

INTRODUCTION

by Mario De Caro and Luca Illetterati

Beginning immediately with his death, the reception of Hegel's philosophy has constantly fluctuated through negative and positive phases of revival. The negative phases, although different in kind, tend to criticize Hegel's idea of the system and the panlogistic aims of his philosophy. Most of the subsequent revivals of his philosophy, on the other hand, tend to focus on specific features of his system – which were interpreted in accordance with the theoretical framework that gave rise to revival itself.

Some examples can be useful in illustrating this historical pattern. The debate regarding Hegel's thought that arose in Germany in the 1830's and the 1840's focused on practical and religious issues (which gave rise to the famous distinction between Right Hegelians and Left Hegelians)¹; while in Britain during the first half of 19th century – that is, within a very different cultural and historical context – the main concerns were with Hegel's logical views as well as with his conception of dialectic². Something similar happened at the beginning of the 20th century, when new attention was given to Hegel's pre-systematic philosophy, mostly thanks to the work of Wilhelm Dilthey and to the publication of Hegel's early writings by Hermann Nohl³. Hegel's conceptions concerning life and history were then brought to the fore and opposed to the alleged systematic closure of his later views, which supposedly had hardened his originally open and dynamic thought⁴. This reading fitted the philosophical atmosphere in Germany at the beginning

¹ See K. LÖWTH, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche*, Europa Verlag A.g., Zürich 1941.

² About British idealism, see W.J. MANDER, *British Idealism: A History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011.

³ G.W.F. HEGEL, *Hegels Theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. by H. Nohl, Tübingen, Mohr 1907.

⁴ See W. DILTHEY, *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels* (1906), repr. in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. IV, Stuttgart und Göttingen 1959.

of 20th century, which was characterized by the debates concerning neo-Kantianism, historicism, and «philosophies of life». Another remarkable revival of Hegel's philosophy occurred in Italy at the beginning of 20th century, thanks to the works of Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, who in different forms propounded a “reform” of Hegel's thought⁵: and, again, it would not be possible to understand what happened then, if one did not consider the specific philosophical debate animating Italy in that period, which was a debate especially focused on the problem of history. The same was true for France, where Existentialism drove a revival of Hegel between the two World Wars. Existentialism produced interpretations and studies of Hegel's system that centered mostly on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which widely influenced the development of continental philosophy. In this respect, of particular importance were the studies by Jean Wahl⁶ and Jean Hyppolite⁷, as well as the lectures given by Alexandre Kojève in Paris in 1933-39, which combined an account of Hegel's notion of “recognition”, as presented in the *Phenomenology*, with themes from Martin Heidegger⁸. The reading proposed by György Lukács in 1948, which was focused on the young Hegel and the problem of capitalistic society, reflects the author's Marxist philosophical background⁹. Theodor W. Adorno's reading – which, by refusing a simplistic division between Hegel's method

⁵ B. CROCE, *Saggio sullo Hegel, seguito da altri scritti di storia della filosofia* (1912), Bibliopolis (Edizione Nazionale), Napoli 2006; G. GENTILE, *La riforma della dialettica hegeliana*, Principato, Messina 1913.

⁶ J. WAHL, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*, Rieder, Paris 1929.

⁷ J. HYPOLITE, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de Hegel*, Aubier Montaigne, Paris 1946.

⁸ A. KOJEVE, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel. Leçons sur la «Phénoménologie de l'Esprit» professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des Hautes Études réunies et publiées par Raimon Queneau*, Gallimard, Paris 1947. By doing so, Kojève started an important tradition of scholarship, inclined to interweave Hegel's and Heidegger's thought. See, for instance, the text written by Jacques Derrida as a comment to the work by Catherine Malabou, which is significantly entitled *L'avenir de Hegel* (Vrin, Paris 1996), which is *Le temps des adieux. Heidegger (tu par) Hegel (tu par) Malabou*.

⁹ G. LUKÁCS, *Der junge Hegel und die Probleme der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft*, Europa Verlag, Zürich, Wien 1948.

(to be saved) and his system (to be rejected), attempted to show that the Hegelian systematic was strictly connected to a conception of rationality itself and was intrinsically critic – sprang both from an heterodox Marxism and from a powerful criticism of the notion of instrumental rationality, which was in particular expressed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*¹⁰.

Finally, Hegel's philosophy gained new attention in the last decades of the 20th century, in connection with the publication of the critical edition of his work and manuscripts, which began in 1968¹¹. Particularly important, in this sense, was the work of a group of scholars who were able to combine careful philological analyses of Hegel's texts with a theoretical interest regarding the development of his thought¹². And, once again, the peculiar interpretative directions originating within this debate paralleled the theoretical backgrounds of the interpreters.

This is true also of the vigorous Hegel's renaissance that has taken place in the United States, and more generally in the English speaking world, in the last decades¹³. This renaissance is a very surprising phenomenon, when one considers the hostility, if not the sheer derision, that Hegel's philosophy encountered in such a world for most of the 20th century.

