

VLAD MUREȘAN

Babeș-Bolyai University
Email: vladmuresan22@gmail.com

DESCARTES AND GERMAN IDEALISM

Abstract: In this paper we try to provide an overview of the impact and reception of Descartes in German idealism. Kant is mostly associated with Descartes since they both are viewed as grounding philosophy in the subjective standpoint. This isomorphism is however limited since Descartes build a metaphysical claim proceeding from the Idea of Infinity present within the subject, whereas Kant isolates himself within the finite subject by excluding any positive ontological infinity. Fichte is even more intensely subjectivist. This might better associate him with Kant. But Fichte's inwardization of the subject develops a definite metaphysical claim: that being actually springs from thinking. While Descartes recovered the unity of thinking with being at the level of being, Fichte recovered the unity of thinking with being at the level of thinking. Schelling tries to unite the philosophy of the subject with the philosophy of nature. In this he confronts Descartes mostly by conceiving nature as organic and alive, rather than mechanic and dead. In his late philosophy he actually departs with German idealism as such, by criticizing Descartes and Hegel for – respectively – introducing and accomplishing conceptual negativity as usurpation of the real positive being. It is Hegel that seems to fully acknowledge and incorporate the Cartesian subjectivity and metaphysics (especially following his restoration of the ontological argument), although he only does this by mirroring it with the ontological monism of Spinoza. As such, Hegel's system can also be seen as an attempt to synthesize the Cartesian dualism with the Spinozian monism.

Key Words: Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, German Idealism, subjective idealism, dogmatic idealism, objectivism, formal idealism, ontological realism.

1. Descartes. Between Scholastic Realism and German Idealism

Descartes is mostly known for his methodological restoration of philosophy and the imposition of the subjective standpoint against the old medieval philosophy. His hyperbolic doubt brackets the finite things suspending them on the charge that they can be nothing else but prejudices that we were imposed upon as we were children. This methodological skepticism was actually an engagement with Montaigne's epistemological skepticism, and was conceived as an answer on the very field of the adversary. His second move, however, is to understand that it is our understanding that is actually abstracting itself from contingent things. As such *our understanding understands itself as existing*. The agent that interrogates things over their reality must of necessity be real itself. I think, therefore I am. *Cogito, ergo sum*. Our finite subjectivity is therefore an existing subjectivity beyond doubt¹.

„So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind”
(Descartes, 1996, p.17).

Kant is of course the natural heir of this subjective centrality. But we must not neglect that there is in Descartes a final retour to an *ontological realism* (the ontological argument we find in the *Fifth Meditation*) complementing his *transcendental idealism* (the methodological priority of subjectivity which represents his Copernican „pre-revolution”, so to say). But even Kant - the very architect of the „Copernican revolution” - was already accused himself of residual scholasticism since his *Noumenon* presenting itself as refractory to transcendental ideality, as an X external to intellectual and intuitive syntheses can only be understood as ontological realism: existence outruns knowledge².

F. Copleston makes a good point when he shows that Descartes' knowledge of scholasticism was mostly based on late handbooks giving the impression of a „decadent Aristotelianism”. In substance, however, there is a strong ontological realism in Descartes which he inherited from Scholasticism, although he radically simplified the elaborated distinctions we find therein³. As such, we must acknowledge the differences he brought against “the old schools”⁴ while understanding nevertheless his strong metaphysical claim in the *Second, Third and Sixth Meditations*.

It is current as well to associate Descartes to Kant and Husserl, two philosophies of subjectivity that are reputed to suspend or to bracket metaphysics. On the other hand, the Cartesian subjective revolution only partially inspired Kant in his Copernican program

aiming to restrict metaphysical knowledge into the sphere of transcendental knowledge. Quite the contrary, Descartes own positing of the subject is foundational for a restorative metaphysical endeavor and it has impacted all German idealism, as Habermas points, in his subjective reinvention of metaphysics:

Self-consciousness, the relationship of the knowing subject to itself, has since Descartes offered the key to the inner and absolutely certain sphere of the representations we have of objects. Thus, in German Idealism metaphysical thinking could take the form of theories of subjectivity. Either self-consciousness is put into a foundational position as the spontaneous source of transcendental accomplishments, or as spirit it is itself elevated to the position of the absolute. The ideal essences are transformed into the categorial determinations of a productive reason, so that in a peculiarly reflexive turn everything is now related to the one of a generative subjectivity. (Habermas, 1992, p. 31)

