

HEGEL'S PRAGMATICS OF TRAGEDY

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Abstract: This paper attempts in a preliminary way to bring out the 'pragmatics' or 'performativity' in Hegel's conception of tragedy and the tragic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The secondary literature has tended to focus on ethical content (the *tragic*) at the expense of cultic form and dramaturgical enactment (*tragedy*); and even with the tragic it has tended to overlook the different linguistic levels in use. I argue that the peculiar term '*Individualität*' allows Hegel, in chapter VI, to describe a logic of equivocal representation he sees at work in ancient '*Sittlichkeit*' (ethical life). I argue furthermore that we seriously misrepresent Hegel's conception of tragedy if we do not include the astonishing claims made of 'Art-religion' in chapter VII. Here tragedy takes on a meta-aesthetic color. Hegel sees tragedy as more than an ancient phenomenon, but as a recurring feature in attempts to represent (*vorstellen*) a speculative truth in sensuous form.

"To be in it is merely a bore, but to be out of it is simply a tragedy."¹

Wilde exaggerates, of course, just as it would no doubt exaggerate to put Hegel on the same comic-ironic footing. The Wildean quip nonetheless captures our sense of bafflement in trying to articulate our place within traditional community. More prosaically—or from an earnest Hegelian point of view—to be embedded in ancient *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life) is tacitly to be sure of, not even to question, my rectitude; taking a reflective distance from my situation renders traditional law problematic; while making sense in retrospect of what it is to live and act in society, what it actually amounts to, results in tragedy (where 'tragedy' may be said to comprise words that function as the mediating representation of one's ethical existence). Through this gradual process of making meaning explicit, for oneself and for others, how do action and language intermesh? That is the question motivating this paper. While Hegel's theory of tragedy is hardly neglected in the scholarly literature, his approach to what may be called the *pragmatics* (or the *performative* dimension) of language—whether *in* tragedy or *of* tragedy—remains unmapped. The paper attempts a sketch of the terrain, in order thereby to gain a better grasp on that highly intricate text, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.²

Some preliminary words are in order on what I understand by 'pragmatics.' Commentators generally look at the meaning or reference of philosophical works, sometimes at their methodological procedure. Only in recent times have historians of philosophy begun to look instead at rhetoric or stylistics on the one hand, on the other at how the language works

in context (Plato's dialogicism, Descartes's deictic markers and self-conscious *larvatus prodeo*, Nietzsche the thinker on stage, etc.). Quite independently certain philosophical tendencies have sponsored the well-known 'linguistic turn.' At the same time, in linguistics there was a parallel articulation of a field called 'pragmatics': a term officially due to the Peirce-inspired semiotician Charles Morris, who distinguished relations between signs and their objects (semantics) from relations between signs and their interpreters.³ Such shifts have not gone unremarked in Hegel studies of course. I might mention here a line deriving from Alexandre Kojève and running via Bataille, Blanchot, Lacan—even Foucault—down to Derrida, Agamben, de Man, Nancy, or Žižek, all of whom look at use rather than the meaning (to apply Wittgenstein's distinction). There is a comparably rich tradition in Anglo-American Hegel scholarship (I'll mention only such names as Brandom, Flay, McCumber, or Judith Butler).

Note that 'pragmatics' is quite different from 'pragmatism': pragmatics looks at *tacit presuppositions* or *antecedent warrant* for, rather than the (usual or probable) *consequences* of, endorsing a given claim or position. Hegel's dialectic—whether logical or phenomenological—falls under pragmatics in just that sense. It typically proceeds by examining (a) what is assumed in saying or maintaining something, or else (b) what is normatively implied by the elective stance that allows it to be uttered. The result will often be an incongruity between what is said and what is (implicitly) done in or by saying it; hence a favored phrase of Hegel's—"aber in der Tat," "but in fact/indeed." Yet the *Phenomenology* sometimes goes further still, to examine the explicit use of language as performance. Such usage is signaled from the start (for example, by pointing to shifters such as "I" or "now," or indeed to the use of examples), and is thematized throughout chapter VI, as Antigone's lament, Louis XIV's declaration (or perhaps injunction) "*L'État, c'est moi*," the arias sung by Rameau's nephew, and the language of conscience or forgiveness at the close. It is only in the penultimate chapter VII, however, with so-called 'Art-religion' (*Kunstreligion*), that it is foregrounded and utterance rendered altogether transparent (if only as transparent self-deception), namely, in the cult of tragedy and its use of mimetic speech. In short: Hegel's language is alert to its own performative functions, while his dialectic will make explicit the normative commitments in use, sometimes even focusing directly on paradigmatic ways in which language appears thematic for social action.

Hegel's ideas on tragedy are a familiar enough topic in the scholarly literature, as I say. The last few years in particular have seen a vigorous debate on Hegel's Antigone—whether as ethical figure or as drama—and on what 'Hegel's Antigone' might have to say to us today, to contemporary feminism especially.⁴ Yet here we should take care to distinguish between contextual implications of the position under scrutiny and our *own* contextual understanding, our own hermeneutics of application. Without question the moment of what can be labeled the "for us" is part of the "*Appell-struktur*" of the text; Hegel would have been the first to agree that meaning is never just given but must always be construed from our own perspective (whoever "we" are taken to be). Moreover, we today cannot help but find in Hegel's words more than he could have intended. That is all well understood. Yet equally the interpreter is called on to avoid anachronism as far as possible, or at least pay heed to the original context of utterance—not merely Hegel's own but also the contexts he sets out to present and examine. It is a complicated business. For instance, it is not at all

clear (i) that Hegel is advancing a reading of Sophocles' play, or (ii) that Antigone—*qua* character—can be slotted straightforwardly into any of the shifting categories on display in the section of chapter VI ("Spirit") on ancient *Sittlichkeit*, or finally (iii) how "our" normative and other concerns serve to illuminate the text, and indeed vice versa.

