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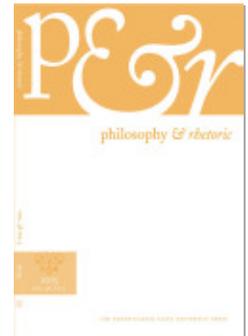
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## Hegel's Pathology of Recognition: A Biopolitical Fable

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# Hegel's Pathology of Recognition: A Biopolitical Fable

*Stuart J. Murray*

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the figures of life and death as rhetorical and material conditions for self-consciousness and mutual recognition, notoriously described in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It turns to Hegel's treatment of life and death, concepts that—according to Hegel's mature system—anticipate and prefigure the struggle for recognition and its master-slave dialectic. Part 1 analyzes the *Philosophy of Nature*, with attention to how the sex relation, species-life, and the diseased body “pathologically” figure the life and death of the nonhuman (animal) organism. Part 2 takes up Hegel's “Anthropology,” which opens his *Philosophy of Mind*, exploring the problematic relationship between (reproductive) sex and love as an incipient politics of woman, family, civil society, and state. Part 3 brings Hegel's world-historical system into dialogue with contemporary biopolitics, arguing that recognition today is driven by a world-historical discourse on *bios* and that Hegel's “pathological” figures might occasion a productive critique of affirmative biopolitics.

KEYWORDS: biopolitics, disease, Michel Foucault, gender, recognition

Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another.

—Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Scholars seeking an account of recognition will be familiar with the seminal section on lordship and bondage in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In these passages we learn that the dialectic of mutual recognition is the key to actualized self-consciousness, that moment in which the "I" transcends its immanence in the life process to become a self-reflective subject, actively superseding the immediacy of nature and passing from animal life to a form-of-life that is recognizably human. In the beginning, the relation is neither self-reflexive nor reciprocal; each is a being-for-self (*Für-sich-sein*) in which the other is "an unessential, negatively characterized object" (1977, ¶186, 113). In their unreflexive immediacy, Hegel writes, these individuals appear

for one another like ordinary objects, *independent* shapes [*Gestalten*], individuals submerged in the being of *Life* [*in das Sein des Lebens*]*—*for the object in its immediacy is here determined as *Life* [*als Leben*]. They are, *for each other*, shapes of consciousness [*versenkte Bewußtsein*] which have not yet accomplished the movement of absolute abstraction, of rooting-out [*zu vertilgen*] all immediate being. (¶186, 113)

In this passage, the concept of life is overdetermined, burdened by its implicit relation to death and to the livingness of the body, "my" body, whose life is something the "I" is enjoined to wield, wager and in some sense sacrifice, and yet still survive. If each "I" is for the other "the middle term," these mediating terms themselves are mediated in and by life and death. Life figures here as pure immanence, the material and rhetorical conditions of mutual recognition. The relation of recognition depends, then, on a pre-existing relation to life, which must be severed. Indeed, Hegel claims that the immediacy of consciousness must be submitted to a "rooting out" or a "pure abstraction" if the self-certainty of the "I" hopes to realize its "truth" as universal. For consciousness—*versenkte Bewußtsein*—is submerged, sunk in life; it is, at the outset, in and of life. Life must be staked, risked, negated as part of the claim to mutual recognition. The "I" of each must act, must demonstrate, that "it is not attached to any specific *existence*, not to the individuality common to existence as such, that it is not attached to life" (¶187, 113). In Hegel's terms, life must be negated, sublated, *Aufgehoben*.

What form-of-life is this, in its immediacy, in its attachment, and as a vital condition to be overcome in the process of mutual recognition? What relation does such life bear to organic life, the mortal life of the

body, which figures obliquely in these passages as a derivative “corporeity of self-consciousness”? Organic life, too, is a condition for self-consciousness and mutual recognition, yet it figures only negatively in the *Phenomenology*, in relation to death, through the life-and-death struggle (*Kampf*). This article examines the provenance of life as the implicit rhetorical and material force at work in the struggle for recognition and self-consciousness. I suggest that in order to understand the stakes of life and death, we might turn to the treatment of these terms in Hegelian texts that systemically anticipate and prefigure this section of the *Phenomenology*—texts that were written after the *Phenomenology* but that set the *Phenomenology*'s scene of recognition within the context of Hegel's mature philosophical system. Hegel concludes his *Philosophy of Nature*, for example, with a discussion of organic (animal) life and death. This text presages and informs the systemically “subsequent” appearance of these terms in the life-and-death struggle and underscores the rhetorical work that they must do in the process of recognition. In nature, too, death looms and life is variously negated for the nonhuman (animal) organism—in sexual congress, in the struggle of the species, and by disease, respectively. In the sex relation, for instance, it is not the life of the individual that is preserved, but notably that of the species—a form of species-life, the life of a population, which today we might recognize most saliently in the language of biopolitics, as I argue here.

It is curious, then, that in the *Phenomenology*'s account of recognition, the organismic sex relation figures nowhere—or, if it “returns,” it has morphed into the erotics of the master-slave dialectic: a libidinal economy of subjugation, war, terror, and not unrelatedly, the labor of the slave, whose material products, as Marx understood, come to represent a perverse form of freedom through sublimated, desexualized (re)production (cf. Marcuse 1974). Sex is sublimated as a life to be superseded by self-consciousness, and yet this morphology or “abstraction” warrants greater scrutiny. Critical of the abstractions of German ideology, Marx and Engels famously take aim at Hegel, writing that “life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life” (1970, 47). I return to Hegel, then, in order to complicate the life-consciousness dialectic and to examine the many instances of organismic “life” in the ways that they prefigure—if they do not altogether “determine”—the perverse freedom attributed to recognizing self-consciousness in the struggle for recognition. In Hegel's terms, it would appear at first blush that the master-slave dialectic is little more than the conscious activity of anxiety or fear (*Angst*), which acts on an individual life: “Not [fear] of this or that particular thing or just at

odd moments,” Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology*, but the kind of fear in which the subject’s “whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord” (1977, ¶194, 117). Indeed, Hegel argues that the “absolute fear” of death is necessary and “formative” but becomes pathological “without the discipline of service and obedience” (¶196, 119) that channels it into slavish servitude, production, and profit for others in the name of freedom and of life itself. To what extent does the life and death—the living death—of the enslaved body figure here, in “immediate” and unreconstructed form, through violence, the subjugating system of capital, and today, we might say, through the ravages of neoliberal biopolitics? As Marx has made clear, although we may destroy the phenomenal body, the real body nevertheless remains to haunt the system (see Derrida 1994, ch. 5).

The life-and-death struggle for mutual recognition is perplexing, I argue, precisely because it presumes the immediacy of a “life” that can be staked and risked, negated in a particular way—through the threat of death, through anxious mortification. Life arrives on the scene, as it were, always already imbued with a human value: when faced with death, the intrinsic value of life must already have been anxiously and self-reflexively understood by both master and slave, and each in and through the other. This presumes a death that amounts to more than mere animal or organismic “perishing”—a human self-consciousness of death *as* death. Mortal self-consciousness represents a radical break from nature, and yet the seeds of such self-consciousness are nevertheless prefigured there. As Hegel writes in the *Philosophy of Nature*, “The goal of Nature is to destroy itself and to break through its husk of immediate, sensuous existence, to consume itself like the phoenix in order to come forth from this externality rejuvenated as spirit” (1970, §376A, 444). The perpetuation of species-life through sexual reproduction might then bear more than an analogy to the life-and-death struggle of human recognition. Yet it remains unclear how human life rises from nature’s ashes like the phoenix—whether this is really the implicit “goal” or telos of nature or whether there is something missing in the account of mutual recognition, some universal anxiety or “freedom” that is conjured from elsewhere—and thereby ensures that human life is more than the mere negation of death—and human death more than the mere extinguishing of life. I find it rather grim to turn for an answer to Hegel, whose exaltation of the slave links freedom to terror, who tells us that wars are from time to time necessary in order to return us to the universal and that “those who remain slaves suffer no absolute injustice; for he who

has not the courage to risk his life to win freedom . . . deserves to be a slave" (1971, §435A, 175). Such indifference is unbearably cruel yet familiar: recognition continues to be won by subjugation, exploitation, and the exposure of others to biological or social death. And as for the slave, he or she continues to wait and to labor for a recognition promised by the dialectic but undelivered—an old but perennial ruse.

