



Critique Hegel's Critique of Kant's Subjective Ethics through the Dialectical Relationship of Subjective Reason with Nature

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Abstract

The concept of ethics in subjective idealism is determined based on the free inner subjectivity (agency). In this conception, morality emerges centered on autonomous reason and, due to the opposition that Kant considers between reason and inclination (desire), creates a rift between the ethical subject and the object. The main question of the present article is: Upon which philosophical elements does Hegel base his critique of Kantian ethics, and how does he examine the problems of subjective ethics? The answer to this question is that Hegel, by creating a dialectic between reason and nature/inclination (desire), seeks to remove the opposition between morality and individual will and motive. Furthermore, by inverting the relationship between the universal will and the individual will that exists in Kant's thought, he seeks a way to

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address the alienation of the ethical subject from social and political institutions. He also intends to severely criticize the terror and dread that were justified in ethical relations in the shadow of the destruction of political institutions.

Keywords

Kant, Hegel, Ethics, Subjective, Terror, Universal Will, Individual Will.



Introduction

Enlightenment philosophers in France and their revolutionary successors regarded reason as an objective historical force, capable of transforming the world into a place of progress once freed from the shackles of despotism. "According to them, it's not the force of arms, but the power of reason that will develop the principles of the revolution. Reason, due to its inherent capacity, will overcome social irrationality" (Marcuse, 2018, p. 25).

It is here that Kant writes his ethical theory, believing that it is the free human reason that legislates moral laws, and not an external entity. The idea that reason constructs and determines the world around it is the roadmap for Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. He believes that Practical Philosophy is constructed by reason itself, and the world in the practical realm can only be rational if it is determined by human free interiority, and not by an external or transcendent foundation. In this regard, Kant follows Rousseau's conception. Cassirer, in his book entitled *Kant, Rousseau*, reveals Rousseau's influence on Kant's Practical Philosophy. There, he states that Rousseau identifies the fundamental problem of humanity as freedom, meaning the non-submission of man to the will of others in the public and private spheres. In essence, Rousseau aimed to shift the origin of law from a transcendent entity to human will. Against this intellectual backdrop, Kant establishes the theoretical foundations for such a conception in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the domain of Practical Philosophy, relying on Rousseau's foundations, he attempts to explain this very issue and concludes that man, by virtue of possessing reason, is the only being that can be free. The relationship that Rousseau establishes between individual will and universal will in his political thought—and the reduction of the universal will to the individual will—had an impact on Kant's Practical Thought equivalent

to Hume's remark that awakened Kant from his dogmatic slumber in theoretical philosophy (Cassirer, 2018, p. 70).

1. The Dialectical Relationship between Practical Reason and Inclination: A Way to Transcend the Opposition between Morality and the State of Nature

Kant describes the ethical subject as being subject to the moral law on the one hand because it possesses Practical Reason, but on the other hand, he considers the subject to be a being that follows its inclinations (desires). Concerning this, he states in the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

Legislation through natural concepts takes place with the help of the understanding and is theoretical. Legislation through the concept of freedom of choice takes place with the help of reason and is purely practical. It is only in the practical domain that reason can be legislative (Kant, 2013, p. 66).

Accordingly, although Kantian ethics—which Hegel refers to as the moral worldview—conceives of the ethical subject as condemned to obey the laws of Practical Reason at one level, at another level, it deems the ethical subject to be subject to the exigencies of the natural world, and thus declares obedience to the natural level as an impediment to the realization of the ethical good. Given this, in the rational sphere, Kant portrays man as a being striving to realize the ethical good, yet considering man's adherence to his natural inclinations, he sees the attainment of the ethical good as problematic.

Consequently, Kant encounters a complex problem and, to resolve this crisis, is forced to appeal to the transcendent world and explain the contradiction between these two spheres with reference to it. However, Hegel does not regard this effort by Kant as a solution;

because, according to Hegel, the problem with the Kantian framework is that within this perspective, the Highest Good (*summum bonum*) and ethical perfection is something we can only hope for—something that *ought* to exist—because the divisions Kant makes between the natural and ethical spheres compel him to place the actualization of this ethical perfection in the beyond (transcendence).

"Because of the actual harmony of the end and actuality, this harmony is posited as something non-actual, as 'a transcendent beyond'" (Hegel, 2020, p. 424). Although morality begins with the presupposition that ethics and reality are in harmony, Hegel argues that this harmony is not genuine because morality *demands* this harmony. The end of the idea of the harmony of motives with ethics is an idea belonging to reason and is located in the distant future. "That harmony is in a foggy distance, beyond consciousness" (Hegel, 2020, p. 426).

