

AN INVESTIGATION INTO HEGEL'S THEORY OF TRAGEDY

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1978

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of Philosophy)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 1982

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I deal primarily with Hegel's theory of tragedy, in an attempt to both explicate and evaluate his ideas in this area. The works of Hegel upon which I have based my observations include the chapter entitled Spirit in his Phenomenology of Spirit and the section on Dramatic Poetry in his Philosophy of Fine Art. First I delineate the kind of moral dilemma which Hegel asserted as intrinsic to tragedy and then I evaluate the theory which arises out of this belief.

The Hegelian terminology necessary for this sort of discussion is set out in the first two chapters. An explanation is given for such terms as Spirit, Freedom, the Universal, the Absolute and the self-defined subject. Hegel's interest in the Greek polis - the tension between the autonomy of the individual and the demands of the state and his concepts of Christian agape and Fate are also discussed.

In the second chapter Hegel's historical dialectic is explored to further clarify his concept of Spirit and to provide the context in which he first presents us with the Antigone, which is his major vehicle for the abstraction of his theory of tragedy from the rest of his system. At this stage the basic ingredients of tragedy can be clearly defined, i.e., familial obligation versus civic duty. I discuss the possibility of tragic division within Spirit itself, the case in which morally justifiable belief and action may be at odds with action and belief which is equally justifiable.

The third chapter offers a more thorough examination of the ethical duties which Hegel thought were unique to family life and the relation these bore to the Universal. Then a brief exegesis of the Antigone is given, followed by the philosophical significance which Hegel perceived in the play's major events and in the relationships therein depicted.

In the final chapter I deal with Hegel's attempt to extend his theory to include modern tragedy. I discuss the level of coherence and consistency which he maintains and the value of his expanded theory. As he contends that modern tragedy emphasizes the individual and the needs and desires of his particular personality or character, I follow up on Quinton's query about whether Hegel's theory can hold up once we have taken the ethical significance away from the action in tragedy.

Finally, I discuss what "the tragic view of life" can be said to mean for Hegel. Is he the optimist he is generally taken for and are all spheres of action and belief in his ethical world ultimately concordant and harmonious? Or, indeed, does Hegel consistently support a yes or no answer to this latter question, along with all its ensuing implications for tragedy and Spirit.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals primarily with Hegel's theory of tragedy, in an attempt both to explicate and evaluate his ideas in this area. This involves a delineation of the kind of moral dilemma which Hegel asserted as intrinsic to tragedy and an analysis of the theory which arises out of this belief. The first two chapters provide the foundations which are necessary for this sort of discussion. An explanation is given for such terms as Spirit, Freedom, The Universal, the Absolute and the self-defined subject. Hegel's interest in the Greek polis in terms of the tension between the autonomy of the individual and the demands of the state, and his concepts of Christian agape and Fate, are also discussed. The second chapter also explores Hegel's historical dialectic in order to further clarify his concept of Spirit and to provide the context in which he first presents us with the Antigone, his major instrument for the abstraction of his theory of tragedy from the rest of his system. At this stage the basic ingredients of tragedy can be clearly defined, i.e. familial obligation versus civic duty. I discuss the possibility of tragic division within Spirit itself, the case in which morally justifiable belief and action may be at odds with action and belief which are equally justifiable.

The third chapter offers a more thorough examination of the ethical duties which Hegel thought were unique to family life and the relation these bore to the philosophical significance which Hegel perceived in the major events and relationships depicted in the Antigone.

In the final chapter I deal with Hegel's attempt to extend his theory to include modern tragedy. I discuss the problems of coherence and consistency which arise from the extension of his theory. As he contends that modern tragedy emphasizes the individual, and the needs and desires of his particular personality or character, I question whether Hegel's theory can be sustained once the ethical significance is taken away from the action in tragedy. In closing I consider what "the tragic view of life" can mean for Hegel. Is he the optimist he is generally taken to be and are all spheres of action and belief in his ethical world ultimately concordant and harmonious? Or, indeed, does Hegel consistently support any yes or no answer to this latter question, along with all its ensuing implications for tragedy and Spirit.

The question of the possibility of an ethically perfect or harmonious society is an important one in the study of Hegel. The political upheaval caused by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars brought about moral and political confusion and the structures of all European societies lay exposed to erosion by these winds of change. Hegel, upon the completion of one of his most significant philosophical works, The Phenomenology of Spirit, had the experience of seeing some of the ideals and principles which he had hitherto praised and supported, leap, as it were, off the page and into life. I am referring to Napoleon's victory at Jena (October 13, 1806). Few of us have had so close a glimpse at history's milestones and the young Hegel was overwhelmed with feelings of hope for the fruition of the victories which he witnessed.

..it is not difficult to see that ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era. Spirit has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and imagined, and is of a mind to submerge it in the past, and in the labour of its own transformation... The frivolity and boredom that unsettle the established order, the vague foreboding of something unknown, these are the heralds of approaching change. The gradual crumbling that left unaltered the face of the whole is cut short by a sunburst which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world.¹

Hegel saw the task of philosophy to be one of cancelling divisions. As a young man at the Tübingen Stift it seems that he saw what were to him the important concepts to be grasped in a life-time, to be in peaceful harmony with one another. These concepts are generally taken to involve firstly the idea of man peacefully cohabiting with man as one, in such a way as he believed the Greek city-states of the past to exemplify. Secondly he believed in the self-defined subject which had arisen out of the philosophical revolution of the Enlightenment. Thirdly he had strong religious beliefs which, although he came to deny them in the dead formulae of the Church, he continued to revere in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Hegel's philosophical career was an odyssey in which at times he balanced precariously on the peak of a wave from which he could see all his beloved ideas as having their true expression in a unity which provided the perfect structure for man's moral and social life. But to an increasing extent throughout his mature years, Hegel toppled from this peak, not, as far as we know, into the depths of despair, but to the realization that this unity was by no means immediately present in the ideas with which he was working. To

the contrary, the ideas of the autonomous will was at odds with the concept of the community as one. This is not to be seen as a set-back or deficiency in Hegel's reasoning, that the ideas he viewed as so necessary turned out to be opposites. It is this realization which raised Hegel's unfolding system out of the mire "of the night in which all cows are black" (PG 16), which had caught up Schelling and others, and whose boggy depths afforded little chance of escape. Hegel saw the polarities and saw that, far from ignoring the differences, it was his job as a philosopher to systematically see how they might best be united and exemplified in the life of man.

Hegel shared the yearnings for the classical past that were rife among many poets and philosophers of his day, such as Goethe, Holderlin and Schiller, and held the supposed harmony of the Greek polis as a political ideal through Germany's own troubled times. Yet he ultimately proclaimed that "only the German nations attained the consciousness, in Christianity, that man as man is free."² What are we to make of this statement which at once upholds and betrays Hegel's philosophical system? The existence of free man as the conscious participant in the Universal Spirit of humanity was the goal which Hegel believed all history struggled to attain for the individual. To say, however, that 18th or 19th century German society had attained such a thing undercuts the plethora of arguments which Hegel has heaped upon us urging the dialectical nature of history. In fact, it is to deny most of the PG.

The problem with dialectical progress is that it is hard to see an absolute end to it. Hegel wanted both. He cherished the dialectic as the profoundest means for the development of ideas and yet he believed that all of history and human thought had an ultimate goal: the comprehension of the Universal essence of the Spirit of humanity, the morally perfect world. Hegel kept stressing the need for the view of the "whole" picture in order to achieve this goal and yet he also seems to have thought contemporary German society had accomplished this end and clearly without a holistic view. But what is important for my purposes is not Hegel's nationalism but his moral philosophy and his belief in the historical dialectic. Having pointed out this defect, I should like in what follows to concentrate primarily on what may be seen as illuminating rather than confusing in certain passages of the PG.

What does it mean to say that man, as man, is free? For man to realize his own freedom he must realize his own significance, his own secondary role in society and his consequent subservience to the Spirit of humanity. Hegel, like Rousseau, believed that freedom was only possible within a society. He did not believe, as did Rousseau, that man is born free, but that he must come to be free as he learns to participate rationally in the equally rational conventions of society. Man must "realize" his freedom as he must "realize" his shared self-identity as Spirit. As Robert Solomon points out, the word "realize" is intentionally ambiguous here. It means both a) to recognize and b) to make it so. Hegel sees Spirit primarily as

a "result," which accordingly means both a) a conclusion and b) a product. Hence, "to recognize ourselves as Spirit, as one, is to make ourselves Spirit."³ This is freedom. Man, as mankind, is free.

Hegel endorsed the Kantian concept of Freedom, which was emblematic of the Enlightenment, defining mere freedom from restraint as "negative freedom" and freedom to think and participate in conformity with moral law as "positive freedom." Not just any society, however, offers the constitution, the laws and conventions, which grant its citizens positive freedom. The extent to which freedom is achieved in a given society is the extent to which its constituents are human in Hegel's eyes. For example, those ruled by despotism in the ancient Orient were not human. Their freedom was arbitrarily and accidentally visited upon them by a savage ruler who himself was not human because his freedom was negative and he had no understanding of Hegel's 19th c. concept of universal freedom.

The Greek polis on the other hand, which was the object of so much attention in Hegel's time, demonstrated that the citizen of this 5th century B.C. society was the possessor of a strikingly universal consciousness. The polis was designed so that every man should have his say and his chance to be represented in the dynamic political system which the Greeks had painstakingly developed. Hence, the Greeks understood the necessity for individual autonomy within a unified civic body. Charles Taylor says that in Hegel's eyes the polis, "the highest articulation of society," had a touch of the divine. However, the polis had

only a touch of the divine. The presence of slavery demonstrated that the Greeks too lacked a true understanding of universal freedom. Eventually, according to Hegel, the parochial nature of the laws, that is, the limited scope of the decision-making body, led to the total collapse of the polis.

Hegel's treatment of the Antigone in the PG makes a two-fold point. Hegel believes that the polis represented an important phase in historical development, that is development towards an understanding of the Universal. It depicts how society must endeavor to grant individual autonomy within the limits of cohesiveness, but it also illustrates how the very limitations necessitated by a unified, singular political entity will eventually destroy individual autonomy. Hence, the city-state must perish in the interests of a greater understanding of the Universal. The Antigone is an explicit example of how just such an arrangement, "the unity of the human and the divine ((particular and universal))", bought at the expense of a certain parochialism,"⁴ can turn, with surprising ease, into a moral battleground.

This leads to the other side of Hegel's purpose in his use of the Antigone. Human actions can be justifiable as delineated within or implied or even dictated by the law and still cause conflict. This conflict is what Hegel came to recognize in the form of moral dilemma. When both parties within a conflict represent actions or beliefs which are justifiable within a social structure we have the truest, most basic ingredients of tragedy. The Greeks were apparently discovering this in a very immediate

and fundamental way. Hence, perhaps, the incredibly accurate and succinct nature of many of their tragedies, not the least of which is the Antigone. The value of Hegel's analysis of the Antigone, both as the basis for a theory of tragedy and in terms of the light it sheds on the anatomy of moral dilemma, is what I shall be seeking to discover in this paper.

My interests in the Antigone as a major contributor to our understanding of moral dilemmas are secondary to my interests in the theory of tragedy. I shall therefore be examining Hegel's use of this play in terms of the general moral philosophy suggested by it, and I will then seek to discover whether the sort of moral dilemma inherent in this philosophy is central to a theory of tragedy. This ultimately leads to a critical analysis of this very system of moral beliefs.

