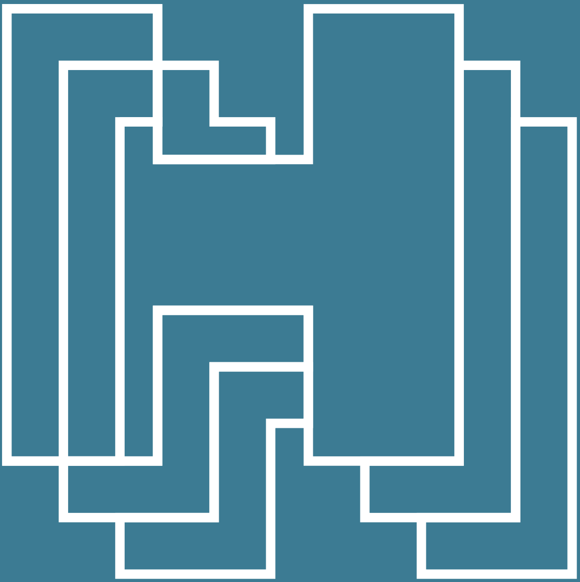
NR 1 /43/ 2022
ISSN 2081-8130

praktyka
teoretyczna



THE RETURN OF HEGEL

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Majewska/ Pańków/ Timofeeva/

praktyka
teoretyczna

THE RETURN OF HEGEL: HISTORY, DIALECTICS AND THE WEAK

Praktyka Teoretyczna
ISSN: 2081-8130
Nr 1(43)/2022 – The Return of Hegel: History, Dialectics and the Weak

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Proofreading: Kit Duncan, Stephen Dersley

Skład: Izabela Poręba

Projekt okładki: Marek Igrekowski

Wersją pierwotną (referencyjną) czasopisma jest wydanie on-line publikowane na stronie https://wuwr.pl/prt

Wydawca:
Wydział Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego
ul. Koszarowa 3, 51-149 Wrocław

Adres Redakcji:
„Praktyka Teoretyczna"
Wydział Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego
ul. Koszarowa 3, 51-149 Wrocław
E-mail: praktyka.teoretyczna@gmail.com

Wrocław 2022

Niniejszy numer powstał dzięki dofinansowaniu przez Goethe-Institut Warschau oraz Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk.

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introduction

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The Return of Hegel: History, Dialectics and the Weak: Introduction

Introduction to the issue “The Return of Hegel: Dialectics and the Weak.”

Keywords: Hegel, Dialectics, History, critical theory

This volume is a post-conference publication to follow up the debates celebrating the 250th Anniversary of Hegel, *The Return of Philosophy of Hegel. History, Universality and the dimensions of Weakness,* co-organized by the Goethe-Institute Warschau and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Science in October 2020. If it seems that the daunting task of celebrating Georg Wilhelm Hegel's 250th birthday cannot be achieved in just one volume, we assure you that volume 2 of our issue will also be published. We believe that, after more than two hundred years, Hegel's thought still addresses us, and maybe we should repeat after Slavoj Žižek: "*Un jour, peut-être, le siècle sera hégélien*"—if the twentieth century was Marxian, the twenty-first will be Hegelian (Žižek 2020, 1).

The first version of our *introduction* was based on a recorded conversation we had in 2020, when merely planning this Hegel volume. It most definitely testifies to the contingency of human actions, and the precarious nature of our plans, that we have finally written this Introduction anew, in some way following both of our most important Hegelian teachers here in Poland. On the one hand, our conversation focused on the actuality of Hegel in defending what Marek J. Siemek, probably the most famous Polish Hegelian thinker, built throughout his life—the systematic social philosophy, which was his main theoretical objective. On the other hand, however, the incessantly comic aspect of planning, performing and recording a six-hour long conversation and never considering the technicality of how to transform sound into written letters, and the futility and tragedy of our efforts, as well as their final abandonment, summons up the shadows of all those unfortunate historical characters—like Shakespeare's Falstaff, so beloved for Aleksander Ochocki, the Hegelian-Marxist professor of the negative—of the absurd and failure. Together, Siemek and Ochocki managed to build a legacy of non-conformist philosophers—albeit sometimes rather systematic—as critical dialecticians of late modernity, throughout almost a half century of teaching here in Warsaw. Siemek was the Chair of the Department of Social Philosophy at the University of Warsaw, and Ochocki was "the other professor" there.

This combination of a state-oriented, transcendentalist dialectics and sharp, distanced historical materialism, recalling the differences between Habermas and Benjamin, Honneth and Butler, is currently undergoing a critical yet sympathetic re-evaluation. Siemek and Ochocki were friends, running the same department and sharing the same day—Thursday—for their seminars. Some generations of students grew up with their teaching, both at the University of Warsaw and at the Theatre Arts

University. Perhaps the most fruitful of these decades was the first one of the 21st century, when a certain thawing took place in the fields of social and political thought, finally allowing a critical (self)reflection of the intellectuals of Poland—a "post-communist" country, however enigmatic this might sound. It was the cordial welcoming address from Marek Siemek to Slavoj Žižek, at the moment of the publication of *Revolution at the Gates*, that announced the end of the end of history paradigm in Polish public debate in the pages of daily press (Žižek [2004] 2006; Siemek 2007, 10). Siemek's loud invocation—to Žižek, but also to Lenin, to Hegel and Marx, put an end to the Fukuyamist and Thatcherite petrification of the supposedly autonomous and critical *intelligentsia*, conveniently stabilized in anti-communism after 1989.

Ochocki was somewhat quieter. Like the death drive, as described by Sigmund Freud, he worked in silence, unlike the much noisier Eros drive. His were the more radical students—situationists, feminists, Leninists. The references to history, dialectics, as well as to weakness, definitely bare his trace. As he moved between history and theatre, theory and aesthetics, we had access to Shakespeare and Marx alike. While Siemek translated the *opus magnum* of pre-war Hegelian Marxism—György Lukács's *History and class Consciousness*, Ochocki would read Bertolt Brecht, Guy Debord and Jan Kott with us, making jokes about Lukács as the "perfect bureaucrat," a petty bourgeois and realist, allowing our expressions of disagreement to find their acute shape and form.

So, now that you know a little of where we came from, please allow us to present a proper introduction to this rich volume of Hegelian thought. As the main elements of the 2020 conference remain our highlights, we stay in the context it established.

Hegel's thought and heritage have usually been understood as an attempt to build a system, a theory, but also a practice of philosophy at once developing and proving the intellectual ability to conceptualize the historical process and explaining its course; not as its mere description, but as a lively framework of notions. This (self)reflexive agency of dialectics was at once a continuation of Platonic-Socratic constant questioning, an overcoming of the Kantian limitations of cognition, and a recognition of history as a lived experience of reflexively inclined individuals and groups of modern European societies. The interplay between the subjective and objective dimensions of the transformations of Spirit was depicted as development, thus allowing strong concepts of progress and necessity in those more socially inclined readers of Hegel. The early 20th century split of Hegelianism into the Marxist and existentialist positions stabilized the grand narratives of necessity and par-

In various streams of theory the need for a systematic and indeed systemic analysis is emphasized, and demands to rethink reason, history and dialectics abound. The Hegelian approach, with its multidimensional, general, contextual and dynamic perspective on the historical process is again in the center of researchers' attention.

ticularity, allowing the post-war condemnation of grand narratives and attributing most of them to Hegel himself. The most famous anti-Hegelianisms, such as that of Gilles Deleuze, successfully proved that reflexive agency requires systemic closure, in progress/necessity or negativity alike. It was not until *perestroika*, that new currents of Hegelianism appeared in Central and Eastern Europe, while in the West this process had begun earlier, in the 1970s. Finally the need to blame the early modern German philosopher for all the wrongdoings of 20th century, like in the influential Anglo-Saxon rejection of his thought proposed by Bertrand Russell and Karl Popper, was over. The turn of 20th and 21st centuries was dominated by a deep critique of "grand narratives," major historiographic projects and theories, connected with this Hegelian inspiration. Especially the first generation of post-structuralism—Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida—drew this almost demonic picture of Hegel as the negative point of reference for their own theories. Paradoxically, the idea of "end of history"—often attributed to Hegel—was also announced in this postmodern time of doubt and deconstruction.

However, at the beginning of the 21st century, macro-history appeared once again, and in its global dimension. In various streams of theory the need for a systematic and indeed systemic analysis is emphasized, and demands to rethink reason, history and dialectics abound. The Hegelian approach, with its multidimensional, general, contextual and dynamic perspective on the historical process is again in the center of researchers' attention. Its contemporary articulations—in the context of the subject, as in the work of Catherine Malabou, Jean-Luc Nancy, Judith Butler, and the "Slovenian School"; in colonial history, in the work of Achille Mbembe and Susan Buck-Morss, in research on capitalist society, as in the work of Frank Ruda and Fredric Jameson, as well as in the new materialist ontology of Slavoj Žižek, Todd McGowan and Adrian Johnston—are abounding, both as continuations and renegotiations of the Hegelian paradigm.

The main readings of Hegel's philosophy, which hitherto followed the heroic perception of history and the subject, are currently being undermined by feminist, psychoanalytical, postcolonial and queer theories, which influence the main philosophical currents in their need to follow everyday, non-heroic experience, including that of weakness, failure and persistence. The articles collected here often embrace these less heroic readings of Hegelian theory, one which perceives the weak and enslaved, the oppressed and the unhappy, as those whose resilience, resistance and even willfulness constitute effective steps towards emancipation. We assume that if there exists an ability to build philosophy, sociology, cultural theory or psychology, not to speak of far more specific theories, such as that of the *habitus*, performativity, language or gender, to only give some examples, it is because of the audacity, and perhaps also failures and insufficiencies, of Hegel's theoretical effort.

Understanding the perplexity of Hegel's own contradictions and embracing the vital interest in theories of history, universality, political ecology, decolonization, feminism and social justice, just to name a few key problems highlighted in contemporary philosophy and social theory, we discuss Hegel with the clear intention of critical historical practice, which combines the particular needs and context with an interest in the past as an effort to build the future. In this context, the need to revisit the notion of universality seems crucial. The concept of "common future" seems to be unavailable without a universalist claim. Such a claim can be one of Antigone, but not without Ismene, one of the bourgeoisie, but not without the rabble, one of resistance, but not without resilience and care.

This shift towards the weak and unheroic can also be seen in other theoretical fields, such as postcolonial studies or feminism, where the limitations of the particular, individualist perspective have been criticized as leaning towards neoliberal atomization; in legal and heritage studies such a claim to universality seems central today. Egalitarian practice and critical theory, which currently struggle in the impasse between the perfect adjustment to the European *status quo* of late modern capitalist citizen and the minoritarian disagreement of those discriminated and excluded, perhaps need to at least confront general Hegelian notions once again. Such a search for universality needs to embrace the dialectics of lived experience, without the conformist focus on the logic of (neoliberal) success.

The twisted logic of neoliberalism, which—as Naomi Klein depicted in her *Shock Doctrine*—is one of experiment, which does not necessarily remain faithful to the "common future" we mentioned previously. In its sudden repetitions of the feudal *pater familias*, today's economic and political elites allow themselves to patronize whom they perceive as "their subjects" without the necessary mediations of the public institutions so central to Hegel's thought. The terror of unmediated presence of the gaze and hands of neoliberal Leviathans, whether of state or capitalist natures, demand a deeper interest in procedures, laws and institutions of the state—perhaps the only remnants of universality left after the neoliberal coup. Theories of the "event" and ecstatic *jouissance* sound today like a conscious rejection of togetherness. Eventful immediate connections are like Tinder matches or flash-mobs—instantly gratifying emptiness, deprived of historicity, and thus also of any common collective experience other than that of the moment. Hegel's dialectic provides a suggestion that anything longer than a moment requires structure, which in turn needs procedures to run for people and not over them. Throughout his life, Hegel was searching for such a mediating, processual structure that would integrate the individual and the universal, civil society and the state apparatus, or the traditional community with modern freedoms. It could be summed up as the dialectical reconciliation of the German Hometown with French modernity. He found it, for example, in the "corporation"—the strange, proto-trade union communal body within capitalist society—which was the key institution of the common in Hegelian system. Neither private interest, nor state obligation, but something in-between; the authentic self-organization of society was—often forgotten by the commentators—the radical idea of Hegel's political philosophy. Interestingly, today it seems to be a proxy of "the common" as conceptualized by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt—a third way of expressing the collective lived experiences of the embodied multitude in a material world of resources and culture.

There is no authority, idea or any other fundament that will save us from our freedom: we are precarious and finite entities condemned to the unsurpassable antagonisms of our natural and social world. The only rescue resides in the fragile common institutions we build with other weak beings. And the Hegelian dialectic can teach us how to do this.

This moment—of mediation, instituting and law, is perhaps less visible in this volume, but it was highlighted in the process of its making, and provided a much needed frame of reference for the variety of perspectives present in the articles submitted to the journal. It was also a necessary companion in our local battles with suddenly decolonial post-Heideggerians, angrily dismantling all structures as supposedly oppressive, while for us it was the proverbial "tyranny of s*tructurelessness*" (Freeman 1972), which resulted from neoliberal capitalism globally and required reflexive and political resistance. Therefore, we should return to the radicalism of Hegel's idea of freedom, which declares that nothing is free from contradiction. There is no authority, idea or any other fundament that will save us from our freedom: we are precarious and finite entities condemned to the unsurpassable antagonisms of our natural and social world. The only rescue resides in the fragile common institutions we build with other weak beings. And the Hegelian dialectic can teach us how to do this.

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Our issue begins with the experimental essay by Oxana Timofeeva, "Hegel's Enlightenment and the Dialectics of Vulva." Today, as Putin's war destroys Ukraine, as well as our hopes for peace and freedom in the region and in the globe, Timofeeva's words also read as a dissident voice from Russia. Hegel's inspiration of providing self-reflexive perspectives on unfolding events led Timofeeva to conduct a Hegelian seminar, for several years. At the time of the 2020 conference, the key references were to the audacity of the reflexive standpoint, surpassing the limitations of Kantian Enlightenment; the legacy of *Rameau's Nephew,* a vagabond intellect in the shaping of the revolutionary *momentum*; as well as film montage references, depicted in the context of a dissident feminist film making a project about the vulva. Today, times have changed. Timofeeva's essay opens our Hegel volume with a call to the next Revolution in Russia. We can say that the war is already there, just like in 1917.

Joanna Bednarek's take on Hegel is the opening paper of the series of articles following the 2020 conference. Aptly entitled "Putting an End to »Man«: Nature and the Human in Hegel, Becoming-Animal and Abolitionism," it allows a post-humanist, planetarian view on the legacy of German philosophy, as well as the Anthropocene. Bednarek attempts to show the extent of Deleuze's debt to Hegel's thought, thus making an unorthodox series of arguments reconstructing the similarities of their philosophies, traditionally seen as oppositional. In the course of her argument, however, Bednarek emphasizes the irreducible nature of Deleuze's *difference,* and the anthropocentrism of Hegel. She then recollects Hegel's notion of "nature," providing a context for the further argument regarding the anthropocentrism of his theory despite its anti-humanism.

Agata Bielik-Robson, in her essay "The Harnessed Lightning, or the Politics of Apocalypse: Hegel, Rosenzweig, Derrida," contests an idea from Carl Schmitt's political theology, namely that of the *restraint* (*katechon*). Her alternative to Schmitt's approach is—partially inspired by Hegel—the notion of *attenuation*, which results in the political and philosophical practice of maintaining a dialectical position between the *katechon* and the *apocalyptic*, a fragile distance between God and the world. In the writings of Hegel, Rosenzweig, and Derrida she finds the way to transform the destructive force of *eschaton* into the power of creation, investment in the immanence.

From the speculative realm of theology, we return to its earthly base, with Ankica Čakardić's article "Hegel and Anticapitalism: Notes on the Political Economy of Poverty." She presents an in-depth analysis of Hegel's political economy. In order to do this, she focuses on three issues: firstly, Hegel's discussion of private property, industrialisation, and capitalism; secondly, his approach to the French Revolution as the transition from feudalism to capitalism in the context of labour; and finally, the phenomenon of poverty in *Philosophy of Right*. Her main argument is that, for Hegel, pauperization and the subsequent alienation from society are not contingent elements of the capitalist system, but its endemic factors; they are side-effects of capitalism's own reproduction.

After this investigation of the economic structure of modern society, we move towards Hegel's reflection on history and historicity. Joseph Grim Feinberg's paper "The Story of Dialectics and the Trickster of History" addresses the relation between emancipatory dialectics and narrative form. Analyzing inter-connections between dialectic and narration, Feinberg argues that varying concepts of dialectics can be associated with varying structures of narrating history. In this context, what interests Feinberg most is the specific narrative form of the trickster tale, which enables a radical re-reading of Hegel's philosophy of history from the perspective of the slave, who, while excluded from historicity, struggles against this exclusion.

Andrzej Leder's article, "The Concept of De-Sublation and the Regressive Process in History: Prolegomena," in turn focuses on the regressive moments of history as those signalized, but perhaps not sufficiently systematized, in Hegel's dialectics, as well as in subsequent theories. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the notion of sublation, central to Hegel's theory, allows theorizing both progress and regress, especially in the context of trauma. It is thus not necessary to abandon Hegel in order to conceptualize the moments when history regresses; Leder argues that such processes can be grasped based on the psychoanalytic re-appropriation of sublation. Following Benjamin, Žižek, Lacan and Husserl, he sketches the basic idea for a Hegelian theory and notion of regress.

In what follows, we are leaving history aside, and we focus on the contemporary relevance of Hegel's thought in the field of social and critical theory. In her essay "The Slave, Antigone and the Housewife: Hegel's Dialectics of the Weak," Ewa Majewska provides a feminist reinterpretation of the Hegelian figure of "Unhappy Consciousness" from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In discussion with Carla Lonzi and Judith Butler, she suggests that "Unhappy Consciousness" refers to the lived experience of a Housewife rather than to the religious subject or romantic suffering. Majewska recapitulates various aspects of reproductive labour, which the Subject experiences as miserably repetitive and mundane, at the stage of dialectics focused on the symbolic realm of recognition. On the basis of the Housewife figure, Majewska proposes her own project of the dialectic of the of the weak, which takes into account the marginalized sphere of the Hegelian spirit: its materiality, corporeality and life maintaining activities, or everything that relates to its structural vulnerability.

The article of Marcin Pańków, "Two Metaphysics of Freedom: Kant and Hegel on Violence and Law in the Era of the Fall of Liberal Democracy," allows a smooth turn to more classical philosophy, while at the same time closing the series of articles in this volume. His meticulous reconstruction of the relations between violence and law offers another Benjaminian reflection on the normative dimensions of democracy. The return to the oft-forgotten dialectics of modality constitutes an important element of Pańków's reflection on violence and history, where he rearticulates the anticolonial points made by Achille Mbembe and Susan Buck-Morss, situating them in the context of a Hegelian understanding of the future.

The section of our "Return of Hegel" volume consisting of articles is thus concluded with a clear-cut turn towards the future. And yet it is not all we offer, as the last section of the publication contains a theoretical debate on the book by Adam Leszczyński, *Ludowa historia Polski* ("The People's History of Poland"), published in Polish in 2020. Orchestrated by the *Praktyka Teoretyczna* Editors, Wiktor Marzec and Mateusz Janik, this section combines the reviews of Leszczyński's important volume by Ewa Majewska, Marcin Jarząbek, Brian Porter-Szűcs, and Michał Pospiszyl, as well, as the author's general response. In the process of the discussion, many important issues associated with both the methodology and strategy of historical research are addressed, connecting the ground-breaking work of Howard Zinn and his *People's History of the United States* with the work of Leszczyński. This author's book accounts for the remnants of feudalism in contemporary society, but above all it is an amazing reconstruction of peasantry, serfdom, patriarchalism, nationalism and resistance in Poland of the last *millennium*, based on the documents concerning those who are usually omitted from historical books—the poor and dispossessed. The debate on this important book allows understanding both the long history of Poland as well as the methodological controversies of its recent accounts.

We hope that this first of the two Hegel-volumes will provoke many debates and controversies. To what extent it will also enhance the return of queries and claims for universality remains to be seen; however, this was one of the purposes behind collecting these articles and essays. If there is one thing we might all have in common in our return to Hegel's thought and heritage on this round anniversary of his 250$^{\text{th}}$ birthday, it is the need for the audacity of his theoretical work to become ours, at least in some part, especially its much needed public and critical

This is why we invited very different thinkers and varied—sometimes even opposing—styles of approaching Hegel and the contemporary world. We invite you to join us in rethinking and discussing Hegel's philosophy and its legacy in today's theory, society and understanding of history.

dimension, its courage to undermine or break the safe patterns of intellectual practice. This is why we invited very different thinkers and varied—sometimes even opposing—styles of approaching Hegel and the contemporary world. We invite you to join us in rethinking and discussing Hegel's philosophy and its legacy in today's theory, society and understanding of history.

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Citation:
Majewska, Ewa, and Bartosz Wójcik. 2022. "The Return of Hegel: History, Dialectics and the Weak." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 9–18.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.1
Funding: Research work funded by the National Science Centre carried out within the project „Hegel and Žižek's Philosophy of Negativity." Project no. 2016/21/N/HS1/03514

Autorzy: Ewa Majewska, Bartosz Wójcik
Tytuł: Powrót Hegla. Historia, dialektyka i to, co słabe

Abstrakt: Wprowadzenie do numeru „Powrót Hegla: historia, dialektyka i to, co słabe".

Słowa kluczowe: Hegel, dialektyka, historia, teoria krytyczna

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Hegel's Enlightenment and the Dialectics of Vulva

This essay is based not on academic research, but on the sum of personal, collective, political and philosophical experiences that someway or another relate to the reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, developed in the course of the seminar that I have been holding in St. Petersburg for several years now. Being a lecturer on Hegel was my dream since the days of youth, when I read Alexander Kojeve, and I used the first institutional opportunity to engage myself in this enterprise. The seminar began in 2015 as a part of the university program, for which I was reading authoritative commentaries, preparing introductory lectures and remarks, although I had never been properly trained for such instruction, my command in German was close to zero, and my entire competence in the German idealism rather basic. Gradually, the seminar became less and less academic, until it got eventually detached from the university and acquired an autonomous existence as a kind of amateur salon gathering students, artists, poets, and other members of the public, which, due to the regularity of the meetings and their exclusive social atmosphere, also became an informal circle of friends.

A great part of the seminar was held in a private apartment, used as a small home gallery and cultural space by its owner, Marina Maraeva, and the now late Labrador dog Guidon. The name of the place—Labradory "Intimnoe mesto"—suggests a play of words, translating from the Russian equally as "Intimate place" and "Private parts." From the very beginning, such an infrastructure gave us a strong feminist impulse, so that the seminar on Hegel became actually something in between an intellectual salon and an underground reading group similar to those historical worker's study circles in which, in our city, Lenin and his comrades were involved a century ago, before the Russian Revolution. While the Revolutionary workers were reading Marx and Engels, we went back to Hegel, reading *Phenomenology* very slowly, line by line, and trying to understand every sentence of it independently of the already existing scholarly interpretations. What worked out then was a "naïve" reading, mediated not by the authority of scholarship or the representatives of university discourse, but solely by the force of collective discussion, which at times could run absolutely wild. We applied Hegel's chapters to our everyday practices and explained it to each other using the examples that are comprehensible to anyone in our cultural environs.

The main characters of *Phenomenology*, i.e. various form of consciousness, were put before new historical challenges. Leaving aside the history of philosophy and taking the risk of being incorrect or even totally wrong in our spontaneous interpretations, we discovered that Hegel's *Phenomenology* provides terms and tools for the actual critical analysis of the present in its various aspects and on its various levels, from private to social and political lives. "What would Hegel say to that point?" was our banner for the 1st of May demonstration in 2017, when a group of Hegelians marched in the column against political repressions and social inequalities. What would Hegel say about the Russian president, Putin, and his repressive police apparatuses? What would Hegel say about Tinder and Instagram? What would he say on the topics of the metoo and BLM movements? On COVID-19 and the restrictions introduced by the governments of the national states in their attempts to combat it? On artificial intelligence and smart technologies? On global warming? Such contextual shifts indeed betray Hegel's thought, but at the same time remain faithful to it, making its crucial elements pass through the filters of contemporaneity.

What happened then is that the reality itself and the current news feed begun to provide us with cases that amazingly seemed to correspond to passages from the *Phenomenology* which we were reading, as if same characters were being played by new actors. In fact, these both were and weren't coincidences: in accordance with the spirit of Hegel's book, there is a dialectics between consciousness and reality, for which every coincidence is a case. What Hegel teaches us is a method: whenever you try it, the object finds its concept, and vice versa. Thus, in March 2020, just as the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, we reached the sixth chapter of the *Phenomenology*, "Spirit," and its central section on the Enlightenment, particularly paragraph 545, where Hegel writes about infection.

Remarkably, at the same time, half the world away, Rebecca Comay was also reading the same chapter with her students. In her wonderful lecture "Enlightenment as Infection" she reminds us about the historical context of this chapter, namely the French Revolution and the cultural developments that shaped its environment, and makes very important arguments: first, that the motif of infection persists in various places in the *Phenomenology*, emerging already in the fourth chapter, the one on the master-slave dialectics, where the self-consciousness is being produced in the process of self-alteration, and mediated by the fear of death; second, that every level of consciousness is a pair of opposites, and every self has its truth in its opposite, in the other than itself, like mastery and slavery, honesty and deception, nobility and baseness, or Enlightenment and superstition; and third, that every "I" is always already "we," and such is the viral nature of language: communication itself is a form of contagion (Comay 2020).

The passage referred to stages a historical drama defined by Hegel as the struggle of the Enlightenment with superstition. This is an ideological struggle, in which the old system of cultural values—above all, religious belief, which corresponds to estate structure of social hierarchies—is getting replaced by the new one, known as Enlightenment. It is the spirit of Enlightenment that is described here as an infection, one that literally spreads in the air and contaminates it with what Hegel calls "pure insight." It begins with education, with the distribution, popularization and democratization of knowledge. The open secret of this drama—which is also the open secret of the Enlightenment's final triumph over religion, which results in the French Revolution—is that faith and pure insight "are essentially the same," they belong to the same element, namely "pure thinking," or the world of ideas. The difference between them is that faith is positive, in a logical sense, for it provides a certain imagery of an absolute essence, or God, whereas pure insight through which the virus of the Enlightenment is spread all around is negativity: it does not have its own objects, so to say, but parasitizes on the images of faith, which it negates. Such negation is possible, however, precisely because pure insight is inherently allied to faith. Due to this alliance, faith is already receptive to pure insight, and being intruded upon by its elements, cannot develop a proper immunity against them:

> For that reason, the communication of pure insight is comparable to a peaceful *diffusion* of something like a scent in a compliant atmosphere. It is a pervading infection and is not noticeable beforehand as being opposed to the indifferent element into which it insinuates itself; it thus cannot be warded off. It is only when the infection has become widespread that it is *for consciousness*, which had carefreely yielded itself to it, for what this consciousness received into itself was precisely the simple essence, which was equal to itself and to consciousness but which was at the same time the simplicity of *negativity* taking a reflective turn into itself. (Hegel 2019, 319)

To put it very simply, the Enlightenment addresses every consciousness in a kind of straightforward manner: "Listen, just discard prejudices and think for yourself!" indeed, this doesn't work directly, and yet, ultimately, this strategy wins, as far as every consciousness is capable of thinking for itself, and is in this sense already inherently infected and ready to give itself to pure insight with minimal resistance:

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> As soon as pure insight thus is for consciousness, this insight has already made itself widespread, and the struggle against it betrays the fact that the infection has already taken hold. The struggle is too late, and all the remedies taken only make the disease worse, for the disease has seized the very marrow of spiritual life, namely, consciousness in its concept, or its pure essence itself. For that reason, there is no force within it that could prevail over the disease. (Hegel 2019, 319)

The paragraph ends with the famous scene of the bloodless replacement of the old idol with the new one. Hegel quotes Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* and compliments his metaphor with a telling image of a serpent that renews its skin:

> Rather, now that it is an invisible and undetected spirit, it winds its way all through the nobler parts, and it has soon taken complete hold over all the fibers and members of the unaware idol. At that point, "*some fine morning* it gives its comrade a shove with the elbow, and, thump! kadump! the idol is lying on the floor"—on *some fine morning*, where the noontime is bloodless and when the infection has permeated every organ of spiritual life. Only then does memory alone still preserve the dead mode of spirit's previous shape as a vanished history (although exactly how it does this nobody knows), and the new serpent of wisdom, which is elevated for adoration, has in this way painlessly only shed its withered skin. (Hegel 2019, 317)

The figure of the serpent perfectly illustrates the crucial element of Hegel's dialectics, namely, *Aufhebung*, usually translated in English as sublation. The Russian language offers an interesting word for it—*snjatie*—which derives from the verb "snjat," having multiple meanings: not only "to abolish," "to suspend," "to withdraw," to "relieve" or "to transcend," etc., but also, in everyday language, "to take off" (a dress) or "to shoot" (a film). In my view, Hegel's *Aufhebung* contains something of all these meanings. Say, for example, a camera focuses on the object of faith—which is the absolute essence, or God—and shoots. "Cut!"—says the director. In Russian, this sounds as "*Snjato!*," which a Hegelian philosopher unaware of the context could mistakenly translate as "Sublated!" And she wouldn't be totally wrong about it, for what is a film shot if not a determinate negation of a certain positive essence, which it cancels, but at the same time preserves as sublated? There is no real flower in the film shot, but there is an image of it, produced by the negativity of the camera. There is no God in the film of the Enlightenment, but there is a notion of God: just think about Voltaire's "*Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer*" (If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him; Voltaire [1768]). Another nonobvious meaning is taking off. I take off my raincoat, my blouse, my skirt and my bra: these gestures are indeed determinate negations that expose the new naked body of the serpent of wisdom.

An important aspect of this process, already emphasized above, is the affinity between negation and what it negates, or, in this particular paragraph, between the infection and what it infects. The point is that there is no identity without alterity: the infection seems to come from the outside, but it does so only insofar as it is at the same time always already inside; the inner truth of a self is the other than itself, and consciousness is this split between the Other and the self. Therefore, the disease is not an accident that could be easily avoided, but a necessity, both historical and logical. There is no development without it. Yes, just like any infection, the Enlightenment seems to come from the outside, from some external bearers, like *Encyclopedia* edited by Diderot and d'Alembert and published in France between 1751 and 1772, which was intended to change the ways of thinking, the general worldview. But the element of thinking is shared by faith and pure insight, and the serpent of the latter already sleeps within the former, as it turns retroactively, when it takes off the old dress of superstition.

Historical necessity is such that the Enlightenment does the groundwork for the Revolution, which will do away with absolutism. With the Revolution, which in Hegel appears as the form of consciousness called "Absolute Freedom," comes terror—but this is already another story. Without stopping here, I will now smuggle this discussion on superstition, Enlightenment, and infection from one historical context to another: let it be a Hegelian contraband.

My country, Russia, has a historical experience of the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917, which, as I already mentioned, was preceded, among many other things, by educational activities, such as underground workers' Marxist reading groups. The educational work was an extremely important element of the revolutionary struggle before it became a real armed struggle: people had to learn about the connection between the pure conditions of their lives, social inequality, and the monarchist state, which rested on the institutions of the police and clergy taking control over the suppressed population. Like the French Revolution, which it took as its model, the Russian Revolution was followed by terror, and then there was some 70 years of an attempt to build a socialist state. After its failure and the collapse of the Soviet Union, we nearly regressed to the previous state of absolutism, which, just like a century ago, relies on the police and the priesthood, with the only difference being that now, instead of hereditary monarchy, we have a formal institute of presidency. Formal, because the mechanism of the transfer of power is broken: one and the same president and his people have retained the state power for already more than twenty years, and intend to keep hold of it.

Many citizens nevertheless risked their health and safety, put on their face masks and gloves, and went to their voting stations just to say "no" to the rewriting of the actual law in the interests of those who otherwise simply violate it.

In order to provide the acting head of state Vladimir Putin with life-long presidency, for the last ten years multiple changes are constantly implemented in the law, and the entire system of social regulation transforms literally every day. Thus, in the summer 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the authorities initiated the process of rewriting the constitution. In order to modify the supreme law, they decided to hold a national referendum, for which even the quarantine restrictions were suspended in spite of the growing number of cases. This vote was indeed a pseudo vote, with the results fixed well in advance. Many citizens nevertheless risked their health and safety, put on their face masks and gloves, and went to their voting stations just to say "no" to the rewriting of the actual law in the interests of those who otherwise simply violate it.

On July 1, the last day of the referendum, Putin, too, came to vote for himself. He didn't wear a protective mask. When the journalists asked his spokesman to comment on this, he replied that Putin fully trusted the sanitary conditions of the voting facilities. This was to say that the president did not wear a mask because he wasn't afraid of getting infected. The reverse scenario— that he himself could infect someone— was out of the question. The voting facilities were considered good enough to protect the president from the people, an anonymous infectious crowd in masks.

Shortly before the referendum, an emblematic episode took place: a number of activists organized an action in support of a political prisoner, the young artist Yulia Tsvetkova from Komsomolsk-on-Amur in the Russian Far East. This was one of a series of show trials, based on a fabricated criminal case: Yulia was accused of peddling pornography. What was labelled as pornography were in fact educational, body-positive drawings, including allegoric images of female sexual organs. Over thirty people, mostly women, were arrested for supporting Yulia, and charged, according to the protocol, with violating sanitary norms and disrupting the quarantine regime. This case shows what, for the police, really constituted sanitary norms. It was not the spreading of COVID that they were trying to prevent. The infection for them was the people, the protesters, their slogans, the drawings, and especially a flower-like, many-colored image in which someone discerned a vulva.

"What's a vulva?" That was the question asked by a police officer to another Russian artist, the activist and feminist Daria Apahonchich on January 2021, during a very brutal house-check. The police came to Daria's apartment all of a sudden, spent seven hours there, turned everything upside down before the eyes of scared children, withdrew all devices and other things, found a bunch of posters protesting Yulia Tsvetkova's case, and asked this question. Referring to article 51 of the Russian Constitution, expressing the right not to incriminate herself, Darya refused to reply to the police officer and say what a vulva is. However, three months after this search, she decided to record a video in which she explains what a vulva is, to an imagined policeman, in the form of a fairy tale, using some comic figures cut out of paper. The video was published online with the following warning:

> THIS MESSAGE (MATERIAL) HAS BEEN CREATED AND (OR) DISSEMINATED BY A FOREIGN MASS MEDIA OUTLET PERFORMING THE FUNCTIONS OF A FOREIGN AGENT, AND (OR) A RUSSIAN LEGAL ENTITY, PERFORMING THE FUNCTIONS OF A FOREIGN AGENT.

This phrase must go with all public statements, posts on social networks, remarks and comments made by Darya since December 2020, when she was declared a foreign agent. In Russia, this status is usually applied to NGOs, cultural institutions and media that receive funds from abroad. Symbolically, a foreign agent is supposed to be an entity that is functioning in the interests of foreign countries, in other words against the interests of the Russian state. It is a stigma, comparable to what, in Stalin's time, was called "the enemy of the people." The status of a foreign agent imposes multiple legal and bureaucratic procedures, which enormously complicate work and life in Russia, and basically aim to make it unbearable. Darya was one of the five persons who received this status not as an institution, but as an individual. Apparently, the reason for this repression was her engagement with feminist ideas.

The fairy tale told by Darya has a multilayered structure. The first narration is an alleged dialog between Darya and the policeman. Without telling him directly what a vulva is, she tells the story of a dinosaur who complains to a sea cow that all his friends disappear whenever he is going to have a dinner with them, and the sea cow advises him to "start reading about the world and its problems, about injustices, have a look at theory, and make friends who are also interested in these things," as well as to "completely abandon meat and eating living creatures" (Apahonchich 2021). The dinosaur follows the advice, but keeps complaining, because what he'd learned about the injustices of the world made him sad, and the cow tells him another story—"of a jellyfish who quarreled with everyone," but then had an interesting discussion with another jellyfish, who told another story—of a bee and a caterpillar… The series of narrations returns to the policeman's question. "So, you mean that in all these stories, the characters achieved their goal, thinking that they were doing something different, but they were disappointed because it is better to have a theory than not have one?," he asks, and Darya replies: "Yes, you've got it quite right, comrade policeman." Finally comes the explanation: "The vulva is a sexual organ, and many organisms have one. But feeling shame over the vulva is the starting point of our misogynous culture, while the movement towards respect, towards understanding that the vulva is an organ of a living person who has the right to know about their anatomy is a process. Therefore, the vulva is the path from shame to respect" (Apahonchich 2021). After all, Darya draws the structure of her narrative that recalls the structure of vulva.

When Daria published her video online, new amendments were suggested to the so-called educational law—a recent legislative initiative that puts multiple restrictions on various educational activities, such as public lectures, seminars, discussions, and other forms of theoretical and cultural interventions. The amendments imply, for instance, that such activities demand special permissions from the ministry of education, cannot be held by the people without a certain length of work in education, or by foreign agents. One could probably ask me at this point how stories of the Russian artists, Putin's fake votes, protests, vulvas, foreign agents and educational activities are connected to the theme of the Enlightenment in Hegel. The answer is simple: in the Russian language, there is only one word for the historical Enlightenment and various educational activities; it has the same root, which is "light." In this sense, Yulia's drawings of female sexual organs, as well as Daria's video instruction for the policeman, are the intrusions of the Enlightenment that shatter the system of superstition and prejudices, upon which the existing system of social inequalities and suppression is based. The new Russian absolutism thinks that it is the disease that comes from the outside—from Europe, from America, from leftists and liberals who propagate dangerous values, such as feminism or human rights, alien to the Russian culture—and tries to undertake prophylactic measures in order to avoid the spreading of the infection. The good news is, however, that the element of pure insight is already inherent in every consciousness, including the one of the policemen, and the logical necessity, with which it will spread and eventually win the day, is just a matter of time. This is how Hegel's theory can be used in practice, without going deep into theoretical debate, in foretelling the future: another Revolution in Russia is to follow.

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Citation:
Timofeeva, Oxana. 2022. "Hegel's Enlightenment and the Dialectics of Vulva." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 19–28.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.2

articles

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Putting an End to “Man”: Nature and the Human in Hegel, Becoming-Animal and Abolitionism

The article attempts to reconstruct the difference between the ontologies of Hegel and Deleuze. The question of nature and Man (as different from the human animal) in both philosophies can provide crucial insight into the fundamental ontological disparity between the two philosophies. Nature, according to Hegel, is truly external to the idea and (as such) is at the same time a moment in the movement of the concept becoming what it is. Deleuze, in contrast, goes back to pre-Kantian ontology without abandoning the transcendental level of analysis. This enables him to bestow upon nature real externality and to transform the dialectic into a mechanism of opening to the inexhaustible outside, not of confirming the primacy of the concept. The case of becoming-animal demonstrates the political implications of this ontological choice: it can be understood as a way of putting an end to “Man,” an enterprise compatible with abolitionist postulates.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, Hegel, Deleuze and Guattari, Man, nature

Deleuze—Hegelian after all?

The Deleuze-Hegel relationship is a complicated one. Although Deleuze never wrote a book about Hegel, as he did about Kant, and in his writings we can find some anti-Hegelian rhetoric (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Deleuze 1994, 91–93), it may prove to be only rhetoric; he also stated that "Hegel is the first to think movement in the concept" (Martin 2013, 227)—a crucial discovery that was the basis of Deleuze's own philosophical project. He also praised Hegel in *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition* for introducing the infinite representation (Deleuze 1990a, 341; Deleuze 1994, 81–82)—a crucial innovation that allowed him to develop his own ontology of difference. Some interpreters also formulate a point that Deleuze may be viewed as belonging to the German speculative tradition as much as to the empiricist tradition—his decisive philosophical innovations can be traced back to an attempt to solve Kant's problem concerning the dichotomy of the empirical ego and transcendental ego—a problem that was also crucial to Hegel (Sauvagnaurges 2013; Somers-Hall 2013). Kantian-like syntheses of experience, sensory data and desire are the backbone of Deleuze's thought. What is more, just like Hegel, he makes internal difference the principle of the movement of the concept—because, contrary to the stereotype, the divergence between the ontology of difference and dialectic is not synonymous with the divergence between the internal difference or process of differentiation present in each being and the "external" differentiation by binary oppositions set in motion by negation. Hegel is not de Saussure—his concepts move precisely because they differ internally, from themselves—"always already," on the most basic level, just like (at a glance) Deleuzian concepts:

> Hegel uses terms like "identity" and "in itself" only to emphasize how strange it is that the in- itself of every thing is *in* another thing. (…) For Hegel, contradiction is not the solution for getting rid of differences once they emerge out of a ground; ground is the solution to how differences coexist after contradiction has torn them apart. (Lampert 2013, 186, 193)

Therefore we can conclude that Deleuze proposes, just like Marx or Catherine Malabou, an unorthodox reading of Hegel.

This does not mean, of course, that there are no serious divergences or conflicts between these two ontologies. Ultimately, despite many intersection points, they are incommensurable. The disparities are numerous. I will try to reconstruct only one of them, concerning the status of nature in both philosophies, and the conclusions about the human or spirit/human as spirit, as well as pro-animal politics, that result from the ontological decisions concerning the status of nature.

This difference pertaining to the status of nature in the systems of both philosophers is very important, because it may help us prove the following points: first, that Deleuze's difference, although it bears many similarities to the dialectical movement of the concept, is in fact irreducible to it—Deleuze manages to posit the movement of the concept by other means than Hegel.

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Second, that although Hegel's system gives its due to the empirical, the given—the domain external to the concept—he is not willing to grant this domain real externality, because he gives the conceptual domain primacy in advance. According to Hegel, nature is the external form in which the idea appears—it is the moment of the idea's greatest alienation. However, the fact that this alienation takes place precisely because the idea has to determine itself makes this externality merely conditional; it is a moment whose destiny is to be overcome with the transition to spirit, incarnated first in the human and then in various human institutions. In order for the substance to become subject, it has to, at some point, undergo a radical becoming-other—and this is the function nature performs in the process of the idea's becoming-itself (this makes Hegel, eventually, an idealist, although his idealism is definitely a peculiar one). For Deleuze, in contrast, nature is the domain that cannot be overcome—it is the subject that is the contingent, particular moment of the whole, and the aim of thinking (which also encompasses politics and art) is to become a substance—that is, something that is *not* a subject.

And finally third: that these disparities in the approach to the question of nature are responsible not only for the profound irreducibility of Hegel's and Deleuze's ontologies, but also for the difference in the way both philosophers approach the issue of anthropocentrism. Hegel—although he is by no means a humanist, and his philosophy is free from that which Jacques Derrida calls "anthropologism" (Derrida 1969, 36)—is an anthropocentrist, and his anthropocentrism is not something we can eliminate without eliminating the fundamental tenets of his ontology. In turn, Deleuze's (or more precisely Deleuze and Guattari's) ontology, in particular the concept of becoming, gives us an opportunity to overcome anthropocentrism—although in order to extract this possibility, we have to place this ontology in the context of abolitionist thought.

In presenting my case, I will reverse the order of arguments delineated above—I will start from the status of nature in Hegel, because it may help us to better understand what is at stake in the difference between the ways both philosophers conceive of nature.

Nature in Hegel

For a long time, Hegel's philosophy of nature was ridiculed (Posch 2011; Wandschneider 2013; Houlgate 1998; Verene 1998). Even those who were convinced of the importance of Hegel's contribution to ethics or social and political philosophy often chose to disregard the philosophy of nature as the "weak" spot in his system (Wandschneider 2013, 104; Schnädelbach 2006, 100). This was rooted in the assumption that "society and culture are areas of reality which, unlike nature, we can more readily regard as quasi-idealistic" (Maker 1998, 2).[1] Both scientists and philosophers in the 19th and the 20th century were outraged by what they perceived to be Hegel's philosophical arrogance towards the empirical. They condemned him as a philosopher who

> intended to *derive* the structure of space, time, motion, matter, of the properties of light, electricity, magnetism, chemical elements, the essence of organisms (…), *completely and utterly from pure reason*, referring to empirical data where they somehow matched his ideas, but ignoring them where they did not. (Posch 2011, 180)

This was largely based on a misunderstanding (or simply a refusal to read Hegel's works). Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the case of the discovery of the planetoid Ceres. In his early work, *Dissertatio philosophica de orbitis planetarum* Hegel (1801) was supposed to deny the possibility that there may exist an undiscovered planet between Mars and Jupiter (hypothesized by astronomers since the 1770s); unfortunately for him, such a planet was discovered by Giuseppe Pazzi in the same year. However, as Thomas Posch stresses, Hegel never wanted to rule out the possibility of the existence of the planet; he merely "formulates a careful if—clause, saying that *if* a series based on the numbers proposed by Plato in his *Timaios* somehow reflects the true order of the planetary orbits, *then* there is no need to look for a planet between Mars and Jupiter" (Posch 2011, 178). Yet, "the myth of the dialectically annihilated asteroids" (Posch 2011, 179) persisted in the reception of Hegel. Nonetheless, careful reading of Hegel's (1970) *Philosophy of Nature* testifies to the fact that, although he made what we recognize today as mistakes and obviously could not have predicted the scientific breakthroughs that occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, he nevertheless possessed a thorough knowledge of the scientific developments of his time (Wandschneider 2013, 105).

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[1] This feature of the reception of Hegel was, thus, to some extent a symptom of the division of labor between the sciences—often interpreted in a positivist vein—and the humanities, which fought to free themselves from the accusation of unscientificity and establish a place for themselves as autonomous from the sciences. Unfortunately, this division prevented the researchers from perceiving the organic connections between the different parts of Hegel's system.

Thus, Hegel definitely did not disregard the empirical or the given; the aim of his system was precisely to integrate the empirical into the conceptual, or rather to prove that the empirical, without losing its status as the "real," is already contained in the conceptual, albeit in the form of externality—that there is no need to pose the external point that would allow us to ground the system. This is necessary, because the status of this external point is inevitably problematic, as debate on the Kantian thing-in-itself proved (Siemek 2012, 4–5, 20–23). If we try to base the validity of knowledge on something external, something we cannot construct *a priori*, but have to obtain from experience, we inevitably encounter a paradox, because to assume the existence of such something is to "apply categories beyond the domain of possible experience" (Siemek 2012, 6; my translation), as the early readers of Kant, like Salomon Maimon and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, recognized.

Hegel's solution is to posit the original correlation of the subject and the object of cognition (Siemek 1998, 39; Meillassoux 2008, 11–12). This makes the thing-in-itself always already present in the system, which becomes self-grounding. At the same time, the subjective or conceptual component of this system undergoes a radical expropriation—it has to become-other, incarnate, like the Christian God, in a material form (Malabou 2005, 97; Schnädelbach 2006, 153–154): "substance withdraws from itself in order to enter into the particularity of its content. Through this movement of self-negation substance will posit itself as subject" (Malabou 2005, 11). This gesture leads William Maker to the claim that Hegel was not, despite the stereotype, an idealist (Maker 1998). This is a valid conclusion if we define idealism as the stance that "dismisses the facticity of the given" and assumes that "reality is thought or thought-like" (Maker 1998, 3). The conceptual, or "thought" in Hegel is real only insofar as it becomes radically dispossessed, insofar as it becomes something it is not—the given, the empirical; and the concept's passage into what is most alien to it, namely nature, is the epitome of this becoming-other.

But how real is this movement of dispossession? In order to respond to this question, we would probably have to display a good amount of bad will towards Hegel; but, as Deleuze maintains, we never philosophize in good will (Deleuze 1994, 165, 166). The status of nature, which is the moment of the greatest alienation of the concept, will again serve as the good test of the traits of this feature of the Hegelian system—because it, as Donald Philip Verene states, "if light can be thrown on how the Idea becomes nature, the whole of the system can be illuminated" (Verene 1998, 213).

