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KANT VERSUS HEGEL: TWO VIEWS ON METAPHYSICS

Abstract

The article highlights the special features of metaphysics in Kant and Hegel. Kant's attitude toward traditional metaphysics was defined by a critical stance that limited knowledge to the transcendental conditions of possible experience. Traditional metaphysics did not meet the transcendental criteria of cognition. Instead, Kant developed *transcendental metaphysics*, which was confined to the study of the *a priori* foundations of natural science, morality, and law, and did not encroach upon the transcendent world. For Hegel, metaphysics in its traditional sense also lost its conceptual appeal, as it was restricted by rational definitions of God, Soul, and Freedom, which did not correspond to Hegel's intentions. Consequently, metaphysics and its problems were incorporated into the system of absolute idealism, based on speculative cognition. Hegel broke with Kant's transcendentalism because he built his philosophical system on the principle of the identity of thought and being, which fundamentally contradicted the principles of transcendentalism. In Hegel's philosophy, traditional metaphysical disciplines lost their former significance; his project of metaphysics was grounded in speculative knowledge of the Absolute – its conceptual understanding within speculative logic, the philosophy of nature, and the philosophy of spirit. This allows us to consider Hegel's system in its internal connection with the Absolute. Thus, Hegel transforms metaphysics and its problems into speculative philosophy, which aligns with the aims of absolute idealism.

Keywords: Kant, transcendentalism, science, metaphysics, Hegel, absolute idealism, speculative thinking and cognition, speculative metaphysics, absolute knowledge, methods of cognition, philosophical method.

Introduction

German philosophy has traditionally gravitated towards metaphysics. This was the

case long before the emergence of the grand systems of German idealism, which are usually referred to as "classical German philosophy."¹

¹ It is worth noting that the term "Classical German Philosophy" owes its widespread use beyond this ideology to Friedrich Engels, one of the pillars of Marxism. Engels not only utilized this term but also included Ludwig Feuerbach in this philosophy, which is inaccurate. Although Feuerbach's philosophy does draw from German idealism, particularly in its preliminary stages, when Hegel significantly influenced the young Feuerbach, as evidenced by his doctoral dissertation, his mature works were based on a fundamental materialist foundation. Engels consistently reminded others of this, insisting that Feuerbach's materialist philosophy is the "final chord" of the German idealist systems (Engels, 26, 2010, pp. 381–398).

These philosophical systems – from Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) – embraced an idealistic worldview, although there were significant and substantial differences between these prominent philosophers that must always be considered. The differences between the philosophical systems of Kant and Fichte, Kant and Schelling, or Kant and Hegel play a much more significant role than what unites them. It would be wrong to consider the systems of these philosophers from the point of view of solving the problems that supposedly unite them, or to view these systems as a consistent solution to these common problems.

In this context, one of the fundamental problems of German idealism draws particular attention: it is the nature and functions of metaphysics, both in the philosophical context and from the standpoint of demarcating science and metaphysics. This problem concerns nearly all German philosophers throughout

the 18th and 19th centuries. The overwhelming majority of philosophers at that time directly or indirectly explored metaphysical issues, attributing either positive or negative significance to them (metaphysics).

In this article, we study the reception of metaphysics and its issues through the lens of two prominent representatives of German idealism – Kant and Hegel. Thus, we intend to address several epistemological tasks: (1) to reveal Kant's project of metaphysics within the framework of transcendental philosophy; (2) to define Kant's grounds for distinguishing between metaphysics and science; (3) to prove that the very break with Kantian transcendental idealism had decisive significance for the formation of absolute idealism – Hegel's most renowned creation; and (4) to determine under what conceptual preconditions Hegel's speculative logic "took on" the functions of metaphysics, that is, emerged as "speculative metaphysics."²

Certainly, very few agree with this strange assertion, except for Marxist orthodoxy. At the same time, he overlooks the exceptional importance of the Young Hegelian movements in completing the classical systems of German idealism. Despite their mutual critique, these currents preserved the central core of German philosophy – idealism. Thus, materialist philosophy, even when addressed to a person, as in Feuerbach's anthropological materialism, had no right to claim to conclude German idealistic philosophy. This materialism emerged as a completely different type of philosophy that gained popularity and influence in the latter half of the 19th century. For example, Arthur Schopenhauer demonstrated a negative attitude towards Fichte, Schelling, and especially Hegel, while at the same time showing a profound respect for Kant and his critical philosophy. So why is this founder of irrationalism not considered as the "finisher" of German idealistic systems? The question is rhetorical, given the outright disdain that Marx and Engels showed towards all contemporary philosophical developments. This attitude continued in later times – for Marxist ideologists, nearly all philosophies of the 19th and 20th centuries signified the decline of bourgeois philosophy. Hence, Hegel and Feuerbach, each in their own way, were acknowledged as the highest achievements of pre-Marxist philosophy. Naturally, much more attention was paid to Hegel, as Marxist ideologists favored his dialectics, attributing an almost mystical significance to this speculative doctrine.

² In preparing this article, I have drawn on the works of various researchers of metaphysical issues in the field of German idealism, particularly the metaphysical motifs of Kant and Hegel. These include well-known works of the past as well as studies by contemporary authors. Among them are the works of Ernst Apelt, Eduard von Hartmann, Alois Riehl, Hermann Cohen, Francis Bradley, Richard Kroner, Nicolai Hartmann, Martin Heidegger, Ernst Cassirer, Heinrich Rickert, Robin George Collingwood, Henry Allison, Paul Guyer, Brady Bowman, Robert Brandom, Karen Gloy, Dieter Henrich, Gottfried Martin, Volodymyr Shynkaruk, Wilfrid Sellars, Herbert Paton, Otto Pöggeler, Anatoly Loy, Yuri Kushakov, Peter Hodgson, Ivan Ivashchenko, Arthur Kok, Vittorio Hösle, Denis Kiryukhin, Mikhail Minakov, Charles Taylor, Vitali Terletsky, Ermylos Plevrakis, Michael Freedman, Frederick Beiser, and Terry Pinkard. Of course, the list of authors is much longer, but the scope of this article does not allow me to mention everyone whose works I studied while preparing this research.

Kant's Distinction Between Scientific and Metaphysical Knowledge

It is well known that in his famous treatise *Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter *CPR*), Kant raises three epistemological questions that are extremely important for the project of transcendental philosophy.³ These questions are connected to the particular orientation of pure reason toward sciences with *a priori* foundations. Kant writes: "In the solution of the above problem there is at the same time contained the possibility of the pure use of reason in the grounding and execution of all sciences that contain a theoretical *a priori* cognition of objects" (Kant, 1998, p. 147). In the theoretical domain, such an application (use) of reason is linked to the need to answer three questions, two of which relate to scientific knowledge. Kant formulates these questions in a transcendental key: "How is pure mathematics possible? How is pure natural science possible?" (Kant, 1998, p. 147). It is quite evident that such a formulation assumes the existence of mathematics and natural science as entirely real, genuine sciences. Therefore, the question of their possibility is based on acknowledging these sciences as a verifiable fact: "About these sciences, since they are actually given, it can appropriately be asked **how** they are possible; for that they must be possible is proved through their actuality" (Kant, 1998, p. 147). This means that revealing the conditions for the existence of mathematics and natural science does not require additional justification of their scientific status. The only matter that needs clarification is the possibility of synthetic judgments *a priori* within these sciences, i.e., on what *a priori* foundations the synthesis of knowledge in these sciences occurs, upon which the apodicticity of natural and mathematical knowledge significantly depends.

Alternatively, the third question related to metaphysics appears differently. Kant emphasizes his fundamental attitude toward metaphysics when he states: "As far as metaphysics is concerned, however, its poor progress up to now, and the fact that of no metaphysics thus far expounded can it even be said that, as far as its essential end is concerned, it even really exists, leaves everyone with ground to doubt its possibility" (Kant, 1998, p. 147). Thus, metaphysics is not a genuine science; throughout its history, it has failed to substantiate its principles. Therefore, the question is whether metaphysics can properly ground its principles and conclusions. Hence arises the third question: "This last question, which flows from the general problem above, would rightly be this: How is metaphysics possible as science?" (Kant, 1998, p. 148). It is worth noting that this question is preceded by another question that touches upon a deeper dimension of metaphysics – not only its scientific status, but also its rootedness in the nature of human reason, which has a tendency to ponder ultimate questions: "But now this **kind of cognition** is in a certain sense also to be regarded as given, and metaphysics is actual, if not as a science yet as a natural predisposition (*metaphysica naturalis*). For human reason, without being moved by the mere vanity of knowing it all, inexorably pushes on, driven by its own need to such questions that cannot be answered by any experiential use of reason and of principles borrowed from such a use; and thus a certain sort of metaphysics has actually been present in all human beings as soon as reason has extended itself to speculation in them, and it will also always remain there. And now about this too the question is: **How is metaphysics as a natural predisposition possible?**" (Kant, 1998, p. 147). Kant argues that metaphysical questions are not empty

³ Citations of Kant's original texts are provided according to the academic edition (Akademie-Ausgabe – AA, Kant 1900 sqq.), with the following notation in square brackets: edition – AA; volume number – in Roman numerals; and page number – in Arabic numerals.

fantasies of human reason but are related to reason's inherent need to seek answers to ultimate questions that lead to a transcendent world. But can these questions be answered scientifically? Kant sees this as the root of the problem, not the questions themselves.