In his early manuscripts on Christianity, Hegel had believed that a spirit of unity could, in fact, transcend the separation caused in society by the demands of radical individual autonomy. He had hoped that a single solution could be found in the victory of one side over the other. That is, he hoped that a desire for political unity with the help of Christian brotherly love would overcome any demands of the individual which might threaten the cohesion of the whole. However, he came in time to believe that it was really the case that both sides must be brought unto a unity while each requirement remained intact and was satisfied. This problem, how to unite expressive wholeness and individual autonomy is what is dealt with in the PG and was a central issue for the Romantic age. Admiration for the Greeks,

basically Christian beliefs, and Kantian leanings are all trends which Hegel shared with the Romantics. Hence, we can see that the Romantic view pushed history a step forward in a trend towards an understanding of the Universal, and Hegel with it.

A central issue of the Enlightenment which also had a major impact on Hegel was a movement towards a self-defined subject. The new notion of self had nothing to do with any understanding of cosmic order, in fact, the point was that this all pervading order did not exist. Meaning was in man, intent and purpose were in the thoughts and actions of man, meaning and order ~~were~~ through which man finds himself were no longer projected onto the external world, the world was objectified.

Charles Taylor says that this new notion of self which was a result of the scientific revolution of the 17th century, a movement sparked by the inspiration of Galileo and Newton, underlies an "emancipation from meaning." The dawning age of science, Taylor maintains liberated man from the laws and myths of the external or natural world. Scientific progress was no longer progress in understanding the meaningful order in nature, nor was self-knowledge related to this. The world is "entzaubert," "disenchanted," to use Max Weber's phrase. Progress was escape from past illusion. I see Taylor's remark as misleading because I see this whole revolution as yet another step in man's search for meaning. It is only that now the meaning is shifted away from the cosmos, its cloak of anthropomorphic myth is shed, and meaning is centered within mankind. Although the moderns thought that the systems of order and the anthropomorphism of the

ancients were self-indulgent and uncondusive to genuine scientific or philosophical progress, the obverse dangers, the threat to moral order posed by this disillusionment in past beliefs, weighed heavily upon the architects of this revolutionary philosophy. Hegel, and many of his contemporaries, set out to discover how this "new" man, liberated from myth and the teleology of cosmic order, atomistically separate and subjective, could find peaceful political unity without sacrificing this new found individual autonomy.

Hegel believed that the individual should be guided from within just as a political body should be governed from within. No external ruler governed the Greek polis, public life was an expression and a common expression, not merely actions limited by an unchallengeable, enforced law. So should it be on all levels of human dealing. Just as he did not want division in the political body, he did not want internal division in man and he staunchly opposed Kant's division of man's reason from his desire. Hegel felt that the best argument against Kant could be found in Christianity, although it is often misunderstood.

The message of Jesus was a call to man to restore the lost unity, to replace the law which commands from outside and divides men from nature and each other with the voice of the heart, that affinity of spirit with nature which comes forward in love.⁵

This is the love, the Christian agape, which Hegel had originally thought would conquer separation but which he later came to see as only one half of the balance. The classic misunderstanding of this Christian love is present in both the Jewish and

Catholic faiths. If man's God is dominating and in his love for him man submits himself to His will, it is to become His slave. Hence there is a hierarchy of servitude in which man is divided against himself through his ability or desire to serve his God. Yet there already did exist this morally autonomous man who was at this stage undefinable in Hegel's philosophy. Kant thought that his moral subject was morally autonomous whereas, this religious man with what Hegel called an unhappy consciousness, was not. Kant had man's Reason ruling his passions, and, with a view to balance, dominating the decision making apparatus in the mind of the moral man. The categorical imperative dictated that man's actions bear the test of "universalizability," and if only those actions that could be accepted as if they were a universal law were followed, then the autonomous man in a moral society was possible. Hegel, however, believed that Kant was seriously mistaken. The difference between these "misusers" of Christianity and the Kantian moral man is that the former "have their lord outside themselves, while the latter carries his lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave."⁶

Hegel's concept of "fate" is another aspect of his religious belief and it seems to provide a link between his moral philosophy and his philosophy of history, both of which are central in his discussion of the Antigone. If law is provided from a source external to us or is somehow imposed upon us, as Hegel believes it is even for Kant, we are never reconciled with that against which we trespass. This is because any system of judging crime and weighing punishment, according to Hegel, is brought

about through divisions of man against man. But when our passions are no longer particular and egoistic but united with our reason and the Spirit of all mankind through love, then, our trespasses are against life itself, they are a division in Spirit, and with the passage of time, history meets and heals the wounds itself. History reacts. "The punishment we receive from fate is that of life injured, it offers the road to reconciliation."⁷ If we cease to act in such a way as to bring on this injurious fate, if we cease to cause division, then the unity of life is restored. Both the trespasser and the path of history are healed together.

Although this apparently retributive doctrine is clearly more Greek than it is Christian, it is important to remember that the love that restores the oneness is Christian agape. It is also important to remember that this is not the classical system of divine retribution that it seems. In Hegel, no curse is cast upon a sinner's off-spring nor do the Eumenides fly down from the heavens. The symbolism, however, is clear. If the balance is upset, the act of setting it right is painful and disruptive; a division which will last until the balance is restored.

In that we suffer, we acknowledge that we have erred.

Antigone⁸

True moral consciousness, which is the ultimate goal in the chapter on Spirit in the PG, is a state in which the subject's will is at one with the Universal. This is explicitly the destination of Hegel's odyssey, it is absolute knowledge. Through the reflection upon this odyssey which this thesis provides it

will become clear how the problem of man in society, individual autonomy versus the welfare of all, gave rise to Hegel's theory of tragedy. Hegel's belief in the struggle of history towards its goal, an understanding of the Universal, is also the path which provides the context for the tragic collision which he felt was the prototype for all true tragedy. As he felt this collision had its inception in the political structure of the Greek polis, Hegel believed that it is to this structure which we must look in order to understand the birth of tragedy on the war torn stage of history's progress.

CHAPTER TWO

SPIRIT AND HISTORY

The Tragic Struggle for Freedom

But even as we contemplate history as this slaughter bench on which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed, our thoughts cannot avoid the question, for whom, for what final aim these monstrous sacrifices have been made.

Hegel, Philosophy of History⁹

The section that I shall primarily be dealing with in the PG, the chapter concerned with Spirit, represents a historical dialectic. Hegel believed that the unfolding of history is dialectical in nature and also that there is an unrealized purpose in this unfolding which is manifested in major phases of historical development. When these developments run contrary to the purpose, it is not the case that we who are interpreting and reflecting upon these events redefine the purpose, but rather, history corrects itself and the forms of life which seem to run contrary to the purpose are altered or completely annihilated. History endeavors to "heal" itself by constantly rebuilding the ruins in an attempt to fulfill and not contradict the purpose, meeting with more or less success at each phase. The purpose which Hegel believes to motivate historical developments is that of humanity seeking to understand true universality, the Absolute, but the path is clearly not one of steady progress.

The city state fails as a realization of the universal, because its parochial nature contradicts true universality. The revolutionary state destroys freedom because it tries to realize it in absolute form, by dissolving all articulations of society, without which freedom cannot exist.¹⁰

It may be the case that Hegel's "purpose" applies in retrospect and is essentially interpretive. For instance, the seeking of a universal consciousness causing first the development and then the destruction of the Greek city-state, can be said at best to interpret history. Consequently, although one can find no precise beginning to this development, and prior to this development the purpose is meaningless, the purpose can be subscribed

to as a reflective interpretation because, Hegel feels, it explains the "tortuous paths of history" better than anything else. Thus, in a historical dialectic, we have no "self-authenticating" purpose as a starting point, and there is not likely to be unanimous agreement among philosophers that Hegel's interpretation applied in hindsight is accurate or sound. Even so, it is important to keep in mind through the ensuing discussion that an understanding of the universal is Hegel's major criterion for a free and moral society and hence his yardstick for historical progress.

Spirit is the constant which moves through history, gaining strength at history's high points and suffering division when revolution destroys the order which is necessary for development and growth. Our interest lies with the Greek polis which manifests an understanding of the universal which is great but not great enough. Through the development of the polis and its subsequent downfall Hegel isolates the collision which is socially and politically devastating and which gives rise to tragedy. The "final aim" of which this chapter's epitaph speaks is the social and political manifestation of the Universal. The roots of tragedy lie in man's inability to articulate this concept in his social institutions.

Sophocles' Antigone provides Hegel with a perfect instance of society's break down through its division from the Universal. In the play, Antigone represents the claims of the world of the beyond, the sphere of action and belief which is Divine and with which Antigone is intuitively united. Creon represents the claims of the state. He cannot see how the burial of a traitor

to the polis could be an ethically supportable action. Antigone cannot see how the polis should be allowed to interfere with a matter which lies strictly between her family and its Gods and she proceeds to ignore the state's command. Such a conflict is due to shortsightedness on the part of both parties and both parties are brought down by the actions which their partial and deceptive perceptions bring about. Hegel, however, felt that the greater point which this play makes is that the structure of the polis cannot support this internal strife. Through the unwillingness, which Creon demonstrates, to perceive the complexities of the matter and to expand the limited scope of the state's parochial laws, a hopeless inability to grasp the Universal is revealed and this is a revelation which Hegel feels has truly devastating and tragic repercussions. This conflict creates a rent in social order which Hegel calls a division in Spirit. A Universal Spirit would be able to meet the demands of both the civic and Divine realms. The meeting of these requirements would be seen by man as a necessity for the welfare of the Spirit of humanity. This is what the Universal is, it is essentially the elimination of borders, boundaries and divisions. An understanding of the Universal would lead not to compromise, but to an inclusion of the opposition. Creon should not see Antigone as a foe but as someone whose claims should be represented within the political body. In the sense that she is the one asking for recognition and he is the one denying it, Creon is more culpable than Antigone, and it seems that the tragic resolution effected in the play brings greater blame upon Creon than upon Antigone.

Spirit, for Hegel, represents the finest, most rational qualities of human consciousness. Hegel felt that the experiences of the individual human consciousness developing towards maturity were analogous to trends in the development of Spirit through historical and prehistorical times. Prehistorical time gives us man in an infant state with a primitive concept of himself and the world around him. This primitive man is a creature filled with his individual desires and needs with little or no understanding of the universal. Hence man is divided from Spirit, or more accurately, the psirit of man is divided from the Absolute Spirit. Spirit is divided from itself.

If man is to rise to the point where he can be the vehicle of this return, he has to be transformed, to undergo a long cultivation or formation (Bildung) . . . Thus in order to know itself in the world, Spirit has to bring about an adequate embodiment in human life in which it can recognize itself.¹¹

In Reason in History, the introductory part of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history, Hegel says:

The goal of world history is that Spirit come to a knowledge of what it truly is, that it give this knowledge objective expression, realize it in a world which lies before it, in short, produce itself as an object for itself.¹²

The organization of communities is the first step towards understanding some sense of the universal. Man is expected to see himself in this development as an active part of a dynamic whole, a microcosm in a macrocosm, and that which he defends and boasts of now extends farther than himself. Hegel does not claim

that history unfolds in a simply progressive manner, that is from simplicity to sophistication, nor does the consciousness of the individual. Consequently, at a relatively early stage in world history we have the Greek city-states which endeavored to grant individual autonomy within a totally democratic system of jurisdiction. While the structure of the Greek polis was considered by Hegel to be divine, complex and very advanced in its accommodation of the need for individual autonomy, it was seen as only a stage in human development which must be destroyed in the interests of further progress. This is because, ultimately, Spirit-sure-of-itself, the final and thus far inaccessible phase in which Spirit perceives its own universality, must have nothing outside of itself, no external restrictions, in order to be totally universal.