Nature is the external form in which the idea appears: "nature is also »the idea«, but it is the idea in the negative form of »otherness (*Anders-seyn)*«" (Wandschneider 2013, 107). As Hegel states at the very beginning of *Philosophy of Nature*:

> Nature has yielded itself as the Idea in the form of *otherness*. Since the *Idea* is therefore the negative of itself, or *external to itself*, nature is not merely external relative to this Idea (and to the subjective existence of the same, spirit), but is embodied as nature in the determination of *externality*. (Hegel 1970 [1], 205)

Why does idea have to externalize itself in this way, make itself the negative of itself? Precisely in order to determine itself. As Maker explains, in the Hegelian system outlined in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the transition from logic to nature serves the goal of giving the idea an internal limit, which it needs in order to progress towards the state of concretization and differentiation—to "complete itself by a process of self-transformative transcendence" (Maker 1998, 9): "the logic's initial articulation of radical self-determination itself requires an intrasystemic recognition and conceptualizing of *radical* otherness" (Maker 1998, 8). Thus, nature is not "an other which is not, in its determinate content, a derivative, reducible product of thought, a quasi-other, despite the fact that this content *is* articulated in and by thought" (Maker 1998). Or, in the words of Dieter Wandschneider:

> What is logically ideal points beyond itself precisely because it is determined as un-conditioned; and it does this precisely as that which is not conditioned by the *non-ideal*, whatever that might be. Thus, the non-ideal is always co-implied by the logically ideal. (Wandschneider 2013, 107)

Without this externalization in the form of the non-ideal the idea would pass onto bad infinity, a linear progression without internal limit (Maker 1998, 9; Nuzzo 2013, 249–250)—this Hegelian nightmare which all thought should avoid at all cost, and which serves as an all-

-purpose bogeyman, appearing often when Hegelians criticize non-Hegelians (as we will see in the section devoted to Catherine Malabou's critique of Deleuze and Guattari).

Nature as the outside of the concept/idea is real: this we have to grant Hegel. But what does it mean to assert that it is at the same time articulated by thought? The controversy concerning Hegel's rejection of evolution might throw some light on this issue. In *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel states that:

> Thinking consideration must reject such nebulous and basically sensuous conceptions as for example the so-called emergence of plants and animals out of water, and of the more highly developed animal organizations out of the lower etc. (…) To think of the genera as gradually evolving themselves out of one another in time is to make use of a completely empty concept. (Hegel 1979 [1], 212–213)

As Errol E. Harris stresses, Hegel could have not known the Darwinian version of the theory of evolution; what he rejected were the hypotheses of evolution that circulated in the second half of the 18th century, devoid yet of firm evidence (Harris 1998, 191); he thereby exercised "true scientific restraint" (Harris 1998, 192) towards the issue. What, then, would Hegel's reaction have been if he had been presented with Darwin's theory? According to Harris, he would probably have been inclined to reject it as well: "it is likely that (Hegel—J.B.) would have rejected its underlying assumption that species originate solely as a result of an accumulation of chance variations giving selective advantage" (Harris 1998, 189). But paradoxically, that would have made Hegel more modern than the 19th-century Darwinists, because the accounts of evolution developed in the second half of the 20th century acknowledge the existence of mechanisms other than the random accumulation of mutations:

> There is today copious evidence that phenotypical change is not simply dependent on random mutation, and there is even some ground for believing that not all mutation is purely random; rather that some may be induced by organismic pressures to maintain the integrity of the living thing in its surroundings. (Harris 1998, 204)

This quasi-teleological dimension of evolution, connected to the existence of the complexity of organisms, which functions as a principle qualifying the phenomenon of random mutations, would have appealed to Hegel, because the "pressures to maintain the integrity of the living thing" would have appeared to him as the activity of the concept in nature. In other words, he would have accepted the evolutionary mechanisms testifying to the existence of purposefulness in nature, and have dismissed the ones testifying to the non-purposeful, random, contingent character of natural processes (here "dismiss" means leave them to the empirical sciences).

Natural teleology is then the conceptual, rational dimension of nature, a manifestation of the fact that the concept is present in it. But it also has its non-conceptual aspect, related to the fact that it is the idea in the form of externality (exemplified here in random mutations). Or, in other words: the fact that nature is the real outside of the idea makes it at the same time something nonrational, nonconceptual, and something in which the concept has to be present after all. This is because there is nothing beyond the concept—therefore, nature does not add anything to the concept (Halper 1998, 34–35). This means that nature is conditioned, but not conditioning; determined, but not determining; it derives its unity from the idea, but in an inadequate, external form (Halper 1998, 36). Hence, nature is full of "transitional phenomena, borderline cases, and exceptions that do not occur in pure logic" (Posch 2011, 182). Because of this, "(t)hinking of nature (…) means negating the truth of the multiplicity of singular bodies that appear reciprocally indifferent and external to one another" (Ferrini 2013, 130).

Nature is the idea, although not in its active and transparent form, but in a form of weakness, passivity, "feebleness" (Hui 2019, 86) or "impotence." We might also say that what nature "adds" to the logic is precisely this weakness/feebleness/impotence, this dimming of the concept. Thus, as Hegel says, nature is to some extent opaque to philosophy:

> The impotence of nature is to be attributed to its only being able to maintain the determinations of the Notion in an abstract manner, and to its exposing the foundation of the particular to determination from without. (…) This impotence on the part of nature sets limits to philosophy; and it is the height of pointlessness to demand of the Notion that it should explain, and as it is said, construe or deduce these contingent products of nature, although the more isolated and trifling they are the easier the task appears to be. (Hegel 1970 [1], 215)

However, this opacity to philosophy makes nature transparent to the sciences:

> Taken simply as such, nature is incomprehensible; and it must therefore be grasped as *pure separateness*. Yet the very point of Hegel's philosophy of nature

> lies in the insight that the comprehending account of nature cannot remain caught at the level of this abstract extrinsicality.(Wandschneider 2013, 110)

This opens space for the agency of the empirical sciences, which are able to describe precisely these various instances of idea in the mode of externality (Houlgate 1998, xiv).

The impotence of nature, which makes it a fitting object for the sciences, is also what makes nature insufficient from the philosophical perspective—and which lies behind the thesis that "the truth of nature lies in the next realm of the system, spirit" (Halper 1998, 37). This is the reason behind Hegel's acceptance of the "great chain of being" (Lovejoy 1960; Posch 2011, 190; Ferrini 2011)—a hierarchical structure of natural forms ascending from the less perfect to the more perfect. This structure is treated in the *Encyclopaedia* as illustrating the stages of the progressive internalization of the concept, increasing the subjectivization of natural forms.

Inorganic matter has its life entirely outside itself and thus is the lowest form of life[2]:

> The Idea has truth and actuality only in so far as it has subjectivity implicit within it. As the mere immediacy of the Idea, life is thus external to itself, and is not life, but merely the corpse of the living process. It is the organism as the totality of the inanimate existence of mechanical and physical nature. (Hegel 1970 [3], 9)

Vegetal life is the first stage of life proper (namely: differentiation, mediation and internalization), but it differentiates only in a modular, superficial way:

> The plant is the primary subject which is for itself, and yet still has its origin in immediacy. It is however the feeble and infantine life which is not yet intrinsically differentiated. (…) In the plant, which is merely subjective animation in its primary immediacy, the objective organism and its subjectivity are still imme-

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[2] The fact that Hegel classifies the "geological organism" as a form of life may seem perplexing, but in reality it is another indication that he was in many respects ahead of his times: what is "geological organism," if not Gaia, the self-organizing planetary ecosystem (Wandschneider 2013, 120)? However, we have to point out that this interpretation also testifies to the teleological character of Hegel's thought on nature. From the perspective of sheer complexity, Gaia would seem to be "more perfect" than a single tree or a single mouse; and yet, for Hegel it is *lower* on the scale of beings, because despite its complexity it is less of a subject than a tree or a mouse.

> diately identical. Consequently, the process whereby vegetable subjectivity articulates and sustains itself, is one in which it comes forth from itself, and falls apart into several individuals. The singleness of the whole individual is simply the basis of these, rather than a subjective unity of members; the part-bud, branch, and so on, is also the whole plant. (Hegel 1970 [3], 45–46)

With animals, we encounter for the first time a true subjectivity, which manifests itself in their activity of consuming and reproducing:

> (…) nature of the animal, in which the actuality and externality *of immediate* singularity is countered by the intra-reflected *self of singularity* or the subjective universality which is within itself. (Hegel 1970 [3], 102)

However, in animals the concept—the genus—is disconnected from the individual. Reproduction is precisely the means by which the animal (or rather the concept using the animal) attempts to bridge this gap, but the effect is not the integration of the particular and the universal, but merely another animal, and then another, and another—in a word, bad infinity (all of this concerns "human animals" as well). The animal's "immediate, abstract individuality remains permanently in contradiction with its generic universality" (Malabou 2005, 23). As Cinzia Ferrini writes: "In nature, both individual and genus remain confined and closed, each in its own finitude and one-sidedness. There can be no syllogistic mediation between these two extremes. In spirit, by contrast, *our* thought is the universal that is for itself and »immortal«" (Ferrini 2013, 130).

The transition to spirit (or, in the words of Malabou, "second nature") alone makes the integration of individuality and universality possible. This transition, being both the death and completion of the animal (human or otherwise), frees the concept present in life, sublates its natural externality: "The last self-externality of nature is sublated, so that the Notion, which in nature merely has implicit being, has become for itself" (Hegel 1970 [3], 45). This enables a progression to the next, qualitatively different dimension, that of spirit, which is nature's truth:

> From our point of view mind has for its presupposition Nature, of which it is the truth, and for that reason its absolute prius. In this its truth Nature is vanished, and mind has resulted as the »Idea« entered on possession of itself. (Hegel 1894, 6)

With the transition to spirit, the "dark night of the soul" (St. John of the Cross 1991, 358–361) that was for the concept the passage through nature is over. The concept is no longer consigned to murkiness and feebleness; thanks to spirit, it can finally assume a form more akin to what it really is.

We now have to leave the valid question: "what does this mean for humans and what is the status of the human in Hegel's philosophy?" for later. What will be of interest for us now is the fact that the true outside of the idea appears to Hegel only as weakness and dimness. This is because he assumes in advance the primacy of the concept, assumes that the concept is the only thing that exists, or that it is only the conceptual that can be understood—that is, the dimension that presents nothing alien to thought.

The reason for this is the fact that in the internal structure of the concept the subjective moment prevails. According to Marek J. Siemek, the subjective moment

> is the most appropriate form of this structure, its fullest and the most adequate shape (…). Putting it a bit maliciously, it is an absolute equality of both moments, the subjective and the objective one, but such that the former is somewhat "more equal" than the latter. (Siemek 1998, 39; my translation)

Deleuze, as we will see, sets himself the objective of constructing a concept in which the subjective moment would not be 'more equal' than the objective one—a concept, in which the substance *could not* become subject.

Counting to Two, Counting to Three and the Spontaneity of Thought

Deleuze's solution to the problem of the relation between the subjective and the objective moment is, I will maintain, different than the Hegelian one. First of all, he proposes to connect these two moments by retaining and affirming their disconnection. In *Logic of Sense* he refers to this movement as disjunctive synthesis:

> The divergence of series or the disjunction of members (*membra disjuncta*) cease to be negative rules of exclusion according to which events would be incompossible or incompatible. Divergence and disjunction are, on the contrary, affirmed as such. (…) We speak (…) of an operation according to which two things or two determinations are affirmed through their difference (…). We cannot identify contraries, nor can we affirm their entire distance, except as that which relates the one to the other. (Deleuze 1990a, 172–173)

Disjunctive synthesis has its predecessor in Gilbert Simondon's concept of disparation (Deleuze 1994, 147), a concept introduced to describe biological individuation and illustrated with an example of stereoscopic vision:

> The term "disparation" (…) which Simondon borrows from the psycho- physiology of perception, refers to the production of depth-perception in binocular vision, and to the incompatibility of retinal images, the irreducible disparity of which produces three-dimensional vision as its creative resolution. Each retina is covered by a two-dimensional image, but the two images do not coincide due to differences in parallax, which one can readily observe by closing one eye at a time. Hence, no two-dimensional image is available to solve what Simondon calls the "axiomatic of two-dimensionality," that is, the mutual incompatibility of the images. Such an axiomatic, in Simondon's terminology, means the objective structuring of a problematic field (in this case vision), the presentation of a 'problematic' or objectively metastable situation requiring a solution. Such a problematic incompatibility is what Simondon intends to capture by his notion of disparation. (…) To attempt to resolve this objective metastability between the two retinas, the human brain integrates it as a condition for the coherence of a new axiomatic, namely three-dimensionality. (Sauvagnargues 2013, 39–40)

Two-dimensional images in both retinas are not overcome, but retained and *as such* they make possible, thanks to the activity of the brain, the perception of depth. This mechanism allows for a kind of progression—or at least the increase of complexity—but they do not guarantee that living forms thus constructed will ever be at home in their environments. This means giving primacy to intuition or the empirical ego—to the objective domain or nature, in a way—but nature here is not the same as the nature envisioned by the proponents of naturalism. It is not a domain of finite, structured organisms and laws governing their behavior, but a domain of intensive differentiations (Baugh 2013, 84–85). Although the creation of an organism always means the alienation, solidification, simplification (Baugh 2013, 83) of these primary structures, they nevertheless cannot do other than to actualize, and their creative capability is still preserved in actualized beings. As Anne Sauvagnargues concludes: "[o]ntology is no longer a matter of the identity of the identity and difference, but of a constructive disparity that stems from a difference that is not reducible from identity" (Sauvagnargues 2013, 39).

Now, we may ask: is this construction really different than the Hegelian movement of the concept? In Hegel, after all, difference is also irreducible to identity! Yet the difference exists—but it is a rather subtle one. How far must a Hegelian dialectician learn to count?"—asks Slavoj Žižek (2008, 179). Contrary to appearances, this is a serious question. It relates, in fact, to the very essence of the dialectical movement. Žižek tries to prove that, despite the stereotype, the answer is not: "to three (the dialectical triad, and so on)" (Žižek 2008, 179), but to four: at every stage, the movement of the concept contains in itself something to which the various critics of Hegel (Adorno first of all) identified as the domain that is supposed to escape sublation: "the excess of pure nothingness of self-relating negativity which vanishes, becomes invisible, in the final Result" (Žižek 2008, 179). Thus, sublation is never a reconciliation; it never glosses over the lack, the negativity that is the truth of every form.

However, on closer inspection, as Verene notices, it would seem that the right answer is rather two than four (Verene 1998, 215). This is illustrated by the fragments from the "Introduction" to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which Hegel analyzes the nature of experience and the way it contains in itself the dialectical movement:

> if we inquire into the truth of knowledge, it seems that we are asking what knowledge is *in itself.* Yet in this inquiry knowledge is *our* object, something that exists *for us;* and the *in-itself* that would supposedly result from it would rather be the being of knowledge for *us*. (Hegel 1977, 55)

Seeking "real" knowledge about the outside world, we double the object of our knowledge into the object in itself and the object for us. It would then seem that in the very beginning of the movement, one encounters two objects: "(w)e see that consciousness now has two objects: one is the first *in-itself,* the second is the *being for-consciousness of this in-itself*" (Hegel 1977, 55). However, the second object is not an autonomous element, but only the doubling of the first—the doubling that is the essence of movement:

> Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what it previously took to be the *in-itself* is not an *in-itself,* or that it was only an in-itself for *consciousness.* Since consciousness thus finds that its knowledge does not correspond to its object, the object itself does not stand the test; in other words, the criterion for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is. (Hegel 1977, 54–55)

As Žižek notices, "the second moment is thus not the negative of the first, its otherness; it is the first moment as its own other, as the negative of itself" (Žižek 2008, 180). Or, in Hegel's words, "mediation is nothing beyond self-moving selfsameness" (Hegel 1977, 11; see also Siemek 2012, 387–389). The dialectical movement requires above all the reflexive doubling of the object of knowledge; this doubling is possible, because the object is always already correlated with the subject:

> But the essential point to bear in mind throughout the whole investigation is that these two moments, "Notion" and "object," "being-for-another" and "being--in-itself," both fall *within* that knowledge which we are investigating. Consequently, we do not need to import criteria, or to make use of our own bright ideas and thoughts during the course of the inquiry. (Hegel 1977, 53–54)

This is why the movement of difference, based on disparation, is different from the dialectical movement. Its point of departure is not one element (an original correlation) that undergoes a reflexive doubling, but *two* mutually independent elements; and the moment of the affirmation of their disjunction that sets them in motion constitutes a *third* element. Thus, it is Deleuze, not Hegel, who is a thinker of the triad.

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This ontological solution has important consequences for the question of thought's spontaneity. Deleuze pointed out, using the example of Descartes, that much of the philosophical tradition assumes that thinking is something that comes to us naturally, spontaneously, and that it can therefore serve the function of pre-philosophical ground of philosophy:

> everybody knows what it means to think and to be (…) This element consist only of the supposition that thought is the natural exercise of the faculty, of the presupposition that there is the natural capacity of thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought*. (Deleuze 1994, 165–166)[4]

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[3] This might mean that, if Deleuze is, as Quentin Meillassoux maintains, a correlationist (Meillassoux 2008, 64), his correlationism is very different from the Hegelian one, because it includes in it, by making the thinking subject a particular, situated being, a moment of radical contingency.

[4] See also Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 27; Lumsden 2013, 135.

We can say, reservations notwithstanding, that this applies to Hegel as well. Although his idea arrives as self-identity only at the end of its journey, successive stages of this journey are possible because they contain within themselves, in a more or less alienated form, the concept—the correlation of the subject and the object. The mechanism by which successive forms emerge is "spontaneous" and ruled by good will[5]; we can see this at the very beginning of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where it turns out that the object and subject of sense-certainty, seemingly the most immediate of the forms of cognition, are not immediate after all:

> When *we* reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated:* I have this certainty *through* something else, viz. the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the I. (Hegel 1977, 59)

On this most basic of levels, when the consciousness does not yet think in the precise sense of the word, the mechanisms responsible for the movement of the concept are already at work. The concept is not only the aim of the movement, but the truth of the whole process, assumed in advance. Things are different for Deleuze, who assumes that no one and nothing thinks spontaneously and in good will: "»Everybody« knows very well that in fact men think rarely, and more often under the impulse of a shock than in the excitement of a taste for thinking" (Deleuze 1994, 168; see also Houle and Vernon 2013; Adkins 2013, 14). A thought appears when an organized being (or a subject, not necessarily a human one) is forced to think by a confrontation with the outside that poses for it a problem demanding a solution.

As we can see, this demonstrates the profound differences in Deleuze's approach to the question of the status of the subject and thought with respect to Hegel; these differences translate, as we will see, to ethical and political solutions. There is nothing original in thought's correlation of the subjective and the objective, because thought itself is passive, owing its activity to the outside. Thought and the subject/object, or the correlation that allows thinking, is radically contingent[6]; it might

There is nothing original in thought's correlation of the subjective and the objective, because thought itself is passive, owing its activity to the outside. Thought and the subject/object, or the correlation that allows thinking, is radically contingent; it might not exist at all if it hadn't been, at some point, in an act that is also contingent, activated by the outside.

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[5] Spontaneity and good will do not denote any particular emotional content—the fact that thought in Hegel is spontaneous does not mean that it is harmonious or peaceful. Reflexive doubling of the correlation is definitely a violent event, and the Hegelian subject is a tortured, internally conflicted entity. This does not change the fact that this violence is an internal affair.

[6] This is perhaps the reason why Deleuze felt the need to "return" to Kantian

not exist at all if it hadn't been, at some point, in an act that is also contingent, activated by the outside.

This means that subject and its concepts are never autonomous, never bear thought out of themselves, irrespectively of the complexity of its organization. It is always dispossessed by its environment and, unlike in Hegel, it will never be "at home" in it. Deleuze describes acts of creation (again, realized by plants and animals as well as humans) as consequences of this encounter with the outside that forces a transformation on subjects. An object or an organism will always be secondary to the outside; it is not a truth of nature, but its product (Baugh 2013, 76; Houle and Vernon 2013). It is the outside, or the virtual, that remains the substance—non-subjective and producing all subjects, although most of the time this is not expressed in the form and contents of ordinary experience. This outside and the virtual might also be called nature—in its two aspects, *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*, creating and created nature (nevertheless this duality constitutes one substance) (Deleuze 1990b, 14).

This does not mean that the thinking subject is condemned to fatalist acceptance of its contingency. The whole project of Deleuzian ethics has as its aim a delineation of the ways the subject—which does not have to become, because it already exists as a particular product of nature—can become something other than the subject.[7] The subject can, in other words, try to be like nature, like the substance—an entity that is *not* a subject (see Spinoza 1994, 253–254). This is the aim of thinking, or becoming, or creation (an activity that encompasses not only philosophy or science, but also politics and art)—a "creative involution" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 185; Hansen 2000), a movement of desubjectification. This desubjectification is also the factor that makes the overcoming of anthropocentrism possible.

Anthropocentrism Is Not a Humanism

We may ask at this point: but weren't all the above remarks based on bad will towards Hegel? Wouldn't good will ultimately be more productive? Moved by good will, couldn't we actually prove that this Deleuzian

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critique, and to combine this return with invocation of pre-transcendental ontologies of Spinoza and Leibniz: this movement allowed him to retain the finitude of the subject. However, the assumption of being's immanence permitted him not to treat this finitude as something absolute.

[7] This substance is, of course, modelled on the God of Spinoza's *Ethics*.

movement of desubjectification is already possible on the grounds of Hegelian philosophy?

This seems to be the path Malabou chooses in *The Future of Hegel*. Reading Hegel through the concept of plasticity[8] allows her to present the Hegelian system as an ontology of difference and contingency. According to this interpretation, the concept is a paradoxical category that is endowed with the power both to give and receive form, or a power of schematization (Malabou 2005, 5, 8, 12, 18):

> Within the process of self-determination, the universal (the substance) and particular (the accidents as something independent) give form to each other through a dynamic like that at play in the "plastic individualities." The process of self-determination is the unfolding of the *substance-subject*. In the process, substance withdraws from itself in order to enter into the particularity of its content. (Malabou 2005, 11)

The alleged teleology of the Hegelian system is actually an anticipative structure (*voir venir*—"to see coming"; see Malabou 2005, 185, 194) which makes the dialectic radically open to the future, although with the awareness that "everything already happened" (Malabou 2005, 192)—the orientation towards the future, the anticipation of the future, is always heavy with the weight of the past, shaped by the past. This is the real meaning of absolute knowledge (Malabou 2005, 183).

This approach to Hegel constitutes one of the most daring attempts to present the relation of the subjective and the objective moment as mutual co-constitution—symmetry, or mutual asymmetry, with no prevalence of the subjective. However, does *The Future of Hegel* really manage to prove this? I have doubts. The way Malabou treats the question of Man/the human is a symptom of the fact that the prevalence of the subjective diagnosed by Siemek subsists also in her interpretation.

Malabou describes the transition from nature to spirit in terms surprisingly similar to the ones used by scholars like Ferrini, Wandschneider or Posch, who want to remain "faithful" to Hegel. The spirit, according to her, is constituted as a "second nature" (Malabou 2005, 26),[9] created as a consequence of the processes of the formation and folding of habit, common to all life (Malabou 2005, 157–158). Habit—which we may also name the force of self-organization—is "a process whereby the psychic and the somatic are translated into one another" (Malabou 2005, 26).[10] This translation occurs in all living beings, although with the human (or rather Man, because we are not speaking here simply about the human animal) we encounter something special, an additional movement of folding of the natural fold—the arrival of Man marks the entrance of habit into another dimension, that of spirit:

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[8] As Malabou demonstrates, the word "plasticity" appears in the texts of Hegel in key places, providing the vantage point that allows to see the whole system in a new light (Malabou 2005, 5).

[9] This term appears also in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, although Debord ascribes to it a more traditionally humanist meaning, stating that "Man's appropriation of his own nature is at the same time his grasp of the development of the universe" (Debord 1992, 73).

> the transition from nature to spirit occurs not as a sublation, but as a *reduplication*, a process through which spirit constitutes itself in and as a *second nature*. This reflexive reduplication is in a certain sense the "mirror stage" of spirit, in which the first form of its identity is constituted. (Malabou 2005, 26)

As we have already seen, reflexive reduplication is what constitutes the dialectical movement; nothing is added with the reduplication, what happens is only that the first moment (here: nature) relates to itself, or, using Deleuzian language, folds in on itself. Malabou's take on the transition to spirit is then no different from the orthodox Hegelian one. What is more, she also stresses that the animal life is only an elementary, insufficient form of habit[11]: "we can recognize in the animal an elementary form of seeing what is coming, of the *voir venir*. Need, appetite, desire, the accumulation of such retentions and expectations, are themselves proof of the fact that the animal is concerned to ensure the perpetuation of its own life" (Malabou 2005, 64); however, "(b)ecause the individual animal is nothing but a natural accident it can only respond to the genus in its substance by means of another accident: the generation of another animal" (Malabou 2005, 73). The development of subjectivity makes the passage to Man necessary: "Man's potential to duplicate his nature emerges from this as the defining anthropological attribute" (Malabou 2005, 57). Only with Man it is that "Subjectivity, henceforth capable of appropriating difference to itself, now appears as what it truly is: the originary synthetic unity linking its determinations and, at the same moment, putting them into sequential form" (Malabou 2005, 38).

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[10] We can notice here that Malabou's description of habit is very similar to passages on habit from Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994, 70–79). Indeed, Malabou draws on Deleuze in her interpretation of Hegel, which allows her to present the author of *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a thinker of the processes of natural self-organization, as well as to prove how indebted to Hegel Deleuze was.

[11] "A profound thought or conception of animal life animates this entire book" (Malabou 2005, xvii)—states Derrida in the preface to *The Future of Hegel*. This is true—but this conception is, ultimately, faithful to Hegel's conception, in which the animal being is inevitably insufficient.

We are now on the familiar field of the Lacanian interpretation of Hegel's anthropology, made known most notably by Žižek (2008, 99–140): "it is language that could act as the cutting edge between the death of the animal and the birth of man" (Malabou 2005, 65). Because of this, "(h)uman »nature« is, for Hegel, always and already »second nature«" (Malabou 2005, 66), that is, a lack of nature, lack established where nature, essence or substance should be. Man is this doubling of the void of essence: "Man sees himself being seen and seeing: he has become doubled and, at the same time, multiplied perspectivally" (Malabou 2005, 67). "Human habitus signifies the fact that it signifies nothing" (Malabou 2005, 67). "Man appears as the being who must come to experience the nonreferentiality of expression, or, in other words, signification's impossible state of nature" (Malabou 2005, 68).

Human nature, then, is the lack of nature; human essence is the lack of essence: "Man does not have a substance. There is no human substance" (Malabou 2005, 75). Exceptionality of Man is established here, again, on the new ground: the lack of ground. Is this really so groundbreaking? Or is it the same old tune of Man's uniqueness?

But maybe this vision of Man gives way to something else in Malabou's interpretation? Man in Hegel is, after all, only the first incarnation of spirit, which proves insufficient to its full realization. The subjective spirit has to give way to objective and absolute spirit. The place of anthropology in the Hegelian system is thus the place of a transitional moment. As Malabou stresses: "Just as Hegel's notion of habit cannot be called anthropological, so his use of man as paradigm does not include an anthropologizing notion of substance. In truth, what is exemplary about man is less human-ness than his status as an *insistent accident*" (Malabou 2005, 73).

Still, I will claim that although Hegel is definitely not a humanist, and his ontology is not dominated by anthropology, it is nevertheless anthropocentric. What does this mean? In "The Ends of Man" Jacques Derrida introduces the distinction between humanism or anthropologism and the trace of the prevalence of Man connected to teleology or ontoteology:

> Whatever decisive breaks from classical anthropologies may be indicated by this Hegelian-Husserlian-Heideggerian anthropology, there is no interruption in a metaphysical familiarity which so naturally relates the we of the philosopher to "we-men," to the we of the total horizon of humanity. (Derrida 1969, 35)

With regard to Hegel, Derrida stresses that "*The Phenomenology of Mind* (…), is in no way concerned with something which could be called man" (Derrida 1969, 37). Yet

> the relations between anthropology and phenomenology are not, according to Hegel, relations of mere exteriority. With all that they introduce, the Hegelian concepts of truth, negativity and *Aufhebung relève*) prevent this from being so. (Derrida 1969, 40)

Because of this, anthropology cannot, of course, be the ultimate truth of Hegel's system; it remains only a place of transition, subject to *Aufhebung* or a subsequent folding: "(c)onsciousness is the truth of man; phenomenology is the truth of anthropology (…); phenomenology is the *relève* of anthropology" (Derrida 1969, 41). Derrida continues: "In this sense all of the structure described in the *Phenomenology of Mind*—just as everything which links them with Logic—are the structures of what has taken over for man" (Derrida 1969, 41). Man is something that is being surpassed. Just as nature is being surpassed in spirit, so Man is being surpassed by society and philosophy. This surpassing, however, also means preserving:

> This equivocality of the relation of *relève* undoubtedly marks the end of man, of man past, but at the same time it marks the completion of man, the appropriation of his essence (…). The idea of the end of man is then always already prescribed in metaphysics, in the thought of the truth of man. (Derrida 1969, 42)

The surpassing of Man still means we stay on the terrain of "human reality." The uniqueness of Man is being qualified here, it undergoes deconstruction, it sheds the naïve list of traits that were used in the past to explain human exceptionality (reason, play, use of tools—only language remains, as a domain that establishes human essence by depriving Man of any essence). Nonetheless, these changes do nothing to destabilize the anthropocentric assumption that a certain ideal reality—whether we call it language, thought, culture or spirit—accomplishes something that nature is of necessity unable to accomplish. This reality uses human animals and the institutions they build as its incarnations, granting Man advantage over animals (though not necessarily ensuring the wellbeing of all human animals). And it is this assumption that lies at the foundation of anthropocentrism.

Granting special status to anthropology is not the sole factor distinguishing anthropocentric ontologies. On the contrary, as antihumanist philosophies became popular (Derrida describes the first signs of this shift in "The Ends of Man"), antihumanism is the form in which anthropocentric thought most often appears. We might even say that it renders the structure of anthropocentrism more fully than ordinary humanism or anthropologism, revealing the fact that it consists in overcoming the human animal, transforming it into Man. The fact that Hegel, long before the poststructuralist turn, established the structure of this anthropocentrism is further proof of the significance of his conceptual innovations. But it is also proof of the inherently anthropocentric character of his thought. Malabou's reading, aimed at downplaying the role of Man in Hegel's thought, ultimately does something opposite—it demonstrates that the sublation of the human is precisely the mechanism at the heart of anthropocentric approach.

We can assume, in simplified terms, that the question of humanism is connected to the way a philosopher solves the problem of the relation between the human as a particular, natural being, as human animal—an empirical ego in Kantian terms—and the human as a bearer or an envelope of a fragile treasure, a thing that is not really human, but that can take root only in the human—Reason, Concept, Idea, Thought. It is a parasite or rather a symbiont for the human, a thing that transforms a human animal into Man. If, as Michel Serres states, the human is a parasite (Serres 1982), this is only possible because first it is a host to Thought/Concept/Reason.

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The starting point of the evolution of this dualism in modernity is the Cartesian solution, in which the human is simply identical with his parasite or symbiont, and particular, empirical part of the human—the body—can be made an object of scientific investigation just like the rest of matter or extended substance. Then things get more complicated: the problem of the empirical ego and the transcendental ego, posed and solved by Kant in a way that bears the traces of dualism (Deleuze 1994, 108–109; Lumsden 2013, 139) became a point of departure for numerous solutions proposed by the representatives of German speculative thought, like Fichte or Schelling. Hegel, dissatisfied with these solutions, proposed his own version of the problem, aimed at overcoming the dichotomy of empirical and transcendental ego without assuming in advance the primacy of the latter (Lumsden 2013, 138–139; Angelova 2013; Widder 2013). However, his solution is based on the statement that the empirical ego or the human animal contains in itself the spirit as its truth, expressed in external form. This makes Hegel an anti-humanist (like the later Lacan, Althusser or Meillassoux), if we contend that humanism equals the view that the human animal does not need to become a host to Reason—that it is perfectly capable of thinking on its own (this is the position of Feuerbach or sociobiologists). Spirit, on the contrary, means, among other things, overcoming the human animal. Hegel is therefore, like Lacan, Althusser or Meillassoux, an anti-humanist. Still, the anthropocentrism present in humanist ontologies is not overcome, but strengthened in the anti-humanist vision that is centred on the sublation of the human animal.[12]

The Abolition of Man

This issue has consequences for the question of the end of Man and its relation to pro-animal politics. Although the need to develop anti-anthropocentric theories and practices has been addressed and answered many times (Haraway 2008; Wolfe 2003; Calarco 2008), the problem of how to think and act in a non-anthropocentric way is still far from being solved. The Deleuzian perspective is especially promising in this context, in view of the way some representatives of new materialism and object-oriented ontology try to solve the problem of the end of Man. Often they attempt to get rid of Man by simply dissolving him in the whole of Matter or by stating that he is just one object among all the other objects (Bennett 2009; Bryant 2011). The practical effect of this movement is an erasure of the asymmetry of power between Man and other living beings. It's a shortcut that leads us straight to our point of departure. It's not an easy or simple thing to get rid of Man. This doesn't, however, mean that all we can hope for is, as Derrida proposes (Derrida 2002), neverending twilight, the protracted departure of Man. We can and should become something other than Man—and the concept of becoming-animal from *A Thousand Plateaus* may prove to be a valuable tool for this endeavor.

> For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not "really" become an animal any

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[12] Among the interpreters of Hegel, it is Adorno who is the closest to questioning the Hegelian perspective, stating for example that we should "see all nature, and whatever would install itself as such, as history, and all history as nature" and mentioning "the painful antithesis of nature and history" (Adorno 2004, 359). However, by concluding that "(t)he moment in which nature and history become commensurable with each other is the moment of passing" (Adorno 2004, 359), he mostly wastes this opportunity to explore the possibility of a different approach to nature and history.

> more than the animal "really" becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 238)

Becoming-animal is a clear example of the movement of difference—characterized by disparation—at work: the two terms, animal and human, with which we start, are separate and irreducible to each other; we might even say that they do not enter into actual contact, because the whole affair happens on the molecular level.[13] It is, nonetheless, not a reflexive doubling of the animality of the human animal, the animality internal to the human[14]; the animal, although a molecular one, is real and external to the human. Yet this separatedness, by being affirmed, produces something new: becoming-animal, a movement that transforms both the human and the animal.

Although becoming-animal was criticized (Haraway 2008) (and sometimes favorably presented; see MacCormack 2020) for concerning only humans and their human, all too human artistic practices, and as not having anything to do with actual animals, with animal rights or with pro-animal politics more broadly, it may be interpreted as a concept whose aim is to dismantle Man—in a non-illusory, cautious and effective way. Becoming-animal is one of the practices that allow the stratified, structured human subject to come into contact with the outside—it is a local, partial contact, because we can never directly experience the virtual as a given, but it makes possible creative involution (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 164), a process that allows for the emergence of the new in art and politics.

We should, perhaps, at this point juxtapose the Hegelian charge that becoming-animal is a form of bad infinity, formulated by Malabou in "Who's Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?". This would mean that it is both harmful and illusory—harmful, because illusory, a quasi-movement inferior to dialectical reflexive doubling. Malabou states that becoming-animal, which "subverts both filiation and reproduction" (Malabou 1996, 125) is "absolutely different from the becoming of the animal, oriented as the latter is towards reproduction, tending towards the stasis of the being that has become, obeying the rule of the multiple in the reassuring figure of the one" (Malabou 1996, 129), and also that "it does not teleologically accomplish the movement of an individual life" (Malabou 1996, 129). Therefore, she criticizes Deleuze's "refusal to recognize lack as the driving force behind becoming" (Malabou 1996, 130). This exclusion of lack leads him to imposing on becoming an external limit—God, the One, a theological closure that is absent in Hegel, "(d)epriving becoming of any immanent amounts to limiting it from outside as Hegel argues in the Doctrine of Being" (Malabou 1996, 130)—limitation from outside being much more repressive than the movement of the negative, which actually frees what it sublates.[15]

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[13] Which does not mean that on the molar level becoming-animal cannot have the form of interaction between an actual human and an actual animal.

[14] Such a reflexive doubling of human animality is the way Giorgio Agamben chooses in order to overcome anthropocentrism (Agamben 2004, 12, 26–27, 76–77).

Malabou refuses to consider two things. First, the organization of the animal organism by the contraction of habit (the becoming of the animal) and becoming are not absolutely different in the ontological sense, because they take place on the same plane (the assumption of immanence). The animal that becomes (evolves) can also enter becoming as creative involution, because there is no absolute separation between these two directions of movement. Second, becoming *has* its internal limit in the form of becoming-imperceptible.

> If becoming-woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becomings-animal that link up with it coming next, what are they all rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279)

It is "coming at the end of all the molecular becomings that begin with becoming-woman" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279). Deleuze and Guattari call it also becoming "like everybody else" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279), which is, appearances notwithstanding, the opposite of conformity: it is coming into contact with the whole world:

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[15] Because of this Malabou contrasts Deleuze and Guattari's account of becoming-animal with the account of becoming of the animal through habit from *Difference and Repetition*, which is, as we have already seen, closer to the Hegelian approach. Thus, she follows Badiou and Žižek in contrasting Deleuze's single-authored works to the ones co-written with Guattari. Whereas the former deserve cautious approval, the latter are condemned as crude "empiriomonism" (Žižek 2004, 19–26) devoid of any conceptual innovation (Badiou 2000, 5).

> *becoming everybody/everything* is another affair, one that brings into play the cosmos with its molecular components. Becoming everybody/everything (*tout le monde*) is to world (*faire monde*), to make a world (*faire un monde*). (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279–280)

Becoming-animal is the step leading to this stage, in which the human is no longer Man; what is more, in the present context we may regard it as a crucial stage, because the way humans treat other animals indicates a tangle of theoretical and practical assumptions humans have about the animality both of "non-human animals" and their own animality, which exists only to be overcome. Patricia MacCormack's suggestion to read becoming-animal as a procedure leading to the abolition of Man shows what is at stake—the abolition of Man, which will free both human and non-human animals:

> man must pass through inhumanity towards ethics (…) there are escape routes from humanism which may encourage ethical relations, not by knowing, fetishizing or making an idea of an animal, but because when there is no human there is no deferral to human signifying systems. (MacCormack 2014, 1–2; see also MacCormack 2020, 14–15, 84–85)

The disappearance of Man doesn't have to mean the literal extinction of humans; it rather refers to stepping back, making space for other animals to live: "Non-parasitic recognition is the turning away with grace, making no demands of the addressee's face; exchange comes from disanchoring the parasitic human and reciprocity is human absence" (MacCormack 2014, 6).

This is in accordance with the postulates of abolitionism, a perspective claiming that the main tenet of animal liberation is the abolition of animals' status as property, recognizing that animals owe us nothing and we have no right to use them in any way (Francione and Charlton 2020). Although this approach is in many ways better than the utilitarian perspective, it may lead to some problematic conclusions. Among them is the opinion, proclaimed by some abolitionists, that we should aim at the complete elimination of relations between humans and other animals. This may lead to the position that domesticated animals should simply cease to exist, which is a conclusion I wouldn't want to uphold. Thus as a necessary correction to the abolitionist stance we may propose supplementing it with Sue Donaldson's and Will Kymlicka's concept of relational rights and duties toward animals, introduced in *Zoopolis*:

> duties arising not just from the intrinsic characteristics of animals (such as their consciousness), but from the more geographically and historically specific relationships that have developed between particular groups of humans and particular groups of animals. For example, the fact that humans have deliberately bred domesticated animals to become dependent on us generates different moral obligations to cows or dogs than we have to the ducks or squirrels who migrate to areas of human settlement. (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 6)

What would it mean to be human when we finally stop defining ourselves by degrading other animals? (…) Probably nothing other than the human animal, as many philosophical definitions-by-privation assert; but in the meantime “the animal” would also change its meaning and would no longer denote something merely living, something less than human.

Our duties towards different groups of animals are based not on the traits of these groups, but on the historical relations between them and humans.[16] It’s also important that stepping back will definitely not mean abandoning animals to their fate; on the contrary, it will mean, as Eva Meijer puts it, “creating space for them to articulate (their—J.B.) good in their own ways” (Meijer 2019, 204).

Such interventions, aimed at creating the conditions for the freedom of non-human animals, will also radically change the status of the human. What would it mean to be human when we finally stop defining ourselves by degrading other animals? Most likely: less than Man, the host of Reason, but also something other than Man, the naturally evolved apex predator (as the quasi-naturalist approaches, grounded less in biology than in right-wing ideology, would have it). Probably nothing other than the human animal, as many philosophical definitions-by-privation assert; but in the meantime “the animal” would also change its meaning and would no longer denote something merely living, something less than human. It would rather mean: a product of the virtual, a contraction of habits and affects, local stability; a being inhabiting a world where, like in Alain Badiou’s nightmare, there are only bodies and languages (Badiou 2009, 1). The only thing distinguishing humans would probably be more responsibility—defined as being host not to thought, but to other living beings (MacCormack 2014, 186).

We might even risk the proposition that such a world and such a status of the human animal in this world is the true meaning of this mysterious idea of Hegel: absolute knowledge, understood not as a return of the concept to itself, but as, as Juliette Simont writes, bringing “Earthiness back to oneself thanks to differentiation, furthering the Earth’s individuality by and within the circulation of the elements” (Simont 2013, 181–182); although, contrary to her, it would not equal a necessity to "detach ourselves from our human footing and adopt the absolute vantage point of this luminous streak" (Simont 2013, 182). It would mean acting with awareness of our limitations and partiality, as well as of the necessity of numerous, far-reaching interventions we will have to undertake. This return of Earth to itself will most likely look more like a departure with no return—because no being, not even Earth herself, can ever be at home.

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[16] We should note that this proposition met with a critique—Eva Meijer, though she accepts in general the concept of relational duties, points out that classification proposed by Donaldson and Kymlicka (wild, domesticated and liminal animals) may be impossible to uphold (Meijer 2019, 117–118, 136–141).

In other words, it seems that it is not possible to envisage a Hegelian ontology which would not at the same time be anthropocentric. Although Malabou demonstrates that Hegel was not a thinker of the Same and closure, but a thinker of Difference and openness towards the future, this future can only be thought as a human one—or more precisely as a future of Man, eternally deconstructing his essence. It is only with Deleuze and Guattari that we encounter the possibility of overcoming Man and envisaging different relations between the human animal, other animals and the whole Earth.

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Citation:
Bednarek, Joanna. 2022. “Putting an End to »Man«: Nature and the Human in Hegel, Becoming-Animal and Abolitionism.” *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 31–61.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.3

Autor: Joanna Bednarek
Tytuł: Położyć kres „Człowiekowi”: Natura i człowiek u Hegla, stawanie-się-zwierzęciem i abolicjonizm
Abstrakt: Artykuł ma na celu rekonstrukcję różnicy między ontologiami Hegla i Deleuze’a. Zagadnienie natury i Człowieka w obu filozofiach pozwala dostrzec fundamentalną ontologiczną niezgodność obu filozofii. Według Hegla natura jest zarazem prawdziwie zewnętrzna względem idei i stanowi (jako taka) moment w ruchu pojęcia, który pozwala mu stać się tym, czym ono jest. Deleuze z kolei powraca do ontologii przedkantowskiej, nie porzucając transcendentalnego poziomu analizy. Pozwala mu to przyznać naturze prawdziwą zewnętrzność, a tym samym przekształcić dialektykę w mechanizm otwarcia na niewyczerpalne zewnętrze, nie zaś mechanizm potwierdzania prymatu pojęcia. Przypadek stawania-się-zwierzęciem ukazuje polityczne konsekwencje tego ontologicznego wyboru: można je bowiem rozumieć jako sposób na położenie kresu „Człowiekowi”, co stanowi przedsięwzięcie zgodne z celami abolicjonizmu.
Słowa kluczowe: antropocentryzm, człowiek, Deleuze i Guattari, Hegel, natura

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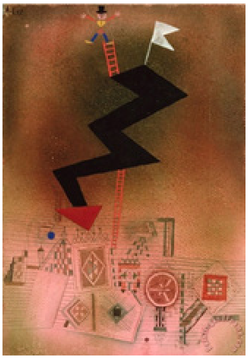
The Harnessed Lightning, or the Politics of Apocalypse: Hegel, Rosenzweig, Derrida

What could be the common thread linking these three very different thinkers: Hegel, Rosenzweig, and Derrida? In my essay, I will argue that this link is provided by a certain form of political theology which is polemical towards Carl Schmitt's notion of the *katechon* or the "restrainer of the apocalypse." While the political theology which they propose is also based on the idea of the *restraint*, it takes a different form than the Schmittian postponement of the apocalyptic event. Their alternative notion is *attenuation* which results in the political and philosophical practice of maintaining a distance between God and the world. Neither simply restraining it, nor simply hastening, this new formula takes a third dialectical position between the *katechon* and the *apocalyptic*, which consists in "easing the lightning to the children": the world as God's child—weak, fragile, and exposed to the infinite power of creation and destruction—must nonetheless find a way to use the revelatory power of the *eschaton* for the immanent purposes.

Keywords: Hegel, Rosenzweig, Derrida, apocalypse, law, justice, work

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind — [1]



Paul Klee, *Gebannter Blitz*

And even the destructive might transform into the world.
Rilke, *Baudelaire*

What could be the common thread linking these three very different thinkers: Hegel, Rosenzweig, and Derrida? In my essay, I will argue that this link is provided by a certain form of political theology which adopts polemical position towards Carl Schmitt's notion of the *katechon* or the "restrainer of the apocalypse."[2] While the political theology which they propose is also based on the idea of the *restraint*, it takes a different form than the Schmittian postponement of the apocalyptic event. Their alternative notion is *attenuation* or, in Emily Dickinson's phrasing: an "easing" or "slanting" of the direct impact of the Truth in its full, *panim el panim* (face-to-face) revelation, which results in the political and philosophical practice of maintaining a distance between God and the world, that is, between the all-mighty and sovereign power, which can create and destroy, on the one hand—and the weaker pole of this relation, the created world as dependent on creative force but, at the same time, striving for as much independence as it can get. This metaphysical struggle for independence, which applies the strategy of distancing, involves something more than just a defense against the infinite power: it reclaims the messianic expectation, which Schmitt excluded from his concept of the *katechon*, but not in the direct manner of such messianic apocalyptics as Jacob Taubes, who avidly await God's ultimate revelation and wish to hasten the end of the world, while saying: "I can imagine as an apocalyptic: let it go down. I have no spiritual investment in the world as it is" (Taubes 2003, 103). Messianic political theology, which will be my subject here, not only defers to but also feeds on the apocalyptic force of divine revelation. Neither simply restraining it, nor simply hastening, this new formula takes a third dialectical position between the *katechon* and the *apocalyptic*, which consists in "easing the lightning to the children": the world as God's child—weak, fragile, and exposed to the infinite power of creation and destruction—must nonetheless find a way to use the revelatory power of the *eschaton* for immanent purposes. This use, however, does not exhaust itself in the manoeuvre which Erich Voegelin famously criticised as the "immanentisation of the *eschaton*": a hubristic attempt of modernity to domesticate the powers of transcendence and make them serve the materialistic utopias of a "paradise on earth."[3] It has a different goal: while it does not negate transcendence, it nonetheless wants to make immanence stronger—as strong as possible within the uneven relation with God.

