

CHAPTER THREE

The Drive for the Good World to Come Hegel's Conceptualisation of Beginnings and Ends*

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This chapter will attempt to conceptually dissect the conditions of possibility for the idea of the good as introduced by Hegel in his *Outline of a Philosophy of Right*. We must certainly not overlook that there are very convincing studies on the systemic place occupied by the idea of the good as it is featured in *Science of Logic*, but while taking this into account, our analysis will focus on the conditions produced by the notion of the good in the framework of Hegel's practical philosophy. This is expressed in “the practical activity of the idea”, or more precisely described as “the drive of the good to bring itself about” (TWA 10, § 225/Hegel 2010b, 291). There are readings that take into account Hegel's other political stage where politics and religion work hand in hand; however, that is not our intention here. The idea of the good is the pivotal concept by which Hegel strives to grasp our social world, explicating that which the social protagonists already know, but he uses the scientific method to render it in the least distorted possible form. Let us start with a basic outline of the field occupied by the idea of the good.

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While there is a long tradition of associating the notion of the good with freedom,¹ there is also something fatalistic about the first instance of the good as outlined by Hegel, since according to him the obligation of the will arises directly in relation to the good. The will must do the work necessary to fit into the category of the good, but the good itself becomes what it is by being recognised as good by the will. This arduous task, to which the will subjects itself, also contains the traces of the world to come. For this reason, this work should not be understood as blind fatalism, in which everything is pre-determined by preceding events, but as a fatalism of necessary freedom, as a kind of precondition for things to happen. Things must happen by themselves for freedom to settle in, but we must maintain the illusion that the worst has already occurred. This is the kind of experience we have when we fall in love, when we should not exactly be expecting and planning at every corner for it to actually come to pass, but rather allowing it to happen on the assumption that in relation to the will, love *ought* to be substantial for it.² In the same respect, good is an idea that cannot be predicted or calculated in terms that are preconditioned by the world, as that idea actually preconditions the world. It is in this light that the idea of the good should also be understood as it appears in Hegel's *Outline of a Philosophy of Right*, namely as "the absolute end of the world" (*der Absolute Endzweck der Welt*) (TWA 7, §129/Hegel 2008, 126).

Before turning to endings, it is essential to emphasise just what this final end is: it is ultimately defined in the encounter with reason as actualized self-consciousness. More specifically, the final end of life, following the ancient Greek ideal, is that which is willed "for the sake of being one with oneself with the self-consciousness" (Pinkard 2012, 174), but in the modern world it is all the more tethered by contingency and finitude. We must be mindful that the world is to be understood here as the world of the spirit,³ the "realm of

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- 1 For Locke, it is the greatest *felt* good that determines the will: "But yet upon a stricter inquiry, I am forced to conclude, that good, the greater good, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, does not determine the will, until our desire, raised proportionably to it, makes us uneasy in the want of it" (Locke 1997, 234). And in his eyes, will is practically inseparable from freedom: "The principal exercise of Freedom is to stand still, open the eyes, look about, and take a view of the consequence of what we are going to do, as much as the weight of the matter requires" (*ibid.*, 254).
 - 2 To put it more bluntly, in love "the adventurous side is necessary, but equally so is the need for tenacity" (Badiou 2012, 32).
 - 3 Let us not forget that "the spirit is not some one mode of meaning which finds utterance or externality only in a form distinct from itself: it does not manifest or reveal something, but its very mode and meaning is this revelation. And thus in its mere possibility spirit is at the same moment an infinite, 'absolute', actuality" (TWA 10, §383/Hegel 2007, 17).

actualised freedom” produced as “second nature” (TWA 7, §4/Hegel 2008, 26). Free choices made only have any weight because they are pulled by the gravity of the rationality and self-sufficiency of this final end. This does not mean, of course, that the freedom to which the subject aspires here is actually realised, since it is still not subject to the demand for the universality and objectivity of its determinations. Here we are still in the realm of morality in Hegel’s system of right, a perspective that characterises the ties between the social fabric and individual actors as contingent, governed by arbitrary self-will (*Willkür*). So even the purest, most selfless acts in this respect concern only the individual good, while the rational social institutions and practices and the collective good are merely “external conditions for deliberation” (Wood 1997, 157). Whereas moral law is grounded in individual actions, which is in reality the position to which Kant is bound, freedom comes to its actual realisation in the following realm, in ethical life. More precisely, this ethical substance is in its highest right expressed in the absolute spirit of the State,⁴ which is an essential subject in the unfolding of the philosophy of right, but will be left for another occasion.

