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Ethics in Progress

**Ethical Theory in Classic German Philosophy Then and Now.
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Marek J. Siemek († 2011) and Jakub Kloc Konkołowicz († 2021)**

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Ethical Theory in Classic German Philosophy Then and Now



Ewa Nowak

(Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań; Poland; ewanowak@amu.edu.pl)
ORCID: 0000-0002-5722-7711

Tom Rockmore

(Peking University; China; tom.rockmore@icloud.com)
ORCID: 0000-0003-4446-335X

Lara Scaglia

(Warsaw University; Poland; l.scaglia@uw.edu.pl)
ORCID: 0000-0002-7148-7456

Rainer Adolphi

(Technische Universität Berlin, Germany; rainer.adolphi@tu-berlin.de)

The volume brings together contributions in the spirit embodied by Marek J. Siemek († 2011) and Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz († 2021), two Warsaw philosophers truly devoted to Classical German Philosophy. They were simultaneously in a relationship between thinker and adept, and thinker and thinker. They both taught philosophy, with a strong emphasis on classic German philosophy, at Warsaw University. Under the theme “Ethical Theory in Classic German Philosophy Then and Now,” students and companions continue their discussions with both of them.

The circle of students that emanated from the work of Marek J. Siemek was and is one of the most fruitful in the recent philosophical landscape in Poland. This circle followed impulses from the thought of German Idealism. What was special about it from the beginning was that this circle did not work from the assumption common in many other countries that from the great figures of that philosophical epoch one had to adopt a single one the absolute point of reference and truth. They saw Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Marx as the expression of a common awakening of thought that continues to have an effect today,

and which has lost none of its relevance. Discussing a question with Hegel did not have to mean therefore being against Kant or Fichte, and vice versa. It was not about demarcations and the formation of camps, but about connections and the historical evolution of key concepts, such as modern freedom and socialisation. Included in this was also always the perspective that this epoch of thought was not necessarily opposed to Marx's thought. The social motivation and thought of Marx were not viewed as the end, not the burial of the philosophy of German Idealism along with its core concerns: the practical and theoretical; the transcendental, speculative and situated; social, historical and linguistic; the unconditional ("realm of freedom") and conditional ("realm of necessity"). Even in his first encounters with German Idealism, Siemek immediately knew the way out of the atomistic and "monological" "impasse of subjective-idealistic 'ego philosophy'". They are all, according to Siemek, connected by a common modern philosophical humanism. The latter can be defined in particular by individual self-determination and self-consciousness mediated by rational and respectful intersubjective relations. Moreover, this kind of humanism is regulated by normativities with justifications from the discourse itself. As Siemek himself puts it in a nutshell:

A conversation, therefore, implies that the Other, while still being strange, ceases to be an enemy, a target of aggression, and begins to be a still unknown but already preliminarily accepted partner, i.e. potentially at least an equal subject. It is precisely this mutual recognition, even if only in the most rudimentary form, that enables and sets in train the whole process of dialogic exchange of 'requests' and 'replies'. This recognition carries with it the principle of *reciprocity* as an irreplaceable, truly 'transcendental' foundation of not only all human interactions and relations, but also of the self reciprocating 'myself to,' which creates the identity of a single human being as a subject. The subjectivity principle, which has dominated classical philosophy and European culture, now emerges even more clearly as a socially and historically shaped product of this original communicative intersubjectivity (Siemek 2000, 38).

A second feature of the intellectual legacy of Siemek and his students was and is to take up current challenges in the ethical, social and political spheres, juxtapose them with divergent contemporary debates and finally explain them in terms of Classical German philosophy. Following Hegel, Siemek was convinced that philosophical tools and philosophy itself can strengthen modern societies and enable them to deal with the divisions and conflicts that define them after their unity has been lost. In his essay "On the Basic Concept of a Social-Transcendental Philosophy", Siemek described the difference between "weak" and "strong" conceptions of philosophising and philosophy. "Strong philosophy" (or "social epistemology") is anchored in the rational, self-critical, self-constituting, social-dialogical element, as already invented in the Socratic "episode" in ancient Athens. "Philosophy itself can be seriously pursued today only insofar as it is understood first and foremost as social philosophy" (Siemek 2020) and provides instruments for coping with the social divide. According to Hegel's *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, division is the very source of philosophy's need.

Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz shared Marek Siemek's appreciation of the radical primacy of the practical in Fichte – namely of unconditional activity qua the “transcendental” model of any “setting”, and thus also the “law-giving” activity of an intelligent subject – activity that then manifests and realises itself as a fully conscious, interactive and empirically acting intersubjectivity and sociability. However, instead of following Siemek's social-transcendental thought, Kloc-Konkołowicz took his own path. He attempted to redefine reciprocal recognition, namely as an applicable orientation principle or normative principle, which was to be placed at the intersection between Fichte's a priori and the empirical doctrine of intersubjectivity. He then applied Fichte's recognition principle “to contemporary social circumstances and thus concretise it differently from him” (Kloc-Konkołowicz 2015, 157) – with important consequences for the concept of law (all too formalised in Kant), which is to be connected with its own activity, or “the concrete realisation of law through action and in action” (ibid., 158) should come into connection. Only in this way would law fully achieve its practical validity, Kloc-Konkołowicz claims, and comply with the “apellative” as well as “counterfactual” sense of Fichte's doctrine of law (ibid., 158). Through this, too, the other fellow-subject or fellow-citizen would be recognised in its “human form”. Consequently, recognition would also take on a real shape as “interaction through concepts” (mutual response to an equally mutual “demand”, in a thoroughly discursive mode).

Recognition as a socio-philosophical (descriptive) and normative concept developed by Fichte, and as a thoroughly contemporary concept, determined the way Kloc-Konkołowicz attempted to interpret the tensions and challenges, conditions and principles, of a modern, self-acting socialisation dynamic and the further self-transformation of society, engaging with M. Siemek, A. Honneth, R. Forst, O. Höffe, L. Siep, J. Rawls, and many others. At the same time, Kloc-Konkołowicz knew how to correct the one-sided, metaphysical or even anti-liberal image of Fichte that emerges all too quickly – through his own comprehensive and concretising interpretations. Recognition is ultimately a normative source of “the mutual commitment to action and reflection” (ibid., 184). Kloc-Konkołowicz never abandoned the transcendental “structure” of such socio-normative development that shaped him as a student of Siemek.

With the following thematic special volume, we present a companion to the legacy of Siemek and Kloc-Konkołowicz, with a focus on ethical and social theory originating from *free action* as a very human feature – then and now. The authors explore the potentials of the most important ethical themes of the Classical German philosophers: from Kant's concept of freedom to the approaches to action of Hegel, Marx and Cieszkowski. The emergence of moral freedom in Kant is the main topic of Jacinto Rivera de Rosales' contribution. We mourn the death of Professor Rivera de Rosales, who passed away in October 2021. He focuses on the concept of virtue and distinguishes four main stages on the way to the realisation of moral freedom. After examining the original possibility of being free, or original innocence, in which freedom is seen as the capacity to initiate a

series of phenomena in the world, he considers radical evil, which corrupts the basis of maxims. However, this does not imply the impossibility of a change of heart, i.e., an inner conversion to the good, which does not mean the abolition of our desire for happiness, but rather promotes the search for its satisfaction within the framework of the moral law. Finally, he focuses on the process of the development of virtue, which reaches immortality, and on the importance of the ethical community, conceived both as an invisible church and as a rational social and legal community. This last moment is seen from our finite and free perspective as an ideally always open task.

Lara Scaglia focuses on education as a core function of reason in both Kant's and Fichte's theories, and as an exemplary case of the dynamic tension between particularity and universality. In particular, the author emphasises the importance of education for Kant, which is already present in the pre-critical works and to which Kant dedicated some of his lectures. Education is seen as essential for the humanisation of man and as an aid to moral judgement and the practice of virtue. Following Kant, in his lectures on the *Vocation of the Scholar*, *The Vocation of Man* and *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, Fichte presents education as the best means to aspire to our vocation and become proper moral agents.

The contribution by Elena Paola Carola Alessiato deals with Fichte's action and the pursuit of freedom. The author makes clear that freedom (in terms of *Tathandlung*) is the core concept of Fichte's thought, which connects all other components and determines the goals of a philosophy of action. She argues that freedom can be seen on the one hand (from a normative point of view) as characterised by the dynamic process of finitude and infinity, and on the other hand (from a moral and social point of view) as the actual and authentic task and determination of human action. Consequently, it is immoral to abandon our infinite vocation and succumb to the power of feelings, such as resignation and fear.

Rainer Adolphi's contribution combines fundamental social theoretical reflections with concrete problems of today's societies. He asks what can block or prevent the realisation of normatively necessary recognitions. Discourses of "identity" have a decisive function here, which often conceal (or are even supposed to conceal) real social problems and tasks. In a sense, the article discusses the complementary side of current theories of recognition. What needs to be considered theoretically is discussed with reference to Hegel, for whom the question of "identity" was not yet significant in his conception of *Sittlichkeit*. But from a Hegelian point of view, "identity" must be thought dynamically so that it does not become a backward-looking social topos against the development of modern forms and transnational responsibility. With Hegel, one can thereby show how difficult this is – and how great is the pull of simple "identity" answers and their politics of history. A mature political culture is a long process of experiences and learning. The contribution follows a basic conviction of the work of Siemek and Kloc-Konkołowicz: Being a 'Hegelian' must also mean not stopping at Hegel. In short a Hegelian must begin

with Hegel in the ongoing social and historical debate that does not end Hegel with but in Hegelian fashion is carried beyond his thought.

In her contribution, Erzsébet Rózsa examines modern “subjective” freedom in Hegel as a historical innovation; the specifics of this freedom include, on the one hand, the permanent complication of human-social practices, but also, on the other hand, the (always deficient) self-regulation of these practices. The concept of subjective freedom has given rise to the modern ideals of freedom, fundamental rights (e.g., human rights), values and norms. In Hegel’s *1820 Philosophy of Right*, subjective freedom is presented as universally normative and at the same time socially and historically situated; both in its “immediate” and “mediated” aspects. The author shows how the users of this freedom, including a variety of their ways of life, deal with tensions between different kinds of “morality” [*Sittlichkeit*]. Conflicts and antagonisms challenge modern subjects, necessitating a constant effort at reconciliation. An example of this dynamic is marriage and the right to divorce as representatives of a specific “morality”.

Ivo Minkov’s contribution focuses on Hegel’s Absolute Subject and interprets the dialectic as a possible course of the spiritual development of the absolute subject, which is seen as a necessary result of speculative and logical formation, and at the same time as a phenomenological process of realising its essence. The author inquires into the methodology of this dynamic: from the idea of freedom constructed in logic as a speculative and logical outcome, through its function in the transition from the subjective to the objective mind, and then in the process of mediations in the realm of the objective mind. In this way, Minkov aims to outline a project of speculative ethics within a framework in which a mental evolution and the construction of being [*Gedachtsein*] is realised through sublation, preservation and accumulation in infinite perfection, on both the ontological and methodological levels.

The relationship between theory and practice is the focus of Andreas Arndt’s article. Starting from August von Cieszkowski’s idea that we are at a turning point in history, where facts become “deeds,” he tries to understand what a “deed” means. He looks at Hegel’s development of the concept of freedom and focuses on two models of understanding action. One leads to Fichte’s act of doing, the other – developed later by Marx – considers action as activity on objects (labour). Hegel’s concept of the act presupposes the dialectical process of absolute reality, which it is the goal of philosophy to grasp and understand. “Work is also that activity through which the spirit liberates itself.” While for Hegel human praxis is to be understood as the practical and theoretical behavior towards the world (nature as well as the social world), according to Marx praxis is objective mediation, Arndt stresses. In contrast, the unconditional or absolute deed could directly be reality in the real-philosophical sense, as Cieszkowski meant it.

Tom Rockmore provides an original contribution on Marx’s relationship to Fichte. Although this topic is not often explored, it is fundamental to understanding Marx’s contribution and his position within so-called Classical German Philosophy. Some

interpreters consider Marx's materialism as evidence of his break with philosophy. However, this position is inaccurate, since materialism must also be regarded as strictly philosophical. The philosophical relevance of Marx is emphasised by Korsch and Lukács; the latter in particular, who wanted to show that Marx went beyond German Idealism in his response to Hegel, points to the importance of Fichte for Marx's conception of the subject. Based on his theory of the subject and human activity, Marx's account (which is directed against Hegel) in this way evoked Fichte's approach to human activity in reaction to Kant. Certainly, the two positions cannot be reduced to one another, but Marx's position is similar to Fichte's, and not only that: it goes back in the Western tradition at least as far as Aristotle, who developed a theory of life as activity in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

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Genesis of Moral Freedom in Kant



Jacinto Rivera de Rosales († 2021)

(La Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid; jrivera@fsf.uned.es)

ORCID: 0000-0001-6808-0463

Abstract: In Kant's writings, we can discover four key moments in the realization of moral freedom: i) The original possibility of being free, ii) The act described by Kant as radical evil, iii) The opposite act, that is, an inner conversion to good, and, finally, iv) The long process of the self-development of virtue extending to immortality. There are further issues such as the double concept of moral evil, and practical temporality. Moral freedom is originally located (and presupposed in Kant's transcendental deduction) in the individual, her decisions, and the maxims or principles that guide her actions, even though a community (as both a „kingdom of ends” and social reality) provides the scope wherein all this takes place and its socially and historically-situated shapes. This paper tries to systematize these crucial stages of Kant's moral philosophy with the focus on the concept of virtue.

Keywords: Kant; moral freedom; moral evil; practical temporality; virtue; immortality.

In Kant's writings, we can discover four moments in the genesis of the development of moral freedom. These are as follows:

- i) The moment of the original possibility of being free,
- ii) The act that Kant describes as radical evil,
- iii) The inner revolution, or conversion toward good, respectively, and
- iv) The long process of virtue.

I am not dealing here with the development of freedom in the human community, as Kant discusses it in his *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (AA VIII, 107–123)¹ which goes from the protection of nature to the state of freedom, or with the evolution of legal freedom, as in *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (AA VIII, 15–31)², which addresses a perfect political constitution both within the state and in the mutual

1 I. Kant, *Muthmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (1786). Citations to Kant will be provided on the basis of the Akademie-Ausgabe by volume and page (for instance: AA I, 1–2; 3–4). English quotations will be edited according to the Cambridge edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, except for the *Critique of Pure Reason* where citations will use the standard A/B edition pagination (for instance: Kant, CPR, A 709/B 737).

2 I. Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784).

relations between states. The topic of this article is rather the genesis of moral freedom, which Kant locates specifically in the individual, his internal decisions, and the maxims or principles that direct his actions, even if the community or kingdom of ends is the realm or context wherein all of this occurs.

I. On the Original Innocence

The first moment in the genesis of moral freedom is a structural element that we could call the original possibility or original innocence. Freedom appears, in Kant, as the capacity to initiate a real series of phenomena in the world, without itself being determined by an external cause, that is, without itself falling under the law of causality that governs phenomena and links them to each other,³ but rather is an original action [*ursprünglich*] that initiates its action itself. As we know, he argues for this first by placing ontological limits on natural causality and determinism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, thus leaving possible room for freedom, and second by showing that freedom is the *ratio essendi* of moral consciousness, because only in a free being can something like a duty appear. Only in a free being can a moral demand arise and be grasped, so the mere fact that one has a moral conscience reveals itself as a condition for the possibility, existence, and reality of a freedom, and of one that takes itself as its own task.

How, then, does this free action arise? If we come closer to seeing what occurs within this act of moral freedom, we see, first, that it develops in the realm of reflective consciousness, which is the location of judgment and reason, including practical reason. It is not given in a pre-reflective, involuntary, or sleeping consciousness, or in an instinctive consciousness, but in one that has arrived at a concept, reflective knowing of a law, or maxim, which involves ideal actions that indicate possibilities, and in this case, possibilities of action. Second, we see that, since it is freedom, or an action that begins with itself, we find in it the ability to decide on one of these possibilities and thus, to determine its own will.

Consequently, we encounter here two elements: concept and volition. On the one hand, there are concept and possibilities, from which proceeds autonomy that consists in acting according to the concept that freedom has of itself. On the other hand, there is a free volition that decides

³ That is why Kant tells us in the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgement* that freedom is not properly the cause [*Ursache*], but rather the foundation [*Grund*], of the causality of natural things in that real series of phenomena to which it gives rise (AA V, 195). However, Kant does not pause to explain wherein the difference between these two concepts consists. We could think that the cause of a phenomenon must be objectively another phenomenon, but freedom is not a phenomenon, and consequently interacts in a different manner. In the “Critique of Teleological Judgement,” we are shown that it becomes an object, it appears as an organic body. We could then conclude that our moral freedom acts in the world through its synthetic identification with our body [*Leib*], and thus, we can understand what Kant is indicating when he says that when moral freedom comes to realize its ends in nature, “the same causality of freedom (of pure and practical reason) is the causality of a natural thing that is subject to it (of the subject, as man, consequently considered as phenomenon)”; in German: “selbst die Kausalität der Freiheit (*der reinen und praktischen Vernunft*) ist die Kausalität einer jener untergeordneten Natursache”, “*des Subjekts, als Mensch, folglich als Erscheinung betrachtet*” (AA V, 196, note), that is, the causality of the human being as a body-mind whole (e.g., Rivera de Rosales 2002).

for itself to act according to one of the possibilities before it. Will, Kant tells us, is a “faculty of determining its causality according to a representation of rules”⁴.

Let us consider now the first element of the concept and the possibilities it offers, which, according to Kant, has the form of a moral law and maxims. These shape the first moment of moral freedom, making it possible by means of the capacity for reflection and the ideal distance in consciousness that the concept provides regarding the immediate reality of the world. This ideal distance extends to the rational demand of the unconditioned that surpasses everything given empirically and allows us a comprehension of freedom’s mode of being, which is distinct from the world’s mode of being. Moral consciousness is thus a reflective knowledge, which is certainly not a direct objective acquaintance with the world, but rather a consciousness that freedom has of itself and its mode of being or, as is said in the KpV, moral consciousness is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. It is so for the philosopher, but because it is so for itself, and because thanks to it the subject is and knows himself to be responsible for his acts, that is to say, free: “This fact [of reason, namely, the moral law] is united inseparably with consciousness of the free will and is the same thing”⁵. This is why freedom can begin from itself and not be caused by anything else, but only by itself and its own decision. The concept sets us free.

We can add to what Kant said that the concept presupposes language, because it is in language that it gives an objectivity to itself and finds its expression. There can be no consciousness without a world, or a concept without language, because consciousness, self-consciousness, and freedom are not transcendent substances, but rather transcendental actions. However, language can only arise in a community, wherein alone communication is needed. Consequently, this act of reflective consciousness and freedom, although it is an individual act, like all acts, is only possible in a community. In fact, it is an act that binds us to the community, as we will see.

However, the concept is not enough. The concept alone, Kant tells us, is empty of content. A reality, of which it is a concept and an understanding, is also required, and indeed, a reality of which the moral concept is consciousness. The moral concept is the consciousness of freedom as a reality in itself, which is the only reality we can affirm based on any ground, and it involves real and ideal spontaneity rather than mere ideal reflection or mere concept. We have no intuition (in the sense Kant uses the term) of this reality of freedom, but he speaks of a moral feeling, that is, the feeling of dignity we have before the moral law, and calls it “respect” [*Achtung*]. Moreover, if we consider the moral law as the consciousness that freedom has of itself, because it is not a heteronomous law that comes from outside, then we can say that it is the feeling wherein freedom manifests its force and reality beyond the concept. Through this feeling, we recognize freedom in

4 In German: “(...) ein Vermögen (...) ihre Causalität durch die Vorstellung von Regeln zu bestimmen“ (AA V, 32). The will is “the capacity to act according to the representation of laws, that is, according to principles” [*das Vermögen, nach der Vorstellung der Gesetze, d.i. nach Prinzipien, zu handeln*] (AA IV, 412).

5 “(...) daß dieses Factum mit dem Bewußtsein der Freiheit des Willens unzertrennlich verbunden, ja mit ihm einerlei sei” (AA V, 42).

the individuality of each person and his act, because action and feeling are related to individuality and particularity, while the concept is related to universality.

We have thus, these two elements: concept and reality in itself, which come to be felt in the moral feeling of respect, and this reality is the source of moral consciousness and the capacity to decide for oneself through its concept or autonomy. This feeling of self has its origin in the reality and the act of freedom in front of its concept, that is, it is given in the concrete, individual action of freedom, which can choose good or evil, in contrast to the universality and obligation of the moral law. Consequently, in this first moment of moral freedom, we encounter an original being and knowledge of ourselves that is not produced by the world. Nonetheless, without a world, they would not have arisen, because possessing consciousness of oneself implies distinguishing oneself from the other, and there would be no consciousness of freedom or “I think” without consciousness of the world or without the action of knowing and transforming it⁶.

Nonetheless, we have here just the condition for the possibility of a complete act of will that is only given when it produces an act, which will occur in the second moment of our genesis. This first element of moral liberty makes all free decision possible, and is the ground on which it stands and with which it forms an indissoluble whole. They arise together, but it was necessary to analyze them separately in order to become aware of the complex whole that contains freedom’s own proper mode of being. This very first element does not exist without the second element, or the act of decision, since it cannot be thought that freedom was first a substance, mere power, or potency that only acted sometimes, or after the decision, but rather that it is always an action, as the first element also arises only with action. The important thing to see here is that this first moment makes every decision free and imputable to the individual subject⁷. Consequently, this first moment will *always* be present in the rational individual, unless his freedom is to be destroyed, and it will be present from the age of reason and throughout his entire rational life provided he does not lose it due to some grave illness, madness, or dementia. By saying “always” we expose here a temporal determination that must be elucidated.

Kant tends to assimilate the first element, which makes all free decision possible, mythically with the earthly paradise, and given that its first free determination led to moral evil, speaks of it as the state of innocence prior to the fall. Adam would be the prototype of what we do normally (AA VI, 41–44). This is how he expresses it clearly in a passage in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*:

All bad action [we could say: all free action], if one seeks its rational origin, would have to be as if man incurred it starting directly from the state of innocence. For, whatever his previous behavior might have been and whatever natural causes might have influenced him, his actions, whether encountered within or outside of him, are still free and not determined by any of these causes. It can be judged,

⁶ Freedom distinguishes us from nature and, at the same time, binds us to it as the place wherein freedom has to be realized, according to Kant’s explanation in the Introduction to KU. This obligation and responsibility also distinguish us from other rational beings and, above all, bind us to them, but with different laws.

⁷ We find the spontaneity of life, and even of subjectivity, in newborn children and animals (or in sleeping or alienated human beings, etc.), too, but they lack the concept, or the reflective consciousness, and therefore do not rise to the capacity for moral freedom.

and must always be thought as an *original* use of his power of choice. (...) And no matter how bad someone might have been until the moment immediately prior to a free action (even including habit as a second nature), it was not only his duty to be better, but even now it is his duty to improve himself. Later, he must be able to do it, and if he does not, he is so susceptible in the moment of the action that has been imputed to him, and he is so subject to this imputation that it is as if he, endowed with the natural disposition toward good (which is inseparable from freedom), had passed from the state of innocence to evil (AA VI, 41)⁸.

II. Radical Evil

Kant examines the second moment, which he called radical evil [*das radikale Böse*], in the first part of *Religion*. We now turn to this first act of free volition, which implies and includes in itself the moment we examined before, since that moment made it possible as a free act. As we know, and according to our author, moral evil consists in the power of choice giving preference to inclinations rather than to the moral law in its maxims, which is to say that the subject opts to attend to his finitude rather than his free being and does not respect freedom in himself or others as something original but subordinates himself to the dominion of the world or to his passions against others, such as anger, envy, and revenge. Evil involves, consequently, an inversion [*Umkehrung*] of the correct hierarchy of the principles⁹ that moves toward non-recognition and destruction of freedom. In evil also, there is knowing (concept) and act, or reflective consciousness and volition: “Man recognizes the moral law and, nonetheless, has allowed in his maxim the (occasional) deviation regarding it” (AA VI, 32)¹⁰.

In the greater part of Kant’s work, we find a conception of evil wherein evil arises as a result of a kind of mechanics of forces, such that moral evil is due to the weakness of freedom and reason against in the greater force of desires on account of the subject’s preference for happiness, or evil occurs because of the “impotence of reason over inclination,”¹¹ or for the debility of freedom against our dependencies on the world. Accordingly, moral evil would not be strictly an act of freedom but, rather, its absence: a release or passivity, or a defeat by opposing superior forces. We can find this conception even in a work as late as the Introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals* of 1797:

8 “Love yourself morally, that is, according to the constitution of your spirit before it was corrupted. The evil that came later in you, before you showed reason, must not provoke aversion against yourself. Honor yourself with respect. Do not make yourself into a thing” (AA VI, 41). In original: “Liebe dich selbst moralisch d.i. nach der Grundanlage deines Gemüths ehe du verdorben warest. Das nachher in dir gekommene Böse selbst, ehe du Vernunft bewiesest, muß dir nicht Abscheu erregen gegen dich selbst. Ehre dich selbst Achtung. Mache Dich nicht zur Sache” (AA XXIII, 404).

9 Good and radical evil depend on which of the two motives the power of choice takes as the supreme condition, or which of the two motives, finitude or originarity, the person makes the condition of the other (see AA VI, 36).

10 “Er ist sich des moralischen Gesetzes bewußt und hat doch die (gelegentlich) Abweichung von demselben in seine Maxime aufgenommen” (AA VI, 32).

11 “Ohnmacht der Vernunft über die Neigungen” (AA XIX, 133). “Le mal radical (...) est la simple impuissance à rejoindre la loi. En ceci réside sa racine transcendante” (Philonenko 1981/3, vol. II, 158).

But freedom of the power of choice cannot be defined by means of the capacity to choose between acting for or against the moral law (...) so that freedom can never allow that the rational subject can make a decision that contradicts its legislative reason (...). Only freedom that conforms to the internal legislation of reason is strictly a capacity; and the possibility of departing from it, an incapacity [*ein Unvermögen*] (AA VI, 226–227)¹².

To be sure, freedom is realized adequately only in goodness.

However, in the first part of *Religion*, we find a different version of Kant's idea of moral evil, which I consider more complete. For evil to be moral and imputable to the subject, it must follow from his free act (see AA VI, 34–35; AA XVII, 430; see also Rivera der Rosales 2007, 9–40) and not from its absence. It must consist in an “intelligible act” [*intelligible That*] (AA VI, 39, note) and not merely a sensible one, since “nothing is morally wrong” (or so to say, capable of being imputed) unless it is our own act”¹³.

It must be an act of freedom (since, otherwise, the use or misuse of man's power of choice in relation to the moral law could not be imputed to him, and neither his goodness nor badness could be called moral). Consequently, in no object that determines the power of choice by inclination, and in no natural impulse, can the foundation of evil be discovered, but rather only in a law that the power of choice gives to itself for the use of its freedom, that is to say, only in a maxim (AA VI, 21)¹⁴.

According to this, moral evil does not consist rest in a conflict between inclinations and freedom, or between finitude and originarity [*Ursprünglichkeit*]. In other words, it does not arise from the difference between the higher and lower faculties of desire, as

12 “(...) daß die Freiheit nimmermehr darin gesetzt werden kann, daß das vernünftige Subject auch eine wider seine (gesetzgebende) Vernunft streitende Wahl treffen kann (...) Die Freiheit in Beziehung auf die innere Gesetzgebung der Vernunft ist eigentlich allein ein Vermögen; die Möglichkeit von dieser abzuweichen ein Unvermögen“ (AA VI, 226–227; see also AA XXIII, 248–249; 383; AA XXI, 470–471; AA XVII, 314; 317; 318). The latter ends by saying that wanting evil “is not properly a capacity, but rather the possibility of being passive [*eine Möglichkeit zu leiden*]. Although evil actions are under [*unter*] freedom, they do not happen through [*durch*] freedom” (*Dieses /das erkannte Böse/ ist auch nicht eigentlich ein Vermögen, sondern eine Möglichkeit zu leiden. Böse Handlungen stehen zwar unter der Freyheit, aber geschehen nicht durch sie*) (AA XVII, 318).

13 “Nun ist aber nichts sittlich-(d.i. zurechnungsfähig-)böse, als was unsere eigene That ist” (AA VI, 31).

14 “Dieser subjective Grund muß aber immer wiederum selbst ein Actus der Freiheit sein (denn sonst könnte der Gebrauch oder Mißgebrauch der Willkür des Menschen in Ansehung des sittlichen Gesetzes ihm nicht zugerechnet werden und das Gute oder Böse in ihm nicht moralisch heißen). Mithin kann in keinem die Willkür durch Neigung bestimmenden Objecte, in keinem Naturtriebe, sondern nur in einer Regel, die die Willkür sich selbst für den Gebrauch ihrer Freiheit macht, d.i. in einer Maxime” (AA VI, 21 cf.). Moral evil is not a mere weakness before sensibility, but rather a free decision, and “it is not to be sought in the inclinations, but rather in the perverted maxim and thus, in freedom itself” [*welches (das Böse) nicht in den Neigungen, sondern in der verkehrten Maxime und also in der Freiheit selbst zu suchen ist*] (AA VI, 58, note; also 59, note). “What man, in a moral sense, is or should, good or bad, he must do or have done himself. Both things must be an effect of his of his free power of choice, or otherwise it could not be imputed to him, and consequently, it could be neither morally good nor bad”, in German: “Was der Mensch im moralischen Sinne ist oder werden soll, gut oder böse, dazu muß er sich selbst machen oder gemacht haben. Beides muß eine Wirkung seiner freien Willkür sein; denn sonst könnte es ihm nicht zugerechnet werden, folglich er weder moralisch gut noch böse sein” (AA VI, 44).

the first concept of moral evil suggested, but it is situated in a second fold that is located within freedom itself, specifically, between the freedom-concept and the freedom-decision, or between the rational will with its universal moral law, or concept, and the absolute spontaneity of the particular power of choice with its maxim and act of volition,¹⁵ which are thus imputable to it (AA VI, 25, note). Only freedom can affirm or negate itself directly¹⁶:

For natural impulses in themselves are innocent and between them and the moral law there is properly no conflict; it is an act of freedom to make the pursuit of the law a maxim for oneself independent of those impulses, or even against them (...). The good principle has no struggle properly against sensibility (of the flesh), since it is innocent, but the propensity to base one's maxim, which is free, on the impulses of the flesh, is the evil principle in us (AA XX, 346–347).

The decision of the power of choice to adapt (or not) its maxims of action to the moral law would be the fundamental decision or “supreme maxim” [*die oberste Maxime*] (AA VI, 31; also 39, note) that gives rise to the good will (e.g., Rivera de Rosales 2007) or radical evil. “This moral evil is radical, because it corrupts the foundation of all maxims”¹⁷. The first fold between the lower faculty of desire and the higher, or the conflict that sometimes exists between inclinations and freedom, still plays an important role here. It contributes, first, to make consciousness of freedom possible, insofar as we become conscious of one force only in its resistance to an opposing force:

All strength [Stärke] is recognized solely by virtue of the obstacles it is able to overcome; but in the case of virtue, the obstacles are natural inclinations that can [but not necessarily] enter into conflict with the moral proposition (AA VI, 394)¹⁸.

Second, as a sometimes-contrary force, it incites evil. Nonetheless, at its root, moral evil must be thought as an act of freedom, which because it is divided into universal will [*Wille*] and particular power of choice makes it possible and necessary that freedom accept and affirm itself

15 “The freedom of the power of choice is constituted with the peculiarity that it cannot be determined as an action due to any motivating force, but rather only and to the extent that the person accepts it as his maxim (and insofar as he makes it a universal rule according to which he wants to behave); Only in this way can a motivating force, whatever it might be, coexist with the absolute spontaneity of the power or choice (of freedom)”; in German: “die Freiheit der Willkür ist von der ganz eigenthümlichen Beschaffenheit, daß sie durch keine Triebfeder zu einer Handlung bestimmt werden kann, als nur sofern der Mensch sie in seine Maxime aufgenommen hat [es sich zur allgemeinen Regel gemacht hat, nach der er sich verhalten Will]; so allein kann eine Triebfeder, welche sie auch sei, mit der absoluten Spontaneität der Willkür [der Freiheit] zusammen bestehen” (AA VI, 23–24; see also AA VI, 213).

16 In German: “Denn die Naturtriebe sind an sich unschuldig und zwischen ihnen und dem moralischen Gesetze giebt es eigentlich keinen Streit: seine Befolgung aber unabhängig von diesen ja selbst wieder sie sich zur Maxime zu machen ist ein Act der Freiheit (...) Die Sinnlichkeit (des Fleisches) ist eigentlich nicht das was vom guten Princip zu bekämpfen ist denn die ist unschuldig sondern der Hang seine Maxime nach dieser ihren Antrieben zu nehmen welche frey ist, ist das böse Princip in uns” (cf.).

17 “Dieses Böse ist radical, weil es den Grund aller Maximen verdirbt” (AA VI, 37).

18 “Alle Stärke wird nur durch Hindernisse erkannt, die sie überwältigen kann; bei der Tugend aber sind diese die Naturneigungen, welche mit dem sittlichen Vorsatz in Streit kommen können,” which would imply self-restraint according to the rational principle of freedom (cf.).

freely. Clearly, this possibility allows that freedom can also deny and demean itself, which is moral evil. Freedom is thus the capacity for doing good or evil, which are possibilities contained in its concept¹⁹. This does not imply that freedom involves an indifference before good and evil, because as I said, freedom is fully realized as such only in good, and for this reason, moral obligation is directed toward the good. Consequently, freedom is the capacity of acting according to its own law, autonomously, and in conformity with its original mode of being, but this capacity implies the possibility of not following its law, and of negating itself and committing injustice, insofar as only this possibility allows the free realization of freedom²⁰.

Let us continue analyzing this second moment and consider why Kant affirms that this first act of moral freedom is morally evil. According to him, “the history of nature began with the good, since it is the work of God; the history of freedom, with moral evil, since it is the work of man”²¹. Very well, but the moral evil of the first act of freedom cannot be explained by the idea of original sin, as Christianity thinks, “since the actions of the power of choice cannot contain something inherited in themselves,”²² insofar as they are free, individual, and imputable to the individual subject and we can only be held accountable for our own acts (AA VII, 31; 40). This radical evil can also not be deduced from freedom’s mode of being, because only the possibility of evil emerges from it, and not the necessity of evil, and not, therefore, the necessity that the first act of freedom be directed toward evil. Consequently, Kant’s claim that the first act is evil can be based solely on experience (AA VI, 32–34), that is, on the moral experience of the existence of evil and injustice in the world and history from their inception, and it is to this experience that he refers us²³.

To understand the fact that the freedom of reflective consciousness opts first for evil, we could argue that the first act tends to be imperfect, or that, as dependent beings, happiness is “the first thing that we desire unconditionally” (AA VI, 46, note) and “the final subjective end” (AA VI, 6, note; compare AA V, 484). We could also argue that moral goodness requires reflection, rational development, and moral education, or that, normally, we need to experience the pain generated by evil to turn our principle of action around. Nonetheless, ultimately, we must comprehend evil as an act of freedom that starts from itself.

One final issue that we need to address about this act of freedom is if it occurs inside or

19 For Schelling, who is also inspired to think this in Kant, conceives the formal concept of freedom as the ability to determine oneself according to practical reason, “since what is free acts only according to the laws of its own essence” [*denn frei ist, was nur den Gesetzen seines eignen Wesens gemäß handelt*] (Schelling, SW VII, 384). “But the real and living concept is that freedom is a capacity of moral good and evil” [*Der reale und lebendige Begriff aber ist, daß sie ein Vermögen des Guten und des Bösen sey*] (Schelling, SW VII, 352).

20 Let us say that the difference between the universality of the law and the particularity of the power of choice shows us again that this act of freedom is only possible within the framework of a plurality of people, wherein the difference between the individual and the community is objectified.

21 “Die Geschichte der Natur fängt also vom Guten an, denn sie ist das Werk Gottes; die Geschichte der Freiheit vom Bösen, denn sie ist das Werk Gottes” (AA VIII, 115).

22 “[...] denn willkürliche Handlungen können nichts Anerbendes bei sich führen” (AA VIII, 123).

23 Here perhaps we could make use of Heidegger’s expression “proximally and for the most part” [*zunächst und zumeist*] from *Being and Time* to conclude: In the greatest number of cases and firstly, it happens that the first act of freedom goes toward evil.

outside of time. We have seen that Kant locates it within freedom and so, considers it an intelligible act, rather than a phenomenal one, which establishes the human being's intelligible character (AA VI, 37). If we recognize that time is the a priori sensible form of objects, then we would have to place this act outside of all time. Kant tells us that "it is an intelligible act, cognizable only by reason without any condition of time [*ohne alle Zeitbedingung*]"²⁴ and assures us that "as an intelligible act, it is prior to all experience [*vor aller Erfahrung*]"²⁵.

Schelling has provided this idea the furthest, referring expressly to Kant (Schelling, SW VII, 384) in his *Philosophical Investigations on the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809). He also locates freedom "outside of all causal connection as well as beyond all time"²⁶. Accordingly, the free individual decision to do good or evil "falls outside of all time and, consequently, coincides with the first creation (although as an event different from it),"²⁷ that is, at the beginning [*Anfang*] of creation, whereby time commences, in eternity [*Ewigkeit*], and this decision determines the entire temporal life of the individual. It is an action that precedes [*vorangeht*] and constitutes the individual's consciousness and "even determines the mode and constitution of his corporeality"²⁸. Schelling appears to approach here the Platonic myth of Er (Plato, *Politicus* 614 b–621 d) to which Leibniz's conception of the divine creation of the world should be added.

It must be said that certain renowned Schellingians believe and defend this point of view, but I find it contains serious difficulties, which can help us to reflect on this issue in Kant. The first and greatest of these difficulties is that an individual cannot possibly determine his moral character (which requires reflective consciousness, concept, and language, that is, a community, as we have seen) prior to all consciousness and his own existence, and even determine his own corporeality, from nothing. Although it might be a beautiful image, it is of a mythological character. Second, if we accept Schelling's idea, the real and conscious man, or the man in time, would cease to be free, insofar as his free act had been converted into necessity, because all his sensible acts and all his life would be necessary consequences of this intelligible act, which could not be changed in the temporal course of his life. Judas could not have acted differently through upbringing or teaching.²⁹ Third, although Schelling endeavors to declare that this act does not precede the life of the individual in time, because it is situated in eternity, he cannot avoid temporal expressions, such as "precede," "first creation," or "prior to consciousness," required for comprehending what is said. Fourth and last, in relation to Schelling's philosophy of nature, it must be remembered that he presents nature as prior to Spirit or the world of freedom (as Hegel will do), but this original act of freedom would have occurred without counting on the presence of the individual body or

24 "Jene ist intelligibele That, bloß durch Vernunft ohne alle Zeitbedingung erkennbar" (AA VI, 31).

25 "... die als intelligibele That vor aller Erfahrung vorhergeht" (AA VI, 39, note).

26 "... außer allem Kausalzusammenhang, wie außer oder über aller Zeit" (AA VII, 383).

27 "... sie fällt außer aller Zeit und daher mit der ersten Schöpfung (wenngleich als eine von ihr verschiedene Tat) zusammen" (AA VII, 385).

28 "... indem durch jene Tat sogar die Art und Beschaffenheit seiner Korporisation bestimmt ist" (AA VII, 387).

29

of nature.

Returning to Kant, I think that the problem regarding the first act of freedom and time resides in his not having reflected sufficiently on different modes of temporality (including those that he uses himself). It appears that the only possible temporality possible would be that of objects, or objective time in CPR, which is ordered by the categories of relation: substance-accident, cause and effect, and reciprocal relations. Freedom, however, is not subject to precisely these relations, because it has a mode of being different from objects. Consequently, Kant concludes that it is outside of all time insofar as causality would not only determine the phenomenal ordering of time but also time as such, which would go against the distinction between intuitions and concepts, or rules of synthesis, and cause it to collapse (AA VII, 386–387). Nonetheless, I would say that there are other temporalities not governed, or not exclusively governed, by these categories, such as the temporality of history, the internal purpose of living beings, or the aesthetic. For instance, Kant claims: “we linger [*weilen*] in the contemplation of the beautiful, because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces it”³⁰. Likewise, we might consider the temporality of musical or theatrical works. To be sure, all of these events and activities still develop against the background of objective temporality and are datable within it³¹.

Thus, here in the case of radical evil, we would find a temporality that we could call practical or moral, because every decision and act divides time into a before and after even though they are not determined by phenomenal causality. Let us examine a brief passage that exposes the Kantian ambiguity on this matter. In *Religion*, Kant tells us that the moral intention [*Gesinnung*] of accepting (or not) the moral law as the first motive of action in its maxim, is an act of the human being “only insofar as it does not occur in time (that he was one or the other from youth on)”³². First, Kant emphasizes that this act is not produced in time and yet, he places it in the individual’s youth. Second, he affirms that this decision will persist forever, but we know that according to him, there is the possibility of an inner conversion toward the good, which can only happen in a moment of time during the individual’s life.

In KpV, Kant appears to reduce the age of moral accountability and tells us that a child of 10 years is capable of distinguishing between moral good and evil (AA V, 155)³³. We would have been surprised if he had said a child of 10 days could make this distinction, because moral consciousness belongs to the realm of reflective consciousness and requires a developed conceptual and linguistic capacity that a newborn lacks. When a child reaches the age of reason remains imprecise and variable insofar as it depends on his intelligence, reflection, and maturity as well as the education that he receives and the society wherein he lives. In any case, he does not arrive at this state

30 “Wir weilen bei der Betrachtung des Schönen, weil diese Betrachtung sich selbst stärkt und reproduziert“ (AA V, 222).

31 Everything real occurs in time and space, but the way of being of the object is not the only one that develops or exists there.

32 “... sondern daß sie nur nicht in der Zeit erworben sei (daß er eines oder das andere von Jugend auf sei immerdar)” (AA VI, 25).

33 “... selbst Kinder,” without specifying their age (AA VI, 48).

before his birth, but rather in the first years of his life and only after a certain process of learning and personal development. Consequently, when Kant maintains that the first act of freedom “as an intelligible act, precedes all experience,” (AA VI, 39, note) it would be difficult to understand that he means any kind of experience, because all knowledge, and so all consciousness, begins with experience, as the CPR affirms. A better interpretation would be that this act is independent of all sensible, concrete experience, as when he assures us that the forms of objective knowing are independent of experience but cannot exist without it. Likewise, when Kant claims that it occurs “*ohne alle Zeitbedingung*,” we must understand that he means it is not determined by the condition of phenomenal causality.

III. The Inner Conversion toward the Good

The third moment in the development of moral freedom starts from the two prior moments and consists in an inner conversion toward the good within freedom. This radical revolution involves an inversion in the subject’s principles of action whereby the maxim of his power of choice ceases to accept inclination as an ultimate guide, which was the characteristic of moral evil, and takes the moral law as a guiding principle, which compels respect and real, practical recognition of everyone’s freedom.

It is not enough that our empirical behavior complies externally with this moral principle, because the evil will or bad *Gesinnung* can lead us to perform external actions that accord with the law on some occasions for the sake of prudence, “and then, in this case, the empirical character is good, but the intelligible character is still evil,”³⁴ and will produce reprehensible actions on other occasions. The good deed here would be contingent and in favor of world domination. Desire has become civilized, some habits have changed, but not yet in the heart, and so, we have an occasional and merely phenomenal virtue (AA VI, 14; 47). Still, this is not enough for Kant.

