
Journal | Issue

Call for Papers

METODO

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On institutions Vol. 8 (1)

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Within the history of philosophy, theories of institutions have dwelled following different traditions and lines of enquiry. The concept of institution has played a central role in more classical approaches, such as in ancient political philosophy (Plato, Aristotle), social contract theory and philosophy of right (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, Rawls), but has also animated discourses that focus on the specific historicity and temporality of institutions, as it is the case with respect to the concepts of institutionalisation (social theory), *Stiftung* (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Lefort, Castoriadis) or language in post-analytic context (Searle). It seems therefore that institutions recur in philosophical reflection from a twofold perspective. At issue are not only the specific institutional realities and structures, which reflection is historically and geographically confronted with, but the concept of institution in general, considered as a tool for the understanding of the opaque crossroad where practice, sociality and historical becoming seem to intersect. While presenting themselves as everyday-realities, institutions require further analysis. Thereby questions arise, such as: which vocabulary is more apt to talk about institutions, besides the legal and economic terminology, as for instance by adopting a less empiricist point of view and taking into view the relations between institutions and the conceptual constitution of experience? Which realities and phenomena are to be counted among institutions? How can the historical becoming of an institution come into view?

Additionally, philosophical investigation has had an eye for the artificial, intersubjective or non- or a-subjective nature of institutions. Both in modernity and antiquity attempts have been made not only to assess the speculative relationship of nature and law, but also to investigate the ways in which collective human life is organised, not lastly by taking a critical stance towards tradition, with respect to its conformity to human agency. This last perspective in particular nourishes philosophy's critical claim of developing normatively coloured positions with respect to its objects: not only what is, but also what ought to be comes into play, in correspondence to the nature of the being that institutions regulate and support. It also seems that the focus on institutionality opens up another critical perspective, one that does not concern solely social reality: bringing sociality and historicity into view might also articulate a standpoint against those positions that presuppose or directly affirm a subjectivist or substantialist understanding of human agency. The existence and emergence of social structures could therefore be interrogated without being tracked back to the constituting acts of a subject: which are the implications of adopting the concept of institution in such a case? To what extent does institutionality determine human life?

In this sense, existing in an institutionalised space and time appears to be a defining feature of the human way of living: self-organisation via traditions, governments and customs seems to necessarily inhere to the variegated forms that human existence has been taking in its historical development. Thus, focusing on institutions means to take human existence into view as embedded in social and historical reality. The subject living in and through institutions is not only herself, her perspective and her individuality, but is essentially situated in a collective, pre-organised and historically becoming context, and seems to exist therefore only in a dynamic and interactive processuality. Practice, interaction and becoming seem to make up therefore the main coordinates of an approach that tackles institutionality. This raises the issue of conceptualising the status of the individual living in institutions: how mutual is the interaction between individuals and institutions, who or what does have precedence, if it does? How are transformation and emergence of social structures with respect to individual agency understood?

The issue of *Metodo. International Studies in Phenomenology and Philosophy* dedicated to the notion of institution aims therefore not only at an elucidation of its topic of interest. It also welcomes more systematic approaches: the investigation of mindedness as to its contextuality, situatedness and embeddedness, viz. of the relation between subjectivity and the material, symbolic and normative context that it unfolds into, and lastly of the mutual impact and transformation that collectivity and individuality undertake in their dynamic exchange and mutual constitution. Furthermore, questions related to philosophical practice and methodology are also looked forward to: philosophy itself is institutionalised in a context of theoretical and practical dependencies with different fields of knowledge and action.

Papers related to the aforementioned topics are welcome, divided in the five following macro-areas:

- a. Meaning, domain and scope of the concept of institution;
- b. Living within institutions: embedded subjectivity and agency;
- c. Critical approaches to sociality and sociality as a mean of critique;
- d. The dynamics of institutions, as to their historicity, genesis and transformation;
- e. Philosophy within institutions: method and philosophical practice.

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