

**Love is colder than death:
Negativity, infiniteness and indetermination in Hegel's theory of desire¹**

For the rest, at a time when the universal nature of spiritual life has become so very much emphasized strengthened, and the mere individual aspect has become, as it should be, correspondingly a matter of indifference, when, too, that universal aspect holds, by the entire range of its substance, the full measure of the wealth it has built up, and lays claim to it all, the share in the total work of spirit that falls to the activity of any particular individual can only be very small. Because this is so, the individual must all the more forget himself, as in fact the very nature of science implies and requires that he should: and he must, moreover, become and do what he can. But all the last must be demanded of him, just as he can expect the less from himself, and may ask the less for himself².

These words of Hegel are important, as they summarize everything the 20th century imputed to him: philosopher of Absolute Knowledge, unable to explain the irreducibility of the differences and aspirations of recognition of individuals to the strategies of synthesis of the concept. He was perhaps the purest expression of the philosophical belief that one is only able to think by articulating strongly hierarchical systems with the consequent disregard for the ontological dignity of the contingent. It is as if, in Hegel, the particular were merely the occasion for the concrete realization of the universal. The particular, therefore, has no reality whatsoever in itself.

But did Hegel simply ignore the requirements for recognizing individuality, or was he really trying to set up the conditions for a re-understanding of the processes of individuation? Is this a defining trait of the limits of Hegelian philosophy, or is this trait the most important point in a broad project intended to provide a renewed concept of individuality according to which we have not yet been able to measure ourselves?

We know that Hegel developed his concept of individuality through the notion of self-consciousness. But we often forget how this self-consciousness is not a mentalist concept proper to the reflexivity of a self-sufficient subjectivity limited by what is exterior to it. For Hegel, self-consciousness is a relational concept intended to describe certain

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² «Weil übrigens in einer Zeit, worin die Allgemeinheit des Geistes so sehr erstarkt und die Einzelheit, wie sich gebührt, um so viel gleichgültiger geworden ist, auch jene an ihrem vollen Umfang und gebildeten Reichtum hält und ihn fodert, der Anteil, der an dem gesamten Werke des Geistes auf die Tätigkeit des Individuums fällt, nur gering sein kann, so muss dieses, wie die Natur der Wissenschaft schon est mit sich bringt, sich um so mehr vergessen, und zwar werden und tun, was es kann, aber es muss ebenso weniger von ihm gefordert werden, wie es selbst weniger von sich erwarten und für sich fordern darf» (HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, p. 58)

modes of overlapping between subject and others that have constitutive value for the experience of oneself.

But to say that self-consciousness is a relational concept is to say very little, since it might simply mean that all subjectivity is, from the beginning, dependent on an intersubjective structure of relationships that constitutes it and precedes it. But Hegel seems to be saying something more. To grasp this, we will have to better understand who this other is with whom I relate in constitutive experiences that take place in the field of language and desire. Is this just another self-consciousness, or a deeper alterity that stands beyond what determines an individuality as an object of mental representation, a beyond that puts me in confrontation with something that, from the point of view of consciousness, is indeterminate?

If we follow this second hypothesis, we may be able to better understand why, for Hegel, free individuality is that which leads to the field of the determination the disruptive force of the confrontation with the indeterminate and that, for this reason, is able to weaken all limiting adherence to a finite determinateness. This confrontation with the indeterminate as a fundamental process of the constitution of individuality becomes clearer if we ask ourselves about the function of limit experiences such as those having to do with death and anxiety in the process of formation of self-consciousness. They are more than mere motives for an excessively "existentialist" reading of Hegelian phenomenology, nor do they represent a moralizing approach as part of a process of formation associated to resentment and resignation regarding finiteness (as Deleuze believe). They indicate the necessary process of openness to what, from the point of view of consciousness immersed in a regime for thinking marked by the finiteness of representation and of ways of categorizing understanding, can only appear as devoid of determination.

In addition, to insist on this aspect will show us how, from a Hegelian perspective, the process of recognition of individuality cannot be limited to the simple recognition of the claim of positive individual rights that find no place in determined normative situations, as Honneth would have it³. For this same Honneth, the experience of indetermination is basically seen by consciousness as a source of suffering.

