

The Unpopularity of Transcendental Philosophy: Fichte's Controversy With Reinhold (1799-1801)

GÜNTER ZÖLLER

These days common sense
is like the peasant who swallows
the prescription instead of the medicine.¹

The following essay examines the account of the relation between philosophy and life which Fichte developed at the end of his years in Jena and at the beginning of his time in Berlin in response to contemporary criticisms and attacks of his earlier work. It shows the increasing importance of metaphilosophical and methodological considerations in the development of Fichte's philosophy and documents the gradual growth of the substance of Fichte's later work out of the positions and problems of his earlier writings. Focussing on Reinhold's critique of Fichte, the essay demonstrates how apparent changes in Fichte's philosophy are part of an internal development of clarification and consolidation that is occasioned and shaped by external factors. It also shows the extent to which Fichte's thinking in Berlin is a response to the

* Due to a lack of English translations of a good number of the works referred to in this essay, the following policy has been adopted: all quotations are translations by the present author; all references are to German editions, with occasional indication of English translations; Kant's and Fichte's works are cited according to the standard editions by the Prussian Academy of Sciences and the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, respectively (see notes 2 and 4). The pagination of these editions is included in most recent English translations.

¹ J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Gliwitzky (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1962ff.) (henceforth "GA"), II/5: 259 ('Bei Bardilis Logik' [Over Bardili's Logic]).

reception of his work in Jena in general and to his work from the last years in Jena in particular.

I. Aut aut or transcendental philosophy and popular philosophy

The type of systematic philosophy which Kant and Fichte developed and presented under the titles "transcendental philosophy" and "*Wissenschaftslehre*" at the close of the eighteenth century marks a sharp caesura in the philosophical discourse of modernity. To be sure, the Kantian-Fichtean philosophical revolution shares in the general critical spirit of the Enlightenment. Yet the scientific rigor of Kant's and Fichte's philosophical work contrasts sharply with the essayistic manner of thinking and writing to be found in European philosophy in the second half of the eighteenth century and especially in its German variant, that eclecticism in which Leibnizian heritage mixes comfortably with English, Scottish and French inspirations. In this regard, the German philosophy of the Enlightenment, chiefly represented by Moses Mendelssohn and Christian Garve, with its aim of a widely comprehensible treatment of philosophical issues, can rightly be considered to remain more faithful to the spirit of the age than the Kantian-Fichtean movement with its appearance of a new scholasticism and scientism in philosophy. Accordingly, the title "popular philosophy" (*Popularphilosophie*), designating the dominating efforts in late eighteenth-century Germany at a philosophizing with a wider, cosmopolitan rather than scholastic intent, originally had entirely positive connotations, which it lost only through the increasing influence of Kant and his successors.²

Kant and Fichte oppose the dominating popular philosophy, which turns generally comprehensible presentation into a criterion of philosophical content, with an alternative conception of philosophy that keeps separate the popular presentation of philosophy and its scientific development, and which places the two in a well-defined relation to each other. Thus Kant writes the three Critiques and his other systematic works for the professional philosopher - even the seemingly more accessible *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* are addressed to "future

² See Helmut Holzhey, article 'Popularphilosophie', in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfriedrich Gründer, vol. 7 (Basel, 1981), 1093-1100.

teachers" of the critical philosophy³ - and supplements this body of works with a series of popular essays, most of them published in the *Berlin Monthly*, the central organ of German Enlightenment.⁴ In his own foundational systematic work Kant follows closely the scientific concept of philosophy of the German school philosophy to be found in Christian Wolff and his successors - Kant's own distinction between his critical conception of philosophy and traditional dogmatism notwithstanding.⁵ Accordingly, Kant castigates sharply the appeal to common sense (*gemeiner Menschenverstand*) in matters of foundational philosophy, which requires not ordinary but speculative understanding (*spekulativer Verstand*).⁶

In Kant the negative assessment of common sense and its cognitive abilities in matters of foundational philosophy is by no means limited to

3. *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Royal Prussian Academy and its successors (Berlin, later Berlin and New York, 1900ff.) (henceforth "AA"), 4: 255 (*Prolegomena*, Preface).