To move toward the third moment in the development of moral freedom, there must be another intelligible act within freedom, namely, that the power of choice adopts the moral law as a guiding principle of its maxims and volitions. It must generate, thus, an inversion [*Umkehrung*] in the guiding principles of action, such that now the moral law and the freedom of every human being are posited as the unconditioned in the supreme maxim of the power of choice, and no longer finitude and particular inclinations. This inversion does not involve nullifying our desire for happiness and our dependency on the world, which would be unnatural and demented, but rather seeking our satisfaction within the framework of the moral law and respect for freedom:

The condition under which the desire for happiness can be consonant with legislative reason, the entire moral prescription consists in this, and the mode of moral thinking consists in the intention to not desire except under this condition (AA VI, 46, note; see also 58; AA VIII, 283; AA V, 25; AA VI, 387)³⁵.

34 “... da dann der empirische Charakter gut, der intelligibele aber immer noch böse ist” (AA VI, 37).

35 “Daß diese nun objectiv die Bedingung sei, unter welcher der Wunsch der ersteren allein mit

The inversion of principles does not occur gradually, as only the phenomenal realm would contain degrees (AA VI, 39, note), so Kant regards it as an “explosion” [*Explosion*], resembling a “new birth” [*eine Art von Wiedergeburt*] and “a new creation” [*eine neue Schöpfung*], or a “new epoch” [*eine neue Epoche*] and an “inner revolution,” (AA VI, 47–48, 74; AA VII, 294) that entail a “revolution in the manner of thinking” [*Revolution für die Denkungsart*] or a “revolution in the mind” [*in der Gesinnung*] (AA VI, 47), and that initiate a new intelligible character in the subject or individual: a good will. According to the religious symbolism that Kant uses to describe this conversion (AA VI, 47, as in John III, 5), the old man, with his former identity and his fear of finitude, deficiency, and death, must perish in this act and a new man, who takes up his freedom and finitude, must be born. In reality, thanks to this act, the human being establishes a character in himself (AA VI, 48) and “has a character that he creates himself” (AA VII, 321), “(...) because evil (since it involves conflict with itself and does not permit any stable principle within itself) distinctly lacks true character”³⁶. However, in contrast, this inner conversion toward the moral good “founds a character (that is consistent with a practical manner of thinking according to invariable maxims)”³⁷.

This inner change is possible thanks to the first moment of freedom, or original innocence, which is *always* present; that is, it is possible thanks to the concept, reflective consciousness, or moral reason, which appeals to the individual so that he takes it as the ultimate guide of his action, and also thanks to the free and original character of the power of choice, which is capable of starting over by itself at any moment: “Stand up and walk!’ (...). This imperative occurs in man by virtue of his own reason, insofar as it harbors in itself the supersensible principle of moral life” (AA VII, 47)³⁸.

This original innocence, or “germ of goodness [*Keim des Guten*] has remained [note the practical temporality] in all its purity” (AA VI, 45) and now is reinstated, since the subject returns to himself, and to the first fontal moment of his freedom, and thereby, to his original capacity for possibilities and for his own decision³⁹. If this root of rational will were corrupted, we would have a diabolical will and it would be impossible to change it, but then we would also have ceased to be free.

Finally, in relation to temporality, we can say that this act of inner revolution, which requires reflection and conscious decision, can only occur during the rational life of an individual, without

der gesetzgebenden Vernunft zusammenstimmen kann, darin besteht alle sittliche Vorschrift und in der Gesinnung, auch nur so bedingt zu wünschen, die sittliche Denkungsart“ (AA VI, 46).

36 “... weil das Böse (da es Widerstreit mit sich selbst bei sich führt und kein bleibendes Princip in sich selbst verstatet) eigentlich ohne Charakter ist“ (AA VII, 329; see also 292–295).

37 “... welcher einen Charakter (praktische consequente Denkungsart nach unveränderlichen Maximen) gründet“ (AA V, 152).

38 In German: “Stehe auf und wandle!’ (...) Der Zuruf geschieht an den Menschen durch seine eigene Vernunft, sofern sie das übersinnliche Princip des moralischen Lebens in sich selbst hat“. Kant is here an enlightened rationalist and not a Lutheran fideist.

39 If theoretical, pragmatic, and technical reason was used as a mere instrument in the search for means of satisfaction before, practical reason is posited as a guide now, and consciousness of freedom is posited in the beginning and the ends.

specifying any particular age during his rational development at which it would occur, since the first moment of moral freedom, which makes it possible, is always present. However, there is also the other possibility, wherein moral freedom also consists, that an individual might never perform this moral act of inner revolution and that he will remain anchored in manipulation and cunning, or that he will never move past the horizon of prudence. In *Anthropology*, where Kant reflects on man's acquisition of character, he thematizes it in the same manner as he does in the context of moral conversion toward good; then he hazards a guess, and points out: "Perhaps only a few have attempted this revolution before the age of 30, and even fewer have established it solidly before 40" (AA VII, 294). If we take into account that the life expectancy was then about 30 years, Kant's prognosis is not very encouraging.

Moreover, those few individuals, who have achieved this inner revolution and established good in themselves, will never be sure of having achieved it. Pure moral intention is an intelligible act that has a negative criterion of the absence of all empirical interest regarding the ultimate determinant of action, but we can never be sure of knowing everything empirical in reference to our desires. "Likewise the nonexistence of something (and so also, any advantage concealed in thought) cannot be an object of experience"⁴⁰. Thus, "it is not possible for man to look so far into the depths of his own heart that he can ever be completely sure about the purity of his moral purpose and the cleanliness of his intention or so much as one of his actions, even if its legality is not subject to any doubt"⁴¹. What the law mandates is that one strive to achieve that purity (AA VIII, 285; AA VI, 393) and if one ought, one can: "A change of direction [*Sinnesänderung*] must also be possible, because it is a duty" (AA VI, 66–67). Further, "duty commands us to be good, and duty does not command us to do anything that is not feasible" (AA VI, 47; see also 50). Nonetheless, we do not know our intelligible character directly, but rather only through our phenomenal or sensible character, that is, "only from its consequences in behavior,"⁴² and "so, true morality of actions (worth and guilt), and even of our own conduct, remains totally concealed from us"⁴³. Still, a man comparing his past and present actions can have some confidence about his change of intention during his life (AA VI, 68). We can add that not being totally sure of one's good will, protects one from the potential arrogance and vanity that would destroy it.

40 "Auch überhaupt kann das Nichtsein von Etwas (mithin auch nicht von einem insgeheim gedachten Vorteil) kein Gegenstand der Erfahrung sein" (AA VIII, 284).

41 As we read in Kant's *Metaphysik der Sitten*: "Denn es ist dem Menschen nicht möglich so in die Tiefe seines eigenen Herzens einzuschauen, daß er jemals von der Reinigkeit seiner moralischen Absicht und der Lauterkeit seiner Gesinnung auch nur in einer Handlung völlig gewiß sein könnte; wenn er gleich über die Legalität derselben gar nicht zweifelhaft ist" (AA VI, 392).

42 "... nur aus den Folgen derselben im Lebenswandel" (AA VI, 71; see also 77).

43 "Die eigentliche Moralität der Handlungen (Verdienst und Schuld) bleibt uns daher, selbst die unseres eigenen Verhaltens, gänzlich verborgen" (Kant, CPR A 551/B 579, note). "Perhaps never has a man done his duty in an absolutely disinterested manner (without the admixture of other motives)" [*Vielleicht mag nie ein Mensch seine erkannte und von ihm auch verehrte Pflicht ganz uneigennützig (ohne Beimischung anderer Triebfeder) ausgeübt haben*] (AA VIII, 284–285).

IV. The Long Road of Virtue

This final section leads us to the fourth moment of moral freedom, namely, the long process of virtue. This fourth moment presupposes and depends on the other three. In this genesis, the stages are based on one another. From the first moment, arises the possibility of always being able to go from an evil *Gesinnung* to a good one, but also the reverse, and consequently, the individual's responsibility for all of his actions. The second moment, of the decision for evil, leaves behind a tendency toward evil [*Hang zum Bösen*] in human nature that originates in this intelligible act of freedom and that gives rise to its own reality in the human world: its inertia, its interests, its injustice, and its practices and abuses, which are manifest, for example, through the violence of the strong and powerful, the corruption of criminal organizations, and the domination of dictatorial or fascist political regimes, and so forth (AA VI, 24–25, note; 25; 44; 47–48; 74; also AA VII, 294). The third moment of the inner moral revolution introduces freedom and its moral law as the ultimate guides of action. However, and here the fourth moment commences, in order to fulfill and realize this foundation of good in practice, the moral subject must overcome the propensity to evil already created, which has become customary and gained strength in himself and his society, by defeating its powerful presence of evil in the world. This requires “a continuous progress to infinity of an imperfect good toward a better one,”⁴⁴ or an asymptotic progress toward the unattainable goal of perfection [*Vollkommenheit*] (AA VI, 45; 60–61; 68; 122) in this life and, for Kant, in a future life as well.

Moreover, not only the world and the empirical I must be transformed according to the new moral intention or *Gesinnung*, but this *Gesinnung* must itself be converted within freedom into a holy will, that is, into a will that is always good. The moral goal and ideal is a *Gesinnung* that does not allow itself to be affected by inclinations in its first principle of action but that always follows the moral law with complete confidence and certainty. Of course, as a finite being, man cannot help but feel interested in the needs stemming from his dependency on the world, and consequently, he will find himself continuously at a crossroad between two interests, forces, and constitutive elements: her originarity and finitude. Sometimes there will be discrepancies between them and he will have to choose which one to prioritize. For this reason, man's moral state can only be “virtue, that is, moral intention and struggle, and not holiness in the intended possession of a complete purity in the intention of the will”⁴⁵.

In *Religion*, Kant proposes that the individual could receive assistance from an ethical community, which he designates as the intelligible church or the invisible church [*die unsichtbare Kirche*] wherein all the visible churches would need to converge. However, we can add that if an individual lived in a just society, or a rational legal community, which recognized everyone's

44 As in Kant's *Religion*: “... ein kontinuierlicher Fortschritt von mangelhaftem Guten zum Besseren ins Unendliche“ (AA VI, 67).

45 “Tugend, d.i. moralische Gesinnung im Kampfe, und nicht Heiligkeit im vermeintlichen Besitze einer völligen Reinigkeit der Gesinnungen des Willens“ (AA V, 84). We do not have a holy will but rather are always affected by the pathological (AA V, 32).

freedom in its laws and institutions, it would help him tremendously and make it easier for him to decide in himself to do good than if he lives in an unjust or delinquent community, which would require of him greater will power and stronger character, or even heroic spirit.

Therefore, although Kant presented the installation of the good in the human spirit as an inversion of principles that contained no degree but only the yes and no, from the human point of view (AA VI, 48) moral intention or spirit has a long way to go toward reinforcing its good decision, which we can understand through the weight, interest, or inertia of the second moment and through human fragility and impurity. It is as if there were a certain mix or oscillation between good and evil principles in the human spirit, even after the presence of the good began to have its effect progressively. Although there is no degree in these principles themselves, there is a degree in their efficient force and its effects.

It is from this ongoing struggle that the postulate of immortality in the Dialectic of KpV departs. Practical reason wants perfection, but man, at best, is only capable of an asymptotic approximation of it. Very well, and this is the argument: Insofar as reason cannot demand the impossible, or otherwise it would be absurd, then if one ought, one can. Consequently, the just must be granted an eternity beyond death in order to fully satisfy the demand of reason, and not only to improve the world morally, because it disappeared with death, but to convert their *Gesinnung* into a permanent good will, or a holy will. I say “the just,” because the unjust, Kant affirms, who, even frequently trying to propose the good, have always fallen back into evil and ever more deeply, will not do better in a life to come.

This postulate is without doubt Kant’s coup de force, aided, obviously, by his culture and Christian religion, which was for him the only moral religion (AA VI, 48). However, it is worth noting that this postulate contains some contradictions, as occur whenever we attempt to think we can reach perfection, completion, or totality, which is when we enter the dialectic. We can, first, assume that in this postulate, freedom is thought as a transcendent substance that could be without a world, but then freedom ceases to be an original act of transformation of reality in nature and thus is thought in an isolated manner as a thing. Second, since the world has disappeared after death, and with it the dependency and finitude of man has also been eliminated and thereby, all tension between finitude and freedom, and between inclinations and moral law, then the very phenomenon of morality, and with it all subjective freedom and all consciousness have been annihilated as well⁴⁶. Kant already warned us in the Prologue of Kant’s KpV: “we can affirm that we do not know or understand, I am not saying simply the reality, but even the possibility” of the ideas of God and immortality⁴⁷.

This said, we might conclude that the fourth moment is always open to us and that an unattainable ideal need not be absurd, but it is a constitutive tension of all subjectivity,

46 It could be suggested that, in order to remain human, finite, rational beings, after death we would go on to inhabit another world on which we would also depend. However, in this case, we would be making up a metaphysical fiction.

47 “... also können wir von jenen Ideen auch, ich will nicht bloß sagen, nicht die Wirklichkeit, sondern auch nicht einmal die Möglichkeit zu erkennen und einzusehen behaupten“ (AA V, 4).

which provides us not only consciousness of our originarity, but also of our essential finitude, whereby we perceive ourselves as not self-sufficient, and this opens us up to the other: nature, other rational beings, and the divine. There is no omnipotence and this finitude is, I believe, the price we pay for our freedom and consciousness.

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The Humble Reason. On Education in Kant and Fichte



Lara Scaglia

(University of Warsaw; l.scaglia@uw.edu.pl)

ORCID: 0000-0002-7148-7456

Abstract: In this paper I will focus on education as the core function of reason in Kant and Fichte. The notion of reason carries an intrinsic tendency to universality, which is difficult to be reconciled with its local (cultural, historical, anthropological) background and actualisation. I believe that the stress on the importance of learning, which can be seen in the works of both Kant and Fichte, might provide useful clues to approaching the relation between universality and particularity. I will start by focusing on Kant's narration on the genealogy of human reason in the *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, and then move on to the critical writings and selected lectures in order to focus on the role of human dignity and ethical education for the moral appraisal and the practice of virtue. Later, I will consider Fichte's lectures on the *Vocation of the Scholar*, the *Vocation of Man* and *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, which are crucial to understanding the social, ethical and political role of the scholar. For Fichte, education is the best instrument to eradicate selfishness, regarded as a historical phenomenon which can lead a nation to ruin. I will then provide some conclusions concerning the two accounts and their implications.

Keywords: Education; genealogy of reason; dignity; vocation; cheerfulness of the heart.

I. Born to Learn. A Genealogy of Reason

Education¹ is not merely a peripheral concern in Kant's thought, as we can see both from the lectures and the published works. References to this topic are present in the two short essays on the *Philanthropinum*, the early *Nachricht* from 1765, the *Metaphysics of Morals* – which sets dealing with the spreading and strengthening of moral principles in education as one of its aims (Kant, AA VI, 217) – and in the lectures² *On Pedagogy*

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2 Citations to Kant will be made on the basis of the *Akademie-Ausgabe* by volume and page (for instance: AA I, 1–2; 3–4). English quotations will be edited according to the Cambridge edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, except for the Critique of Pure Reason where citations will use the standard A/B edition pagination (for instance: Kant, CPR, A 709/B 737).

These lectures consist of a collection of a variety of fragments, drafts and personal notes (especially on Rousseau) edited by Rink and therefore cannot be considered as a finished or even sketched text standing on its own (see Weisskopf 1970). However, they can be useful for supporting

(published in 1803).

To Kant, the only creature needing education is the human being (AA IX, 441, 443; AA VII, 323). For rational, moral and animal beings, impulse is not enough to develop fully what Kant calls “humanity”; as Winkler puts it, education concerns the “humanization of the human” (Winkler 1991, 258–259). To understand this point, I will refer to Kant’s genetic reconstruction of how reason – and through it also morality – emerge.

There are passages in the *Religion* and in the essay *Conjectural beginning of human history* (CBH) – a satirical reply³ to Herder’s *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Humanity* – which bear a resemblance to the reconstruction of the genesis of human faculties widespread in some narratives of the early modern and the modern age (Rousseau 1755; Bonnet 1755).

In the CBH Kant regards, in the first stage, the emergence of the senses: smell develops as the most basic sense (as animal beings, we need smell to check the fitness of food, recognise other species, etc.); followed by sight, through which we extend our sources of knowledge beyond mere instinct (AA VIII, 111) and start comparing different objects in front of us (“this” near to me and “that” far away from me). In this process, reason develops as a capacity to go beyond the instantaneous instinctiveness of nature by means of establishing comparisons among actual alternatives and then constructing new possibilities by imagining possible alternatives that appeal to us.

In the second stage, the sexual impulse appears and with it, man discovers that by controlling the instinct and by interjecting imagination between desire and its object, the possibilities of enjoyment can be increased. If in the first stage the possible objects of desire are extended by comparison, in this second phase instinct itself is reshaped and directed towards objects of desire rationally constructed: “man passed over from mere sensual to idealistic attractions, from merely animal desires eventually to love, from the feeling for the merely pleasant to the taste for beauty” (AA VIII, 113). This iterative⁴ and active process of desire leads to the third stage, in which one becomes capable of thinking about life in terms of possible ends, in which it is possible to desire something we do not have at the moment and plan our life orienting it towards this ideal.

However, as we are limited natural beings, the shadow of death might bring us despair insofar as it limits the realisation of our ideals. This encourages us to generate and grow attachment to our social group and family, so that a part of us can live through them, as well as through our love and work.

After this stage, according to Kant, we develop a self-awareness of our role in

interpretative attempts based on the published texts.

³ Herder’s *Ideas* proposed a sort of an artistic interpretation of the Genesis, using it to move some points towards a criticism of the Enlightenment (e.g., the Fall is regarded as a self-determination of human reason, which brings inevitability to misery and corruption). Kant replies to this through the CBH in a sort of historical theodicy of reason and an idea of progress or providence, which uses human mistakes to develop rational powers, thus contributing to cultural and moral development.

⁴ On iterativity as a characteristic of reason see Willaschek (2018).

the world as social beings, able to treat others always as ends as well: “The fourth and final step that reason took in raising mankind altogether beyond the community of animals” (AA VIII, 114). In this passage, the reference to “mankind altogether” stresses the communitarian-social dimension of this step as well as the community of animals intended in Kant’s sense of animality.

Similarly, in the *Religion* Kant develops a moral anthropological theory and individuates three dispositions towards good: animality, which concerns the physical care, preservation, and is described as “a mechanical self-love, wherein no reason is demanded” (AA VI, 26); humanity, a stage in which practical reason is involved but only as “subservient to other incentives” (AA VI, 28); and finally personality: “the susceptibility to respect for the moral law as of itself a sufficient incentive to the power of choice” (AA VI, 27).

These stages of the development of reason sketched in the CBH and the *Religion* find analogous passages in the *Lectures*, in which Kant individuates different stages of education: the first one is care (AA IX, 441), intended as the physical support, maintenance and provision needed by children. The second is discipline, which changes “animality into humanity” (AA IX, 441), preventing us from deviating from the ends of humanity by means of disciplining impulses so that we do not damage each other. This phase paves the way to proper education and culture⁵, regarded as the possession of aptitude or skilfulness, and leads to civilization – i.e., prudence as the faculty of using skills in “a socially effective manner (AA IX, 455) – as well as to morality.

Kant is known for drawing a clear line between civilization and morality, and alluding repeatedly to the lack of moralisation in his day (AA IX, 451; AA VIII, 29; AA XV, 641). The difficulty of reaching this stage is, of course, caused by the nature of morality itself, which depends on the grounds of our maxims. As Kant puts it, describing ethical education: “Everything is spoiled if one tries to ground it on examples, threats, punishments, etc. One must see to it that the pupil acts from his own maxims, not from habit [*Gewohnheit*], that he does not only do the good, but that he does it because it is good” (AA IX, 475).

But how can this be taught? Virtue, which consists in the adequation of the maxims to the law, is not an innate capacity, but rather something we have to acquire. As Kant formulates it:

The very concept of virtue already implies that virtue must be acquired (that it is not innate); one need not appeal to anthropological knowledge based on experience to see this. For a human being’s moral capacity would not be virtue were it not produced by the strength of his resolution in conflict with powerful opposing inclinations. Virtue is the product of pure practical reason insofar as it gains ascendancy over such inclinations with consciousness of its supremacy (based on freedom). That virtue can and must be taught already follows from its

⁵ Some interpreters regard the two general terms as being synonymous (Louden 2000, 40). I generally agree, although the term *Kultur* is often used to refer to the possession or procurement of some skilfulness (AA V, 431; AA IX, 449), whilst *Bildung* regards the broader process (including the negative stage of discipline and care) by which one acquires *Kultur* (Kant, CPR, KrV A 709/B 737–A 710/B 738).

not being innate; a doctrine of virtue is therefore something that can be taught (AA VI, 477).

If the highest aim of education is virtue, which concerns maxims grounded in the principle of autonomy, how can virtue be taught without this leading to pursue mere legality (i.e., external accordance to a rule)? In what does ethical education consist?

II. Ethical Education

Ethical education cannot and should not provide ethical rules, i.e., mere commands, but, rather, teach the subject to recognise and exercise virtue and the related effort to contrast it with the “inner enemy within the human being” (AA VI, 477), namely heteronomy.

In the published works Kant depicts education as being propaedeutic⁶ to virtue or a presentation of the doctrine of virtue in a systematic⁷ way. This might be acroamatic or erotematic: the first, provides the building materials for education and the pupils are mere listeners, whilst the second requires more active intervention from the pupils who are asked by the teacher in a Socratic way (AA VI, 478). The erotematic method⁸ is further subdivided into the “dialogic manner of teaching” if the teacher queries the student’s reason and in the “catechistic manner of teaching” if the teacher merely queries the student’s memory (AA VI, 478). Catechistic education (AA V, 152 ff.; AA VI, 477 ff.), then, is the most elementary instrument used for new pupils: it is not merely a dogmatic situation – in which only the teacher is entitled to speak and the pupils are passive – it is rather a dynamic one, enlivened by questions asked by the teacher in order to enliven the pupil’s attention and memory. It cannot yet be considered as being a proper, equal, reciprocal dialogue, because the pupil still has no determinate questions (AA VI, 479), and sometimes it can start only after a proper dialogical method, in which both teacher and pupils ask and answer questions. In this way, both teacher and pupils are regarded as subjects of learning:

The pupil, who thus sees that he himself can think, responds with questions of his own about obscurities in the propositions admitted or about his doubts regarding them, and so provides occasions for the teacher himself to learn how to question skillfully, according to the saying *docendo discimus*. (For logic has not yet taken

6 “[T]he product of pure practical reason insofar as it gains ascendancy over such [opposing] inclinations with consciousness of its supremacy (based on freedom)” (AA VI, 478).

7 A method is needed insofar as ethical education is scientific: “As for the method of teaching (for every scientific doctrine must be treated methodically; otherwise, it would be set forth chaotically), this too must be systematic and not fragmentary if the doctrine of virtue is to be presented as a science” (AA VI, 478).

8 The catechistic and dialogic methods are discussed frequently in the *Lectures on Logic* and in some *Reflections* (e.g., AA XXIV, 599–600; AA XVI, 806–808). Here, the catechistic method is addressed as mere “memory work”, in which the student recites thoughts that are not yet his own while in the dialogic one, the teacher and the student alternate asking questions and giving answers to each other.

sufficiently to meet the challenge issued to it, that it should also provide rules to direct one in searching for things, i.e., it should not limit itself to giving rules for conclusive judgments but should also provide rules for *preliminary* judgments (*iudicia praevia*), by which one is led to thoughts. Such a theory can be a guide even to the mathematician in his discoveries, and moreover he often makes use of it) (AA VI, 478)

Apart from that, Kant addresses experimental or technical means intended as a good example set by the conduct of the teacher and “cautionary example in others” (AA VI, 479). Imitation is the first way to form habits, i.e., inclinations through repeated gratification of that inclination or a mechanism of sense and not a principle of thought. But examples, even if they can be an incentive for a specific conduct, cannot determine maxims of virtue. Good examples, then, are not models but rather living proof that it is possible to act in conformity with duty: “So it is not comparison with any other human being whatsoever (as he is), but with the idea (of humanity), as he ought to be, and so comparison with the law, that must serve as the constant standard of a teacher’s instruction” (AA VI, 480).

Before delving into the role of examples, I want to point to Kant’s quite interesting reference to “experiments” in education:

It is even commonly imagined that experiments in education are not necessary, and that one can already judge by reason alone whether something will be good or bad. But this is very mistaken, and experience teaches that our experiments often show quite different effects from the ones expected. One sees therefore that since experiments matter, no one generation can present a complete plan of education (AA IX, 451).

Unlike the standard view according to which Kant basically defends a sort of priority of the theory over the praxis (Kant, CPR, B XIII; AA VIII, 277), in the case of education he recognises the need to experiment and try different educational approaches⁹. Education, in the end, has an instrumental purpose (it is propaedeutic to virtue) and might be more or less efficient depending on a variety of factors, including the historical and contextual situation, as well as the language and personal experiences of the subjects.

As already stressed, education is needed not to merely inculcate “rules” (and here we see one different from legality), but rather to capture the student’s attention through a “feeling for action from duty” (Herman 1998, 255). During the classes, children face some exemplar cases of virtue so that they turn their attention to the specific nature of moral action. In this way, they do not merely confront actions as “natural” but also as moral. Thanks to the questions and the relationship of trust with the teacher, the pupil develops an interest in morality:

Its advantage (of catechism – L.S.) lies especially in the fact that it is natural for a human being to love a subject which he has, by his own handling, brought to a

⁹ Kant hopes that Basedow’s schools could be an impulse to educate students to be citizens of the world, and not merely provincial narrow-minded people: “The present Basedowian institutes are the first which have come to pass according to the perfect plan [of education]. This is the greatest phenomenon that has appeared in this century for the improvement of the perfection of humanity. Through it all schools in the world will receive another form” (AA XXV, 722–723).

science (in which he is now proficient); and so, by this sort of practice, the pupil is drawn without noticing it to an interest in morality. But it is most important in this education not to present the moral catechism mixed with the religious one (to combine them into one) or, what is worse yet, to have it follow upon the religious catechism. On the contrary, the pupil must always be brought to a clear insight into the moral catechism, which should be presented with the utmost diligence and thoroughness. For otherwise the religion that he afterwards professes will be nothing but hypocrisy; he will acknowledge duties out of fear and feign an interest in them that is not in his heart (AA VI, 483–484).

While legality, intended as conformity to rules, needs only some training of rationality (in order to judge which are the “best” means to apply the rule), ethics needs a more complex training of reason, one which deals not only with a choice of the means, but also of the ends, enabling the subject to see which elements of a given situation are morally relevant to determine the maxims according to the moral Law.

This ethical training, stimulated through the erotetic Socratic method of questions and answers, challenges the pupil’s ingenuity and his blindness to morally relevant factors of a situation. In this way, the pupil can broaden his perspective, developing empathic attentiveness, and confront possible situations. But what is needed to achieve this task is community. As Herman puts it:

We do not grasp the moral truths about things by being informed of their names and natures. We require certain experiences – moral experiences – and interpretations of the experiences (instruction) to become aware of and responsive to a moral world. We may have an innate predisposition to morality: a capacity to act from duty and for the sake of the moral law. But if the moral capacity is natural, its actualization in our lives is not; it must be produced (R 23). The conjunction of interpreted experiences with the acquisition of elements of a virtuous character presents the world as a moral world and establishes in us a “second nature.” It is not a new nature; that would be impossible. It involves a construction of a conception of self and the development of innate possibilities by which we would be able, if only ideally, to become fully moral persons (Herman 1998, 257).

The practice of virtue (ethical ascetics) – a practical counterpart of the more theoretical ethical education – aims not at ascetism in a stoic or monkish sense: isolation and self-punishment without repentance and cheerfulness lead only to a negative kind of well-being (AA VI, 484) or to hating the virtue’s command (AA VI, 485). A positive moral feeling must be added to the ascetic regimen, which enables the virtuous to do without the superfluous pleasures and put up with misfortunes (AA VI, 484): “something which, though it is only moral, affords an agreeable enjoyment to life” [*fröhliche Gemüthsstimmung*]. This is the ever-cheerful¹⁰ heart, which brings to mind the virtuous Epicurus (AA VI, 485):

Ethical gymnastics, therefore, consists only in combatting natural impulses

¹⁰ The term appears in Kant’s other works. For instance, in the *Conflict of Faculties* it refers to the state in which we enjoy life acting freely (AA VII, 104), while in the *Religion* it describes the ideal position of someone who is given a holy will and takes all sorrow upon himself (AA VI, 64). Apart from that, it refers to the state of a person who has no remorse or reproach (AA IX, 499) but also to Epicurus’s “joyful heart” [*fröhliches Herz*], which seeks pleasure (AA IX, 30; AA XVIII, 45).

sufficiently to be able to master them when a situation comes up in which they threaten morality; hence it makes one valiant and cheerful in the consciousness of one's restored freedom. To repent of something and to impose & penance on oneself (such as a fast) not for hygienic but for pious considerations are, morally speaking, two very different precautionary measures. To repent of a past transgression when one recalls it is unavoidable and, in fact, it is even a duty not to let this recollection disappear; but doing penance, which is cheerless, gloomy, and sullen, makes virtue itself hated and drives adherents away from it. Hence the training (discipline) that a human being practices on himself can become meritorious and exemplary only through the cheerfulness that accompanies it (AA VI, 485).

To realise our moral appraisal, then, we need others: we need not only abstract or hypothetical examples but also everyday contact with others, a life together made up of sharing feelings, care and empathy. Kant strongly encourages social intercourse (and its *virtutes homileticae*), stating that:

It is a duty to oneself as well as to others not to isolate oneself (*separatistam agere*) but to use one's moral perfections in social intercourse (*officium commercii, sociabilitas*). While making oneself a fixed center of one's principles, one ought to regard this circle drawn around one as also forming part of an all-inclusive circle of those who, in their disposition, are citizens of the world – not exactly in order to promote as the end what is best for the world but only to cultivate what leads indirectly to this end: to cultivate a disposition of reciprocity – agreeableness, tolerance, mutual love and respect (affability and propriety, *humanitas aethetica et decorum*) and so to associate the graces with virtue. To bring this about is itself a duty of virtue (AA VI, 473).

With practice, by becoming aware of the possibilities of other perspectives (moral reasons of others), we can train our skills for broadening our thought and considering others in their dignity¹¹.

III. The Practice of Virtue

In Kant's published works 'dignity' is sometimes related to 'worth' (AA IV, 435; 436), but it does not describe an innate, fundamental value, but rather 'worthiness' or 'excellence' in the Stoic sense, namely a position or status in a relation in which something is elevated above something else (AA VI, 57, note). In ancient times, the term 'dignity' (from Latin *dignitas*, worthiness) signified some high office, usually an office of the state, which carried certain privileges and prerogatives. This explains why Kant writes not only of attributing dignity to humanity, but also uses expressions such as "dignity of mathematics" (AA III, 323), "dignity of a minister" (AA VIII, 344) or "the dignity of a teacher" (AA VI, 162).

More specifically, in Kant's ethics dignity is attributed to every moral subject and is

¹¹ Kant's notion of dignity has been considered as a secondary concept in a non-foundational sense (Sensen 2011). It plays no role in the justification of morality (it does not appear in the passages that should justify morality: The Third Section of the *Groundwork*, the derivation of the Formula of Humanity, the second *Critique*, the *Lectures on Ethics*), because by itself it is not a notion that carries any justificatory weight – rather, it expresses the special standing of someone.

grounded by reason. The unconditioned, formal law that can determine the will is what provides humanity with dignity, i.e., as moral beings, humans have a special standing:

Reason accordingly refers every maxim of the will as giving universal law to every other will and also to every action toward oneself, and does so not for the sake of any other practical motive or any future advantage but from the idea of the dignity of a rational being, who obeys no law other than that which he himself at the same time gives. In the kingdom of ends everything has either a price or a dignity. What has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; what on the other hand is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity (AA IV, 434).

Dignity has no price: it cannot be traded away for something else. It is incomparable and cannot be measured:

But a human being regarded as a person, that is, as the subject of a morally practical reason, is exalted above any price; for as a person (*homo noumenon*) he is not to be valued merely as a means to the ends of others or even to his own ends, but as an end in itself, that is, he possesses a dignity (an absolute inner worth) by which he exacts respect for himself from all other rational beings in the world. He can measure himself with every other being of this kind and value himself on a footing of equality with them (AA VI, 434; 435).

In other words, as lawgivers, as beings capable of setting ends, humans have dignity: “Now, morality is the condition under which alone a rational being can be an end in itself, since only through this is it possible to be a lawgiver member in the kingdom of ends. Hence morality, and humanity insofar as it is capable of morality, is that which alone has dignity” (AA IV, 435). Dignity is intended as a status of the moral subject, insofar as she or he is capable of setting his or her own ends, i.e., being lawgivers. It is not a coincidence that in the *Typic* chapter of the second *Critique* Kant refers to the power to judge as lawgivers in the determination of the will according to the moral Law. The rule of judgment under laws of pure practical reason is the following: ask yourself whether – if the action you propose were to take place by a law of nature of which you were yourself a part – you could indeed regard it as possible through your will. Everyone does, in fact, appraise actions as morally good or evil by this rule:

Thus one says: if everyone permitted himself to deceive when he believed it to be to his advantage, or considered weary of it, or looked with complete indifference on the need of others, and if you belonged to such an order of things, would you be in it with the assent of your will? (...) Such a law is, nevertheless, a type for the appraisal of maxims in accordance with moral principles. If the maxim of the action is not so constituted that it can stand the test as to the form of a law of nature in general, then it is morally impossible (AA V, 69; 70).

But how can we change the perspective and elevate ourselves from a particular, egocentric perspective to a more general one? Many difficulties are related to Kant’s proposal to change the perspective from a private, egoistic one to the position of a

lawgiver. I believe that the three “maxims of common human understanding”¹² presented in the third *Critique* can be of some help. The *sensus communis*, namely, is defined as the faculty to judge as if we were to hold our judgements up to human reason as a whole, abstracting from it the subjective private conditions that could be regarded as objective (AA V, 293; 294).

More specifically, the first maxim characterising the use of the common human understanding¹³ concerns thinking for oneself:

The first is the maxim of a reason that is never **passive**. The tendency toward the latter, hence toward heteronomy of reason, is called **prejudice**; and the greatest prejudice of all is that of representing reason as if it were not subject to the rules of nature on which the understanding grounds it by means of its own essential law: i.e., **superstition**. Liberation from superstition is called **enlightenment** (AA V, 294)

This maxim states not only that we are and have to be autonomous, i.e., can determine our will independently from empirical motives, but also that our process of judgement cannot but start from our individual, context-situated position. It is we – with our particular motives and background (our rooted rationality) – who are on stage.

The second maxim addresses the capacity to think from the standpoint of everyone else or a:

broad-minded way of thinking if he sets himself apart from the subjective private conditions of the judgment, within which so many others are as if bracketed, and reflects on his own judgment from a **universal standpoint** (which he can only determine by putting himself into the standpoint of others) (AA V, 295).

Through such a maxim “of enlarged thought” (AA V, 294), the subject reflects on his own judgement by shifting from a private position to the standpoint of others (AA V, 295).

Finally, the third maxim regards consistency, which: “can only be achieved through the combination of the first two and after frequent observance of them has made them automatic” (AA V, 295). This maxim is the most difficult to be attained, because each change in the standpoint brings with itself the possibility of something new and therefore its fulfilment should be conceived as a never-ending task and effort. This moral dynamic of adequation of the Law, i.e., the pursuit of virtue, on the one hand finds no motive in the pursue of happiness, and on the other – as mentioned above – is accompanied by a cheerfulness of the heart, which brings to mind Kant’s reference to a moral feeling of respect for the moral law, i.e., a feeling produced by reason (AA V, 76) in the sense that

12 I will not delve here into the details of the relation between common sense [*Gemeinsinn*] and common human understanding, but just point out that they might be confused with each other, since they are both referred to by Kant with the general Latin term *sensus communis* and are presupposed as grounds for communication (AA V, 239). However, as Kant specifies, while we judge by feeling through the common sense, we always judge by concepts using the common human understanding – although obscurely (AA V, 238).

13 The maxims are presented in slightly different terms in the *Logic* (AA IX, 57) and the *Anthropology* (AA VII, 228; 229).

reason causes an effect on our state or, to put it more clearly, an interest in the compliance with the law (AA V, 80). Cheerfulness could therefore be regarded as the state of a heart that wants and tries to be adequate to the Law¹⁴.

I cannot delve here into a detailed discussion concerning these terms. However, I want to point out that the notion of happiness is highly ambiguous in Kant: happiness is “necessarily the demand of every rational but finite being and therefore an unavoidable determining ground of its faculty of desire” (AA V, 25). It motivates the lower faculty of desire, thus changing from subject to subject (and from time to time). Besides, if it is assumed as the determining ground of the will, it opposes morality (AA V, 35). However, this does not mean that one should renounce happiness *in toto*: Kant stresses in particular the motives of the determination of the will, he does not oppose happiness *per se*:

But this distinction of the principle of happiness from that of morality is not, for this reason, at once an opposition between them, and pure practical reason does not require that one should renounce claims to happiness but only that as soon as duty is in question one should take no account of them. It can even in certain respects be a duty to attend to one’s happiness, partly because happiness (to which belong skill, health, wealth) contains means for the fulfillment of one’s duty and partly because lack of it (e.g., poverty) contains temptations to transgress one’s duty. However, it can never be a direct duty to promote one’s happiness, still less can it be a principle of all duty (AA V, 93).

Happiness is nuanced and this suggests a shift in Kant’s use of language: on the one hand, happiness is related to the sensuous well-being, it is a sensible principle (AA V, 120) that is at the basis of eudaimonism and as such cannot be compatible with morality, because it is its euthanasia (AA VI, 378). But on the other hand, it can be regarded as a state of the rational being: “Happiness is the state of a rational being in the world in the whole of whose existence everything goes according to his wish and will, and rests, therefore, on the harmony of nature with his whole end as well as with the essential determining ground of his will” (AA V, 124). This harmony and adequacy between the will and the world describes the state of a soul enjoying the highest good: it is not that happiness is given by the fulfillment of some wishes or mental images of what we believe that will give us happiness¹⁵, but that everything is as it must be, i.e., there is an adequacy between virtue and happiness (AA V, 108; 114). In this world, where such a state is not possible, we can enjoy sensuous states of happiness that are, however, not necessarily related to virtue and therefore do not consist in the Stoic’s consciousness of virtue (AA V, 111). Kant is well aware that there is a distinction between happiness and morality: what the Stoics referred to as happiness is perhaps more similar to Kant’s notion of cheerfulness of the heart or of moral feeling of respect, which accompany the practice of virtue as a never-

¹⁴ If this actually happens, cannot be decided: there is always a degree of self-obscurity concerning our profoundest motives. Kant sticks to this point repeatedly in his works, referring to the opacity and the unfathomability affecting the depths of the human heart (AA IV, 398–399; AA V, 35; AA VI, 446; 447).

¹⁵ Happiness, namely is indeterminate (AA IV, 418; 419; AA V, 25–27) and it is up to us to try to figure out what it is (Herman 1998, 258).

ending task. Kernels of these ideas, namely that there is no actual joy without morality and that this is an indefinite purpose of man, are later echoed and developed in Fichte's thought.

IV. The Idea of Man. Learning to Be at One with Oneself

In Fichte, too, education¹⁶ already plays an important role from his early lectures and writings (see Hankovszky 2018). But it is perhaps the *Vocation of the Scholar*, which can be read as an enlivened reply to Rousseau's account on education, which includes the most relevant references to the topic. However, in order to understand the vocation¹⁷ of the scholar, one must previously inquire what the vocation of man is. This, to Fichte, consists in the unity with oneself:

Man should always be at one with himself, he should never contradict his own being (...). The determination of the empirical Ego should be such as may endure for ever. I may here, in passing, and for the sake of illustration merely, express the fundamental principle of morality in the following formula: "So act that thou mayest look upon the dictate of thy will as an eternal law to thyself." The ultimate vocation of every finite, rational being is thus absolute unity, constant identity, perfect harmony with himself (Fichte 1889, 153).

Unlike Rousseau, according to whom man is made wicked by being made sociable (Rousseau 2002, 113), Fichte believes that inequality is provided by the mistakes of nature (Fichte 1988, 164) and that man's vocation is to live in society, where the natural differences can be reconciliated through education and culture (Fichte 1988, 163–164), which help and inspire the subject to be at one with himself. This task, that is identity, is what perfection consists of, and an adequacy to such an absolute completeness cannot but be realised in everlasting aspiration and struggle. A constant improvement, then, and not the achievement of an absolute status, is the true vocation of man:

It is a part of the idea of man that his ultimate end must be unattainable; the way to it endless. Hence it is not the vocation of man to attain this end. But he may and should constantly approach nearer to it; and thus the unceasing approximation to this end is his true vocation as man; i.e. as a rational but finite, as a sensuous but free being (Fichte 1889, 156).

Given the unattainability of this ideal identity, what one could and must do is to

¹⁶ One should remember that Fichte, whose lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar had an exoteric purpose, together with Rousseau, Comenius and Pestalozzi (who met Fichte in person), belongs to a trend of reformers who advocated free access to education, which should not be exclusive to a privileged group, and stressed the important social role of education (Dimić 2003, 779–781).

¹⁷ *Bestimmung* can be regarded as the task, meaning and purpose of human existence, which are understood differently depending on the underlying anthropology and metaphysics of a theory. *Bestimmung* can be *Selbstbestimmung*, self-determination, i.e., the human ability to act according to his own insight. This determination is practically characterised: the subject does not only operate purely theoretically determining his own purposes; rather, he applies them to himself by acting on them. In this way, he "defines" himself in practical terms (see Spalding 1997; Gerhardt 1990).

attempt to realise it in a community with other people: man is not isolated or set apart from all relation to beings like himself and has the tendency and need to find other reasonable and free beings to establish a community with them. It is this “fundamental impulse” (Fichte 1889, 163) that leads us to assume the existence of other reasonable and free human beings: “This social impulse thus belongs to the fundamental impulses of man. It is man’s vocation to live in Society he must live in Society; he is no complete man, but contradicts his own being, if he lives in a state of isolation” (Fichte 1889, 163). This is astonishingly close to Kant’s abovementioned passage concerning the duty not to isolate oneself (cf., AA VI, 473): we need others to realise our capacities, of which morality is the profoundest one. But Fichte, slightly differently from Kant, emphasises with more clearness and decisiveness the role of reciprocity for such a dynamic: the social impulse defined negatively by the law of not self-contradiction (the aim is absolute unity with himself) leads to “reciprocal activity, to mutual influence, mutual giving and receiving, mutual suffering and doing” (Fichte 1889, 166) and entering a social dynamism governed by the principle of coordination (and not mere subordination such as that to the material world). Within this perspective, we make ourselves free only insofar as we make others free. Contrary to this, those who consider themselves masters, have the soul of a slave:

He only is free, who would make all around him free likewise; and does really make them free, by a certain influence the sources of which are hitherto undiscovered. In his presence we breathe more freely; we feel that nothing has power to oppress, hinder, or confine us; we feel an unwonted desire to be and to do all things which self-respect does not forbid (Fichte 1889, 167).

And later in the text:

But no one can successfully labour for the moral improvement of his species who is not himself a good man. We do not teach by words alone, we also teach much more impressively by example; and every one who lives in society owes it a good example, because the power of example has its origin in the social relation (Fichte 1889, 192; 193).

On the basis of the abovementioned passages, we could formulate the following definition: a teacher is someone who has the capacity to inspire his fellows to always be objects of respect, to be themselves and be free; he does so not through dictate, menace or rules, but through his own conduct and way of being.

