Hegel POS Lecture #18: Observing Reason: Critique of Moral Individualism - 2.07.2007

[FIRST PART OF ORIGINAL RECORDING]

[00:03]

Explicate the [inaudible] transition from Reason to Spirit and then begin talking about Antigone, or Spirit and the life of Antigone.

To repeat, this will be in a sense my one approach to Antigone, because my whole account depends on the fact that Hegel makes what I call a double approach to the problem of Antigone. So, next week, we'll be dealing with the middle sections of Spirit — questions of culture, the French Revolution, and all that stuff. In the following week, we'll be turning to the final section of the chapter on Spirit, and I'll be focusing on the question of conscience, rather than the Kantian morality. And I usually make very, very heavy weather of the Kantian morality, but that's because most people who study Hegel with me have already been brainwashed by me about Kant. And since you haven't been brainwashed, I don't need to de-brainwash you.

So I'll be focusing on conscience and making the claim that in some sense, the position of being a conscientious self is unsurpassable. Which to many people sounds like a very anti-Hegelian claim, but I want to say that — of course, what conscience is gets transformed radically over the course of the chapter — but I want to say that, for Hegel, the notion of conscience is a certain realization of [inaudible] individuality and self-determination.

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And, of course, therefore, I see the conscientious self, properly understood, as a kind of the truth, you might say to use Hegelian talk, of Antigone. Since she acts — I mean, if we were to misread Greek tragedy, we'd say she's a conscientious objector. She acts on her conscience. But of course, she didn't have a conscience, so she couldn't act on it.

We've got to the following movement. In the discussion of consciousness, the world was taken to be independent of the self. In the movement to self-consciousness, it was revealed that the issue of independence was that about of the independence of the self, of the subject, of being a self-conscious agent, was to be independent. And it transpired that a necessary condition for the possibility of affirming oneself as an independent, self-conscious being, one must be recognized by another independent self-conscious being. That is, the condition of possibility of the affirmation of independence is a certain sort of dependence on another.

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And this necessity of finding affirmation of oneself in another led to an interpretation of self-consciousness itself. Originally the issue is simply posed as: how does self-consciousness achieve affirmation of itself? But as we read through that structure, it emerges that in order to be self-conscious, one must be recognized and in, therefore, an intentional recognitional relationship with another human being.

Which is to say that the colloquial sense of self-consciousness is actually closer than the philosophical one, right? Because colloquially when we say, 'Oh, I'm feeling very self-conscious,' we mean something like, 'I feel like everyone's looking at me and I have the feeling inwardly of the external point of view.' And Hegel's claim is that that colloquial sense of self-consciousness is in fact right. That we become self-conscious, which is to say we enter into an active relationship with ourselves — and that's the more technical philosophical meaning, self-consciousness is our reflective self-relationship — only by being in relationship to another.

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So, we discover that the grounds of subjectivity, subjectivity is defined in modernity as self-consciousness. Descartes' *Cogito*. It's the birth of subjectivity. Up until that moment, there had been persons, souls, characters, all sorts of different things, but nothing that possessed for itself a subjectivity. That is, a self-relationship, which was determinant of what it was to be that being. So, the very notion of subjectivity is a kind of modern creation.

So Hegel's phenomenological claim allows the very phenomenon of subjectivity to be grounded in intersubjectivity, with the emergence of that interaction of finding oneself in another that is independent of oneself. Means that the fundamental structures of self-consciousness are ways of trying to square those two impossible sides. That is, the independence and the dependence.

And squaring those two impossible sides, we saw — emerged in getting those two elements together, trying to relate them to one another — had the three paradigmatic forms of stoicism, skepticism and the unhappy consciousness. And what is central about those is that the moments of independence and dependence take on the characteristics of universality and particularity. That is, they take on a primarily logical form, the changeable and the unchangeable, what is essential, what is inessential. That the strategies that self-consciousness necessarily adopts — and these are in a sense non-optional, they're structural forms of self-consciousness, because it has these two moments — has the formation of the universal and particular.

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And Christianity, which I said is used here as a [inaudible] language in order to interpret the structure of self-consciousness — the claim — reveals that self-consciousness has the most fundamental temptation of self-consciousness, it's truth, when it becomes — (why is it it's truth?) — when it becomes self-conscious about its split nature. That's what makes Christianity different from stoicism and skepticism. Christianity is a self-consciousness about our split nature. That's why it's the highest form for Hegel. It's self-consciousness becoming self-conscious about itself. And it reveals its understanding of its split nature through its projection of its essence into the absolute, the God, in all the various forms.

And then, what makes Christianity significant here, as opposed to Judaism, which you may say is the un-self-conscious thematization of the split. What distinguishes Christianity is it worries about the mediation. It has, as its project, relating. Judaism just gives up. Christianity, as the saying goes, wants the Messiah and wants him now. He comes, he does it, we're saved. Go out on the square and a lot of people will tell you, 'You're saved.'

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Now, that is important for Hegel, in ways that we'll come to when we discuss his theory of religion, because there's a certain sophistication about Christianity, namely, its concern for mediation. It's concern, it's worrying over how to relate the universal and the particular, the essential and the inessential.

Now, as we saw, Hegel then runs this through, uses a schematic history of Christianity in order to understand the forms of this mediation. Fundamentally, the universal as particular and all the things that go along with that. The church as mediator. And then finally, as that mediation gets lodged in the particular, the priest as having the authority. The emergence of Protestantism, so that the self enters itself into mediation with its God. So the self in its faith is immediately mediating its relationship to the absolute. That's the triumph of Lutheran Protestantism for Hegel.

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And that moment — when you have access, individual access, to the absolute — just makes the absolute itself, God, redundant. Faith becomes the immediacy of reason. Faith becomes epistemic certainty. And that's how I read the movement from self-consciousness to Reason, which is not quite standard, but...

Student: I don't really catch what you said about the redundancy?

Bernstein: Sure. If to have faith is to be in possession of relationship to the absolute — now, in its most extreme form, you may say, I'm saved. In that sense, I have the absolute, and it's my self-relationship, faith, that gives me that relationship. Okay. Now, once that occurs, once it's faith that, so to speak, broaches the possibility of God, once subjectivity itself is the condition of access — [inadudible] you can think that's how that works itself out. But once faith is the condition of access, and belief — that's what, you know, Luther's whole point, the authority of the Bible is based on faith, not authority. But if it's my faith that gives that work authority, then that authority is, in a certain sense, derived from me, which is roughly what I would want to claim is thematized in Descartes problem. I mean, I think the best way to read the evil demon, is to ask it as a debate between faith and Reason.

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Because to have faith in the evil demon hypothesis turns out to be absolute self-denial, which I can't do. That is, the notion of faith would lose me the very subjectivity that faith is supposed to provide on the hypothesis of the evil demon, which is why Descartes puts the *Cogito* — realizes that faith is a form of subjectivity — so puts the self-relationship of self-certainty prior to the notion of faith. Hence, the displacement of faith by Reason.

And of course that's right, the point about the evil demon businesses is, Descartes is right. To have absolute — to put faith, you know, that moment of doubt, would be to say that 'I am absolutely not.' That's why there's no difference between the evil demon and the benevolent God. Which is why skeptical readers of Descartes — Hiram Caton in his writings, Kennington in his, all of them [inaudible] — I think rightly see that Descartes, who was very likely, I tend to read Descartes as an out-and-out atheist who, the strategies of his writing, both in the *Discourse*, which remember the *Discourse* was designed as a prologue to an edited version of a scientific writings that he had suppressed when he heard about Galileo. He was about to publish a book with the very modest title of *Le Monde*, The World. Heard about Galileo and thought, 'Oh, boy, am I in trouble,' since it was Copernican, and then wrote the *Discourse* as an introduction.

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That's why modern readings of it, which treat it as a philosophical text by itself, mistake the project, right, which was to vindicate the possibility to do science without religious interference. It seems to me the *First Meditation* does that supremely and then read the introduction to the *Meditations*. It's all about, ‘I hope the church will find favor,’ and ‘I'm really a nice guy,’ and 'Don't worry about me,’ and 'I'm on your side.’ If you trust Descartes, you'll trust anyone.

Okay, so we achieve a notion of Reason. Is that close to what you've been hearing for the last four or five weeks? Okay, now, the transition I'm suggesting between self-consciousness and Reason is a pretty weird one in the sense that it's both phenomenological and historical. Up to now, all the transitions we've looked at have been phenomenological.

And with the unhappy consciousness, we get a mini-history, an allegorical history, a version of it, which is both the movements of self-consciousness and then secondarily a certain encoded reading of the Christian West. The meaning of pre-modern experience as the search for an absolute external to the self.

