Abstract
This essay will critically examine the Hegelian state its ideal, rational form as developed in the *Philosophy of Right*, doing so in order to demonstrate that the state – as the highest level of freedom, the maximal actualization of reason – relies on an implicit disciplinary paradigm. The mutual recognition that Hegel espouses between state and citizenry is, I suggest, not the ‘glue’ that keeps the state whole; rather, this purported reciprocal recognition disguises an asymmetrical relationship of un-reflexive dependence and disciplinary subjugation. More specifically, in the context of *representation*, I will argue that as the primary points of contact in Hegel’s account between state and citizenry, sites such as sectorial assemblies and public opinion are highly mediated and amount to little more than arenas of normalization – a reductive tendency that can be found in the very ontology of Hegel’s organic state. Further, in the context of *ideology*, I will suggest that the organicism of Hegel’s state forecloses its own potential radicality by conservatively guarding against a radical loss of self, by relying on a habituated patriotism that implicitly displaces the purely *political* character of the rational State onto the *Nation*-state of a specific *Volk*. By way of conclusion, I will draw upon the preceding analysis and take up the issue of multiculturalism as a case study, employing Frantz Fanon’s colonizer/colonized relationship to inform this issue and highlight a dangerous tendency that places the ‘ethnic’ subject in a similar situation to Fanon’s (de)colonized subject – the position of an irreducible Other who is asked to perform the impossible, to demonstrate through mimicry, her status as a subsumable particular under the universality of the Nation-state.

Trust the Ethical Individual
“What characterizes the state as such”, asserts Hegel, “is that the universal is willed, as universal” by its citizens who “will at the same time within the universal and for the sake of the universal” (Hegel, PR, §257S; §260). As both the final moment of the dialectic of ethicality and the end of the *Philosophy of Right*, the Hegelian state is the *logical* result of the dialectic that begins in the family – the ‘natural’ living unity wherein a person is both free and a member – and makes its way through civil society – a realm permeated by the free play of distinct individuals with no necessary commonality. It is at the
logical level of the state that the interests of particular individuals become united with the universal agenda of the community as a whole.

This is the progression of reason: the dialectical synthesis through which the union of the universal and the particular, the very actualization of rationality itself, becoming manifest as/in the concrete Idea of freedom that finds expression in the ethical individuality of the state. Ethicality here is taken as the “idea of freedom as the living good that has its knowing, willing and … its actuality in self-consciousness, but that has its foundation … in ethical being” (Hegel, PR, §142). As a will in and of itself, ethicality, conceived of as the free “universal essence of human individuals”, is actualized both as “a present world and the nature of self-consciousness” (Hegel, PR, §145; §142; emphasis added). Considering that Hegel views the state as “a great architectonic structure, as a hieroglyph of the reason that exhibits itself in actuality”, it is only at the level of the state that freedom qua ethicality finds its maximally rational expression on both subjective and objective levels (PR, §279S). Indeed, the “ideal state (the state as Idea) is reason and freedom in their objective dimensions just as the individual’s legitimation of the state is reason and freedom in their subjective moments” (Cheah, SN, 148).

The Hegelian state, then, is at once the highest expression of an actualized rationality and the best political (and spiritual) manifestation of ethical freedom for all involved. The state is therefore “the rational in and for itself” as an “actuality of the substantial will”, an actuality “it attains in the particular self-consciousness that is elevated to its universality” (Hegel, PR, §258). In other words, the rationality of the state is given a concrete reality by being grounded in the will of its individual citizens – insofar as each self-consciousness wills the universal as universal, aligns his particular interests with those of the state, and recognizes his or her ‘concrete’ freedom as the freedom available under the state, each self-consciousness functions, not as an individual, but as a citizen, upholding and actualizing the objective, rational universality that is constitutive of the state. For the state to exist in a rational, meaningful way – for it to have a concrete reality – Hegel thinks it necessary that individuals voluntarily and consciously transcend their subjective viewpoints and recognize in the objective nature of the state a universal expression common to their particular interests. What this recognition entails is that, in their capacity as political subjects possessing a political identity under the state, citizens extend a certain trust to the ethical state and its makeup, depending on it as the vehicle through which their “innermost projects and interests [are] also confirmed at the concrete level of social participation” (Howard, PI, 238). In return, the responsibility of the state which emerges from this trust and voluntarism of its citizens
– a responsibility to which it could be held *accountable* – is be to generate an ethical space that acknowledges “the multiple ways in which subjects appropriate the fact of their own individuality”, allowing “conscious subjects [to develop] fuller possibilities as *self-conscious* agents” (Howard, PI, 236). Consequently, the ideal expression of the Hegelian state is a vertical mutual interdependence between state and citizenry, where the former is grounded upon an *active, critical, reflexive* citizenry that *voluntarily* upholds state-universality – a citizenry that could hold the state accountable, and, in case of state misbehaviour, could threaten its universality by withdrawing its support and rendering both the state and its universality baseless.

In effect, this ideal vertical interdependence between citizenry and state would be based on the relations wherein the willing trust of the latter would solidify the totality of the former, and where the concerns and expectations of the former would become concretized in various ways by the policies and governmentality of the latter. As Hegel asserts, the state can only be “regarded as articulated and truly organized” when both particular and universal moments align as an *ethical individuality*, in which the “universal must be activated but subjectivity … must attain its full and living development”; in other words, only those states are rational – are full expressions of ethical freedom – in which particularity is “released, given free scope, and brought back to universality” (Hegel, PR, §260).

Of interest to this essay is that last gesture: a gesture that, I argue, is indicative of the rationality of Hegel’s ideal state; a gesture that implies the necessity for a ‘released’ particularity to be ‘brought back’ after it has been – or: *as opposed to being* – ‘free’.

**The Disciplines of Civil Society**

As the realm wherein particularity is allowed full rein, civil society is that step in the Hegelian dialectic wherein the “system of ethicality [is] lost in its extremes”, wherein particularity divorces itself from universality, even as the two are “reciprocally bound together and conditioned”, where “each still has the other as its condition” (Hegel, PR, §184). The members of civil society are particular individuals with their contingent desires and arbitrary ends. In the absence of an over-arching universality, such particularity is left to languish in pure contingency, making civil society an atomistic realm housing the random play of self-interested individuals. Yet, it is also in civil society that an individual member comes to recognize that the actualization of his or her end is accomplished best through a dependence on others, by using others as a mean
to an end. This interdependence is somewhat capricious however, and the overall unity of civil society somewhat tenuous: at best, civil society is a realm of a merely formal universality.

