

The Concept of Identity in Hegel

Seminar on the Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy

Overview

From Marx to Adorno, from Heidegger to Gadamer, from Hyppolite to Merleau-Ponty, Foucault and Derrida: Hegel has been the main interlocutor of contemporary philosophy. However, which concepts stand at the core of Hegelian philosophy itself? How does the oeuvre of Hegel shine a light over contemporary debates and phenomena, such as those of individual self-identity and identity politics? The following seminar on the Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems Of Philosophy focuses on exploring one of Hegel's early works to try and determine the basic and fundamental spirit of the Hegelian philosophical project. Special emphasis is placed into understanding Hegel's central notion of Identity and its implications for the nature of philosophical thought and contemporary debates. The seminar is designed as a first-hand introduction to Hegel and the core aspects of his philosophical project.

Introduction

Under the authority of re-interpretation and critique, contemporary philosophy has generally delighted itself in the continuous revisiting of Hegel's oeuvre. Both master and foe, the dialogue with Hegel has characterized philosophy from Marx to Adorno, from Heidegger to Gadamer, from Miguel de Unamuno to Eugenio Trías, from Hyppolite and Kojève to Merleau-Ponty, Foucault and Derrida. With different degrees and intensities, all critiques and resemblances of post-Hegelianism have been united by one common movement: Back to Hegel!

This tendency has made of Hegel an ongoing presence in philosophy... To the point that any student of modern philosophy will at some point encounter the thought of Hegel during his studies. No history of modern philosophy is complete without mentioning the enormous impact of Hegel's thought: almost all prominent thinkers in French and German thought after Hegel have sought to respond to and critique Hegelian philosophy. Therefore, in engaging with French and German thought, one is bound to possess at least a minimal knowledge of Hegel. Nevertheless, Hegel's own texts often reveal themselves as being cryptic and difficult to understand for the students. During the main Philosophy program, students generally become familiar with notions such as Idealism, Dialectics, Negativity, or system... But the actual meaning and overall importance of these concepts within Hegel's philosophical project are often left in the dark. In fact, these abstract characterizations even tend to make the reading of Hegel's text become substantially more difficult. As a result, and despite the number of references to Hegel within contemporary philosophy, there still exists a deep gulf of knowledge separating a modern philosophy student from engaging with Hegel's works.

Aim of the Seminar

The aim of the present seminar is to bridge that said knowledge gap by engaging with the direct reading of Hegel's first published work: the *Difference Between Fichte's And Schelling's Systems Of Philosophy*. The seminar will introduce students to the core elements of Hegel's philosophy and to its possible projection into contemporary thought. In order to engage fruitfully with such a difficult material, we have linked our reading of the text to the study of a certain

specific topic to both give a concise basis for discussion and relate Hegel to several interesting contemporary philosophical discussions. This topic is Hegel's central notion of Identity.

The reason for focusing on this specific topic is, firstly, that the notion of Identity plays an important role in modern discussions in various fields such as politics (think of 'identity' politics), or other more theoretical discussions surrounding, for example, the self or the status of objects with multiple properties. The second reason for choosing this topic is that it allows us to study a small text which focuses almost in its entirety on the notion of Identity in philosophy —such a clear delimitation is very rare for Hegel. Hegel is very much a thinker to which one must be introduced to. Throughout a number of his later works, a pretty large amount of concepts must be previously considered and sufficiently understood before being able to figure out what is going on within the text itself. However, the *Difference Between Fichte's And Schelling's Systems Of Philosophy*, given that it was Hegel's first published text, does not yet require of such a previous familiarity with a number of these concepts; and it introduces the all-encompassing notion of Identity as a way of understanding which grounds the particular philosophical project that Hegel will aim to bring about in his later works. All this means that the notion of Identity will turn out to be crucial for anyone's understanding of Hegelian philosophy.

Method

The aim of the seminar is to guide students through the *Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System Of Philosophy* and to hold a weekly discussion on Hegel's approach to the concept of Identity throughout the text.

In order to ease the overall reading work-load and difficulty of the text itself, we have decided to keep both the topics and reading materials of each class as short and manageable as possible.

Together with this, and in order to smoothen the discussion and understanding of the text, the first part of each seminar session will consist of a presentation of the chosen text, delivered by seminar leaders. After this initial presentation, the room is open for participants to introduce questions and ideas about the topic of study. This division between presentation and discussion is not set in stone; the aim behind it is simply to have a coherent initial approach to the chosen text as a basic referential standpoint for later debates, clarifications, or re-considerations.