The good, as introduced by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* at the end of the chapter on morality, is expressed only as an abstraction, and as such as that which “ought only to be”, thus binding the subject to his own abstraction, which “ought only to be good” (TWA 7, §141/Hegel 2008, 155). The abstract universality of the good becomes concrete only when it passes into ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) through the identity of the good and the subjective will. The good, precisely because it is bound to a particular (subjective) will, which as such constitutes the emergence of the modern age,⁵ is always on the precipice of turning evil. This inclination arises at the moment when the particularity of individual arbitrariness (*Willkür*) prevails over the universal.⁶ We will return to the idea of evil in relation to will. Meanwhile, the “living

4 It is pertinent to mention but one detail relating to the unveiling of the world: “The state is the divine will, in the sense that it is spirit present on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of a world” (TWA 7, §270/Hegel 2008, 244).

5 Modernity is rooted in modern freedom and self-determination, where freedom is closely defined through the right to particularity: “the subject, an entity reflected into himself and so particular in relation to objective particularity, has in his end his own particular content, and this content is the soul of the action and determines its character. The fact that this moment of the particularity of the agent is contained and realized in the action constitutes subjective freedom in its more concrete sense, the right of the subject to find his satisfaction in the action” (TWA 7, §121/Hegel 2008, 120).

6 The inappropriateness of the good is also explicated by Hegel when he refers to the principle of moral subjectivity something that “determines nothing” (TWA 7, §148/Hegel 2008, 141).

good” (TWA 7, §142/Hegel 2008, 154),⁷ which is another name for the ethical life (as the idea of freedom), overcomes this risk of abstract indeterminacy by being determined through the form of its moments in knowledge and determinacy. The good is thus limited to the moral standpoint, which is the standpoint of the will insofar as it is in itself and so does not yet embrace self-consciousness. As such, the good within morality is bound up in an abstract relation with conscience (*Gewissen*), where the good appears as infinite content without form and conscience as indeterminate form without content.

Before we can examine the structure that sustains the affirmative status of the good, we must first justify the alternating use of the logical and the practical notion of the good. Usually, it is assumed that the logical idea of the good is not directly reproduced in the good found in the section on morality in *Philosophy of Right*. The idea of the good is namely commonly examined through the framework of a logical structure reflecting “the abstract element of thought” (TWA 10, §19), whereas the moral good is an action pertaining to specific individuals. Thus, although in the first instance the idea of the good is ‘only’ a logical moment in the unfolding of the concept, the good, expressed through the moral-practical act of the subject, is itself embedded in a speculative matrix, whose form is the idea of logic.⁸ There is a logical core of the ethical life embodied in the idea of the good, which means that both have the formal character of *Sollen*. We can also refer to Hegel’s conclusion that “every abstract moment of science must correspond to the image of the phenomenal spirit” (TWA 3, 589/Hegel 2018, 465), i.e. every speculative notion of logic must correspond to a specific factual explication in the *Phenomenology*, and the same requirement is transferred to the philosophy of spirit, where the moral good has its place, but this does not mean that this conceptual iteration does not lead to a transformation of the system as such. An identical emphasis is made in the *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel equates free will with pure thinking of oneself and says that “those who treat thinking as a special, peculiar faculty, separate from the will [...] reveal at the very outset their complete ignorance of the nature of the will” (TWA 7, §5/Hegel 2008, 28–29). Despite this

7 By the living good, Hegel refers to Aristotle’s characterisation of the highest actuality, which for him is a foundation that has being in and for itself (*die an und für sich seiende Grundlage*), or a motivating end (*bewegende Zweck*) (TWA 7, §142/Hegel 2008, 155).

