

SPONTANEOUS RELIGIOSITY AS A WAY OF LIFE IN THE GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY¹

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ABSTRACT: I follow here some of Robert R. Williams thesis on the relationship between God, nature and human being in Hegel. I try to connect them with a religiosity of the absence of God in contemporary times, and with the absolute and unconditioned respect for the other until the sacrifice of oneself, which make up and legitimize the life and work of many of the contemporary civil associations. These associations pursue global solidarity and Hegel did not attend to them in his account of civil society.

“The subjective element of poverty, or generally the distress, to which the individual is by nature exposed, requires subjective assistance, both in view of the special circumstances, and out of sympathy and love. Here, amidst all general arrangements, morality finds ample room to work. But since the assistance is in its own nature and in its effects casual, the effort of society shall be to discover a general remedy for penury and to do without random help”².

1. Action and coexistence

“What man is, *only history can tell us*.” This important thesis of Wilhelm Dilthey is particularly valid in order to understand what human beings do, how do they live and what they are. Often, human beings associate with each other, join their forces, help one another and unite between them in order to follow a social or political aim. It is not an obvious or undeniable phenomenon³, if you take into account the abundant material available about social Darwinism.

¹ La realización de este trabajo ha sido posible gracias a una ayuda del Plan propio de Investigación de la Universidad de Málaga. Campus de Andalucía Tech.

² Hegel, G.W.F., *Philosophy of Right*, Tranlated by S.W. Dyde, Batoche Books, Ontario, 2001, § 242.

³ Recuérdese la tesis de Maquiavelo: “Se puede hacer esta generalización acerca de los seres humanos: son desagradecidos, volubles, mentirosos e impostores.”

On the other hand it is not clear whether all forms of human cooperation are rooted on self-interest or aggression (Konrad Lorenz). Phenomena like altruism⁴, sacrifice, empathy, consolation, compassion and love also appear to incite a large number of people to co-operate. These phenomena have also been profusely studied from empirical sciences like neurology of emotions, ethology regarding communication of emotions in animals (that is to say their capacity to empathise), or psychology of the personality. This is just one of the views of the problem. It deals with a point of view, which intends to explain the link between motive and human action, and the appearance of the capacities for altruistic action.

This empirical point of view has to be taken into account by philosophical anthropology, which emerged like a synthesis of different and heterogeneous sources of knowledge about the human being⁵. But the theme of this paper will look at a *particular source of human experience of cooperative action*. It is about a source that does not belong to the physical, emotional or cognitive background of the human being, but to its *environmental, cultural or social* one⁶. It is true that these two backgrounds continuously interact⁷, cross and converge, due to the fact that they don't have to be thought as levels or stratum, but as human *dimensions*. It is for this reason that health models and clinical practices have to take into account factors like love interaction⁸, religion or spirituality⁹. Because of this, critical input has to come from the integration of social and natural sciences, and this new science, is a philosophical one. It is philosophy because it has as its object the foundations of those facts, which are explained and determined by empirical sciences. This can be termed philosophical comprehension. And the ground of the facts can be yet nature already freedom.

It seems obvious the influence of beliefs, and religious symbols and practices over altruistic behaviour and its *socialisation*. It's also clear that the attitudes of care and acceptance of the other form part of the moral, religious and philosophical heritage of the East and the West. These are phenomena whose origin must be based in different cultural spheres —religion, science, worldview— that is to say, in freedom. From here, we can affirm that the study of the biological base of *active co-operation, selfless or altruistic* action must be located in the *plasticity* and *indeterminacy* of human tendencies. Due to this plasticity they must be culturally shaped and expressed in an *unlimited variety of customs and institutions*. With freedom appears the historicity of ways of life and the variability of human behaviour, the unpredictable element, that is to say the person, who gives ever more of himself.

There is another cultural sphere, which plays a decisive role in human motivation: the *economy*. Generally, economic models are *based on personal interest*, and the rationality and peculiar agency of *homo oeconomicus*. This is the focus, which dominates the first classic theory of economics: *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith.

