Generating freedom: Hegel's conception of political order

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8. THE RELEVANCE OF HEGEL'S THEORY OF ORDER

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter discusses whether Hegel's account of order remains relevant. In the first section, I summarize and highlight the most important aspects of Hegel's theory. The other three sections engage with reasons for scepticism about the current relevance of this theory. Section 8.3 investigates the criticism that Hegel's political order is normatively unattractive, as it does not sufficiently realise current standards for individual freedom, political rights and social justice. Then, I discuss the idea that the organic ontology of Hegel's theory of political order is highly implausible (8.4). The final section responds to the criticism that the institutional design of Hegel's political order is historically outdated. Taken together, these responses offer a direction for how Hegelian political thinking could contribute to the challenges that the free political order in 21st century societies face.

8.2 Conclusions: organic order and its fragility

Freedom as organic self-reproduction

This study of Hegel's theory of political order has foregrounded the organic organisation of social and political life. Hegel regards the political community as an internally differentiated, interdependent whole. The whole constitutes, and is constituted by, the relations woven between individuals and the parts and the parts among each other; relations precede relata. In this account, political order should not be conceived something imposed on social life: neither an external power (an intervening state) nor an external idea of how to organise the community is at the bottom of political order. Instead, political order is intrinsic in the social relations as they succeed in reproducing themselves.

Chapter 6 of this study spelt out the inner processes by which the political order reproduces itself. At the most fundamental level, the organic self-(re)generation hinges on the interaction between (civil) society and the (political) state, both of which are not so much things but spheres of relations, respectively between the free members of society and the branches of government. I referred to this interaction as opponent processing. The ensemble of relations which constitute the (political) state is a universalising force, fostering the good of the community as a whole. The relations of civil society, in which individuals pursue their own ends, constitute the sphere of particularisation.

State and society are in Hegel's organic account not only opposed but also orientated towards each other. The regeneration of political order requires a set of integrative processes, which connect (relate!) the particular to the universal and *vice versa*.

The members of civil society end up fostering in their self-interested behaviour in the market the public good as well ('market integration'). Moreover, they also turn out to enlarge their sense of self and others, pursuing the good of the corporations they come to participate in, while ultimately, due to parliamentary representation, also wanting the universal good for the community as a whole (the 'political integration'). At the same time, the interactions of the political state while pursuing the common good by reframing and implementing the law, also come to facilitate the pursuit and satisfaction of particularity ('legislative and executive integrations').

The freedom and rationality of Hegel's political order is intimately linked to these organic integrative processes. Freedom and rationality amount to the optimal integration of a social whole: on the one hand, its inner relations must enable the existence and full development of its individual members and parts. At the same time, the individuals and parts must relate to others in a way which facilitate the existence of such a whole. The participation in such a web of relations also renders citizens subjectively free. They are able to exercise their agency freely, not only because they have the right to set their own ends or because the order offers the means to satisfy their needs but also because they come to have a conception of the good.

The challenge of civil society

In chapters 4 and 5, I discussed Hegel's account of civil society. A free political order enables the unfolding of particularity. In civil society, individuals do not identify themselves, at least not immediately, as members of a larger whole. They regard themselves as individual persons, standing by themselves, having a separate consciousness, and bearing responsibility for their choices. As individual moral subjects, they set their private conception of the good, and consequently act to realise this end. Civil society enables this pursuit of self-interest by granting and protecting fundamental individual civil rights, such as the right of property. As a consequence of this, the relations of civil society resemble a market, containing a labour market, work, the production and exchange of goods.

To realise freedom, the relations of civil society must be part of a larger, organic order, the ethical state, in which civil society stands against the political state. This means that the social relations typical of civil society (the market) are complemented and opposed by the relations of the political state, which are orientated towards the good of the community as a whole. In this grander ensemble of social and political relations, the self-interested interactions of civil society are both curbed and enabled at once.

Fundamentally, Hegel's theory of order is an optimistic account of how modern political order despite of *and* due to the development of civil society realises freedom. The emergence of civil society, however, also poses a risk for the realisation of freedom, as its relations could turn out to emancipate themselves from the larger organic ensemble of social

and political relations and come to impose its logic on *all* relations. Civil society renders the modern organic political order both free and fragile.

This emancipation of civil society corresponds to what we have referred to as the liberal conception of order and has the following conceptual features. Individuals do not regard themselves as participants in a larger whole of relations but as independent entities (persons). Freedom consists for them in their ability to choose and realise their own ends. The rights, which should guarantee this freedom, are taken to inhere in them. Absolutising their own ends, they relate to their social life instrumentally, as a means to realise their ends, not as the relational arena in which they have their life and on which they depend. This orientation tends to regard social life as a market. In this conception, individuals also relate to the government instrumentally: its purpose is to protect the rights of individuals and facilitate the realisation of their ends. This civil society perspective on social life – which we have also referred to as Understanding – is unreasonable: instead of comprehending the whole as an intricate web of interdependent *relations*, it offers a reductionistic representation which deduces the whole from the assumed self-sufficiency of the individual parts.

The emergence of this perspective on political reality undermines the reproduction of the free political order in the organic interplay of state and society, while, *vice versa,* deficient integrative processes generate the one-sided outlook of the Understanding. With regard to the (political) state, its institutions, when reasonable, foster in their interactions the good of the community as a whole. The state finds this good 'in between' civil society's plurality, that is in how the parts relate to each other and the whole. The state in the modus of Understanding, in contrast, makes an abstract representation of society, in which it is a space made up of self-sufficient individuals. This perspective can only perceive the purpose of the whole as the purpose of the individuals, who make up the whole. This state, consequently, understands as its own end the promotion of citizens' autonomy, for which they have to protect equal civil rights or to foster the satisfaction of their subjective ends. This instrumental understanding could result both in limited government and in an interventionist state. In either case, the state does not *respond* to the rationality inherent in the social order. As a consequence, its (absence of) interventions will further undermine this rationality.

With regard to the function of civil society for the self-generation of order, individual subjects' free social relations must not only pursue the satisfaction of private ends, but must also develop a more universal and rational orientation. However, a liberal state thwarts this development; it does not solidify civil society's inner tendency to become more rational, and, as a consequence, does not develop the institutional setting which teaches individual subjects how their particular interests are conditioned on the larger political community. Consequently, civil society in the liberal conception of order is destined to

remain an abstract space, a market, in which individuals do not transcend their self-centred ends; they do not see themselves participants in a larger structure. This experience, in turn, reinforces the dominance of the Understanding as the mode of cognition, which also will also spread to the political state.

