Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Philosophy & Humanistic Sciences
ISSN: 2284-5976 | e-ISSN: 2501-0409
Covered in: ERIH PLUS, CEEOL, Index Copernicus, CrossRef, CrossCheck, J-Gate, Google Scholar, Ideas RePeC, Econpapers, Socionet, KVK, WorldCat, EBSCO.

2023, Volume 10, Issue 3, pages: 1-14 | doi: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenphs/10.3/77

Hegelian Dialectical Interpretation of Plato's Moral Philosophy

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Abstract: *The duality between the supersensible and the sensible world is integrated by Hegel into a broader dialectical vision of Plato's thought. Within this perspective, several themes and dilemmas arise, including the philosopher as a contemplator of perfect Ideas but also as a leader of the ideal world, the autonomy of consciousness in its evolution towards absolute knowledge, the moral progress of humanity starting from the Platonic assumption of the Divinity as Demiurge, happiness and the enigma of evil in the conceptual-ethical opening anticipating Christianity, and the risks of stagnation at the level of the utopian city. This text attempts to highlight the Hegelian dialectical approach to these proposed subjects, at the dawn of universal philosophy, by Plato's thought.*

Keywords: *imperfect copies; perfect ideas; allegory of the cave; utopia; demiurge; dialectics.*

How to cite: Cucu, M. & Lența, O. (2023). Hegelian dialectical interpretation of Plato's moral philosophy. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Philosophy & Humanistic Sciences, 10* (3), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenphs/10.3/77

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Introductory meanings of the Hegelian understanding of the ontic bipolarity proposed by Plato

Hegelian thought found in Plato's work the most important conceptual-moral development as a preparation for Christian era. In practice, Platonic epistemology and moral philosophy prepared the universal consciousness of humanity for the impact of Christian revelation. The conceptual organization based on the postulation of the bipolarity of the world into the sensible and the supersensible dimensions, this vision which aimed at a decisive departure from the tradition of pre-Socratic speculations, imbued with mythology, opened, in Hegel's view, the ground for the slow but firm assumption of Christian moral values (Hegel, 1998, 11). Plato redirected consciousness towards the intelligible world seen as a dimension of the supersensible, an authentic empire of the Spirit, thus consciousness itself takes on the form of the intelligible and reveals itself as a reflection of the Spirit, an idea that Christianity will take up, developing it within the frameworks of its dogmatic and mystical exposition alike (Hegel, 1963, 463). At the same time, discussing the human soul, Plato proposed a new angle of conceptual approach to the destiny of the human being. He believed that the soul possesses an irrational part and a rational part, the former acting like an opening towards the instinctuality of corporeality, while the latter being the window to the world of the spirit, a world Plato called the world of perfect Ideas. (Hegel, 1998, 21) Therefore, Plato proposes a universal ontic scenario, preceding Christianity, in which we have a world of imperfect copies, essentially the dimension of empirical immanence, of ephemeral spatiotemporality, and a world of perfect Ideas, where Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and Justice are the ideas and poles of force. In this bipolar ontological framework, the destiny of man is to withdraw from the influences of corporeality and to participate in the world of perfect Ideas, a vision reiterated by Christianity and resized starting from the already stabilized frameworks of the Old Testament tradition in order to surpass them through a major spiritual resurrection proposing new theological and moral concepts such as salvation or the Kingdom of Heaven. For Plato, man's highest concern is philosophy; it is the gift that man has received and which he must fully assume.

The philosopher as the leader of the ideal city and the contemplator of the world of perfect Ideas in the Hegelian dialectical version