The reading for each week will consist of a part of the text relating to a certain topic of no more than (max) five pages. This will ensure that participants have enough time to closely read the texts for discussion. Given that, consequently to this, parts of the text will have to be skipped, certain seminars will be without any required reading and will be based on the presenter giving an overview of the parts of the text which were not required to read. The parts of the text are largely chosen based on their relationship towards the notion of identity and the way it is conceived by different rational faculties.

Syllabus

Week 1: Introduction

Topic: Introduction to the general set up of the course and to the context of Hegel's first published text.

Required reading: None

Week 2: Kant and the notion of identity

Topic: How Kant made the problem of identity central to German philosophy.

Required reading: The *vorerinnerung*.

Week 3: The different Systems of philosophy

Topic: If philosophy is one area of study, if all philosophical ideas are part of one identity, why does every philosopher seem to have his own different philosophical system? How do we deal with the plurality of philosophical insights?

Reading: *Geschichtliche Ansicht Philosophische Systeme*.

Week 4: The desire of Philosophy

Topic: Why does philosophy seek to create a system in the first place?

Reading: *Bedürfniss der Philosophie*.

Week 5: Reflection and Identity

Topic: How can philosophy construct an identity through thinking which, according to Hegel, happens by distinguishing and dividing things into their proper categories?

Reading: *Reflexion als Instrument des Philosophirens*.

Week 6: The different principals or identities of ordinary and philosophical thinking

Topic: In what way is the notion of identity in philosophy different from how we ordinarily conceive it.

Reading: *Verhältniss der speculation zum Gesunden Menschenverstand* and *Princip einer Philosophie in der Form eines absoluten Grundsatzes*.

Week 7:** Conceiving of the constitution of identity**

Topic: How can philosophy arrive at a positive vision of the identity which underlies its reflection.

Reading: *Transcendentale Anschauung, Postulate der Vernunft* and *Verhältniss des philosophirens zu einem philosophischen system*.

Week 8: Fichte and the subjective identity of thought****

Topic: What are the advantages and difficulties of conceiving the identity of thought subjectively.

Reading: None required, discussion is about the part of the text called *Darstellung des Fichte'schen Systems*.

Week 9: Schelling and the attempt to conceive of an objective identity of thought

Topic: What does it mean to say that the absolute identity of thought is the identity of difference and identity

Reading: Various fragments from the Schelling section of the text.

Week 10: The problems with Schelling****

Topic: Does Schelling's attempt to construct an absolute identity succeed?

Reading: Same as last week.

Week 11: Reinhold and the problem with analytic philosophy

Topic: In what way does Reinhold's conception of identity destroy the advancement made by thinkers such as Fichte and Schelling?

Reading: Various fragments from the Reinhold part of the text.

Week 12: The logical principal

Topic: Can a Science of Logic achieve a living notion of identity?

Reading: Same as last week.

Instructors:

Alejandro Lis Del Cerro

Oskar Wendrich

Queer Embodiment

Overview

This reading group tries to introduce students into small corner of queer, mad, and posthumanist studies through a phenomenological perspective. The focus will be on troubling the abstract notions of the normative rational agent proposed by enlightenment philosophers, using the experience of bodies and minds who themselves do not fit the vitruvian man.

This will be achieved by first asking what it is to be a body, and then to ask what it is to be queer. We will attempt to emotionally and philosophically develop the vocabulary to discuss and critically experience the intersection of gender, neurodivergence and more. Finally, we will draw from experiential and emotive sources, disrupting traditional modes of knowing and meeting each other at the intersections.

ATTENTION: This course is largely based on a course given last semester.

