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The Noumenal Morass:
Post-Kantian Representationalism and Its Relationalist Critique in the Light of Strong Disjunctivism

M. A. Bandurin,

Ph.D., independent researcher, Ivanovo, Russia,

mb.ivsu@gmail.com

Abstract: This epistemological essay addresses the issue of representational content's existence in the case of true direct knowledge. Contrary answers to it are considered as a basis for the distinction between representationalism and relationalism. The first part of the essay contains a critical analysis of the fundamental features of German Idealism as a kind of representationalism, which determined the main epistemological trend of continental philosophy in the form of post-Kantian representationalism. In the second part, after a brief excursion into certain contemporary continental issues, the current discussion between representationalism and relationalism in analytic philosophy is considered. It is concluded that relationalism, while correctly recognizing the nature of direct perception as being without representational content, is incapable of ensuring the unity of direct perception and a perceptual judgment, and a solution is proposed that could lead out of this epistemological blind alley.

Keywords: epistemology, disjunctivism, representationalism, representational content, relationalism, Kant, thing-in-itself, appearance, object, eliminativism, propositional attitude, universal.

This essay is a logical continuation of the previous one[1], containing the articulation of the main claims of strong disjunctivism, and is devoted to a more specific issue — an analysis of the epistemological discussion between representationalism and relationalism[2] in the light of strong disjunctivism. However, we would not like to limit ourselves to the current state of the issue and intend to make a brief digression into the history of philosophy, and this objective has affected the essay's title. Thus, under the term "post-Kantian representationalism" we will consider two classes of theories: the epistemology of German Idealism and the representationalism of contemporary analytic philosophy. Of course, these theories do not exhaust what can be called post-Kantian representationalism, but we believe that they are representative enough of this category for their criticism to be capable of being extended to the main trends of continental and a significant part of analytic philosophy.[3] Accordingly, the essay is divided into two sections: the

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[1] M. A. Bandurin. Strong and Weak Disjunctivism: A Short Comparative Essay. VOX. Философский журнал, No. 29, 2020, pp. 66-E–91-E.

[2] Or, as the problem is often stated, between the Content View and the Object View.

[3] As well as to various hybrid approaches aimed to reconcile representationalism and relationalism and "anti-representationalist" theories, which, however, try to avoid relationalism. See, e.g., S. Schellenberg. The Relational and Representational Character of Perceptual Experience. Does Perception Have Content,

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first is devoted to the criticism of the general epistemological approaches of German Idealism, while the second to the consideration of the recent discussion between representationalism and relationalism and a critical analysis of the arguments of the latter against the former on a number of key issues.

However, we should begin with a brief theoretical clarification. Strong disjunctivism is an epistemological theory intended to defend a realist conception of truth, which, from the ontological viewpoint, presupposes a distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth and denies the possibility of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions. In contrast, both representationalism and relationalism[4] presuppose a causal conception of truth, identify the reality of knowledge with its truth, and implicate the existence of such a justificative correlate. Therefore, from our perspective, even if they adhere to disjunctivism[5], they should be considered as varieties of weak disjunctivism, and all their critique as such varieties, contained in our previous essay, still stands. However, this essay is aimed to consider the matter from a slightly different perspective, namely, one of the existence of the so-called representational content of knowledge. Indeed, strong disjunctivism denies its existence[6] in the case of true direct knowledge and is thus an ally of relationalism and an opponent of representationalism in this respect, even if the latter embraces disjunctivism. This is one of the reasons why its theory of appearance can be provisionally termed acausal relationalism.[7] Accordingly, even though further considerations will proceed from the claims of strong disjunctivism, they will not unnecessarily contrast these two partially kindred theories as far as the critique of post-Kantian representationalism is concerned.

I

Turning to Kant and German Idealism, it should be admitted from the outset — not without regret — that its detailed analysis in the context of the discussed topic is pointless. All attempts to delve into such a rich problematics lose all meaning for a very simple reason — Kant and his contemporaries completely excluded the possibility of a non-representationalist epistemology and considered the notion of representation as the only possible starting point of their arguments. So, the sole positive task for strong disjunctivism in this context remains to clarify the notion of thing-in-itself. It may be objected that, on the contrary, Kant's epistemology is based precisely on the critique of Locke's representationalism and, picking up Berkeley's approach, represents a direct alternative to representationalism in the form of constructivism,[8] coherentism,[9] or even direct realism[10]. However, even if one acknowledges the constructivist,

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ed. by Berit Brogaard. Oxford, 2014, pp. 199–219; Roberto Horácio de Sá Pereira. Combining the representational and the relational view. Philosophical Studies 173, December 2016, pp. 3255–3269; J. Knowles, Relationalism, Berkeley's Puzzle, and Phenomenological Externalism. Acquaintance: New Essays, ed. by Jonathan Knowles and Thomas Raleigh, Oxford, 2019, pp. 169–190.

[4] Here and hereafter, the term "relationalism" without special reservations refers to commonly understood relationalism.

[5] Relationalism necessarily implies disjunctivism, whereas representationalism can be both disjunctivist and conjunctivist.

[6] And also completely denies the existence of sense-data and qualia.

[7] Acausal only in terms of the way of justifying beliefs since it does not deny causal factors of generating cognitions.

[8] See, e.g., T. Rockmore. German Idealism as Constructivism. Chicago and London, 2016.

[9] See, e.g., D. McDermid. Putnam on Kant on Truth: Correspondence or Coherence? Idealistic Studies, Vol. 28, Issue 1/2, Winter/Spring 1998, pp. 17–34.

coherentist, and peculiar realist elements of Kant's epistemology, it is impossible to deny that it is basically representationalist, as there are no sufficient grounds for this. In turn, there are more than enough arguments in favor of the representationalist character of Kantianism, the simplest[11] of them being the fact that the entire "critical philosophy" is built on the assumption of the inferential[12] character of "thing-in-itself".[13] In this respect, it is a direct continuation of Locke's epistemology and even a partial restoration of it after the devastating criticism thereof by Berkeley.[14] As S. Rosen rightfully noted, "even if we accept the 'two-aspect' interpretation of the 'phenomenon–noumenon' distinction, the thing in itself has the status of a hypothesis or, to employ a Hegelian expression, a *Gedankending*, an entity of thought, and so, of that which is immediately open to interpretation in two different ways, either as itself produced by thinking, and so no longer a thing in itself, or in the more extreme case, as a phantom of the imagination." [P. Cicovacki (ed.), 2000, p. 15] In these circumstances, there are few ways to insist on the non-representationalist character of Kant's epistemology, and the least successful of them would be to emphasize the unknowability of "thing-in-itself" more or less in the spirit of the philosopher himself.

Indeed, such an approach would mean persisting in defending one of Kant's weakest theses — about the necessity of both the existence and unknowability of "thing-in-itself". This thesis makes "critical philosophy" truly unique since Kant, apparently, "defends" it all by himself[15] — it has no analogues not only in Western but also in Oriental philosophy and has not been approved even by the contemporaries. And the point here is not in particular cognitive limitations but simply in the assumption that it is impossible to know something that necessarily exists. Therefore, under the influence of Schulze's criticism, another approach quickly prevailed in post-Kantian idealism, which can be called eliminativism,[16] consisting in the attempt to demonstrate the non-existence of "thing-in-itself" outside the subject by various transcendental methods. However, it can hardly be concluded that such an approach was crowned with unequivocal success in the matter of obtaining the knowledge of it, despite all the efforts of the German philosophers. But if "thing-in-itself" indeed has such a status or, a fortiori, is immaterial, as in Berkeley, then representation as a cognitive process becomes either spontaneously autonomous and comprehensive or meaningless. What kind of representationalism, then, can we

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[10] Or even relationalism. See Roberto Horácio de Sá Pereira. O disjunctivismo em Kant. Revista de Filosofia Aurora, V. 24, N. 34, 2012, pp. 129–155.

[11] Apart from the direct textual evidence that clearly indicates that Kant and his early critics designated all the elements of human knowledge with the term "Vorstellung", i.e., "representation". See, e.g., I. Kant. Kritik der reinen Vernunft. Hamburg, 1956, S. 38–40; D. Schulting. In Defence of Reinhold's Kantian Representationalism: Aspects of Idealism in Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens. Kant Yearbook, Vol. 8, Issue 1, 2016, pp. 87–116.

[12] Of course, taking into account all the nuances that the concept of deductive knowledge acquires in Kant, in particular, in connection with his distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments.

[13] Here and hereafter, the terms "thing-in-itself" and "appearance" in quotation marks refer to their Kantian interpretation.

[14] See, e.g., Y. Tomida. Locke's 'Things Themselves' and Kant's 'Things in Themselves': The Naturalistic Basis for Transcendental Idealism. Studies on Locke: Sources, Contemporaries, and Legacy, ed. by S. Hutton and P. Schuurman. Dordrecht, 2008, pp. 261–275.

[15] Except for Reinhold.

[16] Or, at least, partial eliminativism, since this trend had fully prevailed only in neo-Kantianism. See, e.g., F. C. Beiser. The Genesis of Neo-Kantianism, 1796-1880. Oxford, 2014, pp. 210–211, 274; Hanna R. Kant, radikal'nyj agnosticizm i metodologicheskij eliminativizm otnositel'no veshchej v sebe [Kant, Radical Agnosticism, and Methodological Eliminativism About Things-in-Themselves]. Kantovskij sbornik. Vol. 36, No. 4, 2017, pp. 62–65. (In Russian.)

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talk about, if not in the context of Kant, then at least in one of the post-Kantian philosophy? Such a question could be asked by "anti-representationalists" of the eliminativist sort, like Rorty and his followers or, according to certain interpretations, Hegel. It has some semblance of legitimacy, especially concerning Berkeley's philosophy, and therefore should be discussed in more detail.

However, in an attempt to answer this question, we run the risk of falling into the "noumenal morass" dug up by German Idealism and, to one degree or another, absorbed many post-Kantian philosophers. It has several aspects, among which the terminological one is the most striking. This terminological morass is primarily due to the famous Kantian typology of idealism and realism, which can be summarized as follows: there are two basic types of realism — empirical and transcendental; the first one presupposes transcendental idealism, while the second necessarily leads to erroneous empirical idealism.[17] This scheme is further complicated by the fact that Kant, by and large, introduces it together with the concepts of realism[18] and idealism[19] themselves that are, on top of that, by definition interdependent. It is noteworthy that it proved to be so impressive that even many realists who disagree with transcendental idealism continue to agree to apply the term "transcendental realism" to their theories, limiting themselves only to denying its connection with empirical idealism. Meanwhile, the main flaw of this typology lies not in postulating this interconnection but in ignoring the possibility of a non-representationalist epistemology and the non-inferential nature of thing-in-itself, which is additionally disguised by the attempts to attribute anti-representationalism to German Idealism. Subsequently, by accusing Kant himself of dogmatism[20] and formulating Absolute Idealism, Hegel initiated a new typology that eventually resulted in the so-called basic question of philosophy and was in the most awkward form adopted by Marxist dogmatics.[21] Thereby we have got two competing typologies based on the single error, along with the impassable terminological morass.