In fact, the question cannot be answered if we understand that which demands recognition as being individual rights, as singular expressions of autonomy and freedom. But this is not really what Hegel is talking about. As a matter of fact, he goes so far as to say that not risking one's life can produce recognition as a person, but not as an independent self-consciousness. This would be saying that the true autonomy of self-consciousness could only be placed on terrain beyond (or even on this side of) the form of a legal person who bears positive rights and individualizing determinations. This is why everything leads us to believe that Hegel is insisting that it is a matter of showing how the constitution of subjects is in line with the confrontation with something that is only seen in experiences of negativeness and uprooting that are similar to the confrontation with what weakens our individual contexts and our specific perspectives of the world.

If we reconstruct the basic device of the development of Hegel's theory of the formation of self-consciousness, we necessarily come into contact with the master slave dialectic. We are aware of contemporary attempts to invalidate the central role of the master slave dialectic in the discussion on the processes of the formation and recognition of

³ See HONNETH, Axel, *Leiden an Unbestimmtheit: Eine Reaktualisierung der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, Frankfurt: Reclam, 2001.

self consciousness. Robert Williams, for example, says that: "Is it not the full process of reciprocal recognition but the failure to achieve such reciprocal recognition that receives emphasis. For this reason, the figure of master/slave tends to dominate de *Phenomenology's* account of intersubjectivity"⁴. Only in his system of maturity was Hegel to finally provide "this full process."

In fact, the uneasiness of a number of Hegelian commentators with the master slave dialectic comes primarily from the fact that it shows us how processes of social recognition are mediated by a desire that instates conflict as ontological soil, by being present from the very beginning as something that constitutes relationships only on the basis of dynamics of domination and servitude. Through desire, I try to submit the other to the condition of object devoid of autonomy, an other whose essence consists only as a support for my desire. But since desire is the first mode of relationship with the other, the conflict it instates carries the weight of a given ontological fact for the way of being of self consciousness.

If this is the case there would seem to be an inconsistency in Hegel's scheme. As Ludwig Siep wrote, "As Hegel says, the process of recognition begins with the fact that the I is outside itself, he is negated as a being-for-itself and he see itself just in the other. But this is not a structure of fight, but of love"⁵. A conflict with the other only makes sense if we suppose that the other must be and is able to recognize me. If I believed that the other is unable to recognize me (since she or he is insane, for example) or should not recognize me (since she or he is, for example, someone I disdain), then there would be no demand for recognition. There would be no attempt to subordinate the other's system of interests to my desire. But if I believe that the other should recognize me and is able to do so, this is because there is some prior type of bond that we might call "love," that serves here as an initial intersubjective basis and not as a problematic set of relationships.

But going back to the master slave dialectic may help us explain why Hegel has no way to agree with contemporary attempts at restoring love as a "general structure of reciprocal recognition,"⁶ which should be presupposed as primary intersubjective ground for safe and normatized development of all processes of social determination of individuality. Otherwise, Hegel is trying to show that the processes of interaction and socialization are mediated by a desire whose opaqueness and negativeness decisively problematize the primary intersubjectivity of love. This desire can only be satisfied if one recognizes oneself in an individuality where the I will somehow always be inexorably outside of itself. Desire the satisfaction of which leads us to abandon the I as a highly individuated form.

If we go back to the text of *Phenomenology* we see that desire first appears in an enlightening context. It comes up in a discussion about the conditions for attaining some unity between self-consciousness and consciousness of an object. Hegel recalls that the notion of "phenomenon," as "difference which has in itself no being" (because it is only appearing to an Other) was not a figure of the unity of self consciousness with itself. On the contrary, "phenomenon" was the division itself (since essentiality is always in an Other inaccessible to knowledge: the thing in itself). Hegel then states that "the unity must

⁴ WILLIAMS, Robert; *Hegel's ethics of recognition*, University of California Press, 1988, p. 47

⁵ SIEP, Ludwig; *Der Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur Auseinandersetzung Hegels mit Hobbes in den Jenaer Schriften*. In: Hegel-Studien, Bonn, 1974, Bd. 9, p. 194

⁶ See HABERMAS, Jürgen; *Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006, p. 145

become essential to self-consciousness, it means, self consciousness is the state of desire in general”⁷.

What does this introduction of what Hegel calls "desire in general" mean? He seems to be referring not to desire of this or that object, but desire taken in its general sense as a mode of relationship between subject and object. From the context we can infer that the unity between knowledge and the essential determination of objects is only possible as of the moment when we understand the relationships between subject and object not only as relationships of knowledge but, primarily, as relationships of desire and satisfaction.

