HEGEL'S CIRCULAR EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT* AND THE *SCIENCE OF LOGIC*

A Thesis

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

By

Sıla Özkara

May 2013

UMI Number: 1535840

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS
The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript
and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed,
a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI 1535840

Published by ProQuest LLC (2013). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.
All rights reserved. This work is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Copyright by

Sıla Özkara

2013

HEGEL'S CIRCULAR EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*

AND THE *SCIENCE OF LOGIC*

By

Sıla Özkara

Approved April 11, 2013

_____	_____
Tom Rockmore Distinguished Professor of Philosophy (Committee Chair)	John McDowell Distinguished University Professor of Philosophy University of Pittsburgh (Committee Member)
_____	_____
James Swindal Dean, McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts Professor of Philosophy	Ronald Polansky Chair, Department of Philosophy Professor of Philosophy

ABSTRACT

HEGEL'S CIRCULAR EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT* AND THE *SCIENCE OF LOGIC*

By

Sıla Özkara

May 2013

Thesis supervised by Tom Rockmore, Ph.D.

This thesis concerns the circular epistemology of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic*. I argue that these works can be read as epistemologies based on the dialectical structure of their progression. Furthermore, I claim that this dialectical structure is circular. I hold that the epistemology of these works is circular not only because it is anti-foundational, self-justifying, and presuppositionless, but also in these works one instance of knowledge depends on the next for its justification and so on, until the last instance of knowledge returns to the first. Hegel sharply attacks Reinhold in *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, but changes his mind in the *Science of Logic* to embrace elements of Reinhold's philosophy. I argue that, through this circular epistemological reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*, we can account for Hegel's changing view.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmothers who have taught me, among many things, the value of patience, hard work, and dedication.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Abstract iv

Dedication v

1. Introduction 1

2. Epistemology 2

3. Circularity 7

3.1. Features of a circular epistemology 8

3.1.1. Non-linear 8

3.1.2. Presuppositionless 9

3.1.3. Self-justifying 9

3.2. How the features cone together to make a circular epistemology 10

3.3. Hegel's discussions of circularity 11

4. The circular epistemology of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* 19

4.1. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an epistemology 19

4.2. Hegel's epistemology in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as circular 25

4.3. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a circle of circles 41

5. The circular epistemology of the *Science of Logic* 47

5.1. The *Science of Logic* as an epistemology 47

5.2. Hegel's epistemology in the *Science of Logic* as circular 50

6. Why Hegel changed his mind about Reinhold 67

7. Conclusion 71

Bibliography 73

1. Introduction

In this paper, I argue that G. W. F. Hegel presents a circular epistemology in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (henceforth *PhG*) and in the *Science of Logic* (henceforth *WL*). To do this, I first explain what I mean by an epistemology and argue why I hold that Hegel's two works are epistemological. Next, I explain the notion of a circular epistemology: I begin with essential features found in a circular epistemology and continue with what a circular epistemology means. I end this section with Hegel's own explanations of circularity in the formation of philosophical systems. The bulk of this paper, however, rests on what comes after these two sections, namely in the sections on *PhG* and *WL*, in which I demonstrate the execution of Hegel's circular epistemology in these two works respectively. My main argument that runs through this paper is that Hegel's epistemology is found analogously to his system. Hegel's system is circular. Therefore, Hegel's epistemology is circular.

Throughout the paper I situate the importance of Hegel's circular epistemology in his response to Immanuel Kant and Karl Leonhard Reinhold. I discuss Hegel's views on Reinhold's philosophy in the section on Circularity and then return to it at the end of the paper and reevaluate Hegel's changing view on Reinhold. This paper not only shows Hegel's proposal of a new account of knowledge and his execution of this proposal, but also how his advance of this account is meant to be taken as in dialogue with his contemporaries in the German Idealist tradition.

2. Epistemology

An epistemology is an account of knowledge, of what knowledge is, including what it means to know. The *logos* of knowledge is an account of what knowledge is. An epistemology explains the grounds of knowledge: it is a theory for knowledge. One of the questions epistemology asks is what the sources of knowledge are. Another question is how we can justify knowledge. An epistemology is distinct from knowledge itself. It seeks to give an account of knowledge rather than to express knowledge.

In this section, I argue that Hegel has an epistemology which is an account of knowledge that is achieved, contrary to the standard conception of epistemology, through the enumeration of the knowledge itself. Through the enumeration of knowledge, Hegel presents the reader with a framework in which one can know the manner in which to justify and account for knowledge. Such a framework is the source of the knowledge; the structure through which knowledge is attained.

Hegel's epistemology relies on his dialectic. This epistemology is displayed in the acquisition (in the case of *PhG*) and development (in the case of *WL*) of knowledge. Hegel shows his epistemology through the acquisition or development of knowledge itself, because observing the acquisition or development of knowledge is the only way we have access to his account of this knowledge. The acquisition or development of knowledge, in fact, forms the account of knowledge. The whole body of each book shows the acquisition/development from beginning to end. The acquisition/development is dialectical and this dialectic method is shown through the progression of the works, not

separable from knowledge itself.[1] Hence, only in evaluating the movement of knowledge in dialectical fashion can we reach an account of knowledge.

Hegel's commentators often neglect the epistemological aspect of his philosophy. They have also, for the most part, taken for granted that Hegel's works are epistemological. Those that choose to write on Hegel's epistemology do not argue for why we should take Hegel's works as epistemological, but rather proceed to pointing out the aspects or the nature of what they deem to be Hegel's epistemology. The very few that pay attention to Hegel's epistemology do not devote much attention to the crucial influence of the structure of his work on his epistemology.

Robert C. Solomon, for instance, in his paper titled "Hegel's Epistemology", does not argue for why Hegel's philosophy presents an epistemology in the first place, but rather argues that "Hegel's epistemology is an attempt to rework and make consistent the key arguments in Kant's "Transcendental Analytic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*" (Solomon 277). Nevertheless, Solomon recognizes that "[p]hilosophy is not only reflection upon but the structuring of our knowledge", and that "philosophizing about knowing is also" "a self-confirming activity", just like knowing (my account also gives an argument of this sort) (Solomon 282). He thereby suggests that the structure of philosophy gives an account of knowledge. He nevertheless does not demonstrate how this takes place in Hegel's philosophy.

Jens Rometsch, in his paper, "Hegel On Knowledge of What We Are Doing" presents an epistemology that focuses on the "[k]nowledge of what we are doing when performing

[1] In fact, as I discuss below in the section on *WL*, Hegel is against the separation of form and content. If the account of knowledge is the form and the knowledge the content, then it would only be acceptable for a Hegelian epistemology to be presented with the knowledge for which it is an account.

non-epistemic activities" and focuses on Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* §§ 387-482 (Rometsch 104). Although his paper provides a rigorous explication of knowledge in the case of non-epistemic activities, he equates "activities that eventually culminate in thinking" with "epistemic activities" (Rometsch 108) and thereby takes it as self-evident that Hegel presents an epistemology.

Kenneth Westphal, in his *Hegel's Epistemology*, claims that "epistemology is central to the *Phenomenology*" (and holds an important place for Hegel's philosophy) (Westphal 2). He also acknowledges that Hegel's epistemology "doesn't read like an epistemology in any familiar sense" because of its "unique literary structure" which was developed by Hegel "for *philosophical* reasons and purposes" (Westphal 3). However, Westphal falls short in highlighting these "reasons and purposes" and their effects.[2]

Westphal's account of Hegel's epistemology focuses on the specific content of Hegel's *PhG* as epistemology: it does not focus so much on Hegel's mode of presentation but on what consciousness in *PhG* does. In contrast, I focus on the account of knowledge given by and through the structure, rather than simply in the contents of this structure. Thus, my account of an epistemology in Hegel's works deals with the *systematic patterns* of how consciousness is educated, rather than on various epistemological theories that consciousness may be seen to accept or reject in its journey.[3]

---

[2] Westphal gives an account of how the Hegelian dialectic at each shape of consciousness is like Creon in Sophocles's *Antigone* in Chapter 4 of his book. However, this is simply a parallel reading of the dialectic pattern and Creon's character development. Such a reading does not address the more fundamental philosophical issues in play.

[3] Westphal argues that various stages of consciousness in *PhG* are meant to represent certain epistemological theories (e.g. "sense-certainty" is, for Westphal, "a critique of naïve realism", or "perception" is a "critique of concept-empiricism", etc. (Westphal 58)) and their refutation since consciousness finds each stage (except the last) to be internally contradictory (this will be discussed in the

Tom Rockmore repeatedly takes up the notion of epistemology in Hegel's works. His approach focuses on the circularity of Hegel's epistemology, and revolves heavily around the historical setting of Hegel's works. His view of Hegel's epistemology is that it is circular and very much a part of and a response to the discussions of his time on epistemology. In his *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*, Rockmore gives an overview of circularity in the history of philosophy, and examines in great detail the discourse around circular epistemology during Hegel's time and in relation to and within Hegel's work. He discusses in detail the instances in which circularity comes up as a topic of discussion in Hegel's work. He also devotes a chapter to the relation of Hegel's philosophy to the philosophy that comes after him. In *On Hegel's Epistemology and Contemporary Philosophy* he presents a series of papers that range in their emphasis from the circularity of Hegel's epistemology to the relevancy of Hegel's epistemology to contemporary philosophy that deals with epistemology.

Karl Ameriks, in his review essay titled "Recent Work on Hegel: The Rehabilitation of an Epistemologist?" discusses both Rockmore's and Westphal's work. Ameriks praises the historical detail of the work of those whom he reviews but also notes that there is more than just historical background in these works (Ameriks 177-8). As Ameriks claims, Rockmore and Westphal note the "primacy of practice" for Hegel (Ameriks 181). My account of Hegel's epistemology focuses on the ways in which practice takes place and what patterns practice follows in *PhG* and *WL*.

---

section on *PhG*). Whether Westphal is justified in assigning epistemological theories to each stage of consciousness is beyond the scope of this paper, but nevertheless it is an issue worth considering.

Ameriks remarks of Rockmore's *Hegel's Circular Epistemology* that "while Rockmore nicely details the origins of Hegel's concern with circularity, he does not defend his interpretation at length … but rather moves on to describe circular components of Hegel's system" (Ameriks 179). In this paper, since my aim is to argue (through an analysis of *PhG* and *WL*) for why I think Hegel presents an epistemology and why I think this epistemology is circular, I believe I present a novel approach to what can be regarded as a central aspect of Hegel's philosophy.

Since this paper is primarily concerned with the circular epistemology of *PhG* and *WL*, before moving on, it is worth pointing out the differences of these two texts with regard to epistemology. This will establish the ways in which an account of knowledge is presented in each work.

PhG is an account of the knowledge of its subject. The subject, "consciousness" moves in dialectical progression in its journey, and "we" who are the observers of consciousness's journey, have an account of what is happening to consciousness from a distance. Consciousness has dialectical acquisition of knowledge and, I argue, recognition of this acquisition at the end of every stage at which consciousness finds itself is an account of knowledge. This is why, I claim, *PhG* shows an epistemology. *PhG* is an account (by "us) of this account of knowledge held by consciousness.

WL, on the other hand, is not phenomenological like *PhG*, but ontological. There is no salient subject undergoing experience as in *PhG*, and hence no subject that has an account of experience. However, insofar as *WL* progresses dialectically and shows a development of knowledge of ontology, I argue that we can claim that it is

epistemological. For, the dialectic progression is an account of how the knowledge is formed and justified. Furthermore, through dialectic, we can also trace the sources of knowledge, and claim that dialectic is a way of presenting the knower with the sources of knowledge, for the knower has access to the moments in the progression that have been "*aufgehoben*".[4]

In *WL*, contrary to *PhG*, there is only one level of account of knowledge: we who are reading it and following along (or Hegel who is writing the book, or the book itself) constitute the one level of account of knowledge there is. This is because there is no subject that is described in the work that is going through the dialectic. The only subject that is following the progression is the reader or Hegel himself. In *PhG*, the subject of the epistemology is us and consciousness. In *WL*, the subject of the epistemology is only us. Nevertheless, *WL* has the same pattern as *PhG*. Knowledge is acquired or developed through trial and error in a dialectical investigation and this is the account of knowledge.

In the next section, I explain how the dialectical progression is in fact an account of knowledge that is circular. I explain what is required in a circular epistemology and how a circular epistemology is defined. Then I show some parts of Hegel's works in which he discusses circularity.

3. Circularity

Some essential features of a circular epistemology are that it is distinguished from a linear epistemology, it is presuppositionless, and it is self-justifying. I first discuss these three points, then I go on to explain how they form a circular epistemology. Finally, I

[4] The German verb "*aufheben*" is translated by A.V. Miller in *PhG* as "to supersede" and in *WL* as "to sublate". "*Aufheben*" means "to nullify yet preserve".

consider Hegel's reading of Reinhold in his early and later works in relation to circularity which will show Hegel's views on circular epistemology. This section will thereby provide an explanation of the terms employed in the rest of this paper.[5]

3.1. Features of a circular epistemology

3.1.1. Non-linear

Circularity as an epistemological notion relates to its geometrical definition.[6] Geometrically, a circle is a line all points on which are equidistant [7] from a single point, which thereby constitutes the midpoint of the resulting shape. There is no beginning or end to it, and as one continues along its curve, one returns to where one has started. This can be distinguished from a straight line which has a beginning point from which it moves further away.

