



## Hegel and the Problem of Epistemology in the Introduction to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

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### Article Info ABSTRACT

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<b>Article type:</b> <b>Research Article</b>   <b>Received:</b> 2025/03/24 <b>Accepted:</b> 2025/04/14	<p>One of the main preoccupations of modern philosophers, especially after the Enlightenment, was the significant epistemological challenges rooted in the views of their predecessors regarding human understanding and its limits and boundaries. In his various works, especially in <i>The Phenomenology of Spirit</i>, Hegel addresses some of these challenges following philosophical discussions and in his distinctive metaphysical language, attempting to resolve them. In this work, he highlights the difficulty of finding a criterion to distinguish a true proposition from a false one and finding a standard for differentiating truth from falsehood, while addressing its epistemological consequences, such as skepticism. To overcome the epistemic skepticism inherited from Plato, Hegel seeks to rely on the rational nature of reality. By stating that reality is rational, Hegel primarily means that there is nothing within reality itself that is inherently doubtful, truly incomprehensible to reason, contradictory, or inexplicable. From his perspective, philosophy must teach us this; otherwise, we will fall into skepticism and the despair brought about by epistemological theories inherited from the past. In the present essay, we will attempt to outline the epistemological challenges and some of Hegel's critical perspectives on past philosophers, based on his explanations in the introduction to <i>The Phenomenology of Spirit</i>.</p>
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**Keywords:** Hegel, epistemology, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Kant, Skepticism.

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**Introduction: Fundamental Questions**

From the very beginning of philosophical thought, a fundamental issue—or more precisely, a series of issues—regarding human knowledge of reality (or objects) has emerged, compelling philosophers to seek answers to them. Issues such as: What can I know? And more fundamentally, is human reason even capable of knowing anything? How can I consider a belief to be true and correct? What are the limits of human knowledge, and how can these boundaries be defined? And many other similar questions. Of course, no doubt, raising such issues did not arise for humans at the very first moment of thinking. Questions like these are already preceded by a certain level of reflection and self-awareness in humans. The initial theoretical form of human epistemological questions has often been: Which judgments about *x* are true? Or, in a more concise form, is *x* true or false? The answer to such questions, of course, consisted of propositions about *x* or the affirmation (or denial) of *x*. However, humanity did not stop at this stage, and gradually the question (which was, in fact, the philosophical aspect of the discussion) arose: What can I know about *x*? Can I achieve the knowledge to determine whether *x* is true or false? Several reasons can be cited for this shift in human inquiry from the first set of questions (concerning objects) to the second set (concerning knowledge, its nature, and its limits). First, humans are constantly confronted with different beliefs among various people, or even within the same person at different stages of their lives. In short, human beliefs are continually replaced by others. In this context, it seems essential to find a criterion for distinguishing true and correct beliefs from false and incorrect ones (Westphal, 2003: 32). This is precisely the idea that compelled Descartes to seek a criterion for distinguishing true knowledge from false knowledge before climbing the trunk of the tree of knowledge and harvesting its fruits. However, the search for a criterion with such characteristics is doomed to failure from the very beginning (Descartes, 2024).

Finding a criterion to distinguish truth from falsehood requires, first, that we independently recognize and distinguish truths from falsehoods without this criterion. Only then can we examine the criterion itself and determine whether it is sufficiently effective in all these cases. In other words, seeking a criterion to distinguish and recognize truth from falsehood is dependent on this very act of distinguishing and recognizing (Hegel, 1977: 31). It is no wonder that Descartes, unable to find the aforementioned criterion independently, felt compelled to resort to the honesty and integrity of God. It must be said that the ultimate result of this search is skepticism. Of course, Descartes was not in pursuit of skepticism, but rather in pursuit of certainty. Therefore, Cartesian skepticism is a method of skepticism, not the ultimate goal of philosophical and epistemological reflection. The goal of this method is to build a solid foundation, not to destroy any kind of epistemic structure. Unlike "skeptics who doubt just for the sake of doubting, Descartes' goal is 'to reach certainty to set aside the soft sand and dirt until one reaches the stone or clay" (CSM 1:125).

