

HEGEL'S NATIONALISM OR TWO HEGELIAN ARGUMENTS AGAINST GLOBALISM

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ABSTRACT

The conflict between globalism and nationalism is arguably one of the most important political issues of our time. In this article, I argue that Hegel's mature political philosophy has convincing arguments for recognition-based, non-chauvinistic nationalism and against globalism. I lay out two reasons why Hegel is against dissolving national sovereignty and the establishment of a world state: First of all, he argues that the state provides the highest realization of human self-determination. Therefore, he believes that it is not rational for a people who form a sovereign nation to want to give up their political independence. Second of all, Hegel argues that the state must be conceived of as having individuality, which means that it has the ontological structure of an exclusory being-for-itself: In order for it to be an individual, it must stand in exclusory relations to others of the same kind. In addition to reconstructing Hegel's critique of globalism, I argue that his brand of nationalism is based on mutual recognition between states, which makes Hegel not a Hobbesian realist but someone who believes that the political sphere is inherently ethical.

KEYWORDS

nationalism, globalism, Hegel, Hegel's "Philosophy of Right", cosmopolitanism.

INTRODUCTION: NATIONALISM VS. GLOBALISM

In his remarks to the UN General Assembly on September 24, 2019, President Donald J. Trump declared the nearing end of globalism and predicted a bright future for nationalism. He said:

The future does not belong to globalists. The future belongs to patriots. The future belongs to sovereign and independent nations who protect their citizens, respect their neighbors, and honor the differences that make each country special and unique.¹

In his address, Trump did not explicitly define the term "globalism". However, from his use of the word, it is fairly clear that globalism is understood as the

¹ https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-74th-session-united-nations-general-assembly/?utm_source=link

negation of nationalism. Nationalism, in turn, is *not* portrayed as the aggressive nationalism of old, i.e. chauvinism, but as a nationalism that is based on the citizens' patriotic love for their own country as well as the mutual respect and recognition between different nations.

In this article, I want to argue that Hegel's mature political philosophy is in full agreement with this assessment. Hegel has convincing arguments against globalism and for recognition-based, non-chauvinistic nationalism as it is encapsulated in the above quote by President Trump.

I am, of course, fully aware that this claim will be viewed as highly provocative and therefore might even be dismissed out of hand due to the widespread disdain towards Trump among academics. However, this paper is neither about any specific policies of Donald Trump nor his character. Instead, it is about an important - maybe the most important - political issue of our times: the conflict between globalism and nationalism.

I want to stress that I do not argue for chauvinistic nationalism, i.e. the belief that one's own nation has the right to rule over others because of its perceived or actual superiority in some respect. Recognition-based, non-chauvinistic nationalism is another matter entirely, and as I want to show in the following, we can find some interesting arguments for it in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.

My main goal in this article, however, is to lay out two arguments *against* globalism that can be found in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.² In accordance with the above quote, I will use the term "globalism" in the following to refer to the tendency to undermine or even to abolish the plurality of independent nations in favor of some higher transnational order, typically thought of as a world state.³

Globalism in this sense is different from globalization. The term "globalization" refers to either the process of an increasing global human interconnectedness

² An anonymous reviewer has pointed out to me that it might be doubtful whether Hegel's philosophy of objective spirit, which is concerned with the rationality of the modern state, can be ascribed unaltered relevance almost 200 years after its publication. After all, our society is vastly different from Hegel's. My answer to this methodological question is as follows: Since Hegel's arguments (or rather his dialectical reasoning) that I am aiming to reconstruct in this paper are conceptual in nature, empirical changes in the way society functions do not matter as long as they are not expressive of any new *conceptual* challenges that Hegel did not foresee. Instead of having surpassed Hegel's rational modern state, current Western societies, within which alienation and divisiveness are rampant, still seem to fall short of the normative standards of the rational ethical life that Hegel presented in his *Philosophy of Right*.

³ A globalist position is e.g. held by Alexander Wendt who argues for the necessity of a world state on teleological grounds. See his "Why a World State is Inevitable," in: *European Journal of International Relations*, 9 (4), 2003, pp. 491-542. Even though he does not propose a world government in the strict sense, Thomas Pogge would also count as a globalist (even though a less radical one than Wendt) in the way the term is used in this paper because he negates national sovereignty and thus nationalism by arguing for "a global institutional reform with *significant reductions in national sovereignty*" (*World Poverty and Human Rights*, Oxford: Polity Press, 2000, p. 195, emphasis added).

through modern means of communication and travel, or the result of this process. Globalization has occurred and is occurring on many levels: individual, cultural, economic and governmental. The main focus of typical discussions about globalization however is about economics.⁴ Globalization in itself is not necessarily globalist. A nationalist thus might accept and support global human interconnectedness – be it economic, cultural or other – as long as it is not undermining or destabilizing the principles of recognition-based nationalism. Of course, an extreme proponent of globalization will most likely end up endorsing globalism as well for he will not subscribe to any pro-nationalistic caveat in his acceptance of globalization.

