

Ethical Consciousness in the Spirit of Tragedy:

Hegel's *Antigone*

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Within literary theory and philosophical discourse, Sophocles' *Antigone* has been a significant source of questions pertaining to the relationship of individual and state. Indeed, the *Antigone* figures prominently in the context of Hegel's account of "The Ethical Order,"¹ which represents the conflict between the spheres of Divine and Human Law, with reference to the tragic as reflected within Greek ethical life. Following an interpretation of this section on "The Ethical Order," this paper undertakes a more engaged reading of Hegel's account of the *Antigone*, in critical juxtaposition with a re-reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*. In challenging contrast to Hegel's account of the tragedy, this interpretation of the play gives emphasis to the argument that the conflict presented in *Antigone* foreshadows that between individual subjective will and communal right that becomes the defining problem (both politically, and philosophically) of modernity.

In the Section on Spirituality of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, self-consciousness endeavours to surpass an essentially particular existence, in actively seeking to realise itself at the level of the universal. The universal becomes, for it, a law, and in adhering to this law, self-consciousness is raised to the universal principle of individuality. We have thus entered the domain of ethical life, wherein the formation of Spirit is underway in the dynamic between the universal as abstract law, and the individual, as its de-

terminate embodiment. Hegel will demonstrate that the dialectical structure of identity and opposition, which underlies the whole of human consciousness, also extends to the larger sphere of ethical life. Thus, contradiction and division are inherent within ethical life, and become manifest as a conflict between two opposing powers, through the actions of individuals. In a chapter entitled "The Ethical Order,"² Hegel models this dialectic of Spirit upon the narrative and thematic structure of Greek tragic drama. Of special interest for Hegel, is the Sophoclean tragedy, *Antigone*, in which contradiction is seen to have its grounding within the spiritual differences immanent to ethical life.

So as to set the stage upon which the tragic formation of Spirit is to be represented, a brief reiteration of the dialectical journey of consciousness up until the tragic moment is instigated is in order. By the end of the section on Reason, which precedes that dedicated to the formation of Spirit within the ethical world, man comes to the realisation that all of reality is determined by the very same principle of rationality which structures consciousness itself. By this stage in its trajectory, consciousness has endured various transitions and has now attained (principally through the transformation achieved through the master and slave dialectic) the capacity for conceptual thought and, furthermore, recognises the transformational power of thought itself. Man has therefore come to the realisation that "Reason is the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality."³ Owing to an encounter with otherness, man has been raised out of his particularity and is now capable, as a universal consciousness, of universal reflection.

Despite having formed a relation with the universal by means of conceptual thought, this relation is, nevertheless, at this stage, rather rudimentary. The potential for universal self-consciousness lies dormant within the abstraction of pure thought, which unites the individual with the universal to the detriment of his particular existence as an individual will.⁴ As will become apparent in the following Section on Spirit, action is the source of defence against the reductionism of abstract thought: it is that through which the individual will asserts itself as a dynamic force within the universal. Universal self-consciousness is merely conceptualised through reflexive thought, and only fully realised through action.⁵

In Hegel's studies on Spirituality, individuality experiments with several distinct forms of consciousness in an effort to determine the true aspiration of its work. Through its experiences, it learns that its action attains the greatest significance at the level of the universal.⁶ Following this realisation, there comes about a convergence of particular objectives into the unity of a universal object. This transfer of aims coincides with the first positing of Spirit, which, at this incipient stage of its path of realisation, is not

yet actual self-consciousness, but is, rather, objectively and immediately identified with the universal self in the social principle.⁷

Corresponding with this is a shift in the metaphysical ontology of the individuality which is raised from the position of a particular, self-identical, self-immanent being limited unto itself, to a universal self engaged in relation to an external world as *other*.⁸ This supersession has thus created the possibility for a new mode of being: a transcendent existence sustained within a larger social sphere constituted by the coalescence of particular individuality immediately with the universal principle.⁹ This transcendent community whose needs are reflected in the action of its individuals constitutes the primary model of an “ethical world.” Within this sphere there takes place the development of an “ethical consciousness” in direct relation to an absolute authoritative principle: the laws and customs of the community, which comprise its ethical substance.¹⁰ Yet, self-consciousness is, at this stage, not as yet absolute, in that its identity lies purely in objective being.¹¹ The ethical consciousness is as yet given by an immediate identification with an objective principle – “the formal universality of legality or law” – categorically taken to be its own truth.¹² This ‘fragmented’ mode of being of individuality submerged within social substance is overcome through self-knowledge: Spirit “must advance to the consciousness of what it is immediately, must leave behind it the beauty of ethical life, and ... attain to a knowledge of itself.”¹³

Thus Hegel leads us into the domain of Spirit as that in which consciousness has attained a state of self-awareness as an actuality that exists within an historical structure. At this juncture, the dialectical formation of Spirit finds grounding in universal history, the major developments of which are scrutinised by Hegel and upon which is modelled the dialectical progress of consciousness towards the realisation of subjectivity. The development of Absolute Spirit divides into three phases: immediate spirit, self-alienated spirit, and self-certain spirit, which are perceived by Hegel as corresponding to three distinct epochs in universal history (and thus three diverse historical forms): the ancient Greek world, the age of the Roman Empire, and the modern world.¹⁴

Hegel firstly analyses the structure of the Greek polis, and demonstrates why it is that this beautiful unity had, of necessity, to disintegrate. The beautiful ethical life, of which is paradigmatic the world of ancient Greece, was a harmony sustained by an “immanent Objective morality,” or an ethic of immediate identification with and dependence upon the universal substantial principle of the State.¹⁵ For Hegel, this immersion in social substance corresponded to a form of consciousness deficient in the capacity for reflection upon the laws and customs of the society, which were ac-

cepted without further analysis.¹⁶

The Greek democratic city-state is for Hegel an expression of “immediate Spirit” in that it was founded upon this form of “Objective Morality,” which found its source in the “Objective Will” of its citizens who, as such, were unconscious of their particular interests, and thus whose actions exclusively reflected the external reality.¹⁷ Within this historical form, consciousness of the ethical substance – the social laws and customs – is immediate, subjectivity has not yet asserted itself as the critical power of the negative, and thus Hegel perceives the dynamic between consciousness and substance as being undeveloped.¹⁸ For Hegel, this phase of democratic statehood wherein the ethical order exists as a given is, for all its beauty, a depiction of political stagnation corresponding, moreover, to a portrait of the individual as deficient in moral reflexivity.¹⁹

For Hegel, the paradigm of the Greek polis, the harmonious existence of which – and, equally, its inevitable demise – was the result of an absence of reflexive subjectivity, attests to his dialectic in revealing that unity cannot subsist without the presence of contradiction.²⁰ The non-reciprocal dynamic that is, for Hegel, inherent to this ancient form of democracy brings to the fore the ethical dilemma whose resolution becomes Hegel’s main undertaking, as that concerning the feasibility of conciliation between the subjective will of the individual and the collective right of the community. Hegel demonstrates how the perfect synthesis of the Greek polis could not withstand the self-conscious will of the subject, which inevitably had to assert itself among its citizens, and how the repressed, or as yet unrealised, element of subjective will, when raised to consciousness, “could not manifest itself ... otherwise than as a *destructive* element.”²¹ Hegel represents this dilemma and resulting conflict within the context of tragic drama.

