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This special section presents three essays that grew out of Christopher O’Neill’s inspired idea to organise a panel, the “Homage to the *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*” at the 2023 ASCP Conference. The panel reflected on what may appear at first glance to be a rather obscure text: the *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite* (1971), a collection of essays edited by Michel Foucault and others that paid homage to their teacher and colleague, Jean Hyppolite, shortly after his early death in 1968. Its most well-known essay is Foucault’s own contribution to the volume, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” But the volume contains other significant interventions from the thinkers across the field of the human sciences as well: Martial Guérout, Michel Serres and Jean Laplanche among others—in addition, of course, to the three contributions studied in this forum by Suzanne Bachelard, François Dagognet and Georges Canguilhem (see below for a full table of contents). The volume can be read as it was intended, as a testament to Hyppolite’s importance to these thinkers in the trajectory of their thinking and respective fields; but it can also be read as a map charting the extraordinary influence of Hyppolite’s thought and institutional work on the shape of postwar French thought as a whole. It is in both senses that we present it here.

Hyppolite was a singular thinker and administrator who fundamentally inflected the curve of thought after the war. He was the “guardian of originality (*protecteur de la*

nouveauté,” in the words of his former student Alain Badiou; he opened up French philosophy, wrote Louis Althusser, another former student and colleague, allowing it to break away from its “chauvinist” parochialism, rendering legitimate the study of the great “*damnés de la terre*,” Hegel, Freud, and Marx at the highest levels of institutional life in France.¹ His significance for the period is often indicated by pointing to his students. Alongside Althusser and Badiou there was Gilles Deleuze, Michel Serres, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilbert Simondon, Michel Henry, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Déguay, Jacques Martin, Gerard Granel, among others.² Readers of Lacan know him through his active participation in the early seminars and his intervention on the meanings of negation and denegation. But he is most well-known in the anglophone world as the preeminent Hegel scholar in France in the postwar period.

His work on Hegel established his scholarly credentials. Hyppolite’s two-volume translation of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1939, 1941) was followed by his magisterial commentary, *The Genesis and Structure of the Phenomenology of Spirit* (1946). Together, they established the foundation for a reading of Hegel that was fundamentally different from Alexandre Kojève’s—whose seminar Hyppolite, unlike many of his contemporaries, never attended. Whereas Kojève began by foregrounding the problem of anthropogenesis—what separates man from animal—and built his interpretation of Hegel around the category of work and a certain understanding of substance as subject, Hyppolite sought to avoid the humanism implicit in Kojève’s work. He framed Hegelianism as an ontology of difference; he underlined the impersonality of spirit: it is that which speaks through man, not *as* man; he defined Hegelianism by its refusal of teleology, a charge that misunderstands being’s necessary circularity; and he showed that it was a philosophy of pure immanence. All of these interpretative positions were definitively articulated in his virtuosic reading of Hegel in *Logic and Existence* (1952), a work that set the agenda for the major thinkers of the next generation to an extent that anglophone scholarship has not yet fully grasped, despite the pioneering work of Leonard Lawlor.³

Less well known, however, is the extent to which Hyppolite’s *institutional* work shaped the development of postwar French thought. After teaching at the prestigious lycée

Henri IV, where he first worked with Deleuze and Foucault, he took up Guérout's post at the University of Strasbourg when Guérout left for the Sorbonne. It was there that he first worked closely with Georges Canguilhem—who had taken up Cavaillès's post in 1940 (like Guérout, but under quite different circumstances, Cavaillès had taken a position at the Sorbonne, just after his escape from prison in Belgium). Alice Nilsson's lucid essay in this forum unpacks the nature of Hyppolite and Cavaillès's different positions on the nature of mathematical form and its relation to philosophical discourse. That problematic that was just as significant for Canguilhem, and Christopher O'Neill's contribution to this volume works through the manner which Canguilhem and Hyppolite's thinking about rationality and error transformed over the course of their long friendship. In 1948, Hyppolite took a position at the Sorbonne. It was there that he supervised many of the thinkers noted above and helped shape the discourse of philosophy in the immediate wake of liberation. His most important institutional work however, was at the *École Normale Supérieure* where he worked from 1954 to 1963. For most of his time there he was the Director of the *École* and was responsible for major changes in the structure of the institution.