Both the idea and practice of the liberal order are out of tune with the interdependent, organic nature of socio-political reality. While regarding freedom as an attribute of the individual and organising social life to facilitate autonomy, it does not see how freedom requires social formations, whose intricate web of relations render social dependencies mutually beneficial. This inadequate conceptual grasp is not inconsequential as it undermines the development of settings, such as the corporations, which enable social life to become more reasonable. Civil society, consequently, turns out to be ultimately a space of competition resulting in highly asymmetrical relations of dependence. The liberal order does not have the tools to diagnose its failings as it does not see that freedom ultimately depends on the integration of the various parts of social life with each other and into a coherent and harmonious whole.

Chapters 4 and 5 discussed how Hegel offers an analysis of how the logic of civil society must entail social and political pathologies. Chapter 4 worked out Hegel's analysis of the consequences of organizing social life exclusively on the principle of individual freedom and autonomy. The free development of such an order would fail to bring social life's dependencies into a rational and objectively free structure. Instead, the members of society come to relate to each other as competitors, which leads to poverty and the emergence of an underclass on the one hand and extreme wealth on the other. Subjectively, the members of civil society set their ends by comparing themselves with each other, thus living in the eyes of others. They fail to develop mutual relations of dependence which enable the experience of freedom. Civil society evoke the social roles of self-reliance and success, they do not succeed in rendering this order a home to its members. Rather, a substantial part of its members experiences a form of alienation, as they cannot affirmatively relate to the order and the social role that they play in it. The emergence of the rabble, which responds to this alienation with opposition to the social order, is a logical outcome of this social organisation.

In chapter 5, I reconstructed how Hegel seeks to establish that an instrumental state is not able to solve the pathologies of civil society but rather adds its own. The state operating from the cognitive perspective of the Understanding is unable to discern and implement the universal good. It does not succeed in rendering social relations more harmonious, let alone solve the problem of the underclass. The interventions of the state add to social alienation a political alienation, as the members of this order are destined to experience the actions of the government as an external force that intrudes into their life.

Does the organic state solve the problems of civil society?

Hegel's analysis of the fundamental limitations of civil society – poverty, feelings of alienation, an incapable government, tensions between state and society – is followed by an account of the ethical state. Because the organic state realises freedom, it seems logical to infer that it also solves the economic problems which torment the political order fully based on the principles of civil society (*cf.* 4.3). Hegel, however, does not work out explicitly whether and how the state succeeds in solving civil society's inner economic tensions. The market remains active within the state, which provokes the question whether Hegel's state succeeds in curbing the destructive potential of its capitalistic dynamic, which has become so forceful in modern social and political relations.[167]

First of all, the (market) relations of civil society undergo, when embedded in the larger organic order of the ethical state, a significant transformation. Civil society ceases to be merely an abstract market, a sphere of economic and social competition in which each pursues their individual interests. The interactions of civil society weave connections and, solidified by the state, generate associations, i.e. mutually beneficial structures of interdependence, in which individual agents find their destination. 'Incorporated' individuals come to pursue the ends of their corporation; they come to acknowledge that they carry a social responsibility for their corporative fellows. Building on this, the members of civil society also develop an awareness of being part of a political community. Therefore, competitive market relations centred around the maximalisation of profit are, within the organic state, complemented with and transformed into relations of cooperation. In terms of modern sociology, civil society entails the development of moral and social capital. The relations of civil society become in Hegelian parlance more reasonable, i.e. objectively free, just as they enable the experience of subjective freedom.

This transformation of civil society in the ethical state, however, does not imply that capitalistic relations fully disappear. The full development of particularity implies the existence of a domain in which individuals pursue their self-interested ends. Hegel's conception of order is based on a continuous *metanoia*, whereby individuals come to turn to the good of the community as they come to be aware that this good is also their good. This transformative account only makes sense if the free political order continues to have a domain in which allows citizens to fully pursue their particular interests. Consequently, a market must remain part of a free political community.

The continuous presence of market relations seems to be particularly problematic for the unskilled, lower social classes. The development of civil society into a more cooperative and rational sphere takes place primarily in the corporations. As these corporations are based on sharing the productive skills necessary to exercise a profession,

[167] I have not addressed this issue explicitly in the previous chapters. In this discussion of the key findings of this research, it does not seem apt to neglect this issue.

the unskilled will find difficulties in forming associations, as they do not have a profession for which there is a stable demand. They remain prone to the market mechanism in which they can only compete on the basis of their wages. From this perspective, the problem of an underclass, which does not share in the freedom of society, appears to remain unsolved in Hegel's political order.

At the same time, the government as part of the ethical state has more 'tools' and wisdom at its disposal to promote the good for all. The state is no longer merely an instrument to foster individual interests and rights. Citizens now see themselves as members of a political community, within which the political state has the legitimacy to pursue the good of the whole. This recognition of government and of the community as a whole gives the political state leeway to intervene in social relations, which it does not have in the liberal political order. In the ethical state, the government has more room to provide public goods, such as education and public health, and organise welfare for those in need. Moreover, governmental help is in this setting less humiliating as social relations are no longer predominantly assessed from the norm of individual self-sufficiency; individuals now have become citizens, relating to each other as fellow citizens, participants of the same social order. Within this framework, the administration of welfare (the 'police', *cf.* 5.2) can perform its function effectively. The police in Hegel's account of the ethical state seems to approximate the 20th century idea of a welfare state.

However, Hegel's account of order also shows that a welfare state, which directly takes care of all citizens who cannot maintain themselves in social relations, is not a full solution to the economic tensions of civil society. For at least three reasons a welfare state understood along these lines endangers the realisation of freedom.

First, the experiences of subjective freedom also contain the self-assessment of being indispensable for the existence and reproduction of the social order. Citizens' productive life is not unconnected to the exercise of self-government.[168] Citizens who structurally live off the state might find it hard to see themselves as somebody who matters for the existence of the social whole. Moreover, the experience of solidarity among citizens is for Hegel not an abstract moral requirement. Citizens come to recognise each other as fellow citizens, whose interests and concerns carry weight for them, due to parliamentary proceedings, which show how different sections of the social whole contribute to this whole. The existence of a large section of society who lives off the state could undermine this recognition and the solidarity they are willing to show.

Second, participation in civil society, in particular work and the associative life connected to it, is for Hegel a crucial formative experience, which prepares them for their political existence. Here, citizens develop their skills, experience themselves as participants

[168] As such, Hegel turns around the Greek classical tradition, in which liberation from productive life was seen as a precondition for self-government.

of social formation on which they depend and for which they carry responsibility, and come to participate in deliberations about the good. In Hegel's remarkable analysis, the political domain itself does not suffice for shaping individual subjects into citizens. Welfare regimes, which directly offer sustenance, thus carry the risk of not providing the institutional settings for their full development as citizens.