In “The Ethical Order,” Hegel firstly prepares the *mise-en-scène* for the impending tragic conflict, at the heart of which exists this critical divide within ethical life between subjective and objective will, specific and generic identity, individual and universal consciousness. This division is rearticulated in terms of the language and metaphor of tragic drama, as that between human and divine law.

With an eye to enhancing the representation of the rationale underlying this division, and of the qualitative differences of these distinct aspects of ethical life, let us refer for the moment to this notion of ethics and its related terms in Hegelian thought. Broadly speaking, the term ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) refers to the system of customary laws of a society.²² Although the German *Sittlichkeit* can convey both the sense of ethics and of morality, nevertheless for Hegel, the distinction between these terms is essential. Hegel thus sets up this distinction as one between the immediacy of ethical

life whereby ethical customs and norms are accepted as given (a definition for which he reserves the word *Sittlichkeit*), and individual morality, based on one's rationality and subjective conscience (conveyed by the word *Moralität*).²³ Hegel associates morality with a more advanced form of self-consciousness than that relevant to Greek ethical life.²⁴ These terms do not correspond to absolutely disparate functions within Hegel's system, but operate as dialectical complements within his model of the modern state, in which subjective autonomy is reconciled with objective freedom, and laws are accepted only by virtue of their rational justifiability.²⁵

With these definitions in mind, we return now to the "Ethical Order," in which the sphere of ethics resolves itself into the duality of a law of individuality and a law of universality. The "superficial antithesis" thus emerges as a discord between two distinct universals, or value systems: the incontrovertible, unwritten law of the gods, and the manifest ethical power of humanity, which is the conscious sphere of action. This division between Divine and Human Law is further developed as one between the sphere of the family, devoted to the cultivation of the inner essence of the individual, and the domain of the state, committed to the ideal of a common ethical substance, and to the realisation of objective freedom among the populace.

In as much as the family is dedicated to the individual in principle, this natural ethical community is responsible for his preservation beyond his life as a citizen of the state. Hegel illustrates the special significance of the burial rites of the ancient Greek world in these terms. The obligatory death rites performed by the relatives of a deceased family member had the capacity to bestow honour on the latter by imbuing his life with significance. This conscious act on the part of the family corresponded to the salvation of the deceased from the contingency of death as a natural event, by the raising of this contingency to universal necessity.²⁶ In the ethical life of ancient Greece in particular, where subjective spirit was not recognised, the death rites were crucial to the survival of the individual beyond his life within the community. The symbolic power of the burial rites raised the individual from the reality of death into the self-conscious dimension of metaphor, thereby reinventing him in the form of a concept. By the symbolic force of this gesture, death itself is recuperated, sublated into self-conscious existence, and the individual whose life is complete attains the status of spiritual universality.

Hegel demonstrates the mutual interdependence of these two spheres of the Human and the Divine.²⁷ The family provides the citizens for the defence of the state, which offers the family protection in its turn. For the harmonious functioning of this dynamic, each domain must recognise that its own capacity is dependent upon this interchange with the opposing force,

and subsequently acknowledge its debt to its counterpart in its law and in deed.²⁸ Hegel describes a form of society in which each force is reconciled to the other, the state of self-certain Spirit to which the dialectic advances: “the ethical substance, as containing self-consciousness which has being for itself and is united with its concept, is the *actual spirit* of a family and a people.”²⁹ In tragic drama, however, these two laws are in opposition. This dynamic of antagonism is dramatised through individual characters.

Hegel’s meticulous analyses of the figure of the tragic character elucidate his abstract formulations of the concepts of individuality, particularity, the subject, and the will, by providing a medium through which these intangible essences are allowed to come into being. Within the ethical realm, this figure gives voice and form to the notion of the ethical consciousness, and is that through which the collision of universal laws is played out. In ancient tragedy, the universal powers of the gods find their medium of active realisation in the particular and subjective totality of the individual agent as character.³⁰ The tragic character, as the concrete representation of an absolute ideal, is therefore essentially determined by a specific disposition, which becomes manifest through his ‘firmness of decision’, and premeditated action. This inherently fixed character coincides, for Hegel, with the ethical consciousness in so far as it is even now immediately identified with one universal will (to the exclusion of another), and is, therefore, disposed to a onesidedness of decision and of action. The ethical consciousness, in the “immediate firmness of decision,” is sure of its obligation and duty, thus decidedly adhering essentially to one of either the divine or the human law.³¹ Hegel calls attention to the unreflexive condition of this ‘decision’, which is essentially immediately or ‘naturally’ determined and necessary, rather than an “accident of circumstances or choice.”³² Self-consciousness is at this stage, undivided, and cannot as yet recognise the essentiality of both the human and the divine law, and is given only to one.³³ “The ethical consciousness, because it is *decisively* for one of the two powers, is essentially character.”³⁴

Self-consciousness is here entirely consumed by ethical pathos, by which is determined character. An ethical pathos is such forasmuch as it is in accordance with a universal law and is therefore justified. The word *pathos* describes a spiritual temperament free from “all accident of circumstance and particular peculiarities of personality,” and must not be confused with the erratic passions of the heart.³⁵ Pathos is the objective power of a divinity transplanted into the individual, and is that which underlies his will, and comes on the scene as a rationally justified, consciously deliberate, free-willed act.³⁶ In that it involves conscious deliberation and rational judgement, it results in an overmastery of the passions. As evidenced by

the fully expressive, intractable spirit of the figure of Antigone, her action could not be described as one of 'wanton' defiance (although it appears thus to Creon).³⁷ In Hegel's eyes, hers was a conscious, wilful act, motivated by the pathos of a "holy sisterly love."³⁸ Antigone knows immediately what she must do in order to honour the bond of kinship, and Creon likewise is determined and swift in his decision.

According to Hegel, this immediacy of decision coincides with the emergence of a purely individual self-consciousness out of a state of insignificant repose. At this moment, the situation for collision is established, as each individual can only act in accordance with what it knows. Since each is undivided within itself, and is an absolute totality unto itself, it is inevitable to have conflict. With the gods of the underworld on one side, and Zeus, the dominating power over communal life on the other, there occurs a clash of *pathei*, and the protagonists are stimulated into action.