Hegel then considers the Kantian response, namely, that while it may be possible to actualize specific moral things, this does not mean that the ultimate moral end, the Highest Good, can also be actualized in nature. However, according to Hegel, this Kantian response is revealing because it shows that "according to the Kantian individual, what makes the Highest Good unattainable is not nature, but rather the fact that doing this requires more than the limited efforts of individuals" (Stern, 2014, p. 301).

Hegel believes that what actually exists and what human beings face is not the final aim of morality, but the actual deed, the deed of individual consciousness. Consequently, since the moral deed is only the deed of individual consciousness, the aim of morality takes on a possible aspect. This is despite the fact that the universal aim of morality is a universal matter, and as the universal aim of the world, it encompasses the whole world, rather than existing as a singular and

individual matter. Therefore, he believes that this "ultimate end is posited far beyond any actual, singularly existing agency" (Hegel, 2020, p. 424).

What is important is to note that although the objectives of action are not individual and are intended for the general rectification of the world's affairs—such that action plays a marginal role in these rectifications—it must be recognized that care must be taken that this does not lead to idealism regarding the reformation of the world. This is because the outcome of the work must be the performance of duty, and the performance of duty ultimately relates to the world of nature (Findlay, 2014, p. 202).

The moral perfection of consciousness lies in the cessation of the battle between morality and sensibility (feeling) and the agreement of the latter (sensibility) with the former (morality) in a manner that is incomprehensible (Hegel, 2020, p. 426). However, what is crucial is that morality can only be realized in the opposition that exists between sensibility and practical reason, and morality will retain its meaning only as long as this opposition is maintained and one side has not been eliminated in favor of the other. Thus, by eliminating and destroying one of the parties in favor of the other, we destroy the ground for the realization and meaningfulness of morality and render the discussion of ethics moot. For this reason, Hegel declares in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that this action "will be a movement toward the destruction of morality" (Hegel, 2020, p. 427).

According to Kant's description of the freedom of the autonomous subject who acts out of duty, which is separate from the natural subject who acts according to inclinations and desires, Hegel says again that this creates an antithesis between the individual and concrete actions, so that the subject is left with the feeling that perhaps, from a moral perspective, the best thing to do is give up

trying to do anything at all; because they are incapable of doing anything to actualize pure duty (Stern, 2014, p. 290).

But Hegel believes there is no sincerity in this, because "every kind of agency and every kind of morality is set aside, but this, again, is merely a covering up of the 'subject-matter'; for in it every kind of agency and every kind of morality is set aside" (Hegel, 2020, p. 425).

This statement by Hegel refers to Kant's position on the opposition between morality and nature, where Kant, in order to make morality actualizable in nature, tries to diminish the capacity of nature so that he can open a path for the emergence of morality within it. In the *Critique of Judgement*, to resolve this problem, Kant only gives more weight to practical reason and conceives of nature in such a way that its lawfulness does not contradict the actualization of moral ends. That is, in Kant's view, even if there is an irreparable gap between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom, such that no transition from the former to the latter is possible, the realm of freedom must still have a kind of influence on the realm of nature, in that "the concept of freedom must actualize an end that is posited by its laws in the sensible world, and consequently, nature must be thought of in such a way that the lawfulness of its form is at least in harmony with the actualization of these ends within it, in conformity with the laws of freedom" (Kant, 2013, p. 68). Hegel's problem with Kant is precisely here.

Morality considers its goal to be freedom from the dormant forces in material desires and inclinations, but to achieve this goal, it must break its relation with reality (Hegel, 2020, p. 425). In Hegel's view, Kant, in order to find a logical answer to the problem of the opposition between ethics and nature, attempts to eliminate the problem itself. In fact, instead of allowing morality to derive meaning only from the opposition between reason and inclination and the struggle between

them, Kant resolves the existing conflict—which is the ground for the realization of ethics—by confiscating inclination in favor of reason. Through rational despotism and the suppression of inclination and feeling, he supposedly opens the path to becoming moral. In fact, "according to the concept of moral agency, pure duty is inherently active consciousness; accordingly, it 'must absolutely be acted, the absolute duty must manifest itself in the whole of nature, and the moral law must become the law of nature'" (Hegel, 2020, p. 424).

For this reason, in Hegel's view, Kant's mere transfer of the ultimate good from the transcendent realm to the sphere of human practical reason was not enough. That is, simply extracting the logic of morality from the transcendent and placing it in the charge of human reason does not eliminate the abstractness of morality and does not make it concrete. This is because, in this situation, the moral law will still hover above objective reality, due to the fact that Kant still considers morality disregarding the internal specificities of inclination and the sensory drives existing in human nature. This causes morality to lose its concrete foundations and be attributed to an abstract human being considered free from desires and inclinations, instead of being related to the actual human being who possesses inclination and feeling. Therefore, Kant's moral world is built upon what lies beyond this world. In this way, the realm of morality is changed into an unchanging, otherworldly matter. For this reason, Zanoui believes that "Hegel placed the reality of the moral realm within the dimensions of earthly reality. This allowed him to discover history in a completely new way" (Zanoui, 2003, p. 133).

