

Book Review

The Bloomsbury Companion to Hegel

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G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) is one of the greatest systematic thinkers in the history of philosophy. His work has been an inexhaustible source of reflection, inspiration and critique. Hegel's philosophy represents the climax of German Idealism. His philosophical legacy is constantly reassessed, re-evaluated and celebrated in the voluminous scholarly literature published worldwide. Each part of Hegel's philosophy relates to the rest, and the whole signifies the meaning of the particular. He theorised political institutions; religion; nature; history; and, art as domains of Spirit. The realisation of Spirit in the world is magnificently depicted in Hegel's philosophical system.

This volume offers a panorama of Hegel's philosophy in thirty-three chapters, and the book is dedicated to the memory of the philosopher Burkhard Tuschling (1937 – 2012). In this review, it is my intention to present a selection of essays, choosing contributions which either refer to topics of broader interest or reflect my own philosophical preoccupations. My objective is to inspire scholars to

read the book and start their own journey of exploration and assessment of Hegel's philosophical work.

Part I of the collection is entitled "Hegel's Path to the System." In the first two chapters, Martin Bondeli describes Hegel's intellectual journey from 1788 to 1806. After studying philosophy and theology at Tübingen (1788-1793), Hegel worked as a private tutor in Bern and Frankfurt (1793-1800) and obtained a position at the University of Jena in 1801, which coincided with the publication of the *Differenzschrift* (1801). This brought him closer to the philosophical nucleus of German Idealism. At that time, he and Schelling targeted the philosophy of reflection and its inadequate understanding of the finite and the infinite. Hegel developed along with Schelling the "speculative philosophy" defending the plausibility of there being knowledge of the infinite or absolute. Their views on the notion of speculative philosophy later diverged. During the Jena years (1801-1806), Hegel worked on his approach to cognition in which the thing cognised relates to a holistic process of totality. In "The Phenomenology of Spirit of 1807: A Conspectus," Kenneth R. Westphal stresses the role of the Phenomenology as a proper introduction to Hegel's philosophy. Westphal outlines the relation between spirit and the individual and shows the complex architecture of Hegel's Idealism. Hegel's Phenomenology tells the story of the spirit's self-realisation "in and through its embodiment in individuals" and of the development of individuals as they raise themselves to, and absorb, the spirit (p. 51). Human history depicts the unfolding of spirit in the world.

Part II is devoted to "The System of Philosophy." In "The Introductions to the System," Ardis B. Collins responds to contemporary interpretations of the status of Hegel's introductions as either propaedeutic, or systematic, or both, by discussing: (a) the relation of philosophy and experience elaborated in the *Encyclopaedia*; (b) the ways in which the *Encyclopaedia* introduces the philosophical standpoint; and, (c) Hegel's scientific proof procedure. Hegel's introductions to his system support H.-F. Fulda's view that the Phenomenology "is not just a propaedeutic": "It is a demonstration of truth required not only by non-philosophical consciousness but also by philosophical science itself, so that the reality of non-philosophical consciousness can belong to the necessities of philosophical science" (p. 69).

Michael Wolff's "Science of Logic" investigates Hegel's relation to Kant's philosophy. Hegel was inspired by Kant and went on to develop Kant's conception of logical science in two respects. First, he restricted the science of logic to pure logic, and, second, he no longer distinguished between formal and transcendental logic. Hegel's science of logic is a "speculative science" which incorporates

the concept of “speculative” or “absolute” idea. The content of the speculative idea is “the unity of the ideas of the true and the good” (p. 96). The content of the science of logic is “the system of the logical” and its form is the “speculative method” itself (p. 96). Hegel’s logical science “knows its own parts precisely as moments of” a unity which “coincides with the ‘one’ speculative idea” (p. 96-97).

Dieter Wandschneider writes on Hegel’s “Philosophy of Nature.” In Hegel’s metaphysics of the self, the individual is the ontological topos wherein nature reaches both completion and self-transcendence, and spirit is affirmed as the essence of being. Hegel’s philosophical understanding of nature demonstrates the immanence of spirit and the development of nature towards spirit. Hegel’s philosophy of nature encompasses the spiritual detour of the logical idea through nature to spirit and back to the idea itself.

Willem de Vries, Kenneth R. Westphal and Walter Jaeschke complete the analysis of the structure of Hegel’s system by providing three seminal contributions on the nature of the spirit. In “Subjective Spirit: Soul, Consciousness, Intelligence and Will,” de Vries notes that for Hegel, “spirit is the truth of nature” (p. 137). Anthropology, Phenomenology of Spirit, and Psychology are the constitutive parts of the Philosophy of the Subjective Spirit. Anthropology deals with “spirit in its immediate unity with nature and the natural organism” and the focus is “on embodiment”: on the ways in which qualities of humans which appear to be simply natural “have spiritual significance and express the spiritual” (p. 139). Phenomenology “investigates a new and more complex way in which a human relates to itself” (p. 143). Consciousness, self-consciousness and reason relate to the individual’s realisation as a rational moral being. Psychology regards the individual as the unity of organism and spirit who possesses self-consciousness and works towards the realisation of freedom. The self-recognition of spirit as freedom leads to the sphere of the Objective Spirit.

