Theocrit 9628 [A]: What is Philosophy? Philosophy and Theory from Kant to the Twentieth Century

Prof. Tilottama Rajan, University College 2423
E.mail: trajan@uwo.ca.
Office hours: after class or by appointment on zoom (Monday, Thurs or Friday)

I. Course Description

This course takes up the nature of philosophy in (post)Kantian Idealism, the across-fertilization of Idealist and Romantic philosophy as a condition of possibility for "Theory," the continuing role of philosophy now and at times the "resistances" of "philosophy." We will begin with Kant's modest proposal for protecting a place for philosophy in the university and with the way he saw the place of philosophy in relation to other disciplines. We will then move on to Hegel's attempt to make philosophy a meta-discipline, through his attempt to construct an encyclopedia of all the "*philosophical* sciences," and will read Hegel together with Schelling's experimentation with the form and potential diversity of philosophy, and the complex relations between the empirical and transcendental that this geo- and biodiversity of philosophy create.

The radical opening up of thought that thus occurs sees the emergence of something like "Theory" within philosophy, but also results in several attempts, from the mid-nineteenth century to the modern period, to close off this opening. These include a shift away from philosophy as the umbrella discipline for knowledge, for instance in the positivism of Comte. In philosophy itself these foreclosures include neo-Kantianism, British Hegelianism, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, and logical positivism: in other words, they occur in "continental" as well as analytic philosophy. The course cannot cover all of these developments, but will push towards the question of whether philosophy, as a result, migrates out of philosophy strictly speaking. As Zizek says, "often other disciplines," such as aesthetics or sciences, "take over (at least part of) the 'normal" role of philosophy," which results in the "`proper' space" for "authentic philosophical thought" being "these very gaps and interstices in the social edifice," where philosophy is led outside itself. It is in this displacement and the aftermath of German Idealist and Romantic philosophy that we can situate "Theory," as a mode of thinking that develops, initially at least, through the migration of philosophy into aesthetics/literature. The course will return to the issue with which it began, namely the role of philosophy in relation to other domains, but now at a point when philosophy is no longer a rising force, as in Idealism, but is increasingly marginalized within current neo-liberal organizations of knowledge. Here, we will explore both the need for philosophy in Theory now, and the possible differends (to evoke Lyotard) between Theory and philosophy.

II. Readings, These will be made available as pdfs (selections, though I may provide the full text FYI). Selections are noted in the detailed syllabus below or will be provided as the class proceeds. Most of these can also be downloaded from Library Genesis. I have not ordered anything through the bookstore, but do encourage buying a hard copy of anything on which you will be working closely.

Immanuel Kant: Selection from "Architectonic" section of the *Critique of Pure Reason. The Contest of Faculties* (selections); *Critique of Pure Reason* (brief selections); Introductions to various texts*;*

G.W.F.Hegel: *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline* ("Introduction" to the 1817 version); selections from *The Philosophy of Nature* ("Introduction" and section on "Organics," in particular the last section, on "The Disease of the Individual") "Introduction" to *Aesthetics* (section 5). Supplemented by handouts.

Friedrich Schelling: *On University Studies* (selections); *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (selections)*; Ages of the World* (1815 version; selections); pages from the 1813 version of Ages; *Freedom essay*; "On the Nature of Philosophy as Science".

Friedrich Schlegel, "Talk on Mythology."

??Jacques Derrida. For reference, essays from *Right to Philosophy*, vols. 1 and 2 (*Who's Afraid" of Philosophy*, and *Eyes of the University).* Suggested essays: "Privilege," "Theology of Translation" (on Schelling), "The Age of Hegel," "Titles"; "The University Without Condition."

Auguste Comte: brief selections from *Course of Positive Philosophy* (probably just a handout)

Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy (sections 1-17)*

?? Walter Benjamin: *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (selections)

?? Georg Lukacs: *Theory of the Novel* (selections)

Edmund Husserl: "Inaugural Lecture"; brief selections from "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," The Vienna

lecture, and *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*

??Maurice Blanchot, "The Essential Solitude" (in *The Space of Literature*), "Literature and the Right to Death" (selection).

