HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT

Philosophy

GPHI 6018 (Fall)
GPHI 6022 (Spring)

Professor J M Bernstein

Reading List, Course Description, and MiniCommentary Questions

Course Description

This course will be devoted to a reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. Of particular concern will be Hegel's 'completion' of Kant's Copernican Turn, and thus the development of a nonskeptical idealism. In carrying out this project, Hegel makes three fundamental gestures, each of which is fateful for contemporary thought: (i) he attempts to demonstrate that full human selfconsciousness requires intersubjectivity; (ii) that the emergence of selfconsciousness, and thus of philosophy as a reflective discipline, occurs historically; and (iii) that fundamental categories that make experience possible are practical and ethical rather than epistemic or theoretical.

In the Fall semester, we will first briefly look at Hegel's early essay "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate." At the center of this essay is an account of the dialectic of intersubjectivity which operates according to what has come to be called "the causality of fate." Although Hegel comes to believe that the metaphysical presuppositions posited herein for the causality of fate doctrine are false, its operation provides the orientation for the ethical project of the Phenomenology. The goal of the Phenomenology is to restructure the presuppositions of the causality of fate doctrine so that they are compatible with the fundamental feature of modernity, viz., our freedom from the authority of nature, hence the self-determining character of subjectivity. The remainder of the semester will be devoted to reading the first half of the Phenomenology: Introduction, Consciousness, Self-consciousness, and the first half of the chapter on Reason. The famous Preface to the book will not be studied till the end of the course. The two cruxes of the first part of the book are the overcoming of the standpoint of representational knowing, and the account of intersubjectivity in the dialectic of master-slave. The Bataille/Derrida objections to Hegel's account will be considered.

In the Spring semester, we will complete the reading of the chapter on Reason, before going forward to examine the discussions of Spirit, Religion, Absolute Knowing, and the Preface. Within the chapter on Spirit, particular emphasis will be given to the famous discussion of Antigone, the French Revolution, and the critique of Kant's moral philosophy. The end of the chapter on Spirit, on evil and forgiveness, is for me the key to the text as a whole. I construe the chapter on Religion as a defense of atheism.
Assessment

Students are required to complete at least four minicommentaries and one term paper in each semester. Each semester's work will be evaluated separately. You may write more than four mini-commentaries. Mini-commentaries are marked on a strictly Pass/Fail basis; in order to receive a grade for the semester you must have four passes. The final mark for each semester's work will be based on the term paper alone. The minicommentaries are supposed to be brief accounts (no more than three double-spaced pages = 750 words) of the topic or part of the topic covered in one of the seminars. Mini-commentaries should be accurate and clear accounts of what Hegel says in your own words. Mini-commentaries are thus wholly exegetical; interpretative originality, critical evaluation, or your views on the topic are not expected. Mini-commentaries are not short essays, but the exegetical building-blocks for longer pieces of writing. The first minicommentary must be submitted by week 3, the second by week 6, the third by week 9, the final one by week 12 in each semester. The secondary reading indicated in the bibliography is not essential and need only be referred to insofar as it helps in relation to specific points. However, each student will want to own at least one general commentary to provide guidance and orientation. The sample questions are offered as (optional) ways of giving the commentaries a sense of direction. Students are expected to come up with a topic for their term paper themselves. Topics for term papers must be approved by me, and they must be registered with me no later than December 1 for the Fall semester, and no later than April 15 for the Spring semester. Essays are due on the day of our final class meeting each semester.

Text

Hegel, On Christianity: Early Theological Writings
The seminars will presume familiarity with the material to be covered in them; to this end it is essential to read prior to the lecture the relevant passages of the text indicated below.