8 Christoph Halbig in this respect mentions that the idea of the good must not be understood as the fundamental grammar of Hegel’s practical philosophy: “That which is part of the grammar of human activity, such as the orientation towards the good according to the classical thesis, cannot be a historical achievement” (2009, 97).

conceptual overlapping of the unfolding of the idea, of which Hegel himself was well aware,⁹ there are fundamental differences between both instances of the idea of the good in terms of the lived experience and of the community. This idea namely cannot be guaranteed in advance, like a minted coin, but must be revealed through analysis. Let us assume that this justification is sufficient for the purposes of the discussion at hand.

Since the good is that which is supposed to contain all determinations (GW 26,1, §73, 287), there is often a common fallacy, a deception, that the good, the absolute good, is eternally realised in the world, which leads to the conclusion that “it is already fulfilled in itself, and does not have to wait for us” (TWA 8, §R212/Hegel 2010b, 282). But such a notion of the good would remain an aim somewhere beyond our grasp, eternally unattainable, since it contains no actuality. The ultimate end of the good expresses “what is and ought to be” (*was ist und sein soll*) (GW 26,1, §65, 68), but it needs *time* to unfold, and it cannot do so without the subjective will. *Sollen* (ought-to-be) does indeed appear as an inclination for overcoming boundaries, since there is no limit inscribed in it, but it is propagated towards this final end by the drive for realisation, which “wants to give itself objectivity in the objective world through itself and to realize itself” (TWA 6, 542/Hegel 2010a, 729). If the final end of the good requires such a specific drive, it is also necessary to articulate the initial impulse that sets the drive for the good in motion.

Before we get things finally underway and analyse the unfolding of the idea, it is also necessary to point out a few ambiguities and show the structural link between the universal end and the particular will of the subject who decides to strive for the good. The most common readings of the Hegelian philosophy assume that the whole movement of logic is driven by the speculative method, which appears as the drive (*Trieb*)¹⁰ of the immanent movement of pure thinking. We are not disputing this, but the work of logic is too prominent for our topic at hand not to be precise, because the emphasis on dialectical efforts and speculative turns overshadows the

9 With practically the opening words of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes the following remarks regarding the relationship between logic and the practical sphere: “[...] to prove and emphasise the logical progression in each and every detail. In part, this could be considered superfluous, assuming familiarity with the scientific method, but in part it is obvious that the whole, like the formation of its parts, is based on the logical spirit” (TWA 7, §2/Hegel 2008, 4).

10 For various reasons, recent translations use impulse for *Trieb* (e. g. *The Science of Logic*; however, we will keep the notion of drive ourselves because it also encompasses the trait of force that propels the object onward. Hegel ties the drive directly to the Greek *Φορά*, which denotes action, but also something that is brought forth or borne into motion.

subjects own initial gesture, when simple immediacy is integrated into mediation, which turns out to be “mediation as this sublation of itself” (TWA 5, 123/Hegel 2010a, 89).