4. These works include: 'Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht' (Idea for a Universal History With a Cosmopolitan Intent; AA 8: 15-32; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1784); 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was heißt Aufklärung?' (Answer to the Question: What Does Enlightenment Mean?; AA 8: 33-42; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1784); 'Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace' (Determination of the Concept of a Human Race; AA 8: 89-106; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1785); 'Muthmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte' (Conjectural Beginning of Human History; AA 8: 107-124; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1786); 'Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientiren?' (What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking; AA 8: 131-148; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1786); 'Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis' (On the Common Saying: That May Be True in Theory But Does Not Serve Practice; AA 8: 273-314; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1793); 'Das Ende aller Dinge' (The End of All Things; AA 8: 325-340; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1794); 'Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie' (Of a Recently Adopted Superior Tone in Philosophy; AA 8: 387-406; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1796); 'Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Tractats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie' (Announcement of the Imminent Conclusion of a Perpetual Peace in Philosophy; AA 8: 411-422; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1796); 'Über ein vermeintes Recht aus Menschenliebe zu lügen' (On a Putative Right to Lie From Philanthropy; AA 8: 423-430; first publication: *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1797).

5. See my essay, "Die Seele des Systems": Systembegriff und Begriffssystem in Kants Transzendentalphilosophie' in: *System und Architektonik in der Philosophie Kants*, ed. Hans Friedrich Fulda and Jürgen Stolzenberg (in preparation).

6. Cf. AA 4: 258-260 (*Prolegomena*, Preface).

the theoretical use of reason and the latter's systematic critique in transcendental philosophy. To be sure, Kant follows Rousseau⁷ in crediting philosophically untrained reason with the ability to make correct moral judgments.⁸ But he moves the systematic foundation of the principle of morality from "popular moral philosophy" (*populäre sittliche Weltweisheit*) and the latter's restriction to the natural use of the understanding to a "metaphysics of morals" (*Metaphysik der Sitten*) and its grounding in a critique of (pure) practical reason.⁹

Fichte's radical further development of Kant's transcendental philosophy, with its integration of moral philosophy into transcendental philosophy, its novel terminology and the highly complex conceptual apparatus involved, further deepens the opposition between speculative philosophical doctrine and generally comprehensible presentation. Yet in Fichte the increasingly esoteric character of transcendental philosophy, to be observed in the successive treatments of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, coexist throughout with his theory and practice of a popular mediation of the chief philosophical insights. Parallel to the, mostly only posthumously published, successive versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte develops an entire body of work, mostly seen to publication by himself, consisting of lecture courses in the popular style that reach from the early Jena *Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar* through the three series of lectures in the Academy of Sciences in Berlin on the philosophies of history, religion and culture to the late *Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar*.¹⁰

To be sure, these popular writings by Fichte are not popularized versions of his speculative philosophy but seek to import the latter's general results and basic insights into the specifically different questions of a *practical, applied philosophy* with its focus on orientation in life and

7. On Rousseau's significance for the development of Kant's philosophy in general and especially for his practical philosophy, see Immanuel Kant, *Bemerkungen in den "Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen"*, newly edited and commented by Marie Rischmüller. *Kant-Forschungen*, vol. 3 (Hamburg, 1991), 37ff., esp. 38: "Rousseau straightened me out." ("Rousseau hat mich zurecht gebracht.")

8. See AA 4: 403 (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section One).

9. See AA 4: 389-391 (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface).

10. On Fichte's cycles of popular lectures and publications, see Hartmut Traub, *J. G. Fichtes Populärphilosophie 1804-1806* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1992), esp. 18-24 and 288-293. These works by Fichte are now available in a single volume, with commentary: Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Werke*, vol 2: *Schriften zur angewandten Philosophie*, ed. Peter Lothar Oesterreich (Frankfurt/M., 1997). See also my review in *Philosophischer Literaturanzeiger* 51 (1998), 20-23.

reflection on social ethos in abstraction from speculative theorizing. The *Wissenschaftslehre* as such remains outside of this philosophical public relations work undertaken by Fichte.

