... cette ... Voir
Qui se connaît quand elle sonne
N'être plus la voix de personne
Jean Hyppolite

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Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968)*

GEORGES CANGUILHEM and MICHEL FOUCAULT

Translated by Frank Chouraqui and Richard Lambert

A few weeks ago, the death of Jean Hyppolite left us dumbstruck. Today, we attempt to put into words who our colleague and friend was, through who he was for us.

For my part, I first met Hyppolite forty-three years ago, but it was only after we became colleagues at the Faculté de Lettres at Strasbourg, twenty-three years ago, that I really came to know him. In the meantime, my reading of his works had so changed my memories of our relations at the École Normale Supérieure that, on our reunion in 1945, it was he who had to remind me that in the École’s revue of 1926 I had given an impersonation of him. I had played the part of an inquirer, of a man who indefatigably questions and questions himself [demande et se demande]. What struck us all when he started at the École was his capacity for inquiry, for continually putting things into question anew, for renewal. At the time of his death this hadn’t changed, but he had long since acquired a mastery in it. To acquire a mastery in this domain is not only to develop a method to the highest level of effectiveness, but to have learnt its

* The following texts are translations of: 'Jean Hyppolite (1907 – 1968)’ by Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, © PUF, April – June 1969. Michel Foucault's text, 'Jean Hyppolite, 1907 – 1968’ was also reprinted in his Dits et écrits. © Editions GALLIMARD, Paris, 1994. The editors would like to thank the Presses Universitaires de France and Gallimard for permission to reprint these texts in English translation.

In their original publication in the Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, the texts were preceded by the following editorial note: 'we are pleased and proud to publish here, in the form of a homage, the two speeches given by MM. G. Canguilhem and M. Foucault at the memorial service for Jean Hyppolite at the École Normale Supérieure on January 19th 1969.'
Hegel's text. The fact that Houlgate manages, within limits of space and the philosophical ability of the targeted audience, to present a convincing reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* which will, if not convince, most certainly provide a strong challenge to other available readings, can only be seen as an additional strength of the book.

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*Introduction to Metaphysics: From Parmenides to Levinas* by Jean Grondin (trans. Lukas Soderstrom)

**TSUTOMU BEN YAGI**

Jean Grondin is most often recognised for his contributions to scholarship on Hans-Georg Gadamer. For not only has he published a number of books and essays devoted to elucidating Gadamer's hermeneutics, but his biography of Gadamer remains an unparalleled achievement that provides the most reliable and thorough account of Gadamer's life and path of thinking. In the volume under review here, however, Grondin exhibits a whole new orientation as he ventures into surveying the entire history of metaphysics, of which Gadamer occupies only a small section (in chapter eleven). The volume has recently been translated from the French, published in 2004 under the title *Introduction à la métaphysique*, by Lukas Soderstrom. It contains a little over three-hundred pages and, along with a brief preface, introduction, and conclusion, it is divided into eleven chapters that cover the history of metaphysics from Parmenides to Lévinas, as indicated by the subtitle (which does not appear in the original).

Given the widespread aversion to metaphysics that has come to characterise the philosophical scene over more than a half-century, notably due to the profound influence of Heidegger, Grondin makes his intention known already in the preface that he aims to confront such a tendency by seeking to revive metaphysics. In this sense, this volume serves not only as an 'introduction' in the customary sense of the term, where the purpose is to introduce the subject matter to readers who are unfamiliar with it, but also as an attempt to reconstruct the history of metaphysics with a specific aim in mind, namely, to demonstrate the indispensability of metaphysical thought. As Grondin proclaims in the preface, 'this book will argue that it is thus impossible to surpass
metaphysics without presupposing it' (p. xviii). Hence, the primary objective of this work is to rehabilitate the significance metaphysics obtains in philosophy by retracing the thoughts of those representative thinkers who have contributed to defining the metaphysical discourse in an important way over the course of its history.

