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## Dialectics and The Problem of Freedom in *On War*

**Abstract:** This study deals with the dialectics of Carl von Clausewitz in conjunction with the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel – in particular, his insights regarding the relationship between the lord and the bondsman. Understanding war through this relationship is significant to understand the opposites through their predicates and in unity. Then, the opposites imply each other; they are not to be understood as fixed entities situated in a dualistic juxtaposition. Together with his dialectics, Clausewitz's historicism is fundamental to educe the notion of freedom from his work. He emphasises the uniqueness of any war, in the sense that it is being a social interaction contingent on the social milieu. This corresponds also to the absolving of the commander from the doctrinal manuals on war drawn up with respect to wars that happened in the past. These manuals consider wars as if they were merely technical and military matters. His elaboration on war provides the scope for a commander to assert the subjectivity he constitutes through his insights into the objective world he acts within. Clausewitz's method indicates that his theory possesses a discernible universal essence, thus, his work is relevant not only to understand the wars of the era that he lived in but also the contemporary ones.

**Keywords:** Clausewitz, Hegel, Lordship and Bondage, Absolute War, Spirit, Freedom, Historicism

## *Savaş Üzerine'de Diyalektik ve Özgürlük Sorunu*

**Öz:** Bu çalışmada Carl von Clausewitz'in diyalektik yöntemi G. W. F. Hegel'in felsefesiyle, özellikle onun köle ile efendi arasındaki ilişkiyi kavrayışıyla bağlantılı olarak ele alınmıştır. Bu girişim karşıtları yüklemeleri dolayısıyla ve birlik içerisinde kavramak için önemlidir. Bu yolla karşı tarafların her birinin ötekinde ima edildiği ve onların salt ikicil bir tertip içindeki değişmez varlıklar olarak varsayılmadığı bir ilişkiyi ileri sürmek mümkün olur. Clausewitz'in diyalektik yöntemi onun tarihselciliğiyle tamamlanır ve onların birliği yoluyla onun çalışmasındaki özgürlük kavramını çıkarmak mümkün olur. Clausewitz her bir savaşın, içerisinde meydana geldiği toplumsal ilişkilere bağlı olarak gerçekleşen eşsiz bir toplumsal etkileşim olduğunu vurgular. Bu sayede savaşta

kumandan her bir savaşı geçmiş savaşların deneyimlerine dayalı olarak, salt teknik ve askeri bir mesele olarak ele alan doktriner kılavuzlardan özgürleşir. Clausewitz'in kavrayışı komutanın içerisinde eylemde bulunduğu nesnel dünyaya dair içgörülerini yoluyla oluşturduğu özneliğini ileri süreceği teorik alanı açar. Clausewitz'in metodolojisi onun teorisinin ayırt edilebilir bir evrensel özü olduğuna işaret eder. Öyleyse onun eseri yalnızca onun yaşadığı çağın savaşlarını değil günümüzde gerçekleşenleri anlamak için de geçerlidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Clausewitz, Hegel, Kölelik ve Efendilik, Mutlak savaş, Tin, Özgürlük, Tarihselcilik

## Introduction

There are two particular aims of this essay. The first is to indicate that the work of Carl von Clausewitz is not merely on war as a military activity. This requires an attempt to elaborate the elements of his theory of war, which might be unfinished or left in obscurity, in relation to history and society; here this attempt will be made by means of the dialectics of Hegel. Clausewitz never had a program for devising his own methodology. But the manner he deals with his subject matters as perpetually moving constituents of the whole that is in flux necessarily evokes the dialectics of Hegel. Reflecting on the interrelated topics of Clausewitz's work, such as the critique of positive doctrines on war, war being a social interaction, and the opposition of the real war and absolute war through the dialectics of Hegel renders the further exposition of these topics possible.

In this work, the undertaking embarked on does not revolve around the claim that Clausewitz had read the works of Hegel and then adopted his dialectics as the method of his examination of war. Even though Clausewitz probably was aware of Hegel's works, he might or might not have read Hegel's work in detail; this, we can only guess. What matters is to reciprocally interpret the dialectical conceptions of these philosophers of the age of revolution and absolute war, then comprehend the implications of the dialectics for the fundamental notions such as opposition, struggle, spirit, action, and experience that are essential to the philosophies of both. This way we can achieve a new theoretical clarity that would make it possible to

truly comprehend what Clausewitz means with the notion of war and what the implications of his notion of war are for today's society and politics.

This way it will be possible to gain insight into the discussion of whether today Clausewitz's theory is relevant or not, which comprises the second aim of this work. Clausewitz never considered war as an activity between two determinate subjects, the actions of which always result in identical phenomena. Therefore, the assertion that the theory of Clausewitz is valid only when applied to a certain historical mode of war, in which the opponents are the states in equal strength can be declared unfounded. His understanding of war has to be grasped as his reflection on the mode of collective action that constitutes the history in which we live as well.

The postulation of the subjects in opposition in terms of their predicates determines the dialectical method of both philosophers. This concept of the subject which is determined by its predicate reveals itself essentially in the relationship between the lord and the bondsman in the philosophy of Hegel. Moreover, understanding this relationship particularly enables the expounding of freedom as self-consciousness. This concept of freedom is based on collective action, which requires the subject's self-objectification that negates objectivity in general only to return to his self. In this way, the subjects and the whole constituted through their actions are understood as an incessant movement. This brings us to the decisiveness of experience in both philosophers' works; this is a subject matter essential to this contribution.

Throughout this work, the dialectical working of Clausewitz's theory is elaborated primarily through the law of the unity of opposites. Expanding on this law through Hegelian dialectics matters to conceptualise war as a living experience in which uncertainty prevails as Clausewitz understands it. He frequently emphasises that war is a struggle between animate things. The law of the unity of opposites enables us to conceptualise this animate essence of war since in war the subjects are self-contradictory, they have their truths in their opposites, they incessantly turn into each other, and determinateness is constantly sublated.

Therefore, the substance of war is never at rest. The conceptualisation of war through Hegelian dialectics enables us to comprehend Clausewitz's notion of war where war is viewed as a spiritual becoming that is inseparable from social relations. In the first section of this work to propound the emergence of spirit out of the struggle of opposing subjects and to maintain the Spirit's collective character Hegel's view of the relationship between the Lord and the Bondsman is examined. Focusing on this relationship is important to accentuate the indissoluble connection between freedom and spirit and the decisiveness of mutual recognition in the constitution of both. The collective nature of Spirit and the law of the unity of opposites are crucial to comprehend Clausewitz's historicist outlook as well. This outlook is most apparent in his renunciation of the manuals that neglect the spiritual content of war. These manuals consist of doctrines that ignore the animate nature of war; they consider it as if it were an act indifferent to the social milieu. They reduce war to a technical matter concerning inanimate things. In the second section of this work, Clausewitz's take on these doctrines of war is dealt with.

## **1. The Unity of Opposites**

### **1.1 On the workings of the law of the unity of the opposites**

The principle of the unity of opposites is essential in the constitution of the methodology of Clausewitz. Apprehending the expression of this principle in the opposition between necessity and freedom is necessary to understand the concept of praxis in its entirety as it is present in Clausewitz's theory. One of the reasons for reflecting on Hegel and Clausewitz in conjunction is to infer a thorough expounding of this concept and its significance for the theory of Clausewitz as a whole. This unity entails the unity of theory with practice and the subject with the object. It signifies life as becoming.

The law of the unity of opposites is essential to gain insight into the workings of Hegelian dialectics. This law indicates the self-contradictory nature of any being

and its internal tendency to turn into its opposite. Hegel speaks of a commonplace view considering dialectics as an external and negative activity as if it were a subjective obsession to subvert and bring to naught everything true (Hegel 2010: 35). One may conclude that the inadequacy in comprehending the essence of this particular law is what defines commonplace. When Hegel mentions the importance of Immanuel Kant since he had removed any semblance of arbitrariness from dialectics and introduced it as a necessary operation of reason by justifying the objectivity of reflective shine and the necessity of contradiction pertaining to thought determinations (Hegel 2010: 35) he implies the importance of this law in constituting the dialectics as objective. Julie Maybee affirms Kant's decisiveness in establishing dialectics as an objective mode of reasoning as well. She mentions that dialectically generated contradictions are not defects to be reigned in by the understanding as Kant had said, but invitations for the reason to speculate. These contradictions compel reason to generate increasingly comprehensive and universal forms (Maybee 2020).

To gain insight into the unity of opposites it is necessary to comprehend the way Hegel reflects on the relationships between something and nothing and being and non-being. Hegel says it is customary to oppose nothing to something. However, something is a determinate existent distinguishing itself from any other something, then, a nothing that is opposing something is a nothing of a certain thing. Then, it is a determinate nothing (Hegel 2010: 60). Therefore, nothing is concrete, has content in virtue of its opposite, and can be distinguished from it only immediately and not at the level of speculative philosophy. Non-being is both being and its negation. And for Hegel, being and non-being are the same; it is the same whether I am or I am not. A determinate, finite being refers to another, it is a content with the relation of necessity to another content, to the whole world. The proposition, being and nothing are the same indicates the identity of these determinations, yet it equally posits that

the two are distinguished. Then, the proposition internally contradicts itself and dissolves itself (Hegel 2010: 66-67).

