

**CAN WE BE FULLY AT HOME IN OUR
ACTIONS? ACCOMPLISHING EMBODIMENT
THROUGH *SITTlichkeit* IN LAW IN HEGEL'S
*PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT****

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RESUMO: Este artigo é sobre reconciliação, consistindo em, de um lado, noções como incorporação, participação, compartilhamento, comunhão, e, de outro lado, individualidade, pluralidade, alternância, diversidade, estranhamento, e assim por diante. Se não uma real conciliação, ao menos uma promessa de reconciliação é pretendida, mesmo se essa promessa deve moldar-se ao preço da irreconciliável, o destino da eterna recorrência de seu movimento antagonista.

ABSTRACT: This paper is about reconciliation, consisting in, on the one side, notions such as embodiment, belonging, sharing, communality, and, on the other side, individuality, plurality, alterity, diversity, strangeness, and so on. If not a real reconciliation, at least a *promise* of reconciliation is meant, even if this promise has to shape itself at the price of the irreconcilable, the destiny of the eternal recurrence of its antagonistic movement.

SUMÁRIO: 1. Introduction. 2. The tragedy of Antigone and the destiny of *Sittlichkeit* – the struggle between the human and the divine law. 3. Final remarks

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In keeping with this demand is the strenuous, almost over-zealous and frenzied effort to tear men away from their preoccupation with the sensuous, from their ordinary, private [*einzelne*] affairs, and to direct their gaze to the stars; as if they had forgotten all about the divine, and were ready like worms to content themselves with dirt and water. Instead of dwelling in this world's presence, men looked beyond it, following this thread to an other-worldly presence, so to speak. Now we seem to need just the opposite: sense is so fast rooted in earthly things that it requires just as much force to raise it. The Spirit shows itself as so impoverished that, like a wanderer in the desert craving for a mere mouthful of water, it seems to crave for its refreshment only the bare feeling of the divine in general. *By the little which now satisfies Spirit, we can measure the extent of its loss.* (§8)¹

(Hegel)

1. Introduction

On Hegel's view, which was widely shared by his' contemporaries, "the ancient Greeks had, at least for a very brief period in their history, a form of life in which

¹All references to are from Hegel, G.W.F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller with Analysis of the Text and Foreword by J. N. Findlay. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1977.

Sittlichkeit, [Ethical Order] functioned to produce a fully harmonious, non-alienated social order and self-understanding, which since it was consistent with their having attained the highest achievement in art and philosophy, could not be faulted as being somehow inferior to the alienated form of life of the early modern Europeans.”² As such, *Sittlichkeit* means much more than a merely shared way of life; instead, it is related to the idea that there is a deep convention, without discontinuity, between how citizens understand themselves as individuals and how they understand society, which confers to the social space an ethical substance. “These deep conventions have the stronger sense of being the way things have to be done in this form of life. (...) On reflection, they can of course appear as conventions but they can never appear as mere conventions – that is, as conventions that could be changed overnight (such as changing the name of the national currency). They involve, moreover, not just the form that actions take but the kinds of feelings and emotions that are proper to those actions. *They are the ‘conventions’ that structure the subjective lives and expectations of the participants in that form of life.*”³ Thus, this paper will focus mainly on one part of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, namely, the first section of “The Ethical order”. At a higher stage of the embodiment of the *Geist*, the section on “Religion in the Form of Art” deals with a similar kind of dialectical movement that can be seen in “The Ethical Order.” Whereas in the chapter on the Ethical Order the level of embodiment is one in which Spirit is the Spirit of a people, of a community —called by Hegel Objective Spirit – in the *Phenomenology’s* last chapter on Religion, man will fulfill a more fundamental identity, that