Hegel devoted an entire chapter to the inner structure of beginning in *The Science of Logic*, but we will only be interested here in one detail that he points out in this regard. It is that moment that cuts through the indeterminacy of the moment when nothing has yet occurred and the next instant when we are already with both feet fully engaged in the realisation of reason that becomes our purpose. On the one hand, in the same spirit that is present in the division of philosophy or the idea itself, here, too, we have only something anticipated in our hands, while on the other hand, we lay bare the conditions for the movement of reason towards its realisation. How does Hegel proceed here? At the very outset of thinking, as its initial impulse, he places the decision (*Nur der Entschluß*) (TWA 5, 68) that we should want to consider thinking as such.¹¹ In the *Encyclopaedia*, he describes this decision as “a free act of thought” (TWA 10, § 16/Hegel 2010b, 45). Since this is an empty decision, because it presupposes nothing and has no grounds, it can be considered arbitrary. Nevertheless, it is the foundation of all science, for as a speculative beginning it is pure being, which only by moving forward, through the images of actualization, returns to its foundation, to absolute knowledge and inner truth, in which it dissolves into the image of immediate being. Beginnings are by their nature pure being, which only through moving forward, through the appearances of actualization, returns to its foundation, to absolute knowledge and inner truth, in which it dissolves into the form of immediate being. Hence Hegel’s observation that “the first also becomes the last and the last the first” (TWA 5, 70/Hegel 2010a, 49). If we return our attention to the initial subjective gesture of a decision as a movement of the concept, this subjective assumption, like space, number, etc., on other occasions, makes thought itself the object of thought. Of course, it is only in the concept (through mediation) that reason is established as the ground and truth, in which being and essence are contained, albeit in a sublated form. The willed decision is treated more directly in the *Philosophy of Right*, which Hegel frames in terms of the question of whether the rational drive of the will is good.

11 This is an elementary presupposition, echoing the minimal proposition of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that knowledge is that something can be known. To this, Hegel added an aid in the form of a cognitive ladder: “science at least offers him [the subject] a ladder to this position, to show him in himself” (TWA 3, §27/Hegel 2018, 17).

Now, let us turn our attention back to the idea of the good. There is a vast sea of literature on the issue of whether human nature is good or evil,¹² fuelled in particular by theological concerns, where the question of free will is reduced to a debate about original sin. Of course, in the context of the present discussion, the more relevant ideas are those of the radical evil and its other side, the banality of evil, which see in the very activity of thought the conditions that deter or attract people to evil action. The basic framework for these reflections is formed by ideas such as those of Rousseau, who contrasted the original good that the individual possesses in the state of nature with the corruption that infects the individual in culture. Similarly, we find in Kant the opposition of nature (as the aggregate of matter and the senses) to the rationality of the spirit and the self-referral of the will, seduced by the inclination to evil. Curiously, Hegel also follows this logic when he recognises in natural dynamism and inclinations that it introduces contingency, finitude, potentiality and conditioning by the drive into the will, a curtailed freedom and rationality, which is only valid on condition that nature is understood as absolutely self-sufficient. However, this is only true if nature is understood as absolutely self-sufficient. If we take all these elements (or determinations) as rational, integrated into the will as its own determinations, embodying the concretisation of the spirit, then they must be integrated into the purpose. In other words, the thinking reason is here a decision for finitude (TWA 7, §13/Hegel 2008, 36), which means that these individual modes of determination through natural predispositions appear in the form of distinct content. What is crucial for our discussion of the good at this point is that this content stands in for the will as something possible, which is, by this determination, arbitrariness (*Willkür*), since it is grounded on the contingency of choice conditioned in this form by the multiplicity of drives. To avoid misunderstandings, let me mention that we are here on the ground of the spirit, of the realisation of right, where self-determination and the self-production of the drive take the reins, and it is therefore unproductive

12 On the side of the representatives of human good nature, Rousseau stands out. In a letter to Archbishop Beaumont, Rousseau argued that the idea of human natural goodness is “the fundamental principle of all morality” (2001, 935), since all vices can be explained without attributing them to “the human heart [...] There is not a single vice to be found in it of which it cannot be said how and whence it entered” (ibid., 28). Although society is the condition of the common good, it is also the root of all tendencies against the good as such. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, is the finest spokesman for human evil nature: “Original sin is both sin and punishment. It is already present in the newborn children, but only manifests itself when they grow up” (2020, 293). Man’s original sin, however, is not to his detriment, but rather his adoption, by virtue of his nature, of the principle of individuation, according to which he is a distinct and unique entity.

to introduce further the relationship with the natural drive (*Naturtrieb*), which are more accurately defined as instinct, since drive is directly reflected in free will.¹³ We will return to drives again briefly, but at this point let us just mention a few examples given by Hegel. These include, inter alia, the drive for the right, the drive for property, the drive for morality, the drive for sexual love, and the drive for sociability. It is good to have this set of examples in mind because it is then easier to understand the manner in which Hegel uses the concept of the drive in the immanent unfolding of specific concepts.