⁴ Cfr.: Post, S.G., Underwood, L.G., Schloss, J. P., Hurlbut, W.B., *Altruism and Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy and Religion in Dialogue*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002.

⁵ Cfr.: Choza, J., *Manual de antropología filosófica*, Rialp, Madrid, 1989, cap. I.

⁶ Underwood, L., "The Human Experience of Compassionate Love. Conceptual Mapping and Data from Selected Studies" en Post *et alia*, op. Cit., p. 76.

⁷ Cfr.: Damasio, A., *Descartes' error*, Putnam, New York, 1994

⁸ Cfr.: Mermann, A.C., "Love in the clinical setting" en *Humane Medicine*, 9(4)/1993, pp. 268-273

⁹ Cfr.: Underwood, L.G., "A working model of health: Spirituality and religiosity as resources: Applications for persons with disability" en *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*, 3(3)/1995, pp. 51-71; Kaam, A., *Religion and personality*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964.

It isn't by chance that the *General Theory of Action* was a discipline born in university departments of economy and sociology¹⁰. The economic models try to explain the movements of the human being with factors like the *maximisation* of usefulness and benefit. Mathematical disciplines such as the theory of games, the theory of selection by Von Neumann and Nash, or biological theories such as evolution have made important contributions to the General Theory of Action. However, in these approaches, the problem is the justification of a *non-maximised behaviour*. This is due to the *mechanistic* framework of these models. The rational action, rather than arising from an original and effusive base, which always gives more of itself, which can always contribute with something new, which co-exists with others, it is understood by the General Theory of Action as a *re-action*. In re-action plays a decisive role the *calculation*. A calculate action is not the same as a deliberate, or even an spontaneous action. Mechanically understood, the role that ideals play in the study of rational human action, are marginalised. And besides, it is forgotten with it, the *historical accuracy of such ideals*, and therefore the role of freedom gets blurred.

With respect to the theme, which occupies us, one must understand the ways in which altruism is shown in shared and co-operative projects. These projects release *channels of strength, experiences and feelings*, in our globalised society. I want to observe the convergences and intersections of these new forms of altruism, of co-operation in favour of the other, especially of the most needy person, with *new forms of piety and religion*. These are ways of being faced with the *unknown*, with mystery.

Ways, which bind and join emotions and feelings, which are emerging in the recent transformations in civil society in a globalised world. That is to say, in a world in which economic rationalisation and state planning play a more important and central role in the life of human beings. Thus, two main types of actors appear on the modern global scene: state actors and non-state actors. And quite often, they appear overlapping. An extremely plastic image of the new historical and international scene is the so-called international summits and *Parallels Summits*. In the first, the intergovernmental actors come together. In the second, the affected citizens and activists from different causes like solidarity or peace. These individuals gather around legal and non-profit organisations, and with clear awareness of their independency from any government, that is to say, with clear awareness of not being instruments of the government. The *Parallels Summits* are therefore a gigantic metaphor of change in history, which has given up being political in order to embrace other areas: social and cultural history. And all of this has happened since 1899, the moment when the first *Parallels Summit* took place at the tenth Peace Conference in The Hague.

Between the 1st and 3rd of October 2009, the University of Cambridge held an important international conference, whose subject framework was "The roots of global civil society. From the rise of the press at the fall of the wall". Civil society as a *distinct form* —different of family and State— *of human co-operation* born, as it is known, in the Middle Ages, around the 10th and 11th centuries, with the first trade associations, which form the basis of the contemporary professional associations. But the history of civil society is a history of different *institutions and associations, which put forward*

¹⁰ El texto fundacional de esta disciplina fue editado por dos sociólogos de la universidad de Harvard: Parsons, T., Shils, E., *Toward a General Theory of Action*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1962.

rights which are neither immediate nor easily expressed with strategic calculations of political or economic power.

Furthermore, the history of civil society has been the history of a number of social initiatives, which have been able to interact with the same techno-structure of the politico-economic-media system. It is therefore a history which has come true in professional associations, syndicates, neighbourhood associations, co-operatives, consumer organisations, academic and cultural societies, pressure groups, sports organisations, Think Tanks, social clubs, religious groups, charities, voluntary organisations, etc. And in addition, as the aforementioned conference wanted to study, globalisation has affected civil society by making it transnational or global.