As mentioned above, in Kant dignity is the title which describes the moral nature of human beings as ends in themselves, and the same formulation echoes in Fichte’s works:

every individual in society ought to act on the basis of free choice and on the basis of a conviction which he himself has judged adequate. In each of his actions he ought to be able to think of himself as an end and ought to be treated as such by every other member of society. A person who is deceived is being treated as a mere means to an end (Fichte 1988d, 175).

Besides, Fichte stresses that not only should one not use others as means for his own purposes, but, also, he should not even use them for attaining their own virtue, wisdom

and happiness¹⁸ against their will and that one “must not even desire to do it; for it is unjust, and by so doing he would be placed in opposition to himself” (Fichte 1889, 167). To respect others means to respect their freedom even in the most difficult case: when we want them to be happy and believe we know what is best for them. This, however, in Fichte’s perspective, would only cause damage to our loved ones, insofar as we would put them in opposition to themselves. One can encourage the other, share his point of views, but never force him or her in a specific direction or tell them how to use of their freedom.

Although there are several ways of doing it, in the end there is only one ultimate end for individuals, i.e., perfection or equality to oneself. In society, this assumes the form of the law of internal harmony, which is not static but rather enlivened by the continuous movement of cooperation and mutual pedagogical improvement.

V. The Guide of the Human Race

*Bildung*¹⁹ is realised in a social dimension. As Kivelä (2012) summarises, there are different characteristics of *Bildung* distinguished in Fichte’s texts: it is an indefinite process and it does not regard events but the development of human capacities and reason. Moreover, it is guided by the idea of harmony, that has to be realised through our actions in the world, embodied in the mutual and reciprocal relations between individuals who help each other to develop their talents (Kivelä 2012). This reciprocal dynamic in which education consists is described by the distinction between the communicative and the receptive impulse: the former drives us to impart the knowledge we possess, while the latter regards the receptive capacity to embrace the culture we are scarce in, with the help of others²⁰. On the one hand, the teacher is a “giver”, he can share culture because he has acquired it; on the other hand, everyone is always also a receiver, who has to take advantage of the actions of the others towards him. To Fichte, the second impulse is the most important, insofar as it leads to progress and stresses that nobody can be so advanced in his self-realisation to regard others as if he could not learn anything from

18 This is also stated by Kant (AA V, 34–35): it is only the form of the law that must determine the maxim, and not the pursuit of happiness (even of others).

19 I will not delve here into a detailed discussion concerning the distinction – which has oscillated from time to time between *Erziehung* and *Bildung* but just stress that the former concerns education in general and the latter refers to the “building”, formation of the person and his personality: one is more externally governed (the noun *Erziehung* refers to animals, too), the other needs an active internal involvement of the subject and involves self-reflection (Hörner 2008, 12). The two, therefore, are not mutually exclusive and in Kant, *Bildung* (formation) refers to a positive aspect of education: “Education includes care and formation. Formation is 1) negative, viz., the discipline which merely prevents errors; 1) positive, viz., instruction and guidance, and insofar forms a part of culture” (AA IX, 452).

20 This division brings to mind what Fichte wrote as early as 1780, when he was 18 years old – he defined a passive and an active form of obtaining knowledge: “(...) we can learn in two ways. On the one hand, knowledge is transferred into our soul so to speak from outside, so we receive the whole as such from somebody else; on the other hand, (...) it seems to us that we ourselves have grasped and comprehended that knowledge by our own mind, while the teacher only leads us onto the way we can reach it” (Fichte 1962, 19; 20).

them.

It is important, here, to not consider this impulse as a compelling one, like the instinct to survive or procreate – it addresses the free nature of man, and for this reason it does not and cannot oblige pupils to do anything but rather incites them to do it through the guidance of a teacher²¹. The main aim of teachers consists, namely, in directing the attention of the students so that they can draw the conclusions for themselves, which brings to mind the dialogical method advocated by Kant. Fichte, however, does not detail this method further and limits himself to providing some examples of this dynamic. For instance, concerning the existence of God, he states:

With the help of examples which appear in front of his [i.e., learner's] eyes in the moment of speaking I am going to direct his mind without his suspecting what aim my speech serves, so that he may conceive there is somebody who created all this, and that he on his own, in his own intention, may wish to know whether that somebody is God (Fichte 1962, 20).

Fichte identifies three kinds of knowledge acquired through learning: philosophical, i.e., concerning the principles of pure reason, philosophical-historical, regarding the connection of the purposes to the appropriate objects in experience, and historical, concerning the understanding of the direction in which progress must go through examining the events of the past and considering the steps made at a given time. The scholar, then, insofar as he sees the whole picture, the relations between the distinct steps and the whole task, can somehow anticipate the future and, therefore, be a guide of the human race:

He sees not merely the present, he sees also the future: he sees not merely the point which humanity now occupies, but also that to which it must next advance if it remains true to its final end, and do not wander or turn back from its legitimate path. He cannot desire to hurry forward humanity at once to the goal which perhaps gleams brightly before his own vision; the road cannot be overleaped; he must only take care that it do not stand still, and that it do not turn back. In this respect the Scholar is the Guide of the human race (Fichte 1889, 191–192).

Furthermore, the teacher must avoid coercion and physical force, since these means are against the ultimate purpose – moral elevation – which can be encouraged only through the example of a teacher who himself is morally elevated. It is also a happy vocation, because it coincides with the common destiny of every man living under the moral law: it is a privilege and a joy to dedicate oneself primarily (even exclusively) to the common vocation of men and be their guide. Education, in other words, is the way in which people in a community relate to each other and orient themselves towards reciprocal moral improvement, which takes place not only within institutions but also concerns

²¹ Another possibility for Fichte is moral genius, in which reason expresses itself with more clarity, exemplified by the beginners of religions – that is to say, by those who were capable to elevate themselves to the moral consciousness without the stimulus of a teacher (see Pareyson 1976, 396; 397).

every aspect of their existence as members of society²². Therefore, it is an ethical and social education. From this perspective, the scholar has a peculiar role which consists in educating and ennobling mankind, because he supervises progress; he should encourage and help people to recognise their needs and serve as a living example – not separated from reality, but in the community for which he exists. In this way, politics assumes a primary role; what characterises the vocation of the scholar is not metaphysics, nor ascetism and separation from society, but rather an involvement in life and changing it for the sake of reciprocal benefit and development.

Discussing the constitution of a perfect state in which new universities would be constituted respecting the freedom of their members, Fichte writes that students would be given the possibility to place themselves in a social class – of scholars, for instance – by their own effort and left free to choose good or evil. This project opposes the idea of a passive school system, in which the student is a mere listener who has to develop some specific skills or acquire precise contents that serve a precise purpose. The only task, in Fichte's pedagogical account, is freedom. Consequently, being acquainted with the contents, being educated and erudite in some fields of knowledge, does not mean that one is a true scholar, who is conscious of the possession of the Idea. As he puts it:

This principle pervades the conduct of the True Scholar. He has no other purpose in action but to express his Idea, and embody the truth which he recognises in word or work. No personal regard, either for himself or others, can impel him to do that which is not required by this purpose, no such regard can cause him to neglect anything which is demanded by this purpose. His person, and all personality in the world, have long since vanished from before him, and entirely disappeared in his effort after the realization of the Idea. The Idea alone impels him; where it does not move him, he rests and remains inactive. He does nothing with precipitation, hurried forward by disquietude and restlessness; these may well be symptoms of unfolding power, but they are never to be found in conjunction with true, developed, mature and manly strength (Fichte 1889, 285).

The scholar makes the Idea accessible to human thought (Fichte 1889, 297) by means of his own life, accompanied by a forever young attitude that brings joy to his never-ending vocation (Fichte 1889, 307). It is a process of liberation and therefore of joyfulness.

In later texts, the political and social implications of the vocation of the scholar becomes even clearer and this develops into a controversial project which ties together the fate and development of philosophy and those of the national education in the republic. This is famously explored in the *Addresses to the German Nation*, in which Fichte advocates a national education to save the nation, instilling love of learning for its own sake

²² This has been regarded as a point in which Fichte distinguishes his pattern from Kant's one: Kant puts a metaphysics of ethics as a point of departure for then deriving the moral sphere of action (i.e., the ethics of duties). By contrast, Fichte: "finds it in the political nature of Man and his life in the community with other people. In that sense, Categorical Imperative is relativized according to circumstances and it is not so unconditional anymore" (Dimić 2003, 782). However, as showed above, in Kant the categorical imperative must be applied and therefore realised in a specific context. The normative value is grounded a priori, but the application is context-sensitive (see Herman 1985; 1996).

and its practical counterpart, namely ethical disposition (James 2014, 501–503), which develops into the love of the fatherland and the support of the constitution of the nation as a unity (Fichte 1922, 130 ff.). The members of such a nation share a non-instrumental form of reason, expressed in the *Wissenschaftslehre* and in the formula of acting for the sake of duty, which implies a liberation from any coercive bonds and corrupted political arrangements. Along this line, education has to contribute to eradicating selfishness seen as a historical phenomenon which can ruin a nation. For this, Fichte presents a world plan in his lectures *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, identifying five stages of the development of reason in its relation to freedom and selfishness. More specifically, in the first chapter, “The Idea of Universal History”, Fichte states that in the first epoch reason “acts as blind Instinct, where it cannot as yet act through Free Will” (Fichte 1977, 7). The development of reason and freedom is then divided into 5 epochs:

- 1) the unlimited dominion of reason as instinct (the state of innocence);
- 2) reason as instinct becomes the external ruling authority (the positive system which compels without convincing or going back to the ultimate foundation – the State of progressive sin);
- 3) the epoch of liberation (directly from the external authority and indirectly from the power of reason as instinct and generally from reason, the age of indifference towards the truth) – the state of complete sinfulness;
- 4) the epoch of reason as knowledge (truth is beloved above all other things) the state of progressive justification;
- 5) the epoch of reason as art, in which humanity builds itself up into a representative of Reason (the state of completed justification and sanctification).

This journey leads back to the first stage, the dominion of reason (Fichte 1977, 9–19). In order to develop this plan, philosophy has to be spread as *Wissenschaftslehre* in a process of continuous education from the earliest ages.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* will become universally comprehensible and easy to understand just as soon as it becomes the main goal and deliberate aim of all education [*Erziehung*], from the earliest age, only to develop the pupil’s inner energy and not to channel it in any anticipate direction, i.e., just as soon as we begin to educate human beings for their own purposes and as instruments of their own will and not as soulless instruments for the use of others. Education [*Bildung*] of the whole person from earliest youth: This is the only way to propagate philosophy (Fichte 1994, 92).

Conclusive Remarks

Education assumes a fundamental role in the development of both Kant’s and Fichte’s theories. This is because of the account of reason, the moral anthropology and ethics depicted by both philosophers. More specifically, in Kant there are clear hints

towards the application of the command of pure practical reason in a social context-related dimension (Kivelä 2012, 66–69) and Fichte proceeds according to this pattern, regarding the vocation of the scholar as a never-ending social task, which resembles the indefinite *Streben* to adequate the will to the moral Law. Reason must recognise its humbleness: there is no definite achievement, and the learning process is never ended.

However, there are important differences between the two perspectives. I will only briefly point to some of them. Kant does not unite the fate of philosophy and that of the German nation as Fichte does, and he is probably not as sensitive to the need to make philosophy more accessible to a larger public²³. Besides, Fichte's texts are dominated by the notion of reciprocity in a way that anticipates Hegel's doctrine of recognition: reason is practically ascribed to others and through this process only can one have access to his own I. This social dimension of reason has different nuances in Kant's account, which, although it strongly emphasises the necessity of a relation to others (AA VI, 473; 485; AA VIII, 114), does not describe it in specific practical dynamics – apart from the case of education – as Fichte does. Kant's focus is mainly theoretical, and he does not engage with other dimensions of apprehension and acknowledgement such as the bodily one²⁴.

Another important difference and debate is provided by the meaning of notions such as universality, multiplicity and be-at-one-with-oneself. One could individuate a tension within Fichte's works concerning the direction of the self-development of the I and the notion of unity: on the one hand, multiplicity is needed and variety seems to be encouraged (Fichte 1994, 92); the process of growth and acknowledgement is a free process in which the I has to follow its vocation and learn solely by its own powers. As he puts it in *The Vocation of Man*: “the conviction to which I shall come must be thought out by myself; the conviction which I shall accept must be of my own creating” (Fichte 1889, 359).

On the other hand, however, some passages seem to suggest that Fichte depicts the task of education and development of the I as unity or uniformity. Examples of this can be seen not only in the *Vocation of the Scholar*: “The Divine Idea is absolutely fixed and determined, – its individual parts are likewise determined. The particular form of its expression for a particular Age may also be determined” (Fichte 1889, 307), but also, and mostly in the *Addresses to the German Nation*, in which he characterises the German nation as being constituted on the “common characteristic of being German” and

23 As Seidel puts it: “Fichte was the only one among the great German philosophers who turned the lecturing rostrum into a speaker's platform, sometimes into a tribunal. Leibniz corresponded, Kant taught with a particular punctuality, Schelling's appearances were not without a note of aristocratism and Hegel wrestled with words during his lectures in order to express his profound thoughts. Fichte's mind and heart made him “step out of the words!” (Seidel 1997, 118; as translated in Dimic 2003).

24 In *The Vocation of Man* Fichte writes: “Speculation finds no difficulty in showing how the conception of such things is developed solely from my own presentative faculty and its necessary modes of activity. But I apprehend these things, also, though want, desire and enjoyment. Not by the mental conception, but by hunger, thirst, and their satisfaction, does anything become for me food and drink I am necessitated to believe in the reality of that which threatens my sensuous existence, or in that which alone is able to maintain it” (Fichte 1889, 418).

preserved through the exclusion of foreign elements (Fichte 1922, 4). There is no doubt that when Fichte refers to unity, it should be regarded as something that is not given, but *to be given, or angestrebten*. But still, the philosopher remains a partisan of the critical monism of reason (see Kloc-Konkołowicz 2006) and one could wonder how this is not diminishing to the value and dignity of the multiplicity.

In Kant, by contrast, the public²⁵ use of reason and the application of the categorical imperative – at least as I read it – do not lead to a conception of unity as intended uniformity. Quite the contrary, the goal is not uniformity that is intended, but rather that is justified²⁶: the position taken by every moral actor does not have to be shared by everyone, but rather must be grounded on reasons that *can* be shared.

In conclusion, what Kant and Fichte's accounts can still teach us is the thesis of the acknowledgement of the humbleness of reason: the process of the justification, liberation and constitution of the I never ends and it is through the social engagement of our reasons in a dialogical, public way that one can mature and realise his vocation.

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²⁵ By public use of reason Kant means the enlightened, free exercise of reason made by someone "as a scholar before the entire public of the world of readers" (AA, VIII, 37) as opposed to the private use, which concerns someone who speaks as a member of a particular civil post or office. The former regards judgements made for reasons that can be shared, while the latter concerns a narrower statement, which is based on particular motives (for instance, an officer executing the orders given to him by his superior).

²⁶ As Forst puts it synthetically: "principles claiming general validity and justifiability must rest on reasons that are "sharable" among all the addressees of the principles as free and equal authors of claims and reasons" (Forst 2012, 81).

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Striving for Freedom. Some Notes about Fichte's Idealism



Elena Paola Carola Alessiato

(University Suor Orsola Benincasa, Napoli; elena.alessiato@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0003-1399-6030

Abstract: Moving from Fichte's assumption that "the essence of the I is its activity", this paper tries to analyze the meaning and implications of the idea of "activity" [*Tathandlung*] in order to explicate the peculiarities of Fichte's critical, transcendental, and moral idealism. Fichte's idea of activity will be examined with reference to such basic concepts as collision [*Anstoss*], interaction [*Wechselwirkung*], inter-determination [*Wechselbestimmung*], and striving [*Streben*]. However, it is freedom which frames and connects the core components of Fichte's thinking and sets up the goal of his philosophy of action. What freedom accounts for, can be identified both at the transcendental level, in the internal dynamic of infinity and finitude constituting the subjectivity of the I, and at the moral and social levels of Fichte's thought, as the goal of the human action in history and in the society. In assuming the unitary character of Fichte's philosophical system, concluding remarks are developed concerning the moral meaning of the act of striving for freedom and, conversely, the immorality of attitudes and feelings such as fear, resignation, and fatigue.

Keywords: Fichte; critical idealism; striving for freedom; Anstoss; activity; Tathandlung.

I. The I as Activity

It is well-known that Fichte aims with his philosophy at bringing back all the reality to one single principle. In this way, he intended to go beyond the Kantian dualism between phenomenon and thing in itself [*Ding an sich*]. He identifies this principle in the consciousness as the "I" whose core characteristic is to be absolutely free, that is, to be the cause of itself. This is the meaning of the first principle of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* 1794: "The I poses itself" (GA/I, 2, 255–264).

What is posing? It is activity [*Tätigkeit*], or, in Fichte's terms, the preoriginal and essential activity. The German term repeatedly used by Fichte is activity [*Tathandlung*], which stands for an unconditional and undetermined activity, that is, an activity without conditions and conditionings – an absolutely free activity (GA/I, 2, 261; for the "double sense" of Fichte's "setzen" see Wood [2017, 3–6]). This freedom is essential for the entire activity of the I and specifically for the constitution of subjectivity. "The essential of the

I originates from its activity” [*das Wesen des Ich besteht in seiner Tätigkeit*] (GA/I, 2, 405), as Fichte emphasizes in one of his most famous works. Some consequences of this fundamental assumption will be identified and explained below.

I.1

Fichte’s idea of the “I” [*Ich*] is not associated with a substance. The I is not a thing, or an object to grasp intellectually like a chair or a tree. Considering the I as a thing means to fix it through concepts, meanings, stuff, and matter. In fact, the things are subject to determinations making them recognizable and identifiable, but also limited and conditioned. Each determination works both as a *terminus a quo* and a *terminus ad quem* for the being of the thing. On the contrary, the activity continuously reshapes the conditions of its becoming, and the I becomes the I existing through the activity of thinking. In fact, “Freedom, such as I have laid claim to” – as Fichte puts it – “is conceivable only of intelligences; but to them, undoubtedly, it belongs” (GA/I, 6, 183–309)¹.

Once admitted that “intelligence and thing are opposed the one to the other” (GA/I, 4, 183–208; 196)², this difference is assumed to ground the distinction between dogmatism and idealism, which Fichte thematizes in many passages of his books. In *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* a clear synthesis is provided: “The conflict [*Streit*] between the Idealist and the Dogmatist is actually about this: whether the autonomy of the thing has to be sacrificed to that of the I, or inversely, the autonomy of the I to that of the thing” (GA/I, 4, 193). If, on the one side, “the dogmatic principle is the faith in things by themselves” (GA/I, 4, 194) the only valid alternative is, on the other side, the Idealism, which “explains (...) the determinations of the conscience by the acting intelligence. According to it, this is only active, and absolute, not passive” (GA/I, 4, 199). What is *primum* is free and the idealism accounts for the faith in freedom. This freedom belongs to the activity of the I – namely to the I *as* activity, as “according to idealism, intelligence means activity” [*die Intelligenz ist dem Idealismus ein Thun*] (GA/I, 4, 200).

I.2

The I cannot be determined in any other way than by itself. To make it a thing means to miss the proper essence of the I that is endless freedom. But which is the meaning of this pursued freedom?

Freedom can be said in many ways. Regarding the activity of the intelligence, namely the intelligence as activity, we can distinguish between two components of the connected freedom. The first one can be fall under the question: Freedom from what? Here the freedom from external conditions and influences is meant. This is the point in which the influence of Rousseau and

1 J. G. Fichte, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, in the following cited as GA/I, 6.

2 J. G. Fichte, *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, in the following cited as GA/I, 4.

Kant on Fichte emerges: according to the two thinkers, to be free means not to have any other law but those which each subject has given to himself. The I is the law to and for itself (GA/I, 1, 203–404; 237)³. This is the way in which freedom becomes coincident with the meaning of autonomy, opening again the door to the faith of the idealism. “The assumption of the Idealism, therefore, will be this: the intelligence acts; but, by following its own essence, it may act only in a certain way”. This “certain way” implies that “by acting, it gives the law to itself, and this legislative power [*Gesetzgebung*] occurs through a higher necessary act, or representational act” (GA/I, 4, 201).

If the activity of the I has to be consistent with the freedom, it has to be neither accidental nor forced. Thus, the freedom must be inherent in the activity itself. The second component of freedom is captured here, which can be expressed through the question: Freedom towards what? The answer which Fichte gives to it involves the complete self-consciousness, that is the fact that all the reality will be reconciled with goals and tasks of the I, with goals and tasks which the I has given to itself. That condition will be the complete realization of liberty. The mutual connection of freedom and connection – the latter also as a condition for freedom – is at the core of the Fichtean Idealism, which, in consonance with the tradition of Classic German Philosophy, delivers a systemic and organic view of what authentic freedom is. “This Idealism ensues from one single law of the reason” (GA/I, 4, 204). Further, the necessary way by which the reason acts and works “is grounded in the nature of the intelligence and does not depend from the arbitrariness [*Willkür*]; it is something necessary, which, however, occurs only in and through a free act; it is something which is found, still the act of finding is contingent on freedom” (GA/I, 4, 204).

I.3

Finally, Fichte's ideal of liberty is an idea of unity and harmony. The goal of his philosophical thinking is coincident with the goal of reason in the sense that his philosophy aims at showing the ideal necessity of subordinating all reality to the goals of reason. “The perfect harmony of man with himself, and that this may be practicable, the harmony of all external things with his necessary practical ideas of them, the ideas which determine what these things *should be*; this is the ultimate and highest purpose of human existence”. Several lines below the idea is repeatedly stressed: “To subject all irrational nature to himself, to rule over it unreservedly and according to his own laws, is the *ultimate end* of man” (GA/I, 3, 23–68; 32)⁴. In this way the will of the I, made coincident with the law and goals of the reason, gets to become the cause of the whole of reality (as in GA/I, 3, 30–33; GA/I, 6, 183–309; 259; 293–298): “The present world exists for us only through the law of duty; the other will be revealed to us, similarly, through another command of duty; for in no other manner can

³ J. G. Fichte, *Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publikums über die französische Revolution*, in the following cited as GA/I, 1.

⁴ J. G. Fichte, *Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*, in the following cited as GA/I, 3.

a world exist to any reasonable being” (GA/I, 6, 284). The ideal of harmonization applies both to the multitude of subjects sharing and shaping the social world and to the plurality of forces and attitudes building the human personality:

The ultimate vocation of every finite, rational being is thus absolute unity, constant identity, perfect harmony with himself. This absolute identity is the form of the pure Ego (...). Not the Will alone should be always at one with itself, this belongs to morality only; but all the powers of man, which are essentially but one power, and only become distinguished in their application to different objects, should all accord in perfect unity and harmony with each other (GA/I, 3, 30).

II. Critical Idealism: Freedom and Resistance

The realization of the goal of a harmonized unity is not free of obstacles and impediments. On the contrary, at the heart of Fichte’s philosophical view, there is an acute feeling of tension and dualism, which can be depicted in terms of fight and conflict.

The I poses itself freely by giving tasks and law spontaneously to itself. But the achievement of those tasks and goals is not at all spontaneous. By the infinite activity of posing itself, that is a spontaneous movement towards the unity – unity of the I with itself and with the reality of the world – the I is confronted with two kinds of opposition.

II.1

Firstly, there is the existence of the external world, where “external” denotes what is immediately extraneous to the I. This can be both the material world, the matter, all that which is not pure reason and intellectual activity (also, the nature, the world in its natural and material substance), and the social world, the world made up by other Is, by other rational beings. The not-I is dependent on the I for its cognition, yet not for its material existence (GA/I, 2, 411–413). Again, the link between freedom and connection, subjectivity and condition, is constitutive of the I:

It is not true, I say, that the pure Ego is a product of the Non-Ego; such a doctrine would indicate a transcendental materialism which is entirely opposed to reason; but it is certainly true, and will be fully proved in its proper place, that the Ego is not, and can never become, conscious of itself except under its empirical determinations; and that these empirical determinations necessarily imply something external to the Ego (GA/I, 3, 28).

II.2

Secondly, the conflicting and self-contradictory character of the I in itself is another source of resistance to the rationality of the I. The I, in fact, has a complex constitution: “Thus, in so far as man possesses a determinate existence, he is a *sensuous* being. Still, as we have already said, he is also a reasonable being; and his Reason must not be superseded by Sense, but both must exist in harmony with each other” (GA/I, 3, 29).

The completeness of the human being is given by the integration of reason and

sensitivity in the form of a synergetic co-habitation guided by reason.

Both forms of resistance have to be taken into account for the explication of the human activity and have to be philosophically accountable. The way by which Fichte tries to carry out this task is putting what is not-I in a relationship of co-existence and ineliminable reciprocity and interaction with the I. In fact, as he writes:

The empirical determinations of our Ego depend, however, for the most part, not upon ourselves but upon something external to us. (...) They depend upon things external to the Ego, the character of which is multiplicity, not identity. If the Ego is to be constantly at one with itself in this respect also, it must strive to operate directly upon the things themselves on which the sensations and perceptions of man depend; man must endeavor to modify these, and to bring them into harmony with the pure form of his Ego, so that his conceptions of them likewise, so far as these (his conceptions) depend upon the nature of their objects, may harmonize with that form (GA/I, 3, 30–31).

Harmony is always the result of a kind of striving, which is more than a mere aspiration: it is a strenuous endeavor embracing a joyful, yet persevering and tough will.

This stance has a cause and a main implication. The ground of this philosophical choice is to see in the absolute primacy of the I in the sense we explained before, that is as an infinite and absolute activity, where the adjective “absolute” implies both the “freedom from” and the “freedom towards”. This movement has to be permanent and infinite because – as Fichte states – without self-posing there is no I, no consciousness, no reality (GA/I, 2, 389; 408–410). The reality can be grounded and explained only through the cognitive and scientific act of the I. “The concept of acting, which becomes possible only through this intellectual view of the autonomously acting I, is the only one unifying the two worlds which exist for us, the sensible and the intelligible one” (GA/I, 4, 209–269; 220). This is – as we have seen – the essential message of Fichte's transcendental idealism.

The consequence of such a connection is the fact that also the I *idealiter* depends on the not-I. This dependency is represented by what Fichte calls *Wechselwirkung*: that is, interaction, reciprocal action, and determination. The one cannot exist without the other. The identification of such a condition is the peculiarity of Fichte's critical (or transcendental, respectively) idealism (GA/I, 2, 318–321; 328–330; 342–350).

The I, we said, is a non-stop and pure activity. It has an infinite tendency towards being free: the I is “the becoming free”. But an endless activity has no object and no determination, and without determination, there is no knowledge: there is only a fluid unconditional and indefinite movement. Posing itself means to find a basis, a fixed point by and upon which to build itself. In Fichte's idea building itself in order to be itself means to know itself. In order to know itself, determination is necessary. Setting out a determination means to pose an end to the infinite activity of the I. Knowledge needs self-determination, reflection needs self-limitation, consciousness means the consciousness of its limits, then it needs self-consciousness. “Without self-consciousness there is no consciousness at all” [*ohne SelbstBewusstseyn ist überhaupt kein Bewusstseyn*], however, “the self-consciousness is possible only in a way: I am only active” (GA/I, 4, 219). The necessity moving the free activity of the I is a practical one because given

from the own active reason.

III. “Anstoss” and Freedom

The type of *Wechselwirkung*, which Fichte ascribes to the connection between the I and not-I, is a dynamical and conflictual one. It follows from the principle summarized by the formula: “No I without reflection” (GA/I, 2, 423) where reflection is meant as an activity following from the combination of two opposite forces, a centripetal and a centrifugal one. The dynamic ruling the combination of these two movements makes up the subjectivity and crystallizes in the moment of the *Anstoss*.

The paradoxical condition of the I ensues from the fact that the I as pure activity, in order to come to the consciousness of itself, needs to be limited, i.e., needs to meet with something which hinders the activity of the I and obstructs its tendency to expand to infinity. This experience is not properly a meeting, an encounter, but rather a crash, a collision. The German word used by Fichte is *Anstoss*, which denotes the experience made by the I of something objective outside itself, objective in the sense of something extraneous and not coincident with its intellectual and in(de)finite activity (GA/I, 2, 3; 55; 387–388; see Eidam 1997; Soller 1997).

What is important to stress here is that the collision [*An-Stoß*] with the objective is not something incidental and accidental: it is necessary according to a transcendental necessity. Being necessary, it requires that the I finds the objective in itself, i.e., it finds in itself the conditions of its self-determination – otherwise the I would not and could not be free, but always dependent on something external to it, which is contrary to the Kantian and Fichtean idea of autonomy. *Anstoss* is the pre-original impulse [*l’impulsion originaire; sans l’existence d’un être objectif(...)* on ne voit pas comment le dynamisme subjectif pourrait être limité, ce qui est la condition sine qua non de la réflexion], as Druet (1972, 384–392; 385; see also Breazeale 1995) explains. Fichte is quite incisive and logical on this point: “No activity and self-determination of the I would be possible without the pre-original impulse” [*Keine Tüchtigkeit des Ichs, kein Anstoss; Kein Anstoss, keine Selbstbestimmung*] (GA/I, 2, 356).

The *Anstoss* takes a central role in Fichte’s philosophical system: it is the condition of each knowledge up to the highest level of it, the philosophical science, which, according to Fichte, corresponds to «the absolute knowing of the absolute knowledge” (De Pascale 1995, 43–63; 57). With these words, he defines his philosophical doctrine, the *Doctrine of Science*. The philosophical importance of the *Anstoss* ensues from the fact that

on the one hand, it allows the intelligent thinking I to pinpoint itself as I and, on the other hand, stimulates this I to confront something external and extraneous, which in addition does not stay immobile in its passivity, but, in turn, urged the I into a proper, partially active, answer (through its resistance). This is the play of mutual determination [*Wechselbestimmung*] and then of mutual action [*Wechselwirkung*], which is not to understand as a weak effect of a lifeless mechanism, but rather as revealing a view ruled by an inner dynamism (De

Pascale 2001, 10).

As the quotation suggests, the experience of the *Anstoss* is not even important in itself, but rather for the reaction it causes in the I. With its objective presence, the *Anstoss* forces the I to react going beyond the obstacle and bringing it back under the control of its intelligence.

Following Fichte's assumption, we have admitted that the intellectual activity of the I is an infinite movement consisting in continuously expanding the limits of its knowing: these limits, which obstruct the knowing and the reflection of the I, are also those which, exactly by hindering the I in his self-posing process, compel it to go beyond them (De Pascale 1995, 60). Under this condition, the *Anstoss* given by the not-I, that is by the objective being, is an essential and not eliminable component of the process of knowing because it is responsible for putting in movement the cognitive process of knowing itself (GA/I, 2, 356–361). Here the centrifugal force, going outside the I, and the centripetal one, returning to itself as a consequence of the impediment to confront and collide by crashing into each other, they meet and act mutually. For the same reason, the reaction to the crash with the objective limit is an essential part of the reflection process.

Given that the *Anstoss* is the experience that the I makes of something objective outside itself, the existence of such an extraneity is also the necessary condition urging the subject to return to itself and so not to stop its endless activity. By returning back to itself (still a form of activity as well), the I comes to re-reflect on the self which has made the experience of a partial irreducible alterity, the not-I, which can be seen at this point both as ontologically independent *and* as transcendently dependent on the conscience of the I. Thus, this act of reflection is not only an activity in itself but works also as a necessary action of the subjectivity to move on beyond any resistance and keep its activity up (GA/I, 2, 355; 387–388; see Rivera de Rosales 1999).

This reaction takes the name of *Streben*, or effort: this term indicates a view of activity as an infinite tendency to overcome the limits posed to liberty and conscience, an endless reaction to overcome the obstacles to the realization of the I's freedom that corresponds to the realization of the unity between I and not-I, between the I and the world. In the words of an acute Fichtean scholar, "the intervention of the effort indicates that in the infinite pure activity of the absolute I (absolutely identical to itself) an element of finiteness has arisen in that the centrifugal direction taken by this activity has been interrupted in that this activity has 'found,' 'crashed,' 'bumped' into, something objective; in conclusion, that something different and heterogeneous has started to react against the tendency of the absolute I to remain identical to itself" (De Pascale 2005, 9–10).

Positing the I as I means to immediately oppose a not-I and the condition of this possibility is given by no other but the *Anstoss*: the I crashes into the not-I and then reflects on itself (in the worthy meaning of coming back to itself), becoming conscious of itself, of

its proper limit but also of its tendency to go beyond each limit (GA/I, 2, 392–394)⁵.

The I comes to itself through the not-I. This is the core of Fichte's idea of *Wechselbestimmung*, in which the effort is [like] the propelling force of the process, the condition and the way in which the activity expresses and realizes itself. Therefore, the effort is a crucial moment in Fichte's theoretical system because it appears to be the condition for the realization of the identity of the I with itself. "Without *Streben* no reflection is possible"; "No I without reflection" (GA/I, 2, 423).

Since the reflection builds itself up through the process above-described, that is to say through the effort, one can say that the *Streben* is a constitutive activity of the I. "From the impulse [*Trieb*] the reflexive action of the I upon himself follows immediately" (GA/I, 2, 423). Since, however, the *Streben* is a reaction to the *Anstoss*, so, more originally the *Anstoss* expresses both i) a necessary condition for the reflective constitution of the I, and ii) the *occasion* for something new beginning: a starting point for the making of the subjectivity. Additionally, a third consequence is to admit: iii) the dynamic of collision and reaction engenders also the constitution of the not-I. So, briefly, the constitution of the not-I ensues from the activity of the I.

IV. From the Theoretic Opposition to the Practical Unity: The Paradox of The I – in the I

"The pure activity of the I reflecting on itself is, with reference to a possible object, effort [*Streben*] (...), an infinite effort. This infinite effort is endlessly the condition of the possibility of each object: without effort, there is no object" (GA/I, 2, 397). In fact, without a crash, there is no identity, without collision, there is no unity, without effort, there is no reflection, and without reflection there is no knowing and no being. "An object can be posed only in so far as the activity meets a resistance" (GA/I, 2, 395). The connection between activity and resistance is necessarily indissoluble and its seal is the figure of the *Anstoss*. "Without effort, there is no object as *Anstoss*, without the *Anstoss* there is no representation" (Janke 1970, 164).

Presenting the opposition between I and not-I, the subject and the clash with an object, Fichte has shown the paradox intrinsic to the I, a paradox present in the core of his philosophical system. It is a contradiction that cannot be resolved (GA/I, 2, 392; 401–403). It consists in the fact that the I is at the same time infinite and limitless and finite and limited (by the object). "The I is finite because it has to be delimited, but in this finiteness, it is infinite because the border limit can always be moved further away, over and over" (GA/I, 2, 394). At the same moment, "the I is infinite but only according to I's effort: It strives for being infinite" (GA/I, 2, 404). That is to say, it makes the effort of being an

⁵ „Dem Ich [gehört] nichts weiteres, als das Zurückkehren in sich“ (GA/I, 4, 213).

endless effort. "Limited by the not-I, the I is finite; but in itself, posed by its proper activity, it is infinite. Both these elements, finitude and infinitude, have to be unified in it. But this unification is impossible" (GA/I, 2, 301). Fichte is confronted here with a difficulty that forces him to go decisively beyond the original dualism.

A solution could be i) to remove or ii) to cancel the finite: to make all the limits disappear and to make only the infinite One exist. This can be the final end of the intellectual process, which is an ideal and not achievable goal. This is the conclusion to which the theoretical knowledge arrived, presenting a frontal opposition between the subjective and the objective side of the reality, the I and the not-I. But for Fichte, this is not a satisfactory solution. In order to explain how he conceives the relationship between the two parts, he uses a metaphor taken from the intuitive knowledge: this is the metaphor about light and darkness, which exemplifies a relationship of inverse proportionality: "Light and darkness are not generally opposed, but they differ only by degrees. The dark is not but a very small quantity of light. Exactly in this way, it happens between I and not-I" (GA/I, 2, 301).

This explains how Fichte sees this difficult point in the relationship between the I and the not-I. But Fichte tries to handle this problem also systematically, not only by intuition. Thus, he shows that the theoretical knowledge comes to the point of recognizing the opposition between the subject and the object and admitting that the second one is necessary for the determination of the intellectual activity of the first one. But then it stops here. In fact, the theoretical part is the I observed from the point of view of the limitation of the not-I⁶. To overcome this impasse, it is necessary to react to the opposition represented by the *Anstoss* by concentrating and stretching the intellectual energies of the I in order to transform the obstacle into a stimulus for the I. In this way the I can carry on with its self-positing and self-reflection. "Only through the impulse [*Trieb: Vorstellungstrieb*] does the I get to intelligence" (GA/I, 2, 424; 386–387).

However, thematizing the necessity of a reaction, of a counter-movement to the movement of the I (a counter-movement through which, we can say, the I comes to be a Self), Fichte is no longer in the field of the theory alone: he has taken a step towards a practical solution of a theoretical impasse. Then for Fichte what at a theoretical level is irreconcilable and continuously conflicting, can be reconciled at the practical level, through and by the praxis. And in fact, the section of the *Grundlage der Wissenschaftslehre* dedicated to practical knowledge is focalized on the concept of the effort as an intellectual device to impress a movement and to dynamize a situation of immobilism and contraposition.

The *Streben*, considered as an irrepressible unlimited tendency towards a goal, overcoming the reactive movement of the *Anstoss* given by the objective, is both the «origin of the conscience» and the infinite, i.e., never-ending, and never removable "condition

⁶ "Das Ich setzt sich selbst, als beschränkt durch das Nicht-Ich" (GA/I, 2, 285). On the contrary, by the practical point of view the not-I is observed from the point of view of the selfdetermination of the I: "Das Ich setzt das Nicht-Ich, als beschränkt durch das Ich" (GA/I, 2, 285).

of the possibility of an object”, that is to say, the condition for the constitution of an object (GA/IV, 2⁷, 17–266; 62; GA/I, 2, 297). Self-reflection is a reaction to the *Anstoss* represented by the objective. It has to be considered as a limit to the pure endless activity. But self-reflection is simultaneously and immediately combined with [the] striving for a never-ending activity (activity of reflection) (GA/I, 2, 392–394).

Reacting is already a form of acting [*Handeln*]. Considered thus, the importance of the *Streben* within Fichte’s philosophy stands out: by it, we have an intellectual device that makes it possible to reconcile what at a speculative level is divided and cannot be unified, i.e., the purity of the intellectual activity, on the one hand, and its faculty to be related to something objective, on the other hand.

Consequently, the importance of the *Streben* for Fichte’s Idealism can be detected in a twofold level: at systematical level, it makes emerging the priority of the practical above the theoretical, showing that the inner core of the theoretical knowledge is of practical nature because it is in itself a form of movement and reaction (for more on the ambiguous practical in Fichte see Cesa 1992, 101–119). It is not a thing but a goal-oriented tendency. Fichte’s remark in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* is fully consistent with this view:

Kant speaks of interest of the speculative reason and interest of the practical reason, and he opposes them; this is correct only by his point of view but not in itself, because the reason is always one and only one and has only one interest. Its interest is the trust in autonomy and freedom, and from these issues the interest for unity and connection (GA/IV, 2, 23, translation after De Pascale 2001, 7).

The role of the *Streben* comes out also at the transcendental level, where it allows it to overcome the difficulty represented by thinking together the identity of the I and the plurality of the not-I (the reality). The Italian philosopher Luigi Pareyson masterfully explains this point:

The *Streben* is the synthesis between the pure activity and the perception of the limit, i.e., a limited activity which nevertheless holds the impulse (*élan*) of its infinity. When the opposition (i.e., the resistance) appears, the activity for which the I is identical to itself (...) turns into a tendency for recovering the identity and the totality (...); but identity and totality are set as an ideal, as an unattainable goal of the effort, so the activity of the reason, which was previously infinite because it was unlimited, becomes now infinite exactly because it is limited, in the sense that it tries to pass the limit of the opposition in order to refund its own original identity in the totality (Pareyson 1976/2011, 199).

“Identity in the totality” which presupposes the co-existence of activity and limitation, and simultaneously, the dynamic interconnection between the presence of the limit and the activity endlessly urging us to go beyond the limit:

The effort (...) only exists through the presence of a limitation: it represents the infinite activity of the absolute reason, which is yet withstood, blocked, and then limited to a point. The effort is limited because it arises from a limitation, and infinite because it is in itself infinite activity, which, in the moment of the limitation, does not give up its own infinity (Pareyson 1976/2011, 200).

7 J. G. Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, in the following cited as GA/4, 2.

By displaying the meaning of the connection between *Anstoss* and *Streben*, i) we have not only tried to clarify an essential point of Fichte's philosophical logic, and ii) also a crucial point of the logic underlying his transcendental Idealism. We have also found out and exposed iii) the logical structure which according to Fichte is inherent in each acting, not only at cognitive level but also at moral, ethical, and even social level.

Admitting that the identity of the I with itself and with [the] reality passes through this "clash-and-reaction"-play with the not-I [*Anstoss* and *Streben*], then also the achievement of the moral goals of the human being ought to be thought like a struggle against the opposing forces of nature, against the darkness of the material world and the lack of order (moral order), against the resistances opposed by the matter and by natural impulses, by what is not activity and pure reason and intelligence. This is a "fight" because "it is a matter of reconciling what is conflicting and irreconcilable". In fact, "the I tries to welcome the infinite in the form of the finite, then, pushed back, posits the infinite out of this form and, in the same time, tries another time to welcome it in the form of the finitude" (Pareyson 1976/2011, 201).

Fichte's whole philosophy is erected on this conceptual ground and through this intellectual device: there is no being (of the human being) without acting, the acting needs objects to determine itself; but at the same time it is a goal-oriented activity launched towards goals which are set by the reason and as such are unachievable. Thus, the acting is at the same time finite and infinite, determined and endless. But most of all, and most interestingly for us here, we have to notice the paradox according to which the acting needs a limitation to express itself. The moment of limitation takes in Fichte's philosophy an essential place: it is the element that puts the process of thinking-acting in movement. It represents the condition for the possibility of the activity of the I, for the existence of the subject, for the explication of the reason. This logic stays valid even if the goals set by the reason are unachievable because it issues from theoretical grounds: the elimination of the effort would mean the abolition of the object, but without an object, there would be no subject (GA/I, 2, 332) without effort there would be no reflection, and without reflection, there would be no consciousness. In order to preserve the possibility of getting conscious, the effort has to be kept on, so its goal has to remain out of reach, unattainable.

The fulfillment of the effort to the unlimited posing of itself would mean the abolition of each opposition, of the object at all. Since by the abolition of the conscience building difference (between subject and object), conscience would not be conscience (anymore), the fulfillment of the effort remains an unattainable ideal (Schurr 1974, 76).

The unity of the I with itself is the endless and final goal of the I, even if it is unattainable and has to stay in this way.

V. A Philosophy for Action

Conclusively, some consequences will be drawn from this previous analysis:

V.1

Here, in the never-ending tendency to the infinite, Fichte recognizes the mark of the infinitude of our being, the mark of our destination to eternity (GA/I, 2, 404)⁸, i.e., the sign that the human being is made for infinity and eternity. The goal of our reason can be extended to infinity, over and over. To this extension belongs a feeling of longing and desire. “The longing-for is the primary and completely independent manifestation of the effort lying in the I” (GA/I, 2, 432).

So, we can affirm that Fichte’s thought is based on the feeling of desire: a feeling of unfulfilled desire.

V.2

Impossibility is the mainspring of Fichte’s philosophy. Not the possibility but the certainty of failing is the intellectual premise of Fichte’s theoretical discourse about the human being. It represents also the element giving the drive to all his practical discourse and to the ethical program he proposes. The combination between irrepressible striving for a goal and the certainty of the impossibility of the satisfaction of that longing constitutes the driving element of his ethical anthropology and the propelling force for his idea of social and cultural processes (De Pascale 1995, 62).