² PINKARD, Terry, *Hegel’s Phenomenology – The Sociality of Reason*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1994. p. 136. (Hereafter cited as Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*.)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

is, he is close to identifying himself as the life of Absolute Spirit. The life of Spirit is *Vorstellung*, and through the work of art, man is able to grasp *Geist*. As Taylor points out: “The Greek god is a perfect marriage of the divine with the human form, just as the Greek city-state marries the individual and the political. But the price is the same in both cases; man is not ready for reconciliation with the truth universal, so the gods are human at the price of being multiple and particular, as the cities are true ethical substances at the same cost.”⁴

This paper is about reconciliation, consisting in, on the one side, notions such as embodiment, belonging, sharing, communality, and, on the other side, individuality, plurality, alterity, diversity, strangeness, and so on. If not a real reconciliation, at least a *promise* of reconciliation is meant, even if this promise has to shape itself at the price of the irreconcilable, the destiny of the eternal recurrence of its antagonistic movement. The final remarks will lead us to ask the following question concerning modern society: Can we be, as modern individuals, fully at home in our actions? By the expression “being fully at home in our actions,” I essentially mean the question of how we can achieve a deep sense of belonging as citizens who share a common society, taking into account that in modernity such idea of belonging is also imbued with the sense of difference, alterity, and so on. In other words, can we accomplish a sense of communality, of identification with the Ethical order of our society, of universality, so to speak, in which the recognition of difference, of plurality, is not simplistically seen as a *mere* moment to be accepted or

⁴ Taylor, Charles, *Hegel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1975. p. 176. (Hereafter cited as Taylor, *Hegel*)

even overcome, but instead, is held as a *necessary* and *constitutive* moment of shaping such communality?

2. The tragedy of Antigone and the destiny of *Sittlichkeit* – the struggle between the human and the divine law

“And what law of heaven have I transgressed?”
(Antigone)

This section will deal with the level of embodiment accomplished through *Sittlichkeit*, its apex, which is realized through the whole recognition of its citizens through the law of the state, as well as its fall, by the struggle between the human and the divine law. Following Hegel's images to describe the apogee and the decline of the Greek polis, the ancient tragedy will be our path in dealing with *Sittlichkeit* as the higher level of Greek political life. As it is well-known, the Greek polis is the historical time in which the romantics, among them Hegel, situate their nostalgic idea of a society of perfect *Beisichselbstsein*,⁵ through which flowed “the rivers of milk and honey”, the golden age when the ideal harmony between citizen and society was highest achieved in political life. Using as a metaphor the two principal characters of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, namely Creon and Antigone, Hegel describes the struggle of the two universal ethical substances, human law and divine law.

In the dialectical development of the *Geist* in history, the Ancient world of the Greeks corresponds in time to the stage Hegel calls, *immediate truth*, where, “the *living ethical* world is Spirit in its *truth*.” (§442) In that moment of *Phenomenology*, Spirit is substance, and through the life of the city people are aware of themselves as a totality

⁵ See: Ibid.

sharing community. Spirit lives and embodies itself through the self-consciousness of a people that recognizes itself through the eyes of the State. In the same movement, dialectically, Spirit is in itself the substance, the element of the own deeds of individuals, substance manifested in their work, since it is in the process of acting through substance that the community becomes manifested. The substance, the ethical power, splits itself into two different ethical substances, namely, a divine and a human law, which embrace antagonistic movements, whose “plurality of ethical moments become the duality of a law of individuality and a law of universality,” respectively. (§446)

The human law corresponds to the law of the city, the political life of its citizens. In the process of self-consciousness, the human law represents the accomplishment of the total identification of the individual with the law of the polis. As if in a mirror, the individual through the state sees him/herself as part of the totality of the community’s life. *Sittlichkeit*, the ethical order, corresponds to this high level of embodiment of Spirit. *Sittlichkeit* is accomplished not only as *actual substance* – which emerged “*on its own account* in its truth as conscious ethical essence,” as a nation — but as *actual consciousness* as well, realized through the existing consciousness, whose individuality “has the meaning of *self-consciousness* in general, not of a particular, contingent consciousness,” but rather as citizens of this nation. (§447) Hegel writes: “This Spirit can be called the human law, because it is essentially in the form of a reality that is conscious of itself. In the form of universality it is the known law, and the prevailing custom; in the form of individuality it is the actual certainty of itself as a simple individuality it that Spirit as government. Its truth is the authority which is openly accepted and manifest to all; a concrete existence which appears for immediate certainty in the form an existence that has freely issued.” (§448) As Pinkard highlights: “For the Greeks, this ‘substance’ defined them as a people, as a distinct community apart from other