Kant also addresses the metaphysics question in his work *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics THAT Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*" (hereafter *Prolegomena*), where he formulates the question: How is metaphysics at all possible? (Kant, 2004, p. 31). This means that metaphysics is related not only to science (which Kant believes still needs to be clarified) but also to the ability of reason to articulate in

a certain way what is usually referred to as metaphysical ideas. Kant notes that metaphysics ideas are rooted in the Nature of Reason (in der Natur der Vernunft), i.e., in any metaphysical doctrines (Kant, 2004, p. 80). The need for reason to produce such ideas ultimately enables the next step – the doctrinal level of metaphysics. It is this level of metaphysical discourse that interests Kant the most.⁴

Therefore, the question of how metaphysics can be a science relates to the possibilities of the particular reason – the “pure” (speculative) reason, the critique of which Kant laid out in the *CPR*. Even if one does not agree with those

⁴ Kant's metaphysics has always intrigued researchers. Even during the lifetime of the German philosopher, his critique of the possibility of metaphysical cognition sparked interest among many contemporary philosophers. In this context, it is worth mentioning Kant's polemic with the Wolffians (for instance, his debates with Johann Eberhard, Johann Schwab, and others), where one of the central issues was the possibility of metaphysics and the critique of Kant's stance on this matter. Even in later times, this problem did not cease to occupy the pages of numerous studies on Kant's philosophy. In the 19th century, Jakob Fries, Friedrich Beneke, Wilhelm Krug, Ernst Apelt, Hermann Cohen, and others were interested in the problem of Kantian metaphysics. In the 20th century, one of the most influential interpretations of Kantian metaphysics was proposed by Martin Heidegger, which, despite its popularity, has little to do with Kant's own vision of the nature and cognitive capabilities of metaphysics, but rather reflects the basic concepts of a fundamental ontology based on the ontology of the finitude of human existence (*Dasein*) (see Heidegger, 1997). Such an interpretation certainly differs significantly from other approaches to “Kant's metaphysics” – for example, that of Ernst Cassirer, whose discussion of metaphysics in 1929 became a significant event in European philosophy, despite these philosophers illuminating the topic somewhat differently (see Heidegger, 1973, 1997; Cassirer, 1931, 2014). The British philosopher Robin Collingwood's view of Kant's metaphysics is also of interest, as he maintains that Kant's transcendental analytics performs the function of metaphysics (Collingwood, 1948, pp. 237–247). This interpretation is quite plausible and was fairly widespread in the first third of the 20th century. In this context, we can mention the famous neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert, who, in the later period of his work, interpreted the role of Kant's transcendental logic in precisely this way. That was a kind of response to the ontological turn in German philosophy associated not only with Heidegger but also with Nicolai Hartmann and others. Therefore, Rickert acknowledges that transcendental logic should be considered not only as epistemology but also as a certain metaphysics, or more precisely, ontology: “A logic that is not merely a theory of thought in the sense of so-called *formal logic*, which works solely with identity and contradiction, but rather a theory of knowledge in the sense of KANT'S *transcendental logic*, i.e., which seeks to understand the knowledge of any object, certainly cannot do without the concept of being as a predicate of knowledge, for only objects that somehow are, i.e., objects predicated as *being*, can be known” (Rickert, 1930, p. 174). It is clear that this being has no relation to any external being, especially if it is a thing in itself. Rickert, as a neo-Kantian, albeit with certain new ideas, could not agree with this interpretation. This, as we know, was insisted upon by Nicolai Hartmann, his opponent, also a native of the neo-Kantian circle. In the 21st century, “Kant's metaphysics,” whose studies do not provoke significant objections from anyone, continues to be debated regarding the main features and scope of metaphysical issues within the structure of critical philosophy. A significant place in these studies is occupied by analytical developments initiated in the second half of the 20th century through the efforts of Peter Strawson, Jonathan Bennett, and others.

who consider Kant's critique of metaphysics to be a central part of the *CPR*, it must still be acknowledged that the epistemological status of metaphysics troubled Kant. Therefore, much attention has been devoted to clarifying this question, not only in the *CPR* but also in the *Prolegomena*, as well as in numerous notes (reflections) and lectures on metaphysics that the German philosopher delivered between 1755–1796 at the University of Königsberg.

The answer to the question of metaphysics as a science should clarify the difference between scientific discourse and those types of reflection that focus on the transcendent world – the object of metaphysical knowledge. Kant was convinced that scientific propositions concern the phenomenal world. At the same time, traditional metaphysics is interested in transcendent objects that lie beyond any possible experience.⁵ No less important, the way of thinking inherent in metaphysical research is also at stake. The problem is that metaphysical thinking, as Kant believed, is based on speculative reflections that completely deviate from experience, violating the principles of formal logic (which push thought onto the path of antinomies). In addition, metaphysical cognition is based on syllogisms, in particular on the first figure of the categorical syllogism. This is due to the fact that only categorical inferences make possible metaphysical statements (although without

sufficient grounds for this, according to Kant) about the cognition of transcendent objects. All other types of reasoning – for example, judgments – depend on syllogisms. And this stands in contrast to scientific reasoning, where the foundation is the judgment itself – the proposition – as Kant convincingly showed in transcendental logic. Therefore, the intentions of metaphysics do not meet the criteria of scientific inquiry, natural science, or mathematics. At the same time, Kant reminded that natural science and mathematics should not be tempted by metaphysical “dreams” about possible going beyond the limits of their own powers – empirical cognition of phenomena (natural science) and the construction of objects in subjective (a priori) time and space (mathematics).⁶ According to Kant, science is not capable of metaphysical functions. And for metaphysics, the question of its ability to achieve scientific cognition is very important.

Kant is not interested in metaphysics as a natural inclination of human reason, but in the possibility of metaphysics to form scientific cognition that would meet the criteria and standards of science as well as those of ordinary, everyday reasoning about the world, God, and the soul. This prompted him to consider types of argumentation and proof that have proven their effectiveness, for example, in mathematics. As did Christian

⁵ At the same time, Kant reminds us that metaphysics (traditional) was concerned with three subjects: God, freedom, and immortality (Kant, 1998, p.31). However, these cannot be objects of speculative reason, but only of practical reason. To demonstrate this, Kant emphasizes, it is necessary to deprive speculative reason of its powers: “For in order to reach God, freedom, and immortality, speculative reason must use principles that in fact extend merely to objects of possible experience; and when these principles are nonetheless applied to something that cannot be an object of experience, they actually do always transform it into an appearance, and thus they declare all *practical expansion* of reason to be impossible» (Kant, 1998, p. 31). One can agree with the opinion of Arthur Kok, a well-known contemporary researcher of the metaphysics of Kant and Hegel, who states that “Kant does not reject the idea that metaphysics is the doctrine of intelligible things, but wants to show that the relation of the cognitive subject to intelligible things is merely negative” (Kok, 2014, S. 47).

⁶ For a discussion of the features of Kant's doctrine of construction in the various branches of mathematics – arithmetic, algebra, and geometry – as well as of Kant's so-called philosophy of mathematics (which I question), see Kozlovskiy (2025).

Wolff and representatives of his school (*Schulphilosophie*), who were confident in the existence of points of contact between metaphysics and mathematics, thereby granting all parts of metaphysics a scientific status. For Kant, this does not correspond to the actual achievements of metaphysical research. In Kant's opinion, these achievements are of little significance, despite the long existence of metaphysics. And no mathematical methods have added anything to these studies. These are different types of thinking – metaphysical and mathematical, so the methods are also different.

Kant is convinced that a transcendental investigation into the conditions of the possibility of metaphysics should lead to a new understanding of metaphysics, which must retain at least some features of scientificity in order not to descend into scepticism, which he found to be an unacceptable position. In this regard, Kant notes: "The critique of reason thus finally leads necessarily to science; the dogmatic use of it without critique, on the contrary, leads to groundless assertions, to which one can oppose equally plausible ones, thus to scepticism" (Kant, 1998, p. 148). To overcome scepticism, it is necessary to define the goal of metaphysics, as without this, it is impossible to establish the tasks that the developers of metaphysical systems engage in, as well as the right of metaphysics to claim a scientific status comparable to that of mathematics and the natural sciences. On the other hand, metaphysics cannot claim an excessively large scope of cognition, as science typically does, because science addresses a wide range of objects, while metaphysics, according to Kant, should be concerned with reason itself and with the questions that arise from reason itself. In this context, Kant states: "Further, this science cannot be terribly extensive, for it does not deal with objects of reason, whose multiplicity is infinite, but merely with itself, with problems that spring entirely from its

own womb, and that are not set before it by the nature of things that are distinct from it but through its own nature" (Kant, 1998, p. 148).

