

ERDOĞAN YILDIRIM

RETURN OF THE SPIRIT AND THE DEMISE OF POLITICS

Erdoğan Yıldırım

Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.
Email: erdo@metu.edu.tr

Abstract: After Kant's strict separation of the fields of pure reason and practical reason and his demonstration that reason cannot know anything apart from phenomena including the existence of God there was a continuous desire to reestablish the unity of both. The most successful attempt in that direction so far was Hegel's phenomenology of the Spirit where he claimed he succeeded to establish the unity of the two as the Absolute. Yet, even this was problematic for it was the faith itself which supplied the basis of unity while the character of reason (pure insight) was particularity of the self-consciousness. In the late modernity where everything has imploded postmodern theory have successfully destroyed the metanarratives that hold the modernist ideals together. Under these conditions in which the assertion of any kind of subjectivity is impossible there is now a growing interest again in the theories trying to establish the basis of a post-secular society where finally faith and knowledge are hoped to be reconciled and supply a new meaning instead of the lost ones. Particularly the theories developed by Jacques Derrida and Jürgen Habermas try to legitimize the return of the spirit or the 'religious' under the aegis of a still secular state. However, such a desire remains problematical as in Hegel's case for with its totalizing tendency the return of the spirit would tend to eradicate all difference as the basis of conflict and render the effective political action impossible.

Key Words: return of the religious, secular thinking, post-secular society, faith, reason, politics, enlightenment, subjectivity, the spirit, totality

Reactions against the discontents of modernity or postmodernity are not new. Its shallowness, heavy materialism and meaninglessness had all been subject to severe criticisms since the German idealist reaction to the Enlightenment. The thinkers after Kant had to experience the uneasy mixed feelings of admiration and deep frustration before his monumental work. For a while Hegelian thinking held sway among the intellectuals, but then, starting from the mid-19th century materialism (and Marxism) began to establish itself as an attractive alternative side by side with other currents of thought. Nietzsche, who had already declared the dead of God in 1882, developed one of the severest criticisms of the modern European society labeling his age as one of decadence and nihilism. Simmel, Weber and Sombart were also developing a sociology which was largely critical toward the modern life. Heidegger published his *Being and Time* in 1927 where he criticized the contemporary situation of man as boredom due to the forgetfulness of the question of Being as a result of his being too much sunk into the everyday hodge-podge of the materialist modern world.¹ But, perhaps with the exception of Heidegger, despite their critical attitude none of the aforementioned 19th century figures called for a return to the earlier forms of life. They rather preferred to look forward, seeing faith as a thing of the past properly belonging to an age before Nietzsche's declaration of God's death.² So that, during this time and after, until the mid-20th century calling for a return to faith seemed out of place at least among serious scholars. However, the years leading to 1968 in France and its aftermath, especially in connection with the rise of phenomenology, structuralism, and post-structuralism, display a kind of weariness in connection with the well-established modernist theories including Marxism.

It was largely the bunch of theoretical approaches generally referred as postmodern that proved to be quite capable and effective in their critique and destruction of the modernist idea(l)s and reduced them to myths that no longer could maintain their credibility. The destruction of those ideals were so effective and complete, at least in the theoretical plane, that in 1979 Lyotard was writing on the loss of our capacity to believe in the metanarratives that held the modernism together:

“In contemporary society and culture – postindustrial society, postmodern culture—the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.

The decline of the narrative can be seen as an effect of the blossoming of techniques and technologies since the Second World War, which

has shifted emphasis from the ends of action to its means; it can also be seen as an effect of the redeployment of advanced liberal capitalism, [...] a renewal that has eliminated the communist alternative and valorized the individual enjoyment of goods and services.”³

Ironically, the emancipatory project of postmodernism had ended up with the destruction of everything that was thought to be worth to be emancipated, and the loss of credibility of the narratives created a fertile soil for the growth of the Spirit right in the midst of the secular thinking.⁴ From then on it would not take too long for secular intellectuals to respond gradually Heidegger’s call for the invention of a new god as the major task of thinking.⁵ Radical scholars who sought for further emancipation like Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, and Jean-François Lyotard turned into search of spirit in their thinking.⁶ Starting from late 1980s, a former Marxist and a defender of the Enlightenment against its postmodernist critiques, Jürgen Habermas was gradually changing his ideas and beginning to be an advocate of the idea of post-secular society which, according to him, should still remain secular but be capable of embracing religiosity.⁷ In 1996 another prominent French philosopher, who earlier played a crucial role in the development of post-structuralist theory, Jacques Derrida published his important article entitled “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone” alluding to the title of Kant’s famous book and publicly declared the ‘return of the religious’:

“Why is this phenomenon, so hastily called the ‘return of religions’, so difficult to think? Why is it so surprising? Why does it particularly astonish those who believed naively that an alternative opposed to Religion, on the one side, and on the other, Reason, Enlightenment, Science, Criticism (Marxist Criticism, Nietzschean Genealogy, Freudian Psychoanalysis and their heritage), as though could not but put an end to the other? On the contrary, it is an entirely different schema that would have to be taken as one’s point of departure in order to try to think the ‘return of the religious’.”⁸

Within just few decades this declaration and a newly emerging ‘need’ for thinking about the religious which should not posit faith and reason in opposition to each other represents a huge difference in the orientation of secular thinking. Perhaps, we have to attribute this new phenomenalisation of religion as a supplement to science and knowledge rather than its being their antithesis to the rise of the *transcendent*, of the

'Spirit' once again in our socio-political experience today as, indeed, Derrida and Habermas wish. It may well be true that we have been fed up with those ideals of modernist thinking such as the centrality of the subject endowed with the attributes of freedom and reason above everything else. In a globalizing world of postmodernism where everything implodes⁹ it has been impossible to allocate the center place to individual subjectivity any longer. The contemporary experience of loss of meaning and value incites us to think that there are forces higher and stronger than the poor subject that lay beyond its control and reach. Therefore, it seems it has become a pressing need to reevaluate the ideals of modernism including its supposedly anti-religious, secular attitude. But we need to be very cautious in trying to understand the meaning of this new rise of the Spirit, and not to confuse the necessity of recognizing an undeniably important socio-historical phenomenon in it with an 'optional' decision of recognizing its inner truth. In other words, we must be very careful in differentiating the socio-historical unavoidability of faith (especially, the religious one), and its desirability in a world which remains forever in an unfulfilled (*messianic*, as Derrida would say) expectation for peace and tranquility. This desire for peace and 'resolution of every possible conflict' should not force us to make a leap back to the pre-modern forms of living and thinking as that tranquil community life and faithful thinking. For thinking can only be critical and at the moment it ceases to be so, it also ceases to be creative. It is here, in this relationship of the divine, the transcendent to the profane, mundane here-and-now of the possibility of doing and of politics faith becomes the expression of nothing other than a passive withdrawal, an act of surrendering, an abandonment of the will, of the desire: true nihilism.

