

## YOUNG HEGELIAN SOURCES FOR A CONCEPTION OF THE SELF\*

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**Resumo:** Os escritos do jovem Hegel tem sido uma fonte de muitas tentativas de extrair recursos edificantes para o debate ético e político contemporâneo. Neste artigo, foco nos escritos mais jovens de Hegel – partindo do período de Stuttgart, Tubinga e Berna – buscando elementos que possam proporcionar uma concepção do si. Ao endossar uma posição ética e política dos escritos do jovem Hegel, me oponho àqueles que veem nestes escritos sobre a essência da religião uma tese místico-panteísta. Ao contrário, argumento que Hegel está mais preocupado com uma visão republicana da religião, uma que se mostra muito perto do pensamento político francês, como Rousseau e Montesquieu. Assim também, os fundamentos práticos na abordagem da vida ética e na avaliação da capacidade da modernidade para este estão enraizados no ideal helênico. As fontes gregas derivam da leitura do jovem Hegel das tragédias como compreendendo três noções: origem, simplicidade e exterioridade. Explorarei algumas características relacionadas às noções de origem e simplicidade que datam da vida monásticas e das obras de Winckelmann e Schiller. Estes elementos são constantemente entrelaçados na oposição de Hegel ao racionalismo iluminista, principalmente de Kant, assim como na sua adesão e reformulação da razão universal. Me apoiando nestas fontes, divido o artigo em três seções: o si esclarecido, o si sensível e o si simples. Concluo com a ideia de que Hegel visava um tipo de razão sensível do mundo através do “coração”, com o qual ele pensava uma experiência originária e simples do mundo através da natureza e da comunidade que alcança a razão prática universal ao unificar recursos perceptivos, afetivos e imaginativos socialmente compartilhadas que estão em jogo no momento de uma suposta ação moral.

**Palavras-chave:** Hegel, Kant, Iluminismo, Ação moral, Helenismo.

**Abstract:** Young Hegel's writings has been a source for many endeavours aiming at extracting edifying resources for contemporary ethical and political debate. In this paper, I focus on Hegel's earliest writings – stemming from the periods of Stuttgart, Tubingen and Bern – in search for elements that can propel a conception of self. By endorsing an ethical and political stance of young Hegel's writings, I oppose those who see in these writings concerning the essence of religion a mystical-pantheistic thesis. Instead, I argue that Hegel is more concerned with a Republican view of religion, one that is very close to French political thought, such as Rousseau and Montesquieu. Just as much, the practical grounds for addressing ethical life and assessing Modernity's capacity for the latter is rooted on a Hellenistic ideal. The Greek sources derive from young Hegel's reading of the tragedies as comprising three notions: origin, simplicity and exteriority. I explore some features relating the notions of origin and simplicity as dating back to monastic life and the works of Winckelmann and Schiller. These elements are constantly intertwined in Hegel's opposition to the rationalism of Enlightenment, mainly of Kant, as well as his adherence and reformulation of universal reason. Relying on these sources, I divide the paper into three sections: the

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enlightened self, the sensible self and the simple self. I conclude with the idea that Hegel envisaged a kind of sensible reason he often referred to by "heart", by which he meant an originating and simple experience of the world through nature and the community that achieves universal practical reason by comprising socially shared perceptive, affective and imaginative resources at play at the moment of a putative moral action.

**Keywords:** Hegel, Kant, Enlightenment, Moral agency, Hellenism.

## Introduction

Hegel's relation to the Greeks constitutes a personal pursuit since the early years of his studies, as well as of his companions Hölderlin and Schelling. Though his educational background involves classical authors, the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) was the philosophical tendency at the time. One could say that during his youth Hegel was still bound to it, although in a not very coherent way. The main reason for this was that his pursuit for the unity of communal life derived from a Greek ideal. This led him to reflect on a republican line of thought, and to be politically influenced mostly by Rousseau, especially on the grounds of civil religion as outlined in *The Social Contract*.

In this intersection of influences, inspirations and ideals, some incited Hegel more directly during his youth, and in ways that diverge from his mature writings. While some influences – such as Aristotle and Spinoza – only incidentally present themselves in his youth, they hold a considerable share in the construction of the mature system. Kant's idealism, on the contrary, seems to be the everlasting core of Hegel's reflections throughout his writings – but it is certainly tackled diversely in each period. For example, if Hegel offers an epistemological reformulation of Kant's reason from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* onwards, in his youth this reformulation only looms at the background as theoretically implied, yet never explicitly addressed. In other words, this implied epistemological reformulation in young Hegel's writings is not satisfactorily nor lengthily developed in his writings. This is because his concerns lied elsewhere then, on an issue that in the whole of the Kantian project of transcendental criticism is merely secondary: the relation between positive and natural religion.<sup>1</sup>

In 1792-1793, as a student at the *Stift* in Tübingen, Hegel writes annotations of works whose central focus was the essence of religion. During

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<sup>1</sup> As noted by Rosenzweig: "In this way, it is comprehensible that the work to the young Hegel practically detaches itself from the general field of critical philosophy and turns to the investigations of the essence of the Church in a much acute manner than in Kant and Fichte" (ROSENZWEIG, 2008, p. 84).

this same period, Kant in *Religion in the limits of simple reason* and Fichte in *Essay of a critic of all revelation* dwelt upon the same issue. Both writings were inquiring to what extent is religion to be submitted to the court of reason, if it should at all.<sup>2</sup> In Hegel's view, however, the issue concerning the essence of religion was wrongly put. Besides the fact that Hegel was not sympathetic of the rationalism of Enlightenment, what mattered most to him was to search for a religion that is in agreement with the essence of the people. The young Hegel refuses to assess the morally acting self on the standards of the rationalistic trend rooted on the natural sciences' methodology that enlightened philosophy took upon itself. He considers that "The light (*Aufklärung*) of understanding makes us more ingenious, indeed, but not better". To conceive the morally acting self through the standpoint of the enlightened self is to consider it only as a coldly reflecting self, estranged from its own sensibility and, therefore, opposed to morality, since this reason is "too cold to be efficacious at the moment of action (*im Moment des Handelns wirksam sein*), to have an influence on life in general" (*FVC*: 21).<sup>3</sup>

This reading of young Hegel's writings implies understanding his concern with religion as an ethical and social one more properly. Against Dilthey's (DILTHEY, 1963) interpretation of the young Hegel as a theological standpoint in the form of a mystical pantheism, I agree with Lukács (LUKÁCS, 1976) who sees Hegel instead as more morally, socially and politically attentive. This is so because religiosity reaches down to the bottom of the shared social practices of a people, their feelings, and imagination, which are constitutive of the individual's subjective formation in his utmost simple and original unity.

I want here to lay some important grounds for an argument supportive of the edifying reflections of young Hegel's writings in addressing present-day ethical and social issues, mostly contradicting a supposedly unencumbered conception of the self as the grounds for any putative political and institutional framework. Greek religion took the inspirational place of a Folk-religion, since ancient Greece had understood each individual not from the

<sup>2</sup> As Legros points out, regardless of Fichte's and Kant's divergences about this theme, both show to be loyal to the dominating tendencies of the *Aufklärung* (LEGROS, 1980, p. 11).

