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RESEÑAS

Review: Pippin, R., *The Culmination. Heidegger, German Idealism, and the Fate of Philosophy*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2024, 256 pp., ISBN 9780226845647

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The concept of "culmination" [*Vollendung*] employed by Heidegger was meant to designate the Hegelian gesture by which the absolute had been achieved—that is, by which the intelligibility of being had been accounted for, or a justification of any possible entity had been accomplished. Hegel considered this culmination satisfactory, but Heidegger believes that it merely deals with beings insofar as they are "present" or "available." One such being is "idealized" or "dialectical" finitude, a finitude that is understood, and not the proper finitude of existence.

In *The Culmination*, Pippin, drawing on his own extensive studies on Hegel, seeks to critically analyze this reading by Heidegger: Is Heidegger right about what remains unquestioned in Hegel? And is it true that this unasked question constitutes a serious objection to the Hegelian culmination? Should being *qua* being be interpreted as intelligibility or cognition? To address these questions, the author first delineates what exactly Hegel "culminates" from the Western philosophical tradition, what it means for Heidegger that Hegel grounds this tradition in an absolute way, why this accusation betrays an omission of the question of being, and finally, why Heidegger's insight demands a new way of understanding philosophy.

Pippin's main thesis is that for Hegel the "meaningfulness" or sense of human life is reason. For Heidegger, reason is a derivative of the existential origin, since it leaves out other "sources of meaningfulness" that truly call upon the existing being. Pippin agrees with Heidegger on this point and claims that Heidegger understood the idealist tradition "better than anyone had hitherto"

(4).[1] Nevertheless, Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel is at times partial and hasty, which prevents him from appreciating the potential of many analyses within Hegel's absolute system.

The book is primarily expository in nature: its aim is not so much to defend Pippin's own thesis as to critically present Heidegger's interpretation across his work. It is divided into four sections. The first lays out the main points of conflict between Heidegger and Hegel and summarizes the principal theses of Heidegger's philosophy as a whole. The second section analyzes what for Heidegger constitutes "the problem of metaphysics," primarily through his critique of Kant's philosophy, especially in the context of the Davos debate (1929), which serves to establish the main lines of his critique of Hegelian idealism. The third section describes this idealism, situates the concept of "finitude" within the framework of this "absolute system," and finally examines whether Heidegger's critique of Hegel as the "culmination" of metaphysics is adequate. Having confirmed his thesis, Pippin then describes what options remain for post-idealist philosophy if one accepts the premises of Heidegger's critique.

Pippin uses the concept of "meaningfulness" [*Bedeutsamkeit*] as a guiding notion in his interpretation of Heidegger, primarily as defined in §18 of *Sein und Zeit* (SZ) or in GA 29/30 (115). *Bedeutsamkeit* is not a central concept in Heidegger's work: it is widely used in texts from the 1920s (especially in the Freiburg lectures), but after SZ (1927) it is largely abandoned. Nevertheless, Pippin rightly recognizes the transversal importance of this notion in Heidegger's work: in SZ the discourse revolves around Dasein as the phenomenological prism and the modes in which it exists—the existentials. This phenomenological approach denounces the traditional metaphysical way of understanding existence, i.e., as composed of entities that are available, pointable, permanent [*vorhandene*], in order to reclaim that our primary and original relation to the surrounding world is always grounded in our own affective situation. Even though Heidegger proposes throughout his work different and at times conflicting ways of presenting and accessing being, this basic thesis remains unaltered.

Heidegger's question concerning the "meaning of being" [*Sinn von Sein*] thus becomes the question of "meaningfulness" [*Bedeutsamkeit*] as the mode in which being comes to meet us (31). The "forgetfulness of being" he denounces consists precisely in the loss of this meaningfulness proper to Dasein (34)—a meaningfulness more immediate than our encounter with beings or our linguistic interpretation of such an encounter, one that responds to our condition.

1 From now on, the pagination of the work will be given in parentheses: R. Pippin, *The Culmination. Heidegger, German idealism, and the fate of philosophy,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2024, unless reference is made beforehand to another work or to a year of publication.