At first glance an assertion of this type seems utterly rash. Is Hegel putting into march some kind of wild psychologism that subordinates cognitive expectations to practical finalistic interests? Or is he insisting, in the best tradition that we also find in Nietzsche and Freud, that reason configures its procedures (in other words, that reason defines what is rational and legitimate) through interests placed in the attainment of practical ends?

This second alternative seems to be the case. But Hegel also seems to be entering head on into some form of relativism that subordinates universalizing expectations of the truth to the contingency of contexts marked by specific individual interests and desires. Unless Hegel is able to show that practical interests are not driven by the particularism of appetites and inclinations but that, by becoming involved in the practical dimension in order to satisfy their desires, subjects necessarily attain the universalizing aspirations of reason.

Statements of this nature seem to go contrary to the hegemonic trends of 20th century critical thinking. One might recall, for example, this question frequently posited by theoreticians of the Frankfurt School and by Freud's psychoanalysis with his description of the conflictual nature of the processes of socialization in the family and of the internalization of social law: what must be lost if one is to conform to the demands of rationality and universality present in hegemonic processes of the socialization of desire? Or, stated another way: What price must be paid so that these demands can become feasible?

But we must insist that Hegel is sensitive to that which is not entirely and positively determined by processes of socialization and individuation. He knows that there is a complex road ahead before these processes can comply with universalizing demands. This is why, in Hegel, the ontogenesis of the subject is the recognition of an ontological priority of the conflict that is manifested in this necessary connection between subjectivity and negativeness. This is clear in his theory of desire. Lets try to understand o little bit better which is the core of this theory.

What does desire really lack?

For Hegel, desire (*Begierde*) is the way by which self consciousness appears in its first degree of development. In this regard, it is, at one and the same time, a mode of social interaction and a mode of relationship with the object. We might first recall how Hegel seems to associate himself with a long tradition that goes back to Plato and sees desire as a manifestation of lack.

As we know, in recent decades, this proposition of desire as lack has been the subject of virulent criticism, especially from authors such as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Their target was not only the appropriation of Hegel's concept by Lacanian psychoanalysis. They

⁷ “die Einheit des Selbstbewusstsein mit sich selbst, zu seinem Wesen; diese muss ihm wesentlich werden; das heisst, es ist Begierde überhaupt” (HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, op. cit., p. 121)

also criticized the metaphysics of negativeness present in Hegel's concept of desire. They held that the way by which psychoanalysis seeks to socialize desire would produce a desire marked by negativeness, by loss, by conflict. This desire as lack leads us back to Hegel. But Deleuze and Guattari would say that "desire lacks nothing." "Desire does not lack in relation to its object. In fact, the subject lacks something in relation to desire, or, desire lacks a fixed subject. There is only fixed subject thanks to repression"⁸. In this case, one must insist that the description of desire as lack might be nothing but the result of a metaphysical illusion regarding the reality of the negative. It is an illusion backed up by a negative theology that dare not say its name.

In this regard, we might recall that there are three ways of understanding the proposal that the essence of desire is lack. First, lack may be a simple manifestation of privation of a determined object of need. This is certainly not Hegel's position because it would imply a naturalization of systems of needs strange to a philosophy that does not see nature as a closed system of laws. Secondly, we can say that lack is a mode of being of consciousness because it indicates the transcendence of desire in relation to empirical objects, following here a road opened up by Plato.

We know how Plato has Socrates say, in *The Banquet*, that : "we desire that which we don't have" or that which is not present or that which I, personally, am not. Eros, then, is the intermediary between two opposites: it expresses the lack of good and beautiful things that compel desire (*epithumia*), things about which I have some knowledge. In other words, the object of desire is that which, at the same time, I do not have but is in me. This intermediary nature between presence and absence becomes visible as of the moment that Eros is understood on the basis of perspective of the lover (*erastes*), and not of the beloved (*eromenos*).

Nonetheless, this lack that mobilizes desire is not exactly connected to the dimension of sensitive objects. As Socrates states in *The Banquet* "soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another ; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is and the same"⁹. This disqualification of the "sensible" allows an openness to a series of ascetes that lead us to the "very essence of the beautiful," beyond what is mortal and corruptible. It is an essence the vision of which would imply freeing the beautiful in its purity and open up space for manifesting it without mixture in the uniqueness of its formal nature. In the last resort, therefore, the negativeness of desire is seen as intentional expression of the inexhaustible transcendence of being in regard to the empiric.