Another term that is worth distinguishing from “globalism” is “cosmopolitanism”. In a weak sense, a cosmopolitan is simply someone who values humanity as such regardless of nationhood. In a strong sense of the word, however, a cosmopolitan is more or less identical to a globalist, i.e. someone who opposes the principles of recognition-based nationalism, e.g. because he believes that being a “citizen” of the world should trump being a citizen of one’s nation. This is the way in which Hegel uses the term “cosmopolitanism”, rejecting the idea insofar as it is detrimental to “the concrete life of the state”.⁵

THE STATE AS THE “ACTUALITY OF THE ETHICAL IDEA”

I want to start out with a sketch of Hegel’s idea of the state in the *Philosophy of Right*.⁶ The state is the most important institution of what Hegel calls “ethical life”

⁴ Hegel has explicitly addressed globalization, without of course using this exact term, in his treatment of “civil society” in the *Philosophy of Right*. See especially Hegel, G. W. F.: *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* [abbreviated as RPh in the following], in: *Theorie-Werkausgabe*, Bd. 7, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1986, §§ 246–248. For an interesting discussion of “Hegel, Civil Society, and Globalization” see Peter G. Stillman’s paper by the same title in: *Hegel and Global Justice*, ed. Andrew Buchwalter, Dordrecht: Springer, 2012, pp. 111–129. See also Hicks, Steven V.: “Hegel on Cosmopolitanism, International Relations, and the Challenges of Globalization”, in: *Hegel and Global Justice*, pp. 21–47. Civil society and globalization are not the topic of my paper. However, for reasons that should become clear in the course of this article, I disagree with Hicks’ assessment that Hegel would appeal to “international regulatory agencies” to address “market arbitrariness, economic inequalities, and various forms of disenfranchisement at the global level” (ibid., p. 34). I have the same disagreement with Buchwalter’s attempt to have Hegel subscribe to some of Thomas Pogge’s central views on how to solve “economic justice on the global level”. See Buchwalter, Andrew: *Dialectics, Politics, and the Contemporary Values of Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, New York/London: Routledge, 2012, p. 218. As I will demonstrate below, for Hegel the highest principle of international politics is every state’s responsibility for its own well-being.

⁵ RPh, § 208 R. All translations from the German original are my own. “R” refers to remarks, “A” to additions (“Zusätze”).

⁶ This sketch of the state within the context of ethical life follows my presentation in Ostritsch, Sebastian: *Hegels Rechtsphilosophie als Metaethik*, Münster: Mentis, 2014, ch. 7.2.

(“Sittlichkeit”). Let us first address the concept of ethical life and then discuss what makes the state the most important of its institutions.

“Ethical life” is Hegel’s name for the value-laden and normative social reality that is constituted by institutions and social practices that allow individuals to form a concrete self-determined identity. Let me unpack this condensed statement.

Ethical life is value-laden and normative insofar as it provides individuals with norms and mores that are not up to an individual’s caprice. Hegel even says that for the individual “the authority of the ethical laws is infinitely higher” than the authority of the “objects of nature”.⁷ Nature is simply there, but its being there does not compel the individual to act in a certain way, its existence is not inherently normative. The laws and mores of ethical life on the contrary are experienced by the subject as being there *and* being inherently normative.

At the same time, however, the objectivity and authority of the norms of ethical life are typically not experienced by the individual as something foreign. Instead, the individual has “its sense of self” (“Selbstgefühl”) in these norms, for he recognizes them as “*his own essence*” as a self-determining and rational being.⁸

We can see both sides – the objective authority of ethical life and the finding of one’s own self in ethical life – come together when we look at the basic institutions of ethical life and the social roles they provide. The case of the family is probably the most striking and most plausible: Being a mother or a father comes with certain duties.⁹ Those duties are objective insofar as it is not up to anyone’s mere opinion what it is to be a good parent. Of course, there is always room for disagreement, but the disagreement is about an *objective* ethical fact that is not reducible to anyone’s subjective belief.

At the same time, being a parent and living up to those parental duties is a fundamental source of identity for individuals. This identity can be called “concrete” in contrast to the merely formal self-identity of the transcendental ego that logically precedes and makes possible all empirical consciousness. As a transcendental ego, all I can say is “I think” or “I am I”. As a being that is part of ethical life, however, I am able to give a far richer account of who I am, e.g. I can say that “I am a husband, a father, a philosopher, a member of different clubs and associations, a German citizen etc.”.

One might try to argue that nature also provides for a rich and concrete identity. However, natural properties are contingent properties that are not expressive of my status as a self-determining being, allowing only for statement like “I have blue eyes” or “I have blond hair”. The decisive difference of the socially mediated identities of ethical life is that they are not only concrete but also an expression of one’s self-determination. By freely adhering to the values, norms

⁷ RPh, § 146 R.

⁸ RPh, § 147.

⁹ See RPh, §§ 173–180.

and duties that constitute the social role of being a mother or a father, the individual exercises true self-determination, i.e. he performs acts of free will that are not arbitrary.

Belonging to the social institutions of ethical life is thus the realization of Hegel's reflexive definition of the "idea of will" as "*the free will that wills the free will*"¹⁰: By willing to be a member of the family, of civil society, of the state, I will that which makes it possible for me to live a concrete self-determining life. To be a part of these institutions of ethical life is therefore the duty of every self-determining agent.¹¹

Let us now turn to the state. At first glance, one might try to define the state simply as the all-encompassing institution that integrates all other institutions (the family, the economy, legal institutions, institutions that provide welfare) into a cohesive whole. At second glance however, Hegel's concept of the state is more complex, combining three different facets.¹² First, the state is the whole of ethical life *as such*, a whole in which all other social institutions, i.e. the family and the institutions of civil society, are unified.¹³ Since the term "state" ("Staat") in modern parlance is often associated with the government in contrast to other social institutions, it is important to point out that this first facet of Hegel's concept of the state is more accurately captured by the term "nation".¹⁴

According to Hegel, the nation has two forms of existence, an immediate and a mediated one. Its "immediate" existence is in the "*mores*" ("*Sitten*") of ethical life as a whole. Its "mediated existence" lies in the "*self-consciousness* of the individual, its [i.e. the individual's] knowledge and activity".¹⁵ This makes sense because the nation is obviously not an entity of its own, i.e. it does not exist independently of human subjects and their activity. This activity can be habitual and subconscious – as are the practices that constitute a nation's mores – or conscious and deliberately purposeful. In the latter case, individuals do not act with the sole purpose to realize their own particular interests. Rather, they act to further the ends of the ethical and social whole that is the nation. It is thus through "the particular self-consciousness that has raised itself to its universality" that the nation becomes "the actuality of the ethical idea" or "the actuality of the

¹⁰ RPh, § 27.

