

HEGEL, ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND REALISM Author(s): TOM ROCKMORE

Source: *Hegel-Studien*, Vol. 37 (2002), pp. 123-138

Published by: Felix Meiner Verlag GmbH

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26589526>

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TOM ROCKMORE

HEGEL, ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND REALISM

The emerging discussion on Hegel in analytic philosophy is currently one of the most interesting developments in the Hegel debate. This turn of events is surprising when we recall that Anglo-American analytic philosophy began at the beginning of the twentieth century by rejecting British idealism, then the dominant tendency in English-language circles, and idealism in any form. In a famous article, G. E. Moore, with Bertrand Russell one of the two main founders of analytic philosophy, opposed his commonsensism to any form of the denial of the external world he misattributed to philosophical idealism. Moore bravely but also naively insisted on direct empirical knowledge – “Here is one hand [...] and here is another”¹ – that supposedly refuted idealism, or at least some of its forms. Moore’s refutation rests on three claims: first, idealism, or at least certain forms of idealism, in fact denies the existence of the external world; second, idealism in general can be identified and refuted through immediate empirical knowledge; third, there is immediate empirical knowledge.

All three claims are false or at least doubtful. Neither Moore nor anyone else has ever identified idealists who deny the existence of the external world. Even Berkeley, to whom this doctrine is often generously attributed, denies no more than what philosophers say about the world. Further, there is no idealism in general; there are only idealists who defend various types of idealism. Finally, the very idea of immediate empirical knowledge is extremely doubtful. After Moore, the commitment to empirical knowledge, a main theme in English-language philosophy since the time of Bacon and Locke, was subjected to searching criticism by a series of analytic thinkers (the later Wittgenstein, Sellars, Rorty, Putnam, Davidson). A common aversion to claims for empirical knowledge as ordinarily understood is one of the few things that idealists and analytic thinkers agree on.

Moore’s attack on idealism is very weak and badly constructed. It is unclear if he is attacking idealism in general, Bradley the leading British idealist at the time, or perhaps even the Platonist A. E. Taylor. Yet despite its weakness, Moore’s attack on idealism has been widely influential. It was successful in vanquishing British idealism and in undermining any further interest in Hegel. Ber-

¹ See: G. E. Moore: *The Refutation of Idealism*. – In: *Mind*. New Series. Vol. 12. Issue 48. (October 1903), pp. 433–453.

trand Russell, who, like Moore, was briefly attracted to Hegel under McTaggart's influence, is an example. In *A History of Philosophy*, where Russell provides the only substantive discussion of Hegel in his voluminous writings, he concedes Hegel's influence while contending that almost all Hegel's views are false. In examining a potted view of Hegelian logic, he concludes it violates elementary logical principles.²

In the century since Moore's article appeared, few analytic philosophers have regarded any form of idealism as meriting serious study. More recently, a timid, still very limited analytic return, not to idealism in general, but at least to Hegel, has been made possible through two developments within analytic philosophy: the later Wittgenstein's critique of the realism underlying Moore's common-sensism and Sellars's attack on empiricism.

According to Wittgenstein, Moore misuses the term "to know" in criticizing idealism, which cannot be refuted through insisting on immediate knowledge.³ Since there is no direct grasp of so-called independent facts, cognitive claims depend on a frame of reference (*Bezugssystem*).⁴ In *Philosophical Investigations* (*Philosophische Untersuchungen*) and in *On Certainty* (*Über Gewißheit*), he describes a frame of reference as a language game (*Sprachspiel*) in which the meaning of words depends on their use.⁵

Building on the later Wittgenstein, Sellars clearly signals his receptivity to Hegel in what he describes as *Méditations hégéliennes* in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*.⁶ His interest in Hegel is especially evident in his frontal attack on classical empiricism, which he calls the myth of the given. Sellars's attack on this myth builds on Hegel's famous critique of sense certainty (*sinnliche Gewißheit*) at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*). Hegel's target is immediate knowledge, which presupposes an epistemological given, in English empiricists such as Bacon and Locke, and in more sophisticated fashion in Kant's critical philosophy.⁷ If the immediate given cannot be known, then empiricism as it has been understood in the English tradition and even in Kant is indefensible. In restating Hegel's argument in an analytical idiom, Sellars rejects the idea of direct givenness, in Hegelian terms immediacy, as no more than

² See: B. Russell: *A History of Philosophy*. New York 1945.

³ See: L. Wittgenstein: *On Certainty* (*Über Gewißheit*). Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright. New York 1972, §§ 520–521, p. 68.

⁴ See: L. Wittgenstein: *On Certainty*, § 403, p. 52.

⁵ See: L. Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations* (*Philosophische Untersuchungen*). Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. New York 1956, §§ 43 (p. 20), 197 (p. 80), 264 (p. 93), 340 (p. 109); see also: L. Wittgenstein: *On Certainty*, §§ 61 (p. 10), 65 (p. 10), 82 (p. 12), 560 (p. 74).