He expresses elsewhere: 'Now reason leads me to think that I must avoid endorsing views that are not entirely certain and indubitable, just as I avoid views that are clearly false. Therefore, in order to reject all of my opinions, it is enough

to find at least one reason for doubt in each of them." (CSM 2:12), (Leventhal, Phillips & Burns, 2016).

### **Knowledge and Skepticism**

Based on another way of thinking about the problem facing knowledge, one could argue that true knowledge is based on reason and a premise that justifies it. Now, one can direct the question toward the very same reason or premise and inquire about its validity. There are two possible responses: either one does not base this reason and premise on another reason and premise, or one considers it to be based on other reasons and premises. In the first case, according to Hegel, we are merely faced with an assumption. In the second case, the reason and premise must ultimately lead to a reason and premise that I have taken as self-evident; otherwise, my reasoning would regress infinitely. However, even in this case, we have arrived at nothing more than a mere assumption. According to Hegel, the problem here is that once an assumption is introduced, it becomes impossible to explain for preferring one assumption over another—or even over its negation (Inwood, 2013). It may be criticized against Hegel that some of our assumptions are undeniable, as they themselves serve as their own justification, or, as contemporary epistemologists would put it, they are self-sufficient. Specifically, in this regard, one could cite immediate sensory experiences, as well as intuitive propositions or presential knowledge, which can be used as the foundation of knowledge. However, Hegel would claim that he rejected this view of empiricism in his discussion of sensory certainty in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. According to Hegel, even sensory perception is not immediate and therefore not certain. In this regard, Hegel is more aligned with the Platonic tradition than with the empiricist tradition of figures like John Locke. Certainty based on the senses, in terms of cognition, is the most abstract and, in terms of truth, the poorest type of certainty (Mojtahedi, 1992: 52). In this regard, the path of this way of thinking should be seen as leading toward the Platonic-Hegelian skepticism or pessimism regarding the sensible world and sensory perceptions.

On the other hand, the common conception of the state and relationship of our cognitive faculty concerning the object of knowledge places an unbridgeable gap between the two - a gap and rupture between the knowing subject and the realm of objects (the objects of knowledge), which exist independently and distinct from the knowing subject. Thus, it is impossible to determine whether the states and conditions in the knowing subject, called knowledge, correspond to the object and its true nature or not. Here, and especially considering Kant's refinements, it seems difficult to regard the mind as a mere mirror that only and accurately reflects external reality reliably. The human cognitive apparatus is equipped with tools and instruments (Kantian categories) that shape what it acquires from the object (the matter) in such a way that, ultimately, the formed image is a result of the combination of matter and form. Since it was possible that these cognitive tools (categories) could be entirely different from the ones we currently possess, my image of the world is merely one of the many possible images that could have been formed based on the existence of different categories.

All these various ways of thinking about issues related to human knowledge were the result of philosophical developments from the time of Plato, and especially from the era of Descartes onward, which Hegel inherited. It was a skeptical situation that Hegel, as a philosopher, sought to engage with intellectually.