With the aforementioned arbitrariness, we can do practically anything we want. But at the same time, the choice we make is not final, because we can change our minds and decide differently and so on ad infinitum, which means that these are always one-sided final moments. This movement of specific moments, propelled by the drive of the spirit, the drive that Hegel calls “the rational system of the determination of the will” (TWA 7, §19/Hegel 2008, 40), which here also takes the form of an arbitrary subordinating and sacrificial determination, is nevertheless based on the fact that the subjects decide (*sich entschliessen*) (TWA 7, §12/Hegel 2008, 36). It is only by making a decision, by drawing determinations and purposes out of the indeterminacy of the will that the subject sets in motion the drive of “free will” as self-determination, the drive that animates or brings the universality of thought to the surface. Such is the conclusion in the *Science of Logic*. It is therefore unsurprising that Hegel places the will (in reference to the Logic) at the very beginning of the *Philosophy of Right*, the system of the realisation of freedom, though at first necessarily in an arbitrary form, since it is only “absolute determination” (TWA 7, §27/Hegel 2008, 46) that shifts rationality from subjective determinations to objective ones, and remains in objectivity with itself. In short, it is by referring to itself that it sublates the initial direct nature of determination and the contingency of content. This detail is crucial for our search for a good world, because in this immediacy man can indeed be inherently good, if the determinations of the will are positive, but he can also be evil, depending on arbitrary choice, if the determinations are against freedom and the spirit.

13 There is always a certain tendency that the natural drives are read in conjunction with the death drive, which is the fourth limb of psychoanalysis, along with repetition, transference, and the unconscious. It should in no way be included among the biological predispositions or their distortions, since it represents the blind spot in the progress of the constitution of reason, which Lacan somewhere describes as a movement outwards and backwards. This can be roughly understood as the separation of the subject from the immediate givenness (that never existed). Therefore, we can say that the death drive belongs to free will and not to biological instincts.

We have already mentioned that Hegel is quite clear in his use of drives and in distinguishing the natural drives from the drives of the spirit, although, as befits speculative logic, he includes them, namely the natural drives, in the realisation of reason. The highest and only drive is defined by Hegel as the movement of the concept itself, which “in everything finds and knows itself through itself” (TWA 6, 249/Hegel 2010a, 749, revised translation by the author). This is also why the drive has its place at the beginning, as a kind of impetus for things to start moving out of the simple fixity of thought and go from there. This first universality has the meaning of being, which is, however, so poor that there is no need to make any special fuss about it (TWA 6, 554/Hegel 2010a, 739). There seems here to be much ado about nothing, but this “unanalysable” beginning, as Hegel puts it, is supposed to accompany the realisation of reason until it coincides with itself in the absolute final end of the objective spirit or the idea of the good. As the good enters into actuality only through the mediation of the subjective will and is “only in thinking and by means of thinking” (TWA 7, §132/Hegel 2008, 127), the question remains open how the good, which acts as the core of our essence, is determined, if the subject arbitrarily (TWA 7, §139/Hegel 2008, 136) handles the principle of positing in this process. There are two possibilities; the subjective will in its self-certainty is either “willing the universality of the concept” (ibid.) or is simply evil, principally willing a particular content, something in opposition to universality.¹⁴ Hegel is not bound by theologically inspired principles of evil. Indeed, the idea of evil is tied together with human will by Kant’s argument of radical evil, which does not figure as man’s “dark essence” but which comes to expression precisely through the subjective inclination towards freedom. Free will namely brings with it all the potential for choosing evil (AA 6 / RGV, 32), but also the more conventional option of obedience to the Law imposed by practical reason (AA 5, 161). This is significant because a subject who aspires toward a good world is always one decision away from falling into the void of unreason. And that is why it is all the more important to preserve the full weight of the spirit.