For Hegel, it is only by pre-supposing the state as the “self-sufficiency over against which alone [it] alone can subsist” that civil society constitutes “the domain of mediation” in the dialectic of reason (Hegel, PR, §182). Conceived as such, civil society allows particular interests room to develop but also ensures the universal conditioning of these particularities. It is this mediation of relations in civil society that allows particularity to ascend to ‘concrete’ universality: ethical life only manifests itself completely rationally by passing through this interdependent realm of capricious reciprocity. To actualize the union between particularity and universality and to raise the dialectic to the next logical level, the state appears as the final step in *The Philosophy of Right* as an ‘ethical individuality’: a system of governance wherein particular subjects becoming aligned with, and echo, the universality of their community, wherein the “I that is the We” is also “the We that is the I”.

In advancing a system of governance that is interdependent with its citizens, Hegel seems to have parted company from those conceptions of state-hood which (ab)use coercion, marginalization or absolute sovereignty, for he seems to recognize that the rational actualization of freedom would be a state grounded upon a universality that is voluntarily and actively upheld by its self-reflexive citizens. Since the state erodes its own foundations if the “subjective ends [of the citizen] are not satisfied, and if they do not find that the state as such is the means to this satisfaction”, it becomes extremely important for the very stability of the state that “the law of reason and the law of particular freedom permeate each other, and that my particular aim should become identified with the universal” (Hegel, PR, §265A). Ideally, then, particular individuals voluntarily subsume themselves into the universal of the state via the corporations and representatives which ensure that the voices of the people are heard in the higher strata of the community – the ensuing dialogue between citizenry and state is what cements their mutual interdependence, and is most indicative of the rational nature of the state.

By implementing policies whose universal agendas reflect the particular demands of the governed citizenry, the ideal Hegelian state strives for a synchronicity between particularity and universality. Considering the logic of this synchronicity, it seems that Hegel is largely concerned with the process in which the “integration of the individuals in a community or in a totality results from a constant correlation between an increasing individualization and the reinforcement of this totality” (Foucault, PTI, 160f). This description, however, is not Hegel’s own prescription
for mutual interdependence but actually Michel Foucault’s critique of the processes employed by a normalizing governmentality seeking to solidify the (illegitimate/irrational) foundations of the state through insidious forms of discipline disseminated via the institutions of civil society. In gridding the very space of everyday life, it is the prescribed universality of these disciplines that are internalized by the subjects of civil society, subjects who (mis)take this universality as their own. The issue, then, is not one regarding the mutual interplay between state and citizenry, but one of disciplining subjects to voluntarily affirm the universality of the state: to have them normalize their desires in relation to the pre-established institutional norms that are constitutive of that universality, to strive for a recognition of their citizenship through labour deemed productive, and to legitimize their subjectivities through performances deemed intelligible.

Read through the Foucauldian lens, then, the synchronistic logic of the Hegelian universe reveals a disciplinary underbelly. Indeed, disciplinary normalization can be detected in the emphasis placed on the education and instruction that seeks to ‘cultivate’ and, more importantly, to habituate the individual. For Hegel, “pedagogy is the art of making human beings ethical”: habituation to this education is what ensures that the “struggle of the subject is broken down”, wherein she can be “born again”, her original ‘nature’ being transformed – or disciplined – into the spiritual nature best echoing the prescribed contours of the ethical universality of the state (Hegel, PR, §151A; emphasis added). Somewhat paradoxically, it is this “process of cultivating subjectivity in its particularity” that allows the cultivated subject a “liberation, and labour in service of a yet higher liberation”, where an “infinitely subjective substantiality [is] elevated to the shape of universality” (Hegel, PR, §187; emphasis added). This cultivation of the subject via hard labour ensures “against a merely subjective demeanor, against the immediacy of desire, the subjective vanity of feeling, and the willfulness of whims” – a cultivation that “smoothes particularity so that it behaves in accordance with the nature of the matter at hand” (ibid). It is only the power of the state, then, that keeps in the check the infinite, measureless excesses of particular desires. The labour of the individual is thus regulated under a regime of performance, wherein the state enforces onto the individual not just any kind of labour but what Foucault describes as the normalized mechanisms that regulate exercise:

[T]echnique[s] by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different but always graduated. By bending behaviour towards a terminal state, exercise makes possible a perpetual characterization of the individual either in relation to this term, in relation to other individuals, or in relation to a type of itinerary. It thus assures, in the form of continuity and constraint, a
growth, an observation, a qualification … [The performance of] exercise, having become an element in the political technology of the body … does not culminate in a beyond, but tends towards a subjection that has never reached its limit (Foucault, D&P, 161-2; emphasis added).

Under a network of normative ideals, then, an individual labours continuously. He exercises in an attempt to embody the normative ideal set up by this discipline, for it is only through this performativity, measured against this pre-established (and regulated) yardstick, that he stands to garner intelligibility. The perpetuity of this economy of exercise is ensured when this disciplinary imposition is internalized by the subject as a form of panoptic self-discipline, wherein the subject objectifies itself, quantifying and qualifying its own movements and attitudes, voluntarily performing, exercising, and repeatedly, perpetually, self-disciplining. Indeed, Hegel recommends that a citizen must work at “subduing one’s opinions through the labour of study, and subjecting one’s will to discipline and so elevating it to free obedience” (Hegel, PR, §270). For the rationality of the state to be actualized, it is the regulated action of this obedient labour that is essential for its ‘activation’: “rationality is actually present in the state, while action in conformity with these institutions gives rationality its practical activation” (Hegel, PR, §268). This ‘productivistic’ economy of ethical power has a clear strategy: “once in effect in the habituated activity of the ethical subject, the mediating institutions of ethical life must no longer intervene ever anew into the field of human practice in order to guarantee an essentially tenuous legal order” (Durst, ES, 235). Via the institutions that structure civil society, beyond the parameters of the law, state-discipline ensures the functional and/or ethical development of individuals so as to generate a mass of efficient labour.

