

# **The Indignant of the Earth**

**Frank Ruda**

“Poverty is in its in its abasement the indignation at that abasement, an *indignation* to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human *nature* and its condition of life, which is outright, resolute and comprehensive of that nature.” (K. Marx)

„Vielleicht tut es doch weh; und dann kommt auch die Angst.“  
(Turbostaat)

### **Introduction: A European Spring?**

When in recent times the riots in the streets of London became a widely discussed topic throughout Europe, many left intellectuals read them as a sign as an indication of an imminent process of change, as commencement of a politicization, which – maybe due to the lack of organizational means to bundle the different involved groups, maybe due to the fact that in the contemporary situation there is no other way out – ended in straightforward violent actions, but where nonetheless first steps on a way to emancipation. In this sense the London riots presented a peculiar European version of the Arab spring before an actual European spring; an Arab spring in the midst of Europe that if only its agents had known what they really wanted – namely political emancipation – could have denounced injustices and would have adequately struggled for a new way of conceiving social equality.<sup>1</sup> This reading is – as also the immediate aftermath of the riots has shown – wrong, even if one might say it is wrong for the right reasons. It is wrong because it misconstrued crucial features of these riots. Those who took to the streets in the outskirts of London did precisely *not* have the goal to generate a fundamental socio-political transformation. What one was able to witness was rather that the young or younger people involved in the turmoil were not insurgent because they were unsatisfied with contemporary society as such or because they were furious about certain symptoms of its social and political paralysis. That this was not the case can already and quite easily be derived from an empirical fact: no bank was robbed, but diverse Carhartt-stores and several electronic shops. What hence motivated these riots and the people that were referred to (by the police) as looters<sup>2</sup> was to finally be able to comply with the most crucial imperative of present social relations, which might be rendered as: Enjoy and consume! This means that one was less dealing with newly emerging revolutionary tendencies that tried to carve out a

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1 For a detailed analysis of these riots in a broader conceptual context, cf. Žižek 2012a.

2 The London riots hence fall under what Alain Badiou calls “immediate riots”. On this term and on the English “situation”, cf. Badiou 2012, pp. 17ff.

space of their own, but rather with the fact that the rioters finally wanted to consume and enjoy precisely those commodities that are advertised (everywhere) as being absolutely worth of being enjoyed and consumed (from the newest X-Box, flat screen televisions up to new trendy sneakers or pants). The situation was therefore rather delineated by the fact that the rioters had no monetary means to comply with the imperative to enjoy and consume but nonetheless wanted to comply with it: “they were a manifestation of a consumerist desire violently enacted when unable to realise itself in the ‘proper’ way – by shopping.”<sup>3</sup> This incapacity and impotence of means to comply with a maxim supposed to be valid for the whole of society led to a violent manner of expression. This very structure of willingness to follow a social imperative that coincides with a simultaneous impossibility to do so, is one that already Hegel depicted as a crucial problem; a problematic structure, which is at the same time inscribed into any civil society, into any (bourgeois) order of the world. His name for the embodiment of this contradiction is “rabble”. Subsequently I will reconstruct the most crucial elements of Hegel’s notion of the rabble<sup>4</sup>, only to conceptualize something immanently linked to it, namely the category, the peculiar attitude that he referred to as “indignation.”

### Hegel’s Bomb

At one point between his 33<sup>rd</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> year of age, Hegel wrote in his so called *Wastebok*: “Original completely wonderful works of education [*Bildung*] resemble a bomb, which falls into a lazy city in which everyone sits in front of his beer-mug and is extremely wise and does not sense that it is their flat well-being that caused the very crash of thunder.”<sup>5</sup> It is quite justified to state, even against a still widespread opinion, that Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*<sup>6</sup> resembled a similar bomb in its time in Prussia. This is not only justified, as for example Domenico Losurdo has demonstrated<sup>7</sup>, because in it he developed a theory of the corporation, that provides an organizational model and a conception of a political instrument for the working class in the moment of its formation. This is to say it

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3 Žižek 2011a.

4 I have developed this concept in great detail in: Ruda 2011. I will here only deal with the most important aspect of the rabble, such that it enables me to propose the concept of indignation.

5 Hegel 1970, p. 550.

6 Hegel 2008.

7 Cf. Losurdo 1993, pp. 157-234.

offers a sketch of something like a proto-trade-union that should enable the working class to distance itself from the ossified structures of mediæval guild-system and should enable them to influence economic factors like working hours, wages and further general determinations linked to the errand of the workers' interests. This would already be enough – we are in Prussia of the 1830's – to legitimately read the *Philosophy of Right* as a metaphorical bomb. Since Hegel formulates with his conception of the corporation how a sphere of civil society could organize itself in a manner by which it could counter the instability of the economic dynamic, by which it is otherwise determined. In the corporation for example a sort of collective property is established, which would be able to provide for the members of the corporation who fall into poverty.

However, it is precisely this very book, which brought Hegel quite some critics. The explosive character of this book hence can already be derived from the reactions it provoked. And these could not have been worse; people could not have been more outraged and indignant. One can for example find in the highly influential – yet unsustainable – book that Rudolf Haym published in 1857 under the title “Hegel and his time”<sup>8</sup> the famous attack on the *Philosophy of Right* that it is nothing but an apology of the Prussian state. This is a criticism, which up till today (and maybe unsurprisingly today<sup>9</sup>) adheres to the *Philosophy of Right* and to Hegel and has been reformulated in the last century by Ernst Tugendhat in a similarly unconvincing manner.<sup>10</sup> Haym and Tugendhat, one might even add convinced and convicted Hegelians like Michael Theunissen<sup>11</sup> or Theodor Adorno<sup>12</sup>, who also openly dismissed the *Philosophy of Right*. Such unusual and maybe surprising alliances are made possible by the indignant criticisms the *Philosophy of Right* provoked.

