

*The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*, by Robert Pippin; 380 pp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, \$29.99.  
*German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, by Terry Pinkard; 392 pp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, \$28.99.

Robert Pippin has assembled an insightful and provocative collection of essays titled, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*. Pippin is a well-known and distinguished scholar of German Idealism, especially in regard to Hegel and Kant. He knows well the philosophizing of Fichte and Schelling that prepared the way for Hegel's taking up the problems formulated by Kant. Pippin extended the reach of his formulation of the problems, and solutions, of German Idealism by his extensive writings on Modernism in his books *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (1997) and *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfaction of European High Culture* (1999). Still more recently Pippin published *Henry James and Modern Moral Life* (2000), with the emphasis, again, on the peculiar problem of the modern, and modernist attempt to fashion the forms in which a genuinely free human life might give rise to itself. The present collection consists of a substantive Introduction on "Bourgeois Philosophy" and the problem of subjectivity, which nicely gathers together the subsequent either essays on Heidegger, Gadamer, Adorno, Strauss, Arendt, Manfred Frank, John McDowell, and Proust. Less successful in his fathering is the addition of three occasional essays on the topics of medical ethics, civility, and the relation of literature to law. Pippin is instead at his best in the analysis and exposition of the works of individual philosophers and writers.

Pippin believes that we continue to inhabit the world of modernity made possible and, more importantly, made difficult by Kant's posing of the unavoidable task of becoming a person, and in deed a person alongside, in solidarity with, as well as opposed to, other persons. The Kantian aftermath sampled in the present collection of essays is therefore best ranged as a series of answers to, or at least probes toward, the following: "The question of the right way to understand the relation between independence and dependence will emerge as one of the most significant complexities in the modern aspiration to a free life" (p. 4). Pippin would readily acknowledge, however, that his approach might more generally and popularly be seen as a rear-guard action against the aftermath of Hegelian philosophy: "The best brief characterization of much of the tone of post-Hegelian European thought and culture is that it is comprised of a profound suspicion about the basic philosophical claim of 'bourgeois' philosophy, the notion central to the self-understanding and legitimation of the bourgeois form of life: the free, rational, independent, reflective, self-determining subject" (p. 5).

For Pippin, the moment we now occupy remains Kantian-Hegelian, and even though this moment might stretch to become Proustian and Jamesian, it nonetheless persists primarily—however beset by inherent contradictions—as a unitary, unhistorical, and self-consciousness-seeking one. And though one can well imagine Pippin conceding to Marc's claim that the category of the possibility of the human individual is the product of historical and social developments, it is more difficult to imagine Pippin conceiving this possibility as anything but the final form of human becoming. Where Marx has the human individual not only as a real world-historical achievement, but also, and perhaps still more importantly in modern life, as a potential and substantial impediment to

further human development, Pippin regards the individual as an achievement still to be won. Hence for Pippin the “aftermath” remains provocatively Kantian while for Marx and others it is but the warm bath of modernism.

It is just this premise in regards to the continuation of the Kantian-Hegelian moment that would seem to warrant Pippin’s treatments of the philosophers and novelists of the twentieth century. (Pippin might then be compared favorably to Clement Greenberg, another proponent of the continuing centrality of Kant to the aesthetic projects of modernism. For Pippin as for Greenberg it from Kantianism broadly construed, rather than from his aesthetic theory alone, that modern life is to find itself oriented.) But even if one is inclined to go along with Pippin’s assertion of the continuation of German Idealism by other means and in other venues, there is nonetheless a curious discontinuity between Pippin’s foundational work on German Idealism and his work on the later philosophical and literary figures. The curiosity has to do with what warrants, or at least what Pippin sees as warranting, his ability as a philosopher, and self-proclaimed non-expert on figures like Proust and James, to write on these literary figures as well as on philosophers about whom he does not claim expertise. This is no mere academic quibble about who has authority to write on particular authors but rather strikes at the core of Pippin’s concerns regarding the autonomy and freedom of the self and so too points to a potential conflict, or at least a conundrum, in regard to his approach to the twentieth-century philosophers he here encounters.