But what is philosophy for Plato, Hegel wonders, is the meaning attributed to it by the ancient Greeks identical to that which the modern world, Hegel's contemporary world, puts into play? If history undergoes an evolution, in the sense of Hegelian dialectics, with each historical stage opposing another stage, from the confrontation of the two resulting in a higher stage, then the stage of the Greek world required the assumption of philosophy not only at the individual level but also at the political and social level. From this perspective, Plato proposes in the Republic an ideal city-state in which the leaders, the rulers, were to be first and foremost philosophers, that is, bearers of reason who participate in the absolute Ideas. (Platon, 1986, 267) Morality, the ethical axiomatic of this perfect society, could only possess an architecture that revolved around the idea of participation (Hegel, 1998, 23). In Hegel's opinion, at that early moment in history, the debate on the possibility of achieving an ideal world on earth, where man fulfills his destiny and attains earthly happiness, was necessary. Later, with the expansion of Christian values, these ideas were embraced and postulated in all the major constitutions of important states. Of course, the principle of charity, of loving one's neighbor, was often not respected even within the Christian world, but it formed the basis for recognizing the rights of every individual within the major legislative systems. Essentially, Hegel argues that the difference between theory and practice remained equally strong, with humanity largely unable to translate the Platonic imperatives of participation in the world of ideas or those of Christianity into daily life.

But the progress brought about by the dialectic of history lies in the fact that the major moral landmarks, postulated through Plato's dual-plane thinking and the religious and later Christian theological vision, were placed at the foundation of European civilization. Hegel states, in this regard, that beginning with the migration of peoples and the development of Christianity in the Mediterranean basin, for almost two thousand years, the constant effort of European civilization has been to incorporate this transcendent message into the social, political, and cultural system, that is, to integrate the idea of the supersensible world into the framework of the sensible world, to assimilate the consciousness of the supersensible into the dialectic that unites the performance of the individual in society with society itself (Hegel, 1998, 26). The ideal of the perfect city remained a utopia, a distant scenario but one that constantly fascinated the centuries that followed Plato.

Understanding that often the essence of Plato's philosophy was best expressed through the symbolism of myths (Hegel, 2000, 48) and attempting a dialectical interpretation of the Allegory of the Cave, (Hegel, 1998, 28) perhaps the most representative myth for approaching the theme of earthly ideality in Plato's metaphysics, Hegel will ask why the philosopher must lead the ideal city, he being precisely the one who liberates himself from the group of those captive in the depths of the cave evoked by the famous myth? Because his personality represents the middle term of junction and reunification of sensible knowledge and supersensible knowledge. Thus, human knowledge starts from the data it holds in the cave of shadows, of indefinite obscurity. What one holds at this gnoseological stage, man is nothing but impression, opinion, informational relativity, what appears to him to see, perceive, and understand. The event of the liberation of one of the members of the group evoked in Plato's myth as being captive in the depths of the cave represents the dialectical leap from the sensible to reflection, to meditation capable of introducing thought into the flow of sensible information. The philosopher, the one liberated, is the exponent of moving, mobile thought, the bearer of contemplation that captures and incorporates the data of the sensible only to surpass them towards a higher stage, towards a superior stage of knowledge, supreme knowledge. Therefore, according to the Hegelian interpretation, we will have a sensible consciousness, dominated by impressions and immediate data, then comes the rational knowledge of consciousness that reflects, breaks away from the shadows of the sensible cave, and looks at the reality outside the cave, beginning to build laws, norms of contemplation. This stage mediates towards the phase of absolute knowledge, more precisely, towards the level of knowledge oriented towards the absolute, towards thought that is in itself and for itself (Hegel, 1998, 29-31).

The autonomy of consciousness that leans towards absolute knowledge and the necessity of surpassing the relativity of perception.

Hegel will evoke the dialogue Phaedrus, along with the Republic, trying to identify the dialectical formula that is similar for the evolution of the soul in relation to corporeality. And the human body can be thought of as a cave that retains, encloses, blocks, and imprisons the soul and its power of knowledge. Discussing Eros, Plato will consider that authentic Eros does not represent madness, a storm of the senses, but rather a full desire for attaining happiness through knowledge, a nostalgia for the eternal truth that man knew before his earthly life in space and time. In Plato's view, the soul

