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§1 Welcome to the Zoo: Fichte, Hegel, and Questions of Purity

Robert Pippin’s work of recent years, culminating in his 2019 book *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows: Logic as Metaphysics in The Science of Logic*, has involved him undertaking two related tasks. First, in *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows* and contemporaneous texts of his, he launches a counter-offensive against recent efforts by particular others to situate G.W.F. Hegel in relation to permutations of materialism running from nineteenth-century Marxist dialectical materialism up through today. Second, Pippin wishes to rebut critics of his influential 1989 book *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*. Specifically, he seeks to defuse the objections of some according to which his earlier study is guilty of an excessive Kantianization of Hegel, namely, an operation of transforming Hegel’s absolute idealism, with its robust monist realism, into Immanuel Kant’s subjective idealism, with its dualist anti-realism. In what follows, I will argue that Pippin both: one, fails to remain truly Hegelian in his repudiations of materialism and naturalism; as well as, two, continues to remain committed to an objectionable transcendental idealism of a Kantian (and Fichtean) type.

Pippin foregrounds the first task mentioned above (i.e., combatting dialectical-materialism-inspired renditions of Hegel) early on in the opening pages of the introduction to *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*. From the very outset of this 2019 book, he sets up a fundamental conflict between two allegedly irreconcilable sides. On Pippin’s favored side, there is the trio of Kant, J.G. Fichte, and Hegel interpreted as partisans of the philosophical centrality of “pure

thinking”¹—with the deliberate exclusion of F.W.J. Schelling and his neither-subjective-nor-absolute “objective” idealism.² Pippin’s German idealism champions absolutely sovereign conscious cognition in its auto-reflexivity and with its self-supplied and self-justified norms and reasons.³ Such self-conscious and self-grounding mental activity is purported to be fundamentally refractory to any sort of materialist, naturalist, and/or objectivist ontological treatment.

Pippin opposes to the Kant-Fichte-Hegel idealism of absolutely autonomous cognition a tradition beginning with certain of Hegel’s contemporaries. This tradition aims to refute the very existence and even possibility of the pure thinking central to Pippin’s version of German idealism. In the introduction to *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, referring to the “Hegelian project” as based upon the metaphysical prioritization of the (self-)thinking “I,” Pippin writes:

...there is a widespread view that this Hegelian project (in any possible interpretation of it) is doomed from the start, that there is not and cannot be such a topic as ‘pure thinking.’ Since the Jena romantics and Hegel’s contemporary, Schelling, began this line of attack, it keeps reappearing in the European tradition down to the present, with the popularity of ‘new realisms’ and speculative materialisms and the influence of cognitive and neuroscience. The criticism is that thinking must always be understood as grounded on, or dependent on, or an epiphenomenon of, materiality or contingency or the unconscious source or instinct of the thinker. But from Hegel’s point of view, this criticism is question-begging from the start. In his treatment, the topic of pure thinking has nothing to do with the thinker, the subject, consciousness, the mind. The topic rather raises as a problem the possibility of the intelligibility of (also) whatever is being touted as source or hidden origin, the conditions assumed in any such determinate identification. Any such criticism, in so far as it is a thinking, a judging, a claim to know, is always already a manifestation of a dependence on

¹ (Robert B. Pippin, “Hegelian Themes: Richard Marshall Interviews Robert B. Pippin,” *3:AM Magazine*, October 2018, <https://316am.site123.me/articles/hegelian-themes?c=end-times-archive>)

² (Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows: Logic as Metaphysics in The Science of Logic*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019, pg. 4, 108-109)

³ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 7-8, 40, 67-68, 87-88, 122, 171, 199, 219, 276, 296-297, 299-300, 316, 321)

pure thinking and its conditions, and such ‘moments’ of pure thinking are to delimit the normative domain of intelligibility... and not any process or series of events that goes on in supposed independence of the empirical world... That question already manifests a misunderstanding of the question of pure thinking itself.⁴

Apropos the historical origins of the line of thought Pippin dismisses here, I will come back to the significance of the legacies of romanticism and, especially, Schellingianism for Hegel’s philosophy later. As for what Pippin points to as the contemporary permutations of this lineage, he does not identify exactly who he has in mind; the phrases “‘new realisms’” and “‘speculative materialisms’” are vague and contested nowadays. However, in a number of pieces overlapping in time and content with *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, Pippin indeed names names.⁵

But, what about the rebuttal, articulated by Pippin in this quoted passage and elsewhere,⁶ of naturalist, materialist, etc. objections to the purity of cognition? What is to be said philosophically in response to Pippin’s counter-argument here? Preliminarily, I would draw attention to the lumping together in the preceding quotation of “‘grounding,” “‘dependency,” and “‘epiphenomenality.” Through this gesture of aggregation, Pippin evinces a debatable assumption that any and every materialism or naturalism ultimately would be somehow reductive (an assumption also detectable in Robert Brandom’s analytic neo-Hegelianism⁷). In Pippin’s view, all materialisms and naturalisms are unwilling and unable to grant room for the autonomous, self-relating subjectivity central to German idealism.

⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 6-7)

⁵ (Robert B. Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” *Interanimations: Receiving Modern German Philosophy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015, pg. 96, 100-103, 105, 107)

(Robert B. Pippin, “Review of Adrian Johnston, *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*,” *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, August 5, 2018, <https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/a-new-german-idealism-hegel-zizek-and-dialectical-materialism/>)

(Pippin, “Hegelian Themes”)

⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 65, 77-78, 176)

⁷ (Robert B. Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019, pg. 556, 579)

Whether everyone from Schelling to Slavoj Žižek is subsumable under a single general heading, and, if so, whether this heading represents a shared commitment to some sort of basic reductionism, is quite questionable. Additionally, whether the specific versions of dialectical materialism from which Pippin is most concerned to distance Hegel are subject-squelching objectivisms is doubtful.⁸ In fact, the dialectical materialist tradition, with its origins in moments such as the first of Karl Marx's 1845 "Theses on Feuerbach," is characterized by its dogged pursuit of anti-reductive compatibilisms in which something like Pippin's thinking "I" is generated by, but becomes autonomous in relation to, the "non-I" of nature, matter, and the like⁹ (with Pippin himself, in 2008's *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, identifying Hegel as a certain type of compatibilist¹⁰). This pursuit remains at the heart of today's revivals of dialectical materialism, revivals whose appeals to Hegel's philosophy Pippin wishes to silence. Furthermore, the preservation of subjectivity by contemporary partisans of materialist theories of the subject puts them at loggerheads with everyone else associated with "'new realisms' and speculative materialisms." Neo-Spinozistic Deleuzians, object-oriented ontologists, and actor-network theorists, not today's Hegel-influenced dialectic materialists, are the ones who want to get rid of anything like German idealist subjectivity.

That said, the crux of the objection Pippin makes in Hegel's name to problematizations of pure thinking is their ostensibly "question-begging" quality. This objection is straightforward:

Insofar as materialisms and naturalisms are theories which, as such, are thinkings of their chosen

⁸ (Pippin, "Review of Adrian Johnston, *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*") (Pippin, "Hegelian Themes")

⁹ (Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" [trans. S. Ryazanskaya], *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* [ed. David McLellan], Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pg. 156)

(Adrian Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two: A Weak Nature Alone*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019 [forthcoming])

¹⁰ (Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pg. 36-64)

objects, they too are made possible by (Hegelian) pure thinking, with its categories and concepts (“Any such criticism, in so far as it is a thinking, a judging, a claim to know, is always already a manifestation of a dependence on pure thinking and its conditions”—or, as Pippin puts it later in *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, “The idea of an object conceived as not an object of thought, as unthinkable, is an idle, self-canceling thought”¹¹). No materialism or naturalism, as itself a form of thinking, can get back behind always-already-there thinking itself. The latter thereby demands acknowledgment as the *unhintergebar* *Ur*-condition of any and every possible metaphysics/ontology, including materialist or naturalist ones. As Pippin himself is well aware and openly admits, his counter-argument against materialism and naturalism is classically Fichtean,¹² with him explicitly attributing such Fichteanism to Hegel’s philosophy too.¹³ Pippin’s staging of Hegel-versus-dialectical-materialism is a re-staging of Fichte’s idealism-versus-dogmatism zero-

¹¹ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 65)

¹² (J.G. Fichte, “Review of *Aenesidemus*,” *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* [ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale], Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, pg. 69, 71, 73-74)

(J.G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* [ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs], Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pg. 71, 75-76, 109, 116-117)

(J.G. Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy: (Wissenschaftslehre) nova methodo (1796/99)* [ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale], Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, pg. 91-98, 104-106, 330, 339)

(J.G. Fichte, *The Vocation of Man* [trans. William Smith], La Salle: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1965, pg. 28, 82)

(J.G. Fichte, “Fichte in Berlin to Schelling in Jena [Draft of a Letter]: 8th October [actually circa Dec. 27th] 1800,” in J.G. Fichte and F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800-1802)* [ed. and trans. Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood], Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012, pg. 48)

¹³ (Robert B. Pippin, “Fichte’s Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism,” *The Reception of Kant’s Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel* [ed. Sally Sedgwick], Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pg. 148, 165-166)

(Robert B. Pippin, “Robert Brandom’s Hegel,” *Interanimations*, pg. 45)

(Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 7-10, 118, 191, 233)

sum game.¹⁴ Pippin repeats the objections Fichte raises in response to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.¹⁵

Pippin's Fichteanization of Hegel will be submitted to critical scrutiny in the next two sections of my text. For now, I want briefly to propose a Hegelian reply to Pippin's Fichteanism (with this reply to be fleshed out in multiple ways throughout the rest of the present piece). To cut to the chase, I believe Hegel would diagnose as "one-sided" (*einseitig*) Pippin's idealist invocation of the closed loop of pure thinking against the ostensible dogmatism of materialism and naturalism—and this because Hegel himself, across the arc of his intellectual itinerary, repeatedly indicts Fichtean idealism as one-sided.¹⁶

Admittedly, on one side, the one stressed by Pippin, there obviously can be no -ism (idealism, materialism, naturalism...) without an accompanying -ist (idealist, materialist, naturalist...) thinking. Yet, correlatively but conversely, it equally is the case that there can be no (pure) thinking left frictionlessly spinning in an immaterial, unnatural void (to borrow some wording from John McDowell, whose "naturalism of second nature" Pippin deems un-

¹⁴ (J.G. Fichte, "Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre* or, of So-called 'Philosophy,'" *Fichte*, pg. 94-95) (J.G. Fichte, "Outline of the Distinctive Character of the *Wissenschaftslehre* with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty," *Fichte*, pg. 268-269)

(J.G. Fichte, "A Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre* [Excerpt]," *Fichte*, pg. 320, 323)

(J.G. Fichte, "Annals of Philosophical Tone [Excerpt]," *Fichte*, pg. 349)

(Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, pg. 9-20, 69-70, 117-119, 146-148, 160-162, 247)

¹⁵ (J.G. Fichte, "Commentaries on Schelling's *Transcendental Idealism* and *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (1800-1801)," in Fichte and Schelling, *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling*, pg. 119, 121, 132)

¹⁶ (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* [trans. H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf], Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977, pg. 82-83, 135, 176)

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* [trans. A.V. Miller], Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, §415 [pg. 156])

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume Three* [trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson], New York: The Humanities Press, 1955, pg. 499)

(G.W.F. Hegel, *The Berlin Phenomenology* [ed. and trans. M.J. Petry], Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1981, §415 [pg. 15, 23], §417 [pg. 29])

Hegelian¹⁷—Pippin is right to distinguish between University of Pittsburgh colleagues Brandom and McDowell,¹⁸ but wrong, in my view, to favor on supposedly Hegelian grounds the anti-naturalist Brandom¹⁹). At least, this is so for anyone who is uncomfortable with the notion of a putatively pure thinking inexplicable by and underivable from anything and everything natural and material.

Hegel indeed would agree with Pippin that crudely dogmatic forms of materialism/naturalism beg the question of the conditions for the thinking/knowing of matter/nature. But, this same Hegel simultaneously would maintain, against Pippin, that Kantian and Fichtean insistences on an underived, always-already-there apperceptively cognizing “I” (i.e., the transcendental unity of apperception in whatever guise) are equally question-begging. These insistences beg questions about the pre/non-subjective origins and genetic emergence of (transcendental) subjectivity, of the thinking “I”—with Pippin prohibiting these questions he nonetheless begs.²⁰ Only through an immaterialist spiritual-mental monism, an outright Cartesian-type ontological dualism, or a critical-transcendental shrouding of the pre/non-subjective as an unknowable noumenal mystery could one claim to need neither to ask nor answer these questions. But, Hegel rejects all three of these options. Another option for avoiding such questions would be to endorse a Colin-McGinn-kind “new mysterianism,” an un-Hegelian position with which Pippin periodically and surreptitiously flirts (as I will highlight subsequently).

¹⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 306)

¹⁸ (Pippin, “Hegelian Themes”)

¹⁹ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 102-103)
(Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

²⁰ (Pippin, “Robert Brandom’s Hegel,” pg. 41)

With Hegel believing himself to have established the untenability of either spiritual-mental monism or ontological dualism, he also sees Kant's and Fichte's transcendental idealisms in turn as, in their one-sidedness, begging questions (about the pre/non-subjective origins and genesis of their transcendental subject) they neither can ask nor answer. Hegel's non-one-sided alternative to these two ways (i.e., subjectivist and objectivist) of begging questions, reflected in the reciprocally co-determining interrelations between the major divisions of his systematic encyclopedic apparatus (i.e., Logic, Philosophy of Nature, and Philosophy of Mind/Spirit [*Geist*]), is to weave both the circle of the (self-)thinking logical "I" as well as the circular movement of *Logik* overall into the even larger circle of his entire System, with its *Realphilosophie* consisting of *Naturphilosophie* and *Geistesphilosophie*. Put differently, and as I have argued elsewhere,²¹ the architectonics of Hegel's entire System (of which Logic is but a part, albeit a crucial one) present objections to Pippin's Fichtean absolutization of the "I" of pure logical thinking. What is more, various contents of this System (to be found primarily in the *Realphilosophie*, but also in other textual locations, such as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*) speak directly against the Fichteanization Pippin performs in his recent labors on Hegelian philosophy. I will come back to all of this in section four below.

Apart from the Hegelian criticisms of Pippin's Fichteanism I have just put on the agenda for later, I must draw attention at this juncture to what seem to be inconsistencies internal to how Pippin characterizes the idealism he imputes to a Hegel heavily indebted to Kant and Fichte (but not Schelling). As seen, Pippin pits in a Fichtean fashion an idealist pure thinking against a dogmatic (i.e., materialist, naturalist, objectivist, etc.) impure thinking. Yet, within his own

²¹ (Adrian Johnston, *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2018, pg. 68-72)

writings, he appears to vacillate as regards his core thesis about the absolute autonomy and self-sufficiency of pure thinking.

