The Logic of Critical Theory

Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows: Logic as Metaphysics in* The Science of Logic (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019). 322pp., £34.00 hb., £24.00 pb., 978 0 22658 870 4 hb., 978 0 22670 341 1 pb.

In one of Lenin's most famous lines, he notes that 'it is impossible to understand Marx's *Capital* … without having thoroughly studied and understood the *whole* of Hegel's *Logic*.' This might seem an odd starting point for a review of Robert Pippin's most recent book, a highly technical treatise that might best be understood as an explication of what Pippin regards as the *Logic*'s single-most radical thesis: that logic and metaphysics 'coincide'. For Pippin, the *Logic* shows that an account of being or 'what is' (metaphysics) cannot be successful or avoid begging questions without also including an account of the intelligibility or 'thinkability' of such an account (logic). To make sense of things (the task of metaphysics according to Aristotle, one of the two heroes of the *Logic*), we must make sense of the very idea of 'sense-making', the basic forms of thought.

To put this point in the terms of one of the book's key interlocutors, Wittgenstein: if 'being' is understood as the most capacious language-game we play, then what Hegel is asking is what it would mean to give a coherent account of the rules of the game, as well as of the general notion of rule-governed games. For something to be, it must be intelligible, conceptually articulable. There are not unknowable things outside of the bounds of sense, but no things at all, only sheer nonsense.

Pippin's book provides a *tour de force* reading of the *Logic* in terms of the 'logic-as-metaphysics' thesis and the related notion of the 'apperceptive' character of thinking, a career-long preoccupation of Pippin's. He also brings Hegel's work – both the greater *Logic*, published in its final form in 1832, and its 'minor' counterpart, the *Encyclopedia Logic* (1817) – to bear on a number of current philosophical topics, including Frege's distinction between the force and intelligibility of a proposition, Wittgenstein on the limits of sense, the relationship between concept and intuition, and Aristotle and Kant on the mechanical inexplicability of living organisms. Given Pippin's rather esoteric set of concerns, the suspicion might be that *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* is the ultimate exercise in analytic scholasticism, the culmination of a century-long process of depoliticising Hegel, and thus the polar opposite of Lenin's *Conspectus* (1929), his compiled notes for a reading of the *Logic* in the service of advancing Marx's critique of capital. Yet, despite appearances to the contrary, Pippin's book is actually one of the most important contributions to the tradition of critical theory since he began publishing in the 1970s. Aside from its evident contributions to Hegel scholarship, engaging as it does with a host of contemporary analytic idealists, from McDowell to Brandom to Houlgate to Longuenesse, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* is also a crucial philosophical intervention in critical theory with radical implications for our understanding of social critique.

Pippin's book is divided into two parts and comprises nine chapters. The first four chapters which make up Part I establish the frame for the reading of each of the three books of the *Logic* (the Logic of Being, the Logic of Essence and the Logic of the Concept) undertaken in Part II. In the introductory chapter, Pippin argues for the general significance of Hegel's *Logic* by pointing to its status as the 'science of "reasons", of ways of giving reasons in rendering anything genuinely or properly intelligible'. Part of the revolution inaugurated by Kant – the other key figure for the *Logic* – lay in his famous distinction between general and transcendental logic, between the rules of thought in abstraction from objects and the rules of thought that make the experience of objects possible. Famously, Kant provides a 'transcendental deduction' meant to demonstrate the applicability of such rules – the pure categories of the understanding – to the distinctly human form of sensibility, space and time. What was supposed to be a general account of knowledge turns out to amount to no more than a rather modest account of how things appear to 'us' humans, constrained as we happen to be by these spatial and temporal forms of intuition. How things are 'in themselves' is unknowable, beyond the bounds of (our) sense. Hegel radicalises Kant (to borrow a phrase from John McDowell) by rejecting the need for such a demonstration of the world-directedness or

'objective purport' of the categories and by claiming that an examination of the forms of thought themselves, properly executed, will just thereby yield knowledge of the forms of things. (Pippin provides multiple discussions of how Hegel fully prosecutes what Kant merely sketches, a 'metaphysical deduction', throughout the book.) General logic will no longer be separable from transcendental logic, and logic and metaphysics will 'coincide'.