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[1] Poem nr 1263 (Dickinson 1998).

[2] The katechon (in Luther's translation—der Aufhalter, "the restrainer") derives from Pauls' Second Letter to Thessalonians (2:3–2:8): "And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed" (*The New Oxford Annotated* Bible 1991). In *Nomos of the Earth*, Carl Schmitt creates a whole new political theology based on the concept of the katechon as the one who withholds the advent of the Antichrist representing the forces of lawlessness and disorder and as such is a true fulfillment of Christian religion; see most of all the chapter "The Christian Empire as a Restrainer of the Antichrist (Katechon)" (Schmitt 1999, 59–61), where Schmitt says: "I do not believe that any historical concept other than katechon would have been possible for the original Christian faith. The belief that a restrainer holds back the end of the world provides the only bridge between the notion of an eschatologi-

Messianic political theology, which will be my subject here, not only defers to but also feeds on the apocalyptic force of divine revelation. Neither simply restraining it, nor simply hastening, this new formula takes a third dialectical position between the *katechon* and the *apocalyptic*, which consists in "easing the lightning to the children": the world as God's child—weak, fragile, and exposed to the infinite power of creation and destruction—must nonetheless find a way to use the revelatory power of the *eschaton* for immanent purposes.

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cal paralysis of all human events and a tremendous historical monolith like that of the Christian empire of the Germanic kings" (Schmitt 1999, 61). The claim that Paul, unable to wait for the Second Coming any longer, suffered a failure of the messianic nerve and because of that turned towards the figure of the katechon, was also maintained by Jacob Taubes, although with opposite intention (Taubes 2003, 103). While Schmitt represents the katechonic wisdom of anti-messianic and anti-apocalyptic politics, Taubes constitutes the ideal type of the opposite: the messianic theopolitics staking on the apocalyptic revealment of God as putting an end to the failed experiment of the world.

[3] See Voegelin 1999, 184–186.

Hegel, Rosenzweig, and Derrida are the true masters of such indirect messianic political theology: while they offer different solutions, deriving from their disparate philosophical and religious traditions, their common denominator is the variation on the theme of the *utilisation of the apocalypse*. In Hegel, the philosophical sublation of apocalyptic eschatology—the message of the redemptive/ annihilating "end of the world"—plays major role in his philosophy of history, particularly in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where the apocalyptic *Furie der Zerstörung*, "fury of destruction," pressing towards the end of all things—as witnessed in its full terrifying glory during the French Revolution—becomes an engine of the dialectical transformation of the worldly reality: while it undergoes a philosophical sublation, it gets tamed and disciplined to serve the process of historical work as a "delayed destruction." The Hegelian idea of work is thus a compromise between the passive affirmation of the worldly *status quo*, which accepts the world as it is, on the one hand, and the violent negation of the world as such, which leads to the apocalyptic annihilation of all being, on the other. A century later, Franz Rosenzweig—both a great Hegelian scholar and brilliant philosopher of Judaism—will prove that this dialectical neutralization of the apocalypse in the concept of work is not Hegel's original invention. According to the author of *The Star of Redemption*, it goes back to the very origin of the apocalyptic genre, which sprang up among the messianic Jewish sects of the Hellenistic era, and was already then used by Rabbinic Judaism as a defense against the powers pressing towards the grand finale: the works of the Law play exactly the same dialectical role as work in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. And finally, a similar mechanism will appear in the Derridean method of deconstruction which—though *prima facie* anti-Hegelian—continues Hegel's strategy of utilising the "tremendous power of the negative." Derrida's notion of the "apocalypse without apocalypse," which emerges in the essay "On the Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," chimes perfectly well with Hegel's dialectical attenuation of the energy of the negative, which can now be directed not towards the end/ destruction of the world, but towards the historical working-through of its substance.

Hegel, Rosenzweig, and Derrida are the true masters of such indirect messianic political theology: while they offer different solutions, deriving from their disparate philosophical and religious traditions, their common denominator is the variation on the theme of the *utilisation of the apocalypse*.

What clearly unites these three thinkers is the conviction that without the apocalyptic genre there would be no concept of history at all: no sense of a grand messianic narrative, which is staked on the historical work/task and patiently transforms the worldly reality, by fostering its struggle for metaphysical independence. Their messianic political theology, therefore, tarries with the common negative: the apocalyptic *nearness of God* or the danger of coming too close to the naked divine power, which threatens to destroy the precarious worldly existence. Yet—and this is the very gist of the messianic dialectics which they put in motion—this danger is not to be simply averted: it is also to be transformed into an energy that fuels the historical process of the world's emancipation.

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Tarrying with the Apocalypse: Hegel

The title of my paper derives from the painting of Paul Klee, *Gebannter Blitz*, which can be found in the Albertina Gallery in Vienna. This little tribute to the Utopian Socialism fleshes out the secret dream of modern mankind: to harness lightning, bring it down to earth through a complex grounding device and, instead of letting it destroy the world, make it work for the sake of material reality. But the "harnessed lightning" has also a clear religious connotation: being a traditional allegory for revelation, lightning represents the absolute clash between the infinite transcendent power and the finite, fragile and weak existence. *Apocalypsis* is, therefore, simultaneously a revelation—coming to the fore of the hidden God—and a destruction, for "no one can see God face to face and live."

But to harness lightning means precisely to go beyond the destructive antithetical nature of this clash: it is to outwit the transcendence and, in the Promethean gesture of stealing the fire, intercept its energy for worldly purposes and thus ascertain that the revelation no longer kills the world, but make it stronger instead. Hence, Klee's painting can also be seen as belonging to the long series of the pictorial allegories of the Tower of Babel, together with Peter Breughel: the lightning rod which harnesses the flash is a Babelian construction heading towards the sky to challenge its divine inhabitant. It thus offers the best pictorial representation of the Hegelian dialectics: the philosophical heir of the Promethean myth of stealing the fire, the Babelian myth of challenging God, and the myth of *Apocalypsis* as the violent end of the world.

In the interpretation of Hegel which I propose here, to tarry with the negative is most of all to tarry with the apocalyptic: with the forces of fury and destruction that can either end the world or, when cunningly harnessed, make the world stronger. Hegel, therefore, might have thought of himself as a good Lutheran till the end of his life,[4]

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[4] On Hegel's relation to Martin Luther and the Reformed Theology, see most of all: Asendorf 1982.

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but, unlike so many other Protestant thinkers—from Soren Kierkegaard to Karl Barth—he never wished to side with God's power against the world's weakness and then revel in the apocalyptic imagery of the latter's just and total destruction, according to the rule: *pereat mundus, sed fiat iustitia*. The release of pure negativity, no longer harnessed by the dialectical *List der Vernunft*—whether in the case of the sectarian beautiful soul dreaming about the triumph of righteousness over the sinful material realm, or in the case of the revolutionary unleashing unlimited *Furie der Zerstörung*—is, for Hegel, always a sign of evil: of a failure to protect the weak element of the worldly against the creative/destructive omnipotence of the otherworldly, incarnating itself in these two perverted figures of the subjective spirit—the beautiful soul and the revolutionary, both ready to punish the extant precarious reality with the furious *ungebannter Blitz*.[5] Hegel sides firmly with the weakness of the world: its imperfection, moral lapsarianism, death-anxious finitude, care for the precarity of always endangered life. This strong 'spiritual investment' in the world's initial weakness constitutes the very essence of his political theology.[6]

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[5] Hegel, following closely Goethe's "Confessions of the Beautiful Soul," forming the crucial part of *Wilhem Meisters Theatralische Sendung*, treats *die schöhne Seele* as a synecdoche of the Gnostic intransigent negation of the external world, always and forever opposed to the superior element of Innerlichkeit, the 'inwardness' which consorts directly with God. The Goethean Hutherrn community of Moravian Brotherhood, centered around the count Zuzendorf, cultivates its spiritual splendid isolation and, while described by Goethe with his characteristic magnanimity, fails to deserve his ultimate praise: in the end, it is the uncle of the eponymous Beautiful Soul, who gently opposes her sectarian attitude and who takes custody of the children she does not care to raise.

[6] By endorsing this position, I want to engage in a gentle polemic with the latest turn in Hegelian scholarship which revises the idea of Hegel the dialectical reformer of the world and attempts to reclaim his praise of revolution, championed mostly by Slavoj Žižek in his Lacanizing interpretation of Hegel's message. While Žižek rejects the "common perception" according to which "Hegel condemns French Revolution as the immediate assertion of an abstract-universal Freedom" and insists on the repetition of the revolutionary *apocalypse now!* in the manner of an unstoppable *Wiederholungszwang* (repetition compulsion—A.B.-R.) pressing towards the catastrophe, I would like to emphasize the dialectical reassumption of the apocalyptic fire in the Hegelian concept of the work as "delayed destruction," mediating forward between the apocalyptic "fury of destruction" and the passive conservation of the *status quo* (Žižek 2012, 69). In his pro-revolutionary revision of Hegel, Žižek praises Rebecca Comay's *Mourning Sickness. Hegel and the French Revolution* (Comay 2011) for starting this vogue, by rereading Hegel under the auspices of Walter Benjamin whose apocalyptic statement—"Catastrophe: to have missed the opportunity"—serves as the motto to the whole book.

Yet, Hegel's solution has nothing to do with the katechonic gesture of avoidance, by simply restraining, evading and keeping at bay the apocalyptic fire of revelation/ destruction. He is not the Pauline *katechon*, "the restrainer of the apocalypse," as described by Carl Schmitt, who would like to postpone the thunder and lightning forever. Hegel's invention of dialectics is precisely to cut into the dualism of the restrainers and the hasteners of the apocalyptic finale. In order to protect the weaker pole of the relation between transcendence and immanence, he wants to *use* the apocalyptic fire in order to make the world stronger: to solidify its precarious *Dasein*, immunize it against the punitive furies of the divine Spirit which, in all Abrahamic monotheisms, is given the sovereign right to destroy what it created, as and when he wishes, obedient to nothing but his own lordly desire which needs no justification apart from *quia voluit*: "because He wanted that way." The world, occupying the position of the Slave in this metaphysical extrapolation of the Master/ Slave dialectics, begins as absolutely weak and dependent, but eventually outwits the Master. Yet, this cunning does not consist in imitating the Master, which Hegel ultimately rejects as a wrong ideal of *theosis*: man/ world becoming God, and, thanks to that, as strong as God.[7] The human-worldly strategy retains its distance and separation, by relying on a utilisation of God's nihilistic and destructive attitude towards beings in a wholly different manner. This other way Hegel calls *work*, as opposed to the Master's annihilating *desire*:

> Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby its unalloyed feeling of self. But that is the reason why this satisfaction is itself only a fleeting one, for it lacks the side of objectivity and permanence. Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing. The negative relation to the object becomes its form and something permanent, because it is precisely for the worker that the object has independence. (Hegel 1977, 118)

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[7] Here I want to take issues with the interpretation of Hegel as the paradigmatic modern Gnostic, which was proposed by Erich Voegelin and then developed by Cyril O'Regan in *The Heterodox Hegel* (O'Regan 1994). They both understand modern Gnosticism as the doctrine of human self-empowerment which stakes on *imitatio Dei* as the means to absolute *theosis*: man-becoming-God and thus no longer in need of God. Even if the ideal of *theosis* indeed appears in the writings of the Hegelian Left (most of all Ernst Bloch), it should not be attributed to Hegel himself, who envisages a different path of human/ worldly emancipation, leading through the works of the Slave.

According to Hegel's distinction, desire—for which the apocalyptic desire of the world's annihilation serves as the paradigmatic case, just as God constitutes the paradigm of the simple "unalloyed self"—negates its object purely and disregards its independent existence, aiming at its immediate consumption as something weak and destined only to enhance the lordly power. Work, on the other hand, as desire mitigated, "held in check," subdued and cooled down, delays the destruction of its object and due to this postponement gives it shape and form, in this manner bestowing on it objectivity and permanence. Instead of destroying the world altogether, work, still utilising the negative energy of desire, manages to destroy it methodically and partially— that is, to transform it. Work, therefore, is also a force of negativity (for pure positivity would merely issue in a passive contemplation of the world's beauty), but "held in check" and deferred, and because of that played out in the ongoing process of transformation that constitutes a dialectical compromise between simple affirmation and equally simple destruction of its object. In other words, also Hegelian, it is the *negation of negation*, which has a creative-transformative effect: the immediate destruction, resulting from the desire, becomes negated in its immediacy and thus "staved off" in its gratification. In consequence, the object is challenged in its current weak form and given a new, more stable one with a specific purpose. Hegel then extrapolates this model of creative destruction to the whole world, as still not fully formed and lacking purpose; from this moment on, Spirit in all its avatars—subjective, objective, and becoming-absolute—will "form and shape" the material realm with a redemptive *telos* in mind. The *eschaton*—the end of the world—will no longer threaten the world as a verdict/ judgment hovering about it, but will be drawn into the very dynamic of the historical process. Instead of rushing towards apocalyptic destruction, the world will *develop* towards its "objectivity and permanence."[8]

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[8] The metaphor of the Master and Slave dialectics as the best way to approach the evolution of Western metaphysical thought appears very strongly in Adorno's series of lectures devoted to metaphysics, where he presents Aristotle as the precursor of Hegel, i.e. the first thinker to emancipate worldly beings from the service to Platonic Ideas and to give them "permanence and objectivity": "Aristotle, in the first truly metaphysical work of literature—the one which gave that branch of philosophy its name—criticizes the Platonic attempt to oppose essence to the world of the senses, as something separate and absolutely different from it. Above all, he criticizes the Platonic hypostasis of universal concepts as a duplication of the world. In this he makes a very strong and legitimate case, based on the argument that all the attributes of the Ideas are derived from the empirical world, on which they live, rather as the rulers lived on the work of their servants or slaves.

Work as the transformation of the worldly *status quo,* therefore, changes being without destroying it wholesale. It works through it in the process of purposeful *Durcharbeiten*, the goal of which is the final affirmation of the worldly reality as pervaded by "objectivity and permanence," so far attributable only to the divine Absolute and its "unalloyed feeling of the self." No longer just a Pauline "passing figure of the world"—a realm of pitiful transience and ontological weakness—the material reality will have become as real and metaphysically strong as the Spirit which created it, and, because of that, immune to its destructive apocalyptic interventions. This is what modern theology calls the principle of the univocity of being: Duns Scotus's promise that the existence of the world will be no longer dependent on the existence of God, realizes itself fully in Hegel's dialectical notion of work. At the same time, however, although containing an element of rivalry—the Lutheran *Anfechtung Gottes* clearly persists in Hegel—work does not belong to the strategies of *theosis*, the aim of which is to imitate God and become *sicut Dei*. According to Hans Blumenberg, who, similarly to Hegel, criticised the motif of 'man-becoming-God' as the false *telos* of history, work is the means of human self-assertion in the world aways already endangered by the uneven relationship with its Creator: its goal is not self-deification, but ontological autonomy in regard to the divine.[9] It is only work, therefore, which is capable of creating a safe distance between God and the world, and of securing the latter the desired emancipation: by harnessing the apocalyptic *Blitz*, work *incarnates* the energy of the Spirit into the texture of material reality and, in this manner, assists its struggle for recognition.

Hegel makes plenty a room for *kenosis in creation*—a Christian-kabbalistic variant of *tsimtsum* or God's contraction taking the form of the original *Entäusserung*/ exteriorisation/ self-voiding of God into the

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At the same time, however, he then seeks in his turn to extract an essential being from the sensible, empirical world, and thereby to save it; and it is precisely this twofold aim of criticism and rescue which constitutes the nature of metaphysics… Metaphysics can thus be defined as the exertion of thought to save what at the same time it destroys" (Adorno 2001, 20).

[9] Comp. Blumenberg 1985, 545: "It is just this (the rivalry—A.B.-R.) that Luther (…) translated into monotheistic terms: He who wanted to be God and it was naturally self-evident for him that man had to want this could only want to be it in place of the one God. Where no equivalence is possible, thinking has to take the form of the desire to annihilate"—which, following Hegel, would be the desire to annihilate the Master: this is precisely what the Slave is not supposed to do.

world[10]—but he also postulates a parallel *kenosis in destruction*: an attenuating diminution of the apocalyptic finale which, harnessed and disciplined, metamorphoses into the historical work. While the creative *kenosis* makes the whole world the arena of divine incarnation as "the Golgotha of the Absolute Spirit"—the de(con)structive *kenosis* allows the ideal of truth and justice to be incarnated, by transforming the immediate desire for apocalypse into a mediated process of work which defers and diffuses the moment of self-annihilating satisfaction. It is worth noticing that the same scheme will return in Lacan's theory, where the system of pleasure, chained to the reality principle, defers and diffuses the advent of *jouissance*. Unlike Hegel, however, Lacan (and subsequently Žižek in his Lacanizing take on Hegel) openly protests against such "diminution" and neutralising dispersal: his slogan is a modified version of the old dictum—*pereat mundus, sed fiat jouissance*. Hegel, on the other hand, makes his procosmic position absolutely clear, when stating in *Philosophy of Right* in critical reference to Kant and his intransigent position on justice: "*Fiat justitia* ought not to have *pereat mundus* as a consequence" (Hegel 2001, 130).

Schiller's line, often quoted by Hegel[11]—*Die Weltgeschichte ist die Weltgericht*, "the history of the world *is* the judgment over the world"—should thus be read literally: the history of the world is indeed the judgment over the world, but delayed, deferred, and suspended. While Shiller's aphorism wholly belongs to nominalist Protestant theology, which praises the ultimate manifestation of God's infinite power in the apocalyptic execution of the Last Judgment over the worldly reality—Hegel changes its meaning, by introducing a motif of deferral, attenuation, and gradual diminishment, which derives from the alternative theological paradigm of *tsimtsum* as the divine self-contraction, here taking the form of generalised *kenosis*—Spirit making itself small—operative at all levels of divine revelation, both creative and destructive. The apocalyptic judgment, therefore, no longer *hovers* over the world as a threat, but, cunningly intercepted, *works* through the worldly reality as "the infinite in the finite." The world, therefore, will eventually reach its end—but it won't be a blow of divine punishment ending the *stasis* of hopeless fallenness, weakness, and mere transience, as Schiller's sentence originally suggests. It will rather be a long "staved off" fulfilment in which the world will have achieved "objectivity and permanence" that even the most nominalist God, immersed in his infinite "unalloyed desire," would be forced to recognise.

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[10] On the influence of the heterodox religious motives deriving from the so called Christian kabbalistic milieu on Hegel, see my "God of Luria, Hegel, Schelling: The Divine Contraction and the Modern Metaphysics of Finitude" (Bielik-Robson 2017, 32–50).

[11] Hegel quotes Schiller's poem *Resignation* in Section 340 of the *Philosophy of Right*: "The history of the world is the world's court of judgment" (Hegel 2001, 266).

The Law as the Lightning Rod: Rosenzweig

But, as I have already indicated, this surreptitious use of the apocalypse is not exactly Hegel's original invention: it has its antecedent in the non-philosophical language of the late-Hellenistic rabbis who tarried with the apocalyptic negative in a fully developed dialectical manner *avant la lettre*. According to Franz Rosenzweig, it is precisely the rabbinic concept of the Law which offers the dialectical possibility of "working" as a functional transformation of the creaturely realm over against the direct revelation which always threatens to annihilate the world. The Law, therefore, works as a necessary defense mechanism: a mediator of the "endurable portion" of the original violent flame of revelation, precisely as in Dickinson, "eased to the children." The Law emerges here as the delayed destruction of the world, which it patiently transforms, but always on the side of the world as the weaker pole to be defended in the asymmetrical relation with God. And it is precisely this delay and partial neutralization that allows the apocalyptic energy, contained within the Law, to be more precise in the act of targeting its object; instead of exploding the whole of creaturely reality, deemed to be fallen in its entirety and unworthy of, in Taubes's words, any "spiritual investment," it provides a more subtle ethical missile which destroys only those aspects of worldliness which hinder its process of achieving "objectivity and permanence." Just as in Hegel, therefore, work continues the act of creation by different means; if God has the power of *creatio ex nihilo*, human beings must resort to *continuous creative destruction*. Whether these are the works of the Slave or the works of the Law, the mechanism is roughly the same: they destroy the world in its current "passing figure" and transform it, by giving it a new—ethical—form. The Law, therefore, is a bridge that connects transcendence with immanence, by simultaneously preserving the contrast between them and attenuating the destructive effect of this contrast. Rosenzweig approaches this contrast as the tension between the world as it is and the world as redeemed or, as Adorno would have it, contemplated from the standpoint of redemption:

According to Franz Rosenzweig, it is precisely the rabbinic concept of the Law which offers the dialectical possibility of "working" as a functional transformation of the creaturely realm over against the direct revelation which always threatens to annihilate the world. The Law, therefore, works as a necessary defense mechanism: a mediator of the "endurable portion" of the original violent flame of revelation, precisely as in Dickinson, "eased to the children."

> The fact that the world, this world, is created and yet is in need of the future Redemption, the disquietude of this twofold thought, is *quieted in the unity of the Law*. The Law… therefore, in its diversity and power that puts everything in order, the entire "outside," namely all this-worldly life, everything that can draw up some worldly law or other, makes this world and the world to come indistinguishable. According to rabbinic legend, God himself "learns" in the Law. *In the Law, everything that can be grasped in it is this-worldly*, all created existence is already immediately endowed with life and soul for becoming content of the world to come. (Rosenzweig 2005, 429)[12]

The Law is "this-worldly," "no longer in heaven" (*lo bashamayim hi*) and God himself "learns in it": while the Law is studied and developed here on earth by the rabbinic hermeneutic community, God's power becomes limited or even "defeated" in confrontation with his "learned children." The Law thus evolves from the codex originally revealed in the act of *matan Torah* (giving of the Law), when it serves as a means of easing the flash of transcendence to the children of immanence, into a complex system of grasping all the aspects of the worldly existence, which lifts it up to the level of the world redeemed—perfect "objectivity and permanence"—able to challenge God himself and, in a typically Hegelian manner, demand recognition.[13]

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[12] There are, obviously, huge differences between Rosenzweig's and Adorno's references to the *olam ha-ba*, the world to come: while the former accentuates the uniting and reconciling role of the Law as already reflecting the future world of redemption, Adorno emphasizes the negative contrast between what is and what could be. But Adorno's contrastive "inverse theology" can also be regarded as a variant of the Hegelian 'tarrying with the apocalypse," which wishes to use the Light of the Last Judgment as the only possible medium of any meaningful critique of the worldly *status quo*: "The only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption: all else is reconstruction, mere technique" (Adorno 2005, 153). This, as we shall see in a moment, will also be Derrida's view on knowledge as enlightenment.

[13] The rabbinic rule of "no longer in heaven," which places the Torah-Law on earth in the safe distance from God's miraculous interventions, derives from the Talmudic story, told in the tractate Baba Metsia 59b. As a non-philosophical narrative form of reasoning, it must be cited in its entirety; only then does it reveal the true meaning of the Law as a bridge between its Giver and human subjects who use it as a means of self-empowerment in the uneven relation with God, without resorting to any strategy of self-deification: "On that day Rabbi Eliezer brought forward all the arguments in the world, but they were not accepted… He said to them (the other rabbis—A.B.-R.): »If the Halakhah agrees with me, let it be proved from Heaven.« Thereupon a heavenly voice was heard saying:

Gershom Scholem—the great historian of Judaism, but also a speculative thinker with his own philosophical-messianic agenda—felt no sympathy for Rosenzweig' s project, which he saw as far too mellow, too "quited in the unity of the Law," but it was nonetheless he who spotted the crucial role of the Rosenzweigian concept of the Law as a defense mechanism producing the effect of delay and distancing—a sort of stopping device designed to interrupt, arrest and attenuate the apocalyptic fire, to prevent both the subject and the world from instantaneous annihilation. In order to explain the functioning of this defence, Scholem introduced two useful metaphors. One, the traditional metaphor of lightning, symbolizes the vertiginous moment of revelation as an antagonistic clash of the transcendent in the immanent: an infectious fire that, when unstopped, burns down the soul and the world to ashes. The second metaphor, of his own making, is that of a "lightning rod": the device that both uses and tames the divine energy of absolute justice, by directing it towards the ground of the creaturely condition, thus making it separate, "no longer in heaven" and thanks to that operative in the creaturely realm. Between revelation itself and the ethical works of the Law functioning as the "lightning rod," there appears a moment of non-identity— a very Derridean *différance* indeed, in terms of both "difference" and "deferral." The following fragment refers to Rosenzweig, but it could just as well be targeting Hegel:

> Here, in a mode of thought deeply concerned for order, it (the anarchic element) underwent metamorphosis. The power of redemption seems to be built into the clockwork of life lived in the light of revelation, though more as restlessness than as potential destructiveness. For a thinker of Rosenzweig's rank could never remain oblivious to the truth that *redemption possesses not only a liberating but also a destructive force*— a truth which only too many Jewish theologians are loath to consider and which a whole literature takes pains to avoid. Rosenzweig sought at least to neutralize it in a higher order of truth. If it be true that the lightning of redemption directs the universe of Judaism, then in Rosenzweig' s

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»Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer? The Halakhah always agrees with him.« But Rabbi Joshua arose and said (Deut. 30:12): »It is not in heaven.« What did he mean by that? Rabbi Jeremiah replied: »The Torah has already been given at Mount Sinai (and is thus no longer in Heaven—A.B.-R.). We pay no heed to any heavenly voice, because already at Mount Sinai You wrote in the Torah (Exod. 23:2): One must incline after the majority. Rabbi Nathan met the prophet Elijah and asked him: »What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do in that hour?« He replied: »God smiled and said: My children have defeated Me, My children have defeated Me«" (in Scholem 1991, 130–131).

> work *the life of the Jew must be seen as the lightning rod whose task it is to render harmless its destructive power*. (Scholem 1991, 323)

We could easily paraphrase Scholem's words as critical of Hegel's reformist timidity (and thus chiming well with Comay and Žižek): "If it be true that the lightning of apocalypse directs the universe of modernity, then in Hegel's work the life of the modern man must be seen as the lightning rod whose task it is to render harmless its destructive power." Scholem himself, personally more prone to apocalyptic solutions, is critical toward Rosenzweig's cautious ways; he criticizes him for his general intention to appease "the anarchic element" in the clockwork mechanism of ritualised life. This assessment, however, is neither completely true nor fair: the lightning rod of the work and the Law does not serve to render the destructive power of apocalypse-revelation completely "harmless," but to make it operative and effective in the world and for the sake of the world as the dialectical bridge between the world as it is and the better world to come (*olam ha-ba*).[14] In Rosenzweig's post-Hegelian rendering, the rabbinic political theology does not merely create a distance between God and the world, by simply neutralising the revelatory energy: rather, precisely as with the lightning rod, it directs this energy towards the ground, so it can truly acquire transformative power and, as Levinas aptly puts it, "jolt the Real." *Meaningful movement jolts the Real*: the Torah as the *gebannter Blitz* works through the very structure of the world in order to make it less determined by natural laws and more enlightened by the laws of ethics.[15]

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[14] Rosenzweig is very well aware of the pitfalls of the total neutralization of the apocalyptic fire, which he calls "Jewish dangers" (Rosenzweig 2005, 429): one of them consists in "squeezing it into the cozy domestic space between the Law and its, the Law's, people" (Rosenzweig 2005, 430). Thus, while the Christians are endangered by an excessive expansion, which may contaminate their messianic work of the transformation of the worldly reality and make it forget its roots—the Jews are endangered by an excessive contraction of the divine "heat" which they overly domesticate and, indeed, render useless for the world: "Christianity, by radiating outwards, is in danger of evaporating into isolated rays far away from the divine core of truth. Judaism, by glowing inwards, is in danger of gathering its heat into its own bosom far distant from the pagan world reality" (Rosenzweig 2005, 430). The right concept of the Law, as the dialectical bridge between the transcendent heat/fire and the immanent world reality, is to counteract both Jewish and Christian dangers.

[15] See Levinas' description of the Torah as the trace of the transcendent justice from without, which challenges the ontological order here and now: "Being receives a challenge from the Torah, which jeopardizes its pretention of keeping itself above or beyond good and evil. In challenging the absurd »that's the way it

Eucalypse, Now: Derrida[16]

The thinker who managed to synthetize both Hegel's concept of work and Rosenzweig's emphasis on the ethical transformation of the world, by enhancing the dialectical thrust of work as simultaneously using and taming apocalyptic energy, is the father of deconstruction: Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction is, in fact, nothing but *destruction deferred*: it simultaneously wards off the apocalypse and utilizes its destructive energy to subvert the *status quo* of the worldly reality in order to keep itself in a constant ethical vigilance. In the essay on the "apocalyptic tone recently adopted in philosophy"—which directly refers to Kant's famous prototype, but indirectly to all the contemporary Helpers/ Hasteners of the Apocalypse (Derrida mentions here Heidegger, Blanchot, and Lacan, but we could now also add Žižek to this ever growing list)—Derrida defends deconstruction as a form of enlightenment which uses light against light. While it may be true that, in Heraclitus words, "the lightning steers all"—this flash of light must also be steered itself: harnessed and made to work for the sake of the world, not against it.[17] The apocalyptic frenzy has to be partially *covered/ calyptos*: if it is to bring light and *not* destruction, it must be, in the Hegelian manner, "held in check."

Deconstruction is, in fact, nothing but destruction deferred: it simultaneously wards off the apocalypse and utilizes its destructive energy to subvert the status quo of the worldly reality in order to keep itself in a constant ethical vigilance.

For Derrida, enlightenment is not a fully secular formation, but a form of political theology which maintains a complex relation with the apocalyptic lightning of revelation:

> It is difficult to separate the concept of secularization from the concept of *Lumières*, *Illuminisimo*, Enlightenment, or *Aufklärung*, and from the link between the Enlightenment (*Lumières*) of reason (according to Kant, for example) and the light, which is the very element in which revelation, revelations, and above all Judeo-Christian revelation have been announced and advanced. This connection between the light (*la lumière*) and Enlightenment (*les Lumières*) is already the site of secularization (*sécularisation*). This is already the analogy that

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is« claimed by the Power of the powerful, the man of the Torah transforms being into human history. Meaningful movement jolts the Real" (Lévinas 1990, 39).

[16] The title of this section alludes in reverse to Derrida's essay on nuclear danger: "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)" (Derrida 1984a).

[17] In Hermann Diels' *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, this is fragment no. 64: translation slightly altered after Martin Heidegger and Eugen Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar* (Heidegger and Fink 1993, 4–11), where this aphorism is thoroughly discussed. According to Heidegger and Fink, the Heraclitean lightning is at once fire and logos which governs the rhythm of nature: its *genesis kai phthora*, coming-forth-into-being-and-perishing.

> permits *the passage between religion and the world* (*le siècle*)*, between revelation and the world*. (Derrida 2020a, 139)

As Enlightenment, deconstruction is always on the side of justice—Derrida famously claims: "deconstruction is justice"—but this is not the otherworldly absolute justice which wishes the world to vanish according to the rule *pereat mundus, sed fiat iustitia*, entusiastically affirmed by Kant[18]: it belongs to the *saeculum* or the world (*le siècle*). Voegelin's critique of the Hegelian procedures which "immanentize the *eschaton*" could thus also be extrapolated on the Derridean deconstruction, which indeed immanentizes absolute justice in order to turn it into mundane justice, working in and through our every ethical and political decision, but, pace Voegelin, Derrida does not perceive this passage as a distortion or error. Justice is "no longer in heaven," *lo bashamayim*, which means that it must offer a mediation between the transcendent ideal and the immanent real—without giving in into too much of a betrayal. Betray we must, says Derrida, but the en-lightenment lets in precisely the right amount of light to vigilantly watch over the process of mediation. Derrida's slogan of his political theology could thus be a paraphrase of Beckett's famous line on failure: *betray, betray again, betray better*.

The first stage of this process is the dismantling of the apocalyptic discourse of absolute light as *blindly* following the never questioned desire to reach naked truth and see it in all its beaming glory, *sonnenklar* and crystal-clear. Derrida continues here Nietzsche's precursorial project of "gay science," which can remain gay only at the cost of giving up the desire for absolute truth—but also Hegel, who restricts the apocalyptic "fury of destruction" in such a manner that it begins to work within the creaturely reality, not against it. Deconstruction is thus to apocalypsis what Hegel's working dialectics is to the "rapturous enthusiasm which, like a shot from a pistol, begins straight away with absolute knowledge, and makes short work of other standpoints by declaring that it takes no notice of them" (Hegel 1977, 16). Instead of this violent rapture Hegel proposes a different type of *jener nüchhterner Rausch*: "the revel in which no member is not drunk" (Hegel 1977, 27), but which, when regarded as "the whole movement of the *life of truth*" and contrasted with "rapturous enthusiasm," appears almost as a "state of *repose*": the True, no longer "regarded as something on the other side, positive and dead" (Hegel 1977, 27)—the truth-saying *vere-diction* of the apocalyptic Last Judgment hovering over the world—begins to permeate the realm of appearances and, with this act of incarnation, acquires life. The doubly negative attribution—*no member not-drunk*—oscillates between total abandon and sobriety: the whole point of the living and life-affirming revel is to have a sip from the intoxicating fountain of the Last Judgment/ Verdict/ Ultimate Truth, but no more than that—just a *pharmakonic* amount. While rupture explodes with the immediacy of the "pistol shot" and indeed kills and poisons everything around, the revel eases the revelation of Truth, so it can be received by the fragile vessels of appearances and then chained to the works that would foster and sustain the worldly *life* of truth. When revelation/ *apocalypsis* remains outside the world, it is not only dead but also *deadly*. But when it is fused with the course of the world, it begins to live: it awakens to life and to the Slave's choice of "permanence and objectivity."[19] This mechanism of "amortization" applies *a fortiori* to Derrida: the deconstructive *revel* is the methodical use of *revelation*, only slowly and gradually "secreted" from the central, "held in check," desire to tear all the veils and face the whole truth in "the imminence of the end, theophany, parousia, the last judgment" (Derrida 1984b, 22).

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[18] While commenting on Kant's ethics, Michael Rosen does not hide his fear of the apocalyptic terror which it openly endorses: "The austere slogan of retributivism was always: let justice be done although the world perishes (*fiat justitia, pereat mundus*). Kant's position seems even harsher—let justice be done even if we have to create a hell for it to be done in" (Rosen 2014, 13).

There are many differences between Hegel and Derrida, especially with regard to the historical *telos*, but the dialectical mechanism mediating between affirmation and negation remains similar in both. Seen as a politics of the apocalypse, deconstruction is a process of *différance*: it is destruction "held-in-check" and apocalyptic desire "staved off," partly covered and repressed in order to turn into methodical works of en-lightenment, understood literally as *letting-in-light*, i.e. as an *il-lumination* which mediates between full exposure to the "light of lights" and total darkness. Or, in Derrida's own terms, *deconstruction is destruction en-crypted*: it carries within itself the crypt full of eschatological energy as the counter-worldly apocalyptic element of both destruction and revelation, but allows only for its controlled "secretion"/ expression. In that sense, Derrida may be seen as an heir not only to Adorno's negative dialectics as Hegelianism without teleology (although not "without reserve"[20]), but also his "inverse theology" which insists on turning the lamps of the Last Judgment on the world here and now: not in order to destroy it, but to see it critically as still lacking truth and justice, yet not to be totally condemned because of that deficiency.

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[19] The notoriously complex figure of the Hegelian *Rausch* can perhaps be elucidated by poetic imagination: it is what Hart Crane, in his vision of the Brooklyn Bridge, calls fury fused—an oxymoronic image of the congealed fire, energy stored and condensed, which does not explode as if in a pistol shot, but can be utilised in a methodical pursuit of truth and justice. For Hegel, the abiding truth of the French Revolution, itself an apocalyptic terror, is the Napoleonic codex as precisely "fury fused": the cooled down dialectical product of the fury of destruction unleashed by revolutionary forces as a new institution of the objective spirit, bestowed with "objectivity and permanence." Interestingly, there is a historical connection between Hegel and the Brooklyn Bridge. Its designer, Johann August Röbling, was Hegel's student who wrote a 1000 pages long dissertation on the concept of the world, but later on found his vocation in bridge engineering. Could it be that Röbling indeed gave us an example of the Hegelian sublation in the iron construction of the famous bridge in which the poetic genius saw a "fury fused"? (I am grateful to Bartosz Wójcik for making me aware of this association).

The Light of Lights, therefore, must be *well hidden* in order to be of use to us, the worldly creatures who "betray" revelation in its blinding purity for the mundane practice of enlightenment in the impure, always contaminated and messy, world. Hence, against Kant's denunciations of cryptophilia as “a cryptopoetics” and “a poetic perversion of philosophy” (Derrida 1984b, 14) which should be replaced by the enlightenmental pursuit of clarity and purity, Derrida expicitly chooses a *cryptophilic* and *eucalyptic* solution.[21] On Derrida’s account, cryptophilia emerges as a necessary condition of all discourse on truth, which must draw on the same energy as the “overlordly” apocalyptic tone of the Hegelian Master, but in a tamed manner. Yet, this “taming,” *Bannung* or “steering” is more challenging that it appears *prima facie*. The apocalyptic desire is full of ruses which press toward its instantaneous gratification and which deconstruction must patiently demystify. Just as in Hegel, the Master’s desire aims at the total annihilation of its object, in Derrida’s analysis too, the seemingly positive desire for revelation hides a destructive death-wish directed against the fallen world—

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[20] Derrida was always critical of Hegel, perhaps to the point of being "unfair to Hegel"—especially in the 1960s when he wished to inscribe the post-structuralist turn into the anti-dialectical rebellion of the students of Alexandre Kojeve, most of all Georges Bataille, but also later, when he fell under the influence of Emmanuel Levinas, who saw in Hegel the destroyer of transcendence and the main source of the historicist error in 20th century philosophy. Yet, already Derrida's concept of difference, coined in the 1960s, is a paradigmatic example of the post-structuralist "dialectics beyond dialectics" which constantly tarries with the Hegelian legacy under the auspices of the Bataillean dictum that opens Derrida's essay on "Hegelianism without reserve": "Hegel did not know to what extent he was right" (Derrida 1978, 317). In what *prima facie* appears as sympathetic reported speech, Derrida laughs with Bataille at Hegel's thrifty ways of economising every bit of negativity in the process of work and creating the "slavish" world of meaning: "The notion of Aufhebung (…) is laughable in that it signifies the busying of a discourse losing its breath as it reappropriates all negativity for itself, as it works the "putting at stake" into an investment, as it amortizes absolute expenditure" that aims at "the absolute sacrifice of meaning: a sacrifice without return and without reserves" (Derrida 1978, 324). Yet, the more he matures, Derrida is no longer willing (if he really ever was) to subscribe to the Kojevian apology of the Master and his unbound self-expenditure/ jouissance at the expense of the Slave's choice of life and survival, which invests in the "permanence and objectivity" of this world and, in order to do so, must "amortize"—diminish and harness—the apocalyptic powers of the masterly desire. Ultimately, therefore, Derrida ends up in the position that, for Bataille, would indeed appear "laughable": a certain unavowed "Hegelianism with reserve" where the negative becomes restricted by the higher imperative of the world's survival. On the post-structuralist reckoning with Hegel, see Kowalska 2015.

> Such a demystification must give in (*se plier*) to *the finest diversity of apocalyptic ruses*. The interest or the calculus of these ruses can be so dissembled under the desire for light, *well hidden* (*eukalyptus*, as is said of the tree whose calycine limb remains closed after flowering), *well hidden under the avowed desire for revelation*. (Derrida 1984b, 23; emphasis added)[22]

Derrida, however, does not simply opt for the total repression of the apocalyptic desire: *eucalypsis*, the art of “hiding well,” although opposed to *apocalypsis*, does not just push it away. In the eucalyptic strategy, which Derrida recommends, the crypt, where the “well-hidden” truth lies buried, should be neither fully veiled nor fully unveiled: it should rather “secrete” an “enigmatic desire” which, when used as a *pharmakon*—in smaller weaker doses—does, in fact, a good job: instead of unleashing death and destruction, it fuels the deconstructive vigilance and its inner-worldly works of justice. The ideal of justice, which fulfills itself in the apocalyptic judgment over the world (*Weltgericht*), must thus be laid in the eucalyptic, well-hidden crypt, if it is not to destroy the world immediately. But it must also somehow "secret" its message, if the world is to be an ethical place at all.

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[21] See also Derrida on Kant in the 1998 text, “The History of the Lie”: “Everything must be sacrificed to this sacredness of the commandment. Kant writes: “To be truthful (*wahrhaft*; loyal, sincere, honest, in good faith: *ehrlich*) in all declarations is, therefore, a sacred (*heiliges*) and unconditional (*unbedingt gebietendes*) commanding law of reason (*Vernunftgebot*) that admits of no expediency whatsoever” (Derrida 2002, 45).

[22] In section 344 of *Gay Science*, “How to understand our cheerfulness,” Nietzsche explicitly links the unconditional will to truth with a death-wish: “Will to truth—that could be a hidden will to death… No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense which faith in science presupposes thereby affirm another world than that of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this »other world,« must they not by the same token deny its counterpart, this world, our world?” (Nietzsche 2001, 201).

The crypt, therefore, should be *eukalyptus*, not only well hidden, but also hidden *well*, i.e. in a proper manner. For Derrida, the finest of the ruses which he can list on the side of his eucalyptic strategy, consists in turning apocalyptic desire on itself, so it begins to question the very desire for revelation: now it wishes to reveal the source from which all wishes to reveal come from. If, in Freudian psychoanalysis, enlightenment is nothing but desire made conscious, this is exactly what Derrida has in mind: the apocalyptic desire turned on itself, reflexively "checking itself," goes partly into hiding, and manifests no longer as the annihilating negation, but as desire deferred and diffused: *no apocalypse, not now*. We can see it clearly in Derrida's definition of *différance* as the differing and deferring "subversion of every kingdom" which indefinitely delays the advent of absolute *parousia*:

> Not only is there no kingdom of *différance*, but *différance* instigates the subversion of every kingdom. Which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within us that desires a kingdom, the past or future presence of a kingdom. (Derrida 1982, 22)

But, as we know from Derrida's analysis of the apocalyptic tone, to desire a kingdom—"let Thy Kingdom come"—can also be a threat: the absolute *parousia* of the apocalyptic fulfillment spells the end of the world based on the play of *différance* which, on its part, is supported by a counter-desire to subvert every kingdom. The calculus of *conatus*, with its interest and investment in the world, also "well hidden under the avowed desire for revelation/ destruction," thus launches a defense which guards the divine inhabitant of the crypt—the ideal of absolute justice and truth—in his entombment, not completely dead but also not fully alive, just latent, "held in check." Yet, just as in the case of Hegel and then Rosenzweig, this defense is not merely katechonic, because some of the "enigmatic desire" wishing "the light of lights," becomes nonetheless manifest, yet deferred and "checked" in respect to its ultimate goal. It is used in the deconstructive critique of the *status quo*, which, to paraphrase Taubes, invests spiritually in the world, yet not it the world *as it is*. It does not say to the world—*let it go down*—yet, at the same time, does not affirm it in its given "figure." The figures of the world may and should pass, but not the world as such. This is what Derrida, in the

Blanchotian manner, calls *apocalypse without apocalypse*: a dialectical fold or self-subversion of the apocalyptic discourse, which negates the catastrophe announced by the apocalypse (the end of the world) without, at the same time, negating the destructive energy which—delayed, transformed, harnessed, fused—can now serve the "*works* of the negative" within the worldly reality, with the emphasis on *works*:

> *There is the apocalypse without apocalypse*. The word *sans*, without, I pronounce here in the so necessary syntax of Blanchot, who often says X without X. The 'without' marks an internal and external catastrophe of the apocalypse, an overturning of sense that does not merge with the catastrophe announced or described in the apocalyptic writings without however being foreign to them. Here the catastrophe would perhaps be of the apocalypse itself, its fold and its end, a closure without end, an *end without end*. (Derrida 1984b, 35; emphasis added)

The Blanchotian figure of *X sans X* serves Derrida as the best model for his "dialectics beyond the (Hegelian—A.B.-R.) dialectics": a negation which does not cancel, but introduces into the *X* a moment of aporetic, but also pharmakonic, self-limitation. The deconstructor, therefore, may not be a simple *Aufhalter*/ restrainer of the apocalyptic revealment, but he is also not an "accelerationist" who would rush to tell all the truth, where the "truth itself is the end, the destination… the end and the instance of the last judgment" (Derrida 1984b, 23):

> The end is soon, it is imminent, signifies the tone. I see it, I know it, I tell You, now you know, come. We're all going to die, we're going to disappear. And this death sentence (*cet arrêt de mort*) cannot fail to judge us. (Derrida 1984b, 25)

The very structure of the truth as such is apocalyptic: one cannot see Truth face to face—and live. And yet, we cannot completely give up on truth; we must apply it in pharmokonic small doses of gradual en-lightenment. Thus, as Derrida states in one of his early essays, "Force and Significance": "it will be necessary (for the Truth—A.B.-R.) *to descend, to work, to bend*" (Derrida 1978, 35; emphasis added) if it is to be *livable*, that is, to metamorphose from the otherworldly sheer "force" into the innerworldly "significance," capable of guiding and en-lightening our actions. Indeed, as in Scholem commenting on Rosenzweig:

> Here (…) the anarchic element undergoes metamorphosis. The power of redemption seems to be built into the clockwork of life lived in the light of revelation, though more as restlessness than as potential destructiveness.

For Derrida, this is precisely the intended goal of deconstruction: to keep us ethically vigilant and restless, but always short of "potential destructiveness."

To find this *pharmakon* or the right "easy" dose of light constitutes the very gist of Derrida's eucalyptic strategy: if one wants to survive the brush with the Light of Lights—the ideal of Truth and Justice—one must avoid the face-to-face confrontation and, following Emily Dickinson, the great poet of mediated revelation, "tell all the truth, but tell it slant." Yes, we are weak, fallible, and we all are going to die; yes, the end is always near, *but*… "being here is a lot,"[23] and this *a lot* cannot be simply eliminated by the abiding death sentence, the "dead already" of the Heideggerian *Sein-zum-Tode*, based on the principle that "the essence of life is nothing but death" (*Aber die Essenz des Lebens ist zugleich Tod*) (Heidegger 2000, 100). *Always prefer life and affirm survival*—Derrida's famous last words uttering a version of the Biblical imperative of *uvaharta bahayim*, "choose to live!"[24]—trump the higher knowledge of the "philosophical sect" (Derrida 1984b, 25), by moving the whole debate onto a different plane where it becomes a matter not of knowledge but of choice and faith. I—says Derrida—may know that I am going to die, but I still *choose* life; the world may appear weak when compared to theological and philosophical Absolutes, but I still side with its precarious existence. Hence the new command: *eucalypse, now!*—meaning: let's hide well our desire to know and become *fröhlich* for a while, in the manner recommended by Nietzsche, when, in *Gay Science*, he tempts us to give up on "the unconditional will to truth"—

> This unconditional will to truth—what is it? Is it the will not to let oneself be deceived? Is it the will not to deceive?... But why not deceive? But why not allow oneself to be deceived?... (Nietzsche 2001, 201)

To allow oneself to be a little deceived would mean precisely to "ease" the blinding light of truth in its absolute *parousial* revelation and then

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[23] Comp. Rainer Maria Rilke, *The 9th Duino Elegy*: "But because being here is a lot: because everything here/ Seems to need us, this fleeting world, which in some strange way/ Concerns us. Us, the most fleeting of all/ Once For each thing, just once. Once and no more. And we too,/ Just once. And never again. But to have been/ This once, even if only once:/ To have been earthly, seems irrevocable."