communities. There was a recognition of ‘the way things were done’ [ethical order] that was fully shared and that was determinate in the way it apportioned social roles and duties. ...the institutions of Greek life also provided them with various ways by which they could reflect both as individuals and collectively on who they were. As such, there was no discontinuity between how individuals understood themselves as individuals and how they understood the society.”⁶ Individuals did not see themselves as individualities in the modern sense; instead, they identified themselves with the social roles they play in the community. *Sittlichkeit* assumes its shape not only as a distinct set of institutions, concretely objectified through the family, civil society, and the modern state — as posited in the *Philosophy of Right*⁷ — but also as the self-consciousness of individuals through their sense of belonging to an ethical community, as emphasized in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The individual becomes what he is through becoming part of the community.

Nevertheless, the substance also manifests itself through the other ethical power, namely, the divine law, a power that confronts the ethical power of the state. Both laws are universal substances⁸, but at the moment that

⁶ PINKARD, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, p. 138.

⁷ For an account of *Sittlichkeit* as shaped through a distinct set of institutions, concretely objectified through the family, civil society, and the modern state, see: *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Translated with notes by T. M. Knox, (London/Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press), 1967.

⁸ Taylor describes the harmonious movement of both laws that takes place before the conflict: “The state preserves society, and hence defends the family; but the family forms citizens for the state. Thus the divine forces underlying the family must be fed for the good of the state, and at the same time it is the state that sees to this cult, and thus to the feeding of the Gods. Men thus come from the family fed by chthonic forces into the light of political day; and they are called on to risk their lives for the defense of the state and hence these families, and in falling to return to the earth, to the pure individuality of the shade, to repose in the underworld from which the family continues to draw its strength. And reciprocally, the family, particularly the women, in following the rites bring the chthonic law into the light of day, and give it public expression, and by thus preserving the family plays its part in the preservation of the state. The two laws should thus be in perfect harmony.” Taylor, *Hegel*. p. 174.

citizens, through the very active of self-consciousness, fully recognize themselves with the human law, substance is materialized in ethical action. At first, the divine law confronts the ethical order, which is “the movement of self-conscious action,” by being its antithesis, that is, “the simple and immediate essence of the ethical sphere; as actual universality it is a force actively opposed to individuality being-for-self; and as actuality in general it finds in that *inner* essence something other than the ethical power of the state.” (§449) “The conflict between the two universals is now seen as one between human and divine law. Human law is the overt, conscious ethic of the state in which the citizens find themselves reflected. Divine law reflects the truly universal, and it thus at this stage appears as unreflective, as an unwritten law, unmade by man, which has always existed. The divine law, as truly universal, is concerned with the individual as such, not just in his relation to the state. The institution which stands as guardian to this law is thus the family which is also the sphere of immediate unity. The two laws have their paradigmatic expression in these two institutions, and Hegel draws the further conclusion concerning the roles of the sexes: men are mainly concerned with the human and political, women with the divine and familiar.”⁹

As a matter of fact, if the family, as Hegel emphasizes it, is the place for genuine individuality, namely contingent individuality, as well as for genuine universality, it can be said that the ethical order, *Sittlichkeit*—grounded upon a universality built from a process of self-consciousness of a totality of individualities—finds no place in such individual contingency.¹⁰

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁰ See Jean Hyppolite on his account on Immediate Spirit in: Hyppolite, Jean, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 1974. (Hereafter cited as Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology*.)

