

## **A dialectical conception of art derived from the genesis of the concept of work in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*<sup>1 2</sup>**

**Márcia Gonçalves**<sup>3</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

Hegel's philosophy of art is not specifically deployed in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. However, it is possible to understand the systematic relationship between many fundamental concepts of this 1807 book and Hegel's mature concept of art. Based on this relationship, three distinct but complementary theses will be advanced: 1. Of the artwork as ideal product of the work of the spirit (*Geist*); 2. Of the symbolism of natural religion as the product of the craftsman's work, as implying a transition to the beauty of art religion; 3. Of the necessity of the oracle as leading to the concrete subjectivity of the dramatic actor.

Even though Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* has no specific chapter dedicated exclusively to art, but only to art religion, we are not to believe that art – especially poetic art – has no meaningful role in this book. On the contrary, Hegel compared his *Phenomenology* with one of the most important poetical artworks of all time: Homer's *Odyssey*. The Spirit's journey in search of self-knowledge, beginning in its estrangement and alienation or loss of self, all the way up to its return into itself, is remindful of Odysseus' tale of losing himself and returning home.

This analogy between the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and an 'absolute epopee' relates to an idea that Schelling develops in an important passage of his *System of Transcendental Idealism*:

That which we call nature is a poem, wrapped in secret and wondrous characters. Were the enigma to be revealed, we would recognize in it the odyssey of the spirit, which, wonderfully deluded, in seeking itself, flees from itself.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Translated by Pedro Rocha de Oliveira.

<sup>3</sup> Adjunct professor of the Department of Philosophy of the State University of Rio de Janeiro. [marciacfgoncalves@superig.com.br](mailto:marciacfgoncalves@superig.com.br).

The enigma of the spirit, unraveled by Hegel in his *Phenomenology*, does not emerge, however, as a revelation of nature, such as projected by Schelling, but displays itself in the secular unfolding of human History. In his *Lessons on Aesthetics*, when discussing the possibility of an odyssey of the spirit as artistic representation, Hegel suggests that what he calls the ‘absolute epopee’ of the spirit can only be affirmed as philosophic speculation proper, which completely supersedes any merely intuitive artistic representation. Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* carries out this speculation as a description of the dialectical movement of evolution of the spirit of the world toward absolute knowledge of itself or the absolute consciousness of the idea, achieving the synthesis between the apparently metaphysical concept of spirit – expressing the essentially necessary freedom of the being that is for-itself – and the immediately phenomenal reality of world history – that expresses the seemingly contingent necessity of time:

(...) the most elevated action of the spirit is world history itself, and this universal act could be elaborated on the battlefield of universal spirit as the absolute epopee, which hero would be the spirit of Man, the ‘humanus’, that elevates and educates itself, up from the obscurity of consciousness, towards world history. Obviously, it is precisely because of this universality that this content would be scarcely individualizable for art.<sup>5</sup>

In this passage, Hegel justifies the inadequacy between the form of artistic expression and the absolute content of philosophy from the standpoint of the very limitation of that form, which intrinsically requires individualization. The absolute can be expressed through the artwork, at most, in the figures of the individualized deities, but never in its own universal, absolute aspect, which, according to Hegel, can only be thought and expressed through conceptual language. This rational – or rather, spiritual – language of the concept, however, often appeals to the description of innumerable concrete figures of the spirit itself, so that its dialectical movement can be made clear. And art, itself a concrete manifestation of spirit in its absolute character, or – as Hegel puts it in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* – as one of the ‘spheres of absolute spirit’, appears once and again throughout the *Phenomenology*.

The main occurrence of such reference to art is directly related to the idea of the artwork, or to the idea of art as a process resulting from spiritual activity, or, better put, a product of the work of spirit itself. Art can be recognized as one of the central themes of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, inasmuch as we do not seek in it simple reference to historical artworks, or a kind of

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<sup>4</sup> SCHELLING, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System des Transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800). In: Schelling, F. W. J.: *Ausgewählte Schriften*: in 6 Bänden. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985. p. 696. v. I.

<sup>5</sup> HEGEL, G. W. F. Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik. (v. III). In: HEGEL, G. W. F.: *Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986. p. 356, v. 15. (Henceforth, *Ästhetik*).

phenomenology of art, but inasmuch as we recognize art as the last and most elevated stage of the process of formation and self-knowledge implicit in the Hegelian concept of work.

