

War and Peace in Kant's and Hegel's Consideration

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This paper touches upon the selected issues of Kant's and Hegel's political philosophy, namely "war", "revolution" and "peace". The reason why the certain authors were chosen is that Kant and Hegel appear to be the most significant and influential within and beyond German Classical Idealistic paradigm. The author conducts the rational reconstruction of the Kant's and Hegel's consideration of mentioned concepts in the field of History of Philosophy. Reconsideration of mentioned political reflections, in the author's honest opinion, might productively contribute to the composition of the anti-crisis strategy of the development of contemporary Ukrainian society.

The author came to the conclusion, that Kant and Hegel have a common negative attitude to the phenomenon of revolution because in their common opinion it inevitably leads to the anarchy, violence and collapse of any constitutional order. On the contrast, their attitude to the phenomenon of war has nothing in common. Kant states that nothing can be more harmful to the development of mankind then war. Hegel claims a war to be a highly significant condition of the national unity, spirit and freedom. When it comes to the concept of peace, Kant holds an optimistic and romantic position and proclaims the possibility of an idea of perpetual peace. Hegel looks at the idea of perpetual peace from the sceptical perspective, considering it to be too abstract and impossible in real life.

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Introduction

Philosophical traditions of different epochs have always reflected the relevant directions of the wisdom search. German Classical Philosophy sharply actualized almost all the significant social issues that required professional philosophical feedback. Society has always been interested in sustainable development, norms of correct behaviour, rules of harmonious cohabitation, conflict and crisis resolution. Most of the European countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were attempting to resolve similar social problems with those Ukrainian society faces today: fragmentation, political and social instability, hostility, revolutions and

military conflicts. Germany was not the exception in this case. It was divided into more than 300 small, permanently conflicting states, faced external military threats, had great political instability, etc. The most influential intellectuals of the mentioned period were looking for and offering numerous productive solutions, to which, as the author of the article intends to show, our modern society should attentively listen in order to avoid misleading. This article provides the rational reconstruction of Kant's and Hegel's considerations on the phenomena of war, revolution, and perpetual peace, as well as an attempt to assess the relevance and productive capacity of their conclusions on the way to solving similar problems that our society faces today. The author builds his inquiry taking into consideration the strategy of theoretical and historical evaluation of war and peace phenomena proposed by Oleg Bazaluk in his recent related paper "The Problem of War and Peace: a Historical and Philosophical Analysis" [Bazaluk, 2018]. Due to the specifics of the philosophical tradition, which appears as the subject of inquiry, the author uses some productive methodological solutions presented in the recent research papers by Dominika Kosárová [Kosárová & Ušiak, 2017], Iryna Liashenko [Liashenko, 2018], Gilles Rouet [Rouet & Ušiak, 2017], and Volodymyr Pryhodko [Pryhodko & Rudenko, 2018].

The German Classical Philosophy, in fact, is not a consistent philosophical tradition. Many concepts or ideas, propounded by the predecessors were forgotten or even sometimes refuted by the ancestors. Such peculiarity preserves the self-relevance of all the philosophers who represented mentioned tradition. The topics of war, revolution perfectly illustrate the mentioned peculiarity by being highly controversial within the tradition of the German Classical Philosophy.

Kant's refutation of war and rebellion for the sake of perpetual peace

Immanuel Kant dedicates some special works to the topics of war and peace. His most representative political writings in this field are the following: "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" (*Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*, 1784), "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" (*Zum ewigen Frieden*, 1795), "Speculative Beginning of the Human History" (*Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*, 1786), etc.

The former writing concerns mostly the markers of Enlightenment in Kant's consideration. Although in this work, he also partly touches upon the issue of Revolution, precisely, it's possible negative impact on societies' sustainable development. The middle text is specially designed to depict the main global threats of wars and the possible solutions to minimize them. Kant considered the war to be contrary to the nature of human rationality. The latter writing presents the Kant's discovery on the probable starting point of human history. He provides the reader with a comparative speculative inquiry of creationism's and naturalism's standpoints on how the human history takes off. Human history is inconsiderable without wars, which along with infinite war preparations, Kant in this work calls the biggest obstacle on the way of human progress. "It must be admitted that the greatest evils which afflict civilized nations are brought about by war, and not so much by actual wars in the past or the present as by never-ending and indeed continually increasing preparations for the war" [Kant, 1983: 82]. In Kant's honest opinion, the mankind must focus not on the causes of particular wars, but, finally, realize their main inevitable potential consequence — the annihilation of whole mankind.