⁶ See: W. Sellars: *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge 1997, p. 65.

⁷ For his later critique of empiricism, see: G. W. F. Hegel: *The Encyclopedia Logic*. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis 1991, §§ 37–60, pp. 76–107.

a myth in favor of the justification of claims to know within what he calls the logical space of reasons.⁸

The analytic turn away from Hegel is well known and has been often studied.⁹ The aim of the present discussion is to describe some main aspects of the currently unfolding analytic return to Hegel. I will begin by sketching a general account of recent analytic neo-Hegelianism in the context of working out analytic lines of thought, as distinct from analytic approaches to Hegel scholarship. I will then turn to separate consideration of the views of Brandom and McDowell, the two most important analytic “Hegelians” at present. I will end with some reflections on Hegel and the problem of the existence of the external world.

Analytic neo-Hegelianism

The analytic return to Hegel is closely but imprecisely linked to an increasing receptivity to pragmatism. In part, this is warranted since the first generation of American pragmatists all reacted against for or against, idealism, especially Hegel, in working out their views. Peirce, for instance, increasingly believed his position mainly differed from Hegel’s through differences in terminology.¹⁰ Others were less positively disposed. Dewey opposed what he understood as absolute idealism for objective idealism. James was staunchly opposed to idealism in all its forms.

Contemporary Anglo-American analytic neo-pragmatists, who are often less careful in maintaining any distinction between pragmatism and analytic philosophy, routinely conflate pragmatism and Hegel as well. The original American pragmatists were not analytic philosophers. In fact they could not have been since this tendency emerged late in the nineteenth century, hence slightly earlier than analytic philosophy. If we make an exception for Frege, whose influ-

⁸ See: *W. Sellars: Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, § 36, pp. 75–76.

⁹ See: *P. Hylton: Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford 1990.

¹⁰ For Peirce’s judgment on Hegel, see: *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Ed. Ch. Hartshorne and P. Weiss. Cambridge 1960, V, p. 436: “[T]he third category – the category of thought, representation, triadic relation, genuine thirdness as such – is an essential ingredient of reality, yet does not by itself constitute reality, since this category (which in cosmology appears as the element of habit) can have no concrete being without actions, as a separate object on which to work its government, just as action cannot exist without the immediate being of feeling on which to act. The truth is that pragmatism is closely allied to the Hegelian absolute idealism, from which, however, it is sundered by its vigorous denial that the third category (which Hegel degrades to a mere stage of thinking) suffices to make the world, or is even so much as self-sufficient. Had Hegel, instead of regarding the first two stages with his smile of contempt, held on to them as independent or distinct elements of this triune Reality, pragmatism might have looked up to him as the great vindicator of their truth.” – For discussion of the relation of Peirce and Hegel, see: *T. Rockmore: Hegel, Peirce and Knowledge*. – In: *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Vol. 13. No. 3. (1999), pp. 166–184.

ence on logical empiricism is well known, then analytic philosophy only began in England at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet roughly since Quine's attack on Carnap,¹¹ a number of important analytic philosophers (Quine, Rorty, Putnam, possibly Davidson, Brandom) have been increasingly drawn to pragmatism. With the exception of Rorty, who at least mentions Dewey's relation to Hegel,¹² none of the other first generation analytic pragmatists is more than incidentally concerned with idealism in general or Hegel.

This changes in what is increasingly starting to look like the emergence of a second generation of analytic neo-pragmatists, who are less concerned with idealism than with Hegel, who is sometimes read in a way which simply conflates the relation between pragmatism and Hegelianism. Recent analytic pragmatists are not interested in giving up mainline analytic philosophy, although they are increasingly unwilling to make any definite claims about how to recognize it. Unlike, say, the early Wittgenstein, Carnap on some interpretations, or Dummett, they are uninterested in maintaining epistemological foundationalism.¹³ In this way they continue the effort at postfoundational theories of knowledge common to classical American pragmatism and the first generation analytic pragmatists, with the obvious exception of Rorty, an unrepentant epistemological foundationalist. Their approach to knowledge is squarely situated in the conceptual axis of analytical philosophy of mind and language linking the later Wittgenstein, Sellars and Davidson, hence at least as firmly linked as their analytic predecessors to analytic philosophical orthodoxy.

Moore and Russell, the founders of analytic philosophy, hold very dissimilar views. One can describe the difference in saying that Moore features intuitive claims to know, which Russell rejects. Russell famously distinguishes between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. With that distinction in mind, one can say that Moore favors knowledge by acquaintance and Russell favors knowledge by description. Later analytic figures revolt against traditional British empiricism as well as the empiricism of the founding members of analytic philosophy. Moore's commonsensism and Russell's knowledge by acquaintance, which are both based on direct empirical knowledge, are undermined by the multi-faceted, analytic critique of empiricism starting in the later Wittgenstein, and continuing in Neurath, Quine, Sellars, Davidson, Rorty and others.

