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**Author (s):** S.Shehzad Noor,Dr Samina

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## Why A Greek Fictional Character “Antigone” Is Hegel’s Particular Example of Womanhood?

\*S. Shehzad Noor

\*\*Dr. Samina

### Abstract:

*Antigone, a Greek fictional character appears in the writings of Hegel as a genuine example of womanhood instead of a factual woman. Focusing on this theme, this article exhibits that the attributes/ role of Antigone qualify(ies) her to take priority over factual women, whenever Hegel mentions women in a particular sense. Her name is brought up in Hegel’s works on politics, phenomenology, and poetry highlighting the experience of her struggle, self-identity, and tragedy, therefore, the structure of the article follows correspondingly, locating her in the various sections of these works: Antigone is attributed as the symbol of “family piety” in politics, as a “sister” in phenomenology and as she honors the attributes of “family piety” and “sister-brother relation”, the “tragic resolution” of her role is staged as suicide/ fate in poetry. After exhibiting Antigone’s character in Hegel’s works, this article concludes its significance by addressing the question: Why a Greek fictional character instead of a factual woman is Hegel’s particular example of womanhood?*

**Keywords:** *Hegel, Antigone, Family piety, Sister, Tragedy, Suicide, Destiny.*

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\*visiting lecturer at various departments in the University of Peshawar E-mail:  
[shehzadnoor83@gmail.com](mailto:shehzadnoor83@gmail.com).

\*\* Lecturer/ permanent faculty member at the Department of Philosophy  
University of Peshawar  
E-mail: [saminafridi@uop.edu.pk](mailto:saminafridi@uop.edu.pk).

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## Introduction:

In Sophocles’ play of the same name, Antigone appears in three scenes, one is with her sister, Ismene, regarding the death and burial of both their brothers who battled each other, the second scene is with the King of the city, Creon, regarding her defiance against his edict of denying a proper burial to one of the two brothers, and finally, the last scene is before the people of the city, the chorus, regarding her imprisonment in a rocky cave for the burial of one of her brother. Hence, whether the dialogue is between two family members (sisters), a family member (sister) and the ruling king of the city, or a princess and the people of the city, the issue revolves around a kin’s burial which, on the one hand as a divine law must be upheld and on the other, must be refused as a state law. (Winnington-Ingram, 1980, pp. 118; 120-121; 137)

Antigone argues,

- with Ismene, her sister accuses her of dishonoring the gods of the underworld and the rights of dead family members. (Winnington-Ingram, 1980, p. 121)
- with Creon, the present king of the city, she justifies the burial of her brother claiming it to be her duty to uphold the unwritten laws which require proper burial of family members against his edict, forbidding such an action. (Winnington-Ingram, 1980, pp. 128; 130-131)
- with the chorus, the people of the city, she calls them to hear her and witness her imprisonment in a rocky cave that shall become her grave, furthermore, since this is her last sight of sunlight, she will die unwedded in a tomb prison - a virgin bride of death. (Winnington-Ingram, 1980, p. 134; 140)

Hegel admires her character, so much so, that he includes her name whenever womanhood is to be mentioned in the particular because of her attributes/ role throughout the play. To bring to light an account of her admired attributes/ role, general concepts in Hegel’s writings are to be explained first, followed by to those locations within them where Antigone is mentioned by name. The structure of the analysis is as follows:

1. PHILOSOPHY of RIGHT: What is ethical life? What is family and marriage? How is Antigone mentioned in marriage or ethical life?
2. PHENOMENOLOGY of SPIRIT: What is spirit? What is the ethical world and action? How is Antigone mentioned in human/ divine law and knowledge?
3. AESTHETICS: What is dramatic poetry? What is tragedy? How is Antigone mentioned in the tragedy?

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Presented in the questions above, Antigone's image of womanhood arises in Hegel’s writings on politics, phenomenology, and poetry.

The discipline of politics conveys its subject matter identifying/ differing with the human freedom at hand in the social whole, of phenomenology, in the study of the experience of consciousness, and of poetry, in language.

Particularly regarding these disciplines, Antigone appears in the sections on ethical life (social whole), spirit (human nature), and dramatic poetry (action in words), respectively.

