "imperialist" and "multinational" regimes of capitalist accumulation should in no way foreclose mapping postmodernity onto Hegel's imperial *Rechtszustand*. "The era of late capitalism is not a new epoch of capitalist development. It is merely a further development of the imperialist, monopoly-capitalist epoch" (Mandel, 1976: 10). "Multinational capitalism", simply designates that the postwar situation saw a waning of competition between particular capitalist empires, to a situation of US world hegemony and "pax Americana" (Jameson, 2007: 155). Multinational capitalism still involves imperial relations economically as formal and real subsumption under a capitalist world-market and the political global enforcement of legal regimes focused on securing property rights conducive to the circulation of commodities and labor, and thereby the reproduction of capital at a global scale.

41   This is the main thesis argued for in *The Political Unconscious*. See Jameson (2015: 76–9, 281–99).

stoicism as it has been thought and the untenable disquiet of skepticism, all constitute the periphery of those shapes, which, expectantly and with urgency, stand around the birthplace of spirit becoming self-consciousness, and they have as their focal point the all-permeating pain and yearning of the unhappy self-consciousness and the communal birth pangs of its emergence, – the simplicity of the pure concept (*PhG* §754: 403).

Jameson's immanent critique of Hegel hinges on going beyond the particularity of his Christian framing, but retaining both the fundamental problematic and the formal and impossible need for a "solution". This raises the issue of how Hegelian Jameson can really be, given that he maintains that the very practice of "philosophy" is today too closely aligned with ideological systematization and institutionalization, and instead aligns himself with "theory", whose claims "allow us to grasp the limits of philosophy as such, very much including dialectical philosophy" (Jameson 2009: 9).[42] He defines theory, by contrast, as "the perpetual and impossible attempt to dereify the language of thought", which may be *only in part* aligned with Hegel's thought:

> [I]n Hegel's case I will merely claim that, after the *Phenomenology*, it is Hegel himself who turns his own thought into a philosophy and a system; in other words, who, with the later collaboration of his disciplines, produces something we may call Hegelianism, in contrast to that rich practice of dialectical thinking we find in the first great 1807 masterpiece. Such a distinction will help us understand that virtually all the varied contemporary attacks on Hegel are in reality so many indictments of Hegelianism as a philosophy, or, what amounts to the same thing, as an ideology. [...] Hegel is therefore not to be read as projecting a closed system, even though Hegelianism may be (ibid.: 8–9).

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Hegel's place within Jameson's "theory" has only increased with time, peaking with the back-to-back publications of *Valences of the Dialectic* (2009) and *The Hegel Variations* (2010).[43] This Hegelian connection is confirmed, for starters, by the championing in his recent work of "the Absolute" as a key category for critical thought[44], culminating by upturning elements from the phenomenological tradition into an "absolute transcoding" of postmodernity as "the horizon within which the Absolute is to be sought

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42   He still maintains this position up to at least 2019 (Hamza & Ruda 2017: 497–501).
43   In this respect, J. M. H. Mascat (2021) has also pointed out the tension between "the lack of attention that Jameson devotes to investigating the nature of Hegel's Absolute" in *The Hegel Variations* and Jameson's own project of vindicating the category of totality (Mascat 2021: 249). I wholeheartedly agree with her argument that Jameson is even more Hegelian than he cares to admit in his (admittedly quite brief) analysis of the *PhG* – which can be shown not only according to Mascat's reading of the "Absolute Knowing" chapter, but, as has been argued, can be seen clearly according to the "Religion" chapter as well.
44   These developments retroactively make the pervasiveness of Hegelian arguments in his earlier work unmistakable, instantiated through the "missing links" of E. Bloch and G. Lukács.

today" (Jameson 2009: 607–9, 612).[45] But most significantly, his revindication of dialectics beyond any *system* of philosophy is driven towards "a thought mode that does not yet exist" (ibid.: 67), that is, a "new spatial dialectic" afforded by and able to deal with the "contemporary conditions of globalization and post-modernity", as well as allowing "older temporal categories of Hegelian and Marxist dialectics [...] to be translated into the new spatial idiom" (ibid.: 68).

Thus, Hegel's terminological designations of "Athens", "Rome", "Christianity" may just as much fall by the wayside, if we have understood that core of the problem of modernity lies in the aporetic *conceptual* distinction between "individual", "person" and "subject". Hegel's Greek *Individualität*, Roman *Person* (PhG §477: 261), and Christian *Subjektivität* (*PhG* §785: 419) should not be conflated nor reified.[46] Recollection, *Erinnerung,* has a further meaning than consciousness' remembrance of the past: *Er-innerung* signals a re-formation and redistribution of the coordinates of interiority and exteriority constitutive of the shapes of subjectivity and potentially giving birth to a new one:

> [T]he other aspect of spirit's coming-to-be, *history*, is that *knowing* self-*mediating* coming-to-be – the spirit relinquished into time. However, this relinquishing is likewise the relinquishing of itself; the negative is the negative of itself. [...] In taking-the-inward-turn, spirit is absorbed into the night of its self-consciousness, but its vanished existence is preserved in that night, and this sublated existence – the existence which was prior but is now newborn from knowing – is the new existence, a new world, and a new shape of spirit (*PhG* §808: 433).

This utopian valence retained by 'subjectivity', neither a presupposed individual nor a person reducible to an object among others, is not so easily dismissed as Hegel's "Christian" designation of it. Today's *Erinnerung* may no longer be able to take Romantic or Modernist forms, but this does not rule out its speculative transcodification. Jameson proposes his own alternative, in fact: "cognitive mapping", meaning "a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system" through "a more modernist strategy, which retains an impossible concept of totality whose representational failure seemed for the moment as useful and productive as its (inconceivable) success" (Jameson 1992: 54, 409–10).[47] This is no longer Hegel's pure science as metaphysical logic freed from ideology, but a politically effective *aesthetic* practice (Jameson 1988: 358).

Gesturing at such a practice, Jameson's "Nostalgia for the Present" (Jameson 1992: 279–96) compares nostalgic simulacra of historical period pieces as mere projections of our reifying present with the works of Phillip K. Dick, which stand as an example of an untimely modernist remnant of counter-nostalgic

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45   Also, Jameson (2009: 608–9).
46   Though he does not set these terms apart consistently throughout the *PhG*, presumably because he is trying to express their interrelated arising out of each other, he does distinguish them quite clearly within "Religion".
47   See also, Jameson 1988: 356.

defamiliarization of the present: "Only by means of a violent formal and narrative dislocation could a narrative apparatus come into being capable of restoring life and feeling to this only intermittently functioning organ that is our capacity to organize and live time historically" (ibid.: 284). *Time Out of Joint* (1959) presents the discovery that a man's all-too-familiar 1950's suburban life is in fact a simulation created in service of a future dystopian war effort against extraterrestrial invaders – so the crux of the matter ceases to be whether the past "really" was as it is recalled today, and instead: "a perception of the present as history; that is, as a relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective" (Jameson 1992: 283–4). It is interesting, moreover, that Dick's later *VALIS* (1981) revisits this same issue in starker terms, but does not seem to draw Jameson's interest. In this novel, after a series of psychological breakdowns, Dick's autobiographical main character experiences a:

> [T]wo-world superimposition, [he] had seen not only California, U.S.A., of the year 1974 but also ancient Rome, [and] he had discerned within the superimposition a Gestalt shared by both space-time continua, their common element: a Black Iron Prison. This is what the dream referred to as "the Empire". He knew it because, upon seeing the Black Iron Prison, he had recognized it. Everyone dwelt in it without realizing it. The Black Iron Prison was their world (Dick 2011: 40).

In *VALIS,* postmodernism's connection to concrete problem pertaining to an imperial historical form is much closer to Hegel's concern than Jameson's analysis of *Time Out of Joint*. Foregrounding *VALIS* helps show how Jameson's de-familiarization device fulfills a parallel, though not identical, role to the Christian break into history which Hegel sought to grasp – no longer a compensatory reconciliation in eternity, but as revival of a concrete form of historical sense able to undermine the reification of present political and social forms.

The preceding analysis has shown not just that Jameson's characterization of postmodernity is compatible with Hegel's historico-political concerns in the *PhG*, but that we can see them expressing a common problematic thread, together with a concomitance of their critical spirits and ambitions, to which the different perspectives granted by differing social conjunctures are secondary. To claim that Hegel's object of philosophical preoccupation is already postmodernism should not be mistaken as retrofitting Jameson's words into Hegel's mouth – instead, we must endeavor to recognize the problematic kernel which Hegel sought to express in the *PhG*, beyond its outmoded appearance and hackneyed formulations. The task would likewise be mistaken if it simply took Jameson's definitions as given, only to then verify Hegel's *PhG* on that basis – to find that Hegel was concretely engaged with a problem which is also ours means opening ourselves up to the possibility that he may indeed offer a perspective which we have gotten used to ignoring. Finding Hegel behind Jameson's back means finding philosophy and the power of thought at the bottom of the fundamental aesthetic and historico-political problem of modernity and postmodernity, that is, a revindication of philosophy's vocation to

be "its own time comprehended in thought".[48] The apparent disconnect from Hegel's time should instead be seen as an index of intimate confluence and a marker of an invaluable simultaneous distance and closeness of Hegel to our present, able to both defamiliarize us from it and allow us to better grasp it concretely and historically.

Conclusion

Hegel's postmodern relevance lies in the strength of his account for the very problem of modernity. This is why there is much to be gained in transcoding the form of his thought beyond the particular expressions in which they appear in his history lectures. The political and historical significance of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has thus been accounted for by clarifying Hegel's diagnostic and critical use of "Religion" for thinking through the possibilities of cultural representation and presentation with its determination by socio-political and economic conditions. Furthermore, it has been shown how the *Phenomenology of Spirit* could be said to constitute Hegel's own cognitive map, amounting to a philosophy of history decrying that "The Empire Never Ended".

The contemporary relevance of Hegel's philosophy of history and modernity lies squarely in identifying the problematic nature of legal form of the 'person' and the political form of 'empire' – which may well be more of a problem for us today than in Hegel's time. Likewise, it is clear that what Hegel sought to express by his ambivalent account of the religious function of comedy, is deeply prescient about our incapacity to get a grip of our "postmodern condition", in a 21st century defined by an advanced stage of capitalist world-empire. We find it capable of unprecedented reification of (stoic, skeptical or unhappy) consciousnesses, exercising economic and physical control over a world-whole, though unable to deal with a climate crisis, as well as fundamentally structured and divided along imperial lines of violence and exploitation. It is with Hegel standing behind us that we can grasp this situation as 'comic', precisely insofar as nature and history recede from our view, but likewise allowing us to grasp the problem itself at its most concrete.

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48   *PhR*: 15.

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Injigo Baka Bordons

Imperija nikad nije završena: Hegel, postmodernizam i komedija

Apstrakt

Ovaj rad pokazuje da je Hegelov prikaz modernosti već prikaz postmodernosti prema definiciji kulturne logike globalizovanog kapitalizma Fredrika Džejmsona. Prvo, Hegelov prikaz problematike modernosti će se analizirati u *Fenomenologiji duha* kroz razmatranje sazvežđa Atine, Rima i hrišćanstva zajedno sa Hegelovim kontrastom između tragedije i komedije u poglavlju „Religija", kako bi se predstavio filozofski prikaz konkretnog problema povezivanja društvenih, političkih i ekonomskih struktura sa njihovim sopstvenim reprezentacijama. Suštinski problem će postati instanciran u pravnoj figuri „osobe" i društvenoj strukturi sveta „carstva", te povezan sa rimskom zakonitošću i komedijom. Tvrdnja koja se brani jeste da Hegelova društveno-istorijska relevantnost danas zavisi od povlačenja veze između Džejmsonove periodizacije Realizma-Modernizma-Postmodernizma i Hegelovih estetskih kulturnih kategorija Ep-Tragedija-Komedija, a ne Grčka-Rim-Hrišćanstvo. Na osnovu toga, *Fenomenologija duha* stoji kao Hegelova sopstvena „kognitivna mapa", za koju komedija označava problematičan ekstrem društvenog režima reprezentacije koji je srazmeran savremenoj kulturnoj logici kasnog i imperijalnog kapitalizma.

Ključne reči: Hegel, Frederik Džejmson, postmoderna, komedija, kapitalizam, osoba.

Cynthia Cruz

MADNESS AND SUBJECTIVE DESTITUTION: TOWARDS A POSSIBLE EXIT FROM CAPITALISM

ABSTRACT
Madness, as Hegel tells us, is inherent within all, a state each of us moves through each time we acquire a new habit. Like madness, subjective destitution is also an inherent state, one each of us moves through in our initial state of being. The two states converge in the acquisition of a new habit when one is momentarily without a nature and, at the same time, submerged in madness, when one is no longer what they were and not yet what they are about to become. Though, as Lacan tells us, one cannot choose to go mad, and one does not choose to be born into poverty (or other forms of subjective destitution), one can, nonetheless, make a determination to engage in the act of subjective destitution and madness as a means for emancipation. The two states converge in a novel configuration that replicates, though differs from, spirit's process of becoming.

I

Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* ends with the death of an animal. It is from out of this death that spirit arises: "Above this death of Nature, from this dead husk, proceeds a more beautiful Nature, *spirit*" (Hegel 1970: 443). Indeed, spirit's spirit originates from this waste, "the death of the animal is the becoming of consciousness" (Hegel 1967: 164). Implicit in nature's circular process – moving through a series of stages, then returning back into itself – is nature's own death, "The goal of Nature is to destroy itself and to break through its husk of immediate, sensuous existence, to consume itself like the phoenix in order to come forth from this externality rejuvenated as spirit" (Hegel 1970: 444). It is the nature of spirit not merely to be nature but to break with nature and set itself in opposition to it. This destructive constructivity that produces novelty is at the core of Hegel's system of *Aufhebung*.

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Nature's death at the end of *Philosophy of Nature* bleeds into, and is absorbed by, *Philosophy of Spirit*[1] where spirit, in its process of becoming, enters and returns out of nature. Subjective spirit is *Naturgeist,* spirit still immersed in the slumber of nature, or what Hegel calls *Seele,* or soul. Here, spirit is asleep in its unknowing and not yet for itself. Spirit begins, in other words, in sleep where it is neither itself nor nature, in a suspension between death and life, in a form of undeadness.

In this state of what Hegel calls *Seelenhaftigkeit* (2007a: 72), spirit works nature, or subjectivity, out of itself, "Spirit, just because it is the goal of Nature, is *prior* to it, Nature has proceeded from spirit: not empirically, however, but in such a manner that spirit is already from the very first implicitly present in Nature which is spirit's own presupposition" (Hegel 1970 444). Spirit facilitates its own coming into being (with and against nature). Yet, each time spirit engages in the act of negation, it vanishes, "Insofar as something mediates itself with itself, the other by means of which it is mediated disappears and with this the mediation itself disappears" (Hegel 2007a: 81). Through this process nature, along with spirit, vanishes (Hegel 2007b: 9). Spirit, in other words, is its own vanishing mediator.

In *Philosophy of Spirit* Hegel describes spirit's journey as the liberation struggle (*Befreiungskampf*) through which spirit emancipates itself. Spirit's process is one of repeated contradiction, of negating "every fixed determination" (ibid.: 114). This three-stage process consists of, first, *dreaming through* (*durchträumen*)*,* where spirit "still lies in *immediate, undifferentiated* unity with its objectivity" (ibid.: 87), second, *madness* (*Verrücktheit*),[2] where spirit is confronted with a particularity it is unable to assimilate into its interior; and, finally, *habit*, where spirit masters this moment of conflict, resulting in a form of ambivalent mastery.

Spirit is nothing but its resistance to spirit: by opposing the obstacle of this estrangement – its self as other as limit – spirit ceaselessly pushes itself beyond its limits, changing its nature. These negations are a form of death through which sprit passes. Indeed, spirit would die were it not to pass through death. This self-othering, or *Sichanderswerden*, is crucial. Spirit's liberation occurs through the process of these annihilations, or negations, of its self, the result of which is the production of its true being. What spirit becomes through this liberation struggle exists already as Idea, and yet, it is also something entirely novel: "Spirit is free, but first it is merely implicitly free in itself. It has to bring forth what it is implicitly in itself. This process is the content of our discipline:

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1   Hegel's text, *Die Philosophie des Geistes*, is translated as *Philosophy of Mind,* though the German word in the title, *Geist,* means "mind" and "spirit". Because Hegel refers to this entity as spirit, I will be using the term "spirit" rather than "mind".
2   The term *Verrücktheit* translates most commonly to madness and insanity. The word has been translated as "derangement" (Michael Inwood), "insanity" (Daniel Bertold-Bold), and "dementia" (Robert R. Williams), among others. Hegel's use of the term refers to the general category of which there are three distinct categories. I have chosen to use the term madness due its more general and neutral connotations.

to liberate oneself, i.e., to liberate oneself from nature" (Hegel 2007a: 71). In spirit's doubling of itself, it produces a new copy of itself, but one with difference. Thus, within itself, spirit already holds its future self, and yet, it does not yet know what this future self is. It is only its ability to mediate, everything else falls away in this process of becoming, a process that adds as it subtracts.

Once spirit has annihilated spirit, in order to work with this emptiness, this nothingness needs stabilization. By positing a limit between its self and nature, by creating this division, spirit creates a means to stabilize this nothingness (Hegel 2007b: 22). This marking of a limit defines subjectivity. Spirit becomes what it is by determining what it is not. (ibid.: 131) When spirit posits something, it falls back into the void of its abstract interior, what Hegel calls the Night of the World (1983: 87), into momentary madness:

> The human being is this Night, this empty nothing which contains everything in its simplicity – a wealth of infinitely many representations, images, none of which occur to it directly, and none of which are not present. This [is] the Night, the interior of [human] nature, existing here – pure Self – [and] in phantasmagoric representations it is night everywhere: here a bloody head suddenly shoots up and there another white shape, only to disappear as suddenly. We see this Night when we look a human being in the eye, looking into a Night which turns terrifying. [For from his eyes] the night of the world hangs out toward us.
>
> Into this Night the being has returned (ibid.: 87).

Spirit's recognition of its limitation introduces a split where it can either recoil back into its interior abyss of madness, or move through its limit, an act Hegel describes as an act of audacity (*Vermessenheit*) and madness (*Verrücktheit*)" (2007: 22). Thus, retreating into its interior and moving through its limit are both forms of madness.

Hegel describes the rupture that occurs during spirit's separation from nature as "the madness of the human being", "where spirit falls aways from its lucidity and freedom into its raw natural condition (*Natürlichkeit*)" (2007a: 72, footnote 42). This process of becoming represents a crisis, as Catherine Malabou explains:

> The formation of individuality represents a crisis. It is clear that in the word 'crisis' we hear the double meaning of the term 'judgement'—as a rupture and as a decision.... In fact, the further the 'self' advances in the movement which constitutes its own formation, the more it finds itself dispossessed of itself, to the point of becoming truly mad. It seems that spirit does not leave its initial state of self-hypnosis, its original slumber, except to sink further into alienation (2005: 31).

The moment a subject moves into second nature, when it is no longer what it was and is not yet its new, second nature, is an instance of madness. In this moment, one is without a nature. In a sense, in this discrete moment, one is nothing. Hegel describes madness as a moment of instability where a subject

experiences disorientation (2007b: 126). The state of being Hegel describes is one of being untethered, of being "plunged into absolute uncertainty" (ibid.: 126). Such occurrences can transpire during moments of personal change, when, for instance, one learns a new habit like riding a bicycle, or during large shifts in society. Providing the French Revolution as an example, Hegel writes, "many people became insane by the collapse of almost all civil relationships", (ibid.: 126) thus, linking madness to revolution. Because this disarray undoes the structures that were hitherto considered the edifices of reality, this moment presents a radical opening.

During such moments of instability there exists the possibility of a subject's becoming stuck. This occurs when some part of itself cannot be integrated into its overall system. As a result, the subject enters what Hegel calls *derangement* or madness (ibid.: 114). And yet, moving through this in-between state is necessary for change. This is why madness, for Hegel, is inherent to humans, "an essential stage in the development of the soul" (ibid.: 114). Crucially, madness exists at the very crux of our being. As Slavoj Žižek has shown, Hegel's inclusion of madness in his system marks a friction, an indigestible remnant, the result of which is a point of resistance from within (Žižek 2009a).

Indeed, man has the "*privilege* of folly and madness" (Hegel 2007b: 114) (*mensch hat vorrecht der narrheit und des wahnsinns*) (Hegel 1986: 168). Hegel's use of the term *vorrecht* suggests that humans have not merely the right (*Recht*), but the *vor,* or *pre,* right, to go mad, a right that comes before a right. And yet, because it comes before the right, it cannot be claimed. Therefore, madness is a right one is unable to claim. If madness is a *Vorrecht,* it is a privilege, a special right, one is granted. Madness remains a possibility we can neither choose nor not choose, can neither plan for nor plan to evade. Illuminating the inherent paradox of madness, Lacan will present a similar conception of madness, insisting both that "The mad person is the only free human being" (1967: 11) and, at the same time, "Not just anyone can go mad" (Lacan 2006: 144).

Hegel posits habit as a means to quell madness (Hegel 2007b: 131). And yet habit, though it produces freedom from madness, can itself become habitual in the form of oblivion. The repetition of an action that begins as a deliberate choice results in an aspect that becomes sublimated into one's everyday being, "that the soul thus makes itself into abstract universal being, and reduces the particularity of feelings (of consciousness too) to a determination in it that just is, is habit" (ibid.: 131). What at first seems strange and may initially be experienced as a shock, eventually becomes, in a sense, nothing: entirely unnoticeable. Because it provides stability, habit is necessary for a subject's interior cohesion and for social cohesion. Due to habit, feeling becomes second nature, allowing one to engage in the world, to not get stuck on a particularity, as Hegel writes, "the essential determination is the *liberation* from sensations that man gains through habit, when he is affected by them" (ibid.: 131). Thus, habit produces freedom.

Yet, because habit results in a form of forgetting, habit is also a form of unfreedom. Further, because habit becomes second nature, we become habituated

to habit, "in habit man's mode of existence is natural, and for that reason he is unfree in it; but he is free in so far as the natural determinacy of sensation is by habit reduced to his mere being, he is no longer different from it, is indifferent to it, and so no longer interested, engaged, or dependent in respect to it" (ibid.: 131). When feeling becomes second nature, one loses awareness. Thus, at some level, one is always in a state of oblivion.

Hegel uses the term *Vorrecht* precisely three times in *Philosophy of Spirit*. As already discussed, Hegel declares *Wahnsinn* and *Narrheit* to be *Vorrechte*. But for Hegel the act of *Aufhebung* is also a *Vorrecht,* "The subjectivity of the animal contains a contradiction and the urge to preserve itself by sublating this contradiction; this self-preservation is the privilege of the living thing and, in a still higher degree, of spirit" (ibid.: 11). ("*Die Subjektivität des Tieres enthält einen Widerspruch and den Trieb, durch Aufhebung dieses Widerspruchs sich selbst zu erhalten; welche Selbsterhaltung das Vorrecht des Lebendigen und in noch höherem Grade das des Geistes ist*" (Hegel 2016: 20). Here, Hegel uses the word animal, or *Tier,* rather than human, "*Die Subjektivität des Tieres,* or "the subjectivity of the animal", signaling the inherent nature of animal within human. Crucial, also, is Hegel's use of the term *Trieb*, or drive: it is not merely the contradiction and its *Aufhebung*, but also the drive to preserve itself, that Hegel includes in this third *Vorrecht.*

Though *Vorrechte* are rights one cannot claim, one can, nonetheless, make a determination to claim a right, just as one can make a determination to take an action. As with absolute knowing, one makes a determination (to begin) and then makes a determination to let go of what results from this determination. Cognition is required for the initial determination, but then one must make the determination to suspend cognition. This suspension is described by Malabou as "a state of spiritual hypnosis corresponding actually to a time prior to the 'I' which, on this account, precedes man as such" (2005: 28).

In *The Ontology of the Accident*, in her analysis of brain trauma, Malabou describes subjects who are born anew, "An unrecognizable persona whose present comes from no past, whose future harbors nothing to come, an absolute existential improvisation" (2012: 1–2). This new form of being arises through the accident (ibid.: 2), which we can also understand as a crisis. This crisis results in a new form of the subject, a subject who already existed, in a process akin to spirit's becoming. This "new being comes into the world for a second time" (ibid.: 2). Describing this new subject sprung from its own being, Malabou writes:

> We no longer look like anything living, but nor do we look like anything inanimate. We must imagine something between the animate and the inanimate, something that is not animal but that has none of the inertia of stone either. The inanimal? (ibid.: 70).

This suspension between knowing and not-knowing is a state of undeadness. When spirit exists in the suspension between what it was and what it

will be, in this moment, it is nothing. Suspended, it is between states of being. Here, with this willful forgetting, one makes a determination to suspend judgement for an undetermined time. One suspends judgement and then, in a sense, enters the suspension.

This form of forgetting has something to do with Lacan's concept of stupidity in Seminar XV. In the seminar Lacan praises stupidity (2002: 12), "The true dimension of stupidity is indispensable to grasp as being what the psychoanalytic act has to deal with" (ibid.: 12–13). This form of stupidity, what Lacan refers to as *"de-connassance"*, which translates to "un-knowledge", is not a lack of knowledge but, rather, that which exists between knowledge and lack of knowledge.

For Lacan, truth exists in the precise place where the subject's loss of knowledge coincides, at the site where the symptom appears. It is through the symptom that the subject speaks: the subject is, for Lacan, this speaking. And yet the subject remains unaware of this truth. "The truth, this is what psychoanalysis teaches us, lies at the point where the subject refuses to know…The symptom is this real knot where the truth of the subject lies" (ibid.: 202).

The act of initiating psychoanalysis, like spirit's act of determination, also requires a determination followed by a suspension of judgement. Describing the presupposition inherent to the psychoanalytic act, Lacan explains, "What is at stake when what we are dealing with is the divine dimension and generally that of the spirit, turns entirely around the following: what do we suppose to be already there before we discover it?" (ibid.: 13). When one decides to take a leap, to engage in a *salto mortale,* this suspension has a hypnotic quality to it, akin to Hegel's description of animal magnetism. Though, he explains, it would be foolish (*töricht*) to liken the phenomenon to philosophy, and though we must consider animal magnetism a form of disease and a decline in spirit below ordinary consciousness:

> in so far as in that state spirit surrenders its thinking, the thinking that proceeds in determinate distinctions and contrasts itself with nature, yet, on the other hand, in the visible liberation of spirit in those magnetic phenomena from the limitations of space and time and from all finite connexions, there is something that has an affinity to philosophy, something that, with all the brutality of an established fact, defies the scepticism of the intellect and so necessitates the advance from ordinary psychology to the conceptual cognition of speculative philosophy, for which alone animal magnetism is not an incomprehensible miracle (Hegel 2007b: 8).

Animal magnetism allows for a "*sichloslosmachen*", a releasing of spirit from its self, and thus from thinking, and from all finite limits including those of space and time. Such a state is one that is "diseased" and in which "a separation of the soulful from mental consciousness" occurs (ibid.: 99). This state of suspension Hegel describes as also occurring in universal form, in, for example, "*sleep walking, catalepsy*, *the onset of puberty* in young *women*, the state of *pregnancy,* also *St Vitus's dance*, and the moment of approaching *death*" (ibid.:

99). Such a state results in an internal splitting of the self, *Zerrissenheit,* that which is indicative of madness. In his description of this state of being, Hegel includes those of "religious and political exaltation":

> In the war of the Cevennes, for example, the free emergence of the soulful showed up as a prophetic gift present to a high degree in children, in girls and especially in old people. But the most remarkable example of such exaltation is the famous Jeanne d'Arc, in whom we can see, on the one hand, the patriotic enthusiasm of a quite pure, simple soul and, on the other, a kind of magnetic state (ibid.: 99).

Joan of Arc abandons her life without knowing what it is she is entering into or what the final result of her act will be. Through the subtraction of what she is, something new appears.

II

Capitalism, with its origins in the French Revolution, arose from the destruction of feudal society and the breaking up and dissolving of the monarchy (Soboul 1977: 3). The result was a shift from a society where subjects were dependent upon one another to one where each exists for themselves, driven by their own wants and needs. This violent breaking up (*Zerrissen)* of society, resulting in disunity (*Zerrissenheit*), is akin to Hegel's description of a subject's internal splitting (*Zersplitterung*), "into different faculties, forces, or, what comes to the same thing, activities, represented as independent of each other" (2007b: 6), which results in madness.

This rupturing of society resulted in the dispersal of the sovereignty into the people. "This substance entered", Eric Santner writes, "like a strange alien presence—an imminent heterogeneity—into that of the people" (2020:51). What Santner describes as a "strange alien presence" can be understood as the globs and pools of gelatinous matter Marx attributes to the spectral quality of value which has a mesmerizing effect, propelling subjects to it while, simultaneously, altering their very nature (Marx 1976: 128). This process shares a similar structure to what Hegel refers to as chemism (2010: 645). In Hegel's conception of chemism an object or organism is altered internally and, as a result, is drawn, unconsciously, to other, stronger, objects. But unlike the chemical process that occurs in spirit's process of becoming where chemism is the result of mechanism, the chemical process brought about by capitalism results in mechanism. In, for example, the machinery of production and the human body (and mind) of the worker, "in the factory we have a lifeless mechanism which is independent of the workers, who are incorporated into it as its living appendages" (Marx 1976: 548).

The alien power, Hegel writes, "that generates magnetic somnambulism in a subject is mainly another subject" (2007b: 108). In capitalism, there is no subject capable of drawing subjects to them in this way. Or, rather, the subject capable of this overwhelming power is what Marx calls the automatic subject.

This subject that is not a subject is the result of a chemical process where both forms of value commingle:

> in the circulation M-C-M both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself, the money as its general mode of existence, the commodity as its particular or, so to speak, disguised mode. It is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement; it thus becomes transformed into an automatic subject (Marx 1976: 255).

This chemical process produces a form of libidinal excess, what Marx describes as spectral materiality [*gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit*], a gelatinous [*Gallerte*], substance extracted from the laboring body of the worker then transposed to objects which, once they become filled with this invisible, charged substance, become commodities (ibid.: 128). This charged matter that fills objects is also transfused into the human subject who, as a result, is transformed to an "animated monster which begins to 'work', 'as if its body were by love possessed" (ibid.: 302).

This charged matter is an "intensity of undead life", (Santner 2001: 54). As Santner explains, "We are dealing here with a paradoxical kind of mental energy that constrains by means of excess, that leaves us stuck and paralyzed precisely by way of a certain kind of intensification and amplification, by a "too much" of pressure that is unable to be assumed, taken up into the flow of living" (ibid.: 22). Unlike spirit's form of undeadness, dynamic at its core transitioning through moments of forgetfulness during repeated instances of self-negation, capitalist undeadness is a combination of oblivion and freneticism. Here, we have a destructive form of habit, habit perverted by capitalism, resulting in mechanism. We have a subject who has become the mechanical action he performs, moving without thought, existing in a death-like state.

The madness at the core of capitalism is the transformation of use value into exchange value, a procedure through which use value vanishes and, in this vanishing, exchange value is added. Though there is a contradiction at the center of this phenomenon, the phenomenon invisibilizes itself. Capitalism's form of self-valuation bears a similarity with the self-production of spirit but in a problematic form. While contradiction is inherent to the self-production of both spirit and capitalism, unlike spirit, capitalism covers over contradictions and thus, does not sublate them. Because this process remains invisible, we take the strange matter of commodities to be natural. Even political economists remain blind to this alteration to society (Marx 1975: 52).