### **Hegel and the Rational World**

The problem facing Hegel can be understood more seriously when we consider the overall goal and intent of Hegel's extensive and elaborate system. The ultimate goal and purpose of philosophy, according to Hegel, is to convey the idea that the world is rational—an effort to bring this "rationality to the level of consciousness" so that humans may attain a fully adequate understanding of reality (Hegel, 1977: 12). "Nature is rational within itself, ... Knowledge must examine and explore this actual reason that is present within it and comprehend it conceptually—that is, it should not engage in studying mere forms and possibilities that are visible on the surface but rather investigate the eternal harmony of nature, which is conceived as the law of *thing-in-itself*." (Ibid). Hegel's assertion that reality is rational primarily means that there is nothing within reality that is inherently doubtful to reason, truly incomprehensible, contradictory, or incapable of being explained. According to Hegel, when we achieve such an understanding of the world, we attain "absolute knowledge"; otherwise, our knowledge remains "limited" or "conditional." This is where the problem begins. The fact that the world is rational does not necessarily mean that we possess this knowledge or attain absolute knowledge. Attaining absolute knowledge depends on how we perceive the world. If we do not view the world correctly, it will appear to us as containing incomprehensible, contradictory, and alien elements, leading to despair and disappointment. Hegel's project is an attempt to provide a way of viewing things and the world in which such problems no longer remain unsolvable. Through this perspective, the world can be revealed to us as it truly is, free from these difficulties. Therefore, according to Hegel, the greatest service philosophy can provide is to help us overcome this despair by offering a new way of thinking about reality—one that allows us to once again perceive the world as a rational place, where we feel "at home". The "I" is at home in a world that it knows, and the more it understands it, the more at home it is (Stern, 2002: 36). In other words, according to Hegel, the goal of knowledge is to rid the objective world, which stands before us, of its alienation, so that we may feel at home in it.

In his view, to achieve this goal, it is essential for reason to adopt a reflective stance, recognizing and avoiding those forms of thought that lead us to an irrational or impractical understanding of the world, which prevent the rationality of the world from revealing itself to us. Philosophy must aim to correct perspectives that present the world as a place full of unsolvable mysteries and demonstrate how these views arise from a form of deviation in thinking that must be overcome. If philosophy fails to fulfill this role, we will either conclude that the world is inherently irrational or that even if the world is rational, it does not appear so to us. In either case, a person can never feel at home. According to Hegel, one of the forms of thinking that leads to skepticism and despair is epistemology, which gained significant strength from Descartes onward, particularly with Kant.

### **Forces and Limits of Knowledge**

The problems mentioned regarding knowledge naturally suggest the solution that an individual must temporarily refrain from contemplating their beliefs about the world and objects, and before anything else, investigate and examine their cognitive and epistemic faculties to determine whether these faculties are fundamentally capable of knowing anything or not. And if they are capable, is there a limit or boundary to this knowing, or does human knowledge encompass an infinite domain? In Hegel's terms, this situation can be likened to that of a scientist who, before using scientific tools and instruments, sees it as their duty to examine and scrutinize them (Hegel, 1977: 46). Hegel rightly regards Kant as the prominent representative of this position, and it is precisely on this point that Hegel, from the very beginning of the *Phenomenology* (Introduction), opposes Kant.

### **The Introduction to *The Phenomenology of Spirit***

The Introduction to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, like its preface, has a dialectical intention and purpose. Here, Hegel also seeks to demonstrate why and how a new approach should be adopted in contrast to the incorrect approaches of the philosophers preceding him. If philosophy cannot fulfill its promise of finding reason in the world by presenting a new beginning, the consequences are clear: the forces against philosophy, with their victory, will herald a return to skeptical irrationalism. A return to this self-centered opinion, which understands how to diminish any truth, to direct attention back to itself, and takes pleasure in the understanding that it knows how to dissolve any thought, always finding the same barren ego in place of any content. (Ibid: 52)

In any case, although Hegel's argument in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* against this irrationalism considers it largely a result of 'immaturity' and the 'empty formalism' which philosophers after Kant suffered from, he attempts to present a more fundamental challenge, namely that irrationalism should be regarded as the result and product of a 'natural assumption' in the method of philosophical inquiry. (Ibid: 46) From Hegel's perspective, once this natural assumption is accepted, there is no escape from skeptical irrationalism. Therefore, he attempts to demonstrate why this natural assumption is not truly natural, but rather an unjustified trick.