Ethical life (social whole) expresses collective relationships among human beings structured within the family, civil society, and state; spirit (human nature) expresses manifestation of the whole experience of the social world, supernatural religion, and speculative philosophy; dramatic poetry (action in words) expresses a specific resolution in the finale after a collision between characters with specific aims.

Within these sections, Antigone is situated

1. in the simple and natural structure of ethical life (social whole) which is described as family (whose married members are bound in love), where women are associated with the virtue of family piety,
2. in the rudimentary manifestation of spirit (human nature) which is described as an unreflective life of individuals (e.g. sisters) who follow customs and traditions (human/ divine law and knowledge), especially of the ancient Greek family and city-state.
3. in the genre of dramatic poetry (action in words) whose resolution is described as tragedy i.e. a fateful doom reached due to one-sided aims of hostile characters,

Hegel’s presentation of Antigone in all three areas is as follows:

- HEGEL’S ANTIGONE IN THE POLITICS:

What is ethical life?

*“Ethical life is the concept of freedom developed into the existing world and the nature of self-consciousness.”* (Hegel, 1978, p. 105) Ethical life means selfhood unites with the world it finds itself in, instead of rebelling against it, and thus attains freedom. (Hegel, 1978, p. 346) Freedom, comprising of the ‘circle’ of laws and institutions, orders an individual’s life. (Hegel, 1978, p. 105; 259)

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This ‘circle’ that orders and regulates an individual’s life is more real than nature. Nature has a worth as being and becoming. Humans are concerned with nature-as-being and study it as God’s creation, symbolic of His rational proposal and put it in writing i.e. philosophy of nature. Humans adapt to deal with/ use nature-as-becoming which, possessing specific innate qualities, serves their purpose; if humans “*use a tool or derive water power from a stream*”, the tool’s use and the stream’s power can only be known instead of terminated if it to serve a specific purpose. Nature is dependent in the former (being) relation to humans and seems independent in the latter (becoming). According to Hegel, the authority of laws and institutions is higher than nature’s because of their one-sided relation: “*They exist solely for mind and their being is inseparable from the mentality of those whose laws and institutions they are*”. (Hegel, 1978, pp. 105-06; 348-49) What individuality, particularity, and universality are to mind, family, civil society and state are to ethical life in organizational form. (Hegel, 1978, p. 350) Education makes humans habitual and accustomed to intellectual, ethical life, i.e. obedience to the authority of laws and institutions, guiding them out of an instinctive natural life. (Hegel, 1978, p. 108; 260; 350) Any attempt will turn out futile, unsuccessful, and hopeless to alienate people from intellectual life and return to the instinctive one. Thus, the ‘circle’ that orders and regulates an individual’s life destines them to freedom. (Hegel, 1978, p. 109; 261)

What is family and marriage?

Family is the natural, initial ‘circle’ that orders and regulates an individual’s life. An Individual is bound by the feeling of love in this ‘circle’ and is a member of the family within it. (Hegel, 1978, p. 110) Marriage makes a family come into existence. As a natural relation, Marriage appears in its sexual attribute, as a civil relation, it appears in its contractual attribute, and as a feeling, it appears in the attribute of love. In respect to the last attribute, the mind considers love to be a circle, on the one hand, entering it one abandons one’s independence and knows oneself to be a member of the circle, on the other hand, the circle breaks if its members leave. Two conditions must be fulfilled to make a ‘circle of love’, firstly, each member does not wish to be independent, and secondly, one possesses the other while at the same time being in the possession of the other. Thus, Love is a contradiction plus the common element in both manifests the family, an initial moment of ethical life, and marriage, an initial moment in the foundation of a family, as a union of opposites. (Hegel, 1978, pp. 261-62)

Gods and heroes via marriage establish a family, at the same time, marriage and family inherent a religious quality in reverence to them, which come into sight as the Penates i.e. household guardian deities, and Pietas i.e. Family piety, an attitude of obedience and respect to the family. (Hegel, 1978, pp. 112; 114-15; 351)

How is Antigone situated in marriage or ethical life?

Hegel’s political writings highlight Antigone’s attribute of family piety.