Based on this, it is Hegel who connects practical reason with earthly life. In Hegel's philosophy, feelings and inclinations are considered the beginning of action and the practical self-determination of reason. Thus, it should be mentioned that, in his view, reason is

practical *in itself*. Practical feeling is not in opposition to reason and will, but is considered the first empirical self-determination of the will. These motivations and feelings are in themselves neither good nor bad, but are necessary moments of individual action. Therefore, in Hegel's thought, the modern state is not in opposition to the pursuit of individual interests. That is, where individual interests are placed in opposition to the public good, it is considered a legitimate matter and beneficial for the whole. In other words, the modern state has a comprehensive law through which the connection between individual and collective interests is made possible. Consequently, in the individual realm, feelings not only do not oppose moral principles but also actualize the universal matter. Spontaneous moral feeling makes man understand what is right and what is wrong. Therefore, it is the source of morality. Hegel initially understands it as part of the empirical character of humanity, woven into the fabric of all natural inclinations, requests, and necessities of man, and gradually brings him into harmony with the correction and the spiritual-moral nature of man. Hegel distances himself from Kant in the concept of moral feeling, as Kant rejects moral feeling as a moral principle. Hegel believes that self-interest, which is born of human nature, cannot be considered contrary to morality, because this would divide human nature into two parts. Moreover, moral subjectivity is based on the spontaneity of the heart (Zanoui, 2003, p. 121).

Connecting practical reason with earthly life is the main project of Hegelian subjectivity throughout the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel's main objective is the reconciliation of man with the world. Hegel knew that for most people, freedom meant the possibility of doing whatever they wished without institutional limitations. According to this understanding, any type of restriction on activity is a barrier to freedom. Freedom understood in this way is negative

freedom. According to Hegel, if taken seriously, this understanding of freedom becomes an agent of destruction for any institutional order, because the mentioned understanding sees every institution as an unbearable restriction. It was this flawed understanding that determined the unfortunate fate of the French Revolution. Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to mend the rift between the external world, self-consciousness, and our consciousness of the external world.

2. Ethics and its Relation to Social Institutions

Hegel criticizes Kant's conception of ethics precisely because of this separation of reason and feeling/inclination. He believes that it is the social and cultural institutions that free human beings from the captivity of natural drives. Hegel's thought is distinguished by its continuous focus on the secondary nature, the transformation of the natural self with the aid of social and political institutions developed throughout history—institutions through which cultural norms are transmitted to individuals, and individuals internalize them.

According to this conception, institutions transform the individual so that they act in a way that is beneficial to them, thus manifesting their rational will. In Hegel's view, the ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) consists of the redirection of natural drives by a higher self that is the product of culture and various institutions, and this is the replacement of nature with secondary nature. "What distinguishes Hegel's thought from that of Kant and many thinkers, including Kant, is precisely his emphasis on the social and historical dimensions of moral knowledge" (Wood, 1990, p. 10). This emphasis leads him to reject an ethics opposed to nature and inclination, enabling him, on the one hand, to find the objective roots of morality and, on the other hand, to facilitate the reconciliation of ethics with secondary nature.

To this end, Hegel seeks to establish the connection between

the realm of subjective ethics and Civil Society and the State. He aims to present what was clearly described as separate in the Kantian description as being in a relation with each other. Kant declared ethics to be in the transgression of external institutions and a return to the internal will. He believed, "For man to advance from the immoral, natural state to the moral state, he must return to his individual interiority" (Ritter, 1984, p. 17).

Hegel, in contrast, believes that for progress from the natural and immoral state to the ethical realm and non-natural freedom, one must surrender oneself to external institutions and, within the framework of their laws, elevate oneself to the realm of freedom and one's secondary nature, which is the moral man.

By searching for ethics and freedom within the structure of social institutions and considering it impossible without taking social structures into account, Hegel separates himself from Kantian subjective ethics and draws closer to Scottish Enlightenment thought. According to Smith, one of the leaders of the Scottish Enlightenment, "We learn moral rules through the imaginative process of placing ourselves in the minds of others... with the evolution of society, these rules are constantly adjusted and reinterpreted. Along with the evolution of society, the necessary rules for survival also evolve" (Müller, 2020, pp. 164–165).