I propose a closer look at the terms in which the *Phenomenology* specifies the kind of agency found in (or ascribed to) ancient tragedy. As Allen Speight has recently argued, Hegel takes literature to be a lens that can help resolve the complexities of normative agency.⁵ But that is not all, for in addition Hegel understands literature as itself a verbal act or intervention. In this dual perspective, tragedy may be seen as comprising language about language and about its possible implications for an agent's (and ultimately our) ethical self-understanding. One of the oddest features of contemporary discussion of Hegel's Antigone is a tendency to elide *content* and *form* (or rather, *forming*), *the tragic* and *tragedy*, the action *represented* in the play and its *display* or *presentation*. Attention has almost always focussed exclusively on ethical content (e.g., Antigone's character and deeds), at the expense of the ethical or political implications of the tragic *genre* or of particular plays in performance (even Speight can elide the two). Hegel treats them separately—in chapters VI ("ethical life") and VII ("art-religion") of the *Phenomenology*. Of course he also relates them dialectically: content is form, form content. As a result the cult of tragedy comes to be seen as the sharpest cultural reflection on political agency; though as the dialectic pushes still further, tragedy proves at the same time to be self-deception and, as we'll see, the ultimate form of representation (*Vorstellung*). Tragedy in the end shows up the mask of phenomenological appearing, of action as self-representation. I propose to examine both these instances of words in action—ethical action, cultic performance—as well as their interrelation, always bearing in mind the possible separation between what *Hegel* (or the phenomenological observer) thinks and what he thinks the *ancient Greeks* understood (or would have understood) by their utterances and actions.

In what follows I look briefly (i) at Hegel's layered description of ethical practice, understood as equivocating between singular and universal, between individual claim and the norm authorizing it. I then examine (ii) his peculiar use of the term '*Individualität*' to put this equivocation in play. I shift focus from ethical content ('the tragic') to consider (iii) the performative dimension of tragedy as genre or 'mode of presentation' ('*Darstellungsweise*'). Finally I attempt (iv) a brief explication of the crucial paragraphs Hegel devotes to the pragmatics of tragic 'speech' (*Sprache*) in the section of chapter VII on "Art-religion." This last part can do no more than lay out ideas for further exploration.

1. *Plurivocal Contexts in Hegel's Phenomenology, Chapter VI*

I begin with chapter VI of the *Phenomenology*, that is, with Hegel's basic analysis of the ancient polis and its normative status. In the deeper focus of the chapter as a whole, this first section marks the emergence—or better, *formation* (*Bilden*)—of the self as individual person in society with other such persons. Hegel is well aware of the irony by which the individual is defined by the metaphor of persona, or mask; I am the mask I wear, on the stage of the world. At the outset however we need to take extra care against reading in later determinations, almost in teleological fashion. Equally we must take care in assessing what Hegel's language commits him (or us readers) to; the moments of 'in itself,' 'for us,'

and ‘for itself’ should be kept distinct, interrelated only with close attention to viewpoint or voice. Thus the practical implications of an utterance or an action may not be evident to the speaker or agent (as they may be ‘for us’), and even in retrospect the practical significance might not become fully transparent to the participants’ view.⁶ With such a caveat in mind, how are we to outline the initial situation depicted in ‘*Sittlichkeit*,’ ‘ethical life’? It is above all paradoxical. It sets up an opposition of universal norms or laws, one of which is itself ‘universality,’ the other a ‘singularity’ (*Einzelheit*) which devolves upon action or instantiation—and yet *both* universals must be instantiated, namely, by spokesmen for community and individual respectively. Yet how are universality and singularity, the law and its execution, to be mediated—by universal law, or by singular enactment? The paradox is worked out dialectically in the text. I side with those who take what Hegel means by ‘law’ structurally, in terms of social roles assigned to ethical agents who may represent—i.e., perform—these roles well or badly; the various antitheses do not map directly onto individual agents, let alone the characters Creon or Antigone.⁷

Following the exposition ‘for us’ comes the dialectic of experience (VIb)—something “gone through” by an actual and active consciousness. I see the dialectic as exhibiting a chiasmic inversion of terms typical of all such binary hierarchies, from Sense Certainty on.⁸ Agents find through experience that the socially constructed categories in whose name they perform their deeds have (always already) inverted into their opposite: the singularity (*Einzelheit*) associated with male authority turns out to be the universality (*Allgemeinheit*) assigned to the family cult, while a tacit and unspoken universality must in the end be put into effect, enacted, made determinate and public. Each norm thus implicitly “overreaches” (*übergreift*) its opposite, as in the dialectic of the “Inverted World” of chapter III, which is more than a simple inversion (*Verkehrung*) but also an *inclusion* of its opposite. The inclusion can be either illusory, when differences are papered over in the mode of *Vorstellung* (which is how the symbiosis pictured in VIa looks, via the “shades” of male heroes), or actual, when the vaunted harmony of opposed norms proves unstable and ultimately in contradiction with itself.

If that is a fair general description of Hegel’s text, then one realizes how necessary it is to keep the nested contexts sorted. It is only too easy to flatten out its “Chinese-box” construction, e.g., by reducing it literal-mindedly to Sophoclean commentary, or by reading in our own ideals and asking whether we are ‘for’ or ‘against’ (Hegel’s) Antigone. Hegel describes a dynamic of types, a theatre of assigned roles, such that agents are observed to “represent” fixed norms or universals. Where we stand, or where Hegel stands, is something else entirely. Even if we today may identify and pass judgment on Hegel’s own normative claims, it should always be remembered that the Greek ‘Ideal’ is not *Hegel’s* ideal, however much he may have admired it. More generally, we should acknowledge a certain *plurivocity* (Bakhtin’s ‘polyphony’) of utterance *in* Hegel’s text, and not assume it is a ‘monologic’ utterance. We might begin by discerning several voices, frames or levels of presentation, contra those many readings that conflate what the text says (“woman is nature”) with what Hegel himself might have thought (more like “the Greeks failed to distinguish ‘woman’ from individual ‘women,’ or indeed natural from ‘positive’ law, law from laws,” etc.).

