

Abstract

The work seeks to gain an understanding of the concept of spirit in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The objective will be met by means of Hegel's interpretation of Sophocles' *Antigone* and Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*. In its most immediate form the spirit appears as an organically structured whole which Hegel identifies with the Greek ethical substance. Superficially this substance is conceived as a harmonious organism; in reality – as Antigone's and Creon's paradigmatic conflict shows – it is beset by inner conflicts. The once unitary and organically structured spirit decomposes into individual forms of consciousness during the Roman period and develops in further course into a subject freed from anything substantial. It is in this course of the spirit evolving into a subject that Hegel presents his interpretation of *Rameau's Nephew*. Rameau represents the self-negating and self-destructive spirit, who has completely identified with Antigone's and Creon's revolt and has lost the capability of accepting anything not issuing from his consciousness. The last part of the work presents the spirit as a movement seeking to encompass both of these extremes, i.e. the extreme of the substance devoid of subject as well as the extreme of subject negating the substance. In the context of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* this can succeed only on condition that the subject subjects itself to the otherness of the substance willingly.

Keywords: Hegel, spirit, Diderot, Rameau's Nephew, Antigone, Sophocles, antiquity, Enlightenment