It is the state of humanity writ large - as
Spirit - that is free, not the individual.¹³

Hence the necessity for understanding the Universal. Man cannot be free without it.

To best understand Hegel's concept of Spirit it may be easiest first to consider the more familiar notions of "fellow feeling" and "team spirit" and from there make the necessary leap into Hegel's realm of "Geist." It is easy to comprehend, as Robert Solomon points out, that "team spirit" means more than collective aggressiveness. It involves the understanding that to act collectively is better and more useful than to act singularly. It means interdependence in action and intertwined identities. Spirit is Hegel's version of the "humanity" of Kant and

Rousseau. It involves not a respect for individuals but for humans who merit this respect through their shared identity in Spirit.

The significance of that "absolute" commandment - Know thyself - whether we look at it in itself or in the historical circumstances of its first utterance - is not to promote mere knowledge in respect to the particular capacities, character, propensities and foibles of the single self. The knowledge that it commands is that of man's genuine reality - of what is essentially and ultimately true and real - of Spirit as the true and essential being.¹⁴

The collection becomes, for Hegel, more important than its constituents and abstract social classes are more real than the individuals which make them up.

Tragic conflict, then, is a conflict which is primarily significant for Hegel in terms of the division it represents or causes in Spirit. Hegel believed tragic conflict to be a conflict within the powers which rule the world of man's will and action, his "ethical substance." As Bradley puts it:

The family and the state, the bond of parent and child, of brother and sister, of husband and wife, of citizen and ruler, or citizen and citizen, with the obligations and feelings appropriate to these bonds; and again feelings of personal love and honor, or of devotion to a great cause or an ideal interest like religion or science or some kind of social welfare - such are the forces exhibited in tragic action...And as they form the substance of man, are common to all civilised men, and are acknowledged as powers rightfully claiming human allegiance, their exhibition in tragedy has that interest, at once deep and universal, which is essential to a great work of art.¹⁵

Ethical substance is not only ethical consciousness but also ethical action. It knows no "other" or external; the objective social entity before it is no other than a part of itself, as reality is all a part of it. Spirit actualized in ethical substance is the source, the goal and the work of a society. It is the foundation and operation of custom and law.

It is essential that the opposing forces in this situation be clearly defined. Ethical substance represents the unity of a society. When Hegel says self-identity, which is signified by ethical substance, he does not mean that every individual is sure of his own unique identity but that every individual (not uniquely) is sure of his identity with the whole. This is the moment which is captured in the Greek polis, a situation which, Hegel wants to believe, so much manifests the wills of its individual constituents that they can find no identity for themselves without it, nor can the polis without its members. But at the same time as this identity is being achieved, the action of the individual, which is a part of the same moment, rends asunder the unity of society by the individual accomplishing his own work and taking his own share. Far from being devastating, this is what makes substance actual and alive; Hegel says this complement of forces is the "movement and soul of substance and the resultant universal being." (PG 439)

"The living ethical world is Spirit in its truth". (PG 442) But the PG does not end here. Spirit is divided within itself. There are two spheres which struggle to co-exist and they are the realm of culture and the world of belief or faith; the realm of

essential being according to Hegel. It is the Enlightenment which marks the time when the insights of certain individuals, who have a grasp of Spirit returned to itself through the separation caused by these two spheres, become diffused - that is, I suppose, a realization of the unity of Spirit dawns across the land. Spirit divided, and realized in reconciliation, expands from merely encompassing all reality as we know it, to encompassing the beyond as well, which marks the integration of religion with ethics, and morality now represents this new all-encompassing Spirit, Spirit-sure-of-itself. The purpose of the section on Spirit is to follow the ethical world (Sittlichkeit) through its destruction to the final Moralitat or moral view of the world whence arises the "actual self-consciousness of Absolute Spirit." (PG 443)

The scene is set, then, with three active ingredients. The first is substance representing the great store of laws and customs enforced and carried out in a given society. The second is the real circumstances of the individual, that is the changing situation which each individual must constantly interact with. The third, which Hegel calls the infinite middle term, is the self-consciousness of the individual. Substance, in this scenario, represents the universal essence. However this can be misleading in the same way it is misleading to call, as does Taylor, the polis a divine articulation of society. Were substance at this stage truly universal or the polis truly divine, their destruction, or division would not be necessary. As it is they merely articulate the best understanding that society

and the individual in it have at this time of the universal and the divine, but they are, in fact, small-scale models of the real thing.

Ethical action is the prohodos, the step taken.¹⁶ The action is here an antithesis, in that it negates pure thought by replacing it with action. When Sittlichkeit is operating smoothly in an ongoing society, self-consciousness is always implicitly united with Substance, that is, customs and laws, and this unity becomes explicit in action which unites the reality of the individual to Substance as well. This, I hope it is clear, if only barely, is all a very complicated way of saying that an individual is conscientiously following the laws and customs which maintain his society. The synthesis of the thought and the action is the vision of unity which these pose with the established mores. However, on occasion the action, which "preserves the antithesis to self-consciousness" (PG 445), in that it immortalizes in deed the thought of the individual, betrays the self-consciousness as heeding some end which directs actions contrary to the established laws. By this fact we can perceive that it is in the nature of consciousness to create distinctions within itself - "exhibiting itself as a world articulated into its ((separate)) spheres." (PG 445) Since consciousness is implicitly united with Substance, and becomes explicitly so through action, the only coherent result of there being two distinct spheres of consciousness is that there are two distinct spheres of ethical substance, the human and the divine. This is, of course, Hegel's cryptic foreshadowing of the great role the

Antigone is going to play in his description and explanation of the decline and fall of the Greek polis. Consequently, an individual confronted by this divided substance and forced into action by some pressing dilemma in his personal reality will entrust himself to one of these two spheres "according to its nature." (PG 445) (Hegel almost always says "it" in these instances because he is referring to the individual self-consciousness, not the individual. We shall see soon enough, however, that consciousness is by no means neuter.)

Whichever way an individual chooses to take he is acting knowingly in that he is cognisant of the realm to which he is committing himself, but unknowingly in that he is unaware that by his action he is eclipsing in his singular vision the other sphere of substance and upsetting the balance of Reason. The knowledge of the individual at this stage of development is, therefore, deceptive. The agent believes himself to be firmly in the right because he has either the understanding of state law soundly guiding him, as was the case with Creon in the Antigone, or, as in Antigone's own case, Divine Law is the unyielding guide. Hegel's description of this deceptive knowledge indicates a thorough understanding of the Greek concept of hubris (ὕbris). It was not merely a pride so strong that it threatened and offended the gods, it was a blindness in the possession of sight, a mistaken understanding of one's position and power which begat overwhelming self-confidence.¹⁷ The appearance of hubris in a character in classical tragedy is often his hamartia (ἁμαρτία), his tragic flaw which, in spite of the

countless good qualities and intentions he may have, will eventually cause his ruin. Aristotle tells us:

(1) A good man must not be seen passing from happiness to misery, or (2) a bad man from misery to happiness...Nor on the other hand should (3) an extremely bad man be seen falling from happiness into misery...There remains, then, an intermediate kind of personage, a man not preeminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement. (Poetica B. 13)¹⁸

It has often been said of Attic tragedy that, since everyone knew the main story-lines, which were based on either glorified tribal lore or well-known sacred myths, irony took the place of suspense. This is true, however trite it may sound, and the Antigone was in good company in terms of tragedies which employed the above-mentioned devices to fill audiences with grief for a brave and noble character.

Hegel deals philosophically with a similar irony but to do so he must tamper with the facts of the past as much as does any playwright. The polis, for all its being such a harmonious balance of individual will and the welfare of the whole, doubtlessly witnessed the rise to power of a great many people, Pericles of Athens perhaps being an example, who were forced constantly to make decisions which involved some question of the religious over against the legal. Hegel is right to centre on this as a major problem in history, as examples abound in every culture and in every era. But the examples which Hegel chooses to deal with are always the extreme ones where neither the protagonist nor the antagonist can understand the other's side the

least little bit. This is because Hegel is trying to portray the knowledge of the individual at this stage as deceptive; Antigone, Creon, Oedipus and countless others are blind though sighted, knowing though not knowing. When the scales of human and divine justice teeter, the answer is not to abolish one side and raise the other to infinity as Antigone does. Even though we are to think of tragic characters as responsible for the actions which bring on their doom because of their blindness, they themselves receive their doom as an external stroke of fate or Moira, also because of their blindness. (In the Antigone, I will argue later, Creon is more the victim of this sort of short-sightedness and suffering than is Antigone.) By this interpretation of affairs we can see that Hegel's labeling of fate as uncomprehended necessity is an accurate summation of the situation. Hegel quotes Antigone as saying "Because we suffer we acknowledge that we have erred." (PG 470, Antigone l. 926) In this connection it is interesting that Hegel never gives examples of instances in which successful decisions are made, where the agent surveys the situation, weighs sacrifices that might have to be made in the sphere of the divine and of the legal (human) and chooses "according to his nature" but nevertheless not blindly but with full knowledge, and appeases the slighted side to the best of his ability. I do not think that Hegel would want to acknowledge that such a rational and clear-sighted decision was possible of a member of a polis. The whole problem which, according to Hegel, riddles the society of the Greek city-state is that man has not yet grasped the concept of the universal.

The city-state has achieved the purpose of broadening man's view, causing him to identify with a larger whole, but the laws of the city-state are parochial in nature and members of these societies cannot be expected to look beyond these to take in the larger whole which would involve the divine. Through such a union of spheres, Necessity would no longer be an external uncontrollable force but something to be controlled by skillful balance. Hegel believes that once an individual understood the laws of his polis to be parochial and took in the dialectic that leads to the tragic protagonist's destruction brought on by his own limited vision, the individual will achieve a consciousness which, because of its perception of the entire conflict, will be a universal consciousness. The bottom line, however, is that as soon as an individual has an understanding of the universal he no longer uncritically aligns himself with a single city. He is no longer one with the "simple substance" of a parochial ethic, but thinks himself as part of some universal empire and consequently the city-state goes under.