2. *Universality, Singularity, and Individuality in the Phenomenology*

One of the chief sources of anachronistic readings of Hegel is the export of modern individualism into his discussion of *Sittlichkeit*. Hegel's language seems carefully chosen however. The triad Universal/Particular/Singular is more familiar in Hegel's system, where the third term mediates the abstract opposition of the first two terms. How that bears on what he means by 'individuality' is not clear straightaway. I would argue that the term Hegel's '*Individualität*' is too easily conflated with '*Einzelheit*' when translating both as 'individuality' (as Knox usually does), and that '*Individualität*' performs a crucial mediating role (if also, as we'll see, a *sham*-mediation) in VIA a–b.⁹ The term is used elsewhere in the *Phenomenology*, though commentaries do not appear to have marked its importance. It is central to the last section of the previous chapter on 'Reason'—'Individuality that takes itself to be real (*reel*) in and for itself'—where it assumes the form first of political economy ('the animal kingdom of spirit,' '*die geistige Tierreich*'), then of Kantian law-giving and law-testing, which simply identifies individual agent with universal.¹⁰ These are all characteristically modern attempts to justify society from the standpoint of individual action (which Hegel explains is how we encounter the normative problem today).¹¹ Chapter VI, however, turns back to the ancient polis, coming at the normative problem from the other end, as it were, namely, as an attempt to account for individual action from the perspective of the whole; here once again this peculiar term "individuality" is the crucial mediator, or (to be exact) *seeming* mediator. In VIAa (§448, pp. 267–268/341) *Individualität* is associated (i) with the "self-certainty" of government, that is, the immediate, conscious assertion of an indivisible sovereignty,¹² but equally (ii) with the warrior whose body is (to be) accorded family honors by the cult of the familial gods. Individuality seems serves here to mark the active (but "immaculate") transition upwards and downwards from one ethical power to the other; thus the "individualization" (§463, p. 278/341) of the woman in funeral rites complements the "individuality" of the man in government service. VIAb goes on to present the enactment or testing ("in deed," "*in der Tat*") of this purely virtual unity, through what Hegel calls a "singular individuality" (*einzelne Individualität*) (§464, p. 283/342). The latter expression looks oddly pleonastic, but does bring out the way 'individuality' elides the difference between principle and performance, or otherwise put, how the ethical individual holds or is held to a kind of strict liability, is made to take responsibility for his or her¹³ deed even where it was not expressly meant. Acting—the pragmatic testing of virtual universals—is the catalyst here for the action that goes on behind the agents' backs, as it were, which they are then brought to acknowledge. Power or might (*Macht*) is put in force (*Kraft*), as Hegel phrases it. In the process the pure singularity (*Einzelheit*) which was the pure principle of government (if not its express "self-certainty") inverts into the *rebellious* principle of singularity (§474, p. 286/351), that is, when promoted and carried out by the family—Antigone's gesture of throwing dirt over her brother's body. That is, nothing in principle or logic separates political from individual authority; both seem arbitrarily asserted.

Hegel at this point steps back from the actual *experience* of normative collision—the dialectic proper—to draw some conclusions—"for us"—as to the implications of what has gone on. In §475 (p. 287/352–353), the paragraph with the notorious lines about "Womankind—the everlasting irony of the community," Hegel starts out by speaking of "this representation (*Vorstellung*)" or the "picture" the polis has tacitly drawn of itself and its

ethical legitimacy. The irony referred to here is as much the dramatic irony by which we readerly “spectators” understand more than the *dramatis personae* can be taken to have learned. Irony is also the figure for self-conscious subjectivity, as Christoph Menke remarks (in a provocative study of Hegel’s conception of tragedy)¹⁴—to which I would nevertheless add the qualification that this subjectivity remains ours rather than the protagonist’s. Some of the irony at least is at the expense of the patriarchal order of the polis. We—in distant retrospect—come to see how the community or polis is able to maintain itself only by suppressing the raw assertion of the very principle (“this spirit of singularity”) which is both its own essence and the internal opposition it creates in practice (§475, p. 288/353).¹⁵ The “praxical presupposition” (Joseph Flay)¹⁶ of governmental action points to a univocal meaning, and as such parallels what Antigone herself sees as her act of sheer piety. But the latter instead appears to Creon as deliberate defiance, just as she understands his actions as arbitrary rather than for the sake of all. The deeds of both parties are ambiguous, therefore, and at a further remove “we” can see why. *We* can see that the hero—call her ‘Antigone’—has in effect uncovered the singularity without universality—call it ‘individualism’ (rather than ‘individuality’)—which lurks within a pseudo-‘natural’ equilibrium or (better) symbiosis of norms, within a seeming (and seemingly ‘natural’) integration of nature/culture, natural/positive law, the given/action, or universal/singular.

Now, to say that considered in context her deed has uncovered a nascent individualism within individuality is not the same as claiming that Antigone is *herself* an individualist—even of the ‘new’ or ‘good’ kind which would integrate customary (*sittlich*) norms with liberal notions of agency.¹⁷ Nor is it to claim the obverse, that Hegel makes Antigone the antithesis of a ‘Lucinde’-like intriguer and ironist,¹⁸ as it were, the angel in the *oikos*. Nor finally is it to hold that Antigone (or womankind) has arrived at a self-reflective insight into the deceptive workings of a pseudo-natural balancing of ethical norms. What Allen Speight nicely terms the ‘retrospectivity’ displayed by Hegel’s Antigone—an admission that the meaning of one’s actual deed exceeds the scope of prior intentions and desires—does not go as far as (what he calls) ‘theatricality’—a reflective sense of how one’s own agency is played out on the social stage. I see no need to follow Christoph Menke therefore in admitting that Antigone’s curious outsider status (as a woman who uncovers a principle—singular personhood or autonomy—that the prevailing culture is unable to articulate) allows us to ‘read in’ such a self-conscious agency.¹⁹ The irony remains “for us” rather than for consciousness itself. Ethical agents in the condition of *Sittlichkeit* are more or less unwitting placeholders for structural positions in society, and the dialectic they go through has exposed the instability of the community’s overall claim to legitimacy. A new political dynamic, which would mediate the opposed moments of universality and singularity in a unity of rights and personhood (and of social role or persona), is required—although that picture of things will of course prove inadequate in turn.

In sum, although it may go too far to suggest that Antigone uncovers the “male chauvinism” of the Greek polis,²⁰ its tacit presupposition of an assertive individualism is, Hegel contends, the truth that emerges from the dialectic of *Sittlichkeit*. Christoph Menke recommends a “stereoscopic” approach to the sections on ‘tragedy in the ethical’: the dialectical experience exhibits both the content of norms and their enactment.²¹ Tragedy may be understood (from a Hegelian point of view) as reconstructing ethical legitimacy, even while rendering it problematic.