To return to Haym: As Losurdo has shown that it is not at all astonishing that he articulated his critique of Hegel's allegedly reactionary

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8 Cf. Haym 1973.

9 One might just recall the opinion that all political camps today share, namely that one cannot regulate the economic dynamic by artificial means and (external) state intervention, since such measures would limit and restrict free market development (and hence arrest capital circulation). The left as much as the right agree – and not only in Germany – that the economy has a will of its own and to not follow it – this is common to all market optimists and palliates – is what generates the very crises that one constantly lives through.

10 Tugendhat 1989.

11 Cf. Theunissen 1982.

12 Think of Adorno's contention that the *Philosophy of Right* is “awkwardly ideological”. Cf. Adorno 1993, p. 131.

position by claiming Hegel wrote an apology for the state. Haym was a political proponent of the liberal-bourgeois position, of a position for which any demonstration of a necessary limitation of individual freedom and even of individual freedom on the market always sounded terrifying. An interpretation of freedom, which fully emphasizes individual realization on the market and whose domain is economic competition; an interpretation of freedom that defined the liberal bourgeoisie back in Hegel's days and still defines contemporary liberal parties is precisely what Hegel book depicts in its contradictory and self-destructive effects (precisely when it is realized in and as the world of bourgeois market dynamics). Hegel recapitulates the contradictory nature of this conception of freedom in one thesis: in modern societies, which have been brought about by the concatenation of free inner self-determination (a thought embodied by the Reformation<sup>13</sup>) and general legal equality, which provides the universal condition granting the very realization of self-determination (a thought whose historical origin lies in the French Revolution<sup>14</sup>), *there is poverty*. Poverty is, as Hegel outlines, a phenomenon that gains, as much as the societies confronted with it, a specific modern quality. It is specifically related to what is modern about modernity, namely the possibility that is legally warranted to everyone to realize his own freedom in a self-determining manner – say at least in the minimal form of earning one's own subsistence, and at least in the domain of civil society, in the "system of complete interdependence"<sup>15</sup> that is the market.

As Hegel claimed in one of his lectures on the philosophy of right, before Luther is "poverty was [still] considered to stand higher than living from one's own hands labour; but now [after the Reformation but also in modernity tout court] it is known that poverty is an aim not more ethical. Rather it is more ethical to live from labour and to be happy about what one brings before oneself."<sup>16</sup> And this is why he can state that: "The important question of how poverty is to be abolished is one that agitates and torments modern society in particular."<sup>17</sup> Poverty agitates and torments modernity, the moderns and it outrages all those who do not want to hear and accept it. It also makes those indignant who think, as Hegel

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13 Cf. Ritter 2003.

14 Cf. the by far best book on Hegel and the French Revolution: Comay 2010.

15 Hegel 2008, p. 181.

16 Hegel 1974, p. 49.

17 Hegel 2008, p. 221.

once smugly remarks, it is the “most direct measure against poverty” is “to leave the poor to their fate and instruct them to beg from public.”<sup>18</sup> It is not overly difficult to assign this position precisely to the forming liberal bourgeoisie. Hegel’s thesis – and this is what also motivates the enumerated critics of his philosophy of right – presents a very concise and very fundamental critique precisely of those effects and presuppositions, which are generated in modern societies through the hypostatization of the conception of individual freedom into the only true form of freedom. Hegel does not shy away from the contradictory nature of modernity. He rather seeks to demonstrate that one has to deal with it, make attempts to at least tame it, however for doing so one needs a decidedly non-liberal approach.

### **Method: Experiment**

It is a nowadays widespread and influential reconstruction of Hegel that claims his systematic arguments always show in what sense precisely the implicit premises on which a certain position relies lead this very position to explicitly – in the process of its realization – state something that refutes and disproves the position. Thereby the initial state of the position is overcome and some sort of progression is generated.<sup>19</sup> With regard to the contradictory nature that results from the hypostasis of the idea of free individual self-realization legally granted to everyone, one might state that this is how Hegel operates: he accounts for how in the historical process of realization of the claim of individual realization of freedom certain contradictions cannot be avoided, but they rather become apparent. If one, just for fun, would like to mimic Robert Brandom<sup>20</sup>, one could say: it is precisely the process of *making it explicit*, i.e. the historical realization of such a determination of freedom, which gives the primacy to individual self-determination, implies the *becoming-explicit* of an immanent and this is to say previously only implicit contradictory nature of such an understanding of freedom.

However, Hegel would indeed be Brandom and not be Hegel, if this were where he would stop. But Hegel’s position is – and this makes it

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18 Ibid., p. 222.

19 This reconstruction falls short to acknowledge one absolutely crucial dimension of Hegel’s whole project, namely that even though one might run into contradiction in realizing certain assumptions implicit in one’s position, these contradictions do not at all prevent these assumptions from persisting nonetheless.

20 Cf. Brandom 1998.

structurally resemble psychoanalysis<sup>21</sup> – in its approach first and foremost a theory of resistance against itself, a theory of resistances against theory (and the different guises such resistances might take). Hegel thereby anticipates in advance in his exposition the symbolic place of all his indignant critics, the place of all those Hayms, to which I referred above. More precisely one can state that he demonstrates why the critique of the critique of pure individual realizations of freedom<sup>22</sup>, why the outrage that emerges when one seeks to limit these freedoms is a necessary defense mechanism, which is – in fact constitutively – linked to such a comprehension of how to conceptualize and realize freedom. Hegel thereby substantiates the diagnosis that the resistance towards his critique essentially belongs to the position, which he criticizes (and is therefore by no means independent from its internal contradictory nature). He criticizes in advance – a sort of critique of the future and in the mode of the future anterior – his liberal critics for being constantly driven to deny that which cannot be denied: for acting as if the de facto existence of poverty does not affect their comprehension of freedom (and this becomes the most apparent in their criticisms of Hegel's critique of their positions). The outrage and indignation of his critics is thus itself a symptom of the contradictory nature of their positions – some sort of “I do not know who the woman in my dream is, it is certainly not my mother!”<sup>23</sup>