Becoming is the mediating term of the unity of being and nothing. It is the notion indicating their reciprocal motion. Hegel maintains that this becoming is not that one-sided unity of being and nothing; it is not their abstract unity. Becoming consists in this movement: Since pure being is immediate and simple it is just as much pure nothing. There is a distinction between them. But this distinction is equally sublated (Hegel 2010: 68). Becoming sublates the commonplace assumption that being is absolutely the other of nothing. It is the unity the moments of which are being and nothing. Being and nothing have their subsistence in becoming which is their third term. They exist in another, and they do not obtain their subsistences on their own. Becoming is equally the subsistence of being and non-being. Their subsistence is only their being in a one; precisely their subsistence in a one is that which equally sublates their distinction. Being, totally for itself is indeterminate, it has no connecting reference to another; then, from this beginning no forward movement is possible, and there is no advance to happen (Hegel 2010: 68-70). Then, becoming corresponds to the inseparability of being and nothing; it is their determinate unity. In this unity, they are, but as vanishing; only as sublated. Eventually, Hegel enunciates the great importance of this particular opposition for dialectical reasoning when he calls dialectics “the higher rational movement in which these being and nothing, apparently utterly separated, passes over into each other on their own, by virtue of what they are... It is the dialectical immanent nature of being and nothing themselves to manifest their unity, which is becoming, as their truth” (Hegel 2010: 80).

Through the notion of becoming, it becomes possible to relate the unity of opposites with another core Hegelian law: the negation of the negation. Milič Čapek says that being is nothing but an abstraction, it is a static snapshot of becoming, artificially arrested by a fictitious, instantaneous cut made by perception and thought. Contrarily, becoming is ultimate and it is more real than being. There is an indistinguishable continuity between the past and the present, or as Lovejoy put it forward the “perpetual fading of *cogito* into *memini*.” This is a vivid exemplification of the unity of opposites, of the continuity of becoming. And this clarifies the Hegelian law of the negation of the negation as well, since “every present moment is in a sense a negation of its immediate ancestor and it will be in its turn negated by the immediately subsequent moment” (Čapek 1984: 117).

Hegel emphasises the constitutive aspect of the unity of opposites as regards dialectics and the notion of sublation as its ground drawing on the substance of the German language in a compelling manner. He maintains that the German language has certain advantages in doing speculative philosophy. This language has a speculative spirit, because not only do many of its words carry different meanings, they carry opposing ones as well. Hegel says that coming across such words carrying opposing meanings may delight thought since it corresponds to discovering the unity of opposites as a result of speculation which is nonsensical to understanding (Hegel 2010: 12). The crucial notion signifying the speculative nature of the German language should be *aufheben* (to sublata). According to Hegel *aufheben* and *aufgehoben* (sublated) are the most important notions of philosophy. What is sublated does not turn into nothing. Nothing is immediate, what is sublated is mediated; it is non-existent, but it is a result derived from a being. Moreover, preserving comes with a negative note. Because to be preserved and retained, something must be removed from its immediacy and hence from an existence that is open to external influences. Something is sublated only in so far it has entered into the unity with its opposite. Being is being and nothing is nothing if they are held

distinct from each other; in their truth, in their unity, they are vanished as determinations as such and now they are something else (Hegel 2010: 81- 82).

### **1.2. The notion of freedom as Spirit constituted through collective action**

For Hegel, freedom is not to be achieved merely through pure subjectivity, not through the independence and indifference of an individuality that exist in simple identity with itself. On the contrary, freedom is a predicate of the subject who alienates herself in the objective world, of those who abandon their own simple, abstract subjectivities; this, in a way corresponds to the subject who is submerged in substance in Hegelian terms. This notion of freedom becomes evident in this passage: “Caprice, of course, is often equally called ‘freedom’; but caprice is only non-rational freedom, choice and self-determination issuing not from the rationality of the will but from fortuitous impulses and their dependence on sense and the external world” (Hegel 1988: 98). What Pippin says about the notion of freedom and rationality as its content matters. He says that Hegel’s view of freedom consists in being in a certain reflective and purposeful relation to oneself. This entails the ability of one to give a rational form to her inclinations and incentives, which becomes possible only if she is already engaged in certain institutionalised, norm-governed relations with others. For Hegel, the possibility of agency as such consists in the reversal of methodological individualistic logic. For instance, if an action is to be considered as mine, it must make a certain kind of sense to the agent primarily through intelligibility fitting in a whole complex of practice and institutions in which that action may obtain its coherent meaning. Thus, rationality is necessary if the relational states of individual-mindedness and common like-mindedness will result in freedom (Pippin 2008: 4-6). Then, necessarily freedom is social and rational, and these are inseparable in the constitution of freedom.



Various scholars reflecting on the Hegelian notion of freedom deal with this subject matter in its various aspects. For instance, Heikki Ikäheimo speaks of the social ontology in Hegel's philosophy indicating the unity of the subject and objectivity which is a social life form. Its normative essence or concept is freedom which is not freedom in the abstract sense; it is concrete "in the sense of overcoming the alienness or hostility to oneself of what one is necessarily determined by —be it other people, social institutions, or internal or external nature" (Ikäheimo 2016: 57). Frederick Neuhouser maintains that only in a rational social World the social freedom can be realised. Here, individuals are subjectively constituted as to be willingly subordinate their private interests to universal ends not because "out of selflessness but because they regard their activity on behalf of those universal ends as intrinsic to their own (particular) good" (Neuhouser 2000: 92). Lucio Cortella maintains that freedom depends on the recognition of others. Being truly free is including the other in its concept (Cortella 2016: 177-178). Pippin refers to this mode of freedom as Hegel's realistic account of free life: A life of organic, striving, socially organised, mental historical beings (Pippin 2008: 92).

This concept of freedom relates to Clausewitz's understanding of war – an activity in which the subject is bounded by the social milieu within which he acts. In Clausewitz's work, the notion of war does not denote an isolated action on the part of the subject but is rather an action of the subject who is aware of the objectivity determining his actions. This notion of war corresponds to the continuation of the collective human action of understanding and achieving freedom.

In war, the subject becomes free by alienating himself from his own immediate being to be recognised by the other (the enemy) and submerges himself in the substance to become a constituent of it by self-objectification. This understanding of war makes it possible to perceive the subject as attaining freedom through the action that is postulated as the middle term of enmity and politics, of the irrational and the rational in Clausewitz's notion of the wondrous trinity. This is the essential notion both to understand war as a constituent of the whole and war

*per se* as a whole and drew the interest of numerous scholars (Bassford 2007; Echevarria II 2007; Fleming 2013; Herberg-Rothe 2007a; Strachan 2007; Waldman 2016) studying Clausewitz. The subject can become what he is only through action, in experience, and subsequently, the unity of objectivity with subjectivity and necessity with freedom is realised. The subject, through acknowledging both the limits that objectivity imposes upon him and its breadth, attains the understanding of the manner of action that has to be adopted, and in turn, the objectivity determines its actions. This is fundamentally what happens in war: it is the subject's action aiming at the change in reality, through the action the subject recognises both himself and his other (the enemy), and then, war constitutes the specific mode of that action.

Approaching the problem of freedom on the basis of the relationship between the lord and the bondsman provides insight into the essence of Clausewitz's theory and the practical implications of putting that essence forward. This approach operates both to elaborate on the work of Clausewitz, left incomplete due to his untimely death, and to situate the Hegelian dialectics in the practice concretely through the phenomenon of war. Now, what we have to understand is that freedom can only be achieved through objectivity and socially by achieving the recognition of the other (this is also how the individual gains self-consciousness). Because, as Alexandre Kojève correctly emphasises, the value that a man attributes to himself could be illusory; the idea that he has of himself could be false or mad. For that idea to become the truth, it must reveal an objective reality, an entity that also exists for realities other than itself (Kojève 1980: 11).

Human action and experience are crucial elements in the reflections of both Hegel and Clausewitz. Therefore, both treat their subject matters in terms of their spiritual origins in collective human action and in return for both, these spiritual forces culminate in Spirit as the history of human society. Then when the notion of Spirit comes into sight, we are no more in the realm of speculative philosophy solely, since this notion is thoroughly historicist and entails the tending of the philosophy

towards the social, the whole. In this sense, the historicism of both, calls forth to reflect on them in conjunction.

Therefore, what the notion of Spirit is about is reality as a whole. Fredric Jameson's enunciation contending that the words Spirit or *Geist*, wherever they appear have nothing to do with spirituality nor even with consciousness itself as such and that we must hold firmly to the conviction that in Hegel the word spirit always designates the collective (Jameson 2010: 13) has to be understood in this regard. Likewise, Pippin mentions that for Hegel spirit is a kind of socio-historical achievement (Pippin 2008: 42). Hegel calls consciousness as the immediate existence of Spirit which contains the two moments of knowing and the objectivity negative to knowing. Consciousness knows and comprehends only what falls within its experience, what this experience contains is nothing but spiritual substance and this is the object of the self. Then, Spirit becomes the object since it is the movement of becoming another to itself. This movement involves both the Spirit that is becoming an object to itself and the suspension of this otherness. Hegel names this movement as experience, in which the immediate, the unexperienced, i.e., the abstract becomes alienated from itself and then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth, "just as it then has become a property of consciousness also" (Hegel 1977: 21). A condition of the unity of subject with substance is Spirit becoming object, an other to itself; this is the activity in which subject is submerged in substance. Together with the objectification of spirit, the latter's otherness regarding the former is suspended. In this way in experience, i.e., in otherness, one's thoughts about himself or objectivity are tested with the practice, and then the abstract returns back to itself out of the experience and for the first time expresses itself in its actuality and its truth.