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Why does — when Hegel makes the transition that is very structural and historical, I mean structural in the sense that Reason affirms the unity of thought and being. It is the thematic overcoming of the divide between universal and particular, essential and inessential. Reason is premised on the belief that everything accords with the claims of the universality that the individual has an immediate access to, in terms of their Reason, or where Reason has other characteristics: the heart, the like. Your sentiments. If you think, for example, your sentiments inform you about the truth and morality, that's a version of Reason, right?

As long as you have an internal self-relationship to the universal and you have that through a self-relationship and not a relationship to the world or any other, then you're in the standpoint of Reason. So, Reason does not entail necessarily — although paradigmatic forms of Reason are things like natural science, above all mathematical physics, reduction of reality, Galileo, Descartes, *Second Meditation* and Galileo, the reduction of the physical world to mathematical truth, to mere quantities, would be an exemplar of the belief that the world, thought and reality are unified, right? Because what reality is, is revealed by forms of discourse, namely mathematics, that belong to the subject. So there's famous stories — when I say famous, I don't know. We teach all students in the first year all about the reduction of quality to quantity, you all know kind of our story about Galileo or how did the *Second Meditation* — maybe I want to tell you about the *Second Meditation*, because it does help. Alright, just very briefly

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Descartes asks the question, 'What is the truth of matter?' What's the truth about matter, and he says, 'I'm going to give an example.' He says, 'I'm going to take a piece of wax.' He says, 'It's straight from the hive, you can still smell the kind of blossoms there. It's firm to the touch. It has a kind of yellowish feeling. It's cool, and tactile.’ Am I missing any senses? No I think I got all five. So it says something to each of our five senses.

We might say naively, we might have the belief that when we want to identify what something is, we do so in terms of its manifest phenomenal properties. Descartes says, 'Now what happens when I move the piece of wax next to the fire?’ Its shape changes completely. It starts to run and become all liquid. Its color changes, it gets dark, and I can't touch it. It gives off an acrid odor rather than a sweet one. Its taste goes from sweet to bitter, and so on and so forth. Every single phenomenal property changes.

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But now we have a mystery. The mystery is, what is a piece of wax? If every single property by which we can see it and perceive it changes, then we can't say the piece of wax is its phenomenal properties. Indeed, it seems to remain wax wholly independently of all those properties. Well, the only thing, Descartes says, that belongs to the wax essentially, the one thing that doesn't alter, are that it has a certain resistance, and that's to say it fills space, it has extension. That's Descartes' phrase, right? Matter is extension. And it has an infinite number of shapes.

But that means that all that is essential to matter is what can be named by an algebraisized version of geometry. Because all the possibilities of matter are to be found in the permutations of extended stuff. That things look like they do is a mere illusion. A natural illusion, he says, 'It's a teaching of nature.' But it's a false teaching of nature. Nature teaches us that things that look red, you know, that things are what they appear to be. And it's just a lie. Nothing, according to Descartes, is what it appears to be, because the truth — and this is straightforward, early modern science — is that the world is composed of insensible particles in certain configurations that are knowable only by mathematical laws. Ergo, Reason — let's say mathematics' basis — is the truth of the physical world. That's the most exorbitant version of that claim about what Reason means, namely the relationship between thought and reality.

[28:31]

Now the primary forms of Reason. There's a limit to how far — the chapter on Reason when we get to — let's see how I can do this while still speaking English. The chapter on Reason is divided up into two parts: Observing Reason and, let's call it, Practical Reason. And the movement from the one to the other recapitulates, Hegel tells us in paragraph 348, the movement from consciousness to self-consciousness.

Why? Well, the fundamental thought is quite simple. What Reason must show, must reveal, is that its claims about how the world is — how Reason reveals the truth of the world from its own internal resources. The business of revealing that such a Reason is authoritative ultimately must become the project of getting other people to agree that my claim about what is authoritative, is authoritative. That is, science cannot reveal its rationality in a Robinson Crusoe-like way,

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The rationality of science requires the consensus of, we might say, a scientific community. That is, requires recognition by other scientific views. But that means that what is at issue in Reason in the first instance is — or rather the second instance — is a coordination whereby individuals, each of whom believes him or herself is in possession about the truth about the meaning of their lives, ethically or morally, must coordinate that back, get recognition of it from other individuals similarly posed.

Which is to say that the study of Reason is really the study of ethical and moral individualism. And again, the chapter has kind of a typical [inaudible] and I won't go through it [inaudible], but it has the typical Hegelian structure. We have a concept of knowing, a concept of self and a concept of object, concept of world. Again, each one dictates a certain relationship to another one.

[32:48]

Roughly we're going to move from a kind of raw individuality, raw individualism, in this chapter, which we'll call a kind of desire for pleasure, a kind of very primitive hedonism. Notice — this is very important — hedonism is a form of Reason. We always think of hedonism as the opposite of Reason. But if you're a hedonist, what you believe is that the truth about human activity is that it is the search for pleasure. And that there are no criteria other than the pleasures of the self that are authoritative.

That's why even the most primitive kind of hedonism is, from this perspective, a version of the large idealist thesis that thought and reality are one. And it's so in an individualistic mode. It's a mistake, and a very bad mistake, to think of the hedonist merely as a kind of skeptic, or, you know, 'nasty, brutish and short.' The hedonist is actually posing a serious conception based on a certain view of materialism, say the Hobbesian version, where the criteria of good and evil come from desire and aversion.

[34:59]

Hegel will move from that to what he calls 'the law of the heart.’ So now instead of considering pleasure, you consider what your heart tells you is the right thing to do. And then a notion of virtue that comes from that. I think he's thinking here about Shaftesbury and the English moral sense school. Then to a kind of prudential conception of Reason. And then finally to two forms of moral rationalism: a kind of *a priori* form and then finally a Kantian form.

And I'll say more about the Kantian form in a moment. But the thought is, is Kant is, the end of this, this Reason is the tester of moral law. Reason, in the form of the categorical imperatives, tells you — without consulting the world, you don't have to do anything, you just have to consult your Reason in the form of the moral law procedure, the categorical imperative in the procedure trying to universalize individual maxims — whether or not something is moral or ain't.

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And analogously, there are various ways of thinking about the world. He begins with a kind of opaque necessity and a kind of violent ordering. The point here is that, what Hegel is thinking about is, he's certainly thinking that for Hobbes the world appears as a domain of opaque necessity, from the perspective of desire itself. That is, the disorder of the world, which is so important to the Hobbesian view, and Hobbesian atheism, namely that the state of nature is a state of disorder, only appears from the perspective of a certain desire that seeks satisfaction in an external world, when that desire is taken to be criterial. So it [inaudible].

And then, well, here we're going to see the world composed of others with their laws of the heart. So we have a recognition problem, you know, what do a community of Rousseauian individuals do with one another? And virtue then becomes a problem, what Hegel calls ‘the way of the world.’ The issue here, the way Hegel plays this out, this is really a discussion of Shaftesbury versus Mandeville, you know, private vice, public virtue.

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And, of course, Shaftesbury wants private virtue, to give you a nice, virtuous world. And Shaftesbury, I mean, in the *Fable of the Bee*s, is really, amongst other things, not only the espousal of the new economic realities, but it is a critique of the moral sense school. And Hegel shows that there is something — I mean, in each case, there's something unreflected, opaque here, that there's no way in which Shaftesbury can achieve his aims, show that he's in possession of true virtue. What's true virtue?

The problem here, if all these are forms of individualism and in that sense other folk are just a hindrance, right? And every time I try to square my conception that I know what my desires are, I know what the law of my heart is, I know what my moral sense tells me, you know, I know what is a worthwhile life for me, the next one down. In each case, I have a world that simply refuses to play ball and refuses to play ball because it has no reason to put my authority about my claim about what virtue or Reason or the good is above their own. That's an intrinsic problem.

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When Reason is understood in an individualistic mode, it's simply unsurpassable in a certain sense and that's what Hegel thinks. So what we're doing in tracking out these notions, these various developments in the notion of Reason, are working through, again in a way that is as much phenomenological as historical, various ways, various modes in which the belief in Reason has attempted to vindicate itself.

Now, that it fails to do so is for Hegel — the last one is the matter at hand. And in a certain way it's the most interesting. There is one philosopher, very interesting philosopher, named Rudiger Bittner, in whose book — can I remember the name of it? *What We Ought to Do*, *The Claim of Dut*y, something like that. It's a very interesting critique of Kantianism. But the whole last section of the book, of Bittner's book, is a defense of the prudential self-consciousness and the way of the world against Hegel's reading, because he reckons, once Hegel gets to Kant, then Hegel's right against Kant and we're all Hegelians, and that's just got to be wrong. So he actually stages his moral theory, which is a very, very powerful critique of some of the problems in Kantianism, with ultimately showing that the he's got to defend the spiritual animal kingdom — [inaudible] this is called, he says, that's the way it is — against Hegel.