If Kant clearly separated subjectivity from metaphysics, in Fichte, Schelling and Hegel we witness the emergence of a new form of metaphysics precisely through a radical inwardization of the subject. Descartes can be seen as the forerunner not only of Kant's criticism but also of this attempt to reinvent metaphysics from within a subjective standpoint. Our general overview must forcefully insist on thematic and polemical continuities between Descartes and German idealism. But this must not be however be done at the expense of fundamental differences which maintain a frontier line between the two⁵.

Despite therefore clear differences between Descartes, Scholasticism and German Idealism respectively, we believe our mapping to hold epistemological virtue. Descartes is somehow a *Janus bifrons*, half way between a subjectively-tempered ontological realism (Scholastic-style) and a radicalized-metaphysical transcendental idealism (German idealist-style). It is in this vein that we set to interrogate Descartes' treatment by main representatives of German idealism.

2. Immanuel Kant

There is continuity between Descartes' breakthrough and Kant's critical project. For one, Descartes prioritizes epistemology over ontology as the starting point of philosophy. Unlike the scholastics or Spinoza he didn't begin with the infinite Being or Substance of God, but with the inquisitive finite ego. The achievement of this process nevertheless led Descartes to the infinite Being, unlike Kant who installed himself into the critical position of the epistemological *ego* while declaring

ontological knowledge a purely negative knowledge of the external Noumenon (=X).

One of the most prestigious critical reviews that Descartes ever met with was, perhaps, Immanuel Kant's critical mention in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Early reception of the *Critique of Pure Reason* forced Kant's famous delimitation called *Refutation of idealism* in the second edition of his work.⁶ He criticizes Berkeley's *dogmatic idealism* together with Descartes *problematic idealism*⁷.

Idealism (I mean material idealism) is the theory that declares the existence of objects in space outside us either to be merely doubtful and unprovable, or to be false and impossible. The first is the problematic idealism of Descartes: it declares only one the empirical assertion (assertion) to be indubitable, viz.: I am. The second is the dogmatic idealism of Berkeley; it declares space with all the things to which space attaches as inseparable condition, to be something that is in itself impossible and hence also declares the things in space to be mere imaginings. Dogmatic idealism is unavoidable if one regards space as a property that is to belong to things in themselves, for then space, with everything that space serves as a condition, is a nonentity. However, the basis for this idealism has already been removed by us in the Transcendental Aesthetic. Problematic idealism, which asserts nothing about this but only alleges that we are unable to prove by direct experience an existence apart from our own, is reasonable and is in accordance with a thorough philosophical way of thinking viz., in permitting no decisive judgment before a sufficient proof has been found. The proof it demands must, therefore, establish that regarding external things we have not merely imagination but also experience indubitable for Descartes is possible only on the presupposition of outer experience"⁸.

Kant provides two definitions for what is *possible* and what is *real*. A formal correspondence in the conditions of an experience defines what is possible (everything that doesn't contradict these formal conditions is possible). A material correspondence in the conditions of an experience defines what is real. Kant maintains that subjective idealism is unavoidable if we consider space as an intrinsic property of things-in-themselves. But this was just eliminated by the revolution brought about in the Transcendental Aesthetics. Kant endeavors to present a *positive* demonstration against both Descartes and Berkeley, namely by actually trying to solve their problems. It is presumed in both aforementioned idealisms that consciousness completely conditions space and objects. Kant argues that however:

a) It is my consciousness that is conditioned by its inner intuition, because when we presume its *permanence* we resort to external objects. The very consciousness of our existence is rendered possible through the existence of other things that grant us a time criterion against the background of which we can perceive our permanence in time.

b) It is my consciousness that is conditioned by its external intuition, because when we presume its *change* we resort to space. Changes functions in time but happen in space. Changes in our consciousness are a function of local relation⁹.