Thus far, these deliberations have mapped out the properly ethical conditions for a collision. Ethical consciousness has, having sensed a contradiction in the sphere of ethical life, reflected back into its own law, and now stands divided from the other. By means of action, the universal powers rise up in opposition against one another, becoming embroiled in a fateful conflict. The deed instils a moment of exclusionary difference within the ethical structure, thereby activating the negative movement of the dialectic.

Hegel recognises that "collision has its basis in a transgression."³⁹ So, the question then arises, with regards to the *Antigone*, as to who was the perpetrator of this initial causative transgression. Is there a clearly identifiable antagonist as such? To whom does the action proper belong, and to whom the reaction? Once this problem is posed, we become embroiled in the convolutions of a history of previous other collisions,⁴⁰ as that between Creon and Polynices, for example. What becomes apparent to us from this is the circularity of the relationship of cause and effect, action and reaction, within the realm of ethics.⁴¹ The difficulty here lies in the fact that we, who witness the conflict from an outside position, cannot with absolute determinacy identify one protagonist as the wrongdoer. In Hegel's eyes, they are both culpable, however, as shall be seen, each is culpable in a purely ethical, and rational sense. From a position of Absolute ethics, two laws have been violated, where they should have been honoured. Hegel considers them both responsible. Antigone should have honoured the community from which she chose instead to alienate herself, by obeying the King's command, and Creon should have respected the sacred bond of kinship and not denied its observance.⁴²

The event of transgression in the *Antigone* is twofold, certainly, and yet this is precisely why it is that the notion of wrong is not applicable. The no-

tions of wrong and right are brought into play only if the situation is looked at from a 'human' point of view, for this is the sphere of Abstract Right. In tragic drama, as Hegel understands it, there is a transition in values from abstract right, to morality, and from morality to a model of Absolute ethical life.⁴³ The emergence of determinate and particular ethical consciousness as individuality signals the transition from right to morality. Within the moral sphere, there is an apparent duality of values, which becomes manifest in the rift created between state and individual. Here, the notions of right and wrong, as given by the universal will of the state, become meaningless to the self-determined will of the individual.⁴⁴ Thus, from the viewpoint of morality, "the laws of the state cannot claim to extend to a person's dispositions, for in the moral sphere, I exist [only] for myself, and force is meaningless in this context."⁴⁵

Within the context of tragedy, the word 'transgression' is divorced from the dichotomy of right and wrong, good and evil.⁴⁶ For Hegel, moreover, the transgressive act constitutes an essential moment in the formation of subjectivity. The individual gives expression to himself, realises himself, through his act.⁴⁷ Thus, in Hegel, action belongs to the sphere of morality, within the field of ethics. This is so, insofar as morality corresponds to freedom of the subjective will: "the expression of the will as *subjective* or *moral* is *action*."⁴⁸ Furthermore, the action is morally justified in so far as it corresponds to one's purpose or object.⁴⁹

Hegel's profound interest in the tragic character and its "firmness of decision," relates to his aspiration for an absolutely rational model of subjectivity, whereby subject and object are fully determined for each other. Thus is the case with the Greek plastic figure, for which "the bond between the subject and what he wills as his object remains indissoluble."⁵⁰ This figure demonstrates, for Hegel, the subjective depth of personality.⁵¹ Oedipus, with his "plasticity of consciousness," constitutes such a figure. Although from a spectatorial perspective it is evident that his fated deed is isolated from his will, Oedipus, lacking the capacity for self-reflection, is unable to distinguish his purely subjective self-consciousness from what his deed objectively amounts to.⁵²

However, can the dauntless Antigone herself be identified with this classic 'plastic' figure, which for Hegel is the archetypical character of the tragic drama of antiquity? Let us contemplate her character in light of Hegel's definitions, given above. Certainly, Antigone possesses an unwavering resolve, and an "absolute firmness of decision." Clearly, the purpose intended by her subjective will corresponds to her act: she carries out the deed as she had proclaimed she would – "I shall bury him."⁵³ Her decision to honour Polynices by delivering him to the hidden world of Shades is en-

tirely *rational* in that it is in accordance with what she *knows* to be her duty in the eyes of the universal law: the unwritten law ordained by Hades.⁵⁴

However, Hegel's analysis of the nature of the ethical consciousness within the medium of tragedy in "The Ethical Order" does not do justice to the spirit of Antigone. To further explicate this claim, it is the notion of immediacy attributed to the ethical consciousness' commitment to the law, which seems to be discordant with the reflective, and discerning voice of Antigone. Her decision is 'immediate' in the sense that it involves no vacillation whatsoever. However, it is not without reflection, nor is she merely half-conscious of the situation at hand at the moment when she resolves to act, hence her decision is not immediate in the properly Hegelian sense. This is evidenced by the consciousness she has of the duality of ethical life, demonstrated by the conscious equivocality of her words when she describes the deed she is to perform as "a crime that is holy."⁵⁵ Antigone deems Creon's proclamation forbidding the burial of her brother to be without justification, the result of a capricious and coercive power: "but he has no right to keep me from my own!"⁵⁶ The body of Polynices marks a zone of collision, with Creon adamant that as a criminal body, it belongs to the state, whilst Antigone believes she, by virtue of their consanguinity, should be allowed to observe her rightful duty towards her dead brother. Despite her knowledge of her rights and her duty, however, Antigone is not closed to the possibility that *she* may, indeed, be the wrongdoer.⁵⁷ However, in "The Ethical Order," this moment of reflexivity attributable to Antigone is omitted, given that Hegel presents the ethical consciousness as being utterly restricted in its capacity to recognise the validity of any other law but its own.⁵⁸ To the contrary, Antigone is not, like the Greek plastic character, categorically blind to the possibility that there may exist another valid law, although she identifies with one law in particular, and experiences her will to act in accordance with this law as a rational necessity. The Hegelian account of the ethical consciousness, however, limits the scope for such an interpretation, and thus forgoes the means by which the *Antigone* transcends the context of Greek ethical life to which it has been ascribed.

Although the ontology of the ethical consciousness as described in "The Ethical Order" does not represent the full complexity of the character of Antigone, Hegel does, nevertheless, demonstrate in his writings on Aesthetics his appreciation of the variation of the Greek tragic character. In particular, he formulates a distinction between the figures of Antigone and Oedipus, based on the relation of subjective will to objective consequence, thus demonstrating by means of this comparison the complexity of the notions of transgression, and culpability, in light of the problem of intention. Hegel's profound interest in the figure of Antigone, in particular has to do

with the nature of her act as pertains to her subjective purpose, and intention, as measures of responsibility.

