

BOOK SYMPOSIUM

ON GREGORY MOSS, *HEGEL'S FOUNDATIONS FREE
METAPHYSICS*

Edited by Elena Tripaldi

A NEW HOPE FOR THE «FRIENDS OF THE ABSOLUTE»: AN INTRODUCTION

by Elena Tripaldi*

Abstract. *In this introductory essay, I offer an overview of Gregory Moss' book Hegel's Foundations Free Metaphysics. After reconstructing the book's argument, I assess its contribution to the ongoing debate on Hegel's metaphysics, on the one hand, and to the «monism renaissance» within analytic metaphysics, on the other. With respect to the former, I highlight how Moss' book signals a welcome shift in the interpretative debate, defending Hegel's engagement with questions that recent interpreters have associated with pre-Kantian metaphysics, and not with Hegel. Pairing this demonstration with an illustration of how Hegel's metaphysics can interact with contemporary theories in speculative realism and analytic philosophy, Moss' book reopens the question of what should be considered Hegel's legacy, meant here as the aspects of Hegel's philosophy which retain contemporary relevance. Expanding on this latter point, I suggest that Moss' reading of Hegel as overcoming the Western assumption of the absolute validity of the principle of non-contradiction testifies to Hegel's potential in solving issues weighing on the contemporary «monism renaissance» within analytic metaphysics. In the final section, I introduce the contributions that compose this book symposium.*

Keywords. *Hegel's Metaphysics; Absolute; Finitude; Ontological Monism; Grounding*

1. Introduction

This book symposium collects reflections that followed the awarding of the 2022 hegelpd prize to Gregory Moss' book *Hegel's Foundations Free Metaphysics. The Logic of Singularity*¹.

* Università di Padova

¹ G.S. Moss, *Hegel's Foundations Free Metaphysics. The Logic of Singularity*, London-New York, Routledge, 2020.

The *hegelpd* prize has been assigned each year between 2019 and 2023 to a recently published contribution in the field of Hegelian studies, recognized as offering great potential for discussion for the research group on classical German philosophy (*hegelpd*) at the University of Padua. The author of each awarded contribution was invited to discuss their work with the research group. On October 4th, 2023, the *hegelpd* research group had the pleasure of hosting Gregory Moss for a discussion of his book, chaired by me and featuring two comments by Marco Bonutto and Michela Bordignon, as well as a lecture by Moss himself, titled *Hegel's Monism: On the Singularity and Freedom of the Concept*². The event was a great occasion for exchange and confirmed significant overlaps between Moss' research and the interests of the *hegelpd* research group, opening the way for further collaborations, including this book symposium.

2. *The Contemporary Relevance of Moss' Hegel's Foundations Free Metaphysics within and without Hegel Scholarship*

The main thesis of Moss' book is that Hegel's metaphysics demonstrates the necessity of the existence of the Absolute, or that, as Moss himself puts it: «Independently of absolute existence, nothing else can be» (p. 1).

This is framed as an answer to Jacobi's renowned «problem of nihilism». According to Jacobi, the possibility of the existence of everything is defensible if the existence of one principle grounding everything else can be demonstrated. However, the latter is, according to Jacobi, a logical impossibility, as this would require thinking of a principle that can be itself, or self-identical, and not itself, at the same time. From this, Jacobi concludes that nihilism follows; by the means of rational thought alone, the existence of nothing can be accounted for.

² The livestream of the event can be rewatched on *hegelpd*'s YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SfDIasyn7k&t=9035s). Last accessed: January 26th, 2026.

According to Moss, Hegel demonstrates not only that the Absolute, as a principle that is both one and many at the same time, is thinkable, but also that its concept entails necessary existence: «Hegel means to demonstrate to us, via his famed and oft-maligned dialectic, why the world exists. Or better: Hegel means to show why the world's non-existence is absolutely impossible»³.

To reach this conclusion, however, Hegel challenges the most fundamental assumption of Western metaphysics, on which also Jacobi's «problem of nihilism» rests, and namely: the validity of the principle of non-contradiction (PNC)⁴. Following Hegel, Moss shows that, while it is a highly counter-intuitive conclusion for anyone trained in the tradition of Western philosophy, the falsity of the PNC needs to be accepted, if the possibility of philosophy and rational thought is to be salvaged. Indeed, in its attempts to hold onto the PNC, the Western tradition fell prey to a host of aporias, that ultimately threaten the practice of philosophy itself (namely: the already mentioned Problem of Nihilism, the Problem of Instantiation, the Problem of the Missing Difference, the Problem of Onto-theology, and the Third Man Regress). These are all grounded in what Moss calls «the logic of the finite concept», that is: the assumption that, since nothing can be self-identical and different from itself at the same time, conceptuality needs to be divorced from existence, content, or objectivity⁵.