The family — as the place of the specific and opposed to the law of the city where the individual only recognizes him/herself in what is communal to the totality of the community —, is described by Hegel as individual contingency. In the family, the place where the individual meets his/her sheer specificity, he/she finds contingency. Nevertheless, Hegel describes the same place, the family, as the locus of sheer universality as well, where individual contingency faces its most unknown, most universal, and most unpredictable law, namely, the contingent and natural law of death. In the divine law, represented by the family, genuine individuality can only be able to accomplish the unshaped, the sheer universality, by giving meaning to death. Death, as an inherent element of the naturalness, holds the strength of being a pure contingent phenomenon of an unknown law. Through the divine law, the individual is able to change the fate of death from a nature's phenomenon to a Spirit's phenomenon, changing the face of death through an act of individual consciousness. The sheer individuality is accomplished only in death, and at the same time, death is also the primary universal principle, whose birth is unknown, unwritten. Spirit unveils its genuineness in death. Spirit meets its beginning in death. And death, as the most non-reconcilable phenomenon, finds Tragedy as its metaphor *par excellence* for the irreconcilable.

In fact, the attribution of universality to the human law versus the attribution of individuality to the divine law turns out to be more complex, actually tragic, since the movement of individuality as well as of universality essentially takes place in both laws. On the one hand, the divine law remains the primary substance that gives the material to be shaped in the ethical life of the city through its human law. But, on the other hand, at the very moment the individual goes to the public arena and starts the process of realizing him/herself through *Sittlichkeit*, a struggle begins between genuine universality and human universality, even if the law of the state is grounded in the primary forces of divine law. Human law rests its

essentiality in the divine law at the same time that it compels for transgressing the divine law in order to be the law of the city. In as much as *Sittlichkeit* realizes itself, it draws nearer to its own decline, to its end.

The absoluteness of the law manifests itself through ethical life and religion, as the law of ethos and custom. It is different from morality itself, which is autonomous quite independent from law. At the same time, Hegel thinks that the movement of self-reflection can have as its content the law of the community. In using *Antigone* as his metaphor to explain the ethical life in Greek polis, Hegel is leading *Sittlichkeit* to face its own destiny, namely, the tragic irreversibility of its antagonistic force toward its own direction. The tragic element is the legitimacy of both sides, Creon's and Antigone's, the human and the divine law, respectively, in Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*.

On the occasion of war for the Kingship of Thebes, the Oedipus' two sons die fighting against each other for the throne of Thebes. "Creon decrees that Eteocles, who defends the city successfully, shall receive honorable burial, whereas Polyneices, who led the invading army of Argives against it, shall be denied burial."¹¹ The struggle between the two brothers, whose individual pathos appears as "that which animates the substance," — in order for both ethical powers to accomplish themselves, as well as in order for them to be intrinsically mutually dependent on each other — is irreconcilable. "The movement of the ethical power against each other and of the individualities calling them into life and action have attained their true end only in so far as both sides have attained their true end only is so far as both sides suffer the same destruction. For neither power has any advantage over the other that

¹¹ Sophocles, *The Complete Plays of Sophocles*. Translated by Sir Richard Claverhouse Jebb, Edited and with an Introduction by Moses Haddas. (New York: Bantam Books), Bantam Classic edition 1982. p. 115.

would make it a more essential substance. (...) 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.” (§472)