is immortal, it moves on its own and self-determines itself against the body, which receives its movement from its exteriority, being lifeless without it (Platon, 2011, 73-74). Thus, the soul will always seek the basis of its eternity, its authentic homeland, which is represented by the world of perfect Ideas. Hegel insists, interpreting this theory of the immortality of the soul in the scenario of ontic bipolarity proposed by Plato, on the fact that immortality means autonomy, which can self-determine and maintain itself in this self-determination. Through interference with sensations coming from corporeality, this self-determination is reduced, practically the soul loses the advanced degree of freedom and declines to the level of subordination in relation to the body it begins to serve. Only through the effort of education can the remembrance of the perfect Ideas encountered by the soul before incarnating be generated. Only later does the process of participation in these Ideas of transcendent nature appear (Hegel, 1998, 33-34). The metaphor of the winged soul, which loses its wings and descends into the world of materiality by attaching itself to things and assuming their weight, is interpreted by Hegel as the forgetting of the principle of self-determination by consciousness, which allows itself to be led by sensations imposed from corporeality, practically forgetting that it represents the dynamic, living, immortal, free, autonomous factor in relation to matter, instinctuality, and impressions offered by bodily perceptions. (Hegel, 1998, 36) In this context, Hegel asks, what is the Idea? In the dimension of his dialectical thinking, the Idea (eidos) will represent the foundation and the original founding aspect, on the scale of the Spirit's dynamics in history, of what Hegel will understand as the concept (der Begriff), initially seen as the unity between form and content, between identity and difference (Surber, 2019, 131–145). However, Hegel warns that if we simply characterize the Idea as a transcendent entity, we risk a conceptual drift towards a superficial perspective in which everything abstract could be classified as transcendent. In fact, Plato starts from an extremely empirical observation. The world of matter, of primary sensation, the universe of corporeality and its perceptions is a relative dimension. Relativity is dictated, in this context, by the mobility of transition, of passing from past to future. This world of sensations does not present stability; it passes, it consumes itself, and thus, the entire existential complex encompassing humanity at both the individual and collective levels is subject to dissolution. Therefore, life in the cave of imperfect copies is not only subject to illusion at the level of knowledge but also subordinated to ephemerality. Then, Plato considers, the duty of human beings is to detach themselves from this flow of time that inevitably leads to death, to attempt liberation from the immanence of the cave and the

sensations emanating from corporeality. What could be the only path of such an escape? For Plato, reason, contemplation represents that sought-after salvific endeavor. In practice, through thinking, man comes into contact with the perfect Ideas, dedicates himself to them, participates in them, and remembers the lost eternity before incarnation. Before assuming the existence of the transcendent factor, we have, therefore, the factor of reason which opposes sensation, according to Hegelian dialectics. Thus, the Idea constitutes the universal by definition that can be reached by surpassing the particular dialectically through active-opposing reason in relation to the impact of sensation. Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and Justice constitute the central Ideas, and their universality is the ultimate stage of abstraction and spiritualization that human beings can know and assume (Hegel, 1998, 46). These Ideas are so correlated with each other that they constitute a unified meta-existential architecture. What is the connection between such unity and a possible ultimate moral stage, the most evolved ethical level that man can reach?

The dialectic of knowledge stages and moral evolution as a process correlated with the understanding of the Platonic Divinity as Demiurge.

In Hegel's view, for Plato, there is only one Truth and one virtue, that of seeking the Truth. The sensible is relative, it must be disturbed, according to Hegel's formulation, by the intervention of thought as a middle term that dialectically elevates human consciousness towards absolute knowledge (Hegel, 1998, 48). Therefore, the Hegelian triad thesis-antithesis-synthesis crystallizes also at the level of interpreting Plato's theory of Ideas. But Truth is closely correlated with Goodness so that no dialectical effort to leap beyond sensation can lead to supreme knowledge, that is, to Truth without correlation with the act of participating in the Idea of Goodness. Why does Plato relate the two Ideas, that of Truth and that of Goodness, so evidently? Probably to express the difference between the field of knowledge of the person who assumes not only Truth but also Goodness and the one who seeks Truth in the absence of Goodness. Thus, one cannot reach Truth without performing Goodness or, in Plato's language, without participating in the Idea of Goodness. A person consumed by passions, hatred, envy can use their conceptual abilities to the fullest extent, they will only reach reality but not Truth; they will be at most intelligent but not wise. In fact, they remain in the cave of the shadows of knowledge even if they live with the impression of falsely possessing the prime data at the ontic and