CHAPTER THREE

ANTIGONE:

Spirit and Tragedy

Action in the world on the part of the community is still out of phase with the truly universal. In making effective the particular, action thus opens a struggle within the ethical itself. This struggle is tragic...The tragic character who belongs to this stage of unreflecting Sittlichkeit is one who acts only half-conscious of what is at stake. He sees one law; he doesn't see the other which is tied to it, whose violation lies in the realization of the first. He is blind in the very possession of sight.¹⁹

A. The Family and the State

Hegel could not have found a better instrument than Sophocle's Antigone to depict clearly what was a constant problem not only to the truly democratic societies of the past but to all societies which have sought after a unity which does not completely exclude the diversity among its constituents. The kinds of laws these communities must set up cannot possibly accommodate the divine sentiments brought about in the hearts of many by unforeseeable twists of events and passions. Consider here Jesus Christ and Socrates, the two fellow teachers most admired by Hegel. The martyrdom of these men and of Antigone perhaps contributed to Hegel's belief that, painful as it is, destruction will yield a higher level of understanding, if we are lucky. If we are not, we have for example the terrifying aftermath of the French Revolution. History, though it has a goal, does not provide humanity with steady forward progress. Moreover, insight is hardly ever fast on the heels of destruction and ruin. Rather it is from the whole picture, which Hegel thought he saw, that true enlightenment comes, but constant glances over the shoulder are the next best thing.

I have said before that the action of the individual consciousness for itself runs counter to the universality of the state merely by virtue of its individuality. I have also said that this was an essential contradiction and that in action the self-consciousness is (optimally) explicitly united with the ethical substance. The notable exception to this rule is when

Divine Law comes in to play. Divine Law is a part of the ethical substance but it is not made manifest in human law and Findlay says: 'it is opposed to the fully conscious dimension of action, and extends down towards the inner essence of individuals.'²⁰

Of course it is opposed to most conscious dimensions of action because these tend to be dictated by law, but it is present in the individual, springing from, I would say, instead of extending to, some inner essence. So while action - for - self is counter to true universal human law, it is normal and in fact necessary if it is action in accordance with the authority of the state. If, however, action - for - self is motivated by ethical substance that is other than the ethical power of the state, then we have the kind of contradiction which though necessary for growth of Spirit, will ultimately be devastating to the state.

In Hegel's introduction of the family he employs rather convoluted reasoning but the resulting position of the family in society is acceptable enough by now even predictable. Since the community involves consciousness knowingly acting - for - self, then as an antithesis, the ethical substance which is represented in Divine Law must initially be substance that simply unconsciously is. Self-consciousness for Divine Law must develop however, in order for the realm of the divine to fall into the ordained ranks of ethical substance. Hence Divine Law develops its self-consciousness as self - in - other, in the most natural ethical community which is the Family. (Why this self-consciousness must be self - in - other I am not sure unless it is that Hegel believes that this is the only possible inception of self awareness.)

At its introduction the Family is still an unconscious ethical order and as such is opposed to the existing conscious ethical order of the state. As an immediate ethical order, it runs counter to the order of the state which is working toward the universal. Hegel says: "The Penates stand opposed to the universal Spirit." (PG 450) "Penates" normally referred to the particular minor deities which were thought to look after a Roman household. There is an attached meaning, however, which was never primary in Latin usage but to which Hegel is totally committed: the Penates are the spirits of the deceased family members who, if honored and deferred to in ritual, smile protectively down upon the household. Such significance attached to household Penates is clearly linked with Hegel's philosophy concerning the dead as we shall see.

The family is considered to be an unconscious ethical order because it represents the realm of the "Beyond." It attempts to make conscious, that is, to make comprehensible to man the ways of the Gods. There is a paradox here in that it is through ritual which man himself does not clearly understand that he attempts to make understandable the shadowy realm of religion. By taking the rites of death into his domain man feels he will gain power over death itself and no longer be a pawn of the whims of the Gods or the incomprehensible ways of Nature. Furthermore, the relationship of family members with one another is an immediate one. It is natural and unmediated by the political and social structures which articulate the citizen's relationship to his society. Hence, for Hegel, ethical obligations within the family

are also unmediated in that they are not dictated by external structures and are thus, unconscious.

Ethical action which is directed toward the polis, however, is conscious ethical behaviour because there is no mystery in its reasoning. This is the sphere of action and belief which deals with earthly comprehensible issues, not ritual cloaked in the mysteries of the Beyond.

We tend to regard the relations between family members as natural relations, but Hegel insists that "this natural relationship is just as much a spiritual one, and it is only as a spiritual entity that ((the Family)) is ethical." (PG 451) An important key to understanding the ensuing discussion is that throughout Hegel seems to mean by "citizen" the individual being-for-self in society, and by "individual" the individual in his role as a family member. At any rate, the spiritual relationship of family members is what is universal over and above feelings of love and protection; it is what gives ethical order to the family unit. Hegel says that since what is universal is this spiritual bond, what is significant within the family is not love or particularly strong feelings between particular members but the relationship between the individual and the whole family. The whole Family is the ethical substance, and ethical principle is in this case placed in this relationship of the individual to the whole. Any action which an individual performs as a citizen has a negative relation to the family in that it is mediated, conscious and directed toward the universality that is the community. It pulls the citizen out of his family unit.

Within the Family however, it is both the whole Family and the individual in the Family that are the end towards which all action is motivated. Teaching, nursing, protecting and any other services rendered in accidental or contingent circumstances do not, within the context of the family constitute an ethical action. Ethical action - 'can only be related to the whole individual or the individual qua universal.' (PG 451) We must not fall into thinking that any efforts to promote the happiness or welfare of a blood relation have any kind of total positive effect that may ever be considered a universally positive ethical action within the family. The only deed that is true ethical action within the sphere of the Family takes as its object, not the living but the dead. The individual Family member is indeed this object, but not as a particular individual within a reality of 'a long succession of separate disconnected experiences' but as an individual who 'has raised himself out of the unrest of the accidents of life into the calm of simple universality.' (PG 451)²¹ Promoting the cult of the dead, to use Findlay's words, is not merely assuring the well being of the individual in the beyond, and through ritual claiming death as a 'thing done' by rational ethical action, but also, because of Hegel's belief expressed in section 450 in the power of the Penates, care for the dead assures the well being of the whole Family. And yet as always an individual Family member must also be a citizen, as it is in this capacity alone that he is 'actual and substantial;' without this negative aspect of Family life, the individual within the Family 'is only an unreal impotent shadow.' (PG 451) The

venturing out which is civic life, which is represented by Hegel as fragmented, blind, and in fact downright sinful in its constant destruction of the universal, is all absolutely necessary for Spirit to reach the Absolute in the universality that is death.

It is, perhaps, difficult to understand how ethical action within the sphere of the family can exclude duties and obligations which spring from a love and a desire to protect which seems so intrinsic to familial ethical roles. Hegel, however, ultimately portrayed this state of affairs as one which is unique to fifth century B.C. Athens. My discussion in chapter four of his later treatment of this topic in the Philosophy of Fine Art reveals that Hegel eventually had to concede that it is reasonable to posit a greater variety of ethical action within the familial sphere, as ultimately the desire to protect and otherwise aid family members is a noble and defensible cause. However, when Hegel raised this issue in the PG his motive was mainly to create an atmosphere which would facilitate our understanding of the gravity of the dilemma presented in the Antigone. The right to burial is no longer generally accepted as tragic material and Hegel felt that if we are to appreciate tragedy's glorious ancestry we have to be in a position to understand the significance it had in its time. It seems, however, that Hegel could have made his case just as strongly without such an unsupportable definition of ethical roles but there are reasons which, rightly or not, led him to make such a distinction.

Hegel wanted to represent the sphere of ethical action within the family as something truly universal. At this point in his historical dialectic he seemed to think that particular matters of the body and heart were too accidental, too contingent on the shifting sands of unmediated desire and shallow opinion. Obligations to the realm of the Beyond, however, are, to Hegel, universal in two senses. In the first place the Beyond is in one sense the Universal. It is where the dead lose their particular embodiment and join the universal essence which is the substance of human kind. In the second place the promotion of the family Penates benefits the entire family and the entire individual in it and does so no matter what the accidental circumstances of the individual or family may be. Thus it is universally beneficial for mankind and consequently ethical.

It is also likely that Hegel was aware that the polis in fifth century B.C. was governed by political units (demes) which had only recently been organized and which overruled and rearranged the previously existing clan system. Once the family unit and the political unit were the same but now their difference caused a great deal of confusion of allegiances and internal strife in the new system. Many clans were unwilling converts to this newer civil institution and resented political interference with what seemed sacred to the family. The greatest loss, however, seems to have been suffered by the women. Once a woman had a political voice because her family, or gene, was the only political unit that mattered. Now she had no voice and her family was insignificant. Hence the tragic heroine struggling

to maintain the rites of the family in the face of a body politic that cared not at all.

Agamemnon, the Greek general who led the long but victorious campaign against Troy, sacrificed his own daughter for the sake of fair wind for his mission. His outraged wife killed Agamemnon upon his return, vainly upholding a house which, although politically successful, had disintegrated from within.

Antigone, too, speaks of her actions as if they were politically and not personally motivated. She will bury her brother because she will not be "accused of treachery" (l. 46). Her tragedy is that allegiance to her family is political treachery. Her family no longer matters. Hegel is trying to portray, in his odd distribution of ethical duties and in his depiction of male and female roles in society (which I discuss in section C of this chapter) the peculiar circumstances which made the substance of Greek tragedy so poignant for the Greeks. Hegel goes too far, however. We do not need this strained positing of such a curious system of beliefs in order to understand the Antigone. The collision which this tragedy and most Greek tragedy represents is not peculiar. It has universal significance and it can be understood and appreciated without the majority of Hegel's strident assertions concerning the Greek world view.

B. The Antigone

Hegel is anxious to demonstrate the inevitability of the decline of the city state because of its inability to accommodate for the divine rights of the family, while maintaining its civic laws.²² It seems indeed that in most cases the polis does this reasonably well, but the exception which Hegel is going to bring up is that which Sophocles gives us in the Antigone. The situation, which Hegel does not explicitly relate to us is one in which a citizen, Polyneices, has made a traitor and public enemy of himself. He comes in force against the state of Thebes which is being held by his brother Eteocles to claim what he thought was his rightful throne, with the result that:

...sons of one man, one mother's sons,
sent their spears each against each and
found the share of a common death together.
(Antigone ll. 145-8)

Hegel treats this episode rather absurdly saying that try as these two men might to tear themselves free from Nature which gave them birth, by actively and consciously becoming the 'individuality of the community,' they must fail. This is because:

the government, as the unitary soul or the self of the national Spirit, does not tolerate a duality of individuality; and the ethical necessity of this unity is confronted by the natural accident of there being more than one. (PG 473)

For Hegel, the system of the Greek city-state is failing at this stage for the simple reason that it has been unable to raise itself above the accidents in Nature, in this case the fact that

the proposed ruler, 'emerges in the contingent form of two brothers, each of whom with equal right takes possession of the community.' (PG 473) By stressing these accidents of Nature, more and more from this point on, Hegel leads us to understand him as saying something like 'Wherever there is no known order to the regeneration of mankind, there can be no successful society.' We are further led to believe this because of Hegel's insistence that men cannot help but be drawn by their Nature into the conscious realm of politics, and women into the unconscious realm of family ritual, and as long as this is the case, we cannot escape the grips of Nature enough to succeed in creating balanced societies. Though admittedly there are two different meanings of Nature being employed here, that is not Hegel's biggest problem. His problem really is that what he is claiming to be the cause of the downfall of balanced society is not only questionable as a cause but also questionable as even being a recognizable state of affairs.