In *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin repeatedly refers to a 2000 book chapter of his on Fichte ("Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism"). This chapter itself appeals specifically to Fichte's 1794 "Review of *Aenesidemus*." The latter involves, among other things, Fichte insisting most adamantly on the absoluteness of the self-positing transcendental subject of intellectual intuition (i.e., Pippin's apperceptive "I" of pure thinking).²² This Fichte, also the author of the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*, goes so far as to maintain that, "*I simply am, because I am*" (ich bin schlechthin, weil ich bin).²³ In other words, this "I" is an original factual (self-)givenness. It cannot be gotten back behind. As Fichte puts it in the same paragraph containing this just-quoted formulation, "The I is *what* it is, it is *because* it is, and it is *for* the I. Our knowledge can extend no further than this" (*Das Ich ist, was es ist, und weil es ist, für das Ich. Ueber diesen Satz hinaus kann unsere Erkenntniss nicht gehen*).²⁴

Fichte's *unhintergebar Ich* underpins Pippin's current approach to Hegel. Hegel's philosophy, as ostensibly centered on the Logic alone as its Alpha and Omega, is said to be as committed to pure thinking as Fichte's pre-1804 *Wissenschaftslehre* and associated texts.²⁵ Pippin, in "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," translates this Fichte into the more recent Sellarsian terminology favored by both himself and Brandom for assimilating German idealism into the intellectual culture of twentieth-century Anglo-American

²² (Fichte, "Review of *Aenesidemus*," pg. 65)

²³ (J.G. Fichte, "Recension des *Aenesidemus*," *Fichtes Werke, Band I: Zur theoretischen Philosophie I* [ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte], Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1971, pg. 16)

(Fichte, "Review of *Aenesidemus*," pg. 70)

²⁴ (Fichte, "Recension des *Aenesidemus*," pg. 16)

(Fichte, "Review of *Aenesidemus*," pg. 71)

²⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 10-12, 67-68, 87-88, 129, 171, 199, 219, 276, 296-297, 299-300, 316)

philosophy. Fichte's idealism is linked to a Sellarsian reasons-versus-causes dichotomy with anti-materialist, anti-naturalist consequences. This is done through appeal to the Fichtean denial of the possibility of any external determination of the spontaneous auto-reflexive activity of thinking.²⁶ A few pages later in the same essay, Pippin equates Fichte's rejection of the Kantian thing-in-itself with Wilfrid Sellars's debunking of "the myth of the given."²⁷ Through this rejection, Pippin's Fichte is said to establish an idealist "normative monism" of an absolutely autonomous "space of reasons."²⁸ On another occasion, Pippin appeals to Brandom as reinforcing the wholesale equation of Hegelian *Geist* with normativity,²⁹ a normativity, moreover, that is put forward as an always-already-there socio-historical presence.³⁰ Brandom himself indeed absorbs Hegelian spiritual rationality in its entirety into normativity.³¹ He also signals his reciprocal reliance on Pippin's version of Hegelianism.³²

Very much in line with "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* attributes to Hegel (specifically, Hegel's mature Logic) an axiomatic commitment to Fichtean-style pure thinking as a first-philosophical, *unhintergebar ex nihilo*—"What else could it mean for Hegel to characterize logic, a science of pure thinking, as first philosophy? ... The concepts did not come from anywhere, any more than the thinking power comes from anywhere."³³ Pippin's Fichte-inspired emphasis on an underived purity as grounding the entire Hegelian System deserves to be set side-by-side with a remark Pippin

²⁶ (Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," pg. 155-157)
 (Robert B. Brandom, "Categories and Noumena: Two Kantian Axes of Sellars's Thought," *From Empiricism to Expressivism: Brandom Reads Sellars*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015, pg. 97)

²⁷ (Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," pg. 164)

²⁸ (Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," pg. 164)

²⁹ (Pippin, "Robert Brandom's Hegel," pg. 29)

³⁰ (Pippin, "Robert Brandom's Hegel," pg. 45-46)

³¹ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 576)

³² (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 769)

³³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 40)

makes about Žižek in a review of the latter's 2012 book *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*—"The idea of 'pure' drives (or 'pure' anything) belongs in the Hegelian zoo,"³⁴ namely, Hegel's phenomenological menagerie as including "the Beautiful Soul, the Knight of Virtue, and... the Frenzy of Self-Conceit."³⁵ Why would transcendental idealist pure thinking not belong in the same zoo for the same reason?

Indeed, Hegel explicitly includes the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception and the Fichtean thinking "I" in the zoo of the main body of his 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In fact, Fichte's "I = I" is displayed in several of the cages exhibited in this first of Hegel's major works. This "I" appears both at the start of the section on "Self-Consciousness"³⁶ as well as in the subsequent context of the discussion of the figure of the "Beautiful Soul."³⁷

But, in relation to Pippin's project, the Fichtean thinking subject's additional appearance alongside the Kantian unity of apperception as a moment of "The Certainty and Truth of Reason" (i.e., the beginning of the *Phenomenology*'s section on "Reason") is of the greatest relevance for the present discussion. At this specific moment of the *Phenomenology*, on the threshold of the dialectical transition to the shape of "Observing Reason," Hegel portrays Kant's and Fichte's theories of transcendental subjectivity as self-subvertingly one-sided. This one-sidedness is then superseded and remedied by "Observing Reason" as a *Gestalt* blending together the empirical, experimental natural sciences of modernity and their post-Fichtean uptake via Schellingian *Naturphilosophie*.³⁸ Revealingly, Brandom, Pippin's close ally, chooses to skip over entirely the

³⁴ (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 113)

³⁵ (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 106)

³⁶ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* [trans. A.V. Miller], Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pg. 104-105)

³⁷ (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pg. 395, 398-399)

³⁸ (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pg. 144-145)

Phenomenology's chapter on "Observing Reason" in his eight-hundred-plus-page 2019 tome *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*.³⁹

In the shift from "The Certainty and Truth of Reason" to "Observing Reason" in the "Reason" section of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's message is clear: The anti-materialist, anti-naturalist subjectivism of Kantian and Fichtean idealisms can, should, and, nay, must be sublated by a dialectically-speculatively superior position philosophically reconciling the transcendental "I" with nature and the natural sciences.⁴⁰ This message already is foreshadowed earlier during Hegel's Jena stay in both 1801's *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* and 1802's *Faith and Knowledge*.⁴¹ For Hegel starting in the Jena period, Fichte's "I = I" belongs to a reserve of endangered species already being surpassed by the rapid evolution of absolute, beyond subjective, idealism.

In *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin warns that, "Fear of 'subjective idealism' has often led to its contrary, a mystified 'objectivism'"⁴² (with this warning being reiterated a number of times⁴³). The inverse is at least as true: Fear of a mystified "objectivism" has often led to its contrary, a no-less-mystified "subjective idealism." A similar reversal ought to be applied to a related point Pippin makes in "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism." Therein, he speaks of "the insufficiency of modern naturalism to account for its own normative

³⁹ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 1)

⁴⁰ (Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, pg. 50-60)

(Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

⁴¹ (Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, pg. 82-83, 135)

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge* [trans. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris], Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977, pg. 176-177)

⁴² (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 18)

⁴³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 59, 119, 131)

status.”⁴⁴ One could speak with equal justification of the insufficiency of Pippin’s normative epistemology to account for its natural status.

In line with the immediately preceding inversions, I will operate throughout the rest of this intervention on the basis of a more fundamental inversion of a recurring feature of Pippin’s own *modus operandi*. Generally, when a professional academic philosopher confesses to being unclear about or confused by someone else’s claims or arguments, this is a thinly-veiled manner of charging the other in question with being muddle-headed and trafficking in nonsense. Pippin uses this tactic repeatedly. In his recent texts, he deploys his weaponized perplexity against materialist-type renditions of Hegel’s thought. He voices again and again a sentiment along the lines of: How could anyone believe in, and believe that Hegel believed in, subject emerging from substance and the like?

The most fitting response by a (dialectical) materialist interpreter of Hegelian philosophy to Pippin’s feigned bafflement is to fight fire with fire. How could anyone believe in, and believe that Hegel believed in, the inexplicable purity of an *ex nihilo, unhintergebar* thinking “I?” How could anyone credibly deny, and claim that Hegel denies too, that subject emerges from substance and that *Geist* surfaces out of *Natur*? How could anyone construe Hegel’s vision of philosophy as restricting this *Wissenschaft* to the confines of exclusively normative epistemological and socio-ethical concerns?

Pippin indeed entertains such views. For him, Hegel’s System ultimately is an epistemological-normative (more or rather than an ontological) framework within which *Geist* as such is “a kind of norm.”⁴⁵ He sets normative Spirit’s space of reasons entirely apart from

⁴⁴ (Pippin, “Fichte’s Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism,” pg. 165)

⁴⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pg. 61-63)

anything and everything causal *qua* material or natural.⁴⁶ Hegel is said to be an uncompromising anti-naturalist about *Geist*.⁴⁷ Pippin goes so far as to write off the ontological concerns of materialist and naturalist perspectives as unphilosophical, as of no properly philosophical interest.⁴⁸

The affirmative flip-side of Pippin's dismissal of materialist or naturalist ontologies as unphilosophical pops up at the very beginning of *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*. A few pages into its introduction, Pippin asserts, "by pure thinking Hegel basically means: philosophy."⁴⁹ He adds, "all philosophy, from Plato's *Republic* to Descartes's *Meditations* to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* to Quine's *Word and Object*, is an enterprise of pure thinking."⁵⁰ Hegel's *Science of Logic* is situated squarely in this version of the philosophical tradition.⁵¹ As I will proceed to argue, this asserted synonymy between pure thinking and philosophy would hold for Hegel only if Hegel's System were reducible to its Logic alone.

Pippin puts forward as a matter of a straightforward, uncontroversial definition of philosophy what is, in actuality, a contentious picture of the discipline. The introduction to *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* tries to impose a very tight limitation of philosophy. Under Pippin's restrictions, only what gets caught by the sieves of epistemology and ethics (together as normative intelligibility) is to be treated as of interest and value—hence his Brandomian recasting of Hegel's System as purportedly centered on, in Brandom's parlance, logical games of

⁴⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, pg. 48)
(Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 100-101)

⁴⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 306)

⁴⁸ (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 101)

⁴⁹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 7)

⁵⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 7)

⁵¹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 7-10)

recognizing each other as giving and asking for reasons⁵² (by contrast with Pippin, Brandom acknowledges that his rendition of Hegel is more a creative, selective assimilation of Hegel's ideas into Brandom's own contemporary framework than a faithful history-of-philosophy exegesis of the primary sources in question⁵³). This limited scope is certainly a long way from the implicitly interdisciplinary open-mindedness of the ancient Greek love of wisdom in all its forms, for which nothing under the sun was foreign to its curiosity. Likewise, it is very different from Hegel's capacious and voracious intellectual ambitions for a truly encyclopedic philosophical Science-of-sciences. One of the biggest stakes in debating with Pippin about his portrayal of German idealism is struggling over what philosophy itself is and should be.

§2 From Kantianism to Fichteanism (and on to Brandomianism): The Stubborn Shade of Subjective Idealism

As I noted at the outset, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* involves Pippin responding to criticisms of his 1989 *Hegel's Idealism*. Specifically, he seeks to address accusations according to which his interpretation of Hegel is excessively Kantian *qua* subjectively idealist. As the preceding section already suggests, I see him instead as doubling-down on this subjective idealism through an increased reliance on Fichte in his reading of Hegel's mature Logic. Indeed, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* reiterates the emphasis in *Hegel's Idealism* on Kant's transcendental unity of apperception for Hegelian *Logik* and rightly links this unity to the Fichtean "I" as pure thinking.⁵⁴ Pippin insists that this Kantian-Fichtean unity of apperception is not subjectively idealist⁵⁵ (relatedly, he holds at arm's length Klaus Hartmann's deflationary, anti-metaphysical

⁵² (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 102-103)
(Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 14-15, 20)

⁵³ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 636)

⁵⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 35, 45, 73-74, 103-104, 106, 120, 122, 131, 191, 233, 237)

⁵⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 247-248)

Hegel-as-Kantian-category-theorist picture⁵⁶). This insistence of Pippin's will be challenged in what follows.

So, what does Pippin have to say about the charges of exaggerated Kantianism? Pippin's line of defense is that he never sought to Kantianize Hegel back in 1989, but that his presentation of the issues understandably generated this impression amongst certain of his readers. Pippin takes partial responsibility for provoking concerns about the conflation of Hegel's absolute idealism with Kant's subjective idealism. He admits to "tossing around too casually terms like 'conceptual scheme'"⁵⁷ and "a number of infelicities in the 1989 formulations,"⁵⁸ confessing that, "I am dissatisfied... with the account of the logic of the Concept in Pippin (1989)" as "misleading."⁵⁹ Nonetheless, even with these admissions, Pippin protests, "The idea was never that Hegel was a 'Kantian,' but that we cannot appreciate his profound differences with Kant unless we appreciate his enormous debt on this apperception point."⁶⁰

In a prior critique of this earlier Pippin, I joined various others in faulting *Hegel's Idealism* and related texts for indeed making Hegel into an anti-realist subjective idealist.⁶¹ I believe that this prior critique contains ample textual evidence and philosophical argumentation showing that Pippin's subjective idealist Kantianization of Hegel's idealism *circa* 1989 is more

⁵⁶ (Klaus Hartmann, "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* [ed. Alasdair MacIntyre], New York: Anchor Books, 1972, pg. 101-124)

(Klaus Hartmann, "Die ontologische Option," *Die ontologische Option: Studien zu Hegels Propädeutik, Schellings Hegel-Kritik und Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* [ed. Klaus Hartmann], Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976, pg. 1-30)

(Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 95)

⁵⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 32)

⁵⁸ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 58)

⁵⁹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 255)

⁶⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 104)

⁶¹ (Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, pg. 38-73)

than just a misleading superficial appearance resulting from some casual infelicities. I think his current self-defense misleadingly softens the vehemence of his earlier Kantian-style anti-realism.