This is why Hegel talks about the fact of poverty as something that not only agitates but also torments modern societies. For what torments society is, as Hegel is able to show, that all defense mechanism (inter alia the critique of Hegel's own position) blocking the insight into the necessity of limiting individual freedoms are a constitutive component, a part of the problem that is inevitably produced in modern societies (i.e. societies after the Reformation and the French Revolution). Yet, Hegel's thesis is not only that poverty is unavoidably present and hence necessary in modern societies, but moreover that all means which society imagines to have at its disposal cannot resolve this persistently recurring problem. A specter haunts modernity.... it seems to be poverty. Hegel thus attests that even the critics of his position move on the level of civil society and its proposed solutions. This is due to the fact that it is precisely the structural functioning of civil society that generates with its understanding of

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21 Freud stated for example that “the overcoming of resistance is the part of our work that requires the most time and the greatest trouble. It is worth while....” Freud 1989, p. 58.

22 Here Hegel anticipates what Marx and Engels call „critical criticism“ in their: Marx / Engels 1975.

23 For this cf. the inspiring lecture of Zupancic 2013.

freedom the problem of poverty. *Freedom is the problem not the solution.* I will hence subsequently not follow the paths of the mentioned critics<sup>24</sup>, but rather in a rather experimental manner. With this I am not trying to unfolding a merely idiosyncratic position, but I rather take recourse to Adorno, who in one of his great texts on Hegel stated that one cannot but read Hegel in an experimental manner.<sup>25</sup>

Not only due to the mentioned points Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* resembles a metaphorical bomb in Prussia. Moreover in it something becomes explicit – without being over-explicitly articulated – that has overly explosive and at the same time overly contemporary value: in it Hegel presents a theory of indignation, of social outrage. Today from Stephane Hessel's imperative to the Spanish *indignados*, indignation seems to be overly present and indignant people is what can be seen and heard nearly everywhere. At the same time – especially amongst readers of Spinoza<sup>26</sup> – it is today to claim that there is something like political affects, political emotions and it seems fashionable or at least possible today to identify one of these affects as the affect of indignation.<sup>27</sup> For indignation seems to have become one of the political master words, if not the political word of the present moment. To give a more adequate account of what one is talking about when referring to indignation, I take it to be highly instructive to reconstruct Hegel's – implicit – theory of universal indignation that can be derived from his *Philosophy of Right*. This can also lead to the insight that this very book has far more contemporary relevance than usually admitted. Its actuality results from the fact that Hegel therein does not only give a theoretical account of an affect that seems to stand in a peculiar relationship to political action, he furthermore demonstrates that this very affect is linked with a universal claim. My claim will be a simple one: already due to Hegel's reflections on indignation, his *Philosophy of Right* is of an invaluable contemporary political relevance. So what

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24 Hegel – as afterwards repeatedly psychoanalysis – has been precisely for this reason over and over criticized as totalitarian and self-immunizing thinker. Paradigmatically cf. Popper 1940.

25 „[R]eading Hegel is an experimental procedure....“ Adorno 1993, p. 144.

26 Cf. for example: Negri 2013.

27 An account of Spinoza theory of indignation can be found in. I refrain here from a detailed discussion of 1. The relation between Hegel and Spinoza on the issue of indignation and of 2. Stolze's criticism of Badiou's and Žižek's criticism of Spinoza, since I first and foremost want to account for Hegel's assessment of indignation and the debate between Stolze's (and Macherey's) reading of Spinoza and Badiou's and Žižek's criticism of it, does not center on the concept of indignation (although it may be one crucial entry point into the debate).



is Hegel's theory of this universal – as I want to claim “pre-political”<sup>28</sup> – affect, of indignation?

### Indignation and Anxiety

Before I want to answer this, what needs to be answered first is why the following remarks can nonetheless be considered to be experimental? The answer is that I will unfold the following experimental set up: Jacques Lacan once claimed that the only affect that he thought has a universal aspect to it – taking up a something of Heidegger – is the affect of anxiety.<sup>29</sup> This affect is characterized via at least six criteria: 1. One does not experience anxiety with regard to a concrete object (an object appearing in the world) – this is what makes anxiety differ from fear; a point also made by Heidegger<sup>30</sup> and Freud.<sup>31</sup> Say: you encounter a tiger in a train or a guy with a machete and an ice-hockey mask on a dark road, one can experience fear, but not anxiety. Anxiety is nothing I have “of” something that I could encounter in the world. Anxiety is rather related to the fundamental coordinates of the world, to those coordinates that determine what can appear to me as an object at all, what can appear to me as reality. Anxiety hence affects me in a manner that is more fundamental than the way fear affects me. Freud articulated this in the following way: I can flee out of fear, yet anxiety makes it impossible for me to flee at all, because I do not know where to flee to.<sup>32</sup> This is why for Lacan 2. Anxiety is related to an insight into the non-necessity of the world as it is. Anxiety makes me experience ‘something’, which shakes the consistency of my relation to the world and to reality as such. *Fear* one experiences *in relation* to something, i.e. it occurs in already established relations, whereas anxiety concerns the relationality and wordliness as such. It indicates that no relation is necessarily, immutably as it is, that is to say: that it does not need to be how it is. 3. This is precisely why anxiety lacking any objective, i.e. object-related dimension, is an affect that never deceives. It never deceives because it cannot be objectively falsified or verified.