3. *Tragedy as Performative Genre*

Yet that perhaps claims too much. For the odd thing is that chapter VI omits all express *mention* of 'tragedy,' let alone of 'Antigone' (or indeed of the drama called *Antigone*). The closest Hegel comes is with his comment in §465 (pp. 342–343/279) that a strict sense of ethical duty rules out the "sorry spectacle" (*das schlechte Schauspiel*) of a collision between passion and duty, or the comedy (*das Komische*) of a mere collision of duties; it is as if we (readers) too must enter immediately into the seriousness of the action without trying to *frame* it in any way. Indeed the usual perspective on Hegel's conception of tragedy has focussed on its ethical or political *content* rather than its literary *form*, let alone its *performative function*—that is, considering genre with respect to what Northrop Frye terms its "radical of presentation" and the *Aesthetics* its "*Darstellungsweise*."²² Hegel's Berlin lectures only reinforce this bias: their extensive discussions of ancient and modern tragedy, and even more the basic understanding of the Ideal on the model of normative collision, presuppose a *thematic* rather than *generic* treatment. By contrast the 1802 *Natural Law* essay casts history itself in the mold of a continually recycled tragedy, specifically Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, in which Athena establishes the polis as a reconciliation of nature (the laws of modern political economy) and culture (classical political theory). Here the very presentation is *aesthetic* in mode, viz. intuition or *Anschauung*, as we 'look on' the "*Tragödie im Sittlichen*," an unraveling of the historiographic mythos: "the performance on the ethical plane of the tragedy which the Absolute eternally enacts with itself."²³ The *Phenomenology* complicates the picture, by separating *tragedy* from the *tragic*, as Klaus Düsing puts it: "[d]as Tragische wird nun in Tragödien künstlerisch gestaltet."²⁴ And it accommodates both tragedy and the tragic *within* distinct frames rather than employing tragedy *as* the rhetorical frame. The *tragic* appears in chapter VI, as the fate of Greek *Sittlichkeit* exemplified in the conflicts of *Antigone* or *Oedipus* rather than the reconciliation of *Eumenides*. *Tragedy* is featured in chapter VII on Religion, in the section on Greek '*Kunstreligion*,' specifically the "spiritual" artwork of the dramatist.

Peter Szondi long ago (1961) drew attention to the novel (and specifically German) provenance of a 'theory of the tragic.'²⁵ Schelling was the first to move out of an Aristotelian orbit, he contends, though Szondi proceeds to make Hegelian dialectic central to his own interpretations (noting that Hegel's conception of 'dialectic' emerges hand-in-hand with his thinking about tragedy). Szondi takes the advance marked by the *Phenomenology* to lie in Hegel's thematizing of the conflict between human and natural law, between love and law in particular, whereas in the pre-phenomenological writings love reconciled all and there was little for law to do at all.

The dialectic, which is also the tragic (and the overcoming of the tragic), . . . goes beyond the limits posited in the two earlier texts [essays on 'the spirit of Christianity' and on natural law] and now also includes the sphere of the law, which was once rigorously differentiated from it. Elevated to the status of a world principle, the dialectic knows no realm that remains closed off to it.²⁶

Szondi seems to admire this achievement, though emphatically not the philosophical 'disenfranchisement' of literature he sees exemplified by Hegel's *Aesthetics*. What remains puzzling however is his silence about the role of 'tragedy'—as opposed to the 'tragic'—within the *Phenomenology*. For there Hegel maintains the dialectical tension

between form and content, self-positing and natural situatedness, a balancing act which should have met with Szondi's approval.

It is not just the *cult* or *genre* of tragedy that has been neglected in the Hegel literature, but also its 'performative' function or mode of address, as Hegel treats of it in this text. Allen Speight's recent book on Hegel's theory of action remains a partial exception to both propositions, since he does apply Brandomian 'pragmatics' and does consider Hegel's attention to the role of language in the various literary treatments of action. Moreover he even cites chapter VII on the comic actor's doffing of his mask, speaks of the "comic agent," and quotes §733 (p. 443–444/534) on the tragic hero as artist.²⁷ Yet appeal to these places is made solely to gain insight into the "theatricality" of comic action, as depicted in the section of chapter VI on *Bildung*, which forms the topic of Speight's treatment of Hegel's *Rameau's Nephew*. (I note in passing that his third literary example, Jacobi's 'novel of forgiveness,' also exhibits clear tragic aspects, in the downfall of "the beautiful soul," and especially in such turns of phrase as "the tables are turned."²⁸) It is Christoph Menke however who expressly highlights the "performative" dimension by which, as he puts it, tragedy is shown not merely to *be* presentation (*Darstellung*) but also *shows itself* to be presentation.²⁹ Citing Friedrich Schlegel, he sees in tragedy a self-reflexive irony or "parabasis," which renders the work of art at once a *product* and a process of *producing*; our attention may be directed to the action of the play, or to the action of mounting the play and acting out the parts—or somehow to both together. Menke reads this 'Schlegelian' irony into the dialectic of *Sittlichkeit*, and proceeds to interpret modern social reality in that light: the tragic in modernity lies in the opposition between autonomy and authenticity, right and individuality. Here I want rather to take up the passages on tragedy from chapter VII: Hegel's pragmatics of tragedy. I shall argue that Hegel's *Phenomenology* proposes a transhistorical theory of tragedy, and does not limit its scope to the (re)presentation of Greek ethical (*sittlich*) dilemmas.

4. Pragmatics in the "Higher Speech" of Tragedy

Here I make a brief foray into the dizzying complexities of the section of 'Art-religion,' in which Hegel stages his most complete view of tragedy. To set the scene: much of the section is a reflection on the status of 'representation' (*Vorstellung*)—medium of the entire *Phenomenology*—understood both as image or shape and as speech act, which actively 'stands for' the truth. For *us*, so §678 (p. 412/498) explains, each shape of religious or cultic practice is a representation which both thematizes something divine and (in quasi-Durkheimian fashion) reflects the social existence from which it springs. It both *presents* (*darstellt*) the divine/self-consciousness (god knowing itself in its community), and falls short of such transparency, being a shape or garment (*Kleid*) of divine self-knowing. The different shapes assumed by religious consciousness derive, then from its divided nature and the relative occlusion of its object. As 'we' can see (in the exposition prior to the dialectical procession of cultic shapes), what we are observing in 'Religion' is the *presentation* (*Darstellung*) of serial *representations* (*Vorstellungen*). After the "immediate" religion of nature, which simply takes up various figurations found in nature, the second series of shapes shifts to the other pole, subjectivity. It both reflects and is the mediation of artistic (*künstliche*) subjectivity: "the shape raises itself to the form of the *self* through the *producing* [*das Hervorbringen*] in consciousness, whereby the latter beholds [*anschaut*] in its objects its own deed, or the self" (§683, p. 416/502). Yet the self does not appear as such—or rather, as Hegel will go on to say, it 'figures' as the infinite negativity of Fate, on the one hand, and on the other as the sheer producing

activity of the poet (the productive power of 'énonciation' or utterance as much as the production of the 'énoncé' or statement). This paradox repeats on the level of form what was made visible at the level of content in the section on the ethical order. And what could not be accommodated within (while remaining at the heart of) the ethical order, namely, the individual self, is also the latent truth of religion, as Hegel presents it. As before, *Individualität* is the catalyst for this double demonstration of deficiency, both covering and exposing actual divisions.