V.3

What is valid for the transcendental I in its transcendental speculative activity, is valid also for the historical and social worldly I. Given that culture is a process of (self) cultivation of the natural impulses and passions proper to human beings, it represents a kind of struggle against what makes resistance to the cultivation of that nature: against those impulses and passions the culture opposes the disciplining measures aiming at bringing the disconnected variety of the world into a reason-controlled unity (GA/I, 3, 31; 49)⁹.

In Fichte’s view, the goal of history is the establishment of a realm of reason, where all the human beings freely act according to the goals of reason. Nevertheless, a worldly order ruled only by reason is not fully possible for human beings as a result of their very human – too human nature. “To subordinate to itself what is without reason, to have it in control and accorded to its own law: this is the highest goal of the human being; a goal which cannot be in any way achieved and which will not be forever, unless the human being stops being a human being” (GA/I, 3, 32).

These are the conditions (first transcendental, then historical) in which human beings

8 In German: „Das Gepräge unsere Bestimmung für die Ewigkeit“.

9 For this topic and the connection between philosophical reason and history see Vieillard-Baron (2016, 9–39; 7–211) and my Introduction to the Italian edition of J. G. Fichte (Alessiato 2020).

have to act and work. History is the totality of the efforts made by human beings and by humanity in its whole to try to arrive at their or its destination [*Bestimmung*] to get closer to their goals (GA/I, 6, 266–276; GA/I, 3, 38–41).

V.4

Even if the goal is unattainable, this evidence is, according to Fichte, not a good reason for being resigned and feeling a sense of fatigue.

Fatigue as an emotional reaction to an obstacle, to the difficulties issuing from the height of the set tasks and to the labour associated with the effort of duty, does not belong to Fichte's anthropological view. At the same time, neither tiredness nor fear, neither resignation nor disillusion belongs to his moral Idealism. Fatigue as a subjective negative feeling appears to his sensibility as a pejorative experience of the being, and, for this reason, it does not play a role in his philosophy, which is, and wants to be, a philosophy of action¹⁰ – a philosophy *for* action.

If subjectivity is the “effort to act,” and if the effort is the transcendental condition for the being and becoming of the subjectivity (GA/I, 2, 293; 404–408), which means that there is no longer space for asking whether acting is demanding and exhausting: even if it generates tiring effects on our sensitivity, acting is our necessity (in transcendental terms), is our task and our duty (in ontological and ethical terms). It is our destiny and, in Fichte's terminology, our destination. What is then fatigue? Fatigue and, most of all, the subjective perception of it are only signs of the still defective and incomplete morality, the symptom of the still lacking self-consciousness [*Selbstbewusstsein*] of the I.

V.5

At the place of fatigue and resignation, a feeling of trust and self-confidence has to prevail. This is a feeling of self-confidence in the faculty of the human being to pursue what he has to, in his capacity not to resign by following the voice of the reason and in his power to follow through, towards his own destination. This is also a feeling of trust in the rightness of the struggle for reason and liberty; it is the trust in the superior force of tasks and ideas which human beings experience within themselves. In our time of lukewarm beliefs and relative views, Fichte's burning confidence in the reasonable will's potentials and powers is particularly impressive:

Whether it is my acting [*That*] which is successful or hindered or the *That* of someone other, this is indifferent to me. I regard myself anywhere only as one of the instruments of the goals of the reason, and respect and love myself, and I feel sympathy for me only as such (GA/I, 6, 303).

This moral feeling shows the belonging of the human being to a superior intelligible world. In this trust-inspired philosophical framework, the effort is the tangible sign not of the weakness of the human being and his failure-oriented attitude: on the contrary,

¹⁰ A philosophy based on the “joy of acting” (Bertinetto 2016, 95–109).

it represents the evidence of his supernatural nature and the mark of his high oriented destination, that is to say, of his belonging to a realm that is not only this earthly world (GA/I, 6, 280–282).

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**Surrogates of Recognition.
On the Reconstruction of a Possible Critical Hegelian Contribution to
Current Discussions on “Identity”**

**Anerkennungssurrogate.
Zur Rekonstruktion eines möglichen kritischen Hegelschen Beitrags
zu heutigen Diskussionen über ‚Identität‘**



Rainer Adolphi

(Technische Universität Berlin; rainer.adolphi@tu-berlin.de)

Abstract: The article discusses a central topic of contemporary understandings of society that seems to have no place in Hegel’s theory: the topic of “identity”, which seems to fall between the process of a “struggle for recognition” on the one hand, and, on the other, a consolidated recognition of subjects and their rights within the established social order. The article would like to propose a further reconstruction here. It discusses which considerations should be included so that the discourse on “identity” does not end in any substantialist or ethno-national, egocentric understandings, but, instead, could become possibly a part of Hegel’s theory. In today’s dynamics and unsettling changes, there are undeniable needs for “identity” (which are also easily addressed, even fuelled, by corresponding offers). These are, as one could learn from Hegel, surrogates of a still not or no longer successful sufficient recognition. In this, “identity” is to be understood as critical work on oneself as a product of becoming, on inheritances, achievements, challenges, divisions, discrepancies, guilt and failures.

Keywords: Hegel; identity; modernity; recognition; politics of history.

Ethik macht man, wenn man Ethik braucht. Fast stets verlaufen die Entwicklungen so, dass erfahrene Wirklichkeiten auf Prozesse und Aspekte deuten, die bisher noch nicht (oder nicht eigens) reflektiert waren. Durch erfahrene, bewusstgewordene *Wirklichkeiten* kommen neue Wichtigkeiten in den Blick. In dieser Hinsicht geht es der philosophischen Ethik nicht anders als der psychologischen Modellbildung oder der soziologischen Theorie. Und auch inhaltlich sowie konzeptionell sind im Konkreten die Schübe der Entwicklung oft vermittelt über psychologische, sozialwissenschaftliche, anthropologische Betrachtungen und Erkenntnisse. Allgemein ist die Entwicklung sowohl Ausdifferenzierung und Spezifizierung als auch die Erweiterung von Fragestellungen und mit einbezogenen Sachverhalten. Umgewichtungen in den ethischen Wertungs-

Perspektiven und im Themenfokus der Debatten ergeben sich meist sekundär von dort her.

So gibt es denn heutige Kernthemen der Ethik, über die etwa Kant, Fichte oder Hegel *nicht* reflektiert haben. Dazu gehören das Thema der ‚Werte‘, das Thema des ‚Sinns‘, Thema der personalen (existenziellen) Authentizität, Thema der ‚Verantwortung‘, Thema von Ethik und Technisierung der Welt, Thema der ‚Lebenskunst‘, überhaupt Lebensgeschichte, Thema der ‚Identität‘, und nicht zuletzt die neuen Fragen des ‚Bösen‘ (Aufbrechen eines ‚Bösen‘ im Zustand hoher Kultur), Phänomene der Wiederkehr stoizistischer Haltungen und die Phänomene einer neuen Spiritualität. Die frühere ethische Reflexion, bes. in der klassischen Epoche von Kant, Fichte und Hegel, dachte unter Zugrundelegung einer Parallelität von individueller und gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung – Perspektive eines (mit Moderne konnotierten) Bildungsprozesses in Parallele von Individuen (in Denken, Empfinden und Handeln) und Gesellschaftsganzen. Alle seitherigen erweiternden Themen liegen gewissermaßen an dieser Bruchlinie zwischen Individuellem und Gesellschaftlichem.

Das Folgende möchte in den heutigen gesellschaftlichen Verständigungen vielleicht zum wichtigsten gewordene Thema ins Zentrum stellen: das Thema der ‚Identität‘. Erörtert werden soll es im Horizont von *Hegel*. Das Thema scheint in Hegels Theorie keinen Ort zu haben. Es scheint hindurchzufallen zwischen einerseits den Prozessen eines „Kampfes um Anerkennung“, die Hegel als gleichsam unmittelbares Gegenüber von Personen oder Gruppen in ihrem beiderseitigen, polar-bezogenen „Selbst“ erkannt hatte (Hegel 1807, 104–128),¹ und andererseits dem gefestigten „Anerkanntsein“ (vgl. Hegel 1830, §§ 432f./484; auch Hegel 1830, §§ 490/527, Hegel 1821, §§ 192/217) von Subjekten und Rechten innerhalb der etablierten, modernen „sittlichen“ Ordnung. Die soziale und politische Ordnung der „Sittlichkeit“ im Sinne der Hegelschen Theorie scheint neutral zu sein bezüglich Fragen der ‚Identität‘, auch Erfahrungen der Verunsicherung der ‚Identität‘ und überhaupt Verunsicherungen des Geschichtsbewusstseins. – Das Folgende möchte hier eine weiterführende Rekonstruktion vorschlagen. Es soll erörtert werden, welche Reflexionen aufgenommen werden müssen, damit die Rede von ‚Identität‘ nicht unwillkürlich in (konstruierten) substanzialistischen Verständnissen und nationaler (oder ethnischer, religiöser) Eigenzentrierung endet, sondern zu einem Teil gerade einer hegelianischen Theorie werden könnte. ‚Identität‘ soll dabei nicht statisch und rein affirmativ verstanden werden, sondern als Arbeit – oft erforderlich auch kritische Arbeit – am eigenen Gewordensein, an Erbschaften, Errungenschaften, Bezügen-zu-Anderem, aber ebenso an Problemen, Schuld und Versäumnissen.

Hegel in seiner Zeit, zwischen historistischen, nationalistischen, bildungselitären, konfessionalistischen und antisemitischen Strömungen und den Behauptungskämpfen der alten Stände-Ordnung, hatte gute Gründe, das Thema – und ‚wer‘ Träger der wahren

¹ Kap. IV.A.: *Selbständigkeit und Unselbständigkeit des Selbstbewußtseins; Herrschaft und Knechtschaft.*

„sittlichen“ Gemeinschaft ist – fernzuhalten von den Ausführungen seiner Theorie. In den Konstellationen seiner Zeit waren Diskurse über ‚Identität‘ Legitimierung der ‚guten alten‘ Herrschaftsformen und blinder Nationalismus, gegenüber den Ideen der Französischen Revolution und auch Forderungen wie der der Judenemanzipation. Unter heutigen Gegebenheiten starker Dynamik und verunsichernden Wandels aber gibt es unleugbar ‚Identitäts‘-Bedürfnisse – durch die faktischen Gegebenheiten bedingte Bedürfnisse, die auch von entsprechenden Angeboten leicht anzusprechen, ja aufzuheizen sind.² Dazu eine Betrachtung in drei Teilen.

Modernisierungserfahrungen und Identitätsbedürfnisse (Zur geschichtlichen Konstellation des Themas der ‚Identität‘)

(1) Amartya Sen hat auf das Problem aufmerksam gemacht, dass Gemeinschaften, und gerade zunehmend wieder, sich in singularisierten und einander ausschließenden ‚Identitäten‘ verstehen. Es ist ein Problem, das in der neuen globalen Konstellation nach dem Ende der großen 2-Teilung der Welt, deren Fundamentalpolarisierung das 20. Jahrhundert vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zu den Umbrüchen von 1989/90 beherrscht hatte, noch einmal besonders sich verstärkt. In der Tat breitet sich in vielem eine Kriegsrhetorik aus. Nationen und Kulturen empfinden sich im Kampf um ihre jeweilige Wesensidentität, die durch ‚Fremdes‘ bedroht werde. Es ist ein Denken nach der Logik der Verdrängung: Wo das Eine ist, könne das Andere nicht sein, nicht existieren.

Jede Gemeinschaft, jede Zugehörigkeit – das ‚Wir‘ bzw. ‚das Fremde‘ – wird als eine einzige, ganzheitliche Identität (Identitätsgruppe) gedacht, der die Einzelnen in ihrem ganzen Wesen zugeordnet sind bzw. sich zuordnen müssen. Dass Verschiedenes in einem gemeinsamen Raum, Tür an Tür, friedlich und (geschichtlich-)versöhnlich als Nachbarn zusammen leben könnte, ist in diesem Denken nicht vorgesehen.³ Es ist von vornherein ausgeschlossen. Beide jeweilige Seiten seien, für die konkreten Menschen unabänderlich schicksalhaft, zur Ausschließlichkeit⁴ bestimmt (Sen 2006). – Ängste vor einem vorgestellten Anderen oder Verändernden werden da dann allzu leicht zu xenophoben Grundmentalitäten und richten sich gegen *die* vermeintlichen ‚Fremden‘. Solches Denken betont einseitig das Trennende statt des Verbindenden (oder erforderlichlich

2 Meine Erörterungen in diesem Artikel mögen gesehen werden als eine Reflexion in dem, was Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz und Marek Siemek als Feld einer Forschungsaufgabe hinterlassen haben. Im Geist ihrer Erbschaft gilt es heute, die Tradition idealistischer Philosophie zu verteidigen gegen zumal deren Umdeutungen aus ‚romantischen‘ Denkorientierungen des 19. Jhs. wie auch aus szientifischen Depotenzierungen aller Fragestellungen. Dies wird – wie hier beim Thema der ‚Identität‘ – nicht selten auch erkennen müssen, wie Hegelsche Gedanken, wenn sie später in den verschiedenen Hegel-Rezeptionen (und -Renaissancen) tragend wurden, oft in Verschmelzung mit anderen Konzeptionen gebracht sind, gemeinhin nicht zum Vorteil an argumentativer Stärke und Klarheit.

3 Ebensovienig, dass in einem Individuum oder einer Teilgruppe *mehrere* lebensbedeutsame Zugehörigkeiten zusammenkommen können, sich verschränken können.

4 Oder allenfalls zeitweise strategische Koalitionen – gegen Dritte.

Transformativen). Indem in den Vorstellungen der Menschen das verstärkt wird, was sie in Wesensidentität von anderen abhebe und trenne, ist dem Verbindenden und der Suche eines Gemeinsamen und des Ausgleichs immer weniger eine reale Chance gegeben, eine Chance in der Weise des Zusammenlebens. Und dort erwachsen daraus immer größere Gefahren, *Geschichte zu missbrauchen*, um mit entsprechenden Geschichts-Konstruktionen ein identitäres ‚Wir‘-Sein (oder komplementär eine Erbgegnerschaft) zu untermauern.

Die Phänomene, die hier zu diagnostizieren sind, werden immer offenkundiger, und zunehmend in allen Gesellschaften. Das enthebt jedoch nicht der Frage, woher die Bedürfnisse kommen, sich über volks-, nationen- und kulturhafte ‚Identitäten‘ zu bestimmen, ja sich daran zu klammern. – Dass dies so hoch besetzt ist, ist sicher nicht zu verstehen ohne die motivierenden Hintergründe: nämlich woher die Verunsicherungen, nicht (oder nicht mehr) heimisch zu sein im Eigenen, kommen; woher das Unsicherheitsgefühl, das die Sicherung einer ‚Identität‘ – und die geistige Versicherung darüber – so herausstreichen, d.h. so sehr zum sozialen und politischen Argument werden lässt. Alte Gesellschaften und frühere Jahrhunderte waren so gut wie immer identitätsverschlossen und insofern allophob – weil sie mit gar nichts anderem in Berührung kamen als mit sich selbst. Abgrenzungen waren ihnen nur wichtig gegen das vorsoziale Sein, vorsoziale Leben. Doch unter modernen Bedingungen und translokalen Horizonten haben die Prozesse eine besondere Bedeutung. Sich heute über volks-, nationen- und kulturhafte ‚Identitäten‘ zu bestimmen, hat entscheidend auch eine mentale Seite der spezifischen Identitätserwartungen.

(2) Diskurse der ‚Identität‘ sind eine Antwort – doch *worauf?* In einer ersten Annäherung ließe sich sagen: Von ‚Identität‘ kann man sinnvollerweise nur und erst dann sprechen, wo es Alternativen, sich selbst und das eigene Zusammenleben zu sehen wie zu erfahren, gäbe, anderes, als sich über vorgestellte fixierte ‚Identitäten‘ zu bestimmen. Oder wo man das Mächtigwerden dieser Alternativen als drohend empfindet.

Natürlich gibt es Kultur- und auch Sprach-Entwicklungen, die wie feindlich wirken; so z.B. genau in dem historisch durch so plurale Regionen gekennzeichneten Europa, wo das vormals durch Flüsse, Wälder, Gebirge und Religionen Separierte immer stärker in Kontakt kommt. Aus dem Zusammenwachsen der (Lebens-) Räume, aus der Mobilität, aus der Verflechtung in übergreifende ökonomische Prozesse – sowie nicht zuletzt aus dem Wissen, den wechselseitigen Informationen – ist oft noch keine entsprechende mentale Gemeinschaftlichkeit, Brüderlichkeit und Solidarität geworden. Das Mentale und die Empfindungen der Menschen hinken bei großen Veränderungen meist erheblich hinterher. Und die innereuropäischen Arbeits-Ströme sowie die globalen Migrationen haben vielerorts die Vertrautheit, nur mit angestammt ‚Gleichen‘ und Zugehörigen zusammenzuleben, in einer zu schnellen Weise belastet.

Unvertrautheiten haben jedoch oft – mit Nähe zur Gegenwart dies auch immer stärker – nicht eigentlich mit einer Bedrohung der ‚Identität‘ durch andere Menschen, eine andere Kultur, andere Mächte zu tun. Sondern sie erwachsen aus dem sozusagen

gemeinsamen *Schicksal der Modernisierung*, der gemeinsamen Verstrickung in die Faktizitäten der Modernisierung. Durch Modernisierungsentwicklungen, ihren übergeordneten Druckaufalles, kommt es auf allen beteiligten Seiten zu einem Bruch in den Selbstverständlichkeiten von Lebensformen und Arbeit, zu einer Erosion der jeweiligen kulturellen Normtraditionen und Bindungen, die nicht schnell genug nachrücken können, zu Spannungen im Verhältnis der Generationen. Dies sind allem voran jeweilige *innere* Verwerfungen der Gesellschaften. Es gibt immer Gruppen – meist die Jüngeren, die Gebildeteren, die Stadtbevölkerung –, die sich den Veränderungen schnell anpassen, ja bezüglich ihres Status nutzen können. Und es gibt immer Regionen, Bevölkerungsgruppen, Tätigkeitsfelder und generationentypische Biographien wie Erfahrungen, für die die Macht (Übermacht) der Veränderungen und ihre kalte Unerbittlichkeit nicht nur reale Einbußen und Deklassierungen bedeuten, sondern stets auch narzisstische Kränkungen – so, als werde einem die Identität genommen. Das Vorgestellte, dass es so kommen könnte, ist hier subjektiv und sozial oft noch wirkungsvoller als das tatsächlich Eintretende.

Diese Ängste vor dem *gesichtslosen* Anderen, Gesichtsloses im Eigenen, sind es, was – sozusagen negativ – heute den Hauptteil des Verlangens nach einer klaren, einfachen ‚Identität‘ und deren Sicherheit speist. Je rigider eine Behauptung der Identität eingefordert wird, desto mehr sind das meist Kompensationen. Es kommt zur Bereitschaft, sich ‚Identitäts‘-*Angebote* zu eigen zu machen und deren Wortführern Gefolgschaft zu leisten. Es erwachsen Projektionen auch innerhalb des bisherigen Zusammenlebens, Projektionen eines auch *inneren* Feindes, der mit den Mächten der Bedrohung paktiere – ein Ruf nach Identitätspolitik der ‚wahren‘ Gemeinschaft, Ruf nach energischen Maßnahmen und ein gärender innerer Kulturkampf, Kulturkampf im Eigenen. Darin werden denn auch Machtkämpfe der ‚Identitäts‘-Propaganda ausgetragen, Kämpfe der Deutungsführerschaft. Und allgemein leben die Menschen unversehens in einem Klima des Drucks der Überidentifikation.

Die Rede von ‚Identität‘, Diskurse über ‚Identität‘ sind dabei gänzlich ohne Selbstreflexion. Sie verschärfen in allem nur die Ängste, statt konkrete Ursachen zu benennen. Sie anonymisieren alles Erfahrene erstrecht. Mit Modernisierungsentwicklungen gibt es offenkundig große – und immer neue – *Integrationsaufgaben*, doch hier sind sie abgelenkt; die Kausalitäten erscheinen als verschoben bzw. umgedreht. *Imaginierte* Furcht und Bedrohung potenziert dann nur *real* erfahrene Kränkungen und die Anforderungen der Veränderung. Gerade in der dynamisierten Moderne werden dadurch Sicherheitserwartungen geschürt, die die Menschen in vormodernen Zeiten so gar nicht hatten; und dies lässt sich oft leicht politisch instrumentalisieren. –

Soweit zunächst die zeitdiagnostische Phänomenalität. Sie führt zur Notwendigkeit eines allgemeineren Blicks und damit auch zum Bezug auf Hegel: auf das, was, in entsprechender weiterführender Rekonstruktion, eventuell von Hegel zu lernen wäre.

Konstruktionen der ‚Identität‘ (Figuren des Denkens in der Verständigung über ‚Identität‘: eine Hegelsche Perspektive)

Das Bewusstsein, welche Probleme das Konzept der ‚Identität‘ birgt, ist im Grunde alt. Mit der Skepsis gegenüber metaphysischen Hypostasierungen hatte die Reflexion der Neuzeit schon früh erkannt, dass der Mensch, sofern er wesenhaft auch durch seine mentale ‚Innenseite‘ und deren Geschehnisse gekennzeichnet ist, eine besondere Form von Identität besitzt, die nicht mit der generellen ontologischen Kategorie gedacht werden kann, nicht in selber Weise wie dinghafte (oder logische) Entitäten. J. Locke hatte in diesem Sinne die Identität eines Menschen an der Kontinuität seines Bewusstseins festgemacht (vgl. Locke 1694, Book II, Chapter XXVII). Jüngste Konzeptionen haben dies dann dahin ausformuliert, dass in Bezug auf Wirklichkeiten des Bewusstseins die Identität etwas relativ Eigenständiges ist gegenüber der physischen Seite als manifest Vorhandenem und dessen Kausalitäten, auch gegenüber der reinen Summe des einzelnen phänomenal Erlebten (bzw. seiner Gewissheiten von Seins-Gegenständlichkeiten wie -Sachverhalten): Die Identität von Mentalem ist *narrativ* verfasst⁵ und folgt durch Praktiken – primär bes. Einsozialisierung – vermittelten Formen, habituell geronnen in Weisen des gelebten Umgehens-mit.

Das 19. Jahrhundert, mit seinen aus der Romantik geborenen Ideen der ‚Nation‘ und von ‚Volk‘, hatte dies bereits auf kollektive Identitäten übertragen, dabei aber substanzialisiert. Das Wahre erschien als der *Wesens*charakter eines Volkes bzw. einer Nation, welches feste, sich selbst empfindende Wesen aus den Ursprüngen entstamme, und gegenüber dem Entwicklung allenfalls negativ die Gefahr des Verlustes sein könne. Wenn seither und heute gesellschaftliche und mentale Probleme eines Zusammenlebens und der politischen Ordnung immer wieder als Probleme der ‚Identität‘ gezeichnet werden, wirkt darin meist irgendwo dieser Geist der Romantik. Die Vorstellungen bleiben im Bann eines Denkens des 19. Jahrhunderts. –

(1) Dies hat freilich nicht allein weltanschauliche oder ideologische Ursachen, Ursachen einer Geistesatmosphäre.⁶ Auch allgemeine strukturelle Arten des Denkens – und im Gefolge Muster der Theoriebildung – bei dem, Fragen der ‚Identität‘ zu thematisieren, spielen dabei eine prägende Rolle, gerade auch unter heutigem Modernisierungsdruck.

Mit dem, was die klassische Tradition der Hegelschen Theorie als die „sittliche“ Weise, „sittliche“ Integration eines Zusammenlebens von Individuen in sozialen und politischen Gemeinschaften expliziert hat – „Sittlichkeit“ als Gemeinsames der normativen Alltäglichkeiten und Verbindendes des Verhaltens, erfahrungsbefestigte wechselseitige Erwartungen und Vertrauen, und zugleich als gelebte *Zusprechung* von entsprechender Subjektivität und Rechten⁷ –, lassen sich erhebliche Felder dessen, was die Fokussierung

5 Vgl. dazu die grundlegenden Erörterungen von Ricœur (Ricoeur 1983-1985; 1990).

6 Zu einer besonderen Konstellation davon in Deutschland und Polen, lehrreich für die sowohl geistigen wie gesellschaftlichen Prozesse, die dabei schon im 19. Jh. Beginnen vgl. Adolphi 2019.

7 Zum konzeptionellen Kontext bei Hegel vgl. Adolphi 2018.

auf ‚Identität‘ in ihrer primären Evidenz so unreflektiert hat bleiben lassen, ja die ganze Sogkraft dieser Diskurse unter Gegebenheiten der Moderne, als Verkehrungen des Denkens in den gesellschaftlichen Verständigungen erkennen. Schon direkt hat Hegel bei der politischen Gemeinschaft des Staates einen der auratischsten Kernbegriffe der ‚Identitäts‘-Diskurse, die Forderung des „Patriotismus“ und seiner Vorordnung vor andere normative Wertkriterien, auf sein nüchternes Maß zurückverwiesen.⁸ Am Eingang des politischen Teils seiner grundlegenden *Rechtsphilosophie* heißt es – fast beiläufig –, dass die Momente, in denen die Bindung an die Nation von großen aufwallenden Emotionen ist, nicht der Standard sind. Vor allem darf sie, wie man das konkretisieren könnte, nicht etwa politisch missbraucht werden für Überheblichkeit und Auftrumpfen gegen andere und Aufforderung zu entsprechenden heroischen Aktionen, oder für die Diskreditierung des bürgerlichen Lebens.⁹ Die wahre („sittliche“) Bindung beweist sich im Alltäglichen des selbstsicheren Habitus, loyal zu den Institutionen zu stehen und andere, ungeachtet von Differenzen, als Menschen und Mitbürger zu behandeln, nicht in der grimmigen oder gar fanatischen Haltung, niederschwellig bereit zur Abgrenzung, Konfrontation, Aggression.¹⁰ Die Einrichtung des politischen Gemeinwesens, sie zuvörderst, muss gut sein – d.h. damit die Bürger ihre Anerkennungen und die Geltung ihrer Rechte erfahren können –, die Einrichtung, nicht ein Pathos der Gesinnung; bei guter Einrichtung ergibt sich die Gesinnung, in ihrem relativ erforderlichen Maße, auf natürliche Weise von alleine.¹¹

Ebenso koppelt Hegel – mit der Konzeption der „Sittlichkeit“ eines politischen Zustands – die Gemeinschaft, die Zugehörigkeit und den Status der Einzelnen, nicht

8 Analoges gälte für ihn erst recht für ethnische und auch religiöse Eigenverabsolutierung, Arroganz, Hochmut, Gefühlsaufwallung der Selbsterhöhung, Fanatismus.

9 Wie zuletzt der Vorstellung vom Krieg als dem ‚Stahlbad‘ der Nation, als in gewissen Zeiträumen lebenserforderlich gegen die Mattigkeit und die pure Privatheit der Zwecke, in die das bürgerliche Leben immer wieder herunterzusinken neige. Bürgerliches Leben hat das Recht auf das Engagement in jeweiligen *besonderen* Interessenhorizonten (und zu entsprechender selbstverständlich-solidarischer gesellschaftlicher Anteilnahme wie Mitwirkung). Und übrigens auch ist das Militärische als ein eigener Berufsstand, die Souveränität gegebenenfalls *nach außen* zu sichern, einzurichten – Militärisches ist für Hegel nicht ins gesellschaftliche Leben hineinzutragen (vgl. Hegel 1821, §§ 322–328). (Hier gibt es freilich zugegebenermaßen Formulierungen, die aus Sicht heutiger Zeit missverständlich wirken können. Doch hat Hegel auch gelernt; extrem noch, nach dem Vorbild Platons, war die Absolutheit des Einheitsganzen und dessen Zwecke in seiner frühen Jenaer Zeit, bes. im *Naturrechtsaufsatz*.)

10 „Die politische *Gesinnung*, der Patriotismus überhaupt, als die in Wahrheit stehende Gewißheit (...) und das zur *Gewohnheit* gewordene Wollen ist nur Resultat der im Staate bestehenden Institutionen, als in welchem die Vernünftigkeit *wirklich* vorhanden ist, so wie sie durch das ihnen gemäße Handeln ihre Betätigung erhält. (...) Unter Patriotismus wird häufig nur die Aufgelegtheit zu *außerordentlichen* Aufopferungen und Handlungen verstanden. Wesentlich aber ist er die Gesinnung, welche in dem gewöhnlichen Zustande und Lebensverhältnisse das Gemeinwesen für die substantielle Grundlage und Zweck zu wissen gewohnt ist. Dieses bei dem gewöhnlichen Lebensgange sich in allen Verhältnissen bewährende Bewußtsein ist es dann, aus dem sich auch [bei begrenzten herausfordernden Anlässen] die Aufgelegtheit zu außergewöhnlicher Anstrengung begründet. Wie aber die Menschen häufig lieber großmütig als rechtlich sind, so überreden sie sich leicht, jenen außerordentlichen Patriotismus zu besitzen, um sich diese wahrhafte Gesinnung zu ersparen oder ihren Mangel zu entschuldigen“ (Hegel 1821, § 268).

11 „Auf die Frage eines Vaters nach der besten Weise, seinen Sohn sittlich zu erziehen, gab ein Pythagoreer (auch anderen [Hegels Handexemplar: „dem Sokrates“]) wird sie in den Mund gelegt) die Antwort: wenn du ihn zum *Bürger eines Staats von guten Gesetzen* machst“ (Hegel 1821, § 153).

an einen hohen Begriff von (nationaler, gar ethnischer, religiöser) ‚Identität‘ o. dgl. Am Beginn der Thematisierung der Rechtsordnung eines Gemeinwesens von Bürgern ist dazu in deutlichen Worten festgehalten: In einem wahrhaften „sittlichen“ Gemeinwesen, gleich wo in der Welt, gilt ein jedes „Ich als *allgemeine* Person (...), worin *Alle* identisch sind. Der Mensch gilt so, weil er Mensch ist, nicht weil er Jude, Katholik, Protestant, Deutscher, Italiener usf. ist“ (Hegel 1821, § 209).¹² Ein jeder ist Rechtsperson und im Sinne der Gesetze des *bürgerlichen* wie des *staatlichen* Rechts ohne Privilegien einzelner Stände (Adel, Patriziat, Kirche, ‚Altbürger‘ in Bezug auf Vorrechte, Jurisdiktion oder Schuldverantwortung) und mit zugestander moralischer Innerlichkeit.

Von diesem Horizont aus muss man denn wohl eingestehen, dass zunächst persönliche Verhältnisse des Hineingeborenwerdens und der ‚familialen‘ Strukturen allenfalls in einer uneigentlichen Bedeutung von einer ‚Identität‘ im Sinne der Diskurse getragen sind. Wie Hegel herausstreicht, beruhen diese Dimensionen – zumindest modern, wo der Holismus des Traditional-Herrschenden und der darin gesetzten Zuschreibungen wie geforderten Fügungen gebrochen ist – nicht auf einer blanken Verschmelzung;¹³ und das Generative vollzieht sich, sofern nicht durch umfassende altpatriarchale Autorität unterworfen, in der Ablösung der Heranwachsenden zur (willentlichen) Bildung eigener persönlicher Verhältnisse und Lebenszusammenschlüsse (vgl. Hegel 1821, § 177), und auch den bestehenden Herkunfts- und familialen Gemeinschaften sei eine Auflösung der Bindung zuzugestehen, wenn die gemeinsamen Lebensverhältnisse oder Gefühle nachhaltig zerrüttet sind (vgl. Hegel 1821, § 176). Persönliche Verhältnisse kraft Hineingeborenwerden, Herkunft und direkt personalen zwischenmenschlichen Gefühlen (in Hegels Begrifflichkeit: „natürliche Sittlichkeit“, „natürlicher sittlicher Geist“) sind eine Gemeinschafts-Einheit, aber nicht eine darüber hinausgehende mystische ‚Identität‘.¹⁴ Dann, die Gemeinschaftsformen der modernen ‚arbeitsteiligen‘ Gesellschaft – Beziehungen und Vernetzungen – bilden erst recht keine qualitative ‚Identität‘ ihres Ganzen („bürgerliche Gesellschaft“), sondern nur die möglichst allseits förderliche Aufrechterhaltung der funktionalen Prozesse. Die Gemeinschaften – Zugehörigkeiten, Werte und Wichtigkeiten – sind innergesellschaftliche Gemeinschaften im Plural, alle Einzelnen in vielfachen, einander überkreuzenden Kreisen stehend.¹⁵ Die Anerkennungen

12 Immer wieder ist selbst in der Neuzeit „der Unterschied zur Ungebühr hervorgehoben worden, und man hat nach Juden und Christen, Engländern und Franzosen gefragt, mehr als nach dem Menschen“ – dem Menschen, worin alle in gleicher Weise Bürger sind, anerkannt und mit Rechten (Hegel 1819/20, 169).

13 Wenn ich in eine schlechte, unverantwortlich schädliche Familie oder Clan-Formen hineingeboren werde, habe ich in der Gesellschaft – durch das Große der Gesellschaft – die Chance der Freiheit, anstatt die Setzungen und Ansprüche meiner Herkunftsgemeinschaft mein Lebtag mit mir tragen zu müssen.

14 Das schließt ‚Identitäts‘-Empfindungen im Sinne der Identität kleinräumiger Regionalitäten nicht aus, ja auch das (unaggressive) Engagement für deren Bewahrung. Aber auch seine Herkunftsregion und deren Eigentümlichkeiten muss man nicht nur lieben.

15 Wie später Georg Simmel dies bildlich ausdrücken sollte. – Hegel, in seiner Zeit, hat die Pluralität noch primär an den Lebens- und Tätigkeitsbereichen der Einzelnen festgemacht, wo sie als Mitglieder ihrer jeweiligen „Korporations“-Gemeinschaft ihre spezifische Anerkennung, Ehre

gelten hier gerade einem Eigensein des Jeweiligen. Schließlich aber auch das politische Ganze, in der Verfasstheit seiner Ordnung, seinen gesinnungsmäßigen Grundlagen – dem Geistig-Substanziellen der habituellen „politischen Gesinnung“ und des Verhaltens als Bürger unter Bürgern, als *citoyen* – und seiner geschichtlichen Dimension, ist eine Verbindung und handelnde Einheit, die nicht umstandslos durch eine ‚Identität‘ im Sinne der Diskurse bestimmt ist, in einer ‚Identität‘ integriert.¹⁶ Hegel hat sich hier implizit den Ideen von ‚Volk‘, ‚Nation‘ und ‚guter alter Ordnung‘ aus der Romantik seiner Zeit entgegengestellt.

(2) Gegenüber den nach Hegel schon in den Prozessen der „Sittlichkeit“ erforderlichen Differenzierungen zeigen sich generelle Diskurse und Forderungen der ‚Identität‘ – und in komplexen Gesellschaften desto mehr – vielmehr in ihrer Rolle als Surrogate von nicht oder noch nicht bzw. nicht mehr adäquaten gelebten Anerkennungen: Surrogate für nicht genügend gelingende, erfahrbare Anerkennungen, die in Entsprechung zu den Verhältnissen und den Anforderungen der Integration wären.¹⁷ Aus der Weise, wie Hegel die Prozesse der „Sittlichkeit“, die Anerkennungen und die Genese der habituellen *citoyen*-Gesinnung bestimmt, könnte man kritisch-weiterführende Argumentationen zu rekonstruieren versuchen.¹⁸ Dies ließe sich zu vier Aspekten der Problemvorsicht gruppieren.

– Mit den Erfordernissen der Neuorientierung nach dem Ende der großen 2-Teilung der Welt, mit den Bedürfnissen, die bisherigen Geschichtswahrheiten und Einordnungen noch einmal neu zur Disposition zu stellen, ergab sich nach den Umbrüchen von 1989/90 in signifikanter Weise eine intensive theoretische Diskussion über ‚Erinnerung‘ und ‚Vergessen‘, und sie hat sich meist auch mit den konkreten Fragen der ‚Identität‘ verbunden.¹⁹ Eine erste Problemvorsicht muss insofern dem Denken von ‚Erinnerung‘ und ‚Vergessen‘ in dieser Hinsicht gelten. Die Theoriereflexionen und überhaupt das Denken dabei orientieren sich weithin am ‚ich erinnere/vergesse ...‘, ‚du erinnerst/

und habituelle Rechtschaffenheit haben sowie darüber auch ihre politische Partizipation (vgl. Hegel 1821, §§ 207, 253 und 308–311).

16 Die Gemeinschaft des politischen Ganzen hat allenfalls ein verfassungsmäßiges institutionelles *Symbol* bzw. eine *symbolische Verkörperung* ihrer Einheits-Souveränität und ihres Wollens, im Staatsoberhaupt (bei Hegel, aus eher pragmatischen Erwägungen: ein erblicher Monarch, konstitutionell eingebunden).

17 Zu einer erforderlichen konkreten Differenzierung in Bezug auf gegenwärtige Aktualisierungen des Konzepts der ‚Anerkennung‘ vgl. die profunden Erörterungen in Kloc-Konkołowicz 2015.

18 Ich verbinde dies mit der Hypothese, dass Hegel unter heutigen Konstellationen den virulenten Diskursen der ‚Identität‘ einen ähnlich ausführlichen Exkurs – ‚Anmerkung‘ – gewidmet hätte wie dem Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche (vgl. Hegel 1821, § 270) oder dem romantischen Konzept von (nichtgesellschaftlicher, antipolitischer) Subjektivität (vgl. Hegel 1821, § 140). In dieser Hinsicht möchte das Nachfolgende gewissermaßen diese bei Hegel selbst nicht vorhandene Anmerkung, deren Gehalt, umreißen.

19 Die Literatur, exponentiell seit den 1990er Jahren, vor allem der Mitte jenes Jahrzehnts angewachsen, ist kaum mehr zu überblicken (für die Breite der Diskussion vgl. nur exemplarisch: Assmann 1992; Haverkamp und Lachmann 1993; Emrich und Smith 1996; Weinrich 1997; Assmann 1999; Ricœur 2000; Welzer 2001; Esposito 2001; Echterhoff und Saar 2002; Goodman-Thau 2005).

vergisst ...' bei Prozessen einer individuellen Lebensvergangenheit. Die im Grunde daran gewonnenen (oder genauer zu sagen: abgelesenen, plausibilisierten) Explikationen werden per Analogie auf kollektive Subjekte und deren Bewusstsein übertragen. Doch ist nicht nur fraglich, wie weit diese Analogisierung überhaupt tragen kann, phänomenal wie strukturell. Vielmehr transportiert dies gemeinhin auch eine sehr starke Implikation, die wohl nur für die individual-lebensvergangenheitliche Repräsentation einer verflochtenen Seinswirklichkeit einigermaßen adäquat gelten kann: die Implikation, dass Erinnern und Vergessen sich weithin *symmetrisch* verhalten, das Erinnerte und das Vergessene materialiter die komplementären Bereiche dessen sind, wie – je zuständig – das Stattgehabte (bzw. subjektiv als so stattgehabt Erlebte) zu einem gegenwärtigen Bewusstsein und dessen Orientierung gehört. Beim Individuum handelt es sich um die eigene normale Kontinuität eines (Erlebens- und Reflexions-) Bewusstseins – wo das wirkliche Vergessen, im Unterschied zum allmählichen Verblässen oder der beständigen Anstrengung der Verdrängung, ohnehin gar nicht so leicht ist.²⁰ Es ist hier zunächst einmal die lebensgeschichtlich zusammengekommene Menge, die sich, dabei in jeweiliger Deutung, in das (aktual) Erinnerte und das Vergessene (d.h. das Abgedrängte oder Abgekoppelte des Bewusstseins) teilt. Bei kollektiven Subjekten hingegen und deren Bewusstsein handelt es sich um das ungleich komplexere Verhältnis der Generationen-Tradierung (sowie des kollektiven Austauschs). Bei allem, wo jener Tradierungsprozess – sowie für dessen Validierung, eventuelle Erweiterung, Differenzierung oder überhaupt Neuerschließungen: materielle, objektiv-dastehende Überbleibsel einer Vergangenheit – die Kette zu einer anderen Quelle denn der Macht der Gegenwart ist, sind das Erinnerte, und was der Bezug darauf bedeutet für die Formung einer ‚Identität‘, nicht die einfache Kehrseite des Vergessenen. In dem, was für kollektive Subjekte sich als ihre geschichtliche ‚Identität‘ darstellt, sind in weit stärkerem Maße, als dies sicher auch für Individuen und ihr Bewusstsein ihrer Lebensvergangenheit zutrifft, alles *Fragmentstücke von Konstruktionen*, sowohl das ‚erinnerte‘ Geschichts-Bild, d.h. die Gestalt, in der Geschichte *präsent* ist, als auch das ganze Feld des ‚Vergessenen‘, Verlorenen, Verdrängten und dessen Faktoren wie Ökonomie. – Sich diesen ersten Aspekt bewusst zu halten ist vor allem deshalb von Bedeutung für die Diskurse der ‚Identität‘, weil in Zeiten von Umbrüchen und Krisen ein auftretendes neues, alternatives Geschichts-Bild, wenn es gut *inszeniert* ist und mit der Behauptung neuer ‚Wahrheiten‘, die bisher unterdrückt bzw. vorenthalten gewesen seien, relativ leicht Anhängerschaft finden kann. Der Glaube, dass einem etwas verheimlicht werde, ist oft leicht zu wecken. Und das kann ‚Identitäts‘-Diskurse, wenn sie nicht schon gesellschaftlich stabil sind, schnell in Polarisierungen treiben.

– Substantialistische („romantische“) Vorstellungen eines ‚Volks‘ (oder ‚Nation‘) und seiner Geschichte – alle Gruppen der Gemeinschaft einheitlich um diese ‚Identität‘ herum

²⁰ Außer bei schweren Traumata, deren Stattgehabtes, real Vorgefallenes (*und* das in der Ursituation Empfundene) dann tatsächlich einer gezielten ‚psychoanalytischen‘ Erschließung bedürfen. – S. Freud erkannte hier die sowohl schützende wie lähmende Genese von „Deckerinnerungen“.

versammelt – lassen übersehen, dass schon im Individuellen man nicht rein aus sich heraus erfassen kann, was einen im Wesenscharakter ausmache. Das gilt erst recht für kollektive Subjekte, insofern dort die verschiedenster Gruppen eines gesellschaftlichen Gefüges und verschiedene sachliche Perspektiven (von privaten Lebensformen bis zur hohen Politik und dem Außenbezug der Gemeinschaft) sicherlich zumindest eine plurale Auffächerung im Verständnis der ‚Identität‘ des Gemeinsamen bedeuten. Substantialistische Vorstellungen zehren von der Suggestivkraft dessen, als könnte man – im Kollektiven bedeutet das: die ‚echten‘ Volksgenossen, deren Sensorium und Urteilssicherheit nicht von ‚Fremdem‘ korrumpiert oder sediert ist – *für sich alleine* bestimmen, wer und was man ist und was der eigene Anteil an Interaktionen mit anderen ist, d.h. mit Nicht-Zugehörigen: als könnte man, rein aus dem Inneren heraus, in eigener Hoheit den Charakter seines Wesens als Subjekt gewahren, könnte ‚wahrheitlich‘ empfinden, wenn ein Schwinden oder Gefahren eintreten – und von *wem* oder was dies verursacht sei –, und überhaupt, dass man allgemein Richter in eigener Sache sein könne. Aber, ‚Identität‘ ist niemals etwas Einheitliches und Klares, weder als jeweiliges gegenwärtiges Leben noch als geschichtliches Eines, und ist auch niemals ein Autochthones. Im Gegenteil ist ‚Identität‘, wenn dies etwas Sinnvolles bedeuten soll, wohl stets hauptsächlich ein dynamisches (und durchaus aufgefächertes) *Ergebnis*, hervorgegangen aus komplexen Prozessen von ‚Identitäts‘-Kämpfen verschiedener Richtungen, aus ‚Identitäts‘-Zuspaltungen durch äußere (oder übergeordnete) Autoritäten bzw. Mächte, und oft auch aus dem, sich eine ‚Identität‘ umzuhängen (oder zu entlehnen) – sich nobilitieren zu wollen, indem man eine eigene ‚Identität‘ ableitet und legitimiert aus einer bekannten anderen mit hohem Prestige.

