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## **Three forms of consciousness: A methodological perspective**

Already in the first sentences of the *Introduction* of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel presents us with a central question of the book: how is it possible for us to know what the absolute is, he asks himself, when it seems as though our knowledge of the absolute is separated from the absolute itself? To be able to answer this question, Hegel soon comes to the conclusion that we cannot reach knowledge of the absolute from an external perspective, which he expresses in the sentence: “Das Wahre ist das Ganze.”<sup>1</sup> Of course this sentence alone is but a formal definition of the project, and thus the following question remains: how *are* we able to formulate the whole without taking such an external perspective that places itself outside of the whole, and confronts us with the danger of an infinite regress? This is easier said than done.

In this paper I would like to discuss some methodological considerations which I believe are necessary prerequisites to answer the aforementioned question. The central thesis I would like to defend is that a triangular relation between natural, phenomenological and philosophical consciousness as suggested by Johannes Heinrichs in his book *Die Logik der Phänomenologie des Geistes*<sup>2</sup> is needed to be able to come to a systematic understanding of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In what follows I will first introduce all three forms of consciousness and I aim to show how they are connected to each other. Thereafter I will try to substantiate my claims by use of an example from the book.

I will first start with natural consciousness, a concept introduced by Hegel in the *Introduction*. He writes:

“sie kann von diesem Standpunkte aus als der Weg des natürlichen Bewußtseins, das zum wahren Wissen dringt, genommen werden, oder als der Weg der Seele, welche die Reihe ihrer Gestaltungen, als durch ihre Natur vorgesteckter Stationen, durchwandert, dass sie sich zum Geiste läutere, indem sie durch die vollständige Erfahrung ihrer selbst zur Kenntnis desjenigen gelangt, was sie an sich selbst ist”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hamburg 2015, 19.

<sup>2</sup> J. Heinrichs, *Die Logik der Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Bonn 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 55.