If we find ourselves paying close attention to Pippin’s writings on German Idealism it is because of the evidential character of his deep and broad scholarship in it. In short, it is the authority of his scholarship that seems to warrant the compelling character of his accounts of Kant, Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling. But it is then just the nature of this warrant that makes problematic this reader’s approach to Pippin’s other writings, even in the continuity he intimates—from Kant to Proust—is nearly always compelling. One example of such continuity is between his reading of the Hegel, Heidegger, Gadamer nexus and that of Proust’s great quest. In regard to the former he writes: “Indeed, only Hegel and Heidegger (and one should now of course also say, Gadamer) have shown how philosophy itself should be understood not merely to have a history but to be its history, that the work of philosophy itself is a speculative recollection of its history” (p. 82). One cannot help but recall this thought when reading Pippin on Proust: “This is the problem of recovering ‘lost time,’ attempting to retrieve what really happened as one’s own or to recover who one ‘really’ was” (p. 310). In other words, there is the assumption of a continuity from Kant to Proust, and beyond, in the meta-narrative that Pippin so lucidly unwinds.

Another way to frame this worry is according to the difference between scholarship and insight. It is difficult, for example, to reconcile Pippin’s qualified dismissal of Adorno with whatever assumption it is that implies there is value to Pippin’s readings of Proust, James, Heidegger, et al. Pippin’s own text is scarred in part by this conundrum, for though he presents Adorno as inadequate because of the inadequacy of Adorno’s Kant scholarship, Pippin nonetheless acknowledges that Adorno is a figure in the “Kantian aftermath” whose achievement requires consideration. Pippin’s steady scholarship is what orients him in grounding the Kantian-Hegelian formulations of the problem of the self, and thus when he comes to a figure like Adorno his inclination is to

want to take Adorno's insights only as seriously as the depth of Adorno's scholarship warrants. That is, for Pippin, the value of Adorno's thinking can be measured directly according to the correctness of this scholarship: "My claim is that Adorno's account is held captive by a distorted (if conventional) picture of this tradition [classical German Idealism], especially of the moral and ethical project tied to such idealism, so distorted that there is no good reason to accept Adorno's attack or his more general claim about what the tradition stands for (Western modernity, essentially)" (p. 101). What Paul de Man famously called the resistance to reading manifests itself in Pippin's efforts to find where exactly Adorno's Kant scholarship fails to measure up. And it appears that Adorno's account is so distorted that even the claim is to what the tradition stands for cannot be accepted, or at least "there is no good reason" to do so. Once this failure is documented, whatever might persist in troubling one about Adorno becomes easier to ignore because of this incapacitating scholarly lapse. But if Pippin is to hold Adorno to the standards of contemporary Kant scholarship—and it is doubtful Adorno ever aspired to being a Kant scholar—should we not in turn assess the value of Pippin's writings on Proust, James, Heidegger, et al according to the same standards of scholarship? In short, the table that Pippin sets in regard to what de-legitimizes Adorno's claims might just as readily be turned on him.

And yet, to his credit, Pippin also resists the urge to dismiss Adorno's claims and insights. He allows them to persist—and indeed they persist by appearing in many of the essays here—despite the evidence he marshals against them: "I want also to express solidarity with Adorno's deeper insight into the essentially social and historical character of 'the problem of freedom' and to offer some further reasons, in the spirit of Adorno's critique, in support of the suggestion that the internal paradoxes of the Kantian moral theory are manifestations of the internal tensions or 'antagonisms' of bourgeois society itself ... There is, in other words, an antimony in the notion of freedom characteristic of bourgeois society, but Adorno has misidentified it" (p. 101).

Terry Pinkard is a well-known scholar of Hegel. He has published two important books on Hegel. One is *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (1994); the other is the definitive biography of Hegel in English: *Hegel: A Biography* (2000). Under consideration here is his 2002 book, *German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, which begins by acknowledging the very great role that Pippin's ideas and influence have played: "I have incorporated many more of the ideas taken from mutual conversations and a class taught together than could possibly be indicated by even an infinite set of footnotes to his published work" (p. ix). It is therefore better here to ask not whether Pinkard deviates from Pippin's views of German Idealism (he does not, so far as I can tell), but whether Pinkard adds to what seems to be becoming the more or less standard account of the history of German Idealism (Dieter Henrich might in turn count as a key source for both Pippin and Pinkard's accounts). Pinkard adds a great deal by both rounding out in detail the history of the German Romantics' response to Kant as well as attempting here to set the story of German Idealism within the historical and political context of what was becoming Germany, however belatedly, in the period 1760-1860. So too does Pinkard extend the Kantian aftermath to include Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard.

