

HEGEL AND HIS LEGACY

(#1-2/2021)

Since we have several international contributors in this edition of Filosofisk supplement, we have decided to write an introduction in English as well. Huge thanks to Dr. Gregory B. Sadler for sharing our call to papers.

In 2020, we observed Hegel's 250th anniversary. Although the man himself was not there to join us in celebrating his anniversary (not in the flesh, at least), his *Geburtstag* was marked with several conferences, publications and workshops across the globe. That Hegel's thought is still relevant, seems undoubtable, but it is not a given that a philosopher who wrote in the 18th and 19th century would still be this influential. It is neither a given that Hegel specifically, with his distinct style of writing, would be read and discussed widely in our time. This seems to implicate the following: Hegel still has a lot to teach us, both *directly* through his own works, and *indirectly* through the thinkers and schools of thought he has inspired.

There are two things in particular that can be said to be Hegel's groundbreaking contributions to the philosophical discipline: his attempt to incorporate the course of history as a metaphysical force within his system, and his reformulation of the traditional dialectic and logic. These two aspects of his system are, of course, inseparable. In Hegel's view, it is the struggle between contradictions, oppositional forces, that lies behind – and furthers – progression across all levels of reality. This has traditionally been presented in the triad of *thesis*, *antithesis*, and *synthesis*. But as several thinkers have pointed out, this is a simplification of the more dynamic dialectic one finds in Hegel's works. It is – in any case – through this dialectic that Hegel located the possibility of subsuming the one-sided perspectives and dualisms which characterized much of philosophy before him, and which may be said to continue to exercise its influence on the discipline today. One need not look further than to the dichotomies between theoretical and practical reason, subject and object, mankind and nature, individual and collective, and freedom and necessity, to understand what this might entail for Hegel's project.

Hegel was a systematic philosopher, a thinker who reflected upon reality in its entirety, in its totality. He therefore engaged with all areas of philosophy, and also kept himself up to date with the newest developments in the natural sciences in his time. As a thinker, he has accordingly not only left his stamp on the philosophical dis-

cipline – its objects of study, methodology, and models of explanation – but his works have also influenced many disciplines outside of philosophy.

In “Habermas on Hegel, or Steps Along the Way from Absolute Spirit to Communicative Reason”, Steinar Mathisen discusses Jürgen Habermas' use and interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, all the way from Habermas' first published work on Hegel in 1962, up to the newly published book *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie* (2019). Among other things, Mathisen criticizes Habermas' claim that Hegel is the philosopher of modernity.

Terje Sparby has analyzed the role religion plays in Hegel's thought. For Hegel, religion is a prerequisite for philosophy: in religion as well as in philosophy, one turns away from the sensuous and reaches toward the eternal. Hegel seems therefore closer to mysticism than to theology, since Hegel, just like the mystics, seeks to understand the transcendent.

Åsne Dorthea Grøgaard explains and discusses Hegel's critique of Spinoza's concept of God, mainly by drawing on Hegel's lectures in religion. In the article “God says himself”, Grøgaard writes that Hegel proposes and develops a philosophical method which shows us what God is. Hegel did not want to distinguish between the content of the concept “God” and the being of God: *that* God is, follows from *what* he is.

Maia Nordsteien Nielsen discusses Hegel's reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* in her article “What Can We Learn from Tragedy?”. For Hegel, the concept of reconciliation plays a vital role in tragedies. By drawing on Hegel's *Aesthetics* and *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Nielsen claims that Hegel's understanding of tragedy should not be viewed simply as a literary genre analysis, but as an inquiry into our human conditions.

In “Actional Agency and Collective Catharsis”, Matthew Miyagi Tuten looks to the philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon in order to criticize Hegel's dialectic of recognition. One of Fanon's main claims is that Hegel's understanding of the struggle of recognition, by not incorporating preconditions such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity and institutionalized discrimination, remains too abstract and idealist to adequately serve as a model for oppressed groups.

