Hegel POS Lecture #14: Reason Introduction

[Course mechanics]

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We are in the middle of the Unhappy Consciousness.  Again, just to catch ourselves up, I have been claiming that the Unhappy Consciousness is the reflective comprehension of the fact that self-consciousness is itself mediated through another. That is, that the forms of self-consciousness — Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness — are each attempts to make sense of the fact that self-consciousness is both independent from the freedom, from the self-determination, and dependent.  And that divided structure of self-consciousness is given through its genealogical emergence in the master-slave dialectic.

And that the forms of self-consciousness — Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness — are the reflective attempts to make sense of that original genealogical setting, make sense of that initial experience of coming to self-consciousness about being a self-conscious being.  Bear in mind, my account is not that the master-slave is the genealogy of self-consciousness, it's the genealogy of our coming to self-consciousness about our being self-conscious beings. And in that experience, we discover that our self-consciousness is mediated, and mediated by a powerful other, and that we are therefore essentially divided consciousnesses.

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Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness are reflective comprehensions of that self-consciousness about self-consciousness.  So it's kind of three levels of iteration, right?  Being self-conscious about being self-conscious about being self-conscious.  And that the problem of being a divided consciousness comes to fruition, so to speak, in the experience of the Unhappy Consciousness. The Unhappy Consciousness as a certain philosophical reading of the meaning of Christianity at the level of individual experience — I'll say something about what that means at the end of the hour — but at the level of what Christianity does for the individual in their understanding of themselves as a divided consciousness. So not yet Christianity in another form, which we'll talk about later.

So this is a philosophical — so, this is Hegel for the first time using an institutional practice, in this case that of Medieval Christianity, in order to — or the claim is that what religion does, what that practice does, is provide us with a form of self-understanding.  It should not be surprising. Why else would someone become a Christian if it could not provide us with a form of self-understanding? But it provides us with a particular form of understanding, namely of ourselves as a divided consciousness.

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And the aspects of Christian belief, three aspects, are here looked at: devotion, sacramental desire and labor, and self-mortification.  These three aspects of the Unhappy Consciousness are three ways in which this form of divided consciousness — namely one that takes the unchangeable to be its essence, to be its true self. God is my true self. He is the creator. I am his creature. I am his nothingness. He is my essence. So I recognize myself in him, right?  So the very fact of that is a mediated self-understanding.

And that's something that religion knows essentially, that mediated self-understanding. I'm seeing myself through God.  And yet because of the structure of that difference — namely he is up there, in the beyond, unchanging, and I am down here with my flesh with my body — that I have to make sense of that fact.  That is, his beyondness and my changeableness, my finitude.

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Now, there's one further twist here. And the further twist is Christianity always thinks about this problem at its core.  And to think about this problem at its core, because the claim of Christianity is God, out of some benighted benevolence or masochism — masochism is the more plausible — came to Earth in finite form. God became man and died on the cross.  The Incarnation is the fundamental fact of Christianity.  That is, that something about the structure of Christianity from the get-go says that there is no essential gap between finitude and the infinite.

That the very fact that God can happily — God takes on this finite form, wanders the Earth, you know does a few tricks, goes back home. The fact that he does that is already its indication that somehow the gap between unchangeable and changeable is itself not ultimate. Now, nonetheless, we've discovered that that would be okay except for the fact that the son of a bitch we call Jesus died and therefore it's as good as if he hadn’t been here. I mean, whats the point of having someone who incarnates and then leaves, right?  So the Incarnation is a kind of a cheat, right? "I'm actual, I'm real, I'm just like you," but the grave is empty. The grave is empty.

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So in a way the emptiness of the grave is in a way what the Unhappy Consciousness is trying to get over, get 'round. So it's still struggling. It's still struggling to make sense of that relationship between the finite and the infinite.  And Hegel takes it — and this is again Hegel being much, much more interesting, I think, than theology.  If this was a theology course, I would now launch into many hours of lecture on the Trinity.  And I take it that it's not an accident, as Harris notes, that where the Church wanted to punish Abelard…

I have a deep, deep love of Abelard.  *The History of my Calamities* is a tiny book you should all read.  Abelard, I always took as the first rationalist in the Church. His *Sic et Non* is a great rationalist doctrine, I think.  And he really argued — and I think this is why the Church cut him off, so to speak, to put it lightly — that he argued faith must meet the criteria of reason.  That was unacceptable. And hence, the first thing they did is make him repeat *ad nauseam* the *Athanasian Creed*, which of course is a creed about the status of the Trinity. And of course if you read it, it's unintelligible, right?

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So at the heart of Christianity is gobbledygook.  And the place of gobbledygook — that is, the unintelligibility of the *Athanasian Creed —* is the marker of the incapacity of religion to think the relation of the three aspects, namely God is universal, God is finite, God is spirit.  So trinitarian creeds are, so to speak, the hiding of the fact that there's a failure of thought here.

Now Hegel's — the greatness of this text is that he does not repeat the Athanasian Creed.  He looks at religious practice, at cultic practice, in order to understand through those practices itself what the experience of a believer is, not some theology.  But to understand the meaning of Christianity through the experience of the believer, to try and understanding that those practices are themselves the way in which the believer works out the meaning of that diremption between changeable and unchangeable, particular and universal, finite and infinite.

And it's those practices that are the key to the meaning of Christianity and this actually runs through all of the Hegel's reading of religion.  Namely, he understands religion through cult practice, not through theology. So it's an institution with sets of institutional practices and you understand the meaning of the institution by looking at the structure of those practices as themselves a working out of its deepest set of commitments, its forms. Hence the account of devotion, of the Crusades, which is where we left off last time, and now the movement to sacramental desire and labor. Are we all on the same page-ish? Okay.

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So, let me do the the overview of this section and then say a bit more about it.  The form the Unhappy Consciousness takes after the failures of devotion and the discovery of the empty grave is to take seriously the fact that life as appearance cannot be avoided.  But rather we should think of the earthly life as in truth God's gift.  And hence in thinking about it in terms of gift, it reveals a different way of thinking about the nature of our dependence, because the gift here is the gift of life, is the gift of life on Earth. So instead of repudiating, or trying to identify (which becomes a repudiation), rather than merely trying to identify with the beyond as devotion does, here we take seriously the life of everyday human activity.  Which is to say everyday desire and everyday labor, which is what our life amounts to, desire and labor.

And therefore we begin to think that if life is dependent on Him and His gift, and if He is our essence, then we should labor not for ourselves but for Him.  That we must interpret our own worldly activities as the fulfilling of this gift which, because it's a gift, we try to return it, as it were.  We try to to give back, by fulfilling the desires, by, as it were, working hard, and having the sense that we're working not for ourselves, but for the other.

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And this again is deep in how one — if you did a sociological survey of just ordinary working people and you know, you asked them what they were working for, I'm sure the vast majority would say, 'For my family.'  That is, no one works for themselves.  That is, we dignify the meaning of work by thinking of work as not a form of self-assertion, but a form of self-sacrifice for the sake of something beyond ourselves something larger that we belong to, and if we're religious we think of it as indeed working for the very being who gave us life and the Earth.

So in this case, this form of practice of sacramental desire and labor, as we're calling it, takes seriously the Incarnation but thinks of it, like its own life, as something to be sacrificed to the unchangeable world from which it came.  Hence, Hegel argues that this form of consciousness conceives of both its abilities and its doings must be interpreted as gifts. Those of you who do contemporary political philosophy will know that the most debated aspect of Rawls’ theory of justice is his theory that we do not own our own abilities.  Ownership of abilities.