At the beginning of the *Introduction*, Hegel explains and elaborates on this problematic assumption. This assumption is based on the idea that, before embarking on the task of 'finding reason in the world,' it is necessary to take a step back and examine whether our reason can understand this matter. Otherwise, there is the fear that we might engage in a project whose outlook is entirely devoid of any hope of success. Hegel, in another place, quotes a statement from Locke and his recommendation of this method (Hegel, 1998: 65). John Locke believed it was necessary for us to examine our understanding, scrutinize our faculties, and understand what they have corresponded and aligned with' (Locke, 1975: 46). As Locke states in the Introduction to *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Section 1): "The understanding, like the eye, while it enables us to see and perceive

other things, does not observe itself; it requires art and effort to place it at a distance and make it the object of its own examination." No matter how many difficulties may arise on the path of this investigation, for whatever reason we have been kept in ignorance and darkness about ourselves up to this point, in my opinion, the light that this investigation can shed on our minds and the understanding we will gain of our own understanding will not only be pleasant, but will also provide many benefits in guiding our research concerning the objects of our knowledge" (Ibid: 47). This perspective was, of course, not unique to Locke, and in fact, the foundation of this method and natural assumption was established by Descartes: "To prevent ourselves from remaining in a state of uncertainty regarding the powers of our minds, and to avoid wasting our mental efforts on confused and erroneous paths, it is necessary that, before engaging in the study of knowledge concerning specific objects, we once in our lives carefully examine what kind of knowledge the human mind is capable of acquiring" (Descartes, 1985: 30). Although Hegel does not explicitly mention any philosopher in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it can be understood that his critique is particularly aimed at Kant. This is because, although Locke cannot be considered a skeptic or an idealist, Hegel believes that Kant, in the end, was both a skeptic and an idealist. In fact, given the starting point of Locke's philosophy, this was absolutely inevitable in Kant's philosophy. Because once this approach is accepted, our understanding of knowledge becomes our understanding of a 'tool' or 'medium' with its inherent limitations. We are inevitably confronted with the idea that our cognitive faculties stand between us and reality, such that our access to reality, or what Kant calls the *thing-in-itself*, appears impossible. In clearer terms, if knowledge is a tool, how can we be certain that this tool is not defective or distorting? Even if we cannot speak of the tool as being either healthy or defective in this regard, we still cannot know whether this tool has altered reality or not. For Hegel, even if we set aside the metaphor of a tool and consider knowledge merely as a passive medium, reality still passes through this medium. In other words, no matter how much we reach out toward reality, we encounter the reality that has passed through our cognitive faculties (the phenomenon), not reality itself. With this conception of knowledge, in short, it must be said that we have no access to the *thing-in-itself* or, in Hegel's terms, to the Absolute.

According to Hegel (and, of course, many other thinkers after Kant, both those belonging to the tradition of German Idealism, such as Fichte and Schelling, and those like Nietzsche who fundamentally view Kant and his philosophy with skepticism), the concept of the 'thing-in-itself' is one of the greatest weaknesses of Kant's philosophy. In Hegel's viewpoint, it is easy to see that an abstract entity like the "thing-in-itself" is, in itself, the product of purely abstract thinking. But why does Hegel despise this concept? The clearest reason for Hegel's skeptical view of the thing-in-itself can be found in his intention behind the concept of 'knowledge'. Hegel considers only knowledge worthy of the title 'knowledge' which is not limited by any boundary. This is the so-called 'absolute' knowledge, which must be found in the broad concept that he has dedicated his intellectual system to carefully explaining the process of its development. According to Hegel's conception of this knowledge,

nothing should and can limit or condition this knowledge in any external way.

This very brief and improvisational description of Hegel's philosophical project, despite its brevity and superficiality, shows that he must remove the dark shadow of the concept of the thing-in-itself from his philosophy, so that the absolute, speculative knowledge he speaks of becomes the knowledge of what truly is, not what is merely attainable for the subjective faculties of the cognitive apparatus, as a tool.