At any rate, as an outlaw Polyneices is denied burial, but insofar as he is Antigone's brother this runs counter to the ethical End of the Family, and his dishonour in this way is an offense against Divine Law as well as a disaster for the Family in light of what has been said about the Penates. It is in order for this situation to be seen as the dilemma that the Greeks and Hegel saw it to be that the function of the Family and the cult of the dead are being so vehemently stressed. Without this extenuation the modern reader might well wonder just what the problem is. So while we must be careful not to attribute too

much in the way of classical theological beliefs to Hegel, we must also remember that without Hegel's philosophical concept of the universal which we all must in the end return to, neither the significance of the Greek city-state nor the example of its failure in the Antigone would be so necessary in the development of the PG.

The Family, through ritual, protect the dead from being, as I have said, mere victims of the arbitrary actions of nature; 'in truth the calm and universality of a self-conscious being do not belong to Nature.' (PG 452) What Nature does do for the individual, it seems, is give him embodiment, individuality, indeed a lifetime through which to wander in quest of Absolute Knowledge, which is Spirit Absolute, which is full consciousness of the universal and consequent return to it. Death by itself, contrary to what Findlay says in his notes to these sections of the PG, provides no gateway to the universal. It is plausible to assume that the development of the individual as a citizen in his lifetime would have something to do with the success of the individual's final merging with the universal, for it is as a citizen within an ethical community that 'works' improve and enlighten Spirit, but this does not seem to be the case. Man becomes free in his lifetime, as Charles Taylor says, by giving himself over to rational thought, which commitment necessitates his self imposed exile from others of a different bent. Hence the old familiar story; the parochial city-state is rent asunder because the all encompassing Reason of some few men cannot limit

themselves in an institution which cannot accommodate, nor indeed even grasp, universal reason.

But what of the lesser thinkers? They suffer the tragic repercussions of the insights of others but they remain unenlightened. Nothing is said of them in Hegel's discussion of the Family. Whether or not the individual has, by his actions as a citizen achieved unity of consciousness with the sphere of ethical substance that is human law, and regardless of whether his Spirit has given itself over to Reason (as is clearly not always the case) death is still the ultimate goal. In Findlay's words, the performance of funerary ritual is 'the supreme service to the community that a man can perform, in furnishing the Family with its ancestral pantheon, its household Lares.'²³ Although in my opinion Findlay is getting the two spheres of ethical substance confused, as death is only a supreme service to the Family, it seems to be the case that Hegel is simply saying that granting the rites of the dead to blood relations, promotes them to complete universality and this is ethical family action. Unhonored death leaves the individual in an

abstract negativity which, being in its own self without consolation and reconciliation must receive them essentially through a real and external act. 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. (PG 452)

Hegel does not seem to want to come right out and say that he is alluding to the Antigone throughout this discussion, for instance where he describes the dead as being 'at the mercy of every lower irrational individuality and the forces of abstract material elements.' (PG 452) Perhaps he feels that to reveal his sources may diminish the credibility of this section as sound philosophical doctrine, and he is probably right. Findlay provides, probably unintentionally, what is nonetheless his own peculiar brand of comic relief, by inching a little closer throughout his notes on this section to the motivating source of Hegel's mysterious intimations concerning the necessity of burial rights, and contributes imaginatively here that it is from the 'corruption of worms and of chemical agencies by substituting their own conscious work in its place,' that the living rescue the dead. (Though I hardly think he is positing the worms as Hegel's 'lower irrational individualities.')

There is, of course, a particular dead individual who is the subject of this cryptic (no pun intended) discussion, and he is none other than Polyneices the dishonored brother of Antigone of whom the new and headstrong King Creon says:

Leave him unburied, leave his corpse disgraced, a dinner for the birds and for the dogs. Such is my mind. Never shall I, myself, honor the wicked and reject the just.

(11. 205-208)

C. The Roots of Hegel's Theory of Tragedy

There is a lot to be said concerning Hegel's almost fanatical use of the Antigone. It is odd, in the final analysis, that Hegel employed the play as he did in that its philosophical exegesis allows Hegel's whole system one step forward and two steps backwards. On the one hand he is terribly anxious to portray the dialectical demise of the city state, and the necessity of this demise is accounted for by the interpretation which he gives of the Antigone. On the other hand, in the process of explaining why the city-state inevitably must fall, he completely ignores the level of morality which he has previously established as existing in the phase of the city-state's prosperity. If this level of morality were properly heeded as the unifying substance in "the highest realization of human community on earth,"²⁴ the rending asunder of the polis which has been promised us throughout the PG would be nonsensical on the grounds which Hegel gives. What is equally odd is that in his fervor to prove his point Hegel himself either misses or ignores an extremely important disparity between what is meant by 'Divine' for Sophocles and what he himself means by the term. For Sophocles the realm of the Divine extended from the highest peaks of Olympus to the most obscure churnings of nature. The natural world was an extension of and a vehicle for the power of the Gods. For Hegel the interference of nature with the behaviour of men and women and its intrusion into the order of quotidian affairs marked an obstacle for the community of man to overcome

which was in no way related to the realm of the Divine. Quite the contrary, the world of the "beyond," which for Hegel represented the Divine and Absolute, was something which mankind should seek to embrace.

The other more obvious entanglement which Hegel gets himself into is his embarrassing digression concerning male and female ethical roles (PG 457). The female is drawn by her nature into the ethical obligations which involve the family. The promotion of the cult of the dead is her specific ethical duty and through this activity she has an unmediated grasp of the Universal. The male, as an active citizen, has a more "self-conscious power of universality." He is promoting universality by strengthening the community with his support. The relationship between husband and wife, however, is often not ethically pure because it is tainted with natural desire for a particular spouse. Actions born out of love are not ethical actions if desire is a motivating factor, hence the relationship between brother and sister is ethically pure.

The loss of the brother is therefore irreparable to the sister and her duty towards him is the highest. (PG 457, Cf. Antigone, l. 910)

Nonetheless, it is questionable whether or not Antigone even remained interested in her betrothed, Haemon, given that she had to live without her brother Polyneices, as she says:

... My life died long ago. And that has made me fit to help the dead. (Antigone, ll. 559-60)

Consider also her pleas concerning the irrevocable nature of the loss of siblings:

One husband gone, I might have found another,
but with my parents hid away in death, no
brother, ever, could spring up for me.
(Antigone, ll. 910-913)

This hardly depicts the brother - sister relationship as being particularly pure but leaves the situation rather ambiguous.

Aristotle has told us in his Poetica that -

... poetry is something more philosophic
and of graver import than history, since its
statements are of the nature rather of uni-
versals, whereas those of history are
singul²⁵ars.

Hegel seems to have taken him rather strictly at his word. He not only finds the striking conflict between Creon and Antigone symbolic of the struggle between civic and Divine justice, but also chooses to universalize an arbitrary assortment of familial relations from the play as well. Sophocles can certainly not have meant for anyone to draw such conclusions concerning male and female ethical roles from the structure of his play. To expect such a thing would be to imply that all relationships depicted in the Antigone represent truths, which once universalized reflect all mankind. (Applied to the extant body of literature, an investigation of this theory has all sorts of bizarre possibilities.) To take the familial relationships in the Antigone as universal truths is a double fault for Hegel. In the first place it is the naive mistake of a child who has just become aware of the intricacies of Plot, and who does not realize that

characters and relationships have to be contrived or invented, in order for a story to develop. Even if the characters and relationships are nonfictional, it is not commonly believed, except perhaps by the likes of Emile Zola and other scientific naturalists, that any universal laws of human nature are being established just because it happened to be so on one occasion.

The second fault is that even if Hegel was just using this disaster in ancient Thebes as a metaphor or an illustration of the inevitable downfall of a large variety of societies due to the same flaw, he does not know where to end the analogy. Creon was a proud, single-minded and self impressed ruler and Antigone was an over-zealous, impetuous young woman with strong beliefs concerning which level of justice deserved her allegiance. These are the two types whose interaction makes the point which Hegel needs in order to make his own point. I by no means intend to imply that I think the other characters superfluous or insignificant. On the contrary, I think they are all brilliantly essential and provide the completeness and balance that Attic tragedy is famous for, but they are not part of the analogy.

In the application of an analogy for the purposes of illumination and clarification of a concept it is not necessary to manipulate the illustrative device so that it is in every way parallel or analogous to the concept which is in need of illustration. It is likewise, unnecessary to tamper with a concept or idea in order to render it more accessible through analogy. The explicative powers of analogy are clearly limited. I might say that the Canadian Federal Government is like an octopus in

that it has many far reaching arms which support and nourish its main body and sometimes by their prodding endanger themselves or other entities. It may very well be the case that I am making a bad analogy but it would be foolish to say that this is a bad analogy because, for instance, the Canadian Government is not submerged in water. Similarly it would be foolish to say that the Antigone does not make its point because all the relationships between all the characters are not analogous to a universal facet of an ethical entity, and it is silly for Hegel to act as if they are. It is more excusable, I suppose, if it was because of his own private sentiments and psychological theories that he went off on this tirade than if he thought he had to do so to validate his use of the Antigone. But in either case this usage credits him neither as a good philosopher nor as a literary critic. I think it is fair to say that this part of Hegel's discussion has nothing to do with the Antigone and plays no significant role in the development of Spirit.

Antigone is the earthly representative of Divine Law and she has a Socratic determination to carry out, at all costs, an action which she knows to be in accordance with δίκη θεῶν. She knows what she wants from the start and she gets it. She understands that the justice she subscribes to transcends that of human law. The unburied body of her brother is an offense to the gods and would be yet another in a long line of curses upon the house of Oedipus were it allowed to go unheeded. She is to a certain extent Hegel's champion and hers is a success story - she accomplishes her brother's burial, she achieves her own end

(which she clearly desires) and she destroys the agent who, as representative of the law, made it impossible for Divine Law to operate.

Antigone represents the citizen motivated by ethical substance that is not human law. In other words she represents the individual fulfilling her divine and universal obligation to her Family. Ismene, Antigone's timid sister, represents the citizen who, although she may have an understanding of the ethical substance in the family as opposed to that in the state, is not ruled by Reason and whose actions, because of her nature, are motivated by human law and the ethical sphere of the state. Antigone says of her commitment to the burial of Polyneices:

For me, the doer, death is best
Friend shall I lie with him, yes friend with friend,
When I have dared the crime of piety.
Longer the time in which to please the dead
than that for those up here.
There shall I lie forever. You may see fit
to keep honor from what the gods have honored.

Ismene says in return:

I shall do no dishonor. But to act against
the citizens, I cannot.
(ll. 70-80)

The opposing sides are clear. Antigone's position is that no matter what the legal ruling may be, it is still an offense to the gods not to bury one's dead. Ismene does not quite see this, as she does not see that she is committing a crime on any level, she merely feels that it is sad that their brother cannot be honored, but she does not feel that it is morally catastrophic.

The tragedy of the Antigone is neither Antigone's untimely death nor her wasted virginity. It is Hegel's tragedy, the failure of society to understand the universal.

And yet the wise will know my choice was
right ...
I stand convicted of impiety,
the evidence my pious duty done.
(ll. 910, 925-6)

The chorus in the Antigone represent the attitudes of the elders of Thebes and, as is suitable to Hegel's dialectical development, they can at first see no contradiction between human and Divine Law. In the second choral ode the chorus, still ignorant of who committed the crime of bestowing burial rites on Polyneices, addresses itself to this unknown agent saying that, great as man is, he is nothing unless 'he honors the laws of the land and the gods' sworn right,' but 'stateless the man who dares to dwell with dishonor.' (ll. 369-370) The chorus cannot see how following the laws of the state while following those of God should be such a difficult thing, and they count the doer of the forbidden deed as permanently dishonored by the act. Ironically, of course, it will be Creon who winds up dwelling 'stateless' in dishonor.