<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations used:

*FVC* = Hegel, *Fragmente über Volksreligion und Christentum* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1993).

*VGP* = Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986).

*RGR* = Hegel, *Ueber die Religion der Griechen und Römer* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1989).

*DLJ* = Hegel, *Das Leben Jesu* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1989).

*VGR* = Hegel, *Über einige Vortheile, welche uns die Lektüre der alten klassischen Griechischen und Römischen Schriftsteller gewährt* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1989).

*UUD* = Hegel, *Ueber einige charakteristische Unterschiede der alten Dichter* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1989).

standpoint of his private faith, but rather as a ‘whole man’ undetached from his shared social practices.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Enlightened Self Controversy**

When addressing young Hegel’s writings, some previous observations are in order. In the context of the present exposition, I want to point out that one must be diligent not to turn a group of fragmented and unsystematic reflections and annotations into a unified theoretical view. Even the steadiest Hegelian position during his pre-Jena periods does not go as far. On the contrary, in the writings of Stuttgart, Tübingen and Bern period, with which I am concerned here, there is a tension between Hellenism and Enlightenment that is cleared out by Hegel slowly and gradually. He will only settle the status of Greek thought by the time of his lectures on the history of philosophy (MAYOS, 1990).

Regarding the first periods in Stuttgart, one can see that in 1787 Hegel dwells upon the religion of ancient Greece. In a short text entitled *On the religion of the Greeks and the Romans* the 17 year old student exhibits clear Enlightenment features. His view on ancient religion and their beliefs as a sign of ingenuity of ancient people stems from the standpoint of the enlightened reason of his time. This is how the young Hegel assesses that “These men had not yet realized” (RGR: 43) issues regarding divine nature, the way it acts in the world and how to please it. That is why he also criticizes the offerings, the concepts of happiness and unhappiness, the sensible ceremonies.

Hegel points out that the exploitation of the submission to religion served to satisfy the desires and passions as well as the common good ” (RGR: 44). Sensibility is the featuring element for Hegel in ancient religion, and this is apparent when he asserts that the religiosity of these ancient people

[...] reinforced the impulses (*Triebe*), enthralled imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), and nourished and employed them to a certain direction through cumulative sensible ceremonies (*sinnliche Ceremonien*) aiming at this end. (RGR: 44).

By asserting that their sensibility served the satisfactions and the common good, Hegel might not seem to stand much against ancient religion. After all, this same sensibility will soon turn out to become the determining moral factor in Hegel’s struggle against Kant. But in spite of that, in this

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<sup>4</sup> As Reardon states it: “The *Volksreligion* idea clearly fascinated him. He was unattracted by religion as a purely private concern and gauged its real value by its potentiality as an active social force – a cohesive, elevating ideal, popular and national in the best sense. Classical Greece possessed such a religion, and so presented, he believed, a model to his own age. For Greek religion appealed to the ‘whole man’ in the full context of his social existence” (REARDON, 1977, p. 02).

writing specifically, he is critic of ancient religious sensibility. The assessment of the young student here is that this sensible feature served to the ancient peoples as a protection against all the attacks of reason: “Through this [the impulses, the imagination and the sensible ceremonies] they prepared themselves against all of the attacks of reason (*Gegen alle Anfälle der Vernunft*)” (RGR: 44). The struggle against religious imagination is even stronger as he asserts that this “free play of imagination” of ancient culture consists in a less enlightened level of reason:

Only when a nation reaches a certain level of culture (*Bildung*) can the most brightened reason (*Aufgeheiteter Vernunft*) appear between men, achieve better concepts of divinity and communicate them to others. (RGR: 44).

Hegel goes as far as saying that these men “with a live imagination (*lebhaften Einbildungskraft*)” are to be taken as “men with no enlightenment (*Menschen ohne Aufklärung*)” (RGR: 43). In this moment, Hegel makes use of the terms *ohne Aufklärung*. This is how Hegel in this specific writing regards religious ingenuity, the sensible and imaginative religion of ancient people through the eyes of the *Aufklärung*.

In fact, throughout the Stuttgart, Tübingen and Bern periods, Hegel inherits more than ever some features from his formal education towards the Enlightenment. However, this evaluation of ancient people as non-enlightened cultures will be abandoned very soon. This little fragment is the sole one in which Hegel places himself in favor of Enlightenment and against ancient religion. The Hellenistic roots that took a hold on Germanic lands mostly by the influence of Winckelmann imbued the Hegelian reflections, leading him towards a glorification of the Greeks in defiance of Enlightenment. These men ‘with a live imagination’ are to become the noblest moral agents whose deeds exhibit a higher moral stance than any enlightened man could ever hope to achieve.

But Hegel has never given up the core ideal of Enlightenment: universal reason. What he did instead was to rework it through a religious framework based on a range of sensible experiences. For the young Hegel the universalizing spirit of reason can only be placed in the heart of men.<sup>5</sup>

Yet another polemic writing concerns the position of the young Hegel in face of the Enlightenment, and now more directly related to Kant: the only pre-Jena period complete writing, entitled *The Life of Jesus*. While some researchers find there a presence of the Hegelian assimilation of Kantian

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<sup>5</sup> As Janicaud says: “[...] Hegel places however at the bottom of this heart a universal rationality frequently immersed in the unconscious, but present in every man as a potentiality. About this capital point, our young philosopher is therefore not so far from the *Aufklärung*” (JANICAUD, 1975, p. 39).

philosophy, others see an abandonment of Kant.<sup>6</sup> Barazon and Simhon are only partly right in stating that the rationalism of Enlightenment unquestionably dominates the text (BARAZON/SIMHON, 2009, p. 95). Indeed, as in his mature system, the young Hegel is already an advocate of universal reason. But this does not imply adhering to a rationalist or even completely Kantian thesis of enlightened reason. As Harris points out, “Hegel’s development is not explicable *simply* in terms of his reaction to Kant’s philosophy of religion” (HARRIS, 1970, p. 62). Instead, as Harris goes on to argue, Hegel’s early development must be understood through at least two sources: Greek religiosity and rational religion of French and German Enlightenment.

The opposition in young Hegel’s writings that collide Hellenism and Enlightenment, Paganism and Christianity is a strong and permanent one. It can be interpreted either as an attempt to critically integrate one side onto the other as some sort of “dialectic of *Aufklärung*”, but not an unconscious one, as Legros would have it, and that comes down to an unsurpassable tension during a period in which Hegel is in search of a steady theoretical position. Said it another way, I hold that Hegel is indeed in search of a unification of the Rationalist-Enlightenment ideal of a Kantian kind with the Romantic-Hellenic ideal of Platonic tendency. However conscious he may be of the incompatibility between these two ways, this tension remains unsurpassable to him until at least the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>7</sup>

Hegel’s writing on Jesus’ life in 1795 during the Bern period clearly indicates a tendency towards universal reason. The Rationalist tone in an Enlightenment key is evident due to some essential features, as for example the way in which Hegel presents Jesus’ character. He avoids the superstitious traces of Christ’s life, removing from his narrative as a whole any reference whatsoever to the miracles, and even to the resurrection. Hegel’s intention is to deliver a man’s life whose divine self lies in his actions, in his moral inclination. Following the Kantian path, Hegel displays Jesus’ personality based almost exclusively on an ideal of autonomy. This ideal regards the formation of the moral self of men<sup>8</sup> as their capacity to encounter the divine that will guide

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<sup>6</sup> On other interpretations concerning this polemic, see HARRIS, 1970.

