

Hegel's Conception of Fanaticism

Renzo Llorente

State University of New York at Stony Brook

As an exposition of "natural law and political science in outline,"¹ the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is nothing if not comprehensive. Even so, Hegel's treatise gives rather short shrift to certain topics which we might well expect to find treated at some length in a text of this nature. Religion is one such topic: Hegel scarcely occupies himself with religious questions in the pages of the *Philosophy of Right*. While unremarkable, perhaps, at first glance, the dearth of analysis bearing on religion and its relation to the state should give us pause. After all, given the sheer expanse of text devoted to the consideration of "Morality" and "Ethical Life" [*Sittlichkeit*] within the work itself and, in addition, the extraordinary political ramifications of religious practices throughout history, it would not be unreasonable to expect a substantial analysis of "the religious question" from a work of such scope and purported systematicity as the *Philosophy of Right*. This expectation is heightened, moreover, by our awareness of Hegel's own abiding interest in the philosophical treatment of religion, as well as his interest in supplying one of the chief desiderata haunting the legacy of Enlightenment thought: a reconciliation of faith and reason. These considerations notwithstanding, the fact remains that Hegel's references to religion in the *Philosophy of Right* are few and far between, and tend to be of an incidental character at that.

We do, however, find one striking exception to this neglect in the "Remark" appended to section 270, the whole of which consists essentially of an extended meditation on one normative question: What relation ought to obtain between religion and the state? A complex elaboration of what proves to be a momentous form/content distinction, Hegel's reply to this question represents the only sustained treatment of religion per se in the *Philosophy of Right*. It should hardly surprise us, therefore, that section 270 turns out to be the longest single section in the entire work.

In this paper I propose to examine in some detail the passages comprising the "Remark" to section 270, with the aim, first, of clarifying Hegel's view of the proper relation between religion and the state (as elaborated in the *Philosophy of Right*) and, second, of shedding some light upon a few of the remarkable implications that follow from the conceptual approach introduced in his analysis. Accordingly, in the first part of the paper I shall summarize Hegel's argument in the "Remark" for section 270. Using this account as a point of departure, the bulk of the paper then

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H.B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). The citation corresponds to the work's subtitle as rendered in this translation.

explores various facets of the very novel and suggestive interpretation of *fanaticism* that emerges from Hegel's reflections on the relationship between religion and the state, an interpretation particularly noteworthy, as we shall see, as an illustration of Hegel's conception of modernity. Finally, in the last part of the paper I shall present a few brief reflections on the implications of Hegel's theses for political engagement of religious inspiration.

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Hegel begins his argument in the "Remark" for section 270 by recalling his concept of religion, which he first evokes in terms of its content. Succinctly put, the content of religion is absolute truth and rationality², inasmuch as the "concern" of religion, Hegel explains, is "God as the unlimited foundation and cause on which everything depends."³ For the religious consciousness it is this conception of God that serves as the touchstone for the interpretation, judgement, and appraisal of all that exists.

But truth and rationality, as we learn from Hegel's account of the state, likewise comprise *its* content⁴; this identity of content testifies, therefore, to an essential kinship between religion and the state. Due to this essential kinship, religious institutions and the state can, and should, function as complementary forces. And indeed, as "that moment which integrates the state at the deepest level of the disposition [of its citizens],"⁵ the religious disposition ratifies the authority and legitimacy of the state, further securing the bond between citizen and state. This aspect of religion proves particularly valuable to the state with regard to those citizens who, incapable of the requisite philosophical insight enabling one to grasp the essential identity of content, could not otherwise achieve recognition of the proper relationship between citizen and state. In fact, it is for this very reason that Hegel argues that the state ought to require its citizens to become members of some kind of religious community.⁶

² Ibid., p. 292; 299. Cf. Hegel's formulations in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*: "Religion is divine knowledge, the knowledge that human beings have of God and of themselves in God. This is the divine wisdom and the field of absolute truth" (G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, trans. R.F. Brown et al., ed. Peter C. Hodgson [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987], I, p. 451).

³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 292.

⁴ See, e.g., p. 299 of the *Philosophy of Right*.

⁵ Ibid., p. 295.

⁶ Ibid., p. 295. In a note appended to the "Remark" for section 270 Hegel characterizes this function of religion as a "*means* to education and the [appropriate] disposition" (Ibid., p. 292). For Hegel's claim that an appreciation of the identity of content demands "philosophical insight" see p. 299.