That noted, how does the recent Pippin retain his long-held stress on Kantian (and Fichteian) self-sufficient apperception while simultaneously allaying worries that he rides roughshod over Hegel's anti-Kantian realism? In an October 2018 interview summarizing the gist of *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, he characterizes the Hegel of concern to him in this context as a synthesis of Aristotle and Kant.⁶² *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* specifies that the Aristotelianism at stake is Aristotle's hylomorphism specifically.⁶³ Hegel's version of this hylomorphism is a "logical monism"⁶⁴ in which the Logic's categories and concepts cut across the subject-object, mind-world divide. Logical intelligibility structures both, one, what is a thinkable/knowable objectivity through this very structuring as well as, two, the subjectivity thinking/knowing such always-already structured objectivity.⁶⁵ For Pippin's Hegel, to be is to be intelligible (and sometimes also intelligent as thinking/knowing subjectivity in addition to thinkable/knowable objectivity).⁶⁶ The Logic is about the conditions of intelligibility.⁶⁷

Explaining absolute idealism as a hylomorphic logical monism enables Pippin to bring back into view the Hegelian robust realism his previous work was in danger of eclipsing. Pippin's current work speaks of Hegel's realism in terms of a combination of identity and difference between thinking and being. The categories and concepts of the Logic establish an underlying base of structural sameness for what shows up as the difference between subjective

⁶² (Pippin, "Hegelian Themes")

⁶³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 92-93, 217)

⁶⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 59)

⁶⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 13-15, 36-37)

⁶⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 77-78, 81-82)

⁶⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 97-98)

thinking and objective being.⁶⁸ Similarly, Hegel, as an Aristotelianhylomorphist (and not a Platonic metaphysical realist), is committed to the inseparability of the material from the intelligible (as in Aristotle's inseparability of matter and form).⁶⁹

Pippin proceeds to spell out the realist correctives to Kant this Aristotelian metaphysical dimension of Hegel's *Logik* entails. By contrast with the actual separateness of content and form in Kant's conception of logic, the forms of Hegelian Logic are inherently content-directed, separable from their contents only in artificial abstraction.⁷⁰ Likewise, Pippin attributes to Hegel a unity of synthesizing apperception that is not only subjective, but also immanent to objective being itself.⁷¹ He similarly upholds that, "The mode of logical connection is inseparable from the mode of connecting. They are co-constituting."⁷² In the same vein, Hegel is observed to oppose the anti-realist "for us" qualification ubiquitous throughout Kant's subjectivist transcendental idealism.⁷³

As seen, Pippin's recent efforts also rely quite a bit on Fichte. And, as an aside, it would be worth noting that, in "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," he portrays Fichte as at least not a standard anti-realist.⁷⁴ But, in the same essay, Pippin eschews the "primacy of the practical" interpretation of Fichte's philosophy.⁷⁵ This is strange, given that the seeming alternative, what could be called a "primacy of the theoretical" interpretation, is what leads some to perceive Fichte, with his subjectivism, as a post-Kantian Bishop Berkeley or even a shameless solipsist. Nonetheless, Pippin believes that Fichte's repudiations of Kant's thing-in-

⁶⁸ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 47, 50, 303)

⁶⁹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 22, 55)

⁷⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 65, 289)

⁷¹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 74, 276)

⁷² (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 135)

⁷³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 77, 257)

⁷⁴ (Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," pg. 163-164)

⁷⁵ (Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," pg. 153-154)

itself are enough to close the gap between Fichte himself and Hegel with his realism.⁷⁶ Yet, Hegel, including in both the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic*, accuses Fichte of failing actually to jettison *das Ding an sich*.⁷⁷

So as further to fend off the specter of psychological or subjective idealism, Pippin stresses that Hegel's idealism posits an identity between subjective thinking and objective being, rather than a dependence of the latter on the former.⁷⁸ Psychological or subjective idealism posits a dependence of objective being on subjective thinking. By contrast, Hegelian absolute idealism grants the independent existence of objective being apart from subjective thinking. It nonetheless maintains the inherent availability *qua* intelligibility of this independent being as itself already sufficiently structurally similar (i.e., "identical") to thinking so as to be knowable in principle. Pippin makes the same point, echoing Brandom,⁷⁹ through recourse to the Fregean sense-reference (*Sinn-Bedeutung*) distinction, with senses but not references being subject-dependent as per Hegelian idealism.⁸⁰

I agree with much of the immediately preceding. I concur with Pippin that Hegel adheres to a hylomorphic realism. Nonetheless, I am convinced that Pippin fails really to bridge a rift between the two fundamental domains in play here: on the one side, subjectivity, thinking, mind, reasons, senses, and the like; and, on the other side, objectivity, being, world, causes, references,

⁷⁶ (Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," pg. 151)

⁷⁷ (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic* [trans. George di Giovanni], Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 21.35 [pg. 30], 11.247 [pg. 343], 11.331-332 [pg. 428-429])

(G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze* [trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris], Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991, §60 [pg. 108])

(Hegel, *The Berlin Phenomenology*, §415 [pg. 13])

⁷⁸ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 6, 45, 253)

⁷⁹ (Robert B. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pg. 208)

(Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 365, 393, 419, 422-423, 425-429, 667, 772)

⁸⁰ (Pippin, "Robert Brandom's Hegel," pg. 34)

(Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 66)

and the like. Under combined Kantian, Fichtean, and Brandomian influences, Pippin seems to ignore one of the most innovative features of Hegel's philosophy, namely, its novel fashions of foregrounding temporal and historical dimensions of reality, including the bridges these dimensions establish between various domains.

Pippin's present manner of answering the charge of subjective idealism is to declare that there in fact is a real space of causes in addition to the logical space of reasons. Yet, the legacy of Kant's and Fichte's subjectivist transcendental idealisms continues to linger—this legacy gets reinforced by Pippin's Pittsburgh sources—insofar as ostensibly Hegelian absolute idealism *à la* Pippin is predicated on an unexplained static gap between thinking and being, subjectivity and objectivity. Pippin not only neglects to explain this gap—he pointedly refuses to do so. This refusal, one I will continue to push back against below, is made in the name of an anti-materialism and an anti-naturalism defending the purported purity of pure thinking. Such anti-materialism and anti-naturalism are perfectly Kantian and Fichtean, but definitely not Hegelian.

At one point in *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin avows, “in the general picture I want to defend, nature is just as real as agency for Hegel,”⁸¹ noting that, “Hegel accepts a realist philosophy of science.”⁸² This is all fine and good. However, Hegel's realism, as embodied by his *Realphilosophie* over and above *Logik* alone, requires accounting for the real emergence of Pippin's “agency” from nature.⁸³ Likewise, although, in *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, Pippin wants to lay claim to a decidedly non-dualist independence of Spirit from Nature,⁸⁴ he is not

⁸¹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 97)

⁸² (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 212)

⁸³ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I: Das System der spekulativen Philosophie* [ed. Klaus Düsing and Heinz Kimmerle], Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1986, pg. 179)

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* [trans. A.V. Miller], Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, pg. 3, §247 [pg. 14-15], §248 [pg. 18], §251 [pg. 25])

⁸⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, pg. 48, 52-53)

entitled to do so, having tied his own hands with the reasons-causes dualism he imports from Pittsburgh. And, as he bluntly claims in that 2008 book, “Nature *itself*... does not ‘develop into spirit.’”⁸⁵ What about Hegel’s depictions of the rise of *Geist* out of *Natur* as a liberation struggle (*Befreiungskampf*)?⁸⁶ If Spirit does not emerge out of Nature, then from where does it come?

Missing from Pippin’s attempted affirmation of the realist side of Hegel’s idealism is an acknowledgment and account of temporal-historical geneses. At the biggest of big-picture levels, Pippin needs to be able to narrate the genesis of the Ideal (as Spirit, subjectivity, thinking, mind, reasons, senses, etc.) out of the Real (as Nature, objectivity, being, world, causes, references, etc.). But, Pippin’s static dualism of reasons-versus-causes makes it such that he does not, will not, and cannot deliver such a narrative. Without it, Pippin remains a non-Hegelian subjective idealist at least by omission. In the 1801 *Differenzschrift*, Hegel remarks in the course of addressing K.L. Reinhold’s philosophy that, “Materialism... appears to Reinhold only as a sort of mental aberration that is not indigenous to Germany, and he fails to recognize in it the authentic philosophical need to suspend the dichotomy that takes the form of spirit and matter (*echten philosophischen Bedürfnis, die Entzweiung in der Form von Geist und Materie aufzuheben*).”⁸⁷ Apropos Pippin’s strict opposition between reasons and causes, Hegel’s

⁸⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pg. 49)

⁸⁶ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe II: Logik, Metaphysik, Naturphilosophie* [ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann], Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1982, pg. 188-189)

(G.W.F. Hegel, *The Jena System, 1804-5: Logic and Metaphysics* [trans. ed. John W. Burbidge and George di Giovanni], Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986, pg. 185)

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Die Naturphilosophie: Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften II, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 9* [ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978, §270 [pg. 104])

(Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §270 [pg. 81])

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 12* [ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, pg. 106)

(G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* [trans. J. Sibree], New York: Dover, 1956, pg. 80)

(Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

⁸⁷ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 2: Jenaer Schriften, 1801-1807* [ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, pg. 119)

(Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*, pg. 177)

observation *vis-à-vis* Reinhold could be paraphrased as: Materialism appears to Pippin only as a sort of mental aberration that is not indigenous to German idealism, and he fails to recognize in it the authentic philosophical need to suspend the dichotomy that takes the form of spiritual reasons and material causes.

The reasons-versus-causes distinction is an outright dualism even according to Brandom's own definition of a dualism as "a distinction drawn in terms that makes essential relations between the distinguished items unintelligible."⁸⁸ Pippin tirelessly underscores that Hegel is all about intelligibility.⁸⁹ So, by the lights of the Brandom-Pippin duo itself, (anachronistically) attributing to Hegel adherence to a Sellarsian reasons-causes⁹⁰ (and, perhaps also, manifest versus scientific images⁹¹) dichotomy, a dichotomy apropos which even to ask about the relations between its terms is to fall into unintelligibility, must be mistaken. As Hegel warns in his Jena "Aphorisms from the Wastebook," "The questions which philosophy does not answer are answered in that they should not be so posed."⁹² Questions posed to Hegel's philosophy about a variety of relationships (for instance, those between *Logik* and *Realphilosophie*, *Natur* and *Geist*, the pre/non-subjective and the subjective, etc.) become unanswerable under the constraints of Pippin's and Brandom's Sellarsianism. Hence, Hegel would object to asking such questions based on the reasons-causes opposition.⁹³

⁸⁸ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 11)

⁸⁹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, pg. 50)

(Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 14-15, 77-78, 81-82, 97-98, 252, 300)

(Pippin, "Hegelian Themes")

⁹⁰ (Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, pg. 76)

⁹¹ (Wilfrid Sellars, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," *Science, Perception and Reality*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, pg. 2-4, 6, 17-18, 20, 36-37, 39-40)

⁹² (G.W.F. Hegel, "Aphorisms from the Wastebook" [trans. Susanne Klein, David L. Roochnik, and George Elliot Tucker], *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel* [ed. Jon Stewart], Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002, pg. 248)

⁹³ (Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

At one point in *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin makes an assertion about Hegelian intelligibility that seems as though it might provide him with a response to the preceding. He states:

To consider beings in their intelligibility (what Hegel called ‘the science of things in thought’) is not to consider them in terms of some species-specific subjective capacity, any more than considering truth-functional relations between sentences in a logic is a consideration of how we happen to go on with sentences.⁹⁴

Pippin likewise cautions against “an overly psychological or subjectivistic conception of thinking”⁹⁵ and warns that, “‘subjectivity’ is not ‘psychology.’ Its most general reference is ‘anyone, any being, thinking anything at all.’”⁹⁶ Successfully decoupling pure thinking, in its purity, from the species *homo sapiens* would appear to sever the tie between *Geist* and *Natur*. This would permit Pippin to persist untroubled in his Kantian-Fichtean-Brandonian dualism of the two separate spaces of reasons (pertaining to Spirit as rational being) and causes (pertaining to Nature as material being, including the animal side of humans as rational animals).

If this sounds like it is leading to a Kantian-type clear-cut distinction between human beings and rational beings, with human beings as, in part, an actual species of the potentially larger genus of rational beings, that is because it is. Only rational beings engage in the thinking that renders into actual thoughts potentially thinkable (i.e., intelligible) beings, including the pure thinking that renders intelligibility itself fully thought-through.⁹⁷ In the introduction to *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin announces, “The watchwords for this study are simple: when Hegel says subjectivity, he means subjectivity. Only human beings are true subjects, but that

⁹⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 76)

⁹⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 123)

⁹⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 219)

⁹⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 57)

categorization is not limited to finite, psychological subjectivity.”⁹⁸ So, in a very Kantian fashion, Pippin internally divides subjects into two halves, a rational one (involving a pure thinking “in humans more than humans themselves,” as Jacques Lacan might put it) and a human one (involving species-specific psychology, etc.).

Pippin downplays and sidelines a particular group of Hegel’s contemporaries as influences on his philosophy: Schelling and the romantics. As a matter of historical fact, both Schelling and Hegel were profoundly impressed by Friedrich Schiller’s 1795 *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*.⁹⁹ Hegel’s sustained critical rejection of Kant’s deontological ethics of pure practical reason is in no small part inspired by Schiller’s problematization and nuancing of the Kantian division of persons into conflicting noumenal and phenomenal dimensions (pitting a pure rational will against the pathological inclinations of an impure human animal).¹⁰⁰ It would seem that this Schillerian-Hegelian challenging of the noumenal-phenomenal dualism as it features in Kant’s practical philosophy also would raise reservations regarding the closely related splitting of subjectivity at the level of Kant’s theoretical philosophy. This thereby would bring up obstacles to Pippin attributing to Hegel a Kantian-variety human-versus-rational beings distinction.

That noted, Pippin ignores a set of questions crucial from a genuinely Hegelian perspective. What are the conditions of possibility for the human acceding to the rational? What are the anthropogenetic meta-transcendentals for the transcendental subjectivity, the pure

⁹⁸ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 18)

⁹⁹ (G.W.F. Hegel, “Hegel to Schelling: Bern, April 16, 1795,” *Hegel: The Letters* [trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler], Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, pg. 36) (Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §55 [pg. 102])

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Volume I* [trans. T.M. Knox], Oxford: Oxford University Press, pg. 62-63)

¹⁰⁰ (Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* [trans. Reginald Snell], Mineola: Dover, 2004, pg. 24, 31-32, 65, 68, 73-74, 96-99, 109, 112, 115, 122-124)

thinking “I,” misrepresented by Fichte and Pippin as an *unhintergebar ex nihilo*? Posing and responding to such queries would not be simply and automatically to reduce the pure to the impure. Rather, just as there are, for Hegel, presuppositions (historical, phenomenological ones) leading to and making possible the presuppositionless beginning of Logic—Pippin grants that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* indeed is the ladder to *Logik*¹⁰¹—so too are there (natural, organic, anthropological, psychological, etc.) impurities out of which the purity of the logical thinking “I” gets distilled. If presuppositionlessness can be made possible by presuppositions, then why could purity not be made possible by impurity through genetic processes of purification?

Amongst those whose influence upon Hegel Pippin wishes to minimize or deny altogether, there is, in addition to Schelling and Schiller, Schelling’s and Hegel’s mutual friend and Tübingen classmate Friedrich Hölderlin. *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows* contains a passing reference to Hölderlin’s 1795 “On Judgment and Being.”¹⁰² Pippin then appeals approvingly to Dieter Henrich’s work on the Hegel-Hölderlin relationship.¹⁰³ As regards 1795’s “*Über Urtheil und Seyn*,” Henrich contrasts Hölderlin’s vanished unity of primordial Being before its disruption by the original division (*Ur-Teil*) into subjectivity and objectivity with Hegel’s self-negating Being and his Absolute as an achieved result rather than a lost origin.¹⁰⁴ I suspect Pippin’s appeal to Henrich is meant to help maintain distance between Hegel and a Hölderlin highly critical of the Fichtean philosophy of the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* (i.e., the Fichte so pivotal for Pippin).

¹⁰¹ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 102)

(Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 75-76)

¹⁰² (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 144)

¹⁰³ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 144)

¹⁰⁴ (Dieter Henrich, “Hegel und Hölderlin,” *Hegel im Kontext: Mit einem Nachwort zur Neuauflage*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010, pg. 28-29, 37-38)

(Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism* [ed. David S. Pacini], Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, pg. 289)

Pippin does not mention the anti-Fichtean essence of Hölderlin's "On Judgment and Being." However, Henrich directly addresses this matter. In sympathy with Hölderlin *contra* Fichte, he remarks:

...what is the relationship between a discourse that discloses the internal structures of consciousness and an investigation of ontological presuppositions that we have to make in order to complete that discourse on consciousness? ...the discourse on consciousness cannot remain the ultimate discourse, let alone the only one, although it might remain primary... We are therefore compelled to ask what the discourse might be by which we can solve this problem of the relationship between the epistemic and ontological discourses. It cannot be a discourse that relies exclusively on the internal self-explication of the mind.¹⁰⁵

Henrich goes on to observe that this Hölderlinian ontological critique of the *Wissenschaftslehre* represents the birth of an absolute idealism (i.e., what Hegel proceeds to epitomize) beyond Fichte's subjective idealism.¹⁰⁶ Pippin's Fichtean reconstruction of Hegel's Logic looks as though it amounts to, in Henrich's above-quoted words, a "discourse on consciousness" that "relies exclusively on the internal self-explication of the mind." The same Henrich under consideration here also claims that, "Hölderlin rightly asserts that the self-referential mind is not self-explaining, and that we have to presuppose a ground from which it originates"¹⁰⁷—and this against Fichte's very idealistic (i.e., subjectivist) idealism.¹⁰⁸ How is Pippin's redeployment of the Fichtean "self-explaining" "I = I" not vulnerable to the same Hölderlinian contestation (as summarized by Henrich)?