Reconceived along Foucauldian lines, then, Hegel’s ethical universality operates through the dissemination of normative ideals (such as membership, efficiency, ethicality) that have the panoptic capacity to function via internalization at the subjective level with no need for external supervision or explicit imposition – ethicalized subjects, in voluntarily upholding the universality of the state, willingly consent to actualizing the agenda of the state through their disciplined labour. Coercion is unnecessary in this ‘political economization of life’ for the state and its organs advance their agenda by factoring into their governing calculus the subjective happiness of its citizens (Durst, ES, 229). Happiness here is not be taken as the satisfaction of the arbitrary desires of a given individuals, but rather, conceived of as the satisfaction of only those particular desires that become increasingly aligned with the universal; indeed, the efficient labour
prescribed to the citizen by the state is apparently not only a measure of his worth but also the vehicle through which he can reach ‘happiness’. In effect, such happiness becomes one pre-established ideal or norm amongst the many others that constitute state-universality, ideals to which all particular desires are normalized, against which all new desires are deemed un/intelligible, and in relation to which all activity and labour is categorized as useful or inutile. The recognition that Hegel deems so essential to individual subjectivity, self-consciousness and, indeed, subjective happiness, is only extended to the individual through the normalized axes of discipline that catalogue one’s useful labour and efficient activity: to be a citizen of the state, a person has to demonstrate one’s efficient labour – has to perform one’s intelligibility as a member in relation to a universal (norm) – before being ‘recognized’ as a particular subject that is subsumable under universality. In other words, to be deemed as a legitimate part of the citizenry, one has to participate in the pre-established, normalized networks of the lateral economy of mutual ‘recognition’. Here, the very criteria of recognition that allows individuals to distinguish themselves from others, that allows each to ‘develop’ his or her own particular subjectivity and ‘actualize its full possibilities’, is rigidly normalized by the categories of utility, intelligibility and normalcy, thereby structuring the networks of civil society in such a way as to channel labour and performativity through these civic parts to reinforce the totality of the whole.

In sum: continuously labouring under a governing calculus that checks any form of social instability, normalizes any abnormalities and reduces all particularities to a hegemonic state-universality; self-disciplining individuals undergo perpetual exercise in an attempt to approximate the ideals (of happiness, utility, membership, etc) disseminated by the institutions of discipline – a regime under which the only path to recognition (and its concomitant worth) is through these demonstrations of ‘efficient’ labour and performances of ‘intelligible’ membership.

Re(-)presentation

Comparing the initial account of active, critical voluntarism with that of a disciplined, re-educated, pedagogic habituation, what one clearly notices in the latter is the lack of self-reflexivity present in the disciplined subjects upon whose trust the universality and concrete reality of the state is purportedly erected. In other words, if it is the state that is educating
individuals as it sees fit, how can these habituated individuals be a critical conscience of state hegemony? If the Hegelian state is the most rational expression of freedom between particular individuals and universality, why does this framework of rational ‘freedom’ entail disciplining individuals to reinforce a universal supposedly upheld by voluntarism? More specifically, how can ‘born again’ citizens who undergo the labours of ‘re-education’, who have had their natures transformed and are perpetually trapped in a regime of performance, constitute the necessary critical presence that ensures that the vertical recognition between state and citizenry does not transform into the asymmetry between ruler and subjects? The concept of a free, responsible, reflexive, critical ‘people’ – the civic realm of particularity that could hold its universal accountable, the condition that is supposed to infuse into the Hegelian account a democratic element that keeps the ruling monarchy in check – cannot play a role here. Indeed, political docility is characteristic of the disciplined subjects who activity is exhausted in exercising, performing, and subjecting themselves to the contours of an ideal:

Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection (Foucault, D&P, 138).

Therefore, the insidious neutralization of any civic challenge is primarily accomplished by the disciplinary institutions of civil society, which normalize the realm of particularity so that it is readily subsumable to universality, and ensure the normative channeling of individual activity to make it serve the shoring up and reinforcing of state power. The relation between the disciplinary micro-power structures gridding civil society and a meta-power structure like the state is thus: the latter “can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in [the former, for they are] a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power” (Foucault, T&P, 122, emphasis added). Far from its purported basis in a relation of mutual recognition involving a critical, reflexive, voluntary citizenry, Hegel’s state solidifies its foundations and legitimizes its power through insidious relations of disciplinary interdependence: on the one hand, ‘liberating’ individuals from the chaos of an unorganized multitude into a disciplined dependency on the existent yardsticks of
intelligibility, and on the other, having its power depend on the success of the proliferation and internalization of this very habituation.

Against this critique, a Hegelian might retort that there are, in fact, democratic channels of interdependence that testify to the mutual recognition between state and citizen. Sectorial assemblies, for example, can be seen to be indicative of this reciprocity, for they are the primary point through which “the state enters the subjective consciousness of the people and … the people begin to participate in the state” (Hegel, PR, §301). However, the possibility for a critical dialogue in such assemblies that would emerge from a politics of accountability build upon a mutual recognition between state and citizenry is quickly squelched. In Hegel’s explication, these assemblies are not rooted in the people, opposing the state. Rather, theirs is a mediating role between state and people, a role that can only be functional if these assemblies have their roots in corporations – the very corporations which “must fall under the higher supervision of the state, because otherwise they would ossify, build themselves in, and decline into a miserable system of guilds”; the very corporations wherein individuals are supplied “with occupations and activities directed to universal aims”, in which they come to recognize that “aspect of their particular interests that is universal in itself” (Hegel, PR, §303; §255; §264). Indeed, it is “only within the spheres of corporations” that individuals “attain their actual and living determinations for universality”, thereby being transformed from an atom in a multitude to a citizen of the state (Hegel, PR, §308; emphasis added). Echoing the logic of pedagogic ‘cultivation’ above, an individual ‘essential’ self-consciousness can only come about via these functional, corporate sectorial assemblies – ‘essential’ and ‘functional’ here already being (normatively) conceived in terms of state universality.

Therefore, in the feedback loop between state and citizenry, the path from the latter to the former is heavily mediated by the organs of the former, as the citizenry can only organize in the frameworks allowed it by the state. First, the multitude undergoes segmentation: only individuals clustered into corporations are deemed (politically) intelligible. Second, the representatives of these groups are delegates elected only by members of the corporation i.e. elected only by intelligible, useful, citizens who have already actualized their ‘universal determinations’. Third, it is only this delegate qua people’s representative who speaks on the political level.

Since, for Hegel, representation “can no longer be taken to mean that one individual stands in the place of another” the Hegelian delegate “represents not individuals or a conglomeration of them, but one of the essential spheres of society and its large-scale interests”
(Hegel, PR, §311; emphasis added). Here, one can make use of Gayatri Spivak’s distinction between ‘representation’ as the act of speaking in place of someone else – ‘in someone else’s shoes’, so to speak – and re-presentation as proxy, as portraying someone else (Spivak, CSS, 70). Thus conceived, the delegate does not speak in place of, or for, the people – he does not ‘represent’ them (politically). The delegate speaks in terms of parts in relation to the whole: his language is already overdetermined along the categorical axes of essentiality, reducibility, functionality – all categories, again, being conceived in terms of a normative state universality.