gnoseological levels. The consciousness that from the beginning assumes the Idea of Goodness and steadfastly follows it, despite the huge difficulties generated by this choice, can reach the Idea of Truth and absolute knowledge or wisdom. Importantly, Hegel argues, we must understand that all this immense effort that human consciousness must make for absolute knowledge is not, in Plato's view, an act of confrontation and annulment, but rather manifests as a dialectical endeavor that surpasses through assimilation and sublimation. Thus, the opposites engaged in this process, namely sensory knowledge and rational reflection, are not mutually annulled by the projection towards absolute knowledge and, eventually, its attainment. On the contrary, both are preserved in their essence but undergo a process of exceptional evolution, of full perfection. The information provided by sensation, along with the contemplative thoughts of reason, is retained with their contribution to the entire cognitive process but their status and importance are resized (Hegel, 1998, 49). The knowledge of the shadows in the symbolic cave evoked by Plato is not annulled; it remains as necessary knowledge but not sufficient, just as the meditation of the one who liberates themselves from the cave is preserved but not solitary, rather integrated into the schema of evolution towards absolute knowledge. Thus, Hegel considers, in this extensive gnoseological but also moral process, nothing is lost; everything is viewed as an intermediate stage of evolution, as a necessary stage in a much larger process of perfecting human beings who aspire towards the perfection of existence and knowledge, towards the absolute of virtue and supratemporal understanding. Only at this ultimate level does the realization emerge that the idea of Divinity, of perfect beauty, and of eternity represents the supreme of moral landmarks for human beings, the ultimate goal of all efforts not only of knowledge but also of existential conduct, the Idea that exists in and for itself, therefore self-sufficient, being fully self-determined by its own eternal will (Hegel, 1998, 56). This evolutionary dialectic, this upward endeavor of knowledge and the degree of morality assumed by the human consciousness, would not be possible without the architecture of the world, which includes the stages of sensation and matter or corporeality, then those of the intellect reflecting, and finally those of the divine absolute. But what lies at the basis of this architecture, who or what guarantees such a cosmic complexity that includes the dimensions evoked as frameworks through which human consciousness can evolve? Hegel refers here to Plato's dialogue Timaeus, opening a line of interpretation of Plato's ethics from the philosophy of nature presented in this dialogue. From the perspective of Hegelian dialectics, Plato's vision of theological themes undergoes significant progress compared to the entire

previous mythological tradition. Pre-Socratic thought, but especially the poetico-mythic foundation of the ancient Greeks, revolved around the idea of a cosmos that could possess primordial, founding elements or was generated by divine forces but outside any rules, moral imperatives. The image of the universe before Socrates and Plato is that of a nature where the blind forces of matter govern devastatingly and mercilessly over human destiny. The gods know no tolerance or moral principles; on the contrary, according to these proto-theologies, they are dominated by envy, passions, jealousy, unrestrained fury. Hegel emphasizes that Nemesis or Dike, the goddess of destiny, does not punish immorality, in the view of the ancient Greeks, but only the exceeding of measure, excellence. At the root of the gods' punishment lies, most often, envy for the one who is superior, for the man who goes beyond the human measure, who surpasses himself. Following Socrates, Plato will consider that the moment of detachment from these poetico-mythological visions, which practically projected the vices and defects of humans onto the gods, is necessary, practically shaping their character according to the whims and immoral behaviors of humanity. Hegel argues that a major leap is made by breaking away from these rudimentary interpretations of the Divine, and a superior phase is entered by Plato's introduction of the image of a Deity devoid of these human vices. Plato urges us, following in the footsteps of Pythagoras, to look at the cosmos, our earthly world but also the constellations that open to our eyes when we gaze at the starry sky. This world encompasses, on a universal scale, harmony, beauty, proportion; it tends towards the Good and not towards destruction and chaos. There may be deviations, eruptions, disturbing occurrences, but they are isolated in relation to the constant factor of the universal, represented by the Good. Therefore, the Creator can only be good in the sense that He pursues, from the beginning, the universal good, its full fulfillment, and the avoidance of negative interruptions, the extinction, the diminution of the fragmented manifestation of evil. In the cosmology and genesis he proposes, Plato starts from the idea that God is a creator in the sense of a demiurgic presence.

