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THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION IN HEGEL'S JENA WRITINGS

This paper examines the status and the evolution of the concept of struggle for recognition in Hegel's „Jena system outlines“ („Systementwürfe“) prior to his Phenomenology of Spirit. Hegel's elaboration of this concept reflects his emancipation from his own earlier philosophical and political conception. The latter has often been described in terms of a „metaphysics of substance“, in which the ontological priority of the state or of the people as an organic whole is established at the expense of the individual and its freedom. On the contrary, the principle of the struggle for recognition developed in the system outlines is the unlimited endeavour of the individual consciousness towards its complete realization, i.e. the very freedom of the consciousness. The struggle for recognition and the dialectics it brings into play allow us to interpret the state itself as a product of the activity of the individuals which constitute it.

Key words: *Consciousness. – Recognition. – Struggle. – Subjectivity. – Substance.*

In spite of numerous and convincing attempts to challenge it, the interpretation still prevails according to which Hegel is one of the philosophers who sacrificed the individual's right to the Moloch of the state. Indeed, many statements from Hegel's opus speak in favor of this interpretation. It is, for instance, indisputable that Hegel vigorously opposes those conceptions of the state that take the individual as its basic and ultimate purpose. In addition, according to Hegel's frequently quoted formulation, the state is nothing less than „the divine Idea as it exists on earth“, and the individual possesses „objectivity, truth and ethical life only in being a member of it“.¹ Consequently, one may say that Hegel believed that the state was the only independent ethical and political power, and that the individual in his view was nothing more than its subordinated „moment“.

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte (Hegel, Werke, Frankfurt am Main 1986, vol. 12), p. 57; Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (Werke, vol. 7), p. 399.

With regard to the actual controversy between „liberalism“, which strives to limit the influence of the state by the rights of the individual, and „communitarianism“, which asserts that the very identity of the individual is constituted through its affiliation to a concrete community, such interpretation could lead us to the conclusion in terms of which Hegel’s philosophy supports only the latter orientation. For example, while Rawls’ theory of justice, which is the model of a „liberal“ orientation, resulted in a restoration of Kantianism in ethics and political philosophy, many authors use to say that communitarians have covered a part of the road leading „from Kant to Hegel“. In fact, the communitarians question the philosophical foundations of liberalism in a manner that corresponds in a certain sense to Hegel’s criticism of individualism or „atomism“ of Kant’s theory of morality and politics.

However, this analogy between Hegel and the communitarians must not be stretched too far. State, by all means, is only one among different types of „communities“ the importance of which is emphasized by the communitarians, and one should not overestimate its importance in their theory. This is the reason why communitarians seldom refer to Hegel’s theory of the state. On the other hand, it has to be noted that one of the basic motives of Hegel’s philosophy of spirit has experienced its significant revival among the authors who belong to the opposed, „liberal“ tendency in political theory. Simultaneously with the growth of influence of political liberalism, a change of paradigms occurred in political theory, that may be defined as the shift of focus from the problem of management of resources and of elimination of social inequality, to the one of respect for the rights and the dignity of human person, i.e. as the change of orientation from the issue of the redistribution of social resources, typical of the period of ruling social-democracy, to the complex of questions related to the very category of „recognition“.² However, the concept of recognition is central precisely in the philosophy of Hegel.

The well-known book by Francis Fukuyama *The End of History and the Last Man*, which was published in the early nineties of the last century, is only a surface and ideological symptom of the reorientation mentioned above.³ In this book the fall of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – countries marked, according to the author, by considerable deficiencies with regard to the respect of their own citizens – is understood as the result of the struggle of these citizens „for recognition“. Fukuyama refers directly to Hegel’s concept of recognition

² This description was first proposed by Nancy Fraser (cf. Axel Honneth, „Reconnaissance et justice“, in: *Le passant ordinaire*, No. 38, January-February 2002).

³ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992 (cited after the translation by B. Gligorić and S. Divjak, *Kraj istorije i poslednji čovek*, CID, Podgorica 1997).

and to his viewpoint of the struggle for recognition. To be true, he does not re-examine the systematic foundations of that Hegelian concepts, but relies instead on the influential anthropological interpretation of Hegel's philosophy proposed by Alexandre Kojève.⁴

Fukuyama presents Hegelian „struggle for recognition“ as a concept which can help us to surpass the shortcomings of Marxist „economism“.⁵ This is but one of the less intriguing features of his argumentation. As a matter of fact, Fukuyama considers that this Hegelian motive constitutes a necessary corrective element of the liberal and utilitarian political philosophy as well. He starts from the thesis according to which this philosophy is based on an erroneous conception of man as a being who makes practical choices exclusively on the ground of cold estimate of advantages and disadvantages, having as the only goal the advancement of his own self-interest. According to Fukuyama, such conception fails to realize the importance of the „thymotic“ part of human soul (according to the word *thymos* from Plato's *Republic*, which Fukuyama translates as „spiritedness“, and which corresponds to our today's understanding of „pride“ or „self-esteem“). The thymotic element of the soul, however, manifests itself in particular in man's readiness to sacrifice, in certain circumstances, even his life in a struggle for a non-utilitarian goal. In Fukuyama's interpretation, this human capacity is fully taken into account in Hegelian concept of „struggle for recognition“.⁶ Fukuyama therefore believes that Hegel's conception of man offers some advantages of crucial importance compared to the one of the traditional liberal or utilitarian theory. According to Fukuyama, Hegel proposed a more accurate conception of politics and a more sublime understanding of liberal democracy than Locke or Hume.⁷