Antigone, who is the only one whose Reason directs her towards

The gods' unwritten and unfailing laws.
Not now, nor yesterday's they always live,
and no one knows their origin in time.
(ll. 455-457)

is thought by the chorus to be unreasonable and arbitrary:

The same tempest of mind
as ever, controls the girl
(11. 929-930)

Clearly the play illustrates the inadequacy of human law for enlightening the citizen mass and maintaining a balance of the two spheres of justice. But Hegel mislabels the players. He says:

Since the community only gets an existence through its interference with the happiness of the Family, and by dissolving individual self-consciousness into the universal, it creates for itself in what it suppresses and what is at the same time essential to it an eternal enemy - womankind in general.

(PG 475)

Somehow it is because woman cannot help her strong drive to represent familial ethical substance (which is also Divine ethical substance) that she 'perverts the universal property of the state into a possession and ornament for the Family.' (PG 475). The rest of this passage which depicts woman as disregarding the wisdom of age is completely incomprehensible. We are lead to see the downfall of the city-state as the inevitable result of the pull of Nature on male and female behavior. This is not only contrary to what Hegel said earlier in the PG but it is also something that he would have a lot of trouble finding someone to agree with him on, particularly among the ancient Greeks. Earlier we were told it was the inevitably parochial nature of the city-state which would cause its ruin; now we are told that the city-state cannot last because it cannot lift itself high enough above the forces of Nature which keep men and women in a perpetual tug of war, the men pulling for the universality of the

city-state, and the women for the individual universality of the Penates. This is as contrary to Greek custom as it is to anything which is depicted in the Antigone. We cannot help noticing that the familial ethical sentiment which Hegel so vehemently portrays as a universal duty to bury family dead, is not present in Antigone. She says:

Had I children or their father dead
I'd let them moulder. I should not have
chosen in such a case to cross the state's
decree.
What is the law that lies behind these words?
One husband gone, I might have found another,
Or a child from a new man in the first child's
place.

(11. 905-910)

This is no doubt part of what made Hegel go on about the significance of particular inter-relationships of family members but the fact remains that if we employ Hegel's rigor in interpreting this passage, it weakens Hegel's point which posits Antigone as the embodiment and representative of family ethical spirit, as he sees it.²⁶ Polyneices, as the son of Laius and Jocasta, was only her half brother, if we want to superimpose meanings we might just as well look for something more than a pure unmixed relationship between these two, though it is not an idea worth much attention.

Nonetheless, if we understand Antigone to be guided by Divine Law, we must remember that Divine Law for the Greeks was law in harmony with Nature. The exposure of the dead body of Polyneices, as well as of the other warriors who fought against Thebes, was an offense against Nature and as such an offense against the gods. And surely Hegel knew this.

Teiresias the aged seer rails against Creon's crime saying:

Why has this sickness struck against
the state?
Through your decision.
All of the affairs of the town
are choked
with leavings of dogs and birds;
their feast
was on that fated, fallen Polyneices.
So the gods will have no offering
from us,
not prayer, nor flame of sacrifice.
The birds
will not cry out a sound I can
distinguish,
gorged with the greasy blood of
that dead man.
(11. 1014-1022)

Throughout the play there is far less emphasis on Polyneices' safe arrival to the underworld than there is on the horror of decaying flesh being left to the merciless elements of Nature.

So the Divine Law being represented in the Antigone is not, on any account, the same as that which Hegel is talking about in his chapter on Spirit. The best that can be said, though it's unfortunate that Hegel did not say it, is that Antigone has recognized another sphere of justice apart from that of human justice, but she died with an immature understanding of it. Her consciousness was not One with pure familial or Divine ethical substance. Hegel recognizes her actions as being unconscious, but I do not believe he is saying that she is not a true representative of Divine ethical substance, only that the function of this substance is an immediate, unconscious one, which completely upsets his previous position that at this stage, all of ethical substance (ethical action) is guided by Reason.

CHAPTER FOUR

HEGEL'S THEORY OF TRAGEDY

A. Hegel's Theory of Tragedy

From the complex moral history which Hegel has given us in the PG, he has abstracted, in his chapter on "Ethical Order," the ingredients for his theory of tragedy. This theory is expanded and modified in his Aesthetics and in the ensuing discussion I shall find it necessary to refer to both these works. My aim is to delineate his theory and to ascertain what within it may be considered of value to the general analysis and definition of tragedy.

In the Aesthetics Hegel maintained that "the true theme of primitive tragedy is the godlike."²⁷ Far from indicating that tragedy must involve Divine intervention or be in any way connected with the religious consciousness, Hegel is here merely reiterating what we have already derived from the PG. According to Hegel's view, then, tragedy must involve the ethical. The term "godlike" is used because Hegel believes that it is this divine essence which manifests itself in the world as ethical action. What is ethical is "the divine in secular or world realization." (Aes. 296)

From this we may understand why Hegel struggled so hard to portray the enactment of funerary rites within the family as ethical action. For Hegel, tragedy involves ethical spheres. It must be ethical actions or beliefs which collide, or ostensibly, it must be a collision of right with right. Yet Hegel has made his case too strong by limiting the ethical action within the family unit to the provision of burial rites. He is obliged to weaken his stance in the Aesthetics to include:

...those forces which carry in themselves their own justification, and are realized substantively in the volitional activity of mankind. Such are the love of husband and wife, parents, children and kinsfolk. Such are further the life of communities, the patriotism of citizens, the will of those in supreme power. (Aes. 295)

Now, however, Hegel has expanded his theory of tragedy at the expense of his entire system of ethics. He says explicitly in the PG, section 453, that the only ethical action of the family is the previously mentioned funerary duty and that all other familial and civic obligations fall into the realm of human law (as opposed to the divine) except actions which pertain to relationships of love which are outside the ethical altogether. This severely limits the variety of collisions which we can construct within divine and human spheres of action and belief. Yet Hegel still maintains that tragedy must capture - "that original Greek sense of the term, ((an)) outbreak, that is, of opposing forces from the undivided consciousness of life and the godlike" (Aes. 317).

Although Hegel did not dwell on it much in the PG, it seems that he believed that Creon represented a divine and universal purpose with import comparable to that which is clearly attached to Antigone's position. Creon is a ruler upon whose decisions the safety of the state rests as well as mankind's hopes for the perpetuation of the universal through organized society. It is important that both Creon and Antigone represent positions which are intrinsically justifiable because of their ethical content as this is to Hegel the hallmark of tragic conflict. The ethical

did involve the godlike for Hegel in the PG and it did not seem that he was willing for this term to be an elastic catch-all which would conveniently stretch to accommodate any work that the general public deemed tragic. Yet we must remember that it is only primitive tragedy which Hegel was dealing with at this stage and the dialectical nature of his theoretical development has led many to interpret his expanded theory as one which comfortably accommodates issues involving romantic love, familial love, noble ambition and a great variety of personal human interests which were clearly of no interest to Hegel when discussing tragedy in the PG.

There now emerges two different stands which may be taken regarding Hegel's theory and its salvageable insights. Hegel's belief that ancient tragedy does involve the ethical and that the tragic hero brings on his own fate (as "uncomprehended necessity") through the onesidedness of his actions and beliefs gives us one interpretation of his theory. A.M. Quinton sums it up as follows:

...In requiring the moral responsibility of the tragic hero for the disasters that befall him, in seeing his destruction as the reaffirmation of absolute morality, it is fundamentally a demand for poetic justice and as such inapplicable to by far the greater number of the works about whose status as tragedies there would be little disagreement.²⁸

Quinton laments Hegel's apparent appeal to a "poetic justice" and finds this inapplicable to most works which are generally considered to be tragedies. This belief most likely arises out of Quinton's assertion that a compensating heaven is incom-

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patible with tragedy.²⁹ Quinton does not feel that optimism, which is what he sees represented in Hegel's theory even though it generally prescribes the ruin of the tragic hero, can be the right path to an acceptable theory of tragedy.

Bradley, on the other hand, in his essay, Hegel's Theory of Tragedy, also feels that "poetic justice" is out of place in a discussion of tragedy, but contrary to Quinton, neither does he believe that this is what Hegel is talking about.

But, in the first place, it is most important to observe that Hegel is not discussing at all what we should generally call the moral quality of the acts and persons concerned, or, in the ordinary sense, what it was their duty to do. And, in the second place, when he speaks of "equally justified powers," what he means, and, indeed, sometimes says, is that these powers are in themselves equally justified...On the other hand, it is, I think, a matter for regret that Hegel employed such words as "right," "justified," and "justice." They do not mislead readers familiar with his writings, but to others they suggest associations with criminal law, or our everyday moral judgments, or perhaps the theory of "poetic justice;" and these are all out of place in a discussion on tragedy.³⁰

Bradley's understanding of Hegel's position is that these powers which carry within them their own justifications are not necessarily ethical. It is tragic that allegiance to one should sometimes involve the violation of the other but this has nothing to do with what is morally right or wrong. It is not clear to Bradley that familial love or political duty are ethical and this is a point on which Hegel too vacillates, but Hegel does generally insist on the interests of the hero being noble and in fact ethical. It is Hegel's definition of the ethical that

changes not his insistence that it is important. Although Bradley has hit upon the crux of the Hegelian tragic dilemma when he mentions "powers in themselves equally justified," (p. 74) I find myself inclined to be in agreement with Quinton who consistently views the points abandoned by Bradley as the most important ones.

A.C. Bradley amended the theory to include amongst conflicting elements not merely ethical institutions but also "universal interests," moral values that had no determinate social institution as their expression, and even "personal interests," such as Macbeth's ambition. So adjusted the theory can accommodate the tragedies of Racine, with their characteristic battle between love and duty, and to some extent the tragedies of Shakespeare, in which personal goals collide with the demands of that overriding order and harmony without which all human arrangements come to ruin. But this amendment really evacuates the Hegelian position: it allows for the reality of unrecompensed, unreconciled evil, it abandons the demand for the moral responsibility of the hero and for an essentially retributive view of his sufferings.³¹

Yet to weigh the values of these opposing views fairly we must turn again to Hegel himself for surely the answer will lie in his own extension of his theory to take into account modern tragedy as well as ancient.

In his Aesthetics, Hegel lists three categories of comparison between ancient and modern tragedy. We may consider the development of tragedy in terms of a) the ends desired by the tragic hero, b) the nature of the tragic character and also that of the collisions which he is compelled to face, and c) the nature of the final issue and tragic reconciliation.

In classical tragedy, Hegel has emphasized over and over again, there is a strict unity between character and action.