¹¹ See RPh, § 148.

¹² See Wolff, Michael: "Hegels staats-theoretischer Organizismus", in: *Hegel-Studien*, 19, 1984, pp. 147–177, esp. pp. 156–160.

¹³ See RPh, § 258 A: "The state in and for itself is the ethical whole."

¹⁴ See Walsh: *Hegelian Ethics*, London: Macmillan, 1969, p. 45: "A better conception of what he [Hegel] was after can be got if we speak not of the state but of the nation. The activities of the state as Hegel conceives it cover every aspect of national life, and are thus as much cultural as political, educational as much as economic." See also Dean Moyer: *Hegel's Conscience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 191: "Yet Hegel does not identify the State with the government. Rather, he takes the State to be the totality of the institutions of Ethical Life."

¹⁵ RPh, § 257.

substantial *will*¹⁶: The nation is actual only if individuals that identify with it make its functioning and thriving the explicit purpose of their actions.¹⁷ When Hegel speaks of nations as being self-conscious beings (e.g. when he describes the state as “the substantial will that thinks and knows itself...”¹⁸) one has to keep in mind this mediation by self-conscious individuals in order not to end up with the rather absurd claim that states have minds and mental lives like human individuals do.

Another concern might be Hegel’s extreme veneration of the nation. He says that it is “that which is *reasonable* in and for itself” and – in an allusion to Aristotle’s definition of God as the unmoved mover – the “absolute unmoving end in itself”.¹⁹ How can these claims be justified?

I have already laid out why the institutions of ethical life can be seen as providing individuals with the possibility of true freedom, i.e. non arbitrary self-determination, and with objective values, norms and duties at the same time. These institutions, i.e. the family and the various institutions of civil society, make up the nation’s “*constitution [...] in particular*”.²⁰ The nation, as we have seen, is the socio-ethical whole as such, and as such it guarantees the existence and functioning of the very institutions in which individuals find their self-determined identity. Therefore, it is no surprise that within the nation “freedom comes to its highest right”.²¹ The nation’s institutions engender the standing attitude (“*Gesinnung*”) and disposition that Hegel identifies as “*patriotism*”.²² To be patriotic means to know that my “substantial and particular interest” is “preserved and contained” in the interests and ends of the nation, and to have developed a corresponding disposition to act in the interest of the nation.²³

However, the nation is *not* a means to an end for the satisfaction of particular interests. This is the misconception of the sphere that Hegel calls “civil society” (“*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*”).²⁴ The nation is an end in itself insofar as individuals can lead self-determined lives only as members of it. The nation as an end in itself is, as Michael Wolff has pointed out, “the *ground* of the institutional structuring of society”.²⁵ Thus, it is also the ground of individual self-determination. Free

¹⁶ RPh, § 258.

¹⁷ See Stein, Sebastian: “Hegel and Aristotle on Ethical Life: Duty-Bound Happiness and Determined Freedom”, in: *Hegel Bulletin*, 41/1, 2019, pp. 61–82, esp. pp. 74–75.

¹⁸ RPh, § 257.

¹⁹ RPh, § 258.

²⁰ RPh, § 265.

²¹ RPh, § 258.

²² RPh, § 268.

²³ RPh, § 268.

²⁴ See RPh, § 258 R.

²⁵ Wolff, *Hegels staats-theoretischer Organismus*, p. 153: “Grund der institutionellen Gliederung der Gesellschaft”. The translation is mine. See also Moyar, *Hegel’s Conscience*, p. 194.

individuals therefore are obligated to be members of a nation, it is their “*highest duty*”, for otherwise they could not be free, i.e. self-determining.²⁶

However, if conceptualized as the nation, the state is only an “abstract actuality”, as Hegel points out in a later paragraph.²⁷ It is abstract because it yet lacks a genuinely political dimension, i.e. political institutions that are responsible for organizing the institutions of the socio-ethical whole. It is only because of this organizing activity that the socio-ethical whole can function and thrive, which in turn results in people’s patriotic attitudes. This reasoning leads to the concept of the “properly *political* state and *its constitution*”.²⁸ The political constitution is not thought of by Hegel as a piece of paper, or a document of any kind for that matter, but as the way that the state is structured into “*different powers*”.²⁹ In today’s parlance (at least in the U.S.), the political state and the powers that make up the political constitution would typically be called the government and the branches of government. It is in government that the self-consciousness of ethical life is fully actualized insofar as government officials explicitly act in the name and interest of the nation.

When speaking of the Hegelian state we must thus distinguish three aspects or facets: a) the state as the socio-ethical whole that is best called “nation”, b) the family and the institutions of civil society as its “particular constitution”, c) the properly political state – the government – and its “political constitution”, i.e. the political powers (or branches) of government and their organic interrelation.