Following the analytic critique of empiricism, there are two very different

¹¹ See: *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*. – In: *W. V. O. Quine: From A Logical Point of View*. New York 1963, pp. 20–41.

¹² For Rorty's conflation of a right-wing view of Hegel's absolute with Hegel's conception of the real historical subject, see: *Dewey between Hegel and Darwin*. – In: *Rorty, Truth and Progress*. Cambridge 1998, pp. 300–305.

¹³ See e.g.: *M. Dummett: Frege's Philosophy of Language*. London 1973, p. 559.

schools of thought about justifying claims to know. Empiricism is often combined with realism, as in Kant's empirical realism, Moore's commonsensism and Russell's logical empiricism, three approaches to an empirical grasp of the real. In the wake of the analytic critique of empiricism, one way to justify claims to know is return to realism. A kind of realism is manifest in Davidson's attempted resurrection of the correspondence theory of truth, and in Putnam's revival of a form of direct realism. Both views depend on coming back in touch, in Davidson's case indirectly through language, and Putnam's case directly, with the mind-independent external world. Both fall back into what Rorty sees as a bad habit borrowed from Descartes.¹⁴

The other main option in the analytic discussion is to turn to Hegel. The specifically analytic Hegelian turn, which is still in its nascent stages, is mediated by several factors, including the effect of the later Wittgenstein on the subsequent debate, and, in virtue of the increasing attention to Sellars, Sellars' interest in Hegel. The later Wittgenstein directs attention to a contextualist view of knowledge sometimes referred to as linguistic idealism.¹⁵ Wittgenstein's indirect rehabilitation of idealism calls attention to its general resources, which he never explores other than by illustrating them in his writings.

Wittgenstein's later turn to contextualism has been read as social and as asocial. These different readings lead to two different views of Hegel. A straight line runs from a social contextualist reading of Wittgenstein, as illustrated by Kripke's well known interpretation,¹⁶ through Sellars' flirtation with Hegel, to Brandom's still very recent, clearly undeveloped, but explicit turn to Hegel. A rather different connection leads from the later Wittgenstein to McDowell's refutation of social contextualism and his own appropriation of Hegelian themes.

Drawing the lesson of the later Wittgenstein's critique of Moore's commonsensism, Sellars clearly signals his receptivity to Hegel in what he describes as *Méditations hégéliennes* in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*.¹⁷ Sellars' attack on this myth builds on Hegel's famous critique of sense certainty (*sinnliche Gewißheit*) at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*). If the immediate given is unknowable, then empiricism as usually understood in the English tradition and even in Kant is indefensible. In restating He-

¹⁴ This is an instance of what Rorty refers to as "the bad habit British empiricists took over from Descartes – the habit of asking whether mind ever succeeds in making unmediated contact with the world, and remaining skeptical about the status of knowledge – claims until such contact can be shown to exist." – R. Rorty: *Introduction*. – In: *W. Sellars: Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge 1997, p. 9.

¹⁵ See: *D. Bloor: The Question of Linguistic Idealism Revisited*. – In: *Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*. Edited by H. Sluga and D. F. Sterne. New York 1996, pp. 354–382.

¹⁶ See: *S. A. Kripke: Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Oxford 1982.

¹⁷ See: *W. Sellars: Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 148.

gel's argument in an analytical idiom, Sellars rejects the idea of direct givenness, in Hegelian terms immediacy, as no more than a myth in favor of the justification of claims to know within what he calls the logical space of reasons.¹⁸

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty takes over a form of Sellars' social justificationism.¹⁹ In the introduction to the recent republication of Sellars' essay, he underscores its importance, which he compares to Wittgenstein's *Logical Investigations* and Quine's *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*. His appreciation of Hegel, whom he often invokes, seems mainly to come from Dewey as opposed to direct acquaintance with Hegel's texts.²⁰ With an eye to Sellars, Rorty touts Brandom, his own former student, as making a bid to take analytic philosophy from its Kantian stage in Sellars (for Rorty's purposes Sellars is both a Kantian and a Hegelian!) to a new, Hegelian stage by replacing the old reliance on representation through a view of inference.²¹

Brandom and McDowell differ on how to justify claims to know.²² They also differ in their closeness to the texts, which McDowell reads with care and Brandom seems often to neglect. Sellars' view of linguistic nominalism asserts that all awareness of whatever kind is linguistic.²³ Brandom and McDowell accept this doctrine while drawing different inferences. Rorty puts the point well in remarking that Brandom is committed to developing the linguistic turn, but McDowell is committed to experience.²⁴ Another way to read this remark is to say that Brandom is closer to Rorty than McDowell; the latter, who is very critical of Rorty, is closer to Hegel, who position turns on experience.