In the case of Oedipus, his actions, which ultimately amount to the deeds of incest and parricide, are unconscious transgressions. Oedipus acted unknowingly, his transgressive deed does not correspond to the purpose willed through his initial act. By virtue of the principle of '*the Right of knowledge*,' which stipulates that "I can be made *accountable* for a deed only if *my will was responsible* for it," Oedipus' transgression should not have been imputed to him, for "I can be made responsible only for what I knew of the circumstances."⁵⁹ Hegel attributes Oedipus' blinkered imputation of his transgression to himself, to the failure of the heroic self-consciousness to reflect on the distinction between *deed*, as external event, and *action*, as purpose and consciousness of the circumstances.⁶⁰

In contrast, Antigone acted wilfully, and with full consciousness that her deed would transgress the law of the State: "and yet you dared to transgress these laws? ... 'Yes'."⁶¹ In consideration of the principles aforementioned, Antigone is, in the eyes of the spectator, indisputably culpable. One may, nevertheless, in her defence argue that although she is conscious of her transgression even in the act, she does not believe it to be a violation as such of a universal law, as Creon's proclamations, in her conviction, do not merit such a status. One may contend that Antigone acted not out of vengeance,⁶² but in defence of her rightful obligation to the law of kinship. However, to appreciate the full significance of this drama, it is necessary to rethink Antigone's relation to law, beyond the rigorously defined terms of Hegel's analysis.

For Hegel, state and individual (and equally the abstract relation of universal and particular) do not exist as mutually exclusive entities or ideals, but are fundamentally interdependent.⁶³ This interaction is represented by Hegel as conditioned by the terms of kinship, which constitutes the limit, as a structure of both division and permeation, between the spheres of the familial / cultural and the political.⁶⁴ This division is, for Hegel, an inherently gendered one, the power of the feminine standing for the law of kinship, the state and the right to citizenship corresponding to the masculine element.⁶⁵ Just as the familial law effects its substantial existence within the community, the preservation and perpetuation of the community is dependent upon the structure of kinship.⁶⁶ This structure is consolidated, specifically, in the relationship of brother and sister, which, for Hegel, epitomises the structure of kinship in its most pure and equilibrating form, by virtue of its being a relation devoid of desire.⁶⁷ This relationship constitutes the dynamic of legitimate recognition upon which community is founded.⁶⁸

Despite his acknowledgment of the mutual interdependency of the two

spheres of ethical life, Hegel nevertheless maintains the 'rebellious' principle of individuality supported by kinship in a relation of subordination to the universal principle, and to the state, as "the highest form of consciousness."⁶⁹ For Hegel, this interdependency does not constitute a viable form of social existence, but is, rather, rearticulated as a conflict of powers which is inevitably resolved in the dissolution of immediate ethical life, giving way to a new form of social substance, structured by universal unity over and above individuality.⁷⁰ It is apparent from this line of argument, then, that Antigone's demise is read by Hegel as a necessary measure for the establishment of legitimate authority in the overcoming of kinship by the state.⁷¹ Alternatively, the significance of Antigone's transgressive act may be understood in terms of its critical role in the legitimation of state law, the tenability of which would be unsustainable in its absence. This view would reinforce a true interdependency between kinship and state as a permanent and necessary social dynamic, and challenge the dialectical requirement for the supersession and assimilation of the subordinate term to the dominant category (of kinship to state; of transgression to law), with the alternative possibility of the negotiability of these terms.

Judith Butler, in her most discerning reading of *Antigone* in *Antigone's Claim*, demonstrates the intricacy of the relation of kinship to the state, by drawing attention to the inextricability of the language of Antigone's assertion of her act, from the language of sovereign power.⁷² Confronted with Butler's reading of the figure of Antigone as transgressive equally of the boundaries of state and of kinship, Hegel's rigorous distinction between these categories is destabilised.⁷³ Antigone's claim is spoken in the language of the state, and yet remains inassimilable to its terms; she is thus positioned outside the law of the polis, and yet it is she without whom this law would be unsustainable.⁷⁴ Butler's interpretation therefore problematises Hegel's categorical assignation of Antigone to the divine law of kinship, and furthermore, compels a rethinking of the common reading of Antigone as a prepolitical figure.⁷⁵ Indeed, in the "Ethical Order," kinship is consigned to the realm of the unconscious, where it remains as an "inner feeling" that is "exempt from an existence in the real world," and the power of the feminine demoted to a merely "intuitive awareness" of what is ethical.⁷⁶ In intriguing contrast, Butler's critique makes possible a reading of the figure of Antigone as politically significant in her paradoxical relation to law, as engaged, without being absorbed in it, and precisely by virtue of the equivocity of her claim, by which is challenged the very structure of limitation through which the political is defined.

As Hegel understands it in "The Ethical Order," the *Antigone* does not depict a conflict between the state and the individual per se, but is, from a

more comprehensive outlook, a conflict of powers, represented by individuals. The conflict of powers, therefore, does not occur in the space *between* two discrete elements of being, but essentially arises *within* the individual, as a necessary element of the dynamic of his being in the world. Hegel's interest in analysing the *Antigone*, lies not in establishing the guilt or innocence of either of the protagonists, but in revealing this underlying conflict of powers as a necessary event in the formation of ethical life.

Without wishing to contradict this claim, it must be stated that it is precisely the motif of guilt in tragic drama, which Hegel finds to be the most fascinating. This distinctively Hegelian notion of guilt, nevertheless, does not in any sense correspond to the value-laden dichotomy, innocence / guilt: "the tragic heroes are just as much innocent as guilty."⁷⁷ For Hegel, action, *all* action, gives rise to guilt: "innocence, therefore, is merely non-action."⁷⁸ Not even the unwitting Oedipus, though his unwillful act cannot rightly be imputed to him, is completely exempt from responsibility for the consequences of his action. Hegel maintains this contention in accordance with the distinction he develops between purpose and intention in his theory of morality. The transition from purpose to intention consists in the individual gaining an awareness of the universal nature of the individual deed. This involves the realisation that my purely individual and immediate action necessarily results in consequences, which I may or may not have foreseen, on a universal scale.⁷⁹ The alteration effected within the external world as a result of one's deed, is irretrievable, undeniable, and therefore guilt is inevitable.⁸⁰

Hegel explains the conditions giving rise to guilt in the "The Ethical Order," in a subsection entitled "Ethical Action: Human and Divine Knowledge, Guilt and Destiny." The ethical consciousness, by its own hand, unavoidably incurs guilt in that the act, as the manifestation and assertion of particularity, necessarily corresponds solely to one law, to the exclusion and desecration of the other law. To this end, Antigone's bold act is also tantamount to a form of "defiance of the universal," though in a more definitive sense than that seen in the case of Oedipus.⁸¹ Hegel does not, however, abandon to ambiguity the question of guilt as that incurred through a conscious and wilful deed, as compared to one that was quite unconscious on the part of the performer.

