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Reviewed by Sean Morris

## **Review: *The Historical Turn in Analytic Philosophy*, edited by Erich Reck**

Sean Morris

Much like Erich Reck's earlier edited volume, *From Frege to Wittgenstein* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), this new collection, *The Historical Turn in Analytic Philosophy*, makes an important contribution to scholarship on the history of analytic philosophy. The volume collects together twelve essays by both well-established and newer scholars in the field. And it demonstrates particularly well how diverse research in this area has become, moving well beyond a focus on Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein, familiar from the early years of the last decade. While we do still see contributions on Russell and Frege (there are none specifically on Wittgenstein), we also see some on Carnap, Quine, and Ryle. These latter figures are certainly not unknown in the history of analytic philosophy, but have received much less historical attention than other key figures in the tradition. An historical approach to Quine's philosophy remains a rather recent phenomenon, and this has been almost non-existent with regard to Ryle. Recent years have seen much growth in Carnap scholarship, perhaps replacing the previous focus on Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein, and Reck's volume reflects this general trend. The collection also reaches beyond the analytic philosophers to figures such as Lotze, Boole, Dedekind, and C. I. Lewis so as to better situate the analytic tradition into its historical context. Indeed, the book concludes with four historiographically focused essays aimed at addressing broader questions such as what counts as the history of philosophy and what is the relationship between philosophy and its history. That such questions are now being asked about the history of analytic philosophy again shows how much the discipline has matured over the last quarter century.

The book begins with a very helpful introduction by Reck. Citing the large outpouring of historical work on the analytic tradition over the last 25 years, he claims that we might now describe analytic philosophy as having made an "historical turn" (1). While contributing to this growing body of literature, Reck explains that these essays are also meant to reflect on this literature itself and, in particular, to address the question of what exactly this historical turn has achieved or might achieve with regard to analytic philosophy generally. Historically minded philosophers might not question the importance of such research, already seeing it as inherently valuable for any number of philosophical or more strictly historical reasons. Things are far less straightforward within the context of analytic philosophy, however, with its oft-noted hostility towards historical work in philosophy. With this in the background, Reck uses the first half of his introduction to summarize this situation. He observes that while it is true that analytic philosophy has often rejected the history of philosophy as making substantive contributions to philosophy more generally, analytic philosophers have in fact often engaged with the history of their tradition in various ways. Earlier historical contributions by analytic philosophers, however, tended to lack historical context, often relying instead on rational reconstructions rather than detailed historical reconstructions. While not denying the contributions—both philosophical and even historical—that such rational reconstructions might yield, Reck argues that in their selective and acontextual nature, they often mislead and distort if taken to be historical accounts. Such rational reconstructions often emphasize the philosophical relevance of past philosophical views for a particular (contemporary) purpose. In doing so, these reconstructions fail to take historical views seriously from the perspective of their own context, and so do not arrive at a clear accounting of whether the background assumptions of historical figures are shared by their modern day interpreters.

At the opposite end of this spectrum, Reck describes a version of the history of philosophy that pursues history *only* for history's sake, that is, that aims only to get the historical record right. Reck suggests this as some of the reason for analytic philosophy's hostility towards history. If this is all the history of philosophy does, then it does not contribute to ongoing philosophical concerns. This sort of history, though, is not what he is urging either (and he does not think that this is what the best historical work in philosophy does). Rather, he suggests that we pursue what he calls "philosophical history" (9), a form of history of philosophy that is sensitive to both historical and philosophical concerns. He proposes two approaches that might satisfy these. The first continues to pursue rational reconstruction but is also informed by historical context. Such an approach, he explains, would correct the central flaw of doing only rational reconstruction—that it does not take into account the historical context of past philosophers and so fails to address whether such philosophers understand a particular concept in the same way that we do; what their background assumptions might be; and whether they pursued the same projects as us. The second approach Reck proposes is more historically focused but does not avoid general philosophical concerns either. Here, we look at past philosophers without assuming that they share any of our assumptions and attempt to recover their actual views using the methods of history, philology, and philosophy. We also refrain from any initial evaluation of their view by our current standards. We try to understand their views internally, understanding and evaluating them by the standards of their times. This latter aspect, Reck claims, is what keeps the task philosophical and not merely historical.

In the second half of his introduction, Reck provides a brief survey of the historical work on analytic philosophy leading up to this volume. Here, he also includes abstracts for all the papers, making it especially easy to navigate the contents of the

volume, and a very useful bibliography of some of the most relevant work for this volume.