At any rate, while a religion or church may well fail to serve the interests of the state in this fashion and may even attempt to sever every connection to the state (as we shall see below), no religious community can claim total independence, or a total exemption, from the jurisdiction of the state. To the contrary, insofar as the members of a religious community embark on worldly enterprises (e.g., actions intended to give concrete expression to doctrinal commitments) they find themselves within the purview of the state, for worldly enterprises require that one give objective expression to one's will and, as we know from the analysis of Abstract Right, only by means of *property* does the will assume an objective form.⁷ Any assumption of property, however, immediately brings one within the state's jurisdiction. It is with the appropriation of property, then, that the religious community "emerges from the inner realm into that of worldly affairs and hence into the province of the state, thereby placing itself *immediately* under its laws."⁸

As noted, religion and the state have the same content; there would seem to be no reason, then, for a religious community to refuse the state the attention and respect—and voluntary obedience—which it demands. However, if it is true that religion and the state possess an identical *content*, this content assumes distinct *forms* in each. This distinction of form determines their essential difference, and consequently accounts for the possibility of conflict between church and state.

The formal difference between religion and the the state derives from distinct relations to the Absolute and their corresponding forms. Again, the object of religion is absolute truth and rationality, but it has this object only "as a *given* content whose basic determinations have not been recognized in terms of concepts and thought."⁹ Insofar as its relation to the Absolute subsists as this merely given content, a content "*in the form of feeling, representational thought, and faith,*"¹⁰ the religious consciousness of the

It should be emphasized that Hegel's proposition is *not* simply a prescription of opium for the people. It is *not* his view that the state should encourage its citizens to assume some affiliation with a religious community merely so that, concerned exclusively with an otherworldly fate, they view worldly affairs with indifference, seeking neither to influence the state's policies nor intervene in their execution. Rather, he believes the state should encourage affiliation with a religious group because religion, if "genuine"—and we shall see presently just what "genuine" denotes for Hegel—strengthens one's adhesion to the state. Whether in the end this amounts to practically the same thing is a separate question and one that I cannot pursue here.

⁷ See, e.g., section 46 of the *Philosophy of Right*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 296; cf. p. 299. In fact, for Hegel religious communities constitute a variety of corporation; such is their "official" status vis-a vis the state and for this reason alone they remain, in the last analysis, subject to the state's laws.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

Absolute lacks the conceptual clarification and determination peculiar to the products of philosophical cognition. The state, on the other hand, has *knowledge*; that is to say, its content bears the form of determinate thought and rationality.¹¹ Still, this formal difference alone does not entail any necessary antagonism. Rather, antagonisms between church and state arise from doctrinal contradictions.

The doctrine of a given religious community, we know, consists of the body of tenets and beliefs held by the community, the creed that informs and distinguishes its religious orientation and practices. By contrast, the state's doctrine is to be understood, for Hegel, as consisting in what it holds as "valid in relation to right" in accordance with determinations of objective rationality, and it appears "in the form of *thought* as law."¹² We find one manifestation of this formal distinction in the fact that religious doctrine is treated primarily in inwardness, whereas the state's doctrine necessarily achieves objective expression in the law. (One consequence of this distinction, important for some of the problems to be treated below, is that because religious doctrine belongs essentially to inwardness, because it has its province within the conscience and therefore enjoys what Hegel calls "the right of the subjective freedom of self-consciousness,"¹³ the state is never entitled, whatever the circumstances, to dictate or otherwise interfere with a religion's *doctrine*.)

Now, a religious community's doctrine may prove generally compatible with that of the state, or the two doctrines may be antithetical to each other; yet even a contradiction between the two doctrines need not necessarily engender conflict between a religious community and the state. This contingency depends on whether or not members of a religious community content themselves with the religious form of consciousness as such when they turn to the realm of society at large and the operations of the state. For while the form of religious consciousness is in itself inadequate to proper cognition of the ethical status of the state, the members of a religious community can transcend the one-sidedness of their convictions acquired in the immediacy of subjectivity. By "raising their subjectivity to cognition of the truth and knowledge of objective right and duty," they come to understand that "ethical relations are essentially relations of *actual rationality*"¹⁴, and hence are the province of the state, whose primacy in this

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 299. The "Addition" to section 270 states the same distinction as follows: "The Idea, within [the context of] religion, is spirit internalized in emotion, but it is this same Idea which...in the state...secures an existence [*Dasein*] and actuality for itself in knowledge and volition" (*Ibid.*, p. 303).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 297.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 294; p. 296. More generally, this task belongs to "the momentous transition of the inner to the outer, that incorporation [*Einbildung*] of reason into reality which the whole of world history has worked to achieve" (*Ibid.*, p. 294). Cf. Hegel's comments in his "Preface" to the *Philosophy of Right*: "But if it is the right

regard is to be confirmed and endorsed by the church's adherents in inwardness. Church members who achieve this cognition freely submit to the authority of the state, and their religious commitment serves the proper auxiliary function of religion vis-a-vis the state mentioned above.