Pippin begins to explain what such an examination of pure thought involves in the second and third chapters ('Logic and Metaphysics' and 'The Significance of Self-Consciousness'), by turning to the deep influence exercised on the *Logic* by the Kantian notion of the unity of apperception. According to Pippin, Hegel inherits Kant's claim that the basic unit of thought is not the concept but rather the judgement, of which concepts are possible predicates. The meaning of concepts is determined by use – by how they are used in practical and theoretical judgements. To master the concept of 'blue' is to know how to use it, to know to which sorts of things one can apply it (to cubes and flowers but not to gravity or love) and to know what other concepts its application excludes (red, green) or entails (coloured). All thought is apperceptive, for Kant as for Hegel, in that it is not a mere registering of perceptions, desires, beliefs, and so on, but an attentiveness to what one has *reason* to desire or believe.

The *Logic*, on Pippin's account, is the record of thought's apperceptive attempt to think the thought of itself, to ask the question what it means to think. The fourth chapter prepares us for the exemplification of this dialectic in Part II through an account of the self-negating, self-correcting character of any thinking – including thought's thinking of itself ('thinking thinking thinking', in the Aristotelean phrase quoted several times by Pippin). In an important discussion in the penultimate section of the chapter, Pippin contrasts his own reading of Hegel with that of Robert Brandom, whose own understanding of 'determinate negation' in terms of 'material incompatibility' (something's being reptilian specifically excludes its being mammalian) is criticised by Pippin as appropriate only to the first of the three books of the *Logic* and as insufficient to grasp the form of self-negation that functions as the moving principle of the work as a whole. As chapter five demonstrates, in trying to think the thought of pure being, thought has committed itself to thinking something entirely indeterminate, and hence to thinking 'nothing' at all. Such indeterminacy is not just an indifferent fact about pure being, but a failure *of* thought that it must resolve, if it is to truly think being as it ought to be thought. What Brandom fails to grasp, on Pippin's account, is the *a priori* openness of thought to its own possible negation, just by virtue of the norm-governed character of any act or belief.

Throughout the first five chapters, especially in the notes, Pippin takes great pains to correct common misunderstandings prompted by infelicitous formulations in his first path-breaking work on Hegel (*Hegel's Idealism* (1989)), while also working to distinguish his clarified position from the 'ontological' reading of the *Logic* popularised by Stephen Houlgate. In brief, if for Houlgate one can infer directly from the categories of the *Logic* to how things in themselves are, then, for Pippin, the *Logic* articulates how being must be thought for things to be intelligible as what they are. This is a difficult thought and one could be forgiven for thinking that Pippin is just splitting hairs, as early reviews of the book have of-

ten suggested. But in actuality, how one comes down on this issue is a matter of absolute importance: if one does not frame Hegel's 'science of pure thinking' in terms of thought's reason-responsive attempt to think being *rightly*, as it ought to be thought, one risks assimilating Hegel to the pre-Kantian rationalist tradition – represented by Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and Wolff – he himself criticised and will thereby miss what is truly distinctive about the Hegelian option.

Pippin's book culminates, as the *Logic* does, in an account of the categories of Life and the True and the Good. Pippin offers a powerful defense of Hegel's account of life as a non-empirically derived, logical category, not just required heuristically by 'us', for the empirical study of nature (as Kant thought), but required by thought itself, for the full conceptual specification of possible being. Yet if there is a weak spot in *Realm of Shadows*, it is here, where Pippin mostly passes over in silence Hegel's understanding of life not just as a distinct category of judgement, but as itself the most primitive form of judgement and of practical spontaneity: living individuals strive to reproduce themselves through negotiation with an external environment in light of species-specific generic constraints.

In a remarkable passage, Hegel even notes that pain – the normative sense that one's condition is deficient and requires one to act – is the 'prerogative of living natures'. Life is thought's first attempt to specify what it means to be the kind of being that thinks; but given the apperceptive requirement underscored by Pippin, life fails as such an account, since life alone is insufficient for grasping what it means to be a living being. That will require an account of a form of life that *knows* itself to be alive, an account of the *rationally* living. In the Subjective Logic, thought's account of sense leads it to provide an account of the kinds of beings that can *make sense*, living members of a species and, eventually, members of historically evolving societies, with changing conceptions of what counts as true and what counts as good. Hegel shows, in other words, that a determinate conception of being must include an account of the kinds of historically self-realising, materially dependent living beings that render the world intelligible. It is this 'logic' of historical and social self-actualisation that completes the *Science of Logic*, as Pippin shows us in his daring final chapter.