To match this geometrical understanding of circles and lines to the epistemological notions, we can say that a linear epistemology is one in which the knowledge (that the epistemology is an epistemology for) is justified as based on a foundation, which is the beginning point. A linear epistemology then holds that each step of the justification (by

[5] Tom Rockmore in *Hegel's Circular Epistemology* has exhaustively discussed the literature on circularity in Hegel's works (see pp. 11-15). For this reason, I will not have such a discussion in this paper.
[6] Tom Rockmore, in his *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*, notes this.
[7] According to Hegel in the *Philosophy of Nature* (henceforth *PN*) "[t]hat the line does not consist of points … follows from [its] Notion" (*PN* §256). Hence, it is not exactly correct to speak of points that make up a line, for a point is "negativity" (ibid.). However, we can speak of dividing a line into more and more points, to the extent that the line is inexhaustible by points. Thus, a circle, made of a line, is not made up of a certain number of points but is divisible into infinitely many points. Furthermore, a circle is made of a curved line. Hegel remarks of curved lines that they are "in themselves at once in two dimensions" (ibid.). And "[i]n the circle we have the line raised to the second power" (ibid.).

virtue of which the epistemology claims that the knowledge it is an epistemology for is knowledge) is dependent on the step that comes before it, just like the points of a line.[8]

Examples of linear systems include Descartes's and Kant's. Descartes bases his meditations on one unshakable foundation which is the *cogito*.[9] Once Descartes is certain that he, as a thinking thing, *exists*, then he can go on to discuss how it is that he *knows*. Kant, similarly, bases his system on the *a priori* as an unshakable foundation. According to Kant, one comes to know things through the *a priori*.

3.1.2. Presuppositionless

A circular epistemology begins without presuppositions. It does not rest upon pieces of knowledge that would serve as a foundation for what is to come. Rather, a circular epistemology is self-enclosed and does not refer to anything outside itself. It thereby forms a self-sufficient whole, for it does not presuppose an account of knowledge before the account of knowledge that it, as a circle, is set to establish.

3.1.3. Self-justifying

In a foundational epistemology, the system depends on its foundation for justification. The founding point (or the presuppositions) of the epistemology serves as the justifying factor for the system that follows. A circular epistemology, on the other hand, is self-justifying. It is self-justifying because it depends only on its own circular progression. A circular epistemology, as self-justifying, is independent of its starting point, on which a linear epistemology, such as any form of epistemological foundationalism depends.

[8] Various commentators of Hegel have discussed Hegel's anti- or non-foundationalism. In this paper, I discuss in detail Hegel's anti-foundationalism as presented in *PhG* and in *WL*, and as it relates to his circular epistemology in these two works.
[9] See Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* II, 25.

3.2.How the features come together to make circular epistemology

A circular epistemology has all three of the features mentioned above. However, what makes an epistemology circular is the reliance of instances of knowledge to form a self-justificatory circular chain. This circle does not rely on a foundational beginning point or presuppositions. In a circular epistemology, in contrast to a linear epistemology, the justification by virtue of which the knowledge that it is an epistemology of/for counts as knowledge is circular. An instance of knowledge depends[10] on the next instance of knowledge for its justification, which depends on an instance that comes after it, and so on until we come to an instance of knowledge that relies for justification on the instance we began with. The line of knowledge in a circular epistemology is curved so that it forms a circle.

The proper way to begin an inquiry for knowledge is not based on a foundational beginning point but rather can be anywhere. In a circular epistemology what forms the circle is not only the dependence of one point upon another but also the relation of each point to the centre and thereby to each other point (as well as the closing of the circle explained above). The centre of the circle constitutes the problem, i.e. the object of knowledge. The surrounding circle of which the centre is a centre is the knowledge and the way this knowledge is established. Thus every part of the epistemology is at an equal distance from the problem which the knowledge is knowledge of.

I have thus explained the meaning of a circular epistemology. Now I examine passages of Hegel's works in which he explicitly discusses circularity. This examination,

[10] This dependence does not mean that the instance that follows justifies the instance that comes before. That the instance which comes before relies on the instance which follows it for justification is sufficient for this chain of justification.

showing Hegel's views on circularity, is important for accounting for the circular epistemology in *PhG* and *WL* in the following two sections.

3.3. Hegel's discussions of circularity

It is no speculation that Hegel has a view about circularity. In fact, he uses the term "circle" (*Kreis*) often in his works, especially at their introductory parts when he is providing preliminary explanations, such as in the Introduction of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* (henceforth *EL*) or in *WL*. These uses indicate the place of the notion of circularity in Hegel's understanding and execution of his system: circularity is often mentioned as the way in which philosophy progresses. Since *PhG* and *WL* are accounts of acquisition or development of knowledge (among other things), Hegel's discussions of circularity suggest that he uses the notion of circularity to refer not only to his system as a whole but also to his epistemology (among other aspects of his thought).

Hegel first brings out the notion of circularity in his initial philosophical publication, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (henceforth *Differenzschrift*), where he sharply attacks his contemporary Reinhold's view of philosophy and philosophical system. Hegel criticizes Reinhold for seeking a foundation for philosophy before beginning philosophy, that is seeking the philosophy that has come to an end and that thereby, Reinhold thinks, will prove to be a beginning for his philosophy.[11] Hegel mentions that Reinhold has in mind here Kantian philosophy which has come to an end according to Reinhold (even though Hegel disagrees) and thereby will be a beginning even though its "bad consequences … will persist for some time"

[11] The philosophy that is referred to here that has come to an end is Kantian philosophy. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this in further detail.

(*Differenzschrift* 179). Hegel writes of Reinhold's stance that "[t]he founding and grounding tendency, the tendency to philosophize before getting to philosophy has here finally succeeded in expressing itself completely" (ibid.).

According to Hegel, Reinhold worries about setting a foundation for philosophy before beginning a philosophical investigation. Reinhold's desire for a foundation, Hegel holds, is caused by Reinhold's worry about beginning in a wrong fashion. Since the beginning holds such an importance for Reinhold's view of philosophy, how and where one begins is significant for Reinhold. Because of the prevalence of such doubt about the beginning point, given its importance, "every investigation is premature, every beginning is rashness, and every philosophy is a mere preparatory exercise" (*Differenzschrift* 180). For this reason, Hegel claims that for Reinhold, all beginnings are hypothetical and philosophy is an exercise that hopes to stumble upon the "arch-true". Hegel writes that for Reinhold "all the foundations are supposed to be only problematic and hypothetical until such time as, in the progress through the problematic and hypothetical, we stumble upon "the arch-true in our truth and upon truth through the arch-true" (ibid.). Hence, on this view, philosophy does not know what it is looking for and is also not sure of its beginning. Philosophy constantly questions its beginning and what it should seek without being able to move further, while in the meantime hoping to stumble upon the arch-true.

In Hegel's view, "nothing at all is ever founded by way of the hypothetical and the problematic" (*Differenzschrift* 181). Hegel's view of a science [*Wissenschaft*], however, avoids the problem of Reinhold's philosophy. For Hegel, science "found[s] itself upon itself by positing each one of its parts absolutely, and thereby constituting identity and knowledge at the beginning and at every single point" (*Differenzschrift* 180). Hence,

Hegelian science does not face the doubt and worry that plagues the philosophy that Reinhold seeks to have. Furthermore, rather than hoping to discern some "arch-true" along the way, knowledge "founds itself more effectively the more it grows" (ibid.).

At this point Hegel presents his thoughts on circularity for the first time in his corpus. He writes:

> "Center and circle are so connected with each other that the first beginning of the circle is already a connection with the center, and the center is not completely a center unless the whole circle, with all of its connections, is completed: a whole that is as little in need of a particular handle to attach the founding to as the earth is in need of a particular handle to attach the force to that guides it around the sun and at the same time sustains it in the whole living manifold of its shapes" (*Differenzschrift* 180).

This is Hegel's own Copernican Revolution. Following Kant, he seeks to introduce his own philosophical system that is an answer to the difficulties of the philosophy before him. His target here is Reinhold's philosophy, which he deems as the highest expression of "the founding and grounding tendency" of philosophy.[12] His Copernican Revolution is proposing an anti-foundational and circular epistemology.

The center of the circle constitutes the object of knowledge. The line that makes the circle is "connected" to the center from the beginning and constitutes the knowledge. From the beginning the circle is connected to the center even if the circle can only be recognized as a circle when it is completed. The developing knowledge is an effort to

[12] Although Hegel presents Reinhold's philosophy as the highest expression of "the founding and grounding tendency" of philosophy, Reinhold's philosophy is nevertheless not linear. For, Reinhold does not found and ground his philosophy at the beginning but rather turns his philosophy into seeking such a foundation before he begins anything else. Thus, although Reinhold's philosophy (in the way that Hegel portrays it here) is not linear, it is nevertheless foundational.

come to grips with a concept adequate to match the object. As the knowledge develops it increasingly justifies itself. The circle is self-founding and self-sufficient, therefore it does not need a "handle" whereby it will be attached to a founding and grounding principle, like in Reinhold's approach (*Differenzschrift* 180). Hegel is against the idea that philosophy should be grounded in a principle that comes before philosophy because he holds that "[p]hilosophy as a whole grounds itself and the reality of its cognition, both as to form and as to content, within itself" (*Differenzschrift* 179). The grounding of "the reality of its cognition" will be seen in *PhG* and how this pertains to its "form" and "content" will be seen in *WL*.

Hegel's articulation of a circular system and epistemology,[13] an approach to forming complete knowledge through a circular fashion, is clear in his initial work.[14] He presents his view through a criticism of Reinhold and hypothetical beginnings. Later, in his *WL*, however, Hegel reevaluates his criticism of Reinhold. Despite this reevaluation, he still holds on to a circular view of epistemology.[15]

In *WL*, Hegel discusses Reinhold's philosophy in the preliminary section called "With What Must the Science Begin?" of the Doctrine of Being, the first of the three main sections of the work. He states that a discussion and understanding of Reinhold's view will give insight into the progression of the logic of *WL* (*WL* 70).

---

[13] A discussion of why Hegel's circular system applies to his epistemology will become clearer in the discussion of *PhG* and *WL* below. Because Hegel's system is circular and because we can extract an epistemology from his system, that his system is circular indicates that his epistemology is also circular.
[14] Although, as will be discussed, Hegel's epistemology does not only focus on the complete knowledge which is the end result, but also on the instances of justification of knowledge (which are also circular) which come together to form the complete knowledge.
[15] Why Hegel changes his mind is discussed in the last section of this paper.

Hegel begins his discussion of Reinhold by first remarking that "the thought that philosophy can only begin with a *hypothetical* and *problematical* truth and therefore philosophizing can at first be only a quest" stems from "the insight that absolute truth must be a result" and that "a result presupposes a prior truth" (*WL* 70). Hegel remarks that Reinhold "much stressed" this view (ibid.). However, instead of criticizing Reinhold harshly as he did in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel starts by stating that we must give Reinhold "credit for the genuine interest on which [his later philosophical work] is based, an interest which concerns the speculative nature of the philosophical *beginning*" (ibid.). Hegel reevaluates Reinhold's position to be similar to his own and adopts it as a way of explaining his system in *WL*.

In contrast to his reading of Reinhold's position in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel, in *WL* summarizes Reinhold's position as follows: progress in philosophy is marked by starting with a hypothetical beginning, and then after making enough progress, coming back to the beginning to affirm it with the knowledge that has been gained through the progress, thereby being able to say "that what we began with is not something merely arbitrarily assumed but is in fact the *truth*, and also the *primary truth*" (*WL* 70-71). What counts as progress here is development in the philosophical investigation and depends on the nature of the question of the investigation. Therefore, the more progress we make, the further back we go to the first point. This means that the further we progress forward the closer we will be to the justification of the initial point. The first point will thereby be the last. The beginning point will be affirmed at the end as the beginning point, which will then only at the last point be shown to be true, i.e. justified. Hegel writes that "the advance is a *retreat into the ground*, to what is *primary* and *true*, on which it depends and, in fact,

from which it originates, that with which the beginning is made" (*WL* 71). This shows a circular pattern as the beginning point also constitutes the end point and the investigation forms a circle of building knowledge that works to affirm the beginning point at the end.

The last point affirms the first point by being a return to this first point. The whole process which started with a hypothetical beginning ends with a restatement of this hypothetical beginning. However, when the beginning point is stated at the end, it is no longer hypothetical, because the process of reaching the end shows a development of justification. Therefore, the fact that the end point reaches back to the beginning point serves to justify the beginning point.

The last point, which is a return into the first, is necessary as much as the first point, which becomes necessary through the last point. Their necessity is interdependent within a circular justification. The difference between the first and the last point is this: the first point is hypothetical, whereas the last point is reached as a result of an investigation that starts at this hypothetical point. The last point has the moments of this investigation *aufgehoben* in it. Hegel writes that "it is equally necessary to consider as *result* that into which the movement returns as into its *ground*" (*WL* 71). The first point, through the necessity of the end point, therefore becomes the ground. Hegel writes "the beginning of philosophy is the foundation which is present and preserved throughout the entire subsequent development, remaining completely immanent in its further determinations" (ibid.). The end result, which is "the true", validates the whole process and the beginning point. This beginning point thereby becomes necessary. Thus the proper way to begin an investigation is anywhere and everywhere, because the process and its end point will validate the first point as the ground that is equally the end point. However, the beginning

point is "neither an arbitrary and merely provisional assumption, nor is it something which appears to be arbitrarily and tentatively presupposed" (*WL* 72). The "*ground*, the *reason*" of why the beginning point is what it is is given in the body of the progression (ibid.).

The beginning, Hegel remarks, as a result of this circular process of affirming the beginning through the truth of the end, "loses the one-sidedness… it becomes something mediated, and hence the line of the scientific advance becomes a *circle*" (*WL* 71-72). In *PN*, as noted above (see fn 7, p. 8), Hegel contends that a circle, which is made of a curved line, thereby is "in [itself] at once in two dimensions" (*PN* §256). Therefore, insofar as the process of justifying knowledge is circular, each instance of justification would not be "one-sided" and "abstract". Hegel regularly calls the beginning point of each stage in *WL* and *PhG* "abstract" and "one-sided". However, this state of being "one-sided" is remedied when we progress through the stage by acquiring and developing knowledge. He begins with something that is "abstract" and "one-sided" only to reveal that it has other dimensions that are not taken into consideration at the outset. However, through dialectic progression, we find that the one-sided notion was not a complete picture. We see that its *truth* is found through dialectic, through seeing the other "side" as well, which adds another dimension to the beginning point as a result of having returned to it in a circular fashion.

