

HEGEL'S SPIRIT AS A DEFENCE OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND BULWARK AGAINST EXTREMISM

Patricia Calton (Saint Mary's University, Minnesota)

Hegel's detailed analysis of subjective religion and his forceful rejection of the movement in his own political environment to deny civil liberties to Jewish citizens give us the conceptual tools to respond to our contemporary cases of religious extremism without violating the value of the autonomy and inherent worth of the thinking person that fanaticism tramples. This paper first addresses Hegel's analysis of fanaticism, demonstrating that its rejection of the order of existing structures in favor of an abstract ideal entails the Hegelian concept of spirit. When spirit's implications are explored, it is evident that immediate religious certainty has the potential to elevate its adherents to thinking consciousness and therefore have the potential to follow its internal dialectics to the point where its convictions correspond with the major ethical principles upheld by modern states. Given the political freedom to explore their own latent truths and inconsistencies, subjective, even fanatical, religious consciousness can strengthen the state by its independent verification of the ideals embodied in the political community. In the meantime, autonomous reflection should be encouraged through free religious expression, including of religious views that run counter to the objective order of the state. However, any destructive attacks on this order must be confronted and stopped. These principles allow us to respond to the current Syrian refugee crisis, the controversy regarding municipal bans on burkinis in France, and violent, religiously-inspired terrorist attacks with clarity and consistency.

In his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel famously responded to growing popular resentment of Jews by reminding his readers that Jewish citizens are granted civil liberties not because they are Jews, but because they are human beings. Hegel's pride in, and defence of, his state's recognition of civil liberties reflects his conviction that this insight is a hard-won accomplishment, a fruit of a reason's labours not yet borne in all societies.

Hegel's forceful response in his own context reminds us that his philosophy can contribute directly and significantly to evaluating

political discourse and suggesting political solutions regarding a wide variety of religiously-coloured tensions. While Hegel's commitment to universal civil liberties has the potential for an extraordinarily broad set of contemporary applications, this paper will focus on Hegel's relevance to questions regarding responses to religiously-inspired political violence in contemporary Western culture. In recent years, concerns for safety have inspired many to support restrictions on immigration and religious expression. We have even heard defences of torture as a response to religious violence from elected officials. For others, such incidents have inspired calls to renew our political commitments to religious freedom and multiculturalism. Hegel's insights regarding the value and limits of tolerance, combined with his conviction that *all* human beings must be afforded the protection of basic civil liberties, can guide us to principled, consistent judgments regarding these competing claims. As Western countries now confront limiting civil liberties for adherents of some religious faiths, we must answer two core questions: Are civil liberties absolute commitments due to all human beings or are they contingent upon other considerations? What are the limits of religious tolerance in free, multicultural societies?

To answer these inquiries, it is crucial for us to reexamine the conceptual grounding of civil liberties. This is daunting, since our difficulty in making clear, consistent judgments regarding the competing claims of safety and freedom arise out of the failures of contemporary political and religious structures to give adequate expression to their origin. Giving serious consideration to Hegel's grounding of civil liberties in the thinking nature of the human being, and his specific responses both to religious intolerance and to religiously-inspired violence will give us a conceptually-disciplined framework that supports crucial judgments regarding religious freedom while carefully delineating the limits of tolerance.

Thinking through contemporary political concerns in the light of Hegel's perspective is fruitful, since his analysis of both the grounding of civil liberties and the nature of religious commitments, including those that are incompatible with civil society, allow us to clarify the sort of tensions we are currently facing. Most fundamentally, his foundational conviction that the recognition of the freedom and dignity of all human beings is necessary to maintain anyone's freedom underlies a variety of avenues by which he responds to this question. In this analysis, I draw particular attention to the reliance of this insight on the nature of Hegelian spirit, primarily through an examination of Hegel's analysis of the extremism that grows from commitments to abstract ideals, whether in politics, as embodied by

the French Revolution's devotion to abstract freedom, or in religion, as illustrated by Hegel in terms of his understanding of both Judaism and Islam and found in a variety of religious expressions today. We'll then examine the self-contradictory nature of these commitments and the implicit presence of spirit in their expression. In following the implications of spirit in subjective religious and political expressions, we'll see the necessity of integrating the ethics objectified in the state with religious thought, or, failing this, the precedence of civil law over religiously-inspired incivility or violence as a basic, initial response to religious violence. However, Hegel's conviction that religious consciousness is a vehicle for spirit and his insistence on including adherents of all religions under the umbrella of civil society are equally necessary when considering responses to religious violence, guiding the state as a whole to benefit substantially from the presence of a diversity of religions while proscribing attacks on the values to which the state gives objective form. This paper will conclude with an evaluation of some of the current Western responses to members of faiths that are connected with religiously-inspired violence.