The question of nature, and the place of biological or organismic life, has renewed and particular relevance today. I argue that the value of life and the work of death under biopolitics invoke species-life and that the struggle for recognition is modeled today on its universalizing terms. Michel Foucault, in a famous description of biopolitics, writes: "There is absolutely no question relating to an individual body. . . . [Biopolitics] is therefore not a matter of taking the individual at the level of individuality but . . . a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species" (2003b, 246–47). Nature, red in tooth and claw, remains indifferent to the individual, much as it did for Hegel. Mining Hegel's passages yields clues for a critical reading of recognition today—a recognition, I argue, in which nature is co-opted by biopolitics. My reading of Hegel proceeds by examining the spaces between nature and spirit (today we might read: nature and culture), which for Hegel are populated by "monstrous" and "pathological" figures that appear (only to disappear) in the systematic transition from nonhuman (animal) forms-of-life to a life that is recognizably human and self-reflexive. In tracing a Hegelian genealogy of *bios* or "life" and bringing this into dialogue with biopolitics in this latter's own world-historical project, I call for a reorientation of recognition as carnal knowledge—the body, in pain, in suffering, but also in love, and in the sex relation—*pathē* that suggest an empathic future of recognition. This, in any case, is the work that remains to be taken up if my thesis on biopolitics is persuasive. In sum, I hope to provoke a critical reflection in which we might redeem Hegel's "monstrous" lives, which were relegated by him to nature, and to imagine a form of recognition on their dimensions. And, on these terms, we might begin to critically account for—and subvert—the ways that modern biopolitics produces its own monsters as the necessary conditions of biopolitical life.

My reading of Hegel centers on Hegel's mature philosophy, particularly in the three-volume *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), the last work to be published in Hegel's lifetime, and written as a sort of textbook for the teaching of Hegel in universities. In his mature philosophy, beginning with at least the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel will argue

that life is, much like love, the property of nature, not spirit. Life and love are feelings, passions, rooted in the body; they are passive, coded as female or womanly (*Weiblich*), that which remains submerged in nature, not quite human, and that which must be superseded. In the first part of the article, I offer a reading of the last section of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*, which comprises volume 2 of the *Encyclopaedia*. I trace the genealogy of life in the aporia that opens up between nature and spirit, nonhuman and human life, paying particular attention to sex, species-life, and the figure of the diseased body. Each of these "natural" life-relations implies distinct struggles and forms-of-death—nascent forms of recognition. In the final chapters of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*, organic disease is presented as monstrous or rogue life, a resurgence of primitive organic life, and a "return" to an inhuman nature that threatens to undermine the life of spirit. I am interested here in the trope of the pathological, as vestigial or deviant life, which references an implicit ideological norm. My article's second part turns to the opening section of Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, volume 3 of the *Encyclopaedia*, entitled "Anthropology"—some two hundred pages written at the end of Hegel's life expressly for inclusion in his didactic three-volume magnum opus. Much like the final section of the *Philosophy of Nature*, the "Anthropology" works to bridge the gap between volumes 2 and 3 of the *Encyclopaedia* but recruits the Aristotelian concept of soul, which provides a transition between nature and spirit and prefigures the main content of *Philosophy of Mind* (which includes encyclopedic summaries of the *Phenomenology* and the *Philosophy of Right*, among others). In the "Anthropology," the relationship between (reproductive) sex and love is interwoven with a nascent politics of woman and the family, anticipating the transition from these more "primitive" or "natural" instantiations of spirit—the domain of "feelings"—to their sublation in civil society and the state. Finally, in the third and concluding part of my article, I develop the claim that my reading of Hegel sheds light on contemporary terms of recognition and their relation to life and death in the biopolitical present. I argue that Hegel's "pathological" figures can be productively deployed for a critique of affirmative biopolitics.

#### ANATOMOPATHOLOGY

The final section of the *Philosophy of Nature*, titled "The Process of the Genus," describes the life process from genus to species. Each of the section's three parts—the sex relation, in which the individual "perishes"; the particularization

of genus into species, which is described as “death by violence”; and death by disease, which is conceived as “natural death”—prefigures a process of recognition, of sorts, exhibiting an explicit relation to life and to “the different ways . . . in which the living creature meets its death” (1970, §367, 411). Treating these parts in order is crucial if we are to honor Hegel’s system and understand the ontological journey of life-forms from lower to higher manifestations of spirit. However, this is complicated by the fact that in the third and final edition of the *Encyclopaedia*, published in 1830, parts 1 and 2 remain unchanged (textually) but are reversed in order. In this final edition, the particularization of genus into species now precedes the sex relation—and so “death by violence” now precedes the “perishing” of individuals on the altar of the species. Each part can thus be read as presuming the work of the other part, and some confusion arises. The sex relation between individuals seems to presume a kind of species-recognition and places sex in the service of species-life, whereas conversely, the propagation of the species seems to presume sex-recognition and sex-desire among already recognizable members of that selfsame species. The ambiguity of order points to a chicken and egg paradox, a paradox of temporality and historization: the species requires reproductive sex, but reproductive sex requires a determinate species. Moreover, both “death by violence” and individual “perishing” prefigure the advent of self-consciousness and the life-and-death struggle for mutual recognition, as well as the temporo-historical paradox within the section of the *Phenomenology* titled “Lordship and Bondage.”

Species-recognition, if we can call it that, necessitates an intraspecies struggle to the death: “The genus particularizes itself, divides itself into its species; and these species, *behaving as mutually opposed individuals*, are, at the same time, non-organic nature as the genus against individuality—death by violence” (§367, 411, emphasis mine). One is tempted to read the species process as sociological in nature, a nascent form of identification or of civil society. But Hegel does not embark on such a project until the “Anthropology.” Here, he offers instead a detailed and expository excursus into the contemporary science of zoology, comparative anatomy, and taxonomy, paying special attention to the French naturalists, noting the difficulties of fixing on any certain principle of species classification. Animal species are not only distinguished from one another through their internal anatomical differences but also through myriad external contingencies, such as climate. Logically, this division of the species seems to precede the sex relation, which Hegel describes equally as “a negative and hostile attitude towards others” and as “an essentially affirmative relation of the singularity

to itself in it" (§368, 411). Such language, unsurprisingly, is echoed in the struggle for recognition found in the *Phenomenology* and in the encyclopedic entry on recognition in the *Philosophy of Mind*. The natural sex relation is, then, both hostile and affirming, "a *process* which begins with a *need*; for the individual as a *singular* does not accord with the genus immanent in it, and yet at the same time is the identical self-relation of the genus in *one* unity; it thus has the *feeling* of this defect" (§368, 411).

The "feeling" necessarily implies a mutuality: "the urge to obtain its self-feeling in the other of its genus [*Gattung*], to integrate itself through union with it and through this mediation to close the genus with itself and bring it into existence—*copulation*" (§368, 411). Here, given their order of appearance in the first two editions, Hegel refers to the *genus*, rather than the *species*, and the sex relation is posited as prior to species-recognition, a point in the process at which male and female "are not related to each other as organic and non-organic beings" (§368A, 412). Indeed, the sex relation, alternatively called "the substantial relation of the genus" (§368A, 412), is posited as the condition—notably, through feeling—of the species. The text seems to thwart a reading of ontological priority. And yet this very language also appears in the *Phenomenology*, in the pages that immediately precede the section on lordship and bondage: "The other Life, however, for which the genus [*Gattung*] as such exists, and which is genus on its own account, viz. self-consciousness, exists in the first instance for self-consciousness only as this simple essence, and has itself as pure 'I' for object" (1977, ¶173, 109). Here Hegel is describing immanent self-consciousness, which has not yet risked its life in order to return to itself in and through the mutual recognition of the other. Although the word "genus" (*Gattung*) can be used both in a biological sense as well as in a more abstract sense to refer to a logical class or group of individuals, in this passage the ambiguity becomes productive; both "self" and "other" are described as independent genera, and one wonders if something akin to the natural "feeling" of the sex relation or species process conditions their "substantial relation" and kindles recognition's life-and-death struggle.

