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Preface

Philosophy is a discipline which, perhaps more than any other, is preoccupied with its history. At the same time, this preoccupation has as much to do with maintaining and reclaiming traditions as with critiquing and transforming them. Some figures leave indelible marks on schools of thought, even while attributing credit to their forebears on whose shoulders they in turn innovate and critique. The legacy of these figures is instantiated through the generative role they play in inspiring new schools of thought. Such reception is by no means inherently positive. In fact, it is often disagreement rather than affirmation that sustains the lasting impact of an original thinker.

This is especially true in the case of G. W. F. Hegel to whose legacy this themed issue is dedicated. Not only is it true that Hegel's extensive engagement with past thinkers is important for understanding his own project, one also cannot hope to fully understand the significance of Hegel's thought without giving consideration to those who carried forward and developed his ideas or turned a critical eye towards them. Hegel would be the first to agree that genuine engagement with the history of philosophy involves a double commitment to affirmation and critique: the 'reaction to a philosophy must therefore contain an affirmative as well as a negative side; only then can we do justice to a philosophy'.[1] Of course, one may wonder to what extent Hegel would have accepted the necessity of the second, negative strand for his own thinking. At the same time, he was clear that the actualization of a historical account can never be a matter of just repeating the past: for 'mummies when brought among the living cannot there endure'.[2]

This themed issue therefore collects papers exploring both the affirmative and the critical reception of Hegel's thinking, encompassing a wide range of topics, historical perspectives, and cultural contexts. These contributions have their origin in talks given at the conference 'Beyond Idealism: Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophical Legacy', held at the University of Sheffield in June 2022.[3] Rather than replicating the conference's order, the themed issue is organized in a roughly chronological progression, from early reference points and reception of Hegel's thought to its contemporary applications.

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Béatrice Han-Pile examines how Greek tragedy informs Hegel's theory of action, and how this relates in turn to current views. Leonard Weiss confronts Hegel's metaphysics of individuality with Schelling's late philosophy, while Jonas Hodel and Jonathan Egid examine Hegel's philosophy of history through the lens of Kierkegaard and African philosophy respectively. Tanja Staehler and Martina Barnaba explore Hegelian influences in phenomenology and existentialism, while Dylan Shaul and Evan Supple situate Hegel in relation to debates in contemporary French philosophy. Finally, Elena Tripaldi places Hegel's *Logic* into dialogue with analytic metaphysics. This variety of topics points to the breadth of Hegel's thought and each paper provides insights into why Hegel remains enduringly relevant, even as we have gone *beyond idealism*.

The conference and this themed issue are testament to the way in which philosophical debate over Hegel's thought flourished at the University of Sheffield under the guidance of Robert Stern (1962–2024). Among Bob's many virtues was his capacity to combine an advocacy for Hegel's thought with welcoming – and even cultivating – passionate challenges to Hegelian ideas. In this intellectual climate, Hegel's thought was not mechanically reproduced but came to life in productive debates with philosophical opponents, other philosophical traditions, and alternative interpretative lenses.

In addition to intellectual and academic openness, Bob used his keen sense of humour to convey his caring and welcoming personality. Nowhere was this more evident than in interactions with his students. When writing to his Hegel-challenging doctoral students, Bob would occasionally close messages 'Judge William', alluding to a character in Kierkegaard's writings. We therefore dedicate this issue to our Judge William and to the spirit of sincere and constructive debate we encountered with him.

Roderick Howlett, Michael Regier and Leonard Weiss

Notes

[1] Hegel, *Theorie Werkausgabe* (*TWA*), ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980), 18: 56–57; translation ours.

[2] *TWA* 18: 66.

[3] We thank the following learned societies for their generous support of the conference: the Aristotelian Society, the British Society for the History of Philosophy, the Hegel Society of Great Britain, the Royal Institute of Philosophy, and the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities.

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