Clausewitz's notion of war relates to Spirit first through being a collective interaction in which the living beings as moral forces act upon each other. In turn, war becomes the experience in which freedom manifests itself in its unity with the

necessity to become universal freedom, the praxis as the constitution of spirit. This notion of war as praxis finds its expression in Clausewitz's opposition to any abstract ideas about war, any positive doctrines of war, and in his adoption of the historicist view in which experience of any phenomenon is necessary for the attainment of its knowledge. It is not possible to comprehend war *ex-ante*, before the experience of it in its historical actuality. As a matter of fact, theory and experience are to be understood in their unity, as Hew Strachan puts it forward: "Theories of war must be tested against reality. Experience without philosophy is devoid of meaning; philosophy without experience is condemned to error" (Strachan 2007: 38).

A commander must be united with war. Only through this unity he can understand it and make sound judgments. This means that experience is not merely the notion of action as such but also of the action as knowing. It is essential to reckon with the fact that Hegel indicates consciousness only as in experience. Therefore, consciousness is not going to be given from a beyond, externally. Consciousness is to be achieved in the real world as a real consciousness through the sublation of the self and in the experience of transforming the real world; the subject is actualised in this way. The significance of experience as the negation of the objective world and as its formation in both philosophers' works indicates a greater part of their practical content.

This content entails the understanding of freedom as to be achieved collectively, not through individual acts; the notion of freedom must point to collective action. This indicates the unity of freedom and necessity as well. This unity is evident in Clausewitz's understanding of absolute war concerning freedom, the war is absolved from all its restraints through the involvement of the people and their passions. Also for Hegel freedom is in no way individual. Freedom is to rule over universality, to express one's self-will in universality or over the entirety of objective existence. According to Robert Pippin, "this theory of freedom is not a free will or individual causal agency theory, and rather depends essentially on a

collectively achieved, shared understanding... of one's involvement with others" (Pippin 2019: 271). Therefore, we understand that for Hegel freedom is not absolute or pre-supposed, but rather realised through the collective experience of the objective reality (necessity). Freedom is first and foremost one's disposing of slavery to natural existence and only then when one constitutes himself as self-consciousness, the condition of freedom attained; thus, the condition of freedom consists in collectivity.

### **1.3 War as the life-and-death struggle in which what is annihilated is the opponent's autonomy**

The notion of self-consciousness reveals the practical substance of both philosophers' works. This notion also makes it possible to comprehend historicism of both. For Hegel, freedom can only come true in self-consciousness. It is the self-objectification of the subject, the knowledge of the self as an object. This is the transition of the negativity of the subject in the face of objectivity to the negativity of the 'I' in the face of the object as self. As Jean Hyppolite concisely put it, the development of consciousness elicits self-consciousness, for which the object only is the 'I' itself (Hyppolite 1974: 219). Self-consciousness is simultaneously the recognition of the subject by the other, and the universal notion of freedom attained in/through collectivity by way of his action in relation to the other. This corresponds to the difference attributed by Clausewitz to one that is between duel and war as well, which is going to be further elaborated.

The concept of self-consciousness as such evokes the life-and-death struggle of the lord and the bondsman, the necessary experience of attaining freedom, and as such is the essential notion to understand the movement constituting self-consciousness. This suggests that self-consciousness can only be procured through sublating the other, who presented himself as an independent being. This way, the nothingness is verified as the truth of the other. Subject annihilates the independent object and confers itself with the self-assurance of itself as a true certainty. This

certainty is self-consciousness becoming explicitly objective. Through the annihilation of the independent being as the other, self-consciousness will achieve its own recognition. Without a doubt, what we speak of is not the annihilation of the physical existence of the other. As Kojève says, to overcome dialectically is to overcome while preserving what is overcome. What is annihilated is the autonomy of the other (Kojève 1980: 15).

The knowledge that Clausewitz seeks to comprise in his theory pertains to the spiritual content of war. That content finds its expression fundamentally in the intertwining of war and history in his theory. This is not just a matter of the relation of the part to the whole because both are put forward in terms of movement that is occasionally suspended. The movement is driven by the struggle, the practice of two living subjects in which their free wills are realised. This indicates the understanding of the subject in his becoming. This theory of war, particularly its methodology calls forth the life-and-death struggle of the lord and the bondsman. And the notion of life-and-death struggle also suggests that the armed struggle is not solely about the physical destruction of the enemy, but the destruction of his will to fight as well. It will be further elaborated on this in the forthcoming pages.

In the struggle, the bondsman acquires recognition and obtains Spirit, a universal substance for himself. This, for Hegel, consists in rooting out of all immediate being, and of being merely the purely negative being of self-identical consciousness, the presentation of itself as the pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself as the pure negation of its objective mode, or in showing 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 (Hegel 1977: 113). One engages in the life-and-death struggle to root the living existence out, the immediate individuality both out of himself and of the other. An essential element of this struggle is the negation of the objectivity of both parties, the subject's refusal to act as an object for another.

This implies that, if the bondsman is going to achieve freedom through the life-and-death struggle, what he has to do primarily is risk his own immediate being, rather than diminish the other's vitality. Hegel says that "it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won... The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a person, but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness" (Hegel 1977: 114). Hyppolite expounds on this idea further. According to him, the freedom that is won in this way corresponds to man's rising above life which is the positive condition of his emergence. He is capable of risking his life and thereby frees himself from the only slavery possible, enslavement to life. One of the self-consciousnesses rises above animal life confronts death and has no fear of the loss of his vital substance, he sets forth the abstract being in itself as his essence and in this way saves himself from the enslavement to life (Hyppolite 1974: 169-171). The bondsman can attain freedom only through the experience of absolute necessity: death. Through this experience he comes to be known as being for itself, he demonstrates his self-affirmation independent of his objectivity, thereby asserting himself as a universal being.

Therefore, freedom as understood by Hegel is not a notion of the ideal, not a thing that could be achieved in consciousness as such, in an individual immediate being, contingently. Rather freedom is the notion of necessity. Kojève calls this necessity the substructure, which supports both Religions and Philosophy, and is nothing but the totality of human *Actions*, realised during the course of universal history, that history in and by which Man has created a series of specifically human Worlds (Kojève 1980: 22). And Hyppolite says this history of mankind is only possible if necessity reconciles with freedom, the objective with the subjective, and the conscious with the unconscious (Hyppolite 1974: 27-28). Hyppolite's words on the conditions of the history of mankind bring up the positive aspect of the freedom of the bondsman. For Hegel, the freedom that is to emerge in the relationship between the lord and the bondman is not solely based on the negative action of the bondsman, but also depends on the bondsman's will and capacity to constitute a

new objective order with a new substance that expresses the subjectivity of the bondsman. The reconciliations mentioned by Hyppolite become possible by way of the subject's unity with substance and this unity as the movement in which the subject submerges itself in substance to drive it into flux also enables us to understand Spirit as freedom.

Reflecting on Clausewitz's theory by means of the relationship between the lord and the bondsman is not an arbitrary choice. War is a struggle as a social relationship, this is how Clausewitz understands it, and thereby his theory's fundamental aim is not dealing with the military affairs and technical details that fall within the sphere of war. Rather Clausewitz is mostly concerned with the epistemology of war, regarding its universal core, which is the collective reciprocal struggle of men, leading to Spirit. Hegel's view of struggle as the origin of the Spirit becomes explicit under the topic of Lordship and Bondage. One of the reasons for elaborating the dialectics inherent to Clausewitz's work through the opposition between the lord and the bondsman is the primacy of struggle in the constitution of the spirit in both philosophers' works. What matters for both is fundamentally how people make their history through the interplay of opposites.