For the “concrete state is the whole articulated into its particular circles. Members of a state are members of such sectors; only in this their objective determination do they come under consideration with respect to the state” (Hegel, PR, §308; emphasis added). In effect, for the most part, the delegate does not even speak of (re-present or portray) the people. The only political voice in which individuals are (indirectly, ambiguously) spoken of, re-presents them – portrays them – as sector populations that are already codified into spheres relating to a larger whole. Such ‘spatial’ language is part and parcel of a disciplinary paradigm that functions on the principle of elementary location or partitioning. Each individual has his own place; and each place it’s individual. Avoid distributions in groups; break up collective dispositions; analyze confused, massive or transient pluralities … one must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation…[Discipline is] a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering and using. Discipline organizes an analytical space. (Foucault, D&P, 143)

In Hegel’s account, then, sectorial assemblies, as the primary points of potential contact between state and citizenry, turn out not to be the arenas for the political voice of the people, but heavily normalized arenas whose function is to provide an “excellent education for the citizens [so that] the people become best acquainted with their true interests” (Hegel, PR, §315; emphasis added). Hegel goes on to insinuate that there is also no need to speak for individuals either, for speaking in the place of the multitude, or allowing it to speak for itself – to represent itself – is a pointless, and somewhat ‘tasteless notion’ (Hegel, PR, §308). A people that is “separated from the government … does not know what it wills”, for to know, one would have to possess the “deep insight and practical education” that is characteristic of the intellectual elite (Hegel, PR, §301S). Indeed, in a very Machiavellian gesture, Hegel emphasizes the need for sectorial assemblies and an arena for public opinion, but his derision of both areas of public discourse implies that these exist not for the sake of the state, and its conscientious awareness of
the needs of its citizenry, but more as a safety-valve that would be dangerous to do without¹: an organ of (dead-ended) argumentation that is only an “outlet and a measure of satisfaction” – for “once one has had one’s say and so one’s share of responsibility, one’s subjectivity has been satisfied and one puts up with a lot” (Hegel, PR, §317; emphasis added). More often then not, the state need not pay attention to the ‘griping’ of the people, because it “often does not lead in the direction of what is better, so the government must examine the wishes of the people and give in only when it is convinced … [it] must wait until the people’s thought has developed fully and has become the good thought of an entire people” (Hegel, PR, §274). Put otherwise: either the state ‘hears’ the multitude through heavily mediated – and thus normalized – channels through the arena of sectorial assemblies, or it can choose, if it so wishes, to be deaf to (what it deems) the contradictory, petulant, trivial and ultimately ‘unessential’ ramblings of a ‘wild’ multitude that lacks the organization fit for politics, an organization that only the channels of governmentality ensure². In other words, when it comes to a political voice in the Hegelian state, the people cannot speak.

In sum: instead of a vertical mutual recognition – wherein the state is grounded upon the voluntary trust of the citizenry that holds it accountable, wherein the latter simply has to withdraw that trust to destabilize the moorings of the former – what is revealed is a disciplinary interdependence re/generated by a political system with an implicit network of normalizing institutional mechanisms that regulate civil society, manufacture consent, install glass ceilings in the realm of representation and public opinion, neutralize and/or normalize all truly ‘civic’ voices, and, by thoroughly marginalizing the majority of the people through various mechanisms of distancing, ultimately shore up all political power into the hands of an intellectual, monarchical elite.

**Organic Logic**

Methodologically speaking, one could try to defend Hegel by suggesting that *The Philosophy of Right* is developing the idea of the State: his is an attempt to conceptually grasp only its ‘affirmative nature’, to understand the essential rational makeup of the State *per se* instead of

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¹ After all, Hegel does suggest that individuals die a metaphorical death from extreme habituation, leading completely passive existences: this ‘safety-valve’ might be one way of regulating habituation itself, increasing its efficiency by incorporating ‘individual expression’ and ‘public opinion’ into its discipline (Hegel, PR, §151S).

² Indeed, “to be independent of public opinion is the first formulaic condition of achieving anything great or rational whether in actuality or in science” (Hegel, PR, §318).
dwelling on the errors of present, particular states and institutions. As Hegel states: the “state is not a work of art; it stands within the world and thus within the sphere of willfulness contingency, and error… But the ugliest human being, the criminal, an invalid, or a cripple, is still a living human being; the affirmative – life – subsists despite their defects and this affirmative is what concerns us here” (PR, §258S). There are strong parallels here between Hegel’s philosophy of right and what he considers to be the task of philosophy as developing a science of nature. For since nature “is rational in itself”, it is “acknowledged that philosophy must know it as it is”, that “knowing must investigate and then grasp conceptually, as nature’s immanent law and essence, this rationality that is present and actual within it … [i.e. this] eternal harmony” (Hegel, PR, Preface, 3). Just as philosophy can develop a science of nature by immersing itself in it, and by discerning the underlying rationality of nature that unites its contingency; speculative philosophy can be similarly deployed on a political level to develop a science of freedom.

Arguably, one can conceive of an ideal(ized) Hegelian scenario where the health of the state would be dependent on the degree to which individuals can identify their particular interests with its universal agenda, where each “subjectivity willingly takes it content from state institutions”, and where the very success of internalized discipline would ensure the negation of its own hegemony (Cheah, SN, 154). But the likelihood of this scenario becoming manifest is unlikely, for it would have to involve something like the simultaneous homogenization of an entire mass of people, a maneuver that would undoubtedly involve exorbitant amounts of violence. In other words, a discipline-less scenario is extremely implausible. To see why, one must take up the Hegel’s organic conception of the state.

“The nature of an organism” Hegel asserts, referring to the state, “is such that unless all of its parts become an identity – if any one of them posits itself as self-sufficient – all must perish” (PR, §269S). In light of the discussion above, it seems that to allow the parts of civil society to become disjointed, self-sufficient and discontinuous would mean the death of the organic whole that is the state. Such is the justification for the state to intervene and transform this chaotic atomism of parts into an organized totality in the very interest of the totality – it would, in effect, have to reduce (all) difference to identity. As Cheah points out, this reductive logic is part and parcel of Hegel’s ontological structure of all operations of reason, be it in the workings of self-consciousness or in developing a framework of the State:
“Reason’s actualization is its necessary passage through otherness, its becoming an external object to itself, but with the crucial qualification that reason directs this entire process and recognizes itself in this other, thereby returning to and becoming united with itself even as it becomes objective existence” (Cheah, SN, 143)

What is essential to note here is that alterity is not a stumbling block for reason, an obstacle without which reason could finally be-itself in an uncontaminated purity. Rather, it is only through being open to alterity that reason can become manifest, can develop, can actualize itself. The first gesture of reason, then, is this openness that is “the condition of possibility for its actuality and self-possession” (ibid). Importantly, however, reason is not radically open to any alterity; reason must find in alterity an image of itself. It’s logic dictates that the otherness it encounters – the negativity that it tarries with – is simply a ‘stop’ on reason’s way back (in)to itself – otherness cannot be anything more than a foil that mirrors reason back to itself. It is this logical negation of a negation, this assimilation of an always reducible difference, this perpetual reduction of alterity to identity that lies at the very crux of reason’s actualization: particularity qua reducible difference must always be so that it is subsumable, identifiable. The logical progression of this movement would engender the conception that no difference is irreducible, since all difference has to be reducible to expressions of the same – a dangerous conception, especially on a political level: since all difference is (must be) reducible, any reductive means, violent or otherwise, are automatically legitimized due to their very necessity.