Finally, a free political order must respect the semi-autonomy of civil society. The state must be largely responsive to the free developments of civil society; it should cultivate the structures of mutual interdependence which emerge in it. The state should exercise a certain reserve in intervening and ordering society directly. It should get not tie society too much to the state, imposing blueprints which determine in detail who gets what income, etc. This would stifle the political order's organic nature which requires civil society to freely weave relations among its members.

All of these dangers do not imply that the Hegelian state must refrain from welfare, but that it should prevent citizens becoming immediately dependent on the state. Welfare programmes should not substitute for but rather foster the participation of those in need in civil society. It is crucial that citizens have work, the basic mode of participating in a free political order. If we think along Hegelian lines, the state should stimulate those potentialities present in civil society to solve the problem itself. For instance, it could incite corporations to take up larger portions of society. Also the self-organisation of the labour market into trade unions fits into the Hegelian conception of order, as society takes the initiative. In addition to this state, the state could regulate the labour market, for instance by setting a minimum wage, which would allow all workers to make a living.

To conclude, Hegel's political order can counteract the disorganising market forces and to realise freedom for all. However, this solution is not simple and definitive. As free societies develop, market forces will continue to undermine the community's flourishing by generating one-sided dependencies. Civil society renders the political order free, but also fragile. Contrary to Avineri (*cf.* 5.3), the political states of well-structured order do have the ability to continuously counter these processes of corruption, not by overcoming the market, but curbing and embedding it and as such let is transform itself. In this respect, Hegel offers an optimistic theory of how the political order, which seeks the realisation of freedom for all, can accommodate modernity's unfolding of capitalism within itself for its own purpose.

Citizenship as self-government

Finally, this study has worked out the account of citizenship and self-government which Hegel's organic conception of political order entails. In the first place, Hegel's account of citizenship differs from the liberal right-based conception of citizenship. Like the liberal account, the members of Hegel's conception of order have an extensive set of liberal rights, but, in contrast, they should not consider these rights as their property. This difference may

appear trivial but is, in fact, crucial in Hegel's conception of order. For realising freedom, a political community must have the leeway to revise rights in the legislature. A political order can only remain free by adjusting laws, if citizens do not absolutise their rights, but recognise the state's substantiality, that is their dependence on the political order at large. A free order, therefore, appears in Hegel's theory of order as a thin line. On the one hand, it should offer citizens the full development of their particularity by granting them the rights which enable this. At the same time, these citizens should not mistakenly regard these rights as their personal property, but as rooted in their membership of the political community.

In the reconstruction of Hegel's account of citizenship, I have positioned Hegel firmly within the republican tradition of self-government. Ultimately, the political community and its laws are, and should be experienced as, the will of its citizens. For this the cognitive attitude of trust is of crucial importance. Hegel rejects the idea that self-government must be based on the democratic system of one-man-one-vote or direct participation. Similarly, Hegel, rejects the ideal of popular sovereignty. Instead, he positions sovereignty in the web of inner relations constitutive of the political order. Citizens can participate in the exercise of this sovereignty in the self-government of the corporations and communes, in the corporative representation in the legislative assembly and by contribution to public opinion.

Hegel's anti-democratic stance should not be taken as a mere conservative sentiment. It expresses Hegel's awareness of the inner fragility of a free political order. The presence of civil society could easily entail the emancipation of individual subjectivity. Agents then regard their subjective will, their personal convictions about the good, as valuable as any other's. They do not yet know that they are not reasonable. If the political system does not have an inner standard, the rational will in itself, it will regard all wills as equally valid. The outcome of the electoral process, then, must be arbitrary at least, but very likely suppresses the legitimate interests and rights of parts of the political community.

For Hegel, the challenge of a free political order is to have an institutional setting which tames unleashed particularity and renders the particular wills more reasonable. Also in this respect, Hegel's account of political order is optimistic, as he regards the institutions of his age capable of this formative work. In particular, the role of the Lower House, made up by (corporative) representatives, is crucial for developing a sense for the common good. In contrast to Constant, Hegel does not think that democratic institutions in themselves could bring about the social learning that a free political order requires. The associations in civil society, the family, the activities of the profession civil service in the legislative and executive branches, must also contribute to this. Due to all these integrative processes, public opinion might come to approximate the rational will. In Hegel's analysis, states, by not being organised as a democracy, could turn out to be democratic in practice, understood as a regime in which the will of the state corresponds with the will of the people.

8.3 Normatively unappealing?

A first reason for rejecting the relevance of Hegel's conception of political order could be normative. From the dominant, liberal and democratic normative orientation, Hegel's order could be criticised for not realising or even violating the values that it holds dear. First of all, Hegel could be said to insufficiently protect Constant's 'modern liberty'. A free political order should enable its members to lead autonomous lives. This requires a wide gamut of firmly established universal civil rights, which protect the individual against domination. In a liberal perspective, such as Constant's, the main threat to freedom consists in the power of the state. Consequently, the power of the state must be limited. Rights must be conceived as preceding the state, so that citizens can invoke them against the state. In Hegel's state, however, civil rights appear more as a favour than as their firmly established property.

Second, Hegel's political order is likely to be criticises as being non- or only deficiently democratic. From a democratic perspective, all citizens should have the same democratic right on the basis of which each could, in principle at least, exercise equal democratic influence. In Hegel's order, however, citizens do not have an equal right to vote. Moreover, Hegel's state does not recognise the people as its ultimate foundation. As a mixed regime, in which the actions of the state officials are crucial, not all decisions and responsibilities can be traced back to the popular will. From a democratic perspective, this setting is unacceptable.

Third, Hegel's conception of order could also be criticised for thwarting the development of individuality. To be free means from this perspective the ability of individuals to develop their individuality and follow in life a corresponding path. Hegel's order, in contrast, is deeply and densely institutional. Individuals have to perform the social roles of the institutions, the family, work and the state, in which they are embedded. From the perspective of the importance of individuality, Hegel's political order counteracts individuals' authentic self-development by pressurising them to conform to their societal roles.

Finally, Hegel's order might not only be criticised from the perspective of freedom, but also from the ideal of social justice and equality. Hegel's order allows the free development of civil society, which results in social relations that are pluralistic and, by inference, unequal as citizens of Hegel's order turn out to have unequal economic and political positions. Hegel's political order, thus, goes against the norm of equality.

These criticisms of Hegel's conception of order have in common that they assess Hegel's political order from a distinctive norm or principle: freedom as non-interference, the rights of the people to rule themselves, the value of individuality and the demand for equality. From a Hegelian perspective, however, this mode of judging is deeply problematic as it posits isolated standards to measure social reality against. This approach fails to investigate whether this standard is reasonable itself.