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Now, Reason was, of course, always doomed to fail. It was doomed to fail first, most evidently because it is individualistic. But that is, so to speak, only part of the issue. Above all, it is doomed to fail because it's an abstraction. And it's an abstraction based on the forgetfulness of the very history that formed it.

So what Hegel says in paragraph 233, "But the two reduced themselves to a single truth, namely that what is, or the in-itself, only is insofar as it is for consciousness, and what is for consciousness is also in itself or has intrinsic being. The consciousness which is this truth..." — that's just a way of saying thought and being are one. He just said it in a hard way to make us sweat. "The consciousness which is this truth has this path behind it and has forgotten it, and comes on the scene immediately as Reason; in other words, this Reason which comes immediately on the scene appears only as…”

[PART B OF ORIGINAL RECORDING]

…about the unity of thought and being, the truth of idealism on Hegel's reading, comes on the scene as an immediacy, indeed comes on the scene as opposed to history. Descartes' most obvious gesture. So, it comes on the scene as a certainty and an immediacy and hence is doomed to a certain sort of dogmatism. That although the whole project of Reason is the demonstration or revelation of its claim to be in possession of the truth, because it abstracts itself from the history that forms us and further therefore thinks that Reason is abstractable from the history of its formation, and therefore believes that Reason can be the possession of one individual as opposed to the communities that undergo the history that conduces to the formation of Reason. For all those reasons, Reason will end in a collapse, a dogmatism.

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I love saying dogmatism and having a bell ring behind me. It's so right. I hope you noticed I timed that, I waited. Yeah?

Student: Just to sort of put this in terms of the Kantian problem, what we get at the beginning of his critique is the two dangers of dogmatism and skepticism, then, is Hegel saying actually, skepticism thought in the Kantian mode ends up being a new dogmatism? Because it's not historical? Is that fair?

Bernstein: Oh, yeah, sure, sure. Because for — Hegel will say that Spirit has three dimensions. Spirit is 'we' — that is, the 'I' which is a 'we' and the 'we' which is an 'I.' Spirit is history. And, Spirit is knowledge of itself in its history. All those can be found in paragraph 441. I didn't just make them up.

Now, Reason, therefore, can be read as, it shifts from we to I, you can read it as an abstraction from Spirit, which is what Hegel is saying it is. That it makes — it reduces the we to an I. It reduces history to an immediacy which is only possible on the basis of a forgetfulness. So in each of the three modes — so the abstraction is, as it were, very precisely defined.

[04:07]

Student: So, this would also be the site of difference from Weber's neo-Kantianism ethical individualism, is that right?

Bernstein: Yeah, I mean, certainly, that would be just another individualism for Hegel, sure.

Student: [inaudible] Something you said earlier sounded a like Weber's ethical individualism [inaudible] strong difference [inaudible]

Bernstein: Yeah, I mean, not all these are false positions here. Okay.

Student: It's tricky because [inaudible] the way the historical moment is taken. And that's why I brought up the Kant 'beginning thing.' It's like Kant says, ‘Okay, we have to do philosophy now.' And we have this problem that we're either going to fall into these kinds of dogmatic system constructions or this sort of total relativism. And Weber is reconstructing that kind of problem again, it's sort of even more historical stuff, but the Hegelian critique would be: you don't see the historical constitution of the categories of division. So you think that you can stand outside and have this kind of critical position and not articulate your own way, your own thinking, of the situation, what your genre is — sociology, critical philosophy — how that's constituted historically, so it's not really truly skeptical or something.

Bernstein: Well, that's right. And therefore, you know, there is not — the notion of the vocation of the scholar therefore is not, as it were, this value choice amongst all the possibilities, which of course, has a nice neutrality. Yeah no.

[06:18]

As we will see, one of the scary things about Hegel is he is going to be able to be wanting to claim that ethics or morality is both objective but lacks all criteria. You know, from here it may sound just like saying, "And he thinks there are square circles." That's the way he wants to play it.

Okay, let me say something about the final moment of Reason, and say it just very briefly, just to show you how he gets, as it were, to Spirit, and then we'll have a break, and then we can talk about Spirit. The last moment of Reason is Reason as a tester of laws, and as I've said before, what's being talked about here is Kant's notion of the Categorical Imperative, where the Categorical Imperative says, 'A minimum necessary condition for any maxim of action to be permissible is that it be one that can be willed equally, in the same way, in the same respect, by all.' It's the principle of universality and universalization.

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And since that notion of universality looks like it's saying nothing more than, ‘Like cases should be treated alike.' And since we may say that to say, 'Like cases should be treated differently,’ seems sheer arbitrariness, then it looks as if Kant is asking after a minimal notion of consistency. He's asking, 'What is consistency in action?' And he's saying, 'Consistency in action must mean something like treating like cases alike.'

Or, 'treating like cases alike' means, in practical terms, that people in like circumstances be able or capable of willing the same actions. Just capable. They could. Not that they do or will or even ought to, but they could. That's the question being asked. And then anything that fails that will show that the action is not a consistent one. That is, you're not being consistent with yourself, nor in allowing a relationship to others.

And this is, again, rationalistic in a minimal way that seems hard for us to deny. Namely, what we're asking about any particular action is: we are assuming that when we will an action, our wills are legislative. We're not merely doing something, but we're, as it were, instituting a norm of action. And the reason I say that is something that we shouldn't want to deny is that unless we have that view — that the meaning of individual action is that it is legislative — then I think the notion of individuality disappears.

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You look really puzzled. Is that all right? That's why I'm saying the notion of self-determination requires that we think of each action as being legislated. Which is why the the real solipsistic relativist is incoherent, because they are so worried about individualism that they can't see that what it is to be an individual is to be lawmaking. Otherwise, the notion that there is an individual, as opposed to being lost in the collective, loses coherence.

That notion that individual acts are legislative is one in fact that Hegel does not deny. He's not Neitzschean either. He doesn't deny it. So what is his objection to Kant, given that the way I've described it, what Kant is saying seems so weak and it seems impossible to deny its validity? Hegel's answer seems to me a drop more subtle than it is usually portrayed as being. Hegel is not claiming — and I want to be absolutely clear about this — that individual actions should not be consistent in a Kantian way.

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But if he's not denying that, what is he doing? What he's denying is that the moral law, the Categorical Imperative, is the overriding and criterial notion for moral rightness. And the argument goes something like this. The example he gives is one of returning property you borrowed, and this is one of the types of examples that Kant makes much ado about. And it's very simple to see why it works out very neatly for Kantian purposes.

Namely, Kant says, 'Well look, say I promise falsely that I will return your records that I have no intention of doing so. Well, could that be moral?' Kant says, 'Well, let's look at it. If we imagine that everybody who borrows things refused to return them, then people would stop lending them and the institution would break down. Ergo, I can't consistently will that thought and therefore I'm committed to the idea that people's property ought to be returned to them.'

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Hegel says that it's an illusion that it's the Categorical Imperative that is determining the goodness of returning property. It's an illusion because, that we should return borrowed goods derives from an anterior commitment to private property, that people have rightful possession. But the Categorical Imperative will not tell us whether we ought to have a system of private property or not.

So if we now alter the case a little bit and ask, "What about the person who's starving to death? Is it okay for them to steal? Is it okay for the workers who are locked out to take over the boss's factory?" Then the categorical imperative falls silent. It falls silent wherever the debate is between two particular forms of life.

But Hegel wants to say — so I mean, a form of life in which there'd be no private property and a form of life in which there would be private property — about the goodness or badness of those forms of life, it can tell us nothing. But we are most legislative as individuals — that is, we enter into our strongest moral self-consciousness — in willing the structures of the forms of life we inhabit. That is, that's when I am truly legislative. Not in my individual action, but when I agree with everyone else we're gonna have a democratic society, or we're gonna have a racist society, or we're going to have a materialist society.

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In all those fundamental choices is when I'm truly legislative. But it's at the moment when I'm truly legislative, which determines the fundamental structures of the fundamental institutions of the society, that the Categorical Imperative, between all the kinds of possibilities we may choose, says nothing. But that it says nothing is not a matter of indifference for Hegel. And it's not a matter of indifference for Hegel because, in making the Categorical Imperative absolute and authoritative for us, the Categorical Imperative necessarily puts out of play our dependence on the very fundamental arrangements, and our allegiance to them, as the constitutive ethical questions that we face.

But if our will receives its maxims from arrangements of that kind and is only truly legislative in willing such arrangements, then the categorical imperative procedure must in fact deprive us of our fundamental moral identity and the moral constitution of our will. So it actively alienates us from our ethical substance. And it does so by pretending that our moral core is elsewhere. It pretends our moral core is in the Categorical Imperative and not in the collective acts of willing a particular form of life.

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So we may put it this way: the moral ‘ought’ is indifferent to the substantial ends of the will: how individuals realize themselves in and through engaging in particular forms of social activity, where part of the purpose of engaging in those forms of social activity is to affirm, to give credence to, those forms of activity themselves. That is, there's a relationship between our particular acts and the kind of institutions in which we embody in them. So, in engaging in familial acts, we put ourselves in relationship to the institution of the family. And those of us who have problems with families, they ergo have to forego…right?

