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WHAT DOES THE ‘SUBLATION’ OF MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS MEAN FOR PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE? ON THE INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION OF THERAPY IN HEGEL’S PHILOSOPHY

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The main question that I want to pose in this paper is the following: *What can the sublation (Aufhebung) of moral consciousness within Hegel’s philosophy mean for philosophical practice regarding therapeutic dimensions of Hegel’s notion of the ‘ethical life’ (Sittlichkeit)?* Although my answer is purely theoretical, I maintain that Hegel’s insights into the nature of the human spirit and its processuality, as well as the inherent tendency of human beings to seek self-awareness and self-realization, can be of great benefit to the conceptual foundation of philosophical praxis as a new paradigm in the pursuit of philosophy. Hegel’s philosophy essentially speaks about the ways in which humans relate to the world, and about the contingent and finite condition of human existence. Hegel’s therapeutic inquiry thus focuses on enabling the individual to feel ‘at home’ in the world.¹ Once a subject becomes aware of its own mind, its self-consciousness and capability for moral judgment, the potential for profound suffering arises in the frequent attempts to reconcile the sublime side of human existence with its animalistic desires and passions. This

¹Hegel (1988: 14): ‘To him who looks upon the world rationally, the world looks rational in return. The relation is mutual.’ References to the *Philosophy of Right* are to G.W.F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* [= PhR], trans. by T. M. Knox, revised, edited, and introduced by S. Houlgate (Oxford: University Press 2008). Those to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are to G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* [=PdG], trans. by A. V. Miller (Oxford: University Press 1977).

very suffering discloses the need for philosophy, which is understandable as a therapeutic attempt to integrate the human being with the other and the world. The main aim of Hegel's practical philosophy is hence to refract one from abstract subjective concepts to one's concrete everyday inter-subjective practices, and show one the way to understand oneself and one's social world as originally related to each other.

The therapeutic dimensions of Hegel's philosophy have been discussed at length in the context of the relation between philosophical and psychoanalytical thought. These discussions focused mainly on his early work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.² There, Hegel maintains that the task of bringing about the universal 'consists not so much in purging the individual of an immediate, sensuous mode of apprehension and making him into a substance that is an object of thought and that thinks, but rather in just the opposite, in freeing determinate thoughts from their fixity so as to give actuality to the universal, and impart to it spiritual life' (PdG, 19–20). *The Phenomenology* can thus be seen as a therapeutic presentation of the perceptual *deformations* of natural, pre-philosophical consciousness.

The first insights into the therapeutic function that the concept of 'ethical life' has within Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* was put forward by Axel Honneth in his book *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*.³ Honneth's thesis on the nature of ethical life may have strong implications for psychoanalytic thought, because psychoanalysis also indicates an immanent pathology of the 'absolutisation' of individual self-consciousness. Indeed, psychoanalytic theory may lead to strong social and political consequences regarding an essential incompleteness of both human beings and social order. Todd McGowan notices that

the subject exists at the point of the social order's failure to become a closed structure, and the subject enters into social arrangements as a result of its own failure to achieve self-identity. The internal contradictions within every social order create the space for the subject, just as the internal contradictions of the subject produce an opening to externality that links the subject to the social order. Failure on each side provides the

²J. Lacan was the first to bring Hegel's philosophy and psychoanalytical theory in closer connection. Cf. also: Dolar 2006: 129–155, Mills 2012, M. Macdonald 2013; as well as the various works of S. Žižek.

³English translation (Princeton: University Press 2010) of: Axel Honneth, *Leiden an Unbestimmtheit: Eine Reaktualisierung der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001.

connective apparatus and constitutes the bond between the subject and the social order (McGowan, 2013: 145).