Hegel's dialectic is the way in which his works unfold. In a dialectic progression, one moment transitions into the next moment as a result of the internal contradictions of the current moment. The investigation begins with an "abstract" and "one-sided" notion. Upon reflection, the "abstract" and "one-sided" quality of this beginning is revealed

because the reflection shows the other side to the consideration. As a result of this disclosure of internal contradiction, the investigation moves onto the next moment.

In *PhG*, we see that consciousness begins with a hypothetical immediacy. At the end of its journey (or investigation) consciousness finds the truth in its beginning point when it reaches "absolute knowing". Hegel makes a remark about this in his rereading of Reinhold. He writes "consciousness on its onward path from the immediacy with which it began is led back to absolute knowledge as its innermost truth" (*WL* 71). Hegel writes that this last point is also its beginning, which first "appeared as an immediacy" (ibid.). "Absolute knowing" is the point at which consciousness's Notion[16] matches its object. It is "absolute" because it is not in internal contradiction, for it is knowledge which matches its object (and also refers back to the absolute beginning of *PhG* where there is not yet a distinction between Notion and object in the immediacy). In *WL* however, there is no need for a pure immediacy in the beginning. However, "the essential requirement" is that "the whole of the science be within itself *a circle* in which the first is also the last and the last is also the first" (ibid., emphasis mine). Both of these works are discussed in the following two sections of this paper.

In §15 of the *EL*, Hegel writes "each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle that closes upon itself.… The whole presents itself therefore as a circle of circles, each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its peculiar elements constitutes the whole idea—which equally appears in each single one of them" (*EL* §15). Through an examination of some of these parts which are circles and the workings of the

[16] A.V. Miller translates "*Begriff*" as "Notion". It would be better translated as "Concept". For the purposes of consistency I use "Notion" in this paper for "*Begriff*".

"circle of circles", that is, the whole philosophy, we may shed light onto Hegel's circular system and epistemology.

The next section will discuss circular epistemology in *PhG*. The section following that will discuss how the *WL* also has a circular epistemology and the ways in which this is similar to that of the *PhG*. Discussing these two essential works and some of their key sections (with regard to circularity) will shed light onto Hegel's understanding of circularity as an epistemological notion.

4. The circular epistemology of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

PhG, from beginning to end, forms a circle. Since Hegel's epistemology is displayed through the body of his works, I argue that *PhG* displays a circular epistemology. However, every stage of *PhG* is also a circle, and hence displays an expression of Hegel's circular epistemology. I begin this section with an argument of why *PhG* is epistemological. I then argue that *PhG* forms a circle from beginning to end. Then I go on to explain how *PhG* is a circle of circles, that is, each stage that consciousness has forms a circle.

4.1. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an epistemology

Before discussing the circular epistemology presented in *PhG*, we need to establish the ways in which *PhG* is an epistemology. I argue that *PhG* presents an epistemology because through the work we see what Hegel calls the "*education* of consciousness" (*PhG* ¶78) and can determine the way in which this education takes place. This way of education is an account of knowledge. I begin this section with a discussion of passages in which Hegel presents knowledge as the topic of *PhG*. I continue with an account of

how Hegel defines knowledge and knowing. I then bring these points together to argue for why *PhG* presents an epistemology.

Hegel writes, in the Introduction to *PhG*, that what he aims to show in this work is the "*education* of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science" (*PhG* ¶78). The goal of the work is to explain an education. Hegel claims to show, through his work, "an exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance" (*PhG* ¶76). Thus, Hegel presents *PhG* as an epistemological study, as a response to the basic question about how the quest for knowledge should be undertaken.

Hegel's epistemological study begins at what he calls the "ordinary way of looking at things", "ordinary knowledge", or "natural consciousness" (*PhG* ¶76; ¶76; ¶78). The aim is to reach "true knowledge" (*PhG* ¶77).[17] The sole object of this exposition is "phenomenal knowledge", and for that reason Hegel tells us that although "this exposition seems not to be Science", it is "the path of the natural consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge" (ibid.). However, this exposition in each step is Science; consciousness is just not aware of it as such as it is happening (*PhG* ¶88). Only when consciousness reaches true knowledge does it know what it has been all along. Furthermore, only when consciousness reaches true knowledge does it recognize that the path was an education. For, at the standpoint of Science, it can look back and see what each step of the path meant for its progress towards true knowledge. We see

[17] The difference between "knowledge" and "true knowledge" is that the latter cannot be falsified. It is attained by consciousness only at the end of consciousness's journey. It is true because it matches the object of which it is knowledge. All other instances of knowledge do not match their objects and thus can be shown to be false (as consciousness does by finding the shapes to be in internal contradiction). That Hegel uses the adjective "true" to apply to "knowledge" suggests that he has in mind other kinds of knowledge too to which he is contrasting this knowledge that is "true" (such as knowledge that is not necessarily "true"). Since only at the end of the progression does consciousness get "true knowledge", all the preceding stages of consciousness have simply "knowledge" (which may be, and is, falsified).

consciousness looking back through the stages of its education in ¶789 to ¶797 of the "Absolute Knowing" chapter.

Natural consciousness is not supposed to have knowledge at the outset, for what use then is a study that aims to get at knowledge if it already presupposes the knowledge that it is supposed to seek? By Hegel's account, it is only appropriate that the beginning point be "natural consciousness" in its own terms. The beginning point should not compose of terms that are imported from outside of natural consciousness, i.e. knowledge that is handed down to it. Consciousness thereby does not "[come] on the scene" as in the problematic attempt at Science that has the account of cognition as its beginning point (*PhG* ¶76).

Natural consciousness is not "real knowledge" (*PhG* ¶78). However, it takes itself to be such, and therefore makes the path of the phenomenal seeking of knowledge "[have] a negative significance for it" (ibid.). This means that natural consciousness will be in error (in fact, in internal contradiction) at each step of the way. With the recognition of these errors as errors (as negations of its presupposed knowledge), which it will recognize in experience, that is, in its thinking through of its presuppositions, it will adopt a new phenomenal object. Experience as such will yield a new shape of consciousness which results from the internal contradiction of the preceding shape. This natural consciousness, therefore, in the process "[loses] its own self" at each stage because through the process it finds itself at a different stage with a different object, to attain "real knowledge" at the end point (ibid.).

The above analysis of several key parts of the Introduction of *PhG* shows that knowledge and attaining knowledge is the main aim of *PhG*. To better understand how we can derive an epistemology from this explanation of how consciousness acquires knowledge, it is important to consider how Hegel's discusses "knowledge".

Hegel discusses the meaning of "knowing" when he gives an account of how the concept of knowledge belongs in an account of a stage of phenomenal consciousness. This account is as follows: "Consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something, and at the same time *relates* itself to it, or, as it is said, this something exists *for* consciousness; and the determinate aspect of this *relating*, or of the *being* of something for a consciousness, is *knowing*" (*PhG* ¶82). The Notion and the object, Hegel claims, are both "*within* [the] knowledge which we are investigating" (*PhG* ¶84). The Notion is the "knowing". The object is what is supposedly known. It is conceived at each stage as what it is in itself according to the given shape of consciousness and consciousness's internal conception at that shape. Knowing and the object do not match in all of the stages of the journey before the last stage.

Consciousness goes through "a series of configurations" in *PhG*, all of which are attempts at refining the phenomenal object at hand to match the Notion (*PhG* ¶78). At each configuration consciousness is in a certain phenomenal situation upon which it exercises dialectical movement. Through this dialectical movement, which is experience, consciousness experiences its internal contradiction. By recognizing the internal contradiction of its current configuration by virtue of experience, it transitions into a new configuration. Thus, consciousness, finding a stage to be internally contradictory through the experience of that stage, moves onto the next stage (until the standpoint of Science).

Hegel contends that since the Notion and the object "both fall *within* the knowledge which we are investigating", we do not need to "import criteria" or other ideas in this investigation (*PhG* ¶84). That is, the process is self-enclosed. Hegel further claims that "it is precisely when we leave these [external criteria and our own ideas] aside that we succeed in contemplating the matter in hand as it is *in and for itself*" (ibid.). The Notion and the object, in their dialectical co-determination and –definition, are what is needed for knowledge. Knowledge depends on these and their dialectic circular unfolding.[18] Any external criteria will distract from the matter at hand, which is consciousness that has the Notion and the object within it. In short, nothing else is needed, especially nothing from outside the self-enclosed, self-sufficient process.

Consciousness seeks knowledge of its object which is at once distinguished from it and related to it. Consciousness examines its own self (*PhG* ¶85) and thereby becomes the object of its investigation. Thus, consciousness is the "consciousness of the object" or "what for it is the True" and "consciousness of itself" or "its knowledge of the truth" (ibid.). Consciousness's journey to real knowledge is contemplating this object through itself: consciousness seeks itself through itself. Hegel writes that "this *dialectical* movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object is precisely what is called *experience* [*Erfahrung*]" (*PhG* ¶86). Since consciousness's investigation is self-enclosed, any "contribution by us is superfluous" (*PhG* ¶85).

At every stage of the path of the *Phenomenology*, consciousness relates to an object. Knowledge, as Hegel describes, in the stages before the final stage of *PhG*, is presented

[18] That the unfolding is circular is explained below.

as instances of knowledge, or as "knowing"s. These "knowing"s each belong to a stage of consciousness. The "knowing" that is the determinate aspect of the relating of consciousness to its object turns out, in the experience of each stage, not to be genuine knowing. What consciousness comes to regard as knowledge, as what it thinks it knows about its object, changes through the progression of the stage to turn out to not be genuine knowing. Thus, consciousness moves on. This realization on the part of consciousness happens as a result of the dialectic progression of each stage. Consciousness is presented with an object, and upon examining it, finds out that its initial relation to it (its supposed "knowledge") is flawed. As a result of this realization, consciousness supersedes (*aufheben*) this "knowledge". This is the dialectical pattern which Hegel employs: relation to the object which results in "knowledge", examination of the object and the knowledge of the object, realization of internal contradiction of the shape consciousness is in (which is marked by the relation consciousness holds to the object), *aufheben* of the object and the supposed knowledge of the object.

In the *PhG*, we see that consciousness moves through its stages in a dialectical pattern. Consciousness's "knowing" also fits in this dialectical pattern. There is knowledge involved when consciousness relates to its object; knowledge is one of the ways in which the relation happens. There is also knowledge involved when consciousness is facing internal contradiction. For, consciousness, when facing internal contradiction, knows that its previous supposed knowledge was not genuine. Since the patterns of knowledge (even if the "knowledge" we speak of is described as a kind of relation) are dialectical, we can present an account of knowledge, that is, an epistemology, which bases itself on Hegel's dialectic. Hence, *PhG*, in displaying the

journey of consciousness (which provides the details of consciousness's "knowledge" at each stage) also provides an account of knowledge (one that has it basis on the dialectic structure). I will call this account of knowledge that we can observe through the narration of consciousness's education Hegel's epistemology in *PhG*.

4.2. Hegel's epistemology in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as circular

In the section above, I claimed that we can derive an epistemology from Hegel's *PhG*. In this section, I argue that Hegel's epistemology in *PhG* is circular. I will focus on the circularity of the account of knowledge given in the whole work, as distinguished from the circularity of the account of knowledge of each stage of consciousness which I will discuss in the next section. I begin this section by examining the lack of foundations and presuppositions of *PhG*, and consciousness when it first begins its journey. This lack of foundation and presuppositions shows that *PhG* is self-enclosed and self-justificatory. I then present the circular pattern of epistemology in *PhG*.

Hegel spells out his stance against presuppositions or a foundation for the *PhG* at the beginning of the work. The first paragraph of the Introduction of the *PhG* – which can be said to be the first paragraph of the *PhG* as the Preface was written after the work itself was completed – begins with a criticism of the presupposed need to begin philosophy with first having an understanding of "its proper subject-matter, viz. the actual cognition of what truly is" (*PhG* ¶73). There are two arguments Hegel levels against this presupposition. The first one is that there are different kinds of cognition, and we may not know which one is appropriate for the task at hand before we know the task itself. Determining this cognition before we know the task, and doing so in order to get to know

the task is problematic at best (ibid.). The second point is that "cognition is a faculty of a definite kind and scope" (ibid.) and without a definition of it we are bound to run into problems, especially when we are to use this cognition as a foundation for knowledge of philosophy. Thus, Hegel criticizes the effort to begin by giving an account of what cognition is as the foundation of knowledge, that is, of cognizing.

Hegel has in mind here the Kantian project, which seeks to begin its enquiry by first establishing an account of the very possibility of cognition (an account of philosophical knowledge). Kant's "critical" project in fact begins with an account of cognition in the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements. Kant begins the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (henceforth *CPR*) by remarking that there is a need to establish the "secure course of a science" for metaphysics (*CPR* Bvii). He continues in expressing his view that "the secure path of science" for metaphysics has "eluded us so far" (*CPR* Bxv) and we should take the advancements made in "mathematics and natural sciences" (*CPR* Bxvi) of his time as an example of what needs to be done similarly in metaphysics. We need a "change in the ways of thinking" that have thus far defined metaphysics (ibid.).