Discussions over Fukuyama's book have become quiet some time ago. The book is certainly not significant because of its intrinsic qualities or because of the answers it gives, but it still stays interesting in that it treats some questions that are still open.⁸ Criticism of Hegel by liberals

4 Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, Paris 1947.

5 It must be noted that this kind of objection is sometimes raised against Hegel as well. For example, A. Honneth, in spite of his own leftist background, criticizes Hegel for his neglect of the logic of recognition, which is allegedly the consequence of his predilection for the concepts of „labour“ and „education“; cf. A. Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung*, Frankfurt 1994, p. 104.

6 F. Fukuyama, *Kraj istorije...*, p. 166 sqq.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 164–165, 216.

8 Besides Honneth's book (see above), cf. in this respect the studies by Jürgen Habermas, „Arbeit und Interaktion“ (in J. Habermas, *Technik und Wissenschaft als „Ideologie“*, Frankfurt a. M. 1968), Ludwig Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie*, Freiburg/München 1979, and Andreas Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung*, Stuttgart 1982.

whose arguments, since Haym's book on Hegel and all the way up to Popper, remained the same, dismissed Hegelian philosophy as an apology of totalitarianism.⁹ How then is it possible that an enterprise such as Fukuyama's, which understands itself as a radicalization of the liberal position, and which, moreover, could with some reason be described as an „eschatology“ of liberalism – is carried out through massive borrowing from Hegel's conceptuality, and even from the interpretation of Hegel by Kojève, whose attitude toward liberalism was, to say the least, ambivalent?

The present text does not aspire to propose a final answer to this question. In addition to that, it deals only with the struggle for recognition in Hegel's Jena system outlines, and leaves entirely aside the elaboration of the concept of recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Beginning with the origins of Hegel's theory of recognition, it tries to examine and explain the ambivalence of contemporary liberalism in its relation to Hegel. Hegel's elaboration of the struggle for recognition is understood here as an attempt to transgress the limits of the liberal conception of politics not through its correction from outside, but rather by developing its own internal assumptions, i.e. through deducing the final consequences out of the concept of free subjectivity that Hegel intended to place at the basis of his political theory, which he himself steadily considered as a „liberal“ one.

1.

All his life long, Hegel was an enthusiastic admirer of the French Revolution and of the principle of freedom the Revolution had inaugurated.¹⁰ The experience of that great event was decisive already for

⁹ See Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit*, Hildesheim/New York 1974 (¹1857), especially Chapter 15, pp. 357–391. On the other hand, many authors (such as V. Cousin, J. Hyppolite, S. Avineri, J. Ritter, E. Weil, K. H. Ilting, M. Riedel) consider Hegel as a „liberal“ political thinker (for further references, see Jean-Claude Pinson, *Hegel, le droit et le libéralisme*, Paris 1989, pp. 5–12). To the side of the statements quoted at the beginning of the present article, which express Hegel's view of the state as a „divinity“, one could put the following sentence from the *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 407), which clearly demonstrates his intention to operate a synthesis of the standpoint of the individual and of the one of the state: „The principle of the modern states has this enormous strength and depth, in that it allows the principle of subjectivity to complete itself into an independent extreme of personal particularity, and yet at the same time brings it back into the substantive unity, and thus preserves this unity in that very extreme.“

¹⁰ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 529. Cf. Joachim Ritter, „Hegel und die französische Revolution“, in: J. Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik. Studien zu Aristoteles und Hegel*, Frankfurt a. M. 1969, p. 192 sqq., and J. Habermas,

the beginnings of Hegel's orientation in philosophy. As a young man, Hegel hoped that the Revolution would spread to Germany as well.¹¹ This attitude was challenged by general disappointment caused by further development of the situation in France, after the revolutionary power was established, especially by the execution of Louis XVI and the ensuing period of Jacobean dictatorship. As of many others among his contemporaries in Germany, some of whom actively took part in revolutionary events, it might be said of Hegel as well that he was closer to Girondism.¹²

However, the revolution was important for the way Hegel was to perceive the central problem of modern politics. According to Hegel, the main problem of modern times lies in the separation between the individual and the state. In modern conceptions of natural law as well, the two concepts are understood as opposed to one another. Even the revolution was not successful in overcoming this separation between the state and the sphere of particularity of the citizens. Hegel's enthusiasm for republican political ideal of the ancient times, as witnessed by his early writings, originates in this observation. Following Schiller, Hegel puts the ideal unity between the citizens and the polity, that existed in Antiquity, against the antagonism between private life and public or political existence, which is so characteristic of the modern age.