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So, no, we don't own our abilities. They come from God, they don't belong to us principally. Therefore we do not own the results of our practice and therefore in order to act we must act in the mode of thanksgiving, in the mode of gratitude. So paragraph 220, the end of paragraph, Hegel says: "The relation to actuality is the changing of it..."  So the first thing is, what's my relationship to the world?  Well, my real relationship to the world must be my changing of it. That's what we Christians do. We build the world. We change it, we alter it.  We make it into something.  Or, working on it.

So the idea of the original slave labor is now another form of slave labor, not now under the form of coercion (the original experience of the serf), but under the form of gift and gratitude.  I defy — I have certain skepticisms about recent appropriations of the gift. They’ve got to be theological.  And it seems to me the most atrocious theological moment in Derrida's thought is his account of the gift.  His exchange.  Both his accounts of exchange and the gift are severely mistaken, I think.  Of which the book on Baudelaire, *Given Time*, is just easily his worst book.  He never thanked me for telling him that.  He'll get his revenge.

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So, "the relation to actuality is the changing of it and working on it." The being-for-self, right? The point is here is, by working on it, whatever else you may think, there is a moment of being-for-self. Even if you're in the mode of gratitude, even if you're in the mode of thanksgiving, this is the mode of the being-for-self which belongs to individual consciousness as such. As such.  "But, in this relation, it is also" — not one or the other, but also — "in itself or has intrinsic being."  That is, it also has the master moment. So this is the serf having the master moment.

"..this aspect belongs” — [inaudible] the Unhappy Consciousness — “to the Unchangeable beyond and consists of faculties and powers, a gift from an alien source, which the Unchangeable makes over to consciousness to make use of.” So roughly, then, this dialectic works out as the Unhappy Consciousness attempting, through its independent initiative, through its laboring and working, to demonstrate it's absolute dependence.  And clearly this is bound to be self-defeating for the more it labors, and the more successfully it labors, and the more it desires for the sake of the Lord, the more it necessarily feels its own extreme independence and individuality.

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So two-thirds of the way through paragraph 222, Hegel says,

"Similarly, even in its giving thanks, in which it acknowledges the other extreme as the essential Being and counts itself as nothing, this its own act which counterbalances the action of the other extreme, and meets the self-sacrificing beneficence with a like action. If the other extreme delivers over to consciousness only the surface of its being, yet consciousness also gives thanks; and in surrendering its own action, i.e. its essential being, it really does more than the other which only sheds a superficial element of itself."

The superficial elements of the other is that it's in the beyond and that's just surface.  The beyond, as philosophers call transcendence, for Hegel is just surface. Not a deep property [inaudible]. Why?  Going right back in the *Introduction*: essence must appear. There's nothing about any transcendence that can matter to us other than in the ways it appears, other than the ways it's taken, other than in its formations.

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"Thus the entire movement is reflected not only in the actual desiring, working, and enjoyment, but even in the very giving of thanks where the reverse seems to take place, in the extreme of individuality." So the thought is, this form of consciousness wants to think of itself as divided. So it, on the one hand, wants to leave itself as working, and then it wants to have a reflective relationship to its own working which it calls 'giving thanks,' but the giving thanks is itself its own way of appropriating the meaning of its very own action. So even in the giving thanks, it's asserting itself.

"Consciousness feels itself therein as this particular individual, and does not let itself be deceived by its own seeming renunciation, for the truth of the matter is that it has not renounced itself. What has been brought about is only the double reflection into the two extremes; and the result is the renewed division into the opposed consciousness of the Unchangeable…" etc.  So there is, Hegel's claim, no way of actively performing the renunciation of oneself as an individual that is finite, working and laboring and desiring, that does not end up as a form of affirmation. Because the only way one can renounce one's individuality is to do something and every time you do it you affirm your authority, and hence you affirm the inviolability of your singular individual will.

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Paradoxically then, performance of renunciation becomes the occasion for a grand and endless action that effectively augments and individuate the self it seems to deny. And if you're a sociologist, you just want to now begin reading Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Just goes right from here. That is, right from this moment you go right to how this spirit, this sense of working on the world, increases and increases and increases this form of individualism — this is what Weber argued — until the point where the fact that it is being done for God just doesn't have a chance. It just gets eaten up, swallowed.

So there is a moment here of unsurpassable enjoyment, of satisfaction.  And the satisfaction occurs because there is an inevitable form, in this laboring and doing, of self-affirmation.  So he says, paragraph 223, "Returned from this external activity, however, consciousness has experienced itself as actual and effective, or knows that it is in truth in and for itself…In work and enjoyment which make this unsubstantial existence a reality, it can directly forget itself…"

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So it's this moment of enjoyment, which Hegel is just thinking the enjoyment of accomplishment of action.  You know, it's that double consciousness. You know, your parents say, you know, ‘You must mow the lawn, sweep the garage.'  Whatever your parents miserably tell you to do. And the deep thing is you resent them like hell and yet feel satisfaction at the same time when you accomplish it.  And you can't get rid of that duality of resentment and satisfaction. And of course that makes it worse, because you don't know what to do with your own sense of satisfaction because of your resentment

Student: Isn't giving thanks designed to cover that over?

Bernstein: Of course. Yeah, right.  It's trying to make the super ego into an ego ideal.  It never works.

So by recognizing that everything I am and do is given to me by the grace of God, I do indeed, Hegel is claiming, experience my unity with God, but nothing can alter the fact that I take God's gifts, including the gift of freedom, and use everything he has given me in my own way.  So, as Harris rightly says, "The cycle of desire, labor, and enjoyment is all mine. And even if it is God who lays the desire upon me and sets the limit to what I can do, when I come to the enjoyment, I must recognize I am actually enjoying the exercise of my own choice.”

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So the contradictoriness of the Unhappy Consciousness arises from the inviolability of the unity of mind and body in an actual embodied consciousness. That’s the only way you can read this section; that is, the contradictions arise from the inviolability of the unity of mind and body in actual embodied consciousness.

Now this leads me to a large, not so large, a little aside.  And the aside is on the status of labor in Hegel.  And I'm here just tracking what Harris says on pages 417 and 418 of his text, but it's worth bringing in.  And it's worth bringing in because Uncle Karl argued, I quote, "Labor as Hegel understands and recognizes it, is abstract mental labor." That's the crux of Marx's critique of Hegel.  Everything else is just, you know, smoke and mirrors. The crux is the interpretation that labor, as Hegel understands it and recognizes it, is abstract mental labor.

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Now if my interpretation of the Unhappy Consciousness is right, then that thesis is just straightforwardly false.  Whatever Marx's critique of Hegel is, he better not rest it on that foundation.  So we know that the labor, going back to the master-slave relationship, that the labor of the serf was physical.  And only superveniently, namely as a mode of afterthought, does its mental side arise as a result, namely the contemplation of the form. Essentially it's a doing, but in the mode of Stoicism I abstract from the doing, because I want to imagine my freedom of thought.  But of course that's what Hegel's going to criticize.

