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## Kant and Hegel on Freedom

### Abstract

The main objective of this article is to understand Hegelian understanding of freedom through a comparison of its Kantian counterpart. I set up this investigation with a consideration of the debate between liberals and communitarians. In the history of political thought, many political thinkers have been occupied by the questions about the priority of right over good and of universal over particular. In order to answer these questions, one needs to have a clear conception of freedom since the claims of freedom and equality are universally accepted political values which should reflect our political institutions contextually. To accomplish this task, first, I will introduce a brief account of Kant's idea of freedom. It is crucial to know Kantian idea of freedom and how this idea reflects to his political philosophy to understand Hegel's emphasis on ethical order and particularly state institutions. Second, I will give a brief account of Hegel's idea of freedom by giving references to his book titled Philosophy of Right. Third, I will introduce two major criticisms that Hegel poses to the Kantian idea of freedom. Finally, I will introduce how Hegel tries to overcome the problems of Kantian idea of freedom through the dialectical construction of the concepts of spirit, freedom and ethical order.

**Keywords:** Kant, Hegel, Freedom, Communitarians Philosophy, Philosophy of Right.

## Kant ve Hegel'in Felsefesinde Özgürlük

### Öz

Bu makalenin esas amacı, Kant ve Hegel'in özgürlük anlayışları karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz etmektir. Bu analiz toplum ve birey arasındaki ilişkiyi liberal ve komüniteryan perspektiflerin arasındaki tartışma dikkate alınarak kurgulanmıştır. Siyasal düşünce tarihinde, birçok düşünür, "haklar ile iyi hayatın" ve "evrensel ile pratiğin" arasında seçim yapmak zorunda kalmış ve bu ikilikler arasında hangisinin önceliği olduğu hakkında çözülmesi bir hayli zor sorularla meşgul olmuştur. Bu sorulara cevap verebilmek için, özgürlük anlayışının kesin hatlarla çizilmesi gerekir çünkü özgürlük ve eşitlik siyasi kurumlarımızı yansıması gereken normatif ve evrensel değerlerdir. Bu makalede, ilk olarak, Hegel'in etik düzene ve özellikle devlet kurumlarına yaptığı vurguyu anlamak için Kantçı özgürlük anlayışını ve bunun siyaset felsefesine nasıl yansıdığını bilmek gerektiğinden, Kant'ın özgürlük fikrinin kısa bir açıklamasını sunacağım. İkinci olarak, Hegel'in özgürlük anlayışı Hukuk Felsefesi kitabından atıfla anlatılacaktır. Üçüncü olarak, Hegel'in Kantçı özgürlük fikrine sunduğu iki büyük eleştiri tartışılacaktır. Son olarak, Hegel'in Kantçı özgürlük anlayışının yol açtığı temel eleştirileri; ruh, özgürlük ve etik düzen kavramlarının diyalektik inşası yoluyla nasıl aşmaya çalıştığı gösterilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kant, Hegel, Özgürlük, Komüniteryan Felsefe, Hukuk Felsefesi.

## Introduction

The debate between liberals and communitarians about the relationship between universal rights and particular definitions of the good life is an ongoing one. On the one hand, liberals claim that right has a priority over good. Everyone should be treated equally regardless of his or her particular ethnic, racial, sexual or religious orientations, assuming that such orientations entail differing particular definitions of good life. This is the reason why neutrality and impartiality of political institutions is the basic universal right, which should have a priority over different understandings of good life. In this sense, liberalism constructs its understanding of freedom and equality on the basis of an unencumbered and atomistic individual (Sandel 1984).

This understanding of the Self as being capable to free itself from the bounds of particularities of community, tradition and culture has been widely criticized by communitarian political theorists like Sandel and Taylor. Generally, communitarians believe that as individuals we are completely attached to our community and culture and have distinct political obligations to our community. Sandel claims that we have constitutive attachments to our community and culture (Sandel 1984: 90). The major argument is that a person's loyalty to her community is inseparable to her identity which brings particular rights and duties to each individual in their particular community. This debate basically represents a paradox between universality and particularity and right and good. Which one should have priority over other? How can particular definitions of the good life be incorporated into universal claims of the basic rights?