Hegel's political works written during the first half of his Jena period (1801–1803) may be understood as an attempt to overcome the antagonism between the state and the individual to the advantage of the latter. At this stage of Hegel's development, the state represents the totality of the ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) that absorbs the individual into itself. This point of view is expressed with remarkable clarity in Hegel's article on „The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law“, as well as in the unpublished manuscript to which Rosenkranz gave the title *System der Sittlichkeit (System of Ethical Life)*.

This solution of the problem may be explained by the basic character of the philosophical conception adopted by Hegel at that time. On the threshold of the eighteenth century Hegel developed, under the influence of Schelling, a philosophy that could be described as a form of metaphysics of the unique and all-encompassing substance.¹³ The abso-

„Hegels Kritik der Französischen Revolution“, in: J. Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis*, Luchterhand 1963, p. 89.

11 Cf. Hegel's letter to Schelling of April 16, 1795, in: *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. by J. Hoffmeister, Hamburg 1952, p. 23 sqq. Cf. also J. Ritter, *ibid.*, p. 16.

12 See the book by Jacques d'Hondt *Hegel secret. Recherches sur les sources cachées de la pensée de Hegel*, Paris 1968.

13 Cf. Hegel in Jena (ed. by Dieter Henrich and Klaus Düsing), Bonn 1980.

lute itself – i.e. the infinite affirmation, which is, according to Hegel, the principle of all reality – manifests itself in the sphere of the ethical life as the spirit of a people, which finds its ultimate expression in the state itself. The individual is here understood as the result of the „negation“ of this ethical totality, in a way that reminds us of Spinozean metaphysics, in which every determination is conceived as a partial negation of the one and unique substance.

Hegel did not develop this philosophical conception directly through criticism of the representative protagonists of liberal political theory, but rather by means of settling accounts with Kant's and Fichte's transcendental idealism, which he described as the predominant form of contemporary „philosophy of subjectivity“ or „philosophy of reflection“. According to Hegel, Kant's and Fichte's endeavour to establish the self-conscious subjectivity as the sole principle of philosophy constitutes the basis for their viewpoint that the individual is the original concept of ethical and political theory. Hegel criticizes all the constructions that define the state starting from the individual, even if they are „idealistic“ or based on the principle of pure will, characteristic of Kant's and Fichte's ethics.¹⁴ This is why he objects that the transcendental position in moral philosophy represents nothing more than a variety of „eudemonism“. ¹⁵ At first sight it may appear that this word can be applied only to a standpoint such as the one of Locke's moral philosophy or alike; its extension to Kant or Fichte seems to be contradicted by their own criticism of happiness as the principle of ethical theory. However, according to Hegel's interpretation, the element common to the liberal and to the idealistic position, which justifies their description in terms of „eudemonism“, lies in the fact that they both resist the movement of absorption of the individual into the totality of the ethical life; all these positions remain attached solely to the moment of negativity that constitutes the being of particular things, and thus fail to reach the absolute as genuine „affirmation“.

In contrast to individualistic theories of natural law, Hegel endeavours to grasp the state as the realm of the absolute ethical life, which is at the same time to be found „entirely in the act within the very interior of individuals, thus representing their essence“. ¹⁶ Along these lines Hegel strives to restore the classical understanding of politics. Taking over the assertion from Aristotle's *Politics*, according to which

14 Cf. Manfred Riedel, „Hegels Kritik des Naturrechts“, Hegel-Studien 4 (1967), p. 184 sqq.

15 Hegel, „Glauben und Wissen“, in: Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807 (Hegel, Werke, vol. 2), p. 294.

16 Hegel, „Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts“, *ibid.*, p. 488.

„the *polis* by nature precedes the individual“, Hegel develops, under the heading of the „natural ethical life“, a model of „natural law“ diametrically opposed to the modern tradition, which is centered on the idea that the rights of the individual are absolute and that they should be protected from the intervention of the state. Hegel obviously understands „natural“ law in terms of Aristotle’s conception of nature, not in terms of modern theory of natural rights of the individual. Besides, his concept of nature demonstrates features that are clearly teleological.¹⁷ In support of his views Hegel invokes the classical Greek conception of priority of politics over individual morality.¹⁸ He also defends the absolute right of the state to interfere in the private sphere by referring to the „Spinozean“ argument according to which the affirmation has absolute logical and ontological priority over negation. This is the reason why the state is absolutely entitled to „negate the negation“ which gives birth to the existence of the individual, thus re-establishing the infinite affirmation of the one ethical substance. With some justification, this theory could be described as „totalitarian“, since no portion of individual life or private existence remains protected from the state as the „totality“ of ethical life. Hegel even speaks of beneficial effects of wars: they bring the necessary unrest and destruction into the sphere of civil society, and thus demonstrate the limits of its principle – individual self-interest – as well as of its basic value – secure and comfortable life in abundance of material goods.

