

**Ph. D. thesis**

***In the wake of Apollo and Dike***

*hermeneutical ideas about Greek tragedy  
in the aspect of Hegel's interpretations*

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## I. Project and aims

My doctoral work's main objective is to build up a theory based on a re-interpretation of conception found in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* and *Lectures on Philosophy of Art*. According to his intentions of the speculative philosophy (of art) my conclusions can be used adequately and productively for the philosophical analysis of a Greek tragedy: Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.

So this dissertation has two intentions: 1. my interpretation which prepares the analysis of the tragedy has to do an expedient, hermeneutical *reconstruction* of Hegel's speculative-phenomenological conception, which establishes his philosophy of art. 2. Testing the functionality of this conceptual structure (as an interim result) on *Oresteia*. (Such a trial of the interpretation of the Tragedy will confirm the conclusions of the 1<sup>st</sup> phase too.)

This way I have tried to shake up and actualize Hegel's most criticized and passed for unproductive arguments on aesthetics. I've tried to demonstrate the implicit potential of his arguments' applicability by means of some popular problems of the present day, for example the layered relation between consciousness and artwork. Meanwhile I have aspired to contribute some vividness to this discussion by means of throwing a new light upon the concept of tragedy which stands in the centre of Hegel's aesthetics.

## II. Methodological abstract

### *II/1. Methodological comments for the aim 1.*

Hegel himself – like Aristotle – takes the cultural relevant (i.e. function) of art for its only and proper mission. According to Hegel's conception, artworks are necessary for the conscious and social advance of individuals in European culture; therefore the art is a favoured area of human improvement and self-knowledge. In the *general part* of my dissertation I have tried to find some minor, in many cases *microscopic structural moments* of this function. Instead of well-known aesthetical macro problems like the historical hierarchy of the branches of art or the end of the art I have concentrated on limited problems, for example each-other-constituent, inverse relations between consciousness and artworks, or the semantical meshwork beneath Hegel's word: "ideal".

I have approached the interpretation of Hegel's speculative aesthetics' keywords *in two way*, two well-defined methodological platforms at the same time.

The textual basis of the first way is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). In the course of its recapitulation I have documented the natural, word-constitutive consciousness' activity, while the universal speculativity of word (language) has been much in evidence. My argumentation has used Hegel's other writings, and led to an analysis of his aesthetical lectures. My train of thought has shown the main property of Hegel's

conceptual construction: *the structural identity and speculative analogy of ontological-phenomenological and aesthetical levels.*

Two leading theoretician of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's hermeneutics, Heidegger and Gadamer grant basis for both directions. They knew the Hegelian thinking thoroughly. Using their direct and indirect Hegel-interpretations, my train of thought based on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has got a hermeneutical tinge from its first step. My explanation could make a use of not only this two thinker's consequences, but could reach and get newer perspectives and inspirations from the fact that the arts have a leading role in the 20<sup>th</sup> century's hermeneutics.

Both ways have been linked to a third one: using the adequate contemporary, Hungarian and German secondary literature on Hegel, Heidegger and Gadamer has been very helpful by reconciling and explaining these approaches.

### *II/1. Methodological comments for aim 2.*

In the *specific part* of my dissertation I have tested the validity of my elaborated hermeneutical reconstruction about Hegel's conception of tragedy. For this philosophical analysis I have chosen a poem, the *Oresteia*. Choosing this tragedy and an experimental method was not unsystematic: it completely follows the methodological expectations of Hegel's speculative philosophy, since its most fundamental motive is an orientation for practice. Hegel calls only thinking philosophical, which has reference to a concrete phenomenon in time and space. I have chosen Aeschylus' trilogy, because it appears in Hegel's own theory, and I'm convinced that the closeness of Greek tragedy and (speculative) philosophy accentuated by Hegel is remarkably transparent in the case of this artwork.

I first have proved the uncertainness of a trivial-offered ethical interpretation so to make way for a speculative-hermeneutical approach of the trilogy. The base of my argumentation is the ignoration of the Christian idea of guilt in the case of Greek tragedy. Hegel and Heidegger paid attention to this problem too. Hereupon a detailed textual comparison of the conceptual structure of speculative philosophy and the structure of *Oresteia* has come. As a result of this, the text of the trilogy has appeared as an intensive movement, as a quasi-philosophy, which can clear its own hyperbolic way towards the philosophy itself.