So acts always have a double register. We both are pursuing particular ends that are permitted and opened up by various institutional practices, but in so doing, we are putting ourselves in relationship to those institutions themselves, and affirming or denying them in various ways. And the Kantian procedure brackets the latter, but it's only from the latter that we have an ethical identity. So it is the contention that the categorical imperative is supremely authoritative for us, and not the requirement for consistency itself, to which Hegel objects.

[22:42]

That's what Hegel means when — or the old thing that Kant is a formalist, and that the moral law has no content. That's what it amounts to. It amounts to a, not direct, but indirect challenge, because it's saying that something that is secondary is being made primary. It's not an absolute denial of the Kantian position. It's a denial of its absoluteness. Because, of course, once I do accept, say, private property, and I will a form of life in which that's the case, then stealing is wrong. And it would be inconsistent both to want and to uphold a form of life in which we own private property and to espouse the goodness of stealing.

But that's not because I'm an abstract moral agent, but because I have determined, historically but groundlessly, that as far as I can make out the best form of life possible is one in which there is private property. I don't actually think that is true. I think private property is confused. That's the kind of thought that's required.

[24:13 ]

And for that, there are no ultimate criteria. Which is to say what? It's to say that the content which the moral law espouses comes from elsewhere. The content, the force. That's always the big question. What's the real force of the moral law? Why is it really compelled? And I've said, “Look, the compulsion doesn't derive from logicality.”

The compulsion, in the sense of feeling that rightness and willing to go along with it, comes from my anterior commitment to a particular form of life. So the content comes from something we have willed. The content willed, and what gives force to particular maxims and their universality, is something we have willed. But that's what Hegel means by Spirit.

So the truth of the moral law is that it gets all its content from collective forms of life. Hence the ground of Reason is Spirit. If we can live with that word. Okay, let's have a break there. We can then ask if you have questions, probably easier to think about questions, with a cigarette, nicotine, and caffeine and sugar, and all the other really wonderful things in life. We'll start again in 15 minutes.

[26:29]

As a matter of simple information, the best abstract description of the notion of Spirit occurs in the middle of the chapter on Reason. Paragraphs 347 to 359. In broad terms, Hegel tells us that everything we've been looking at up to now is an abstraction from Spirit, where Spirit has, as I suggested, the three dimensions. That is, one which there is a mutual determination between we and I. That is to say, in order to have an individual identity, you must equally have a social identity. That all individuation is a process of socialization and that therefore, every individual identity is simply a mode or form or a way of inhabiting a particular form of social life.

[28:30]

Secondly, Spirit is history. As Hegel says, "These shapes, however, are distinguished from the previous ones by the fact that they are real Spirits, actualities in the strict meaning of the word, and instead of being shapes merely of consciousness, are shapes of a world." So, roughly, all being is being in the world and to be in the world is to be in some world. And to be in some world is to be in a world that is distinct from other worlds, both spatially and temporally, although for Hegel spatial distance is not very significant.

Which is to say that every fundamental element of which we ever become conscious is something that has been historically shaped and formed. That there are, as it were, whatever potentialities we may have for speaking a language or being socialized, whatever the fundamental structures, themselves all emerge and are articulated in historically and socially specific ways.

[30:13]

Finally, although we haven't got there yet, Spirit has knowledge of itself in its history. And that's what makes this chapter different from every other chapter. Every other chapter has been asking the question about what are the conditions of possibility, you might say, for self-possession. We went through the forms of consciousness, self-consciousness, Reason, and discovered that the unity of thought and being is — which is the claim of Reason — is only realized as an actuality in Spirit. That Reason gets its reality and content from Spirit. So, what's most real — and if I can use the old philosophical word — what is substance of the world is Spirit.

So, what we are now coming to see, starting from where we have been, is that subject is substance where substance is understood in terms of Spirit. Hence, paragraphs 439, 440. "Spirit, being the substance and the universal, self-identical, and abiding essence, is the unmoved solid ground and starting-point for the action of all, and it is their purpose and goal, the in-itself of every self-consciousness expressed in thought."

[32:12]

Student: What paragraph is that?

Bernstein: Paragraph 439, I'm sorry. Yeah. It's hard reading those three number digits.

Now, it's very important, when we hear and read these descriptions of Spirit, to realize he's using all the classical predicates applied to God. Spirit is 'the unmoved mover.' It is the 'unmoved solid ground' and the 'starting point of the action of all.' It is their 'purpose and goal.' Notice, its purpose and goal. We are Spirit, and Spirit is our purpose and goal. Aristotelian formulation.

Don't worry about cashing these out for the moment, I will come back to these at the very, very end of the text. He is just giving us a brief glimpse of a fundamental idealist claim. Notice now, what Hegel seems to mean by idealism is simply that what is substance, which at the beginning of the text was the ultimate matter of fact, the thing-in-itself, has now become Spirit.

[33:42]

So the relationship between subject and object becomes subject’s inhabitation of a spiritual life, as the truth of what it is to be a human being. That our ground is Spirit. "As substance, Spirit is unshaken righteous self-identity." That is, the claim is, and this is the sort of thing that people like Derrida and the like really worry about, is that there's no authentic or rational, outside experience. "But as being-for-self it is a fragmented being, self-sacrificing and benevolent, in which each accomplishes his own work, rends asunder the universal being, and takes from it his own share."

They seem to only do the lawn on Tuesdays and Thursdays. But he has a thing that doesn't actually cut anything. I think it's actually a very, I think it's a Kantian strategy to disrupt a Hegelian critique. You don't think that's right? Looks Kantian to me.

Okay. Now, we as yet have no reason to buy any of the stuff about benevolence, self-sacrificing, but again, the point of these claims, especially at this point in time, is to be provocative. The absolute substance of the world is Spirit and Spirit is going to be self-sacrificing and benevolent, just like Jesus, and so on and so forth. I mean, come on. He's trying to get his readers really worked up.

[36:05]

"Spirit is thus self-supporting, absolute, real being. All previous shapes of consciousness are abstract forms of it." That was my fundamental claim here: that nothing has any reality independent of it. All these things have been abstractions based on, as we saw at the beginning of Reason, on forgetting. "They result from Spirit analyzing itself, distinguishing its moments, and dwelling for a while with each. This isolating of those moments presupposes Spirit itself and subsists therein; in other words, the isolation exists only in Spirit which is a concrete existence."

And then he'll say things, in those paragraphs I mentioned earlier, like 'Spirit manifests itself in the laws and customs of a nation.' Because those are the fundamental, you might say, shared linguistic and discursive practices that constitute any particular social formation as being 'this very social formation.' Each has its own particularity.

Now, having settled that, one might now ask the reasonable question, why doesn't Hegel just get on with it and tell us all about Spirit? We just discovered the truth, it's Spirit! And you all look as bored as sin. All of this work for this? Well, there's a problem and you're right to feel there's a problem. Namely, that this claim about Spirit is something that has no phenomenological reality. This is something that we as observers, in looking at Kantianism in a certain way, can, as it were, critically theorize.

[38:34]

But the question is this: how could we come to experience the truth of our subjectivity, the truth of my subjectivity, as a spiritual life? Hence, the third version, the third feature of Spirit, that Spirit is a knowledge of itself in its history, means that you're right to feel neutral, because all you've been offered is an abstraction shot from a pistol. You might as well be doing sociological theory, right? We've been going through modes of sociological individualism, now we're going through forms of sociological moralism.

So this chapter, the chapter on Spirit, must, as it were, provide us for the first time with a real history, which is the history of how we, who claim to have an insight into the truth, could have that insight. That is, we must provide a history of Spirit, which will be a history of those moments within Western history, through which and by means of which, we, as a culture, are enabled to come to an insight about our own theoretical self-consciousness. Which is to say that we must now provide a genealogy of ourselves and the condition of the possibility of the insight which we have, as idealists, presumably accepted by our reading of the text up to here.

[40:55]

So, the question is now going to be, "Who are we?" Because everything is an abstraction from that, and Reason is that abstraction because it thinks that you can ask the question about the fundamental ground for the possibility of experience in abstraction from the historical reality of your position. But if it turns out that Spirit is the ground, that can't itself be said ahistorically and neutrally. And if you're doing the saying, then it must be said in the mode in which asking about the possibility of that saying is the same as asking the question about who you are, and to ask the question about who you are is to ask the question of the history that formed and made you possible, because that is who you are.