Now Fichte's personality with its vehement striving after practical efficacy, together with the pathos of his popular lectures and his central speculative doctrine of the radical primacy of freedom in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, as conveyed in its self-description as "the first system of freedom",¹¹ could create the impression that Fichte's philosophy is practical through and through, and concerned throughout with matters pertaining to the conduct of life. Certainly the assumption of a basic methodical continuity between speculative foundation and popular application underlies much of the polemical and metacritical debates surrounding his philosophy. This assumption shows in the psychological misunderstanding of Fichte's pure I as empirical individual I,¹² and it is especially virulent in the reception of Fichte's philosophical theory of religious belief or faith (*Glaube*) as atheism and hence disbelief (*Unglaube*). In the latter case the confusion of faith philosophized-about with faith believed-in or disbelieved is not limited to the reaction of the religious and political authorities in the course of the so-called atheism dispute of 1798-99¹³ but is also and even prominently present in the reactions of Fichte's fellows philosophers. Responding to this widespread methodological misunderstanding of his work, Fichte even supplements his public defense against the charge of atheism, in which he turns the accusation back on the accusers,¹⁴ with clarifications in correspondence and publications that address themselves to professional philosophers on

11. See Fichte's two drafts of his letters to Jens Baggesen of April or May 1795: "My system is the first system of freedom." ("Mein System ist das erste System der Freiheit.") (GA III/2: 298 and 300 [in the original emphasis]).

12. See *Vergleichung des von Herrn Prof. Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit der Wissenschaftslehre* (Comparison of the System Set Forth by Professor Schmid With the *Wissenschaftslehre*) (GA I/3: 235-271).

13. See the collection of the documents pertaining to the atheism dispute in *Appellation an das Publikum ...: Dokumente zum Atheismusstreit um Fichte, Forberg und Niethammer. Jena 1798/99* (Leipzig, 1991).

14. See *J.G. Fichte's d. Phil. Doctors und ordentlichen Professors zu Jena Appellation an das Publikum über die durch ein Kurf. Sächs. Confiscationsrescript ihm beigemessenen atheistischen Aeußerungen. Eine Schrift, die man erst zu lesen bittet, ehe man sie confiscirt* (Appeal to the Public by J.G. Fichte, Doctor of Philosophy and Professor Ordinarius, Regarding the Atheistic Pronouncements Attributed to Him by a Confiscation Order in Electoral Saxony. A Work Which One Asks to Read Before Confiscating It) (GA I/5: 415-453).

the methodological status of theorizing in the philosophy of religion in particular and on philosophical speculation in general.

In the course of these mainly methodological rather than doctrinal elaborations on the alleged atheism of the *Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte's philosophical self-understanding gains noticeably in power of distinction and accuracy. In fact, in these debates concerning the status and the function of the *Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte works out an entire metaphilosophy of transcendental philosophy, in which the *hauteur* of speculation and the *ferveur* of concrete existence are brought together in a consistent manner.

In this context, Fichte's controversy with Karl Leonhard Reinhold is particularly illuminating, given that Reinhold's temporary adherence to the early *Wissenschaftslehre* changes during the atheism dispute into increasingly critical distance and soon thereafter into outright polemical opposition to Fichte's philosophy. In his critique of Fichte, Reinhold draws successively on the arsenals of two declared opponents of Kantian-Fichtean transcendental philosophy, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Christoph Gottfried Bardili. Fichte's continuing high regard for Jacobi and his explicit low regard for Bardili lend to the dispute with Reinhold during and immediately after the atheism dispute the character of a doubly deflected reply on Fichte's part to the contemporary philosophical opposition to the *Wissenschaftslehre* in Jacobi and Bardili. At the center of Fichte's dispute with Jacobi-Reinhold stands the opposition of speculation and life and especially the possibility or necessity of a standpoint that mediates between speculation and life. At the core of Fichte's dispute with Bardili-Reinhold lies the concept of thinking and especially its relation to intuition and life. In both controversies the prevailing arguments on Fichte's side are of a methodological and metaphilosophical nature.

