

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Contradiction in Motion: Hegel's Organic Concept of Life and Value by
Songsuk Susan Hahn

Review by: Christopher Yeomans

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evolution and formation of his philosophical ideas." Gilson follows this fragment with the insightful recommendation for understanding Leibniz: "Look in Blanchet's thesis for points of similarity with Campanella; it is the key to Leibniz about whom we no longer understand anything because the XVIth century lasted until the XVIIIth" (p. 25). On this same page, Gilson initiates reference to Malebranche as resurrecting in the eighteenth century the thirteenth-century struggle between Aristotelian-Thomism and traditional Augustinianism and as spearheading an Augustinian renaissance and conflict between two forms of Scholasticism that is "the key to all the instances of *Modernism*, up until Fr. Bautain and Father Laberthonnière" (pp. 25, 29, 30). As if this were not enough, footnote 18 on page 25 proceeds to give a short history of Modernism.

On a more personal level, the book contains little-known information about Gilson's influence on thinkers like Richard McKeon, Thomas Merton, and Marie-Dominique Chenu, and Gilson's experiences in the United States and Canada, including some of his thoughts about such major events as his celebrated Gifford Lectures. And it provides information about Gilson's views on publishing and teaching, Catholic education, and details from Gilson's *vie quotidienne*—his steadfast concern for his family, sense of humor, enjoyment of hunting and fishing in Canada, and his playing tennis while teaching at Harvard.

In short, Fafara's book is a superb piece of scholarship and an invaluable research tool that should be of great value to anyone interested in the works of Gilson, Gouhier, Descartes, Malebranche, or the history of twentieth-century Thomism. The richness of its content far exceeds its modest price.—Peter A. Redpath, *Saint John's University, Staten Island*.

HAHN, Songsuk Susan. *Contradiction in Motion: Hegel's Organic Concept of Life and Value*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007. 198 pp. Cloth, \$49.95—Hahn argues for a naturalized interpretation of Hegel's theory of contradiction, and then finds examples of naturalized contradictions in Hegel's aesthetics and practical philosophy. This leads her to claim that in both aesthetics and in moral experience, Hegel appeals to a form of intuition that cannot be represented by ordinary concepts.

Part 1 of the book presents Hahn's case for naturalizing Hegel's doctrine of contradiction. By "naturalizing" she means to take seriously Hegel's claims that concepts are living entities by understanding such claims in terms of Goethe's program of modifying our cognitive faculties to better grasp the organic becoming of nature. On this reading, Hegel develops his notion of contradiction to represent in conceptual terms the teleological progression of the self-development through self-repulsion

of organic life forms. This interpretation then leads Hahn to distinguish between organic (good) contradictions that motivate cognitive development and formal (bad) contradictions that undermine critical thought.

Part 2 of the book applies this interpretation to Hegel's aesthetics. Here Hahn first extends the account of contradiction by arguing that organic totalities exhibiting contradictory structure are grasped by a kind of subjective intuition that is intermediate between discursive and nondiscursive knowledge. This aesthetic intuition is a transformation of the Kantian divine intuition that can directly see simple unity in the maximal complexity of an organic form. Since we finite subjects cannot take in the whole of this complexity, Hegel reasons that "We subsume the greatest complexities under the simplest unities by means of aesthetic ideas embodied in fragments of the whole and glimpse aesthetic unities noncognitively through these *partial totalities*" (p. 95). Then Hahn moves to apply this view to the apparent contradiction between Hegel's holding that artistic "picture-thinking" produces a kind of knowledge and his valorization of propositional knowledge. Hahn argues that this contradiction is of the good, organic kind that develops aesthetic experience into conceptual articulation, as Hegel tried to conceptually articulate a truth content that could only appear to the Greeks in a deficient form in their artistic culture.

In Part 3, Hahn sets out to execute her most original project: "I explore the extent to which [Hegel's] ethics has to be reconfigured, if not altogether abandoned, in the light of his methodological commitments. Given the dependence of action and agency on the ordinary laws of logic, I explore the extent to which Hegel's revisionary understanding of classical logical principles . . . is threatening to spread and infect ordinary logic, the kind of logic that makes action possible" (p. 3). This is interesting as a contrast to the litany of studies asserting the totalitarian nature of Hegel's philosophy as excluding all substantive difference, since Hahn thinks that "to grasp the whole compass of a deed organically means that both inner and outer aspects of action must be viewed as possessing an essential organization and inseparable connection even when the diversity of its parts contradicts its unity" (p. 131). Though I do not see that Hahn diagnoses any threat to Hegel's ethical theory or suggests how it might need to be reconfigured or abandoned, she does use the presence of contradictions in morally ambiguous cases such as that of Oedipus to make a case for seeing conscience as central to Hegel's (defensible) ethical theory. Oedipus is caught between a classical understanding of morality in which the consequences of his action make him a vicious criminal, and a Kantian understanding of morality in which his good intentions make him completely innocent. This is not a matter of moral vagueness—there are two completely opposed moral judgments, both of which are included in Oedipus's (and our) moral self-understanding. These contradictory elements must be held together in a grasp of the unity of our action, and

Hahn applies the intuitive interpretation from Part 2 to conscience, which is understood as “an intuitive faculty of the Will that gives us this intuitive, cognitive access to the unifying ground of our moral experience” (p. 190).

Thus the main interpretive thesis of the book is the validation of conscience as a distinctively Hegelian form of moral experience. That would be both a response to the complaint sometimes heard that Hegel does not have a moral theory and a defense of his theory of conscience against interpreters who find it lacking. It is also a novel interpretation of Hegel as providing an intuitive basis of morality (rather than a social or rational basis). Hahn argues that Hegel distinguishes his own theory of conscience from Romantic moral intuitionism by insisting on the need to corroborate our inarticulate intuitions with public behavior. But if our public behavior is similarly the object of subjective intuition, it is difficult to see how such public behavior would resolve disputes over the moral characterizations of actions.—Christopher Yeomans, *Kenyon College*.

HARMAN, Graham. *Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing*. Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 2007. x + 193 pp. Paper, \$19.95—Explaining Heidegger is a tall order. Doing so in English—or any language other than German—is particularly so. Graham Harman brings extensive knowledge and boundless enthusiasm to his task. His attempt to explain Heidegger takes the form of a summary of over twenty of Heidegger’s writings from *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (1919) to “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking” (1963–64). It might have been better to have concentrated on a smaller number of representative texts (in the way Walter Biemel does in his 1973 book, *Heidegger*). Although Harman succeeds in shedding light on some aspects of Heidegger’s thought and in conveying something of its fascination, spreading his net so wide makes it difficult to discern any clear development (despite the fact that his chosen texts are dealt with in chronological order). But then he seems to think that the difference between early and later Heidegger is basically one of terminology and tone and that the notion of a “turn” in Heidegger’s thinking has been overplayed. In terms of productive genius, Heidegger’s golden years, in Harman’s view, were those spent in Marburg. And it should be said that the chapter which deals with this period is perhaps the best in the book, but he goes on to make the highly contentious claim that by 1930 Heidegger starts to run out of steam as a creative philosopher. In line with his skepticism about the *Kehre*, he thinks “On the Essence of Truth” is “highly over-rated”. He also thinks the importance of *Contributions to Philosophy* (which Heidegger wrote for his own benefit between 1936 and 1938) has been overestimated. Accordingly he devotes less than five pages to this