In the *Philosophy of Right*, (Hegel 1975) offers a solution to this seemingly paradoxical relationship between right and good. Hegel is critical of Enlightenment understanding of abstract individual who is free from the bounds of tradition, culture and community. For him, Enlightenment's rejection of tradition and celebration of reason as the sole ruler of human actions is as dogmatic as the Middle Ages' dismissal of scientific inquiry. Hegel believes that one can observe the development of reason and

human freedom in political institutions, culture and community. With his political philosophy, Hegel aims to “combine the ancient emphasis on the dignity and even architectonic character of political life with the modern concern for freedom, rights and mutual recognition” (Smith 1986: 6). Hegel argues that communal values and individualism can be reconciled through the state institutions. Thus, state is the reality of the ethical idea where concrete freedom is actualized through the reconciliation of universality of individual rights and particularity of the good life. But what is freedom? Why are political institutions necessary for the actualization of freedom? How can individual and political freedom be reconciled? In order to understand Hegel’s political philosophy, one should first answer these questions.

In this article, I have two aims. I want to understand Hegel’s understanding of freedom and the reasons why he opposes the liberal understanding of individual freedom. To do that, first, I will introduce a brief account of Kant’s idea of freedom. It is crucial to know Kantian idea of freedom and how this idea reflects to his political philosophy to understand Hegel’s emphasis on ethical order and particularly state institutions. Second, I will give a brief account of Hegel’s idea of freedom by giving references to the *Philosophy of Right*. Third, I will introduce two major criticisms that Hegel poses to the Kantian idea of freedom and try to understand how Hegel tries to overcome the problems of Kantian idea of freedom through the dialectical construction of spirit, freedom and ethical order.

### **1. Kant’s Idea of Freedom**

In the *What is Enlightenment?* (Kant 1990) defines autonomy as self-governance. Kant claims that with the Enlightenment, individuals are finally free from traditional religious dogmas that had been guiding their judgments and understanding of the world. According to Kant, freedom has strong connections with morality and pure practical reason.

Kant argues that there are two different types of freedom namely, negative and positive. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant distinguishes two ways of causality:

“either according to nature, or from freedom” (CPR: A531). The causality in nature is found with regard to the appearances in the sensible world. They are temporary and conditioned. However, causality from freedom is the “causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining in time in accordance with the law of nature” (CPR: A533). This is what Kant calls negative (transcendental) freedom which is not conditioned by any natural causation. Thus, the negative freedom is “the faculty of beginning a state from itself” (CPR: A533); namely the uncaused first cause.

However, in the third antinomy, Kant states that it is impossible for rational but finite human beings to arrive at the knowledge of the first cause because of “their epistemic dependence on the concept of causality” (Flikschuh 2000: 80). This is the reason why Kant turns to a more positive (practical) understanding of freedom. This is an idea of freedom, which can be comprehended by all rational beings. Kant defines positive (practical) freedom as the will’s ability to determine itself with regard to the principles of pure practical reason. The will’s ability to make choices without taking the appearances of the sensible world into consideration comes from human faculty of pure reason. In this sense, “freedom in the practical sense is the independence of the power of choice from necessitation by impulses of sensibility” (CPR: A534). Positive freedom is the capacity of pure reason to determine human activity.

Kant argues that the motivation for an action can come either from desires or reason. Since some of our desires are shaped “through moving causes of sensibility” – such as hunger, or sex-, an action cannot be free when it is initiated by desire (CPR, A534). So, what kind of action is initiated by reason? Kant’s answer is that actions whose maxim can be willed as a universal law. These are categorical imperatives. Categorical imperatives are unconditioned universals because they can be willed by everyone as universal laws. The categorical imperatives are not derived from the physical appearances of the phenomenal world but are drawn from reason.

