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Antigone and the Phenomenology of Spirit

Between Literary Source (vv. 925–928) and Philosophical Reading

Abstract: This contribution aims at exploring a passage related to the figure of Antigone in Chapter Six of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel attributes the following words to the heroine: “Because we suffer we recognized that we have erred”. Although this reference appears to be a literal quotation, upon closer investigation it clearly departs from the literary source. The paper focuses on the meaning of this passage in the context of the Sophoclean tragedy and in that of the *Phenomenology* in order to show that the philosophical use that Hegel makes of *Antigone* (specifically of the verses 925–928 of the tragedy) is not a simple mistranslation. Rather, the philosophical use of the literary source could be seen as an example of the constitutive transformations that any literary figure undergoes whenever it is incorporated into the philosophical discourse.

In this contribution I intend to deal with a passage related to the figure of Antigone in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the section “A. The true Spirit. The Ethical Order” of Chapter Six, Hegel attributes the following words to Antigone: “Because we suffer we recognized that we have erred” (GW 9, p. 255; *PhS*, p. 272). This is of course a reference to verses 925–928 of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, which read: “If all this does seem good to the gods, then I / Through suffering would know within myself / That I did wrong; but if these men do wrong / May the evils that they suffer be no more / Than what they are unjustly doing to me”.¹

The interest of this reference lies in the fact that, although it appears to be a literal quotation, upon closer investigation it clearly departs from the literary source. I will focus on the meaning of this passage in the context of the Sophoclean tragedy and in that of the *Phenomenology* in the following pages; for now I will simply note that, in the critical literature, the Hegelian interpretation of verse 926 has been seen almost unanimously as a stretch, a misunderstanding² or even a “mistranslation” (Speight 2004, p. 55).

In the first part of this paper, I will show how the philosophical use that Hegel makes of Antigone is, up to a certain point, overall in line with Sophocles’ text. In the second, comparing the meaning of verses 925–926 with their reformulation in the *Phenomenology*, I will try to suggest that indeed Hegel seems to change the ending of *Antigone*, giving its protagonist a degree of awareness that Sophocles’ heroine never had. Finally, in the third part I will ask if, nevertheless, we should really take Hegel’s interpretation as a misunderstanding. More precisely, I will try to suggest that, in order to understand the meaning of the Hegelian reformulation without reducing it to a simple mistake, it is necessary to

¹ I quote from *Antigone*, trans. by R. Gibbons and Ch. Segal: Sophocles 2003, p. 95.

² I will only mention a few of the many critical readings that share this point of view. Mills (1996, p. 70) notes that Hegel is “misrepresenting and adapting what she says to make it look as if she admits guilt”; J. B. Hoy notes that, with respect to Hegel’s reformulation, Sophocles’ Antigone “actually says something quite different” (Hoy 2009, p. 181). Christopher Menke, defines Hegel’s version of v. 926 of *Antigone* a “forcierte Auslegung” (Menke 1996, p. 95).

keep in mind the constitutive transformations that any literary figure undergoes whenever it is incorporated into the philosophical discourse.

1 Hegel's and Sophocles' Antigone. Heroic temper and Hegelian *pathos*

As is known, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel borrowed from Sophocles to illustrate the dialectic of ethics in its immediate configuration. In this framework, the unfolding of the tragedy is given by the clash between the ethical subject, which is unilateral *pathos*, and the internal division which undermines the foundations of immediate ethics: that between human law and divine law, whence the irremediable opposition between Creon and Antigone.

These two laws give content to the split that Hegel announces at the end of the section dedicated to Reason as Testing Laws. Ethics, says Hegel, is like a universal self-consciousness, effective in everyone's consciousness. It is only within this community framework that individuality feels itself to be such, so much so that it is precisely by virtue of this context that every consciousness conceives of its union with all others: "in the life of the people, the concept of the actualization of self-conscious reason has in fact its consummate reality" (GW 9, p. 194; *PhS*, p. 205).

However, this configuration is only apparently harmonious. In fact, the immediate ethical structure contains contradictions that only a concrete opposition can manifest. That between human law and divine law is therefore an opposition that exists within a unity. The first is the law of the *polis*, and therefore of what governs people in the light of day, publicly and in relation to male citizens under the auspices of Olympic divinities; the second is that which applies in the *secretum* of the domestic hearth, in the order of what is hidden and nocturnal, in the love that binds the family to the son that must be sacrificed for the state, as well as in the chthonic divinities who set inscrutable traps for whomever breaks their dictates.