This process mimics and yet perverts spirit's process of becoming. While spirit's system is one of self-negation and self-valorization, where spirit reproduces itself as something novel, with capitalism we have, instead, a process of duplication where something vanishes and yet, this vanishing is veiled by its replacement with something else. Stated otherwise, with spirit, we have the production of something new through contradiction, while with capitalism we

have reproduction with contradiction that is covered over. Without contradiction, or contradiction that is covered over, there is no possibility for change.

With the appearance of capitalism, nature is replaced and capitalism becomes (human) second nature. While with spirit's interaction with nature and nature's interaction with spirit, both spirit and nature self-generate and disappear. Once they transform themselves, what they were no longer exists. When capitalism replaces nature, capitalism generates itself but, unlike nature and spirit, it does not disappear in the process but, instead, continues self-replicating. In addition, because capitalism introduces mechanism, which nature does not, it thus naturalizes nature.

As a result of the French revolution and the appearance of capitalism, the human subject is without its nature, transformed to animal nature. Human nature, removed from human, is replaced with the worship of money and commodities, "Money is the estranged essence of man's work and man's existence, and this alien essence dominates him, and he worships it" (Marx 1987: 172). The human subject becomes "man in his uncivilized, unsocial form, man in his fortuitous existence, man just as he is, man as he has been corrupted by the whole organization of our society, who has lost himself, been alienated, and handed over to the rule of inhuman conditions and elements – in short, man who is not yet a *real* species-being" (ibid.: 159). Man's nature is removed and replaced with this new second nature, egoistic man. As Marx writes, "*egoistic* man is the passive result of the dissolved society, a result that is simply found in existence, an object of immediate certainly, therefore a natural object" (1987: 167). This new human is "not yet a real species being", regressing to a pre-human state, and yet, he becomes this not-yet-human precisely due to what we call civilization, "the whole organization of our society" (ibid.: 159).

Marx's concept of human nature, *Gattungswesen*, is predicated on human needs that are not fixed upon each individual or even upon the human species but, rather, change according to human society and history (1993: 222). These needs are natural but when taken in isolation, when man attends to them as if they are no more than mere needs, they reduce man to animal, that which is not capable of determinations, who has no contradiction, and experiences only an endless series of the same,

> Nature as such in its self-internalizing does not attain to this being-for-self, to the consciousness of itself; the animal, the most complete form of this internalization, exhibits only the spiritless dialectic of transition from one individual sensation filling up its whole soul to another individual sensation which equally exclusively dominates it; it is man who first raises himself above the individuality of sensation to the universality of thought, to awareness of himself, to the grasp of his subjectivity, of his I—in a word, it is only man who is thinking mind and by this and by this alone, is essentially distinguished from nature (Hegel 2007b: 15).

Furthermore, due to the alienation of labor, man feels free only when engaging in the fulfilment of these needs: "as a result, therefore, man (the worker)

only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, pro-creating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is an-imal becomes human and what is human becomes animal" (Marx 1959: 30). This new human subject appears as natural and yet, his nature is animal (an-imal nature). This is because he has forgotten his animal nature and has been reduced to animal with his focus entirely on fulfilling his individual needs.

Though there were instances of pre-capitalist greed during, for example, an-tiquity, what Marx calls driven greed, these were exceptions. With capitalism, such exceptions become the norm (Johnston 2017: 272–273). For both Marx and Freud, drives are not givens but mediated by the social, resulting in the altering of structural, as well as phenomenal, dimensions. These mediations render the drive an object, and the (drive) object, then, alters the subject (ibid.: 280). Capitalism does something to do this original drive, as Adrian Johnston writes: capitalism alters the libidinal configuration of subjects from pre-cap-italism's "more constrained and implicit (in itself [*an sich*]) to more unbound and explicit (for itself [*für sich*])" (ibid.: 272).

Pre-capitalist and capitalist drive correlate with pre-capitalist and capi-talist greed. In *Grundrisse* Marx describes greed as "a particular form of the *drive*" (1993: 222) as distinct from the craving for a particular kind of wealth, such as for clothes, weapons, jewels, etc. With capitalism pre-capitalist drive becomes a new form of drive, greed, as Marx writes, "the mania for posses-sions is possible without money; but greed itself is the product of a definite social development not *natural*, as opposed to historical" (ibid.: 222). Though we had pre-capitalist drive and a pre-capitalist "mania for possessions", with capitalism, the two conflate, resulting in what Marx calls greed. This new form of greed does something to subject formation.

This state of man reduced to animal is described by Andrey Platonov in his short story "Rubbish Wind". The wife of Albert Lichtenberg, the main charac-ter, is described as becoming animal as the result of fascist society, "though she had been a dear and magnificent being", he writes, "As he got dressed Licht-enberg saw that Zelda was crying and had lain down on the floor; her leg was bared, it was covered with the rampart sores of an unclean animal; she did not even lick them, she was worse than a monkey – a monkey looks after its organs with painstaking care" (1999: 67).

In contrast, Lichtenberg is emptied out, a mere husk, "He could not im-mediately remember, that he existed and that it was necessary for him to car-ry on living, he had forgotten the weight and feeling of his own body" (ibid.: 67). Lichtenberg's emptiness can be likened to what Alain Badiou describes as the self-purification of the working class (2009: 35), that combat ought to be against one's interior where bourgeois belief and habit reside, "It is by re-alizing its interior unity, by purifying itself of its determination (of its divi-sion) by the bourgeoisie, that the working class projects itself expansively in the destructive battle against the imperialist place" (ibid.: 35). Lichtenberg's experience of forgetting the weight of his body seems, also, to correlate with

Santner's description of the libidinal charge subjects experience. This charge manifests in a weight one experiences in the body or, as Santner writes, in the flesh. This flesh is the site where we experience the cut of the symbolic in our being, what he calls "incarnation" (Santner 2011: 31–32). Lichtenberg's experience is the opposite of what Santner describes, his is a body that is light, free of such investitures.

Man is an animal and yet, man's knowledge of being an animal is what makes man not an animal, or, rather, an animal that is not an animal, as Hegel writes in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*:

> Man is an animal, but even in his animal functions, he is not confined to the implicit, as the animal is; he becomes conscious of them, recognizes them, and lifts them, as, for instance, the process of digestion, into self-conscious science. In this way man breaks the barrier of his implicit and immediate character, so that precisely because he knows that he is an animal, he ceases to be an animal and attains knowledge of himself as spirit (Hegel 1975: 80).

An animal does not know it is an animal and this not-knowing separates animal from human. But when man forgets his animal nature, it is as though he drops to a level below that of animal. This state is articulated nicely by Frank Ruda when he writes, "the worker is less than an animal because he loses the knowledge that he has of his lack and thereby lacks even lacking the animal-way" (2018: 85). Under capitalism, man precisely forgets his inherent animal nature and is reduced to what Marx calls man's "cattle-like existence" (1959: 3).

Hegel makes a distinction between the human and animal with regard to need (1991: 228). Animal need is limited: it needs food and water, for example, and these needs cannot be extended (ibid.: 228). In contrast, though human need, like animal need, also originates in survival, it is expandable through the human will (ibid.: 228). Indeed, precisely because need is tethered to human survival, we continue to strive after whatever objects are presented as human needs, "the tendency of the social conditions towards an indeterminate multiplication and specification of needs, means, and pleasures—i.e. *luxury*—a tendency which, like the distinction between natural and educated needs, has no limits [*Grenzen*], involves an equally infinite increase in dependence and want" (ibid.: 228).

Desire, on the other hand, for Hegel, is spirit's drive to sublate its otherness in an object. There is a doubling of desire which occurs at the outset, manifesting in an urge to sublate this otherness, and, then, again, in the sublating of this otherness, "but by this sublation of the object the subject...sublates its own lack, its disintegration into a distinctionless I=I and an I related to an external object, and it gives its subjectivity objectivity just as much as it makes its object subjective" (Hegel 2007b: 156). In this act, spirit transcends "the self-centredness of merely destructive desire" (ibid.: 157). Thus, desire can be understood as spirit's repeated act of negation, this act of annihilation and destruction. Desire is what drives man to act. And yet, with the emergence of capitalism, man's desire is perverted by becoming bound to objects, and man is reduced

to "the animal reality bound to individuality" (ibid.: 15). While desire propels one into the future, a future without a definitive goal, desire bound to an object binds one to the present moment (Timofeeva 2018: 107). One becomes stuck in the ever-revolving sameness of the now.

To be human is to be of the world. As Heidegger writes, "the animal is poor in world; Man is world-forming" (1995: 184). The animal does not have a world. Or, rather, it has a world but its world is not shared with the human. For Hegel, the animal is the creature that is less than human. The animal is constrained within its sphere, external to the human. And yet, the human has animal nature within it. Spirit arises from out of the death of nature. Like the human, the animal exists, but it exists outside the human world.

Describing Descartes' wonder at the animals' existence within this between space, Oxana Timofeeva writes, "those animals are almost already dead, or rather undead, and, incidentally, one might say, that a passage from life to death, their short stay in the grey zone in between, is an object of scientific and aesthetic inspiration in the Classical Age" (2018: 55).

Platonov's "Rubbish Wind" depicts the becoming-animal of humans, a transformation that results from a poverty of living. The mutation is one that is both spiritual and physical—one begins slowly to go mad—forgetting, and then losing the ability to use one's mind—as one is slowly transformed to animal. In the story, two forms of this type of madness are described. As with madness, habit, and undeadness, there is a good and bad form of becoming animal. Lichtenberg's wife is depicted as animal, but also as mad and dead, "uttering...the cries of dead madness" (1999: 67). "Her mouth", he writes, is "filled with the saliva of greed and sensuality" (ibid.: 67). It is as if the very matter of capitalism has filled her up and is spilling out from her body. In contrast, Lichtenberg's madness is one of being emptied out, "mostly he kept forgetting himself, perhaps some surplus of suffering consciousness was switching off the life inside him so it should be preserved if only in sad forgetfulness" (Platonov 1999: 71). Though his wife is reduced to mad, dead, animal, Lichtenberg retains the core of his being, "now she was a beast, scum of crazed consciousness, whereas he would always, until the grave, remain a human being, a physicist of the cosmic spaces, and even if hunger were to torment his stomach right up to his heart, it would not reach higher than his throat, and his life would hide away in the cave of his head" (1996: 68).

The "hunger" afflicting Lichtenberg and his wife, this starvation, results in a strange chemical alteration. Lichtenberg's wife goes mad, her mind and body overcome with "greed" and "sensuality". Lichtenberg also experiences hunger, and yet this hunger does something different to him. Rather than propelling him into a ravenous state, it results, instead, in a space between himself and the insane world of Nazi Germany. Though he could fall in line with the madness he sees around him, he refuses, and this resistance to hunger and to his oppression, sustains him. Picked up by the police and taken to a concentration camp, Lichtenberg is described upon his examination as "A possible new species of social animal, developing a layer of hair, extremities debilitated, sexual

attributes poorly defined; this subject, now removed from social circulation, cannot be ascribed to a definite gender;..." (1999: 80). With Lichtenberg, there is a becoming animal of man and yet man neither remains human, nor is he formed into animal. Instead, he is transformed into something else: a form of waste, or refuse, out of which something new appears.

This division between human and animal and animal within human shifts already with Kant. While with pre-Kant, the concept of animal as a force that might take over human was one situated externally, with Kant this animal is one that is lodged within the human. As Žižek writes, "in the pre-Kantian universe, humans were simply humans, beings of reason, fighting the excesses of animal lusts and divine madness, while only with Kant and German Idealism is the excess to be fought absolutely immanent, the very core of subjectivity itself" (2009b: 22). In his analysis of this shift, Žižek describes the inherent undead or inhuman nature of this transformation between animal and human:

> In Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's sister Grete calls her brother-turned-insect a monster—the German word used is "ein Untier", an inanimal, in strict symmetry to inhuman. What we get here is the opposite of inhuman: an animal which, while remaining animal, is not really animal—the excess over the animal in animal, the traumatic core of animality, which can emerge "as such" only in a human who has become an animal (ibid.: 22).

This excess out of which this inhuman appears is a form of undeadness that belongs neither to spirit nor to capitalism's undeadness. It arises from capitalism's libidinal matter, transformed through a subject's act of self-negation. Not through material death, but rather through an instance of symbolic death, through subjective destitution, which we will examine more closely in the third part of this paper.

Capitalism, due to repetition, becomes habit, or second nature, thus invisibilizing itself. While habit is the practice of repeating an act that becomes nothing over time, with capitalism, habit is habit that, sublimated into capitalism, makes, through the act of repetition, everything the same. As a result, difference vanishes. What is repeated remains hidden (Badiou 2009). Through repetition, we forget difference. With nothing to help orient us we are drawn into capitalism's infinite flow without recourse. Habit, the very mechanism that ought to provide a remedy for madness becomes, itself, a form of madness.

The animating quality that comes to life due to capitalism results in a strange paradoxical configuration—one is charged with libidinal matter while, at the same time, stuck in a state of paralytic stasis. Inanimate objects are animated with this matter while human animation is displaced by this animating source, the result of which is a state of suspension. While spirit's undeadness is one where spirit moves through its death as it becomes itself, in capitalism, subjects are immobile while being filled with a life-force that is also a form of living death. While spirit is in constant movement in its voyage to its self, the capitalist subject is petrified in a form of freneticism that leads nowhere. As Santner writes, "this 'animation' at issue for Marx, is something that is ultimately

deadening—or rather, *undeadening*—for human beings, something that drives them while holding them in place, a condition Walter Benjamin once referred to as 'petrified unrest,' *erstarrte Unruhe*" (2006: 81). This charge of undeadness, is an "intensity of undead life" (ibid.: 22). Santner likens this state to that of mania. "The "manic" side of modern melancholy can thus be understood at least in part as a mode of response to what Marx characterized as the spectral dimension of our life with commodities" (ibid.: 82). This combination of stuckness and frenzy differs from spirit's in-between space, a good form of undeadness that constructs out of destruction. In capitalism, this constructive undeadness changes and becomes a state where one is dead while still living, a form of destruction that is not constructive.

What Benjamin describes as poverty of experience, where subjects experience something but have no experience of their experience (1996: 732), becomes actual both in madness and in capitalism. The reality we are unable to experience is an experience that is rendered meaningless. With its structure of exchange value, capitalism creates a world in which all aspects of life become calculable, commodified. Thus, because everything is exchangeable, everything becomes the same, losing distinctions. As Marx writes, "Just as in money every qualitative difference between commodities is extinguished, so too for its part, as a radical leveller, it extinguishes all distinctions" (1976: 229). This leveling down of everything, where difference no longer exists, ends in indifference, *Gleichgültigkeit.* Thus, the poverty of experience is both our inability to experience and the very meaningless experience we are unable to experience. The experience Benjamin describes, that of the destruction of forms of experience, can be understood as a form of living dead. The structure of experience is missing and yet, one goes on living, nonetheless.

And, as we continue living, though not experiencing this living, the old, what has happened before now, continues, accumulating, refusing to die. This "old" that continues, remaining alive, at the same time, does not exist for us. In this space between the past, or history we remain ignorant to, and a future we are no longer able to imagine, we are stuck within a structure of the lack of a history and a (historical) future, resulting in the form of unconscious of a particular time. As Jean-Joseph Goux articulates, "[...] the form of unconscious typifying a given period is constructed upon the lack, the failing, in the dominant structure, of strata that "precede" or "follow" that period's dominant level of fixation, with the understanding that this precession or succession refers not to real history but to a structural phenomenon" (1990: 77). Subjects experience the time they are living in as a phenomena unconnected to history or a historical future. There is thus, a lack of temporal.

In this stuckness in the infinite now we are in the realm of the animal whose mode of experience is constrained by its mode of survival – of following its desire for food, water, and reproduction – and is thus fixed in the now without a future or past. At the same time, we are in the realm of madness and death: Hegel's description of "a representation torn off from the totality of actuality" (2007b: 120) (*der Wirklichkeit abgerissenen*) is a rupture, a cutting off

from (*zerreißen*) and this being cut off from actuality, from reality or existence (*Wirklichkeit*) is a form of death, of being relegated to the realm between deaths.

III

Subjective destitution, or what Lacan also calls *désêtre, or unbeing,* marks the termination of analysis where fantasy, what had hitherto served to obscure reality, finally falls away, releasing a subject to the freedom of *unbeing.* Akin to Hegel's absolute knowing, this state is described by Lacan as one of "absolute disarray" (1997: 304), where a subject is reduced to their purest, emptiest, and is confronted with the fragility of their own life, which is also to say, their death. As a result, the subject stands before the abyss in a state of sheer anxiety:

> That really is what is at issue, at the end of analysis, a twilight, an imaginary decline of the world, and even an experience at the limit of depersonalization. That is when the contingent falls away—the accidental, the trauma, the hitches of history—And it is being which then comes to be constituted (Lacan 1988: 232).

Lacan describes this state as "twilight". Surprisingly, this is the same term he uses to describe Schreber's descent into madness:

> First, there were several months of pre psychotic incubation in which the subject was in a state of profound confusion. This is the period in which the phenomena of the twilight of the world occur, which are characteristic of the beginning of a delusional period (1993: 217).

Thus, twilight describes both the space precipitating a subject's decent into psychosis and subjective destitution. There is a proximity, in other words, between the two states. Though they are not the same, in both, a subject removes themselves from the symbolic, experiencing a symbolic death.

While with psychosis, one is in the abyss, with subjective destitution, one stands at the edge of the abyss. This edge is a state of anxiety, the terror one encounters when facing the nothing that is not an absence but, rather, the presence of something that remains unknown or, as Lacan articulates, the lack of lack. While the psychotic fills this gap with hallucination and the capitalist subject fills it with disavowal, the subject of subjective destitution stands before the abyss in a state of sheer anxiety. Inherent to Lacan's articulation of subjective destitution, the analysand is rendered to a state of *hilflosigkeit.* It is in this state that one transitions from one state of being to the other, where, as Žižek writes that:

> we overcome mortality and enter undeadness: not life after death but death in life, not dis-alienation but extreme self-abolishing alienation—we leave behind the very standard by means of which we measure alienation, the notion of a normal warm daily life, of our full immersion in the safe and stable world of customs. The way to overcome the topsy-turvy world is not to return to normality but to embrace turvy without topsy (2022: 290).

In his directive that we embrace "turvy" rather than "topsy", Žižek connects subjective destitution with madness. By invoking Marx's critical analysis of capital's "enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world", he connects madness and subjective destitution with emancipation. This zero level where a subject identifies with their own destitution is the site where they set themselves free from capitalist greed and madness without a need for escape because they have already escaped.

Like madness, subjective destitution is inherent within all. Each of us exists in this state before we enter the cut of language and then, again, each time we acquire a new habit. This space between what we are no longer and who we are yet to be is akin to spirit's beginnings when spirit is pure being, immediate, or "natural spirit". As Hegel writes, "But this pure being is the pure abstraction, and hence it is the absolutely negative, which when taken immediately, is equally nothing" (1991a: 139). By entering one's nothingness, one's inherent destitution, one gains access to what had previously remained veiled. Importantly, what becomes visible was always there to begin with. It is only through this subtraction that the otherwise invisible comes to light, as Alenka Zupančič writes:

> Destitution of the subject precedes subjectivity. You don't start with subject and then go about its dismantling. It is not as if whatever subjectivity there is, it is there on behalf of the destitution. The notion of the subject is related to this radical negativity, but it isn't as if we have to destitute the subject, as if we are persons and then we have to destitute ourselves (2015: 196).

Destitution is a surplus that arises out of this negativity. For Hegel, madness is both a destructive and a constructive force and yet it becomes wholly destructive under capitalism, resulting in capitalist madness. Capitalism, replacing nature, takes the place of nature, which has vanished in the process of subject formation. With subjective destitution we return to a form of destructive construction. We return, but we return with something added.

In Lacan's concept of psychoanalysis it is not through the affirmative that a subject becomes but, rather, through its relentless process of self-negation. When the analysand reaches the end of psychoanalysis, they reach what Lacan calls "*la passe*" or "the pass", and what he also calls "the leap":

> Naturally, many things are done, one could say that everything in the organisation of psychoanalysis is done to conceal that this leap is a leap. That is not all. On occasion people will even make a leap of it on condition that there is a kind of blanket stretched over what has to be got over which does not let it be seen that it is a leap. It is still the best case. It is, all the same, better than putting a little safe. convenient foot-bridge, which in that case no longer makes of it a leap at all (2002: 109).

What makes a leap, then, is that it not be made into a "foot-bridge", that the actor, in other words, remain both aware and unaware of its existence. This suspension is also a form of undeadness, where a subject exists in the space between in a form of nothingness—having emptied itself out of its self—plus

the surplus that comes about through this act of emptying one's self. In his articulation of the Kantian indefinite judgment, Žižek describes this form of the undead as the "Inhuman":

> The indefinite judgement opens up a third domain which undermines the underlying distinction: the "undead" are neither alive nor dead, they are precisely the monstrous "living dead". And the same goes for "inhuman": "he is not human" is not the same as "he is inhuman"—"he is inhuman" means something completely different: the fact that he is neither human nor inhuman, but marked by a terrifying excess which, although it negates what we understand as "humanity", in (sic) inherent to being-human (2009b: 21–22).

For the subject who exists inside and yet outside capitalism, who exists, for instance, in what Badiou calls *zonages,* spaces where human life has been abandoned, living at the level of pure survival and yet, resists allowing their desire to be bound to the objects of their basic needs for survival, this act of resistance moves the subject beyond animal and beyond bare human. Reduced to the level of mere survival, reduced to that which is less, even, than animal, there exist, nonetheless, subjects able to move past this state of being and thus enter a moment of what can only be called courage. Hegel describes spirit's moving beyond its limits as an act of madness and audacity. This correlates with Brecht and, in particular, his poem "All of Us or None of Us". In Brecht's poem it is only those reduced to this state, one that is both a subtraction and, due to this subtraction, also an addition, who have the capacity to see those who are starved or beaten by the enemy and save them by joining them:

> Slave, who is it who shall free you?
> Those in deepest darkness laying?
> Comrade, those alone shall see you,
> They alone can her you crying.
> Comrade, only slaves can free you.

In Brecht's poem it is only the other – the other of the other – who also has nothing – who has the ability to free those who are enslaved and, in freeing them, frees themselves. Here, we have a death that matters: a death of the subject that is not material, but symbolic. This is akin to spirit's becoming through self-annihilation, spirit's doubling of itself but a doubling that adds something else.

Subjective destitution has a similar structure. Through becoming nothing but what one is – reducing one's self to pure being, or a good form of undeadness – something else is brought about, something novel. This formula is the inverse of Hegel's equation with regard to the enslavement of he who slaves others, as Hegel writes, "*Der Unfrei Mensch hat und macht andere zu knechten, der in sich freie mensch läßt die anderen frei*" (2007b: 136). This is also why one who takes another's freedom, takes away their own freedom. Relatedly, there is no freedom for the one if all are not free and there is no freedom for all, if even one is unfree.

Joan of Arc is the exemplary figure for the unity of subjective destitution and madness. Abandoning her family, home, and community to follow a voice no one but she can hear, Joan of Arc abandons herself – negating all determinations that make her who she is (daughter, sister, peasant, worker) – to become this enigmatic something who is also nothing. She abandons everything for a community that does not (yet) exist. In her act of becoming nothing, Joan of Arc becomes everything. Describing Joan of Arc's act of self-negation, Badiou writes, "A patriot without a nation, a populist without an insurrection, a Catholic without the Church, a woman without man: this is how Joan traverses appearances and subtracts herself from all predicates" (1997: 32). The space she enters is the space between two deaths. In her act, she enters the space where one sees the death of one's life, the limit that, as Lacan tells us, "touches the end of what he is and what he is not" (1997: 304).

It is the act itself that transforms the subject, the subject *passes through it*. As Jacques-Alain Miller writes, "every true act is a suicide of the subject", through which "the subject is reborn as different" (2006: 21). In her act, Joan of Arc removes herself from the symbolic order – she is no longer what she was and yet, she is not yet something new. She exists in this abeyance. This is made concrete during her trial, when in court, she is asked for her surname, by responding that she does not know. Her name, her family, all the predicates that had once adhered to her, fall away. She no longer belongs to her family or community, she belongs to no one and nowhere. This site where subjective destitution and madness converge results in an antagonism that makes visible that which had previously remained invisible.

This death of the self is akin to spirit's self-annihilation in its process of becoming. It is in the moment spirit has engaged in its act of self-negation, when it is no longer what it was and is not yet what it will be, that it is plunged again into its abstract being, back into the abyss of madness. This site where madness and subjective destitution converge is an exit from capitalist oblivion. The negation of what is not, brings to light a world that as of yet does not exist.

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Sintija Kruz

Ludilo i subjektivna nemaština: ka mogućem izlasku iz kapitalizma

Apstakt

Ludilo je, kako nam kaže Hegel, svojstveno svima, stanje kroz koje svako od nas prolazi svaki put kada stekne novu naviku. Poput ludila, subjektivna nemaština je takođe inherentno stanje kroz koje svako od nas prolazi u svom početnom stanju postojanja. Ova dva stanja se spajaju u sticanju nove navike kada je neko na trenutak bez prirode i, istovremeno, potopljen u ludilo, kada više nije ono što je bio i još nije ono što će postati. Iako, kako nam Lakan kaže, čovek ne može da izabere da poludi i ne bira da se rodi u siromaštvu (ili drugim oblicima subjektivne nemaštine), ipak se može odlučiti da se uključi u čin subjektivne nemaštine i ludila kao sredstvima za emancipaciju. Ova dva stanja se spajaju u novu konfiguraciju koja replicira proces nastajanja duha iako se od njega razlikuje.

Ključne reči: Hegel, Marks, subjektivna nemaština, kapitalizam, Lakan.

Timo Ennen

COUNTERING POSTMODERN GENEALOGIES: BRANDOM, HEGEL AND THE LOGIC OF SELF-DETERMINATION

ABSTRACT
In his recent *A Spirit of Trust*, Robert Brandom interprets Hegel as proposing a conception of normativity that overcomes the shortcomings of both modernity and its critics. Brandom's Hegel asks for a "hermeneutics of magnanimity", in opposition to what Paul Ricœur labelled the "hermeneutics of suspicion". According to Brandom, "great unmaskers" of modern normativity like Nietzsche or Foucault make use of the delegitimizing force that characterizes genealogical explanation. Their suspicion is that what is thought to be normative is conditioned by contingencies that undermine that very normativity. In this paper, while raising objections against Brandom's reading, I want to hold on to his idea that Hegelian philosophy counters those subversive postmodern genealogies. Instead of focusing, as Brandom does, on the end of the "Spirit" chapter in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, I draw on Hegel's logic of self-determination. Contrary to the "great unmaskers", for Hegel, explanation of something through reference to some external or contingent factor is parasitic on explanation that explains something through itself.

Introduction

In his recent monumental commentary on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* titled *A Spirit of Trust*, Robert Brandom proposes the idea of a conception of normativity with "an edifying intent" (Brandom 2019: 636) to be found in Hegel. He ascribes the term "postmodern" to this conception not in order to bring Hegel closer to the representatives of the 20th-century postmodern movement. On the contrary, this "postmodern structure of normativity", which he also labels as the "hermeneutics of magnanimity" (ibid.: 30, 635), is precisely meant as an antidote not just to flaws of modern normativity but also to subversive criticisms of modernity by the "masters of suspicion" (Ricœur 2008: 33) or "the

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great unmaskers" (Brandom 2019: 561), as Brandom calls them. According to Brandom, these unmaskers make use of genealogical explanation, that is, a form of explanation that undercuts the normative force of that which is explained. After an overly substantial ethical life in antiquity and overly subjective modernity paired with its genealogical critics, Brandom imagines "recognitive practices of a hypothetical future third age of Spirit" (ibid.: 560).

In the following, I first lay out the analysis of genealogical explanation and the response to it, as Brandom finds them in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Then, referring to various criticisms that have been made of Brandom's reading, I put forward another way to understand Hegelian philosophy as countering genealogy that draws instead from Hegel's logic of self-determination.

In contrast to Brandom, I will speak of those genealogies that seek to subvert modern normativity as postmodern. These genealogies do not exhaust what is meant by postmodern philosophy.[1] Yet given that the genealogical tradition extends at least from Nietzsche to Foucault, it can certainly be characterized as postmodern in spirit. The idea that the production of knowledge is entangled with regimes of power, the suspicion of reason both in its capacity to cognize what is universally true and in its capacity to liberate from dogmatism are undoubtedly crucial postmodern moments in the genealogical tradition. What is more, genealogy traces not continuity but contingency, the countless little accidents and errors that arise in the history of events. In the words of Foucault,

> if the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms. [...] What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity (Foucault 1971: 142–143).

> [W]e want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference (ibid.: 155).

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1 Lyotard defined postmodernism influentially as an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984: xxiv), in particular, metanarratives about emancipation, universality and scientific progress. As the term itself already indicates, postmodernism is a historical product. It is a condition of knowledge which "designates the state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature, and the arts" (ibid.: xxiii). According to Gary Aylesworth, postmodernism "can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning" (Aylesworth 2015).

Brandom's Hegel on Postmodern Genealogies

The problem of both modern subjectivity and its genealogical critics is alienation from the actuality of norms. "[T]he attitude-dependence of norms", arising with modernity, "may be seen to undercut the authority they claim over attitudes" (Brandom 2019: 561). In both modern subjectivity and genealogical explanation, normativity is, though in two distinctive forms, conceived as a product of us. In the first case, normativity stems from our autonomy, from the self-commanding subject. In the second case, it stems from some particular contingent feature of us.

Towards the end of the "Spirit" chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel presents the allegory of the valet to express the partiality of judging consciousness when it finds acting consciousness not living up to its moral aspirations. Brandom reads the valet as a figure who "epitomizes for Hegel the reductive naturalism" or "the alienated displacement of reasons in favor of causes (the normative in favor of the natural)". As described by the allegory, the "alienated ironic detachment" that genealogical explanation results in "may treat normative discourse as ... the expression of particular, private attitudes, interests, and inclinations" (ibid.: 560).

Hegel's short allegory reads as follows:

> No man is a hero to his valet, but not because that man is not a hero, but rather because the latter is—a valet, a person with whom the hero deals not as a hero but as someone who eats, drinks, gets dressed, in general in the [particularity] of the hero's needs and ideas. For that kind of judgmental assessment, there is no action for which such judgmental assessment cannot oppose the aspect of the [particularity] of individuality to the action's universal aspect, and there is no action in which it cannot play the part of the moral valet towards the actor (Hegel 2018: §665).

The valet judges that the hero is not a hero after all. By seeing through the hero's partiality, he (the valet) himself rises up to the universality that the hero had professed to act out. The tables have turned. The valet knows universality on his side, while he sees only particularity actualized outside of him. By virtue of this asymmetry between judging and acting consciousness, the allegory of the valet transitions into the allegory of the hard heart. Hegel states that "judging consciousness [...] is the hard heart which is for itself and which rejects any continuity with the other" (ibid.: §667). What is more,

> it is *hypocrisy* because he pretends that such judgment is not only *another manner* of being evil but is rather itself the *rightful consciousness* of action. In his non-actuality and in the vanity he has in being such a faultfinder, he places himself far above the deeds it excoriates, and he wants to know that his speech, which is utterly devoid of any deeds, is to be taken as a superior *actuality* (ibid.: §666).

The hard heart takes its judgment to be conclusive without the need to act. It is only seeing without being seen. It wants only authority without responsibility.

Acting consciousness will not change judging consciousness by any further action, for the problem is not that the hero "is not a hero but rather [that] the [valet] is—a valet" (ibid.: §665). There is nothing acting consciousness can do, for judging consciousness has stopped being responsive to anything else than particularity. In this attitude, the hard heart precisely interrupts the process through which universality is engendered.