Similarly, the state qua organism “is a process within itself … articulates itself within itself, posits distinctions within itself, and thereby completes its cycle” (Hegel, PR, §267S). Echoing the logic of reason, the state perpetualizes itself through this self-diremption and normalized completion, sustaining its universality as long as it repeats this procedure: the logic of the state dictates that for it to sustain its universality, it must perpetually both open itself up to and reduce an always-already subsumable particularity. Put otherwise, it is not that state-universality has to continuously endure alterity and prevent the contamination of its purity, or that it could just be-itself if alterity could be permanently fended off, but, like reason, it is its continual ‘opening up’ to and subsequent appropriation of alterity that allows the movement of universality, a progression that it undergoes to perpetually sustain itself by becoming actualized via negated particularity. This sustaining movement parallels the self-perpetuating nature of disciplinary power, wherein the mechanisms of the latter ensure that discipline does not tend towards a goal, a limit, or a ‘culmination’. Rather, its perpetual regime is ensured by the fact that
the individual is never fully disciplined. In other words, there are always parts to be disciplined, edges to be smoothed, abnormalities to be normalized – discipline re/generates an irreducible excess which functions as the condition of possibility for its perpetual imposition. Similarly, Hegel’s conception of the organicism underlying the rational state, wherein state universality perpetually actualizes itself via always-already reducible particularity, means that there are always particularities to be subsumed, alterity reduced, and difference made identical – it means that as the maximal expression of rational, ethical freedom, the State is never fully actualized. In effect, what Hegel espouses is a

universality that is inseparable from its founding negations. The all-encompassing trajectory of the term is necessarily undone by the exclusion of particularity on which it rests. There is no way to bring the excluded particularity into the universal without first negating that particularity. And that negation would only confirm once again that universality cannot proceed without destroying that which it purports to include.” (Butler, RU, 24; emphasis added)

Mapping this schema onto the political space of the Philosophy of Right sheds light onto the necessity of a disciplinary paradigm in the self-sustaining logic of Hegel’s state, wherein its rational universality is sustained through the subsumption of particularity. This process finds expression in the perpetual normalizing mechanisms of the disciplinary institutions gridding the ‘allowed’ chaos of civil society, where particularity is continually ‘brought back’ to (reinforce) universality after being ‘set free’; where the perpetual economy of exercise carried out within a pre-established set of ‘useful’ parameters serves to simultaneously order the chaotic multitude as well as uphold the norm of ‘order’; and where the continuous normalization of ‘free’ citizens allows disciplinary reason to move to a subjective level of particularity and be subsumed by a self-perpetuating state-universality.

Consequently, the above cases of disciplinary intervention and habituation are not the result of rational steps taken against some mundane contingency of the everyday, a contingency that can just as easily be excluded from philosophical reflection; these cases are not superficial hindrances to the proliferation of rationality, nor are they exceptions to the rules of Hegel’s political science. Rather, such instances (and there are numerous others3) are essential

3 A few examples just from the realm of the family (and its extensions): Hegel’s policing authority can intervene in the private realm of the family for this authority has “the right and duty of superintending and influencing child-rearing insofar as it bears upon the child’s capacity to become a member of society” (Hegel, PR, §239; emphasis added). Insofar as “parents constitute what is universal and essential” to which “children must be obedient”, it follows that “one of the chief elements in child-rearing is discipline”, the purpose of which is to “break down the child’s self-will” – since “the individual becomes a son of civil society” after leaving the family, similar authoritative measures can be employed in that realm to generate obedience (Hegel, PR, §174; §238). And, in regard
components of the very self-perpetuating nature of the disciplinary logic of Hegelian state-universality: by endlessly deferring the maximal expression of a fully ethical state, such disciplinary measures perpetually reconstitute themselves as the conditions of (im)possibility for the actualization of the ‘science of freedom’.

The Patriots of Universality

In tarrying with, and returning from, particularity, Hegelian universality reinforces its totality and ensures its perpetuity by assimilating the particularity as that it has pre-identified as reducible difference. Further, this movement of universality presupposes that, in its adventures, it will only encounter its other as that which will allow reason to return to itself. In effect, universality presupposes an essence to which it will inevitably return, an essence that forms the irreducible backdrop for this tarrying with the negative. Yet, one must ask: why must all difference that reason encounters simply be a mirror that projects back its own essence? Why can this movement out of self not encounter irreducible aporias of absolute otherness? More specifically, why can a journey not result in something radically other than its original, self-same essence?

The tendency of reason, to inevitably ‘fall back’ onto itself is, as I have shown, reflected in Hegel’s account of the state, where it employs certain forms of discipline that serve as normalizing mechanisms to order the chaos of civil society and ensure the perpetuity of its universality. Indeed, as Hegel asserts, “the distinct aspects of the state are its various powers with their functions and operations, through which the universal continuously produces itself in a necessary way, and maintains its identity because it is presupposed by its own production” (Hegel, PR, §269S; emphasis added). Investigating this last clause, one must ask the crucial question: what is the nature of this presupposition, and of the identity that must be sustained through this (re)production?

Remaining on a purely logical level, one can argue that it should not be impossible for universality to morph due to its immersion into alterity, to become something other than itself because of its encounter with difference, undergoing a loss of self and reconfiguring the ‘old’ universality as this radically new ‘other-than-itself’. In other words, there seems no reason that to the poor, universal “authority takes the place of the family in regard not only to what they lack immediately, but also to laziness of disposition, malignity, and the over vices that arise out of their plight and their feeling of wrong” (Hegel, PR, §241). Add to that the outright rejection of the mere thought of women possessing anything other than “familial piety” (Hegel, PR, §164-167)
Hegelian political logic cannot allow a transformation of universality, as long as this transformed universality constitutes the new backdrop against which all particularity be subsumed. For “the state is actual”, Hegel asserts,

[and] true actuality is necessity; what is actual is necessity within itself. Necessity consists in this, that the whole dirempt itself into conceptual distinctions and that this dirempted whole yield a firm and persistent determinacy, though one that is not dead set, but perpetually recreates itself in its dissolution. (Hegel, PR, §270S; emphasis added)

Rephrasing the above question, one can ask: what exactly in Hegel’s account negates the potential radicality inherent in this ‘perpetual recreation’, always ensuring the return of state-universality to an irreducible identity that anchors this universality so as to prevent its dissolution into something radically other than itself? To answer this question, one must move from the purely political logic at work in the rational state to Hegel’s explication of the state’s historico-cultural essence that is the spirit of the Volk.