In his *Lectures on the Philosophical Encyclopedia*, in the brief section devoted to metaphysics, Kant once again elaborates the thesis of metaphysics as a transcendental discipline. In these lectures, Kant formulates the question about the idea of metaphysics, i.e., the specifics of its cognition of the world. It is quite evident, the German philosopher reminds us, that metaphysics distracts from sensory perception. Therefore, metaphysics deals with special entities with no sensory connotations, making their perception as phenomena of the empirical world impossible. Natural science and mathematics rely precisely on such sensory perception; however, each of these sciences operates in its own way with the sensory forms of intuition – space and time, which function as *a priori* structures of consciousness. Metaphysics "transcends," overcoming the sensory world of phenomena in two possible aspects: (1) the objects of metaphysics have no sensory connotations, i.e., they are transcendental; and (2) the subject specificity of metaphysics lies in its study not of the "World of Things," but of the intellectual structures through which knowledge is constituted. This second aspect of metaphysics does not concern sensory intuition (including intellectual intuition) either but instead examines the "Titles of Thought" (*die Titel des Denkens*) that we employ in the process of cognition, when we "subordinate" objects of cognition to certain categories and thereby perform synthesis. Kant notes: "Metaphysics thus contains the titles of thought and teaches the use of reason regarding all alleged things. It considers the titles of thought in relation to the objects" (Kant AA XXIX, S. 34).

Kant's understanding of metaphysics manifests itself in three aspects. Firstly, when we speak of these "Titles of Thought" purely abstractly, not attempting to ascribe any

epistemological significance to them, i.e., when we consider them (pure concepts of understanding or categories) as ways or instruments of thinking about existence, without attributing them with the status of knowledge of that existence. Kant designates this abstract consideration of the “Titles of Thought” as transcendental metaphysics, distinguishing it from dogmatic metaphysics, which claims to achieve apodictic knowledge. Kant writes: “If, then, I consider the titles of thought in and of themselves, metaphysics arises from this: now I can speak of the titles of thought in abstracto, and from this arises transcendental metaphysics” (Kant AA XXIX, S. 34). Secondly, when we consider reason as a certain immanent force restricted by the possibilities related to sensory experience (Kant AA XXIX, S. 34). Thirdly, when we direct our epistemological efforts beyond sensory experience. In this case, we are dealing with metaphysics as a certain kind of reasoning (Vernünfteley) that is incapable of true knowledge. According to Kant, metaphysics often finds itself in this very dangerous situation because its proponents, for a long historical period beginning with the rise of metaphysics in Ancient Greece, did not assign sufficient significance to a critical analysis of the capacity of metaphysics to know existence beyond the world of phenomena. Kant is dissatisfied with such an uncritical, dogmatic approach to metaphysics, which nevertheless continues to motivate many philosophers in their efforts to comprehend the transcendent (noumenal) world as a fully legitimate form of scientific knowledge. This metaphysical cognition, however, is grounded in the manipulation of concepts rather than in empirical experience or in the construction of concepts, as in mathematics. As a result, metaphysics tends toward a dogmatic mode of thinking, which should be viewed from a somewhat different, critical position rather than accepted as a legitimate method for metaphysical cognition.

In his *Lectures on Metaphysics* (“Metaphysik von Schön”), Kant notes: “Dogmatic knowledge must always arise a priori and from mere concepts. Whoever believes that he can construct a system out of pure rational concepts a priori without first having examined the faculty and then, as it were, going on adventures with this faculty is called a dogmatist, and we can easily see that dogmatism leads to nothing but errors” (Kant AA XXVIII, S. 466). Therefore, the main problem of metaphysics is its ability to synthesise *a priori* knowledge. This problem defines Kant’s intent to critically explore the possibility of Reason (speculative) to know the supersensible world and safeguard reason from errors and false conclusions about this world. Kant sees this as a danger, and therefore he is interested in how to eliminate it: “In this danger, in which pure reason often stands of going astray, we see very easily that it is necessary to examine beforehand (1) whether there is such a faculty of pure reason, (2) whether it gives us something real to recognise, and (3) whether we can determine the scope and limits of pure reason? I, therefore, have no other means than to determine the capacity of pure reason itself, and this is the CPR. Without this, no metaphysics is possible. Without being able to determine whether pure reason can judge without knowing its limits and scope, nothing secures us from error; we end up with fantasies and chimaeras without recognizing them for what they are” (Kant AA, XXVIII, S. 465). The main problem of metaphysics is its ability to synthesise a priori knowledge. This problem defines Kant’s intention to critically examine the capability of reason (speculative) to know the supersensible world in order to safeguard reason from errors and false conclusions about this world. Kant understands this danger perfectly well, and therefore he is interested in how to eliminate it: “In this danger, in which pure reason often stands of going astray, we see very easily that it is necessary to examine beforehand (1) whether

there really is such a faculty of pure reason, (2) whether it gives us something real to recognize, and (3) whether we can determine the scope and limits of pure reason? I, therefore, have no other means than to determine the capacity of pure reason itself, and this is the CPR. Without this, no metaphysics is possible. Without being able to determine whether pure reason can judge without knowing its limits and scope, nothing secures us from error; we end up with fantasies and chimaeras without recognizing them for what they are" (Kant AA XXVIII, S.465). Strict adherence to the "boundaries of reason," which requires thorough investigation rather than declarative limitation of reason's right to go beyond possible experience into the realm of metaphysical ideas, is Kant's response to the challenge of metaphysics and its claims to scientific status.⁷ At the same time, the German philosopher draws attention to two fundamental points: (1) the differences between transcendental philosophy and dogmatic metaphysics; and (2) the possibility of the existence of metaphysics (within the framework of critical philosophy) in two forms – *Metaphysics of Nature* and *Metaphysics of Freedom*.⁸ That is, Kant believed that his CPR convincingly demonstrated that metaphysics cannot engage in the study of the Absolute since it pertains to the supersensible, noumenal world. This is a crucial part of the discourse on

metaphysics, the unravelling of those limitations that make its claim to scientific status impossible. And yet, Kant set out his positive program – presenting his new metaphysics in several important treatises, in particular, the treatise *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (which meets the requirements of the *Metaphysics of Nature*) and the treatise *Metaphysics of Morals* (which meets the requirements of the *Metaphysics of Freedom*). The latter treatise includes both the "Metaphysical Foundations of the Doctrine of Right" and the "Metaphysical Foundations of the Doctrine of Virtue," which corresponds to Kant's understanding of the structure of practical reason, where law and morality have their own a priori structures, which allows for the formation of transcendental doctrines that constitute a new, "critical metaphysics."

In this context, it is worth noting that Kant's *Metaphysics of Nature* in no way solved the problems of "dogmatic metaphysics." It was not a kind of natural cosmology (like Wolff's) or a philosophy of nature (like the later Schelling and Hegel), since its mission was to solve the transcendental problems of the justification of natural science. As for the "Metaphysics of Morals," we are talking about the text of 1798, and not about the "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" (1784) or the "Critique of Practical Reason" (1788). The latter

⁷ Kant noted that metaphysics essentially depends on human interest in such somewhat strange, unfounded considerations, as well as on the desire to perceive these considerations as truth: "How could anyone fail to see that metaphysics was nothing but mere argumentation, empty reasoning? The metaphysicians always boasted of the thoroughness of their proofs, but they would have convinced no one by them if everyone were not already inclined to accept the propositions, even without proof, since his own interest lay in them - and one was always accustomed to make up in zeal what was lacking in thorough insight; but the Zealot disagrees with the philosopher, and this proves how necessary it is to advance the criticism of metaphysics" (Kant AA XXVIII, S. 465–466).

⁸ An interesting aspect of Kant's philosophical discourse is his teaching of traditional metaphysics to university students. Kant taught courses in ontology, cosmology, psychology (empirical and rational), and natural theology, using a textbook by the famous Wolffian scholar, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. The teaching of natural theology was based on a textbook by Johann August Ebergard, a devoted Wolffian figure. This practice continued even after the formation of critical philosophy. As we can see, in his lectures, Kant – following the academic requirements of the time – was obliged to pay considerable attention to the textbook, and this did not fully align with the transcendental approach to metaphysics. In the absence of his own textbooks, he was required to teach from someone else's, which is what Kant did.

works, as, incidentally, did the *CPR*, performed a critical function of clearing away dogmatic statements about the nature of knowledge and moral imperatives, clarifying their grounding in the *a priori* structures of judgment and reason. The positive program of the *Metaphysics of Freedom*, based on previous critical developments, had to answer the question of what metaphysics should be as a transcendental doctrine, and of what parts (the doctrine of right and the doctrine of virtue) it should consist.⁹

Thus, metaphysics must be limited to the study of those transcendental foundations that make possible our knowledge of nature, as well as our understanding of the maxims and imperatives that make possible our actions and the choice between good and evil. This metaphysics makes impossible the “elevation” to the supersensible world. This option was fundamentally closed to Kant. Thus, Kant does not consider it appropriate to include within metaphysics the entire scope of issues addressed by traditional metaphysics. His project of metaphysics is not reduced to ontology (if transcendental logic is considered such an ontology), but also includes the *Metaphysics of Nature* and the *Metaphysics of Freedom*. Furthermore, Kant’s position did not imply any identity between thinking and being (as a thing in itself); on the contrary, Kant saw a dualism between them. Reason gives laws to nature – a clear maxim of transcendental idealism. This maxim has caused much difficulty for modern (as well as earlier, 19th century) interpretations of Kant’s philosophy

in the spirit of fashionable realism and its various versions.¹⁰

At the same time, Kant assessed negatively the role of speculative reason as an organon of metaphysical cognition. Speculation creates the illusion of knowledge, as it confuses our reason with dialectical contradictions that distance us from the truth rather than bringing us closer to it. The new metaphysics must abandon speculative reasoning about its objects, since such reasoning makes it impossible to effectively apply the transcendental method. Hegel later complained about Kant’s disdain for speculative reason, which, in his view, slowed the progress of metaphysics.