<sup>7</sup> I will follow here Legros’ position to a great length. But I disagree that this is an unconscious tension in young Hegel, and neither therefore that Hegel realizes this and goes on to choose Hellenistic sensibility over Enlightenment rationalism in a hierarchical manner in the writings of the Frankfurt period. Instead, I argue that if any hierarchical relation is present in Hegel’s young writings, it is to be seen as his personal way to “weigh and measure” each side. However, Hegel never abandoned the idea that the only path possible to philosophizing in his epoch was the middle-term between ancient Greece and modern Germany.

<sup>8</sup> “However, Christ acquires more merit for the improvement of the corrupted maxims of men and for the

their actions from within their inhabiting rational autonomy. In this way, Hegel's Jesus sets reason as the universal that inhabits men, the only guide to the ethical coherence according to divine precepts. As not to leave any doubts on this issue, Hegel immediately begins the dissertation as it follows: "Pure reason unfit to any limits is the divinity itself: thus the worldly plane is generally ordered in accordance to reason" (DLJ: 207). Men cannot attend to the truth if not by way of reason: "The formation of reason (*Ausbildung der Vernunft*) is the only source of truth and pacification" (DLJ: 207). By establishing this intimate link to the Enlightenment spirit of a Kantian kind, Hegel places in Jesus' mouth the rational spirit present in men and the need to report to the court of reason:

But he who behaves in an honest way willingly approaches the court of reason (*Richterstuhle der Vernunft*), does not dread neither its reprehensions nor the self-knowledge it conveys. – and does not need to conceal his actions (*Handlungen*), for they testify the spirit that enlivens it, the spirit of the rational world, the spirit of the divinity. (DLJ: 213).

Again, men will only plainly be men through reason, as only it can lead them to partake in the divine:

[...] for only those are well-pleasing to him [God] – the spirit, in which only reason and its blossom, the moral law, reigns – only upon this must the authentic adoration of God be grounded. (DLJ: 213).

It is meaningful the fact that Hegel's representation of Jesus presents us a man whose ground faith relies on the universality of reason as the judging measure regarding the conscious actions of men, as an ordering and divine essence of the world. Thus, the purpose of Jesus' life lies on the way men follow the divine that they bear within themselves. This divine emerges as the rational side of human being. Reason is the divine and therefore the moral law is accessible because men are rational beings. Morality based on the rational autonomy of the individual is the kernel of the Kantian morality and it consists as well in one of Enlightenment's fundamental features. Hegel's representation of Jesus in this characteristically Enlightenment key turns out to be unquestionable when we see the lemma of *Aufklärung* placed in Jesus' mouth as he criticizes the Pharisees: "However, reflect by yourselves (*Überleget bei euch*) still on the passages, what they may mean, placed somewhere in your saint books: 'Not the sacrifices, but rectitude is pleasing to me'" (DLJ: 222). The expression *Überleget bei euch* was the motto of the proponents of Enlightenment, the *Aufklärer*.

Indeed, the rationalist feature of Enlightenment is a strong presence in

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knowledge of the authentic morality and the adoration of God all pure" (DLJ: 207).

this writing about Jesus' life. However, this is not an uncontroversial position undertaken by Hegel. On the contrary, I want to argue that, put in the context of the writings of this period, reason must be understood here in a sensible way, that is, reason is normative insofar as it consists in practical sensible reason. Instead of ruling over subjective sensations, reason sets its foot in an entirely different landscape, one in which sensibility is not diminished, but rather ennobled. This means that the normative status of subjective sensations are hierarchically uplifted. Hegel sees sensibility as constitutive of the norms of action.

When Kant, in his *Groundwork to the metaphysics of Morals*, addresses the motive for acting, he conceives the moral agent on a dual sense. Reason and sensibility are heteronomically related (KANT, 1906, p. 81). Guidance by sensibility would prove to be unreliable as it is completely contingent. Reason, on the other hand, can drive moral action due to its reliance on universality. Human strive to moral action is then a struggle to act according to the dictates of reason. However, the moral agent cannot do away with sensibility altogether. Hence Kant's deduction of the necessity of a categorical imperative based, among other things, on this duality that strikes autonomy at its core. A being whose will did not convey such duality, that is, that did not undergo sensible experience, would immediately and purely experience universal autonomous will. Unfortunately, men must bear this as a norm, as what should-be (*Sollen*) (KANT, 1906, p. 83).

For Kant, then, sensibility gets on the way of an autonomous willing self. This is why there must be a rational rule over sensibility, which Hegel would deem the kernel of the Kantian moral thesis. Kant thought that by conceiving the idea of freedom as "independence from the *determining* causes of the world-of-sensations (*Unabhängigkeit von bestimmenden Ursachen der Sinnenwelt*)" (KANT, 1906, p. 84) this would lead moral agents to the ideal of good willing.

The young Hegel, on the opposite, believes – as put by Barazon-Simhon – that "the legislating reason of moral law is also called 'heart'" (BARAZON/SIMHON, 2009, p. 95). In Hegel's words:

But how can you admit your reason as the highest measure of knowledge and belief since you have never heard the voice of divinity [nor] the echo in thy hearts [...]! (*DLJ*: 223).

According to Reardon, Hegel followed Kant here to the letter. There is, indeed, a seemingly strong rationalistic intonation. Notwithstanding Hegel's appeal to the universality of reason as the only divine guidance to moral action, I argue that this is not rationalistic at all. I would also add that neither is

it Kantian, at least not completely.

Reardon has it that Hegel “was by now entirely self-committed to the most rigid Kantian ethicism”, and “almost at times to the exclusion of the Greek ideals [...] which he had hitherto so consistently extolled” (REARDON, 1977, p. 04). Hegel does indeed repeat incessantly the motto of Enlightenment quoted above: reflect by yourselves, *überlegt bei euch*. My argument is that Hegel did not intend to do away with the universality of reason laid down by Kant and the Enlightenment. Rather, his intention was to rework it altogether by conceding a constitutive role to sensibility regarding moral action. He refers to this sensible reason by the name of ‘heart’. Reason is the heart itself,<sup>9</sup> as when his version of Jesus states: “I keep myself only to the unadulterated voice of my heart (*Herzens*) and my conscience (*Gemissens*)” (DLJ: 234). Hegel is also careful to ward off any relation of his version of universal reason from what he considers the cold knowledge of erudition:

Be praised and glorified, Father of heaven and earth, that the fact of cognizing what is each one's duty is not the property of erudition nor knowledge, and that each uncorrupted heart may feel itself the difference between good and evil. (DLJ: 139).

