

Hegel and the Philosophy of Right after 200 years

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Celebrating anniversaries is a custom known everywhere and to everybody. It can easily be extended to the celebration of anniversaries of books or even artistic, sometimes scientific but certainly political events. But in 2021 we are not dealing with an ordinary anniversary: rather a year after everyone tried to celebrate the 250th birthday of one of the most important thinkers in the history of modern philosophy without being properly able to do so due to a pandemic (sometimes, there is not only reason, but also a virus in history), 2021 offers an occasion to celebrate, if this is the right term here, one of his achievements. 200 years after its publication, 2021 is the year of the anniversary of one of his most controversial books. The philosopher in question, as you all know, is G.W.F. Hegel and the book whose anniversary we want to salute, as you certainly know, too, is his *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*.

Therefore, we are not only celebrating the 200th anniversary of the publication of the *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, but concomitantly we are analysing and discussing the relevance of Hegel after 251 years of his birth and 200 years of his most important political work.

Hegel's philosophical system in general is often, if not mostly characterized as difficult. Part of this difficulty is that it is not easy, maybe even impossible to identify within it only an ideological or political orientation - rather one always seems to find elements that point to even contradictory readings and this might be especially true in the case of the *Philosophy of Right*. For this is a book, not to forget, which brought him some of the most devastating and exaggerated: e.g. charges of being a Prussian state philosopher and /or a totalitarian thinker, to name just two of the most prominent ones (though the list is easily extendable on). But especially with regard to the *Philosophy of Right*, a book, written for teaching purposes and to appear rather late in his life, a distinction introduced by Göorgy Lukács in *The Young Hegel* between a conservative and an early revolutionary Hegel, seems to still be pertinent for its reception today. One of aspects of Hegel's book that is and was often conceived as one of its most problematic can be located in one of the notorious slogans that can be found in its preface, where Hegel infamously states: "what is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational."

How to read this claim has divided Hegel's readers now for two centuries. With this issue of *Crisis and Critique* we want to again light or, maybe even fire up the torch of rationality and we sought contributions from distinguished readers of Hegel and new voices. We are here bringing together dialectical thinkers, who are willing to discuss with us the pertinence and rational actuality of Hegel's philosophy of objective spirit in today's world and thus for today.

In his inaugural lecture at Heidelberg University in 1816, Hegel writes that to "draw Philosophy out of the solitude into which it was wandered - to do such work as this we may hope that we are called by

the higher spirit of our time.” Such is the task we have set ourselves with *Crisis and Critique*, an essential part of which is the present issue. After all, Hegel is the name of the ultimate systematic philosopher.

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