And yet, despite the rapid success of Kant’s transcendentalism in Germany during his lifetime and afterward, transcendentalism was reinterpreted and even rejected by various philosophical movements based on different principles. In this respect, Kant did not completely defeat “dogmatic metaphysics”; it demonstrated a remarkable ability to change, transform, and acquire new, convincing, and, as many believed, “fruitful” philosophical forms.

Hegel’s speculative philosophy as a new kind of metaphysics

It seems that, despite Kant’s warnings, Hegel’s philosophy demonstrates a kind of “return” to a dogmatic position, and therefore to metaphysics. This appears to correspond to a certain trend in German philosophy at the

⁹ In various texts, Kant wrote about the need for a preliminary critique of metaphysics before discussing its cognitive possibilities. Thus, in his *Lectures on the Philosophical Encyclopedia*, comparing mathematics and metaphysics, Kant drew a clear conclusion: “In Mathematics I can certainly do without it, because there I have theorems on which I can rely, but in Metaphysics the Critique of Pure Reason is the essential thing” (Kant, AA XXIX, pp. 34–35).

¹⁰ A good overview of the current state of research on “Kantian realism” has been provided by Rudolf Meer. He discusses both historical forms of “realism” (with particular attention to Alois Riehl’s) and modern “realist” approaches to Kant’s transcendental idealism (Meer, 2022). The interpretations are interesting, some of them original, but not entirely convincing.

beginning of the 19th century, when transcendentalism gradually began to lose its influence. Of course, the intention to reject or limit Kant's transcendentalism went hand in hand with his strong support. Johann Fichte attempted to preserve Kant's transcendental idealism by modernizing it. For Fichte, the condition for the possibility of transcendental idealism is the *Absolute I* (Das Absolute Ich), which serves as the highest point and absolute precondition of knowledge and the foundation of understanding. Fichte outlined this approach in his work "The Foundation of the Entire Science of Knowledge" (1794), where he proposed a system of Absolute Knowledge based on the *Absolute I* as unconditional certainty. Fichte considered this version of transcendental idealism to be the only possible philosophical position that is consistent and coherent, unlike Kant's position. That is why, for Fichte, the objective does not appear as Nature (as Schelling later began to write about), but as an abstract not-I (das Nicht-Ich), which arises in the *I* as its internal self-limitation. Regarding this, Fichte writes the following: "The *I* and the *Not-I* are both products of the original actions of the *I*, and consciousness itself is a product of the first, original action of the *I* – the action of positing the *I* through itself..." (Fichte, 2021, p. 212). It is worth noting that Hegel's speculative philosophy was largely based on Fichte's doctrine of the *Absolute I*, significantly modifying it towards a system of absolute idealism, where the subjective (*I*, Self) and the objective (Nature) are viewed only as moments of the Absolute.¹¹

Friedrich Schelling took a slightly different position. At the beginning of his philosophical career, he wrote about the need to return to dogmatism, meaning to "supplement" Kant's critical philosophy – his transcendental idealism – with a special metaphysical discipline: the Philosophy of Nature, which, as is well known, did not correspond to either the letter or the spirit of Kant's transcendentalism. In his "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism" (1795), Schelling notes the extraordinary appeal of dogmatism, the effectiveness of which could not be definitively refuted even by the most sophisticated system of criticism. He developed this investigation in his treatises, where he examined issues of natural philosophy alongside transcendental philosophy. Of course, this was not a return to "pre-Kantian" metaphysics – that is, the "dogmatic metaphysics" of the Wolffian type, against which Kant had opposed himself. However, this new version of metaphysics is grounded in a firm belief in the possibility of knowing the supersensible world – the deep principles of nature as a living whole – and also the Absolute as that higher unity where all contradictions converge and find their reconciliation.¹² Schelling tried to combine the transcendental approach (which resulted in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*) with the speculative one, constructing a philosophy of nature. An effective method of such cognition is intellectual intuition, which includes two aspects – receptive and creative. The philosopher (like the artist, the genius) contemplates what he constructs and creates;

¹¹ An example of Fichte's speculative reflection can be seen in the following passage: "We must conduct an experiment and ask, How can A and –A, being and non-being, reality and negation, be thought together in a manner that does not annihilate and annul them?" (Fichte, 2021, p. 212). This is a remarkable instance of speculation, which Hegel was apparently guided by at the beginning of his philosophical career.

¹² While early Schelling's philosophy demonstrated its dependence on art, his later philosophy – the Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation – unfolds as a metaphysical (theosophical) doctrine about the Absolute, where Schelling presents a rather mystical doctrine about the theogonic process, in which God's self-revelation occurs in the history of the human spirit. In his later works, Schelling refers to this knowledge as "philosophical empiricism," which embodies the so-called positive philosophy in contrast to the negative, purely rationalist philosophy he pursued in his youth, which received unprecedented development

his power lies in such constitutive contemplation, in intuition, and not in the conceptual elaboration of the Absolute (*Absolute Identity*, as Schelling noted) into a system of categories: "The whole of philosophy starts, and must start, from a principle which, as the absolute principle, is also at the same time the absolutely identical. An absolutely simple and identical cannot be grasped or communicated through description, nor through concepts at all. It can only be intuited. Such an intuition is the organ of all philosophy. – But this intuition, which is an intellectual rather than a sensory one, and has as its object neither the objective nor the subjective, but the absolutely identical" (Schelling, 1993, p. 229). This constitutes a completely frank defense of intellectual intuition as a way, method, and organ of philosophical cognition.

Hegel did not share the approaches to the Absolute either with Fichte (whose Absolute I was too subjective, although he viewed the concept of Absolute Science positively) or with Schelling, who reconciled opposing principles in an absolute identity that is indifferent to its distinctions. In particular, Hegel was not satisfied with his university colleague Schelling. For Hegel, all these innovations of Schelling did not advance but rather distanced philosophy from the true path of cognizing the Absolute, especially since Schelling "demeaned" the power of conceptual cognition by giving preference to intellectual intuition. Already in the Jena period, Hegel came to the conclusion about the "power of the concept" and the need to develop a conceptual definition of the Absolute.

At the same time, Hegel, apparently under Schelling's influence, realized that the Absolute is the only subject of philosophical (metaphysical) cognition. But how was such cognition to be constructed? Hegel was convinced that it must be scientific cognition, not some form of art. Therefore, Schelling merely played at scientific cognition without approaching true science. Philosophy, however, must be a science – Fichte had convinced Hegel of this – and the Absolute Science. Such a Science cannot rely on intellectual intuition. No intuition in the cognition of the Absolute! As Arthur Kok notes, this rejection of intellectual intuition had conceptual consequences: "By denying the possibility of an intellectual intuition, and apparently not needing it for his philosophy of the Absolute, Hegel also abandons the idea that absolute being-with-itself is a divine originator or uncreated creator" (Kok, 2013, p. 266). Hegel gives the Absolute the status of infinite reality, which includes all that exists as its moments and therefore does not need either a divine creator or an eternal, uncreated originator for its signification. Hegel radicalizes the Absolute both in the epistemological aspect (its cognition is not intellectual intuition but positively rational, i.e., speculative) and in the ontological aspect (because the Absolute, being above any creation and not requiring an act of creation, cannot be the subject of metaphysics – especially if metaphysics rejects scientific status).

That is why Hegel notes a loss of interest in "metaphysics as a science" in the philosophy of that time.¹³ Instead, scientific metaphysics is

in Hegel. Thus, regarding this new variety of empiricism, Schelling noted: "A higher level of philosophical empiricism, however, is one that maintains that the supersensible can become an actual object of experience, whereby it goes without saying that this experience cannot be of the merely sensuous type but must have something about it that is inherently mysterious, mystical, and for which reason we can call the doctrines of this type doctrines of a mystical empiricism" (Schelling, 2007, p. 171). All of this is very far from both Kant's critical philosophy and Hegel's absolute idealism.

¹³ In Ukrainian philosophy of the Soviet period, metaphysics was viewed as a dead product of Western philosophy, as an anti-dialectical method that held little significance for Marxist philosophy, where only dialectics was considered worthy of attention. Kant's antinomies of pure reason were interpreted as

being replaced by certain fictional metaphysical doctrines that do not take into account the achievements of Kant's critical philosophy or offer strange metaphysical ideas that bear little resemblance to scientific achievements and do not meet the requirements of Absolute Science at all. Hegel realized the need for such a Science back at the University of Jena, where he taught courses on *Logic and Metaphysics*, as well as a course in *Realphilosophy* (the *Philosophy of Nature and Spirit*) for five years. As is known, all these lectures and creative searches finally led Hegel to write the great work "Phenomenology of Spirit" (hereinafter – *PhS*).