Recommended Commentaries

H.S. Harris, Hegel's Ladder, 2 volumes (Hackett).
J. Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (Northwestern, paper)
Q. Lauer, A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (Fordham, paper)
M. Westphal, History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (Humanities Press paper)
J. Flay Hegel's Ouest for Certainty (SUNY Press, paper)
R. Pippin, Hegel's Idealism (CUP, paper)
J. Stewart (ed.), The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader (SUNY paper)
R. Williams, Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other (SUNY paper)
T. Pinkard, Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason (CUP paper)
Robert Stern, Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit (Routledge paper)
John Russon, Reading Hegel's Phenomenology (Indiana paper)
Harris' commentary is the fruit of thirty years research, and fifteen years in the writing; it is easily the most comprehensive account of the *Phenomenology* yet to be written. Harris provides a short re-statement of the argument of each paragraph of the text, and then a commentary on it. In the manner of Hyppolite, Harris attempts to provide historical concretion for each shape of consciousness that Hegel discusses abstractly, thus attempting to tie together the logic of Hegel's argument with its claim that every shape of consciousness has been historically actual. Because he is so detailed, students will find Harris of most help once they have a general grasp of the overall movement of any particular section. This book includes the most comprehensive bibliography on the *Phenomenology* in English. Hyppolite's book is one of the classic commentaries on the *Phenomenology* and although it is sometimes rather imaginative, it is almost always stimulating. Whereas Hyppolite is generous in his provision of reference to other authors as well as to Hegel's early writings, Lauer confines himself to the text, which he covers more systematically. The major fault of Lauer's book is that it tends towards mere paraphrase so that it does not in fact provide an articulated reading of Hegel. Stern's is book is probably the best introductory commentary available; it can be relied on to provide at least solid theoretical orientation where it is needed; it is probably the best commentary to read before immersing oneself in the text itself. Westphal's book is much the easiest to read, more introductory than the other three, and perhaps more helpful in setting out Hegel's overall strategy; but it only offers a sketch, is unlikely to help with a difficult passage and is more selective in its treatment of topics than one would wish. Flay's book may not be a detailed commentary, but in addition to offering an interpretation and critical discussion of the *Phenomenology*, the notes provide an invaluable survey of the secondary literature on Hegel. Pinkard's commentary is much more in the mode of rational reconstruction, following through for the whole text the "completion of Kant" line of interpretation begun in Pippin's book, which is still the best account of the relation between Kant's and Fichte's transcendental idealism and Hegel's objective idealism. Pinkard's account of the "sociality of reason" is a useful way through the text. Williams sings pretty much the same song as Pippin and Pinkard, but his account is more focused on the "recognition" issue than is theirs, and more accessible. Stewart's reader presents a nice selection of essays that, roughly, cover of the main sections of the book. It diversity viewpoints provides accessible way of avoiding a monological interpretation of the text. I have placed all the other leading commentaries on three day reserve in the Library.

Four further books which can be found in the library and which might serve as partial commentaries in place of those listed above are

Robert Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel* (Oxford University)
Joseph Navickas, *Consciousness and Reality: Hegel's Philosophy of Subjectivity* (Nijhof)
Michael N. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago)

Mention should also be made of Kojève's highly influential but idiosyncratic study *Introduction*
to the Reading of Hegel, Gadamer's Hegel's Dialectic, and Heidegger's Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. None of them covers more than a small part of the text which we shall be studying, but all of them would prove a valuable source of inspiration and a good investment. Since I cannot imagine anyone not finding Kojeve gripping, copies of it also can be found in the bookstore.

There are two useful one volume overviews of Hegel’s thought: Stephen Houlgate, An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History (Blackwell); and Frederick Beiser, Hegel (Routledge) – both available in paperback. And we now have an extremely helpful and reliable intellectual biography of Hegel in English: Terry Pinkard, Hegel: A Biography (Cambridge UP).

FALL SEMESTER

TOPIC ONE

Text: 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate'

Commentaries:

Further Reading:
Jurgen Habermas, Theory and Practice, Ch.4
Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, pp.2330, 3245
Albrecht Wellmer, The Persistence of Modernity, pp.20711, 253
Axel Honneth, 'Moral Development and Social Struggle: Hegel's Early SocialPhilosophical Doctrines', in A Honneth, et.al. (eds), CulturalPolitical Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment

Sample Questions:
In what sense is Christianity a critique of moral theory?
What is presupposed by the thought that transgression entails selfdestruction?
If selfdestruction is the issue, what is the role of moral norms?

