

Introduction

100 Years of Philosophy at The New School

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Philosophy has been a prominent discipline at The New School since the university was established in 1919. This is hardly surprising—after all, John Dewey and Horace M. Kallen were among its founders. However, it was not only the philosophers who professed the centrality of philosophy at this new, progressive institution. Alvin Johnson, an economist who was the first director of The New School and the architect behind the idea for the University in Exile, was also convinced of the importance of including philosophers among the faculty—though he did admit that he had a hard time getting along with them.¹ In his autobiography, he explains that with the University in Exile, he hoped to import what he called the “European university discipline” in which “philosophy lay at the center.”²

In the century that has passed since The New School’s inception, the European influence has remained strong in its Philosophy department; it is, to this day, one of the few departments in the United States that is known for its so-called “continental philosophy.” This does not mean that philosophy is practiced as a monolithic discipline at The New School—quite the contrary. The history of philosophy here is characterized by a striking breadth of approaches, topics, and perspectives.

My hope is that this special issue, which marks the centennial of The New School, provides a glimpse of this breadth. It consists of a mix of essays (by Inessa Medzhibovskaya and Richard J. Bernstein), lecture notes (of Reiner Schürmann and Susanne K. Langer), conference papers (by Ágnes Heller, Sheldon S. Wolin, and Kallen), transcriptions of lectures (given by Aron Gurwitsch and Hans Jonas), and correspondence (between Rudolf Bultmann and Jonas). Bernstein’s and Medzhibovskaya’s pieces were written specifically for this centennial issue, while the others were found in archives and through exchanges with scholars, librarians, archivists, and other people that used to work with the thinkers in this issue. Some of the articles do require context. To this end, Veronica

Padilla, Mark Larrimore, and Ian Alexander Moore have written insightful introductions to the pieces by Langer, Kallen, and Schürmann, respectively. Moore has also translated the Jonas-Bultmann exchange and has written a helpful introductory note for it. All the philosophers whose work is included in this issue, save for Wolin and Bultmann, have taught at The New School; indeed, Medzhibovskaya and Bernstein continue to teach here. Wolin was in ongoing conversation with different members of the Philosophy department at The New School, and presented his work here on several occasions, of which his piece in this issue is an example.³ Bultmann was Jonas' teacher and lifelong friend with whom he corresponded frequently.⁴

Although the pieces in this issue span a wide range of topics—from Ockham's medieval philosophy to Langer's aesthetics, and from Dewey's pragmatism to the phenomenology of mathematics—, there are many prominent philosophical traditions that are not represented in this issue. The long history of feminism at The New School is one example, with thinkers such as Karen Horney, Sara Ruddick, Ann Snitow, and Barrie Karp. Another strand of philosophy at The New School that is not represented in this issue is the study of ancient philosophy, exemplified by scholars such as Leo Strauss and Seth Benardete. Even though it was never our ambition to provide a complete overview of the history of philosophy at The New School, it is hard to shake off the feeling of insufficiency in the face of such a legacy.

The work on this centennial issue took the Editorial staff away from the desks of our office in the 6 East 16th Street building of The New School in New York. We spent hours combing through The New School Archives and The New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts, and we even drove to SUNY's Albany campus to search the German and Jewish Intellectual Émigré Collections. This issue would not have come to fruition without the help and support of a great number of people. Acknowledgement and gratitude are due to all of them. In particular, the staff of the *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* worked tirelessly on what, at some point, seemed like a never-ending task. Thanks to the Editorial Assistants—Alexander Altonji, Elizabeth Dijkstra, Agnese Di Riccio, and Greg Bartels—for going well beyond their regular duties, checking archival material all over New York City, and diligently tracking down references; to Joel de Lara, our Senior Consulting Editor, whom we owe a considerable debt for his substantial feedback on all pieces in this issue; and last, thanks to the Senior Editors, Krishna Boddapati and Cayla Clinkenbeard, without whom it would have been impossible to put together this issue.

I thank the faculty of the Philosophy department at The New School for their encouragement and their help in the assessment of the materials

that we encountered. I also want to express my gratitude to the many librarians and archivists who expertly answered questions and remained patient when, time and again, one of us wanted to have a final look at that one document in the box that had just been returned to the offsite storage. Many other people also require mention: I am grateful to John F. Jonas, Ben Kallen, György Fehér, and Leonard W. Langer and Stephen T. Langer for their generous permission to publish the work of their late family members. Tara Mastrelli helped out on many occasions and found answers to questions that seemed like dead-ends. Jonathan Pickle suggested Heller's piece and gave invaluable feedback on our edits. Despina Dontas always had practical help and answers when we needed them. William McKenna kindly provided us with the transcription of Gurwitsch's lectures. We would find our day-to-day workings far more arduous if not for David McClean's ongoing financial support of the *GFPJ*. This issue was also partly funded by the Centennial Award from The New School. The cover design for this issue is based on a cover that was used by the *GFPJ* during the early 1980s. The design was by Québécois painter Louis Comtois, who was also Reiner Schürmann's partner. Isabella Deocariza did wonders in reworking the design for this special issue.

This centennial issue is dedicated to the vibrant memory of Ágnes Heller, who passed away while we were working on this issue.

NOTES

1. Alvin Johnson, *Pioneer's Progress: An Autobiography* (New York: Viking Press, 1952), p. 221. The University in Exile was established by The New School in 1933 and offered refuge for intellectuals who lost their academic positions in Europe due to Nazism and fascism.
2. Ibid., p. 347. For a brief note on the centrality of philosophy according to Johnson, see Judith Friedlander, *A Light in Dark Times: The New School for Social Research and Its University in Exile* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), p. 93.
3. In particular, Wolin was a major interlocutor of Hannah Arendt. His contribution to this centennial issue also consists in his critical engagement with Arendt's work. Furthermore, in 1979, Wolin was one of three academics invited from other universities to examine and report on the Graduate Faculty of The New School for Social Research when several of its programs, including Philosophy, were in academic crisis (see Friedlander, *A Light in Dark Times*, pp. 294–5).
4. The complete correspondence between Hans Jonas and Rudolf Bultmann, edited by Andreas Großmann, is to be published by Mohr Siebeck Verlag.