Describing the basic character of subversive genealogies, Brandom states that "the possibility of offering a certain kind of *genealogical* account of the process by which a conceptual content developed or was determined can seem to undercut the *rational* bindingness of the norms that have that content" (Brandom 2019: 561) or, more simply, that "a genealogy of content can undercut normative force" (ibid.: 564). Following Brandom's interpretation, we can understand the valet or judging consciousness as applying a hermeneutics of suspicion which does not see the normativity instituted by acting consciousness but only its partiality. It is like explaining a judge's judgment by reference to "what the judge had for breakfast" (ibid.: 564–565).[2] Moreover,

> such a genealogical explanation might invoke the nature of the judge's training, the prejudices of his teachers, the opinions of his culture circle, his career ambitions, the political emphases, issues, and pressures of the day, and so on. Playing the moral valet to the judge is offering such a genealogical account of a judgment: revealing it as not a response to reasons properly provided by precedent and principle, not a matter of acknowledging as binding the content of an antecedent norm, but as the product of extrajudicial, rationally extraneous motives and considerations (ibid.: 565).

In such an explanation, there is no space for normativity in its emphatic sense, only for ideology. Importantly, Brandom's and, in fact, Hegel's point is not that action cannot be subjected to partiality, for any action is, by definition, something particular as well. Yet judging consciousness does not see that it itself can be subjected to such partiality, and that its conscientiousness is no more secure than that of acting consciousness. Judging consciousness claims partiality to be out there in the other but, in doing so, professes its own universality. Judging consciousness thinks itself to have seen through the false claims of morality and universality and to have found only particularities beneath, and this is how Brandom describes genealogical explanation: "The genealogy tells us what is *really* going on, by presenting the underlying mechanism actually responsible for our taking this rather than that as appropriate, fitting, or correct" (ibid.: 562).

Brandom explicitly tells us who he has in mind when problematizing this form of explanation. The genealogical tradition does not exhaust itself in what Ricœur labelled the "masters of suspicion", the "great unmaskers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud" (ibid.:

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2   This ironic remark is not just a common slogan but has been tested and corroborated in scientific study (see Danziger, Levav and Avnaim-Pesso 2011).

656), but extends to "Foucault at the end of the twentieth" (ibid.: 565). According to Brandom, even

> [a] great deal of the later Wittgenstein's writing can be read as pointing out genealogical antecedents of our reason-giving and reason-assessing practices. ... The norms implicit in our most basic discursive practices accordingly show up as deeply *parochial,* in that their specific content depends on contingent features of our embodiment and natural history, and of antecedently established practices and institutions. That is why he thinks that if the lion could speak, we would not be able to understand him (ibid.: 562).

These various thinkers certainly do not speak of the same underlying mechanisms, and they need not think of mechanical causation or linear development, for instance, at all.[3] What matters is that they all take for granted a certain way of genealogical explanation in which something is explained by its origin or function without this origin or function being normatively meaningful, that is, without this explanation giving evidence for the truth or normativity of what is explained. Genealogy, in "[e]xhibiting the contingent features of things, not addressed by a conceptual content or commitment, that caused it to be as it is, unmasks talk of reasons as irrelevant mystification. *Niederträchtig* [pusillanimous or base] explanations take precedence over *edelmütig* [magnanimous] ones" (ibid.: 565). This character pervades all sorts of genealogical stories we may tell. Hinting humorously at the three masters of suspicion, Brandom writes:

> If one's approval of treating labor as a commodity is due to one's bourgeois upbringing, if one's Christian humility is the result of *ressentiment,* if one's authoritarianism should be understood as stemming from unresolved conflicts left over from the Family Romance, then the justifiability and hence the normative force, the authority, of those commitments is challenged. For being raised in bourgeois circumstances is not evidence for the justice of labor markets, being riven with *ressentiment* does not provide reasons for esteeming humility, and Oedipal rivalry with one's father does not justify the contents of authoritarian attitudes (ibid.: 657).

We may deny that those philosophers mentioned by Brandom can be grouped together under the label of reductive naturalism. Nevertheless, Brandom is right in detecting a crucial genealogical character in their philosophies and in his description of that genealogical character. Postmodern genealogies prioritize particularity over universality. By excavating the contingent structures lurking beneath our normative attitudes and commitments, these genealogies disenchant what first seemed to have universal appeal and reveal it to have detectable roots in a particular setting which itself has no normative force.

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3   As mentioned in the beginning, in good postmodern fashion, Foucault explicitly rejects any such linear development, for instance, in his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History" (1971).

Genealogists seek to reveal how a "specific content depends on contingent features of our embodiment and natural history, [or] of antecedently established practices and institutions" (ibid.: 562). Their stories use "the structure that underlies the delegitimizing force of genealogical explanations generally" (ibid.: 656).[4] In this sense, they speak indeed with the voice of Hegel's valet who puts into question the conscientiousness of the hero by revealing that the latter's aspiration to universality amounts to something rather particular. What is more, unmasking how we have become what we are by way of genealogical explanation does not leave the normative force of our attitudes or commitments untouched. The "ironic distance" (ibid.: 560), quoted at the beginning of this section, which reveals alienation from what has previously been taken as normative or true, is certainly not alien to the postmodern condition.[5]

Brandom concludes that "[a] foreseeable consequence of appreciating these contingencies conditioning our practices is a delegitimizing of the norms whose contingency has been revealed. This undercutting of the rational bindingness of the norms is alienation in Hegel's sense" (ibid.: 656). Then, the question is how to reconcile contingency with normativity, or how to achieve an unalienated form of normativity that takes up modern subjectivity, instead of taking it back.

> Pointing to the radical contingencies that our conceptual norms are subjunctively dependent upon poses a threat to our understanding of those norms as *rationally binding* on us. The challenge is to see why, if the norms are to this extent and in this way our products, they can nonetheless be understood to be binding on us, to be *correctly* used this way and not that (ibid. 2019: 656).

Brandom's Hegel on the "Hermeneutics of Magnanimity"

In Brandom's reading of the *Phenomenology*, "forgiving recollection" (Brandom 2019: 538) is the key to postmodern unalienated normativity. It requires an attitude of magnanimity that contrasts with the valet and the hard heart, the two allegoric forms of judging consciousness that deny any continuity with acting consciousness; that is, they deny the possibility to reinstitute a reconciled community of both consciousnesses. The hard heart does not grant forgiveness and

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4   Foucault, for instance, seeks to "to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault 1982: 208) and expresses his suspicion of reason when he asks: "*What* is this Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers?" (Foucault 1984: 249). The term *épistémè* signifies for him an historical *a priori* that "defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge" (Foucault 1966: 183) and practice in a cultural epoch. Foucault adopts genealogical explanation most explicitly in his 1971 "Nietzsche" essay and his 1975 monograph *Discipline and Punish*. Yet I take it that Brandom's characterization of genealogical explanation also applies to Foucault's earlier archeological writings of the 1960s.
5   Along the same lines, Foucault states that "historical beginnings are lowly: not in the sense of modest or discreet like the steps of a dove, but derisive and ironic, capable of undoing every infatuation" (Foucault 1971: 143).

precisely in this denial thinks itself to exhibit universality, in opposition to the particularity of the confessing acting consciousness. In a Hegelian sense, by cutting itself off from the other and any happening outside, it belies its very commitment to universality. Through its discontinuity with the other, its professed universality turns itself into something particular.

Forgiving recollection then signifies the idea to rationally reconstruct any doing as implicitly governed by a normative force, even though the doer might have been unable to make that normativity explicit. Such recollective forgiving reconciles the intention of the doer with what really happened. Brandom's Hegel's "postmodern neoheroic form of practical normativity replaces (normatively) blind fate with something we do for reasons" (ibid.: 756). While in the ancient conception of normativity the doer was responsible regardless of what was intended, in the modern conception the doer takes up responsibility only for what was intended regardless of any result. The reconciliation of the two then does not consist in denying the responsibility of the doer for what has happened but in spreading it out onto the whole community, in which fellow self-consciousnesses confess to and forgive each other. This third conception combines "the modern insight into the attitude-dependence of normative statuses [and] the traditional insight into the status-dependence of normative attitudes" (ibid.: 263). It, therein, shows how normative force has both subjectivity and objectivity as its moments. That is to say, it encompasses, at the same time, both an understanding of how normativity happens through the autonomous subject that makes something normative by taking it to be normative and an understanding of how normative force is something that bears on actuality, something that is really efficacious in communities.

As such, normative assessment is more than just the recognition of the attitude of the doer. It recognizes the responsibility of the doer for what is actual but only does so insofar as this responsibility is shared by the ones who assess the doer. In "Hegel's recognition model based on symmetrical social recognitive attitudes" (ibid.: 263), deeds are the doing of all, as it were. Of course, there is a distinction between the doer of the deed and the ones who rationally recollect it. Otherwise, there would be no need to confess or forgive at all. But through confession and forgiveness the significance of the deed, its conceptual content, itself changes.

In contrast to the valet and the hard heart, adopting the magnanimous attitude means not to take the deed of the doer as an objective fact, as something whose significance is already decided in and of itself, as something which is entirely evil or good and the responsibility for which lies completely outside of the judger. Certainly, adopting this attitude does not mean that one can and will forgive just anything. It means, however, that one takes oneself to be subject to the same logic of confession and forgiveness as the person that one judges. In other words, one may find oneself unable to tell a recollective story in a certain case. But this does not let one off the hook to take on responsibility for one's inability to find the responsivity to norms in that particular case. It is not that anything is forgiven but that we are committed to forgive:

As a magnanimous, *edelmütig,* forgiving assessor of another's doing, one *confesses* that it is (also) one's *own* fault, that one is not good enough at forgiving. And one must *trust* that this recollective-recognitive failure, too— like the failure of the original, inadequately forgiven doer— will be more successfully forgiven by future assessors (who know more and are better at it). ... The content of the shared recognitive attitudes with which all parties identify is 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass before us' (ibid. 2019: 748-749).

In sum, by adopting the attitude of magnanimity, we treat our predecessors or fellow self-consciousnesses as guided by normative force and not just as determined by some contingent feature such as their breakfasts. In doing this, we institute symmetrical recognitive relationships with them and establish a continuity between us and them, instead of the discontinuity claimed by the valet and the hard heart. At the same time, we hope future judging consciousnesses will do the same to us, that is, judge our judgments or acts to be likewise guided by normative force and not just to be some particular natural or psychological event.

Brandom himself recognizes his Hegel as providing "at once a theory and a fighting faith". Put differently, "[i]t is, remarkably, a *semantics* that is *morally* edifying". This is to say, for Brandom, understanding the conditions under which forgiving recollection may be instituted "turns out to commit us to adopting to one another practical *recognitive* attitudes of a particular kind: forgiveness, confession, and trust". Understanding this postmodern conception of normativity does not just make intelligible what is always already going on but "obliges us to be certain kinds of selves, and to institute certain kinds of communities" (ibid. 2019: 635). This "semantics with an edifying intent" (ibid.: 636)

> obliges us in practice to forgive and trust one another: to be *that* kind of self and institute *that* kind of community. Practicing the recollective recognitive hermeneutics of magnanimity is not just one option among others. A proper understanding of ourselves as discursive creatures obliges us to institute a community in which reciprocal recognition takes the form of forgiving recollection: a community bound by and built on trust (ibid.: 635).

Brandom's Hegel points to the future, to something that is not yet actualized in modernity and only anticipated at the end of the *Phenomenology*. What is more, each practitioner of forgiving recollection points to the future, in so far as she must assume practitioners of such recollection following upon her will treat her as magnanimously as she treated her predecessors. These claims in particular have provoked criticisms of Brandom's reading.

While Brandom's critics do not deny that Hegelian philosophy counters certain reductive forms of explanation, they see one major problem in the very anticipation of a third unalienated age of trust and its edifying implications (see, for instance, Houlgate 2020 and Žižek 2015, 2020). For Slavoj Žižek, this proposition of a future we may actively work towards is anti-Hegelian at its

core, since Hegel "explicitly prohibits any project of how our future should look" (Žižek 2020). Žižek's critique focuses on Brandom's notion of forgiving recollection.

> Brandom gets caught into a spurious infinite of recognition: the gap between intention and consequences of our actions is constitutive, we cannot ever reach full reconciliation, we are condemned to the infinite progress towards overcoming disparity, every agent has to trust forgiveness from the future figures of big Other (Žižek 2015: 807).

In Brandom's picture, the inability to forgive is a failure also on our part and not just on the part of the evildoer; it is something one would have to confess and something that would be in need of forgiveness by other (future) self-consciousnesses. We recollect magnanimously the past, as we trust we will be recollected magnanimously in the future. In this sense, we trust in the spirit of trust pervading history. But this amounts to an ethical project and to what Žižek calls "holistic teleology" in which we have to trust in the unending telling of better recollective stories which discover a "'deeper meaning' that obfuscates the brutal reality of catastrophes" (Žižek 2020). Žižek also points out that "[s]uch a simple self-historicization/self-relativization is thoroughly non-Hegelian" (Žižek 2015: 807). He finds "this jump to the future, this faith in progress, totally unwarranted, and at odds with Hegel's basic metaphysical stance" (Žižek 2020). This mischaracterization of "Hegel's basic metaphysical stance" may fit with Brandom's neglect of the *Science of Logic*.[6] As both Stephen Houlgate and Clara Ramas San Miguel point out, the *Phenomenology* is a "sceptical 'ladder'" (Houlgate 2020) and, therein, of a "preliminary character", for "it cannot be assumed that [it] presents Hegel's definitive ideas on being, truth, consciousness or action" (Ramas San Miguel 2023: 228).[7]

Brandom's interpretation of Hegel focuses on the individuation of conceptual content through a process of the experience of error and the recollective reparation of error. This process is necessarily unending; hence, the open-endedness and instability of any empirical concept. This process does not just describe the way the sciences progress but applies to the social and historical institution of discursive norms. What is more, Brandom also wants the categories or meta-concepts in which philosophy traffics to be of that open and instable character.

> As a matter of deep pragmatist semantic principle, the *only* way to understand the content of a determinate concept, [Hegel] thinks, is by rationally reconstructing

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6   In Brandom's reading, the *Science of Logic* does not really add anything to the story. The *Science of Logic* is merely a purified and, in its finality, overly confident repetition of "those same contents", that is, "those metaconcepts" (Brandom 2019: 7) already laid out in the *Phenomenology*.

7   Of course, despite the objections raised against Brandom's interpretation, his philosophy of magnanimity may still be investigated on its own account and independently of the question of whether Brandom's Hegel is indeed Hegel.

an expressively progressive history of the process of determining it. This is Hegel's model of conceptual content, and he extends it to the content of his favored speculative metaconcepts (Brandom 2019: 7).

Thus, these categories or meta-concepts philosophers use to make intelligible how determinate empirical concepts work exhibit the same logical structure as empirical concepts. Brandom finds this in the progression of forms of consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and it is this that conflicts with the *Science of Logic*, in which a final set of categories or meta-concepts is developed. Brandom wants those categories or meta-concepts to be generated bottom-up, to be finite and unstable, that is, in need of forgiving recollection, just like our empirical concepts. His idea that the development of our logical concepts is subject to the same forgiving recollection throughout history as our empirical concepts contradicts both the presuppositionlessness and finality of the *Science of Logic*.

Finally, in the last section, I explore how Hegel can be read as countering postmodern genealogies, drawing from his logic of self-determination.[8]

Hegel and the Logic of Self-Determination

Ricœur characterizes the masters of suspicion as follows:

Descartes triumphed over the doubt as to things by the evidence of consciousness; they triumph over the doubt as to consciousness by an exegesis of meaning. Beginning with them, understanding is hermeneutics: henceforward, to seek meaning is no longer to spell out the consciousness of meaning, but to *decipher its expressions*. What must be faced, therefore, is not only a threefold suspicion, but a threefold guile. If consciousness is not what it thinks it is, a new relation must be instituted between the patent and the latent; this new relation would correspond to the one that consciousness had instituted between appearances and the reality of things. For Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the fundamental category of consciousness is the relation of hidden-shown or, if you prefer, simulated-manifested (Ricœur 2008: 33–34).

Assuming that there is (at least some) truth to this characterization, it shows that the masters of suspicion go behind Hegel's insight into the limits of the

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8   Due to his own emphasis on contingency, Žižek would certainly not be fond of the top-down reading, as developed in the following. Along these lines, he writes that "contingency does not only enter at the level of the circumstances of the actualization of an end: what if the contingent aspects of an action are the very inner intentions of its agents? It is in this sense that Hegel speaks about the 'spiritual animal kingdom', his term for the complex interaction of individuals in a market society: each individual participating in it is moved by egotist concerns (personal wealth, pleasures, power...)" (Žižek 2015: 799). Notably, his example remains on the level of objective spirit which, for Hegel, is not the highest concept, that is, not the highest form of self-determination, we can think. Nevertheless, his critical remarks concerning Brandom's Hegel quoted above are still helpful to motivate my own reading.

Logic of Essence. Hegel's Logic of Essence deals precisely with something inner and something outer, with something expressing and something expressed. The Logic of Essence thinks mediation as concepts being reflected through one another. Yet it cannot think self-development. Being stuck in reflection, it cannot think the immanent movement of the concept. As such, the masters of suspicion ignore Hegel's Logic of the Concept.

The concept "is none other than the 'I' or pure self-consciousness" (Hegel 2010b: 514).[9] The masters of suspicion pretend to unmask the falsity of consciousness, to unmask ideology or to unmask certain determinate concepts we operate with. Yet they do not grasp self-consciousness. They fail to grasp the pure concept and reiterate concepts of the Logic of Essence which are only preliminary. Their suspicion is stuck in the reflection of some outer appearance in consciousness (truth, goodness, reason, autonomy etc.) and something hidden beneath that reveals the contingency or ideological character of that consciousness by referring to its origin or function. Genealogical explanation is restricted to the Logic of Essence, to contrasting distinctions between what is determining and what is determined, between condition and conditioned, ground and grounded, essence and appearance. As such, it is unable to conceive of self-determination and individuality.

Richard Dien Winfield presents the breakdown of the Logic of Essence as follows:

> What the entire development of the Logic of Essence shows is that none of these relations can sustain themselves as independent, immediate factors that could serve as ultimate principles. Instead, the relation of positor and posited continually undermines itself insofar as the positor can only play its determining role by being in relation to what is posited. What is posited, as posited, effectively posits the determining character of its positor, such that the positor is posited and the posited operates as a positor [...] With this development, the logic of foundationalism eliminates itself, giving way to the logic of self-determination (Winfield 2022: 67–68).

It is noteworthy that this breaking down of relations of conditioning and the transition to self-determination is present, first, at the transition *to* the Logic of the Concept by way of the self-dissolution of reciprocity at the end of Hegel's Logic of Essence and, second, *within* the logic of the Concept at the end of its "Objectivity" chapter that transitions to the self-determination of the idea articulated in inherently purposeful life, truth and goodness. This double appearance can be understood as follows: The concept already articulates self-determination with its three moments of universality, particularity and individuality. Yet it is only later, having gone through the "Objectivity" chapter, that we see how this self-determination is really something actual, that is,

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9   The passage goes on: "True, I *have* concepts, that is, determinate concepts; but the 'I' is the pure concept itself, the concept that has come into *determinate existence*" (Hegel 2010b: 514).

something that does not have objectivity as its alien other and, hence, is not something that is trapped in subjectivity or a mind, as it were.

> Hegel's logic of the concept demonstrates how reason can escape Kant's appeal to the given, overcome heteronomy, and determine itself. The universal's self-determining self-differentiation is what allows concepts to lay hold of objectivity, which unlike conditioned appearance is determined in and through itself. Precisely because objectivity is what is in its own right, it can be the proper object of truth and transparent to a reason whose autonomous development can think through the self-development of an unconditioned subject matter (Winfield 2022: 69).

At first glance, it may seem counterintuitive that it is in the subjective logic, the Logic of the Concept, where the notion of objectivity comes on stage. Yet this is because the concept, that is, self-consciousness or thought, is precisely not the other of objectivity but what opens up the idea of a totality of knowledge which objectivity is in the first place.[10] While the animal or, to a lesser extent, the plant refers to and interacts with its environment, its ecological niche, self-consciousness or thought refers to objectivity as such. The idea of thought is the idea of thinking what is. It is not the idea of thinking something particular, something conditioned, but thinking what is in its entirety. Self-consciousness is beyond any particular determination. As Hegel writes in the introduction to his *Philosophy of Right*, "[t]he human being alone is able to abandon all things, even his own life: he can commit suicide" (Hegel 1991a: §5 Zu). While the animal has a sensitivity to its ecological niche, self-consciousness is openness to what is thinkable or to reality as such. It is not that we are this and that, and, then, in a second step, on certain occasions, in genealogical explanation, for instance, we may also obtain self-consciousness of this or that feature. Rather, we only are what we are by being self-conscious. In virtue of being self-conscious, we are not just responsive to this or that biosphere but to objective validity or unconditioned objectivity as such. Along these lines, Hegel states at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Spirit* that "the aim of all genuine science is just this, that [spirit] shall recognize itself in everything in heaven and on earth. There is simply no out-and-out Other for [spirit]" (Hegel 2007: §377 Zu).

Both postmodern genealogies and Brandom's Hegel fall prey to a notion of external determination which cannot close over itself. Therein, self-consciousness remains alien to itself and must refer to something outside of itself: in the case of genealogy, some contingent given particular condition; for Brandom, some future forgiving recollection. Brandom's semantic inferentialism focuses on the individuation of determinate concepts, the questions of how our concepts obtain their content and how this content is shaped in normatively significant reciprocal relationships. He thereby leaves out the pure concept that

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10   Sebastian Rödl develops this idea in detail in *Self-Consciousness and Objectivity: An Introduction to Absolute Idealism* (2018).

we ourselves are and that through us "has come into *determinate existence*" (Hegel 2010b: 514).

This point relates to wider criticism that has been levelled against contemporary Anglo-American adaptations of Hegel's thought. In a nutshell, Brandom, just like John McDowell, "overplay[s] the role and importance of the empirical in Hegel's thought" (Moss 2020: 461). Brandom claims that "[t]he point of developing an adequate understanding of ... categorial concepts is so that they can then be used to make explicit how ordinary empirical concepts work" (Brandom 1999: 165). What is more, he argues that the "content of these concepts presupposed by experience is derived from their role in experience" (ibid.: 168).[11] Addressing these quotations, Gregory Moss comments that "[c]ertainly this cannot apply to logical concepts, which do not derive their content from experience, for they are without presupposition" (Moss 2020: 479). Likewise, Houlgate argues, against Brandom, that Hegel "is not [...] a pragmatist about logical concepts" (Houlgate 2020; see also Houlgate 2009). Logical concepts are not determined by our use of something below them. Instead, they determine the intelligibility of any possible empirical concept there is. This is the way in which they work top-down. Brandom acknowledges that we need not have mastered the use of specific "ground-level determinate concepts" (Brandom 2019: 6) to be able to make our way through the logical concepts in the *Science of Logic*: "Their contents are available independently of any particular use of ground-level concepts" (ibid.: 5). Yet he still wants to hold on to the idea that everything logical concepts do is making explicit what is happening in the use of ground-level empirical concepts. Notably, this derivation of logical concepts from "their role in experience" is similar in structure to genealogical explanation in which something is explained by its origin or function. Such derivation renders the genuine truth of the logical concept in question invisible, just as the normative force of an attitude or commitment is rendered invisible in explaining it genealogically.

The pure concept, self-consciousness, is not gained through forgiving recollection. It is not generated bottom-up. It cannot be derived through particularities. Instead, it generates top-down. It is the source of the universality of judgment, regardless of whether such judgment is a genealogical explanation or an act of confession or forgiveness. That the concept signifies thought of the totality of unconditioned objectivity is not a matter of forgiving recollection but of the inherent universality of self-consciousness. This totality of what is thinkable expressed by the concept or self-consciousness cannot be placed as conditioning or as conditioned next to something else, for it cannot be placed alongside other things which it is not.

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11 Likewise, in *A Spirit of Trust*, Brandom writes that "Hegel's 'speculative,' logical, or philosophical concepts [l]ike Kant's categories, ... are metaconcepts: concepts whose job it is to express key features of the use and content of the ground-level empirical and practical concepts Hegel calls 'determinate' concepts" (Brandom 2019: 5).

Addressing Brandom's bottom-up model of explanation and defending Hegel's top-down model, Sebastian Rödl writes:

> Explanation of something by something other Hegel calls *finite* explanation. An *infinite* explanation, by contrast, explains the elements and the conditions in virtue of satisfying which they constitute X by the whole or unity they thus constitute. Here we need not turn to something other in order to comprehend why given elements satisfy the conditions and satisfy them all. The nature of X, which is internal to the elements that constitute it, accounts for that. In this way, the nature of X accounts for its existence. What is capable of this form of comprehension Hegel calls an idea. The first kind of idea, he thinks, is a life-form, then there is knowledge, theoretical and practical (Rödl 2008: 129).

Finite explanations, that is, explanations that explain "something by something other" are exhibited in mechanism, chemism and any genealogy. In contrast, explanations that explain a thing through the unity that is constituted through that thing we may call infinite. This infinity belongs to self-determination and is articulated by what Hegel calls idea, that is, life, truth and the good.

The finite does not have existence on its own. Finite explanation is parasitic on infinite explanation. It does not overcome the infinite but is merely abstracting from it. Finite objects or finite explanations of something through something other abolish themselves. They are defined by having their termination or limit in something else: "That is what everything finite is: its own sublation", or "immanent transcending" (Hegel 1991b: §81). The idea of something being conditioned by something else, a thought underlying all genealogy, is not exhaustive of reality. Such explanation is always already part of a totality in which there is life, truth and the good. Along these lines, Hegel states that "the world is thus itself the idea" (Hegel 2010a: §234 Zu). There is no world conceivable which would consist merely of external determination comprehended in finite explanation but not self-determination comprehended in infinite explanation.

The insight that infinite explanation is the truth of finite explanation or that teleology is "the truth of *mechanism*" (Hegel 2010b: 652), for instance, cannot be acquired by empirical investigation or a certain presupposed philosophical worldview. Instead, it has to be acquired by investigating these logical concepts themselves. For Hegel, "the reality that the concept gives itself cannot be picked up as it were from the outside but must be derived from the concept itself". We can do this, for the concept is not empty, and "to regard the given material of intuition and the manifold of representation as the real, in contrast to what is thought and the concept, is precisely the view that must be given up as condition of philosophizing" (ibid.: 518).

According to Hegel, unlike "[e]arlier metaphysics" we cannot presuppose "a certain picture of the world" where either efficient causality or final causality prevails. Instead, we need to investigate "which possesses truth *in and for itself* [...] independently", that is, logically, so that even though "it may turn out that the objective world exhibits mechanical and final causes [...] its actual

existence is not the norm of *what is true*, but *what is true* is rather the criterion for deciding which of these concrete existences is its true one". Moreover, "if mechanism and purposiveness stand opposed to each other, then by that very fact they cannot be taken as *indifferent* concepts, as if each were by itself a correct concept and had as much validity as the other, the only question being *where* the one or the other may apply" (ibid.: 651). This is to say, we cannot just throw up our hands and conclude that, on certain occasions, mechanical law prevails over teleology and, on other occasions, teleology prevails over mechanical law; or that, on certain occasions, finite genealogical explanation prevails over infinite explanation and, on other occasions, infinite explanation prevails over finite genealogical explanation; and that none is the truth of the other.

Mechanism exhibits a universality that is indifferent to its particular instantiations. This form of causality remains entirely external to the object it works upon. That an object in a mechanism is a cause is a coincidence with respect to the nature of that object. Rain or a stone is only a "cause because this determination has been posited in it by another" (ibid.: 498), yet "the object is indifferent to this determination attributed to it; that it is a cause is therefore something accidental to it" (ibid.: 635). While in chemism the particular chemical substances have a say, as it were, in the result of their reaction, the initial cause of that reaction is still due to some external force. Mechanical or chemical causality, just like any other form of conditioning that is not self-determining, cannot account for individuation, for why that law or conditioning takes place here and now, since it remains abstract and thus external to the particular cases in which it is efficacious. It fails in bringing together the universality of that form of conditioning and the particularity of its instances. That is to say, such a form of explanation fails in making its concreteness intelligible. What affects objects or is affected by them are, for example, "motion, heat, magnetism, electricity, and the like, all of which, even when one wants to imagine them as stuffs or materials, must be termed as *imponderable* agents, for they lack that aspect of materiality that grounds *its singularization*" (ibid.: 636). These agents are not themselves objects; instead, they presuppose objects that carry or communicate them.

In mechanism, the intelligibility of the universal conditioning is indifferent to the nature of the particular objects through which that conditioning is efficacious. In other words, here, intelligibility only concerns form. The particular contents do not contribute anything to that intelligibility. Thus, they remain outside of that which is intelligible. This is the contradiction of relations of external determination and contingency. They depend on particular contents from outside that do not contribute to their intelligibility.

Life then articulates, for the first time, self-determination in which what is determining and what is determined describe one and the same totality. Yet the natural living being is still subject to the universality of the genus or life-form on which the individual living being has no impact. The individual living being thus has to blindly procreate and re-instantiate its genus to achieve that universality which is beyond its individual actualizations. Hegel states that

"the fate of a living thing is in general the *genus*, for the genus manifests itself through the fleetingness of the living individuals that do not possess it as genus in their *actual singularity*". This is why in living beings, in "their *own immediate nature*", there still remains "externality and contingency" (ibid.: 639). Only in self-conscious beings or spiritual life, full self-determination is achieved, for the universality of spirit is nothing above and beyond the universality of each self-conscious individual. While the individual living being still has the universality of the genus as outside of it, as that which imposes normativity, that is, its lifeform on it, the normativity of spiritual life has overcome such externality and is at stake in any of its actualizations, that is, in any self-conscious being.

Genealogical explanation articulates ways of conditioning that are echoed in Hegel's notions of mechanism and chemism as, ultimately, failing conceptions of an objective totality. As mentioned earlier, it is not that thinkers conceived by Brandom as genealogists (the masters of suspicion, the late Wittgenstein and Foucault) share a mechanistically determined worldview. Genealogical explanation might make use of all sorts of ways to make conditioning intelligible, including non-linear and functional ones. They do however all refer to some particular factor or factors that condition what is conditioned. Thereby, at least to some extent, they split reality into what determines and what is determined. These forms of explanation are lacking in that they cannot close over themselves. They are, ultimately, expressing an endless chain of external determination—bad infinity—and cannot account for the self-determination of the individual in which what is determined and what is determining are the same. The living individual being does not overcome mechanism or chemism in the sense of abolishing their efficacy. Yet it uses them to realize ends that are not reducible anymore to those forms of conditioning. Along these lines, Hegel writes, "mechanical or chemical technique, because of its character of being externally determined, naturally offers itself to the connection of purpose" (ibid.: 657).