That becomes explicit in the astonishing few paragraphs introducing 'Kunstreligion' (§§699–704, pp. 424ff./512ff.), where Hegel turns his focus on the subjective poetic act itself, almost as if (to cite Emerson) "[t]he true poem is the poet's mind; the true ship is the ship-builder."³⁰ He begins by noting that now the artisan (*Werkmeister*) of 'nature religion' has become a spiritual "laborer" (*Arbeiter*), capable of producing outer shapes of full independence from an inner self "that utters itself out of itself and in [an] itself" (§698, p. 424/512). The artist produces pictures of the community, in which all members recognize their community as the work "of each and all," that is, as "individualized" rather than mere "singulars" (*Einzelnen*: §700, p. 424/512). The artist is the member of the community whose special task is to interpret that to itself, to bask in its own beauty, so to speak. The other side of the picture emerges in §701 (pp. 425–426/513–514), where Hegel speaks of the "scission" (*Scheiden*) such a religion makes in its developed form between itself and its existence (*Bestehen*); a gap between the unchanging beauty art celebrates and the self-certain activity of self-conscious remembrance.³¹

The consummation of the ethical sphere in free self-consciousness, and the fate of the ethical world, are therefore the individuality that has withdrawn into itself, the absolute levity [*Leichtsinn*: recklessness] of the ethical spirit that has dissolved within itself all the firmly established distinctions of its stable existence and the spheres of its organically ordered world and, being perfectly sure of itself, has attained to unrestrained joyfulness and the freest enjoyment of itself.

In trusting in its own self, however, it breaks with the world it also celebrates:

This is spirit, inwardly sure of itself, which mourns over the loss of its world, and now out of the purity of self creates its own essence raised above actuality."
(translation amended)

The following paragraph goes even further, claiming that this is the moment when "absolute art" comes forth. H. S. Harris rightly asks whether such art is still 'art proper'—that is to say, naive 'art religion'—or isn't rather predicated on the *separation* of art and religion after the fall of the *polis*, when the self not only creates a work but has its very "concept" for its shape (which seems to be an allusion to Christ, considered as absolute artist or artwork!). Harris concludes: "whereas the identity of art and life is tragic for the life of the artist, the identity of art and the concept is tragic for her art."³² Art mourns not just over the loss of its world, but also over its own end. The ambiguity repeats itself in §703 (p. 426/514), where the conceit is carried still further. Hegel speaks of the "pure form" (better, pure forming activity) into which the artist's poetic activity have been distilled:

This form is the night in which substance was betrayed and made itself subject. It is out of this night of pure certainty of self that ethical spirit is resurrected as a shape freed from nature and its own immediate existence [*Dasein*].

What to make of this image of a Judas kiss of betrayal in the night of subjectivity, with its uncanny (or uncomfortable) mixing of Greek and Christian themes? Following Harris we could see here a transition to the world of “manifest” (*offenbar*) religion, and even take the Passion story as the last vestige of tragic form—up to the word “It is finished” Harris remarks (as if the show only now becomes *real*, non-fictional). Or we could read it the other way round, if still parodically, as some kind of crucifixion scene staged for the artist in all his creative majesty, creating whole worlds out of her infinite subjectivity. It is true that the following stage of Christian religion shows up the finitude of selfhood, in relation to the infinitude of God, etc.; yet it is no less true that infinite subjectivity remains even there, in the *personhood* of the divinity, and certainly returns in the final chapter on Absolute Knowing (where the ‘intro-reflection’ of subjectivity remains crucial right to the end). My suggestion, at any rate, makes good sense of §704 (pp. 426–427/515), which speaks of an individual (Christ? the Romantic artist?) selected to be the vehicle of spirit’s sorrow. But if this looks like the standard Passion story, Hegel’s text makes clear that it is nevertheless enacted in tragical guise, namely, as a struggle *between* the poet and the community s/he commemorates, *between* their respective ethical powers or *pathé*—“by surrendering to which his self-consciousness loses its freedom,” Hegel adds. What one might call this ‘meta-tragedy’—a tragedy *about* tragic form—now undergoes a final turn. It inverts into a ‘comedy’—the comedy about tragedy, in fact—ending in the victory of the “pure self of the individual, of negative power.” Here, writes Hegel, poetic activity,

conscious of its inalienable force, wrangles with the shapeless being; becoming its master, it has made the pathos into its own matter and given itself its content, and this unity emerges as a work, universal spirit individualized and set before us [*vorgestellt*]. (translation amended)

This constitutes the triumph of the comic subject or agent, but equally of the modern artist, no longer beholden to the muse for inspiration but now wholly self-creating. Anachronistic or not, Hegel’s description certainly goes far beyond a straightforward dialectic of the cult of tragedy.

If this *first* moment is one of subjectivity, self-reflexivity or irony, let me turn to a *second* moment, equally important, that of *language*, and in particular the performative dimension of the *utterance*. Speaking (in §726, p. 439/528–529) of the transition from the ‘living’ art of cult and lyric, Hegel highlights the role of *speech*, which now achieves a remarkable degree of transparency between inner self and outer determinacy, a content that is lucid and a form that is directly the artist’s existence. I have already noted that performative language had been featured several times in chapter VI: as Antigone’s claim to legitimacy (the language of the Law) or laments over her fate; as the language of flattery or of the king (“*L’État, c’est moi*” has perlocutionary force); of the ‘beautiful soul,’ words as fading echo or of forgiveness, etc.³³ But the theme of language as the self’s transparent speech act emerges explicitly in the sections on the ‘spiritual work of art,’ where Hegel writes about epic, tragedy and comedy. Epic is said to create a single pantheon of spiritual beings or gods “whose element and habitation is language” (§727, p. 439/529), language that is about national strife (Trojan war), about individual heroes like Achilles and Odysseus, or about the gods—individualities all. The rhapsode begins *in medias res*, as does his own individuality: Hegel describes him as disappearing into his thematic matter, effacing himself before his tale, that is, as not owning up to his presence

in the scenes he narrates. By comparison, the “higher language” of tragedy (§733, p. 444/534) allows the dramatist to appear *in propria persona*, on stage, as one of the “players” (Sophocles was reputed to have done so). And conversely, says Hegel, the characters in the drama

are artists, who do not express with unconscious naturalness and naivety the *external* aspects of their resolves and enterprises [as in ordinary life], but give utterance to the inner essence, establish the rightness of their action, and the pathos that moves them is soberly asserted. . . . The existence [*Dasein*] of these characters, finally, are *actual* humans, who assume the personae [*Personen*] of heroes and present [*darstellen*] them, not in narrative mode, but in their own [direct] speech. Just as it is essential for the statue to be the work of human hands, so is the player essential to his mask—not as an external condition from which artistically we must abstract.

