Reflection Prompts Week 2
Monday’s Reading:

Hegel’s ‘Master-Servant’

- Try to unpack the first sentence in ordinary English. What is Hegel saying and what kind of claim is this? A psychological claim describing the actual conditions giving rise to human self-consciousness? A socio-political claim about the social dynamic or dialectical process that yields a master-servant form of mutual recognition? Or???

- See the handout on Hegel’s Dialectic. Briefly describe or consider the three movements (thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis) resulting in the master-slave recognition. Do you agree that Hegel has correctly characterized a historical accurate and/or necessary dance in the process of becoming objectively certain of one’s autonomy and intrinsic value? What examples could you cite where this dance occurs?

- Why, according to Hegel, is this type of mutual recognition ultimately unstable for the both the master and the servant? Do you agree that such relationships will naturally progress to more adequate forms of mutual recognition? Why or why not?

Wednesday’s Reading:

Mill’s ‘Human Nature as a Subject of Science’ and ‘The Laws of Mind’

- What, according to Mill, does it take for something to qualify as a proper subject of scientific inquiry? Do you agree that with Mill that human thought and behavior can meet these qualifications?

- What is Mill’s vision of the science of human nature? Mill admits that the human sciences can never be exact sciences, so what is he trying to accomplish? Are these worthy goals?

- How would you characterize the difference in Hegel’s approach for understanding the development of reason (human reason) from Mill’s approach? In other words, how does investigating the dialectical movements driving world history and smaller scale sociological phenomena differ from Millian psychology? What are the virtues and vices of each approach in addressing the philosophical question ‘What is human nature?’

- Does Mill’s scientific hypothesis about how we form moral beliefs (see p. 224) pose a problem for the idea that we are free and responsible moral agents? If so, how can we (or should we?) try to reconcile the findings of empirical psychology with the ethical and religious dimensions of human experience?
Friday’s Reading:

Mill’s Chapter III ‘On Individuality, as One of the Elements of Well-Being’ in *On Liberty*

- What appears to be Mill’s notion of freedom? How does it compare with Hegel’s account of freedom? That is, what role, if any, does society play in guaranteeing the freedom of its citizens for Mill as compared with Hegel? What role, if any, does actual Christian theory and practice play in developing free individuals for Mill as compared with Hegel? Would you rather be a member of a Millian society or a Hegelian one?
- Why, according to Mill, should societies encourage “different experiments in living”? (p. 47) Present your own critique of his reasoning.
- Would you agree with Mill that, in his day, social norms placed more pressure on women to conform than men? (see p. 57) What about our day?