³ Moss, *Hegel's Foundation Free Metaphysics*, p. 5.

⁴ «Part I of Hegel's *Foundation Free Metaphysics* presents the argument that as long as the principle of non-contradiction is presumed to have a privileged, absolute status, the Absolute can neither exist nor be known» (ivi, p. 2).

⁵ «A dominant and influential tradition in the West takes for granted the assumption that the concept, or the universal, cannot achieve truth in virtue of itself alone. Because the universal cannot achieve truth on its own, a separate principle of particularity must be presupposed as the ultimate arbiter of the truth of the universal [...]. Because of this, we traditionally conceive of actuality as external and other to the universal. The question of whether the universal exists ([...] as more than a mere possibility to be), so it is supposed, is a question that cannot be answered by merely consulting the concept alone» (*ibidem*).

Thus, the Western tradition worked with a dualist logic of conceptual determination, or truth, which ultimately led to the impossibility of rationally thinking the Absolute. Indeed, if all concepts need to rely on a second principle to be true and existent, or to instantiate and determine themselves – no concept can be adequate to capture the Absolute as the one that is both one and many, or that which, in virtue of being absolute, has no other outside of itself in relation to which it can be defined. The very structure of a self-differentiating totality would be beyond the means of conceptuality (as defined by the logic of the finite concept). This robbed philosophers of the possibility of realizing the goal most characteristic of their discipline: an *a priori*, rational account of the world.

However, by holding to the logic of the finite concept to avoid the self-refuting (because contradictory) claim that concepts can be both themselves (i.e. universal) and not themselves (i.e. particular) at the same time, Western metaphysics still stumbled on unresolvable aporias, which significantly limited, if not totally threatened, the validity of its inquiry. With Hegel, Moss suggests seeing this outcome as a sort of *ad absurdum* demonstration that the PNC cannot hold, because if it did, thought would run into the aporias mentioned above⁶.

This leads to the necessity of what Moss calls «Absolute Dialetheism», or the acceptance that not only (like in regular

⁶ Moss does not explicitly present this argument as an *ad absurdum* argument. Rather, he frames the «hypothetical» character of his argument as a necessity of the exposition of the book, specifying that in Hegel the argument is not really hypothetical, and rather entails an immanent demonstration (see *ivi*, pp. 311ff). What is important to note here is that Moss shows how finite conceptuality is not refuted by Hegel in such a way that it grants its suppression and elimination. Rather, it is immanently incorporated as a necessary moment of the development of the concept – which is only faulty when it is absolutized. Indeed, the refuting and overcoming of the logic of finite concept through its aporias lights the way towards a higher and speculative understanding of conceptuality as infinite (or self-predicating and self-instantiating). Thus, it should be regarded as an essential part of the development of the concept as concept, which «returns to itself» (or reaffirms itself as a self-particularizing universal) from its particularization as a finite concept, as the principle of the finite concept's existence and dissolution (see *ivi*, pp. 445ff).

dialetheism) there are true contradictions, but that «the world, or the singular one and all, exists and can be known as a true contradiction» (p. 3). «Absolute Dialetheism» has two possible declinations: mystical and rationalist. The former affirms that the Absolute exists and can be known as a contradiction, but that this knowledge is always faulty and contingent, meaning that it does not encompass a fully rational description of the structure of the Absolute, and only amounts to the rather immediate revelation that the Absolute as a true contradiction exists. In other words, the mystical absolute dialetheist is not committed to describing, and explaining the Absolute, but only to encountering and revealing it as a contradiction. To do so, the mystical dialetheist still identifies rational thought mostly with finite conceptuality, highlighting its self-refuting character and letting the Absolute ‘shine through’ the collapse of discursive rationality in its self-refutingness⁷.