Hegel describes the organization of the state as class-based.¹⁹ Two of the three estates in this description – peasantry and commercial *bourgeoisie* – have, according to Hegel, a merely relative existence: their purpose is some particular aspect of social life. Genuine political capacity belongs, however, to military aristocracy, whose basic virtue is courage, i.e. readiness to sacrifice their lives in the war for the state²⁰ – the act which, according to Hegel, completes the process of „putting an end to particularity“. In regard to this, it can be stated that one of the essential elements of Hegel’s future conception of „struggle for recognition“ is already present in the article on natural law: it is the risk of violent death, accepted by the members of the military estate. Nevertheless, the concept

17 Cf. Riedel, *ibid.*, p. 181.

18 Hegel, *ibid.*, p. 505.

19 Already Rosenzweig pointed to the differences existing between the class-based state portrayed by Hegel in this article and its presumed Platonic model. According to his interpretation, Hegel’s description of state corresponds rather to Prussia of Friedrich the Great than to the Greek polity (see Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, München/Berlin 1962, p. 135).

20 To a certain extent, Hegel assigns this virtue to the peasant class as well, which he of course subordinates to the leadership of the military estate; cf. *ibid.*, p. 490.

of recognition is not yet incorporated in Hegel's theory. As it will turn out, this is the consequence of Hegel's failure to elaborate the concept of individuality, which is a prerequisite for the conception of struggle for recognition in the proper sense of the word. In terms of the article on natural law, the ultimate truth of the individual consists in its immediate negation or immediate transformation into the universal, i.e. in the death of the citizen for the purpose of the state.

The same is true for the *System of Ethical Life*, which can in some respects be understood as the systematic elaboration of the issues treated previously, in introductory fashion, in the article on natural law.²¹ This manuscript was written only several months later, and the conception of politics exposed in the text is basically identical to the earlier one.

The concept of nature elaborated by Hegel in his article on natural law still plays the decisive role here. In the first part of the manuscript Hegel gives a further elaboration of the sphere of „natural ethical life“. This development begins with the stage of the „individual“, but it also covers the concepts or „potencies“ (*Potenzen*; Hegel took over this expression from Schelling's philosophy of nature) that can no more be conceived as features of the isolated self, but constitute the elementary forms of intersubjective relations. Such are the forms of „labor“, „language“ and „family“.²² Different types of recognition are already effective in these first „potencies“. However, between the first subdivision of the manuscript, dealing with the natural ethical life, and the one which treats of the state and politics, Hegel inserts, as an intermediate item, a potency of „negativity“ (under the heading „The negative, or freedom, or crime“), which deals with the individual that seeks to emancipate itself from the former potencies of labor, language and family.²³ One of the main issues treated in this chapter of the *System of Ethical life* is the „struggle for honour“, which suppresses the forms of „natural“ recognition realized at the earlier stages.

In consequence, one may say that the *System of Ethical life* treats both of the concept of „struggle“ – which appears, as the „struggle for honour“, in the chapter on „negativity“ – and of the one of „recognition“. However, there is still no „struggle for recognition“ in the genuine sense of the term. In a word, the „struggle for honour“ emerges in this work only after, and only because, the recognition realized in the realm of the natural ethical life, whose model is still the polis of the Greeks, has been violated.

21 Cf. F. Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, p. 155.

22 Hegel, „System der Sittlichkeit“, in: *Schriften und Entwürfe 1799–1808* (Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, Hamburg 1998), p. 281 sqq.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 309, 315–323.

Parallels to this concept can be found in earlier political theories. In Hegel's *System of Ethical life*, just as in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, war of everyone against everyone, struggle and aggressiveness are not seen, like in Hobbes' theory, as characteristic of the original or „natural“ condition of man, but as a product of the civil society. Nevertheless, according to Hegel's views, the „struggle“ is not yet directed toward the recognition of the individual which would represent its positive achievement; it still has only the meaning of the pure „negation of the individual“, which is carried out with the purpose of its absorption into the absolute ethical life of the state. Just as „courage“ of the military estate from the article on natural law, „struggle for honour“ from the *System of Ethical life* ends in destruction of particularity and individuality for the good of the state. Hegel is rather clear along these lines: „The singularity of the individual is not something primary – this is reserved for the energy of the ethical life, that divinity; regarding to its essence, the single individual is too poor to conceive its nature in its entire reality“.²⁴

2.

Beginning with 1803 – significantly, this term coincides with Schelling's departure from Jena – important changes can be observed regarding the very foundations of Hegel's philosophical conception. These changes may be resumed by the well-known programmatic statement from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, according to which the truth should be grasped and expressed „not (only) as substance, but as subject as well.“²⁵ In a way, this statement also describes the result of Hegel's own development during the last years he spent in Jena, marked by an ever more pronounced tendency of separation from Schelling's „philosophy of identity“ and from Hegel's own former version of „metaphysics of substance“.

