

Phil 567, Fall 2013
Seminar in 19th Century Philosophy: Hegel's Logic

Instructor: Professor George di Giovanni

Time: Monday, 1:35-3:25, Leacock 927

Prerequisites: Phil 366 or an equivalent course on German Idealism and Hegel in particular

Expected Enrollment: not more than 10 students

Requirements: Class attendance and class participation. The final mark will be based on one major paper alone (about 20 pages, on a topic to be agreed upon individually). In marking the paper, I shall take into consideration the extent to which it reflects active engagement in seminar discussion. I shall not accept a paper that might have been written in a different context altogether.

Principal Text: *Hegel's Science of Logic*, tr., ed. George di Giovanni (Cambridge, 2010); I am not sure whether there is a paperback edition yet. The older translation by Miller will do, but I shall have to explain why I have deviated in significant ways from some of Miller's renderings of German terms.

Description:

The so called "Greater Logic," the text which we are going to study, was produced over a number of years and published in parts: Part I in 1812; Part II in 1813; Part III in 1816; Part I again, in much revised form, posthumously in 1832. (I shall explain in class why I choose this text rather than, as is normally done, the much briefer "Encyclopedia Logic.") Hegel's text has nothing of the historically and imaginative content of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). It is indeed a "logic." Even more so than the other work, which can still be read with the interest of a *Bildungsroman*, it is an outdated text. Yet, just as is the case for Spinoza's *Ethics*, which is no less dry and dated than Hegel's Logic, much can be learned from it in the way of metaphysics and ethics. Indeed, its greatest source of interest lies precisely in the protracted criticism that it directs at Spinoza, whom Hegel considered the greatest classical metaphysician, and at the Romantic idealism which, in the early nineteenth century, attempted to revive Spinozism.

The least, and the least controversial, that can be said about the Logic is that it is a "genetic analysis" of all the categories that have made their appearance at some time or other in Western metaphysics in an effort at defining Being. Many of these categories are also the property of common discourse. I say that the analysis is "genetic" because, as performed by Hegel, it demonstrates at each step how, upon assuming one category or one group of categories, one necessarily commits oneself to introducing some other categories. These new categories make explicit the hitherto unspoken assumptions that had *de facto* motivated the introduction of the previous round of categories. Hegel's Logic, in other words, is a reflective discourse on discourse about Being. As such, it is also a reflection upon, and a criticism of, all past metaphysics. A turning point is reached at the end of Book II, where Hegel takes explicit aim at the system of Spinoza. This critique allows him to make his move to his own type of Idealism.

One can read Hegel's Logic by concentrating on the details of this genetic analysis and by

questioning its cogency at each step. We shall do some of this work in the seminar. However, of equal if not greater philosophical interest is to establish the nature of Hegel's Idealism—in effect, to question the motivation behind the Logic. In the most recent past alone, Hegel has been interpreted in a variety of incompatible ways—as a neo-Platonist (Taylor), a neo-Aristotelian (Houlgate, Errol Harris), a neo-Spinozist (also Houlgate and Errol Harris), a proto-Wittgensteinian (McDowell, McCumber), a proto-pragmatist (Burbidge, Brandom). Exactly what is he? I submit that he is just an idealist *sui generis*—in effect, a consistent *realist*.

I shall have to explain what I mean by this last claim. The explaining will need, however, historical contextualization. Hegel's Logic must be contrasted with Fichte's post-1800 presentations of his *Science of Knowledge*, and with Schelling's Pantheism, both of which were, albeit in different ways, attempts at giving a new life to Spinoza. I shall take it upon myself to pursue this historical theme in the course of the Seminar. For the rest we shall read and try to understand some key texts together. Participants will be asked to make presentations on these texts. Since the seminar is small, I shall also expect each and every one to contribute to it with intelligent discussion.

Selected Bibliography:

The relevant texts in the early 1800 controversy between Fichte and Schelling which was the background of Hegel's reflections leading, at one and the same time, to both his Phenomenology and his Logic are now available in English translation:

Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood, trs., eds., *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800-1802)*, with an Introduction by the editors (SUNY2012).

The 1804 Lectures in which Fichte presented his *Wissenschaftslehre* for the first time in a completely new form that gave Schelling cause to cry plagiarism is also now available in English translation:

Walter E. Wright, tr. Ed., *The Science of Knowing: J. G. Fichte's 1804 Lectures on the Wissenschaftslehre* (SUNY 2005) April 24, 2013.

Robert Brandom, "Some pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism," *European Journal of Philosophy* (1999); also in *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*, eds. R. Bubner, W. Mensch (1999).

Clark Butler, *Hegel's Logic: Between Dialectic and History* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1997).

John Burbidge, *On Hegel's Logic*, Humanities Press, 1981 (useful for some textual readings)

-----, "Hegel's Logic," *Handbook of the History of Logic*, Vol. 3 (Elsevier BV, 100\$), pp. 131–175 (I shall distribute off-prints in class)

Daniel Cook, Review of David Lamb's Book (see below), *Owl of Minerva* 14,2 (December,

1982)

Errol E. Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*, University Press of America, 1983

David Lamb, *Hegel and Perception in Hegel and Wittgenstein* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1979)

John McCumber, *The Company of Words, Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993)

Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence* (1932), tr. Leonard lawler and Amit Sen (Albany: SUNY, 1997).

G.R.G. Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic*, Oxford, 1950

Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, Cambridge 1989

Jere Paul Surber, "Hegel's Speculative Sentence," *Hegel-Studien*, 10(1975).

Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1975)

Essays on Hegel's Logic, ed. George di Giovanni (SUNY 1990; some essays—not all—are interesting).

Two early papers of mine:

"Reflection and Contradiction: A Commentary on Some Passages of Hegel's Logic" *Hegel-Studien* (1973) 131-161

"The Category of Contingency in the Hegelian Logic" *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy*, eds. W.E. Steinkraus and K.L. Schmitz (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980) 179-200.

Tentative Seminar Schedule:

Seminar 1: Hegel in contest (lecture).

Seminar 2: Hegel in context (lecture).

Seminar 3: Hegel's Logic in overview (lecture).

For these three lectures, which might stretch to four, I shall post still unpublished essays and/or notes of mine so that you will have a base from which to raise issues.

Seminar 4: Prefaces and Introduction. Book One: "With what the Beginning of science be made?" and the whole of Section I

Seminar 5: Book One: Section II (skip the long remarks on calculus after Chapter 2)

Seminar 6: Book One: Section III, ch. 3. Book Two: Introduction; Section I: Introduction.

Seminar 7: Book Two: Section I: chs. 1, 2.

Seminar 8: Book Two: Section II: chs. 1, 2.

Seminar 9: Book Two: Section III: *in toto*

Seminar 10: Book Three: “On the concept in general”; Section II: just concentrate on the concept of a mechanical, chemical, and teleological object.

Seminar 11: Book Three: Definition of “Idea”; Section III: ch. 1 (concentrate on just the idea of life); ch. 2 (concentrate on the definitions of “the true” and “the good.”

Seminar 12: Book Three; Section III, ch. 3 (the Absolute Idea).

Seminar 13: spare

Note that in all cases you should read the formal parts of the text first and foremost. These parts are normally short, as contrasted with the long Remarks that follow them. Such remarks are very helpful, and they often provide the historical background for the categories under analysis. But you should use your discretion in allotting reading time for them.

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