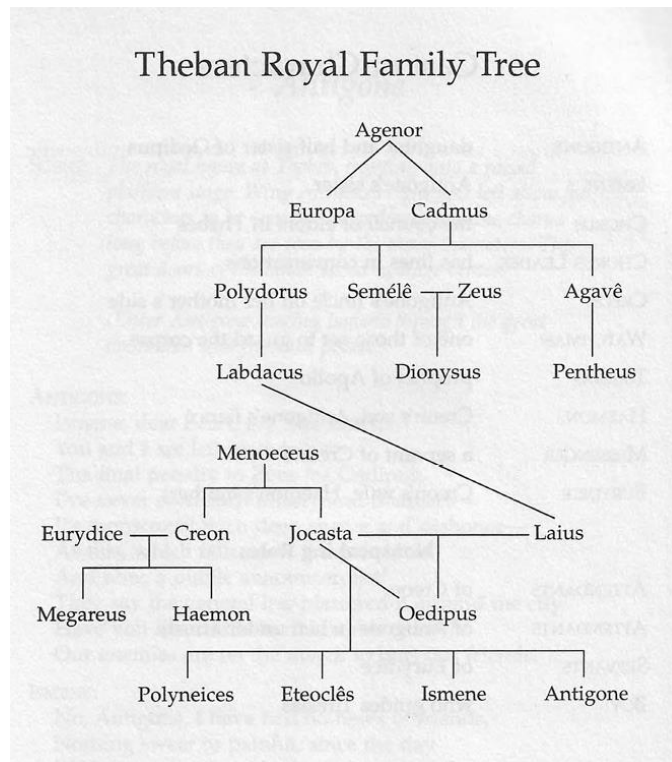
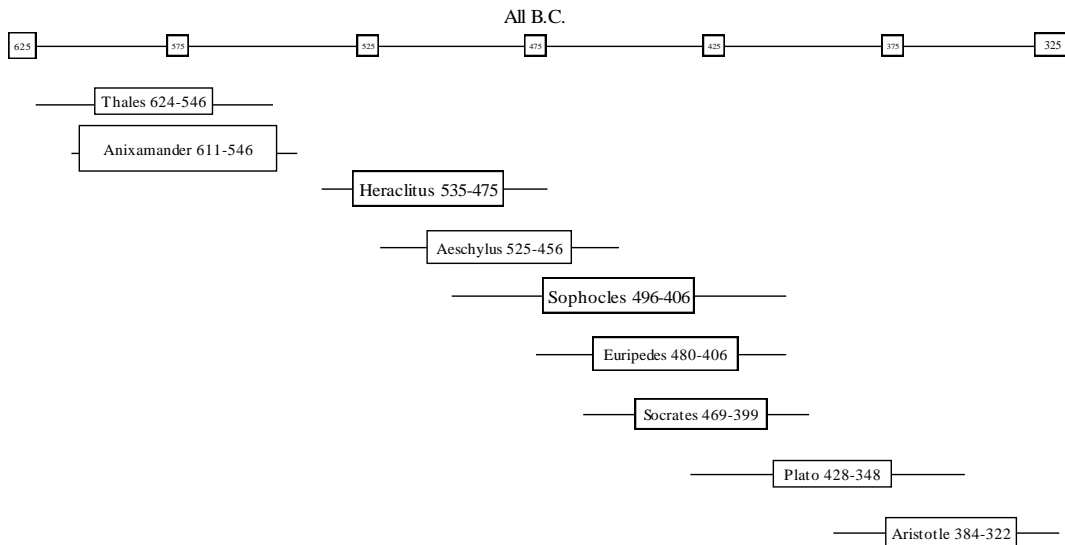


## Week 8: Traditional Normativity as Immediate *Sittlichkeit*

### For Orientation:



### Terminology:

*Sitte* = (ethos) customs, mores, social practices governing practical deliberation and normative assessment.

**“What observation knew as a given object in which the self had no part, is here a given custom [Sitte].” [PG 461]**

*Sittlichkeit* is a matter of the *bindingness* (Kant’s ‘*Verbindlichkeit*,’ ‘*Gültigkeit*’) of norms.

*Sittlichkeit* is the authority of normative *statuses* over normative *attitudes*, in the sense that in a *sittlich* community, individuals *identify* with (and so are willing to *sacrifice* for) the norms, *rather than* their own particular subjective attitudes—what one eternally risks and occasionally sacrifices *for* the norms.