If we examine the sense of fitting in the two ethical substances, through Creon and Antigone as respective portrayals of human and divine law, we can distinguish two legitimate senses of belonging. On the one hand, there is a universal sense of belonging, in which the citizen identifies him/herself with the human law, the law of the state — the *Sittlichkeit* as the identification between citizens and the State, as this sense of belonging to a concrete community through its laws. Creon, placing the human law, carries the responsibility for preserving the law of the city, which symbolizes the law of the community as well as of its citizens. The genuineness of *Sittlichkeit* is the recognition of its authority through its citizens. Creon is the one who recognizes the legitimacy the law, and since Eteocles embodied the law of the city, and died defending the city, Creon conceded him to receive honorable burial. The burial is the recognition of the human law. On the other hand, Polyneices, whose pathos is the ethical power of the divine law, and who, like Antigone, who identifies herself with her brother, sees the opposing ethical power of the state as wrong and merely accidental. Antigone is the embodied substance of the divine law, the embodiment of the unwritten law. Hegel, describing the relationship between Antigone and Polyneices, writes: “The brother, however, is for the sister a passive, similar being in general; the recognition of herself in him is pure and unmixed with any natural desire. In this relationship, therefore, the indifference of the particularity, and the ethical contingency of the latter, are not present; but the moment of the individual self, recognizing and being recognized, can here assert its right, because it is linked to the equilibrium of the blood and is a relation devoid of desire. The loss of the brother is therefore

irreparable to the sister and her duty towards him is the highest.” (§458) Both Antigone and Polyneices are genuine universality, and each recognizes the other.

The struggle between the two ethical substances is irreconcilable. Tragedy comes to Creon and Antigone through the process of realizing themselves. For both, their tragic destinies have been already written. When Creon asks Antigone if she knows that she is transgressing the state law and the consequences of this transgression, Antigone answers:

Yes, for it was not Zeus that had published that edict; not such are the laws set among men by the Justice who dwells with the gods below. Nor did I deem that your decrees were of such force that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes of heaven. For their life is not of today or yesterday, but from all time; no man knows when they were first put forth. Not through dread of any human pride could I answer to the gods for breaking these. Die I must; that I knew well (how should I not?) even without your edicts. But if I am to die before my time I count that a great gain. If anyone lives as I do compassed about with evils, could he find anything but gain in death?¹²

And, at the same price of realizing itself, Creon denies Teiresias' council, even though he is aware of the fate of Teiresias' vaticination. Teiresias says that “once more,” Creon is “standing on fate's fine edge.” Spirit experiences “the contradiction between its knowledge of the ethical

¹² Ibid., p. 127.

character of its action, and what is in its own proper nature ethical, and thus finds its own downfall.” Precisely because the “particular self has become the actuality of what it is essence,” *Sittlichkeit*, in accomplishing its fulfillment, has to vanish. The struggle between Creon and Antigone corresponds exactly to this moment, when *Sittlichkeit* seemed to have reach its completeness, when the individual reached the most extreme level of identification with the human law, at the price of losing his/her self-reflection. *Sittlichkeit* lacks the process of self-consciousness, of the self-reflection of particular individualities. The result is that, by the occurrence of death and destruction through the tragic struggle, the individual, by being completely identified with the city, sees the misfortune of the city as his/her own, and is unable to detach him/herself from it because of his/her lack of self-reflection. What remains is only an empty individuality. Hence, Hegel concludes: “so now the living Spirit of the nation succumb through their own individuality and perish in a universal community, whose simple universality is soulless and dead, and is alive only in the single individual qua single. The ethical shape of Spirit has vanished and another takes its place. (...) The substance emerges as a formal universality in them, no longer dwelling in them as a living Spirit; on the contrary, the simple compactness of their individuality has been shattered into a multitude of separate atoms.” (§475 - 476)

3. Final Remarks

We have been dialing with Hegel’s notion of *Sittlichkeit* as one of the highest sense of identification of men with the community’s life. The final remarks will lead us to replace the following question in the direction of modernity. Can we be fully at home in our actions in modernity? By “being at home in our actions” is claimed the sense of belonging that individual can achieve by

identifying him/herself within the community. Taking into account that modernity is a place for identity as well as for alterity, how is it possible to accomplish universality holding at the same time the recognition of the difference? Can, somehow, difference stand for any kind of universality? In other words, could individuality be thought as the fulfillment of both, universality and particularity? Or still, is it possible to achieve a kind of ethical life compatible with the realization of self-consciousness? How does the building of self-identity deal with the issue of difference as well as alterity? What is the condition to realize the full project of individuality within a community? Those question illustrate the sort of problematic we have been facing in modernity in order to built a sense of communality in society.