A significant reason that justifies and makes possible the undertaking to interpret Clausewitz's theory of war in conjunction with the relationship of the lord and the bondsman is the extension of his notion of the aim of war beyond viewing it as the physical destruction of the enemy. This extension of his understanding is particularly evident in Book 1, the book which, in Azar Gat's words "he [Clausewitz] had... anticipated... to be the most affected by the revision and application of his new ideas" (Gat 2001: 264). Clausewitz began his revision of *On War* in 1827, approximately 4 years before his death. In Book 1 Clausewitz defines war simply as "*an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will*" (Clausewitz 1989: 13). Here there is no reference to physical destruction, death, or injury. And later, in Book 1 he enunciates that the purpose of war may be the destruction of the enemy's forces, but not necessarily so. The



destruction of the enemy is not the only means of attaining the political object when there are other objectives for which the war is waged (Clausewitz 1989: 38-39). Without a doubt, it would be utterly ridiculous to claim that fighting could take place without physical violence and Clausewitz was not naive to assume a war could be fought without the physical killing of the opponent. He says the character of battle is slaughter. But as a human being the commander will recoil from it (Clausewitz 1989: 259). The latter imperfection is an aspect of friction in war and in this example, it is the human being that stops the tendency of war towards extremes. Even though Clausewitz says the battle is slaughter, he nevertheless adds that the battle's effect is rather a killing of the enemy's spirit than of his men (Clausewitz 1989: 259). It is clear that late in his life Clausewitz was concerned mainly with those aspects of war other than physical violence. Beatrice Heuser says the more Clausewitz pondered on the role of intangible factors like morale, the more he moved away from analysing war as merely a function of physical factors, military balances, and the outcome of battles on the battlefield (Heuser 2007: 150). If war is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will, then this corresponds to the process of attaining self-consciousness through gaining the recognition of the other. This formulation of war specifically overlaps with the relationship between the lord and the bondsman in which the bondsman engages in the life-and-death struggle to remove the opponent's autonomous being; this is to compel the lord (the enemy) to do his will simply.

The total physical destruction of enemy forces is not the necessary condition for victory. Andreas Herberg-Rothe is a proponent of this conviction. In his reflection on the concept of *pursuit* in Clausewitz's work, first, he conveys the importance Clausewitz gave to the pursuit of the enemy for a victory to have a real effect. Then, he points to the fact that the pursuit is not about the enemy's physical destruction but is rather a matter of disintegrating it in a way that precludes its further military activity (Herberg-Rothe 2007a: 23). Somewhere else Clausewitz implies this when he says victory consists in the destruction of the enemy's physical

and psychic forces (Clausewitz 2007: 10). Benoît Durieux particularly lays stress on the problem when he says in Clausewitz's work, the concept of destruction is much more subtle than some caricatured images of him have suggested and the achievement of purpose in war involves attacking the enemy's will as much as its physical capabilities (Durieux 2007: 260). Perhaps the clearest example of winning the war through the destruction of the enemy's psychic forces is the Vietnam War in which the communist forces never totally physically destroyed the occupier's forces but rather destroyed their will to fight. When Heuser in her Introduction to *On War*, speaks of guerrilla war and says that, "a superior power may lose a war if it does not manage to impose its will on a population, and a people may manage to persuade a military largely superior occupying force to withdraw by denying it, the fruits of its occupation" (Heuser 2007b: XXVIII), she implies that war sometimes revolves around the inevitable recognition of the feeble side (guerrilla) by the superior; this insight evokes the relationship between the lord and the bondsman in which the lesser side is to attain freedom. Vietnam War is perhaps the most evident instance of such an achievement of freedom, and it also attests to the fact that victory depends on altering the public opinion of the adversary, first and foremost through putting up undeterred resistance spreading over time and space. The social upheaval in the United States then, the anti-war movement in particular was one of the determining elements that forced the U. S. to withdraw its troops from Vietnam.

Besides, frequently there are advantages that a commander might exploit by not letting war run to extremes. An example is the revolutionary forces' lenient attitude towards surrendered enemy forces during the Cuban Revolution; the captured soldiers were allowed to go free. Fidel Castro explained the reasons for this attitude: "We had an invariable policy of respect for the adversary's integrity. If you kill them after they've surrendered [the next ones] will fight you to death and besides, it costs you bullets and lives. In a word, you don't win the war" (Castro 2007: 213). This is an instance of what Clausewitz spoke of as the larger part intelligence plays in methods of warfare. Herberg-Rothe makes a similar point while reflecting

on the containment of violence: “the enemy will fight to the bitter end if he is not given grounds to expect human and honorable treatment. The expectation of a just peace after the war, *ius post bellum*, has a more pacifying function than any attempt to shape an enemy’s warlike spirit” (Herberg-Rothe 2007b: 301).

Hegel’s approach to war, how he understands war as a concern of society, a condition for the freedom of the people, for the constitution of a new spirit, justifies the conceptualisation of war as a mode of the relationship of the lord and the bondsman. One of the fundamental conditions for the bondsman’s freedom is his experience of the fear of death in the face of the Lord. The same experience comes true in war:

The spirit of universal assemblage and association is the single and simple principle and the negative essential factor at work in the segregation and isolation of these systems. In order not to let them get rooted and settled in this isolation and thus break up the whole into fragments and let the common spirit evaporate, government has from time to time shake them to the very centre by War. By this means it confounds the order that has been established and arranged, and violates their right to independence, while the individuals... are made, by the task thus imposed on them by government, to feel the power of their lord and master, death. By thus breaking up the form of fixed stability, spirit guards the ethical order from sinking into merely natural existence, preserves the self of which it is conscious and raises that self to the freedom and its own powers. (Hegel 1949: 474)

Here, death has a twofold meaning: On the one hand, it indicates the end of the physical existence of individuals, on the other, it is the sublation of an individual’s immediate natural existence, natural desires, independence, and personal rights such as property through the experience of terror in the face of death. This also tells us that an individual sometimes may not be willing to make the mentioned sacrifices or to become self-conscious of themselves as a part of the collective. Individuals then should be forced by the state to do so. According to Hegel, the state sets the people free from the form of fixed stability, from the mere natural existence, to raise them to the level of freedom and to endow them with the power

of the Spirit. This way freedom is realised through its unity with necessity as the state and as death.

The realisation of the freedom of the people and their possession of the power of the Spirit is connected with the ethical substance of the people. Hegel correlates war with the independence and sovereignty of the state. The people's duty is to preserve this substantial individuality. War is the moment in which the ideality of the particular attains its right and becomes actuality. The more significant a war is, the more the ethical health of nations is preserved (Hegel 1991: 361). Here Hegel implies that absolute war, as an affair of the people, is the way to achieve this end of preserving the ethical health of the nation. Clausewitz in his political declaration adopts a similar approach: "That a people courageously struggling for its liberty is invincible. That even the destruction of liberty after a bloody and honorable struggle assures the people's rebirth. It is the seed of life, which one day will bring forth a new, securely rooted tree" (Clausewitz 1992: 290). This is when he urged the king of Prussia to put up resistance against Napoleon. Herberg-Rothe evokes the stance of both philosophers on this subject matter: "the aspiration to a world without conflicts as such fails to recognize that in the course of history conflicts and conflict solutions have frequently been necessary for human development" (Herberg-Rothe 2007b: 304). It should be clear that the collective struggles of men are integral parts of their social interaction, and that these struggles frequently materialise in the form of wars that culminates in Spirit as history. Therefore, neither of these philosophers is interested in the casuistry on war, with finding the sublime in struggle or denouncing it. What matters for both of them is fundamentally how people make their own history through the interplay of opposites. One might subjectively wish that history should come to a standstill, but in a capitalist world ridden with contradictions that constantly cause crisis in almost every field of social life, in a world where people are divided into classes, nations, religions, the objective conditions of non-violence seem non-existent. As Clausewitz says: The fact that slaughter is a horrifying spectacle must make us take war more

seriously, but not provide an excuse for gradually blunting our swords in the name of humanity. Sooner or later, someone will come along with a sharp sword and hack off our arms (Clausewitz 1989: 260).

#### **1.4. The significance of the unity of opposites in Clausewitz's work**

Understanding the truth of the opposition between the lord and the bondsman makes it possible to understand the notion of opposition in the work of Clausewitz. Neither Hegel nor Clausewitz assumes opposites as mutually exclusive, petrified. They should rather be understood as reciprocally transitive positions that are determined through subjects' predicates; thus, each is implied in the other. The essential oppositions that Clausewitz reflects on, the opposition between real war and absolute war and the one between attack and defence can only be understood when they are taken as dialectical oppositions. In both relations, parties' reciprocal stances correspond to the opposition that Herberg-Rothe explains with Clausewitz's notion of the logical antithesis: "The true 'logical antithesis' goes beyond the limitations of polarity and makes it possible to think in terms of additional forms of interaction and development in this relationship. Each term is implied in the other, and posting one of them entails the other" (Herberg-Rothe 2007a: 130).

What is meant by the constitution of the subject through its predicates? In the case of lordship and bondage, the unity of opposites through their predicates is explained by Hegel: "Because life is as essential as freedom, the combat ends initially as one-sided negation with an asymmetry: one of the combatants prefers life, maintains himself as individual self-consciousness, but surrenders his chance of recognition, while the other holds fast to his relation to himself and is recognised by the first in his subjugation: the *relationship of mastery and bondage*" (Hegel 2007: 160). Then Hegel adds that in this relationship, the immediacy of particular self-consciousness is initially sublated on the side of the bondsman, but on the master's side, it is preserved (Hegel 2007: 160). The Lord has no capacity of being recognised since as Pippin emphasises the premise of the realisation of self-consciousness

cannot be a matter of negating the passive objects. The realisation of self-consciousness can occur only by means of another free self-determining being with respect to its desires and ends (Pippin 1993: 67). In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel expresses the dialectical inversion of the relationship between the lord and the bondsman in these words: “The *truth* of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness of the bondsman... just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is...” (Hegel 1977: 117) Therefore, the lord and the bondsman change their positions. Since the bondsman is the one that sublates his immediate existence, he is the one that can assert himself as an object and can free himself by manifesting himself as the universal being. In the meantime, the lord is going to be stuck in his own immediate existence with no capacity of being recognised and emancipated. We come across another definition of the predicates of the bondsman when Kojève says that Bondsman is ready for change and in his very being, he is change, transcendence, education; he is historical becoming at his origin, in his essence, in his very existence (Kojève 1980: 22). This is the assertion of the bondsman as the sole real self-consciousness.