Pippin's book gives new meaning and urgency to Lenin's old chestnut about Hegel's *Logic* and *Capital*. As Pippin writes, 'Hegel's diagnosis of the fix we have gotten ourselves into consists in the claim that we have not properly understood how to understand ourselves and the social and natural world in which we dwell'. As he has also suggested in a recent article, written during the same period as *Realm of Shadows*, unless we 'understand what is to understand anything', we will be poorly equipped to understand our historical form of life, let alone to properly diagnose its deep, structural failings.

This reflects something of a shift in the thinking of Hegel's most important contemporary reader: in his earlier book, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy* (2008), Pippin had noted that 'Marx was right about Hegel', for whom 'the point of philosophy is to comprehend the world, not change it; and this for a simple reason that Marx never properly understood: it can't'. According to Pippin's recent work, by contrast, the point of philosophy is to change the world *by* comprehending it. Indeed, especially if we take into account Hegel's radical understanding of spirit as a higher form of life (rather than something other than or 'added to' the living), the reading of the *Science of Logic* that Pippin makes available could provide a new philosophical foundation for that other famous German science, often (and mistakenly) counterposed to idealism – a 'historical materialism'.

As Hegel demonstrates with his concept of life, the idea of a historically mutable 'life process' (what we might call a 'mode of production') is partly constitutive of any possible spiritual existence. And if we fail to grasp what it means to be spiritually alive, the *Logic* wagers, we will be unable to grasp what it means for anything to intelligibly *be* at all. Consequently, with *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Pippin not only makes another invaluable contribution to Hegel scholarship; he changes the world – if only a little bit – by helping us to understand how we ought to understand ourselves.

Jensen Suther

Ruined resentments

Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019). 264pp., £62.00hb., £22.00 pb., 978 0 23155 053 6 hb., 978 0 23119 385 6 pb.

Wendy Brown has been one of the foremost critical theorists and political commentators on the left since the publication of *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* in 1995. Her work has many virtues; its clarity of exposition, its willingness to blend high theory with topical examples, and its admirable interest in examining theory produced by people on the other end of the political spectrum. But its defining feature is Brown's fascination with modernity and an effort to keep alive the kind of grand critique of the age, which many scholars in her generation – often under the influence of post-structuralist philosophies – shied away from. Unlike authors with similarly epochal ambitions, such as David Harvey or Slavoj Žižek, Brown has also engaged in this critique without ultimately appealing to a comprehensive theoretical framework such as Marxism or Lacanian-Hegelianism. This gives Brown's work a democratic quality, as her many sources of authorial inspiration dialogue and wrestle with one another throughout her texts. At its best this makes for thrillingly erudite reading. Her new book *In The Ruins of Neoliberalism* demonstrates all of the virtues Brown brings to her best work, while displaying a new level of focus and synthetic acumen.

In the Ruins is the culmination of a decade of theoretical reflection on the nature of neoliberal societies. Brown's short 2010 book *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* now seems prophetic in its insistence that with the destabilisation of national and individual identities brought about by global capitalism, the idea of walls takes on a new symbolic resonance. Brown argued that modern governments seek to shore up communal homogeneity by erecting legal and psychical barriers against an invasive 'other' responsible for this destabilisation while insulating capital from reform. The election of Donald Trump in 2016, around the rallying promise to build a wall along the Mexican border, makes the book look extremely acute in hindsight. Brown's 2015 book *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* continued the analysis in a more systematic manner. Here, she interprets neoliberalism as a governing rationality which economises everything while corroding forms and institutions of democratic opposition. *Undoing the Demos* is a more empirically driven work which examines the impact of neoliberal reforms on the ground. Both books are rigorous, but lack a decisive engagement with the rationality of neoliberalism understood on its own terms. *In the Ruins* completes the overall project, while also enriching and demanding reexamination of the earlier works, by responding to the arguments of major neoliberal thinkers, while showcasing the failings of their ideas in practice. The conclusions link these failures to the rise of Trumpism in 2016 and its resentment-driven politics.