– Untersuchungen der gesellschaftlichen Mentalitäten und ihrer inneren Verständigungen haben in der jüngsten Zeit die Fruchtbarkeit des Forschungsprogramms der „Erinnerungsorte“ / „lieux de mémoire“ gezeigt: die „Erinnerungsorte“ / „lieux de mémoire“ einer Gesellschaft (einschließlich ihrer subkulturellen Milieus) aufzuarbeiten – deren Pluralität, die ein jeweiliges ganzes Feld bildet.²¹ In den thematischen ‚Identitäts‘-Diskursen jedoch werden die ohnehin problematischen Voraussetzungen ihres Denkens oft durch eine heute ganz neuartige (und durchaus nichtselbstverständliche) gegenteilige Letztentscheidung potenziert. Es ist die Entscheidung, die Konzeption von Erinnerung, Geschichtsbewusstsein und ‚Identität‘ hauptsächlich in Orientierung an dramatischen – und moralisch hoch besetzten – Groß-Begebenheiten zu entwickeln.²² Dies reproduziert etwas in der *Theorie*, was zuvor einmal die Weise von ‚Identitäts‘-Konstruktion aus *Mythen* gewesen war (seien es Mythen in Gestalt von Heroen und Heldentum oder zuweilen auch, genauso funktional, solche von Märtyrertum). – Entstanden ist es als Reflex auf die ganz

21 Wie – um diese beiden Beispiele aus dem Zentrum Europas und seiner Geschichte anzuführen – exemplarisch die Diskussionen in Frankreich und Deutschland solche differenzierenden Thematisierungen angegangen sind (vgl. Nora 1984-1992 sowie François und Schulze 2001).

22 In den neueren Theorien (s. oben Anm. 19) vorzugsweise meist aus dem Bereich *Holocaust*, z.T. auch aus dem Bereich *Stalinismus*.

spezifischen verhängnisvollen Erfahrungen – Groß-Erfahrungen – des 20. Jahrhunderts. Doch es bringt, was immer sonst berechtigte Motivationen dieser Exemplifizierung sein mögen, eine fragwürdige *Dramatisierung* in überhaupt alles Verständnis. Und es verdeckt vor allem tendenziell auch das, was in den *alltäglichen Verhältnissen* mindestens ebenso prägende Charakteristika des jeweiligen kollektiven Bewusstseins und der vertrauten Lebensgestaltung sind. Für alltägliche ‚Identitäten‘ sowie ‚Identitäts‘-Verständigungen – sobald einmal das Stadium mythologisch-religiöser Legitimationen abgelegt ist – ist vielmehr jenes Konzept der spezifischen „Erinnerungsorte“ / „lieux de mémoire“, und die eben sind in jeder Gesellschaft und jeder Kultur ein Zusammenwirken von vielen, evidentermaßen weitaus adäquater. Der Alltag darf, das meinte Hegel auch mit seiner Bemerkung zu einem gesunden nüchternen Patriotismus (s.o.), nicht künstlich überlagert, ja aufgeheizt werden mit Heroismus und Märtyrertum (bzw. ‚Identitäts‘-Erinnerungen daran). Und solche „Erinnerungsorte“ / „lieux de mémoire“, nämlich insofern sie konkret sind, lassen sich auch kritisch reflektieren.²³

– Schließlich noch ein letzter, aber entscheidender Punkt. In der gesellschaftlichen und intellektuellen Rede über ‚Identität‘ wird, und gerade wo es um Probleme der Gegenwart geht, auch meist so generell gesprochen, dass leicht übersehen wird, dass genau *Probleme* nicht durchweg überall sich in gleichem Grad und Dringlichkeit darstellen. In oberen und weiter umfassenden Bereichen zum Beispiel – bei den *Menschenrechts*-Prinzipien der *UN* usw., oder in den Ländern der *Europäischen Union* etwa bei den Instanzen und der Politik dieser Gemeinschaft – hat sich in den Menschen im Allgemeinen etwas ergeben, das eine Art *intellektuelles Bekenntnis* dazu ist; dass darüber Diskurse geführt werden und oft Kompromisse geschlossen werden müssen, ist dort nichts Irritierendes, ja ist durch die Medien öffentlich präsent. Und in den unmittelbaren umgebenden Bereichen, im Regionalen (bes. von Herkunft und Lebenstätigkeit) ist man normalerweise so verwurzelt, dass man *Ambivalenzen zulassen* kann (d.h. sofern nicht abrupte Veränderungen eintreten). Das Problematische liegt dagegen bes. auf gleichsam mittlerer Ebene – bes. schwierig sind ‚Identitäten‘ und ‚Identitäts‘-Erfahrungen auf mittlerer Höhe bzw. Reichweite, wie etwa bei Nationen und historischen Großlandschaften. Diese Einheiten brauchen, und zumal in Krisen, einen hohen *Identifizierungs*-Bedarf; und dort wird dann in der Weise der Rede und Weise der politischen Aktion leicht übersehen – oder sogar absichtsvoll unterdrückt –, dass es in Bezug auf höhere Zugehörigkeiten (und der Prinzipien) wie im Lokaleren bereits flexible Kompetenzen gibt.

Diese vierfachen Reflexionen berücksichtigt, könnte das Thema der ‚Identität‘, als differenziert zu verortendes Begleitphänomen gesellschaftlicher Verständigungs-Prozesse in Phasen großer Affirmationsunsicherheit und Orientierungsbedürfnisse, durchaus auch eine Bedeutung in einer Theorie moderner politischer Ordnungen

²³ Mythen des Autochthonen hingegen stilisieren meist stark die Gründungs-‚Identitäten‘, in Narrationen einer Ursprungs- oder Gründungs-Geschichte. (Da werden dann auch häufig Tatsachen erfunden, Urkunden bzw. Belege gefälscht.)

wie ihrer politischen Bewegungen einnehmen: theorieseitig, nicht nur sozusagen sozialpsychologisch. Das Thema wäre dann zurückgebaut auf einen Kern, worin das Narrative (narrative Konstruktionen) und die durch Praktiken, bes. Einsozialisierung vermittelten Formen ohne blinde heroisierende Affirmation und Überdeckung innergesellschaftlicher (bzw. gruppierungsimmanenter) Probleme wie Aufgaben gedacht werden können.²⁴ Eingebunden in Hegels Konzept der „Sittlichkeit“ und ihrer Differenzierungen, könnte das Thema der ‚Identität‘, seine erscheinende Gestalt und sein Grad, zum Index eines in den Verhältnissen und Institutionen – zeitbedingt verstehbar – unbefriedigten gesellschaftlichen Bewusstseins werden. Ohne Reflexion aber wird es infektiös, und Spielball von Identitätspropaganda und Geschichtspolitik.

Der Halt im Netz der Geschichte (Der Problemdruck der großen Umbrüche)

Geschichte schafft Legitimitäten, schafft Identifikationen, und schafft Ziele. Allgemein: Der Bezug auf Geschichte vermittelt einen Stand der sozialen und kulturellen Integration. Das gilt für ‚normale‘, geregelte Zeiten wie für Zeiten großer Veränderungen und eines davon ausgehenden Problemdrucks. Darum sind entstehende Reflexionen über Erinnerungen, über die Geschichtskultur einer Gemeinschaft, stets Ausdruck eines drohenden Abbrechens der Überlieferungen; oder Ausdruck des Bewusstseins, mit der geschichtlichen Dynamik evtl. nicht mehr Schritt zu halten, so dass die produzierten Wissensbestände und Deutungen tot bleiben oder ins Leere laufen. In Zeiten besonderer Umbrüche werden dabei die Erbschaften der jüngsten Vorgeschichte neu zur Betrachtung und Beurteilung freigegeben.

Die Ereignisse von und seit 1989/90 waren im eminenten Maße ein Auslöser dieser auch mentalen Unruhe und Orientierungsvergewisserungen. In Gesellschaften mit sicherem, langherkommendem gesellschaftlichem Bewusstsein, Bewusstsein ihrer pluralistischen Wirklichkeit – sicher und z.T. auch durch frühere Erfahrungen mit sich selbst aufgeklärt über mögliche Untiefen und Verführungen im Eigenen – kann man die Prozesse begleitet sehen von den genannten theoretischen Verständigungen über das Wesen von ‚Erinnerung‘ und ‚Vergessen‘ und ihre Faktoren der Konstruktion; begleitet zudem meist von einer bezeichnenden Erneuerung der *Gesellschaftstheorie*, eine parallele Debatte über Gesellschaftlichkeit und ihre moderneentsprechenden, nicht nur traditionalistischen Formen. In Gesellschaften aber, in denen das Empfinden herrscht, sich überhaupt von bisherigen Irrwegen, bes. oktroyierten oder verordneten Falschbildern befreien zu müssen und die eigene Geschichte überhaupt erst wieder zu erschließen,

²⁴ In dieser Situierung könnte mit Hegel wohl auch ein – relational – positiver Diskurs der ‚Identität‘ begründet sein: ‚Identität‘ (und Identitätspolitik) als Identitätsfindung – und stärken- des Gruppen-Selbstbewusstsein – von bisher Marginalisiertem oder Verleugnetem *innerhalb* einer Gesellschaft (nationale Minderheiten; von einer Zentralmacht erstickte Regionalitäten; nicht-standardmäßige sexuelle Orientierungen; usw.).

in Souveränität über die eigene Geschichte, werden die Diskurse der ‚Identität‘ meist ungleich schillernder.

Das gilt offenkundig für viele der Gesellschaften der einst sowjetisch beherrschten ganzen Hemisphäre der Welt, die ein vormals durch Ideen von transnationaler ‚sozialistischer‘ Verbrüderungs- und Solidaritätsgemeinschaft dominiertes gesellschaftliches, politisches und geistiges System zu verarbeiten hatten. Je neuer ein postsozialistisches System, je weniger schon gefestigt die demokratische Kultur, je weniger schon pluralitäts- und konflikterfahren, desto entfesselter ist in solchen Ländern oft der Diskurs über ‚Identität‘, ja konstruierte Mythen der Verständigung, und desto mehr ist der Bezug auf Geschichte national aufgeladen. In stark sich wandelnden Gesellschaftsordnungen, und wenn noch keine festen Bestände eines Konsenses über die eigene ‚Identität‘ und ihre Tradition, kommt es zum Kampf um die ‚Wahrheit‘, Kampf um die nationale Deutungshoheit, auch zu Visionen und Versprechungen an das kollektive Wahlvolk-‚Wir‘. Im Erfordernis, nach dem Ende der Über-Geschichte von der Einheit und Gemeinschaft der ‚sozialistischen Bruderstaaten‘ erstmals das eigene gesellschaftliche sowie nationale Sein zu thematisieren – eine eigene ‚Identität‘ und Geschichtsverortung gegen die bisherigen Fremdnarrationen –, verselbständigen sich allzu leicht substanzialistische Projektionen eines nationalen oder ethnischen ‚Wesens‘. Und an den verschiedenen Lagern der ‚Identitäts‘-Angebote wiederum spaltet sich die Gesellschaft, entsolidarisiert sich in sich selbst.

Die Vorstellung von einer autonomen, gar einfachen ‚Identität‘ ist jedoch allemal eine prekäre Ware im mentalen Haushalt von Gesellschaften und ihren Verständigungen. ‚Identitäten‘ sind immer mit bestimmtem Geschichtsbewusstsein verbunden, und was dies Geschichtsbewusstsein von Gesellschaften und Subgruppierungen ausmacht, steht, wo eine erfahrungsbasierte wirkliche Reife und Resilienz gewonnen ist, normalerweise in einem *zwiefachen* Bezug auf Geschichte. Identitäten, als jeweilige ‚Identitäts‘-Konstruktionen, verankern sich nicht nur – und stabilisieren sich – an Geschichtlichem, an historischen Identitäts-‚Wahrheiten‘. Sondern in Reife stehen sie auch in einem gewissen dynamischen Bezug, sich auch auf die zugrundeliegenden geschichtlichen Wissensurteile hin zu überprüfen und sich durch bisher noch nicht bedachte Perspektiven oder noch nicht Verstandenes in Frage stellen zu lassen. In der Moderne seit dem 20. Jahrhundert ist dies oft die aus Selbstbewusstsein erwachsene kritische Arbeit an eigenen Mythen. – Undramatisch gehört das dann normalerweise mit dazu, als Ergänzungen und Erweiterungen, als Differenzierungen und gewisse Korrekturen. In problematische Entwicklungen kommt dies vielmehr, wenn gegen Verunsicherungen, die in Zeiten großer Umbrüche entstehen, neue feste Eindeutigkeiten gezeichnet werden – wenn ‚Identitäts‘-*Bedürfnisse* zum Vorherrschenden werden und wenn eine (offene oder unterschwellige) Erinnerungs-*Politik* betrieben wird.

Tendenzen, dass dabei die negative Seite zum treibenden Faktor wird und imaginierte – und instrumentalisierbare – Furcht und Bedrohung, ohne dies mit der

generellen globalen Modernisierung in Verbindung zu bringen, zum Bestimmenden werden, d.h. mentale Personalisierungen (resp. Re-Personalisierungen) von Verursachern, lassen sich in vielen Ländern beobachten. Aber das macht es nicht besser. Das Faktum des Ubiquitären ist keine Rechtfertigung. – Ein Blick nach nebenan, auf spezifisch die unmittelbaren Nachfolgestaaten der ehemaligen Sowjetunion mag hier abschließend Gefahren wie Perspektiven dieser heute virulenten Dynamik deutlich machen. Diese Länder haben in besonderer Weise eine potenzierende Konstellation. Genauer ist es eine doppelte zusätzliche Problematik. Zum einen ist bei ihnen auch ihr jeweiliges Territorium, und damit der Umfang des unter einer Identität von Gemeinschaftlichkeit zu Befassenden, das eines unter einer vormaligen, nun nicht mehr bestehenden Ratio Geschaffenen: das der *in* der Sowjetunion gebildeten Republiken. Die darin lebenden Menschen sind weder ethnisch noch in den meisten Fällen allgemein kulturell (sowie religiös) homogen; aber alle sind zunächst einmal gleichberechtigte *Bürger* dieser neuen Staaten, bzw. müssen dies bleiben. Sie dürfen nicht durch die jeweilige neue ‚Identität‘ gegeneinander gewertet oder gar polarisiert werden. Zum anderen scheint die Geschichte dort auf den ersten Blick tatsächlich nur eine einzige Richtung, einzige Option als das national und moralisch Notwendige zu weisen. Sicher geht es um ein Rückgängigmachen vormaliger Strukturen, rückgängig gegen die Sowjetifizierung, welche in vielen Phasen der 70 Jahre der sowjetisch dominierten Hemisphäre der Welt dort im besonderen Maße auch die ‚Russifizierung‘ bedeutete. Doch wenn nun eine eigene, neue Identität zur Aufgabe wird, darf nicht der negative Affekt, die *Anti*-Haltung gegen die vorherige Geschichte wiederum jede offene zivilgesellschaftliche Verständigung über das Eigene, die Gegenwart und ihre pluralen Lebensverwurzelungen niederdrücken. Die den Zusammenhalt, die Loyalität und die Orientierung stiftende Identität der Gemeinschaft darf nichts neues Einfaches suchen. Das wäre nur die Wiederholung der Geschichte, einfach unter umgekehrten Vorzeichen.

Beides sind, oft unbewusst, problematische Schatten der Vergangenheit. Doch sind diese Staaten zugleich in einer eigentlich günstigen Lage. Sie können von anderen Ländern lernen, die z.T. bereits früher durch Erfahrungen mit Chancen und Gefahren einer postsozialistischen gesellschaftlichen Orientierung und Identität hindurchgegangen sind (in Europa in den Regionen des ehemaligen Jugoslawiens dramatisch bis hin zum Krieg). Sie können aber vor allem allgemein von den ‚westlichen‘, schon länger demokratisch und pluralistisch verfassten Gesellschaften, für die die Umbrüche von 1989/90 ebenfalls ein Einschnitt in ihren bisherigen Verständigungen und Orientierungen waren, lernen: dass nicht in einem abgehobenen ‚kulturalistischen‘ Raum ein Diskurs über ‚Identität‘ und Geschichtsbewusstsein aufgemacht werden darf, der sich sonst leicht verabsolutiert. Sondern dies muss eingebunden sein in parallele gesellschaftstheoretische und sozialpsychologische Betrachtungen über die betreffenden Bedürfnisse der Versicherung und die konkreten realen Ursachen. Und schließlich kann auch von den in vielen Ländern bereits erreichten Einrichtungen gelernt werden, prägende Geschichtsereignisse nicht nur der historischen Deutung und Bedeutungsgebung im jeweiligen eigenen nationalen

Horizont zu überlassen, sondern in bilateralen, gemeinsamen Kommissionen die wechselseitigen Erinnerungen zusammenzubringen und zu versöhnen – den Blick der Anderen ebenso zu Wort kommen zu lassen, bis in die Schulbücher hinein. Wo man sich diesen Möglichkeiten verschließt, droht allenfalls eine neue 2-Teilung der Welt, nun eine Teilung in der Mentalität von Geschichtsbewusstsein und ‚Identitäts‘-Verständnis; auch eine 2-Teilung *innerhalb* dieser Gesellschaften zwischen Jüngeren und Alten.

Das Bild, das Hegel von der „Sittlichkeit“ eines gesellschaftlichen und staatlichen Zusammenhalts verdeutlichte – auch in Erwartung eines Sichausbreitens über die Welt –, war hier gewissermaßen schon vielem aus unserer heutigen Zeit voraus: Anerkennung des Verschiedenen lernen; nicht überall innere Feinde und ‚Unnationales‘ wähen; nicht vom Krieg und von der Selbstbehauptung unter Bedrohung her denken; und nicht auf verbissene ‚Identitäts‘-Kämpfe auszugehen, die fast stets die einer bestimmten Gruppe, die mit *ihrer* Auslegung, *ihrer* Definition zu Einfluss zu gelangen sucht, sind – und oft auch nur Stellvertreter- oder Ablenkungskämpfe. Doch das scheint manchmal nicht so einfach. In dieser Hinsicht sind wir wahrscheinlich realistischer als Hegel. Realistischer, als Hegel dies bereits sein konnte. ‚Hegelianer*in‘ zu sein muss auch heißen, nicht bei Hegel stehenzubleiben.

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Self-determination and “the Right to Specificity”. Concerning Hegel’s Theory of Modern Freedom

Selbstbestimmung und das „Recht der Besonderheit”. Zu Hegels Theorie der modernen Freiheit



Erzsébet Rózsa

(Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest – Debrecen; rozsa.erszsebet@arts.unideb.hu)

Abstract: In this paper, it will be shown that Hegel’s philosophical thematisation of subjective freedom has given a fundamental contribution to the historical innovation of modernity, which regards not only human rights, but also norms and values. Besides, it played an important role concerning the cultural transformation, i.e., the process of the realization of the historical innovation oriented towards the ideals of modern freedom. To show this, the author will focus on some passages from Hegel’s Philosophy of Right of 1820, in which Hegel regarded subjective freedom as universally-normative and, at the same time, as socially and historically contextualized (situated, respectively). Hegel, namely, explicates modern freedom in its ideality and moral normativity, addressing its realization in particular forms of life. Marriage, for instance, as it will be shown towards the end of this contribution, exemplified as the right to particularity, is the normative basis of modern subjective freedom. Tensions and collisions will permanently challenge this type of freedom and also require permanent (and self-defeating) efforts invested in striving for a (too contextualized and situated) „reconciliation“ (in Hegel’s terms *Versöhnung*).

Keywords: Hegel; subjectivity; freedom; self-determination; modernity; the right to specificity; morality.

Einleitende Bemerkungen

Im Folgenden wird am Leitideal von Hegels Theorie der Moderne, an der „subjektiven Freiheit“ „eines jeden“ aufgezeigt, dass die große historische Innovation der Moderne und ihre kulturelle Transformation nicht nur in einer ‚historisch orientierten soziologischen‘ Rekonstruktion der Genealogie der Menschenrechte eine plausible Klärung und angemessene Darstellung erhalten können, was Hans Joas ins Zentrum seiner Theorie stellt, und nämlich im *Sakralität einer Person* (Joas 2011). Auch die *philosophische* Thematisierung der Freiheit bei Hegel ist als ein beachtenswerter Beitrag zu dieser Innovation aufzufassen. Bevor auf diese Problematik eingegangen wird, einige Passagen

aus Hegels *Rechtsphilosophie* (1820) mit dem Fokus auf die „subjektive Freiheit“:

Das Recht der *Besonderheit* des Subjekts sich befriedigt zu finden, oder, was dasselbe ist, das Recht der *subjektiven Freiheit* macht den Wende- und Mittelpunkt in dem Unterschiede des *Altertums* und der *modernen Zeit* (Hegel 1820, § 142, Anm.).

Daß dies Moment der *Besonderheit* des Handelnden in der Handlung enthalten und ausgeführt ist, macht die *subjektive Freiheit* in ihrer konkreten Bestimmung aus, das *Recht des Subjekts*, in der Handlung seine *Befriedigung* zu finden (Hegel 1820, § 121).

(...) die Subjektivität in ihrer umfassenden Besonderheit ist selbst das Dasein der Freiheit (Hegel 1820, § 128).

I.1 Historische Innovation

Unter historischer Innovation der Moderne kann man nicht nur die Innovation der Menschenrechte verstehen, wie es Hans Joas behauptet. In der historischen Innovation der modernen Freiheit geht es auch um weitere *Ideale, Normen und Werte* wie Autonomie (etwa nach Kant) bzw. Selbstbestimmung (etwa nach Hegel) als zentrale Aspekte des umfassenden Begriffs der modernen Freiheit.¹

I.2 Kulturelle Transformation

Kulturelle Transformation ist der *verwirklichende Prozess* jener historischen Innovation, der an Idealen der modernen Freiheit orientiert ist. In diesem Prozess entwickelt, rezipiert oder importiert eine Gesellschaft soziokulturelle Inhalte, die meistens höhere normative Geltungsansprüche haben als die bisher gültigen, kodifizierten und kanonisierten Inhalte hatten. Im Transformationsprozess bilden sich neue, dem neuen Ideal mehr oder weniger angemessene politische, rechtliche und kulturelle Institutionen, Verhaltensweisen, Handlungstypen, Gesinnungen, Gewohnheiten usw. aus. Fraglich ist immer, inwieweit die Institutionalisierung mit Idealen und Normen (ggf. der subjektiven Freiheit eines jeden) in verschiedenen *Subjekten* (Individuen und Gemeinschaften, Verlierer und Gewinner usw.) und in ihren *Lebenswelten bzw. Verhaltensweisen harmoniert*

¹ Die Idealbildung hat ihre Wurzeln in unserer aktiv-tätigen Natur. Wir müssen „unser Handeln als Streben zu Idealen interpretieren (...) und es als solches auf den Erfolg dieses Strebens hin bewerten,“ so Joas (2011, 173) im Anschluss an Charles Taylor. Joas beschreibt die Natur des Ideals folgenderweise: „Diese Idealen werden nicht gewählt oder beschlossen. Für sie ist vielmehr (...) ein Gefühl der subjektiven Evidenz bei affektiver Intensität typisch. Nicht Begründungen sind bei intensiven Wertbildungen konstitutiv, sondern Erfahrungen“ (Joas 2011, 163). Hegel verweist in Bezug auf die subjektive oder moralische Freiheit auf gleiche Kennzeichnungen: „(...) die sittlichen wie die religiösen Bestimmungen sollen nicht nur als äußerliche Gesetze und Vorschriften einer Autorität den Anspruch an ihn machen, von ihm befolgt zu werden, sondern in seinem Herzen, Gesinnung, Gewissen, Einsicht usf. ihre Zustimmung, Anerkennung oder selbst Begründung haben“ (Hegel 1830, § 503 Anm., 312 f.).

oder eben neue Konflikte generiert.

Im folgenden wird die historische Innovation der modernen Freiheit an einigen Grundzügen von Hegels Konzept untersucht. Dabei wird von ihren kulturellen Transformationen, die Hegel auch thematisiert hat, abgesehen.

II. Freiheit als innovative Motivationsstruktur

Hegel, der in Joas Augen keine historische Innovation kannte,² hat m. E. nach einen bis heute inspirierenden, philosophisch-systematisch ausgearbeiteten Idealtyp der historischen Innovation der modernen Freiheit ausgearbeitet.

Im objektiven Geist hat er zwei Aspekte der Freiheit hervorgehoben: 1. Freiheit als Befreiung und 2. „Bildung zur Freiheit“. Die *Befreiung* ist die umfassende normative Motivation, die auch auf diejenige *historische Innovation* auszudehnen ist, die im Ideal der Freiheit eine gemeinsame, bindende und zusammenführende Bedeutung für *einen jeden als das allgemeinste Subjekt der modernen Freiheit* hat. Die *Freiheit zur Bildung* ist eher ein reflexiv-theoretischer Aspekt, der sowohl dem Bewusstwerden der jeweiligen praktischen Motivation und Situation im Blick auf die vorliegende Innovation als auch ihrer *kulturellen Transformationen* dient, und zwar in verschiedenen Formen und Medien der Gesamtkultur.³ Befreiung und Freiheit zur Bildung stellen zusammen eine *innovative Motivationsstruktur* für den grundlegenden sozialen Wandel in die Moderne dar.

Die „subjektive Freiheit“ als Leitideal der Moderne hat Hegel einerseits universell-normativ aufgefasst, andererseits historisch, kulturell und sozial kontextuiert gedeutet⁴, d.h. *partikular* im Sinne von Joas verstanden. Denke man daran, dass die Freiheit die *umfassendste historische Innovation* bei Hegel in dem Sinne ist, dass ihre Entfaltung von Platon über das Christentum, das römische Recht, die Reformation und die Aufklärung bis zur Hegels gegenwärtigen deutschen Philosophie reicht. Zweieinhalbtausend Jahre europäischer Geschichte sind als Fortschritt in der Freiheit aufzufassen – im Sinne der

2 Bei Hegel mangle es an „Reflexion auf das Verhältnis historischer Teleologie und unantizipierbarer historischer Innovation“, so rekapituliert Joas Ernst Troeltsch' Kritik an Hegel (vgl. Joas 2011, 160 f.).

3 Hegel hat in diesem Zusammenhang auf folgende kulturelle Medien verwiesen: Liebe, das Romantische, Moralität, Gewissen, bürgerliche Gesellschaft, Momente der politischen Verfassung (vgl. Hegel 1820, § 124 Anm., 233).

4 Hegel hat die kulturelle Transformation von Leitidealen wie z.B. der modernen Freiheit mit der Beschreibung der Grundzüge der jeweiligen Situation der vorliegenden Kultur eng verbunden. Die soziale Kontextuierung von Leitidealen ist bei ihm ein konstitutives Strukturmoment der kulturellen Transformation. Auch in diesem Zusammenhang stellt sich heraus, dass der Geist bei Hegel in seiner Mehrdimensionalität (vgl. Tillich 1962, 79) zu verstehen ist, die mit der linearen Struktur von subjektivem, objektivem und absolutem Geist nicht identisch ist. Die jeweilige Gegenwart und Wirklichkeit eines „Volksgeistes“ oder „Zeitgeistes“ sind ebenso von besonderer Bedeutung für die jeweilige kulturelle Transformation eines Ideals, die auch als „situiertes Geist“ (Derrida) aufzufassen ist.

Ausdehnung der Befreiung auf einen jeden und der Bildung zur Freiheit als innovativer Motivationsstruktur der sozialen, politischen und lebensweltlichen Veränderungen, die sich dann in Institutionen, Normen, Aktivitäten und Welten der modernen gesellschaftlichen und Lebensform herauskristallisiert wurden/werden.

In diesem komplexen Interpretationshorizont sind *weitere Aspekte und Komponenten des modernen Freiheitsgedanken* zu erkennen, mit denen Hegel zum „Projekt der Moderne“ wesentlich beigetragen hat.

III. Hegels subjektive (moderne) Freiheit im Spannungsfeld von Moralität und Sittlichkeit

Diese subjektive oder moralische Freiheit ist es vornehmlich, welche im europäischen Sinne Freiheit heißt (Hegel 1830, § 503, Anm., 312.f.).

Die Schwerpunkte von Hegels Problematisierung der modernen Freiheit sind in dem Moralitätskapitel und in der Sittlichkeit der *Rechtsphilosophie* von 1820 zu finden. Die im Motto vorangeschickten Zitate aus diesem Werk sind Schlüsseltexte für die Erläuterung von Hegels Kerngedanken zur modernen Freiheit. Im Umfeld der Moralität und der Sittlichkeit hat er die *moralische Idealität bzw. Normativität* wie auch die *Praktikabilität* der Freiheit thematisiert, die wesentliche Aspekte der gesamten historischen Innovation der modernen Freiheit überhaupt, und nicht nur der Menschenrechte ausmachen.

III.1 „Prinzip“, „Idee“, „Recht“ der „unendlich subjektiven Freiheit“: Idealität und Normativität von Aktivitäten und moderner Lebensform

„Prinzip“, „Idee“, „Recht“ der subjektiven Freiheit sind jene Begriffe in der Moralität, in denen Hegel die moderne Freiheit in ihrer *Idealität und (moralischer) Normativität* expliziert. Dabei hat er hier auch ihre *Realisierbarkeit* als Überführung von Normen in das „Dasein“ („Leben“) qua Vorformen der (sittlichen) Lebenswelt angesprochen. In diesem Begriffskreis tritt das höchste Prinzip der Moderne, das „Prinzip der unendlich subjektiven Freiheit“ ein. Es handelt sich um jene Freiheit, die Hegel *einem jeden als umfassendsten Subjekt* in der Moderne zugeschrieben hat.

In diesem Zusammenhang verweist er auf jene tiefgreifende und umfassende Kennzeichnung der Moderne, die sich *in dem subjektiven Charakter* der modernen Freiheit zeigt⁵. Dies beinhaltet *ab ovo* etwas ambivalentes: Hegel hebt einerseits die Zufälligkeit, Willkür und Beliebigkeit der Freiheit aus⁶, andererseits das „*Höhere im Menschen*“ als

⁵ Der subjektive Charakter der modernen Freiheit wurzelt sich im handlungstheoretischen Zusammenhang in der *Zufälligkeit*, die die willentlichen Aktivitäten überhaupt kennzeichnet. Diesen handlungstheoretischen Aspekt verfolgen wir in folgender Ausführung nicht.

⁶ Unmittelbar an die Selbstbestimmung anknüpfend, spricht Hegel im § 104 die *Zufälligkeit des Willens* an. (Hegel 1820, 199). Die Probleme um die Zufälligkeit von willentlichen Akten, die Hegel an vielen Stellen immer wieder anspricht, hat er versucht eben in Bezug auf die Besonderheit als

Möglichkeit seiner *eigenen (Selbst)bestimmung* bzw. deren äusserordenliche Bedeutung für das Dasein als Existenz des modernen Menschen. Diese *Ambivalenz* ist und bleibt eine grundlegende Kennzeichnung der modernen Freiheit, die sich in der Lebensführung und Lebenswelt von jeweiligen Individuen weiter spezifiziert, konkretisiert, oder mit Hegel ausgedrückt: *gesondert* oder *besondert*.⁷

Der ambivalente Charakter der modernen Freiheit ist ein Aspekt der historischen Innovation der Moderne, auf den Hegel ein großes Gewicht gelegt hat. Er ist erkennbar in der „*schwankenden Haltung*“ von Individuen, die das Bedürfnis nach Stabilität der modernen Existenz und Lebenswelt erweckt. So entwickelt Hegel eine Theorie der Normativität und Praktikabilität von an Freiheit orientierten Aktivitäten und habituellen Einstellungen, die eben der Stabilisierung und Konsolidierung der Lebensführung und Lebenswelt durch Aufzeigen eines Instrumentariums für das Minimalisieren von Ambivalenzen dienen soll (zur Versöhnung als empfohlene, umfassende und habituelle Einstellung bei Hegel siehe Rózsa [1997]).

Wie die Begriffe von Prinzip, Idee und Recht an sich schon zeigen, hat die „unendlich subjektive Freiheit“ eine starke Normativität *mit euphoristischen Zügen*, die dann sozial dynamisierende und individuell motivierende Auswirkungen auf Aktivitäten von (individuellen und gemeinschaftlichen) Subjekten in der modernen gesellschaftlichen Lebensform erwecken können. Hegel zielt ab, eine in diesem Sinne normative Grundlegung für die moderne Freiheit auszuarbeiten, die dann für Aktivitäten von Individuen und Gemeinschaften *praktisch-effiziente Orientierungspunkte in ihrem wirklichen Leben* anbieten können.

III.2 Selbstbestimmung und Besonderheit: Spezifizierung, Konkretisierung und Kontextuierung des Prinzips der subjektiven Freiheit

Die *für sich* unendliche Subjektivität der Freiheit macht das Prinzip des moralischen Standpunktes aus (Hegel 1820, § 104).

Der *moralische Standpunkt* hat sein eigenes Prinzip in der subjektiven oder modernen Freiheit. Dementsprechend hat dieses Prinzip seinen eigenen systematischen Ort in der Moralität. In der Sphäre der Moralität *bezieht sich die Subjektivität* 1. als allgemeine und 2. als besondere Individualität *auf sich selbst*. In dieser doppelten Selbst-Beziehung des Subjekts der Freiheit differenziert sich die *Selbstbestimmung* als systematisch-begriffliche

logische Figur zu lösen. So wird die *Besonderheit* zu jener logischen Figur, die bei Hegel dem Zweck dient, die *Zufälligkeit* in eine auch theoretisch stabilere Gestalt zu transformieren um auch ihre praktische Realisierung auf einen stabileren Boden bauen zu können. Eben dieser Aspekt wird in der vorliegenden Ausführung vor Augen gehalten.

⁷ Den Begriff der Spezifizierung habe ich vom M. Walzer übernommen (vgl. Walzer 1990, 30–35). Die Spezifizierung ist auch eine Art der Distanzierung zur ratiolanen Leztbegründung, die ja auch Hegel betont. Er hat die Spezifizierung in seiner Denkfigur „Besonderung“ bzw. „Besonderheit“ ausgearbeitet, die für die Thematik der modernen Freiheit eine angemessene Zugangsweise anbietet.

Spezifizierung, sich verwirklichende *Konkretisierung* und soziale Kontextuierung des Prinzips der modernen Freiheit.

Der erste Aspekt der Selbstbeziehung ist ein allgemeiner (Selbstbestimmung der Subjektivität überhaupt), der zweite hingegen ist ein spezifischer: das moderne Individuum als ein jedes hat das *Recht auf seine eigene Bestimmung*, auf seine eigene Art des Lebens, das heißt: auf *Besonderheit* seines Daseins und seiner Lebenswelt überhaupt.

In dieser *doppelten (allgemein-begrifflichen, ideal-normativen und besonderen-verwirklichenden) Dimension* der Selbstbestimmung verweist Hegel auf die logische Figur von *Einzelheit, Besonderheit und Allgemeinheit*. Damit verbindet er die Sphäre der Moralität auch mit der Logik, und nicht nur mit der Sittlichkeit. Nun heben wir jedoch die Verbindung der Moralität mit der Sittlichkeit als zentraler Sphäre des objektiv-praktischen Geistes hervor, der der eigentliche Ort der *Verwirklichung* der Selbstbestimmung ist. Uns interessiert *hier und jetzt* nicht die logisch-begriffliche, theoretische Verankerung der Freiheitsproblematik an sich, sondern vielmehr Hegels Überlegungen über die *Realisierbarkeit der modernen Freiheit* – auch in Bezug auf die Idealität und moralische Normativität dieses Ideals. Es ist jedoch vor Augen zu halten, dass er auch die komplette logische Figur von Einzelheit, Besonderheit und Allgemeinheit für die Erläuterung der zwei Dimensionen der Selbstbestimmung verwendet. Er verbindet in der Selbstbestimmung die prinzipielle Realisierbarkeit mit der konkreten Verwirklichung der Idee der Freiheit. Der sich entfaltende Prozess der Selbstbestimmung *ist eben jene „Besonderung“, die die Verwirklichung und deren Ergebnis, die Wirklichkeit der Freiheit darstellen*. Die Besonderung als inhaltliche Konkretisierung der Selbstbestimmung in der jeweiligen eigenen Lebenswelt und im Rahmen des sittlichen Lebens als Umwelt ist eben der 'situierter Geist' (wie Derrida und auch Habermas es formulieren). Diese Kontextuierung im Spannungsfeld von Moralität und Sittlichkeit wird zwar auch durch die vorliegende logische Figur, jedoch mit der Akzentuierung *der Besonderheit* dargestellt.

In den Sphären des *wirklichen Lebens* realisiert sich das Ideal der modernen Freiheit dadurch, dass sich die jeweiligen, besonderen Inhalte des Lebens eines jeden durch *normativ geleitete Selbstbestimmungsakte* entfalten und Anerkennung von anderen als *soziale Kontextuierung und Bestätigung der vollzogenen Selbstbestimmungsakte* gewinnen. Auf diese Weise verbindet sich das zunächst allgemeine Dasein oder Leben („der allgemeinen Subjektivität“) mit der eigenen, selbstbestimmten, auch von anderen bestätigten, *besonderen Lebenswelt* („der besonderen Individualität“) eines jeden und wird zur „konkreten Allgemeinheit“ (qua Einheit der allgemeinen Subjektivität und der besonderen Individualität in ihrer „besonderen Existenz“). Durch die auf diese Weise erreichte „Konkretheit“ (qua komplexere Einheit) eines Lebens als „besonderer Existenz“ (Lebenswelt) sind jene besonderen Inhalte nicht mehr als willkürlich oder beliebig zu betrachten, sondern als *wesentliche* Kennzeichnungen und *strukturelle* Komponenten,

die sich eben in der jeweiligen Spezifizierung und geistiger Situierung als „Besonderung“ des jeweiligen Lebens entfalten (vgl. Siep 2020, Quante 2011, Rorty 1996, Walzer 1990, Tillich 1962).⁸ Hegels Verknüpfung der normativen und der praktikablen Aspekte der *Selbstbestimmung* mit der logischen Figur der *Besonderheit* spielt hierfür eine Schlüsselrolle.

Die Selbstbestimmung speist jedoch nicht nur aus Idealität, Normativität und Praktikabilität der Sphären des Geistes oder aus Logizität des Denkens. Sie steht in enger Verbindung auch mit Phänomenen des *einfachen Lebens*. Das Leben fängt unmittelbar nicht im höheren, moralischen oder sittlich-geistigen, sondern (auch) im *natürlich geprägten Leben* an. Um sich am Leben zu halten, muss *ein jeder* imstande sein, seine eigenen *Begierde* als Benötigung qua ein starkes Lebensmotiv erkennen und befriedigen zu können und zu wollen.

Am Standpunkt der Moralität geht es aber weder um diese Benötigung als zwingende Kennzeichnung noch um konkrete Befriedigungsakte, sondern nur um die *prinzipiell-ideelle Möglichkeit* und die *normative Ausrichtung der Befriedigung* der Begierden. Die Befriedigung selbst ist hier in ihrer *Normativität* aufgefasst: sie wird eben als *Recht* bestimmt. Das *Recht der Befriedigung* akzentuiert die *konkretere normative Seite und Stärke der aufzuzeigenden und eröffnenden Befriedigungsmöglichkeit*. Das „Recht an Befriedigung“ ist dementsprechend vom geistigen und keinesfalls natürlichen Charakter. Sein geistiger Charakter ist auch darin zu erkennen, dass dieses Recht keinem und nie entzogen werden kann.⁹

Die *konkreten Befriedigungsakte* werden hingegen im „System der Bedürfnisse“, in der soziokulturellen und Lebenswelt der Sittlichkeit innerhalb des objektiven Geistes erörtert, wo die Praktikabilität der Selbstbestimmung in dem Vordergrund steht und auch

⁸ Der Geist ist hier als moralischer und soziokulturell kontextuierter Geist zu verstehen, die die Sphären des objektiven Geistes sind. Dabei ist es auch zu betonen, dass der Geist nicht nur für Hegels Konzept über die Philosophie des Geistes von besonderer Bedeutung ist. Er stellt den umfassendsten Begriff des Systems überhaupt dar. Diese Einsicht ist aber nicht nur aus der Perspektive des absoluten Geistes zu entfalten, sondern auch im Rahmen des objektiven Geistes. Darüber hinaus sind Wesenszüge des Geistes wie Selbsterkenntnis und Freiheit sind auch für Hegels Logik von besonderer Bedeutung. In Kürze hat Oehl die eminente Bedeutung des umfassenden Begriffs des Geistes in seiner Hegel-Deutung ausgeführt, und zwar in der kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem amerikanischen Pragmatismus, insbesondere mit John McDowells Thesen. Oehl hat überzeugend aufgezeigt, dass der Geist auch in Hegels Epistemologie und Metaphysik eine zentrale Rolle spielt (vgl. Oehl 2021, 1–25).

⁹ Es stellt sich heraus: in der langen und immer noch andauernden Diskussion um die Freiheit versus Glück hat Hegel die Freiheit bevorzugt, ohne aber das Glück oder die Glückseligkeit zu ignorieren. Die Begierde und ihre Befriedigung hat er in seine Konzeption der modernen Freiheit eingebunden. Aber nicht die Befriedigung an sich ist interessant für seine philosophische Reflexion, sondern das „Recht“ auf Befriedigung und dessen Verbindung mit dem Recht auf Besonderheit der Lebensführung eines jeden. Nicht die Begierde und deren Befriedigung an sich sind philosophisch interessant, sondern ihre moralische Legitimierung und normativ unterstützte Einbindung in die selbstbestimmte Lebensform.

die natürlichen Aspekte der Befriedigung berücksichtigt werden. Eben in dem sittlichen, soziokulturell „sitierten Geist“ entwickelt sich die jeweilige konkrete Besonderheit als eine *grundlegende, inhaltliche und wertorientierte/orientierende* Bestimmung des auch natürlich beeinflussten Lebens eines jeden (vgl. Hegel 1820, § 104, Anm. 198). So entfaltet sich das Leben eines jeden im sozialen Kontext, im situierten Geist und im Spannungsfeld von auch natürlich motivierten und geistig (inhaltlich und wertorientiert) geprägten, bestimmten Dimensionen der menschlichen Lebensform unter „modernen Voraussetzungen“ (Hegel 1821, 3–29).

Es hat sich Folgendes herausgestellt: die „besondere Individualität“ als in ihre Lebenswelt und Umwelt verflochtene Individualität und nicht die allgemeine (abstrakt-logische) Subjektivität hat das „*Recht*“ auf die jeweilige Selbstbestimmung. Dieses Recht als grundlegender moralisch-normativer Aspekt der modernen Freiheit bereitet die Überführung von abstrakten Aspekten der Freiheit (Ideal, Prinzip) in die sozial kontextuierten Sphären der Sittlichkeit, in denen sich die Realisierungsmöglichkeiten und die Instrumenten dazu eröffnen. Die Verwirklichung dieses Rechts eines jeden findet im Spannungsfeld der eigenen, selbstbestimmten Lebenswelt und der unmittelbaren sozialen Umwelt – im geistig situierten, dennoch je-eigenen, besonderen, auch von Natur mitbeeinflussten Leben.