Ethical life comprises laws and institutions, of family, civil society, and state. Hegel portrays Antigone as the voice of the family and knowledge of its law which is divine is known unconsciously. No one consciously arrived at the law of the family but rather it was (intuitively) bestowed by divine powers and may only be thanked for its bestowal. (Hegel, 1978, p. 259)

Man labors and struggles with the world, however, a woman is “imbued with family piety”, the former’s life belongs to the state, and the latter’s life is destined to the family. (Hegel, 1978, p. 114) For Hegel, Antigone symbolizes family piety, a law attributed to women, to “inward life”, to “the gods of the underworld”, and in regards to time is considered everlasting, its origin being unknown to man. (Hegel, 1978, pp. 114-15) Furthermore, the law of woman is opposed to the law of man, which has as much importance in phenomenology as in politics. By burying her brother, Antigone, at the same time, upholds the family law and defies the state’s law; the conflict appears to be institutional on this level. On an individual level, the conflict is between the nature of a woman and a man. (Hegel, 1978, p. 351)

- HEGEL’S ANTIGONE IN PHENOMENOLOGY:  
What is spirit?

Spirit is defined as a “self-supporting, absolute, real being” that dwells in a social world, supernatural religion, and speculative philosophy. (Hegel, 1978, p. 264) Of the three dwellings, the first one, a social world, is where human nature faces a world of ethical order, culture, and morality. The first among these three (i.e. ethical order) is the rudimentary dwelling of human nature in the mythic age of Greece and the imperial Roman age where human behavior as that of an unreflective follower is committed to family and city-state. (Magee, 2010, pp. 173-74)

On the one hand, ethical order viewed as an ethical world (organization) manifests in the Greek family and city-state, on the other hand, ethical order viewed as ethical action (clash) manifests in Greek tragedy.

What is the ethical world and action?

The ethical world is described as a dualism of law, while ethical action is a dualism of knowledge. The dualism consists of human and divine characteristics of law and knowledge. As law, human and divine characteristics appear as man and woman; as knowledge, human and divine characteristics appear as guilt and destiny.

Human law is known to all citizens of a city-state as established customs issued by the daylight authority of government. (Hegel, 1978, pp. 267-68); (Findlay, 1958, p. 117)

Divine law is known to all members of a family as blood relationships issued by the authority of the gods of the underworld.

The family and the city-state “*have their natural self and operative individuality in man and woman*”. (Hegel, 1978, p. 276) According to Hegel, “*Neither of the two is by itself valid*”. (Hegel, 1978, p. 276)

The ethical world is a unity of oppositions between male and female, human and divine law, family, and city-state that exist and develop together. The ethical world separates two appearances within gender, law, and institution; the opposites authenticate “*one through the other*” in mutual contact. (Hegel, 1978, p. 278)

The ethical world viewed in separation appears as:

Divine law stems from the dark “*underworld of the unconscious*” (human nature), interpreted by women; human law issues upon the earthly daylight of the conscious (human nature), proclaimed and enforced by men. (Hegel, 2004, p. xxi)

The ethical world viewed in connection appears as:

The underworld causes the “*living process*” of the human law; the natural world causes the “*actual existence*” of the divine law. (Hegel, 1978, p. 276)

The City-state provides security and human laws to family life while the family, set in divine law, exists as the elementary living unit of the city-state. (Hegel, 1978, p. 276) Human law moves downwards from the city-state to the family

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and divine law moves upwards from the family to the city-state. The opposite movements, the former associated with men and the latter, with women, unite as a whole in one process. (Hegel, 1978, p. 278)

The ethical world focuses on the unity of opposites between human and divine law, ethical action focuses on the struggle of opposites between human and divine knowledge. Gender and institution were united in law creating a world; the binary components of both are divided in knowledge creating hostile action. (Hegel, 1978, p. 279)

Men and women align themselves to one-sided roles; each of them has decided and already knows their course of action. (Hegel, 1978, p. 280) The one-sidedness of action leads to the firmness of decision in regards to where one belongs - either one belongs to the divine law upheld by the family which is “*locked up in the darkness as the will of an isolated individual*” or the human law upheld by the city-state which is “*open to the light of day*” as the command of a collective community. (Hegel, 1978, p. 280)