Returning to the initial question, it is necessary to recall that this Kantian scheme is corroborated by the so-called refutation of idealism, in the context of which we are primarily interested in an attempt to refute the so-called dogmatic idealism or, in other words, the idealism of Berkeley. This set of arguments is one of the most dubious aspects of transcendental idealism since it inevitably shows more similarities between the latter and Berkeleanism than Kant would have approved.[22] That's why, in order not to get confused from the very beginning and not to

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[17] See, e.g., V. G. Morgan. Kant and Dogmatic Idealism: A Defence of Kant's Refutation of Berkeley. The Southern Journal of Philosophy, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, 1993, pp. 217–225.

[18] By incorporating the content of Berkeley's concept "materialism", which in a way facilitates its understanding.

[19] Kant seems to have introduced the very term "realism" into philosophy, just as Leibniz had introduced the term "idealism" before him. But for the contemporary understanding of idealism, Kant's interpretation is also crucial. See, e.g., D. Heidemann Kant and the forms of realism. Synthese 198, 2019, pp. 3231–3252.

[20] While removing the accusations of dogmatism from Plato and Aristotle. See B. Mabile. Is Hegel Dogmatic? The Philosophical Forum, Vol. XXXI, Nos. 3-4, Fall-Winter 2000, p. 275.

[21] In one of the recent interpretations, it looks as follows: philosophy is divided into subjective-idealist and realist; realism is represented by pluralism and monism, whereas monism is represented by objective idealism and materialism. See Levin G. D. Filosofskie kategorii v sovremennom diskurse [Philosophical Categories in the Current Discourse]. Moscow. 2007, pp. 35-36. (In Russian.)

[22] See, e.g., K. L. Pearce. What Descartes Doubted, Berkeley Denied, and Kant Endorsed. Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review, Vol. 58, Issue. 1, 2019, pp. 31–63; G. Dicker. Kant's Refutation of Idealism. Noûs, Vol. 42, Issue 1, March 2008, pp. 80–108; C. M. Turbayne. Kant's Refutation of Dogmatic Idealism. The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 20, July 1955, pp. 225–244.

drown in the noumenal morass, it is necessary to return to Berkeley and clearly formulate our own position vis-à-vis his idealism. It will come down to the following thesis: Berkeley had no reason to assert the existence of things-in-themselves based on the principles of his philosophy, even though he really claimed this.[23] This is so because the existence of things-in-themselves is actually asserted on the basis of non-inferential knowledge, in which they appear not as a kind of content[24] but as constituents of cognitions. The fact that Berkeley tried to reduce what, according to Locke, determines representation to representation itself and to turn the *esse est percipi* principle into an idealist one[25] does not make any difference, since true direct knowledge has no content at all but only objects as constituents of cognitions that are things-in-themselves. Our line of argument here does not differ much from the analysis of Berkeley's Puzzle by one of the major proponents of relationalism, J. Campbell,[26] except for the fact that this analysis is of less importance for the justification of strong disjunctivism than of relationalism, as the former does not consider things-in-themselves, however understood,[27] as justificative ontological correlates of knowledge. Let us dwell on it in more detail.

According to Campbell, Berkeley's Puzzle comes down to the following statement: our understanding of concepts of the medium-sized world is grounded in our sensory experience, while the latter can provide only concepts relating to sensory experience itself.[28] It should follow from this that our concepts of the external world do not actually have anything to do with the external world itself. It is not difficult to realize that such a line of argument proceeds from the critique of the inferential character of thing-in-itself and clearly follows Locke's epistemology in this respect. But given, as we claim, that Berkeley had no reason to speak about the existence of things-in-themselves based on his principles, is this not an argument in favor of the fact that he was not a representationalist? No, because an epistemology that claims to be non-representationalist must allow for the existence of things-in-themselves in some form or another[29] and have at least the slightest grounds for this. And the latter can be ensured only based on the analysis of the epistemic role of introspective appearance of objects. Strong disjunctivism assigns it the greatest epistemic role possible since it considers such an appearance to be necessarily justified[30] by virtue of the reality of the very cognition, of which it is an integral

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[23] The fact that Berkeley denied the existence of matter does not provide grounds to assert that he denied the existence and even the knowability of things-in-themselves. Thus, a character of his dialogues Philonus emphasized: "What you call the empty forms and outside of things seem to me the very things themselves. Nor are they empty or incomplete, otherwise than upon your supposition that Matter is an essential part of all corporeal things." See G. Berkeley. Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous. Chicago, 1906, p. 111.

[24] And not as a cause of some content, either.

[25] See Y. Tomida. Locke's 'Things Themselves'… p. 266.

[26] See J. Campbell. Berkeley's Puzzle. Conceivability and Possibility, ed. by Tamar Szabo Gendler and John O'Leary Hawthorne. Oxford, 2002, pp. 127–143; Idem. Relational vs. Kantian Responses to Berkeley's Puzzle. Perception, Causation, and Objectivity, ed. by Naomi Eilan, Hemdat Lerman and Johannes Roessler. Oxford, 2011, pp. 35-50; Idem. A Straightforward Solution to Berkeley's Puzzle. The Harvard Review of Philosophy, Vol. XVIII, 2012, pp. 31–49.

[27] We are aware that the term "thing-in-itself" came from representationalism but consider it possible to use it in a different sense.

[28] J. Campbell. A Straightforward Solution… p. 31

[29] Not necessarily in the unknowable one.

[30] And necessarily in the form of a belief. We will return to this subject at the end of the essay.

part.[31] Other internalist epistemological theories do not consider it to be a necessarily justified knowledge, thereby adhering to a causal conception of truth and treating knowledge as justified true belief. At the same time, realist representationalism of both the disjunctivist and conjunctivist varieties refuses to recognize the object as an integral part of cognition, insisting instead on distinguishing between the representational content and the object. Transcendental idealism goes even further and insists on the contrast between object and thing-in-itself, trying, partly in the spirit of Berkeley, to reduce the object to the representational content. Post-Kantian German Idealism moves in the direction of eliminativism and the identification of thing-in-itself with the subject. Thus, we have naturally returned to the conclusion about the representationalist character of Kant's epistemology.

Indeed, transcendental idealism is a slightly more consistent epistemology than Berkeleanism since it at least acknowledges the fact that the representational content must somehow refer to things-in-themselves, not be them. However, taking into account the brief digression into the specifics of Berkeley's idealism, we should return to the initial question about the allegedly non-representationalist nature of post-Kantian philosophy. To begin with, it should be pointed out that Kant's early critics were right when they stated that his "critical philosophy" is deficient, but without taking into account more serious grounds for such a characterization. The first thing that stands out to attention in the epistemology of transcendental idealism is, at times, a direct adherence to the antecedent, one might even say scholastic, tradition while denying or reinterpreting only some of its elements. Thus, Kant fully accepted the Aristotelian principle, according to which knowledge of the essence of a thing implies knowledge of its proximate cause[32] while trying to question his another thesis that the soul is somehow the beings, along with the definition of truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus,*[33] which traces back to the latter. At the same time, he makes a downright axiomatic shift of emphasis from the question of the problematic relationship between a representation and its object to the question of the a priori necessity of an object's representation itself,[34] since he sees this as a way out of Berkeley's Puzzle. But what did prevent Berkeley himself from introducing such an a priori necessity? The fact that he supposedly did not understand that "thing-in-itself" is unknowable and turned mere "appearances" into "things-in-themselves", thereby falling into illusionism.

Concerning such a critique of idealism, three points should be noted. Firstly, it provides little for understanding the distinction between "appearances" and "things-in-themselves" since it presupposes the latter. Secondly, it is an example of the reinterpretation of the epistemic role of the introspective appearance of objects, since Kant, following Hume, begins interpreting "appearance" in terms of the Common Kind Assumption, i.e. as a general ontological kind invoked to explain the supposed indistinguishability of the phenomenal character of perception and hallucination. Transcendental idealism thus necessarily proceeds from conjunctivism — otherwise, it would have no reason to begin a struggle against Berkeleanism. And, thirdly, Kant's refutation of idealism is actually a more far-reaching undertaking than a mere attack on Berkeley. Indeed, we should keep in mind that Kant virtually identified transcendental realism with empirical idealism, which means that he seriously claimed to ground the only possible non-

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[31] This is one of the reasons why knowledge as such cannot be reduced to the appearance of some object — a part cannot be reduced to the whole. And this is despite the fact that we can say about a particular cognition that it is knowledge reduced to the justified appearance of its object.

[32] Lektorskij V. A. Kant, radikal'nyj konstruktivizm i konstruktivnyj realizm v epistemologii [Kant, Radical Constructivism, and Constructive Realism in Epistemology]. Voprosy filosofii, No. 8, 2005, pp. 12–13. (In Russian.)

[33] S. Rosen. Is Thinking Spontaneous? Kant's Legacy: Essays in Honor of Lewis White Beck, ed. by Predrag Cicovacki. Rochester, 2000, pp. 15–16.

[34] See, e.g., J. Tartaglia. Rorty and the Mirror of Nature. London and New York, 2007, p. 32.

skeptical form of realism — the so-called empirical realism — since other forms of realism would allegedly necessarily fall into illusionism like Berkeley. And this only possible form of realism could be, in general, exclusively representationalist since it was based on the opposition of "correct" representationalism, which does not go beyond the limits of possible experience, and the erroneous one, turning "appearances" into "things-in-themselves". The possibility that realism, even an erroneous one, can be non-idealist or, a fortiori, non-representationalist, was excluded in this scheme. In this way, Kant put at stake too much with his apriorism.

In any case, we are primarily interested here in the fact that this so-called empirical realism necessarily presupposes four inextricably linked points.[35] Firstly, it implies a strange identification of the laws of physics with the laws of cognition[36] in the sense that the latter in its context act as the former, which necessarily leads to the presumption that physics cannot claim to know "things-in-themselves". This in itself should have caused protests on the part of scientific circles, but in fact, that did not happen. Secondly, it admits the fundamental possibility for the cognizing subject to be indistinguishable from the subject of a total hallucination but makes an "optimistic" conclusion from this, which comes down to the fact that such a situation does not affect successful cognition in any way, since the knowledge of "things-in-themselves" is beyond our scope in any case.[37] Thirdly, this so-called empirical realism is necessarily a form of representationalism, simply because, despite all the Copernican turn that emphasizes the active role of the cognizing subject, it presupposes the fundamental finitude of the latter, and the notion of representation acts in this regard as a necessary compromise between these two in many respects conflicting assumptions. And, fourthly, as we have already noted, all this would be impossible without implicit conjunctivism. The first thing that naturally collapsed in the historical and philosophical perspective was the reduction of physics to epistemology, which eventually led, as Rosen put it, to the triumph of history over mathematics in the transcendental sphere.[38] The other points proved to be much more enduring.

