

## ***Topoi of Classical German Philosophy in Progress. A Thematic Issue Dedicated to Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz***



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**Abstract:** Preface by the Editors to the special thematic volume dedicated to the memory of Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz.

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To commemorate the first anniversary of the passing of Professor Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz († 2021), an outstanding specialist in German philosophy, our partner in scientific discussions and friend, we dedicate to his memory a volume entitled *Topoi of Classical German Philosophy in Progress*. The continuation of inquiries in the spirit of a philosophy dear to our colleague bring to mind Hegel's statement from the *Phenomenology*: "The life of spirit is not the life that shrinks from death (...), but rather the life that endures it..." Thus, the contributions gathered here wish to continue the thought and themes of Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz and – as a life of the mind – the always fruitful conversations with him.

Since the domain of the spirit or philosophical consciousness belongs more to reflection than to emotion, we proceed immediately to the presentation of the principal inquiries addressed in this volume. These will frequently revolve around Hegel, who continues to inspire – or provoke, and both could spark a new wave of critical philosophy. Hegel will be accompanied by his fellow contemporaries or near-contemporaries, such as Fichte, Kant, Spinoza, Schelling, Hölderlin, Marx, or Smith. Among the central topoi of German philosophy dealt with in the volume are the concept of civil society, the concept and legitimacy of law, consciousness (including “unhappy consciousness”), *Bildung*, the theory of emotion, action and practice (practical philosophy), as well as the concepts of community, citizenship, lies and truth, and mutual recognition.

As is well known, philosophers suffer from an affliction that Hegel called the “preface paradox.” What he meant, more or less, was that writing prefaces is an exercise that is in a sense “superfluous” and “counterpurposeful,” since the truth – or sense – of “the letter” can only be constituted in the course of thinking (“the spirit”). Therefore, only the topography of the ideas and reasonings of the contributors to this volume are outlined here.

**Axel Honneth** (Frankfurt am Main – New York) unveils the deep ambivalence of Hegel’s concept of “civil society” whose pro-individualist and especially economic functioning reveals socially self-destructive tendencies. The article examines the extent to which Hegel reliably redefined “civil society,” provided an ethical basis for politics, and brought together two distinct dimensions: the classical one, based on the political activism of citizens as *cives/citoyen*, and the modern one, based on the economic activity of citizens as *bourgeois*, merely pursuing by their (constantly refining) self-interests. However, similar to Smith, Hegel expected labour and economic co-operation to have a socialising and educational effect on modern citizens being somewhat ruled by “a system of all-round interdependence,” as Hegel puts it. This effect was expected to be twofold, in line with the producer and consumer distinction. He further believed that interests would eventually harmonise in “a system of reciprocally complementary needs,” as Honneth puts it. However, Hegel overestimated these supposedly self-generating and beneficent influences, and underestimated the dynamics of consumption growth (and, we should add at this point, economic growth for its own sake) and the myriad of ensuing social and human miseries. All these false assumptions and naiveties of Hegel’s conception of civil society add up to a clinical evidence of “inner conflict” and indecision of the great system-master – to condemn or to defend the new social reality – which “is no different from that which plagues his contemporary readers,” as Axel Honneth’s article concludes.

**Christoph Horn** (Bonn) examines the foundations for the legitimacy of law in

Hegel, taking as his starting point the Hegelian critique of Kant. He considers Hegel's reasons for rejecting the natural law-based, contractualist and positivist methods of legitimating law. In a sort of countermovement, the article then gives detailed consideration to whether historical contextualism replaces these methods; however, he opts for a metaphysical approach and contrasts it with Honneth's theory of recognition and Brandom's pragmatism. What is the metaphysical and contextualist approach? Well, Hegel leans towards an apersonal, non-individualistic, normatively impartial concept of law; on the other hand, such a concept is situated in a real and concrete society, which is at a particular stage of development and history of its objective "spirit" and lived social ethics [*Sittlichkeit*]. Law, however, is not an "epiphenomenon" of its socio-historical (i.e., to some extent contingent) conditions. It may be said that its shape is as this spirit affords. On the side of its dialectic, it remains the mediation of all its moments in conceptual "generality."