Our relation to beings is therefore not primarily cognitive or linguistic, but is realized through our attunement [*Stimmung*], which arises originally from our practical involvement [*Zuhandenheit*] in the horizon of this meaningfulness (39)—that is, from the set of what matters to us, what concerns us, or what in general gives "sense" to our existence.

Pippin argues that Heidegger's inquiry into being is not intended to lead us to a "determinate answer" (43), as would be the aim of any clarification within Hegel's system. Heidegger's goal is not to turn away from "meaningfulness" by treating it as a being, an object, or, ultimately, as *Vorhandenheit*. According to SZ, prior to cognition—which requires the categories of discourse—there is already an "interpretation" taking place out of this very meaningfulness. For this reason, any theoretical approach will necessarily be "derivative" (46). Pippin nevertheless draws attention to the fact that theoretical entities may not be "available," and suggests that our practical relation to theoretical entities could even be understood in terms of *Zuhandenheit* (49). This leads him to question whether Heidegger does not treat the figures or stages of the Hegelian dialectic under a "logical prejudice" (50), thereby ignoring their originally practical nature.

Pippin relies on *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929, GA 3) to delimit the way Heidegger addresses German Idealism as representative of this "problem." He acknowledges that Heidegger's interpretation of idealism, though mistaken in its treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception (92) and insistent on reading a "thesis on being" into a work with a strictly epistemological aim (94, 105), nonetheless rightly shows that from either critical or speculative philosophy it is "difficult, if not impossible" to raise the question of being (95).

Heidegger can identify in Kantian philosophy a recognition of finitude as the axis or ground of thought. The problem, for Heidegger, is that Kant's imagination can only project entities in a categorial way—entities that are present-at-hand [*vorhandene*] (113). For this reason, Kant's acknowledgment of finitude remains incomplete or unsatisfactory: pure reason is incapable of thematizing the finitude proper to existential temporality, which is irreducible to the categorial (117). Pippin notes that this position exaggerates Kant's expressions (101) and introduces the premise of an original experience of being prior to perception—something foreign to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (105).

According to Pippin's interpretation, the "authentic meaning of Dasein's being" is expressed in SZ as the "anxious being-towards-death" (121). In other words, this is what is first and foremost meaningful for us—the very source of meaningfulness. For Kant, by contrast, meaningfulness proceeds from a "rational faith in our moral vocation" (122). For Heidegger, this would be a

"mode of being" far removed from our primary or original being, since what is meaningful for a particular Dasein would still remain unexplained (125). Nevertheless, Kant was right to recognize that our access to this "moral dimension" is first and foremost emotional.

Hegel's culmination with respect to Kant consists in his comprehension of the world in terms of the availability and manipulability of its entities—an approach inaugurated in modern philosophy by the Cartesian concept of *res* (132). This understanding of the world allows idealism to advance toward "scientific objectivity," but this objectivity originates in "a distortion of the primordial level of meaningfulness" (135). Pippin agrees with Heidegger that this distortion consists in differentiating first between what being means for us and what it really is; but there is no being without meaningfulness. Nonetheless, Pippin raises the issue that the *Phenomenology* abounds in examples of "non-discursive intelligibility" (135), which makes it difficult to see how Heidegger can call Hegel the "culmination" of traditional philosophy.

Pippin acknowledges that Heidegger has a "sophisticated, deep, highly accurate and insightful" reading of the *Science of Logic* (145). What is at stake between them is a difference of principle: the defense of the self-sufficiency of reason versus the defense of its radical finitude (146). While for idealism the finite does not truly exist (148), Heidegger insists that all thought must always be understood as dependent on a finite ground that is not thought. In Pippin's view, this makes Heidegger misinterpret and undervalue Hegel's main contributions: the pure thinking of thought beyond human thinkers (148) and the autonomy of reason, which generates its own objects (151).

Heidegger is right that the premise or axiom of the *Logic* is determination (both dialectical and speculative) and that all problems are, for Hegel, addressed within this framework (167); he is also right that the *Logic* cannot "step outside itself" to ground itself, to account for what cognoscibility means—it must determine itself (168). Therefore, it is true that the question of being, beyond all ontic determination, cannot be posed within the framework of the *Logic*; but it does not follow that the "absolute presence" to which Hegel refers can be understood as "present-at-hand" [*vorhanden*] or "standing presence" [*Anwesenheit*] (170).