So serfdom for Hegel is labor in its most stringent sense because it is both involuntary and enforced.  The labor of the Unhappy Consciousness is self-estranged. Not involuntary and enforced, but self-estranged.  Almost, you might say, a Marxian category.  So on the physical side, it is both involuntary and compulsory service to natural need, which is broken into by the enjoyment of both the satisfaction of accomplishment and of satisfied desire.  And of course on the other side, it is voluntary service for God.

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But the voluntary service is indeed purely mental.  And it is indeed what is important to the Unhappy Consciousness.  And it's because of this that this Unhappy Consciousness, in its laboring, can conceive of itself — in its labor it can conceive of itself — as free and universal.  Because I'm laboring for God.

Student: Confused on this voluntary service to God. Insofar as its a practice of devotion surely it's not entirely mental.  I mean you go to Church, you do various things.

Bernstein:  Right but remember this is not about the devotional side, this is about the thanksgiving side.

Student:  But even in thanksgiving there's a set of practices.

Bernstein: Well, it's going to be a set of practices that's going to be governed by an attitude. It’s the attitude of thanksgiving that Hegel is concerned with.  Of course, it has versions of it.  You give over a tithe.  There's all sorts of ways in which it’s manifested in very concrete sorts of things. But the way it's a dual practice is that the laboring is a mental physical activity doing, while the thanksgiving is the reflective comprehension of it.  So it's still voluntary, even if there's some cultic practices.

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So the point here, however, is that this thanksgiving can of course not make any difference at all to or in the beyond.  That the only significance of thanksgiving is the experience of the working and laboring itself.  And the argument again here is the experience of working and laboring is always going to be one in which I am transforming the world physically and socially all the time.  That is, Christianity is nothing if not world-making, even if under some illusory [inaudible] about in whose service or for what reasons.  Hence, in its world-making, it will give onto the Protestant ethic, that is, modern faith.

And in modern faith, in the life of the Protestant ethic, it will literally become *bildung*.  That is, the cultivation of itself as it makes the new world.  But it's making all the time — I mean this is what [inaudible].  There's no moment in this in which Hegel does not conceive of these activities as literally physically constructive.

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Now the conceptual opposition, therefore, between the concrete physical on the one hand and the abstract mental on the other, is an opposition that belongs to Greek society and, in a certain moment of bad faith, to bourgeois society.  What I mean by that is: ‘You go to Wall Street every day. You are ruthless. You are cutthroat. And you're going to church on Sunday.’  So, you have your moments of working on the world, of making it, of affirming yourself, doing all that stuff.  And you have the purely mental side of, ‘I believe,’ which, only in America does this continue to exist.  But anyway this form of bourgeois life — America is like a museum so we can understand the *Phenomenology*. Bourgeois life is still like that? How did that happen?

We need another course to understand American religion.  Because American religion is not cult.  It's actually important: why has religion not faded from America?  Because in America I think religion has never been essentially a social practice.  That is, a cult practice that is governed by a Church with a series of practices and that the institutional belonging to the Church was the essential thing.  In America, religion has always meant sect, where sect has always been interpreted as individual salvation.  That is, the relationship of the individual to God so that even in its most — and the thing about sects is that it can not only exist under conditions of fragmentation and dissolution, but it can thrive under these conditions. That is, it doesn't need to be in competition with the state. It doesn't need to have institutional. It can thrive on isolation, loneliness, fragmentation, dislocation. It has its core there.

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So that all the ways in which in European nations, in complicated ways and sometimes very recently in the cases of Italy and Spain, has the Church lost its power by the State taking over some of the integrative arrangements of the Church and taking responsibility for them.  You can read the writings of our colleague downstairs, Jose Casanova. This is what his research is all about.  But in the United States, because we had not had that kind of institutional Church, then that usurpation of the experience of a secular society has not occurred. So you do have something very odd and curious here. That is, this is continuation of early, very early bourgeois Protestant experience.

Hence the dualism between them, the concretely physical and the mental, between the six days of the week and Sunday, which is the concrete manifestation of that.  Which a form bourgeois society upheld.

Student: Practically the division between mental and the actual is itself...

Bernstein: Oh it has practical yes. Of course.  And that's absolutely right. And all I want to say is that division does not exist in Hegelian philosophy.  There is no mental self-making in Hegel with which is not essentially physical making of the world at the same time.  Free labor, Harris rightly suggests, is the identity of human thought and action.  So Hegel, and I don't want to say Hegel is not an idealist, I'm not one of those other Hegelians, I think Hegel is an idealist — whatever his idealism is or means, it's not because he thinks it all happens up there in the domain of ideas. It has something fundamentally to do with the structures of laboring activity as self-conscious, institutional practices.

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So it is unsurprising that there is going to be something ultimately self-defeating about thanksgiving.  And this, by the way, this argument about thanksgiving is still there in lots of contemporary forms of Christianity.  Obviously all the stuff about the gift relationship, the way it’s come back, but even McIntyre arguing that thought, philosophy, is really just a sublated form of prayer.  I guess you have to live in South Bend, Indiana for that to make much sense, and even there...

So if the relationship between mind and body is inviolable, then the full recognition of God's giving as what places me in my body, as a free acceptance of my embodiment — that's the achievement of the gift moment.  We need to be clear, the achievement of the moment, what it gets absolutely right, is it leads to the free acceptance of embodiment and laboring.  But then it finds it’s another form of self-assertion. So the problem then becomes the problem of the will.

It's not like, 'I don't know what to do with my body;’ although, my body remains a problem.  But it's my will that seems beginning in the way.  I seem to be asserting my will.  And it's just that which is going to lead to a new relationship, that of self-mortification.  Let me say what this and then we'll have a break because I have a lot to say about it.

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The last form of the Unhappy Consciousness — and again remember what I said before, all of these forms now continue, [inaudible] so that on the one hand we move on to another one, but unlike earlier accounts, they're not quite sublated because they each have their own structure of temptation.  Which has been one of the things I've been trying to illustrate, is they carry on as contemporary forms of self-understanding.  The last form of the Unhappy Consciousness is one in which it seeks to divest itself actively, completely, of its initiative and its embodiment as of worth at all. So just taking the extreme view, having, as it were, failed to find the mediated way of getting back to its body, this is going to be the attempt to systematically dis-identify itself with its will and embodiment.

So rather than enjoying its activity in the service of God, it mourns and agonizes over each and every element.  Which is to say, its real goal is to reduce itself to nothing, to achieve, as it were, the nothingness of its inessentiality. That is, if my activity and embodiment are truly inessential, are truly worth nothing, then I want them to become nothing.  And hence, I want my inhabitation of the world to become nothing. That is, I want to reveal worldliness itself as a nothing.  And the way it does this — and there's a contradiction here — is through a focus on its animal function.

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Paragraph 225.  So the point here is this form of consciousness

"takes its own *reality* as *immediately a nothingness,*" — immediately — "its actual doing thus becomes a doing of nothing, its enjoyment a feeling of its wretchedness. Work and enjoyment thus lose all *universal content and significance*, for if they had any, they would have an absolute being of their own. Both withdraw into their mere particularity, which consciousness is set upon reducing to nothingness. Consciousness is aware of itself as *this actual individual* in the animal functions. These are no longer performed naturally and without embarrassment, as matters trifling in themselves which cannot possess any importance or essential significance for Spirit; instead, since it is in them that the enemy reveals himself in his characteristic shape..." — it's the Devil — "...they are rather the object of serious endeavour, and become precisely matters of the utmost importance. This enemy, however, renews himself in his defeat, and consciousness, in fixing its attention on him, far from freeing itself from him, really remains for ever in contact with him, and for ever sees itself as defiled…"

So the guess everyone makes here is that neither eating nor sex are matters that Christianity has traditionally repudiated. After all, the Eucharist itself involves a bit of nosh, and Christians are supposed to procreate a lot.  So the thought here is that the mention of animal functions is excretion, and the question about whether and what Hegel knew about Luther is roughly what people wonder about.  Luther notoriously — there’s an important book by Eric Erickson called *The Young Luther.*  Erickson is one of the original Frankfurt School psychologists.