[24] The last words of Derrida, which he scribbled right before his death, were: "Always prefer life and constantly affirm survival (*Preferez toujours la vie et affirmez sans cesse la survie*)" (Derrida 2007b, 244).

"tell it slant." Once the will to truth becomes *conditional*—that is, restricted by other desires, most of all the will to live, here and now, in the imperfect world—the truth does not disappear completely, but now it can be pursued within the context of life as a *livable* goal and not as "the truth (that) kills."[25]

"Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me, so I can have a moment of joy," says Job to God (Job, 10: 20), and so also says Derrida to the Truth in its threatening apocalyptic glory. The *vere-diction*, "telling the truth," is always and inescapably a *verdict*, a death sentence or the Blanchotian *arrêt de mort*; so, in order to practice *sur-vie* instead of *melete thanatou*, the "exercise of death," one needs to retort to the cunning of unreason—and *choose* or *decide* instead of knowing. This is also where Derrida most radically differs from Hegel, who still wants to have his share in Absolute Knowledge at the end of history, when the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the World will have finally coincided in peaceful reconciliation. While, in his deconstructionist method, he will always use the Hegelian-dialectical scheme of "delayed destruction" which, as a *différance* allows the apocalyptic desire of absolute truth and justice to work in and through the mundane condition, he does not want the process of deferral to end. The weakness and precarity of our worldly condition cannot be removed and replaced with an absolute "objectivity and permanence," as in the Hegelian *telos*. Ultimately, therefore, en-lightenment *is* revelation/ apocalypse, but (hopefully) forever differed and deferred: a revelation *cum différance*. We could thus sum up Derrida's tarrying with Hegel by the ironic inversion of his own phrasing from the early essay on Bataille: *Hegelianism with Reserve*—even more reserved, restricted and cautious in its wary ways of "amortizing" the light of lights than Hegel himself.

Conclusion

Derrida's tarrying with the apocalypse repeats Hegel's strategy in late-modern circumstances where it is now the "philosophical sect" (Derrida 1984b, 25)—driven by the unchecked desire for enlightenment as "the unconditional will to truth," even, or especially, at the cost of life—that steps into the Hegelian shoes of the Beautiful Soul. He will also use the same "tarrying" method in his treatment of "Marx & Sons," or the Marxist "revolutionary sect" in *Specters of Marx*.[26] Here too, Derrida endorses the condition of a *chronic apocalypse* as belonging to the structure of messianicity, but only on the proviso that it can be fully inverted into a *procosmic position* which, putting things bluntly, does something good for the world. Instead of resulting in a "permanent catastrophe," therefore, the chronic apocalypse metamorphoses into a "permanent deconstruction," with the spectre of Absolute Justice hovering/ watching over the material world, too eager to close upon its immanence and follow the laws of the "social *physis*." Spectre would thus be the "amortized" Spirit of the Apocalypse (or, as a "specter of Marx," the amortized spirit of revolution): sufficiently restrained to withdraw its "fury of destruction" from the world—but also sufficiently *haunting* not to let the world rest on its immanentist laurels. Hence the idea of *hantologie* as an apocalyptic reference beyond presence and non-presence: inactive as the real power of destruction, but still active as a reminder of the ideal of justice, of which the world will always fall short for the very reason of being. This hantological *ratio* between being and nothing determines the measure of the Spirit/spectre as a *pharmakon*: the right dose of the poison, which transfigures but does not destroy the world as the host "hospitable to the ghosts." This, again, can be interpreted in Hegelian terms. In *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel refers to the subject as a ghostly principle that gathers the sensual manifold of the self: "When the I grasps it, this material is *at once poisoned* (*vergiftet*) *and transfigured* by the universality of the I, loses its individualized, independent subsistence and receives a spiritual reality" (Hegel 2007, §381Z; emphasis added). Granted, the stakes are different—for Hegel, this is the universality of the Spirit, counteracting the dissipating tendency of the sensual substance; for Derrida, this is the Rosenzweigian ideal of justice, counteracting the self-enclosing tendency of the material immanence—but the method of *gradual poisoning*, which is to infect matter with something alien to it and thus start the process of its transfiguration, remains similar.

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[25] *Wahrheit tötet* (Nietzsche 1995, 190). See Derrida's comment on Nietzsche's statement: "the truth is suicide in its structure. It is suicide. It is life death, as truth without truth of the truth" (Derrida 2020b, 153).

Derrida tarries with the apocalypse from the beginning till the very end of his intellectual career: from the very idea of *différance* as the indefinite delay of presence/ *parousia*/ Real and "subversion of the kingdom" to his apology of partial blindness in *The Memoirs of the Blind* and the defense of the necessary *bêtise de la vie*, "stupidity of life" in the *Death Penalty* seminar. The "easing" paradigm is manifest in Derrida's writing above all as the lesson of the *pharmakon*: the right, properly "diminished" dose of the poison which is lethal when taken without prescription, but beneficial when limited and restricted. In its direct unmediated form, the *apocalypse*—the lightning of revelation—is nothing but *die Gift*: the annihilating contagion that spells the end of the world. But as "eased to the children"—"the apocalypse without the apocalypse"—the lightning indeed "steers all" and constitutes *the gift*, which assists the world on its way towards "objectivity and permanence." Derrida, therefore, is indeed "another Abraham"[27] who, while wrestling with God threatening to end the world, presents him with the following alternative: "You desire the world and you desire absolute justice. Take one or the other. You cannot hold the cord at both ends at once."[28] At the same time, however, Derrida does pull the cord at both ends at once, when insisting on the necessity of the critique of the worldly *status quo*. The ultimate stake of Derrida's Hegelian-Rabbinic intervention is to safeguard the transcendental possibility of the critique as poising itself between negation and affirmation. From Hegel on, secularised apocalypticism—the fury of destruction which wandered into the profane to live with it on critical basis—forms such a transcendental condition: the dialectics of critical works aim not at the destruction, but at the trans-formation of the worldly reality. In his attack on the "philosophical sect" (Derrida 1984b, 25), Derrida reminds us that what today passes for a "critical theory" is often not a critique, but an exercise of simple negation—looking at the world severely, from the apocalyptic vantage point of redemption/ Last Judgment.

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[26] See Derrida 1999, as well as Derrida 1994.

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The politics of the apocalypse, which takes its most mature form in Derrida's deconstruction, belongs to the Hegelian legacy which has not lost its ongoing significance. This particular line of inheritance is mediated by Rosenzweig, from whom Derrida derives the conviction that the dialectical model of "tarrying with the apocalypse" is older than Hegel and can be traced back to the Judaic tradition which they both try to awaken in its procosmic ethical choice of life and world, however weak and precarious, over against the powerful divine Absolute. Whether in dialectics or in deconstruction, the mighty force of creation and destruction is not simply warded off, but cunningly utilized for the sake of the world: the tremendous power of the negative is here a *gebannter Blitz*, a lightning "eased to the children" and harnessed to do mundane work.

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[27] See Derrida 2007a.

[28] *Genesis Rabbah*, "Lekh Lekha" 39:6. To which God replies, clearly taking Abraham's admonition to heart: "I will never again curse the ground because of man (…). Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done" (Gen. 8:20–21).

For, even the destructive might transform into the world.

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Citation:
Bielik-Robson, Agata. 2022. “The Harnessed Lightning, or the Politics of Apocalypse: Hegel, Rosenzweig, Derrida.” *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 63–92.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.4

Autor: Agata Bielik-Robson
Tytuł: Światło ujarzmione, czyli polityka apokalipsy: Hegel, Rosenzweig, Derrida
Abstrakt: Co łączy tych trzech bardzo różnych myślicieli: Hegla, Rosenzweiga i Derridę? W eseju tym twierdzę, że łącznika dostarcza wspólna im wszystkim formuła teologii politycznej, polemiczna wobec Schmittiańskiej kategorii *katechona* jako „powstrzymywacza apokalipsy”. Podczas gdy ich formuła także wspiera się na idei powstrzymywania, przybiera ono inną postać niż zwykłe odwleczenie apokalipsy: postać *osłabienia* albo *amortyzacji*, która stwarza dystans mediacji między Bogiem, wszechpotężną instancją kreacji i destrukcji, a światem czyli słabszą stroną tej istotowo asymetrycznej relacji. Ta alternatywna formuła ani nie odwleka, ani nie przyspiesza apokalipsy, lecz ustawia się w trzeciej dialektycznej pozycji między obiema postawami: jej celem jest, słowami Emily Dickinson, „zelżenie światła”, tak by mogło ono posłużyć do transformacji świata, a nie do jego zniszczenia. To dialektyczne „zmaganie

się z apokalipsą” ani zatem nie pozostawia świata w jego *status quo*, ani nie dąży do jego prostej destrukcji, lecz stawia na jego immanentne przepracowanie.

Słowa kluczowe: Hegel, Rosenzweig, Derrida, apokalipsa, prawo, sprawiedliwość, praca

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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.
>
> (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 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.

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[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.

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 capitalist 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 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).

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[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).

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

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[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

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[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-

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[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).

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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 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*

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[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 published 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 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.

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

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 individuals 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]

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[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-

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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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Citation:
Čakardić, Ankica. 2022. "Hegel and Anticapitalism: Notes on the Political Economy of Poverty." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 93–130.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.5

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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

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The Story of Dialectics and the Trickster of History

Drawing on Hegel's interpretation of narrative and Lyotard's rejection of "grand" dialectical narratives, this paper addresses the relationship between emancipatory dialectics and narrative form. It begins by establishing the intimate connection between dialectical thought and narration. On this basis, the paper argues that varying conceptions of dialectics can be associated with varying structures of narrating history. Finally, the paper makes the case for identifying a specific narrative form adequate to the radical re-readings of Hegel that have replaced the perspective of the master (the subject privileged by a given system of historicity) with the perspective of the slave (who, while excluded from historicity, struggles against this exclusion). This narrative form corresponds to none of the classical Greek genres; it is best described as a trickster tale.

Keywords: Hegel, narrative theory, philosophy of history, Master-Slave Dialectic, tricksters

> *A long time ago, there were no stories on the earth, because all the stories belonged to Nyame, the god of the sky. So Anansi the spider went up into the sky.*

It is telling that one of the harshest critiques ever made against Hegelian dialectics was a critique of narrative. When Jean-François Lyotard declared that the grand narratives of the modern age had lost credibility (Lyotard 1984), this was widely understood as an indictment of the historical dialectic that had been so grandly narrated by Hegel. But the critique did not stop with Hegel and his compelling story of Spirit on its journey to self-consciousness and realization in history. Lyotard questioned the continued efficacy of all those types of stories that, over the years, had been inspired by Hegel's: stories of humanity gaining liberty through scientific knowledge, of the oppressed people winning democratic self-government, of the working class overcoming the contradictions of capitalism. Although Lyotard himself paid some attention to the differences between such stories, the simplified idea of the end of grand narratives concealed something else about the dialectical tradition: the fact that dialectical narratives come in many forms.

Recognition of the plurality of dialectical forms should complicate the received picture of young, energetic, small non-dialectical narratives fighting it out with big, senescent dialectics. While this account became, perhaps against the intentions of writers associated with postmodernism and poststructuralism Lyotard's own intentions (e.g. Lyotard and Thébaud 1985; Derrida 1986; Barnett 1998; White 2014), a kind of popularized meta-narrative of the postmodern age, I would argue not only that dialectics survived the alleged end of grand narratives, but that all narratives are dialectical. In light of this, the challenge posed by Lyotard can be reframed. The issue is not whether the dialectic can offer a legitimate story of emancipation, but what kinds of dialectical stories of emancipation can be told.

Hegel, like any good storyteller, inspired others to retell his story. Each reader of Hegel also became a re-teller, and in the course of retelling, the story changed. New narrators have pointed to flaws, gaps, and contradictions in Hegel's own story; they have brought new heroes into the narrative, drawing attention to the hero's position, to the prospects and temporality of the hero's success, to the relationship between the story of one hero and the stories of others, Spirit or Man, masters or slaves, imperial states or peoples without history. The hero may come from within a society, embody that society, and lead it to victory. Or the hero may be an uncouth outcast who, lacking power, mobilizes wit and guile to break down the barriers to freedom.

Some of these narrative forms have been given names by Hegel and his later readers: history has been told as comedy, as tragedy, or as epic. I, as a reader of Hegel's readers, call attention to another narrative form, one that has already taken shape in proletarian and anticolonial readings of the dialectic, but which has not yet received a proper name.

> *Nyame, the god of the sky, said to Anansi, "I tell stories for kings when they come issuing decrees. I tell stories for merchants who offer me all the wealth and pleasures of their cities. I tell stories for warriors who come beating their breasts and raising their spears. I tell stories for the Python and the Leopard and the Tiger and all the Hornets of the world. How can I spare a story for you?"*

Narrativity vs. Dialectics?

In spite of the significant interest in narrative theory expressed during the postmodern period (which I will define as the period dominated by the questioning of grand narratives), it is striking that many of the approaches that emerged then were rather anti-narrative. Authors like Derrida and Deleuze drew attention to indeterminate successions of ruptures and events that punctuated any possible linear development and seemed to render inoperative any consistent semantic structures (Derrida 1978; Deleuze 1988). But while one strand of thought refused to narrate history as a coherent story, another invoked narrativity as a way of emphasizing history's contingency. So while Lyotard recognized the Hegelian dialectic as a narrative, he also relativized it, presenting it as just one narrative among many. Earlier, Hayden White had made a similar move, raising the question of how history was narrated and, thus, suggesting the arbitrariness of Hegel's narrative in comparison to other historical narratives (White 2014).

Even this turn to narrativity, however, represented a turn away from what has been traditionally considered good storytelling. While Lyotard, for example, described grand narratives in terms typical of storytelling, he hardly said anything about the structure of small narratives. To grand narratives he attributed beginnings (conditions of domination or ignorance), rising tension (historical struggles for progress), and ends (in which tension is resolved and consciousness or emancipation is achieved), but when discussing small narratives he largely abandoned narrative terminology and wrote instead of "games" (Lyotard 1984, chap. 14; Lyotard and Thébaud 1985), as if to suggest that in small narratives plot structure is less important than the unpredictable results of play. Lyotard remained interested in the fact that stories were narrated, but he was much less interested in the structure of narration.

The cumulative effect of such critiques was to discredit singularity (the idea that there might be only one grand narrative), linearity (that a narrative might proceed without setbacks or interruption), and structure (that a narrative might be interpreted within an internally coherent system of meaning). Narrative survived, but largely bereft of form. As these non-narrative or para-narrative features came to be associated with narrativity, narrative could be invoked to suggest contingency. In order to say that some course of events could not be explained by inevitable progress or universal laws of history, it could be said that that it was just another story, unfolding however the narrator chose to tell it.

The trouble with this understanding of narrative—which, though not the only understanding to emerge in the postmodern period, became widespread—is that this is not how stories actually operate. In stories, events do not arbitrarily follow one another. A new episode does not mark a radical rupture from the preceding episode. A new event may mark a reversal or twist, but its effect has everything to do with what came before. The power of stories derives from the fact that, although we never know just what might happen next, what happens next still has to satisfy the demands aroused in the audience by the preceding narrative.

The turn to small narratives drew attention to a moment of contingency—or, more precisely, underdetermination—contained in all effective stories. And if dialectics are also stories, they too contain this underdetermined moment. If every detail of the path of history were known in advance, it would involve neither narrative tension nor dialectical contradiction. Yet this underdetermination cannot be pure contingency, because good stories are not free to develop just *any* way. Even the smallest narratives need to go somewhere if they are to become compelling stories. A story whose audience wants to hear it finished and might want to retell it—a story that has a chance of becoming a socially generalizable way of perceiving events—has to set up narrative tension and adequately respond to that tension. History is dialectical only if each historical conjuncture holds us in suspense by generating expectation and pointing to specific possible outcomes, even if we do not know which outcome will be realized, and even if we might be surprised by a development that defies expectations and yet, once it comes, appears fully adequate to the overlooked clues that foreshadowed it.

The outcome of dialectical history is neither predetermined nor fully contingent; not every story will find an audience. Some might be told, but ignored. Some might be so implausible that they are never told. Yet there is always more than one story that has a chance of succeeding, satisfying the audience with the right mix of necessity and surprise. This creates an inevitable moment of narrative decision. If the postmodern critique brought valuable attention to the narrative dimension of dialectics and the multiplicity of possible narratives, the Hegelian tradition can remind us, once again, how the structure of dialectical contradiction shapes understandings of emancipation that will be adopted by movements that tell their own stories and place themselves in history.

> *Anansi said to Nyame, "I will beat all those beasts of the earth, and you can give their stories to me."*

Dialectics as Narrativity

Hegel, in developing his notion of dialectics, offered a method for understanding how humans narratively shape understanding. He accomplished this not only by situating concepts in history, pointing to how they develop over time, but more importantly by showing how the temporal development of concepts is shaped by tension between opposing principles, as concepts are pushed into a changing future by the pressure to resolve tension. In this respect, the principle of dialectical contradiction is coterminous with the principle of narrative tension. Dialectics come into play when human perception of tension and temporality comes into play, when humans perceive contradiction as something that calls for resolution, when they act and understand the actions of others as attempts to push contradictory situations toward resolution. In other words, social experience first became dialectical when humans first began weaving moments of life together as series of entanglements and disentanglements, suspense and resolution—that is, when they began telling their lives and histories as stories.[1]

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[1] It is true that Hegel applied this approach not only to human affairs, but also to the nature of the world. He was able to make this logical move because he placed the whole world within the realm of unfolding consciousness. Since Hegel's world was a grand storyteller, the world appeared to really operate according to the principles of stories. Insofar as the world becomes Spirit, the world moves the way human Spirit narrates its moving. When Lukács, in *History and Class Consciousness*, argued against Engels that dialectics cannot be found purely in nature, but only where there is human subjectivity in history (Lukács 1971a, 3), this was a logical consequence of renouncing Hegel's identification of Spirit and world. If there is a natural world distinct from Spirit, then it only becomes dia-

Hegel was by no means the first to bring together dialectical and narrative thought. When philosophy first emerged, it mobilized the narrative principles of traditional storytelling, even if it did not yet explicitly reflect on narration. Philosophy took the principle of contradiction, which had been embedded in narrative thinking, and reflected on it independently and abstractly, turning it into a contradiction between established opinion and philosophical truth (as it was for Parmenides and Plato) or turning it into a principle of reality itself (as it was for Heraclitus and, in China, for Zou Yan and his elaboration of yin and yang). Philosophy thus turned from myth to ontology, from stories about an anthropomorphized world to stories about the interaction of abstract principles. From this perspective, Aristotle's *Poetics* appears as one of the first major works that not only employed dialectical thought, but directly described and analyzed its principles, and in this respect it may be as important as his *Metaphysics* as an antecedent to modern dialectics.

Hegel's innovation was to apply narrative principles consistently to the investigation of knowledge about being. This is somewhat obscured by the order in which Hegel presented his ideas, which might give the impression that he first developed a set of metaphysical principles and later applied them to history and narrative art. Yet from a logical perspective, it could be said that it was the narrative principles that took priority. In effect, Hegel asked what might happen if we looked on existence as a story. His work stands out as an attempt to bring these modes of theory together, synthetizing the principles of narrative and dialectics with the principles that govern the known world (as dialectically narrated).

Hegel's innovation was to apply narrative principles consistently to the investigation of knowledge about being. (…) In effect, Hegel asked what might happen if we looked on existence as a story. His work stands out as an attempt to bring these modes of theory together, synthetizing the principles of narrative and dialectics with the principles that govern the known world (as dialectically narrated).

If concepts develop according to principles of contradiction and the push toward resolution—that is to say, if they develop as stories—then different kinds of stories make for different kinds of concepts. My purpose, then, is not to pinpoint which narrative form Hegel most consistently employs, but to explore how Hegel's narration opened up the question of form, inspiring multiple interpretations and alternatives. The stakes are high, because if Hegel was right that dialectics not only capture the development of consciousness, but also encompass the development of history on its path toward freedom, then the narrative form of dialectics is also a structure emancipatory practice.

Exploring the relationship between narrative form and emancipatory practice it becomes all the more pressing at moments like the present,

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lectical when it finds a subject that confronts it and narrates its historical motion.

when older narratives have lost their position of dominance. After modern grand narratives were called into question in the postmodern period, now the postmodern story of proliferating small narratives has also lost its erstwhile hold on the public imagination. But new narratives are only beginning to take shape. The old heroes of dialectics have been declared dead, and no birth certificate has yet been issued for the heroes who keep being born.

> *Anansi the spider went down to earth and into the forest of the Python. He cut down a branch of palm and a length of stringy vine, and as he walked he said,*
>
> *"I bet Python isn't even as long as this little branch." The Python overheard him.*
>
> *"What's that?" the Python said. "I'm as long as ten palm branches!"*
>
> *But no, Anansi said, "I don't believe you."*
>
> *So the Python stretched himself out beside the branch, closed his eyes and stretched and stretched until his head reached past one end of the branch and his tail reached past the other. "Keep stretching," Anansi said. "Maybe you really are long after all! How was a little spider to know?" The Python kept stretching, and Anansi tied him up with his length of vine and carried him up to the god of the sky.*

Hegel's Genres

According to a character in Brecht's *Refugee Conversations*, Hegel's *Greater Logic*

> talks about the life of concepts, those slippery, unstable, irresponsible existences; the way they insult each other and draw their knives on each other and then sit down to dinner together as if nothing had happened. They appear in couples, so to speak—each is married to its opposite. (Brecht 2020, 63)

Like in a classical comedy, the characters of dialectics clash and then reconcile, ending in marriage. But this was not an entirely original observation on Brecht's part. Hegel himself seemed to suggest that dialectics could be understood as a grand, universal comedy (White 2014; Hamacher 1998; Zupančič 2008; Speight 2021).

In his *Aesthetics*, Hegel begins his reflections on poetic form with a consideration of epic and lyric poetry.[2] But as he defines them, each

If concepts develop according to principles of contradiction and the push toward resolution—that is to say, if they develop as stories—then different kinds of stories make for different kinds of concepts. (...) The stakes are high, because if Hegel was right that dialectics not only capture the development of consciousness, but also encompass the development of history on its path toward freedom, then the narrative form of dialectics is also a structure emancipatory practice.

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[2] Hegel covers some of the same ground in the *Phenomenology*, in the section on "Religion in the Form of Art," but there he places much less emphasis on narrativity and historicity.

is only one-sided in its expression of spirit: epic is the genre of exteriority, while lyric is the domain of interiority. Epic objectively portrays deeds and events from the perspective of a given whole; lyric subjectively portrays the inner world of the speaker. The one-sidedness of each genre is overcome, then, in dramatic poetry, which brings multiple subjects together in their dramatic deeds, developing the relationship between their inner spirit and their outer world (Hegel 1975 [2], 1037–1038). Within drama, then, Hegel distinguishes tragedy from comedy, and here it is tragedy that appears one-sided. This time the issue is one of historical perspective. Tragedy depicts how, in a given epoch and within a given ethical order, conflicting intentions and claims prove impossible to reconcile: "For although the characters have a purpose which is valid in itself, they can carry it out in tragedy only by pursuing it one-sidedly and so contradicting and infringing someone else's purpose" (Hegel 1975 [2], 1197). Although Hegel still states that the tragic denouement involves a supersession of the particular aims of the tragic characters, it would seem that the principle that supersedes these aims—the principle of desired harmony and shared freedom that survives the irreconcilable conflict (Hegel 1975 [2], 1197)—exists *beyond* the narrative world of the tragedy itself and appears in tragedy only negatively, by revealing the one-sidedness of the struggles portrayed. Only with comedy, then, does the whole appear directly as the principle of reconciliation. In comedy the hero is not destroyed by conflict, but rises "above his own inner contradiction" with "an infinite light-heartedness and confidence" (Hegel 1975 [2], 1200). The comic hero overcomes any particular failures, even outlasts the work of art itself, recognizing "a loftier principle" and becoming "the overlord of whatever appears in the real world" (Hegel 1975 [2], 1202).

Hayden White reads Hegel's *Philosophy of History* much the way Hegel, in the *Aesthetics*, reads himself. In the *Philosophy of History*, White observes, tragedy structures the history of specific individuals or peoples, but comedy is the form taken by Universal History. Individual heroes struggle and fail. Peoples and their civilizations rise and fall. They have all been able to express only particular moments in the development of Spirit, and they are unable to overcome their own internal contradictions without unmaking themselves.

> Each of these Tragic defeats, however, is an epiphany of the *law* that governs the whole sequence. (…) It is (…) the law of history, which is the law of freedom that is figured in every human project culminating in a Tragic resolution. And this law figures the ultimately Comic outcome of the whole succession of forms

> which is immediately apprehended under the aspect of Tragedy. (White 2014, 116–117)

Each individual or people contributes to Universal History by failing in particular history (see also Heneghan 2021); but taken together, these separate failed attempts to assert freedom point toward a resolution in which freedom prevails, a final wedding of Spirit and world, subject and object, freedom and law.

There is no doubt significant subversive potential in the Hegelian comedy (Zupančič 2008). Taken as a whole, it is a story in which successive ethical orders fail to fully realize the principle of freedom, and are overthrown. On the way to the story's happy ending, each partial order comes to appear laughable. (And perhaps this is part of what Marx had in mind when he famously remarked that when world-historical facts repeat themselves—if a new order has not yet replaced the old—they turn from tragedy to farce; Marx 1978, 594.) Nevertheless, it is also easy to see how the comedy of history could appeal to Hegel's notoriously conservative defensive of the state. In spite of the transformative feat of reconciliation that comedy accomplishes, turning adversaries into allies and friends, the classical form of the genre also respects a principle of stasis, according to which the balance of forces that prevailed at the outset is reinstated at the end. For the duration of the narrative, the world may be turned upside-down; mistaken identity may follow mistaken identity, men may become women, women men, slaves masters and masters slaves—but in the moment of resolution the masters return to being masters, slaves become slaves once more, and everyone returns to her or his proper station. Everyone has a good laugh and goes back to life as before, perhaps wiser and happier about a reality that has been revealed as better than it had previously seemed before. For Hegel, there was no contradiction in seeing progress in stasis, because for him the principle of change was already contained in the narrative world at the start. Although much can be said of the social transformations that Hegel recounted in his actual narration of history, the classical comic plot narrates these transformations first and foremost as changes of consciousness, in which the higher principle that allows reconciliation is recognized, allowing the already-present seed of harmony to grow and finally bear fruit.

The radicals of the nineteenth and early 20th centuries, including the most ardent standard-bearers of the Hegelian tradition, amended the more conservative interpretation of the dialectic as a comedy of reconciliation. They expected something more substantially new to emerge at the end of their stories, something that pointed beyond what was present in the story at the start. They also expected that, in order to reach that end, the leading characters would have to engage in heroic struggle, from which some would emerge victorious, while the others would be vanquished. One way of narrating this history—and this was implicit in much romantic revolutionary thought—was to emphasize the tragic moment over the comic. As Jason M. Yonover (2021) has argued, the revolutionary plays an important role in Hegel's historical understanding, and in spite of Hegel's ambivalence toward revolution, there is room for a revolutionary Hegelian narration of history as a succession of tragic rebellions. Although the revolutionary pursues a purpose that is incompatible with an established order, and in the clash between incompatible purposes the rebel appears doomed to failure, a broader view of history reveals that even in failure, revolutionaries can recognize and establish principles that *will become universal* (Yonover 2021, 254). History's revolutionary tragedies give progressive content to the non-tragic narrative frame. Freedom can be advanced in history thanks to heroes who repeatedly push against ethical orders that threaten to hold history in place (Yonover 2021, 256).

But another narrative revision took the Hegelian frame in another direction. When revolutionary movements believed in the possibility (and sometimes inevitability) of their own ultimate victory, they gradually developed a narrative that could be called epic. Because epic deals with exteriority, the fundamental change that comes about in an epic story is not a change of consciousness, but a change of conditions. The state of the narrative world at the end is not yet given at the start. The hero sets out into a world that is only beginning to be constituted, and in the course of the story the hero can come to embody a whole people or ideal or movement. The story may end in victory or defeat, but not in nuptials. Even if the hero dies, the transformation of the narrative world is completed, and the embodied object lives on, having revealed something essential about its character or fate. The affronted Achaeans, in battling Troy, become Hellenes, pointing toward future greatness, even if their greatest epic ends before the battle has been won. Ilya Muromets becomes the people of Rus by stopping invaders from abroad and exposing the cowardice and cupidity of the country's rulers. And these heroes can be replaced by the forgotten poor, the oppressed nation, or the humble worker who rises from misery to rid the land of exploiters; and only the preliminary telling of the story's eventual end may give the heroes confidence that they—or at least their children or grandchildren—will not die trying.

At the same time, the characters of this epic are flatter, and the plotline is straighter, than in the dialectic of classical comedy. The characters' internal complexity is not expressed on the level of narrative form. They are not beset by moral dilemmas or laughable inner contradictions. They are not rendered immobile by the difficulty of decision or the hopelessness of fate. In the narrative that emerges, the heroes are given goals to pursue, goals external to their own being, and their story is the pursuit of these external goals. This story lacks an elaborate web of tragic scheming or comic plot twists and reversals. The characters stoically struggle to complete their tasks, sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing, sometimes making rapid progress, sometimes faltering, sometimes engaging in great, apocalyptic battles, sometimes slogging along in a slow and gradual process that points to the same goal.

Each of these genres, comic, tragic, and epic, has contributed to the narrative tradition of emancipation that we have at our disposal today. Yet I think there is another genre, implied by a another tradition of reading Hegel, that conforms to none of these forms.

> *Where did Anansi get the idea to trick the Python? Naturally, it was his wife Aso's idea.*

The Hero of Dialectics

In the classical genres that captured Hegel's attention, varied as they are, one thing about the hero remains relatively unchanged: the hero begins and ends the story at the center of the narrative world. The tragic hero is a great man or woman, the power of whose story derives from the fact that even in this greatness he or she cannot transcend given conditions and is destined to fall. The comic hero, by contrast, begins as a lesser person but transcends conditions thanks to her or his privileged position at the center of a story that propels the imperfect hero toward a happy fate. The epic hero is already born to be great—a prince, perhaps a lost heir—and rises to become a king. In the epic telling of the Hegelian story, the hero can be Spirit, the State, the nation, the working class, or liberal democracy. The hero sets out already posited as the rightful representative of the whole, and through the dialectical process the hero comes to claim its due. The subject rises, realizes its potential, and affirms what it always already essentially was. This is a kind of history told from a position of immanence within the whole that will be claimed. The hero begins as a positive subject that negates its world. Through this negation, the hero is transformed from potentiality to actuality, and the world becomes the hero's world.

But there is another tradition of dialectical narration that tells of a differently positioned hero. There, where the hero's existence is negative from the start, the transformation it undergoes is more radical. When it accomplishes its task by negating *itself*, abolishing the essence that had defined it been before, a different kind of story takes shape. This is the story of a hero excluded from the mechanisms that empower subjects to take control of the course of events, who then struggles against this exclusion, accomplishing a kind of transformation that the insider to erstwhile history was unable to bring about. This subject does not only negate the world, but also negates the mechanisms that prevented other subjects from negating the world. Instead of accomplishing a task already given by history, it makes history possible—history as the underdetermined result of the hero's actions.

Oedipus is given tasks by fate, and the genre of his story condemns him to fail. Achilles is given tasks that his genre requires him to fulfill. Odysseus is thrown by fate in the direction of a different genre.

Achilles, son of a goddess and champion of an army, is tasked with defending his slighted honor and fighting against Troy. Never straying from the martial world where he is at home, he completes both tasks, raging against his comrades when they slight him, but then turning the tide of their war.

Odysseus, son of mortals, but with a trickster god for a grandfather, is blown off his course into an unfamiliar world. With cunning more than brawn, he makes his long journey home, a foreigner everywhere along the way, and on every island he has to break the local rules.

Odysseus is still part-warrior, and the *Odyssey* is still part-epic, but already it enters new territory. What happens to the dialectic when it is retold as a trickster tale?

> *Anansi travelled from forest to forest and country to country. He heaped praise on the Tiger, the Leopard, and the Hornets, who were strong, and deadly, and vain. The Tiger had sharp claws, but he couldn't use them when he fell asleep and Anansi tied his hair to a kola nut tree. The Leopard had swift feet, but they didn't help him when he ran into a trap that Anansi had dug in the ground. The Hornets stung with poison, but their poison didn't keep them from being lured into Anansi's gourd. Anansi strung them all together with a vine. With the help of his wife Aro he carried them up to the god of the sky.*

Master and Slave, In and Out of History

Hegel was somewhat more ambivalent in the positioning of his protagonists than his overt choice of genres suggests. For the most part his heroes are internal to the world they inhabit and appropriate. Since "the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development" (Hegel 1979, 11), it seems that Spirit's path of development should be already contained within the character at the start. The Subject-becoming-itself seems to contain the whole within itself and seems to be contained within the whole. But at a crucial turning point in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel famously tells us that the Subject can only realize itself as self-consciousness "*in another self-consciousness*" (Hegel 1979, 110), and suddenly the hero's path is not as clearly marked as it first appeared. The path leads Spirit to another character, called the master, who stands in for Spirit, and then to yet another character, whom Hegel calls the master's "bondsman" or "slave." The master, the comfortable inhabitant of the pre-established whole, can only achieve self--consciousness by becoming aware of and being recognized by someone who, at the outset, was excluded from the system's consciousness. The master's consciousness must be confronted; its incompleteness and dependency must be revealed. The non-absoluteness of what posed as absolute must be overcome.

The *Phenomenology* thus depicts an outsider character who counters the inside-position of the initial hero. The outsider, on a superficial reading, would seem to play only a minor part. But a whole countercurrent in dialectical thought would come to retell the dialectical narrative with the slave as its hero. The young Marx, Lukács, Beauvoir, Fanon, and postcolonial theorists would all draw attention to this position both inside and outside of history that grants the slave a specific kind of dialectical power, not only because she can influence the course of events that depend on her activity and, thus, can force history to recognize her historicity, but also because, located outside the positions of power and privilege of her historical moment's, she can call the entirety of the system into question. And when the slave becomes a dialectical subject, the narrative structure of dialectics changes too. Although the character of the slave was already contained in Hegel's system, the story of dialectics is not the same when the slave becomes its main character.

This retelling of the story also entailed some revision of Hegel's understanding of the slave. Hegel's depicted the slave as directly subordinate to the master, while he excluded large parts of the exploited world from this dialectically important position. In *The Philosophy of History*, he notoriously described sub-Saharan Africa as a place "shut up (...) within itself" (Hegel 2001, 109), its people unable to attain adequate consciousness of "humanity" and, thus, incapable of influencing world-historical events. On this basis, he summarily dismisses Africa from his pages in order to enter "the real theatre of History" (Hegel 2001, 117).

Yet Hegel also reveals that in fact this excluded place is not outside history at all: "The only essential connection that has existed and continued between the Negroes and the Europeans," he writes, "is that of slavery" (Hegel 2001, 116). "Only" slavery connects Africans with Europeans—at a historical moment when slavery formed the very basis of Europe's economic and political domination of the world. Many Africans never played the restricted role of the slave as depicted in the *Phenomenology*. But an expanded understanding of the character (implicit in anticolonial and postcolonial readings) recognizes that the system of slavery stretches beyond the direct relationship between each master and each slave, encompassing the many people who struggling to avoid or escape slavery or to resist it from one or another position that is both inside the system and outside. When this expanded notion of the slave becomes a hero of the dialectic, a thoroughly different narration of history emerges.

The modernist epic had little place for the rebellious outsider. It recast its outsiders as insiders, asserting that its chosen hero—the liberal state, the nation, the working class—was the most genuine representative of the people as a whole on its march toward progress.[3]

Tragedy leaves more room for the insider-outsider, too frustrated by history to accept it without a fight, but too enmeshed in the contradictions of the moment to be capable of resolving them without provoking catastrophe.

Comedy, if told right, brings us closer to a story in which history's outsiders have a fighting chance of coming out on top. But a good deal rides on what kind of comic tale we tell.

Much of narrative theory, and especially narrative-theoretical consideration of Hegel, has limited its range to the genres of classical Greece and their adjusted modern counterparts. But when we look at the narrative that came out of re-reading Hegel from the perspective of the slave, we might characterize it best by turning to another genre, one present throughout the world, but which entered widespread theoretical reflection only in the course of comparative anthropological research (e.g. Radin 1956; Lévi-Strauss 1963), and which is especially well developed among the rebellious slaves of the Caribbean that impressed Hegel (Buck-Morss 2009), and in the regions of West Africa that Hegel dismissed from the theater of History.

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[3] Lukács, in his pre-Marxist *Theory of the Novel* (Lukács 1971b), found narrative space for the outsider by declaring that the novel had become the epic of a modern society where everyone had become an outsider. But the novel's hero, the alienated, "transcendentally homeless" individual, is unable to effectively change the course of history, and finds momentary transcendence only in the world of literary representation. (When Lukács later turned to the proletariat, a more socially transformative hero [Lukács 1971a], he no longer specified which narrative genre might best capture this unfolding of dialectics in history.)

> *The world is still full of pythons, tigers, leopards, and hornets. But it is also full of spiders.*

The Trickster of History

The trickster tale is comic, but it is not a classically structured comedy. Tricksters are not blessed by fate like the heroes of classical comedies, who are saved from their blundering by good fortune or the favor of the gods or the whims of a *deus ex machine*; tricksters survive by forcing others, more powerful than they, to blunder. Tricksters may sometimes be lesser gods, like the Greek Prometheus or the Polynesian Maui, in worlds populated by other gods, but unlike classical comic heroes they are almost never kings ruling over women and men.[4] The trickster tale, like a classical comedy, elicits laughter by inverting social norms, but unlike the comedy it does not conclude by turning the norms right-side-up again. Their stories do not end in marriage as a final reconciliation. Often, the trickster is a culture hero, whose inventions, inversions, and expropriations have permanently changed the world, but the culture hero comes at the beginning, not the end, of history. The trickster's rebellions do not put an end to struggle, but set the stage for further struggle.

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[4] Odysseus, an exception to this rule, bears the marks of a generically composite character. The story, told in heroic meter and traditionally classified as an epic, begins after a war and ends with a warrior king reclaiming his throne. But all along the voyage home, the hero is a trickster—in terms of rank, he is little more than a pirate captain—who employs guile to defeat powerful monsters and sorceresses and to sneak into his old home so that when he emerges as a warrior, he can take his rivals by surprise. ([*or?*] The trickster's task is to bring the hero home.) The warrior's task is to place him on the throne.

When Prometheus, Marx's favorite god, stole fire from his divine king and gave it to humanity, he was not permitted to sit quietly around the hearth with the people he had liberated from the cold. The guardian of the old order imprisoned him on a mountain and gave a jar full of troubles to the world. Humanity has been fighting back against its oppressors ever since—but this was also the moment when humans became characters in the story.

The trickster dialectic does not have a unique beginning or definitive end. It comes in cycles of stories, as the trickster hero faces repeated problems (the lack of fire, the domination of kings and gods and beasts), solves them through unexpected devices and designs, brings innovations to the world, brings new, once-excluded characters into the story, and then goes back to prepare for the next episode.

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Alenka Zupančič, in her study of Hegel and comedy, identifies many of these qualities of the trickster tale in what she calls "comedy." While she acknowledges that "false" comedy can be conservative in its effects, "true" comedy, she argues, is subversive. In "false" comedy, an ordinary man might believe he is a king, or a king might be shown in amusing light as an ordinary man, but the work concludes by affirming the ridiculousness of placing a deluded subject on the throne, and by reaffirming the humanity of the king in his role as king. Yet in true comedy, she says, the king is shown to be ridiculous precisely because he is a king, while the comic subject accedes to the position of universality by laughing at kings. True comedy, in this view, reveals how laughable were the falsely universal claims of gods and morals and institutions, before they were confronted by the particularity of comic subjects, before this confrontation forced the abstract-universal to change places with the concrete subjects, who rise to a truer universality (Zupančič 2008, 30–32). The trickster is a master of what Zupančič attributes to true comedy, which "exposes to laughter, one after another, all the figures of the universal essence and its powers" (Zupančič 2008, 27). But the trickster accomplishes this, *pace* Zupančič, in a narrative structure that differs from the form classically known as comedy. The trickster's tale does not end with what Hegel, in the *Phenomenology*, considers the culmination of comedy, "a state of spiritual well-being and or repose" (Hegel 1979, 453) where the audience feels "completely at home" (Hegel 1979, 452).

Even if Lévi-Strauss was right when, in his seminal work on trickster myths, he argued that tricksters operate as mediators between opposing principles, their role in dialectics is not one of definitively resolving tension and enabling spiritual repose. It may be true that "mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution" (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 224), but when tricksters serve as mediators, this resolution is only temporary. In spite of Lévi-Strauss's avowed commitment to synchronic analysis, tricksters play the role of setting structures *in motion*. Lévi-Strauss takes as examples the Native North American raven and coyote characters who, as carrion-eaters, mediate between herbivores and carnivores (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 224–225); he could have analyzed the West Africa and Caribbean tales of Anansi the spider and seen the spider as a mediator between the animals of the earth and the god of the sky. But this mediation does not reconcile herbivores and carnivores or a heavenly god with dangerous mundane beasts. Mythological mediation, according to Lévi-Strauss, is a technique for organizing experience (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 225), for categorizing the perceived world; but the mediation of one set of oppositions only leads to new oppositions: "two opposite terms with no intermediary always tend to be replaced by two equivalent terms which admit of a third one as a mediator; then one of the polar terms and the mediator become replaced by a new triad, and so on" (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 224).

Lévi-Strauss also recognizes other mediating figures, whom he calls "messiahs," who point to reconciliation by "uniting" opposite terms (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 223). But messiahs belong to a different, more epic type of tale. Tricksters come into play when messiahs fail (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 226–227; 1976, 160).

From a temporal perspective, insofar as trickster myths can be applied to an understanding of historical change, what tricksters mediate are not only synchronically coexisting structural oppositions—the carnivorous and herbivorous, the earth and sky—but also diachronically arranged structures. They mediate between one state of affairs where the carnivorous could freely devour the herbivorous and another state of affairs where the carnivorous are humiliated. They mediate between a state of affairs where all the stories are held in the vaults of the sky, and another state of affairs where the stories have been brought down to earth and told against the overly powerful creatures there. When the trickster is a culture hero, there is no going back. The change has been effected in a distant past, and we all live with it today. But because new oppositions continue to emerge, the trickster keeps tricking and inviting others to join in. For example, as Anansi the spider does, by appropriating the means of telling stories.

Because tricksters are outsiders, they are often wanderers. If the episodes about their tricks are woven together into an overarching narrative frame, sometimes it is a story like Odysseus's, the struggle to return home. Other times, as with Maui in Polynesia, the story begins at home and proceeds outward, as a narrative affirmation that the trickster has no place in the old world—in this case, a primordial land of spirits and gods, which Maui leaves in order to create a world fit for women and men (in his ensuing adventures, he lifts up the sky to make room between the heavens and earth, he fishes up the islands from the ocean floor, he slows down the sun to give people time to live in the daylight). These two types of story could be read as two points in the same dialectical process. With Maui, we see an originary rejection of an abstractly universal world where gods have not yet been confronted by people. Maui presses forward with a necessary estrangement that might allow later heroes to embark on their own *Odysseys*, to find their way home, now, to a world where people have known gods but must learn to live without them.

This is the role of the trickster of history. Standing outside the apparent system of historicity, the trickster asserts the incompleteness of this system. The trickster, by rejecting the given ontological or ethical order, shows that this order was stagnant, and not fully integrated. The trickster reveals itself as heterogeneity, which becomes alienated from the given order, and sets in motion a process of transformation. This is no longer the same story that Hegel set out to tell. But Hegel helped give later tellers the narrative tools to tell it.

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> *Anansi showed his captives to Nyame, the god of the sky. Nyame said, "They're all tied up, the beasts I was saving my stories for! Let the stories be yours."*

Tales of Tales

Anyone, of course, can try their hand at playing tricks. There is no guarantee that any single rebellion against morality will be carried out in the name of a better, more universal morality. Trickster, sometimes, pull dirty tricks.

Are we faced, then, with the kind of "paganism" described by Lyotard, in which every god or spirit, or at least everyone that accedes to the role of the trickster, operates by its own moral rules? With the notion of paganism, Lyotard attempted to link the problem of multiple narratives to the possibility of universally valid judgment. Even if every narrative implies its own parallel moral logic (its own paralogism; Lyotard 1984, chap. 14), narratives can be embedded within one another, "the gods can become, like human beings, like Ulysses, the heroes of numerous, almost innumerable narratives, all set into each other," with heroes exchanging functions, names, and masks, which—Lyotard is careful to add in a dig against Hegel—"bars the way to the very notion of a subject identical to itself through the peripeteia of its history" (Lyotard and Thébaud 1985, 40). The stories intermingle, and somewhere in this mess, which offers neither definitive resolution nor definitive criteria for judgment, one must nevertheless pass judgment, "one must decide" (Lyotard and Thébaud 1985, 17).

Lyotard invokes the trickster tale with the name Ulysses, but he does not consider its significance. Yet the trickster tale offers a different approach to the process of bringing disparate moral logics together. Without needing the final peripeteia that brings classical tragedies and comedies to a close, trickster tales come together in something more clearly structured than "innumerable narratives, all set into each other." Although most trickster tales remain open ended, with every episode's peripeteia opening space for another episode, the episodes nonetheless are grouped together. Like folk epics, they concatenate around what folklorist Wilhelm Radloff calls "epic centers," striking themes, events, locations, and especially characters that offer points of narrative convergence (Radloff 1990, 78). Narrative fragments circulate as oblique reference, side comments, quotations, shared cultural knowledge. Fragments then gather into complete episodes, episodes into cycles. Sometimes, a single episode takes on such imaginative power that it becomes the frame for other stories, as in the *1001 Nights*, where Shahrazad deploys her own storytelling as a trick to foil the plans of a murderous king.[5] Some cycles of tales, especially when given overarching frames, crystalize into cohesive written texts or performances with clear beginnings and ends. From there they return to shared cultural knowledge, and then they circulate again, waiting for new moments of narrative realization. The narrative structure enables the joining of universals and particulars, gods and humans, frame and episode, moral rules and anti-moral rebellion; the achieved synthesis can then be disrupted at the right moment by a new retelling. The trickster dialectic does not generate an identical subject-object of history, but rather a non-identical insider-outsider who, in spite of this ambivalent and disruptive role, points toward the universal by turning history inside-out.

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[5] Tellingly, the frame story of Shahrazad does not end in marriage, but *begins*

A single episode about a single trickster does not make universal history. It only reveals the non-universality of history told before. As more episodes come together, the story they tell gains in breadth. Then multiple cycles can come together, with multiple tricksters, as the sharing of stories reaches global scale, as social movements interact, as the narrators of history confront the commonality of masters with commonality of slaves. And at a certain moment a protagonist might step forward who, in revealing the inadequacy of the master's narrative, becomes the bearer of the universal principle of emancipation from the rule of masters. This position, this juncture of history and exclusion from history, can serve as a point where these different narratives entwine and, together, tend toward something that might be worthy of the name of World History that Hegel had put forth. The end of this story is not yet determined. The story unfolds in fits and starts, in a cycle of tale after tale and tale within tale.

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The trickster cycle is an imperfect narrative structure in the sense that its form enables the incorporation of a diverse range of content. But because the folk trickster cycle necessarily circulates in shared cultural consciousness (as do some remarkable novels, especially those like *Don Quixote* or *The Good Soldier Švejk* that mimic the form of episodic trickster cycles), it is open to incorporating new material and expanding its narrative scope. As a culturally shared referent, it is also readily available for application beyond the bounds of fiction, in the historical motion of emancipatory practice.