I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time. All determination in regard to time presupposes the existence of something permanent in perception. But this permanent something cannot be something in me, for the very reason that my existence in time is itself determined by this permanent something. It follows that the perception of this permanent existence is possible only through a thing without me and not through the mere representation of a thing without me. Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of real things external to me. Now, consciousness in time is necessarily connected with the consciousness of the possibility of this determination in time. Hence it follows that consciousness in time is necessarily connected also with the existence of things without me, inasmuch as the existence of these things is the condition of determination in time. That is to say, the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things without me" (Kant, 1996, p.290, B276)

This doesn't mean of course that any objects exist independently, but that our consciousness is limited by its very transcendental structure to its external and internal intuition, and these are pure forms that organize what we receive from the amorphous Noumenon that originally limited and constituted our consciousness. Therefore, rather than in both idealisms where space and objects was suspended or denied any objectivity, the *phenomenal world* is a composite structure, external amorphous *matter* that affects our inner pure *forms* that organize it in accordance with our transcendental structure. Kant defines his philosophy as simultaneously idealist and realist, but he specifies: *transcendental idealism plus empirical realism*. Descartes project can by contrast be characterized as *transcendental idealism plus ontological realism*.

This is obvious especially if we contrast the *Third* and *Fifth Meditations* with the *Transcendental Dialectic*. Whereas Kant is criticizing all arguments for the existence of God, Descartes formulates a causal

version of an argument for the existence of God (*Third Meditation*), as well as an *a priori*, pure form of ontological argument (*Fifth Meditation*). This makes all the difference. Although Kant explicitly mentions Anselm, we must not forget that following Thomas of Aquinas' critique of this version of ontological argument (in favor of his own formulation), the ontological argument fell into relative oblivion and Descartes can be considered the one who actually resurrected it in modern philosophy. This makes Kant's critique of Anselm a critique of all metaphysics, including the Cartesian one.

"Since I have been accustomed to distinguish between existence and essence in everything else, I find it easy to persuade myself that existence can also be separated from the essence of God, and hence that God can be thought of as not existing. But when I concentrate more carefully, it is quite evident that existence can no more be separated from the essence of God than the fact that its three angles equal two right angles can be separated from the essence of a triangle, or than the idea of a mountain can be separated from the idea of a valley. Hence it is just as much of a contradiction to think of God (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is, lacking a perfection), as it is to think of a mountain without a valley".
(Descartes, 1996, p. 46)

Descartes version of the ontological argument must decisively be opposed to Kant's deconstruction from the *Transcendental Dialectic*. It is clear that Descartes sees the co-immanence of essence and existence as *a priori* and analytical, whereas Kant treats them as *a posteriori* and synthetic. Kant claims that the predicate of existence does not add anything to essence, and things either exist or they don't. To which Descartes would have replied that he is not talking about "things", but he is rendering explicit the analytical co-interiority of a supreme essence containing all perfections and existence which is definitely a "perfection". This of course only applies in *one single case*, the predicative totality of the Supreme Essence *which cannot but exist*. There is practically a *Kluft* or an abyss between how Descartes and Kant view things in this matter. But in many ways Hegel's restoration of the ontological argument can be read as a restoration of metaphysics itself by addressing Kant's virulent challenge.

2. Fichte

Descartes is considered as the first one to establish a philosophy of the subject in opposition to the old ontological approach proceeding from a Supreme Being. This is so general that it can always apply to Fichte himself. Similarities must be indicated before we identify the differences. Hegel correctly establishes this first level connection between Descartes and Fichte as pertains to the starting point of both philosophies¹⁰.

While it is clear that the *Second Meditation* inaugurates the systematic and methodic imposition of the transcendental subjective standpoint, Descartes remains dualistic in his final ontological doctrine. Fichte's argument begins, in contradistinction, with the fundamental anti-dualistic assertion that *the very distinction between subjective and objective falls within the authority of the subjectivity entitled to draw it*¹¹. Fichte argues that all systems proceeding from knowledge are more fundamental than those proceeding from the object, since the object is always *already* internal to knowledge. This makes the *ego* not only the *act* of thinking itself, but also the *existing-thinking*. All presupposition of something external is dogmatic, once we accepted that the very distinction between subjective interiority and objective exteriority falls already within the sphere of the ego and there are no objects except for the subject. Dogmatic systems are not only theoretically contradictory but also morally threatening, since they limit the ego's free realization.