Of course, Hegel's thought cannot be reduced to Smith's, because Hegel goes a step further than Smith's Civil Society—which is an economic society that measures morality solely by economic needs and personal profit and gain, and determines moral concepts within these relations—and explains the system of ethics within the State. The State, in his view, is a rational entity and cannot be reduced to economic needs, desires, and interests, unlike Civil Society. Thus, ethics will be actualizable in a rational society. With this conception,

Hegel rescues ethics from the utilitarian trap that existed in the Scottish Enlightenment. "He introduces virtue as the spirit of moral laws and, following Kant in the condemnation of utilitarianism, he follows Rousseau" (Taylor, 1989, p. 365).

Despite such a proximity between Hegel with Kant and Rousseau, there is a clear difference between them; because in the Kantian view, morality is severed from earthly bonds and knows of no specific social structure. Conscience does not contaminate itself with everyday morality and does not attribute pure morality to worldly affairs (Hegel, 2020, p. 435). Although both define ethics in virtue ethics and thereby distance themselves from the foundation of the utilitarians¹ in ethical thought, Hegel, unlike Kant and Rousseau, does not relate moral virtue to the isolated "I"; because, in his opinion, moral virtue can only be realized in social relations.

Hegel believes that although Kant succeeded in establishing a fundamental moral autonomy in opposition to the utilitarian definition of categories like the good and reason, and in freeing moral obligation

1. Of Course, Hegel accepts utilitarianism in ethics, but he considers it only as a stage of ethical life, not as the foundation of the ethical realm, unlike the Enlightenment thinkers. The first influence of the Enlightenment movement on Hegel's thought was the highlighting of the concept of utility in his view. Since the utilitarian school considers the criterion for the goodness or badness of actions to be the utility resulting from them, it regards the world and nature as being in the service of man. Furthermore, knowledge of man and the world, and the relationship between man and the world, was at the heart of the Enlightenment movement. Hence, ethics in Hegel's philosophy, to the extent that it was concerned with individual benefit and well-being, became linked with the utilitarian aspects of the Enlightenment. Based on this, Hegel believes that one cannot be free except as a member of a type of private property society (Wood, 1990, p. 26). The young Hegel must have found the theory in English economics through which to develop his own thought.

from the necessity of nature and grounding it in individual will, they failed in developing this foundation in the realm of politics. Accordingly, in Hegel's view, "Although Kant begins with a new understanding of morality, nevertheless his political theory does not go much beyond utilitarian theory" (Taylor, 1979, pp. 75-8).

Hegel also criticizes Rousseau for still considering the will as the individual will and for presenting the General Will merely as a common element that emerges amidst individual wills, instead of considering it as an "absolutely rational component in the will". This leads to a concept of the State that is based on arbitrary decisions (Taylor, 1979, p. 78).

Connecting practical reason with earthly life is the main project of Hegelian subjectivity throughout the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel's main objective is the reconciliation of man with the world. Hegel knew that for most people, freedom meant the possibility of doing whatever they wished without institutional limitations. According to this understanding, any type of restriction on activity is a barrier to freedom. Freedom understood in this way is negative freedom. According to Hegel, if taken seriously, this understanding of freedom becomes an agent of destruction for any institutional order, because the mentioned understanding sees every institution as an unbearable restriction. It was this flawed understanding that determined the unfortunate fate of the French Revolution. Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to mend the rift between the external world, self-consciousness, and our consciousness of the external world.

To bridge the existing gap between ethics, which is a subjective matter, and the objective world and existing institutions, and to enable this morality, which arises in the isolated "I", to flow into the external world, Kant requires a transcendent entity. Through this entity, he objectifies his subjective logic in the external world.

"Kant's moral theory relies upon the employment of the Idea of God, and for that reason is unable to supply a concrete criterion upon which to decide whether the rule can rightly be applied to particular cases or not" (James, 2020, p. 68). Since Kant conceives the logic of morality as an internal logic free from any objective institution, he has no mechanism for the flow of moral rules into the external world.

In contrast, Hegel, by declaring that morality, which is concerned with the individual interior, can only be determined in external relations, removes the dualism between the individual and social dimensions and unifies the logic of their flow. Therefore, when the logic of morality flows, it can simultaneously and without any problem flow as a single entity in both spheres.

Hegel seeks to provide such an external criterion in his theory of modern ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), and he intends this criterion to be one that every individual can attain a rational insight into. Through this, given the ethical position's inability to explain how the individual will can harmonize with the universal will, he adopts the view that the objective system of these principles and duties, and the achievement of the unity of subjective knowledge with this system, exists only when the perspective of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) has been achieved (Hegel, 2017, p. 172).