On the other hand, the rationalist absolute dialetheist claims that not only does the Absolute exist as a true contradiction, but also that this true contradiction can be thoroughly known through concepts. This rests on a peculiar identification between thought and the Absolute, which becomes apparent once the validity of the PNC and the logic of finite conceptuality are left behind. Indeed, once no separation is held between concept and instantiation, or

⁷ As a defender of rationalist absolute dialetheism, Moss also advances an argument refuting mystical absolute dialetheism. For Moss, mystical absolute dialetheism ultimately relapses into the logic of finite thought and fails to grasp the Absolute as a true contradiction/as Absolute. Indeed, by making the Absolute exceed finite conceptuality, the mystical dialetheist implicitly claims that there is something that is not the Absolute and that stands over against it, thereby imposing a limit not just on human thought – as the mystic himself thinks – but on the power of the Absolute itself. See *ivi*, pp. 240ff. Moss acknowledges that the one criticized here is only one type of mysticism out of the many advanced in the tradition. He defines this type of mysticism «ironic», or «monochromatic», connects it to the tradition of negative theology, and distinguishes it from hermetic mysticism, which, following Muratori and Magee, he sees closer to Hegel’s standpoint insofar as it recognizes the participation of human thinking in the realization of the Absolute (*ivi*, p. 250, n. 46).

universal and particularization, an understanding of the concept can be developed, in which the latter is self-instantiating, or self-particularizing. As such, the concept can not only withstand the aporias which engulfed finite thought, but is also itself absolute, one and all.

Because the overcoming of the PNC also engenders the elimination of the separation between the principles of universality and particularity, Hegel construes the universal as the principle of its own particularization, or as self-particularizing. As self-particularizing, the universal becomes endowed with the power to instantiate itself, without the need to appeal to external principles⁸.

There cannot be two absolutes, otherwise they would relativize one another. Thus, thought (as infinite) cannot be merely a concept of the Absolute, as if the Absolute lay outside thought as an object which thought mirrored. Thought, as absolute, *is* the Absolute, or, as Moss puts it: absolute existence (as in: the existing absolute) is absolute knowing, and vice versa. This identity between thought and the absolute, or the fact that the Absolute is the Concept, is what Moss calls «Total Realism»⁹.

As reconstructed above, Moss' book argues that the core of Hegel's metaphysics consists of a novel take on the ontological proof, offering an argument as to why what Hegel called «the Concept», and that we can generally call the Absolute, is existentially implicating. This acquisition also functions as the demonstration of the possibility of having a unitary principle grounding not only manifold existence, but also the knowledge thereof.

Thus, Moss' book demonstrates Hegel's interest in questions that recent interpreters have associated with pre-Kantian metaphysics only. In doing this, the book introduces a crucial, and in my view very welcome, shift in the recent debate on Hegel's metaphysics.

In the last years, the debate on the nature and scope of Hegel's metaphysics – or, better put, on what Hegel's *Science of Logic* (SL) is about – has been for the most part divided between two options. The first one claims that the SL lays out some kind of 'transcendental

⁸ Ivi, p. 5.

⁹ Ivi, p. 6.

ontology': it articulates the rules governing the determination of the conceptual scheme which, in its turn, defines the limits of our experience of the world. As is well known, this option has been championed by Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard, who can be considered the founding scholars of what later became labelled as the «post-Kantian» reading of Hegel's metaphysics¹⁰. The first reading of the SL as a study of the fundamental categories ruling our experience of the world has been offered by Pinkard in the renowned article *The Logic of Hegel's Logic*¹¹. After first resisting Pinkard's reading, Pippin presented an expanded version of this reading in his ground-breaking book *Hegel's Idealism*¹², where he also explicitly referred to Hegel's philosophy as a «conceptual scheme idealism»¹³. While in this first version of his reading he did not explicitly call Hegel's philosophy a «metaphysics», he did so in his following book *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*. There, he compared Hegel's metaphysics to a «metaphysics of the

¹⁰ For the classification and history of the debate between «post-Kantian» and «revised metaphysical» readings of Hegel, see P. Redding, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2025 Edition, ed. by E.N. Zalta & U. Nodelman <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2025/entries/hegel/>>. Last accessed January 26th, 2026. See also J. Kreines, *Hegel's Metaphysics: Changing the Debate*, «Philosophy Compass», I (5), pp. 466-480; L. Corti, *Ritratti hegeliani*, Roma, Carocci, 2014; R. Pippin, *Finite and Infinite Idealism. The Transcendental and the Metaphysical Hegel*, in *The Transcendental Turn*, ed. by S. Gardner, M. Grist, Cambridge (MA), Cambridge University Press, 2015 pp. 159-172; J. Kreines, *Systematicity and Philosophical Interpretation: Hegel, Pippin, and Changing Debates*, «Australasian Philosophical Review», II (4), pp. 393-402; P. Redding, *Robert Pippin's Hegel as an Analytically Approachable Philosopher*, «Australasian Philosophical Review», II (4), pp. 355-364.