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (extensive selections*) Raymond Roussel* (extensive selections), *The Order of Things* (brief selections)

Georges Canguilhem, essays from *Knowledge of Life*, *The Normal and the Pathological* (selections)

Roberto Esposito, selections from *Immunitas*, *Bios*, and *Third Person*.

The question marks are because I won't devote a significant amount of our short time to these texts unless someone is interested in doing a seminar on them (though I will still touch on them). There may also be other background readings.

III. Schedule

1. January 8th — Introduction: Issues of the course. The emergence of philosophy as metadiscipline. Kant on the construction of disciplines, on architectonic, and the nature and position of philosophy ("Architectonic section of 1st Critique, *Conflict of Faculties*). Some key terms in Kant's critical "apparatus," and their implications: critique, transcendental, dialectic, regulative/constitutive, ideas/concepts, reason/understanding, aesthetic/rational ideas, determinant/reflective judgment (extracts from 1st and 3rd Critiques). Kant's thinking between the disciplines: examples – "To Perpetual Peace."; the French Revolution (*Conflict of Faculties*).

2. January 15 — Previous continued. Hegel, "Introduction" to the Encyclopedia; the concept of, and the breaking open of the encyclopedia; levels and spheres; Architectonic, containment and infinitization; the historical rather than transcendental structure of Hegel's texts; the empirical and the transcendental; the Zusätze (please glance at *Philosophy of Nature* for this; cf. also Nancy, *The Speculative Remark* in Ancillary Readings). Aesthetics.

3. January 22 — *The Philosophy of Nature;* its omission from the corpus from the 19th-20thc; the problems that nature causes for philosophy; digestion, illness, negativity, excrement, abjection; irritability and sensibility; what is "spirit"?; temporalities of the plant and animal organism; reading Hegel otherwise.

   READINGS: *Philosophy of Nature,* The Introduction and "Organics" section of the *Philosophy of Nature* (#337, #343, #345, #348, #350, $351 [need only glance at Remarks], #354 [+ pp 364-5 of Remark]; #356, #357, $363-5, #380-76 [all including Remarks]); Aesthetics (Introduction, section 5; further selections from sections on Classical and Romantic art)

   Nancy, from *The Speculative Remark*; Catherine Malabou, "The Wounds of Spirit"

4. January 29 — Hegel continued. Schelling's early "encyclopedia" of philosophy in *On University Studies*: positive vs absolute knowledge, real and ideal science. Schelling's later traversal of the experience of philosophy in "On the Nature of Philosophy as Science." (Pp. 210-30)

5. February 5 — Overview of Schelling's corpus and the various "series" in his philosophy. Archive and predication: we will cover the *First Outline* and *Ages of the World* (1815) as "archives" of ideas and the *Freedom* essay as a form of speculative predication. These are all difficult texts and so in looking (selectively) at the first two, I will be concerned with how they enable what Schelling calls "unconditional" thinking, and will not attempt an exposition of the texts (which would be impossible). But so as to have a thread to follow, we will concentrate on the classic Idealist issue of the (im)possibility of nature self-developing into spirit.

   Background Readings: Derrida, "Theology of Translation"; excerpt from Deleuze (*Difference and Repetition*) on the great book.

6. February 12 — Above continued. Possible seminar on Schelling and Derrida. Otherwise I will briefly cover this myself

READING WEEK

7. February 26 Interregnum: The eclipse and narrowing of philosophy: The turn away from speculation (Burckhardt, Comte); Husserl. [I do not expect to spend the entire class on the above. We may either have got behind by this point, or we may move on to the next component].

READINGS: Auguste Comte, (by way of handout); Jacob Burckhardt, selection from *Reflections on History*, and handout; Husserl, "Inaugural Lecture," "Philosophy as Rigourous Science" (skim), *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Chapter. 2)

8. March 5 The migration of philosophy into aesthetics: Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*; art theory (Worringer, Riegl); literature (Benjamin, Lukacs).

