

Globalising Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom

The 5th Australian Hegel Society Biennial Conference

December 11-12, 2025

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The Fifth Biannual Conference of The Australian Hegel Society, 'Globalising Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom', hosted by UNSW Sydney, will take place on December 11th - December 12th, 2025, in person in Sydney Australia and online via zoom.

Keynote speakers: Julia Peters (Heidelberg, online) & Klaus Vieweg (Jena, in-person)

Call for abstracts: Abstracts should be sent as attachment to h.ikaheimo@unsw.edu.au and s.lumsden@unsw.edu.au. See instructions at the bottom of this message.

Deadline: September 1, 2025

Conference theme:

The question of freedom runs like a red thread throughout the entirety of G.W.F. Hegel's *oeuvre*. From his first days as a schoolboy enthralled with Schiller's theatrical critiques of despotism until his last days criticising the Reform Bill for failing to solve the existing social conflicts in England, the question of freedom and its proper form were never far from his mind.

Yet more than the subject of his various political reflections, Hegel was also attentive to freedom as it expresses itself in modern art, religion, economics, and even non-human nature. Indeed, Hegel saw freedom as driving modern philosophy itself, decisively announced in Kant's attempt to free philosophy from "dogmatic" rationalism and to ground philosophical thought in the self-legislating activity of reason alone. As Hegel emphasises in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, this new spirit of freedom has broken with the past to refigure all of humanity's most distinctive endeavours. This has led some of Hegel's interpreters to claim, with justification, that the central thematic of Hegel's philosophy is freedom, or what is the same thing, that Hegel is *the* philosopher of freedom.

While Hegel's mature thought seeks to vindicate the self-understanding of then-emerging modern Western societies as committed to freedom, he nonetheless works to criticize one-sided and destructive accounts of freedom, dialectically deepening the concept in order to elaborate the institutional forms in which freedom should be actualised. The result is a philosophy that takes up and critically transforms the liberal political tradition in ways that remain crucially relevant today, as liberal democracies and the freedom they ostensibly protect face existential threats - climactic, oligarchic, and military.

Importantly, however, Hegel's philosophy of freedom itself has long been justifiably called into serious question as Eurocentric and blind to the violent imperialism and colonialism that accompanied triumphalist European declarations of universal freedom. For many commentators, Hegel's world historical narrative, culminating in the emergence of a "Germanic" world finally self-consciously committed to the freedom of individuals, relegates non-European cultures to a decisively outdated pre-modernity. Indeed, as Terry Pinkard has recently suggested, Hegel can be

with justification read as presenting “non-Europeans as failed Europeans,” a view impossible to sustain today – especially in a time when European and Europe-derived understandings of freedom and free institutions routinely fail. If Hegel’s philosophy is a philosophy of freedom which simultaneously contains seemingly racist and even openly pro-colonialist remarks, then perhaps Hegel’s idea of freedom ought to be problematised.

This year’s conference of the Australian Hegel Society (AHS) invites scholars working on Hegel and the post-Hegelian tradition to critically reconsider Hegel’s account of freedom, its role in his philosophy and in the philosophies he influenced, and the value and limitations of that account in a global context today. What is Hegel’s concept of freedom, and how does Hegel’s account of freedom differ from his closest interlocutors and philosophical inheritors? How is freedom dialectically reworked in Hegel’s systematic theoretical works, e.g., the *Science of Logic*, the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*? Can Hegel’s account of freedom be rehabilitated and expanded beyond its Eurocentric horizons, or is its fabric too tightly interwoven with European imperialism and colonialism? What relevance does Hegel’s concept of freedom have in a global context today, and how might Hegel’s Eurocentric blindspots and erasures be addressed in a more comprehensive conceptualisation? Papers dealing with these, and other questions related to freedom and Hegel’s philosophy, are welcome.

Instructions:

Papers are welcome that address the conference theme. [The Australian Hegel Society](#) welcomes submissions also from early career researchers and advanced graduate students. To notify your interest in presenting at the conference, please send an abstract of your paper to both following addresses with **Australian Hegel Society 2025 Abstract** as the email title line by September 1: h.ikaheimo@unsw.edu.au & s.lumsden@unsw.edu.au.

Note that this is a hybrid conference allowing both in-person and online participation.

Your abstract should include the following items:

1. ‘Submission Australian Hegel Society Conference 2025’ in the subject line
2. The paper title
3. Author’s name
4. Institutional affiliation
5. Email address
6. Description of the paper (no more than 300 words)
7. Indication of whether you wish to attend in-person or online.

Sessions at the conference are likely to be around 30 minutes per paper including question time.