According to Pippin, Heidegger keeps interpreting Hegelian intelligibility as discursive intelligibility whose determinations are those of discourse (177 ff.). But Pippin stresses that the *Logic* cannot be predicatively determined—since all determination is an activity immanent to the *Logic*—and that Hegelian judgments [*Urteile*] are not "truth-bearers" but "conceptual self-determinations" that admit of no contraries (175). This leads Pippin to conclude that, contrary to Heidegger's assumption, the *Logic* does not begin with being—as if it were

a given—but with the attempt to think being. The result of this, the self-determination of the *Logic* itself, the identity of the Idea with itself, is not, from the standpoint of the absolute system, "as a dead repose, as a mere *picture*, numb, without impulse and movement" (quoted from the *Logic*, 175). Such would be an "abstract" thought; its concreteness lies in "process." This is the thesis Pippin defended in *Hegel's Realm of Shadows* (2018): there is no "determination of thought" that can be taken in isolation; essentialities or individualities must be considered as "shadows" of the absolute (176).

However—and here lies the originality of Pippin's approach—this "realm" of essentialities in which Logic consists, the realm of determinations of thought, is a realm that still needs to come to terms with finitude in order to be complete (179), since the pure concept will only fully understand itself after the *Realphilosophie* (183). In other words: the "realm of shadows" lacks finitude—there is no thinking without a thinking subject.[2]

Pippin grants Heidegger that finitude is precisely what is to be overcome in the *Phenomenology* (192). Nonetheless, when Heidegger claims that the Absolute is at once the result and the beginning, that it is what is "presupposed" (195), he is not justified in equating these two moments. The negation of the truth of our finitude may be the starting point, but it is not a starting point we are initially conscious of (199)—that is, one we are justified in recognizing. Heidegger would thus be interpreting Hegel's finite spirit in an "atomistic, self-sufficient" way, failing to see the active and constant interplay between the individual and the collective that is present in the concept of *Geist* (200–201).

In sum, while Pippin acknowledges the plausibility of Heidegger's fundamental thesis about the omission in the Hegelian system of the "meaningfulness" of the existing being that we are, and while he recognizes that Heidegger in general provides a correct and deep reading of German Idealism, he warns that many of Heidegger's interpretations of the *Logic* or the *Phenomenology* are debatable or insufficiently grounded, and fail to appreciate the potential of Hegel's key accomplishments.

For all these reasons, this book makes a major contribution to understanding Heidegger's stance against Hegel throughout his work, in harmony with the development of his own thought. It also contributes positively to clarifying the relations among several Heideggerian "concepts" from different stages of his thinking. This allows Pippin to integrate Heidegger's numerous theses into a simple and coherent unity that serves as a device for making comparisons with Hegel's texts.

2 R. Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018, p. 302.

On the other hand, Heidegger's diverging positions across his writings are at times merged into a single one. Although Heidegger's fundamental stance remains stable over the years, one should not overlook radical shifts such as the abandonment of the "scientific" perspective of ontology and of the centrality of Dasein after the 1930s. Moreover, although the citations from Heidegger's work are abundant and well chosen, only the English edition's abbreviations are used—neither the pagination of the original GA edition nor the year of writing or publication are indicated for each quotation, which would have helped to follow more precisely the evolution of Heidegger's thought.

The book's structure is not a systematic exposition of Pippin's own thesis but is organized thematically, following the evolution of Heidegger's confrontation with German Idealism, especially Hegel. Its architecture is thematic and expository, not systematic or demonstrative. Pippin excellently reconstructs the key moments of Heidegger's critique of Hegel (being as represented, logic as a regional ontology, the overcoming of finitude, etc.). But his own position is expressed in a dispersed way, often as comments, clarifications, nuances, or interspersed corrections. There is no chapter in which he sets out his thesis against Heidegger clearly and step by step. This is not the book's aim, but as a result, some of his most incisive criticisms may lose visibility, which partially limits the impact of his stance against Heidegger.