Pinkard, in explaining this point, believes that "for moral norms to be my own and my person's rational reasons, which reflect 'me', I must be able to feel conformity and compatibility with the institutions and customs with which I live and by which I am shaped and which shape me, and to regard their demands upon me not as external demands but as internal necessities that make me who I am" (Pinkard, 2016, p. 428). In other words, the objective, universal, and necessary nature of ethics is possible only by attending to the social

system, and it can never be determined without attending to the systematization of the individual subject.

With this conception, one can understand why Hegel considered the greatest problem of Kantian ethics to be that "conscience has its own truth in immediate certainty of itself" (Hegel, 2020, p. 435), and this self-awareness occurs without requiring the confirmation of others. This is because Kantian ethics is actualized based on the individual system and without attention to an intersubjective system in which the principle of human relations and social institutions are embedded.

It is necessary to note, however, that Hegel's goal is not to replace Kant's ethics with something else, but to accept it, recognize its limitations, and consider it as a special case of a larger social theory. For Hegel, moral theory is the same as social theory and political theory, and all three are tightly linked to historical developments.

The State is the Spirit of Ethicism (*Moralität*) in the position of the substantial will which is explicit and clear to itself, and which thinks and knows itself, and puts into effect what it knows insofar as it knows it (Hegel, 2017, p. 223). The State, in Hegel's view, is the Objective Spirit that encompasses all the customs, traditions, activities, and ways of life, all of which are the product of society, and upon which individuals immediately rely in their thoughts and actions (Knowles, 2002, p. 114).

3. Bridging the Gap between "Ought" and "Is" through the Relationship between Kantian Ethics and Social Institutions in the State

By separating the realm of ethics from nature and denying the connection of ethics to social institutions, Kant posited a separation between "Is" (Sein) and "Ought" (Sollen). In the *Critique of Judgment*,

he proclaimed this separation by dividing consciousness into two realms—the practical and the theoretical—stating that the realm of the "Is", which deals with nature, must be distinguished from the practical realm, which concerns the normative "Ought" (Kant, 2013, p. 66).

According to Kant's conception, the conflict between nature and spirit, Is and Ought, and ethics and social institutions was not a metaphysical contradiction, but one that arose from Kant's attention to ethical issues. When Kant turned his focus to ethical discussions and was drawn towards practical matters, he suddenly perceived an unbridgeable gulf between the realm of freedom and the realm of nature (Kain, 2005, p. 205). He realized that the nature of these two discussions was different and belonged to separate spheres. Thus, he differentiated between the "Is" and the "Ought", designating Theoretical Reason as tasked with understanding the "Is's" and Practical Reason as tasked with understanding the "Ought's".

What led Kant to separate these dualities and turn away from objective and factual discussions in Practical Reason was his failure to recognize inclination (desire) as the link that opened the individual subject's interior to the objective and non-individual world. Through this link, the subject could unite its individuality with the universality present in the objective world and connect the realm of freedom, which deals with the "Ought's", with the issue of existence and objectivity.

Hegel clearly points to this crucial role of human motive and inclination in relating the individual world to the objective world, declaring that "only motives and inclinations establish our relationship with reality" (Findlay, 2014, p. 203) and "are the actualizers of self-consciousness" (Hegel, 2020, p. 426).

By understanding the deficiency in Kantian thought on this

matter, Hegel was able to recover this missing link in his own philosophy by demonstrating the importance of feeling and affections in human moral consciousness, and to explain his ethics by simultaneously considering inclinations and human reason. He believed that the problem with Kantian ethics was that, since it considered human nature to have two contradictory sides, man would lose one side when pursuing the other. Every gain was a loss, and every joy a pain. Striving to satisfy one's natural desires led to the abandonment of the supernatural and spiritual quest. Striving to satisfy the supernatural and spiritual demands led to the neglect and suppression of the individual's natural desires (Kain, 2005, p. 205).

Thus, through his evaluation of the role of inclination in ethics, Hegel was able to mend the relationship that had emerged between knowledge and value with Kant's philosophy and establish a complex relation between "Is" and "Ought", and knowledge and value. Therefore, unlike Kant, Hegel considers the duty of practical philosophy to be not the understanding of moral "oughts" and "ought-nots", but the discovery of their objective foundations.

In the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, by establishing a relationship between Kantian ethics and social institutions, he sought to create a bridge between the "Is" and the "Ought" and connect knowledge and value. With this view, Hegel resolves another flaw in Kant's philosophy: the problem of "Ought" and "Is", or the gap between value and knowledge.

In Kant's moral philosophy, on the one hand, we were dealing with an 'Ought' that was always supposed to be realized but wasn't; on the other hand, we faced the world of reality which was neutral towards our ethical goals and ideals (Sedgwick, 2008, p. 68).