### *II/3. Methodological comments for explaining*

On behalf of *interdisciplinarity*, the main requirements of my dissertation's explanation are unambiguousness and unbranchment, to turn Hegel's (and Heidegger's) notoriously complex and difficult terminology more communicable – without losing essential thought contents. I hope my dissertation can enrich the Hungarian literature on this topic this way and can claim some attention of other related areas of science.

### III. Results

#### III/1. Aesthetical reconstruction of Hegel's conception of speculativity

##### a) Platform: the consciousness

In my work I have taken a *compact and expedient recapitulation and summary* of Hegel's idea of speculativity in hand. I've started it from the inner dynamism of consciousness-object relation, which is included always in a simple word i.e. the first and general form of idea. Understanding the primary mechanism of human experience has a cardinal importance to take up Hegel's methodological position. His orientation declares the inseparableness and each-other-determination of consciousness and object (subjectum and objectum) before any kind of philosophical description. According to Hegel, reality is a generic unified, dynamic meshwork of relations, which has the subjectum and objectum inside of itself as moments, but they do not exist (for example: there's not any real, punctiform consciousness, isolated from phenomena). These relations are preserved, get extension and importance in words and in the meshwork of concepts (in conclusions etc.), in accordance with all levels of the structure of meshwork. It's indispensable to know Hegel's speculative conception of reality for the analysis of his conception of Greek tragedy, because Hegel himself take his foundational postulates' knowing for granted by examinations of artworks. His conception uncovers connections between consciousness and artwork as a starting point.

Hegel presents a process in his analysis, which moves on lingual field, starts from natural consciousness and leads to self-consciousness. During this "from-himself-to-other(person, object, artwork etc.)-and-back" movement the consciousness experiences an other as its own counterpart. Hegel calls this diverging-acquiring movement the fundament of human life. In this movement the conceptuality of consciousness i.e. its (self-)knowledge is getting more complex. By reconstruction of his philosophy of art I have laid emphasis on this liveliness and connected to the abstract concept of Hegel's speculativity. Thus the *special relation between consciousness and artwork* and the cultural function of arts can get a better elucidation. The human diverging-acquiring essence is presented in a (conceptual) relation within an artwork to the consciousness' sight, namely in two aspects: 1. The immanent content of human artwork presents the human being per definitionem as "world-constitutive". 2. When consciousness confronts this sense, it has to change its preconceptions. So it is active as a diverging-acquiring, and awake to the realization of this mechanism while confronted an artwork.

##### b) Aesthetical moments of speculativity

Hegel's conception of reality has a close connection with his expecting that any philosophical description has to express the thing itself (die Sache selbst). That is to say we have to examine the objects as a speculative, conceptual system of relations. Since this requirement is fully valid for Hegel's philosophy of art I have tried to correspond to

this aspect and reveal *the speculative environs of artwork*. Hegel's idea of *ideal* has helped me in this, because he speaks about the generic unity of moments of artwork.

One cardinal proposition of the Hegelian aesthetic is that that any artwork has to have human-form as the only suitable form. This excludes the simple imitation of the nature. For this reason it is important to import Hegel's sharp conclusions about *artist* into the discussion of relation between consciousness and artwork. The artist is not an enlightened genius but he/she is always on a by-pass road to him/herself during his/her work, and meet his/her human diverging-acquiring essence. Therefore an artwork does not come into being just like something anthropomorphic, in the meaning of a visible human form. The essence of a human artwork lies rather beneath that that an artwork can uncover any segment of the ambient world, meanwhile the human moments of the represented things remain watchable and understandable.

The next important momentum of the artwork's speculative environs is the system of relations in the tragedy's immanent content, i.e. in its story. In Hegel's conception of Greek tragedy there is an analogy between the abstract description of speculativity and the fight of the old and new Greek gods. My dissertation has apprehended and accentuated this analogy. According to that I have tried to expose that in Hegel's introduction summarized speculativity works same way as the speculativity in environs of the artwork. But the artwork itself demonstrates this working more expressive and concrete. In a Greek tragedy there's an each-other-constituent conflict between old and new gods. By this conflict the discursive gods of Olympus fight out and gain their form progressively. Form-taking means not only sensory changing but lingual enrichment, shifting to *logos* during the deepening of the tragedy's conceptual world.