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28 I take this term from Alain Badiou who introduced it in: Badiou 1985. I am referring to indignation as pre-political and not as political to already emphasize my skepticism with regard to the concept of political affects.

29 Cf. Lacan 2004.

30 Cf. Heidegger 2008, pp. 228-234.

31 Cf. Freud 1990, pp. 101ff.

32 Ibid.

Therefore it is always true, or more precisely: always certain that one is in a state of anxiety when one is in a state of anxiety.<sup>33</sup> Anxiety leads directly into the – peculiar – kernel of the subject (or the peculiar certainty of its existence). This is also why one can say that fear can be communicated, for example I can say that people with machetes and ice-hockey masks scare me, however irrational it might be, but anxiety cannot be communicated. 4. Although anxiety has no direct relation to an object of and in the world, anxiety is, as Lacan pointed out<sup>34</sup>, never without an object.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the object of anxiety is not an object of the world, but rather appears within the very relation to the world, which implies that the place of the strange object of anxiety is within the subject of anxiety itself: I am afraid not “of” me, but “for” me; something within me is in a state of anxiety. And this means that anxiety by affecting relation as such puts me into the position of the object. 5. Freud defined anxiety as an affect and hence as composed of at least two things<sup>36</sup>: namely of a movement, which the subject of the movement did not inaugurate itself and the perception of this movement. This very concatenation produces anxiety. For, anxiety concerns the perception of a kind of heteronomously generated movement of a subject (that is moved). 6. Anxiety by generating the perception that I am determined heteronomously puts me in the position of subjective destitution, in a position in which I cannot act any longer, because I lose the status of being a subject. Anxiety does not, although it comes with an insight into the non-necessity of the world, make me active; it rather makes me more passive.

I enlist these determinations of anxiety here because in the following I will try to demonstrate that what Hegel calls indignation comes very close to the determination of anxiety as depicted by Lacan (and Freud or Heidegger). Hegel characterizes indignation in such a way that it cannot be an indignation directed at something, say directed at a particular in-

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33 This seeming tautology is none. For it confirms the nearly Cartesian insight into the absolute certainty of anxiety in the affective state of anxiety.

34 This is the point where Lacan clearly goes a step further than Heidegger or Freud. With regard to the former it is clear that he stops precisely after claiming that anxiety does not have an object. Cf. again: Lacan 2004, p. 155f.

35 In French this can be worded as follows: “l’angoisse n’est pas sans objet” or in oral language “l’angoisse est pas sans objet.” It does not only entail a reference to the French word for “step” (pas), but also and even more importantly generates a phonetic similarity between the “pas sans objet” (not without object) of anxiety and the peculiar status of this very (not-without-)object. For it resembles a passing object, a “passant object” (which is why Lacan’s examples are inter alia the voice and the gaze). For this see the magnificent book: Dolar 2006.

36 Cf. Freud 1952.

justice or an objective momentum of the world, but indignation is directed against the general manner in which the world is set up and erected. More precisely: *indignation for Hegel is always indignation against a world in which there is indignation*. Moreover, he defines indignation such that it marks the non-necessity of the world as it is. For, if the world were necessarily as it is, in it there would not be any indignation. Indignation thereby becomes an affect that never deceives, because as soon as there is indignation, indignation is outraged about its own existence – which makes indignation into a reflexive affect. Therefore indignation is outraged about the position of those who are feeling indignant. And: indignation is forced to be indignation at indignation because the world is as it is.

### **The Subject of Indignation**

Hegel demonstrates in his *Philosophy of Right* that modern civil society from a certain historical moment of its own economic development onwards is not able to uphold its own principle without contradiction. If for any member of civil society holds that it has to gain its own subsistence through the investment of its own labor force, Hegel's diagnosis can be read in the following manner: civil society generates the contradiction that in it all have to subsist via the investment of labor power, yet at the same time it makes it impossible that all can subsist via investment of their own labor force.<sup>37</sup> In short: civil society produces poverty. Poverty is defined by Hegel as state in which all advantages of civil society are lost, yet all desires generated by it continue to exist. Although Hegel discusses a series of solutions how to deal with the poverty problem, he clearly sees that all of them do not principally overcome this problem, but rather produce even bigger problems, problems related to what Hegel calls the “rabble”.

If for example Hegel discusses to leave the poor to their destiny and refer them to public begging, he immediately noticed that any man, who once begged, will soon lose the habit to work and believe he is entitled to live without labor. In this manner the poor would be turned into the rabble. The rabble is, in a first definition, the poor man who lost more than just his property, namely also the insight into the necessity of labor and the honor to earn his own subsistence through investing his own activity. Poverty as necessary product of the economic dynamic of civil society is hence the constantly given condition of possibility for the emergence of

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<sup>37</sup> Another manner of putting this in very profane terms: civil society necessarily produces unemployment – whatever the current historical rates of it are; it is a systemic effect.

the rabble, of a lazy existence without honor. Although Hegel characterizes the rabble by a series of additional losses, which add up to poverty – say it is shy of work, without shame, lazy and without honor – the rabble is at the same time not a necessarily derivable consequence of the state of poverty. Here one needs to take one determination Hegel assigns to the rabble absolutely seriously. For the rabble “makes itself”<sup>38</sup>, this makes him different from the poor. Poverty is a necessary product of the historically self-specifying and self-differentiating movement of civil society – and hence not based on individual mistakes or misdoings, although this may be the case with regard to a particular individual. There is poverty, this is Hegel far reaching claim, because modern societies function like they do. Fredric Jameson has recently elaborated that Marx already demonstrated that *the* problem of capitalism is unemployment<sup>39</sup>, that is to say there is a problem which arises from the fact that capitalism cannot ensure the subsistence of all its members through labor although it explicitly claims to do so. This is already Hegel’s insight. But what is crucial here is that if poverty is a product of society and the rabble is self-generative, the poor and the rabble are distinct – something which repeats in the distinction of worker class and proletariat in Marx. Because the rabble at first emerges when a contingent attitude supplements the necessary condition, i.e. if a subjective attitude, which is determinant for the rabble, supplements the state of poverty. This attitude Hegel designates with the name “indignation”. But how does it emerge?