The masterful stories of the march of civilization can then be met by other stories, like the stories of Anansi, who inverted the masters' inverted morality until the whole story could be overturned (Levine 1977, 102–133). The slave, in this retelling of the historical dialectic,

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with it. Marriage to a monarch is not the solution, but the problem.

does not play the role of noble epic warrior. Still less of the tragic king condemned by fate or the comic bumbler blessed by it. This slave is a wandering trickster who subverts the world, and in the process rebuilds it. If these genres coexist today, as in so many other times, this is because no society is fully in harmony with itself and capable of telling only a single story. Every Achilles calls forth his Odysseus, and every powerful beast is met by an Anansi. The master hungers after someone to recognize his honor. The trickster finds honor in tricking the masters.

> *Nyame, the god of the sky, gave the stories to Anansi and Aro in a giant basket. Only, the basket had a hole, and as the two climbed back down to earth, stories spilled out everywhere.*[6]

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[6] This is my retelling of a tale many times retold. See, e.g. Rattray (1930, 55–59).

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Citation:
Feinberg, Joseph Grim. 2022. "The Story of Dialectics and the Trickster of History." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 131–153.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.6

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Tytuł: Opowieść o dialektyce i tricksterze historii

Abstrakt: Opierając się na heglowskiej interpretacji narracji i odrzuceniu przez Lyotarda „wielkich" narracji dialektycznych, niniejszy artykuł dotyczy relacji pomiędzy dialektyką emancypacyjną a formą narracji. Rozpoczyna się od zbadania bliskiego związku między myślą dialektyczną a teoria narracji. Na tej podstawie artykuł dowodzi, że różne koncepcje dialektyki dają się powiązać z różnymi strukturami opowiadania historii. Wreszcie w konkluzji, tekst poszukuje formy narracyjnej adekwatnej dla radykalnego odczytania Hegla, w której perspektywa pana (podmiotu uprzywilejowanego przez dany system historyczności) zostałaby zastąpiona perspektywą niewolnika (który, będąc wykluczonym z historyczności, walczy przeciwko temu wykluczeniu). Ta forma narracyjna nie odpowiada żadnemu z klasycznych, greckich gatunków literackich, a najbardziej odpowiadałby jej opowieść o tricksterze.

Słowa kluczowe: Hegel, teoria narracji, filozofia historii, dialektyka Pana i Niewolnika, trickster

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The Concept of De-Sublation and the Regressive Process in History: Prolegomena

I start the analysis with probably the strongest historiography of progress—the Hegelian philosophy. Then I discuss the dynamics of the "conceptual engine" of the theory of progress in Hegel—the concept of sublation. This analysis will make apparent that the Hegelian approach gives us not only a general "historiosophy" of progress, but above all a precise conceptual—even logical— tool, engine, device; thus productively mediatizing contradictions and conditioning the possibility of progress as such. In search of the general "historiography" of regress, I then turn towards psychoanalytical theory. In the psychoanalytical horizon of Freud and Lacan, I introduce a conceptual instrument forged on the basis of the Hegelian sublation—the concept of de-sublation. It will appear as the sought after "conceptual device" of the general theory of regress. We will see how the de-sublation of the previously sublated whole produces two independent conceptual entities, gathered around the moments of the universal and the singular.

Keywords: Hegel, Freud, Lacan, history, progress, regressive process, sublation, de-sublation

Endowed with an original plastic power, the concept gives and receives its own sensible figures, its own meaningful images. However, Hegel confounds this productive activity with the actual movement of History.
Catherine Malabou

Introduction

In a lecture delivered at the Polish Academy of Sciences in 2005, Zygmunt Bauman maintained that the Hegelian "spirit of history" had attained a new level in the spiral of time. No human language or system of representations forged over the last 200 years, or what we may term modernity, has been able to sufficiently express the current iteration. In this paper, I will consider Bauman's statement through the conceptual lenses of historical progress and historical regress.

I understand Hegel's metaphor of the spiral as follows: If the historical movement in the vertical dimension—the temporal axis—has an unambiguously progressive character, the horizontal, circular movement conveys periods of progress and—in a necessary way—periods of regress and destruction. My aim in this article is to conceptualize these regressive moments**.** I will not, however, try to discuss the Hegelian philosophy of history. I share the disposition of Catherine Malabou, well exemplified in the quotation chosen as the motto of this text (Malabou 2010, 14). The concept gives and receives its own sensible figures and Hegel confounds this productive activity with the actual movement of History. The assumption, formulated by Malabou in this way:

My aim in this article is to conceptualize these regressive moments.

> (1) The semantic powers of displacement or plasticity that make a word or concept the critical and *hermeneutic emissary of an epoch* are thus necessarily borne by a historical tendency. (Malabou 2010, 13; emphasis added)

will be my methodological compass. I thus analyze sublation, the core Hegelian concept founding the dialectical process, interpreting it as the "hermeneutic emissary" (see quote 1) of the historical epoch of progress. And then I ask whether, if inversed in a movement of de-sublation, it can become the "logical engine" of a regressive historical tendency. I try to show that "endowed with it original plastic power" (see the motto) the concept of de-sublation can give us a comprehensive explanation of some important reconfigurations of the order of ideas in the first decades of the 20th century, giving us "meaningful images" (see the motto) of history.

To do this I first make a connection to some of the 20th century critiques of the concept of progress and try to show that even if they dismiss progressive historiography, they don't give a valuable theory of historical regress. I find the main reason for this in their aversion to historiography as such. I will thus conclude that in the field of social philosophy we lack a theory of history, focused on historical regress. I do not engage in the discussion of this question, I rather take this view as mine, as a premise to search for a theory of regress elsewhere.

To do this I first make a connection to some of the 20th century critiques of the concept of progress and try to show that even if they dismiss progressive historiography, they don't give a valuable theory of historical regress.

I start the next stage of analysis with probably the strongest historiography of progress—the Hegelian philosophy. Then I discuss the dynamics of the "conceptual engine" of the theory of progress in Hegel, the concept of sublation. This analysis will make apparent that the Hegelian approach gives us not only a general "historiosophy" of progress, but above all a precise conceptual—even logical—tool, engine, device, in a productive way mediatizing contradictions and conditioning the possibility of progress as such. This is apparent in the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* where the general "historiosophy" gives us an account of the transformation and development of hegemonic ideas of the subsequent epochs, and the conceptual tool explains how those ideas transform one into another.

In search for the general "historiography" of regress I then turn towards psychoanalytical theory. Although Freud didn't formulate his concepts in a philosophical language, he sketched the most comprehensive theory of regress in the 20th century. His research hints at the analysis of the regressive transformation of structures. Jacques Lacan expressed those intuitions in the language of humanities, and I draw conclusions from his conceptualization.

I confront them in a methodological digression which considers often repeated doubts about the applicability of psychoanalytical concepts, forged for the analysis of an individual, to the social and general.

In the thus sketched psychoanalytical horizon, I introduce a conceptual instrument forged on the basis of the Hegelian sublation—the concept of de-sublation. It will appear as the search for "conceptual device" of the general theory of regress. We will see how the de-sublation of the previously sublated whole produces two independent conceptual entities, gathered around the moments of the universal and the singular. In Lacanian language—two different structures of subjectivity, one addressing the universality of the Other, the second—the singularity characteristic for the objectual world.

Applying previously forged conceptual tools, in the last two parts I show, in a preliminary sketch, how the form of the spirit, the result of the progressive process of the 19th century projected by Hegel in the *Phenomenology…* broke down during WWI and transformed itself, through de-sublation, into new, unilateral philosophical formations, new "hermeneutic emissaries of the epoch" (see quote 1).

Regressive Processes and the Critique of the Concept of Progress

We must first distinguish between the premises of the theory of regressive processes we are hoping to establish, and existing critiques of the concept of historical progress. Whilst the second half of the 20th century may have lacked a systematic theory of historical regress, critiques of the concept of progress appeared in abundance. They were offered by both conservative critics, such as Robert Nisbet, doubting any possibility of the rational understanding of history (Nisbet 1986, 23) in the Anglo-Saxon world, or Karl Löwith, reducing the modern concept of history to its pre-modern Judeo-Christian predecessor (Löwith 2004) in Germany, and leftist critics such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, with their concept of altermodernity (Hardt and Negri 2009, 107).

The harbinger of leftist critiques of progress was Walter Benjamin, who, in response to the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact in 1939, launched a particularly explicit denunciation of historical progress through his figuration of the Angel of History

> (2) (…) His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair, to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm. (Benjamin 1974, 5)

In this metaphor Benjamin turned the face of the Hegelian spirit of the Times (*Zeitgeist)* from the future toward the past; even more, he ethically delegitimized the historical process, showing that it appears to us as a catastrophe of injustice and irreparable violence.

Critics of the concept of progress thus highlight the dangerous consequences of applying the category of progress to political practice: the artificial way in which progress is constructed, its dependency on earlier theological concepts, and (in Benjamin) the ambiguous ethical position it occupies. Of particular concern is the assumed link between technological development and the moral progress of societies.

Nevertheless, critiques of the concept of progress were most often connected with the critique of the philosophy of history, or historiosophy as such, which left no space for a theory of regress in history. Such a theory would in fact require another historiosophy, another attempt to find meaning behind a given string of historical events. Even if in the first decades of the 20th century apocalyptical visions—like that of Oswald Spengler or, in some sense, Carl Schmitt—diagnosed the regress of European civilization and its inevitable catastrophic end, they lacked a theoretical elaboration of the change in historical process. Such an elaboration would have to provide an explanation of the mechanism standing behind the transformation of a more complicated historical entity into the less complicated one. A mechanism, a "conceptual device" of regress, would have to be found, if we would like to understand the concept of historical regress as we can give intelligibility to the concept and at the same time the "historical tendency" (see quote 1) of progress.

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The Hegelian Concept of Progress

Before the dawn of modernity, philosophical thinking acknowledged the metaphysical rule, saying that there is more reality in the cause than in the result. Introducing the concept of sublation (*Aufhebung*) G.W.F. Hegel proposed a "conceptual device" which permitted displacing the core of transient reality to the future. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* Jürgen Habermas maintains that this changed the whole attitude towards history; "(…) traditional experiences of previous generations are then replaced by the kind of experience of progress that lends to our horizon of expectations" (Habermas 1987, 12) as "(…) the horizon open to the future, which is determined by expectations in the present, guides our access to the past (…)" (Habermas 1987, 16).

In his book about the young Hegel, György Lucács indicates how his reading of the firmly grounded English economists—such as Steuart, and Smith in particular—influenced Hegel's idea of the inevitable conflict of values that constituted bourgeois society (Lucács 1975, 172–178). This was one of the initial steps towards his dialectical understanding of the historical process: "(…) one of the decisive moments that helped to determine his view on contradictoriness was the dynamic contradiction to be found most strikingly in human activity, in work" (Lucács 1975, 219).

Let us consider a contemporary reformulation of this idea, in Titus Stahl's article found in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*;

> (3) Lukács argues that Hegel's development of dialectics was informed by his reading of the British economists Steuart and Smith. According to Lukács, this empirical grounding enabled Hegel's dialectics to draw on *an idea of objective, social-historical progress and understand modern society and economy as a processual totality that is structured by contradictions*. (Stahl 2018, chap. 4.2; emphasis added)

I quote this sentence not only because it indicates the degree to which the idea of "objective, social-historical progress" is inseparably connected with the reception of Hegel's philosophy. From the point of view of this paper, I find the idea formulated in the second part of the quotation more important: "objective progress" was founded on the understanding of modern society as a *processual totality structured by contradictions* (see quote 2).

I will continually return to this formula, as it represents a perspective enabling the apprehension of history as a structure in process.

Sublation—the "Conceptual Device" of the Process of Progress

Contradictions could thus structure the progressive movement of society thanks to the specific logical/ontological operation of *Aufhebung*, or sublation. In his chapter about consciousness in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel writes:

> (4) The sublation exhibits its truly doubled meaning, something which we already have seen in the negative; it is now a negating and at the same time a preserving. (Hegel 2018, 69)

I believe that we can conceptualize sublation as a type of synthesis. Hegel asserts that the result of the sublation in the dialectical process:

> (5) is a universality affected with an opposition, which for that reason is separated into the extremes of singularity and universality (…). (Hegel 2018, 77)

I would also like to offer a different translation, closer to Hegel's original sentence:

> (6) but this universal, because derived from sense, is essentially conditioned by it, and hence is, in general, *not a genuine self-identical universality, but one affected with an opposition*. (Hegel 2001, 44; emphasis added)

This fragment shows that even if after sublation the new, more universal concept is self-identical, there remains an inner opposition—perhaps we can call it a "tension"—which is always capable of destabilizing it. We can hypothesize that it could be torn apart by these "opposing extremes," even if Hegel himself does not explicitly propose such an outcome. We will return to this idea later.

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A well-known example of the role of sublation in the dialectical process is the opposition of being and nothingness, which synthesizes into becoming. In *The Science of Logic,* Hegel proposes:

> (7) Pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same. The truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over into nothing and nothing into being ("has passed over," not passes over. But the truth is just as much that they are not without distinction; it is rather that they are not the same, that they are absolutely distinct yet equally unseparated and inseparable, and that each immediately vanishes in its opposite). *Their truth is therefore this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: becoming*, a movement in which the two are distinguished, but by a distinction which has just as immediately dissolved itself. (Hegel 2010, 59; emphasis added)

I highlight one important feature in this citation. Namely, it shows that when we pass through the dialectical process from the one-sidedness of a concept to understanding what Hegel terms the "completed and concrete" concept, we are concurrently moving from a rigid and stagnant concept of thinking and being to a dynamic and processual one. "Their truth is therefore this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other": The truth is in motion.

Julie E. Maybee, one of the authors receptive to the dynamic aspect of the Hegelian dialectics, emphasizes this dynamic aspect of the process of sublation:

> (8) The first moment—the moment of the understanding—is the moment of fixity, in which concepts or forms have a seemingly stable definition or determination (EL §80). (…) The second moment—the "dialectical" (EL §§79, 81)

> or "negatively rational" (EL §79) moment—is the moment of instability. (Maybee 2020, chap. 1.)

In another fragment she writes:

> (9) The moment of understanding sublates itself because its own character or nature—its one-sidedness or restrictedness—destabilizes its definition and leads it to pass into its opposite. (Maybee 2020, chap. 1.)

Of note here is the use of phrases such as "seemingly stable definition," "moment of instability" and "destabilizes its definition," which bring us into the sphere of the obscure, where language and dynamics hybridize. Thus, an understanding of the dynamic aspect of thought, the instability of concepts, and the propensity of both for metamorphosis is already present.

The Psychoanalytical Concept of Regressive Processes and Its Application to the Dialectic

As discussed above, critiques of the concept of progress don't provide a comprehensive theory of regress in history. However, we can find a complex vision of regressive processes in another theoretical elaboration of the temporal evolution of the "spirit." From its beginnings in Freud's writings, psychoanalysis dealt with the question of the processual evolution of subjectivity—both development and regress. The influence of psychoanalytical thought on social philosophy was already present in the early studies of the first Frankfurt School (Fromm 1932, 28–54). After its structural reformulation in French Theory, psychoanalysis was more and more often applied to social entities, as in the whole work of Slavoj Žižek. Indeed, if we understand the dialectical process as "a processual totality structured by contradictions" (see quote 2), the conceptual framework of psychoanalytical thinking appears as the privileged tool to develop the Hegelian intuitions in the direction of regress, the regressive movement in the horizontal dimension of the spiral of time.

Early Freudian psychoanalysis had already offered a theoretical elaboration of the question of regress. The general premise of this theory states that subjectivity must resolve difficult inner conflicts. This can be accomplished through a reorganization of the inner order of subjective instances. Most often, the consequence of such a reorganization of the inner world is its further development or progress. The subject forges new and more sophisticated mechanisms, which simultaneously condition the evolution and sublimation of its structure and refine its image of the world.

However, in some situations the psychic system will reach for some earlier mechanisms. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bernard Pontalis write, when reconstructing the psychoanalytical sense of the term "regression":

> (10) Freud often laid stress on the fact that the infantile past—of the individual or even of the humanity as a whole—remains forever with us. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1974, 387)

Thus it is always possible that the subjectivity will regress to some mechanisms of the past. This regress in Freudian thought has differentiated dimensions, as is evident from the following passage added to the *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1914:

> (11) Three kinds of regression are thus to be distinguished; a. *topographical* regression, in the sense of the schematic picture [of the psychical apparatus]; b. *temporal* regression, in so far as what is the question is a harking back to older psychical structures; c. formal regression, where primitive methods of expression and representation take the place of the usual ones (…). (Freud 1951, 548)

In this complex theorization, the most interesting aspect for us is the formal regression. Laplanche and Pontalis notice that although it is less often evoked by Freud, it could be compared to the mechanism that other theories refer to as *destructuring* (Laplanche and Pontalis 1974, 387). This concept—the *destructuring*—will provide us with a bridge to the dynamic interpretation of the dialectic process.

The Lacanian reformulation introduced psychoanalysis in the field determined by the 20th century "linguistic turn." Nevertheless, Freud's basic idea of the subjectivity as structure resolving inner conflicts remained at the core of this theory. We can see a striking similitude of this conceptual structure to the dynamic interpretation of the dialectic. If the conflict resolution is interpreted "dynamically," in Hegelian terms, Maybee argues that:

> (12) In many places, the dialectical process is driven by a syntactic necessity that is really a kind of exhaustion: *when the current strategy has been exhausted, the process is forced, necessarily, to employ a new strategy*. (Maybee 2020; emphasis added)

Applying the psychoanalytical way of thinking to this formulation, it can be proposed that when the conflict sometimes appears irresolvable, the subject could be said to return to the earlier stages of its development, which we understand here as earlier stages in the dialectical process. "When the current strategy has been exhausted" (see quote 12) but a "new strategy" cannot be forged, the subject finds and applies earlier mechanisms, no longer active but still stored in the depths of memory. Or to put it in a Hegelian way, strategies that were "negated and preserved" (see quote 4). The subject will apply them, resolving the conflict whilst simultaneously losing some of the dynamic plasticity previously acquired through its progressive development. Obviously, the old strategies will be applied in a new historical context, and we may say that this is the sense of the "sensible figure" (see the motto) of the Hegelian spiral—regressive movement in the horizontal dimension if it finds an unfamiliar place in the vertical, temporal dimension.

It may be useful here to invert our initial procedure and ask why should the Hegelian dialectic be introduced to the realm of psychoanalytic theory? The answer is that quite often psychoanalytic constructions, forged by clinicians specifically for clinical practice, require further development in order to render their logical premises apparent. The epoch of regress is in search of its "critical and hermeneutic emissary" (see quote 1), of the concept pregnant of "meaningful images" (see the motto). Hegelian dialectics appears as a privileged instrument for such a task. The Freudian idea of *formal regression,* understood as *destructuring* of the previously acquired structural entity—inspiring, yet not developed in a precise way, is a good example of a sketched theory in demand of a formal conceptual engine, explaining its inner movement. At the same time these conceptual "emissaries" of the "historical tendency" (see quote 1) find their "sensible figures" and "meaningful images" (see the motto) in psychoanalytical theory.

To summarize, I propose that psychoanalysis can provide a general theory of regress; however, the conceptual engine of the transformations shall be found in the dialectic.

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A Methodological Digression

As is always the case with Freudian psychoanalysis, one can problematize the transferring of categories forged for an individual onto a wider social field. Christopher Lasch, in his book on contemporary narcissism, responds to precisely this objection:

> (13) Every society reproduces its culture—its norms, its underlying assumptions, its modes of organizing experience—the individual, in the form of personality. As Durkheim said, personality is the individual socialized. The process of socialization, carried out by the family and secondarily by the school and other agencies of character formation, modifies human nature to conform to the prevailing social norms. (Hence—A.L.) Psychoanalysis best clarifies the connection between society and the individual, culture and personality, precisely when it confines itself to careful examination of individuals. (Lash 1991, 34)

Lasch is asserting that since Freudian subjectivity is created through the modification of the inner world by a variety of social norms and agencies, this transference of categories is not incorrect, and it is precisely through examination of the individual that we can come to understand the social field.

In this excerpt from the "Observation of Self-Consciousness in its Purity and in its Relation to External Actuality" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a precise and quintessentially Hegelian rendering of this same idea is offered:

> (14) However much the state of the world had been so constituted in and for itself as it appears in individuality itself, still the latter would be comprehended on the grounds of the former. *We would have a double gallery of pictures, each of which would be the reflection back of the other. The one would be the gallery of complete determinateness and the complete encompassing of external circumstances; the other would be the same gallery translated into the way in which those circumstances are in the conscious being*. The former would be the spherical surface, the latter the center which represents that surface within itself. (Hegel 2018, 178; emphasis added)

The pictures determined by the "state of the world" are thus reflected in the individual conscious being. The state of the world can be comprehended on the basis of individuality itself.

Jacques Lacan, influenced by structuralist linguistics, proposed a different strategy for interpreting the social subject. If we try to comprehend subjectivity as a structuralized field of utterances, the subject appears as an instance of speech. In matter of fact an "implied subject" is always assumed in any set of sentences (Fink 2004, 111–114).

In the Lacanian reformulation of psychoanalytical theory, the "implied subject," at this stage of its development, is synonymous with the structure. Thus, any finite set of utterances, or texts of culture, can be interpreted as having an assumed subject who is synonymous with a structured historical process. This historical subjectivity is perpetually in the process of transgressing contradictions, that is, the process of inscribing history into structure.

Lacan also offers a perhaps less obvious, but equally fruitful idea: in all utterances, the implied subject relates to the Other, a structurally established recipient of speech, representing the universality of language. Thus, we can read any signifier—that is, any set of texts, images, or objects—as an utterance representing the historical subject's relation to the Other, the universality of language.

The Concept of De-Sublation

If we accept that psychoanalysis can provide a general theory of regress, but also that the conceptual engine of the regressive transformations shall be found in the dialectic, we can try to forge this engine on the basis of sublation, the conceptual engine of progress. If the progressive tendency in history happens thanks to the sublation, the regressive process will operate thanks to a symmetrical operation—the de-sublation.

This brings us to a consideration of the moment in the dialectical process "when the current strategy has been exhausted (the process—A.L.) is necessarily forced to employ a new strategy" (see quote 12). However, the progressive movement of sublation is impossible. In this case, the "universality affected with an opposition" (see quote 5) of the given strategy will be torn into its two components: the singular and the universal. Hence this strategy will reverse the sense of the previous moment of sublation and synthesis brought by it.

If the progressive tendency in history happens thanks to the sublation, the regressive process will operate thanks to a symmetrical operation—the de-sublation.

Thus, if we understand regression as de-sublation, it will stand as the inverse of Hegelian sublation. If sublation was the movement of "negating and preserving" (see quote 4) which means that the negated moment was necessarily immersed in the new conceptual, synthetized entity and connected with the negating moment, de-sublation would mean a decay of such a synthetized entity and its disintegration into the negated moment and its negation, separated once again. In other words, if we define "the sublated" as a state which conveys an inner opposition or tension that can always destabilize it, it follows that it can be successfully torn apart by the "opposing extremes" it is constituted by.

There are two important issues ensuing from the concept of de-sublation thus understood. First, as the dialectic process was reaching a new conceptual level, thanks to the sublation a more dynamic and more flexible conceptual entity was appearing. As we have seen in Hegel's example of being and nothing, the movement of becoming was the result of sublation: "Their truth is therefore this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other" (see quote 7). Sublation is thus an operation where the third term becomes more universal and at the same time more dynamic and flexible than the first and second. De-sublation moves in the opposite direction: from the more universal term to the less, from the dynamic to the static, from the flexible to the rigid, from the transgressing and relational to the identical-to-itself.

It is important to highlight that in this conceptualization of the regressive process, when at the moment of exhaustion the given universality regresses and de-sublates, it gives life to forms reflecting the previously sublated moments. De-sublation thus gives life to concepts and ideas that are at the same time antagonistic and self-sufficient. As Hegel puts it:

> (15) For these concepts are indeed determinate against each other, but at the same time they are in themselves universal such that they fill out the whole range of the self, and this self has no other content than this, its own determinateness, a determinateness which neither goes beyond the self nor is more restricted than it. (Hegel 2018, 388)

As results of de-sublation, the two concepts are "determinate against each other." However, we must remember that the two resulting positions are themselves effects of the prior dialectical process of previous multiple and overlapping sublations and syntheses. Thus, even if in relation to the de-sublated entity they represent a regression to the logically antecedent antithetic positions of universal and singular, each of them is in itself the result of previous processes of syntheses, combining earlier singularities and universalities. They contain in themselves the totality of this earlier path.

The Concept of De-Sublation and the Psychoanalytical Theory of Regress

Let us introduce the concept of de-sublation into the psychoanalytical theory of regress. With Lacan, psychoanalytic language intercepts the way of thinking the subject described by Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For my purpose, the most important idea is not the dialectic of the master and slave, but the idea of subjectivity, containing the self and the object, presented by Hegel as follows:

> (16) The certainty of itself is the *universal subject*, and its knowing concept is the essence of all actuality. (…) *It is the universal self, the self of itself as well as of*

> *the object*, and, as the universal self, it is the unity of this movement returning into itself. (Hegel 2018, 340; emphasis added)

We find here the previously discussed opposition, "the self of itself as well as of the object" and the sublated "universal self." In Lacanian terms, it is the relation of the subject (the self of itself), the signifier (the object), and the Other (the universal self).

The subject's "universality affected with an opposition" (see quote 4), "the self of itself as well as of the object" (see quote 15) appears in Lacanian language as the relation with the Other through the medium of the signifier. The Other represents the universality of the linguistic system, the signifier—which, as the linguist Michel Arrivé has shown, in Lacan can be understood as a term designing not only signs but also objects (Arrivé 1994, 101)—represents singularity. When the subjective structure loses its equilibrium, the regressive mechanism will destabilize it, towards either the singular (the signifier) or the universal (the Other). In either situation, the earlier mechanisms stored in the unconscious memory, "the negated and preserved" (see quote 4) are activated.

When the subjective structure loses its equilibrium, the regressive mechanism will destabilize it, towards either the singular (the signifier) or the universal (the Other).

The first regressive process, the one in which the singular, objectual, becomes central, is in psychoanalytic terms called "obsessive." The subject that finds itself in the obsessive position denies the importance of the Other, in other words, of the universal. Lacan rather opaquely writes: "The obsessive drags into the cage of his narcissism the objects, (…) (and—A.L.) addresses his ambiguous homage toward the box in which he himself has his seat, that of the master who cannot be seen" (Lacan 2006, 250). This sentence is clarified by Bruce Fink, arguably the most trustworthy translator of Lacan into English, who reformulates it as: "(…) the obsessive takes the object for himself and refuses to recognize the Other's existence, much less Other's desire" (Fink 1997, 119).

We can understand this to mean that the utterances of the obsessive subject will seek to avoid and deny general concepts, and attempt instead to reduce anything and everything to a purely factual and objectual level.

In contrast to the first regressive process, which results in the obsessive subject, the second regressive process results in the hysterical subject. We return to Bruce Fink's definition, whereby: "(…) the hysteric constitutes herself as the object that makes the Other desire" (Fink 1997, 120). Unlike the obsessive, the hysterical subject finds themselves in a sublime position, given that "what every person desires is for the Other to desire him or her, everyone wants to be the signifier of the Other's desire (…)" (Fink 2004, 22). In this instance, the hysterical subject's utterances will situate him/heras the bearer of the universal, as the sign of the most general of possible discourses. This subject will posit him/herself as the voice of the universal.

Both subjective structures are somehow complete, in the sense apprehended by Hegel in the words: "this self has no other content than this, its own determinateness, a determinateness which neither goes beyond the self nor is more restricted than it" (see quote 14).

Coupling Lacanian strategy with the concept of de-sublation allows us to interpret the 20th century as a field wherein philosophical utterances signify the regressive process. The most important philosophical pronouncements, including those of the Circle of Vienna and Edmund Husserl's 1936 *Crisis*, can be understood as articulations of this process. To include them into the regressive process doesn't mean a rating of their philosophical value and novelty, but rather an attempt to see them in the wider context of the *Zeitgeist's* transformations, the "historical tendency" (see quote 1).

To once again reference to the Stahl commentary of Lucacs, these articulations can themselves be understood as results of different configurations of the "processual totality that is structured by contradictions" (see quote 3) adapted to the regressive pathway. As such, the century itself appears as a conceptual persona—in the Deleuzian sense (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 7). Or, in other words, the century is the implied subject of these articulations.

The Turn of the 18th and 19th Centuries as a Progressive Process in Hegel

In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel proposes a formulation of the progressive evolution of the Spirit at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. In the chapter "On Absolute Freedom and Terror" he describes the century's essential characteristic as follows:

> (17) This undivided substance of absolute freedom elevates itself to the throne of the world without any power capable of resisting it. (Hegel 2018, 340)

Thus, Hegel saw the "undivided substance of absolute freedom" (see quote 14) as the driving idea for the 19th century: in Lacanian language, as its *reason of desire*. Whilst considering instances of exploitation, enslavement, and exclusion may give rise to doubts about how this freedom manifested materially, the "substance of absolute freedom" appeared to him as the “universal subject,” (see quote 14) sublating the boundaries of any particular consciousness.

> (18) The individual consciousness that belonged to any such group and which exercised its will and found its fulfillment there, has sublated its boundaries, and its purpose is now the universal purpose, its language the universal law, its work the universal work. (Hegel 2018, 341)

We can understand this “universal subject” as the “universal will”:

> (19) *The world is to it quite simply its will, and this will is the universal will.* Indeed, this will is not the empty thought of the will, which is posited as lying in a tacit or in a represented consent; rather, it is posited as lying in a real universal will, the will of all singular individuals as such. (Hegel 2018, 340; emphasis added)

This construction, as a structure, can be understood as the whole, intact Lacanian subject, an equilibrium of the universal and singular; of the subject, signifier and Other.

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However, by the beginning of the 20th century, the “universal will” was no longer driven by the “substance of absolute freedom”; its mood, or historical tendency had changed significantly. Hannah Arendt concisely defines the state of *fin de siècle* morality:

> (20) The process by which bourgeois society developed out of the ruins of its revolutionary traditions and memories added the black ghost of boredom to economic saturation and general indifference to political questions. (Arendt 1979, 67)

There is discernible a sense of the regressive in Arendt’s words. However, in order to catalyze the de-sublation of the “universal subject,” of “the self of itself as well as of the object,” (see quote 16) something more dramatic—or traumatic—had to occur. In Baillie’s translation of Hegel we find:

> (21) Absolute Spirit enters existence merely at the culminating point (auf der Spitze) at which its pure knowledge about itself is the opposition and interchange with itself. (Hegel 2001, 245)

The culminating point, the moment in which the “universal will” was tensed and strained to its limit, was the outbreak of the Great War.

The Traumatic Shock of the WWI as the Trigger of the Regressive Process

Why do I posit the traumatic events of 1914–1918 the conduit by which Hegelian "absolute spirit enters existence" (see quote 18)? In his brilliant essay on the "Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War," Jan Patočka addresses this question explicitly:

> (22) Why must the energetic transformation of the world take on the form of war? Because war, acute confrontation, is the most intensive means for the rapid release of accumulated forces. (Patočka 1996, 124)

Thus, World War I acted as the catalyst for the regressive transformation. It was exactly at this point that the idea of the "world, being simply (the universal subjects'—A.L.) will" (see quote 19) appeared at its apogee. This dynamism, "rapid release of accumulated forces" (see quote 22) was traumatic for the universal subject of the 20th century. The "current strategy of the dialectical process has been exhausted" (see quote 12) but no dynamics for a new sublation—a new synthesis—were to be found. Thus, the regressive process of de-sublation started.

However, Patočka adds:

> (23) The idea that war itself might be something that can explain, that has itself the power of bestowing meaning, is an idea foreign to all philosophies of history. (Patočka 1996, 120)

This is why the "critical and hermeneutical emissaries" of the "historical tendencies" (see quote 1), the new strong philosophical positions of the interwar period, are not so often directly connected with war's "power of bestowing meaning" (see quote 23). Nevertheless this specific power can be seen in the de-sublation process, following the war.

The de-sublation of the 19th century's "universal subject" (see quote 16) is signified by the appearance of two contradictory ideas. One is that of the sufficiency of the singular, grasped as the world of objects. The second is the idea of the purity of the universal, where the singular is only the "point of the entrance into the existence" of the universal. These two ideas were expressed by both the Vienna Circle and the late philosophical work of Edmund Husserl, mainly in his lectures on *Crisis*.

In this paper, I can only give a sketch of this reversal. However, it is not difficult to ascertain how much and how exactly the two major philosophical schools express the described regressive or de-sublated structures. For example, in his well-known work, significantly subtitled "Pseudoproblems in Philosophy," Rudolf Carnap launches a preliminary discussion on the logical structure of the world, wherein everything is classified as some kind of object (Carnap [1928] 2003, 42). The uncompromising orientation to the factual and logic, the abhorrence of the universal ideas and general concepts of metaphysics, characteristic for the Vienna Circle, correspond to the Lacanian description of the obsessive structure.

Conversely, in his 1938 Prague lectures Husserl asserts that "Positivism, in a manner of speaking, decapitates philosophy" (Husserl [1954] 1970, 9). Showing that to be the lacking complement of the universal spirit is his deepest desire, he adds—

> (24) The faith in the possibility of philosophy as a task, that is, in the possibility of universal knowledge, is something we cannot let go. We know that we are called to this task as serious philosophers. (…) In our philosophizing, then—how can we avoid it?—we are functionaries of mankind. The quite personal responsibility of our own true being as philosophers, our inner personal vocation, bears within itself at the same time the responsibility for the true being of mankind; the latter is, necessarily, being toward a *telos* and can only come to realization, if at all, through philosophy—through us, if we are philosophers in all seriousness. (Husserl [1954] 1970, 17)

In a somehow hysterical way, Husserl institutes himself as the agent of universal knowledge, as the "functionary of mankind," bearing the responsibility for mankind's true being. The hysterical subject "(…) wants to be the signifier of the Other's desire" (Fink 2004, 22), we can easily recognize in Husserl's utterance this structural issue.

As we already have shown, when we refer to the psychoanalytic theory of the regressive process, we can assume that the "universal self, the self of itself as well as of the object" (see quote 16), disintegrates through the mechanism of de-sublation into two structures. In the first structure, the one of the Lacanian obsessive, the subject stands in relation exclusively with objects and excludes the Other, universality. In the second structure, the one of the Lacanian hysteric, the subject renders itself to the expression of the Other, excluding the independence of the factuality. The two philosophical personae, have "no other content than this, its own determinateness, a determinateness which neither goes beyond the self nor is more restricted than it" (see quote 15) as Hegel puts it. They are at the same time contradictory and self-

-sufficient, and their mutual contempt can be easily explained by this structural situation.

This brings to an end my preliminary analysis. My task was to show how the theoretical elaboration of the regressive process in history can be philosophically enriched by the concept of de-sublation and the psychoanalytical theory of regress.

Further developing and more fully conceptualizing the 20th century history of ideas as a regressive process will be attempted more fully at a later date.

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Citation:
Leder, Andrzej. 2022. "The Concept of De-Sublation and the Regressive Process in History: Prolegomena." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 155–175.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.7

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Tytuł: Procesy regresywne, przeciw-zniesienie i regres w historii. Prolegomena

Abstrakt: Analizę rozpoczynam od prawdopodobnie najmocniejszej historiografii postępu – filozofii heglowskiej. Następnie skupiam się na dynamice „silnika pojęciowego" teorii postępu u Hegla, czyli na pojęciu zniesienia. Dowodzę, że podejście heglowskie stanowi nie tylko ogólną „historiozofię" postępu, ale przede wszystkim precyzyjne pojęciowe – nawet logiczne – narzędzie, silnik, urządzenie, które efektywnie zapośrednicza sprzeczności i umożliwia postęp jako taki. W poszukiwaniu ogólnej „historiografii" regresu zwracam się następnie w stronę teorii psychoanalitycznej. Opierając się na psychoanalizie Freuda i Lacana wprowadzam instrument pojęciowy opracowany na podstawie heglowskiego zniesienia – pojęcie przeciw-zniesienia. Stanowi ono, jak próbuje pokazać, „pojęciowe urządzenie" ogólnej teorii regresji. Zobaczymy, jak przeciw-zniesienie uprzednio zniesionej całości wytwarza dwa niezależne byty pojęciowe, zorganizowane wokół momentów uniwersalnego i jednostkowego.

Słowa kluczowe: Hegel, Freud, Lacan, historia, postęp, procesy regresywne, zniesienie, przeciw-zniesienie

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The Slave, Antigone and the Housewife: Hegel's Dialectics of the Weak

This article moves across the wide spectrum of feminist interpretations of Hegel, starting with Carla Lonzi and revisiting the queer analysis of Judith Butler, in order to re-interpret the famous figure of "Unhappy Consciousness." From a feminist perspective, these passages in *Phenomenology of Spirit* should be read as a re-evaluation of the care and reproductive labour, which the Subject experiences as miserably repetitive and mundane, at the stage of dialectics focused on symbolic realm of recognition. The dialectics of the weak can be established based on an in-depth re-evaluation of the material, life maintaining activities traditionally neglected in the discussions of Hegel's legacy. Here these marginalized elements of the Subject's lived experience are taken into account, thus allowing the introduction of the Housewife into the dialectical process.

Keywords: dialectics, weakness, reproductive labour, Antigone

> In this way, she becomes the voice, the accomplice of the people, the slaves, those who only whisper their revolt against their masters secretly.
>
> Luce Irigaray, *The Eternal Irony of the Community*

This article is divided into three sections. The first presents a generalized genealogy of my feminist reading of Hegel's philosophy, situated in the broader feminist debate over his philosophy and recognition. The second part focuses on my reconstruction of the "dialectics of the weak" in Hegel, which I situate partly in the theory of *sittlichkeit* and Hegel's discussion of Antigone, and partly in the central moment of his dialectics, one marked by his interestingly ex-static notion of the Subject recognizing themselves[1] as "other"—in the dialectics of slave and master. The third part of my paper is a discussion of the possibility of reconceptualizing reproductive work and maintenance, built on a new reading of the chapter "Unhappy Consciousness" of *Phenomenology of Spirit.* This chapter has been traditionally understood as one merely concerning the rejection of the body and finding unstable, temporary and partial reconciliation in religion (see Butler 1997a; Nietzsche 2004; Kojeve 1980). I argue that this chapter ought to be read differently, as an account of the disenchantment of the subject (focused on the symbolic) with the mundane, repetitive reality of the material sustainability, including the body and its maintenance, which mainly consists of reproductive and care labour. In such a reading, the "unhappiness" of consciousness can be understood not merely as a sense of loss and its overcoming in religion, but rather as an account of the impossibility of accepting the material realm of sustainability and care, which becomes the abstract rejection of any form of repetitive materiality, and is finally sublated by the sense of participating in the general process of maintenance of life in its materialized form. In such a perspective, this chapter can be seen as a short passage of *Phenomenology...*, where Hegel announces an early version of the analysis of reproductive labor and the precarious, vulnerable figures of those who accomplish this work allowing the continuation of the species—the reproductive labour performed by housewives, servants and other care-givers. I also argue that such a reading cannot be made from an individualist perspective. Concluding, I argue that there is more to Hegel than gender stereotypes and clinging to tradition,

In such a reading, the "unhappiness" of consciousness can be understood not merely as a sense of loss and its overcoming in religion, but rather as an account of the impossibility of accepting the material realm of sustainability and care, which becomes the abstract rejection of any form of repetitive materiality, and is finally sublated by the sense of participating in the general process of maintenance of life in its materialized form.

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[1] In this article I try to use trans-friendly pronouns.

and perhaps the notion of the "dialectics of the weak," based on the three elements of dialectics discussed earlier in this article, allows the struggle for recognition to be reclaimed in an interesting, materialist and historical way.

The feminist discussion of Hegel is particularly diverse. Some feminist authors embrace the dialectics as a model for women's emancipation (Benhabib 1996; Beauvoir de 1956). The Hegelian notion of dialectics is central in the works of several French feminist authors, such as Simone de Beauvoir, who shapes the gender conflict based on the dialectics of the slave and master, indebted to Frantz Fanon and other anti-colonial thinkers, as well as Julia Kristeva, whose discussion of the abject is an effort to express the other Other of the production of culture—the borderline between Object and Subject, is indebted to dialectics (Kristeva 1982). Feminists coming from the critical theory tradition, such as Seyla Benhabib, also affirm the notion of recognition as central for addressing gender inequality and producing egalitarian claims (Benhabib 1994).

Among the main feminist theories contesting Hegel, perhaps the most visible is that of Carla Lonzi, who in 1970 advocated rejecting Hegel entirely in her manifesto *Let's Spit on Hegel,* demanding a new "unknown subject," neither masculine nor feminine, one deprived of the limitations of the traditional divisions of gender based on motherhood and war (Lonzi 1991). Within poststructural feminist theory, another strand of anti-Hegelianism can be found in cyberfeminism—such as that depicted in the Cyborg Manifesto of Donna Haraway, where binary codes and distinctions are replaced by the ironic myth of hybrid entities rather than a self-transparent, solely conscious notion of a subject (Haraway 1991).

Carole Pateman, with her discussion of the social contract as "fraternal," reduces Hegel's philosophy to the traditionalist ideology of family and marriage, repressing femininity and reducing women to the "disorder to be tamed" (this is actually Rousseau's statement) or the "irony of history" (Hegel's words; see Pateman 1989). In this spectrum of anti--Hegelian feminism there should also be a place for Judith Butler, who rejected the ideas of reconciliation, the end of history and linear progress, she also disagrees with Hegel's interpretation of Antigone, rejecting the idea that she represents femininity and emphasizing her gender contradictions (Butler 1987; 1997a; 2000; Malabou and Butler 2011). Arguing that Sophocles' tragedy itself contains persuasive arguments contradicting Antigone's femininity, for example Creon's exclamations to Antigone, such as "you are not even a woman!" or "You are a boy!," and reconstructing Antigone's claim as one equally eloquent to those made by Creon, Butler undermines the presumption that cis-femininity immediately legitimizes the interpretation of her voice as "woman's" (see Butler 2000; Honig 2013; Majewska 2007). By such a challenging of Hegel's interpretation of Antigone, not merely is femininity contested, but more widely—so is the general idea of binary gender division. This can be seen as queering Antigone, but Butler portrays her not only as a character embodying gender contradictions and thus sublating them, but also as a person with a peculiar affective predisposition—to affectively invest in the process of dying rather than living. Paradoxically, it can thus be seen as a properly Hegelian reading of Antigone, written against Hegel, not merely a critique of his work. Butler can also be seen as one of the most interesting defenders of such notions as recognition or struggle, and as she clearly embraces the centrality of Antigone in Hegel's notion of the ethical. Perhaps against Butler's own arguments, I am thus placing her analysis at the threshold between the feminism rejecting Hegel and that which embraces or at least continues some parts of his work.

In more recent discussions of such ideas as the end of history and dialectics, different perspectives have been offered by Catherine Malabou, Frank Ruda and Rebecca Comay (Malabou 2015; Ruda 2011; Comay 2010). Contesting the inevitability of reading "the end of history" literally, as the only possible closure of the historical process, these authors undermine the notion of finitude, determinism and linearity in Hegel, thus making his thought more accessible for poststructuralist and feminist readings. The *Xenofeminist Manifesto*, partially rooted in Haraway's poststructuralism, embraces Hegel's interest in alienation and otherness, situating it at the core of women's experience, as well as rationalism, which in their view, should become feminism (Laboria Cubonix 2015). Although not directly inspired by the German philosopher, the XF Manifesto may be seen as preserving the sense of culture as the environment, where one encounters themselves as "other."

A particularly original, distinctly anti-Hegelian feminist thinker is Luce Irigaray, who rejects the phallogocentric, patriarchal cultural fundaments of the gender division in search for the prior origins of women's subordination—the "murder of the mother," preceding in her view that of the father and thus establishing the symbolic order of patriarchal culture as that based on the foreclosure of femininity and relations between women (Irigaray 2004). For Irigaray, it is Ismene who embodies the characteristics of femininity. Antigone, on the other hand, neither yields to the laws of the king, state or patriarchy, nor allows a foreclosure of her voice, according to Irigaray, who emphasizes the shift of relations between men and women to those of brother and sister, which for Hegel constitute “true kinship.” Irigaray argues that “The war of the sexes would not take place here. But this moment is mythical, of course... It is a consoling fancy (...)” (Irigaray 2010, 101–102). As Irigaray further claims about Antigone, “In this way, she becomes the voice, the accomplice of the people, the slaves, those who only whisper their revolt against their masters secretly” (Irigaray 2010, 103). Antigone thus becomes a voice of the unheard, yet she is not—and never has a chance, to become—a woman, by force of her isolation and risk of premature death. As I will argue later, following Bonnie Honig, this isolation is perhaps only supposed, as another interpretation of Sophocles’ tragedy is possible, one emphasizing the “anti-patriarchal sororal pact” between Ismene and Antigone (Honig 2013).

Irigaray dwells on the impossibility of becoming a woman, recreating, following Hegel, Antigone’s sudden nostalgia for a bond that is close, even erotic, yet—which does not go as far as the sexual act. Irigaray further suggests that “if Antigone gives proof of a bravery, a tenderness, and an anger..., this is certainly because she had digested the masculine. At least partially, at least for a moment” (Irigaray 2010, 105). The moment of tenderness and pain makes such transition of a “private” person, a woman, into a person who can produce a claim publicly—a man.

As Judith Butler suggests in her article “Longing for Recognition”—it is in a moment of vulnerability and weakness that the possibility of a claim begins (Butler 2010b). To some extent, Butler agrees with Hegel and his concept of recognition, as one not only resisting a vision of an all too easy reconciliation in the formation of intersubjectivity, but also one formed in a condition of impossibility, of a need to fight for one’s life. This is the core of contemporary discussions of recognition, where some theorists—like Jürgen Habermas, or to some extent, also Axel Honneth—allow the vulnerable core of struggle to evaporate in the communicative process. Butler argues that the confrontation with “the other” can become a successful sublation, where the destructive becomes the negative in the process of building and recognizing claims. For her, the dialectics of the subject and the Other neither begins in a moment, where the subject is fully disconnected from the Other nor can lead to their complete absorption. Recognition is, in her words,

> “neither an act that one performs, nor is it literalized as the event in which we each “see” one another and are “seen.” It takes place through communication, primarily but not exclusively verbal, in which subjects are transformed by virtue of the communicative practice in which they are engaged. (Butler 2010b, 110)

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It is important to emphasize the possibility of verbal and non-verbal expression of a claim—such a distinction allows the claims that would otherwise not be seen as such—the emotional, irrational, artistic, feminine, incomprehensible acts; those which are performed, not articulated with words. The reductive perspective, allowing a sudden hegemony of the act of seeing and thus marginalizing the embodiment necessary to discuss labor as central element of the master-slave dialectics, as well as any cultural and social production, by which the historical process can materially form, is criticized by Butler not solely because her understanding of gender requires embodied performances, not just words, as was shown in her *Bodies that Matter* (Butler 1993). She needs such an embodied and verbalized understanding of the process of recognition also to foreground her notion of violence in concrete, material acts and words that carry meaning, and result in psychic and psychosomatic states of injury (see Butler 1993; 1997b). Thus her notion of the discursive practice of gender formation, violence, or even "excitable speech," all rely not only on the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics, but also on the Hegelian idea of recognition gained in overcoming the impossible, threatening condition the forming subject finds themselves in. While in her article "Longing for Recognition" she is most preoccupied with resisting and undermining the Lacanian notion of the Other, as well as the Levinassian promise of reconciliation, in her other texts and books, especially in *Bodies that Matter* and *Excitable Speech*, she needs the notions of conflict, struggle and recognition, in order to argue for the subversive, non-heroic, ordinary, quiet forms of subjectivity, resisting violence or hate speech, which take place in artistic and queer responses to violence, in subversive performances of gender and sexuality, or in the daily struggles of millions of queer, non-normative or refugee lives across the world. It is thus how her perspective in fact preserves the Hegelian image of the core of subjectivation through overcoming. But if Butler's perspective is Hegelian, then is Hegel who we thought he was?