¹¹ T. Pinkard, *The Logic of Hegel's Logic*, «Journal of the History of Philosophy», XVII (4), 1979, pp. 417-435.

¹² See R. Pippin, *Hegel and Category Theory*, «The Review of Metaphysics», XLIII (4), 1990, pp. 839-848; Id., *Hegel's Idealism. The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge (MA), Cambridge University Press, 1989.

¹³ Ivi, p. 99.

ordinary»¹⁴. While the reappropriation of the term «metaphysics» by Pippin suggested to many a revision of his «conceptual scheme» reading, Pippin himself highlighted that this was just a clarification thereof, and not a distancing from it¹⁵. Namely, Pippin clarified that his reading of Hegel's SL as a «metaphysics of experience» is called a «metaphysics» not because it entails some kind of rationalist inquiry into (mind-independent) being. Rather, it can be called a metaphysics only once we understand that Hegel's inquiry in the SL rests on the demonstration of the inseparability of thought (or logic) and being: the bounds of intelligibility are the bounds of being. From this, Pippin claimed that Hegel inferred the impossibility of making any claim about 'mind-independent' being plausible. According to Pippin's in Hegel, since no such thing can be conceived, it might as well not exist: its existence or nonexistence cannot be determined, so this is a pseudo-problem¹⁶. Consequently,

¹⁴ Id., *Hegel's Realm of Shadows. Logic as Metaphysics in the 'Science of Logic'*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2018, p. 94. To be precise, Pippin does not define Hegel's metaphysics as «metaphysics of the ordinary» directly. Rather, the phrase «metaphysics of the ordinary» identifies Aristotelian metaphysics, which is presented by Pippin as a 'model' which inspires Hegel in the development of his own metaphysics. I thank Paolo Giuspoli for this specification.

¹⁵ Ivi, p. 255 n. 4.

¹⁶ The most concise formulation of this argument is found in Pippin, *Finite and Infinite Idealism*. As I highlight in E. Tripaldi, *Hegel's Metaphysics of Subjectivity: The Truth of Substance*, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2026, Ch.1, Pippin is here attributing to Hegel an argument by Richard Rorty. Pippin remains quite consistent on this aspect of his interpretation. Indeed, this same point constitutes the basis for his 'Heideggerian' critique of Hegel in his latest book *The Culmination*: precisely because Hegel identifies being with intelligibility, he is incapable of thematizing the grounding that lies 'beyond' intelligibility. See R. Pippin, *The Culmination. Heidegger, German Idealism, and the Fate of Philosophy*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2024. For reasons connected to those I will highlight below, I believe Moss' book shows that Hegel might indeed have an answer to this anxiety, thematizing Being as the ground of beings, and thereby overcoming – instead of culminating, as Pippin and Heidegger suggest – what Heidegger called «metaphysics» (provided that he, as clarified in the answer to my comment in

the revision of the meaning of the term ‘metaphysics’ followed: the term is not used by Hegel to identify an inquiry into mind-independent being, and is rather meant with the only possible meaning it can have in this framework, which is that of an inquiry into the determination of thought, which unavoidably coincides with the determination of the being we can know¹⁷. Another way to present this change in Pippin’s use of the label is this: Pippin’s original refusal of the label ‘metaphysics’ for his reading of Hegel’s SL stemmed from an identification of the term with pre-Kantian metaphysics and rationalism. With the *proviso* that the meaning of the term changes within the Kantian and Hegelian framework – which admits ‘transcendental ontology’ as the highest possible form of inquiry into being – Pippin later reclaimed the term¹⁸.

The second way of understanding Hegel’s metaphysics corresponds to the quite varied collection of authors labelled as «revised metaphysical» interpreters of Hegel. Although the label can be extended to any reading linking Hegel to a realism stronger than Pippin’s, it traditionally includes Stephen Houlgate, Robert Stern, and James Kreines¹⁹. Each of these interpreters developed their own

this symposium does not identify thinking with the existence of the Absolute). On this, see also E. Tripaldi, *Priority or Reflection? Ontological Dependence and Heterogeneity in Hegel and the Contemporary ‘Montism Renaissance’*, «Hegel Bulletin», XLVI (2), 2025, pp. 394-421.