2. Rationalisation and world-disenchantment

In the modern formation of Western States and societies, there seems to be a tension between two of their principles. In a way, these States and societies base their social, economic, legal or political structure and legislation on subjective freedom. To guarantee, extend and effectively achieve freedom for citizens is the principle by which social, moral, economic, legal or political institutions stand. Therefore an institution like marriage cannot be legitimate in the modern era, from a cultural tradition that allows people to come to an agreement independently and voluntarily with those they marry. Free consent is the principle for marriage as a modern institution. The same can be said of the institutions of civil society or these institutions who establish and connect the different powers in modern states.

We can designate this principle of freedom as its *formal principle*, because it organises feelings, experiences and plans for human beings and their activities in the West. So, freedom is the principle by which the western institutions stand. But it *does not stop producing friction with the efficiency principle of the same institutions in our world*. Such a principle was referred to by Max Weber as “*bureaucracy*” and consists of a process of increasing rationalisation of knowledge, experiences and human life.

For example, a very widespread practice between non-Western cultures of regulating violence is called *vendetta*. Bloody revenge is a human practice subject to *very strict rules* in primitive cultures. According to Weber, rationalisation of violence by means of public force, is a similar process to the rationalisation of economic, political or legal fields in Western societies, a process of separation and secularisation of different cultural classes and their respective institutions. As much for Kant as for Hegel, the process of rationalisation ends in a universal legislation, in which one can achieve freedom and recognize the human self-consciousness. Thereby, the process of rationalisation is inseparable from the awareness of the realisation of the universal history, that is to say, the history in a cosmopolitan sense.

This is why bureaucracy should be easily joined together with the principle of subjective freedom, because the history of bureaucracy is the history of rational procedures, and thereby universals, that allow to extend self-consciousness of human freedom, and effectively achieve it in a world and in a history which are not so varied and diverse in values, symbols and views of the world, like the world of the primitive and ancient peoples. With an increasing process of rationalisation, *bureaucracy is a process of increasing disillusionment in the world*. The world is becoming *more*

predictable, more calculable, the future less uncertain. Knowledge is divided up into administrative elements, in areas of knowledge, in which research is bindingly linked to progress and not ‘merely’ to the education of the individual.

This means that knowledge is linked to the discovery of technical means of bureaucratic planning and resolution of social and human problems. This is why contemporary states have taken the form of states of wellbeing, and in their midst an alliance between political, economic and media subsystems has been produced in the form of a technical framework, a *techno-structure*. This techno-structure designs, predicts, and implements the means to achieve human ideals. Thereby, the individual *gives up his ethical, legal, and religious education*, in the German sense of the word “*Bildung*”. Committees of experts advise, and ultimately legitimise the decision, and as a result human beings remain in the unfortunate state of specialists without spirit (those who calculate, the bureaucrats) and sensualists without heart (men to whom the necessity of taking a conscious decision has been removed).

3. Life, community and religion in modern times

Apparently, subjective freedom and bureaucracy are joined, since rationalisation appears as the guarantee and the safeguard in the objective level of subjective freedom. And therefore *Hegel, who is justly seen as the first and principal theorist on modern society and modern forms of life*, was able to assert that the *State is the ethical substance of modern society*, that is to say, the State is responsible for making institutions coherent with the dignity of the human being and which make possible ways of life which are truly humane.