Butler's emphasis on Antigone's dismantling of femininity rooted in the gender binary is perhaps an interesting case in which Hegel is somehow tacitly congratulated on his promotion of queer identities as those representing the anti-authoritarian voice in history. In *Antigone's Claim* Butler suggests that Hegel's choice to depict Antigone as the representative of femininity is rather peculiar, as Antigone is neither fully recognized as a woman nor a subject; neither Creon, nor her sister recognizes her as such; her desire also betrays her, as she always loves against the rules, and in a somewhat lawbreaking way (Butler 2000). According to Butler, the choice of Antigone as the representative of femininity is strange, as she can and indeed does articulate her claims in front of Creon in ways opposing the traditionally feminine, which would either be incomprehensible, too emotional, "irrational" or otherwise impossible to express in a public forum. The lack of inhibitions and the fluency of Antigone's claim is her main weapon but also the main obstacle in understanding her gender performance as one typical of femininity. If this is how Hegel imagines women, we could actually say that he was ahead of his time and speaks of a modern, contemporary woman of today, with all her contradictions, rather than about what was seen as "feminine" in his days, or still ours in some more traditional parts of the globe. For Butler this constitutes an argument to oppose Hegel, and to prove Antigone's queer gender, which is not untrue; however, perhaps we can carry her argument further, and claim that in his supposedly failed choice of women's public representative, Hegel nevertheless strengthens the women's voice by offering an image of the rebellious, disobedient heroine at the core of the social?

Judith Butler's interpretation of Antigone offers some integration of the otherwise scattered character, lost in contradictions by the earlier analysis of this important figure. However, emphasizing Antigone's exceptionality even further distances her not just from the rest of more conventionally gendered or less heroic humans, but also and most sharply—from her sister. As I already mentioned, however—their relation might not be what it seems at first glance.

For Hegel, Antigone stands as the key figure of the regime of the social, the *Sittlichkeit*. As Marek Siemek eloquently argued, Hegel is *the* philosopher of the social. If so—perhaps Antigone should be seen as one of the main figures of his philosophy, together with the slave, the tired cultivated bourgeois of the Enlightenment and the tired housewife we find, as I will show later, in the chapter on Unhappy Consciousness? If this is so—Hegel is not only a philosopher of "the rabble," as Frank Ruda argued, not only a philosopher of the emancipating enslaved, as Susan Buck-Morss claims, but also he expresses the voices of the women and gender misfits, as I try to prove, following Judith Butler to some extent (Ruda 2011; Buck-Morss 2000; Butler 2010a; Majewska 2007; 2009).

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In her discussion of Antigone's gender, Butler follows the observations of Irigaray and those formulated by Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick, and she claims—following Hannah Arendt, that Antigone represents resistance and disagreement, queer identity and desire, but not necessarily femininity. Butler is not particularly interested in Ismene, who—as Irigaray and other authors claim, represents the traditional version of femininity.

In her important book *Antigone, Interrupted*, Bonnie Honig takes this argument further—she reclaims Ismene's ability to perform care and affective labor and suggests that there is a sororal, anti-patriarchal bond between the two sisters, because of which they can defeat the patriarchal laws and oppose male domination (Honig 2013). Ismene's caring attitude throughout the tragedy enables Antigone, prompts responses to her own care and kindness, provides necessary reminders of the presence and needs of others, and resists her and her claim's complete alienation from the specific, familial and social context, thus preserving each of these from becoming complete fetishes.

Honig re-evaluates political agency as that requiring a pact between the one who is tender and caring, and the other brave sister, to actually produce a claim, which—and here it is interesting—requires an alliance, not an individual; solidarity, not heroism.

In her interpretation, Honig rehabilitates the non-heroic, common (as in: ordinary), caring agency performed by Ismene, as well as the humane, loving aspects of Antigone, emphasizing that one is impossible without the other, that only in an alliance can both heroines perform their acts of resistance against the patriarchal state power. This interpretation is a powerful lesson not only of a careful reading of the ancient text of the tragedy, but also of feminist solidarity, in which differences are seen less as obstacles and more as advantages. Honig re-evaluates political agency as that requiring a pact between the one who is tender and caring, and the other brave sister, to actually produce a claim, which—and here it is interesting—requires an alliance, not an individual; solidarity, not heroism. We can take Honig's observations further, and notice that the sororal pact between Antigone and Ismene is actually a necessity, that the bond connecting their lives provides meaning, sympathy, courage and safety, for the both of them. Their solidarity should thus be seen as an overcoming of their weakness, and weakness itself—the core of their togetherness. It is why in the title of this article I argue for a "weak dialectics." In Hegel, we merely see Antigone's weakness—as a representative of the historically older order, she will be sublated and state order will be installed on the ruin of her claim. The ruin however will not disappear, it will be a foundation of the new construction, fulfilling its aims, it will signal *asocial sociability*, as Kant named it, the conflicted interests of the social core in the scaffolding of the state. Antigone's exceptionality in Hegel's argument can thus be seen as her weakness, to be sublated by the community imposed in the rigid form of state law, in which totality clearly opposes singularity at the moment of the intensification of contradictions allowing/enforcing sublation.

The title of my article announces the housewife. Where, if at all, can she be found in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*? Unsurprisingly, she is mentioned directly only in the sharp, antiracist chapter about phrenology, where the possibility of deducing someone's intellectual abilities solely from the shape of their head is compared to the deduction made by proverbial housewives, who argue that since it is the day of washing, there should be rain (Hegel 1979, 193). The short chapter on the Unhappy Consciousness allows this stage of the Spirit to be discussed as one immersed in the mundane existence regulated by the repetitive performances of caring and reproductive labor. The Unhappy Consciousness is a moment when: "Consequently, the duplication which formerly was divided between two individuals, the lord and the bondsman, is now lodged in one" (Hegel 1979, 126). In contrast to the usual understanding of this passage, which suggests a detachment from earthly bonds, I would argue the contrary—that, both logically and based on Hegel's own narrative, it can as well be expected that the prevailing part will be materialistic, nonsensical on its own, in its immediacy, and deprived of any reflexive mediation. This chapter tends to be understood as one depicting the perturbed unity of the spirit that discovers and experiences its own existence as split. But what would that actually mean? Hegel's text is quite ambiguous in this chapter. Would that solely express the fight of two opposing perceptions of oneself—i.e. the role of master and the role of the slave? Or would it rather be a moment where the "I" is torn by "desire and work," as Hegel has it? If so, would that thus denote the automatic duties fulfilled to maintain one's own existence and perhaps also the existence of the surrounding others? Such an interpretation results from the general idea that Hegel was not an idealist, which is sufficiently supported by authors as diverse as Slavoj Žižek, Catherine Malabou and Susan Buck-Morss, to name just a few (Žižek 2020; Malabou 2015; Buck-Morss 2000), as well as from the close reading of this chapter, revealing the possibility of viewing it as a story of an artificial, immediate abstraction from the material everyday to spiritual eternity, which contains both moments although the material is preserved only in the form of a too quickly rejected, merely negated, not yet sublated, lived experience.

The short chapter on the Unhappy Consciousness allows this stage of the Spirit to be discussed as one immersed in the mundane existence regulated by the repetitive performances of caring and reproductive labor.

We should perhaps reconstruct the conditions in which the Unhappy Consciousness makes its appearance in the *Phenomenology of Spirit.* It begins after freedom is experienced by the spirit in the forms of the ultimate negative—Stoicism and Skepticism—it accomplishes the adventures of the spirit before it encounters the external, materialized world and after it won recognition in the battle of master and slave. Already at the start of the chapter, Hegel emphasizes that:

> Freedom in thought has only pure thought as its truth, a truth lacking the fullness of life. Hence freedom in thought, too, is only the Notion of freedom, not the living reality of freedom itself. (Hegel 1979, 122).

At first, “the Notion as an abstraction cuts itself off from the multiplicity of things” (Hegel 1979, 122). And:

> This thinking consciousness as determined in the form of abstract freedom is thus only the incomplete negation of otherness. Withdrawn from existence only into itself, it has not there achieved its consummation as absolute negation of that existence. (Hegel 1979, 122)

The next stage, where such negation will be accomplished, is Skepticism, and then the Unhappy Consciousness can develop, in confrontation with the futility, mundanity and everyday. In Skepticism, the self encounters the nullity of general moral laws and ethics, and “the Unhappy Consciousness is the consciousness of self as a dual natured, merely contradictory being” (Hegel 1979, 126). Now, a big question consists in how to understand the Notion of Spirit, which ultimately constitutes the sublation of the Unhappy Consciousness. As Hegel grants that “the Notion of Spirit that has become a living Spirit, and has achieved an actual existence” (Hegel 1979, 126), it can be understood as the presence of God, as in Christianity, or the more pantheistic presence of God, or—and this is the most classical interpretation, rooted in Hegel’s text—the church, the community of believers. Traditionally, the *ecclesia*, the religious community would be seen as the “actual existence” of the Spirit. My effort is to show that the community generated by the “life functions,” by reproductive and affective needs and labour, is the one depicted by Hegel in this chapter too. It is seen as a merely negated substrate, with which consciousness struggles, experiencing and rejecting their meaningless life, while it also despises the repetitive life functions and the efforts to sustain life, not yet understanding them as necessary, but merely experiencing them as randomly contingent. In this description however, these contingent experiences become the key inspiration for the hopeful immersion in religion; it is opposed, resisted and negated, and thus deprived of any reflexive mediation, becoming the rejected part of Spirit’s experience on this stage. While Todd McGowan argues that the material, contingent elements of experience are solely accidental, and thus somewhat unnecessary elements of experience, which properly functions as organized by notions, and thus free of all contingency, I would like to argue that those very material, random elements of experience constitute its necessary component (see McGowan 2021), in opposition to which the Spirit finds solace in religion, and comforts itself in the *ecclesia.* The material aspect of the everyday—negated, opposed, and thus understood only as an obstacle—functions as a necessary element of the dialectics, perhaps its weakest elements, as it is most often reduced to an unnecessary substrate, and not the substance on the basis of which any historical moment can be distinguished from another. I would therefore like to argue that the figure of an exhausted, tired housewife, most symptomatic for the mundane, repetitive life maintenance in the human existence, presents itself as another weak, yet necessary, element of Hegel's dialectics, in parallel to Antigone and the slave. Reconciliation is therefore not granted by the spiritually inclined church community, but by the readiness to encounter the external, material world, then culture, by understanding the interconnectedness of all materialized, embodied life on Earth, and by appreciating care/affective labour as modes of participating in such community. I will return to this dimension of Hegel's analyzed chapter later.

If for the Unhappy Consciousness, the Changeable and the Unchangeable rest separated, it might very well consist of a deity or simply existence, as in everyday life, and that would be an interpretation closer to how the other parts of the *Phenomenology*... are read by the authors I mentioned earlier, such as Malabou or Buck-Morss. Hegel's depiction of the fight at the core of the formative process of the Unhappy Consciousness legitimizes such a reading, as he wrote:

> Consciousness of life, of its existence and activity, is only an agonizing over this existence and activity, for therein it is conscious that its essence is only its opposite, is conscious only of its own nothingness. (Hegel 1979, 127)

Then existence becomes more central, first—in its formless version, then with attributes, as "its efforts from now on are directed rather to setting aside its relation with the pure/armless Unchangeable, and to coming into relation only with the Unchangeable in its embodied or incarnate form" (Hegel 1979, 129). I think it is here that the hiatus between the separation from the material everyday and the hopeful yet futile lapse in the eternal occurs the strongest. The Spirit, still incapable of understanding the social dimension of its experience, tries to erase the maintenance that reproductive labour experiences by declaring itself spiritual. The tired housewife seems like an invisible figure that is necessary for the dialectical movement, but which is missing from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; an absent way to bridge between the negation and the world out there. And further "The Unhappy Consciousness is this contact; it is the unity of pure thinking and individuality" (Hegel 1979, 130). Then—the realization of the fact that on this stage, life is only encountered as its grave appears. Here—again—we can take the idealist route, or overcome idealism, and think of all the agency necessary to avoid death, all the fulfillment of basic needs as precisely the act of pushing the grave away, avoiding death by means of sustaining life in its basic functions by means of reproductive labour. This is a logical consequence of the earlier passages in *Phenomenology...*, where the actuality of enslavement is often contradicted with the abstracted idealization of mastery. *Per analogiam*, if plantation is the primary scene of the struggle for recognition; the household will be the space where a more ordinary and far less heroic fight takes place—one faced by the Unhappy Consciousness struggling to maintain life after big battles. Instead, what Hegel offers in the chapter is a pure negation of materiality, with materiality not represented, and spirituality artificially expanded.

The heterogeneity of forms of life sharply contradicts the supposed unity of merely spiritual lived experience, distinguishes it from the homogenous world of mere thought.

Another important idea, that of heterogeneity, is introduced in the discussed chapter of *Phenomenology...* Hegel writes: "In Skepticism, now, (…) the negativity of free self-consciousness comes to know itself in the many and *varied forms of life* as a real negativity" (Hegel 1979, 123; emphasis added). The heterogeneity of forms of life sharply contradicts the supposed unity of merely spiritual lived experience, distinguishes it from the homogenous world of mere thought. In her analysis of the French reception of Hegel, Butler argues, that:

> As long as emancipation is modeled on autonomy and self-realization, the emancipated bondsman will be restricted by the constraints of self-identity and will know neither pleasure nor creativity—essential features of the will-to-power. (Butler 1987, 210)

However, if we could imagine another, non-Nietzschean, collective and post-individualist version of emancipation, the Unhappy Consciousness will be seen as an expression of the confrontation of the still artificially absolute Spirit not with God, but with materialized life in its basic form of bare, physical functions and the mundane activities of sustaining life and caring. The stoic, skeptic and finally unhappy attitudes of this stage of the Spirit's journey should thus be understood not merely as the approaches towards deity, but as moments always already negatively addressing the bare life, the material aspects of existence and the dull, repetitive activities necessary for its preservation. Such a reading allows a feminist-materialist moment to be located at the core of the Unhappy Consciousness, a moment which should perhaps have been captured by the figure of a nanny, a maid or another woman performing invisible reproductive and care labour to maintain the life functions of those who surround her, as well as herself. Such reading of this chapter allows reproductive labour to be embraced as a necessary—yet expressed only negatively—part of Hegel's project, as well as acknowledging, following Susan Buck-Morss's research on the influence of actual historical examples of slave-master relations on dialectics, the role of female servants and maids in the making of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* as a philosophical project. With the slave as the general figure of material labour as submission, and Antigone as the kinship claim opposed and controlled by the state law, the (invisible and absent) maid/care giver should represent the material negated substrate of the private life of the (bourgeois) subject—the family.

Hegel continues:

> Work and enjoyment thus *lose all universal content and significance*, for if they had any, they would have an absolute being of their own. Both withdraw *into their mere particularity* (…). *Consciousness is aware of itself as this actual individual in the animal functions*. (Hegel 1979, 135, emphasis added)

This is bare life in its physiological functions. The "animal functions" should be interpreted as those requiring care and reproductive labour, otherwise we imagine a Robinsonade, as Karl Marx would probably call it, and we get out of Hegel's deeply social, historical and materialized universe, in which the adventures of the Spirit unfold as dialectics. For Butler—they signalize the formation of the abject, as she claims: "Here, consciousness in its full abjection has become like shit, lost in a self-referential anality, a circle of its own making" (Butler 1997, 50). As I already suggested, I find her reading of Hegel to some extent reductive, thus I argue that beyond what she emphasizes there is also the repetitiveness and mundane character of basic life functions, which are obviously repulsive for the Spirit at this stage, yet—not quite abjectal or anal, as they can also take the form of caring agency, for oneself or another. Thus, in order to remain within the Hegelian ontology, we need to imagine these "animal functions," as well as the "varied forms of life," as impressions of a materialized, empirical character, obviously subjected to the tormented reflection of the self, right after the difficult "struggle for recognition," thus in the moment when any materiality is experienced as the just rejected chains. This badly abstract negativity entered by the Spirit in moment of Stoicism, thus unfolds as a deepening hiatus between the reproductive functions perceived mainly as "animal functions" and the prospects of abandoning all matter in radical spiritualism. While the second part of this twofold operation is given full depiction,

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that first, materialized, embodied experience of repetitive maintenance, is not so vocal, yet it leaves its traces, and perhaps a closer look at them makes the dialectics more complete, while at the same time bringing about an invisible figure tacitly representing them as parts of the universal human experience.

The moments of wretchedness and poverty experienced by the Unhappy Consciousness have long been understood as those resulting from the recognition of nothingness and futility, or—as Butler depicts it in *Psychic Life of Power*—the "permutations of self-enslavement" (Butler 1997a, 32). Following Nietzsche and Foucault, Butler reinstalls the denial of the body in the dialectics, arguing that Hegel demonstrated how liberation from external oppression does not lead to the disappearance of internal oppression (Butler 1997a, 32–33). For Butler the appearance of the Unhappy Consciousness

> (...) involves splitting the psyche into two parts, a lordship and a bondage internal to a single consciousness, whereby the body is again dissimulated as an alterity, but where this alterity is now interior to the psyche itself. (Butler 1997a, 42)

But why would Hegel mention the animal functions, if he rejected the body completely? Isn't the claim of alterity of the body applicable to the unhappy moment of consciousness rather than to Hegel himself?

Ochocki goes as far as to remind us that it is actually in comedy that the people, or the rabble, actually present itself, as they are insufficiently sophisticated to enter tragedy.

In the book *Trzy opery, czyli podmiotowość komiczna* (Three operas, or the comic subjectivity) Aleksander Ochocki argues in favor of a materialist reading of Hegel's dialectics, in which, he suggests that the least fortunate—often comical—characters make historical changes. Parallel to the more classical reading of Hegel, Ochocki opened the way for a Brechtian, disillusioned understanding of the historical process, in which it is Rameau's Nephew and other unheroic beings that actually express the central themes of history. In his reevaluation of comedy as more important for Hegel than tragedy, Ochocki goes as far as to remind us that it is actually in comedy that the people, or the rabble, actually present itself, as they are insufficiently sophisticated to enter tragedy (Ochocki 2003, 65). In Hegel's aesthetics, comedy actually closes the discussion on art's development, making most readers understand it as a happy ending of the adventures of Spirit in culture, however Ochocki offers a different reading: in his perspective comedy is important, because history is not heroic, it consists of the daily struggles of those excluded from historical accounts: the rabble. These remarks shed new light on the Unhappy Consciousness too—if history does not belong to the winners, then perhaps the sense of nothingness resulting from the everyday confrontations with material reproduction and decay, the encounter of life “as its grave,” should also be read in a materialist fashion, not merely as an effort to reduce the embodied experience to some “mere alterity,” but rather as an expression of the alienation of the spirit in its negation of said experience.

Similarly to the operation performed by Bonnie Honig on Butler’s reading of Antigone, I tried to re-read Hegel’s chapter on the Unhappy Consciousness somewhat against Butler, as one which allows us to see how the body becomes recognized as mundane, animal, non-human, and individual, as opposed to universal, thus: particular and enmeshed in various forms of life. Such an object obviously makes the Spirit, the subject of the dialectics, “unhappy.” But is it thus foreclosed or opposed, rejected or embraced? As the Unhappy Consciousness leads to reconciliation in “being in the world,” it seems clear that, regardless of all the disgust and unhappiness the body can cause, it is still that which not only risks death, but also allows life. I believe that the perspective offered by Butler on the Unhappy Consciousness reconstructs one part of the process of embodiment in the dialectics, while leaving aside the other part—that of maintenance, sustainability, reproduction and care, which also should be considered. This preservation of the bare life is involved in the double-bind: it is the only part of labour clearly hidden from the male gaze and the individualist theoretical readings, therefore, throughout *Phenomenology of Spirit* in its entirety. It should perhaps be stressed that the negation of reproductive labour, care and the practice of its maintenance, is a cultural phenomenon largely discussed in feminist theory. It is thus interesting that Hegel’s description of the exclusion of these necessary components of the everyday life of individuals and society perhaps critically addresses the problem? Perhaps *Phenomenology...* would have been a better book, if the figure of a maid had been there in the first place. As I was trying to show however, there is sufficient material in the discussed chapter to argue that Hegel theorized the foreclosure of materialized, embodied experience, rather than asserting that he himself banished that experience from dialectics. This argument, proceeding in line with Buck-Morss’s research on the slave and the actual historical references in Hegel’s life and the events surrounding him, clearly demarcates him as a historical materialist rather than an idealist, as has been claimed on numerous occasions. My reading of the Unhappy Consciousness leads to the conclusion that Hegel did not idealize his time, either by artificially making care and reproductive labour visible or by pushing his discussion of the self-formation away from materialized experience. On the contrary—he expressed the embodied experience while at the same time demonstrating the ideological constraints of his time, which led to the badly abstract rejection, artificial negation of the material reproduction of life in the badly abstract spiritualism.

The "other," material side of the process of the formation of the Unhappy Consciousness, perhaps one that expresses that part of socialization clearly associated with femininity and care, remains oblivious, however it can nevertheless be reconstructed from between the scattered expressions of the sensual, empirical and embodied present in Hegel's chapter. We would thus have the disgust and foreclosure of the body, yet combined with a growing understanding that yes, the repetitive, mundane and reproductive labour of sustaining the body and the species belong to dialectics. Butler's impossibility of seeing in the chapter on Unhappy Consciousness not only the repeated distancing from the body, disgust and rejection of it, but also—parallelly—learning that maintenance work is that which, albeit repetitive, is also necessary, and leads to a surrender of one's will, later to be discovered in the flat unity of reason, as "it has successfully struggled to divest itself of its being-for-self and has turned it into (mere) being" of certainty (Hegel 1979, 139). Butler's reconstruction of the rejection of the body and my effort to reconstruct the process of (positive) embodiment in Hegel's narrative, presented as negated by the Spirit, together make of the Unhappy Consciousness a twofold, dialectical operation. As Hegel writes,

> Through these moments of surrender, first of its right to decide for itself, then of its property and enjoyment, and finally through the positive moment of practising what it does not understand, it truly and completely deprives itself of the consciousness of inner and outer freedom, of the actuality in which consciousness exists for *itself*. (Hegel 1979, 135)

After Susan Buck-Morss's article "Hegel and Haiti," we must acknowledge that the slaves of San Domingue inspired Europe's most powerful philosophical metaphor of emancipation in modern history.

Doesn't that sound rather like a mother's or other care-giver's statement concerning the nature of their caring acts? And thus—is not a vision of Unhappy Consciousness as one of childbearing and cleaning more appropriate than that of the "Young Werther"? Or—and this could be a more plausible version of my argument in this article—could it be that the "tearing" of the consciousness in the discussed chapter consists also in the Subject's confrontation with materiality and sustainability, and thus—the need to react to the "life functions"? In such a reading, Hegel's famous chapter is one about the rejection of the contingency, precarity and instability of existence in both dimensions: the embodied and the psychic. Until now I have contradicted the "traditional," spiritual focus that other authors highlighted in reading this part of *Pheno-*

menology of the Spirit. I also undermined Judith Butler's one-sided perspective asserting that the hatred of the body immediately means its rejection. What if it does not? What if the hatred, the inability to embrace the material, embodied and thus contingent dimension of life, the Subject finds its precarious reconciliation in acknowledging the materialized, embodied community of bodies, human and not, in the world?

Such an atypical reading of the Unhappy Consciousness chapter would not have been possible without the research made by Susan Buck-Morss on Hegel's work and reading while he was writing the *Phenomenology of the Spirit.* As we might remember, Hegel sent the draft of his manuscript two weeks after the deadline, because Jena was under Napoleon's siege. After Susan Buck-Morss's article "Hegel and Haiti*,*" we must acknowledge that the slaves of San Domingue inspired Europe's most powerful philosophical metaphor of emancipation in modern history. As Buck-Morss reconstructs the magazines Hegel read and letters he wrote prior to the publication of his *Phenomenology of the Spirit,* it is clear that the frequent readings of the progressive, abolitionist magazine *Minerva* shaped his understanding of the struggle for recognition. It is thus perhaps necessary to revisit the other parts of his narrative, central for the global struggles, and imagine other possible understandings of the dialectics of the self than idealist ones, shaped by the 19th century dualisms, patriarchal and racist prejudices, as well as a flat and one-dimensional understanding of progress. The heroic vision of political subjectivity also needs to be revisited, as it perhaps limits our imagination in the important issue of what it means to change history.

The process of the reinterpretation of the Unhappy Consciousness in a materialist-feminist way is a necessary one, as it complements the other materialist-historical excursions in Hegel's dialectics.

This short article drafts the prospect of finding a housewife at the core of Hegel's dialectics. The mundane, repetitive and reproductive labour of care, performed everyday mostly by women in the privacy of households, in hospitals and other institutions, already known to Hegel, did not receive a clear expression in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. However, their presence can be traced in his narrative, as I tried to show. By this operation, I believe I fulfilled the part of my task to introduce a housewife to the dialectics and present her as another element of the "dialectics of the weak," suggested in the article's beginning. This hopeful premise is based on several feminist interpretations of Hegel's philosophy, those in which the dialectics is not seen solely as a patriarchal weapon, those where materialism is the method, as well as those where the connections between theory and historical events are drawn. I also referenced Butler's and Ochocki's readings of Hegel, to reiterate the importance of recognition, its perplexity, and of comedy and its centrality. The process of the reinterpretation of the Unhappy Consciousness in a materialist-feminist way is a necessary one, as it complements the other materialist-historical excursions in Hegel's dialectics, such as those offered by Susan Buck-Morss in the context of slavery and emancipation, by Frank Ruda and the re-evaluation of the rabble, as well as that presented by Aleksander Ochocki in the context of comedy and the misfortunate, funny anti-heroes of Hegelian philosophy. Introducing a housewife in the Unhappy Consciousness is an effort to bring dialectics home, to its incessant connection with the embodied life, which on this stage is a bare life, in need of care and maintenance to survive. It is also necessary for the task of reconstructing the weak figures of the dialectics understood as a philosophical project—my reading allows the vulnerable, weak, even invisible subjects to be seen as another part of the dialectics, its central parts perhaps, as they represent the materialized, embodied elements of the spirit's journey, thus making it historical in the first place.

Examining various efforts to construct a materialist reading of Hegel, it is easy to see how the heroic, monumental and successful vision of history is tacitly replaced by that enacted by the unheroic, mundane, exhausted and disenchanted. It is thus significant how these very different revisions of Hegel's supposed idealism, actually introduce a sense of historicity, weakness and what Walter Benjamin would probably call "history written by losers." The dialectics thus presents itself as one pushed forward by the weak, and consists in everyday unheroic struggles rather than the victorious marches of the winners. The reconstruction of the Unhappy Consciousness as a confrontation of the Spirit with care and reproductive labour announces an end to the exclusion of invisible labour from dialectics, but also fills an important gap in the materialist reinterpretations of Hegel, providing another argument for the critical, anti-monumental and progressive reading of his philosophy. However brutally the spirit claims to escape its embodied, material experience, it is there, in the dialectical process, even in its private, supposedly intimate moments of daily existence and its reproductive and caring maintenance. This, alongside the recognition of the slave and Antigone's claim, is the third element of the weak dialectics, the re-introduction of the supposedly absent housewife.

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Citation:
Majewska, Ewa. 2022. "The Slave, Antigone and the Housewife: Hegel's Dialectics of the Weak." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 177–197.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.8

Autor: Ewa Majewska
Tytuł: Niewolnik, Antygona i gospodyni domowa. Heglowska dialektyka słabości

Abstrakt: Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje dyskusję szeregu feministycznych interpretacji Hegla, od tej zaproponowanej przez Carlę Lonzi, po queerową analitykę Judith Butler, tak by zreinterpretować słynną figurę „świadomości nieszczęśliwej". Z feministycznej perspektywy poświęcone jej fragmenty *Fenomenologii ducha* powinny być czytane przede wszystkim jako re-ewaluacja pracy opiekuńczej i reprodukcyjnej, której Podmiot doświadcza na tym etapie swojego rozwoju przede wszystkim jako powtarzalnej i nużącej. Dialektyka słabości może być ustanowiona w oparciu o głębokie przewartościowanie rozumienia tego, co materialne, w tym również aktywności podtrzymujących życie tradycyjnie już lekceważonych w analizach heglowskiego dziedzictwa. W niniejszym artykule te marginalizowane dotąd elementy przeżywanego doświadczenia Podmiotu zostają uwzględnione, co z kolei prowadzi do wprowadzenia gospodyni domowej w proces dialektyczny.

Słowa kluczowe: dialektyka, słabość, praca reprodukcyjna, Antygona

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Two Metaphysics of Freedom: Kant and Hegel on Violence and Law in the Era of the Fall of Liberal Democracy

The article attempts to rethink the legacy of Kant and Hegel in light of the problematic of law, violence and universality. It is also an explication of this legacy in the context of two contemporary insights into historical fate of our Eurocentric civilization—of Achille Mbembe and of Susan Buck-Morss. First, I consider the Kantian foundation of Rechtstaat in the light of Benjamin's classic *Critique of Violence* and Mbembe's contemporary critique of colonial power. Then I propose a new account of the central concept of Hegel's *Logic*—i.e. the transition from necessity to freedom— from the same perspective, supplemented with Derrida's interpretation of Benjamin, and Žižek's reading of Hegel. The dialectic of modality from Hegel's *Science of Logic* seems to be an underappreciated thread in this respect, insofar as Hegel's idea of universality or freedom is founded on his ontology and critique of law.

Keywords: freedom, violence, law, ideology, contingency, colonialism, Hegel

> The awareness of common humanity is born not through culture, but through the threat of its betrayal. (…) how are we to make sense out of the temporal unfolding of collective, human life? The need to rethink this question today in a global context, that is, as *universal* history, has not been felt so strongly for centuries—perhaps not since Hegel, Haiti, and the Age of Revolution.
>
> Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*

By "two metaphysics of freedom" I do not have in mind the general metaphysical views on subjectivity and on the nature of freedom held by Kant and Hegel, but rather two ontologies of *law and freedom*, and the dialectical relationship between these categories and *violence*. The first ontology—developed by Kant—finds its final form in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, his last important work. The second one culminates in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel's major work in this area, which can be read as a critique of Kant's ideological absolutization of the rule of law.

The second part of my article's title refers to a significant contemporary process that, according to Achille Mbembe's argument in his essay on Fanon, reveals a colossal inversion within the framework of liberal democracy (Mbembe 2019). This consists in its transformation into a society of hostility and exclusion. The contemporary manifestations of this transition include: the rise of the alt-right movements, along with racism; the expanding universe of conspiracy theories; and such phenomena as cancel culture or post-truth.

Kant and the Rule of Law

For the sake of my argument, I assume that Kant's idea of the *Rechtstaat* constitutes an exemplary conceptual reference point for today's liberal democracy. The most influential example of a more recent use of this reference is Habermas's theory of the state, which is consciously rooted in Kantian social thought and has adapted its solutions to the contemporary world (Habermas 1996). Kant inaugurated a tradition that claims to be conceptually independent of the early modern concepts of natural law (Habermas 1974). He argued that a valid law comes into existence at the moment when an act establishes a meditative regulation, as the classic theorists of the social contract had suggested before him. The conditions of the social contract are determined by the need to subordinate competing individuals to a common law because of general antagonism, as noted in the "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" (Kant 1991).

While formulating his philosophy of history, Kant attempted to capture the subtle logic of the process of socialisation through a bold synthesis of republican intuitions and the British political tradition of "rule of law" represented by Locke's thought. The "war of all against all" straight out of Hobbes's *Leviathan* should—according to Kant—be perceived from a different angle. The conflict of egoisms does not hinder socialisation but is—paradoxically—the key to explaining it, because it derives from an elusive feature of human nature. This feature is ambivalent, and can be described as "people's unsocial sociability (*ungesellige Geselligkeit der Menschen*)" or the "the unsocial characteristic of wishing to have everything go according to (one's—M.P.) own wish":

> It is this very resistance which awakens all man's powers and induces him to overcome his tendency to laziness. Through the desire for honour, power or property, it drives him to seek status among his fellows, whom he cannot *bear* yet cannot *bear to leave*. Then the first true steps are taken from barbarism to culture, which in fact consists in the social worthiness of man. All man's talents are now gradually developed, his taste cultivated, and by a continued process of enlightenment, a beginning is made towards establishing a way of thinking which can with time transform the primitive natural capacity for moral discrimination into definite practical principles; and thus a pathologically enforced social union in transformed into a moral whole. (Kant 1991, 44–45)

Kant's reasoning is dialectical. Unsocial sociability explains how the conflict of egoisms immanently becomes its very opposite—a new kind of community, a moral whole. It is the process of the emergence of social distinctions in a developed division of labour that creates the social value of each person. Moreover, this process generates values as such, and forms something common. The natural need for socialisation in a state of nature forces distrustful individuals to seek cooperation and self-development, and to self-regulate inherently egoistic actions. The role of the enlightened authorities and public opinion is to acknowledge a positive tendency and endorse it. The process of transitioning from barbarism to culture should be universally sanctioned through a formal system of regulations—a rational legal order:

> The highest task which nature has set for mankind must therefore be that of establishing a society in which freedom under external laws would be combined to the greatest possible extent with irresistible force, in other words of establishing a perfectly just civil constitution. (Kant 1991, 45–46)

The essence of civil liberty lies in the balance between the rights of the subject and the absolute respect for the limits of these rights. It seems, therefore, that Kant follows British Enlightenment thinkers. Even John Locke claimed that the aim of political order is to secure pre-existing natural laws. Kant agrees—in part—with Hobbes's thesis that "where (there is—M.P.) no law, (there is—M.P.) no injustice" (Hobbes 1998, 85). Valid property law and basic human rights can only be adopted after public authority has been established. More importantly, however, Kant goes on to formulate a characteristic interpretation of justice: a just legal system consists in the protection of citizens and their "external laws," which are upheld by "irresistible force." Therefore, he develops a political interpretation of his own concept. A political system of freedom is, paradoxically, based on an order of necessity—an order of the necessary formalization of social relations. Although such an order emerges from nature (as according to Locke), the artificial power of the force of law is the culmination of this process. The ever-changing and obscure realm of the "natural" relations between groups and individuals, as well as their conflicts and alliances—previously marked by the "primitive natural capacity for moral discrimination"—demands valid formalization (Kant 1991, 45). The rules of social activity must be sanctioned by the authority of a law-governed state.

Kant's argument is therefore based on the close relationship between two elements—on the one hand, legalism and the legal definition of freedom and justice *a la* Hobbes, and, on the other, the language of moral and civilizational duty. For the author of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the majesty and power of positive law derives only from its universal validity.

The Rule of Law as a Problem in Itself

In the essay "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" Kant also formulated a characteristic interpretation of freedom and justice within the *Rechtstaat*. Later, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he elaborated further on the interconnection between law, freedom, and violence (*Gewalt*). And it is at this point that the Kant's narrative about the establishment of the legal order connects with Mbembe's thesis about the return of democracy's hidden colonial violence within democracy itself. This is because Kant developed a narrative about the social contract precisely in relation to colonization, referring directly to indigenous peoples. He was aware that colonization could lead to "fraudulent purchase" of the land belonging to "the American Indians, the Hottentots and the inhabitants of New Holland" and acquiring their land "without regard for their first possession," "making use of our superiority." However, his answer to the question of whether we should "establish a civil union with them and bring these human beings (savages) into a rightful condition" is positive; he justifies his choice with the maxim "nature abhors a vacuum":

And it is at this point that the Kant's narrative about the establishment of the legal order connects with Mbembe's thesis about the return of democracy's hidden colonial violence within democracy itself.

> Should we not be authorized to do this, especially since nature itself (which abhors a vacuum) seems to demand it, and great expanses of land in other parts of the world, which are now splendidly populated, would have otherwise remained uninhabited by civilized people or, indeed, would have to remain forever uninhabited, so that the end of creation would have been frustrated? (Kant 1999, 417–418)

It is in this context that Kant defines the relationship between law, freedom, and violence (*Gewalt*), where freedom merges with law because its realization consists precisely in limitation. Kant perceives the rational order as the "hindering of the hindrance," that is, as hindering of the freedom as far as it threatens its agreement with universal laws and rational order, or as a coercion *that is opposed to this*:

> If a certain use of freedom is itself a hindrance to freedom in accordance with universal laws (i.e. wrong), coercion that is opposed to this (as a hindering of a hindrance to freedom) is consistent with freedom in accordance with universal laws, that is, it is right. (Kant 1999, 338)

Assuming that in the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant builds an of ontology of law, it appears in the role of double negation, "hindering of hindrance." As in the famous thesis from Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*: *anomos* precedes *nomos*.

A closer inspection of this argumentation turns out to be symptomatically inconsistent and brings to mind the typical justifications of colonial violence in the style of British officials.[1] The narrative from the

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[1] It should be stressed that Kant condemns colonial abuses. Yet both Hegel and Kant employ the dichotomy of civilization vs. barbarism. Still, the former

Metaphysics of Morals can be simplified in the following way: in the past, in the state of nature, there was a pre-political, provisional "private right," later replaced in the civil constitution by a peremptory "public right," in the sense that it applies ultimately and unfailingly. During the Enlightenment, before our eyes, as Kant would say, as if on behalf of the people's tribune, the former "private" right was elevated to a law of reason. However, reason is not only an end in itself, like the "Kingdom of Ends" in the philosophy of morals, but it also *demands* that pre-political law should be replaced by public right. It's not an ethical demand, but a pragmatic one, perhaps more pragmatic than Kant usually is. He argues: "A civil constitution, though its realization is subjectively contingent is still objectively necessary, that is, necessary as a duty" (Kant 1999, 416). The "subjectively contingent" nature of this realization means that the "necessity" is actually rooted in civilization, because it is not linked to any particular form of republican government. In fact, it is not only a necessity but also a duty. Kant also warns that those who wish to remain in the state of nature "do wrong in the highest degree" because the state of nature "is not rightful, that is, (it is a state—M.P.) in which no one is assured of what is his against violence" (Kant 1999, 416).

Here, the law seems to be a crypto-moral extreme of radical opposition between state of law and that of lawlessness, thereby heralding the modern disciplinary model described by Foucault. Even though the idea of *Rechtsstaat* was inspired by the liberal tradition of natural law, Kant broke away from it, lending the concept of law (in the legal sense) a certain normative surplus related to normalization in the form of "legal interventionism" (see Foucault 2008, 167). According to Kant, almost all of humanity—with minor exceptions in North America and Europe——"does wrong in the highest degree" in everyday life by existing outside the republican order.

This argumentation brings to mind the Freudian term "kettle logic," which refers to contradictory arguments concerning the same issue, the sum of which means something altogether different than what is implied by particular arguments (Freud 2010, 144). The first premise is that it is our pragmatic *responsibility* to recognize civilizational necessity and submit to it, as in: the kettle has been returned undamaged. The second concerns the resulting *moral duty* to act in accordance with civilizational necessity, as in: it already had holes in it when he borrowed it. The third

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does not do so (rather fortunately) in any crucial passage—Susan Buck-Morss discusses this important matter in detail in her brilliant essay *Hegel and Haiti* (Buck-Morss 2009, 65–75).

premise consists in the moral imperative to combat the unlawful situation described above, which—as a call to action—presupposes the absence of any objective necessity to do so, as in: he had never borrowed it at all. The same is true with regard to establishing a new legal order: its main aim is *either* to transform and eradicate the shortcomings of the natural condition of mankind by replacing it with a new, formal order of reason, *or* to preserve and secure elements of the natural condition that had already existed in it in a provisional form. These two scenarios are mutually exclusive. Moreover, Kant admits that in the natural state we can find communities governed by certain rules. He emphasizes that when these rules fall within the scope of public law, the social contract does not contain any new obligations but only gains a guaranteed sanction from universal law—an observation that is difficult to accommodate with the basic opposition of civilization vs. barbarism.

From the point of view of the problematic of this essay, however, the most important problem is that Kant introduces a metaphysical explanation that combines the concepts of lawlessness and violence. He claims that the state of nature need not be a state of injustice just because it is natural. However,

> it would still be a state devoid of justice (*status iustitia vacuus*), in which when rights are in dispute, there would be no judge competent to render a verdict having rightful force. Hence each may impel the other by force to leave this state and enter into a rightful condition; for although each can acquire something external by taking control of it or by contract in accordance with its concepts of right, this acquisition is still only provisional. (Kant 1999, 456)

This reasoning evidently suggests that because the state of nature involved some form of customary law, it was not regulated by violence alone but rather kept itself below a certain level of civility. It was a state of lawlessness (*Rechtslosigkeit*), or of the absence of justice (*status iustitia vacuus*). Times when the lack of a formal system of justice bred uncertainty concerning property laws serve as historical testimony to the "intermediate" kind of human condition. The hidden sense of Kant's argumentation is thus finally revealed: each may impel the other by force to leave this state and enter into a rightful condition. Transitioning into the state of law is an unconditional and absolute necessity, and must be achieved at all costs. Significantly, Kant does not justify his point by referring to humanitarian values or even fighting lawlessness and barbarianism, but through the need for legal stability or security in relation to the acquisition of goods. As if the intermediate state of customary law did not provide the conditions for longer-term investments. While discussing the "postulate" of public right, Kant argues that one "ought to abandon" the natural state and adds another justification: "the ground of this postulate can be explicated analytically from the concept of right in external relations, in contrast with violence (*violentia*)" (Kant 1999, 452).

This peculiar view is based on the assumption that the law is officially the opposite of violence but allows using violence against lawlessness—even if it is not exactly lawless—because such violence would serve the public good or civil liberty.

This is how he justifies accepting what could be recognized as pro--state or pre-civil violence. This peculiar view is based on the assumption that the law is officially the opposite of violence but allows using violence against lawlessness—even if it is not exactly lawless—because such violence would serve the public good or civil liberty. The law "has the right" to use violence. In a nutshell, even before the law exists somewhere, for example in the colonies, it has the performative ability to establish itself, in a legitimate and lawful way. As Mbembe points out, "as, indeed, no extant legitimacy authorizes power in the colony, power seems to impose itself in the manner of a destiny." Further, we can recognise three major points made by Mbembe. First, "the colonial world as an offspring of democracy, was not an antithesis of the democratic order. It has always been its double or, again, its nocturnal face." Second, "this nocturnal face in effect hides a primordial and founding void—the law that originates in nonlaw and that is instituted as law outside the law" (Mbembe 2019, 25–27). And third,

> Added to this founding void is a second void—this time one of preservation. These two voids are closely imbricated in one another. Paradoxically, the metropolitan democratic order needs this twofold void, first, to give credence to the existence of an irreducible contrast between it and its apparent opposite; second, to nourish its mythological resources and better hide its underneath on the inside as well as on the outside. (Mbembe 2019, 25–27)

To sum up, the attempt to legitimize the principle of freedom in Kant's classic Enlightenment formulation as the principle of law, or the self-limitation of freedom, seems deconstructible, and is therefore revealed as ideological. As was argued by Habermas and other authors, Kant's failure is probably rooted in his departure from the theory of natural law professed by his predecessors—Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke (see Habermas 1974, 82–120). Marx's ironical observation in *On the Jewish Question* provides a perfect commentary on the problems of Kant's *Rechststaat*:

> Security is the highest social concept of civil society, the concept of police, expressing the fact that the whole of society exists only in order to guarantee to

> each of its members the preservation of his person, his rights, and his property. It is in this sense that Hegel calls civil society "the state of need and Verstand." The concept of security does not raise civil society above its egoism. On the contrary, security is the insurance of its egoism. (Marx 1975, 163–164)

A Drama in Three Acts

Let us turn to Hegel, who also embraced the idea of a "civilizing mission" to be carried out in the colonies. In *Philosophy of Right,* he argues:

> In the same way civilized nations may treat as barbarians the peoples who are behind them in the essential elements of the state. Thus, the rights of mere herdsmen, hunters, and tillers of the soil are inferior, and their independence is merely formal. Note. Wars and contests arising under such circumstances are struggles for recognition in behalf of a certain definite content. It is this feature of them which is significant in world-history. (Hegel 2001, 269)

The question is whether the potential of Hegel's thought has been exhausted with regard to this problem. Susan Buck-Morss offers an in-depth study on Hegel's legitimization of slavery in *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (see Buck-Morss 2009, 115–118). As I argue later on, her reconstruction of his arguments provides grounds for such investigations into Hegel's thinking on violence and law as those offered here. As Susan Buck-Morss has shown in the context of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, with the famous master-slave dialectic and the Haitian revolution we can only begin to understand the complexity of Hegel's theory in this regard.

On the other hand, in the context of Kant and Hegel's *Logic*, Walter Benjamin's classic essay *Towards the Critique of Violence* seems particularly insightful, because it discovers a new distinction between "law-making" violence, i.e. military violence that establishes new legal rights, and law-preserving violence, i.e. police violence which uses violence to preserve the law. Benjamin illustrates the tension between legal violence and illegal actions with the figure of the "great" criminal admired by the people in defiance of the law. Duncan Stuart explains that:

> The police use state-sanctioned violence to uphold the law and the effectiveness of this violence gives the established legal order the appearance of permanence. Law-preserving violence is the inevitable response to any attempt to break the law or found a new legal order. Law-preserving violence need not take the form of an actual punishment. Rather, the threat of violence always hangs over any-

To sum up, the attempt to legitimize the principle of freedom in Kant's classic Enlightenment formulation as the principle of law, or the self-limitation of freedom, seems deconstructible, and is therefore revealed as ideological.

> one seeking to undermine the law. This is what Benjamin means when he refers to the retributory power of the state as fate. (Stuart 2021)

As can already be seen from our presentation of the Kantian logic of law in its performative power of self-establishment, the two types of violence distinguished by Benjamin, namely a "legislative" or "law--making" violence (*rechtsetzende Gewalt*) and a "lawpreserving violence" (*rechtserhaltende Gewalt*), cluster into a single, yet dual figure. From its outset this legislative violence aims to preserve the law and therefore at the same time appears as its opposite, as law-preserving violence. It aims to monopolize itself—monopolize violence. In this context Benjamin points to

> the surprising possibility that the law's interest in a monopoly of violence vis-à-vis individuals is explained not by the intention of preserving legal ends but, rather, by the intention of preserving the law itself; that violence, when not in the hands of the law, threatens it not by the ends that it may pursue but by its mere existence outside the law. (Benjamin 1999, 239)

At first glance it may seem surprising that after Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* we do not turn to Hegel's *Principles of the Philosophy of Law*. However, it is the *Science of Logic* that develops the most complex and significant account of freedom and violence. The discussion of the relationship between the appearance of law itself, the manifestation of the violence of law, and then the transition to freedom, dramatically splits into three acts. When considered from the perspective of Benjamin's *Critique of Violence*, the moment that Kant viewed as the end, culminating in the establishment of a legal order—or, to follow Benjamin, of violence preserving the law—is only the starting point for Hegel. This crucial distinction—between violence and law—is annulled not only by Kant, but also by Hegel (in *Logic*), since the purpose of establishing the legal order is merely to preserve it. In the philosophical tradition extending from Benjamin to Agamben, this situation is conceptualized as "the state of emergency," in which *nomos* is constituted in an internal reference to *anomos*, in a kind of a vicious circle of the two kinds of violence. "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the »state of emergency« in which we live is the rule" (Benjamin 1968, 257).