But the ethical consciousness is more complete, its guilt more inexcusable, if it knows *beforehand* the law and the power which it opposes, if it takes them to be violence and wrong, to be ethical merely by accident, and, like Antigone, knowingly commits the crime.⁸²

It follows, then, that Antigone, must indeed be culpable, and in a more ulti-

mate sense than was Oedipus, and that she must, according to Hegel, acknowledge her guilt, and thus concede to a recognition of the legitimacy of the opposite law.⁸³ Without hesitation, she acknowledges her responsibility for the deed, since it was committed by her very own knowing hand: "I say that I did it and I do not deny it."⁸⁴ Quite the reverse, however, being in possession of the insight which was lacking in Oedipus, she is not prepared to accept such guilt unconditionally. In her discerning mind, action does not categorically amount to crime, and therefore does not necessarily incur guilt. Her words resonate with a brazen rationality as she reflects upon these circumstances:

What justice of the gods have I transgressed? ... For by acting piously I have been convicted of impiety. Well, if this is approved among the gods, I should forgive them for what I have suffered, since I have done wrong; but if they are the wrongdoers, may they not suffer worse evils than those they are unjustly inflicting upon me!⁸⁵

How is it that Antigone, despite having knowingly defied an opposing ethical law, is not plagued by an unpardonable guilt, as Hegel reasons she ought to be? It is Hegel's own text which, far from contradicting Antigone's spirited reaction, casts light upon this apparent deviation. Ethical action, as Hegel explains, is crucial to the formation of a self-conscious subject. In order to gain the capacity for self-reflection, consciousness essentially needs to double up upon itself, according to Hegel's dialectical theory of alterity. Within the ethical sphere, such a schism within consciousness occurs at the moment of acting: "the action is itself this splitting into two."⁸⁶ The dialectic of suffering activated by the deed, painfully reshapes the individual into a self-conscious self.

For Hegel, guilt is the manifestation of this consequential split ontology of the conscious self. For the Greek tragedians and for Hegel, the metaphor of guilt is significant to this context. If understood as 'self-reproach', it can be regarded as an instrument of self-reflexivity.⁸⁷ Indeed, prefiguring the concept of the self-conscious individual, Hegel associates the instance of guilt with the claim to right, albeit a claim that is not explicitly asserted, according to Hegel, but which remains implicit in the consciousness of guilt.⁸⁸ Remarkably, although Antigone is not beset by guilt, despite this, she does defend her right, and quite explicitly so. Antigone, having attained the capacity for self-reflection through her action, is concerned to question the justness of the condemnation ordained upon her by Creon, in consideration of her rights and duties as a sister. Furthermore, she is compelled to assess critically the rightfulness of her own action, with respect to the law which she opposes. This reflection on her part constitutes another mo-

ment of aberrancy in comparison to the rigorously circumscribed role to which she is consigned by Hegel, and signifies another instance, in addition to that identified by Butler, wherein Antigone resorts to the language and logic of sovereign power, to gain perspective on her deed, demonstrating yet again that the status of Antigone is not unproblematically inscribed within the sphere of kinship. The figure of Antigone thus articulates a self-reflexive mode of being that is a more pronounced prefigurement of the self-conscious individual, and the notions of freedom of will and recognition of right it entails, than Hegel envisions. In acting, she is not consumed by guilt, she seizes and implements it, reflects upon it, and attaches conditions to it. Antigone herself understands the necessary relation between the experience of guilt, and the culpability of the will: she attains a rational conception of guilt. Oedipus, by contrast experiences a sense of remorse which is, essentially, disassociated with his willing self, and therefore his experience of guilt is irrational, guilt is in his case a false notion.

In his interpretation of tragic drama, Hegel observes that the element of guilt, as intertwined with the notion of destiny, plays a key role in the cancellation of conflict and the restoration of harmonious ethical life. To acknowledge one's guilt, is equally to recognise in one's fate the consequence of one's (mis)conduct: "because we suffer we acknowledge we have erred."⁸⁹ To acknowledge one's guilt is thereby to acknowledge the opposite law, whose violation by your own hand causes you such remorse. The one who experiences guilt now recognises the division within ethical life between the two laws, each of the same essential nature, and internalises this division as an insurmountable contradiction which ultimately destroys the individual as such.

Fate comes on the scene as an abstract universal power that surpasses both the particularity of men and of gods alike, it is the negative power of an eternal necessity that overrides both human and divine law.⁹⁰ This force comes to life as a consequence of the event of transgression, "fate drives individuality back within its limits and destroys it if these are crossed."⁹¹ In Greek tragedy, the absolute power of fate coincides with the function of an eternal justice within ethical life. Fate establishes equilibrium within the ethical world, in assigning equal validity to both powers that were in conflict. Hegel envisages this reconciliation as taking effect among the spectators of tragic drama, to whom the fate of the characters appears as "absolute rationality," true justice which cannot but result in the satisfaction of the spirit.⁹² The *Antigone* represents this idea of a self-compelled fate, by situating the conflict between the two mutually supporting powers of ethical life. Within this conflict, therefore, there is "immanent in both" Antigone and Creon something that they violate that they should be honouring,

so they are destroyed by something “intrinsic to their own actual being.”⁹³

To be subject to fate, one must have attained a degree of self-consciousness.⁹⁴ Hegel distinguishes between several notions of fate corresponding to varying degrees of self-consciousness. For the purposes of demonstrating the transition represented by the *Antigone* from the idea of fate as ‘blind’ necessity, to the notion of a rational necessity, we shall once again compare the example of Oedipus with that of Antigone.

Hegel defines necessity as the “union of possibility and actuality.”⁹⁵ This is a definition of the objective form of necessity, through the eyes of a self-conscious individual, however, necessity appears in a different form. In the process of ‘blind’, or uncomprehended necessity, the final cause is not explicitly known to consciousness. Necessity appears as rational and is ‘seeing,’ or understood, if, on the other hand, the end of action corresponds to what has been foreknown and forewilled.⁹⁶ The latter form involves an ethical engagement, on the part of the fated one, with the question of his fate, the former does not enter into the field of the ethical.