If for Hegel poverty is a necessary product of civil society and hence not dependent on individual misdoings, in civil society any of its members is latently poor. This is to say: if anyone can become poor without individual fault, in civil society anyone is latently poor. If now the rabble emerges from the poor through the contingent supplement of an attitude, one can infer that any poor can make itself into the rabble. Anyone in civil society is latently poor and hence latently rabble. Or more precisely: Anyone will have been latently rabble. Why this peculiar temporality? One here needs the future anterior, because the logical insight into the fact that there is this latency, the first latency that anyone will have been poor and the second latency that anyone will have been rabble, only results if one starts from the emergence of the rabble. It is a retroactive and not only retrospective insight and hence this specific temporality – the emergence

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38 I here altered the misleading – wrong – translation that the rabble “is fixed automatically” Hegel 2008, p. 221.

39 Jameson 2010.

of the rabble changes the past of civil society. I will refer to this insight in an abbreviated manner as *logic of double latency*. It is linked to the emergence of the rabble and this emergence is again linked to what Hegel calls indignation.

### Forms and Contents of Indignation

Hegel qualifies the content of the indignation of the rabble as follows: the rabble deprives the state and all its institutions of their legitimacy. The rabble disqualifies the existing state of things in their rationality and deprives them of the right to exist. For Hegel this can be done in two different manners and hence he needs to introduce the distinction between two modalities of the rabble. Civil society is for Hegel organized by estates and the participation in one of them is necessary for everyone, other than this one's subsistence cannot be attained (this simply means that anyone needs to have a proper job). In this way anyone outside of the estates is for Hegel what he calls a "mere private person".<sup>40</sup> Private person are then again distinguished into two categories: there are the poor and there are the gamblers. Anyone can *involuntarily* become poor, whereas one can only become a gambler if one *voluntarily and arbitrarily* decides to not satisfy one's self-seeking interest through one's own labor force and bet on the contingent movement of bourgeois economy. This decision relies on the hope that one will also contingently – say through winnings at the stock market – secure one's subsistence. If such winning is obtained, the gambler immediately and necessarily becomes what I call *luxury rabble*. Luxury is the category Hegel deploys for the following thesis: any wealth outside the estates (and the corporation) is property of the rich rabble. The luxury rabble also deprives all existing institutions of their right and their legitimacy, yet it spares one, namely that institution on which its own existence relies: the arbitrary dynamic of the market dynamic, which made the rich rabble into what it is. That the rich rabble dislikes Hegel's thesis is in the nature of things. The luxury-rabble is therefore fundamentally determined by what I refer to as *logic of double arbitrariness*, which applies to anyone who 1. Arbitrarily places himself outside the estates and hence relies on the game of luck of economy and to who 2. Arbitrarily gains some profit in this game. If the logic of double latency, which applies to the poor rabble, is latently valid for anyone, the logic of double arbitrariness is only valid for those who are by their arbitrary attitude driven into the game of contingency and who arbitrarily gains some winning in it.

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<sup>40</sup> Hegel 2008, p. 197.

It hence only applies to those who arbitrarily decided to opt for the arbitrary game, arbitrarily gain something and it only applies as long as they have won and did not again lose their winnings.<sup>41</sup>

Hegel wants to criticize the position of the rabble in general as a position of an irrational particularity, which claims its mere particular interests against the existing and rationally organized universal and is thereby led into contradiction. Yet, it can be demonstrated that it is only the rich rabble that Hegel justifiably criticizes as being nothing but a particularity. Whereas the poor rabble entails against Hegel's assessment as particularity a latent universal dimension, which is not at all inferior to the universality of Hegel's concept of ethical life – a concept that he precisely invokes to overcome the contradictions of mere particularities. Although it seems as if Hegel nonetheless has to assign an indignant attitude also to the rich rabble, he – in a very consistent manner – reserves for it the concept of depravity and corruption [*Verdorbenheit*].<sup>42</sup> Rich private persons are and will always be conceptually corrupt and depraved; already Hegel could not be more explicit about this. And this also means: only the poor rabble is indignant, which is why I from here on leave the rich rabble aside. The poor rabble is indignant about its own conditions of possibility, that is to say it is outraged because of poverty and infers from this that an ethico-political community, which does not prevent it from being brought about, is itself nothing but an illegitimate accumulation of self-seeking interests without any rational and actual universality. The further and deepening loss, which the rabble suffers with regard to poverty leads to the fact that it is full of “inner indignation against the rich, against society, against the government, etc.” – it is the “etc.” at the end which is decisive, since it marks for Hegel the (bad) infinite continual of indignation. The rabble is indignant because it considers itself to be in a “state that lacks rights [*Rechtlosigkeit*]”<sup>43</sup>, which is nonetheless displayed as being a state of right; hence the rabble sees this as a gigantic masquerade. Hegel's clearly marks on one side that civil society is driven into the contradictory production of poverty but still he cannot – and here one should be more Hegelian than Hegel – read this contradiction as in his depiction the rabble reads it: namely as a wrong, as an injustice. Hegel

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41 For a longer elaboration of this distinction, cf. Ruda 2011, pp. 49-74.