Deleuze and Guattari base their positions on this current of thought to develop their criticism of desire as lack. Everything takes place as if Hegel had appropriated this scheme of transcendence to set it in operation in a certain negative theology. There it is no longer the transcendence of the Idea that produces the disqualification of all that is sensitive, but "pure negativeness." And this negativeness appears only by the infinite reiteration of the overcoming of the sensitive finite determination, of the infinite sacrifice of a finite determination that must continue to disappear, to keep on disappearing, so that negativeness will have reality.

But we can say that this is not what Hegel is referring to in his definition of desire in its negativeness. The negativeness of desire does not come exactly from the denying pressure

⁸ DELEUZE, Gilles et GUATTARI, Félix, *L'anti-Oedipe*, Paris : Minuit, 1971, p. 34

⁹ PLATON, *Le banquet*, In: *OEuvres complètes*, Paris : Gallimard, 1950, 200a

of transcendence, as someone like Kojève might have it (and Kojève is, in the last resort, Deleuze's most important reference in his reading of Hegel). In fact, to understand what Hegel is talking about with his notion of desire as lack, we should not see lack as privation, as want, or simply as transcendence, but as a manifestation of infiniteness. This infiniteness can be bad if the satisfaction of desire is seen as the reiterated consumption of objects that produce some form of *jouissance* (*Genuss*) which is merely narcissistic submission of the other to oneself. But it will be true infiniteness when it comes face to face with objects freed from finite determinations.

We might first recall that, for Hegel, lack appears as a way of being of consciousness in a precise historical context. This context was marked by a critical questioning as to what serves as the basis of the forms of life in modernity. Hegel understands modernity as the historical moment when the spirit "lost" the immediateness of its substantial life. In other words, nothing any longer appears to it as substantially grounded in a power able to unify the various social spheres of values. It is in this spirit that classical historical diagnoses as

"[In modern times] [The spirit] has not merely lost its essential and concrete life, it is also conscious of this loss and of the transitory finitude characteristic of its content. Turning away from the husks he has to feed on, and confessed that it lies in wickedness and sin, it reviles itself for so doing, and now desires from philosophy not so much to bring it to a knowledge of what is it, as to obtain once again through philosophy the sense of solidity and substantiality of existence it has lost¹⁰.

Decades after Hegel, the sociology of Durkheim and Max Weber constituted converging portrayals in the characterization of modernity as an era proper to a certain subjective feeling of indetermination resulting from the loss of stable horizons of socialization. The autonomy of social spheres of values in modern life and the erosion of traditional authority sedimented in ritualized customs and habits seemed to have produced a loss of references in the ways in which relationships with the self are structured, and this represented a critical questioning of no return of the spontaneity of agent subjects. From that point on, the subject could only appear as:

this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity—an unending wealth of many presentations, images, of which none happens to occur to him—or which are not present. This night, the inner of nature, that exists here—pure self—in phantasmagorical presentations, is night all around it, here shoots a bloody head—there another white shape, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye—into a night that becomes awful, it suspends the night of the world here in an opposition. In this night being has returned¹¹.

¹⁰ « Sein wesentliches Leben ist ihm nicht nur verloren, er ist auch dieses Verlustes, und der Endlichkeit, die sein Inhalt ist, bewusst. Von den Treibern sich wegwendend, dass er im Argen liegt, bekennd und darauf schmähend, verlangt er nun von der Philosophie nicht sowohl das Wissen dessen, was er ist, als zur Herstellung jener Substantialität und der Gediegenheit des Seins erst wieder durch sie zu gelangen ». (HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, op. cit., p. 7)

¹¹ « Der Mensch ist diese Nacht, dies leere Nichts, das alles in ihrer Einfachheit enthält – ein Reichum unendlich vieler Vorstellungen, Bilder, deren keines ihm gerade einfällt -, oder die nicht[s] als gegenwärtige sind. Dies die Nacht, das Innere der Natur, das hier existiert – reines Selbst, - in phantasmagorischen

But Hegel is not willing to be satisfied with socio historical diagnoses. He wants to come up with the ontological grounds of the historical situation proper to modernity, as if this loss of stable horizons were not merely the result of the contingency of historical processes, but was the achievement of a destiny marked with the need of those who have ontological dignity. For this purpose, Hegel needs a notion of individuality like that which is inhabited by a potency of indetermination, as that which does not fully submit to the identity determination of the synthesis of an Ego. The theory of desire as lack, or, we might say, as negativeness that impels one to act, provided Hegel with the ontological grounds he was seeking. In other words, lack, here, is, in fact, the mode of description of a strength of indetermination and of de-personalization that inhabits all subjects.