Kant proposes his Copernican Revolution in metaphysics as an answer to the quest of securing a course of science for philosophy (*CPR* Bxvi). This so-called Copernican Revolution consists of taking cognition as foundational. Cognition, in this view, is foundational because the philosophical inquiry bases itself on an account of cognition. As opposed to the previous ways of thinking which took cognition to conform to the object, Kant proposes that we take the object to conform to the intuition of the subject, that is, to cognition (*CPR* Bxvii). He remarks that this is the only way in which we may hope to

"know anything of [objects] *a priori*" (ibid.). In other words, he seems to be suggesting that accounting for cognition before anything else will yield a secure course for the science that is metaphysics.[19]

Cognition, however, must have a limit. For, an epistemology for *a priori* knowledge should have at its foundation a conception of knowledge as something to which objects have to conform. Kant calls this limit "the unconditioned" (*CPR* Bxx). The unconditioned are things in themselves that are not accessible to cognition; for cognition, as *a priori*, reaches only appearances (ibid.). Kant's proposal that we do not base metaphysics on conforming cognition to objects results in the fact that there must be such an unreachable point for cognition. For, an account of objects needs to conform to an account of cognition which is prior to the account of objects. The unconditioned is not "present in things insofar as we are acquainted with them …, but rather in things as we are not acquainted with them as things in themselves" (ibid.). All that we can know about things in themselves is that they are limits. The unconditioned, therefore, can be known only as things in themselves and cannot be known *a priori*. Only what is *a priori* is necessary and universal, independently of experience (*CPR* A2). Therefore, starting with an account of cognition is the only path which will lead us to a secure metaphysics.

Kant remarks that "on the assumption that our cognition from experience conforms to the objects as things in themselves, the unconditioned cannot be thought at all without contradiction" (*CPR* Bxx). The only way to avoid this contradiction, for Kant, is to not base metaphysics on what we, through our cognition, have no access to. We should rather

[19] Kant writes: "after this alteration in our way of thinking we can very well explain the possibility of a cognition *a priori*, and what is still more, we can provide satisfactory proofs of the laws that are the *a priori* ground of nature, as the sum of total objects of experience – which were both impossible according to the earlier way of proceeding" (*CPR* Bxix).

base metaphysics on cognition itself. Once we establish what cognition is, then we may be able to know something about the rest of what makes up a metaphysics according to the Kantian view. Most of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements of *CPR* is devoted to establishing an account of cognition. Given that Hegel is in conversation with Kant in most of his works, we can claim that Hegel's denunciation of beginning with an account of cognition is directed at the Kantian project.

Hegel's opening paragraph to the *PhG*, thus, as a sharp attack on prematurely establishing an account of cognition as the foundation for dealing with "[philosophy's] proper subject-matter", is the beginning of a response to the Kantian project (*PhG* ¶73). Hegel characterizes the Kantian project of starting with an account of cognition as plagued with a "fear of falling into error" (*PhG* ¶74). The fear of falling into error results from the idea that we should start with an account of knowledge. He writes that "if the fear of falling into error sets up a mistrust of Science, which in the absence of such scruples gets on with the work itself, and actually cognizes something, it is hard to see why we should not turn around and mistrust this very mistrust. Should we not be concerned as to whether this fear of error is not just the error itself?" (ibid.). He continues by claiming that "what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of the truth" (ibid.).

In the Hegelian project, on the contrary, making errors is integral to the path towards "absolute knowing". Consciousness repeatedly finds that it is in error: at every stage, it recognizes that its position is untenable, until it reaches "absolute knowing". It reaches "absolute knowing" by virtue of having passed through the stages which proved to be erroneous. Hence, falling into error is not something we should be afraid of.

Hegel contends that the haste to posit an account of cognition as a foundation for philosophy and the resulting fear of making an error "takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an *instrument* and as a *medium*, and assumes that there is a *difference between ourselves and this cognition*" (*PhG* ¶74). Thus, the fear of making an error turns into the error itself: taking cognition as the foundation, as Hegel explained in the first paragraph, is problematic. Furthermore, it assumes that this cognition, as something we can define and posit at the outset, is thereby distinct from us, since we are positing it before knowing about it. The cognition, thus, hypothetically becomes an instrument or medium on this account. There is no indication of legitimacy in taking cognition as an instrument that will guide us through the quest for knowledge, as distinct from us. More crucially, taking it as an instrument will put us on the path of fear of error, and eliminate any possibility of reaching true knowledge.

Hegel's answer to the assumptions about cognition and the resulting fear of error is to introduce "the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely … the pathway of despair" (*PhG* ¶78). He warns us that the path he proposes (and then fleshes out in the main body of this work) is more difficult and demanding than the method he criticizes. The method he criticizes makes "excuses which creates the incapacity of Science" and adopts what it works on "in order to be exempt from the hard work of Science, while at the same time giving the impression of working seriously and zealously" (*PhG* ¶76).

Hegel's attack on Kant's notion of beginning with an account of cognition (especially as significantly placed at the beginning of the Introduction of *PhG*) shows that Hegel's account of knowledge in *PhG* will not have presuppositions or seek to have a foundation. For, Hegel's rejection of the Kantian model shows that he is against an *a priori*

epistemology. Hegel, as a response to the view he criticizes at the beginning of *PhG*, presents a self-enclosed and self-justifying process of education, which does not depend on a foundation or presuppositions. That Hegel's system in *PhG* is self-enclosed can be shown through Hegel's descriptions of consciousness's dialectical relation with its object.

The series of developing phenomenal objects are the phenomenal objects *of* consciousness and constitute the knowledge of consciousness at each respective stage of consciousness's journey. Hegel remarks that "[s]ince our object is phenomenal knowledge, its determinations too will at first be taken directly as they present themselves; and they do present themselves very much as we have already apprehended them" (*PhG* ¶82). The shape of consciousness is defined by the way in which consciousness apprehends its object. Hegel writes that "[c]onsciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself; for the distinction made above falls within it" (*PhG* ¶84). The investigation that is the comparison of consciousness with itself is the experience of consciousness within the bounds of its current stage which yields a redefined phenomenal object. Experience here is strictly tied to and defined by the consciousness that is the experiential subject, because experience is the movement that the relevant stage of consciousness undergoes.

Since the starting point is the phenomenal object of natural consciousness, however, the starting point (whichever point that may be) is not yet real knowledge (even though we do not know this at the beginning; that this knowledge is not real knowledge emerges in the experience of the stage). The object of a stage of consciousness is other than consciousness, until absolute knowing. Consciousness has to reach the shape of "absolute

knowing" to counter the otherness. Hegel writes that "this other is to consciousness not merely *for it*, but is also outside of this relationship, or exists *in itself*: the moment of truth" (*PhG* ¶84). But this otherness of the object to consciousness is further shown in Hegel's claim in the same sentence that "[i]n consciousness, one thing exists *for* another" (ibid.). This means that one thing is the object *for* consciousness, distinct from and other to consciousness. Despite interacting with something other to it, consciousness uses its own criteria in experience. Since consciousness is the knower and the account of knowledge we can find in *PhG* is based on how consciousness comes to know something, it is important for an account of epistemology in *PhG* that consciousness, despite having an object that is other to it, uses its own criteria to acquire knowledge.

Since consciousness's beginning point is "natural consciousness", which is distant in its journey from real knowledge (the True), its object (what for it is the True) is distant from real knowledge. At each configuration what for it is the True and its knowledge of this truth come closer to the True, that is, to real knowledge. Consciousness has to continually seek to match what for it is the True with its knowledge of the truth. If these two do not match one another, then "it would seem that consciousness must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object" (*PhG* ¶85). In other words, consciousness would need to move through its configurations until its Notion matches its object. However, when the knowledge is altered, "the object itself alters for it too, for the knowledge that was present was essentially a knowledge of the object: as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge" (ibid.).

Hence, for this reason Hegel cannot be an essentialist.[20] Hegel further writes that "the criterion for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is" (ibid.).

The new object that emerges from the testing of the Notion against the previous object does not come from outside the relation of subject and object but it "come[s] about through a *reversal of consciousness itself*" (*PhG* ¶87). The resulting object at each configuration "contains what was true in the preceding knowledge" (ibid.), i.e. according to Hegel later phases necessarily build upon earlier phases. However, this building does not happen as on a secure foundation. Later phases build upon earlier phases insofar as the earlier phases prove to be in internal contradiction. The later phases come as an attempt to accomplish what the previous phases failed to accomplish, which is to be free from internal contradiction. However, even though consciousness finds real knowledge only at the end of the progression, the whole progression is significant for it.[21] For, Hegel writes, "the way to Science is itself already *Science*, and hence, in virtue of its content, is the Science of the *experience of consciousness*" (*PhG* ¶88). The end point of the process is that toward which the entire process is driven. Yet only at the end are all the parts of the journey in the form of a circle such that the importance of each point emerges as a part of the whole.

[20] This point relates to Hegel's anti-foundationalism, and a case can also be made to discuss Hegel's view on essentialism with regard to his circularity, which, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.
[21] Thomas E. Wartenberg, in his paper titled "Hegel's idealism: The logic of conceptuality", claims, related to this point, that *PhG* exemplifies "Hegel's belief that the whole exists in a process of development" and that "the manner in which this holistic idea develops is to be thought of as its own self-actualization" (Wartenberg 107).

Not only Hegel's stance against foundations, as discussed earlier, but also the circularity of Hegel's epistemology can also be framed as a reaction to Kant.[22] This reaction with regard to circularity is rooted in the terminology of Hegel's description of what happens to consciousness as it embarks on its journey. Hegel writes that the exposition presented in *PhG* "has only phenomenal knowledge for its object" (*PhG* ¶77). The exposition begins with phenomenal knowledge, which consciousness experiences, and finds to be internally contradictory. Consciousness thereby moves onto its next shape. This process takes place through its own means: there is no reliance or employment of anything external to the phenomenal object which is the sole object of experience and knowledge.

Hegel's use of the term "phenomenal" shows an ontological commitment. "Phenomenal" is the adjective form of the word "phenomenon" which has been used throughout the history of philosophy to mean roughly "appearance". Plato, Aristotle, and Kant are among those that employed the word. Hegel's use perhaps harkens back to all of these thinkers. However, it is especially useful to think of Hegel's use of the term in relation to his contemporary Kant.

Kant uses the word "phenomena" to mean "appearances" (*CPR* B305). Phenomena are given in sensibility. Appearances are representations and "all our representations are in fact related to some object through the understanding" (*CPR* A250). The understanding "relates" appearances to "a something, as the object of sensible intuition" which is thus the "transcendental object" because we can know nothing about it (*CPR* A249). The transcendental object is only "a correlate of the unity of apperception for the

[22] My argument for why the epistemology of *PhG* is circular follows this discussion of Kant.

unity of the manifold in sensible intuition" (ibid.). The categories, then, determine something in general (that is, the transcendental object) as appearance through the understanding (*CPR* A251). This is what Kant calls "noumena" (ibid.). For Kant, phenomena and noumena correspond to what is sensible and what is intelligible respectively. Phenomena, for Kant, are "appearances, to the extent that as objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of the categories" (ibid.). Thus, for Kant, phenomena are related to objects which are the noumena.

Kant indicates that appearances depend on us: "appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation" (*CPR* A251). But he also adds that there must be something that this appearance depends upon, especially if we are to avoid "a constant circle" (*CPR* A252). This circle is avoided since "the word 'appearance' must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is grounded), must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility" (ibid.). Therefore the concept of a noumenon, for Kant, constitutes a "boundary concept", a grounding object to which we can relate our phenomenon (*CPR* B311).[23]

Hegel's use of the term "phenomenal" is not coupled with a corresponding "noumenal". Rather, the phenomenal object for Hegel stands alone, not as a representation. The phenomenal object may present an internal contradiction in the experience of a stage of consciousness (as happens with each phenomenal object until the end of *PhG*). However, this contradiction is not with something external (or

[23] "Noumenon" functions in several ways, as a thing that appears and as a limit concept.

"transcendental"), such as not matching a transcendental object of which it is a representation. For knowledge does not seek to represent the phenomenal object or vice versa, but rather the two need to match one another, that is, there should not be internal conflict in the phenomenal object when taken as known. "Phenomenal object" for Hegel is how the world appears to consciousness, but there is nothing more to the world than this appearance.[24]

Hegel's use of the term "phenomenal" is, thus, a clear break with Kant's use of the term.[25] Hegel's use not only does not align with Kant's because it lacks noumena as boundary, but it also commits what Kant denounces in his discussion of noumena: Hegel's use of "phenomenal" commits him to be in a "circle", to be in the very "circle" which Kant seeks to avoid. The connection here is striking, for Hegel's circular epistemology depends on the internal investigation, that is, internal to the mind, of the phenomenal object. This suggests that Hegel's circular epistemology is a reaction against the Kantian effort to avoid "a constant circle".

Hegel's epistemology in *PhG* is circular because each stage follows one another to reach the last stage which harkens back to the first stage to start the process over again. Each stage of the *Phenomenology* moves on to the next because of the failure of the current stage until we reach "absolute knowing". Because the internal contradiction of a stage prompts the transition into the next stage at every stage, stages of consciousness do not depend on the stages that come before them for justification. If anything, the stage

[24] This use of "phenomena" that excludes noumena of which the phenomena are appearances resembles Hegel's move in determining "Essence" as "illusory" in the "Doctrine of Essence" in *WL*.
[25] Solomon remarks that "Hegel does not attack Kant's phenomenon-noumenon distinction; he undermines it, finally reducing it to an absurd joke at the end of the chapter on "Understanding"" of *PhG* (Solomon 282). A discussion of the chapter on "Understanding" is beyond the scope of this paper.

that comes after is intended to justify the stage that precedes it. For, the stage that follows shows that consciousness was correct to be in internal contradiction because it was not at that point sufficiently educated (even though the stage that shows this also turns out to be in internal contradiction and therefore relies on the stage that comes after it for justification, all the way until "absolute knowing"). Each subsequent stage of consciousness reveals more of consciousness's lack of knowledge. Through this revelation, consciousness is getting further educated. "We", the observers of consciousness's education, can see this.