So, regarding the absence of scientific metaphysics (as Absolute Science), in his work *Science of Logic* (hereinafter – *SL*), Hegel sadly notes the following: "What was hitherto called *metaphysics* has been, so to speak, extirpated

root and branch, and has vanished from the ranks of the sciences. Where are the voices still to be heard of the ontology of former times, of the rational psychology, the cosmology, or indeed, even of the natural theology of the past, or where are they allowed to be heard?" (Hegel, 2010, p. 7). Therefore, all these parts of metaphysics (cosmology, rational psychology, natural theology) no longer hold influence over contemporary philosophical discourse, which consciously turns away from metaphysical questions, resulting in a situation where not only philosophers but also people are left without metaphysics. Furthermore, this asset is so significant and invaluable that if people lose metaphysics, then "the spirit engaged with its pure essence no longer has any real presence in its life" (Hegel, 2010, p. 7).¹⁴

negative dialectics, the first necessary step towards true dialectics. It was believed that Hegel took the next step, albeit on an idealistic basis. However, in Soviet philosophy, this was considered an important moment, as Hegel arrived at an understanding of the necessary synthesis of opposites, rather than their mere mutual exclusion, as Kant had done. It is clear that all these ideological dogmas effectively "killed" an adequate understanding of the issues regarding metaphysics as posed by Kant and Hegel. Among the well-known researchers of Kant and Hegel at that time were Volodymyr Shynkaruk, Mykhailo Bulatov, and Yuriy Kushakov. Perhaps the most devoted Marxist in the studies of German idealism was Bulatov, who continued to adhere to Marxist stereotypes in interpreting Hegel's philosophy for many years after the collapse of the Soviet system. As before, for Bulatov, the main thing in Hegel is the so-called dialectic. Regarding Kant, Bulatov interpreted his philosophy as a precursor to Hegel. Bulatov remained loyal to Hegel, seeing the author of the *SL* as the pinnacle of pre-Marxist philosophy and, in a certain sense, an exemplary thinker whose legacy occupies a significant place in contemporary philosophy. It is evident that it is difficult to agree with such a hypertrophied assessment of Hegel's philosophical achievements; this is far from the actual standing of his philosophy in modern thought. Likely, his philosophy has more historical than conceptual significance. However, not everyone will agree with this. Both in the past and now, there have been advocates of the view regarding the overwhelming power and grandeur of Hegel's system. In this context, one can mention how enthusiastically the renowned researcher of German idealism Richard Kroner spoke of Hegel: "One must demand of everyone that he do this system the slightest honor worthy of it, that he take it as it has itself taken the cause it serves: namely, seriously. The tremendous power of Hegel to move in the element of the concepts he has coined with playful ease, as it were, has made us misjudge the no less seriousness that characterizes the master of this game and himself" (Kroner, 1924, S. IX). He even compared Hegel's philosophy to the "Eternal Philosophy" (*Philosophia Perennis*). This, by the way, resulted in his peculiar methodological guideline – critical reflection on Hegel's system must conclude with: "The *critical reflections* end with the presentation of Hegel" (Kroner, 1924, S. XIII). It is a strange position, even if one has switched from the neo-Kantian to the neo-Hegelian camp.

¹⁴ In this regard, the attempts of some modern researchers to position Hegel's speculative philosophy, in particular *Logic*, as an anti-metaphysical project seem somewhat strange. I would like to note that such a view is very influential among modern researchers of Hegel. Back in the 1970s, Klaus Hartmann published a rather popular and, as it turned out over time, influential article in which he tried to prove that *SL* is not focused on rethinking metaphysical problems, but on building a system of categories. Therefore, at best, it

This careless attitude toward metaphysics is associated by Hegel with Kant's criticism, which shattered our confidence in the power of metaphysical discourse and the ability to know the "Supreme Reality." Kant's critique transformed metaphysics into an empty, powerless form of knowledge devoid of scientific status, thereby losing its right to claim a worthy place in the realm of the Spirit.¹⁵ In this regard, Hegel notes: "Metaphysics – even one that restricted itself to the fixed concepts of the understanding without rising to

speculation, to the nature of the concept and of the idea – did have for its aim the cognition of truth; it did probe its subject matter to ascertain whether they were something true or not, whether substances or phenomena" (Hegel, 2010, p. 693).

This limitation on the possibilities of metaphysical knowledge of the "Supreme Reality" turns "metaphysical truths" into an unsubstantiated belief that, although this Being is theoretically unknowable, these truths play an important role as moral postulates

is a categorical analysis of reality, and not the disclosure of some metaphysical Absolute. That is, *SL* can be understood without referring to the Absolute. (See: Hartmann, 1972). Already after the death of this talented author, his book was published, in which he consistently substantiated his anti-metaphysical position from the standpoint of theoretical-logical consideration. (See: Hartmann, 1999). This approach also influenced later anti-metaphysical studies of Hegel, having many supporters. The discussions surrounding such an anti-metaphysical approach are interesting. Let us recall at least the discussion between Frederick Beiser and Terry Pinkard. In his critical article, Beiser disagreed with the position of Pinkard, and other authors of the book, regarding the possibility and acceptability of an anti-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel. (See: Beiser, 1995). Pinkard, having stolen this opportunity, doctors, is also the editor, and also, at the same time, the author of this book. (See: *Hegel Reconsidered*, 1994). Therefore, Pinkard defended not only his own views, but also the views of other authors of this book. (See: Pinkard, 1996). An interesting overview of this problem was provided by Robert Sterne, noting that, unlike continental philosophers, anti-metaphysical tendencies had a long history among British Hegelians. (See: Sterne, 1994). It is noteworthy that Bertrand Russell, while studying at the university, belonged to the Hegelian circle, as did the famous British philosophers of the time – Thomas Hill Green, Francis Herbert Bradley, John Ellis McTaggart, Robin George Collingwood and others. Each of them interpreted Hegel's philosophy, his absolute idealism, in his own way. By the way, they were all supporters of coherence theory of truth, which stemmed from their idealistic position, the understanding that everything is in the Absolute, and almost any external relations have no ontological status. This is what, over time, forced Russell to abandon the Hegelian postulates of his teachers (e.g., McTaggart, Bradley) and to move rapidly towards the theory of external relations between things as the basis for a correspondence theory of truth. And in this context, Russell took a very negative position towards Hegel, his idealism and dialectics, and his absolutist claims to truth. On this movement of Russell, see: (Kozlovskiy, 2024).

¹⁵ Despite his critical stance towards Kant's philosophy, Hegel held the achievements of the founder of German philosophy in great esteem. He wrote the following about this: "I should point out that in this work I make frequent references to the Kantian philosophy (which to many might seem superfluous) because, whatever might be said here or elsewhere of its distinctive character or of particular parts of its exposition, it constitutes the foundation and the starting point of the new German philosophy, and this is a merit of which it can boast undiminished by whatever fault may be found in it. An added reason for these frequent references in the objective logic is that Kantian philosophy delves deeply into important, *more specific* aspects of the logic, whereas later philosophical expositions have paid little attention to these aspects and in some instances have even expressed crude – though not unavenged – contempt for them" (Hegel, 2010, p. 40). At the same time, Hegel reminds us that for some philosophers of his time, the achievements of critical philosophy serve as a basis for intellectual laziness, a refusal to independently seek truth, relying instead on past accomplishments: "The philosophy of Kant thus serves as a cushion for an intellectual indolence which takes comfort in the fact that everything is already proved and settled" (Hegel, 2010, p. 40).

(assumptions regarding the existence of this Being, rather than veritable principles of its cognition), without claiming that Reason is capable of knowing it. Hegel accuses Kant of negatively influencing one fundamental feature of metaphysics, from which the author of *CPR* consciously distances himself – speculative thinking. This is because relying on such thinking requires a rejection of experience, which is utilized by the category of Understanding, while speculative thinking emerges as a function of Reason. In contrast to Kant, who denies the capability of Reason to produce knowledge about the supersensible world, Hegel elevates Reason to a higher level, granting it the right to know this world (the Absolute, Absolute Spirit) and to produce universal knowledge about it. Moreover, this knowledge is based on the transformation of the Absolute, since this Absolute is neither a Spinozian substance identical to itself nor the mysterious Kantian thing-in-itself, but rather a special substance that is simultaneously a subject – self-consciousness – which implies movement and negation within the Absolute itself.¹⁶

Negation “works” as a principle of unfolding knowledge not externally but internally – as a

principle of the dialectical movement of speculative thought within the Absolute itself. Thus, the cognition of the Absolute occurs as the negation of the negation of its (the Absolute’s) previous definitions, and this negation is immanent to the Absolute itself, to its mode of unfolding. The *principle of negation of the negation* constitutes the algorithm of the dialectical movement of the categorical definitions of the Absolute. It should be noted that only within the framework of such a purely speculative movement does dialectics make sense and find application in philosophical discourse. It is no coincidence that Hegel designated dialectics as a necessary dimension of speculative cognition and did not consider it possible to extend this method beyond the limits of such cognition. This follows from another basic feature of this method – it presupposes an internal teleology, a goal whose achievement requires precisely this method. In Hegel, this goal is obvious – the absolute cognition of the Absolute within a system of categorical definitions in order to achieve Absolute Truth. Only this goal justifies dialectics as a method of philosophical cognition.