This position is also shared by Hegel, who attempts to sublate the split (*Entzweiung*) between the ‘infinite right’ of the modern *subjectivity* as the principle of morality (PhR, § 104) and the *objective norms* of social institutions, through the fundamental notion of his legal and political philosophy – the notion of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). *Sittlichkeit* has no exact English equivalent. It is not simply morality, for it includes the institutional dimension of social interactions within one’s community. The ethical life represents — as we shall see further on — the fact that ethics is grounded in social institutions rather than in one’s abstract principles. The morality of inner subjectivity (e.g. conscience) is not adequate for ethical guidance, because, according to Hegel, neither morality nor private rights of individuals (based on property rights) can generate truly binding ethical principles. I will now briefly describe what Hegel’s notion of the ethical life exactly denotes and how he comes to the conclusion that private rights and morality are insufficient for the ethical orientation of human beings in the world.

The notion of the ethical life, *die Sittlichkeit*, derives from the concept of *die Sitte*, ‘custom’. Still, for Kant and Fichte *Sittlichkeit* was equated with moral philosophy, or ethics in general. Hegel gives this word a totally different meaning, by linking it with his equally peculiar notion of Spirit (*Geist*), which expresses the interconnection between the mental and wilful properties of human beings on the one hand, and the collective activities that make up human culture – art, religion, philosophy, and so forth – on the other. In contrast to morality, which is always individual, based on one’s own conscience or feelings, the ethical life represents ethical norms embodied in the customs and institutions of one’s society. Any stable society requires an ethical life, a system of social norms accepted by its members. The central aim of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* is to provide a justification for the norms of ethical life. In doing so, Hegel distinguishes between three types of freedom: (i) the abstract, private right, (ii) morality and (iii) the ethical life. In a society founded upon abstract right, the primary relations between individuals are property relations. The freedom founded on abstract rights (the claim, ‘this is mine and I have the right to it’) is, for Hegel, the most basic. A true sense of community is absent here. The moral standpoint as a distinct type of ‘freedom’ implies that human beings are able to adopt a sense of impartiality by applying universal norms to their affairs and accordingly set their own self-interests aside. For Hegel, however, moral norms, which are the basis of Kant’s

principle of universalization, are 'empty of content'. Hegel holds that every ethical norm must be practiced: one needs to learn within inter-subjective relations what particular moral norms or values are (e.g. generosity). That is why, according to Hegel, ethics requires social institutions that give moral norms their concrete shape through inter-subjective practices.

It is to this aspect of Hegel's understanding of ethical life that Axel Honneth gives a particular meaning by linking it to a particular interpretation of Hegel's therapeutic strategy as 'liberation from suffering' within the social life-world (*Lebenswelt*). Hegel finds that the suffering of the individual in modern society is caused by pathologies in which the individual becomes embroiled, while striving through the universalization of normative content of purely *moral* subjectivity to values and ends of human life. Thus the inter-subjectivity of civil life is pathologized by the fact that 'the freedom of the other here [in civil society, R.J.] appears only as the means of satisfying one's own interest in keeping open as many options as possible' (Honneth, 2010: 34):

To have no interest except in one's formal right may be pure obstinacy, often a fitting accompaniment of a cold heart and restricted sympathies: for it is uncultured people who insist most on their rights, while noble minds look on other aspects of the thing. Thus abstract right is nothing but a bare possibility and in that respect something formal as compared with the whole range of the situation. On that account, to have a right gives one a warrant, but it is not absolutely necessary that one should insist on one's rights, because that is only one aspect of the whole situation (PhR, § 37 Addition).

A formal 'legal relationship fixes [the] individual being and posits it absolutely' (Hegel, 1999: 149). This is not a purely theoretical conclusion: it is grounded in Hegel's understanding of contemporary civil society, where the dissociative forces of early capitalism had destroyed the earlier communal bonds characteristic of feudalism and the feudalist resources for social integration. The advent of modernity meant that individuals started to consider themselves primarily as private owners and subjects of legal rights. Their self-conceptualization rested firmly on their perception of self-interest.

