

Hegel, Dialectic, and Metaphysical Grounding

Hegel makes ambitious promises on behalf of his project in theoretical philosophy: He claims to argue by an internal engagement with Kant's critical philosophy. And yet Hegel also claims to reach by this means ambitious conclusions about some form of "absolute idea", which is supposed to require transcending the epistemic limits imposed by Kant's critical philosophy. I argue that we can better understand this philosophical project by comparing the now-familiar idea that metaphysics concerns at base questions about grounding. Both Kant and Hegel approach topics in this neighborhood in a way that is now unfamiliar—and a way that I think worth considering as a revision to how we think of metaphysical grounding. Clarifying their approach then helps, first, to bring into focus how Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic" engages metaphysical questions specifically in order to demonstrate our epistemic limits. And it helps, second, in clearing out of the way many of the reasons why Hegel's ambitions have often seemed hopeless; we can understand in these terms why there is real reason to hope that Kant's "dialectic" could be of use in constructing and defending Hegel's new and unusual theory of the metaphysics of grounding.