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Hegel and Anticapitalism: Notes on the Political Economy of Poverty

From the very beginning of his philosophical journey, Hegel demonstrated time and again his interest in the questions of political economy. In his earliest writings on religion, politics and economics, Hegel expressed his concern for a topic that was to play a vital role in his later works: the phenomenon of private property. In order to present Hegel's notes on political economy more clearly, I have divided this paper into three sections. The first one deals with Hegel's analysis of private property, industrialisation, and capitalism. The second addresses his attitudes toward the French Revolution, the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and the problem of labour. Finally, the third section is concerned with the political economy of poverty in the context of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, and in it, I point to Hegel's emphasis that extreme and increasing poverty and pauperisation are not accidental phenomena, but are in fact endemic to the modern commodity-producing society.

Keywords: labour, private property, poverty, the state, Hegel

> Since from Hegel philosophical roads lead just unavoidably to the most dangerous robber caves of Feuerbach and Marx there remained to the bourgeois philosophers nothing but to annul Hegel from the history of philosophy simply by a command, and to let science jump back "to Kant" by a magic gesture.
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> (Luxemburg 1990, 490)

Introduction

Although the interest in the history of philosophy is as old as philosophy itself, critical analyses, interpretations, research methodology, and reflections on its purpose started to develop only at the beginning of the 19th century. Before that, the history of philosophy had been written in a chronological or anecdotal manner, often with an *a priori* understanding of a particular philosophical system, but rarely with strict analysis and reference to the historical development of ideas.[1] In contrast to this tradition, Hegel insisted on a historical understanding of the development of philosophy and stepped out of descriptive narratives. He voiced a "reproach of one-sidedness," with which historians of philosophy, depending on their mood, attempted to describe ideas, concepts, and opinions (Hegel 1995, XLV). He compared these historians of philosophy "to animals which have listened to all the tones in some music, but to whose senses the unison, the harmony of their tones, has not penetrated" (Hegel 1995, XLV). Departing from the thesis that philosophy and politics, society and state, morality and right, share a common basis—*Zeitgeist*, Hegel set out to investigate how and why a particular philosophy occurs at a given time and place as a dominant system of thought. By following in these footsteps, we will set ourselves a very similar goal—to examine how Hegel positions himself *vis-a-vis* his own

1 Let us recall here that Karl Marx's dissertation on the difference between the natural philosophy of Epicurus and Democritus—a dissertation in which he demonstrated how, from the antiquity all the way to the 19th century, Epicurus' philosophy was marginalised without a clear explanation in favour of reproducing Cicero's critique of Epicurus' interpretation of the motion of atoms—stands out as one of the earliest examples of a critique of ahistorical narratives of the history of philosophy. Already the 19th- and the early-20th-century philosophical discussions introduced a methodological shift toward a more systematic presentation in the history of philosophy, as was the case with the works of Eduard Zeller, Theodor Gomperz, and Hermann Diels.

time and how socio-political occurrences of that time affected his philosophy, just as his philosophy affected politics, the concept of right, and the critique of political economy.

In this paper, I will develop a Marxist analysis of Hegel's political economy and identify some of his politically progressive, or—to use the parlance of our time—"leftist" views. However, since he produced no single systematic text which could offer us an overarching explanatory model for his vision of political economy, I single out particular "notes," ideas and conceptions from his opus. I start my analytical trajectory with Hegel's early works and move toward his more mature writings. My task is structured as a discussion in three parts. In the first section, I deal with Hegel's analysis of private property, industrialisation, and capitalism. In the second, I turn to his elaborations on the French Revolution, the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and the issue of labour. Finally, the third section studies the political economy of poverty in the context of Hegel's most significant and simultaneously the most controversial work of his late period—the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* ("Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechtes, oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft in Grundrissen" 1821). Here, I point to Hegel's insistence that extreme and increasing poverty and pauperisation are not accidental phenomena, but are in fact endemic to modern commodity-producing society. I will thereby pay due attention to the British political-economic lore that Hegel explored in the works of Adam Ferguson, James Steuart and Adam Smith, but also in English newspapers and journals which he regularly read.

1. Private Property, Industrialisation, and Capitalism

Already in his early writings on theology, politics, and economy, Hegel tackled an issue that was to play a very important role in his mature works—the phenomenon of private property. He raises questions pertaining to the critique of capitalism, and offers poignant analyses of the relationship between politics and production, individualism and political universalism, exaggerated subjectivity and alienation, as well labour in industrial society (Skomvoulis 2015; Thompson 2015; Ross 2015; Buchwalter 2015a). Since Hegel never produced a systematic study that could serve as a foundation for his critique of capitalist political economy, in this paper I will identify several of his essays and texts which, in their own specific ways, engage in a critique of political economy, social politics, and, in Theodor Adorno's words, "the experience, itself unconscious, of abstract labor" (Adorno 1993, 20).

In this paper, I draw on the understanding of capitalism as a very complex historical form or social-property relations that, due to the specificity of its productive and reproductive processes, differs significantly from feudalism and the slaveholding system (Čakardić 2019, 19–36). Capitalism is not a natural and inevitable consequence of human nature, nor simply an extension of age-old practices of trade and commerce (Meiksins Wood 2002). The capitalist mode of production has its own economic logic and a specific class configuration that dictates the unique development and form of social relations. The capitalist system was born in England in the early modern period, with mutually reinforcing agricultural and industrial sectors, as interpreted by the tradition of Political Marxism (Brenner 1985a; 1985b; Meiksins Wood 1991; 2002; Comninel 2000), following the example of Marx (Marx 1982, 877). Hegel bases his analysis of private property and poverty on the examples from British political economy because this country had already gone through the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

Capitalism is a system in which absolutely all economic actors—whether producers or appropriators—depend, in one way or another, on the market to meet their basic needs. Thus, no one in the socio-economic arena appears "directly" in the market—they do so "indirectly." Unlike non-capitalist societies—where producers had non-market access to the means of production, and appropriators used various instruments of political and physical power to appropriate surplus products—in capitalism there is a mutual market dependence of producers and appropriators in which everyone is subjected to the imperatives of competition, accumulation, and labor productivity growth. These imperatives also represent the nature of the capitalist market, which defines access to the basic means of human existence. The conditioning of existence by the strict imperatives of the accumulation and maximization of profit in capitalism does not take place under the control and force of military or political power; on the contrary, individuals are finally "emancipated" from such feudalist repression.

Capitalism appears in its full form only when the older, communal ways of life and subsistence have disappeared, or, more precisely, when they have been destroyed. For capitalism to develop, existing traditions in the access to land as a means of self-reproduction must be shaken, as are communal ties between people. It does not tolerate communal ownership, and it is realized by a mode of production exclusively based on private ownership. Hegel was well aware of these shifts in political economy, and he was very critical of its capitalist tendencies.

During his studies in Tübingen, Hegel made notes on John Locke and developed an interest in economic analysis, that is, political economy (Cullen 1979, 16). These notes were mediated by Lockean reflections on the notion of property as an embodiment of workers' personalities. Hegel's interest in economic theory may be illustrated through a couple of vitally important sections from the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, especially §51 (Hegel 2014, 81). As we shall see, the political and economic framework of the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* grew out of the implicit antagonism between wealth and poverty in contemporary society, and it was long before Marx that Hegel emphasized the historical and societal problem of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and warned against the dehumanising effects of industrialisation and labour.

Charles Taylor points out that Hegel, in his analyses of contemporary industrial production and its inherent tendency to move toward a deeper and more sophisticated division of labour, manages to locate the origins and the historical emergence of proletariat (Taylor 1975, 437; Taylor 1979, 130). A consequence of that new class configuration, as Taylor claims while reading and citing Hegel, consists in the fact that "the proletariat will be impoverished, materially by low wages and uncertainty of employment, and spiritually by the narrowness and monotony of its work" (Taylor 1979, 130). Taylor sees the natural consequence of this process as nothing other than "reducing the proletariat to »bestiality«" (Taylor 1975, 437). Along the same lines, Nathan Ross writes that Hegel refers to the "logic of mechanism to describe those aspects of the modern, industrial economy," and to point to the political and economic problem of "the industrialization of labour, the rise of self-interest as a constitutive force in politics, and the need for state intervention in managing the economy" (Ross 2008, 4).