In the groundwork, Kant asserts that categorical imperatives as moral laws are synthetic a priori. This gives moral laws three distinct characteristics. First, moral laws are a priori and cannot be based on empirical circumstances. Second, moral laws are

unconditioned, so they do not have an empirical causality. And, finally, moral laws are originated from reason. Moreover, there are three different formulations of categorical imperatives that are analytically equivalent to each other. The first one is the formula of universal law “that is I ought never to act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim should become a universal law” (G: [4:402]). This means that the motivation for one’s action ought not to come from the expected results from that action. The second one is the humanity as an end formulation. This categorical imperative dictate that “act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in any other person, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (G, [4:429]). In this sense, the second formula requires every rational being to respect other rational beings and not to interfere with their freedom to make life choices. This formula also requires every person to treat every human being as having equal intrinsic value. Finally, the third formula is about autonomy of the will. Kant emphasizes how these universal moral laws are originated from the subject’s own pure reason. Thus, we are not only subjects to moral laws, but we are also the legislators of these laws. The good will is autonomous.

Therefore, the characteristics of positive freedom are good will, self-legislation of universal maxims and moral obligation to obey these maxims. Free will is the will under the moral laws. “All rational agents are under moral laws if and only if they have freedom of the will” (G: [4:447]). Thus, Kantian freedom is lawful freedom. Up until now, I have tried to understand Kant’s idea of freedom and the differences between positive and negative freedom. Next, I will introduce Kant’s understanding of right, state and in relation to positive freedom.

### **1. 1. Kant’s Political Philosophy**

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant gives a thematic treatment of the possibility of the positive freedom of individuals living under one state. According to Kant, “state is

an aggregate of men under rightful laws” (MM, §45). Members of such state who unites for self-legislation of laws are called citizens. Citizens have three basic attributes:

Firstly, lawful freedom to obey no law other than that to which he has given his consent; secondly, civil equality in recognizing no-one among the people as superior to himself, unless it be someone who he is just as morally entitled to bind by law as the other is to bind him; and thirdly, the attribute of civil independence which allows him to owe his existence and sustenance not to the arbitrary will of anyone else among the people, but purely to his own rights and powers as a member of the commonwealth (MM: §46).

Freedom, equality and independence are three basic attributes of the citizens of the rightful state. These are also natural laws of freedom, which are inalienable (MM: §46). Kant claims that autonomous will is the self-legislator and ought to give its consent to obey state’s law. However, Kant unlike any other contractual theorists does not take consent as an empirical reality. Kant asks which laws are worth of consent of the autonomous will in a hypothetical situation. He answers that only universal moral laws are worth of consent (Riley 1983, 100). Therefore, “Kantian moral law does not generate any new political obligation, it is simply institutional legal way of realizing some ends that perfectly efficacious good will would lead automatically” (Riley 1983: 100).

While Kant is supporting Rousseauian ideas of freedom as obeying one’s own laws, he does not necessarily advocate for a direct democracy. This is because laws worthy of individual consent are universal moral laws. These moral laws can be arrived by the guidance of pure practical reason not with the help of political participation. Instead, Kantian republicanism puts emphasis on external freedom of choice and from interference and equality before law.

According to Kant, the kind of freedom that citizens have within the state is the external freedom. “External freedom is the innate freedom which each individual possesses in the virtue of their humanity, compromises subjects’ innate equality, their independence from the arbitrary will of another, and their right to free interaction with other on an equal footing” (Flikschuh 2000: 88). Simply put, external freedom is freedom from any restriction apart from the coercion by the rightful laws.

Kant’s definition of right corresponds to his understanding of freedom. “Every action which by itself or by its maxim enables the freedom of each individual’s will to co-exist with the freedom of everyone else in accordance with a universal law, is right” (MM: §C). This means that wild and lawless freedom ought to be restricted in accordance with the right of every individual to be free from constraint. Right imposes obligation and duties. Also, right entails the authority to apply coercion (MM: §D). Kant argues that the restrictions to external freedom imposed by duties and obligations do not make us less free. Instead, men within in a state “in fact completely abandoned their wild and lawless freedom in order to find again their entire and undiminished freedom in a state of lawful dependence, for this dependence is created by their own legislative will” (MM: §47).

Moreover, Kant explains what he means by the equality of men. Each member of the state has the right of coercion and subject to coercion. Subjects are equal before the law. “No-one can voluntarily renounce his rights by a contract or a legal transaction to the effect that he has no rights but only duties, for such a contract deprive him of the right to make a contract” (Kant 2008: 75). Moreover, Kant believes that no-one in the state can have hereditary privilege. Thus, state should be impartial and neutral to its citizens.