A stage of consciousness that follows a given stage of consciousness in *PhG* is intended to be justificatory for the given stage (only to show that the following stage itself is in need of justification). For, at the end of each stage of consciousness Hegel mentions the topic of what the next stage is,[26] as following from the current stage and as the possible answer to the despair that consciousness found itself in at the current stage. For example, at the end of "Sense-certainty", Hegel mentions "perception" as the following shape of consciousness, presenting it as "the truth of" of consciousness's object (as consciousness sees the object in that moment), rather than taking that object as "immediate" (as consciousness has done in "Sense-certainty") which has led consciousness into despair (*PhG* ¶110). The same pattern occurs at each stage. The new shape is presented as the answer to the despair that consciousness faced in its previous shape (albeit, with a different object). Thus, each new shape that comes does not rely on

[26] Although we, the observers of consciousness's education, see what his next shape will be at the end of the current shape, consciousness is unaware of it. Consciousness finds itself in a new stage without recollection of previous stages at each stage of the journey until the last stage, "absolute knowing", at which point consciousness becomes aware of the shapes it took in its journey. We, the observers who have an *account* of the education of consciousness, know the stage that will follow at the end of each stage and how this following stage relates to the previous stage, but consciousness itself remains unaware until the end.

knowledge presented in the shape preceding it. On the contrary, each new shape is an attempt to be free of internal contradiction like the previous shapes.[27]

Furthermore, at the end of "Absolute Knowing", that is, at the end of *PhG*, Hegel claims that once consciousness reaches the end of its education, it needs to do it over again repeatedly.[28] Thus, the end point seeks to find its justification at the beginning point which takes consciousness through the journey once again. Hegel writes of the final point of consciousness's progression that "[i]n the *immediacy* of this new existence the Spirit has to start afresh to bring itself to maturity as if, for it, all that preceded were lost and it had learned nothing from the experience of the earlier Spirits" (*PhG* ¶808, emphasis mine).[29] Thus, consciousness (or Spirit, as it is at the final stage) goes back to the beginning. What is more, the mentioning of "the *immediacy* of this new existence" (ibid., emphasis mine) bears striking resemblance to how the knowledge of consciousness in the first paragraph of the first chapter, "Sense-certainty", is characterized as "immediate": "The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is *immediately* our object cannot be anything else but *immediate* knowledge itself, a knowledge of the *immediate* or of what simply *is*. Our approach to the object must also be *immediate*" (*PhG* ¶90, first three emphases mine). This use of the same term to characterize knowledge and existence of

[27] Again, each new shape is an attempt to be free of contradiction even though consciousness itself is not aware of it at the time.
[28] Similarly, Scott F. Aikin remarks, in his paper titled "The Problem of the Criterion and Hegel's Model for Epistemic Infinitism", that because Hegel's "system is made explicit by philosophy, both the system and the articulation must be circular and ongoing", it therefore presents "a unique form of epistemic infinitism" (Aikin 379). According to Aikin, the epistemic system is circular and follows its pattern of inferences to infinity in circular motion (Aikin 379-80).
[29] Hegel proceeds to claim that, however, "recollection, the *inwardizing*, of that experience, has preserved it and is the inner being, and in fact the higher form of the substance. So although this Spirit starts afresh and apparently from its own resources to bring itself to maturity, it is none the less on a higher level than it starts" (*PhG* ¶808).

consciousness at both the first and the last paragraph of the journey of consciousness's education shows that there is a connection between these two paragraphs.[30]

Consequently, we can see that *PhG* gives an account of knowledge that is circular because each stage (in other words, each stage of knowledge for us who are observing consciousness that is undergoing education) depends on the stage following it. This is a circular epistemology because we, as readers and observers of consciousness's journey, see that the way consciousness is educated and the way we come to know the development of this education is in a circular pattern: each stage relies on the next for justification and the last stage returns to the first.

Phenomenal knowledge (knowledge of appearance) is true only when it is free of internal contradiction. This state of freedom from internal contradiction is attained at "absolute knowing", when consciousness is at "the standpoint of Science" (*PhG* ¶78). Hegel writes that "[the] path [of consciousness] is the conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge" (ibid.). At each stage of consciousness in the journey, consciousness finds its phenomenal knowledge to be untrue. In this path, each time the process takes place over again, the phenomenal object gets further differentiated and determined, and thus changes (while nevertheless remaining as a *phenomenal* object). This change occurs as a result of dialectical analysis. The aim of this movement between phenomenal object and its experience, and their constant mutual revision, is to come to a point at which there is no internal contradiction, where there is no discrepancy between the Notion and the object. Hegel expresses this when he writes that "the *goal* is as

[30] Hegel writes that each time the whole process takes place again, it starts at a "higher level" than before, but nevertheless finds a greater "depth". This process of repeating the circle over and over again is "the raising-up of its depth" (*PhG* ¶808). Hegel claims that this is a goal of self-knowledge.

necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial progression [of the configurations]; it is the point where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion" (*PhG* ¶80). This point will be one in which natural consciousness has lost itself completely and became conscious at the standpoint of Science, having reached true knowledge. It is the point at which consciousness no longer needs to progress further.[31] Nevertheless, consciousness goes back to the beginning in a circle and starts over again.

Once consciousness (as natural consciousness) embarks on the journey to reach its truth, it is coming closer and closer to matching its object. Reaching true knowledge would mean that (i) "the Notion corresponds to the object" and (ii) that "the object corresponds to its Notion" (*PhG* ¶84). In the first case, knowledge is designated as the Notion and "the essence[32] or the *True* as what exists, or the *object*" (ibid.). In the second case essence is called the Notion and the object is understood as "the Notion itself as *object*, viz. as it exists *for an other*" (ibid.). The two cases ("procedures"), Hegel says, "are the same" (ibid.). For in both procedures, the goal is to seek the matching of Notion and object.

Thus only when the Notion and the phenomenal object are matching can the claim to true knowledge be made. Hegel claims that the investigation in *PhG* should be viewed as "*relating Science* to *phenomenal* knowledge" (*PhG* ¶81). However, it does not (despite

[31] Hegel writes of consciousness that "it is something that goes beyond limits, and since these limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself" (*PhG* ¶80).
[32] "Essence" here is a translation of "*Wesen*" which resembles the past tense (Perfekt and Plusquamperfekt) form "*gewesen*" of the verb "to be" ("*sein*") in German. This may have connotations for the process of *aufheben* that occurs in Hegelian dialectic where the past moments are preserved in the present moment. Most commentators think Hegel is an essentialist and that this term means "essence". That implies there is something fixed by which to identify the object, whereas for Hegel the object, hence possible knowledge of it, changes.

seeming to) require a "presupposition which can serve as its underlying criterion" (ibid.). An examination which has a presupposition must presuppose what cognition is supposed to be like in order to examine it: it must presuppose cognition. And based on this criterion, the examination and its results will be limited to whether the results fit the criterion or not. On such a model, the examination cannot be fruitful.

On the Hegelian circular model, however, the examination yields results because there is no presupposed criterion. The starting point is not foundational because it is necessarily revisable and does not form the ultimate authority and criteria for what comes later. In the *PhG* "the Soul … journeys through the series of its own configurations as though they were the stations appointed for it by its own nature, … and achieve[s] finally, through a completed experience of itself, the awareness of what it really is in itself" (*PhG* ¶77). Consciousness does not begin with what it ends up affirming, which is the final result of an ongoing process. This process is one in which every result falls short, and is continually revised until the result agrees with its Notion. What consciousness ends up affirming is a significant revision and expansion of its beginning point based on a circular epistemology.

In this section I argued that the epistemology in *PhG* is circular. Not only is the structure of the process of *PhG* circular but also the epistemology presented in *PhG* is circular. For, the structure gives an account of consciousness's education in *PhG*. In the next section I show how each stage of consciousness in *PhG* is circular and how this fits into Hegel's description of a system that is a "circle of circles".

4.3. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a circle of circles

In the previous section I argued that the epistemology presented in *PhG* is circular. This argument focused on consciousness's journey as a whole as presenting a circular epistemology. In this section I claim that each stage of consciousness, as epistemological, is circular. I make this argument on two grounds. The first is that the way each shape of consciousness unfolds is very similar, for each shape follows a dialectic pattern; therefore, we are presented with the same repeating pattern regarding knowledge at each shape. The second argument is that in each shape the end of the shape justifies the beginning of the shape: that consciousness realizes that its current shape is internally contradictory (which is some form of knowledge) and that this realization resembles in some ways the beginning of the stage shows that the knowledge gained through the process harkens back to the beginning point. Having identified the contradiction, the end point justifies what went wrong at the beginning of the shape (and proposes the next stage which will hopefully not be in internal contradiction like this current shape).

PhG is made up of consciousness finding itself in different stages of education. A shape of consciousness begins when consciousness finds itself in it. This shape develops through the experience of the shape, and ends when consciousness recognizes the internal contradiction of the shape. At this point, consciousness finds itself in a new shape and the same process happens over again until consciousness finds itself in a new shape again. This keeps on happening until consciousness reaches "Absolute Knowing", at the end of which Hegel tells us consciousness has to start over again from the beginning and then repeat this over and over again. In this picture, the fact that consciousness goes over the same process of the progression of a shape over and over again shows a circular pattern.

Consciousness moves through the dialectical progression of a shape only to go through the same dialectical progression again (but this time with a different object).

Not only do shapes of consciousness which follow each other in succession follow the same dialectical pattern, thereby presenting circularity with regard to one another, each shape is circular also by virtue of its own contents. Each shape of consciousness ends when consciousness finds the shape to be internally contradictory. This internal contradiction and its recognition is a form of knowledge (for consciousness and for us who are the observers of consciousness's journey). After this recognition, at the end of every shape, there is something that refers back to the beginning of the shape, such that what refers back to the beginning of the shape can be taken to serve as an account of why consciousness began the way it did and what it must do differently, that is, what shape it is about to take next (which will be, hopefully, free of internal contradiction). The end point of the shape shows us something about the beginning of the shape. For, the state that consciousness is in at the end of the shape is what shape the experience took as a result of its dialectical development. Hence, at the end of the stage, we, as the observers of consciousness can make better sense of the beginning point of the shape. We can observe what of the shape was internally contradictory to begin with. Consciousness too, when recognizing the internal contradiction of the shape it is in, gains knowledge of the beginning of the shape.

The end of the shape, therefore, I argue, justifies our knowledge of the beginning of the shape. We can see this in each shape of consciousness. In the following paragraphs I

focus on several of these shapes[33] and give an account of why I think the end point reaches back to the beginning point and why the knowledge of the end point justifies the knowledge of the beginning point.

In Sense-certainty, consciousness begins with "immediate knowledge" (*PhG* ¶90). Consciousness finds that this "immediate knowledge" which "appears as the *richest* kind of knowledge" is in fact "the most abstract and poorest *truth*" (*PhG* ¶91). For, consciousness is limited in its expression of this immediate knowledge. It uses words such as "This", "I", "Here", and "Now" shortly to find that these words cannot express what it means because they do not refer to particulars but to universals (*PhG* ¶91; ¶95; ¶97). To try to solve its issue, consciousness seeks to point at the things it means to express using words (*PhG* ¶105). However, this fails as well because pointing does not get at the essence of expressing what is meant in a way that lasts (*PhG* ¶107). Even though consciousness's object was immediate to begin with, this immediacy is what caused the internal contradiction in this shape of consciousness. For, consciousness could not express something immediate in the immediate means of expression that were available to it. This inability to express was caused by the fact that whenever consciousness tried to give an expression of something, that something was no longer immediate. When it tried to express moment *t* as "Now", although *t* appeared immediate to consciousness at the moment of expression, it no longer was immediate when it recognized that *t* had passed, but consciousness still wanted to refer to it with "Now" (such as what happens at *PhG* ¶95) .

[33] I do not give an account of all shapes of consciousness in this manner because of limitations in space.

Consciousness comes to the realization of why it began with "immediate knowledge" only at the end of the shape of "Sense-certainty". Hegel writes at the end of "Sense-certainty" "instead of knowing something immediate I take the truth of it, or *perceive* it" (*PhG* ¶110). The truth of immediate knowledge was perception, that is, consciousness *perceived* something *as* immediate. Only at the end of the shape does consciousness come to this realization and thereby transitions into its next shape: "Perception". The end of the shape is connected to its beginning because it explains why the beginning was the way it was (and suggests that the next shape will explain what is mentioned at this end point further, albeit in a different stage and with a different object than the current shape). This shows that the shape of "Sense-certainty" is circular in its account of knowledge.

In the "Self-consciousness" chapter, in the shape of "Lordship and Bondage" ("Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness"),[34] we can observe the same pattern of the end point of the shape justifying the beginning point. This shape begins with self-consciousness facing another self-consciousness which "has come *out of itself*" (*PhG* ¶179).[35] These self-consciousnesses "*recognize*[36] themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another" (*PhG* ¶184). This mutual recognition does not last long, for immediately after it an "inequality" emerges in which one self-consciousness is "*recognized*" and "the other only *recognizing*" (*PhG* ¶185). In this inequality "each seeks the death of the other" (*PhG* ¶187). This struggle to the death becomes a struggle to get

[34] The German original of this title is "Selbständigkeit und Unselbständigkeit des Selbstbewußtseins" which, Westphal notes, is translated more accurately as "Self-sufficiency and Non-selfsufficiency of Self-Consciousness" (Westphal fn 13, p. 60).
[35] Whether this duality is within one self-consciousness or not will not be a topic of discussion here. For more on this point, see McDowell (2006) and Kojeve (1996).
[36] "Recognize" is translated from "*anerkennen*" which means "to recognize" as well as "to respect". It is derived from the verb "*erkennen*" which means "to detect, spot, discern" which is derived from the verb "*kennen*" which means "to know".

recognition (*PhG* ¶188). Hegel writes that "[i]n this experience, self-consciousness learns that life is as essential to it as pure-self-consciousness" and gives up on the struggle to the death (*PhG* ¶189). Thus, it becomes the bondsman to the lord who did not give up the fight (ibid.). The bondsman recognizes the lord and the lord is recognized; the lord does not recognize the bondsman (*PhG* ¶190, ¶191). The bondsman "works" for the lord, for the lord's "enjoyment" (ibid.). However, this picture changes when the lord recognizes that he is not "an independent consciousness" as he had taken himself to be, for he is "dependent" (*PhG* ¶192). The bondsman, on the other hand, finds independence in the "formative activity" of his work (*PhG* ¶195, ¶196). Not only is it the case that "[t]he *truth* of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness of the bondsman", but also "consciousness, *qua* worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its *own* independence" and that "[t]hrough this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own" (*PhG* ¶193; ¶195; ¶196).