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And in *The Young Luther,* Erickson deals at length with Luther's constipation. Luther apparently spent hours a day in the bathroom, in the privy, and I guess his assumption was, if he spent hours a day in there, this must mean something.  And you assume what it meant was it was the Devil trying to reduce him to his bodily functions and hence his fight with constipation became the signature of the idea of what spiritual fighting meant.  So that if he could somehow — you can go on the web and check all this out. I'm not making this up.  Indeed, I think it was in the mid-60s, I'm embarrassed I know this, they actually discovered the privy, the bathroom, where Luther did all this.  This was a great discovery at the time, lots of stuff going on in Wittenberg.

Well the comedy of this is also the comedy, I want to say, of the abject. That Hegel is not doing this by accident.  It is exactly looking at that moment of our physicality over which we lack control [inaudible] and which places us with in the animal kingdom essentially, not just an embodied, incarnated Christ.  This is, and I believe he got this right, so that the difficulty now is — that is, what's Luther's problem? He cannot find the place to draw the line between the physical and the spiritual so he's turning back on that physical and on being unable — the excremental vision here is the inability to, as it were, draw that line is the experience of abjection.  Abjection is the experience of the last boundary or border.

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So this last form of the Unhappy Consciousness is indeed a form of abjection in the most profound sense.  And that Hegel has this sense of the ultimacy — the idea is, the ultimacy of a religious consciousness, as it tries to enact that difficulty of divided consciousness, ends up in abjection.  Ends up in abjection.

[course mechanics]

[BREAK]

Should we begin?   The way I want to think through this next moment is by focusing on Judith Butler's account in her book *The Psychic Life of Power*. And the reason I want to do so is because in it Butler presents a critique of the transition here to Reason, and I want to take seriously that critique and then — so I want to really present what Butler's argument is, then present my own interpretation of the transition and then I'll return to try to say something about the limitations of Butler, which I take to be limitations of her philosophy in general.  So I'm going to be having a kind of conversation here about this very moment.

For reasons I'll come to, Butler believes in a certain way that the notion of the Unhappy Consciousness is the ultimate form of consciousness, that there's nothing beyond it, and that one might think this is sort of interesting. And there are other ways in which people would like the book to end at this point and I want to discuss them as well.

So let me recycle where we are. Just following Butler's line from work into abjection, and then the transition.

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From the performative self-assertion of work, Butler argues, as I have been all along, that performance becomes the occasion for the grand and endless action that effectively augments and individuates the self it seeks to deny. And hence the final turn to self-mortification in which the notion of self-defeating performance — which is what I've been arguing is the structure of the argument all along, a series of self-defeating performances — nonetheless has to be slightly different.

Here, she says, what occurs is a negative narcissism, that is, an engaged preoccupation with what is most debased and defiled about changeable consciousness.  So in regarding itself as nothing and as doing nothing, in regarding itself as an excremental function and hence regarding itself as excrement (that’s what's really occurring here), 'this consciousness effectively reduces itself to the changeable features of its bodily functions and providence.' That is, to use a phrase of Blake’s, you become what you behold, and if you are absorptively focused on those functions then you, as it were, take yourself to be nothing but that.

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Yet, and here's the flip-side, since it is an experience of wretchedness, the intentionality of consciousness slipping in, because you're having an experience of your wretchedness then there is some consciousness that is taking stock of those functions and hence, because it's intentional, cannot be thoroughly identified with them. Which gives a slightly Satrean reading to the intentionality of consciousness here. And there's always in Butler a slightly Sartrean subtext, I think.

'It is just here in the effort to differentiate itself from its excretory functions, indeed from an excretory identity, that consciousness relies on the mediator, on the priest.' This is the transition.  'The strategy is roughly this: 'because the body cannot be fully denied, as the Stoic thought, it must be ritualistically renounced.  At the limits of this self-mortification and self-sacrifice, the abjected consciousness appears to ground its action not in its own will, because then it would be asserting itself again, but in the will of another. I am going to do this because the priest demands it, the mediator demands it. And hence it attempts to ground this action in a way that conceals the reflexive origins of this form of self-punishment.'

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So the idea of bringing the mediator in, the priest in, is — think of it this way, in the case of the master-slave relationship, what the slave did was substitute the desire of the other for its own desire and worked accordingly.  Here, the Unhappy Consciousness is substituting the will of another, namely the will of the priest, for its will as the grounds of its self-punishment.  Now, Butler argues that it's at this very juncture that Hegel departs from what has been the pattern of explanation that he has used throughout this chapter, namely a structure of explanation in which the self-negating posture is underscored as a posture, as a doing.  That is, every act of self-negation is self-defeating because it is something that I do and hence a phenomenalizing. So the self-negation is phenomenalized, made present, in an action that refutes the negation it seeks to institute.

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All this again, you know, is just my joke, ‘talking to myself.'  So in place of this kind of explanation — about this Butler seems to me right  — Hegel is offering a different kind of explanation, and she wants to argue that it's this other form of explanation that is suspicious and one we should reject.  'Here Hegel operates an account that operates through the idea of a self-sacrificial action.  In effect, the self-sacrifice' — and this is the problem — 'is not refuted through the claim that self-sacrifice is a willful action.'  That's what would involve in carrying on, right? There's a self-sacrifice, I do with the priest tells me to do, *I* do with the priest tells me to do, hence I'm doing it hence, hence the priest is not. That's not what Hegel says here.  It's true. It is not what he says

‘So it's not a structure of a self-defeating performance; rather, Hegel asserts that in self-sacrifice one really does enact another's will, the will of the priest.’  “One might expect,” she says, “that the penitent would be shown to be revealing himself to be self-aggrandizing, to be narcissistic, that his self-punishments would culminate in a pleasurable assertion of the self.”  You know, so the idea she's thinking of is, no matter how much I whip myself — "Body be done! I can't get enough of that pain! There's nothing that makes me happier!" That beautiful entanglement of pleasure and pain that is at the core of masochism. One would have thought that that moment of pleasure would be the crux of the matter.

And of course you might think it should be the crux of the matter, because after all — and about this, she's right — up to now, hasn't this whole chapter been about the entanglement of pleasure and pain?  Hasn't this whole chapter been about a series of essentially masochistic strategies, which always have a moment of enjoyment?

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So that the enjoyment is always supervenient on the pain, because I'm performing the act as a form of self-negation.  But Hegel eschews this explanation, she says, in favor of, and I quote, "a religious solution in Spirit."  So her argument is that, whereas in all earlier examples of self-negation, pleasure was understood to inhere in pain — and that's kind of the thought we've got to have in order to read Hegel: the way in which pleasure inheres in pain, not as something beyond it, but in it, as a moment of it.  The pleasurable self-aggrandizement of the Stoic. The pleasurable sadism of the Skeptic.