"Demiurgos" means "craftsman" in Greek. Therefore, He does not create matter, as is argued in the Judeo-Christian tradition of creation ex nihilo, out of nothing, but He shapes it, forms it, gives it structure, organization; He practically controls chaos and transforms it into harmony. The world becomes like His supreme intellect; He cannot be envious of the world (Platon, 1993, 144) because this would mean a contradiction, being envious of Himself (Platon, 1993, 70).

The problem of evil in Plato's dialectical version and the anticipation of Christian morality.

Although one cannot speak of a proper theological moral view, this new perspective proposed by Plato constituted an intermediate stage towards the subsequent revelation of Christianity. Only in Christian religion, Hegel considers, does the dialectic of Spirit fulfill itself also in the theological realm. Thus, Divinity generates the transition from the first ontic phase, that of the Creator or the Demiurge in Plato's version, to the phase of the divine subject. God becomes a subject, a distinct human individuality, and thus reveals Himself by making the dialectical leap from the stage of a hidden all-powerful entity to the stage of self-revelation through subjectivity. Thus, He creates not only the world but also His Son in whom He realizes Himself as something else, as a dynamic autonomous form, but in this entire dialectical process, He remains in Himself. He reunites with Himself through this Mediator, and the fall into human individuality is elevated again through sacrifice and complete love. Thus, the Spirit returns to itself, the Divinity becomes from immediate absolute, mediated and mediator, and then returns to itself, confirming its absolute self-unity. (Platon, 1993, 74-75)

It is not only the dialectic of Creation but, primarily, the dialectic of love towards Creation, a dialectic that obliges creation, and implicitly humans, to assume this love, to participate, in the sense of Plato's metaphysics, in the Idea of absolute Goodness. Within such a mobility of Spirit, love manifests itself in its fullness, as a state that involves no unresolved contradictions (Hegel, 1961, 304), an experience that neither restricts nor is restricted, a unique feeling that cannot be placed among other feelings but above all, having its direction both horizontally, among people, and vertically, from Creator to creation and vice versa. Yet, amidst this relational perfection between Creator and creation, evil appears. Is it a deviation or a constant, an infinite occurrence parallel to universal Good, or a relative fact integrated into a much larger system of the Creator that we cannot rationally comprehend? Hegel, interpreting Plato, will consider that even in this matter, the dialectic and the thesis-antithesis-synthesis system are definitive in understanding the processes at play. Thus, Hegel comments, Plato maintains that the world is perfect like its Creator, and human beings should not be affected by illness and the dissolution of old age and death. The movement impregnated throughout the universe by the Creator is not one of dissolution or destruction but, on the contrary, circular and conservative. However, chaotic forces act upon the perfection of human beings and reposition them in an inferior state, disturbing them so that they

lose their perfection and existence in the contemplation of the Ideas, falling into a great forgetfulness of them. The descent into temporality is merely the result of destabilizing external interventions. But even these energies are not outside the supreme order of things. Thus, we have a higher phase of perfection, where humans do not know evil, being in the ecstasy of contemplating perfect Ideas. Then comes the second phase of imbalance, which determines the incarnation of humans with the whole range of sufferings and dissolutions at the level of consciousness, among which illness, aging, and forgetfulness are the main plagues. It is the stage of finitude, difference, rupture, and fragmentation. But this level is only intermediate; it is a transitional stage. The stage of the soul's return to the spiritual part follows, as Hegel would say. In fact, Spirit departs from itself to return to itself, but it has never been anything other than itself essentially. Thus, the dialectical process of confrontation between the infinite and the finite of human consciousness can only be completed in the third phase, that of absolute knowledge, the superior return to the eternity of Ideas. In practice, Hegel argues, evil is included and assimilated by good in the sense that the Idea of the infinite already contains within itself the idea of the finite, which means that it has been overcome as a necessary but transitory factor in the dialectical evolution of Spirit, both at the level of individual human life and in the vast movements within the history of humanity. Evil cannot sustain itself in the life of the individual or of peoples; it is only a dramatic means of final fulfillment of good. Starting from the demiurgic vision proposed by Plato, Hegel therefore considers that the finite is encompassed by the Infinite not only at the onto-creational level but also at the moral level, with evil being included and subordinated to good, it not having real autonomy but only manifesting the illusion of false independence.