The most significant of these changes resulted in the creation of what Hyppolite called "the New *École Normale Supérieure*" in 1963.⁴ He saw the new ENS as emerging from the intersection of three separate forces, all of which worked together to dissolve one of the institution's most fundamental commitments: the training not of researchers or of tertiary educators but of secondary teachers. The most significant of these forces was the rise of scientific laboratories within the ENS. Not only were the labs built around strong ties with "industry," they had been training their students to be researchers and lab assistants rather than preparing them to teach in the lycées and preparatory schools. At the same time, new legislation explicitly brought the ENS into the University of Paris system clarifying that the ENS thereby trained not just teachers, but researchers. And, as Hyppolite underlined in response to queries he had received, the rapidly increasing number of students attending university after the war changed conditions of university teaching nationwide, but also the training of teachers which would have to be radically reimagined at the national level.⁵ The basic obligation of all

normalien(ne)s to teach in the secondary schools was thus fundamentally altered, and, as a result, Hyppolite himself underlined, it changed the very sense of the *agrégation*.⁶

In response to this situation, Hyppolite operated a sequence of changes, the most significant of which for the history of philosophy was the construction of a new division of the “human sciences” at the ENS.⁷ He gave to the human sciences—and to literature and philosophy in particular—the specific institutional function of providing the place in which the hyper-specialisations that were developing across the increasingly reified disciplines of the postwar university could be reflected on and enter into the field of everyday language (see, in this regard, Lachlan Wells’s discussion in this forum of how Hyppolite saw the relation between early bioinformatics and philosophical discourse at the end of his contribution to this forum). At the same time, in order to directly support this vision, Hyppolite created a major seminar in contemporary philosophy, with the logician Roger Martin and Louis Althusser (who was then General Secretary and lecturer at the ENS).⁸ The seminar created the institutional conditions for this work of maintaining and updating the encyclopedia of knowledge. However it also modelled Hyppolite’s practice of opening discourses onto one another in: an opening that would be reflected in a quite different register in Althusser’s own break with the PCF and the opening of the *Cercle d’Ulm*, a group of maoists that broke with Althusser in turn.⁹ To open a discourse is not to let it subsist alongside all others in their undifferentiated particularity, but to allow them to encounter one another in a fundamental way.¹⁰

Hyppolite died unexpectedly in October 1968, when he was 61 years old. Foucault and Canguilhem presented moving tributes that were later published in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*.¹¹ It was there that Foucault famously wrote that Hyppolite “established for us all the problems that are ours,”¹² and Canguilhem, anticipating the Badiou and recalling the Althusser quotations above, affirmed that he was a force of novelty and inventiveness, but added that that was primarily for the young. For him, Hyppolite’s influence lay in the way it established the territory of philosophy beyond the horizon of consciousness in a renewed conception of reason: it was “under his influence, along with that of Jean Cavallès in another domain, that French philosophy began to lose the consciousness of that which had been for it, formerly, Consciousness

(sous son influence, concurremment à celle de Cavailles dans un autre domaine, que la philosophie française a commencé à perdre conscience de ce qu'était pour elle, auparavant, la Conscience).¹³

The word “homage” ultimately derives from the dynamics of Feudal obligation: it the act in which a vassal recognises their Lord, their *homme*, and what they owe to one another—an eminently Hegelian problematic, of course.¹⁴ What, exactly, is owed or paid is never quite clear in the genre of the homage, and the act of recognition is complex. Like the *festschrift*, the genre is bound by two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, its purpose is to pay homage to a scholar, to provide some kind of indication of the magnitude of their work and its influence. On the other, it often proceeds, particularly at this period in France, by *not* engaging with the work of the *homme* who is the object of *hommage*. This convention of avoiding direct engagement is something all three essays work through here, either in the form of the exception (Dagognet) or through the necessary task of teasing out the indirection which returns the essay to its object, the manner in which Bachelard or Canguilhem are in fact talking about Hyppolite even as they avoid any mention. But precisely by following this indirection of the encounter, the three essays collected here begin reconstruct the map of Hyppolite vast influence across heterogenous discourses of the period.