This renaissance, however, should not merely be seen as a revival of studies of and scholarly inquiries into his writings.

¹⁰ M. HORKHEIMER, TH.W. ADORNO, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*, Querido, Amsterdam 1947. About Adorno's reading of Hegel see: TH.W. ADORNO, *Negative Dialektik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1966; ID., *Drei Studien zu Hegel*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1963.

¹¹ G.W.F. HEGEL, *Gesammelte Werke*, hrsg. im Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, Meiner, Hamburg 1968 ff.

¹²In this respect, particularly significant are the works, among others, by Klaus Düsing, Hans Friedrich Fulda, Dieter Henrich, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Karl Hein Ilting, Walter Jaeschke, Otto Pöggeler, Manfred Riedel, Michael Theunissen in Germany; Remo Bodei, Giuseppe Cantillo, Claudio Cesa, Franco Chiereghin, Leo Lugarini and Valerio Verra in Italy; Bernard Bourgeois, Dominique Dubarle, Pierre-Jean Labarriere and Jacques D'Hondt in France; Ramón Valls Plana and Felix Duque in Spain.

¹³ For a wide overview about the so-called Hegel-renaissance in the English speaking world, see: L. RUGGIU, I. TESTA (ed. by), *Hegel contemporaneo. La ricezione americana di Hegel a confronto con la tradizione europea*, Guerini, Milano 2003.

Rather, its main inspiration was a renewed interest in some of the fundamental strategies of Hegel's philosophy, which have been exploited in order to explore new directions within a philosophical context that traditionally has been shaped by analytic philosophy and pragmatism. The views of a group of scholars who have taken up the teaching of Wilfrid Sellars – a group that includes Robert Pippin and the two members of the so-called “Pittsburgh neo-Hegelian school”, Robert Brandom and John McDowell – are paradigmatic in this sense. However, despite the common reference to Hegel, these authors *make use* of Hegel's thought in very different ways, so that it would be partially inaccurate to place them under a single framework or label. Nonetheless, some general common features can perhaps be sketched out.

One trait shared by all those philosophers is that they do not conceive Hegel's philosophy as really opposed to Kant's thought. To be sure, they are all well aware of Hegel's criticism to Kant; nevertheless, they insist that the central feature of Hegel's thought is its continuity with Kant's project of transcendental philosophy (even if it should be noted that such a continuity is sometimes meant as a “radicalization” and other times as a “completion”). Frequently, in this discussion, the notion of «transcendental» at stake has a strong normative and intersubjective flavor. What is seen as *the* peculiar Hegelian insight is – to use a phrase by Terry Pinkard – the focus on the *sociality of reason*: the constitution of norms and rationality as internal to the historical and social practices, which are the (testing) ground of reason itself¹⁴.

One of the central notions of the post-Sellarsians inter-

¹⁴ Another reason of the return of interest for Hegel's philosophy in the English speaking philosophical world is the very Hegelian idea (explored for example by Bernard Williams, one of the most authoritative British thinkers of the last decades) that, as opposed to what happens in regard with the scientific image, in order to understand the moral image of the world we must consider its contingent genealogy (see B. WILLIAMS, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2006). With less theoretical and historical profundity, but exercising a stronger influence than Williams, Richard Rorty held a similar view.

pretations of both Kant and Hegel is that of *normativity*, which is connected with the Wittgensteinian view that concepts have an intrinsic normative nature. Indeed, as shown in the present volume, in order to interpret not just Hegel's philosophy, but Kant's as well, both Brandom and McDowell make essential references to the Wittgensteinian discussion regarding the origins and nature of "rules". And this also explains why the focus of this volume is on classical German philosophy in general, rather than on Hegelian philosophy alone.

Another common trait of the "Sellarsian school" is the particular attention given to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Although all these authors, and especially Pippin, are well aware of the problematic role played by the *Phenomenology* in the construction of Hegel's system, it is remarkable that it was the work that prompted Hegel's revival. In that text one can in fact identify an evident developmental process, which starts with an ingenuous consciousness, moves through the difficulties generated by the notion of "the given", and finally addresses the social dimension of Spirit, in which the normative is produced. If the hallmark of the "analytic Hegel" is, roughly, a specific kind of Kantianism – so that Hegel is seen as a critical prosecutor of the transcendental philosophical project – then this interpretation is more easily supported by looking at the *Phenomenology* than at the *Science of Logic*.

However, the neo-Hegelian school of Pittsburgh is only a part of Hegel's contemporary revival in the English speaking philosophical world. In his entry "Hegel", in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Paul Redding distinguishes among three main interpretative lines¹⁵: i. A *traditional metaphysical* view of Hegel (which, according to Redding, is well exemplified by the work of Charles Taylor and more recently in the approach of Frederick Beiser); ii. A *non-metaphysical (or post-Kantian)* view of Hegel (which Redding mainly associates with the works of Terry Pinkard and Robert Pippin, but also with the views, developed «from a more technically analytic perspective», by Robert Brandom and John McDowell); iii. A *revised metaphysical* view of

¹⁵ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/>.

