



California Institute  
of Integral Studies

# Mind and Nature in German Idealism

PARP 6393 ~ Spring 2017 ~ 2.00 Units

Matthew T. Segall, PhD  
[msegall@ciis.edu](mailto:msegall@ciis.edu)  
415.575.6104

The German Idealist movement, beginning with the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 and climaxing with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1806, is considered by many to be the most inspired period of philosophical activity since Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Indeed, this period has been referred to simply as "the twenty five years of philosophy" by one recent commentator, as it was Kant who claimed that real philosophy had not even begun until his discovery of the transcendental method, and Hegel who, perfecting this method, claimed to have brought philosophy to its end. This course re-evaluates aspects of this standard narrative by highlighting the contributions and critiques offered by other major figures of the time, most notably Schelling and Goethe, both of whom sought to bring balance to the heights claimed by idealist rationality by pointing to Reason's utter dependence upon and emergence out of the unfathomable depths of Nature.

Like every philosophical movement, the intellectual efforts of the German Idealists make sense only if set in their proper context. In order to fully benefit from the content of this course, students should already have developed an appreciation for the 2000 year historical arc of Western philosophy from Plato to Descartes. Without this historical background, students will have difficulty grasping the significance of the solutions distilled by the thinkers we will study for the simple reason that they have not yet come to share in their problems.

## Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students should grasp the historical contribution of German Idealism to the development of Western philosophy and natural science.
2. Students should gain an appreciation for the important rupture points that led to mutations within and reactions against German Idealism (including Schelling's break with Fichte, Goethe's influence on Schelling and appropriation of Kant, Hegel's break with Schelling, and Schelling's later critique of Hegel).
3. Students should gain an appreciation for dialectical thinking, that is, a mode of thought that is able to both grasp *and* to release ideas in the course of a developmental dialogue (with oneself or in conversation with others).

4. Students should gain a deeper appreciation for the intimate connection between Mind and Nature that is all too often obscured by standard accounts of scientific knowledge.

### Course Assessment Measures

Students have the grading option (OP) of either Pass/Fail or a letter grade. Grades are weighted in the following way:

Class participation 40%	<i>For Letter Grade</i>
Mid-term paper 15%	95% or higher =A Outstanding
Final paper 45%	90% or higher =A– Very Good
	87% or higher =B+ Good
<i>For OP Grade</i>	84% or higher =B Average
80% or higher =Pass	80% or higher =B– Below Average, but Passing
79% or lower =Fail	79% or lower =Failing

### Course Texts and Reading Materials

1. *On the History of Modern Philosophy* by F. W. J. Schelling. Transl. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge University Press, 1994). ISBN: 0226712117
2. *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism* by Frederick Beiser (Harvard University Press, 2008). ISBN: 0674027175
3. Other readings to be provided electronically.

### Written Assignments

Students will be required to submit brief reflections (200-300 words) on each week's lecture and readings in the online Canvas discussion forum. Students will also be required to record and upload 2 short 5-7 minute audio or video reflections in place of the written reflections during weeks of their choosing. Students will compose two mid-term essays (800-1000 words each) due on weeks 3 and 7. The final paper will be due on week 10 (3000 words).

1. Mid-term #1: In the preface to his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant claims to have philosophically reversed Copernicus' astronomical de-centering of earth by ushering in a second Copernican Revolution that places the constructive activity of the human subject at the center of things. Why did Kant think this second revolution was necessary? Explain how he is able to accomplish this re-centering. Explore the implications of the re-centering of the subject for philosophy after Kant

(including its implications for psychology, cosmology, and theology) and argue for or against its possible ramifications.

2. Mid-term #2: Either a) explain Schelling's disagreement with Fichte concerning the status of Nature, or b) explain how Goethe's extension of Kant's view of artistic genius assisted in the development of his alternative scientific method.
3. Final Exam: Students should use their final essay both to display their grasp of the material and to argue for their own perspective. Using the course readings, secondary resources, and consultation with the instructor, students should develop and pursue a research question of their own. One option, as an example, would be to explain the difference between the positions of Hegel and Schelling as regards philosophical system building. What is the place of Mind and of Nature in each of their systems? Does Schelling's critique of Hegel's "negative philosophy" hit its mark? Why or why not? Another example would be to bring German Idealism as a whole or one of its representatives into conversation with an alternative school of thought (i.e., phenomenology, Neoplatonism, materialism, etc.).

### **Assignments Summary (readings available on Canvas):**

Sat Jan 21, 2017	Introduce yourself
Tue Jan 24, 2017	Week 1: Metaphysics Before Kant – Discussion Week 1: Metaphysics Before Kant - Readings and Lecture
Tue Jan 31, 2017	Week 2: Kant's Copernican Revolution - Discussion Week 2: Kant's Copernican Revolution - Readings and Lecture
Tue Feb 7, 2017	Week 3: Kant's Critique of Judgment – Discussion Week 3: Kant's Critique of Judgment - Readings and Lecture due
Fri Feb 10, 2017	Mid-Term # 1 - due Friday, Feb. 10th at 11:59pm
Thu Feb 16, 2017	Week 4: Fichte's Subjective Idealism - Discussion Week 4: Fichte's Subjective Idealism - Readings and Lecture
Tue Feb 21, 2017	Week 5: Schelling's Philosophy of Nature - Discussion Week 5: Schelling's Philosophy of Nature - Readings and Lecture
Tue Feb 28, 2017	Week 6: Goethe's Scientific Method – Discussion Week 6: Goethe's Scientific Method - Readings and Lecture
Tue Mar 7, 2017	Week 7: Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit - Discussion Week 7: Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit - Readings and Lecture

Thu Mar 9, 2017	Mid-term #2 - Due Thursday, March 9th
Thu Mar 16, 2017	Week 8: Schelling's Criticism of Hegel - Discussion Week 8: Schelling's Criticism of Hegel - Readings and Lecture
Tue Mar 21, 2017	Week 9: Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation – Discussion Week 9: Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation - Readings and Lecture
Tue Mar 28, 2017	Week 10: The Odyssey of German Idealism – Discussion Week 10: The Odyssey of German Idealism - Readings and Lecture
Mon May 1, 2017	Final Exam - Due Monday, May 1st by 11:59pm

### Relevant Policies

- **Attendance and tardiness:** Students must complete all course modules on time unless extreme circumstances are discussed with the instructor prior to absence.
- **Academic integrity policy** (see CIIS policy:<http://www.ciis.edu/Documents/Administration/AVP/CIIS%20Policies/Academic%20Integrity.pdf> (Links to an external site.))
- **Statement on diversity:** This is a course on a philosophical stream originating from a specific cultural and historical period (Germany between approximately 1781 and 1845). Efforts will be made to include the voices of women (including Schelling's brilliant wife Caroline, with whom he composed several dialogical texts) and the influences of then newly translated Indian sacred texts on the development of the German Idealist movement. Students will also be invited to bring alternative perspectives into class discussions and their final papers.