For Hegel, the understanding of organismic life as it emerges in nature is not only intimately linked to species-life, but also to the vitality of sexual "self-feeling," which ensures that the "self" recognizes (in a nascent sense) the sexed "other" of its own species, a self that as a result of this "feeling" is urged to "copulate" in the name of life. Hegel's account of identity and "self-feeling" operates despite male and female sexual difference—an anatomical difference we might have imagined to foster immediate disidentification or

the failure of self-reflection in the opposite sex. Hegel elides the paradox of heterosexual desire and sticks to an organic paradigm when he claims that originally male and female are united in the individual organism, only to become sexually differentiated at a later moment. To make this argument, he appeals to hermaphroditism and embryology to demonstrate how male and female genitals are, despite appearances, copresent and ultimately of “the same type”—“the female *labia pudendi* are shrunken scrota”—even while he ultimately maintains that “the male contains subjectivity” (1970, §368A, 413) in relation to his passive, if not receptive, female counterpart. Indeed, these descriptions portray male as origin and female as derivative (female sexual parts discreetly appear in Latin, for Hegel’s more sensitive readers). Perhaps we are meant to recognize our embryological similarity with members of the opposite sex, or perhaps our gendered identifications are all coded as male despite anatomical differences? Steadfastly refusing the cultural dimensions of (hetero)sexual desire, Hegel’s argument must contort itself to a degree. Several pages later, male and female are posited as “efficacy” and “stimulus,” respectively: “The opposition of sex separates efficacy and stimulus (*Wirksamkeit und Reize*), distributing them between two organic individuals. But the organic individual [originally] is itself both; and this is the possibility of its death, a possibility immanent in it, namely, that the organic individual itself separates itself into these forms” (§371A, 429). Even the organic differentiation of the sexes is motivated by the fear of death. Indeed, this last passage appears in a later section on disease, effectively pathologizing sexual difference and desire as a morbid excess “stimulus” (namely, woman or inherent womanliness) that the (presumably male) organism is incapable of bearing. Throughout the *Philosophy of Nature* Hegel depicts life as a process that transcends the individual’s death, surviving through the sexual activity of the species: “In the genus-process the separate individuals perish” (§369A, 414). In the third and final section, he turns to disease and the “natural death” of the individual, where disease is figured almost as a reverse process of spirit, a pathological dissolution or return of the organism to its constitutive, nonorganic parts. However, here the trope of sexual difference is not overcome, but instead, through the figure of disease, pathology becomes radically entrenched and explained according to “natural” gender norms.

Life and health rely on a proper proportionality between organic and nonorganic parts, whereas disease is “a *disproportion between irritation and the capacity of the organism to respond*” (§371A, 429). The organism, Hegel writes, is “in a state of *disease* when one of its systems or organs, *stimulated*

into conflict with the inorganic power (*Potenz*), establishes itself in isolation and persists in its particular activity against the activity of the whole” (§371, 428). Health is not merely the proper proportionality of humors within the organism itself; a healthy or efficacious “disposition” (male *Wirksamkeit*) is also often able to tolerate what Hegel calls an irritation or stimulus (female *Reiz*) temporarily greater than its capacity to assimilate it. Indeed, in a positive vein, Hegel considers medicines to be irritants or stimuli (*Reize*) designed to provoke the whole organism into a healthy system response, which leads him to privilege the final moment of disease—acute “crisis” (in the ancient Hippocratic sense): “Cure mainly depends on the possibility of the entire organism becoming morbidly affected, because then the activity of the whole organism too, can be released” (§371A, 432). We see this in homeopathic medicine, with the principle of *similia similibus curentur* (“let like be cured by like”), which posits that substances that cause particular disorders can be used to cure the organism holistically (see §373A, 438). In sum, the organism is in a state of health when it is in proportion to the whole and when “all its organs are fluid in the universal” (§371A, 428). Life must, as it were, perpetually (re)assert itself, pledge itself to the whole.<sup>1</sup>

The organism’s health is therefore none other than the health of the whole, in which the organism finds itself dissolved much as a substance might be proportionately suspended in a chemical solution or much as the individual is “submerged in the being [or immediacy] of *Life*” prior to its life-and-death struggle for mutual recognition. Relapse into a preceding state is figured either as death or disease, an aberration in the dialectic; meanwhile, such states are paradoxically to be tolerated if they are overcome along the way of spirit’s upward progress. Disease states are not in themselves dangerous but only when they become “a *form* or *state* of the self-conscious, educated, self-possessed human being” (1971, §406, 101). Otherwise said, these states only represent disease when they are regressive states after a higher state has been achieved; disease is disease in retrospect only.

Hegel’s account of how medicine understands and treats disease sheds light on the distinction not just between healthy and unhealthy organisms but between spirit and a less proportional, regressive state of nature. In stark contrast to the scientific rigor with which he discussed the classification of natural species, Hegel explains the action of medicine as “magical”: “like that of animal magnetism, in which the organism is brought under the power of another person” (1970, §373A, 438). If the self is diseased, Hegel writes, the self “is in the power of something other than itself” (§373A, 438).

By this same logic, Hegel reasons that “as in animal magnetism, it also has a world beyond, free from its diseased state, through which the vital force can restore itself” (§373A, 438). “Magnetism” and the laying on of hands works to restore the universality of the organism lost to the particularity of its disease: “The finger-tips of the magnetizer which conduct this magnetism throughout the whole organism and which, in this way, fluidify it” (§373A, 440). Once again, Hegel returns to the trope of fluidity and the organism’s proportional assimilation into the universal “whole.” Yet the invocation of “magic,” “vital forces,” and “worlds beyond” ignores medical science circa 1830, when statistical medicine, anatomopathology, and physiopathology were gaining ground in Europe (although it should be noted that in relation to women’s bodies, in particular, nineteenth-century physicians continued to deploy magical “cures” and the intimate laying on of hands—often the prurient physician’s—for the treatment of “hysteria”). Instead, the charismatic presence of the magnetizing healer permits Hegel the metaphor of a life-and-death struggle, a rudimentary process of recognition, rather than a struggle within the organism itself. An extended discussion of magnetism appears in the “Anthropology,” but the magnetizer features here, at the end of the *Philosophy of Nature*, as a transitional figure—ambiguously allied with both nature and spirit and yet belonging neither in a full sense. The magnetizer—and by implication, therapeutic medicine—occupies a liminal realm between nature and spirit.

I would like to suggest that this is a space of some anxiety for Hegel, an anxiety that manifests itself in his effort to account for the “magical” manner in which nature becomes conscious, the way feelings develop into self-consciousness and recognition, and how organismic life becomes human life. It is significant that if we begin in this text to envisage properly self-conscious human beings, they appear almost always in crisis, diseased, in a struggle for life—for they are only liminal, almost atavistic, creatures.