As has been observed, it is not a question here of two laws that oppose the human to the divine, but of two laws that identify two levels of existence which, though with internal differentiation, should coexist. The divine law recognizes, in the abstract form of legal universality, the right of the individual, while human law does the same but with the law of the community. "The universal ethical essences are thus the substance as universal consciousness and as individual consciousness" (GW 9, p. 249; *PhS*, p. 265).

We must think of the dual face of the ethical structure as consisting of two parts of the same body, once towards the outside, the other towards the inside, where each side contains all of ethics yet keeps the other face of it hidden. If individuals are the reflection of ethics, then each of them, reflecting themselves, can only see one face. Therefore, even those who identify with the public side of the law ignore an aspect, since the other face of the ethical structure will always remain

hidden from their sight. The tragic *pathos* therefore expresses a limited knowledge that is not able to embrace the whole.

In this context, action constitutes the test bed in which ethical subjectivity follows the upheaval and transformation of its own certainty. The antithesis between laws, precisely because it is not recognized, appears to consciousness as a merely factual conflict: “the opposition appears only as an *unfortunate* collision of duty with an actuality utterly devoid of any right [*eine unglückliche Collision der Pflicht nur mit der rechtlosen Wirklichkeit*]” (GW 9, p. 252; *PhS*, p. 269). For this reason, consciousness feels entitled to submit those who observe the other law, and to do so by means of violence or deception.

Every consciousness sees the right (*das Recht*) only on its own side, and the wrong (*das Unrecht*) entirely on the other. The consciousness that belongs to the divine law (Antigone), blames the other for its violent, accidental and human action, while the consciousness of the human law (Creon) contests in its antagonist “the obstinacy and *disobedience* of inward being-for-itself [*den Eigensinn und den Ungehorsam des innerlichen Fürsichseyn*]” (GW 9, p. 252; *PhS*, p. 269). Nevertheless, the action is directed to reality and operates in it, and it is in consequence of the action that the ethical conscience opens up to experience; since reality is in itself different from what consciousness believes it to be, this effective reality has its own strength: the actuality “is in league with the truth against consciousness, and only presents the consciousness what truth is” (GW 9, p. 252; *PhS*, p. 269).

So what happens? The essence of actual reality and subjective conviction are mutually revealed by the act of consciousness itself. By acting, the latter intervenes on the whole that was unknown to it. Therefore, action leads to the *Aufhebung* of the antithesis between the subjective certainty of the law and actual reality. When the outcome of the action presents it with the truth of actual reality – that is, the unity of the laws that it did not yet know – consciousness can no longer escape the experience it used to ignore. It has now acted, and, irrevocably, “the *actuality* of the purpose is the purpose of acting” (GW 9, p. 255; *PhS*, p. 272). At this point, it is experience itself that changes its subjective certainty: whence the fault. Since Antigone paradigmatically expresses the point of view of immediate ethical consciousness, we can say that “the accomplished deed inverts [*verkehrt*] its point of view. What the *accomplishment* itself expresses is that the *ethical* must be *actual*” (GW 9, p. 255; *PhS*, p. 272).

Hence the fulfillment of the dialectic of ethics: while consciousness, acting ethically, believed it was achieving its victory at the expense of the opposite part, the fall of one is *ipso facto* the defeat of both, as they are indivisible. This is why the tragedy exemplifies both the end of the ethical individual and the decline of the entire ethical structure. Antigone does not survive Creon, and

Creon will never again be what he used to be, since he comes out devastated by the tragic story both as a man and as a ruler. We must think both about Creon and about Antigone when Hegel says:³

The achievement of public spirit is therefore transformed into its opposite, and the public spirit learns that its supreme right is supreme wrong and that its victory is instead its own downfall (GW 9, p. 258; *PhS*, p. 275).

Up to a certain point, in the Hegelian rereading, Antigone constitutes the character who, more than any other, expresses the heroic temperament as *pathos*. Not only because she is a character who unilaterally adheres to her law and, driven by it, is consciously determined to act. But also because Antigone wants to protect her law by appealing to a bond that finds its foundation in the nature of kinship. When describing the relationship between brother and sister as the ethical relationship *par excellence*, Hegel is perhaps taking into account the recurrence, in Sophocles' text, of the adjective ὁμαίμος, which means "of the same blood".