It is not just that genealogists cannot account for how they could have arrived at their theories, for how their insight could have stepped out of the play of the infinite chain of conditioning. Though this is the case as well. Rather, for Hegel, mechanism, chemism or any sort of external determination are not a thought of an intelligible totality, that is, of what truly is at all. In these conceptions, universality and particularity remain separated. In them, we cannot think "self-particularization" (Hegel 2007: §383). Postmodern genealogies seek to explain something that has a universal appeal by something particular and thereby render that universality as itself something particular. Hegel's concept and self-consciousness, however, are self-particularizing; they engender particularities that never leave the medium of the universal.[12]

Hegel does not just propose self-determination so that we may feel better about ourselves, or so that we may push back the genealogical unmasking of

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12 See also Hegel's exposition of the moments of the concept in the 'I' or self-consciousness in the introduction to his *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel 1991a: §§5–7).

false claims to universal validity. In contrast to Brandom's interpretation, this is not a matter of attitude. The universality of self-consciousness or thought does not depend on our attitude, which may be suspicion or magnanimity. Instead, self-determination is the truth of those forms of conditioning. The external determination and contingency exhibited in mechanism is not what subverts and is not the out and out other of self-determination. Rather, the efficacy of mechanism is parasitic on there being self-determination. Likewise, genealogical explanation is not what subverts and is not the out and out other of the normativity articulated by self-determining beings. Rather, the efficacy of genealogical explanation is parasitic on there being the normativity articulated by self-determining beings. Just like the living being may use mechanical or chemical force in order to pursue its purpose without this purpose being reducible to those forces, self-conscious beings who live through knowledge of the true and the good may apply genealogies, that is, natural, psychological, sociocultural or any other finite explanations in order to explain a certain happening without truth and goodness being reducible to those forms of explanation. We do not have to reject genealogical explanation and adopt an attitude of magnanimity instead. Rather, genealogical explanation cannot deconstruct self-conscious life, for the latter is the truth of that form of explanation, and the genealogical notion of conditioning on its own is not a thought of an objective totality, not a thought of what truly is at all.

Ultimately, a Hegelian exposition of self-conscious life, that is, of us, will have to show how the logical progression towards increasing self-determination plays out not only in the logic but in the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit. At this point, the foregoing exposition may only foreshadow the way in which any evolutionary, that is, natural, explanation, any psychological, that is, 'subjective', explanation and any sociocultural or sociopolitical, that is, 'objective', explanation will, ultimately, not exhaust self-conscious life. Albeit to different degrees, these explanations remain on the level of external determination. There may be all sorts of appropriate applications of them, in the empirical sciences, for instance. Yet, these explanations are parasitic on the self-determination of self-conscious life. Its self-comprehension in art, religion and philosophy is not exhaustible by any evolutionary, psychological or sociocultural description. Certainly, there is the history of art, the history of religion and the history of philosophy. But there is no genealogy of the experience of beauty, of religious faith or philosophical truth, just like there is no genealogy of the acts of confession and forgiveness or love. In other words, there is neither a natural nor an institutional history that could explain the absolute genealogically.[13]

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13   In this regard, see recent scholarship by Chen Yang and Christopher Yeomans (2023). They elucidate the logical notion of teleology through its application in Hegel's account of world history. What is more, they show how a notion of objective spirit like the state, which is often rendered as the culmination of Hegel's philosophy, remains something incomplete and does not exhaust absolute self-comprehension in art, religion and

Conclusion

At first glance, starting philosophy with certain natural, psychological, cultural or any other contingent particular factors might seem modest, but it actually implies various presuppositions: for instance, that what there is in thought (subjectivity) and what is really going on (objectivity) are ultimately to be conceived as one thing conditioning the other. Certainly, we are born without being asked. We find ourselves in a body that we did not pick. We acquire a native language that we did not choose. These are enabling conditions for there to be so much as thought and philosophizing at all. Yet, to take these as proof that conditioning, i.e., external determination, is the truth of self-determination and not the other way round is unsound. Hegel's logic exhibits how we come to understand which one is the truth of the other by examining these notions of conditioning themselves; not by empirical evidence or intuition. We can do this because they are not empty concepts but exhibit an immanent development. They fail or succeed in articulating the totality of what is. Hegel has no problem in recognizing that "stages of feeling, intuition, sense consciousness, and so forth, are prior to [and] the conditions of the genesis of [thought] but they are conditions only in the sense that the concept results *from their dialectic* and *their nothingness* and not because it is conditioned by their *reality*". He goes on:

> [T]he prevailing fundamental misunderstanding is that the *natural* principle, or the *starting point* in the *natural* development or the *history* of an individual in the process of self-formation, is regarded as the *truth* and *conceptually the first*. Intuition or being are no doubt first in the order of nature, or are the condition for the concept, but they are not ... the unconditioned in and for itself; on the contrary, in the concept their reality is sublated and, consequently, so is also the reflective shine that they had of being the conditioning reality. If it is not the *truth* which is at issue but only *narration*, as it is the case in pictorial and phenomenal thinking, then we might as well stay with the story that we begin with feelings and intuitions, ... [b]ut philosophy ought not to be a narrative of what happens, but a cognition of what is *true* in what happens, in order further to comprehend on the basis of this truth what in the narrative appears as a mere happening (Hegel 2010b: 519).

Postmodern genealogies are stuck in finite explanation and in mediation as reflection (of the hidden in the manifest, the "conditioning reality" in the conditioned and so forth) and, hence, in the Logic of Essence. They narrate or explain but do not cognize "what is *true* in what happens". They cannot undermine self-determination, for they, by definition, only explain something finite.

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philosophy. To this effect, they quote Hegel saying: "All deeper feelings such as love as well as religious intuition and its forms are wholly present and satisfying in themselves; but the external existence of the state with its rational laws and customs, is an incomplete present, the understanding of which calls for incorporating the awareness of its past" (Hegel 2011: 116).

Just like determinate empirical concepts are unable to explain and will never amount to the pure concept, genealogical explanation is unable to explain and will never amount to self-consciousness. Hegel denies that philosophy consists in the narration of a succession of phenomena (phenomenology) or the explanation of one phenomenon through something else (Logic of Essence and natural science). What is truly there is the self-determination of the concept, and only in self-determining beings do we achieve a comprehension of why something is actually held together, not in the sense of not being easily breakable but in the sense of comprehending something through the unity that is constituted through that thing, that is, comprehending the existence of something through itself.

Can there be what Hans Joas calls an "affirmative genealogy" (2009), in contrast to subversive ones? Would Hegel's historical writings be a case in point? These questions could not be adequately addressed within the scope of this paper. Such an affirmative genealogy would disclose or undergird our trust in normative commitments rather than subvert them. This would certainly be in line with what Brandom's Hegel is proposing. However, as long as such a genealogy traffics in finite explanations, it falls prey to the same critique as subversive postmodern genealogies. If it exhibits infinite explanations, on the other hand, we may have no reason to call it a genealogy in the first place.

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Timo Hendrik Enen

Suprotstavljanje postmodernim genealogijama: Brandom, Hegel i logika samoodređenja

Apstrakt

U svom nedavnom „Duhu poverenja", Robert Brandom tumači Hegela kao predlagača koncepcije normativnosti koja prevazilazi nedostatke kako modernosti, tako i njenih kritičara. Brandomov Hegel traži „hermeneutiku velikodušnosti", u suprotnosti sa onim što je Paul Riker nazvao „hermeneutikom sumnje". Prema Brandomu, „veliki razotkrivači" moderne normativnosti poput Ničea ili Fukoa koriste delegitimišuću silu koja karakteriše genealoško objašnjenje. Njihova sumnja jeste da je ono što se smatra normativnim uslovljeno nepredviđenim okolnostima koje potkopavaju upravo tu normativnost. U ovom radu, dok iznosim zamerke protiv Brandomovog čitanja, želim da se zadržim na njegovoj ideji da se hegelijanska filozofija suprotstavlja tim subverzivnim postmodernim genealogijama. Umesto da se fokusiram, kao što Brandom čini, na kraj poglavlja „Duh" u Hegelovoj fenomenologiji, oslanjam se na Hegelovu logiku samoodređenja. Za razliku od „velikih demaskira", za Hegela, objašnjenje nečega kroz upućivanje na neki spoljašnji ili kontingentni faktor parazitira na objašnjenju koje objašnjava nešto kroz samo sebe. Ovo poslednje je artikulisano samosvesnim životom u kome se konceptualni momenti univerzalnosti, posebnosti i individualnosti ne rastavljaju.

Ključne reči: Hegel, Brandom, genealogija, postmodernizam, samoodređenje.

Julián Ferreyra

DELEUZE AND THE HEGELIAN STATE[1]

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses Gilles Deleuze's political philosophy in relation to the Hegelian concept of the State. To do this, we identify three interpretations of the term "State" in Deleuze's work: 1) as the reference point defining the three forms of *socius* presented in *Anti-Oedipus* (primitive territorial, barbarian despotic, and civilized capitalist); 2) as a defining trait of the despotic *socius* form; and 3) as the internalization of this form (*Urstaat*). Deleuze emerges as a harsh critic of the State in each of these interpretations. However, the subsequent part of the paper reveals that this critique does not advocate for societal fragmentation. By comparing Deleuze's political philosophy with Hegel's, we demonstrate that the forms of *socius* in Deleuze's system occupy the conceptual place of the State in Hegel's framework. Through an exploration of the role of differential calculus in the ontology of both philosophers, we establish the groundwork for a philosophical examination of the dominant social relation in the modern world (which is capitalism and not the State) and the prerequisites for a novel political *socius*.

KEYWORDS

Deleuze, Hegel, State, civil society, aggregate, differential calculus, capitalism, individuals

Introduction

Gilles Deleuze thinks *against* the State. This is apparent in his works, spanning from *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) to *Negotiations* (1990), including his key publications such as *Difference and Repetition* (1969), *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the two later written with Félix Guattari. He believes the State – and State thought – should be surpassed. Deleuze consistently holds this stance. Consequently, the existing vast literature on Deleuze tends to advocate for a nihilistic or postmodern approach that limits political action to

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1 Certain sections of the paper are derived, with significant alterations, from an article originally published in Spanish as "Deleuze y el Estado", in an issue of the Argentine journal *Deus Mortalis* which is now out of press.

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micropolitics and an ambiguous "molecular revolution".[2] Such a philosophical and political perspective, however, exposes individuals to unpredictable encounters, leading them to be "poor devils defending their skins" (Strauss 1965: 233). This paper's contribution to Deleuzianism is to show how the ontological principles of the French philosopher allows us to construct a macro-political perspective on the State that can counter the influences of capitalism. It also adds to state theory by presenting the State as a Deleuzian, immanent power rather than a sovereign authority with a transcendent foundation.

In order to conceptually achieve this, Deleuze will be compared with his supposed adversary, Hegel.[3] The analysis will transition from ontology to political philosophy, demonstrating – through the two authors' treatment of differential calculus – how Deleuze's concept of "form of *socius*" occupies the conceptual place of Hegel's notion of the State. According to the ontological disparities between the two, the conclusion will show how Deleuze envisions what Hegel cannot: the potential for a new *socius* where human life can thrive. In order to achieve this, the first step is to study the role of the State in Deleuze's work.

1. Deleuze and the State

"Philosophy does not serve the State or the Church, who have other concerns. It serves no established power", states Deleuze in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1983: 106). "Recognition is a sign of the celebration of monstrous nuptials, in which thought 'rediscovers' the State, rediscovers 'the Church' and rediscovers all the current values that it subtly presented in the pure form of an eternally blessed unspecified eternal object", Deleuze maintains in *Difference and Repetition* (1994: 136). "There exists a Hegelianism of the right that lives on in official political philosophy and weds the destiny of thought to the State", he asserts along with Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 556).

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2   This is the mainstream position in Deleuzian studies: "The possibility of understanding revolution from the point of view of small politics, that is, micropolitics […] The possibility of a revolution, normatively based on a vague notion of freedom, is brought about by temporal, albeit non-sequential, moments" (Bolaños 2020, ix). See for example: Negri 1977, Alliez y Lazzarato 2016, Colson 2018, Patton 2000, Mengue 2003, Sibertin-Blanc 2013, Reyes 2020, Pal Pelbart 2019, Rolnik 2019, Sztulwark 2019, Kœnig 2013. For a criticism of such positions, see Ferreyra 2022.

3   The debate between Deleuze and Hegel has been one of the longest-standing discussions in Deleuzian philosophy. It began with Jean Wahl's review of Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy* in 1963 and continued through various scholars (Houlgate 1986, Hardt 1993, Malabou 1996, Simont 1997, Brusseau 1998, Butler 1999, Smith 2001, Faucher 2010) until reaching a climax ten years ago with three dedicated books: Somers-Hall (2012), Houle-Vernon (2013), and Lundy-Voss (2015). Initially marked by the authors' opposition, further academic research revealed significant points of commonality, leading to a recognition of the value in considering their ideas together. In previous publications, I have tried to contribute to uncovering the underlying affinities beneath their seemingly irreconcilable differences (Ferreyra 2021).

As we can see, criticism of the State is prevalent throughout Deleuze's work. However, what does he specifically mean by the term "State"? Examining the various references to this concept in his work reveals three distinct interpretations:

1) In *Anti-Oedipus*' third chapter, Deleuze and Guattari (1977: 139–271) identify three types of forms of *socius* or social organization: the primitive *socius* (body of the earth), the barbarian *socius* (body of the despot), and the civilized *socius* (body of capital). Each form of *socius* is characterized by the State's structural role. The primitive *socius* opposes it,[4] while it dominates in the despotic *socius* and is controlled by the capitalist *socius* based on objectives that are foreign to it. This concept, termed the "apparatus of capture" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, alongside the "war machines", shapes all political structures: "Everything is not of the State precisely because there have been States always and everywhere" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 429). This initial portrayal of the State in Deleuze's work defines it in a broad sense, as an institution that is not merely "one formation among others, nor is it the transition from one formation to another" (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 219), but a reference point to delineate diverse social structures.

2) In a more restricted sense, the term "State" is equivalent to the despotic *socius,* that is, a formation where the State plays a predominant role, influencing both social relations and their circulation. Deleuze often critiques the State as a centralized and hierarchical system composed of similar parts with a transcendent foundation: the organic unity of the despotic *socius*. The imperial form of social organization aligns with what Deleuze terms "organic representation", associated with an Aristotelian mindset. This representation is also described as the "dogmatic image of thought" in *Difference and Repetition* and as the arborescent model of thought in *A Thousand Plateaus* ("The State as the model for the book and for thought has a long history", Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 24)*.* Its key traits include recognition and reproduction, reminiscent of Hegel's concept of understanding (*Verstand*) or common sense (*gemeiner Menschenverstand*) in the *Science of Logic*, characterized by fixed categories and resistance to proper thinking (Reason) (Hegel 1969: 25–42).

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4   Deleuze and Guattari draw from an extensive anthropological bibliography, influenced by Claude Lévi-Strauss, to argue that the State's dominance as a form of social organization is not the sole model. Primitive societies exhibit a unique organizational structure that does not require unification into a state-like entity. This concept inspired Pierre Clastres' research, who through fieldwork observed the para-state operations within primitive societies: "Primitive societies are societies without a State. This factual judgment, accurate in itself, actually hides an opinion, a value judgment that immediately throws doubt on the possibility of constituting political anthropology as a strict science. What the statement says, in fact, is that primitive societies are missing something – the State – that is essential to them, as it is to any other society: our own, for instance. Consequently, those societies are incomplete; they are not quite true societies – they are not civilized – their existence continues to suffer the painful experience of a lack – the lack of a State – which, try as they may, they will never make up [...] Incompletion, unfulfillment, lack: the nature of primitive societies is not to be sought in that direction. Rather, it asserts itself as positivity, as a mastery of the natural milieu and the social project; as the sovereign will to let nothing slip outside its being that might alter, corrupt, and destroy it" (Clastres 1987: 189–199).

It is unclear whether Deleuze and Guattari's basic and straightforward portrayal of the despotic *socius* indicates a belief in its actual historical existence or an attempt to explain common perceptions of power dynamics. Regardless, they assert that in this organizational structure, every component and role is clearly defined and influenced. Nothing exists without a purpose within the whole system:

> [...] he "megamachine" of the State, a functional pyramid that has the despot at its apex, an immobile motor, with the bureaucratic apparatus as its lateral surface and its transmission gear, and the villagers at its base, serving as its working parts (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 194).

This *socius* is characterized by direct alliances with the despot rather than lateral alliances with other members of the tribe. This is not a contract whereby the savages relinquish their rights to a representative, but the result of a violent conquest. As a result, the primitive codes that controlled the tribal functioning become the "bricks", which, without losing their form, remain subject to the new organization's codes ("overcoding", according to Deleuze and Guattari), and where the conquerors become either the Despot (apex of the pyramid) or a part of the chain of command that ensures the obedience of the base.

> The Chinese imperial state reproduced, on a large scale, a pattern of state-formation that was probably more the rule than the exception in 'high' civilizations of the non-capitalist world: a bureaucratic hierarchy descending from a monarch to administrative districts governed by royal functionaries and fiscal officials, who extracted surplus labour from subject villages of peasant producers for redistribution up the hierarchical chain. Something like this pattern is visible in many of the most highly organized civilizations, from the relatively small and modest states of Bronze Age Greece to the more elaborate and powerful New Kingdom of Egypt, and even, much further afield, the vast empire of the Incas (Meiksins Wood 2003: 27).

3) The third characterization of the State in Deleuze and Guattari's work has nothing to do with empirical reality, but with a phantom image rooted in common sense. A psychological aspect rather than a political one: it involves the interiorization of the despotic model, the monomania of referring to everything that occurs to it, and is described by Deleuze as the "Urstaat": "the primordial *Urstaat*, the eternal model of everything the State wants to be and desires" (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 217). The State is no longer a political body or the point of reference for different organizations, but a spiritualized and internalized model that serves as an unattainable reference point.

2. Misunderstandings

Deleuze's approach to the State, however, does not agree with his ontological and ethical perspective. In the first place, the belief that the State is inherently deleterious (with associated notions such as "tree" or "root"), while

concepts like the war machine and rhizome are essentially worthy, is more of a moral view (where there would be an essential Good and an essential Evil as transcendent values), than an ethical view (where good and bad depend on the encounters that increase or decrease the power of a concrete form of being) (Deleuze 1983: 119–122). Deleuze and Guattari promote the idea of an essentially good rhizome through slogans such as "Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant!" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 24). However, they also caution against the axiological error: "The first is axiological and consists in believing that a little suppleness is enough to make things 'better'" (ibid.: 215). Despite the caution, most Deleuzian references to the State reinforce the notion that it, along with other unified models, are pernicious and should be opposed.

The axiological error is just the first issue arising from the Deleuzian theory of the State. The second problem lies in the emphasis on the pyramidal structure, whether in the political constitution or at the subjective level. Hence, Deleuze apparently aligns himself with criticism of subjectivity and Cartesianism, suggesting that the crux of the problem may be the existence of a foundation (social or individual) and the solution lies in overthrowing it. However, the most interesting aspect of Deleuze's theory is his shift in focus, introducing tools that bring a new perspective to the debate. His approach to the history of philosophy differs significantly from Heidegger's, emphasizing not the foundation (of the State or the subject as *sub-jectum*), but the novel forms of organization emerging from the dissolution of grounding. In essence, he seeks to explore what arises from the breakdown of the State and subjectivity (without relying on a predefined axiological value).

The Deleuzian theory of the State commits a third error when compared to his deep ontology. This error involves the assumption that the individual is the foundation for the development of society. According to this perspective, the despotic *socius* emerges from primitive communities that serve as its building blocks. These communities are believed to be the initial historical stage, which the despot seizes and exploits for personal gain, particularly in wealth extraction. Deleuze, however, supports Marx's insights from the early sections of *Grundrisse*:

> Individuals producing in society – hence socially determined individual production – is, of course, the point of departure. The individual and isolated hunter and fisherman, with whom Smith and Ricardo begin, belongs among the unimaginative conceits of the eighteenth-century Robinsonades [...] The more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole (Marx 1993: 83–84).

Replacing lonely and isolated individuals with lonely and isolated tribes is neutral from an ontological perspective. Ontology aims to uncover the genetic factors behind seemingly isolated entities like the human individual, the State, communities, or atoms. Deleuze's theory of the State fails to elucidate what he intends to convey: the genetic element of forms and contents in empirical

reality. It is only in his theory of the capitalist *socius* that we can discover hints leading beyond experiential limitations into a transcendental realm that not only influences reality but also gives rise to it ("we push each line beyond the turn, to the point where it goes beyond our own experience", Deleuze 1988: 27).

3. Capitalism is More Than Just the Dissolution of the Social Bond

"With contemporary capitalism, *Deleuze gets what he wants. Does he not?*" (Mengue 2003: 121). This perspective places Deleuze among thinkers who view capitalism in an exclusively negative way (as the *absence* of the social bond). Such interpretations stem from misunderstandings that Deleuze himself promotes, with a simplistic view of the State as a social organization that unites independent elements. The despotic *socius* is seen as connecting communities in an external manner. Therefore, capitalism, the subsequent *socius*, could be seen as simply breaking down social bonds. If, at the same time, his ontology seems to celebrate everything that flows and all that dissolves itself, Deleuze would indeed *get what he wants with contemporary capitalism*. Viewing current social events through this ontological lens may lead to the conclusion of societal fragmentation. Deleuze would be one face of the manifold enemy of State thought:

> The State's decline and the undermining of its *centrality* in creating social cohesion doesn't necessitate a stronger entity to take its place. This scenario is taken into account amid *fragmentation, globalization*, and the decline of disciplinary society. However, the social bond is a product of political construction, not an attribute of civil society. This construction is shared by the state and currently exists, albeit with significant challenges, through the operation of a group of institutions known in the past – in times that were less fragmented – as the *ideological state apparatus* (Abad and Paez Canosa 2007: 382).

The bleak evaluation of the current state of social unity implies indifference among the elements within the political realm. Considering the Deleuzian State as a group of parts, it is understandable that its deterioration could be seen as the vanishing of the societal bond. These external parts may appear capable of regaining their previous independence (with the primary objective being to revive the customary tribal communal bonds, known for their violence, caste systems, and more).

However, the Deleuzian political theory does not follow this perspective. Although he recognizes capitalism's potential to weaken the State ("It is beneath the blows of private property, then of commodity production, that the State witnesses its decline", Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 218), he does not suggest that we are facing a sheer unorganized flow. The political contemporary framework, according to Deleuze, is distinct, robust and fully determined. Capitalism is not just about *quantitative* relationships between different elements; it also plays a crucial role in shaping the determination process through *qualitative* connections.

Deleuze defines capitalism in an obscure fashion: as a relationship of flows dy/dx. "This is the differential relation Dy / Dx, where Dy derives from labor power and constitutes the fluctuation of variable capital, and where Dx derives from capital itself and constitutes the fluctuation of constant capital" (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 227–228). The second part of this paper will shed light on Deleuzian capitalism: according to his theory, this *socius* does not fragment external elements but holds back such fragmentation. By drawing on Hegel's analysis of the formula dy/dx, we will chart a new approach to Deleuzian political philosophy. Even if the Hegelian State, as analysed by Hegel, differs from the concept of the State in Deleuze's work, their relation opens up the opportunity to enhance our understanding of Deleuzian political philosophy by integrating Hegelian concepts, which focus on intrinsic relations rather than extrinsic elements. Hegel's approach moves beyond external multiplicities (*Menge*), numbers, and compositions (*Zusammensetzung*) towards a positive quantitative infinity, exemplified by the expression dy/dx. Sounds *Deleuzian,* doesn't it?

4. Differential Calculus, From the White Nothingness to the Qualitative Relation

Deleuze refers to the breaking down of bonds as the *white nothingness*: "the white nothingness, the once more calm surface upon which float unconnected determinations like scattered members: a head without a neck, an arm without a shoulder, eyes without brows" (1994: 28). Hegel describes this phenomenon as an aggregate (*Menge*): "existing, independent parts, which are only externally combined into a whole. [...] an aggregate of atoms external to one another" (Hegel 1969: 222). In his work *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel locates these aggregates within civil society, characterized by "arbitrariness and external contingency [...] extravagance and want" (Hegel 2008: 182). Civil society is, according to Hegel, "the sphere where quantity, not the concept, is the principle of determination" (ibid.: 202), that allocates "individuals as a mass [*Menge*], in such a way that in any individual case this allocation appears as mediated by circumstances, the individual's arbitrary will and his personal choice of vocation" (ibid.: 238).

Individuals exist (*Dasein*) as components but cannot possess actuality (*Wirklichkeit*). When examining Kant's antinomy regarding the infinite divisibility of space, Hegel decisively addresses the ontological standing of the extensive components forming the whole:

> [*Bayle*] rejoins that if matter is infinitely divisible, then it actually [*wirklich*] contains an infinite number [*Menge*] of parts, [...]. Such intellect commits the error of holding such mental fictions, such abstractions, as an infinite number of parts, to be something true and actual (Hegel 1969: 198–199).

The mass is simply the representation of reality as grasped by the understanding, appearing to be a collection of parts or atoms. Yet, these individual

components lack true existence in terms of ontology. The connection with Marx's criticism of the idea which suggests that isolated individuals may have been the starting point of society, is explicit:

> Its development affords the interesting spectacle (as in Smith, Say, and Ricardo) of thought working upon the endless mass [*Menge*] of details which confront it at the outset and extracting therefrom the simple principles of the thing (Hegel 2008: 187).

The understanding (as in the theories of Smith, Say, and Ricardo) focuses on interactions within civil society involving isolated individuals. However, the reality is that society fundamentally consists of individuals belonging to a greater whole. Society is not a mere sum of individuals (it is not a *Menge,* it is not a quantitative aggregate), but rather requires a qualitative aspect for its existence. This confusion in political science is linked to the "atomistic principle, according to which the essence of things is the atom and the void" (Hegel 1969: 166). Atoms represent pure externality, where "all determination, variety, conjunction remains for it an utterly external relation" (ibid.: 166). This challenges the conventional "theory of the State which starts from the particular will of individuals" (ibid.:167). Hegel argues that this simplistic view, characteristic of representational thinking, is limited in grasping the true nature of reality. "In thinking that is not based on the Notion [*begrifflosen Vorstellung*]" (ibid.:188), relationships among individuals would be merely external compositions (*Zusammensetzung*).

In Book One of *The Science of Logic*, the quantitative external relations are discussed in Section Two: Magnitude (Quantity). The sublation of this partial and insufficient viewpoint is presented towards the end of the section, serving as a pivotal link not just to the subsequent section on "measure", but also as a crucial transition from Being to Essence. Hegel delves into differential calculus through three notable remarks, which are significant for their depth and are among the extensively revised pages in the 1832 edition of *The Science of Logic*. The initial 1812 edition featured a single lengthy remark spanning 40 pages, while the revised 1832 edition included over 60 additional pages of remarks. This expansion may have been a response to critiques from mathematicians, but the primary focus should remain on the conceptual aspects. Hegel's curiosity extends beyond mathematical discourse, demonstrating a keen interest in the significance of differential calculus. It is within these detailed remarks that the formula dy/dx is introduced.

The three remarks on differential calculus follow the ones about the number (ibid.: 204–217), where he criticized the excessive pretensions of the mathematics of his time and, in particular, "The Employment of Numerical Distinctions for Expressing Philosophical Notions", as the title of the second remark points out (ibid.: 212). In arithmetic, according to Hegel, combinations and differences do not occur in the object, but are effected on it in a wholly external manner; its objects do not have internal relations (*Verhältnisse*). As a consequence of this indifference of the factors, thought is forced to move into "a realm of

thoughtlessness" (ibid.: 213). Its point of departure is sensible intuition, the *quantum* as a pure number, which has only exterior relationships through arithmetical operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and exponentiation. The number "forms the latest stage in that imperfection which contemplates the universal admixed with sense" (ibid.: 213).

The imperfection of the quantum appears to be resolved in its projection towards infinity. However, Hegel argues that infinity surpassing the quantum is, in fact, a quantum itself. "[...] infinitely great or infinitely small] still bears the character of quantum [...]. This infinity which is perpetually determined as the beyond of the finite is to be described as the spurious quantitative infinite" (ibid.: 227–228). In this passage, Hegel explicitly rejects Deleuze's characterization of his ontology as that of the "infinitely large" (Deleuze 1994: 42–43). Genuine infinity is only revealed through the sublation of this spurious infinite progression. The three remarks on differential calculus aim to achieve this sublation. Hegel demonstrates how the infinite quantum inherently encompasses both externality and its negation.

> [...] it is thus no longer any finite quantum, not a quantitative determinateness which would have a *determinate being as quantum*; it is simple, and therefore only a *moment*. It is a quantitative determinateness in *qualitative* form; its infinity consists in its being a *qualitative determinateness*. As such moment, it is in essential unity with its other, and is only as determined by this its other, i.e. it has meaning solely with reference to that which stands in *relation* to it. *Apart from this relation* it is a *nullity* – simply because quantum as such is indifferent *to the relation*, yet in the relation is supposed to be an *immediate*, inert determination. As only a moment, it is, *in the relation*, not an independent, indifferent something; the quantum in its infinity is a *being-for-self*, for it is at the same time a quantitative determinateness only in the form of a *being-for-one* (Hegel 1969: 244–245).

Hegel's goal is to understand elements that only exist within a relation and have no separate existence (in political terms, the individuals who exist outside of a social relation – a form of *socius* – have no existence). He seeks to identify a specific relation where the terms are interdependent: the differential relationship. Hegel uses mathematical examples to demonstrate this concept, eliminating false relations where the terms are external to each other. For instance, in the case of fractional numbers like 2/7, the individual numbers 2 and 7 are independent of each other. 2 is 2 outside the relation with 7, while 7 is 7 outside the relation with 2. Later, he examines fractions involving unknown quantities represented by letters such as *a* and *b*: *a / b*. Unlike specific numbers like 2 and 7, *a* and *b* represent undetermined numerical values. However, even though they lack a specific value, they still signify a finite quantity without their relation.

Hegel also explores the use of variables x and y in functions involving curved lines, illustrating *qualitative* relations rather than mere quantities. The function usually expresses power-relations (y^2 / x), where x has no relation to y but to its

square (y^2). "The relation of a magnitude to a *power* is not a *quantum*, but essentially a *qualitative* relation" (ibid.: 252). However, on the one hand "in the place, too, of x and y of a function, there can be put an infinite, i.e. inexhaustible, multitude of numbers" (ibid.: 251), that is, x and y are nothing else than signs that take the place of the variable. "In an equation in which x and y are determined primarily by a power-relation, x and y as such are still supposed to signify quanta" (ibid.: 253). On the other hand, the power, as a number, is still an aggregate (*Menge*).[5] In essence, the reference to relations between independent elements, the relations conceived as either *Menge* or *Zusammensetzung* are still implicit. The essence of quantum is only found in the formula of differential calculus (*dy/dx*):

> *Dx dy*, are no longer quanta, nor are they supposed to signify quanta; it is solely in their relation to each other that they have any meaning, a *meaning merely as moments*. They are no longer *something* (something taken as a quantum), not finite differences; but neither are they *nothing*; not empty nullities. Apart from their relation they are pure nullities, but they are intended to be taken only as moments of the relation, as *determinations* of the differential co-efficient *dy / dx* (ibid.: 253).

It is true that Hegel still presents the quantitative determination (*Bestimmheit*) as a fundamental principle. However, the differential relation *dy / dx* indicates the quantitative elements it determines only in one direction, while pointing to the qualitative element underlying every quantitative relation in the other direction: the interior relation, which is not exterior (*Verhältnis*). "With the qualitative aspect as such there begins a new order, the specifying of which is no longer only a matter of quantitative difference" (ibid.: 362). This qualitative element is not only the condition of possibility of *quantum,* but also its genetic element.[6] By maintaining its quantitative nature, Hegel avoids reverting to mere quality (first section of the *Doctrine of Being*) and achieves the unity of quantity and quality: transition to the measure (*das Maß*), and, in short, to the sublation of Being into Essence, where all the quantitative differences, the independent "somethings", will only be the appearance of the Essence.