The bondsman is independent because he finds creativity in his work. He sustains the lord with the fruits of his endeavors and the lord becomes dependent on the bondsman. The bondsman's independence rests partly on his freedom to create and partly on the dependence of the lord on his creativity. Self-consciousness at the beginning of the shape had the self-consciousness that it was facing "come out of itself"; the self-consciousness that it was facing started off as a part of, or even (for a brief moment right before they face one another) dependent on self-consciousness. On this ground, we can argue that the end point of the stage of "Lordship and Bondage" returns to its beginning to justify it. That the self-consciousness that self-consciousness is facing has come out of itself is

spelled out in more detail at the end of the dialectic progression of the shape: the lord, as dependent on the bondsman's work, sustains his being by virtue of the bondsman and owes his sustenance to the bondsman. Hence, in fact, the lord at the end of the shape looks as though he "has come out of" the bondsman because the lord is living on the work of the bondsman. This connection of the end of the shape to the beginning of the shape shows the circularity of the shape: the dialectic development is such that the end point is a return to the beginning point. The knowledge that is found at the beginning point (that the self-consciousness that self-consciousness is facing has come out of itself) is justified by the knowledge found at the end point (that the lord is dependent on the bondsman who is consequently independent).

This relation of the end point to the beginning point shows each stage of consciousness to be in itself circular. As discussed above in the definition of a circular epistemology, an epistemology is circular when each instance of knowledge relies on the instance of knowledge that comes after it for justification and when the last instance of knowledge serves to justify the first instance of knowledge. In the case of the shapes of consciousness, the end point mentions what shape consciousness will take next, as well as how consciousness began the current shape. This shows that, in retrospect, the first point of a shape depends on the last point in order to make sense and yield knowledge. Only at the end point can we say that we began in such and such a way because in fact such and such was the case and that experience showed us this.

5. The circular epistemology of the *Science of Logic*

In the previous sections I argued based on my initial definitions of an epistemology and circularity that *PhG* presents a circular epistemology. In this section, I argue that *WL* similarly presents a circular epistemology. I begin with an account of how *WL* gives an account of knowledge. I continue with explaining why this epistemology is circular. My analysis also serves as a comparison of *WL* with *PhG* with regard to these points in order to shed light on what Hegel's project in *WL* exactly is, that is what problem Hegel is solving in *WL*.

5.1. The *Science of Logic* as an epistemology

I claim that there is an epistemology presented in *WL*. My claim rests on the fact that *WL* gives us (the readers) knowledge of ontology and that this conveying of knowledge is executed through a specific method, i.e. the dialectic. I begin with this explanation and then point out the difference that the epistemology of *WL* has from the epistemology of *PhG*. This difference is that *PhG* shows an epistemology based on a phenomenology, whereas in *WL* there is no phenomenology. I discuss how this difference should affect the way in which we analyze the epistemology in *WL* as circular.

In Hegel's words, *WL* "is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind" (*WL* 50). Such an exposition is an ontology that transmits to the reader knowledge of what its details are and how it unfolds. Although it reflects ontology as independent of nature and a finite mind, it nevertheless does this

reflection *for* finite minds, that is, to the minds of the readers.[37] Hence, *WL*, with its series of moments beginning at "Being" and moving all the way to "Absolute Idea", is an exposition of ontology that yields to the readers the knowledge of how this ontology unfolds.

The development of this ontology is through a specific method: each moment of *WL* follows another and unfolds in a dialectical manner. At each part of *WL*, we start with something "abstract" and "one-sided". Upon reflection on this starting point, a more sophisticated picture of the object emerges which prompts the revision of the object that we began with. The progression of *WL* is characterized by such a movement.

WL, therefore, gives us knowledge of an ontology by breaking "God", or reality, down into its logical moments and displaying how it is that things come together. Through employing this dialectical method, Hegel shows how we ought to think of ontology and how we ought to break apart and then put its pieces back together. *WL* teaches us ontology step by step, but also follows the steps of the logical moments of ontology through their progression. *WL* also teaches us ontology through trial and error: it shows the "abstract" and "one-sided" beginning point by how one may begin to think of that relevant part of ontology, and why this way of thinking about it does not adequately reflect what actually is the case, all by using detailed dialectical scrutiny. This detailed

[37] Rometsch writes the following regarding this point: "The thinking of reality does not take place in some strange surreal place. It takes place in individual thinkers who are a part of the reality that is being thought. Hegel's project of thinking reality starts off with a presentation of the reality of *pure* thinking, or of thinking as thinking: The *Science of Logic*. The *Science of Logic* is meant to present all the categories of thinking that are also categories of that which is thought of – of reality insofar as it is accessible to thinking" (Rometsch 105). As Rometsch remarks, thinking is done by subjects. Although *WL* is set to take place prior to finite minds, it is nevertheless thought and put together by them. The reality that is thought is "prior" to a finite mind insofar as it is shown as independent of the finite mind in its existence. However, the account of this reality (as the one presented in *WL*) is given by a finite mind that is within that reality. Rometsch also writes that *WL* should be understood "as a pure and objective thought of thinkable reality as such" (Rometsch 106).

dialectical scrutiny reveals that the starting point was "one-sided" and not a complete account.

The employment of dialectical method in *WL* is similar to how in *PhG* experience reveals the current stage of consciousness to be internally contradictory. However, unlike in *PhG*, in *WL* it is not consciousness that is finding itself in internally contradictory stages, but rather it is knowledge itself (the relevant part of the ontology as knowledge for us, the readers) that displays and resolves contradictions and "abstract" ways of regarding certain notions in ontology.

In other words, in *WL*, knowledge is its own self-development. This ontology is knowledge only for us, the readers who are following its progression. Thus the "abstract" way of regarding a relevant part of ontology can be done only by us, who are doing the act of regarding when following Hegel's exposition. When the stage gains its full form through a more sophisticated account that develops starting from the "abstract" beginning point, it again is only grasped by us to be that way. Otherwise, it is a mechanical point in the workings of the logic, or ontology.

WL, I claim, is an epistemology because Hegel's exposition of the ontology shows the dialectical structure of its development is inherent to ontology. This dialectical structure comes to the surface when we break it down, like Hegel does, to its logical moments. Since *WL* gives its readers knowledge of this breaking down of ontology into its logical moments, and does so through a specific method, namely Hegel's dialectic, we can claim that *WL* presents an account of knowledge. This account of knowledge is dependent on the ontology presented in *WL to* the reader: it is an account of how the reader is to know

"God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind" (*WL* 50). The reader is to know it through a dialectical exposition that reveals the logical moments in succession. Hence, the epistemology that is presented in *WL* is essentially dialectical and depends on the reader. Furthermore, the frequent comments on other philosophers and thinkers of his time throughout *WL* shows *WL* to not merely be an ontology but a work about ontology intended for the education of the reader, and hence an account of how we are to think correctly of certain ontological notions.

5.2. Hegel's epistemology in the *Science of Logic* as circular

To explain the circular nature of Hegel's epistemology in *WL*, I begin with a discussion of Hegel's views against a foundational system. This discussion focuses on several points against foundations and the relation *WL* has to foundations. An analysis of Hegel's views against foundations shows his system in *WL* to be presuppositionless and self-enclosed. I further claim that Hegel presents his system as circular in *WL* and that this circularity applies to his epistemology.

To explain Hegel's views against foundations I begin with a discussion of the relation of *PhG* and *WL*, specifically that *PhG* does not form a foundation for *WL*. I then continue to discuss the Introduction of *WL* and how it is not a foundation for *WL*. Then I show the status of the Logic as itself not a foundation for something that may be its content but that Hegel's Logic is also its own content. This description of logic reveals that it is self-enclosed and that logic defines itself through itself.

As noted above, Hegel, in *PhG*, remarks that *PhG* is consciousness's education to the standpoint of Science (PhG ¶78). At the end of *PhG*, consciousness reaches absolute

knowing, which is the point at which its Notion matches its object such that there is no discrepancy between what it knows and what this knowledge claims to be a knowledge of. The path of *PhG* results in "the Notion of science" (*WL* 48). The science of logic is to be considered from and "based on this, the only true standpoint" (ibid.). Hegel claims that the Notion has already received "justification" in *PhG* and for that reason does not need to be justified again in *WL* (ibid.). Hegel also mentions that the justification of the Notion can only be given in consciousness, and thus it is necessary that it emerges in consciousness (*WL* 48, 49).

Because *WL* can be undertaken only at the standpoint of Science, for it is a science itself, then it goes without saying that *WL* comes after the *PhG*.[38, 39] This does not mean that *WL* presupposes the contents of *PhG*. One could have such an idea, after all, since the science of logic does not concern itself with justifying the Notion but simply assumes it is justified through *PhG*. However, since the science of logic can only be undertaken at the standpoint of Science, the *PhG* and *WL* concern different topics. Even though both have epistemological concerns, *PhG* is a phenomenology whereas *WL* is an ontology. As remarked above, Hegel writes that the content of *WL* "is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind" (*WL* 50). Even though this claim is quite obscure and it is not clear whether Hegel is entitled to make such a claim, we can nevertheless reason that Hegel intends *WL* to be an ontology, an account of the structure of reality that is independent of and prior to a conscious subject.

[38] Kant makes a similar claim when he discusses logic. He contends that "general logic" which is "applied" is "[i]n the schools … often stuck before the sciences as their propaedeutic, though in the course of human reason they are certainly the latest to be reached, once the science is already long complete, and requires only the final touch for its improvement and perfection" (*CPR* A52/B76). How Kant's view of logic otherwise differs from Hegel's will be discussed later in this section.

[39] That Hegel is referring to the contents of these works and how they are to be ordered is important for the claim that *WL* is an epistemology, because it assumes a reader that *knows* what goes on in the works.

The Notion nevertheless "emerges within logic itself" (*WL* 48) but *WL* has a different object than *PhG*. The Notion, as something that can only be justified through a consciousness, may emerge in the Logic but its justification is not a necessary part of the Logic (not to mention that it cannot be justified through the logic that does not have a consciousness). As discussed in the previous section, *WL* is an ontological epistemology that excludes a conscious subject in its content. In contrast to *PhG*, which is a phenomenological epistemology and requires a conscious subject, *WL* is an exposition of a structure that is before and independent of a consciousness (even though its exposition is intended to be read by conscious subjects). A consciousness may be what is necessary to justify the Notion, but a lack of justification for it in *WL* does not preclude its presence and importance in *WL*.[40]

The ontology of *WL* may engage with notions that come up and become justified within a phenomenological epistemology. However, this does not make *WL* dependent on the justifications involved in *PhG*. Hence, there is no ground for supposing that *WL* presupposes *PhG* and its contents. The contents of *WL* have no need for a ground outside of them and *PhG* does not form a foundation for them.

An ontology that precedes a conscious subject is the development of what is pure knowledge in itself for the reader. *PhG* showed the process of getting to the level of pure knowledge. *WL* shows how this pure knowledge develops dialectically through its own means. Thus, the ontology, as beginning at the point of "absolute knowledge", is an exposition of what would count as pure absolute knowledge. There is no longer a need for a consciousness because pure knowledge transcends phenomenology and what is

[40] A discussion of why the Notion is important for *WL* is beyond the scope of this paper.

attained through experience. Once the Notion matches the phenomenal object, there is no longer a distinction between the two and thus no need for a consciousness in the investigation that starts at the point of this unison.

That *WL* does not have presuppositions despite taking the Notion as already justified is significant for *WL* because *WL* claims to begin presuppositionless.[41] The beginning point of the first Book of *WL*, "With What Must the Science Begin?" is an explanation of this notion of beginning presuppositionless. Since it begins without presuppositions, (among other things) it begins without an external foundation that is to legitimize the moves that happen once the science starts its course.

Not only does the science of logic not have foundations, it is also against them in principle. I have thus far shown the place of *WL* in the Hegelian corpus with regard to *PhG* and how *WL* does not have a foundation in the corpus. Now I go on to describe the anti-foundationalism found in the content of *WL*.

A foundationalist approach would be a linear one: the foundation would be the beginning point of the line. An anti-foundationalist approach, on the other hand, suggests that the beginning point, as not a foundation, does not have a privileged justificatory power in comparison to what comes after it. Hence, even though not every anti-foundationalist system is circular, a circular system is anti-foundationalist.

The Introduction of Hegel's *WL* displays Hegel's views against foundations. Hegel holds an anti-foundationalist stance in two ways: (i) his work (*WL*) does not have or need

[41] Whether *WL* really begins presuppositionless, as Hegel claims it does, is not so clear. However, a discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this paper. In this paper, I will present *WL* as beginning presuppositionless as Hegel claims it does.

a foundation and its Introduction is not meant as a foundation for what is done in the rest of the work, and (ii) logic (as "form") is not separate from and a foundation of its "content" (or its "matter"). Not only does Hegel think that foundations are unnecessary, he also holds that foundations are irrelevant to sciences (above all, to the science of logic) in their justification.

In the following paragraphs, I first explain the initial point which touches upon aspects of what Hegel sees to be the purpose of the Introduction. I then talk about the second point, of how logic is not something separate from its content, as thought is often seen to be separate from matter. This gets to the heart of what Hegel regards to be the Logic. I argue that Hegel's anti-foundationalist view points towards his epistemological stance that suggests a circular system and a circular epistemology with the interaction between form and content.

Consider Hegel's remarks about the place of the Introduction of *WL* for the rest of the work. Hegel starts the Introduction by writing that "[i]n no science is the need to begin with the subject matter itself, without preliminary reflections, felt more strongly than in the science of logic" (*WL* 43). The science of logic is a Science [*Wissenschaft*], yet it is distinguished from other sciences (and perhaps from other philosophy, but this is not so clear). We may see how it is distinguished from the other sciences based on Hegel's explanation that follows.

