



Political participation, the Betzavta Method and the interpretation of Hegel's concept of freedom in *Philosophy of Right*

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to confront Hegel's political philosophy regarding ethical community and civil society with the objective of *betzavta*, which is an educational method promoting democratic decision-making processes. The concepts of freedom and ethical community were strongly present in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and later on discussed by Zbigniew Pelczynski (1971, 1984a, 1984b), Shlomo Avineri (1972), Charles Taylor (1979) and Marek Siemek (1995, 1998). This article reconstructs these Hegelian concepts based on their liberal interpretations and confronts them with contemporary challenges related to minority rights, conflict of values, decision-making processes and political participation in relation to the experiences gained during the *betzavta* workshops. The main problem defined is the question whether it's possible to reach a consensus in a given society that would conclude with the establishment of ethical community. The general assumption of this article is that because of the impossibility to obtain a consensus on fundamental values (lack of compromise on same-sex marriage or abortion), an ethical community that would secure both particular and public freedom cannot be reached. The clash between subjective and objective freedom can be perceived through the lenses of the classical problem of a tyranny of majority, where minorities are pushed towards a submissive compromise with the rules set by the majority. An experience of the Betzavta Method will also be included in the general reflections on the essence of freedom in political participation and the silent presence of certain members in decision taking-processes.

Key words: freedom, democracy, Hegel, tyranny, *betzavta*, participation, majority, civil society

This article was directly inspired by workshops on democracy conducted according to the so-called Betzavta Method, which took place in Bad Bevensen in January 2018.¹ This method, which was developed by Uki Maroshek-Klarman and at the Jerusalem Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace, aims at raising awareness on democratic processes such as elections or legislations, and critical situations i.e. solving conflicts. The *betzavta* aims at promoting education for democracy. It elaborates on democratic decision-making processes. The central idea of participating in *betzavta* is to reflect upon one's actions and choices, as well as to strengthen democratic awareness. The crucial element is to achieve a compromise, which requires a sacrifice of individual interests to the interests of the community, i.e. a decision of dedicating one's free will and freedom to the interest of the state. This particular issue regarding freedom, and ethical community was strongly present in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and later on discussed by Zbigniew Pelczynski (1971, 1984a, 1984b), Shlomo Avineri (1972), Charles Taylor (1979) and Marek Siemek (1995, 1998). The aim of this essay is to reconstruct the Hegelian concept of freedom based on these interpretations and to confront them with contemporary challenges related to minority rights, equality, decision-making processes and political participation in relation to the experiences gained during the *betzavta* workshop.

Hegel's philosophy and concepts are not linked to the Betzavta Method *per se*, but the values and practices of the Betzavta Method can be traced back to Hegel. Moreover, there is a bridge of common issues and problems to be solved and Hegel's concepts from the *Philosophy of Rights*, and interpretations of them, can contribute to a better understanding of present difficulties and puzzles faced by modern democratic societies. The article presents an interdisciplinary approach to the mentioned issues incorporating philosophy, participation practice of *betzavta* and a political component, i.e. current challenges standing in front of the EU related to political participation and freedom. It seems that binding societies together and reaching a compromise are the key challenges in the 21st century, but still there is no middle ground on many issues, i.e. refugee crisis, right to abortion, same-sex marriage, limitations exercised upon certain minorities feeling of freedom.

What is most inspiring of being a part of *betzavta* is the experience of the complexity of reaching compromise with other members of the workshops. *Betzavta* means together, which implies the community-based character of this practice. As a result, it is both personal and social experience. The workshops, which took place in Bad Bevensen combined two elements: *betzavta*

¹<http://www.betzavta.de/anhang/KONZEPT.PDF> [access 26.05.2019]

workshops and readings of Kant, Rousseau, and the Polish and German constitutions. As a result, speculative philosophical reflections were closely intertwined with experimental practices connected to certain aspects of political participation.