Without a particular constitution and the properly political constitution that organizes the former, a people could not be said to form a proper state but only “a family, horde, tribe, mass etc.”.³⁰ What these types of collectives lack is an “objective legality” and “a rationality that is stable for itself” – things that only a proper political constitution can provide.³¹

THE STATE AS A SOVEREIGN INDIVIDUAL: TWO ARGUMENTS AGAINST GLOBALISM

So far, our analysis of Hegel’s theory of the state has shown that the state is to be thought of as the actuality of the idea of ethical life within which humans achieve true self-determination, and therefore as an end in itself. However, this kind of “statism” in itself does *not* yet rule out globalism in general. What it does rule out is any attempt to abolish particular nation states without any global

²⁶ RPh, § 258.

²⁷ RPh, § 270.

²⁸ RPh, § 267.

²⁹ RPh, § 269. Hegel argues that in the case of a rational constitution, these powers are not separate but function like an organism. See Wolff, “Hegels staats-theoretischer Organismus”.

³⁰ RPh, § 349.

³¹ RPh, § 349.

replacement. But what about the idea of a single global nation, a world state? As I want to show in this section, Hegel offers two arguments against this possibility.

The basis for both of Hegel's arguments is his claim that the state is an "individual" ("Individuum") or that it has "individuality" ("Individualität").³² Hegel's understanding of the category of individuality is quite unique and needs some explanation for which we have to turn to Hegel's treatment of "Einzelheit" in the *Science of Logic*. "Einzelheit", which is often also translated as "individuality", is actually just "the principle of individuality". This means that "individuality" is best understood as a richer, more developed concept of "Einzelheit".³³ However, for the purposes of this paper, we can ignore this difference because the logical properties of "Einzelheit" will suffice to understand the state's individuality. In order to avoid unnecessary complexity, I will speak of "individuality" both in the case of "Einzelheit" and "Individualität".³⁴

So what is an individual according to Hegel? Usually, we think of individuality as that which makes an entity a single unified entity that cannot be instantiated. While general things have instances, individuals do not.³⁵ Hegel argues that singularity is the result of a self-reflexive operation that he calls "negativity relating to itself".³⁶ Since for Hegel negation is determination, another definition of individuality is also "determinacy relating to itself". A singular being is thus not something that could be defined as a bundle of particular properties or as a propertyless substance. Instead, in Hegel's view, what makes an entity with particular characteristics (or "determinations" in a more Hegelian language) an individual is that it relates to itself, thereby enclosing its particular determinations into a single unity.³⁷

It is a surprising consequence of this view of singularity that most things that we address and experience as being individuals are not individuals in themselves. Since individuality requires a self-constituting activity, only living beings – and in the fullest sense only persons – are considered to be true individuals by Hegel. An ordinary individual material thing we refer to as "this" is not a "this" in itself but only "insofar it is being shown" ("insofern es *monstriert* wird") by a true individual, i.e. a person.³⁸ Hegel understands this act of showing as the very act that

³² RPh, § 321.

³³ Hegel, G. W. F.: *Wissenschaft der Logik II* [WL II], in: *Theorie-Werkausgabe*, Bd. 6, p. 297.

³⁴ George di Giovanni translates "Einzelheit" as "singularity". See his *Science of Logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. lxx.

³⁵ See e.g. Strawson, Peter: "Particular and General", in: *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, London: Ashgate, 1971, pp. 21–40.

³⁶ WL II, p. 299.

³⁷ For an excellent discussion of "Einzelheit" see Martin, Christian: *Ontologie der Selbstbestimmung*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012, pp. 243–253.

³⁸ WL II, p. 300.

constitutes the entity as an individual one by providing the necessary self-relation *for it*.³⁹

True individuals on the other hand are defined by the fact that they themselves provide (or rather: *are*) this very activity of self-relation that makes them individuals. If we abstract away from the particular determinacy enclosed within the individual and just focus on its mere self-relation, we have its “being-for-itself” (“Für-sich-sein”).⁴⁰ This is a category that appears earlier in the *Logic*. There, Hegel argues that a being-for-itself presupposes a plurality of other beings, each of which is also for itself, and that each such being has a negative and exclusory relation to the others.⁴¹ Since individuality includes this aspect of being-for-itself, it itself also must be characterized by such an exclusory relation to other individuals. Hegel thus argues that while persons may individuate an object as a “this” without presupposing other such objects, a true individual, such as a person, can only be *for itself* insofar as there are others like it that it excludes from itself.

We can understand the reason for this by considering the following question: “What makes my individuality *mine*?” The answer cannot be found in any particular property, which others might share or I might lose. Individuality includes but is not equal to having a particular determination. Rather, it is the self-relation of determinacy. Therefore, what makes such a self-relation of determinacy *mine* is that it is *not* the self-relation of determinacy of another. Individuality thus comes with the irreducible difference between *mine* and *yours/theirs* or between one’s *own* individuality and the individuality of *others*.⁴²

We may now turn to the state and its characterization as an individual. As we have seen above, the state, especially in the sense of the properly political state, can be called self-conscious, for it is within the sphere of the political state that the socio-ethical whole becomes the object of itself. Or to put the matter even stronger: “Only as present in consciousness, knowing itself as an existing object, is it [i.e. the state] the state.”⁴³ Thus the state has the self-reflexive form of “*being-for-itself*”.⁴⁴ The self-reflexive form of the state is however not an empty form, it also has a particular character that “belongs to history”.⁴⁵ This means that the mores and the institutions that make up a nation’s so-called constitution in particular are the result of historical processes. From our reconstruction of individuality it is clear that these particular determinations alone – that one might also call a

³⁹ See WL II, p. 300.

⁴⁰ See WL II, p. 300.

⁴¹ See WL II, p. 300.

⁴² In his argument, Hegel refers back to the chapter in the first part of the *Logic* on the “repulsion of the one”. See WL II, p. 300.