The worldwide sustainable peace agreement in accordance with the principles of right appears to be the only possible solution, which may provide mankind with the hope for

further survival. The sketch of such possible global perpetual peace treaty was presented to the public by this work. In Kant's consideration, there are several principle requirements that states all around the world should meet before such kind of agreement can become real. The first necessary condition is that each state, which intends to participate in the perpetual peace agreement must be republican. Thus are the lines by which he starts the corresponding chapter: "The only constitution which has its origin in the idea of the original contract, upon which the lawful legislation of every nation must be based, is the republican" [Kant, 1970: 120]. Another important condition is an establishment of an international organization whose functions would be to secure the agreement from any kind of possible state of military aggression. On this issue Kant claims the following: "Hence there must be an alliance of a particular kind which we may call a covenant of peace (*foedus pacificum*), which would differ from a treaty of peace (*pactum pacis*) in this respect, that the latter merely puts an end to one war, while the former would seek to put an end to war forever. This alliance does not aim at the gain of any power whatsoever of the state, but merely at the preservation and security of the freedom of the state for itself and of other allied states at the same time" [Kant, 1970: 134].

By publishing this work Kant wanted to attract society's attention to the rational way of resolving the interstate conflicts avoiding the application of military power based on the emotional competition. Kant was completely aware that humans are rather emotional than rational creatures, specifically when it comes to the competitions and wars. Nevertheless, he was trying to reassure them, that such kind of agreement is the only possible choice, which will not lead to catastrophic consequences. Otherwise, the perpetual peace, Kant ironically assumes, will be established on the entire mankind's cemetery. He puts his irony into the following lines: "Perpetual peace." "A Dutch innkeeper once put this satirical inscription on his signboard, along with the picture of a graveyard. We shall not trouble to ask whether it applies to men in general or particularly to heads of state (who can never have enough of war), or only to the philosophers who blissfully dream of perpetual peace" [Kant, 1970: 93]. Kant appears as an adversary of any kind of war and a fierce warrior for peace.

Similarly negative was Kant's attitude toward the revolution phenomenon itself. He considered being unacceptable any kind of encroachment on forceful and violent political changes within the state, either actions or only intentions. Any kind of state transformation should proceed gradually and by no means violently. This does not mean that all citizens of the state must obey the will of the rulers, even if it is unfair or suppresses their interests and freedom. Criticism of power is necessary, but without appealing to violence. The British political philosopher Hans Reiss in his introduction to Kant's political writing gives the following explanation to mentioned Kant's views: "According to Kant the case against rebellion is unambiguous. The people cannot possess a right to rebel. There can be no power to determine what constitutes the right to rebel. Rebellion would upset the whole system of laws. It would create anarchy and violence. It would also destroy the civil constitution which the idea of social contrast demands" [Reiss, 1970: 31]. The prescriptions of constitution and laws of the state must be considered as sacred by all the citizens, even if they are newly established. This would guarantee the sustainable development of any state.

Hegel's pragmatic attitude to the war for the sake of the divinity of state

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was profoundly familiar with the military history of Ancient times, as well as with the history of European wars. This awareness is clearly

manifested in many of his works, both early and mature periods. But apart from a purely historiographic illustrative presentation of military conflicts, he was always theorizing particular questions of war showing his rigorous and thorough character. For the first time Hegel touched upon the problem of war and peace in some of his early political writings, namely “German Constitution” (*Die verfassung Deutschlands*, 1798-1803) and “On the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, on its Place in Practical Philosophy, and its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Right” (*Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungen des Naturrechts...*, 1802-1803). In the later period, Hegel reflects on the war and peace in the writings “The Phenomenology of Mind” (the alternative English translation of the title is “The Phenomenology of Spirit”) (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right, or Natural Law and Political Science in Outline* (1820, (title 1821)) and others.

