
MODERN CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHERS

SELECTIONS
ILLUSTRATING MODERN PHILOSOPHY
FROM BRUNO TO SPENCER

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THE CONTRITE CONSCIOUSNESS

Prefatory Note by Josiah Royce

The *Phänomenologie des Geistes* the first of Hegel's systematic works 1807 is intended as a novel sort of Introduction to Philosophy It depicts a series of phases or Gestalten of consciousness which lie between our natural common sense view of the real world and what Hegel regards as the truly philosophical view of reality These phases form a series whose order Hegel conceives as necessary Each stage or phase of insight into the truth of things is meanwhile illustrated in this book by examples derived from literature from history or from the general experience of mankind These mere illustrations are freely chosen and Hegel does not conceive that the special embodiment or clothing which his choice of the illustrations gives to each phase or stage of consciousness is part of the necessary development The unhappy or contrite consciousness *das unglückliche Bewusstsein* is a phase or stage of consciousness which is subjectively idealistic in its interpretation of reality but which is abstract and dualistic in its view of its relations to truth It is therefore concerned not with external nature but with its own private ideals and with a search for personal perfection It is in brief what Professor William James might call a variety of religious experience This experience is here that of a lonely devotee whose world consists of his search for inner spiritual perfection together with the goal of this search namely his far off changeless or divine consciousness Both the social and the more technically theological aspects of religion play no essential part in the phase of consciousness here in question The illustrations are obviously derived from mediæval cloister life but this part of the setting of the phase in question is accidental Any lonely religious experience might present essentially the same features The union of theoretical opinions about the nature of truth with practical and emotional interpretations of life is characteristic of the Phenomenology Any coherent plan of life embodies a theory of truth and of reality Any view about the universe expresses itself in a way of life Such is the general notion illustrated by the phases of consciousness which the Phenomenology portrays.