One could say, in defense of Reardon's view, that by appealing to the heart and by dispelling erudition all Hegel is doing is highlighting that “Jesus' concern [is] with the *spirit* of the law as distinct from its mere letter” (REARDON, 1977, p. 06). This is, indeed, the case. But this thesis springs from Montesquieu's masterpiece, *The Spirit of the Laws* (although Reardon does not mention it). In addressing the issue of religion, Montesquieu states it clearly that “religion, made to speak to the heart, should give many counsels and few precepts” (MONTESQUIEU, 1989, p. 464). As Montesquieu, the young Hegel does not detach religious matters from political and social ones.

Yet Hegel's views (just as those of the Germans as a whole) were influenced more directly by Rousseau. In this sense, instead of following on the footsteps of Montesquieu and safeguard Christianity's appeal to sociality, Hegel had previously endorsed<sup>10</sup> Rousseau's criticism of Christian religiosity as incompatible with a republican life (ROUSSEAU, 1994, p. 164-165). Montesquieu's defense of Christianity as a religion fit for good political life relies on the feelings of sociality it fosters on its subjects. On this basis, Montesquieu contrasts it with the feelings of non-sociality of what he calls Mohammedanism (Islam), but also of the Greeks and Romans (MONTESQUIEU, 1989, p. 461-462). Interestingly enough, Rousseau's

<sup>9</sup> Hegel uses, indiscriminately as it seems, the words *Herz* and *Busen* when he refers to heart.

<sup>10</sup> Previous to *The life of Jesus*. See HEGEL, 1993.

arguments against Christianity stands on the same basis as Montesquieu's: because Christians are only loyal to the law leading them to heaven, they are imbued with otherworldly feelings,<sup>11</sup> apart and distanced from the "sentiments of sociality, without which it is impossible to be either a good citizen or a loyal subject" (ROUSSEAU, 1991, p. 166). If Christianity could not form individuals who share republican principles, then the possibility of success of good political life stems from a different tradition. Its possibility derives from the historical fact that the Greeks and Romans were able to do so (ROUSSEAU, 1994 p. 122-123). The inversion Rousseau performed on these specificities from Montesquieu 14 years after *The Spirit of the Laws* are crucial in the eyes of the young Hegel. Therefore, in spite the fact that Hegel regards religion from the point of view of morality (as Kant and Fichte had done so), his focus on the sentiments or feelings of sociality as constitutive of moral actions takes him on a different path.

In spite his undertaking of Rousseau's inversion, the spirit of the laws with which Hegel's Jesus is concerned ultimately relies on Montesquieu's warning that some people show "an inability to distinguish the orders for the establishment of Christianity from Christianity itself" (MONTESQUIEU, 1989, p. 464). It is important to notice this, as Hegel's writing *The life of Jesus* is intended to distinguish the character of Jesus from what Christianity had made out of his teachings. This explains Hegel writing his criticism of Christianity in *The positivity of Christian religion* right after *The life of Jesus*. Among other things, in *The positivity of Christian religion* Hegel tries to identify where did Christianity go wrong, that is, what elements in Jesus' teaching left it open to the possibility for Christianity to turn into a positive religion as it turned out. Throughout his arguments, Hegel contrasts Socrates' teaching to those of Jesus, which conveys the thesis of the Socratic moral superiority.<sup>12</sup>

At least two features stand out from this for the argument I want to make against Reardon's thesis about the meaning of Hegel's *The life of Jesus* for a conception of the morally acting self.

Firstly, when Reardon states about *The life of Jesus* that Hegel's commitment to Kantian ethicism occurs "almost at times to the exclusion of the Greek ideals of spontaneity (...) which he had hitherto so consistently extolled", he seems to argue that the Greek ideal had ceased its influence on Hegel, or at least was greatly downgraded. However, there are compelling

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<sup>11</sup> See ROUSSEAU, 1994, p. 164: "The religion of Christianity is entirely spiritual, and concerned solely with heavenly things; the Christian's country is not of this world". Also: "But I am mistaken in saying 'a Christian republic'; the two words are mutually exclusive. (...) True Christians are made to be slaves; they know it and are hardly bothered by it; since this short life, in their eyes, is worth too little" (p. 165).

<sup>12</sup> I approached this Socrates-Jesus relation in a previous paper.

indications to think otherwise. Reardon does mention, for example, the Socratic superiority over Jesus' teachings in *The positivity of Christian religion*, just as he mentions Greek superiority in comparison to Jews and Christians in the Frankfurt writings such as *The spirit of Christianity and its destiny*. Both writings are posterior to *The life of Jesus*. Nevertheless, Reardon falls short of appreciating these allusions as expression of the still strong Hellenic ideal in Hegel's mind. If that is so, if Hegel's writings before and after *The life of Jesus* is outspokenly pro-Hellenic, then a supposedly Hegelian 'rigid Kantian ethicism' is misplaced.

Secondly, because Reardon does not take into account the fragments Hegel wrote before and after Hegel's writing on Jesus, he consequently isolates *The life of Jesus* and fails to assess Hegel's overall theoretical position during the Bern period. This means that not only does Reardon picture *The life of Jesus* wrongly, but also that his misunderstanding stems from a lack of any consideration whatsoever regarding Hegel's terminology.

### **The Sensible Self**

It is important to stress that by taking reason as the 'heart', Hegel is propounding an ennobling sensitivity<sup>13</sup> towards duty. If one is attentive to other writings as, for instance, his fragments before Bern during the Tübingen studies where he was mindful of the essence of religion, one can see how the sensible feature of reason – and not rational duty alone – presents itself more explicitly.

The center of debate for the Enlightenment over the essence of religion consisted of the distinction between that which religion bears universally, its moral ideas that constitute its basis, and what is manifested as superstition, its rites and ceremonies. In contrast, young Hegel's position relies upon a completely different basis than that of the Enlightenment. According to Hegel, the capacity of enlightened understanding to identify the superstitious absurdities of religious belief is at the same time its flaw, since it is incapable of comprehending the moral value of certain actions despite superstitious bearings. As Hegel understands it, these actions are to be appreciated by the heart, by the feeling and simplicity of spirit.

Hegel is unquestionably deeply influenced by Enlightenment's universalizing spirit of reason. Nevertheless, the universalizing feature in human spirit is its tendency to moral action, and this Hegel conceives this as a

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<sup>13</sup> As Barazon-Simhon asserts, any thesis one might have on the issue concerning young Hegel's representation of Jesus, one cannot overlook that *The life of Jesus* bears both thesis of a universal reason and an ennoblement of sensibility (BARAZON-SIMHON, 2009, p. 94-95).

driving force (*Triebfeder*) to moral practice emanating from religion proper.<sup>14</sup> Religion is considered, however, as a second drive, but not as second-order hierarchically lower. On the contrary: “Religion gives then to morality and its motives a new more sublime impetus” (*FVC*: 12).<sup>15</sup> The religious upbringing “makes an impression on us, [and] is of a kind that is inoculated in a natural necessity (*ein natürliches Bedürfnis*) of human spirit” (*FVC*: 10). A first impetus, then, is evoked stemming from a sort of spiritual nature of the self, as the original impulse which Hegel accounts for as a moral tendency of men. Yet, this practical side of religion is still much close to an Enlightenment kind:

Human nature (*Die menschliche Natur*) is established in such a way that what is practical in the doctrine of God, what for him can turn into a driving force (*Triebfeder*), into actions (*Handlungen*), into source of knowledge of the duties and source of consolation, shortly presents itself to the uncorrupted human sense (*dem unverdorbenen Menschensinne*) (*FVC*: 10).<sup>16</sup>

However, as stated above, Hegel reworks this universalizing spirit of reason. Neither during his youth nor during his mature writings did Hegel completely comply with the rationalizing postulates of Enlightenment. He does not take kindly the separation between pure morality (*reine Moralität*) and sensation (*Empfindung*), not that the latter should supposedly adjust to the former. Therefore, he accuses this separation of offering nothing but abstractions (*FVC*: 11). The detachment from sensibility, the pursuit to tame the impulses (*Trieben*) are improper to moral truth and thereby to the essence of religion. On the contrary, one should bear in mind human dependence on exteriority, on nature.