That is to say, the poet/player *is* directly the mask through which s/he speaks: a triple (con)fusion of (i) creating subject, (ii) player onstage, and (iii) the social, ethical or religious roles played in reality, on the stage of the world. This is performative language as dramatic performance, we might say, and of a high and revealing order.

Yet the Hegelian dialectic pushes relentlessly forward, to unmask all remnants of im-mediacy in any such poetic mediation. Harris writes of this section as a “playing for the gods,” and his nice phrase captures something of what is going on: it is mere play, for the enjoyment of the gods, projecting finite consciousness upon the Olympian pantheon, as well as playing *to* the gods (i.e., in the back row), exaggerated play-acting, mere dissembling. The artist both knows and does not know what he is doing, is perhaps ingenuous about the self with which she peoples the stage or world; a gap emerges between knowing and ignorance, Hegel observes (§737, p. 446/537). One odd feature here is Hegel’s bringing in of *modern* as well as ancient tragedy—Oedipus, Orestes, Macbeth, and Hamlet are the obvious allusions. His point, I take it, is that the elision of role and subjective knowledge is characteristic of drama *throughout* history. Hence this describes not so much the *declension* of tragic form or its *survival* into modern, post-aesthetic times, more a *perennial* feature of human attempts at depicting universal ethical-religious norms in sensuous (hence individual) guise, on stage so to say.

Holding fast to the virtues of ‘individuality’ requires a kind of forgetfulness, as Hegel puts it in §740 (p. 448/539). This is what I would list as a *third* moment, the moment §742 (p. 450/541) labels “*hypocrisy*”—in the original Greek sense of play-acting, whereas ‘the beautiful soul’ is hypocritical in the more modern sense of self-deception. If the ‘Fate’ thematized (though hardly depicted) in tragic representation “completes the depopulation of Heaven”³⁴ that is not only because there is for Hegel a deeper, Christian ‘destiny’ or Providence, but equally because in comedy (i.e., Aristophanic or Old Comedy) the player may be seen to discard the mask and appear as his own “self”—just as we in the audience have become selves, mere persons. I mention this not to conclude the story, as it were, but to point out that it is not the end at all: we *cannot* ‘dispense’ with figure and metaphor, simply by bringing on stage (*in propria persona*) a figure typed as the individual person, the comic player/artist. The real issue here concerns the performative function or pragmatics which the section on ‘*Kunstreligion*’ brings to the surface—the self whose expression never reveals the self ‘as such’ (its final “shape” in chapter VIII is

purely logical). That the issue is *not* resolved is evident from those later parts of the text that reflect backwards on the whole process of *Vorstellen* (§§765–785, pp. 463–476/556–572), its manner of presenting godhead or absolute, the bearing that has on the notion of evil (whose negativity is unrepresentable), and—not least—how evil bears upon poetic subjectivity (already condemned in the person of ‘the beautiful soul’).³⁵ The task is complicated even further by the section immediately following ‘Art-religion,’ on Christianity or ‘Manifest Religion,’ which considers how the modern world might take up of Greek culture once the gods have ‘flown,’ doing so via the vivid metaphor of a maiden plucking the fruit and handing on the universal classical heritage. The chapter concludes with the words (i.e., representation) that “God is dead”: it is the death of religion qua metaphor and *Vorstellung*. To enter into Hegel and figural representation would be another paper, however, if not indeed a book. Suffice to say that in presenting figural representation as it appears via successive ‘images’ (*Bilder*) of spirit or culture, Hegel ultimately wants to expose the action (or pragmatics) of thought as it were ‘behind’ the curtain of sense; yet the result is a tightening spiral of figures presenting figural consciousness.³⁶ In that light, the death of the gods enacted in tragedy parallels Christianity’s liturgical declaration that “God is dead.” The tragedy of tragedy is more than a Greek affair, then: it has to do with the ultimate impossibility of figuring or representing the truth.

To sum up: Hegel’s text harbors many layers or levels the careful reader would be wise to take into consideration. This paper has attempted in a preliminary way to bring out a ‘performative’ side to Hegel’s conception of tragedy and the tragic. Much attention has focused on the plane of ethical content, and in particular on how an equivocal Woman/women is figured in the ethical order of ancient *Sittlichkeit*. Even there however the critical issues are easily lost sight of. How should we avoid anachronism and address (or suppose ourselves addressed by) the plurivocality of Hegel’s text? How are we to conceive of the way ‘the individual’ figures within ancient community, or the mode by which law (as with Spinoza’s ‘substance,’ it is not numerical one) is enacted in the singular case? I argue that the peculiar term ‘*Individualität*’ allows Hegel to describe a logic of equivocation or representation at work here. In any event, by comparison with ethical content the level of form (or formative activity) has been almost wholly neglected. I would argue that we seriously misrepresent Hegel’s conception of tragedy if we restrict ourselves to chapter VI and do not widen our focus to include the astonishing claims made of ‘*Kunstreligion*.’ Here tragedy takes on a meta-aesthetic color. Not only does it reflect on the status of political norms, in Hegel’s presentation, it also actively constructs a new unity as mediated through its audience. Yet that too fails to achieve closure in and as the work proper: character, artist, or audience “forgets” what it really knows. The “betrayal” goes to the foundations of (aesthetic) representation, and indeed, of the unified work which is at the same time a speech act whose meaning is up for construal. But in *presenting* the act of presentation implicit in dramatic *Vorstellen*, Hegel (and with him his readers) would presumably be in a new language game entirely, that of the system proper rather than a ‘phenomenology’ of determinate spiritual shapes, individuality represented as such. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *larvatus prodeō* might well be considered Hegel’s motto as well as Descartes,’ although it is not one either of them was in a position to advertise.

Notes

1. Lord Illingworth (aka Oscar Wilde) speaking of 'society' in *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), act 3. Later the character declares, "Nothing succeeds like excess"—which could go also for Hegel's *Antigone*.

2. I cite by paragraph number, then by pagination in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); and *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973).

3. The field proper is little more than forty years old. For a preliminary clarification, see *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, ed. Jan-Ola Östman, Jef Verschueren, Jan Blommaert, and Chris Bulchaen (Antwerp/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1994), especially the introductory piece ("The Pragmatic Perspective") by Jef Verschueren. See also the entry for 'Pragmatics' in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

4. See Philip J. Kain, "Hegel, Antigone, and Women," *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2002), pp. 157–177, esp. p. 173, n. 2, a useful survey of the literature. Besides the sources he mentions, one should add the work of Lacan, Irigaray, Derrida, and, more recently, Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

5. *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially chap. 2, the most thorough account in English of how Greek tragedy bears on Hegel's theory of action. Following Robert Brandom, Speight contends that tragic action articulates or "makes explicit" the intentions and normative commitments the agent has.