So the chapter on Spirit is going to track these modes that are going to allow an insight into Spirit. And that's going to be my first claim, my first claim at the end is going to be that it's only that moment, the experience of the insight that we are Spirit, that is going to be foundational. That makes spiritual insight and insight into the nature of Spirit the same thing. That's a puzzling way of making — what I want to claim is ethical insight and metaphysical insight are the same. That there's no such thing — I mean, if Hegel has been objecting all along to pure theory and to pure metaphysics and to Reason as observer and to the idea of the world as an object, then his philosophy cannot return to a form of mere spectatorial theorizing.

[43:06]

But if that's the case, then the insights of his philosophy must themselves be experientially, in his sense of the word [inaudible], grounded. That is, there must be some historical experience that we go through, which is an experience that we have as individuals, into our social and historical predicament, that yields an actual metaphysical insight.

So I'm going to say that the idea of philosophical insight, and the idea of having an ethical experience have to be united. Or, we have dissolved the very terms of reference that we've been generating up till now. So we have to have a history. And that history is going to start where all such histories start, with ancient Greece, especially if you're German.

He says, "Spirit is the..." — 441. "Spirit is the ethical life of a nation in so far as it is the immediate truth—the individual that is a world. It must advance to the consciousness of what it is immediately, must leave behind it the beauty of ethical life, and by passing through a series of shapes attain to a knowledge of itself. These shapes, however, are distinguished from the previous ones by the fact that they are real shapes of Spirit…” and so on.

[45:10]

So, we're going to start with a form of Spirit that is indeed spiritual. That is, a form in which individuals — and we're going to call this ethical life, a form of life in which people do take what is concrete for them to be their form of life. And, we're going to do so immediately and directly. And we're going to see how that immediate and direct understanding of oneself as constituted by the ethical laws that constitute the community will eventually fracture because — and because is the interesting question — that's what we need to find out, but something's crazy about that immediacy.

[PART C]

Speaking very fast, probably more fast, faster, than unusual. If that's possible. Is at least what the project is, intelligible from here? Yeah?

Student: I'm not sure I follow how the problem with Spirit is that it has to be — it's not phenomenological, or it's not phenomenal. There has to be — how does the fusion of an ethical experience and how does the fusion with that to philosophical insight reveal Spirit?

Bernstein: Well, that's, so to speak, what has to be shown, and the question is the right one. My claim is simply this: that the transition from Reason to Spirit is one that is made on the basis of a philosophical thesis. Namely, the thesis that the content which drives the moral law is itself spiritual. So that last critique, the critique of Kant, is actually not made phenomenologically.

It's made behind the back of moral consciousness. Those of us seeing, already having, as it were — now we're set up to regard abstract Kantian rationality as an abstraction, and in a way, we're just looking for how it is abstract in the way we've seen other forms to be abstractions from a social content. But it's not a phenomenological collapse that we actually find. What we find is a theoretical criticism. And people have said they find, you know, this one of the weakest moments in the text, that critique of Kant's moral law. Well, it is a weak one. It's perfectly gestural. He does the same thing much better in 1000 different places, since he's been making the same criticism since he was about 22 years old. And all his buddies have been making the same criticism, right? It really is very gestural critique of formalism.

But that means it doesn't happen for natural consciousness. It happens for us. The 'we' who have been reading the text. And I've said that that's, you know — the structure of the book is always phenomenological demonstrations for a particular readership, the rhetorical question of the idealist reader.

[4:11]

But if that's right, then I'm saying this movement has been accomplished theoretically but not phenomenologically. But if it hasn't been phenomenologically accomplished, then it doesn't refer to any possible experience anyone's ever had, in which case, it doesn't refer, it doesn't go through what is claimed to be necessary by Hegel, namely that there be an experiential path by which insight is achieved into substance. And I'm claiming the chapter on Spirit will give us that experiential path.

Now I'm simply claiming that the notion of experience that we're going to — and this is just a claim now — that the actual experience which will be experience that allows me to say — you know, to recognize myself in otherness — me to say I'm a member of Spirit — which is a philosophical insight, right? — and I'm gonna say is a consequence or is a component of a very concrete kind of ethical experience. So I'm saying, philosophical insight into the philosophical claim that Spirit is substance ultimately is going to be derived from going through an ethical experience of some kind. But that — and then I'm going to have to be able to say — now, I've already hinted at the thought that this looks like it must be necessary for Hegel to say, because if Spirit is the ground, there's nothing outside of Spirit.

[6:24]

And Spirit is various forms of life. And all forms of life are nothing but customs and practices and customs and practices, our form of mutual recognition. That's what they are. See more about that as we go on. If all of that's the case, very unsurprisingly, insight into Spirit must be made in a mode logically compatible with it. That is, spiritually, not theoretically, in the abstract sense that we've been criticizing all along.

Now I've said it all again, does that help a bit? I mean, as I say, the actual way I'm going to try to do the trick, as it were, ethical insight-philosophical insight, just depends on a specific reading of the end of the chapter on Spirit. So I haven't done that yet. But I'm just going to try to, as it were, I want to — it seems to me even from where we are it makes sense to say that that's what we should expect to happen. Maybe I'm not [inaudible] too much.

[8:08]

Student: I wanted to try to ask a really simple question. Why is it that the ethical insight and philosophical insight, in order to be the same, need to have a specifically historical articulation? It seems to me, for instance, this description that you just made with forms of life, is amenable to a kind of Wittgensteinian reading that then abstracts from history in a strong sense that Hegel wants to. So, you might think that you're making a stronger claim about the connection between metaphysical insight and...

Bernstein: Yeah, I mean, one way of posing the issue at moment is to say, 'Well, what we've got to here is, you might say, a certain kind of Wittgensteinianism, although not one that Wittgenstein himself would approve of, but, you may say, a certain philosophical appropriation of Wittgenstein, whose deepest [inaudible] philosophical.'

[9:41]

Now, the question may then be posed as to why it is we can't stop with that insight. What makes that insight itself abstract? And someone who didn't — and here's a typical kind of complaint against Wittgenstein. People have said Wittgenstein's antipathy towards philosophy doesn't realize that philosophy too is a language game, participates in forms of life, and therefore philosophical argumentation is just as legitimate as any other form of argumentation. So why is Hegel making this big deal against a purely theoretical insight into the notion of Spirit?

Well, the answer has to be because of what Spirit is. And if the claim is that Spirit is not just the fact of human sociality or the fact that I am a social being and only get my individuality by being socialized into a language, a set of practices — how tedious. All that's true. But the point is, that must make — that's not only a fact, externally, but it makes a certain kind of claim upon me. It actually opens up the possibilities of my fundamental relationship to myself. Because that's the question we've been asking.

[11:47]

So unless I can come to an understanding of the meaning of sociality as something that emerges in the drive to come to an understanding of my experience of myself, as agents in the world — that is, unless I can understand the claim of sociality, where I'm leaving the notion of claim as neutral between the ethical and the epistemic, then I misunderstood what that claim is, that a claim of a certain kind is being lodged. Not a mere discovery of another fact of the matter. That would be realism again. So what we have, you might say at this juncture, is a kind of realism of Spirit which fails to — which is therefore logically incompatible with the fact that we're talking about Spirit.

And hence the provocation I said at the descriptions of Spirit. It's not accidental he uses religious language, because he wants to make the claims of Spirit to have all the weight of religious claims, but of course, to be wholly immanent.

I mean, at no point, I think, in *The Phenomenology*, is it ever even remotely plausible to think that Hegel has any theistic beliefs. I mean, the way, as you've seen, the religious comes up at every point we've looked at so far, makes unequivocal, you know, what the metaphysics and ontology of his position are. That there's ever been a debate is one of the great mysteries of Hegel scholarship, I think. Although some of his later works allow the debate to happen. Maybe.

I find the lectures on the philosophy of religion blatantly atheistic, but I'm starting, obviously, maybe looking askance. Does that help answer your question? Is that a better version of the thought or didn't I quite make it?

[14:29]

Student: No, no, I think it helps, This thing that — when you said the realism of Spirit is the problem and that's Reason.

Bernstein: Yes, that, in a sense, we're still looking at Spirit from an unspiritual standpoint and what we need is a spiritual understanding of Spirit rather than saying, 'Oh yeah, we've got some ultimate facts of the matter. There is Spirit. There's history. There's something else.' All of which is compatible with, say, sociology, for example, claiming, you know, it's the first of all sciences, right? And then you generate sociology of knowledge as the sociology of sociology. And you make that claim, right? I mean, that is a certain form of sociologism.

All of which, I'm suggesting, is pressed aside at the very, by the very fact that Hegel refuses to stop at this juncture. That all we have is an abstraction. Well, the — I think I'll just, as it were, do the the first half of this discussion, which will leave us, as it were, all next time, this Thursday, to talk about the analysis of Antigone. So, those of you who really want to look at the text and look at all the objections to Hegel and all that, opportunity to do so.

[16:34]

The discussion of Greek ethical life is divided into two: the section A, the ethical world, human and divine law, man, woman, part one. And then part two: ethical action, human/divine knowledge, guilt, and destiny. Needless to say, for those of you who were here in the first week, the notions of guilt and destiny should come as no surprise to you, but there they are.

