

Cultural studies



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Cultural Studies Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit deals with the evolution of consciousness and the various factors and ideas that contributed to the formation of a new, modern spirit. The work attempts to unearth how the human consciousness underwent changes throughout history. For Foucault the concept of modernity is a matter of one's attitude-“ a mode of relating to contemporary reality, a voluntary choice made by certain people.” (Michel Foucault, p. 32-50, 1984). For Hegel the right attitude is formed only when self-consciousness becomes the essential being of individuals. This is possible when the spirit is free from the influence of the universal will and instead it should be moved by the pure will or pure knowing.

“ Hegel believes that the idea of individual consciousness is closely connected with the Notion of Utility” (p. 355). (G. W. F Hegel, 1977). It is this Notion of Utility which gives a new shape to the human consciousness-that of absolute freedom which Hegel considers as the ‘ essence of all actuality’. Thus Spirit, in this absolute freedom, is aware of its own pure personality and of all spiritual reality which is a product of the general will of all individuals as such (p. 356). But there is a tendency for the consciousness to abolish all the ‘ social groups or classes which are the spiritual spheres into which the whole is articulated’ (p. 357). Thus, it is necessary to bring about a balanced notion regarding the concept of absolute freedom and the way it creates difference between the individual and the universal consciousness.

According to Hegel, the individual needs to respond to both the universal consciousness and his own personal consciousness. On the other hand he should also make sure that he doesn't adhere himself to the dictates of the universal consciousness.

The element of being is the key to nourish one's self-consciousness. The self-

consciousness should never be allowed to live in a world of illusion thinking that it is accomplishing a particular work while fulfilling the universal work itself. (p. 359). Hegel is of the opinion that the universal will represents only one actual will in a self whereas all other individual will are excluded from it. That is why he considers government as the ‘ individuality of the universal will’ which represents only the ‘ victorious faction’ (p. 360). Therefore, any attempt to bring together the universal will with that of the individual will is quite impossible and one should negate the very notion of “ the individual as a being existing in the universal” (p. 360).

Hegel, thus, concludes his argument by stating that the Spirit now needs to go back to the ethical and real world of culture to rejuvenate his self-consciousness. It now needs to find itself and block the objective reality of the universal spirit which excludes its own self-consciousness. Thus pure knowing or pure will is identified by him as the real solution to feel the actual world and for this one needs to be an essential being rather than being a selfless form. Now the absolute freedom that the individual is provided is to be exercised to pursue truth in this unreal world, which will refresh his Spirit and help his “ self-consciousness to be essential being in its perfection and completion” (p. 363).

Thus one can undoubtedly say that Hegel in his work envisages modernity as an attitude rather than a period of history. For Foucault, attitude is a mode of relating to the reality and Hegel shows how can reality be seen by a self-conscious individual if he can withstand the pressures of the universal will and can exercise his own personal self-consciousness. Thus, for Hegel the phenomenology of Spirit is an evolution of consciousness from the shackles of the dominant universal will to the realization of a pure will.

Works Cited

Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?" *The Foucault Reader*, New York, Pantheon Books. p. 32-50. 1984.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Phenomenology of spirit*. Oxford university press. 1977.