6. Speight casts the tragic process as "retrospective" in mode: the agent comes to realize only after the fact just what he or she did or had meant (and I would add that such recognition might be only partial, and perhaps gradual and ongoing).

7. Nadine Chagfoot, "Hegel's Antigone: A Response to the Feminist Critique," *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2002), pp. 179–204. A particular man might not live up to the "masculine" norm, or a woman might in the event appear "unfeminine"; Creon might take governmental authority to be necessarily sovereign, when in fact he issues emergency decrees merely or reduces law to the singular instance of its proclamation. Already we can see a certain play between the given of a role and the act or achievement of playing it.

8. Chiasmus is a favored mode of Adorno, Derrida, and de Man, all of whom link it with Hegel's dialectic. Little has been written on Hegel's strategic use of chiasmus. For some suggestive insights on it, however, see Sanford Budick, *The Western Theory of Tradition: Terms and Paradigms of the Cultural Sublime* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), e.g., chaps. 3 and 5. I might add that Budick (pace de Man) links chiasmus with prosopopeia and apostrophe: tradition—or what he calls "the cultural sublime"—is posited or impersonated as directly addressing the individual (the "I that is we and we that is I"). Budick seems to agree with Bataille, that Hegel ends up adopting a "vulgar" attitude to death by reducing it to a reserved "economy." Yet, as I hope to show, the symbiotic economy of ethical action is precisely what Hegel exposes in this section.

9. The *Aesthetics* makes 'Individualität' the hallmark of the classical Ideal, of action (*Handlung*) in particular, and clearly it is not the same as 'individualism.' See Hegel's *Ästhetik (Werke: Suhrkamp, 1970)* vols. 13–15/*Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975)—e.g., chap. III of part 1 on "Beautiful Individuality" (13, 203–211/153–160), namely, as presented by art rather than *qua* natural beauty. Hegel appears there not to play on the term's ambiguity. As far as I know Hegel's peculiar usage has never been discussed in the secondary literature. Hermann Schmitz, *Hegel als Denker der Individualität* (Meisenheim-Glam: Anton Hain, 1957), might seem to promise otherwise, yet oddly enough the term is barely mentioned in his

(nevertheless interesting) discussion of the problem of mediation, especially between universal and particular via singularity (sc., *Einzelheit*) the ‘middle term’ in the syllogism. (On p. 155 of Schmitz’s book mediation even becomes self-reflexively thematic in the form of footnotes to a footnote; something I haven’t seen outside a Flann O’Brien novel.) Schmitz highlights the paradox by which in the ‘infinite judgment’ opposites coincide (the self is a thing, spirit is a bone, etc.). But despite his close attention to the *Phenomenology*, he passes up the chance to thematize the strange sham-mediation found with ‘*Individualität*.’ In just one place (p. 156), discussing the ‘*Persönlichkeit*’ of the king in the third Jena system, does Schmitz instance the term: “*Das freie Allgemeine* ist der Punkt der Individualität . . . der *erbliche Monarch*” (*Jenaer Systementwürfe III: Naturphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes* [Hamburg: Meiner, 1987], p. 240). Royal authority is based on merely ‘*natural*’ succession, and requires the complement of ‘public opinion.’ There is something theatrical in the way the king is required to perform a role, don a *persona*, and it remained an open question for Hegel’s political philosophy whether this is a genuine mediation of universal and particular.

John H. Smith—*The Spirit and Its Letter: Traces of Rhetoric in Hegel’s Philosophy of Bildung* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988)—might also seem promising. He argues that Hegel deploys rhetorical means to depict the ‘cultivation’ of individuality towards self-representation (p. 200)—the *Bild* in *Bildung*, as it were. Smith draws attention to Hegel’s critique of synecdoche—the identification of part with whole, individual with universal (e.g., pp. 192–193). Yet he fails to distinguish the *immediate* coincidence of the two moments from their *mediated* interrelation. In the middle section of chapter VI, on *Bildung*, as well as in the last section, on the ‘moral *Weltanschauung*,’ Hegel parodies the vaunted self-sufficiency of (say) courtly allegiance, of Rameau’s nephew, the French revolutionary state, or the Kantian moral agent: all simply conflate particular and universal in the “point” of seemingly “natural” individuality (see *Phenomenology*, e.g., §§489, 497, 521, 537, 588, 589, 591, 599, 646, 650, 659, 665, etc.).

From a brief survey of the Jena period writings, I should say that Hegel uses the term in the first place to conceptualize the unity of the *natural organism*, *qua* self-directed and so independent: see the ‘Philosophy of Nature,’ in *Jenaer Systementwürfe I: Das System der speculative Philosophie* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1986), *passim*; which incidentally would throw some light on ‘*die geistige Tierreich*.’ More importantly, the term also signals a *subjective* or ‘*spiritual*’ *self-possession* (*Besonnenheit*): in other words, how subjectivity assumes its shape in reality. That is the aspect emphasized in the *Aesthetics*. An immediate (“natural”) realization of meaning in and as the body, or as transparent deed, word or demeanor, is the mark of the classical Ideal, of so-called “beautiful individuality.” Hegel speaks of an identity of meaning and shape, *Bedeutung* and *Gestalt*. Of course, even conscious self-possession can remain relatively unthinking; and the dialectic proceeds to make this ‘un-thought’ explicit. The individual experiences the loss of unity in its *Vorstellung*; hence the shift to a ‘romantic’ or post-classical mode of representation, for which a suggestion of negativity or disparity is built into individual shape.

10. I agree with H. S. Harris (and Karl Marx, too) that what Hegel intended by the section on ‘the animal kingdom of spirit’ was a parody of the notion of “civil society” as transmitted to Germany via translations of various Scottish theorists. It attacks “political economy,” or the theory of liberalism. See Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder*, vol. 2: *The Odyssey of Spirit* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 136–137, where he is careful to distinguish ‘*die Sache selbst*’ from ‘commodity’ and labor; Hegel focusses on *consciousness* of interest, not on the workings of capital itself. Note that ‘*Individualität*’ has already figured in Vb, which comprises various assertions of subjectivity in the modern world: it points to individual action and work, considered only in their immediate assertion, as if knowing the principle amounted to its enactment or execution.