This type of social organization and collective self-perception presents a peculiar trend of pathogenesis: rising apathy for the community as a whole, or 'political nullity' as Hegel calls it (Hegel, 1999: 151), as well as a certain disorientation of moral conscience, because people perceive their

relationships to one another and to reality largely through the process of universalization of their own ‘abstract’ individual standpoints, rather than really ‘taking in’ the identities and interests of the community as a whole.

Since the individual naturally seeks the objective realization of their own understanding of the right, and this understanding is often in collision with positive legal norms, the individual in such cases suffers the feelings of non-recognition by society. Such contingent developments are made possible by the consistent inadequacy of a subjective conscience for ethical guidance in a modern capitalist society. Individual morality, which Hegel appears to conceive of as purely subjective, is unable in principle to accommodate the resistance encountered by the world and is thus practically insufficient as the normative framework for social action. This is where institutionalized customs and social norms come into play.

Finally, the purely subjective moral standpoint could become the standpoint of evil:

Once self-consciousness has reduced all otherwise valid determinations to emptiness and itself to the sheer inwardness of the will, it has become the potentiality of either making what is universal in and for itself into its principle, or equally well of elevating above the universal the *self-will* of its *own particularity*, taking that as its principle and realizing it through its actions, i.e. it has become potentially *evil* (PhR, § 139).

Axel Honneth’s thesis on the therapeutic function of ethical life

Honneth locates the therapeutic dimension of Hegel’s ‘ethical life’ in its function to *liberate the individual from suffering*. ‘Suffering’ here refers to the moral stance of the subject, who meets resistance by the world. This resistance is generated in relation to one’s subjective moral conscience, whose universalization is, therefore, inadequate to guide the subject in achieving developed forms of ‘life-practice’ (*Lebenspraxis*) (Honneth, 2010: 14). The subject’s self-realization occurs not through the abstract demands for realization of subjective moral ends rooted in moral conscience, but through the individual’s participation in inter-subjective interactions.

Honneth’s analysis here does not differ from Hegel’s. Institutional forms of ethical life act therapeutically on the individual. They implant or embed the individual in a world that one no longer finds alien to one’s self-

awareness. The existent ethos of a community offers one a framework for action and for the 'concrete' fulfilment of duty.

Honneth correctly recognizes that Hegel's statements about suffering due to the insufficiency of one's life-practice (*Lebenspraxis*), apathy and dissatisfying circumstances belong to what could be considered quasi-psychological aspects of *The Philosophy of Right*. However, Hegel's 'philosophically decisive step consists in tracing the different phenomena of social suffering back to a conceptual confusion [*Verwirrung*]' (Honneth, 2010: 44). This *Verwirrung*, which causes social suffering, can essentially be traced to a fundamental misunderstanding of human freedom. This confusion is not just a cognitive error or merely a wrong attitude; it is, in a sense, an objective pathology in a society because it conflates subjective principles and objective normativity, which characterize social life in general (Honneth, 2010: 45). The only solution here, according to Honneth, is a *therapeutic critique* which facilitates a liberating self-reflection: 'the moment the readers accept the offer of an interpretation of their lifeworld as an instance of ethical life, they should liberate themselves from the deceptive attitudes that have so far prevented them from realizing their freedom' (Honneth, 2010: 46). Therapeutic self-reflection leads to insights into the communicative conditions of human interaction, which at the same time make individual freedom possible. Individual freedom, which is covered and conditioned by networks of legal and moral requirements, can flourish only if adequate conditions for the person's inter-subjective realization are present. Such conditions arise from a 'horizontal' mutual recognition between individuals, on one level, and between individuals and socio-political institutions, on another.⁴

The sequence of Honneth's argumentation only retains the inter-subjective spheres of family life and friendship as suitable patterns of recognition through which ethical life exercises therapy on pathological forms of the understanding of human freedom. Although Honneth does not fail to emphasize Hegel's view that the purpose of the state is to enable the