¹⁷ I have here combined different arguments Pippin makes throughout his production on the topic of Hegel’s metaphysics. As implied above, Pippin is quite consistent in his core theses on the topic. See R. Pippin’s *Finite and Infinite Idealism* for bone of the argument, which remains the same throughout Pippin’s production. See also R. Pippin, *Hegel on Logic as Metaphysics*, in *Oxford Companion to Hegel*, ed. by D. Moyar, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 199-218 for a clarification of how this argument is however different from a mere subjectivism.

¹⁸ For a reconstruction of Pippin’s position on this point, see Tripaldi, *Hegel’s Metaphysics of Subjectivity*, Ch. 1. For a discussion of the complex issue of the meaning of the term ‘metaphysics’ in Hegel’s philosophy, as well as within the context of the stratified meaning in which ‘metaphysics’ has been used by recent interpreters, see *ivi*, Ch. 1-2.

¹⁹ See Redding, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel*.

interpretation, with characteristics that make them quite different one from one another. However, they share the commitment to not overlook Hegel's debt to Kant in their reading of Hegel's SL as rooted in conceptual realism. Similarly to Pippin, these readings locate Hegel's Kantian debt in his revision of the traditional meaning of the term 'metaphysics'. While for Pippin this revision went in the direction of a 'transcendental ontology', for «revised metaphysical» interpreters it entails discarding the questions that characterized the branch of pre-Kantian metaphysics known as *metaphysica specialis*.²⁰ Thus, these readers suggest that Hegel's SL is indeed committed to an inquiry into the fundamental ontological structures describing entities and phenomena that – independently of our conceptual description or apprehension – exist. However, this inquiry does not entail an inquiry into what pre-Kantian metaphysics called «objects of reason»: complex objects grounding manifolds in their unity, including among them God, as the ground for all existence²¹. Consider Stern's concise formulation:

²⁰ On this point, see G. Magee, *Hegel as Metaphysician*, in *Hegel and Metaphysics: On Logic and Ontology in the System*, ed. by A. de Laurentiis, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016; Moss, *Hegel's Foundations Free Metaphysics*, pp. 334ff; E. Tripaldi, *A Temple Without a Holy of Holies*, in *The Relevance of Hegel's Concept of Philosophy: From Classical German Philosophy to Contemporary Metaphilosophy*, ed. by L. Illetterati and G. Miolli, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2021, pp. 431-450.

²¹ The case of Stephen Houlgate's interpretation is more complex. Houlgate's renowned definition of the *Science of Logic* as an «onto-logic» can be seen as thematizing (indeterminate) Being as the 'ground' for all of its subsequent determinations – and, therefore, as the 'ground' for all beings given that for Houlgate each determination is to be seen as both a determination of Being and as an ontological category identifying a specific kind of entity. See for instance: «[Hegel's *Logic*] does not start out from any determinate conception of what there is at all. It starts out from the utterly indeterminate awareness or thought of being as such and sees its task as the onto-logical one of simply unfolding what is implicit in that bare thought itself». S. Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic. From Being to Infinity*, West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 2006, p. 123. Moving from this assumption, Jacob McNulty has recently presented a monist reading of the *Science of Logic* in J. McNulty *Hegel's Logic and Metaphysics*, Cambridge (MA),

On Hegel's view, to cognize reality in absolute terms, is just to see that while concepts like 'cause', or 'ground', or 'essence', and so on make sense when applied to matters within it, they do not make sense when applied to it as a totality—so that in this way, the question of why there is being and not nothing drops away, without requiring us to give 'what is' the status of a necessary existent²².

Compare it with Kreines' distinction between Hegel's «epistemic monism» and his ontological pluralism:

Hegel entirely rejects all forms of metaphysical rationalism, including rationalist monism. He holds that there is no single ground providing a complete reason for everything real, not even in the whole of everything²³.

For reasons perhaps hard to determine with certainty (possibly: a specific philosophical orientation hostile to so-called «questions of fundamentality» defining the broader intellectual or philosophical climate between the 90s and the early 2000s²⁴; a particular

Cambridge University Press, 2023. On the other hand, Houlgate's reading does not explicitly present the relationship between Being and the other categories of the Logic in terms of grounding.

²² R. Stern, *Hegelian Metaphysics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 34.

²³ J. Kreines, *Metaphysics Without Pre-Critical Monism. Hegel on Lower-Level Natural Kinds and the Structure of Reality*, «Hegel Bulletin», XXIX (1-2), 2008, pp. 48-70, p. 50. It is important to note that Kreines' attitude towards Hegel's monism has changed since the quoted article, acknowledging that Hegel indeed embraced some kind of ontological monism, although not in the sense of a substance monism (whereby by this expression the grounding of the fact of existence of things is meant). See Id., *Aristotelian Priority, Metaphysical Definitions of God and Hegel on Pure Thought as Absolute*, «Hegel Bulletin», XLI (1), 2020, pp. 19-39.