However, despite the impressive impact, the Copernican turn actually did not end with anything significant. Indeed, Kant drew attention to the fact that the source of objective knowledge lies not in the objects themselves but in the a priori forms of sensibility and understanding. Such an approach seemed to him extremely convincing because, like the "dogmatists" he criticized, he proceeded from identifying the sources of knowledge with the sources of its justification. Accordingly, in his opinion, specifying a different source of knowledge should have led to a certain revolutionary effect in epistemology. But in fact, this identification is erroneous since the question of the justification of knowledge has nothing at all to do with the question of its source. Of course, true knowledge is an effect of a really existing object, but this abstract principle can play no role at the moment of justifying knowledge thereof since even an existing object is not known until the moment of justification of the belief about its truth. That's why Kant is one of the most prominent adherents of causal epistemology, as clearly evidenced by the so-called transcendental deduction of categories — an attempt to demonstrate that true knowledge is exhausted by the sphere of "appearances", a priori and deductively structured according to the causal principle. And this state of affairs cannot be mitigated by appeals neither to the argument that Kant allegedly does not hypostatize a "conscious thing" and

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[35] In order not to complicate the exposition, we will not dwell on another innovation of Kant — the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, which does not stand up to scrutiny but plays an important role in his schemes.

[36] Which is based on the assumption that the laws of physics and the laws of cognition have a common nature, consisting in synthetic a priori judgments. See, e.g., M. Ferraris. Goodbye, Kant!: What Still Stands of The Critique of Pure Reason. New-York, 2013, pp. 27–31.

[37] J. Campbell. Relational vs. Kantian Responses to Berkeley's Puzzle… p. 46.

[38] S. Rosen. Hermeneutics as Politics: Second Edition. New Haven and London, 2003, pp. 24–27.

proceeds from pure consciousness[39] nor to the fact that the cognitive faculty is supposedly spontaneous and knows only those objects that it itself constructs. In any case, Kant's approach consists in an attempt to demonstrate that transcendental idealism has an advantage over other doctrines, precisely because it supposedly discovers a certain, even the only possible, source of knowledge, and draws attention to the allegedly decisive role of active "production" of objects in the process of their cognition.[40] Therefore, given that we can assume that epistemological realism can be based on the denial of a causal conception of truth, Kant does not just miss his aim in criticizing the former but does not even consider it as an aim of a critique.

Nevertheless, Kant's transcendental method had a decisive influence on continental and significant influence on analytic philosophy in terms of its three most odious manifestations: the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, the contrast between reason and understanding, and the splitting of reality into ontological and epistemological. Thus, it is well known that one of the main tasks of Kant was to demonstrate how exactly synthetic a priori judgments are possible. Their very existence is certain for him; moreover, this assumption acts as one of the arguments in favor of the unknowability of "things-in-themselves".[41] Indeed, were the latter at least potentially knowable, the former would be impossible[42] — but such a conclusion is unacceptable for Kant, as he sees in its denial the only way out of both Humean skepticism and Berkeley's puzzle. Thus, weren't synthetic a priori truths exist, we would necessarily fall into skeptical empiricism of the Humean sort, but given that they exist, one has a possibility to reconcile "empiricism" and "rationalism". Given all this, it may even seem for an average reader that Kant undertakes some kind of restoration of infallibilism after its devastating criticism by Hume.

However, this entire line of reasoning is wrong for many reasons. Firstly, it shows an uncritical adherence to Hume's philosophy. Indeed, Hume tried to demonstrate the impossibility of introspective infallibilism, compensating for its lack by justifying the possibility of an "empirically" understood causality based on a theory of the association of ideas but retaining all the features of necessity.[43] Kant generally agrees with these reasonings since he is not satisfied with pure "rationalism". However, he does not satisfied with the purely "empirical" interpretation of the concept of causality either. This situation forces him to choose a third way, namely, the reinterpretation of causality as a synthetic a priori principle. All this is presented as the only possible way to rehabilitate the principle of sufficient reason after its scathing criticism by Hume, which is acknowledged by Kant as being in many respects correct.[44] It must be said that, at this point, Kant took another step in both overcomplicating this banal philosophical principle and putting it at the service of causal epistemology[45] — in the process, to which contributed most of the major modern philosophers, beginning with Spinoza and ending with Schopenhauer.

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[39] By the way, it is not quite clear how exactly the thesis about the unknowability of the source of cognition can in itself help in the justification of knowledge, given that the justification in question appeals to this source.

[40] In this latter thesis, the influence of scholasticism in terms of creationism and appealing to the proximate cause is particularly apparent.

[41] R. Howell. Kant's Transcendental Deduction: An Analysis of Main Themes in His Critical Philosophy. Dordrecht, 1992, p. 20.

[42] J. V. Buroker. Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction. Cambridge, 2006, p. 20.

[43] M. Boehm. Certainty, Necessity, and Knowledge in Hume's Treatise. David Hume: A Tercentenary Tribute, ed. by S. Tweyman. Ann Arbor, 2013, p. 84.

[44] P. Guyer. Kant and the Claims of Knowledge. Cambridge, 1987, pp. 237–238.

[45] The fact that Kant drew a distinction between a reason and a cause doesn't help matters. See A. Schopenhauer. On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. London, 1903, pp. 24-26.

In the broadest terms, this process looks as follows. Spinoza insisted on the universality of this principle, denied the possibility of contingent truths, but admitted only a single "thing-in-itself". Leibniz, on the contrary, emphasized the pluralism of substances but at the same time denied their causal interaction and conceded the existence of contingent truths. The principle of sufficient reason was thereby married with necessity as distinct from contingency. Kant took up this last idea but began to deny that causality has to do with the knowledge of "things-in-themselves".[46] Kant's ambivalence, however, provoked a revival of Spinozism of a kind.[47] As a result, in Hegel, all this ended up with the situation where "thing-in-itself", as a kind of intermediary between the subject and "appearances", began to determine their unity, without being determined from the outside. Finally, Schopenhauer emphasized that "thing-in-itself" as Will, though not determined from the outside, cannot determine "appearances", as the principle of sufficient reason is contracted within the phenomenal sphere.[48] In this way, a simple truth that things-in-themselves mutually determine each other, not being self-sufficient, but not determining knowledge, either — not to mention the admission of the impossibility of contingent truths — fell outside the purview of philosophy thanks to German Idealism.

Secondly, the thesis that the knowledge of things-in-themselves leads to skepticism and needs a priori-synthetic "infallibilism" is erroneous since it commits a confusion between infallibilism and a priori determinism while ignoring full-fledged infallibilism. In fact, in this respect, Kant is not far removed from Hume. And finally, this so-called "infallibilism" is impossible since it has to be based on an erroneous distinction between analytic and synthetic truths.[49] We will not specifically dwell on this matter, confining ourselves to pointing out the fact that a purely analytic judgment cannot exist, simply because the law of identity cannot be completely abstracted from perception. More than that — even the pre-Kantian distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge is illegitimate to the extent that it is based on the distinction between necessary truths of reason and contingent empirical truths.

In any case, there is no infallibilism in the full sense of the word neither in Kant's philosophy nor even among his followers since it is substituted there by various sorts of a priori-synthetic necessity. As Rosen rightfully noted, "From Descartes to Hegel, freedom assumes ever more explicitly the status of first principle. […] What appears spontaneously may disappear

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[46] D. Hogan. Kant's Copernican Turn and the Rationalist Tradition. The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, ed. by Paul Guyer. New-York, 2010, pp. 34–40.

[47] It should be noted that the whole discussion about "things-in-themselves" is complicated by the fact that this concept often means not so much objects in themselves as some single substance serving as the cause of things. This is the result of a peculiar tendency of the modern European philosophy towards monism. Thus, while Locke, Berkeley, and Leibniz can with some reservations be called pluralists, Kant, by attributing unknowability and "transcendental indeterminateness" to "thing-in-itself", clearly provoked the increasing of the monistic tendency. Moreover, it may even seem that Kant accuses the "transcendental realists" of mistakenly identifying objects precisely with the so-understood reality. Meanwhile, the question of epistemological realism is not always formulated in the context of monism and, from our perspective, cannot be formulated in such a way.

[48] It is important here that both Hegel's attempt to side with Spinoza and Schopenhauer's attempt to side with both Vedanta and Buddhism at the same time do not stand up to criticism for one simple reason — neither Spinoza nor classical Indian philosophy distinguished "appearance" from "thing-in-itself". Unfortunately, despite all this, the Hegelian or Schopenhauer's paradigm is often accepted as the basis for interpreting, on the one hand, various "absolutist" doctrines, such as Neoplatonism or Advaita Vedanta, and, on the other, the common philosophical distinction between appearance and reality.

[49] See, e.g., A. Sion. A Short Critique of Kant's Unreason. Geneva, 2009, pp. 33–56; W.V. Quine. The Two Dogmas of Empiricism. The Philosophical Review, Vol. 60, No. 1, January 1951, pp. 20–43.

spontaneously. The notion of necessity thus becomes a pseudonym for contingency." [S. Rosen, 1989, pp. 72–73] For improperly admitted contingency, it should be added. This is the logical outcome of Hume's attempt to dissociate introspective necessity from infallibilism, which was only aggravated by the German philosophers, and Schopenhauer's efforts aimed at "purifying" the concept of "thing-in-itself" from determinism and showing the impossibility of free will are clearly insufficient to fix this situation.

As for the distinction between reason and understanding — one of the most outrageous manifestations of transcendental idealism — it had a more limited impact on subsequent philosophy due to its obvious deadendness. It owes most of its influence to the philosophy of Hegel. Kant, however, went as far as to contrast thinking with knowing[50] — as if thinking could be abstracted from the cognitive process. Among other things, this distinction served him as a necessary component for the criticism of "transcendental realism" — if it did not exist, "dogmatists" could not be blamed for applying categories beyond the limits of possible experience. So, while Descartes is already notable for the typologization of cognitons and their opposition to each other, Kant and Hegel remain unchallenged in this respect.