The real source of antagonism and conflict between religion(s) and the state derives from the "shapes" that religious belief assumes when a religious community fails to assimilate the cognition of objective right and duty to its religiosity in representational form—whatever the specific doctrinal character of the latter. Such communities or churches typically proclaim "religious advice [that] attempts to retain exclusive validity and claims authority to determine and administer [the process of] right."¹⁵ In a word, these religious communities fail to recognize the limitations inherent in immediate cognition and content themselves with the first form of religious consciousness alone, "renounc[ing] cognition of objective truth"¹⁶ altogether. In contrast with the religious devotion of a "genuine" kind which, having complemented its subjective religiosity with an embrace of the state's rationally determined principles, freely submits to the latter's authority and jurisdiction and so issues in practices in harmony with it, the communities whose doctrine remains at the level of representational thought assume a negative attitude toward the state; to the extent that they aspire to actualize their doctrines, these communities clash with the state. This thoroughly negative attitude toward the state, which Hegel terms "polemical piety", can follow one of two courses, assuming one of two expressions of repudiation. Either believers attend to their doctrine exclusively in inwardness, adopting an attitude of indifference toward the state, or they attempt to externalize their doctrine in the domain of rational objectivity, and so mount a direct challenge to the state. In both cases (i.e., with both types of polemical piety) the religious community betrays its impoverished, merely representational view of the state as an institution designed simply to safeguard property rights, security, general welfare, etc.¹⁷, a view that wholly ignores the preeminently ethical character of the state and its indispensability as a framework for the realization of freedom.

As an exclusively inward disposition the negativity of polemical piety generates a detachment from the perceived affairs and operations of the state. Church members so disposed display a passive acceptance of the

kind of piety, it abandons the form of this [emotional] region as soon as it emerges from [the condition of] inwardness into the daylight of the Idea's full development [*Entfaltung*] and manifest abundance, and it brings with it, from its inner worship of God, a reverence for the laws and for a truth which has being in and for itself and is exalted above the subjective form of feeling" (Ibid., p. 16). (As one might suspect, the series of remarks in the "Preface" from which this citation is drawn only becomes fully intelligible in light of section 270.)

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 291.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 294.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 298.

state: they do not directly challenge the state's authority, but nor are they willing to embrace or assist it.¹⁸ When, on the other hand, such a community's adherents attempt to impart objectivity to their (representationally conceived) doctrine in defiance of the state, this attitude becomes *fanaticism*.

Where fanaticism prevails, representational thought likewise prevails. Decisions bearing on actual existence are based on mere opinion; expressions of arbitrary will and merely subjective representations replace the objective determinations of the state. Concerned exclusively with the *content* of religious consciousness, fanaticism "repudiates all political institutions and legal order as restrictive limitations [*Schranken*] on the inner emotions and as incommensurate with the infinity of these."¹⁹ Hence the hallmark of fanaticism—"hatred of law, of legally determined right."²⁰ Animated by a form of consciousness which knows only absolute abstraction,²¹ fanaticism strives for a universality without determinacy, and thus an annihilation of the differences established by the state and preserved in its laws, a radical de-differentiation and homogenization.

What policy should the state assume toward these negatively disposed religious communities and their adherents? According to Hegel, this depends on which type of repudiation is involved. On the one hand, the state must tolerate "polemical piety" when this takes the form of inwardness, i.e., insofar as the religious community abstains from efforts to impart objectivity to its convictions.²² When, however, a negatively disposed church or religious community claims authority in the purview of the state, that is to say, whenever there arises a threat to objective truth and the rational principles governing Ethical Life, the state must turn intolerant, asserting its supremacy to ensure "the right and form of self-conscious, objective rationality."²³ The state has a *duty* to be intolerant of opinions

¹⁸ In one of the notes attached to section 270's "Remark" Hegel refers to the Quakers and the Anabaptists as examples of this sort polemical piety (*Philosophy of Right*, p. 295). At any rate, in one sense persons of such a disposition are, to be sure, not really members of the state at all, for they disdain to recognize the validity of the state's laws, and so recognize no duties to the state either. Still, insofar as they possess and dispose of property they enter the state's domain and therefore incur certain obligations to it. See p. 295 of the *Philosophy of Right*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. It is in section 5 of the *Philosophy of Right* that Hegel treats this aspect of fanaticism in some detail, in the course of discussing the first moment of the will, "the element of *pure indeterminacy*" (*Ibid.*, p. 37).

²² The duty of tolerance, Hegel adds, presupposes both that the state is secure enough and strong enough to exercise such tolerance, and that the negatively disposed religious communities remain small in number. Too large a number of citizens who accord the state merely passive obedience would, like fanaticism, tend to undermine the state's actuality. See p. 295 of the *Philosophy of Right*.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

based on bad principles when these principles aspire to "give themselves a universal existence [*Dasein*] which undermines actuality."²⁴ When confronted with this threat it behooves the state to exercise what we might call its epistemological sovereignty, as ultimate arbiter of objective truth and the "right and form of self-conscious, objective rationality." For it is by upholding the objective determinations of the laws that the state defends particular interests as well as the "rights of reason"²⁵ and objective rationality. We may then think of the state's intolerance toward fanaticism as in one sense representing an exercise of *raison d'etat*, one which finds its justification *in the reason of the state*.

