

Gentrain Unit 11 Philosophy of Hegel, 5 December 2013. Dr. Cindy Ausec

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1831) – German ‘idealist’ born in Stuttgart

Works

- *Phenomenology of Spirit*
- *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Science*
- *Elements of a Philosophy of Right*

### ***Phenomenology of Spirit***

Shapes of Consciousness

- Idealist - Human knowledge is not of the actual things of this world – Sensory input has been run through our ‘a priori’ knowledge of time and space and categories of quantity, substance, etc. (Like Kant’s theory)
- Differed from Kant
  - Argues that a collective ‘*Spirit*’ exists within societies that shapes the ideas and concepts of individuals
  - Believed that human societies and their collective ‘*Spirit*’ evolve
- Three modes of consciousness
  - *Meaning*, or ‘sense certainty’ - the mind’s initial attempt to grasp the nature of a thing (Requirement that concepts have a ‘universal’ quality – different people must also be able to comprehend these concepts)
  - *Perception* – consciousness appeals to categories of thought worked out between individuals through some kind of communicative process at the level of common language (our culture shapes our categories)
  - *Understanding* - we are aware of the inadequacy of our categories and thus are moved to find new ground for ‘sense certainty’, generating new concepts that smooth over the contradictions

Self-consciousness

- In order to be conscious of objects an individual must be aware of him/herself apart from that object
- Others perceive us as objects and we base our self awareness on how others perceive us or how we believe they perceive us
- Consciousnesses are inextricably interwoven - one cannot have any concept of oneself without having actually experienced a moment of identification with the other

Reason

- Reason involves a self-conscious ego struggling to assimilate objects
- Reason leads consciousness to fit particular phenomena into universal categories
- Laws of Thought – set of standards governing how phenomena conform to categories

***'Spirit/Mind'*** – the collective consciousness of a given society which shapes the ideas and consciousness of each individual – based on language, traditions, mores - culture

- Spirit is the location of the ethical order, the realm of laws and customs in other words culture
- Hegel saw human societies evolving in the same way that an argument might evolve. An entire society or culture begins with one idea about the world, which naturally and irresistibly evolves into a succession of different ideas through a dialectic pattern
- *Spirit* has two manifestations
  - First, it is the basis of the deep-seated ethical orientation of individuals, as an object of faith
  - Second, it has an outward existence as the culture and civilization of a given historical age

Religion

- Religion is essentially a collective Spirit conscious of itself – it reflects a given culture's expression of ethical life and the balance between individual and collective
- Religion is not the highest stage of consciousness

Absolute Knowledge – combines attention to subjective knowledge with attention to objective truth

***Science of Logic***

- Being – Appears to be the most 'immediate' fundamental determination characterizing any possible thought content – however it is not stable or certain
  - Category of 'being' implies the category of nothingness or 'not being'
  - One cannot call to mind one category without invoking the other
  - Resolved by invoking a third category 'becoming' which captures both nothing and being at once
- Essence – a higher more complex mode of by which consciousness grasps objects
  - Essence points to qualities beyond mere existence or nonexistence to particular qualities of the object
    - Manifest themselves in the appearances of objects
    - Objects appear to have different natures
  - Being and essence are both features of object logic
- Concept
  - Level where object logic ('being' and 'essence') is combined with subjective logic
    - Subjective logic concerns the ideal properties of knowledge, those emanating from products of the mind: concepts or notions
  - The level of concepts is the domain of philosophy or metaphysics