If one belongs to the divine authority, then the state seems “*no more than the violence of human caprice*”; if one belongs to the human authority, then the family seems no more than “*the self-will and disobedience of the individual who insists on being his authority*”. (Hegel, 1978, p. 280)

Man and woman know and relate with only the one-sided authority between human and divine, the opposite authority remains unknown and unrelatable to each. If each “*acts in accordance*” with the authority it obeys and no decision is conceivable other than what each knows it to be, then conflict arises. (Hegel, 1978, pp. 280-81)

Man and woman split and separate from allegiance to both laws, divine and human, each turns his/her back on the other and commits violence by action by its one-sided obedience. Action is just the transition from knowledge to actuality and guilt is brought upon when both perform in accordance to their separate decisions. Only a stone cannot incur guilt, conversely, man and woman both incur guilt because they recognize that their allegiance should have been to both laws, instead of just one of the two. (Hegel, 1978, pp. 281-82)

Man and woman, each is guilty of the law it violates due to one-sided allegiance. If the moment of this recognition never arrives or arrives too late<sup>1</sup>, the horrible

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<sup>1</sup> The moment never arrives for Antigone and arrives too late for Creon.



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destiny of their conflict will call doom upon both. Collision of the human and divine law attains “*life and action*” in man and woman who “*suffer the same*” horrible destiny. Destiny steps in “*only in the downfall of both sides alike*”. (Hegel, 1978, p. 279; 285)

In conclusion, ethical action is just the transition from knowledge to actuality and when both perform by their already self-committed decision. Action separates the harmony of the ethical world (described as the union of and mutual allegiance to human and divine law), man and woman/ state and family stand at their separate corners ready for conflict. Battle of separate actions once performed concludes in guilt, if the harmony of the ethical world comes to sight/ remembered, and concludes in destiny if the harmony of the ethical world remains hidden/ forgotten.

Ethical action viewed in separation ensues struggle of opposites:

Human knowledge is the one-sidedness of man, who knows only obedience to human law, the decision to commit action by it, and does not know the other side.

Divine knowledge is the one-sidedness of a woman, who knows only obedience to divine law, the decision to commit action by it, and does not know the other side.

Ethical action viewed in connection concludes in guilt and/or destiny:

Human knowledge takes the shape of guilt if both recognize that the one-sidedness of their obedience made them neglectful of the lawful other. Guilt is the knowledge that one ought to have given allegiance to both laws instead of just the one that was pursued in action.

Divine knowledge takes the shape of destiny if allegiance to both laws remains unknown to both actors, each acts only by their respective allegiance and thus is engulfed by an unfateful doom. Destiny is the knowledge that a horrible reality must now be faced from the time when allegiance, that ought to have been given to both laws, instead, was just given to one and pursued in action.

How is Antigone situated in human/ divine law and knowledge?

As law, human and divine characteristics appear as man and woman. Gender (male/female) and institution (family) unite creating three relationships: parent-daughter, husband/father-wife/mother, and sister-brother.

Hegel’s phenomenological writings highlight Antigone’s attribute of sister-brother relations.

The Female gender can exist in three states, daughter, mother/wife, and sister. The daughter is related to her parents and she attains independence only at the

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cost of their demise i.e. when they pass away. As long as the parents are alive they view her as a child, thus “*in the parents, she does not behold her being-for-self in a positive form.*” Mother/ wife relates to her husband as an object of desire which can be easily replaced by another. Only as a sister does the female gender negate being treated like a child, who is considered not an individual self, and wife/mother, who is desired and replaceable. A sister-brother relationship is without unequal status, they neither desire each other, nor consider each other replaceable, and “*are free individualities regarding each other*”. According to Hegel, “*The loss of the brother is therefore irreparable to the sister and her duty towards him is the highest.*” (Hegel, 1978, pp. 274-75)

Two of three female existences become the guardians of divine law. (Hegel, 1978, p. 275) Wife/mother and sister fulfill the condition of individuality qualifying them for that role, although the former instead of the latter is without inequality of status. The daughter is unqualified because she does not fulfill the condition of being an individual, to be with or without inequality of status does not matter in that case. To qualify the daughter has to be freed from her parents via marriage and thus made a wife or her parents must conceive a male offspring making her a sister.