However, of all the three abovementioned manifestations of Kant's transcendental method, it is the third, i.e. the splitting of reality into ontological and epistemological, that, from our perspective, had a decisive impact on at least continental philosophy. To begin with, it caused polar assessments of the role of epistemology in Kant's philosophy, including among its explicit critics. Thus, some thinkers believed or believe that Kant's philosophy is epistemology par excellence, and even that it is therefore necessary to abandon epistemology as such in order to return to "common sense".[51] Others, on the contrary, believe that Kant's epistemology cannot be considered epistemology proper, judging by contemporary standards.[52] Besides, some believe that Kant violated the natural balance between epistemology and ontology[53], while others, on the contrary, assert that he established it[54]. All this is complemented by the endless contention of various kinds of epistemological interpretations of Kant and Hegel with the ontological ones. Our main task, however, is the analysis of the thesis about the allegedly non-representationalist character of post-Kantian philosophy. As we have already noted, the early critics of Kant began to emphasize the deficiency of transcendental idealism but basically inherited all the features of the latter we have identified. In any case, there is no doubt that Reinhold, Jacobi, Maimon, Schulze, Beck, Fichte, Schelling, and Schopenhauer, along with Kant, proceeded from the representationalist paradigm. In this context, three points deserve special attention. Firstly, Schulze's special role in the development of German Idealism should be noted. It is related to the fact that his argument from causality against Kant's understanding of "things-in-themselves" remains relevant to this day.[55] Indeed, Kant's "empirical realism" proceeds from the equivocation

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[50] M. Buzzoni. Kantian Accounts of Thought Experiments. The Routledge Companion to Thought Experiments, ed. by J.R. Brown, Y. Fehige, M. Stuart. London and New York, 2018, pp. 327–330.

[51] See, e.g., S. Rosen. Is Thinking Spontaneous?.. pp. 18–39; R. Rorty. Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. Princeton, 1981, p. 126.

[52] See, e.g., A. Chignell. Kant's Concepts of Justification. Noûs, Vol. 41, No. 1, March 2007, p. 33; D. Heidemann. Epistemology in German Idealism. The Routledge Companion to Nineteenth Century Philosophy, ed. by Dean Moyar. London and New-York, 2010, pp. 32–43.

[53] See M. Ferraris. Manifesto of New Realism. New-York, 2014, pp. 23–34.

[54] See M. Cardiani and M. Tamborini. Italian New Realism and Transcendental Philosophy: A Critical Account. Philosophy Today, Vol. 61, No. 3, Summer 2017, pp. 539–554.

[55] It is interesting to note that Schopenhauer, cursing all the Kant's followers, spoke approvingly only about his teacher Schulze. See A. Schopenhauer Critique of the Kantian Philosophy. The World as Will

of the term "reality", which can be smoothed over only by demonstrating the "participation" of the reality of "empirical realism" in the reality of "things-in-themselves". But the causal problem stands in the way of this in the first place.[56] Secondly, Fichte actually did not get all that far ahead of Kant in justifying the knowability of "thing-in-itself",[57] and this can serve as a reliable criterion to distinguish his philosophy from Berkeleanism. Thirdly, it remains open who was most successful in eliminativism; in particular, the arguments are given in favor of the fact that it was, again, not Fichte but Beck.[58] In any case, only Hegel's philosophy can suggest more or less serious doubts about its representationalism. Indeed, as it is often noted, Hegel overcame naïve realism,[59] criticized the Myth of the Given,[60] and was even a forefather of contemporary disjunctivism[61].

In this regard, it is necessary to consider another terminological confusion, which has had a decisive influence on the entire post-Kantian philosophy up to the present. It consists in the definitions of the terms "representationalism", "naïve realism", and "direct realism". Thus, concerning the last two terms, it is usually argued that, firstly, they mean basically the same thing,[62] and, secondly, that to be a naïve or direct realist, it is enough merely to deny sense-data or other similar intermediaries between the subject and the cognizable world.[63] In such a perspective, a representationalist can be considered a direct or even naïve realist.[64] Meanwhile, this is a grave mistake. By definition, a representationalist can be neither a direct nor a naïve realist since, in the most general terms, representationalism is simply the assumption of representational content[65] in the case of true direct knowledge. Accordingly, when such content is admitted, direct realism becomes out of the question, even if a representationalist embraces disjunctivism and rejects sense-data. Thus, representationalism is inevitably an indirect realism,[66]

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and Representation, Vol. I, trans. and ed. by J. Norman, A. Welchman, and C. Janaway. Cambridge, 2010, pp. 463–465.

[56] See, e.g., J. Messina. Answering Aenesidemus: Schulze's Attack on Reingoldian Representationalism and Its Importance for Fichte. Journal of the History of Philosophy, Vol. 49, No. 3, July 2011, pp. 339–369; R. Fincham. The Impact of Aenesidemus upon Fichte and Schopenhauer. Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 10, 2000, pp. 96–126.

[57] See, e.g., S. Rosen. The Ancients and the Moderns: Rethinking Modernity. New Haven and London, 1989, pp. 65–82.

[58] See L. Nitzar. Jacob Sigismund Beck's Standpunctslehre and the Kantian Thing-in-itself Debate: The Relation Between a Representation and Its Object. Cham, 2014.

[59] See, e.g., K. R. Westphal. Hegel's Internal Critique of Naïve Realism. Journal of Philosophical Research, Vol. 25, 2000, pp. 173–229.

[60] See, e.g.,: J. McDowell. Hegel and the Myth of the Given. Das Interesse des Denkens : Hegel aus heutiger Sicht, Hrsg.: Wolfgang Welsch und Klaus Vieweg. München, 2007, S. 75–88.

[61] See F. Sanguinetti. Hegel, the grandfather of disjunctivism. The Philosophical Forum, Vol. 51, Issue 3, Fall 2020, pp. 331–353.

[62] See, e.g., T. Rockmore. On Constructivist Epistemology. Lanham, 2005, p. 16.

[63] See, e.g., J. Lyons. Epistemological Problems of Perception. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2017 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta. URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/perception-episprob.

[64] Sometimes it is formally denied, but representationalism is given too narrow a definition, which nullifies this denial.

[65] Be it conceptual or nonconceptual.

[66] This definition is also true for ancient and medieval philosophy. Thus, there are reasons to consider the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists as a kind of indirect realism, contrary to some assertions. See J. Blackmore. On the Inverted Use of the Terms 'Realism' and 'Idealism' Among

even when it is an "idealist realism" in the spirit of Kant, Hegel, etc. But this is not the whole story; the real trouble is that if we allow this confusion, then, as the history of philosophy shows, we will not be able to arrive at a single and sufficiently general definition of representationalism, even given that all the proposed definitions will necessarily presuppose the above common criterion.

The interpretations of Hegel's philosophy are very revealing in this regard. Thus, if we assume that under the rubric of "sense-certainty" Hegel indeed aspire to overcome "naïve realism", which will correspond to a certain form of representationalism, then it will be easy to draw the conclusion that absolute idealism is a form of anti-representationalism — moreover, necessarily a not naïve realist one. At this point, things get completely confusing since commentators who are positive towards Hegel and adhere to this line of reasoning are forced to assert that he criticizes direct realism while being himself a direct realist of a kind, given that he defends the idea of an "ascent" to the direct knowledge. Meanwhile, even though "sense-certainty" can indeed be understood only as a certain form of representationalism, neither it nor "absolute knowledge" can be considered a direct or naïve realism, and Hegel's entire undertaking thus comes down to an attempt to overcome certain forms of representationalism within and in favor of another form. There is thus no general anti-representationalist criterion for distinguishing between the lower and higher levels of knowledge in Hegel's philosophy.

To complete the consideration of one of the most pernicious distinctions in the history of philosophy — between reason and understanding in the Hegelian sense — let us dwell on the criticism of Hegel's dialectical method, although this will slightly distract us from the main topic. As is well known, treating the nature of knowledge, Hegel, following Hume,[67] proceeded from a kind of neo-Pyrrhonism.[68] Adherence to such an approach, along with other assumptions of an extremely doubtful sort, encouraged the obvious misuse of the derivatives of the term "Absolute" in his works, which gives reason to suspect Hegel, if not of charlatanism, as Schopenhauer stressed, then at least of deep ignorance. Indeed, it was necessary to try one's best to declare as an "Absolute" something presumably complete but still constantly striving for self-completion by its very nature.[69] However that may be, the inclusion of neo-Pyrrhonism in this "absolute" did benefit the justification of neither everyday nor "absolute" knowledge. The fact is that, unlike the ancient skeptics, Hegel's approach considers the principle of equipollence (isostheneia) not merely as possible and applicable but as necessary.[70] Thus, he believed that the understanding, as a necessary moment of the "Absolute Spirit", has to posit impassable antinomies, vainly striving for the true identity.[71] On the other hand, dialectical reason is capable of sublating contradictions

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Scientists and Historians of Science. The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 30, No. 2, June 1979, pp. 125–128.

[67] One should not rush to contrast Hegel with Hume in this respect: contrary to Hegel's statements, his approach to skepticism is closer to Hume's than the approach of the ancient skeptics to the approach of both of them.

[68] See, e.g., M. N. Forster. Hegel and Skepticism. Cambridge and London, 1989, pp. 97–116.

[69] See S. Rosen. G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom. New Haven and London, 1974, pp. 278–280. Again, the interpretation of necessity and contingency, tracing back to Kant, played a significant role in this.

[70] See, e.g., M. Hentrup. Self-Completing Skepticism: On Hegel's Sublation of Pyrrhonism. Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy, Vol. 23, Issue 1, Fall 2018, pp. 105–123; A. Speight. Skepticism, Modernity, and the Origins of Hegelian Dialectic. The Dimensions of Hegelian Dialectic, ed. by Nectarios G. Limnatis. London and New-York, 2010, pp. 140–156.

[71] D. Heidemann. Hegel on the Nature of Scepticism. Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain, Vol. 32, Issue 1-2, 2011, pp. 82–83.

and thereby acts as the identity of the subject and object. To put it in contemporary terms, this construction, by and large, rests on a strange denial of the understanding's capacity for healthy fallibilism, insofar as the latter is exclusively attributed to the reason. All this looks as if Hegel simply declares the understanding to be a "dogmatic" moment of the "Absolute Spirit", implying that it represents a false and infallibilistic separation between the subject and object, and opposes it, within the subject itself, to the true, dialectical, and fallibilistic reason that constitutes their initial identity. However, we will not dwell on this point and instead draw attention to some equally important problems that arise in connection with such an approach. There are at least three main problems in this regard. Firstly, the principle of equipollence, both in the classical and the Hegelian version, is erroneous since it ignores the fact that any proposition and the negation of any proposition are justified according to a single principle.[72] Secondly, no cognition can be invalidated by merely positing an opposite cognition, i.e. epistemologically. Thirdly, no cognition can be invalidated allegedly by virtue of an ontological validation of the opposite one. Let us clarify the overall situation by a simple example.