II. Et et or Reinhold's intermediate standpoint

Early in 1799, first through correspondence and later also in personal discussions, Reinhold effectuates his *rapprochement* to Jacobi, who at the time is working on his contribution to the atheism dispute, a personal letter to Fichte that was to be published in revised form as 'Open Letter to Fichte.'¹⁵ Reinhold's new allegiance first manifests itself in his letter to

15. See *Jacobi an Fichte* (Hamburg, 1799). Reprinted in GA III/3: 224-281).

Fichte of 27 March and 6 April 1799,¹⁶ which soon thereafter is incorporated into Reinhold's 'Open Letter to J. C. Lavater and J. G. Fichte on the Belief in God.'¹⁷ The close collaboration between Jacobi and Reinhold in their disputes with Fichte can be seen from the reference to Jacobi's open letter to Fichte in both the correspondence and published version of Reinhold's open letter to Fichte and in the reference to Reinhold's open letter to Lavater and Fichte in the published version of Jacobi's letter to Fichte.¹⁸ Both Jacobi and Reinhold develop their defense of a theistic, personal God in the context of discussing the relation between faith or belief (*Glaube*) and knowledge (*Wissen*) in Fichte. In his controversial essay 'On the Ground of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World.'¹⁹ Fichte had followed Kant²⁰ and developed a voluntaristic conception of faith in which the further questioning of theoretical grounds for beliefs of all kinds, which is always possible, is terminated practically - through the voluntary decision to rest with what is given through feeling as something ultimate that is not to be questioned any further. According to Fichte, the object of the voluntary sanction of what is affectively given is the moral order implied in moral consciousness.

Against Fichte's modal interpretation of faith as voluntary affirmation of feeling and the latter's extensional restriction to the orderly nature of the intelligible, Jacobi advances his concept of "natural faith" (*natürlicher Glaube*),²¹ which he had already developed under the influence of Hume in his earlier critique of Kant's idealism and which he

16. See GA III/3: 307-320.

17. *Sendschreiben an J. C. Lavater und J. G. Fichte über den Glauben an Gott* (Hamburg, 1799), part on Fichte: 76-113. Reprint of the preface and the part on Fichte in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation: Der Streit um die Gestalt einer Ersten Philosophie (1799-1807)*. Quellenband, ed. Walter Jäschke. Philosophisch-literarische Streitsachen, vol. 2.1 (Hamburg, 1993), 47-56. For the fragments of Reinhold's personal letter to Fichte that formed the basis of the *Open Letter*, see GA III/3: 295-307.

18. See GA III/3: 296 and GA III/3: 225 note (preliminary report in the printed edition of Jacobi's letter to Fichte).

19. See GA I/5: 347-357.

20. See AA 5: 143 (*Critique of Practical Reason*, Dialectic, Chapter Two, Section VIII): "Thus [...] the righteous may well say: I will that a God exists, that I exist in an intelligible world, finally that my duration is endless." ("Also [...] darf der Rechtschaffene wohl sagen: ich will, daß ein Gott, daß mein Dasein in einer Verstandeswelt, endlich auch, daß meine Dauer endlos sei [...].")

21. GA III/3: 225.

now relates specifically to the creaturely belief in a living God "outside me" (*außer mir*) existing for itself.²² Jacobi's reply to the undermining of natural belief through a "new *singular* theism" in Fichte's moral concepts of belief and God is met by Jacobi's reminder that transcendental philosophy properly may be "neither theistic nor atheistic."²³ Jacobi goes on to consider (transcendental) philosophy, which is thus detheologized, as one of the sciences (*Wissenschaften*) with which the human being playfully organizes his own ignorance into a system without thereby "approaching the cognition of the true (*des Wahren*) as much as by a hair's breadth."²⁴ The ludic comprehension of the world through philosophy as science (transcendental philosophy or *Wissenschaftslehre*) finds poignant expression in Jacobi's simile of the knit stocking in the texture of which the movement of the needles has imbedded the world's image without this presentation being more than a complexly turned piece of yarn.²⁵