The problem posed in “The Ethical Order,” centres around this issue of the ethical, as it pertains to the self-conscious individual’s reflection upon the actual. Conflict arises as a reaction to the detection of a discrepancy between these two provinces, which the reflective self-consciousness perceives as a contradiction between what *is*, and what *ought* to be. The unreflective consciousness, contrastingly, is blind to the difference between possibility and actuality, and cannot distinguish what *ought* to be from what *is*. Oedipus, from this perspective, lacks a critical competence for discrimination, he lacks an ethical consciousness, and hence is without choice. He accepts with resignation his irrational fate as his actuality with an acquiescent, *it is so*.⁹⁷ According to Hegel, the antithesis created as a result of reflective differentiation on the part of the ethical consciousness, is surmounted by a reconciliation, and not at all by a resignation. By acknowledging, through guilt, the opposite law as its actuality, the ethical consciousness is reconciled with the notion that what is ethical must be actual.⁹⁸

Hegel draws on this idea of a rational fate, to develop further his theory of freedom. Freedom, as the essence of Spirit, is self-contained existence: “I am free ... when my existence depends upon myself.”⁹⁹ Necessity, as pure self-reciprocation, or infinite negative self-relation, is Freedom in truth.¹⁰⁰ Freedom consists in the realisation that one’s fate is, of necessity, the outcome of oneself. Hegel believes that to live by such a principle is to spare oneself the consciousness of having suffered a wrong, in times of adversity. To stand free, therefore, one must learn to bear one’s guilt.¹⁰¹ This idea of rational necessity thus corresponds with the movement of self-reconciliation immanent within consciousness. Hegel also develops a no-

tion of justice inspired by Sophoclean tragedy, by which true justice is to be found in the reconciling of oneself to one's fate.

But, does this reconciliation occur in the character of Antigone? For, when she learns of the fate she is condemned to suffer, she does not endeavour to reconcile herself to it. She does not say "all is as it ought to be," but, rather, she declares "*that ought to be!*" Nevertheless, she does not seek consolation, nor does she desire to escape this most dreadful of fates. What, in the seeing eyes of Antigone, is the most iniquitous and deceitful injustice, is the possibility that this fate which she is to suffer, may or *may not* be her own. "*But if they are the wrongdoers!*": Antigone thus refuses to bear a guilt that is foreign to her, refuses even the prospect of it. To free herself from this injustice, she self-consciously creates a fate for herself that is truly her own, and takes her own life by her own hand: self-sacrifice par excellence. A denouement as just, as it is tragic.

To conclude, Hegel makes use of the tragic model to present the ethical dilemma that necessarily becomes manifest between subjective will and objective law, as that concerning the mutual demand for justification. The tragic genre dramatises this problem in terms of a conflictual dynamic between two opposing manifestations of the ethical. The *Antigone* is, for Hegel, the "most magnificent and satisfying work of art"¹⁰² of the tragic genre, in that it distinctly features the act of a rational being as being the most divisive, and yet also most significant event within ethical life. Through his forewilled deed, the individual comes to the realisation that his existence is, fundamentally, self-determined, and therefore rational. This journey of self-reflection is represented in terms of the reconciliation of the individual with his fate. The tragic art form, therefore, dramatises the dialectical trajectory of the subject's rational self-realisation as a determinate existence. This notwithstanding, to do justice to the particular instance of Sophocles' *Antigone*, would entail acknowledgment of the reductive factors implicated in an entirely Hegelian reading of the play, which forgoes the prospect that *Antigone* transcends its context in Greek ethics, and equally, forgoes the possibility for a comparatively more modern interpretation of the play.

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NOTES

¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977).

- ² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§444-83, pp. 266-94.
- ³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §233, p. 140.
- ⁴ See Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1974), p. 322; Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1975), p. 166.
- ⁵ See Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, p. 322.
- ⁶ See Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 168.
- ⁷ The term Spirit in Hegel's *Phenomenology* properly refers to a state of existence, an underlying mode of consciousness that is intrinsic to all rational beings. Thus, the sense of Spirit first becomes significant with the introduction of the universal self, by which individuality gains a consciousness of itself in immediate identification within the social sphere. In its immersion in social substance, the nature of individuality is "such that its *being* is the *action* of the *single* individual and of all individuals and whose action is immediately *for others*, or is a 'matter in hand' and is such only as the action of *each* and *everyone*: the essence which is the essence of all beings, viz. *spiritual essence*"; "The pure 'matter in hand' itself is what was defined as 'the category,' being that is the 'I' or 'I' that is being, but in the form of *thought* which is still distinguished from *actual self-consciousness*" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, §418, p. 252); see also §438, p. 263: "this is spiritual essence that is in and for itself, but which is not yet *consciousness* of itself."
- ⁸ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §398, p. 237-8; §438, p. 263.
- ⁹ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §418, p.252.
- ¹⁰ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §420, p. 253.
- ¹¹ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §438, p. 263.
- ¹² See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §438, p. 263: "This still *abstract* determination which constitutes 'the matter in hand' itself is at first only spiritual essence, and its consciousness [only] a formal knowing of it."; and, §442, p. 265: "the *living ethical* world is Spirit in its *truth*. When Spirit first arrives at an abstract knowledge of its essence, ethical life is submerged in the formal universality of legality or law."
- ¹³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §441, p. 265.
- ¹⁴ See Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 172-8 ; Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, p. 326.
- ¹⁵ See Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J.Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), pp. 250-2.
- ¹⁶ See Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 253.
- ¹⁷ See Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 252.
- ¹⁸ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §438, p. 263: "this consciousness, as a particular individual, is still in fact distinct from substance."

Within this mode of ethical life, Hegel argues, reflexive subjectivity is not yet historically developed.

- ¹⁹ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §354, p. 541; *The Philosophy of Right*, "Second Part: Morality."

- ²⁰ More specifically, in the context of society, contradiction arises via the manifestation or assertion of subjective will, by which is introduced a 'corruptive element' into the unity of State, and are set the conditions whereby, "the individual finds himself in a position to bring everything to the test of his own conscience, even in defiance of the existing constitution" (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 253).
- ²¹ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 252. For Hegel, subjective reflection posed the threat of ruin to the Greek state – then established upon 'Objective Will', or an 'immanent Objective Morality' – in that: "When reflection once comes into play, the inquiry is started whether the Principles of Law (*das Recht*) cannot be improved. Instead of holding by the existing state of things, *internal* conviction is relied upon; and thus begins a subjective independent Freedom, in which the individual finds himself in a position to bring everything to the test of his own conscience, even in defiance of the existing constitution" (pp. 252-3).
- ²² Cf. Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 93; see also Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, p. 337.
- ²³ See Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, pp. 91-2; Hegel develops this distinction between ethical order and abstract morality in *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge UP, 1991), parts 2 and 3.
- ²⁴ Cf. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, p. 191.
- ²⁵ Cf. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, p. 93.
- ²⁶ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §452, pp. 270-1: "This universality which the individual as such attains is *pure being, death*; it is a state which has been reached *immediately*, in the *course of Nature*, not the result of an action *consciously done*. The duty of the member of a Family is on that account to add this aspect, in order that the individual's ultimate being, too, shall not belong solely to Nature and remain something irrational, but shall be something *done*, and the right of consciousness asserted to it"; "Blood-relationship supplements, then, the abstract natural process by adding to it the movement of consciousness, interrupting the work of Nature and rescuing the blood-relation from destruction; or better, because destruction is necessary, the passage of the blood-relation into mere being, it takes on itself the act of destruction. ... the Family keeps away from the dead this dishonouring of him by unconscious appetites and abstract entities, and puts its own action in their place."
- ²⁷ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §460, p. 276: "Just as the Family ... possesses in the community its substance and enduring being, so, conversely, the community possesses in the Family the formal element of its actual existence, and in the divine law its power and authentication. Neither of the two is by itself absolutely valid; human law proceeds in its living process from the divine, and law valid on earth from that of the nether world, the conscious from the unconscious, mediation from immediacy – and equally returns whence it came. The power of the nether world, on the other hand, has its actual existence on earth; through consciousness, it becomes existence and activity."
- ²⁸ In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel perceives the identity of the universal and the particular will (which, in abstract terms correspond to the domain of the state, and the familial realm, respectively) necessarily to involve the coincidence of the no-

