One of the challenges facing a volume entitled *Hegel and the Analytic Tradition* and aiming to encourage dialogue across the “analytic–continental divide” is that the notion of an “analytic tradition” might seem more meaningful for Hegelians than for the analysts themselves. With analysis’s tendency towards an ahistorical, “naturalistic” self-conception, many analytic philosophers may doubt that they belong, in any meaningful sense, to a “tradition” with a “history”. That there may be aspects of or periods within the “tradition” that seem to point in the direction of Hegel might just be met with a shrug. Mainstream analytic philosophy is, it is often assumed, made up of attempts to clarify philosophical problems with the help of logical tools forged first by Frege, Russell and others at the dawn of analysis. In order to do physics, so the argument goes, physicists need neither study the history of physics nor engage with long-gone theories: why should it be different with philosophy?

Of course there is an analytic tradition, and it has a history that has only recently become an object of genuine historical scrutiny. And as with traditions in general, it has attitudes that can be passed on, somewhat mechanically, from generation to generation, with only a dim awareness of their original motivations. As is well known, one of these attitudes has been its particularly negative assessment of Hegel. But analytic philosophy has itself continually changed, and at different times the grounds for its attitude to Hegel have changed too. Indeed during the second half of the twentieth century, the possibility for some reconciliation seemed to accompany certain developments within the philosophy of language. While the earlier focus had been on formal issues to do with the logical syntax of a purported language of science, with the later Wittgenstein in particular, attention switched towards a conception of reason as embedded in socially normative and historically changeable patterns of linguistic usage. And while, the glory days of that version of analysis are now well behind, over the past decades attention has been captured by a revival of such “pragmatic” approaches, now often in a more Sellarsian, and seemingly Hegelian guise. It is not surprising then, that those parts of the “analytic tradition” most visible in these essays centre on the pragmatic turn in philosophy of language, rather than, say, contemporary ethics or philosophy of mind.

After the editor’s helpful introduction, Joseph Margolis, in “The Point of Hegel’s Dissatisfaction with Kant”, draws lessons for contemporary analytic philosophy, with its natural science focus, from Hegel’s critique of Kant’s transcendental program. Kant had presumed “to investigate the possibility of hitherto unnoticed necessary structures in the understanding (of a cognizing subject) answering to the requirements of Newton’s science” (14), thereby tethering his philosophy to claims that further developments in science would
eliminate. Hegel’s critique of Kant brought to the fore the historically changing character of reason, even if Hegel effectively became caught in the same trap with his aspiration to give a complete teleological unfolding of reason. Aspirations to any “absolute knowing” must be given up, but with the contextualist elements of his critique, Hegel anticipated the refashioning of his own program “along pragmatist lines” (17). Relieved of its absolutizing dimensions, Hegel’s critique of Kant best captures the historicist and pragmatist thrust of much subsequent philosophy, both analytic and continental: “the perceived trajectory of the history of science drives philosophy (without privilege) closer to Hegel’s “revision” of the Kantian program … than to any attempt to redeem the more than problematic inflexibilities of Kant’s … transcendental model” (24).

Margolis’s essay captures an orientation to Hegelianism that is found in a number of other contributions. Thus David Kolb, in “The Necessities of Hegel’s Logics”, examines the prospects for an Hegelian solution to this tension between the historical and logical dimensions of Hegel’s philosophy by way of a critique of a particular approach to Hegel’s logical project itself. Contesting the interpretation advanced by Stephen Houlgate, who appeals to a type of rational intuition in assessing Hegel’s logical claims, Kolb suggests that Hegel’s logical structures must ultimately be thought as implicit within historically changeable patterns of actual language use. While Houlgate’s approach captures those (legitimately worrying, Kolb seems to think) aspects of Hegel’s philosophy that suggest a telos for thought in its “pure self presence”, one can also find in Hegel a valuable contrary conception of the finitude of thought as always situated or “horizonal”. Kolb sees a reformed Hegel as providing an attractive alternative to opposed positions in current philosophy. This Hegelianism “looks more like analytic philosophy with its mix of specialized problems that do not necessarily cohere into one general view”, but it will also be “more conceptual than Heidegger, more systematic than Derrida, and still seeking more comprehensive views than most current analytic philosophy” (p. 57–8).