However, in Hegel's ethical subjectivity, the gap between "Ought" and "Is", or the embodiment of ethics in the customs and traditions of nations, is bridged. That is, there is no contradiction between the subjective and objective dimensions. Hegel's State is the realization of the ethical Idea, which means the creation of a complex subject-object relationship, i.e., the creation of a harmony between the subject and external relations.

In fact, it is the State and the social institutions within it that free the ethical subject from abstractness and actualize its objective roots. Only in this state does the possibility arise for the subject to achieve the realization of its freedom and subjective dignity. Hegel believes:

The immediate existence of the State is custom (*Sitte*), and its mediated existence is the individual's self-consciousness, the individual's knowledge and activity, just as self-consciousness, by virtue of its nature, derives its substantial freedom, as its essence, its goal, and the product of its activity, from the State (Hegel, 2017, p. 292).

According to Hegel's explanation, although the State, as the objective dimension, precedes the individual as the subjective dimension, the State is nonetheless determined by the actuality of the individual. Therefore, the State, as an objective and factual matter, is conditional upon the activity of the subjective historical human being who has actualized their ethics externally; because "the State is in and for itself the totality of morality (*Sittlichkeit*)" (Hegel, 2017, p. 300).

Accordingly, the establishment of the relationship between "Ought" and "Is" in Hegel's thought—just as their separation in Kant was a normative matter and not a metaphysical one—occurs through the normative realm and the explanation of the relationship between

these two realms should never be considered a metaphysical matter (Pinkard, 2016, p. 419).

Given this, Hegel was able to establish a relationship between knowledge and value, "Is" and "Ought" in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, which deals with practical philosophy. Unlike Kant, he no longer believes that the duty of practical philosophy is to know the "oughts" and "ought-nots," the moral norms and deviations. Rather, in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, he believes the duty of philosophy is to comprehend what is; for what is, is nothing other than reason.

Every individual is a child of his time. Philosophy is also its own time, comprehended in thought. It is just as foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to suppose that an individual can jump over his own time... If a theory constructs a world for itself as it ought to be, it undoubtedly has an existence, but only within the mind of that individual; a pliable space where imagination can build whatever it wants... Philosophy appears in the world's thought only after the actuality of its formative process is complete and it has reached its maturity (Hegel, 2017, p. 12).

According to what has been said, in order for Hegel to connect the Noumenon and the Phenomenon and validate subjectivity, he shifts the discussion of this connection—just as Kant did, who considered it a normative issue and addressed it in the Third Critique—from ontological matters to the normative realm and practical philosophy.

This shift in direction means that the issues and problems of the ontological and epistemological realms, which were previously discussed in theoretical philosophy, are now discussed by Kant in the

Third Critique and subsequently by Hegel in the *Objective Spirit*, which deals with practical issues. Thus, by linking the issue of objectivity to practical discussions instead of theoretical ones, Politics, as the foundation of practical matters, is considered the basis of Hegel's explanation of objectivity.

4. Subjective Ethics: Dread and Terror

In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant replicates in his moral philosophy the very thing that Rousseau accomplished in political philosophy. He does this by stating, "The will of every rational being is a universally legislative will" (Kant, 2015, p. 98). He extends Rousseau's political position—which consists of the agency of the interior in the realm of action—to his own moral position, and thus "every human will is conceived of as a will that legislates universal laws through its maxims of conduct" (Kant, 2015, p. 98).

However, in Kant's view, the Kantian individual should not be regarded as a tyrant who exempts himself from the law through his own legislation while compelling others to obey it. Rather, he asserts, "Every rational being is a member of the kingdom of ends, as he, although a universal lawgiver in it, is himself subject to these laws" (Kant, 2015, p. 100). For this reason, Strauss rightly declares that this work by Rousseau "deeply altered the landscape of Western ethics" (Strauss, 2008, p. 149).

But, in Hegel's view, this very act of attributing universal validity to human actions in such a way that they are affirmed by others and considered as universal law (Hegel, 2020, p. 436) causes the individual will, by absorbing the universal will into itself, to become tyrannical. This result is the very Reign of Terror and Dread that manifests itself as moral despotism in Kantian ethics, and which universalizes subjective ethics by extending the laws derived from

subjective reason to all other individuals, morally obligating all rational beings to obey it.

A form of despotism exists here in which the severity of the law manifests itself as the purification of every kind of feeling, individuality, and externality. Thus, Kantian ethics is "the continuation of the Terror by other means" (Camus, 2016, p. 141); because Kant's conception of moral duty implies that a relationship of commitment and obligation exists between the individual will and the universal will, even though this universal will is valid for every single ethical subject. Simultaneously, "this universal will is actualized only through the act of self-legislation performed by each individual will" (Taylor, 1989, p. 177).