Brandom's pragmatic Hegelianism

Brandom in part depends on claims about mainline analytic philosophy, pragmatism and Hegel. His understanding of his relation to other views is at least precarious. Let us bracket for the moment his suggestions about analytic philosophy. Brandom's claims that his inferentialism is both pragmatist and Hegelian may strike some readers as arbitrary. After all, it is not every day that someone who traces his position to Sellars and Frege also insists on his relation to prag-

¹⁸ See: *Ibid.*, § 36, p. 76.

¹⁹ See: *R. Rorty: Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton 1979, p. 170.

²⁰ See: *J. Habermas: Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn*. – In: *Rorty and His Critics*. Edited by R. B. Brandom. Malden, MA. 2000, p. 34.

²¹ See: *W. Sellars: Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 8.

²² For discussion, see: *Robert Brandom on Social Practice and Representations*. – In: *Rorty, Truth and Progress*. Vol. 3, pp. 122–137.

²³ See: *W. Sellars: Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. § 29, pp. 160–161.

²⁴ See: *R. Brandom on Social Practice and Representations*. – In: *Rorty, Truth and Progress*. Vol. 3, p. 122.

matism and to Hegel. Some observers might want to emphasize the differences between such thinkers. Brandom's conviction that pragmatism is semantic since cognitive claims appeal to, hence rely on, semantic inference at best shows that pragmatism relies, or ought to rely, on semantics for claims to know. It does not show that all forms of semantics, or even those forms associated with Frege and Sellars, are pragmatist.

One thing Brandom gets right about pragmatism is its often neglected epistemological thrust. Brandom has almost nothing to say, except in the most general terms, about classical pragmatists. In identifying his position as pragmatist, he seems to have in mind inferential practice as opposed to theory. An example he gives is the way that, on the basis of studying electrons or aromatic compounds, we arrive at a theory, or series of interrelated concepts, which we can determine as true or false in empirically determining how things really are with such cognitive objects as aromatic compounds or electrons.²⁵

Brandom's unfamiliar form of pragmatism is relevant to his equally unfamiliar way of reading Hegel. Brandom's Hegelian credentials are at least dubious. He claims to be a Hegelian, and teases the reader with repeated references to a supposedly forthcoming Hegel book. Yet he says little directly about Hegel in general or as concerns inferentialism. And what he does say seems suspect. There seems little or no similarity between the position Brandom espouses and the one he attributes to Hegel. Brandom's inferentialism seems different from, in fact incompatible with, Hegel's position even on a charitable reading.

In *Making It Explicit*, the only important reference to Hegel is a remark about him as anticipating Quine's holism.²⁶ This claim is very odd. In a chronological sense in that he precedes Quine, Hegelian holism precedes Quinean holism. Yet Hegel does not invent or discover holism which goes back at least to ancient Greece (e.g. Speusippus). And he does not anticipate anything like Quinean holism, which is simply antithetical to his position. A Quinean or quasi-Quinean reading of Hegel is not only unprecedented, which is not necessarily bad, but also exceedingly odd, and inconsistent with the texts. It is simply implausible to equate Quine's essentially asocial and ahistorical view of the change of meaning and belief, to use Brandom's language, with Hegel's very different view of the constitution of knowledge and ethics for real human individuals within the social and historical context. Or to put the same point in another way, Quine focuses on the epistemic conditions of knowledge in general given the underdetermination of theories, without regard to the underlying social context; but Hegel focuses on their constitution in relation to the (social and conceptual) context. Hegel never distinguishes cleanly between

²⁵ See: R. Brandom: *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*. Cambridge 2000, p. 27.

²⁶ See: R. Brandom: *Making It Explicit*, p. 92.

theory and the context in which it emerges. It is unclear that such a distinction would be consistent with his position. He understands theories as indexed to the historical moment, hence relative to time and place, in a word as intrinsically historical. On the contrary, Quine takes a behaviorist but not a historical approach to knowledge. There is not the slightest hint in Quine that he understands cognition as historical.

Brandom's view of Hegel later evolved. In a recent article on pragmatist themes in Hegelian idealism, he elaborates his earlier claim.²⁷ At this stage he no longer emphasizes Hegel's anticipation of Quine in arguing in more detail than before for an explicit parallel between Hegel and Quine. According to Brandom, Quine works out his pragmatist view, or the adjustment of meaning and belief within experience, in the same way that Hegel works out his idealist view.²⁸ Through a distinction between the alleged pragmatist thesis that "the use of concepts determines their content" and the so-called idealist thesis, that "the structure and unity of the *concept* is the same as the structure and unity of the *self*," Brandom makes two points: Hegel's idealist thesis is his way of making the pragmatist thesis work, and this is useful for contemporary semantics.²⁹