In this regard, it could be noted that a brother, for a sister, is an irreplaceable figure – someone who, unlike a spouse or child, cannot be replaced by anyone and whose loss can never be made up for. However, this also applies to a parent. What characterizes the relationship between siblings is that only they are really ὁμαίμοι, because only siblings share the blood of the same mother and the same father.⁴ Antigone's ethical certainty, from this point of view, follows the logic of the *same*. As Nicole Loraux noted, a linguistic *Leitmotiv* that characterizes the entire narrative of the tragedy is the systematic recurrence, in Antigone's expressions, of nouns and adjectives composed of the prefix αὐτο-. Unable to bend as Creon does, preferring to "resist and perish, root and branch" (v. 714), Antigone would like to do everything herself: αὐτή. The logic of the same, whose practice reveals that it is the law of what is only one's own, leads to a "monadic identity" (Loraux 1986, p. 170). After all, it is in the name of αὐτός that all the vicissitudes of Antigone's *genos* seem to be take place, from the incestuous union of the same with the same that gives rise to the four brothers (v. 864) to the fratricidal struggle between Eteocles and Polynices, where one suppresses one's own blood, passing through Oedipus which blinds himself with his own hands.

³ The common view is that Hegel is driven by a theoretical empathy for Creon's ethical *pathos*. For a different interpretation, which insists on the parity of Antigone and Creon, cf. Houlgate 2007, pp. 154–155. Nussbaum also recognizes the relative correctness of Hegel's rereading of *Antigone*: cf. Nussbaum 2001, pp. 63–67.

⁴ The main source of this *topos*, however, is to be traced most likely in a passage by Herodotus *Histories* III, 119, 4–7, where Intaphernes' wife, given the possibility of saving only one of her loved ones, chooses her brother, on grounds that if the parents are dead, husbands and children can be "replaced", whereas a sibling cannot. On this, see Dewald/Kitzinger 2006.

What is paradoxical is that, while obviously wanting to break free from the curse of the Labdacids – the inexorable logic of the same – on which, except a few words from Ismene, Antigone places the veil of silence and oblivion, she is fatally, once again, αὐτόνομος and αὐτόγνωτος, up to the extreme of self-destruction. Therefore, as regards the treatment of immediate ethics, Antigone gives an exemplary account of how ancient subjectivity, characterized by unilateral *pathos*, was not equipped to accept otherness in itself and therefore did not know how to cope with contradiction.

Already in the fourth chapter of his *Phenomenology*, Hegel defines ethics as “The *I* that is *we* and *we* that is *I*” (GW 9, p. 108; *PhS*, p. 108). By that token, it is easy to see that Antigone’s *pathos* adheres, up to a certain point, to the law according to the idea that I is We, but not to the point of being able to face the otherness involved in that We that exceeds the I. Not knowing how to bear the contradiction, ancient subjectivity cannot mediate the ethical structure of the *polis*, which inevitably crumbles down just like Antigone and Creon.

2 Hegel’s *Antigone*. An alternative ending?

So, in a way, Hegel’s interpretation not only seems faithful to the literary *Antigone* but also appears able to bring out some less obvious aspects of Sophocles’ text which, as we have seen, Nicole Loraux unfolded in close reading. There is no doubt, moreover, that Hegel knew the text of the tragedy in depth.⁵ For this reason, it is all the more surprising that Hegel attributed to Antigone the words: “Because we suffer, we acknowledge we have erred [*weil wir leiden, anerkennen wir, daß wir gefehlt*]” (GW 9, p. 255; *PhS*, p. 272).

After mentioning almost literally verses 456–457 (see GW 9, p. 236; *PhS*, p. 251) in the conclusion of the fifth chapter, Hegel here evokes verse 926 of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. In all likelihood his quotation is a Hegelian reformulation, given that there is a clear departure from the literary source. In fact, in her last speech before Creon, the presence of a possible admission of guilt by Antigone is far from obvious. With a tone that refers, *mutatis mutandis*, to Oedipus in *Oedipus in Colonus*, Antigone only says that, if her misfortune were right by the gods, she would accept to suffer and recognize that she had sinned (that is, of having committed ἁμαρτία).

Antigone adds, however, that if it was those who condemn her who were in error (ἁμαρτάνουσι), then she would wish them to suffer no less than what she has unjustly suffered. The final part of this appeal, which ends up being an accusation, must certainly be considered to be her last word. The first part, more concessive, is in fact placed within a hypothetical proposition which only hints

⁵ Rosenkranz recalls that Hegel had translated himself the text of *Antigone* (cf. Rosenkranz 1977, p. 11), even if that translation has not come down to us. On Hegel and translation, see Sell 2002.

at the *possibility* that she may be mistaken (constructed with the conjunction $\epsilon\iota$ in the protasis and $\alpha\upsilon$ in the apodosis, plus the verb in the optative; see vv. 925–926), which seems to constitute a functional rhetorical device to rather enhance the claim of her own reasons.

