

Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows. Logic as Metaphysics in The Science of Logic*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2019, pp. 352, € 28.08, ISBN 9780226703411

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In recent decades the wealth of interpretative criteria provided by the contributions on Hegel's *Science of Logic* has become almost impossible to master. Without a doubt, one of the issues over which the interpreters continue to quarrel is the possibility (or not) of reading the Hegelian project as a metaphysical one. Predominant are the attempts to discuss the Hegelian reading of the philosopher who, along with Jacobi, “did do away with this whole style of the previous metaphysics and its method along with it” (*SL* 12.229): Kant. This argumentative line is picked up by the recent volume of Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows. Logic as Metaphysics in the Science of Logic*, which attempts at discussing a theoretical interest that Hegel and Kant share: “how to account for the determinate moments of ‘any thinking of the knowable’, such that they count as the determinate moments of the knowable itself” (p.8).

Such a genealogy with Kant alone certainly does not hit the mark, if one recalls Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism* published thirty years ago. Unprecedented in Pippin's interest in the *SL* is the decision to risk a *positive* answer to the ‘metaphysical question’ – i.e. to make sense of the statement “*logic* coincides with *metaphysics*” (p.39), without thereby renouncing all forms of metaphysics.

The volume is divided into two parts. Part I sets the conditions to investigate the metaphysical question in the *SL*, while part II is devoted to the actual reading of the logical text.

Chapter one, “The Significance of *The Science of Logic*”, spells out the main issues within Hegel's project of a science of pure thinking as the most general and consistent way of determining any account-giving. At stake is the need to justify “the priority and autonomy of logic” (p.7) by exposing the complete self-determination of its own moments, the *Denkbestimmungen*. They allow thought (i) to have determinate objective content, as well as (ii) to constitute “at the same time [...] the determinations inherent in the possible determinacy of being itself” (p.8). On this “at the same time” depends the metaphysical question as such.

How can concepts as products of thought make the “categorical structure without which the world would not be even empirically intelligible at all” (p.14)? The identification-claim about the forms of thought and the forms of being is explored in chapter two, “Logic and Metaphysics”. For Pippin’s Hegel, concepts are not atoms, but rather “predicates of possible judgments” (p.45), whereby – as for Kant the highest principle of synthetic judgments – the conditions for the possibility of experience are at the same time the conditions for the possibility of the objects of experience. Once understood that the basic form of possible thought is content-directed, Hegel’s contentious goal would be to show the impossibility to understand the general logic as a purely formal endeavour: general logic “must already *be* transcendental logic, at least *in nuce*” (p.76). Pippin is certainly aware that the distinction with the transcendental logic (having “a manifold of sensibility that lies before it a priori, which the transcendental aesthetic has offered to it”, *CPR* A77/B102), as well as the necessity for finite knowers to be provided of content receptively, are “part of Kant’s epistemology” (p.73). Nevertheless, the emphasis on the “content-directedness” of thinking seems to underestimate the difference in purposes between the project of a *critique* of pure reason, on the one hand, and a *logic* as a genetic discussion of the *Denkbestimmungen*, as well as Kant’s refutation of an “intellectus archetypus” – making Kant “too Hegelian”, to reverse earlier criticism at Pippin’s “too Kantian” Hegel.

To show that what is at stake is not to say of any particular thing what it is, the genealogy with Kant undergoes a radical twist and incorporates Aristotle. The productivity of this reference, not at all new in Hegelian studies, is to understand the task of metaphysics as the determination of *what must be true of anything at all*, such that what it is in particular can be determined (p.60). In this sense, *Wirklichkeit* as the subject matter of the *Logic* is said to be nothing but “being in its truth, in terms of its possible intelligibility” (p.53).

The implications of Hegel’s understanding of the Concept itself, i.e. the most general term for the basic bearer of truth as apperceptive spontaneity, are discussed in chapter three, “The role of self-consciousness in *The Science of Logic*”. To properly understand this “apperceptive logic” (p.101), Pippin suggests to focus on the unity of the concept, which “is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception, the unity of the ‘I think’, or of self-consciousness” (*SL* 12.17-18). To show that the

question is eminently *logical*, Pippin explores the structure of account-giving in judgment as a dyadic and non-dyadic relation. To judge is to be aware not only *of what* one is judging, but *that* one is asserting it to be the case. Consciousness is the judgment itself and not a second-order reflection. Once one understands that this unity is the original synthetic unity of apperception, one has *thereby* already established the objective validity of the categories, thus accomplishing the task of the transcendental deduction.

Chapter four, “Logic and Negation”, explores different accounts of negations in the *SL*. In the Logic of Being, the negative relation between an individual and the determinations by virtue of which it is contrasted with what it is not, cannot stand as it is. It must be reversed in a different logic: an account of the relation between a thing understood as an essence, and its appearance. In turn, in the Logic of the Concept, concepts are said to give themselves their own content and be self-determining – something recalling once more Kant, but this time practical self-legislation, i.e. reason relying only on itself in determining its normative structure.