The theme of happiness in the context of knowledge of necessary causes and divine ones. The empty or insufficient ideal of the ideal city from the Hegelian perspective

The world is conceived in this context as being perfect from a mechanistic standpoint and happy from a moral standpoint, just as happy as its Creator. The entire universe tends toward this happiness, even though sometimes, at the individual and collective levels, dialectical transition through evil is necessary (Hegel, 1998, 76-77). Plato's cosmological vision proposes a perfect universe that reflects the perfection and ecstatic happiness of its Creator. In this cosmos, there are two types of causes, the

necessary and the divine. Hegel emphasizes that Plato does not postulate a simple contradiction between these two categories of causes but maintains his dialectical perspective even in this context, advocating the necessity for these two realities to reunite universally. Thus, man is duty-bound to seek and understand the necessary causes of the world, namely the external relationships of things, beings, and related situations. He must investigate the created world and understand its laws and the beauty of the harmony that characterizes it. But at the same time, man must also investigate the divine causes of the world, with the pursuit of the Divine being his highest goal, the only path to achieving happiness. According to Plato, in Hegel's interpretation, a happy life cannot be attained without constant reference to knowledge that transcends the immanent, to knowledge that appeals to the divine mystery. (Platon, 1993, 83) Therefore, we have a rational knowledge approach that describes the physical world and a metaphysical knowledge approach that targets the prime principles, the transcendent foundations of the world, the world of perfect Ideas, and ultimately, the presence of the Demiurge, as Plato names it. These two types of knowledge do not exclude each other; on the contrary, they complement each other dialectically in a synthesis that determines absolute knowledge. Knowledge of the world leads to exceptional progress in human life and intelligence, while knowledge of the divine leads to significant moral evolution of the human being and the attainment of a happy life, as far as it can be admitted within the bounds of human finitude. Hegel considers that Plato will propose an understanding of the moral nature of man starting, paradoxically, not from the individuality of human consciousness, but from the collective consciousness of the city, a matter addressed primarily in the work "The Republic." For Plato, the moral dynamics of man cannot be analyzed except from the understanding of his existence within the organic complexity of the state. (Platon, 1993, 87) Why does Plato's thinking seemingly position itself in this strange way regarding the theme of morality? Because he connects this theme to the idea of justice, which can only be fulfilled within the framework and dimension of the human city, within the perimeter of the civic collectivity of human beings. Thus, only by examining the state will we be able to understand the mechanisms of justice and implicitly of morality. In fact, Plato initially proposes the image of an ideal city, a society that is perfect from an ethical point of view. Within this society, which could be characterized as utopian, the human individual integrates as part of a universal moral mechanism, a behavioral-ethical piece included in a huge gear characterized by a collective ethics, by a common axiology. The human subject cannot be inherently moral; he must assume moral values, and this is achieved gradually, in a way