Furthermore, Kant argues that we should distinguish right from happiness because of the danger of despotism. “The sovereign wants to make people happy as he thinks best, and thus become a despot, while people are unwilling to give up their universal human desire to happiness in their own way, thus become rebels” (Kant 2008: 83). In this sense, Kant prioritizes right over good. He advocates for the protection of basic individual rights and does not want state to interfere with any particular understanding of good life.

To sum up, for Kant, the state becomes the protector of external freedom through implementation of legal laws. State’s laws ought to be in line with moral universal laws. In this sense, state becomes a mere legal framework, which allows individuals to live a free life in line with moral principles. According to Kant, politics is simply an

extension of morality. Since morality is the principle of pure practical reason without any bonds of culture, history and tradition, individuals as political agents do not have to interact with each other to develop their capacity. The development of the capacity of political agent through state institutions, education and culture has no place in Kantian moral philosophy. In Kant’s political philosophy, “the agent, thin as needle, appears in the quick flash of choosing will” (Smith 1989: 76). Kantian understanding of individual freedom as being constrained not by particular cultural identities but by universal moral laws has inspired Liberal understanding of negative freedom and state’s role as a neutral agent for that actualization of freedom. By assigning the capacity of being free on the universality of individual reason, Kant diminishes the effect of particular identities, relations of recognition and political participation on that very capacity to be free. For a very long time, this approach has been accepted on the face value by classical liberals. However, after 1980s, it has started to be challenged by recognition demands of national minorities. Communitarians such as Taylor based their criticisms towards universalistic idea of freedom based on neutrality of state institutions on Hegelian rejection of Kantian understanding of freedom (Taylor 1992). Next, I will give a brief account of Hegel’s understanding of freedom and then will talk about Hegel’s criticisms to Kantian understanding of freedom.

## **2. Hegel’s Concept of Freedom**

For Hegel, history is an artificial human product which, as with all artificial products, requires labour (i.e., action) and, in the end, the realization of an aim, a purpose. The purpose of history is freedom. Hegel defines history as the development of consciousness of freedom and its final cause as “absolute freedom” (Hegel 1953: 25). For Hegel, absolute freedom is actualized both in consciousness and in the world history. In this sense, the content of freedom is not static but changes through historical progress. The idea of absolute freedom is the actualization of modern soul in its full potential. Freedom becomes reality, “only if the entire world is dominated by an integrating rational will and by knowledge” (Marcuse 1986: 24).



For Hegel, freedom is the essence of human nature. Hegel defines freedom as being at home. Being at home is a state where particular individual wills are reconciled with universal common will. History and rational action make this reconciliation possible through mutual recognition. Therefore, “freedom is neither a faculty given by nature, nor a capacity of the self, but a structure of interaction between individuals wherein the self-determination of each is constitutively related to that of others through mutual recognition” (Ritter 1982: 5).

For Hegel, an ethical order reconciles individualism and public spiritedness and achieves the mutual recognition between individuals. This is the reason why “ethical life is the idea of freedom as living good which has its knowledge and volition in self-consciousness and its actuality through self-conscious action” (PR: §142). Because the reconciliation between subjective and objective will and mutual recognition become possible through the institutionalization of absolute freedom. At this point, institutionalization can be understood as the construction and the protection of the condition where agents can reconcile themselves to any universally willed action. This however is to come from agents' own will. For Hegel, it is the state that provides certain rights and duties to its citizens and thus the state is the highest possible order of the institutionalization of freedom. And, thus, “the state is the actuality of absolute freedom” (PR: §260).

In this sense, Hegel believes that Enlightenment’s rejection of state institutions, culture and traditions is as dogmatic as the rejection of the autonomy of reason. Hegel wants to reconcile Aristotelian understanding of harmony with liberal understanding of individual rights and progress. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel tries to revitalize Ancient understanding of good ethical order and reconcile it with liberal understanding of abstract right.