In sum, insofar as it must practice intolerance toward the designs of certain religious communities the state is merely fulfilling its essential purpose: the conservation and harmonization of particular interests (including those of every variety of religious group) within the universal interest.²⁶ Thus, however curious Hegel's neglect of the religious question in his analysis of Civil Society or the Family, it is clear why he should choose to broach the relationship between religion and the state precisely here,²⁷ in a section stressing the state's two-fold role as the institution that secures the universal interest while upholding particular interests.

In concluding this brief exposition it is well to take note of the decisive inversion, as it were, that Hegel effects in the course of section 270. Hegel begins his discussion in the "Remark" by way of responding to the claim that the state rests on a religious foundation. We have seen why, according to Hegel, this cannot be so: the mode of understanding natural to religious insight and conviction is that of representational thought, feeling, the sphere of opinion—"a subjective content which therefore has no true inner force and power."²⁸ Yet Hegel's counterargument goes further still, and by the end of his analysis it has been shown that, far from the state's resting on a religious foundation, "*genuine*" religion—in the end the only worthy type of religion—*rests on a political foundation*.²⁹ It is not the state that cannot

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 290. Cf. p. 282: "The principle of modern states has enormous strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to attain fulfilment in the *self-sufficient extreme* of personal particularity, while at the same time *bringing it back to substantial unity* and so preserving this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself."

²⁷ In a note to the "Remark" for section 270 Hegel does in fact directly acknowledge the absence of a more extensive treatment of religion, explaining that "a comprehensively concrete treatise on the state" would include such a discussion, but that in the *Philosophy of Right* it is "the principle of the state which is expounded in its *own distinct* sphere and in accordance with its Idea...." (*Ibid.*, p. 292).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

²⁹ It is no doubt instructive to recall that Hegel himself claims, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, that "religion is the foundation of the state" (I, 472; cf. p. 200 of the *Lectures*: "...the state must rest essentially on religion"). Yet the context

do without religion, but religion that cannot do without the state, at least in this crucial respect: if it is to render itself "genuine," a religious community must integrate its own devotion with an understanding and affirmation of the state's ethical authority, and to this end it is dependent on the existence of the state. To be sure, the state benefits from the endorsement of religion, which endorsement lends further legitimacy to the state's authority. Nevertheless, in the end the state does not require this endorsement because it enjoys its own "religious accreditation," owing to the fact that its laws embody rationally determined ethical principles which have been "framed with reference to" religion.³⁰

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Having reviewed the substance of the "Remark" to section 270, let us now return to one of the most interesting aspects of Hegel's analysis, namely his interpretation of the phenomenon of fanaticism. References to fanaticism appear on two different occasions within section 270, once in the course of the "Remark" itself and once in the context of the "Addition" derived from Hotho's notes. In addition, Hegel discusses the problem in the "Remark" and "Addition" to section 5 as well as in a footnote to section 258, the second of the sections relating specifically to the nature of the state. From these comments explicitly addressing fanaticism, and the thrust of his discussion of the relationship between religion and the state generally, we can distill a fairly coherent conception of the nature of fanaticism.³¹

of these remarks suggests that such statements should be interpreted as an affirmation, as in the *Philosophy of Right*, of the essential identity of content uniting religion and the state; that is, the fact that for Hegel, "religion and the foundation of the state are one and the same—they are implicitly and explicitly identical" (Ibid., p. 452). At any rate, it is clear that Hegel's criticism in section 270 of the *Philosophy of Right* is aimed at those who assert a foundational role for religion while failing to comprehend the meaning which "foundation" and "religion" must have if this assertion is to reflect the insights of philosophical cognition.

³⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 299. Of course in another sense none can do without the state: "Since the state is objective spirit, it is only through being a member of the state that the individual [*Individuum*] himself has objectivity, truth, and ethical life" (Ibid., p. 276). Cf. the "Addition" to section 261: "The determinations of the will of the individual acquire an objective existence through the state, and it is only through the state that they attain their truth and actualization" (Ibid., p. 285).

It is worth noting, in addition, that another inversion of sorts also takes place in the course of section 270, in that Hegel's analysis underscores the fact that it is not the Church that is an end in itself, but rather the state. Cf., e.g., p. 297 of the *Philosophy of Right*.

³¹ Although my account of Hegel's conception of fanaticism is based solely on the *Philosophy of Right*, it is well to note that the references to fanaticism in the *Philosophy of Right* are consistent with the few scattered remarks on this theme

How, then, should we interpret fanaticism according to Hegel? To begin answering this question it is useful to recall Hegel's remarks on the nature and status of the law. The key passage in this regard is doubtless section 211, wherein Hegel elucidates the connection between Right and the law. In this passage Hegel shows that Right assumes the form of universality *and* determinacy only when established as law, for it is by means of laws that cognition of the principles of Right in their determinate universality are rendered objective. The state's laws therefore establish and codify objective determinations, that is, they confer objective existence on Right in itself as determined by thought rather than feeling. Truth appears in universal yet determinate form, Right becomes *positive* Right, through the laws.³²