Hegel's account of political order is based on the will, which, according to him, has an inner orientation towards freedom: the will wants to will itself (see 3.4). The *Philosophy of Right* investigates how the will realises freedom, which has a conceptual (what is freedom?) and an institutional dimension (what setting realises freedom?). Hegel comes to the conclusion that freedom needs a social form which succeeds in continually restructuring the dependencies of all its parts into a form which is mutually beneficial for all. This form enables the full development of the parts while these parts at the same time contribute to regenerating this free whole.

From this perspective, each of the critical accounts is one-sided. Their assessments are based on representative thought, or the Understanding, which does not penetrate the organic nature of social relations and, consequently, cannot conceive what freedom in reality means. They do not acknowledge that freedom consists in the organisation and mutual adjustment of all social relations, which cannot be reduced to a simple norm or principle. This does not imply that Hegel rejects the content of these values, as the free political order is supposed to realise, to a certain degree, each of them. However, he rejects the absolutisation of these, or any other, values, which does not fit in, and undermines, the organic nature of political communities

The liberal, democratic and social justice criticisms of the normative framework of Hegel's political order, therefore, backfire. Hegel's theory of a free political order could be read as a criticism of the normative dogmas that they invoke against his theory and also against the social and political relations in real existing societies. In the remainder of this section, I will briefly work out the rejoinders which can be inferred from Hegel's conception of order to each of the four points of criticism.

First, Hegel does not oppose civil rights in themselves, but their absolutisation. Rights are a legal way to structure dependencies: the right of the one, for instance a right to property, corresponds with the duty of the other to respect this right. This way, rights can generate a sphere of non-interference (which is also a sphere of obligations) in which individual agents can be self-determining. Hegel recognises the need of such a sphere for the realisation of freedom. A free political order, therefore, contains a civil society. Civil rights, however, are in themselves not sufficient for a free political order. The realisation of freedom requires a communal life, which consists of a rich web of formative social and political relations by which its participants without force attune to each other. Civil rights, necessary for the full development of particularity, are *part* of such a political community, a part which requires the whole for its existence. The absolutisation of rights fails to acknowledge this communal embedding.

This ontological misconception of rights is not without practical consequences. Liberals fear the state becoming dominating, arbitrarily interfering in society without respecting citizens' fundamental right. Citizens, therefore, need to have rights which they

can invoke against the state and which the state cannot take away. Against this view, Hegel holds that an unamendable rights regime can be equally dominating. The right to property, for instance, can generate relations of dependence which come at the expense of the flourishing of the community as a whole. It is, therefore, pertinent for a free political order that the state brings adjustments to the rights regime in order to keep the community objectively free. In Hegel's conception of political order, 'the good', i.e. the rational or objective freedom, has priority over 'the right' (also because freedom as the good also includes rights). Citizens, therefore, must recognise that rights do not inhere in them, but that the political community, including the political state, is their substance. Only then, will citizens allow the state to make adjustments and be able to experience them as reasonable.

Hegel, thus, rejects the liberal programme, which counters its distrust of the state by giving individuals rights they can invoke against the state and, thus, by limiting the range of state intervention. This rejection does not mean that Hegel himself is blind to the danger of state abuse. Overall, he is very cautious with respect to interference in society, arguing for incremental adaptions in the light of changing circumstances. Moreover, the constitutional structure of his order contains feedback mechanisms, which should prevent governmental abuse (see 6.3 and 7.5). However, going further, forcing the state to accept rights, takes the possibility away for the state to regenerate itself as a free organic whole. The liberal strategy to prevent 'evil', i.e. domination, undermines the realisation of freedom. The liberal intention to protect freedom, paradoxically, destroys freedom.

Hegel's theory of order opposes democratic complacency, according to which every extension of popular influence must be beneficial. Democracy itself is not a good in itself. The ultimate purpose of a political community is rational freedom, which must include self-government. The (re)generation of a free and rational political order requires the interplay of a large set of integrative processes. In these, not only the participation of the political class matters, but also that of citizens, as worked out in 7.5. However, when democratic principles claim to be the only legitimate principle to organise political decision-making, political orders are destined to fail. Hegel, thus, points at the old paradox that democracies can undermine freedom and also themselves.[169]

The third criticism fears that Hegel's political order stifles the development of authentic individuality. Hegel's institutionalised conception of political order does not leave room for the development of individuality. This criticism, however, misunderstands Hegel's understanding of institutions. For Hegel, human agency is, by definition, institutionally embedded. I have referred to this feature as the priority of the social. From this perspective, also the ideal of individuality and authenticity, which posits the free inner development of

[169] I do not want to make the claim that every criticism of Hegel's theory in the name of democracy must be deficient, but only the simple, unexamined view that popular influence is by necessity good.

the individual against external social pressures, are social ideals, embedded in a certain historical and cultural setting.

Moreover, institutional membership does not mean that the individual must fully conform to the homogeneous norms of the institution. The norms of the institutions which Hegel singles out for the realisation of freedom, the family, work, and the state, are relatively open. States, families or corporations must continuously concretize the norms and ends which should realise the good internal to the institution. The members of these institutions can contribute to this. In addition, the institutional norms allow for variety – particularisation – in the way members contribute to their existence. Citizenship allows for different ways of living, either political or at home in civil society. Likewise, professional roles allow for variety in the way individuals perform them. Individuals can be good doctors in different ways, even though they must have certain skills and values in common. For Hegel, institutions and the accompanying social roles are not obstacles but preconditions to develop individuality and find recognition for it. In order to become a specific kind of doctor and be acknowledged as such, one needs the judgment of one's peers. Similarly, distinctive modes of living can only be recognised within a political community, orientated towards the thriving of the whole.

To finish rebutting the third objection, it is important to keep in mind that Hegel's theory of order allows for the coexistence of different social roles, without any of them claiming an allegiance at the expense of others. Citizenship, as the most encompassing social role, more extensive than intensive, does not subordinate all other roles, such as work or even personhood, but assumes and facilitates these. Consequently, Hegel's political order is a landscape consisting of a wide variety of social roles, which enables citizens to follow their own path, developing their individuality.

Finally, Hegel's account of order can be criticised for being unjust as his political order consists of inequalities. The free unfolding of the political order in civil society must, by necessity, bring about social differentiation: not all citizens end up in the same or a similar social, economic or political position in the social whole. The standard of equality is for Hegel too abstract; it does not do justice to the differentiated nature of a free political order.