Let's say I consider the following perceptual judgment justified: there is a cup on the table in front of me now. According to the principles of strong disjunctivism, I have every reason to consider this judgment justified; and if I want to be rational, I should not doubt its truth unless and until the ontological invalidation of the relevant cognition happens. This is true not least because when I asserted the existence of the cup, I have already made a double negation in the form: there is a not "not-cup" on the table in front of me now. Besides, in any case, I cannot deny that I already have knowledge of the cup, even if I admit that it may in principle be wrong, and that its logical opposite will have exactly the same epistemic status. However, despite these two circumstances, it cannot be argued that by asserting the existence of the cup, I refuted the existence of any other object that is not a cup simply because a cup is by definition not "not-cup",[73] nor that I invalidated the judgment about the existence of the cup by assuming that the latter may not be a cup after its justification. The latter possibility can only be regarded as a doubt, not an invalidation. The main thing to be noted here is that a doubt of this kind will necessarily be irrational. Indeed, in order to be rational, I must consider the knowledge of the cup to be true and the opposite judgment false but by no means doubt the former after it has already been justified — for the simple reason that its cognition already occurred. In fact, in order for me to rationally cease considering the knowledge of the cup as justified, a full-fledged ontological invalidation must occur, which the mere positing of the opposite is incapable of ensuring. But this would only mean a rollback, albeit one that brings new knowledge, not the dialectical "progress", as irrational doubt in itself does not lead anywhere. Thus, it is rationally impossible to have knowledge of an object while simultaneously doubting it, and therefore doubt cannot serve as a "fuel" for the dialectical self-movement of concepts.

What does Hegel offer instead? Two points immediately strike one's eye when it comes to this matter: firstly, he is not interested in perceptual judgments, and, secondly, he is revising the law of contradiction. This immediately complicates the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy in terms of simple examples. But, anyway, it is clear that his doctrine of dialectical "sublation", firstly, is a factor of disregard for perceptual judgments, and, secondly, ignores the rational impossibility of the coexistence of a fact of knowledge and a doubt in it. Indeed, the combination of the necessity, implied by the "absolute", of both positing antinomies and their subsequent "sublation", although avoiding the absurd identification of doubt with invalidation, to which Hegel got dangerously close, is based on an erroneous understanding of the nature of cognition, which admits the possibility of, on the one hand, knowledge that is necessarily accompanied by a contradiction, and, on the other, a contradiction that is incapable of a full-fledged invalidation,

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[72] In line with the first main claim of strong disjunctivism.

[73] In other words, I must claim to have refuted these objects primarily by virtue of the perception of a particular cup, not because of the mere applicability of the law of double negation to the latter.

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given that it necessarily leads to dialectical "sublation". In the end, we have got a doctrine, not far removed from Hume's, which allows that a cognition can allegedly be invalidated by virtue of an ontological validation of the opposite — but with the introduction of the "absolute" acting as a universal opposite.[74] Against this background, the entire notorious Hegelian struggle with epistemic foundationalism loses its meaning.

Indeed, the entire "phenomenology of Spirit" is based on the assumption that the "Absolute", firstly, posits the criteria of truth within itself and, secondly, that most of them necessarily prove to be erroneous. The question of the criteria of truth was already an argument in favor of the principle of equipollence among the ancient skeptics, but its raising by Hegel, again, provoked a shift of emphasis from the problem of the invalidation of perceptual judgments to the description of the process of changing the forms of consciousness, as he tried to justify the internal criterion of truth, contrasting it with the external ones.[75] Everything ended up essentially the same as in the case of foundationalists — with an appeal to a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions in the context of their alleged equipollence. Moreover, the methods of Hegel and Kant resemble fighting with windmills — both assume oppositions to their systems from within the latter and then successfully criticize "metaphysics" or "transcendental realism". The general answer to both Hegel and his opponents will be that the question of the criteria of truth, whether external or internal, cannot be posed — truth has no criteria at all, but only the nature, the way of justification, and manifestations.[76] This is a necessary consequence of the nonexistence of a justificative ontological correlate of knowledge.

Here, we may be told that we do not fully acknowledge the ontological character of Hegel's system, namely, the fact that it is absolute idealism and, therefore, a special kind of direct realism. Indeed, if object actually exists only for the absolute subject, then the very question of the representation of reality becomes meaningless. In response, three points should be stressed. Firstly, as we have already noted, the criterion for distinguishing representationalism from anti-representationalism consists in the assumption of representational content in the case of true direct knowledge, and there are no grounds for doubt that Hegel proceeded from this assumption. Secondly, the appeal to the notion of representation serves in German Idealism as an explanation of the limited nature of the cognizing subject, the assumption of which, of course, has not disappeared in Hegel. Thirdly, Hegel follows Descartes in what we in our previous essay called the ontologization of epistemology in the form of hypostasizing non-being. In this respect, he has reached the loftiest heights, as he took advantage of the new approaches, namely, following Kant, the splitting of reality into ontological and epistemological and the ontologization of fallibilism. Thus, it is not difficult to find out that his contrasting of reason and understanding, as well as of "being-in-itself" and "being-for-itself", is largely based on commonplace epistemological fallibilism, though rather crudely interpreted. Moreover, this approach has only strengthened the splitting of reality in question, which in itself, from our perspective, is already a manifestation of the ontologization of epistemology. At this juncture, however, it is appropriate to proceed to the second part of this essay.

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[74] See P. Yong. Consciousness and Hegel's Solution to the Problem of the Criterion. European Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 26, Issue 1, March 2018, pp. 283–307.

[75] See K. Westphal. Hegel's Solution to the Dilemma of the Criterion. History of Philosophy Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1988, pp. 173–188.

[76] In particular, practice is not a criterion of truth but a manifestation of knowledge — and not always a true one, to say the least.

II

Before considering the discussion between representationalism and relationalism, it is necessary to briefly dwell on the topic related to the state of affairs in contemporary continental philosophy, especially since the logical transition to it from Hegel is quite simple. The fact is that, by and large, the entire post-Hegelian continental philosophy somehow inherited all the three features that we have just described. Thus, despite all the heterogeneity, continental philosophy is characterized by a certain general epistemological trend, which can be designated as post-Kantian representationalism. Moreover, it is one of the main reasons for its current deplorable state — for the fact it has reached a dead end and got hopelessly stuck in the noumenal morass. A salient feature of post-Kantian representationalism is the splitting of reality into ontological and epistemological with subsequent attempts to reduce "thing-in-itself" to what remains of the transcendental subject in contemporary philosophy. This reduction can be called eliminativism in the broadest sense of the term. Of course, this splitting itself is conditional — moreover, ephemeral — in the sense that its so-called epistemological component is already ontologized. Besides, the eliminativist trend dominated the continental philosophy only until very recently — until the advent of speculative realism of Q. Meillassoux et al. To identify the characteristic features of the two different approaches within a single trend, let us consider them on the example of the philosophies of R. Rorty and M. Ferraris.

To undertake an epistemological analysis of Rorty's philosophy is a thankless task since he vehemently denied that he was engaged in epistemology at all. We cannot ignore him simply because he has become a personification of anti-representationalism in contemporary philosophy, thanks to his criticism of knowledge as an alleged "mirror of nature". Many studies note the proximity of Rorty's approach to Kant's contrary to his own aspirations.[77] Indeed, it is difficult to understand how he could try to justify his "linguistic holism" without, on the one hand, partial reliance on the basic principles of transcendental idealism and, on the other, the assumption of the representational content of knowledge.[78] However, as G. Harman noted, among contemporary continental philosophers, an explicit adoption of either idealist or realistic position is considered bad form,[79] and Rorty is a prominent representative of such an approach. Therefore, in order to point to his alleged anti-representationalism, without being mired in a discussion on particular issues, we will limit ourselves to general considerations only.

In fact, Rorty is a representationalist simply because he completely denies the possibility of a non-representationalist epistemology. In this respect, he is no different from Kant. However, unlike the latter, he does not try to reform representationalism but simply calls for rejecting it, and thereby epistemology as such. It follows from this that his so-called anti-representationalism cannot be considered epistemological from the outset, at least in terms of his own aspirations. In this respect, he comes into conflict with epistemological anti-representationalism proper in the form of relationalism, the possibility of which Rorty ignores. His anti-epistemological approach is thus erroneous. Another problem is that he does not even try to give a strict definition of representationalism. Thus, D. McDermid has identified six equivocations of the term "representationalism" in Rorty's book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.[80] It seems that it

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[77] See, e.g., J. Tartaglia. Rorty's Ambivalent Relationship with Kant. Contemporary Pragmatism, Vol. 13, 2016, pp. 298–318; J. Boros. Representationalism and Antirepresentationalism – Kant, Davidson, and Rorty. The Paideia Archive: Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Vol. 45, 1998, pp. 22–34.

[78] Or, in other words, without relying on the three assumptions described above.

[79] M. Ferraris. Manifesto of New Realism… p. IX.

[80] D. McDermid. Does Epistemology Rest on a Mistake? Understanding Rorty on Scepticism. Critica, Vol. XXXII, No. 96, 2000, p. 5. Subsequently, they were reduced to three. See Idem. The Varieties of

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would be not too inaccurate to say that by representationalism he understood epistemic foundationalism in the first place. No wonder his approach is based on a kind of coherentism, a natural opponent of foundationalism — though raising many questions, given his interpretation.[81] Be that as it may, each of these understandings is far from the definition we have specified. In this context, it is not out of place to mention another adversary of representationalism, though not arguing against epistemology, being a proponent of constructivism — T. Rockmore. His definition of representationalism is a little more apt, but it still remains unclear how it can serve his aims. In particular, he argues that representationalism is neutral with respect to realism or idealism, and that representation is always representation of something else.[82] If we assume that "something else" in this case is not just a mind-independent reality but more abstractly understood "thing-in-itself", then it is unclear how such characteristics can be indicative of the anti-representationalism of Hegel and, a fortiori, Kant. Similarly, it is unclear how Rorty's anti-foundationalism can serve as a basis for his anti-representationalism. The problem with eliminativists is that they ignore the fact that, in their own perspective, "thing-in-itself" must remain as a kind of matter, subject to the shaping activity on the part of variously understood subjectivity. Given all this, neither reality nor the representational content of knowledge, which is its necessary epistemological correlate, can be ontologically eliminated, contrary to their own aspirations. The only thing that remains here is to insist on the "transcendental indeterminateness"[83] of reality in different ways and to interpret subjectivity in one way or another. In any case, this very perspective cannot but remain representationalist — this is true both for Hegel and for all continental philosophers after him. So, neither eliminativism, nor constructivism, nor coherentism can claim the status of epistemological anti-representationalism, and relationalism remains its only possible form.