In turn, this strength of indetermination is another name for what Hegel understands as infiniteness, since the infinite is what demonstrates the instability and inadequacy of all finite determination. Things could not be otherwise because, for Hegel, infinite is that which bears in itself its own negation and that, instead of destroying itself, conserves itself in a determinateness that is nothing more than the figure of instability of all determinateness. It is in this context that, in a key phrase, he writes that: "Infinitude, the absolute unrest of pure self movement, such that whatever is determined in any way, for example, as being, is really the opposite of this determinateness"¹².

It can be clearly seen here that the concept of infiniteness is constructed on the basis of the notion of contradiction. We might recall here the definition Kant gave to contradiction: "The object of a concept which contradicts itself is nothing, because the concept is nothing, is the impossible, e.g. a two-sided rectilinear figure (*nihil negativum*)"¹³. In other words, a contradiction is an empty object without concept, since there is no possible representation when I apply two contradictory propositions to the same object, as in the case of a figure that, at the same time, is rectilinear and has two sides. Hegel does not want to think about a two-sided rectilinear figure, but he wants to insist that there are objects that can only be apprehended by applying two contradictory propositions, two divergent series. This can perhaps show us how infiniteness is not simply an astute strategy of disqualification of the sensitive. It is the grounds that allow one to criticize the submission of the sensitive to the grammar of finiteness.

However, since the subject is essentially the locus of the manifestation of infiniteness, we can say that the vocabulary of the negativeness of desire calls attention to the nature of unsuitability between a subject's expectations for recognition and the possibilities available for one's own social determination. This is tantamount to saying that the positivity of reified reality with its finite representations became so firmly established as a "natural representation of thinking," that only an effort at negation can break such a circle of alienation.

In any case, Hegel would consider this so typical way that we contemporaries of post

Vorstellungen ist es rings um Nacht, hier schießt dann ein blutig Kopf, - dort eine andere weiße Gestalt plötzlich hervor, und verschwindet ebenso. – Diese Nacht erblickt man, wenn man dem Menschen ins Auge blickt – in eine Nacht hinein, die *furchtbar* wird, - es hängt die Nacht der Welt hier einem entgegen » (HEGEL, Jenaer Systementwürfe III, Hamburg : Felix Meiner 1987, S. 172)

¹² "Die Unendlichekeit oder diese absolute Unruhe des reinen sich selbst Bewegens, dass, was auf irgend eine Weise, zum Beispiel als Sein, bestimmt ist, vielmehr das Gegenteil dieser Bestimmtheit" (HEGEL, *Phänomenologie ...*, op. cit., p. 116)

¹³ KANT, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988, B348

structuralism see things, as simply incorrect. Specifically, the problem is of contrasting the negativeness of desire against the positivity of a power that is expressed in an immanent way, such as the relationship between Spinoza's substance and its modes. This, because, from a certain perspective, desire is always destructive (it always asserts its unsuitability in relation to finite determinations) and, on the other, it is always productive (its truth is to assert itself as free will that constitutes institutional situations for recognizing it through relationships of labor and language). Hegel was so aware of this overlapping between negativeness and productivity that, when he discusses the need for revolutionary terror as a historical experience of internalizing the negativeness that devastates all phenomenal determination, he wrote:

“But just on that account this will is in unmediated oneness with self-consciousness, it is the pure positive because it is the pure negative; and that meaningless death, the unfilled, vacuous negativity of self, in its inner constitutive principle, turns round into absolutely positivity”¹⁴.