Domenico Losurdo demonstrates with equal perceptiveness how "Hegel's unrestricted acceptance of advanced industrial society never turns into a romanticized account of it" (Losurdo 2004, 150). In fact, poverty represents an inevitable consequence of industrialisation, and almost becomes "synonymous, as Hegel constantly emphasizes, with a condition of generalized violence" (Losurdo 2004, 150). Michalis Skomvoulis, in his article *Hegel Discovers Capitalism*, details Hegel's "discovery" of capitalism, which occurred in the early 1800s, when Hegel first encountered the theories of modern political economy associated with Smith, Ferguson, and Steuart (Skomvoulis 2015). For Michael Thompson, in the "Capitalism as Deficient Modernity: Hegel against the Modern Economy," the pathologies associated by Hegel with capi-

talist economies entail that his political philosophy is essentially "anti-capitalist" (Thompson 2015). All of these are interpretative variations that neatly direct us to Hegel's interest in the issue of private property and capitalism, which are imposed on the already strained relationship between the productive and the political sphere.

There is no doubt that in his theory Hegel supported the sanctity of property rights, yet he was well aware of the negative impact they had, not only on the individual, but also on society as a whole. In principle, Hegel defends the legitimacy of egotistic action and the consequent inequality in civil society (Mowad 2015, 71). "For many," Andrew Buchwalter emphasizes, "Hegel remains first and foremost a champion of the Prussian state and state power generally," but "it is nonetheless a mistake to disregard his possible contribution to reflections of the nature and status of capitalist market societies" (Buchwalter 2015a, 2). Hegel describes how mutual dependence for the sake of satisfying personal needs forces individuals to engage in reciprocal acknowledgement in the historical process of commodity exchange (Saito 2015, 43–44). "By a dialectical movement," writes Hegel, "*subjective selfishness* turns into a *contribution towards the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else*" (Hegel 2014, §199, 233). He reminds us, as is pointed out in the studies of Shlomo Avineri and Bernard Cullen, that extreme poverty is not an accidental phenomenon, but rather a key element of the modern commodity-producing society (Avineri 1972, 96; Cullen 1979, 66). It is a result of the rapid expansion of the market and of continually-changing needs and fashions within the internal logic of the productive process, a consequence "of (changes in—A.Č.) fashion or a fall in prices due to inventions in other countries" (Hegel 1983, 139–140). "This inequality between wealth and poverty," writes Hegel, "this need and necessity, lead to the utmost dismemberment of the will, to inner indignation and hatred" (Hegel 1983, 140).

Hegel's understanding of economic and political alienation of modern world was a direct consequence of religious alienation and social gaps among the Christians, which he describes in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* (Hegel 1996a). In the chapter "Common Ownership of Goods," he brusquely criticises the Catholic Church and very directly addresses the class antagonism between the wealthy and the poor:

> In the Catholic church this enrichment of monasteries, priests, and churches has persisted; little is distributed to the poor, and this little in such a way that beggars subsist on it, and by an unnatural perversion of things the idle vagrant who spends the night on the streets is better off in many places than the industrious craftsman. (Hegel 1996a, 88)

Even sharper remarks may be found in the chapter entitled "Equality":

> A simpleminded man may hear his bishop or superintendent preaching with touching eloquence about these principles of humility, about the abhorrence of all pride and all vanity, and he may see the edified expressions with which the lords and ladies in the congregation listen to this; but if, when the sermon is over, he approaches his prelate and the gentry with the hope of finding them humble brothers and friends, he will soon read in their laughing or contemptuous faces that all this is not to be taken *au pied de la lettre* and that only in Heaven will it find its literal application. (Hegel 1996a, 89)

In order to address social, class and economic issues more directly, Hegel compiled a detailed study of the Bernese fiscal system during his stay in the city (Rosenkranz 1844, 61). Also, having observed social differences among the believers, he scrupulously analysed the *English Poor Laws*, which testifies to Hegel's passionate reading and constant following of foreign newspapers and journals (Rosenkranz 1844, 85; Waszek 1988, 85; Buck-Morrs 2009, 18).[2] Even though none of these studies survived, a text dealing with similar issues that endured is Hegel's 1798 anonymous German translation of the French pamphlet *Confidential letters on the Previous Governmental-Legal Relations of the Waadtland (Pays de Vaud) to the City of Bern*, originally written by the Bernese jurist Jean-Jacques Cart ("Vertrauliche Briefe über das vormalige staatsrechtliche Verhältnis des Waadtlandes »Pays de Vaud« zur Stadt Bern von Cart, Jean Jacques").[3] The translation features Hegel's foreword and notes (Hegel 1970a), and in the notes and remarks to the translated letters he displays a burning interest in the specific economic, legal, and political aspects of the Bernese dominance over the Vaud canton, and

2 In his analysis of the 18th-century Scottish thinkers, Norbert Waszek mentions a number of Hegel's extracts from British newspapers (*Quarterly Review*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Morning Chronicle*) which have survived in manuscript and are now kept at Berlin and Harvard (Waszek 1988, 85). Waszek notes: "For the central years of the German Enlightenment (1763–1789), the crucial significance of the journals can hardly be overestimated: they sprang up by the thousands, they were run by men like Lessing and Nicolai, they received contributions from even greater men like Kant and Herder, and they were read by everybody, including the rising generation of Goethe and Hegel" (Waszek 1988, 66). Susan Buck-Morrs underlines the affinities between the politics of Hegel's early philosophy of spirit and his reading of the journal *Minerva* (Buck-Morrs 2009, 18).

3 It was only in 1909 that Hegel was recognised as the author of the translation and its commentary. Curiously enough, this was in fact Hegel's first published work (Avineri 1972, 5–6).

emphasizes the problems of nepotism and oligarchy. There is even a brief and sharply critical discussion of the Bernese tax and statistics system. At one point in the pamphlet, Hegel roughly criticises the political and legal organisation of Bern, in which "the criminal court is entirely in the hands of the government" and "in no other country (…) are so many people sentenced to death by hanging, wheeling, and decapitation, as in this canton" (Hegel 1982a, 198).

During that period, alongside the critical fragments on the traditional state, Hegel continued to contemplate the relation between Christianity and political institutions, and critically examined the role of institutionalised religion, superstition and natural law in opposing modernist notions and customary law, an intellectual venture he had already begun in *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*. I am unable to sufficiently stress the fact that Hegel was almost alone among the philosophers of his time—except for, perhaps, Fichte (Rose 1995, 55–56; Saito 2015, 37–41)—in identifying the crucial role of the economics in political, religious, and cultural life.[4] In a letter to his friend Schelling from January 1795, he wrote:

> Orthodoxy is not to be shaken as long as the profession of it is bound up with worldly advantage and interwoven with the totality of a state. This interest is too strong for orthodoxy to be given up so soon, and it operates without anyone being clearly aware of it as a whole. As long as this condition prevails, orthodoxy will have on its side the entire ever-preponderant herd of blind followers or scribblers devoid of higher interests and thoughts. (Hegel 1984, 31)

Only a few years later, in the commentaries to his reading of the Gospel of Matthew, published in *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*, Hegel used a direct and polemic tone to communicate his bitterness towards the exhausting effects of private interests that intersected with the political, social, and religious sphere of life, especially in the form of private property. In that work, he wrote the following:

> About the command which follows (Matthew vi. 19–34) to cast aside care for one's life and to despise riches, as also about Matthew xix. 23: "How hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven," there is nothing to be said; it is a litany pardonable only in sermons and rhymes, for such a command is

4 It should be noted that some analyses point to the fact that Hegel was not the first in his generation to perceive, or even analyse, problems in modern civil society, because it had already been done by the young Romantics in the late 1790s (Beiser 2006, 243).

> without truth for us. The fate of property has become too powerful for us to tolerate reflections on it, to find its abolition thinkable. (Hegel 1996b, 221)

Hegel was quite preoccupied with the problem of duality and the separation of institutional religion and the state. His early theological works definitely ought to be read through the lens of an attempt to solve that conflict by demanding cohesion and unity, a role-model for which he saw in the organisation of the ancient *polis*. In his foreword to Hegel's *Political Writings*, Jürgen Habermas argues that Hegel treated the ancient *polis* as a paradigmatic example of a political structure that in itself united the specific and the social being (Habermas 1966, 358).[5] Despite the fact that one of Hegel's primary goals was to find out "how to reach such a synthesis within the conditions of the modern world" (Avineri 1972, 33), in *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*, it seems that the gap between the religion and the state is represented as even deeper and more complicated, which is supported by the final sentence of this unusual treatise: "And it is its fate that church and state, worship and life, piety and virtue, spiritual and worldly action, can never dissolve into one" (Hegel 1966b, 301).