Aa Name	☰ TBR	☰ Session
<u>Braidotti</u>	Posthumanism 1-4, 13-15	Week 1
<u>Nietzsche</u>	What is Truth	Week 1
<u>Fielding</u>	Habit Body	Week 2
<u>Fielding</u>	The Phenomenological Method	Week 2
<u>Merleau-Ponty</u>	Introduction to phenomenology of perception	Week 3
<u>Audre Lorde</u>	Age, race, class and sex	Week 4
<u>Wittig</u>	What is a woman	Week 4
<u>Bartky</u>	Foucault, femininity and the modernisation of patriarchal power	Week 5
<u>Stuart Hall</u>	Representations	Week 5
<u>Literary theory, the basics</u>	Postructuralist continued	Week 5
<u>Fielding</u>	Queer orientations	Week 6
<u>Ahmed</u>	Queer phenomenology	Week 6
<u>Viiiiibes</u>	Maybe Xenofeminism	Week 7
<u>Feeling things and feels</u>	and maybe Paul Preciado	Week 8

Chinese Reading Group Information

Initiated by a few philosophy students and began meeting since June 2022, this reading group project welcomes people who are interested in either (classical) Chinese philosophy or reading texts classical Chinese. During the sessions, we aim at a slow, close, and careful reading experience that would be valuable for both philosophical research and China studies, quality over quantity. Current members range from BA to PhDs, with varying background including philosophy and China Studies. Professors and visiting scholars may also join.

On a social level, this group creates a friendly environment that brings together people who share the same interests in these areas. On an academic level, the project hopes to provide a platform for intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogues based on not only serious engagement with the primary texts and their translations, but also openness towards different approaches and opinions, either within or across cultural or disciplinary boundaries.

Readers from all backgrounds and levels are welcome. Chinese proficiency will be an advantage but not required; a few current members have no such proficiency at all. The assigned text will be made available in both English and Chinese and the discussions will have an emphasis on the philosophical connotations instead of Chinese language itself. However, members with Chinese proficiency (or interest in it) are encouraged to read the Chinese texts and all questions about the language are welcome in the discussions. The same applies to prior background knowledge of Chinese history, Chinese philosophy and its history, etc., though these will be an advantage too. When needed, relevant information will be provided and discussed during sessions. Members are encouraged to consult secondary literature for their own knowledge building, while questions of such nature are welcome in discussions and members with better knowledge will try their best to answer.

History of Marxism

This reading circle will engage with close reading of primary texts and discussion of debates such as Marxism vs. Anarchism. In four parts, we move through four historical moments in Marxism: Writings by Marx, Revolutionary Praxis, Frankfurt School and its reflections on Marxism, and Contemporary Marxism.

Led by: Roman Thommassen (Alumni MA Philosophy of Humanities) and James Cochrane (MA Modern European Philosophy, MA History).

Syllabus

Part 1: Writings by Marx

Document

Resources

- "Theses on Feuerbach" (1845) 1 p.

[Theses on Feuerbach](#)

- Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848) 20 pp.

[Preface](#)

- The German Ideology, Ch. 1, first two sections (A,B) (or more) (1846) 25 pp.

[The German Ideology](#)

- Capital Vol. I, Ch. 1 Sec. 4 "The fetishism of commodities" (1867) 5 pp.

[Economic Manuscripts: Capital Vol. I - Chapter One](#)

[What is Commodity Fetishism? | Socialism 101](#)

Part 2: Revolutionary Praxis

Document

Resources

- Lenin – selections from State and Revolution (1917) 20 pp.

[The State and Revolution](#)

[On Women's Emancipation | Socialism 101](#)

- Lukács - "Class Consciousness" from History and Class Consciousness (1923) 30 pp.

[Notes on Lukács](#)

[Class Consciousness by Georg Lukacs 1920](#)

Part 3: Frankfurt School

Document

Resources

- Horkheimer - selections from Dawn / Dämmerung (1926-31) 8 pp.
- (O) Benjamin - "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940) 8 pp.
[Walter Benjamin On the Concept of History /Theses on the Philosophy of History](#)
- (O) Adorno - "Imaginative Excesses" (1944–47) 4 pp.
- Adorno on praxis: "Marginalia to Theory and Praxis" (1969) 18 pp., "Resignation" (1969) 6 pp.

Part 4: Contemporary Marxism

Document

Resources

- Slavoj Žižek - No way out? Communism in the new century (2013)
[Slavoj Žižek: Don't Act. Just Think. | Big Think](#)
[No way out? Communism in the new century](#)
- (O) Chris Cutrone - The dictatorship of the proletariat and the death of the Left (2021)
[The dictatorship of the proletariat and the death of the Left](#)

["The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Death of the Left": a teach-in by Chris Cutrone](#)

- Fredric Jameson - An American Utopia (2016)

[An American Utopia: Fredric Jameson in Conversation with Stanley Aronowitz](#)

[Jameson: An american utopia](#)

- Jodi Dean - Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging (2019)