In my doctoral work I have gave attention to the central concept of the tragedy – the *pathos*. I have made footnotes to the difference of Greek and modern individuality in the course of interpretation of the speculativity in pathos. Besides in relation to artwork I've distinguished the ontological aspect from the ontic one. In a Greek tragedy persons connect to the conflict of gods through pathos. My interpretation about pathos has used Hegel's explanation of the relationship of consciousness-object and consciousness-artwork, when when the problem of extraordinary is taken into consideration. This word – pathos – summarizes the strained, dialogic relation between consciousness and artwork on a next conceptual level.

Hegel thematises the concurrence of consciousness and artwork in his conception of *extraordinary* and astonishment. By reconstruction of his conception about Greek tragedy, as a last step I have compared the Hegelian concept of extraordinarity with Heidegger's same topic on writings. Both bring the extraordinarity into connection with amazement, desperation and uncertainty, but because of their different terminology, Heidegger's texts can be used for Hegel's theses productively. The interpretation of Heidegger's writings can lay the foundation for additional comments at the end of my dissertation too. My analysis of extraordinarity has taken to the Heideggerian translation of the Greek concept of godliness. The sections about goddess Artemis have led on to the *specific part*, to the concrete philosophical approaching to *Oresteia*.

### III/2. The appear of the speculativity in Oresteia

According to the Hegelian and Heideggerian instructions my dissertation has performed a *critic of an ethical interpretation* before the main analysis of the trilogy. In this way there can not be any psychological pragmatic method, which divides actors into groups of “good” and “evil”, then cast blame on them. On the one hand parties in opposition always refer to murders’ righteousness (Dike) wholeheartedly. On the other hand the causality of inducements leads out from the story of the tragedy and perishes in the mystery of the myth.

In Hegel’s speculative perspective the *substantial state of world* grants the frame of *Oresteia*. The state of world is a general property, which contains the concrete requirement of the consciousness’ connections in the case of the tragedy. My dissertation has revealed how the substantial state surrounds the tragedy. This surroundness guarantees that consciousness (actors, viewers etc.) around the artwork can take place in their surrounding world and move in real relations all along, instead of floating in vacuum. The state of world expresses the requirements of Hegel’s speculativity on the conceptual level of the tragedy. But it has still a very abstract meaning; it can’t be apprehended by direct means before the story unravels itself. Similarly to the incipient declaration of speculativity it grants only the framework and possibility of the tragedy.

Inside this framework every tragedy begins with a *situation*, because any person in its surroundings lives in a concrete world, in temporal and spatial relations, in a meshwork of situations. The fate of Atreus’ dynasty determinates the situation in *Oresteia*. My dissertation has demonstrated that the oracle-god Phoebus Apollo set the trilogy’s first situation in motion through his twin sister Artemis: it’s the first common word, his first prophecy. By the analysis of this famous prophecy, which requires Iphigenia’s sacrifice, light has been thrown on the speculative conflict of Apollo and Dike and its moments: the interdependence of gods, the pathos of protagonists, Agamemnon’s extreme despair, and the murder which preserves the conflict.

After Agamemnon’s death the meshwork of the situations take shape according to Apollo’s newer prophecies. 1. While Phoebus’ prophecies are getting more discursive and understandable, Dike is trying to prevent his rise. 2. Persons in the tragedy turn against each other more violently and their ontological despair is getting more intensified. 3. By the lingual deepening of the tragedy it becomes brighter: the more intensified the opposition of gods and persons the more obvious their interdependence and the speculative each-other-determination.

In the last part of my dissertation I have demonstrated the link between the Greek tragedy and the speculative philosophy, using the end of the trilogy, *The Eumenides*. Here, at the end of the cosmic contest, the form-finder shining Apollo gains his true form through taking Dike’s ancient, equalizing essence – and he disappears at the moment of his conceptual accomplishment. For this reason, in my interpretation *Oresteia* represents the speculativity of (human) being meanwhile it comes very close to philosophy. The whole trilogy reveals this speculativity first in form of god Apollo. It’s referring back itself

continually, it's an endless beginning, a being-in-time which turn itself timeless (conceptual) continually. It corresponds to the philosophical definition of speculativity, but on the expressive level of arts. My dissertation has accentuated that *the same* is demonstrated on both level. Hegel calls all this the constantly realized idea, or else the essential movement of spirit.