TOPIC TWO


Commentaries:
Harris (I), ch. 3
Further Reading:
M. Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience*
W. Marx, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Ch. V. part 2, Ch. VI.
K. Westphal, "Hegel's Solution to the Dilemma of the Criterion" (in Stweart)
J. Habermas, 'Hegel's Critique of Kant', *Knowledge and Human Interest*, Ch. 1.

Sample Questions:
What does Hegel understand by 'experience'? Who according to Hegel undergoes 'experience'?
Why does Hegel maintain that the critique of knowledge be abandoned?
Is Hegel's phenomenological method presuppositionless?

TOPIC THREE


Commentaries:
Harris (I), chs. 4-5
Ippoliti, pp.77117
Lauer, pp.4169
Westphal, pp. 123 and 5991
Pippin, pp.116131
Pinkard, pp.2845
Stern, pp. 43-59

Further reading:
C. Taylor, *Hegel*, pp.140147
C. Taylor "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology" in *Hegel*, (ed) A. Macintyre.
A. Warminski, Reading for Example: "SenseCertainty" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*,
K. Dulkeit, "Can Hegel Refer to Particulars?" (in Stewart)
M. Westphal, "Hegel's Phenomenology of Perception" (in Stewart)

Sample Questions:
What does Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty and perception tell us about the nature of truth for these two forms of consciousness?
What do we learn about language from the discussion of sense-certainty?
In what way does the account of sense-certainty illustrate Hegel's phenomenological method?

**TOPIC FOUR**

**Text:** Phenomenology, Force and Understanding, paras. 132-165

**Commentaries**
Harris (I), chapter 6
Pippin, pp. 131-42
Pinkard, pp. 34-45
Westphal, ch. 4
Stern, pp. 59-70

**Further Reading**
J. Flay, "Hegel's 'Inverted world'" (in Stewart)
Robert Brandom, "Holism and Idealism in Hegel's Phenomenology," in his *Tales of the Mighty Dead*

Chapter III, "Force and Understanding", is for me the most obscure in the text. While nearly everyone agrees on what the core argument must be, there is little agreement on details, and no account I have read is fully convincing. However, one cannot understand the transition to self-consciousness without some grasp of the overall movement of this chapter. Rather than getting bogged down here, I will aim to focus on what I take to be the core argument, emphasizing the beginning (§§132-136) and end (§§160-5) of the chapter. Almost all the standard commentaries have a chapter on "Force and Understanding", which can be consulted. Particularly valuable are the accounts by Westphal, Pippin, Flay, and, most notably, Gadamer's "The Inverted World", which can be found in his *Hegel's Dialectic*.

Sample questions
What is the purpose of the "inverted world" argument?
How does Hegel's account of explanation demonstrate that the ultimate good of scientific knowing is not representational?
What does Hegel mean by "infinity" in §§162-163?
TOPIC FIVE

Text: Phenomenology: "Lordship and Bondage" through to the "Unhappy Consciousness", Paras. 178230. (Given the breadth of this chapter, you may write two commentaries on it—each of course covering different portions of it.)

Commentaries:
Harris (I), chs. 7-9.
Hyppolite pp. 156215
Lauer pp. 100124
Flay pp. 81112
Pippin pp. 143171
Williams Chs. 78
Pinkard Ch. 3
Stern, Ch. 3

Further Reading:
HG. Gadamer, 'Hegel's Dialectic of Self-Consciousness' in Hegel's Dialectic
A. Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Ch. 1 and Ch.2 to p. 57.
H. Adelman, "Of Human Bondage" (in Stewart)
S. Rosen, G.W.F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom, Ch. 7.
H. Marcuse Reason and Revolution pp. 114120.
I. Soll, An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics Ch. I.
P. Redding, Hegel's Hermeneutics, ch. 5 (this book is a generally rewarding general interpretation of Hegel's recognitive theory of spirit).
Marcuse Hegel's Ontology, ch. 21, pp. 250263.
Peter Simpson, Hegel's Transcendental Induction (a new attempt to make self-consciousness the key to the book as a whole)
Elliot L. Jurist, Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche, chs. 5-6, 9.
Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve" in Writing and Difference
John O’Neill (ed.), Hegel’s Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary (includes Marx, Kojève, Habermas, Sartre, etc. on the master/slave dialectic).
Robert Brandom, “Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel’s Idealism,” in his Tales of the Mighty Dead

Sample Questions:
Describe the ‘experience’ of one of the forms of consciousness discussed in these sections.
Why must self-consciousness, my relationship to myself, be grounded in my relationship to another?
What is the role of death in the masterslave dialectic?
In what sense are “Stoicism” and “Skepticism” forms of self-consciousness?
Why is the “Unhappy Consciousness” the ultimate form of self-consciousness?