This Hegelian concept of work emerges paradigmatically in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and has been the target of numberless commentaries, including Marx's recognition of it as one of Hegel's most important concepts. However, this concept is seldom developed up to its aesthetic implications. What I intend to suggest is that the possibility of pursuing such development may account for the fact that the *Phenomenology* lacks a chapter specifically on art.

### **1 – The artwork as ideal product of the work of spirit**

In the *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, Marx recognizes the Hegelian concept of work as one of the most important contributions of Hegel's idealism, and perhaps as one of the most important philosophical concepts of all time, what, for itself, recommends the reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The importance attributed by Marx to this concept is due to his recognition of its extremely materialist, realist and, above all, dialectical aspect:

What is grand in Hegelian *Phenomenology* is the fact that, therein, Hegel understands the self-generation of man as a process; concretion as opposition; alienation as supersession of alienation; and, finally, that he understand the essence of work and conceives objective man – man as a true being, because a real being – as the result of his *own work*.<sup>6</sup>

The Hegelian conception of work is, as Marx rightly interpreted, directly linked to the idea of self-production or self-formation through production or formation of an objectivity that is revealed, at the same time, conserving in itself the subjectivity of he who generated it. This form of alterity that conserves the subjective property of the agent of work, by whom it was formed, is termed 'property' by Hegel. This concept, far from indicating a simple consumer good, signifies the overcoming of the merely negative relation with objectivity in its natural immediacy, for no other reason than that formation through work, by chiseling and leveling the natural resistance of the immediate exteriority, negates in objectivity only its negativity, that is, its aspect of alterity. Property is not related to the natural desire for consumption, but to the already spiritual satisfaction of self-recognition through the worked product.

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<sup>6</sup> „Das Große an der Hegelschen ‚*Phänomenologie*‘ ist also einmal, daß Hegel die Selbsterzeugung des Menschen als ein Prozeß faßt, die Vergegenständlichung als Entgegenständlichung, die Entäußerung als Aufhebung dieser Entäußerung; daß er also das Wesen der *Arbeit* faßt und den gegenständlichen Menschen, wahren, weil wirklichen Menschen, als Resultat seiner *eigenen Arbeit* begreift“. C.f. *Ökonomische-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844*. In: MARX, Karl; ENGELS, Friedrich. *Werke*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, Berlin (DDR), 1968. p. 547. Erste Teil

Man, however, (...) has needs (*Bedürfnisse*) and desires (*Wünsche*), which satisfaction nature is not capable of fulfilling immediately. To this extent, he needs to attain the necessary self-satisfaction through his own activity; he needs to take possession (*in Besitz nehmen*) of natural things, prepare them, form them, chiseling around every resistance (*Hinderliche*) through his acquired ability, so as to transform the outside in a medium through which he can actualize himself according to all his ends.<sup>7</sup>

The more spirituality the product of work has, that is, the more spiritual is the forming process of which it results, the greater will that recognition be, not only in the intensity of its power and deepness, but in the breadth of its collective reach. Hegel thus discovers a hierarchy in the products of human work which varies according to the degree of spirituality, or their capacity of promoting the recognition of spirit, and this not only on the subjective dimension, but universally as well. This hierarchy relates to an evolutionary process of self-formation of human spirit itself, a process that, according to Hegel, arises from a spontaneous impulse, characteristic of human nature, of bestowing on the outside world the aspect of inner reality. By means of human practical activity, external reality loses its immediate aspect of independence and resistance, the character of being in-itself and a purely external or contingent necessity, to become a means to a higher end: man himself and his spirituality. Man becomes itself, that is, spirit, as he transforms the objective world in a secondary medium for his own existence. In the cultural world, the objectivity of the real world is already subjectivized, spiritualized, humanized, thus losing the character of alien exteriority.

Hegel's evolutionary vision of a process of spontaneous and necessary elevation of the spirit above natural immediacy implies the gradual spiritualization or subjectivation of the very subject-object relation as a parameter for cultural evolution or spiritual absolutization. This means that, for Hegel, the man-nature relationship achieves, little by little, more culturally advanced – that is to say, more spiritualized – forms of negation and supersession. This consists in what Hegel calls 'idealization of nature' by spirit. For Hegel, the most elevated or spiritualized form of this negation, that is, the most effective form of idealization of what is *sensible*, is to be found in the artwork, inasmuch as art already constitutes the first of the spheres of absolute spirit.