**Violetta L. Waibel** (Vienna) elucidates the concept of an inner, immanent criterion [*Maßstab*] of spirit in Hegel. This criterion is responsible not only for the development of consciousness in the process of becoming itself, but also for the development of absolute knowledge. Hegel introduced it in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he also developed the notion of history – but the manifestations and shapes of this history are relative, history according to a hypothetical Phenomenology written down nowadays would be different. Hegel's *Phenomenology* can be considered as a sort of "Entwicklungsroman" (development novel). In the midst of variability, diversity and contingency, it is this internal standard or norm that, according to Waibel, "constantly checks the identities of concept and objective in order to correct and to mediate the immediate conviction of sensuous certainty and to develop new immediacies." J. G. Fichte provided a different, but comparable, vivid pattern of consciousness that generates reflection and knowledge in an immanently self-organising way (in Fichte, not accidentally, the emphasis is on the "I" as a very *principle*). Schelling, Hölderlin and Spinoza also developed their original patterns of the immediate activity of consciousness.

**Petra Lohmann's** (Siegen) essay is on the subject of the interpretation – and artistic manifestation – of J. G. Fichte's theory of feeling by Karl Friedrich Schinkel. (Schinkel was a contemporary of the author of the monumental *Wissenschaftslehre*.) Lohmann deals with a rare and complex issue. Firstly, she reconstructs feeling within the framework of Fichte's scientific-systematic philosophy as the reason for consciousness, in order to demonstrate through it the instance of Schinkel's essential question of the pedagogical efficiency of life-practical cultivation architecture. She further illustrates how Schinkel, within Fichte's conceptual horizon, undertakes to define the relationship between feeling and ratio, by means of which, for his part, he establishes architecture as an instrument of cultivation. The article is accompanied by several rare reproductions of engravings – Schinkel's architectural designs. These are unique aesthetic allegories for which the

correlate can be a Fichtean aesthetic, ethical, or absolute (religious) feeling.

**Jure Zovko** (Zadar) takes a close look at the multifaceted and enduring concept of *Bildung*. He takes as his motto Heidegger's famous saying that 'Hegel is the last of the Greeks' and begins with a paideutic interpretation of *Bildung*. In doing so, he emphasizes the individual experience of development and the continuity of work on oneself, leading the subject to self-realization and formation, and at the same time assuming self-transformation – but not in isolation, but always in intersubjective, political, cultural and civilizational contexts. Zovko deduces that we are incapable of making a judgment about our own era, of developing a project, or of recalling the past with understanding and creatively, if one has experienced serious deficits within the *Bildung* process. There is also no chance of realizing the potential of the liberal and democratic system when the institutions responsible for education forget the message of this great idea, which Hegel comprehensively elaborated.

**Lara Scaglia** (Warsaw) addresses “unhappy consciousness,” an archetypal topos of classical German philosophy, especially (but not only) in Hegel. She points out the whole range of unhappiness into which a consciousness can fall when seeking its “essence” and plenitude in the sphere that Hegel referred to as “Jenseits,” as opposed to “Diesseits.” In principle, any consciousness (self-awareness) that is unfulfilled, does not find itself in its “Anderssein,” can be unhappy; as well as one that cannot or does not change its existential position. Finally, one that is “false” (though this term does not stem from Hegel) as it subjectively fails; one that trembles in the face of finitude, negativity, and death; one that is overwhelmed by the theodicy of evil, nihilism and the powerlessness of man, or even God. Scaglia argues that in this complex matter, besides Hegel, Kant, Schiller and psychoanalysts also have much to say.