We are given a glimpse of these figures here, in the final pages of the *Philosophy of Nature* and can anticipate that this is exactly where the third volume of the *Encyclopaedia* will pick up, fashioning its “anthropology” as a propaedeutic to the philosophy of spirit. Yet we never quite leave behind the language of disease, a body afflicted, or the death of the finite organism: “finitude” is the “original disease,” the “germ of death” (§375, 441). Those who are ill play their part: “The goal of Nature is to destroy itself” (§376A, 444). And yet this destruction, this negation, has a ghostly presence in these texts. We are haunted by the abnormal, the sick, the dying, the dead, the undead—lives lived out in a liminal, perhaps unrecognizable,

realm. For example, sleepwalkers seem to disconcert Hegel, representing a pathological state of being in which the individual succumbs to an “earlier” moment of development. Figures such as these are deemed “monstrous.” In dreams there is a primitive immediacy that is characteristic of the sleeping state—a “natural” state that is not yet self-conscious and in which we are liable to mistake dreams for waking life. In waking life proper, however, dreams are known *as* dreams in the same way that daydreams are not taken for real but are recognized as “subjective fancies”: “If he has not lost his reason, he knows . . . that these fancies are only fancies because they conflict with his present totality” (1971, §398A, 70). Analogously, if death is to be known *as* death, a similar “totality” or universal ought to be working through particular individuals, parts in relation to an assimilating whole. “Truth” here is tied to reason and cognition in relation to a totality, to a whole that guarantees a normative proportionality of its particular parts. In the “Anthropology,” under the general heading “disease,” Hegel will cite a host of dubious “pathologies”: for example, the “magic” tie that appears in so-called questionable friendships, “especially female friends with delicate nerves (a tie which may go so far as to show ‘magnetic’ phenomena)” (§405, 95), and “the oncoming of puberty in girls, pregnancy, also St. Vitus’s dance, and the moment of approaching death” (§406A, 106).<sup>2</sup> Even everyday synaesthesia is pathologized as a regressive immediacy by which “one sees and hears with the fingers, and especially with the pit of the stomach, etc.” (§406, 105). “Pathologies” such as these—deviant and deficient lives—are the *sine qua non* of normative life and the material and rhetorical precursors of the life that will be wielded, wagered, and in some sense sacrificed in the process of mutual recognition.

#### ANTHROPOLOGY

Mediating organismic life and the self-conscious life of mutual recognition, is the concept of soul as the intermediate whole, which Hegel adapts from Aristotle. The soul on this view is an intermediate or transitional “totality,” an early instantiation of “reason” and self-consciousness in terms that draw on organic nature and yet prefigure the subjective life of a phenomenology of spirit. The three dialectical moments of soul in the “Anthropology” are as follows: the natural (*natürliche*) soul, a qualitatively determined soul as natural form (manifesting, e.g., racial and national differences); the feeling (*fühlende*) soul, soul negated, soul entering into opposition with its natural form (e.g., states of insanity, somnambulism); and finally, the actual

(*wirkliche*) soul, the outcome of earlier conflicts: the “triumph of the soul over its corporeity, the process of reducing, and the accomplished reduction of, this corporeity to a sign, to the representation of soul” (1971, §387A, 27).<sup>3</sup> The final moment of actuality prepares the way for consciousness to utterly dominate the corporeal semiotically, since the body here is now treated as a signifier under the purview and manipulation of the intellect, corporeity being a unitary sign of the soul, the “corporeity of self-consciousness.” It is here, perhaps, that Hegel struggles most to achieve a smooth transition from nature to spirit.

In the first dialectical moment, the natural soul is figured as closest to nature, a physical substance whose life is the life of the planet, the seasons, daily cycles. Hegel writes that this life of nature “shows itself only in occasional strain or disturbance of mental tone” (§392, 36)—a disturbance of mood (*Stimmung*) that calls attention to itself in an as yet inchoate manner in the form of a “dim awareness” (§390A, 35) that prefigures consciousness of self. The natural soul is somewhat romantically pictured as living in naïve harmony with nature, and yet there are breaks in this immanence, instances of primitive or quasi knowledge. “In nations less intellectually emancipated,” he writes, “we find amid their superstitions and aberrations of imbecility a few real cases of such sympathy, and on that foundation what seems to be marvellous prophetic vision of coming conditions and of events arising therefrom” (§392, 37). Although these natural souls are submerged in nature and “imbecility,” from time to time they might exhibit the power of prophecy—some small freedom from nature in the occasional ability to presage events, non-self-reflexively. These moments of relative transcendence are explained by the “restlessness of the concept,” a restlessness that, more than soul, proves to be the *primum mobile*.<sup>4</sup> It was back in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Nature* that Hegel drew a clear distinction between states of intuition and intelligence proper: it is the distinction between non-self-reflective spirit and self-reflective spirit. The dialectical union of intuition and thought through their sublation (*Aufhebung*) is the telos of spirit and cannot be admitted as an earlier, primitive state. Although it might be tempting, Hegel remarks, to see this unity already in nature, it is only prefigured there: “A natural unity of thought and intuition is that of the child and the animal, and this can at most be called feeling, not spirituality” (1970, §246A, 9). “Feeling,” he writes, is “the finding of self in self. . . . Each member has within itself the entire soul (*Seele*), is not self-subsistent but exists only as bound up with the whole” (§337A, 277). “Feeling” is nature’s

unity, and yet we have already encountered the work of this term in the sex relation and the sexual reproduction of the species.

Hegel's section on the feeling soul—the second moment of the dialectic—occupies more than fifty dense pages of the “Anthropology.” It is essential here that we distinguish between *Gefühl*, “feeling,” and its more primitive counterpart *Empfindung*, “sensation,” although the two terms are often used interchangeably in ordinary German speech. For Hegel, sensation is immediate, how the soul “senses” *in-itself*, whereas, through feeling proper, the soul is said to “feel” *for-itself*; the former is passive while the latter is active (relatively speaking). Hegel's description of *Gefühl* is notable: “We do not speak of the sensation—but of the feeling (sense) of right [*Gefühl des Rechts*], of self [*Selbstgefühl*]” (1971, §402, 88). In other words, sensation is immediate, but implicit in feeling is the feeling of right and the feeling of self. This leads Hegel to conclude that “it is we ourselves who feel” (“*Gefühl zugleich mehr auf die Selbstschkeit, die darin ist, geht*”) (§402, 88).<sup>5</sup> With this distinction, Hegel has inserted a reflexive “we ourselves” or *Selbstschkeit* into the dialectic—a nascent self-consciousness that is not quite “selfness” but approximates the self as a “self-like-ness” to be found in feeling. Through the language of “self” and “right,” we are introduced to terms that have meaning only in a properly social context—not immediately, but, importantly, mediately; my “feeling of right” has a referent and my purported “feeling of self” must draw its determinateness in and through others. We might say that feeling “personalizes” what is taken as “natural,” problematically naturalizing the social dimensions—here designated as “feelings”—of race, nation, sex, and gender. The section on the feeling soul is further divided into three subsections, each with its own place in the dialectic: At the earliest, most immediate stage, Hegel again speaks of “magic,” “a magical influence on objects, . . . an immediate influence of one mind on another” (§405A, 97). But even here, Hegel's language is the language of pathology: “The child is, of course, infected (*inficiert* [sic]) in a preponderantly *immediate* manner by the mind of the adults it sees around it.” This “infection” stimulates a supposedly healthy response in the child: “This relation is *mediated* by consciousness and by the incipient independence of the child” (§405A, 97). “Incipience” looks forward, embodying a normalizing teleology that must be taken on faith; meanwhile, the transition exorcises its material and rhetorical conditions—deficiencies, pathologies, brute feelings (*Empfindungen*), “magic” ties, and “magnetic” phenomena.

Animal magnetism is once again a transitional figure in these pages. Animal magnetism is clearly situated in a primitive realm, and yet it

“presages” the later transition to spirit and self-reflexive consciousness; it is “a lively and visible confirmation of the underlying unity of soul, and of the power of its ‘ideality’” (§379, 4). Insofar as it implies an incipient “ideality,” animal magnetism represents “a stumbling-block to finite thought” (§379A, 5). In this state, the self “no longer retains its self-mastery” (§406A, 106), which seems to be the condition for certain forms of knowledge, such as metal- and water divining, for a “generalized sense,” such as in the pit of the stomach, and for all manner of visionary seeing. As evidence that these conditions are sometimes merely physiological, Hegel cites the case of one Brother Nicolai, whose (schizophrenic?) visions were finally cured “by the application of leeches to the rectum” (§406A, 109). But Hegel does not conclude that *all* forms of clairvoyance, somnambulism, catelepsy, mesmerism, magnetism, and psychic rapport (a kind of intrapsychic transitivity) with others are either hoaxes or have an organic etiology: “These phenomena,” he notes, “can occur both as a result of physical illness and also in the case of otherwise healthy persons, in virtue of a certain particular disposition” (§406A, 115).