For Hegel, the organism of the state in its objective substantiality can be divided into two parts: the strictly political state and its constitution (Hegel, PR, §267). State-universality, then, is composed of two aspects: in addition to the purely political state, the other half of state-universality is the constitution that is particular to an individual spirit of a nation, a constitution that reflects the self-sufficient individuality of a ‘people’ and distinguishes it from all others (Hegel, PR, §274S; §330S). For every ‘people’ has its “determinate anthropological principle that develops in its history; this makes the people a nation” (Hegel, PR, §330S). Therefore, in addition to the politico-logical aspect of this state-universality, Hegel espouses an irreducible historico-cultural aspect as well – irreducible because this constitution is in no way artificial or revocable: “it must be treated rather as something that is simply in and as itself, therefore as divine and enduring, and so as above the sphere of all things that are made (Hegel, PR, §273). The constitution might be ‘altered’ but only “in ways that accord with [its pre-existent] order” (ibid). For Hegel, it is this ‘order’ of the constitution that reflects the sedimentation and progressive actualization of a (quasi)transcendental essence: a ‘spirit of the nation’ that continuously actualizes itself through particular political frameworks but nonetheless retains its self-sameness, a spirit that permeates each and every one of its members regardless of whether “each individual knows it or not, opposes it or not, or simply ignores it … In individuals’ particular aspects, in their action, that spirit is what moves them; it is the unmoved mover” (Hegel, PR, §274S; emphasis added). As the inherited sedimentation of the various actualizations
of the distinct national spirit into past political frameworks, the irreducible essence of Hegelian political logic is this political constitution, the *organic identity* “produced perpetually by the state … through [which] the state maintains itself” in its self-sameness (Hegel, PR, §269S).

On a material level, what sustains state-universality, in both its political and historico-cultural aspects, is a ‘political disposition’ – a ‘subjective substantiality’ that, for Hegel, is a *patriotism* based on a “willing that has become habitual … [– a willing that is] simply a product of the institutions subsisting in the state” (Hegel, PR, §268; emphasis added). “The very secret of the citizens’ patriotism” Hegel continues, lies in the *corporations*, through which the citizenry comes to “know the state as their substance”: “because the spirit of the corporation immediately contains the rooting of the particular in the universal, *that is where the depth and strength the state possesses in [patriotic] disposition is seated*” (Hegel, PR, §289; emphasis added). Yet, one can see that this ‘habituated patriotism’ is easily reducible to a form of pedagogic institutional discipline, being an un-reflexive ‘product of institutions’ as well as being grounded in corporations, the very normative arenas of civil society that fuel the basis of state power. Any appeals made to this political disposition constituting some sort of spontaneous ‘will of the people’, or a patriotism originating of its own accord in the people as a whole, or a continually emergent commonality of the multitudes that is “the fundamental feeling of order possessed by all”, are simply unsubstantiated, ignoring as they do the disciplined nature of this very ‘patriotism’. Neither can one somehow ‘naturalize’ this patriotic disposition by evoking a quasi-transcendental spirit which somehow ‘glues’ the ‘people’ together, for even the realm of the spirit is not free of discipline. Paradoxically, Hegel implies the need for an intellectual elite to be the sole possessors and caretakers of the spirit of the people – paradoxical, because it implies that this national spirit that is irreducibly essential to an entire people can only be actualized by an *intellectual elite who govern and discipline* an ignorant multitude:

> The spirit of a people is something necessary; it need merely be known, but knowing it cannot be the business of the whole people, but only of the best educated, the wise. To leave the formation of the constitution to what is actually called ‘the people’ is a mistake, because the people does not contain within itself a ripened consciousness of the spirit of the people (Hegel, PR, §274S)

As I have stressed before, it is the disciplinary habituation of the multitude into efficient, intelligible citizens by a governing monarchical elite that ensures the perpetuity of the universality of the Hegelian state. In addition to the politico-logical aspect to this state-universality, it is the *irreducible* historico-cultural aspect that constitutes the *internal consistency*
underlying the rationale for all the purely political expressions of state-universality. In other words, the anchor that grounds the purely political logic of the state-universality and prevents its dissolution into a radical otherness – that sets up all Others as sharply distinct from itself – is the transcendent ‘spirit’ of the constitutional order that every political infrastructure of a certain ‘people’ must reiterate, a reiteration that must be done by the intellectual elite on behalf of this ignorant people.

It is this ‘anchoring’ gesture, I argue, that betrays the conservatism of Hegel’s political logic. For this anchoring is nothing other than Hegel’s neutralization of any potentially radical permutation of the purely political universality of the State into the sedimented stasis of a historico-cultural universality that is unique to a Nation-state. Put otherwise, it is this gesture that inserts into universality an identity that is not simply the result of its purely logico-political actualizations, but is an irreducible historico-cultural essence in the sole possession of an elite. It is this gesture that allows the governing elite to presuppose this irreducible, spiritual essence in their political logic, a ‘natural’ presupposition that guides and governs – indeed: normalizes – the regeneration of state universality along nationalist lines. It is this gesture that forecloses the potentially radical mutability of state-universality by presupposing a national spirit, an essentialization that prevents any ‘radical contaminations’ of the state-universality by ‘foreign’, ‘irreducible’, or ‘inassimilable’ Others. It is also this gesture in which the un-finalizable – and potentially unstable – nature of the purely political aspect of state-universality is (temporarily) coalesced through the continuous evocations of an essential national spirit, wherein each evocation falsely finalizes the organicism of the political state into a static, homogeneous nation-state. Most importantly, it is this gesture that is indicative of the proper danger of the conservative mechanisms already at work in Hegel’s political logic: it reveals that the perpetuity of state power depends not only upon a habituated, un-reflexive, highly normalized citizenry herded into sector populations, but is also legitimized through the dissemination of a nationalist ideology that fuses together all (supervised) parts of a whole into (a national) identity. This gesture, then, acts as the condition of possibility for displacing the political logic of the rational state onto the exclusive historico-cultural nationalism of a specific Volk.