But it is Hegel himself who begins to be aware of the difficulties of the modern states to guarantee and achieve ways of life according to the dignity of human beings. In his *Lectures about Philosophy of Religion* dictated in 1821 and recently published, Hegel’s tone reminds that of Max Weber’s about the disenchantment of the world, and surprised the usual reader of Hegel’s published works. The success of rationalization for Weber involves the replacement of morality by bureaucracy. The actualization of the ideals would compete to the state. For Hegel, the diagnosis is similar, because in the modern world:

“all virtue and right, everything sacred in human institutions and affairs, the majesty of everything that has infinite value —all are cast upon the dung heap... Everything ethical... was destroyed, and there remained to the established order only an entirely bare, external cold authority— only death —from which the degraded... life that was inwardly aware of itself did not recoil”.¹¹

This is a surprising text. Hegel has always been considered the philosopher of the modern state. The end of history becomes the end of political history, the actualization

¹¹ Hegel, G.W.F., *LPR*, 3: 130-131. Cited by Williams, R., *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, p. 315. I follow here some of Williams’ thesis on the relationship between God, nature and human being in Hegel. I try to connect them with a religious absence of God in contemporary times, and with the absolute and unconditioned respect for the other until the sacrifice of oneself, which make up and legitimize the life and work of many of the contemporary civil associations. These associations pursue global solidarity and Hegel did not attend to them in his account of civil society.

of equality and freedom between human beings. But suddenly, it appears “a theological-political critique of modernity”¹², and therefore a critique of the institutions, and among them a critique of the modern institution as such: the State, which seems incapable of guaranteeing the most sacred in human institutions and affairs, that is to say subjective freedom and dignity. Why?

It could be interpreted that the previous text could be related to the paragraphs of the *Philosophy of Law*, in which Hegel addresses the problem of poverty (§§ 241 ff.). There it speaks of the masses, of the islands of poverty and marginalization that the economic mechanism itself generates. Hegel looked at the world during his time and was aware of human exploitation caused by the industrial revolution (§ 198), of excessively harsh workloads (243), of the unwanted effects of industrialization on unemployment and marginalization, and the inability of the legal and economic systems, in order to solve the injury to personal dignity which means to be part of the mob, the mass, the rubbish, of *those human beings and are neither recognized as people nor seen as such by themselves*. But this *lack of recognition* implies a deep *fragmentation in modern society*, which is split between those who have achieved a certain welfare and recognition, and those who lack even the compassion of the first: those who lie in abject misery, the despised, humiliated those who are extremely vile.

Civil society, with independency of its prosperity, as Hegel thinks, it is unable to remedy the problem of poverty (§ 245). The system of necessities itself generates poverty, and therefore destroys ethical life, subjective freedom, and awareness with respect to the moral value of human beings. This is the usual reading. The Marxist theory of alienation is based upon it, and the Hegelian theory that the problem of poverty can only be fixed by public authority, that is to say, by the State.

The focus of Hegel is much like the Weberian polytheism of values. According to Weber, *rationality either scientific or philosophical is unable to resolve the preferred values*. Each person in his practical actions must do this. One should behave, at least, according to the consequences of one's actions. One can act following principles, acting by conviction. In any case, the values to be performed remain absolute but irreconcilable. *It's necessary to choose amongst absolutes*, and this implies to reject absolutes.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* speaks of a similar situation. This is *tragedy*. Tragedy is tragedy, not because of a conflict between right and wrong. It is not a melodrama. It is tragedy because it faces what is right with right, violated law with enacted law, opposes a freedom and a will to another. But in such situation the tragic hero and the chorus included in the conflict can only be perplexed. This *conflict between absolutes*, this *polytheism* destroys the ethical life of the Greeks, because every hero is identified with one of the ethical powers of society, or what is the same, with one of the substantial interests of freedom. In the case of Antigone, the tragic conflict arises between an institution, which forms and offers human beings for the city, namely the family, and the laws enacted, that men give to themselves. So the tragedy marked the beginning of the breakup of the Greek *ethos*. The ethical totality and its absolute character fragments and shatters into the tragedy.

¹² Williams, R., *op. Cit.*, p. 314.