Hegel finds Antigone as an exemplary figure for a rudimentary form of spirituality in the ethical world of Greek tragedy. Princess Antigone, daughter of a King (Oedipus) and the fiancée of a prince (the present king’s son, Haemon), clashes with the political authority of the present king, Creon, and his edict, upholding the attributes of family piety and sister-brother relationship. As knowledge, human and divine characteristics appear as guilt and destiny. Gender (male/female) and institution (family/ state) divide in knowledge-creating hostile action that can resolve in either guilt or destiny.

Human knowledge takes the shape of guilt if both recognize that the one-sidedness of their obedience made them neglectful of the lawful other.

Guilt is the knowledge that one ought to have given allegiance to both laws instead of just the one that was pursued in action. Burial of Antigone’s brother is an action that is committed in accordance to one-sided allegiance between divine and human law and therefore, “*inexcusable*”, if one “*knows beforehand*” the legitimacy of the other law and knowingly rejects it. For that reason, the guilt of the action committed is likewise inexcusable and inevitable. (Hegel, 1978, p. 284) For

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Hegel, not only do these two laws necessarily clash but also bring out the guilt in the characters involved. (Hegel, 2004, pp. xx-xxi) However, such a moment of realization never comes in the character of Antigone and arrives too late for Creon.

Divine knowledge takes the shape of destiny if allegiance to both laws remains unknown to both actors, each acts only by their respective allegiance and thus is engulfed by an unfateful doom.

Destiny is the knowledge that a horrible reality must now be faced from the time when allegiance, that ought to have been given to both laws, instead, was just given to one and pursued in action. The tragic resolution of the clash led to her fateful death and/ or self-willed suicide. However one might view it, either as Antigone’s fate to die or her self-willed suicide, but a tragedy unfolds nonetheless, a tragedy of self and destiny.

Having reached it thus far, it seems obvious that the law of woman opposed to the law of man has as much importance in poetry as in phenomenology and/or politics.

- HEGEL’S ANTIGONE IN THE POETRY:

What is dramatic poetry?

Human action is the heart of a drama. Action in a drama rests upon conflict and resolution, instead of just satisfying a particular (desire) goal. Taken as a whole it may be said that within a drama, particular (desires) goals come to life via characters, located in a situation of conflict, struggling till the moment of resolution arrives. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1159) In other words, dramatic characters act according to their own (goal) desire, whose consequences are to come, at the same time, within the circumstance where they stand. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1161)

A circumstance puts characters together who decide on a (desired) goal and pursue it in action. A character identifies the executed action with his (goal) desire’s satisfaction, thus becoming responsible for its consequence. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1161) However, a drama’s spotlight is neither on the circumstance (world) nor on the character (self) but on the action carried out till the end. An action having a specific end is beyond the scope of the character, its actor who fuels it with life, and the circumstance, its scene of imagination. (Hegel, 1975, pp. 1161-62) In other words, actors come on the scene, motivated by their specific, different, and opposed ends that can be adopted only as separate characters who “*struggle for success and control*”. The motivation may be of many

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kinds e.g. “*law, patriotism, love of parents, relations, spouses, etc*”. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1162)

The dramatic world stage holds actors together in three scenes (moments) - contact of the antagonistic characters, their struggle, and their final destiny (resolution).

Out of the initial circumstance where the characters meet, a conflict must arise leading to its resolution. Between the circumstance that births the conflict and the resolution where it passes away exists the antagonistic characters in struggle, the highlight of the drama. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1169) Thus, the most dramatic scene of all, the scene of contact being its origin, is the moment of struggle that concludes in destined doom, (Hegel, 1975, p. 1168)

The scene of contact, the origin of the conflict, exhibits characters as the living form of their desires and goals; at this moment, action hides as a potential flicker that actualizes as flame during the conflict, destined to die out. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1170) The genre of drama is derived from the potential flicker in the hearts of the characters which decides the style of the blazing fire of the conflict and its resolution. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1193)

What is tragedy?