The scope of these changes in the sphere of the theory of state becomes visible once the conception of „struggle for honour“ exposed in the *System of Ethical Life*, is compared to the concept of „struggle for recognition“ elaborated in the system outline Hegel wrote about one year later (*System of Speculative Philosophy*, 1803–04). In this manuscript Hegel elaborates for the first time the concept of the „struggle for recognition“ in the proper sense of the term; in other words, the recognition is here understood as the very purpose of the struggle.²⁶ Its function, at least

24 Hegel, „System der Sittlichkeit“, p. 334.

25 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hegel, Werke, vol. 3), p. 23.

26 Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I* (Hegel, Gesammelte Werke, vol. 6, Hamburg 1975), pp. 307–326.

formally, corresponds to the one Hobbes ascribed to the „war of everyone against everyone“. In contrast to Hegel’s earlier views, this struggle does not simply negate the recognition achieved at the earlier stages of the ethical life; on the contrary, the recognition is the result of the struggle.

The change in Hegel’s philosophical conception affected the structure of his system as well. As a matter of fact, in his *System of Speculative Philosophy*, Hegel does not speak of „natural“ ethical life any more. Generally speaking, the significance of the concept of „nature“ is now restricted to the first part of the system, which gives an exposition of the „philosophy of nature“. This part of the system precedes the „philosophy of spirit“, which contains Hegel’s theory of state. In spite of this, it is the concept of spirit that constitutes the true foundation of the system. The nature is here understood, just as in Hegel’s system in its definitive form, as a mere anticipation of the spirit. This is the reason why the philosophy of spirit leaves no more space for the category of „natural“ ethical life. The theory of the ethical life is placed in the framework of the philosophy of spirit, which presupposes the negation of the „natural“ concept of nature. This new position of the concept of nature in Hegel’s system is of the utmost importance for understanding the function of the risk of violent death taken by the individual in the struggle for recognition; that risk reflects the capacity of the individual subject to operate the abstraction or the „negation“ of all its natural determinations and thus demonstrate its absolute freedom. In Hegel’s earlier writings, this rather negative conception of nature was ascribed to the viewpoint of transcendental philosophy or to idealism. This is the reason why Hegel, simultaneously with departing from Schelling’s philosophy of nature and from his „metaphysics of substance“, started to redefine his interpretation of Kant’s and Fichte’s philosophy. Finally, he incorporated some crucial elements of the „philosophy of subjectivity“, that he had previously criticized and rejected, into his own philosophical conception, and also came closer to the viewpoint of the modern theories of „natural law“.

As a matter of fact, further development of Hegel’s concept of recognition can be partially explained by his reinterpretation of the representatives of „philosophy of reflection“. Fichte was the first author to elaborate, in his *Natural law* (1796), a theory of recognition. In this work Fichte seeks to explain the possibility and the structure of the self-conscious individual. However, as Fichte states it, this task confronts us with an aporia: the unity of subject and object which self-consciousness should only bring to evidence does not exist without self-consciousness itself; in order to render intelligible the genesis of self-consciousness, we must assume that it already exists.²⁷ Fichte believes that there is only one way

27 J. G. Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts*, Hamburg 1960, p. 31 sqq.

of resolving this difficulty: the „subject“ and the „object“ in self-consciousness – or, to speak with Fichte, „self-determination“ and „determination“ – should be grasped within a single thought. According to Fichte, this can be achieved only if we place ourselves from the outset at the level of mutual relations between reasonable beings, where the „objective“ definite character of one self-consciousness, i.e. its determinateness, which comes from another being, can at the same time be understood as the incentive to its own self-determination or free action; due to this dependence on other self-consciousness, man is, as Fichte puts it, essentially a generic being.²⁸ From these considerations Fichte deduces further consequences.²⁹ The incentive to a free action, directed to one reasonable being by another one, presupposes in its turn the limitation of the arbitrariness of the will of that other reasonable being. On the other hand, the actualization of the possibility to execute a free action by the reasonable being to which the „incentive“ is directed, presupposes the limitation of the arbitrariness of its own free will. Following Fichte, we may arguably say that one’s own freedom depends on the recognition of the freedom of the other; recognition is essentially mutual recognition. According to Fichte, „individuality“ itself is a concept that can be conceived only in relation to another being.³⁰

As it can be seen from the development above, recognition, in Fichte’s view, implies self-limitation – the concept which Hegel rejected, in his article on natural law, as contradictory and inappropriate to express the nature of absolute freedom.³¹ Hegel therefore places the concept of recognition in a different perspective: he seeks to radicalize the demand for recognition into the „fight to the death“, the principle of which is not the self-limitation, but the negation of the other, which is carried out without any limits or restrictions.³² However, this struggle for recognition originates from a position which in certain regards corresponds to the one described in Fichte’s *Natural law*: from the situation where the freedom of one individual will is confronted with that of another one, and where both individual wills come out with the demand to be recognized as mutually exclusive „totalities“.