Nilsson, O'Neill and Wells's essays, then, begin to address one of the most significant lacunae in anglophone scholarship on the period.¹⁵ There is still no book-length account in English of the monumental importance of Hyppolite's thought and institutional practice on the development of postwar French philosophy—this despite the fact many of the major philosophical projects that now define that period were written and conceived in direct and sustained relationship to the writings of Jean Hyppolite and the institutional structures he created and sustained. We perhaps have a greater need of this scholarship today than we did at the height of “French theory's” popularity. We live during a period in which the intellectual space of the contemporary university perpetually duplicates and hollows itself out, proliferating faux-disciplines and undermining real ones as it orients teaching toward a disastrously narrow notion of job readiness and works to bind research ever more tightly to the endless end of profit.

What “leader” today has the capacity or the intellectual substance to even imagine a university oriented toward the universal? Even if that task pushed Hyppolite to the limit of what is possible, it is one that retains its own exigency, and Hyppolite can stand as one as one of its models.

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¹ See Althusser, *Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Marx* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 163. Badiou quote is cited in Bianco who cites Alain Badiou, “Alain Badiou,” *Le Tête-à-tête with Frédéric Taddéi*, France Culture, 11 December 2011. Cited in Giuseppe Bianco, “Biographie de Jean Hyppolite,” in Jean Hyppolite, *Charles Péguy: Quatre conférences* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2023), p. 110.

² See Bianco, p. 119 for details of the theses.

³ See Leonard Lawlor, *Thinking through French philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), *The Implications of Immanence* (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2006) and his important “Translator’s Preface” in Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. L. Lawlor (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

⁴ Jean Hyppolite, “La nouvelle École Normale Supérieure,” *Bulletin de la Société des amis de l’École normale supérieure*, 97 1963 (juin): 12-28. See *Le Monde’s* report, which curiously reproduces Hyppolite’s own points in his presentation as editorial critiques of the position presented. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1963/04/24/m-jean-hyppolite-presente-la-nouvelle-ecole-normale-superieure_2206225_1819218.html Hyppolite kept the clipping of this article in his papers.

⁵ These documents are in the Hyppolite archive at the Ecole Normale Supérieure: Bibliothèque des Lettres et Sciences Humaines et Sociales, Fonds Hyppolite, HYP IV/3.

⁶ See Alan Schrift, “The Effects of the Agrégation de Philosophie on Twentieth-Century French Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46.3 (2008): 449–73.

⁷ See Bianco p. 120 and Hyppolite, “La nouvelle École normale supérieure.”

⁸ See Bianco, p. 120.

⁹ See Julian Bourg, “The Red Guards of Paris: French Student Maoism of the 1960s,” *History of European Ideas*, 31.4 (2005): 472-490.

¹⁰ Cf. Badiou’s description of Hyppolite’s administrative vision as that of a “superior Hegelianism, the idea that the destiny of the institution is not its immobility but its ability to concentrate the historical idea itself.” Badiou, *Pocket Pantheon*, trans. D. Macey, (London: Verso, 2016), p. 32.

¹¹ Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault “Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968),” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 74.2 (April-June 1969), pp. 129-136.

¹² Foucault, “Jean Hyppolite,” p. 136.

¹³ Canguilhem, “Jean Hyppolite” p. 130.

¹⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “homage (*n.*), Etymology,” December 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9431368281>.

¹⁵ In addition to the work of Leonard Lawlor and Giuseppe Bianco, see the special issue of *Pli*, “Jean Hyppolite,” *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 24 (2013).