Tragic action comprises the desires and goals that, on the one hand, influence the characters as independent powers, on the other hand, are adopted by them as free agents e.g. “*family love between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters; political life also, the patriotism of the citizens, the will of the ruler; and religion*”. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1194) Because of this reason, whether the action of the characters is under the influence of independent powers (divine or mortal) or freely decided, it presents the scene of conflict between them “*in reciprocal independence*”. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1196) While the aim, character, and action are one-sided, the scene of conflict holds each sovereign together as opposites in the struggle. Each opposed side, although one-sided, is justified by itself, consequently, their conflict ends in guilt (if not in doom). (Hegel, 1975, p. 1196) Similarly, whether the heroes of tragic drama are living representations of independent powers (divine or mortal) or self-reliant free agents, they, similar to (sovereign) gods, are depicted in works of sculpture (figurative independence) as statues and images. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1195)

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According to Hegel, “*Only in heroic times can these powers enter in original freshness as the gods who either oppose one another in their activities or appear themselves as the living heart of free human individuals*”. (Hegel, 1975, pp. 1208-09) The abstract principles animate the characters to act in opposition to others, locking them in a conflict where they consider themselves justified in their one-sidedness; Hegel considers them as “*figures who simply are what they are*”. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1209) Characters of a tragic drama are self-assured individuals, although this assuredness of theirs is caused by an abstract principle. Tragedy actualizes itself in human life because the struggle of opposites, i.e. characters justified in their one-sided action, shapes it. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1210)

Ingredients of a tragic drama include: “*aims and their objects as well as the individuals*” holding them, their conflict, and their fate(s). (Hegel, 1975, p. 1208)

Collision is produced by the justified action; instead of the author intentionally assigning specific traits to characters, justification for the action must appear as if it lay essentially within the characters themselves. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1212) Either responsibility for one’s action and its consequences or self-assured freedom to act without regard is necessarily presupposed by tragic action. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1205) The reconciliation (finale) bears naked the false one-sidedness of conflicting characters, which may conclude in one of the two scenarios: “*resignedly accept what they had opposed*”, otherwise destroy yourself in its blind pursuit. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1199) To bring the conflict to a stop is the reconciliation, the final result of the tragedy. The powers animating action i.e. the two sides, which once were struggling to destroy each other, in one scenario of reconciliation strip away the one-sidedness they upheld and assign equal honor to the justification which both have. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1215)

Tragic heroes are attributed as innocent and/or guilty. Guilt is attributed if one himself/ herself decides an action among alternatives available to him/ her. Innocence is attributed if one does not choose, instead is what one wills and achieves. Thus, Greek tragic heroes are considered innocent because the aim, character, and will are in union; the subject and his will as an object remain permanently bound together. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1214)

For Hegel, Sophocles is masterful in an objective language whose characters collide with justified self-assurance ending in guilt or injury, however, such characters are neither meant to arouse passions i.e. sympathy, pity, etc nor to

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personally express themselves, instead, given that the character is one with the power it represents, what he/she did is his/her glory; they ought to be considered blameworthy; to be what they are and do what they did is an honor for them. (Hegel, 1975, pp. 1214-15)

How is Antigone situated in tragedy?

In summary, the drama’s structure thus far discussed has been, first, that the tragic characters and his/ her aim unfold, then the necessary tragic collision is followed by the finale, a tragic resolution. In the middle of the drama, an unresolved contradiction is built as the struggle of opposites but it is not meant to stand for long and must come to an honest finale. Although the characters had a valid purpose, they carried it out in one-sidedness infringing the other’s purpose, but in the finale, what must be abandoned is precisely this: the one-sidedness of one’s aim, and if one is unable to do so, the finale is condemned to be a sight of destruction. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1197)

Antigone, as a character, is located twice in the footnote section of Hegel’s writing on poetry and as a produced artwork of tragic drama, twice in the main body of argument as follows:

- Antigone is discussed in the footnote of the explanation of the term “tragic drama” as the personification of an independent power:

Tragedy is the consequence of the struggle of opposites i.e. hostility arising from one-sidedness. Drama exposes the one-sidedness of both. Reconciliation is the halt of the conflict i.e. both powers are seen as complementary and not independent. As a whole, tragic drama consists of the suspension of hostile attitudes between characters within whom one-sidedness of powers makes them independent.