As embodied in institutions and codified in law, then, positive Right fixes particular determinations, and thus limitations. But such determinations and limitations remain utterly foreign—and inimical—to the mere immediate cognition corresponding to religiosity in the form of representational thought, or an apprehension of Absolute Truth that has not been supplemented by the ethical principles established through rational cognition. This abstract form of consciousness, the cognitive basis of fanaticism, as it were, reflects the infinity of inwardness, the state of

found elsewhere in Hegel's corpus. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, for example, Hegel likewise speaks of fanaticism in connection with the elevation of an individual end to the status of a universal end: "A real purpose of this kind first appeared in Islam, where the singular purpose is raised to universal purpose, and so becomes fanatical" (Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, II, p. 438). Similarly, in *The Philosophy of History* Hegel equates fanaticism with a devotion to an abstract thought which negates the existent and so necessarily issues in the destruction of the concrete. Referring to the religious history of the Moslems, Hegel states that "their object was, to establish an abstract worship.... This enthusiasm was *Fanaticism*, that is, an enthusiasm for something abstract—for an abstract thought which sustains a negative position towards the established order of things. It is the essence of fanaticism to bear only a desolating destructive relation to the concrete..." (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J Sibree [New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956], p. 358). In keeping with the view informing this last remark, Hegel moreover identifies "Arabia" as "the empire of fanaticism [*das Reich des Fanatismus*]" (Ibid., p. 100).

³² Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 294; 241. In section 211 Hegel furthermore distinguishes between a legal code which exists by virtue of convention, and as such is "merely a collection" of customary rights, "characterized by *formlessness*, indeterminacy, and incompleteness," and the legal code "proper," in which "the principles of right in their *universality*, and hence in their determinacy, are apprehended and expressed in terms of thought" (Ibid., p. 242). Insofar as even a legal code proper "may differ in content from what is right in itself," the discrepancy is due, explains Hegel in section 212 of the *Philosophy of Right*, to the fact that "being posited constitutes the aspect of existence [*Dasein*] in which the contingency of self-will and of other particular factors may also intervene..." (Ibid., p. 243).

"*absolute abstraction or universality*" corresponding to the first moment of the will (treated in section 5 of the *Philosophy of Right*), whose essential nature manifests itself in a negative freedom, a "*pure indeterminacy...in which every limitation, every content...is dissolved.*"³³ It is the "formalism of unconditional subjectivity,"³⁴ which not only knows nothing of, but in addition resists, the restrictions that the determinations and limitations generated by rational cognition entail.

Thus, by acting on and attempting to render objective the merely subjective representations of this one-sided religiosity, fanaticism in effect seeks to establish the objectivity of a doctrine that remains in the form of representational thought; indeed, fanaticism is the necessary result of such an undertaking. It necessarily wills abstract representations, all particularizations proving incompatible with the essential indeterminacy of representational thought. Like this form of consciousness, fanaticism strives to encompass everything within an undifferentiated totality; it represents a force that strives for homogeneity and seeks a coerced unification, identity, sameness. Hence fanaticism's pretensions to de-differentiation and homogenization noted above. Though, to be sure, fanatics will a positive state of affairs, their exertions can only take the form of a nullification of already existing particular determinations, for the positive ethos which they envisage amounts to an order of minimal differentiation and, in any event, it is only by means of destruction that the "negative" will at the source of fanaticism attains to self-consciousness and achieves its self-affirmation.³⁵ Consequently, fanaticism tends to a radical, wholesale de-differentiation of the particular determinations established by reason in history and secured in modernity through the objective protection of laws that recognize and safeguard these determinations. For this reason the definition provided in the "Addition" to section 270, while perhaps ultimately unreliable, may yet best epitomize fanaticism: "fanaticism is simply the refusal to admit particular differences."³⁶

Not surprisingly, this disdain of difference(s) appears most strikingly in fanatics' repudiation of all laws, whose intent is, as we have seen, to secure and preserve determinate differences. In lieu of law, fanaticism would have subjective feeling "legislate." Accordingly, if and insofar as judgements and decisions bearing on wordly affairs must be made, subjective representations, caprice of arbitrary will, and opinion will prevail for, as is observed in the "Addition" to section 270, "inwardness does not develop

³³ Ibid., p. 37.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 301.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 304. The "Addition" to section 5 of the *Philosophy of Right* cites the French Revolution's Reign of Terror as an illustration of this will to de-differentiation, since the institutionalization of the Terror meant that "all differences of talents and authority were supposed to be cancelled out [*aufgehoben*]" (Ibid., p. 39).

reasons."³⁷ Rationality will be entirely absent from fanaticism's judgements, for while they, like the laws, possess universality, they lack determinacy.³⁸