In “Objective Spirit: Right, Morality, Ethical Life and World History,” Westphal writes that Hegel’s philosophy of right is an example of “Natural Law Constructivism” (p. 166). His social philosophy holds a special place “in the historical and social development of reason” (p. 178). Abstract right, morality and ethical life encompass the development of rational social life and correspond to institutions and practices which maintain the ethical functioning of an organised polity.

Jaeschke’s “Absolute Spirit: Art, Religion and Philosophy” focuses on the metaphysical synthesis of absolute spirit. Art is a form of spirit’s self-intuition, self-consciousness, and self-

knowledge. Hegel divided the history of art into symbolic, classical and romantic. Each stage accommodates a different relation of spirit and nature. The culmination is the art of the Christian world (romantic art) which achieves “the elevation of spirit above nature” (p. 184). Religion is “a knowing of what it is to be a spiritual being as such” and is understood as the “self-consciousness of spirit in the form of representation” (p. 189). Christianity is the “absolute religion”: “Christianity is consummate, that is, perfected, because in it the concept of religion has come to be its own object” (p. 192). Philosophy is “the final shape of absolute spirit in Enc.” (p. 194). Philosophy needs political freedom in order to flourish. The history of philosophy is the history of spirit’s life and the history of spirit’s self-recognition.

“Substantive and Interpretative Questions” is the theme of Part III. In “Thinking and Knowing,” Marina F. Bykova argues that Hegel theorises knowledge as a dialectical and dynamic process. Thinking and knowing are inseparable. Thinking is at the centre of our ontological self-identification. It involves relations, cognition, comprehension of concepts, and knowledge growth. All objects of our knowledge actually exist (a thesis also defended by Kant) and all existing objects can be known (a claim not accepted by Kant). To “truly know is to grasp reality in its totality, namely as a rational whole of interrelated moments” (p. 229). Philosophical inquiry is a search for absolute knowledge. In her second essay, “Will and Freedom,” Bykova explores the connection of reason, will and freedom in Hegel’s philosophy. Freedom relates to rational self-determination. The secret to rational self-determination lies within the will itself, for will is a mode of reason. Rational agency and rational freedom blossom in the framework of *Sittlichkeit*. *Sittlichkeit* is crucial to the attainment of higher freedom because, in the realm of ethical life, freedom is chiselled by reason. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* depicts the evolution of freedom from abstract freedom to concrete. Freedom reaches its full development in the state. The state enables the reconciliation of the subjective and objective aspects of freedom and harbours the highest level of rational self-determination.

Di Giovanni’s “Truth” focuses on the relation of “truth” to ontology and to historical consciousness in Hegel philosophy. Hegel replaced Kant’s “thing in itself” with the works of Spirit and heralded the return from “transcendental logic” to the “logic of being” (p. 236). The products of Spirit are amenable “to both historical observation and historical testing” (pp. 236-237). The *Phenomenology* harbours a discourse between historical consciousness and the reflective subject and tells the story of reaching the concept itself (the subject-matter of philosophy).

The idea of the concept is further elaborated in Burkhard Tuschling's "Concept, Object, Absolute Idea." Tuschling argues that the concept is intrinsically related to freedom and the movement of the concept is a sublational activity depicting the integration of formerly independent elements into a whole which harbours negation and universality in self-determination. The concept as "free, negative and determined in and for itself" reflects "the system of the logical" in which the concept "is at once itself and its own object" and becomes "thought that thinks itself" (p. 220). The "idea" "signifies an existent that is both subject and object" (p. 220). Tuschling concludes with two observations. First, the idea "entails an identity of opposites" (a rational identity) and as such "the concept of the idea is a concept of reason, not of the understanding" (p. 220). Second, the "rational identity epitomized by the idea is the identity of the concept and its self-actualizations, that is, the natural phenomenon of life, the epistemic process of cognition and the free activity of the will" (p. 220).