The *decomposition* of ethical totality happens, according to Hegel, in *comedy*. Comedy is precisely the time for the *relativisation* of substantial powers with which the heroes are identified. They fought for them. The emptiness left by the ethical life of the Beautiful Hellas, is called by Hegel the unhappy consciousness. *It is the misfortune of self-consciousness, which is intended to be absolute, and yet finds nothing whatsoever, no substantial power that cannot be consumed by satire and comedy.* The text we have quoted portrays exactly this situation, the *misfortune of consciousness*, and hence *the misfortune of modern subjectivity, which is also known as infinite, free, and finds nothing absolute around it. There are no absolutes in a world of consumption, private rights for some and marginalization and depravity for others. This is the dissolution of modern ethics.*

What does it mean, the dissolution of all ethics, his shipwreck found by tragedy and consumed by satire and comedy? According to Hegel, the characteristic of Greek life lay in what he called the ethical beauty. In Greece, the ideal and the divine was not something transcendent, which is beyond. The divine, and the ideals, connect, **nurture** give immanent strength. The divine was manifested, appeared freely in the public sphere, in the *polis*, as Hannah Arendt has shown. *The gods were not beyond.* At the beginnings of the Greek culture, the archaic deities were gods of nature, such as Aeolus, Gaia and Uranus. In the classical times, the Olympian gods were among human matters. They also had a *polis* and political relations among each other. *Community and ethical life were inextricably linked, according to Hegel, in Greece.* But it was a totality with a weak and fragile cohesion, as it is shown by tragic conflicts.

The *polis* and the republic were ‘the final limit of the world’ for the Greeks and Romans. But with the flow of history, republic system collapsed. And with this, it weakens the motivational forces of perfection for the citizens. According to Pinkard, “the loss of such a good left people with nothing to inspire them except the cold ideals of protecting property and the fear of death. In this context, Christianity, which promised eternal life to those who slavishly followed its dictates, stepped into the void left by the disappearance of the Greek and Roman divinities.”¹³ In his *Early writings* Hegel opposes to this form of religiosity, which he considers servile. Such religiosity is the *negative side of the Absolute Subject of the Hebrew religion.* For Hegel, such a religiosity is “only a union through domination, the power of a stranger over a stranger.”¹⁴ Therefore Hegel criticizes the conception of divinity as the Supreme Being, a conception expressed in monarchist metaphors. For God cannot be thought of as a monarch of the universe and over men, a *Pantocrator* beyond them, separate of them, and dominating them.

This is, according to Hegel, the metaphysical and theological conception since the dissolution of the Beautiful Hellas until the completion of modernity. This is an *onto-theological conception*, as Williams has noted, because it separates two areas in reality, that of the infinite and perfect against the finite, the eternal in front of the mortal. This onto-theological conception has its sociological counterpart in the pyramidal structure of society, and its most perfect example in the enlightened despotism. An elite rules for the good of the state, but without any community with the folk. This elite governs an

¹³ Cfr.: Pinkard, T., *Hegel. A biography*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 65-66.

¹⁴ Cited by Williams, R., *Tragedy, Recognition...*, p. 294. I follow Williams' interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of Religion, and particularly in his interpretation of Hegel as a pan-en-theist, and the meaning of the true infinite in religion.

ignorant society without resources. But this is also the result of techno-scientific bureaucratization of society, with its elite of experts, and social engineers.

Hegel discovered an alternative model to the onto-theological one in the and the Pauline theology of the Cross, and the *kenosis*. The loss of all that is substantial is what Christianity calls *Good Friday, the death of God*, the waste and emptiness of the same divinity, the *kenosis*. God took the form of a servant, it makes Himself finite, entered into human relationships, lived among us, resigned Himself to its quite being. But this renunciation to his being-in-himself, to His being before the creation of the world, i.e. before any *relation of God to the other*, is a dissolution of its substance, and of its tranquillity.

Hegel interprets that in this *emptiness is where divine subjectivity appears*. This is the transition of his substantiality to his subjectivity. Or rather, the divine self dissolves its abstract substance into the abysmal night, on the night of $I = I$, on the night of subjectivity. And it does this because *freedom and subjectivity is the capability to be itself, at home, on the other*, into the different of itself. The actualization of a subjectivity requires another subjectivity and a serious relationship with this other. This relationship means that there is no possible actualization of oneself independently of the other's actualization. It is subjective in nature, being certain in a way, said Aristotle's *nous*. That is, what Plato called *eros*, and what is implied by Hegel in his treatment of recognition, as Robert R. Williams has shown.