⁴Thus, ethical life liberates the individual from social pathologies, and at the same time offers identical conditions for the realization of freedom to every individual. The therapeutic function of Hegel's philosophy is, according to Honneth, inseparable from his theory of justice. Such a theory of justice must primarily banish the danger of the uncontrolled capitalistic market (cf. Honneth, 2010: 73, and further). A society is just only if it is capable of providing all of its members with equal opportunity to realize themselves in all three modes of freedom: legal, moral and communicative freedom.

individuals to ‘live a universal life’ (PhR, § 258 Remark), he sees in Hegel’s notion of the state (PhR, §§ 257–360) a certain lagging behind in relation to the already achieved inter-subjective institutions of marriage, friendship, and corporations. The mutual recognition between the political institutions and the individual here is no longer a ‘horizontal’, but a ‘vertical’ relationship. Accordingly, individuals need not refer to recognizing each other in order to be able to produce ‘the universal through common activities, but the universal seems to be given as something substantial, so that the recognition acquires the sense of a confirmation from below of what is above’ (Honneth, 2010: 79).

While I agree with Honneth’s stance on the changed structure of recognition when one enters the sphere of the state in Hegel’s *Philosophy of right*, it seems to me that this chapter of Hegel’s doctrine of objective spirit contains much deeper therapeutic moments than the social institutions of marriage and friendship. In what follows, I argue this in some detail and point out ways in which philosophical practitioners can carry out their practice based on Hegel’s philosophical views.

Two levels of therapy

At one point, Hegel says (PhR, § 216 Addition) that the particular German ‘sickness’ lies in the tendency to treat the legal code as something absolute and complete in itself, although human affairs are by nature finite and subject to continuous approximation. Hegel sees therapy as liberation from the structural pathologies of ‘civil society’. On the other hand, he views therapy as a way to a complete and perfect self-realization *which is only possible* within the ‘absolute’ spirit, that is, life of speculative thought alone. This is shown on two levels in Hegel’s philosophy: the *phenomenological* and the *theoretical level*, within his understanding of the therapeutic dimensions of *war* and *philosophy*. In other words, the therapeutic dimension of his philosophical theory is reflected (a) theoretically, through conceptual settings of his philosophy, and (b) phenomenologically, through the analysis of the effect on individual consciousness of the aftermath of the wars.

The state and war

I will start with the phenomenological level and offer a thesis that Hegel’s theory of war (PhR, §§ 321–351) brings additional content to the therapeutic function of his concept of ethical life, which Honneth does not

include in his 'therapeutical reading' of Hegel's philosophy. In order to properly understand what Hegel means by the therapeutic effect of war, we must return to our main question and further discuss what the 'sublation' of moral consciousness represents within Hegel's philosophy — that is, the overcoming of subjective moral consciousness — not of morality as such.

The term 'depression' (*Gedrücktheit*), which Hegel uses to mark the moralism of the reflective individual, evokes the misfortune of moral indecision and ambiguity, from which Hegel himself had suffered in his early 'Frankfurt period'. This 'depression', which the individual 'cannot escape in his moral reflections on what ought to be and what might be' (Hegel, 1973: 491), Hegel psychologically describes as follows:

[...] the human individual who is reflected in himself is always in consultation with himself, broods in himself, without strong self-feeling and without spiritual health. Out of this illness, out of this brooding [...] simple duty liberates him. For in duty man acts in a universally valid way, [because] he has given up his particularity. The illness of reflection is to be particular. This is the moral unsoundness, in part depression, in part complacency, in which he is not actual because he is in disharmony with the objective [reality] (Hegel, 1973: 491).⁵

According to Hegel, it is through *duty* that the individual liberates oneself to 'substantial' freedom (PhR, § 149). Duties found in the 'ethical life' are, for Hegel, necessary determinations in which freedom realizes itself. The moral subject that does not recognize externally imposed duties and merely remains at the level of one's 'abstract' freedom, 'pathological and weak' (Hegel, 1973: 491), withdraws oneself from 'concrete' ethical life. Such a position of moral consciousness is one of fear and excessive