Fichte tried to present himself as a disciple of Kant. His starting point is consciousness. Whenever we are conscious of something we know. Philosophy, or true knowledge, begins when we are conscious of this very consciousness. Descartes' most reputed result is the positing of the identity of thinking and existence (*Cogito, ergo sum*). Fichte opens his investigation precisely by balancing thinking and existence, subject and object. But Fichte can be seen as supplementing Descartes' *horizontal* interrogation with his own *vertical* elaboration. The Cartesian impact on Fichte and German idealism can be generally put this way: any subject is intentionally correlated to an object (to use Husserl's terminology). But this is mere first degree knowledge. When the subject takes itself as the object (in view of gaining certainty), it then becomes a subject-object, or a subject-reflected-upon-itself. *I think therefore I am* actually incorporates multiple levels:

1. *I think*. But it also means, on a superior level:
2. *I think this thinking itself* (as second degree knowledge) and
3. *I think the intrinsic correlation of my own thinking and my very existence* (as third degree knowledge).

As such, it is very much clear that Fichte's doctrine of science is already present in a compressed manner so to say in Descartes' own instauration of the ego, and it can naturally be seen as a further elaboration as well as radicalization¹². This radicalization must be seen as not only positing of the *ego* through a dubitative suspension of objects, but as an ontological destitution and re-institution of objects genealogically proceeding from the *ego*. As such Fichte departs from Descartes: while Descartes takes the self-reflective and self-certifying ego as a way to attest to the Infinity of a transcendent God, Fichte converts the subject, by means of a radicalized inwardization into an Absolute Ego producing the world of objects. As such, Fichte is internally transcending the finite subject in order to attest to the "inner Godhead" of the Absolute Ego.

3. Schelling

Schelling's relation to Descartes varies according to Schelling's own philosophical transformation. This is why we can acknowledge there's no definitive statement on Descartes but rather successive different angles of reading. In his first studies on the philosophy of the ego, Schelling is still attached to Fichte. As such he praises Descartes for having resolved with the dogmatic substantialist stance of the old scholastic in favor of the subjective start point. Of course Schelling agrees with Fichte's own view on Descartes, namely the dissatisfaction with the residual disjunctive dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, viewed as coextensive and irreducible.

This changes however with Schelling's revolutionizing of the philosophy of nature. On a different vein, he is reputed to have overcome the one-sidedness of a purely subjective philosophy by deeply pointing the complementarity of nature to the spirit. Schelling paraphrases Descartes' wide-known systematic claim: give me mater and motion and I will construct the universe. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* he says: „give me a nature made up of opposed activities, of which one reaches out into the infinite, while the other tries to intuit itself in this infinitude, and from that I will make the intelligence with the whole system of its presentations arise before you”¹³.

The Cartesian mechanistic approach is rejected in favor of an organic concept of nature. A formal mechanic determination of nature does not sufficiently describe nature's intrinsic teleology. We could argue that if Descartes is mostly influenced by mathematics and physics, Schelling is much more influenced by a biological view. This „biological” stance is not positivistic but rather romantic. In his

*Freiheitschrift*¹⁴, Schelling argues that from its very inception with Descartes, modern philosophy is defective of nature, and when it conceives nature it does so without a living ground. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, which we consider as Schelling's third phase, as synthesis between his philosophy of the ego and his philosophy of nature, Schelling consciously uses Descartes universal dubitation as foundational for the subjective standpoint which mirrors without excluding the objective standpoint. He consistently reduces the dualism of subject and object by placing it precisely within the sphere of the self-reflective ego which he defines as self-consciousness. Knowledge presupposes the concordance of the subjective with the objective. Nature is the totality of the objective - the ego is the totality of the subjective. If we proceed from the subjective we must explain the objective, if we proceed from the objective we must explain the subjective. Schelling's solution is their mutual implication. Schelling's philosophy begins with the hyperbolic generalized doubt concerning the whole objectivity. The greatest prejudice of our intellect is that: *There are things outside us*. This uncertain proposition is grounded however on a certainty: that *I am* the primary evidence of common reason (as if we would say that Locke is grounded on Descartes). Unlike common knowledge (that knows the object) transcendental knowledge knows (i.e. objectifies) the subject. This requires a unifying of the natural fracture between act and thought as well as a reduction of all prejudice to an original unique certainty where subject and object coincide. This is the self-consciousness¹⁵. We might therefore acknowledge the explicit Cartesian construction in the first phase of Schelling's philosophy.

