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Strange Bedfellows: Hegel's Dialectics and the Method of the Early Analytic Philosophy

Introduction

In the last decades, several attempts were made to exploit the relatedness between the early analytic philosophers and Hegel. Some 30 years ago, Peter Hylton and Nicholas Griffin investigated the apprenticeship of Bertrand Russell with neo-Hegelians.¹ 25 years later, the direction of interest changed. Paul Redding and Angelica Nuzzo sought a connection between Hegel and analytic philosophy following hints made by Robert Brandom and John McDowell. According to these authors, Hegel can be seen as a theorist of concepts.² Moreover, they found that Hegel's understanding of concepts is close to that of the early analytic philosophy.

The approach we are following in this paper is different. We shall concentrate on the relatedness between the method of the early analytic philosophers and aspects of Hegel's method. This is an unexplored venue and we hope that our study will open a new perspective both in the history of the early analytic philosophy and in Hegel Studies. To be more explicit, we are not going to specifically investigate the genealogical connection between these two methods. We shall be mainly concerned with their kinship.

1. Hegel and the Eliminativistic Method of Early Analytic Philosophy

The official story has it that the early analytic philosophy was developed as an antithesis to Hegel's dialectics. Whereas analytic philosophers strived to fix the *exact* terms and boundaries of logic, ontology and epistemology, Hegel was interested in the *transition* of terms, concepts and objects in other concepts and objects. Despite the fact that this story seems to be correct and is so rather

¹ Cf. P. Hylton, *Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford 1990; N. Griffin, *Russell's Idealist Apprenticeship*, Oxford 1991.

² Cf. P. Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, Cambridge 2007; A. Nuzzo (ed.), *Hegel and the Analytic Tradition*, London 2009.