

## On Hegel's Account of Selfhood and Human Sociality

Joint seminar of the UNSW Philosophy Program and the Australian Hegel Society

**Abstract:** The essay will focus on Hegel's conception of the self as a social construct. Traditionally, this topic is almost exclusively discussed in terms of mutual recognition on the basis of the dialectic of "lordship and bondage" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. These discussions rightly emphasize the distinctive feature of Hegel's account of the self that lies in the idea that the self is a mutual project, something that only arises through interaction with like beings. Yet, what often escapes the scholars' attention is that Hegel's account of selfhood is much richer than just interaction with other selves and is not limited to only mutual recognition. Hegel's notion of "socially constructed" self indicates as well that the self is also constituted by specific historical settings and social, and political conditions, which indelibly affect the self's identity. These topics Hegel discusses in the *Encyclopedia Objective Spirit* in terms of ethical life. As the system of shared customs and social institutions, ethical life appears as the actual milieu, in which the self achieves its true identity by participating in the family and civil society, and by exercising its rights, privileges, and obligations as a member of the state.

**Bio:** Marina F. Bykova is Professor of Philosophy at North Carolina State University (USA). Her area of specialization is German idealism, with a special focus on Hegel, and recently also on Fichte. She has written *Hegel's Interpretation of Thinking* (1990), *Absolute Idea and Absolute Spirit in Hegel's Philosophy* (1993, co-authored), and *The Mystery of Logic and the Secret of Subjectivity* (1996). She has also edited a new Russian edition of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (2000) with a new commentary, and most recently, *Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge UP) and *The German Idealism Reader: Ideas, Responses and Legacy* (Bloomsbury), both forthcoming in 2019. Currently, she is co-editing (with Kenneth Westphal) *The Palgrave Hegel Handbook*, which is under contract with Palgrave Macmillan.



**Speaker:** Marina F. Bykova, North Carolina State University

### Event Details:

Friday, 14 December 2018  
3:00-4:30 pm  
Room 310, Level 3  
Morven Brown building  
Kensington Campus, UNSW

**Map reference:** C20

**RSVP:** not necessary

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