And I should say that, of philosophers, only I think Hegel and Nietzsche really understand the way in which pleasure inheres in pain. And Nietzsche of course most radically in cruelty.  Nothing more pleasurable.  That's at the core of the whole *Genealogy,* festivals of cruelty.

It's not?

Student: That's not what I meant, I was nodding.

Bernstein:  So, 'here,' she argues, 'pleasure is here temporarily removed from pain through the figure of its future compensation.' That's the religious solution, that pain now, pleasure later in the afterlife.  And we'll see in a moment, when I come back to my own account, we'll see that there is a moment of that in this account. We have to do something with that thought.  There does seem away which Hegel seems to be using religious thought.

So, “for Hegel,” Butler argues, "this eschatological transformation of pain of this world into the pleasure of the next” — which is certainly a deep version of religious consciousness.  The eschatological transformation of the pain of this world into the pleasure of the next, which I would argue is what eschatology is.  Eschatology is that transfiguration of pain into pleasure through the idea of a temporal operator. There is nothing else that it could be I think.

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‘This is what establishes, in a sense, the transition from Self-Consciousness to Reason, and Self-Consciousness's recognition of itself as part of a religious community later in the book will equally affect the transition from Self-Consciousness to Spirit.'  That's Butler's critique. That Hegel, as it were, dodges out, goes religious, and solves the problem in the afterlife.

Now I want to go on and say a few things about Butler before we turn back to Hegel here, because this chapter of Butler is fascinating.  And as she elaborates her critique, we're also going to see why she wants to dwell and continue this thought of the Unhappy Consciousness. So, a few pages later after lodging this critique, she says that, “the body” —  I'm quoting now page 54,  “the body appears to be nothing other than, [for Hegel] a threat to the project of safety and self-sufficiency that governs the *Phenomenology's* trajectory.”  Let me repeat that.  "The body," she's arguing, "appears to be nothing other than a threat to the project of safety and self-sufficiency that governs the *Phenomenology's* trajectory."

Now if anything I've been doing over the last 14 weeks makes sense, then I take this claim to be just false.  What I do take to be true, and I want to underline this, is that the ideas of safety and self-sufficiency are precisely the most recurring and insistent goals of natural consciousness.  Indeed safety and self-sufficiency are for Hegel the temptations of philosophy.  That what philosophy has been — Heidegger would say a philosophy of presence.  What is the philosophy of presence?  The dream of safety and self sufficiency, I think, is Hegel's view. But what would safety and self sufficiency be?  It would be nothing but radical independence without a moment of dependence.

So I take it that the desire for safety and self-sufficiency is exactly the drive that runs right through the chapter on self-consciousness, namely that because of the divided structure of self-consciousness, because — just to repeat my interpretation again — because the self is intrinsically and unavoidably dependent, hence, essentially not self-sufficient, hence, essentially not autonomous, hence, essentially not safe (all these I take to be the premise of everything that Hegel does) — then the recurrent temptation of self-consciousness in all its forms is to repudiate dependence.

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That is, I want to suggest, the deepest structure of human temptation: to repudiate dependence.  Of which, of course, the most extravagant form, is the admission of absolute dependence on God.  You just hand yourself over lock, stock and barrel, to get everything back.  As I will be suggesting as we go on with the text, this temptation to try to ensure oneself of one's independence involves trying to assert one's independence from the body, from the other, from society, from history, and therefore from time.  I will suggest that all the book is about the impossibility of asserting that independence from these forms of mediation of the self.

If, to put it another way, our independence depends upon these others, then independence is itself a figure of dependence.  That was what I was trying to argue in my account of the master-slave. And if that's true, then I am claiming that what is found unacceptable, or intolerable or unworthy or compromising, is that experience of dependence.

“The anal preoccupation that directly precedes the ascendance into a religious concept or an afterlife suggests,” Butler says, “a bodily permeability that can only be resolved by an escape into an afterlife in which no bodies exists at all.”  That simply is not what the text says. What the text says, going back to that passage I read, is that the activities of the body are natural to the body and therefore do not matter. That is, they're not a form of defilement. They're only a form of defilement if you imagine separation.  So it cannot be that Hegel is imagining a world with no bodies at all.

So “this affirmation,” that's Butler's phrase, “of the absolute negation of the body,” she says, “contradicts all the earlier efforts to subordinate or master the body *within* life, efforts which culminated in the assertion of the ineluctability of the body.”   So she recognizes that Hegel claims the ineluctability of the body.  And on that ground decides he must be making a religious move here.  It sounds like a contradiction to me.  “Whereas,” she says, “other religious notions turned out to be surreptitious ways of reasserting the body, this one appears exempt from the dialetical reversal it resolves.”

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Well, throughout her writings, Butler has employed any number of variations on the master-slave dialectic.  And the trick to reading Butler is always to figure out who's the master. Sometimes the master appears in the form of Althusserian interpellation, sometimes it appears as Foucaultian subjection, sometimes it appears as just language itself.  But always there is a structure of master-slave.  So it is unsurprising that she carries on this chapter by arguing that the pattern of the Unhappy Consciousness is one that reappears in roughly the books that she takes to be her bibles, namely Nietzsche's *On The Genealogy of Morals* and *Daybreak,* *Discipline and Punish* and *Civilization and its Discontents.* The rest of the chapter tries to map out how the structure of those arguments are exactly the same as the structure of Hegel's.

So roughly, for example, psychoanalysis slots desire or libido or instinct into the place where Hegel has the body, so that the imperatives of conscience — your conscience is now the Freudian version of unchangeable consciousness — produce the very satisfaction they prohibit.  Butler puts it, page 55, like this — and it was part of the reason I want to underline this is I want say this is Hegel's argument here, so that these carrying-ons of these arguments in the *Genealogy* and in Freud and in Foucault are carrying on an essential form of Hegelian dialectic.  So she argues that “the repression of libido is always understood as itself libidinally invested in repression.”

The pleasure I get — so I'm libidinally invested in the repressing moment. So the moment of the pain is the moment of the pleasure that makes the repression, keeps it going and motivates it.  Hence libido is not absolutely negated through repression.  The repressive law is not external to the libido that it represses, but the repressive law represses to the extent that repression becomes a libidinal activity.  That is, there isn't some antecedent libido that then gets stomped down by repression, rather libido is simply the underside of the movement of repression itself that keeps it moving as a relationship.

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So she says, “the afterlife of prohibited desire” — afterlife of prohibited desire — “is in the prohibition itself.”  Think about it — I can see you're  puzzled.   Think about what happens when the parents leave the house and they say to you just before they leave, “The you one thing you must not do is open the liquor cabinet.”  Oh boy does that generate desire!  You may have never had a desire before, but that will do it.

And that's to say that the life of the desire is nothing compared to the investment in breaking that prohibition itself. That is, what gives the prohibition its force is the libidinal investment in it as a structure of the denial of the self which you can only assert — you can only assert —through the prohibition of desire. So that there's an internal relationship between prohibition and desire.  Desire is always the desire to break the law.  Which I will say is a Hegelian thought, and I'll come to that in about another 20 weeks, more or less.