They act in accordance with a specific character, a specific pathos, for the simple reason that they are this character, this pathos. In such a case there is no lack of decision and no choice. The strength of great characters consists precisely in this that they do not choose but are entirely and absolutely just that which they will and achieve. (Aes. 320)

Furthermore, this forceful character is, in Hegel's theory, justified in his actions and beliefs because of his total alignment with a given ethical sphere of reference, his ends are never defined by his lust for personal gain which has no such ties. In modern tragedy, however, it is not the basic ethical dicta of the family, the State, or the Church, as such, which provide the substance of the drama. These spheres may well provide the backdrop for the actions of the new and complex tragic hero but his ends are born of more particular aims which are accessible to modern drama because of the relaxing structure of society, but which were not, as such, within the reach of ancient drama. The "right of subjectivity" was making itself known, "the principle of the personal life in its independence has asserted its claim, novel phases of existence make their inevitable appearance in each ((ethical sphere)), which modern man claims to set up as the end and directory of his action." (Aes. 332)

The modern tragic hero, then, need not be the vision of unity and strength which we encountered in the works of the Greeks. Furthermore, many of the general interests of our modern

life are portrayed in modern tragic drama to such a degree as would be unheard of in antiquity. These interests may motivate characters and charge events in a way such as to supply a mere external background for the main course of action or may in fact provide the conflict when confronted by the protagonist in his "individual state of emotion." "Wrong and Crime" are still important, not as the ethical judgements they once were, but as complications in the hero's life. He may not deliberately seek to place himself in a culpable situation, but the tragic collision may involve his inability to avoid it in the pursuit of his desired end.

What, then, distinguishes tragedy from a simple story with a sad ending? The answer to this question lies in the third category of comparison - the matter of reconciliation. If we are to tell a story with no compulsion, or inevitability, Hegel asks the question, why not have it end happily? If the tragic issue results merely from external accidents and unhappy circumstances, it could quite easily result in a happy conclusion instead.

If therefore the interests are of such a nature, that it is really not worth the trouble to sacrifice the men or women concerned on their altar, it being possible for them either to surrender their objects, without making such surrender as is equivalent to a surrender of their individuality, or to mutually come to an agreement in respect thereof, there is no reason why the conclusion should be tragic. The tragic aspect of the conflicts and their resolution ought in principle merely to be enforced in the cases where it is actually necessary in order to satisfy the claim of a superior point of view. If this necessity is absent there is no sufficient ground for mere suffering and unhappiness. (Aes. 343)

We can distinguish modern tragedy from its cheap imitators with the "so-called noble criminal, with his empty talk about fate" (Aes. 318), by a certain conspiracy between the nature of the tragic character and the nature of the events which bring his downfall. Hamlet is the prime example of this which is cited by Hegel.

The real collision, therefore, ((in Hamlet)) does not turn on the fact that the son, in giving effect to a rightful sense of vengeance, is himself forced to violate morality, but rather on the particular personality, the inner life of Hamlet, whose noble soul is not steeled to this kind of energetic activity, but, while full of contempt for the world and life, what between making up his mind and attempting to carry into effect or preparing to carry into effect its resolves, is bandied from pillar to post, and finally through his own procrastination and the external course of events meets his own doom. (Aes. 335)

Whereas the emphasis in classical tragedy was on the collision per se, in modern tragedy, according to Hegel, the stress is on the complex make-up of the tragic character. Once the character was his alliance with "one ethical state of pathos which alone corresponds to his already formed personality." (Aes. 335). Now the backdrop of contingent relations and conditions is too complex and dynamic to provide the rigid structure required for tragic collision. Now the germ lies within the character itself. The tragic character is driven into action, not necessarily "in the interests of the ethical vindication of the truly substantive claims, but for the simple reason that they are the kind of men they are." (Aes. 335)

The reconciliation which we are offered in the case of Hamlet is that he is granted sweet death. It is only from a purely

external point of view that Hamlet's death can be seen as an accidental ending of his duel with Laertes.

...in the background of Hamlet's soul, death is already present from the first. The sand bank of finite condition will not content his spirit. (Aes. 342)

Hamlet is a more complicated tragic hero than the Greek protagonist of our previous discussions. He is not singularly aligned with a doomed position, he is worse. Hamlet has what Antigone did not have, a dual vision. He can see both sides of every issue he confronts and he is paralysed. Unlike the tragic hero of antiquity he is not strengthened in his position by an unwavering, if tragic, resolve. He both is in a tragic position and understands it, he can see all the cases against him and his possible actions. These prototypes, the one-sided protagonist and the dual-visioned hero, provide the material from which, according to Hegel, all tragedy comes.

B. Conclusion

Hegel believed that tragedy was born of the ethical struggle inherent in the political structure of the Greek polis. Hegel's belief in the historical dialectic, in which the society of man struggles to gain an ever better understanding of the Universal, seems to indicate that he believed that a morally perfect world is not an impossibility. What would be necessary for such perfection would be a social structure which could accommodate the earthly needs of a universal brotherhood of man as well as the demands placed upon man from the "beyond." Such a structure, Hegel thought, would be truly universal; secular and spiritual spheres of action and belief would co-exist harmoniously. I do not believe that he felt that the polis provided the machinery complex enough to host such an arrangement.

In my discussion of ethical spheres within the Greek polis I have mentioned two distinct ways of promoting universality. One is the political involvement of the male which promotes the quality of civic life in this miniature model of universal awareness. The other is the promotion of the cult of the dead which is the female's calling and which improves the spiritual life of the family and grants pure universality to the dead through ritual.

1) The acquisition and maintenance of power and wealth is in part concerned only with needs and belongs to the sphere of appetite; in part, they become in their higher determination something that is mediated. This determination does not fall within the Family itself, but bears on what is truly universal, the community; it has, rather, a negative relation to the Family, and consists in expelling the individual from the Family,

subduing the natural aspect and separateness of his existence, and training him to be virtuous, to a life in and for the universal...

2) The deed, then, which embraces the entire existence of the blood-relation; does not concern the citizen, for he does not belong to the Family... it has as its object and content this particular individual who belongs to the Family, but is taken as a universal being freed from his sensuous, i.e. individual, reality. The deed no longer concerns the living but the dead, the individual who, after a long succession of separate disconnected experiences, concentrated himself into a single completed shape, and has raised himself out of the unrest of the accidents of life into the calm of simple universality. (PG 451)

It is not a flaw in Hegel's scheme that these two ways of promoting universality are at odds with each other. They are at odds with each other because the laws of the polis are too parochial in nature to provide for the scope of both spheres of action and belief. This is largely because, according to Hegel, the men and women of Greek society had too immediate a relationship with their respective ethical obligations. Their's was not reflective ethical involvement but immediate unity with the "ethical substance" which their position in society dictated. Hence, the unity of the classical tragic antagonist with his action. The character is one with his belief and action.

((The tragic character's)) being consists in his belonging to his ethical law...The ethical individuality is directly and intrinsically one with this his universal aspect, exists in it alone, and is incapable of surviving the destruction of this ethical power by its opposite. (PG 471)

It should not be confusing, then, that Hegel says on some occasions that the two distinct realms of ethical life are harmonious in nature, and at other times, that they are not. They

are not consistently concordant at the time of the Greek polis. Mankind is too dominated, in his decisions to act, by his nature. Reason, although this hints of dichotomy which Hegel professes to ignore, has not yet designated the means for a balance.

This ruin of the ethical Substance and its passage into another form is thus determined by the fact that the ethical consciousness is directed on to the law in a way that is essentially immediate. This determination of immediacy means that Nature as such enters into the ethical act, the reality of which simply reveals the contradiction and the germ of destruction inherent in the beautiful harmony and tranquil equilibrium of the ethical Spirit itself. (PG 476)

However, when Hegel does refer to his ethical Spirit as existing without internal contradiction, it seems that he can only be speaking of a state of development which is not yet possible to attain or maintain. Such a balance is only in a state of possibility, the ethical world is potentially harmonious. This is an important point to settle as it determines the significance of the moral dilemma which Hegel felt was so bound up with Greek society and classical tragedy.

A.M. Quinton understands Hegel to be saying that a conflict of right versus right can only be apparent.³² Indeed it sometimes seems that Hegel is saying that the spheres of ethical substance in the Greek polis were already in harmony and that it was only a matter of mistaken human understanding which caused all the problems which are brought to us in Greek tragedy. Hegel says over and over again that it is not the principles for which the tragic hero stands that are at fault but the way in which the tragic hero represents them in human society.

For despite the fact that the individual characters propose that which is itself essentially valid, yet they are only able to carry it out under the tragic demand in a manner that implies contradiction and with a onesidedness which is injurious. (Aes. 298)

It seems to me, however, that it is likely that what Hegel is identifying as the origin of tragedy has its roots a little deeper. If, indeed, the conflict which we encounter in the Antigone, Oedipus, and a score of other tragedies is only apparent, why does it require a tragic resolution? Both Antigone's and Creon's behaviour is the result of a deceptive understanding, but this amounts to more than a simple human mistake. These characters are great. Their mistakes are symptomatic of a flaw in Spirit itself. They are the result of the discordant realms of ethical action and belief. The ethical world, human Spirit, is not yet perfect.

Only in the downfall of both sides alike is absolute right accomplished, and the ethical substance as the negative power which engulfs both sides, that is, omnipotent and righteous Destiny, steps on the scene. (PG 472)

As I have said, it is necessary to understand the presence of ethical discord in the city-state in order to make sense of the gravity of the human conflict which results from it. In the sections quoted above Hegel seems to refer to ethical substance as if it were present in the forms of concordant ideals which are harmonious in principle but independent from, and in fact insupportable within, human action. Human action, by the logical necessity of its allegiance to either human or divine law which some occasions demand, disrupts the balance in ethical substance

and causes violence and destruction. I do not believe, however, that this is a position which Hegel wishes to consistently support. It is senseless to suppose that there can be a harmonious code for behaviour which is impossible for behaviour to uphold. Hegel is also the last person who would suggest that there is any ethical order or "substance" which is outside or separate from human action and belief. When Antigone and Creon clash, the possibility which is inherent in the existence of the two spheres, human and divine, becomes actuality. Discord exists. Spirit is divided and the ethical realms are not in harmony.

It is strange, nonetheless, that to represent a sound ethical belief is frequently to court disaster. This is the germ of destruction of which Hegel spoke. Quinton says that Antigone presses too hard "the claims of the family," and doubtless Creon is too tyrannical to represent the just claims of the state. Yet what meaning can the familial duties, the ethical sphere of the family, have without a champion to articulate them when they are threatened? What function can the parochial laws of the polis perform if not the punishment of traitors? Moderation and measured action are attributes which are inapplicable to the tragic hero; his question, which Hegel says is no question at all, is whether to act or not to act. And yet if he acts in accordance with an ethical sphere, how does the fault lie in his "particular embodiment" of it? How is the individual culpable for the contradictions inherent in ethical substance? If Antigone and Creon had both softened their stances we would still have a conflict but not a tragedy. Bradley says:

That which is denied is not the rightful powers with which the combatants have identified themselves. On the contrary, those powers, and with them the only thing for which the combatants cared are affirmed. What is denied is the exclusive and therefore wrongful assertion of their right.³³

Here is where we must take into consideration the larger view presented in Hegel's philosophy in order to give this awkward stand-off a context. Ultimately human society will too often cause a division of ethical substance such as the one which we find in the Antigone. The particular embodiments of ethical substance, e.g. Antigone and Creon, and the model within which they must work, e.g. the Greek polis, are too insufficient as models of the Universal concepts which they attempt to portray. For this reason they are to be destroyed. The fault is seen to lie, for Hegel, in the nature of the modeling materials. Life, at this stage, provides too poor a copy of certain ideals to hold together when forced into action. The cogs of divine and judicial justice stick, the machine shudders, and the state grinds to a tragic halt.

