

Das Dieses ist ein Baum ist ein Baum

Der absolute Geist als freies Dasein der Wirklichkeit in Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes

The 'This' is a Tree is a Tree.

Absolute Spirit as Free Existence of Actuality in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit

by Kurt Appel

Abstract

This article, an examination of the chapter on religion in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, argues that religion is not to be understood as a projection of the Self (Feuerbach) but rather marks the impossibility of self-projection. For Hegel, religion constitutes an essential stage of consciousness in which the Self can no longer locate itself in its world of reflection, representations and self-projection. As a result, the religious stage is one of substantial loss in which the Self's relation to Being is fundamentally negative. In this negative relation, the Subject finds itself as divested of Substance, and Being appears as negativity defying objectification. Although all phases of religious development represent an experience of loss, Hegel's critique of revealed religion is that it holds on to a representation of the Absolute either as a positive and noticeable past or as a pending and utopian future, as for Hegel the Absolute is negativity, fundamentally incommensurable with representation. Instead, the Absolute manifests through the sublation of mediating images and referential language. Sense certainty, the first stage of the Phenomenology of Spirit, appears anew in the Absolute Knowledge, as the Absolute realizes itself as sensual event by effacing all immediate and denotative representations of reflection and by revoking all finite predicates.

Keywords:

Hegel

Phenomenology of Spirit

Philosophy of Religion

Critique of Representation

Absolute Spirit

Dialectic