1. Commitment to Abstract Ideals in Religious Consciousness

The persistent religiously motivated violence we are experiencing worldwide, and some of the more extreme political responses to this violence, can both be analyzed in terms of Hegel's critique of abstract ideals. Hegel is pointedly critical of seeing abstract ideals as the whole truth in both religious and political consciousness. Applying Hegel's assessment of commitments to such ideals to both religiously-tinged violence and to political reactions to terrorism allows us to respond consistently and on clear principles to such violence and ensures that these responses do not embody the same subjective certainty in abstract ideals that makes religious fanaticism self-contradictory and destructive. To see the relationship between religious violence and political reactions to it, we'll look closely at Hegel's analysis of commitment to abstract ideals first in religious consciousness and then in the political sphere.

The most informative passages for our discussion on religious consciousness' commitment to abstract ideals are found in Hegel's remarks on ancient Hebrew consciousness, his reading of Islam, and in the intuitive religious consciousness so influential in Europe in his day. In each of these forms of consciousness, the ultimate value is an

abstract ideal before which all else is contingent, including actually existing political structures and persons.

In ancient Jewish consciousness, Hegel finds the locus of all substance in the divine will. From our perspective, we can look at the content of Hebrew Scriptures, most notably the Ten Commandments, and find rational, ethical components. Hegel makes the case that this convergence of reason and revelation has been a recurring theme in both Jewish and Christian thought since the first century of the Common Era, but argues that we, as people accustomed to this later insight, project this backwards erroneously. He sees no such recognition of the correspondence between reason and religion in the ancient Hebrew outlook. Consequently, he claims that, for them, religious laws are arbitrary expressions of God's will, not reflections of rationality or freely chosen guides to the happy life. They are accepted simply *because* they are commanded by God. As with the bond servants in their land, who were accustomed to obeying their master's every word, obedience, not agreement or understanding, is the appropriate response to a divine edict. Consequently, God's commands are viewed as "...an externally imposed law adhered to without question."¹ The measure of their obedience was how completely they subordinated their own desires to those of God.

Since divine law is simply God's incomprehensible will, Hegel concludes that it is clear to the Hebrews that the prosperity that follows obedience does not flow directly from the human actions the law prescribes, but is God's response to those who obey him. Therefore, just as the law is not seen as grounded in reason, the possessions granted by God in return for this service have no justification or guarantee other than divine will, so that the "irrationality of the service corresponds to the irrationality of the possession." (VPR III, 349/449) Since God's will is neither bound by nor explicable by reason, reason cannot guarantee possession of the land, the food it produces, or the life of one's child. Hegel argues that this uncertainty brought with it constant vigilance to obey God's commands, lest God's open hand close. Moreover, just as neither the obedience demanded nor its reward were tied to reason in ancient Hebrew

¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Teil 3. Die vollendete Religion*, (ed.) Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1984), 349, tr. by R. Brown, P. Hodgson, J. Stewart as *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion III*, (ed.) P. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 449. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as VPR III. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

consciousness, neither was the punishment for disobedience. The destruction that follows a misstep need be neither proportional nor related to the offense and nothing was beyond the reach of the Creator. To emphasize this, Hegel gives us some lines from Leviticus:

And if in spite of this you will not harken to me, but walk contrary to me, then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and chastise you myself sevenfold for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and cast your dead bodies upon the bodies of your idols; and my soul will abhor you.... And I will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be astonished at it.²

Divine will is the only substance that counts, and all lives and possessions are simply the means of its expression. Consequently, the sole focus of worship is on an incomprehensible, abstract ideal. No moral precept, no individual life, nothing *actual*, has the weight to make claims on its own behalf.