Another manner in which Pippin attempts to burnish his own Hegelian realist (rather than subjective idealist *qua* anti-realist) credentials involves contrasting Kant and Hegel on the topic

¹⁰⁵ (Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, pg. 286)

¹⁰⁶ (Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, pg. 292)

¹⁰⁷ (Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, pg. 295)

¹⁰⁸ (Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, pg. 295)

of life. As is common knowledge, Hegel (along with Schelling) ontologizes Kant's merely regulative, "as if" conception of the organic as per the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" in 1790's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Pippin spotlights Hegel's frustration with the Kantian "*als ob*" qualifying the subject of life in particular.¹⁰⁹ By contrast with Kant's critical-epistemological agnosticism, Hegel is a realist about organic structures and dynamics.¹¹⁰

Interestingly, "life" already appears as a logic category in the mature Logic's "Doctrine of the Concept" even before the transition to the topic of Nature as per *Naturphilosophie*. Pippin sees the specifically logical role of the category of life as buttressing the very idea of pure thinking, with both life and pure thinking being instances of auto-reflexive self-determination.¹¹¹ Moreover, he handles the appearance of life in the *Logik* carefully. Pippin portrays life being a logical category for Hegel as representing a Hegelian argument against any absolutization of mechanics, any attempt to deny the possible real existence of structures and dynamics different from mechanical ones (such as organic ones).¹¹²

But, tempering this, Pippin takes pains correspondingly to stipulate that Hegel is no vitalistic hylozoist.¹¹³ Inorganic mechanics has its logical (and real) place along with, and independently of, organic life.¹¹⁴ Likewise, "Hegel is not out to deduce a priori the necessary existence of living beings."¹¹⁵ Pippin wisely decouples Hegel's conception of life, along with his conceptions of various other things, from any teleology according to which its very existence is

¹⁰⁹ (Pippin, "Hegelian Themes")

(Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 286-287, 292-295)

¹¹⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 274)

¹¹¹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 316)

¹¹² (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 62, 275-276, 289)

¹¹³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 284)

¹¹⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 288)

¹¹⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 274)

somehow an ontological necessity.¹¹⁶ This is fortunate for anyone enjoying Darwinian hindsight as regards Hegel's Logic.

Of course, for Darwinian evolutionary theory, as well as for some of its predecessors, actual life emerges in the course of natural history. A transition takes place from a world without life to a world with it. As I have argued elsewhere,¹¹⁷ Hegel, despite certain remarks of his, can be interpreted as accepting some version of the historical-temporal emergence of the living out of the non-living. If Hegelianism is, at least on a basic level, minimally compatible with Darwinism, then this makes the absence of any account of real anthropogenesis arising out of nature in Pippin's framework a shortcoming marring his rendition of Hegelian realism.

What is more, the connection between a realist ontologization of life as per Kant's third *Critique* and the realism specific to absolute idealism brings the figure of Schelling back into the picture here. This connection is crucial to Schelling as well as to Hegel. As seen, Pippin consistently marginalizes Schelling's philosophy, treating Schelling as the odd man out of classical German idealism. I soon will demonstrate that Pippin's references to Schelling, especially in the context of his fight against materialist annexations of Hegel's thought, are revealing points well worth debating.

Finally, before proceeding to the next section, it must be mentioned that this philosophical-historical constellation involving Schelling's and Hegel's relations to Kant's "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" also includes the figure of Baruch Spinoza thanks to the *Pantheismusstreit* provoked by F.H. Jacobi starting in 1785. I will not retell this

¹¹⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 268-269)

¹¹⁷ (Adrian Johnston, "Transcendentalism in Hegel's Wake: A Reply to Timothy M. Hackett and Benjamin Berger," *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, special issue: "Schelling: Powers of the Idea" [ed. Benjamin Berger], no. 26, Fall 2014, pg. 226-228)
(Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

story here, having done so on prior occasions.¹¹⁸ However, the matter of Spinozism, so utterly central to the emergence and unfolding of post-Kantian German idealism, brings up the roles of materialism and naturalism in this idealist tradition. Moreover, the Schellingian and Hegelian critiques of Spinozism are directly relevant to Pippin's version of Hegel's realism.

Insofar as the version of realist Hegelianism Pippin advocates in his recent texts involves firm commitment to the reasons-causes dichotomy, his portrait of Hegel's logical monism resembles Spinoza's dual-aspect monism. Brandom, throughout *A Spirit of Trust*, invokes what he christens Hegel's "bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism."¹¹⁹ I already have clarified the "hylomorphic conceptual" part of this label in explaining Pippin's account of Hegel's Aristotelian hylomorphism (an account similar to that offered by Brandom). And, Brandom's adjective "bimodal" refers to the two modes of "alethic modal" (i.e., real-objective) and "deontic normative" (i.e., ideal-subjective) relations, with these two modes being analogous to the space of causes and the space of reasons respectively. Pippin explicitly endorses this Brandomian bimodality in *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*.¹²⁰ But, Brandom's (anti-naturalist, socio-pragmatic) bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism suffers in the same way from the same absence of an authentically Hegelian inclusion of (anthropo)genetic dimensions that I identify above as compromising Pippin's supposedly Hegelian logic-as-metaphysics realism.

Without these (anthropo)genetic dimensions, Brandom's and Pippin's attempts at reconstructing Hegel leave the latter's metaphysics looking too much like Spinoza's. Of course, with Spinoza, one has a dual-aspect monism in which "substance" as monistic being inexplicably

¹¹⁸ (Adrian Johnston, *Adventures in Transcendental Materialism: Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, pg. 23-49)

(Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, pg. 11-37)

¹¹⁹ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 84, 106, 108, 229-231, 373-374, 464, 573, 638, 666, 668-669, 715)

¹²⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 164, 176)

just so happens to show up, for human beings, in the two guises of the “attributes” of “thinking” and “extension.” With Brandom and Pippin, one has a bimodal (i.e., dual-aspect) logical monism in which the spiritual substance of pure intelligibility shows up in the two guises of the modes (akin to Spinoza’s attributes) of reasons (i.e., ideality, subjectivity, thinking, mind, senses, etc.) and causes (i.e., reality, objectivity, being, world, references, etc.). The parallel is palpable.

On a separate occasion, I explore the significant breadth and depth of Hegel’s sustained, repeated critiques of Spinoza and lifelong ambivalence towards Spinozism.¹²¹ Here, it ought to be foregrounded that, as per Schelling and Hegel, Spinoza’s major fault is his failure to ask and answer questions about why and/or how substance refracts itself into the split between its attributes of thinking and extension. For a Hegelian (and not just a Schellingian), the same objection applies to Brandom and Pippin.

In fact, the objection at this juncture is twofold. First, Pittsburgh-Chicago neo-Hegelianism does not explain the genesis of the very divide between the space of reasons and the space of causes. Second, this Analytic Hegelianism also does not explain the genesis of one of its two dimensions, the space of reasons, out of the other dimension, the space of causes. Anyone who both, one, affirms the historicity of nature generally and evolutionary theory specifically as well as, two, rejects spiritual-mental monism, Cartesian-type ontological dualism, and subjective idealism—Pippin signals his endorsement of this ensemble of affirmations and rejections—is obligated to explain in particular the genesis of the space of reasons out of the space of causes. Yet, Pippin, given other of his commitments, appears unable to meet this obligation mandatory if his version of Hegelian realism is to be fully intelligible.

¹²¹ (Johnston, *Adventures in Transcendental Materialism*, pg. 23-49)

§3 An Idealist Trinity or a Speculative Gang of Four?: The Schelling Symptom

Hegel's Realm of Shadows, with its focus on *Logik*, puts forward a specific portrayal of the Hegelian Absolute. Pippin speaks of “absolute self-conscious intelligibility, the intelligibility of intelligibility itself, the Absolute”¹²² and “the rendering intelligible of intelligibility itself.”¹²³ This entails that the reflective and reflexive thinking “I” sits enthroned at the ultimate pinnacle of Hegel’s System—“self-conscious subjectivity is at the very peak.”¹²⁴ Such assertions enable Pippin to allege that Hegel, despite his severe (Schellingian) criticisms of Fichte in such places as the *Differenzschrift*, is systematically Fichtean in spirit.¹²⁵ Yet, Hegel’s repudiations of Fichte’s anti-realist, anti-naturalist subjectivism as one-sided are not confined to moments in his pre-*Phenomenology* youth. They show up consistently throughout his mature corpus.

As Pippin observes of Hegel, “The Absolute itself is said to be a result.”¹²⁶ This is true. But, any Hegelian result, especially the Result of results that is the Absolute itself, is the product of sublation *als Aufhebung*. As such, the Absolute *qua* result contains preserved within itself everything that came before. Even if one grants Pippin’s elevation of the self-conscious subjectivity of the Logic’s “Doctrine of the Concept” to the very apex of a pyramid-like edifice, the bases atop which this “I” is perched, strata including pre-subjective “substance” and/or “nature,” must be recognized as possibility conditions and sublated presuppositions of the supposedly self-positing subject.

¹²² (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 252)

¹²³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 300)

¹²⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 98)

¹²⁵ (Pippin, “Fichte’s Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism,” pg. 165-166)

¹²⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 135)

However, Pippin puts up fierce Fichteian resistance against granting such recognition. His minimization of the significance of Spinoza's and Schelling's intermingling influences upon Hegel is the primary manifestation of this resistance. He sometimes expresses incredulity at interpretations of Hegel's philosophy according to which it owes anything to the Spinozistic vision of the very being of the Absolute itself becoming self-reflective in and through human beings.¹²⁷ Yet, even Fichte himself, starting in the 1804 version of his *Wissenschaftslehre*, came to see the unavoidability of situating his transcendental reflexive "I" within a genetic ontology of substance-becoming-subject, of the non/pre-subjective giving rise to subjectivity proper.¹²⁸

Basically, Pippin's anti-Spinozism in *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* reflects the restriction of his concerns to Hegel's Logic. Insofar as Hegelian *Logik* is a thinking about thinking, it does not narrate the spontaneous self-movement of Being *an sich* as a substance moving from itself onwards up to the apperceptive "I" as a subject. At the very start of Logic, Being is a concept for thinking, not a substance in itself.¹²⁹ However, if one takes into account both the very end of Logic (with its transition to *Naturphilosophie*) as well as all of the Philosophy of the Real, denying the existence of Spinozistic features in Hegel's System becomes implausible. What holds for *Logik* does not automatically hold for *Realphilosophie* and encyclopedic *Wissenschaft überhaupt*.

In seeming tension with Pippin's anti-Spinozism, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* also contains a concession to a sort of quasi-Spinozistic picture. Pippin states:

We can say that reality comes to self-consciousness about itself in us, or that the light that illuminates beings in their distinct being-at-work is the same light that

¹²⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 53, 58, 109, 133-134)

¹²⁸ (J.G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowing: J.G. Fichte's 1804 Lectures on the Wissenschaftslehre* [trans. Walter E. Wright], Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, pg. 37-38, 41, 122)

¹²⁹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 188)

illuminates their knowability in us, as long as we do not mean a light emanating from individual minds.¹³⁰

Spinoza, Schelling, and Hegel would concur with the caveat that closes this quotation. Also apropos Spinoza's metaphysics, Pippin, implicitly in resonance with the famous barb about "the night in which all cows are black" in the *Phenomenology's* preface,¹³¹ underscores that Hegel's Logic dissolves the indeterminacy of the being of Spinozistic substance into specific forms of precise categorial determinacy.¹³²

Pippin is especially hostile towards Schelling. As witnessed, he associates Schelling's philosophy with the beginning of a materialist-naturalist campaign to sully the purity of pure thinking.¹³³ Schellingian objective idealism is disqualified as genuinely idealist as per a German idealism defined by the triad of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel.¹³⁴ At best, Schelling's "idealism" is a disposable mediator between subjectivist transcendental idealism and Hegelian absolute idealism.¹³⁵

Moreover, Pippin flatly denies that Hegel takes over the core of the early Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie*.¹³⁶ Already in *Hegel's Idealism*, Pippin tries to circumscribe the role of Schelling in the formation of Hegel's philosophy. Therein, only Schelling's 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, a still partially Fichtean work, is said to exert an influence on Hegel—and this exclusively on the immature Hegel.¹³⁷ In "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological,

¹³⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 93-94)

¹³¹ (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pg. 9)

¹³² (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 212-213, 241)

¹³³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 6-7)

¹³⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 4)

¹³⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 12-14, 36-37)

¹³⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 108-109)

¹³⁷ (Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pg. 64)

(Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, pg. 66)

One-Sided Idealism,” Pippin refers to “the Schellingean bog,” with which he associates “Hölderlin, Novalis, and the early Hegel”¹³⁸ (but not the mature Hegel from 1807 onward).

Also in “Fichte’s Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism,” Pippin characterizes Schelling’s post-Fichtean pursuit of a version of substance-also-as-subject as a quest for “a kind of Holy Grail for modern philosophy.”¹³⁹ In a passage that appears both in his review of Žižek’s *Less Than Nothing* as well as in *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, he deems a strong-emergentist substance-also-as-subject metaphysics to be “a tall order.”¹⁴⁰ And, this tall order is said to be a specifically Schellingian concern, with Pippin maintaining that its presence in Hegel’s thinking is confined to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* alone (i.e., after 1807, Hegel ceases to share this concern with his former friend).¹⁴¹

As I noted a while ago, Hegel indeed posits the superiority of Schelling’s objective idealist standpoint over the subjective idealist perspectives of Kant and Fichte in the *Phenomenology* itself. This is signaled by the fact that transcendental idealism, with the unity of its apperceptive “I,” is succeeded therein by Baconian natural science and its speculative digestion by Schellingian *Naturphilosophie* (in the transition from “The Certainty and Truth of Reason” to “Observing Reason” in the “Reason” section succeeding the section on “Self-Consciousness”). And, *pace* Pippin, such pro-Schelling evaluations by Hegel are not confined to the Jena period.

Indeed, these evaluations recur as late as the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* of Hegel’s final Berlin period. Schelling features there as the last figure covered, coming after Kant

¹³⁸ (Pippin, “Fichte’s Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism,” pg. 160)

¹³⁹ (Pippin, “Fichte’s Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism,” pg. 159)

¹⁴⁰ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 95-96)

(Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 143)

¹⁴¹ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 98)

and Fichte. This alone is significant. Moreover, this later Hegel remains markedly ambivalent, rather than unequivocally hostile, towards his old Tübingen peer and earlier collaborator.