Die (*allgemeine oder reine*) *Subjektivität* ist qua Repräsentant von *Prinzip und Idee* der modernen Freiheit. Die *konkreten Subjekten* sind hingegen Einzelnen und Gemeinschaften, die von ihren jeweiligen besonderen Wünschen, Begierden, ihren eigenen Vorstellungen über ihr eigenes Leben bzw. über die Verwirklichung ihren Vorstellungen und Befriedigung ihrer eigenen Begierde und Wünsche geprägt und bestimmt werden. So wurzelt sich die *normativ-moralische und sittliche* Grundlegung dieses *komplexen Prozesses* der Selbstbestimmung einerseits im *Recht auf Besonderheit*, andererseits in der *Geltungbringung dieses Rechts*. In diesem Zusammenhang fügt Hegel hinzu: es hat sich damit für die Freiheit „ein höherer Boden“ bestimmt; „an der Idee“ ist jetzt die „Seite der Existenz oder ihr reales Moment“ erkennbar. Auf diesem Boden kann die Freiheit *konkret und wirklich* werden, betont er.¹⁰

Das „Recht an Besonderheit“ ermöglicht das Dasein der Freiheit in der realen Lebenswelt eines jeden. Hegel verweist hier auf die Freiheit als *Herausforderung für einen jeden*, die darin besteht, seine eigene Freiheit erkennen, einschätzen und realisieren zu können und zu wollen. Und zwar im jeweiligen Kontext, im sozialen Gefüge des sittlichen Lebens. Moralisch selbstbestimmtes Leben und sozial-sittlich kontextuiertes Leben sind untrennbare Seiten des Lebens eines jeden, die in der Geistigkeit des Menschseins ihre

¹⁰ „Es hat sich damit für die Freiheit ein höherer Boden bestimmt; an der Idee ist jetzt die Seite der *Existenz* oder ihr reales Moment, die Subjektivität des Willens. Nur im Willen, als subjektivem, kann die Freiheit oder der an sich seiende Wille wirklich sein“ (Hegel 1820, § 106, 204).

gemeinsame Grundlage haben.

Diese Zusammenführung der allgemeinen (abstrakt-logischen bzw. ideellen) Subjektivität und der besonderen (sich konkretisierenden, verwirklichenden) Individualität im Spannungsfeld von normativ-moralischer Selbstbestimmung und dem sozial kontextuierten, sittlich-geistigen Leben ist für Hegels *philosophische Theorie der modernen Freiheit* von ausgezeichneter Bedeutung. In dieser Zusammenführung zeigt sich auch die *komplexere Struktur der Selbstbestimmung als grundlegender Aspekt des sich spezifizierenden, besondernden, situierten (objektiven) Geistes*.

Diese Überlegungen zum Prinzip der Freiheit und zu ihrem Leitbegriff der Selbstbestimmung bringen offensichtlich eine vielfache inhaltliche Bereicherung des Ideals der modernen Freiheit zum Ausdruck. In der „Besonderheit“ und „Besonderung“ als inhaltlicher Spezifizierung und Konkretisierung des Lebens eines jeden qua Geltungbringung des Rechts auf selbstbestimmte Lebensführung entfaltet Hegel seine komplexe, logisch-natürlich-geistige Denkfigur als Kerngedanken der modernen Freiheit.

Abschließend sei ein Beispiel aus der Sittlichkeit in Erinnerung gerufen, in dem Hegel die konkreten Auswirkungen des Rechts auf Besonderheit und der Selbstbestimmung auf die Gestaltung des eigenen Lebens thematisierte.

IV. Ausblick

Die Wichtigkeit der Anerkennung des „*Rechts an Besonderheit*“ als *normativer Grundlage der modernen, subjektiven Freiheit* erweist sich exemplarisch in der Entscheidung über die Eheschließung, die nur die zwei betroffenen, autonomen Individuen, und keinesfalls die Eltern treffen können. Die Betonung der Bedeutung der *eigenen Entscheidung und gleichzeitig der sittlichen Verantwortung* der Ehepartner dient dem Zusammenhalt und der Stabilisierung dieser sozialen Form unter den Umständen, die – man denke an seine Konzeption der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft – nicht mehr stabil sind.¹¹

Er betont die Wichtigkeit der „freien Einwilligung der Personen“, in der Ehe „eine Person auszumachen“. Die freie, vernünftige, verantwortungsvolle Entscheidung über die Eheschließung ist eine Art Garantie gegen „nur subjektive Gesinnung“, „gegen die besondere Neigung der beiden Personen“, „gegen die natürliche Neigung“ und „Beliebigkeit der Liebe“, die die Stabilität der Familie zerstören können. Das Sittlich-Normative der Moderne liegt in der bewussten Entscheidung und in der gegenseitigen Selbstbeschränkung der Personen. Sodann ist die wohl überlegte Eheschließung eine besondere Art der Selbstbestimmung, in der ich mich frei entscheiden können soll

¹¹ „Subjektivitätsproblematik und Identitätsprobleme in Hegels Rechtsphilosophie: systematische Überlegungen und das Beispiel des Mannes“ (Rózsa 2007b, 103–120).

und mich an die Entscheidung zu halten habe. Aus diesem Grund hat Hegel abgelehnt, dass Eltern über die Ehe der Kinder entscheiden. In solchen Fällen werden das Recht der Selbstbestimmung sowie die Identifizierung mit der eigenen Entscheidung verletzt. Dergestalt wird die freie Entscheidung als Manifestation der modernen subjektiven Freiheit in die sittlich-institutionellen Strukturen der Ehe integriert.

Hegel war im Grunde genommen gegen die Scheidung. Aber das Recht an Besonderheit, der Respekt vor den Rechten von Individuen und dessen Zuerkennung auch der Frau erklären, warum Hegel schon in dem zweiten Paragraphen des Familienkapitels über die Ehescheidung nachdenkt (zu dieser Problematik vgl. Rózsa 2007a, 103–120). Wenn die Familienmitglieder „in ihrer Gesinnung und Wirklichkeit“ zu „selbstständigen Personen“ werden, so Hegel, dann ist die Ehescheidung möglich. Er spricht hier um das „Recht der bestimmten Einzelheit“.

Gerade durch das theoretisch anspruchsvolle und mit Realitätssinn durchgeführte Thematisieren von den kurz signalisierten Spannungsstrukturen im modernen Leben ist Hegel eigentlich immer noch aktuell: man kämpft auch heute lebenslang mit konträren „Prinzipien“ und Ambivalenzen der modernen Freiheit, die kaum zu lösen, höchstens in Grenzen zu halten sind.

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Hegel and the Spiritual Evolution of Absolute Subject



Ivo Minkov

(South-West University Neofit Rilski, Blagoevgrad; iminkov@swu.bg)

ORCID: 0000-0002-5326-7433

Abstract: The article interprets the methodological potential of Hegel's speculative dialectics as a possible course of spiritual evolution of the Absolute subject. The intention is towards the method, first through the very construction of the "idea of freedom" from the point of view of Logic; second, through the constitutive function of freedom and the transition of the subjective spirit into the objective spirit; third, through the unfolding of mediation in the realms of the objective spirit. This essentially substantial methodologization dissolves the theoretical space of the idea of the mediating function of freedom as an ontological principle of ethical life. In line with the paradigm of such a course, the text considers a project of speculative ethics, a project within the framework of which the methodological and ontological sublation of spiritual evolution takes place.

Keywords: History of philosophy; ethics; methodologization; mediation; spiritual evolution; Absolute Subject.

Introduction

In Hegel's philosophy freedom [*Freiheit*] is an absolute definition of spirit. In the process of attaining freedom, the Absolute Subject ascends to the *Supreme Being*, enters into a relation with the *Other* by removing its own and his determination (sublation, in German *Aufheben*, of the mediation), and as a result merges not with the Other, but with the sublated Other, with *Himself*. Thus the Absolute Subject arises speculatively-dialectically, freely, substantiates in itself both the subjective definite thought and the objective definite thought. Against extreme subjectivism, to which absolute subjectivism can often be attached, it must be said that it is he who does not realize the necessity of his dialecticism, because through it he makes a breakthrough in his own extreme, breaks it and reveals objectivity to him. This spirit, however, is typical of the Absolute subject and lies in the free immanent self-production, in which the immediate opposition between subject and object is removed in the return of the common to itself as a whole (as specifically within itself), where in the generated universal the peculiarity is also understood in an objectivity, where all definitions are sublated.

This is the spiritual work of the Absolute subject. The becoming of his consciousness and the exhausting work in the field of pure speculative philosophy, in logic, intertwine with each other, as a common spiritual movement in which there is no primacy of one over the other, but the necessity of both positions their unity and differences prevails. Hegel shows the path of freedom, first through *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the rise of consciousness, as a condition for entering science and logic. The study focuses on the justification of the ethical course of spiritual evolution through the prism of the logical, on the clear explication of the equal importance of “logic” and “ethical life” [*Sittlichkeit*] in the formation of the Absolute Subject, while suggesting the mutual mediation of logic and ethical life. In this way the research explains the reverse path, which after the education in speculative logic and metaphysics, a more general and complete notion of ethical life is achieved, in general the ethical acquires another form and another meaning, it is transformed and regenerated, ascending spiritually man in his evolutionary process. But these opposite paths, by virtue of Hegel’s absolute method of knowledge, are in fact identical in content, identical in the doubly mediating and fundamental force, which by an identical method for the two paths (of becoming logic and ethical life) is sublated ontologically in spirit.

I. Constructing the “Idea of Freedom” from Logic (Freedom as a Speculative-Logical Result)

Construction is understood as a purely philosophical, that is, speculative exposition of the crystallization of the concept of freedom from Logic. This constitutes the immanent course of the very concept of freedom, its necessary development. And when freedom is often accepted only as the subject of practical philosophy, as the essence of the will, it must become clear that this does not mean looking only for the origin of freedom in this practical, in the external¹. On the contrary, the ascent to the universality of thought, to the true knowledge of the definitions of thought beyond perception in intuition and representation, is now manifested as necessary also in regard to ethics and ethical life. The concept of freedom and its self-determination and self-realization embodies the totality, the very “idea of freedom”. It rises and draws from pure speculative philosophy; moreover, it is also its principle, its absolute basis. The use of this method of cognition as an immanent self-realization of freedom rises from the complete abstractness of logical definitions to the more concrete side of ethical categories. As with formal logic, which is studied first in school, and then education is directed to other sciences, the basis of which is the previous one, so a similar need is manifested in the study of speculative logic. The

¹ In his study, V. Duplancic examines the typicality and position of the “idea of freedom” in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, clearly emphasizing from the very beginning that it is not a “patrimony” of practical reason, but rather plays a decisive role in configuring a *System of Science*. Freedom is not just one of the characteristics of the Absolute, but its very nature “par excellence” (Duplancic 2006, 21).

latter, however, is not studied in the middle course, but on the contrary, we turn to it only after certain knowledge in other areas of knowledge, i.e., on the way back to formal logic, to a return from the special sciences to logic. In the universality of speculative logic then the riches of the peculiarity are discovered and neither the extremeness of the subjective thinking nor the objective concept of things constitute the truth separately, and the connection of the two parties, the mediating connection – freedom².

Thinking is the realm of freedom. In speculative logic there are no instinctive actions, feelings, sensations. There everything is guided by the tireless course of the concept, of the spirit, which means freedom; a free self-conscious action, detached from self-subjective immediacy and devoted to an objectivity that is not external, but rather immanent objectivity. The comprehension of such objectivity as the self-knowing freedom that has returned to itself is the real reality. The purification of the instinctive impulses from the realm of the logical contributes to its elevation, to the animating of the spirit. Thus, as a pure sphere of intellect, logic contributes to the possibility of pushing the idea of a new *speculative-ethical project* in which to demonstrate the ethical potential of the Absolute subject, its elevation to freedom and truth [*Wahrheit*], its spiritual evolution.

With the implementation of the *content* in logic, a theoretical space for placing freedom as a speculative-logical result is revealed. With speculative logic Hegel puts again the beginning of the real consideration of things, of *the concept of things*. In the whole circle of logical priority there is the concept, which is both a result and an absolute basis. The concept is *in-it-self* (this is its formal side), but it is also a *certain* concept, i.e., it is filled with *content*, or rather, it is the very content of thinking. The intra-plastic philosophical methodology in the speculative logic explicates the strict course of thinking, its necessary development, in which it has the highest freedom, complete independence. The deduction of the categories from themselves is a direction given by Fichte, but which Hegel leads to the end in his logic and which determines the real side of freedom, the consideration of things *for themselves*. The nature of the concept as self-determination has the special side of giving itself content and thus reality³. At this level, the essence of the Absolute Subject,

2 The American researcher and philosopher A. Wood points out the essential difference in the concepts of freedom, in I. Kant and J. G. Fichte on the one hand and, in Hegel, on the other. Hegel presents Kant and Fichte's views on distinction (Otherness), as completely wrong, as "escape strategy", "self-withdrawal". Kant and Fichte make a sharp distinction between the rational "I" and everything "external", "empirical". Hegel thinks of the necessary connection of the two sides, the necessity of distinction and its overcoming by the subject, making the other his own, entering into it and conquering it (Wood 1990, 44–45). Wood also shows the specific technical (operational) term that Hegel uses in defining absolute freedom, of absolute one's own activity: "To be free in this special way means to be *bei sich selbst*", "with oneself". In ordinary German *bei sich* has to main meanings when applied to a person: it means to be awake, conscious, and to have control over oneself. Freedom like *Beisichselbstsein* refers to human abilities for self-confidence and self-awareness, for self-improvement, but it also has a richer meaning. The original meaning of the German *bei* is related to the expression of spatial proximity, contact or belonging (cf.). This is the "idea of freedom" as the involvement of the Absolute subject, its intertwining in social relations, its awareness in its own imprint in the world-historical process, the awareness of the necessary connection of all and everything, with the sole purpose of spiritual evolution.

3 In this strong unity of the concept is unlocked the harmony, the necessary connection between *concept* and *reality*. R. Pippin points out that this is an "extraordinary connection", "not just

Hegel's concept and conception of the "idea" in general, as a unity of subjective and objective, begin to overflow. The "idea", according to the German philosopher, is abstract, but also concrete, such as

(...) the free concept, the concept determining itself and thereby determining itself as reality. It would be something formally abstract only if the concept that is its principle were taken as the abstract unity and not as it is, namely, as the *negative return of it into itself* and as *subjectivity* (Hegel 2010a, 283).

Here this already become subjectivity differs essentially from the ordinary conception of it as coincidence and arbitrariness. Absolute subjectivity is true reality; it has a being as a *spirit*. Its work (activity) is the free production, the speculative-dialectical course of mental definitions in their necessary development as a system. Its sole purpose is truth, understood as the conformity of objectivity with the concept: "These objects [*Gegenstände*] are *true* if they are what they *should* be, that is to say, if their reality corresponds to their concept" (Hegel 2010a, 284). Hegel sees the "idea" not as something abducted, but rather as the most real, it is not something beyond, distant, but fully present. In this sense freedom as an "idea" is a constitutive principle in logic (as in the whole philosophical system of Hegel), but also a result, and its own result. It is something immediate, but also something, above all, mediated. In such unity the "idea of freedom" is peculiar; it has its own typicality. It differs both from a self-substantiality and from a one-sided subjectivity and crystallizes as the "Absolute idea" existing *in-it-self* and *for-it-self*.

The unity of the Absolute Subject should be preserved in this direction of taking away oneself in the one-sidedness of the two positions in themselves. The speculative-dialectical method embodies analytical and synthetic relations simultaneously. Such is the philosophical attitude, which must preserve the activity of the concept itself and beware of arbitrary ideas and special opinions, which, as Hegel says, "always want to manifest". The philosophical method is not an external form that sets the content in motion, but appears as the soul of that content; the concept itself. Therefore the research is centered on the analysis of the method, of the own immanent self-development of the concept, which reaches the form of the forms, to the "Absolute form", in which all its definitions return and thus represents a systematic totality. Throughout of the course of *The Science of Logic*, in the development of logical categories, where the deepest mental strain is required, the nature of freedom is evident. Usually arbitrariness and opinion are perceived as attributes of freedom⁴, but it is with them that the subject is not with himself. Hegel sees arbitrariness as a choice which operates with a reflection that abstracts from everything and is dependent on a particular content or matter (Hegel 2005, XXXVIII). In speculative logic, however, there is no room for arbitrariness and mere subjective whims;

harmony", but "complete penetration" (*vollkommene Durchdringung*), quoting a paragraph from the *Philosophy of Right* (Pippin 2000, 184).

⁴ Hegel writes: "Ordinary man believes that he is free, when he is allowed to act capriciously, but precisely in caprice is it inherent that he is not free" (Hegel 2005, XXXIX).

everything there is permeated by the relentless course of the concept, where the Absolute Subject is with itself, and is a free spirit.

The definition of the Absolute Subject, as a form of attitude towards oneself, includes being a free spirit in oneself⁵. The becoming of the Absolute Subject in itself gradually breaks the shell of the substantial and at the same time raises it to self-consciousness. The Absolute Subject operates with simple negativity, it is its essence, the mediation of becoming another for oneself with oneself. This is the form of subjective spirit in Hegel, the first side of the *Philosophy of Spirit* and the first requirement in general in the process of snatching from the immediacy of substantial life. The speculative-dialectical course results in a form of the spirit that returns (and at the same time approaches its evolution) to the phenomenological side and focuses on three fundamental relations – to the *Supreme Being*, to the *Other* and to *Oneself*, to pave the way to a possible speculative ethics. As an attitude towards oneself, this form, in turn, is, apart from the unity of the first two relations and thus their result and truth, also the beginning of the indirectly immediate form of a subjective spirit, of a free spirit in itself, which has the inner dialectical urge to do it for oneself, and to focus on the existence of the spirit *in* oneself and *for* oneself. This is the ethics of the present form of the spirit, methodologically justified and laid down by mediation in logic. What matters is the spiritual evolution itself. Speculative logic affirms the retreat into the supersensible world of thought and concept. The principle foundation of the methodological perspective, as a meaningful methodologizing, which is necessarily self-directed thinking, becomes the essence, the constitution of the Absolute Subject. It is the methodological basis of the transition from logic to ethical life and vice versa, knowledge that has basis in itself. This is the view of the Absolute Subject towards himself, which holds and comprehends the possibility⁶ and the attempt to build his own ethics of

5 The Absolute Subject is in its become immediacy and must walk the path to the absolute form of subjectivity, which has in principle the logical and ethical spirit and which has in itself the real world. This last form of absolute subjectivity stands against ordinary finite, divisive reasoning, on the one hand, and immediate knowledge, on the other. Extracting the positive from the two popular forms of knowledge and removing the reactionary elements, the Absolute Subject is centered in the speculative, withdraws from the advancing necessity, from the concept that embodies freedom, and with its help directs himself to knowledge of himself and his own evolution. Because the spiritual evolution of the Absolute Subject is the realization of itself, that it reaches the knowledge of itself. Hegel's words are so relevant today:

Besides, it is not difficult to see that ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era. Spirit has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and imagined, and is of a mind to submerge it in the past, and in the labour of its own transformation. (...) The onset of the new spirit is the product of a widespread upheaval in various forms of culture, the prize at the end of a complicated, tortuous path and of just as variegated and strenuous an effort. It is the whole which, having traversed its content in time and space, has returned into itself, and is the resultant *simple Notion* of the whole (Hegel 1977, 6–7).

6 Hegel speaks of the abstract, immediate reality of the spirit, naturalness. But such naturalness must be overcome by the way of spiritualizing, an etherialization (Toynbee's idea for *Progress*) of man. Therefore, the possible course of the Absolute Subject is an ethical course aimed at one's own spiritual growth and is substantiated by logic, by the concept. Building a path for the Absolute Subject to speculative ethics is possible because it is based on the concept and aims to become reality through the attainment of spiritual evolution. Speculative ethics can be principled

a speculative order. All this determines the formation of the typological characteristics of spiritual evolution, explicates its essence and way to achievement.

From here, the article focuses on the problem of how this subjective, free-spirited spirit breaks away from naturalness, brings itself into *being for itself*, and creates its own world in which freedom has being as an available necessity. This real world is known as the objective spirit, the elements of freedom, its derivatives, and the explicit nature of the Absolute Subject in all the richness of its evolving form.

II. The Constituent Function of Freedom. An Attempt at a Peculiar Topology

The constituent function of freedom is postulated through the movement forward of development, through the constant becoming and perfection of the Absolute Subject and its forms. According to Hegel, the “idea of freedom”, its mediating and constitutive function, is necessarily in the philosophical consideration. In the strictly theoretical and speculative-dialectical course of the research, the objective spirit in which one enters is an adequate expression of the necessary series of certain concepts. The abstract subjective spirit is filled in this movement of development forward, forming the objective and investing it in itself, and, conversely, subjectivity becomes objectivity. He now enters the phenomenological sphere, where the mediated unity of consciousness and self-consciousness points the way to the actual realization of the spirit, to the general transition from subjective to objective, to true reason.

The dialectical movement of the concept (spirit) requires the attitude of the Absolute Subject, as such *in-it-self* and *for-it-self*. Contrary to the philosophies of Kant and Fichte, consciousness is directed to its own perfection, not through anything else, but through itself. The attitude to something else is only a step, a necessary stage of spiritual evolution, it is not something incomprehensible, which remains an infinite impetus, but is inserted into the whole process of mediating oneself with oneself. Therefore the spiritual evolution of the Absolute Subject lies in the whole, rational relation, in which subjective confidence rises to truth, resolving its own initial contradiction, escapes from the abstract way of understanding and goes to the concrete nature of things, to the *understanding of things in their concepts*. Thus, through the essence of the concept of spirit, the subject achieves *in himself* and *for himself* evolution, self-improvement. It is a basis and self-movement, self-development, but at the same times a goal and thus a true result. These dialectical circles explicate the nature of the “speculative” in Hegel, they are all-encompassing and their totality arouses the urge to define, to know, to be uncompromising with regard to the claims about the limits of human knowledge. This Hegelian spirit, the spirit of the concept,

as real, and at the same time the ontological achievement of ethical life in general takes place. Finally, all these paths are conditioned and acquire meaning through the “idea of freedom” and its fundamental, mediating function of a constitutive nature.

is also a starting point in the transition to objectivity. He dictates the general course of the degrees of subjectivity and objectivity, of their interrelation in the transitions, emphasizing a special analogy. The raising of subjective confidence to truth takes place through the forms of *consciousness*, *self-consciousness* and *reason*. The elevation of objectivity to its truth takes place through the forms of *law*, *morality* and *ethical life*. Here the meaningful methodological transition, from *Phenomenology of Spirit* to *Philosophy of Right* (which takes place through Logic), is really significant.

The forms of the subjective spirit are not simply sewn to those of the objective spirit. Significant is the insight for the application of the entire speculative-dialectical activity of the concept, from the subjectivity, in the certain forms of objectivity. The course of consciousness to reason is woven as a methodology in each of the forms of the objective spirit separately, in law, in morality, and in ethical life, thus achieving a kind of systematic topology of freedom, expressing the peculiarity of its derivatives.

In order to grasp a systematic topology of freedom, it is necessary, *first*, to establish the nature of the will; *second*, to make law as something internal to the Absolute Subject as morality; and *third*, to reveal law and morality as a universal ethical spirit. The topological characteristic of law pushes the metaphysical position of legal ideas and presents a broader and deeper view of law – speculative-dialectical. Hegel acknowledged Montesquieu's merit in the systematics of law, albeit mainly in a historical sense. The French thinker understands legislation and its characteristics, not in an abstract way, but rather as a dependent element of the totality, connecting it with the other elements that form the mentality of a nation and an era. It is really important for Hegel that such a comparative-historical approach coincides with the development of legal ideas from the concept. In *Philosophy of Right*, the German philosopher cites the textbook of Hugo *Lehrbuch der Geschichte des römischen Rechts (Textbook of the History of Roman Law)* (Hegel 2005, XXVII–XXIX) as an example of the lack of speculative, logical procedure. G. von Hugo (1764-1844), the author of this work acts only within the known ordinary, only reflective and divisive reason and does not reach the constitutive speculative notion of law, in general the truly rational thread in legal matter.

The place of law is in spirituality, in particular in the will, which is free. The constituent function of freedom establishes the substantial, essential characteristics of the will. Hegel explains freedom of the will with reference to nature, emphasizing that freedom is as fundamental to the will as the weight of the bodies: "Will without freedom is an empty word, and freedom becomes actual only as will, as subject" (Hegel 2005, XXIX). A similar analogy is observed between thinking and the will: "The will is a special way of thinking; it is thought translating itself into reality" (Hegel 2005, XXX). And their difference is only as it is in between theoretical and practical in general, i.e., such a difference has its place in the speculative-dialectical course of the concept, but finally it is also removed and unfolded to the higher, to unity. Thus, the nature of the will is best clarified precisely in its connection with thinking and the theoretical.

In the transition from law [*Das Abstracte Recht*] to morality [*Moralität*], Hegel approaches with internal intention and, in this sense content methodological. The notion of morality that is approached is not required externally, but is built internally in the process of becoming law. The German philosopher treats law and its necessary interconnectedness with morality in a completely new, heuristic way⁷. If law is the abstract definition of the will, then morality is its negation, the transfer inward to itself, its own attitude. This is the middle term in the way of defining the will, in its stages of construction and development. But, in fact, both sides are one-sided, and morality also falls into mere abstraction, into abstract negation. Only in ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*], law and morality do they discover their truth, where the will, as a concept, and will, as individual and subjective, stand in a powerful unity.

In the speculative-dialectical course, *the concept of recognition* stands out, through which the personal right of the subject and the right of the other subjects are given meaning. This is presented in the movement of “property”, in the stages of its development, first, as an immediate *act* of possession; second, as the *use* of possession; third, as a waiver of that possession (*relinquishment*). This development of “property” results in the need for *contractual relations* between the subjects, where the unity of each particular will is established in a universal will⁸. In the “contract”, an entity owns “property” within the meaning of the universal will. The logical course of the concept is manifested as it passes from the singular and the finite and develops by virtue of its very nature, into something universal. A very important aspect of the “contract” is that each of the two parties does not simply take the opposite position to the other. This has to do with the concept and lies beyond the formal contract and the simple stipulation. On the contrary, each of the parties fulfills obligations under both lines of the agreement, while maintaining its own. Dialectics is self-generating, alive, it is an exchange between the two sides of the “contract”, between two wills. The dialectical nature of the “contract” manifests itself as an analogy of the relationship between “property” and “possession”, between the substantial side and appearance. The universal and individual wills differ, have and retain their originality,

⁷ Some authors understand Hegel’s legal theory from a natural law paradigm, emphasizing the distinctive alternative that presents his view of how most natural law theories are traditionally conceived. According to them, Hegel builds an entirely new way of thinking about the relationship between law and morality (Brooks 2017). Strictly philosophically, however, it must be said that Hegel developed a clear distinction between law and subjective will. The internal approach to the transition from law to morality makes sense because of the ambiguity of the term “natural law” pointed out by the German philosopher, namely whether it is present in a directly natural way or is thought as determined by the nature of the object, i.e., by the concept. The first conception has been developed by a whole galaxy of thinkers, from Grotius to Savigny, and the second, which follows the relentless course of the concept, now requires restriction of freedom, a self-determination of the will and sacrifice of naturalness. Therefore, Hegel cannot be defined as a representative of the natural law paradigm in the ordinary understanding of the expression “natural condition,” but only insofar as this expression contains the meaning of the nature of the object, the origin of the concept.

⁸ Hegel points out: “This reference of will to will is the true and peculiar ground on which freedom is realized” (Hegel 2005, 23).

but at the same time they stand in unity. The universal will resist in the agreement, and the individual – in the fulfillment of the obligations under the contract.

Another specific aspect of the “contract”, which has to do with the nature of the concept and the peculiar topology of freedom, is the essence of its rational treatment, its typology, which is derived not from external circumstances but from distinctions that are included in its true, dialectical nature. These are the differences between a *formal* and a *real* “contract”, between “property” and “possession”, and so on, which in turn lead immanently to a deeper difference – the fully realized difference, not only sublated and overcome, but developed, from this extreme and subjective side, the special will, which differs from the universal and becomes *non-legal* [*Unrecht*]. And Hegel points to the very high need for this transition to non-law, from the point of view of logic. Because the course, the dialectic of law requires, or rather represents the non-law, the special and accidental will, which opposes the law itself. On the one hand, this particular will is aimed at denying the concept of recognition, which is essential for law as such. He separates himself from it by observing only its formal part and disregarding its true value, its content. On the other hand, further in the definition of the will (as non-right) it is declared against the formal and substantive side of the recognition, and hence of the law in general, and it becomes a *violent-evil* will – a “crime” (Hegel 2005, 30). All these definitions of the will require the existence of the judicial system that regulates the relations of the many different special wills and this is a necessary part of the topology of freedom, of its actual development and realization in a state or civic community. The need to punish crimes for the purpose of retribution and justice for the injured party, in order to discipline the special will, is a huge section of law – *criminal law*. The essence and meaning of criminal law is to deny the negation of the right caused by the violent-evil will. The negation of negation, as a basic principle in speculative logic, is applied in the legal system, giving rise to the actual appearance, the application of *justice* [*Gerechtigkeit*]⁹. As Wood rightly points out, all this corresponds directly to Hegel’s metaphysics, where one thing presents its truth and reality, when it is able to endure otherness and contradiction, and then to return to itself from its own opposite (Wood 1990, 110).

The speculative-dialectical course of the will passes in the transition from law to morality and more concrete in the specifics of the latter. The resulting form of freedom, of the will as a right, is, so to speak, the external side, which aims at the regulation of human

⁹ In his major work *The Theory of Justice* (1925) where a critical analysis of *the concept of justice* was made, the German philosopher of law R. Stammler pointed out that the intention of the right to realize justice was not the result of any external circumstances, is not its secondary nature, but rather is given by the very concept of the law and the purpose of the institution representing it – *the court*. That is why Stammler argues that every right, every law is essentially an attempt to enforce justice (Stammler 1925, 21–25). Stammler’s philosophy of law is critical because he was influenced by Kant and neo-Kantianism (Stammler was friends with P. Natorp, one of the co-founders of the Marburg School). He transformed legal philosophy by shifting its focus from the simple equating of morality to simple abstract rules, to the relation of morality to the problem of justice, in the administration of law in specific cases. Stammler rejects the historical and analytical approach, considering them insufficient, and turns to a critical content methodology attempting to introduce a new “critical jurisprudence” (Sabine 1933, 322–232; 350).

behavior from the outside. Morality is the internal form through which the concept of will (freedom) continues its development and further definition in order to result in the unity of the two forms, which determines the constitutive nature of freedom. The immanent course of law is based on the dialectical nature present in the legal system¹⁰. The first and immediate form of abstract law should be sublated and overcome, as is the movement of categories in speculative logic, and the next stage in the realization of the will is expressed in its involvement in the opposition of the abstract universal and independent particular. This opposition is again removed, through the negation of negation, and the will actualizes itself as a real freedom that already has the potential to relate itself to itself. Hegel writes: “The subjectivity which is its own object is infinite, and freedom in its infinite subjectivity constitutes the principle of morality” (Hegel 2005, 40). Or, as in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, self-consciousness is the truth of consciousness, which has evolved to the point of relating to itself, the object of study is itself. The concept of freedom progresses from abstract law to the degree of a self-determining and self-relating subject.

The special role of the concept of morality in Hegel’s system is indisputable. It has its own evolution, which is necessarily linked to the development of Hegel’s speculative, systematic thinking. There is a difference between the concept of morality in the early and later periods of its philosophical maturation. In his earliest manuscripts, from Tübingen (1793) and Bern (1794-1796), Hegel addressed problems primarily on religious themes and the history of religion. In Frankfurt (1796-1800) theological pursuits continued, even deepening, going beyond morality through the teachings of Jesus Christ. And if in the two previous periods of Hegel’s philosophical growth there was an attitude, especially to Kant and the *second Critique*, then in Jena (1801-1806) “Along with the construction of the speculative system, Hegel’s views on morality continued to develop mainly in response to Fichte’s ethical writings written during his own Jena period (1794-1799)” (Wood 1990, 131). In all periods of his development, however, Hegel always has in himself a common, holistic view of morality as a one-sided part of ethical life. This is evident, again, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where a contradiction grows between the “systematic superiority of ethical life” and the “historical superiority of morality” (Wood 1990, 133). Hegel’s Jena manuscripts lay the groundwork for asserting and affirming the thesis that morality is a positive, albeit, limited form of ethical life. Morality is the ethical life of the modern bourgeois world, the subjective moral freedom, in the European sense of the word.

In the speculative-dialectical determination of the will, the course of subjectivity to

¹⁰ There are two fundamental paradigms in jurisprudence – “natural law” and “positive law”. The first binds law and morality; the second, on the contrary, does not unite, but separates law and legislation from morality and ethics. Legal positivism, as a result of the logical positivism in which it finds its philosophical rationale, seems to be the more widespread view of law in general, in the twentieth century. The main idea is to promote the notion of “pure theory of law”, beyond morality and politics, as “pure science of law” (jurisprudence) (Kelsen 2005). In the 21st century, however, the trend seems to be changing and more and more talk, and above all, to demand morality in politics, law and the judiciary.

objectivity is paved. The subjective will have an impulse to turn to objectivity by virtue of the deep principle clearly unfolded in its fullness in Hegel's speculative logic. This is a principle of the identity of internal and external, which is applied to morality, arguing that what is the will "from within" must be judged by its external actions: "The subject is the series of his acts. If these are a series of worthless productions, the subjectivity of the will is also worthless; if the acts are substantial and sound, so likewise is the inner will of the individual" (Hegel 2005, 52). Law immanently gives rise to subjectivity. Morality, free subjective will, in turn requires objectivity, the construction of a whole, the existence of an absolute will. The limitation, the extreme of morality, manifests itself in two aspects, as the abstract, unrealized good, and as the abstract subjectivity. These are the specific elements in which freedom receives its development, differentiates the degrees and intensity of its metaphysical position and constitutive function. The philosophical consideration of freedom establishes the need for such a totality, of a complete process, from the point of view of law, towards the point of view of morality, the result of which is ethical life, the unified spirit, which is at the same time the basis of the first two. Absolute will, which is becoming a subject only now, as a universal ethical spirit, contains all the previous elements, not only as an objective spirit and topological spheres of freedom, but also as a speculative-logical and dialectical course of mediation. The logical basis paves the way for the ethical and makes an attempt to elevate the latter to the level of a specific, concrete science. The interplay of the "logical" and the "ethical" opens up the possibility of spiritual evolution, and the Absolute Subject uses philosophical treatment to achieve this goal. In scientific philosophy, which is beyond arbitrary beliefs and simple sensations and relies solely on the concept, one can trace the development of the concept of freedom, which means the overall formation of absolute subjectivity, its spiritual evolution and its own ethics. Therefore, the whole course of research is directed to this development of the concept of freedom from the "logical" and its phenomenological prerequisites, to the "ethical" and typological characteristics of spiritual evolution in general.

Next, the mutilation of ethical life without freedom should be shown first (in order to further support the strength of its constituent function); second, to reveal mediation as an ontological principle in general; and, third, to demonstrate the mediating function of freedom as an ontological principle of ethical life.

III. The Mediating Function of Freedom as an Ontological Principle of Ethical Life

The concept of freedom develops and unfolds both to the external reality and the essence of self-consciousness. Only through the concept of freedom and its meaning are known the phases of ethical life, its system and the relationship of the elements. This derivation of ethical life, from the point of view of freedom, the showing of the insolvency of the former in the absence of the latter, refutes the immediate conception of unnecessary

evidence in the ethical sphere. On the contrary, the necessity of such evidence and the strictly scientific treatment of ethical issues as an essential aspect of the speculative, of the philosophical in general are affirmed. Freedom is a springboard for ethical substance and evolution of its elements. Thanks to it (as a speculative-logical result) the ethical person, the Absolute Subject has the potential to be spiritually uplifted, immanent and necessary transformed, setting the course of identical change in the laws and constitution of his state, its institutions.

The essence and the meaningful interpretation of the “law” [*Gesetz*] set the parameters and the potential of the Absolute Subject, an ethical person filled with the power of free thought and substantial life. As a logical category, the “law” is considered in the system of categories of essence, in the transition to necessity, as the latter is revealed as a characteristic of the law. In the field of ethical life the main type of law is preserved and passed methodologically. The theory of *duty*, which as undeveloped by philosophical, i.e., speculative point of view, as found in Kant and Fichte, based on the principle of moral subjectivity, is unsatisfactory. On the contrary, Hegel presents a new *concept of duty*, which is developed in terms of its own content and its logical formulation as the development of relations that are necessary in the sense of freedom and are in fact in their entirety real (Hegel 2005, 78). This is found only in the state, where the laws find their full expression and are a real explication of freedom.

In the development of the ethical thought of the late Hegel (from *Philosophy of Right*), ethical life is speculatively and in principle nurtured by freedom, “reconciling” in Wood’s apt expression (Wood 1993, 216–217). Aristotle’s traditional ethical theory with Kant’s and Fichte’s emphasis on personal freedom (in an abstract sense). Hegel of Berlin puts a different meaning into ethical life, unlike Frankfurt and Jena, focusing on the construction of a complete system of ethical life, as relations and mediations of its elements, of its immanent speculative-dialectical self-realization. The self-development of the concept of freedom is the only basis and instrument that gives ethical life, a *real* life and fullness, because freedom makes itself objective and thus real. Therefore, the personality becomes ethical, the subject becomes absolute, only when the spirit of freedom does not stand only in its reflective and finite-subjective form, but is considered and realized simultaneously from its objective side. As a whole, as a system, in the relations of subjective and objective ethical life acquires its new form, of a single spirit and organic unity, the self-created freedom, so powerful as to claim the most general regularity and ontological principle. Thus, the true understanding of the category of “law” determines the transition to such general laws and further strengthens the justification of mediation as an ontological principle in general.

The speculative-dialectical treatment of the law conducts its systematics beyond the claims of perfection, on the one hand, and insolvency and arbitrariness, on the other. The basis of law should be sought only in thinking, in the spiritual. Only in this way the law is constituted and substantiated, and is *valid* and *known*. Free thinking has its

constitutive function to lead to universality a specific feature, and its mediating function to remove the uniqueness in the community. This united result is the spirit of the laws, the spirit of the state and of a nation. The need for laws arises from the *system of wants* (*needs*) and the regulation of relations to achieve human wants through *labour*. It is also conditioned by the application of the law to the relations in the civic community related to “property,” the “contract,” to the ethical and economic relations, as well as to the own internal needs, arising from justice and the state¹¹. The unity of the individual feature and the legal universality is also manifested in the law¹². The universality of law represents the state, and the individual feature – the individual citizen. In the law as known by the citizen the mediation between the latter and the state takes place. The state as a self-developing whole and self-conscious ethical substance, also knows the law and the community of law. In the development of its moments and, mainly through the essential principle – the “basic law” – the “constitution”, the state receives “(...) the form of a known community”. The unifying connection of the law lies as a right of self-consciousness and therefore the laws should be carried out to a degree of universality, to be known. The law embodies the intrinsic nature of abstract law, as well as the essence of self-consciousness. The diversity of peculiarities in civic community rises to the level of universality, removing its peculiarity in the law and recognizing the validity of the rational will of other subjects. Through the law the will becomes objective, realized. That is why the laws, the individual cases in the court in which the law finds its guardianship, should be public; the laws must preserve and maintain the trust of the citizens¹³.

The “state” [*Der Staat*] is the realm of law. The basic law and the innermost side of a state is its “constitution” [*Verfassung*]¹⁴. The speculative-dialectical construction of the state is the relation of development to itself, the preservation of the two necessary pillars – the “family” and “civic community”, as well as universal law and individual morality. The constitution of the state preserves the consciousness of its citizens about freedom, expresses and maintains the level that individuals have reached in the understanding

11 Aristotle also said that laws are determined and should be determined by the state system, not the other way around: “The same political insight will enable a man to know which laws are the best, and which are suited to different constitutions; for the laws are, and ought to be, relative to the constitution, and not the constitution to the laws” (Aristotle 1999, 81). Therefore, the laws and legal systems of different peoples, in turn, differ from each other (Hegel 2005, 112).

12 “Right as a rational order opposes arbitrariness and as a general unity of law opposes random details” (Lasson 1967, 271). In his work *System der Rechtsphilosophie (Originalausgabe aus dem Jahr 1882)*, A. Lasson, father of a famous Protestant theologian and co-editor of the collected works of Hegel (*Sämtliche Werke*, Felix Meiner Verlag 1911) G. Lasson, presents law (*Das Recht*) as an existing being, an external existence (äussere Dasein) of freedom [*Freiheit*] (Lasson 1967, 271–282).

13 Hegel writes: “Publicity is a right, because the aim of the court is justice, which as a universality belongs to all” (Hegel 2005, 119).

14 Hegel wrote about the constitution in *Fragmente einer Kritik der Verfassung Deutschlands*, starting the essay around 1799 while still in Frankfurt and finishing it in Jena in 1802-1803. K. Rosenkranz originally attributed the essay to 1806-1808 (Rosenkranz 1844, 235–246), but later admitted that it was completed in 1802-1803. In contemporary research on Hegel’s biography, writings, and systematic philosophical growth, the fragment is also dated to the period 1799-1803, but placed in the *Jenaer Schriften und Entwürfe (1801-1806)* column (Jaeschke 2003, 100–105).

of the concept of freedom and its realization. In the essence of the constitution as a process of self-construction and immanent establishment, lies the real methodology – the speculative dialectic, the mediating force. The method that permeates the whole philosophical system of Hegel, with which *Science of Logic* ends, and also *Phenomenology of Spirit* begins, is the totality, the general regularity and the ontogenesis of the “logical” and the “ethical”. In the first, the idea of mediation as an ontological principle in general is justified; and in the second, the idea of mediation as an ontological principle of ethical life.

In the nature of *mediation* [*Vermittlung*] lies the meaningful course of self-directed thinking in its uniformity, the simple becoming¹⁵ of pure abstraction and its transformation into being. Mediation is the self-conscious freedom, the free, own activity of the spirit, as a thinking subject. The self-igniting power of mediation gives rise to being from an epistemological basis, from a philosophical conceptualization and thematization of cognitive content. At the same time, however, this mediating power of thinking has an essential meaning and does not abandon the ontological content. Mediation as a principle fully embodies both the epistemological and the ontological aspects of Hegel’s dialectic. The methodological interpretation of mediation also leads to its ontological aspect, insofar as the method is the soul of all objectivity, and each *content* has its truth in the *form*: “For this course the method has resulted as the *absolutely self-knowing concept*, as the *concept that has the absolute*, both as subjective and objective, *as its subject matter*, and consequently as the pure correspondence of the concept and its reality, a concrete existence that is the concept itself” (Hegel 2010b, 737). The result of the mediating activity is a coincidence of the *methodological form* and the *theoretical content*, the theory of being corresponds to the theory of knowledge. Hegel combines epistemology, ontology and logic and revives the principle that Kant previously destroyed: the *principle of the identity of thought and being*. Here he finds its justification and mediation as an ontological principle in general. As a method, mediation was initially understood from its epistemological form and not accidentally, it is the main method in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the latter, the procedural character of the principle of the identity of thought and being, the idea of transition and activity, of the living live in which the truth lies, is carried out. The process conceived in this way is the methodological basis that substantiates the typicality of the spiritual evolution of the individual and of social progress. Mediation is a process in which knowledge is understood and promoted in general, and the constitution of a speculative ontology becomes possible through it.