Both points are at least questionable or even simply erroneous. The possible utility of Hegel's position for contemporary semantics in part presupposes a plausible take on the position. There are a number of things suspect or plainly wrong about the supposed parallel between Hegel and Quine. Since Hegel precedes rather than succeeds the rise of pragmatism, Brandom appears here to be reading the history of philosophy from front to back, or backwards. I confess I cannot make any sense of the so-called idealist thesis, which apparently suggests some unspecified (structural?) similarity between concepts and selves. It is obvious that, at a sufficiently abstract level, anything resembles anything else. Yet I see no reason to hold that a concept is like a self or a self is like a concept. Clearly if there are concepts, selves have them; but selves are not and cannot be reduced to concepts. Finally, although concept (*Begriff*) is a technical term for Hegel, Brandom's understanding of this word, including Hegel's use of it, remains unclear. We have no reason to infer that Quine or Brandom understand "concept" in even a remotely similar way to Hegel's technical understanding of the same term. Brandom's claim, already noted, that through concepts we can determine how things stand with cognitive objects is explicitly not what Hegel means. More on this point later.

²⁷ See: R. Brandom: *Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms*. – In: *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, August 1999, pp. 164–189.

²⁸ See: *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²⁹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 164.

The relation between Hegel and Quine earlier featured is not directly addressed in the recent book. Brandom's earlier comparison between Hegelian idealism and Quinean pragmatism presupposes a distinction between idealism and pragmatism. A form of idealism is said to be like a form of pragmatism; it is not said to be identical with it. Although I contest the similarity between Hegel and Quine, I agree with the distinction between pragmatism and idealism. They are not the same and need to be distinguished. The classical American pragmatists react against Hegel and other forms of idealism. Whatever idealism is, it is not identical with pragmatism. This useful distinction simply disappears in *Articulating Reasons*, where Brandom directly and firmly links his own position to Hegel's. Brandom's strategy relies on approving Rorty's typically charitable, imprecise, fuzzy view of things in which all concepts merge into other concepts. Brandom describes his aim as what Rorty describes as Brandom's Hegelian extension of Sellars' Kantian approach to thought and action.

Rorty is both friendly to but also critical of Brandom. His suggestion about Brandom can be construed as three related claims: first, Sellars is a Kantian; second, Brandom is a Hegelian; and third, Brandom's Hegelianism improves on Sellars' Kantianism through a form of inferentialism that Rorty himself rejects.

All three claims require comment. Sellars is not only a Kantian but also, at least in some of his writings, such as *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, which depends on the application of Hegelian insights to the criticism of empiricism, a Hegelian. Whether Brandom is, as Rorty suggests and Brandom claims, a Hegelian depends on what we mean by "Hegelian". And if we decide that Brandom is a Hegelian, it remains questionable whether his Hegelianism improves on Sellars' Kantianism through inferentialism. This latter claim is called into question by Rorty, who defends Sellars but criticizes Brandom's inferentialism.

Brandom, who overlooks Rorty's criticism of his inferentialism – more about that presently – is enthusiastic about the suggestion to be taking analytic philosophy from its Kantian to its Hegelian stage. He defends this idea in noting his concern with the putative Hegelian distinction between nature and culture, Hegel's supposed pragmatism about conceptual norms, and the alleged Hegelian link between logic and self-consciousness.³⁰

A peculiar feature in Brandom's Hegelianism is that he consistently reads Hegel indirectly, through other analytic thinkers, initially through Quine and more recently through Sellars. Sellars' Hegelian turn can be criticized in two ways. One is to deny that Sellars' Kant can be worked up into a Hegel that resembles Hegel. Another is to argue that Sellars is incompatible with Hegel. The first criticism is suggested by McDowell. Brandom's effort to extend analytic

³⁰ See: R. Brandom: *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*. (2000), pp. 32–33.

philosophy to a Hegelian phase means going beyond Sellars' reading of Kant that, according to McDowell, is demonstrably false and closes off this avenue of development.³¹ And it further means adopting a social justificationism reading of the later Wittgenstein that McDowell also contests.³² The second criticism rests on the difference between Sellars and Hegel.

In his distinction between nature and culture, Brandom echoes Rorty's reading of Sellars' scientism. Sellars famously distinguishes between so-called folk views, which are unsubstantiated and do not count as knowledge, and science, which is our only reliable cognitive source. Rorty applies Sellars' distinction in a view of philosophy as defending the further distinction between science and nonscience, or culture.³³ On Rorty's model, philosophy separates out the disciplines providing truth and knowledge from, say, folk disciplines, which fall below acceptable cognitive standards. On the Rorty-Sellars view, the philosopher functions like a gym teacher in choosing players for two teams: those apt only for folk views, which are incorrigibly subjective and depend on local conditions; and those apt for scientific knowledge, the objective form of cognition, which is independent of local conditions, and who win all the conceptual games.