In part II, Pippin tries to show how the general interpretation advanced in part I can be used to make sense of the core issues in the three books of the *SL*. Chapter five, “The Logic of Being: the ‘Given’ as a logical problem”, introduces the account for the determinacy of being, as well as for the pure concepts indispensable in thinking about the determinacy of anything. According to Pippin, the attempt to think Being *as an object* fails in the opening, or rather proves itself “to be incomplete as a possible thought”. Pure thinking does not witness to a special event but determines its own possibility. In this sense, *Nichts* is not a strange object but thinking “*thinking its failure to be thinking*” (p.186) that way; in turn, determinate being (*Dasein*) is the condition of determinacy, which at the minimum level turns out to consist in qualitative and quantitative predicates, and their relation to each other (*Maß*). Through the first failure we learn that all thinking must be the attempt to think that being as such *is X or Y or whatever*. There is no *nous pathetikos*: thought is discursive. These reflections on the logical insufficiency of this model of explicability are taken immediately to have metaphysical implications, since that which is cannot have *only* the characteristics allowed by a logic of being.

The next chapter, “Essence as reflected Being”, reinforces the argument: if the putative opening is just a *Schein*, “a showing in

which nothing is shown” (p.190), the logic of being cannot be grasped “except if conceived *within* a logic of essence” (p.201). The essence-appearance distinction is a way to think together inseparability with distinctness, or a type of distinctness that is also inseparable – a question that doesn’t amount to the determinate otherness, as in the logic of being, but to how objects that share properties could be, even with an extraordinary degree of such likeness, still unlike (p.241). Such a mediated immediacy of *Schein* frames Kant’s distinction of concept (the principle of unity) and of intuition (the source of differentiation). While he simply assumes such a difference, for Hegel it should be understood “primarily [as] a logical problem” (p.234).

Chapter 7 addresses the self-conscious and self-determining conceptual moments necessary for anything to be a determinate thing. The pure thinking that in the objective logic was the source of any possible objective determinateness, in the subjective logic is the object as well as the subject of thinking (p.255). Leaving aside the affinities with Spinoza, Pippin states that “by ‘the concept’ Hegel means the Kantian apperceptive I, the structure of conceptuality as apperceptive judgments in inferential relations” (p.257). The development of this self-knowledge, that plays a crucial role in Hegel’s theory of freedom and its realization, driven by *an essentially practical contradiction* (p.268), makes the purposive nature of reason.

This character is addressed in chapter 8, “Life as a logical concept”. The account-giving of non-living beings would be insufficient on their own terms without a contrasting distinction with the internal teleology of organism, whose form, i.e. principle of intelligibility, “is its norm, not just a means of classification” (p.303).

Chapter 9, “The True and the Good”, develops the subject matter that ends the book, namely the self-determination of thinking itself brought to full self-consciousness.

As a whole, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows* is a subtle, ambitious and insightful analysis of the *SL*. It offers the reader a challenging interpretation, that shows the idea, as the unity of concept and objectivity, being not “just a goal” (p.300) of the logical path, but rather what determines the concrete possibility of determinately intelligible empirical content (p.319-320). If the formal determinateness of any content is *identical* with conceptual determinacy, Pippin maintains, Hegel does not suggest a form of “impositionism”: “we are very far here from a Hegel committed

to deriving the content of the world from pure thought alone” (p.319). At stake is rather “the idea of thought’s pure self-determination, the right understanding of thinking generally”, which in turn leaves, according to Pippin, “plenty of room for the exploration of an unknown empirical and finite world, that ‘realm of darkness’” (p.320). This reference brings us back to the beginning of the volume, to the “realm of shadows” mentioned in the title. Right at the level of the metaphoric, arduous difficulties resurface, which deal with Pippin’s reconstruction of the project of an autonomous logic. What are the *Denkbestimmungen* shadows of? Is the logic radical to the point of casting the shadows themselves? How can their shadowy character account for the ordinary scientific, empirical epistemological accounting?

On the answer to these issues depends nothing less than the interpretation of the foundational role of logic in Hegel’s system. In this regard, the argument about the “priority and autonomy of logic” (p.7) for understanding the distinction between the logic “taken as *the final science*” and “as *the first science*” (“God’s thoughts before the creation”) (SL 12.198) is one of the issue that deserves to be further explored, along with the method and its retroactivity – of which a discussion is unfortunately missing. Its analysis would be valuable in disentangling the apperceptive nature of pure thinking and its occurrence, which seems not to be *experienceable from the outset*. Second, it would allow to ask the metaphysical question from a crucial point of view. In fact, it is true that the analysis *before the logic of concept* can be read as a consistent discussion of being in its truth i.e. in its intelligibility. Nevertheless, once “the rendering intelligible of intelligibility itself” (p.299) *becomes object and subject* of thinking in the *method*, one might ask: to which extent is its retrospective reading itself a metaphysical project? Is the consciousness of a metaphysical project still metaphysics? Conversely, is it by chance that the logic ends with method, and not with the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) placed in the logic of essence?

If the productivity of a volume is measured by the issues it raises, this is doubtless the case with the thought-provoking contribution of Pippin, which will be an inescapable reference for all future readings of the *SL*, no matter their metaphysical commitment.

More reviews of this volume

S. Houlgate, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows: Logic as Metaphysics in The Science of Logic* by Robert B. Pippin (review), in "Journal of the History of Philosophy", Volume 57, Number 4, October 2019, pp. 765-766

C. Baumann, *Hegel's realm of shadows: logic as metaphysics in the science of logic*, in "British Journal for the History of Philosophy", 2019, 27:6, 1256-1260