The conclusions from the workshops were connected to the threat of the tyranny of the majority in democratic systems, sources of people's ability to participate in political life, as well as the challenges standing in front of minorities seeking their rights. It is usually assumed that one of the most important values of democratic political systems is freedom, which in public discourse is identified with the freedom of speech and opinions. In contemporary European democracies, there is a consensus that freedom of expression is the cornerstone of democracy and that it has to be protected: *"Freedom of Opinion, Freedom of Expression and the Right to Information are basic human rights and they are seen by the European Union as cornerstones of democracy in any society"*.² What binds society together are shared intellectual and ethical beliefs that enable taking crucial decisions by the state representatives who are chosen in free and just elections. However, there is no direct compromise on the set of values that should be prioritized within certain states and on the level of European Union.³

The key ideas of German idealism had a tremendous impact on the development of modern philosophy, and influenced politics, science as well as numerous other fields.⁴ In this regard, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (first published in 1820) had a crucial share in influencing the perspective on what freedom means in relation to the state and civil society (Taylor, 1979). There are different schools of reading Hegel and for the purpose of this article, liberal interpretations are presented Zbigniew Pelczynski (1971, 1984a, 1984b), Shlomo Avineri (1972), Charles Taylor (1979) and Marek Siemek (1995, 1998). It means that critical interpretations like Karl Popper's presented in the book *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (2010) will not be referred to. Popper's interpretation of Hegel's political philosophy seems to be inadequate and based on a misunderstanding, what was proven by Shlomo Avineri (1972).

For the objective of this article, a brief elaboration on key concepts from *Philosophy of Right* will be presented. Through the concept of the state, Hegel means a politically organized modern community, where a civil sphere exists, and individuals can seek satisfaction. In Hegel's idea of political system freedom and free will are key elements that can only be realized in the realm of the modern state:

²https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/freedom-expression_en [access 26.05.2019]

³Bjork, M. (2018). *EU's 'old men' must pressure Poland on abortion rights*. EU Observer. [access 26.05.2019 <https://euobserver.com/opinion/140547>]

⁴<https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/the-impact-of-idealism> [access 26.05.2019]

The state is the actuality of concrete freedom. But concrete freedom consists in this, that personal individuality and its particular interests not only achieve their complete development and gain explicit recognition for their right (as they do in the sphere of the family and civil society) but, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and, for another thing, they know and will the universal; they even recognize it as their own substantive mind; they take it as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit. The result is that the universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the co-operation of particular knowing and willing; and individuals likewise do not live as private persons for their own ends alone, but in the very act of willing these they will the universal in the light of the universal, and their activity is consciously aimed at none but the universal end. The principle of modern states has prodigious strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to progress to its culmination in the extreme of self-subsistent personal particularity, and yet at the same time brings it back to the substantive unity and so maintains this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself (Hegel 1942, § 260).

Hegel's idea is that concrete freedom can reach perfection and realization only in the modern state. The controversial moment of this concept is passing over concrete freedom to the interest of the universal. Hegel highlights that personal individualities know and want the universal. But what happens if a group of members of the Hegelian modern state do not will the universal, but find the political system oppressive? This problem seems to be left without solution. According to Pelczynski (1984a, pp. 74-76), two kinds of freedom merge in the state: objective freedom that stands for the existence of necessary ethical and civil laws and subjective freedom that means men's consciousness of themselves as free. In the ideal Hegelian state, individual activity should be aimed at the universal end. On the other hand, Avineri argues that:

The state, then, is based on rational freedom, organized in such a way as to enable each to realize his freedom in conjunction with others, while in civil society one can realize one's ends only by disregarding everyone else's aims. Hence the purely individualistic concept of freedom, which maintains no limits on one's arbitrary choice, has to be superseded by the ethical order which makes my freedom dependent on that of the other. The state is 'freedom universal and objective' (Avineri, 1972, p. 179).

The excerpt from Avineri's book *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* arguing that '*the purely individualistic concept of freedom [...] has to be superseded by the ethical order*' is most controversial. It means the subordination of concrete freedom to the ethical order or in Pelczynski's words, subordination to universal ends. Universal ends can only be met when reasonable solutions can be internalized and fully accepted by society. Actually, Hegel's political philosophy represents belief that in the future the consensus towards universal values can be reached with the fulfilment of the Spirit (*Geist*). However, to many ontological and ethical questions, there are no reasonable answers, and if there are certain answers, they are mostly offered only by certain sets of beliefs or paradigms. There is no consensus on when human life starts, or what marriage means. As a

result, an ethical order is difficult to reach and legitimize on the fundament of rationality. This can be seen at the example of civil protests, where religious and lay arguments are being hailed.