Admittedly, Hegel hurls a number of harsh criticisms at Schelling in these Berlin lectures. Nonetheless, he portrays Schelling as having “raised himself above the Fichtean principle and the Kantian content with which he began.”¹⁴² This portrayal by itself indicates, again *contra* Pippin, that Hegel never abandoned his 1801 assessment, in the *Differenzschrift*, of Schelling’s philosophy *vis-à-vis* Kant’s and Fichte’s philosophies in favor of the former. The Berlin Hegel soon adds:

With Schelling the speculative form has... again come to the front, and philosophy has again obtained a special character of its own; the principle of Philosophy, rational thought in itself, has obtained the form of thought. In the philosophy of Schelling the content, the truth, has once more become the matter of chief importance, whereas in the Kantian philosophy the point of interest was more especially stated to be the necessity for investigating subjective knowledge. This is the standpoint of Schelling’s philosophy in its general aspects.¹⁴³

At this same moment, Hegel repeats his anti-Kantian swipe, from the *Encyclopedia Logic*, about the critical epistemology of subjectivist transcendental idealism being comparable to “the wise resolve of Scholasticus to learn to *swim before he ventured into the water*.”¹⁴⁴ Kant, in his excessive epistemological caution, wants something as “absurd”¹⁴⁵ as Scholasticus, namely, to know about knowledge prior to any actual knowing (i.e., an impossible knowing-before-knowing). As in Jena while closely cooperating with Schelling, so too still in Berlin long after parting ways with Schelling: Hegel favors Schellingian speculative objective idealism, with its

¹⁴² (Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume Three*, pg. 513)

¹⁴³ (Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume Three*, pg. 521)

¹⁴⁴ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 20* [ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971, pg. 430) (Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §10 [pg. 34])

¹⁴⁵ (Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §10 [pg. 34])

“*Wahrheit*,” over Kantian and Fichtean critical subjective idealisms, with their self-limitation to “*das Wissen, das Erkennen, das subjektive Erkennen*.”¹⁴⁶ In this same vein, the Berlin Hegel even continues to have approving words for Schellingian *Naturphilosophie*.¹⁴⁷ All of this obviously presents complications for Pippin’s exegetical perspective.

The wedge Pippin tries to drive between, on one side, the Kant-Fichte-Hegel troika and, on another side, Spinoza, Schelling, and (dialectical) materialism already is rehearsed a few years prior to *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows* in Pippin’s review of *Less Than Nothing*. This review, in addition to raising objections to Žižekian metaphysics, also voices complaints about Žižek’s politics. These complaints reveal the presence of a political subtext accompanying the debates about the epistemological and ontological dimensions of Hegelian theoretical philosophy. For the time being, I will continue to focus on the metaphysical issues under dispute, postponing an engagement with Pippin’s political comments until the fifth and final section of this intervention (“Hegelianism’s Historical Futures: A Political Coda”).

Pippin opens his review of *Less Than Nothing* with a deployment of his weaponized incomprehension against the Spinozistic-Schellingian motif of substance as self-sundering.¹⁴⁸ This would be Being-in-itself (*qua* Nature) as auto-disruptive in ways that help bring into existence subjectivity. After labeling this motif embraced by Žižek “a tall order,” Pippin maneuvers to exclude it from the philosophical sanctum of true German idealism. Substance-also-as-subject is dismissed as a Schellingian objective idealist and/or Freudian psychoanalytic problem, not a Hegelian one.¹⁴⁹ For Pippin, Žižek is too Schellingian and Lacanian while not

¹⁴⁶ (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*, pg. 430)

¹⁴⁷ (Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume Three*, pg. 535-536, 541-545)

¹⁴⁸ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 93)

¹⁴⁹ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 95-96)

being Hegelian enough.¹⁵⁰ However, Hegel, near the very end of the *Encyclopedia* (and well after the *Phenomenology*), reaffirms the importance to his System of “substance as subject and as mind” (*Substanz als Subjekt und als Geist*) in connection with the ontological and genetic metaphysical Spinozism summarily waved away by Pippin.¹⁵¹ Likewise, while lecturing on the Logic’s “Doctrine of the Concept” one last time in 1831, Hegel again invokes as crucial the problematic of *Substanz-als-Subjekt*.¹⁵² Against Pippin, this Spinoza-inflected philosophical program is trackable as a red thread running throughout Hegel’s intellectual itinerary, from at least as early as the Jena *Phenomenology of Spirit* straight through until his death.¹⁵³ And, although I disagree with how Brandom construes the *Phenomenology*’s substance-also-as-subject, he at least registers its enduring importance for Hegel.¹⁵⁴

In a Kantian-Fichtean move by now familiar, Pippin plays off the alleged priority of a socio-normative unity of apperception against any materialist or naturalist self-sundering substance (as per Žižek *et al*).¹⁵⁵ Accordingly, Žižek’s metaphysics, with its asubjective excesses, remainders, and the like, is judged to be a regression to an objectivist myth of givenness put out of business by the German idealist revelation of omnipresent subjective mediation (via the apperceiving “I” and everything it brings with it).¹⁵⁶ In particular, Hegel’s

¹⁵⁰ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 105, 107)

¹⁵¹ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Dritter Teil: Die Philosophie des Geistes mit den mündlichen Zusätzen, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 10* [ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, §573 [pg. 387-389])

(Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §573 [pg. 309-310])

¹⁵² (G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Logik: Berlin, 1831* [ed. Udo Rameil], Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2001, §212-213 [pg. 208], §235 [pg. 222])

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Logic: Berlin, 1831* [trans. Clark Butler], Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, §212-213 [pg. 212], §235 [pg. 227])

¹⁵³ (Johnston, *Adventures in Transcendental Materialism*, pg. 23-49)

(Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, pg. 11-37)

(Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

¹⁵⁴ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 713)

¹⁵⁵ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 97, 105, 107)

¹⁵⁶ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 105, 113-114)
(Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 141-142)

System, reduced to its Logic, is purported by Pippin (as also in *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* subsequently) to be all about subject-centered intelligibility and not at all about any “material evolution” from the natural to the logical.¹⁵⁷

Throughout Pippin’s review of *Less Than Nothing*, he mocks Žižek’s “gappy ontology” of ruptures, voids, and the like.¹⁵⁸ For Pippin, such Žižekian formulations “mystify everything needlessly.”¹⁵⁹ He proclaims his puzzlement in the face of these formulations.¹⁶⁰ Portions of Žižek’s discourse are accused of being “mystified and unintelligible.”¹⁶¹

Pippin’s mockery, puzzlement, and accusations readily can and should be turned against him. His metaphysics is unbelievably gappy, being centered on the Mother of all gaps, namely, the unbridgeable dualistic divide between the space of reasons and the space of causes. This Gap of gaps is puzzlement incarnate. It mystifies and renders unintelligible the fundamental relations between being and thinking, *Natur und Geist*, body and mind, subjectivity and objectivity, and so on. It even backs Pippin into the philosophical obscurantism of justly so-called “new mysterianism.”

Pippin’s mysterian mischaracterization of Hegel comes out most clearly in the second chapter (“Naturalness and mindedness: Hegel’s compatibilism”) of *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*. On the one hand, Pippin correctly observes therein that, “All aspects of human mentality and practices (spirit) *always*, Hegel insists throughout, ‘presuppose’ nature.”¹⁶² He soon proceeds to propose:

¹⁵⁷ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 101-102)

¹⁵⁸ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 96-97, 100, 108)

¹⁵⁹ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 103)

¹⁶⁰ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 105)

¹⁶¹ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek’s Hegel,” pg. 106)

¹⁶² (Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, pg. 46)

The suggestion Hegel appears to be making is simply that at a certain level of complexity and organization, natural organisms come to be occupied with themselves and eventually to understand themselves in ways no longer appropriately explicable within the boundaries of nature or in any way the result of empirical observation.¹⁶³

Pippin is here vague and non-committal, speaking merely of “a certain level of complexity and organization.” Yet, despite the haziness of this “certain level,” it seems as though he is endorsing the basic model of *Geist*, as mindedness and like-mindedness, emerging on the basis of *Natur*, as animal organisms (Brandom likewise sketches a fuzzy emergentist picture along these same lines¹⁶⁴). Hegel himself displays an unwillingness to leave Spirit’s liberation struggle (*Befreiungskampf*) from Nature in a fog of obscurity. Hegel’s *Realphilosophie* delineates the real genesis of the spiritual out of the natural as a really knowable genesis with sharp, discernible moments and components.

In the same chapter of *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, Pippin promptly muddies these waters. I already quoted his insistence that, “Nature *itself*... does not ‘develop into spirit.’”¹⁶⁵ How is one to square this denial with the endorsement of some sort of emergentism of *Geist* from *Natur* in the preceding block quotation? Additionally, how is one to square it with statements by Hegel such as, “the objective world itself at once contains (*in sich enthält*) the very subject that differentiates itself (*die sich unterscheidet*) from the world as object,”¹⁶⁶ a statement again from his 1831 Berlin lectures on the logical “Doctrine of the Concept?”

Moreover, Pippin, again in this chapter of his 2008 book, claims that Hegel in no way advocates “some form of weak or anomalous monism, or other sort of dual aspect,

¹⁶³ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pg. 46)

¹⁶⁴ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 529)

¹⁶⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pg. 49)

¹⁶⁶ (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Logik*, §235 [pg. 222])
(Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, §235 [pg. 227])

supervenience, emergent property thesis, etc.”¹⁶⁷ He then immediately remarks, “Hegel’s account of spirit is none of these and it is hard to see what that leaves us with.”¹⁶⁸ I would contend that it is Pippin’s rendition of Hegel, not the Hegelian corpus itself, that leaves readers in this state of confusion. Incidentally, with Pippin’s just-quoted mention of “dual aspect,” it is worth remembering that Pippin, along with Brandom, ends up imputing to Hegel, however inadvertently, a metaphysics objectionably similar to Spinoza’s dual-aspect monism as already critiqued by Hegel himself.

At this point, Pippin can be seen to oscillate between two positions. I am inclined to designate these as weak mysterianism and strong mysterianism. Sometimes, he indicates that Spirit is known to emerge from Nature, albeit with the precise details of this emergence stubbornly remaining shrouded in mystery. This would be Pippin’s weak mysterianism. At other times, he simply denies that *Geist* arises from *Natur*, leaving the question of Spirit’s genetic origins unasked and unanswered. This would be Pippin’s strong mysterianism. If either form of mysterianism somehow still qualifies as compatibilism, they both nonetheless remain incompatible with Hegel.

In *Less Than Nothing*, Žižek responds to this same material from the second chapter of *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*. Although Pippin reviewed Žižek’s book, he still has not responded to some of Žižek’s critiques of him in *Less Than Nothing*. And, I am convinced Pippin cannot adequately respond unless and until the quite unlikely occurrence of him breaking with the position he has defended from 1989 onwards. That said, Žižek, at one point in his 2012 tome, observes:

¹⁶⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pg. 59)

¹⁶⁸ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pg. 59)

If... in ontological terms, spirit naturally evolves as a capacity of natural beings, why not simply endorse materialist evolutionism? That is to say, if—to quote Pippin—‘at a certain level of complexity and organization, natural organisms come to be occupied with themselves and eventually to understand themselves,’ does this not mean that, precisely, in a certain sense nature itself *does* ‘develop into spirit?’ What one should render problematic is precisely Pippin’s fragile balance between ontological materialism and epistemological transcendental idealism: he rejects the direct idealist ontologization of the transcendental account of intelligibility, but he also rejects the epistemological consequences of the ontological evolutionary materialism. (In other words, he does not accept that the self-reflection of knowledge should construct a kind of bridge to materialist ontology, accounting for how the normative attitude of ‘accounting for’ itself could have emerged out of nature.)¹⁶⁹

What Žižek identifies as “Pippin’s fragile balance between ontological materialism and epistemological transcendental idealism” is reflected in Pippin’s symptomatic stigmatization of Schelling in relation to the tradition of German idealism. Both Schelling and Hegel—Hegel remained throughout his intellectual itinerary marked by Schelling’s philosophies of Identity and Nature—continually sought, in Žižek’s words, to “construct a kind of bridge to materialist ontology, accounting for how the normative attitude of ‘accounting for’ itself could have emerged out of nature.”¹⁷⁰ I would suggest that both Pippin and Brandom need such a bridge. Yet, this Chicago-Pittsburgh pair have invested in stances that prevent them from building a structure that would span the gap they themselves sustain between the normative and the natural.

Brandom, in *A Spirit of Trust*, and Pippin, in 2011’s *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit*, both have recourse to the desiring human creature, the *Gestalt* of *Begierde*, as featured during the opening of the *Phenomenology*’s section on “*Selbstbewußtsein*” in attempts to bridge the rift they themselves open up and hold open between

¹⁶⁹ (Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, London: Verso, 2012, pg. 238)

¹⁷⁰ (Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

the natural and the normative.¹⁷¹ Pippin's way of here trying to have his dualistic reasons-causes cake and eat it too echoes his above-criticized 2008 mysterianism(s).¹⁷² Brandom supplies a more technically detailed, yet not substantially different-in-kind, tale of the transubstantiation of natural animal being into normative rational being through nothing more and nothing less than language-mediated games of recognition, with their regulatory systems of deontic "score-keeping."

There are problems with Brandom's and Pippin's turns to the *Begierde-Gestalt* of the *Phenomenology* even within strictly Hegelian parameters. To begin with, under the constraints of the opposition between natural causes and normative reasons, neither Brandom nor Pippin are entitled to any kind of transition from *Natur* to *Geist*, despite needing this in light of Hegel's own outlook. Unfortunately for the Pittsburgh-Chicago joint venture, the apparent move from organism (as passive, receptive, and sentient) to agent (as active, spontaneous, and sapient) would have to amount to the still-unexplained non-transition of a miraculous leap into a mysteriously always-already-there socio-linguistic matrix (i.e., an *unhintergehbare* space of reasons).

Furthermore, seen with the benefit of hindsight afforded by Hegel's both logical and real-philosophical System, the desire dealt with at the start of "Self-Consciousness" in the *Phenomenology* is only a very small part of a much longer story about the coming into being of the human as spiritual. Hegelian *Realphilosophie* in particular subtly but undeniably embeds the entire *Phenomenology* (as itself wholly internal to *Geistesphilosophie*) in a larger explanatory arc

¹⁷¹ (Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, pg. 34-36, 75-76)

(Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 24, 246, 262, 326-328, 336-338, 531, 679)

¹⁷² (Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness*, pg. 75-76)

within which both *Begierde* and *Selbstbewußtsein* are themselves rather late outcomes. Behind them lurk material possibility conditions both natural and anthropological for the subjects of Phenomenology and Logic. Neither Brandom nor Pippin seem willing or able to entertain the very idea of such material and natural (meta-)transcendentals. Pippin exacerbates these difficulties for himself by tying Hegelian desire to Fichtean “striving” (*Streben*).¹⁷³

Brandom, already in the 2000 book *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, broaches some of the matters under dispute in the present discussion. Brandom’s take on the Nature-Spirit rapport in this work arguably exhibits an oscillation akin to the one Žižek identifies in the quotation above occurring in Pippin’s 2008 book *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*. On the one hand, Brandom concedes that *Geist*, in a bottom-up genesis, immanently arises from *Natur*, with the spiritual thereafter achieving a self-relating autonomy *vis-à-vis* its natural grounds.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, in this same book, he soon proceeds to imprison the disciplines that would study this real emergence of Spirit out of Nature, such as the natural sciences, within the confines of Spirit alone.¹⁷⁵ Pippin performs the same gesture.¹⁷⁶ Thereby, what otherwise would be a Hegelian emergentist realism is dissolved into a social-constructivist anti-realism.