Hegel interpreted Islam as sharing Judaism's vision of God as the sole substance. As in the case of Judaism, God is an abstract "One" that remains opposed to anything concrete. Human worth, consequently, is found only in service God. (VPR II, 62/156) As Hegel puts it, "In Islam, it is only being a believer that matters." (VPR II, 64/158)

For Hegel, God's incomprehensible will as the sole substance was not the only manifestation of subjectivity in religion. In fact, he saw subjectivity as a marked feature of religious consciousness of his time in thinkers such as Fichte and Schleiermacher. Intuitions, in the Romantic period, took the place of conceptual Christian doctrine and, like Christian doctrine, they were asserted as facts to accept or reject—as Hegel put it, as an "Either/Or."

Comparing intuitive religion to the absolute freedom embodied in the French Revolution, Hegel identifies individual consciousness as the sole source of substance in each. Consequently, in immediate religious consciousness, as with religious consciousness that recognizes only God's will as worthy in its own right, we have no way of conceptually grounding or critiquing convictions. As Hegel derisively

² G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Teil 2. Die vollendete Religion*, (ed.) W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1985), 350–51, tr. by R. Brown, P. Hodgson, J. Stewart as *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion II*, (ed.) P. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 450–51. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as VPR II. Pages references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

remarks, we “may equally embrace...the belief that the Dalai-Lama, the bull, the ape, etc. is God.”³ Hegel bemoans this contemporary movement as bringing religion and ethics full circle, returning them to their ancient status of resting commitments on proclamations. In addition to relying on the heteronomous authority of feeling, we’re also left with no way of steering clear of the blatantly immoral as we follow our own convictions, as the bond between religion and ethics forged through the intellectual history of the preceding centuries is broken, for, Hegel concludes, “it follows from the supposition that immediate knowing is the criterion of truth, that all superstition and idolatry is proclaimed as truth, and the most unjust and unethical content of the will is justified.” (EL, §72, 162/120) In a withering appraisal of those of his own day who find the truth only in religion’s subjective form, Hegel remarks:

Those who ‘seek the Lord’ and assure themselves, in their uneducated opinion, that they possess everything *immediately* instead of undertaking the work of raising their subjectivity to cognition of the truth and knowledge of objective right and duty, can produce nothing but folly, outrage, and the destruction of all ethical relations. These are necessary consequences of that religious disposition which insists exclusively on its form, and so turns against actuality and the truth which is present in universal form within the laws.⁴

2. Hegel’s Spirit as a Bulwark against Extremism

Whether from a religious consciousness that holds only God’s will to be substantial or from a reliance on intuition as the sole source of truth, Hegel warns that convictions of immediate, subjective ideals

³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I*, in *Werke*, Bd. 8, (ed.) E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), §63, 152, tr. by T. Geraets, W. Suchting, and H. Harris as *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences with Zusätze* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991) 112. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as EL. Page references, separated by slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke*, Bd. 7, (ed.) E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), §270, 419 tr. by H.B. Nisbet as *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, (ed.) Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 294. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as PR. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

are capable of arousing violent, immoral, impulses bent on destroying objective order and countering history's movement toward freedom. In his reflections on religious consciousness' capacity to evince itself as hatred of the law that stands against it, seemingly as a competing truth, Hegel addresses religious zealotry. Acknowledging that immediate religious consciousness may take the form of an interior, private rejection of culture or law, Hegel recognizes a forceful, destructive potential in subjective religion:

If, however, this negative attitude does not simply remain an inward disposition and viewpoint, but turns instead to the actual world and asserts itself within it, it leads to religious *fanaticism* which, like political fanaticism, repudiates all political institutions and legal order as restrictive limitations [*Schranken*] on the inner emotions and as incommensurate with the infinity of these.... Since, however, decisions still have to be made in relation to actual existence [*Dasein*] and action...decisions are made on the basis of subjective representations [*Vorstellung*] i.e. of opinion and the that subjective ideas, i.e. opinion and *caprice of the arbitrary will*. (GPR, §270, 418/293)

Whether grounded in Romantic self-certainty or in the authority of religion, such convictions are beyond the reach of rational critique and so are absolutes unto themselves.