42 As Hegel states: „One can call this depravity [*Verdorbenheit*] that the rich assumes himself to be at liberty to do anything.” Hegel 2005, p 223. Also relevant in this context is the statement: “everything in the world that has become corrupt has a good reason for its corruption.” Hegel 1982, p. 229

43 Hegel 2005, p. 222.

clearly observes that poverty is a state of lack of possibilities to realize one's own freedom; he also notes that this lack, this *impossibility* (of realizing one's own freedom<sup>44</sup>) is indispensable, i.e. *necessary* as well as it is artificially produced. This ought to turn this lack into an injustice. Yet, it is this consequence that Hegel does not draw, since otherwise he would assert that civil society, "the *world of appearance* of the ethical"<sup>45</sup> is in its totality nothing but a gigantic concatenation of injustices; a concatenation, which incessantly produces the impossibility to universally validate (i.e. for all) the very principle on which it relies.<sup>46</sup> The rabble does not hesitate to draw this consequence and it infers from the indignation against the existing state of things the claim of a right to subsist without labor, since, de facto, it cannot subsist by laboring. To claim such a right can only appear irrational to Hegel, since he links the very concept of right to the notion of the free will, which can only be what it is, i.e. free when it objectifies and hence realizes itself through laborious activity (which is precisely what the rabble does not do).

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44 Already early Hegel defined poverty as „impossibility to bring something in front of oneself."  
Hegel 1969, p.232.

45 Hegel 2008, p. 180.

46 Let me be more precise here: Hegel is fully aware that civil society is contradictory. Of course, this is precisely how he comes to depict the existence first of the police and the corporation and second of the state. The former two try to cope with the contradictory nature of civil society by means of limiting the outburst of all its potential catastrophes happening in miniature (the police) or by trying to generate a different mode of organization on its very terrain (the corporation). Both are just transitory institutions leading into the state. The difficult thing to understand with regard to the overall conception of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is the following: what happens to all the contradictions that Hegel clearly sees on the level of civil society after the conceptual insight into the necessity of the state, if they cannot be overcome in any way? There are a variety of possible answers, some very unconvincing ones (all members become ethically aware of the destructive tendencies of the market and hence behave in a more morally responsible manner when partaking in ethical life – which is precisely what today consumer responsibility theories / advertisements rely on), some rather unsatisfying (Hegel acknowledges the unblatantness of these contradictions and simply develops that state for those not at all confronted with them), etc. Yet, there is one possibility, which I consider to be the most consistent with regard to Hegel's overall depiction of the idea of right in the *Philosophy of Right*, but which I at the same time cannot adequately unfold here: Hegel shows that even the state cannot properly stabilize civil society, which is also one of the reasons why there never will be an eternal state – states have a history, i.e. they emerge and disappear in history. That is to say, Hegel's crucial claim is: any state – conceptually necessitated by the contradictions of civil society – will always have been a failed state – as it will have proven inapt to deal with these very contradictions. And the very moment its failure becomes manifest is when it conceptually starts to disappear. I here read Hegel as depicting another path: the rabble and the state co-emerge at the same logical locus and hence in Hegel there is either the option of the always-already-will-have-failed-state or the option of the rabble.

## Indignant Form, Indignant Content

To demand a right to subsistence without activity and at the same time to assume this right only for oneself signifies for Hegel that one assumes right, which neither has nor is able to have the universality nor the objective validity of a right. The right, that the rabble claims, is for Hegel a right without right – that is to say for him it has neither the characteristic of universality nor of rationality – and he defines consequentially the rabble as that particularity, which even unbinds itself from all relations of rights and duties. Yet, due to the mentioned *logic of double latency*, it becomes clear what Hegel does not want to assert with regard to the rabble: the right without right it claims entails a latent universal dimension and hence is more than just a merely particular demand. It rather breaks with the very idea of demand. It is as a right articulated from a particular position a right that latently concerns anyone and it hence offers the insight that there can be a claim for equality beyond the existing, objective state relations. But what does all this mean for the question that I set off to answer? What does all this signify for the affect of indignation proper and its (pre-) political status? It shall be clear that indignation thereby does not merely articulate and embody frustration. It is also not simply a sign of the loss of self-respect, hence not an expression of melancholia.<sup>47</sup> Rather what indignation does entails is some sort of positive self-assertion, it thereby can be read as an expression of self-respect, although as it seems an impossible one. As it is precisely the society to which it is supposed to belong that denies him the right to exist, the rabble asserts a right against the world as it is and hence it claims a right, as Žižek depicted it, “a universal right to have rights, to be in a position to act as free autonomous subject. The demand to be provided for life without working is thus a (possible superficial) form of appearance of the more basic and in no way ‘irrational’ demand to be given a chance to act as an autonomous free subject, to be included in the universe of freedoms and obligations.”<sup>48</sup> The rabble measures civil society by the claim that arises from its own nature but which it at the same time cannot uphold due to the lack inscribed into it. If the production of poor masses is an inevitable part of the movement of civil society, its very existence is accompanied

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47 As Freud claims: The melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning – an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.” There is not lack of self-regard involved in the rabble’s indignation. Cf. Freud 2005, pp. 205.

48 Žižek 2011b, p. xvi.



by an indignation about this existence. The rabble is in indignation about the excessive, unnatural and perverse effects of the economic movement of society, because in and through them it becomes clear that the legal claim with regard to the subsistence of all individuals can only be upheld under the retroactively visible condition of constantly depriving large masses of poor individuals of their rights. The possibility to uphold the right to subsistence of all implies within society at the same time the impossibility to warrant the right to subsistence for all. This contingent insight into the perverted unnatural essence of society is what generates the rabble and its indignation.