2. The French Revolution, Feudalism, and Labour

Hegel studied theology and philosophy at Tübingen, where he met the Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderin and his junior by five years—the philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling. As a student, he admired and avidly supported the French Revolution, which remained continuously present in his philosophy in different ways (Fluss 2016; Fluss and Greene 2020). In his student years, Hegel served as member of a political club that was under surveillance for its activities (Avineri

5 There are at least three approaches to Hegel's view of the ancient *polis* as a concept that could bear political significance in modern times. In his foreword to Hegel's *Political Writings*, Habermas states that the ancient *polis* was a source of inspiration for the Hegelian concept of the modern state, which was sketched between 1798 and 1801. In *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, Avineri recognizes that it was already in Frankfurt, during the work on *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*, that Hegel became aware of the impossibility of restoring the ancient *polis* in modern times, citing Hegel's polemic on Klopstock's fragment called *Is Judea, then, the Teutons' Fatherland?* as proof (Avineri 1972, 21–22). Finally, in *The Young Hegel*, György Lukács argues that, in *The Positivity of Christian Religion*, Hegel was still haunted by the utopian vision of returning to ancient Greece, which he finally abandoned only in *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*.

1972, 3). Some pieces of evidence and legends tell us that, during his studies, Hegel participated in several student activities related to the French Revolution. One of those legends is related by Terry Pinkard in his biography on Hegel:

> Some fellow students later recounted an anecdote about this period according to which the trio of Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel erected a "freedom tree"—a kind of revolutionary Maypole—on the fourteenth of July, 1793 (a year into the Terror, during which the guillotines were working full time) on a field near the town of Tübingen and danced the revolutionary French dance, the Carmognole, around it, all the while singing the words to the Marseillaise (which Schelling had translated into German). (Pinkard 2000, 24)

For Hegel, the French Revolution represented a crucial turning-point in the development of modern philosophy. In his words, it was a "world-historical overturn," characterised by the tension between the forces that celebrated progressive ideals of revolutionary consciousness, and those who rejected the direction of the world-historical change, and advocated for traditional values, political restoration, and "good old rights."

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> (I)t is with Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, that the French Revolution finds its theoretical expression. The liberal authors of the time, on the other hand, develop their thought for the most part during the controversy and the struggle against the French Revolution. And if, as we believe, the political and ideal legacy that stems from the French Revolution constitutes the foundation par excellence of modern freedom, in order to gain a thorough understanding of this freedom it is necessary to draw from classic German philosophy rather than from its contemporary liberal tradition. (Losurdo 2004, 305)

In *The Hegel Variations*, Fredric Jameson argues that

> the French Revolution was not only an immense political overturning, the end of the feudal system or the displacement of a whole aristocratic elite and of the monarchy itself by the masses of the common people, (but—A.Č.) also the climax of a process of secularisation as such. (Jameson 2010, 60)

This is a very valuable argument if we want to explore the secular influence of the French Revolution on philosophy, the capacity for individual progress, and the political potential of labour beyond feudalist privilege or relations of production characteristic of feudalism. It is also crucial for exploring the relation of feudalist and sacral tradition *vis-a-vis*

the modern legal concept of the state as Hegel attempted to systematise it in his social philosophy. Jameson writes:

> This process (of French Revolution—A.Č.) is not merely to be characterized as the coming of wage labor, although it was also that, but also as the liberation of human activity from the shackles of the sacred—the so-called "*carrière ouverte aux talents*": not just the possibility of rising beyond the traditional caste barriers of the old regime, but the plebeianization of that old religious conception of vocation as such or "calling": the chance now to follow ones interests and to practice whatever activity speaks to our individual subjectivities. (Jameson 2010, 61)

Hegel's orientation towards big historical events of his time has another peculiar trait which sets him apart from all his contemporary philosophers. György Lukács contends:

> It is not only the case that he made the greatest and fairest German assessment of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period. In addition, he is the only German thinker to have made a serious attempt to come to grips with the industrial revolution in England. He is the only man to have forged a link between the problems of classical English economics and those of philosophy and dialectics. (Lukács 1975, XXVI)

"We stand," as was stated in a lecture on speculative philosophy held in Jena at the end of 1806, "in an important epoch, a ferment, where spirit has jolted, emerged from its former shape, and gained a new one" (Ritter 1984, 53). In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel writes:

> Besides, it is not difficult to see that our own epoch is a time of birth and a transition to a new period. Spirit has broken with the previous world of its existence and its ways of thinking; it is now of a mind to let them recede into the past and to immerse itself in its own work at reshaping itself. (Hegel 2018, 8–9)

"For Hegel, the French Revolution is that event around which all the determinations of philosophy in relation to its time are clustered," claims Joachim Ritter in his essay, and "there is no other philosophy that is a philosophy of revolution to such a degree and so profoundly, in its innermost drive, as that of Hegel" (Ritter 1984, 43). "The central historical events," according to Lukács, "are the French Revolution and the resulting class struggles in France with their consequent impact on internal German problems" (Lukács 1975, XXVI). "For his part, Hegel hailed the French Revolution," maintains Arno Mayer, "as a »world-

-historical« event precisely because of its engagement on behalf of man, regardless of religion or nation. Needless to say, in their time Marx and Engels fully shared this view" (Mayer 2000, 31). Even the Young Hegelians, like Bruno Bauer, asserted that "Hegel's *Phenomenology* never really left the soil of the French Revolution" (Fluss and Greene 2020). Hegel also diligently followed French intellectual trends. He read Jean Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot, and even praised French atheism, or those currents of the Radical Enlightenment, as having a deep and rebellious feeling which "opposed the meaningless hypotheses and assumptions of positive religion" (Fluss and Greene 2020).

As I mentioned earlier, Hegel had celebrated the storming of the Bastille as a student. However, he simultaneously cultivated the spirit of revolution in later years. This is evidenced by the following anecdote, to which Pinkard draws attention. In July 1820, having travelled to Dresden, Hegel gathered with friends and colleagues at the inn called the Blue Star. When the waiter served him the common local Meißner wine with the dinner, the philosopher rejected the offer and ordered Sillery, the most exquisite champagne of its time. Having somewhat secretively passed the bottle around the table to his colleagues for a toast, everybody accepted the generous gesture, yet they were confused about what they were toasting. Pinkard describes the rest of the scene:

> (W)hen it became clear that nobody at the table knew exactly why they should be drinking to that particular day, Hegel turned in mock astonishment and with raised voice declared, "This glass is for the 14th of July, 1789—to the storming of the Bastille." (Pinkard 2000, 451)

Although he always cultivated the rationalist assumptions of the French Revolution as a source of modern rights, after 27th of July 1794, when Robespierre was taken to the guillotine, Hegel grew increasingly discontented with the path the Revolution had taken, especially with the counter-revolutionary consequences he observed from the perspective of the old German state. The principles of the Revolution did not exert a positive influence on Germany, and feudalist alienation was not replaced with a new cohesive community of free citizens that was founded on the harmony of the private and the public. Neither did it lead to the emancipation of the bourgeoisie from feudal privileges and the rights derived from them. Universalism thus retreated to the realm of thought, instead of turning into reality. A unique opportunity was missed, as Hegel understood it, for reason to finally actualise itself, so "that the leavened dough of revolutionary principles

of that time" and "the abstract thoughts of freedom" finally be translated into positive constitutional law (Hegel 2014a, 64). The relationship between the German state and the French Revolution was described by Hegel in the following way:

> The attitude of the Estates that have been convened in Württemberg is precisely the opposite of what began twenty-five years ago in a neighboring realm and what at the time had resonated among all spirits: that in a state constitution nothing ought to be recognized as valid except what can be recognized according to the right of reason. (Hegel 2014a, 64)

