

## Why Hegel? Why Now?

David Kolb

We live in the self-proclaimed time of difference, when particular identities and localities worry about or actively resist the global forces of modernization. This is the time of the other, the exception, the multi-cultural. Why then look again at Hegel, who is reputed to be the philosopher of unity, sameness, and absorption into the whole? Things may not be what they seem. Hegel may be surprisingly relevant: in a world where particularity is alternately triumphant and resentful, Hegel offers more sophisticated ways to think about individual and social unity. Agree with him or not, you can learn from him.

Although the essays in this issue deal with a variety of topics, again and again they return to the question how thought deals with resistant particulars. This shows up in Jay Bernstein's exposition of action in community, and in the friendly questions he raises about Henry Harris' interpretation of Hegel on mutual forgiveness. Several of our authors offer different readings of Hegel's views on thought's relation to particular reality. Kristjan Arngrimsson discusses his relation to the Enlightenment notions of individuality and modern alienation and irony. Hegel has always been read as a partisan of modernization, though not always of individuality. Our individual freedom is the concern of Will Dudley's treatment of Hegel's attempt to provide room for both modern self-legislation and a social content that enables rather than damages individual autonomy. Alison Stone shows parallels between the categories Hegel uses to describe nature and those for individual consciousness. Ardis Collins discusses the relation of Hegelian philosophy's most abstract moment, the Logic, to the particulars of nature and historical reality, offering a Hegel who both develops an a priori set of philosophical concepts and surrenders to the particularities of a reality that will always resist those concepts.

The most wide-ranging discussion of Hegel's views is offered in the three pieces discussing Henry Harris' monumental new commentary on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Jay Bernstein and Terry Pinkard applaud Harris' work, and in the process they, and Harris' reply, show how Hegel's key notion of Spirit is being read today as the human community's self-awareness of its own structure and motion. They disagree, though, on how this non-theological conception of Spirit fits with Hegel's use of the particular religious language of Christianity -- compare Bernstein's desire for a "wholly secular" reading, with Harris' desire to show "the logical necessity of Hegel's transition

to 'Religion'." At stake is what it means for us to live as a rationally structured community that is aware of both its unity and its historical particularities.

Today's Hegel is post-Kantian, in several senses. He strives to extend Kant's advances while overcoming Kant's dualities. Hegel, like Kant, works towards a self-conception of our conceptualizing activity. For Hegel, though, that knowledge is unconditioned by any other factors. Hegel does think that we can come to know the form of our developing process of language and culture, and that we can come to live self-consciously within that process, building our institutions from that understanding. This is what it means to be completely modern.

The difficulty is to find ways to affirm the unconditioned quality of philosophical knowledge where "all of the positions in the story are logically necessary, and hence permanently present in our experience" (Harris) yet also to be open to the particular and the other. Our essays include a debate about just how pure philosophical knowledge can be. Richard Winfield argues that Hegel's discussion of formal logic can lead to insights based purely on the immanent development of necessary concepts, whereas Rebecca de Boer argues in a Heideggerian and deconstructive fashion that Hegel's thought is necessarily impure and relies on presuppositions not accounted for in the self-comprehending system. Ardis Collins tries for a middle position showing how the very purity of the Logic might demand an openness beyond itself.

=====

### Finding Hegel On the Map

Discussions of nineteenth century philosophy have tended toward two complementary omissions. Either Hegel and reactions to him are made the central drama, to the exclusion of empirical and positivist thought, or the growth of empirical and positivist science-oriented philosophy is stressed, to the exclusion of Hegel and other "metaphysical" thinkers. The first narrative traces an ancestry for contemporary Continental philosophy, the second for contemporary analytic philosophy.

With the analytic reaction against the Hegel-inspired British Idealists, and with the Hegelian influence on American pragmatism either hidden or denied, in the twenties and thirties of the last century Hegel was removed from the map of philosophical options in England and America. He crept back on from his hideouts in Europe, partly as a corrective for Marx, partly through reactions to Heidegger's negative references,

and largely through the pioneering expositions of John Findlay, Walter Kaufmann, Charles Taylor, and others in the late fifties and sixties. The next decades saw a Hegel boom. But that is old news. Why Hegel now?

In so-called Continental philosophy Hegel has always loomed large, often as the parental figure to be rejected. Heideggerians and deconstructionists find themselves facing a Hegel who already announced many of their themes, though, they insist, with an emphasis on closure that must be rejected. His method seems so thoroughly rationalistic, and his goal of a complete understanding so outrageous, that he is taken as the supreme example of philosophical hybris. This leads some to attempt to rehabilitate Hegel and deny that his thought is as closed as it is made out to be. Several of the essays in this issue enter that debate.

