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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy by Tom Rockmore

Review by: Chris Yeomans

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The last two chapters, “Thomism: Past, Present, and Future” and “Respect for Tradition and the Catholic Philosopher Today” have the feel of in-house advice to Catholic philosophers as to how they should go about their professional work, how to use their sources judiciously, and in what way respect for the authority of the Church as well as authority for past philosophers should be given.

Rescher’s knowledge of the history of philosophy—especially the medieval and modern eras—is impressive. Drawing upon Aquinas and other great scholastics, he is able to formulate questions and propose solutions to contemporary metaphysics and epistemology that are informed by the great medieval scholastics in a way that critically employs these authors without slavishly following them wherever they lead. Yet, one wonders why Rescher ignores the most important interpreter of Aquinas, and an outstanding scholastic metaphysician in his own right, Francisco Suarez.—Craig A. Boyd, *Azusa Pacific University*.

ROCKMORE, Tom. *Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 284 pp. Cloth, \$40.00—Rockmore argues that recent attempts by analytic philosophers such as Robert Brandom and John McDowell to make use of Hegel’s ideas represent an encroachment on continental philosophy that cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. This encroachment rests on a basic confusion over the differences between analytic and continental philosophy, and in particular between the analytic semantic concern to establish reference and the continental concern with epistemology. Philosophers like Brandom and McDowell only think that their positions are Hegelian because they completely ignore Hegel’s idealism, and so think that Hegel’s views could be consistent with their own metaphysical realism. In this way they are still influenced by G. E. Moore’s uninformed rejection of idealism as denying the existence of the external world.

The book is split into three long chapters. Chapter 1 surveys idealism, British idealism and the early analytic reaction against it. Rockmore argues that there is no single point of doctrine that unites all idealists, or even British idealists. In particular, Rockmore argues that no idealist denies the existence of the external world, and thus that Moore’s rejection of idealism is off the mark. If this is so, then there is no reason for contemporary (analytic) philosophers to be wary of idealism, or to avoid looking to idealism as a solution to epistemological problems.

Chapter 2 surveys the various forms of pragmatism and neopragmatism. As in Chapter 1, Rockmore denies that there is a single doctrine linking all pragmatists; furthermore he adds that, as currently used, the term “pragmatism” is close to losing all meaning. Rockmore argues that pragmatism does not understand knowledge as historical in the same way that Hegel does, and thus that Hegel cannot be said to be a pragmatist. The chapter culminates in a discussion of Brandom, McDowell, and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer. In arguing against the Hegel interpretations of these three authors, Rockmore claims that each of the three is com-

mitted to a project that is fundamentally at odds with Hegel's own project. Brandom and Stekeler-Weithofer are fundamentally interested in a semantic theory of reference that, as usually understood, is fundamentally different from the interest in epistemology that Hegel has. The semantic theory of reference is only one topic in epistemology, which concerns the broader issue of knowledge. In addition, each of the three is a metaphysical realist, whereas Hegel (as a good post-Kantian) rejects metaphysical realism (the doctrine that we can know a mind-independent world as it is) in favor of empirical realism (the doctrine that we can know the real within consciousness in such a way that it represents an empirical constraint on knowledge). The two themes are connected because the Fregean focus on semantics involves reference to the mind-independent real world, and thus entails metaphysical realism. This chapter is predominantly negative in character: the main point is that there is not currently an interesting conversation across the analytic-continental divide because these analytic thinkers have not squarely addressed the vast differences in project and approach that separate the two kinds of philosophy.

In Chapter 3, Rockmore provides the picture of Hegel on which his criticisms in Chapter 2 are based. There are three basic elements to this picture. First, Hegel is an empirical, not metaphysical realist. This discussion left me with a number of questions. A consideration of Kenneth Westphal's realist interpretation of Hegel (which is summarily dismissed in a footnote) would have been useful. Also, though I doubt that Hegel is a metaphysical realist, he is not an antirealist such as Rorty, nor is it clear that there is any restriction on objects of knowledge of Hegel's view (since he thinks the transcendental thing in itself is unintelligible). Since Brandom and McDowell's professions of realism come in response to Rortean antirealism, a real conversation between the two and Hegel still seems possible.

Second, Hegel does not advance a doctrine of absolute knowledge, but of absolute knowing (that is, our understanding of the epistemic process). Hegel distinguishes between first order knowledge claims and second-order conceptual schemes. Hegel's "spirit" is the "practical negotiation of unstable, mutable conceptual frameworks in real time" (p. 191). My concern here is that this characterization applies more obviously to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* than it does to Hegel's mature system, and Rockmore provides no argument to link it to Hegel's mature thought.

Third, Hegel's contextualism is fundamentally historical (unlike the [neo]pragmatists). Knowledge claims are historically relative, but still objective. They are historical in the sense that they involve reference to a world-view or conceptual schemes that change through time for reasons that are not directly related to the first-order judgments those schemes support. I was left wanting to know more about the nature of Hegel's historicism, and particularly why it would be at odds with pragmatist contextualism.—Chris Yeomans, *Kenyon College*.