Among a number of philosophers taken up, Kant and Heidegger assume an important and distinctive role, especially for the specific aim of this volume just laid out. For, in Grondin's view, they are the 'two major inspirations' for contemporary thought, insofar as 'The arguments of both have commanded all the efforts to go beyond metaphysics' (p. 251). While the special place Heidegger occupies is perhaps incontestable given his influence on contemporary thought, it is noteworthy that Grondin identifies Kant as another thinker who helped shape contemporary thought, rather than, say, Hegel or Nietzsche (while the former receives a fair amount of attention in the volume, the latter is only briefly mentioned). A reconstruction of the history of metaphysics Grondin embarks upon becomes truly meaningful only when one follows his reading of Kant and Heidegger. Rather than interpreting these two thinkers as having simply wreaked havoc on the stature of metaphysics as a credible form of thought, as it is often believed, Grondin brings out the moments in their thoughts which display metaphysical characteristics.

Kant, who is taken up in chapter eight, is commonly regarded as a philosopher whose works consisted in demarcating the respectable boundaries of metaphysics. As such, the emphasis is often given to the aspect of his thought which endorses the idea that metaphysics is legitimate only insofar as its discourse is confined to the realm of possible experience. Yet such an understanding alone would remain inadequate, since, as Grondin suggests, it does not take into consideration the fact that Kant was essentially more occupied with practical philosophy (metaphysics of morals) than theoretical philosophy (metaphysics of nature). Although Kant sought to develop his metaphysics of morals while remaining faithful to the transcendental arguments which he had worked out in his metaphysics of nature, the practical questions he dealt with no longer pertained to those which concern the conditions of knowledge. For, in asking about human freedom, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul, it is 'less a question of assuring the scientific value of metaphysical knowledge than a defense of pure reason's hopes, which Kant knew quite well no longer related to any science' (p. 152). Even if Kant regards his answers to such questions as postulates of practical reason, without which we are unable to properly account for human action, he is nevertheless guided by such questions which 'necessarily overstep the very limited boundaries of science as they relate to the ends of human reason' (p. 152).

Likewise, Grondin seeks out the metaphysical moments in Heidegger's thought in chapter ten. He does this by attending to the period between 1927 and 1929, during which Heidegger used the term 'metaphysics' affirmatively to characterise his own thinking (p. 208-13). In particular, Grondin identifies two works from 1929 as providing a revealing insight: What is Metaphysics? and Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics. Rather than conceiving of metaphysics as an impediment to our thinking, as he would later come to think, Heidegger, in these works, engages with metaphysics in order to radicalise it by reawakening the question of the meaning of Being. As Grondin highlights, Heidegger employs the expression 'metaphysics of Dasein' in Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics to characterise his project precisely because, at this stage, he still maintains the view that the question of the meaning of Being may be rethought through the transcendence of Dasein. Against the Heidegger who later came to 'stigmatise metaphysics', as Grondin repeatedly describes him, Grondin reads him as a 'metaphysical thinker to the core' (p. 255) who radicalised metaphysics from within and out of metaphysical thinking.

Once Grondin's assessment of Kant and Heidegger is taken into account, his motives for re-examining the history of metaphysics become apparent. By investigating how different philosophers have developed and articulated metaphysical thoughts, Grondin intends to highlight the fact that there are 'many forms of metaphysics' (p. 247). In doing so, he is clearly making the case that metaphysics is capable of critiquing and overcoming itself. Thus we must not abandon metaphysics for 'another beginning', as Heidegger later came to believe, but rather discover a possibility for self-renewal within metaphysics itself. The history of metaphysics exhibits precisely such a self-critical dimension of metaphysics.