This rejection of equality clearly does not imply that any inequality is acceptable in Hegel's political order. For being acceptable, the inequality must contribute to freedom, which implies that the relations of dependence are mutually beneficial. More relevant than signalling inequality in a social and political setting, therefore, is to question whether *all* citizens are able to experience subjective freedom. Each must be able to pursue their own ends, recognise the law as their own, experience recognition in their station in the social whole and regard themselves as indispensable for the regeneration of the political order. This subjective freedom is only possible within a rational, objectively free political community, which succeeds in taking the interests of all groups into account. Such an order is clearly incompatible with relations of exploitation.

8.4 Is Hegel's organic ontology implausible?

Another reason for doubting the relevance of Hegel's theory of order concerns his metaphysical or ontological assumptions. This study has offered a reconstruction which does not explicitly follow the conceptual logic, which is often taken to be obscure and metaphysically implausible. Instead, it has interpreted Hegel's account in terms of an organic ontology. This ontology, however, might appear as equally implausible.

Hegel regards the political order as an organic whole; individuals are participants in this organic substance; their being depends on this social whole; their will participates in the larger will of the community though it does not mean that the will for themselves automatically falls together with the will in itself; the will is intrinsically orientated on becoming free and rational; relations are constitutive of relata; reason is understood as the inner organisation of the relations which make a whole; the poles of oppositions, for instance between the particular and universal, private and public, society and state, are not simple dichotomies but also condition, and are orientated towards, their opposite. These assumptions easily appear as ungrounded, and as such closer to religion than what a scientific theory of political order should bring about.[170]

As a consequence of this, many readers would prefer an account of political order, which does not include organic, interdependent assumptions. The liberal conception of order appears from this perspective more plausible. This assessment, however, raises the question whether non-organic conceptions of order are not equally based on ungrounded ontological assumptions. The liberal account of order rejects the presence of an inner norm – the reasonable – in social relations except for the rights which inhere in the individual. It does not understand political order as an internally differentiated coherent whole, like a body, but as a space in which entities, individuals, interact with each other. The ends of these individuals proceed from themselves; their wills are taken as starting points.[171] This account understands political order by reference to these single wills working upon each other. It has a linear understanding of causality. Its mode of cognition is the Understanding, which understands the whole by reference to the parts, which have existence in themselves. It does not discern that social relations constitute an interdependent whole, which embeds single individuals as participants. Freedom is understood by reference to the individual, who should be able to pursue his self-chosen ends, not as an attribute of a web of relations which must be structured in a specific way. The state is understood by reference to the individual: it should protect individual rights or foster an aggregate good, like economic growth.

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[170] Hegel connects his account of political order at some points to a religious experience of order. Individuals are part of a pre-structured and further evolving reality that transcends them. When Hegel refers to the existence of the state order as "the march of God in the world" (*PR*, §258A), this religious connotation is very explicit.

[171] This perspective does not reject the existence of social influence, but it does not attribute a will to the whole.

Is this ontology, which is taken for granted in the liberal conception of order, more plausible than Hegel's organic ontology? Does it do justice to what political order and social life in reality amount to? How do we know that this ontology is true? Of course, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prove what account of the ultimate nature of social reality is true and it certainly is beyond the scope of this study. But the burden to prove the plausibility of a conception of order does lie as much on those taking the non-organic order for granted as on those accepting Hegel's assumptions.

Though I cannot prove Hegel's organic ontology, it deserves, for two reasons, at least serious attention. In the first place, as the non-organic understanding of order has come to dominate social and political reflection, it is often taken for granted. Hegel's conception of political order offers a sophisticated challenge to this understanding of political order. Hegel's account of political order does not merely assume a different, organic ontology, but also includes an account of the deficiencies of the non-organic ontology: his account of civil society is also an investigation into the mode of cognition – the Understanding – which does not discern the organic nature of social and political relations. In civil society, in its initial form before entering the corporations, individuals take their own self as absolute. They see themselves as the cause of their own action and have an instrumental relation to their social life and, consequently, take the state as the means of their own life.

Hegel, thus, allows within his organically structured order a domain for the Understanding, even though it should come to awareness that it is does not fully comprehend social reality and turn reasonable. The re-presentation of social reality of the Understanding is unable to 'presence' the relations which are constitutive of social reality, and is therefore at the same time a misrepresentation: it does not discern the deeper organic interdependence and unity of social life. Hegel offers an account of the necessary real-life effects of a political order which takes the representation of the Understanding as full reality. The inability to attune to political reality renders the social relations pathological (see chapters 4 and 5). As Hegel's theoretical account of the pathological consequences of a liberal order to a large degree corresponds with the syndromes which haunt the current liberal order, it seems reasonable to take his organic ontology seriously.

In the second place, Hegel's organic ontology has gained plausibility in the light of recent academic studies, in particular the ground-breaking work of the psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist on brain lateralisation.[172] His main finding, on the basis of extensive clinical and experimental evidence, is the existence of two distinctive modes of cognition or of attention. For our purposes, it is highly interesting to highlight a few of the differences in cognition between both hemispheres.[173]

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[172] McGilchrist's approach must not be confused with pop scientific ideas on the divided brain and their effects on psychology that spread in the 60's and 70's of the 20th century. All of these earlier ideas are wrong.

[173] It is beyond the scope of this research to work out this theory in more detail.

> 1. The LH [left hemisphere] is principally concerned with manipulation of the world; the RH with understanding the world as a whole and how to relate to it.
>
> 4. The LH aims to narrow things down to a certainty, while the RH opens them up to possibility. The RH is able to sustain ambiguity and the holding together of information that appears to have contrary implications, without having to make an 'either/or' decision, and to collapse it, as the LH tends to do, in favour of one of them.
>
> 6. The LH tends to see things as isolated, discrete, fragmentary, where the RH tends to see the whole. The LH tends to see things as put together mechanically from pieces, and sees the parts, rather than the complex union that the RH sees
>
> 7. The LH's world tends towards fixity and stasis, that of the RH towards change and flow.
>
> 19. The RH is better at seeing things as they are preconceptually (…). The LH, then, sees things as they are 'represented', literally 'present again' after the fact, as already familiar abstractions or signs. One could say that the LH is the hemisphere of theory, the RH that of experience; the LH that of the map, the RH that of the terrain. (McGilchrist 2021, 28–30)

For human functioning (and also for other animals) the contributions of both hemispheres are crucial. It is necessary to make a model out of reality but at the same time to have an openness for wider reality of which such a model is always a simplification. However, there is also a hierarchy. For full contact with reality, the right hemisphere should have priority. It should be the master and the left brain its emissary. In *The Master and his Emissary* (2009), McGilchrist warns of the danger of the left hemisphere taking up the role as master, which consequently offers a lopsided, reductive, one-sided picture of reality.