While immediate religious feeling holds the potential for destruction unbound by reason, Hegel's conception of spirit shows us that fanaticism grounded in subjective conviction undermines itself, since its elevation of what "ought to be" over actuality reveals the nature of human being as rational, free, and inherently good. By discovering human being's inherent goodness and worth as an implication of religious consciousness' sense of disjunction between what is and what ought to be, he establishes that the religious consciousness that can lead to fanaticism reveals to us that human being is spirit and gives us a basis for universal civil liberties. While this contrast takes many forms, Hegel's most detailed analysis is in light of the biblical account of the sin of Adam, a myth central to the expression of what it is to be human in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Hegel was among many philosophers of his era to point out the ubiquity of the myth of the fall in religious consciousness. In his philosophical interpretation of the Genesis version of this story, Hegel finds the nature of spirit implicit in human consciousness' rejection of what is in the light of what "ought to be." In examining this scriptural account, as in other areas of his dialectic, it is where things do not seem to make sense immediately where deeper truths

lie. For, while our limited human understanding is adept at picking out the points that rub and, with Enlightenment hubris, rejecting such myths as untruths, Hegel argues that “it is God, spirit itself, that eternally posit and sublates this contradiction.” (VPR III, 18/79) Philosophical reasoning, he tells us, must simply follow spirit as it sets up inconsistencies and then brings them together into its coherent whole. Since this coherence is only found on the *conceptual* level, philosophy is necessary to extract and clarify the truth embedded in religious consciousness in the form of this myth.

In calling the story of the Adam’s sin “profound,” Hegel not only draws attention to his break with the intellectual trends of his day, but instructs his hearers that they must do some spiritual digging with him if they intend to learn its lessons. On the surface, Genesis is a record of the actions of the first humans. Tempted by the serpent to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they transgressed God’s command and were expelled from Paradise. Read this way, Hegel acknowledges that these scriptural passages raise more questions than they answer: Adam and Eve are tricked into eating the forbidden fruit by the serpent, who tells them that if they eat it they will be like God. Yet God confirms that the serpent’s promise was fulfilled, saying: “Look, they have become like Us.” Was the serpent lying? Was God *joking* (a minority interpretation with at least one adherent in Hegel’s day)? Does *evil* make us like God? The punishment for becoming like God is, ironically, mortality: Adam is exiled from the garden before he can eat of the Tree of Life. But God also seems to speak of this exile as a precaution designed to protect Adam. How could immortality endanger him?

While Hegel’s questions are of the kind that made the story of the fall so vulnerable to the scorn of the Enlightenment, they are not, Hegel argues, the inconsistencies of a confused account of events of long ago. Instead, they are the paradoxes we must resolve if we are to pass beyond the facade of its story-form to the profundity of its philosophical truth. For the myth of Adam and Eve takes the form of the story of the first man and woman in order to tell us what it means to be a human being. Not literally history, it symbolically presents human being as emerging from the immediacy of feeling and intuition to the self-awareness of *thinking consciousness*. As such, Hegel reads it as revealing to us the truth of what it is to be spirit. (VPR III, 43/106)

The first of these apparent inconsistencies has to do with a central feature of the story: the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is clearly forbidden by God. But the fruit is not the point here; that is just a figurative representation. Knowledge of good and

evil itself is what has been forbidden and that has to do with universal demands upon us, actions that are either right or wrong on principle, not things that are in themselves neutral or contingent, such as eating an apple. But how can there be a divine command that human beings remain innocent of knowledge of good and evil when this knowledge is what makes us like God? Without it, we are on a par with beasts. This is the lowly condition of Adam and Eve at the opening of the story, who live in a paradise that Hegel compares to a zoo. Neither good nor evil, they fulfill their desires without conscious choice. But this is a state fit only for animals, which have no consciousness of the choices before them, no responsibility, no moral calling. Such animals eat and mate without *deciding* to do so. They consume whatever is edible and available, with no capacity for moral second-guessing.