⁵Translation taken over from Peperzak (2001: 394). Compare the German original: 'Denn der in sich reflectirte Mensch geht ewig sich zu Rathe, grübelt in sich, ohne kräftiges Selbstgefühl, ohne Gesundheit des Geistes. Aus dieser Krankheit, aus diesem Grübeln also befreit die einfache Pflicht. Denn in der Pflicht handelt der Mensch auf allgemein gültige Weise, hat aufgegeben seine Besonderheit. Die Krankheit der Reflexion ist, ein Besonderes zu sein. Dieß ist die moralische Ungesundheit, theils der Gedrücktheit, theils der Selbstgefälligkeit, in der er nicht wirklich ist als in Disharmonie mit dem Objectiven.' According to C. Lauer, Hegel's concept of self-feeling offers 'an organic conception of overcoming trauma that accounts for the impulse toward health in its very structure' (Lauer, 2012: 142). For, every sort of trauma brings the individual into opposition to oneself and drives them to overcome this opposition, and thus also to develop a traumatic pathology.

sensitivity, and it expresses itself often as ‘political rapture, as fanaticism’ (Hegel, 1973: 490). Comprehended only as ‘abstract’ moral freedom — ‘we want to be free, but free in general’ (Hegel, 1973: 490; Cf. also PhR, § 5 Addition) — this type of freedom will tend to evoke violence and subjective arbitrariness, as in the terror of the French Revolution (Cf. Hegel, 1977, Chapter ‘Absolute Freedom and Terror’). This vantage point of ‘abstract freedom’, according to Hegel, makes up ‘the main viewpoint and illness of the present time’ (PhR, § 138); this is what he considers a pronounced form of *social pathology*.

When they are established as the ultimate purpose of shared life in a community, Hegel considers private rights of individuals in civil society, such as the ‘*right of property*’ (PhR, § 208), an ‘illness’ (Cf. PhR, § 278 Remark). Civil society as a ‘system of needs’ (PhR, § 208) can thus suppress the very idea of common good and take the private interests of individuals as *ultima ratio* of sociality in general. Such a community can easily fall into various violent pathologies and civil war. Controversially, Hegel posits war here as an ‘ethical institution’, which serves an organizing function and prevents communal decay.

According to Hegel, war is capable of *organizing a* community as an ‘ethical whole [...]’ (PhR, § 340). War is an *ethical institution*, which prevents the universalization of subjective interests and private rights. The ‘ethical moment in war’ implies that the ‘transience of the finite becomes a *willed* passing away’ (PhR, § 324 Remark), since to defend one’s own ethical life means to defend the community as a whole. There is no ethical life outside the community. Consequently, it is ‘the individual’s substantial duty — the duty to maintain [...] the independence and sovereignty of the state, at the risk and sacrifice of property and life...’ (PhR, § 324). The ethical moment in war is that war is thus ‘the state of affairs in which the vanity of temporal goods and concerns is treated with all seriousness...’ (PhR, § 324 Remark).

War benefits our social world by generating stronger bonds between individuals. When peacetime is long, people become preoccupied with their own personal affairs and self-interests; they tend to lose sight of the communal good. However, in wartime, the awareness of the general good and interests of the state re-surface and motivate people to make sacrifices of personal and private goods. The sacrifice in war is not only an ethical duty, but ‘a *universal duty*’ (PhR, § 325). Only through the prospect of sacrifice for the state can the therapeutic function of ethical life be *fulfilled*. Only in one’s sacrifice for the existence of the spirit of mutual

recognition, achieved in what Hegel calls the ethical life, does the individual reach the ultimate insight into the true reason for one's existence. Thus what seems as destruction and the ultimate crisis may in fact serve as the re-actualization of the commonalities and the awareness of the greater good that fall out of sight in circumstances of ordinary social life, giving rise to the over-arching selfish models of inter-subjective relationships.