From antiquity, Grondin explores the thought of Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle, and devotes a chapter to each thinker (followed by a
chapter dedicated to Plotinus and Augustine). Although the term 'metaphysics' was not coined until the first-century BCE by Andronicus of Rhodes and did not enter into the philosophical lexicon until the twelfth-century CE (p. xxii), we can already locate the origins of metaphysics in these thinkers. It is indeed clear, even at this point, that metaphysics proceeds in a dynamic fashion. Beginning with Parmenides' Being, Plato's elaboration of the notion of Idea was inspired by Parmenides, just as Aristotle reacted against Plato in developing his doctrine of Being qua Being. Grondin offers an interesting interpretation, inspired by Gadamer's reading of Plato and Aristotle (p. 272, note 42), which suggests that, contrary to the conventional view, it was actually Plato rather than Aristotle that preserved the intricate relation between the sensible and the intelligible without completely separating them. For, even if Aristotle espoused the hylomorphic structure of substance in order to account for change and movement, whereby matter and form are brought to unity, his view fundamentally hinges on the doctrine of the prime mover which marks the supreme principle and the highest activity. Aristotle thus distinguishes the divine from the sensible in such a way that they are disparately separate (p. 66). On the contrary, Plato still maintained the intertwined and interdependent relation between the two realms of reality, the sensible and the intelligible, since he concedes that the world is not only governed in a uniform manner according to the Idea, but is also dispersed by the principle of the indeterminate dyad. He therefore endorses a 'dualism of principles' (p. 44).

In chapter five, Grondin subsequently turns to Anselm, Avicenna, Averroes, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus from the Middle Ages. It is to Grondin's credit that he includes non-Western thinkers in this volume. While each of these thinkers pursued metaphysics in their own way, they all shared the fundamental task of addressing the relation between Being and God, regardless of whether they dwelt in the world of Islam or Christianity. Grondin thus remarks that 'the Middle Ages were marked by a decisive confrontation between faith and reason' (p. 84). As such, it was in such a theological context of seeking to determine the ontological status of God that the ontological questions were developed by Duns Scotus into a formal and rational inquiry called 'transcendental philosophy', which would later be known as 'ontology'. As Grondin notes, it was not until the seventeenth century that 'the neologism ontologia appeared' (p. 106).

Grondin then proceeds with an explication of modern philosophy, where Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz are examined prior to the chapter on Kant. In chapter six, which is dedicated to Descartes, Grondin follows Jean-Luc Marion's interpretation of Descartes (p. 119) in suggesting that Descartes implicitly adopts two distinct forms of metaphysics in his Meditations on First Philosophy: metaphysics of the cogito and metaphysics of God. As such, one witnesses a 'tension between the two faces of first philosophy' (p. 120) in Descartes, as he inherited aspects of scholastic thought while at the same time attempting to establish a new metaphysics founded on subjectivity. Spinoza and Leibniz, who are discussed in the following chapter, were deeply influenced by Descartes' approach of demonstrating the metaphysical concepts based on a rational method. Spinoza and Leibniz thus work out their metaphysical inquiry in an analytical manner, which Grondin describes as the 'metaphysics of simplicity and integral rationality'. Indeed such a characterisation well captures their views, as Spinoza identifies the immanence of God as the fundamental principle of the world, just as Leibniz considers the monad to amount to such a principle.

Subsequent to the chapter on Kant, Grondin turns his attention to the philosophical development during the period between Kant and Heidegger. While most of the chapter is devoted to explicating the central figures of German Idealism, namely, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, Grondin also offers an account of the development both prior and subsequent to this movement. He thus includes a discussion of the interpretations of Kant's theoretical philosophy formulated by Jocobi and Reinhold prior to the emergence of German Idealism, as well as a brief summary of the development following the movement, in which thinkers like Dithey, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein are mentioned. Given the wide scope of this chapter, it constitutes the lengthiest in this volume. While the German Idealists are generally known for their preoccupation with metaphysics, Grondin refers to a rather paradoxical situation by explaining in the following way: 'Whereas Kant argued a resolutely anti-metaphysical philosophy, but recurrently used the term metaphysics, German Idealism elaborated powerfully metaphysical philosophies without ever using, expressis verbis, the title metaphysics' (p. 155).