In the third part of *The Matter with Things*, McGilchrist attempts to give an account of the nature of reality as it appears to the Right Hemisphere.[174] In these chapters, he discusses fundamental ontological issues, such as the nature of time, space, motion, matter and consciousness, but also the nature of social reality, which he, like Hegel, approaches in organic terms as parts and whole, interdependence, reciprocal instead of linear causality, relationships as coming before the relata, flow and change, and the unity of opposites

The parallels of Hegel's and McGilchrist's approach are striking. It does not seem that farfetched to read in these two modes of cognition, LH and RH, Hegel's distinction between Understanding and Reason, while McGilchrist's account of the nature of reality to a large degree corresponds with Hegel's interdependent organic account. McGilchrist's idea of the risk of a left hemisphere domination corresponds with the danger in Hegel's

[174] Every account of the nature of reality depends on the left hemisphere which has the tools to give a 'representation'.

conception of order of the Understanding claiming its representations to fully grasp the nature of reality and of civil society claiming to constitute the political order as a whole. This correspondence of Hegel's account of political order with McGilchrist's brain-based account of two modes of understanding and his organic account of reality clearly does not prove its truth, but it certainly adds to its plausibility. Hegel's theory cannot be rejected with mere reference to its ontological assumptions as their implausibility can no longer be deemed self-evident.

8.5 Institutionally outdated?

Finally, Hegel's account appears as institutionally outdated. His theory of how free political order could be realised might fit early nineteenth century societies but seems to be fully irrelevant for 21st century political order. First of all, the key institutions of his order, the estates, corporations and monarchy have all but disappeared in current societies. The other way round, key institutions of current-day societies, such as universal voting rights, are explicitly rejected. More generally, Hegel offers a picture of a communitarian political order in which state and society to a large degree cohere and mutually condition each other. These Hegelian state-societies do not fit the 21st century political reality in which civil society, in particular the market, has become globalised. The shift in meaning of the concept of the corporation could be said to symbolise the lack of relevance of Hegel's order. While corporations were for Hegel the self-organising economic sectors with constitutionally determined political rights *within* a state and orientated towards this state, current corporations are global actors, not bound to any state let alone the good of the state, but at home in what we could designate as a global civil society.

It is without doubt true that the political world has changed dramatically but it does not immediately follow that this makes Hegel's theory of political order irrelevant. It all depends on how we read this theory of order. If we read his institutional picture as a normative blueprint, it does not suit current conditions. And if we read his theory as an explication of why a specific historical institutional formation realises freedom, it explicates the order of his age, not ours.

For assessing its relevance for 21st century society, we must bring up the nature of the Hegelian project (*cf.* 3.2 & 3.5). Most fundamentally, the *Philosophy of Right* is an explication of why the political structures of his age, that is the Post-Revolutionary, Post-Napoleonic order, are rational and free. The *Philosophy or Right* explores what a full realisation of freedom would amount to and how the institutions present in his age contribute to this. Hegel's description of order, therefore, does not fully correspond with any really-existing political order of his age, as he includes only those institutions which are relevant for realising freedom.

Hegel's theory is not meant as a normative blueprint. The institutions which enable the realisation of freedom are not the result of constitutional design but based on a long-term historical evolution together with sudden reforms in the wake of historical events, such as the French Revolution, all of them being beyond human control. This explication is not without normative implications. The knowledge concerning which of the institutions that make up a concrete state are crucial for the realisation of freedom entails the normative obligation to protect and strengthen these institutions, especially when they have not fully come to fruition as the corporations. However, his project rejects the (Enlightenment) idea that a rational constitution can be designed and imposed on a society. Since it is not meant as a universal constitutional prescription, it cannot be obsolete in this sense.

As an explication of order, however, we can question its relevance for us. Hegel, clearly, offers a rational explication of the political order of his age. On the one hand, it could be argued that our order still has the key institutions which Hegel emphasises: a civil society, civil rights, a professional civil service, representation and citizenship. On the other hand, it could be argued that these institutions have been transformed beyond recognition – compare for instance Hegel's corporative representation and modern elections – and other institutions have largely disappeared. How could Hegel's account of order be relevant to us?

It seems useful to me to distinguish two institutional levels within Hegel's explication of political order. The first, most basic level gives a relatively abstract account of what institutional setting realises freedom. From this perspective, a free political order needs (1) civil society, a sphere of interaction in which individuals pursue their own ends, and which includes a market, and (2) a well-developed, constitutionally structured political state, in which political experts, skilled in practical judgments, are active, and which fosters the good of the community as a whole. These spheres are opposed, but also orientated towards each other. Civil society, in the pursuit of particularity, must also turn both unconsciously and by intention, towards the good of the community as a whole. The political state must in its pursuit of the common good, also respect, as far as possible, society's particularity and enable its free development of civil society.

The other level contains the more concrete institutions by which the interplay of state and society generates political order. In Hegel's account of order, civil society structures itself into estates and, crucial in his order, the corporations as self-governing associations. Moreover, civil society also generates public opinion, which is conditioned on the freedom of expression, and which requires specific institutional forms (papers, reading societies). The structure of family life, the nuclear family, is relevant for the way in which civil society develops as well. For the organisation of the political state, the organisation of the representative assemblies, its constitutional rights, but also the way representatives are selected, the monarch and his constitutional role, the executive and the specific organisation

of the civil service, and the relations between the branches of government are all relevant for how it performs its function.

The distinction of both levels is somewhat artificial, as the realisation of freedom, in the interplay of state and society requires the functioning of the more concrete institutions and relationships. But it is useful for helping us distinguish what in Hegel's theory of order cannot be given up without discarding his theory and what allows for different institutional forms. In this respect, the basic level points to what is essential for the freedom of the modern political order (the opponent processing of state and society) and to the institutional requirements this entails *in abstracto*. However, the specific institutional organisation of Hegel's theory of order – the second level – does not seem to have the same kind of necessity. The generation of political order needs a web of institutions, which, by linking the particular and universal, transform the will of a political community, but the identity of these institutions and their inner organisations seem to leave room for alternatives – functional equivalents – which are able to bring about the same social effects.

Such a reading of Hegel's theory of order extends the scope of its relevance beyond the confines of his age. Hegel's theory of order can be used, then, to explicate the (lack of) freedom and rationality in current, late modern, political orders. It could help to diagnose adequately what is the case and what are the underlying causes. Its strength and distinctiveness lie in its synoptic, holistic approach, which attempts to take into account the organic interdependence of social relations, and its rich conception of freedom. As such, Hegel's account of order could offer a valuable alternative to one-sided understandings of order, which do not do justice to the whole.