*Substance/Essence* [Substanz/Wesen]:

*Essence* is normativity: the norms implicit in the communities practices of deliberation and assessment, attribution of authority and responsibility.

*Substance* is the community and its implicitly normative practices.

**Three stages of Hegelian history:**

- Stage One:            *Sittlichkeit*, no modern subjectivity;
- Stage Two:        Alienation, modern subjectivity;
- Stage Three:      *Sittlichkeit* (in a new form, compatible with subjectivity),  
Modern subjectivity (in a new, *sittlich* form).

	<b>No Subjectivity</b>	<b>Subjectivity</b>
<b>Sittlichkeit</b>	Stage One	Stage Three
<b>Alienation</b>	X	Stage Two

Question One: What exactly is it that traditional forms of life got wrong about us that modern forms of life get right? What have we gained? What is it that we have learned and incorporated into our practices and institutions that makes us *modern* selves? What is the “rise of subjectivity”?

Question Two: What is pre-modern *Sittlichkeit*?

Question Three: What is modern alienation?

Question Four: Why did the advent of modern subjectivity bring with it alienation—that is, why did these two structures arise together?

Question Five: What is wrong with the idea of *pre-modern alienation*?

Question Six: How are we to understand Stage Three? Why does the insight into subjectivity not *entail* alienation? How can what was progressive about the transition to modernity be preserved, while re-achieving *Sittlichkeit*?

Question Seven: Can a version of the expansive, heroic conception of agency be reconciled with acknowledging the rights of intention and knowledge?

**Texts:**

***Sittlichkeit:***

“What observation knew as a given object in which the self had no part, is here a given custom [Sitte].” [PG 461]

...unalienated spirits transparent to themselves, stainless celestial figures that preserve in all their differences the undefiled innocence and harmony of their **essential** nature. The relationship of self-consciousness to them is equally simple and clear. They are, and nothing more; this is what constitutes the awareness of its relationship to them. Thus, Sophocles' Antigone acknowledges them as the unwritten and infallible law of the gods.

They are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting,  
Though where they came from, none of us can tell.

They are. If I inquire after their origin and confine them to the point whence they arose, then I have transcended them; for now it is I who am the universal, and they are the conditioned and limited. **If they are supposed to be validated by my insight, then I have already denied their unshakeable, intrinsic being**, and regard them as something which, for me, is perhaps true, but also is perhaps not true. Ethical [*sittlich*] disposition consists just in **sticking steadfastly to what is right**, and abstaining from all attempts to move or shake it, or derive it. [PG 437]

“...immediate...ethical consciousness which **knows its duty and does it**, and is bound up with it as its own nature.”[PG 597]

***The Family and Gender Essentialism:***

However, although the Family is immediately determined as an ethical being, it is within itself an ethical entity only so far as it is not the natural relationship of its members... **this natural relationship is just as much a spiritual one, and it is only as a spiritual entity that it is ethical**...[T]he ethical principle must be placed in the relation of the individual member of the Family to the whole Family as the **Substance**...[PG 452]

[T]he two sexes overcome their [merely] natural being and appear in their ethical significance, as diverse beings who share between them the two distinctions belonging to the ethical substance. These two universal beings of the ethical world have, therefore, their specific individuality in naturally distinct self-consciousnesses, because **the ethical Spirit is the immediate unity of the substance with self-consciousness**—an immediacy which appears, therefore, both from the side of reality and of difference, as the existence of a natural difference....It is now the specific antithesis of the **two sexes whose natural existence acquires at the same time the significance of their ethical determination**. [459]

“Nature, not the accident of circumstances or choice, assigns one sex to one law, the other to the other law.” [PG 465]

Thus, human law in its universal existence, that is, the community, in general is, in its setting itself into activity, the manliness of the community and, in its actual activity, *is* the government, *moving* itself and *sustaining* itself by absorbing into itself the particularization of the penates, that is, their self-sufficient individualization into different families over which women preside, and by preserving them as dissolved within its fluidity's continuity. However, the family is in general at the same time its element and its universal activating ground is individual consciousness. Since the community gives