Multicultural Implications: C/c instead of M/s
Having demonstrated the Hegelian political state as a form of nationalist absolutism legitimized by its disciplined and habituated ‘patriotic’ citizenry, I wish to conclude by sketching out the implications that this analysis might have in the contemporary issues of multiculturalism.

The concept of ‘mutual’ recognition at the heart of contemporary debates on multiculturalism finds its genesis in the account of the master and slave that Hegel outlines in the chapter “Lordship and Bondage” in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. The reciprocity at the heart of mutual recognition both constitutes and sustains the subjectivities of the recognizers who engage in this relationship: one is only a subject in so far as one is recognized by another subject, and vice versa. Indeed, for the Hegelian subject “self-consciousness exists in and for itself, when, and by the fact that, it exist for another; that is, *it exists only in being acknowledged*: (PS, §198; emphasis added). *Intersubjectivity* is therefore the fundamental and irreducible ground for individual subjectivity. Transposing this intersubjective ground to the highly dramatized parable of the Master and the slave, the initial intersubjective encounter, at least for Hegel, generates a fight to the death. An individual self-consciousness, upon encountering another, *desires* recognition from the Other to cement its own self-certainty, and it is this almost feverish desire of each to extract self-certainty from the Other that initiates the fight. The one who is willing to risk his life emerges victorious over the Other self-consciousness which surrenders because of its fear of death – the former ascends to the status of the master, the latter becomes his slave. Yet, the master does not achieve ‘true’ self-certainty, for he is only recognized as master by an ‘inferior being’: his self-certainty is not echoed back to him by a free, *independent* self-consciousness, but by the *dependent* self-consciousness of the slave – such recognition is of no value. On the other hand, it is the labouring slave who, in shaping objects through his will, stands to *achieve partial recognition through work*: for in the absence of an-Other self-consciousness granting the slave recognition, it is “through work [that the slave] becomes conscious of what he truly is”, a work which is “desire held in check, fleetingness staved off”, a “formative activity” that demonstrates to the self-consciousness of the slave his “*own independence*” “in the independent being [of the object]” (Hegel, PS, §195). In other words: the disciplined slave stands to achieve partial recognition through the economy of exercise that is dictated by his master. For Hegel, the flawed recognition in the Master/slave scenario, and its outright exploitative relationship, is remedied by the actualization of the ethical community in the state, wherein individuals recognize each other through the mediation of their common institutions operating under state-universality.
Frantz Fanon’s account of the colonizer/colonized relationship is both an extension and a rejection of the Hegelian Master/slave dialectic, wherein the face-to-face subjection of the latter dialectic is extended to the level of a subjected population labouring under an institutionalized universality under colonial domination. However, Fanon’s extension problematizes the Hegelian M/s dialectic and raises some crucial questions, namely: what if the master qua colonizer simply does not care about being recognized by the slave? What if the colonizer does not need the recognition of the colonized subject and, indeed, “laughs at the consciousness of the slave”?

(Fanon, BSWM, 220f) What if all he wants is the disciplined labour of the slave? What if the exploitative nature of this relationship reiterates the inferior, particular status of slave and the universal status of the master, thereby perpetuating the colonizer’s universality? And, crucially, what if it is the colonized subject – the object of the “epidermalization of this inferiority” – who turns away from her normalized work, who comes to view the master as the only subject worth recognizing and the only subject that can gain recognition, and strives to ascend to the (impossible) status of the master-colonizer? (Fanon, BSWM, 11)

For Fanon, then, the slave qua colonized subject is caught in a double bind: on the one hand, under the master-discourse of colonial universality, she does not gain recognition – to prevent from being reduced to, or be continuously kept at, the level of a subaltern, she must mimic the norms and values of the colonizer, hoping to transcend her status by performing the universality of the master-discourse. On other hand, the colonized subject finds herself constantly denied equal recognition, constantly denied the status of a worthy peer of the master-colonizer – through various dead-ended attempts to echo universality, the colonized subjectivity emerges as the “effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized, is emphatically not to be English”, in which to be a civilized Negro, is emphatically not to be a white man (Bhabha, MM, 125; Fanon, BSWM, 113-118). It is this double bind that keeps the colonized subject in a perpetual subjugation under the master-discourse of the colonizer’s universality, continuously denying her access to the level of the colonizer, but making it impossible for the colonized subject to stop trying to embody the ideal. One can draw a parallel here between the mechanisms governing this scenario of outright subjugation and exploitation and the more insidious disciplinary mechanisms that allow for a perpetual characterization of the subject, ensuring that she is never fully disciplined, normalized, Anglicized, Europeanized, or recognized. In other words, the disciplinary state-universality of the colonizer ensures its perpetuity through ambivalence, simultaneously hinting at the possibility of authentic recognition.
while disavowing its actualization – an ambivalence that ensures that the colonized native is kept in the perpetual state of *almost but not quite/white*⁴ (Bhabha, MM, 122).

Keeping the analysis of the normalizing nature of Hegelian universality in the background here, what I want to argue is that such mechanisms of ambivalent distancing can significantly inform the present debates surrounding liberal multiculturalism which take as their backdrop a state-universality that employs a logic analogous to the one at work in Hegel’s account⁵. Heeding Fanon’s warning, one must first recognize that ‘extending recognition’ to the Other is often a patronizing gesture that stems from, and *serves to reinforce*, the power of the privileged recognizer as the (supposedly) *neutral subject of a un-racialized universality*⁶. Indeed, Zizek’s explication of multiculturalism unveils a similar logic:

Multiculturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a ‘racism with a distance’ … it is a racism which empties its own position of all positive content … but nonetheless retains this position as the privileged *empty point of universality* from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) properly other *particular* cultures – the multiculturalist respect for the Other’s specificity is the very form of asserting one’s own superiority. (Zizek, MC, 44; emphasis added)

Secondly, one must recognize that the recognition granted to the de-colonized subject *inherits as its backdrop the master-discourse of the colonizer*. Which means the very universality that outright excluded the colonized subject as an inferior object is now the very universality that extends her ‘recognition’ as a member, that now assess her in *its* terms of whether she constitutes a subsumable particularity under *its* purportedly neutral state-universality that is (supposedly) upheld by the patriotic members of *its* citizenry. Hegel himself uses the same sort of language in describing various religious sects as being active, useful members of *civil society alone* for not *fully* embodying, internalizing and performing their “direct duties to the state” – these sects, then, are the *reducible difference* a “strong” state can “tolerate” (Hegel, PR, §270f). For

only if the state is otherwise strong can it overlook and suffer such *anomalies*,
because it can then rely principally on the *power of its ethos* and the *inner*

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⁴ Fanon’s Antillean subject finds himself in an analogously hybrid position between black and white poles, distancing himself from the racialized Other (he ‘used to be’) and striving for the (impossible) status of a *white* master (Fanon, BSWM, 211-12)

⁵ Space prevents me from going into full detail regarding discipline and habituation. Consequently, I will primarily focus on the ideological consequences of the Hegelian logic of universality at work in the issues of multiculturalism.