Hegel’s theoretical position on the issue of war and peace sharply contrasts to Kant’s. Providing critical speculation on the phenomenon of war Hegel attempts to overcome the boundaries of subjectivity, routine and historical specificity. Being a consistent generalist, he tried to uncover the fundamental principles by which the war appears to be a historical necessity. Hegel claimed that it is fully sensible to consider that the war appears to be historically necessary that it might have a social significance and might even be vitally necessary for the further development of the states and mankind in general. In his political writings, he repeatedly stated that when it comes to the state sovereignty defence, the war is a “substantial duty” of any individual. Moreover, it must be accepted as the only real indicator of the state’s health. The health of a state generally reveals itself not so much in the tranquillity of peace as in the turmoil of war. “he former is a state [Zustand] of enjoyment and activity in isolation, in which the government is a wise paternalism which makes only ordinary demands upon its subjects; but in war, the strength of the association between all [individuals] and the whole is displayed, both in the extent of the demands which this association has managed to impose on individuals and in the worth of what the latter are prepared to do for it of their own initiative and inclination [Trieb und Gemüt]” [Hegel, 1999: 6].

In the context of Hegel’s illustrated reflections, his sceptical attitude to the state of peace is immediately apparent. In his consideration, peace, first of all, harms the “moral health” of the nations, as in peacetime individuals immersed in the quagmire of everyday life and lose their connection with the spirit of their nation. Secondly, Hegel claims that such notion as a “perpetual peace” is internally contradictory and historically nonsensical. “In peace, the bounds of civil life are extended, all its spheres become firmly established, and in the long run, people become stuck in their ways. Their particular characteristics become increasingly rigid and ossified. But the unity of the body is essential to the health, and if its parts grow internally hard, the result is death. Perpetual peace is often demanded as an ideal to which mankind should approximate. But the state is an individual, and negation is an essential component of individuality. Thus, even if a number of states join together as a family, this league, in its individuality, must generate opposition and create an enemy... But wars will nevertheless occur whenever they lie in the nature of the case [Sache]; the seeds germinate once more, and talk falls silent in face of the solemn recurrences of history” [Hegel, 1991: 362-363].

Hegel’s theoretical attitude to the phenomenon of revolution was not consistent during his creative lifetime. In his youth, Hegel seemed to be a passionate follower and supporter of the French Revolution, but later he changed his attitude to more negative treatment. In “Phenomenology of Mind” for an abstract definition of the consequences of the French

Revolution Hegel propounds a term “Absolute Freedom and Terror.” Hegel’s manner of writing in general and particularly in this text makes a serious obstacle for clear understanding what historical fact is describing in the particular lines. Although, the vast majority of historians of philosophy commonly hold an opinion that this chapters of “Phenomenology of Mind” is dedicated to the description of the theoretical background of any possible revolution and the French Revolution in particular.

“Absolute Freedom” appears to be the regular consequence of the Enlightenment spirit embodiment and means the state of total denial of the authority of statehood. Hegel writes the following lines: “This brings on the scene spirit in the form of absolute freedom. It is the mode of self-consciousness which clearly comprehends that in its certainty of self lies the essence of all the component spiritual spheres of the concrete sensible as well as of the supersensible world, or, conversely, that essential being and concrete actuality consist in the knowledge consciousness has of itself. It is conscious of its pure personality and with that of all spiritual reality; and all reality is solely spirituality; the world is for it absolutely its own will, and this will is universal will. And further, this will is not the empty thought of will, which is constituted by giving a silent assent, or an assent through a representative, a mere symbol of willing; it is concretely embodied universal will, the will of all individuals as such. For will is in itself the consciousness of personality, of every single one; and it has to be as this true concrete actual as self-conscious essential being of each and every personality, so that each single and undivided does everything, and what appears as done by the whole is at once and consciously the deed of every single individual” [Hegel, 1910: 594]. Such denial follows after the realization of total irrationality of the former political system (monarchy in this particular case) as well as a strong intention to immediate radical changes. The individuals fell themselves free to act in any way to resist the unfair ruling regime, even committing offences. Such “Absolute freedom” eventually turns into anarchic havoc, which means the refutation of any kind of state authority. Such anarchic havoc in Hegel’s opinion follows inevitably any political revolution. For denotation of this anarchic phenomenon, Hegel uses the term “Terror.”