So, the *kenosis* is taking form of a servant, human flesh, entering into a serious relationship which the finite. And a relationship that has to accept death, and the death of cross. There is no *kenosis* according to Hegel without acceptance of the most profound anguish, the anguish before death, which God shares within all human nature. On Good Friday, *it is not only the death of the abstract God*, of the identity that is not related to the other, call it divine impassiveness, call it fate or necessity. It is the *death of the death – mors mortis– the discovery of subjectivity, of it being oneself in the other, the establishment of the person as subjectivity and relationship*. And this implies that God *finds himself in its other, in finitude, poverty, pain, anguish and death*. Hegel speaks of the absolute Idea incorporating in itself the infinite pain of the finite. The *kenosis*, according to Hegel, illustrates the true infinity, the infinity which is not separated from the finite.

But the death of God, the Good Friday, is only *the beginning of the community of God with men*. Its *development is speculative Good Friday*, the search for a *universal community* in which develops self-awareness and extends freedom to human boundaries. The slogan that Holderlin, Schelling and Hegel had, during his years at Tübingen, said “come to us the kingdom of the God”, i.e., the bond of love for the religious community.

As Williams has shown, Hegel far from being an accomplished Western metaphysicist is better described as the first serious critic of onto-theological models of reality. The last word of Hegel would not be Idea in the *Science of Logic*, but the final reconciliation in the true infinite. The finite is but a manifestation of the infinite, its *echo*, one of its fragments, or rather of its moments. Its ground is the infinite. Human being is included, *is incorporated into the infinite, within a community*.

Hegel's religiosity is to be defined by the intersection of these four problems: God is subject, in any way substance. But absolute subjectivity is not to be separated from others, the world, men and history. Also, this religion of closeness, of be oneself in the other, must be nutritious for the other, must give him strength and must connect them, as the *polis* produce life for the humans in the Beautiful Hellas. Because of this, religion is not only linked to a community, the kingdom of God, but must integrate everything that is human.

And this is the most defining of the Hegelian religiosity, the absolute value of finitude, the knowledge of the infinite value of the finite. And this is also what Hegel criticized for modernity at the sight of poverty. "Everything ethical ... was destroyed", "everything sacred in human institutions and affairs, the majesty of everything that has infinite value —all are cast upon the dung heap"¹⁵. As Robert Williams has shown "The disintegration of ethical life generates a crisis for modern civil society. The extremes of extravagant wealth and abject poverty not only delegitimize civil society, but threaten to tear it apart. These developments mark the return of the figure of master and slave within a world where slavery is supposedly abolished in principle. (...) The extremes of wealth and poverty make clear that modernity has not abolished tragedy either, but rather is only the most recent scene where freedom comes to tragic realization"¹⁶.

4. Piety and global civil society

God and the Absolute for Hegel is what is at the back. At the back, not in the eyes or projected on a distant beyond. No it is sighted, **but it behaves**. There are some theology of silence and the absence of the divine in the Hegelian God. This absence is neither inexistence nor presence. It is default. There is not absence of God, like in the atheism, as if the gods had fled. This is not a departure, or nihilism, but an eclipse, a concealment, or not-making an appearance. God lives in the finitude, as the other of himself. The finite is not external to him, and the human life has absolute value. Hegel has fought against the ontologizing of the divine.

God is the Absolute at the back, this absolute has been understood as spiritual substance, that is, as latency, as hidden God, as the implicit, the quiet, and the background of consciousness, its last depth. So the historical process of awareness of the value of human freedom, and the extension of it becomes a crack the shell that hides the infinite, a struggle of the same Idea to overcome its alienation, its estrangement in space and time, and whose purpose is the appear of the same Idea, the manifestation of herself.

However, as highlighted Jacinto Choza, contemporary piety "is veneration on the other, granting himself the dignity of the mystery, his or her sacred origin." "It is not an abstract piety, neither it refers only to God as a distant father. It refers also to God such as a close brother, like a man, like Jesus." Piety is a human tendency that is the ground of religion. Because of piety we venerate our own origins, like the fathers, the country, and God. And we venerate our own origins not only on the subjective level. The ways of behaving, living and being are habits that can be institutionalized and recognized

¹⁵ Hegel, G.W.F., LPR 3: 130-1, cited by Williams, R., *Tragedy, Recognition and Death of God*, p. 315.