Similarly, just so we hear the same thing, here's the aesthetic ideal in Nietzsche. Just a bit of Nietzsche for you. Where Nietzsche, just to remind you, says that 'hatred against everything human, even more against everything animal, against everything material, this disgust with the senses, with reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this desire to get away from all semblance, change, becoming, death, wish, desire itself. The meaning of all this is a will to nothingness, a will running counter to life, a revolt against the most fundamental presuppositions of life, yet it is and remains a will.'  That's the reinvestment. So the turning against life, that would be uninteresting in itself, what gives that whole mechanism its power is the willing against it.  And that's the moment of the performative contradiction.

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Now what is extraordinary here is how — and this is why I want to say that Butler is a believer in the Unhappy Consciousness — how low-key and deflationary her account of emancipation is.  Roughly, she argues, following Foucault — and we need to do this here. Why? Because I want to ask you: what is the right solution to the problem of the Unhappy Consciousness?  Here's Butler’s solution.  It's Foucault's solution.  And what is Foucault’s solution?  Well, she argues that regimes of repression, by inciting what they prohibit, cannot succeed.  Regimes of repression: 'Do not do that.'  Whoo-hoo, now I'm going to do it.  Incite what they prohibit.

Because they cannot succeed — repression always must fail because it incites what it prohibits — then they must — if they're not succeeding in repression, what's happening?  Well, what they're doing is actually exacerbating.  And they must exacerbate and diversify the efforts of repression.  So, your parents come home and they can see that you've had a nip of the bottle and they say, 'Okay, you're grounded.' Oh, so now you have two things to rebel against.  You both want to have a drink and you want to sneak out of the house.  And again the next thing is going to happen. So every time you break the law another one comes in and of course then multiple ones come in and you diversify and multiply the desires of resistance.

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So Butler argues that these attempts to diversify the efforts of domination simultaneously proliferate, proliferate — this is obviously the beginning of Foucault's critique of the repressing hypothesis — “*proliferate* the domain of the bodily beyond the domain targeted by the original restriction.”  And she argues, this proliferation — 'I now want to drink and escape the house and not do my homework, I want to be really bad — that, she says, it's this proliferation which separates Foucault from Hegel.  An odd argument, since I would have thought the structure of the argument was nothing but about proliferation. I thought that's what Hegel was doing, but anyway.  She says it's the proliferation that separates Foucault from Hegel, and constitutes, and she puts it this way, the site of potential resistance to regulation.

“The possibility of this resistance is derived from what is *unforeseeable* in proliferation.” That is, I may just find myself doing something other than what I've been prohibited to do.  And, she says, “If a given regime cannot fully control the incitement that it nevertheless produces, is that in part the result of a resistance, at the level of impulse, to a full and final domestication of any regulatory regime?” That is, what she's arguing is, and this is all she wants to argue, nothing else, that domination cannot finally succeed. That's it. Because it will proliferate and there will be potential sites of resistance. But there's no account of anything else. There is no account of anything else. So in others of her work this comes up as repeating otherwise of what was said or done, mocking or ironically using an original form of subjection, and the like.

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Now I take it that this is pretty thin gruel, hardly looks like emancipation and it's true that while there are another five chapters of *The Psychic Life of Power,* the structure of the argument is very similar. It just modulates from this version of it into a version concerned with melancholy and mourning.  And I'll say much more about melancholy and mourning toward the end of the *Phenomenology*, which is about memory and mourning.

Well, I take it that we would want or, unless we are happy to be unhappy consciousnesses, then we would want to repudiate the religious solution and Butler's version of simply the thought that there cannot be a final regime of repression. That is, the Butlerian form of hope, which is to say an odd form of despair.  But Butler, I mean, if anyone's melancholy in modern philosophy it's Butler.  I say that and she's a dear friend. It worries me.

What is Hegel's reasoning beyond this? So I want to give another account of transition here.  To here, the presumption of what separates the changeable from the unchangeable is that my changeable body is what separates me from my essence. Hence, the hope or the idea is, if I could suppress my body, then there would be no gap, and hence a reconciliation or unification with God would occur.  And this won't work, and it cannot work, because I do have a body. That's the end of it.  It can't get around that.

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If the other really is my essence, then it follows that what is separating me from it is not my body.  If the other is my essence and I am essentially bodily, then whatever is separating me from God cannot be my body.  Otherwise the unchangeable cannot be my essence.  So the issue is not what happens to the body.  Although that issue is going to return in various forms, that's not the issue here.  Rather, that's been the red herring of the whole movement of Christianity.  Rather, the issue here is: what will it take for me to recognize that the will of the unchangeable consciousness is a reified and projected version of my will?  [inaudible] maybe not.

That is, rather than seeing it from the position of the body, look at it from: what do I need to see the other as a reified projection of me as an embodied consciousness?  What do I need, not to do to get rid of my body, what do I need to do to it [the other] to bring it to Earth?  That's the issue, and not just bring it to Earth but to internalize it as my will.  How can I make my will God's will, so that God drops out?

Now, of course, this issue has been there from the beginning of the chapter. It is the very stakes of the Incarnation. We're not going beyond the logic of the chapter, rather we're saying that we haven't yet come to grips with it. That is, we haven't yet taken seriously the Incarnation, but we've been trying to, as it were, avoid it.

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So the first thing to remember is that every interpretation of what is required by God from the penitent’s point of view, is equally a demonstration of God's point of view.  What I mean by that is, you have to reverse your perspectives. What you have to remind yourself of is that when the penitent says ‘I am unworthy from God's point of view,’ because that is my essence, then I am saying that from my point of view as well. God's point of view is my point of view, albeit reified. That's what we've been saying all along. Now, we want to, as it were, say that more seriously, or find a way of saying that in a way that gets rid of the excess or the extra, what he calls, the surface structure.

So the thought is every interpretation of my situation is a double perspective in which one assumes that one is inhabiting only a single perspective. That's the mistake.  That it's a double perspective, my understanding of my relationship to God from my point of view of His point of view.  And I keep trying to keep the two separate rather than saying, ‘No, I'm taking on His point of view of me, so that's my self-interpretation.’ And this is just what Hegel says the idea of the double point of view in paragraph 226.

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He says, so — very short paragraph thankfully. “But to both of these moments, the feeling of its wretchedness and the poverty of its actions, is linked the consciousness of its unity” — of its unity — “with the Unchangeable. For the attempted direct destruction of what it actually is is mediated by the thought of the Unchangeable, and takes place in this relation to it." So it's this mediation of my self-interpretation that gives it its essential doubleness.  Hegel also says, carrying on, that this dual perspective demonstrates that my self-relation is mediated by another.

So, the introduction of “the mediator.”  Whoa!  A book about mediation bringing in a mediator.  Might be something important.  Not about religion, but about mediation, about self-mediation.  About my relation to myself being self-mediated, not an accident that he says not

"priest" but "the mediator" here.  This is the transition, about the mediation.

So the problem has been that the interpretation of the mediation has been negative.  If I can make it positive — that is, if I can think of God not berating me to undo my changeableness, but rather affirming my unity with God — then the distance between me and the unchangeable consciousness will collapse and unity with the unchangeable become possible.  Hence, what is required is an affirmative identification with it, rather than a negative dis-identification from myself.  Let me repeat that.  What's wanted is an affirmative identification with the unchangeable consciousness rather than a negative dis-identification from myself.