In the atmosphere of very critical attitudes toward the German monarchy, princely appearances and their political address, which revealed "the emptiness (…), and in general the nullity and unreality of public life," as well as "moral and hypochondriacal self-conceit toward the public" (Hegel 2014a, 37), utterly dissatisfied with the poor reception of the spiritual principles of the Revolution in Germany, Hegel wrote thus in the early draft of his introduction to *The German Constitution*:

> The organization of this body called the German constitution was built up in a life totally different from the life it had later and has now. The justice and power, the wisdom and courage of times past; the honour and blood, the wellbeing and distress of generations long dead; and the relationships and manners which have perished with them; all these are expressed in the forms of this body. But the course of time and of the civilization that has been meanwhile developing has sundered the fate of that past from the life of the present. The building in which the fate dwelt is no longer supported by the fate of the present generation. (Hegel 1982b, 346)

Hegel was working on *The German Constitution* for several years, that is, from 1798 to 1802. The text may serve as an excellent illustration of his sensibility for the social and political topics that concerned him every day. How immersed he was in contemporary socio-political events becomes quite clear in his famous quote: "(r)eading the morning newspaper is the realist's morning prayer" (Hegel 2002, 247). In *The German Constitution* Hegel begins his comprehensive analysis of the German state of the time and its administration with a sharp and negative critique of the political situation in his country of origin, and simply asserts that "Germany is no longer a state" (Hegel 2004a, 6). The universal power of the state to enact laws had evaporated, and as a consequence

the widespread positivist legislative "no longer treats constitutional law as a science, but only as a description of what exists empirically and not comfortably with a rational idea" (Hegel 2004a, 6). For Hegel,

> German constitutional law is therefore a collection of private rights; (…) the state had in the first instance no other function in this regard, but to confirm that it had been deprived of its power. (Hegel 2004a, 11)

The elaborate manner in which Hegel addressed the transition from feudalism to capitalism in this work suggests that he engaged in a theoretical attempt to examine and dissect the uneasy relationship between private rights and the public sphere. He stated that the birth of the modern world was marked by a progressive separation of the private and the public (Losurdo 2004, 64). Furthermore, he highlights the difficulty of establishing a modern constitutional state as an alternative to a feudalist monarchy that relies on "a register of the most varied constitutional rights acquired in the manner of civil law (*Privatrecht*)" (Hegel 2004a, 12). Avineri posits that Hegel's discourse was aimed at emancipating the German political system from the shackles of feudalism, medievalism and petty absolutism, and at helping bring about the modernisation of political life in Germany (Avineri 1972, 61). Hegel's idea of the constitution as reason itself relied on putting in place the administrative and rational order in the fragmented German state, which was characterised by a mixture of various feudal private--public power mechanisms. This idea was also anchored in Hegel's discontent with the consequences of changes in social relations which historically resulted from the erosion of the feudal system and from the constitution of new class configurations. Unlike Britain or France, late-18th-century Germany was still not a capitalist and nation state (Lafrance 2019, 124) as it was after 1871, when the Second German Reich was created. From 1815 to 1871 Germany was splintered into thirty-nine independent states that constituted the German Confederation ("Deutscher Bund"). The political and economic power of Germany were not yet separate entities, and this unity of state administration and its means of creating surplus value represented one of the core elements of feudal social relations. It was only under capitalism that these two spheres were divorced from each other (Čakardić 2019, 20–21). The historian James Bryce, in his book *The Holy Roman Empire,* published in 1864, offered a vivid description of the fragmentation and decentralization of Germany at the time:

> One day's journey in Germany might take a traveller through the territories of a free city, a sovereign abbot, a village belonging to an imperial knight, and the dominions of a landgrave, a Duke, a prince and a king, so small, so numerous and so diverse were the principalities. (Cited in: Cullen 1979, 42)

Another important topic Hegel struggled with in *The German Constitution* was the absence of a "common political authority" (*Staatsgewalt*) that would enforce the law across the whole German territory. "No constitution," he wrote, "as a whole, as a state, has a poorer system than the German Empire" (Hegel 1982b, 345). He alleged that German laws are based on pure selfishness, instead of universal needs:

> Political powers and rights are not offices of state designed in accordance with an organisation of the whole, and the services and duties of individuals are not determined by the needs of the whole. On the contrary, every individual member of the political hierarchy, every princely house, every estate (*Stand*), every city, guild, etc.—everything which has rights or duties in relation to the state—has acquired them for itself. (Hegel 2004a, 11–2)

In parallel with this, Hegel was developing his criticism of German constitutional law as a form of private law. He wrote the following in the early draft of the introduction to *The German Constitution*:

> Possession existed before law and did not come from laws but was conquered and turned into customary law. In its origin, therefore, German public law is basically private law, and political rights are legal possession, property. (Hegel 1982b, 347–348)

A couple of sentences later Hegel concludes that the privileged class affords itself an independence from the whole, and that this privilege of "isolation" from the state as a community represents an exclusive class right. "The rights of this extraction from the whole," he claims, "which individual Estates achieved for themselves, are sacred, sacrosanct rights (…) guarded with greatest scrupulousness and most fearful diligence" (Hegel 1982b, 349).

Hegel's class critique, directed at the discrepancy between private and public rights, did not require a revolutionary change of the whole of modern society. After all, Hegel was not Marx. Rebecca Comay emphasises that Hegel was not prepared "to identify capitalism itself as its own gravedigger" (Comay 2011, 141). Instead, he was interested in some kind of new politically-economic harmony of society that would

supersede the individualism of the modern world. He was in need of an overarching philosophical system that would enable the modern human to perceive and understand the interdependence of many forces that are operative in society. Following these premises, Hegel had already compiled the pamphlet entitled *The Magistrates should be Elected by the People* (Hegel 1798), which begins with a call for reform and appeals to the courage and to the sense of justice among the people of Württemberg. Under the subtitle "On the recent internal affairs of Württemberg, in particular the inadequacies of the municipal constitution," Hegel proclaims:

> It is time that the people of Württemberg ceased to vacillate between hope and fear, to alternate between expectancy and frustrated expectations. (…) For men of nobler aspirations and purer zeal, it is time above all to focus their undirected (*unbestimmten*) will on those parts of the constitution which are founded on injustice, and to apply their efforts to the necessary change which such parts require. (Hegel 2004b, 1)

Whether in a revolutionary or in a reformist sense, Hegel finds the dominant feudal rule absolutely unacceptable, which he made sure to emphasize on every single page of this brochure. As noted by Ritter, restoration suffers from internal contradiction as "its inverted character consists in that it opposes itself antithetically to the present-day principle and thus negates the historical substance itself, which it yet wishes to preserve and reestablish" (Ritter 1984, 57). It is the duty of philosophy to reveal these contradictions and offer a comprehensive understanding of the modern world and its development. Likewise, it must be remarked that social and political experiences do not constitute accidental epiphenomena of the human condition, but are in fact a central feature of an individual's relationship to the world. By analysing that relationship, we develop the power of spirit.

Hegel's first attempt to systematically elaborate the thus understood "philosophy of spirit" may be traced back to his *System of Ethical Life* ("System der Sittlichkeit") of 1802/03 (Hegel 1979). It was in this work that he conducted the most important methodological and epistemological modifications of his political philosophy (Blunden 2003). Here, Hegel delivered a vivid presentation of labour typical for the modern commercial society, and displayed his familiarity with the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production, which was already in its mature stage in Great Britain and France, but not in Germany. The results of Hegel's reception of political economy are for the first time crystallized in

this manuscript (Saito 2015, 35).[6] "This description," argues Herbert Marcuse, "contains an imminent critique of liberalist society," in which Hegel "examines the traditional system of political economy and finds it to be an apologetic formulation of the principles that govern the existing social system" (Marcuse 1955, 59–60). *System of Ethical Life* represents the political economy of bourgeois property relations in which law is separated from the rest of social life (Rose 1995, 56).

In a way, the *System of Ethical Life* represents Hegel's initial attempt to demonstrate all private, social and political relations in a breakdown of the system whose socio-political organisation constructs the process of self-actualisation, that is, an amalgam of empirical and absolute consciousness, as the ultimate form of cognition. In short, in this social-theoretical study, Hegel developed the thesis that people work in close bond with nature, which also determines the essence of labour. The result of the development of labour is the need for private property. Finally, "on the basis of these property relations arise government and state" (Blunden 2003).