As Derrida reminds, retaining the naïve modernist attitude¹⁰ toward religion (faith in general) and science (reason and knowledge) as we did until the end of the 70s can no longer offer a strong basis for a satisfactory answer to the questions posed by the rise of the transcendental in the field of experience as well as by the dissolution of the modernist myths after post-structuralist and postmodernist critiques in the field of thinking.¹¹ Today, it seems no longer possible to deny the *fact*¹² that the religious element has already been involved in the development and autonomy of reason from the very outset. Apart from the question of the so-called early Greek inception of the Western metaphysics, it is possible only today to raise the question how all these intelligent minds could be blind to the fact that Descartes wrote one of his most influential books for the purpose of convincing the infidel to the truth of the Christian religion and its God. On the first page of his "Letter" of dedication "[t]o these wisest and most distinguished men, the Dean and Doctors of the Holy Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris," in *Meditations*, Descartes was defending the right to philosophy as a distinct domain from theology by saying:

“I have always thought that the two issues of God and the soul were the most important of those that should be resolved by philosophical rather than theological means.”¹³

If one stops reading here, one will have every right to claim that Descartes has been, indeed, striving to liberate out of the hands of the dogmatic system of Catholic theology the privilege of rising the only questions that are important for us¹⁴ and seeking their answers within a rational philosophy. But, when one reads along the text one should be blind not to see that this is not the case at all. For what Descartes makes explicit in the immediately following sentences is that his intention is rather to acknowledge the priority and superiority of faith (presented as a gift of God to Christians) in attaining the truth and that his rational methodology is proposed only to invite the infidel (having no inner light of faith that can direct him to the truth of the Christian God) to see and appreciate this truth which he is otherwise incapable of conceiving: If one cannot win their hearts, then one must try to win their minds. Descartes continues from where he has left:

“For although it is sufficient for us Christians to believe by faith that the human soul does not perish with the body and that God exists, yet it seems certain that unbelievers cannot be convinced of the truth of religion, and scarcely even of any moral values, unless these first two truths are proved to them by natural reason. (...) And although it is completely true that we should believe in the existence of God because it is taught in the holy scriptures, and by the same token that we should believe the holy scriptures because we have them from God –since, faith being a gift of God, he who gives us the grace to believe the rest of religion can also give us the grace to believe he exists—there is no point in asserting this to unbelievers, because they would call it arguing in a circle.”¹⁵

Neither was this all. Can it be denied that it was Descartes again, the founder of reason, who could accomplish the unity of his system only through the transcendental meditation of a moral God between the mind and the body as the two irreconcilably distinct substances? According to the inventor of doubt as the only reliable method of attaining those ‘clear and distinct ideas’ which can only be conceived in the mind (thinking mind, by its thinking activity establishing its own existence at the same time), those elements of the Christian belief which, actually, are obtained through the gift of God, viz. that God exists, that he is a benevolent God, and that he is omniscient and omnipotent are desperately needed. Such a

proposition with regard to the existence of a god who is far above and beyond the two substances is indeed necessitated to be able to establish the link between the soul and the matter and ground of the possibility of knowledge of the world. Since a mind capable of demonstrating its own existence without any reference to the existence of a god cannot do so when it tries to demonstrate even the truth (as the ground of their reliability) of its own abstract ideas¹⁶, let alone the knowledge of the existence of other things, now understood as standing at the externality of the mind¹⁷. As it will be seen, the strategy adopted by Descartes in the 6th Meditation, arguing the necessity of postulating the existence of God, will prove to be quite fertile in terms of the question of the possibility of supplying the mind with a particular historical content.

Descartes was brave enough to make it clear that what he was after was to show the indispensable need for a transcendental being by means of which he could restore unity to Being. He was also clear that this third element, which was transcendent in every sense of the word, so that it cannot be considered as another substance, could only be a divine existence with its infinite powers who could be thought but not understood by the finitude of the human mind. Yet, one should not blame Descartes for establishing the 'rational' grounds for the necessity of positing the existence of God, and thus, making philosophy a tool for faith, if not for theology. It was largely due to his misrepresentation or reversal of the actual role of philosophy in relation to faith, as if it had offered an autonomous and even superior path to knowledge rather than faith and theology that the modernist attitude was able to create the myths of reason and science (with an addition of the procedure of experiment) presented as antireligion. However misguided it may be it was his insistence on the capacity of reason to show and prove the existence of God and the immortality of the soul rather than simply propagating them as the dogmas of religion as God revealed them through holy Scriptures that gave birth to the dream of a modernism of a reason triumphant.

Derrida was right in reminding us the need to rethink Western modernity. Perhaps, the very inception of Western modernity owes much to faith as the ground of its rationality, so that, it can live through all the myths of its rationality, its radically distinct identity, and its superiority. Otherwise how could Habermas wrote:

“Insofar as Christianity and capitalism, natural science and technology, Roman law and the Code of Napoleon, the bourgeois-urban form of life, democracy and human rights, the secularization of state and society have spread across other continents, these legacies no longer constitute a *proprium*. The Western form of spirit, rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, certainly has its characteristic features. But the nations of Europe

also share this mental habitus, characterized by individualism, rationalism, and activism, with the United States, Canada, and Australia.”¹⁸

The idea that the modernity has been lived through the myths generated by modernism which have served as a disguise for its medieval Christian roots and that it never has been a radical break with the religious dogma of the past is also confirmed by Derrida and Latour. In “Faith and Knowledge,” Derrida says, for instance, that with respect to the Christian notion of tolerance, “the French Enlightenment, *les Lumières*, was no less essentially Christian than the *Aufklärung*.”¹⁹ And Latour points out to this possibility as if he was waking up from a dream by invoking the question: “And what if we had never been modern?”²⁰

Therefore, it would not be wrong to suggest that it can never be a mere coincidence nor simply a result of sheer logical necessity that the thought of Descartes has occupied a very crucial place in the history of Western thinking, and that, following him, no less than a figure than Kant has come to occupy the center place of this tradition. As it is well known, this authority of the German *Aufklärung* would start his famous first *Critique* by stating that he “had to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*.”²¹ Yet, as it appears from the reactions of his contemporaries as well as successors like Fichte, Jacobi, Mendelssohn, Wizenmann, Schelling, and finally, Hegel, all he was able to accomplish despite his sincere efforts ‘to make room for faith,’ was to destruct the not-so-well-grounded modernist belief in knowledge rather than restoring faith. Perhaps, unlike others and despite his pietist background and sincerity, his strict limitation of the legitimate use of reason to the field of experience was what led his full-hearted opposition against religious enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) and defend the freedom of the public use of reason. Kant’s position was indeed equivocal for his contemporaries because he was trying to defend faith by showing the impossibility of ‘true’ knowledge, thus destroying their belief in it while, at the same time, denying the possibility of knowing the existence of God. From then on it would be impossible for the others to base their claims of faith on knowledge as Descartes once was trying to do for the unbelievers.