Rather than acknowledging the end of speculative metaphysics, the German Idealists discovered possibilities of developing metaphysics
Grondin's book serves its intended purpose. It is certainly helpful to delve into the history of metaphysics in this way, and the plurality of metaphysical discourses is evident in the specific questions that captivated the thinkers of the metaphysical tradition. What the book does not seem to deliver quite as effectively, however, is the supposedly common character that unites all metaphysical endeavours. As Grondin argues in the conclusion, metaphysics constitutes 'the guiding thread of the entire Western tradition' (p. 247). Unfortunately, he does not elucidate much as to how such a guiding thread can and should be conceived. His own scant contribution to this matter can be captured by the following passage where, shortly afterwards, he asserts:

[M]etaphysics is, in essence, the self-critical endeavor of the human mind to understand the whole of reality and its reasons, an undertaking which can indeed be seen to have supported the Western intellectual tradition (p. 247).

Yet one must wonder whether such a definition is not too general and abstract to be useful. Indeed, have we not come to question the very notions of being 'self-critical' and the 'whole of reality'? Precisely whose reality is at issue? And exactly who is doing self-criticism? Moreover, Grondin does not seem at all concerned to address the reason why a sustained endeavour to understand the 'whole of reality and its reasons' should have recourse solely to the 'Western intellectual tradition'. Why should such a human aspiration be identified with and continue to be bounded by a geographically-confined tradition? Does that not, in fact, imply a restriction of reality?

Ultimately, this volume is an attempt to restore our confidence in metaphysics, calling for its revival by making the case that metaphysics is indispensable, if not unavoidable. Rather than refraining from metaphysics because it somehow remains inherently 'violent' in its inability to account for otherness, we must conceive of metaphysics as expressing the human hope. As Grondin asks in the following way:

But where on Earth is the violence in the thinking of Being and its reasons? Isn't it this criticism itself that is extraordinarily violent in that it doesn't do justice to the human mind's hope of understanding reality? (p. 250)
In other words, we ought not shun metaphysics, but rather confront it. In seeking to understand reality, we transcend (‘meta’) our ordinary conditions in order to attain a more abstract vantage point. Grondin thus states:

Metaphysics uses this natural transcendence [of going beyond experience and what is immediately given] of the human mind and language to argue that one only understands something when one sees it in a broader perspective (p. 249).

Yet the book still leaves much to be desired, insofar as Grondin himself does not offer any substantial clue, aside from his exhortation to restore metaphysics, as to how we may proceed with such a restoration. Supposing that we do regain the confidence and courage to take on metaphysics once again — what, then, would a renewed form of metaphysics actually look like? How can it be carried out? As a reader, one would expect him to at least suggest how he envisions such a possible metaphysics.

Leaving behind the content of the book, I wish at last to make some brief remarks about the editing of this volume. For I must admit that its overall quality is quite disappointing. The text contains numerous spelling and grammatical errors as well as missing characters and words to such a degree that they may actually hinder one’s reading experience. Just to illustrate by pointing out the most frequently recurring error, ‘than’ is constantly misspelled as ‘that’ throughout the text. Other negligible errors are also very noticeable: ‘Lévinas’ is at times written with the accent mark, other times without; inconsistent capitalisation with words like ‘Book’ or ‘Thomistic’; and the Greek alphabet is used at times for references to the book number of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, the Roman numeral at other times. Even if one considers such errors to be trivial and of little concern, they reveal a lack of care and attention on preparing the text for publication. However, there is further cause for even greater concern.

What I was particularly puzzled by at first was the fact that, on seeing in the text references made to the English language but none to the French, I was not at all sure whether such references were those of the author himself. Given that the original text appeared in French, it is natural to suppose that the author would make references to French rather than to English. Yet, in the text, one encounters a number of passages such as the following:

For some time now, I have deplored the absence of a historical introduction to metaphysics in English. Those that do exist are either old or Thomistic, in an outdated and caricatured understanding of the term (p. xvii, emphasis added).

In the original, as it turns out, the same passage appears as follows:

*Il y a déjà quelque temps que je regrette l’absence, en langue française, d’une introduction historique à la métaphysique. La plupart de celles qui existent sont ou très anciennes ou d’inspiration thomiste, au sens un peu périmé et caricatural du terme* (p. 13, emphasis added).