Why is liberty that important to Hegel? In *Philosophy of Right*, freedom is not perceived as means, but as an ultimate aim of not only every individual, but also of a community. The most important challenge of such an interpretation is connected to the problem that a consensus on values within societies has never been fully achieved in reality. Actually, universal values seem to always clash with the specific particular freedom of an individual. An ethical community *sensu stricto*, that was proposed by Hegel, has been met throughout history with negation, reflection or even revolution, mostly because tensions between objective and subjective freedom were too strong, as well as tensions connected to an appreciation of different conceptions of freedom (Avineri, 1972).

We clearly see it also in political debates held in the US, where some of the pro-life far right extremists feel limited by the governing law accepting abortion. On the other hand, many feminists struggle with plans of restricting abortion law in Poland.⁵

John Stuart Mill published his famous book *On Liberty*, where the possibility of a tyrant or despot oppressing minority groups is discussed. Actually, through tyranny or despotism of the majority some of the unpopular ethnic, political, religious or social groups can be oppressed, even within democratic processes – this is exactly what could be experience between 2016 and 2018 in Poland (i.e. arguments over courts). Mill highlights a very important feature, as he moves from public authority's tyranny towards the tyranny of society. He also adds another kind of tyranny, which is related to exercising power and authority over opinions, feelings and codes of conduct:

Like other tyrannies, the tyranny of the majority was at first, and is still vulgarly, held in dread, chiefly as operating through the acts of the public authorities. But reflecting persons perceived that when society is itself the tyrant—society collectively over the separate individuals who compose it—its means of tyrannising are not restricted to the acts which it may do by the hands of its political functionaries. Society can and does execute its own mandates: and if it issues wrong mandates instead of right, or any mandates at all in things with which it ought not to meddle, it practises a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself. Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough: there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the development, and, if possible, prevent the formation, of any individuality not in harmony with its ways, and compels all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own” (Mill, 2001, 9).

⁵https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/freedom-expression_en [access 26.05.2018]

A war on our values: that's how we could summarise the debates of past years within the European Union that promotes certain vision of the humanity, which is often not being accepted by particular social groups or governments.⁶ Actually, crucial presumptions on human life (i.e. when a fetus becomes a human that can be protected by law) are placed in the sphere of ambiguity, where only certain kinds of belief, ideology or religion standpoints build benchmarks. The clash between objective and subjective freedom, as Hegel defines them, cannot be just faced, clearly a compromise is needed. But what is in the end a compromise? Maybe it could be described as a reached agreement by which nobody is fully satisfied. European Union names its values, but in a broad sense, gives much freedom to various states to interpret them, i.e. in the Netherlands, abortion is possible till the third month of pregnancy, in Poland it is forbidden, unless there are special conditions fulfilled (i.e. rape). Some of the key EU values are stated below:

Values

The EU values are common to the EU countries in a society in which inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination prevail. These values are an integral part of our European way of life:

Human dignity

Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected, protected and constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.

Freedom

Freedom of movement gives citizens the right to move and reside freely within the Union. Individual freedoms such as respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Democracy

The functioning of the EU is founded on representative democracy. Being a European citizen also means enjoying political rights. Every adult EU citizen has the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in elections to the European Parliament. EU citizens have the right to stand as candidate and to vote in their country of residence, or in their country of origin.

Equality

Equality is about equal rights for all citizens before the law. The principle of equality between women and men underpins all European policies and is the basis for European integration. It applies in all areas. The principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress.

Rule of law

The EU is based on the rule of law. Everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by its EU countries. Law and justice are upheld by an independent judiciary. The EU countries gave final jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice which judgements have to be respected by all.

⁶There are many organizations and platforms, which discuss different views and approaches to Europe and EU, here I bring some examples: <http://www.brandeu.eu> or <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-vision-for-europe-mateusz-morawiecki/> [access 26.05.2019]

Human rights

Human rights are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. These cover the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, the right to the protection of your personal data, and or the right to get access to justice⁷.