Moreover, Kant was also successful in destroying the transcendent unity of all achieved by the Cartesian hierarchy of the tripartite unity of God, soul and body. With the separation of the world as phenomenal and noumenal, and the division of experience as cognitive and practical, the security in the world suggested by the Cartesian, Leibnizian and Spinozist philosophies could no longer hold. Thus, if these philosophies could be read as the expressions of a world order based upon the fantastic image (‘*imago*’ in the Lacanian sense²²) of the unity of the self, of the society (Hobbes and Locke), of the nature (Newton), and finally of all (Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz with their complementing and competing propositions)²³, the Kantian critique had to be seen as a deadly blow onto

this unity in the sphere of thinking. This dissolution of unity in thinking can also be seen as a symptom of a dissolution of the universalistic view of the Catholic church in the field of experience under the pressure of Protestantism that started earlier as well as the pressures coming from the rising modern state as an effective rival for earthly authority.²⁴ Indeed, Kantian philosophy with its ‘as if’ character came to prominence as the best and binding example of the mythic nature of the modernist representation of the emerging modern world. Because, according to Kant, it was only by taking the subjective need, or purposiveness originating from this need ‘as if’ it was objective, humanity could create the conditions of the possibility of its existence and prove itself its *worth to be happy*.²⁵ When Kant asserted the obligation of being happy as the formal rational condition of the use of human freedom “without depending on any sort of end as a material condition”, he was actually pointing to one of the earliest and most important divisions in philosophy and making a decision with regard to it in accordance with the requirements of the conceptual framework that had developed inside the Platonic, Neoplatonic and Christian tradition. Indeed, this division was nothing other than an extension of the division drawn by Parmenides between *aletheia* and *doxa* as a response to the question of the relation of knowledge²⁶ to human condition that would crystallize later in the difference between Plato’s and Aristotle’s’ approaches to the political and ethical life as well as to the nature of knowledge and knowing.

It will be unnecessary to go into a detailed discussion of this issue here. For our present purposes it will suffice to point out that the issue has been centered on the question of the nature of the good. Plato described the good as the ultimate Form from which all other Forms came into being.²⁷ For Aristotle such a conceptualization of the good as the ultimate Form was not acceptable, because he was looking for it not in the realm of the Idea, but rather in the here-and-now of the social.²⁸ This suggests that when approaching the important problem of the good, they differ radically even in their methodology. Since Plato was giving priority to the procedures of remembering, i.e., dialectical method digging out what the soul already knew through its earlier being in the realm of the Forms before its departure for this life of dream. Against this, Aristotle was emphasizing the role of the sensory experiences (*empeiria*) and the need of the soul to connect in the memory their representations in clusters (*kathalon*), which were nothing but generalized summaries of the experiences grouped together according to their similarities and differences.²⁹ Therefore, it was unacceptable for him to start the inquiry on the good by supposing a theory of the Forms, but rather it was necessary to look for it in the realm of experience. This preference was what made Aristotle to open up the fields of politics and ethics as two closely related fields of human activity where the question of justice was reduced to be a function of them. Such a view was in sharp contrast to the

Platonic theory of the Forms which saw the 'perfect' state and 'eternal' justice as Forms to be remembered (or imagined) and which emphasized the ideal political structure and the harmonious order of the universe respectively and reduced ethics to a function of this transcendent just order as the unity of all.

Despite Kant described his position in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as transcendental idealism referring to the investigation of existing *a priori* categories of reason, since these categories were left empty of content without experience, he remained loyal to the delimiting power of the latter. Therefore, for his successors, what Kant was bringing could not be easily received as a gift, and starting with his most devoted and immediate follower, Fichte, the reactions reflected the agony it inflicted in the minds of those who were used to think in a universe whose unity and harmony was guaranteed by a transcendent god. The cry which Fichte lets go in his popular work, *The Vocation of Man*, echoes this painful yearning after, now lost, Cartesian happiness felt before mind's having clear and distinct ideas. What Fichte finds intolerable is exactly the Kantian achievement:

“The reality in which you formerly believed –a material world existing independently of you, of which you feared to become a slave—has vanished; for this whole material world arises only through knowledge, and is itself our knowledge. But knowledge is not reality –just because it is knowledge. You have seen through the illusion; and without bellying your better insight, you can never again give yourself up to it. (...) You now seek [with the help of Fichte's own system], and with good right as I well know, something real lying beyond mere appearance, another reality than that which has thus been annihilated. But in vain would you labour to create this reality by means of your knowledge, or out of your knowledge; or to embrace it by your understanding.”³⁰

At a juncture when everybody talks about the return of the religious, we can rightfully ask what was so frustrating in Kant's thinking. Was it that Kant, from the summit of the Enlightenment, was calling for disbelief? Certainly not! But he was severing the ties of the 'transcendent' (unity of the subject, unity of the nature, and God as the unity of all) from the particular historical content, the here-and-now of the human existence. These ideals of pure reason could not be based on any real experience, but were only suggested by the extension of the logical operations of reason outside of the domain of experience. So that, although such a 'faith' in the ideals of pure reason was determined as a (logical) necessity, Kant was quick to warn those who might had been

ready to give up reason (as Fichte did) for faith about the dangers of religious enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) and was reminding everyone the importance of reason.³¹ Thus, by reducing the transcendent to a mere idea of reason, he was also destroying its factuality as any historically revealed religion. He had shown that reason, in its knowing capacity, could not offer a sufficient ground for the transcendent truth, and despite all his good intentions the result was a mere empty transcendental idea without any content or predicates which could, therefore, only offer a deistic interpretation in relation to the problem of knowing the existence of God.³² This separation of the transcendent (or its reduction to a mere idea) and experience (phenomenal, devoid of noumenal reality) was exactly what rendered the transcendent ineffective and the phenomenal frustrating and boring.³³ While Fichte and Jacobi could do nothing other than inviting us back to the path of faith via feeling, Wizenmann was to take another path which would lead to the re-emergence of the transcendent by a re-unification of the idea and historical experience. In his *Resultate*, Wizenmann was relating the requirement of faith to the very thing which Kant described as the sole criterion for knowledge, viz. experience, and reminding that even the criterion itself could only be a result of an act of faith, for we have to *believe* in our experiences to be able to assume even the existence of reason itself.³⁴