²⁴ On this, see J. Schaffer, *The Internal Relatedness of All Things*, «Mind» (119), 2010, pp. 341-376, pp. 341-342. I suggested that this bias specific of the time in which «post-Kantian» and «revised metaphysical readings» first appeared has acted as an unconscious influence on these readings of Hegel in E. Tripaldi, *With or Without Monism: A Roadmap to the Contemporary Relevance of Hegel's Metaphysics*, «Revista Electronica de Estudios Hegelianos», XIX (33), 2022, pp. 160-196.

dynamic of academic knowledge production, which privileges English-speaking scholars, providing them with greater visibility and making them the primary shapers of research trends), the interpretative debate of the last few years has been widely dominated by the question of whether the «post-Kantian» or the «revised metaphysical» reading of Hegel was the correct one.

This, however, was a false alternative, which also encouraged a focus on a question Hegel would – in my view – have considered preliminary to the specific inquiry of metaphysics, and namely the one concerning the relationship between thought and being, or between concepts and entities.

Gregory Moss' book confirms this hypothesis, highlighting how the core of Hegel's metaphysical enterprise consist in taking up of the challenge of thinking the Absolute, as the ultimate ground of existence – and thus, I would add, perhaps stretching beyond Moss's intentions, as something prior to both thought and being, which are its manifestations²⁵.

In doing this, Moss's book lays the first step towards a possible shift in the debate on Hegel's metaphysics, bringing it closer to questions concerning Hegel's understanding of fundamentality and grounding²⁶.

There is an element of irony in the shift introduced by Moss' book: an element of Hegel's metaphysics that had been overlooked and openly denied by recent interpreters – who, amongst other things, also championed the contemporary relevance of Hegel – is now not only highlighted as central in Hegel's own metaphysical

²⁵ Moss' own discussion of the debate between «post-Kantian» and «revised metaphysical readings» can be found at pp. 333ff in Moss, *Hegel's Foundations Free Metaphysics*.

²⁶ Recent readings of Hegel also moving in this direction include Jacob McNulty's, James Kreines', and my own. See J. McNulty, *Hegel's Logic and Metaphysics*; J. McNulty, *Hegel's Ontological Argument: A Reconstruction*, «Hegel Bulletin», XLIV (2), 2023, pp. 275-296; J. Kreines, *Aristotelian Priority, Metaphysical Definitions of God and Hegel on Pure Thought as Absolute*; J. Kreines, *The Poison Chalice of Metaphysical Grounding*, «Hegel Bulletin», Published online 2025, pp. 1-33; E. Tripaldi, *Hegel's Metaphysics of Subjectivity*.

endeavour, but it is also revealed as an aspect of Hegel's philosophy of great interest for the contemporary debate.

Indeed, Moss shows how 'his Hegel' can fruitfully interact not only with Graham Priest's dialetheism, but also with versions of speculative realism such as Quentin Meillassoux's and Markus Gabriel's. This interaction is made possible by a reading that advocates for Hegel's engagement with the question of the Absolute as the ontological, self-grounding ground of all there is. As Moss himself highlights, this reading amounts to a vindication of Hegel's engagement with questions proper not only to traditional, pre-Kantian metaphysics, as *metaphysica generalis*, but also to traditional, pre-Kantian metaphysics as *metaphysica specialis* – an aspect which, as reconstructed above, recent interpreters had downplayed.

Against Quentin Meillassoux's realism and his argument for ancestry, Moss highlights that Hegel's Concept is in its own way ancestral: its activity of self-predication and self-instantiation is not dependent on its givenness in human thought: the latter is possible, but it is not a condition for the Concept's existence and does not influence its quality²⁷.

Gabriel's no-world view consists in the denial of the existence of the world, meant here as the most comprehensive object, containing all other things. Moss' argument against Gabriel is the following: either his no-world view is self-refuting, or it is a form of «mystical Dialetheism» (ultimately also self-refuting). Gabriel's claim that there is no world is meaningless (and thus cannot be held true) by Gabriel's own definition, which determines every claim referring to non-existent objects as meaningless²⁸. Gabriel's no-world view could resist the charge of self-refutingness by claiming that any speech about the world is meaningless, and yet that this meaninglessness is proof that the world is beyond intelligibility. This way, the theory would be coherent but would then be open to the paradox that Moss highlights in «mystical Dialetheism»: there is an aspect of the

²⁷ See Moss, *Hegel's Foundation Free Metaphysics*, pp. 374ff.