I would like to propose translating this dialectical inversion that takes place in the relationship of the lord and the bondsman to the phenomenon of absolute war; this is going to aid in understanding the truth of the notion. The word absolute is derived from the Latin word *absolvere* which means to loosen, to free, to release. So, Clausewitz’s definition of absolute war as, “War, untrammelled by any conventional restraints, had broken loose in all its elemental fury” (Clausewitz 2007: 239) should be understood accordingly. We know that war becomes absolute, primarily through being an affair of the people. This means that war absolved of all restraints requires the collective will of the people. And we also know that for Hegel freedom is the predicate of the collective subject. This subject’s predicate is to constitute the new order of things by turning negative action into positive. The

permanence manifesting itself through action is the transition of the bondsman's negative activity into the positive, against the transience of the lord. The collective subject founds the new order of things by submerging itself into the substance of war and regarding the Republic of France, this unity of subject with the substance has a specific name: *the conscript*. This corresponds to revolutionary France's sublation of *ancien régime* and the foundation of the republic. Besides the people of the French Republic have experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord. While France was getting through an internal upheaval, the nation saw the European monarchies forming alliances to overwhelm the republic, starting with the Declaration of Pillnitz which threatened the republic with foreign intervention. Then in this case of absolute war, the dialectical inversion of the bondsman to the lord incarnated is Napoleon Bonaparte, the god of war in Clausewitz's words or the world soul in Hegel's (Hegel 1984: 114).

Clausewitz, throughout his reflection on moderating forces in Chapter 16 explicitly instantiates the Hegelian dialectics in his own philosophy, in the unity of action and inaction, theory and practice, and progression of the war and its suspension. Theoretically, war is apprehended as perpetual action, though practically and frequently it presents itself as inactivity. As Clausewitz says, the history of warfare shows us that immobility and inactivity are the normal states of armies in war, and action is the exception (Clausewitz 2007: 153). Thus, two opposites (inactivity and action) manifest themselves paradoxically in a single unity in war. This unity rigorously necessitates experience, since, in theory, all actions are going to follow each other without any frictions and going to reach their teleological ends which is reciprocal, unrestricted perpetual violence that recognises no opposite tendencies. As Clausewitz says, the lack of great motives hinders action, and this explains the tame conduct of specific conflicts in which the hostile spirit of true war is held in check. The more these factors turn war into something half-hearted, the less solid the bases that are available to theory (Clausewitz 2007: 155). Without the presence of the social relations that lead the war to extremes, the theory

becomes less relevant. Once again, we understand that to have a true conception of war, whenever it breaks out, it should be treated in its historical actuality, otherwise, the theory that considers it as its subject matter would remain as conventional thinking unable to grasp the truth of war.

Clausewitz's dialectics explicitly manifests itself in his reflection on defence and offence and on their unity. This notion of unity demonstrates the historicism of Clausewitz as well. All over his work, Clausewitz defines defence as the stronger fighting form. Nevertheless, neither defence nor offence is absolute. All offence involves defence, and all defence involves offence. This dialectic conception of offence and defence is most clear in this statement: "where two ideas form a true logical antithesis, each complementary to the other, then fundamentally each is implied in the other" (Clausewitz 2007: 193). In war, there are no two separate actions as defence and offence and no polarity exists between them. These two are – at the very least – implicitly united.

The question of unity implies the notion of the whole. Herberg-Rothe deals with this notion through the relation of polarity. He emphasises the necessity of viewing the whole; this way, he argues, Clausewitz subordinates the polarity to the whole. He conveys the reasoning of Clausewitz on this matter: "it is not in the end the polarity of the parts that is decisive, but rather that of the unities" (Herberg-Rothe 2007a: 123). Clausewitz's dialectical concept of opposition once again becomes evident in his understanding of the polarity that culminates in his dialectics of attack and defence. He says, "when we are dealing with two different things that have a common relation external to themselves, the polarity lies not in the things but in their relationship" (Clausewitz 2007: 23). This means that polarity should be understood in terms of the dialectical relationship between opposites, not in terms of a reified reciprocally quantitative change as if it were the sole appropriate way of abstraction. The latter manner of abstraction would reduce the opposition to a pure dualistic relation where one side's gain is equal in its magnitude to the other's loss. To achieve a dialectical apprehension of polarity one should acknowledge that the



acts of parties in opposition take place in a whole which does not correspond to a certified balance. In war, polarity is as distinct from the poles of a magnet as things implicates the reciprocal act as changing both the opposites in the struggle and the whole constituted by them. Herberg-Rothe points out the understanding of the opposition in war as the relation of constituting the whole which is constantly in flux: “even a violent splitting of the two parts of this relationship of mutual dependency does not lead to a genuine separation of the opposing poles, but rather the multiplication of their potential” (Herberg-Rothe 2007a: 126).

The unity of opposites connotes that the notions set in motion by Clausewitz and the phenomena that they indicate are never absolute and are not identical to themselves. In Clausewitz’s philosophy, the constitution of any notion imminently implies its turning into its opposite. None of the notions is idealised, detached from objective reality. Therefore, the dialectical method exhibits itself as a determining element of Clausewitz’s historicism. For example, he says, “one defence is therefore not exactly like another, nor will defence always enjoy the same degree of superiority over the attack. In particular, this will be the case in a defence that follows directly the exhaustion of an offensive – a defence whose theatre of operations is located at the apex of an offensive wedge thrust forward deep into hostile territory” (Clausewitz 2007: 216).<sup>1</sup> This implies that the acts of defence and attack are incomprehensible before the experience of them.

The necessity of the historicist point of view in dealing with war and the inadequacy of the positive doctrines regarding the understanding of the latter arise

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<sup>1</sup> While the dialectics of Clausewitz resembles the Hegelian dialectics very markedly in the former’s reflections on the relationship between attack and defence, it is an intriguing case that Raymond Aron denies the similarity of their methods through the relationship between attack and defence. Aron rejects that Clausewitz’s notion of ‘defence-attack’ has a Hegelian overtone (Aron 1986: 225-226). He argues that this notion is quite different from the synthesis in the Hegelian sense. According to Aron, Clausewitz’s dialectics does not imply a contradiction between means and ends, numbers and morale, and attack and defence (Aron 1986: 226). However, Cormier indicates that Aron mentions a particularly significant passage from Clausewitz while discussing this subject matter. Here, Clausewitz chooses the term *aufheben* to explain that when the enemy attacks any move by the defending side does not sublate the concept of defence. Therefore, Cormier states that Clausewitz knew of *Aufhebung* and this strongly suggests that he knew of Hegel’s methods (Cormier 2016: 194-195).

from the futility of drawing implications from a specific war to understand another for various reasons – the uniqueness of the history that constitutes any war being first and the foremost. To begin with, although their correlatives in reality seem immediately explicit, the notions such as defence and attack are not fixed; in practice, their change into their opponents is only a matter of time. In that sense, understanding these notions as indicating the predicates and not fixed beings will provide us with the epistemological clarity that would preclude the theory to miss the volatility of the real. In other words, these notions are not presented for the purpose of setting definite rules on war, but for providing us with insight about it, with general tendencies inherent to it. Clausewitz approves this stance when he says, “theory cannot equip the mind with formulas for solving problems, nor can it mark the narrow path on which the sole solution is supposed to lie by planting a hedge of principles on either side. But it can give the mind insight into the great mass of phenomena and of their relationships, then leave it free to rise into the higher realms of action” (Clausewitz 2007: 222). Gat, when speaking of the undertaking of Clausewitz as aiming at the “lasting spirit of war” implicitly indicates this insight. Gat rightly speaks of the invalidation of military theories by new historical experience. Nevertheless, he claims that according to Clausewitz a universal theory of war is possible since in war there exists a universal, constant element that Clausewitz calls the “lasting spirit of war” (Gat 1991: 191). Therefore, the knowledge of the universal substance of war is both possible and necessary and Clausewitz worked on it in opposition to the positive doctrines.