These same oscillations, ones ultimately veering towards socio-subjectivist anti-realism and anti-naturalism, recur in 2019’s *A Spirit of Trust*. Therein, Brandom depicts Hegel as meeting “the challenge to integrate reasons and causes” through seeking to overcome the

¹⁷³ (Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness*, pg. 55)

¹⁷⁴ (Robert B. Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, pg. 26-27)

¹⁷⁵ (Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, pg. 33)

¹⁷⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 314)

dialectical deadlock of the third of Kant's "antinomies of pure reason."¹⁷⁷ Brandom notes Hegel's opposition to the sorts of dualisms upon which Kant's *Verstand*-centric perspective relies.¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, Brandom's Hegel, instead of actually carrying out a true *Aufhebung* of the reasons-causes dualism, remains committed to a non-dialectical and implicitly Spinozist bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism in which natural causes and normative reasons are utterly separate, dichotomous modes (or aspects/attributes) untranslatable into each other.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, Brandom presents bimodal hylomorphic conceptual realism as also entailing both an objective idealism of thinkable/knowable objects and a conceptual idealism of thinking/ knowing subjects—albeit with there being an “asymmetry” between objective and conceptual idealisms slanted towards the priority of subjectivity as per conceptual idealism.¹⁸⁰ Brandom's identification of Hegel as a conceptual idealist brings the towering giant of post-Kantian idealism back into unsettling proximity to an anti-realist, anti-materialist subjective idealism one-sidedly favoring the spiritual reasons of epistemological subjectivity over the natural causes of ontological objectivity. Indeed, right after correctly noting Hegel's hostility to Kantian-style dualisms between reasons and causes, norms and natures, etc., Brandom immediately proceeds to suggest that Hegel's metaphysics is, so to speak, normative reasons all the way down, with even the apparent objectivity of natural causes being posited in and by subjectivity.¹⁸¹ This is anything but a properly Hegelian surmounting or sublation of the reasons-causes dualism.

¹⁷⁷ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 558)

¹⁷⁸ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 660, 706)

¹⁷⁹ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 572-573)

¹⁸⁰ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 638, 672-673, 717)

¹⁸¹ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 660)

As with the Fichte relied upon by Pippin, so too with this Brandomian Hegel: The distinction between Spirit and Nature is a distinction internal to Spirit itself. Alternately, this could be reworded in Brandom's own vocabulary as the claim that the distinction between the normative space of reasons and the natural space of causes is a distinction internal to the normative space of reasons itself (just as, for Fichte, the distinction between the *Ich* and the *Nicht-Ich* is a distinction internal to the *Ich* itself). Hegel, in the *Differenzschrift*, argues for the need to supplement Kant's and Fichte's anti-realist "subjective subject-object" of critical-transcendental idealism with Schelling's realist "objective subject-object" of the *Identitätsphilosophie* and *Naturphilosophie* emblematic of objective idealism¹⁸² (with Schelling and Hegel meaning something different by "objective idealism" than Brandom when the latter employs this phrase). Hegel's Schelling-inspired 1801 argument applies just as much to this Brandom, whose one-sidedly spiritual-ideal Spirit-Nature (as static-synchronic) requires counterbalancing by a natural-real Spirit-Nature (as genetic-diachronic).

§4 The Substance of Shadows: The Place of *Logik* in Hegel's System

The very title of Pippin's 2019 book on Hegelian *Logik* raises a number of thorny interpretive and philosophical issues. The exact meaning of Hegel's characterization of his "system of logic" as "the realm of shadows"¹⁸³ is a tricky exegetical problem.¹⁸⁴ What makes this especially difficult and important is that how one reads the phrase "realm of shadows" ultimately hinges on how one reconstructs the architecture of Hegel's System as a whole.

¹⁸² (Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, pg. 82-83, 157, 159-162, 165-169, 172-174)

¹⁸³ (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.42 [pg. 37])

¹⁸⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 28-29)

Pippin indeed confronts the puzzles presented by Hegel's metaphor of a realm of shadows. He poses a series of questions this metaphor brings up:

If the realm of 'thinking thinking thinking' is a realm of shadows, what is casting the shadows? What is the light? Why the apparent reference to what Plato's prisoners see on the walls of the cave? If *Denkbestimmungen* are shadows, they can only be shadows of themselves, or thought's self-reflection. In that case what does it mean that these reflections are 'shadows?' Such questions multiply as soon as one proffers an interpretation.¹⁸⁵

Pippin rightly judges that what the categories and concepts of *Logik* are shadows of are the natural and spiritual contents of *Realphilosophie*.¹⁸⁶ He states:

...the ultimately intelligible, the self-determining concept of the Concept, the absolutely thinkable, thinkability itself (what we conclude the *Logik* with), is a reflective illumination that allows us to see *the world-in-its-shadows*, to see its structure of intelligibility in a way it never exists, isolated as such. (So understood they never cease to be shadows, given Hegel's radical hylomorphism... but they are fully determinate shadows, sharply defined, not fuzzy anymore.) The *Realphilosophie* would return us to the embodied form of these making-intelligibility-possible forms, *Natur* and *Geist*.¹⁸⁷

Insofar as Hegel's realist absolute idealism is also a "radical hylomorphism," he would be committed to heeding the Aristotelian dictum according to which there is neither formless matter nor matterless form. Therefore, the thinking of logical forms in their purity is a shadowy abstraction from these forms as always-already immanent to and incarnate within a more-than-logical Real. Logic's categories and concepts are not transcendent metaphysical realities externally superimposed upon mundane earthly stuff.¹⁸⁸

Pippin makes a number of concessions as regards the larger architecture of Hegel's System above and beyond the Logic alone. Admitting the existence of *Realphilosophie*,¹⁸⁹ he

¹⁸⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 315)

¹⁸⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 300, 302)

¹⁸⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 29)

¹⁸⁸ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 319-320)

¹⁸⁹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 15)

even grants that the Philosophies of Nature and Spirit are part of Hegelian metaphysics too in addition to *Logik-as-metaphysics*.¹⁹⁰ The *Science of Logic*, with its concluding transition, indeed is inseparably tied to the Philosophy of the Real.¹⁹¹

With the logical thinking “I” as the purest form of *Geist*, grasping the transition from *Logik* to *Realphilosophie* (including a *Geistesphilosophie* as well as a *Naturphilosophie*) involves, among other things, comprehending the relationship between Spirit and Nature. Pippin acknowledges that the Spirit-Nature rapport must be thought.¹⁹² He even refers to “a transition to and then from a Philosophy of Nature.”¹⁹³ In relation to this, I will proceed in the current section to charge that Pippin both: one, misconstrues the import of the transition from *Logik* to *Realphilosophie*; as well as, two, is bound to core commitments that prevent him from being able to think the other side of this transition he mentions, namely, the movement from *Naturphilosophie* to both *Geistesphilosophie* and *Logik* (i.e., “from a Philosophy of Nature”).

Pippin gives Logic pride of place in Hegel’s System. He identifies the *Science of Logic* in particular as “Hegel’s most important book.”¹⁹⁴ Because of Pippin’s overriding epistemological emphasis on the priority of intelligibility above all else, *Realphilosophie* is accordingly made secondary and subservient to *Logik*.¹⁹⁵

I would maintain that Pippin’s uneven weighting of the components of Hegel’s encyclopedic System is yet another symptom of a lingering subjectivist *qua* transcendental idealist bias coloring his perspective on Hegel. This bias blinds him to an anti-Kantian and post-

¹⁹⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 41)

¹⁹¹ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 312)

¹⁹² (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 22)

¹⁹³ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 314)

¹⁹⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. vii, 26)

¹⁹⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, pg. 49)

critical dimension of Hegelian Logic in its entirety. This dimension appears most clearly at the very beginning and the very end of the mature versions of Hegel's *Logik*. Revisiting the place of the Logic in the larger Hegelian System further problematizes Pippin's Fichtean portrait of logical pure thinking.

Hegel, in his 1831 preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*, remarks that, "the need to occupy oneself with pure thoughts presupposes a long road that the human spirit must have traversed."¹⁹⁶ One could say that the ideal logical purity so esteemed by Pippin's reconstruction of Hegelianism is here said by Hegel himself, at the very end of his life, to presuppose as its conditions of possibility the real socio-historical impurities delineated in both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as well as the third and final volume of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (a volume which itself contains select recapitulations of the *Phenomenology's* content). Hegel's remark from the 1831 preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic* thus alludes to the circular structure of the System overall (i.e., "the whole Idea" [*die ganze Idee*] as "a circle of circles"¹⁹⁷). This means that the historically informed final stretch of the *Encyclopedia* bends back so as to condition and lead into the Logic as starting with the presuppositionless thinking of indeterminate Being—albeit as a presuppositionlessness dialectically generated out of specific natural, anthropological, phenomenological, psychological, and socio-historical presuppositions.

Apropos the start of Hegel's mature Logic, a certain amount of interpretive divergence amongst Hegel scholars has been provoked by what appears to be a difference between the

¹⁹⁶ (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.12 [pg. 14])

¹⁹⁷ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil: Die Wissenschaft der Logik mit den mündlichen Zusätzen, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 8* [ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, §15 [pg. 60])

(Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §15 [pg. 39])

Science of Logic and the *Encyclopedia Logic*. The *Science of Logic* is put forward by Hegel as being led up to by the ladder of the prior *Phenomenology of Spirit*.¹⁹⁸ By seeming contrast, the *Encyclopedia Logic* indicates that a subjectively willful decision to set aside all presuppositions and focus on mere, sheer thinking itself as such is sufficient for getting underway with *Logik* as the first part of systematic *Wissenschaft*.¹⁹⁹

To complicate things, the *Science of Logic* at one moment, like the subsequent *Encyclopedia Logic*, admittedly allows for the possibility of an apparently “arbitrary” (*Willkür*) initiation of *Logik* with the “resolve” (*Entschluß*) to suspend all presuppositions.²⁰⁰ However, this single moment has to be weighed against how the *Science of Logic* elsewhere tethers *Logik* several times in several ways to both *Phenomenology* and *Realphilosophie* in a circularly organized systematic whole. Furthermore, this isolated instance in the *Science of Logic* qualifies the *ex nihilo* arbitrariness of simple resolve as merely apparent; getting underway with a willful decision “can also be viewed as arbitrary” (*man auch für eine Willkür ansehen kann*),²⁰¹ namely, this is a non-mandatory partial perspective. Finally, Hegel’s theory of will indicates that any instance of an *Entschluß*, however immediately self-sufficient (or “arbitrary” [*Willkür*]) it might look to be, actually is mediated by its complex interrelationships with forces and factors other than its own willfulness.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.32-21.33 [pg. 28-29], 21.37-21.38 [pg. 32-33])

¹⁹⁹ (Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §17 [pg. 41], §78 [pg. 124])

²⁰⁰ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, I, Werke in zwanzig Bänden, 5* [ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969, pg. 68)

(Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.56 [pg. 48])

²⁰¹ (Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, I*, pg. 68)

(Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.56 [pg. 48])

²⁰² (Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §443-445 [pg. 185-189])

(G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* [ed. Allen W. Wood; trans. H.B. Nisbet], Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, §4 [pg. 35-36])

I strongly suspect that Hegel's recommendation, primarily in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, of beginning *Logik* with a subjective decision to bracket every presupposition does not really compete with and replace how the *Science of Logic* tends to situate Logic in relation to both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* before it and the encyclopedic *Realphilosophie* after it. One has to remember that the *Encyclopedia* was written to serve as a textbook for Hegel's teaching purposes. As such, its beginning with Logic is made easier by Hegel not presuming that his students have climbed the lengthy and demanding ladder of the *Phenomenology*.

Hegel's survey of alternate "preliminary conceptions" (including pre-Kantian rationalist metaphysics, empiricism, Kantian critique, and Jacobian immediacy) early in the *Encyclopedia Logic* substitutes for aspects of the *Phenomenology*. Moreover, Hegel assumes he can appeal to his modern students' subjective willingness to set aside all presuppositions precisely because they (and their wills) are modern. That is to say, the Hegel of the *Encyclopedia* is quietly aware that his demand to his early-nineteenth-century contemporaries to leap into the standpoint of presuppositionlessness can be heard and risen to precisely because these contemporaries are themselves products of a modernity informed by the critical sensibilities of Cartesian, Kantian, and scientific anti-dogmatic rationality. The *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Science of Logic*, and *Realphilosophie* all posit the presupposition of (modern) presuppositionlessness appealed to with apparent abruptness at the start of the *Encyclopedia Logic*.

In *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin comes across as somewhat torn between the difference in beginning presented by the *Science of Logic* versus the *Encyclopedia Logic*. A couple of times, he endorses the latter's manner of starting with a willful decision to suspend

one's presuppositions.²⁰³ Yet, Pippin also expresses reservations about "absolute" presuppositionlessness.²⁰⁴ He even insists that, "the notion of an absolutely autonomous starting point is un-Hegelian and impossible."²⁰⁵ In general, Pippin's work on Hegelian Logic leaves it less than transparently evident exactly how he understands the relations between the logical and both the phenomenological and the real-philosophical. I will come back to these difficulties below.

Tellingly, in both the *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel's prefatory and introductory framings of both Logic itself as well as his entire System are accompanied by multiple repudiations of the subjectivism of Kantian and Fichtean transcendental idealisms.²⁰⁶ However, as is to be expected from Hegel, these repudiations come in the form of immanent, not external, critiques. In other words, Hegelian metaphysics, as both *Logik* and *Realphilosophie*, is post-critical instead of pre-critical, passing through (and beyond), rather than bypassing, transcendental idealism.²⁰⁷

Of course, Hegel obviously accepts Kant's critical assault on metaphysical dogmatism. What is more, his crafting of the Logic's movement of categories reflects his appreciation of Fichte's Reinhold-inspired overcoming of lingering dogmatism in the Kantian "Transcendental Analytic" through the recasting of Kant's theoretical apparatus along rigorously deductive argumentative lines.²⁰⁸ But, *contra* Pippin, Hegel's Logic intends to demonstrate, among many other things, that pure thinking de-purifies itself, driving itself outside itself into an extra-

²⁰³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 157, 185)

²⁰⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 184-185)

²⁰⁵ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 172)

²⁰⁶ (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.14 [pg. 15-16], 21.29-21.31 [pg. 25-27])

(Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §10 [pg. 34], §41 [pg. 81-82], §42 [pg. 86], §45 [pg. 88-89], §48 [pg. 91-93], §60 [pg. 105-106])

²⁰⁷ (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.46-21.48 [pg. 40-42])

²⁰⁸ (Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §42 [pg. 84], §60 [pg. 107-108])

ideational Real. The initial incarnation of this Real is spatio-temporal nature, which is what the category of Being at the beginning of Logic turns out to be when seen with the benefit of the hindsight built into Hegel's circularly structured System. One of the significant upshots of the Logic's concluding transition to *Natur* as per *Naturphilosophie*, a transition flowing out of the inner kinetics of purportedly pure thinking itself, is the anti-subjectivist (i.e., anti-Kantian and anti-Fichtean) thesis according to which the cognizing "I" does not establish any unsurpassable limit between itself and an unknowable noumenal Real.

Pippin exhibits an awareness that a fully satisfactory and complete reckoning with Hegel's mature *Logik* requires engaging with his Philosophy of the Real too. However, to date, the only portion of Hegelian *Realphilosophie* to which he has devoted sustained attention is Hegel's practical philosophy, specifically, his socio-political thought as per, first and foremost, 1821's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. A lot remains uncovered: the entire Philosophy of Nature as well as much of the rest of the Philosophy of Spirit. Pippin leaves this bulk of the *Encyclopedia* aside as "another story,"²⁰⁹ presumably for another time. Likewise, in *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, he says:

...were there space in this study to discuss in detail the relation between Hegel's *Logic* and his *Realphilosophie*, both the other two parts of the *Encyclopedia* and his lecture courses, one could show that part of what Hegel means by treating the *Logic* as 'the realm of shadows' is that the full demonstration of the truth of this Ur-relation lies in what it actually illuminates...²¹⁰

Pleading space limitations, Pippin again signs a promissory note postponing the settlement of accounts between his rendition of Hegelian *Logik* and the rest of Hegel's System constituted by *Realphilosophie*. The little he foreshadows of what this settlement would look like indicates that

²⁰⁹ (Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," pg. 169)

²¹⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 249)

the entire Philosophy of the Real would be boiled down, in Pippin's hands, to yet more emphases on intelligibility above all else. But, this indeed would be only a "part of what Hegel means" in how he intertwines Logic and *Realphilosophie*. Whereas Pippin here hints that he would continue to present the logical Ideal as making possible the (knowability of the) extra-logical Real, the real Hegel would insist on counter-balancing this with a supplementary presentation of the extra-logical Real as making possible the (existence of the) logical Ideal.

