



## Hegel's realm of shadows: logic as metaphysics in the science of logic

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Hegel's realm of shadows: logic as metaphysics in the science of logic**, by Robert Pippin, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 2019, pp. 339, £34.00 (hb), ISBN 978-0-226588704

With *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* the analytic, American interpretation of Hegel has come full circle. After Klaus Hartmann proposed a Kantian and non-metaphysical Hegel in 1972 ('Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View', in *A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. A. MacIntyre, New York: Anchor Books, 101–124), it was arguably Rorty's historicist take on Hegel, along with his demand to 'change the subject' away from metaphysical questions, which paved the way for an increased interest in Hegel's philosophy (see Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism. Essays 1972–1980*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, xiv). Suddenly, Hegel's philosophy was seen to be unencumbered by metaphysics. And since his authoritarianism has historically been linked to his metaphysics, he was also considered non-authoritarian and relevant to contemporary debates (see Baumann, 'Was Hegel an Authoritarian Thinker. Reading his Philosophy of History on the Basis of his Metaphysics'. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* [forthcoming]). Now the very subject that Rorty wanted to avoid has come back to haunt interpreters in the tradition of Pippin, Pinkard, Brandom and McDowell. This is not only because it is hard to deny its relevance for Hegel, but also because of the resurgence of interest in metaphysics in analytic philosophy.

*Hegel's Realm of Shadows* is the first book-length study of Hegel's metaphysics among the leading exponents of this tradition. In line with Hegel, Pippin distinguishes between the 'old', pre-Kantian metaphysics of Spinoza and Leibniz among others and a 'new', (post-)Kantian metaphysics. Pippin's readers will not be surprised that he associates Hegel broadly with the latter tradition. In contrast to what Hegel's text may suggest, Pippin does not distinguish the types of metaphysics with regard to the realm of the world that they consider to be fundamental and which they, therefore, study. He does not assume that the old metaphysicians believe themselves capable of saying something about the underlying nature of the world (as it is independently of being thought of) and that the new metaphysics studies the necessary structure and categories of thought (and what effect they have on how a subject necessarily judges or thinks about any object). Rather, Pippin distinguishes the two types of metaphysics in terms of their approach to the question of knowledge. Old, pre-Kantian metaphysics wants to know 'what there really is' (36), the 'furniture of the universe' (137). The new metaphysics inspired by Kant concerns 'the authority and legitimacy of our claims to know' (190), it is a reflection on types of claims and their grounds or 'unacknowledged presuppositions' (50).

The setup of this first distinction is important, because Hegel famously rejects Kant's and, indeed, Fichte's 'subjective idealism'. His own 'absolute idealism' is akin to 'ordinary realistic consciousness' – but transcends it insofar as it regards all

entities as 'ideal moment' of a broader system. (See *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970, §45 addition and §160 addition.) In order to interpret Hegel via Kant, Pippin needs to say that when Hegel rejects Kant's subjectivism, he does not mean his interest in thoughts and judgments. (At the end of this review, I will introduce an alternative reading of Hegel's metaphysics according to which his basic approach is closer to the 'old', rationalist metaphysics than to Kant). Pippin argues that Hegel's Kantian metaphysics is non-subjectivist insofar as it does not explicate the basis underlying human finite cognition (58), much less the human psyche (see 10, 59). Rather, the *Logic* investigates the preconditions of 'any possible sense' (63), 'the distinctions and relations without which sense would not be possible' (61).

What does that mean? On Pippin's reading, Hegel's *Logic* discusses types of judgments (see 154, 254) with regard to the 'meta-concepts' that specify the 'rules of judgmental unification' (45), i.e. the notions on the basis of which one claims that the predicate and the subject of a judgment are linked. Pippin highlights the link to Kantian 'categories' (31) and speaks of principles that 'govern' inferences (111). (For example, 'inherence' or substance is the rule according to which one judges that Socrates is a man; it is also the principle on the basis of which one discriminates between essential properties and accidental ones.) Pippin interprets these types of judgments as more or less successful attempts at adequately defining and explaining something. Once you have reached the most consistent type, you no longer need earlier types of predication. You know that in order to truly define something you cannot simply provide a 'list' of judgments (211) of the type 'S is P', but you need a judgment of the form 'S is essentially P' or indeed 'S is a good P', a good instance of its concept (see 254).

Pippin's central claim is that Hegel's *Logic* is best understood as spelling out the structure and self-related activity of Kant's 'synthetic unity of apperception' (131) (or, indeed, the 'self-positing I' [191] proposed by Fichte, who is also a major inspiration for Pippin's reading). For Kant, the forms of judgment (and the categories implied therein) are both a necessary part of any thinking and judgmental activity and the constitutive features of objects. Remaining the same over time – category of subsistence – and being capable of causal affection – category of causality – are part of the definition and unchangeable features of any object (see Baumann, 'Kant, Neo-Kantians and Transcendental Subjectivity'. *European Journal of Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (2017): 595–161).