¹⁶ Williams, R., *Tragedy, Recognition and Death of God*, pp. 316-317.

later by the public consciousness. Hegel could say that God found himself in the finite, in the other of himself. That is the Kenosis. God finds himself in poverty, and a highly visible part of global civil society meets God in the poor, in anguish before the death of the refugee camps, in humanitarian missions, in the marginalized sick person, in the socially excluded, in the criminal, and in general in humanitarian assistance, in the practice of a solidarity, that in the XXI century has a global dimension.

Hegel did not know the civil society in which we are living. He did not think that civil society could adopt non-profit form. Furthermore, he did not think that civil society could have a transnational character. But he would have enjoyed a lot knowing of social initiatives such as *Save the children*, *Médecins sans Frontières* or *International Amnesty*. These are initiatives where some human beings associate each other in order to be nutritious for other men, to give them strength, to link them. That is precisely what the ancient polis was for their citizens.

Hegel would have been disconcerted, because the social initiatives he knew were not so powerful. They were restricted to the practice of individual charity, or by any religious group. Neither, he did not think that religious values could pervade and could legitimize civil associations. For him, civil society could only have an economic legitimacy. Civil society stands for the protection of the interests of certain groups. But it happened that these non-profit transnational associations, that pursue global solidarity, appeared just after the death of Hegel. They arose scarcely a year and a half after his death.

On the 23rd of April in 1833 the French man Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam founded a humanitarian group, the *Society of saint Vicente of Paul*. Nine years later this group worked to an international level. Now it operates in 148 countries, and it united approximately 1.300.000 volunteers, organized through conferences. Such conferences, did not have a state scope, but they organize themselves in centres such as a school, a hospital, a community centre, a church etc. The members did not have to be Catholics, although they should not ignore that they are dealing with a catholic society. This civil, private association is usually considered the first, which operated solidarity on a global level. In the directory of associations of the pontifical council for the laics, one can find more to more than a hundred of these associations.

The *World Council of Churches* (WCC) was founded in 1937, with a strong ecumenical mentality. And this means with the intention of spreading over the dogmatic boundaries that divide the different evangelical churches. Ecumenism was way for its founders as they wanted to “debate ways to confront social problems and issues of world peace. At the moment of its foundation, the World Council of Churches gathered together 147 churches. Currently members of the Council include 349 churches from 110 countries, which represent 560 million Christians. According to Moyser the WCC “has, over the years, been a significant moral force in the international community, espousing solidarity with the world’s poor and oppressed and highlighting a wide range of major issues such as racism, the status of women, needy children, migrant workers, refugees, global warming, and the arms race”¹⁷.

¹⁷ Moyser “World Council of Churches” en Wuthnow, R., (edit.) *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, Routledge, Londres, p. 794. Citado por Madeley, *op. Cit.*, p. 66.

Catholic associations have a lot in common, either with social initiatives initiated by WCC or those developed under the support of the organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Above all, these organizations inspired by a particular religious creed have a lot in common with other international organizations who have no such inspiration and who have spread worldwide to different areas promoting human development and integration. They reveal a not-degraded vitality; a vitality that knows about itself, and that does not pull back neither from death, nor from poverty, nor to limited resources. It appears an alternative to costing and rationalization as an efficient principle of modern societies. Or rather, it appears it is not disassociated to the formal and efficient principle of modern society: On the one hand subjective freedom, dignity, the moral value of each. On the other hand solidarity, fraternity, and not merely the rationalization of the other. It appears a configuration of civil society that does not satisfy itself neither with the consumption nor the mere assertion of hedonistic and private rights, but that it is not ready to let the poor fall into abjectness. It appears so an absolute consciousness, that of every man who finds the Absolute around him. And this lay at the most imaginable distant from the unhappy consciousness and the comedy.