itself enduring existence only by disrupting familial happiness and by dissolving self-consciousness into the universal, **it creates an internal enemy for itself in what it suppresses and what is at the same time essential to it (femininity in general).** **Femininity — the community's eternal irony** — [erzeugt es sich an dem, was es unterdrückt und was ihm zugleich wesentlich ist, an der Weiblichkeit überhaupt seinen inneren Feind. Diese - **die ewige Ironie des Gemeinwesens**] changes by intrigue the government's universal purpose into a private end, transforms its universal activity into this determinate individual's work, and turns the state's universal property topsy-turvy into the family's possession and ornament. In this way, **the feminine turns to ridicule the earnest wisdom of maturity**, which, being dead to individuality — to pleasure and consumption as well as to actual activity — only thinks of and is concerned for the universal; she turns this mature wisdom into an object of ridicule for immature, high-spirited youths, and into an object of contempt for their enthusiasm, and she elevates in general youth's force into what count as valid — elevating the son, born to the mother as her master, **the brother as one in whom the sister finds a man as an equal with herself**, and the youth through whom the daughter, freed from her non-self-sufficiency, achieves **the enjoyment and the dignity of womanhood.** — **The community, however, can only sustain itself by suppressing this spirit of individuality**; and because that spirit is an essential moment, the community equally creates it by its repressive stance towards it as a hostile principle. Nevertheless, since this principle, in separating itself from universal purposes, is only evil, is within itself nothing, it would be incapable of accomplishing anything if the community itself were not to recognize the force of youth (the manhood, which, while immature, is still subsumed under individuality) as the *force* of the whole. For the community is a people, it is itself individuality, and it is only essentially for *itself* in that *other individualities* are *for it*, only in that it *excludes* these from itself and knows itself to be independent of them. [PG 475]

**Burial:**

**Death... is a state which has been reached immediately, in the course of Nature, not the result of an action consciously done.** The duty of the member of a Family is on that account to add this aspect, in order that the individual's ultimate being, too, shall not belong solely to Nature and remain something irrational, but **shall be something done**, and the right of consciousness be asserted in it. [PG 452]

The family “interrupts the work of Nature”, it keeps away from the dead this dishonouring of him by unconscious appetites and abstract entities, and puts its own action in their place...The Family thereby **makes him a member of a community** which prevails over and holds under control the forces of particular material elements and the lower forms of life, which sought to unloose themselves against him and to destroy him. [PG 452]

Because, on the one hand, the ethical order essentially consists in this immediate firmness of decision, and for that reason there is for consciousness essentially only one law, while, on the other hand, the ethical powers are real and effective in the self of consciousness, these powers acquire the significance of excluding and

opposing one another.... The ethical consciousness, **because it is decisively for one of the two powers, is essentially character**; it does not accept that both have the same essential nature. For this reason, the opposition between them appears as an unfortunate collision of duty merely with a reality which possesses no rights of its own.... Since it sees right only on one side and wrong on the other, that consciousness which belongs to the divine law sees in the other side only the violence of human caprice, while that which holds to human law sees in the other only the self-will and disobedience of the individual who insists on being his own authority. [PG 466]

The wrong which can be inflicted on an individual in the ethical realm is simply this, that **something merely happens to him**...the consciousness of [those who share] the blood of the individual repair this wrong in such a way that **what has simply happened becomes rather a work deliberately done**...[PG 462]

*The Advent of Modernity:*

[S]elf-consciousness...learns through its own act the contradiction of those powers into which the substance divided itself and their mutual downfall, as well as the contradiction between its knowledge of the ethical character of its action, and what is in its own proper nature ethical, and thus finds its own downfall. In point of fact, however, the ethical substance has developed through this process into actual self-consciousness; in other words, this particular self has become the actuality of what it is in essence; but precisely in this development the ethical order has been destroyed. [PG 445]

Guilt is not an indifferent, ambiguous affair, as if the deed as actually seen in the light of day could, or perhaps could not, be the action of the self, as if with the doing of it there could be linked something external and accidental that did not belong to it, from which aspect, therefore, the action would be innocent. [PG 468]

Ethical self-consciousness now learns from its deed the developed nature of what it *actually* did...The resolve [Entschluß], however, is *in itself* the negative aspect which confronts the resolve with an 'other', something alien to the resolve which knows what it does. Actuality therefore holds concealed within it the other aspect which is alien to this knowledge, and does not reveal the whole truth about itself to consciousness: the son does not recognize his father in the man who has wronged him and whom he slays, nor his mother in the queen whom he makes his wife. **In this way, a power which shuns the light of day ensnares the ethical consciousness, a power which breaks forth only after the deed is done, and seizes the doer in the act.** For the accomplished deed is the removal of the antithesis between the knowing self and the actuality confronting it.... [PG 469]