The first impulse of the child already carries in itself this practical transformation of external things. The boy throws stones in the river and looks with wonder to the circles that are formed in the water, as a product in which he gains intuition of his own being (*des Seinigen*). This need (*Bedürfnis*) proceeds through multiple manifestations, until it achieves the form of production of itself on external things, such as in the artwork.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> HEGEL. *Ästhetik*, v. I, p. 332.

<sup>8</sup> HEGEL. *Ästhetik*, v. I, p. 51.

It is not by mere hazard that, in the paragraph immediately preceding the chapter on spirit, Hegel discusses the relation between individuality and the product of work (*das Werke*). His intention is to show how it is possible to distinguish a form of product sustaining the internal contradiction between the activity or the work that produces it, or the means through which it came to be, and the will generating it, or its finality, from a true piece of workmanship, or its truth as supersession of its own contradiction, consisting in the unity between doing and being, wanting and implementing, concept and reality. The carrying out of this synthesis is described by Hegel as the transformation of the very conception of the product of work, from a vanishing entity to an entity that perdures as a thing-in-itself (*Sache*), which, unlike the mere thing (*Ding*), is the 'expression of the spiritual', an objectivity that is not alienated from its self-conscious origin, and which, therefore, is free, authentic and universal. This true and universal entity is no longer the product of singular, individual work, but of spirituality in its generic and collective dimension. It reveals itself originally as the ethical substantiality of actuality, historically manifest in the Greek world and in its truly beautiful classical artworks.

The difference between the true beautiful artwork and the product of a yet prosaic work can be understood by appealing to the difference of their degrees of spirituality or, to employ a more concrete expression, the difference among the stages of cultural and ethical development of the people that produced it. This spiritual evolution of the work does not cease with the realization of art, but penetrates and pervades it, differentiating several kinds of artwork. One of the main thesis sustained by Hegel in order to describe this process involves the idea of an evolution in the form of the divine toward ever more anthropomorphic aesthetical manifestations. This thesis, extensively developed by Hegel in his Philosophy of Art, is but sketched in the *Phenomenology*. Here, we are interested only in briefly presenting some more fundamental moments of this evolution, as found in the chapter on art religion, which correspond to important figures of art, in sculpture and theater.

It is interesting to note that the plastic artwork – specifically: the classic sculpture of the Olympic god – is described in the *Aesthetic* as the paradigm of the phenomenon of the beautiful, while, in the *Phenomenology*, it will be rather found to play the role of highlighting the religious phenomenon in the ritual of worship and devotion that takes place within the space of the temple, a phenomenon that also involves two other forms of artistic manifestations: architecture and music or, more specifically, devotional chant. The sculpture is placed in the center of the temple, as a kind of image of the birth of the concrete spirituality of the work in its already anthropomorphized appearance, which reflects the very subjectivity of the artist. The sculpture of the god or the aesthetic phenomena of the sculpted god must therefore be understood in the context of the differentiation between a form of craftsmanship, and the spiritual work of the artist proper.

## **2 – From the symbolism of natural religion as a product of craftsmanship to the beauty of art religion**

In the paragraph of the *Phenomenology* entitled ‘Natural religion’, Hegel discusses the form of religion that, in the *Aesthetic*, corresponds to the form of symbolic art. He thus describes the manifestation of the spirit in this form of religion as what he calls the craftsman (*Wermeister*). The craftsman is inferior to the true artist, exactly because his work – although it corresponds to the essence of work in general, insofar as it ‘produces itself as object’ – is, unlike true artistic work, ‘an instinctive work’, comparable to what bees do when they ‘build (*bauen*) their combs’. Craftsmanship involving the transformation of sensible matter in a form that still maintains the predominance of the aspect of its immediate materiality has as its paradigm the ancient oriental works of architecture, such as the pyramids and the obelisks.

This kind of workmanship, resulting from an unconscious work of the spirit, akin to the ingenious creations of bees, is taken by Hegel as still devoid of spirit, that is: as a work that ‘still has not been, in itself, fulfilled (*erfüllt*) by spirit’. This description of craftsmanship corresponds, with some important differences, to the analysis, deployed by Hegel in his *Philosophy of Art*, of the symbolic artwork, whose meaning or spirit remains in the surface of exteriority, or, what comes to the same, in the inaccessible deepness of an obscure interiority, which, so as to be deciphered, always depends on an interpretation that will give meaning to it, as a symbol that always requires interpretations.