⁴³ RPh, § 258 A.

⁴⁴ RPh, § 321.

⁴⁵ RPh, § 259 A.

nation's cultural particularities – do not constitute the state's individuality.⁴⁶ Rather, what makes a state an individual is that it integrates these historically developed particularities into a single self-reflexive unity – a unity that it explicitly posits as *its* unity, thereby excluding others from it. Therefore, one cannot define a state merely on the basis of its cultural practices at a certain point in time, even though every state has such practices.⁴⁷ Instead, what defines an individual state is its exclusory self-reflexive structure – what Hegel calls its “exclusory being-for-itself”. And it is this exclusory self-relation that manifests itself in the state's “*relation to other states*, each of which is independent from the others”.⁴⁸ To exist as an individual is thus dialectically coupled to being independent from other individuals, or put differently: The internal and the external sovereignty of the state are two sides of the same coin. Since the independence of a state is thus the way in which its inner structure of “*being-for-itself*” “has its *being-there*” (“*Dasein*”), Hegel can call the state's independence “the first freedom and the highest honor of a people”.⁴⁹

We are now in the position to reconstruct Hegel's arguments against globalism, which we have defined as the attempt *to dissolve the sovereignty of nations* in favor of a supranational global order or a world state.

The first argument states that *given the existence of a plurality of states*, it would be irrational for a sovereign state to allow itself to be dissolved or to be incorporated by another state. The reason for this should be obvious from our above reconstruction of Hegel's concept of the state: As we have seen, Hegel argues that the individual state, i.e. the sovereign nation, is an end in itself insofar as it is the actualization of human self-determination. It would thus be against human self-determination to dissolve a sovereign political entity.⁵⁰ No people that form a sovereign nation will rationally want to give up their nationhood:

Those who speak of the wishes of a totality that constitutes a more or less sovereign state and that has its own center – of wishes to lose this center and its sovereignty in order to form a whole with another – know little of the nature of a totality and the sense of self that a people has in its independence.⁵¹

⁴⁶ See RPh, § 259 A.

⁴⁷ I therefore disagree with Buchwalter's claim in *Dialectics, Politics, and the Contemporary Values of Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, p. 214) that Hegel has a “*culturalist* notion of political units”.

⁴⁸ RPh, § 322.

⁴⁹ RPh, § 322.

⁵⁰ Of course, this does not mean that states exist forever. History is full of examples of states ceasing to exist – either through war or because of failing institutions that in turn undermine the patriotic attitude that is necessary to maintain the state's inner and outer sovereignty. See e.g. RPh § 347 R.

⁵¹ RPh, § 322 R. Hegel goes on to point out in that paragraph that, historically speaking, sovereignty as such is the very first shape in which nationhood appears: Even when a nation has no

Since globalism is precisely this attempt to dissolve independent states, a Hegelian must oppose it. It is thus clear that he must subscribe to Trump's above-quoted statement that the future does not belong to globalism but "to sovereign and independent nations".

Let us turn to the second Hegelian argument against globalism. While the first argument stated that globalism is not a rational option for a people who form a sovereign nation, the second argument claims that the very existence of a world state is an ontological impossibility.

As we have seen, the state is an individual and as such it must have an exclusory relation to others like it. The genuinely political "we" of a people that is embodied by the state is dependent on the exclusion of a political "they" of another people that – *for itself* – is also unified into a political "we" of its own.⁵²

Unless it were confronted by an extraterrestrial political entity, a world state by definition would have no relation to another political entity. Thus, it could not be considered a sovereign state because sovereignty involves the independence from others. One could object that the world state would be independent from others simply because there are no others at all. But Hegel insists that the independence *from* others has to appear as the negative "relation of *another* towards *another*".⁵³ Hegel's point is that an individual cannot come to be or maintain itself as an individual without the relation to others. And one decisive aspect of this relation to others is exclusory: "Self-relating determinacy" is the nature of individuality as such. But what makes my individuality *mine* is simply that I am *not others* who I exclude from the unity of the self-relating determinacy that I am as an individual. The self-relation that constitutes individuality is an ontological activity, not merely a mental one. Therefore, the relation to another must also be ontological, it cannot be just an imagined logical possibility. If, e.g., anthropologists were to discover a tribe that had not been aware of the existence of other human groups, Hegel would insist that this group would not be a sovereign nation or a political state. They would be a mere horde lacking individuality. The same then would be true for a "world state", which could not be a truly political entity, not a nation or a political state in any serious sense. The idea of a world state is thus an empty abstraction. In its abstraction it is similar to the idea that one could care for the "well-being *of all*", an idea that Hegel criticizes as an "entirely empty determination".⁵⁴

developed internal political structure yet, i.e. no proper political constitution, it has an individual at its top, e.g. a patriarch, that embodies the state's individuality.

⁵² Here we can see the Hegelian roots of Carl Schmitt's famous concept of the political as the sphere that is determined by the opposition between "friend" ("Freund") and "foe" ("Feind"). See Carl Schmitt: *Der Begriff des Politischen*, München/Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1932, p. 14.

⁵³ RPh, § 323.

⁵⁴ RPh, § 125.

RECOGNITION-BASED NATIONALISM VS. CHAUVINISM

So far, I have reconstructed two Hegelian arguments against globalism. In this final section, I want to elaborate on Hegel's concept of nationalism. In particular, I want to argue that Hegel's nationalism is not chauvinism but that it is based on the mutual recognition of sovereign nations, thus being in line with Trump above-quoted vision of nationalism, which requires that nations "respect their neighbors, and honor the differences that make each country special and unique".