Having examined the initial gesture that propels us towards the good world, it is now time to point out the aforementioned premise that the good world acts as the final end (*Endzweck*). The final end does not end the work of the

14 Evil as the other side of good is convincingly discussed from various perspectives in the present volume. As a logical form, evil is presented as “the one of a thought-determination which, being the self-reference that has negated the independence of the otherness, posits itself as self-subsistent and claims to be absolute” (La Rocca 2024, 130).

concept, since it is not an end (*Ende*) and ends are a matter of nature, which is its own end without the need to establish a relation to will or sense. The final end is, on the contrary, something realised that has no end. The phrase *in the end* is conceptually very close to what *Endzweck* refers (the Slovenian phrase *konec koncev* [the end of ends] comes even closer by doubling the ending, thereby encapsulating its irreversible nature) and can be used to understand what in the end becomes of the good in the context of morality.

In Kant's essay, *Das Ende Aller Dinge*, written shortly before *Zum ewigen Frieden*, as a kind of flip side, a bleak side, full of productive derivations that we will not deal with in detail at this time, he basically touches on the question "why do people expect the world to end at all?" (AA 8, 331) To this, he responds that human reason dictates that "the world has value only insofar as rational beings are in conformity with the final end of their existence" (ibid.), which he directly relates to the pursuit of the highest good. Otherwise, creation as such is worthless and vain for him.¹⁵ In Kant's system, reason, in a practical sense, can never do enough to reach the ultimate goal if we follow the path of constant change (ibid., 334). In this way, he is actually committed to the principle of *Sollen* (Kant's never conclusive thought), which subsumes under itself both the end (*das Ende*) and the final end (*Endzweck*). But because the stakes are so high, this path to the highest good should not be seen as a simple overcoming of an endless series of ills (*Übeln*), for we remain unsatisfied until we have concretely thought it through and exhausted it.

To resolve this endless journey into the abyss of reason, which is committed to the aim of the moral good, Kant introduces an imaginary perspective, an imaginative (*Einbildung*) notion of the end, of the last act of thinking: things cease to move and stand still, "the whole of nature is rigid and virtually petrified" (*die ganze Nature starr und gleichsam versteinert*) (ibid., 334). The last thought and feeling is thus the suspension of thought in its own being, an event that Kant equates with annihilation (*Vernichtung*). Kant is unable to accept this tragic conclusion, because for him it results either in nihilism, mysticism, or pantheism, all of which abolish thought but of which all are the consistent result of the very imagination of the end, the end as the fulfilment of the final end, accompanied by a state of "contentment" (*Zufriedenheit*), in short, eternal rest (*ewige Ruhe*), a state free of inner tension, of excitement.

This logical idea of a peaceful repose, which interrupts the endless process of morality and as such causes discomfort for Kant, is for Hegel, on the contrary, the rest

15 "Like a play that has no ending at all and reveals no reasonable intention" (ibid. 332).

period of a perfected life, not its last moment. This proposition must be read together with Hegel's insistence that the notion of Spinozist substance corresponds to the movement of the concept, substance as "one indivisible totality" (TWA 6, 195/Hegel 2010a, 472), into which everything independently dissolves (*aufgelöst*) and is thus determined through negation. In this respect, substance can be read as an absolute, which, strictly speaking, is not the progression and overcoming of something simple, but the determination of the universal, in which all particular modes are abolished and enveloped.¹⁶ And it is in the recognition and acceptance of a necessary identity with the whole that we must seek freedom.