Of course, this second sort of faith, believing in the facts (or in the factuality of our own experiences) was quite different from the rational faith which was necessitated by the need of reason as Kant described. As Beck put it³⁵, Wizenmann was not talking about “a belief which merely ratifies some of the findings of speculative reason (and vetoes others, as Mendelssohn thought sound reason should),” but about a faith which could take a person “out of the realm of abstract and universal truths”, in other words, out of the empty world of the ideals of reason. Only through such a faith in the factuality of experience it was possible to introduce the facts (*Thatsache*) into reason, and thus re-establish the unity of the abstract ideal with the historical in the faith of (Christian) religion. It was no surprise that Wizenmann’s suggestion was taken up by Schelling and Hegel, and it was the latter who took it up to the heights of the speculative philosophy and gave it a ‘secular’ appearance in his formulation of the *Geist* as the Absolute.³⁶

Hegel saw the enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) as a stage in the dialectical and historical development of the Spirit. Since Being and Thought were the same thing, both constituting the unity of the Spirit,³⁷ there was no essential difference between the forms of thought and the actualization of the Spirit, and thus, for him enlightenment was the result of the alienation of the Spirit from its original universal unity, separating itself into two parts as pure insight (thought – *reine Einsicht*) and belief (*Glauben*). In this process of alienation of the native pure consciousness, its pure logical structure gradually distinguishes itself from any specific content the

introduction of which into the consciousness requires, as Wizenmann has already pointed out, belief, at least, in the reality of the experience. This alienation of the pure insight is at the same time a movement of the pure consciousness which establishes the immediate truth of itself in the form of the self-consciousness of the subject (“I think, therefore I am”). Thus, according to Hegel, the moment of enlightenment represents a development brought forth by the insidious spread of the infection of pure insight into the consciousness and its opposition against belief generating pure consciousness of the Absolute Being:

“(…) the expansion of pure insight – enlightenment; for pure insight is born of the substance of spirit, it knows the pure self of consciousness to be absolute, and enters into conflict with the pure consciousness of the Absolute Being of all reality.

Since belief and insight are the same pure consciousness, but in form are opposed –the reality in the case of belief being a thought, not a notion, and hence something absolutely opposed to self-consciousness, while the reality in the case of pure insight is the self—they are such that *inter se* the one is the absolute negative of the other.”³⁸

In this opposition against belief, pure insight, says Hegel, is at first without any specific content for it rejects belief and the content brought with it, but develops its own content later by making itself (the self) its own content. Thus, it can only know belief in the form of “superstitious prejudices and errors” and by thus interpreting belief and its content presented in the form of the Absolute Being of all, it falls into error itself. This shows that Hegel was thinking of the enlightenment as an erroneous but still historically necessary domination of the alienated negative pure insight of self-consciousness over the unity of the objective spirit. It is in this erroneous way, through fantasies, indeed, reason and enlightenment establish themselves as the mythical ultimate reality of self-consciousness. Since it is far from being complete, in the movement of its rise, self-consciousness necessarily opposes itself something which is nothing other than that form of consciousness (spirit) which emerges as belief. Hegel describes belief primarily as trust in the object which enables the believing consciousness establish an unmediated relation with its object, to see itself as being “one with the object, and in the object.”³⁹ Yet, despite belief is still in the element of thought, since it does not assume the form of notion (concept, *Begriff*), as belief, it cannot express itself in the pure rational (logical) language of pure insight. In its distinction from belief which tends to be one with and lost in its object which is nothing other than the unity of consciousness itself in the form of objective spirit or God,

and in opposition to it, enlightenment asserts its own individual self-consciousness as a moment of the subjective spirit alienated from the objective spirit.⁴⁰ According to this account, the counterposing and struggle of reason (pure logical rationality) based upon the constitution of the individual self-consciousness, which corresponds to the historical emergence of the bourgeois individual subject, is just the natural result of the history of the development of the objective spirit which is yet far from expressing itself in its Absolute Truth, that is, in the unity of consciousness that will emerge at the end of the process of its own sublation over and above the dualism of the pure rationality of thought and notionless trust of belief.

At first sight, enlightenment seems to be a one-sided triumph of reason. But, Hegel was quite aware of its inner contradictions, so that, despite its tendency to negate belief and condemn superstition, enlightenment cannot do but reintroduce what it rejects just in another form. This form, as Hegel points out, is nothing other than the very notion of matter which, contrary to its factual incarnations in particular experiences, remains metaphysical as something that secures the “missing moment of *presence*”.⁴¹ It is through such an abstract notion of matter, enlightenment creates a ground (while rejecting it in the form of the Absolute Being as it is presented by belief) for what is beyond the finitude of the self-consciousness as the sole source of sense experience. Therefore, as Wizenmann asserted, even to be able to pose itself, self-consciousness in its negativity poses an external being in the abstract matter which can only emerge as its object in the form of utility: the useful, according to Hegel, is the result of the tendency of the individual self-consciousness which poses itself in contradistinction to all (to its original unity and, in consequence, its being one with the objective spirit, its being nothing other than one of its moments). In its vanity, then, self-consciousness creates its own world to which Hegel refers as the third world and counterposes it against the earlier but now (after the rise and spread of enlightenment of the self-consciousness) forgotten first world of the spirit as nature and second world of belief inspired by the generic principle of the Absolute Being. For Hegel, this third world of the pure insight of self-consciousness can only be based upon the notion of the useful, because while “[t]he realm of the truth of belief lacks the principle of concrete actuality, or of certainty of self in the sense of this individual self,” nature’s concrete actuality, that is “certainty of self *qua* this individual, lacks the ultimate inherent nature (Ansich).”⁴² Therefore, it is only through the notion of the useful, pure insight can establish its particular object and reconcile the world of the Absolute Being (now, in the form of abstract matter) and the world of actuality (sense experience), and secure the possibility of true knowledge which it claims.