The idea of mutual recognition between states follows naturally from the idea that the state must have individuality in the sense of an "exclusory being-for-itself". The negative, exclusory relation towards other states presupposes that those other states are recognized *as states*. Without such recognition a state would not have a proper *other* that it needs in order to manifest its own independence and sovereignty. Hegel explicitly draws a connection between persons and states in this regard: "Just as the individual is not an actual person without relation to other persons, the state is not an actual individual without relation to other states."⁵⁵ And it is in this relation to others that every sovereign state needs "to be recognized" as such by others.⁵⁶

This recognition-based nature of the state disqualifies chauvinistic nationalism. Clearly, Hegel must be read as a critic of chauvinistic nationalism because by trying to rule over others, a state undermines the very conditions that make its existence as a sovereign nation possible, namely the recognition by other sovereign nations. In fact, this recognition-based argument against chauvinism is at the same time an argument against the globalist vision of a world state. The attempt to establish a world state is self-defeating because it would involve the elimination of other states whose recognition the world state would need in order to be a state at all. This is the other, recognition-based side of the coin of the second argument against globalism that was presented in the previous section. Michael O. Hardimon has summed it up nicely:

Part of what it is to *be* an individual, for Hegel, is to be recognized as an individual by other individuals and to recognize that one is recognized as an individual by other individuals. The establishment of a world state would therefore eliminate a condition - the existence of other states - that must obtain in order for that world state fully to actualize itself as an individual state. And so a world state, in addition to being undesirable [see the first argument against globalism above, S. O.], is not a real possibility.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ RPh, § 331 R.

⁵⁶ RPh, § 331.

⁵⁷ Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy. The Project of Reconciliation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 233.

Both chauvinism and the project of a world state are faced with the same recognition-based objection because on closer inspection *both* are the manifestation of a globalist tendency. After all, the ultimate goal of the chauvinist is to rule the world, i.e. to establish itself as a de facto world state.

So what are the consequences of Hegel's recognition-based nationalism with regard to international law and the idea of an international community? First of all, Hegel points out that mutual recognition between states is notoriously volatile. The reason for this is that there is no overarching ethical authority, no state above the state, that could objectively settle differences between them.⁵⁸ There is, however, a logic of recognition that governs the relation between states.

Mutual recognition presupposes an acknowledgement of "general identity".⁵⁹ Each state that recognizes another must recognize it *as an independent state*, i.e. as an entity of the same type as it itself. From this acknowledgement of a general identity that is inherent in the recognition of other states follows the "*law of nations*" ("*Völkerrecht*"). The law of nations is different from particular treaties ("Traktate") that states agree upon, because the law of nations is the "*general* [...]*law*", i.e. "the law that should hold in and for itself between states".⁶⁰ The difference is made clear by "the principle of the *law of nations*" according to which treaties that states have agreed upon "should *be upheld*".⁶¹ In other words, "pacta sunt servanda" is not the result of a particular agreement between states but a general principle governing all particular agreements, i.e. a principle that follows from the mutual need for recognition between states. "Pacta sunt servanda" is not the only principle of the law of nations.⁶² Other such principles mentioned by Hegel are the principle that "a state should not interfere with the internal affairs of another"⁶³, or that in war "the possibility of peace" should be maintained, which means that e.g. envoys and civilians may not be targeted.⁶⁴ All these principles are specific norms that safeguard the possibility of mutual recognition between independent states, and as such these principles presuppose the acknowledgment of the general identity of sovereign nations. The "highest law" that governs the relation between states, however, is that each individual state is the embodiment of a "*particular will*" and that - as such - it is supposed to make its own "*well-being*" ("*Wohl*") its primary objective.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ See RPh, § 333 R.

⁵⁹ RPh, § 331 R.

⁶⁰ RPh, § 333.

⁶¹ RPh, § 333.

⁶² See Wolff, Michael: "Moral in der Politik. Garve, Kant, Hegel", unpublished manuscript, 2008, https://www.academia.edu/37673040/Wolff_Moral_in_der_Politik_Garve_Kant_Hegel, p. 17.

⁶³ RPh, § 331 R.

⁶⁴ RPh, § 338.

⁶⁵ RPh, § 336.

However, the question whether a particular treaty does or does not apply in a specific situation, or the question whether a particular treaty has been truly upheld by all parties is a matter of interpretation. Since there is no higher objective arbiter in such matters, even the general principle of “pacta sunt servanda” cannot go beyond a merely prescriptive “should” (“Sollen”).⁶⁶ Political conflict between states, which in its most extreme manifestation means war, therefore cannot be ruled out. This does not mean that Hegel is fond of war. He does not consider war a generally desirable event. However, he correctly identifies it as an ineliminable possibility of political ontology.⁶⁷ Hegel maintains that even in war the “tie” of recognition between states is not to be completely severed, i.e. the general principles of the law of nations still hold.⁶⁸ Within Hegel’s non-chauvinistic conception of nationalism, it is rational for states to regard war “as something that should pass” because only peace allows for the re-establishment of the mutual recognition that all sovereign states require.⁶⁹

As we can see from this presentation, Hegel does subscribe to a certain form of internationalism: A state can only fully actualize itself as an independent nation as part of an international community of equally sovereign states. But Hegel stresses the point that this community cannot itself have the status of single overarching state. Instead the international community is held together by relations of mutual recognition, relations that are horizontal and not vertical in direction, and that therefore depend on the particular wills of the states involved. It is therefore incorrect to claim, as Merold Westphal has done, that “the nationalism of Hegel’s view of the state refuses to become the internationalism which his own logic calls for.”⁷⁰ Rather, Hegel defends exactly the kind of internationalism that the internal logic of the *Philosophy of Right* demands: This is clearly *not* the internationalism envisioned by Shlomo Avineri who claimed that in the end, Hegel “emerges with a vision of One World, united by culture and reason, progressing towards a system wherein sovereignty, though acknowledged, will wither away, and wars, though immanent, will gradually disappear.”⁷¹ Instead, it is the picture of a

⁶⁶ RPh, § 333.

