

through his emphasis on the role of conversation in philosophy casts it in an interesting light.

The style of this collection echoes its subject matter. While each essay can stand on its own, the collection of these essays in a particular order demands that the reader play an active role in finding the unity between the essays. The themes of each essay relate to the themes of the other essays, but in ways that are at times indirect and implicit. Only when the reader actively draws the essays together into a conversation does the book coalesce as a whole. Peperzak's prose invites the reader into a conversation with him, especially in his manner of consistently posing questions that follow from his ideas. Peperzak takes on the epistemic humility that he identifies as necessary for philosophy. In keeping with his thesis, he accepts that he is a confluence of past experiences and yet he is also a unique thinker rethinking and remolding past ideas anew. As a result, he does not often explicitly acknowledge his past influences, but at the same time does not claim to be proposing anything radically new. His example of philosophizing invites his reader to do the same, so that the reader may be drawn into a passionate response to his ideas and so will engage in genuine philosophical activity.—Margaret I. Hughes, *College of Mount Saint Vincent*.

ROCKMORE, Tom. *Kant and Phenomenology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011. 258 pp. Cloth, \$45.00—The purpose of this targeted work is to examine a phenomenological approach to epistemology, and specifically, to address the relation between “reality,” “phenomena” and “appearance” in light of the enduring question of how it is possible to grasp reality as such. Rockmore argues that phenomenology, broadly conceived, extends beyond Husserl importantly back to Kant. He argues that Husserl's, Heidegger's, and Merleau-Ponty's so-called nonconstructivist approaches to phenomenology fail to solve this problem and suggests that Kant's “constructivist strategy” is more effective in addressing it. The major view espoused in nonconstructivist phenomenological accounts is that reality is knowable because it appears. Constructivism—the view “that a minimal conditional of knowledge is that the cognitive subject must ‘construct’ the cognitive subject”—“turns away from a claim to know the way the world is in itself for a claim to know whatever is given in experience.” Contrary to constructivism is representationalism, in which phenomena and appearances (which are run together) are understood to represent reality in itself. Rockmore recommends phenomenological approaches to epistemology to follow the spirit of the critical philosophy and constructivism. This can be done by looking to Hegel, who stresses that “knowledge does not concern the world in itself but the world for us, which we only know through conscious phenomena,” which forces us to

grapple with the problem of knowledge as lying “in understanding how ‘we’ construct phenomenon in the interaction between [finite] human beings and situated within the historical process in which we come to know the world and ourselves.”

In the first chapter, Rockmore focuses on the interface of Plato and Kant with respect to the role that ideas play in relation to knowledge. There is an ultimate conflict between Plato and phenomenology insofar as Platonism presupposes that “the real does not and cannot appear in cognizable form” because Plato, although he admits of reasoning from cause to effect, denies that one can infer any causes from effects; specifically, he denies that one can infer something about reality—the source of all things—from appearances. Ideas conceived of by the moderns were consistent with a representationalist theory of knowledge due in part to their causal theory of perception, which understands things to cause ideas, and with it the implication that reality manifests itself. Rockmore canvasses the ongoing debate about ideas among moderns, who work in their own context with the specter of phenomena, appearance, and reality in the background.

In chapter two, Rockmore depicts Kant’s movement from the environs of the causal theory of perception and its corresponding representational theory of knowledge to his descriptive phenomenology and constructivism. Kant’s Copernican revolution, in its attempt at saving the *de facto* intelligibility of the objective order in experience, is consistent with phenomenology and Platonism. Concerning the former, Kant is said to be the first to use the term philosophically, understanding it to be “a theory that explains how within the realm of material natural science empirical phenomena become experience.” Concerning the latter, Kant’s philosophy eschews the real as foreign to our experience.

Next, in chapter three, Rockmore examines Hegel as an important representative of post-Kantian critical philosophy and phenomenology. Hegel’s main intent is developing the spirit of Kant’s philosophy but he also stresses the importance of historical perspective. Beginning by discussing important post-Kantian idealists and their relationship to the critical philosophy, Rockmore emphasizes Hegel’s development of critical philosophy as a “progressive unfolding of ideas through dialectical debate in historical space.” Hegel’s phenomenology and constructivism cause him to reject the thing in itself, to hold that knowledge is based on self-consciousness, and to propose that “the cognitive object crucially depends . . . on the finite subject’s activity.”

In the fourth chapter, he investigates Husserl’s phenomenological epistemology. Clearly a major theme that shapes Husserl’s approach is his interests in overcoming psychologism. Reconstructing Husserl’s epistemology from a broadly Kantian perspective, Rockmore discusses Husserl’s shift from descriptive phenomenology—which attains to the *a priori* description of essences—to his transcendental idealism. His former position faces a major epistemological problem in that it leaves one wondering how “for an essentialist, one can claim to grasp the really existing external object”; a solution for which he only offers an

unredeemed promissory note. Regarding his transcendental idealism, Rockmore claims that “after Husserl introduces the reduction, there is no longer any plausible way to comprehend the relation of psychologically immanent experiences [*Erlebnisse*] to a transcendent reality.” Yet, in claiming to go to things themselves, Husserl eschews a constructivism about the cognitive objective.

In chapter five, Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology is mined for clues to identifying his treatment of epistemology. Whereas Husserl held that being cannot be “the object of a phenomenological seeing,” Heidegger held that “in phenomenological intuition, being is given as the basis for an analysis for the meaning of being.” The possibility of such an analysis is facilitated through Heidegger’s own definition of truth merely as “to uncover a thing as it is in itself.” Rockmore characterizes Heidegger’s view of truth as problematic in that it is theoretically unsupported. Rockmore also identifies his position as excluding constructivism and as broadly representational: because of this, Heidegger’s position is fraught with the same problems faced by representationalists and anti-constructivists.

Chapter six addresses Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology as it bears upon Kant’s thought. Rockmore argues that although Merleau-Ponty “intends his position as a refutation of idealism . . . he misunderstands idealism and hence the relation of his position to idealism.” A prominent feature of Merleau-Ponty’s epistemology is his focus on the primacy of perception. In his use of descriptive phenomenology and the primacy of perception as unadulterated experiential givenness, Merleau-Ponty seeks to exclude any idealist constructivist approach in favor of the idea that the world is “always already there.” Rockmore refers to the “myth of the givenness” and suggests that concrete description, as Merleau-Ponty describes it, is not the case. Rather, “we never go directly to experience, but always do so on the basis of our prior experience, which is, hence, always already in that sense ‘constructed’ by us as a condition of its apprehension.” Ultimately, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology does not avoid the epistemological problem pointed out by Rockmore throughout *Kant and Phenomenology*: namely, that “if all one means by *world* is what arises in perception, how [can] one test claims to know against experience[?]”—Paul Symington, *Franciscan University of Steubenville*.

SCHALL, James V. *The Modern Age*. South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011. 207 pp. Cloth, \$30.00—In this work, Jesuit political philosopher James Schall proposes a diagnosis of the modern age, where “modern” is understood as the present or current period. The thesis of this book is that in the modern age the transcendent goals for human beings—the ones that were originally outlined partly in Greek philosophy but more