TOPIC SIX

Text: Phenomenology, Observing Reason, paras. 231-346

Commentaries:
Pippin, ch. 7
Harris (II), Ch. 1 (B) (a) (b), Ch. 2.
Hyppolite, pp. 219-258.
Lauer, pp. 131-5,
Flay, pp. 113-61.
Pinkard, ch. 4
Stern, pp. 97-133

Further Reading
H. Marcuse, Hegel’s Ontology, chs. 22-3.
MacIntyre, “Hegel on Faces and Skulls” (in Stewart)

Sample Questions
What are Hegel’s arguments against phrenology?
What is the relation of reason to idealism?
What does Hegel mean by the “infinite judgement” – “the self is a thing”?

SPRING SEMESTER

TOPIC SEVEN

Text: Phenomenology, “Acting” Reason (B, C), paras. 347-437
Commentaries
Harris (II), Ch. 1 (B) (a) (b), Ch. 2.
Hyppolite, pp. 250-320.
Lauer, pp. 148-56, 164-76
Flay, pp. 113-61.
Pinkard, ch. 4.
Stern, p. 114-114

Further Reading:
Gary Shapiro, “Notes on the Animal Kingdom of the Spirit” (in Stewart)
Rudiger Bittner, What Reason Demands
For further references on Hegel’s critique of Kant’s moral philosophy, see commentaries and further reading for topic eleven.

Sample Questions
What is the cause of “frenzy”, the madness, of any one form of self-actualized reason?
What does Hegel mean by the idea of a spiritual “animal kingdom”?
Why is law-testing reason empty?

TOPIC EIGHT

Text: Phenomenology, Sittlichkeit (The Ethical Order), paras. 444483.

Commentaries:
Harris (II), chs. 3-4.
Hyppolite pp.334375
Lauer pp. 177190
Westphal pp.138146 and 153160
Flay pp.164182
Williams pp.192204
Pinkard pp.135150
Stern, pp. 135-147

Further Reading:
Hegel, The Philosophy of History Part II pp.223277. And for paras:477483 read Part III
Introduction and para. III Ch. 1, pp.278282 and 314318.
A. Kojeve, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, pp.5768.
G. Steiner, Antigones (Oxford University) pp.2742.
and in Stewart).
Heidi M. Ravven, "Has Hegel Anything to Say to Feminists?", *The Owl of Minerva* 19/2 (Spring 1988), pp.149168.

Benjamin Barber, "Spirit's Phoenix and History's Owl or The Incoherence of Dialectics in Hegel's Account of Women", *Political Theory* 16/1, (February 1988), pp.528.

Luce Irigaray, "The Eternal Irony of the Community", in P.J. Mills (ed), *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel*. (Mills' own essay is also reprinted here.)

Tina Caner, "Looking at Hegel's Antigone Through Irigaray's Speculum" in her *Ethics of Eros*, Ch. 3.

Kimberly Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*, Ch. 4 (this book contains a fine summary of the feminist debates on Hegel, and an original line of its own)

Allen Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency*, Ch. 2


It is helpful to know the plot of Sophocles' *Antigone* and also Hegel's discussion of it in his *Aesthetics* (see the index to Knox's translation).

**Sample Questions:**

What does ethical selfconsciousness experience in its deed? (Para 469).

How does it come about that 'ethical life' (Sittlichkeit), which is the immediate unity of substance with selfconsciousness, comes to confront an alien actuality?

What is the role of nature in the tragedy of ethical life?

What place is accorded to law in the ethical world?