One noteworthy consequence of conceiving fanaticism in these terms is that it enables us to appreciate more fully the fundamentally *anti-modern* or *pre-modern* impulse that inspires the fanatic and sustains her enterprise. As fanaticism's challenge to the state represents at bottom a challenge to what Hegel calls "the architectonics of [the state's] rationality",³⁹ it amounts to nothing less than a repudiation of the distinctively modern essence of the state. Moreover, this rejection of the state constitutes but one element of a repudiation of Ethical Life (*Sittlichkeit*)—a definitively modern articulation of social life—as such. For fanaticism shows itself no less averse to particular determinations within the other spheres of Ethical Life, not to mention the differentiation of the spheres themselves (i.e., the Family, Civil Society, the State). Consider, for example, fanaticism's attitude toward Civil Society. As we are reminded in the "Addition" to section 182 Civil Society, like Ethical Life generally, comprises an irreducibly modern creation, it being the modern world "which for the first time allows all determinations of the Idea to attain their rights."⁴⁰ Yet the pretensions of fanaticism also endanger this peculiarly modern creation, owing to its repudiation of the determinations of particularity embodied in "the relationships and tasks of civil society, etc. [which it rejects] as unworthy of love and the freedom of feeling."⁴¹ Rejecting both the determinations within the distinct spheres of Ethical Life themselves and the determinations which underpin the differentiation of these spheres, fanatics strive ultimately for a negation of *Sittlichkeit* as a whole, the totality of Ethical Life qua a "rational system of social institutions."⁴²

But if in the end Hegel's analysis succeeds in illuminating the anti-modern or pre-modern impulse of fanaticism it is because in treating polemical piety (including its expression in fanaticism) in particular, and the relationship between religion and the state in general, he brings to bear his concept of modernity. Although the scope of this paper does not allow for an adequate treatment of this dimension of Hegel's method, let us at least note that he bases his condemnation of fanaticism essentially on the latter's tendency to contravene the central principles of his concept of modernity,

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

³⁸ Cf. Hegel's remarks in the "Preface": "That right and ethics...are grasped by means of *thoughts* and give themselves the form of rationality—namely universality and determinacy..." (*Philosophy of Right*, p. 17). The distinction drawn in the text corresponds to some degree to Hegel's distinction between a *de facto* legal code and legal code proper. See note 31 above.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁴² Allan Wood, "Editor's Introduction" in Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. xii.

namely the principle of subjectivity or autonomy (i.e., the peculiarly modern freedom for individuation and self-determination, the freedom of particularity), and the insistence on justification and legitimation by reason.⁴³ As we have seen, fanaticism would annul the freedom of autonomous subjectivity by abrogating the very determinations which establish the institutional conditions of this freedom. With respect to the imperative of rational justification, it suffices to recall that Hegel's whole critique of fanaticism rests at bottom on the contention that religion, too, requires justification by reason; ultimately it, too, must assimilate the objective ethical determinations wrought by the operation of rational thought. Likewise, Hegel ultimately condemns fanaticism for its deficit of rationality.

At any rate, to conclude our discussion of fanaticism, let us take note of two implications, or corollaries, of this aspect of Hegel's theory, and two problems which it seems to leave unresolved. The first of these implications has to do with the singularity of Hegel's criterion for determining the "genuineness" of religious devotion. As noted above, Hegel's thesis provides us with a means for distinguishing between proper and improper types of piety, between "genuine" and "polemical" modes of religiosity. Again, a genuine religion acknowledges and endorses the state, having raised its subjectivity "to cognition of the truth and knowledge of objective right and duty" and thereby come to recognize the ethical character of the state and its necessary supremacy. For Hegel, a religious community's practice is "genuine" to the extent that it combines its subjective religiosity of the understanding with a recognition of the objective rationality of the state, and so voluntarily subordinates itself to, and ratifies the authority of, the latter.

Leaving aside for the moment the fact that, by positing this criterion, Hegel ends up affirming only those religions which endorse the modern state without reservation, we may note that Hegel's view implies that the doctrine of almost *any* religious group can be rendered "genuine," regardless of its specific doctrinal content, provided only that it is raised to "cognition of the truth and knowledge of objective right and duty." This means, however, that Christianity, *the* "religion of freedom"⁴⁴ itself and the

⁴³ Statements of, and allusions to, these principles occur repeatedly in the *Philosophy of Right*. For especially prominent references to the "principle of subjectivity," see for example sections 124, 162, 185, 260, 299, and 316. Regarding the insistence on justification and legitimation by reason, consider Hegel's remarks in his "Preface": "It is a great obstinacy, the kind of obstinacy which does honour to human beings, that they are unwilling to acknowledge in their attitudes [*Gesinnung*] anything which has not been justified by thought—and this obstinacy is the characteristic property of the modern age..." (Ibid., p. 22). (Cf. section 132: "The right to recognize nothing that I do not perceive as rational is the highest right of the subject..." (Ibid., p. 159).