tions of *duty* and *right*. In the ethical realm, “a human being has rights in so far as he has duties, and duties in so far as he has rights” (§155, p. 197). This ethical economy of reciprocity was merely implicit within the structure of Greek ethical life, and would have needed consciously to be realised in order that the function of this dynamic actualise itself in the preservation of the ancient state. It is precisely this blindness to the coincidence of *duty* and *right* that is represented as *tragic* in Greek drama, and, according to Hegel, in the *Antigone*, in particular.

²⁹ See Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, §156, p. 197.

³⁰ See Hegel, *On Tragedy*, eds. Anne and Henry Paolucci (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 152; Hegel, *Aesthetics*, volumes I and II, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), I: 236: “The gods become human ‘pathos’, and ‘pathos’ in concrete activity is the human character.”

³¹ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §465, p. 280.

³² See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §465, p. 280: “This immediate firmness of decision is something implicit, and therefore has at the same time the significance of a natural being as we have seen. Nature, not the accident of circumstances or choice, assigns one sex to one law, the other to the other law.”

³³ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §466, p. 280: “The ethical consciousness, because it is *decisively* for one of the two powers, is essentially character; it does not accept that both have the same *essential* nature.”

³⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §466, p. 280.

³⁵ See Hegel, *On Tragedy*, p. 292.

³⁶ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, I: 232.

³⁷ Hegel describes the disparity in perspective as to right and wrong, between individual and state, and, furthermore, remarks on the unequal authority of state power: “Since it sees right only on one side and wrong on the other, that consciousness which belongs to the divine law sees in the other side only the violence of human caprice, while that which holds to human law sees in the other only the self-will and disobedience of the individual who insists on being his own authority. For the commands of government have a universal, public meaning open to the light of day; the will of the other law, however, is locked up in the darkness of the nether regions, and in its outer existence manifests as the will of an isolated individual which, as contradicting the first, is a wanton outrage” (*Phenomenology*, §466, 280).

³⁸ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, I: 232.

³⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, I: 204.

⁴⁰ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, I: 218.

⁴¹ Hegel expounds the circular relationship of cause and effect in the *Logic*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), §154, p. 217: “the rectilinear movement out from causes to effects, and from effects to causes, is bent round and back into itself, and thus the progress *ad infinitum* of causes and effects is, really and truly suspended.”

⁴² See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1217.

- ⁴³ In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel expounds the interrelated institutional spheres of Abstract Right, Morality, and Ethical Life.
- ⁴⁴ In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes a distinction between right and morality, the former pertaining to state power, the latter pertaining to the individual will (§94A, p. 121).
- ⁴⁵ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §94A, p. 121.
- ⁴⁶ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1212, “In Greek tragedy ... the occasion for collisions is produced by the moral justification of a specific act, and not at all by an evil will, a crime, or infamy. ... For evil in the abstract has no truth in itself and is of no interest.”
- ⁴⁷ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, I: 219, “Action is the clearest revelation of the individual.”
- ⁴⁸ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §113, p. 140.
- ⁴⁹ According to Hegel, individuality arrives at a moral relation to the world through a recognition and acknowledgement of its agency and realisation that its agency and duty coincide. See *Phenomenology*, §616, p.374: “In the moral view of the world we see ... consciousness itself *consciously* produce its object; we see that it neither encounters the object as something alien to it, nor does the object come before it in an unconscious manner ... for it knows itself to be the *active* agent that produces it”; §637, p. 387: “the content of the moral action is the doer’s own immediate *individuality*, and the *form* of that content is just this self as a pure movement, viz. as [the individual’s] knowing or his *own conviction*”; §638, p. 387: “this self, *qua* a pure self-identical knowing, is the *absolute universal*, so that just this knowing, as *its own* knowing, as conviction, is *duty*. Duty is no longer the universal that stands over against the self; on the contrary, it is known to have no validity when thus separated. It is now the law that exists for the sake of the self, not the self that exists for the sake of the law.”
- ⁵⁰ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1214.
- ⁵¹ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1215.
- ⁵² See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1214.
- ⁵³ Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1994), p. 10
- ⁵⁴ For Hegel, the ethical consciousness, of which the tragic character is representative, is ethical in so far as its “deed, the *shape* in which it *actualises* itself, shall be nothing else but what it *knows*” (*Phenomenology*, §467, p. 281).
- ⁵⁵ Sophocles, *Antigone*, p. 11.
- ⁵⁶ Sophocles, *Antigone*, Antigone addresses Creon with this confrontational claim: “I would say that all these men would approve this, if it were not that fear shuts their mouths. But kingship is fortunate in many ways, and in particular it has power to do and say what it wishes” (p. 49).
- ⁵⁷ See Sophocles, *Antigone*, p. 89.
- ⁵⁸ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §466, p. 280: “The ethical consciousness, because it is *decisively* for one of the two powers ... does not accept that both have the same *essential* nature. For this reason, the opposition between them appears as an *un-*

fortunate collision of duty merely with a reality which possesses no rights of its own. ... Since it sees right only on one side and wrong on the other, that consciousness which belongs to the divine law sees in the other side only the violence of human caprice, while that which holds to human law sees in the other only the self-will and disobedience of the individual who insists on being his own authority.”

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §117, p. 144; §118A, p. 146. The principle of ‘*the Right of knowledge*’ is the translation of ‘*Recht des Wissens*’ (Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, p. 192).

⁶⁰ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §118A, p. 146. This form of consciousness corresponds to Greek ethical life or *Sittlichkeit*.

⁶¹ Sophocles, *Antigone*, pp. 43–4.

⁶² Compare Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §462, p. 277.