At this point, it seems appropriate to try to explain why Hegel distances himself from the text of the tragedy: the ambiguity of those verses is dissolved in Hegel's Antigone's unambiguous recognition of guilt, something that the Sophoclean heroine does not admit to anywhere. In fact, Hegel deliberately substitutes the nuanced meaning of a conditional proposition with the definite meaning of a causal proposition, introduced by the conjunction "weil"⁶ and reinforced by the use of the finite indicative mode in place of the concessive and potential nature of the optative. In the final part of a speech in which Antigone paradoxically seems to celebrate her own funeral while still alive, Hegel seems to recognize her merit of having gained the awareness of being conditioned; in other words, Hegel's Antigone is aware of the transformation to which she was exposed by experience.

However, as we have seen, the Hegelian reformulation is mostly far from being alien to the themes that pervade the story of Antigone. For this reason, the surprising outcome of the philosophical Antigone, rather than a misunderstanding of Sophocles' text, seems to be a veritable alternative ending – one that responds to a problem in the philosophical rendition of the tragedy, by which the division between laws, as represented by the male and the female, would be naturalistically determined.

Hegel did perhaps keep in mind the onomastic meaning of the name Antigone – that is to say the *anti-generator* (cf. Bernadete 1999, p. 111) –,⁷ one who *does not generate*, thereby transcending her own sexuality.⁸ Therefore, Hegel's Antigone achieves self-awareness only when, insisting on the conditioned nature of her story, she realizes that she was *generated*, conditioned.⁹ In this sense,

⁶ Hölderlin's translation, published in 1804, which might have been more familiar to Hegel, retains the sense of that conditional: "Doch wenn nun dieses schön ist vor den Göttern / So leiden wir und bitten ab, was wir / Gesündigtet. Wenn aber diese fehlen, / So mögen sie nicht größer Unglück leiden, / Als sie bewirken offenbar an mir" (Hölderlin 1952, p. 243).

⁷ For a reading that intends to critically rethink the insistence on heroic temperament as harsh, isolated and extreme see Cairns 2016.

⁸ The question of the interpretation of *Antigone* with respect to the theme of femininity in general is too big a problem to be approached within this paper. Here I refer the reader at least to the authoritative text by Judith Butler, who, even from the point of view of a gender reading, shows how in the course of the drama Antigone ends up taking the place of all family men (Butler 2000, p. 62). Thus, Hegel's observation that "femininity is the eternal irony of the community" should not be understood in the sense that femininity is immediately such, but in reference to the femininity of Antigone, who overturned her own natural givenness in a way that is anything but irenic. For a discussion of this topic see also Donougho 1989 and Mills 2002. On this topic see also Brezzi 2004, who underlines the presence of a short circuit by which Antigone goes beyond the *oikos* just honoring it. Following the law of the *genos* Antigone becomes representative of an alternative ethics, that is the law of *philia*.

⁹ It should be kept in mind, however, that in addition to the argument I am making here to justify the Hegelian hermeneutical operation on Sophocles' text with respect to the reception of it in the critical literature, verses 925–928 remain controversial and effectively allow for a reassessment of the correctness of the Hegelian interpretation. On this, as regards the commentary to Sophocles' text, see at least Cropp 1997. The author emphasizes that, by virtue of the

therefore, the story of Antigone seems to contribute to an ethical certainty conceived as part of *nature*, breaking the rigid male/female, written law/unwritten law scheme (cf. Garelli 2015, pp. 119–120).

Albeit deviating from the text and at the same time appropriating it, that is, integrating it within the development of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel thus seems to give his Antigone another chance. Admitting that she was wrong with the thematization of her own suffering, the Sophoclean heroine seems to recognize herself here in an order of genesis where experience introduces a new character. In contrast to the curse of the same, which inevitably leads to its repetition, the recognition of a genesis, far from inducing repetition, produces difference.