It is noteworthy that almost all of the major themes of modern criticisms directed against enlightenment have already been pointed out

in Hegel's text written as early as the beginning of the 19th century: alienation, forgetfulness of Being, excessive individualism, being sunk in the materiality of the capitalist world, commodity fetishism, instrumentalization of reason, over-rationalization as bureaucratization. This holds also true with regard to themes of postmodern and postsecular criticisms of modernity emphasizing the constructed or subjugated nature of modern subjectivity, its blindness on the relationship between power, knowledge and truth, and its never being purely rational despite its claims to the contrary, or reason's need to 'recognize' its other in religion, etc. But, it would be wrong to delimit the scope of the Hegelian analysis to a mere critique of the knowledge claims of the enlightenment. We must acknowledge that it was also him who first saw the difficult relationship between the emergence of difference as the rise of the alienated self from the totality and the totality itself creating a space in the gap to locate the ground for the possibility of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) and politics. Unfortunately, Hegelian dialectics would end up by a declaration of a sort of 'end of history' when he announced the (German) state as the final "image and actuality of reason"⁴³ and demanded from the individual subject a perfect identification with it.⁴⁴

Hegel was quite right when he felt the need to make a distinction between ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*] and morality [*Moralität*] in the Kantian sense, despite the common etymological roots of the words.⁴⁵ For him, the ideas of morality and moral duty were the products of the idealization of the subjective self-consciousness which was unable to come out of itself, and as such, they reflected the second moment of the will which was determined as subjective individuality in its opposition to the world (objective Spirit).⁴⁶ But, from this point on, Hegel, following his urge incited by his dialectics to declare the necessity of the identity of opposites and of their reconciliation in the unity of the Absolute, neglected the hint he got from Aristotle and concentrated on the ethical life as unity of the good as ideal and action as its actualization.⁴⁷ However, as it was stated earlier, Aristotle was firmly rejecting the Platonic idea of good as the ultimate Form and located it in a social context where it could no longer be seen as absolute. Therefore, for Aristotle the virtues and vices were not determined in accordance with an abstract idea of the good, but rather with the socially acquired habits which also constituted the character of people.⁴⁸

This last observation can also be supported by Aristotle's insistence on differences between the goods of the democrats, aristocrats and the tyrant. And, indeed, it is this possibility of differences emerging in a social context in relation to the nature of the good which opens up a field for ethical and political life in the social. Not only that, the very connection between actual (social) ethical life and politics can also be established on this ground of the social, for, individuals acting in the society, do confront each other through their action which may or may not transgress the

boundaries of the others. As long as these actings upon each other stabilize in the formation of habits as certain possible modes of acting in the social, their being so indicates the emergence of the rule (not out of the idea of good as a borrowed principle from the realm of the Forms and brought down to the actuality) as a socio-historical point of legitimation reflecting the limits of acting (which may not necessarily be symmetrical) conceived as more or less 'acceptable' by the parties involved. Interpreted in this way, ethics becomes the knowledge of this legitimate norm acquiring an approximate degree of historical and social stability in a given social context. It is this capacity of acting on each other and its being subject to continuous negotiation, thus, rather than the inclusion of the idea of the good in the social action (this latter can never act as a unifying principle for there will always be a disagreement about its nature as long as there are differences of positions in the society) which gives ethics (as the knowledge of these rules) and ethical life (acting according to these rules) its possibility and connects it with politics. In this sense, then, politics emerges as the capacity to enforce (push) the rule further towards the other making it to accept a larger portion of the good of the enforcing party as its own good. In such a relationship, enforcement, resistance, and counter-enforcement in a process of continuous negotiation of the differences of position give meaning to a politics as effective action. Hegelian interpretation tending to reduce ethical life and politics to a neutral moment of the unity of all under the principle of the absolute good achieved within the state may seem, at the first glance, as if it is aiming at establishing that happy state of humanity where everyone will take his just share from security and welfare.⁴⁹ But, since it is rather difficult for the rest of us to accept the validity of the idea of the good over its social determination, we have every right to suggest that the Hegelian interpretation of the situation does nothing but expand (push) the grounds of the legitimacy of a particular state (modern state), of a particular region (the West), and of a particular folk (the Germans) onto whoever their other in a particular juncture. Indeed, such a judgment declaring the impossibility of a melting down of the substantially effective differences (as well as its undesirability and unnecessariness) in the unity of an Absolute Being can also be confirmed by the very rise of the idea of unity which can only be located in actuality as the relationality of the opposites.

Contrary to this, however, those lovers of faithful peace, who seem to be eager to show us the happy end in the 'long-awaited' unity of a world under a Kantian (thanks God, not Hegelian) cosmopolitan order whose law should be given by the West (which, of course, is the best) and in the happy wedding of reason and faith in this post-secular society where truth (both in scientific and religious terms) is democratized and stripped of all its efficacy, are 'kindly' inviting the rest to forget about the differences in the name of an idealized, and therefore, messianic, never-to-come unity.

In Hegelian abstract language, this was expressed as the restoration of that presupposed ideal unity or ‘synthesis’ of the subjective and objective spirit, or what was conceived by the pure insight of self-consciousness (knowledge) and what was immediately intuited by belief. In the postmodern language it finds its expression in the *presencing* of the Absolute Being calling for an experience of *ek-stasis* on the part of *Dasein* in the Heideggerian sense and requiring a cancelling out (deconstruction) of the terms of opposition. Indeed, what Hegelian philosophy hits upon and late postmodern thinking affirms through those so-called de-centerings or deconstructions of the subject seems to be a strange destruction of all *other* subjectivities in the unity of a cosmopolitan world whose law should be given by the Western *subjectivity* as a special sort of subjectivity which should and can survive this deconstruction mysteriously. As such, this can only mean the assertion of a demand expressed *in thought* for the complete surrender of specific selves whose common denominator is their *not* being ‘one of us’.⁵⁰