[...] just as much, when considering man in general and its life, we must consider above all its sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*), its dependence in relation to interior and exterior nature, [in relation to] that which surrounds him and that in which he lives, [in relation to] the sensible inclination (*sinnlichen Neigungen*) and the blind instinct. (*FVC*: 11).

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<sup>14</sup> Hegel (*FVC*: 10) distinguishes theology from religion, by pejoratively understanding the former as the “metaphysical knowledge of God, our relation to him and the whole world’s relation to him and so on”, while religion is “the interest of the heart” (p. 16). Hegel in his youth does not see theoretical or metaphysical endeavors with good eyes. But in his maturity writings, as is well known, the most important structural pillar of his system is exactly the most theoretical and supposedly metaphysical writing, the *Science of Logic*.

<sup>15</sup> “Die Religion gibt also der Moralität und ihren Beweggründen einen neuen erhabeneren Schwung”.

<sup>16</sup> Hegel sees in this religious impetus the presence of the genius of youth. Far from having a primitive connotation, youthfulness means to Hegel – and his friend Hölderlin – a live spirituality historically represented in the *Bildung* of Greek antiquity. Those who have lost this youthful genius that animates religions no longer have sensibility to harbor religious ideas: “Religious ideas can make less impression on a suppressed spirit (*unterdrückten Geist*) who has lost the vigor of its youthfulness (*jugendliche Kraft*) under the burden of its chains and starts to grow old” (*FVC*: 13). More about the youthful genius, distinguishing it from the old genius, are in the paragraph that follows this quotation.

Young Hegel's sensibility thesis avoids materialism and empiricism, and even a kind of hedonism.<sup>17</sup> Hegel is not against reason and in favor of sensibility alone. It is not about simple immediacy emptied of all reflection: this would turn out to be nothing but unconcerned sensibility, blind instinct. On the contrary, Hegel articulates a reason-sensibility axis without falling into mere spontaneity. The Hegelian thesis constitutes an open effusion with which the sensible impetus of moral action is nothing but a free and open experience (*Erfahrung*) in which there is a rational-sensible agreement.<sup>18</sup>

The definition of 'free and open' brings up Hegel's metaphor of "the beautiful delicate plant of free and open senses (*die schöne zarte Pflanze des offenen freien Sinnes*)" (*FVC*: 15). With this image, the young Hegel questions the abstract universality in which moral law has run afoul of in enlightened rationality. For abstract universality Hegel often uses the word "reason" (*Vernunft*) and understanding (*Verstand*), which bears many of the features Hegel assimilates to what he would later call only understanding (*Verstand*) in his mature writings. It is however difficult to find in these young writings a solid concept of reason.<sup>19</sup> He uses expressions such as mere reason (*bloße Vernunft*) (*FVC*: 11) or mere intelligence (*bloße Klugheit*) (*FVC*: 10) and cold reason (*kalte Vernunft*) (*FVC*: 12) referring to a kind of knowledge distant from reality and feelings, externally casting concepts which impose themselves by way of taming the impulse of the heart and by extirpating sensible imagination (*Phantasie*).

Although he acknowledges useful applications to reason – namely, as already stated, avoiding blind sensibility whence religious illusions may derive – , on the other hand, Hegel is accusing this sort of cold rationality of oppressing and decaying the movement of life and therefore "through the understanding the principles are never made practical" (*FVC*: 21). This rationality of Enlightenment "is exquisite to the service of self-love" which, among other things, "is always very astute in giving a beautiful color to the flaws already perpetrated or to be perpetrated" (*FVC*: 21). However, as Hegel understands it, this astuteness amounts to mere scholarly concepts, which have no use in practical life, in the real life of men: "The elucidation (*Aufklärung*) of

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<sup>17</sup> We would rather say, like Janicaud, that Hegel here searches for a kind of realism that he finds in Greek religions.

<sup>18</sup> As Legros states it: "an agreement of reflection and immediacy, a rationality not that of the understanding (of objectifying reflection), a sensibility that is not blind, but 'free and open'" (LEGROS, 1980, p. 38).

<sup>19</sup> In Legros' opinion, Hegel holds back in delivering a clear definition due to fear of falling into an irreducible opposition between "ideas which animate sensibility and objective representations which understanding erects as an ideal" (LEGROS, 1980, p. 19).

understanding certainly makes more clever (*klüger*) but not better” (*FVC*: 21). The intellectual coldness is assimilated here to reason and understanding and criticized for opposing sensibility and thereby morality. After all, this reason of “calculation (*Berechnung*) is too captious and too cold to be efficacious at the moment of action, so that it could have an influence over life at all” (*FVC*: 21).<sup>20</sup>

This is the birthplace of Hegel’s assimilation of the knowledge of understanding to what is dead. This takes place due to Hegel’s attempt to develop a kind of rationality integrated to the movement of life. His intention at this moment is to establish a kind of sensible reason that makes an actual morality (*wirklich Moralität*) possible.

Since his concern in this period is to analyze and evaluate the essence of religion, he must not grasp the concept of religion in a science of God where His properties are listed, as well as our human relation to him, the immortality of the soul, among other things. This narrow comprehension of the concept of religion “could at best either be accessible to mere reason (*blasse Vernunft*) or even be known to us through another way” (*FVC*: 11). Hegel’s objective here by opposing religion as the science of God is to conceive religion as an expression of sensible reason, as a driving force for moral actions. In order to do so it is imperative not to understand sensibility as mere external impression, otherwise it would not have any influence on moral action. Religion would be nothing but an ensemble of superstition with no value to life whatsoever. That is why the concept of religion that Hegel comes up with

is not a mere historical or rationalized (*rationalisierte*) knowledge, but it concerns the heart (*Herz*), it has an influence over our feelings (*Empfindungen*) and over the determination of our will (*die Bestimmung unseres Willens*). (*FVC*: 11).

As a second impetus, religion carries forward the original impulse of the heart. Sensibility is not left aside or even tamed by reason. On the contrary, it all amounts to conceiving the heart as reason made sensible. The heart as an original sensible impulse is understood as such due to its *simplicity*. This comes up wholeheartedly in *The life of Jesus* as the most delicate and noble flower of humanity:

Be well attentive of yourselves for despising no one and even less so the simplicity of heart (*Einfalt des Herzens*), it is the most delicate, the most noble flower of humanity, the most pure image of divinity, the one and only to

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<sup>20</sup> Still, regarding the incapacity of this cold reason and understanding to make someone morally better: “That bad inclinations do not ascend at all, that they don’t reach a bigger amount, this no printed moral can do, no elucidation of understanding (*Aufklärung des Verstandes*) can achieve” (*FVC*: 22).