With his *Identitätsphilosophie* Schelling restores Spinoza's ontological monism in a radical effort to resolve his residual dualism between spirit and nature. Even more radically Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* completely departs with his transcendental program. Schelling's famous distinction between positive and negative philosophy, oriented against Hegel's speculative totality, will alter his perspective on Descartes as well, thereby signaling the call for a forced "ending" of German idealism. What essentially constitutes ontology is the equation of Thought and Being: from Parmenides' immediate unity of Thought and Being to Hegel's mediated unity of Thought and Being. Descartes is nothing but the modern intermediate avatar of this negative philosophy that, in identifying thinking and existence actually renders existence dependent on thinking. As such, conceptual negativity abbreviates and actually misses the substantial positivity of the Being. Concept therefore becomes alienated from being precisely in its claim to be identical with it. Schelling argues that Being is in fact the

forgotten *prius* of Thinking (thus anticipating Kierkegaard as well as Heidegger's critique of onto-theology).

What we encounter here is Schelling's alternative to Descartes' *cogito*, in which there are no bedrock propositions demonstrating clear and self-evident ideas. We begin neither in the ready-made world of pristine reason nor the vacuous desert of pure nothingness. Rather, we begin in an indeterminate but potent origin whose disordered ambiguity is much more commensurate to the reality of our experience. This immediate content of reason, this infinite capacity to be, is for Schelling the embryonic seed of all being. In this first moment it shows us a reason that, since it is "open toward everything" and thus "excludes nothing," is "free towards all that is" (II/3, 75). In excluding nothing, the immediate content of reason betrays its roots in an environment that is *other than* reason itself. Far from being the science that presupposes nothing, for Schelling, "philosophy is the science that must presuppose everything." (p. 34). (...) Schelling makes the obvious point that if philosophy were really the science that presupposes nothing, "then it would have to deduce language itself. The philosophy that absolutely presupposed nothing would have no other option than to refrain from all speech" whatsoever (p. 218) (Bruce Mathew, in F.W.J. Schelling, 2007)

It is visible that Schelling initial admiration for and use of Descartes is finally eclipsed by his war on negativity towards the end of his life. Descartes turns from an ally into an enemy, as founder of the modern version of negative philosophy that culminated in Hegel – a correct reading by Schelling, as we shall see when analyzing Hegel's comments of Descartes.

4. Hegel

The Cartesian idea that all presupposition must be set aside is understood by Hegel as self-reflexive exigency of thinking: thinking must begin with itself. This is taken of course as abstract, finite intellect (*Verstand*). *Re*-flexion is ulterior to *pre*-judice, or is the judgment on what is before the judgment.

Hegel is sensitive to the Cartesian use of negation, or more precisely *to his production of the positive through negation*. The independence of thinking is negatively expressed in Descartes through his imposing of the universal dubitation: *De omnibus dubitandum est*, acting as "first principle" of a new philosophy. This is however only methodological not ontological skepticism since this is a mean but not the end of Descartes' thought. Behind this negative and destructive moment, a positive and constructive movement is at work. Thinking begins with abstracting from all content. This results in negative freedom. But this is just a moment of the logical real.

"From one side we view this proposition as a syllogism: being is deduced from thinking. Against this logical connection Kant I objected that being is not contained in thinking, that it is distinct from thinking, and he is quite correct." They are, however, inseparable, that is, they constitute an identity. What is inseparable [from another] is nonetheless distinct [from it], although the identity is not endangered by this difference; the two are a unity. All the same, this is not a syllogism, for a syllogism comprises three terms; [needed] here is a third term that would mediate between thinking and being. But that is not how it is. It is not "I think, therefore I am" - the "therefore" is not here the "therefore" of the syllogism, for it expresses only the correlation by which being is immediately linked with thinking". In Descartes, therefore, we see expressed the identity of being and thinking. (Hegel, 1990, p. 140)