According to Pelczynski, the reception of Hegel (his interpretation represents the more liberal account of Hegel than that of Popper), freedom in civil society is gratifying subjectivity and particularity of its individual members. The main difference is in individuals pursuing private or public ends. In this regard civil society also participates in the actualization of freedom, but on another level than the state:

Civil society is an area of independent individual and group activity in which desires, needs and interests particular to the individuals concerned are pursued within a structure of social relations (such as the market, production, division of labour and the class system) and in which there are institutions and agencies (legal codes, courts of law, regulatory authorities and corporations) ensuring the satisfaction of particular interests. Civil society is therefore the realm of “subjectivity” or arbitrary choice, and ‘particularity’ or self-interest, where government intervention is at the minimum and where, when it occurs, its purpose is to maximize individual welfare (Pelczynski, 1984, p. 165b).

Briefly, freedom in civil society is the realm of realizing particular interests, which are secured thanks to institutions and agencies. Hegel mentions *inter alia* corporations, that are meant to represent the interests of certain groups. Including them into the realm of civil society is quite innovative for the first half of the 19th century. This idea seems to be universal and acceptable, especially because it also includes his reflections about the market, production, and division of labour as important benchmarks of the modern state. Avineri (1972) highlights that Hegel was also very much aware of the need to secure basic material needs and ensuring a well-working system of labour.

In the end, thanks to the synthesis of universality and particularity plus objectivity and subjectivity, freedom can be achieved in modern states, as Pelczynski (1984a) puts it: through the presence of rational civil and political institutions:

The result [of political freedom] is that the universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the co-operation of particular knowing and willing; and individuals likewise do not live as private persons for their own ends alone ... and their activity is consciously aimed at none but the universal end (Hegel, 1942, §260).

⁷ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en

One could tell that such a combination is purely utopian. Imagining such an ethical community means building humans capable of sharing same values, namely society bringing together private persons who are striving towards a universal end. Such a society seems to be utopian, if not classified as totalitarian (because of the possible subordination of personal freedom and interest for the sake of a wider community). That is one of the reasons why Hegel for many centuries was neglected and strongly criticized. It is important to add that in the whole debate about the Hegelian idea of state and civil society, two opposite schools can be named. Pelczynski and Avineri stand for a more liberal interpretation, which focuses on the possibility of reading Hegel as an innovative prophet of a modern state. The second camp, which is among others represented by Karl Popper (2010) reads Hegelian philosophy as an introduction to fascist regimes of the 20th century. One of the reasons of such an interpretation is the presumption that for Hegel, individual freedom should be subordinated for the sake of the state's interest. Hegel's political writings and the philosopher himself was named by Popper as the enemy of open societies. According to Avineri (1972), Popper misunderstood Hegel, because he referred only to parts of his writings, mixed different notions of the state, as well as was unjustly connected to the fascism milieu. Avineri(1972) strongly criticized Poppers approach highlighting that Hegel opposed the speech of Jakob Friedrich Fries and as a matter of fact opposed not only antisemitism, but also German *Burschenschaften*, which later became the prototype of Germany's nationalist extremism.

On the other hand, taking into consideration the so-called welfare rights, the right to public education and the right to public assistance, one can clearly depict Hegel as a modern thinker, who even managed to precede the epoch he lived in. Moreover, some of the ideas presented in the *Philosophy of Right* seem to give a possibility to read Hegel as a liberal thinker. Especially considering the fact that the French Revolution was one of the most inspiring events for Hegel, however it is still interpreted in some milieus as a destructive event. It should be highlighted that he was one of the first philosophers who introduced corporations as a direct contributor to civil society. The main aim of corporations is to pursue common interests and find a bridge of agreement, for example in the field of public business. The second element contributing to civil society is strictly connected to the existence of public opinion, where common interests can be discussed and some of political choices can be criticized.

It is also vital to add that Hegel's concept of freedom is *prima facie* very modern for his age. In *Philosophy of Right*, the consequences of pauperization are named as the ones hindering freedoms of individuals. Poverty and lack of education are a serious barrier to building a healthy civil society that according to Hegel's political writings should consist of free individuals, who

independently wish to choose for the ethical order. Hegel argues also in favour of the possibility to choose occupation and profession. Moreover, the right to possess property is considered as one of the most fundamental aspects of freedom:

The right actually present in the particular requires, first, that accidental hindrances to one aim or another be removed, and undisturbed safety of person and property be attained; and secondly, that the securing of every single person's livelihood and person be treated and actualized as a right, i.e. that particular welfare as such be so treated' (Hegel, 1942, §10).