### *III/3. Conclusion*

Resulting and in harmony with the above, the consciousness and the object, the idea, the consciousness and the artwork, the immanent contents and lingual layering of tragedies, as well as the action of the chosen work, *Oresteia*, stand out from the reality of the appeared speculative idea, the complex sense of the ideal, the artwork itself, *the reality of artwork*. Beyond the conceptual layering of the ideal, my dissertation has a main result: according to Hegel's conceptual method, it can make clear the structural unity of different explication levels (general part, special parts) and the overlapping of the levels of argumentation. My interpretation's method about the *Oresteia* is productive because it has led to newer understandings, relating to the tragedy's "message", moreover to Apollo's and Dike's figure. Otherwise it has acknowledged my reconstruction of Hegel's aesthetical conception.

### *III/4. Complement: the Oresteia in aspect of Heidegger*

At the end of my dissertation I have tried to re-interpret Apollo schematic setting out from several Heideggerian concepts. According to them Apollo seems to brake off the conflict, the polemos, which is the centre of the tragedy. The god Apollo grants victory for techne over dike and lets the man (Orestes) back to the daily family life. In this perspective *Oresteia* seems to terminate itself again, that can be interpreted as a document of the historical forgetting of being, which has started with the ancient Greek thinking. My theoretical complement has tried to prove the productivity of Heidegger's concepts and cleared the way for other similar interpretations.

## Publications and conferences

Zoltán Andrejka

### Articles related to the thesis

*A mitikus tudat térfogalmaihoz*, In: Partium 2005 winter ed., Nyíregyháza, 65-69.

*Eumeniszek – a tragédia tragédiája*, In: Világosság 2006/4., Budapest, 6-9.

*Tragédia és filozófia viszonya Hegel gondolkodásában*, In: Loboczy, János (ed.): *Költészet és gondolkodás*, Líceum Press, Eger, 2007, 58-72.

Engelhard, Kristina: *Az egyedi szubjektum kanti elméletének kritikája Hegel gyakorlati filozófiájában*, In: Kellék 33-34., Kolozsvár-Nagyvárad-Szeged, 2007, 145-164.  
(translation from German)

Adolphi, Rainer: *Az individuumok „mi”-világa. Hegel és Max Weber a modern szubjektivitás társadalmi orientációjáról*. In: Kellék 33-34., Kolozsvár-Nagyvárad-Szeged, 2007, 191-216.  
(translation from German)

*A szubsztanciális állapot és a szituáció jelentősége a hegeli tragédiakoncepcióban*. In: Horváth, Lajos – Valastyán, Tamás (ed.): *A művészetektől a tudományokig – és vissza*, Volume of Essays, Kossuth University Press, Debrecen (under publication)

Krivánik, Dániel – Andrejka, Zoltán: *Tudat és mű*, In: Partium, Nyíregyháza (under publication)

### Conferences

21<sup>st</sup> November 2008 (Debrecen): oral presentation on the conference of István Hatvani Special College. Title: *The antihypnotic Hypnos*.

25<sup>th</sup> May 2007 (Debrecen): oral presentation on the PhD conference ‘Civic competences – education, philosophy’. Title: *The conservative concept of the (political) culture – Scruton and Hegel*.

9-10<sup>th</sup> November 2006 (Eger): oral presentation on the scientific conference ‘Poetry and thinking’. Title: *The relationship of tragedy and philosophy in Hegel’s thinking*.

28<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 (Debrecen): abstract on the international scientific conference ‘Hegel’s Theory of individuality’. Title of the abstract: *Individuality in the meeting with an artwork in Hegel’s aesthetical lectures 1823*.

15-17<sup>th</sup> April 2003 (Debrecen): oral presentation on the XXVI<sup>th</sup> OTDK conference’s Sociology Section. (III<sup>rd</sup> award). Title: *Mysteries of Eleusis – Community and individuum in the young Hegel’s interpretation of myth*.