Philosophy as a way of life

Although sacrifice and war are the ultimate political institutions of the ethical life for Hegel, only philosophy can adequately represent the 'true' content of the spirit, that is, content that is not conditioned by the externality of form. If the limited perspective of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is taken too far, it could lead to the wrong impression that the final realization of freedom should unfold in the 'objective' world of law, politics and history. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* should not be read separately from the whole philosophy of spirit. One's normative orientation in the juridico-political life and its institutions is not the ultimate end of individual life. The individual's union with the world cannot be achieved outside the philosophical *reconciliation* with the world. In very broad terms, for Hegel the aim of philosophy is attainment of a knowledge about the Absolute, where the Absolute is 'the whole', i.e. the whole of existence itself. Each finite thing has its place in a comprehensive *system* of reality. The quest for self-awareness lies in our seeking to fully understand ourselves and our place within the totality of existence, and this quest we pursue through science and philosophy. Only in philosophy can we achieve the highest expression of our existence, namely the self-relatedness as self-consciousness. Only philosophy can achieve a complete grasp of the object and 'knowledge of the whole'. However, philosophical knowledge must separate itself from the realm of finite things and annul the conceptual separation between the subject and the object, in order to fulfil its promise of getting to know the whole of reality. While 'Objective Spirit' expresses humanity in the form of ethical institutions, 'Absolute Spirit' is one of comprehensive self-awareness in the context of conceptualizing the entire reality as a coherent system. Absolute Spirit is *inaccessible* to law, politics and ordinary morality. It exceeds all institutions and all power of juridico-political authority. It is always *absent* from concrete ethical and legal norms of human inter-subjective relations. Through the artistic enjoyment of beauty, philosophical knowledge of limitations of the political realization of

freedom and the religious and eschatological idea of freedom that is set to come, the human being sets one's finitude in *openness*. In this context, freedom for Hegel is in the knowledge as such. Freedom is truly realized only by identifying ourselves with our communities.

Consequences for philosophical practice

I started here from Honneth's thesis on the therapeutic function of Hegel's notion of the ethical life, i.e. that liberation from suffering and social pathologies is at the same time liberation from the abstractness and insufficiency of the legal and moral understanding of the nature of human freedom. I proceeded by questioning Honnet's distinction between social and political philosophies. I argued that, according to Hegel, only the political institutions of the state (primarily referring to the 'institution' of war as an intrinsic ethical moment) adequately illustrate the attribution of therapeutic functions to his philosophy. For Hegel, the 'sublation' of the moral standpoint is a necessary step for human beings to gain proper self-consciousness of their true freedom and related social duties. Arriving at self-consciousness that no longer suffers from 'indeterminacy' and social pathologies comes about in Hegel's philosophy in two ways. The first is war, by which human beings gain a consciousness of the finite nature of private rights (which are based on the institutions of contract and property) and at the same time rise above their narrow sphere of self-interests. The second way is through philosophical insights into the true determination of human freedom and socio-political institutions that warrant its achievement. Essentially, the previous discussion leads to the conclusion that Hegel's understanding of therapy is an embrace of *amor fati*, or as he put it to his friend Niethammer in a letter from 23 November 1814 – the middle way (*Mittelwesen*):

The essential point is your belief that it will not get so bad that we cannot put up with it. Your view coincides pretty much with my own belief that we cannot hope for something good enough to merit any particular praise. This colourless, tasteless intermediary state, which allows nothing to get too bad and nothing too good, for once rules our world (Hegel, 1984: 320, Letter 255).

Hegel almost medically prescribes such quasi-quietism to the individual who morally sways, who doubts the justification of the world and existence of justice in the world. Hegel exercised the same kind of therapy on himself in his 'Frankfurt period', when he thought the world and its

