Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* has a paradoxical reputation as one of the most important and most impenetrable and inconsistent of philosophical works. In *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit*, Michael N. Forster advances an original reading of the work which for the first time really penetrates its obscurity. His approach differs from that of previous scholars in two main ways: he reads the work, first, as a whole—not piecemeal, as it has usually been analyzed—and second, within the context of Hegel’s broader corpus and the thought of other philosophers. Forster’s reading reveals the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as in fact an impressively coherent text containing a rich array of ideas of extraordinary philosophical originality and depth. These ideas include a diagnosis of the ills of modernity in terms of its entanglement in a series of dualisms, and a project for overcoming them; a sweeping naturalism; a deep rethinking of and response to problems of skepticism; subtle arguments for social theories of meaning and truth; and a family of ideas based on the insight that human thought changes in fundamental ways over the course of history. Forster’s unique and compelling reading uncovers a marvelous product of the philosophical imagination, unparalleled in the history of philosophy and barely recognized for its riches until now.

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