This is the most adequate background for dealing with the discussion of the confrontation with death in the formation of self-consciousness. First we can note a greater consequence. If it is true that Hegel is encouraged by a theory of desire of this type, then the conflict produced by desire, a conflict that appears as the driving force of the master slave dialectic, cannot be a mere collision between particular systems of interests of two different consciousnesses, as commentators such as Habermas have held. This is not a conflict through which I try to dominate the other by submitting her or his system of values and interest to the perspective proper to my system, where I try to submit the other's desire to mine. On the contrary, if Hegel holds that the formation for free and universal will takes place through the submission to a master, it is because this master cannot simply represent another particular determination of interest.

If we look more closely at the master slave dialectic we will see Hegel insisting that, after the struggle for recognition, the slave's essentiality seems to be deposited in his master. It is he who dominates his acts by consuming the product of his labor. The slave thus sees his acts as something foreign, but Hegel insists that this strangeness may mean an elevation beyond particularity since: “when the slave works for a master, otherwise, not in your own interest, your desire receive a amplitude that consist in contain in itself the desire of an other”. Having one's desire linked to that of another, however, does not provide us with the universality of recognition desired by consciousness. For this link not to be simple submission, this other must have something of the unconditional universality of what is essential and he must be an "absolute master" whose internalization leads me to be recognized beyond any and all contexts. We must keep this problem in view if we are to interpret the following central assertion:

It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained, only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence, is not the merely immediate form in which it at first makes its appearance, is not the mere absorption

¹⁴ “aber ebendarum ist er unvermittelt eins mit dem Selbstbewusstsein, oder er ist das rein Positive, weil er das rein Negative ist; und der bedeutungslose Tod, die unerfüllte Negativität des eSelbst schlägt im innern Begriffe zur absoluten Positivität um” (HEGEL, *Phänomenologie ...*, op. cit., p. 393)

in the expanse of life. Rather it is thereby guaranteed that there is nothing present but what might be taken as a vanishing moment (...). The individual, who has not staked his life, may, no doubt, be recognized as a person; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness¹⁵.

If the confrontation with death is a condition for achieving freedom, this is because death is the privileged figure in this unconditional and absolute universality which, since it is unconditional and absolute, is expressed as negation of everything that is conditioned and finite. We should take this into account when we read the following statement by Hegel:

The submission of the slave's selfishness is the begin of the freedom. The dissolution of the singularity of the will, the feeling of the nothingness of selfishness, the practice of obeisance: all this is necessary moments in the cultivation of every man. Without these experience that broke the self will, nobody become free, rational and able to command. In order to become free, to be able to self-command, every people needed to pass through the strong formation upon the submission to a master¹⁶.

Statements of this type leave room for a number of misunderstandings. Hegel is not saying that freedom is merely the name we give to a will constructed on the basis of using the internalization of "disciplinary mechanisms" masked as practices of self-control. It is not just any submission to a master that produces freedom, but only submission to a master who is able to realize unconditional demands of universality. For Hegel, this explains why the great individualities capable of submitting a nation necessarily produce the feeling that the work of the spirit is entirely strange to all finite politics, with all utilitarian calculation based on "my" system of selfish interests. In fact, the greatest of all illusions consists exactly of seeing in Hegel's criticism of selfishness an astute strategy of emptying the particular. Hegel can criticize selfishness because there is no individuality in this "self", because there is nothing of individual in the interior of a system of established interests, constructed, in fact, by using identifications and internalizing principles of conduct coming from other given consciousness. This is why the "dissolution of the singularity of the will" may look like "liberation."

In this regard, we might recall the meaning that Hegel gives to this dispossession of oneself by the internalization of death as absolute master. In this regard, death is not a simple destruction of consciousness, nor is it a simple shattering (*zugrunde gehen*). It is a

¹⁵ "Und es ist allein das Daransetzen des Lebens, wodurch die Freiheit, wodurch es bewährt wird, dass dem Selbstbewusstsein nicht das Sein, nicht die unmittelbare Weise, wie es auftritt, nicht sein Wesentsein in die Ausbreitung des Lebens, - das Wesen, sondern dass an ihm nichts vorhanden, was für es nicht verschwindendes Moment wäre, dass es nur reines Fürsichsein ist. Das Individuum, welches das Leben nicht gewagt hat, kann wohl als Person anerkannt werden; aber es hat die Wahrheit dieses Anerkanntseins als eines selbständigen Selbstbewusstseins nicht erreicht" (HEGEL, *Phänomenologie...*, op. cit., p. 131)

