

Hegel, Hegelianism and Ethics in International Relations:

Wednesday, 17 June 2020 10:30 (1h 30m)

The aim of this panel is to reassert the significance of Hegel and the Hegelian tradition of political philosophy for the contemporary study of International Relations. Although recognised as one of the most significant philosophers of modernity and as an influential political theorist and ethicist of the first rank, G.W.F. Hegel has not exerted a comparable influence on the development of the discipline of International Relations. The central claim of this panel is that the relative neglect of Hegel's complex meditations on politics and ethics at the international level ought to be redressed as his work offers a valuable critical resource for contemporary theorists of international society.

If Kant was the political philosopher of a post-Cold War Cosmopolitan, liberal world order, Hegel promises to play a similar role in the contemporary era of crisis. The eclipse of Cosmopolitan principles of global governance invites reinvestigation into Hegel's insights into the nature of ethics, politics and society. Hegel confronts theorists of the international with a series of challenges to prevailing orthodoxies and offers the means to rethink the bases of global politics by reference not only to moral requirements but political necessities. In contrast to Kant and contemporary cosmopolitans, Hegel and Hegelianism do not prioritise what 'ought' to be over how things 'are.' The Hegelian aim is to understand the ethical as a fluid, dynamic set of possibilities within a political context as opposed to a static set of legal commandments. The purpose of this panel is to probe these possibilities in a critically engaged fashion, drawing attention to both the promise and the problems inherent in the Hegelian theorisations of - inter alia - war, peace, and the role of law. In an era of growing pessimism and defeatism, IR can afford to ignore Hegel no longer. Hegel's clear-sighted, balanced theory of IR is the ideal antidote to both the naivety of Cosmopolitanism and also the cynical opportunism of populism.

Track Classification: Ethics and World Politics Working Group