Hegel's social philosophy is usually presented in a logical and systematic way, but even during such philosophical-speculative presentation of socio-economic topics, he always insists on empirical reality. The fact that studies on Hegel all too often ignore the empirical aspect of his philosophy, as was pointed out by Lukács in *The Young Hegel*, does not reduce the value of Hegel's tendency to critically assess political economy (Lukács 1975). Similarly, Gerhard Göhler states that, for Hegel, looking for empirically given content and its logical and systematic incorporation into the system are two equally important moments for formulating statements of social philosophy (Göhler 1976, 78; Hegel 2018, §65, 40; Hegel 1817, §243; Hegel 2014, §2, §31). This idea is expressed in an even more outright manner in Lukács' assertion that Hegel desired to "grasp the true inner structure, the real motive forces of the present and of capitalism and to define the dialectic of its movement" (Lukács 1975, XXVII). Finally, Marx, in his critique of Hegel, emphasizes the inseparability of philosophic-

6 It is noteworthy that Hegel's *System of Ethical Life* originated from the lecture course entitled "Critique of Fichte's Natural Right," which was at some point cancelled due to administrative difficulties. On that matter Kohai Saito writes the following: "Even if Hegel had modified a great deal of the original lecture notes in the process of preparing the book manuscript that Karl Rosenkranz later named *System of Ethical Life*, it still reasonable to assume that he there elaborated many themes in conscious opposition to Fichte's system of natural right" (Saito 2015, 35).

-speculative method on the one hand, and political economy, on the other hand:

> The outstanding achievement of Hegel's *Phänomenologie* and of its final outcome, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle, is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of labour and comprehends objective man—true, because real man—as the outcome of man's own labour. (Marx 1844, XXIII)

When, in *System of Ethical Life*, Hegel explains the first level (*Potenz*) of nature, that is, the inclusion of an object as an aspect of direct empirical connection, he claims that labour is "an identity of universal and particular," "is real and living," and "its vitality is to be known as a totality" (Hegel 1979, 108). Simultaneously, however, "labour is wholly mechanical," which Hegel demonstrates by analysing the correlation of the growing mechanisation of labour with the resulting alienation of workers from their labour (Hegel 1979, 108). He expounds the issue in following words:

> (F)or labour, as annihilation of intuition (the particular object—A.Č.), is at the same time annihilation of the subject, positing in him a negation of the merely quantitative; hand and spirit are blunted by it, i.e., they themselves assume the nature of negativity and formlessness (…). In the tool the subject severs objectivity and its own blunting from itself, it sacrifices an other to annihilation and casts the subjective side of that on to the other. (Hegel 1979, 112–113)

In this paragraph Hegel highlights the advantages and disadvantages of mechanisation and the social division of labour, which came to be a subject of some of his later writings (Hegel 2014, §198, 232–3). For instance, in the *Philosophy of Spirit* from the Jena period, he described how, in the context of mechanisation, workers invest a relatively higher amount of labour than a machine, without achieving what they need and without needing what they produced. This way, while working alongside machines, a worker "can produce more, but this reduces the value of his labour" (Hegel 1983, 138). In addition, abstract labour creates a gap between an individual and the complete fulfilment of their needs. As the mechanisation and specialisation of labour expand, the worker becomes increasingly alienated in the process of production, and their work becomes "more mechanical, duller, spiritless," while "the

spiritual element, this fulfilled self-conscious life, becomes an empty doing (leeres Thun)" (Hegel 1983, 139). Hegel continues:

> Thus a vast number of people are condemned to a labor that is totally stupefying, unhealthy and unsafe—in workshops, factories, mines, etc.—shrinking their skills. And entire branches of industry, which supported a large class of people, go dry all at once because of (changes in—A.Č.) fashion or a fall in prices due to inventions in other countries, etc—and this huge population is thrown into helpless poverty. (Hegel 1983, 139–140)

Hegel was convinced that dehumanising life circumstances, existential difficulties and the pauperisation of the working class were not some contingent and accidental side-effect of the factory capitalist system. In fact, "(t)he contrast (between—A.Č.) great wealth and great poverty appears: the poverty for which it becomes impossible to do anything; (the) wealth (which—A.Č.), like any mass, makes itself into a force" (Hegel 1983, 140). He considered poverty an inevitable consequence of the process of accumulating capital and argued that the enrichment "condemns a multitude of people to a raw life, to stultification in labour and to poverty—in order to let others amass wealth and (then—A.Č.) to take it from them" (Hegel 1983, 145). On another occasion, Hegel summed up his observations quite perspicaciously and almost epigrammatically: "Manufacturers and workshops found their existence on the misery of a class" (Lukács 1975, 331).

Despite the fact that Hegel studied the phenomena of labour and dehumanisation within industrial society, whereby his critique of political economy also took the social division of labour into account as a crucial element in the capitalist mode of production, the question still remains if he, even in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, indeed managed to provide an adequate solution to the problem of the mechanization and division of labour. This open question led Otto Pöggeler to conclude: "Although he saw that industrialization must give rise to a »rabble« or proletariat, he did not perceive the explosive force contained in this process" (Pöggeler 1995, 42). Similarly, although Hegel examined the role of "corporations" as institutions that safeguarded both the special needs and the collective interests in a civil society, it seems that he failed to grasp the whole complexity of the problem, since, in capitalism, labour relations became progressively more complicated and differentiated (Cesarale 2015, 92). The issue is further tangled by the fact that Hegel provides an explicit defence of the labour contract, the practice most essential to capitalism, in which money is exchanged not

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for a commodity of a fixed value, but for the power to create value—variable capital (Mowad 2015, 71). It will be worthwhile to examine this issue in its relationship to poverty through the lens of Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* in the last chapter of this study.

3. English Resources, poverty, and the *Philosophy of Right*

There are many references in Hegel's social philosophy that indicate his theoretical preoccupation with the political economy of Ferguson, Steuart and Smith. No less important is the fact that Hegel knew English and used English material extensively (Waszek 1988, 84–87). His earliest explicit reference to Smith is to be found in the first set of *The Philosophy of Spirit* (Waszek 1988, 128). This manuscript is a striking record of the impact of reading *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, argues Buck-Morrs (Buck-Morrs 2009, 4).[7] In *The Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel's philosophical attention was caught by Smith's classical description of the division of labour (Smith 1977, 18–19):

> (T)he *division of labour* increases *the mass* of manufactured (objects—A.Č.); eighteen men work in an English pin factory. (…) Each has a specific part of the work to do and only do that. (Hegel 1979, 248)

In a rather marginal note to this exposition, the name "Smith" appears only with a page reference ("Smith, p. 8"). In his study, particularly in the chapter "Hegel's Contacts with and Knowledge of the Scottish Enlightenment," Waszek analyses Hegel's implicit and explicit theoretical indebtedness to Scottish thinkers,[8] who had also shown awareness of the problems of modern commercial and industrial civilisation, for instance, the dehumanising division of labour, the problem of alienation and the rampant individualism of commercial society (Waszek 1988, 84–142). In his Heidelberg lectures on *The First Philosophy of Right*

7 Even though Christian Garve produced a good German translation of the text (1784–1796), Hegel seems to have used the original English edition. Both versions, Smith's original and Garve's translation, were ultimately in Hegel's permanent library (Buck-Morrs 2009, 4).

8 It is curious that Hegel's explicit references to the Scottish literati are remarkably few, given the fact that he drew from their ideas and writings quite amply. This is explained by Waszek, who claims that, in this respect, Hegel was simply following the common practice of an age in which philosophical inspirations were rarely acknowledged in footnotes (Waszek 1988, 118).