All right, why this division? Why not just one continuous narrative here? Well, because — let's look at 441 again, and then I'll suggest [inaudible]. Hegel says, "Spirit is the ethical life of a nation in so far as it is the immediate truth—the individual that is a world. It must advance to the consciousness of what it is immediately, must leave behind it the beauty of ethical life, and by passing through a series of shapes attain to a knowledge of itself." It must leave behind the beauty of ethical life. The beautiful ethical life. Better, better.

[18:38]

Now let's look at 462, "The whole is a stable equilibrium of all the parts, and each part is a Spirit at home in this whole, a Spirit which does not seek its satisfaction outside of itself but finds it within itself, because it is itself in this equilibrium with the whole." And then 463, "The ethical realm is in this way in its enduring existence an immaculate world, a world unsullied by any internal dissension."

And then 476, "This determination of" — the second sentence — "of immediacy means that Nature as such enters into the ethical act, the reality of which simply reveals the contradiction and the germ of destruction inherent in the beautiful harmony and tranquil equilibrium of the ethical Spirit itself." What is all this stuff about beauty and harmony and the like, equilibrium? What is he, as it were, sitting up here?

Just in naive terms. There's not going to be a difficult leap of thought. I think he's using a language here. He's trying to ask: from whence came the crazy German romanticization of ancient Greece? That is, he's beginning with the ideology of the organic inscription of the Greek world.

[21:09]

He is not positing — and he's certainly saying there's a certain truth to that. A truth, however, that does not make the Greek world an ideal. And we know it's not an ideal, because we know that from paragraph — which we've already looked at — paragraph 32, that Hegel is no friend of beauty. Right? Because it's beauty that hates the understanding for asking of her what it cannot do.

So it's no accident that he's beginning here with beautiful Greek world. And he wants to show that the beautiful Greek world is mean and nasty. In fact, the end of the chapter will be very precise, which people rarely speak about. The actual end of the chapter, his actual claim, is like the Greek city-state that he's talking about is fundamentally a warrior state. And that achieves its identity, its so called beautiful organic identity, its for-itselfness by waging war on other such states. That's how the chapter actually ends.

And to say it's a warrior state is also to say that, you know, it's — that's why it's an individual. That is, it gets its so called neatness and harmony by, as it were, setting itself in opposition of a very forceful negative kind to other states. That's the actual chapter. Let's, let's [inaudible].

So, Hegel begins then with a description of the ethical order that is meant to reveal to us, to give us an account of the possibility of, and something that accords with, the belief in the organic myth of Greece as being, you know, the true origin of humanity and all that.

[23:20]

And as well as doing so — and I'll set it up first diagrammatically. Ethical life, he's going to claim, in the Greek city-state is composed of fundamentally two elements. The human, and human law, which will partake of the fundamental predicates of being, belonging to the domain of light, of consciousness, and of self-conscious action. And the human has, appears as the nation, and the nation, of course, is the moment of universality, and the concreteness of that universality. That is, the mode of the human makes itself manifest in men.

[25:23]

Now that's slightly — I want to be actually careful there — I'm simplifying greatly, because in this slot, for reasons that I'll come to, in this slot, rather than talking about male members of the species here, I could easily also have put the notion of government. And I'll explain that later. That the particular — the point here, the particularity of the nation is the government, is just the thought. Rather than thinking of it as male citizens, which is the other way I'm thinking about it, right? Both have claims to be a particular instantiation of the universal rules, norms, and laws that constitute the nation, make themselves manifest at concreteness in male citizens, who are active in the state, but the state itself has the particularity of the government, hence, the power of [inaudible], right, is gonna be part of the story.

Okay, and then the other side is the divine and that always partakes of the language, if you wish, of shadow, unconsciousness, being in nature. And in its universalistic mode, it is manifest in the institution of the family. In its particular realization, it is going to be in womanhood. Women as particular bearers of the divine.

[27:36]

This is the domain of written law, or proclaimed law. This is the domain of the unwritten law. Now, you can do the same thing by mapping the whole thing beginning with universal and having the notion universal nation and family and then a notion of individual, of man and woman. That would be another structural view.

The reason I'm doing these structural diagrams is because what Hegel is fundamentally claiming about the illusion or ideology of organicism is there is a certain structural neatness to the Greek world, right? So, I'm laying out these structures only because, in a certain sense, that's the appeal. That we're going to show that these various elements complement, synthesize with one another in various ways to give us a whole and complete version of life.

So you can do the same thing with the moment of universality which then manifests itself in the institutions of nation and family, and the moment of the individual or the particularity, and there's a difference but I won't enter into it now, I'll get to it later, with then the man, woman. And to say that, and I'll say that, both the text of *Antigone*, I want to claim, and this analysis, is about sexual difference and for some reason people think that Hegel didn't, that Hegel's analysis was doing something else. I'll be arguing that the whole *raison d'etre* of the analysis is to say something about the problem of sexual difference, gender difference

[30:01]

Okay, well what's the content then of these two moments? First the nation and then the family. The nation, paragraph 448: "This Spirit can be called the human law, because it is essentially in the form of a reality that is conscious of itself. In the form of universality it is the known law, and the prevailing custom; in the form of individuality it is the actual certainty of itself in the individual as such, and the certainty of itself as a simple individuality is that Spirit as government" — that's the reason I put the equivocation on the other diagram — "Its truth is the authority which is openly accepted and manifest to all; a concrete existence which appears for immediate certainty in the form of an existence that has freely issued forth."

Student: [inaudible]

Bernstein: No, it doesn't.

Student: [inaudible] So, how does it read? It's — the word for authority [inaudible] is validity.

Other Student: What?

Student: Validity.

Bernstein: What else do we need to say about the nation? Paragraph 455: "The community, the superior law whose validity is openly apparent, has its real vitality in the government as that in which it has an individual form. Government is the reality of Spirit that is reflected into itself, the simple self of the entire ethical substance."

[32:18]

So the nation is something that operates in accordance with known and written laws, that these written laws are taken by everyone to be authoritative. That they're taken by everyone to be authoritative, and that they're fully known, and that they're being known and being authoritative are part of their quality as constitutive of that form of ethical life, is what makes this a self-conscious form of ethical life. Okay? That we regulate our lives in accordance with declared communal norms, right, that are not taken to be coming from, you know, some mysterious source. We're living in, inhabiting, a human world, not a divine world, ruled by governments not by priests. And the government, however, is just a manifestation of the authority of the people as people. Hence, the Greek polity.

How about the divine and family? Let's start with paragraph 450 and 451. That's what we need to look at. "This moment which expresses the ethical sphere in this element of immediacy or simple being, or which is an immediate consciousness of itself, both as essence and as this particular self, in an ‘other,’ *i.e.* as a natural ethical community—this is the Family. The Family, as the unconscious, still inner Notion [of the ethical order], stands opposed to its actual, self-conscious existence." What does that sentence mean? The family of the unconscious, still inner notion of the ethical order?

[35:13]

Student: Could you read that [inaudible]?

Bernstein: Yeah. "The Family, as the unconscious, still inner Notion [of the ethical order], stands opposed to its actual, self-conscious existence."

Student: Either I'm in the wrong place or there's something missing. It's right after the thing with families is italicized? The sentence after that?

Bernstein: There's no italic family here.

Student: This is the family, the natural, ethical, common theme, right?

Bernstein: Yeah.

Student: I'm in the right place up to there. The sentence is just completely different. "Is the unconscious, still inner concept.." Okay, so far, so good. And then…and something really weird happened with the previous sentence too, right? Here, “itself in another” is translated completely different.

Bernstein: Reverses. Despite problems with the translation, the thought, nonetheless, is going to be that, at a certain level, it is right to consider the nation and as an articulation of, a self-conscious articulation of the model of the family as community. But, the fact that it's so doing is not something that is self-consciously known. And that that reverberates back on both the role of the family in the state, the nation, and the nation itself. That it's accepted a model of natural community, which is what the family's been inscribed as here, as its model for ethical community.

Now, of course, we know that actually communitarians actually say this is what they want to do. Right? For Hegel, this is going to be the problem, not the solution.

[37:51]

Well, what's the function of the family? The family is the natural moment of the actual order, it's all that. What's it's function? Paragraph 451. Well, Hegel says, he gives us a whole list of functions it doesn't have. And very quickly: it's not to be understood through the notion of the love relationship, and it's not — although the love relationship is important, the truth of the love relationship is the child. Hence, the truth of the family cannot simply be the model of mutual recognition and love, since what that love really accomplishes is child-rearing.