Antigone is the personification of the independent power of family piety and Creon is the personification of the independent power of state. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1163)

- Antigone is only hinted at in the footnote; meanwhile, Hegel’s actual focus is the divine feature of a Greek tragedy:

Hegel considers the proper theme of tragedy to be divine. Divine makes the motive for human action true and real in the world. As the real world is a multiplicity of particulars, powers or agents appear differentiated and separate in it. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1195) The divine cannot be effective in the real world if it remains universal and not particular. It is due to this reason that “*Greek life is*

*particularized in a group of gods*”, each holding his/her sphere. Consequently, in tragedy, the separate spheres enter into a conflict. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1196)  
What is hinted regarding the character of Antigone is that she stands for the law of the gods of the underworld, in the real world.

- Antigone as a work of art is referred to as a tragedy by Hegel:  
In a tragedy, characters carry out one-sided actions, justified by the target that is aimed, initiating a struggle of opposites where each clings to their respective powers and stands as its personification. At this moment, the conflict of equally justified powers and characters is complete.

In his work “Antigone”, Sophocles presents the conflict between opposing powers and characters i.e. state and family as personified by Antigone and Creon, each honoring only his sphere. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1213)

- Antigone as a work of art is referred to as a masterpiece by Hegel:  
*“Of all the masterpieces of the classical and the modern world I know nearly all of them and you should and can - the Antigone seems to me to be the most magnificent and satisfying work of art of this kind.”* (Hegel, 1975, p. 1218)

Reconciliation, in a tragedy, is the movement of the struggle of opposites (conflict) to the unity of opposites (harmony).

Human beings are under the dominion of various obligations, however, one obligation among them is above all with which an individual is completely identified. As a result, they fight each other; however, in reality, they fight themselves. In other words, if opposites fight holding onto different obligations, then they only appear at variance from each other they are violating what should have been honored. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1217)

Hegel gives the example as follows:

- Although Creon is a father and husband, he is gripped one-sidedly by the power of the state.
- Similarly, Antigone is a princess, daughter of a deceased king and soon to marry the present King’s son, yet she is gripped one-sidedly by the power of family.

It is observable that each character belongs within the spheres of both powers (family and state), yet each identifies only with one. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1217)

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Since the characters belong within the spheres of both powers (family and state), they should be honoring what they are violating. Antigone should have paid obedience to the authority of the state, while Creon should have respected the holy bond of the family. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1217)

In the finale, the above moment of mutual recognition of equally justified powers (family and state) never came. For that reason, on the one hand, the destiny of Antigone is death before the royal marriage; on the other hand, Creon’s punishment is that his family, first the son and then his wife take their own lives. (Hegel, 1975, p. 1217)

The masterpiece tragedy ends in doom: the princess never became the future queen of the state and the current king lost his family.

#### CONCLUSION:

Outline of Antigone’s character in the drama is:

The tragic fate of a character in conflict, committed to a one-sided action, for whom family piety/ sister-brother relation become her own heavenly/ worldly identity respectively, that destined her to embrace death, sacrificing her royal marriage and possible family life as a future queen, joining her dead family members in the underworld.

Focusing on the attributes, innate to all women and especially Antigone, raises comparative inquiry between fictional and factual women:

Antigone stands for the law of family, it is an unconsciously known, unwritten divine law attributed to women.

Antigone stands for sister-brother relationship; it is an irreplaceable relation of free and equal individual status attributed to women.

Fictional characters share the above attributes with factual women: family piety is attributed to all women as an innate feature of womanhood, whereas sisterhood holds priority over all other relationships that a woman can be attributed to i.e. daughter and mother/wife. Furthermore, these attributes are not a matter of choice for women; instead, these attributes are what she is.

If factual women share these attributes, then why does Antigone, a Greek fictional character, qualify to replace factual women as an example of womanhood in general?

In answering this question, highlighting the key element at the beginning of her role takes precedence i.e. honoring the attributes.



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Antigone honors the law of the family or sister-brother relationship and is not content to be only attributed to them. Antigone activates these attributes by honoring them which in turn starts paving the path for the character upon activation as follows:

Law of the family through the sister-brother relationship becomes active, in her act of honoring these attributes, whose one-sidedness of action keeps her ignorant of guilt leading to a tragic fate of imprisonment and suicide.