Once again, it is the *particularity* of these individuals, the “particular disposition,” almost atomistic, that in principle refuses assimilation in an organizing whole—this is what makes them pathological, for “otherwise,” Hegel writes, they would be healthy. But this small word “otherwise” does a great deal of work here, calling attention to the accidental nature—and the natural accident—of disease and other abnormalities. Here too the sex relation and the differentiation of the sexes from the *Philosophy of Nature* are developed as incipient—yet magical and pathological—forms of self-consciousness. “Strong men are especially qualified to magnetize female persons,” Hegel writes, because the natural “disposition” of the female will is “weaker and less independent” (§406A, 117). What manner of “magnetization” does Hegel have in mind? A strange coupling of organic body and soul: “During magnetic somnambulism, the soul’s activity descends into the brain of the reproductive system, namely, into the ganglia.” Hegel further propounds that the “unusual stimulation of the reproductive system occurring in the magnetic state is seen not only in the mental or spiritual form of clairvoyance but also in the more sensuous shape of sexual desire which becomes more or less active, especially in female persons” (§406A, 118). Curiously, then, it is the pathological that negatively characterizes normal components of the sex relation and, thus, the continuation of the species. The vagaries of organismic (animal) life yield to the vitality of self-consciousness, pathological life having been destined to be negated by

consciousness all along. It is perhaps less that we overcome our organismic nature than that we self-consciously “discipline” our deficient bodies into “service and obedience” (as the master “disciplines” the body of the slave in the struggle for recognition).

Although Hegel concedes that the intellect is confounded by a truth that is readily “manifest in sensuous existence itself” (§379A, 7)—a truth that is manifest in deficient and pathological life, we might say—he argues that this does not authorize us to search in the sensual for moral and religious principles (§380, 7). “Mind, it is true, is already mind at the outset, but it does not yet know that it is” (§385A, 21). Self-reflexive knowledge entails the struggle for recognition, in incipient but increasingly self-reflective forms-of-life. But there are nevertheless leaps (magic? faith?) at work, because “mind [Spirit] does not proceed *in a natural manner* from Nature” (§381A, 14; emphasis mine). This suggests that something must be negated in nature, causing nature to transcend itself, but this agency is not natural, does not proceed *from* nature; rather, negation proceeds from the restless temporality of what will be, as if anxiously anticipating some future moment, what will have been. “What in animal life as such is *genus*, is in the sphere of mind *rationality*” (§396A, 56). But the progression is legible, in each moment, only retrospectively, through the threat of regression, the figure of disease, pathology, the sex relation, death: “Mind is also soul and as *soul*, lowers itself to the status of natural, immediate being, of a passive being” (§397A, 67). The transition from nature to spirit is repeatedly metaphorized as enlightenment, a coming to day, a breakthrough, a birth or even conception, a waking: “Waking is brought about by the *lightning-stroke* of subjectivity *breaking through* the form of mind’s immediacy” (§397A, 67; emphasis mine). In the sex relation, once again, the animal relies on a “self-feeling” to promote union with the other sex: “Each sex feels in the other not an alien externality but its own self, or the genus common to both” (§381A, 10). Where the animal does not yet *know*, self-reflexively, but merely *feels* the commonality of its genus, we must ascribe a certain agency to the figure of genus itself, magically animated by the concept and thus justifying its discipline—the imposition of conscious content over organismic life-form. The plant, a lower life-form, Hegel describes as *rehearsing* sexuality, as it were, since the plant’s sexuality is all form, no content.

In “The Process of the Genus” from the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel had briefly distinguished love from mere sex relation. In the sex relation, the creature itself perishes, just as the butterfly does, dying immediately after copulation. “Love, on the other hand,” he explains, “is the feeling in which

the self-seeking of the individual and its separated existence is negated, and the individual form (*Gestalt*) therefore perishes and cannot preserve itself" (1970, §369A, 414). In the love relation, there is likewise a perishing, but it is the death of "the individual form." If a life remains, it has become another form-of-life. The creature's life, in love, is nevertheless relegated to the natural *immediacy* of feeling. Love is a unifying power, but it costs the individual his or her self-seeking and separate existence. Self-seeking and separateness find their destiny, as it were, in a self that no longer seeks for itself, for it finds itself in the immediacy of the loving union, answered by a feeling. Yet we must recall that for Hegel, sexual difference—and the process of sex differentiation—posits the sexes, man and woman, as not only dimorphic but as necessarily embodying oppositional forces, efficacy and stimulus (also see Irigaray 1996, 20). The ostensibly organismic trope of gender difference resurfaces as a normative force that cuts across both nature and spirit: "The difference between men and women," Hegel states in the *Philosophy of Right*, "is like that between animals and plants" (1967, §166A, 263). Like the plant whose "truth" was its "death" in animal life, woman, too, must find her death in the life of the universal, man. Women, then, are not properly self-conscious because "women regulate their actions not by the demands of universality but by arbitrary inclinations and opinions" (§166A, 264); in other words, while men are organic wholes whose integrity points to a correct proportionality, women are inherently disproportional, figures of disease, threat, death. Luce Irigaray has offered a trenchant critique of the Hegelian system on these grounds:

It is inaugurated by a sacrifice, a tragedy, an exclusion, and by the opening of another space-time than that of nature. Within the family, then the race, then the nation, something is hidden that allows the articulation of spirit, of time, of history. This something is the maternal-feminine that invisibly continues its work of underpinning the existence of the whole social body. (1993, 133–34)

The "maternal-feminine" is thus the "inclusive exclusion" or the "constitutive outside" of Hegelian spirit, and something spirit must perpetually disavow through the (masculine) universal. Woman becomes synonymous with life, and life with deficiency and pathology; in Irigaray's terms, it is she who must be wielded, wagered, and sacrificed in the process of mutual (male) recognition—sacrificed but not killed, for she must be disciplined, conscripted into the sexual reproductive service of civil society and state.

Unsurprisingly, then, love is one of recognition's greatest ruses. In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel describes love in the section on the family: love is immediate, not self-reflective; love is "mind's feeling of its own unity" (1967, §158, 110) as a member of the family unit. "Love means in general terms the consciousness of my unity with another. . . . Love, however, is a *feeling*, i.e. ethical life *in the form of something natural*" (§158A, 261; emphasis mine). Love, because it is feeling, is therefore destined to disappear in the state, where unity becomes mediated by *law*. And this notwithstanding the vestiges, a perennial harking back, much in the way that diseased or maternal-feminine bodies stand as the rhetorical and material conditions of the healthy (male) body (politic). When love becomes "rational and known" (§158A, 261), it is no longer love, no longer affective, but *juridical*—now a content, no longer an empty affective form. While Hegel admits that affective love presents "the most tremendous contradiction" to our understanding, reason soon enters as an ethical *ought*: "Love . . . is the most tremendous contradiction; the Understanding cannot resolve it since there is nothing more stubborn than this repeated point (*Punktualität*) of self-consciousness which is negated and which nevertheless I ought to possess as affirmative" (§158A, 261–62). "I *ought* to affirmatively possess "my" love, submit it to a rooting out or render it a pure abstraction, much as "I" did to life. "Love is at once the propounding and the resolving of this contradiction" (§158A, 262). Love is "resolved" or assimilated, as it were, into the universal fluidity of a greater civil society and ethical life.<sup>6</sup> The sex relation disappears in Hegel's text, rooted out and abstracted, only later to figure negatively, as the renunciation of "chastity" and "celibacy"—and sacralized by a discussion of "holiness" and the sanctity of marriage.