The Hegelian framework could help to understand the flourishing of liberal democracies, the distinctive combination of market and democracy, in Western democracies in the post-war era (1945-1989). A Hegelian-based interpretation could uncover the inner logic of successful liberal democracies, going beyond interpretations, which take the stability of liberal democracy for granted and explain its current problems by reference to relative external factors, like economic growth, the threat of immigration and the rise of the social media (*cf.* 1.2 for a discussion of Mounk).

Below, I will endeavour to give the broad strokes of such a Hegelian interpretation. By necessity, this interpretation cannot do justice to all the empirical complexity and variety. It does not pretend to offer a conclusive analysis of liberal democracy; it merely wants to point out the distinctive tenor of a Hegelian analysis.

First of all, the liberal democracies of this period could be said to realise freedom, or in any case approximate the realisation of freedom. Individual citizens can pursue and realise their own ends (the liberal part), but they could also see themselves as participating in the democratic self-government of the community. Liberal democracies succeeded in generating relatively high levels of political trust and turnout in elections. In Hegelian terms,

liberal democracies have succeeded rendering their members subjectively free. The post-war liberal democracies could also be said to be objectively free, as different segments of society, such as workers, succeeded in having their reasonable interests taken into account in relevant decision-making.[175]

In a Hegelian analysis, the success of the post-war order cannot be explained by reference to the free market and presence of civil liberties alone. It regards as crucial that society does not remain an abstract space, but transforms itself into a sphere which forms its members and prepares them for political existence. In civil society, individuals must come to develop their will, no longer merely focusing on their isolated private ends, but now also willing universal ends which are no longer taken as pure opposites of their private ends. In Hegel's account of political order, the corporations were crucial for the political self-organisation of civil society. The post-war order had its functional equivalents of this: mass political parties which were embedded in society, trade unions, social movements and also experiments with forms of self-government for economic sectors. These mediating institutions succeeded in forging connections between the particular and the universal, the parts and the whole. Thanks to them, citizens were able to understand and attune to the reality they participate in, not by suppressing their particular self-interest, but by developing a greater awareness of what their particular interests exactly are.[176] For the development of reasonable public opinion, also the role of professional journalism, like Hegel's civil servants skilled in political judgment, must be singled out.

With regard to political decision-making, the post-war world understood itself emphatically as a representative *democracy*. Elections to a large degree structured political life, whose results were largely taken as the expression of society's political will. The political institutions were supposed to follow society's political preferences. This form of popular democracy seems to go against Hegel's understanding of the role of the state. However, it is a simplification to regard this order as a pure popular democracy. First, the democratic will of society went for its development through a set of institutions, which – in line with Hegel's vision – rendered it more reasonable. Political parties, which represented more or less objective segments of society, like labour, brought together the bottom-up perspective of the needs of its members in society with the top-down perspective of its representatives on the state level. This is not so different from Hegel's corporative representatives, who are also supposed to mediate between the state interests and those of their corporations. Similarly, journalism had this function of connecting society to the affairs of the state, and the state to

[175] Again, this is by necessity a very general picture, which does not want to deny the presence of forms of domination, social tensions and fundamental political criticism.

[176] From a Hegelian perspective, all associations seem to be useful, thus also sport clubs and churches. However, he emphasises forms of association which have a direct political relevance.

what happened in society. Due to these mediations, the people did not rule as an abstract aggregate but as an organised unity that has gone through processes of formation.

In addition, it is also incorrect to regard the state in this era as merely an instrument of the democratic will of society, or as an instrument to merely protect civil rights and the market. The state, which consisted of a professionalised civil service, did enable markets and individual civil and social rights, but it also carried a responsibility for the whole of society. Civil servants were not supposed to refrain from developing ideas about the common good and intervene on this basis. This period also attempts to use scientific knowledge for good policies, instituting scientific councils. I do not want to claim that the abstract, liberal representation of social life, which gives individual choice a sacred status, was fully absent with this civil service and scientific councils in this period, but it was clearly less dominant than it would become in the 90's. In this setting, the involvement of the civil service in the preparation of laws was also taken to be less of a violation of the democratic dogma of the priority of politics.[177] All these elements are in a Hegelian analysis crucial for the thriving of liberal democracy in the post-war period.

Hegel's theory of order could also be used for diagnosing the crisis of liberal democracy in late modernity. It is clearly beyond the scope of this study to offer here a full-fledged analysis of the fate of the current political order. Again, I will only highlight some of the elements which stand out from a Hegelian perspective. These elements correspond with the idea of an inner fragility of Hegel's organic conception of order. As such, this analysis indicates the direction in which a Hegelian analysis would go.

From a Hegelian perspective, current political orders are no longer able to fully realise freedom. The widespread expression of discontent and distrust, often combined with a populist vote, indicate a decrease in subjective freedom. Such an analysis would highlight experiences of alienation, whereby citizens do not experience the political order as their 'home'. They do not experience their lives to matter for the existence of the whole, nor do they see themselves participating in a form of self-government. As they do not succeed in relating to government, its interventions are to a large degree experienced as an arbitrary, ungrounded exercise of power. Hegel's concept of the rabble, understood not so much as a material but as a spiritual want, seems to catch the phenomenon of pockets of society fully rejecting its key principles and norms.

The current political order appears in a Hegelian analysis also as less rational. In empirical-institutional terms, the parts are not enough integrated into the social whole, while on a cognitive level, the Understanding dominates. The parts of society have difficulties in discerning how they are participants in an interdependent, differentiated, social whole.

[177] I do not want to make the point that the civil service fully followed its own ends against the wishes of politics, but that there was more of a collaboration, which corresponds with Hegel's conception of how the civil service collaborates with the legislative power.

Instead, they see themselves first of all as separate individual, who predominantly relate to others by abstract comparisons or as instruments for the realisation of their ends. Alternatively, they can also misjudge their organic embeddedness by absolutising the group that they identify with. These practical identities do not allow citizens to pursue reasonable ends. As a consequence of this lack of rationality, the social whole is not able to reproduce itself in freedom. For maintaining political order, it must more often resort to the exercise of force, including manipulation.

In a Hegelian analysis, the deeper ground for this state of being is the emancipation of civil society from the larger political order. In a free political order, civil society needs to be free, but this freedom is not an end in itself. Civil society should be the arena in which individuals come to see that they are citizens and that the well-being of the community is also their end. From a Hegelian perspective, this formation takes place insufficiently. The mediating institutions into which civil society must organise itself have lost much of their vitality. In particular, political parties have lost their ability to mediate state and society as they are no longer embedded in society. Now corporations are the most important association in civil society, but, following a logic of self-interest, they do not perform the mediating function that Hegel attributed to his corporations. Civil society, therefore, has more and more obtained the character of a pure market, fully determined by the logic of its members pursuing their own ends. Neoliberalism, which has come up since the 80's, is the ideological expression of this development.