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provide a position and even the most elevated position; this simplicity deserves that everything which constitutes your most dear inclinations be sacrificed to. (DLJ: 236).

Hegel's energetic defense of the simplicity of the heart has its roots on the most essential affiliation to the legacy of ancient Greece.

## The Simple Self

As previously seen, in the first fragment in which Hegel addresses antiquity (*On the religion of the Greeks and Romans*) he understands ancient religion as ingenuity in contrast to the rationality of *Aufklärung*. This fragment was written in 1787. Nevertheless, in the following year, in 1788, another fragment approaches antiquity in a completely different fashion by engaging the distinctive feature of the antique poets in relation to the modern ones.

In this writing entitled *On some distinctive characteristics peculiar to the poets of old*, the young 18 year old assesses in which ways antique poetry differs from, and is superior to modern poetry. Hegel's change of position seems drastic, for the superiority of antiquity is now apparent. Hegel starts off by pointing out that modern poetry is not connected neither to the religious system nor to true history. These aspects will very soon turn out to be key to the Hegelian evaluation of the degradation toward positivity regarding the religion of a people. Hegel's ideal is a Republican one, which is the reason his concern is with the individual and the community and how they are to be integrated in a unique whole. The broad outlines have to do with how a people and their laws, their faith and their moral practice are organically intertwined as not to materialize arbitrary and abstract rules.

This strong link between the individual and the community recurs in the last year of Hegel's studies in Stuttgart.<sup>21</sup> Greece is here a model concerning life in community and the fulfillment of each individual in the political community. In this last year of his studies in Stuttgart, in 1788, Hegel stresses for the first time Greek and Roman antiquity.<sup>22</sup> In this writing, Hegel

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<sup>21</sup> As Rosenzweig says, the "young orator praises destiny's luck which combined in the antiquity humanity's general interests with local and particular interests" (ROSENZWEIG, 2008, p. 78).

<sup>22</sup> The stress is much more towards Greek than Roman antiquity. When analyzed in more details, one can see that the Latin examples are used to talk about the Greek ones, delineating a Greek priority over the Roman. This position is clearly established in another writing of the same year. Hegel himself points to the Greek superiority over the Romans. The paradigm of the overcoming of intelligible-sensible duality, as well as the dualities deriving from it, are considered in view of Greek antiquity. As Hegel says: "But the antiques, particularly the Greeks – about which above all it is here being questioned, the Roman writings, not taking into account the content, most of the time are nothing but a copy of those [the Greeks]" (VGR: 52). In his maturity, in the *Lectures on the history of philosophy*, Hegel still maintains this position – extending the critic from poetry to philosophy – contrasting Greece and Rome, he asserts about the Romans: "Their poetry is not their own, it is borrowed; as well as their philosophy" (VGP: 405).

distances himself from the sharp enlightened rationalist featuring in his 1787 fragment *On the religion of the Greeks and Romans*. At the same time, Hegel contrasts Greek poetry to modern poetry, identifying in the latter a rupture between the people and their culture.<sup>23</sup> Hegel's assessment is that in Modernity, by and large, the peoples are disconnected from their land. Nature, the people and their culture are sparse, scattered, lacking any unity whatsoever. Hegel finds his inspiration to this initial theoretical framework in Greek tragedy – mainly in Sophocles' works, specially *Antigone*, but also *Ajax* and *Oedipus*: “Tragedy takes its origin from the rustic festivals celebrated in honor of Bacchus accompanied by songs and dances” (UUD: 47).<sup>24</sup>

If Modernity represents the rupture of communities and scattered individuals, the opposite is true of the Greeks.<sup>25</sup> In the 1788 writing, Hegel appoints three distinctive features of antique poets intimately interlinked: simplicity, originality, and exteriority. Simplicity (its Latinized version as *Simplicität*) is understood as the writer's capacity to “faithfully present us the image of things (*das Bild der Sache getreu darstellen*)”, which “express only and simply compound sensation” (UUD: 46). The original (*Original*) regards the fact that “each one acquired their ideas out of experience (*Erfahrung*) itself” (UUD: 46). Exterior sense (*äußerliche Sinne*) refers to when “the poets pictured particularly the exterior in the senses of befalling phenomena of visible nature” (UUD: 47). These three together are meant to present the simple and original experience in its sensible externality. But this experience is thought of as concerning both the *physis* and the *ethos* of a people.<sup>26</sup>

Hegel's originality is meant to oppose (for the first time in Hegel's writings) science as cold erudition by aiming at a concept of reason more closely related to experience.<sup>27</sup> He quotes Lessing's *Nathan, the Wise* in order to express this insufficiency of erudite reason: “the cold erudition of the books which do not imprint/in our brain but as dead symbols”. The Greeks had no knowledge of this cold erudition, for they could simply ask themselves: “How?

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<sup>23</sup> According to Janicaud, this criticism is directed to a “cultivated public, therefore narrow and disconnected from nature” (JANICAUD, 1975, p. 32).

<sup>24</sup> Later on, in the Frankfurt writings, Hegel conceives destiny (*Schicksal*) as the first centralizing concept to form his philosophy of history. One can also see in the tragic element of clash between opposing ethical norms for life as the first sketch of what would become the negativity of dialectic (DE BOER, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> As Janicaud says: “The poet's authenticity consists therefore in the rooting of a culture in its natural soil due to the mediation of a live and united people” (JANICAUD, 1975, p. 32).

<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, both Aristotle and Montesquieu (just to name two representatives of political thought in antiquity and modernity) are concerned with the natural surroundings of a city in dealing with how to form a prosperous government.

<sup>27</sup> One can already see here, in this 18-year-old writing, the initial fermentation of the theoretical paradigm of the experience of Spirit, which is systematically worked out only in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Where? Why? Then they would have already learned” (UUD: 46). In other words, to Hegel the Greek spirit of originality granted them universal reason out of experience itself: “Besides that, their educational and cultural system as a whole was of a kind of complexity that each one had acquired their ideas out of experience itself” (UUD: 46).

Exteriority distinguishes antiquity from modernity for the fact that in the latter “we are, on the contrary, more instructed by the *internal play of forces* (*inner Spiel der Kräfte*) and we know in general more about the causes of things than how they appear” (UUD: 47). The ‘exteriority’ antiquity dealt with did not amount to some sort of abstract and arbitrary thing. On the contrary, exteriority consists of taking phenomena as more reliable than Modernity is willing to concede.

In its turn, simplicity cannot be comprehended unless in connection with originality and exteriority. If exteriority involves turning oneself to sensible phenomena, while originality comprises being true to experience, then simplicity comes into play in order to stress even more this sensible side, so it can ‘faithfully present the image of the thing’. What Hegel sees in the poets of old is that they

[...] did not seek to make it [the thing to be presented] more interesting through secondary refined features, through the erudite innuendos, or make them more shiny and charming through a little deviation in relation to truth, as we demand nowadays. (UUD: 46).