With the aims and context of the volume laid out, let me turn now to consider the contributed essays themselves. The book is broken down into three parts, each consisting of four essays: "Case Studies," which focuses on specific philosophers in the analytic tradition; "Broader Themes," which looks at how specific figures as well as analytic philosophy as a whole fits into the history of philosophy more generally; and "Methodological Reflections," which focuses broadly on disputes about the relevance of the history of analytic philosophy and how it should be pursued. While I will comment on all of the essays below, I have biased this discussion in accord with my own interests and expertise. A shorter discussion should not be taken to indicate that a particular contribution is of lesser importance. I have also tried to highlight the essays that seemed to best illustrate the overall aims of the volume.

Part I of the book, "Case Studies," begins with Stewart Candlish's "Philosophy and the Tide of History," which takes up the theme that doing philosophy and doing its history are not distinct tasks. He argues that the history of philosophy is itself philosophy and more specifically, that it contributes to the continuing relevance and progress of philosophy. Focusing specifically on aspects of Bertrand Russell's philosophy, Candlish aims to expose certain myths that surround much of the philosophy Russell is most remembered for such as his analysis of propositions, the multiple relation theory of judgment, and definite descriptions. Candlish urges, against those who see this as all part of a general philosophy of language, that these aspects cannot be properly understood outside the context of Russell's philosophy of mathematics. By doing so, he makes very clear Reck's point that philosophy without context leads to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

Alan Richardson next contributes an essay on Carnap's philosophy, "Taking the Measure of Carnap's Philosophical Engi-

neering: Metalogic as Metrology,” emphasizing how technical developments outside of philosophy in the science of metrology influenced Carnap’s views. Richardson aims here to further recent characterizations of Carnap as holding an engineering conception of philosophy. While a number of commentators have made this claim about Carnap, Richardson makes this more concrete by examining a particular kind of engineering that might have motivated Carnap. In doing so, Richardson furthers the overall aims of the volume by showing the importance of thinking about philosophy in its broader historical context. A rational reconstruction view of the history of philosophy, for example, would be unlikely to recognize such external developments as informing Carnap’s philosophy.

Peter Hylton’s “Quine and the *Aufbau*: The Possibility of Objective Knowledge,” the third essay, looks at recent reinterpretations of Carnap and their impact on our understanding of his dispute over analyticity with Quine. Quine famously (or now, perhaps infamously) interpreted Carnap’s *Aufbau* as an attempt to carry out in full detail an empiricist epistemology in the tradition of Russell’s *Our Knowledge of the External World*. Recent reinterpretations of the *Aufbau* by Michael Friedman and Alan Richardson have cast doubt on this reading, focusing instead on Carnap’s neo-Kantian origins and his concern with objectivity. Hylton does not dispute the new interpretation but instead uses it to provide a deeper understanding of the differences between Quine and Carnap. In particular, he argues that Quine implicitly provides an answer to the same question—in a sense—that Carnap had asked about the possibility of objective knowledge from its subjective beginnings. But Quine does so from within the confines of his own un-Carnapian philosophy, and so, this similarity also helps to bring into better focus his divergences from Carnap. This essay is particularly interesting within the context of this volume in demonstrating how doing the history of analytic philosophy can serve as a corrective to accepted

readings of these figures. Here we have Quine’s own reading of Carnap being replaced by those of more historically sensitive readers. Furthermore, Hylton shows particularly well how the assumptions of one philosopher may not be the same as those of another, despite appearances to the contrary. In this case, we have two contemporaries—Carnap and Quine—illustrating this. It seems then we should be all the more cautious in treating historical figures, who are often much more distant in time from us.

The final essay of Part I comes from Julia Tanney and examines Gilbert Ryle’s contributions to key issues in the philosophy of logic and language. Ryle, while no doubt an important figure of analytic philosophy, has so far been mostly overlooked in the historical turn. Tanney’s essay makes an important contribution by urging Ryle’s continued relevance to key issues in analytic philosophy and by emphasizing his unique contributions. In particular, she shows that Ryle had already anticipated many ideas often associated with the later Wittgenstein (such as grammatical analysis and the context sensitivity of linguistic meaning).

Part II of Reck’s volume, “Broader Themes,” looks more generally at the philosophy of logic, mathematics, psychology, and the analytic-synthetic distinction within the development of analytic philosophy. By doing so, the contributions of Part II also help to broaden our understanding of the variety of philosophers who contributed to the development of analytic philosophy, even some usually not considered, themselves, to be analytic philosophers. This second part seems the most fruitful for opening new research directions for the history of analytic philosophy by bringing to light new figures and contexts for analytic philosophy.

