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KENLEY R. DOVE

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BOOK REVIEW

Hegel. The Arguments of the Philosophers. By M.J. INWOOD. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983. Pp. 582.

Historians of contemporary philosophy generally cite Bradley and McTaggart's 'Hegelianism' as the point of departure for twentieth-century analytic philosophy. Bertrand Russell tells us that 1898 was the critical year for his rejection of Hegel and that rejection, together with the later discovery of Frege, has been decisive for the subsequent development of philosophy throughout the English-speaking world. In light of this, some readers will be startled or fascinated by the ultimate contention of the book under review: So far, "Hegel has outlasted most of his critics" (520) and "Hegel's position may ultimately prove to be the right one … ." But it is "too early" to say. Why? Because "it is only recently that … analytical philosophers have begun to make use of what he has to offer" (523).

We seem to have come a long way since those militant days of analytic philosophy when, as Russell puts it, " … I began to believe everything the Hegelians disbelieved."[1] In the meanwhile analytic philosophy has softened, moving from a set of doctrines, most now abandoned, to a vague celebration of 'precision' and a characteristically brisk *style* of argumentation. Of course Mr. Inwood is not the first to serve up Hegel in the generally accepted style of contemporary Anglophone philosophy. But his two major predecessors, J.N. Findlay (*Hegel*, 1958) and Charles Taylor (*Hegel*, 1975), both came to Hegel with philosophical predispositions rather alien to the more austerely Fregean core of analytic philosophy: Neo-Platonic 'rational mysticism' in the case of Findlay and continental hermeneutic phenomenology with Taylor. Inwood's analytic style is uncontaminated by any such content. Thus he can make fair claim to have written the first large-scale (his book is bigger than Findlay's and, by a hair, Taylor's) and hard-core analytic treatment of Hegel. Students of Hegel who also delight in this style may well take pleasure in his *Hegel*.

One of the happier features of the book, perhaps a corollary of its style and certainly befitting a place in its series, is its departure from the prevalent tendency of Hegel scholars to dwell upon biographical details, philological refinements, and cultural backgrounds, to the neglect of systematic arguments. From the very beginning he assures us that he has "preferred to stress the metaphysical elements of [Hegel's] thought" (1) and, with very few exceptions, his subsequent pages hammer away at very specific arguments. Even more radically than McTaggart, he does not hesitate to join Hegel in argument at almost every turn. But unlike McTaggart's, most of Inwood's arguments are against Hegel. The result is a book that is highly polemical in spirit.

A less happy feature of Inwood's preference for 'systematic' over historical arguments is his declared and demonstrated disinterest in matters systematic in Hegel's sense of the word. Thus he gives an 'analytic' twist to the predominant tendency in twentieth-century Hegel scholarship: picking and choosing, à la Croce, "what is living and what is dead in Hegel." After having *shown* this attitude quite unequivocally for 59 pages, he explicitly *says* that, on his reading, "What Hegel prided himself on was systematic understanding rather than scattered insights … but what he displays … are scattered insights rather than systematic understanding." Thus, despite his propensity to cite passages (in his own generally competent translations) from the systematic *Encyclopedia* (albeit in disregard of Hegel's important distinction between his first-order arguments and his commentaries [*Anmerkungen*] on them, and with a marked preference for the editors' additions [*Zusätze*] which he often finds "clearer or fuller" than Hegel), Mr. Inwood pays very little heed to the putatively systematic character of Hegel's arguments, preferring to take them up as isolated propositions, with no concern for their

[1] B. Russell, *My Philosophical Development* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 62.

place in the development of any argument. This accords well with his analytic style, for which arguments consist in propositions, atomic and molecular, and the point is to see whether the operators (conjunctions, disjunctions, conditionals, etc.) allegedly binding atomic into molecular propositions are actually doing their job. Never mind that Hegel himself was systematically critical of arguments couched in propositional form. Having cited and analysed one such passage (*Enz.* § 85) expressing this 'odd' view, Mr. Inwood, who elsewhere notes Hegel's ignorance of what 'we' call 'standard logic' (by which he must mean logic since Frege's *Begriffsschrift* of 1879), cheerfully concludes: "The *Logic* [sc. Hegel's] does of course … express what we would call propositions. It does, after all, consist of sentences and is not simply a list of words" (189). Q.E.D.

More often than not, having put what Hegel "would say" in 'standard form'—trotting out an elegant list of propositions, all nicely numbered—Inwood finds that Hegel has been logically careless, "blurring," "running together," "glossing over," or—Inwood's favorite, often used repeatedly on a single page—"conflating" two or more "quite different distinctions." The first and most critical distinction subjected to such analysis is that between *Begriffe* (here 'concepts') and *Vorstellungen* ('conceptions'). Since Hegel says it is the main business of philosophy to translate *Vorstellungen*, content in the form of terms *or* propositions as objects for consciousness (empirical or transcendental), into *Begriffe*, content in the form of the determinate individuality of things as Aristotelianly 'separate' thoughts, independent of consciousness' appetite for truth (which Hegel calls 'correctness'), the distinction between *Vorstellungen* and *Begriffe*, if a mere "conflation," would transform his entire philosophical enterprise into so much elaborate nonsense. But for Mr. Inwood, who "conflates" the *Phenomenology* with the system (eliciting propositions from either indiscriminately) and ignores Hegel's repeated argument that the former (together with the "Vorbegriff" to the *Encyclopedia*, see § 25A) enables us to reject the propositional attitudes (*Vorstellungen*) to objectivity, i.e., 'correctness,' through an immanent critique of them all (the 'argument' of the *Phenomenology*) that is presupposed for any systematic thoughts of determinacy (*Begriffe*), this distinction, like many others he cites, will not wash. As a result, the longest English language study of Hegel's 'system' is entirely innocent of the most elementary precondition for a comprehension of that system. Perhaps it is true that analytic philosophers have "only recently" turned their attention to Hegel. But the Hegel in question remains strikingly similar to the one rejected by Russell in 1898.[2]

KENLEY R. DOVE

The State University of New York at Purchase

[2] On Bradley and Frege's parallel shifts from *term* to *propositional* variables in logic, and its meanings for philosophical analysis, see the modestly entitled manifesto of analysis in its hey-day: *The Revolution in Philosophy*, introduced by Gilbert Ryle (London: Macmillan, 1956), esp., 6ff., 15ff., and 33ff. Hegel's critique of *both* forms of logic, the 'Fregean' known to him through the Stoics, is of course unmentioned. Mr. Inwood shows that analytic philosophy still awaits its discoverer of this critique. The egg of Columbus has yet to be cracked.