But then the truth of the family is not education either. Because education is not something that's intrinsical to the family. Nor is the family the fundamental economic unit, because the economic relations between adults are not necessarily familial relations. Even though each home is an economic unit, the economy doesn't transpire within the family. So all those accounts of the family — and really, he's talking about, if you wish, the sociology of his time in a certain way. He's saying, you know, 'the family is not to be understood in sentimental terms, in educational terms or in economic terms.' That would be a mistake here, although we're just talking about the Greek family.

Rather, the family's central task appears to be to raise the individual out of nature and to particularize nature. But as particulars, we are all subject to natural negation: death. Hence, the proper task of a family is to preserve the individuality of the individual through their death. Paragraph 452. Start at the end of 451, I guess.

[40:46]

"The deed, then, which embraces the entire existence of the blood-relation, does not concern the citizen, for he does not belong to the Family, nor the individual who is to become a citizen and will cease to count as this particular individual" — top of page 270 for those [inaudible] — "it has as its object and content this particular individual who belongs to the Family, but is taken as a universal being freed from his sensuous, *i.e.* individual, reality. The deed no longer concerns the living but the dead, the individual who, after a long succession of separate disconnected experiences, concentrates himself into a single completed shape, and has raised himself out of the unrest of the accidents of life into the calm of simple universality. But because it is only as a citizen that he is actual and substantial, the individual, so far as he is not a citizen but belongs to the Family, is only an unreal impotent shadow."

That should worry anyone who only belongs to a family, say, a woman. "The universality..." — let me stop there. And this, and above all in the next paragraph, Hegel is going to be concerned to make an argument about the significance of the role — I mean, obviously, he's writing this with both eyes on *Antigone*. But nonetheless, we have to ask the question, why this level of significance being related to the question of burying the dead, that is, making a natural fact into a human act. That's the fundamental gesture of the act of ritual burial, to turn natural fact into human act. But why?

[42:50]

Well we need at least — I mean, and ask this, we really should be asking ourselves: why is there an obligation to bury the dead? And why is it that, in fact, we're aware of no culture that doesn't have this ritual? Hegel's emphasis in this context — I mean, part of the answer clearly has to do with the nature-culture division. Right? I mean, this is a fundamental way of asserting the meaning of culture in relationship to the natural world, and since, as in eating and so on — the role of the cook — this is one of the fundamental places where that difficulty arises, then it is the one place, along with eating, which — and lovemaking I guess, those three are always marked out in all cultures — must be given cultural significance.

But it's not the mere — although it's important for Hegel's purposes that the nature-culture issue is being brought out here, but that's not the one that he's concerned with. Hegel's emphasis is on a suppressed individuality in the Greek city-state. On the suppression of individual self-consciousness in the Greek world. And I want to be very precise here. Hegel's claim is that for this world only death provides for individuation, that the notion of individual self-consciousness has not yet arisen, and that therefore the notion of individuation only makes itself manifest with death.

[45:41]

Now, metaphysically this presupposes the validity of the Heideggerian thought that, you know, death individualizes and individuates. But the issue here is not a being — not the Heideggerian one, but the space of individuality itself.

Roughly, the problem arises because we have the individual, [inaudible], and he's caught between two universalities. The universality of the nation — and Hegel says, look, with reference to his acts, the meaning of those acts are the way in which they participate in the good of the nation. So, at that level, his individuality, whether it's in speeches or deeds, disappears. It's what he is [inaudible] nature.

So when he lives, he loses his individuality in playing out the role or functions he has in the state. And this is going to be part of Hegel's complaint, is that there are only roles and functions for individuals in the Greek city-state. There aren't individuals. Or rather, the claim is going to be that Antigone is the first individual in human history. And we'll see why.

[47:44]

So the only possibility for individuation — right? The two possibilities you might think would be: action, but that gets eaten up by the nation. Therefore, only in death can we try to break that one, break — and this is all the stuff about the birds eating his body and all that stuff, preserving him from that, *i.e.* to preserve some individuality. So the question is: only in the ritual burial, does, or do, Greek individuals attain to the level of being an individual. That is, their unique identity is only fully expressed with the death and the recognition of the death that completes their lives. Hence, even an Aristotle will find, you know, 'let no man be called happy until he's dead.'

But that had something to do with lacking a notion of individuality that can be tied to what we will see — and this is what's missing. What's missing is a significant notion of action. Nonetheless, we're getting poised already for an identification, which we already kind of know about, relating death to individuality to action.

[50:03]

Action is going to be negativity. Actions are negativity. That's what the Greeks don't have. They don't have the idea of action as negativity. Why? Because the notion of action is simply, in the Greek world, the notion of my station and its duties. Whether my duties are those in the family or those of the statesperson, in each case, what is enacted is not oneself, but the duties and responsibilities that come along with whatever station it is you have within the functionally structured whole.

I want to stop there. There's lots more to say about that alone, but, yeah, it's two o'clock so let's stop, and we'll pick up all this and the play and whatever other readings of the play you might have on Thursday.

[SECOND HALF OF 2007 LECTURE]

Virtue and the way of the world. I won't dwell on this argument in the way I have the previous two. In fact, the general form of the argument here is fairly well known, since it formed the germ, although he never says so, of MacIntyre's *After Virtue*. In fact, he wrote, the whole of *After Virtue* is just a working out of this section all by itself. Namely, that what goes by the name of virtue for us — and for MacIntyre that's all of modern morality — is really nothing but fragments of an earlier practice, which have lost their meaning because they have lost their original setting.

That is, MacIntyre supposes, and Shaftesbury is probably at issue here, that what gives meaning to our moral concepts was something of the role they had in an earlier form of life that has now disappeared and gotten internalized in the individual. And when they are so internalized, they've become, they have a feeling of both being rational and at the same time, in some sense, mysterious. So MacIntyre took seriously the idea of loss of ethical life. Indeed, he says, we have to just go back to Aristotle. And he says, the place where that lives now is roughly in South Bend, Indiana. That's a virtuous community.

[2:24]

But what we get when we're missing the form of life that would go with it is something that we can call virtue idealism, which is to say it's modern virtue without the communal supports necessary for it to actualize itself in the world. So virtue, because it's a kind of idealism, Hegel will speak of the 'night of virtue,' with I guess, a — paragraph 386. And it's tempting to think he, you know, is playing a bit with *Don Quixote*. Shaftesbury seems an obvious person here. Harris thinks it's Lessing. I don't know which of any of these it is.

But the thought is something like this. The idea now is that individuality is not immediately in possession of universality or necessity, but that individuality must overcome itself in order to attain to a certain type of moral necessity and that this new form of universality is 'acting virtuously.' And that virtue is therefore a kind of discipline of the self, in which, when the self does manage this, right, the idea would be that it will find in acting virtuously in seeking its own pleasure, it will always also be finding the good for everyone.

[4:24]

That such a virtue, when achieved, understands itself as opposing the way of the world. They'll flop. Where the way of the world is a social reality that is perverted by, amongst other things, rampant individualism. The kind of individual individualism that seeks its own pleasure and enjoyment, hedonism and egoism. So here individualism arises for the first time as a problem for moral consciousness.

Now, because this is a kind of virtue idealism in which virtuous action and behavior lack the complex set of social practices in which each, when — so MacIntyre's story, just to remind you: virtue always permits specific kinds of practices, and these practices have their own internal goods. To say they're internal goods is to say that there is a certain pleasure involved in performing them well. So, he always uses, as does Plato and Aristotle, analogies from areas of virtuosity, like playing the piano well. That is, you receive a certain kind of pleasure, right, when you participate in a practice and learn to master it, because internal to the practices are goods internal to it *qua* practice. And the assumption of Aristotle is that modern ethical — Greek ethical and political practices — are like that; that is, they have their own internal goods.

[7:05]

We don't have those practices, therefore, we don't have goods internal to the practice. Hence, virtue becomes just a matter of virtuous character. That is, a form of moral consciousness. That's why Hegel says that virtuous consciousness is a kind of faith — kind of indicates that it's been internalized. Because it sets itself against the world or the way of the world as cynical, self-seeking action, then the only reality possible for this kind of virtuous activity is for it to be recognized as virtuous. That is, it's a kind of self-satisfaction in behaving well.

I guess I always think of this kind of person as the moral prince. The kind of person who feels utterly justified in their life, because they support all the right causes and go on all the right marches and have a sense of their perfection thereby. That is, achieved virtue.

[8:54]

So, this is an idealism of the worst kind. And that means that in the showing of itself in opposition to the world — and for Hegel, this very fact, let's call this form of moral priggishness, shows its lack of seriousness. It's not a matter that the world has actually gotten better or not. It's not that any work has been realized. It's that I've done the virtuous; I've behaved virtuously.

So that's, paragraph 386. So virtue, like heart, is more interested in itself, in its showing of itself, than what is accomplished. And therefore, it can have this shape simply because the bite of this shape — and this is why it's self-undermining — the bite of this shape is the way it shows itself in opposition to a world. That is, its virtue only appears as a contrast of term. "I'm virtuous and the world ain't." And that's it's existential emptiness.