Such counter-balancing is front and center in the preliminary section on "With what must the beginning of science be made?" of the *Science of Logic*. When discussing the very idea of initiating a *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Hegel once again brings up the image of circularity.²¹¹ Being structured like a circle, the Logic's movement forward on its curving path also brings about a circumnavigation back to its starting point—"progression is a retreat to the ground (*ein Rückgang in der Grund*), to the *origin* and the *truth* on which that with which the beginning was made, and from which it is in fact produced, depends."²¹² Audibly alluding to the Logic's concluding transition into *Naturphilosophie*,²¹³ Hegel promptly proceeds to stipulate that, "at the *end* of the development (*am Ende der Entwicklung*)" of *Logik* thinking *Geist* "freely externalizes itself (*sich mit Freiheit entäußernd*)" as/into the extra-logical Real.²¹⁴ He then adds that, "the whole of science is in itself a circle (*das Ganze derselben ein Kreislauf in sich selbst ist*) in which the first becomes also the last, and the last also the first."²¹⁵ In terms of the circle of the

²¹¹ (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.57-21.58 [pg. 49])

²¹² (Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, I, pg. 70)

(Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.57 [pg. 49])

²¹³ (G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, II, Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 6 [ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969, pg. 573)

(Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 12.253 [pg. 752-753])

²¹⁴ (Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, I, pg. 70)

(Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.57 [pg. 49])

²¹⁵ (Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, I, pg. 70)

(Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 21.57 [pg. 49])

Logic, the preceding indicates that its first, as the thinking of Being, becomes, at the conclusion of the *Wissenschaft der Logik*, the last, namely, the being of Nature. Nature thus proves to be the “ground” (*Grund*) of Logic reached via the very “progression” of the Logic itself—with this progression also being a “retreat” (*Rückgang*) due to the circular trajectory of Hegelian dialectical-speculative movement. Pippin’s lopsided privileging of pure thinking looks to be at odds with the well-rounded structure of Hegel’s System.

Apropos delaying a sustained confrontation with the Hegelian Real, and to use the language and metaphors of the marketplace noticeably prominent in Pippin’s and, even more so, Brandom’s discourses: Pippin keeps deferring payment of his explanatory debts incurred *vis-à-vis* Hegel’s *Realphilosophie*. However, going back to at least 1989, this bill is long overdue. To quote a paraphrase of Schiller’s *Xenien* by Hegel himself, “You can get away with paying with IOU’s for a long time, but you still finally have to open your purse.”²¹⁶ Yet, I do not think Pippin ever can pay off these explanatory debts to the Hegelian Philosophies of Nature and Spirit without his own position losing its internal self-consistency.

Pippin’s inability to pay his explanatory debts to Hegelian *Realphilosophie* while remaining faithful to his apperception-centric, Kant-and-Fichte-inspired reconstruction of Hegelian *Logik* readily can be illustrated in connection with the reasons-versus-causes dichotomy. With *Geist* as per *Logik* occupying the space of reasons and *Natur* as per *Realphilosophie* occupying the space of causes, Pippin sometimes, when being most consistent with himself, strictly partitions the logical-ideal space of reasons from the real-material space of

²¹⁶ (G.W.F. Hegel, “Hegel to Daub: Berlin, May 9, 1821,” *Hegel: The Letters*, pg. 460)

causes. Of course, this is an un-Hegelian imposition upon the Hegelian System, rupturing this System's internal unity.

Indeed, Pippin stresses the separateness of *Logik* from *Realphilosophie*²¹⁷ (despite above-cited concessions to the contrary elsewhere). In this same vein, he states that, "Philosophy of Nature... is not a concern of logic proper."²¹⁸ This is the same author who, a few years earlier, dismisses the whole of Hegel's *Naturphilosophie* as of little significance, even within Hegel's own System itself.²¹⁹ Similarly, Pippin reads the location of the categories of space and time at the start of the Philosophy of Nature as underscoring the neither-spatial-nor-temporal sovereign status of the Logic's pure thinking.²²⁰ Even within the category of *Geist*, he goes so far as to assert, in implicit tension with Hegel's organic arrangement of his System, a hard-and-fast difference-in-kind between, on the one hand, logical *Geist* and, on the other hand, *Geist* as per both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the "Philosophy of Subjective Spirit" of *Geistesphilosophie*.²²¹

However, if the Logic forms a circle as Hegel maintains, then its concluding transition into spatio-temporal nature indicates that, from its very beginning, Logic itself never was pure *qua* separate from space, time, and the rest of both *Natur* and the entire Real of the Philosophy of the Real.²²² At the end of *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin insists that the transition from *Logik* to *Realphilosophie* in no way compromises or qualifies the autonomous self-sufficiency of pure

²¹⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 74)

²¹⁸ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 83)

²¹⁹ (Robert B. Pippin, "Leaving Nature Behind, or Two Cheers for 'Subjectivism': On John McDowell," *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pg. 189)

²²⁰ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 276)

²²¹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 304)

²²² (Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, pg. 67-70)
(Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

thinking.²²³ On the contrary, I think that, at a minimum, it represents the immanent dialectical self-de-purification of supposedly pure thinking, of the latter as ideal finally positing its impure (i.e., real) presuppositions.

Obviously, there is Hegel's lifelong critique of Kant's theoretical philosophy as the critical epistemology of transcendental idealism. In line with this, there is a major anti-Kantian (and anti-Fichtean) upshot to the Logic concluding with the transition to the extra-ideal Real (first as Nature in its objective reality as opposed to "strict ideality,"²²⁴ with Hegel's reversal of Kant's prioritization of time over space at the start of *Naturphilosophie* further emphasizing the anti-Kantianism here). The entire course of the Logic shows that the apperceptive activity of the Kantian/Fichtean-style apperceptive "I" eventually becomes immanently self-critical, driving itself outside of itself into a realist ontology not without its naturalism. In other words, this "I" pushes itself beyond its own ultimately impossible-to-maintain epistemological (self-)limitations.

Incidentally, Pippin accuses me of failing to address this transition in my 2018 book *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*.²²⁵ I deal with it both in a 2012 article²²⁶ referenced several times in *A New German Idealism* as well as in the 2019 second volume (*A Weak Nature Alone*) of my *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism* trilogy. I divided my Hegelian labors such that, in *A New German Idealism*, I deliberately left it to these other two texts to address the Logic-Nature transition issue. That said, Pippin, in *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, has little to say about this transition himself. What little he does say is problematic.

²²³ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 321)

²²⁴ (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood], Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, A27-28/B43-44 [pg. 160], A35-36/B52-53 [pg. 164-165], B69-71 [pg. 190-191])

²²⁵ (Pippin, "Review of Adrian Johnston, *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*")

²²⁶ (Adrian Johnston, "The Voiding of Weak Nature: The Transcendental Materialist Kernels of Hegel's *Naturphilosophie*," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, Spring 2012, pg. 103-157)

Pippin's equation of Hegelian *Logik* and *Realphilosophie* with the spaces of reasons and causes respectively, in conjunction with his Fichteanization of the subject of Hegel's Logic, compels him to deny that rational subjectivity (i.e., the pure thinking "I") can be accounted for in connection with causal forces and factors. These forces and factors constitute everything that Hegel deals with under the heading of *Naturphilosophie* and much that he deals with under the heading of *Geistesphilosophie*. Still, for Pippin, the space of reasons cannot be explained at all in relation to the space of causes.

But, Pippin's denial that the logical (i.e., the space of reasons of the *Ich*) arises from the real (i.e., the space of causes of the *Nicht-Ich*) immediately creates serious discomfort. Such moments in Hegel's corpus as his "Anthropology" and "Psychology" in the *Philosophy of Mind* draw upon and even anticipate advances in biology and what have come to be the various psy-disciplines. Since his death in 1831, these and myriad related fields have advanced by leaps and bounds. Their accumulated advances, which a living Hegel would be eager to reckon with philosophically (as he did with the sciences of his time), have gone a long way towards fleshing out the subject of anthropogenesis. In relation to this, Pippin erroneously asserts that Hegel's endorsement of Kant's critique of the soul *qua* metaphysical object as per Descartes-inspired rational psychology—this critique is articulated in the "Paralogisms of Pure Reason" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—means that Hegel is not in the least bit interested in the soul and related notions.²²⁷ The central place of *die Seele* (including *die natürliche Seele*) at the start of the third volume of the *Encyclopedia* dealing with *Geistesphilosophie* (first as subjective spirit at

²²⁷ (Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, pg. 42-43, 57-58, 60)

the level of a philosophical anthropology growing out of the animal organics of *Naturphilosophie*) clashes with Pippin's assertion.

With the plethora of insights into the rise of *homo sapiens* in view, and in Darwin's wake, hearing talk of a spiritual space of reasons that in no way whatsoever can be thought of as developing out of a natural space of causes is prone to trigger intellectual unease at a minimum. How can such a radical, self-grounding autonomy of the space of reasons not look like a Baron Munchausen fantastically pulling itself up out of the swamp of nature's space of causes by its own hair (indeed, Brandom unabashedly describes how the purportedly self-constituting rational subject "pulled himself up by his own bootstraps from the swamp of merely biological being into a nobler status,"²²⁸ reiterating this description several times²²⁹)? How could the contention of the absolute independence of a non-emergent space of reasons utterly disconnected from real space and time avoid being haunted by the not-at-all-Hegelian specters of spiritual-mental monism and ontological dualism?

Pippin himself evinces signs that he too is not immune to the just-expressed unease. As witnessed, he sometimes strictly separates both *Logik* from *Realphilosophie* as well as philosophy from science. Obviously, I have been objecting to both of these partitionings on Hegelian grounds. However, in a handful of instances, Pippin appears to soften his insistence on the supreme sovereignty of a philosophical pure thinking unsullied by anything empirical, experimental, and the like. He is under dual Hegelian and scientific pressure to do so, at least occasionally.

²²⁸ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 336)

²²⁹ (Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*, pg. 527, 708-709)

Pippin, in his review of Žižek's *Less Than Nothing*, tacks on a qualification to his already-cited dismissal of science-shaped inquiries into anthropogenesis as “not philosophical problems.”²³⁰ In a footnote to this dismissal, he concedes, “Not that such discoveries could not be relevant to philosophy. They certainly are for Hegel.”²³¹ Pippin then references paragraphs 12, 246, and 381 in Hegel's *Encyclopedia*. In *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin, in another footnote, remarks that, “Speculative philosophy is the completion of scientific knowledge, not its competitor.”²³² Paragraphs 9 and 12 of the *Encyclopedia* are mentioned in connection with this remark. These footnote-level concessions move in the right direction. But, Pippin's core commitments prevent him from moving all the way in the right direction.

Pippin does not explain what would be involved with his own version of philosophically registering (or speculatively “completing”) the relevance and import of any or all scientific discoveries. He also does not explain how, to begin with, he even could render his reconstruction of Hegel's Logic, given its various load-bearing tenets, compatible with the empirical, experimental sciences and their speculative philosophical uptake. Considering Pippin's embrace of such things as Fichte's *unhintergebar* “I” and the *Verstand*-style reasons-causes dichotomy as well as anti-naturalist repudiations of any notions of real material geneses, how can he acknowledge and do justice to even “Sunday magazine summaries”²³³ of such ABCs of modern science as Darwin's discovery of evolution?

After fortifying the pure inner sanctum of a transcendental idealist “I” serenely self-sufficient and self-grounding, Pippin is faced with daunting difficulties in terms of accounting

²³⁰ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek's Hegel,” pg. 101)

²³¹ (Pippin, “Slavoj Žižek's Hegel,” pg. 101)

²³² (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 34)

²³³ (Pippin, “Review of Adrian Johnston, *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*”)

for this logical “I”’s immanent anchoring in and relatedness to pre- and non-subjective realities (an accounting demanded by both Schelling and Hegel as decidedly post-Kantian and post-Fichtean thinkers). Pippin at least admits, albeit parenthetically, regarding the *Science of Logic* that, “How, and in what sense, extraconceptual objects enter the picture is, in effect, the basic problem in understanding the book.”²³⁴ If this is “the basic problem in understanding the book,” then *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, devoted (as per its sub-title) to the *Science of Logic*, falls short of accomplishing its task. Relatedly, Pippin’s book also fails to pose and investigate the complementary inverse question of equal centrality to Hegel’s System: How, and in what sense, do logical categories and concepts (as associated with the *Ich*, the space of reasons, *Geist*, etc.) enter the picture out of extraconceptual objects (as associated with the *Nicht-Ich*, the space of causes, *Natur*, etc.)?

From Pippin’s career-making 1989 *Hegel’s Idealism* to the current late phase of his work, he has exhibited a number of faces. He has been, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes successively, Kantian, Fichtean, and Brandomian. But, the one thing Pippin has never been is wholly Hegelian.

§5 Hegelianism’s Historical Futures: A Political Coda

Pippin’s present campaign against dialectical materialism and its permutations, however intentionally or not, echoes a set of interrelated conflicts going back to the time of Hegel’s death. These fault lines first arise as the split between, on one side, right and center Hegelians and, on the other side, left Hegelians. Of course, Marx’s and Friedrich Engels’s historical and dialectical materialisms grow out of the left Hegelian circles of the 1830s and early 1840s. Marx and

²³⁴ (Pippin, *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows*, pg. 31)

Engels lay claim to aspects of Hegel's philosophy in their theorizations of both social and natural history. Many of these claims tacitly are contested by Pippin's rendition of Hegelianism.

Furthermore, the Marxist tradition, starting with its nineteenth-century founders, recurrently maintains that the principle contradiction structuring the history of Western philosophy is nothing other than the conflict between idealism and materialism.²³⁵ In line with this traditional thesis, Louis Althusser famously proposes that philosophy itself be construed as involving "class struggle in theory."²³⁶ Such historical materialist views of the philosophical space of reasons seem especially pertinent apropos certain controversies bearing upon aspects of Hegel's thought. As is well known, the debates between right and left Hegelians in the 1830s over Hegel's relationship to religion generally and Protestantism specifically were sublimations of antagonisms concerning Hegel's politics in relation to then-current political circumstances, namely, the reactionary and repressive Prussian circumstances making necessary this sublimation. Likewise, in a parallel to the 1830s, today's debates about Hegel's metaphysics might be about politics too.