In Greek world, there was a complete elimination of individuality for the sake of common good. To illustrate, for Aristotle, state has been seen as a natural whole. State is a creation of nature and man is by nature a political animal” (Pol: 1253a1). State is natural in the sense that it develops from natural human associations like family and

village (Pol: 1252b10-20). Moreover, “the proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; therefore, he is like a part in relation to the whole” (Pol: 1253a25-30). Individuals as citizens are natural part of the state; thus, state constitutes the whole and is prior to its part namely individuals/citizens. In this sense, individuals can only be self-sufficing as a part of the state.

The establishment of the state and the political action as natural does not only legitimize state but also secure order and harmony as the ruling principles of politics. According to Aristotle, virtue is the characteristics, which avails men to be a good man and “causes him to perform his own function well” (NE: 1106a20). Aristotle defines virtue as an act of moderation between extreme passions and of self-control. However, the fulfillment of this function which would lead individual to live in harmony is not a process of natural development of human beings, rather it is a process of habituation and education within a community. Thus, for Aristotle, politics, as the architectonic science of the good, is responsible for the design of the cosmos in which individuals as citizens are able to become virtues, good and happy.

On the other hand, liberals in line with natural law theorists claim that state’s sole function is to create an environment in which each and every individual lives freely without interfering each other’s natural rights. In this sense, state has nothing to do with individuals’ improvement or good. According to liberals, the good of the community and the rights of the individuals are in a paradoxical position. Hegel tries to reconcile these two seemingly paradoxical understandings of freedom with the ethical order (PR: §154, §260). Next, I will give a brief account of Hegel’s understanding of ethical life.

## **2. 1. Ethical Life**

According to Hegel, ethical order in modern times manifests “the universal recognition of property rights (and the abolition of slavery), the acceptance of moral autonomy (and the religious reformation it requires), the rise of civil society’s market

economy (and the overthrow of the feudal bondage), the institution of civil courts and due process and the foundation of public welfare agencies to guarantee equal economic opportunity" (Winfield 2001: 99).

The institutionalization of freedom is achieved by the apparatuses of ethical life. These apparatuses of the ethical life are family, civil society and the state.

### **2. 1. 1. Family**

For Hegel, family is the immediate substantiality of freedom characterized by love. He considers love as mind's feeling of its own unity. At this point, family is a unity and it is within this unity that an individual can have her own self-consciousness. This constitutes the individual's frame of mind. Eventually, individual person within a family considers herself not an independent person but a part of the unity (PR: § 158). Through a family, a subject can become a family member (PR: § 190).

Hegel describes marriage as the form assumed by the family in its immediate phase. At this point, marriage constitutes one of the ethical roots of the state. Moreover, the concept of marriage and the act of marriage represent the development of self-consciousness of freedom at a miniature scale. For Hegel, the significance of marriage is that it is an act of free self-limitation. An individual comprehends true love and realizes that her selfhood depends on a rational and ethical commitment to another individual. At the end, the individual becomes more rational and spiritual due to the change in her consciousness (Steinberger 1988: 184).

### **2. 1. 2. Civil Society**

Hegel thinks that civil society is an area where every birth and fortune is allowed to play. It is also an area where people's passions are regulated by reason. He says, "particularity, restricted by universality, is the only standard whereby each particular member promotes his welfare" (PR: § 182a). Corporations at this point can achieve this.

In a corporation, members realize that their individual freedom and welfare could be secured in a better way if they consider themselves objects of a common concern.

Moreover, individuals understand that if they share a common identity and objective with another individual such as marriage partners, they can achieve to gain a special form of freedom (Houlgate 1991: 119). Therefore, striving for particular interests such as trade or certain other professions, corporations could pose themselves as a dividing force in the society. This can be avoided through higher inspection. However, in turn higher inspection restricts ethical freedom. If individuals perceive freedom in its form as a shared identity for all, they also realize that freedom can be achieved. This kind of community, i.e., the state, constitutes the true content and aim of an individual (Houlgate 1991: 120).

Hegel defines the relationship between civil society and state in terms of three distinct propositions. He stipulates that:

- 1) Civil society is the sphere in which agents have the particular as their end and object;
- 2) The universal is an unintended consequence of this pursuit of the particular in civil society; and
- 3) The state is the sphere in which agents consciously have the universal as their end and object (Patten 1999: 172).