Based on his familiarity with Jacobi's critique of Fichte and against the background of his own sympathizing with Fichte's transcendental philosophy over several years, Reinhold attempts a mediation between the opposed positions of Fichte and Jacobi. At the center of this search for a position between Fichte and Jacobi stands the notion of the *standpoint* (*Standpunkt*), which had been entered into the post-Kantian discussion by Jacob Sigismund Beck²⁶ as a means of tracing doctrinal differences back to underlying methodological differences. The concept of the standpoint lends expression to the dependency of specific insights on the perspectival conditions under which they have been gained. This does not yet imply a relativizing of such insights, for there may be well be reasons, and good reasons at that, for assuming one rather than another standpoint.

In the introductions of his *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1797-98), in *The System of Ethics* (1798) and in his

22. GA III/3: 251. On Jacobi's concept of belief or faith in relation to Kant and Fichte, see my essay, "Das Element aller Gewissheit": Kant, Jacobi und Fichte über den Glauben', *Fichte-Studien* 14 (1998), 21-41.

23. GA III/3: 225.

24. GA III/3: 238.

25. See GA III/3: 235-237.

26. See Jakob Sigismund Beck, *Erläuternder Auszug aus den Kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anraten desselben*. Bd. 3: *Dritter Band, welcher den Standpunkt darstellt, aus welchem die Kritische Philosophie zu beurteilen ist: Einzig möglicher Standpunkt, aus welchem die Kritische Philosophie beurteilt werden muss* (Riga, 1793; reprint in *Aetas Kantiana*, Brussels, 1968).

lecture courses on the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* (1796-99) Fichte had distinguished between the "standpoints" or "viewpoints" of philosophical thinking and "common thinking" (*gemeines Denken*).²⁷ From the philosophical standpoint, assertions are made about the hidden procedures and laws of common, ordinary thinking which can neither be formulated nor understood from the latter standpoint. The distinction between ordinary thinking as such and the extraordinary, philosophical view of the latter - incidentally carried out with clear allusion to Jacobi's critique of Kant²⁸ - is designed to meet the contemporary objection that Fichte's transcendental-idealist theory with its central thesis of the constitution of the object in consciousness is at odds with empirical evidence and rendered absurd by the latter. Accordingly, a core component of Fichte's philosophical thinking about non-philosophical thinking is the latter's amnesia regarding its own activities of consciousness - an amnesia by means of which that which is made or produced by consciousness appears as given or found in consciousness.

Fichte also distinguishes the two basic views of consciousness and its objects under the designations "standpoint of speculation" (*Standpunkt der Spekulation*) and "standpoint of life and of science" (*Standpunkt des Lebens und der Wissenschaft*).²⁹ Here "speculation" is to be understood as the specifically philosophical form of reflection employed in the metatheory of all knowledge (*Wissenschaftslehre*), namely the abstracting-reflecting reconstruction of the non-empirical conditions of experience. By contrast, the grouping together of "life" and "science" indicates the affinity of non-philosophical reflection, which occurs in the sciences and occasionally also in non-scientific life, to "common thinking," which is not enlightened about its own clandestine transcendental accomplishments.

27. See GA I/4: 210 note, 236 note, 246, 253, 274; GA I/5: 33f.; *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*. *Kollegnachschrift K. Chr. Fr. Krause*, ed. Erich Fuchs, 2nd ed. (Hamburg, 1995) (henceforth "WLnM"), 24f. The English translation of this work, Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) nova methodo* (1796/99), tr. and ed. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca, New York, 1992), contains in the margins the pagination of the German edition cited above.

28. See GA I/4: 235, 236 note: "the clearest thinker of our age" ("der hellste Denker unsers Zeitalters") ("Second Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*", Section 6; the translation of this work in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, ed. and tr. Daniel Breazeale [Indianapolis and Cambridge, Mass., 1994] contains the pagination of of the German edition cited above).