For this reason, although not explicitly stated, according to many interpreters in an implicit manner, he attempts to clarify his stance on this concept in the very first chapter of his system of knowledge, that is, in the chapter on consciousness in the book *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

### **Hegel and Skeptical Anti-Rationalism**

However, Hegel never intends to follow this line of thought or slide into the slope of skeptical anti-rationalism. Therefore, he seeks a solution to this problem. According to Hegel, if we regard knowledge and cognitive faculties as mere tools, we can never avoid their inevitable consequence — skepticism. Kant mistakenly believed that by detaching from and distancing oneself from cognitive faculties and examining them—just as a scientist examines their tools to identify the deficiencies and distortions they create in reality, one could achieve a desirable outcome (Singer, 1379: 47). For example, one can refer to an astronomer and their instrument. Since the astronomer is familiar with their tool—the telescope—and its laws, they know that the image of the sky appearing in the eyepiece is inverted due to the laws of light and lenses, and thus, they can easily account for this issue. But when it comes to knowledge, can the same approach be applied?

Hegel traces the hidden contradiction in epistemology precisely at this point. In the case of an instrument, such as a telescope, it is not the instrument itself that examines the instrument; rather, the astronomer analyzes its structure without relying on the instrument itself.

According to Hegel, this detachment is impossible. Any act of knowing requires the use of cognitive faculties, whether it is the knowledge of the world and objects, or the knowledge of oneself, cognition, and human epistemic faculties. Detaching from knowledge and objectifying it cannot be understood as the elimination or subtraction of the very act of knowing. In this case, how can knowledge assess and examine itself when, for this assessment and examination, it can only and exclusively rely on itself? Or as Nietzsche states, "How can a tool critique itself when, for critique and assessment, it can only use itself?" (Nietzsche, 1967: 486).

Therefore, according to Hegel, one must take a step back and question the very recommendation of these philosophers to prioritize the discussion of knowledge (a recommendation that can be called a 'critical epistemological method'), meaning to challenge the natural assumption. We are neither forced nor obligated to assume this inherently contradictory assumption. If these philosophers' argument for the critical epistemological method was that this method is without any presuppositions because it does not assume any presupposition about the cognitive faculties' ability to know

the world, then it must be acknowledged that they have erred. The 'critical epistemological method' is, in fact, not without presuppositions. This method already assumes an instrumental view of knowledge, as well as the assumption that we can step back and successfully examine this very instrument. Apart from assuming the existence of something called reality, this method also assumes that the knowing subject is separate and distinct from reality, since knowledge is regarded here as an instrument or intermediary between us and reality. In Hegel's terms, as stated in *Logic*, if the claim is that before engaging in the knowledge of the 'true existence of things,' we must evaluate the limitations of our reason, then it must be said that before even beginning this evaluation of reason's limitations, we must also assess and examine reason's capability and limitations for undertaking such an inquiry and knowledge. And in this way, the issue continues infinitely, because 'the examination of knowledge and cognitive faculties is only possible through them.' Hegel's statement here is worth quoting:

Kant says that we must first become familiar with the tools, and then proceed with the task for which we intend to use them, because if the tools are inadequate, all our efforts will be in vain... But the verification of knowledge is only possible through the act of knowing itself. The examination of this (so-called) tool is precisely the act of knowing it. But knowing before acquiring knowledge is as invalid as the Scholasticus' wise decision to refrain from entering the water before learning how to swim. (Hegel, 1991: 10)

Hegel's argument against this view of Kant in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is quite straightforward: Why should we need to be certain of this kind before starting our investigation? Why shouldn't we start our research and see how far we go? Thus, Hegel recommends that before placing any trust in the natural assumption, and before conducting preliminary research on our cognitive faculties and doubting their ability, we should doubt even this very skepticism.