Hegel writes that "in every other science the subject matter and the scientific method are distinguished from each other" (*WL* 43) but that in the science of logic, they are not. Hegel's critiques of Kant mandate that such a distinction is no longer possible. In the

science of logic, the subject matter and the scientific method are one, that is, the science of logic is its own science. Furthermore, he writes that in other sciences "the content does not make an absolute beginning but is dependent on other concepts and is connected on all sides with other material" (ibid.), that is, these sciences depend on a foundation, such as preceding concepts and other founding materials that support the content of these sciences; they do not begin with their own content. Whereas in the science of logic, there is no such foundation; the science of logic begins with the content matter itself without reliance on anything that comes before.

The foundation for the other sciences mostly serves as a definition of them, laying out what is to be expected. However, Hegel claims, "[t]he definition with which any science makes an absolute beginning cannot contain anything other than the precise and correct expression of what is *imagined* to be the *accepted* and *familiar* subject matter and aim of the science" (*WL* 49). One cannot know what the science will turn out to be, thus one *imagines* it and claims it as what is to follow. Furthermore, this definition cannot extend beyond what is (imagined to be) *accepted* and *familiar*, and therefore does not reach towards new possibilities in knowledge. Such a system of epistemology is thus self-limiting, for the science is limited by its foundation at the outset which cannot reach beyond what is imagined of the science to be already accepted and familiar.

Given that *WL* does not rely on anything that comes before, nothing that comes before *WL* serves as a definition for it. There is nothing that provides a definition of "the science of logic" other than *WL* itself. If "the science of logic" had a definition or outline preceding it, then this would be a foundation for *WL*. What precedes *WL* is *PhG*, which by no means gives a definition of "the science of logic". *PhG* reaches only at its end to a

stance at which it is possible for consciousness to understand *WL*. Nevertheless, this end point cannot be a definition of "the science of logic". *WL*, having no such foundation, provides the definition of "the science of logic" as the whole of its text. Hegel writes "what logic is cannot be stated beforehand, rather does this knowledge of what it is first emerge as the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition" (*WL* 43).

Thus, this Introduction is not a definition of "the science of logic", and neither does it suggest what could be expected from its content as a whole. Its goal is not "to justify its method scientifically in advance" (*WL* 43). Rather, it hopes to illustrate its difference from other kinds of inquiry.

For Hegel, such use of foundations as justifications is a mistake in general. For, justifications based on foundations, for Hegel, do not demonstrate necessity. This may be observed in the definitions of sciences that serve as a starting-point: "In this method of beginning a science with its definition, no mention is made of the need to demonstrate the *necessity* of its *subject matter* and therefore of the science itself" (*WL* 49). There is no demonstration of necessity in these foundations because there is nothing on the scene yet that may be proof to a necessity. For the science does not precede its foundational definition.

Since the Introduction of *WL* does not serve as a foundation, the science of logic will have its justification elsewhere. As a whole, it serves as its own justification and hence does not need to refer to something outside of it. It is fully self-referential and self-confined. It does not require the authority of any other system for its own legitimacy. The science of logic, therefore, contrary to the other sciences, is itself a demonstration of the

necessity of its subject matter, for it does not have a preceding definitional foundation but rather defines itself in its own body. This definition and justification of itself for itself serves to show its necessity: it depends on nothing other than itself.

Not only does the science of logic not have a foundation (such as would be the introduction of the book in which it is presented), it also is not a foundation to anything outside of itself. It is self-confined and only related to itself. This point is best explained with the use of Hegel's view about form and content with regard to the logic: logic is not the form that gives shape to some content, serving as the foundation for that content, but rather the logic is form and content together. This point is crucial for Hegel's circular epistemology in *WL*.

To explain this point, Hegel remarks that logic is often thought of as the form of thought. He writes that "[w]hen logic is taken as the science of thinking in general, it is understood that this thinking constitutes the *mere form* of a cognition, that logic abstracts from *all content*" and that "its *matter*, must come from elsewhere" (*WL* 43). Furthermore, this form becomes the foundation to content which is then shaped by the form. To describe this point Hegel writes that "since this matter [i.e., content] is absolutely independent of logic, this latter can provide only the formal conditions of genuine cognition" (*WL* 44).

Hegel criticizes this view and claims that the Logic of the science of logic is not only form, but it is also its own content. He begins his criticism by noting that "it is quite inept to say that logic abstracts from all content, that it teaches only the rules of thinking without any reference to *what* is thought or without being able to consider its nature" (*WL*

44). Hegel's reasoning is that logic is form that takes this form as its matter: form itself becomes the content of the form. He writes that "[f]or as thinking and the rules of thinking are supposed to be the subject matter of logic, these directly constitute its peculiar content" (ibid.). This is logic's "matter, about the nature of which it is concerned" (ibid.). Hegel's logic thus brings together both form and content: it is no more form than it is content and it is wrong to think that it can solely be one or the other, or that one is the foundation to or is prior to the other. The content is the form itself under investigation through the form.

Not only does this characterization show logic to not have any foundations and to not itself be a foundation, it also shows logic to be epistemologically circular. The logic is form insofar as its content constitutes this form. Like a serpent eating its tail, the logic works on the formation of itself as its content. Thus, it does not concern itself with what lies outside it. Furthermore it develops its content through the means of the content, and the means of the content are created through the creation of the content itself. Hegel writes that "it is assumed that … thinking on its own is empty and comes as an external form to the said material, fills itself with it and only thus acquires a content and becomes real knowing" (*WL* 44). However, such thinking that separates thinking and its contents "bar[s] the entrance to philosophy, [and] must be discarded at its portals" (*WL* 45). Discarding the idea of such a separation leads to a circular epistemology.

Hegel's presentation of this circularity rests on a criticism of logic as it has been conceived before him. He expresses this when he writes "[h]itherto, the Notion of logic has rested on the separation, presupposed once and for all in the ordinary consciousness,

of the *content* of cognition and its *form*, or of *truth* and *certainty*" (*WL* 44).[42] This understanding has taken the object, or content, as something that is complete and separate from thought on its own, and the thought or form as dependent on this object or content. However, Hegel contends that "truth is the agreement of thought with the object" (ibid.), echoing the state in which consciousness is in at the end point of *PhG*. This agreement takes a circular form in the developing of the logic in dialectic because the agreement is one of an evolving identity relation between thought and object, form and content.

As I noted above, Hegel writes that thinking and its rules are the content of logic. Logic, which is deemed to be form, is analogous to thinking. Content, on the other hand, is analogous to matter. We can formulate the circularity presented by Hegel as the following:

(1) Logic is form.

(2) Matter of logic is content.

(3) Form is the matter of logic.

---

(4) Form is content. (by 2 and 3)

(5) Content is logic. (by 1 and 4)

(6) Therefore, form is logic. (by 4 and 5)

Accepting that the content of logic is laws of thinking (logic itself) results in holding that form is content. Thus we may start with the premises (1) and (2), which merely state the

[42] That Hegel mentions "truth and certainty" here relates to self-consciousness in *PhG*. The chapter of *PhG* where consciousness reaches the stage of self-consciousness is called "The Truth of Self-certainty". At this stage, consciousness recognizes its object as an object for itself as who this object is an object for (which in turn is an object). Thus, in a way, consciousness unifies the content of its cognition with its form.

assumption of the previous metaphysics, and add (3) which is Hegel's notion that logic ought to examine itself. Then we will be able to derive from these three premises (4) and (5) which reverse the assumption of the previous metaphysics and show that the equation between logic, matter, form and content are not assigned in a strict exclusive binary but that there is a circular relation. This circular relation is emphasized with deriving (6) (which is equivalent to (1)) from (4) and (5): we are back at where we started.

Thinking is real knowing only if it is treated as its own content (*WL* 44). Hegel's notion of such a logic that takes itself as form which constitutes its own content is in part a response to Kant's view of logic, and form and content. Kant presents form and content as a strict dichotomy. Furthermore, his view of logic holds that logic is strictly form and not content, and should be separated from content.

At the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant writes "I call that in the appearance which corresponds to sensation its **matter**; but that which allows the manifold of appearance to be ordered in certain relations I call the **form** of appearance" (*CPR* A20/B34). Although Kant is describing form and content as they pertain to what happens in cognition with regard to a cognizing subject, it is still worth considering in relation to Hegel's point about form and content. For, in Kant's portrayal of form and content, form is what orders matter, i.e. its content. Form is distinct from this matter and is empty without it. Matter, on the other hand, as the appearance which corresponds to sensation, forms the content for the form from which it is distinct. Form organizes matter from its manifold state to one that is unified. Kant writes that "[t]he understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only

from their unification can cognition arise" (*CPR* B75-76). Accordingly, understanding constitutes form and the senses constitute matter or content.

Examples of form can be given as "inner sense" and "outer sense", time and space, respectively (*CPR* A37; B37). Kant writes that "time is … a pure form of sensible intuition" (*CPR* B47) and "space is … a pure intuition" (*CPR* B39). Time and space together are the forms of sensibility: they form the contents of sensation which are distinct from time and space but are in cognition found in time and space.

As remarked above, not only does Kant distinguish between form and content with regard to sensibility and understanding, but also when he is discussing logic. He discusses two main kinds of logic, "general" and "transcendental". He presents both kinds of logic as solely form and as devoid of and separate from content. He makes this distinction between form and content when he writes in his discussion of "general logic" that "we distinguish the science of the rules of sensibility in general, i.e., aesthetic, from the science of the rules of understanding in general, i.e., logic" (*CPR* B76). A general logic, for Kant, is strictly form, and is something that can be applied to matter. It does not concern itself with what it may be applied to, it is self-enclosed, and in Hegelian terms "one-sided". For Kant, "[a] general but pure logic has to do with strictly *a priori* principles, and is a canon of the understanding and reason, but only in regard to what is formal in their use, be the content what it may" (*CPR* B77).[43]

[43] Kant also defines a "general" but "applied" logic which would be "directed by the rules of the use of the understanding under the subjective empirical conditions that psychology teaches us" (*CPR* B77). However, he continues by stating that "[i]n general logic the part that is to constitute the pure doctrine of reason must … be entirely separated from that which constitutes applied (though still general) logic. The former alone is properly science" (ibid.). Since we are concerned with science in Hegel's discussion of logic, it serves the purposes of this paper better to discuss only the general pure logic.

For Kant, a general logic "abstracts from all contents of the cognition of the understanding and of the difference of its objects, and has to do with nothing but the mere form of thinking" (*CPR* 78). A transcendental logic, on the other hand, "[does] not abstract from all content of cognition" but still nevertheless shows a distinction between form and content (*CPR* 80). Transcendental logic "contain[s] merely the rules of the pure thinking of an object" and "exclude[s] all those cognitions that were of empirical content" (ibid.). Transcendental logic concerns the origin of our cognitions (ibid.). It is "a science, which would determine the origin, domain, and the objective validity" of cognitions that are pure (*CPR* 81). These cognitions are "of reason, by means of which we think objects completely *a priori*" (ibid.). Transcendental logic only concerns "the laws of the understanding and reason … insofar as they are related to objects *a priori*" (*CPR* 81-82). Thus for Kant, both kinds of logic concern only what relates to form and do not concern the objects (or in other words "content", or "matter"). Kant separates form from content in considering logic. Hence, we can claim that Hegel's criticism is partly against the Kantian view of logic (which for the most part is representative of how "logic" had been understood until Hegel).

I have thus far explicated the lack of foundations in *WL* as well as its resulting self-enclosed system. That *WL* has no presuppositions has previously been discussed in the section on Circularity. I made several allusions to how these relate to Hegel's circular epistemology in *WL* but have not explained this circular epistemology in detail. In the rest of this section I explore how the epistemology in *WL* expounded in the preceding section is circular. In *WL*, since the unfolding of the system is the education of the reader, the pattern this unfolding follows is an account of knowledge. Thus, showing that the

development of the system is circular will show that Hegel presents a circular epistemology in *WL*.

For *WL* to have a circular epistemology, based on the definition that I have been using throughout this paper, each of its stages or moments must depend on the next for justification and the first moment must depend on the last moment. I begin with explaining how each moment of *WL* depends on the moment that follows it for justification. Following this explanation, I move onto an account of how the last moment connects to the first moment. Finally I connect these points about the circular structure to the preceding discussion on the lack of foundations to emphasize the circular epistemology.

In *WL*, each moment follows the other in such a way that one moment depends on the moment that follows from it. Whether justification happens in this next moment is independent from the previous moment's state of dependence for justification. Such a structure follows the definition of a circular epistemology. One instance of knowledge depends for its justification on the instance of knowledge that comes after it and so on until the last instance of knowledge which reaches back to the first instance of knowledge for its justification, forming a circle. This can be seen clearly in *WL* when we take into account its logical moments in their succession.

For instance, we can look at Chapters 1 and 2 of Section One of Book One of Volume One of *WL*. Chapter 1, titled "Being" is followed by Chapter 2, titled "Determinate Being". When we examine these two sections, we can see that Chapter 1 depends on Chapter 2. Chapter 1 begins with the words (and not a complete sentence) "*Being, pure*

being, without any further determination" (*WL* 82). It precedes "*Nothing, pure nothing*" (ibid.). Hegel starts with "being" that is not determined in any way, but that this non-determination is mentioned shows that there is a possibility of its determination. Following the development of Section 1 through "being", "nothing", and "becoming", the progression arrives at Chapter 2, "Determinate Being". Hegel begins this section by stating that "[i]n considering determinate being the emphasis falls on its determinate character; the determinateness is in the form of *being*, and as such it is quality" to begin with (*WL* 109). And further, "[f]rom becoming there issues determinate being, which is the simple oneness of being and nothing. Because of this oneness it has the form of *immediacy*" (ibid.).