Despite this tendency for sublation and overcoming, let us not forget Hegel's incessant struggle with the end: end of history, end of art, and even the end of religion. But all these depictions of the spirit at the end of their days are not depictions of a radical end¹⁷ or the realisation of a purpose, but signifiers of something incomplete, not of something that will not have happened again. All these shapes of the spirit are merely at the end of their highest form, e.g. art with the Greek world, which does not mean that they will not reach further formal perfection. Hegel's *Phenomenology* ends on an identical note, where one would expect to be brought directly face to face with a kind of absolute embodiment of *Endzweck* in the form of pure thinking.¹⁸ Instead, it ends abruptly with a modified quotation from Schiller's poem on *Friendship*, which upends spirit's elegant self-fashioning with an image of formless excess and evanescence of infinity:

Out of the chalice of this realm of spirits
Foams forth to him his infinity.¹⁹

16 The method of absolute knowledge is, as Hegel says, "analytic" in the sense of dealing with the thing in itself and for itself, but equally "synthetic" (GW 6, 557/Hegel 2010a, 741), since the immediate universal is revealed as something else.

17 There is also a very productive reading of the end, offered by Marcus Quent, in the present volume. Instead of linking the end to aims and purposes, which is manifested through the realisation of the good, he rather makes use of it in its radical form as doom: "Only where time has become the deadline is it possible that humans are 'awakening to the idea of the whole', 'giving form' to it, and realizing their good end" (Quent 2024, 203).

18 "But the thinking that is purely for itself is a thinking of what is most exquisite in and for itself – an absolute end for itself" (GW 19, 162).

19 See TWA 3, §808/Hegel 2018, 467. Interestingly, Hegel takes liberties in writing Schiller's last stanza. To compare its original: "Out of the chalice of the entire realm of souls / Foams forth to him — the infinity" (Schiller 1943, 111). There are at least two opposing interpretations tied to this difference. The final end on the path of self-consciousnesses to self-certainty ends with a final gesture of certainty that either affirms the finitude of such endeavours, as it "drinks its infinity from a specific chalice [...] its truth therefore circumscribed" (Pahl 2012, 98), or acts violently as a "reference to divine lack" (Comay 2018, 74).

Exertion of the concept therefore does not end, nor does it come to rest. Conclusions in philosophy, after all, remain wide open and uncertain.

Finally, to return to the section on the idea of the good, it begins in the manner of films with an impending disaster looming, where the end is shown first, and then we follow the events that led up to that end. One of the more effective is certainly Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011), the second instalment within the Depression trilogy, which opens and ends the film with images of the Earth colliding with a rogue planet. The characters are not so individually impacted by this catastrophic event, as the family disintegration was already well underway. The community as such is never addressed, obscured by the impending universal destruction. This unimaginable totality of the end, just like the dissolution of the family in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, is unavoidable. In such a reading, the film in the context of the trilogy can be understood as a melancholic reflection of the development of the idea of absolutely free will: the dissolution of the family of the *Melancholia* is preceded by the isolation of the free will (*Antichrist*, 2009)²⁰ and followed by the overabundance of enjoyment in civil society (*Nymphomaniac*, 2013). In brief, a world of morality and particularity must end for ethical life to have a "happy end". In the *Philosophy of Right's* section on good and conscience, the "absolute final *end and aim* of the world" (TWA 7, §129/Hegel 2008, 126) plays an identical role, which is realised through "integration" and "demonstration" (TWA 7, §141/Hegel 2008, 151-152) into the absolutes of the following paragraphs in this work. At the very end of the section, of course, it ends with the announcement that we are now entering the order of ethics (*Sittlichkeit*). The drive for the good is transformed into duty by passing into morality, as the rational system of determining the will acquires another form.

The good world to come can thus manifest itself as a necessary imagination (*Einbildung*), as an appearance of the good in concrete form, but if it is consistently realised, it must be preserved as an imaginary, because it is realised by emptying out the substantiality with which it comes into being, thereby dissolving it, negating even the drive that sustained it. For the idea of the good can only be an empty idea, an idea, as Hegel puts it, that has "evaporated" (TWA 7, §141/Hegel 2008, 152). But this does not mean that the imagination of the good is there only for decoration, for in its imaginary form it holds this emptiness together, and must therefore remain, as always, coming.

20 A description of the pure form of this figure is given by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right*: "insatiable greed of subjectivity, which gathers up and consumes everything within the simple source of the pure I" (TWA 7, §26/Hegel 2008, 45).

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Abbreviations

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