Kant's theory of moral judgment is exposed to moral subjectivism. This dilemma is a key component of Hegel's effort to demonstrate how the internal expansion of the moral perspective leads to the subordination of the universal will to the individual will (James, 2020, p. 63). Hegel refers to the "subordination of the universal will to the singular will as acting according to a self-centered doctrine" (Hegel, 2020, par. 655) and describes it as the ground for the emergence of the person as an "abstract actuality" (Hegel, 2020, p. 433).

In Hegel's view, such a conception of the individual will removes man from the intersubjective relationship—which is the foundation of concreteness—and immerses him in an abstract vacuum. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel demonstrates that Kant's moral law, i.e., pure duty, is an abstract principle that has no connection with the individual motives that constitute human behavior, and therefore stands on a heavenly height above them. "He considers the moral consciousness as absolute negation" (Hegel, 2020, p. 436).

For this reason, Kantian ethics can be regarded as Christian

ethics in that it determines moral concepts in a place where man withdraws himself from the objective world and, by retreating into his individual world, discovers the moral law within it. As Taylor believes, such ethics "can only turn to destruction" (Taylor, 1989, p. 340). "The moral agent suspends the world to allow his ruthlessness towards the world to continue without hindrance. Through the passion and fervor of his separation from the world, conscience negates all obstacles that reality places against the performance of duty" (Findlay, 2014, p. 206). Therefore, in paragraph 637 of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel declares, "This consciousness washes its hands of all the stances and cover-ups of the moral worldview, and this occurs when it gives up the consciousness that treats duty and actuality as mutually contradictory matters" (Hegel, 2020, p. 435).

Hegel, like Rousseau and Kant, believed that the moralization of man is possible in the unity of the universal will (General Will) with the singular will. However, unlike Kant and Rousseau, who considered the universal will to be identical to the singular will, Hegel introduces the universal will as having emerged through social institutions. In this way, he takes the unity of the singular and universal will from Kant, who derived it from Rousseau; because Hegel calls the Ethical Life (*Sittlichkeit*) the "unity of the universal will and the subjective will" (Hegel, 1975, p. 95).

Thus, the universal will in Hegel's thought is not, as it was for Rousseau and Kant, reducible to the singular will. In practice, instead of the universal will being able to stand as an objective entity in opposition to the subjective will and moderate it, the universal will is reduced to the singular will, and practically, the explanation of the prohibitory function of the universal will reaches a dead end. For this reason, Hegel believes that "the conscious action of the person is

never absolutely approved by the universal conscience of society" (Hegel, 2020, p. 437).

Such universal and absolute approval cannot exist in the realm of morality, because the correctness of any action can always be doubted. Since the correctness of every action is doubtful in subjective ethics and its truth and universality can never be reached with certainty, Hegel holds that the human conscience cannot answer the question of whether an action performed was in accordance with its duty or not; because in individual conscience, there is no knowledge of the absolute performance of duty (Hegel, 2020, p. 445).

According to Hegel, the absolute performance of duty is only possible in social life, which, through the institutions within it, has made possible the realization of the absolute will. The fact that Hegel considers the universal will to be the very laws and institutions of modern Ethical Life (*Sittlichkeit*) indicates that this unity is created through the harmonious action of individuals with norms that are derived through laws and institutions in their relation to the individual will.

From this perspective, "Hegel is able to show an important aspect of the dependence of the State's laws and institutions on the very individuals whose duty is to act in accordance with those laws; for it is only through the activity of these individuals that the State's laws and institutions can be actualized" (James, 2020, p. 78). Therefore, it can be seen that the universal will is embodied in the diverse determinations of Ethical Life, which are themselves the product of the subjective will, and this two-way relationship is the basis for the unity of the subjective will and the universal will. When Hegel says, "The State has its mediated existence in the individual's self-consciousness, in the individual's knowledge and activity" (Hegel, 2017, p. 293), he is referring to this intrinsic characteristic of Ethical Life.

Thus, Hegel does not consider the universal will to be a transcendent entity that exists above social relations and governs moral relations. Instead, the universal will, for him, is the very institutions that enter the world through human affairs. That is, social institutions emerge through social agreement and recognition of humans, not by a transcendent entity that is placed above social relations and creates institutions for it, obligating human society to submit to them.¹

It is on this basis that he opposes Kant for considering moral laws to be related to a transcendent entity such as God. Hegel argues that the view that God is the author of moral laws is contrary to Kant's own concept of moral autonomy (Stern, 2014, p. 303). He also believes that giving moral agency to God cannot be reconciled with God's transcendence from nature; because the reality of pure duty can only be actualized in nature and sense, while God is situated beyond nature (Hegel, 2020, pp. 428-429). Therefore, God is located outside the realm where moral action takes place. Accordingly, "Hegel demands the abolition of any transcendent position, because he considers it to mean an objectivity that is alien to institutional, i.e., internal, ethics" (Zanoui, 2003, p. 63).