READINGS: Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (sections 1-17); a reprise of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, including the later section on Romantic art and the end of art; Benjamin, selections from *Trauerspiel* (Epistemo-Critical Prologue, and pp.102-23, 145-58, 159-95; 213-20, 232-5– these selections deal with Nietzsche/Schopenhauer, allegory/symbol/ruin, writing/script, and allegory and melancholy); may touch on Lukacs (Preface to *Theory of the Novel*)

9. March 12 Blanchot; Foucault, *Raymond Roussel*. The idea of "literature" in Blanchot and Foucault. Foucault's *Trauerspiel*.

READINGS: Blanchot, "The Essential Solitude" (in *The Space of Literature*), "Literature and the Right to Death" (the last segment on the two slopes of literature); Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, (Chapter. 1, 2, 3 (upto p. 41), 5, 8 and the 1983 interview with Ruas at the end); however, those giving the seminar and response MUST read the whole book. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.300.

Background Reading: Foucault, "Language to Infinity."

10. March 19 Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic (Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 6, 8-10, Conclusion)

11 March 26 Canguilhem. *Knowledge of Life*; *The Normal and the Pathological* ("Introduction": 33-5; "Introduction to the Problem" 39-46; 47-64, 75-112, Conclusion: 227-9)

12. April 2nd Esposito, *Bios* (Chapters 1,4,5); *Immunitas*, "Introduction," "The Implant"; *Third Person*, "Introduction," Chapter 1. These readings may be modified depending on what seminar-presenters are doing.

IV. Method of Evaluation

Participation (10%): General participation, attendance and Seminar response (see separate list of Seminars). Attendance is a required part of this course. If you miss more than two classes without good reason (compassionate or medical), you may forfeit upto 5% of the 10% grade.

Book Review (15%): see separate list of Books for Review. Due February 14th; grace period: one week.

Seminar (25%). Weeks 5-12, to be written up and handed in a week after the seminar. See separate list of seminars. Please choose seminar by January 15th.

Research paper (50%). Due April 23rd. There may be an extended deadline, depending on when my grades are due; papers not submitted by April 23rd will not receive extensive comments. The paper should be 20-25 pages (at least 5000 words excluding Bibliography), and should be on a different thinker than the one covered in the seminar. Papers may deal with texts covered in class or with other work by the theorists in the course, or in consultation with me, a related thinker (e.g. Schopenhauer), but they should take up the topic of the course (ie "What is Philosophy?").The paper should contain a bibliography, andshould show evidence of secondary reading and original research. The paper should follow either the MLA or Chicago Style format for references.

All essays **must** be submitted in **hard** copy, and either left for me at the English Department office by April 23rd, or after that should be dropped off at my house (870 Wellington Street, SE corner of Wellington and Grosvenor). All

essays should also be submitted to me electronically in MS Word 97-2003, Compatibility Mode.

V. Late Penalties and Incompletes

--Failure to give a seminar on the assigned date creates a problem for the entire class and its scheduling. If this happens, the seminar must be handed in in writing within a week, and there will be a 15% deduction from the grade.

– Late submission of book review: 1% will be deducted per day after the grace period.

-- Late submission of research paper: 2% will be deducted per day after the extended deadline.

--Incompletes: Incompletes must be requested from the Centre Director in consultation with the instructor. I cannot grant an incomplete on my own. Please consult the Centre Office about this.

Academic Offences

As part of university policy we are required to stress that scholastic offences, including but not limited to plagiariam (whether of direct wording or arguments), are taken seriously. Students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Website:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

In addition, please note (with apologies for saying this if it's unnecessary) that a graduate course which draws on the professor's published and unpublished research is noit like an undergraduate course which may organise existing information that is in the public domain. Any arguments that you take from this course, which are not common knowledge, and which you use in a class essay or outside this class (e.g. in another course, a thesis, conference paper, or article), must be duly acknowledged.