Holy "love" becomes an ethical injunction in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where it is described as the overcoming of passion. Hegel calls this "active love": "Active love . . . aims at removing an evil from someone and being good to him" (1977, ¶425, 255). Yet my being ethically good to him is figured as my actively removing an evil from him; even the positive content of "active" love is defined as negation. Moreover, if I am to remove an evil, I must have knowledge: "For this purpose I have to distinguish what is bad for him, what is the appropriate good to counter this evil, and what in general is good for him; i.e. I must love him *intelligently*" (¶425, 255). Love, in this case, is none other than the transformation of the other through a sort of ethical violence that presumes my knowledge of what his good is—a presumption of which I can be certain, if I act in conformity with "the intelligent universal action of the state" (¶425, 255). Love is thus regulatory,

disciplining, the vigilant political extirpation of passionate feeling. Similarly, in the *Philosophy of Mind*, the passions of “love and friendship” are said to remain in the young man only as vestiges of his youth, and Hegel opposes this juvenile ideal to the ideal of “a universal state of the world.” And so in Hegel’s lengthy discussion of bodily feelings we find “anger, revenge, envy, shame, remorse” (1971, §401A, 83), but no mention of love. The reader must assume that these particular feelings represent a higher order than love and that by the time we feel anger, revenge, envy, shame, or remorse, love itself has already been sublated. These feelings are associated with specific parts of the body: grief manifests as abdominal illness, the head is the seat of the intellect, and the heart is claimed by anger and courage—not by love, as we might expect (§401A, 84–85). When love does appear, it is often the object of ridicule, as when, in describing the various “national particularities” of the “natural soul,” Hegel declares that “not infrequently Italian women and maidens have died instantaneously from grief over an unhappy love affair” (§394A, 48). If the immediacy of natural organismic life must be “rooted out” (*vertilgen*, which is itself an organic metaphor; the word means “to exterminate vermin” or “to kill weeds”), it is in the service of ethical life—the life of the state, collective life, political life. Individual life must be disciplined, and it must be placed in the service of—and made obedient to—a life that we have come to designate in our day as biopolitical.

#### SUBLIMATING LIFE

In Hegel we find at least two different kinds of *bios*, or “life”: organismic nature and spirit, along with their disparate, perhaps incommensurable, figurations in relation to death and the process of recognition. It might be tempting to conceive of these as two poles along a vital continuum, but a continuum implies differences of degree rather than of kind. We do not find in Hegel *degrees* of value (less or more) but, effectively, classifications, kinds, or forms-of-life: some lives are imbued with value and enjoy universal content, while others are deficient yet serviceable particular life-forms. We might imagine here that the ethical “cut” bears some relation to universalizing and particularizing forces, respectively—a distinction that resonates with but that is not quite equivalent to society or the polis in relation to the individual. The universal—the “whole”—carries the weight not of a collective or *socius* but of ideology, religious revelation, or transcendent truth, which co-opt the terms of critique. Hegel’s binary division of sexes, male and female, offers a salient instance of *difference* reified as *kind*;

however, this division is also a troubling reminder that universal valuations do not easily map onto the particular lives of a species or a society or a race or a nation. The “pathological” figures I have discussed occupy a liminal realm and in my view represent a crisis for the universalizing valuation of “life.” In this, I believe they are productive particularities, carnal moments of critique, in flesh and bone.

This ancient twofold division of life is probably well known to readers at least since Giorgio Agamben’s (1999) discussion of *bios* and *zoē*. Here, however, I would like to cite the description offered by Martin Heidegger, from his lecture of February 16, 1934, at the University of Freiburg:

The Greeks . . . used *bios* in a twofold sense. First, in the sense of biology, the science of life. Here we think of the organic growth of the body, glandular activity, sexual difference, and the like. . . . Another sense of *bios* for the Greeks is the course of a life, the history of a life, more or less in the sense that the word “biography” still has for us today. *Bios* means here human history and existence—so there can be no *bios* of animals. *Bios*, as human *bios*, has the peculiar distinction of being able either to stand above the animal or to sink beneath it. (2015, 51)

My choice of Heidegger is not innocent. His terminology is reminiscent of Hegel’s—life “sunk” in organic nature (Hegel’s *versenkte Bewußtsein*), in “glandular activity,” and “sexual difference,” set off against the sublime human life of history and existence, which “stands above” animality as culture, spirit. For both philosophers it is possible to rise above animal *bios* or to sink beneath it, which I take to mean below bestial life. Both subscribe to a similar understanding of world history, whose engine is metaphysical, universalizing. In Heidegger’s case, it is now abundantly clear that his philosophy of this period informed his involvement in National Socialism and his belief that the Führer state was the culmination of world history. Heidegger writes:

Homeland expresses itself in rootedness in the soil and being bound to the earth. But nature works on the human being, roots him in the soil, only when nature belongs as an environment, so to speak, to the people whose member that human being is. The homeland becomes the way of Being of a people only when the

homeland becomes expansive, when it interacts with the outside  
—when it becomes a state. (55)

The life-and-death struggle for recognition easily becomes *Mein Kampf* and *Krieg*, “expansion” justified as a need for *Lebensraum*—room for life itself, war and extermination in the name of life, race, nation, “the Being of a people.” As for Hegel, we might compare his description of the Terror as a necessary part of the French Revolution. While he acknowledges its “pure horrifying domination,” he nevertheless compares Robespierre to the mythical Theseus, who founded Athens. “Justice” and “discipline” sometimes require such tyrannical force, he argues, and in the end, terror is “necessary and just, insofar as it constitutes and sustains the state as this actual individual” (Hegel 1983, 155; also see Schmidt 1998). This is the sovereign force necessary to bind together individuals into a republic, a civil society. My life—and ultimately the life of the state as it is expressed through me—often compels the destruction of the other, whether I actively engage in war or am merely complicit, as a noncombatant citizen, a taxpayer, a consumer. My suggestion here is that the master-slave dialectic of domination and subjugation is never truly subverted or reconciled—unless under the “conceptual” cloak, the ruse, the magical metaphysics, of world history. The human price of this ruse is life itself, during which individuals perish in the name of the nation, the race, the species.

The passages that I have cited from Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* and “Anthropology” may of course be of interest to historiographers and philosophers of history; to do justice to Hegel, these texts need to be contextualized, read in relation to the history and science of the early nineteenth century. Here, in a much narrower vein, my interest concerns the textual rhetorics of life and death circa 1830, particularly in the frame of the world-historical shift underway, as Foucault describes it, from sovereign power to biopolitics:

One of the greatest transformations political right underwent in the nineteenth century was . . . that sovereignty’s old right—to *take life or let live*— . . . came to be complemented by a new right which does not erase the old right but which does penetrate it, permeate it. . . . It is the power to “*make*” *live* and “*let*” *die*. (Foucault 2003b, 241; emphasis mine)

Hegel is writing precisely at this historical juncture, during the transition from sovereign to biopolitical power. In the passages I have cited, we can at times discern both forces—sovereign and biopolitical—locked in ideological struggle over the right to life and death. Even if we force a rapprochement between Hegel and Foucault, Hegel is not easily classified as a “biopolitician,” despite the world-historical procession of civil society, state, and ultimately art, revealed religion, and philosophy (read: theology), which seize control of living beings in the name of the universalizing concept, sublimating and sublating them, and notwithstanding the terrors of human history—“necessary and just”—whether guillotines or gas chambers, suicide bombers or smart bombs. Nevertheless, insofar as Hegel holds to a notion of power or force—necessity or justice—his philosophy remains in my view a question of sovereignty, the power “to take life or let live.” In the *Phenomenology*’s life-and-death struggle for recognition and self-consciousness, for instance, we find that life is already on the scene, a substantial givenness; the life-and-death struggle amounts to the sovereign power to take the other’s life—through the agency of fear, death, the rule of the sword (*gladius dei*)—or simply to let him live. And death, in Hegel, is little more than “a metaphor for the power of negativity. Just as negativity is necessary for the constitution of positive reality, so death is needed for the constitution of life and of spirit’s power” (Yovel 2005, 128). Ultimately, for Hegel sovereignty is located in the Christian God, revealed as absolute spirit, and so Hegel’s denigration of natural *bios* is in this sense hardly surprising. For the faithful, death has lost its sting, and the life that matters is the life everlasting, in the kingdom of God. Indeed, we find the trinity of God, Son, and Holy Spirit itself played out in the very language of recognition, as God comes to self-consciousness through the other, his Son, and unites in the Holy Spirit through the community of Christians.<sup>7</sup>