Well, it follows from this that what is necessary here is to make explicit two things.  First, that my self-relation is mediated through the other, and I am the other. It's *my* mediated self-relation.  It's a *self*-relation that's mediated. So the other is not anything absolutely external to me. And for this to work, three steps, I think, are necessary. First, what I'm suggesting is the hidden subtext of the chapter, the implicit likeness to me of The Mediator — now I'm saying The with a capital T.  I take it that The Mediator is Jesus. The Mediator, that's the Incarnation.  The implicit likeness of me to The Mediator must become explicit. And as such it will work through that likeness of me to God.

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Hence the arrival on the scene of an explicit third.  Mediation always requires a third. And the third is the actual mediator here, the priest. So what happens now is, with the priest, mediation itself now becomes explicit. That's what's important with the mediator.  The mediator makes mediation itself explicit. That is, I am in a mediated self-relationship to my own essence, and putting the priest there makes that fact explicit.

So as Hegel argues then, in the next paragraph 227, what follows then is that the mediator presents the two extremes to one another.  That is the job of the priest is to say, 'I mediate between God and you.'  So in the priest, changeable and unchangeable touch.  They touch.  And of course the Unhappy Consciousness has been all along about the fact that changeable and unchangeable touch.  They meet one another.

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So the mediator — and here's an obvious thought that Hegel, by the way, for reasons I'll come to in a second, doesn't run with — the mediator him or herself explicitly already possesses within itself an affirmative version of itself as at one with both sides, as at one with the unchangeable and the changeable consciousness alike. That's what makes the Pope just a screwball idea, right?  Now, you know, 'Absolutely the word of God right there in that guy telling it to us. Is he God?  Is he man? What is the deal with the Pope?'  Right?  He's an old [inaudible].

Now if we were rushed — we're a little rushed, I want to slow down.  But if we were rushed, we could actually simply say that all by itself, this fact (recognizing what the mediator does) does everything that Hegel needs.  That is, once we recognize the mediator as a version of ourselves — after all, he's not only Pope Benedict, he is Ratzinger.  He's a guy.  Just like you and me.  Once we recognize that, then we can dispense with him altogether and become our own mediator.  That's just what Luther did.  This is Luther's move.  Luther said,  'Well, look if you son-of-a-bitch are claiming to be the voice of Him on Earth, the priest with the voice of God, how exactly are you in relationship to Him that I'm not?  And then you have to tell something screwy story about Apostolic succession?  Give me a break. Let's get rid of the reified mediator. We are our own mediation in relationship to the unchangeable.’

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Each man is his own priest. This is what Lutheranism is.  Then, once you have that move, then you can go right to Descartes, where I take it that Descartes is simply making explicit the implicit identification of self with God in Protestantism.  Oh dear, those blank looks.  The *cogito* is a form of atheism. It is the idea of the — have I given this to you before?  The impossibility of faith?  Yeah, it's the evil demon, right? The evil demon problem is the problem of faith. Can you believe in God and have faith in God?  Well it turns out faith in God — imagine God as an evil demon, right, then God means absolute self-doubt. Because what faith means is absolute self-doubt, and Descartes argues that's impossible.

So the faith of faith — that is, its certainty — is the *cogito*.  So there is absolutely no gap between Luther and Atheism, on my reading, none.  Need another course on that.  At any rate, I'm not going to take that path now because take Hegel doesn't but...

[00:50:10]

Student: So is a part of the critique of Butler is that she holds on to the mediator (Pope, priest) too long, not recognizing — in other words…

Bernstein:  Absolutely.  It's subjection. She's all about subjection.

Student:  So in a strange sense, the attachment to domination as a problem is ...

Bernstein: Absolutely.

Student: ...is a peculiar theology of sorts.

Bernstein: Absolutely. Yeah, that's the argument.

Student:  ... [inaudible] proliferates desire in the same way...

Bernstein: [inaudible] and lives in guilt and hence her arguments, normative heterosexuality and its guilt structure and all that, it always comes back to the same essential structure. Okay.

Now Hegel doesn't use this argument, and it’s interesting that he doesn’t — the argument I just gave you — but I gave you that argument only because that shows you how easy the transition is.  Now, Hegel make the argument a little bit more complex, and I want to go through his complex version in about 12 minutes.  So if the problem, to here, is that — and this just picks up something that Katie's been insisting on all along — that what's been anchoring the movement of the Unhappy Consciousness is a moment of universalism. That is, the structure of the unchangeable consciousness in changeable consciousness. It's been there all along.

And it's been there as something that's never been really external but only projected as external.  So we're simply re-appropriating that moment that has been there from the get-go.  And what Butler doesn't take seriously enough, I'm suggesting, the other side of that, is the truth of universality, of what's going to be the truth of Reason. That is, there's a kind of Skepticism that goes along with the Unhappy Consciousness. Okay,

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If the problem, to here, is that each willing of renunciation was a performative affirmation, then at this juncture Hegel argues the Unhappy Consciousness must give up its will. This is what having a mediator accomplishes.  The mediator replaces the unchangeable, permitting the Unhappy Consciousness to substitute the will of another for his own will.  Of course to will to let another's will to be one's will is a form of willing, and that is inevitable.  The point that Hegel picks up here, though, is that the other, here, is now another finite being, a priest, whose will I'm substituting for my will.  So the unchangeable now is appearing in the form of a finite subject, the mediator, the priest, the Pope.

Now, as Hegel has it at the beginning of paragraph 229, the getting rid of one's finite self-assertive will does two things.  First, in being will-less, the Unhappy Consciousness now becomes the very thing he dreaded being all along, a thing. This is the ultimate moment of self-degradation.  To actually turn yourself, not even into excrement but even worse than excrement, if imaginable. A mere thing, a lump.  What vanishes here according to Hegel is that the deception, that performative thanking, is now a form of self-assertion.

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Second, in substituting the will of the mediator for my will, I have tacitly internalized the unchangeable essence in me. I'll say that again because that's that's the crux of his move. By substituting the will of the mediator for my will, I have essentially or tacitly or implicitly internalized the unchangeable essence in myself. I have made the unchangeable will my will.

Now Hegel's statement of this in paragraph 230 is probably less than crystal clear.  But roughly on my reading he is claiming that this is what happens. And because there is now no gap between finite and infinite, because the unchangeable is already changeable — that's the moment of the Incarnation — and now the changeable already unchangeable by interpretation of the Incarnation, I experience myself through it, then in principle relief from misery has been given.

The thought here is 'that this is in principle' is ambiguous.  And it is this ambiguity that Hegel intends when he says in the middle of the final paragraph, “for consciousness, its will does indeed become universal and essential will…" — that's the moment of realization. For consciousness, its will really does become universal and essential, “…but…” — and this is the ambiguity — “…but consciousness itself does not take itself to be this essential will,” which is the deflection of what it has already achieved.

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The exact same ambiguity occurs a sentence later when he says, “This unity of objectivity and being-for-self, which lies in the Notion of action, and which therefore becomes for consciousness essence and object — this unity is not the principle of its action, and so too it does not become an object for consciousness, directly and through itself."  Now, what's going on here?  And I think this is where Butler's misreading enters.  And the reason I think that nearly everyone gets this transition wrong is that they try to resolve this ambiguity.

On my reading Hegel is going to insist on the ambiguity of this moment. That is — let me get clear again what the ambiguity is this moment.  It both is the assertion that for consciousness its will does indeed become universal and essential will, and, at the same time, consciousness

does not take itself to be this essential will.