F.A Hayek emerges as the chief intellectual foil of the book. Looking at the nuances of his work takes up the major parts of *In the Ruins*'s opening chapters. Brown's ambition is to show how many of the failings of neoliberalism which are currently being lamented by its proponents were latent in the theoretical and political ambitions of intellectuals like Hayek from the beginning. She pushes convincingly against efforts to paint Hayek as a proto-libertarian thinker who emphatically rejected all forms of social hegemony and traditionalism. Of course Hayek himself occasionally implied such a rejection, as in his classic essay at the conclusion of *The Constitution of Liberty* with the ambiguous title 'Why I Am Not A Conservative'. But Brown points out that throughout Hayek's life he continuously stressed the importance of traditional morality, alongside capitalist markets, as generative of uncoerced order. This traditional morality 'cannot be submitted to rational justification' but emerges 'spontaneously' to organically hold society together. Individuals submit themselves to the imperatives of traditional morality without reflecting on it too deeply. This is just as well, since such reflection might prompt rationalising efforts to deconstruct traditional morality in theory and thence democratic agitation to reject it in practice. As Brown puts it:

> Freedom for Hayek is not emancipation, it is not power to enact one's will. Indeed, it is not even choice. Importantly it is also not independence of the traditions

> generating rules of conduct and the habits of following them. Hayek writes in one of his notebooks 'restraint is a condition, not the opposite of freedom.' … Hayekian freedom, then, has nothing to do with emancipation from accepted social norms or powers. Rather it is the uncoerced capacity for endeavour and experimentation within codes of conduct generated by tradition and enshrined in just law, markets, and morality. Schooled by Edmund Burke, whom he modernises via Darwin, Hayek marvels at the capacity of tradition to produce social harmony and integration along with a means of change, all without recourse to the coercive agency of institutions or groups.

For Brown, this point is key to understanding the entire neoliberal project and why it appealed to many contemporary conservatives. It also demonstrates why the apparent break between neoliberalism and reactionary Trumpism is less stark than it might initially appear.

For Hayek and other neoliberals, morality and the markets operate in tandem to generate order and prosperity for all. But they will always be threatened by those who rationally seek to justify and then criticise the seeming arbitrariness and hierarchical stratification produced by moralistic capitalism. Often these progressives march under the banner of social justice; in particular by demanding the devolution of sovereignty to the demos so that it can redistribute power and wealth more equally. For Hayek and other neoliberals this would be an appalling development. But how then to push against ongoing progressive demands without lapsing into authoritarianism and silencing dissent? As is well known, some neoliberals, including Hayek himself at points, were willing to bite the bullet by flirting with authoritarian regimes which enforced moralistic capitalism and halted the emergence of socialist democracy. Pinochet´s Chile and apartheid South Africa are prominent examples, but such instances were obviously not ideal since they exposed the limitations to freedom that neoliberalism was supposed to overcome. Instead, Brown claims the neoliberals deployed three techniques to maintain the status quo without resort to strict authoritarianism. Firstly, they sought to limit legislative power by halting efforts to deliberate and pass laws related to regulating the market or encouraging emancipation from traditional morality. Secondly, neoliberals discredited all talk of 'social justice' as nonsensical and potentially totalitarian. And finally, the law was to be used to provide protections for personal morality beyond the private sphere. This last technique was especially important, and Brown goes on to unpack its ramifications at length, providing an explanation for why many neoliberals were willing to support the efforts of employers to regulate the moral behaviour of their employees or provide protections enabling socially conservative women´s groups to spread false information about the health 'dangers' of abortion.

Brown´s analysis clarifies a great deal while challenging much conventional wisdom. Few critical theorists have managed to showcase the connections between the many different strands of neoliberal and conservative thinking and praxis so expertly, while still taking its main proponents seriously as intellectual opponents. Many of us (guilty as charged) have long been tempted to regard neoliberalism as a kind of super-liberalism or libertarianism, which created considerable puzzles in explaining why many traditionalist conservatives were attracted to its doctrines. The typical argument given is strategic rather than ideological; many strands of traditionalist conservatism supported unbridled capitalism and their alliance with neoliberals was therefore one of political realism rather than ideas. More probing commentators like Corey Robin in *The Reactionary Mind* took great efforts to show that there was a good deal more ideological overlap in the mutual desire to pushback against democratisation and preserve social hierarchies. Brown goes a step further in presenting the intricate connections between neoliberalism and traditionalism which far too many of us underestimated when reading *The Road to Serfdom*. This also helps highlight the connection between neoliberalism and the emergence of Trumpism.