that Hegel considers dialectical. Thus, we have a first phase of this process, the social categories, which involve a first separation of moral rules. Then comes the phase of social virtues, the crystallization of clear moral obligations that each social category must respect without deviation. The synthesis phase follows, the stage in which the individual, the personal consciousness, assumes both the division of social categories and the distribution of ethical responsibilities in relation to them. Thus, he will know to which social category he belongs, what ethical responsibilities and virtues belong to him, and how important it is to respect this moral code (Platon, 1993, 92-93). In Plato's vision, continues Hegel, in this perfect city there would be three fundamental social categories: the guardians, actually the moral guardians of the city, those who have primarily philosophical and scientific training, the warriors or those who are career military, and the class of craftsmen and farmers, those who ensure the daily life of the city (Platon, 1993, 93). Four virtues should be defining for this ideal society: wisdom, a trait that would address the universal knowledge and the world of perfect Ideas, a characteristic belonging to the first social category; courage, or the assertion and enforcement of law and moral standards; temperance as a quality that should govern all social categories, being a formidable weapon against unbridled passions and vices; and finally, justice, a quality through which each individual's energy would be redirected towards the collective effort of the entire city, achieving a real balance between individual contribution to the general welfare and the individual compensation in relation to the personal contribution offered (Platon, 1993, 94-95). From the perspective of Hegelian dialectics, Spirit does not fulfill itself at this stage; practically, it moves towards a higher phase, surpassing the historical sequence of the ancient Greeks and Plato's utopia of the ideal city. Why does the paradigm of the ideal city prove to be only a transitional zone? Hegel observes that in the desire to neutralize the influence of vices, passions within the dynamics of the ideal city, Plato strikes at the concept of free will, practically transforming the human being into a mechanical presence, devoid of feelings by excluding the right to property and family, by denying any form of assertion of subjective freedom, and thus of passion, emotional experiences. In Plato's city, Hegel notes, the absence of feelings leads to the exclusion of the principle of confrontation, and without assertion and confrontation, there can be no authentic individual and collective progress. Lacking synthesis, thus missing the entire dialectical process, the citizen member of such a utopian community is a stranger to real human life, perhaps a Übermensch in the Nietzschean sense or another existential configuration distant from the reality of the human soul. True to

his dialectical vision, Hegel will consider that, from the perspective of moral philosophy, Plato's city is a necessary stage in the universal course of Spirit. This republic-city is nothing but the expression of an *empty ideal* (Hegel, 1969, 16), according to the Hegelian formulation, a necessary but transitory ideal. Thus, it starts from the phase of primary individual affirmation, of a bodily type, passes through the phase of collective generalization where rationality reflects on absolute Ideas and imposes its reflection at a general level, to the stage of a utopian society. Then, the shining importance and unique value of the individual, the consciousness of each human being, are fulfilled in a third stage, a stage of synthesis, the stage of Christian religion. In this stage, human personality possesses infinite value as the subject of divine grace, manifesting its absolute relationship with the Divine as Spirit destined for the highest freedom (Hegel, 1966, 313). Only at this level does the importance of sensory individuality unite with the value of collective expression, both being highlighted in a new phase, that of recognizing the unique value of each individual and fully embracing love for one's neighbor. For Hegel, only in this third, higher, and synthetic interval does the individual soul reveal itself to be an end in itself, the most necessary reality for the evolution of Spirit in the world. This aspect forms the foundation of Christian compassion (Hegel, 1998, 98-99).

Conclusions open to interpretation and the risks of human consciousness remaining in the stage of the utopian city by rejecting the dialectical evolution towards a new gnoseological-moral phase.

The individual progresses from the phase of sensory perception to the stage of reflexive knowledge, corresponding in Plato's ideal city to the act of collective learning, the endeavor of public education dictated by the leadership of philosophers, those who possess genuine wisdom (Hegel, 2006, 176). Then, there is the leap to a new paradigm of Spirit and human consciousness, namely the level of individual knowledge assumption, an assumed knowledge of the world and especially of one's own self against the backdrop of the search for and revelation of divine presence and the world of perfect Ideas. Hegelian dialectical interpretation of Plato's moral philosophy constitutes an endeavor that has retained its resonance throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In practice, the failure of implementing utopian societies in the twentieth century, proposed by major ideologies viewed as political religions, especially communism and Nazism, as well as the collapse of the idols around which these scenarios revolved on a global scale, were already anticipated in Hegelian thought. The Nietzschean

Übermensch or the Soviet man are entities that have catalyzed the energy of the utopian societies they claimed allegiance to, societies about which Hegel, interpreting Plato, already asserted were incomplete, could only be considered as transitional working hypotheses, as intermediate stages towards another level of society and human valorization. To what extent, after the tragedies of the twentieth century, this third stage could be represented by a reassumption of universal values, only the dynamics of the future could answer.

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