Changes in Hegel’s conception may be established with regard to the description of the relationship between the individual and the state as

28 Ibid, p. 39.

29 Ibid, p. 40 sqq.

30 Ibid, p. 47.

31 Hegel, „Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie“, in: Hegel, *Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807*, pp. 66 sqq.

32 Cf. L. Siep, „Zur Dialektik der Anerkennung bei Hegel“, in: W. R. Beyer (ed.), *Hegel-Jahrbuch 1974*, Köln 1975, pp. 390 sqq.

well. To be true, the *System of Speculative Philosophy* describes, in a way that reminds us of the article on natural law, the suppression of the particular consciousness and the overcoming of the individuality of the citizen in the absolute ethical life of the state.³³ There is, however, an important difference between Hegel's earlier writings and the *System of Speculative Philosophy*, and it lies in the fact that the suppression of the individual consciousness in the *System* takes place without the intermediate stage of struggle *for* the state as the structure which encompasses the individual. In other words, the act of risking one's life in the struggle for recognition does not only „objectively“ lead to the affirmation of the absolute freedom of the human subject in the ethical life of the state; it also originates from subjective reasons and motives that are immanent to the domain of freedom of the individual. The prevailing theme of the „struggle for recognition“ is the very individual self as such. To be sure, this struggle is not directed against the state, but only against the freedom of other individuals, who stand out with the identical demand to be recognized. However, it is carried out according to a logic which is inherent to the standpoint of the individual consciousness. One could go so far as to say, somewhat paradoxically, that Hegel now achieves the „suppression of the individual“ by means of a radicalization of the very moment of individual freedom.

Hegel exposes the dialectical sequence leading to mutual recognition of individuals in the framework of the idealistic „history of self-consciousness“. This is yet another effect of his reception of transcendental philosophy.³⁴ According to Hegel, the individual consciousness as such can already be defined as the „concept of spirit“, which is the negation of the entire sphere of being and objectivity. Consequently, the individual consciousness reduces the substance of the object to the relation of that object to itself. This act excludes every other consciousness from the relation to the object. However, the individual consciousness still has to prove its conviction that it constitutes the substance of the object. In order for this to happen, this relation of consciousness to its object has to be violated, and the struggle for recognition provoked by the violation has to take place.³⁵ In consequence, what we have here is not a case of violation of a „right“ – which would presuppose that the mutual recognition of individuals already exists – but the one of violation of the very internal structure of the individual consciousness as a „being for itself“ which seeks to preserve its complete independence.

33 Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I*, p. 312 sqq.

34 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 307 sqq.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 309.

In Hegel's description of the struggle for recognition, two consciousnesses are confronted with one another, and each one of them strives to be recognized as an exclusive „totality of particularity“. Therefore, each one of the two consciousnesses understands any violation of its relation to the object by the other consciousness as its own total negation. If this violation actually happens, the consciousness that has been violated responds by challenging the other one to a fight until death.³⁶ However, in this struggle, the consciousness becomes aware that it is also exposed to the risk of the lost of its own life, which is the condition of its existence. On the other hand, if the struggle ends with the actual death of the rival, the recognition of the surviving consciousness is not achieved either. According to Hegel, there is only way to solve this dilemma. In order to be recognized, the individual consciousness – which represents an instance of the contradictory concept of „individual totality“ – should be suppressed *as such*. However, if this consciousness actually is suppressed *as individual totality*, it becomes *nothing else but* the universal consciousness itself;³⁷ by this suppression, the individual consciousness transforms itself into the absolute consciousness, i.e. into the spirit of a people, which is „the ether, that has swallowed in it (*verschlungen*) all individual consciousnesses; the *absolute simple*, the living, and the only substance“.³⁸

It would be mistaken to interpret these words in the sense of the unrestrained affirmation of the universal spirit at the expense of the individual consciousness. As Hegel states it, the universal spirit „has to be the *active substance* as well“. However, the activity of the universal spirit is accomplished by the individual consciousnesses themselves.³⁹ Indeed, Hegel defines the universal consciousness or spirit, without any further substantive determinations, as the very act of absolute negation which the individual consciousness performs on itself. According to Hegel, the spirit of a people is the creation of the individuals who belong to it: „they“ are the ones who „produce“ it, even if they „praise it as something that exists by itself“.⁴⁰ Without the activity of the individuals, the „substance“ of the universal spirit of a people would have no effectivity whatsoever.

This interpretation is confirmed by Hegel's subsequent work, the *Jenaer Realphilosophie* (1805–06). The exposition of the system of real philosophy that Hegel gives here does not end, like the one in the *System*

36 Ibid, p. 310 sqq.

37 Ibid, p. 311 sqq.

38 Ibid, p. 315.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid, p. 316.

of *Speculative Philosophy*, with a theory of state or of the ethical life, but with a chapter on absolute knowledge, art and religion. This makes this conception of the system closer to the one developed in the later *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, which concludes with the theory of the „absolute spirit“. Continuity with the earlier works is, however, demonstrated by the fact that Hegel still places his theory of the absolute in the chapter which treats of „Constitution“ (*Konstitution*), which would clearly belong, in terms of the *Encyclopaedia*, to the sphere of „objective“ spirit.