In this regard, it is crucial to elaborate on Hegel's concept of freedom *per se*. For this reconstruction, Pelczynski's essay considering Hegel's notion of freedom proves to be most helpful. Pelczynski (1984b) describes and names four major conceptions of freedom as the self-conscious rational self-determination of the will:

1. Natural, arbitrary or negative freedom
2. Objective, substantive or positive freedom
3. Subjective, particular or formal freedom
4. Rational, concrete or absolute freedom

The first conception of freedom is strictly connected to the ability to do what we please – the freedom of the state of nature. The second variant is freedom (objective, substantive or positive) as an unquestioning self-identification with the dominant values of the culture in which an individual lives. The third type of freedom might be compared to the negative liberty of liberal theory related to civil rights (Hegel associates it with Reformation, Enlightenment and French Revolution). The fourth possibility, meaning rational, concrete or absolute freedom is strictly connected to the image of the ideal, reconciliation of the objective and subjective freedom.

In Pelczynski's opinion (1984b, p.178), Hegel does not place the freedom of type two above three, as many critics of his philosophy have argued, but tries to give a concept of freedom, where objective and subjective freedom can be realised. This can happen according to Hegel in a dialectical process. Particular needs should be secured by civil society, whereas the state constitutes a rational superstructure, which is oriented on the so-called universal end. In Pelczynski's liberal reception of Hegel's theory of freedom, there is enough realm for many forms of activities that might be paradoxical.

There is, within Hegel's overall theory of freedom, room for the value of independence and cooperation, competition and community, happiness and morality, rights and duties, private enjoyment and political participation, and other values as well (Pelczynski 1984b, 178).

Moreover, Pelczynski argues that within the concept of freedom from *Philosophy of Right*, there is also a realm for the self-realisation of the Spirit. Ideal as it sounds, it seems barely possible to merge all these qualities under the umbrella of an ideal type of modern state by Hegel. A disagreement on certain values seems impossible to be omitted. As a matter of fact, even in the rather liberal reception of Hegel's political philosophy, not enough room was given towards analysing what happiness or morality mean. The morality of a Christian is rather impossible to be combined with a view on values represented by an atheist.

Let us now compare these ideas with the Betzavta Method mentioned at the beginning of this article. In the Betzavta Method, the notion of freedom is certainly crucial. Uki Maroshek-Klarman, who developed this method states, that the recognition of every individual's equal right to freedom is one of the key elements of togetherness. *Betzavta* focuses primarily on the subjective dimension of freedom, as it is directed towards limiting the amount of freedom taken by each person in a group. Most important seems to be the awareness of the influence that a person exercises on his or her's partners in the group. The concept of freedom is treated both from the active and passive perspective. Situations in which the freedom of others limits one's personal freedom, as well as promotes it, are discussed. The notion of freedom in the Betzavta Method also means that everyone has the right to live in accordance with individually chosen values or convictions. There is only one objection that was already mentioned: that the right to freedom of others cannot be limited by another's person freedom. During workshops participants, have a unique chance to experience together the dangers, opportunities and challenges of democratic processes.

One of the realms of freedom is also political participation according to Pelczynski's reading of Hegel, however ideas standing behind what political participation means can differ very strongly. The Betzavta Method, which is aimed at revealing to participants the mechanisms of cooperation and decision taking processes, proved to be an ideal tool to show the spectrum of challenges. One of the main issues that were discussed during the workshop concentrated on explaining what people who remain silent think: do they agree with the rest of the group, or maybe they think that their viewpoint will not gain enough support. Or maybe being silent and not participating in decision-taking processes is a type of participation by conforming. In some modern European democracies, the majority of population does not take part in elections, as in the parliamentary elections in France in 2017 (only 42-43% of those entitled to vote went to the polls).⁸ In Poland, the percent of voter turnout in recent years has been even lower.

⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-election-turnout/turnout-in-french-parliamentary-election-estimated-at-42-43-percent-idUSKBN1990Q4>

Another question was how the rules of decision taking processes are being spread in society? One of the exercises given to a group was to play a game, that gave a possibility of establishing new rules. However, the group did not decide to re-establish all the basic set of rules typical for the game: the order of movement or rolling the dice. The aim of another exercise was to formulate one rule that could be introduced for the whole course of workshops. Intuitively and somehow spontaneously, a leader emerged. The leader started writing ideas given by the group on a blackboard. However, he didn't decide to write all of the ideas, because he chose only some of them according to his private views. As a result, the group decided to vote on solutions that were proposed by him or the ones that were written by him on the blackboard. Afterwards, the group voted for one rule, which was: "The rule is that the group can establish new rules if needed". After the task was finished, some participants claimed that their votes were not included on the blackboard and that they felt marginalized. The group came to the conclusion that they didn't know how exactly the role of the leader appeared and why they decided to subordinate and give part of their freedom in the hands of the leader. In the end, the group came to the conclusion that there was not enough will in the group to undermine the leader's role and constitute new principles and rules. Somehow passively and silently, they accepted the role of the leader. In conclusion, the group reflected on their socialized ideas of decision-making processes, i.e. voting. Such a concept of decision making is an effect of early school socialization, where children learn about hierarchy, structure, decision-making and political order. At schools, there is always a teacher, who acts as a leader who is supervising the class and builds rules for the school community.

The biggest challenge was however strictly connected to the issue of reaching a compromise and reflections on what a real compromise means. The group was rather consentaneous in this regard, as compromise was defined as an agreement in which every party is partially unsatisfied with. Reaching a consensus where all parties would be satisfied seemed to be very difficult for the group. The challenges mentioned above are strongly connected with the problem of building a community based on shared and internalised values. And exactly in this regard a bridge between the possibility of building ethical community and Pelczynski's reception of Hegel can be built. What happens when particular interests become dominant in civil society? As Pelczynski argues in another essay:

This is dangerous because if the individualistic point of view characteristic of 'civil society' gains too strong a foothold in the 'political state', the state power may cease functioning as the guardians of the community, ethical life may become subordinated to the free play of particular interests and subjective opinions of individual citizens, and the state-wide 'ethical community'

may eventually dissolve into the much looser kind typical of 'civil society' (Pelczynski 1971, pp. 23).

According to the interpretation of Avineri (1972), institutions are not to be conceived as external coercive organs, but become extensions of man's own self-consciousness. Avineri highlights that the state is immanent in the individual's self-consciousness, and a person needs the other for the recognition of his own personality. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel assumed that the supreme duty of the individual is to be a member of the society in a state, that is absolutely rational:

The state is absolutely rational inasmuch as it is the actuality of the substantial will which it possesses in the particular self-consciousness of its universality. This substantial unity is an absolute unmoved end in itself, in which freedom comes into its supreme right. On the other hand, this final end has a supreme right against the individual, whose supreme duty is to be a member of the society (Hegel 1942, §10).

Since the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, the building of an ideal political system, in which the subjective freedom could develop in accordance with objective freedom was a very lively and challenging subject. The belief that a universal set of values build upon rationality could be developed, seemed to be possible. However, in arbitrary way for certain minorities, sets of values are incorporated in the existing laws, that are not satisfying and realizing their needs.

As a matter of fact, merging objective and subjective freedom, as well as finding universal end, seems to be utopian. Somewhere between the lines, Hegel communicates one statement: as long as your free choices are taken according to the best of public end, you are a good civilian serving your own state. The question arises – what if you are a good civilian, but still your opinions and ideas don't follow decisions taken by the state? Is ethical community as presented by Hegel possible to achieve?

These questions are far too complex to be answered in the realm of a short article, however it's quite important to diagnose them and reflect upon them. The experience of *betzavta* gives a perfect glimpse into roots of democracy and freedom, and offers a unique perspective on what political participation means and how it functions in practice. This method gives inspiration to look behind classical philosophical problems. It also seems that the notion of freedom concentrating on the needs of individuals and equality of rights meaning being free to choose one's own values and convictions, is closer to the priorities of the 21st century. On the other hand, *betzavta* proposes understanding and ability to step in the shoes of others, at the same time limiting the feeling of frustration or discrimination, but it does not offer an alternative to

classical problems like the tyranny of the majority over the minority. What *betzavta* offers is a mutual understanding.

In my opinion, ethical community as presented by Hegel and interpreted by Pelczynski cannot be reached. One of the reasons is the conflict of values: cultural and religious diversification. As a matter of fact, the idea of what we may call the conflict of values has not been deeply analyzed not only by Hegel, but also by two of his liberal interpreters - Avineri and Pelczynski. In contemporary democratic political systems, it seems to be the most difficult challenge to overcome.

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