**Yuliia Tereshchenko** (Poznań – Kharkiv) offers a collection and revision of popular contemporary – but often deflationary – interpretations of Hegel's thought, using the example of philosophy of action and practical philosophy. Contemporary, especially analytic Hegelianism manifests a sort of allergy to Hegel's conceptuality and complexity, even the term “Spirit” is often used in an unspecified (or ‘mystic’) way, suggesting that in Hegel there are no explicit or systematic concepts of action and practice, but only acts of spirit [*Geistestaten*], dialectics, or history. The author revisits *The Science of Logic*, as well as Hegel's early writings, to provide vivid evidence to the contrary, and to demonstrate how great their potentials are when it comes to the philosophy of intentional causation, teleology, efficient action, labor, etc. – all these processes lie within the capacities of the real human subject, and of society.

According to **Guido Löhrer** (Erfurt), lies, fakes, bogus disclosures, gaslighting, humbug, conspiracy theories, collective illusions, propaganda tactics, etc., are – and indeed have always been – ubiquitous phenomena, since the Psalmist already claims that ‘all humans are liars’. By citing notable examples from the history of interdisciplinary research into the causes and effects of these practices, as well as highly interesting examples of them from history, including present-day ones, and analyzing them in terms of logic, semantics, illocution, narrative and discourse theory, etc., Löhrer creates an up-to-date, highly instructive – but also horrifying – topography of the traps lurking in public discourses, including those of the media. We all think we are navigating efficiently in this topography, but the ‘truth’ might be that we are wandering and straying, and leading others astray – without even realizing it, while losing control of own cognitive resources.

**Yang Shaogang** (Jiangmen, Guangzhou) argues that to better deal with global crises such as a pandemic, it is worth rethinking the moral identity of ‘species’ as the foundation of a community with a shared future. This is rooted in traditional Chinese ethics, and in fact it is officially promoted today in Chinese education as a model to prevent extreme individualization resulting in disastrous (e.g., socio-economic) consequences. However, research referenced by Yang showed that a shared axiological identity would be unlikely to suit those representing more pluralistic and individualistic cultures. Through references to Marx, Yang’s model is also associated with Kant’s idea of cosmopolitan citizenship and belonging to an interpersonal community in the moral sense (an originally religious community, as articulated by Kant in his writings on religion). However, millions of people in the world are denied political belongingness and citizenship, and face violation of their “right to have rights,” as formulated in H. Arendt. This type of community deserves to be reclaimed as well.

Finally, **Ewa Nowak** (Poznań) reviews the monograph *Social and Institutional Dimensions of Axel Honneth’s Theory of Recognition* by Marcin Byczyński (2021). The book offers a systematic approach to the recognition theory of Axel Honneth in its tripartite nature (love, rights, esteem) and the constructive critique of the same theory. Byczyński would expect not only an exhaustive theorization of recognition, but tools to empower the citizens to effectively transform all their relevant institutions. Such a point of view corresponds to what Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz stressed in his own monograph *Anerkennung als Verpflichtung. Klassische Konzepte der Anerkennung und ihre Bedeutung für die aktuelle Debatte* [Recognition as Obligation. Classical concepts of recognition and their relevance for current debate] (2015): that “acts of recognition are not testimonies that everyone can take home to decorate their own four walls.” They must be a living experience, the realisation of an intersubjective, indeed normative, commitment; a theory that is confirmed in everyday practice; a history, even a rather monotonous and not monumental one, that is written by interpersonal, societal, institutional, and political

practice itself. Nonetheless, some of Hegel's thought proved worthy of being taken out of the "museum" of philosophical masterpieces into the public eye (if only to hold the flame of discussion).<sup>1</sup> The review concludes by comparing the findings of the book under review with former Polish achievements in the field of recognition theory, notably those of Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz.

It is our hope that this volume will show that the philosophical conversation with our colleague from Warsaw, which was prematurely and brutally interrupted, is continuing, and that it will not come to an end at any point in the near future.

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<sup>1</sup> However, they were also recalled because times have come when the philosophy of right and civil society – not only in Poland – needs to be presented nearly from scratch.