The first act of the Hegelian discussion of freedom in *Logic* is the manifestation of the absolute as an absolute necessity, in the third and final section of the second transitional "book" of the *Logic*—"The

Doctrine of Essence." The first difference in relation to Kant concerns the moment of establishing law, which is explicitly connected with the lack of rational legitimisation. In Hegel, this establishing appears to be rather mystical—in the sense of Derrida's "mystical foundation of authority"— the subtitle of his late work devoted entirely to the analysis and interpretation of Benjamin's essay. Derrida claims:

> Discourse here meets its limit—in itself, in its very performative power. It is what I propose to call the *mystical*. There is here a silence walled up in a violent structure of the founding act; walled up, walled in because this silence is not external to the language. Here is the sense in which I would be tempted to interpret, beyond simple commentary, what Montaigne and Pascal call the *mystical foundation of authority*. (Derrida 1992, 242)

Derrida wrote about the "walling up/in," and in his *Logic* Hegel wrote about concealment (*Verschlossenheit*) of the essence in being:

> The absolutely necessary only *is* because it *is*; it otherwise has neither condition nor ground.—But it equally is pure *essence*, its *being* the simple immanent reflection; it is *because* it is. As reflection, it has a ground and a condition but has only *itself* for this ground and condition. It is in-itself, but its in-itself is its immediacy, its possibility is its actuality.—*It is, therefore, because it is* (…).
>
> Absolute necessity is therefore *blind*. On the one hand, the two different terms determined as actuality and possibility have the shape of *immanent reflection* as *being*; they are therefore *free actualities*, neither of which reflectively shines in the other, nor will either allow in it a trace of its reference to the other; grounded in itself, each is inherently necessary. *Necessity* as *essence* is concealed (*verschlossen*) in this being; the reciprocal contact of these actualities appears, therefore, as an empty externality. (Hegel 2000, 487–488)

The "mystical" is expressed in Hegel explicitly through the destruction of contradictory universalities and actualities. When Hegel attempts to describe the tautological nature of law in order to demonstrate the logic of its manifesting, it is undoubtedly the most visionary and poetic aspect of his *Logic.* First, the absolute necessity expresses itself in a contradictory, mutually impervious coexistence: "This essence is *averse to light*, because there is no *reflective shining* in these actualities, no reflex—because they are grounded purely in themselves, are shaped for themselves, manifest themselves only to *themselves*—because they are only being" (Hegel 2000, 487).

Next comes destruction:

> But this *contingency* is rather absolute necessity; it is the *essence* of those free, inherently necessary actualities (…). The *essence* will break forth in them and will reveal what *it* is and what *they* are (…) it will break forth against this being in the form of being, hence as the *negation* of those actualities, a negation *absolutely different* from their being; it will break forth as their *nothing*, as an *otherness* which is just as *free* towards them as their being is free. (…) In their self-based shape they are indifferent to form, are a content and consequently *different* actualities and a *determinate* content. (Hegel 2000, 488)

And here we encounter law:

> This content is the *mark* that necessity impressed upon them by letting them go free as absolutely actual (…) It is the mark to which necessity appeals as witness to its right, and, overcome by it, the actualities now perish. This manifestation of what *determinateness* is in its truth, that it is negative self-reference, is a *blind* collapse into otherness. (Hegel 2000, 488)

This metaphysical vision of the "*blind* collapse into otherness," where law appears as the unity of contingency and necessity, creates a situation that Hegel later attributes to the substance itself as the core of reality.

> It is a distinguishing, of which the moments are themselves the whole totality of necessity, and therefore *subsist* absolutely, but do so in such a way that their subsisting is *one* subsistence, and the difference only the *reflective shine* of the movement of exposition, and this reflective shine is the absolute itself. (Hegel 2000, 489)

It is thus a situation that can be described as the "state of emergency" in Kant's legal order, i.e. as the rule of so-called law-preserving violence, to put in Benjamin's terms, insofar as the law preserving violence is the threatening violence. It would be a "legislative violence" (*rechtsetzende Gewalt*) that aims, right from the outset, to preserve the law and therefore appears as its opposite: the "law-preserving violence" (*rechtserhaltende Gewalt*) that aims to monopolize itself, i.e. to monopolize violence. Benjamin describes the state of emergency as a law-preserving violence that "resides in the fact that there is only one fate and that what exists, and in particular what threatens, belongs inviolably to its order" (Benjamin 1999, 285).

Moving to the second act of Hegel's dramatic presentation of the constitution of law, in his view law-preserving violence is expressed in the concept of substance. The basis of contradictory actualities appears to be that they are mutually false. However, the very appearance of their self-sufficiency paradoxically turns out to be absolute actuality. The blind collapse into otherness—this is precisely Hegel's so-called absolute or its manifestation.

The potential of Hegel's argument is embedded in a unique dialectical situation, which Slavoj Žižek also described as a decisive moment in *Logic*, and as a "vertiginous" conceptual reversal (Žižek 1994, 37). Pure appearance or pure seeming turns out to be identical with absolute reality, the moment when Hegel's *Schein*—something supposedly relational or reflective—turns out to be the very core of the inert substantiality. This moment in Hegel's *Logic* involves a decisive shift in the understanding of falsehood itself. If falsehood is inherent in substance, a whole constellation of modal terms and their determinations changes its meaning—due to fracturing or substantial curvature. It is also the moment which Žižek diagnoses as a particularly important step towards the transition from substance to subject, from necessity to freedom:

Pure appearance or pure seeming turns out to be identical with absolute reality, the moment when Hegel's *Schein*—something supposedly relational or reflective—turns out to be the very core of the inert substantiality.

> Absolute necessity as *causa sui* is an inherently contradictory notion; its contradiction is explicated, posited as such, when the notion of substance (synonymous with Spinozean absolute necessity) splits into active substance (cause) and passive substance (effect). This opposition is then surmounted by the category of reciprocity, wherein the cause which determines its effect is itself determined by the effect—thereby, we pass from substance to subject. (…) Thus we arrive at the most concise definition of the subject: the subject is an effect that entirely posits its own cause. Hegel says the same thing when he concludes that absolute necessity is »a relation because it is a distinguishing whose moments are themselves its whole totality, and therefore absolutely subsist, but in such a manner that there is only one subsistence and the difference is only the *Schein* of the expository process, and this (*Schein*) is the absolute itself«. The vertiginous reversal is brought about by the last clause of the last sentence (…). That is to say, had the sentence ended without "and this is the absolute itself," we would be left with the traditional definition of the substance as absolute: each of its moments (attributes) is in itself the whole totality of the substance, it "subsists absolutely," so that there is only one subsistence, and difference concerns only the appearance. (Žižek 1994, 37)

The manifestation of necessity or substance in the *Logic* reveals the immanent perspective on the fracturing of the absolute itself underlying the falsehood of any modal or finite point of view, in the Spinozian sense. According to Žižek the transition from substance to subject assumes that this paradoxical reflection is not only our external reflection, but an immanent fracturing of the absolute. Žižek interprets it as the death of God, or, in Lacanian terms—as the suspension of the big Other—*L'autre n'existe pas* (Žižek 1994, 42). I would call this *the recognition of the ultimate limit of the rationalisation of law in Hegel.*

The third act brings the direct transition to the concept of freedom. It transpires that in the Hegelian drama the establishment of the rule of law-preserving violence—the manifestation of absolute necessity mentioned above—is only the starting point for the final solution of Benjamin's vicious circle of law-constituting and law-preserving violence, which points towards what Benjamin termed *divine violence*—the third, separate kind of violence that leads beyond the vicious circle of the constituting and the law-preserving violence. This new distinction also led Derrida to the important conclusion regarding this issue in *Force of law* (Derrida 1992). He claims it is the possibility to deconstruct law as the law-constituting/law-preserving violence—something that Hegel actually does in *Logic*—and the impossibility of deconstructing justice, corresponding to Benjamin's "divine violence." Derrida argues:

> Since the origin of authority, the foundation or ground, the position of law can't by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground. Which is not to say that they are in themselfs unjust in the sense of "illegal." They are neither legal or illegal in they founding moment (…). The structure I am describing here is a structure in which law (*droit*) is essentially deconstructible, whether because it is founded, constructed on interpretable and transformable textual strata (and that is the history of law (*droit*), its possible and necessary transformation, sometimes its amelioration), or because its ultimate foundation is by definition unfounded. The fact that law is deconstructible is not bad news. We may even see in this a stroke of luck for politics, for all historical progress. But the paradox that I'd like to submit for discussion is the following: it is the deconstructible structure of law (*droit*) or if you prefere of justice as *droit* that also insures the possibility of deconstruction. Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice. (Derrida 1992, 14)

Hegel's Transition from Substance to Subject as a Deconstruction of Law: Beyond the Vicious Circle of Law-Making and Law-Preserving Violence?

Let's now return to the issue of colonialism, in order to ask again how Hegel's philosophy could potentially contribute to our understanding of the contemporary reversal of liberal democracy. In light of our earlier discussion of Kant and Mbembe, and then Benjamin's problematics of violence and law, at least three strands come into play.

First, if we compare Kant and Hegel, the latter does not establish freedom as the rule of law, because in the *Logic* freedom stands above law. It doesn't fit within the logical space set by the law—freedom means directly the *overcoming* of substance as the manifestation of law in its destructive logic. In this sense, it becomes doubtful whether Kant could have grasped Haiti, as in the kind of research that Susan Buck-Morss has conducted with regard to Hegel. The clear boundary drawn in the *Logic* between the logic of law and the logic of freedom means that both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the key theme from the *Logic* can be read as a slave revolt directed against external power. It is in any case a transition that can be sufficiently understood only through the prism of the relation of domination and its abolition.

Second, what Hegel describes as the logic of law brings to mind something schizophrenic, a final split, the process of diversifying universes, both apparently self-grounded and self-sufficient, and yet existing within the same conditions. The best-known historical interpretation of such a contradiction between division and the same conditions of existence is, of course, the contradiction between capital and labour. Benjamin, inspired by Sorel, also writes his essay about violence and law under circumstances that direct his gaze towards the form of the general strike.

But thirdly, if we consider this again through the prism of Mbembe's diagnosis of the transformation of liberal democracy into a society of hostility, and try to look at Hegel in the manner proposed by Susan Bauck-Morss (this time with reference to the *Logic*), we can see that a general strike (or revolution) isn't the only possible scenario of going beyond the vicious circle of two types of violence. Mbembe suggestively shows that the division exported to the fringes of civilization now begins to affect it in its own geographically dense area. As the whole of Atlantic slavery existed within the entire economic system in the period of the rise of democracy, today's existence of "a sort of boring ice floe" that Europe is beginning to turn into, is still a contradictory coexistence between refugees and citizens, and among citizens themselves, in the form of an escalating culture war (Mbembe 2019, 57).

Therefore, if we consider today's deep entrenchment of ideological positions, manifesting in the retreat of mutually impervious ideological realities into themselves, in *Logic* the starting point is the same moment as the one that Mbembe calls "relation without desire" which in fact appears to be a "desire of apartheid" (Mbembe 2019, 1). Just as in Hegel's vision of "free actualities, neither of which reflectively shines in the other, nor will either allow in it a trace of its reference to the other; grounded in itself, each is inherently necessary."[2]

On the other hand, Mbembe speaks in terms of a split:

> real isolation that is exclusively turned upon itself and that, while pretending to ensure the world's government, seeks exemption from it. What follows is a reflection on today's planetary-scale renewal of the relation of enmity and its multiple reconfigurations. (Mbembe 2019, 1)

All of humanity, including the previously privileged Europeans, become slaves to the logic of hostility, making it a universal experience. However in Hegel's *Logic* we can observe a peculiar, complex change of perspective, which is significant and calls for broader consideration. We can recognize that Hegel's transition to freedom overcomes (or fails to overcome) this ultimate contradiction between actualities in two distinct ways. Already the manifestation of the law itself—as a "blind collapse into otherness"—is a kind of objective ontological failure, something that cannot be fully rationalized, which is expressed further in the paradoxical concept of substance as an absolute relation, as seen by Žižek. Hegel wrote:

> But the *expositor* (*Auslegerin*) of the absolute is the *absolute* necessity which, as self-determining, is identical with itself. Since this necessity is the reflective shining posited as reflective shining, the sides of this relation, because they are as shine, are *totalities*; for as shine, the differences are themselves and their opposite, that is, they are the whole; and, conversely, they thus are only shine because they are totalities. (Hegel 2010, 489)

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[2] "Absolute necessity is thus *the reflection or form of the absolute*, the unity of being and essence, simple immediacy which is absolute negativity. *On the one hand*, therefore, its differences are not like the determinations of reflection but an *existing manifoldness*, a differentiated actuality in the shape of others independently subsisting over against each other. *On the other hand*, since its connection is that of absolute identity, it is the *absolute conversion* of its actuality into its possibility and its possibility into its actuality.—Absolute necessity is therefore *blind*. On the one hand, the two different terms determined as actuality and possibility have the shape of immanent reflection as being; they are therefore *free actualities*, neither of which reflectively shines in the other, nor will either allow in it a trace of its reference to the other; grounded in itself, each is inherently necessary" (Hegel 2010, 487).

The problem is further exacerbated and confirmed in the dialectics of causality. If it is possible to use such a distinction, it would be not only a "ultimate failure" of *nomos*— right or law—but also a failure of *physis*, insofar as it is already indistinguishable from *nomos* at this stage.[3]

This substantial contradiction is no longer dialectical, but constitutes a real *aporia*—a pure appearance seems to be identical with an absolute actuality. In this sense, the dialectic of the absolute and substance would be the very weakness that addresses the topic of the Warsaw 2020 conference, *The return of Hegel. History, Universality and Dimensions of Weakness*—the moment of exhaustion, when the regressive process could perhaps be reversed. This is also the moment discussed by Susan Buck-Morss, when she juxtaposes the Haitian experience with economic and political powerlessness, which converge in the history of Atlantic slavery.

What this dialectics of substance shows is how the self-contradiction of substance derives, in its opacity, from substance itself, from the essence of law itself. As a result of this, substance is no longer regarded as nature or rational law, but as a pure yet empty structure of the falsehood of the still existing reference based on radical otherness. In fact, the entire ontological structure remains intact. However, as Hegel pointed out, the result of the dialectic "is that the substantiality of the sides that stand in relation is lost, and necessity unveils itself" (Hegel 2010, 504). The logic of transition is still expressed in modal terms, where *contingency* plays a key role:

As a result of this, substance is no longer regarded as nature or rational law, but as a pure yet empty structure of the falsehood of the still existing reference based on radical otherness.

> Necessity does not come to be *freedom* by vanishing but in that its still only *inner* identity is *manifested*, and this manifestation is the identical movement immanent to the different sides, the immanent reflection of shine as shine.—Conversely, *contingency* thereby comes to be *freedom* at the same time, for the sides of necessity, which have the shape of independent, free actualities that do not reflectively shine into each other, *are now posited as an identity*, so that now these totalities of immanent reflection, in their differences, also *shine as identical*, in other words, they are also posited as only one and the same reflection. (Hegel 2010, 504)

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[3] Also Derrida explained: "The structure I am describing here is a structure in which law (*droit*) is essentially deconstructible, whether because it is founded, constructed on interpretable and transformable textual strata (and that is the history of law (*droit*), its possible and necessary transformation, sometimes its amelioration), or because its ultimate foundation is by definition unfounded" (Derrida 1992, 14).

In this passage we encounter the final conceptual formulation of the famous movement of recognition or subject formation in the Hegelian sense. It is quite convoluted, due to its still being expressed in modal terms, but the ethical moment is undoubtedly identifiable here. The transition to freedom involves here, as it were, a decision to abandon the logic designated by law, insofar as the mystical authority of the necessity "unveils itself." Freedom is synonymous with the recognition of a shared responsibility for mutual contingency in the face of the non-existence of truth only in-itself; the big Other—*L'autre n'existe pas* in Žižek's terms. It means that such freedom can neither be understood as "a truth" in the liberal manner, as mutual limitation of rights and property, a concept determined, as in Kant's narrative, by reference to that which threatens it. It can neither be understood in the republican manner, as subordination to the "truth" that already exists as the always already defined "common." This is because in the Hegelian transition, community is formed precisely by this randomness, contingency.

The transition to freedom involves here, as it were, a decision to abandon the logic designated by law, insofar as the mystical authority of the necessity "unveils itself."

This modal dimension constitutes the prerequisite of Hegelian universality, and if *Logic* contains any explication of the concept of universality, this is the one. At this point it becomes necessary to seek answers to two questions posed by Susan Buck-Morss: one concerning "collective identity" and whether it can be imagined as a creation as inclusive as humanity itself; and the second, enquiring as to "whether there is such a thing today as universal history" and where could we find the path towards it (Buck-Morss 2009, 111).

Here we encounter the extreme point of Hegel's last *aporia*, a "real isolation that is exclusively turned upon itself and that, while pretending to ensure the world's government, seeks exemption from it" (Mbembe 2019, 1). This is the extreme point, as Susan Buck-Morss points out, where universality should be sought. It is the

> moment of the slaves' self-awareness that the situation was not humanly tolerable, that it marked the betrayal of civilization and the limits of cultural understanding. (…) At the same time, we are pushed to the point where Hegel's dialectic of master and slave fall silent. (Buck-Morss 2009, 133)

Still, perhaps Hegel's *Logic* does not remain silent on this point. I would like to actually claim the contrary; it can indeed help to understand the relation of extreme otherness that we face today, and indicate an interesting solution which is not aimed at the erasure of difference, but which helps to understand the singularity inscribed in universality itself. This would I think be exactly the point that Buck-Morss makes—when she suggests the need to adopt "a *radical* neutrality":

> Nothing keeps history univocal except power. We will never have a definitive answer as to the intent of historical actors, and even if we could, this would not be history's truth. It is not that truth is multiple or that the truth is a whole ensemble of collective identities with partial perspectives. Truth is singular, but it is a continuous process of inquiry because it builds on a present that moving ground. History keeps running away from us, going places we, mere humans, cannot predict. The politics of scholarship that I am suggesting is neutrality, but not of the nonpartisan, "truth lies in the middle" sort; rather, it is a radical neutrality that insists on the porosity of the space between enemy sides, a space contested and precarious, to be sure, but free enough for the idea of humanity to remain in view. (Buck-Morss 2009, 150)

Such radical neutrality can be formulated in the perspective opened by Hegel's logic. It would be a sublation, not an erasure, of difference.

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Citation:
Pańków, Marcin. 2022. “Two Metaphysics of Freedom: Kant and Hegel on Violence and Law in the Era of the Fall of Liberal Democracy.” *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 199–219.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.9

Autor: Marcin Pańków
Tytuł: Dwie metafizyki wolności. Kant i Hegel o przemocy i prawie w epoce upadku demokracji liberalnej

Abstrakt: Artykuł jest próbą przemyślenia dziedzictwa Kanta i Hegla w świetle problematyki prawa, przemocy i uniwersalności. Jest również analizą tego dziedzictwa w kontekście dwóch współczesnych perspektyw na historyczne losy naszej cywilizacji zdominowanej przez Europę – w wydaniu Achille Mbembe i Susan Buck-Morss. Najpierw rozpatruję Kantowskie ufundowanie *Rechtstaat* w świetle klasycznego *Przyczynku do krytyki przemocy* Benjamina i współczesnej krytyki władzy kolonialnej Mbembego. Następnie proponuję nowe ujęcie centralnej koncepcji z *Logiki* Hegla – czyli przejścia od konieczności do wolności – f z tej samej perspektywy, uzupełnionej o interpretację Benjamina przeprowadzoną przez Derridę oraz interpretację Hegla w wydaniu Žižka. Dialektyka modalności z Heglowskiej *Nauki logiki* wydaje się wątkiem o tyle niedocenianym, o ile Heglowska idea uniwersalności czyli wolności znajduje oparcie w precyzyjnie sformułowanej ontologii i krytyce prawa.

Słowa kluczowe: wolność, przemoc, prawo, ideologia, przygodność, kolonializm, Hegel

“The People’s History of Poland”: a review forum

“The People’s History of Poland”: A Review Forum

The *Praktyka Teoretyczna* Review Forum on Adam Leszczyński’s *Ludowa historia Polski*. *Historia wyzysku i oporu. Mitologia panowania*, Wydawnictwo WAB, Warszawa, 2020. 669 pages.

Partner: the working group for historical sociology of the Polish Sociological Association
Idea and coordination: Wiktor Marzec
In collaboration with: Mateusz Janik

Recent months brought an unprecedented wave of works dealing with the history of polish peasants, their place in “national” history, role they played in the economic development of Poland and far reaching violence they experienced, not without a trace for cultural formations lasting till today. Books by Kamil Janicki, Adam Leszczyński, Michał Narożniak, Kacper Pobłocki, Michał Rauszer and Keely Stater-Halstedhave irreversibly changed out perception of the peasant past and the way the history of Poland is researched and grasped (Janicki 2021; Leszczyński 2020; Narożniak 2021; Pobłocki 2021; Rauszer 2021b; 2021a). This debate is important for the self-perception of the national community, and as serving such aims is conducted mostly in Polish. As the idea of bridging the debates in the national language and international circulation of ideas is dear for this journal, we initiated a review forum connecting these two realms in various ways. Taking one of these books, Adam Leszczyński’s *Ludowa historia Polski* (“The People’s History of Poland”), as a starting point, we invited scholars from Poland and abroad, and the author himself, to comment of the book and debate its relevance in broader contexts. We publish the forum in English to provide insight in the debate as well for the global community interested in history of peasants, of the region or in the state of historiographical debate in Poland.

MARCIN JARZĄBEK

“The People’s History of Poland”—a Guidebook for Middle-Class Readers

The book by Adam Leszczyński is probably the most intensely debated (and also the best selling) Polish historical work of the last half year. Though it is not the first publication in recent years showing the rising interest in the history and legacy of serfdom or labour history, it is the first full academic panorama of the whole history of Poland that uses the perspective of people’s history. Therefore, much has been said already about its strengths and weaknesses. My commentary will not point to factual inaccuracies in one or another detail or discuss the validity of the book’s general interpretation line (what many reviews of it do). Instead, I focus on three general issues: (1) what is, according to Leszczyński, people’s history, (2) what is Poland for him, and—last but not least—(3) what is the book’s intention and aim?

(1) The author of the Polish people’s history consciously steps into the shoes of Howard Zinn, borrowing not only the title but also the idea of putting all kinds of exploited groups into one basket. As he declares: The “people’s history of Poland should be a history of the bottom 90% of the society, the ruled not the rulers, the poor not the rich, mostly uneducated and always subordinated to the authority” (Leszczyński 2020, 569). The bottom 90%—in fact, very diverse—is, however, not the subject for itself but mainly throughout the relationship with “the upper 10%.” As the book’s subtitle says, it is “a history of exploitation and resistance.” Leszczyński shows the history of Poland as

an economic struggle where the rulers used their position and force (often: hegemony) to exploit the society. The exploited usually have little power or capital (economic, social, cultural) to change their position for the better. That is why the resistance and sometimes its violent form—a rebellion—were the only proper and, in fact, reasonable collective solutions to counteract the oppression.

Leszczyński's people's history is deeply rooted in economic history and, in particular, rational choice theory (not necessarily explicitly mentioned but often seen beneath the surface). The exploitation of peasantry or workers was, from the Polish nobleman or capitalist's view (apart from all kinds of mythologies that justified it), usually a reasonable solution. The semi-peripheral position of Poland within the global economic system was the reason that forced labour seemed to be profitable. On the other hand, the revolt was often no less reasonable for the powerless and desperate exploited. The Warsaw historian convincingly shows that the frequency and strength of peasant revolts coincides with the rising oppression and hopes for a positive change. Therefore, we observe waves of collective insubordination in the mid-18th century and the first half of the 19th century when those hopes could be met with some institutional changes. Although often spontaneous, the revolts of peasants (and later workers) reasonably used the tools available to them: performativity (also performativity of violence) and collective actions.

In that respect, I need to add that the issue that seems to be the most controversial for many Polish historians is that Adam Leszczyński compares serfdom with slavery. Not only does he compare, but he also states that, regardless of some legal and contextual differences, peasants in Poland for centuries were "white Negroes," viewed by the ideologies of ruling noble elites as "yokels" and "naturally subordinated." As he argues and quotes the sources, that comparison was already explicitly made by some perceptive observers in the Early Modern period, so we should not avoid using it today. Here comes the problem of—what I would call—mutual misunderstanding. On the one hand, Leszczyński's critics tend to ignore that he is aware of those differences between a slave on a plantation in Georgia and a crofter in Masovia. Nevertheless, he shows that both occupied the same social position in the social structure and within the discourses legitimising it. On the other hand, Leszczyński focuses so on the elites' legitimising mythologies and peasants' resistance that other forms of the peoples' life and their agency almost disappear from his sight. From the "The People's History of Poland," we learn a lot about the exploitation, resistance, and domination mythologies but much less about the actual 90% of the "bottom 90%" lifetime. Everyday life appears here only as the context of the three main themes, which is, in my view, a pity.

(2) To write a synthetic history of over a thousand-year history means to select only some cases to build up the general picture. Since the term "Poland" referred to different entities through the ages, that task is even more difficult than in England or the US. One can always ask why the author did not refer to the context of a region X or a city Y or an author Z, and one never gets the picture with all possible elements (in fact, Leszczyński notes that and cites Jerzy Jedlicki's notion of "a demon of induction" who can possess a positivistic historian). Having said that, I still regret that Poland in the reviewed book is located predominantly around Warsaw, Łódź and Krakow, and sometimes also in the Eastern borderlands. Some regions in Western Poland like Upper Silesia hardly ever appear, even in the chapters about 20th-century history. That perspective—centred around what has been the Russian Polish Kingdom and Austrian Galicia—is quite typical for Polish historical narratives in general. In other words, Leszczyński cuts himself off from traditional elite-centred historiography but follows the same centralised pattern when it comes to geography.

If geographical framework might be disappointing, the chronology of Polish history, introduced by Leszczyński, is, in my view, an innovative concept that can be useful for further studies. He divides the history into six periods: early middle-ages, the period of the German law colonisation (up to 1520), the Early-Modern manor economy (which he calls "the tightening of the screw"), "the end of slavery" (mid-18th up to the abolition of serfdom in the Polish Kingdom in 1864), "capitalism on peripheries" (mid-19th to 1944) and communist Poland—"the exploitation in the name of the party." The periodisation consciously goes beyond political history schemes, arguing, e.g., that introducing the general obligatory serfdom in 1520 is a far more critical date for the people than the death of another king. That chronology allows one to notice key processes happening regardless of political changes, including the partitions or the rise of the Polish state in 1918. On the other hand, I regret that there is a tiny place for military conflicts in that periodisation, even for the First and the Second World War, which without question had an immense importance for "the bottom 90%" in all possible dimensions. The Polish people's history of WWI and WWII is still to be written.

(3) Beginning this commentary with the parallels between Zinn's and Leszczyński's books, I should return to it once again. Leszczyński, like his American predecessor, openly declares that writing history is

a political act, a statement in the public debate. Positivistic (or, in another way, modernist) belief in the cognitive and political neutrality of a historian is not only a mirage but also a mischievous illusion, supporting, in fact, the elite-centred view of the past. Citing Andrzej Nowak (a conservative Polish historian), Leszczyński argues that right-wing historiography is already aware of its political power and uses it for their needs in strengthening a nationalistic and elitist view on Polish history. It is high time for the progressive historiography to do the opposite, not following positivistic illusions—says Leszczyński. "»The People's History of Poland« must put the interests and needs of the subordinated people at the first place and entirely reinterpret the national history from their perspective" (Leszczyński 2020, 570).

Here come two interlinked questions which, in my opinion, are central to understanding the "The People's History of Poland": to whom is the book dedicated and what message does it carry? To find an answer to the former question, let's first deal with the latter. In my view, the full impact on exploitation, resistance and ruling elites' ideologies serves to demonstrate the sources and mechanisms of social distance and long-lasting mistrust between Polish elites and Polish people (*lud*). That is why we read so little about the people's lives and so much about their economic and power relationship with the elites. The bottom strata had (and still may have) a lot of good reasons not to trust the upper- and middle-classes and not to share their viewpoints. If both speak about values, social order, dignity, freedom, they, in fact, refer to two different memories of deeply-rooted historical experiences. Rare moments in Polish history when a noticeable part of the elites offered true understanding and a sense of community with the people (like in 1794, 1863, 1905 1918, 1980) usually ended with a failure or a disappointment. That is why the bottom strata were and are sensitive to the signs of patronising and looking down on them.

Finally, we can name the reader of Leszczyński's book: this is not the best-seller for the bottom classes but, on the contrary, a guidebook for middle-class intellectuals, educators, activists, thinkers, and policymakers (of all kinds). "The People's History of Poland" should make them/us aware of the deep reservoir of mutual class mistrust and historical reasons for that distance. It reminds us of economic mechanisms of exploitation, standing behind it, which might not be noticeable when one does not belong to the bottom classes. Considering that the current middle class in Poland is on one-two generations of peasant or workers' origins, it is a form of a collective anamnesis of who "we" were in the past. If, despite all its weakness, that is the effect of Leszczyński's book, it will meet its aim.

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Let me also add a little postscript: while writing this commentary in English, I realised that, paradoxically, this book might be far more surprising for a Polish reader who is used to the traditional textbook and elite-oriented historiographical narratives than for a foreigner, aware of what the people's history is. Nevertheless, in Polish historiography, the importance of Leszczyński's book is marked not only by what he wrote (and whatnot), but also by the time it was published and its political statement.

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Citation:
Jarząbek, Marcin. 2022. "»The People's History of Poland«—a Guidebook for Middle-Class Readers." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 225–230.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.10

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Tytuł: *Ludowa historia polski*— przewodnik dla czytelnika z klasy średniej

EWA MAJEWSKA

Serfdom as the Matrix of Contemporary Poland, Critically Revisited

> The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule.
>
> Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*

This large and important book combines several strategies and tactics. Its title, announces *Ludowa historia Polski* ("The People's History of Poland"), thus making a reference to the official name of the communist Poland, until 1990: "People's Republic of Poland" (now it is just "The Republic of Poland"—*Rzeczpospolita Polska*). The shift in the name of the Polish state shows, what has really changed in 1989. Leszczyński's book title also references the famous work of Howard Zinn, *People's History of the United States.* It also makes an appeal to the "history of oppression and resistance" (this is the second part of the book's title) and the "mythology of lordship" (the third part of the book's title). Spoiler alert—yes, Leszczyński indeed discusses all these matters in his large analysis of Polish history. Following Zinn and other versions of critical historiography, he positions serfdom, which occupied almost 1000 years of Polish history, at the center of his understanding of how today's Poland was built on the exploitation and exclusion of the peasant masses. This is the first effort to address Poland's history from such perspective, and as such, this book definitely revolutionalized the approach to history as a discipline within Polish history research. Let's just mention that in the last century, as well as after 2000 the only consistent matrix of the Polish history applied by historians was Christianity, which also shaped Poland's past for a thousand years. The Marxist research from the 1960s and 1970s was swept under the pretext of "de-ideologization," and any effort to discuss class dynamic, as well as gender, colonial and ethnic divisions, was only possible in a positivist way. Leszczyński's book accounts for this paradigm shift, tracing it back to the Stalinist era and other repressive moments of Poland's recent history.

Leszczyński only reveals his methodological inspirations in the closing chapters of the book, where we read about Nietzsche, Hayden White and Michel Foucault as well as a slightly mockingly styled small chapter on Howard Zinn. We all know that without the incessant involvement of the latter, we would never see such books as that of Leszczyński, and thus, such positioning of Zinn's work in Leszczyński's books obliges us to ask: What is possible in the field of history in Poland? How would his new analysis be received if Leszczyński openly claimed Zinn's legacy? How would it be received if the author used feminist methodology, Gayatri Spivak's theory of the "subaltern" or other intersectional, interdisciplinary and politically engaged tools? Poland's current historical research, predominantly petrified in the 19th century positivist methodologies of "grasping the facts" with one's bare hands. Such astonishingly a-scientific method is widely practiced by Poland's academic historians as if the scientific obligation to choose and explain the method, evident in other disciplines, was obsolete in the specific field of analyzing past events. It can easily be deduced that Leszczyński's choices to apply Hayden White, but not Spivak, to discuss Zinn, but without fully affiliating with his method, was a strategic choice. The times when Bronisław Geremek read the history of France at the dawn of Europe's modernity by means of analyzing those excluded and marginalized from it are already long forgotten, and history methodology conveniently returned to mere positivist factography. It seems that as some other countries' histories can be read by its exclusions, the analysis of Poland's history has been petrified as being defined by a thousand years of Christianity, depicted by heroic victories and no failures, and approached solely from the perspective of the upper classes, the elitist view of nobles and *intelligentsia.* What Leszczyński does, introducing another factor, serfdom, which materially shaped the reality of Poland for a period of time as long as the presence of Christianity, was for decades a dirty secret, and now comes to light by means of his book. Leszczyński succeeded in consequently depicting the situation of women and ethnic minorities, especially Jews and Ukrainians, which also is a novelty in Polish historiography. While the notion of "gender" does not make an appearance in the book's method, the care with which the archive materials are selected in order to reveal the women's situation throughout the depicted thousand years is inspiring.

Obviously, a thousand years is a long time, hardly conforming to a complete account in one book, even a large one. But Leszczyński's task was of a more critical than archivist nature. His aim—to introduce serfdom as a grey eminence of the history of Poland, as a factor overdetermining its past and present; that purpose of the monumental book—was accomplished. A good question would be, however, whether the history of serfdom is the same as "The People's History of Poland"? Were "the people" only a passive, disorganized receiver of the historical necessity expressed from the hands of the serfdom's functionaries? The answer is obviously negative, and the servant's resistance was never reduced solely reduced to individual gestures of vengeful atrocity against the masters. Peasant and proletarian revolts and uprisings had organized structures, long term aims and elaborate claims, thus undermining the supposed passivity of the people. Jacques Ranciere dismantles the philosopher's image of "his poor" on multiple occasions, as do Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt in their *Public Sphere and Experience.* Gayatri Spivak on the other hand aptly demonstrates, how "the poor woman of India" might neither be poor nor fulfilling the stereotypical Western codes of orientalized femininity. These are just some of the multiple references absent in Leszczyński's book, thus making his vision of "the people" to some extent more stereotypical than he intended it to be.

Leszczyński's book was criticized by several commentators for insufficient precision in addressing the gender issues and ethnic diversity of Poland throughout its history. I would like to partially agree with such assessments—but only on a methodological level—and thus, as I explained above, such perspective would make this book inaccessible for the mainstream historians in Poland, and thus would make it impossible to finally undermine the current state of Poland's historical research in a mainstream, mediatized debate. It should nevertheless be emphasized that on the factographic level Leszczyński's book embraces the gender and ethnicity based inequalities in ways which sometimes really are inspiring. I believe his choice of discussed archive materials depicting the lives and deaths of peasants in Poland addresses women's distinct suffering inflicted by the land owners and feudal aristocracy. Furthermore, the Jewish and Ukrainian questions are consequently analyzed throughout the book to build up the suggestion that, even without the Shoah, we would probably witness some dramatic cumulation of antisemitic resentment in Poland in the early 20th century. This becomes clear when Leszczyński meticulously recapitulates the clashes between Poles and Jews built up within serfdom mechanisms while discussing particularly rich archive materials. The same holds for the Ukrainian question and the contemporary ambivalent sentiments and behaviors of Polish people towards our Ukrainian neighbors, who today constitute some 500,000 people's diaspora in Poland, (working mainly in low--income jobs and paid less than the citizens of Poland). Today's ambiguous relations Poles have with the Ukrainians, sometimes declaring brotherhood, and most often just serving prejudice and exploitative work conditions, finds its detailed explanation in Leszczyński's book. The archive material discussed by Leszczyński, particularly that from times after the 15th century, amounts to a systemic mix of colonial and exploitative abuse of Ukraine's population by the Polish upper classes.

These racist and misogynist aspects of Polish history analyzed, as Leszczyński does, from the perspective of the systemic mechanisms of serfdom, would gain far more visibility if the author decided to signalize them directly, within his methodological apparatus, in the book. Without such generalized, methodological highlights, they sometimes evaporate from view and thus open ways to the—unjust, as I tried to explain above—criticisms concerning supposed gender or ethnicity based blindspots. As we see in chapters concerning the method, Leszczyński clearly tries to address the current state of history research in Poland to undermine and change it. He begins with Nietzsche's demand of the need to practice critical history, neither based on blind affirmation of historical figures nor solely on archivist precision, but on the desire to understand the contemporary times of the historian better by approaching the past events with a clear conscience that such grasping of the past is always conditioned by the current situation of the researcher.

This important book engages with several stakes on different levels. This makes it a fascinating combination of a impressively large archive research summary, an invitation to historical debate, and a war Leszczyński declares against positivist methodology of the historical studies dominant in contemporary Polish academia. It is also an introduction of poststructuralism into the methodology of historical studies, which might sound surprising after the work of Bronisław Geremek from the 1970s but is indeed still necessary. Leszczyński engages with the uses and misuses of Marxism in Polish historical studies throughout the 20th and 21th centuries, rightly pointing to the commonly observed phenomena—namely, that if you kill dialectics, both emancipation and the quality of your research die as well, which indeed happened in a large cluster of Polish historical academic work. After 1989, anything that could be associated with Marxism—criticality, engagement and nonconformism in particular, made the Polish historical research return to the sad positivist practice of "collecting and organizing data," an approach abandoned even by the police as it became obvious that the psychological and subjective motifs, unexpected shifts, external conditioning, class, race and gender, long processes of trauma and exploitation and other factors need to be considered and methodologically explained in order to understand "facts." Polish historians forgot this in the Stalinist era, as Leszczyński rightly pointed, but this large blind spot continues in historical scholarship after 1989 as well, now legitimized by the supposed necessity to "abandon Marxism" as a politically incorrect methodology. Leszczyński brilliantly connects the two large returns of the positivist muting of context and diversity in historical sciences—that from the 1950s and that of 1989, thus bringing us to the understanding of how Poland's impossibility of understanding history directly translates into forms of petrified feudal remnants of serfdom in contemporary socio-political relations. He also mentions other critical historical authors of the current time; however, he does not engage with them throughout the book.

Leszczyński's book responds to the perfectly pertinent problem of today's state of exception applications by conservative governments to the immediacy of the contemporary relations between the executive power and the bare lives of individuals in Poland. Although the "contemporary grange" and "remnants of feudal relations today" are mentioned in his book, Leszczyński builds a convincing explanation of the ease with which the authoritarian power structures persist in Poland and how they make it possible to ignore the political agency of those whose invisibility, shaped by the lack of privilege, is today maintained by the "positivist" historical (lack of) method. I tried to approach this issue of methodological erasure of the workers from the Polish accounts of anti-state opposition after WWII in the book *Feminist Antifascism: Counterpublics of the Common.* Leszczyński did something very similar, and more, as he asked the fundamental question concerning the privilege of the supposedly "descriptive" rather than "critical" method in the historical studies. Both our books discuss Howard Zinn, but while I fully embrace his revisionist attitude to the traditionalist, *de facto* conservative making of history, Leszczyński takes some (rhetorical, I believe) "methodological distance." This results in mild comments of conservative historians praising Leszczyński for "not being a leftist radical" as if there was something principally wrong with having political opinions and—more importantly—as if the majority of Polish historians were not radical conservatives in their scholarly practice. Leszczyński not only undermines the hegemony of the conservative perspective in Polish historiography, but he also proves to what extent the supposedly "direct access" to "data" consists, in fact, in cementing the past without discussion or revision.

Perhaps the greatest value of this book is the legitimization and, in fact, perpetuation of a methodological *coup*, after which the supposed neutrality of the traditionalist, positivist "direct access" of historians to "facts" will forever be over. This tacitly conducted operation is a strategic masterpiece, and the eventual flaws of the book can therefore, in my opinion, be forgiven. The detailed and methodologically consistent introduction of another historical Matrix of Poland's development—the serfdom—is another important aspect of this book.

Another merit of Leszczyński's project is his ability to combine the struggles of the peasants, with constant attention to their gender and ethnic/national belonging, which—although I already expressed some doubts concerning the methodological choices of the author—is a novelty in Polish historical scholarship, generally divided between the mainstream, gender-blind "descriptions" of the "facts" and its counterpart—the unfortunately positivist as well—supplementing of data concerning women, practiced widely in Polish "feminist" historical scholarship, such as that of the school of Anna Żarnowska and other academics.

As I suggested earlier, the magnitude of Leszczyński's book, which promises to cover over a thousand years of Poland's history in 669 pages, obviously exposes him to easy criticism of this or that omission. Obviously, it was impossible to write about everything, and, for instance, the history of women's or peasants' movements could have been discussed more extensively. The perplexed mechanisms of "subalternation" could also have been discussed in a more complex theoretical framework. But in comparisons with the gains this book brought, and as the wide discussion of this and other books, research and artistic projects, as well as media debates largely prove, the book managed to transform the Polish debates about the past, the method of researching history, as well as the discussions of the current identity of the society of Poland with all its conflicted interests, past remnants and contemporary modes of exploitation and rebellion. For this, I am truly grateful to the author of "The People's History of Poland."

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Citation:
Majewska, Ewa. 2022. "Serfdom as the Matrix of Contemporary Poland, Critically Revisited." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 231–238.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.11

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Tytuł: Pańszczyzna jako matryca współczesnej polski – krytyczna rewizja

BRIAN PORTER-SZŰCS

Whiteness and Polishness

In 2019, the *New York Times* launched a series of articles entitled "The 1619 Project," which argued that we should reorient our understanding of American history by using as a starting point the year when the first African slaves were sold in the territory that would become the United States.[1] Not surprisingly, Donald Trump immediately countered by sponsoring "The 1776 Project," which attempts to position the libertarian right as the heir to a long tradition of American greatness.[2] A furious battle over historical memory is now being fought around these two texts, with school districts mandating that one or the other be adopted into the curriculum, depending on the political orientation dominating in any particular district.[3]

This was the backdrop for me when I read Adam Leszczyński's *Ludowa historia Polski* ("The People's History of Poland"), so the book felt familiar even before I noticed the references to Howard Zinn's (1980) *A People's History of the United States*. The country of my birth and the country that I study as a historian are rarely so explicitly aligned. Both

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[1] See https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619--america-slavery.html.

[2] See https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Presidents-Advisory-1776-Commission-Final-Report.pdf.

[3] Some conservative state legislators have attempted to ban the use of "The 1619 Project." For example, see Schwartz 2021.

Americans and Poles are experiencing a parallel moment of historical reassessment. Zinn's book is forty years old, so there's nothing new about seeing US history from the "bottom up." But most Americans were, until recently, taught to perceive slavery as a tragic moment in our past, a vanquished evil whose legacy we must transcend. Even those of us who think of ourselves as progressive saw racism as a stain on our nation—something that needed to be cleaned off so that the ideals of the Revolution could be more fully realized. These past few years have opened many eyes to the fact that bigotry has an enormous constituency in this country, and (more important) that it is not a mere stain—it is woven into the very fabric of our country. The term "structural racism" is no longer an obscure concept used by historians and social scientists, but instead a regular component in our public discourse. With "The 1619 Project" and the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, we White Americans have been forced to recognize that racism is not a mere character flaw embodied by a small group of bad people.[4] It is, instead, something so deeply rooted in our politics, culture, and society that it is perpetuated even among those who sincerely renounce prejudice.

Adam Leszczyński's contribution is quite similar. Explicitly, his theoretical models are Zinn, Hayden White, Michel Foucault, and most of all, James C. Scott.[5] Yet to cite those authors is misleading, because it makes Leszczyński seem behind the times, as if Poles are only now ready to consider arguments that were made in the US and Western Europe many decades ago. It is true that the trends that reshaped the discipline of history in the 1980s and 1990s had less resonance among scholars in Poland at the time—but how could it have been otherwise, given everything that was going on back then? Leszczyński's most important contribution is not to help Polish historians "catch up" with the West; instead, this book is momentous because it is a Polish instantiation of a dramatic and much-needed shock that is now happening in many different countries: the difficult recognition that *structures* of oppression and exploitation exist in our societies that cannot be easily eradicated by individual commitments to think nice thoughts and treat others with respect. In country after country, people are coming to realize that the point of discussing historical injustice is not (at least, not only) to reconcile previously hostile communities or come to terms with the wrongs that our grandparents committed. In fact, those conversations can easily be led astray, deflected by the insistence that the sins of the parents not be passed on to the children. Much more important are the ways in which engrained patterns of thought, institutional discrimination, unacknowledged privilege, and inherited "cultural capital" perpetuate those past wrongs into the present. In this regard, in Poland, the power of the nobility over the peasantry is at least as important as the history of violence and discrimination against "minorities" (Jews, Ukrainians, etc.).

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[4] A recent change in standard capitalization rules in American English has been to capitalize Black when referring to a racial identity. The canonical Associated Press Style Guide accepted this in June of last year, see: https://apnews.com/article/71386b46dbff8190e71493a763e8f45a. It has remained controversial whether to capitalize White or not, and there are good arguments on both sides. In my opinion, Whiteness needs to be marked in the same way as any other ethnic/national/racial identity, precisely because it has for so long been the unmarked, normative, privileged condition. I am not "white," but a sort of pinkish-beige. I am, however, undeniably White.

[5] Scott's work might be less widely known than the others. His most important books are *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (Scott 2017); *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (Scott 1976); *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Scott 1998); *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Scott 1985).

This is why there is, and must be, a productive presentism in Leszczyński's book. The last line of his conclusion reminds us that "Polska zaś zmienia się przez stulecia w znacznie mniejszym stopniu, niż się Polakom wydaje." The historian is usually the one who pops into every argument in order to say "It's more complicated than you think" and "Don't forget that the past was very different from the present." We tend to be professionally allergic to generalizations, and that's a good thing. Every so often, however, we need to step back and notice that despite all the shifting specifics, there really are some continuities that merit explanation. In this case, these persistent themes involve the cultural attitudes, social hierarchies, political institutions, and economic practices that *systematically* disadvantage some and privilege others. It is banal to say that there have always been poor and oppressed people while others enjoy wealth and privilege. Jesus said it (Matthew 26:11), and so have countless others before and after. The analytical challenge is to push deeper and discover the structures and forms through which power is exerted and maintained, and trace how and why those change. This is what Karl Marx, and Adam Smith before him, did by outlining a theory of historical stages of development characterized by different forms of authority. Our moment, however, is more difficult than theirs, because it is much harder to believe in capital-H-History. In 2021, few can sustain a faith that "progress" will make everything better.

One alternative to placing our trust in historical progress is to relocate our ideals from a future time to a geographical space. This tendency is particularly common along the European periphery, and it is exemplified in "The People's History of Poland." While Leszczyński eschews a faith in progress, he still seems to believe in Europe. The book is punctuated by references to how badly Poland looks when compared to the "kraje cywilizacyjnego centrum," and how much "oriental barbarism" or "oriental cruelty" can be found along the Vistula. Leszczyński is familiar with Larry Wolff's argument that 18th century West Europeans were engaging in an ideological project by constructing an "oriental mirror" that concealed their own flaws—yet he concludes that those observers were nonetheless basing their projection on a realistic portrait of the East.[6]

They probably were. But the point of Wolff's book, like the canonical writing of Edward Said that inspired it, was not that the orientalists were misrepresenting what they saw—rather, the problem was that they were describing it in a way that deflected attention from the injustices and flaws in their own societies (Said 1978). They depicted a barbaric racial and geographical other which could be marked, so that their own status as racially White and geographically Western could be rendered invisible, as the taken-for-granted "normal" against which all others should be measured. This left Eastern Europe in a strange transitional zone, and ensured that the specter of Whiteness would haunt the way we write about the region. For far too long, those of us who study this part of the world have acted as if we don't have to think seriously about race, given that nearly everyone in the area we study is White. Although racialized hostility towards Jews and Roma was a major issue for many decades, post-WWII Poland is reflexively described as racially (and ethnically, religiously, and linguistically) homogeneous. This has allowed us to forget that in the modern world, race is of central importance even were it cannot be seen.

