

Claudio Cesa: Verso l'eticità. Saggi di storia della filosofia. [Der Sittlichkeit entgegen. Aufsätze zur Geschichte der Philosophie.] Edited by Carla De Pascale/Luca Fonnesu/Alessandro Savorelli. Edizioni della Normale: Pisa 2013. 256 pp.

The volume *Verso l'eticità. Saggi di storia della filosofia [Towards Ethical Life. Essays on the History of Philosophy]* provides an extensive selection of Claudio Cesa's philosophical research on the topic of ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*] in German Idealism, edited by Carla De Pascale, Luca Fonnesu and Alessandro Savorelli. The collection, celebrating Cesa's 85th birthday, gathers together several essays published by Cesa in different languages between 1977 and 2008. The book is divided into two parts: The first, entitled "Verso l'eticità" [Towards Ethical Life], focuses on the genesis of the notion of *Sittlichkeit* in the post-Kantian tradition, exploring the difference between *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität* especially in Hegel. The second part, called *Itinerari [Itineraries]*, is a selection of Cesa's inquiries into the political thought of classical German philosophy, including his investigations into the role of state, community and world history among Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.

The articles selected by the editors provide a comprehensive insight into Cesa's wide and complex research. To be sure, they attest Cesa's rigorous commitment to the philological investigation of German philosophical thought, including a thorough examination of sources and historical debates. However, Cesa's concern is not restricted to the analysis of sources. He widely and carefully acknowledges the conceptual differences inherent in the use of notions such as morality, ethical life, natural right and state. Ultimately, Cesa's writings offer an exhaustive and detailed account of the possibility of freedom in the framework of classical German philosophy. Contrary to scholars like Eric Weil, Shlomo Avineri, Charles Taylor and Joachim Ritter, Claudio Cesa neither emphasises Hegel's inheritance of ideals from the French Revolution nor does he attempt to present Hegel as a social thinker. By investigating the relevance of the notion of *Sittlichkeit* and its philosophical consequences in German Idealism, Cesa shows that the position of the individual is closely related to the systematic dialectic taking place between institutions, as well as to historical, social and religious conditions. Yet, he recognises the place of interiority and individual freedom assigned to subjectivity by all German thinkers, especially by Hegel. Freedom is as much a task as knowing and understanding are, and no institution could replace the individual freedom of choice (92).

In the first essay, "Il cammino dell'eticità. Dall'età dei Lumi a Hegel" [The Path of Ethical Life. From the Age of Enlightenment to Hegel], Cesa traces back the origins of the hiatus between morality and ethical life. Although Plato and Aristotle first raised the issue as an antinomy belonging to unjust states, it was up to Renaissance philosophy to establish the dualism between the moral and the political order. Later, Rousseau introduced the opposition between virtue and despotism, influencing many authors of German *Aufklärung* like Herder and Jacobi. It was in such a context that the occurrence of the 'ethical state' first appeared. But Hegel, to whom scholars usually refer, used this expression only once, in the 1817/18 manuscripts, to identify the authority of the state that replaces the church in celebrating marriage (24). Cesa shows that Hegel devoted

his entire life to explore the relationship between state, morality and religion. Yet, Cesa did not consider ethical life as the most encompassing moment to which history, philosophy and religion should be reduced, as Rudolf Haym famously maintained. On the contrary, Cesa argues that in Hegel's thought the concept of *Sittlichkeit* goes through many variations, due to its complex and fragile relation to religion.

“Armonia e felicità dall'illuminismo all'idealismo” [Harmony and Happiness from Enlightenment to Idealism] expands upon the variety of meanings of happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] and beatitude [*Seligkeit*] from Kant to Hegel. Importantly, the essay shows to what extent Hegel overcomes Kant's moral philosophy by replacing religion with *Moralität*. Nonetheless, ethical life can never be identified with *Seligkeit*, which belongs to religion. Actually, the difference between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit* is entirely Hegelian, as the essay “Tra ‘Moralität’ e ‘Sittlichkeit’. Sul confronto di Hegel con la filosofia pratica di Kant” [Between ‘Moralität’ and ‘Sittlichkeit’. On the Comparison between Hegel and Kant's Practical Philosophy] brings to the foreground.