“Terror” is actually the worst possible scenario of any rebellion. It shows how good and positive hope for a better life after the overthrow of “bad rulers” turn into a mass slaughter of enemies of revolution or thous, who are not rebellious enough. In the case of the French Revolution, the Hegelian “Terror” revealed itself as a “Regin of Terror” usually connected with the rule of Jacobin Dictatorship. Moreover, there are a lot of other examples of mentioned scenario for instance — the “red” and “white” terror after the October revolution of 1917 in Russia, etc. Hegel describes this anarchic phenomenon and its essential principle in his intrinsic manner: “The activity and being of personality would, however, find itself by this process confined to a branch of the whole, to one kind of action and existence; when placed in the element of existence, personality would bear the meaning of a determinate personality; it would cease to be in reality universal self-consciousness. Neither by the idea of submission to self-imposed laws, addressed in part to universal self-consciousness, nor by its being represented when legislation and universal action take place, does self-consciousness here let itself be mistaken about the actual truth, that itself lays down the law and itself accomplishes a universal and not a particular task. For in the case where the self is merely represented and ideally presented (*vorgestellt*), there it is not actual: where it is by proxy, it is not” [Hegel, 1910: 597].

The revolution itself holds a great threat to statehood in general. By claiming that Hegel puts himself in a line with Kant’s considerations of revolutions and their possible threats. It

is a well-known fact that Hegel considered the state to be the most valuable achievement of the historical progress of mankind, and therefore negatively treated everything that could threaten the existence of statehood itself. Hegel's philosophy of Right contains numerous honourable expressions toward the phenomenon of state and its high value. The following lines perfectly illustrate his attitude toward this issue. "The state in and for itself is the ethical whole, the actualization of freedom, and it is the absolute end of the reason that freedom should be actual. The state is the spirit which is present in the world and which consciously realizes itself therein, whereas, in nature, it actualizes itself only as the other of itself, as dormant spirit. Only when it is present in consciousness, knowing itself as an existent object [Gegenstand], is it the state. Any discussion of freedom must begin not with individuality [Einzelheit] or the individual self-consciousness, but only with the essence of self-consciousness; for whether human beings know it or not, this essence realizes itself as a self-sufficient power of which single individuals [die einzelnen Individuen] are only moments. The state consists of the march of God in the world, and its basis is the power of reason actualizing itself as will. In considering the Idea of the state, we must not have any particular states or particular institutions in mind; instead, we should consider the Idea, this actual God, in its own right" [Hegel, 1991: 279].

The comparison of the state and the God itself shows that its preservation is for any individual even more important task than the preservation of the own life. Moreover, everyone must be ready at any moment to sacrifice his life for the sake of state's freedom and should never be afraid of inconveniences of war, or the insecurity that it brings to the life of the individuals. Freedom loss because of the fear of property or life loss is, in Hegel's consideration, a move from bad to worse.

Conclusion

Kant and Hegel appear to be the thinkers, whose thoughts went far ahead of the time in which they were expressed. Sometimes their considerations appear to be surprisingly relevant and some of their predictions have come to fruition.

When doing a rational reconstruction and, precisely, comparison of Kant's and Hegel's ideas, it is necessary to take into consideration the essential difference between the research approaches of thinkers (Kant's apriorism and Hegel's historicism). The difference in research positions does not allow reducing or "sublating" (Hegelian term) the theoretical achievements of one thinker by the positions and achievements of another, as it has been deliberately done, for example, in Soviet Marxism. (More detailed information about Soviet Marxist interpretations of Kant's and Hegel's philosophical heritage can be found in the recent article by Sergii Rudenko [Tytarenko & Rudenko, 2018]). Though, Kant and Hegel are the representatives of a single philosophical tradition (German Classical Philosophy) they still remain original and self-sufficient thinkers, whose theoretical positions may complement one another and form a complete image of the corresponding philosophical discourse. The modern consideration of mentioned discourse achievements is undoubtedly important for the fruitful assimilation of the wisdom of the past in order to avoid similar mistakes in the present and a future.

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