Judith Butler has brought Hegel and Foucault into dialogue, and it is her work that inspires me here. “Although Foucault’s vocabulary ought not to be conflated with Hegel’s, his concern with the double-edged implications of subjection (*assujétissement*: the simultaneous *forming* and *regulating* of the subject) is,” she observes, “in some ways prefigured in Hegel’s account of the bondsman’s liberation. . . . The bondsman in Hegel throws off the apparently external ‘Lord’ only to find himself in an ethical world subjected to various norms and ideals” (1997, 32; also see Butler 1987, 217–29). The language of “norms” and “ideals,” and of Foucauldian theory in general, is appropriate. But whereas Butler will look “forward” in the *Phenomenology* to offer a reading of the unhappy consciousness—the section that succeeds

“Lordship and Bondage” and presumes it—my own approach has been “backward,” focusing on sections that systemically precede “Lordship and Bondage” and that are therefore presumed *by* it as its material or rhetorical conditions of possibility. And whereas Butler focuses on Foucault’s treatment of *disciplinary* norms, my reading is *biopolitical*. The implications are several: in Foucault’s terms, discipline is “addressed to bodies” (2003b, 242); it is an “individualizing” power and thus treats the “individual-as-body” (243, 245), much as sovereign power does through the fearful spectacle of the scaffold, for example. In contradistinction, biopolitics is “massifying” and treats “man-as-a-living-being” or “man-as-species” (243, 242). If the individual body figures at all in biopolitics, it is only insofar as it is a statistical moment of an aggregate “population,” or, to borrow a Hegelian term, the “instrument” of a particular (spiritual) order. Biopolitics is thus depersonalizing and deindividualizing and intimately connected with the techniques of neoliberalism: “forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures. . . . In a word, security mechanisms have to be installed around the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life” (246; on neoliberalism, also see Foucault 2008).

In this article I have focused on Hegel’s “monstrous” or abnormal forms-of-life, relegated to nature, to feelings, to souls, and incarnated by bodies through the sex relation, species and race, gender difference, and disease. Similar “monsters” populate Foucault’s discussions on the early nineteenth century. He understands these as the monstrous products of medicine, psychiatry, and criminology—discursive domains that became increasingly biopolitical across the century. Abnormality is measured for Foucault according to a norm that is productive and pathologizing rather than strictly repressive: “The norm’s function is not to exclude and reject. Rather, it is always linked to a positive technique of intervention and transformation, to a sort of normative project” (2003a, 50). In Foucault we find a rich description of abnormality and deviance from the norm, particularly around bodies and disease, sexuality and childhood (“the masturbator”), mental illness and criminality—all reminiscent of Hegel’s descriptions and relegated by him to the less advanced life-forms of animal nature and deemed not quite, or only problematically, belonging to human consciousness. We might say that Hegel’s monsters are equally subject to a norm, to the normative project of the world-historical concept, which, in civil society and the state, will prove to be juridicizing. In recounting Hegel’s “pathologies,” I admit to some small guilty pleasure: we are apt to look askance on Hegel’s descriptions—of race, disease, women—to treat them as products

of his time, to jauntily dismiss them as unenlightened prejudice, and to imagine that we as a culture have progressed beyond such nonsense. And yet we produce our own monsters and turn our faces from them, to the extent that we need them as inclusive-exclusions of our particular form-of-life. In other words, this article is not intended as a vulgar critique of Hegel, or even of the dangers of his world-historical system, which are well known; rather, it is reflexive in intent and asks us to interrogate the terms of our own self-recognition, to find some purchase for a critique of the present, of ourselves, and of the world-historical thrust of neoliberal biopolitics.

I have suggested that the terms of recognition today are biopolitical, which is to say that these terms—self-consciousness and our reflective consciousness *of* that self-consciousness in and through the reciprocal recognition of others—are in thrall today to a particular (biopolitical) discourse on life. Perhaps this is to say no more than that the terms by which the “I” relates to itself, as ethical subject, are the terms it has been given and has taken up in relation to others. For Hegel, this entails the “negation” of those pathological forms-of-life that consciousness supersedes in the world-historical spirit, which “works” in and through determinate forms, such as “you” and “I.” The temporality is tricky, almost retrospective; we actualize a destiny that was implicit all along. There is no life as such in Hegel but merely forms-of-life, moments of consciousness, shapes (*Gestalten*). And so in the life-and-death struggle “I” am enjoined to wield, to wager, and in some sense to sacrifice “my” life as a determinate form. As Butler explains, “The concept of Life appears [in both the senses of “manifests” and “seems”], then, to reconcile the moments of determinateness and negativity, which, conceived from a static point of view appeared only paradoxically related” (1987, 36). Along the subject’s path to self-consciousness and mutual recognition, life becomes substance—life itself—but this understanding is deficient because its perspective is static, informed by “being” rather than ek-static becoming. “At this point,” Butler writes, “Hegel’s [static] subject concludes that the proper object of desire is Life, and subscribes to a primitive form of pantheism which attributes creative powers to the objective world” (36). This is of course a ruse, and it is this form-of-life that must be negated by the mortifying and fearful (*ängstlich*) agency of death. Hegel’s gloss on this section in the *Encyclopaedia* is meant to correct a misreading of the life-and-death struggle from the *Phenomenology*:

To prevent any possible misunderstandings with regard to the standpoint just outlined, we must here remark that the fight for

recognition pushed to the extreme here indicated [i.e., death] can only occur in the natural state, where men exist only as single, separate individuals; but it is absent in civil society and the State because here the recognition for which the combatants fought already exists. (1971, §432A, 172)

It is unclear how to conceive of men “in the natural state,” for these beings may have self-consciousness in the immediate form of “I = I,” but they would not yet know the truth of self-consciousness in mutual relation with other men. Are we meant to recall the “death by violence” that characterizes the struggle of the species from the *Philosophy of Nature*? Notwithstanding this paradox, the passage suggests that the “work” of death has already been accomplished by civil society and the state and that the struggle is in part rhetorical or symbolic, not material. The struggle appears in the past tense: the combatants fought already. “What dominates the state,” Hegel explains, “is the spirit of the people, custom, and law” (§432A, 172)—and these forms are meant to furnish the terms of recognition, a content presumably cleansed of state violence. Indeed, it presumes somewhat preposterously that the state is the coming of God into the world, as Hegel declares in the *Philosophy of Right*.

The temporal paradox here, of course, is that these “higher” forms (civil society, state) presume the life-and-death struggle for recognition as their ontological condition of possibility—not just the struggle of individual subjects but also of species, race, nation. “Desire” (*Begierde*) is the engine that drives the struggle for recognition, though this slippery term must be applied to animal as well as human life. William Wallace translates *die Begierde* as “appetite or instinctive desire” (1971, §426, 167) to call attention to its uses in German. And yet many Hegel scholars read desire as being solely at the service of human *bios* or culture to the exclusion of animal or organismic life. In this way, the life-and-death struggle for recognition becomes a humanizing metaphor, and its relation to real lives, real deaths, and real domination represents a failure at the level of community rather than an atavistic urge on the part of the individual. Butler, for example, argues that “desire is . . . not originally an effort of acquisition or domination, but emerges in such forms only when a community based on the principles of reciprocal recognition has not yet been developed” (1987, 243n18). This reading of Hegel responds to critics who imagine the “origins” that Hobbes describes, the *bellum omnium contra omnes* and the emergence of the social contract; Butler rejects this thesis, denies this origin,

and rather than posit another, turns to Hegel's teleology and the figure of "development." Here, community (Hegel's civil society or state) is imagined as a resource upon which the desiring subject draws, providing both form and content for mutual recognition and facilitating an integration of the particular into the universal fluidity of greater civil society, ethical life, and finally, absolute spirit. Again, not only is there a temporal paradox, but more troubling still, Hegel's teleology presumes a shared belief in a Christian God (and state), a sovereign power who will reveal himself in the fullness of messianic or eschatological time, through "the plan of Providence" (Hegel 1971, §549, 277). It is this universalizing destiny, a theological and teleological conceit, that Hegel draws on to make the ethical cut and to distinguish human life (*bios*) from animal life, spiritual life from organismic life. The normative project proves to be faith based.