11. ‘*Individualität*’ recurs through the later sections of chapter VI (see note 9 above) and into VII; in chapter VIII it features just twice, once as a reminiscence of religious shape, and last in relation to Leibnizian ‘individuality.’

12. Cf. *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, p. 238.

13. Perhaps we should say “its”—yet even the possessive form is unwarranted, when the deed refers as much to *divine* will as to human.

14. Christoph Menke, *Tragödie im Sittlichen. Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit nach Hegel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996). I say “provocative,” since it invites discussion, especially about Menke’s claim that irony and theatricality characterize Antigone herself. For Hegel, he argues, Antigone is not just a player *in* but also a spectator *of* tragedy (p. 136, and chap. 4, *passim*). I think that conflates the self-consciousness of chapter VII’s ‘*Kunstreligion*’ with the more or less innocent “experience” of chapter VIAa, even though Menke has his reasons for doing so (constructing a transhistorical theory of tragedy in the ethical order). More broadly, I shall argue that whereas Menke supposes Hegel thinks tragedy proper comes to an end with the Greeks—we have politics instead—what we find in chapter VII in fact is Hegel’s own transhistorical treatment of tragedy, as mode of religious (self-)consciousness.

15. The same point is made, with respect to epic and society, in James Redfield’s *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: the tragedy of Hector* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). Greek society requires the occasional exercise of individualist heroism which it officially proscribes.

16. *Hegel’s Quest for Certainty* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984). An earlier attempt (1978) speaks of “pragmatic presuppositions”; the change is due presumably to a philosophical rather than linguistic context.

17. Philip Kain’s argument, in “Hegel, Antigone, and Women,” especially pp. 172–173.

18. As Patricia Jagentowicz Mills claims in her “‘Hegel’s Antigone’ Redux: Woman in Four Parts,” *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2002), pp. 205–221, at p. 214. A close reading of §475 shows, I think, that Antigone’s own character or motivation, or Polyneices’ for that matter, is not the issue for Hegel’s text.

19. Menke, *Tragödie im Sittlichen*, chap. 3, *passim*. He is followed in part by Cecilia Sjöholm, *The Antigone Complex: Ethics and the Invention of Feminine Desire* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press 2004), e.g., pp. 36–41, 45–54.

20. Philip Kain, “Hegel, Antigone, and Women,” p. 176, n. 34, commenting on my “The Woman in White: On the Reception of Hegel’s Antigone,” *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1989), pp. 65–89, at p. 86. (My article occasionally mixes up page references in the *Aesthetics* and the *Phenomenology*, as Robert Williams kindly pointed out; I had a computer accident.)

21. See *Tragödie im Sittlichen*, pp. 96–97, 82–83. (for the metaphor of ‘stereoscopic’ reading, which he borrows from Wellmer interpreting Adorno). To repeat: such a stereoscopic perspective does not here extend to the tragic *presentation* of this dialectic, as Menke suggests it might.

22. See F. Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 246–247.

23. Hegel, *Natural Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), p. 104. See also Bernhard Lypp, *Ästhetischer Absolutismus und politischer Vernunft: Zum Widerstreit vom Reflexion und Sittlichkeit im deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), cited in my “The Woman in White,” at p. 68. Lypp follows Peter Szondi (below) in preferring the earlier Hegel to the later ‘speculative’ systematizer even of the *Phenomenology*.

24. Klaus Düsing, “Die Theorie der Tragödie bei Hölderlin und Hegel,” in *Jenseits der Idealismus*, ed. Christoph Jamme and Otto Pöggeler (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986), pp. 55–82, at p. 76.

25. *Versuch über das Tragische* (first ed., 1961; second ed., 1964), reprinted in *Schriften I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978); translated as *An Essay on the Tragic* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002); see *Schriften 152, Essay 2*. Klaus Düsing advances an argument much like Szondi’s, *viz.*, that Hegel’s conception of dialectic comes out of his thinking about the conflict of ethical norms.

26. *Schriften* 173, *Essay* 21. Cf. 208/56.

27. Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency*, pp. 66–67, 70–71. He also cites Hegel's comments on the "language" of "complaint" (tragedy), "perversion" (Rameau's court culture), and "conviction" (conscience, the beautiful soul), which gets closer to the performative dimension I focus on.

28. "Hierdurch kehrt die Szene um (§667, p. 405/490)—this is nothing if not a tragic "reversal" or *peripeteia*. Speight calls this section "Hegel's second appropriation of tragedy," but still lays emphasis on the genre of Romantic novel.

29. Menke, *Tragödie im Sittlichen*, p. 108, and for his discussion of Schlegel on "transcendental Poesie," pp. 56–57. Cf. his recent *Die Gegenwart der Tragödie der Tragödie: Versuch über Urteil und Spiel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), which in a similar move would separate a "*Tragik des Handelns*" from its "*Darstellung im Spiel*." I play down any differences with my own approach here: Menke takes irony to be present in and as action—theatricality, if you will—and so takes Hegel's thoughts on cultic performance as offering a clue to understanding the tragic overall, which he sees playing itself out on the stage of modernity generally, not just that of ancient *Sittlichkeit*.

30. "History," *Essays: First Series*, in *Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), p. 244.

31. Menke argues that this separation is matched by the later separation between epic and tragic "language."

32. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 2: *The Odyssey of Spirit*, p. 581.

33. Speight argues convincingly for the latter's being a reference to Jacobi's *Woldemar*, and even better, for an intertextual context. Jacobi's novel is in tacit conversation with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, and a good part of the conversation concerns the true place of theatre in modern society. The prospect is abyssal: Hegel is to be read as thematizing literature about literature about action as language, and so on.

34. §741, p. 449/540: Hegel speaks here of theatrical representation (or its ethical content) as "the unthinking amalgam of individuality and essence." Cf. Wallace Stevens, "It Must Be Abstract": "How clean the sun when seen in its idea/Washed in the remotest cleanliness of a heaven/That has expelled us and our images. . . /The death of one god is the death of all." *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction* (*Collected Poetry and Prose* [New York: Library of America, 1997], p. 329).

35. Chapter VIII allows 'evil' and 'the beautiful soul' a farewell appearance, though translated into logical rather than figural terms as "rein *Insichsein*": §795, p. 483/580.

36. Here Smith, *The Spirit and its Letter*, is suggestive in foregrounding Hegel's rhetorical practice even as it presents rhetorical practices, in being figural presentation of figural thought. In the end however it is not clear whether for him such reflexivity hasn't become a problem as much as an achievement.