Brandom's argument depends on a distinction between nature and culture he attributes to Hegel, but which Hegel would obviously reject. In this connection, Brandom stresses his interest in spirit (*Geist*) without telling us how to interpret this difficult concept. Hegel's view of spirit is not the same as analytic philosophy of language which is focused on denotation, extension and similar themes. Hegel, who systematically relativizes all distinctions, does not sharply distinguish between nature and culture. For Hegel, the natural sciences comprise a collection of cognitive disciplines as usually understood which fall below the level of philosophical science. He detects a reciprocal relation between nature and culture. Hegel regards culture as situated within nature, which is a cultural phenomenon, since what we mean by "nature" is itself a historical variable. The important point is not that the study of nature has a history but that all cognitive disciplines, including the natural sciences, are intrinsically historical. In contending that such concepts as electron and aromatic compound have histories, but are not purely historical, Brandom fails to get at the deeper issue concerning the intrinsic historicity of human cognition.

³¹ See: J. McDowell: *Comment on Robert Brandom's 'Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism'*. – In: *European Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 7. No. 2. (August 1999), pp. 190–193. – See also: J. McDowell: *Having the World in View: Kant, Sellars and Intentionality*. The Woodbridge Lectures 1997. – In: *The Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. XCV. No. 9. (September 1998), p. 466.

³² See: J. McDowell: *Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy*. – Reprinted in: J. McDowell: *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge 1998, pp. 263–278. – See also: *Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein*. – Reprinted in: *Ibid.*, pp. 297–324.

³³ See: R. Rorty: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. (1979), p. 268.

It is also doubtful that Hegel is a pragmatist about conceptual norms in anything like Brandom's sense. It has already been noted that Brandom earlier compared Quine's pragmatism with Hegel's idealism. He now identifies Hegel as pragmatist on the doubtful grounds that pragmatism just is idealism and conversely. In offering a transcendental interpretation of idealism, Brandom points to Haugeland's idea that transcendental constitution is social institution.³⁴ Hegel's position, which relies on social institutions, is not transcendental in any ordinary way, say in Kant's sense. It is unclear whether Hegel defends a position that is transcendental in any ordinary sense of the term. It is also difficult to know what "transcendental pragmatism" would mean. And unless refusing a transcendental approach equals a commitment to pragmatism, it is unclear why Hegel should be described as a pragmatist at all. Hegel's view that conceptual norms depend on the society in which they emerge does not seem specifically pragmatist at all. It sounds more like common sense, which even nonpragmatists exhibit.

McDowell on Hegel

I will have less to say about McDowell on Hegel. This is not because what he has written is less interesting but because his use of Hegel, like his approach to philosophy in general, has so far been very cautious. Unlike Brandom, who identifies his own position as specifically Hegelian, McDowell has not so far taken this step. If increasing mastery of the relevant texts is any indication, then his more cautious, less florid approach is more promising than his Pittsburgh colleague's. The cast of philosophical heroes for McDowell and Brandom is similar although the relevant interpretations are not. McDowell, who shares Brandom's interest in Wittgenstein, Sellars and Hegel, reads all three very differently. Unlike Brandom and Rorty, his approach to Hegel is not mediated through pragmatism. McDowell rejects the social justificationist readings of Wittgenstein and Sellars uncritically assumed by Rorty and Brandom. And McDowell further rejects Brandom's inferentialist account of concepts. According to McDowell, who may have Hegel in mind, since mental events are not judgments which can justify beliefs, perceptual experience has a role to play, even if it is conceptually structured. This permits McDowell to hold on to experience as making a difference in our claims to know, hence in having a viable alternative to a mere coherence approach to truth.

Brandom's belief with Putnam that thoughts and talk give us, as he claims, a perspectival grip on a nonperspectival world amounts to representing it as rela-

³⁴ See: J. Haugeland: Heidegger on Being a Person. – In: *Nous* 16. (1982), pp. 16–26. – See also: R. Brandom: *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*. (2000), p. 34.

tive to a frame of reference, something Davidson explicitly disclaims. McDowell breaks with Davidson's coherentist view that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief."³⁵ McDowell points out that Davidson's coherentism allows no external constraints.³⁶ He prefers the counterclaim, based on his own reading of Sellars' psychological nominalism, that "although the world is not external to the space of concepts, it is external to exercises of spontaneity."³⁷ The view that our claims to know are empirically constrained by a world given only within experience leads McDowell in Hegel's direction.

The difference between McDowell and Brandom in this respect, which is major, not minor, can be summarized in three points. To begin with, McDowell rejects the social justificationist reading of Wittgenstein on which Brandom explicitly relies.³⁸ He further rejects the idea that meaning is socially constituted, on which Brandom also in part relies. He finally rejects the idea that there is a problem about the norms of reason, that is, the very problem which is central to Brandom's recent work, and which motivates his turn to a pragmatic Hegel. For McDowell but not Brandom we can continue to rely on our relation to experience.