Briefly, the remarks on differential calculus are crucial to the *Science of Logic*. And the exposition presents a strong affinity with that of Deleuze:

> [The pure element of quantitability must] be distinguished both from the fixed quantities of intuition [*quantum*] and from variable quantities in the form of concepts of the understanding [*quantitas*]. The symbol which expresses it is therefore completely undetermined: *dx* is strictly nothing in relation to x, as *dy* is in relation to y [...] but they are perfectly determinable in relation to one

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5   "Now power is number (magnitude as the more general term may be preferred, but it is in itself always number), and hence a plurality [*Menge*]", Hegel 1969: 280).
6   Deleuze contends that post-Kantian thinkers criticized Kant for holding fast "to the point of view of conditioning without attaining that of genesis" (Deleuze 1994: 170). Deleuze suggests that the perspective of genesis is connected to the ability to envision relationships that are "internal to the Idea", rather than being external or merely quantitative.

another. For this reason, a principle of determinability corresponds to the undetermined as such. The universal is not a nothing since there are, in Bordas' expression, 'relations of the universal'. *Dx* and *dy* are completely undifferenciated [*indifferencies*], in the particular and in the general, but completely differentiated [*differenties*] in and by the universal. The relation *dy/dx* is not like a fraction which is established between particular quanta in intuition [...]. Each term exists absolutely only in its relation to the other (Deleuze 1994: 171–172).[7]

The undetermined (*dx, dy*), the determinable (*dy/dx*), and the determination (values of *dy* and *dx*) form the internal relation of the Deleuzian Idea (ibid.: 171).[8] This does not involve relationships between external, quantitative elements. Deleuze implicitly adopts Hegel's description and moves away from a quantitative perspective on reality towards the pure concept of qualitability: the relation (*rapport*). Reality's constituent parts are not isolated entities (not *2* or *7*, not *a* or *b*, not *y* or *x*) with a self-sufficient or external determination, but the undetermined (*dy, dx*) that solely reach their determination *dy / dx* in their connection.

Deleuze, like Hegel, acknowledges the limitations of the differential relationship. According to Deleuze "in so far as it expresses another quality, the differential relation remains tied to the individual values or to the quantitative variations corresponding to that quality" (ibid.: 172). The qualitative connection between *dy* and *dx actualizes* itself in individual values (*quanta*) through the process of *différenciation* (with a "c"), also referred to by Deleuze as the "actualization"

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7   "We will define it verbally, conventionally; we will say that *dx* or *dy* is the infinitely small quantity assumed to be added or subtracted from *x* or from *y*. Now there is an invention! The infinitely small quantity, that is, it's the smallest variation of the quantity considered. And whatever you say, if you say, ah good, so it's the ten millionth, it's still even smaller. As we say, it is unassignable; one must not try to assign it, it's unassignable. By convention, it's unassignable. You'll ask me, so what is that, *dx* = what? Well, *dx* = 0; *dy* = what? *dx* = 0 in *x*, in relation to *x*; it's the smallest quantity, right, from which *x* might vary, and that equals 0. *dy* = 0 in relation to *y*. [...] miracle! *dy* over *dx* is not equal to zero, and furthermore: *dy* over *dx* has a perfectly expressible finite quantity" (Deleuze 1980).
8   Deleuze exemplifies the tripartite structure of the Idea with the difference between the Cartesian and the Kantian Cogito: "nothing is more instructive than the difference between the Kantian and the Cartesian Cogito. It is as though Descartes' Cogito operated with two logical values: determination and undetermined existence. The determination (I think) implies an undetermined existence (I am, because 'in order to think one must exist') [...] The entire Kantian critique amounts to objecting against Descartes that it is impossible for determination to bear directly upon the undetermined. The determination ('I think') obviously implies something undetermined ('I am'), but nothing so far tells us how it is that this undetermined is determinable by the 'I think'. [...] Kant therefore adds a third logical value: the determinable, or rather the form in which the undetermined is determinable (by the determination). [...] Kant's answer is well known: the form under which undetermined existence is determinable by the 'I think' is that of time" (Deleuze 1994: 85–86). Further on, he will link this tripartition to his theory of the Idea: "It is apparent that Ideas here repeat the three aspects of the Cogito: the I am as an indeterminate existence, time as the form under which this existence is determinable, and the I think as a determination" (ibid.: 169).

(or even "incarnation") of the virtual, where the Ideal field is the realm of the *virtual* while the quantitative/extensive field is the *actual*. This interpretation allows for understanding the differential relationship of the Ideas through the empirical bonds that tie them to reality. However, "this is only a first aspect" (ibid.: 172). The ontological significance of the differential relationship mirrors Hegel's approach, expressing the pure element of quantitability and *différentiation* (with a "t"). The *différentiation* – ensemble of differential relationships in the field of Ideas – leads to the transcendental realm of thought, where the genesis of the world and social structures becomes conceivable.

5. State and Capitalism

In Deleuze, similar to Hegel, the Idea serves as the genetic element from which seemingly autonomous existences follow. This ontological basis allows for the exploration of the political realm, moving beyond the image of social relations as mere coincidental connections among individuals (*Zusammengesetzung*). Instead, the focus shifts towards understanding individuals in relation to social structures, aiming to uncover the productive instance or the pure *social* component element of the qualitability (Ideas).

In Hegel, the differential relation is the basic stage from an ontological perspective. It appears towards the end of the section on Being, with the doctrine of Essence and the entirety of subjective logic (the doctrine of Notion) yet to follow. Nevertheless, in terms of political philosophy, this marks a significant moment, aligning with the shift from civil society to the State. Within differential calculus, we can understand why the State is not reliant on the individuals considered as its foundational components (as suggested by the contractualist tradition). Instead, it is the State that gives reason to them; "the social bond is a product of political construction, not an attribute of civil society", in terms of Abad and Paez Canosa, as we saw above (2007: 382). The influential Argentine political philosopher Jorge Dotti points out this convergence of the political and ontological points of view in Hegel:

> Family and civil society come before the State sphere in the exposition. However, this derivation does not imply that the State is conditioned by its preceding moments. On the contrary, it emerges as their reason for being from both a metaphysical and juridico-philosophical perspective. [...] "In reality", the "true essence" of the family and particularly of civil society is to be "ideal moments" (that is, to be dialectically dissolved into the apparent hostility of the universal), serving as preparatory stages for the ultimate blooming or extroversion of their deeper reason of being, the State as the totalizing and worldly fulfillment of the absolute (Dotti 1983: 121).

The State is the political instance which incarnates the sublation of external relations among independent elements (*Menge*) and gives reason for them. According to Hegel, it corresponds to the rich development of the Essence and the Notion (*Begriff*) within the Idea. Deleuze also envisions a concept that

transcends independent elements and acknowledges them, referring to it as the "Idea". However, he avoids to identify it as the "State". This rejection is not primarily due to his rejection of "negativity" as commonly believed, but more accurately due to the process of alienation and return (*Rückkehr*) involved in the Hegelian Essence, and the circular relationship between the Notion and its political realization (the State). Hegel views the circular form as a means to avoid descending into spurious infinity (or quantitative infinity). Conversely, the Deleuzian social concept does not alienate itself, but rather differentiates within the political structure (forms of *socius*). There is no return or circularity, and notably, there is no unity of the Idea. Deleuze rejects the notion of a singular Idea, consequently negating a single social form capable of embodying it. Perhaps Deleuze's divergence from the "Hegelianism of right", as proposed by Weil and Kojève (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 556), stems from the rejection of a unified Idea and its singular embodiment, whether as State or Capital.[9]

Based on our research, the Deleuzian social concept does not oppose the State in Hegel as Deleuze suggests in his statements, but rather shows conceptual affinity. In the Deleuzian system, the forms of *socius* hold a similar conceptual position to the State in Hegel's system. Therefore, we believe that Deleuze's political philosophy does not signify a complete departure from Hegel's philosophy, but can be seen as part of its legacy. Unlike Hegel, who sees the State as the sole means of realizing a single Idea, Deleuze presents a multitude of Ideas with various manifestations. Each social relation or form of *socius* represents a *différentiation* of a social Idea that is not unique, but the outcome of an ongoing synthesis of differences. Our current social structure embodies a specific Idea. On this ground, Deleuze and Guattari define "capitalism" as a differential relation dy/dx, in a quite mysterious passage that we are now able to comprehend:

> [...] the capitalist machine begins when capital ceases to be a capital of alliance to become a filiative capital. Capital becomes filiative when money begets money, or value a surplus value [...] We are no longer in the domain of the quantum or of the quantitas, but in that of the differential relation as a conjunction that defines the immanent social field particular to capitalism [...] This is the differential relation Dy / Dx, where Dy derives from labor power and constitutes the fluctuation of variable capital, and where Dx derives from capital itself and constitutes the fluctuation of constant capital (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 227–228).

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9   In the case of Weil, the Hegelian ontology will realize itself in a State that has not yet existed, but is on the horizon. Its realization through war may explain Deleuze's rejection of the State (Weil 1970: 130-131). In the case of Kojève, through his interpretation of the "death of man" in the last pages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the form of hegemony of capital and the triumph of the *American Way of Life*, he was "led to conclude from this that the 'American way of life' was the type of life specific to the post-historical period, the actual presence of the United States in the world prefiguring the 'eternal present' future of all of humanity. Thus, Man's return to animality appeared no longer as a possibility that was yet to come, but as a certainty that was already present" (Kojève 1969: 161).

The reference to Marx's variable and constant capital might be misleading. Within Deleuze and Guattari's framework, these concepts should not be understood in the context of quantitative logic. Neither is Dy derived from labor force as it existed in pre-capitalist societies, nor is Dx derived from merchant capital. What is described as existing "in the very pores" of the old social structure according to Marx's formula (ibid.: 223) is not a reference point for the development of capitalism. Labor power and capital are not quantitative, indifferent, or random components. The differential relationship is not "tied to the individual values or to the quantitative variations corresponding to that quality" (Deleuze 1994: 172).

The Hegelian perspective enables us to access the pure element of qualitability. The components (dy, dx, labor flow, capital flow) are dependent on the social relationship (dy/dx), which in turn relies on the ideal genetic element: the form of the determinable, serving as the mediation that articulates and generates the flow constituting the process. Once more, we encounter the tripartite configuration of the Deleuzian idea: the undetermined (dx, dy), the determinable (dy/dx), and the determination (values of dy/dx). However, this time, it is manifested within the components of the capitalist *socius*: the labor and capital value as determination, the human and monetary material as the undetermined, and the differential relation between labor and capital as the determinable.

There is no despotic determination that compels the elements to operate in a capitalist manner. The determination does not directly affect the undetermined. This does not lead to the breakdown of social bonds or fragmentation into aggregate or mass (*Menge*). The concept "reunites and articulates that which it distinguishes" (ibid.: 170) and adds a quality to the extension that goes beyond mere quantity.[10] The real subsumption of the production process to capital does not rely on an external entity to explain how the worker "obeys" the capitalist, but the determinations (*value* of labor, *value* of capital) are produced by the genetic instance in the capitalist social process. Additionally, these eidetic relations, in order to exist, must be reflected in empirical relations, where human struggles play a crucial role.

This conception applies not only to capitalist societies but also to all types of social organizations. The political incarnations of distinct Ideas do not emerge from the collision of external elements, and it does not occur as a miracle, but is the object of a careful creation, which is the task of political philosophy.[11] This applies also to a *future socius* yet to be created. At the same time, it must be politically incarnated, through the struggle of the concrete human beings that shape history.

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10   "These give rise to the greatest monotonies and the greatest weaknesses of a new-found common sense in the absence of the genius of the Idea, but also to the most powerful 'repetitions' [...] when the Idea emerges in all its violence" (Deleuze 1994: 195).
11   On political creation, Ferreyra 2022.

Conclusion

If the "war machines" were the Good, while the "apparatus of capture" was the Evil, then the only practical conclusion of Deleuze and Guattari's political philosophy would be an intensive struggle through micro-politics and various forms of resistance to the macro-political alliance of the Evil forces of Capitalism and the State. However, if the State and the "apparatus of capture" are not essentially evil, then we can find in these concepts, such as they are exposed in Deleuze and Guattari's work, many valuable elements that can be useful tools in contemporary struggles. The Deleuzian State, differing from traditional perspectives, would lack a transcendent foundation, would be immanent to the people, and thus responsive to the varied needs and demands of minorities. Amidst the tumult of today's political landscape, where individual profit-driven motives and brute strength often take an inhuman shape, the Deleuzian State, rooted in the differential relation of multiplicities, appears as a realm where the vital essence of human power to exist can be fostered and preserved.

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Hulijan Ferejra

Delez i hegelijanska država

Apstrakt

Ovaj rad analizira političku filozofiju Žila Deleza u odnosu na hegelijanski koncept države. Da bismo to uradili, identifikujemo tri interpretacije pojma „država" u Delezovim delima: 1) kao referentnu tačku koja definiše tri oblika socius-a kako je predstavljena u *Anti-Edipu* (primitivni teritorijalni, varvarski despotski i civilizovani kapitalistički); 2) kao određujuću crtu despotske *socius* forme; i 3) kao internalizaciju ovog oblika (*Urstaat*). Delez se u svakoj od ovih interpretacija pojavljuje kao oštar kritičar države. Međutim, sledeći deo rada otkriva da se ova kritika ne zalaže za fragmentaciju društva. Upoređivanjem Delezove političke filozofije sa Hegelovom, pokazujemo da oblici *socius*-a u Delezovom sistemu zauzimaju konceptualno mesto Države u Hegelovom okviru. Kroz istraživanje uloge diferencijalnog računa u ontologiji oba filozofa, uspostavljamo osnovu za filozofsko ispitivanje dominantnog društvenog odnosa u savremenom svetu (koji je kapitalizam, a ne država) i preduslove za novi politički *socius*.

Ključne reči: Delez, Hegel, država, građansko društvo, agregat, diferencijalni račun, kapitalizam, pojedinci.

II

STUDIES AND ARTICLES
STUDIJE I ČLANCI

Etienne Balibar

WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?[1]

ABSTRACT
This text explores the nuances of choice and consequence through the philosophical lenses of Pascal and Sartre. It contrasts Pascal's transcendental faith-based approach with Sartre's terrestrial decision-making, emphasizing the inherent paradox of engagement beginning before choice. It argues that authentic choice demands embracing the unknown and its extreme consequences, rejecting the spectator's role for active participation. The text also examines the intellectual's duality, caught between bourgeois origins and subaltern solidarity, and the antinomy of integrating science and revolution. It concludes with reflections on the intellectual's role in revolutionary movements, highlighting the necessity of continuous critical engagement and the interplay of truth and error.

KEYWORDS
engagement, transcendence, subaltern solidarity, science, revolution, Marxism, deconstruction

Introduction

Dear Colleagues and Students, dear audience of the Demos 21 inaugural Event, I feel very proud of receiving the Miladin Životić Award in the Conference Hall of the American University in Paris, and I am especially happy to be offered this occasion to discuss the philosophical issue that, *par excellence*, articulates our lives and our reflections: "engagement". For any intellectual (but where are the boundaries of "intellectuality" as they cannot be circumscribed by some academic status?), to speak about *engagement* inevitably means to speak about oneself, and about one's "Self", or history, actions, achievements and failures or errors. Such a discourse makes sense only if it is presented "in the first person" – both *singular* and *plural,* or to put it in Georg W. F. Hegel's famous formulation from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* – "I that is We, and

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We that is I" – which immediately shows that although personal it cannot be reduced to a *narrative* of one's life and thoughts. A difficult unity of concept and experience is required.

As you can see, I am using the French word *engagement* and I will continue to do so. I hope that this is not understood as chauvinism or parochialism. In his brilliant essay, "What Is an Act of Engagement? Between the Social, Collegial and Institutional Protocols", Petar Bojanić has examined semantic and pragmatic issues which are closely related to my subject, but not completely identical. After discussing the *collective* dimensions of individual actions done in the service of the public, or the community, he concludes that:

> An institutional act is also an engaged act that calls for the engagement of all, for the sake of transforming occasional, one-off acts of help into consistent institutional actions, that is institutional agency. (Bojanić 2020)

And, in the course of the lecture, he emphasizes the aspect of *anticipation* of such acts, which open future possibilities, showing that this quality of anticipation is best expressed through the combined use of two English categories: *engagement* and *commitment*, or the temporal and the subjective. This is important for me, but does not form my main topic, which is rather concerned with the "partisan" activity of intellectuals who, *qua* intellectuals, decide to support a *political* "cause" and join a *social* "movement", if only as "fellow travelers" (Jean-Paul Sartre's well-known definition of this relationship to the Communist Party in the 1950s, marking at the same time proximity and difference: he was reproached for both). Jean-Paul Sartre is indeed the one who coined the universal use of the word *engagement* in his famous essays "Présentation des Temps-Modernes" ([1945] 1948) and "Qu'est-ce que la Littérature?" (1948). Witness the fact that, in his *replica* to Sartre from 1965 (quoted by Bojanić), Theodor Adorno (1978) retains the French word in German. I am building on this precedent.

Choosing the Extreme

I will ask your permission to bring in at the outset some semantic and stylistic considerations about the words used by Sartre in his text (I rely mainly on the *Présentation*) in the original language, and the parallelism they exhibit with a famous development in Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* called "le pari" (*the wager*). Sartre's presentation of *engagement* is linked both explicitly and implicitly to Pascal's *pari*, as a reading of the two passages immediately demonstrates. First Pascal:

> Oui, mais il faut parier. Cela n'est pas volontaire, vous êtes embarqué. Lequel prendrez-vous donc ? Voyons. Puisqu'il faut choisir, voyons ce qui vous intéresse le moins… (Pascal [1669])[2]

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2   "Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least." (translation Trotter, taken from Wikipedia)

And Sartre:

Totalement conditionné par sa classe … c'est lui qui décide du sens de sa con-dition … Non point libre de ne pas choisir, il est engagé, il faut parier. L'absten-tion est un choix … totalement engagé et totalement libre. (Sartre [1945] 1948)[3]

Within the repetition of the motif, nevertheless, there is a difference. Which is it? It lies not in the paradoxical articulation of *embarqué* and *choisir*, or the "situation" and the "decision", but in the articulation of the choice and its *con-sequences*, which depends on two types of "transcendence" or excess: either *in-side* (Sartre) or *outside* (Pascal) this world, hence this within or beyond our life. The Pascalian subject expects and imagines the consequences of his choices (or non-choices) in the modality of *hope*, hence *faith*. The Sartrean subject *fac-es* or *confronts* the terrestrial consequences of his "decision", both for himself and for others. In both cases, however, a paradoxical temporality is involved, since the condition of being "*embarqué*" (onboard) in the situation means that the engagement begins *before the choice*. What Pascal calls a wager (*pari*) is a choice *of the consequences* which retroactively determines the situation. What is not possible is *not to choose*, but there is an existential and in fact meta-physical difference between choosing "by abstention" and *choosing to choose,* choosing as acting. Again, however, choosing to choose is wanting the (largely) *unknown*: the consequences are not already there, they are *to come*.[4] This has several implications. First, it means that the authentic choice is the choice *of the extreme*, or the "extremist" choice, a choice that doesn't withdraw from it-self, imagining itself to be able to control the consequences, implicitly limiting them to what is calculable or governable. Involved in the extremist choice is the possibility to find oneself at some point in a *different place* than one believed to be (e.g. switching the roles of oppressed and oppressor, as the Christians became inquisitors, or the Communists became dictators). Second, it means that choosing as action eliminates the position of a spectator or an observer (not to mention the famous "impartial observer"), even in the modalities which involve being critical or enthusiastic (as in Foucault or Kant): who chooses is involved or implicated *in the first person* (but there are many modalities). And above all to "choose" means a commitment to *continue choosing the same*, which again has many modalities: one could think of fidelity or faithfulness (to which I will return in the end), conversion, or enrolment. I would grant a privilege to the idea of *obstinacy*.[5] I believe that every reflection on *engagement* that is

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3   "Totally conditioned by his class … it is he who decides the meaning of his condition … Not free not to choose, he is committed, you have to bet. Abstention is a choice … totally committed and totally free."
4   On purpose I use a Derridean expression: there is of course an echo of both Pascal and Sartre when Derrida asserts that "toute décision est la décision de l'autre", with the typical equivocality of the genitive: the decision made by the other, the decision of choosing or seeking the other. See: Derrida (2007).
5   This is the name given (in German: Eigensinn) by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (2014) to their remarkable book *History and Obstinacy*.

not blinding itself about its radical stakes must keep these "extremist" propositions in mind. But it is also subjected to the inevitable antinomies affecting the commitment-dedication (Max Weber's *Beruf*) to intellectual operations in their relationship to politics.

A first antinomy arises from the fact that the intellectual who is also historically a "bourgeois" through origin or training ("bourgeois intellectual" is a tautology...) must "situate" himself uneasily and in fact contradictorily both *outside* and *inside* the condition of the "subalterns" whose defence and party he/she is taking – or "move" practically and emotionally from "outsider" to "insider", in the form of solidarity and even identification. An identification which can never be complete, or only in the modality of the imaginary. Hence the perversions of engagements with revolutionary movements: victimization and terrorism, idealization or absolutization, *surenchère* (overbid) in radicality and masochistic humiliation (thirst for obedience to the "line" or the "leadership"). Are they inevitable? We know Marx's (and Engels') interpretation, as it is formulated in the *Communist Manifesto*: the philosophers who "rally" the working-class movement in order to become its intellectual spokespersons, seeking the "realization of philosophy", are "traitors" to their bourgeois class (which also raises the symmetric question: are not the intellectualized activists in the labor movement at least potential "traitors" to the working class?). *Treason* in a sense is a paradigmatic figure of the *engagé* intellectual who is caught in the double bind of antithetic class positions.[6]

Symmetric Negations

A second antinomy concerns the combination of "science" (or theory) and "revolution", two "instances" or "vocations" which seem to be at the same time impossible to fuse and impossible to separate (neither *one* not *two*), although this double bind has many modalities, and remains ambivalent from the point of view of its internal hierarchy.[7] Whereas Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual" seems to be an attempt at positively overcoming the dilemma, it is interesting to keep in mind here Karl Marx's personal "solution", best described in *negative* terms in correlation: never give up on the intellectual exigencies of "science", never give up on the practical exigencies of "revolution". But it is also possible to believe that this double exigency (ironically expressed in the declaration: "I am not a Marxist.") accounts for the *aporias* of Marx's *political discourse*, which permanently oscillated between statist and anarchist tendencies, nourished by his twin critiques of his two great opponents within the socialist

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6   One of Sartre's close disciples, also himself an important philosopher and activist, André Gorz published in 1958 an autobiographical essay with the title *Le Traître*.

7   Althusser's reversal of his position from the primacy of "theoretical practice" in order to provide the revolutionary party with its orientation (before 1968) to the primacy of class struggle and the idea of "class struggle in theory" (after 1968) is a perfect example of this antinomy. Each position essentially relies on the refutation of its opposite.

movement of his time: Mikhail Bakunin and Ferdinand Lassalle.[8] It is also interesting to compare Louis Althusser's final description of the aporia (as formulated in particular in such "late" essays such as *Freud and Marx*) (Althusser 1976): certain theories are *conflictual* (or, as the German translator cleverly proposed, "schismatic") *sciences* (Althusser 1999*). Such "sciences" not only would lack an established truth, they would move from the idea of "learning through error" (which is a standard dialectical model) to the idea of producing only (transitory, antithetic) "errors", or addressing truth only in the negative form of a permanent rectification of antithetic "errors", so that error is the actual content of truth *sub specie negationis*. Again, this seems to come very close to a Derridean notion of "deconstruction", if we admit that the crucial object of deconstruction is the metaphysics that "secures" or "confirms" the positive *truth value* of a theory, or to put it in Nietzschean terms, it questions the "will to truth" of science. However, the real difficulty lies in the exigency *not to give up on theory* (or knowledge, science) because of its dedication to truth, falling into some sort of skepticism or relativism. This antinomic position must be experienced in the present (not postponed indefinitely in the Kantian manner of a "regulatory ideal"), so that truth and error are *actually united* in a single modality of knowledge: a "schismatic" science is one in which hypothesis and experience, verification and falsification are contemporaneous moments. What knowledge "verifies" it also immediately "falsifies" in some respect, and the intellectual could be defined as a scholar and activist who *anticipates this falsification*, or seeks to identify the inevitable gap between the "rational" and the "real", the "impossible" within the "possible". Which also leads to the "Machiavellian" lesson that Althusser (and others) tried to implement within the communist movement: develop theory in order not to "justify" the political line, but continuously "betray" one's camp, or shoot against one's own position to test its validity.

At this point I am inclined to borrow another Machiavellian trope, famously expressed in the "Dedicatory Letter" of *The Prince* (1613): *esser principe, esser populare*. The intellectual or theorist is one who "places himself" on the antithetic positions of the ruler and the ruled in order to uncover each side's secret weakness.[9] We could read it in the following manner, as a complex pattern of "betrayal": for any movement or party in which an intellectual is *engagé*, or to which he or she is committed, there is something that the enemy or adversary (the other party) *knows about it* that the party does not know itself, or there is something necessary to its "self-knowledge", its actual balance of truth and error, that can be found only through the *detour* via the enemy's "place" or "ideology". And if we think about it more accurately, is this not what Marx did with his "critique of political economy" and his borrowing of concepts (such as "value", "equivalence") which subsumed the analysis of labor under the viewpoint of capital, in order to "reverse" their hierarchy? But this is also

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8   I have described this antinomy in my essay from 1984 "Le proletariat insaisissable" which was later incorporated into the volume *La crainte des masses: Politique et philosophie avant et après Marx* published in 1997. See: Balibar (1997: 227 and elsewhere).
9   See: Balibar (2015).

what, with very few exceptions, was lost in the history of Marxism, with its concepts of "class consciousness" and "proletarian science". It requires a specific form of *engagement* where the "outside" and the "inside" continuously exchange their functions.

Passion of the Concept

Now, I want to try and move beyond these traditional references towards a more personal discussion of theoretical *engagement* which I subsume under the formula: "the passion of the concept" (Balibar 2020). There are many risks here: falling into some sort of autobiography which covers self-complacency. The "I" speaking in this discourse refers to someone (myself) whose *engagement* (whether inside or outside the academia) was always essentially "theoretical" (even if combined with political and ethical commitments related to present social conflicts, wars and human dramas): my point is precisely that there is an intellectual *engagement* in the field of theory, whose relations to the political realm are strong, ambivalent and contradictory, but never reducible to a *subjection* of "theory" to "practice". We may hear in this manner the Spinozian motto: *sed intelligere* ("but what is requested is understanding").[10] Contrary to what a traditional "rationalist" reading would suggest, this call for understanding does not *substitute action,* but changes its modality, and it does not eliminate "passion". On the contrary, it involves a set of relations and intentions which can be said "passionate" in various respects. There is a passionate relation to the discovery of truth (of things, of discourses) but also to its critique or "refutation" (the passion of the negative). There is a passionate relation to the achievement of the "truth-effect" *par excellence* which is the intelligibility of the world (hence the situation, the conditions) in which an individual and, above all, a collective subject is situated in the moment of his or her constitution. There is a passionate relation to the effort and the struggle to remove obstacles preventing intelligibility (be they external, e.g., social and institutional, relations of power, or internal, e.g. ideological and unconscious, "relations of desire" as it were). As Freud once said, quoting Vergil: the unconscious inferno must be moved (*Acheronta movebo*).[11] And there is a passionate relation to the *communication* of knowledge (or the truth), which is intrinsic to its "production" or "discovery", therefore an expectation of the Other's replica and rebuttal.

We find here again the trope of retroactive effect: if there is no truth before its communication, then there is also no truth before its "enunciation", the

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10   Spinoza writes: "Sedula curavi, humanas actiones non ridere, non lugere, neque detestare, sed intelligere." (I have labored carefully, not to mock, lament, or execrate, but to understand human actions.) (Spinoza [1677] 1883: chapter 1, section 4).

11   "Flectere si nequeo superos acheronta movebo." (The goddess Juno in Vergil's Aeneid, Book VII; 312). "If I cannot prevail upon the gods (to do my will), then I shall move Acheron (one of the five rivers of the underworld)." Often translated figuratively as "If I can't move heaven; I'll raise hell!" This verse is quoted as an epigraph in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* published in 1990.

speech-act that makes it communicable. But there are at least two modalities of enunciation, which contemporary philosophers have described in antithetic manners: enunciation requires *writing,* therefore (as Derrida has particularly insisted) knowledge or science is always "literary", it is always *stylistically* determined; and enunciation requires *speaking* (which ultimately, as Foucault has insisted in his elaboration of the ancient Greek notion of *parrhesia,* means speaking *to some power,* "provoking" its representatives).[12] Therefore we can retrieve the idea already present in Sartre and Adorno: *engagement* does not so much neutralize (or instrumentalize) "literature" (and art, more generally); rather, it *intensifies* their internal conflicts and divisions. This makes sense provided, of course, we do not identify "art" only with certain *works*, but with the *acts* or *actions* of speaking and writing.[13]

A traditional manner of describing the antinomy located at the heart of intellectual activity resides in the opposition between universality and "situated knowledge" (the expression popularized in a famous essay by Donna Haraway (1988), with remarkable "Sartrean" resonances, perhaps through the intermediary of Simone de Beauvoir). Perhaps the best way of emphasizing the antinomy, i.e. the mutual dependency of antithetic propositions and intentions, resides in understanding "universality" not primarily in terms of a knowledge or truth that can be recognized and *accepted by everyone*, at the cost of neutralizing locations and differences, but in terms of what Spinoza had provocatively called "the point of view of eternity". Eternity is not a temporal modality, it is the discursive form that "survives" the conditions of its own enunciation, or becomes independent of its "production". On the other side, we should understand "situation" not in a *passive* manner, as a mere dependency of the activity of knowing on given conditions that *restrict* or *limit* its capacity of reaching the real, but rather in an *active* manner, whereby the knowing subject is allowed to *reflect upon its own situation*, as a condition of possibility of reaching a critical and self-critical awareness of the conditions themselves (what some feminist epistemologists have called "strong objectivity").[14] However, such a radical formulation of the antinomy also suggests a shifting of the problem towards a more *subjective* definition of the antinomy, or towards considering a second antinomy, which forms the counterpart of the first on the side of *subject position*. This is where the "passionate" character of knowledge collides with the paradoxes of *engagement* as I tried to describe them earlier with the help of references to Sartre and Pascal.

Let me be more specific. On the side of *engagement* there is always a character of "undecidability" which ultimately concerns not only the consequences (always unpredictable) of any "practical choice" in the real world, but also, more dangerously, the *ethical value* of the principles themselves (for which the Nietzschean motto "beyond good and evil" could serve as a symbolic marker).

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12   See: Balibar (2018).
13   I join Petar Bojanić (2020) on this point.
14   See: Harding (2005).

And, on the side of "partisanship" (the commitment to actual causes which are not defined by the subject, but framed by the circumstances and the political relations of forces) there is always a radical dissymmetry between the antagonistic "parties" from the point of view of their capacity of self-criticism (i.e. the capacity to know oneself, and especially one's own errors or crimes). This can be illustrated by the discussion launched by Slavoj Žižek (2009) when he wrote that Martin Heidegger when choosing to join the Nazi party in 1933 and actively support Nazi politics had "taken the right step, albeit in the wrong direction". He would link this judgment (which has provoked many reactions of outrage) to the idea of the supreme value of banning eclecticism and "choosing the extreme" (instead of the liberal balanced "middle ground"), not only in terms of political action, but also in terms of intellectual radicalism. However, even admitting this description of engagement, it seems to me that the discussion is ill-oriented when focusing on questions of "right" and "wrong" (or *only* on such questions, which lead to sentences of condemnations, apologies, disowning), leaving aside the more difficult question of the responsibility for the consequences arising from one's convictions (i.e. the *combination* of the two "ethics" famously separated by Max Weber). My conjecture (which *per se* is also a "wager") would be that "conservative" theories don't really need self-criticism and critical capacities (they only need *adapting* to circumstances and new realities), whereas "revolutionary" theories intrinsically need this capacity of self-criticism because – to put it in the famous Marxian words – they are not about "interpreting" but about "changing the world", more precisely *deviating the (ongoing) changes of the world*. Therefore, they are permanently caught between attitudes of "resistance" or refusal and attitudes of "acceleration" and overcoming of existing conditions. Which means that there are no "self-critical nazis" (although there are plenty of more or less sincerely *repentant* nazis), whereas there are – at least some – "self-critical communists" (who retrospectively appear as the genuine communists – among which we may count Marx himself).