⁶⁷ See RPh, § 332. Again, we can see the Hegelian roots of another of Carl Schmitt’s major insights, namely that a world without the *possibility* of war would be a world without politics. See Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, p. 23.

⁶⁸ RPh, § 338.

⁶⁹ RPh, § 338.

⁷⁰ Westphal, Merold: “Hegel’s radical idealism: family and state as ethical communities”, in: *The State and Civil Society*, ed. Z. A. Pelczynski, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 77–92, here: p. 287, note 27.

⁷¹ Avineri, Shlomo: *Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 207. Avineri seems to have gotten carried away by one of Hegel’s statements in his lectures on the philosophy of (world) history. Talking about the third period of world history, which is dominated by the different Germanic peoples, Hegel writes: “Despite all the difference there is also a uniformity in all Germanic principles, and therefore independence is also to be regarded as just a formal principle” (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, IV. Band: Die*

recognition-based international community consisting of sovereign nations that emerges at the end of Hegel's political philosophy. This picture has been nicely summed up by Robert R. Williams:

Hegel regards the international level, and history, as fundamentally tragic. For on the international level, there is no mutual recognition that issues in a higher union; there is no We. For this reason Hegel claims that international law has the status of an 'ought to be'.⁷²

The only addition I want to make to this otherwise concise and accurate statement is that Hegel does allow for a "we" on the international level, however not a state-like, stable and all-encompassing one. There can be no "we" of a world state. However, there can be alliances between states during which they can refer to themselves as "we". Yet, this "we" is not the substantial ethical unity that is expressed by the "we" of the family or the state.

Beyond this "we" of a political alliance, Hegel also acknowledges the possibility of a more substantial unity between states. He points out that states with a common history, common mores and common laws may form a family of sorts. He even claims that this is true in the case of Europe: "The European nations form a family according to the general principle of their legislation, their mores, their education [...]."⁷³ It is important to pay close attention to Hegel's words here. He speaks of the European states forming a family *in certain (important) respects*. According to Hegel, there is a common European cultural identity. But this is

Germanische Welt, ed. Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Meiner, 2. ed., 1923, p. 761). The uniformity that Hegel speaks of here is just the family resemblance between the modern European states as far as their mores and laws are concerned. It is *not* a vision of politically unified world. Klaus Vieweg, who correctly states that Hegel reject the idea of a world state, nevertheless claims that Hegel favors some sort of historicized cosmopolitanism according to which all nations are particular manifestations of the world spirit that reveals itself in the course of world history. See his *Das Denken der Freiheit*, München: Fink, 2012, p. 499 where he speaks of Hegel's "weltbürgerliche Absicht". Andrew Buchwalter has defended a similar position, which he calls "Hegel's 'situated' or 'rooted' cosmopolitanism". According to it, world history is seen to lead not to a world state but to a "a historically emergent global consensus on values and principles". See Buchwalter, *Dialectics, Politics, and the Contemporary Values of Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, p. 209 and p. 208. Similarly, Alberto L. Siani ("Unvollkommene Gerechtigkeit'. Hegel, Antigone und die Menschenrechte", in: *Objektiver und absoluter Geist nach Hegel*, ed. Arthur Kok and Thomas Oehl, Leiden/Boston: Brill, pp. 191–212, esp.: p. 209) has proposed to interpret the overarching right of world history as global justice based on universal human rights. To these modified cosmopolitan proposals I want to object that world history itself is clearly not a state, therefore it has no citizens. There are and can be no literal *cosmo-politans*. Individuals only exist in the concrete reality of a historically situated state and not in world history per se. Using the term "cosmopolitanism" to refer to the universalist aspects of Hegel's position is thus misleading at the very least.

⁷² Williams, Robert R.: *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, Berkeley/L.A.: University of California Press, 1997, p. 771.

⁷³ RPh, § 339 A.

different from actually forming a political unity that would constitute a single European state.⁷⁴ Hegel did believe that such a political unification was a possibility. At the same time, however, he insisted that political unification could never become global (unless, of course, there was an extraterrestrial other):

However, the state is an individual, and negation is an essential aspect of individuality. Thus, even if a plurality of states turns itself into a family, this union as individuality must create an opposition and generate an enemy.⁷⁵

Steven V. Hicks has suggested that the role of this opposing other may be played by “global problems – the threat of nuclear annihilation, global warming, ecological degradation, chronic global poverty, global terrorism, the global spread of AIDS and other diseases, etc.”.⁷⁶ This thought rests on a misunderstanding of what kind of other is required for the recognition of a state. As we have seen in the previous section, the other in question must be another of the same type, a political individual. Just as persons need other persons to fully actualize themselves as persons, a nation can actualize itself as an independent state only in relation to an entity like itself. Without a doubt, there can be global threats that require international cooperation. However, even then, international cooperation is a *consequence* of individual states following the above-mentioned highest law of international politics according to which the state’s primary obligation is to its own well-being.⁷⁷

It would be a grave misunderstanding of this highest law and the entire recognition-based sphere of international politics, if one were to conclude that Hegel is a full-blown Hobbesian realist.⁷⁸ Among other points, such realism is defined by the belief that there is a relation between states that is completely amoral, i.e. a non-moral or non-normative state of nature. Hegel does indeed

⁷⁴ It is quite clear that having a family resemblance with respect to a common history, common mores and common laws, i.e. a *common culture*, is the prerequisite for the wish of different peoples to form a properly *political* union. Therefore, Hegel would firmly reject the notion advanced by Paul Cobben that “multiculturalism [...] has to be integrated into the national state” (“The Citizen of the European Union from a Hegelian Perspective”, in: *Hegel and Global Justice*, p. 177–192, here: p. 185) and that without such an explicit political endorsement of multiculturalism, a state (Cobben’s example is the Netherlands) “cannot be considered a sovereign country in the full sense of the term” (ibid., p. 190). This view amounts to a stunning reversal of Hegel’s position.