One of the difficulties in coming to terms which the Greek model concerns the unquestionable position each individual occupies in the social life. The fact that in the Greek life, the social role of individual in the community is given by birth — turning the social life both, natural and necessarily given — seems to be the different that makes the different in attempting to raise the Greek model as an inspiration for modern life. There is a deep role that alterity and diversity plays in building self-identity in the modern ethical life, where the realm of “this is just the way things are” have been banished. Nevertheless, at the same time, the sense of belonging, of communality, so deeply connected with the notion of *Sittlichkeit*, still occupies a central role in building a community, by the fact that the sense of belonging is essentially ethical. Hence, to speak in terms of the development of Spirit, it could be asked where we are now. Are we experiencing again the moment of the unhappy consciousness, in which we have lost the faith to be at home with our actions? I argue that we have been experiencing a kind of inversion of the two ethical power and its respective domains. The private world of genuine individuality, which in the Greek world had been identified with the family, precisely by embracing contingent

individuality, it has, in modern times, rather turned to be the *leitmotif* of the public realm. The modern community, embodied by the free spirit of contingent individualities, has become the place for genuine individuality, for difference, and for mutual recognition. On the other hand, the place for identities, for feeling at home had been the very private space of the family. In modern societies, it could be said that the law of each individual heart, before placed in the law of the family, had moved to occupy the place of the law of every heart, the universal order, the law of the city, the human law. Difference was replaced from the nucleus of the private family to the public arena of the law of the city.

If the notion of communality and belonging is built under the identifying between citizen and the law of the state, and if the modern citizens do not recognize the city as their own, how can modern society accomplish a community? In fact, the main question we are dealing with — in Hegel's account of Greek society as the model of accomplishing embodiment — is in fact the dilemma of how to realize individuality in the community, since we recognize that we have reached the end of the history of objectivity, and individuals have to mutually recognize each other. In this process, contradictions must necessarily be thought, seen as the dialectical movement between universality and particularity. The double dialectic between particular — *immediation*, and universal — *mediation*. The object is the one and the many, and its unity has a dynamic transition, *becoming* through a dynamic liaison in the concepts themselves.

One of the key points seems to be how to build self-identity dealing with the issue of difference and alterity, in which neither consensus nor alterity would occupy the place of the stable ground for ethical life, but instead, simultaneously, consensus and alterity would operate as necessary moments of establishing a new *Sittlichkeit*, in

which “the plurality of ethical moments become the duality of a law of individuality and a law of universality.” (§ 446)

Pinkard leads the accomplishment of *Sittlichkeit* in modern world to a very accurate perspective, namely, seeing Hegel’s rationality *itself* as a form of ethical life, instead of opposing Hegel’s *Sittlichkeit* to Kant’s *Moralität*. “In Hegel’s terms, an agent who understands himself as part of an ‘ethical life,’ of *Sittlichkeit*, will also come to understand himself as a ‘universal self;’ his personal point of view on himself and the world will come to be fully congruent with his impersonal point of view on the same thing.”¹³ In such view, *Sittlichkeit* is seen as the background set of norms, a sort of “modern normative social space.” It drives to the conclusion that “the self-identity of each would be thereby continuous with the self-identities of others in the community, since the normative standards that make those practices into the practices that they are would be the standards that each would have come to accept as authoritative for himself; and the modern understanding of the individuality of agents would be preserved because these standards would count for these individuals as the standards that make up who they are as individuals.”¹⁴ Such conception embraces the idea that modern individuals self-determine themselves by seeing in the existing social practices what they will for themselves as part of a common self-identity. In *grosso modo*, what is took for granted in such argument is that, if *Sittlichkeit* is build under the ground of self-conscious agents, the social space, as the concrete arena of such determination, must necessarily reflect what the individual takes into account as valid for him/herself, as though *Sittlichkeit* had embraced what its agents have freely chosen as their own ends.