²⁸ As Moss notes, this was also Priest's argument against Gabriel. See Id. *Hegel's Foundation Free Metaphysics*, p. 286ff.

Absolute, or the world (namely: human intelligibility or meaningfulness) that remains other than the Absolute, therefore limiting it. Gabriel is not interested in this option, because he claims the world does not exist, which makes him however liable to the charge for self-refutingness highlighted above, as well as to the charge Moss levels against what he calls «relative Dialetheism»: accepting the truth of some contradictions, but not of all – and, most importantly, not of the Absolute as that which can be both one and many, or universal and particular – is ultimately a reiteration of the «logic of the finite concept».

Another aspect of the contemporary relevance of Moss' reading, which is not highlighted in the book itself, concerns a smaller debate that has recently emerged in Hegel scholarship, concerning the possible interaction between Hegel's philosophy and what I have called the «monism renaissance» in analytic metaphysics²⁹. This aspect connects to Moss' critique of «relative Dialetheism», insofar as it shows how a reading of Hegel as defending the need to accept the truth of all contradictions (and most of all, of the one concerning the Absolute's self-instantiation) can resolve a debate currently stuck between relativization and mysticism. Insofar as it also hinges on Moss' demonstration that the engagement with the ontological proof is the central endeavour of Hegel's metaphysics, this aspect also confirms the irony I highlighted at the beginning of this paragraph.

The main competing analytic monist theories are currently three: Horgan and Potrc's blobjectivism, Jonathan Schaffer's priority monism, and Michael Della Rocca's strict monism³⁰.

²⁹ On this topic, see Kreines, *Aristotelian Priority, Metaphysical Definitions of God and Hegel on Pure Thought as Absolute*; Kreines, *The Poison Chalice of Metaphysical Grounding*; Tripaldi, *Priority or Reflection?* and A.S. Munte, *Does it Make a Difference Whether We are Monists or Pluralists? Metametaphysical Reflections on Monism in Jonathan Schaffer and Hegel's Realphilosophien*, «International Journal of Philosophical Studies», XXXII (5), 2024, pp. 1-25.

³⁰ J. Schaffer, *Monism*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), ed. by E.N. Zalta, URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/monism/>>. Last accessed January 26th, 2026.

While Horgan and Potrc abide by a strictly Quinean methodology and thus advocate ontological «austerity» within a «flat ontology», Schaffer and Della Rocca, each in their own way, move away from the understanding of metaphysics as the determination of «what there is», and rather focus on grounds within an «ordered ontology»³¹. Moreover, they both claim – in ways similar to Moss in his criticizing dualist frameworks in traditional Western metaphysics – the unavoidability of questions of fundamentality in metaphysics: without a definition of something's ground, this something cannot be fully specified, and thus cannot be considered existent³².

However, both Schaffer and Della Rocca reject the possibility of grounds being self-referring and, thus, self-predicating. In doing this, they share a general assumption driving the current debate on grounding within analytic metaphysics³³, which yet reveals to be an obstacle in the defence of a monist metaphysics. Indeed, the defence of the existence of a unitary ground for the existence of things would require that this ground be both one and many, itself and not itself and, in being thus, it should also be self-referring, or self-grounding. If it weren't, and its being both one and many would be grounded in a different ground, we would have two grounds, and not one. This is clearly the issue Jacobi raised as the «problem of nihilism», and an expansion of what Schaffer called «the problem of heterogeneity»³⁴.

³¹ I am following here the systematization offered by Schaffer in Id., *On What Grounds What in Metametaphysics*, ed. by D. Chalmers, D. Manley, and R. Wasserman, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.

³² Id., *On What Grounds What*; M. Della Rocca, *PSR*, «Philosophers' Imprint», X (7), pp. 1-13.

³³ Schaffer, *On What Grounds What*.

³⁴ Id., *Monism: The Priority of the Whole*, «Philosophical Review», CXIX (1), pp. 31-76. For a discussion of Schaffer with relation to Hegel and Jacobi, see Kreines, *The Poison Chalice of Metaphysical Grounding*. For a reformulation of this issue, see also G.S. Moss, *Dialetheism and the Problem of the Missing Difference*, «SATS», XIX (2), pp. 89-110.