Hegel (to be found in the works of Robert Stern, Kenneth Westphal, and James Kreines.).

In the present special issue of *Verifiche*, readings from all of these interpretive lines are discussed with the aim of drawing attention to the potential and limits of this framework, both as an alternative to the more traditional interpretations of Kant's and Hegel's philosophies and as an innovative perspective for framing some of the most challenging issues of contemporary philosophy.

In their essays, Paul Redding and Luca Corti focus on Sellars' reading of Kant, arguing that his reading is more complex and sophisticated than that offered by McDowell. In "McDowell's radicalization of Kant's account of concepts and intuitions: a Sellarsian (and Hegelian) critique", Redding puts forward a modest Sellarsian revision of Kant, claiming that it can both give a better account of perceptual experience and help us to understand further the step that Hegel took beyond Kant. In "Crossing the line: Sellars on Kant on imagination", Corti, after reconstructing Sellars's translation of Sellars's own views in the *lingua franca* of Kantianism, focuses on Sellars's concept of imagination. He claims that this can be seen as a third way between two well-known theoretical strategies for facing Sellars's dichotomy adopted by two prominent left-wing Sellarsians: Brandom's strategy of "doing without intuitions" and McDowell's strategy of fusing concepts and intuitions.

In his essay "*Bildung*, meaning, and reasons", Matteo Bianchin addresses the role and the problems of McDowell's notion of *Bildung*, which is of course inspired by Hegel. Bianchin's suggestion is that in order to understand the role that this pivotal notion plays in McDowell's philosophy, we need to investigate the connections (which are only hinted at in *Mind and World*) between this notion and McDowell's views of meaning and reasons.

Paolo Costa's contribution, "«What is familiar is not understood precisely because it is familiar»: a re-examination of McDowell's quietism", discusses the problematic connection between McDowell's theoretical quietism, inspired by Wittgenstein, and Hegel's idea of philosophy. Costa's conclusion is that, as para-

doxical as this may appear, the Hegelian and the Wittgensteinian views, as interpreted by McDowell, are much more similar at a metaphilosophical level than is commonly thought.

James Kreines, in “Learning from Hegel what philosophy is all about: for the metaphysics of reason and against the priority of semantics”, points out the distinction between metaphysical and anti-metaphysical readings of Hegel. Kreines defends a metaphysical view of Hegel, but not in the sense that metaphysics should be concerned with an absolute perspective-independence or with a God’s-eye view of the world. Rather, in the relevant sense, metaphysics is concerned with what-is-a -reason-for-what: this is what Kreines calls “the metaphysics of reason”.

In his “Reconstruction and pragmatist metaphysics. On Brandom’s understanding of rationality”, Italo Testa takes the notion of *reconstructive rationality* into account, with reference to the pragmatism of Robert Brandom. Testa outlines a pragmatist understanding of the concept of metaphysics, in order to reconcile Brandom’s more or less implicit attempt at metaphysical theorizing with his devotion to a pragmatist tradition that is resistant, if not altogether hostile, to the very idea of metaphysics.

“What must we recognize? Brandom’s Kant and Hegel” is the title of Alfredo Ferrarin’s article, in which he comments on Brandom’s interpretation of Kant and Hegel, and in particular on his reading of Kant’s faculty of judgment, which he criticizes for being one-sided and reductive. Ferrarin claims that the normative turn that plays an important role for Brandom rests largely on a notion of judgment that falls short of Kant’s substantially more complex notion of the power of judgment. As regards Hegel, according to Ferrarin, what Brandom calls the rational integration of commitments in a recognitive community is based on an exclusively theoretical and abstract interpretation of the chapter on self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In “Contradiction or non-contradiction? Hegel’s dialectic between Brandom and Priest”, Michela Bordignon also begins by critically discussing Brandom’s views. She analyses Brandom’s account of Hegel’s conception of determinate negation and the role this logical structure plays in the dialectical process with respect to the problem of contradiction. After discussing the

merits and the limits of Brandom's proposal, Bordignon refers to Priest's dialetheistic approach to contradiction as an alternative perspective for capturing the essential features of Hegel's notion of contradiction.

Finally, Federico Sanguinetti discusses McDowell's *Marquette Lectures* "Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge". In his critical discussion Sanguinetti criticizes McDowell's argumentation and argues that one cannot assume, as McDowell does, that perception is an indefeasible warrant for rational beliefs.

The volume ends with three reviews: Elisa Magrì discusses Klaus Brinkmann's book "Idealism without Limits" (Springer 2011), Federico Orsini discusses Markus Gabriel's book "Transcendental Ontology" (Continuum 2011) and Andrea Piras discusses David James's work "Art, Myth and Society in Hegel's Aesthetics" (Continuum 2009).