⁶³ This, for Hegel, constitutes an “absolute relation:” “the true and absolute relation is that the one really does illumine the other; each has a living bearing on the other, and each is the other’s serious fate. The absolute relation, then, is set forth in tragedy” (from the essay on *Natural Law*, trans. T. M. Knox [U of Pennsylvania P, 1975], p. 108).

⁶⁴ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §458, p. 275.

⁶⁵ The division between Divine and Human Law becomes explicitly gendered in the section of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* entitled “The Ethical World. Human and Divine Law: Man and Woman.”

⁶⁶ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §460, p. 276.

⁶⁷ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §457, pp. 274–5; Judith Butler offers a critical interpretation of the gender difference structuring Hegel’s reading of *Antigone*. Specifically, in Hegel’s emphasis on the blood relation of brother and sister as one devoid of desire, Butler interprets the implicit contention that the prohibition against incest reinforces the structure of kinship (see *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* [New York: Columbia UP, 2000], p. 13). Operating with her novel version of the figure of Antigone as transgressive – taking into account the incestuous convolutions of her ancestry – of the ideal structure of kinship, rather than as categorically representative of these norms, Butler is led to question the way in which socially idealised forms of kinship are instituted and legitimated as ethical structures constituting the basis of modern “cultural intelligibility.”

⁶⁸ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §457, p. 275: it is interesting to note the evident discrepancy here between the model of recognition put forth in “Lordship and Bondage” (see §167, pp.104–5) in which desire features as a necessary precondition, as compared to the apparent prohibition of desire as the factor which disqualifies and renders impossible recognition: “The brother, however, is for the sister a passive, similar being in general; the recognition of herself in him is pure and unmixed with any natural desire.” For a discussion of this variance, see Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, pp. 13–4.

⁶⁹ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §473, p. 286; §474, p. 286; §475, p. 288: “The community, however, can only maintain itself by suppressing this spirit of individu-

alism.”

⁷⁰ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §§472-7, pp. 284-90.

⁷¹ See Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, p. 29.

⁷² See Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, chapter 1, “Antigone’s Claim”; Antigone “speaks in public, precisely when she ought to be sequestered to the private domain,” (p. 4); “She attempts to speak in the political sphere in the language of sovereignty that is the instrument of political power” (p. 29); which leads Butler to question, “what sort of political speech is this that transgresses the very boundaries of the political, which sets into scandalous motion the boundary by which her speech ought to be contained?” (p. 4); “Her words ... are chiasmically related to the vernacular of sovereign power, speaking in and against it, delivering and defying imperatives at the same time, inhabiting the language of sovereignty at the very moment in which she opposes sovereign power and is excluded from its terms” (p. 28).

⁷³ In Butler’s reading, in *Antigone's Claim*, “not only does the state presuppose kinship and kinship presuppose the state but ‘acts’ that are performed in the name of the one principle take place in the idiom of the other, confounding the distinction between the two at a rhetorical level and thus bringing into crisis the stability of the conceptual distinction between them” (p. 11); “Opposing Antigone to Creon as the encounter between the forces of kinship and those of state power fails to take into account the ways in which Antigone has already departed from kinship, herself the daughter of an incestuous bond” (p. 5-6).

⁷⁴ See Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, p. 4: “She is outside the terms of the polis, but she is, as it were, an outside without which the polis could not be”; pp. 28, 30; see also pp. 67-8 (and esp. note 6, pp. 94-5) on “the structural necessity of perversion to the law.”

⁷⁵ See Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, p. 2.

⁷⁶ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §450, p. 268 and §457, p. 274.

⁷⁷ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1214. The tragic genre represented by the *Antigone* conceptualises conflict not as that arising between forces of good and evil, but as that which, of necessity, arises within a structure wherein two powers, each of them self-justifying, are in action.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §468, p. 282.

⁷⁹ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §118A, p. 146: “What is at issue here is not the individual aspect but the whole, which concerns not the determinate character of the particular action but its universal nature. The transition from purpose to intention consists, then, in the fact that I ought to be aware not only of my individual action, but also of the universal which is associated with it. When it emerges in this manner, the universal is what I have willed, i.e. my *intention*.”

⁸⁰ In the subsection of “The Ethical Order” entitled, “Ethical Action. Human and Divine Knowledge. Guilt and Destiny,” Hegel demonstrates action incurs guilt regardless of whether or not the doer was fully conscious: “the one character, like the other is split up into a conscious and an unconscious part; and since each itself calls forth this opposition and its not-knowing is, through the deed, its own affair, each is responsible for the guilt which destroys it” (*Phenomenology*, §472, p.

285). The deed, once accomplished is irreversible, regardless of whether or not the doer was aware of his action: “for the accomplished deed is the removal of the antithesis between the knowing self and the actuality confronting it.” Thus, “the doer cannot deny the crime or his guilt” (§469, p. 283). Hegel does, however, see the contrast between the nature of guilt as resulting from a deed that was willed, and one that was not.

⁸¹ Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 174

⁸² Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §470, p. 284.

⁸³ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §470, p. 284: “The ethical consciousness must, on account of its deed, acknowledge its opposite as its own actuality, must acknowledge its guilt.”

⁸⁴ Sophocles, *Antigone*, p. 43.

⁸⁵ Sophocles, *Antigone*, p. 89.

⁸⁶ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §468, p. 282.

⁸⁷ Indeed, the awareness of guilt sets the conditions for reflection upon one’s deed, or in Hegel’s words, guilt takes effect such that “the deed is brought out into the light of day, as something in which the conscious is bound up with the unconscious” (*Phenomenology*, §469, p. 283).

⁸⁸ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §470, p. 284; within the context of ancient Greek *Sittlichkeit*, the notion of right is to be distinguished from the modern conception of abstract right, which is intelligible to a “consciously free will” (see Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, “First Part: Abstract Right,” §35, p. 37).

⁸⁹ Sophocles, *Antigone*, cited in Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §470, p. 284.

⁹⁰ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, I: 503.

⁹¹ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1216.

⁹² See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1215.

⁹³ See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II:1218.

⁹⁴ Cf. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, pp. 102-3

⁹⁵ See Hegel, *Hegel’s Logic*, §147, pp. 207-8. Hegel elaborates upon this definition thus: “developed actuality, as the coincident alternation of inner and outer, the alternation of their opposite motions combined into a single motion, is Necessity.”

⁹⁶ See Hegel, *Logic*, §147A, p. 209.

⁹⁷ Hegel, in the *Logic* (§147A, p. 210) remarks on the mentality of the ‘ancient mind’: “in the ancient mind the feeling was more of the following kind: Because such a thing is, it is, and as it is, so it ought to be.”

⁹⁸ See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §470, p. 284.

⁹⁹ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ See Hegel, *Logic*, §157-8, pp. 219-20.

¹⁰¹ See Hegel, *Logic*, §147A, pp. 210-1.

¹⁰² Hegel, *Aesthetics*, II: 1218.