¹⁶ « Jene Unterwerfung der Selbstsucht des Knechtes bildet den *Beginn* der wahrhaften Freiheit des Menschen. Das Erzitern der Einzelheit des Willens, das Gefühl der Nichtigkeit der Selbstsucht, die Gewohnheit des Gehorsams ist ein notwendiges Moment in der Bildung jades Menschen. Ohne diese den Eigenwillen brechende Zucht erfahren zu haben, wird niemand frei, vernünftig und zum Befehlen fähig. Um frei zu warden, um die Fähigkeit zur Selbstregierung zu erlangen, haben daher alle Völker erst durch die strenge Zucht der Unterwürfigkeit unten einen Herrn hindurchgehen müssen" (HEGEL, *Enzyklopädie III*, Frankfurt ; Suhrkamp, 1986, § 435

way of getting to the fundamentals (*zu Grund gehen*). Since the confrontation with death is a phenomenological experience aimed at expressing access to the initially indeterminate nature of the fundamentals, which are aimed at expressing: "The essence, as what is determined as ground, is determined as a non-determined and its determinateness is just the sublation of these determinate being"¹⁷.

We know that to ground is to determine what exists through its relationship with a standard that enables me to orient myself in thought. For example, when mobilizing categorical structures such as causality, the modality for assuring the intelligibility of phenomena, I determine the form of what exists. Based on this appeal to form as a fundamental, I can guarantee the criterion of the true and the false, the correct and the incorrect, the adequate and the inadequate. But the application of all these structures to phenomena depends on a prior and tacit decision about general and logical principles of connection and unity able to constitute objects of experience and to found proposals of identity and difference. These principles of connection (*Verbindung*) and unity are derived from the Ego as a synthetic unit of apperceptions, and this unity appears along with the true fundamentals of determinations. However, the critical discussion of these principles is the true object of dialectics. For example, Hegel constructs a *witz* by saying that, for consciousness, "The being have the meaning of what is mine" (*das Sein die Bedeutung das Seinen hat*). Here he has in mind the fact that being an object for consciousness means structuring oneself based on the use of an internal principle of connection and unity which is a way for consciousness to appropriate the world or, we might say, to constitute the world after its own image and likeness, and this lets Hegel ignore the importance of Kant's distinctions between receptivity and spontaneity.

Dialectics must then accede to a fundamental that is no longer dependent on the self identical form of the Ego, and this is possible by overcoming the naturalized modes of determination, by weakening the images of the world that guide and constitute our structured field of experiences. Hegel phenomenologically describes this weakening as anxiety and the confrontation with death.

We thus see how the confrontation with death enables self consciousness to understand the spirit as what is expressed in the multiplicity of its determinations, weakening them all and leading them to confront a power of the pre-personal and the indeterminate that also lets us all re understand what the difference is. The difference is not what determines the distinction between conceptually articulated entities, as Deleuze imputes to Hegel. The difference in Hegel is this internal power of the in difference that corrodes all determination. This expression of being leads us to assert, with Scott Fitzgerald, that "all life is a process of breaking down." This breaking down occurs when we reveal this "part of indetermination that every individual enjoys"¹⁸. This is not a question of a step ahead for determination and positivity, but for the assumption of a risk related to the confrontation which is posited as purely indeterminate. Under these conditions, to submit oneself to an absolute master who dissolves everything that seemed established and determined has nothing to do with the psychological dynamics of resignation, resentment or the need for repression.

It is from this context that we can derive modernity's greatest problem, at least according to Hegel. This problem is at the basis of his philosophy of law, namely: how to enable the

¹⁷ HEGEL, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1982, p. 81

¹⁸ DELEUZE, Gilles; *Différence et répétition*, Paris : PUF, 1969, p. 331

institutional recognition of subjects that are thought of as singular modes of confrontation with what is offered as indeterminate? It is not indetermination that produces social suffering but the incapacity of institutional structures and processes of social interaction to recognize the founding reality of the existential condition of all subjects. If these structures are capable of providing the delineation of processes of the recognition of the power of indetermination that inhabits all subjects, perhaps we can then find a way to recover a renewed concept of love as the regulating horizon of practices of social interaction. In a way that is not yet clear, this love must bear experiences of depersonalization and infiniteness that Hegel initially relates to confrontation with death. For this reason, it would be more than poetic license to say, paraphrasing Fassbinder, that he is the promise of a love colder than death.