⁶ More often than not, this gesture does little to change the nature of the power relations at work, often simply disguising them – *legitimizing* them – through another ideology.
rationality of its institutions to diminish and close the gap between such anomalies and the full assertion of its own strict rights (Hegel, PR, §270f; emphasis added)

One can recognize in most of the debates surrounding multiculturalism (and immigration) employ the same rationality of reducible difference – of reasonable accommodation – to an existent, neutral state-universality. In effect, the issue is to judge the Other, to assess his reducibility, his usability, his intelligible performativity: the Other of difference, the immigrant, the ‘ethnic subject’, must therefore perform the status of a reducible Other if he is to prevent the slide into the subaltern state of irreducible difference and risk the danger of being violently reduced or systematically marginalized.

Finally, one must recognize the universality against which the Other is judged, the state-universality that adopts “multiculturalism”, as a ‘neutral’ universality purportedly free from racial, cultural, and ethnic coding7, is, in fact, irreducibly conditioned by the historico-cultural dimension of state-universality that echoes the ‘spirit’ of the people and the values of the Nation. It is the very disavowal of this historico-cultural dimension that places on the Other the burden of being the sole ‘cultural’ stain on the universal of ‘human’ neutrality, implying the possibility of assimilation if the Other is to shed his cultural skin. But, by the same token, it is also characteristic of the mechanisms of ambivalence that this disavowal is inverted at crucial junctures to reiterate some static identity or essence that is purportedly endangered by the Other, thereby insinuating that this essence can only be possessed by the Self and forever keeping the Other at bay.

In the colonizer/colonized scenario, this glass ceiling for the colonized subject was a racial-ideological barrier: it was a universality to which the colonized subject could simply not belong, no matter how authentic his mimicry, how persuasive his performativity, how effective his distancing of himself from all that was Other. Translating this into the Hegelian language of universality, the colonizer’s universality had a ‘spiritual’ component that was the sole possession of a certain (colonizing) ‘people’. If it was simply a question of labour, of efficiency and productivity, then the colonized subject’s exercise in accordance with the disciplinary institutions of the purely politico-logical universality of

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7 I am deliberately considering the paradigm of liberal multiculturalism wherein the neutral host country/state is usually portrayed as having to assimilate various other cultures. Nevertheless, this analysis can be extended to, for example, Muslim integration in Sweden, except for the fact that that scenario might involve a Swiss universality – if Swiss national universality is disguised as a ‘humanistic’ universality, this scenario would echo the framework of neutral liberal multiculturalism.
the rational state could have given her the same possibilities of intelligibility and membership as the (disciplined) citizen-subjects of the colonizing ‘people’. But her mimetic performativity could not grant her admission, and instead, served to keep her in a perpetual subjection, rearticulating in her the inferiority of a “crushing objecthood” (Fanon, BSWM, 109). I have already stressed that the very disavowal of any cultural coding in the realm of the Self places on the Other the burden of culture; it is a disavowal which demands for the Other to shed her cultural baggage, and implies the (im)possibility of the Other becoming a particular, subsumable member of a supposedly neutral universality. But if the state that adopts multiculturalism upholds, implicitly or explicitly, an irreducible ‘spiritual’ dimension of a ‘people’ in its universality, as long as it generates a national fantasy that implies the exclusive membership of a Volk, and then, against this backdrop, demands of ‘difference’ to reduce itself into a truly subsumable particular for this politico-national universality – to perform intelligibly as a patriot-citizen – the immigrant, the ethnic subject, the Other, will perpetually be partially excluded. Her difference might be ‘reducible’ and her Otherness might be identifiable to the point where she might be partially included under the purely politico-logical universality of the state (its law, its economy, its efficiency and productivity). But as far as ideology goes, as far as the spirit of a ‘people’ is concerned, she will continue to be a non-member. For under the national-spiritual aspect of universality from which she is continually excluded, no mimesis of hers will be enough to satisfy, once and for all, the disciplinary mechanisms that perpetually characterize her as difference, that seek to normalize her Otherness – no performance of hers will be enough to garner her recognition as a proper patriot. At best, her partial inclusion would legitimize her purely political citizenship, not as a (habituated) patriot-by-birth but as a ‘naturalized’ Other. Performing under such a multicultural (national) universality, the ‘cultural’ subject marked with ‘ethnicity’ will thus be perpetually normalized, left to stagnate in the disciplined state of being almost but not quite/neutral enough to be granted the status of a patriot-citizen of the nation-state.

As I have suggested above, to rely on a static, ideal ‘essence’ in the logic of Hegelian universality is to draw limits and erect barriers, to posit difference and legitimate discipline. It is to foreclose the radical possibilities of self-loss that a truly empty universality could possibly
undergo. One example of this foreclosure is the displacement of a purely political state onto a Nation-state through the use of an exclusive ‘spiritual universality’, or a nationalist ideology. A similar move is the displacement of the burden of culture onto the Other so as to imply, by negation, a ‘neutral’, ‘universal’ space for the Self – a space that continually disavows its own historico-cultural coding, but, at crucial junctures, in the face of radical, ‘irreducible’ difference, prevents a radical loss of the self by (implicitly or explicitly) evoking a static identity or essence.

By way of conclusion, then, I wish to stress the need for an attempt to be made to reject this sort of phantasmic foreclosure, to discard the reliance on the collective fantasy of a spiritual nationality whose function is to smooth over the cracks and fissures of the political sphere. It would be an attempt to recognize the contingent historico-cultural dimensions of the ‘multicultural neutrality’ supposedly characteristic of the Self, to relieve the Other of the burden of being the sole ‘cultural’ stain on neutrality and to recognize the fluid, porous and interdependent nature of ‘cultural differences’ and ‘national essences’. It would be an attempt to ‘unlearn privilege’, to engage in a politics of acknowledgement, to adopt a paradigm of self-recognition and self-reflexivity, and to encourage radical losses of this self through a continuous dialogue with difference – in effect, it would constitute nothing less than the attempt to inaugurate the project of actualizing the radical potentialities of truly dynamic universalities.

Bibliography


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