Schaffer and Della Rocca react to this difficulty in one of two ways, each ultimately raising further difficulties. Schaffer chooses to avoid the contradiction of a self-instantiating ground through restriction of the scope of the grounding relation between the one and the many. He claims that the many existing «concrete objects» share a unitary ground which, however, does not ground their existence as individual manifolds. Indeed, like a whole in which these manifolds need to be compossible, the one grounds – or, better, constrains – some qualities of the existence of the manifold³⁵. As highlighted by Michael Della Rocca, this strategy is dissatisfactory because it does not provide for an explanation for the «fact of existence» of the manifold «concrete objects», which is here taken as a «brute fact»³⁶. To paraphrase the issue in the terms used by Moss, Della Rocca is here pointing to the fact that two principles are being assumed (something Schaffer has no problem with³⁷): one is a principle of ontological manifoldness, the other is a principle of unity as compossibility³⁸. This separation, however, limits the explanatory potential of each principle – and also defeats the purpose of offering a «monist» theory. Thereby, it also reopens Jacobi's «problem of nihilism»: since the manifoldness of the many cannot ultimately be grounded in a unitary principle, there is no way to account for the existence of anything.

To avoid the pitfalls of Schaffer's «tame» account, Della Rocca takes an alternative approach, which, following Moss' categorization, we can define as «mystical». Della Rocca claims that there is a unitary ground accounting for the «fact of existence» of all things. However, he highlights the contradictory, or «self-refuting» character of the notion of such a ground, since it has to be both one and many, and both ground and grounded. Differently from Gabriel's no-world view, this contradiction is noted not to claim the

³⁵ Schaffer, *The Internal Relatedness of All Things*.

³⁶ M. Della Rocca, *The Parmenidean Ascent*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 226-259.

³⁷ J. Schaffer, *Monism: The Priority of the Whole*.

³⁸ I am indebted to Rolf-Peter Horstmann for the framing of Schaffer's understanding of unity in terms of compossibility.

nonexistence of the One. Rather, it is noted to show the illusory character of the (fact of) «distinction» itself, as something necessary for (human) knowledge, and yet at odds with the ultimate task and ground of knowledge itself, namely, the identification of a principle of sufficient reason for all there is³⁹. This understanding opens a dimension of play: any act of thought, resting on an act of distinction, is only aimed at refuting itself, so that the hardly conceivable One resting beyond all things can be revealed in self-annulling claims leading to (mystical) silence⁴⁰.

Moss' criticism of «mystical Dialetheism» and of «relative Dialetheism» can help in showing the limits of these accounts, while his reading of Hegel as advocating for the possibility of a self-instantiating, self-particularizing universal can show how Hegel can be a precious interlocutor for developing a monist metaphysics which overcomes these limits⁴¹.

3. Conclusions

To conclude, I believe Moss' book and this symposium prove that there is indeed hope for «the friends of the Absolute»⁴², not just within Hegelian scholarship, but also in the broader field of philosophical discourse. As Moss himself puts it, Moss' book

³⁹ Della Rocca, *The Parmenidean Ascent*; id., *PSR*.

⁴⁰ Symbolically – and genially – Della Rocca's *The Parmenidean Ascent* ends with a blank page, after the first few words of the book are repeated again.

⁴¹ Although moving in a different direction than Moss', James Kreines has been explicitly working to bridge Hegel and contemporary analytic monism. See Kreines, *Aristotelian Priority, Metaphysical Definitions of God and Hegel on Pure Thought as Absolute*; Id., *The Poison Chalice of Grounding*. For an in-depth discussion of Hegel with relation to the debate grounding – pun intended – the contemporary one, and namely the one between F.H. Bradley's idealism and B. Russell's pluralism, see the seminal R.P. Horstmann, *Ontologie der Relationen. Hegel, Bradley, Russell und die Kontroverse über interne und externe Beziehungen*, Frankfurt, Athenaeum Hain, 1984.

⁴² Moss, *Hegel's Foundation Free Metaphysics*, p. 1.

«resurrects» the Absolute from the ashes left by its denial in post-modernism and recent speculative and analytic realism. This «resurrection» is not just in the terms of a plausibility of the hypothesis that there is the Absolute, but it is rather in the terms of a demonstration that without the Absolute, a thorough understanding of the reality we live in, is impossible. It is in this sense, that the question of how to conceive of a single principle that does not cancel out singularity but rather enhances it is reiterated as an essential question for the future of philosophy. Being a bridge between Moss' old and new book on this topic, this symposium testifies the importance of Moss' research for the present and future philosophical conversation.