If we turn to the consideration of Ferraris' philosophy, we will find out that representationalism does not pose any problem for his "New Realism" — on the contrary, he explicitly acknowledges the representationalist character of his philosophy and appeals to the notion of representational content, including non-conceptual. In this, as in many other respects, New Realism sides with speculative realism of Meillassoux and object-oriented ontology of Harman. However, it compares favorably with these theories in that it rejects the notorious notion of "correlationism" that only misleads one and diverts one's attention from the real problem of continental philosophy — the adherence to post-Kantian representationalism.[84] Accordingly, Ferraris can be called a moderate representative of this general continental "realist turn" of the beginning of the 21st century. However, in another respect, New Realism is a vivid example of an explicit splitting of reality into ontological and epistemological, which it almost elevates to first principle. Thus, Ferraris is known as a fierce critic of the reduction of ontology to epistemology, and in order to overcome it, he even suggests dissociating the concepts of truth and reality. But doesn't strong disjunctivism suggest the same thing? To dismiss these superficial comparisons, let us elaborate on this point.

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Pragmatism: Truth, Realism, and Knowledge from James to Rorty. London and New-York, 2006, pp. 134–135.

[81] See H. Inusah. Coherentism in Rorty's Anti-Foundationalist Epistemology. UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2016, pp. 109–120.

[82] T. Rockmore. On Foundationalism: A Strategy for Metaphysical Realism. Lanham, 2004, p. 90.

[83] See, e.g., S. Rosen. Metaphysics in Ordinary Language. New Haven and London, 1999, pp. 144–163; M. Ferraris. New Realism a Short Introduction. Speculations VI, ed. by F. Gironi, M. Austin, R. Jackson. New-York, 2015, p. 145.

[84] Besides, Ferraris rightly treats the approaches of Rorty and constructivists as forms of post-Kantian representationalism. See M. Ferraris. Transcendental Realism. The Monist, Vol. 98, 2015, p. 216.

Strong disjunctivism does criticize the ontologization of epistemology and, among other things, draws attention to the difference between the reality of knowledge and its truth. However, we do not see any epistemological grounds for denying the widespread identification of the truth and reality of the object of knowledge to the extent that it does not lead to the erroneous endowing of a hallucination with a special status.[85] Meanwhile, Ferraris offers just such an approach while adhering to the "classical" account of knowledge, i.e. identifying its reality with truth. It is this distinctive combination of these two features that determines the nature of his epistemological theory. It also leads to far-reaching consequences. Indeed, if we assume that the reality of knowledge is identical with its truth and that the truth of the object of knowledge is, in turn, not identical with its reality, then the latter can only be understood in such a perspective as epistemologically neutral, i.e. neither true nor false. Basically, this is precisely the essence of Ferraris' approach, as it is in this way that he tries to emphasize the independence of reality from epistemology. To support this thesis, he has formulated a peculiar theory of truth. Thus, according to his typology, there are three theories of truth: hermeneutical ("hypotruth"), analytic ("hypertruth"), and "technological" ("mesotruth"). The first considers truth as an attribute of belief, the second as an attribute of a mind-independent object, whereas the latter is his own theory, intended, as the prefix "meso" suggests, to serve as a technical intermediary between ontology and epistemology.[86] But what does not suit Ferraris in the "analytic" theory of truth — after all, it is also realist? He believes that simply discovering the attribute of truth in objects would imply that the interaction of planets occurs according to the self-subsisting laws of physics. In other words, Ferraris tries to avoid platonism of a sort, supposedly peculiar to this theory.

Such an interpretation compels us to unwittingly stand up for the "analytic" theory of truth since two misunderstandings immediately strike one here. Firstly, Ferraris begins with Newton's laws, i.e. with something inferred and thus being an indirect knowledge — as if the truth of objects cannot be perceived directly. Secondly, he ignores the fact that the "analytic" theory cannot be reduced to a pure ontology — on the contrary, in order to be full-fledged, it must proceed from epistemology. Thus, one of the advantages of relationalism lies in the fact that it demonstrates the applicability, and even the necessity, of epistemic internalism to justify what Ferraris called "hypertruth".[87] Accordingly, the "technological" conception of truth is at least devoid of significance — the harmony between epistemology and ontology is already ensured by the elaborate theories that recognize truth as an attribute of a mind-independent object. Besides, like post-Kantian constructivism, it proceeds from the assumption that truth must necessarily be determined by humans — otherwise, their active role as cognizing subjects will allegedly not be acknowledged. All this indicates that Ferraris, similarly to Descartes, Kant, etc., follows the general trend of ontologizing epistemology — after all, we should not forget that the attribute of truth is directly related to the very existence of an object, and to attribute it to "technology" means to be not far removed from idealism.

The irony of the situation is that this entire system is designed precisely to overcome the ontologization of epistemology. The problem here is that by this ontologization Ferraris understands not the splitting of reality into ontological and epistemological itself but a certain disproportion in favor of epistemology within this split. Indeed, both the split and the

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[85] In other words, an object of both a cognitive error and a so-called hallucination should be characterized by a single term, be it "false" or "unreal".

[86] M. Ferraris. To Make Truth: Ontology, Epistemology, Technology. New Realism and Contemporary Philosophy, ed. by G. Kroupa and J. Simoniti. London, 2020, pp. 73–75.

[87] However, in our terms, commonly-known relationalism still cannot claim to defend a realist conception of truth, remaining within the bounds of causal understanding thereof.

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disproportion are consequences of Kant's philosophy.[88] However, it is the first, not the second, that in itself is a manifestation of the ontologization of epistemology, and only as a consequence of the latter, which began long before Kant. It is also important here that, besides introducing the new theory of truth, to overcome this disproportion, Ferraris, just like Hegel, appeals to crudely understood fallibilism. His line of reasoning is very simple: since knowledge is fundamentally subject to error, it is limited and substantially different from the infinite reality that is unamendable and indifferent to it. Therefore, his epistemology is compared not only with the philosophy of Hegel but also with the post-Kantian theism of Jacobi.[89] And we would add that his claim about the epistemological indifference of reality is, on the one hand, explicit externalism within internalism[90] and, on the other, a peculiar variety of what we in the previous essay called the introspection's neutrality thesis.

Analytic philosophy, to which we should now turn, is notable for a much greater epistemological discipline than continental. This equally applies to the portion thereof that can also be called post-Kantian representationalism. However, we will not compare these two types of representationalism but, on the contrary, given their common epistemological feature — the assumption of representational content in the case of true direct knowledge — will contrast them with the theories that deny this content. Indeed, this is exactly what the current discussion between representationalism and relationalism in analytic philosophy comes down to. However, taking into account that the discussion itself is not yet over, and to avoid a mere accounting of it, we will focus only on those points that seem particularly important to us and only in the light of strong disjunctivism. In other words, assuming that our position concerning representational content is clear enough, let us proceed to consider relationalism itself as a participant in this discussion. In this context, we believe it necessary to address three issues — the question of the status of knowledge at the moment of a cognitive error, the theory of phenomenal externalism, and the problem of transition from a direct perception to a perceptual judgment based on it.

One of the undeniable merits of relationalism is that it drew attention to the following simple epistemological truth: if an object does not seem to be what it is, then it is this very object that is mistakenly perceived — otherwise, a cognitive error would be out of question. This point of view is systematically explicated in B. Brewer's book *Perception and its Objects*.[91] Thus, when a stick is partially immersed in a glass of clear water, it will seem bent when one looks at it from the side. However, the whole point of this illusion is that it is the straight stick that looks bent. Even so, there is a missing link in this argument, which, on the one hand, betrays relationalism as a variety of weak disjunctivism and, on the other, gives occasion to its critics to insist that its approach is not sufficiently different from representationalism.[92] Indeed, in explaining a cognitive error, relationalism is forced to appeal to looks, and this forces it to embark on a slippery path that can lead first to representationalism and then to skepticism and conjunctivism. This missing link has to do with the need to further emphasize the fact that, in the case of a cognitive error, the cognizing subject has knowledge about the object to which they are mistaken — otherwise, questions will arise about the object's identity, along with other problems

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[88] To be precise, Ferraris begins with Descartes, but the general emphasis inevitably falls on Kant anyway. See M. Ferraris. Manifesto of New Realism… pp. 23–34.

[89] B. Norris. Madness and Authority in Jacobi and Ferraris: Why New Realism Is Not New. Stasis, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2020, pp. 76–104.

[90] The epistemology of Ferraris cannot be considered pure externalism owing to its significant proximity to German Idealism.

[91] B. Brewer. Perception and Its Objects. Oxford, 2011, pp. 101–109.

[92] See, e.g., H. Robinson. Relationalism Versus Representationalism: How Deep Is the Divide? The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 248, July 2012, pp. 614–619.

that we have already considered. In fact, Brewer came very close to recognizing this necessity by emphasizing that the straight stick in the case of the illusion under consideration should be an object of direct perception.[93] However, he did not take a decisive step on this path. Strong disjunctivism is capable of filling this missing link since this is implied by its very basic principles.

Thus, to return to our example with the stick, in this case, it is necessary to stress not just that it is the straight stick that seems to be bent in the water but also that the subject of this illusion necessarily has knowledge of the straight stick. Moreover, the difference between those who know the explanation of this experiment and those who perceive it for the first time is of secondary importance here, as both will have this knowledge. We have already touched on this topic in our previous essay, so it is appropriate to return to the more complex example discussed there. It came down to a hypothetical situation when some dacha's owner found out from the media that a fire occurred in his dacha settlement, mistakenly decided that his cottage had burned down and, not being persuaded by his neighbor, who insisted that the fire had not affected their property, went to the place himself. Provided that the neighbor saw that the fire left their property untouched with his own eyes, many epistemologists would characterize such a case as follows: the neighbor is in a better epistemic position than the dacha's owner himself. In the broadest terms, this usually means that the former, unlike the latter, had already somehow validated his knowledge. However, this cannot be unreservedly accepted, and therefore we drew attention to the fact that the awareness of the invalidity of knowledge on the part of the dacha's owner himself is of secondary importance in this situation.[94] This is so, firstly, because the reality of knowledge is not identical with its truth, and, secondly, as we can now emphasize, since the dacha's owner had the justified knowledge that his house had not burnt down even in these conditions. Thus, the only difference between these two subjects is that one had already invalidated[95] a certain false belief, whereas the second had not yet. But in terms of justification, this difference is secondary, and both subjects are in the completely equal epistemic position.