This germ of destruction, however, is what makes the unhappy unfoldings in tragedy inevitable, and not just accidental, mishaps. This necessity is what separates tragedy from melodrama and the tragic hero from a flamboyant fool. The characters who take a tragic stance are great because of their alliance with an ethical realm. Because they are great we care about them and we feel the horror of such strength and virtue wasting itself in the trap that Fate (or "uncomprehended necessity"), has laid for those who act out their beliefs. In the Antigone, Ismene

understands the family's plight as clearly as Antigone does. She, however, does not act. In Ismene there is conflict but no tragedy.

Guilt is not an indifferent, ambiguous affair, as if the deed as actually seen in the light of day could, or perhaps could not, be the action of the self, as if with the doing of it there could be linked something external and accidental that did not belong to it, from which aspect, therefore, the action would be innocent. On the contrary, the action itself is itself this splitting into two, this explicit self-affirmation and the establishing over against itself of an alien external reality; that there is such a reality, this stems from the action itself and results from it. Innocence, therefore, is merely non-action, like the mere being of a stone, not even that of a child. (PG 468)

We must wonder, then, that Hegel should be labeled an optimist. He clearly says that action is always wrong, in that it will always temporarily upset the balance, but this provides a tension which is necessary for the perpetuation of a living, dynamic society. However, strong actions, actions which exceed the simple demands of everyday life and rise to the occasion of a crisis, leadership and what seems to be independent thinking, are all the more certain to be wrong, culpable and downright tragic. Antigone is more guilty than Oedipus because she knew that she was acting in opposition to an established law.

It can be that the right which lay in wait is not present in its own proper shape to the consciousness of the doer, but is present only implicitly in the inner guilt of the resolve and the action. 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. (PG 470)

What can we say of a theory of tragedy which pronounces all tragic heroes guilty? It is small comfort to a vanquished hero that the ethical realm which he defended was indeed worthy of defense but at the same time indefensible in the realm of human affairs. And clearly, as an archetype for tragedy this is far too limiting a prescription. Thus it is that Hegel was obliged to extend his list of justifiable beliefs and actions to include those which he did not initially include within ethical substance. With the inclusion of personal interests which are relative to the tragic hero and his circumstances a certain amount of the desirable necessity is removed from tragic development. That germ of destruction inherent in the good versus good collision is not present in a situation where one is merely pursuing love, fame, wealth or some other commodity which is generally recognized as being of universal interest and hence the pursuit of it is to a certain extent justifiable. But here, by clinging to that conspiracy of the nature of the tragic character with his unfortunate circumstance, Hegel manages to convince us of the inevitability of the tragic developments in the greater works in this genre.

And what of the aforementioned position which Hegel traditionally holds in Aesthetics as an optimist? He believed in reconciliation, eternal justice, and other optimistic sounding ideals, but what do these terms mean for Hegel?

...whatever may be the claim of the tragic final purpose and personality, whatever may be the necessity of the tragic collision, it is, as a consequence of our present view, no less a claim

that is asserted...by the tragic resolution of this division. It is through this latter result that Eternal Justice is operative in such aims and individuals under a mode whereby it restores the ethical substance and unity in and along with the downfall of the individuality which disturbs its repose. (Aes. 298)

Hegel is optimistic to the extent that he allows for some element of balance and structure in the unfolding of history and in our daily dilemma, but the very architects of change, the bastions of strength and reason that make up the handful of men and women who symbolically confront what appears unjust or pursue what appears just, these are the most notable victims of the very justice which they uphold. Hegel's is not the blind fate of Schopenhauer, his is a sighted and hence all the more ruthless fate.

Hegel draws upon Aristotle's famous dictum that "the true effect of tragedy is to excite and purify fear and pity." (Aes. 298) Hegel believed that the quality of fear and pity excited by a work of tragedy is a testimony to the quality of the work. Tragedy should not simply inspire in us a fear of accident or unfortunate coincidence, nor pity for those who have merely fallen victim to such bad luck. We are warned that external contingencies are not what is truly terrible in life.

That which mankind has therefore in truth to fear is not the external power and its oppression, but the ethical might which is self-defined in its own free rationality, and partakes further of the eternal and inviolable, the power a man summons against his own being when he turns his back upon it. (Aes. 299)

Similarly the sympathy which we must feel for a tragic character is different from the realization that accidents happen and it is a shame that they often happen to good people. On the contrary, we have to feel a recognition of the greatness of a character because of his alliance with an ethical sphere or justifiable interest and also a sympathy with him which springs from the realization that within his greatness is his own destruction. The two are hopelessly entangled.

True sympathy...is an accordant feeling with the ethical claim at the same time associated with the sufferer - that is, with what is necessarily implied in his condition as affirmative and substantive. (Aes. 299)

Quinton's summation of what can be meant by the "tragic view of life," asserts that it entails a contingency of value - "value is contingent for its realization on the agency of men" - and that it is presupposed, "by the idea that human action has any point."³⁴ This is not the case in Hegel's theory, Quinton argues, because Hegel is an optimist. Consequently, Hegel is interpreted as saying that "good must triumph...what seems to be bad will cease to seem so when viewed in its place in the whole scheme of things."³⁵ Such a thesis, Quinton claims, makes human activity pointless because if everything which appears evil will eventually be seen as good, it makes little difference which in particular it actually is or what we do to change it.

This is an ironic statement of Hegel's position because, as I have shown, Hegel frequently frames his philosophy in quite the opposite terms. That is to say, even though it appears that

Antigone is upholding a noble cause, the larger view will reveal her position as being in the wrong. Her knowledge is deceptive and she errs. However, this reversed statement of Hegel's position, if substituted for Quinton's will yield the same complaint with regards to the contingency of value. That is, if good will appear bad and bad will appear good, what meaning can we tie to these terms and how can we expect our actions to have any significance?

What rescues Hegel, in my opinion, from this static interpretation, is his own larger view. He believes that the suffering we depict and come to understand in tragedy is what may some day lead to that brotherhood of man in which the universal is thoroughly understood and represented in human justice. Such is the goal of history but there is no guarantee that it is an obtainable goal. Hegel's God is, in fact, the unorthodox one which Quinton avowed as the only Christian God compatible with the tragic view of life. Hegel's God is omnipotent but he allows man to struggle and to suffer the evils which his actions bring about. Hegel's optimism lies in the principles of love and harmony which he believed his God has granted us. His pessimism lies in the burden these ideals place on the weak human frame which endeavours to support them. The same belief is promising for our spiritual lives and devastating to our practical existence.

The fact that the trend in modern tragedy is away from the moral dilemma would be, in fact, a depressing pattern to Hegel. Far from seeking the larger view, this trend depicts man's

interests as lying more and more with the needs of the individual to an extent which greatly exceeds that which was acceptable in the philosophy born of the Enlightenment. Even so, this drift was clear enough to Hegel to cause him to draw attention to the significance of Greek tragedy. It remained for him the only true form of tragedy because it captured what Hegel believed was the greatest horror in civilized society. This is the sacrifice of the whole, the loss of the Universal through some deceptive understanding of the needs of man. This should strike the greatest fear to our hearts and it is only through tragedy, Hegel felt, that we could be made aware of this imminent disaster and perhaps become enlightened. This is the universal implication that Hegel, and Aristotle before him, insisted upon as the quality which granted the genre of tragedy the power to purify, and perhaps raise up, the greedy, mundane, soul of man.

Footnotes

1. G.W.F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.V. Miller, notes J.N. Findlay (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979), p. 6. This edition shall henceforth be abbreviated as PG and all quotations from it will be identified in the text of this paper by section number.
2. R.C. Solomon, History and Human Nature, (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, N.Y., 1974), p. 219.
3. ibid., p. 224.
4. Charles Taylor, Hegel, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977), p. 66.
5. ibid., p. 59.
6. Israel Knox, The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer, (New York, 1936), p. 211.
7. Taylor, op. cit., p. 61.
8. Sophocles, "Antigone," Sophocles 1, trans. Elizabeth Wyckoff, (Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973), l. 926.
9. G.W.F. Hegel, Reason in History, trans. R.S. Hartman, (Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), p. 1.
10. Taylor, op. cit., p. 217.
11. Taylor, op. cit., p. 366.
12. Hegel, "Reason in History," Philosophy of History, ed. J. Hoffmeister, (Hamburg, 1955), p. 74.
13. Solomon, op. cit., p. 224.
14. G.W.F. Hegel, Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part III Philosophy of Spirit, trans. W. Wallace, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971), p. 377.
15. A.C. Bradley, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," Oxford Lectures on Poetry, (Oxford University Press, Oxford), p. 71.
16. The term prohodos is an allusion to the Greek Neoplatonist version of the dialectic. Instead of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, they used the phrases, mone; unity or whole, prohodos; the road forward or advance, and epistrophe; turning around, regarding or reaching.

17. In earlier Greek drama such as the tragedies of Aeschylus, hubris was generally depicted as an offence against the gods. In the works of Sophocles, however, hubris was more often an offence against the balance of nature brought about not by any depravity in the main character but by the tragic error of mistaken judgment. This is the one-sided pronouncement of Hegel's deceptive knowledge. Oedipus is constantly cited as the archetype of this flawed character (Aristotle, De Poetica, B. 11) but we must bear in mind that the Antigone was written by Sophocles approximately 15 years before Oedipus the King and it has been suggested that Creon was the prototype for the character of Oedipus. If this is the case it supports my belief that the Antigone is more a drama concerning hubris than one dealing with a conflict of "goods;" divine and human law. (See David Grene's introduction to Sophocles 1.
18. Aristotle, "De Poetica," The Basic Works of Aristotle, trans. Richard McKeon, (Random House Press, N.Y., 1941), sect. 13.
19. Taylor, op. cit., p. 175.
20. Findlay, PG, sect. 449.
21. I can only make sense of Hegel's peculiar assignment of the promotion of the cult of the dead to the family as its sole ethical action in that this function has no significance or import to the whole community. This would not explain, however, why it is the family's only ethical action and in fact in the Antigone the unburied dead were a threat to the welfare of all of Thebes and this natural aspect was stressed much more in the play than was Polyneices safe passage to the underworld or any other divine notion.
22. See PG, 443-5.
23. Findlay's notes, PG, 452.
24. Taylor, op. cit., p. 465.
25. Aristotle, op. cit., sect. 8.
26. It is an issue among classicists whether or not the passage is spurious, but most evidence supports it as being authentic. There is an understandable tendency among literary scholars to call any passage which they cannot explain spurious.
27. Hegel, The Philosophy of Fine Art, trans. with notes by F.P.B. Osmaston, (G. Bell and Sons Ltd., London), p. 296. All further quotations from this edition will be given in the text of the paper and The Philosophy of Fine Art shall be abbreviated Aes.

28. A.M. Quinton, "Tragedy," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supp. Vol. 34 (1960).
29. Quinton, op. cit., 164.
30. Bradley, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
31. Bradley, op. cit., pp. 158-9.
32. Bradley, op. cit., pp. 158-9.
33. Bradley, op. cit., p. 73.
34. Bradley, op. cit., p. 162 and 164.
35. Bradley, op. cit., pp. 162-163.

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The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973.
21. Steiner, George. The Death of Tragedy.
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22. Taylor, C. Hegel.
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.