This means that to the poets of antiquity truth was not about adorning it with allusions of sumptuousness, as it was to modernity (and here the young Hegel echoes Winckelmann’s opposition to similar features of Baroque art, which is also contrasted to the Greeks simplicity and originality). Just as well, to the Greek poets truth did not consist of searching for a supposedly enriched experience in culture and only then finding again its origin in sensible experience. Truth does not even involve, one might add, looking at the relations of the internal forces and causes of things as contrasted with their exterior aspect. The study of antiquity had taken Hegel to look up for ancient Greece as an inspiration to an enlivened experience bearing its proper originality, simplicity and exteriority as aspects of a unified political community in a form of religion of the people.<sup>28</sup>

Janicaud argues that originality is the most important of the three, and

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<sup>28</sup> According to Janicaud, Hoffmeister showed that the three tragic features presented by Hegel are not his own. Hegel is following here Christian Garve, to whom “ancient simplicity and exteriority are opposed to modern complexity and interiority”. However, as Janicaud points out, Hegel did not follow Garve as the later remains in the “static opposition between two types of civilization” (JANICAUD, 1975, p. 33), which shows that if Hegel did not come up with these concepts, at least the way they were employed is his own.

I find this a mistake. If one must determine one of the three tragic features of the Greeks as the most essential, then Janicaud does seem to have a point. After all, the Greek originality conceived here by Hegel does consist, in Janicaud's words, on "the fidelity to the teaching of experience" (JANICAUD, 1975, p. 31). This involves their whole system of thinking, of language and belief in such a way that, according to Hegel, "each one should have a form of his spirit that was their own as well as their own system of thinking, and then all should be *original*" (UUD: 47). Nonetheless, I argue instead, why must we single out one of these three features as the most important in the first place? Hegel does not seem to do so, and neither do the triangular mutual implication of these features seem to leave any room to consider this hierarchical reading. For instance, the simplicity featuring in this 1788 writing has strong German roots without which it is impossible to assess the full meaning of the originality of experience Hegel suggests.

The notion of simplicity has a long history in the Christian tradition of the *sancta simplicitas*. This dates back to humility of St. Benedict in founding monastic life (LECLERCQ, 1982, p. 205), which was taken as a motto against the abuses of dialectics (LECLERCQ, 1982, p. 204), i.e., of the subtleties and adornments of scholastic erudition – just as the young Hegel stresses as featuring in contrast between Greek tragedies and Modern poetry. Scholasticism, in its search for rational explanations of the mysteries of religion, brought with it the danger of depleting the role of faith and leading to self-indulgence instead of humility. Later on, this mostly psychological and moral status of simplicity receives an aesthetic meaning. Compare, for instance, Shaftesbury's criticism of the "coquetry of a modern author" whose adornments are "designed to draw attention from the subject towards himself" (SHAFTESBURY, 2000, p. 92) as contrasted to "the refined manner and accurate simplicity of the ancients" (SHAFTESBURY, 2000, p. 459). Yet an important shift was also taking place. While the Christian, classical Humanist tradition of the Renaissance overlapped *Humanitas* with *Romanitas* – i.e., the *sancta simplicitas* conveyed a longing for a golden age located in the Roman tradition – the aesthetic meaning of simplicity was attached, to the Greek tradition instead.

This is important, as this 'longing for', this mourning sickness concerns the notion of origin. Hence, for the preachers of monastic life knowledge derives from faith, and not otherwise. Faith has the power of origin. This is not new, as the Greek word *arché* means not only the ground of something, but also the origin and power. The ideal of simplicity is then directly linked to the notion of originality, as the young Hegel suggested. However, Hegel's more intimate source for the ideal of simplicity derives from Germanic Hellenism,

mainly Winckelmann and Schiller.

The shift towards a Greek origin for the ideal of simplicity had received a stronger impulse in Germanic language. Luther played an invaluable role in endorsing both that the Gospels were the only viable power of origin men could have, and that the Greek text of the Gospels are to be preferred. The combination of these two features had much more consequences than Luther might have intended. The Greek tradition was about set foot in Germanic lands meant to last for centuries to come, and the most prominent German name that made this possible was Winckelmann.

In his *Reflections on the imitation of Greek works in painting and sculpture* Winckelmann asserts that “The only way for us to become great, [and] if possible, even unequaled, is the imitation (*Nachahmung*) of the ancients” (WINCKELMANN, 1756, p. 03). The Greek artist, in turn, followed the law prescribed in Thebe to imitate nature, and they were able to deliver an unparalleled imitation of it (WINCKELMANN, 1756, p. 10-11). Winckelmann stresses this as a distinguishing feature of Greek art in relation to modern art (WINCKELMANN, 1756, p. 11). This closeness to nature, nonetheless, involves “not only nature (*Natur*)”, but “certain ideal beauties themselves that, as an older interpreter of Plato teaches us, is constituted of projected images only in the understanding (*im Verstande*)” (WINCKELMANN, 1756, p. 04).<sup>29</sup> Based on this non-duality conception of the sensible-intelligible relation, Winckelmann lays down two main features of Greek art: calm grandeur (*stille Größe*) and noble simplicity (*edle Einfalt*). Much like the strife of monastic culture with scholastic erudition, as well as Shaftesbury’s criticism of modern literature, Winckelmann’s noble simplicity opposes Baroque and their tendency towards adornments and excessive complexity. Even the German word for simplicity, *ein-fältig*, was demonstrated to derive from the 8<sup>th</sup> century Christian translations for the Latin *simplex* that means plain, simple, natural (VEIT, 1986 p. 370).

In regards to Hegel, it is crucial the fact that Hegel inherits simplicity from the aesthetical thought of Winckelmann as a kind of sensibility that does not neglect the intelligible factor of beauty. Sensible experience regarding the world – both nature and the community – is intimately bound to intelligible experience of universal reason. However, I agree with Taminaux (TAMINIAUX, 1967) that the ideal of simplicity arrives at Hegel through Schiller, who undertook Winckelmann’s noble simplicity in order to widen the scope of Kantian autonomy. This is apparent by Hegel’s use of Schiller’s

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<sup>29</sup> The interpreter of Plato mentioned here by Winckelmann is Proclus. The reference is to Proclus’ *Commentary on the Timaeus*.

terminology for simplicity as both *Einfalt* and the Latinized version *Simplicität*.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> letter of Schiller's *Letters on the aesthetic education of men*, the author overlaps aesthetics and politics (SCHILLER, 1875, p. 111), and proposes an organic unity of men among themselves and nature (SCHILLER, 1875, p. 116-134). This is accomplished when the morals and habits are mirrored on the laws along with the subjective unity of sensations and sentiments (SCHILLER, 1875, p. 124). Schiller introduces the Hellenic element in this specific context, contrasting his present-time with how the Greeks were capable of carrying out a unity in which "the senses (*Sinne*) and the spirit (*Geist*) did not have yet a rigorous dissociated property". And diverging from modern times, "As high as reason rose, it always brought matter (*die Materie*) behind it in a loving way, and as sharp and acute they distinguished (*trennte*), they also never mutilated (*verstümmelte*) as much" (SCHILLER, 1875, p. 144).