Indignation is as Hegel states in one of his lectures on the philosophy of right an “attitude without right.”<sup>49</sup> In civil society only that does truly exist, what is mediated by activity and labor. Yet, at the same time its own dynamic creates something that impossibly can be mediated by activity and labor. The indignation, which can emerge about this structural lack and which hence is an indignation about society’s own unnatural nature, can only appear as an unnatural excess to it. In the indicting indignation of the rabble civil society listens to nothing but to an unnatural voice it itself brought about. But this indignation which is directed against the very nature of civil society is coupled with a universal dimension (as anyone is latently poor and any poor can become rabble and he becomes part of the – poor – rabble for Hegel when he starts to be indignant). This dimension emerges with the rabble-indignation, since it is a (latently) universal indignation and in this very universal dimension it is bound to the claim of a right without right which is expressed in this indignation. The right without right is the content and the peculiar form of indignation. The right without right consists of an indignant form and an indignant content. This is why it appears to be “without right [rechtlos]”. Yet, it is important to note that indignation is directed against its own conditions of possibility. *Indignation is indignation against indignation*<sup>50</sup>, against the condition of possibility of being indignant at all. It is hence not directed against an object of the world but rather against the world as it is. That is

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49 Hegel 1974, p. 703.

50 If the talk about political affects is supposed to have any meaning whatsoever, then it seems to me, it can only do so if any political affect has such a reflexive structure as its prerequisite (and at the same time I do not think that this is a sufficient conditions to qualify an affect as being political; indignation as such is *not* political). If this prerequisite is not achieved, one cannot speak of (political) affects but rather of feelings and Hegel once rightly stated that: “If man on any topic appeals... but to his feeling, the only thing to do is to let him alone, because he thereby spurns the community of rationality....” Hegel 2009, p. 178.

to say, indignation is directed against a world in which there is indignation. Indignation thereby can be read as a form of (latent) subjectivization of an injustice, which is not conceded to be one by the existing objective categories of right, since it concerns the very constitution of the world as such.

It is important to keep in mind that the rabble makes itself, that is to say that its emergence is contingent. If poor masses are necessarily generated through the general dynamic of civil society, indignation about this manifestation of poverty, which provides the ground for the poor rabble, is generated contingently. Indignation due to its contingent origin might hence be read in terms of what Adorno once called the *addendum* [*das Hinzutretende*].<sup>51</sup> This category describes something that contingently supplements a situation, in which a subject encounters a concrete impossibility (in the rabble's case the impossibility to bring something in front of itself, i.e. an impossibility of realizing one's own freedom under given conditions). As Adorno rightly states: "The subject's decisions do not roll off in a causal chain; what occurs is a jolt, rather."<sup>52</sup> Hence the subject's decision relies on an addendum, the additional indignation. Indignation also results from a jolt and it is thus the necessary content and the necessary form of a contingent attitude, which is directed against its own condition of possibility. And it is precisely this interplay of necessary possibility of indignation, i.e. of poverty and of the contingent genesis of this attitude, which assures its universality. Indignation is, at least latent-

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51 Cf. Adorno 1973.

52 Ibid., p. 226f. In a different context, Adorno gives a good example of this „jolt“ [Ruck], which generates the type of action he has in mind and that I here see as structurally equivalent with the emergence of indignation. He reports the following: "Perhaps I can illustrate this with something I experienced... in the first few months after I returned to Germany - it is now almost fourteen years ago - from emigration. I had the opportunity to make the acquaintance of one of the few crucial actors of the 20 July and was able to talk to him. I said to him, 'Well, you knew very well that the conspiracy's chances of success were minimal, and you must have known that if you were caught you had to expect a fate far more terrible than death - unimaginably terrible consequences. What made it possible for you to take action notwithstanding this?' - Whereupon he said to me - you will all know his name, but I do not wish to name him here - 'But there are situations that are so intolerable that one just cannot continue to put up with them, no matter what may happen and no matter what may happen to oneself in the course of the attempt to change them.' He said this without any pathos - and I should like to add, without any appeal to theory. He was simply explaining to me what motivated him in that seemingly absurd enterprise on 20 July. I believe that this act of resistance - the fact that things may be so intolerable that you feel compelled to make the attempt to change them, regardless of the consequences for yourself, and in circumstances in which you may also predict the possible consequences for other people - is the precise point at which the irrationality, or better, the irrational aspect of moral action is to be sought, the point at which It may be located." Cf. Adorno 2001, p. 8. In another language one might also read this as a good example of a "logical revolt", since what Adorno depicts is neither determined by some type of social necessity nor by any pure moral catechism relying on an imperative that could guide all actions within concrete situations.

ly, indignation of anyone. He who is indignant in the rabble-sense of the term is aiming to be a representative of the whole of humanity. Therefore indignation never deceives and it can thereby become a possible category of political action. But – and this but is crucial – it can only do so if 1. One does not only depicts its determinations in a merely negative way as also Hegel seems to do (although he also offers the means to conceptualize it otherwise) and 2. By not only determining it as an affective expression of a particularity as particularity. There can be merely particular indignation, obviously – when sitting in front of the TV and watching the news for example, even watching a sport match in a sport stadium. To overcome the purely particular and purely negative characteristics of indignation what needs to be happen is precisely what Hegel sees happening with the rabble's indignation. In it there is 1. A positive kernel, namely the formulation of a right (without right) to subsist without working and 2. This is a latently universal dimension that although articulated from a particular position includes anyone in its address and 3. It has a reflexive structure in the sense that its negative dimension is directed against its own condition of possibility (i.e. against the world which allows for indignation to exist).

### **Indignation – Anxiety and....**

It is important to note that Hegel employs the word “indignation” in a two-fold manner. He uses it as affective determination of the attitude of the rabble but also – and here the reference to the Lacanian concept of anxiety is interesting – in the (etymologically wrong) sense of rebellion, revolt, turmoil, insurrection. This is why he can write that a “rebellion in a province conquered in war is a different thing from a rising [Empörung] in a well-organized state.”<sup>53</sup> The latter, he thinks, is a veritable “crime against the state”<sup>54</sup>; a crime against the consistency of social bonds – duties and rights – which make the state into the state; an attack on the world as it is. This demonstrates that indignation is not simply a characteristic of an inner attitude and therefore without any external effects. The rabble is in a state of affective indignation about the state and outraged at the existing order. This leads the rabble to claim a right without a right, which marks a moment of absolute unbinding from the concepts and spheres of right, from the social bond, etc. This leads to the fact that one can state that one here moves from “indignation about” (the condition of possibility of

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53 Hegel 2008, p. 275.