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 303. This formulation appears in the "Addition" to section 270.

decisive impetus behind the advent of modernity (due to its cultivation of subjectivity), cannot justifiably lay any special claim to "genuineness"; rather, its adherents also bear the responsibility for supplementing their immediate cognition of the truth with the objective determinations of rational thought—it, too, remains susceptible of anti-modern regressions, it too must become "genuine".

The second point that I wish to underscore is the following: One virtue of Hegel's analysis is that it shows why *religious* fanaticism is necessarily *political* in nature—indeed, is by definition a kind of *political fanaticism*. By showing that an externalized polemical piety tends of necessity both to dispute the state's authority and contest its very existence, Hegel provides a most plausible argument for the inevitably *political* character of *religious* fanaticism.

As for the various problems attending the interpretation of section 270, I should like to mention two, without however, venturing to resolve them. First, it is worth noting that it remains unclear whether Hegel regards fanaticism as being fundamentally an aberration of the individual or a supra-individual disorder. In other words, does the potential for fanaticism represent an institutional liability, or is it rather merely the result of a failing on the part of the individual believer? To be sure, the menace of fanaticism is in large measure proportionate to the number of fanatics, but nevertheless the question remains: Who bears the responsibility for integrating the ethical and juridical determinations of rational cognition with the religious form of consciousness, the individual or the community?

Hegel does of course often treat the issue of polemical piety in terms of "religious communities" or simply "the Church", and the general tenor of his interpretation implies that the responsibility for integrating religious insight with the concepts of rational cognition lies with the community. Yet, if it is the case that this responsibility does fall to the community, how are we to explain the persistence of individual fanatics within one which has duly integrated its own doctrine with that of the state? In a similar vein, one must question the efficacy of assimilating and affirming the determinations of objective rationality at the level of the religious *community*, considering that fanaticism originates in the form of consciousness natural to religious conviction in the individual. On the other hand, the assumption that every individual adherent of a given faith or member of a given religious community bears responsibility for assimilating the rationally determined ethical principles to her or his conviction leads to two problems: first, it makes for an undue measure of contingency in the performance of this vital task; secondly, it seems to suppose greater intellectual capacities of individuals than Hegel is prepared to grant: It will be recalled that Hegel believes that all citizens should be required to affiliate themselves with some religious community or other, presumably because most citizens

cannot by their own lights recognize the true authority of the state, and their proper relation to it.⁴⁵

The second problem to which I wish to draw our attention concerns the issue just mentioned, namely Hegel's suggestion that the state encourage all of its citizens or subjects to belong to some religious community, since the religious sentiment strengthens and lends further legitimation to the state's authority. Hegel maintains that any religious community will do, and that the state is therefore under the obligation to observe a policy of strict non-interference with regard to the content of religious doctrines. Now, it is well to ask whether Hegel's proposition does not produce a certain tension in his treatise, a tension symptomatic in many ways of the tension between the liberal and communitarian tendencies in his treatment of the relationship between religion and state, and his political thought generally. Given Hegel's theory of the state and in particular his concern with the conditions ensuring its viability and sovereignty, we may well wonder how he can advocate such a broad religious liberty. For, if some religious doctrines not only do not tend to reinforce the state's legitimacy, but, to the contrary, of necessity tend actively to contest it, is it advisable that the state nonetheless authorize their propagation? By doing so does the state not encourage—or in any event, fail to discourage—polemical piety? Does the state's responsibility to safeguard rationality, i.e., to uphold the rights of self-conscious objective rationality,⁴⁶ not entail some obligation to discourage, if not stem altogether, the growth of "polemically" oriented tendencies of religious piety? Is it enough, as a countermeasure, that the state promote (through, for example, educational practices) all individuals' receptivity to its own rationally determined ethical and juridical principles? These are, it seems to me, questions that must be addressed if we truly wish to make sense of the implications of this facet of Hegel's political theory.

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Lastly, I should like to consider the implications of Hegel's conception of polemical piety for political engagement or praxis of religious inspiration. As we have seen, according to Hegel's thesis it is in principle impossible for a "genuine" religion to propound, let alone endeavor to realize, a doctrine at odds with the state's doctrine. (Indeed, since "the organization of the [modern] state is inherently [*in sich*] rational and the image of eternal reason,"⁴⁷ any opposition to its structural constitution is irrational—and hence alien to "genuine" religious devotion—by definition.) Does Hegel's view not, therefore, foreclose the possibility of progressive

⁴⁵ It is after all "*philosophical insight* which recognizes that Church and state are not opposed to each other as far as their *content* is concerned...but merely differ in form" (Ibid., p. 299; first emphasis added).

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 299.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 306. Cf. p. 380: "the *state* [is] the image and actuality of reason."

praxis or engagement by religious communities in the modern era? If all positive exertions of a religious community that are at variance with a modern state's juridical or institutional structuration are tantamount to "fanaticism", how is religion to perform a progressive political function? Or does Hegel's political theory simply preclude the possibility outright? In a word, does the relationship between religion and the state affirmed by Hegel amount to a prescription for acquiescence and servility, and therefore simply lend further credibility to the view that Hegel advocates capitulation before the status quo?