'weight' had him completely overwhelmed.⁶ Therapy, in this context, needs to be administered to the individual who doubts the correctness of his actions and the very possibility of universal moral justification of human action. It encourages the individual to build a strong and independent 'second nature' that is able to withstand the loss of a part of one's world (cf. Hegel, 2007, § 402 Addition). Hegel uses the word 'to bear' or 'to endure' — *zu ertragen*. If human beings are able to bear (*zu ertragen*) things, to withstand the resistive pressure, they therapeutically facilitate their own self-transformation. Only through such self-transformation is a human being capable of reaching self-consciousness that qualifies him or her as a real subject: 'A being which is capable of containing and enduring its own contradiction is a *subject*' [*Ein solches, das den Widerspruch seiner selbst in sich zu haben und zu ertragen fähig ist, ist das Subjekt*] (Hegel, 2004: § 359). While an 'impediment arising in the soul from grief and pain' or through 'sudden excessive joy [...] can result in the fracture of the organism, death, or derangement', one who has learned how to bear social contradictions 'is much less exposed than others to such effects', and performs better than 'a natural man, poor in representations and thoughts, who does not possess the power to endure the negativity of a sudden invasion of violent pain' (Hegel, 2007, §401 Addition). Hegel gives an example of a deranged mind, in such disunion with the world:

An Englishman, e.g., sank into indifference to all things, first to politics and then to his own affairs and to his family. He would sit quietly, looking straight in front of him and for years did not speak a word, and showed an insensitivity that made it doubtful whether he knew his wife and children or not. He was cured when someone else, dressed exactly like him, sat opposite him and imitated him in everything he did. This threw the patient into a violent frenzy which forced him to attend to things outside of him and drove him permanently out of his self-absorption (Hegel, 2007, § 408 Addition).

⁶ A kind of philosophical turn to medicine is noticeable at the early nineteenth century - at a time when medicine had not yet become an exact science and when philosophy, at least in German Romanticism, asked itself the question: how is it possible to live with a nature that has power over history when it no longer suffices to live with it 'aesthetically'? (cf. Marquard, 2004: 20) Moreover, doctors themselves at the time are writing myriad romantic philosophies of nature, so that 'the philosophical authority of doctors [was] part of a philosophical economy of therapeutics that develops when philosophy turns to nature as a decisive power and when, at the same time, aesthetics as the philosophy of life is no longer equal to this nature and stops being effective.

The ability 'to bear' does not prevent the individual's reactions to unfair circumstances in one's world: reactions against corrupt institutions, loss of other individuals, etc. Just the opposite: Hegel considers that this *ertragen*, 'to bear', is in fact a condition for ethically justified action. For, without this therapy of 'endurance' and 'bearing', human beings cannot gain the self-consciousness of participation in joint matters, communal duties, nor reach the true nature of human freedom. This applies not only to one's participation in corporate and civil relations; it also fully relates to private life, to one's relationships with family and friends.

Conclusion

On one level, according to Hegel, in order to gain self-consciousness, the individual should bear, (*ertragen*) the terrible circumstances of reality by participating in the ethical life of one's community and by fulfilling one's ethical duties. Hegel does not hesitate to acknowledge that ethical duties always involve self-sacrifice, *Aufopferung*: sacrifice for family and close friends, for the success and advancement of the employing company, or for the state as the highest institution of ethical life. The finitude of property or human life is, perhaps, most noticeable in war, but this finitude and vulnerability is equally present in one's more ordinary actions, such as striving for the welfare of one's family and close ones. One's awareness of the limited value and finitude of such 'civil' qualities as property or even life, plays an emancipatory role in allowing for the achievement of a degree of philosophical freedom, which translates into a wise life.

On a different level, to be able to tolerate (*vertragen*) the various and pervasive social inequalities, one must 'become' a philosopher. One must, according to Hegel, raise oneself to the level of *Wir*, 'we' (the first-person plural that Hegel uses to refer to the individual consciousness that has become a reflective self-consciousness). Surrendering to theory, acting within philosophical thoughts, leads to philosophical satisfaction (*Schadenfreude*) for one who recognizes the amount and strength of injustice in the world: "the fine gentlemen, released from their captivity, come forth with a terrible outcry, voicing the opinion that everything must be changed. But as they set to work, one thing after another eludes their grasp, and, apart from the vanity of affixing their own etiquette on it the matter has preserved itself through its own weight" (Hegel, 1984: 327, Letter 272).

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