I even see a connection between the theoretical and practical dimensions of Pippin's philosophy. To be more exact, his subjective idealism, with its focus on the individual thinking "I," is a metaphysical position that arguably leads him, as I will highlight momentarily, to

²³⁵ (Johnston *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

²³⁶ (Louis Althusser, *Reply to John Lewis, Essays in Self-Criticism* [trans. Grahame Locke], London: New Left Books, 1976, pg. 37-38, 58, 72)

(Louis Althusser, *Elements of Self-Criticism, Essays in Self-Criticism*, pg. 142-144, 150)

(Louis Althusser, "The Transformation of Philosophy," [trans. Thomas E. Lewis], *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists and Other Essays* [ed. Gregory Elliott], London: Verso, 1990, pg. 261)

(Louis Althusser, *Initiation à la philosophie pour les non-philosophes* [ed. G.M. Goshgarian], Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2014, pg. 50-51, 322-323, 326-327, 359, 383)

(Louis Althusser, "Philosophy and Marxism: Interviews with Fernanda Navarro, 1984-87," *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987* [ed. François Matheron and Oliver Corpet; trans. G.M. Goshgarian], London: Verso, 2006, pg. 270-271)

misidentify individual mental states (especially psychopathological ones) as responsible for current political situations. Pippin's individualistic psychopathologizing at the level of politics is a reflection of his Kantian-Fichtean privileging of first-person cognition above all else at the level of metaphysics. This brings things straight back to the long-entrenched antagonism between materialism and idealism. Pippin is right to perceive Marxist materialism as a foe of his position. But, he is wrong to read Hegel as a foe of this materialism.²³⁷

Pippin's battles with proponents of contemporary redeployments of historical and dialectical materialism display an undercurrent of political motivation on his part. In his review of *Less Than Nothing*, he "shudders" at the very idea of Žižek's Leninist-type political "act."²³⁸ In *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, he uses reference to "radical decisionism" so as to bring Alain Badiou (a communist comrade of the Žižek of the act) "ominously" into the discrediting company of the Nazi theorist Carl Schmitt.²³⁹ This move evokes the commonplace liberal employment of the vague pseudo-concept of "totalitarianism" so as to lump together communism and fascism as supposedly the two converging extreme ends of a curving political spectrum. Furthermore, Pippin is offended by rhetoric rooted in the combative partisan thinking of the Marxist legacy.²⁴⁰ He tries to present Hegelianism and revolutionary radicalism as mutually exclusive. His is a centrist Hegel defending bourgeois modernity as, if nothing else, the least bad game in town.

Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda, in the introduction to their 2018 book on Hegel's *Logic*, *The Dash—The Other Side of Absolute Knowing*, address the political implications of

²³⁷ (Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*)

²³⁸ (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 106)

²³⁹ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 26)

²⁴⁰ (Pippin, "Review of Adrian Johnston, *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*")

Pittsburgh-Chicago neo-Hegelianism. Targeting all portraits of Hegel fixating upon specific socio-ethical construals of “recognition” (*Anerkennung*) in Hegel’s philosophy, Comay and Ruda observe:

Yet, the one thing that cannot be challenged, in this pragmatist account, is the space of reasons itself—the irreducible fulcrum of history that enables historical modulation and discursive progress. This space can only be tinkered with or *interpreted* differently; it cannot be fundamentally *changed*, let alone refused: the form of rationality remains essentially unchallenged and is even reproduced in efforts to resist it. Having eliminated the vestigial positivity of Kant’s transcendental, Hegel seems to have introduced an even more intractable givenness—the inescapable language game that supplies the paradigm and basis of all our intersubjective negotiations and that thus functions as a new transcendental.²⁴¹

They soon continue with reference to a “regression” to a new transcendental givenness:

A symptom of this regression is that the only form of change imaginable is a gradual amelioration brought about by a constant adjustment of our discursively negotiated commitments. Unthinkable within such a framework is that some might be excluded from or choose to opt out of the space of reasons: the space is bounded with all exits and entrances sealed. This precludes the possibility of radical dissensus and therefore of drastic change: the terms of rational agency are already determined such that alternative forms of practical rationality are ruled out from the outset as infeasible, ridiculous, violent, dangerous, undemocratic, unreasonable, irrational, inhuman, even prehuman or nonhuman.²⁴²

All of this applies not only to Pippin and Brandom, but also to Jürgen Habermas and representatives of the so-called “third generation” of the Frankfurt School. For Pippin, the political views of such figures as Badiou and Žižek clearly qualify as “infeasible, ridiculous, violent, dangerous, undemocratic, unreasonable, irrational, inhuman, even prehuman or nonhuman.” In Pippin’s case, his conception of rationality entails an inversion of a well-known Maoist slogan: It is wrong to revolt.

²⁴¹ (Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda, *The Dash—The Other Side of Absolute Knowing*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018, pg. 13)

²⁴² (Comay and Ruda, *The Dash*, pg. 13)

Pippin himself provides ample additional evidence to this effect, over and above what I already have cited. By glaring omission, he nowhere, unlike Žižek and Ruda among others, attempts to get to grips with the single problem Hegel explicitly identifies without providing some sort of accompanying resolution or even hint thereof: the social, economic, and political problem posed to liberal-democratic capitalism by the rabble (*der Pöbel*).²⁴³ Already prior to Marx, Hegel foresees this uniquely vexing difficulty of mass immiseration threatening (or promising) to turn out to amount to capitalism's suicidal subversion of itself. In fact, Hegel's ability to serve as the Owl of Minerva for the socio-political orders of capitalist modernity is due, at least in part, to the sun setting on these orders thanks to their own self-destabilizations via a rapidly-widening wealth gap and its potentially explosive consequences.²⁴⁴

Getting underway with the counter-revolutionary victories of neo-liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s, contemporary capitalism has managed to match, if not outdo, the inequalities of Dickensian England or the Gilded Age and *Belle Époque*. If Hegel were alive now, he likely would be as or more expectant of imminent upheaval looking at today's *Pöbel* as when he saw the rabble of his own early-nineteenth century. Although Pippin justly repudiates as pseudo-Hegelian talk of "the end of history"²⁴⁵ as well as accurately reads Hegel's image of the Owl of Minerva as signaling that bourgeois modernity already has entered into the twilight of its life,²⁴⁶

²⁴³ (G.W.F. Hegel, "Fragments of Historical Studies," *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, pg. 99) (G.W.F. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life (1802/3)* [trans. T.M. Knox and H.S. Harris], *System of Ethical Life (1802/3) and First Philosophy of Spirit (Part III of the System of Speculative Philosophy 1803/4)* [ed. and trans. H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox], Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979, pg. 170-171) (Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §244-246 [pg. 266-268], §248 [pg. 269])

(G.W.F. Hegel, "On the English Reform Bill," *Political Writings* [ed. Laurence Dickey and H.B. Nisbet; trans. H.B. Nisbet], Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pg. 255-256)

²⁴⁴ (Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, pg. 78-79, 117-120, 124-128)

²⁴⁵ (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 108-109)

(Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 307)

²⁴⁶ (Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, pg. 312-313)

he avoids connecting these insights to topics such as rabble-generating wealth inequality and drawing the appropriate political conclusions. *Je sais bien, mais quand même...*

By equally glaring commission, Pippin, arguing against Žižek's politics (including its revisiting of the topic of the rabble in Hegel's corpus²⁴⁷), tries to enlist Hegel against any sort of radical leftism. Pippin's review of *Less Than Nothing* contains the following defense of a moderate reformism that remains internal to bourgeois capitalist society:

The fact that there appears to be ever weakening political will in, for example, the United States for any attention to... a common good (even public schools are now slowly but surely emerging as a target for the ever more powerful far right) is very likely a pathology that needs explaining. Perhaps we need the help of Lacanians to do this... but that great dream of social democrats everywhere—'Sweden in the Sixties!'—does not seem to me something that inevitably produces its own irrational and irreconcilable Unreason, or Other. More lawyers for the poor in Texas, affordable day care, universal health care, several fewer aircraft carriers, more worker control over working conditions, regulated and perhaps nationalized banks—all are reasonable extensions of that bourgeois ideal itself, however sick and often even deranged modern bourgeois society has become. (*Citizens United* was not a logically inescapable result of capitalist logic. It was the result of the ravings of several lunatic judges. We are the only advanced capitalist democracy on earth that allows legalized bribery.)²⁴⁸

A few pages later, Pippin concludes his review of *Less Than Nothing* with this paragraph:

This forces the question of whether there is much left in contemporary society that provides any sort of material basis for Hegel's aspirations about these potentially transformative and educative potentials of modern civil society. No one can be anything but profoundly pessimistic about this possibility, but the search for such possible 'traces of reason' seems to me a more genuinely Hegelian and still possible prospect than anything that could result from 'abyssal Acts.'²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 110)

²⁴⁸ (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 111)

²⁴⁹ (Pippin, "Slavoj Žižek's Hegel," pg. 115)

Where to start in response to these passages? Preliminarily, Pippin's claim that, "We are the only advanced capitalist democracy on earth that allows legalized bribery," even if true back in 2012 on the basis of his narrowly literal construal of "legalized bribery," insidiously occludes the myriad pathways by which flows of capital exert countless direct and indirect influences upon societies and states across the world. Sadly, there is nothing anomalous in America or elsewhere about the Citizens United case.

What is worse, the capitalists of globalization do not have to slip wads of local currency surreptitiously into officials' pockets in order to get their way, so as to liquidate the "common good" through capital's inexorable drive to privatize any and all commons. It is not just that the "far right" only recently is beginning to "target" America's "public schools." Many such schools, especially those serving discriminated-against groups, always have been under assault (when not non-existent) by the American political mainstream (and not just by today's rising neo-fascists). Furthermore, capital always involves targeting anything and everything public anywhere whatsoever. So long as there is capitalism, there will be an unrelenting push towards privatization. This thrust is inherent to the very logic of capital, rather than being ascribable to the extraordinary greed of some unusually avaricious Gordon Gekko types.²⁵⁰ A failure to understand this is a failure to understand capitalism. This is normal, not pathological, capitalism. Or, if this is pathological capitalism, then capitalism itself is inherently pathological.

Pippin's suggestion of a possible psychoanalytic diagnosis of the social, economic, and political illnesses he mentions is, in a seemingly ironic role-reversal between the non-analytic

²⁵⁰ (Adrian Johnston, "From Closed Need to Infinite Greed: Marx's Drive Theory," *Continental Thought and Theory: A Journal of Intellectual Freedom*, special issue: "Reading Marx's *Capital* 150 Years On" [ed. Mike Grimshaw and Cindy Zeiher], vol. 1, no. 4, October 2017, pg. 270-346)

Pippin and the analytic Žižek, precisely what a Lacanian such as Žižek would resist and refuse. Lacanianism as well as Marxism forbids, on rigorously argued theoretical grounds, tracing socio-structural phenomena back to individual psychopathologies. This is a reductive gesture proper not to Lacan and psychoanalysis, but to History Channel shows. Pinning the blame for disastrous collective occurrences on, for example, “the ravings of several lunatic judges” (i.e., a few bad apples) is no different-in-kind from explaining away Nazism and Stalinism as merely a matter of Adolph Hitler’s and J.V. Stalin’s psychological maladies and quirks. It is tempting to ask: What diagnostic label or labels would be appropriate for a psychopathology that dictates vainly trying to breathe life back into desiccated political forms from which the animating actual *Zeitgeist* already has fled: malignant nostalgia, socio-institutional anosognosia, reformist scotomization, pre-crisis stress disorder, anti-revolutionary metathesiophobia...?

Psychological pathologizing of politics shirks one’s responsibility to ask and answer questions about how and why specific figures and events (even when these involve severely unhinged persons) are able to have mass-scale socio-political effects. This is a critical point that Hegel too, with his subtle threading of the needle between the two polar extremes of “great man” and “anonymous forces” varieties of historical narratives, would have insisted on *contra* the Pippin presently under discussion. Relatedly, Hegel, Marx, and Žižek all would reject as a false dilemma the alternative Pippin puts forward here between either the iron necessity of “logically inescapable” trans-individual structures (such as capital) or the luck-of-the-draw contingency of idiosyncratic individual agents (such as a small clique of jurists).²⁵¹

²⁵¹ (Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, pg. 74-128)

Since Pippin published his review essay on Žižek in 2012, the Supreme Court of the United States has acquired two more “lunatic judges.” Plus, the Federalist Society has hundreds more such nearly identical lunatics ready to be recommended for SCOTUS and other court nominations to the numerous lunatics in both the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government. But, not to worry: Surely the supply of lunatics will dry up sooner or later. And then, back to Sweden in the Sixties! Or, at least, back to dreaming about it.

Other signs of the times indicate that, in a mere seven years, Pippin’s above-quoted assessments of today’s circumstances have aged rather badly. Regrettably, the reasons for this are hardly confined to the U.S. In addition to the Trump crime family, their entourage of shameless grifters, their Republican Party co-conspirators, and many others, a plethora of developments around the world, some long preceding the rise of Trumpism and already in plain sight in 2012, feature a dizzying proliferation of supposed lunatics and bad apples (to name a few either controlling or influencing government alphabetically by country): Australia’s Tony Abbott, Peter Dutton, and the extremists of the Liberal Party; Austria’s Freedom Party; Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro; China’s Xi Jinping and its Lee-Kuan-Yew-inspired state capitalism; Finland’s Finns Party; France’s National Rally led by the Le Pens; Germany’s AFD, PEGIDA, and the right-wing of the CDU/CSU partnership; Greece’s Golden Dawn; Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, Fidesz, and Jobbik; India’s Narendra Modi, BJP, RSS, and Hindutva ideology; Israel’s Benjamin Netanyahu and his ruling coalition; Italy’s Matteo Salvini, the Northern League, and Silvio Berlusconi’s Trumpism-*avant-la-lettre* precedent; Japan’s Shinzō Abe and the nationalist, Yasukuni-visiting factions of the LDP; the Netherlands’s Geert Wilders and the PVV; the Philippine’s Rodrigo Duterte; Poland’s Jarosław Kaczyński and PiS; Russia’s Vladimir Putin

and his mafia state; Spain's Vox; Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan with his AK Party; and, the United Kingdom's Boris Johnson, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Nigel Farage, *et al.*

Even the Swedes have the Swedish Democrats, an organization with Nazi roots that is now the third largest party in the Riksdag. So much for that sweet Swedish dream! What happened? What went so terribly wrong? Whatever the explanation, one answer definitely can be ruled out: a gaggle of unsavory characters accidentally getting some power. Additionally, the more these "sick" and "deranged" actors multiply, the less plausible any few-bad-apples story sounds. A passing glance at the globe shows that authoritarian and kleptocratic capitalism, illiberal democracy, ethno-nationalism, and the like are triumphantly on the geo-political march. This is not a trickle of isolated incidents. It is the tsunami of a structural trend.

Neither Hegel looking at industrialism's rabble in the nineteenth century nor anyone looking at globalization's dispossessed today through properly Hegelian (if not also Marxian) eyes sees freak exceptions to bourgeois capitalism's business as usual. Pippin's "Sweden in the Sixties" is a metonymic stand-in for aberrant versions of a capitalism temporarily stabilizing itself in response both to the shocks of two World Wars with a Great Depression sandwiched in-between as well as to the rising threat of Really Existing Socialism. In short, slightly less rapacious mid-twentieth-century capitalism was the exception, not the rule.

Apart from the few decades from roughly the New Deal in America and the defeat of Nazism in Europe through the 1970s, the history of capitalism since its inception has been marked by relentlessly increasing class polarization. Unsurprisingly from the vantage point of capitalism's *longue durée*, the past forty or so years, exploiting and encouraging the easing-through-historical-amnesia of the exigencies of the first half of the twentieth century, has

restored pre-World-War-I socio-economic and geo-political conditions. Yet again, the rich rabble have grown obscenely richer, and the ranks of the poor rabble swell remorselessly. This is not the handiwork of a clutch of bad actors. This is a centuries-long historical trend reasserting itself with a vengeance after a brief interlude forced upon capitalism by a rapid-fire succession of its own self-wrought catastrophes.

I will close now with some questions for Pippin. At what point does searching for “traces of reason” in the *status quo* tip over, in fact if not intention, from being reasonable reformism into becoming irrational avoidance of the only remaining reasonable option, namely, the admittedly unsettling radical rejection of the devil one knows? When is calling both corrupt powers-that-be and their revolutionary enemies “lunatic,” “sick,” “deranged,” and so on itself not sober-minded sanity but, instead, yet another pathology? What about these sorts of dialectical reversals today under Hegel’s shadow?