54 Ibid.

indignation) to “indignation against” (the reproduction and perpetuation of it). *The indignation about the world rises itself up – akin to baron Münchhausen’s famous self-liberation from the marsh – to the indignation against the world, which puts the latter in a state of turmoil.*

The indignation-against is directed against the state, the order, the world, as it is. Indignation is hence in Hegel an *anti-state*, literally an *a-social* and therefore a *pre-political* affect. It is an affect of possible political subjectivization; it is not an affect indicating political subjectivity in actu – hence the sole dimension, as I demonstrated, that is present in it is a latently universal one. But it indicates the place of politics. Why? Because political actions always starts with breaking the social bond; diminishing the evidence of the state (of things). Yet, latent politicality, pre-politics should never be confused with actual politics. Indicating the politics is possible is not doing politics. With regard to the rabble one may say: the true revolt of the rabble is the indignant unbinding of the alleged necessity of the world as it is. The rabble asserts, emphasizes and indignantly demonstrates the (impossible) possibility of politics. Indignation comes, in this respect again comparable to Lacan’s but also to Heidegger’s depiction of anxiety, with an effect of de-naturalization of the existing order, which opens up the dimension of true political action. This is because indignation expresses the contradiction between concept and reality, say between the concept of right and the reality of right and the implied deprivation of rights of the poor; between the concept of the free will and the reality of its realizations. Already in his early *Realphilosophie* Hegel had characterized inner indignation as “highest inner turmoil of the will”, which is brought about by “the inequality of wealth and poverty.”<sup>55</sup> Here indignation does not only designate the subjective thinking of the rabble-like poor vis-à-vis the rich, rather it is directed against the very possibility of this splitting, of the split of poverty and wealth as such. Indignation is hence not the hatred of the poor directed towards the rich, but rather what is generated when this splitting in poor and rich becomes a principle structuring the world. Indignation in its latent universal dimension names the affect that indicates the breaking of the social bond. Why? Because it is directed towards those separations that, if they exist, indicate that the social bond is already broken. This is why Hegel describes indignation as highest turmoil [*höchste Zerrissenheit*] – as rupture of the social, which at the same time come with an insight into a fundamental and universal dimension that is not any longer founded in the social, but

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55 Hegel 1969, p. 232f.

rather in its impossibility (this is what marks the place of possible political action).

Lacan describes anxiety as affective manifestation of the necessary condition for any real transformation (the abyssal and ground-shaking insight into the non-necessity of the world). However, to actually transform one needs hence to work with (certain doses of) anxiety, for one cannot simply remain within anxiety, otherwise one would remain within subjective destitution. Rather one needs to raise the impotency to act in face of the non-necessity of the world to a real point of impossibility. This is one definition of the analytic cure, recently brought up again by Badiou (and of course first elaborated by Lacan).<sup>56</sup> One might also render this transition from subjective destitution (i.e. impotence) to point of impossibility as transition from anxiety to courage. A transition from the moment of non-necessity to the affirmation of a point, whose affirmation contains, perpetuates, in short: sublates the non-necessity. Hegel's theory of indignation seems to entail both dimensions, both as elements of the proper universal dimension of indignation. But one might nonetheless ask: if indignation as depicted by Hegel has a latent universal dimension – and hence not an actual one – what does it mean to think the transition from latency to actuality? It has to be a transition, a path, a pass which does not simply realize a given possibility – for indignation is immanently linked to an impossibility. To put this in other terms, if courage is what need to logically follows anxiety to generate proper subjective action, to not remain within a subjective inability to act (indicated by indignation), what affect could logically succeed indignation? How to get from the riots in London's suburbs to true political action?

If one needs to pass from indignation to an affect, let's call it "E" to account for proper politicization and if "E" names the affective dimension of political subjectivization, there is one affect, which seems to be a promising candidate. Of course one can here think of is enthusiasm.<sup>57</sup> If this could be substantiated, then to think in Hegelian terms a politiciza-

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56 Cf. Badiou 2008, p. 35.

57 Besides Kant, I am thinking of Žižek's recent attempt to correct Badiou's early foursome distinction of anxiety, courage, superego and justice by anxiety, courage, terror and enthusiasm. Cf. Žižek 2012b, p. 834-835. Žižek here does not account for the fact that Badiou – himself without offering any proper theoretical elaboration – explicitly stated that the affect of politics is enthusiasm. Badiou does not develop this, neither does he thus far offer an account of how affects work in his system. He simply enlists four affects, each of them matching one of the "conditions" of philosophy: enthusiasm in politics, pleasure in art, happiness in love and joy in science. As odd, and as Kantian as at least half of them may sound, to my mind it is important that Badiou indicates that in politics proper we are always also dealing with an enthusiastic subject. Cf. Badiou 2009, p. 76-77.

tion of the latently universal subject, to think a transition from a pre-political situation to politics proper and hence to think a true transformation of the world would also imply to conceive of the transition from indignation to enthusiasm. This transition – this passage – would then not only be an indicator of transformation, but also and at the same time it would be linked with the appearance of a new subject, that courageously and full of enthusiasm would be ready to traverse anxiety and leave indignation behind. From indignation to enthusiasm could then also be a formula for depicting what it could mean – with and for Hegel – to frighten those who set up the world as it is just now.

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