Jeremy Heis immediately adopts this wider perspective in his “Frege, Lotze, and Boole.” Without a doubt this is one of the most important essays in contributing to the overall aims of the

book. Heis takes up, very directly, one of Reck's suggestions for how the history of philosophy contributes to philosophy more broadly, showing in detail how a back and forth between rational reconstruction and contextual history yields better history while also furthering philosophical understanding more generally. In particular, he shows, against Dummett, the importance of understanding Frege's historical context, specifically how the influence of Lotze on concept formation leads to a more balanced account of Frege's development of modern mathematical logic. But Heis also argues against Sluga that putting too much weight on Lotze's influence obscures Frege's truly original contributions to logic.

Reck's own contribution to the volume, "Frege or Dedekind? Towards a Reevaluation of Their Legacies," looks at the importance of the philosophy of mathematics to analytic philosophy since its beginnings. While Dedekind has certainly been recognized as making important contributions to foundational studies in mathematics, Reck notes that this has been most appreciated within a mathematical context. By connecting Dedekind's work to ongoing debates within current philosophy of mathematics (particularly, concerning neo-logicism and neo-structuralism), Reck aims to revive interest in Dedekind as a philosopher of mathematics. In keeping with the overall themes of the volume, Reck shows how good historical work furthers our understanding of contemporary philosophical issues.

In his "Psychology, Epistemology, and the Problem of the External World: Russell and Before," Gary Hatfield lays out with great clarity the importance of nineteenth century psychology as a background for understanding Russell's attempts in the nineteen-teens to construct the external world from sense-data. In particular, Hatfield clarifies how we might understand the often derisive label "psychologism," arguing that only an extreme anti-psychologism (e.g. Frege's or Husserl's) rejects any appeal to psychology in epistemology. Russell's epistemology would

certainly count as psychologism under this view, but under a more tempered view that merely takes scientific psychology to be relevant to epistemology, it would not. Hopefully, Hatfield's historically informed account of the role of psychology in the early development of analytic philosophy will encourage further reassessments of views that the tradition has often dismissed out of hand as psychologistic.

Thomas Baldwin's essay "C. I. Lewis and the Analyticity Debate" also shows how a contextual approach to the history of philosophy can deepen our understanding of philosophy itself. While Quine is explicit in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" that he has both Lewis and Carnap in mind, only the latter has received extensive treatment in the secondary literature on the analyticity debate. Baldwin gives us a much-needed account of how Quine's criticisms play out against Lewis and offers some defense of him by connecting his views to both Kuhn and Wittgenstein. Baldwin mentions that Lewis and Carnap might be distinguished by Lewis's overtly Kantian conception of analyticity. Given recent reinterpretations of Carnap emphasizing the neo-Kantian origins of his philosophy, Kantian themes might leave interesting space for further work on the connections between Quine, Carnap, and Lewis on analyticity.

Part III of the volume concludes with some methodological-historiographical reflections on the current state of the history of analytic philosophy and, again, on the relationship between history of philosophy and philosophy more generally. In his "Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy: The Development of the Idea of Rational Reconstruction," Michael Beaney considers the notion of rational reconstruction itself within the development of analytic philosophy. Beaney locates its origins in the earlier neo-Kantian tradition but then sees it as developing further with the reconstructive projects found throughout early analytic philosophy, for example, within logicism and Carnap's *Aufbau*. A. W. Carus contributes "History and the Future

of Logical Empiricism,” arguing that Kuhn’s work contributed in a significant way to the downfall of logical empiricism. But he counters that this does not have to be the case. Looking to Howard Stein’s work, Carus then argues that Stein presents an approach to the history of science done largely from within the confines of logical empiricism. This historically based approach, Carus argues, serves to overcome some of the weaknesses found in Carnap’s own work. Michael Kremer’s “What is the Good of Philosophical History” continues his ongoing debate with Scott Soames, arguing, in line with Reck’s overall aims for the volume, that philosophical history is a way of doing philosophy that does not just focus on the past but that remains historically sensitive in relating history to present concerns. Finally, Hans-Johann Glock uses his “The Owl of Minerva: Is Analytic Philosophy Moribund?” to consider whether or not the analytic tradition remains a vibrant way of approaching philosophy or whether this tradition has now been surpassed. Glock argues that analytic philosophy is still vibrant and turns to recent work on its history to show its ongoing relevance to philosophy generally. Here we have a particularly important example of how history of philosophy is itself philosophy. Together, these last four essays show how much the history of analytic philosophy has matured. So much so that the discipline itself can now be subjected to historiographical and methodological reflections. Overall, this volume is an important contribution to the history of analytic philosophy, and in line with its own aims, to philosophy generally.

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