My own proposal regarding the "passion" inherent in the concept itself would be to view the *conceptual practice* as an intrinsically conflictual process, for which (imitating a famous formula by the logician and epistemologist W. van Orman Quine) I have coined the expression "polemic ascent" (Balibar 2020). I take this in a double sense:

- The "activity" of the concept, or its *engagement* born by the "intellectual" who assumes the corresponding subject-position, involves rising to the point where the "extremes" (in the field of discourses, therefore ideologies) are *closest*, and prove dissymmetric. If you do not experience the closeness, you will not reveal the dissymmetry. This is where the crucial "points of heresy" or the metaphysical and ethical choices cannot be avoided, because they express the intrinsic dilemmas of the situation (such as, for instance, the choice between fascism and communism to overcome the crisis of bourgeois liberalism).

- But the same activity involves rising to the level of *abstraction* (or speculation) where the involvement of the "subject" within the "object" itself can no longer be neutralized, therefore there is no "objectivity" through which the passionate action of the subject is eliminated (this is in some sense the reverse side of the idea of the "strong objectivity" that I mentioned above). György Lukacs ([1923] 2023) would have come very close to such an idea in many passages of his early essay *History and Class Consciousness*, written in the middle of the revolutionary turmoil that launched the "European Civil War", if – following a Hegelian tradition – he had not dismissed "abstraction" in the name of the "concrete" universal. But this was because, in the end, he wanted to incorporate *engagement* into a preestablished logic of world-history (or reduce *engagement* to the subjective side of a dialectical necessity). He *practiced* the wager *and* denied it.

Combining the two sides of the conceptual *engagement* (heresy and abstraction), I submit that there is an intrinsic *politicality of the concept*, which continuously intersects with the requests of politics, arising from conflicts among social forces evolving in history, but not directly *reducible* to political commitments and "obstinacies". This is also very much what I had in mind when emphasizing that Marx himself never "sacrificed the intellect" to his absolute commitment to the revolutionary cause (no more than he sacrificed his communism to the incompleteness of the understanding of the "historical tendencies" of capitalism). In other terms the political can be conceived as the problematic unity of "politics" (in the institutional and extra-institutional sense) *and* this "non-politics" that is carried on as "polemic ascent" in the conceptual field.

Becoming Other

As a form of provisional conclusion, I will now try and name the ethical postulate that was implicit in the above considerations, with all their hypothetic character: as opposed to a moral idea that proposes to the subject the aim of "becoming herself" (or *identifying* with her own ideal *ego*), but also a morality that *commands* obedience ("respect") to the law or transgression of the law (the two symmetric attitudes that derive from the imposition of a preexisting symbolic order on the subject), I define it as the ethics of *becoming (an)other*. *Engagement* as a commitment to an "extreme" cause (which can be also a conceptual cause, hence the cause of "abstraction") makes no sense if it is not a way one enters in order to *being transformed*. It seeks to construct a reciprocity between "transforming the world" (of social relations as well as ideas) and "transforming oneself".[15] Therefore the *desire* which animates *engagement* is not

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15   This is not incompatible with the Foucauldian correlation between "governing oneself" and "governing the others", provided we do not keep the understanding of "governance" as a stabilization of one's character and place in the world, which is dominant

so much opposed to *dégagement* (detachment or disengagement, distantiation from the world, "acosmism" in Hannah Arendt's words) as it is opposed to *remaining* the same (or the self-same) identical person, well protected within the *boundaries of the self* (that John Locke famously defined as being a "proprietor of his own person").

Clearly this was latent in Sartre and, before him, in the Pascalian allegory of embarking ("*nous sommes embarqués*", meaning "we are onboard" a ship travelling towards the unknown, the absolute "other side"). Perhaps even Baruch Spinoza can be understood that way, despite his "paradoxical conservatism",[16] if we push to the extreme Gilles Deleuze's indication (which has Nietzschean origins) privileging the assertion from *Ethics* (III 2 S) "the power of a body is unknown", which opens the possibility of carrying the intelligence beyond every preestablished limit. And certainly – my favorite reference – it is dominant in Weber's discussion of the "vocation of the scientist" that matches the "vocation of the political", since what he describes as *axiological neutrality* goes along with a passionate critique of the "sacrifice of the intellect" in the "war of gods", which I take to mean that one must be ready to "sacrifice" one's identity for the sake of the understanding.

Finally, I associate the ideal of becoming other with a conversion from the primacy of "causes" (in both the epistemic and the ethical-political sense) to the primacy of *consequences*. Following the theological model of Saint Paul's definition of "faith" (*pistis*), Alain Badiou has famously made *fidelity* the cardinal principle of *engagement*, emphasizing the consequences of being committed to a "truth" that has been experienced and revealed though the event that interrupts (or exceeds) a given situation or destroys one's adaptation to the existing conditions of life (Badiou 2005: 233).[17] The Sartrean legacy is there as well. However, in my own representation the primacy of consequences leads into the opposite direction: "fidelity" or "faith" involves that a reference (or "truth") once revealed will remain essentially *the same*, in order for oneself to be forever the same intractable subject. *Engagement*, as I understand it, involves just the opposite attitude and readiness: becoming other as much as possible, through allowing oneself to experience the conflicts or "heresies" and the reversible "treasons" arising from a double "passion", the passion for a revolutionary cause, and the passion for understanding what happens to that cause and to its supporters in history, i.e. *what follows* from its realization. "It's right to rebel". *Sed intelligere*.

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in the Stoic tradition (*oikieiôsis*), but try to understand it in terms of an adventure with unpredictable consequences.

16   "Paradoxical Conservatism" is the formula used by François Zourabichvili (2023) in his brilliant interpretation of Spinoza's pedagogy and politics.

17   The idea is developed in several other essays, including Badiou (2003).

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Etjen Balibar

Šta je angažman?

Apstrakt

Ovaj tekst istražuje odnose između izbora i posledica kroz filozofske okvire Paskala i Sartra. Stavlja u uporednu perspektivu Paskalov transcendentalni pristup zasnovan na veri sa Sartrovim svetovnim interpretativnim okvirom, naglašavajući inherentni paradoks angažovanja koje počinje pre izbora. Tvrdi se da autentičan izbor zahteva prihvatanje nepoznatog i njegovih ekstremnih posledica, odbacujući ulogu posmatrača sa aktivnim učešćem. Tekst takođe ispituje dualnost intelektualca, uhvaćenog između buržoaskog porekla i solidarnosti sa potlačenima, i antinomiju integrisanja nauke i revolucije. Zaključuje se promišljanjem uloge intelektualca u revolucionarnim pokretima, ističući neophodnost kontinuiranog kritičkog angažovanja i međusobne igre istine i greške.

Ključne reči: angažman, transcedentnost, solidarnost sa potlačenima, nauka, revolucija, Marksizam, dekonstrukcija.

Srđan Đurđević

HETEROGENEITY OF THE FREUDIAN SIGN: KRISTEVA'S SEMIOTIC CHORA AND LACAN'S NOTION OF LALANGUE

ABSTRACT

In this contribution, our aim is to explore and analyse the interplay between the approaches of Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan during the 1970s. By seeking to transcend the limitations inherent in the structuralist framework, both authors endeavour to introduce new concepts that can account for the heterogeneity of Freudian sign. Previous studies examining the relationship between these two authors predominantly focused on Kristeva's critique of Lacanian structuralist theory during the 1950s. From this standpoint, the semiotic *chora* is perceived as a force that fundamentally challenges Lacanian concepts. However, it is important to note that Kristeva was acquainted with Lacan's later teachings, particularly the notion of *lalangue* that she introduced. Our argument posits that her critique stems from a misinterpretation of certain key concepts that Lacan put forth in the 1970s. Moreover, while Lacan would abandon the dialectical relationship in favour of the logic of triplicity, Kristeva continued to engage with the notion of heterogeneity through the lens of Hegelian dialectics.

Introduction

Both Kristeva and Lacan dedicated a large part of their teaching to the pivotal role that language acquisition plays in psychic life. During the structuralist phase of Lacan's teachings, he underscored the dialectical interplay between the symbolic and the imaginary realms. The paternal metaphor, substituting the enigmatic desire of the mother by the privileged signifier Name-of-the-Father, institutes the order in the chaotic world of the imaginary and makes the signification process operative.

The majority of authors see Lacan's and Kristeva's approaches as completely opposed, with Kristeva giving the central place to the maternal, non-conceptual signification in the opposition of the privileged position that paternal law and conceptual signification have in Lacanian theory (Barzilai 1991, McAfee

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2004, Sjöholm 2005). In their arguments, they start from Lacan's classical definition of the signifier as "what represents the subject to another signifier" (Lacan 2005: 693) and the sign as what "represents something for someone" (Lacan 1998a: 207). This linguistic turn in psychoanalysis is based on the Saussurean idea of language as a closed differential system of linguistic signs. But while the Saussurean sign is composed of the signifier and the signified, Lacan's symbolic order is marked by the primacy of signifiers, which are defined only by their opposition to other signifiers. For Lacan, language is the system of signifiers. The subject of the unconscious appears as the effect of language. Language is its cause and thereby it is split already by the fact of entering the symbolic. On the other hand, according to Kristeva, while the symbolic refers to the underlying structures and laws of language and society, the semiotic refers to the layers of signification that are irreducible to those laws. The signifying process can be grasped only through the dialectical relation between the two modalities of the symbolic and semiotic. Thus, the idea of semiotic chora establishes a sphere that logically precedes the inscription of the symbolic and presupposes the subject of the semiotic as the subject-in-process, the one that always brings every structure into question. These commentators (Barzilai 1991, McAfee 2004, Sjöholm 2005) see in the semiotic *chora* the dominance of pre-Oedipal which introduces another aspect of subjectivity that couldn't be grasped from the perspective of Lacanian structuralism.

On the other hand, some authors seek to assimilate Kristeva's approach to the Lacanian one, acknowledging Lacan's influence on Kristeva's work (Elliott 2005, Balsam 2014). Indeed, throughout her work, Kristeva never abandoned the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father as the specific mechanism that characterizes the psychotic structure, nor did she neglect the structuring function of the Third, necessary to condense semiotic content into linguistic signs and to transform the mother into an object, an Other, and not an abject. Even when postulating the mediating role of the imaginary father in the process from dependence on the abjected mother to identification with the symbolic paternal law, as found in her later works, she acknowledges the importance of the loved father, which Lacan saw as crucial for the resolution of the Oedipus complex (Rae 2019).

Both readings can be valid for the structuralist period of Lacan's teaching. However, we argue that the complexity of their relationship becomes further nuanced in light of Lacan's later teachings, marked by the introduction of knots and a heightened emphasis on the jouissance and the real. Hence, it becomes imperative to scrutinize the relationship between Lacan's final teachings and Kristeva's contemporaneous works, transcending simplistic critiques or reductionist readings.

An often-overlooked aspect in discussions of their works is that Kristeva was familiar with Lacan's later elaborations. In her essay "Within the Microcosm of 'The Talking Cure'" Kristeva proceeds with her "critical reading of Lacan" (Kristeva 1983: 33) to suggest an analytical attentiveness to the discourse of borderline patients and the types of interpretation it elicits from the analyst.

According to her, Lacan's notion of *lalangue*, denoting the interplay of meaning and *jouissance*, the domain of equivocation, is seen as "a fundamental refinement into the relation between the unconscious and language previously elaborated" (Kristeva 1983: 34). However, it does not solve the problem of speaking being split into irreconcilable heterogeneity. In her view, *lalangue* integrates the realm of meaning into the field of psychoanalysis. Although meaning is never totalizable and is continually perforated by nonsense, it is made homogeneous with the realm of signification to the point of assimilating the irreducible Freudian dualism between the instinctual drive and affect. Her argument is summarized in the following citation: "No matter how impossible the real might be, once it is made homogeneous with *lalangue*, it finally becomes part of a topology with the imaginary and the symbolic, a part of that trinary hold from which nothing escapes, not even the 'hole', since it too is part of the structure" (Kristeva 1983: 35). Therefore, the topology, as the "formalization of discourse on the subject", whether "a symbolic or an imaginary tool" (Kristeva 1983: 36), is seen as unsuitable.

However, contrary to Kristeva's position, we argue that such criticisms stem from a number of key misreadings regarding Lacan's conception of *lalangue* and the status of topology. During this period of Kristeva's teaching, the symbolic is theorized through the relation to the other as object, as introduced by Melanie Klein. The symbolic is mediated through the effects of a relation to a primary object. It is through the interplay of primitive mechanisms as defined in the Kleinian paradigm that the semiotic continuously challenge (in the form of speech disturbances) or transgress (in the poetic language) the symbolic law. Therefore, Kristeva kept the container-contained dynamic as the basis through which drives are continually recreating the object. On the other hand, Lacan's later works move towards reconceptualizing the subject and departing from Euclidean geometry's spatial dichotomy interior-exterior.

We begin this study by examining the particularities of the semiotic *chora*, which was introduced by Kristeva in *The Subject in the Process*, in 1972, further elaborated in numerous essays published during the following years. Subsequently, the primordial status of the object as the abject, introduced in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, in 1980, is discussed. Furthermore, we scrutinize Lacan's paradigmatic shift in the 1970s, particularly regarding the evolving conception of *jouissance* and the concept of *lalangue*. Last, we argue that the Kristeva's critique doesn't take into account the double status of the realm of the real, evidenced in Lacan's last teaching.

By exploring the interaction between Lacan and Kristeva, this study aims to provide fresh insights into the ongoing debate. This debate revolves around authors who view the register of the real solely as the imminent antagonism of the symbolic, as discussed by scholars such as Žižek (2016) and Espinoza Lolas (2023). Conversely, other authors acknowledge the double status of the real: not only as the immanent antagonism of the symbolic but also as a realm beyond the symbolic (Miller 2012, Soler 2014).

1. What Is Lawless, but Still Subjected to the Regulation Process: Kristeva's Semiotic *Chora*

Starting from the early period of her work, Kristeva places the heterogeneity of the signifying process at the forefront. On one hand, this heterogeneity can be present as a transgression of the symbolic order, as seen in poetic language. On the other hand, it manifests itself as the irruption of prosodic elements that tend to decompose the stable meanings and stability of the signifier, as seen in the discourse of psychosis. Acknowledging this heterogeneity involves seeing a symbolic function as a product of dialectic between two separate modalities: the semiotic, emanating from instinctual drives and primary processes, and the symbolic, assimilable to secondary processes, predicative synthesis, and judgment. Language encompasses the inseparable interplay of these two modalities within the process of signification. As Kristeva states: "Because the subject is always both semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (Kristeva 1984: 24).

According to Kristeva, the child is born with drives. Following Freud, she defines these drives as "energetic but already semiotic charges, junctures of the psychic and the somatic" that "extract the body from its homogeneous shell and turn it into a space linked to the outside; they are the forces that mark out the *chora* in process" (Kristeva 1998: 164). Discrete energy quantities traverse the subject's body, still not posited as such, and throughout its development, these energies conform to the diverse limitations imposed on the body. In this manner, the drives give shape to the *chora*, "an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases" (Kristeva 1984: 25). More precisely, the *chora* portrays a mobile and extremely provisional rhythmic articulation, which logically and genetically precedes spatiality and temporality and is analogous only to vocal and kinetic rhythm. Linguistics should therefore take speech practice as its object, "letting its boundaries be shifted by the advent of the semiotic rhythm that no system of linguistic communication has yet been able to assimilate" (Kristeva 1980: 24).

The notion of *chora*, although abandoned in her later teaching[1], stays the key concept for understanding her work on the relation between language and drives. The term is borrowed from Plato's *Timaeus*, who defines it as "a space, which exists forever and is indestructible" (Plato 2008: 42). Kristeva uses it in a singular way to grasp the complexity of the "Freud's sign" (Kristeva 1983: 37), which is conceived as "a complicated concept built up from various impressions", "an intricate process of associations entered into by elements of visual, acoustic, and kinesthetic origins" (Freud 1953: 77). It is that heterogeneity, although the acoustic image will be privileged in later Freudian texts, that does not permit any reduction of "Freud's sign" to the Saussurean one.

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1   Kristeva progressively abandoned the notion of semiotic *chora,* as she started to accentuate the central role that imaginary father plays in the constitution of the subjectivity. See: Kristeva (1987, 1988).

Although semiotic *chora* is deprived of unity and identity, although it is not yet a sign, nor a signifier, it is from the *chora* that all thetic positioning, representation and signification depend. Furthermore, even preceding the symbolic law, *chora* is not anarchic. Kristeva makes a distinction between a law and ordering, as a preceding mediation on the level of concrete operations: "its vocal and gestural organization is subject to what we shall call an objective *ordering,* which is dictated by natural or socio-historical constraints such as the biological difference between sexes or family structure" (Kristeva 1984: 27). Its expression is channeled by expulsions, drive discharges and pre-Oedipal semiotic functions that orient the body to the mother. Dominated by the oral and anal drives, death drives, the semiotized body is a place of permanent scission. These impulses are both directed and structured around the mother's body, so that it becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*, which mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations. This ordering is than specific to every child, depending on its relation with the particular primary object.

The semiotic, as pre-thetic, precedes the posited subject with regard to the object, since Kristeva conceives that the thetic positions are initiated by the mirror stage and the Oedipus complex. The semiotic precedes the semantics, which is produced by the thetic, introducing the cut, the rupture, and a stability of any possible position - posited subject of the signifier as already absent, posited object as the lost object. Therefore, the thetic is thought of as a break that produces signification: "the subject must separate from and through his image, from and through his objects" (Kristeva 1984: 43). We find the thetic phase of the signifying process at two points: the mirror stage and the discovery of castration (that is to say, the resolution of the Oedipal complex). Already in the mirror stage, the fragmented body finds itself unified in the representation. The first holophrastic elements occurring at that age testify to what will later become integrated as a signifier. Finally, castration pushes the process of separation even further by positing the subject as signifiable, always confronted by an other: imago (signified) and semiotic process (signifier). The perception of the lack marks the end of the dependence on the mother, confines *jouissance* to the genital, and transfers semiotic mobility onto the symbolic order. However, the traces of the semiotic always threaten the stability of the symbolic by the potential influx of the death drive and the tendency to breach primal repression. Although the semiotic *chora* is the precondition of the symbolic, Kristeva underlines the logical and chronological priority of the symbolic in any organization of the semiotic: "Neurotics and psychotics are defined as such by their relationship to what we are calling the thetic. We now see why, in treating them, psychoanalysis can only conceive of semiotic mobility as a disturbance of language and/or the order of the signifier" (Kristeva 1984: 50). By following the Kleinian way of thought, she argues that the pre-Oedipal stages are analytically unthinkable, and their functioning appears only in the complete, post-genital handling of language.

Kristeva opposes the idea of a static subject or a unary subject and instead proposes the subject in process as "functioning by way of reiteration of

the break and separation, as a multiplicity of expulsions, insuring its infinite renewal" (Kristeva 1998: 134). The dialectic between the two heterogeneous realms, semiotic and symbolic, is governed by the work of negativity, which is both "the cause and the organizing principle of the process" (Kristeva 1984: 110). Kristeva takes the concept of negativity from Hegel, but while for him it belongs to a contemplative theoretical system, she links it to the materiality of the Freudian theory of the drives. This negativity has a tendency to suppress the thetic position and is different from negation. While negation in judgment ("No") articulates an opposition and is itself a symbolic function positing the unitary subject, negativity proposes a heteronomy, a repulsion that returns by attacking this "No": the Name of the Father, the superego, language itself, and the primal repression that imposes it. The subject in process is multiplied, mobile, and a-filial.

The concept of negativity becomes equivalent to expulsion through reference to Freud's text on *Negation*. According to Freud, the pleasure ego precedes the reality ego and the distinction between inside and outside: "the original pleasure ego wants to introject into itself everything that is good and to reject from itself everything that is bad. What is bad, what is alien to the ego, and what is external are, to begin with, identical" (Freud 1953b: 237). Judgment is only made possible by the formation of the symbol of negation, which succeeds expulsion and introduces the possibility of repression. Freud organizes the opposition between affirmation and negation as a replication of introjection and expulsion, both derived from the same drive dynamics between Eros and the death drive. Kristeva invites us to leave the domain of the symbolic function, which already absorbs negativity within the predicate, and to consider the process of rejection that pulsates through the drives in the body, which is already caught within the network of nature and society. In her view, *Autosstossung* or *Ververfung*, which she links to concrete operations at the linguistic level, is a basic biological process of scission, separation, and division that always links the splitting body to family structure and nature. It is the space of the non-symbolized negativity, a pre-verbal function, and the precondition of the positing of the real object as external, but always only thinkable as inherent to any thesis. Expulsion establishes an outside, but one that is always in the process of being posited: "Expulsion reconstitutes real objects, or rather it is the creation of new objects; in this sense it re-invents the real and re-semiotizes it" (Kristeva 1998: 147). It is a separation that is not a lack but a discharge in accordance with the pleasure principle. At the same time, it has a constitutive function as a path towards positing the object as forever lost and thus signifiable, as well as towards the formation of the superego.

The symbolic function requires the repression of destructive anality, the anal phase preceding the separation of the ego from the id. This means that the symbolic function presupposes renunciation of the pleasure of expulsion and the suppression of anality. In the pleasure derived from expulsion, Kristeva sees the Kleinian assumption of the attack against the expelled object and all exterior objects, including parts of one's own body and the mother's body. The

cases of child schizophrenia show us the violence of rejection and anal plea-sure when no mediation by Oedipal identification is possible. The return of rejection immobilizes the body and disturbs the symbolic chains, blocking the symbolic capacity and the acquisition of language (Klein 1930, Klein 1946). In adults, the return of anality breaks the linearity of the signifying chain. Kristeva will say that, using the Freudian term introduced in his *Project* (1953a), repeat-ed and returned rejection opposes repression and reintroduces "free energy" into "bound energy". But what is the nature of that strange primary object, not yet perceived as the other, neither posited nor still signifiable?

2. The *Abject*: The Primordial Status of the Primary Object

In order to grasp the mysterious nature of Kleinian primary object, Kristeva will introduce the concept of *abject*. That concept makes her approach more consistent and is paradigmatic for understanding her teaching.

The abjection is the precondition for the child to exit the symbiotic bond with his mother and develop his own ego. Therefore, it is the precondition for narcissism. The *abject* is not an object, since it lacks the static, conceptual clar-ity of objectivity. On the other hand, even though it lies quite close, it cannot be assimilated. It is defined as "the twisted braid of affects and thoughts" that do not have "properly speaking, a definable object" (Kristeva 1982: 1). The *ab-ject* is not an object facing the I, which can be named or imagined. Being op-posed to the I is its only quality of the object. Contrary to an object, it "is rad-ically excluded and draws me to the place where meaning collapses". Without a sign for it, it appeals to a discharge, a convulsion. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object: "To each ego its object, to each superego its abject" (Kristeva 1982: 2). But also, "the abject would ... be the object of primal repression" (Kristeva 1982: 12). What causes abjection is "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 1982: 4). For Kristeva, the unconscious is dependent on the dialectic of negativity. We should think of abjection as the first attempt at separation before we can make use of any symbolic signification.

After defining the main concepts of her conceptual apparatus, we can now turn to the question of language acquisition. On the one side, Kristeva starts from the assumptions of the theory of object relations. More precisely, she evokes the work of Hanna Segal who sees the "symbolic equations" (concrete thoughts of schizophrenics) characteristic for the paranoid-schizoid position, preceding the words as the repairers, the object perceived as total and the dif-ferentiated from the ego, characteristic for the depressive position (Segal 1952). There is something ("symbolic equations") that precedes the signifier. On the other hand, she criticizes the Segal explanation, which postulates from the be-ginning the existence of an ego and an object. For Kristeva, everything indicates a fusional dyad with the mother, where differentiation is problematic and the ego is entirely unstable. What will be the object is an *abject*, and the ego can

perceive only void, emptiness and injury. Such an ego produces the infantile echolalia to try to feel the hole. The "good enough mother" (term introduced by Kohut, but which Kristeva use to grasp the process in question) hears this "void" and directs it towards the father – that is to say towards the Symbol, the Third. It is only by the structuring function of the Third that those fragmented elements will become condensed into signs and mother will become an object, an Other, and not an abject (Kristeva 1983). Kristeva reintroduces the process in structural approach, claiming that the subject is not reducible to the signifier, but is also a subject in process.

In the same period, Lacan underwent a paradigmatic shift in his understanding of the concept of *jouissance*. This led him to abandon the notion of the primacy of the symbolic realm and to redefine the relationship between language and the drives. In the next section of this study, we will delve into this paradigmatic change, which laid the groundwork for the concept of *lalangue*.

3. From *Jouissance* as Language to Language as *Jouissance*

Despite its central importance in Lacanian theory, the concept of *jouissance* remains inherently elusive, undergoing multiple reinterpretations throughout Lacan's teachings. For the purposes of this study, we emphasize the difference in understanding this concept between Lacan's structuralist phase and his views during the seventies.

During the fifties, Lacan theorized the symbolic order in its autonomy, independent of all reference to the body. He was trying to establish its laws taking the inspiration from the structural linguistics. The drives are structured in terms of language. They are capable of metonymy and metaphor and linked to the demand (Lacan 2017b: 129–234). The *jouissance* linked to the question of desire is a mortified *jouissance*. It is the *jouissance* that has already passed to the signifier. In the upper part of the famous graph of desire, we have a trajectory from *jouissance* to castration, that achieves its significantisation (Lacan 2017b: 371–382, Lacan 2018: 3–42). Therefore, the drive is reduced to a signifying chain. The signifier annuls *jouissance*, which returns in the form of signified desire.

The only contact with the living body at that time of Lacan's elaboration is a fantasy, since it puts together the imaginary *a* and the signifying structure, while the barred subject refers merely to a signifying function (Lacan 2018: 357–374).

In the sixties, Lacan conceptualize *jouissance* as the real. In his seminar *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, the *jouissance* is linked to the das Ding, what is outside of symbolic and imaginary realm (Lacan 1997: 43–70). The *jouissance* is radically separated from the signifier and the image. This moment of his teaching puts an emphasis on a profound disjunction between the signifier and image and the real jouissance. Here, the opposition between the desire and das Ding reflects the opposition between the pleasure and *jouissance.*

In the following years, Lacan will think the relation between the signifier and that which is beyond the symbolization in terms of object *a*, as the mediation between *das Ding* and the Other. Firstly, the object *a* appears as the real

object, produced by the separation (Lacan 1998a: 216–229), to find itself fully articulated in terms of *surplus-jouissance*, during the seminar on discourses as the social bonds (Lacan 2006b).

We can argue, although such a claim is necessarily a schematized simplification, that Lacan's teaching moved from the autonomy of symbolic and dialectics of symbolic and imaginary realm, during the fifties, towards the dialectics between the symbolic and the real during the sixties. Starting from the seventies, the new use of topology of knots introduced a radical cut. The three realms of symbolic, imaginary, and real are no longer perceived as hierarchically organized but as entirely equivalent. Also, the new conception of the relation between *jouissance* and the language is introduced.

In his seminar XX, Lacan begins with the fact of *jouissance*, while the very concepts of language and the Other are now seen as derivative. They are derivative comparing to *lalangue*, defined as the speech before its grammatical and lexicographical order. The speech primarily serves for *jouissance,* and not communication.

The whole last teaching of Lacan rests on the fundamental non-rapport between the *jouissance* and the Other. There is no rapport between the two, but "there's such a thing as One (*Y a d' l'Un*)" (Lacan 1998: 5). It is the One of the *jouissance* of the living body. Being at the same time the speaking body (*parlêtre*), the body enjoys itself by the act of speaking.

By making the living body the place of the *jouissance*, Lacan orients his theory towards the realm of the real. This guided him to revise some of the major concepts of the previous periods of his teaching. We proceed by exploring some of these important revisions.

4. What in Signifying Materiality Precedes the Signifier: Lacan's Notion of *Lalangue*

Searching to surpass his own definition of the unconscious as a mere effect of the language, Lacan will be guided to substitute his concept of the subject of the unconscious by the concept of *parlêtre*. The introduction of knots and a new doctrine of the autonomy of the letter facilitated this paradigmatic shift by emphasizing the *jouissance* of speech. Therefore, we will proceed by elucidating the interconnection between three pivotal concepts in this phase of Lacan's teachings: *parlêtre*, letter, and *lalangue*.

Once named by Lacan in 1971, on the occasion of a slip of tongue, Lacan underlines that "*lalangue* has nothing to do with the dictionary, whatever kind of dictionary it is" (Lacan 2017a: 12). *Lalangue* precedes Saussurian sign - the structure, the Other of language - and opens up questions about the One of *jouissance* and its drives: "Language without doubt is made of *lalangue*. It is knowledge's harebrained lucubration about *lalangue*" (Lacan 1998: 139). The idea that language is firstly made for enjoying, and not for communicating, Lacan will express in following way: "I think...therefore it enjoys" (Lacan 2021: 8). The structure of language is secondary comparing to that enjoyment.

Lalangue illustrates the *jouissance* of speech, the libidinous aspect of language, a mode of drive gratification that has nothing to do with the message speech conveys, but with the act of enunciation itself (Vanheule 2016: 152–154). The moment a person speaks, signifying articulation drains *jouissance* from the body. As Lacan puts it in his seminar *Les non-dupes errent*: "It is from *lalangue* that proceeds what I will not hesitate to call the animation of the *jouissance* of the body. If the body in its motor skills is animated, it comes from a privileged *jouissance*, distinct from that of the body." It is the word that Lacan choose to make it as much as possible close to "lallation" or "bubbling", stipulating that "it is no coincidence at all that, whatever language it is that one receives the first imprint of, words are equivocal" (Lacan 1985: 14). He refuses to attribute to mere chance the fact that *ne* (not) is pronounced the same as the word *nœud* (knot), that the word *pas* (not) sound the same as the word *un pas* (a step). It is the way in which language has been spoken and also heard, in its particularity, that something subsequently emerges in the formations of the unconscious. It is in the *moterialism* – the neologism made from the word *mot* (word) – the materiality of the words, that the unconscious takes hold. That sonorous element is the only one that is consonant with the unconscious, and it only appears in the mother tongue since only the mother tongue was articulated in the first place as babbling (Lacan 2022).

The same year that *lalangue* was introduced, Lacan established a clear distinction between the letter and the signifier: "the letter is the signifier that there is no Other" (Lacan 2006a: 108). If the letter is the signifier that there is no Other, it is because it brings the Other to its logical inconsistency. The Other of language serves to mask the fact of the inexistence of the sexual relation. On the level of the letter, nothing implies the existence of the Other as the necessary effect.

That difference becomes more explicit in the text *Lituraterre*. The neologism that we find in the title comes from the equivocation between the Latin words *littera* and *litura*. But it also refers to the Joycean equivocation which makes the movement from the letter to the litter (Lacan 2013c). This text aims to demonstrate the relation between the letter and *jouissance*. The letter becomes litter, waste, as it loses the relation to any possible meaning. The effect of the *jouissance* of the letter wipes out all the meanings at stake. The letter becomes the effect of what is detached from the domain of the signifier.

The idea of the signifier as an articulation of differential elements, a connection of elements that might be isolated, is replaced by the imprecision of form and the inconsistency of signifying materiality. This is why the letter is situated as a border (*littoral*) (Lacan 2013c: 32) between two heterogeneous registers. The letter is as much at the service of knowledge as it is at the service of *jouissance*, hence its status as a border. It is situated beyond its symbolic function. Therefore, the real emerges as a dimension impermeable to the effects of signification. The structure of language is now considered as having no hold on *jouissance*. In this perspective, the letter designates the isolated element that is precipitated from language. Contrary to the definition of the signifier that

implies this oppositional relationship, the letter appears as a signifier that is not articulated to another signifier, but to *jouissance* itself. The letter thus becomes an effect of the symbolic in the body. It is the symbolic unit that marks the body as a support of *jouissance*, hence its specificity of being both symbolic and real. Being non-interpretable, it challenges the idea of the unconscious structured as a language.