**TOPIC NINE**

**Text:** *Phenomenology, the World of Selfalienated Spirit*, paras. 484537

**Commentaries:**

Harris (II), Ch. 5

Hyppolite pp.376425

Lauer pp.190201

Westphal pp.160166

Flay pp.183193

Pinkard pp.150165

Stern, pp. 147 -168

**Further Reading:**

S. Rosen, G.W.F. Hegel, pp.172182


D. Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew* (Penguin). For espece (type para. 489) see p.108. For the inversion of good and bad (para. 523) see especially pp. 83ff.
David Price, “Hegel’s Intertextual Practice…” (in Stewart)
Allen Speight, Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency, Ch. 3.

Sample Questions:
What for Hegel is the experience of alienation?
Discuss the relation of the language of flattery to statepower and the relation of the language of base flattery to wealth?
What is the individual in search of in its flirtation with wealth and state power? Why does it not find it in them? (para 526).

TOPIC TEN

Commentaries:
Harris (II), Chs. 6-7
Hyppolite pp.426464
Lauer pp.201213
Westphal pp.166173
Flay pp.193205
Pinkard pp.165193

Further Readings:
Hinchman, Hegel's Critique of the Enlightenment (Florida)
K. Nusser, “The French Revolution and Hegel's Phenomenology…” (in Stewart)
J. Hyppolite 'The Significance of the French Revolution in Hegel's Phenomenology' in his Studies on Marx and Hegel.

Sample Questions:
How does Faith experience the Enlightenment?
What does it mean 'thinking in thinghood'? (para 578).
If every prejudice and superstitious has been erased, what is the nature of the truth which the Enlightenment offers in their place?
What are Hegel’s reservations about the notion of culture of Bildung? (See especially para. 594.) A useful account of the meaning of the German word is given in Gadamer's Truth and Method pp.1019, but Gadamer does not convey Hegel's critique of the world of culture.)
In what sense is the French Revolution an attempt to realize Absolute Freedom? What is Hegel's critique of Absolute Freedom?

TOPIC ELEVEN
Commentaries:
Harris (II), Chs. 8-9
Hyppolite pp.467528
Lauer pp.213229
Westphal pp.173181
Flay pp.207226
Williams pp.206220
Pinkard pp.193220
Stern, pp. 168-182

Further Reading:
G.W.F. Hegel, Natural Law, pp. 112132.
J. Robinson, Duty and Hypocrisy in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind (Toronto).
Allen Wood, Hegel's Ethical Thought, ch.10.
Robert Pippin, "Hegel's Ethical Rationalism," in his Idealism as Modernism.
For a standard rejoinder to Hegel’s critique, see Henry Allison, Kant's Theory of Freedom, ch. 10, AND
Karl Ameriks, Kant and the Fate of Autonomy, ch. 7. Ch. 6 of Ameriks’ book provide as useful overview of the Kant-Hegel dispute in relation to Kant’s theoretical philosophy.

Sample Questions:
Why does Hegel associate Kant's Postulates with the 'moral view of the world'? In what way are the Postulates duplicitive?
What are the limits of conscience?
What is the role of language in attaining mutual recognition?
Why does the chapter on Spirit culminate in the discussion of evil and forgiveness?

TOPIC TWELVE

Text: Phenomenology, Religion paras. 632787 (In order to make this manageable in a couple
of weeks, sections A and B (natural religion and religion in the form of art) will be done
together, leaving a week to focus on C, 'revealed religion,' esp. paras. 7807.)

**Commentaries:**
Harris (II), Ch. 10, pp. 521-547; Ch. 12.
Flay, 227-248
Hippolite pp.529570
Lauer pp.230255
Westphal pp.187210
Williams Ch.10
Solomon Ch.10
Pinkard pp.221228, 252260
Stern, Ch. 6

**Further Reading:**
Q. Lauer, 'Hegel on the Identity of Content in Religion and Philosophy’ in *Hegel and the
Philosophy of Religion*, (ed.) D. Christensen (Nijhoff) pp.261278. Revised version in his
*Essays in Hegelian Dialectic*.
W.H. Werkmeister, 'Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind as a Development of Kant's Basic
Ontology' in *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion*, pp.93100.
And the essays by Viellard-Baron, Schondorf, and Nys in Stewart (ed.).

**Sample Questions:**
Why does Hegel turn to religion after completing the chapter on Spirit?
Why is Christianity the culmination of the chapter on Religion?
Discuss Hegel’s treatment of Good and Evil in § 780.