## **2. Against the Positive Doctrines of War: War as a Social and Spiritual Interaction**

### **2.1 War as a spiritual activity: the untruth of the mechanical doctrines**

Clausewitz’s dialectical reasoning manifests itself in his critique of the positive doctrines of war: “...we must remind ourselves that it is simply not possible

to construct a model for the art of war that can serve as a scaffolding on which the commander can rely for support at any time” (Clausewitz 2007: 89). One of the motives of his critique is the mechanistic character of these doctrines: they neglect the inseparability of cause and effect in war, they regard war as an autonomous activity in itself, separated from the whole, from the Spirit. In contrast to these doctrines, Clausewitz comprehends war as an activity in which cause and effect are intertwined, an activity that can’t be understood when detached from the entirety of the world in which it takes place, an activity the substance of which is in constant flux and that continually changes the subjects driving it. Clausewitz’s avoidance of mechanistic representations regarding war corresponds to what Alan Beyerchen defines as Clausewitz’s understanding of war in a non-linear manner (Beyerchen 2007: 45). When Clausewitz speaks of the vast, almost infinite distance there can be between a cause and its effect and the countless ways in which these elements can be combined (Clausewitz 2007: 222), it is clear that he renounces the application of any mechanical causation to war. Therefore, in the case of war, we are unable to clearly discern the cause of an effect in a definite relationship. This is one of the reasons that we cannot procure a positive doctrine of war.

The inadequacy of the positive doctrines primarily stems from the socially determined character of war. Clausewitz understands war as a struggle, the essence of which is socially determined. This is very clear when he says that “very few of the new manifestations in war can be ascribed to new inventions or new departures in ideas. They result mainly from the transformation of society and new social conditions” (Clausewitz 1989: 515). Moreover, the subjects’ interactions within war resemble social relations: “We therefore conclude that war does not belong in the realm of arts and sciences; rather it is a part of man’s social existence... Rather than comparing it to art we could more accurately compare it to commerce, which is also a conflict of human interests and activities...” (Clausewitz 2007: 100) This passage is remarkable in the sense that in it outrightly war is compared with commerce, the field of civil society *par excellence* where subjects are mutually dependent on each

other and where the struggle of independent commodity owners (competition) as living beings prevails. Then Clausewitz goes on to say that “the essential difference is that war is not an exercise of the will directed at inanimate matter, as in the case with the mechanical arts, or at matter which is animate but passive and yielding... In war, the will is directed at an animate object that reacts” (Clausewitz 2007: 100). Therefore, all mechanistic thinking should be declared as inadequate in dealing with war, it is necessary to think dialectically to comprehend the relationship between two living entities, acting upon, and changing each other. The reason that the subject’s predicate refers to freedom is his action’s aiming at another living force, not any random object; this is why the Spirit is related to freedom.

Therefore, war is always the reciprocal activity of living forces in which various frictions restrain every action and the play of chance prevails; these diverge the theory of war from the real war: “It is a very difficult task to construct a scientific theory for the art of war, and so many attempts have failed that most people say it is impossible since it deals with matters that no permanent law can provide for” (Clausewitz 2007: 9). A historicist view is required, the content of which is obtained in experience.

As a matter of fact, Clausewitz’s experience on the battlefield was decisive in the formation of his theory. He directly experienced the incompetency of the commanders who attempted to apply obsolete doctrines of war to a new situation. This was the case when Napoleon thoroughly defeated the Prussian army in the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt: “When in 1806 the Prussian generals... plunged into the open jaws of disaster by using Frederick the Great’s oblique order of battle, it was not just a case of a style that had outlived its usefulness but the most extreme poverty of the imagination to which routine has ever led. The result was that the Prussian army under Hohenlohe was ruined more completely than any army has ever been ruined on the battlefield” (Clausewitz 2007: 106). His own experience of this defeat which caused him to be captured by the French as a prisoner of war is

one of the crucial elements of Clausewitz's stance against the positive doctrines of war which impoverish the imaginations of commanders.

Clausewitz sees objectivity and the human activity that takes place in it in a way that encourages the free action of the subject. An aspect of this freedom is constituted by the subject directing his actions free of the pre-suppositions of an inanimate theory. The other aspect is the freedom of the objectivity itself in the sense that it is not obliged to translate the actions of the subject exactly to its intended consequences whatsoever:<sup>2</sup> "... the conduct of war branches out in almost all directions and has no definite limits; while any system, any model, has the finite nature of a synthesis. An irreconcilable conflict exists between this type of theory and actual practice" (Clausewitz 2007: 82). Therefore, war can't be comprehended in a teleological manner and Clausewitz's emphasis brings us in line with the Hegelian conception of freedom in his assumption of the substance that creates space for human action in particular. Clausewitz's understanding of war is remote from the thought of human action happening within pre-supposed boundaries.

For Hegel, there is no supposition of a point of reference to make ultimate judgments on human actions or to commune with the world through individuals. In this way the individual or the collective embodying the individual may or may not decide to act solely with respect to their self-will and to the insight of objectivity they possess; without appealing to any external authority that would assure them whether their actions are justified or will beget their intended consequences. This necessary solitude is required for the subject to constitute himself as universal by courageously deciding on his own responsibilities and asserting himself as an object. Clausewitz's repudiation of positive doctrines should be understood in this sense, i.e., freeing any commander of the manuals on the war that would operate as

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<sup>2</sup> Hegel has formulated a particular notion to explain this mode of freedom: the cunning of reason. Hegel says that, in history an additional result is produced by human actions beyond that which they aim at and obtain – that which they immediately recognise and desire. They gratify their own interest, but something further is thereby accomplished, latent in the actions in question, though not present to their consciousness, and not included in their design (Hegel 2001: 42).

external points of reference. The commander as the subject must submerge himself in substance, in which he can determine his own duties, and then act accordingly. When Durieux says, "Clausewitz does not wish to propose solutions for the military commander, because such solutions, supposing that they were possible, would limit his freedom of action. On the contrary, he wants to enable him to exercise his freedom of action" (Durieux 2007: 252), he is in line with this insight. In war, the exact knowledge of the objectivity within the subject acts and of the condition of the enemy is unattainable. But real freedom springs from this imperfection. Since if all this knowledge were to be given for the subject in its completeness, everything would be clear for him *ex-ante* and there would not be a sphere in which the will can operate; the decision to act would be based on mere calculation and the subject would turn into a device that does the right thing automatically.

These doctrines exclude talent and genius which are integral aspects of free human action as well. This exclusion indicates a contradiction on the part of the positive doctrines on war according to Clausewitz. When in practice the commander necessarily falls back on his innate talent, he finds himself outside the model and in conflict with it. Thus, subjectivity goes out of view, and talent and genius are regarded as irrelevant to the theory; then theory and practice enter into an irreparable conflict (Clausewitz 2007: 89). This means that genius and talent, the referents of contingency as the middle term of Clausewitz's wondrous trinity are neglected in the positive doctrines since these treat war as if it were the struggle of inanimate beings indifferent to moral forces.

The experience of the French Revolutionary Wars rendered the positive doctrines further irrelevant since the latter overlook the spiritual forces in play. Clausewitz indicates the mechanistic features of these doctrines: "Formerly, the terms 'art of war' or 'science of war' were used to designate only the total body of knowledge and skill that was concerned with material factors... It was a case of handling a material substance, a unilateral activity, and was basically nothing but a

gradual rise from a craft to a refined mechanical art... It did not yet include the use of force under conditions of danger, subject to constant interaction with an adversary, nor the efforts of spirit and courage to achieve a desired end” (Clausewitz 2007: 80). For Clausewitz, war should not be understood as a technical matter, as a sum of subsequent battles that comprises it. Against the undertakings that attempt to think of war in technical terms, Clausewitz asserts his notion of war as a social interaction that is determined by Spirit and culminates in a new Spirit. This, in the Hegelian sense, is a collective subject’s negation of the state of affairs to constitute a new order of things. The disposition of Clausewitz on this subject matter is apparent in his approach to the French Revolutionary Wars:

... in 1793 a force appeared that beggared all imagination. Suddenly war again became the business of the people – a people of thirty millions, all of whom considered themselves to be citizens... The people became a participant in war; instead of governments and armies as heretofore, the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance. The resources and efforts now available for use surpassed all conventional limits; nothing now impeded the vigour with which war could be waged, and consequently the opponents of French faced the utmost peril... Bonaparte, this juggernaut of war, based on the strength of the entire people, began its pulverizing course through Europe. It moved with such confidence and certainty that whenever it was opposed by armies of the traditional type there could never be a moment’s doubt as to the result. (Clausewitz 2007: 238)

This passage concisely expresses the prominence of the notion of Spirit for Clausewitz. He understood the French revolution and the revolutionary wars that followed as inspirers of that Spirit. This is why Strachan says without Napoleon, *On War* could never have been written (Strachan 2007: 17). A new Spirit had been constituted in the French Revolution which has put the substance of war in flux, owing to the fact that the army hereupon was to be formed of people as conscripts who were equals as citizens. And the statement that “nothing now impeded vigour with which war could be waged” points out the fact that the power of spirit actualised is material, real power.

Since in war, the forces of Spirit manifest themselves as real forces, in experience one cannot clearly discern the Spiritual from the material; the discerning

of them is only possible in theory. Clausewitz says that “military activity is never directed against material force alone; it is always aimed simultaneously at the moral forces which give it life, and the two cannot be separated” (Clausewitz 2007: 85). When war comes into question, to see it merely as the struggle for material things, employing material means, overlooks the fact that the moral forces (courage being the first and the foremost) are contained in it in multifaceted ways.