Sjur Sandvik Strøm has written an article called “From Duty and Conscience to Hypocrisy and Beautiful Souls”, where he reconstructs and analyzes the transitions in the last part of the chapter on Spirit in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. Here, Hegel identifies a line from Kant’s moral philosophy to Fichte’s ethics of conscience and phenomena such as hypocrisy and evil. Strøm maintains that Hegel’s critique of Kant is insightful, but that it can be counterproductive to forfeit Kant’s doctrine of postulates altogether. Strøm also shows how Hegel’s interpretation of evil can be challenged.

How has Hegel influenced French thought? Lukas Lehner looks into differences and similarities between Hegel and Gilles Deleuze in his article “The Tamed Difference”. Even though Hegel and Deleuze share a common goal, namely, to overcome the Kantian separation of *noumenon* and *phenomenon*, the two philosophers depart through the way in which they understand the relationship between the concepts of identity and difference.

How has Hegel influenced the social sciences? This question is treated by Evan Hays in the article “Implicit Dialectic”. As the title indicates, Hays claims that Hegel’s dialectic is operative – albeit implicit – in several disciplines, although the different disciplines might not be methodologically conscious of it.

Andreas Tagmose Grønkjær has written about Hegel’s importance for the philosophy of history. Through an analysis and critical interpretation of Hegel’s use of the concepts “canon” and “organon”, Grønkjær highlights the differences between Hegel and Kant’s view of history. Furthermore, Grønkjær claims that it is a Hegelian consequence that Hegel himself has become superfluous.

Sindre Brennhagen and Sjur Sandvik Strøm have interviewed Arne Johan Vetlesen, professor of philosophy at the University of Oslo, about Hegel’s continued relevance. In their conversation, they delve into several different subjects. They ask Vetlesen about how he views Hegel as a philosophical system builder, his usage of Hegel’s thought when dealing with questions of moral and judicial accountability and punishment (especially in the case of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik), and furthermore, how insights from Hegel’s social philosophy can help us understand our own time.

Jonas Bakkeli Eide has reviewed Eirik Høyer Leivestad’s book *Frykt og avsky i demokratiet* (2020), published by the literary journal *Vagant* on their newly started publishing firm. Eide finds that Leivestad’s critical analysis of the concept of “the masses” are both thought-provoking and well-argued, but that he falls into his own trap when he tries to discuss the populism of our time without accounting for

the subjectivity of the (presumably) homogenous “mass”.

Sindre Brennhagen has written an essay wherein he delves into topics discussed in Eileen Crist’s *Abundant Earth* (2019) and the anthology *Det går til helvete. Eller?* (2020) edited by K.I. Bjørlykhaug and A.J. Vetlesen. In the essay titled “Elegy for Dying Nature”, Brennhagen writes about issues related to the philosophy of nature, focusing on extinction of species in the Anthropocene, ecogrief, ecological amnesia, and the necessity of maintaining nature as a normative frame of reference.

In our regular column called “In Practice”, Dag Johnsen – who has translated Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, *Philosophy of Nature*, *Philosophy of Spirit* and *Logic* from German to Norwegian – provides his thoughts on translating in general, and translating Hegel specifically.

Tollef Graff Hugo has translated “Who Thinks Abstractly?”, which Hegel wrote in 1807. “Who Thinks Abstractly?” was originally written as a contribution to a satire contest, but as Hugo points out in his introduction to the translation, Hegel makes several sarcastic remarks on the contest and also uses the opportunity to argue against major objections to his own philosophy.

Harald Langslet Kavli has translated the Hellenistic philosopher Epicurus’ letter to Menoecus. In the letter, Epicurus argues that death is not an evil for those that die, since death can make no difference for those who are not alive. This is a position the later Lucretius also defended, and a view that contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum has written extensively about.

As always, the reader can find an excerpt from the mystical “Lexicryptic Encyclopedia”, two short-texts from newly graduates in philosophy, quizzes in the back of the issue, and a call for papers for our next issue.

The current issue of *Filosofisk supplement*, the one you hold in your hands, is the longest we have ever published. But just like philosophy arrives too late to its own time, and the owl of Minerva spreads its wings and flies at dusk, our own issue devoted to Hegel is published right *after* his 250th anniversary. Perhaps this is something the man of the hour himself would have found humorous. We nonetheless hope that this issue can shed some light on Hegel’s thinking, and its influence on heirs and critics.

Enjoy!

Sindre Brennhagen
& Sjur Sandvik Strøm
editors