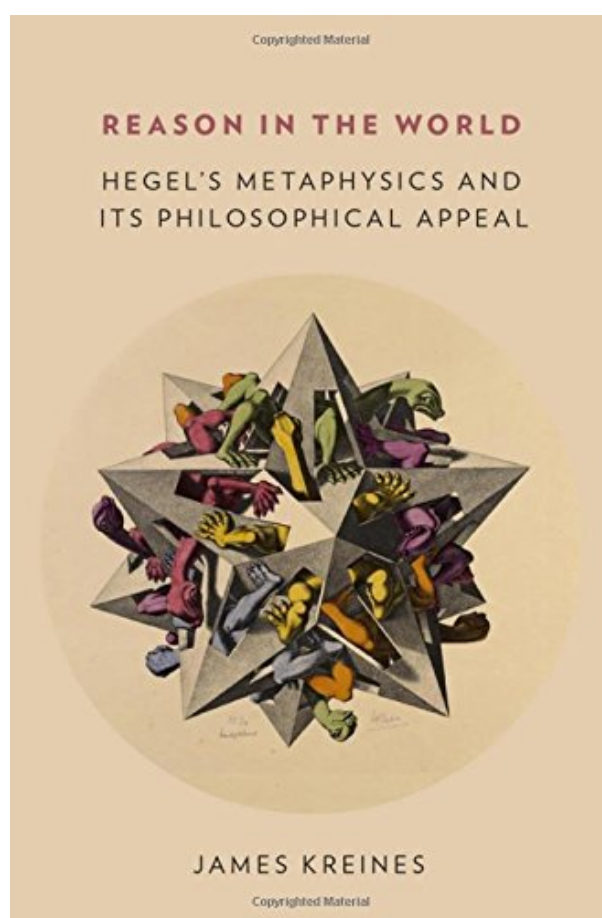


REASON IN THE WORLD: HEGEL'S METAPHYSICS AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL APPEAL BY JAMES KREINES



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Review

"...he offers a book that will surprise both seasoned Hegel hands with the order and connection of its arguments and contemporary metaphysicians with the cogency of those arguments on their own playing field...Kreines' book marks an important step forward for understanding Hegel's theoretical philosophy. In clearly framing the import of Hegel's conceptual innovations by placing them against the background of options in modern metaphysics, Kreines continues his contributions towards the cultivation of a productive space for debate about the metaphysical significance of Hegel's thought." -- Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews Online

"A review cannot do full justice to the details of Kreines' arguments and the extent to which he brings Hegel into dialogue with contemporary philosophy...Much may and should be added to the defense of Hegel against contemporary objections. Kreines' book, however, makes a big step toward reconstructing Hegelian metaphysics and giving it renewed vitality." -- Philosophy in Review

"...its value is secured by the remarkable clarity, thoroughness, and insight with which it has rearranged, reexamined, and reinterpreted an important constellation of Hegelian terms, arguments, and approaches-and also by its promise to bring Hegel into play in contemporary metaphysics. I strongly recommend it to anyone who already has, or should cultivate, an interest in Hegel, his era, or our own." -- Journal of the History of Philosophy

About the Author

James Kreines is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Claremont McKenna College, in Claremont, California. He teaches and writes about the history of metaphysics, especially in Kant and Hegel. Future research topics include metaphilosophy, and Kant's things in themselves.

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This book defends a new interpretation of Hegel's theoretical philosophy, according to which Hegel's project in his central Science of Logic has a single organizing focus, provided by taking metaphysics as fundamental to philosophy, rather than any epistemological problem about knowledge or intentionality. Hegel pursues more specifically the metaphysics of reason, concerned with grounds, reasons, or conditions in terms of which things can be explained-and ultimately with the possibility of complete reasons.

There is no threat to such metaphysics in epistemological or skeptical worries. The real threat is Kant's Transcendental Dialectic case that metaphysics comes into conflict with itself. But Hegel, despite familiar worries, has a powerful case that Kant's own insights in the Dialectic can be turned to the purpose of constructive metaphysics. And we can understand in these terms the unified focus of the arguments at the conclusion of Hegel's Science of Logic. Hegel defends, first, his general claim that the reasons which explain things are always found in immanent concepts, universals or kinds. And he will argue from here to conclusions which are distinctive in being metaphysically ambitious yet surprisingly distant from any form of metaphysical foundationalism, whether scientific, theological, or otherwise. Hegel's project, then, turns out neither Kantian nor Spinozist, but more distinctively his own. Finally, we can still learn a great deal from Hegel about ongoing philosophical debates concerning everything from metaphysics, to the philosophy of science, and all the way to the nature of philosophy itself.

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from mechanism to life

By John G. Bardis

Essentially this book is an explanation of the transitions in Hegel's Science of Logic from Mechanism to the internal teleology of Life.

The book is in two parts. The first part is in three chapters dealing with mechanism, empiricism and teleology. In the 18th century, before the developments of modern chemistry and electro-magnetic theory, I believe mechanism and empiricism were a big deal. Certainly Hegel is very much opposed to them. Today, perhaps, arguments against these are fairly tedious. But the real pay-off here is that all this leads to the chapter on teleology.

Kreines gives a very clear and understandable account of Kant's view of teleology and the inner teleology of organisms from the third Critique. He then very clearly shows how Hegel's view of teleology is both rooted in and a correction of Kant's view on the matter.

The second part of the book is, essentially, a repetition of the argument of the first part but at a higher level. Rather than dealing with Hegel and his relation to Kant in regard to teleology, this second part deals with Hegel and his relation to Kant in regard to the metaphysics of reason. And while the first argument goes from mechanism in general to Hegel's view of teleology, the second argument goes from the Mechanism chapter of the SL (by way of Mechanism and Teleology) to the immediate form of the Idea in Life (and then beyond to the Absolute Idea).

The second argument begins with a consideration of Kant's dialectic of reason from the first Critique, showing how reason's concern for complete understanding (in the three Ideas of Reason: the psychological, cosmological and theological) necessarily leads to contradictions. Kreines then very clearly shows how Hegel's metaphysics of reason is both rooted in and a correction of Kant's dialectic of reason.

So, then, we come to the heart of the book which is an explanation of the Object section of the SL and its transition to Life and the Idea. This explanation is so clear and compelling that it really jumps right off the page. This is, as far as I know, the best account available of the Object (Mechanism, Chemism, Teleology) and its transition to Life as the immediate form of the Idea. This is highly recommended for students of Hegel's SL without question.

Then, further, Kreines explains that Life, although fully comprehensible in itself, is not fully comprehensible to itself. So this requires the transition to Spirit (in its logical form, first, as cognition). I was happy to see, in this regard, that Kreines gives credit to Marcuse's great book: *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (1932; ET 1987). Four times from page 204 to page 251 he mentions something like: "In approaching 'the idea' via life, I share a general strategy with Marcuse". In many ways this book by Kreines, with its exposition of the Object, can be seen as setting the stage for Marcuse's book. And it might also be seen as following Winfield's account of the SL which provides, as far as I know, the best account of the Concept, the section that immediately precedes the section on the Object.

If, between the three of them, the books by Winfield, Kreines, and Marcuse provide a quite comprehensive account of the doctrine of the concept and at a quite high level, still there is very likely the need for a fourth book as well. Namely, there is the need for a definitive account of the Absolute Idea, and the Absolute Idea especially in its relation, not only to Life, but also to the two forms of Cognition as well.

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