Conclusion

Perhaps it is true that the spirit or the religious returns in this age as Derrida declared. But it would be a simple naïveté to attribute this return to twists and shifts in theory. Rather, what makes almost all of us (including those Neo-Kantians, -Hegelians, postmodernists, defenders of post-secular society, etc.) to think of its unavoidable return and hastily declare the demise of the self, and together with it, the insubstantiality of difference reduced to multiculturalism –whereas all the possibility of sociability, ethical life and politics can rest on its substantial forms— can only be understood on the ground of a common set of contemporary experiences.⁵¹ When we ask what is common to all these experiences, perhaps we may find nothing other than the much talked about helplessness felt in the face of a world increasingly getting out of our own control. But, we should be careful in observing that world is getting out of our own control may not necessarily mean its actually getting out of control (out of joints). It may also signify its *falling* under the ‘control’ –yet another myth—of some *other* which remains for us ‘transcendent’. Perhaps, in this sense, the return of the spirit does neither represent the happy reconciliation of faith and knowledge nor herald the final unification of humanity under a happy cosmopolitan world order where law will be equally just for everyone. Moreover, this return cannot be seen as a natural result of the workings of a Hegelian dialectic. Rather, it may represent an enforced subordination of reason by faith, for faith can never give up its claim of the immediate certainty of the truth of the unity of the Absolute, reserving a place for knowledge just enough to allow it to be a function of itself.⁵² Indeed, the increasing credibility of those traditionalist men of faith, well versed in postmodern language, like Nasr

who does not hesitate to call science to humility before faith and give up its major claims before the rising Spirit if any reconciliation will be possible at all in a Habermasian postsecular, post-metaphysical society witnesses this very well.⁵³ For, Nasr is much more aware of the vanity of such desires of reconciliation brought forth by those who seek a sympathetic coexistence with the religious *within* the secular:

“... the facile convergence of science and spirituality championed in so many circles is based more on fervent desire than on reality. Also it is often based on the one hand on the confusion of science with the views of some of its practitioners and on the other on the dilution and distortion of authentic spiritual teachings.”⁵⁴

Reading this, it is more than worth to recall Kant warning the ‘friends of the human race’ in his own language to be very careful in trusting knowledge and reason into the hands of faith which may be quite ruthless despite its apparent semblance to tolerance:

“Friends of the human race and of what is holiest to it! Accept what appears to you most worthy of belief after careful and sincere examination, whether of facts or rational grounds; only do not dispute that prerogative of reason which makes it the highest good on earth, the prerogative of being the final touchstone of truth. Failing here, you will become unworthy of this freedom, and you will surely forfeit it too; and besides that you will bring the same misfortune down on the heads of other, innocent parties who would otherwise have been well disposed and would have used their freedom *lawfully* and hence in a way which is conducive to what is best for the world!”⁵⁵

Notes:

¹ See especially Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 1-9, 107-118 and 156-164.

² Of course, this does not mean that they were not able to appreciate the significant role played by faith and religion in the society. Rather, except Marx perhaps, they all took religion seriously and assuming a secular attitude worked on it.

³ François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 37-38.

⁴ Deflef Pollack and Daniel V. A. Olson write in their ‘Preface’, “Religion is back on the political agenda of western societies that, for the most part, have come to

regard themselves as secularized”. Deflef Pollack and Daniel V. A. Olson, “Preface” in *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies*, ed. Deflef Pollack and Daniel V. A. Olson (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), xiii.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, “Only a God Can Save Us: *Der Spiegel*’s Interview”, in Martin Heidegger, *Philosophical and Political Writings*, ed. Mansfred Stassen, (New York and London: Continuum, 2003), 38.

⁶ Just as an example see Janet Janet and Kevin B. Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), for an excellent analysis of late Foucault’s turn to what he termed ‘political spirituality’ in defense of an authentic engagement with politics as it was exemplified by 1979 Iranian Revolution and convergences between his postmodernist thinking and Islamic religiosity.

⁷ For the dramatic change in Habermas’s approach to faith see Austin Harrington, “Habermas and Post-Secular Society,” *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2007): 543-560. There Harrington says, “*Prima vista*, Habermas’s current work [starting from 1988] suggests a significantly more sympathetic engagement with the arguments of the theologians and a dramatic self-distancing from his earlier secularist advocacy” (Harrington, 544). For a recent interview with Habermas summarizing his hopes for the happy unity of faith and reason in the post-secular society which, at least for the time being, can be thought in the already secularized western societies see Jürgen Habermas, “A Postsecular World Society? On the Philosophical Significance of Postsecular Consciousness and the Multicultural World Society,” int. Eduardo Mendieta, *The Immanent Frame* (February 3, 2010), <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/A-Postsecular-World-Society-TIF.pdf> (accessed September 24, 2010).

⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 45.

⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007).

¹⁰ A modernist attitude should be understood here as different from a ‘modern’ attitude in its being an idealized, mythicized representation of what is actually taken place in the modern, so that the modern recognizes itself in its mythical, idealized representation.

¹¹ The term ‘modernist myths’ is used here in reference to Lyotard’s use of the notion of ‘meta-narratives’. Indeed, Lyotard’s interpretation of the relation between the meta-narratives and science does confirm the earlier differentiation of the modernist attitude from the modern practices and the problematic nature of their relationship. Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiii, says: “Science has always been in conflict with narratives. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them prove to be fables. But to the extent that science does not restrict itself to stating useful regularities and seeks the truth, it is obliged to legitimate the rules of its own game. It then produces a discourse of legitimation with respect to its own status, a discourse called philosophy. I will use the term *modern* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subjects, or the creation of wealth.”

¹² Just like the fact of the temporality of this age which emerges as an undeniable historical reality and will fade away, of course, with a trace, in a future to come, as it forces earlier facts to disappear and lose their importance and undeniable force.

¹³ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

¹⁴ Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *Max Weber's Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, ed. John Dreijmanis (New York: Algora, 2008), 39. In discussing what can be expected from science as a vocation, Weber quotes from Tolstoy's "What Then We Must Do?": "It [science] is meaningless because it gives no answer to the only questions that are important to us: 'What should we do? How should we live?'" As it can be seen, however, Descartes' important questions (the existence of God and the immortality of the soul) were quite different from those of Tolstoy.

¹⁵ Descartes, *Meditations*, 3.

¹⁶ Rene Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, in *Rene Descartes: Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Pub., 2000), 234. In answering the 13th question "In what sense the knowledge of all other things depends on the knowledge of God", Descartes says that the mind conceiving "that it may have been created of such a nature that it has been deceived even in what is most evident, it sees clearly that it has great cause to doubt the truth of such conclusions and to realize that it can have no certain knowledge until it has come to know the author of its origin."