Pippin's Hegel rejects the strict Kantian outline of this proposition, but retains the basic idea. Hegel does not believe in the unchanging truth of Kant's twelve categories (153), nor in the notion of thought or judgment 'constituting' objects (247). Nevertheless, Pippin's Hegel agrees with Kant (as interpreted by Pippin) that (a) judging and account-giving is law-based, i.e. there are some unchanging concepts that structure claims and without which those claims would not make sense. This means that (b) judging ought to be understood primarily as a logical, not a psychological, process (51), which has a structure (44) and goals that are enacted by particular judges/human beings (282, see also 262). (c) claims or judgments are inherently 'reflexive', i.e. they include a 'consciousness of judgment' and (the possibility of becoming conscious of and measuring judgments

against) their underlying standards (see 131). Lastly, (d) Hegel concludes from Kant's account that the only relevant objects are 'intelligibles' (35), where intelligibles refers to objects 'as thought/judged' (131). This claim is also Aristotelian for Pippin (see 87): 'Hegel accepts the Aristotelian premise that actually to be is to be a this-such', a type or the (better or worse) instantiation of a concept. 'What a thing actually is, lies hidden, must be uncovered, posited, a product of thought' (220).

The last two points, while implicit in Kant, also lead Hegel beyond Kant according to Pippin. For Pippin's Hegel, Kant is uncritical in simply presupposing a list of categories (130, 153). He argues that the origin, the necessity and validity of those categories must be shown (this is why Pippin links Hegel's *Logic* to Kant's metaphysical deduction from which the categories originate: 173, 122). Hegel's *Logic* evaluates old and introduces new meta-concepts 'dynamically'. It starts with the simplest possible judgment and its meta-concept, reveals their flaws, which then forces the author and reader to propose the next meta-concept, which is then found to be lacking and so on. According to Pippin, this dynamic is due to a 'practical contradiction' of thought's 'activity contradicting its own end' (268). Since it is part of judging to be conscious of judging, it is also always conscious of the implicit aim of any judgment. The aim is not only to make a sensible claim, but to 'adequately determine' or 'specify' what something is (154). (Adequate turns out to mean exhaustive and coherent.) The development of the *Logic* shows what 'judgment freely requires of itself' (210), successively introducing meta-concepts required for realizing the aim of judging. This is what Pippin means by 'thought's a priori and "productive" determination of its own possibility' (173).

Regarding point (d), Kant does not only speak of objects as judged or thought. He also has the notion of a thing-in-itself and an unknown origin of sense impressions. For Pippin's Hegel, 'experience is not elicited [...] by sensations' (199); hence, what elicits them cannot be an issue. Experience is sensory awareness that distinguishes between objects conceptually (199). Additionally, the thing-in-itself, 'the notion of an object conceived as not an object of thought is idle and self-cancelling' (64). Pippin is not claiming that there can be no entities that are non-conceptual; 'the sensible object is left as it is' (247). But if there are non-conceptual entities, they are a non-topic for Hegel. Pippin's Hegel is not concerned with 'which things exist', but rather the 'determinations necessary to pick a thing out as what it actually is' (218).

The first four chapters of *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* outline the general interpretative approach, and the last five discuss the different types of sense-making and meta-concepts Hegel analyses over the course of his *Logic*. For Pippin, Hegel's *Logic* ends with the insight into what has been going on all along, an awareness of the reflexive structure of knowing and, indeed, acting, which is akin to Kant's unity of apperception. Thinking becomes aware of its foundational activity (providing meta-concepts) and the notion that what objects actually are is their conceptual determination. Built into the progression of meta-concepts is a progression or hierarchy of objects that those meta-concepts are best instantiated by. Pippin speaks of 'degrees of intelligibility' (300) of objects, with the most

intelligible object being 'conceptuality' or the 'structure of apperception' itself (319; see also 96/97).

There is no doubt that Pippin's interpretation is a feat in both Hegel and Kant scholarship. And yet, readers need to know the alternatives to Pippin's reading of Hegel's metaphysics. One established line of interpretation attributes to Hegel a position that Rolf-Peter Horstmann has labelled a 'relation-ontological monism' (*Ontologie und Relationen. Hegel, Bradley, Russell und die Kontroverse über interne und externe Beziehungen*. Königstein Taunus: Athenäum, 1984). Hegel presupposes, as Christian Iber puts it, that 'reality, be it spiritual or natural reality, is essentially structured by relations of form [Formverhältnisse], which are in turn graspable according to the formalities of our thought structures' ('Was will Hegel eigentlich mit seiner Logik? Kleine Einführung in Hegels Logik', in *Hegels Seinslogik. Interpretationen und Perspektiven*, ed. A. Arndt and C. Iber, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000, 13–32, 15). Like Spinoza and Leibniz, Hegel develops a theory about the nature of the mind-independent world (as well as of thought and society); however, unlike them, Hegel believes that what underlies the world, society, and thought are structures or relations, not substances. Every entity and phenomenon has its characteristic internal structures, and stands in structured relations to other entities. Hegel's position is a *monism* because it implies an absolute web of relations. Hegel believes that there is a limited number of patterns or structures, basic ways in which oneness and plurality, unity and difference can coexist. These patterns are present as structuring elements in all social, organic and chemical structures. His metaphysics takes the form of a logic, because the basic patterns can be analysed by means of our logical thinking – not because they stem from us, but inversely because our reason is one among many realms in which these structures exist.

Many readers of Hegel will be drawn to one or the other line of interpretation based on what they imply for Hegel's social philosophy. This is not the topic here, but it is worth exploring the fundamental differences between these two and, indeed, other readings in the future.

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