In the *Real Philosophy*, the „struggle for recognition“ emerges at two different stages of development. This topic is first treated in a context which deals with the structures of individual or „subjective“ spirit. It appears again in the chapter on „Effective spirit“ (*Wirklicher Geist*), which occupies the intermediate position between the individual spirit and the state. This part of the system gives an exposition of different forms of organization of civil society and of its legal regulation, which presuppose mutual recognition between its members.⁴¹ At this stage, the „struggle for recognition“ is in fact understood as the struggle of the individual will against the law, or „crime“. This case is interesting because it constitutes an exception: as far as I can see, this is the only instance where Hegel develops the concept of the struggle for recognition in terms of conflict between the „particular“ and the „universal“ will. However, only the first form of struggle is here of importance to us: the one that takes place, as in the *System of Speculative Philosophy*, between the individuals, and by which mutual recognition is established for the first time.

The first type of mutual „recognition“ described in the *Real philosophy* is the one that happens in familial „love“. However, according to Hegel, the concept of love is not „ethical“ in the genuine sense of the word: love is, as Hegel states it, no more than the „element“ or „presentiment“ of the ethical life.⁴² Since the individuals connected by feelings of love do not appear as conflicting free wills as well, their mutual recognition is only implicit and imperfect.⁴³ Genuine recognition is brought about only through the „struggle until death“, which is the basic feature of the natural state. However, according to Hegel, this natural state is not the „original“ state at the same time; quite to the contrary, it is itself generated by the suppression of love-based family relations. Civil society

41 Hegel, *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, Hamburg 1969, pp. 210 sqq., 221 sqq.; the title of the chapter on „Subjective spirit“ was given by the editor, Johannes Hoffmeister.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

43 *Cf. ibid.*, p. 209.

itself, which is the terrain of mutual recognition between individuals, is considered by Hegel as a result of the dissolution of the family.⁴⁴

In Hegel's *Real philosophy*, just as in the *System of Speculative Philosophy*, the recognition is the purpose or the objective of the struggle. However, the concept of recognition that Hegel elaborates here differs from the earlier one in that it is founded on categories pertaining to the domain of subjective, i.e. individual spirit. These concepts are first of all the categories of „intelligence“ and „will“.⁴⁵ This fact demonstrates once again the influence of Kant's and Fichte's idealism on Hegel's thought. Following Kant, Hegel understands pure will as the capacity to suspend the influence of all natural motives of human action; risking one's own life for the sake of mere recognition is but an extreme consequence of this idealistic conception of will. Hegel takes yet another step that brings him further than Kant or Fichte when he seeks to demonstrate how the two categories of pure will and of intelligence become one in the concept of the „knowing will“, which in its turn represents the starting point for his exposition of the struggle for recognition. In this context, he also emphasizes the etymological affinity between the terms „knowledge“ or „cognition“ (*Erkenntnis*) and „recognition“ (*Anerkennung*).⁴⁶

According to Hegel's description, in the struggle for recognition a *de facto* relationship to an object, i.e. its possession, is transformed into property. Here again Hegel states that violation or „negation“ of possession by another individual constitutes a presupposition essential to the achievement of mutual recognition; the struggle for recognition is initiated by the very fact of violation. Of course, the immediate object of the act of violation is the thing possessed; however, this object is essentially related to the self-consciousness or to the „being for itself“ of the individual who possesses it, and who, in that object, „knows“ its own self.⁴⁷ As a matter of fact, the violation of possession affects the subject in its most intimate inner structure of self-conscious individuality.

The violation committed generates an asymmetric relation between the two individual wills. The individual who originally came into possession of the thing meant only to exclude from the relation to that thing all other individuals but itself; on the contrary, the action of the other individual, the one who committed the violation, was directed against one particular individual consciousness, i.e. against the possessor of the thing himself. According to Hegel, this asymmetry or inequality is resolved through the struggle in which the individual who has suffered

44 Ibid, p. 205.

45 Ibid, pp. 179 sqq., 194 sqq.

46 Ibid, p. 212.

47 Ibid, p. 210.

damage claims the recognition of its being for itself. This individual first aims at the death of the other; however, in doing so, it experiences that it exposes itself to the risk of violent death as well. Hegel therefore says that its aggressiveness has the character of a „suicide“: in the struggle for recognition, the individual „looks at its own suppressed existence“, or at its own suppressed natural being.⁴⁸ However, according to Hegel, this experience of death, of the „suppression of one’s own most intimate being for itself“, is of crucial importance: it places the self-consciousness in a position from which it is able to perceive its very otherness *as itself*.⁴⁹ This experience „brings back“ (in this context, Hegel speaks of *Wiederherstellen*, „restitution“) the self-consciousness into the very „abstraction of knowledge“ that was initially violated. Moreover, one may say that this „restitution“ brings *more* than the violation took away: it gives to the self-consciousness that has been harmed the pure abstraction of its „being in itself“, that was not accomplished in it before the violation.