[00:58:25]

Why the ambiguity? On my reading, the ambiguity exists because, on the one side — let's call it the side of the Unhappy Consciousness itself — is going to respond to the ambiguity itself by claiming, and this is the religious moment, that it will be relieved from its misery in the beyond.  And the reason that Hegel keeps this moment is because this moment continues.  It continues in Kant's conception of the highest good. It continues with the recurring history of Christianity.  And it recurs in various places, in Jacobi, and so on.  That is, the notion of the beyond continues to exist in a new form. That's one side.

On the other hand, he is also claiming that this same ambiguity has been resolved in a real reconciliation, namely the uprising of reason.  Which is what he says in the final sentence of the chapter.  So you might say, and this is what I'm now claiming here, the simplest way of thinking about this is: Luther and Descartes always occur together.  And they enter into the modern world together, and they are both modern versions — modern versions — of the reconciliation of changeable and unchangeable.

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One version of it, which is, let's call it, the repetition of the Unhappy Consciousness, will put the moment of reconciliation in the beyond. The other moment, the moment of Descartes says, 'No, I am God.'  Well, what he says in *Le Monde*, I'll remind you, is ‘let's pretend that God does not exist and let's now say what the structure of the world would be if he created the world again;’i.e.,he says, 'I am God.' I don't see how he could be more explicit about it than he is in *Le Monde.*

So the crux here is is twofold.  First, that the idea of a mediator is implicit from the get-go — this is what Jesus is, this is what the Incarnation is all about — but that role could not be recognized as long as it was simply seen as God in finite form.  Because the God always remained a problem.  What the mediator does is make explicit what is already implicit in the Incarnation.  Second, [inaudible] Butler, the performative contradiction strategy has done everything it could by demonstrating that neither self-assertion of particularity nor embodiment are circumventable.  That's all performative self-contradiction can do.  Which is to say, it is a dead-end strategy for moving on.  The best it can do is, [inaudible] is Butlerian proliferation, that is, other forms of unhappiness, which of course is the same thing that happens in Foucault.

[01:02:30]

It is hence no accident that what Butler does, essentially, is spread out the problem, pluralizing the uprising of the body without really working through the governing issue, namely the compatibility of the two sides of our dual consciousness. So I want to say that that she hasn't even thought the problem that Hegel's trying to come to grips with.  And she never truly asks if the unchangeable is compatible with embodiment. She always leaves it as that double structure of: subjection making you subject.  No subjects without subjection.  [inaudible]

While the problem does not get settled here, Hegel does assume that something radical happens with Luther and with Descartes.  That they are different, sure, and not reducible to one another — that's my version of the ambiguity — but nonetheless they are logically related.  The logical relation will look less troublesome if one recalls that even the Stoical Rationalist strategy, namely Descartes, is itself a version of unhappiness, that Descartes is a post-Christian Stoic. Mind-body dualism.

[01:04:20]

So rather than overcoming embodiment, my suggestion is, the change must and can only work from the other direction and show that the unchangeable, the universal, whatever it is, need not be located as beyond but instead could be inhabited by a finite consciousness. That finite consciousness we have a name for in modernity: the very name that Descartes and Kant give it.  [inaudible]

Any questions?  I skipped a lot.  I'll say, maybe more next week I'll go through this [inaudible]

Student:  You mention Jesus is the third mediator, and priests are also mediators.  Is there any difference between these two kinds of mediators?

Bernstein:   There's no difference in principle. What my claim is is that Jesus, because he's a singular case, represents the idea of mediation, while priests are the actuality of mediation, but both of them accomplish the same thing in principle, namely the bringing together of universal and particular.  So my Hegelian way of saying is, 'The priest makes explicit what was implicit in the Incarnation.' And then eventually, you'll notice what's missing from the story is the Holy Spirit and that will become huge in the chapter on Religion. So there's a further step to take here.

[01:06:32]

Student:  [inaudible] what happened to the body in Reason. I understand the reconciliation, if you like, of the unchangeable in consciousness, but what you said a second ago that Descartes is a post-Christian Stoic, mind-body dualism.

Bernstein:  But the body is going to come back in as a problem. Think about Kant. I mean what could be a bigger problem for Kant than natural desire, happiness? That's why I'm saying that the reason why Hegel doesn't want to finish with the story of the Unhappy Consciousness is because he knows it's going to come back again in varieties of German Idealism itself.  So what he has to do is explain how it can be the case that there can be a real transition to Reason and a real advance. A movement of immanent 'I am the world.'  What Descartes and Kant both say.  That's the Copernican Turn. 'I am everything. I make the world. I give the law.' I mean how more explicit can they be?

So that move has happened. God is, you know, written off, and yet something about the way in which that affirmation of Reason occurs remains within the framework of the Unhappy Consciousness and therefore the rest of the book has to work through, let’s call it, the remnant of of unhappiness within the assertion of modern subjectivity, in various ways.

[01:08:30]

So, although — and I want to be clear, this is why I am unhappy with accounts of this book.  Again, I'll say more about this next time a little different.  I don't want to end here because so far, even with the assertion of reason — 'I am the universal. I am the world. I am everything.' — it still hasn't happened!  And somehow the way it works, when readers of Hegel see that, they say 'Well, that's Hegel's thought, right, that there's a unity of being and thought.'  That’s what I mean by 'I am everything,' there's a unity of being and thought. In Descartes, that's the meaning of the *Second Meditation*. That's the point of the piece of wax. [inaudible]

The unity of thought, if that's already being asserted, they say, 'Well then when we get to reason, Hegel's already finished his story.' About that Butler's right, that there's something terribly unresolved.  And the unresolvedness, and she puts her finger on it, is the fact that there is a remnant of religious thinking that has not been worked through.  Hence, what I'm claiming is the central ambiguity of this moment of transition, rather than a definitive sublation.

Student: Luther and Descartes.

Bernstein:  Luther and Descartes, that's my argument.  You can't, as it were, say you go forward with just one and not the other. So what's going to happen is we're going to go forward with Descartes. It's a scientism, and then the Lutherian moment will come back again anyway and will haunt.

[01:10:15]

So there's something radical — so, of course, it's important to think that Hegel takes Luther to be a form of the achievement of modern subjectivity. He affirms that, so he really does want to twin Luther and Descartes, as I've been trying to do.  Now post-Catholic faith and Cartesian certainty, faith and certainty — Heidegger mentions this as well — have got to be flip-sides of one another.  You can't separate them out.  But that should be both exciting and alarming.  It's exciting because, you know, with Descartes we think we've got some modernity going but if Luther is twinned with him, then there's going to be an excess that has not been worked through yet.

Student: How does Hegel account for violence, in the sense of trauma that is experienced through violence? [inaudible]  It's the traumatic experience that lays bare the [inaudible]

Bernstein:  Let's see what he says about the Terror.  I guess that's the moment of trauma in the book, and there's a great debate about whether he covers it over or not.  That's the place where the rise — the Terror is the moment of the trauma of modernity.  What do we do with the Terror?  Because it gives us both modern freedom and also takes it away.

[01:12:30]

[inaudible] just sent me the final version of her book on this subject.  [inaudible] Okay, let's stop there. I will answer — I want to say a little bit more [inaudible] and a little bit more about the transition, give you another version of it, and answer any questions, textual, come in with questions, come in with textual worries, the works.