The young Hegel's attempt at opposing past and present in view of a yet to come ideal integration of them is a familiar Germanic theoretical ground. This originating power of unification that Greece had in the eyes of German thinkers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is the touchstone in accomplishing a threefold task which Hegel took upon himself until his last days: to question, criticize and renew the spirit of Modernity.<sup>30</sup> As voiced by Schiller in his poem *The Gods of Greece*, the young Hegel suffered due to the acknowledgement that all Modernity could deliver was the world emptied of the gods. This suffering was experienced as a longing for their return. By uniting imagination and sensibility to form universal reason, the sublime character Hegel saw in Greek religion consists in respecting not only the moral laws represented by the gods, but also natural necessity and, moreover, dependence upon nature.

Since this belief is, in part, the respect in face of the flow of natural necessity (*Naturnotwendigkeit*), and, at the same time, the conviction that men are dominated by the gods according to moral laws, it seems humanly adequate to the sublimity of divinity and to the debility, to the dependence of men in relation to nature and their limited line of sight. (*FVC*: 36).

According to Hegel, then, reason and imagination of the Greeks did not aim at crossing the limits beyond sensibility. When Hegel states, referring

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<sup>30</sup> Schiller states the following: "The Greeks make us ashamed of ourselves, not only through simplicity (*Simplicität*), which is foreign to our times. It is, anyhow, for this reason they are at the same time our rivals, frequently our models (*Muster*) on the so-called qualities (*Vorzügen*) with which we cultivate to comfort the adverse nature of our customs (*die Naturwürdigkeit unserer Sitten*). Simultaneously complete form (*voll Form*) and complete content (*voll Fülle*), simultaneously philosophizing and forming (*bildend*), simultaneously tender (*zart*) and energetic (*energisch*), we seen them unite the virtue of phantasy (*die Tugend der Phantasie*) with the virility of reason in a magnificent humanity (*in einer herrlichen Menschheit*)" (SCHILLER, 1875, p. 143).

to the Greeks, that “disgrace for them was disgrace, pain was pain” (*FVC*: 36), one is wrong to take it as mere tautology. In fact, what he means by it is that the Greeks did not pursue transcendence, as what is transcendent is actually immanent – the gods populated the Earth.

### Concluding remarks

At this stage of the argument, it must have become somewhat apparent at least two things. Firstly, that I find no reason to agree with Janicaud that the tragic feature of originality in Hegel’s 1788 writing must be considered as more important than simplicity, or exteriority. The exposition regarding simplicity should have proven that even exteriority is not downgraded in young Hegel’s idea of a sensible experience.

Secondly, that the young Hegel’s idea of sensibility encompasses a subject’s experience of his perceptive phenomena, of his affective sentiments, and the products of imagination. They are intimately related and mutually propelling. Nonetheless, one must not forget that this German Hellenist tradition inherited by Hegel was not at all against universal reason – as Hegel says, “human nature is in a way impregnated by the ideas of reason” (*FVC*: 11). Instead, they were putting the enlightened version of universal reason into question. As seen above, both Winckelmann and Schiller regarded sensibility as not only indispensable, but indeed at the same level of importance as reason for attaining a true picture of intelligibility – the former even more than the latter. The young Hegel follows on their footsteps and tries to make out a theoretical framework of his own. The whole period since Stuttgart through Tübingen up to the Bern writings displays Hegel’s overall view on sensibility. In view of the discussion exposed here, I argue that by “heart” – as in his controversial writing *The Life of Jesus* – he meant an originating and simple experience of the world through nature and the community that achieves universal practical reason by comprising socially shared perceptive, affective and imaginative resources at play at the moment of a putative moral action.

As an impulse of the heart, reason should be sensible as a way of making the intelligible actual in the world.<sup>31</sup> The Hegelian intention is to search for an enlivened sensibility. This is the reason why Hegel invested his efforts in reworking practical reason (and not so much theoretical reason) focused on religion and the customs of the people. In the spirit of the people and its concrete life, the dictates of reason can no longer be restricted to the Kantian

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<sup>31</sup> According to Legros, one cannot “present the sensible as a limit to be surpassed, an obstacle to the surmounted, as an element that jams the actualization of morality”, because this would consist in “precisely operating the abstract separation that Hegel denounced and that the systems of morals presuppose” (LEGROS, 1980, p. 15).

should-be (*Sollen*), and should rather find a place within the harmony of being. This means that one can find – already in young Hegel’s writings – a search for the originating unity, a very different one, however, from the synthetic originating unity of apperception as presented in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* and the moral duality implied thereof. The Hegelian simple origin of the self is a practical one, that is, at the moment of acting upon the world, and it is already a unity of sensibility and intelligibility in its actual experience of the world.<sup>32</sup>

Along these lines, Hegel defines the human spirit as “the beautiful fragile plant of spirit free and open (*die schöne zarte Pflanze des offenen freien Sinnes*)” (*FVC*: 15). This already mentioned definition of the human spirit as free and open consists in the Hegelian opposition to the faculty-structured framework in the formation of knowledge.<sup>33</sup> This new status of reason that turns over to enlivened sensibility expresses Hegel’s struggle against philosophical Modernity, as the latter broadly speaking reduces every matter to an epistemological investigation concerning the relation between subject and object taken as positive self-enclosed entities. The subject as a supposedly interiority turned onto itself, and the object as an exteriority whose truth is sealed in itself, are circumscribed by a bordering relation, i.e., both parties are encased by an epistemological reduction. Since his youth, Hegel considers human spirit as ‘free and open’, i.e., the self is not conceived as shut off from the world, where reason operates with representations that do not reach out to the objects themselves in all their sensible extension. Hegel seeks an enlivened conception self (sensible, simple) as opposed to the enlightened self (rational, abstract) challenging the Kantian environment prevailing during his time. That is why Hegel asks of those who are reading him: “We are not to startle, therefore, if we find it that it must be believed that sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) is the fundamental element of every action and effort of men” (*FVC*: 10). One must take these writings then as his first assessment of the main issues to be delivered in extended and deepened theories later in his life. This is how, in Taminaux’s words, the young Hegel, mainly since the Tübingen period

[...] silently works to draft the traces of a practical reason that, differently from

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<sup>32</sup> Again, as Legros points out, “these [ideas of reason] can no longer be conceived in the framework of the dualism established by these systems of morals: they cannot penetrate the human nature if they are not originally united to sensibility” (LEGROS, 1980, p. 15).

<sup>33</sup> Commenting on this passage, Legros states that “The spirit, according to this metaphor, is not the junction of a passive faculty – sensibility – that would receive the impressions, and an active faculty – reason – that would try to organize them, not even the domain of an ensemble of sensible impulses; it is, on the contrary, ‘free and open’, in accordance, in original sympathy with the world, united with it without being the same thing” (LEGROS, 1980, p. 16).

the Kantian reason (and Fichtean), do not oppose sensibility, but is in a 'coalescence' estate with it, that do not oppose should-be with being, and at last, that does not have its basis on the autonomy of the I, but on a life that 'feels', 'acts' and 'finds itself' in the other. (TAMINIAUX, 1976, p. 13).

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