Three chapters by Michael J. Inwood provide valuable insights into the Hegelian universe of spirit, consciousness, self-consciousness and knowledge. In "Logic – Nature – Spirit," Inwood finds a correspondence between this triadic structure of Hegel's system and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Hegel's system has a circular movement from logic to the spirit. It is a whole governed by its "concept" – the logical idea. The logical idea "is the deep logical structure of nature, spirit and their interrelationship" (p. 208). In Hegel's version, "the logical idea represents God the Father, nature represents the Son, and spirit, the Holy Spirit" (p. 208). Philosophy, religion and art substantiate the Absolute Spirit – the highest form of spirit's realisation. Inwood explores the relation of Geist and consciousness in "Spirit, Consciousness, Self-Consciousness." Spirit takes various forms which must be seen as "systematically related phases of a single, developing Geist, not as different senses of the word Geist" (p. 240). The transcendent yet immanent nature of Geist makes it "the Absolute." Consciousness is narrower than Geist and "applies primarily to an individual subject" (p. 241). Self-consciousness advances "both throughout history and throughout Hegel's own system" (p. 242). Hegel's account of self-consciousness is not only "an attempt to explain humanity's emergence from the state of nature", but also an attempt to address Kant's "neglect of the relationship between myself and others" in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (p. 242). In "Reason and Understanding," Inwood notes that *Vernunft* and *Verstand* are embedded in the concepts, things and events themselves, while their contrast "shapes" Hegel's

“overall approach to philosophy” (p. 246). Hegel endeavoured to free thought from “the one-sided ‘dogmatism’ of the misunderstanding” which occurs when we adopt “one philosophy [...] in preference to its competitors” (p. 246). Reason’s critical function allows the mind to resolve contradictions and see the whole.

In Part IV, Manfred Baum, Italo Testa and Kenneth R. Westphal shed light on “Hegel’s Forms of Argument.” In “Dialectic,” Baum argues that Hegel’s method of dialectic has the concept as its object. For Hegel, dialectic is “the only possible method of achieving the cognition of truth” (p. 279). Hegel acknowledges Plato as his predecessor and stresses the role of Neoplatonists in completing Plato’s dialectic. Hegel’s dialectic is the absolute method of absolute knowing. Baum explores the dialectic in the absolute idea and traces the determinations of the development of the concept. In “Scepticism and Scepticism,” Testa holds that Hegel’s theory of recognition provides “a unitary response to the threefold sceptical issue of the accessibility of the external world, of other minds and of one’s own mind: the evolution of the capacity of recognition institutes unitarily the possibility of self-reference, reference to others and objective reference” (p. 273). Intersubjective recognition between self-consciousnesses prepares the ground for self-identification and self-knowledge. Self-recognition of self-consciousness involves reason and relatedness. Hegel’s theory of perception is pragmatic and interactional. Perception and knowledge reflect a process of “pragmatic relatedness grounded in recognition” (p. 278). Westphal’s “Proof, Justification, Refutation” discusses aspects of Hegel’s logic. In dealing with the Dilemma of the Criterion, Hegel realised “that a sound fallibilist account of rational justification requires identifying and assessing our basic cognitive and practical capacities, together with their attendant incapacities” (p. 295). The Dilemma of the Criterion challenges coherentist and foundationalist theories of justification and shows that solving the problem of cognitive justification at the first order relates to solving the problem of epistemic justification at the second order of justification theories. Westphal concludes with a discussion of Hegel’s science of logic in relation to Kant’s transcendental idealism.

From Part V which is devoted to “Hegel’s Philosophical Influence,” I have chosen two essays by Tom Rockmore. In “Feuerbach, Bauer, Marx and Marxisms,” Rockmore focuses on the Young Hegelians: Bauer, Feuerbach, Marx and Engels. Bauer edited the *Journal of Speculative Theology* and had Marx among his students. Bauer argued that “Hegel understands God as a projection of self-consciousness” and that “religion is only a stage on the way to full self-consciousness” (p. 306). Feuerbach started as a

Hegel enthusiast and later became a critic. He interpreted Hegel's philosophy as theological idealism that "must be dissolved in anthropology" and stressed "the need to derive a philosophy of humanity from the philosophy of the absolute" (p. 307). Marx elaborated his position through a selective use of Hegel's philosophy in a complex process of appropriation and refutation, while Engels developed a less sophisticated version of Hegel. In "Hegel in France," Rockmore argues that Alexandre Kojève exerted the greatest influence on French Hegel studies. Kojève provided an idiosyncratic reading of Hegel which presented his own views as those of the master under the pretence that he just was a mere interpreter of Hegel. He also attributed to Hegel an anti-religious theorisation of human existence. Kojève's understanding of Hegel is controversial. French anti-Hegelianism is mostly a reaction "against Kojève's Hegel" (p. 327). Recent French Hegel scholarship accommodates a variety of readings and interpretations.

Idealism, philosophy of mind, logic, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, history of philosophy, philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, social and political philosophy, are some of the provinces where Hegel's contribution is colossal. The value of his philosophical legacy is unsurpassed. This volume shows the dynamic character and ongoing relevance of Hegel's philosophy and invites us to revisit and celebrate his work.

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