The book's last chapter returns Brown to the politics of resentment she has been probing since *States of Injury* decades ago. If the book's first three chapters owe a big debt to critiques of neoliberalism from the left, Chapter Five operates on a more Nietzschean basis. She observes that, despite the rosy sublimations of neoliberal theorists and conservative traditionalists, the economisation of neoliberalisation led to a deepening nihilism and the desublimation of values. This creates a paradoxical reaction in conservative figures, who simultaneously resent the 'disenchantment of the world' while feeling liberated to unleash their anger against the Other they feel is responsible for the condition of nihilism. Invoking Marcuse´s theory of 'repressive desublimation' Brown characterises the Trumpist right as defined by exercises of an increasingly

unconscionable and resentment-driven aggression to reinforce prejudice, violence and traditional values. Rather than deal with the social conditions which desacralise the world, generate inequality and create feelings of power in the face of capital, the Trumpist right directs its energies against the weak to support the strong. This is because its resentment is of a very different type than Nietzsche predicted; rather than being fired upwards against the masters it punches down towards those groups who are trying to use democratic agitation to level the social playing field. In particular, white middle-class men who feel increasingly disempowered by nihilistic economisation and inequality despise this democratising development, seeing it as a serious threat to their relatively esteemed status in the hierarchy. Many therefore put their faith in a racist, misogynistic President who seems unbound by discursive norms and is willing to offer a retrenchment of power against those who demand a fair share.

Brown´s reading in this concluding chapter impressively blends critical theory, economics, psychoanalysis and Nietzschean philosophy. Nonetheless, there are some limitations to her analysis. Perhaps the most important is that, crucial as Nietzsche is to her work, Brown largely ignores religious concerns about the importance of transcendent meaning and the challenges posed by secularisation. Indeed, not only does she largely ignore it, Nietzsche himself is chided for being 'limited by his preoccupation with God and morality as they were being challenged by science and reason.' A comprehensively critical project must put Nietzsche and Marx in dialogue by examining both material conditions and their ideologies *and* the dialectic of secularisation. There is good work being done in this area, such as in Jefferey Nichols´ interesting book *Reason, Tradition, and the Good: MacIntyre´s Tradition Constituted Reason and Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, but there is still much further to go. One hopes that Brown´s next work takes secularisation theory more seriously to weave it into the fascinating theoretical perspective she is developing.

Matthew McManus

Agents of change

Lilia D. Monzó, *A Revolutionary Subject: Pedagogy of Women of Color and Indigeneity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019). 290pp., £95.59 hb., £36.74 pb., 978 1 43313 407 4 hb., 978 1 43313 406 7 pb.

History is usually taught through a white, Eurocentric, male lens, erasing the contributions of women. Women of Colour and Indigenous women, specifically, have consistently been erased from history; at best, marginalised to a footnote. In *A Revolutionary Subject*, Lilia D. Monzó situates Women of Colour and Indigenous women as revolutionary subjects who have played a pivotal role in revolutionary movements and who continue to do so in the present. Tracing her own path toward political consciousness, and providing the stories of revolutionary women through history, Monzó's book situates these protagonists as critical agents of change, proposing that the revolutionary subject is 'made in the process of struggle'.

Establishing the genesis for the subject of her book, Monzó examines the work of Karl Marx and Raya Dunayevskaya to situate Women of Colour and Indigenous Women as revolutionary subjects. The book begins with an intersectional reading of Marx, one that considers the ways gender and race, alongside class, have particularly impacted Women of Colour and Indigenous Women. As Monzó moves back and forth in her reading of Marx, she covers coloniality, slavery and white feminism. Acknowledging interpretations that problematise Marx, Monzó nonetheless challenges analyses that characterise Marx as Eurocentric and sexist, offering an inclusive reading that encompasses Chicanx and Latinx movements.

Monzó's text acknowledges and names women as key players in revolutionary events in history in order to combat the ways in which Women of Colour, as she writes, to 'varying degrees'

> have internalised deficit narratives, disdain for our ways of being and thinking, deep seeded fears of our physical and emotional safety, guilt for succeeding in a dominant White male world, and an uncritical gratitude for everything, including for being allowed to breathe. I want