As one can see, the translator has substituted the reference to French with one to English. I cannot say with any firm conviction how unusual, if not outright misguided, such a practice is, but I am doubtful that this is a standard editorial practice. Given that French and English, and the philosophical culture and context corresponding to them, are far from being identical, and hence not directly substitutable, this simply seems to be a poor decision made by the translator. Such an editorial change would perhaps be admissible should there be an editor’s note or translator’s introduction explaining what changes they have made to the text and why. Unfortunately, such an explanation is nowhere to be found, as the volume contains no comments by either the translator or an editor.

The only words we have from the translator are a paragraph included as the ‘Note on References’ (p. 258), which only explains the pagination used for citations in the text. Given that the volume also lacks an index, which would certainly have been helpful for an introductory work, I cannot help but think that it was a hasty job by the translator as well as the publisher.

Considering the book as a whole, I believe Grondin falls short of fulfilling the goal with which he sets out on this ambitious undertaking. To trace back and narrate the entire history of metaphysics in a volume of such modest length is not a trivial task to achieve. Rather than covering such a wide scope, it may perhaps have been more feasible and compelling had Grondin focused simply on, say, Kant and Heidegger as
the central figures of his attempt at rehabilitation, and mentioned other thinkers only as needed, should the project not be carried out in voluminous length. While the readers may be able pick up a basic knowledge of the metaphysical thinkers under discussion such that, in this respect, the book serves its intended purpose, what they are able to take away from it is likely to be quite limited, mainly because no thinker is addressed in sufficient detail to serve as a useful guide for exploring the intellectual terrain. Yet, concerning the other aim of the volume, the reconstructed history of metaphysics retold by Grondin lacks a coherent narrative to demonstrate the common features shared by metaphysics as a whole. Hence, it is difficult to grant that the author has succeeded in showing convincingly that 'metaphysics is the insurmountable presupposition of all thought insofar as it carried and supported the project of a universal understanding of the world that inquires into the Being and reason for things' (p. xvii). Insofar as Grondin 'inscribes' a reversal in the text, such that Lévinas follows after Derrida, we as readers would expect him to provide us with an elucidation as to what that reversal may signify for the rehabilitation. Moreover, insofar as he claims that metaphysics has been 'rediscovered', we would hope to find out in what way metaphysics has become possible again and how it can still be carried out today. Witnessing the considerable difficulty with which Grondin seeks out a possibility for the rehabilitation of metaphysics, we are left wondering whether we were doing metaphysics all along, or whether we still remain at a great distance from the point of rediscovering metaphysics.

The Ends of Beauty: Sinead Murphy's the Art Kettle

PETE WOLFENDALE

I promise you... that if you ask me for a good thing that is good for nothing. I know no such thing, nor have anything to do with it... In a word, all things that are of any use in the world are esteemed beautiful and good, with regard to the subject for which they are proper.¹

These words, attributed to Socrates by Xenophon, paint a picture of the beautiful which is strikingly at odds with those attributed to him by Plato. This tension – between the Socrates who grounds beauty in the practical concerns of everyday life and the Socrates who grounds beauty in the divine perfection of the intelligible that shines through its imperfect realisation in the sensible – inaugurates a division in the philosophical understanding of beauty that still haunts us in the present day. Though both sides of this divide have had their champions – such as Hume's thoroughgoing aesthetic utilitarianism and Kant's substitution of formal purposiveness for divine purpose, respectively – it is clear that, at least in the world of art, the latter tradition has been dominant for quite some time.

If Sinead Murphy's only concern was to chart the history of this dominance, and to suggest that it be countered by a return to the notion of craft, she would have written a good book. The Art Kettle goes beyond this by claiming that art is a mode of control that plays an important function in late capitalism, and that therefore the return to craft is as much an act of political resistance as it is an aesthetic choice. That such a bold and compelling thesis can be defended with such subtlety, accessibility, and, indeed, brevity (in only 76 pages) is what makes this a great book, which I can recommend enthusiastically to both academics and non-academics alike. I'll do my best to summarise the core points of each chapter, tracing the overall argument before raising some potential issues for the position it develops.

¹ Xenophon, The Memorable Thoughts of Socrates, bk. 3, ch. 8, pp. 106-107.
Jean Hyppolite

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