

Hegel's confused concept of tragic

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Abstract:

The ancient Greek tragedy is seen by Hegel as opposed to the modern one in both method and quality. While the ancient tragedy is a lesson for every spectator, the modern one stands as a sign of the decay of the modern human individual. This dichotomy seems to be obvious only for the German philosopher since his arguments are less a sign of logic and reason and more a proof of some innate aversion towards the 19th century in which he lives. The key to interpret Hegel's theory on tragedy resides in an analysis of Hegel's psychic and not in his discourse.

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Hegel's critics are, without a doubt, as many and as loud as his supporters. If some of them – his contemporaries – were criticizing his obscurantism or his political ideas from a perspective regarding mostly his biography than the actual work (as is the case of Nietzsche or, more obviously, Schopenhauer and his manifest animosity towards his eternal rival of Berlin's academic environment), modern critics appeal to some anachronous aspects of the Hegelian system. Lange, Santayana or Popper (following Kirkegaard), for example, have maintained a severe critique of the totalitarian tendencies which can be drawn from Hegel's declared affinity with an absolutist state (inspired from early 19th century Prussia), accusing him of making room for the 20th century tyrannies. The epistemological side of hegelianism was also a subject of intense critique during the last century; Gauss, for instance, sustained that "Hegel's insanities from his doctoral thesis, where he criticizes Newton and puts a question mark on the utility of the endeavour to find new planets are samples of wisdom if one compares them with his later remarks" [D'Hondt 1998, 58]. Finally, the 20th century, especially in its second half, was the witness of an anti-hegelian wave started from the ever accused obscurantism and from the discordance with the tendencies of the analytical philosophy. It is no wonder that the most famous names of this kind of philosophy (starting from Russell, Wittgenstein, Moore, Ayer, The Vienna Circle, but also Heidegger or Derrida) repeatedly accused the lack of substance and the confusing style in Hegel's writings. Above this, a major fault was considered to be the German philosopher's obsession to unveil the principles of the dialectical method in every aspect which drew his attention. One of the most radical accuses towards Hegel is made by Jung who associates him with pure mental disease: "a philosophy like that of Hegel's is an auto-revelation of the psychic background and, philosophically speaking, a presumption. From a psychological point of view it is the equal of an invasion from the Unconscious. Hegel's strange language sustains this point of view; is very similar to the megalomaniac language of schizophrenics which use terrific words, charmed to reduce the transcendent to a subjective shape, to give banalities the appeal of novelty or to mystify the common places