So paragraph 389 is the core of critique. He says, "Virtue, therefore, is conquered by the ‘way of the world’ because its purpose is, in fact, the abstract, unreal essence" — appearing virtuous — "and because its action as regards reality rests on distinctions which are purely nominal. It wanted to consist in bringing the good into actual existence by the sacrifice of individuality, but the side of reality is itself nothing else but the side of individuality. The good was supposed to be that which has an implicit being, and to be opposed to what is; but the in-itself, taken in its real and true sense, is rather being itself..." etc, etc.

[11:21]

So it can't makes sense of being, of actuality. And because it can't make sense of being and actuality, then not only does it not have any work, but equally it loses the force of particularity with which it started. Because here there's no source for there to be any conflict or tension between the particular and the universal. It perfectly realizes the universal. In that perfection, in that self-congratulation, it shows its emptiness. And it is an emptiness that — like Shaftesbury who ended up as a stoic — this ends up as a form of stoicism in the face of the world. And like that earliest stoicism, Hegel suggests that it collapses out of boredom. Its claim to virtue is the empty of the intoning of virtue without any encounter.

[13:18]

If one is not keeping close track on Hegel here, then the next transition, in paragraph 391, can be a bit surprising. He says, "The result, then, which issues from this antithesis consists in the fact that consciousness drops like a discarded cloak its idea of a good that exists [only] in principle, but has as yet no actual existence. In its conflict it has learnt by experience that the ‘way of the world’ is not as bad as it looked; for its reality is the reality of the universal."

That is — see the puzzle [inaudible] — if virtue is getting its authority from the contract, it must be denying the world aiming for a rational authority and a universality worth having. But that can't be right. And it cannot be right because the reality of the world is nothing but the product of individual actions. And in reality, the world is nothing but the product of individual actions, of people trying to bring the good into the world, then the world has an incipient universality in it that cannot be thought of as merely opposed to the individual.

That is, all the forms of individual we've been looking at have been assuming that I have to imprint — so that moral reality is here, right, and I've got to imprint on an opaque or resistant or nasty empirical world, as if the empirical world is made up of anything other than individuals acting on the basis of their beliefs and desires. So that, the contrast between self and world — call it representational contrast — is always illicit because it does not recognize its participation in that very world.

[16:23]

So Hegel says, "With this lesson in mind, the idea of bringing the good into existence by means of the sacrifice of individuality is abandoned; for individuality is precisely" — what is individuality, he says — "is precisely the actualizing of what exists only in principle, and the perversion ceases to be regarded as a perversion of the good, for it is in fact really the conversion of the good, as a mere End, into an actual existence: the movement of individuality is the reality of the universal."

The movement of individuality is the reality of the universal. What's the reality of the universal? It's what we do! We have ideas, and we try to realize them in the world. And that's how the universal — that is, the world, meaning — comes into being. So the thought is that virtue is illusory, that individuality cannot be either wholly cynical or intrinsically opposed to universality. Indeed, the way of the world cannot be all that bad, since even if it does not know it, it is a world, and that world both empowers the individual and is the result of individual action. Which is what Hegel means when he says that the movement of individuality, including the form we have been observing, is the reality of the universal.

[18:20]

If we had not already heard earlier in the section something about Geist as a matter of customs and laws and practices and forms of recognition, we might think this was a bit of reductionism. That social is just only reductively individual doings. Hegel of course is not thinking of any version of reductionism here. Rather, he's thinking this as a question of content.

Nonetheless, the position that now needs engaging is going to be a sophisticated version of the thought that the social is nothing but the production of individual actions. And the individual actions are to be understood as agents who are operating with, let's call it, ordinary means-ends rationality.

[20:16]

In coming to realize that individuality is not necessarily opposed to the world, that worldly individualism is not itself opposed to universality, then it follows that in some sense, individuality and universality are themselves united, which is why the section begins now: 'Individuality which takes itself to be real, in and for itself.' That there is no intrinsic conflict — although we haven't figured out how they're connected up — between individuality and universality.

So the way of the world, we might say, is not intrinsically awful for Hegel. That the way of the world — bourgeois individualism — itself has a kernel of rationality. Nor is individuality, in seeking its own good, intrinsically opposed to working for the good of all.

[21:42]

So, what we have — because no longer troubled by the opposition between individual and world — what we now have is a self-assured individuality, that its meaning can be realized in the social world, and that it can just directly act on this individualistic basis in which individual action is everything. Action, therefore, paragraph 396, "Action has, therefore, the appearance of the movement of a circle which moves freely within itself in a void, which, unimpeded, now expands, now contracts, and is perfectly content to operate in and with its own self. The element in which individuality sets forth its shape has the significance solely of putting on the shape of individuality; it is the daylight in which consciousness wants to display itself. Action alters nothing and opposes nothing. It is the pure form of a transition from a state of not being seen to one of being seen, and the content which is brought out into the daylight and displayed, is nothing else but what this action already is in itself.”

So what we have here is, in fact, the liberal notion of social space, as an arena of mutual self-realization. It's Mrs. Thatcher saying, "Society does not exist.” Right? But individuals exist and produce society. It's the moment of Reagan, of Von Hayeck, of Popper, of all these strong forms of individualism that think that individuals doing their own thing is compatible with the construction of a habitable world, and that there's no demand opposing it. And hence, Hegel is gonna call this the spiritual animal kingdom.

[24:27]

Because, on the one hand it's spiritual because it has got the relationship between individual and universality is being realized. But it's one in which it's an animal one because it is about self-realization because the universality has no moment of apartness. No difference. It's just whatever action brings about and nothing else, and anything else would be an interference, right?

This is what the Von Hayeck argument is over and over again. Anything: labor unions, laws, you know, all of this gets in the way of people acting spontaneously in this self-moving circle.

Now this is — there's many moments in the *Phenomenology* where some thinker or other wants to say I think we can stop right here. For Feuerbach we saw it with *Sense Certainty*. For Derrida it was in the shift from biological to spiritual life. He thinks the way Hegel makes that shift, once you get [inaudible] going, it's never going to stop. And of course, Kantianism is nothing but saying, 'We must stop with Kant and not go on to Hegel." That's all the Kantians say, that's their job.

[26:18]

Rudiger Bittner in this wonderful book, *What Reason Demands* — is a splendid form of nominalism and skepticism and individualism — argues that it is in this very chapter one must stop, because, Bittner argues, if you go past this moment, the moment of the spiritual animal kingdom, you're gonna end up in Kant. And he says, of course, once you go to Kant, you can't avoid going to Hegel. So we've got to stop earlier than Kant in order to avoid Hegel, otherwise it's all lost.

[26:56]

Now, what Hegel's going to argue here — and I won't do the argument since it's getting late, but let me say how the argument is going to run and get it going and I'll start here next week. What Hegel is going to argue here, and Bittner deny, is that the idea of Reason as simply what helps me realize my overall life plan could not count as a Reason unless the good reasons for action, in order to qualify as such, fit into a supra-individual context of meaning. Let me say that again.

The argument is — and the best account of this, by the way, is Pippin's article *You Can't Get There From Here: Transition Problems In the Phenomenology* in the *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. The argument is going to be that the idea of Reason that simply helps me realize my overall life plan, let's call that Prudential Reason — and Bittner actually doesn't use the narrow version of it. But he thinks he helps themselves to an Aristotelian version of it.

But Prudential Reason, means-ends rationality in some generous form, that's what’s at issue here. Hegel's argument is that kind of reasoning could not count as a Reason unless the good reasons for action, in order to be good reasons, fit into a supra-individual context of meaning, in the Geist, Spirit. So what this means here is that nothing could conceivably count as a reason for me, nothing can count as a reason for me unless I understand myself as also counting for and participating in something larger and more significant than my life. [inaudible] little old me.

[29:48]

That [inaudible] and this is why this is a really testing point. The question is, can we make sense of our own lives in purely individualistic terms? Find rational self-reassurance for ourselves in this way? Or is it — and this is the moment where the necessity is going to really tell — or must I consider myself, and the question is what's the 'must' here — or must I consider myself, in order to be rational for myself in my own prudential reasoning, see myself as part of some larger whole? So here is exactly the moment, as it were, where individualism versus Geist is being posed.

Once you get past this moment, then you're in the forms of universality, even in this chapter. Moral rationalism, [inaudible] — all those are already saying, I must consider myself in relationship to my others. Here, prudential reasoning says, 'I don't have to worry about that' — given that notion of action, right, it moves in a circle — ‘if I just am a prudential-rational, happiness-maximizer, things will take care of themselves.’

[31:17]

That's the question we want to ask ourselves. We'll start there next time. We will begin — so I know we're already, I think, three weeks behind in the third week of term. Pretty soon we'll almost be at the point where [inaudible] but I'm hoping to start Spirit next week. It is my intention.