⁷⁵ RPh, § 324 A.

⁷⁶ Hicks, “Hegel on Cosmopolitanism, International Relations, and the Challenges of Globalization”, p. 44.

⁷⁷ See RPh, § 336.

⁷⁸ For a one-sided Hobbesian interpretation see Brooks, Tom: “Between Statism and Cosmopolitanism: Hegel and the Possibility of Global Justice”, in: *Hegel and Global Justice*, pp. 65–83, esp. pp. 68–73. The crucial difference between Hobbes and Hegel (i.e. the necessary recognition between states) is e.g. correctly identified in Hicks, “Hegel on Cosmopolitanism, International Relations, and the Challenges of Globalization”, p. 35, and in Stillman, “Hegel, Civil Society, and Globalization”, p. 113.

write that states are “in the state of nature”, but he adds that this is only the case “insofar” as “their relation is based on the principle of their [respective] sovereignty”.⁷⁹ But as we have seen, there is a dialectical flipside to sovereignty, namely the need for *mutual recognition*.⁸⁰ This recognition involves the acknowledgment that other states are independent nations as well, and that they also follow the highest law of politics, which states that every sovereign nation must ensure its own well-being.⁸¹ The law of nations is the *normative* framework that is supposed to safeguard the practice of mutual recognition between states. Its very function is to oppose the realist doctrine of “might is right”.⁸² According to Hegel, not only powerful states have the right to promote their well-being. On the contrary, every state – regardless of size or power – has this right and should recognize that all others have it as well.⁸³ Therefore, when Hegel states that there is only a “supposed opposition” between morality and politics, his claim is not that politics is completely amoral but rather that politics itself is an inherently ethical realm.⁸⁴ Hegel does not advocate “might is right” but, as he himself says, the “might of the just and ethical”.⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

⁷⁹ RPh, § 333.

⁸⁰ One really must ignore RPh, § 331 R in order to claim – as Tom Brooks does in “Between Statism and Cosmopolitanism”, p. 71 – that “[s]tates do not exist interdependently”. It is therefore also not the case – as Thomas M. Schmidt believes in “Grundrechte einer Weltverfassung?”, in: *Recht auf Menschenrechte. Menschenrechte, Demokratie und internationale Politik*, ed. Hauke Brunkhorst et al., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999, pp. 293–313 – that Hegel’s theory of interstate relations simply reverts to the state of nature. It is correct that Hegel does not allow for the development of a “cosmopolitan constitution”, but this is not due to some logical failure that Hegel has deliberately or mistakenly committed, as Schmidt suggests. See *ibid.*, p. 307.

⁸¹ As mentioned above, certain acts between states are objectively unjust, e.g. starting a war for any other reason than the real (or sincerely perceived) threat to the sovereignty or well-being of one’s own state. On a Hegelian view, wars of aggression or wars “in the name of humanity” are illegitimate. See Wolff, “Moral in der Politik”, p. 25.

⁸² Hegel offers a harsh critique of his contemporary Carl Ludwig von Haller – the thought leader of restoration – for holding precisely such a realist position. See RPh, p. 403, note.

⁸³ Michael Wolff has correctly pointed out that Hegel’s highest law of politics, i.e. that every government should work for the benefit of its own nation, is perfectly compatible with Kant’s categorical imperative. See Wolff, “Moral in der Politik”, p. 23.

⁸⁴ RPh, § 337. See Wolff, “Moral in der Politik”, p. 25, and already Heimsoeth, Heinz: “Politik und Moral in Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie”, in: *Blätter für Deutsche Philosophie*, Bd. 8, 1934/35, pp. 127–148, esp. p. 137.

⁸⁵ RPh, p. 403, note. In RPh, § 209 R Hegel famously remarks that every human is a bearer of rights “because he is human, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian etc.”. However, he goes on to clarify that this universalistic thought is “deficient if it fixates itself to oppose the concrete life of the state, e.g. as *cosmopolitanism*”. This nicely sums up Hegel’s fundamental claim that the state itself is an ethical entity. Without concrete states, the notion of universal human rights must remain an abstract ideal.

I have argued that Hegel is opposed to globalist efforts of dissolving national sovereignty for two reasons. First of all, Hegel argues that the state provides the highest realization of human self-determination. Therefore, he believes that it is not rational for a people who form a sovereign nation to want to give up their political independence. Second of all, Hegel argues that the state must be conceived of as having individuality, which means that it has the ontological structure of an exclusory being-for-itself: In order for it to be an individual, it must stand in exclusory relations to others of the same kind. In addition to Hegel's critique of globalism, I have laid out the central tenets of his recognition-based nationalism. I have started with the fact that mutual recognition between states is the dialectical flipside of them having an exclusory self-relation. In the end, I have argued that due to the logic of mutual recognition Hegel is not a full-blown Hobbesian realist but someone who believes that the political sphere is inherently ethical.