¹³ Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, p. 124.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Taylor also holds the notion of *Sittlichkeit* in modernity to a kind of fully rational state, in which its citizens would be able to identify in its institutions and practices the norms and ideas which they recognize, and by which they define their identity. He writes: "And this will be the case because the state expresses the articulations of the Idea, which rational man comes to see as the formula of necessity underlying all things, which is destined to come to self-consciousness in man. So that the rational state will restore *Sittlichkeit*, the embodiment of the highest norms in an ongoing public life. It will recover what was lost with the Greeks, but on a higher level. For the fully developed state will incorporate the principle of the individual rational will judging by universal criteria, the very principle that undermined and eventually destroyed the Greek *polis*."¹⁵ Nevertheless, for the very reason that in Greek *Sittlichkeit* there was no lack between what "is," *Sein*, and what "ought to be," *Sollen*, that the ethical power carried a highest sense of belonging, of feeling at home in the public arena. There was no free subjective itself, which is the distinctive principle of modern ethical life. Even if we argue, as Wood, that "Ethical life is more concrete than abstract right and morality not because it emphasizes the collective over the individual, but because the ethical image of the individual is a more concrete one. It addresses every side of the individual self, and situates the self in a living social order,"¹⁶ it still remains the fact that in the main basis in which the notion of *Sittlichkeit* is grounded, namely the Greek ethical life, its agents did not correspond to free self-reflexive rational individualities.

¹⁵ Taylor, Charles, *Hegel and Modern Society*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1975. p. 94. (Hereafter cited as Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*)

¹⁶ Wood, Allen W., *Hegel's Ethical Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1990. p. 196.

If free individuality is the principle of the modern world, and, if the Spirit has to be manifested in the world, such manifestation necessarily takes place in individuality. At that very moment, we achieve universality. In that sense, individuality is not ontologically constituted; rather it is an achievement, a modern achievement. If it is possible to think in terms of a modern conception of *Sittlichkeit*, it has to deal with a kind of community based on “a structure of mutual recognition that allows the members of the community to achieve a reconciliation both with each other and with themselves as individuals.”¹⁷ The absoluteness of different wills affirms already the plurality itself. This mutual recognition is intrinsically connected with the question for self-identity, which leads us to deal with the differentiation and correlation among the antitheses universality-particularity, and the role of individuality plays on it. The question of self-identity consequently calls for the notion of *Bildung*, that means, educating ourselves in order to be able to be cultivated men (*gebildet*), in the sense of cultivating the sense of “otherness,”¹⁸ and the idea of commonality as an exercise in order to cultivate (*Bildung*) diversity. “The main drama of history is then opened by the breakdown of the perfect unity of *Sittlichkeit* in the Greek world, the birth of the individual with universal consciousness. It then follows the slow development through the succeeding centuries both of the individual (his *Bildung*) and of the institutions embodying *Sittlichkeit*, so that the two can eventually rendezvous in the rational state.”¹⁹

In the epigraph of this paper, as Hegel points out, we do not need to go beyond the stars to find *Geist*. *Geist* is

¹⁷ Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, p. 224.

¹⁸ See: Gadamer's account of Hegel's notion of *Bildung* in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall, (New York: Continuum), second revised edition, 1996.

¹⁹ Taylor, Charles, *Hegel and Modern Society*, p. 100.

not beyond the sky. We look to the sky, and as individuals, we can see the stars as concrete manifestation of Spirit. We really do not need to be beyond the stars. Nevertheless, all that we *do not* need is to lose the stars. It is no longer necessary to lose the divine law, the work of art, philosophy, the sense of sharing, of belonging, and so on, in order to accomplish a “rational” project of modern state, by the very reason that the tragic struggle between human and divine law — between city and family, necessity and contingency, universality and particularity, politics and philosophy, and so on —, still plays a fundamental role in building a modern society, and its fundamental sense of cultivating otherness.

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