McDowell's turn to pragmatism and to Hegel is recent; there is no trace of it in a collection of his papers over the last twenty years.³⁹ McDowell points out that Rorty regards pragmatism as debunking dualisms, but relies on the dualism between reason and nature. Although he makes no claim to be a pragmatist, he suggests that his own view is closer to pragmatism on Rorty's model than the latter's position which he describes as simply "half-baked". McDowell sees Hegel as standing on Kant's shoulders,⁴⁰ and acknowledges his influence on such writers as Marx and Gadamer.⁴¹ He regards Hegel as correcting such Kantian ideas as the supersensible.⁴²

In recent lectures, McDowell criticizes Sellars for allegedly misreading Kant in a way which closes off access to Hegel as continuing but also as correcting

³⁵ See: *A Coherence Theory of Knowledge*. – In: *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*. Edited by E. LePore. Oxford 1986, p. 310.

³⁶ See: *J. McDowell: Mind and World*. Cambridge 1994, p. 144.

³⁷ See: *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³⁸ At the beginning of this decade, he published two papers on what he sees as the misrepresentation of intentionality in the later Wittgenstein in Kripke's, and following him Wright's, versions of the familiar social justificationist interpretations. – See: *Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy*, and: *Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein*, both reprinted in: *J. McDowell: Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge 1998, pp. 263–278 and 297–324.

³⁹ See: *J. McDowell: Mind, Value and Reality*. Cambridge 1998.

⁴⁰ See: *J. McDowell: Mind and World*. (1994), p. 111.

⁴¹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 117, n. 8.

⁴² See: *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Kant.⁴³ He points out that Sellars proposes a Kantian approach to intentionality, understood as the relation of thought and language to the world in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, and then in its sequel, *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes*. And he suggests that Sellars interprets Kant as claiming that sensibility is purely receptive in order to “avoid the dialectic which leads from Hegel’s *Phenomenology* to nineteenth-century idealism.”⁴⁴

Clearly McDowell, who is concerned to avoid any easy conflation of Hegel and Wittgenstein, is also not frightened by the perspective of idealism. In a defense of Hegel against Sellars, McDowell contends that Hegel’s theory, which contains an internal constraint, does not require an external constraint.⁴⁵ He concludes, on this basis, that Sellars is correct that for Kant sensibility plays a transcendental role, but that for Hegel the necessary empirical constraint is provided by the objects of perception. In this way, he implicitly acknowledges Hegel’s often overlooked empiricism.

Unlike Brandom, McDowell reads Hegel directly and not through the eyes of others. McDowell’s ability to penetrate into the texts from the vantagepoint of ongoing philosophical disputes is displayed in a recent paper, “Hegel’s Idealism as Radicalization of Kant.”⁴⁶ The paper follows and then diverges from Pippin’s version⁴⁷ of the well known idea that Hegel is both inspired by and critical of Kant. With this in mind, McDowell develops a detailed discussion of the transcendental deduction in the B edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. His discussion is meant to bring out some of the ways in which, from a Hegelian perspective Kant’s deduction falls short, and to point to ways in which Hegel aims to achieve Kant’s intentions.

McDowell’s reading suggests, but never directly says, that Hegel treats Kant’s critical philosophy as an unfinished project in developing Kant’s deduction according to its spirit but not necessarily according to its letter. Along the way, McDowell corrects some well anti-Hegelian prejudices, such as the view, sometimes attributed to Hegel, but perhaps more often to Fichte, that the subject simply creates the world out of its own mind.⁴⁸ McDowell diverges from Pippin

⁴³ See: J. McDowell. *Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality*. (1998), pp. 431–491. – For discussion of McDowell’s reading of Kant, see: Ch. Norris: *McDowell on Kant: Redrawing the Bounds of Sense*. – In: *Metaphilosophy* 31. No. 4. (July 2000), pp. 382–411.

⁴⁴ See: W. Sellars: *Science and Metaphysics*, p. 16. – Cited in: J. McDowell: *Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality*. (1998), p. 466.

⁴⁵ “Hegelian Reason does not need to be constrained from outside, precisely because it includes as a moment within itself the receptivity that Kant attributes to sensibility.” – In: J. McDowell: *Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality*. (1998), p. 466

⁴⁶ See: J. McDowell: *Hegel’s Idealism as Radicalization of Kant*. – Proceedings of the Venice Hegel Meeting, Edizioni Guarini – forthcoming.

⁴⁷ See: R. Pippin: *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge 1989.