Contemporary researcher Brady Bowman recognized a special role for negation in the

¹⁶ Hegel pays particular attention to the category of the Absolute in his *SL*. Here, the Absolute appears as the total movement of various categorical definitions within itself, as its identity and completeness inherently include the distinctions of these definitions, which ensures this continuous movement: “But in actual fact the exposition of the absolute is the absolute’s own doing, an act that begins from itself and arrives at itself... Or again, the absolute which is only as absolute identity is only the absolute of an external reflection. It is, therefore, not the absolutely absolute but the absolute in a determination, or it is an attribute” (Hegel, 2010, pp. 468–469). Therefore, this Absolute reveals itself in different modalities – as Absolute Idea (speculative logic), Idea of Nature (philosophy of nature), and the Spirit (doctrines about subjective, objective, and absolute spirit). Therefore, on the one hand, these are attributes of the Absolute, and on the other hand, this is the Absolute in its special fullness and completeness – from the state of pure thinking to the totality of all possible spiritual dimensions. Interestingly, the well-known researcher of German idealism, Karen Gloy, examines the various approaches that developed in German philosophy after Kant regarding the understanding of the Absolute. The researcher carefully analyzes the views of Fichte, Schelling, Jacobi, Hölderlin, and Hegel to clarify the conceptual paths German philosophers took to represent it. According to Gloy, for Hegel, the Absolute resolves complex contradictory problems: “The principle thus embodies the unity of form and matter, of universality and particularity, of unity and multiplicity, of identity and difference. Such a specific form is the Absolute, which no longer has anything outside itself but encompasses everything, even difference and opposition, and thus represents totality” (Gloy, 2021, S. 115).

cognition of the Absolute and its self-revelation. The researcher characterizes the author's position as "negative asymmetricalism," whose essence lies in the claim that "I therefore suggest that we create a new category of theories about negation, namely, negative asymmetricalism, which is distinguished from positive asymmetricalism by the claim that affirmation ultimately presupposes and is in some sense reducible to negation. In the history of thought on negation, therefore, Hegel is *sui generis*" (Bowman, 2013, p. 24). Bowman believes that "negative asymmetricalism" is crucial for both the cognition of the Absolute and its unfolding. Hegel emphasizes negation as a defining characteristic of the Absolute. This gives the Absolute the necessary dynamics, which occur as an infinite negation, acting incessantly like a clear algorithm. To reveal the Absolute, speculative thinking is essential.¹⁷

Kant's position consisted in refusing speculative thought – that is, Reason – the ability to know the Absolute, and especially in denying any fundamental significance to negation in the process of cognition. Kant limited Reason to a regulative function, as true

knowledge is the prerogative of the Understanding and its synthetic power. However, this knowledge is restricted to the realm of phenomena related to human subjectivity and self-consciousness, which determines the dependence of phenomena on the *a priori* structures of subjectivity.

Hegel is not satisfied with the approach to metaphysics proposed by Kant; as the author of the *CPR*, metaphysics appears as a purely conceptual notion, whereas metaphysics must seek Truth that is not reducible to the phenomena of subjective consciousness – those definitions of metaphysics produced by the Understanding. Therefore, it is not surprising that Hegel rejects such a subjective view of metaphysics: "The triumph of the Kantian critique over this metaphysics consists, on the contrary, in sidelining any investigation that would have truth for its aim and this aim itself; it simply does not pose the one question which is of interest, namely whether a determinate subject, in this case the abstract *I* of representation, has truth in and for itself" (Hegel, 2010, p. 693). Furthermore, Hegel believes that such a subjective understanding

¹⁷ In the British tradition, the attraction to speculative philosophy never completely disappeared. It is enough to recall neo-Hegelianism, where this tradition received a powerful impetus. No less influential in this respect was Alfred North Whitehead, the developer, together with Russell, of mathematical logicism and, a little later, of speculative process philosophy. For Whitehead, the peculiarity of such philosophy is that "Speculative Philosophy is the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted" (Whitehead, 1974, p. 3). Such philosophy assumes the interconnection and coherence of concepts within the framework of a general conceptual scheme: "It is the ideal of speculative philosophy that its fundamental notions shall not seem capable of abstraction from each other. In other words, it is presupposed that no entity can be conceived in complete abstraction from the system of the universe, and that it is the business of speculative philosophy to exhibit this truth. This character is its coherence" (Whitehead, 1974, p. 3). As we see, like Hegel, the speculative philosophy of the British scholar professed holism as a way of organizing philosophical knowledge and its movement. This is an organic philosophy. Hegel's speculative philosophy should not be confused with the variants of speculation offered by representatives of speculative realism (Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux, and others). As is known, they aim to overcome correlationism between the person who knows and the object of knowledge. Such correlationism was powerfully introduced by Kant, which limited the possibilities of understanding reality to those phenomena that we ourselves form. Speculative realists, each in their own way – without a unified position common to these philosophers – try to refute or limit this dependence, in particular by turning to prehistoric times, when humankind did not yet exist. This intention to look beyond subjectivity, to view the world from an objective standpoint, characterizes this type of speculative philosophizing.

of metaphysics “narrows” the tasks and goals with which philosophy should engage: “But to stay at appearances and the mere representations of ordinary consciousness is to give up on the concept and philosophy” (Hegel, 2010, p. 693).

Thus, Hegel defends speculative knowledge, considering it the only possible equivalent of metaphysical knowledge, which contradicts Kant’s transcendental principles. In this context, it is difficult to agree with the statement of the well-known researcher of German idealism, Vittorio Hösle, regarding Hegel’s development of transcendental philosophy. In his work dedicated to Hegel’s philosophy, he notes: “The foundational interest in the theoretical interpretation of the Hegelian system, which underpins this work, requires that Hegel’s philosophy be interpreted as a transcendental philosophy, indeed, in a certain sense, as the highest form of transcendental philosophy” (Hösle, 1998, S. 12). Hösle considers it possible to view Hegel’s transcendentalism as “higher,” in contrast to the finite transcendentalism of Kant and Fichte. This distinction is strange, especially

considering that Hegel’s philosophy, both in its method (which is a particular method outlined in the concluding part of the *SL*) and in its character (which is absolute idealism that presupposes total coverage of all being), does not meet the minimal criteria of transcendentalism.¹⁸ Finally, Hegel’s philosophy is speculative knowledge, the dimensions of which do not meet the requirements of transcendental philosophy. In contrast to transcendental knowledge, which is based on transcendental logic, speculative knowledge firmly relies on a specific logic – speculative logic – in which the dialectical unfolding of the system of categories of thought is the central task.¹⁹

This Logic reproduces both the ontological and theological structure of the Absolute, uniting its ontological and theological connotations.²⁰ Hegel writes: “Logic is to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. This realm is truth unveiled, truth as it is in and for itself. It can therefore be said that this content is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite

¹⁸ Hösle suggested examining Hegel’s philosophy from the perspective of intersubjectivity, particularly his *Realphilosophy*, which, according to the researcher, possesses significant intersubjective potential. This interpretation is noteworthy, although it does not always appear convincing, given the absolute (rather than objective) idealism of the author (*SL*). Nevertheless, Hösle found an appropriate approach to reveal the intersubjective aspects not only of the forms of objective and absolute spirit but also of the philosophy of nature, and even skillfully interpreted *Logic* through the lens of K.-O. Apel’s theory of intersubjectivity.

¹⁹ It is difficult to agree with Robert Williams’s opinion that the *PhS* can be considered an introduction to transcendental philosophy. I believe that the author has not provided sufficient arguments for such a conclusion, and his position does not seem well founded, especially considering that Williams concludes his analysis with the statement that “transcendental subject is metamorphosed into *Geist*, and *Geist* requires time and history to become self-conscious. *Geist*, as the form of a world, is historical and has a history” (Williams, 1985, p. 606). Such transcendentalism, in which some Spirit arises, cannot even be called “nonformal and determinate,” as Williams does.

²⁰ In the research literature, there are ongoing discussions regarding the modalities of the Absolute in Hegel’s speculative philosophy. For example, Ermylos Plevrakis draws attention to the problem of the relationship between the concept of the Absolute and God and, subsequently, to Hegel’s philosophical theology. He writes: “What does ‘the Absolute’ mean for Hegel? Likewise, questions are raised about *God* or the *Absolute Spirit*, which is usually connoted similarly to *God* and the *Absolute*. Initially, no distinction is even made between *God* and the *Absolute*” (Plevrakis, 2017, p. 15). Plevrakis highlights the evolution of the concept of the Absolute in interpretations that have been developed in many studies of Hegel’s philosophy throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

spirit" (Hegel, 2010, p. 29). Hegel addresses this issue in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where he says that in a philosophical (i.e., speculative) examination of religion, one must resolutely reject the usual opposition between knowledge and God. This is the wrong way to know God. In fact, the philosophical cognition of religion must be based on the coincidence of cognition with its object. This means that there is a fundamental identity (in content) between religion and philosophy, rather than a radical difference. Hegel formulates this as follows: "Content of philosophy, its need and interest, is wholly in common with that of religion. The object of religion, like that of philosophy, is the eternal truth, God and nothing but God and the explication of God. Philosophy is only explicating itself when it explicates religion, and when it explicates itself it is explicating religion" (Hegel, 1988, pp. 78–79). As we can

see, Hegel consistently formulates coincidence, even identity (in content), between speculative logic and the philosophy of religion. This fully corresponds to the intentions of his absolute idealism and, therefore, to the absolutist intentions of his *Logic*.²¹

This significantly distinguishes his *Logic* from Kant's transcendental logic, as well as from the philosophy of religion of the author of the *CPR*. As is known, Kant created a transcendental doctrine of religion, which he set out in the work *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*. Kant's doctrine of religion differs from Hegel's both in subject matter and in method of analysis.