Hegel (1995a) draws the consequences of the position he had reached at the end of his time in Jena, namely that all estates or classes are to be understood on the basis of the way in which a people's "labour" is divided and that the ethical universalism no longer appears in its proper shape in the virtue of an individual (Pöggeler 1995, 32). Referencing Smith's ideas of "proper division of labor" and "proper combination of different operations," Hegel writes the following:

> (T)he preparation of specific means calls for a particular aptitude and familiarity, and individuals must confine themselves to only one of these. This gives rise to the division of labor, (a multiplicity of labors—A.Č.) as a result of which labor or work becomes less concrete in character, becomes abstract, homogeneous, and easier, so that a far greater quantity of products can be prepared in the same time. In the final stage of abstractness, the homogeneity of labor makes it mechanical, and it becomes possible to install machines in place of people, replacing human motion by a principle of natural motion that is harnessed to secure uniformity and to promote human ends. (…) (O)nce factory work has reached a certain degree of perfection, of simplification, mechanical human labor can be replaced by the work of machines, and this is what usually comes about in factories. In this way, through the consummation of this mechanical progress, human freedom is restored. (Hegel 1995a, §101, 175–177)

Hegel considered labour an abstract rather than a concrete activity (Hegel 1995a, §91, 165). Given the fact that he simultaneously viewed labour through the prism of the capitalist mode of production, which is structurally and historically based exactly on social division of labour, this peculiarity in Hegel's thinking betrays a certain ambivalence. Quite similarly, in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* Hegel introduces the concept of "abstract labour" in a very dense paragraph:

> The universal and objective aspect of work consists, however, in that (process of—A.Č.) *abstraction* which confers a specific character on means and needs and hence also on production, so giving rise to the *division of labour*. Through this division, the work of the individual (*des Einzelnen*) becomes *simpler*, so that his skill at his abstract work becomes greater, as does the volume of his output. At the same time, this abstraction of skill and means makes the *dependence* and *reciprocity* of human beings in the satisfaction of their other needs complete and entirely necessary. Furthermore, the abstraction of production makes work increasingly *mechanical* so that the human being is eventually able to step aside and let a machine take his place. (Hegel 2014, §198, 232–233)

Both the Heidelberg lectures on *The First Philosophy of Right* and the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* are imbued with a mood evocative of Smith and Ferguson. On one hand, Hegel's discussions on the division of labour and abstract labour reflect an enthusiasm for the potential emancipatory function of machines, which seemed to promise the working class freedom from the drudgery of labour and a life with a higher degree of dignity. On the other hand, his teleological approach, built on technological determinism, also maintains that the capitalist mode of production, as was evident especially in England, engendered a physically and mentally debilitating form of mechanization that undermined its emancipatory potential (Buchwalter 2015a, 10). Likewise, abstract labour revealed its great potential for structuring social relations, but it is, at the same time, the origin of their necessity, because it is split in itself (Cesarale 2015, 89). Therefore, this discussion creates a certain intellectual discomfort, which Giorgio Cesarale describes in the following way:

Hegel's discussions on the division of labour and abstract labour reflect an enthusiasm for the potential emancipatory function of machines, which seemed to promise the working class freedom from the drudgery of labour and a life with a higher degree of dignity.

> The teleological goal turns itself into what dialectically precedes, into mechanism. If the "abstraction of production" transforms the teleological goal into mechanism, this means that subjectivity plays no role in the development of the particular purposes and in the use of the means. (Cesarale 2015, 90)

Since the pre-capitalist Germany of the time, especially those parts of the country that Hegel did not have the opportunity to experience first-hand, did not offer sufficient research material for a substantial political-economic analysis, Hegel had to turn to English, and, to a lesser extent, French economics. As in his previously mentioned works, in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, that is, in its §189, Hegel also explicitly refers to Smith, Say and Ricardo (Hegel 2014, §189, 227). Apart from that, in §200, the theoretical points are fully modelled on Smith's classical economics (Hegel 2014, §200, 233–234). Here, however, he departs from Smith's definition of capital, as well as his theory on creating surplus value, and justifies class differences that emerged from property inequalities. Moreover, he unhesitatingly states that, for amassing wealth, it is not enough to simply possess certain skills and talents—the initial capital is also required. And it was this initial capital that represented a key source of class inequality.

Additionally, as I already stated above, Hegel regularly read English newspapers and journals that published long and detailed reports on relevant political and economic developments in Britain. This may be observed in his analysis *On the English Reform Bill* (Hegel 2004c). In this essay, which was written in 1831 and was to become his last publi-

shed text—again showing how interested he remained in social, political, and economic issues throughout his whole life—he criticised the feudalist understanding of English law and English hereditary privileges. In doing so, he accurately demonstrated the problems of nepotism and corruption. For example, he stated that the sittings of the English Parliament were regularly attended only by few officials and that both houses of the Parliament were basically the property of about 150 men from the privileged classes (Hegel 2004c, 236). His indignation at the situation is cynically expressed in the following comment: "Nowhere but in England is the prejudice so entrenched and sincerely accepted that if birth and wealth give someone an office, they also give him the intelligence (*Verstand*) to go with it" (Hegel 2004c, 249). In this work, Hegel also scrutinises the issues of austerity measures, government expenditures, and taxes for the poor (Hegel 2004c, 242). With equal disgruntlement he describes the expropriation of peasants and colonial conquests of the English Crown (Hegel 2004c, 247–248).[9] Ultimately, in the spirit of Locke's theory of government and its administrative realm, Hegel labels the English state "minimal" (Hegel 2004c, 269).

The most fascinating thing about Hegel's notes on political economy is the fact that he managed to resist the tempting, optimistic dogmas of *laissez faire* economics that had become quite influential in German economic circles at the turn of the century (Cullen 1979, 72). At that time, translations of Steuart's and Smith's works were widespread and popular in Germany (Lukács 1975, 174; Waszek 1988, 56–83). In contrast to this trend, Hegel's economic analyses are accompanied with remarks on issues of social polarisation, poverty, pauperisation and alienation, prompting us to conclude that he refused to stay fixed on the ideas of classical economics, especially after he had witnessed the growth of poverty in modern civil society. One of the reasons why Hegel distanced himself from orthodox British political economy and turned more to the issues like the social welfare state was the fact that Prussia of the time was still a largely pre-capitalist country on the verge of undergoing a transition to full-fledged industrial revolution. Thus, his lived experience did not match that of subjects from the already well-established capitalist Britain. This, however, still does not mean that Hegel did not witness the growing poverty in Prussia first hand, which resulted from the dissolution of communal estates and the expropriation of the peasantry following the Napoleonic wars (Pinkard 2000, 486). As was the

9 Buck-Morrs emphasises that Hegel is in fact the first philosopher describing world market of the European colonial system (Buck-Morrs 2009, 8).

general case, the transition from feudalism to capitalism led to "the creation of a »rabble« of unemployed and unemployable peasants throughout Prussia" (Pinkard 2000, 486). Although Hegel quite candidly admitted that his speculative philosophy contained no answer to the problem of modern poverty (Pinkard 2000, 486), his leap from classical idealism into materialism, which enabled him to analyse the political economy of poverty, should nevertheless be understood as a revolutionary socio-epistemological innovation. It even provided the foundation on which Marx built the methodological framework for his own critique of political economy.

This is why the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* emerged as a mature articulation of his social and political thought, as an attempt to systematically articulate the relationship between personal needs on the one hand, and the community as a whole, on the other. In other words, the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* may be described as Hegel's effort to describe a harmonious political system and the rational modern state, in which the conflicts of the individual and the community, that is, the conflicts of private interests and communal duties, are resolved through a synthesis on a higher level. Broadly speaking, *Philosophy of Right*, in its fluent triangulation of abstract right, morality and ethical life could be conceptualised as an account on the ventures of spirit, progress, and the development of human will through various phases (or spheres) that ultimately lead to the actualised freedom of an individual as a member of society. As nature knows no concept of freedom, freedom becomes possible only in the domain of law. To the sphere of ethical life Hegel relegates family, civil society, and state. Civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) is thereby defined as

> an association of members as self-sufficient individuals (*Einzelner*) in what is therefore a formal universality, occasioned by their needs and by the legal constitution as a means of security for persons and property (…). (Hegel §157, 198)

Hegel points out that civil society, given the gap between the private and the communal interests, "affords a spectacle of extravagance and misery as well as of the physical and ethical corruption common to both" (Hegel 2014, §185, 222). The will of an individual within civil society, as Hegel has it, is actualized only when the individual is able to possess an object, which makes private property a necessary prerequisite for their freedom. Thus, in order for the individual to be free, they have to own private property as an objectification of their own will. Free indi-

viduals are so focused on satisfying their private needs and interests that they lost their last iota of respect for the common good.