**TOPIC THIRTEEN**
**Text:** *Phenomenology, Absolute Knowing*, Paras 788808

**Commentaries:**
Harris (II), Ch. 13
Flay, Ch. XI
Hippolite, pp.573606
Lauer, pp.256269
Westphal, pp.211229
Williams, Ch. 11
Pinkard, pp.261268
Stern, Ch. 7

**Further Reading:**
Mitchell Miller, " 'The Attainment of the Absolute Standpoint in Hegel's Phenomenology'" (in
Stewart).
A. Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel chs. 5 & 6.
M. Murray, Modern Philosophy of History, ch. 11.
D. Verene, Hegel's Recollection, ch. 9
H. Marcuse, Hegel's Ontology, ch. 25, pp.305318
C. Lenhardt, 'Anamnestic Solidarity'

Sample Question:
What is the place accorded to history at the end of the Phenomenology of Spirit?

TOPIC FOURTEEN
Text: Phenomenology, Preface, paras 172.

There is now an excellent new translation and commentary by Yirmiyahu Yovel, Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit.

Here I want to focus on the issue of language, the heart of Hegel's discussion of which concerns what he calls 'speculative propositions'.

Hegel's discussion of how speculative propositions are to be read can be found in paras. 5866 of the Preface. There is now an extensive secondary literature on the subject, including:

J.P. Surber 'Hegel's Speculative Sentence' HegelStudies Band 10, 1975, pp.211230.
HG Gadamer, Truth and Method, pp.416431
HG Gadamer, Hegel's Dialectic, pp.3033
W. Marx 'Reason and Language' in his Reason and World
J. Burbidge 'Language and Recognition' in Method and Speculation in Hegel's Phenomenology, (ed) M. Westhal, pp.8593
John Sallis, "Hegel's Concept of Presentation" (in Stewart).

Sample Questions:
What does Hegel understand by the phrase 'language is the existence of Spirit'? (See paras. 510, 520, 652 and 666).
What is a speculative proposition? Illustrate how they are to be read with examples from the main body of the text.
HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT

PART TWO

(GPHI 6022)

PROFESSOR J. M. BERNSTEIN

This course is a continuation of "Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Part One". Detail of readings, bibliography, and writing assignments are all given in the syllabus to that course. Provided here is only week-by-week readings. Readings all refer to PhS, Miller translation.


WEEK 2: “The actualization of rational self-consciousness through its own activity” and “Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself”, Ch. V (B, C (a))): #347 - #418 [The critique of modern moral individualism]

WEEK 3: “Individuality...” (continued), and “The true spirit. The ethical order”, Ch. V (C (b, c), Ch. 6 (A): #419 - 483. [The critique of Kant’s formalism and the transition to Spirit] **First mini-commentary due**

WEEK 4: “The true spirit. The ethical order” (continued). [Antigone]

WEEKS 5 - 6: “Self-Alienated Spirit. Culture”, Ch. VI (B): #484 - #595. [The critiques of the absolutist state, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution] **Second mini-commentary due week 6**

WEEK 7: “Spirit that is certain of itself. Morality”, Ch. VI (C (a, b)): #596 - #631. [Critique of Kant’s “Postulates of Pure Practical Reason”]

WEEK 8: “Spirit that is certain of itself. Morality”, Ch. V I (C (c)): # 632 – 671. [Conscience]

WEEK 9: “Religion”, Ch. VII (A, B): #672 - #747. [Natural religion, and religion in the form of art, i.e., Greek art/religion] **Third mini-commentary due**


WEEK 11: “Absolute Knowing” **Fourth mini-commentary due**

WEEK 12: “Preface” (esp. #59 - #67) [Speculative propositions]
Summary on the "Introduction" to the Phenomenology

1. Modern theory of knowledge, epistemology as first philosophy, is sceptical in that, first, it means to employ methodical scepticism as a means of overcoming social scepticism (Descartes' strategy in the First Meditation leading to the "cogito"); and secondly, it, presumptively, secures certainty in the form of non-inferential self-awareness that is detached from world-awareness. Hence, the programme of the theory of knowledge of clarifying our cognitive abilities independently of and prior to any form of object awareness presupposes the sceptical retreat that isolates self-consciousness from object-consciousness.