Parallel to this change, the nature of the state has also changed.[178] The state is no longer conceived, nor does it conceive itself, as a relatively self-sufficient player in the organic whole whose purpose is to cultivate the common good within the freely developing relations of civil society. Instead, it takes itself as an instrument of society, of which it has an abstract representation. One version of this is to regard society as a market, a self-contained system of interactions in which individuals pursue their own ends. The task of government is to follow the liberal script of protecting the rights of citizens and making decisions or regulations in case of conflicting claims. In this conception, the state does not discern the good which inheres in the inner relations of the social whole. Instead of practical wisdom, government has become technocratic (see 6.3).

In the other version, society is understood as a democratic unity whose will can be read in the outcome of elections. The state takes this expression of the political will as authoritative of what society wants and defines its task as the implementation of this will. Also in this version, the state does not regard the discernment of the good inherent in the social relations as its task. From a Hegelian perspective, the problem of democracy is that it generates a political will, based on an aggregation and dynamic of particular subjectivities, which have not been disciplined into becoming more reasonable. While in the post-war

[178] The change of civil society is both the cause and the effect of the change of the state.

order, political parties ingrained in society were able to shape the will of citizens in line with the needs of society and the state, modern parties, competing for the votes of the citizens, manipulate voters into voting for them by the use of polarisation. Similarly, the proceedings of parliament and journalistic reporting of it, no longer succeed in their educational function of illustrating that the particular and the universal are interdependent, which is often attributed to the rise of the social media and the commercial imperative of click over content. In this setting, the majority will must be, from a Hegelian perspective, fundamentally arbitrary.

In both versions, the political state has given up its ambition to discern the rational, and to cultivate the good present in society. This attitude constitutes a logical response to operating in a society which takes respect for individual subjectivity and economic and political competition as its natural features. In this setting, rational judgments, which discern the good by taking all conditions and mutual interdependencies into account, do not succeed, insofar as citizens and state officials are capable of making them, in gaining weight in the social whole.

Without this inner purpose of freedom and rationality, the political order is likely to become a plaything of societal forces, economic, electoral, or both at the same time. The forces that will gain supremacy, possibly by the promise to restore freedom, will use the state institutions to curb – not integrate (!) – those elements in society it regards as a threat to political stability or its own power position. Consequently, the continued existence of order becomes dependent on the exercise of force and also on manipulation, as in order to find support and legitimacy, such an order will endeavour to convince its citizens by inventing narratives which are not grounded in real existing relations and do not resonate with the good which inheres in social relations.

Finally, I want to address the question whether Hegel's theory of order can also be used for fostering freedom and rationality, especially in the light of the crisis of democracy. There are reasons to answer this question negatively. The purpose of Hegel's project is to explicate the rationality of a political order that has come to fruition. As such, Hegel could establish how the institutions of his age could realise freedom and we can see now how the constitutions of the post-war order could also realise freedom. But now, we are living in times of transition which move us beyond Hegelian territory; the fundamental base of Hegelian political order, the organic state-society unities are collapsing. With Hegel's theory of order in mind, we can witness and diagnose this process of disorganisation – as addressed above – but we cannot stop it. The forces which now determine social relations, global civil society, regional powers and empires, global capitalism, the rejection of mediating institutions by technical innovations (the social media, the market) announce a new kind of order, though we cannot know, only speculate about, its precise nature, let alone establish how this new world order could turn out to be reasonable in the end.

This nostalgic use of Hegel's theory of order, however, is not the only option. The current order could also be said to be after but not beyond Hegel. From this perspective, it is still within the reach of current liberal democracies to reproduce themselves as free communities by the organic interplay of state and society. A Hegelian analysis could be used to explicate how current institutions could bring this about. It is not sufficient for such an explication to merely describe the most visible and prominent institutions active in our social worlds. It should also proceed more imaginatively, investigating the presence of institutions that have the potential to contribute to order but have not come to fruition yet, just as Hegel saw in the emergence of proto-corporative associations a possibility for the political order of his age to realise freedom. A Hegelian explication is also able to discern the hidden potential of existing relations. Such an analysis could be prescriptive, not in the sense of offering a blueprint, but by pointing out which institutions, to some degree present already in social relations, should be reformed in what direction to further contribute to freedom. It must also demonstrate how this institutional ensemble would be able to render social relations and participants more reasonable by weaving connections between the particular and the universal.

It is beyond the scope of this study to offer such an explication and answer the question whether the political order of our age could still realise freedom. I only wish to underline (a) the crucial importance of the question whether the modern political order would be able to organise itself as a 'home' for its members; and (b) that Hegel offers valuable theoretical tools for tackling this question. To conclude this study, I only want to point to three issues which seem to me crucial for such an investigation into the possibilities of 21st century freedom.

First, one of the most remarkable institutional developments in European democracy has been the continuing development of European Union governance structures. The emergence of this 'political state' seems to be a logical response to problems more and more transcending the national state-society framework. At the same time, it brings up the Hegelian question whether EU institutions could contribute to the freedom of European societies? From a Hegelian perspective, a polity in which individuals relate without mediation to the political state cannot be free. Consequently, national states must play a role within the structure of the EU. But *how* in a free order should the EU political state relate to the political states of its member states? And how should this political state relate to free society? For investigating these urgent questions, the Hegelian framework seems very relevant.[179]

Second, markets must from a Hegelian perspective develop certain structures, in which individuals find their place in life and which also enables them to be citizens. Free

[179] Two decades ago, this question had already been addressed by Siep (2003) and Quante and Rózsa (2001). Given the crisis of liberal democracy, it would be good to re-examine this.

markets must transcend themselves. If markets remain solely organised around profit and self-interest, a political order cannot be free. This raises the question whether the current political order contains possibilities to overcome the abstract market logic, for example in 'glocal' movements and forms of economic organisation which do not focus exclusively on profit, such as cooperatives and other forms of shared resources, such as the commons. In addition, it brings up the question what tools current states have to re-embed markets and to stimulate the development of reasonable structures.

Third, Hegel's analysis rejects one-man-one-vote democracy as threatening the rationality of the political order. The post-war order showed that it is possible to have democratic representation due to the mediating institutions – political parties, journalism – which render the particular wills more reasonable, more in tune with political reality. Current liberal democracies, however, have great difficulties in rendering subjective particularity more reasonable. A Hegelian explication must investigate the presence of institutions which could bring reason into political life. Citizen councils and other democratic innovations not based on competition for votes but sortition might be more reasonable organisations of political participation. Moreover, it must investigate whether the age of social media, in which attention has become a commodity and an object of competition, contains institutional possibilities to foster the development of rationality, understood as judgments taking the whole into account.