The latter is a detailed survey of the development of Hegel's thought, passing from his early writings on religion to his later mature works. While Hegel adopts in the early writings an anthropocentric attitude, he often warns against the risks of reducing the speculative horizon to the empirical in his successive reflections. Even his concern for morality goes through an evident variation: In the Jena writings, Hegel does not distinguish between *moralisch* and *sittlich*, which are used as synonyms. Here, morality is regarded as superior to ethical life and the science of *Naturrecht* stands higher than morality itself. Instead, the 1807 *Phenomenology* reverses the order: Ethical life now encompasses juridical law and is followed by morality and religion. This contrasts with the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, where the abstract right is the most immediate and is followed by morality and ethical life. Cesa convincingly argues that logical reasons, such as the necessity to provide spirit with a concrete content, justify these shifts in Hegel's philosophy.

The place of individual freedom within ethical life is the topic of the essay “Libertà e libertà politica nella filosofia classica tedesca” [Freedom and Political Freedom in Classical German Philosophy]. Unlike Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel do not devote specific attention to practical reason in itself. Although practical freedom is essential to determine subjectivity, the latter is no longer conceived as a process of liberation from sensible impulses, but rather in relation to a holistic system of interrelations. Hegel's later investigations in Berlin outline a model of political freedom, wherein the place of individual freedom depends on the right that everyone holds to participate in the state's affairs. In the Berlin lessons, rather than in the Heidelberg manuscripts, Cesa finds a stronger emphasis on the role of civil society in giving rise to modern freedom.

In “Diritto naturale e filosofia classica tedesca” [Natural Right and Classical German Philosophy] Cesa confronts himself with Norberto Bobbio and Karl-Heinz Ilting's analyses of Hegel and the doctrine of natural law. The author argues that Hegel's references were not Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz or Rousseau, but rather German coeval thinkers, such as Karl Ludwig von Haller, against whom Hegel wrote § 258 of his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. In this way, Cesa shows that Hegel's appraisal of the doctrine of natural law was deeply influenced by and related to the German interpretation of natural law.

“La ‘seconda natura’ tra Kant e Hegel” [The ‘Second Nature’ Between Kant and Hegel] explores the notion of habit as “second nature” in both Kant and Hegel, pointing out the relevance Hegel assigns to habit [*Gewohnheit*]. Indeed, habit both shapes the development of subjectivity and strengthens civil customs [*Sitten*]. However, Cesa stresses how problematic it is to determine whether Greek or modern *Sitten* truly realise human second nature.

The second part of the book tackles specific issues in Fichte, Schelling and Hegel’s political thoughts. These articles are extremely helpful in that they provide clear and precise accounts of controversial topics, such as the role of state and community in Fichte (see: *Popolo, Stato e storia universale*; in English: *Community, State and Universal History*, as well as *Le condizioni della ‘comunità assoluta’ secondo Fichte*; in English: *The Conditions of ‘Absolute Community’ according to Fichte*); the meaning of *praktisch* in the young Schelling (see: *La nozione di ‘pratico’ nel giovane Schelling*; in English: *The Concept of ‘Practical’ in the Young Schelling*), and the significance of *Notstaat* (state of necessity) in Hegel (see: *Notstaat*). The priority of ethical life, which is traditionally associated to the criticism of Kant’s categorical imperative, is then reconstructed and carefully reconsidered. Cesa aims to identify the critical points that put problems into perspective. As a result, he highlights the interplay between state and individuals in order to identify the true space of freedom assigned to the subject.

The last essay, entitled “Doveri universali e doveri di stato” [Universal Obligations and the Obligations of the State], once again contextualises the Hegelian difference between *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität*, but from another perspective. Cesa points out that the inner articulation of the state by Hegel is reminiscent of some 18th-century German political theories (Wolff, Garve, the young Fichte). Yet, despite its complex bourgeois structure, the state is extremely fragile, due to the possibility of external clashes with other nation states. According to Cesa, such fragility serves the purpose of avoiding the reduction of ethical consciousness to the state. For Hegel, wars and conflicts are crises that give the occasion for reflection and moral action to individuals. Individuality as such – Cesa maintains – is the fixed point that the waves of history cannot overwhelm (249). This probably represents one of the most difficult issues in Hegel’s philosophy that Cesa appropriately leaves as an open problem.

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