This is why Clausewitz says that the tremendous effects of the French Revolution abroad were caused not so much by new military methods and concepts as by radical changes in policies and administration, by the new character of the government, the change in the conditions of the French people, and like (Clausewitz 2007: 257). Gerhard von Scharnhorst, probably the person who influenced Clausewitz most, also discerned that the success of the French armies was closely connected with the transformation of the society that lay behind them, with the emergence of the idea of a French Nation (Howard 2002: 7). The theoretical inadequacies of the positive doctrines that became explicit in the French Revolutionary Wars also found their expression in the objective inability of European monarchies to apprehend the new spiritual forces of war which according to Clausewitz made possible a degree of energy in the war that otherwise would have been inconceivable (Clausewitz 2007: 258). They did not and could not comprehend the new spiritual forces prevailing in war and treated a social and political problem as if it were a technical and military one. This led to their debacle in the face of the French Republic.

A fundamental reason for the irrelevance of the positive doctrines of war is the unprecedented involvement of passions in war since with the revolution it was the people themselves who waged the war. These passions are translated as hatred and enmity on the part of the people as one extreme of the wondrous trinity of Clausewitz. It is in this sense Clausewitz says it would be a fallacy to imagine war as gradually ridding itself of passion. Even the most civilised of peoples can be fired with a passionate hatred for each other. War does not take place by algebra



(Clausewitz 2007: 14). War inevitably contains the decisiveness of Spirit; it can't be a matter of calculation in which the side with numerical superiority attains victory overleaping the necessary action and the experience of violence. It is not possible to pre-suppose war by means of abstractions based on concepts such as the level of civilisation, morals, or law. Then the question comes up: Why contemporary wars are not carried out in a totally brutal manner – at least in some cases? Clausewitz's answer is concise: "Intelligence plays a larger part in methods of warfare and has taught them [civilised nations] more effective ways of using force than the crude expression of instinct" (Clausewitz 2007: 15). This is almost the counterpart of Hegel's historicism through which a bond between history and reason is forged: "what is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational" (Hegel 1991: 20).

## **2.2 War is a social interaction that the theory must comply with**

In the positive doctrines, war is assumed as an autonomous activity detached from social relations, and in this work, it was mentioned that this aspect of theirs is the main reason for their irrelevance to the real experience of war. One of the motives to expound Clausewitz's work by means of Hegelian dialectics is to accentuate that aspect of Clausewitz's theory in which war is treated as a social relationship. This approach of his is evident in this phrase: "Is war not just another expression of their [peoples and their governments] thoughts, another form of speech and writing? Its grammar, maybe its own, but not its logic" (Clausewitz 2007: 252). But in his work, war as such also is a whole in which the social relations as a whole express themselves. The wondrous trinity is the notion of the whole, finding its expression in war.

Therefore, war is a matter of desires, recognition, collective action, self-consciousness, struggle, and freedom. This derives first from the fact that for Clausewitz war is only a branch of political activity that is in no sense autonomous; war is the continuation of political intercourse with the addition of other means. Thus, Clausewitz says divorcing war from political life would leave us with

something pointless and devoid of sense (Clausewitz 2007: 252). The logic of war is the same as the logic of politics and the outbreak of war does not suspend political intercourse. So, in its appearance war is different from politics, it uses different means in its execution, but in their essences, in their workings both are identical activities that aim at the compelling enemy to subordination, annihilating its autonomous being.

Clausewitz understands war as a constituent of the whole; the whole as the history of men that they make through their actions. Therefore, his theory can't be limited as if it were only valid in dealing with a specific mode of armed struggle that happened between the states that men had formed at a specific moment in their history. Moreover, Clausewitz's theory is universal in the sense of being not merely valid for wars between the states as reified entities. This insight will enable us to assert war as a social phenomenon, not a mere state matter. As Youri Cormier says, "while a state is necessarily a group infused with a political will and capable of generating and enacting policy, policy and political will are not necessarily the product of statehood, nor does the formula 'instrument of policy' make that claim" (Cormier 2016: 32). Strachan mentions the receptivity of Clausewitz to the appearance of non-state actors (Strachan 2007: 39) and Herberg-Rothe says Clausewitz's concept of the state must be understood as any kind of community (Herberg-Rothe 2007a: 164). The state is not an isolated entity that is distinct from the people, it is an expression of the social relations of people; this is the way Clausewitz understands it since it is Clausewitz who says that "the only source of war is politics —the intercourse of governments and peoples" (Clausewitz 2007: 252). Thereby we understand that for Clausewitz the notion of politics refers not merely to the state as its subject but to people as well. Just as war is not autonomous, neither the state is. As a matter of fact, the notion of the wondrous trinity implies this unity.

The question of whether the concept of policy or of politics is more relevant to the work of Clausewitz pertains to this issue.<sup>3</sup> While policy indicates specifically the decisions made by the state device, politics is pertinent to the whole as a society and social interaction and thus seems more relevant to Clausewitz's historicism and to his dialectal methodology. Christopher Bassford proposes to opt for the concept of politics rather than policy, since the former is multilateral and interactive and thus more appropriate regarding the work of Clausewitz (Bassford 2007: 83-88). Antulio J. Echevarria II concurs with this approach as well: "the wars of history owe their forms more to the prevailing political conditions, or politics than to policy. Such political determinism severely restricts policy choices, however. In other words, Clausewitz's argument often has less to do with the primacy of policy, as some scholars have maintained, than with the deterministic influence of politics, broadly defined" (Echevarria II 2007: 207). Gat goes further when he speaks of the dominant role played by the insight that war is an integral part of comprehensive social and political reality starting from Clausewitz's youth. Gat argues that this insight that was absorbed by Clausewitz from the rising conceptions of historicism and from Scharnhorst is in the modern sense concerned with the relationship of war to society rather than to politics (Gat 1991: 215). When we consider that a determinative aspect of his work is his emphasis on the moral forces and the passions of the people as objective forces in the war, imagining his theory as restrained absolutely by the decisions made by a narrow group of politicians as policymakers would be to limit the scope of his theory.

If we recall that Clausewitz understands war as a part of men's social existence, we make the inference that what matters really to him is politics rather than policy. Besides, conflicts and struggles that manifest themselves as reciprocal organised violence of opposing human communities are *antecedents* to the state. As Bassford

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<sup>3</sup> About the preference of the term 'policy' over 'politics' in Michael Howard and Peter Paret translation of *On War* see (Honig 2007: 69-71; Fleming 2013: 68-69).

says, "war occurs even in the absence of the state" (Bassford 2007: 88). Actually, the states are the outcomes of such struggles and conflicts. Just as Friedrich Engels says,

the state... is a product of society at a certain stage of evolution. It is the confession that this society has become hopelessly divided against itself, has entangled itself in irreconcilable contradictions which it is powerless to banish. In order that these contradictions, these classes with conflicting economic interests, may not annihilate themselves and society in a useless struggle, a power becomes necessary that stands apparently above society and has the function of keeping down the conflicts and maintaining "order." And this, power, the outgrowth of society, but assuming supremacy over it and becoming more and more divorced from it, is the state. (Engels 1909: 206)

### **2.3 Historicism, absolute war, and limited war**

Clausewitz's whole work, his disregard for the positive doctrines, his frequent emphasis on the decisiveness of the spiritual forces in the war, his refusal to see war as an autonomous phenomenon, and his insistence on viewing war as an interaction that is a part of society as a whole contain Clausewitz's historicist point of view. Throughout his work, his historicism is most evident in his critique of the positive doctrines of war. The coinciding of his historicism with his critique of the positive doctrines finds its clear expression in this phrase: "We wanted to show how every age had its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions. Each period, therefore, would have held to its own theory of war, even if the urge had always and universally existed to work things out on scientific principles. It follows that the events of every age must be judged in the light of its own peculiarities" (Clausewitz 2007: 240). It can't be expected of a philosopher who criticises the positive doctrines, because they overlook the fact that war changes along with the social and historical changes and attempt to explain wars through the theories derived from the previous experiences of war, to reflect on wars depending on a single theory of war – the theory of Absolute War.

Absolute war is the mode of war of the French Revolutionary Wars until Napoleon Bonaparte's Russian Campaign. It was Napoleon Bonaparte who drove the war towards extremes and made it absolute by making it a matter of the people, of

world history; his wars were about compelling the enemy to a decisive engagement, then physically destroying it to a great extent on the battlefield. In doing so he brought war closer to its theoretical correlative as well. Clausewitz as well indicates the unity of theory with practice brought about by Napoleon: "Surely it is both natural and inescapable that this phenomenon should cause us to turn again to the pure concept of war with all its rigorous implications" (Clausewitz 2007: 224). Then, on the next page, he proposes the necessity of developing the concept of war. The notion of limited war which stands as the logical antithesis of absolute war is the concept of this development that is regarded as a necessity by Clausewitz.

Clausewitz's view of war as social interaction is implied in the notion of limited war; war *per se* changes according to the society in which it takes place. One cannot expect war to occur following a pre-supposed model. Therefore, we can apprehend that Clausewitz's theory is not only relevant for examining a specific type of war; war does not come true in a single form. War is not necessarily – and most of the time it is not – a struggle in which the enemy is physically destroyed in a single engagement, with a single blow. For Clausewitz, in war, the case is generally not the collision of mutually destructive elements, but the tension between two elements that discharge energy in discontinuous minor shocks (Clausewitz 2007: 233). This mode of war, the limited war is correlative with the real war in the sense that the latter necessarily comes true in temporality and within the constraints that the objective world imposes upon the adversaries; therefore, the concept of real implies that war is never absolutely free.