Hegel confronts us with a process that makes us who we are, but that cannot be captured by the usual modern devices of formal analysis. Stable frameworks of meaning exist within a process that they can neither describe nor dominate. In Hegel's jargon, this means, as Bernstein says, that "the claim of immediacy is always a reflective one, hence always mediated or posited." While this Hegelian theme obviously reappears in deconstructive thinkers, it also lies behind the continuing vitality of hermeneutic thought. Gadamer and Ricoeur continue to both bring together and to deny one-sided simplifications in their studies of philosophy, literature, and ethics, influenced by Heidegger but using more Hegelian strategies than Heidegger would approve of.

Hegel has also become relevant to some debates within analytic philosophy, especially in ethics and politics, where he is often seen as developing Kant's moral ideas in more socially useful directions. He is conceived not as the crypto-fascist that Popper pictured, but as a proto-communitarian. In ontology and epistemology he has been brought into contact with current analytic debates through the work of scholars such as Willem DeVries, Kenneth Westphal, William Maker, and others. Analogies to Hegel have even been asserted for the systematic ambitions of Wilfrid Sellars and Donald Davidson. In the philosophy of art, whose historical mode he invented, Hegel remains influential through the work of Arthur Danto, Karsten Harries, and others, often in debates about "the end of art." Even his much disdained philosophy of nature has been receiving a second look, urged on by the careful studies of Michael Petry, John Burbidge, and others.

Large-scale debates about modernization, whatever their provenance, find themselves

referring to Hegel. He has been attacked by Marxists and varieties of postmodernists for his approval of bourgeois life and for his vision of a completed modernity. But his views about the relation of civil society and state seem more relevant in the time of the triumphant global market.

There has been another stimulus for new looks at Hegel, as new texts have become available. The Hegel Archive has been embarked on a new critical edition of his works. Hegel published only four books and a handful of articles during his lifetime. His books included *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, his tortuous account of how consciousness arrives at the stance of true philosophical knowledge, the *Science of Logic*, which develops the fundamental content of true philosophical knowledge, the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, his handbook for students attending his lectures, and the *Philosophy of Right*, an expansion of the Encyclopedia section dealing with ethics, morals, and the philosophy of law and politics. These works have been carefully re-edited in the new critical edition.

The bulk of Hegel's published works, however, are his more accessible lectures on concrete and historical subjects: the philosophy of art, of religion, of history, and the history of philosophy. These lectures include extended narratives of the relevant history, threaded on a framework provided by his logic. The lecture volumes were assembled after Hegel's death from student transcripts and Hegel's fragmentary notes. Those who assembled them put together material from different courses. The new critical edition is attempting to publish the student transcripts themselves, where they still exist, enabling us to follow the development in Hegel's thought. Also, where Hegel revised his published books for subsequent editions, the editors are re-issuing the earlier as well as the later versions. Besides their value to scholars, these new editions of the books and lectures quietly undermine the image of Hegel as unresponsive to the empirical and historical material he deals with.

==

some paragraph on what essays in this issue what postponed.

papers definitely be in the issue:

Dudley,

Stone,

Arngrimsson.

if room: My own order of preference would be:

1) Collins,

2) De Boer,

3) Winfield.

===

One effect of Kant's work, and then of Hegel's, was to shift the old boundary separating what was and was not open to treatment by philosophy. Thinkers like Kierkegaard accepted Hegel's claim that the logos could hold and give insight into basic structures of rationality and society etc., and then to say that the real dynamics and real sources of change were outside the reach of the logos and reason.

(Robert Pippin's studies of Hegel emphasize this side of his work.)

Kristjan G. Arngrimsson ("Hegel's Dialogue With the Enlightenment").

Will Dudley ("Freedom In and Through Hegel's Philosophy"),

Alison Stone ("Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Overcoming the Division Between Matter and Thought"),

=====

I agree with your selection and subselection, with this thought: it might be good to mention in the Hegel issue, if papers have to be postponed, that the Hegel issue has a supplement, as it were, that focusses in general on the relation of language and thought (Winfield, DeBoer), and then publish them together if possible. If one of them can be put in the issue I agree that Collins would be good, but I think that it is important that DeBoer and Winfield be together so that their opposing views can be highlighted. You might even consider a "dialogue" letting each of them comment on the other's paper in a

brief afterward.

(Kristjan G. Arngrimsson, York University, No email given)

This paper is the briefest of the set, 17 pages, trying to make more precise Hegel's attitude to the Enlightenment, in the light of the criticisms he makes in the phenomenology of Spirit. Of these, eight are taken up with a discussion of Camus and Dostoyevsky and Rorty. This discussion sets the stage well, but the Hegel section that follows is too brief, and the argument on page 16 is not sufficient as it stands. The paper reads well, though it is written as a response to an article readers won't likely know, and refers without enough narration to parts of Hegel's work. This has something of the feel of a graduate school paper. It could be expanded, though, in the last section and then might make an interesting match with some of the other papers. I'd send it out, but it would not be a first choice.

Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Overcoming the Division between Matter and Thought  
(Alison Stone, Cambridge, as363@cam.ac.uk)

This is an interesting paper with a worthwhile aim, **to show parallelisms between certain sections of the philosophy of nature and certain sections of the philosophy of spirit. The author is right that the philosophy of nature has more structure to it than is often thought**, and the method she chooses works fairly well. The paper's exposition is too compressed at times but is enlightening. There is, however, a vagueness about just what the overcoming of the division between matter and thought really comes to in the end, and the paper is too abrupt when it is making some crucial points. This paper should go out to blind review; it is worth considering.

Hegel's Unresolved Contradictions: Experience, Philosophy, and the Irrationality of Nature  
(Ardis Collins, Loyola University of Chicago, acolllin@luc.edu (invited) )

This paper could make a nice companion/contrast to Winfield, since Collins is disagreeing with his interpretation. I find the exposition clear, with a theme that is followed through various examples drawn from different parts of the Phenomenology of Spirit. Collins makes her point straightforwardly. However, the paper is too long. There are many places where the same point is made several times in successive sentences; these could be compressed. On a large scale the material from pages 18-31 (sections 5-8) be compressed. This is where Collins lines up a series of examples; several of them, sections 6 and 7 could be reduced to a paragraph each that mentions the moves involved rather than narrating them. Section 8 is important to her argument but too long and covers too much of Hegel at once. Footnote 78 could be reworded and used in

the conclusion to make her point clearer. I suggest this paper be sent out for review, and if accepted some shortening required.

From Concept to Judgment: Rethinking Hegel's Overcoming of Formal Logic (Invited Paper)

(Richard Dien Winfield, University of Georgia, )

**Winfield is one of the main practitioners of an influential mode of reading and applying Hegel that takes him to have, by and large successfully, constructed a very rigorous a priori science of the categories of thought developed without relying on any foundation outside thought's own movement. This interpretation takes Hegel's method to depend on a severe exclusion of any external content and any conceptuality not yet developed within the self-authored sequence. The result is a style of Hegel exposition that is committed, very patient and clear, but not easy to read because the exposition works within the same constraints.** In this paper Winfield takes on a section in the third part of Hegel's logic, **related to current debates about the origin of the overall categories used to describe formal logic.** This is the best paper of the group being considered so far, but it is not an easy read. What makes it good is that it takes up a section of Hegel and narrates it critically, raising objections and finding answers in the text, and also relating the material to some contemporary issues. What makes it difficult is that the exposition is severe and somewhat unrelenting, and that for the audience of the journal the paper would need to have added to it some explanation of the general theory of the three modes of determination in being, essence, and concept, which is alluded to in the paper as if the reader already knew it. In this regard the discussion of the collapse at the end of the section on Essence would need to be expanded, and something more said about the overcoming of the status of "consciousness" before the logic begins. On the other hand, this paper is a good example of current Hegelian thinking, though I would have wished that Winfield had taken up one of the more social or aesthetic portions of Hegel's thought. The paper also ends too abruptly, as it seems to be an excerpt from a longer treatment of the logic. I would definitely send this out for blind review.

The Infinite Movement of Self-Conception and its Inconceivable Finitude: Hegel on Logos and Language (Karin de Boer, University of Amsterdam, kdeboer@hum.uva.nl)  
This essay offers **a Heideggerian criticism of Hegel**, and might be good to include as an example of current criticisms. It is nicely written, with a few lapses in English, and approaches a standard Heideggerian point by a consideration of **the role of language in Hegel.** The discussion of language is good as far as it goes, though the author leaves out consideration of some important sections of Hegel (in the philosophy of spirit) that

would force some changes in her ideas. This paper pairs, in some ways, with the Winfield paper, since they differ markedly on the issue of **the relation of the speculative science to empirical language**. Winfield's notion of that relation avoids many of de Boer's criticisms, and he is much more careful about Hegelian notions such as "self-development" that de Boer uses loosely and vaguely. On the other hand de Boer is arguing that the self-development that Winfield proposes cannot be done on its own terms, as it has **a hidden presupposition**. Her paper ends rather abruptly, and the Heideggerian criticism itself is just stated in about a page and a half, and not sufficiently developed either in itself or as coming from the preceding reflections. Since her paper is somewhat short, this could perhaps be remedied. If the paper is accepted, I would also suggest incorporating some of the lengthy footnotes into the text. I would definitely send this out for blind review.