¹⁷ Descartes, *Meditations*, 57. In the 6th meditation devoted to the question of the existence of the real things, the only way that was left open to Descartes was to posit God as the sole guarantor of the truth of the knowledge of the real things: "As to the remaining properties that are either purely particular (for instance, the sun's being of a certain magnitude or shape) or less clearly understood (for instance, light, sound, pain, and suchlike), although they are very doubtful and uncertain, yet this basic fact, that God is no deceiver, and that therefore it cannot be the case that any falsity should be found in my opinions, unless there is also some God-given faculty in me for correcting it, offers me a firm hope of discovering the truth with respect to them as well".

¹⁸ Habermas, Jürgen, "February 15, or What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in the Core of Europe," *Constellations*, Vol. 10, Issue 3, 2003, p. 294.

¹⁹ Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 59.

²⁰ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10.

²¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Trans. and Ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17 ("Preface" to the Second Edition, p. BXXX).

²² Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006), 75-81.

²³ Descartes wrote his *Meditations* in 1641, Hobbes his *Leviathan* in 1651, Locke his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in 1690, Newton his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* in 1687, Spinoza his *Ethica* in 1677, and Leibniz his *Theodiciée* in 1710. This was also roughly the period of the European religious wars following Luther's publication of *The Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517.

²⁴ When we assume a non-philosophical attitude, then the discussion of ideas or systems of ideas ceases to be a mere discussion of their truth value, but turns out to be a discussion of their relevance to the requirements of their times. Therefore, the answer to the question why Kantian philosophy was, and still is so crucial cannot be found within the truth of the Kantian philosophy itself, but rather should be sought in its power to express best the experiences of those who have felt and still feel the need to take it seriously.

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 315-316. Kant points to the impossibility of grounding moral obligation of being happy on an objective purposiveness of nature and adds, “Consequently, we must assume a moral cause of the world (an author of the world) in order to set before ourselves a final end, in accordance with the moral law;” (italics are mine, EY).

²⁶ For Parmenides’ famous poem, see G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 263-285.

²⁷ Plato, *Republic*, Book VI, 508 b-c and e, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Pub., 1977), 1129-1130. In this argument where he resembles the Form of the good in the intelligible realm to the sun in the sensible realm, Plato adds: “Therefore, you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it, although the good is not being, but superior to it in rank and power.”

²⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, 1106a 11-16 and especially 27-28, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), Vol. II, 1732. Aristotle accepts the importance of the notion of the good but bitterly criticizes the Platonic interpretation of it as the ultimate Form: “We had perhaps better consider the universal good and discuss thoroughly what is meant by it, although such an inquiry is made an uphill one by the fact that the Forms have been introduced by friends of our own. Yet it would perhaps thought to be better, indeed to be our duty, for the sake of maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers; for while both are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends. (...) clearly the good cannot be something universally present in all cases and simple.” With this last statement he rejects the Platonic idea of the good and reduces it to something which is to be determined differently according to individuals and groups located in certain social contexts.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3-11, Book I, 980 a 22-982 a 25.

³⁰ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Vocation of Man* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1956), 182.

³¹ Immanuel Kant, “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13. “Every Belief, even the historical, must of course be *rational* (for the final touchstone of truth is always reason); only a rational belief or faith is one grounded on no data other than those contained in *pure* reason. All believing is a holding true which is subjectively sufficient, but *consciously* regarded as objectively insufficient; thus it is contrasted with *knowing*. On the other hand, when something is held true on objective though consciously

insufficient grounds, and hence is merely *opinion*, this *opining* can gradually be supplemented by the same kind of grounds and finally become *knowing*. By contrast, if the grounds of holding true are of a kind that cannot be objectively valid at all, then the belief can never become a knowing through any use of reason.”

³² Although it is true that Kant himself rejected deism alongside atheism and anthropomorphism (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 588) he could do that only by taking recourse to the assumption of the existence of the absolutely necessary practical laws (*Ibid.*, 585). Yet, since this second assumption cannot be based upon experience but only on the subjective purposiveness which does not guarantee objective purposiveness of nature as the ground of all experience, Kant was still unable to give a solid ground for his conviction (faith) of the existence of God. Indeed, it was this which disappointed most his later followers down to Hegel. Feuerbach was keen to observe this when he was interpreted Kant’s position as a specific version of deism which tended to see God as a mere idea of reason without any predicates. Such a God of philosophy, for him, was an expression of unbelief which was even worse than atheism which could still include an element of belief. In Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (Mineola NY: Dover, 2008), 12, he writes: “In relation to the attributes, the predicates, of the Divine Being, this is admitted without hesitation, but by no means in relation to the subject of these predicates. The negation of the subject is held to be irreligion, nay, atheism; though not so the negation of the predicates. But that which has no predicates or qualities, has no effect upon me; that which has no effect on me has no existence for me. To deny all the qualities of a being is equivalent to denying the being himself. A being without qualities is one which cannot become an object of the mind, and such a being is virtually non-existent. Where man deprives God of all qualities, God is no longer anything more to him than a negative being. To the truly religious man, God is not a being without qualities, because to him he is a positive, real being. The theory that God cannot be defined, and consequently cannot be known by man, is therefore the offspring of recent times, a product of modern unbelief.”

³³ Heidegger would refer to the first as the long forgotten question of Being, and the second as getting lost oneself in the averageness of the they self in his *Being and Time*.

³⁴ Thomas Wizenmann, *Die Resultate der Jacobischen und Mendelssohnschen Philosophie von einem Freywilligen* (Leipzig, 1786), 244-245: “So würde er gefunden haben, daß das Christenthum nicht Glauben an Lehre und Meynung, Glauben und ewige Wahrheiten, so fern sie sich auf keine Thatsachen stützen und nicht aus Thatsachen hervor gehen;”

³⁵ L. White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 372.

³⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 180-181. In criticizing Fichte’s radicalization of the Kantian philosophy of immanence (of the consciousness) in the form of a philosophy of absolute subjectivity, Hegel says the following: “The view of the world in the philosophy of absolute subjectivity is not the religious view at all. (...) [In contrast] Religion offers a possible reconciliation with nature viewed as finite and particular. The original possibility of this reconciliation lies in the original image of God on the subjective side; its actuality, the objective side lies in God’s eternal Incarnation in

man, and the identity of the possibility with the actuality through the spirit is the union of the subjective side with God made man.”

³⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), 594 and G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, herausg. Georg Lasson (Leipzig: Verlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, 1907), 375: “... das Denken ist Dingheit, oder Dingheit ist Denken.”

³⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 561.

³⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 568.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 567, Hegel continues: “As regards its [enlightenment's, pure insight's] content, it is in the first instance empty insight, whose content appears an external other to it. It meets this content, consequently, in the shape of something not yet its own, as something that exists quite independent of it, and is found in belief. Enlightenment, then, conceives its object in the first instance and generally in such a way as to take it as pure insight, and failing to recognize itself there, interprets it as error. In insight as such consciousness apprehends an object in such a manner that it becomes the inner being of conscious life, or becomes an object which consciousness permeates, in which consciousness maintains itself, keeps with itself, and is present to itself, and, by its thus being the process of that object, brings the object into being. It is precisely this which enlightenment rightly declares belief to be, when enlightenment says that the Absolute Reality professed by belief is a being that comes from belief's own consciousness, is its own thought, something produced from and by consciousness. Enlightenment, consequently, explains and declares it to be an error, to be a made-up invention about the very same thing as enlightenment itself is.”

⁴¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 592-593. Speaking about the matter Hegel says, “Matter is really pure abstraction; and being so, we have here the pure essential nature of thought, or pure thought itself, as the Absolute without predicates, undetermined, having no distinctions within it.”

⁴² Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 597.

⁴³ W. G. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 380. On page 379, writing on the final reconciliation of all oppositions in the course of the world history understood as the process of the Spirit's unfolding, Hegel declares that the task of accomplishing this reconciliation falls on the part of the “Nordic principle of the *Germanic peoples*”. In the following page, he says that the true unity of reason (or, earlier pure insight of self-consciousness) and belief (unity of all conceived through religion) is achieved in the state as the objective spirit: “The present has cast off its barbarism and unjust [*unrechliche*] arbitrariness, and truth has cast off its otherworldliness and contingent force, so that the true reconciliation, which reveals the *state* as the image and actuality of reason, has become objective. In the *state*, the self-consciousness finds the actuality of its substantial knowledge and volition in organic development; in *religion*, it finds the feeling and representation [*Vorstellung*] of this truth as ideal essentiality; but in *science*, it finds the free and comprehended cognition of this truth as one and the same in all its complementary manifestations, i.e., in the *state*, in *nature*, and in the *ideal world*.”

⁴⁴ Despite Hegel's optimistic insistence on the *possibility* of the reconciliation of subjective and objective spirit(s), his haste to invite the end of the dialectic of spirit in its *necessary* unification in the ultimate identity of the two, sets this

reconciliation as a *necessity* rather than as a possibility (Hegel, *Elements*, 282): “The state is the actuality of concrete freedom. But *concrete freedom* requires that personal individuality [*Einzelheit*] and its particular interests should reach their full *development* and gain *recognition of their right* for itself (within the system of the family and of civil society), and also that they should, on the one hand, *pass over* of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and on the other, knowingly and willingly acknowledge this universal interest even as their own *substantial spirit*, and *actively pursue it* as their *ultimate end*.” In the following section of the paragraph, as if he had noticed what he demanded from the particularity in the name of the universal, Hegel went into a painstaking effort to show that the validity and fulfillment of the universal could not be reached without the “interest, knowledge, and volition of the particular”. But, in the addition to the same paragraph he could not take himself from saying again that this unproblematic unity cannot be determined “in accordance with subjective caprice”: “The idea of the state in modern times has the distinctive characteristic that the state is the actualization of freedom not in accordance with subjective caprice, but in accordance with the concept of the will, i.e. in accordance with its universality and divinity”.

⁴⁵ Hegel, *Elements*, 63.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Elements*, 62. Therefore, morality in the Kantian sense, was seen as the ideal of the subjective individuality in its effort to establish a ‘just’ relationship between these two extremes: “... *the right of the subjective will* in relation to the right of the world and the right of the idea –which, however, *has being only in itself*.”

⁴⁷ Hegel, *Elements*, 189, § 142 and Addition (H) to § 144.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Elements*, 194. The discussion of virtue within an Aristotelian context and declaration of their being an earlier expression of the ethical life pertaining to Antiquity shows that Hegel was well aware of the Aristotelian insistence on the usage of the word *ethos* in the senses of (socially acquired) *habits* and character as the totality of these habits in an individual or a society.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Elements*, 221, § 183: “The selfish end in its actualization, conditioned in this way by universality, establishes a system of all-round interdependence, so that the subsistence [*Subsistenz*] and welfare of the individual [*des Einzelnen*] and his rightful existence [*Dasein*] are intervoven with, an grounded on, the subsistence, welfare, and rights of all, and have actuality and security only in this context. –One may regard this system in the first instance as the *external state*, the *state of necessity* and of *the understanding*”. As the following page makes it clear, however, what Hegel does here is to destroy the possibility of ethical life, first, on the level of family and then of politics which, according to him emerges in the civil society, on the level of the state.

⁵⁰ For this special usage of the expression ‘one of us’ within the context of a description of a specific ‘European identity’, see Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, “February 15, or What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in the Core of Europe”, *Constellations*, V. 10, N. 3 (2003): 293. Of course, in opposing the annihilation of subjectivity, or of the self in ‘self-consciousness’ we do not deny historically and socially constructed character of subjectivity, but rather, try to emphasize the indispensability of asserting selfhood in whatever historico-social form it may assume even to be able to ‘imagine’ any idea of unity which can be nothing other than the expression of a

desire (ideal of a self-consciousness, as Kant would put it) to declare itself as the sole universal in its expansive movement towards its other.

⁵¹ Here, we need pay homage to Kant who never gave up delimiting the operations of reason with experience.

⁵² Enforced subordination of reason by faith does not mean that reason will necessarily be crushed under physical violence of the faithful, though remembering all the past experiences when faith got the upper hand this may also be possible in time: the cases of the so called Iranian Revolution, Taliban, Al Kaida and former Yugoslavia are just too fresh to forget. Yet, as Habermas reminds one should make a distinction between wealthy western countries and other poor societies (Habermas, “A Postsecular World Society”) and rather refer to all those not-necessarily-physical forms of violence which can make impossible to defend reason and free thinking against the overwhelming majority (general will) of the faithful who, despite their tolerance, never hesitate to enforce unity to the point of destructing or taming (Foucault) all effective difference. For a discussion of how the idea of tolerance hides the power of the tolerating party see Derrida, Jacques, (1997) 2000, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

⁵³ Seyyed Hossain Nasr, “Spirituality and Science: Convergence or Divergence,” in *The Essential Sophia*, ed. Seyyed Hossain Nasr and Katherine O’Brien (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2006), 217.

⁵⁴ Nasr, “Spirituality,” 213.

⁵⁵ Immanuel Kant, “What does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 14.

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