### **2. 1. 3. State**

For Hegel, by granting rights and duties to its citizens, the state actualizes the idea of freedom. On the one hand, the Hegelian state respects and protects spheres of individual subjective choices by recognizing the rights of citizens. So, individuals can freely “choose whom to marry, with whom to trade, what occupation to pursue and so on” (Patten 1999: 191). Therefore, “the right of the individuals to their particular satisfaction is contained in the ethical substantial order” (PR: § 154). On the other hand, Hegelian state assigns duties to the citizens within a constitutional framework. Hegel argues that duty is not associated with the limitation of human freedom (PR: § 149).

...The truth is, however, that in duty individual finds his liberation; first, liberation from dependence on mere natural impulse and from the depression which as a particular subject he can not escape in his moral reflections on what ought to be and what might be; second, liberation from the indeterminate subjectivity which, never reaching reality or the objective determinacy of action...In duty the individual acquires his substantive freedom (PR: § 149).

To sum up, state is the reality of the ethical idea where concrete freedom is actualized through the reconciliation of universality of individual rights and good of the community. State “exists immediately in its customs and tradition and mediately in the self-consciousness of the individual, in the latter’s knowledge and activity and by virtue of his conviction, the individual enjoys his substantial freedom in it” (PR: §257). In this sense, Hegel claims that the actualization of freedom is an activity of both self-consciousness and the spirit, which finds its manifestation in tradition, culture and institutions. Next, I will discuss Hegel’s criticisms of the Kantian understanding of freedom.

## **2. 2. Hegel’s Criticisms of Kantian Idea of Freedom**

### **2. 2. 1. Lack of Institutionalism**

As mentioned above, while Hegel agrees with Kant’s assertion of Reason as the ruling principle of human freedom, he diverges from the Kantian idea of lawful freedom in several aspects. First, Hegel criticizes Kant to confine state within the limits of judicial domain. For Hegel, Kant’s lack of emphasis on institutions as elements of rationality is a major deficit. Second, Hegel argues that reason and freedom cannot be detached from institutions, culture and traditions. “Rationality should be attributed not merely to individuals but also to the institutions and even the political cultures that makes these actions possible” (Smith 1989: 6). This means that we cannot understand free will and reason without the consideration of institutions and culture. State institutions, education and culture contribute to the development of absolute freedom in the world history.

However, Hegel does not completely abandon the Enlightenment idea of reason as the sole ruler of human action. Hegel agrees with Kant’s Enlightenment ideal of human progress and protection of human rights. Modern age necessitates the protection of individuals from external interferences by the state law. For Hegel, civil society itself as a part of ethical order is the space for individuals to follow their particular interests by the virtue of security provided by state institutions. At this point, Hegel like Kant defines institutional functions in terms of protection of basic individual rights. However, Hegel does not want to prioritize right over good. Because he believes that for the actualization of absolute freedom, *Bildung* is absolutely necessary.

For Hegel, the abstract form goes through three phases so that it could achieve its content. The first one is what Hegel calls *Bildung*. A free agent's objectives, desires, abilities and attitude are not shared by everybody but shaped through a process of socialization and education. The second phase requires that a free agent has to recognize other agents as a part of the *Bildung* process. The recognition at this point has to be mutual. To be free, an agent has to be a part of the community composed of mutually recognized free agents. An agent also has to respect other agents' individual interests. The last phase comes with the institutionalization of ethical life. Each agent should commit herself to ethical conditions so that a community of mutually recognized agents could come into existence. The conditions are determined by certain institutions such as family, civil society, and the state. In this third phase, free agents care for each other so that they can secure their community (Patten 1999:102).

In this sense, Hegel rejects Kantian priority of right over good. Hegel unlike Kant believes that happiness can be reconciled with right. He claimed that Kant’s ethics “divides man against himself, locks reason into eternal conflict with desire and denies the natural side of man any right to satisfaction” (Singer 1983:33).

Moreover, Hegel criticizes the Kantian self-reflective atomistic agency and believes that the identity of the autonomous agent is constructed through socially and institutionally mediated networks of mutual recognition. mutual recognition is the most important step for the construction of identity of the Self. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel

gives rather an abstract account of how self-consciousness knows itself through another self-consciousness with the help of the master and slave narrative. The main argument is that we can only know ourselves through other people in a contextually bounded environment. Our identity depends on our culture, traditions, reason and mutual recognition of other self-consciousness. Thus, Hegel rejects Kantian idea of atomistic individual. Mutual recognition of one agent in another is the only way for the reconciliation of subjective and objective will.