### **Critical Epistemological Method**

It is very important to note that Hegel's primary goal is to confront the critical epistemological method, which considers this assumption as the 'natural assumption.' This means that the priority of research into the nature of our cognitive faculties is regarded as an obvious starting point, grounded in common sense, for any philosophical endeavor. According to the proponents of this view, with this preliminary research, we can guard against the danger of "perceiving the clouds of error instead of the sky of truth," and preserve ourselves from the fear of having assumed something.

Given what we have discussed, it is indeed not easy to understand how Hegel can resist other arguments that lead to the same critical method of cognition; especially those arguments that are based on the claim that there is positive evidence suggesting that our cognitive powers are limited, as we can clearly observe the flaws



and limitations of these powers in certain discussions (for example, discussions related to metaphysics or theology). Given this evidence regarding the limitations of our knowledge, it seems reasonable to first understand the limitations of our cognitive faculties and, after recognizing these limitations, attempt to avoid stepping beyond their scope. This expression of the critical epistemological method, using Hegel's own example, is akin to a person who, having been drowning amid the violent waves of the sea, now, after being saved from those overwhelming waves, finds it necessary to first assess their abilities, possibilities, and limits in swimming to avoid such an incident in the future. Thus, it cannot be said that Hegel's argument here would find fault with this way of presenting the critical epistemological method. Of course, in some of his other works, Hegel presents more serious and significant critiques of Kant's claim that metaphysical thinking reflects the limitations of reason in knowing something like the *thing-in-itself*.

### **Two Fundamental Principles**

Given what has been stated, it can be said that the two fundamental principles of Hegel's philosophy are: first, the emphasis on the unity of reason and existence, or the unity of the realms of affirmation (*ithbat*) and existence (*thobut*) (in the terminology of Islamic philosophy), meaning that these two realms correspond with each other; and second, the emphasis on the idea that human reason (the intellect of the human species in its historical development) is capable of discovering this correspondence without any external assistance. With the first principle, Hegel aims to eliminate the dualism between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge, a division that has become problematic in modern epistemology. According to him, Kant's response, which posits that within the world of the object, there is a dualism between appearance or phenomena and the rational essence or nomen (the *thing-in-itself*), and that our objective knowledge (objectivity) is limited to the world of phenomena and characterized by appearance, is not acceptable. Such a solution still keeps us distant from the world of the *nexus of things* (the absolute, according to Hegel), and Hegel is not content with anything less than this level of knowledge. Such a solution actually still keeps us distant from the world of *the nexus of things* (the absolute, according to Hegel), and Hegel is not content with anything less than this level of knowledge.

Kant had assumed that the antinomies of pure reason indicate that there are domains that are closed off to our reason. For example, regarding whether the universe is finite or infinite, according to Kant, one can present dialectical arguments for both sides. The fact that both sides of these arguments are proven actually supports the idea that neither side is conclusively proven. According to Kant, the only logical conclusion from these proofs is that we cannot answer questions such as the finitude or infinity of space and time in the universe. Such antinomies indicate the incapacity of human reason to comprehend the domain that Kant calls the realm of the irrational essence or the *thing-in-itself*. A domain that will remain unknowable to human reason. However, Hegel never intends to arrive at such a conclusion. According to Hegel, the antinomies of pure reason do

not actually prove that our reason is limited to the realm of appearances and phenomena. Hegel's most important and prominent critique of Kant's epistemology is summed up in his emphasis on the non-existence of the *thing-in-itself*. In Hegel's viewpoint, the assumption of the *thing-in-itself* inherently carries extreme incompatibility and contradiction within itself:

On one hand, the claim that understanding only knows appearances, and on the other hand, the emphasis on the view that this knowledge is something absolute, meaning that knowledge cannot go beyond this point, and that this is the natural, absolute limit of human awareness, ultimately contradict each other... A person only has awareness of something as a defect, a limit, when they simultaneously feel that they are beyond it (Hegel, 1991: 60).