The logico-linguistic focus is continued in Angelica Nuzzo’s “Vagueness and Meaning Variance in Hegel’s Logic”, and John McCumber’s “Hegel and ‘Natural Language’”. In her rich and suggestive chapter, Nuzzo reads Hegel as “a type of linguistic analyst for whom logic is a program of the clarification and revision of language” and who translates expressions from both everyday language and the language of metaphysics into “the ‘new’ language of speculative philosophy” (p. 62). This would seem to make Hegel into a type of “ideal language” theorist (the implicit picture, according to Kolb, in Houlgate’s reading), but Hegel also shares in the contextualist approach characteristic of the later Wittgenstein. Hegel’s significance, however, lies in the fact that he can, via his dialectical method, incorporate this without the embrace of relativism or any softening of his logical concerns. McCumber’s equally suggestive and helpful article is directed more to exploring the details of Hegel’s own treatment of language in his Philosophy of Spirit. Hegel has a surprisingly naturalistic theory of the origins of language (taken over from Herder), but on his account languages undergo a type of denaturing process in which the original natural relations organizing their syntactic and semantic structures are deformed and made less
relevant, allowing a linguistic development that is more “spiritual” and rational than natural. McCumber unpacks Hegel’s implicit semantics in relation to description theories and Kripkean causal theories of reference, and Brandonian inferentialist semantics. Contrary to standardly analytic assumptions, Hegel can be seen as engaged with the sorts of philosophical issues that have been at the core of the analytic tradition, but as offering a richer approach to language than the truth-theoretic approach standardly found there.

Katharina Dulckeit and Franca D’Agostini bring Hegel into particular dialogues. In “Putnam and Hegel on Natural Kind Terms”, Dulckeit engages Hegel with Hilary Putnam over semantics, while in “Was Hegel Noneist, Allist or Someist?”, D’Agonstini places Hegel in the context of a recent debate over contemporary Meinongism in analytic ontology.

With the challenges of Kripke and Putnam to the classical analytic “sense-determines-reference” picture of semantics, Dulckeit has surely picked a useful focus for the intended dialogue in which one might indeed glimpse a resurgent Hegelianism within the decidedly anti-subjectivist “externalist” semantic turn. On Putnam’s account as sketched, natural kind terms do not fix reference by some listing of essential properties, rather the extension of a natural kind term is determined by its applying to everything that is the same as the paradigm picked out in some putative original ostensive definition. While Putnam’s views are “astonishingly close to Hegel’s own” (p. 119), Dulckeit is not satisfied with the idea of Hegel having anticipated this analytic move. Rather, Hegel’s account is the better of the two.

This is a big, but extremely suggestive, claim. In his method of “determinate negation”, Hegel had used a more traditional concept of negation (term negation) as holding among empirically applicable predicates, such as colour terms. But this approach effectively disappeared with the Frege-Russell treatment of negation as applying principally to propositional contents. While, like Putnam, Hegel refused to define essences or natures in terms of properties, with his use of determinate negation, the properties expressing a thing’s nature are nevertheless seen as not indifferent to it, as the Putnam picture seems to suggest. For Dulckeit, with his different logical resources, Hegel was able to explain parts of the story Putnam tells about the semantics of natural kind terms that Putnam, however, presupposes but cannot explain. On criteria as to what makes a better theory that she takes from Russell, Hegel trumps Putnam.

D’Agostini’s article takes its focus and title from David Lewis’s “Noneism or Allism?” in which he had engaged with the revived Meinonian ontology of Richard Routley, and which had in turn elicited a response by Graham Priest. Again, this seems promising territory for any dialogue between Hegel and analytic philosophy: as D’Agostini points out, Priest himself draws parallels between Hegel’s dialectical logic and the paraconsistent logic forged by Routley and himself. D’Agostini uses this contemporary debate over Meinongism to reflect on the nature of Hegel’s “idealism”, a clarification of which is essential for any engagement with analytic philosophy given the degree of ignorance and confusion over this term. As she points out, Hegelian “idealism” cannot be
identified with what analysts call “anti-realism”, nor with fantastic theories about some ultimate “Cosmic Mind” (145–6). Hegel’s idealism was a “particular kind of Platonism”, and as such not dissimilar to positions held by some contemporary analytic ontologists.

Not all authors in the collection, however, are as keen on such “dialogue” here. In particular, Tom Rockmore, in “Some Recent Analytic ‘Realist’ Readings of Hegel”, is concerned with the replacement of the actual Hegel with some ersatz analytic version. While Rockmore’s general worries may indeed have a point, his case here is less than convincing. Rockmore considers a “representative selection” of analytic readings of Hegel—those of Frederick Beiser, Wilfrid Sellars, Robert Brandom and Kenneth Westphal, and readers familiar with the work of these diverse figures might be skeptical that, as a group, they are “representative” of anything much at all. According to Rockmore what unites them is a commitment to the “metaphysical realism” that is at the core of the analytic project. Metaphysical realism is portrayed as what has motivated analytic philosophers’ continuing attempts to solve the problem of reference—the problem of how our words “hook onto” the world—and that this project is out of kilter with Hegel’s idealism he evidences by Hegel’s famous treatment of “sense-certainty” at the start of the Phenomenology of Spirit.