Hegel argues that only human beings have an awareness of ourselves as separate from our actions and desires. We do not simply see what we desire, but are also aware of ourselves desiring. This is the distance rational consciousness provides and it is the hallmark of our humanity. It lifts us out of nature, providing the space necessary for the self-knowledge that accompanies every instance of our consciousness of things that stand apart from ourselves. Hegel uses words like “cleavage” and “rupture” to describe this uniquely human way of knowing: it is a “cleavage” between our thought and the object at which this thought is directed. Each of us is a “rupture” in the world, a tear between ourselves and the things or actions we have the possibility of choosing. With this rupture, we are not completely immersed in the individual apple before us. Instead, we have a sense of ourselves that accompanies every act of knowing. We have a sense of our own independence, of our freedom. Consequently, in considering objects of our desire we are aware of our own thinking and choosing. Additionally, human consciousness contains an awareness that not all exercises of freedom are morally equal: some choices *ought* to be made and others *ought* not. Genesis gives us an image of this awakening of the knowledge of good and evil, of what ought to be and what ought not, by describing “that the human beings became aware that they were naked.” (EL, §24, 90/62)

How, then, does Hegel resolve the paradox that knowledge of good and evil both makes us an image of God and is something that should not be? How can thinking, which is spirit, bring evil into the world? His response is in the form of an explication of what human consciousness entails. Our awareness of our separation from the objects of our thought allows us to see our choices before us *as* choices. We know ourselves as separate from objects of our desire,

free to choose them or not. As the separation between us and the world that allows for choice, human knowing consciousness makes room for responsibility, since we are aware of our power to assent to our desire or to hold back. But rational consciousness does much more than make us aware of the possibility of choice. By translating our particular experience into universal ideas, it also shows us that not all choices are equal: some are good and others are evil.

Because reason formulates our experience in universal categories, we recognize that, alongside our own immediate desires, there are other humans just like us. We realize that they have similar wants and needs. Somebody else might have his eye on the apple I desire. From this distinctively human perspective, distinctively human questions arise: Should I live as an isolated individual concerned only with fulfilling for my own immediate desires or should I act in accordance with what thought, by putting the situation in universal terms, tells me that I *should* do? Should I take the apple for myself? Share it? Leave it for someone else? By raising these questions, rational consciousness imposes the universal demands of morality upon us. Consequently, knowledge is not only freedom from the instincts that direct the animals, but is also a conceptualization of the universal laws that we *should* fulfill. Eventually, the demands of reason take shape in our world. Whether they take the form of divine commands or of the precepts of civil authority, our natural inclinations are confronted by an external universal good. (EL, §24, 90/62) Knowledge offers us a choice between desire and rationality, between nature and spirit. Without human consciousness, we act without reflection, without guilt. With it, there is evil in the world.

Then what of God's remark that knowledge of good and evil would make us like Him? How can the same thing that brings evil into the world shape us into God's image? By confronting our animal inclinations, knowledge of good and evil raises us out of the natural life of selfish desires and directs us to live in the divine image as a rational being. But, in presenting us with the choice of goodness in terms of universal, rational laws that only thinking spirit can produce and comprehend, knowledge of good and evil reveals to us our rational nature. We see what ought to be in universal terms, rather than being immersed in unmediated sensory experience or feeling, and come to know human being as free and moral.

Since this knowledge of humanity as free and moral is implicit in our distinction between what is and what should be, the dissatisfaction of subjective religious consciousness, including that of the zealot, contains the implication that human being is thinking consciousness, or spirit. Spirit's self-determination in light of universal

right and wrong, as Hegel explains in his *Philosophy of Right*, is the ground of civil liberties. Rational human consciousness, in elevating us to the universal right and wrong over our subjective desires, presents the insight that everyone must be recognized by law: "It is part of education, of *thinking* as consciousness of the individual [*des Einzelnen*], in the form of universality, that I am apprehended as a universal person, in which all are identical. A human being counts as such because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, German, or Protestant, etc. This consciousness, which is the aim of thought, is of infinite importance." (GPR, §209, 360–61/240) Still, the good that brings us to this insight remains an abstract ideal set against the actually existing world.