Based on this special speculative logic, rather than the usual formal logic, actual speculative knowledge is what Kant defined as metaphysical knowledge.²² In this context, the subject area of metaphysics also transforms, losing its division into clearly defined

²¹ It is characteristic that such an ontological-theological understanding of *Logic* received some support from a certain part of Hegel's students and followers. The well-known Hegelian Philip Marheineke consistently defended the position that it was possible to use speculative methods, based on Hegel's ideas, to form a philosophy of religion and set out the basic dogmas of Christianity. Marheineke was convinced that Christian dogmatics must be based on the speculative idea of self-movement, which best expresses God. Theology must have an internal, immanent connection with philosophy, just as philosophy is revealed as immanent knowledge of God. Of course, we are talking about Hegel's philosophy: "It will become apparent that the concept of theology cannot be grasped in its truth without its intrinsic and unique relationship to philosophy, just as philosophy refers to theology through itself" (Marheineke, 1842, p. 59). This theologian sincerely believed that Hegel's speculative method truly reveals the essence of God, because this method itself is an absolute method. The strength of this method lies in the fact that it allows us to derive all the characteristics of the Christian religion from its essence, without the aid of any empirical or historical experience. As we can see, this is the apotheosis of speculation! This attitude towards Hegel's idea of the identity of philosophy (logic) and theology was shared by some well-known philosophers and theologians of the time, especially those belonging to the Hegelian circle (for example, Johann Gabler, Carl Göschel, Carl Daub, and others). Incidentally, it was from this absolutist position that Marheineke criticized Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation*.

²² This *Logic* has no relation to scientific knowledge in its usual understanding; it only makes sense within the framework of Hegel's system of absolute idealism. It is therefore not surprising that all attempts by Marxist philosophers to apply Hegel's system of categories to the study of real social and economic problems always ended in the production of some kind of scholastic construct. In this context, we can mention attempts to create a materialistic system of dialectical categories; discussions about where to start this system; how to apply the dialectical method to the construction of a system of categories of socialist economic theory; how to correctly understand the dialectical contradictions of socialism – whether they exist or whether they are ideological diversions of dissidents, etc. All these "developments" came to nothing, and now it is difficult to find anyone who even remembers them. Even fewer people study these works.

disciplines – ontology, cosmology, psychology, and natural theology. Instead, the subject of speculative (metaphysical) knowledge is the categorical definition of the Absolute based on the dialectical principle of the negation of negation.

Therefore, speculative cognition moves according to the algorithm of the “unity of opposites,” where each such “unity” is not a complete whole, but only a moment in the cognition of the Absolute. Speculative cognition has an internal teleology of the movement of thought – from abstract definitions of the Absolute to a consistent synthesis of all contradictory definitions for the sake of a concrete (total) cognition of the Absolute. For Hegel, the Absolute is not cognized instantly, in an act of intellectual intuition; its cognition is a process in which the result necessarily includes the path of cognition as a necessary factor in the disclosure of the Absolute itself. This is the peculiarity of speculative cognition.

The main aspects of Hegel’s speculative philosophy are formulated in the *PhS*, where he substantiates the rules of speculative reasoning, highlighting their distinction from other types of reasoning (mathematical, natural sciences). From the perspective of form, speculative thinking modifies the connection between the subject of judgment and its predicate. Hegel draws attention to this peculiarity of speculative expression: “What has been said can be expressed formally in this way. The nature of judgment, or of the proposition per se, which includes the

difference between subject and predicate within itself, is destroyed by the speculative judgment, and the identical proposition, which the former comes to be, contains the counter-stroke to those relations” (Hegel, 2018, p. 39). In the *PhS*, Hegel unfolded his system of Absolute Knowledge (*das Absolute Wissen*) regarding Absolute Spirit based on speculative expression.²³

And one more detail that is rarely paid attention to: for such thinking, along with speculative expression, a special vision or contemplation is also necessary. Because how else can one grasp this unity of opposites, where each of the opposing sides necessarily includes its other, that is, it is not identical with itself but includes distinction? And all this “works” during the development of cognition, especially if it is the development of the Absolute. This development cannot be a purely logical process, even if a dialectical algorithm is added to it. Even in this case, it will not constitute the entire speculation of thinking but only its negatively rational moment. There is also a positively rational one, which includes this special vision of the unity of opposing concepts and categories. This grasping in many ways resembles intellectual intuition, although it is not reducible to it. It is precisely in order to grasp and maintain this contradictory unity that a special speculative expression is necessary, which, Hegel is convinced, is based on the possibilities of the German language – its speculative possibilities.²⁴

²³ An interesting analysis of the specifics of speculative thinking was conducted by the well-known German philosopher Dieter Heinrich. The researcher considers the ability for universal synthesis to be a basic feature of speculative thinking (Heinrich, 1999, pp. 85–138). This is undoubtedly an important characteristic of this type of cognitive activity, but not the decisive one; a more significant feature is the ability for speculative articulation, which unfolds through the negation of the negation, i.e., synthesis, where previous knowledge (thesis and antithesis) constitutes moments of the new synthesis.

²⁴ I would like to note that this is a separate and important topic of Hegelian philosophy, which is fruitfully discussed by modern researchers. Hegel’s not very numerous but nonetheless meaningful and interesting judgments about the role of language in speculative reasoning – especially regarding the significance of the German language – are analyzed. Some scholars even note the growing interest among representatives of analytical philosophy in Hegel, his doctrine of language, and speculative reasoning. Of course, one must

Therefore, in the *PhS*, speculative cognition has two sides: 1) through it, consciousness rises to the level of total thinking and, from this “higher point,” encompasses and reveals all possible dimensions of the Absolute Spirit; 2) at the same time, it represents the path of self-knowledge of the Absolute Spirit for the finite subjective spirit, since this subjective spirit is incorporated into (more precisely, within) the Absolute Spirit. Is Absolute Knowledge a necessary dimension of the Absolute Spirit? This is consistent with the principle of absolute idealism: Absolute Knowledge is not merely knowledge about the Absolute Spirit but knowledge *of* the Absolute Spirit itself. And this is Absolute Science, which

is speculative metaphysics based on the principle of the unity of thought and being. As mentioned above, this metaphysics is grounded in the principle of the unity of thought and being.²⁵ This principle became the universal foundation of Hegel’s absolute idealism, serving as its justification.²⁶ This principle differed from the relationship between thought and being demonstrated by the systems of his great predecessors – Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. For Kant, such identity is impossible because his transcendental idealism is built on the dualism of thought and being, as true being is unknowable; it is the thing-in-itself. For Fichte, this identity is purely subjective, since being is posited by the *Absolute I*, that is, formal self-

take into account the wide range of analytical interpretations of Hegel – from the denial of his method of philosophizing, the artificiality and contrived complexity of the language in which Hegel’s texts are written (for example, Bertrand Russell, George Edward Moore, Willard Van Orman Quine) to at least partial acceptance of Hegel (for example, Georg Henrik von Wright, Jay Bernstein, Arthur Danto, Robert Brandom). For an interesting, though not exhaustive, overview of analytical studies of Hegel’s philosophy, see Redding (2007). For Russell’s attitude towards Hegel’s speculative reasoning, his so-called dialectic, see: (Kozlovskiy, 2024).

²⁵ It is known that Hegel appealed to the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides, who supposedly first postulated the unity of thought and being. According to Hegel, this meant the ontologization of thought and the rejection of any scepticism or sophistry. Hegel notes: “This thinking or representation that has before it only a certain being, existence, must be referred to the earlier mentioned beginning of the science, created by Parmenides – the one who purified and raised to pure thinking, to being as such, his own otherwise imagistic representations, and thus also the representations of his descendants, thereby initiating an element of science. – What is first in science must inevitably turn out to be first historically. And we must consider the one or being of the Eleatics as the first case of knowledge through thought” (Hegel, 2010, p. 65). For the German philosopher, Parmenides is a kind of forerunner of absolute idealism. As always, Hegel did not pay much attention to the differences between his own position and the positions of those philosophical predecessors to whom he appealed in order to justify speculative philosophy. Parmenides is no exception.

²⁶ The interpretation of absolute idealism proposed by the well-known American researcher Robert Brandom is worth noting: “It should be remembered to begin with that I am not identifying the absolute idealism Hegel propounds in the *Phenomenology* with objective idealism. As indicated in the preceding, I am analyzing absolute idealism as comprising three component theses: conceptual realism, objective idealism, and conceptual idealism. To assess the interest of absolute idealism as so conceived, one must look at it as a whole” (Brandom, 2019, p. 213). These three semantic modalities define Hegel’s absolute idealism. Therefore, according to Brandom, it is necessary to take into account this semantic “triad” when defining this basic concept, because our understanding of Hegel’s philosophy depends significantly on it. Thus, the American researcher defines the semantic meaning of conceptual realism as follows: “Conceptual realism is the thesis that the objective world, the world as it is in itself, no less than the realm of subjective activity that shapes what the world is for consciousness, is conceptually structured” (Brandom, 2019, p. 213). As we can see, Brandom offers three modalities for considering this concept, which perhaps do not align with Hegel’s intentions. To a greater extent, this interpretation reflects the analytical pragmatism of the author of the study.

consciousness. Schelling posits such unity differently in his early systems and later philosophy. Ultimately, the late system of positive philosophy implies a certain mystical unity of thought and being, where being appears as a Higher Being that can be known through complex paths relying not on rational but on mystical (theosophical) cognition, developing throughout History.