Besides, it should be kept in mind that when a cognitive error occurs, its object necessarily seems to be true. In this regard, the example with the stick is even more revealing — it is justly often cited as a paradigm case of a universal illusion that inevitably seems true for everyone, including those who conduct this experiment. Thus, in the case of a cognitive error, a subject simultaneously has a justified knowledge of a false object, which thus seems true to them, and a justified knowledge of a true object, which is seemingly substituted by a false one — otherwise, the error would not occur. Therefore, from the perspective of strong disjunctivism, any particular truth is necessarily cognizable or even being actually comprehended at least in an erroneous form. For this entire set of conditions not to seem absurd, several additional factors should be taken into account. Firstly, the theory of cognitive error under consideration proceeds from truth-fallibilism, which, roughly speaking, consists in the fact that epistemological truth cannot be ontologically guaranteed, that to establish it, we have to proceed from introspective appearance, and that it, albeit being an attribute of an object, cannot serve as a justificative ontological correlate of knowledge.[96] Secondly, given that a cognitive error, so to say, consists of two objective components, one of them is necessarily false, while the second is true. In other words, the introspective aspect of the justification of a belief about the truth of a false object is, strictly speaking, non-existent, whereas the simultaneously cognized true object is, though existing, as if concealed due to the error. Thirdly, a subjective appearance can be considered

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[93] B. Brewer. Perception and Its Objects… p. 106.

[94] M. A. Bandurin. Strong and Weak Disjunctivism… p. 79-E.

[95] According to strong disjunctivism, falsity is determined precisely by invalidation and not by non-validation or anything like that.

[96] Weak disjunctivism also tries to emphasize truth-fallibilism but mistakenly denies the latter condition.

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existent only insofar as its object is true. Differently stated, a non-existent subjective component of the justification of a belief is such precisely because of the falsity of its object since it could be considered existent only in the necessary correlation with the truth of the object but instead contrasts with the latter. Fourth, the theory under consideration is intended to emphasize one more simple commonsense truth: any cognitive error is, strictly speaking, false and does not constitute a kind of alternative truth. And, finally, when we say that a subject has a justified knowledge of a true object at the time of an error, this should not be understood in the sense that he or she has true knowledge thereof — in the final analysis, this entire complex is still false.

The theory of phenomenal externalism in the context of the discussion in question requires only a brief remark. In general terms, this theory implies that the subjective appearance of truth, or its phenomenal character, cannot be reduced to internal mental processes but is a relation between a cognizing subject and mind external objects.[97] It is not hard to see that, according to this definition, relationalism is a kind of phenomenal externalism. However, it does not constitute a criterion for the distinction between relationalism and representationalism. More than that — the proponents of the latter often resort to the theory under consideration to demonstrate that it is not necessary to abandon the notion of the representational content of knowledge in order to ensure such a cognitive relation.[98] Either way, it is important to emphasize at this point that phenomenal externalism is not directly related to epistemic externalism — moreover, the discussion around it unfolds primarily in the context of internalism. Therefore, even though strong disjunctivism is rigorously opposed to epistemic externalism, it is still a variety of phenomenal externalism. Indeed, its main claims proceed from the fact that any cognition necessarily implies an introspective appearance of truth, which, even in the case of a cognitive error, is justifiably related to a mind external object. This is true not least because, as we have shown above, a subject has knowledge of a true object in any case.

At the end of the critique of relationalism, we will have to consider what we believe to be the most acute problem for it, related to the transition from a direct perception to a perceptual judgment based on it. Most of the participants in the discussion in question agree on the following. All knowledge of an object can be divided into three categories: direct perception of an object, perceptual judgment about an object, and indirect knowledge of an object. Thus, for example, when I merely perceive a cup on my table, this will be the first kind of knowledge about it. When I make a judgment that there is a cup on the table — this will be the second kind. Finally, if I take the cup to the kitchen and, being in another room, would claim that the cup is in the kitchen — this will be a manifestation of indirect knowledge about it. Clearly, it is indirect knowledge about something that is most prone to errors. However, the transition from a perceptual judgment to it is less problematic than the relationship of the first two categories and even the very distinction between them. It is clear that it should be very close, up to a very conditional distinguishability. Therefore, there is every reason to label these two varieties as a single category of direct knowledge. But how well do relationalism and representationalism cope with this task?

Basically, the task of all the theories in this regard is the same — to emphasize the derivativeness of indirect knowledge from the direct one. It should be noted from the outset that strong disjunctivism is no exception in this respect, and so when we claim that the appearance of an object's truth is given in any cognition and is justified by virtue of its reality, we imply a strict difference between direct knowledge — by which we primarily mean the unity of perception and a perceptual judgment — and inferential knowledge dependent on it. Accordingly, even though both categories of knowledge are justified in the same way, indirect knowledge cannot be

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[97] J. Veldeman. Varieties of Phenomenal Externalism. Teorema, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2009, p. 21.

[98] See, e.g., L. Gow. Perceptual Experience and Physicalism. Purpose and Procedure in Philosophy of Perception, ed. by Heather Logue and Louise Richardson, Oxford, 2021, pp. 127–146.

autonomous and purely deductive and necessarily presupposes the validity of perceptual judgments associated with it. Relationalism argues in a similar fashion. By and large, its task is precisely to demonstrate the strict derivativeness of indirect knowledge from the direct one, i.e. one without representational content.[99] Representationalists also try to emphasize this fact, but, from relationalists' perspective, they have no reason to speak about direct knowledge in the strict sense of the term, as they admit representational content even in its case.

The irony of the situation is that prima facie representationalism copes with the task in question better. The fact is that the notion of representational content is well suited to serve as a link between the two types of knowledge — no matter whether one resorts to a mythical notion of non-conceptual content or, on the contrary, emphasizes the inevitably conceptual character of any type of knowledge.[100] Here one can immediately object that this apparent success of representationalism has to do with the substitution of direct knowledge for the indirect one and is thereby in many respects nullified. On the one hand, this is true, but the problem is that relationalism copes with the task under consideration no better — all because it fights representationalism with the methods of weak disjunctivism. Indeed, although it rightly understands the nature of direct knowledge and seeks to emphasize the derivative nature of the indirect one, it approaches the connection between direct perception and a perceptual judgment in a way that, with all the best will in the world, makes one incapable of characterizing the latter as a direct knowledge — and this also largely nullifies the entire undertaking.

How could this happen? We will not specify a rather long list of assumptions and factors that led to such a state of affairs, discussed in our previous essay but will add one more point to it. It consists in the thesis that any belief necessarily presupposes propositional content.[101] This is another trouble with Western philosophy, which traces back to none other than Plato and Aristotle. Of course, the identification of belief with propositional attitude and the elaborating of the notion of propositional content are associated with a much later period of the development of logic in the 19th century and analytic philosophy in the 20th century. But, basically, this thesis is the expression of arguably the most ancient philosophical problem related to representational content. Thus, Plato himself is known for his critique of purely discursive knowledge and for contrasting it with the "direct" knowledge, which can be characterized as non-propositional.[102] However, contemporary epistemology admits the possibility that, firstly, propositional content can be non-conceptual[103] and, secondly, that non-propositional knowledge with even greater reason can presuppose non-conceptual representational content. In any case, there is a general consensus that a belief, being a propositional attitude, necessarily presupposes representational content. As a result, in the matter of explaining the derivative character of indirect knowledge from the direct one, contemporary epistemology has reached a blind alley. On the one hand, we have representationalists who try to solve the problem of the unity of direct perception and a perceptual judgment by substituting direct knowledge for the indirect one — the results of disjunctivists and adherents of the thesis of the conceptual character of direct perception are particularly impressive in this regard.[104] On the other hand, there are relationalists who correctly

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99 See, e.g., J. Campbell. Reference and Consciousness. Oxford, 2002, pp. 114–156.

100 R. Locatelli, K. A. Wilson. Introduction: Perception Without Representation. Topoi, Vol. 36, 2017, p. 199.

101 See, e.g., E. Schwitzgebel. Belief. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2019 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta. URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/belief/.

102 See, e.g., F. J. Gonzalez. Nonpropositional Knowledge in Plato. Apeiron, Vol. 31, Issue 3, 1998, pp. 235–284.

103 T. Crane. Is Perception a Propositional Attitude. The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 236, p. 453.

104 See J. McDowell. Mind and World. London, 1996; Idem. Conceptual Capacities in Perception. Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars. London, 2009, pp. 127–144.

deny representational content's existence in the case of true direct knowledge but are principally incapable of solving this problem.

All because the latter unconditionally accept the thesis about propositional content as a necessary component of any beliefs and, accordingly, perceptual judgments. It is not hard to see that if direct perception is treated as being without representational content, while a perceptual judgment based on the former is understood as presupposing it, then we will get nothing but a contrast between them instead of the necessary unity. More than that — relationalists are forced to systematically emphasize this contrast. This is due to the fact that in order to demonstrate the non-existence of representational content in the case of direct perception, they have to "purify" the latter from propositional content in every way possible, i.e. to increase the gap in question. It is for this reason that they resort to a special account of direct knowledge, which is thus usually considered in terms of "experience" and "acquaintance".[105] The worst part about this is that, given that a truth-bearer is necessarily propositional, these terms are intended to emphasize the neutrality of direct knowledge as regards truth or falsity. It comes to the point that some relationalists call for the adoption of a Russellian principle, according to which knowledge of things is supposedly possible as independent of knowledge of truths.[106] In this way, relationalism systematically overstresses what we have called the introspection's neutrality thesis. The correct interpretation of direct knowledge thus comes at too great a cost to it, as the manifest gap between direct perception and a perceptual judgment is no better than the admission of representational content in its case.

Such an epistemological blind alley calls for a radical solution, which can be offered by strong disjunctivism. It consists in the denial of the thesis that a belief must have propositional content. But how could one ensure this? In the thesis under scrutiny, it is difficult to deny the following points: that belief is a propositional attitude and that a truth-bearer is necessarily propositional. With this in mind, we see only one way to ensure the possibility for a belief to be without propositional content — to admit the perceptibility of universals. Relationalism has already emphasized the fact that things in themselves are constituents of cognitions, primarily in terms of the cognizable attribute of truth belonging to them. It remains to add here that universals should also belong to the cognizable attributes of an object so understood. Provided this, it will be possible to assert that a propositional attitude, standing in a referential relation to universals,[107] does not have to feature representational content. But won't this approach lead to realism about universals? Yes, it will, but with several serious reservations. Firstly, it does not treat universals as justificative ontological correlates of cognitions. Secondly, in contrast to the infallibilist understanding of universals in the history of philosophy, it presupposes truth-fallibilism. Thirdly, such an approach to universals seriously differs from both Platonic and Aristotelian in both epistemological and ontological respects. Let us focus on the last point in more detail.