It is this problem that led to Hegel's main dilemma—how to reconcile private rights with the need for universality? A rational and moral state has to secure freedom for the individual, although "particularity in itself (*für sich*)," as Hegel writes, keeps "indulging itself in all directions as it satisfies its needs, contingent arbitrariness, and subjective caprice" (Hegel 2014, §185, 222). Since "individuals, as citizens of this state, are private persons who have their own interest as their end," it is obligatory that individuality thus understood be mediated by abstract universality (Hegel 2014, §187, 224). The state has to be strong enough to reconcile individuality with the singularity of ethical life, to facilitate the unity of individual needs and their fulfilment through "hard work of opposing mere subjectivity of conduct, of opposing the immediacy of desire as well as the subjective vanity of feeling (*Empfindung*) and the arbitrariness of caprice" (Hegel 2014, §187, 225). In addition, Hegel emphasizes the need for "(t)he mediation whereby appropriate and particularized means are acquired and prepared for similarly particularized needs is labour," (Hegel 2014, §196, 231) whereby labour "confers a specific character on means and needs and hence also on production, so giving rise to the division of labour" (Hegel 2014, §198, 232). Such a relation between universality and individuality in the concept of labour, as well as in the social division of labour, leads to the creation of "dependence and reciprocity of human beings in the satisfaction of their other needs" (Hegel 2014, §198, 233). Hegel concludes:

> In this dependence and reciprocity of work and the satisfaction of needs, *subjective selfishness* turns into a *contribution towards the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else*. By a dialectical movement, the particular is mediated by the universal so that each individual, in earning, producing, and enjoying on his own account (*für sich*), thereby earns and produces for the enjoyment of others. (Hegel 2014, §199, 233)

Although Hegel at one point justified class differences as unavoidable (Hegel 2014, §200, 233), he was well aware of the growth of poverty as one of the most significant negative aspects of modern civil society. He wrote that,

> When a large mass of people sinks below the level of certain standard of living, this leads to the creation of a rabble, which in turn makes it much easier for disproportionate wealth to be concentrated in a few hands. (Hegel 2014, §244, 266)

Poverty occurred precisely due to class differences, which "may reduce individuals to poverty" and deprive the poor "of all the advantages of society, such as the ability to acquire skills and education in general, as well as of the administration of justice, health care, and often even of the consolation of religion" (Hegel 2014, §241, 265). Hegel argues:

> The lowest level of subsistence (*Subsistenz*), that of the rabble, defines itself automatically, but this minimum varies greatly between different peoples. In England, even the poorest man believes he has his rights; this differs from what the poor are content with in other countries. Poverty in itself does not reduce people to a rabble; a rabble is created only by the disposition associated with poverty, by inward rebellion against the rich, against society, the government, etc. (…) The important question of how poverty can be remedied is one which agitates and torments modem societies especially. (Hegel 2014, §244A, 266–267)

If we briefly pause at the last sentence of the cited paragraph and consider that, already in the next one, Hegel concluded that, "despite an excess of wealth, civil society is not wealthy enough (…) to prevent an excess of poverty and the formation of a rabble" (Hegel 2014, §245), we can gain the impression that these candid remarks might be read as an admission of failure to offer the speculative proof that the modern state is rational, an impression in which we are not alone (Avineri 1972, 154; Teichgraeber 1977, 63–64; Wood 1990, 255; Neuhouser 2000, 174; Losurdo 2004, 177–179). This challenge has not gone unanswered, and it has spawned a lively debate on the significance of the problem of poverty in Hegel's project (Di Salvo 2015, 101).

Having studied the consequences of the English laws on the poor (Hegel 2014, §245, 267), Hegel attempted to demonstrate the inefficacy of English (and Scottish) methods for combating poverty by rejecting any possibility of humanitarisation, or such ideas as "limitless private charity" (Hegel 2014, §245, 267), "subjective help" (Hegel 2014, §242, 265), and "the contingent character of almsgiving and charitable donations" (Hegel 2014, §242, 265). Instead, he proposed a solution in the form of allowing everybody the opportunity to work and introducing progressive taxes for wealthier classes (Hegel 2014, §245, 267). Besides, Hegel thought that, as the public character of politics, or the welfare state, becomes "all the more perfect, the less there is left for the individual to do by himself (*für sich*) in the light of his own particular opinion (as compared with what is arranged in a universal manner)" (Hegel 2014, §242, 266).

The analysis that Pereira Di Salvo conducts in "Hegel's Torment: Poverty and the Rationality of Modern State" reveals another important consequence of the definition of a person in relation to poverty, as outlined by Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right* (Di Salvo 2015). In the context of abstract right, a person is defined as a concrete embodiment of their will, but also as owning some property that needs to be actively used. In property, the person actively relates to the object of their belonging. Property is therefore a means by which an abstract person objectifies themselves. To put it differently, the self becomes particularized and concrete through ownership (Schroeder 1998, 34). Hegel himself notes:

> The poor man feels excluded and mocked by everyone, and this necessarily gives rise to an inner indignation. He is conscious of himself as an infinite, free being, and thus arises the demand that his external existence should correspond to this consciousness (…). Self-consciousness appears driven to the point where it no longer has any rights, where freedom has no existence. In this position, where the existence of freedom becomes something wholly contingent, inner indignation is necessary. Because the individual's freedom has no existence, the recognition of universal freedom disappears. From this condition arises that shamelessness that we find in the rabble. (Hegel 2014, n. 1 to §244, 453)

At stake here is how poverty undermines autonomous personality itself. Di Salvo suggests that "poverty is problematic (…) because it constitutes a condition in which a human being is prevented from realizing their capacity for personality in the first place" (Di Salvo 2015, 102). However, Hegel does not reduce the antagonism of wealth and poverty to a simplistic relationship in which an impoverished individual is dependent on the arbitrary wills of the wealthy. Instead, he holds that poverty is problematic because those who are subject to that condition are rendered incapable of realizing their personality (Di Salvo 2015, 110). It is what Di Salvo calls a condition of "socially frustrated personality" (Di Salvo 2015, 110) and the reason why Slavoj Žižek argues that Hegel fails to take note of how the rabble,

> in its very status as the destructive excess of the social totality (…) is the "reflexive determination" of the totality as such, (…) the particular element in the guise of which the social totality encounters itself among its elements. (Žižek 2012, 431)[10]

10 It would be interesting to examine Žižek's ideas of "social totality" and "totality as such" in light of his characteristic zeal for the provocative, such as

This is also one of the main reasons why Frank Ruda reads Hegel's ideas on the rabble as a "symptomatic point of his entire philosophy of right, if not of his entire system" (Žižek 2012, 431). The rabble unbinds itself from the relations of ethical community, which is what Ruda, in the *Hegel's Rabble*, specifies as the concept of the "organ without a body" (Ruda 2011, 130). "That the rabble does not have a possession, i.e. not even of a body," claims Ruda, "clarifies again that the rabble as matter of the ethical space cannot be one body among others" (Ruda 2011, 131). This "Hegelian failure" happens at a point where "Hegel was not Hegelian enough" (Ruda 2011, 168). Susan Buck-Morrs arrives at an astonishingly similar conclusion, which reveals the fallacies of the *pars pro toto* logic emanating from Hegel's concepts of ownership and property. She asks to what extent Hegel may be deemed accountable for the effective silencing of the problem of race or slaves successfully rioting against their real masters. She writes thus on the matter:

> But what if the "property" is itself the injurer, the slave who rectifies the injury to *his person* by asserting his own freedom without compensation? Hegel does not raise this question (…). The slave is the one commodity like no other, as freedom of property and freedom of person are here in direct contradiction. (Buck-Morrs 2009, 52)

However, even if we admit that the implied political and ontological limitations of Hegel's dialectic, and acknowledge the "unresolved problem" of the starving human and a slave (Losurdo 2004, 177), thus bringing the careful precision of the anatomy of poverty and society within *Sittlichkeit* to its logical conclusion, we should not fully dismiss Hegel's analysis. In fact, if we point to the non-inclusivity of Hegel's universalism and follow Buck-Morrs in her call for the "anticipation of unity", we could easily "fall directly into this »anticipation of unity« by rejecting divisive political identities outright (…) in favour of immediate and unconditional assertion of universality as a fact" (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 175). In his *Decolonizing Dialectics*, George Ciccariello-Maher claims that "the parameters of (Buck-Morrs'—A.Č.) universal remain conspicuously Eurocentric" (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 175). Inspired by the analytical sharpness of Frantz Fanon, he rejects the supposedly self-

when he urges the Left to openly embrace the particularity of Eurocentrism (Žižek 1998). George Ciccariello-Maher notes that Žižek's call for embracing Western culture and "our freedoms" is even more problematic in light of the current influx of refugees into Europe—a partial indication of the dead-end into which his uncritical universalism leads (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 172; Žižek 2015).