Escaping the grip of the naturalistic logic of the same, which from blood passes to fate, even in the absence of the powers that would otherwise allow her to re-establish herself positively, Hegel's Antigone finally recognized to be different from what she was at the beginning. In acknowledging the consequences of the events that have changed her certainties, she values her own conditioning and, perhaps, her vulnerability.¹⁰ If this hypothesis were plausible, however, a further problematic horizon would open up. The chance of transformation that Hegel attributes to his Antigone as a philosophical figure, in fact, exceeds the possibilities of ancient subjectivity as he himself seems to conceive it, starting from the one-sidedness that characterizes it and therefore from the inability to cope with otherness.

The inconsistency of the alternative ending of the phenomenological figure that draws inspiration from Antigone is thus at least twofold: on the one hand, in relation to the textual source; on the other, also in relation to the context of the philosophical reformulation, where Hegel intends to show the intrinsic causes of the decline of the *polis* model, also rooted in the type of subjectivity that it produced. At this point, rather than being a simple misunderstanding, the Hegelian reformulation of verses 925–928, and in particular of verse 926, of Sophocles' *Antigone* seems to acquire a peculiar problematic character, as if those words that the *Phenomenology* attributes to the philosophical Antigone stood out, at least for a moment, from the whole context. In that sentence, in fact, the phenomenological Antigone, who is conceived by Hegel as a model of ancient subjectivity, seems to acquire the contours of modern subjectivity, i. e. a subjectivity that has, and dwells in, interiority.¹¹

conformity of Antigone's attitude with the *pathei mathos*, in verses 925–928 Antigone “abandons the self-determining [*autognōtos*] temper to which the Chorus have attributed her ruin [v. 875]” (Cropp 1997, p. 14). For a similar argument, H. S. Harris claims the essential correctness of Hegel's interpretation (Harris 1997, vol. 2, pp. 217–218 and 242).

¹⁰ For a reading that insists on this aspect, cf. Pahl 2012, p. 60ff.

¹¹ On this aspect see Iannelli 2006, which emphasizes the way Antigone, in Hegelian reflection, represents a dawn's light that nevertheless must be left behind. Indeed, within the *polis* the role of subjectivity is perceived as a disturbing element. In other terms, Antigone's shape is an embryonic stage of subjectivity, still unable to deal with intersubjectivity and alterity. Antigone's subjectivity is therefore unfulfilled.

To this content-related consideration one could also add an observation concerning the surprising form in which the anomaly of the philosophical Antigone presents itself: in the phenomenological context in question, in fact, without any use of the verbs of thinking and without quotation marks, Hegel seems to directly give voice to the thoughts of his Antigone. It does not seem out of place to suspect that, in the context of philosophical diegesis, this is a sort of interior monologue, which is not only a narrative device, but also, being the most sophisticated instrument to represent the interiority of a person, the device of modern fiction *par excellence*.¹²

Standing out from the text as an interior monologue, the modernity of the diegesis relative to the last phase of Antigone's phenomenological interpretation seems to be the symptom of modern subjectivity, something that emerges in that situation Hegel *volens nolens*. The Hegelian text might lend itself to this interpretation even without expressly wanting to inoculate the seed of modernity in its Antigone.

At most, we could say that, given this circumstance, while anticipating some features of modern subjectivity, the Hegelian Antigone cannot substantiate itself in it: it is in fact a figure that is still destined to disappear.¹³ Nevertheless, this apparent short circuit, even if not intended, cannot be dismissed as a simple misunderstanding. What is at stake, rather – I think – is the relative surplus of the literary figure with respect to the philosophical discursiveness in which it is inserted. What remains to be investigated is the peculiar logic to which the literary figure responds when it is incorporated into philosophical conceptuality.

I am certainly aware that I risk overinterpreting Hegel here. However, to support my hermeneutical hypothesis it is worthwhile to insist on a possible antidote, intrinsic to the text, whose presence might reveal some degree of concern on Hegel's part with respect to his philosophical use of the literary figure. It is true, in fact, that the *Phenomenology* seems to propose an alternative ending to Sophocles' *Antigone*, relatively incompatible with the literary source. However, we must remember that the figure we are talking about, in the text of the *Phenomenology*, remains nameless. But why would this anonymity be significant? To understand the importance of this circumstance, it should be remembered that Hegel already mentioned the verses of *Antigone* at the end of the fifth chapter, but in that case the evocation of her position was clearly, and not coincidentally, almost literal (GW 9, p. 236; *PhS*, p. 251). It must be emphasized that in the quotation that honors the literary source Hegel mentions the name of Antigone *apertis verbis*, in the body of the text.