But the exteriority in the products of the craftsman’s work is also given as a division between matter and form, between the material being-in-itself and the ideal being-for-itself of the working self-consciousness. The absence of spirit in the product of work transforms it in an object abstracted from the spiritual activity that formed it, further reducing it to a kind of decorative adornment. However, even the architectonic work tends to evolve from its primitive rectilinear traces to more complex forms that mimetize the nature of organic life. Architecture, therefore, goes on to include, in its originally inorganic and essentially mineral forms, mimetic references to the natural forms of plants and animals. This passage from the inorganic to the organic actually prepares the process of self-recognition of the craftsman in its own work. In the mimetism of the animal form, present, for instance, in the symbolic expression of the hieroglyph, architecture mimetizes, above all, the process of production inherent to this form of being, thus making a reference – albeit indirectly – to the productive process that characterizes the creation of the work of the architect or craftsman.

The architectonic work will achieve its highest degree of spirituality in the shape of the temple, that no more shelters the labyrinthic obscurity of mortuary tombs that aimed to achieve infinity through the conservation of the materiality of the lifeless body, but the vivacity of the cult to immortal divinities that travel in the realm of mortal men and penetrate their souls in ritualistic festivities, just as the bread and the wine penetrate and feed their enraptured bodies. It is with this setting in mind, typical of the pagan cults of ancient Greek religion, that Hegel, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, presents this kind of religion as art religion, following very closely the denomination of 'beautiful religion' or 'religion for free peoples', employed in his first writings. At that time, Hegel's intention was to place this kind of religiosity in a higher place than Judaism and Christianity, both being 'positive' religions, that is, religions that, through their process of institutionalization, lost their spirituality and gave place to externalized, objective rites. In the *Phenomenology*, however, Hegel interprets Christianity as revealed religion exactly because he considers as paramount the accomplishment of the process of anthropomorphization of the divinity that was begun with Greek religion. Christianity spiritualizes what is left of the natural aspects of Greek religion, and transforms, for instance, the bread and wine of the Bacchus and Ceres cults in the body and blood of Christ.

The permanence of natural or sensible aspects in ancient Greek religion is, however, exactly what allows for its being beautiful, or having an essentially artistic side. The Greek temple is, at the same time, the dwelling of the sculptured god and a space of enjoyment for those who frequent it.

The sculpture of the Greek god, its wholly human and, at the same time, ideally beautiful form, accomplishes, according to Hegel, the very essence of the deity which, in the same 'Art religion' chapter of the *Phenomenology*, is defined as the 'unity of the universal existence of nature and of self-conscious spirit which, in its actuality, confronts the former'.<sup>9</sup> The naturality of the Greek deity, expressed in its most perfect form in Greek classic sculpture, is, however, as Hegel points out, already entirely superseded (*aufgehoben*), completely idealized, for the whole of nature is transformed into art or, to quote the *Phenomenology*, 'the universal existence of nature (...) is, in this unity, that element reflected into spirit, nature transfigured by thought and united with self-conscious life.'<sup>10</sup>

The statue, however, possesses the static character that generates an immanent contradiction between its eternal content and its highly sensible and perishable matter. Human form, the answer to the ideal synthesis of beauty that is carefully highlighted in the *Aesthetic*, only has some role in the *Phenomenology* inasmuch as it relates to the result of the process of spiritual recognition of the

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<sup>9</sup> HEGEL, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. A. V. Miller (trans.) New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 428

artist in his artwork and through its artwork. In the *Phenomenology*, the sculpture of the anthropomorphic god is on the highest level of the accomplishment of beauty, and Hegel is found concerned with establishing for this static and concrete artistic manifestation a dynamic point of opposition whose materiality is, in contrast, subtle and evanescent: the phenomenon of music as the devotional chant. The importance of this aesthetic manifestation in dialectical relation to the phenomenon of sculpture is also the capacity of elevating the soul by its plunging into its own interiority. If, when standing before the sculpture, the devotee experiences the feeling of external and concrete presence of the god, through chant, on the contrary, he is driven inward, at the same time elevating himself, transcending of the very space of the temple, promoting what Hegel calls the purification of the soul. This process of interiorization present in the cult already points towards the transformation of the temple, or of the divine abode of architectonic exteriority, in the inwardness of self-consciousness itself. Hegel poetically describes this process of interiorization as part of art religion:

Self-consciousness, then, comes forth from the cult satisfied in its essence, and the god enters into it as into its habitation. This habitation is, by itself, the night of substance or its pure individuality, but no longer the tense individuality of the artist, an individuality which has not yet reconciled itself with its essence that is in process of becoming *objective*; it is the satisfied night [of substance] which has its ‘pathos’ within it and is not in need of anything, because it returns from intuition, from the objectivity that has been superseded (*aufgehoben*). This ‘pathos’ is, by itself, the being of the risen sun, but a being which has now ‘set’ itself within itself, and has its ‘setting’ or going-down, i.e. self-consciousness – and hence existence and actuality – within itself.<sup>11</sup>

This unity between the objective and the subjective carried out in the cult, yet under the shape of an ‘objective certainty’ or ‘enjoyed certainty’ of the god, is also described by Hegel, in the *Phenomenology*, as the mystery of the mystic itself, the mystery of the transubstantiation of a substance that has not yet acquired its true universality, the mystery of Bacchic ecstasy and enthusiasm, which drunkenness needs, according to Hegel, to ‘calm itself down’ in the artwork that exists as its opposite given in objectivity and aestheticity in the sculpture of the god. There is, however, a synthesis between these two poles of artistic-religious manifestation, between the static calm of the sculptured image of the anthropomorphic god and the dynamics of Dionysiac enthusiasm generated by the drunkenness of wine, music and dance. What is at stake is the transformation of this ritual in a truly artistic phenomenon: drama. Drama allows for the beautiful bodiliness of the statue to gain the dynamic of the living body of the actor that incarnates his

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<sup>10</sup> Idem.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 436



character, and inconsistent Dionysiac drunkenness gives place to the Apollonic clarity of poetry. In fact, the true synthesis resulting from the dialectic present in the pagan cult of beautiful religion is, according to Hegel, the very phenomenon of language and, more specifically, of language in its properly aesthetic form, poetic language:

The perfect element in which inwardness is just as external as externality is inward is once again speech; but it is neither the speech of the Oracle, wholly contingent and individual as regards its content, nor the emotional hymn sung in praise of the individual god, nor again is it the meaningless stammer of Bacchic frenzy.<sup>12</sup>

The oracle is, indeed, a kind of prototype for poetical language, and is the beginning of a process that spans from natural imagination to the objective clarity of epic poetry, culminating in the dramatic representation of Greek tragedy. But the oracle will also be represented in this last and more perfected form of aesthetic manifestation of the Greek spirit. The tragic hero, be it Antigone or Oedipus, seeks to integrate knowledge with action, but the search for self-knowledge is still represented by an act of seeking the oracle. The oracle is, therefore, the great emblem of this form of immediate ethicity.

### **3 – From the necessity of the oracle to the concrete subjectivity of the drama actor**

As Hegel elucidates in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the oracle is the ‘language of god himself, which is the spirit of the ethical people’. But inasmuch as the ethicity of the Greeks is still something immediate, and subjectivity has not achieved a sufficient level of inwardness and reflection, universal truth expressed by the oracle is still perceived as an ‘alien speech’ or the speech of an ‘alien thinking’<sup>13</sup>, as a speech that still lacks clarity. However, as Hegel emphasizes, in this passage, the degree of contingency in the determination of an action through the oracle is no different from that of a determination founded only in a particular arbitrary individuality: ‘the contingent is something that is not self-possessed and is alien, and therefore the ethical consciousness lets itself settle such matters, too, as by a throw of the dice’.<sup>14</sup>

Only a concrete subjectivity, and not an abstract and contingent subjectivity will not be able to supersede this still external determination of the oracle, which Hegel, in the *Phenomenology*, still

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 439

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 431

<sup>14</sup> Idem.