2. Hegel offers only a weak prima facie argument against this procedure. First, by recalling for us the paradox of knowledge from the Ménè (how can you hope to discover the truth about X without knowing what you are looking for), Hegel means to remind the modern epistemologist that the retreat to inner awareness does not alter the form of the paradox. Secondly, then, any claim about consciousness (e.g., the division into simple and complex ideas or ideas and impressions) must be formally realist in the same manner as the realism which generated the sceptical regress to consciousness. Thirdly, the turn to "knowing" as a separate faculty necessarily comes to make knowing a tool or an instrument, which either cuts it off from its object or instigates a form of knowing—e.g., knowing appearances only—that leaves the truth itself elsewhere and non-cognitive (a matter of faith, say).

3. For Hegel the claim that we know appearances only and not things in themselves summarizes the claims and the dilemmas of epistemology. The sceptical remainder—things in themselves—problematises the status of the reflective forms of knowing while recalling the question of the absolute.

4. The way around this dilemma is not to assume that we can know about knowing without being involved in the process of knowing. Knowledge ("science") must appear, where appearing involves precisely science's separating itself from opinion (or common sense) and giving an account of its superiority. But this means that true knowing involves two things: the knowledge and the account of it which justifies its claim to knowledge. This is already a fully modern position since it assumes the a valid account must be self-grounding. Holding to appearances and being self-grounding are equivalents. Any account of knowledge which keeps to these two moments, and shows how they are articulated, Hegel denominates with the term "self-consciousness".

5. The method of the Phenomenology is to survey all the substantive appearances of knowing. This can occur by means of an orderly progression because self-consciousness will provide an account of what it takes the Absolute (or truth or essence or the in itself) to be and an account of how knowing relates to it. This will be an acceptable procedure to Us because it assumes only the fundamentals of Kant's Copernican turn: every form of consciousness knows in accordance with its own "concept of an object" (= its idea of the absolute or truth, etc.).

6. All we have to ask is if the account of knowing and the projected conception of truth correspond, i.e., does that form of knowing capture the kind of object-awareness it claims in terms of its own concept of an object? Any failure of correspondence will occur for a particular reason or set of reasons. These particular reasons delimit the field which a succeeding account must make good. Hence, the collapse of a form of consciousness (= both a knowing and a concept of an object-world) is determinate. This is what Hegel means by determinate negation. Determinate negation is prospectively a narrative device and retrospectively explanatory. It is only a narrative device prospectively because we cannot presuppose that the series of determinate negations will end. Prospectively, the Phenomenology is a gamble, not a method. The gamble employs natural scepticism as a means. Like epistemology, Hegel means to employ scepticism to defeat scepticism. Natural scepticism embeds an erotic moment, a desire for knowledge and certainty that is the motor of dialectic (= the movement of forms of consciousness from one to another). The unfolding movement of forms of consciousness is the education of consciousness, its formation through the process of the internal, sceptical defeat of its various formations. Consciousness goes through an indefinite process of being formed, de-formed and re-formed. This is, in truth, a way of despair, not doubt, in that each sceptical defeat is the loss of "world", a loss of the self through that self losing its world, unlike
modern scepticism in which doubt eventuates in, formally, non-inferential self-awareness, and substantively, self-possession. The way of despair is a movement of processual self-dispossession (which is a clue about the end). Again, all this will be an education only if the process can conclude successfully. If it does not, then scepticism triumphs.

7. Because Hegel presupposes the validity of the Copernican turn, then the entire process can have only two possible results: the vindication of idealism or sceptical defeat. Hegel's entire practice assumes that realism, i.e., the mind-independence of the truth, is sceptical, and that therefore there cannot be a successful realist theory of knowledge.