The unity of thinking and of existence is not syllogistically (externally constructed) but is immediate (internally given). But this unity at the level of the *Ego* is supplemented by a more powerful unity of thinking and being at the level of *Being* itself. The *Second Meditation* is actually a reflection of the *Fifth Meditation*. The unity within the subject reflects a higher unity within Being itself. Hegel is quick to point the Cartesian culminative justification of the ontological argument. In this he finds at work the necessity of Spirit elaborating upon itself and recognizing his own concrete unity. Hegel supports Descartes against Kant's critique of the ontological argument by restating the point used in his own answer, namely that the coincidence of the essence and existence/ concept and reality / thinking and existence *exclusively applies to a unique ontological point*, not to all finite things.

Among the diverse representations (...) there is also one of a supremely intelligent, supremely powerful and absolutely perfect being, and this is the most excellent of all our representations. The question now arises, "Is this a merely contingent representation, or one that is necessary and eternal?" Descartes replies: "There is this one necessary representation that the universal or what we call 'God' is. "For the universal is supposed to be just that in whose representation necessary existence is contained. This had already been said by Anselm, that "God is what is most perfect." The question then arises, "But does this most perfect [being] also exist?" This is an illegitimate question. For what is most perfect is supposed to be just that in whose concept existence already lies. That is [the definition of] -what is most perfect-existence and representation are bound up together in it. This idea is therefore a presupposition. We would say now that we find this idea within ourselves as the highest idea: that the One is. So it is presupposed in this way, and if we ask whether this idea also exists, that is precisely what the idea is: that with it existence is posited too. Here in the form of God no other unity is expressed than the one found in *cogito ergo sum* - being and thinking inseparably linked. *Cogito* means consciousness as pure thinking. (...). Descartes says: "This concept is not made by us. We do not find in ourselves the

perfections that are contained in this representation; it is given to us as eternal truth." The same thing is then said in a quite different form: we are absolutely certain that God is, and this absolute certainty is the proof that God is (Hegel, 1990, p. 142-143).

This is a pure *a priori* formula, not a synthetic addition of a predicate to a subject, but the exposition of the inner co-interiority of both or rather of their inseparability. Hegel is contrasting Descartes and Spinoza and he tries to unite them. This unity is practically nothing than his own philosophy. Descartes proceeds from a dualist framework, which he tries to unite two times – both at the level of the subject, and at the level of God. Spinoza, on the contrary, begins with their unity within the Substance, but he has derivational problems to posit the finite world outside the Substance. While Descartes' most important problem is the finding of an intermediate able to unite the two worlds of subject and the world, Spinoza's problem is to even conceive of a separation outside the Substance.

Notes:

¹ Hegel comments *Second Meditation*: "We cannot think about ourselves that we do not exist. The determination of being is immediately [bound up] with the I; the pure I or this *cogito* is immediately bound up with it. "This is the first and most certain knowledge of all, and it presents itself to anyone who philosophizes in an orderly fashion". This is the famous *cogito ergo sum*; in it thinking and being are thus inseparably bound together. (G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, p. 139)

² Gottfried Martin is a classic case of such an argument, is his outstanding work: *Immanuel Kant. Ontologie und Wissenschaftstheorie*, Kölner Universität Verlag, 1958

³ Copleston, Frederick, S.J., *A History of Philosophy. Modern Philosophy: From the French Enlightenment to Kant*, vol. VI, New York, Image Books, 1994

⁴ "First, he aimed to propound a unified scientific understanding of the universe, in contrast to the compartmentalized and piecemeal approach of the scholastics. Second, this science was to be based on mathematical principles, in contrast to the qualitative explanatory apparatus of his predecessors. Third, he wanted to develop a mechanistic model of explanation, avoiding wherever possible any reference to final causes and purposes; in this sense, Cartesian science was to stake its claim to a substantial degree of autonomy, in place of the traditional subordination of physics to theology (*A Descartes Dictionary*, John Cottingham, 1993, p. 154).