Antigone’s dramatic conflict and tragic fate is a necessary actualization of honoring the law of the family, an intuitive principle constituting womanhood in general, and sister-brother relation, the only qualified relation between male-female family bonds that fulfills family piety. Law of the family through sister-brother relationship not only frames the nature of womanhood but also adapts them to its influence and becomes active in their act of honoring them.

Since their influence keeps her ignorant of any sense of guilt both before entering into conflict and during it, tragedy as suicide is Antigone’s fate. Thus, these attributes are working themselves out actualizing the denial of guilt during conflict and the arrival of suicide as tragic fate.

These attributes are not a list to be counted in her name but actively play their part in a conflict leading to a tragic, poetic fate. This differentiates Antigone from factual women, who unlike her may only be a list of attributes that may be cataloged and nothing more.

Although Antigone has been distinguished from factual women through the above argument, still key elements during her moments of conflict ought to be stressed i.e. ignorance of guilt marks its influence in the middle of the play which displays Antigone’s determination, steadfastness, and heartbreak.

Ignorance of guilt is the effect of honoring family-piety through a sister-brother relationship on the issue of her brother’s burial. This ignorance, in turn, leads to blind allegiance to the same honored attributes during the moments of conflict with her three interlocutors and each moment shows a side of her character. Her arguments with her sister show a sense of commitment (determination) towards burying their brother even though the king’s edict forbids it, with Creon, a sense of will-power (steadfastness) as she accepts giving her brother a proper burial,

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and chorus, a sense of mourning (heartbreak) for their one-sidedness to the law of mortals that made them ignorant of the divine law for which she is convicted.

Her determination, steadfastness, and heartbreak can be sensed in the following selected dialogues with each interlocutor, respectively.

- With Ismene, whether she is under the obligation of divine law or acting according to her own decision to bury her brother, the dialogue expresses determination:

*“It is the dead, not the living that makes the longest demands.”*

- With Creon, whether due to an innocent struggle or her deliberate defiance, the dialogue expresses steadfastness:

*“Your edict, king, was strong, but all your strength is weakness itself against the immortal unrecorded laws of god. They are not merely now: they were, and shall be, operative forever, beyond man utterly.”*

- With the Chorus, whether a fated death looms closer or her suicide, the dialogue expresses heartbreak:

*“And yet, as men’s hearts know, I have done no wrong, I have not sinned before god. Or if I have, I shall know the truth in death.”*

Guilt could have been part of Antigone’s character had she ever recognized that the other law, the King’s edict, also demanded allegiance. On the other hand, Creon could have felt guilt had he recognized Antigone’s reason for burial i.e. the Divine law but he was adamant on his edict and mutually ignorant. In the face of the edict, the chorus is both fearful and silent, while Ismene is fearful at first but vocal against it as she sides with Antigone during their confrontation with him. Each of the three selected dialogues confirms that Antigone’s moment of guilt never arrives leading to the actualization of determination against a frightened sister, steadfastness against a mutually ignorant and guiltless king, and heartbreak against the frightened and quiet chorus.

So far, Antigone begins by honoring the attributes shared by womanhood in general which, keep her ignorant of guilt during her moments of conflict, making

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determination, steadfastness, and heartbreak noticeable in her character, whose last key element arrives during her imprisonment:

Tragic fate as suicide is the result of one-sided honor bestowed on family piety/ sister-brother relation leading to ignorance of guilt.

Not much can be said of the closing moments of Antigone’s character except, whether one views it as a fateful death and/ or self-willed suicide, both scenarios are tragic. Whether she was under the command or has consented to give allegiance to divine law as a woman and during her moments of conflict, her fate/free will is tragic - the prison becomes her tomb, and/or she commits suicide imprisoned in a rocky cave that becomes her grave.

In conclusion, factual women may share the attributes of family piety/ sister-brother relation with Antigone, however, her role moving between honoring the attributes-ignorance of guilt-tragic fate as suicide is unique to her alone and I believe it is due to this reason that Hegel thoroughly referred to her (a fictional Greek character) in particular as an example whenever writing about womanhood.

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