### **2. 2. 2. Anti-historicism of Kant**

Hegel criticizes and rejects the ahistorical character of Kantian idea of external freedom. Hegel criticizes Kant's understanding of lawful freedom as being dogmatic because Kant "fails to analyze the social and historical constitution of the autonomy" (Benhabib 1986: 71). For Hegel, historical development is a necessary condition for the actualization of freedom. This can be best understood by Hegel's understanding of spirit. For Hegel, spirit is both historical and teleological.

After the creation of knowledge appears man. He constitutes the anti-thesis to the natural world; he is the being that lifts itself up to the second world. We have in our universal consciousness two realms; the realm of nature and the realm of spirit. The realm of spirit consist of what is produced by man... Man is active in it; whatever he does, he is the creature within which the Spirit works ... Hence it is of interest, in the course of history, to learn to know spiritual nature in its existence that is, the point where spirit and nature unite, human nature. In speaking human nature, we mean something permanent. The idea of human consciousness as a manifestation of human nature is the sole purpose of the world (Hegel 1953: 20-23).

"Spirit means self-conscious life and it applies to the divine as well as the human. The Spirit can be used for individuals, but it can also refer to a community in which the customs that govern social interaction create a field of forces with its own distinctive and unique character" (Inwood 1992: 173). Spirit represents actuality and rationality. In other words, Spirit is the development of the consciousness of freedom, which is the

form of historical totality. Hegel employs two methods, namely logic and history, in order to come to this conclusion.

Moreover, Hegel claims that categorical imperatives are empty universals unable to specify moral actions in concrete situations. “Contingency of the content has universality merely in the propositional form in which it is expressed; but as an ethical proposition it promises a universal and necessary content, and thus contradicts itself by the content being contingent” (PhN, §424).

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this paper, I tried to understand Kantian and Hegelian understanding of freedom. I set up this investigation with a consideration of the debate between liberals and communitarians. In the history of political thought, many political thinkers have been occupied by the questions about the priority of right over good and of universal over particular. In order to answer these questions, one needs to have a clear conception of freedom since the claims of freedom and equality are universally accepted political values which should reflect our political institutions.

Both Kant and Hegel’s political philosophies can be understood by investigating their idea of freedom. Kant’s emphasis on legality and Hegel’s emphasis on the state as an ethical institution come from their different understandings of freedom. While Kant defines freedom as autonomy and as freedom from any restriction apart from the coercion by the rightful laws, Hegel understands freedom as something to be reconciled by the state institutions, education and culture. While Kant prioritizes the right over the good, Hegel wants to reconcile these two by the help of the ethical order. While Kant advocates for legislation of universal moral laws with regard to the principles of pure practical reason, Hegel rejects Kantian categorical imperatives and wants to include human happiness in the legal ethical considerations.

Hegel criticizes Kant for being ahistorical and overly abstract and rejects Kantian understanding of freedom. However, supporters of Kant against Hegel’s criticisms



would defend him by pointing out that Kant has also given much attention to history and empirical content which plays an important role in motivating us to act from the rational law (Sedgwick 2010: 50-56). Although one might argue that Kant has also approached universality from empirical and historical aspects, his political philosophy does not provide any necessary tools to include minority identities into the realm of external freedom. But Hegel's reconciliation of right and good within the context of particular culture of ethical order give communitarians sufficient philosophical tools to reimagine freedom for all citizens in relation with their cultural particularities and defend particular community rights even in a liberal state.

At the end, Hegel's lack of emphasis on political participation and his justification of state as the highest form of freedom make Hegel's political theory seem as despotic and conservatist. Although Hegelian portrait of the state as an institutional structure in which mutual recognition and reconciliation between particularities of culture and universal laws of reason take place has a dual and contradictory function namely reconciling particular and universal, the emphasis on solidarity and mutual recognition still makes Hegel the ideal candidate for demanding equality and respect for minorities.

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