Pinkard's book is divided into four equal parts: after a quite helpful introduction

which sets the opening of German Idealism at the conclusion of the Seven Years War in 1763 by indicating that the rapidly changing intellectual environment—and less rapidly changing political one—resulted from the great shifts in population occurring in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the subsequent rise of a well-educated but unemployable class. Part One, “Kant and the Revolution in Philosophy,” therefore begins with the problematic relation between human spontaneity and the natural order. The “revolution” points of course to the necessary freedom required if we are to leave our self-incurred state of immaturity. Pinkard then proceeds to the central formulation of his book, borrowed from Pippin, the “Kantian paradox”: “The paradox arises from Kant’s demand that, if we are to impose a principle (a maxim, the moral law) on ourselves, then presumably we must have a *reason* to do so; but, if there was an antecedent reason to adopt that principle, then that reason would not itself be self-imposed; yet for it to be binding on us, it had to be (or at least had to be ‘regarded’ to be, as Kant ambiguously stated) self-imposed” (p. 59). And yet, though this is regarded as undeniable if we are to consider ourselves autonomous agents, it remains theoretically unproven. It is in large measure, according to Pinkard, just this paradox which orients so much of the subsequent response to Kant.

Part Two, “the Revolution Continued: Post-Kantians” turns to the political events and philosophers of the 1780s and 1790s who take up the Kantian paradox right in the midst of the French revolutionary period. Here Pinkard is especially illuminating in giving compelling accounts of the response to Kant in the 1780s by the supposed irrationalism and distinctly anti-Enlightenment thought of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi as well as what Pinkard successfully shows to be Karl Leonhard Reinhold’s pivotal misunderstanding of Kant’s use of the term deduction. Pinkard continues his march through the 1790s by revisiting the well-trod path of Fichte’s astonishing philosophical career as the new apparent heir to Kantianism. Though there are many histories of the period between Kantianism and Hegelianism, Pinkard’s is easily among the most lucid, cogent, and compelling. What makes his account so successful is that Pinkard’s narrative manages to be both inside and outside the controversies; he is able to explain in detail what is at stake in each contested formulation as well as to couch his expositions in the forward trajectory of the problem of modernity. Pinkard next divides the Romantic appropriation of Kant into two chapters: the first treats Holderlin, Novalis, Schleiermacher, and Schlegel while the second is reserved for Schelling alone. All of this then serves as the prelude to Part Three: “The Revolution Completed? Hegel,” in which Pinkard returns to the labor with which he is most adept: the explication of Hegelianism, which is here pursued quite broadly with separate chapters of Hegel’s *Science of Logic* (titled “Mind and World” in homage to John McDowell), on the concepts of nature and spirit, and of course also on Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. The fourth and final section of Pinkard’s volume is titled “The Revolution in Question” and deals, briefly, with Schelling’s later attempt to restore Idealism before turning to Schopenhauer—whose post-Kantianism is here treated as Romantic pessimism—and Kierkegaard, described here as a post-Schellingian Hegelian. Most surprising here is the omission of any sustained encounter with Marx, who is instead briefly regarded as a post-Fichtean (thus seems not to qualify as post-Hegelian or even part of the “Legacy of Idealism”) and is discussed in the section titled “Exhaustion and Resignation, 1830-1855.” This is a curious

omission in a book that means to treat German philosophical, intellectual, and political development in the period 1760-1860.

Pippin, Pinkard, Henry Allison, and Paul Guyer, continue to set the boundaries of what constitutes the canonical accounts of German Idealism. But as they are now extending those boundaries by way of the “aftermath” to Kantianism and the “legacy” of Idealism, it might do us all well to pause to digest the great benefits of their scholarship before we so readily smack our lips at the prospect of continuing the same feast.

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