

Tentative Title of Dissertation:

The Role of the Imagination in Reason: Kant and Hegel

Abstract:

My dissertation seeks to accomplish three original and pivotal tasks in German Idealism. First, it argues for a unified account of the imagination in Kant's critical work. This analysis takes up the imagination in relation (a) to the logical hylomorphic function of (non-sensible) matter in judgments (e.g. concerning space and time as the pure forms of intuitions), (b) to its synthetic function that makes possible the schemata (and the schematism) and thereby the possibility of experience itself, as well as (c) to its function in the principle of purposiveness as a "free lawfulness", which structures and grounds all aesthetic judgments and teleological judgments of nature. The analysis makes explicit the formal features of the imagination such that a unified account of its diverse functions is possible. Second, this unified account of the formal features of the imagination reveals a surprisingly vital ground for seeing the imagination as the fundamental structural quality of a unity of reason. Whether taken up as a self-grounding ground of all knowledge, as in Fichte's 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*, or as the core structure of reason that grounds the Hegelian dialectic in which sensibility is capable of determining the transcendental (without thereby necessitating a transcendental "world"), the imagination serves as a unifying ground of reason precisely because of those formal features that Kant first reveals in his critical work. Third, by making explicit the formal features of the imagination in Kant and how the imagination (with the same formal features) becomes a structural core of the unity of reason in Hegel, my dissertation gives, what I take to be, the strongest ground for taking seriously Hegel's claims to be completing Kant's transcendental work, and thereby defends a reading of Hegel as revealing the structural unity of reason (which Kant notes is a demand of reason itself). This unity of reason is often confused with a kind of pre-critical monism instead of a deeply Kantian rational holism. The formal features of the imagination make possible a strong reading of both Kant and Hegel as endeavoring to show (in different ways and to different degrees) the transcendental ground for the unity of reason. As such, my account of the imagination will provide a strong ground for understanding Hegel in a far more Kantian light than is typically thought.