As Herberg-Rothe puts it, while very early Clausewitz thinks time is of very little significance, in his later work time became a determining element in restraining war (Herberg-Rothe 2007a: 55). The question of temporality only appears in Book 1, the very last book that Clausewitz has written and this attests to this view of Herberg-Rothe. In Book 1 Clausewitz says that war does not consist of one decisive act, or of a set of simultaneous decisions. He says the decision in war consists of several successive acts and each of these acts will provide a gauge for

those that follow. This way the abstract world is ousted by the real one (Clausewitz 2007: 18). Therefore, the time of war is diachronic and each event that takes place is constrained by another. Reflection on the question of temporality makes it possible to distinguish between the individual duel and war. Herberg-Rothe (Herberg-Rothe 2007a: 57-58) says that the decisiveness of time makes itself evident in the distinction between the individual duel and war. The former is timeless, the latter is not (another decisive difference that separates them is the fact that duel is individual, but war is not). In contrast to the duel of two specific individuals war does not end with a single instant act; war happens in experience which is mediated through several inter-connected moments. This nature of war necessities understanding it in terms of the notion of experience which is integral to the historicist view. It is this view of historicism expressed when Clausewitz says that smooth harmony of the whole activity becomes evident in final success (Clausewitz 2007: 134). This means that we evaluate any event *aposteriori* and view the outcome as it was predestined, seeking out a pattern, entwined through separate moments that lead to that outcome. Clausewitz actually remarks that this understanding is the basis for a true theory on war. He says that within the concept of absolute form, war is indivisible, and its component parts are of value only in their relation to the whole. Another extreme that contrasts this view holds that war consists of separate successes each unrelated to the next. Although Clausewitz says that theory cannot dispense with either, he adds: "all action must be based on former since it is the fundamental concept" (Clausewitz 2007: 226-227).

War is further moderated by the forces that Clausewitz calls inertia and friction: "the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult" (Clausewitz 2007: 68). Gat concisely defines it as the gulf between planning and the actual course of the war (Gat 1991: 185). In general, these are physical constraints imposed by the objective world that hampers the movement in war or constraints originated in human nature as it is assumed by Clausewitz: "inconsistency, imprecision, and

timidity of man” (Clausewitz 2007: 225). Friction in war is the notion of everything *humane*, temporal, and spatial that upsets the subject’s actions.

Then there is this last and the most important moderating force affecting war: dependency of war on policy. The mode of policy that precludes war, in Clausewitz’s words, “to advance relentlessly toward the absolute, as theory would demand... it [war] has to be treated as a part of some other whole; the name of which is policy. Policy converts the overwhelmingly destructive element of war into a mere instrument. It changes the terrible battle-sword... into a light, handy rapier” (Clausewitz 2007: 253). It would be appropriate to specify the inhibiting policy as the policy unrelated to revolutionary fervour, because as Cormier accurately states, “only absolute politics can lead to absolute war. And the only true absolute policy is revolution” (Cormier 2016: 130-131).

The emergence of the notion of whole and the understanding of war as an aspect of the whole take place at the expense of the theory of war. If war had been an autonomous, independent activity, it could have been treated as it were to overlap with its theory in which it attains the absolute form, unrestrained; an activity only subject to its own internal laws, unconstrained by the external. But war is real and understanding it this way entails the consideration of the dialectical unity of freedom and necessity. Of course, war has an inherent tendency towards extremes. A commander might desire to drive it to extremes, but since he moves in an objective whole (necessity) he only can accomplish his subjective ends (a war unleashed) acknowledging the constraints set by politics. A commander’s freedom is only possible if his military activity corresponds to the political; this notion is summarised by Clausewitz as subordinating the military point of view to the political (Clausewitz 2007: 254). Therefore, the thought of one’s particular desires being realised in the war in spite of the political is nonsensical. In this sense, Clausewitz’s idea is analogous to the prescript that “mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve” (Marx 1904: 12). One’s self-will can only be realised

as freedom if it is the expression of a decision made rationally and if it is interwoven with actuality.

Absolute war is an abstraction for sure, but the notion of abstraction automatically entails the understanding of the real since an abstraction can only live by maintaining its relevance regarding reality. Absolute war implies a practical tendency that drives action to extremes. In the history of men, there have been instances of absolute war, when a people are engaged in revolutionary action, and the only way of concluding the hostilities was the enemy's total submission, as happened with the French Revolutionary Wars. This is why absolute war and limited war are not distinct; they are only theoretically separated – they exist as logical antitheses. In fact, Clausewitz understands war as the unity of the theory, through which the war is driven to extremes, with practice in which the tendencies that inhibit war prevail. This is the unity of theory with practice, of freedom with necessity. This way Absolute becomes the substance in which the subject is assumed as universal and is free to act.

### **Conclusion: Praxis as the Unity of Freedom and Necessity**

In Clausewitz's theory, war as praxis is irrevocably connected to the notion of freedom. Praxis, first of all, is realised through the epistemology in which knowledge is possible only within the experience, and the knowledge Clausewitz seeks to comprise regarding the truth of war manifests itself in the concepts of the real experience of the subjects. This experience is of achieving freedom through the objectification of the self and the recognition attained in/through collective action, in the attempt of changing "the world that is hostile to a human project into a world in harmony with that project" in Kojève's words (Kojève 1980: 11). This is the freedom as universal, the freedom in its unity with necessity; since the subject moves within the collective, he achieves self-consciousness socially. Society provides the subject with the substance in which he may express his subjectivity.



In Clausewitz's work, theory and practice are united by virtue of the dialectical method – its Hegelian variant precisely. This method fundamentally manifests itself in Clausewitz's critique of the positive doctrines of war. Both the knowledge of history and of any interaction taking place in it is irrevocably intertwined with the reciprocal practice of two living beings. War is not the exercise of will directed at an inanimate matter. Throughout this work, it was expanded on Clausewitz's notion of war as an interaction of animate beings by identifying the subjects with their predicates. Thereby, in Clausewitz's theory, in war, adversaries' acting upon each other causes their incessant change. Clausewitz's view of the subject saves the subject ontologically from being a theoretically pre-supposed entity that would act in a manner as intended by the doctrines. The positive doctrines reveal themselves as the set of instructions that reduce the commander to an instrument who is only responsible for executing these instructions exactly, independent of his determinate circumstances. In his renouncing of the positive doctrines, we discern in Clausewitz's work praxis as connected to freedom and talent: the commander's praxis of freeing himself from the residues of the past, the praxis of evaluating his circumstances freely in order to express his will in action, freely. This is the unity of theory and practice. Clausewitz's endeavour is not about asserting canons regarding war, he is not concerned with *what war is ought to be*, but rather with what war really is; thus, by no means, he attempts to stretch the reality for the sake of theory.

Clausewitz considers war as an aspect of the whole and situates war within the history that it takes place. Through his view of the whole first and foremost his theory attains its universal essence. Hence the subject is freed from acting in an enclosed sphere with strict laws that compel him to a certain mode of action. The notion of subject in Clausewitz's work indicates the commander who constitutes himself in unity with the objective world, whose activities are determined by reality extending beyond the battlefield. This is the subject who decides on what is possible and necessary with regard to the history within which he acts and directs his

practice accordingly. Clausewitz made evident the notion of universal subject in his own practice when he resigned from the Prussian Army to fight against Napoleon in the ranks of Imperial Russia after Prussia had allied with France against Russia. Since the Prussian state gave up resistance, it ceded its being as the embodiment of the substance of the people as their independence; he resigned to become free to pursue that substance. Within the philosophy of Clausewitz, the subjects and war as their field of activity are considered in their relationship to the whole as Spirit; they are determined by the history within which they move and achieve their freedom. This way, the various elements of Clausewitz's theory coalesce into universality.

Today we live in an era of crisis. Various crises manifest themselves almost in every field of human social interaction. Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic humanity had gotten through symptomised the intensification of the crisis of men's relationship with nature. These crises exacerbate the contradictions inherent to the capitalist mode of production and this implicates the tendency of conflicts engendered in these contradictions being resolved in armed struggles rather than the reciprocal concessions of the opposing parties. The ongoing war in Ukraine attests to this tendency. In this sense, Clausewitz's theory is not only relevant today, but takes on a new significance to comprehend forthcoming armed struggles in their relation to today's society. Moreover, Clausewitz's theory will be needed to accentuate that, even if war has a universal substance, no war could be understood by way of the theories derived from the experiences of prior wars that took place in another world. In the last couple of decades, we have witnessed war further becoming the sphere of non-state actors. This phenomenon evokes Clausewitz's theory of war in which the subjects are not fixed beings but determined in their relations with the objective world and changing due to their experiences in war. In this way, we can attain a true understanding of any war that is going to take place as related to the breadth of the objective world.

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