-evident liberalist and Eurocentric concept of "universalism" and takes a step ahead of liberalist call for the "anticipation of unity" with his radical and novel reading of Hegel's slave-master dialectic (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 175). Ciccariello-Maher recognizes the revolutionary potential in this dialectic's capacity to allow for a presumption of equality from the outset under the premise that both parties enter into conflict with the same standing, with either being able to theoretically emerge as the victor or the vanquished (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 55):

> (T)he blockage that race constitutes for the Hegelian master-slave dialectic is a double one, in which the master cannot turn toward the slave, and the slave cannot turn away from the master. Overcoming this impasse must similarly trace the contours of the two-way street that is self-consciousness. It must somehow force the master to open his eyes to the being of the (Black) other, and to disalienate the slave, to rid her of her long-cultivated inferiority complex and make possible independence in work (or as we will see, struggle as work). (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 59)

As opposed to Hegel's lenient view of inevitable progress toward universal self-consciousness, Ciccariello-Maher supports Fanon's vision and stresses the need to project blackness subjectively and to do so "violently" in a way that wakes both the Black slave and the white master from their respective undialectical slumbers (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 70–71).

Once we have opened the discussion on the political economy of poverty, pauperisation and slavery, the next Hegelian question that logically ensues is: can one think of rabble-politics of equality without the state? As we have seen, Hegel's analysis of society clearly points to the issues of pauperisation, class antagonisms and social sensibilities. However, as noted by Avineri in a somewhat sharp tone, Hegel actually has no solution to the problems of poverty: "This is the only time in his system where Hegel raises a problem—and leaves it open" (Avineri 1972, 154). And he is not alone in his critique, since Lukács, Cullen, and other Marxist authors are even more critical of Hegel's attitude toward the poor (Lukács 1959; Cullen 1979; Losurdo 2004). This gives us a reason to ask another important question—is Hegel a classical liberal of Smithian type, or can we patch the holes in *The Philosophy of Right* with state interventionism?

The answer is given by Hegel himself in §236, where he explains why he is not a *laissez faire* liberal and in certain way shares the worldview of interventionists (Ross 2008, 4). He advocated for the concept of the

"welfare state" (Cullen 1979, 90) and claimed that "the differing interests of producers and consumers may come into collision with each other," which is why it was necessary to introduce the regulation not only of the market and the prices of certain products, but also of entire branches of some industries (Hegel 2014, §236, 261). Even though it is important to insist on the fulfilment of personal interests, Hegel saw the common good to be far more important in his interpretation of the goals of political economy:

> The right to regulate individual matters in this way (e.g. by deciding the value of the commonest necessities of life) is based on the fact that, when commodities in completely universal everyday use are publicly marketed, they are offered not so much to a particular individual (*Individuum*) as such, as to the individual in a universal sense, i.e. to the public; and the task of upholding the public's right not to be cheated and of inspecting market commodities may, as a common concern, be entrusted to a public authority. (…) This interest invokes the freedom of trade and commerce against regulation from above; but the more blindly it immerses itself in its selfish ends, the more it requires such regulation to bring it back to the universal. (Hegel 2014, §236, 262)

Hegel's awareness of the problem of poverty was an issue he wrote about throughout his whole lifetime. His task simultaneously served the general protection of the "starving individual," but also the freedom of the individual within an almighty state.

The legacy of Revolution in Hegel's works, as argued by Losurdo, is expressed in two main points (Losurdo 2004, 305). Firstly, there is the affirmation of history as a progressive and difficult realisation of that concept. Secondly, there is the relationship between politics and economics, a relationship according to which material poverty, taken to an extreme, results in a "total lack of rights for the starving individual" (Losurdo 2004, 305). Hegel's awareness of the problem of poverty was an issue he wrote about throughout his whole lifetime. His task simultaneously served the general protection of the "starving individual," but also the freedom of the individual within an almighty state. He wanted to showcase the political reach of the state that was not superior in relation to right or individual freedom, since the rationality of the state intersected with the right. In Hegel's definition, the state is nothing more than "the actuality of concrete freedom" (Hegel 2014, §260, 282) and the actuality of the substantial will, an individual self-consciousness that transcends into universality. As such, "it is the rational in and for itself" (Hegel 2014, §258, 275). The reality of concrete freedom demands that, stresses Hegel:

> personal individuality (*Einzelheit*) and its particular interests…reach their full *development* and gain recognition *of their right* for itself (within the system of

> the family and of civil society), and also that they...on the one hand, *pass over* of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and on the other, knowingly and willingly acknowledge this universal interest even as their own substantial spirit, and actively pursue it as their ultimate end. (Hegel 2014, §260, 282)

The state as an idea might exhibit all manner of weaknesses and deficiencies, but in its realised form it may produce the opposite of what its idea promised. For Hegel, all the negative aspects of the modern rational state do not outweigh those that exist in the absence of such a state. This may well be taken as Hegel's final thought on the relationship between free will and political universalism.

The philosophical-historical tendency of Hegel to derive all economic and social categories from the human attitude toward modern civil society, as discussed by Lukács, resembles an attempt to locate the contradictions of the individual, nature, and society, whose abolition and restoration makes the structure of society and history intelligible (Lukács 1959, 401). Losurdo concludes that, "(f)rom Hegel on, the discourse on freedom has become more complex and problematic" (Losurdo 2004, 310). This important Hegelian remark has to be born in mind every time when we are seriously involved in the field of social philosophy or think about the problem of the realisation of freedom, thus counterweighing the speculative spirit and materialism.

Even if we agree that Hegel failed to provide an adequate solution to the issue of the "rabble," it still stands that his social philosophy offers a unique denunciation of poverty and capitalism. He may not have given an answer to how the economy should be regulated in the tiniest detail, but his materialistic explanations provide a theoretical framework for a critique of capitalism in the name of progressive anti-capitalist politics. By using Hegel's theoretical tools, we may achieve big success in the socio-epistemological sense, since, as Fluss points out, "the essence of the Hegelian dialectic is critical and revolutionary" (Fluss 2016). It was exactly these revolutionary potentials of Hegel's philosophy that Rosa Luxemburg had in mind when she stated that, from Hegel onward, philosophical trajectories unavoidably led to the most dangerous robber caves of Feuerbach and Marx. Even if Hegel did not set subjective freedom apart from the sanctity of private property, his call for solidarity remains an ideal for which we should strive. If, however, Hegel's ideals, like freedom, political universalism, the welfare state, and solidarity with the despised starving human, are to be observed more attentively, I believe we could without difficulty find

a fertile soil for the growth of precisely those principles upon which socialism itself is founded.

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Tytuł: Hegel i antykapitalizm: Notatki z ekonomii politycznej ubóstwa
Abstrakt: Hegel już na samym początku swojej drogi filozoficznej interesował się zagadnieniami ekonomii politycznej. W swoich najwcześniejszych pismach poświęconych religii, polityce i ekonomii Hegel zwrócił uwagę na temat, który miał odegrać istotną rolę w jego późniejszych pracach: fenomenem własności prywatnej. Aby przystępnie przedstawić Heglowską refleksję dotyczącą ekonomii politycznej, artykuł jest podzielony na trzy części. Pierwsza z nich poświęcona jest Heglowskiej analizie własności prywatnej, industrializacji i kapitalizmu. Drugi dotyczy postawy filozofa wobec rewolucji francuskiej, czyli przejścia od feudalizmu do kapitalizmu oraz związanego z nim problemu pracy. Wreszcie, trzeci rozdział traktuje o ekonomii politycznej ubóstwa w kontekście Heglowskiej *Zasad filozofii prawa*, w których filozof zauważa, że skrajne ubóstwo i postępująca pauperyzacja nie są zjawiskami przypadkowymi, ale endemicznymi dla nowoczesnego społeczeństwa produkującego towary.
Słowa kluczowe: praca, własność prywatna, ubóstwo, państwo, Hegel