calls 'abstract artwork'. In his *Philosophy of History*, Hegel clearly shows the limits of Greek democracy and ethnicity, in which, for instance, slavery is permitted, insofar as subjectivity and self-consciousness are restricted only to certain individuals. The Greeks still lack, in their ethical immediacy, a form of subjectivity, as a 'moral consciousness' (*Gewissen*) or morality. Their ethnicity and their freedom consist only in following the *ethos* or customs of living for the whole, the individual being dispensed from isolating himself in the process of self-reflection of a subjective will.<sup>15</sup> This immediate ethnicity, that defines the so-called Greek democracy, perfectly admits, for this reason, the practice of consulting with the oracle, as a stand-in for a particular subjective will:

Oracles are linked to democracy, such as it existed in Greece. Deciding from oneself involves a concrete subjectivity of will, which is determined by prevalent motives. The Greeks still lacked this force of the same. (...) With the evolution of democracy, we see how, in important situations, the oracles are no longer consulted, but the singular opinions of the representatives of the people are decisively carried out.<sup>16</sup>

This advance in Greek democracy, in the form of effective participation of the citizens in a pantheon, is given concurrently with the development of artistic production as a 'spiritual artwork', which begins the process of the return of divine essence in self-consciousness. For Hegel, poetry, as essentially spiritual work, is the first not only to explain what is natural, but to concretely actualize divine content, as self-conscious subjectivity. For art initiates the process of spiritual self-consciousness inasmuch as the artwork – especially poetry – is no longer an alien and contingent language, but the 'true self-conscious existence'<sup>17</sup>. This consciousness begins when the divine is recognized as content and, therefore, as result of poetic creation itself.

Art deals with the spirit in its concrete existence, be it as imagined individuality or as objectively represented in the figure of the hero, be it as the imagining individuality of the poet. The two extremes correspond exactly to the evolution peculiar to the spirit – described by Hegel mainly in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* – toward self-knowledge, that is: free subjectivity.

The true moment of synthesis between the two moments is accomplished in theater, insofar as the actor recreates the creation of the poet, incorporating, at the same time, the character of the role being played, despite the immediate appearance of his own personality. Hegel, who was known as a great lover of drama, recognizes acting as an art by itself:

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Hegel, G. W. F. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. In: Hegel, G. W. F. *Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986. p. 308. v. 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 310s.

<sup>17</sup> HEGEL, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. A. V. Miller (trans.) New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 432

The hero is himself the speaker, and the performance displays to the audience – who are also spectators – *self-conscious* human beings who *know* their rights and purposes, the power and the will of their specific nature and know how to *assert* them. They are artists, who do not express with unconscious naturalness and naivety the external aspects of their resolves and enterprises, as happens in the language accompanying ordinary actions in actual life; on the contrary, they give utterance to the inner essence, they prove the rightness of their action, and the ‘pathos’ which moves them is soberly asserted and definitely expressed in its universal individuality, free from the accidents of circumstance and personal idiosyncrasies. Lastly, these characters *exist* as actual human beings who impersonate the heroes and portray them, not in the form of a narrative, but in the actual speech of the actors themselves.<sup>18</sup>

In Hegel’s most important work, in which the philosophic language of the concept is employed to describe the absolute epopee of the spirit, and the actuality or phenomenality of this spirit in the world and in history is emphasized, no art form but drama could occupy this place of synthesis, exactly because drama is an aesthetical phenomenon of actualization not only of poetry, but also of painting, music and sculpture, each of which are transformed in a living unity that repeats life itself in an ideal form. In the *Aesthetic*, this synthesis is given in many moments, but drama is always described as the end of a movement of actualization of self-conscious individuality.

In his Philosophy of Art, Hegel will develop this idea, characterizing modern drama as the aesthetical phenomena in which the process of actualization of subjectivity is finally achieved, which began with Greek tragedy. This last represents, however, the loss of a parameter of unification between the individual and ethical substance. As far as modernity is concerned, ethnicity has wholly taken the place of morality. Tragic action more often than not incurs in the pure contingency of chance, no longer in the certainty of an ethical necessity. However, the loss of this ethical necessity has transformed the modern individual in a free subject, a subject that finds himself alone with his own self-consciousness, without gods nor temples, with no more than the open sky over his own subjective will. The image of the ruined temple that surrounds the modern drama actor is employed poetically by Hegel in his Philosophy of Art to characterize this new form of modern subjectivity. A subjectivity that lost a mask which once had approached it to the deity incarnated in the statue. A subjectivity that has been deprived of the background of ethical substance represented in Antiquity by the tragic chorus. A subjectivity whose main tragedy and whose main destiny is the solitude of its own freedom.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 444