This, however, seems a strange combination of claims, even by Rockmore’s own lights. If there has been one point of focal interest among “analytic” readings of Hegel it has been the parallels between Hegel’s “sense-certainty” chapter and Sellars’s famous critique of the “myth of the Given” in Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind. Sellars’s text is commonly seen as initiating an “anti-representationalist” approach to language, and with it, a rejection of the foundationalist epistemology of early analysis as well as “metaphysical realism” more generally. Rockmore, of course, knows this, and he goes on to oppose, correctly, Sellars’s own scientific realism (a variety of “metaphysical realism”) to Hegel’s idealism. But he then extends such a commitment to “metaphysical realism” to Sellars’s disciple, Brandom, despite the fact that Brandom explicitly opposes his holistic, “inferentialist” semantics to the traditional “designationalist” approach to language, that attempts to demonstrate the “hooks” between words and world. Brandom’s radical interpretation of Hegel through the lens of his post-Fregean inferentialism is undoubtedly controversial. Moreover, that his claims may someday be shown to commit him, against his professed intentions, to a version of “metaphysical realism” is possible; in fact this possibility is entailed by the inferentialist doctrine itself. But here Rockmore does not give us any good reasons for thinking that Brandom’s philosophy is a version of metaphysical realism (in the sense that he gives the term), nor that it is radically unhegelian.

Hegel’s critique of the “myth of the Given” at the start of the Phenomenology is at the heart of the two remaining contributions by Terry Pinkard and Kenneth Westphal, who each represent two different ways in which the Hegel–Sellars parallel has been interpreted in recent times. Both of their contributions pose problems for Rockmore’s diagnosis of the situation with analytically related Hegelianism. In “Hegel’s Nonanalytic Option” Pinkard
acknowledges that historically, Hegel failed where Frege succeeded in revolutionizing philosophy. Nevertheless, “there is a good case to be made for Hegel’s proposals for such a shift in philosophical approaches that comes out of themes in the ‘consciousness’ section” of the Phenomenology of Spirit (98). What ensues from Hegel’s demolition of the given is that classical epistemological questions dissolve “yielding themselves to considerations of how it is that certain types of claims have come to exercise their hold on us” (102), and thus philosophy turns to an historical, development account of the norms that have come underpin our theoretical and practical engagement with the world. This social, historical turn in philosophical analysis is at the core of the Hegelian “nonanalytic” option. “What things mean, what is their truth, is the Hegelian concern; and one will never get that solely from the analyses of concepts, the construction of semantics for artificial and natural languages” (109) or other exclusively ahistorical methods.

In the final essay in the volume, “Hegel, Russell, and the Foundations of Philosophy”, Westphal similarly argues for relevance of Hegel’s critique of “sense-certainty” for a critique of the sorts of concerns that Rockmore sees as central to “metaphysical realism”, but does this in the name of his own “realist” version of the pragmatist account of Hegel’s philosophy that seems at variance with the thrust of Pinkard’s account. In applying Hegel’s critique of sense-certainty to Russell’s early foundationalist epistemology, Westphal relates these issues to the broader problem of adjudicating different philosophical outlooks in the light of the “Pyrrhonian Dilemma of the Criterion”. In debating the criteria used in the assessment of rival claims, how can one appeal to criteria without circularity? Westphal rejects the consequences that many, often following Rorty, have drawn from the Hegelian–Sellarsian critique of the “myth of the Given”. While he agrees that Hegel’s criticisms of foundationalist epistemology in the opening chapters of the Phenomenology take us in the direction of a conception of rationality that is historically contextual, pragmatic and social, this does not, he thinks, rule out a type of realism, as is often assumed.

One aspect of Westphal’s article that I found particularly telling concerns the question-begging and ultimately rhetorical nature, not only of Russell’s dismissal of Hegel, but of that found in analytic philosophy more generally. While analytic epistemology has moved on from the foundationalism of early Russell, analysis has failed to address the more general question of the evaluation and defense of its own conception of philosophy in the face of external critiques, such as those of Hegelians—it has not faced up to the continuing relevance of the “Dilemma of the Criterion”. Hegel’s answer was that rationality must be seen as self-correcting rather than built on foundations, and self-correction can only function in the context of engagement with opposed positions. “According to Hegel’s method of determinate negation, any principle ... can be justified rationally only through the thorough internal critique of opposed views, both historical and contemporaneous” (177). To the extent that analytic philosophers still accept the dichotomy of “historical” and “rational” knowledge, and deny the relevance of history to the question of the justification of philosophical claims, their dismissal of rival philosophical approaches must ultimately lapse back into rhetoric.
Like Westphal, I believe that the engagement between analytic and Hegelian forms of philosophy can be “enormously fruitful” (173). This volume itself testifies to this assessment. Both analytic philosophers and Hegelians alike should find in it much to engage their interests and challenge their assumptions. From the contributions it is clear that Hegelianism is no set of fixed doctrines, but a way of doing philosophy that has continued to evolve—as it should have if philosophy is, as Hegel put it in the Philosophy of Right, “its own time comprehended in thoughts”. And part of the present for Hegelians surely must be the existence of analytic philosophy.

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