¹² K. Pahl, albeit referring to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in general, speaks of a similar aspect: "Hegel uses a philosophical version of the free indirect discourse [...]. Hegel presents the theories (or "certainties") and insights of his protagonist/s by oscillating often imperceptibly between the protagonist's voice and the phenomenologist's voice" (Pahl 2012, p. 11).

¹³ This constitutive "ambiguity [*Zweideutigkeit*]", starting precisely from Hegel's problematic rendition of verses 924–926, is the focus of some pages of Wang 2004, p. 121ff.

Having had no qualms about calling the character with her literary first name when the lines attributed to her are actually her own, the fact that Hegel, in the part that leads to an unfaithful ending, no longer mentions the name of Antigone could show some awareness on the part of the philosopher concerning the instance of justifying the emancipation of the philosophical figure from the literary figure that inspired it.

3 Hegel's rendition of verses 925–926 of Sophocles' *Antigone*. A hermeneutical problem

In the previous paragraph, I have shown the series of problems in the light of which speaking of a simple misunderstanding of Sophocles' *Antigone* does not seem to capture the complex operation that Hegel is carrying out by incorporating the reference to the Sophoclean heroine in the discursiveness of his *Phenomenology*. To conclude this paper, I would like to try to suggest that, to understand this order of problems, it is necessary to keep in mind the unforeseen effects that are produced when a literary figure is incorporated into philosophical discursiveness. My hermeneutical hypothesis therefore intends to enhance three significant passages of the way in which the literary figure interacts with the philosophical reformulation that it inspires.

At first, when the reformulation is faithful, Hegel's thought evidently falls into debt with the aesthetic text, since, by using it, it accepts the literary figure in its own philosophical discursiveness. In a second moment Antigone becomes a figure of thought; in this way, she emancipates herself from the literary source to become a relatively autonomous figure who, while achieving a life of her own, is nevertheless affected by her aesthetic origin. Had it not been for Sophocles' narrative, Hegel could not have thought of that particular, unprecedented figure which is his philosophical Antigone.

From this point of view, it is undeniable that a productive alliance is therefore established between thought and what is not immediately thought. To understand the outcome of this operation without reducing it to a mere misunderstanding, however, it is necessary to keep in mind the possibility of a third, further stage. The Antigone of the *Phenomenology*, after emancipating herself from the literary text to become a figure of thought, seems in fact to live a life of her own also with respect to philosophical discursiveness.

We could perhaps try to understand why Hegel gives this chance to his philosophical Antigone by emphasizing that, after becoming a figure of thought in a modern philosophical discourse, she acquired the features of it. In other words, as the philosophical figure emancipates itself from the literary text from which it comes, even though it bears the marks of its origin, so Antigone as a figure of thought acquires autonomy with respect to the philosophical discourse, exhibiting the features of modernity by which it has been reformulated. In textual terms, this aspect is represented

by the shift between the third person of philosophical discursiveness and the interior monologue that seems to let Antigone speak for herself.

Finally, therefore, I would like to suggest that we should set aside the simple idea of a mistranslation and instead try to understand what happened in that controversial moment of the Hegelian reformulation of *Antigone*. In this sense, the form of this sort of interior monologue seems to play a decisive role. At first, as said, philosophy draws on the literary figure and is in debt with it; at a later time, then, the literary figure becomes a figure of thought, thus emancipating itself from its aesthetic origin while still bearing the signs of it. In a third moment, however, the figure of thought, being still a figure, resists its dilution in the discursive dimension, and ends up exceeding it.

So, the final, controversial step occurs when the philosophical figure, precisely because of its figure-status, emancipates itself from the philosophical narrative while inheriting some of its specific traits, namely the symptoms of modernity. The testimony of this complex combination of reciprocal conditioning between literary aspect and conceptual interpretation lies precisely in the textual eruption of an interior monologue, which feels strange in a philosophical text, and even stranger when placed in the mouth of a character of ancient origin such as Antigone.

The surprising diegetic element that I have tried to highlight shows that, rather than being a misunderstanding, the estranging effect of the Hegelian reformulation responds to the intrinsic logic that is at work when philosophical discursiveness interacts with a literary figure. To conclude, I do not want to give the idea that the literariness of the figure expropriates the philosophical discourse in its legitimate exercise. On the contrary, my analysis, which here cannot proceed any further, was aimed to show how the complex dynamics between the literary figure and the use that Hegel makes of it in the *Phenomenology* are able to enhance the philosophical meaning of the apparent misunderstanding.

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