In contradistinction, recognition on biopolitical terms engenders a life-and-death struggle that is more than metaphorical. Indeed, it is *demande*d by—rather than resolved in—community, civil society, and state, and to be clear, I do consider this an ethical failure on the part these collective governing bodies. But we cannot quite fault them on Hegel's terms: indeed, they have developed highly effective principles of reciprocal recognition—biopolitical principles, which are increasingly manifest in the spirit of the people, custom, and law. These principles, too, are faith based, providential, destined, and yet they are godless. The "destiny" of biopolitics is postsovereign and post-Christian—and while its *bios* falls on the side of the organism, biology, species, and sex, it is this *bios* that is exalted as human destiny in biopolitics. I suspect that the effects of biopolitics are well known. We witness, for example, the speculative futures—the "making live"—of biomedicine, cloning, and genomics; the state regulation of life's beginnings and ends; the mitigation of risk and risk management; the normalization of populations through public health and hygiene initiatives; the "responsibilization" of individuals, which paradoxically binds them ever more intimately to "expert service providers"; the securitization and criminalization and the hyperincarceration of "deviant" life; racialization and racism. We "make live and let die." Death is vanquished, for some of us, while pathologized others are "allowed" to die or, rather, to "perish" in the name of life itself. Abnormal life, the undead, the sick, the dying, the weak, black lives, the risky, the criminal, the queer—these lives call for containment, and populate liminal spaces, much like the creatures that haunt the pages of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* and "Anthropology," making these texts a fable of sorts for biopolitical life. They are the casualties, collateral damage, negative externalities

of biopolitical life; they die, much as they do in Hegel, forgotten by world history but necessary to it—and likewise they are thought to “suffer no absolute injustice” (1971, §435A, 175). In some respects, then, with biopolitics it appears that the Hegelian system has been inverted and that world history has been seized by nature rather than spirit. In other words, natural *bios* has now become the “goal,” the telos, toward which our universalizing world history strives.

I opened this article by citing Marx and Engels: “Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life” (1970, 47). It is a polemical statement attacking Hegel’s view that life is a function of spirit or mind (*Geist*), rather than *Geist*’s necessary material or even rhetorical condition. Material (and maternal) bodies, and their slavish labors, are more or otherwise than the “corporeity of self-consciousness.” Readers of the *German Ideology* will know, however, that its authors are not advocating a naïve or reactionary inversion of hegemonies. It is not that life itself determines consciousness in some necessary or linear fashion. As Andrzej Warminski explains,

Whatever Marx may mean by all the formulations that suggest a reversal or an inversion of the terms of a hierarchical opposition—like “consciousness” and “life,” for instance—the one thing he *cannot* mean is a *mere* inversion, a *mere* reversal. . . . [I]t is easy enough to see that for a dialectical thought, it makes no difference which determines which, as long as their relation remains one of determination. (1995, 120)

Biopolitics, however, has no understanding of dialectical thought.<sup>8</sup> It effects a “mere” inversion of consciousness and life while retaining all the justificatory thrust of world history. The *bios* of biopolitics is at once the most concrete and natural instantiation of bodily, organismic life—and the most sacred, the most metaphysical, the most fabular. It represents a new evangelism, a messianism without religion. The ancient Greek division of *bios* into human and nonhuman, which Heidegger describes so well, is conflated here in a peculiar way: if the distinction no longer holds, the destiny of organismic *bios* is not only to take on sacred dimensions but to produce pathological life and nonlife as its constitutive exclusions—monstrosities that must be “allowed” to die for the sake of life.

I think it is correct to say that recognition is made possible only within community, in and through the forms-of-life that are available to be taken up and lived. Consciousness can intervene here, dialectically, and has the duty

to do so, with the understanding that community is only ever fragmentary and fragile and indeed must be, for otherwise it would be closed and would have no history, no future. My worry, however, is that within the structures of biopolitics, only an etiolated form of mutual recognition is possible because the terms of self-consciousness, of self-relation, have been seized on by a (biopolitical) discourse of the *bios*, and it is this that now drives the world-historization of the human. The consequences for political life in civil society and the state are dire, deathly. My reading of biopolitics is perhaps more alarmist in tone than that of those theorists who, at times, hold to the promise of an “affirmative” biopolitics (e.g., Campbell 2011, Esposito 2008, and Hardt and Negri 2005), because unlike them, I take seriously the world-historical thrust of neoliberal biopolitics, even if it remains, propositionally, as elusive as Hegel’s absolute spirit.<sup>9</sup> If we “recognize” one another as desiring subjects, it is now life that we desire, life to which we are intimately attached and toward which we ek-statically strive, life as the means and the end—the terms and the terminus—of reflective self-consciousness and the basis of any possible rhetoric of recognition.

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## NOTES

1. Hegel gives a description of the “whole” in the *Science of Logic*: “although the whole is equal to the parts it is not equal *to them* as parts; the whole is reflected unity, but the parts constitute the determinate moment or the *otherness* of the unity and are the diverse manifold. The whole is not equal to them as this self-subsistent diversity, but to them *together*. But this their ‘together’ is nothing else but their unity, the whole as such. The whole is, therefore, in the parts only equal to itself. . . . [T]he tautology that *the whole as whole* is equal not to the parts but to *the whole*” (1999, 516). The whole is something “extra,” as it were, by virtue of its reflective unity, its “togetherness,” which occurs in the judgment that some other nameable thing is there in the specific organization of the manifold. “The whole as whole” is materially dependent upon but spiritually independent of its parts.

2. St. Vitus’s dance is otherwise known as chorea, a disorder in which there is involuntary twitching of the muscles.

3. Note the biologized/naturalized categories of race and nation in the first dialectical moment. These “natural” racial differences are then, according to Hegel, idealized by Spirit: first, the racial “feeling” is produced by a soul informed by Nature and natural difference, only later to become ideal categories of thought and intellectual difference.

## hegel's pathology of recognition

4. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel explains that “the restlessness and mutability of the external side of the living being is the manifestation in it of the Notion” (1999, 767). This restlessness, according to critics such as Merleau-Ponty, is merely a “manner of speaking: the concept has no restlessness; restlessness belongs to an existent” (1994, 75; translation mine), which is then projected as an abstraction onto nature itself.

5. The *Empfindung/Gefühl* distinction was already drawn back in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* (1970, §351A, 353).

6. Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*, published roughly thirty years before the *Encyclopaedia*, offer a stark contrast to his mature system. Insofar as these works attain to a systematicity, it is love—significantly, sometimes called “life”—that unifies much in the way that spirit will in his later system. “Love” is the unifying principle in both the “Love” fragment (1975, 305) and “The Spirit of Christianity”; it is “life” sometimes in “The Spirit of Christianity” and in “Fragment of a System.” “Life is the union of union and nonunion” (312), Hegel writes famously, a vital way of overcoming dualisms without reducing either term to the other. Life conceived as love is the unification of the universal and the particular: “This correspondence of law and inclination is life and, as the relation of different to one another, love” (215). And finally, he writes: “Of course [love] is ‘pathological, an inclination’; but it detracts nothing from its greatness, it does not degrade it, that its essence is not a domination of something alien to it” (247).

7. Hegel writes that “God the Father (this simple universal or being-within-self), putting aside his solitariness creates Nature (the being that is external to itself, outside of itself), begets a Son (his other ‘I’), but in the power of his love beholds in this Other himself, recognizes his likeness therein and in it returns to unity with himself; but this unity is no longer abstract and immediate, but a concrete unity mediated by the moment of difference; it is the Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father and the Son, reaching its perfect actuality and truth in the community of Christians” (1971, §381A, 12).

8. As much as Francis Fukuyama's (1992) crass appropriation of Hegelian recognition has invited ridicule from scholars, it has proven prophetic for neoliberal world history.

9. For a brief critique of “affirmative” biopolitics, see my “Affirming the Human? The Question of Biopolitics” (2014).



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