

PHILOSOPHY
INDIVIDUALITY IN THE MODERN WORLD
Final Examination
Two Essays: Forty Minutes Each

This course has developed the argument of Aristotle and Hegel that a thing is an individual to the degree that it is actual. To be is to be in the *process* of actualizing a determinate potentiality. Every theorizable process involves three factors, principles, or sources of determinacy: (1.) a determinate beginning, (2.) a determinate end, and (3.) a determinable aspect susceptible of undergoing the determination of the process from (1.) to (2.). If the determinable aspect *is* in-formed by the determinate end *throughout* the process, that process is an actuality (*energeia*, *Wirklichkeit*). If the determinable aspect *comes to be* in-formed by the determinate end *during* the process, that process is a motion (*kinesis*, *Bewegung*) or an incomplete actuality.

For the philosophy of first nature in both Aristotle and Hegel, it is important to remember that a thing is spoken of in many ways. Some things are active in a plurality of ways (*qua* alive, *qua* sensing, *qua* knowing, *qua* thinking) as well as motile in a plurality of ways (*qua* qualitative, *qua* quantitative, *qua* local). But all things that are (*qua* being) are active in a determinate way (the activity of being *qua* being).

Aristotle and Hegel agree that things can only be theoretically (speculatively) grasped as such processes. For your first essay, give two illustrations of such theorizing, one from Aristotle's *Physics/Metaphysics* and one from Hegel's *Encyclopedia Logic*.

Aristotle and Hegel also agree that the spheres of human praxis (or action) involve processes analogous to those of theorizable things and that the determinate beginning and end of a practical process (ethical action) is a *second nature* (habit or disposition) rather than a first nature. But in Aristotle's philosophy practical processes are not theorizable because (in part) it is a matter of chance or luck whether a given human being will have acquired the full array of practically determinate beginnings and ends (virtues) requisite for an ethical life—such a second nature was only availed those few lucky enough to have experienced the *paideia* of a house (*oikos*) and a city (*polis*).

According to Hegel the modern world has allowed practical philosophy to be replaced by the philosophy of objective spirit. In the modern world it is a deprivation not to be recognized as a person (i.e., to be a slave). In the modern world every human being can claim the right to determine his or her action as a moral subject. And in the modern world every human being has the right (sometimes deprived) to acquire the full array of second nature determinacies via membership in a family, in civil society, and in a state. It is thus Hegel's argument that the modern-world counterparts of Aristotle's *oikos* (Hegel's sphere of the family) and *polis* (Hegel's sphere of the state) are supplemented in the philosophy of objective spirit by the incomplete (by themselves aporetic) modes of individuality *qua* person (a universal) and *qua* subject (a particular) and that the determinate beginnings and ends (habituated virtues) are as a matter of right (sometimes deprived) available to all via upbringing or education (*Bildung*) in a family, in a state, and in that singular ethical institution to be shared by all on earth: civil society.

The critical question of Individuality in the Modern World concerns the theorizability of practical life in its legal, moral, and ethical dimensions. For your second essay consider why human practice was held to be untheorizable by Aristotle and how Hegel was able to integrate practice into his “circle of paideia” (i.e., *Encyclo-Paideia*) in the modern world.

In short, write two essays: One on the philosophy of first nature in Aristotle and Hegel and a second on the philosophy of second nature in Aristotle and Hegel. For both essays the most critical aspect will be the discussion of why to be is to be in the *process* of actualizing (completely or incompletely) determinate potentialities.