The struggle for recognition and the risk of violent death that it involves constitute an indispensable condition for the progress from a mere factual or „natural“ relation to the stage of „pure self-consciousness“ or spirit (accordingly to the *Phenomenology of spirit*, the concept of spirit is even synonymous with the reciprocity of recognition).⁵⁰ The motive of risking one’s own life in the fight until death is a necessary moment in the systematic structure of Hegel’s philosophy in a more general way as well. This may be stated against the attempts to minimize the importance of this motive or to criticize it for the sake of the intersubjective relations that seem to be more „harmonious“. Hegel’s concept of struggle for recognition has neither „existential“ nor „anthropological“ meaning that it could preserve regardless of the general context of Hegel’s idealistic philosophy;⁵¹ this concept is the result of Hegel’s efforts to develop the conception of „pure will“ in its ultimate consequences. Pure will, which implies the capacity of abstraction from all natural determination, also enables the individual to experience its fundamental identity with another individual subject: to raise to the level at which it is capable to „want the will of the other as its own will“, which qualifies it to become a member of the legally regulated civil society.⁵²

We may conclude that Hegel attempted to overcome the limits of the „liberal“ standpoint not by restricting its basic assumptions, but rather

48 Ibid, p. 211.

49 Ibid, p. 212.

50 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 144 sqq.

51 Cf. A. Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung*, p. 82.

52 Cf. L. Siep, „Der Kampf um Anerkennung“, *Hegel-Studien* 9 (1974), p. 187.

by pushing to the extreme the principle of individual freedom or the very „negativity“ that, according to his own interpretation, constitutes the basis of the modern „constructions“ of natural law. From the second half of the „Jena period“ on, Hegel’s endeavour to overcome or, in his own terms, „negate“ the standpoint of these constructions, does not aim only at their destruction, but also at their preservation: in the very fact of being „negated“, the „negativity“ – which is, in Hegel’s view, the element of the concept of free subjectivity – comes back or is reflected only to itself. It is no accident that Hegel, precisely at the time when he was working on the problem of recognition, elaborated in detail the basic structure of the concept of subjectivity, which he conceived as a dialectical negation that is directed against itself, and which is for this reason identical to itself in its own negation.⁵³ This concept of double or self-referential negation constitutes, in the sphere of philosophy of right, the principle of deduction of all forms of ethical life that are superior to the standpoint of the individual will. This concept also allows Hegel to overcome the shortcomings of atomistic conceptions of the self, which are characteristic of modern natural law, without giving up its principle of freedom. However, Hegel’s attempt to overcome the liberal theory by means of its radicalization is not just one among various applications of his new concept of self-referential negation. We could rather say that it was the origin, or the historical and practical paradigm, of Hegel’s logical theory of negation, which was to become so important in the later development of his philosophy.⁵⁴

By the end of Hegel’s Jena years, this transformation of his philosophical position was only in its beginnings. This point must be emphasized in particular when it comes to Hegel’s conception of relations between the individual and the state. In the third chapter of the Jena *Real Philosophy* Hegel portrays once again a concept of the state which is placed high above the individual and the sphere of its rights. In the same context, he praises Machiavelli’s views on politics and emphasizes the importance of the „obedience“ of citizens in a polity.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Hegel’s views considerably changed during his Jena period. In particular, his practical philosophy evolved from a conception of the absolute ethical life which implies complete „destruction of the singularity“, to a theory of state which is a result of an immanent critique of the principles of liberalism, and which therefore leaves more space for

53 Hegel, „Logik, Metaphysik, Naturphilosophie“, in: Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe II* (Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, Hamburg 1971).

54 Cf. in particular the statements on the importance of the concept of negation in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, pp. 52 sqq.).

55 Hegel, *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, p. 246.

individual freedom too. This is perhaps best witnessed by the change in Hegel's attitude to the classical concept of politics. In the Jena *Real Philosophy* Hegel gives for the first time a critique of Greek conception of politics, which remained constant in his later philosophy as well. In particular, he states that the „free spirit“, which is the principle of modernity, was unknown to the ancient times. The Greeks lived „in an immediate unity of the universal and the particular“; however, they were not capable of attaining „the absolute self-knowledge of the singularity“ and its „absolute being for itself“. Hegel therefore characterizes the „Lacedaemonian republic“, as well as Plato's ideal state, as the „disappearance of the individuality that knows itself“. ⁵⁶ The fact that Hegel's philosophy still stays inspiring in the debates of our time may be explained by this effort to maintain the absolute right of the individual subjectivity even when dealing with those forms of „objective spirit“ which seem to constitute its very opposite or its limit.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 251.