Contrary to Kant's view, Hegel believes that the elements and conditions necessary for understanding this unity between the world of existence and reason lie within our reason, although by "reason," he does not mean my individual reason, but rather historical reason. Therefore, it can be said that the goal of Hegel's epistemology is to reach a point where there is no longer any gap between knowledge and the thing-in-itself. So, Hegel considers the thing-in-itself to be a contradictory concept and dismisses it, and the result of such a stance is nothing other than Hegel's absolute idealism. However, the extent to which Hegel has succeeded in overcoming the dualism he sees in the philosophies before him, and whether he has been able to realize the ultimate unifying goal of absolute idealism, is something that has not gone unnoticed by contemporary philosophers as well as by those in later periods, and of course, this itself requires an independent and detailed study.

## Conclusion

Based on what we have discussed in this essay, we can say that Hegel, in the epistemological discussions presented in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, seeks to overcome the subject-object split in Kantian epistemology within the modern system of knowledge, which, according to Hegel, has been partially inherited from Plato. Hegel, by emphasizing the unity of reason and existence, means that these two realms are ontologically aligned with each other. Furthermore, by reflecting on the fact that human reason, in its historical development, can discover this alignment without relying on any external tools or assistance, Hegel's primary aim is to eliminate the dualism between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge, which has become a problematic issue in modern epistemology. According to Hegel, Kant's response, which posits an ontological split between appearance and the rational essence (the *thing-in-itself*) within the realm of phenomena or objects, and claims that our objective knowledge is limited to the world of appearances and characterized by the attribute of appearance, is not acceptable. Such a solution, in fact, still keeps us detached from the realm of the *thing-in-itself*, or Hegel's absolute, and he is not satisfied with anything less than this kind of knowledge. Since our analysis in this article was limited to the introduction of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a discussion on Hegel's critique of Kant's *thing-in-itself*, which may be even more prominent than his critique in the introduction of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, requires a separate occasion.

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## هگل و مسئله معرفت‌شناسی در مقدمه پدیدارشناسی روح

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اطلاعات مقاله	چکیده
نوع مقاله: مقاله پژوهشی	یکی از دلمشغولی‌های اصلی فیلسوفان دوره جدید بویژه پس از عصر روشنگری، چالش‌های معرفت‌شناختی مهمی بود که ریشه در دیدگاه‌های فیلسوفان پیش از آنها در باب فاهمه آدمی و حدود و ثغور آن دارد. هگل در آثار مختلف خود، بویژه در پدیدارشناسی روح، به تناسب مباحث فلسفی و با ادبیات متافیزیکی خاص خودش، به برخی از این چالش‌ها توجه کرده و سعی دارد برون‌رفتی برای آنها بیابد. او در این اثر، به دشواری یافتن معیار گزاره صادق از کاذب و نیز یافتن معیار حقیقت از ناحقیقت اشاره می‌کند و پیامدهای معرفت‌شناختی آن همانند شکاکیت-را متذکر می‌گردد. هگل برای فائق آمدن بر این شکاکیت معرفتی‌ای که از افلاطون به وی به ارث رسیده بود، تلاش می‌کند از عقلانی‌بودن واقعیت کمک بگیرد. مراد او از اینکه واقعیت عقلانی است، در درجه اول این است که در خود واقعیت چیزی نیست که برای عقل، شک‌برانگیز، حقیقتاً غیرقابل فهم، متناقض یا تبیین‌ناپذیر باشد. از نظر او، این را باید فلسفه به ما بیاموزاند وگرنه دچار شکاکیت و ناامیدی حاصل از تئوری‌های معرفت‌شناختی خواهیم شد که از گذشته به ما رسیده‌اند. در جستار حاضر، سعی خواهیم نمود با توجه به تبیین‌های هگل در مقدمه پدیدارشناسی روح، چالش‌های معرفت‌شناختی و برخی نگاه‌های انتقادی او به فیلسوفان گذشته را بیان کنیم.

کلمات کلیدی: هگل، معرفت‌شناسی، پدیدارشناسی روح، کانت، شکاکیت.

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