Interestingly, the fundamental dependence of Hegel's philosophy on the Absolute is emphasized by the well-known German philosopher Nikolai Hartmann: "If we now add that the absolute, because it is reason, is nowhere completely there except where it comprehends itself, it follows that in truth it is not at all a beginning of all things outside of us, but rather that we ourselves are directly the absolute in our self-understanding thinking. It is, therefore, pleonastic to call logic the *logic of the absolute*. Rather, logic is, by its very nature, the science of the absolute. More correctly, it is the absolute itself unfolding in its determinations" (Hartmann, 1974, S. 364). He relates this total focus of Hegel on the Absolute to a specific, non-Kantian understanding of the functions of categories in the cognition of the Absolute, defining these functions as a fundamental feature of speculative thinking: "The categories of thought are categories of the absolute, and therefore categories of everything that exists, of nature as well as of spirit. The basic position of Hegelian logic can be summarized in this sentence. Of course, this cannot apply to all thinking. It only applies to pure, speculative thinking" (Hartmann, 1974, S. 364). In this aspect, Hegel does not agree with Kant regarding the restriction of categories to the function of

synthesizing experience. For Hegel, categories have a significantly higher status – they are elements of Absolute Science that reveal a truth that cannot be reduced to any other truths, as it is the truth in "the final instance."

For Hegel, true truth appears as the *Absolute Truth*, which claims to be able to answer all the fundamental questions of existence. This follows from the idea that the world, humanity, and even God are moments in the revelation of the Absolute. According to Hegel, true philosophy must be such absolute cognition.

In fact, Hegel's speculative philosophy radicalizes the metaphysical aspirations toward the comprehensiveness of cognition of the "Supreme Reality," the Absolute.²⁷ It is quite evident that all these universalist aspirations of speculative cognition obviously had metaphysical implications that did not align with transcendental directives, particularly Kant's belief that both speculative thought and dialectics (the inner principle of unfolding speculative reflections) cannot fulfil cognitive functions, as this is the prerogative of sensory intuition in unity with the categorical synthesis of the Understanding. If dialectics has a destructive inclination that makes "metaphysics as science" impossible, then speculative thought retains certain intellectual rights, namely, the right to form Ideas of Reason that lack cognitive power, and in this Kant was steadfast. However, these ideas can perform a regulative function in cognition, serving as entirely positive elements. Nevertheless, the regulative function of the Ideas of Reason concerns scientific cognition, not metaphysical.

²⁷ The aforementioned British neo-Hegelian Francis Bradley viewed the Absolute as the only reality that has true ontological status because the Absolute is present in every phenomenon without being reduced to these phenomena. Everything that exists has power only through the Absolute: "The Absolute is present in, and, in a sense, it is alike each of its special appearances; though present everywhere again in different values and degrees" (Bradley, 1962, p. 404). The Absolute appears as a complete, true Reality that encompasses everything – the empirical world, history. None of this has full ontological status without the Absolute. Bradley demonstrates an even more radical, uncompromising position on the Absolute than his teacher, Hegel.

For Hegel, the situation appears to be the opposite – speculative knowledge, which employs Reason, its concepts, and Ideas, is the true Science that enables Absolute Knowledge, in contrast to specific sciences limited by empirical experience or mathematics, restricted by external constructions of geometric figures and the manipulation of numbers and artificial, symbolic language.²⁸ For Hegel, all these methods are unsatisfactory because they are incapable of even bringing us closer to the knowledge of the Absolute – the only true reality which, according to the author of the *SL*, is worthy of philosophical attention.

According to Hegel, what method corresponds to the tasks of speculative (absolute) knowledge? A comprehensive exposition of the only possible method in the realm of speculative philosophy is provided by Hegel in his *SL*, particularly in the final part of this work, which discusses the Absolute Idea. As Hegel attempted to demonstrate, this Idea is the absolute method that enables the unfolding of a system of categorical determinations of the Absolute. This method is the internal movement of the concept itself and of being itself, as the absolute method requires such unity. Hegel notes: “For this course the method has resulted as the absolutely self-knowing concept, as the concept that has the absolute, both as subjective and objective, as its subject matter, and consequently as the pure correspondence of the concept and its reality,

a concrete existence that is the concept itself” (Hegel, 2010, p. 737). Hegel even reinforces the “absolutist” status of this method when he states: “The method is therefore to be acknowledged as the universal, internal and external mode, free of restrictions, and as the absolutely infinite force to which no object that may present itself as something external, removed from reason and independent of it, could offer resistance, or be of a particular nature opposite to it, and could not be penetrated by it. It is therefore soul and substance, and nothing is conceived and known in its truth unless completely subjugated to the method” (Hegel, 2010, p. 737).

Thus, the absolute cognition of the Absolute requires the Absolute method – this is a clear formula of Hegel’s speculative metaphysics. These metaphysical disciplines lose their independence, and their subject matter (partially, and at a completely different level, and in other conceptual forms – the philosophy of nature and spirit) appears as necessary moments of cognition of the Absolute. It is such cognition that constitutes the fundamental definition of speculative philosophy, without which it is impossible to understand the features of Hegel’s philosophy, his intention to encompass the entire history of philosophy, and the philosophical ideas of past eras as necessary stages on the way to a completed system of absolute idealism, which, Hegel is convinced, is his own speculative philosophy.²⁹

²⁸ Hegel analyses the peculiarities of mathematical knowledge and mathematical methods in various texts. He pays attention to both algebraic methods, particularly differential and integral calculus, as well as the characteristics of constructing geometric figures and the proof methods used in the mathematical sciences. A thorough investigation of mathematical methods is elaborated in the *SL* (Hegel, 2010, pp. 204–260). For Hegel, as for Kant, mathematical methods do not correspond to the aims of philosophy; therefore, they cannot claim an active role in “speculative metaphysics,” both in terms of their content (because these are specific methods inherent to particular sciences rather than Absolute Science) and their forms and application algorithms (since the application of these methods requires external components – definitions, lemmas, assumptions, etc.). For Hegel, none of these methods is capable of ensuring the immanent unfolding of philosophical thought, especially when it is speculative thought.

²⁹ The history of philosophy becomes a part of this system, losing its intrinsic value in exchange for acquiring the status of the foundation of Hegel’s philosophy. This is particularly evident in the *SL*, where the German philosopher wrote about it quite openly: it is constructed on the basis of those categorical definitions that

Conclusions

Kant's critical philosophy fundamentally rejected traditional metaphysics, offering its own version – *transcendental metaphysics* – which was expressed in the *Metaphysics of Nature* and the *Metaphysics of Freedom*, whose function was to clarify the *a priori* foundations of cognition in natural science, mathematics, ethics, and law. Hegel goes further, transforming traditional metaphysics into speculative philosophy, where the focus is on the Absolute. This enables a kind of “dissolution” of traditional metaphysical issues within the system of speculative

philosophy. As a result, all components of metaphysics (ontology, cosmology, psychology, theology) lose their specific subject matter, and their issues appear as ideal moments (Hegel's characteristic definition) within the system of absolute idealism. Hegel's proposed new metaphysics radically contradicts Kant's position and his project of transcendental metaphysics. Thus, Hegel offers his own answers to questions about the essence of the Absolute, which are already linked to new philosophical disciplines – speculative logic, philosophy of nature, and philosophy of spirit.

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were formed throughout the entire history of philosophy. It is clear that such a purely speculative history of philosophy significantly limits the subject of the historical consideration of philosophy, as it rejects as secondary and unimportant the concepts and ideas of philosophers from past epochs that do not conform to the speculative scheme of the unity of the logical and the historical – the main principle of Hegel's history of philosophy. This principle, as well as the movement of speculative thought from the abstract to the concrete, serves as the foundation for constructing speculative logic; at the same time, these principles “operate” in the history of philosophy. This confirms the dependence of the history of philosophy on speculative logic, and not vice versa. Although at first glance Hegel constantly spoke of the importance of the historical justification of his system, especially in *SL*, its dependence on the philosophical teachings of the past.

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Анотація

У статті висвітлено особливості метафізики у Канта і Гегеля. Стосунок Канта до традиційної метафізики визначався критичною позицією, яка обмежувала знання трансцендентальними умовами можливого досвіду. Традиційна метафізика не відповідала трансцендентальним критеріям пізнання. Натомість Кант створює *трансцендентальну метафізику*, яка обмежується дослідженням апіорних основ природознавства, моралі та права і не зазіхає на трансцендентний світ. Для Гегеля метафізика в її традиційному розумінні також втратила свою концептуальну привабливість, оскільки була обмежена раціональними визначеннями Бога, Душі та Свободи, що не відповідало намірам Гегеля. Тому метафізика та її проблеми увійшли до системи абсолютного ідеалізму, ґрунтованого на спекулятивному пізнанні. Гегель розриває зв'язок із Кантовим трансценденталізмом, оскільки вибудовує свою філософську систему на принципі тотожності мислення та буття, що радикально суперечило принципам трансценденталізму. У Гегеля традиційні метафізичні дисципліни втратили своє значення, його проєкт метафізики базувався на спекулятивному пізнанні Абсолюту, його концептуальному осмисленні у спекулятивній логіці, філософії природи та філософії духу. Це дає змогу розглядати систему Гегеля у її внутрішніх зв'язках з Абсолютом. Таким чином, Гегель перетворює метафізику та її проблеми на спекулятивну філософію, яка відповідає цілям абсолютного ідеалізму.

Ключові слова: Кант, трансценденталізм, наука, метафізика, Гегель, абсолютний ідеалізм, спекулятивне мислення і пізнання, спекулятивна метафізика, абсолютне знання, методи пізнання, філософський метод.

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