That guides leads Lacan to redefine the concept of the symptom. The symptom is no longer conceived as something that has a meaning that should be deciphered (S1-S2). Rather, it is a *jouissance* provided by the reiteration of a letter, without ever relating to the other signifier (S1-*a*): "An opaque *jouissance* that excludes meaning" (Lacan 2001: 570). Here, the notion of the subject of the unconscious is no longer sufficient. Instead of the symptom as the hidden meaning, the new definition demonstrates the relation between the letter and the symptom. The signifying chain is then reduced to a swarm of S1, which produces an enigmatic effect at the level of the signified. Therefore, Lacan could say that Joyce abolishes the symbol, that Joyce "cancelled his subscription to the unconscious" (Lacan 2016: 144). The symptom as the S1-*a* introduces the pure *jouissance* of the master signifier. It is the unconscious detached from the relation to the subject supposed to know, "the unconscious being real" (Lacan 2001: 571).

The definition of the unconscious as real leads Lacan to replace the term unconscious with that of *parlêtre*. This notion implies the body of the speaking being, the body as affected by the unconscious. This is what allows him to affirm that the real "is the mystery of the speaking body, the mystery of the unconscious" (Lacan 1998: 131). But what is that mystery of the speaking body? It seems that the mystery resides precisely in the effect of *jouissance* of the signifier as the letter, which stays enigmatic and indecipherable. It is in function of this opacity that Lacan replaces the term language with that of *lalangue*. With his concept of *lalangue*, he reduces language to the dimension of equivocation, where meaning always remains uncertain. Language is now defined by its capacity to produce equivocations, and no more thought in terms of structure. It is not a structure synchronically ordered. There are no previously discernable elements in *lalangue.* This is why it is presented as essentially diachronic, always leaving a space for invention: "The One incarnated in *lalangue* is something that remains indeterminate between the phoneme, the word, the sentence and even the whole of thought" (Lacan 1998: 143). Lacan underlines that structure is secondary to what we hear at the diachronic level. *Lalangue* is the realm of the One.

The language as a structure can be completely reduced to the negative relations between the linguistic signs, which are defined only by their opposition to other signs, with their sensorial and phonetic qualities reduced to the formalities. In contrast, *lalangue* is positive and affirmative, but it is also punctual, as no homophonic word is related to another. It manifests itself in separate word plays, and there is no possibility of thinking the network of homophonous pairs. While language is constituted as a whole and expressed by grammatical

rules, *lalangue* always opens up to the unlimited infinity of homophony. The signifier is therefore a linguistic construction that supposes annulation of the sound material, where all of homophonies are produced (Miller 2021a). A point of the insertion of language requires the repression of homophonous repetition of phonemes.

As *lalangue* participates as a whole, language needs an element that doesn't belong to it – the exception being the very requirement of the thetic position. Miller uses Cantor's distinction between "inconsistent multiplicity", and "determined multiplicity" (Cantor 1955). The "determined multiplicity" makes it possible to think of all its elements as existing simultaneously, functioning as a single object, a unit. That is a consistent multiplicity, a whole. The second kind does not allow this gathering. The hypothesis of a simultaneous existence of all its elements leads to a contradiction. This is an absolutely infinite or inconsistent multiplicity, fundamental in the theory of *lalangue*. The inconsistent multiplicity already has its credentials at the edge of the set theory, which can only be built on the condition of evacuating it (Miller 2021b). It is only at the level of discourse that language is ordered in terms of structure. The unconscious structured as language represents itself is an effect of discourse. For Lacan, discourse is one of the apparatuses of *jouissance*, while *lalangue* precedes any idea of discourse.

The language is *lalangue* caught up in the discourse of the master (Miller 2021b). It has the same structure as the discourse of the master, and this made possible Lacan's classical formulation of the unconscious structured like a language. It is by the process of mastering *lalangue* that it emerges, and the master signifier provides the only consistence that the subject has. Therefore, *lalangue* is the state before the master signifier enters the game. It is the heterogeneity without the reference since it lacks the element apart. It is the polysemy of equivocations and provokes effects through the ambiguity of each word, spawning traces on the enjoying body.

Lalangue is thus the relation between the body and the speech, singular for each speaking being. It is the state before the distinction of the signifier and the signified: sonorous element, noise, scream, pure musicality. The signifier, considered as a letter outside the register of meaning, determines the singular mode of jouissance unique for each *parlêtre*, in the form of coinciding between the two heterogenous registers, forming the irreducible *sinthome*: S1-*a*.

Finally, if Lacan is guided to introduce the knots in the psychoanalytic theory, it is preciously in order to take account of the extreme heterogeneity of the three constitutive dimensions of the human existence. Three realms, the real, the symbolic and the imaginary are not anymore conceived in dialectical terms, but articulated in the logic of triplicity: "The three cercles of Borromean knot are, as cercles equivalent to one another. They are constituted by something that is reproduced in all three of them" (Lacan 2016: 38). The equivalence between the three circles implies that the One is not articulated to the Other in the knot. This is why the consistency of the knot does not make the system. The consistency of the knot is only guaranteed by the act of nomination. This

is why the key concept of Lacan's classical teaching – Name of the Father – is finally replaced by the Father of the Name, the naming father.

It is the letter as S1 that makes the hole in the real and makes the idea of the knotting possible. The S1 is what makes the hole in the real, "language eats into the real" (Lacan 2016: 21), and only the hole makes any knotting possible. Starting from the fourth element, the act of nomination, the *dire*, the strict equivalence between the three elements is finally interrupted.

In order to address Kristeva's critique of topology as a trinity hold from which nothing escapes and which makes the impossible real homogeneous with *lalangue* (Kristeva 1983: 35), we have to approach the double status of the realm of the real, such as it is present in the last teaching of Lacan.

5. The Double Status of Real: Beyond Hegelian Dialectics

At the outset of his teaching, Lacan conceived the real as what is colloquially known as reality. However, during the sixties, the real took on another dimension. It became the kernel that cannot by designated by the signifier, neither represented by the image. As mentioned earlier, initially, it manifests as das Ding, then as the object petit a, and finally as *surplus-jouissance*.

It is true that during that period, characterized by the dialectic between the symbolic and the real, the real appears as "an impasse of formalization", that does not stop not being written (Lacan 1998: 85). From the same period is the formula of the real as impossible (Lacan 2023), which, appearing as a paradox, as both a product and a rejection of the symbolic—upon which it depends— continuously eludes the signifying machinery.

We argue that starting from the assumption of the equivalence of three registers and the abandonment of dialectics in favor of the logic of triplicity, the double status of the real can be discerned. On one hand, Lacan keeps the idea of the real as object *a*, that takes part in the *sinthome* (S1-*a*) and produce the knotting. On the other hand, the realm of real *ex-sists* in relation to the realms of symbolic and imaginary (Lacan 2016: 25). It exists outside the symbolic and the imaginary. Encountering a limit of formalization within the symbolic is entirely different from encountering the real outside of the symbolic. The real outside of the symbolic pertains more to the realm of the living body, about which we can know nothing. In his seminar *Sinthome*, Lacan employs the series of terms to qualify that aspect of the real: it is the real "without law", "without order", "the real that doesn't tie to anything" (Lacan 2016). Finally, the following year, Lacan introduces the new conception of the real as „impossible to bear" (Lacan 1977: 7).

The real as impossible to bear represents another status of the real that cannopt be reduced to the impasse of formalization. It separates itself from any logical or mathematical writing. The notion of bearing, at the core of impossible formalization, evokes the idea of carrying, of weight, of suffering and of managing one's body.

When Kristeva argues that Lacan's topology makes the real „a part of trinity hole from which nothing escapes, not even a 'hole', since it too is part of the structure" (Kristeva 1983: 35), she doesn't recognize the status of the real as impossible to bear. For her, the real is reducible to the impasse of formalization, since she relies on Hegelian dialectics, to explain the subject as the dialectic between the two realms, semiotic and symbolic, governed by the work of negativity. Consequently, she is compelled to employ a whole series of binary oppositions such as subject-primary object, container-contained, interior-exterior.

On the other side, Lacan gradually abandons dialectics and replaces mathematical logic with topology of knots. The new logic enables him to think the three realms in their autonomy, but also within the context of the knotting function Lastly, it is noteworthy that Lacan clarifies that the real on the side of the living being remains unattainable. We can only grasp "odds and ends of the real" (Lacan 2016: 104), since we are only able to reach it through the semblance of object *a*.

Concluding Remarks

In this article, we examined in which way two French psychoanalysts, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan, seek to overcome the constraints imposed by the structuralist framework and to take into account the heterogeneity of the Freudian sign, induced by the irruption of the drives in the signifying process.

The *semiotic chora* is the central concept for apprehending Kristeva's approach from the seventies. However, her attempt to assimilate the dynamic aspect in Lacan's structuralist theory guided to some logical impasses. On the one hand, she keeps the idea of the symbolic order organized around the privileged signifier – the Name of the Father. On the other hand, she presupposes the pre-Oedipal dynamic presented in terms of Kleinian object relations theory. The articulation between those two registers is based on the dialectical terms. For example, in her discussion on borderline patients, she argues that the interpretation should be based on countertransference, but that the countertransference shouldn't be thought in the imaginary dynamic of the mother-child relation. The analyst directs the fragmented speech of the analysand toward the structuring function of the Third (father, psychoanalyst, etc.) (Kristeva 1983). Although the notion of *semiotic chora* stays very important for taking into account the prosodical elements of the speech, we could argue that Kristeva, by emphasizing the structuring function of the symbolic Third, stays more loyal to Lacanian classical theory than Lacan himself was at that moment.

During the seventies, Lacan pushes to the point of collapse his own concepts of language, of the speech as the communication, of the big Other, the phallus and Name of the Father. All of them appear to be a mere semblance in regard to the real. In the place of those terms that commemorate the existence of transcendental structure, we find the pragmatic approach, beyond any idea of normativity. That change is followed by the elaboration of the new concepts,

more appropriate to grasp the question of inherent heterogeneity – the letter, *lalangue* and *parlêtre*. Finally, the introduction of the knots will enable him to think the extreme singularity of the *sinthome* which defines the mode of *jouissance* for every *parlêtre*.

In this perspective, language is above all an apparatus of *jouissance* (Lacan 1998). Reality is approached by the apparatuses of *jouissance*. The concept of apparatus replaces that of structure since it allows the coexistence of two heterogeneous elements - the signifier and the *jouissance*. Language is no longer conceived from its purpose of communication, but of *jouissance*. Therefore, it is no longer a question of the Other as the place of the message, but of the One of *lalangue* that find its echo only in the body of the speaking being.

The new support of the subject becomes the knot between three constitutive dimensions, materialized by the function of the hole. It is the letter, the signifier One, that exclude the meaning, that makes the knotting possible. Lacan tries to set up categories that can support each other in the approach of the real. The new writing of the symptom (S1-*a*) allows him to articulate the language to the *jouissance* of the body. The symptom is redefined as an event of the body (Lacan 2001a) insofar as it designates the trace of the traumatic encounter between the signifier and the body. Lacan supports the theory that this encounter produces an eruption of *jouissance* that is repeated in the symptom. The symptom is therefore the reiteration of this first event that marks the body. However, there is no possibility of letter without *lalangue*. If *lalangue* can precipitate itself into the letter, it is insofar as the function of the symptom allows the operation of writing in the real.

Viewed from this perspective, Kristeva's critic on Lacan's topological approach, expressed in the essay "In the Microcosm of the Talking Cure" becomes unsustainable for several reasons: neither the real is made homogenous with *lalangue*, neither the topology can be thought in terms of structure or symbolic or imaginary tool. Finally, the subject of the unconscious disappears completely from Lacanian theory, since the term *parlêtre* testifies that the being is always secondary to the One of existence, and can be found only in the semblances of the language as a structure.

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Srđan Đurđević

Heterogenost Frojdovog znaka: Kristevina semiotička hora i Lakanov pojam jejezika

Apstrakt

Ovaj rad analizira interakciju između pristupa Julije Kristeve i Žaka Lakana tokom 1970-ih. Nastojeći da prevaziđu ograničenja svojstvena strukturalističkom okviru, oba autora uvode nove koncepte koji mogu objasniti heterogenost frojdovskog znaka. Prethodne studije koje su ispitivale odnos između ova dva autora uglavnom su se fokusirale na Kristevinu kritiku lakanovske strukturalističke teorije tokom 1950-ih. Sa ovog stanovišta, semiotička hora suštinski dovodi u pitanje lakanovske koncepte. Međutim, važno je napomenuti da je Kristeva bila upoznata sa kasnijim Lakanovim učenjem, posebno sa pojmom jejezik. Njena kritika proizilazi iz pogrešnog tumačenja određenih ključnih koncepata koje je Lakan formulisao tokom 1970-ih. Štaviše, dok će Lakan napustiti dijalektički odnos u korist logike trostrukosti, Kristeva nastavlja da se bavi pojmom heterogenosti kroz prizmu hegelijanske dijalektike.

Ključne reči: semiotička hora, jejezik, Kristeva, Lakan, Hegel, Ime Oca, sinthome, dijalektika, slovo, topologija

Christos Marneros

TOWARDS AN *AN-ARCHIC* ETHOS

ABSTRACT
The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze has never stated his intention to write or create a work of ethics or moral philosophy, at least not in the traditional sense of the term used to describe a 'genre' of the discipline of philosophy. However, this paper argues that a close attention to Deleuze's philosophical thought manifests an *ethos* which calls us to ponder the possibility of creating a way of being that is profoundly *an-archic* (without an ἀρχή [*archē*]), in a sense that it opposes any form of dogmatism and/or hierarchies. In other words, it opposes a notion of 'a ground' or origin – an ἀρχή [*archē*]. The examination of this *an-archic ethos* is manifested through Deleuze's distinction between ethics and morality and his reading of the works of two of his main philosophical predecessors, Friedrich Nietzsche and Baruch Spinoza.

Introduction

The task of talking about ethics and/or morality relation to the philosophical thought of one of the most significant French philosophers of the 20th century, Gilles Deleuze, is not an easy one. This is because – and despite the vast multiplicity of subjects he examined – both in his solo works and in his collaborations with the militant psychoanalyst Félix Guattari – Deleuze has never stated his intention to write or create a work of ethics or moral philosophy, at least not in the traditional sense that the term is used to describe a 'genre' of the discipline of philosophy. Thus, a moral or ethical programme, 'a manifesto,' based on certain rules or codes is not to be found in any of his writings (indeed, the idea of such a manifesto-type work by Deleuze would have been quite the opposite of his general understanding of what it means to do philosophy and politics or even, to a certain extent, of what it means *to live*). As such, any discussion of ethics and morality in Deleuze's work is reduced to brief and sporadic statements – albeit, quite insightful and important as I will argue below.

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Despite all the 'silence' and the seemingly marginal place of ethics in Deleuze's thought, a statement from Michel Foucault provokes us to (re)think this very place of ethics in his contemporary's works. In his preface of Deleuze and Guattari's ground-breaking volume *Anti-Oedipus*, Foucault writes that "*Anti-Oedipus* (may its authors forgive me) is a book of ethics, the first to be written in France in a quite long time" (2013: xli). Similarly, Daniella Voss (2018: 868) suggests that Deleuze's philosophy "makes a practical difference in ethics as well as politics. Immanence provides an orientation for thought, which is removed from normative regimes of transcendence and tends to be critical of religious and political authorities." Indeed, such a grand, yet enigmatic statement calls us to ponder further on the issue of ethics in Deleuze's work.

To that extent it can be claimed that the work of Deleuze is characterised by a certain notion of an *ethos*. This notion of an *ethos* is precisely what Deleuze's contribution to an ethics has to offer. But why does such a notion of an *ethos* differ from any call to 'fixed' or 'grounding' moral or ethical principles? In other words, how can someone talk about 'ways of being' without prescribing 'a normative code'? Deleuze did not manifest a particular interest in providing an account (let alone a philosophical system) which can be described as a normative school of thought, whether in the form of a moral philosophy or even a mere discussion of moral norms (e.g. the discussion of the 'good' or the 'just') (Jun 2011: 1, 89; Smith 2012: 146–159). Perhaps this is the reason why he never engaged in a philosophical examination which could be classified as 'a philosophy of ethics or of morality.' Instead, Deleuze's contribution to an ethical way of life is manifested as an alternative way of life, that questions these higher, transcendent norms – a process of a constant and affective *becoming-ethical* (Braidotti 2006: 123–129).[1]

Unsurprisingly, the complexity of the matter has provoked certain questions and criticisms. For example, the view that Deleuze escapes any reference to fixed norms is contested by Todd May who suggests that there is (a sense of) normativity in Deleuze's thought (May 1994). May supports that view by presenting an 'inconsistent' Deleuze who, on the one hand, wants to do away with "the project of measuring life against external standards" but who, on the other hand, supports (as an alternative to this reference to external standards) an obscure call to "experimentation" (May 1994: 127–128). May reads such a call to experimentation as something which cannot be totally free from relying on a framework of normativity and values, because the experimentation is grounded on particular moral or ethical principles. Hence, he concludes that behind the Deleuzian call for experimentation we can extract "several intertwined and not very controversial ethical principles" (May

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1   The feminist contribution to the reading of the place of ethics in Deleuze has been immense. Especially, through the reading of Deleuzian becoming and affective theory. See, for example: Braidotti (2001), Ahmed (2014), and Grosz (2017). My approach here is different, as I focus on the distinction between ethics and morality and how ethics lead to *an-anarchic* way of life.

1994: 128). Alternatively, Deleuze and many of his contemporaries, such as Michel Foucault and Jean-Françcois Lyotard, have often been the target of criticism through accusations of 'relativism' which leads to 'moral nihilism.' According to these critics, by refusing to recognise certain principles as values, these philosophers end up incapable of offering a substantial criticism as to any worldly affairs that call for taking a decisive stand. For instance, Jürgen Habermas' position reflects such a view. Habermas, commenting on Foucault's approach towards an ethics, writes that the latter "resists the demand to take sides" and to that extent, Foucault (and this can also apply to Deleuze) ends up in a position of 'strong relativism' where "there is no right side" (1982: 282). In that sense, Habermas' critique echoes similar accusations against Deleuze which portray him as a 'mystique' or an 'elitist,' who is completely indifferent towards 'common affairs.' Such an indifference, according to the critics, is not only culpable of impotence and of lacking any substantial 'solutions' or 'methods' of resistance towards the machineries of 'world's elite' and the domination of the capitalist market, but also, through its impotence, ends up being an accomplice to these machineries and the predicaments of the world's marginalised. Such a view is supported by Slavoj Žižek. Žižek, after offering examples that, according to him, illustrate the supposed 'indifference' of Deleuze and Guattari towards the unfolding of 'actualities' that take place in the world (such as revolutions), concludes that such an indifference is not only a manifestation of impotence to account for any revolutionary action but also a blessing for contemporary capitalism (2007: 204–205). As he states, "the conceptual machinery articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, far from being simply 'subversive,' also fits the (military, economic, and ideologico-political) operational mode of contemporary capitalism" (Zizek 2007: 205). While these critiques are easier to counter (compared to May's one) by a simple juxtaposition of Deleuze's engagement with several political or social movements and also the fact that Deleuze does not shy away from expressing a position on multiple, even highly controversial issues, their critiques have gained a certain popularity and approval within multiple academic and activist circles.[2] Hence, an examination of Deleuze's ethical account is paramount in order to show that not only he is not indifferent to matters of 'this world' but, on the contrary, his account of ethics – being closely connected

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2   See also Badiou (2000: xi, 2, and 11). Here, Badiou attacks "the superficial *doxa* of an anarcho-desiring Deleuzianism making of Deleuze the champion of desire, free flux, and anarchic experimentation, is the first of the false images he sets out to shatter (xi)." Nonetheless, it does not seem Badiou, directly, attacks Deleuze or his thought as such (at least in that instance). According to Eleanor Kauffman (2000: 87) what Badiou attacks is "the position of the Deleuzian disciple[s]." Indeed, Badiou (2000: 11) is, ferociously, critical towards a popular image of Deleuze "as the philosophical inspiration for what we called the 'anarcho-desirers' …". The problem with these 'disciples' and this dominant image of Deleuze is again the impotence to account for a 'realistic' political programme and to that extent to offer any revolutionary alternative to capitalist and neoliberal policies.

to his account of immanence – can be characterised as a 'practical' or a 'lived' philosophy *par excellence*.[3]

On the other hand, May's criticism is, indeed, a far more challenging one. If he is right on his claim that Deleuze relies upon a notion of 'not very controversial ethical principles' – and as such those principles can be found in several accounts of normative philosophies – then Deleuze's account of ethics runs the risk of falling back into the same problem that it tries to overcome, namely the problem of transcendent moral values. However, I aim to show that May's argument is problematic because it fails to acknowledge that a Deleuzian *ethos* does not rely upon 'fixed,' 'grounded' or 'totalised' suppositions that come from above and exist *a priori*. This may, indeed, look contradictory, even 'paradoxical,' but as I will show below, one of the main factors that distinguishes Deleuze's ethics from a notion of morality is the fact that such a notion of an ethics engages with the particularity of an *encounter* and not with pre-existing values, cemented upon an *a priori* ground, an ἀρχή [*archē*]. Hence, it is in this sense that I refer to Deleuzian ethics by calling them *an-archic* (without an *archē*).[4]

This paper delves into the distinction made by Deleuze between ethics and morality. It then aims to show how this distinction originates from Deleuze's reading of two of his philosophical predecessors, Friedrich Nietzsche and Baruch Spinoza and their polemic against any form of transcendence, hierarchy and dogmatism. Such an examination aims to show that Deleuze's philosophical thought points towards an *an-archic ethos* which could potentially be an answer to our nihilistic age, defined by dogmas and fascistic tendencies.

1. "To Have Done with the Judgment of God"[5]

Deleuze made most of his statements regarding ethics in his earlier writings and these comments were made with regards to the philosopher's distaste for

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3   This view is, often, supported by The Invisible Committee (2015, 2017) Deleuze is a huge influence in their work, despite only being, explicitly, mentioned three times. On the matter of their call for a practical ethics, the language they use is, evidently, Deleuzian with phrases such as ethical truths as "affirmations" or as a way of "experimenting" (2015: 46, 125).
4   I do not aim to argue that Deleuze himself was an anarchist and I am not interested in such mundane discussions which are trying to present an image of an author to serve certain political and non-political (or mere 'gossiping') purposes. I, simply, want to argue that Deleuze's thought may have something interesting to offer to the efforts to (re) think anarchy in terms of an *ethos* and a related politics. This is, of course, not a radically novel view, with Deleuze's relation to anarchy and his huge, direct or indirect, influence on many theorists of anarchy, anarchist group and movements being well-known. In fact, only within the last year, an edited collection on Deleuze and anarchism also a lexicon of anarchic concepts, which places Deleuze within the broader anarchist tradition were published. See respectively, Vasileva (2019), Gray van Heerden and Eloff (2019), Colson (2019), and, more recently, Gray van Heerden's (2022) excellent book.
5   The phrase belongs to the homonymous essay, which was written and performed by Antonin Artaud (1976 [1947]: 571). Artaud's writings, plays and performances,

a notion of transcendence, which, according to him, dominates Western philosophical thought since the days of Plato. On the other hand, Deleuze supports 'a philosophy of immanence.' However, I need to stress that – and despite the fact that the direct discussion of his understanding of a notion of immanence takes place in later writings – such a turn to the earlier works aims at the manifestation of a dynamic sequence in Deleuze' immanent and ethical 'accounts' which can help us form a more coherent account of a Deleuzian *ethology* based, in part, on his account of immanence. This method of inquiry not only shows that an immanent mode of thought was an extremely influential notion – albeit remaining in the background – from the very beginning of his writings but also that, through the proximity of Deleuze's ethics with immanence, his immanent philosophy is not another 'utopian' and 'occult' narrative for 'a sect' of a 'select few' but, it is instead, a mode of thought which is interested in the very particularities of life, of 'this world,' and remains 'a practical philosophy' at its core.

The two distinct definitions that Deleuze gives to ethics and morality shall function as our point of departure for such an inquiry. These definitions are given in his discussion with Foucault's biographer Didier Eribon. Discussing Foucault's account of ethics in his examination of the Ancient Greek and Roman practices of 'the care of the self' (Foucault 1990), Deleuze makes the following illuminating statement:

> Yes, establishing ways of existing or styles of life isn't just an aesthetic matter, it's what Foucault called ethics as opposed to morality. The difference is that morality presents us with a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to *transcendent values* (this is good, that's bad…); ethics is a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved. We say this, do that: or say through mean-spiritedness, a life based on hatred, or bitterness toward life. Sometimes it takes just one gesture of word. It's the style of life involved in everything that makes us this or that … (1995: 100).

Evidently, the above statement offers two clear-cut definitions of how Deleuze understands 'morality' and 'ethics' respectively. However, it seems that the complexity of the above quotation is hidden in its very simplicity. Deleuze, on the one hand, manages to draw a straightforward distinction between the

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significantly, influenced Deleuze and Guattari's thought. For example, in this particular essay ('To Have Done with the Judgment of God'), Artaud refers to the notion of the 'Body without Organs' as the 'the way out,' the liberation of man from God's judgment, from divine commandments and moral rules. Artaud writes: "When you will have made him [meaning man] a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom." A. Artaud, Deleuze and Guattari would later adopt and expand on the concept of the 'Body without Organs' in their collective works, notably in their *Anti-Oedipus* where they devote a whole chapter on the notion ('The Body without Organs'). Furthermore, Deleuze (1998: 125–136) wrote an essay entitled 'To Have Done with Judgment' which explicitly refers to Artaud essay and the idea that transcendence dominates Western philosophical tradition, as "the triumph of the judgment of God."

ethical and the moral, but on the other hand, and because he does not comment further on the matter in the particular interview, we do not get much information on how he arrives to that distinction, and, more importantly, what the meaning of these 'optional rules' is. What we can, at least to some extent, infer from the statement, is that the ethical is manifested as something which does not rely upon 'fixed' or 'eternal' norms – 'You should do as I say because it's *the right* thing to do!' 'That's *wrong*, don't do it!' Instead, it is a matter of *evaluating* or *assessing* each situation and each encounter in their specificity – '*How* does a particular situation or a particular encounter with an external body or an idea *affect* me? On the other hand, moral rules claim to manifest a universality because they act as 'judges' of any actions – irrespective of an action's singularity – based on presupposed eternal values, what Deleuze calls *transcendent values*. Hence, there is a 'personal' or a notion of relativity in Deleuze's account of ethics, contrary to the 'claim of universality' made by moral values. It is precisely at this point that the complexity of the argument arises. Does this 'personal' element of the ethical entail a chaotic call for 'everything is permitted?' Furthermore, does the statement that these moral values are whatever contributes towards 'a hatred for life' suggest, in part, a kind of a so-called 'moral nihilism' that Deleuze's critics point out as 'a black spot' in his philosophical thought? In order to offer answers to the above question, it is paramount to examine further the origin, or the influence, behind this distinction between ethics and morality.

Deleuze's ethology draws significantly on the writings of two of his main philosophical influences, Baruch Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche.[6] Indeed, the presence of these two philosophers can be traced in the vast majority of Deleuze's writings through various issues. This view is presented by Deleuze himself when, in conversation with Raymond Bellour and François Ewald, he states that:

> I did begin with books on the history of philosophy, but all the authors I dealt with, had for me something in common. And it all tended toward the great Spinoza-Nietzsche equation (Deleuze 1995: 135).

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6   Commentators support that Deleuze's ethical account is based on either the one or the other, to a certain degree. For example, Michael Hardt (1993) focuses his account of a Deleuzian ethics on a 'Nietzschean' Deleuze. On the other hand, Julian Bourg (2017: 45) talks about an account of Deleuze based on 'Spinozist Ethics.' More specifically he reads Deleuze's shift from the direct engagement with Nietzsche to that of Spinoza as "a departure or a development." Bourgh recognises that despite Deleuze "continued to explore Nietzschean themes … later works were more explicitly Spinozist …". I am not making a distinction between the Spinozist or Nietzschean influences on Deleuze's ethical account, but I follow a route akin to the one followed by Daniel W. Smith (2007, 2012). Smith does not focus on one or the other philosopher, but he illustrates a Deleuzian ethical account based on both. Similarly, I read the ethical account of Deleuze as an outcome of a combination of the thoughts of the two philosophers. Hence, we can say that Spinoza and Nietzsche supplement each other on the matter of Deleuze's understanding of an ethics.

Nonetheless, the choice of those two philosophers as his 'precursors,' especially on the matter of ethics and morality, is a particularly interesting one. This is because both thinkers are usually considered controversial figures for their ideas and were a target of contempt by their contemporaries, even leading to an enforced exile in the case of Spinoza. They have often been accused as "atheists, but even worse, for being immoralists" (Smith 2007: 67). Consequently, and unsurprisingly, these two thinkers remained for a long period of time an unpopular point of reference in the so-called mainstream philosophical circles' discussions on morality. Hence, according to Daniel Smith, "at best the Spinozistic and Nietzschean critiques [within these philosophical circles] were accepted as negative moments, exemplary of what must be fought against and rejected in the ethico-moral domain" (2007: 77). Indeed, these statements show that there is not any sense of exaggeration when Deleuze writes for Spinoza that, "no philosopher was ever more worthy, but neither was any philosopher more maligned and hated (2001: 17)." Perhaps it is this element of worthiness and 'sacrifice' that Deleuze and Guattari recognise in Spinoza, and perhaps what encouraged them to go as far as to call Spinoza "the prince" and "Christ of philosophers" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 60).

It starts to become apparent that the factor which Deleuze finds interesting in both philosophers is their critique towards transcendence (as an ἀρχή [*archē*]), universal values and their engagement with an understanding of modes of existence in an affirmative, active and joyful way. In Deleuze's words "Spinoza believed in joy and vision (2001: 14)." "He projects an image of the positive, affirmative life, which stands in opposition to the semblances that men are content with (2001: 16)." What Deleuze means by this statement is that humans, for Spinoza, became entrenched to the primacy of certain moral values and commandments. Ultimately, this condition led humans to become content with the habit of considering these 'semblances' as unquestionable and 'eternal.' Hence, they ended up leading their lives uncritical of these 'semblances,' and to that extent, they become the perfect obedient subjects to any form of transcendent authority.

Similarly, Deleuze remarks that Nietzsche illustrated 'the philosopher of the future' as someone who united life and thought through creation and 'recollection' of "that has been essentially forgotten" (2005: 60). In that sense, "modes of life inspire ways of thinking; modes of thinking create ways of living. Life *activates* thought, and thought, in turn, *affirms* life" (Deleuze 2005: 60). The 'play' of life and thought suggests 'a critical life.' That is a life which is not satisfied with what Deleuze called 'semblances' but, instead, it is a life that aims at constant creation through inspiration that motivates a constant 'thinking otherwise.' In other words, such a life is affirmative because is not satisfied with a mere contemplation of 'fixed' values and ideas, but it is defined by an active thought that finds its inspiration within an equally active mode of living. Consequently, such a way of contemplating life in terms of joy and affirmation manifests a connection, or even a tautology, in the way that both Spinoza and Nietzsche talk about the notion of a mode of being. Nonetheless,

this connection is not yet enough to point towards a system of ethics. In other words, we have to ask: what exactly do Nietzsche and Spinoza's positions on the issue of life have to do with the distinction between ethics and morality? The answer can be potentially found in what Deleuze identifies as the starting point for his morality/ethics distinction and a common ground between Nietzsche and Spinoza, namely, their abhorrence for transcendent, moral values. Here, it is important to stress that Nietzsche and Spinoza's critique of transcendence "is not merely theoretical or speculative – exposing its fictional or illusory status – but rather practical and ethical," thus their importance of understanding better Deleuze's practical philosophy is paramount (Smith 2007: 68).