The theory of universals in question can be considered a variety of moderate realism, commonly expressed by the thesis *universalia in re*. In this respect, it is closer to the Aristotelian approach. However, its differences from the latter, as well as from all the others, are very significant. To emphasize these differences, let us dwell on the three features of the Aristotelian theory of universals, which we consider erroneous. They can be formulated as follows: two doctrines of essence, the exclusively predicative character of universals, and the distinction

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[105] See, e.g., J. Campbell. Acquaintance as Grounded in Joint Attention. Acquaintance: New Essays, ed. by Jonathan Knowles and Thomas Raleigh, Oxford, 2019, pp. 215–226.

[106] N. Eilan. Perceptual Objectivity and Consciousness: A Relational Response to Burge's Challenge. Topoi, Vol. 36, 2017, pp. 292–293.

[107] See, e.g., M. Loux. Substance and Attribute: A Study in Ontology. Dordrecht, 1978, pp. 13-43.

between essential and accidental predication. One can say that each subsequent feature is a consequence of the previous one, so let us consider them in due order.

The interpretations of Aristotle's philosophy are notable for serious disagreements, which are largely due to his two doctrines of essence.[108] Thus, essence (ousia) is understood by him in two senses — on the one hand, as a non-predicative individual substance, directly cognizable by noetic intuition, and, on the other, as a predicative species-form, which he also called "the what it was [for a thing] to be".[109] It would seem that since individual substances are known directly and even declared to be the only existing things, we are dealing with a variety of direct epistemological realism, which has certain similarities with relationalism. However, one should not rush to conclusions — according to Aristotle, only something general is cognizable, and so the epistemological emphasis still falls on the species-forms, i.e. secondary substances. Of course, it is implied here that the essence is one and the same in both cases, but Aristotle is practically devoid of rational means to demonstrate this. Moreover, one can even notice something in his approach that anticipates modern philosophy, i.e., that he tries to make statements about the existence of a, strictly speaking, unknowable reality on the basis of secondary attributes that supposedly belong to it — and this largely nullifies his entire doctrine of noetic intuition. Aristotle apparently contented himself with the claim that species-forms should have real and non-predicative substrates beyond the mind, but the subsequent history of philosophy has shown that this was not enough to ensure strict epistemological realism. Indeed, if it is implied that a secondary substance can act as a logical subject only insofar as it is, so to say, a substitute of a noetically comprehended individual substance, then — given that a rational connection between direct and indirect forms of knowledge is not described — it is very easy to forget about intellectual intuition and reduce everything to discursive cognition of primary substances, especially since the elaborate categorical apparatus is already at hand.

But the main problem here is not even in the oblivion of pure noetic cognition, but in the fact that the remaining forms of knowledge are considered by Aristotle himself as purely predicative — we have designated this as a thesis about the exclusively predicative character of universals.[110] In other words, a central problem lies in this very gap between discursive and non-discursive knowledge, which allows one to call Aristotle a forefather of the thesis at issue that a belief must have propositional content. But, after all, it is difficult to deny the predicative character of universals, and so such an approach can hardly be considered improper. Indeed, it is impossible to deny this, but it should be emphasized that a universal, being predicative, can also serve as a subject. Here we may be told that this was already emphasized by Aristotle: a secondary substance, according to him, can serve as a subject. This is true, but by our claim, we mean something else, namely, that a universal should act as the only possible form of a concrete substance. Otherwise put, there is nothing non-predicative beyond universals that could be opposed to them, thereby making them purely intelligible. But this is possible only if the divide lies not between discursive and non-discursive knowledge but between universals that are directly perceived as concrete substances at a given moment and universals that appear in

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[108] See Neretina S. S., Ogurcov A. P. Puti k universaliyam [The Ways Toward Universals]. SPb, 2006, pp. 121-137. (In Russian.)

[109] See S. Rosen. Remarks on Heidegger's Plato. Heidegger and Plato: Toward Dialogue, ed. by C. Partenie and T. Rockmore. Evaston, 2005, pp. 182–184.

[110] See, e.g., J. Engmann. Aristotle's Distinction between Substance and Universal. Phronesis, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1973, pp. 139-155; Idem. Aristotelian Universals. Classical Philology, Vol. 73, No. 1, January 1978, pp. 17–23.

indirect knowledge.[111] In our previous essay, we expressed this idea in terms of contrasting truth as an attribute of an object and truth as an attribute of a belief.

Moreover, the divide cannot also lie between essence and quality, understood as universals. Thus, if we define human as the rational animal, neither "rational" nor "animal" will act as secondary substances, opposed to qualities like "tall" and "fair-haired". In other words, there are no grounds for the Aristotelian distinction between essential and accidental predication, and this whole set of predicates should be qualified, if not as qualities proper, then at least simply as attributes.[112] This does not imply that it is impossible to distinguish between them as more or less specific for a particular substance in order to give a more or less precise definition of it. For example, it seems that the attribute "the author of *Critique of Pure Reason*" is much more important for knowing who Immanuel Kant was than the fact that he was a rational animal, even given that such an attribute cannot be considered essential. So, modern philosophy and science could be praised for criticizing scholasticism had they not slipped into post-Kantian representationalism.

To clarify all this, let us return to our example with the cup. Thus, when I perceive a cup standing on the table, this implies that I necessarily perceive the universal "cup". Otherwise, I could not make a perceptual judgment that there is the cup on the table, and this would be tantamount to a denial that I know the cup. The latter circumstance would be especially ridiculous, given that the direct perception of the cup has already occurred. Thus, the direct perception and a perceptual judgment associated with it must form a unity in the sense that the former cannot vanish at the moment of the latter, as the latter justifies its very existence. In turn, for this unity to be ensured, the universal "cup" must be understood as not forming propositional content. It should also be borne in mind that, given the inseparable unity between these two components, the expression "a perceptual judgment based on direct perception" is not quite suitable for describing the situation in question. Such an expression should be reserved only for the characterization of indirect knowledge that might be based on this unity. So, for a perceptual judgment to be able to occur at the moment of a direct perception, it must have a justifying capacity in relation to the latter, and in order for it to be true as well, the direct perception must have a universal, not being a justificative ontological correlate of a cognition, as its constituent. In this way, we will be able to agree with J. McDowell that direct perception is itself propositional,[113] but, contra him, to deny its conceptual character.

At this point, it may be objected that, in direct perception, we know concrete objects, whereas in the description we have given, everything boils down to universals. The answer will be that universals are, by definition, either concrete objects or their attributes. These concrete objects can be given various names — individual substances, particulars, things-in-themselves, etc. — but the main thing is to keep in mind that these are just other names for universals, emphasizing their concreteness and perceptibility. But where does this concreteness come from, given that the theory of universals under consideration does not leave room for the principle of individuation? It is ensured by a simple fact that no universal can be perceived without attributes, among which there are necessarily spatial and temporal ones.[114] In other words, in direct perception, we inevitably deal with object unities in the form of universals qualified by other universals. But if there are no pure universals, then why talk about them at all? Indeed, in these

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[111] Of course, this distinction is only in terms of the cognition of universals, not of their inherent nature, since at least it can be said that all universals comprehensible in direct knowledge can get in the indirect one.

[112] All this also applies to both metaphysics and dialectics of quantity and quality.

[113] See, e.g., J. McDowell. Response to Paul Redding. McDowell and Hegel: Perceptual Experience, Thought and Action, ed. by F. Sanguinetti and A. J. Abath. Cham, 2018, pp. 240–242.

[114] Which can include not only a specific space and time but also such properties as eternity, ubiquity, etc.

circumstances, there is every reason to admit only individual substances and adopt nominalism. The answer lies in the fact that, firstly, the realism of universals allows one to justify consistent relationalism and get out of the epistemological blind alley associated with the inability to ensure the unity of direct perception and a perceptual judgment, and, secondly, that Aristotle was basically right when he claimed that genuine knowledge is knowledge of something general. It remains only to cross the word "authentic" out from this formulation and replace it with "any" to emphasize that it should express not just a methodological attitude but a brute epistemological fact. Indeed, it is enough to consider the fact that any word is general[115] by its nature, and this very circumstance will inevitably lead to impassable epistemological and ontological problems — such as the one we are dealing with — for those who try to abstract individual substances from universals — and, above all, for nominalists. And, finally, it should be taken into account that it is the perceptibility of universals that would ensure their objective validity. There is nothing strange in this, given that true direct perception and universals comprehended in it are without both representational and propositional content. This is precisely what the approach of strong disjunctivism and the concomitant acausal relationalism consists in.

In conclusion of the entire essay, we would like to touch on the issue of the general proportion between epistemology and ontology, as this topic was constantly raised on its pages without being properly addressed. We hope that our arguments have quite convincingly demonstrated the potency of epistemology in the matter of cognition of objects beyond the mind and its dominant role in ensuring the very practical life of cognizing subjects, i.e. those its capacities that go far beyond the limits mistakenly set to it by Kant and various skeptics. Indeed, epistemology determines the very attribute of existence of an object, and its role in the objective sphere thus cannot be overestimated. But does this mean that epistemology enjoys a fundamental priority over ontology? The final answer to this question must be negative, as, despite all this, it should be considered dependent on ontology — and this fact should not be forgotten. This is due to several reasons. Firstly, epistemology is fallibilistic in nature, although not without significant reservations, which we have generalized in the notion of truth-fallibilism. Secondly, it is incapable of knowing its source, that is, in other words, the source of cognitions. This is true in two senses. On the one hand, epistemology is incapable of determining the source of a false cognition, generated by a non-existent object, at the moment of the perception and until the moment of possible invalidation. On the other hand, it is unable to comprehend a single ontological source of all cognitions. Thirdly, it is incapable of making claims about a certain unitary reality of objects and has to be content with a naïve pluralism of substances. This is due to the fact that if it could do this, it would automatically comprehend its source, and this is contrary to the first two points. These limitations determine the immanent epistemological agnosticism, so to say. Meanwhile, the substitution of purely epistemological knowledge for the ontological one, based on the assumption of a justificative ontological correlate thereof and followed by claims about the unitary nature of the reality of objects or the sources of knowledge, is a favorite endeavor of continental philosophy and its predecessors. This is what we call the ontologization of epistemology, which is often accompanied by skeptical claims about the nature of epistemology itself with their following hypostasizing. Its striking manifestation has been the splitting of reality into ontological and epistemological and the inexhaustible flow of various theories based on it, which either "abstain" from judging the nature of reality or, on the contrary, embark on speculative idealism or realism. But, in fact, epistemology by its very nature does not allow one to fully abstain from assertions about the nature of its objects, and therefore all those who admit the possibility of knowledge beyond epistemology need to be especially attentive to its real capacities and limitations and check whether the so-called ontological knowledge is not merely epistemological in each particular case.

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[115] Or, rather, both general and specific.

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