It is clear that "determinate being" is being that is determined, and although it is the coming together of "being" and "nothing" in "becoming", it is nevertheless "in the form of *being*" (*WL* 109). This justifies (although not completely)[44] why we began with Being: if we had instead begun with "nothing", we would not be able to move on to "Determinate Being", for "nothing" could not be determined. Even though "determinate being" is "the simple oneness of being and nothing", it is nevertheless "being" and not "nothing". It is contradictory to think of determinate nothing because that would again be some "being". Thus, "Determinate Being" justifies "Being" as the moment that comes before it. Since these sections are moments of our knowledge of the ontology, the way that they develop gives an account of knowledge. This argument that the second instance of knowledge ("Determinate Being") justifies the first one ("Being") fits with my claim that there is a circular epistemology in *WL*.

[44] There is not a complete justification; that is why one moment follows the next, further unfolding and justifying all of the preceding moments.

We can take the next section of *WL* as another example of an instance of knowledge in *WL* justifying the instance of knowledge that comes before it. Chapter 2, "Determinate Being" is followed by Chapter 3, "Being-for-self". A close look at "Being-for-self" reveals that this chapter justifies what takes place in "Determinate Being". When we arrive at "being-for-self" we see that "[d]eterminate being is therefore the sphere of difference, of dualism, the field of finitude. Determinateness is determinateness as such, in which being is only relatively, not absolutely determined" (*WL* 157). This means that "determinate being" is being that is determined relatively. It is not determined on its own grounds and hence it is not absolutely determined. "Being-for-self" reveals this truth about "determinate being" because only when we reach "being-for-self" do we find that "determinate being" can be "posited and equalized" (ibid.), namely that "determinate being" is "*a* being-for-self", a single one, but there is a "plurality" of it such that it is not the only one (ibid.). There are many "determinate" beings and because of this plurality they are "posited" as "determinate" and "equalized" because they are not simply one. Only when we reach "being-for-self" do we learn that "determinate being" is "determinate" because it is relative to other "determinate" beings. Thus, the fact that the preceding moment of knowledge was of "determinate being" is justified with the knowledge that there is a singularity and plurality of "being-for-self". Because these notions of singularity and plurality apply to being, being must be determinate.

Hence, we see that the knowledge in Chapter 2 relies for its justification on the knowledge in Chapter 3. This pattern, as I also discussed with regard to Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, takes place across *WL*. This shows that each instance of knowledge in *WL* depends on the next for its justification. The whole system is built in such a way that it

justifies itself: one point depends on the next and the last point depends on the first. Now I explain how the last instance of knowledge in *WL* depends on the first instance of knowledge. This explanation will finish the argument for why the epistemology presented in *WL* is circular.

WL ends with the chapter titled "The Absolute Idea" which is Chapter 3 of Section Three of Volume Two of *WL*. At the end of this chapter, i.e. at the end of *WL*, Hegel remarks that we have indeed returned to the beginning point, i.e. to "being". He writes that "the science exhibits itself as a *circle* returning upon itself, the end being wound back into the beginning, the simple ground, by the mediation" (*WL* 842). The end point of the science, thus, is a return to the beginning after the mediation, which was the whole ontology, or our education by reading this ontology as it developed dialectically. "Absolute Idea" is a return to "being" because it is a "withdraw[al] into that same simple unity which [logic's] beginning is" (ibid.).

The logic unfolds through dialectic into its final stage, "Absolute Idea". This development is a mediation of the beginning point "being". In *WL*, "being" is mediated through the dialectical development every moment of which has the previous moments as sublated. The final point of *WL* sublates all of the moments in which sublation occurred, that is all of the moments of mediation. "Absolute Idea" thus sublates all of the mediation. "Absolute Idea" is thereby a return to the beginning point. Hegel expresses this when he writes that "the pure immediacy of being in which at first every determination appears to be extinguished or removed by abstraction, is the Idea that has reached through mediation, that is, through the sublation of mediation, a likeness correspondent to itself" (*WL* 842). "Absolute Idea" is the part of the dialectical

progression where all of the moments that pure being has implicitly in itself are sublated after having been made explicit through mediation.

The last point of the system is, therefore, a return to the first point in *WL*. This shows a circular epistemology because the whole progression is a breaking down of ontology moment by moment for the reader: it shows how reality is put together logically. Thus, it is the *science* of logic. Hence, we, who are doing the science by following along with the dialectical development, are acquiring knowledge of how logic, as ontology, comes together. That the last point returns to the first in this scientific endeavor thus demonstrates the circular epistemology.

Not only is *WL* a circle, but it is a "circle of circles". However, the circles as they apply here are different from how I explained the circles with regard to *PhG* above. In *PhG*, I argued that the circles are each stage of consciousness as well as the repetition of consciousness's journey. Differing from this way of seeing the circles, Hegel writes of *WL* that "this circle is moreover a *circle of circles*, for each individual member as ensouled by the method is reflected into itself, so that in returning into the beginning it is at the same time the beginning of a new member. Links of this chain are the individual sciences [of logic, nature and spirit]" (*WL* 842). Thus, WL is one of three circles of science. The other two circles in this trilogy will not be discussed in this paper for concerns for space.

6. Why Hegel changed his mind about Reinhold

In the preceding two sections of this paper I argued that Hegel's *PhG* and *WL* are (in some ways) epistemological and that these epistemologies are circular. At this point, I

will return to a discussion I presented in the section titled Circularity about Hegel's views on Reinhold, and consider why Hegel changed his views on Reinhold's view of philosophy.

As noted in the earlier section, Hegel claimed in the *Differenzschrift* that Reinhold's philosophy operated on the "founding and grounding tendency" (*Differenzschrift* 179). Philosophy for Reinhold, according to Hegel in the *Differenzschrift*, turned into a futile exercise of hoping to stumble upon the arch-true while never attaining the goal of having a firm foundation. Thus, philosophy turned into a mere preliminary exercise that could not reach further, according to Hegel's criticism of Reinhold's view of philosophy.

In his discussion of Reinhold in *WL*, however, Hegel radically changed his view on Reinhold. Where he sharply criticized Reinhold in the *Differenzschrift*, in *WL*, Hegel embraced Reinhold's system based on his revised reading of Reinhold. In *WL*, he presented Reinhold's philosophy as essentially circular, having a hypothetical beginning and justifying this beginning through the whole system where the end point returns to the beginning and justifies this beginning, relieving it of its hypothetical status.

We can understand why Hegel changes his mind about Reinhold, when we reference the circular epistemology of *PhG* and *WL*. Firstly, Hegel sees that all beginnings are hypothetical. He already had this view in the *Differenzschrift* when he wrote against the "founding and grounding tendency" (*Differenzschrift* 179). Because foundations cannot show necessity according to his view (*WL* 49), beginnings have to be hypothetical; their necessity will be demonstrated through the whole system which is self-justificatory. Hegel changed his view on Reinhold when he saw that this was what Reinhold was doing

all along. He was not hoping to stumble upon an arch-true but rather seeking to justify the beginning point after beginning hypothetically.

Beginning hypothetically and returning to this beginning point to justify it is in fact what Hegel does in his works. My analysis of *PhG* has shown that consciousness begins with no knowledge, thus begins hypothetically, where the beginning is appropriate. As a result of its journey it justifies its beginning point as "immediacy" as the proper place to begin when it reaches "Absolute Knowing" and returns back to this "immediacy". The beginning is justified by the affirmation of the final point. Similarly, in *WL*, the ontology begins with "being, pure being". This is again a hypothetical beginning because it has not yet received justification. Although Hegel discusses why we must begin with "being" and not anything else (*WL* 72) (thus the beginning is not entirely arbitrary), it is nevertheless hypothetical because it is immediate and undifferentiated. Only when we reach Absolute Idea at the end do we know that we are to return back to the beginning and thereby the beginning is affirmed and justified.

Thus only in a circular fashion, as Hegel discusses in relation to Reinhold in *WL*, do we have justification of how we began our investigation, and this is exemplified in my analyses of both *PhG* and *WL*. Hegel realizes in *WL* that what he criticized Reinhold for in the *Differenzschrift* (namely committing himself to an inability to ever get out of a preliminary investigation and making philosophy a beginning exercise) was wrong. In fact, what he criticized Reinhold for doing was what he was doing himself which he did not deem to merely be a beginning exercise.

Consciousness in Hegel's *PhG* can be said to "stumble upon an arch-true" at the end of its journey when it reaches Absolute Knowing, if we are to take Hegel's description of Reinhold's system in the *Differenzschrift* to hold. However, we know that consciousness does not merely "stumble upon" "absolute knowing", but it reaches it through a dialectical progression. Furthermore, when it reaches "Absolute Knowing", it has all of its preceding shapes superseded in it. This shows that "Absolute Knowing" is not an arbitrary place in which consciousness ends up but rather is the result of a progression (which is also set to return to the beginning point). This is why the whole process is self-justifying. However, because consciousness does not merely "stumble upon the arch-true" but reaches it as a result of a progression, this does not fit Hegel's description of Reinhold's system in the *Differenzschrift*, but rather fits the one in *WL*. Hegel realizes in *WL* that what his philosophical system is epistemologically like how Reinhold describes how a philosophical system should be; only Hegel did not give him enough credit in the *Differenzschrift*.

In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel had criticized Reinhold for turning philosophy into a search for a beginning. In his own works, he takes this notion of a search for beginning philosophy and reevaluates it. *PhG* and *WL* form a search for a beginning, yet they also constitute beginnings. At the end of *PhG*, as remarked above, the progression returns to its beginning point and goes through the progression again only to repeat this again. At the end of *WL*, not only do we return to where we started but rather we are told that there are other circles that will follow the circle of *WL*, and that even though *WL* is a self-enclosed system, it nevertheless leads the way to another self-enclosed system which will lead to another self-enclosed system which will return to *WL*. Hence there is a repetition

of circles and with each repetition, there is a new beginning for the next circle. Philosophy does become an exercise to begin, but this no longer carries a negative connotation like the one Hegel attributed to Reinhold's view in his interpretation of it in the *Differenzschrift*. Hence, Hegel realizes in *WL* that his criticism of Reinhold was not fair because his own system was Reinholdian all along, and unlike the criticism he leveled against Reinhold.

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that Hegel's works, specifically *PhG* and *WL*, can be read as epistemological. In contrast to the previous work done on Hegel's epistemology, I focused on an approach to Hegel's epistemology that dwells on the importance of the structure of Hegel's works. Furthermore, and more centrally, I argued that these epistemologies are circular, based on the circular structure of Hegel's works. I showed that this circularity hinges on Hegel's anti-foundationalism, presuppositionless beginnings and self-enclosed and -justifying systems. However, more importantly, I argued that we can call Hegel's works epistemologically circular because each instance of knowledge in Hegel's works depends on the next for its justification and the end returns to the beginning.

In my discussion of Hegel's views on Reinhold, I showed that Hegel reevaluated his position on Reinhold's philosophy by changing his reading of Reinhold. My account of Hegel's circular epistemology that is structural in *PhG* and *WL* explains why Hegel changed his mind about Reinhold and how Hegel's philosophy is in line with Reinhold's notion of a philosophical system. Only in looking at the structural epistemological

aspects of Hegel's philosophy can we adequately account for Hegel's change of mind regarding Reinhold's discussions of a philosophical system.

I have, through my analysis of the place of circularity in Hegel's structural epistemology in *PhG* and *WL*, shown the importance of circular epistemology in Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's circular epistemology holds an essential relation to his views on Reinhold's position on philosophy: his engagement with Reinhold regarding circularity in his initial work, the *Differenzschrift*, and Reinhold's continuing influence in his later works, as in *WL*, bears witness to this importance. Exploring Hegel's circular epistemology, as I have done in this paper, traces a thread that runs through Hegel's corpus from its beginning to his later works, and illuminates essential concerns in Hegel's philosophy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aikin, Scott F. "The Problem of the Criterion and Hegel's Model for Epistemic Infinitism." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 27.4 (2010): 379-388. Web.

Ameriks, Karl. "Recent Work on Hegel: The Rehabilitation of an Epistemologist?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52.1 (1992): 177-202. Web.

Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: The Modern Library, 2001. Print.

Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Trans. and Ed. John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print.

Harris, H. S. *Hegel: Phenomenology and System*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1995. Print.

---. *Hegel's Ladder I: The Pilgrimage of Reason*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997. Print.

---. *Hegel's Ladder II: The Odyssey of Spirit*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997. Print.

Hegel, G. W. F. The *Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. Trans. H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf. Albany: State University of New York Press: 1977. Print.

---. *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. Trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991. Print.

---. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.

---. *Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830).* Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.

---. *Science of Logic*. Trans. A. V. Miller; Ed. H.D. Lewis. New York: Humanity Books, 1998. Print.

Horstmann, Rolf-Peter. "Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit as an Argument for a Monistic Ontology." *Inquiry* 49.1 (2006): 103-118. Web.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. and Ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print.

Kojeve, Alexandre. "Desire and Work in the Master and Slave." *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition*. Ed. John O'Neill. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. 49-65. Print.

McDowell, John. "The Apperceptive I and the Empirical Self: Towards a Heterodox Reading of 'Lordship and Bondage' in Hegel's *Phenomenology.*" *Hegel: New Directions*. Ed. Katerina Deligiorgi. Chesham, Bucks: Acumen, 2006. 33-48. Print.

Plato. *Complete Works*. Eds. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997. Print.

Reinhold, K.L. *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*. Ed. Karl Ameriks. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.

Rockmore, Tom. *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. Print.

---. *On Hegel's Epistemology and Contemporary Philosophy*. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996. Print.

Rometsch, Jens. "Hegel On Knowledge of What We Are Doing." *SATS Northern European Journal of Philosophy* 13.2 (2012): 95-115. Web.

Solomon, Robert C. "Hegel's Epistemology." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 11.4 (1974): 277-289. Web.

Sophocles. *Antigone*. Trans. David Franklin and John Harrison. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.

Wartenberg, Thomas E. "Hegel's idealism: The logic of conceptuality." *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Ed. Frederick C. Beiser. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. 102-129. Print.

Westphal, Kenneth R. *Hegel's Epistemology: A Philosophical Introduction to the* Phenomenology of Spirit. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003. Print.