2. *Against Ressentiment*: Deleuze's Reading of Nietzsche

Nietzsche offers a devastating critique of Christianity and the Judaeo-Christian tradition more broadly. What can be called his central claim for that critique is the fact that for him, the Christian world is akin to 'a spread of disease' that led to the ultimate decadence to all aspects of life and led to the domination of 'weak' and 'feeble' values – everything that is against his conceptualisation of 'a proud' way of existing and of "philosophising with a hammer (Nietzsche 1998: xvi)."[7] Thus, in his own words, "Christian faith has meant sacrifice: the sacrifice of freedom, pride, spiritual self-confidence; it has meant subjugation and self-derision, self-mutilation (Nietzsche 2008: 44, aphorism 46)." But which one is the main aspect of Judaeo-Christian tradition that makes it symptomatic of decadence? For Nietzsche, such a triumph of the slaves is a process which is facilitated by the values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Subsequently, this process towards the dominance of slave morality begins with 'revolt of the slaves,' something Nietzsche identifies with the emerging influence and ultimate triumph of the Judaeo-Christian tradition over what he conceives as the noble values of the Ancient World (Nietzsche 2008: 83, aphorism 195). As such, according to Nietzsche, the creation – in a negative sense – of morality occurs with a *slave revolt in morals* and the consequent *reversal of values*.

This process began, when the slaves, 'plebeians' or 'the herd,' for Nietzsche, managed to "depose the Masters" and consequently "the morality of the common people has triumphed" (Nietzsche 2017: 19). But what exactly is the problem with that? A simple answer would be 'a hatred for life.' The 'creative,' 'joyful' aspect of life is replaced by *bad conscience* (or guilt)[8] and *ressentiment*. For

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7   Nietzsche's hammer can be read as a "diagnostic tool" that aims to 'hit' with force any so-called values and to that extent to destroy any of them that are 'hollow' and thus to manifest their decadent state.

8   The issue of guilt is strongly evident in Spinoza as well and Deleuze's reading of him. Deleuze (2001: 23) suggests that guilt is extremely self-destructive. More specifically he asks: "How can one keep from destroying oneself through guilt …?" An answer to that may suggest that the transcendent commandments on 'the Divine' are internalised in the form of 'masochistic,' 'repressive' constraints that we imposed upon our own selves.

Nietzsche, the moment that the *ressentiment* of slavish beings – those "who deny the proper response for action [and instead] they compensate [this lack] with imaginary revenge" – becomes creative, albeit in merely reactionary, negative sense, it gives birth to all these moral, transcendent values (Nietzsche 2017: 20). What characterises these values according to Nietzsche is their tendency to say 'no' "on principle to everything that is 'outside,' 'other,' 'non-self' and this 'no' is its creative deed" (Nietzsche 2017: 20). As a result, a reversal of values takes place, by virtue of the need of the slave to define itself through a vicarious relation to an outside, to an opposite – *evaluation* of the slave's self gives way to judgment of the outside. In other words, the slave morality relies on an exoteric principle in order to define itself, and as such it gives primacy to negation over affirmation. In Michael Hardt's words:

> The slave mentality says "you are evil, therefore I am good," whereas the master mentality says "I am good, therefore you are evil" (2006: x).

To that extent, while in the first instance the negation of an outside, opposite being affirms the slave's self, in the second one the affirmation of the master's self-negates that of the slave. But one should not read these examples as merely a reversal of a current state of affairs, i.e. that the master simply affirms themselves at a particular moment and this is the end of the matter. The primacy of affirmation is a pure call for a way of existing based on constant creation. Deleuze renders this point clear by reading the Nietzschean eternal return as a predominantly ethical principle. To that extent, as Deleuze illustrates, the maxim "*whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return*" acquires an unprecedented gravity (Deleuze 2006: 68). The eternal return performs a selective process, in the sense that "the thought of the eternal return eliminates from willing everything which falls outside the eternal return, it makes willing a creation, it brings about the equation '*willing = creating*" (Deleuze 2006: 69). By this Deleuze wants to suggest that the ethical stand of eternal return presupposes that by willing the eternal return of something we are willing as a *whole* and as such there is an affirmative and joyful element in willing, which to that extent becomes synonymous with creating. Hence, every encounter in life is taken in a 'light' spirit and it is evaluated in accordance with the way we affect it and it affects us and it is not judged based on external conditions. However, with the triumph of slave morality, the forces of reaction prevail over the active ones, and as such, in Deleuze's words:

> Good and evil are new values, but how strangely these values are created! They are created by reversing good and bad. They are not created by acting but by holding back from acting, not by affirming, but by beginning with denial. This is why they are called un-created, divine, transcendent, superior to life. But think of what these values hide, of their mode of creation. They hide an extraordinary

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The sense of guilt is one of the main manifestations of this internalisation of transcendence (e.g. in the form of the 'Superego').

hatred, a hatred for life, a hatred for all that is active and affirmative in life. No moral values would survive for a single instant if they were separated from the premises of which they are the conclusion. And, more profoundly, no religious values are separable from this hatred and revenge from which they draw the consequences. The positivity of religion is only apparent: they conclude that the wretched, the poor, the weak, the slaves, are the good since the strong are 'evil' and 'damned.' They have invented the good wretch, the good weakling: there is no better revenge against the strong and happy (2006: 122).

This statement sums up perfectly the problem of moral values as transcendent foundations and the problem of a mode of existing which is faithful to primary principles and hierarchies. This is manifested through the use the word 'un-created.' Moral values are 'un-created' because they are to be thought of as the unquestionable foundations of 'the Truth' of every existence. The very fact that they are not created by anyone (e.g. just like the predominant Judaeo-Christian notion of God, who is a-genealogical) suggests that they cannot be modified or be the subject of any critique. Hence, to that extent they become the very opposite of an active, or 'ethical' mode of living that is characterised by a constant mode of creation. Such an ethical life, then, will never be satisfied with any mode of existing which is imposed from above, in the form of such moral values but it will always seek new ways of affirming itself.

3. Spinoza: Deleuze's Joyful Teacher

Spinoza's thought can be summed up as an assault on the traditional and hierarchical Judaeo-Christian religious tradition and a conception of God as a transcendent Being. Drawn to the most tolerant and liberal circles of Amsterdam, Spinoza started to question the "Jewish-Christian dogmas of the divinity of Scripture, the election of Israel, and the popular ideas of the Hereafter (Feldman 1992: 3)." As a result, Spinoza and his circle followed a different path and "began to propound a more philosophical, or naturalistic, conception of God and religion (Feldman 1992: 3)." Such a path ultimately led Spinoza to reject both the teachings of the Scripture in Christianity but also Judaism, a religion that he was born into (Deleuze 2001: 6–7). As he states, in his *Treatise of Theology and Politics*:

Scripture is not to teach any matters of high-level intellectual theory ·but rather to present what I have called its *summa* or 'top teaching', namely the injunction to love God above all else and to love one's neighbour as oneself·. Given that this is its purpose, we can easily judge that all Scripture requires from men is *obedience*, and that what it condemns is not ignorance but *stubborn resistance* (Spinoza 2017: 108).

This rejection, almost an anti-religious stand (Balibar 2008: 7), significantly shaped his philosophical thought, and had a great impact on the philosopher's life.

Spinoza drew an intimate picture of what 'doing philosophy' meant for him, a picture which goes beyond the strict boundaries of the disciplinary

meaning of the term. For him philosophy was not only a science but 'a way of life' and as such, a philosophical inquiry was not something to be taken up without shaping throughout the philosopher's *ethos*. Spinoza remained true to this quest – a quest for *his* truth and not for the Truth – and for that he had to make sacrifices, demanded by his faithfulness to this notion of 'philosophy as life.' Indeed, his philosophical ideas and his general lifestyle would lead to a trial led by rabbis, who condemned him of heresy and ultimately to his excommunication (Deleuze 2001: 5–7). Spinoza, unmoved by the events, remained firm in his ideas and he paid for this by being banished from Amsterdam because he was considered "a menace to all piety and morals, whether Jewish or Christian" (Feldman 1992: 3).

The immanent philosophical system of Spinoza influenced like none other the philosophical thought of Deleuze, especially the latter's understanding of what an immanent philosophy is. Deleuze understands an immanent mode of thought as a 'weapon' or 'antidote' for doing away with the dominant transcendent tradition of Western thought. Unsurprisingly, then, it is in his reading of Spinoza that Deleuze identifies that this critique of transcendence can also point towards a critique of eternal values and morality. Deleuze's reading of Spinoza helps him to supplement his ideas on the issue, drawn by his earlier readings of Nietzsche, and ultimately leads him to make a distinction between moral values and ethics. Spinoza's philosophy is to be thought of as "a philosophy of life" (Deleuze 2001: 26). As such, it is, at least on that issue, very close to Nietzschean thought, which, as stated above, is also based on a notion of 'joy' and is critical of transcendence. Spinoza's philosophy, says Deleuze, "consists precisely in denouncing all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life … Life becomes "poisoned" when it is infused and judged accordingly based on categories of "Good and Evil, of blame and merit, of sin and redemption" (Deleuze 2001: 260). The emergence of moral ideas, of final ends, of a God who acts as a judge and punishes accordingly are nothing more than illusions (*illusion of values*), due to our *inadequate ideas* – that is, "ideas that are confused and mutilated, effects separated from their real causes" (Deleuze 2001: 23). These inadequate ideas lead us to confuse bad encounters for morally prohibited and evil acts. This is the point for Deleuze, via the medium of Spinoza, that moral values emerge. So, for example, when parents say to their children 'don't eat this' children can confuse that as a prohibition. What actually happens though is that the coming-together of the children and the food is simply an encounter between two bodies "which are not compatible" (Deleuze 2001: 22). As a result, one or two of them will be affected by the other in a way that is *bad*, but it is merely bad just for itself. In order to explain this, Deleuze makes a distinction between the transcendent, moral idea of Good and Evil on the one hand, and the immanent, ethical notion of good and bad on the other. In the first case, that of Good and Evil, the definition of something as 'good' and as 'evil' takes place through the judgment of transcendent values, of so-called 'eternal truths.' In the second, 'good' and 'bad' define an encounter between bodies in nature, "a composition." In this

vein, something is defined as good when the two bodies that are combined "form a more powerful whole" (Deleuze 2001: 18, 23). Thus, it is good because it extends the power of the body, its ability to act. A bad encounter takes place when the encounter of the two bodies results in the decomposition of one or the two, leading to the decrease of its power. As a result, the distinction between good and bad is based solely on an *evaluation* of a particular, singular encounter. Consequently, I would say that while the Good and Evil distinction manifests a transcendent universal, an unquestioned Truth, the good and bad distinction is more of a singular outcome in a particular encounter.[9]

At this point, we arrive at the aforementioned distinction between ethics and morality according to Deleuze. When we think of the encounter as a composition of two bodies, we evaluate "the capacity [of bodies, ideas, beings] to be affected" (Deleuze 2001: 26). The evaluation relies solely on immanent modes and thus it is characterised by a horizontally. On the other hand, operating through a vertical relation, "morality always refers existence to transcendent values" (Deleuze 2001: 2003). Hence, "morality is the judgment of God, the *system of Judgment*" (Deleuze 2001: 23). Through this analysis, it now becomes clear what Deleuze meant by the claim that morality is "a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to transcendent values (this is good, that's bad…)" while on the other hand, "ethics is a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved" (Deleuze 1995: 100).

To sum up, a Deleuzian ethology could be characterised as an attempt to "define bodies, animals, or humans by the affects they are capable of […]. Ethology is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterise each thing" (Deleuze 2001: 125). In other words, it is a matter of evaluating the capability of a body to increase or decrease its power when it encounters another. This evaluation of the encounter, as stated above, is solely based on the capability of these bodies to affect or be affected and, thus, external moral values do not dictate and do not judge by any means the quality of the 'coming together' of the two bodies. It is in this way that immanent ethics are characterised by 'joy,' 'affirmation' and 'experimentation.' Thus, they do not have anything to do with transcendent moral values, prohibitions, restrictions and lack of movement and passivity.

But what is the *practical* element of such a distinction? Or in other words, how does this have an impact on 'real life' encounters? An indication lies in Deleuze's distinction between the three personas of *ressentiment*, or the three personas that generate, sustain and turn *ad infinitum* 'the wheels' of domination and relations of transcendence and morality. These three personas are 'the slave,' 'the tyrant' and 'the priest.' The slave is the person with sad passions,

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9   The distinction is manifested in a better way in the Greek translation of *Practical Philosophy*. The Greek translator makes a distinction between Καλό [Kalo] και Κακό [Kako] (meaning Good and Evil or Bad), as universal categories, irrespective of the particular encounters, and καλό [για εμένα] και κακό [για εμένα] (meaning 'good for me and bad for me') (Deleuze 1996: 38).

with bad consciousness and negativity in Nietzschean terms. The tyrant takes advantage of the sad passions of the first, imposing their rule and domination over the slave. Finally, the priest "is saddened by the human condition and by human passions in general" (Deleuze 2001: 25); as such, he manifests a hatred for the worldly life, contempt and vanity. For the priest, the kingdom of God is the final destination of the human, the absolute end and eternal truth. Is this not precisely, how our masters operate today? Is it not the case, that the sovereign, the state, and the powerful of the world take advantage of sad passions as *fear* or *guilt* imposing their rule?[10] Usually, the help from the priest is paramount. The priest, even in a so-called secular milieu, promises redemption by asking for sacrifice(s) (Newman 2018: 11). Furthermore, the priest pacifies and keeps people in order by advising patience, obedience and acceptance. But, as Anton Schütz states:

> if God is the immanent cause of all things, as Spinoza holds he is, then thanking God or praying to God or invoking God, or any other transaction involving God, appears as a pretty silly past pastime, but much worse must be said of letting one's own or other humans' lives be subjected to God's will, governed by god-appointed governors, or based on obedience to God's name (2011: 196).

Is not the promise for redemption and the merits of life 'a hatred for life' *par excellence*? A detachment and a freezing of movement and experimentation that leads to the ultimate impotence and servitude. It is, then, for these reasons that I call Deleuzian ethics 'an-archic,' in the sense that they refuse to be subjected to any primary cause or a primary foundation, an ἀρχή [*archē*], and the commandments of 'a higher' Being which 'judges' and dictates an 'un-creative' life. Hence, at this point, it becomes clear how a notion of an immanent thought – and to that extent, the notion of Deleuze's immanent thought – is linked to an ethics as opposed to transcendent morality. In addition, we have seen how this distinction (of ethics and morality) is a matter of a *lived philosophy*, as a creative manner that, potentially, inspires new modes of existing.

Conclusion

Admittedly, then, there is an *'an-archic'* element when we refer to Deleuzian ethics, in the sense that they do not rely on any form of hierarchy and authority of 'higher' Being or value to be defined or to be judged. An ethical way of

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10   It is striking how today the re-emergence of (neo)Fascism and (neo)Nazism operates through the cultivation of fear for difference, the 'other.' Furthermore, the operation of guilt is very effective in the new forms of 'imperialism,' in our 'neoliberal era' through an extremely successful mechanism of using an indefinite 'debt' as the ultimate 'weapon' for ruling over the states or persons, by presenting their debt as the ultimate guilt that must be repaid. See also how 'the state' presents itself as the outright, 'benevolent' entity that demands contributions from the indebted and egotistic citizens as 'a sacrifice.' This demand is justified because the citizens are, fundamentally, guilty *a priori* for their so-called 'egotistic nature.' For such view see Slavoj Žižek (2012: 113–114).

living, in the Deleuzian sense of the term, will not turn to higher values to 'shape' its ways of existing according to the command of such values. It is rather, as Deleuze states, a matter of forming 'a style of life' according to 'optional rules.' On the contrary, as we have seen, an idea of morality is manifested as a 'universal,' 'transcendent' set of rules and constraints. In that sense, a call for ethics may be seen as a way out of these claims and rules that are dictated by a notion of morality, as it is illustrated by Deleuze. But here we need to ask; what could this way out be, or what is the *moral* of ethics and morality distinction? In other words, what could be the impact of it in broader terms? A potential answer to these questions may be given if we consider the condition of our age.

Even in our so-called 'secular,' (post)modern age, we are yet to be freed from the 'shadows' of a transcendent morality. Instead, what we witness is a rise of the calls for 'higher' principles, such as 'the nation,' 'race,' 'the state' and so forth. At the same time, any effective resistance to these, often, nationalistic, even fascistic tendencies, is almost impossible to be found. This is, potentially, linked to the problem of morality, in the sense that any motion of resistance acts through a transcendent framework, invoking moral values, such as principles of human rights, the Law, democracy or justice. This is, often, done in a 'banal' way which is completely detached from life and the specificity of each case and thus these forms of resistance remain significantly ineffective. On the other hand, what Deleuze defines as ethics, possibly, leads towards a new way of creative thinking and living in an ethical, expressive way that could do away from dogmas and hierarchies. It is thus, a potential 'line of flight' out of the nihilism caused by dogmas and certainties, towards an *ethos* that embraces an *an-archic* potentiality that calls for experimentation.

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Hristos Marneros

Ka *an-arhičnom* etosu

Apstrakt

Francuski filozof Žil Delez nikada nije izjavio da namerava da napiše ili stvori delo etike ili moralne filozofije, barem ne u tradicionalnom smislu izraza koji se koristi za opisivanje „žanra" filozofske discipline. Međutim, ovaj rad pokazuje da dublje čitanje otkriva da Delezovova filozofska misao manifestuje *etos* koji nas poziva da razmislimo o mogućnosti stvaranja načina postojanja koji je duboko *an-arhičan* (bez ἀρχή [*archē*]), u smislu da se protivi svakom obliku dogmatizma i/ili hijerarhije. Drugim rečima, suprotstavlja se pojmu „osnova" ili porekla – ἀρχή [*archē*]. Ispitivanje ovog *an-arhičnog etosa* se manifestuje kroz Delezovu razliku između etike i morala, kao i kroz njegovo čitanje dela dvojice njegovih glavnih filozofskih prethodnika, Fridriha Ničea i Baruha Spinoze.

Ključne reči: Žil Delez, Fridrih Niče, Baruh Spinoza, *an-arhija*, etika, moral.

III

REVIEWS
PRIKAZI

TERRY PINKARD, *PRACTICE, POWER, AND FORMS OF LIFE; SARTRE'S APPROPRIATION OF HEGEL AND MARX.* CHICAGO AND LONDON: THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2022

Novak Malešević, Institute for Literature and Art. Belgrade, Serbia

There is, at the same time, a certain curiosity and skepticism regarding titles (of monographs, scientific papers, and even newspaper articles) which promise a lot; on one hand, as a reader, the one-who-wants-to-know, you become interested and intrigued by the fullness of meaning of certain titles, while on the other hand, as a critic you know that the text which follows such titles, almost as a rule – defies expectations. The book by Terry Pinkard *Practice, Power, and Forms of Life; Sartre's Appropriation of Hegel and Marx* represents precisely one of such, rather intriguing and seemingly interesting books, which due to its ambitious title is doomed to a sort of epistemological and methodological ambiguity. Whereas the first part of the title (*Practice, Power, and Forms of Life*) suffers from ambiguity of *meaning* (where each of these concepts could probably stand as a separate research guideline, which as such is more suitable for *key words,* rather than for the topic of the text), which the author tries to tame working through Sartre's thought, the second part of the title (*Sartre's Appropriation of Hegel and Marx*), carries with it *methodological* uneasiness, reflected in the question "How to *actually*

read/interpret Hegel's and Marx's influence in Sartre's philosophy?", and more specifically than that: "How to recognize what Sartre *actually* took over from them?" Will the individual fragments from Hegel's and Marx's works be analyzed and compared to that passages from Sartre's works, and thus measure *what is exactly appropriated* from these philosophers? Or, will it be recognized, by moving through Sartre's texts, in them that which is Marxist and Hegelian, not referring much either to Marx or Hegel? The first methodological choice requires a serious comparative analysis (more befitting a doctoral dissertation), for which the book by Terry Pinkard, amounting to about a hundred pages (followed up by fifty pages of endnotes) – was (simply) not strong enough.[1] The author opted for meth-

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1   The fact, however, that not a single text by Marx was stated in the literature, and implicitly, in the very analysis not a single quotation by Marx was cited, says enough about Pinkard's more liberal approach to this topic. The question is in principle: can you speak about Sartre's appropriation of Marx only on the basis of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*? To interpret *Critique* and Marxism within it (that aspect relating to historical

odological compromise, where Marx is indirectly referred to (via Sartre and others), while Hegel's quotation found their place in the text itself. This conditioned methodological and epistemological disproportion in the approach to the authors referred to, which lead to each reference to Marx embodying two issues (of a bad faith): a) that we have to trust in the fact that Sartre adequately appropriated/interpreted Marx and b) that Pinkard adequately clarified Sartre's interpretation of Marx's texts.

However, methodological and epistemological difficulties that this book faces also lead to a very practical issue, which reflects in the question "Who is this book meant for?". It is not the "Introduction" to Sartre's philosophy (ethics, politics, epistemology), nor does it represent the clarification of individual aspects of Marx's or Hegel's thought. Moreover, in certain places, a sort of rhetorical coquetry emerges, which often blurs rather than clarifies the theses it analyzes. The consequences can be that it is easier to understand the text being analyzed than the text which analyzes (explains) it. Let us consider, for example, Pinkard's explanation of impossibility of "I" being the subject of its own consciousness and the Sartre's quotation which follows. "If self-consciousness consists in the subject being conscious of itself as an object, then the subject that is aware of the subject that is not itself an object is not itself self-conscious unless it has, as it were, another subject (another version of itself) conscious of it, ad infinitum. Or, as Sartre also put it, 'if the *I* is a part

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materialism) without referring to Marx means at best to move, without more detailed insights and clarifications, through a well-known analytical palette of Marxist terms (class inequality, exploitation, etc.), in the absence of clear determination of quantity and quality of the "appropriation" of Marx, whereby, if it does not falsify, it at least – trivializes the very relation towards Marx.

of consciousness, there would then be *two I's:* the I of the reflective consciousness and the I of the reflected consciousness', thus requiring yet another *'I'* to identify them.'" (1) Why did this, simple and relatively famous Sartre's formulation about the impossibility of "I" being, at the same time, both the object and the subject of reflection, have to be expressed in such a complicated manner? On the other hand, it would be incorrect - to say that Pinkard's text is obscure, incomprehensible and superficial. Pinkard gives a sound and precise insight into the various stages in the development of Sartre's thought, and explicitly warns of different or similar treatments of the same problem units in different works. In that way, the text gives the impression of wholeness and roundedness, while problem units of Sartre's philosophy, which Pinkard exposes, follow both chronological as well as logical development path of Sartre's thought. (For example, the relation of consciousness and its own Ego ("I") in *Transcendence of the Ego* and in the later texts *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason, 1-4*). Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that Pinkard's book possesses a very interesting structure of exposition; between the *Preface* and *Denouement*, there are three chapters *Spontaneity and Inertia, Spontaneity's Limits and Ethics in Politics,* which are considerably devoid of quotations (of Sartre, Hegel and other authors). Namely, the quotations are transferred to a separate part of the text – the endnotes. According to the author: "This allows for a more narrative exposition of Sartre's thought in the main text while leaving the more scholarly tug and tussle with other scholars for the notes." (xvi) Certain epistemological and methodological uncertainty of this book we spoke about is hereby also explained. Pinkard's text becomes, as needed, both an essay and scientific article depending on the readers' affinity. However,

this is precisely the problem; it alternates between an essay, a scientific article, and hermetically (incomprehensible) material which probably Sartre himself could not, at times, delve into. And sometimes it becomes all of these things, not through the will of the readers, nor author, but by the capriciousness of textual structure of it is own. This is precisely why Pinkard's book on Sartre is intended for everyone and no one. So the scholars who enjoy detailed movements through quotations of various authors will not probably like methodological and epistemological uneven approach to Hegel's and Marx's texts; the students who want to thoroughly get involved in the complexities of Sartre's philosophy, but who will often stumbled on Pinkard's rhetorical hermeticism; the fans of Sartre's thought (to a wider public), especially those keen on ethics, racism and colonial critique, but who will remain disappointed by the book if they do not have a "deeper" background on Sarte's concepts, that is, certain "technical terms".

Finally, what did Sartre appropriate from Hegel? It is already in *Preface* where Pinkard presents us with the fact that the early Sartre was not so steeply acquainted with Hegel's work (this also applies to *Being and Nothingness*), and that it is only with *Critique*, through the translation and critical remarks of Hegel's *Phenomenology* by Jean Hyppolit, that the familiarization was more complete. (x-xi)

Appropriation or more exactly, Sartr's argument with Hegel, is continued in the first chapter *Spontaneity and Inertia*, in which the relationship between the subject ("I") and the first person plural ("We") is resolved, where in the development of spirit, as Hegel believes, "various self-consciousness" merge into themselves. Sartre arguments against it, emphasizing that if "I" really becomes "We" it will condition the impossibility of the existence of "I", which leads to

the problem: "Hot to reconcile the 'I' to the 'We' without absorbing the one into the other" (6). Value difference between "I" and "Other", at Hegel, is established through mutual awareness of the status of the other (master-servant dialectic), whereby the transitivity of the awareness of the existence of others is presumed ("...if I recognize A, and A recognize B, then I also Recognize B"), which Sartre rejects as empty "mirror game." Pinkard shows that for Sartre, it is already in "I" that "second person awareness" exists, which is able to create the value of "I". (10) The author further emphasizes how Hegel's syntagma „"concrete universal", was convenient means for explaining the relationship between practice and action (of an actor). (12) The moment when the action is objectified, conditioned by ideological (socio-historical) pressures, and converted into "recurrent pattern of behavior" (27) it leads towards passivization "spontaneity" which enables the production of "practico-inert" (Sartre's term which signifies "the activity of others insofar as it is sustained and diverted by inorganic inertia."). Practico-inert is drawn into the materialism of the world, limited and conditioned by it; he changes that world, but he is also cheated by that world, by being passivized through everyday activities (imposed on him), without awareness of the totalitarian aspect of his actions. Thus, we arrive at "detached subject", which practically becomes alienated object, which is capable of observing his "machine-like" actions. (22-23) It is precisely "structure of plural human activities" which becomes the reason for antagonism between subjects, and not necessarily "psychology of people". (28) However, it implies that the instance which determines the structure of plurality is not binary (as Hegel thought), but tertiary. Therefore, Sartre rejects Hegel's master-servant dialectic, which establishes values between them (where one

of them creates an axiological whole, that is, speaks from the position of authority), and introduces the third agent (instead of Hegel's Geist) in order to determine and settle the fight between them. (29)

Pinkard starts the second chapter (*Spontaneity's Limits*) by explaining Sartre's term counter-finality, which occurs as a natural consequence of "form of life", that is, "a way of 'being together'". (31) Counter-finality implies different result than the expected one, a different ending compared to the established goal. "However, counter-finalities are, after all, finalities, ends being pursued that turn out differently than they were conceived in the original project". (32) It is precisely in such "tragic conception of dialectic" that Pinkard perceives Sartre's connection with Hegel; after free action (which had been initiated with a certain goal in mind) led to the opposite effects, there is no other thing but to accept responsibility, whereby it is confirmed that "humans are not in harmony with their world". (33) The deconstruction of Hegel's dialectic in the context of master-servant relation becomes the basis for Sartre's understanding of freedom. Freedom can never be actualized in relation to materialism, which reduces it to seriality. It, according to Sartre, has to come from a direct connection between the subjects themselves, "not something that quasi-naturally develops out of something else" (40), as Hegel does by introducing *Geist*. In Pinkard's words: "Sartre's own transformation of the Hegelian proposal is to see the third element not as an independent, 'hyper-organism' *Geist,* but as another individual agent totalizing him..." (41) It is precisely that agent who serves as the third instance which is totalizing the other two, but who is also being devised through the duo it totalizes. Pinkard returns to Sartre's critique of Hegel's thought of the relationship between master and servant at the end

of the second chapter as well, when the relationship of violence and (un)conditional commitment "to his own independence" is spoken about (55). Sartre begrudges Hegel how it is impossible to talk about the master-servant relationship in general (where servant necessarily chooses life instead of "(un)conditional commitment to his own independence"), but that such relations have to be observed in a historical context.

In the third paragraph (*Ethics in Politics*), Pinkard emphasizes the difference between Hegel's and Sartre's understanding of ethics. To Hegel, "moral ethos" (*Sittlichkeit*) is derived from "Lockean rights to life, liberty and property" and Christian morality, which are "actualized" through bourgeois family and monarchy. (76-77) Such a system obtains "rational approval on the part of the participants in that moral ethos", whereby the social structure, despite its divisions, is maintained in harmonic coherence. (77) Pinkard points out that it is precisely that harmony of the system that is the issue to Sartre as it rests on value laws conditioned by historical changes. This means that these values are not and cannot be based on any rationality (that governs them), but on contingencies of social and historical movement, which (almost as a rule) imply some kind of disagreement and conflict.

What was appropriated from Marx? It is difficult to say bearing in mind the methodological foundation (which has been mentioned) on which this book is based. This led to Pinkard establishing a connection between Sartre and Marxism more often, instead of the relation between Sartre and Marx. It is understandably a slippery analytical terrain. *Critique* is a Marxist work (even if in some parts it deviates from Marx), but to analyze it (as Pinkard does it) is not the same as to analyze Marx (and implicitly draw conclusions about the influence of Marx on Sartre). Therefore, in Pinkard's

text, we can rather talk about the impact of *specters* of Marx, which emerge from various usage variations of Marx's name meaning very little ("Western Hegelian-Marxist sense..." (8), "criticism of dogmatic Marxism" (61), "existentialism fused together with Marxism" (63), "his *après*-Marxist point" (79) „orthodox Leninist Marxism" (84) etc.) However, in the third chapter, the section: *What Follows Marxism?* should not be overlooked, where Pinkard, referring to Sartre, states that *Critique* is not a Marxist work. This removal from Marx (Marxism), Pinkard sees in the impossibility of the construction of a classless society. A worker is not only deprived of "labor power", but a whole life, whereby spontaneity is extinguished. Thus, all the systems (and "Soviet-style socialism") suffocate the individual in their foundation - taking his/her freedom.

The book *Practice, Power, and Forms of Life; Sartre's Appropriation of Hegel and Marx*, by Terry Pinkard is one of those well-thought syntheses of large (or even better, diverse) philosophical systems. To link Sartre, Hegel and Marx (as we were promised in the title) is a considerable job and the decision to write such a book stems from years of reading experience of those authors (or about those authors). However, the condition for a well-done synthesis process is implied by previously well-done analyses. It is only by thoroughly breaking the things into its components that we are capable of connecting those parts on the basis of certain qualities or similarities. Unfortunately, Pinkard's book does not fulfill that condition. (Almost) Nothing was spoken about Marx here, while little was said about Hegel. Hence, the synthesis remained based on the analysis of Sartre himself (whose works are already a synthesis of Marx's and Hegel's teachings). Instead of a synthesis based on an analysis, we get a synthesis, whose basis is - another synthesis. This does not mean, however, that Pinkard's book does not have any value. The author moves very steadily through Sartre's philosophy and has a good insight into the dynamics and developmental stages of his thought. The text is not scattered in (pointless) complementation and contextualization (this is a consequence of partially essayistic structure of this book). And such writing is a consequence of the (quality) reading experience.

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