1. Of course, Kant had previously stated in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that he accepts God's legislation within the framework of **immanent theology**. He emphasizes that **moral laws cannot be conceived of as originating from the will of a superior being**, because in that case, the said laws would not be moral, and the duty corresponding to them would not be considered a **free virtue** but would instead become an **arbitrary command**.

However, even if this is the case, **Hegel's critique of Kant remains valid**; because, instead of referring to the social institutions themselves—which are a **human matter**—for the externalization of moral rules, Kant **directs the foundation of his argument to the Idea of God**. In Hegel's view, this is **Kant's greatest deficiency**.

Based on Hegel's theoretical foundation, one of the signs that links Kantian ethics to the Terror and Dread of the Revolution is the distinction he makes between morality and nature. In Kant's thought, moral and rational relations and human obligations establish their own peculiar rational and moral system which is distinct from nature. "Nature in general... has no concern for moral self-consciousness, just as this moral self-consciousness has no concern or care for that world or nature" (Hegel, 2020, p. 413).

Hegel, of course, does not see this system as being outside of nature, but rather as something that grows within the context of nature itself and emphasizes the objective existence of the moral system on the earthly world. Thus, "In Hegel's philosophical system, nature plays a more significant role than Kant accounted for" (Zanoui, 2003, p. 58).

The result is that Hegel does not consider moral feeling to be in contradiction with reason, and on this basis, something develops within the context of nature that existentially transcends nature. Hegel's demand that the realm of ethical ideas be made completely subjective means that Practical Reason must be situated in relation to human feelings, needs, and empirical interests. In this way, Hegel destroys the transcendental foundations of the moral worldview present in the Kantian system—which leads to the terror of feelings, motives, and inclinations.

The reason Kantian ethics culminates in terror and dread is that, due to the despotic confrontation it has with feelings and motives, it sacrifices all of them to its own internal desire and will, and thus "desires and inclinations are sacrificed for the sake of the totality of the rational will" (Houlgate, 2013, p. 165). This is where terror and dread occur within the human subject.

According to Hegel's view, the opposition of rational law to inclination and feeling causes rational despotism to create horror in the nature of human desire, and terror to arise within its nature. As Camus considers in his interpretation of this passage, Hegel goes even further; because, in Hegel's view, "the violence will escalate even when Kant's followers, from Schiller onward, attempt to soften the rigidity of the critical project by reinjecting feeling into ethics. The post-Kantian effort to re-unite the subject with the world, to re-establish freedom and set it in motion again, will only cause its further eradication" (Camus, 2016, p. 141).

Hegel thus considers Kantian ethics, because it explains the realm of morality in the isolated human being and free from social relations, as a kind of philosophical representative of the Revolution led by Robespierre. According to this interpretation, "Hegel considers the emergence of Robespierre in the French Revolution as the basis for the fundamental transformation of practical philosophy in German Idealism" (Hyppolite, 1974, p. 434). Kant was trying to bring about the rule of dread and terror in philosophy this time by referring to the human interior and imposing the human interior onto external objectivity.¹

Conclusion

From what has been discussed, it becomes clear that subjective ethics emerged based on the opposition between reason and nature. In this

1. However, it must be noted that **Kant was not the perfect philosophical mirror of Robespierre in Germany**. Although in practical philosophy, influenced by Rousseau, he considered **individual reason** to be paramount and the criterion for all matters in the public sphere, his belief in the **thing-in-itself** (*Ding an sich*) in theoretical philosophy somewhat mitigated the arbitrary nature of his theoretical philosophy.

conception, ethics is explained with reference to the free, rational, subjective interior and without considering the objective relations of the external world.

Based on his dialectical thought, Hegel launches devastating critiques against the one-sidedness of Kant's idea by creating an internal relationship between reason and inclination (desire). According to Hegel's thought, because Kant deduces the moral law from the individual subjective will, he subordinates the universal will to the individual will, thereby expanding the singular will and making it absolute. It is here that the very ethics that was meant to be based on freedom and through which the subject's freedom was to be provided leads to despotism. Due to the negation, absorption, and confiscation of the absolute will within the subjective individual will, the terror and dread that appeared in the French Revolution are formulated into a theory of terror and dread through Kant's moral philosophy.

Hegel also believes that since Kant formulates the moral law based on the individual subjective will, he renders political and social institutions ineffective in the development of the ethical realm, and in doing so, ignores the entire historical tradition latent within the laws of political and social institutions.

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