In mediation lies the meaning of the method, which seeks to realize the concept. The ontological achievement through mediation is realized on the way of taking oneself in

15 W. Lütterfelds (1943-2018) notes in an article concerning Hegel’s thesis on the identity of “substance” and “subject” that mediation is an independent equality [*Sichselbstgleichheit*], “simple becoming” [*einfache[s] Werden*] is the self-reflexive movement of absolute knowledge, and this is the structure of the mind. Mediation deals with itself [*Vermittlung des Sichanderswerdens mit sich selbst*] and pushes the conceptual idea of self-change, self-transformation [*begriffslogische Selbstveränderung*] of the *Absolute Subject* (I. M.) as a theme of education, experience and science (Lütterfelds 2007, 84).

the further development of knowledge, to the meaningful course of content methodology. The transition of the subjective idea to being becomes a reality with the presence of mediation in itself, not of mediation only with something external and through something external, "but as ending in itself". The awareness of this immanent totality and the inner impulse of mediation are both its establishment and constitution as a general regularity and an ontological principle. The unity, totality and universality that contain and promote the principle of mediation are not a presupposed, idealistic premise for the identity of subject and object in the mind. On the contrary, it is an endless course of self-realization, self-development, spiritual uplift aimed at achieving more and more powerful and more sustainable unity, from which to proceed again with confidence to further its development and improvement. In this way, mediation is understood, not only as an absolute beginning, not only as an end result, but as a speculative-dialectical process, a method of absolute negativity, the real course of thought definitions that build the structural lattice, the model of being. In such a structured being, each element contains the definition of its predecessor, and the preceding form is sublated in the other, subsequent form. Mediation, seen as self-relation, spiritual self-movement, and self-transformation, going through a relationship with something else and with something else, is in fact a *contradiction*. Within the scope of this mediation, the contradictory content is not abandoned and neglected, but rises and provides for thinking. The mediated and mediating subjectivity in this way is an absolute subjectivity, on which it is possible to remove the contradiction between concept and reality and in general the existence of the personality [*Persönlichkeit*] and freedom.

From the speculative logic is derived the methodological meaning of the absolute, fundamental mediation, crystallizes its living spirit and true result, as the concrete, the subject. The form of this method is often understood only in its abstract element of trinity, but Hegel clearly shows that this form can also be taken as a quadruple, in which the negative, the difference is counted as duality, unity of mediation, absolute mediation (as sublation of the mediation). The duality here arises through the explicit nature of the systematic mediation between the "logical" and the "ethical". The single result is not something forever completed, but the restless one. Mediation is directed to oneself and one's own activity, manifesting the ethical element. After removing the mediation and the double negativity, the obtained Absolute Subject again gives itself a form of immediacy, a new beginning, with the further development of which its own content, already derived and already proved in logic, can be shown. The sublated mediation stands out as a form of the absolute method of knowledge, as the essential side of the absolute mediation. In this way, the Absolute Subject has in itself the peculiarity, the definiteness, which builds on its uncertainty as a beginning. The Absolute Subject is understood through the prism of the absolute method of mediation, as a *system of totality*. In it the content finds its further definition, in general, the general course of *knowledge*, from logic to ethical life, but also the reverse path is present, going back and justifying the beginning, the general course of *being*.

In the specific case of the present work and the attempt to pave the way for the spiritual evolution of the personality, mediation, the mediating function of freedom is this center in which duality manifests itself methodologically, dissolves and sublates itself ontologically in the spirit. Through the course of knowledge and analysis of mediation, the ground crystallizes. Through all stages of development of logical categories, the need for transition to ethical life is known. In parallel with this move, however, at each next step of it, the return (the “going back justification”) to the beginning, the other move, is made meaningful. Such is the absolute method of knowledge, as a system of wholeness, a circle that reproduces the absolute dialectic, the methodologically substantiated mediating function of freedom, which determines and establishes the typological characteristic of spiritual evolution. And the method understood in this way embodies not only its logical and epistemological significance, but also its ontological meaning. Insofar as the method, as an absolute and fundamental mediation, is an essential principle in logic, it becomes clear (or possible) from what has been said so far that it could be also a principle in the sphere of ethics.

The idea of the “state” as the embodiment of concrete freedom dominates in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. The constitution is the internal law of the state [*das innere Staatsrecht*], which contains the entire course of the absolute method. Therefore a careful and in-depth study of the constitution, of the internal state law, of the various functions, relations and activities in the state, to the greatest extent helps to establish mediation as an ontological principle of ethical life.

In the constitution, the state finds its support to unite the individual with the community. This is a kind of vortex in which the subjective interests and the intention to satisfy them in fact coincide with the goals of the universal and in fact work for its improvement and substantial construction. Thus, the level of constitutional law of a state, the meaning, goals, rights and obligations presented in its basic law, ultimately corresponds to the level of consciousness of individuals, citizens and their spiritual condition. In order to demonstrate concretely the mediation in this sphere, one should only consider the degrees of state structure and government, whose speculative-dialectical treatment leads to the absolute peak and culmination of self-development of the mediating function as world history and manifestation of the spirit.

The state is an internally organized whole, where the main requirement is the organization and realization of the concept of freedom. The institutions (“family” and “civic community”) embody, guarantee and make sense of the constitution, the developed and updated rationality¹⁶. As the beginning of the state, the constitution and its content are immediate, in the sense and form of an abstract universality. The content of the

¹⁶ “They are the steadfast basis of the state, determining the temper of individuals towards the state, and their confidence in it. They are, moreover, the foundation-stones of public freedom, because in them particular freedom becomes realized in a rational form. They thus involve an intrinsic union of freedom and necessity” (Hegel 2005, 141–142).

constitution is immediate, something simple and general, but in the element of thinking, not of the senses or the imagination. Thus, by virtue of the absolute method of mediation, the immediacy of the content of the constitution, in fact, acquires the meaning of *being*, of the abstract relation to oneself. The requirement that crystallizes at this final stage of the study, namely to show and interpret the meaning of the constitution as the absolute basis of the state, has the inner meaning of the further realization of the concept of freedom, of an realization that lies not only in the constitution, but is rather the goal and task of the Absolute Subject, of its development and spiritual evolution. Man knows his own, special interest and the possibility of its realization, for its transformation into *being* only in the state and its constant creation.

The constitution is not something completed once and for all. Due to its inseparable connection with the spirit, it is constantly evolving, passing the necessary degrees of change through the concept. As a pure universality, the constitution is dissatisfied and has a tendency to take itself further. It is *in-it-self* the concrete totality, but it is not set *for-it-self*. Thus in the beginning the constitution is expressed as *being in-it-self* without *being for-it-self*. The own evolution of the constitution, respectively of the spirit, consists in the way of *being in-it-self*, the self-determination of this common, as common *for-it-self*, as a *subject*¹⁷. In this course of the constitution the dismemberment of the state power, the living concrete totality in which the difference appears the definition in general, the *government* appears.

The separation of the *legislative, executive and judicial power* derives from the nature of the concept, i.e., through the act of mediation, in which the organizational structure of the state is revealed as the *development of the idea in its differences*. The state is not a mechanism (in the context of mechanistic materialism), but the course of the rational life of self-conscious freedom, the mediating activity and system of the

¹⁷ Here lies an idea that has a broader tradition in research in the field of social and legal philosophy, and in the history of ideas in general. It is a question of the thesis (a dogma) about the legal subjectivity, or legal personality of the state [*Rechtspersönlichkeit des Staates*], which has been treated in more recent times by the Swiss lawyer and social philosopher U. Häfelin. The thesis has no application in Switzerland, but has been extensively discussed in France and Germany since World War II. Häfelin examines historically and relatively the concept of legal personality of the state, noting that over time it becomes increasingly important. With the increase of the systematic importance of the law, the scope of the construction of the personality in connection with the overall concept of the state also increases. With the development of the idea of *Staatpersönlichkeitsdogmas*, in different epochs and in different legal schools, not only this state structure is designed. In many cases, this is an internal structural change in the concept of legal personality of the state. In this way, the *Rechtspersönlichkeit des Staates* is placed in a completely different systemic context from the individual schools (Häfelin 1959, 396–399). The problematic nature of this doctrine lies in the possibilities for establishing a relationship between the state and the individual, of different conceptualizations of the relationship between the universal law of the state and the individual character of the individual member of civic community.

In *Pure Theory of Law* (1934), H. Kelsen also considered the thesis of the *legal personality of the state*. Through the prism of the conception of the state as a *social order* and a national legal order, Kelsen also presents the state as a subject, in the sense of the personification of this order. If the state is interpreted as active subjectivity, then it is rather only the personification of the legal order, not as the overall legal order of the state (national), but as that of individual representatives (of different social spheres), in the context of the principles of division of labor (Kelsen 2005, 290–311).

ethical world. The separation of powers is understood as the vital soul of the state, as the absolute subjectivity, which simultaneously creates differences and preserves their unity. As a spiritual movement, domestic state law and its subdivisions are in harmony with the nature of the concept. This occurs when every *power, government* and *class*, as different, have in themselves the element of the whole, totality, i.e., they also contain elements of their differences. In this way an *individual whole* is constituted.

The dynamics in the work of individual authorities in the state should be bilateral. On the one hand, special spheres and individual cases fall under the general, as legislative power, but on the other hand, the possibility of unity of the state and the constitution is determined by the power of government (executive power) as administrative and judicial power depending on the application of laws relating to general or private matters. The legislature is not completely independent of other authorities, of the law in general, and of universally recognized legal principles and values. It fixes and establishes universal values. At the same time, it guarantees and constitutes the principle of free (absolute) subjectivity. Legislative power, as the first sphere of state manifestation, penetrates into all relations and codes of ethics, into the consciousness of all individuals¹⁸. As the creator of the laws in the state the legislature has in itself the spirit of the constitution and the people, has the inner impulse of the concept and strives for the further definition of the law and the universal values, which it stands for. It is also its connection with the executive branch, which further carries universal rights and values to their definite reality. For its part, the executive power carries out this activity, controlling and organizing the peculiarity and monitoring its misleading and coordination with the law and the general public.

The speculative-dialectical treatment of the *Principle of the Separation of Powers* requires a demonstration of the mediation within it, a methodological and ontological substantiation of both the mediation itself and the principle in question. Beyond the rational method of considering the nature and relation of the various powers, mediation has the dialectical *in-it-self*; rather it is the dialectical itself. In its *negative* element, mediation decomposes the definitions of reason, and in its *positive* element it gives rise to the *universal* and perceives in it the *particular*. In the general spirit of mediation, the legislature and the executive are the manifestation of negative and positive reason in the state. Mediation as a spiritual movement constitutes the qualitative side in the activity of the two authorities. Initially, the simplicity of universality and abstract law is denied in order to make the definite distinction to which the negation is again applied. Mediation continues after the negation of negation, and thus is the positive, in which the first universal, which is no longer abstract, is restored. Thus the laws, the universal rights and values become concrete within themselves, in the mediating activity of the spirit, both

¹⁸ "Hence the constitution of a people depends mainly on the kind and character of its self-consciousness. In it are found both its subjective freedom and the actuality of the constitution" (Hegel 2005, 160).

the *universal* and the *particular* are determined. Legislative and executive powers move in this definition, which is essentially the immanent development of the concept. Thus, in the *ethical course that builds itself*, with the power of mediation, absolute subjectivity is established.

It should be made clear that Hegel shows neither negative criticism nor blind adherence to the ideas of liberalism in its familiar classical form. As much as he was a supporter of the constitutional monarchy and declared himself against the revolutions, he also had a touch of conservatism. In the spirit of speculative-dialectical and mediation, he tries to build a bridge between the traditional conception of the monarchical constitution and modern liberal thinking, to introduce the emerging development of freedom in the model of the constitutional monarchy, thus building a system overcoming the shortcomings and one-sidedness. He sees the concrete existence of the spirit, of the constantly evolving concept of *freedom*, precisely in this removal of the classical liberal and conservative ideas, as a powerful speculative idea of the state, and hence of *world history* and the *dialectic of the special spirits of nations*.

“World history” [*Weltgeschichte*] is the culmination of the self-cause and self-realization of reason in reality. As a spiritual movement, world history is the liberation of the moment in the spirit. It is an exposition and realization of the universal, absolute spirit. As the Absolute Subject rises to the level of world history, the power of mediation is concentrated and condensed even more than before, while at the same time its scope expands. The self-denial of the Absolute Subject, and in this self-denial the attainment of spiritual evolution, is the intensity in which mediation develops its potential as an absolute method of knowledge and methodological and ontological justification. Every work of world history contributes to the spiritual growth of the Absolute Subject, and the latter appears as an incarnation of the substantial activity of the world spirit. With awareness, with comprehension of the substantial in the course of mediation in world history, thanks to education in the field of speculative logic and its methods and principles, the Absolute Subject is the very top.

Hegel’s philosophical view of world history is the very exposition of the absolute method of knowledge, of mediating activity. In his *philosophical history*, he views the world historical process as the self-liberation of man. All the basic principles of speculative logic are embedded in the world historical process, (i) absolute freedom; (ii) despotism and the freedom of a ruler (Eastern world); (iii) democratic and aristocratic rule in ancient Greece and ancient Rome; (iv) to the true monarchy and the German Christian world. These stages are seen as degrees in the consciousness of freedom, denying each other in a progressive direction, which direction is the necessary move from the *abstract* to the *concrete*, as well as the necessary unity of the sequence of *logical* and *historical*. Mediation achieves his goal by arranging and systemizing the historical facts, thus explicating the overall picture of the historical course of mankind and the logical connection of the

particular spirits, of the different peoples. Hegel inserts mediation in the study of world history, and its cumulative nature contributes to the achievement, understanding and laying down of history.

The conceptual and systematic conception of history is the essential relation of the Absolute Subject, which sees the order (the substantial) in the initially revealed chaos and the series of coincidences in the process of historical development. Mediation requires the release of the immanent rhythm of the concept and the unfolding of the nature of the object from itself, without the intervention of subjective opinion, sensory observation, or the so called contemplation. Such freedom in the knowledge of world history is a basic requirement, moreover, it is the turning point from which one starts and ultimately achieves the necessary connection between the world historical process and the Absolute Subject, without the latter being subordinate to the former, and vice versa. For example, if the object of study is world history, and the subject of, say, French history in the eighteenth century and the beginning of the Great French Revolution, then the free course of conceptual thinking leads to the placement of internal, own causes. Reaching the self-consciousness of the French citizens, to the consciousness of freedom of reason, dictated and essentially prepared by the Enlightenment ideas and attitudes, inevitably sets itself the next goal, to come out into reality, to unleash the power by which victory over the feudal economic system and despotic monarchy will triumph. The inner form shows the own conception of the revolution and the parallel course of development and perfection of the human consciousness, its spiritual evolution. Absolute monarchy and the suppression of the economic activity of the rising bourgeoisie no longer satisfied the spirit of the French. They crave a new system of government and civic community, a state based on human rights and freedoms. This new spirit, which reached its consciousness of itself, went far beyond the geographical borders of France, becoming a major power throughout Europe and later beyond. Freedom of reason prepares the consciousness of mankind for the democratic reorganization of societies. The universality of the method penetrates both the object and the subject, and in the concrete example, the history of the revolution in France reveals the immanent course and internal activity of *substantiality* (legitimate deep social causes, *the concept of being*) to *subjectivity* (people's self-awareness of these causes, *the concept as a concept*).

Every nation (as a "historical individual") is a particular spirit in world history. The international influence of the Great French Revolution shows the need for dialectic of particular spirits and proves an even higher requirement for the interweaving of mediation in the world historical process. Preservation and cultivation of the peculiarity and originality of peoples, as well as simultaneous enrichment and improvement through the other (for example, France and Germany, in which progress in the consciousness of freedom takes place in different ways, but as a necessity for each of the forms) of the demonstrated methodology, which ultimately results in something third, such as the unity of duality. The unity of duality, like this third, is the essence of the Absolute Subject,

and since each individual nation is part of world history, through the mediating function of freedom, the idea of the absolute subjectivity of the people and the state is reached. Here the subjective will and the substantial life merge into one ethical whole [*Sittlichkeit*] which has an ontological characteristic. The state is the real ethical life, the unity of the substantial and moral-subjective will, the ethical life in its entirety. Thus the latter, as such a unity, rises to a concrete universality, to mediated immediacy and reveals its ontological potential. *Sittlichkeit* is the spiritual reality that has its existence in the state. The Absolute Subject observes the ethical life of the state, which becomes its essential characteristic, understands its principles, which are one with its own beliefs and will, and lays down the paradigm of mediation as an ontological principle of ethical life. Within this paradigm lies the idea of a *speculative-ethical project*, which has yet to consider the possibilities for its application, a project in which the individual morality of each individual citizen and the ethical spirit of the state stand in speculative unity. Fundamental mediation is the method (spirit) by which this totality is made possible, the absolute method of knowledge, which also creates absolute subjectivity.

Conclusion

The Absolute Subject is considered as a necessary result of the speculative-logical education, as well as of the subsequent phenomenological approach to its own essence. The two paths merge into one, as ontologically sublated. The principle of the methodological function leads to the substantial side of the Absolute Subject, whose goal is the constant transformation and self-improvement, the spiritual evolution, the infinite change in which the peculiarity is preserved. In fact, from a pessimistic point of view, man's helplessness in the relentless course of the world historical process and the cunning of reason [*List der Vernunft*] stand out well. Logging the world, as some authors call it, unleashes a spiritual force that the human being cannot master, but simply serves, while thinking that he is achieving what he himself desires. However, the logic of the world is speculative; i.e., absolute subjectivity elevates its thoughts, feelings, and desires to the power of the absolute spirit, becomes one with it, builds on its own selfishness, low passions, and empty thoughts, and overcomes the cunning applied to it as a method of restraint.

Virtues and ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*] do not play a huge role in the world, in the historical process, because their level is low, in contrast to selfish goals, passions, etc., whose importance is elevated. Ordinary reason, which is actually accustomed to discipline and simple arithmetic (and has its necessary role, although it should not remain with it), cannot break the shackles and free the spirit, stands at its own extreme and extremes and degrades ethical life, transforms it in something stereotypical, unifies it, ultimately subordinating man and depriving him of his freedom. Man is reduced to the degree of a machine which operates with ordinary reason and, one after the other, the

same calculation. The Absolute Subject dealing with fundamental mediation, educated in speculative logic, has the ability to transcend the ethical “values” of ordinary reason and to build its own, new values that time requires, as well as its higher education, level of self-awareness, and so on. This is the spiritual evolution itself and the present paper revealed a possible course for a meaningful sublation, preservation and accumulation, a meaningful construction of being [*Gedachtsein*], and its infinite attainment.

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Philosophy of the Deed. “Praxis” in Hegel and Posthegelian Discourses

Philosophie der Tat. „Praxis” bei Hegel und in nachhegelschen Diskursen



Andreas Arndt

(Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin; a.e.arndt@gmx.de)

Abstract: In his *Prolegomena to Historiosophy*, published in 1838, August von Cieszkowski wrote that we are at the turning point in history, when facts turn into deeds. This raises the question of what is actually to be understood by the term “deed” [*Tat*] and why, the hour of the deed should have come precisely now. After focusing on Hegel’s concept of a history of freedom, I will present two models of understanding action and conclude by discussing their consequences. More specifically, I will undertake a search that will lead us – by way of a detour via Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* – to Fichte’s concept of the act of doing. That socio-political practice can be justified in this way, however, is denied by those who argue that society and politics in Hegel fall under the category of objective and not of absolute spirit. The alternative model of action that I will focus on, concerns action in relation to objects, or labour, a model that Hegel had already worked out in Jena, and that Marx will re-discover (rather than invent) and further develop.

Keywords: Deed; theory vs. practice; consciousness; history; freedom; action; Hegel; Cieszkowski; Marx; Fichte.

„Philosophie, die einmal überholt schien, erhält sich am Leben, weil der Augenblick ihrer Verwirklichung versäumt ward“ (Adorno 1970, 13). Adornos These – über die wir nachher sicher noch mehr hören werden – bringt zugleich das vorherrschende Urteil über das Selbstverständnis der junghegelianischen Philosophie zum Ausdruck. Es gehe dort nicht mehr um die weitere Vertiefung des Begriffs in sich – das habe Hegel nahezu abschließend geleistet – es gehe um eine genuine Praxis der Philosophie, ihre Verwirklichung, kurz: eine Philosophie der Tat. Das Konzept einer solchen Philosophie hatte August von Cieszkowski in seinen 1838 erschienenen *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* entwickelt. Wir befinden uns, so schrieb er dort, „eben jetzt bei dem weltgeschichtlichen Wendepunkte des Umschlagens der Thatsachen in Thaten“ (Cieszkowski 1981, 97). Mit

seiner *Philosophie der Tat* (1843) hat Moses Hess diesem Konzept dann den Namen gegeben.

Hierbei drängt sich die Frage auf, was unter dem eher unbestimmten und schillernden Terminus „Tat“ eigentlich zu verstehen ist und weshalb gerade jetzt, nach Hegel, die Stunde der Tat gekommen sein soll. Die Spurensuche, die ich im Folgenden dazu unternehmen werde, wird uns auf dem Umweg über Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes* – zu Fichtes Konzept der Tathandlung führen. Dass gesellschaftlich-politische Praxis sich so begründen lasse, wird jedoch – wenn auch bisweilen nach heftigen Schwankungen – von denen bestritten, die sich noch erinnern, dass Gesellschaft und Politik nach Hegel unter die Kategorie des objektiven, nicht des absoluten Geistes fallen. Das (alternative) Handlungsmodell ist hier die gegenständlich bezogene Tätigkeit oder Arbeit, ein Modell, das Hegel bereits in Jena ausgearbeitet hatte, und das Marx eher wieder findet als erfindet.

Bevor ich jedoch beide Modelle vorstelle und abschließend auf ihre Konsequenzen zu sprechen komme, möchte ich kurz auf Hegel zurückkommen. Die Forderung, dass die Philosophie zu verwirklichen sei, ist nämlich orientiert an Hegel selbst. Genauer gesagt: sie findet ihr Modell in Hegels Konzept einer Freiheitsgeschichte (hierzu vgl. Arndt 2015).¹

I.

In seinen religionsphilosophischen Vorlesungen bezieht Hegel sich darauf, dass das Prinzip der Freiheit Aller, wie es in der Moderne gesellschaftlich, rechtlich und politisch Gestalt annimmt, seine Wurzeln im Christentum habe. Hegel unterscheidet das „Aufgehen“ dieses Prinzips der Freiheit einerseits, und die „weitere Aufgabe“, dieses „Princip auch in das weltliche Wesen einzubilden“, andererseits (Jaeschke 2003, 502). Religionsphilosophisch entspricht dem „die Realisierung des Geistigen der Gemeinde zur allgemeinen Wirklichkeit“, welche eine „entwickelte Weltlichkeit“ einschließt (Hegel 1984, 262). Hierin liegt das Modell für die junghegelianischen Diskurse über das Weltlichwerden und die Verwirklichung der Philosophie.

Freilich: Hegel hat dieses Modell nicht auf seine eigene Philosophie übertragen. Vielmehr hat er der Philosophie dezidiert eine andere Funktion zugewiesen, die ihn eher in eine Entsprechung zu Horkheimers und Adornos Rede von der kritischen Theorie als Flaschenpost in der *Dialektik der Aufklärung*² bringt. Ich zitiere aus Hegels Vorlesungen zur *Religionsphilosophie*, wo es heißt, die Philosophie sei „ein abgesondertes Heiligthum und ihre Diener bilden einen isolirten Priesterstand, der mit der Welt nicht zusammengehen darf und das Besitzthum der Wahrheit zu hüten hat. Wie sich die zeitliche, empirische Gegenwart aus ihrem Zwiespalt herausfinde, wie sie sich gestalte, ist ihr zu überlassen

¹ Walter Jaeschke hat zuerst darauf aufmerksam gemacht, dass es bei Hegel bereits das „beharrlich ignorierte“ Modell für die Verwirklichung der Philosophie gebe (Jaeschke 2003, 502).

² „Wenn die Rede heute an einen sich wenden kann, so sind es weder die sogenannten Massen, noch der Einzelne, der ohnmächtig ist, sondern eher ein eingebildeter Zeuge, dem wir es hinterlassen, damit es doch nicht ganz mit uns untergeht“ (Horkheimer und Adorno 1944, 306).

und ist nicht die *unmittelbar* praktische Sache und Angelegenheit der Philosophie“ (Hegel 1840, 356). Was bedeutet das? Ist das Inkonsequenz und letztlich doch – wie die Liberalen später vermuteten – Akkomodation an den preußischen Staat (Rudolf Haym)? Oder ist diese Ambivalenz der Philosophie *als* Philosophie eingeschrieben? So dass sie zwar *durch ihr Prinzip* weltlich zu werden vermag, aber eben nicht *als* Philosophie?

Für diese Unterscheidung ist darauf hinzuweisen, dass für Hegel Prinzipien nicht diejenige Dignität haben, die ihnen sonst in der Philosophie meist zukommt. Prinzipien oder auch Grundlagen (man denke z.B. an seine Rede von der Religion als Grundlage des Staates) sind für Hegel abstrakt in dem Sinne, dass sie sich noch nicht zu einer vollen, in sich konkreten Wirklichkeit entwickelt haben. Sie haben daher grundsätzlich einen präkeren Status, da ihre Realisierungsmöglichkeiten in ihnen nicht vorgegeben sind. So kann das Prinzip der Freiheit eben auch als Terror realisiert werden, wie etwa in der Schreckensherrschaft der Jakobiner in der Französischen Revolution. Gleiches ließe sich nach Hegel über die gescheiterten Versuche sagen, soziale Freiheiten in kommunistischen Gesellschaften zu realisieren. Umgekehrt gilt freilich auch: solche Deformationen des Prinzips in der Realisierung des Prinzips sagen nicht etwas gegen das Prinzip selbst, wenn es denn überhaupt auf vernünftige Weise realisierbar ist. So hat Hegel zeitlebens an der Berechtigung der Französischen Revolution festgehalten und sie, nächst der Reformation, als *das* weltgeschichtliche Ereignis der Moderne angesehen.

Seine eigene Philosophie – wie die Klassische Deutsche Philosophie insgesamt – versteht er dann auch ausdrücklich als Ausarbeitung jenes Freiheitsgedankens, der in der der Französischen Revolution sich politisch geltend gemacht habe. In dem Wissen des Begriffs von sich als absolute Idee erfasst sich der Begriff als das vollendete Bewusstsein der Freiheit. Dass diese Idee, Hegel zufolge, *absolute* Idee als absolute *Methode* ist, heißt, dass sie dank dieser Absolutheit zugleich als normatives Prinzip unseres theoretischen und praktischen Verhaltens zur ‚Welt‘ zu fungieren vermag.

Dies bedeutet jedoch nicht, dass sich die absolute Idee vollständig realisieren ließe. Um genau diese Differenz wird es in der junghegelianischen Philosophie gehen. Die politisch-gesellschaftliche Sphäre gehört dem objektiven, nicht dem absoluten Geist. Anders gesagt: jene reine Selbstbezüglichkeit des Begriffs, welche den absoluten, vollendeten Begriff der Freiheit konstituiert, lässt sich in der Sphäre des objektiven Geistes, die gegenständlich gebunden bleibt, gar nicht realisieren. Von einer *Verwirklichung der Philosophie als Philosophie* kann daher für Hegel nicht die Rede sein, sondern nur von der Verwirklichung ihres Prinzips. Hegels Attentismus hat daher philosophische Gründe und stellt keine Akkomodation an die preußische Realität dar. Nicht ausgeschlossen ist, dass die ‚Welt‘ auf das Prinzip der Philosophie zurückgreift und auch von der Norm eines philosophisch entwickelten Freiheitsbegriffs Gebrauch macht. Dies zu bewerkstelligen, ist jedoch nicht Aufgabe der Philosophie selbst.

Damit keine Missverständnisse entstehen: Ich behaupte nicht, dass Hegels Philosophie die Formen der Praxis nicht thematisiert; im Gegenteil. Das ergibt sich schon

daraus, dass die absolute Idee ebenso sehr als theoretische wie als praktische Idee zu verstehen ist. Ich behaupte nur, dass Hegels Philosophie keine Philosophie der Praxis (oder der Tat) in dem Sinne ist, dass sie Vorgaben für eine aus der Philosophie selbst zu entwickelnde Praxis bereithielte. Und sie kann auch nicht durch eine solche Philosophie der Praxis ergänzt werden, ohne Hegels Grundgedanken zu beschädigen.

II.

An August von Cieszkowskis *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* ist abzulesen, wie der Schritt von der Thematisierung von Praxis in Hegels Philosophie zu einer nachhegelschen Philosophie *der* Praxis vollzogen wird. Cieszkowski konstatiert zu Beginn seiner Schrift, dass Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie dadurch ein Defizit aufweise, dass die logischen Gesetze oder die Dialektik sich in ihr „nicht in genügender Klarheit“ abspiegelten (Cieszkowski 1981, 5). Diese Gesetze müssten sich, wenn sie tatsächlich notwendig seien, in der Geschichte „als Prüfstein aller Speculationen (...) *sub specie aeternitatis* in der Sphäre der *Thaten* offenbaren“ (Cieszkowski 1981, 3). Diese These wirft mehrere Fragen auf. Zunächst: Es ist keineswegs selbstverständlich, dass die „logischen Gesetze“, die den *internen* Zusammenhang der Kategorien unseres theoretischen und praktischen Verhaltens zur „Welt“ bezeichnen, unmittelbar – sozusagen in einer eins zu eins Übersetzung – auf realphilosophische Prozesse und Strukturen Anwendung finden können (Iber 1990, 9; vgl. Arndt 2015, 143).

Im Blick auf die Geschichte ist hier daran zu erinnern, dass schon in der *Phänomenologie des Geistes* die Differenz zwischen der Arbeit des allgemeinen Geistes und der Aneignung seiner Resultate, also zwischen Geschichtsverlauf und begriffener Geschichte konstitutiv ist (vgl. Arndt 2007, 9–17). Sodann: Die Vernunft in der Geschichte, ihr logisches Entwicklungsgesetz, bezieht sich nicht auf die „Thaten“, sondern auf den „Fortschritt im Bewußtseyn der Freiheit“ (Hegel 1968, 153).

Die geschichtlichen Taten sind zwar Voraussetzung der Entwicklung dieses Bewusstseins und bringen auch einen gegebenen Stand dieses Bewusstseins zum Ausdruck, sind aber als geschichtliche Handlungen logisch nicht ableitbar. Der Fortschritt im Bewusstsein der Freiheit ist daher mit dem Fortschritt in der Realisierung der Freiheit nicht identisch. Und schließlich: Die Forderung nach einer umfassenden Realisierung der logischen Strukturen verkennt, dass absolute Selbstbezüglichkeit, wie sie dem absoluten Geist am Ende seiner Selbsterfassung in der logischen Idee zukommt, in raumzeitlich bestimmten Verhältnissen des subjektiven und objektiven Geistes nicht realisiert werden kann – auch nicht als „Tat“.

Die soeben genannten Missverständnisse bilden eine Art Syndrom, das die junghegelianische Philosophie der Tat durchgehend bestimmt. Cieszkowski liefert auch das Paradigma, durch welches diese Deutungen an Hegel selbst einen Halt zu finden hoffen, nämlich den Rekurs auf die *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Die „Entwicklung des Weltgeistes

in der Geschichte“ gilt ihm „als Corrolarium der phänomenologischen Entwicklung des Bewusstseyns“, denn: „Das Bewusstseyn ist (...) bei Hegel das Alpha und Omega, *von diesem* leitet er das ganze System seiner Philosophie überhaupt ab“ (Cieszkowski 1981, 96). Da ein Corrolarium eine naheliegende Schlussfolgerung bezeichnet, kann demnach die Logik der Weltgeschichte aus der Logik der Entwicklung des Bewusstseins abgeleitet werden. Nur vordergründig wird damit Hegels Bestimmung der Geschichte als Fortschritt im Bewusstsein der Freiheit eingeholt. Tatsächlich ist für Cieszkowski die Bewusstseinsgeschichte nur das Vorspiel zur eigentlichen Geschichte: „Das Bewusstseyn nämlich nimmt eine bestimmte Stelle im wahren Systeme der Philosophie ein, mit ihm also schliesst das Universum nicht. Was vor ihm (dem Gedanken nach) liegt, ist unbewusst, d.i. Thatsache, was aber hinter ihm, muss sich bewusst entwickeln, und das ist die *That*“ (Cieszkowski 1981, 97). Dem liegt die Auffassung zugrunde, dass Hegels Absolutes „*nicht absolut das Absolute*“ sein könne (Cieszkowski 1981, 103), weil das „*absolut praktische Gebiet des Willens*“ (Cieszkowski 1981, 115), die praktische Realisierung der Einheit des Seins und Denkens aus dem Denken durch die Tat, bei ihm fehle. Das absolute Wissen, wie es am Ende der *Phänomenologie* hervortritt, bleibe Wissen im Modus der Erinnerung; es fehle ihm an einer praktischen Entäußerung, die sich nicht in die Äußerlichkeit verliert, sondern sich darin – als reine Geistestat – vollkommen durchsichtig bleibt. Dies sei „die erst wirkliche Durchdringung des Aeussern und Innern im Prozesse des absoluten Thuns, durch welches das im Innern *erinnerte Aeussere sich wieder äussert, ohne sich zu veräussern*“ (Cieszkowski 1981, 126).

Mit dieser Wendung gegen das, was Ernst Bloch später den „Bann der Anamnesis“ nannte (Bloch 1970, 115), sind die Philosophen nicht mehr der von Hegel beschriebene isolierte Priesterstand, der das Besitztum der Wahrheit zu hüten hat, sondern der Philosoph ist, wie Arnold Ruge 1841 im Vorwort zu den *Deutschen Jahrbüchern* schreibt, „Apostel der Zukunft“ (Ruge 1985, 223). Hegel habe diese Dimension seines eigenen Denkens verkannt: „In der wissenschaftlichen Dialektik lehrt und übt Hegel fortdauernd die wahre Idealität, der Regreß auf das Vorhandene gibt ihm überall den Progreß, die Kritik der erreichten Stufe ist unmittelbar in der Orientierung über das, was sie hat und ist, ein Neues geworden; in der Weltgeschichte dagegen will er der Philosophie die Initiative durchaus nicht zugestehen. Philosophie ist ihm ein Abschluß ohne Sollen, das bloße Fertigmachen einer Periode“ (Ruge 1985, 226). Ruge richtet sich dabei nicht nur gegen das vermeintliche Ende der Geschichte bei Hegel bzw. die Abgeschlossenheit des Systems, sondern auch ihm geht es, genauso wie Cieszkowski, darum, aus der Dialektik des Begriffs eine Praxis-Perspektive zu entwickeln, die jenseits der bisherigen *Arbeit* des Geistes als *freie Tat* ausgewiesen werden kann. Der Apostel der Zukunft verkündet einen „*neue[n] Idealismus*, in Wahrheit aber nichts weiter als die notwendige Konsequenz der Kantischen Autonomie des Willens, des Fichtischen sich selbst bestimmenden Ichs und der Hegelschen Auslegung dieser sich selbstbestimmenden Intelligenz, d.h. der Dialektik des

Begriffs, sowohl im reinen Selbstbewußtsein als im Geist (Staat und Geschichte)“ (Ruge 1985, 227). Modell solcher geschichtlichen Praxis, in der „jede Selbstkritik (...) eine neue Schöpfung oder die freie Tat“ ist (Ruge 1985, 227), ist offenkundig das Sichselbstsetzen des Ich in der ursprünglichen Tathandlung im obersten Grundsatz der *Wissenschaftslehre* von 1794/95. Diese Konsequenz teilt Ruge z.B. auch mit Max Stirner, bei dem es heißt: „das *Wissen* muß sterben, um als *Wille* wieder aufzuerstehen und als freie *Person* sich täglich neu zu schaffen (Stirner 1985, 430).

Der heimliche und offene Fichtianismus der jungehegelianischen „Philosophien der Tat“ ist bisher von der Forschung so gut wie nicht beachtet worden (vgl. Stahl 2013, 109–124). Da ich hier auf einen auch nur annähernd vollständigen Überblick verzichten muss, konzentriere ich mich auf die Frage, in welchem systematischen Verhältnis dieser Fichtianismus zu Hegel steht. Moses Hess, der den Begriff der Philosophie der Tat prägte, war ja ursprünglich kein Hegelianer, sondern philosophischer Autodidakt und, wie er sich selbst im Untertitel seiner 1837 publizierten Schrift *Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit* nannte, ein „*Jünger Spinoza's*“. Er skizziert hier einen religiösen Sozialismus, in dem aus dem Wort die Tat hervorgeht: „Nach der Vollendung der Noth wird der Keim des heiligen Geistes zum Stamme, das Wort des Meisters zur That werden. Die Zeit wird alsdann in ihrer Herrlichkeit erscheinen, in welcher das Leben wieder einig, und der verlorne Friede wieder da seyn soll“ (Hess 1980, 66). Erst in der 1841 publizierten Schrift *Die europäische Triarchie* beruft sich Hess dann auf Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, welche „das Hegel'sche System in nuce“ sei (Hess 1980, 80); man hört schon Marx' Diktum von der *Phänomenologie* als der Geburtsstätte und dem Geheimnis der Hegelschen Philosophie in den unter dem Einfluss Hess' geschriebenen Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripten (1844).

Das Schema, das Hess der Geschichte überstülpt, unterscheidet sich jedoch kaum von der vorhergehenden, ohne jede Kenntnis Hegels geschriebenen Schrift. Es ist das Schema der Entwicklung von der ursprünglichen Einheit über die Entäußerung bzw. Entfremdung zu einer neuen Einheit: Altertum („Welt der unmittelbaren oder objectiven Geistesthat“), Mittelalter („Innerlichkeit des Denkens“) und der „Vermittlungsproceß der absoluten Geistesthat, die deutsche Philosophie“, folgen aufeinander, letztere aber werde „am Ende durch ihre eigene Logik zu Grunde gerichtet. Indem sie sich in sich vertieft, begreift sie sich am Ende als die absolute Einheit aller Unterschiede, womit die Vermittlung nothwendig aufhören und die That wieder beginnen muß“ (Hess 1980, 77f.). In der *Philosophie der That* (1843) schließlich wird dieses Schema auf das Selbstverhältnis des Ich bezogen: „Ich stellt sich (oder setzt sich) sich selber vor, als ein Anderes, kommt aber durch die Aufhebung dieser Reflexion wieder zu sich, nachdem es gleichsam durch die Entdeckung seines eignen Lebens im Spiegel außer sich gekommen“ (Hess 1980, 210). In der Aufhebung der Entgegensetzung kommen „der Geist und seine Welt, das soziale Leben, der Mensch und die Menschheit (...) endlich zu ihrem sichselbstgleichen Dasein,

wo (...) nichts als die Thätigkeit übrig bleibt – wo sich alle Naturbestimmtheit in freie Selbstbestimmung umgestaltet“ (Hess 1980, 218).

Bei Hess lässt sich feststellen, dass sich das Schema der Konstruktion der Geschichte gar nicht ändert, wenn Hegel ins Spiel gebracht wird; anders gesagt: Die Bezugnahme auf Hegel bleibt äußerlich. Seine Philosophie insgesamt und besonders die *Phänomenologie des Geistes* werden hinsichtlich des Schemas ursprüngliche Einheit – Entgegensetzung – Rückkehr zur Einheit (auch: Einheit – Entäußerung – Rücknahme der Entäußerung) gelesen, eine äußerliche Lektüre, die auf das bekannte und verbreitete Schema der Entfremdungsromantik rekurriert, dass sich bei Hegel – gerade in der *Phänomenologie* – ja auch wiederfinden lässt. Für Hegel allerdings kann die Sichselbstgleichheit als Rücknahme der Entäußerung nicht im geschichtlichen Handeln selbst erfolgen, sondern nur in dem Wissen des Geistes von sich als dem absoluten Wissen, das auf die Arbeit des Geistes zurückblickt. Die beiden unendlichen Urteile der *Phänomenologie*, dass das Ich Ding und das Ding Ich sei, konstituieren ein Wissen und kein Handeln, das von dieser Identität seinen Ausgang nimmt. Der frühe Bruno Bauer, der Praxis als kritische Kritik, d.h. als theoretische Praxis modellierte, wusste noch hierum. Die philosophische Kritik zielt auf die Verwirklichung eines reinen Selbstbewusstseins als „die letzte That einer bestimmten Philosophie, welche sich darin von einer positiven Bestimmtheit, die ihre wahre Allgemeinheit noch beschränkt, befreien muß“ (Bauer 1841, XXI). Der Fichtianismus bekommt seine strategische Funktion aber genau dadurch, dass er in das absolute Wissen eingetragen wird. Das Absolute wird damit in letzter Konsequenz nicht mehr als absolutes Wissen, sondern als Tathandlung aufgefasst; es ist nicht durch die Arbeit des Geistes und die Aneignung ihrer Resultate vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit, sondern eine unvermittelte Unmittelbarkeit, die sich aus dem absoluten Wissen, der Befreiung vom Gegensatz des Bewusstseins, neu herstellt. Die *Phänomenologie* hat gleichsam die Funktion, den Weg freizumachen für die praktische Selbstkonstitution des Ich. Der oberste Grundsatz der *Wissenschaftslehre*, das Subjekt als Tat und die Tat als das Absolute,³ erscheint jetzt so, wie Hegel das Absolute denken wollte, als Resultat, aber als ein solches Resultat, das die Vermittlungen hinter sich gelassen hat und, trotz aller Tätigkeit, in einer perennierenden Sichselbstgleichheit verharrt. Moses Hess bietet hierfür das schlagende Exempel.

III.

Auch Marx, der 1844 stark unter dem Einfluss von Moses Hess stand, war gegen die Entfremdungsromantik der Junghegelianer nicht gefeit. In den Ökonomisch-Philosophischen Manuskripten (1844) rekurriert er auf die *Phänomenologie* als „der wahren

³ Vgl. Peter Furths Anmerkung: „Die Tat war ihm [Fichte – A.A.] das eigentliche Subjekt des philosophischen Denkens. Damit aber hatte die Tat für ihn auch die Souveränität und Omnipotenz des Absoluten; sie war nicht durch Bedingungen vermittelt, so wie sie selber auch nicht vermittelnd war, sondern sie war das Ursprungsprinzip, und das bedeutete, daß sie die Bedingungen ihrer Möglichkeit, das tätige Subjekt und das betätigte Objekt, selber setzte“ (Furth 1991, 51).

Geburtsstätte und dem Geheimniß der hegel'schen Philosophie“ (Marx und Engels 1975, 277); ihr Thema sei „die Selbsterzeugung d[es] Menschen (...) die Vergegenständlichung als Entgegenständlichung, als Entäusserung, und als Aufhebung dieser Entäusserung“ (Marx und Engels 1975, 292). An die Stelle des absoluten Wissens tritt bei Marx der „Communismus“ als „wahrhafte Auflösung“ allen Widerstreits“ (Marx und Engels 1975, 389).

Ebenfalls 1844, in der gemeinsam mit Friedrich Engels verfassten Schrift *Die Heilige Familie*, wird Hegels Philosophie als die „notwendig-widerspruchsvolle *Einheit*“ der spinozistischen Substanz und des Fichteschen Selbstbewußtseins charakterisiert; das erste Element sei „die metaphysisch travestierte *Natur* in der *Trennung* vom Menschen, das zweite ist der metaphysisch travestierte *Geist* in der *Trennung* von der Natur, das dritte ist die metaphysisch travestierte *Einheit* von beiden, der *wirkliche Mensch* und die *wirkliche Menschengattung*“ (Marx und Engels 1956, 147).