⁵ "The Cartesian (mentalist) view presupposes a robust realism according to which the world to be correctly represented is the world as it is independently of a subject's conceptual determination of it. Given a non-inferentially warranted mental state, the mentalist asks, how can we prove whether it corresponds to a mind independent reality? Yet neither Kant nor Hegel believe a) that there is such a thing as a world in itself to be represented at all, or b) that the most promising way to reconstruct the conditions under which knowledge is possible is to try to identify an immediately given mental state and then inquire into its possible correspondence with a mind-independent object. Central to both Kant's and Hegel's projects is that non-

inferentially warranted states cannot have an epistemic value because in order to take a mental state to possess any kind of determinacy (and it must have determinacy, be of something in particular, in order to represent something), it is necessary to take it to have a specific content, and one can only do so by making a judgment about it that involves the use of concepts. (...). Rather than taking the mind's epistemic role to consist in passively representing the world, where the truth-claim of a given representation is assessed in terms of specific epistemic qualities, both Kant and Hegel argue that the mind is fundamentally active in that, in getting to know how things stand, it determines what is given to it by relating judgmentally (and hence apperceptively) to the given". (Espen Hammer, ed., *German Idealism. Contemporary Perspective*, 2007, p. 117-118)

⁶ We retake Kant's analysis from our twin contribution, *Berkeley and German Idealism*, *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai*, 58/2013, n. 2, 85-86

⁷ At times, Kant also characterizes his idealism as "formal" or "critical," in order to distinguish it from the "dogmatic" or "material" idealism of Berkeley and the "skeptical" or "empirical" idealism of Descartes", Graham Bird (ed.), *A Companion to Kant*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006.

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 288-289 (B 274).

⁹ Immanuel Kant, op.cit., pg. 290 (B 275)

¹⁰ "This *I think* is then the starting point - it is what is utterly certain (just as Fichte too begins with immediate knowing), it presents itself within me", although based on his own interpretation of the first proposition in the *Wissenschaftslehre* as immediate knowing" (G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, California University Press, p. 139)

¹¹ "However, so Fichte concluded, that dichotomy itself - that core distinction between subjects and objects - was itself *subjectively* established; it was a normative distinction that "subjects" themselves institute. As Fichte saw it, Kant had shown that everything we encountered was either an object or a subject; but the dynamic of Kant's own thoughts should have shown him that this distinction itself was subjectively established" (Terry Pinkard, *1760-1860: The Legacy of German Idealism*, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹² "Following the lead of Descartes and Reinhold, Fichte indicates three essential features of any science: (1) All of its propositions must possess *certainty*. (2) In order to assure this, it must possess a distinctively *systematic* form so that each proposition within the science is related to all of the others in such a way that the certainty of one can be transferred to the others. (3) The only way any collection of propositions can form a *single* system is if all of them can in some way be derived from a single *Grundsatz*, or grounding principle" (Rockmore, Tom & Breazeale, Daniel, *Fichte and Transcendental Philosophy*, Pallgrave MacMillan, 2014, p. 23 24).

¹³ F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Virginia University Press, 1998.

¹⁴ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, SUNY, 2006.

¹⁵ F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, op.cit., p.15-31.

References

I. Primary bibliography

- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996)
- J.G. Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992)
- G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990)
- F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1978)
- F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, (New York: SUNY, 2006)
- F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, (New York: SUNY, 2007)

II. Secondary bibliography

- Ameriks, Karl (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- Bird, Graham (ed.), *A Companion to Kant*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006)
- Copleston, Frederick, S.J., *A History of Philosophy. Modern Philosophy: From the French Enlightenment to Kant*, vol. VI, (New York: Image Books, 1994)
- Cottingham, John, *A Descartes Dictionary*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993)
- Espen Hammer (ed.), *German Idealism. Contemporary Perspective*, (London: Routledge, 2007)
- Goudeli, Kyriaki, *Challenges to German Idealism. Schelling, Fichte and Kant*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002)
- Habermas, Jürgen, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992)
- Martin, Gottfried, *Immanuel Kant. Ontologie und Wissenschaftstheorie*, (Köln: Kölner Universität Verlag, 1958)
- Pinkard, Terry, *1760-1860: The Legacy of German Idealism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- Rockmore, Tom & Breazeale, Daniel, *Fichte and Transcendental Philosophy*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014)