While recognizing that chattel slavery and serfdom were not the same, Leszczyński nonetheless argues that "mimo tych zasadniczych różnic istniały także strukturalne podobieństwa między tymi oboma systemami społecznymi." These structural parallels are indeed as numerous as they are obvious, but I think one particular similarity noted by Leszczyński deserves attention here: „W USA miał on rasowy charakter, ale w Europie Wschodniej (…) różnicę pomiędzy chłopem a szlachcicem uważano za równie wrodzoną, jak kolor skóry w Stanach Zjednoczonych."

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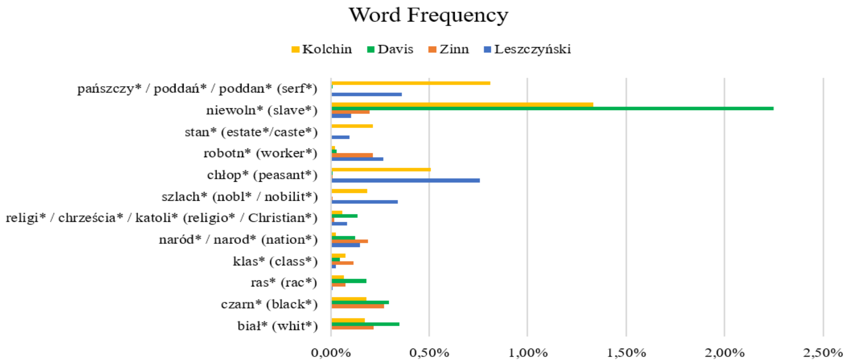
[6] The canonical reference here is Larry Wolff (1994) *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Less well known, but also worthy of attention, is the more recent book *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Wolff 2010).

It is quite striking how American and Polish scholars use different terminology to talk about structures of oppression. Let's compare "The People's History of Poland" to three similar works from this side of the Atlantic: the aforementioned book by Howard Zinn; a canonical history of slavery, David Davis' (2006) *Inhuman Bondage*; and the only book I'm aware of that systematically compared slavery and serfdom, Peter Kolchin's (1987) masterpiece *Unfree Labor*. I ran a textual analysis on all four books, and the terminological variations were revealing:[7]



The differences between these texts might seem so obvious that they don't even warrant mention: after all, race does not appear to be a salient category of analysis in Poland, while in the US we have "farmers" rather than "peasants." And for all that Leszczyński compares serfdom and slavery, he is mostly discussing the former. Yet I think we should think seriously about his claim that the apparent differences between US slavery and Polish serfdom are not as great as they might appear, because we Americans describe as "racial" a form of exploitation that is categorized otherwise in Poland, but is nonetheless quite comparable. The first section of "The People's History of Poland" is devoted to the various attempts to describe a separate genealogy for *szlachta* and peasants. This is, in fact, a very old story. At least as early as Aristotle, we can find the myth of the "natural slave."

> All men who differ from one another by as much as the soul differs from the body or man from a wild beast (and that is the state of those who work by using their bodies, and for whom that is the best they can do)—these people

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[7] The analysis was preformed on the main body of each volume, excluding the notes, bibliography, and index. I used the apps available at https://voyant-tools.org/. The asterisk in each search term indicates variable letters in order to capture alternative word forms. I manually reviewed the findings to catch false positives.

> are slaves by nature, and it is better for them to be subject to this kind of control (…). Nature must therefore have intended to make the bodies of free men and of slaves different also; slaves' bodies strong for the services they have to do, those of free men upright and not much use for that kind of work, but instead useful for community life (…). It is clear that there are certain people who are free and certain who are slaves by nature, and it is both to their advantage, and just, for them to be slaves. (Aristotle, *Politics*, chap. 5)

Aristotle made the idea of the "natural slave" central to his vision of the ideal polity: one in which the work would be done by those created for that purpose, thus enabling others to have the leisure needed to attend to public affairs. For Aristotle, a world without slaves would be necessarily a world without citizens, for that latter depended on the former. From the *δημοκρατία* to the *res publica* to the *rzeczpospolita*, participatory government was linked to unfree labor. It is thus no coincidence that the word *obywatel* was a synonym for *szlachcic* as late as the early 20th century.

With this in mind, we understand more clearly why "The 1619 Project" could argue that slavery was at the core of the American project. One of the most powerful US politicians of the 19th century, John C. Calhoun, said this in a speech from 1849:

> With us the two great divisions of society are not the rich and the poor, but White and Black, and all the former, the poor as well as the rich, belong to the upper class, and are respected and treated as equals, if honest and industrious, and hence have a position and pride of character of which neither poverty nor misfortune can deprive them. (Calhoun 1883, 505–506)

No defender of the *złota wolność* could have put it better. The parallels between the America republic and the *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów* are clear. We can see how serfdom/slavery was more than just a bad thing that existed *alongside* the proto-democratic institutions of the First Republic or the American Revolution. Instead, the system was one integral whole. It is highly relevant that the timelines leading to the Nihil Novi constitution and the establishment of a mandatory minimum *pańszczyzna* are almost exactly aligned.

Yet if this parallel between America and Poland is so apt, then why is there such a significant terminological differentiation in how we talk about the two locations? The *concept* of race does indeed flow through both stories, but the term "race" does not. Perhaps it should.

I found one tiny misstatement in "The People's History of Poland"—something so trivial that it would not on its own be worth mentioning.

Leszczyński writes that the flow of emigrants from Poland to the US declined because of restrictions put in place in response to the mass unemployment of the Great Depression. This is off by a few years. The stream of émigrés from Eastern Europe was slowed to a trickle by the "Emergency Quota Act" of 1921, and then nearly entirely closed with the immigration act of 1924. Both of these were explicitly racial in nature, designed to keep White hegemony secure in the United States. Immigration from Asia was shut off entirely, but so was the flow from southern and eastern Europe. Reading the congressional transcripts from the debates surrounding these laws, it is clear that the primary concern was racial supremacy. Those who could fit into the American racial structure could be welcomed in a controlled way: thus, seasonal farm-worker programs for Mexicans could be retained. But the growing urban areas with enclaves of Poles, Chinese, Jews, Japanese, Greeks, Italians, etc. were seen as dangerous to White hegemony. The Asians were blocked because they had no recognized place in the White-Black-Brown triumvirate of the American racial system. The Eastern and Southern Europeans were blocked because they were simultaneously too White and not White enough. The very potential of assimilation was the fear in this case, because there was no way to immediately differentiate a White protestant of English ancestry from a White Catholic of Polish ancestry. The peripheral Europeans, in other words, could "pass," which was a great concern in the American racial ideology of that time.

Leszczyński tells us that peasants who emigrated to America would write home with stories about how easy it was to succeed in the States, where only their skill mattered. It was irrelevant to the Americans, they wrote, whether someone was peasant or noble. Poles could establish a much higher standard of living and even advance socially in the still thinly populated American Midwest during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. What they did not see—what Polish immigrants in the US or Western Europe often fail to see even today—is that their ability to "pass" as White was crucial to their success. They could prosper in the US not because America was so very different than Poland in the rigidity of its hierarchies, but because the categories were drawn differently. As the American cities grew and racial fears of diversity grew with them, Europe's Catholics got temporarily re-racialized as non-White, and thus grouped together with Asians in the prohibitions of the 1921–1924 laws. Later, the dynamics of the Cold War made Polish-Americans (and Catholics, more broadly) White once again. Race is a mutable category in this way, but that fluidity is limited. It can become more or less capacious in the definition of precisely who is considered White, and in this sense, race works just like nationality or ethnicity. But whereas the opposite of "Polish" can be lots of different things depending on the context, the opposite of "White" is always "Black."

The fear of not being White sits very deeply in Polish culture, even though it is virtually never expressed as such. Leszczyński tells us about the nicknames used in the 1950s to denigrate Nowa Huta: *Dziki Meksyk* and *Kożedo* (the latter referring to a POW camp from the Korean War). The power of those labels rested precisely on the perceived scandal of Poles being treated in a way that they considered unsuitable to their identity as White Europeans. The poverty and abuse of the *lud* throughout Polish history is awful, and deserves to be analyzed alongside other regimes of unfree labor. But race enters this story in two pernicious ways. First, in the outrage generated by the fact that Poland appears so much worse than the (White) European world to which it is assumed to properly belong. Second, in the invisible power and privilege that comes with Whiteness even for those with peasant ancestry.

Inside Poland, the lack of enduring racial differentiation made it harder to sustain the old divisions once the institutional structure of subordination was gone. It is undeniable that the cultural capital of those with szlachta ancestry continues to exist. "The People's History of Poland" would not even be a controversial book were it not for the fact that a historical narrative designed by and for the nobility defines Polish history, even now.[8] Nonetheless, the fluidity allowing people to assimilate into this elite is vastly greater than that of those designated as a racial other in the United States or Western Europe (or Poland, for that matter). Yes, we did have an African-American President for eight years, but the fierce backlash brought us Donald Trump. How many Poles even know which of the III Republic's Prime Ministers were from peasant and which from noble background? The enduring *cultural* power of szlachta identity means that all of them acted as if they were from "good families," but the porousness of this category allowed them to do so. No matter how hard he tried, President Obama could never *not* be Black. There is a flexibility surrounding nonracial hierarchies that is missing when they are racially marked. More importantly, I think, the concept of race exists for Poles themselves, for whom "Whiteness" is unseen but vital. It is evident every time someone in Poland worries about declining birth rates yet cannot even imagine that immigration could resolve that problem. It is evident when Poles see a deep injustice in the economic gap between Poland and Germany, but take as self-evident the (*much* larger) gap between Poland and Nigeria, or Vietnam, or Guatemala. And most of all, it is evident as soon as we notice the countless ways in which Poles can, under the right circumstances, take advantage of the same White privilege that any other European has access to.[9] Just consider the social dynamics at play the moment any Pole comes into contact with anyone from outside Europe or North America—in the emigration, on vacation in Egypt or Turkey, or when dealing with the small but growing population of non-White immigrants in Poland itself.

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[8] Leszczynski cites Smoczyński and Zarycki 2017. I would add a magnificent book on this topic that has not garnered the attention it deserves: Jakubowska 2012.

Two things are simultaneously true: 1) the Sarmatian mythology is an example of how the *szlachta* constructed a cultural-political-economic regime that in many ways looked quite similar to the racialized slavery of the Western hemisphere; 2) although those social divides remain "sticky" a century and a half after the abolition of serfdom, there can be no real comparison to the enduring power of Whiteness around the world—including in places where virtually everyone is perceived as White.

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[9] The history of this phenomenon has been brilliantly explored in Valerio 2019.

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Citation: Porter-Szűcs, Brian. 2022. "Whiteness and Polishness." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 239–249.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.12

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Tytuł: Białość i polskość

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Was the Enlightenment Progress?

Enlightenment or Barbarism

We often assume the connection between the Enlightenment and social progress to be something evident. It is to the Enlightenment philosophy that we owe the ideas of emancipation, equality, democracy, while the mobility of classes and the abolition of feudal despotism are seen as achievements of the modern states. Even if we do not mix the relationship of this new order with racism, slavery, colonization, the birth of nationalism, and the rise of fossil-fuel-based capitalism (Haraway 2016; Mignolo 2011; Buck-Morss 2014; Moore 2015; Tsing 2012; Federici 2009), it still seems that since the 18th century, the Enlightenment has been the only possible political choice—either (imperfect) enlightenment or (feudal) barbarism.

Recently, a great deal of work has been done in the humanities to demonstrate that the above alternative is itself primarily a product of the Enlightenment ideology (Mignolo 2012; Scott 1999). Writers waging their ideological war against “backwardness” (feudal, tribal, etc.) were obviously not in the position to describe events, phenomena, and characters impartially. Perhaps the most striking example of their strategy was the theory of cannibalism of the non-European peoples aimed to justify the ventures of colonization. At a time when travellers were looking among the “savages” for the evidence of their cannibalism, Europeans themselves were consuming considerable amounts of human flesh for medical purposes. According to Richard Sugg, “It is very likely that Europeans consumed more human meat during this time than people in the New World” (Sugg 2011).

Nevertheless, in Adam Leszczyński’s “The People’s History of Poland,” the credibility of these (proto)Enlightenment travellers is rated very highly (Leszczyński 2020). Ulrich von Werdum, quoted at great length in this book, as a Protestant representative of the philosophy of reason, is supposed to be particularly sensitive to all the manifestations of Catholic paganism and social oppression. Yet from the works of (mainly feminist) scholars of the period emerges the exact opposite picture. Witch-hunting was a typically modern invention (virtually absent in medieval Europe) supported by the major philosophers of reason (Federici 2009; Merchant 1990; 2006). Furthermore, while Enlightenment writers portray the slavery of peasants, seen during their travels through Eastern Europe, in the colonies founded by the Enlightenment states, between 1700 and 1850, the number of slaves increased tenfold (Losurdo 2014; Buck-Morss 2014).

The trust Leszczyński puts in the Enlightenment travellers and later in the Enlightenment reformers (originating partly from Poland, but mainly from the partitioning monarchies) is problematic not only because of the total lack of credibility of the western travellers, but also because of the questionable progressiveness of the reforms introduced by the Enlightenment governments. In relation to the Enlightenment, Leszczyński applies a kind of right-wing politics of history, in which the defence of “the good name” (homeland, religion, intellectual tradition, etc.) is always more important than confronting the historical reality (Leszczyński 2020). The decision to defend the Enlightenment in this way is all the more surprising as it is probably the only moment in the entire “The People’s History of Poland” when the author so clearly takes the side of the elites (in this case, Enlightenment elites) instead of the subordinated (and usually very anti-Enlightenment) classes oppressed by them. Leszczyński has no shortage of tools to demystify the narratives about the salutary role of the leftist intelligentsia in other times (played in its various variants from the 19th century until the Third Polish Republic) or to expose the false promises of the socialist state, but with regard to the elites of the seventeenth and especially the 18th century this critical awareness seems to fade away. Why?

The Kingdom of Peasant Anarchy

This lapse, in my opinion, results from the choice of the interpretive framework adopted in the chapter on the pre-partition Commonwealth. In most of the parts of the "The People's History of Poland," at least three protagonists are put on stage (e.g. in the 19th century: the tsarist regime, peasants/workers, socialist intelligentsia; or in the People's Republic of Poland: communists, workers, leftist intelligentsia), but before 1800, the history seems to have only two actors: the nobility and the elites of the Enlightenment (Western philosophers and absolutist monarchs). Even there, where Leszczyński decides to give voice to the peasants living at that time, almost always it is the passive voice of victims, never of active participants of history. According to recent research, however, before 1800, the subordinated classes in this part of Europe had quite a lot to say. Certainly much more than the historiography based on the cunning opinions of the Enlightenment writers would be willing to admit. Leszczyński shares their prejudices.

The work that summarizes the findings of the recent historiography on the topic is Marcus Cerman's *Villagers and Lords in Eastern Europe, 1300–1800* (Cerman 2012; see Kochanowicz 2013). Unfortunately, Leszczyński does not address the argument from *Villagers and Lords* in any way,[1] despite the fact that the book exposes many of the myths inherited from the Enlightenment by 20th century historiography. Cerman proposes to abandon categories such as "eastern backwardness," "serfdom," and "secondary serfdom," which are supposed to explain at one stroke the social life that has been going on for hundreds of years in the territories covering millions of square kilometres. Thus, instead of looking for the convincing sources for the initial dogma, we should rather go in the opposite direction: start with the detailed research on the specific estates, manors, and villages, and only on such basis draw a broader picture of the epoch. Looking from below, we can see, for example, that *pańszczyzna* (serfdom), which is the only institution that Enlightenment writers visiting Eastern Europe could associate with slavery, is a phenomenon that, in fact, rarely occurs in this region (Cerman 2012, 12, 22). It usually appears and disappears, never lastingly assigned to an entire country, region, or even village. The reason for this is that, without a centralized state, every norm, measure and law remains subject to permanent, local negotiations (Kula 1986). Peasants—especially when the aristocracy has limited recourse to centralized repressive apparatuses (used to suppress open revolts only)—can win quite a lot as long as they fight their battles using the tools of the weak resistance: they can falsify measurements, expand the commons, shorten the workday, and even change the local laws (Cerman 2012, 33–38; Rauszer 2021; Scott 1987).

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[1] The only reference is the footnote in which Leszczyński refers to the page 37 of *Villagers and Lords*, where Cerman is supposed to prove the thesis of the widespread violence prevailing in the Eastern European countryside (Leszczyński 2020). Yet on the page 37 of his book, Cerman argues the exact opposite. He refers to statistics that show the enormous diversity of violence suffered by the Russian peasants at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries: on some manors, beatings were experienced by up to 25 percent of the serfs, while elsewhere it was as little as 0.3 percent (Cerman 2012, 37).

Because the pre-1800 legal and economic arrangements are locally limited in ways that are difficult to imagine today, it is impossible to speak of anything like Polish, Swedish, or Russian serfdom, just as it is difficult to argue that there was any significant difference in the position of the peasant living in either the Western or Eastern parts of Europe (Cerman 2012, 94–129). Hypostases such as Polish, Swedish, Russian, Eastern and Western economies result from an anachronistic understanding of the pre-modern world. Indeed, the states at that time employ something resembling the centralized modern law; there are also trade contacts between the East and the West that might be associated with the capitalist globalization. But when the matter is looked at more closely, it becomes clear that the scale of this trade (everywhere, not just in Poland) was, in fact, microscopic (Topolski 2000; Pobłocki 2017, 185)[2], and the law (intended primarily to protect the interests of the nobility) is grossly ineffective—more a record of expectations or even fantasies than a reliable reflection of the actual social relations of the epoch (Cerman 2012, 33–38).

For the law to work (i.e. effectively defend the elite interests) and for the globalization to happen (fuelled by phenomena such as Atlantic slavery), there is a need for centralized, powerful state apparatuses. These, however, do not appear in Europe before the 18th century. There is no reason to regard the absolutist monarchies, legitimized by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, as the institutions standing up for the oppressed peasantry. It was no coincidence that these states consisted almost exclusively of the repressive apparatuses: army, police, and bureaucracy that controlled the society. Frederick the Great's Prussia—for many Enlightenment writers, an example of the incarnate utopia—spent 75 percent (!) of its annual budget on the army alone. Instead of abolishing exploitation, absolutist monarchies strengthened and sealed it: they limited migration, suppressed the revolts with greater ease, imposed new taxes and forced conscription to the army. Not surprisingly, the struggle of peasants against the modern state continues uninterrupted from 18th century Austria and England, through revolutionary France, 19th century Italy, to 20th century Burma and Malaysia (Luebke 1997; Thompson 1971; Morales 2017; Petrusewicz 1996; Scott 1977; 1987).

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[2] Kacper Pobłocki writes: “It was only with the advent of technology enabling mass transport of goods over long distances—the steamboat and especially railroads—that one can speak of an increase in the importance of international exchange. As late as the early 19th century, long-distance trade differed little from that of ancient times. All the products that flowed from Asia to Europe throughout the 1800s could be fit on a single modern container ship” (Pobłocki 2021, 189).

It is in this context that we should see the phenomenon that is completely incomprehensible from the perspective of the narrative proposed by Leszczyński, namely, tens of thousands of fugitive serfs, fleeing Russia, Austria, and Prussia, who stream into 18th century Poland, the only region in this part of Europe which failed to establish the apparatuses of the modern state (Gornostaev 2020, 70–71; Jones 1993). The oppressed in the 18th century Poland are favoured not only by the lack of administration, police, army, and low population density. Above all, they are helped by the natural conditions—abundance of marshes, swamps, and dense forests—that provide shelter and, with few exceptions, are used as commons. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of people wandered around Poland at that time (Assorodobraj-Kula 1966, 43; Assorodobraj 2020), and those who decided to work on the manor could count on lower burdens (Omulski, in a letter from 1786, writes with undoubted exaggeration about the twenty-fold difference in taxation between the Polish and Russian peasants; Jones 1993, 115). This has to be attributed to the limited means of repression at the disposal of the nobility at that time, where an unsatisfied peasant could always, as Leszczyński aptly points out without drawing any major consequences from this observation, "disappear without much difficulty" (Leszczyński 2020).

Enlightened Slavery

The fact that the Commonwealth became in the 18th century almost "stateless" (Scott 2010), a great storehouse for fugitives, smugglers and brigands, threatening the interests of the absolutist states in the region, was, according to some scholars, the main reason for (at least the first of) the partitions (Jones 1993).[3] The partitions themselves, from the perspective of the local peasant, were an event that was at least ambivalent, if not simply negative. Leszczyński is right that under the new order, the peasant gained the legal personality and freedom, but for this (usually purely formal) privilege, the serf had to bear the new judicial system dominated by the nobility, new burdens, greater control over migration, and, finally, forced conscription.[4] That the partitioning monarchies ultimately acted as defenders of the fundamental nobility's interests can well be seen by the fact that all three of them recognized Polish aristocratic titles and maintained the law of serfdom for decades (in the case of Russia and Prussia, counting from the first partition, it would take nearly a century to completely abolish it).

All three also, as though recognizing the material basis of the power wielded by the local peasantry, inaugurated their reign by conquering nature: exploiting rivers, marshes, meadows, and forests, that is, spaces previously used as commons (Guzowski 2015). Already in 1796, in the Austrian partition, regulations were introduced which forbade peasants to sell timber from the forests in the royal estates; a few years later (1804), the ban began to cover any unprescribed harvesting of timber from the government lands. All the while, in the second and third decades of the 19th century in the Kingdom of Poland, a predatory policy combined with modern forest management was carried out; both resulted in "shrinking of the forested area and limited peasants' access to forests" (Kochanowicz 1981, 56). A similar fate befell the drained swamps, marshes, bogs, and liquidated floodplains (Guzowski 2015, 70). As Kochanowski summarizes these changes, with the new power, "the feudal order lost its symmetrical character—the village, subordinated to the will of the owner or holder, forced to do the corvee, no longer had the right to concessions and care of the manor, while its rights to pastures and forests became limited" (Kochanowicz 1981, 85). Probably in the breaking of the feudal compromise, which in exchange for burdens guaranteed access to forests, pastures, rivers, and assistance in case of fire, drought, or crop failure, the reasons for growing unrest in the countryside not only in the Kingdom of Poland, but also in Galicia, should be sought (Kochanowicz 1981, 100, 142).

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[3] Jones shows that this was a fundamental motivation in the policy of Catherine the Great, acting under the strong influence of the Russian gentry originated from the governorates adjacent to Poland and particularly vulnerable to peasant flight and brigand raids (Jones 1993).

[4] What affected most was the ruthlessness of the state burden. If previously the amount of taxes is a subject of negotiation between peasant and lord (and thus depended, for example, on the size of the harvest), with the advent of modern fiscal systems there is no longer any room for negotiation (Kochanowicz 1981, 142; see Scott 1977, 97).

While the attack on the commons targeted the economic foundation of the peasant resistance, the forced conscription was a weapon aimed at its political basis. In Russia, it was quite openly treated as a counter-revolutionary tool; the army conscripts were troublemakers or slackers, peasants who impeded the efficient management of property (Miakinkov 2020, 24). Forced military service lasted from a dozen to several dozen years, usually taking place in poor sanitary and health conditions, and most conscripts, if they didn't lose their lives on the battlefield, often died of epidemics, malnutrition or suicide. Forced conscription, an institution that Austria and Russia maintained until the second half of the 19th century (and replaced only with a shorter and less severe general conscription), most often for the lower classes meant nothing but a form of slavery.

If we adopt Orlando Petterson's definition of slavery as "social death" (that is, the forced uprooting of an individual from his or her community, culture, and language), conscription turns out to equal slavery to a greater degree than any form of feudal servitude, serfdom included (Patterson 2018). Not surprisingly, subjugated classes escape conscription: they attempt bribes, fake marriages, even commit self-mutilation, all that to avoid the enrolment (Hochedlinger 2011, 94; Forrest 1989, 136–137). A peasant given a "choice" between feudal and modern slavery will almost always and almost everywhere choose the former (Scott 1977, 43).

The issue does not only concern conscription. According to David Graeber, although the feudal subjection remains legally uniform with the slave labour or bonded labour, in the perspective of social history it is the "free" wage labour which resembles slavery to much greater extent (Graeber 2011, 352).[5] In both cases, the condition of subjugation is the "social death," that is, the forced uprooting from the local culture:

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[5] "There is, and has always been, a curious affinity between wage labor and slavery. This is not just because it was slaves on Caribbean sugar plantations who supplied the quick-energy products that powered much of early wage laborers' work; not just because most of the scientific management techniques applied in factories in the industrial revolution can be traced back to those sugar plantations; but also because both the relation between master and slave, and between employer and employee, are in principle impersonal: whether you've been sold or you're simply rented yourself out, the moment money changes hands, who you are is supposed to be unimportant; all that's important is that you are capable of understanding orders and doing what you're told" (Graeber 2011, 352).

from the community, from familiar languages, customs, traditions, from commons—in short, from the social reality built over generations for the protection of the subjugated (especially women) from the elite oppression (Scott 1977; Federici 2009). Such form and degree of alienation remains essentially alien to the feudal world. This is why slavery, in its most extreme forms, had a chance to succeed in the Caribbean, where people, hauled off to the plantations, were stripped of any connection to their social world. This is why rural and urban plebs, in the name of their moral economies, are most often inclined to defend the social structures which yield less income but are more stable and egalitarian than a market society (Thompson 1971; Scott 1977, 40).

In this context, the coming of the Enlightenment can hardly be combined with "social modernization bringing the promise of emancipation to many of our country's lower-born citizens" (Leszczynski 2020). From the perspective of the regional commoners, transition towards the Enlightment was at best yet another exchange of elites; at worst, it meant a counter-revolution, an attack against peasant and plebeian autonomy. Thus, if any progress was made in the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 19th century, it was not thanks to the Enlightenment and its elites, who maintained where they could the slave and the semi-slave social relations for decades, despite or even against the Enlightenment as a result of the struggle against the new social order and its government.

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Citation:
Pospiszyl, Michał. 2022. “Was the Enlightenment Progress?” *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 251–261.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.13

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Tytuł: Czy oświecenie było postępem?

KEELY STAUTER-HALSTED

Adam Leszczyński, Ludowa historia Polski: A Revolution in Polish Historiography?

Adam Leszczyński's *Ludowa historia Polski* ("The People's History of Poland") has already received its fair share of critical commentary in Polish journals, and rightly so. The book's reframing of the long durée of Polish history "from the ground up" challenges the way we view the relative contributions of noble actors and the broad masses of unlettered peasants. Leszczyński's recasting of the nation's history parallels a similarly controversial effort to shift the focus of the American story. The highly controversial "1619 Project," published in 2019, suggested an inversion of the power dynamic in US history, substituting Black Americans as founders to change the national narrative from a tale of heroic beginnings to one of internal struggle for liberation. *Ludowa historia* has the potential to spark a similar debate about the very nature of Polish history. The questions are: where will the conversation go from here, and how can we as scholars make best use of Leszczyński's reappraisal?

"The People's History of Poland" re-examines the entire sweep of Polish history by focusing our attention on the fortunes of the oppressed majority and de-emphasizing the powerful minority. But this no mere Manichean opposition of forces. Rather, Leszczyński structures his reappraisal around three intersecting concepts: the changing structures of oppression imposed upon the peasantry and other lower social orders, the varying justifications for these power dynamics, and the matrix of ways the subject population maneuvered around these restrictions. At its base, “The People’s History of Poland” asks us to rethink the lessons Polish history teaches, or to consider whether it teaches any concrete lessons at all. No longer a story of romantic struggle against foreign invasion, conquest, and occupation or a heroic battle “for your freedom and ours,” Poland here is the site of internal struggle among competing social orders. This recalibration suggests a much darker past, one that is peppered with institutionalized violence and systematic exclusion. Leszczyński revisits the country’s dramatic turning points from the perspective of the politically disenfranchised and economically oppressed—peasant farmers, lower-class urban inhabitants, and industrial wage laborers. Symbols of exploitation are substituted for myths that mask the reality of life among the lower ranks. The curse of Cham fills in for the legend of Lech. The bloody violence required to settle peasants on the land substitutes for the drama of medieval warlords. Mieszko I, we learn, was in all likelihood involved in the slave trade and the 1036 peasant revolt was less a reaction to the imposition of Christianity than a rebellion against putative masters. Time and again, Leszczyński reinterprets well-known moments in the country’s past from the viewpoint of small farmers. The infamous late medieval “Drang nach Osten,” for example, that brought German colonists to the Polish lands is touted as a source of improved agricultural techniques and a more flexible legal system, developments welcomed by the serfs, rather than the economic “disintegration” and national conflict earlier historians describe.

“The People’s History of Poland” thus opens up complex developments in the Polish past that are often flattened into simplistic dichotomies or pat generalizations. The so-called “second serfdom” is handled here with deft depictions of the peasantry’s gradual and uneven descent into increasingly harsh arrangements with landlords. From the earliest times, Leszczyński reminds us, peasants were divided into multiple categories with different rights and privileges; throughout the feudal period service obligations and tribute varied depending on the number of animals and the size of the holding each farmer worked. All of this shifted during the 15th century and by the 17th century, we find depictions of the brutality with which landlords treated their enserfed laborers, such as that from a German traveller of a peasant “lying in the snow, chained to a stake by his neck (…) I know not for what crime” (Leszczyński 2020, 113). Leszczyński stresses that the nobility’s Golden Freedoms and the tremendous artistic production of the early modern period were sustained on the backs of the subject serf population. He recalls that the Chmielnicki massacre and the *potop* that followed were less about the country’s weak central government and more a backlash resulting from

Polish landholders encroaching on independent farmers in the *kresy*. And he emphasizes that the marginalization of Polish towns well into the modern period helped slow the economic liberation and social mobility of the popular masses. Here and elsewhere, Leszczyński displays a unique gift for storytelling, conjuring up vivid images of peasant beatings and contrasting them with idyllic depictions of life on the landed estate. Clearly, presenting a thousand years of history from the perspective of a mostly unlettered population poses significant challenges, but Leszczyński effectively employs evocative vignettes to underline the deep social tensions at the base of Poland's evolution.

All of this developed out of what Leszczyński describes as the fundamentally racist notion that the small farmers of the Polish countryside were ethnically distinct from the nobility governing them. "The People's History of Poland" reexamines the Sarmatian myth of ethnogenesis, arguing that far from a simple legend used to justify the institution of serfdom, the division of Polish-speakers into separate strata, one meant to rule and the other to be dominated, penetrates deep into Polish consciousness. During the Enlightenment, the Sarmatian legend helped dismiss the onus of serfdom as a foreign borrowing brought to Poland via conquest. By the 19th century, experts leaned on this conception to claim Polish peasants were "naturally" weak, docile and disorganized, and destined to a life of bondage. Interwar scholars rejected the invasion theory, but replaced it with the "modern" notion that the Polish nobility and peasants represented two distinct anthropological "types," the nobility being "Nordic" while the peasants were proto-Slavic. The former were said to be gifted, talented, and well organized, while the latter were weak, incapable of self-governance, and primitive. Again, just as institutionalized violence and social tensions have underpinned the Polish story, the habit of defending social inequality also haunted the country's development as it struggled to become modern.

Little of this will be dramatically new for most historians of Poland, though the depictions of peasant subjugation contribute a fresh vividness to our understanding of the social dynamic. What is more powerful and potentially of greater significance are the examples Leszczyński offers of peasant farmers challenging their oppressive circumstances. Perhaps the most revealing aspect of "The People's History of Poland," and one that again echoes the 1619 Project, is the pattern of personal agency Leszczyński charts across the history of the Polish lands. He relies on court records to document a steady stream of complaints from smallholders directed at abusive landlords and negligent clergy. These sophisticated appeals suggest a sense of empowerment that remained even as the screws of serfdom continued to tighten. Peasants were savvy, knew their rights, and could be strategic in the ways they directed their attacks. More than formal petitions, they also employed various "weapons of the weak" such as work slow downs, running away, sabotaging the planting, breaking their tools, or stealing from their masters to mitigate their subject condition. The regular social rebellions sprinkled across modern Polish history, from the 1846 Galician massacre to the Kościuszko Rising, and finally to the rise of the Solidarity Trade Union movement, suggest that the Polish masses never accepted their position passively. Rather, as Leszczyński notes, individual acts of resistance coalesced into collective challenges, and finally exploded into violent rebellions when the opportunity arose. While it is true that the fortunes of small farmers declined as the nobility enjoyed greater prosperity, Polish serfs were never the chattel slaves of the Americas. They were never "owned" by others and even occasionally had the opportunity to transgress the sharp class divide and "become" merchants or members of the lower gentry. This was a system that may have had racist foundations, but it was not completely closed or impermeable. Moreover, smallholders maintained some autonomy within the peasant commune itself, where *gromada* officials helped mediate disputes with the lord and a distinct social hierarchy developed based on family size, landholding patterns, and reputation in the village. Such independent thinking helps explain one of Leszczyński's most important interventions, namely the assertion that the peasantry did not automatically support the 19th-century nationalist uprisings since they did not always see their fortunes reflected in the return of the noble republic. Serfs, Leszczyński suggests, may have been objects of persistent abuse, but they maintained some limited agency and were capable of assessing their own self-interest.

Within this sociological analysis of the peasant village, it must be admitted, "The People's History of Poland"misses an opportunity to look at the doubly subjected position of women in the village, and even more so at migration to the city as a form of liberation for many females. Moreover, it is unclear how unusual the power relations in Poland were within the broader context of Western history. What was special about the Polish story of subjugation and resistance? Leszczyński acknowledges that seigniorial systems existed across Europe for much of the medieval and early modern periods, but stresses that the farther west one looks, the weaker were the ties of serfdom. Yet he fails to note that across the *ancien regime*, members of the lower social orders were consistently subjected to barbaric punishments and inhuman forms of torture for the slightest infraction. Instead, by stressing Poland's status "on the periphery" of Europe, he suggests a uniqueness to Polish social tensions that threatens to reify the old martyrdom approach to the country's past. If the history of Poland is not to be one of noble heroism and sacrifice, we must be careful not to replace that narrative with one that is uniquely marked by peasant oppression. Rather, serfdom and slavery were abusive systems everywhere, and everywhere they left their mark on the generations that followed. In most cases, we are still dealing with their legacy. By the same token, Leszczyński gives little credit to the Polish People's Republic for promoting social mobility amongst small farmers and industrial laborers. If the PRL did nothing else during its half-century grip on Polish society, it eliminated noble titles, expanded access to professional and educational opportunities, and at least temporarily expunged inherited wealth.

"The People's History of Poland" also poses a challenge to the way historians approach their practice in another important respect. The professional writing of history has long been a nationalist enterprise, established by scholars dedicated to the reification of the state for which they worked. For this reason, most historical narratives are structured around the rise and fall of royal dynasties, the development of key institutions, the codification of laws, diplomatic maneuvers, or military conflict. The prospect of charting the lives of the "non-political," non-elite population has slowly gained traction since the second half of the 20th century, but the work of social historians has often been challenged as lacking the necessary political scaffolding to explain its relevance. Of what value are anecdotes about disenfranchised masses if they are not connected to larger regime changes or cultural developments? How is it possible to remove the nation or any political framework from such a massive historical account? In this respect, Leszczyński takes some risks that may limit his readership, tacitly proposing a new and different shape to historical inquiry. His history lacks the political infrastructure that shapes the majority of such grand surveys. We read little about the expansion of the state, the colonization of the eastern lands, or the introduction of elected kingship. Readers familiar with the main currents of "established" Polish history will find this account refreshing, but it may be challenging for students who lack a background in these more conventional turning points.

Above all, though, "The People's History of Poland" leaves open the question of what the fundamental focus or parameters of such a history should be. If it is meant to be a history of the subject population of the Polish lands, it is unclear why more attention is not paid to the cultural diversity of the peasantry. Are Kashubians and Sorbs to be considered

Polish in the same sense that the Bretons and the peasants of Languedoc are viewed as French even before they spoke the language of Paris? And what about Greek Catholic Ukrainian speakers? Was their subjugation to Polish-speaking lords not distinct in that it came with attempts to also disrupt their religious observance? The Jews are discussed here, but more as victims of persecution than as agents of their own fate. On the other hand, Leszczyński appropriately includes the mass migration of Polish peasant laborers across the globe since many maintained their attachment to Polish culture in emigration, even as they adopted other languages for everyday use. Who then are the "Polish" folk, and is the concept of Poland here based on territory, culture, language, or something else? In many respects, the very fact that the limits of Leszczyński's study are poorly defined gives us cause for discussion about the shape and configuration of Polishness as a historical category. Regardless of the (lack of) framing, the book nonetheless provides a welcome set of observations about the entrenchment of the class-based attitudes that have served as the undercurrent of Polish history for generations.

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Citation:
Stauter-Halsted, Keely. 2022. "Adam Leszczyński, *Ludowa historia Polski*: A Revolution in Polish Historiography?" *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 263–269.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.14

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Tytuł: *Ludowa historia Polski* Adama Leszczyńskiego: rewolucja w polskiej historiografii?

ADAM LESZCZYŃSKI

"The People's History of Poland" from the Author's Perspective: What It Is All about

In the beginning let me express my deepest gratitude to the editors of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* for this seminar. I am also grateful to the five extraordinary scholars who have found time in their busy schedules to write a review of my book. It is an honor for the author.

I also beg for forgiveness for not replying to all the critical opinions and inspiring thoughts I found in the reviews. I will try to address at least some of them.

However, I think that a general commentary from the author of *Ludowa historia Polski* ("The People's History of Poland") about the purpose of the book and the way it was constructed may be more interesting to many readers. I will try then to describe briefly why this book was written and to explain my approach to the subject, including its problematic moments and its limitations – at least the ones I am aware of.

The Big Idea

"The People's History of Poland" tells the tale of the community (or, more precisely, communities) which lived on the Polish lands (with an emphasis on central regions) as a history of the social redistribution of economic resources. It assumes that the economic surplus produced by "the people" was redistributed upwards to the elite (I will return to the definition of "the people" in a moment).

This constitutes the essence of the narrative, the axis of Polish social history and, of course, its central conflict.

The conflict over redistribution is described in this book in three main dimensions: the evolution of the social institutions through which the redistribution upward was carried out; the discourse of domination that justified the whole process; and finally techniques of resistance, rebellion and protest.

From the methodological perspective, "The People's History of Poland"—despite a similar title—does not borrow too much from the famous book by Howard Zinn. It is certainly not, as some participants of this seminar noted, an attempt to rewrite Zinn into the Polish context. The core of this book is a description of what is basically an economic process with the assumption that power and discourse follow the economic resources: this is by design, and it is arguably a pretty much old-school Marxist approach, with some theoretical inventions borrowed from modern subaltern studies.

The book's collective hero—"the people"—are not only peasants, but also townspeople or Jews (in the times of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), or workers (from the end of the 18th century). "The people" are understood as those from whom the upward redistribution takes place (being part of "the people" or "the elite" it is defined by the person's place in the structure of redistribution). This definition is very broad—understandably, because the social composition of society changed drastically in the ten centuries or so of Polish history—but it also has its problems, which I will discuss later.

Narrative Structure

The narrative structure of the "The People's History of Poland" has four layers. One can imagine them in the shape of a pyramid—each floor of which is accessible to a more professional reader.

The first layer is the level of an anecdote, easily understandable to the unprofessional but educated reader. It serves to illustrate the redistribution mechanisms and techniques of resistance. Many readers stopped there. I have always thought that the hermetic jargon of the social sciences serves mostly as a tool to exclude non-professionals from the debate. Therefore I wanted this book to be as democratic in its reception as possible—without diluting the message.

The second layer of the narrative is the history of the evolution of social institutions which underpinned the process of redistribution, with particular focus on their *longue durée* in Polish history. The reader can, for example, compare the discourse justifying the failure to comply with the legislation regulating labor relations both in the Russian partition (before 1914) and in the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939). S/he then discovers that the institutional dysfunction and arguments used to justify it were strikingly similar. The structure which served the elite interests and made extraction easier changed very little.

The third layer of the narrative is the level of the historical and sociological model that tries to explain social change towards the democratization of social relations and a greater scope of popular autonomy (and thus emancipation). I propose to explain this process—which began taking place in Poland at least from the end of the 18th century—by the mechanism of political competition between the elites fighting for control over resources extracted from the popular classes. Such models also have—I am sorry for stating the obvius here—a long tradition in sociology, political science and economics (classical authors like Schumpeter and Olson come to mind; see Schumpeter 1942; Olson 1993).

The fourth layer is—at the top of the pyramid—an attempt to politicize a large part of Polish historical literature. The book as a whole is a polemic against the dominant worldview of our historiography which has been written, consciously or not, from a patriarchal, elitist and nationalist perspective, often perceived as the only obvious, natural and possible way of describing "the national past." Breaking out of this canon can be difficult, even for the most intelligent scholars; such is the burden of the dominant narrative. In a very influential book on the methodology of history—Handelsman's (1922) *Historyka*—the nation was identified as the main subject of historical "science." It was of course the elite (lords, kings, generals, nobility, the intelligentsia etc.) which constituted the essence of the nation. The rest—peasants, merchants, the poor—constituted for Handelsman only the backdrop of national history, an amorphous, anonymous mass, barely worth noticing. I deliberately refer here to an outstanding methodologist who was a democratic socialist of Jewish origin and very progressive for his time. Handelsman was as politically distant from the nationalists as it was possible to be (he edited and printed the oldest known memoir of a Polish serf, as early as 1907). Even he, as a methodologist, the most progressive of his contemporaries, had a very narrow, patriarchal view of history with "nation" at the center.

An important goal for which "The People's History of Poland" was written was to show—especially to the broad strata of the Polish intelligentsia—that it is possible to describe the history of our community (or communities) in a totally different way than the nationalist, patriarchal and elite-focused history does. Judging from some of the reactions—and angry voices from the right, denouncing this author as a "neomarxist," the worst invective in their vocabulary—it came as a shock to many.

Model of the Emancipation Process

In the book I also propose a very broad model of Polish politics in modern times. Models are always a simplification and it is useful to think about them as offering a guide to thinking about social processes, not as providing rigorous description. Let me summarize my proposition here. The different elites—whether native or imperial (in the case of Polish lands under the partitions in the 19th century)—compete for control over resources extracted from the lower classes. At the moment of a political turning point—war, uprising, revolution, mass popular protests—the aspiring elite makes a political and economic offer to "the people."

There might have been a proposal to abandon serfdom and give the land to former serfs (this was the case in 1830, 1848, 1861–1864) or, for example, to break up the big landowners' estates and redistribute the land (1920, 1944). In different social contexts it might have been a workers' self-government (1956, 1980). This offer—understood very broadly—always has two main components: one of them is material, promising a new, usually redistributive policy. The second is a proposition of a new (at least at the time) common identity, usually more democratic and open to popular ambitions. This offer serves to gain political support (again understood broadly—e.g. in the form of, for example, participation in an uprising or voting in the elections).

The aspiring elite proposes an attractive and therefore usually more democratic vision of a community. After gaining power, however, the victorious elite reneges on many (or even most) of the promises. They are too costly from the perspective of the interests of the new ruling elite, which has to contend with many different social groups and their influence. For example, rural reform was mostly abandoned after 1920, because of the political influence of a tiny landowning class (making up less than 1 percent of the population).

These unkept promises are an integral part of the process. However, when they are made, they cannot be completely withdrawn; they remain on the table and during the next historical turning point they may finally become reality. The emancipation of the popular strata is then a permanent process—promises once made cannot be completely denied. Emancipation is therefore a dialectical, torturous and painful process. I argue that every political turning point in the modern history of Poland—starting with the Kościuszko Uprising in 1794—can be explained within this model, including the 2015 elections won by Law and Justice.

Is this a Marxist perspective? Yes and no. To be sure, there is a definite conception the historical process baked into this model. On the other hand, real Marxists (and Pospiszyl's remarks during this seminar can serve as proof here) had a problem with it. The whole intellectual structure of this book contains a number of assumptions taken from classical economics: it emphasizes the central place of economics in social life and assumes the general rationality of collective actors (understood as striving to maximize their material benefits).

Old school Marxists were appalled by the perspective this book takes with regard to Communist Poland. For them it was an emancipatory moment in Polish history, which brought innumerable benefits and real freedoms to the Polish working class. In "The People's History of Poland" the communist period is described as an exploitative moment, full of hypocrisy. The elite extracted the surplus from the working classes, just like the previous elite had. It just used slightly (but only slightly) different methods than the previous regime, as well as different rhetoric. They also spent this surplus differently—not only on their own consumption (although they also tended to consume much more than the working class), but also on creating a huge, ineffective and wasteful military-industrial complex, designed mostly to keep it in power in the face of an external threat from the capitalist West.

The Problems (Only Some of Them)

What do I wish I had done differently? I keep a list of possible changes and updates for the second extended and improved edition—if it happens someday. They are too numerous to mention (and the participants of this seminar added a number of points to this ever–growing list). Still I would like to mention here some issues I find to be the most problematic.

Geography was a problem—the narrative focuses on "core" Polish lands, roughly equivalent to the territory of the 19th Kingdom of Poland and Western Galicia. Consequently, I think that the Prussian partition, with its very different social history, was not mentioned often enough. The eastern part (*Kresy*) also deserves more extensive treatment.

There was not nearly enough written in "The People's History of Poland" about the social and especially economic role of the Catholic Church. In the late Middle Ages, the church administrators were very active in introducing serfdom; throughout this historical period, the Church was instrumental in maintaining social order, explaining to the peasants and workers that their situation was both bearable and justified. The Church is present in the book, but I should have devoted a lot more space to its place in Polish society—which, I think, fits nicely with the main narrative of the book.

The definition of "the people" I used also presents many important problems which I think need addressing in the future. The most important of them is—as some reviewers noted—that the bipolar division between "the people" and "the elite" obviously makes it difficult to write, for example, about exploitation and violence among the various segments of the working class. There was a very extensive hierarchy among the serfs in the Polish countryside, and rich peasants were sometimes very ruthless and cruel masters to their agricultural workers and servants (*parobek*).

On a more conceptual level, I would like to rethink once more the role that violence plays in the story. In "The People's History of Poland" violence is described in a purely utilitarian manner—mostly as a tool of forcing obedience. I also assume, perhaps wrongly, that violence was rational—used mostly when necessary to force the lower classes to work and maintain social order. In his book *Chamstwo*, Pobłocki presents a very different view on the issue: for him violence is a foundation of the entire structure of social relations and has an almost mystical quality. I don't share his perspective, but there may be something to it—a conclusion which is not surprising to any reader of modern social theory.

It was extremely enlightening for me to read in Brian Porter Szucs' review the comparison between the legacy of racism in the United States and serfdom in Poland. Even thinking about this constitutes an offense to mainstream Polish historiography, but I think it deserves more extensive and systematic exploration. I am also grateful to Ewa Alicja Majewska for pointing out the role of gender issues in this book; although they are present, they are not as prominent as—in retrospect—I think they should be. I am still waiting for a history of Poland written from a woman's perspective, utilizing all the theoretical apparatus of today's gender studies. I hope I will live to see it.

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Citation:
Leszczyński, Adam. 2022. "»The People's History of Poland« from the Author's Perspective: What It Is All about." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1(43): 271–278.
DOI: 10.19195/prt.2022.1.15

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Tytuł: *Ludowa historia Polski* z perspektywy autora. O co w tym wszystkim chodzi