⁴⁸ He refers here to: M. Friedman: *Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition: Comments on John McDowell’s Mind and World*. – In: *Philosophical Review*. Vol. 105. (1996), 427–67, especially at 439–44

in two ways: in claiming that Pippin fails to isolate what about the Deduction is not Hegelian, which is precisely the aim of McDowell's paper; and in also failing to show how the Deduction very nearly succeeds. McDowell's interesting point exploits the difference between Kant's views of the understanding, constrained by sensation, and reason as unconstrained, and Hegelian reason as empirically constrained. McDowell ends by suggesting that unlike Kant, Hegel pursues the idea of objective cognition by eliminating externalism, or the view that in knowing we know how it is with the mind-independent external world. By implication, although he does not say so, Hegel's view runs directly contrary to Brandom's.

The emerging analytic Hegel

How does the nascent analytic Hegel relate to Hegel? One way to answer this point is in reference to Kant. His analysis of cognition can be interpreted in two ways, call them realism and idealism for present purposes. Kant should be seen as striving but failing to know the mind-independent world, or external reality while limiting claims to know to empirical reality. In current analytic terminology, Kant favors externalism. As an idealist, Kant should be seen as putting forward a theory of knowledge based on a sensory input or external constraint. I believe that Hegel takes the second approach to cognition. He makes no claim to know the mind-independent external world as it is. He is not a metaphysical realist as ordinarily understood in epistemological discussion. He is rather, like Kant, an empirical realist. He understands the process of knowledge against the background of the interaction of subject and object, knower and known, subjectivity and objectivity within the experience of consciousness. For Hegel, to know is to know what is given in conscious experience, not what is as it is in independence of us. As a result of working through the critical philosophy he turns away from realism.

By analogy, one can discern two different realist and idealist strands in the analytic return to Hegel. With the possible exception of Rorty, Brandom and McDowell are currently the analytic philosophers most visibly interested in Hegel. To simplify, we can limit ourselves to three analytic philosophers: Sellars, Brandom and McDowell. Sellars is influential on both. In evaluating the emerging analytic Hegel, I think the larger differences in the respective approaches to Hegel are more important than the specific grasp of the texts. All three figures are driven to Hegel through the internal dialectic of the analytic discussion, as a result of which key assumptions, which were ingredient in the turn away from Hegel, especially traditional British empiricism, were criticized and rejected. The rejection of these assumptions, the change in

the overall analytic position, to the extent that such a position in fact exists, has increasingly led selected analytic thinkers in Hegel's direction.

It would be a mistake to conflate analytic views with Hegel's position. Their views are in part similar to Hegel's. Yet they are also very different and the differences are important, even crucial. Since its beginnings in Frege, analytic philosophy has been concerned with semantics, or questions of reference, something very different from epistemology, or theory of knowledge. A short way of putting the point is that semantics cannot substitute for epistemology, since to pick out or designate a thing is not the same as knowing it. Semantics arguably belongs to epistemology, which is a different, wider enterprise. From the analytic perspective, Hegel is not a semanticist but an anti-semanticist, since, as the famous analysis of sense certainty (*sinnliche Gewißheit*) shows, he denies anything more than informal reference. In favoring informal reference, he rejects the very idea of formal reference that has occupied the best analytic minds over more than a hundred years.

Hegel thinks that philosophy begins in difference. Yet the distinct tendency to erase differences in recent analytic discussion about Hegel makes it difficult to understand what is being talked about. Faithful to his tendency to muddy all distinctions, Rorty who sees Sellars and Brandom as leaning toward Hegel, does not acknowledge even the most obvious differences between Sellars and Hegel, or between himself and Sellars.⁴⁹

As concerns Hegel's recent analytic followers, the differences are often more important than the similarities. Sellars' scientism, which is well known, connects him with traditional analytic semantics and realism, which further survive in Brandom. The latter, who is also a realist as well as the beneficiary of Rorty's generosity, suggests clearly but entirely unconvincingly that he and Hegel are up to the same thing when the two positions are very different, opposed and incompatible. They differ basically with respect to realism, which Brandom favors and Hegel does not. The difference is important and basic since Brandom claims to know the mind-independent external world as it is in knowing how it is with electrons and aromatic compounds whereas Hegel claims to know no more than what is present in conscious experience.

Sellars, and then Brandom, who is influenced by him, fall within the analytic semantic tradition, which has always been realist. They overlap with Hegel in refuting empiricism as ordinary understood, but differ from Hegel in their respective commitment to realism, hence to externalism, in short to getting it right about the mind-independent external world. Although also influenced by

⁴⁹ Rorty conflates Sellars' view of justification through the space of reasons with epistemological behaviorism, or the view that rationality depends on what society lets us say which he attributes to Wittgenstein and Dewey. – See: *R. Rorty: Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. (1979), p. 174.

Sellars, McDowell rejects externalism, hence realism, in basing his understanding of Hegel on the elimination of so-called externality from Kant's transcendental deduction. If Hegel is not a realist, then a non-realist approach to his position is at least compatible with its spirit. Before saying more, we must await further developments in the analytic return to Hegel.