8. Hegel can write a "phenomenology" is that he employs a descriptive method: the appearances of forms of consciousness. He can be descriptive in the sense that he does, himself, have to propose a criterion in order to evaluate the success or failure of the different forms of consciousness. Again, each form of consciousness provides its own criterion, its concept of an object. Hence, each form of consciousness measures itself, succeeding or failing in its own terms. This is what has led all commentators to the conclusion that the text is presuppositionless or methodologically neutral. As we have seen, this is false. The premise of the procedure is the idea that "consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something, and at the same time relates itself to it, or, as it is said, something exists for consciousness..." (para. 82) This business of distinguishing and relating presupposes the apparatus of Kantian synthesis, the projecting of a concept of an object, and the regulation of one's activities in accordance with that projection.

9. Hegel entitles the movement of loss and the generation of a new object world "experience". To have an experience is, here, precisely the loss of self and world, and the generation of a new account of the self-world relation. Experience is categorial, it refers to the self-world relation as such. Understanding that what consciousness took to be an in-itself is in reality (only) a human projection (a for us), which brings about another conception of an in-itself is what we add to the process that consciousness simply undergoes or suffers. We transform what has simply happened into an orderly progression. Hence the claim that the Phenomenology is the "science of the experience of consciousness".

10. The conclusion of the process, absolute knowledge, absoluten Wissens, is not knowledge of the absolute, but the discovery that knowing is absolute or unconditioned, i.e., there is no perspective outside it that qualifies or conditions or limits it. This is equivalent to saying that the conclusion only states that scepticism (which derives from realism, which is equivalent to the belief that it makes sense to speak of a (human-)mind-independent truth about the world) is false.

11. We will begin with forms of consciousness that deny account giving, and hence which are not self-conscious, and hence fall below the methodological presuppositions that govern the movement of the text as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KNOWING</th>
<th>CONCEPT OF AN OBJECT (= TRUTH)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense-Certainty</td>
<td>A singular object (a this)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>A singular object with properties (universals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Forces or a system of laws</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JMB
8.2.96
The problem is that the dimensions of physical time, social space, and body cannot be reduced to the binary oppositions of communication and action. The reason for this opposition, according to Habermas, is the need to differentiate between the communicative and the action-oriented aspects of social interaction. This differentiation is crucial for understanding how individuals and groups engage in social practices.

Habermas argues that the communicative aspect of social interaction is characterized by the ability to engage in meaningful dialogue and to construct shared understandings. This aspect is characterized by the use of language and symbols to negotiate meanings and to establish shared meanings. The action-oriented aspect of social interaction, on the other hand, is characterized by the ability to act and to implement decisions. This aspect is characterized by the use of power and authority to enforce decisions and to achieve outcomes.

Habermas further argues that the communicative and action-oriented aspects of social interaction are in constant tension with each other. This tension is characterized by the need to balance the interests of different groups and to achieve a shared understanding. This balance is achieved through the use of communicative action, which involves the use of language and symbols to negotiate meanings and to establish shared understandings.

In summary, Habermas' work on communicative action and action-oriented social interaction is crucial for understanding how individuals and groups engage in social practices. This work highlights the importance of the communicative aspect of social interaction and the need to balance the interests of different groups in order to achieve a shared understanding.
The Physiology of Self-Consciousness

The physiological process of recognizing the existence of the self is an intricate and complex phenomenon. It involves a series of neurological events that are triggered by the interaction of various brain regions. These regions work together to create a sense of awareness and self-awareness, which is essential for our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

The process of self-awareness begins with the activation of certain areas of the brain, particularly those responsible for processing sensory information. As we interact with the environment, these areas become activated, allowing us to perceive and interpret our experiences.

One key area involved in this process is the prefrontal cortex, which plays a crucial role in higher-order cognitive functions such as decision-making, planning, and problem-solving. The prefrontal cortex is also responsible for initiating and regulating autonomic responses, which are essential for our survival.

Another important region involved in self-awareness is the amygdala, which is responsible for processing emotional information. The amygdala helps us to identify and respond to emotional stimuli, allowing us to adapt our behavior accordingly.

Finally, the hippocampus is also involved in self-awareness, particularly in the formation of new memories. The hippocampus helps us to encode new information into our memory system, making it possible to retrieve and recall these memories later.

In summary, the physiology of self-awareness involves a complex interplay of various brain regions, each playing a critical role in our ability to recognize and understand ourselves. This process is essential for our survival and our ability to interact effectively with the world around us.