3. Hegel's Spirit as Connecting the Subjective and Objective

The strength of Hegel's scathing assessment of non-conceptual religious knowledge is matched by the vigor of his confidence that philosophy can both develop conceptual knowledge of God and that this "genuine" religious consciousness can be the basis of a law-abiding, civilized political state. While religious consciousness, by its very nature, takes the form of intuition, feeling, and representational thought, religion's content, given conceptual form, becomes ethics, law and political structures that comprise civilization and hem in any disruptive extremism. In keeping with his interpretation of our awareness of sin and the rupture between what ought to be and what is, we can see that all human consciousness, especially in the form zealous rejection of contemporary religious, political, or moral affairs, betrays our awareness that we *ought* to do what is right. Given the chasm between what *is* and what we think *should be*, we are called to do better: to elevate ourselves to the image of goodness that religion and reason present to us. In other words, in knowing ourselves as less than perfect, we see that we are implicitly the good that we know we fail to embody and that we are explicitly evil to the degree that we fall short of this standard. The demand made on human consciousness, then, is not to turn exclusively to an abstract good, but to *be* good: to make oneself and the world actually what it *should be*.

For Hegel, this is an image of humanity as spirit: we are essentially what we are not, what we are potentially, but have not yet actualized. Reason, by setting before us what we are implicitly, assigns us the task of making it real. This is the process of history, in which societal structures are reformed to reflect a more refined view of

human nature, a more complete structure supporting freedom. Civil liberties and political freedoms expand in response to this developing appreciation of what a human society ought to be. Spirit directs our labour so that, by our efforts, we make what reason shows us *should be* into concrete reality: “That humanity must make itself what it is, that it must produce and eat bread in the sweat of its brow, belongs to what is most essential and distinctive about it and coheres necessarily with the knowledge of good and evil.” (EL, §24, 90/63) The spiritual progress continues, pushing us toward a fuller realization of the truth. As that new reality evinces its own shortcomings, spirit moves us to yet a higher level of actuality, eventually taking the form of philosophy and law. Genuine religious consciousness, for Hegel, develops from purely subjective commitments to establish the truths of faith in the concepts of law and morality.

Because religion begins in intuition, Hegel describes its role as “the prodigious transfer of the inner into the outer, the building of reason into the real world.” (GPR, §270, 430/303) This, Hegel claims, “has been the task of the world through the whole course of history. It is by working at this task that civilized man has actually given reason an embodiment in law and governance and achieved consciousness of it as a fact.” (GPR, §270, 430/304)

4. Political Responses to Fanaticism

Commitments to abstract ideals, whether in the religious forms discussed above or in the form of the devotion to absolute freedom that marked the French Revolution, reduce everything else to the insubstantial. Individuals, as well as their artistic, religious, and political expressions, are sapped of any significant worth. Whatever, or whoever, threatens this “truth” is subject to annihilation. Abstract ideals, in their immediacy, mirror the consciousness of the knowing subject, without the contradictions that encounters with the world present, and free of the internal tensions to which such challenges give rise. One’s truth is *the* truth. Writing on the French Revolution and its aftermath, Hegel offers lucid reflections on the violence to which abstract ideals can lead: “Self-existence, being-for-self, however, into which being for another returns, in other words the self, is not a self of what is called object, a self all its own and different from the ego: for consciousness qua pure insight is not an individual self, over against which the object, in the sense of having a self all its own, could stand, but the pure notion, the gazing of the self into self, the

literal and absolute seeing itself doubled.”⁵ As the “undivided substance,” “absolute freedom puts itself on the throne of the world...For since in very truth consciousness is alone the element which furnishes spiritual beings or power with their substance. (PhG, 433/594) With nothing standing over against the notion [of the will] “negativity has pervaded all of its moments.” (PhG, 433/601)