It is difficult not to conclude that Hegel's theory of the modern state does to a large extent deny the legitimacy of such religiously inspired dissidence. Yet we must bear in mind that even if this much is granted, it applies only in the case of *modern* states, and that even many states existing in the modern era would not qualify as *modern* states according to Hegel's criteria. For this reason it is worthwhile to examine the possible implications of Hegel's view with respect to pre-modern states.

What, then, are the implications for religiously motivated political engagement in those historical contexts where neither the state nor religion yet possesses a rational form? That is to say, what, on Hegel's terms, would be the proper relationship between religion and the state *before* the rise of the modern state? Again, both church and state rightly claim the status of an ethical authority in the modern era, but the two do not possess equal authority: the modern state enjoys ultimate ethical authority, and this hierarchy of ethical authority is due to the state's rational supremacy, the result of its rational *form*. But what of the past? What view would Hegel's theory imply for the past? To be sure, the religiosity of polemical piety was no more "genuine" in the past, yet it is equally true that before the modern era the state lacked the one quality, its objective rationality, which in the modern era establishes the basis for its ultimate supremacy as an ethical authority.

In short, it would seem that in the past religious communities and the state bore the same content, without either possessing a rational form. Presumably, then, both sorts of institutions were entitled to the same ethical authority. But if this is so, then it would seem that insofar as, or *wherever*, a given state has yet to become rational, has yet to attain the actuality of the properly modern state, religion and the state represent the same ethical status, at least gauged in formal terms.

What does this imply with regard to polemical piety? Might it not perform a progressive function when the state exists in a less than rational form? Might not polemical piety represent a progressive dialectical counter-force wherever it reacts against a repressive positivity, understanding the latter as, in Habermas's words, "a society from whose historically petrified forms the spirit has fled, a society whose institutions, laws and constitution no longer correspond to interests, opinions, and

sentiments"⁴⁸? Might not the decidedly pre-modern (and anti-modern) impulse of religious fanaticism have an essential role to play in *pre-modern* contexts—the role, paradoxically enough of a *modernizing* agent? Indeed, it seems plausible to infer, given the assumptions of Hegel's theory in the *Philosophy of Right*, that polemical piety, in both of its forms, was a necessary force in the past, a vital factor at one stage in the evolution of world history and the progressive actualization of the Idea, which finds its consummation in the modern state. If this is so, then we may rightly speak of even a necessary and legitimate *fanaticism* in the past, operative in the phases of world history prior to the full rationalization of the state, prior, that is, to a time in which *modernization* characteristically implies *secularization*. Whether manifested as a withdrawal into inwardness or as the outwardly directed response of fanaticism, such polemical piety would on this interpretation constitute one pole of a dialectical antagonism promoting and propelling the development of reason. In fact, we find some warrant for this interpretation in the "Remark" to section 270 itself, when Hegel alludes to

past...periods and conditions of barbarism in which all higher spirituality had its seat in the Church, while the state was merely a secular regime of violence, arbitrariness, and passion and the abstract opposition [of Church and state]...was the main principle of actuality....⁴⁹

Of course, Hegel does not discuss any concrete historical examples of fanaticism qua a progressive, antagonistic counter-force to the pre-modern state. By way of conclusion I should like to suggest that the case of Jesus Christ furnishes us with just such an example; that we might well regard Jesus as a paradigmatic exemplar of such, as it were, progressive polemical piety. After all, given Hegel's conception of fanaticism, Jesus appears as an exemplary, even archetypal fanatic, the fanatic *par excellence*, repudiating as he did "all political institutions and legal order as restrictive limitations...and hence also reject[ing] private property, marriage, the relationships and tasks of civil society, etc.,"⁵⁰ and exhorting his adherents to do the same. Indeed, paradoxical as it may sound, the very inspiration for

⁴⁸ Juergen Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 180.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 298. In this connection Hegel's remarks on the autonomy of Socrates in section 138 of the *Philosophy of Right* are also pertinent.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 293. Jay Haley underscores this very feature of Jesus's activity in his study of Jesus as a charismatic leader of an incipient mass movement. Jesus's recruits, Haley writes, "had to give up everything related to ambition in the society as it was and abandon all other commitments to others, including family ties, when they joined him" (Jay Haley, *The Power Tactics of Jesus Christ and Other Essays* [New York: Avon Books, 1971], p. 40).

the "religion of freedom" and foundation of modernity counseled and embodied the most potent antagonism to the conditions of (modern) freedom, by virtue of his fanaticism. In any event, if we grant the assumption that social progress and the advance of World Spirit required polemical piety, including fanaticism, in the past, it seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus's fanaticism was of this type and pardonable, even laudable, on these grounds. That Hegel's analysis affords us such insight, enabling us to appreciate Christ's political significance as the protagonist of a world-historical fanaticism, is but one more unexpected virtue of the *Philosophy of Right*.