Allerdings versteht Marx nun den Fichtianismus nicht als das Element, dass es – im Sinne der Philosophie der Tat – gegen den Abschluss des Systems bei Hegel zu mobilisieren gelte. Vielmehr unterstellt er Hegel, dass er das menschliche Wesen unter Fichteschen Prämissen und damit falsch auffasse, indem er es mit dem Selbstbewußtsein identifiziere (Marx und Engels 1975, 405) und daher statt des wirklichen, gegenständlich tätigen Menschen eine „Abstraktion des Menschen“ (Marx und Engels 1975, 407) setze. Dies führt nach Marx dazu, dass Hegel die Gegenständlichkeit oder „Dingheit“ überhaupt (in Abstraktion von den wirklichen, natürlichen Gegenständen menschlicher Tätigkeit) als Setzung des Selbstbewusstseins versteht, welche in das Bewusstsein zurückgenommen werden könne. Demgegenüber betrachtet Marx den Menschen als ein durch Gegenstände bestimmtes und gegenständlich tätiges Naturwesen:

Es schafft, setzt nur Gegenstände, weil es durch Gegenstände gesetzt ist, weil es von Haus aus *Natur* ist. In dem Akt des Setzens fällt es also nicht aus seiner ‚reinen Thätigkeit‘ in ein *Schaffen des Gegenstandes*, sondern sein *gegenständliches* Product bestätigt nur seine *gegenständliche* Thätigkeit, seine Thätigkeit als die Thätigkeit eines gegenständlichen natürlichen Wesens (Marx und Engels 1975, 408).

Insoweit kommt Marx zu einem von der Philosophie der Tat abweichenden Konzept von „Praxis“ als gegenständlicher bzw. besser: gegenständlich vermittelter Tätigkeit. Dies stimmt damit zusammen, dass Marx bereits früh, in seiner Jenaer Dissertation über Demokrit und Epikur (1841), den Gedanken einer *unmittelbaren* Verwirklichung der Philosophie zurückgewiesen hatte. Das verhindert jedoch nicht, dass Marx in den Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripten behauptet, Hegels Gedanke einer Selbsterzeugung der menschlichen Gattung durch Arbeit oder die Dialektik der Negativität beziehe sich erst auf die Konstitution des wahren Subjekts menschlicher Geschichte; Hegel habe lediglich „den *abstrakten, logischen, spekulativen* Ausdruck für die Bewegung der Geschichte gefunden, die noch nicht *wirkliche* Geschichte des Menschen

als eines vorausgesetzten Subjekts, sondern erst *Erzeugungsakt, Entstehungsgeschichte* des Menschen ist“ (Marx und Engels 1975, 401).

Es ist unklar, was Marx damit meint. Sollte damit gesagt sein, eine künftige Geschichte werde weniger naturwüchsig, sondern auf der Basis einer bewussten Regulierung des menschlichen Naturverhältnisses vonstatten gehen – ein Gedanke, den der späte Marx ja immer wieder ins Spiel bringt – wäre dies mit der Konzeption einer gegenständlich vermittelten Tätigkeit durchaus vereinbar. Die Charakteristik des Kommunismus als das Ende aller Entgegensetzungen legt allerdings eher den Verdacht nahe, Marx bewege sich hier in der Nähe der Philosophie der Tat.

An dieser Stelle ist ein Rückblick auf Hegel angebracht. Es stimmt ohne Zweifel, dass das intellektuelle Moment des Arbeitsprozesses für Hegel eine besondere Bedeutung hat, wie Marx es 1844 moniert, wenn er sagt, Hegel kenne Arbeit allein als geistige. Dies hängt freilich gerade mit der Naturbestimmtheit der Arbeit zusammen. Wenn die Natur überhaupt als Äußerlichkeit bestimmt ist, die sich darum in ihren Bestimmtheiten nicht selbst zu erfassen und festzuhalten vermag, dann kommt dem Geist die Funktion zu, die gleichsam auseinandergeworfenen Eigenschaften der Natur jenseits ihrer natürlichen Vorkommensweisen zusammenzubringen und sich aneinander abarbeiten zu lassen. Das, was Hegel als Überlistung der Natur beschreibt, hat hierin seinen Grund. Und nur in diesem Sinne ist Arbeit auch das „disseitige sich zum *Dinge* machen“ (Hegel, GW 8, 205).⁴ Dabei überlistet der Mensch die Natur, indem er deren Gesetze für seine Zwecke ausnutzt; Arbeit ist aber auch diejenige Tätigkeit, durch welche der Geist sich zu sich befreit: die wirkliche Arbeit ist – hinter dem Rücken der arbeitenden Individuen – Moment der Arbeit des Geistes: Die Befreiung des Geistes und damit auch die Freiheitsgeschichte – Weltgeschichte als Fortschritt im Bewusstsein der Freiheit – beginnt mit der Befreiung des Menschen aus unmittelbaren Naturabhängigkeiten durch die Arbeit.

Die Überlistung der Natur beschreibt Hegel anschaulich in einem Jenaer Vorlesungsmanuskript zur Philosophie des Geistes von 1803:

das Individuum kann sich nur eine Art von gemeinschaftlichem Thun ersinnen, in welchem die Natur ihren Weg der Nothwendigkeit für sich fortgeht und der Einzelne gleichsam auf sie lauert, wo sie mit seinen Zwecken übereinstimme, und hier sich zu ihr hält, und sie betrügt, daß indem sie für sich zu bewegen scheint, es doch eigentlich für das Subject geschieht (Hegel, GW 5, 367).

Dies geschieht, indem sich das Werkzeug als Mitte zwischen Subjekt und Objekt schiebt. Es ist einerseits, wie das Objekt, ein Naturgegenstand der, wie Hegel sagt, „der Natur entrissen“ (Hegel, GW 5, 291) wurde. Es ist andererseits Produkt von Arbeit, also durch das Subjekt verändert oder bestimmt. Das Werkzeug ist somit Einheit von Subjekt und Objekt, von Naturgesetzlichkeit und Bestimmtwerden der Natur durch das Subjekt. Mit ihm „lauert“ der Mensch, um Hegels Bild noch einmal zu bemühen, der Natur auf, um

⁴ GW 8 für *Geistesphilosophie* 1805/06.

sie zu überlisten. Indem ein natürlicher Gegenstand so bearbeitet wird, dass er zu einer weiteren Bearbeitung von natürlichen Gegenständen benutzt werden kann, die ohne diesen Werkzeuggebrauch nicht möglich wäre, vergrößert sich die Differenz zur unmittelbar vorfindlichen Natur und damit die Brechung des unmittelbaren Naturzwanges. Aber es bleibt gleichwohl ein Verhältnis, in dem die Natur mit Hilfe der natürlichen Eigenschaften der Werkzeuge überlistet wird. Insoweit und insofern Arbeit aus der Notwendigkeit zur Reproduktion des menschlichen Lebens folgt, ist für Hegel das Zwangsmoment der Arbeit *für die Menschen* nicht zu tilgen.

Zugleich aber ist für Hegel die Arbeit durch eine Selbstreflexivität charakterisiert, die ihm den Ansatzpunkt bietet, diesen Zwangscharakter auf einer höheren Stufe geistiger Allgemeinheit aufzuheben. Durch das Arbeitsmittel, also das Werkzeug, bezieht sich die Arbeit auf sich selbst, denn im Herstellen des Werkzeuges wird gearbeitet, um Arbeit zu ermöglichen, und im Werkzeuggebrauch wird das Resultat vergangener Arbeit als Mittel eingesetzt. Diese Selbstbezüglichkeit der Arbeit ist nicht mehr an die einzelne Subjektivität gebunden, sondern allgemein, sofern das Werkzeug den einzelnen Arbeitsprozess überdauert und übertragbar ist. Es ist nach Hegel die „reale Vernünftigkeit der Arbeit“ (Hegel, GW 5, 291), und diese elementare Vernünftigkeit ruft Hegel auch in der *Wissenschaft der Logik* (im Rahmen des Teleologiekapitels in der *Lehre vom Begriff*) noch einmal in Erinnerung: „Das Werkzeug erhält sich, während die unmittelbaren Genüsse vergehen und vergessen werden. An seinen Werkzeugen besitzt der Mensch die Macht über die äusserliche Natur, wenn er auch nach seinen Zwecken ihr vielmehr unterworfen ist“ (Hegel, GW 12, 166).

Die Auffassung, Arbeit repräsentiere eine elementare Struktur von Vernünftigkeit, ist Voraussetzung dafür, dass Hegel schließlich den geschichtlichen Bildungsgang des Geistes als Arbeit des Geistes verstehen kann, in der am Ende das intellektuelle und vernünftige Moment des Arbeitsprozesses selbstbezüglich wird. Natur und Geist sind nach Hegel „unterschiedene Weisen“, das „*Daseyn*“ der Idee darzustellen (Hegel, GW 12, 236); die absolute Idee hat ein *Dasein* nur in der Natur *und* im Geist und nicht in einer metaphysischen Hinterwelt, und demzufolge sind auch Natur *und* Geist als Relate notwendig aufeinander bezogen. Der Geist ist „*Setzen* der Natur als *seiner* Welt; ein Setzen, das als Reflexion zugleich *Voraussetzen* der Welt als selbständiger Natur ist“ (Hegel, GW 20, 382). Diese reale Vermittlung von Natur *und* Geist ist unhintergebar. Die absolute Form – die Form des sich als Begriff erfassenden Begriffs in der absoluten Idee – ist eben darum auch nur formell, wie es in der *Logik* heißt (vgl. Hegel, GW 12, 25). Sie beruht auf der Möglichkeit des Geistes, „von allem Aeußerlichen und seiner eigenen Aeußerlichkeit, seinem *Daseyn* selbst [zu] abstrahiren“ (Hegel, GW 19, 289).⁵

Was Hegel im Paragraphen 382 der *Enzyklopädie* sagt, korrespondiert in der *Begriffslogik* mit der Aussage in dem Kapitel über die absolute Idee, diese sei „noch logisch“ und „in den reinen Gedanken“ und „in die Subjectivität eingeschlossen“ (Hegel,

⁵ GW 19 für *Enzyklopädie* 1827, § 382.

GW 12, 253). Der Irrtum der Philosophie der Tat bestand darin, diese Abstraktion des Gedankens unmittelbar in die Wirklichkeit treten lassen zu wollen.

Das philosophische Erkennen, wie Hegel es konzipiert, vermag menschliche Praxis als das praktische und theoretische Verhalten zur ‚Welt‘ zu beschreiben und auch kategorial zu begründen. Hegels philosophischer Arbeitsbegriff, bezogen auf den realen Arbeitsprozess, konvergiert dabei weitgehend mit Marx' Auffassung gegenständlicher Vermittlung. Demgegenüber ist der Begriff der Tat nicht auf Bedingungen gesellschaftlichen und politischen Handelns gerichtet, weil er selbst als unbedingt konzipiert ist. Er setzt voraus, dass das Unbedingte oder Absolute unmittelbar Realität im realphilosophischen Sinne sein könne. Die Bestimmung der Philosophie ist es aber gerade, die Realität als das zu begreifen, was sie ist.⁶

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⁶ Dass dies keine kritiklose Affirmation bedeutet, habe ich an anderer Stelle ausführlich gezeigt (Arndt 2020, 209–224).

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Marx the Fichteian



Tom Rockmore

(Peking University; tom.rockmore@icloud.com)

ORCID: 0000-0003-4446-335X

Abstract: We ignore the history of philosophy at our peril. Engels, who typically conflates Marx and Marxism, points to the relation of Marxism to the tradition while also denying it. In his little book on Feuerbach, Engels depicts Feuerbach as leading Marx away from Hegel, away from classical German philosophy, away from philosophy and towards materialism and science. This view suggests that Marx is at best negatively related to Classical German philosophy, including Hegel. Yet Engels elsewhere suggests that Marx belongs to the classical German philosophical tradition. In the preface to *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, Engels wrote: “We German socialists are proud that we trace our descent not only from Saint Simon, Fourier and Owen, but also from Kant, Fichte and Hegel” (Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*). In this paper I will focus on Marx’s relation to Fichte. This relation is rarely mentioned in the Marxist debate, but I will argue, it is crucial for the formulation of Marx’s position, and hence for assessing his contribution accurately. One of the results of this study will be to indicate that Marx, in reacting against Hegel, did not, as is often suggested, ‘leave’ philosophy, but in fact made a crucial philosophical contribution.

Keywords: Marx’s relation to Fichte; Marx as not philosophy-escapist; Hegel; Engels; Feuerbach; Classical German Philosophy; Lukács.

I. Feuerbach and the Marxist Reading of Marx

Engels depicts the relation of Marx to philosophy mainly through Hegel, whom he allegedly rejects, and Feuerbach, who supposedly makes this rejection possible. If it turns out that Fichte did in fact influence Marx, then it will be necessary to revise the Marxist view of his link to German Marxism.

The argument presented by Engels goes something like this: Marx’s position arose in reaction against Hegelian idealism. Idealism, of all kinds, hence Hegelian idealism, offers a distorted, therefore false, view, based on an inverted conception of the real world as viewed through the lens of bourgeois thought. Marx later freed himself from idealism

mainly through Feuerbach, who enabled Marx to simply throw Hegel aside. Idealism and materialism are incompatible opposites. Idealism in all its forms is false, but at least one type of materialism, the type worked out in Marxism, is true. Feuerbach provides a materialist critique of Hegel, hence of idealism. Feuerbach, whose critique of idealism “overcomes” Hegel, is in turn later criticized by Marx. Marx follows Feuerbach’s lead in ‘leaving’ idealist claptrap behind for materialism, whose dialectical version provides the only correct approach to contemporary society.

This complex claim can be usefully restated as a series of five provocative propositions, propositions which are asserted without proof, which taken together function as the outlines of a supposed refutation of the alternative to Hegel’s position:

i) Marx’s position arose in in a complex reaction to Hegelian idealism. This reaction includes Hegelian realism, natural law as well as quasi-biological descriptions of state and society, and so on.

ii) Idealism and materialism are incompatible opposites of which one is true and the other is false.

iii) According to Marx, materialism is true while idealism is false.

iv) Marx followed Feuerbach’s lead, more precisely his decisive critique of Hegelian idealism, in giving up idealism for materialism.

v) In giving up idealism for materialism, Marx moved beyond philosophy.

These assertions are often, indeed routinely regarded as true but each is ‘false’. By false I mean inaccurate, tendentious, or misleading. There is a widespread tendency to understand Marx in terms of his roots in Hegelian idealism. Now, Marx’s relation to Hegel and Hegelianism should not be denied. He was obviously influenced by Hegel. Marx, who read Hegel’s main writings as a teenager, criticized them in his early writings while still in his mid-twenties. Though clearly critical of Hegel, Marx later continued to rely on Hegel for key categories, arguments and insights throughout his later writings, up to and including *Capital*. The result, which is routinely but mistakenly simply denied, lies in a complex dialectical relationship between Marx, Hegel, the young Hegelians of the right and the left, and so on.

Though himself a Young, or left-Hegelian, Marx was critical of other Young Hegelians. It is initially plausible – but, on reflection, misleading – to understand Marx’s position as arising solely in reaction to Hegelian idealism, if that means it can somehow be adequately accounted for or understood simply in terms of its Hegelian roots. It is plausible that, as Engels reports, if not the origin of Marx’s position, but the position itself lies in coming to grips with Hegel’s *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. But this led Marx well beyond the confines of his understanding of Hegel, towards other economic, political and philosophical horizons and, within philosophy, towards thinkers he regarded as supplementing or even correcting Hegel in various ways.

The second proposition concerns the relation between idealism and materialism. Most observers regard materialism (or realism) and idealism as incompatible, and believe that a simultaneous commitment to both would be self-contradictory. The view that no version of idealism and materialism (or realism) can be combined within a single position is common to objections raised against idealism in different ways by its Marxist other critics. Elsewhere, I have examined 'idealism' in detail in the context of an account of Kantian, hence German, idealism (see Rockmore 2007). This is not the place to rehearse views of idealism such as Kant's transcendental, Fichte's science of knowledge, Schelling's conception of the absolute, and so on. Suffice it to say there are different types of idealism and materialism. It is doubtful that there is a single, shared doctrinal commitment for either idealism or materialism, whose subtypes appear to overlap in terms of family resemblances rather than a single shared essence. In a famous paper, G. E. Moore influentially suggested that idealists of all stripes deny the existence of the external world (Moore 1902/1958). Yet this is a clear error. Moore does not specify any idealist guilty of this mistake and none has ever been identified. Further, the supposed incompatibility between idealism and materialism, though often asserted, is nowhere demonstrated. On a closer look, it appears that, if properly understood and under appropriate conditions, idealism and materialism are compatible.

The relation between these doctrines is long and complex. The philosophical term "idealism" seems to have been invented by Leibniz at the start of the eighteenth century. In responding to Bayle, he objects to "those who, like Epicurus and Hobbes, believe that the soul is material, in adding that in his own position "whatever of good there is in the hypotheses of Epicurus and Plato, of the great materialists and the great idealists, is combined here" (Leibniz 1875-1890, IV, 559-560). Leibniz's usage of the term implies idealism and materialism differ, but can be combined, in a single position. He suggests, as Fichte later appears to suggest, a simultaneous commitment to idealism and materialism (or realism) (Fichte 1982, 3-28).

Marx is often regarded as following Feuerbach's lead in giving up idealism, which he supposedly vanquished, for materialism. Feuerbach, who was an opponent of Hegel, criticizes the latter in various texts from the perspective of the so-called *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (Feuerbach 1986). But it is not the case, as the name of his position clearly suggests, that he vanquishes idealism for extra-philosophical materialism. It is further exaggerated to claim that Feuerbach, who is better known for his contribution to religion than to philosophy, "overcomes" Hegel, a true philosophical giant. At most, he can be read as pointing beyond Hegel in other directions.

Fourth, even if Marx were a materialist, it would not follow that he had moved beyond philosophy. There are numerous philosophical materialists, beginning with Democritus, Leucippus and Epicurus, the materialists of antiquity, and continuing up to the present. Even if Marx supported Feuerbach against Hegel, it would not follow that he moved beyond philosophy.

Engels, who did not graduate high school, was an autodidact, with no more than a cursory philosophical background. In inventing Marxism, he was influenced by a short period of study with Schelling in 1841. Another student in the same class was Kierkegaard. In the Munich lectures, held shortly after Hegel's death, Schelling sharply criticized Hegel's position as negative, in advancing his own supposedly positive philosophy, which ultimately became his theory of revelation. Engels and Kierkegaard both later formulated different versions of Schelling's complaint that Hegel was unable to grasp concrete existence. In Marxism, this became the difference between theory and practice, or *Praxis*. Engels developed Schelling's distinction between negative and positive philosophy in substituting the familiar distinction between materialism and idealism. In Engels's revision of Schelling's critique of Hegel, idealism, which is intrinsically abstract, cannot grasp the real social context. It is grasped only by materialism, which, unlike idealism, is concrete. Marxism, which is only distantly related to Marx's own position, is a conceptual amalgam thrown together by borrowing from different sources, including a crude but highly misleading view of the Western philosophical tradition on the basis of a simplistic account of German idealism.

The most influential statement of this theory is found in Engels's little book *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Engels 1941). Here and elsewhere, on behalf of Marxism Engels promotes a misleading, simplistic three-fold claim regarding the relation of Hegel to prior philosophy, the relation of philosophy to philosophical problems, and the relation of Marx to philosophy and philosophical problems. According to this view, as the leftwing young Hegelian Heine suggested, philosophy came to a peak and to an end in Hegel.

The idea that philosophy could and in fact has already ended with a particular is not new with the young Hegelians. Kant made a version of this claim in suggesting that the critical philosophy forever solved the problems of philosophy and, hence, could not be revised. Hegel, who never made any version of this claim, contradicted Kant by suggesting that all positions, including his own, belong to the history of philosophy. No philosophical theory, position, position, insight or argument can suffice to bring the philosophical tradition to an end. Earlier theories are either ignored or refuted by later theories, which continually take the discussion beyond any given point. Engels, who made Marxism stand or fall on this fallacious claim, did so in generalizing Schelling's view of Hegel's supposedly negative philosophy to philosophy in general.

According to Engels, philosophy is inadequate to solve, resolve or otherwise dispose of its problems, concerns, or difficulties. His basic insight, the suggestion that reason must be adapted to – or, in another formulation, made congruent with – its object goes back in the early Greek tradition at least to Parmenides. In distinguishing between the way

of error, which is straight, and the way of truth, which is circular, he indicates that the criterion of knowledge is the identity of thought and being. For the cognitive instrument must be adapted to its cognitive object, that which it seeks to know. This idea is later restated many times: for instance, in Kant's so-called Copernican revolution, which centers around the complex claim that, though one cannot represent the real, one can know what one in some sense constructs. Engels suggests that philosophy is inadequate to come to grips with its problems, which are, however, real. These problems are resolved only by Marxism, which is situated beyond philosophy.

Engels's unsupported blanket-claim rapidly became an article of Marxist faith, with roughly the same status as religious beliefs. Such beliefs need neither argument nor demonstration in order to be accepted, and cannot be refuted through ordinary forms of argument. Engels, who did not demonstrate any of his claims, made no pretense of arguing for his interpretations, which remain mere assertions. He did not, for instance, show that philosophy came to an end in Hegel, that it cannot carry out its self-assigned tasks, that idealism goes from thought to being rather than going from being to thought, nor that Marxism can provide an extra-philosophical solution to philosophical problems. It seems doubtful that no formulation of this view can demonstrate the Marxist claim that philosophical questions can be answered from a position "outside philosophy."

II. Lukács and Hegelian Marxism

In Engels' reading of Marx, Feuerbach enabled the latter to 'leave' philosophy in favor of a scientific perspective situated outside it in order to solve, resolve or overcome its difficulties, problems and concerns. This is tantamount to suggesting that, as Althusser insisted, Marx turned away from an approach based on the actions of one or more individuals, illustrated in German idealism, to instead rely on science, and thus scientific laws. On the contrary, when we inspect Marx's texts, we see that his position relies on rethinking the conception of the subject that does not leave behind, but rather depends on, German idealism, especially Fichte.

Engels's simplistic, unargued account of the relation of Marx to Hegel and German idealism is literally transformed in Lukács' complex, closely argued account. Simultaneously with Karl Korsch (Korsch 2012) Lukács invented Hegelian Marxism. Unlike Engels, and unlike most students of Marx, including Korsch, Lukács had a thorough grasp of classical German philosophy. He did, for instance, early work in Kantian aesthetics before turning to Marxism. His particular form of Hegelian Marxism has two characteristics. First – like Korsch, and like other Hegelian Marxists – he resisted a simplistic, binary reading of the relation between Marx to Hegel, in formulating a richer, multi-dimensional account. Second – unlike Korsch as well as other Hegelian Marxists – Lukács, in emphasizing Hegel, also pointed to the importance of Fichte for Marx's position. Lukács's most significant account of Hegelian Marxism occurred in *History and Class Consciousness* (Lukács 1971), which

appeared in 1923, the same year as Korsch's important study, *Marxism and Philosophy*. Lukács, who employed a Marxist reading of Marx with Kantian and neo-Kantian elements, comprehends Marx's theory as a form of commodity-analysis. According to Lukács, only Marxist political economy is capable of comprehending the economic structure of advanced industrial society.

His Kantian argument for this claim consists of two points. First, non-Marxist political economy cannot know its object, that is, the real structure of the social context. So-called bourgeois political economy, which is limited to grasping false appearance, is implicitly irrational.

Second, Marxian political economy grasps true appearance through the Marxian theory of commodity-analysis, and hence is implicitly rational. It is the only approach that can lead to knowledge of social reality. Marx's theory of commodity-analysis, as Lukács asserted in a dazzling example of Marxist faith, can resolve any and all problems (Lukács 1971, 83).

Lukács's attitude towards Engels was both positive and negative: positive in that he supplied arguments to buttress the latter's simplistic assertions in restating Marxism on a philosophical basis, but negative in that he sharply criticized Engels's philosophical inadequacies, such as his simplistic treatment of Kant's key conception of the thing-in-itself (Lukács 1971, 131–133). Engels simply claimed that philosophy reaches its peak and end in Hegel without being able to resolve its problems. Unlike Engels, Lukács argued for this claim in supposedly identifying a specific flaw in classical German philosophy on the level of the subject, a conception which is allegedly corrected by Marx.

Lukács' argument in favor of Marxism extends Kant's analysis of the thing-in-itself throughout classical German philosophy, which is by definition unable to know its object. According to Lukács, Kant advanced an inadequate conception of the subject, whose difficulty culminated in Hegel's appeal to a mythological concept of the absolute, expressing a manifest inability to understand the real historical subject, the proletarian class, or identical subject-object.

Lukács adduced three reasons, all well-known in the Hegel literature, for Hegel's supposed failure to provide an adequate conception of the subject. First, the relation of reason to history is merely contingent, since reason is not actually imminent to history. This is a version of the familiar Marxist view that Hegel began from an abstract, theoretical perspective, which never grasps the social and historical context. Second, Hegel supposes that history has an end, which lies in the Prussian state. In this context, Lukács restated the frequent claim that Hegel later turned away from the revolutionary ideals of his youth and assumed a reactionary political stance. Third, he complained that in the *Encyclopedia*, in an abstract, contemplative discussion, Hegel separated genesis from history in a merely logical analysis of the transition from logic through nature to spirit. The resultant conception of the absolute only seems to make history. This is a form of the well-known assertion – which Lukács never abandoned, and which formed the basis of his critique

of Hegel in *On the Ontology of Social Being* (German: *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*) that Hegel's philosophy is a panlogism [Lukács 1984-1971]).

According to Lukács, the interest of the German-idealist tradition consists of pointing through its method towards the way beyond these limits. The correct path lies in a return to the early Marx's discovery of the true historical subject. Through the dialectical method as the only true historical method, we identify the real "we" of the historical process in the proletariat, as the identical subject/object of history. Lukács writes:

The continuation of that course which at least in method started to point the way beyond these limits, namely the dialectical method as the true historical method, was reserved for the class which was able to discover within itself on the basis of its life-experience the identical subject-object, the subject of 'action' the 'we' of the genesis: namely the proletariat (Lukács 1971, 148-149).

The claim for the proletarian standpoint as the solution to the problem emerging from the thing-in-itself is, in fact, a transparent restatement of the Young-Hegelian view that philosophy comes to an end in Hegel's thought. In other words, the theory of the proletariat discovered by Marx and continued by Marxism provides the solution for the crucial problem left unsolved by classical German philosophy. In the final analysis, philosophy does not end in the Hegelian synthesis, which, since it depends on an incorrect view of the subject, simply fails. Rather, it is completed and comes to an end after Hegel in the Marxian transformation of absolute idealism, which is seamlessly prolonged in Marxism.

We can summarize as follows: according to Lukács, Marx's key move, which is unrelated to exposing the anatomy of modern industrial society, lies in rethinking the subject in his early writings. In this context, Lukács turned his attention towards Fichte. Lukács was critical of the Fichtean concept of activity, whose importance lies in a prototypical solution of the relation of theory and praxis, subjectivity and objectivity. He followed others in maintaining that Fichte failed to understand the true nature of human activity, which he incorrectly assimilated to mental activity alone.

In the present context, it is not necessary to examine Fichte's view of the active subject in detail. It can suffice here to note that Fichte's conception of the subject as wholly active and never passive is significant as a contribution to the Kantian problem. Kant makes practice dependent on theory since theory includes and hence resolves any and all practical concerns. Fichte responds to Kant in inverting the relation between theory and practice. According to Fichte, theory, which is not disconnected from practice, is not irrelevant, but relevant to practical concerns from which it arises and to which it returns.

It is widely known that Kant deduces a transcendental subject unrelated to human being. Fichte goes beyond Kant in correctly locating the unity of subject and object in activity and by means of it Lukács suggests that, in rethinking the unity of subject and object as activity (Lukács 1971, 123), Fichte showed that so-called given can be understood as the

product of the identical subject/object, that is as the product of the activity of cognizing and knowing something which derives from this unity. The importance of Fichte's view for Lukács becomes clear in his argument that the unity of subject and object, which Fichte allegedly located in mental activity, is, according to Lukács, brought about through the activity of the proletariat.

III. Fichte and the Marxian Conception of the Subject

Western Marxism is with some exceptions a series of forms of Hegelian Marxism invented by Lukács and Korsch, Lukács more than Korsch. Lukács' reading of Marx in relation to German idealism remains incomplete. As the main co-founder of Hegelian Marxism, he provided a richer, better informed, more nuanced account of the relation of Marx to Hegel and classical German idealism than any other observer has before or since.

Two points are relevant here. Though his intention was to show that Marx went beyond German idealism in answering Hegel, Lukács correctly points out Fichte's significance for Marx's conception of the subject, thereby undercutting the claim that Marx left philosophy behind. At the same time, he undercuts his own effort to depict Marx in replying to Engels' suggestion that we must understand Marx through Hegel in pointing beyond him to Fichte.

In the wake of Descartes, the problem of the subject recurs throughout modern philosophy, including German idealism. In reacting against Hegel, Lukács suggests that the Hegelian synthesis is finally completed in the Marxian transformation of absolute idealism, seamlessly prolonged in Marxism. We can summarize the argument as follows: according to Lukács, Marx's key move lay in rethinking the subject, or more precisely in discovering the real historical subject in replacing the German idealist depictions of the absolute by the proletariat in his early Marxist writings after his conversion to Marxism in 1918. In this context, Lukács turned his attention towards Fichte. Lukács was critical of the Fichtean concept of activity, whose importance lies in a prototypical solution of the relation of theory and praxis. We have already pointed out that he followed others in maintaining that Fichte failed to understand the true nature of human activity, which he assimilated to mental activity alone.

Kant's problem lies in bringing together objectivity and subjectivity, theory and practice in, as Lukács says, solving the enigma of the thing in itself, in other words in finally grasping modern bourgeois society. This problem occurs on different levels, including theory, practice, and the unity of theory and practice. On the theoretical level it is the problem of how to know modern industrial society that, according to Lukács, cannot be grasped from the bourgeois perspective and can only be grasped from the perspective of the proletariat. On the practical level it concerns the relationship of theory and practice that Kant resolves in the moral writings in subordinating practice to theory.

The difficulty lies in bringing together theory and practice in a unity that, as Lukács points out, lies in activity. According to Lukács, in this respect Fichte went beyond Kant and “put the practical, action as well as activity in the center of his unifying philosophical system” (Lukács 1971, 123) (and in the center of his conception of subjectivity).

Yet, since Lukács is committed to the superiority of Marxism, his view of Fichte is equivocal. He sees but fails to understand the importance of the Fichtean view of the subject as intrinsically active since he is committed to the view that, as he writes, “*only the practical class consciousness of the proletariat* possesses this ability to transform things” (Lukács 1971, 205).

In fact, the situation is different than Lukács’s depiction of it. Marx does not merely dismiss but rather relies on Fichte’s conception of the subject as wholly active and never passive as an indispensable clue to the solution of the real historical subject. According to Lukács, who follows E. Lask, Fichte shows that the given can be understood as the product of the identical subject/object, which derives from this unity. The importance of Fichte’s view for Lukács’ Marxist reading of the relation of Marx to classical German philosophy becomes clear in his argument that the unity of subject and object, which Fichte allegedly located in mental activity, is in fact, brought about through the activity of the proletariat.

After the above remarks on Lukács’ view of Fichte, we turn immediately to the relationship between Fichte and Marx. In reacting against Hegel, the Young Hegelians, including Feuerbach, turned to Fichte in order to formulate an adequate account of subjectivity. Kant considers the question of what “man” is to be the single most important theme. He worked out his view of the subject in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the transcendental deduction, in isolating the conditions of knowledge in general from psychological factors. Though he accounted types of experience through types of activity, he was unable to formulate a unified theory of the subject. In Kant’s wake, Fichte, for the first time in classical German philosophy, formulated a unified theory of the subject based on its activity. After Hegel, a number of Young Hegelians, including Feuerbach and Marx, if Marx was in fact a young Hegelian, turned to Fichte for a model of subjectivity that they then proceeded to develop (Cornu 1955-1970).

In the very early *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Marx argues that Hegel substitutes a mere concept or idea for the real historical subject. Hegel’s supposed failure to identify the real historical subject is an important factor in Marx’s turn in the *Paris Manuscripts* from Hegel to Fichte to overcome a perceived deficit in the Hegelian theory of the modern state. The family and civil society in reality produce the state through the unfolding of the concrete social context. Yet, Marx contends, Hegel incorrectly sees them as produced by the idea (Marx & Engels, CW III, 8–9) or, in Hegelian language, by a self-realizing concept. Marx sums up his methodological criticism by accusing Hegel of a quasi-Feuerbachian inversion of subject and predicate: “The fact which is taken as a point of departure is not conceived as such, but as a mystical result” (Marx & Engels, CW III, 9). In other words, Hegel conflates causes and effects in substituting effects for causes and

conversely.

Marx, who was familiar with Fichte's position, later maintained an interest in the latter's views. This interest in Fichte is clear in his early writings, especially in the *Paris Manuscripts* of 1844. In the third Manuscript, in the section known as the "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic and General Philosophy," Marx objects to the conceptions of the subject in Fichte and Hegel. It is, he maintained, as much a mistake to consider human being through self-consciousness as to reduce the object of consciousness to a purely mental creation. In an important but little noticed passage, Marx utilizes Fichtean terminology against Fichte in writing:

When real corporal man ... posits [*setzt*], the positing [*das Setzen*] is not the subject of this act (...) An objective being acts objectively It creates and establishes [*setzt*] only objects (...) In the act of establishing it does not descend from its 'pure activity' to the creation of objects [*In dem Akt des Setzens fällt es also nicht aus seiner 'reinen Tätigkeit' in ein Schaffen des Gegenstandes*]; its objective product simply confirms its objective activity, with its activity as an objective, natural being (Marx 1964, 206¹).

Here, we see Marx insisting on the objectivity of the external world, in opposition to Fichte, who was widely but incorrectly understood as believing that reality is wholly a product of thought. Marx further insists that if human individuals are not solely created through mental activity, they also cannot be understood through their mental capacities. It is remarkable how far the view that Marx here insists on – presumably for the most part against Hegel, and perhaps against Fichte as well – resembles Fichte's own conception of the human subject. In order to bring out this point, it is useful to quote the relevant passage at some length.

"Man," Marx writes,

is directly a natural being. As a natural being, and as a living natural being he is, on the one hand, endowed with natural powers and faculties, which exist in him as tendencies and abilities, as drives. On the other hand, as a natural, embodied, sentient, objective being, his is a suffering, conditioned and limited being, like animals and plants. The objects of his drives exist outside himself as objective independent of him, yet they are objects of his needs, essential objects, which are indispensable to the exercise and confirmation of his faculties. The fact that man is an embodied, living, real, sentient objective being with natural powers, means that he has real, sensuous objects as the objects of his being, or that he can only express his being in real sensuous objects (...) Man as an objective sentient being is a suffering being, and since he feels his suffering, a passionate being. Passion is

1 In Original: „Wenn der wirkliche, leibliche, auf der festen wohlgerundeten Erde stehende, alle Naturkräfte aus- und einatmende Mensch seine wirklichen, gegenständlichen Wesenskräfte durch seine Entäußerung als fremde Gegenstände setzt, so ist nicht das Setzen Subjekt; [A*] es ist die Subjektivität gegenständlicher Wesenskräfte, deren Aktion daher auch eine gegenständliche sein muß. Das gegenständliche Wesen wirkt gegenständlich, und es würde nicht gegenständlich wirken, wenn nicht das Gegenständliche in seiner Wesensbestimmung läge. Es schafft, setzt nun Gegenstände, weil es durch Gegenstände gesetzt ist, weil es von Haus aus Natur ist. In dem Akt des Setzens fällt es also nicht aus seiner ‚reinen Tätigkeit‘ in ein Schaffen des Gegenstandes, sondern sein gegenständliches Produkt bestätigt nur seine gegenständliche Tätigkeit, seine Tätigkeit als die Tätigkeit eines gegenständlichen natürlichen Wesens“ (Marx 1968, 577).

man's faculties striving (*strebende*) to attain their object (Marx 1964, 206–208)².

To the best of my knowledge, no other single passage anywhere in Marx's voluminous writings offers a more detailed statement of his understanding of the human individual. This passage is, furthermore, fascinating for the remarkable resemblance between Marx's comprehension of finite human being and Fichte's view. Man is described, in Fichtean language, as 'natural', possessed of 'drives', as 'suffering' because limited, and as 'passionate' due to his awareness of his limitations: this reflects Marx's awareness of Fichte's theory as well as his specific conception of finite human being. Though Marx's overall position differed from Fichte's, he clearly accepts the main lines of Fichte's conception of the human individual as a natural being, hence obliged to meet his needs outside himself, limited by and only able to realize himself in relation to others through transforming the surrounding social context.

IV. Marxian Man and Marxian Economics

Marx's position offers a solution to the modern form of the ancient problem of human flourishing in its modern reformulation by Rousseau and later thinkers including Kant, Hegel and others. Marx suggests that in and through its activity human being meets two kinds of needs. They include basic reproductive needs, such as the proverbial food, clothing and shelter, which must be met in order for workers to continue to work in meeting their basic needs and capitalism to continue to function through realizing and appropriating surplus value. They include as well human needs, or the need to realize one's specific capacities as a finite human being, or the need to surpass mere reproductive needs in taking one's place as a fully individual member of society.

The different kinds of human needs are met in practice through different forms of human activity. In skeletal form Marx's position includes a theory of the main forms of activity through which finite human beings meet their basic or species needs, an account

² See also Marx (1968, 578): „Der Mensch ist unmittelbar Naturwesen. Als Naturwesen und als lebendiges Naturwesen ist er teils mit natürlichen Kräften, mit Lebenskräften ausgerüstet, ein tätiges Naturwesen; diese Kräfte existieren in ihm als Anlagen und Fähigkeiten, als Triebe; teils ist er als natürliches, leibliches, sinnliches, gegenständliches Wesen ein leidendes, bedingtes und beschränktes Wesen, wie es auch das Tier und die Pflanze ist, d.h. die Gegenstände seiner Triebe existieren außer ihm, als von ihm unabhängige Gegenstände; aber diese Gegenstände sind Gegenstände seines Bedürfnisses, zur Betätigung und Bestätigung seiner Wesenskräfte unentbehrliche, wesentliche Gegenstände. Daß der Mensch ein leibliches, naturkräftiges, lebendiges, wirkliches, sinnliches, gegenständliches Wesen ist, heißt, daß er wirkliche, sinnliche Gegenstände zum Gegenstand seines Wesens, seiner Lebensäußerung hat oder daß er nun an wirklichen, sinnlichen Gegenständen sein Leben äußern kann. Gegenständlich, natürlich, sinnlich sein und sowohl Gegenstand, Natur, Sinn außer sich haben oder selbst Gegenstand, Natur, Sinn für ein drittes sein ist identisch (...). Der Hunger ist ein natürliches Bedürfnis; er bedarf also einer Natur außer sich, eines Gegenstandes außer sich, um sich zu befriedigen, um sich zu stillen. Der Hunger ist das gestandne Bedürfnis meines Leibes nach einem außer ihm seienden, zu seiner Integrierung und Wesensäußerung unentbehrlichen Gegenstande. Die Sonne ist der Gegenstand der Pflanze, ein ihr unentbehrlicher, ihr Leben bestätigender Gegenstand, wie die Pflanze Gegenstand der Sonne ist, als Äußerung von der lebenserweckenden Kraft der Sonne, von der gegenständlichen Wesenskraft der Sonne“.

of surplus value is created and appropriated by the owners of the means of production, as well as the revolutionary activity through which private property is abolished in the transition from capitalism to communism, and finally the activity through which human beings finally become fully human individuals all depend on his reworking of the central Fichtean insight into human being as basically active and never passive.

If this is correct, then it follows that the Fichtean view of human being as active is not, as Lukács suggests, a bourgeois, hence non-proletarian and incorrect supplement to Marx's effort to rethink the subject in Hegel's wake. It is rather key to Marx's effort, in relying on Fichtean insights to construct a replacement for what he regarded as Hegel's supposedly inadequate conception of the human subject. Marx's effort to respond to Hegel, which Marx rethinks on a Fichtean basis, is, since the conception of the subject is central to all the classical German thinkers, central to Marx's theory as well. For at the end of the day, if we leave aside the Marxist rhetoric to concentrate on the practical problems of modern industrial society, we see that Marx's conception of the human being as active is key to the Marxian conception of the solution to the ancient theme of human flourishing in modern industrial society.

V. Conclusion: Marx the Fichtean

I began by asking a question about the relation of Marx to Fichte. The answer depends on what it means to be a Fichtean. This question was already controversial in Fichte's time. In the period between Kant and Hegel Fichte was enormously influential. He was still very influential when Marx was a philosophical graduate student. The young Schelling and the young Hegel were Fichteans for a time, though Fichte, who thought he was misunderstood, rapidly rejected Schelling as a disciple and Hegel just as rapidly moved beyond this early phase. If to be a Fichtean means to accept the main lines of Fichte's position, then neither Marx nor, arguably, anyone else was ever a Fichtean. **Even Fichte** was, arguably, never a Fichtean, since he continually altered his position to demonstrate a variety of shapes and manifestations of the originally 'unconditional' and 'absolute' activity, stages in a position that he was never able to state satisfactorily, in some 16 versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. If, on the contrary, to be a Fichtean means to accept one or more central Fichtean ideas, then it seems clear that in an important sense, Marx is a Fichtean, above all with respect to the conception of finite human being as essentially active. At the dawn of modern philosophy, Descartes invented two views of the human subject, the widely-known, 'official' spectator theory, and the little-known, but perhaps more interesting, so-called actor theory, implicit in the famous remark in the *Discourse*, but never worked out, about 'trying to be a spectator rather than an actor in all the comedies the world displays' (Descartes 1970, 99). The so-called spectator theory of subjectivity has long been popular. But in general, the more interesting views of the subject in the wake of Descartes are different forms of the largely undefined actor view,

through which various thinkers strived to understand knowledge, morality and the social surroundings through the prism of the activity of finite human beings.

Marx belongs to this ongoing effort, arising in the first instance in the reaction to the wholly theoretical subject in Kant and, at least from his perspective, the supposed lack of a historical subject in Hegel, a lack that is initially overcome through the Fichtean conception of the subject as always active and never passive, but whose activity is constrained by its self-constructed social surroundings. Marx is certainly not Fichte, though in some respects the resemblance runs very deep. In Fichte's wake, Marx participated in a Fichtean effort to rethink the subject as defined by work – or, indeed, labor [*Arbeit*] – in modern industrial society. He understood capitalism, communism and, if there is a distinction, socialism through the self-production of finite human beings – within capitalism, in the form of work through which one meets one's basic reproductive or subsistence needs; and in a future form of society, perhaps unrealistically, situated beyond the limits of human needs anywhere one develops one's human potentials through what we can call free human activity.

Marx's entire position turns on working out an understanding and account of the real conditions of human freedom in modern industrial society on the basis of a theory of human activity. This approach to human beings through human activity was formulated by Fichte in reaction against Kant and then appropriated and transformed by Marx in reaction against Hegel.

Marx's position cannot be reduced to Fichte's, but it does resemble it and obviously depends on it as it adopts and works out an approach to finite human being and all the many forms of society through a conception of human activity. This approach goes back in the Western tradition at least as far as Aristotle, who advanced a theory of life as activity in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But its proximal version, which influenced the Young Hegelians in the mid-nineteenth century as they rebelled against Hegel, was in Fichte's position. Fichte is, in this respect, the origin of Marx's conception of human being, which is the centerpiece of his entire position. I conclude that, in this sense, and perhaps others as well, Marx is, indeed, a Fichtean.

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