5. Religious Tolerance Strengthens the Objective Expression of Spirit in the State

These passages make it clear that a static conviction in an abstract ideal can subjectively justify the most brutal attacks on institutions and individuals. However, we have also seen that convictions of abstract “goodness” entail, with the emergence of the thinking self, a comprehension of the human being as spirit and a commitment to concrete, versus abstract, good. Because laws that foster this development of spirit in the individual and the state require freedom and critical reflection regarding the true and the good, the movement of spirit depends on the liberty to refine perspectives on core values, including those that could support fanaticism. Hegel recognizes that these subjective religious commitments can be intense, since the most immediate, common, and visceral connections to the truth takes place within religious communities, where the truth is experienced on the level of intuition and feeling. Since religion is accepted on its own authority, it is not surprising that conflicts between the state and sects arise. However, for Hegel, religious pluralism, even when it entails descent from publicly recognized law, contributes to the establishment of objective spirit in the state. On the most fundamental level, since the movement of spirit makes what is implicit in religious feeling explicit, revising content by working through internal tensions, autonomous thought is essential for the development of religious perspectives that accurately reflect the truth of spirit. Just as government’s prescribing the edicts of a state-supported religion would stifle the movement of spirit toward deeper, more subtle expressions of spirit’s truth, silencing minority groups would prevent their adherents from refining their form of religious conscious-

⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Werke*, Bd. 3, (ed.) E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), 432, tr. by J. Baillie as *Phenomenology of Mind* (London: Harper & Row, 1967), 600. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as PhG. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the German original, then to the English translation.

ness to better express the truths of spirit. In time, free religious expression and critique, whether internal or external, moves religious consciousness from intuition toward a thinking expression of the truth. In a mature state, this movement would bring religion closer to the expression of spirit as it is embodied in legislation and mores. This rise of thinking consciousness, represented in Genesis' story of Adam's fall and emergence into human consciousness, is essential for this growth. While toleration is necessary, discussion of and reflection on the inadequacies of interpretations of religious truths, highlighting the contradictions found in the mode of intuitive knowledge or in incomplete conceptual accounts, is prerequisite for spirit's movement. When, after internal dialectics, diverse religious traditions cohere around the same truths supported by the laws of the state, citizens are attached to these laws not simply as externally imposed abstractions, but through the intimacy of religious feeling. In addition to this movement of religious consciousness toward a more developed expression of spirit, there is strong evidence that toleration of minority religions has the further benefit of, in time, strengthening support for the laws of the state.

One of Hegel's most fundamental positions is that the state, philosophy, and religion have the same content, universal truth, for their object. Since religion is grounded in the subjective, intuitive connection between individual citizens and the truth embodied in the state, and shares the state's object, religious communities that develop in line with the unfolding of spirit will move toward an articulation of the truth as it is embodied in the state. For this reinforcement to occur, religion and the state must be seen as developing independently of one another, as opposed to either the state or religion dictating content to the other. By providing the opportunity for spirit to develop according to its own dynamics and refraining from dictating particular religious content, the state allows religion to develop spiritually while maintaining its subjective connection of individuals and its content. In keeping religion, the state, and philosophy autonomous, these three spheres of spirit have the effect of strengthening one another.

Consequently, in order for religion to reinforce the state's objective content effectively, religious freedom and toleration of religious dissent is essential. Crucially, toleration, and the variety of faith perspectives it promotes, prevents politics and ethics from being reduced to expressions of a single church authority. Additionally, the correspondence of religious convictions and the morality established by ethics and law buttresses the claims of all three as embodiments of spirit. Furthermore, when a variety of distinct religious communi-

ties converge, to greater or lesser extents, perhaps, with the spiritual fruits embodied in law and the state, these fruits can be recognized as the product of free spirit. As Timothy Brownlee observes, “the *universal* purposes of the state are better sustained when they need not contend with a single monumental church, but rather stand over a diverse range of “*particular* churches.”⁶ Hegel’s pointing out the benefit of multiple religious communities, Brownlee concludes, “indicates that Hegel believes that some form of religious diversity is itself *good* for the state.”⁷

6. Religious Zealots

While toleration is the mark of a strong, cohesive state, clearly there are limits to what should be accepted. In his remarks on fanaticism, Hegel uses his concept of spirit to distinguish between religious consciousness that can be permitted in a state and the extremism that must be extinguished. In politics and religion, Hegel notes that abstract subjective certainty that refuses to move beyond itself and remains separate from the world confronts actual order as it is found in the world and finds that, as a result, subjective certitude has a tendency to express itself by attacking both public institutions and individuals that represent objective value or order:

If it remains purely theoretical, it becomes in the religious realm the Hindu fanaticism of contemplation; but if it turns to actuality, it becomes in the realm of both politics and religion the fanaticism of destruction, demolishing the whole existing social order, eliminating all individuals regarded as suspect by a given order, and annihilating any organization which attempts to rise up anew. Only in destroying something does this negative will have a feeling of its own existence [*Dasein*].... Thus, whatever such freedom believes [*meint*] that it wills can in itself be no more than an abstract representation [*Vorstellung*], and its actualization can only be the fury of destruction. (GPR, §5, 50/38)

⁶ Timothy Brownlee, “Hegel’s Defense of Toleration,” in *Hegel on Religion and Politics* (ed.) Angelica Nuzzo (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 83.

⁷ *Ibid.*

7. Hegel's Principled Response to Fanaticism

Responding to the fury of abstract ideals from the vantage of concrete civil society, Hegel is clear that religious individuals or communities who, informed only by their immediate certainty of religious conviction, undermine law and objective ethics endanger civilization and must be restrained within the laws of the community. Warning that this is a danger posed from within Christian communities as well as from without, he reminds us that the saying "'To the righteous, no law is given'" "leads to religious *fanaticism*" that undermines the order of the state. (PR, §270, 418/293) Its very subjective nature, unmediated by rational reflection and separating it from objectivity, makes it volatile.

However, Hegel is also clear that violent conflict between subjective religion and the state is not inevitable. Even among those who hold immediate religious convictions that oppose the laws and morality embodied in the political community, these beliefs are not necessarily acted upon. It is possible for such convictions, such as of a religious duty to forcibly convert others to one's religion, to remain private convictions. This inner conviction disciplined by the law of the larger culture, for Hegel, should be permitted to exist within the state.

Accepting private convictions but restraining destructive action is, in outline, is Hegel's pragmatic response to the problem of extremism. Civilization in the form of laws and institutions must be recognized as the embodiment of our spiritual journey toward actualizing political and moral truths in the world. Given that subjective religious consciousness is not under the sway of reason, it must not be allowed to attack aspects of society that do not fit its agenda: laws and ethics must retain their inherent worth and authority. As Hegel expresses it: "The very fact that everything in the state is stable and secure is a defense against arbitrariness.... Thus, religion as such should not hold the reins of government." (GPR, §270, 431/304)

Hegel's concept of spirit, and his limitations on extremist action, guides us to nurture free religious expression, encourage open critiques of religion, and restrict actions aimed at religious critique, and thwarting any action that attacks the political or moral order of society. Applying these to our current controversial responses to religious violence evinces the merit of Hegel's analysis. For example, a position that advocates the torture of suspects or witnesses in order to prevent a terrorist attack elevates the abstract ideal of "human life" above the concrete lives it is willing to subject to tor-

ture. Such a response, by failing to recognize the concrete goods before it and the legal principles that give them objective form, undermines the values it seeks to uphold. By negating the value of human life, such a response mirrors the abstraction and absolutism of the fanatic instead of countering them.

Hegel's perspective is also helpful in clarifying current bans on non-violent religious expression, such as the outlawing of "burkinis" in France. Designed both to fulfill the requirements of modesty imposed by Islam and to allow a fuller participation in the public recreational life on France's beaches, these light, quick-drying garments cover the heads and limbs of female swimmers. Several municipalities have banned burkinis because they are a public expression of religion that opposes France's commitment to secularism. Others are banning the burkini because it is interpreted as a statement blaming women for the desires of men who see them. These interpretations have some truth to them and burkinis challenge post-Enlightenment views of personhood and public secular life. However, wearing of a burkini, or a burka, for that matter, is not an overtly destructive attack on the structures of Western social or moral order. In fact, it is an opportunity for Muslims, and Muslim women, in particular, to participate more fully in French society. Burkinis, in revisioning strictly traditional garb to allow for freer movement and fuller participation in the larger society on the part of Muslim women, are a step closer to the values that the municipalities cite in their bans. Consequently, to foster reflection and revision in religious consciousness, Burkinis should be tolerated on France's beaches. Extremists such as those who attack citizens with firearms, on the other hand, must be confronted with the full force of the state.

pcalton@smumn.edu