29. See GA I/4: 210.

Jacobi, too, resorts in his 'Open Letter to Fichte' to the discourse of standpoints, though not for the purpose of contrasting speculation and life but in order to distinguish his own position from that of Fichte. Jacobi concedes that he can very well place himself in "Fichte's standpoint" and that he then is "almost ashamed to be of different opinion."³⁰ He critiques Fichte's standpoint, which he understands as nihilistic radical idealism, not because of any inconsistencies but due to the latter's limited viewpoint, due to which there may come into view true knowledge or "truths" (*Wahrheiten*) but never "the true" itself (*das Wahre*) - epistemologically speaking, the things (in) themselves, and theologically speaking, God.

In the part of his 'Open Letter to Lavater and Fichte' addressed to Fichte, Reinhold follows closely Jacobi's personalized rendition of the alternative standpoints when indicating to Fichte "that I have to take my standpoint between *him* (sc. Jacobi) and *you* (sc. Fichte)".³¹ Reinhold here considers Fichte's standpoint to be that of "philosophical knowledge" founded purely on itself. He does not further describe the standpoint he attributes to Jacobi. It would have to be identified as certainty in one's belief regarding a personal God and, more generally, of a reality that is in principle independent of our knowledge and inaccessible to it.

Referring to Fichte's own remarks on the function of belief as the "element of all certainty" (*Element aller Gewissheit*), Reinhold now defends the dependence of knowledge as such on natural belief. Belief is here not supposed to be produced by philosophy as the placeholder of the latter's own ignorance - a position which Reinhold attributes to Fichte - but is supposed to be posited prior to all knowledge through God's independent existence.³² The internal completion and termination of knowledge through moral faith in Fichte is thus countered by the external foundation of knowledge in the belief in God in Reinhold, who here depends on Jacobi.

After having traced Jacobi's and Fichte's positions to the opposition between the "standpoint of conscience" and the "standpoint of speculation",³³ Reinhold seeks to alleviate this opposition by correlating the standpoints to different aspects of human existence.³⁴ The human

30. GA III/3: 222.

31. GA III/3: 308.

32. See GA III/3: 309f.

33. GA III/3: 311 and 312.

34. See GA III/3: 309.

being *qua* philosopher pursues the systematic goal of founding knowledge in a purely speculative manner, independent of any factors external to knowledge. By contrast, the human being as such—including the philosopher *qua* human being—lives in the immediate certainty of some absolute reality which he does not posit but which posits him.

Thus Reinhold's standpoint *between* Jacobi and Fichte is supposed to consist in the insight that their standpoints do not exclude each other but complement each other. This third standpoint, which might be located *above* rather than *between* the two other standpoints, is, according to Reinhold, a specifically philosophical standpoint, insofar as it is supposed to maintain the practical independence of belief and faith from knowledge against the speculative usurpation of the concept of faith through knowledge in Fichte. Reinhold explicitly declares the role of the intermediate standpoint in securing natural belief to be "the business of the *properly practical*, not merely scientific *philosophy*".³⁵ It is this notion of a practical, applied philosophy that provokes Fichte's critical reaction to Reinhold's attempt at mediation between Jacobi and Fichte.

III. Tertium non datur or Fichte's critique of Reinhold's doctrine of the intermediate standpoint

In his response of 22 April 1799 to Reinhold's 'Open Letter', which in part is also contained in Fichte's written response to Jacobi's letter to Fichte of 3 through 21 March 1799, Fichte declares with regard to Reinhold's "present turn" that there is "no standpoint of *philosophizing* between Jacobi's and mine".³⁶ Fichte does not deny that one can alternate between the standpoints of speculation and faith. The philosopher's existence outright consists in the controlled transition back and forth between the speculative standpoint and the general, "common" standpoint. But Fichte denies that there could be a genuinely *philosophical* standpoint in addition to these two standpoints. The transition between the two standpoints is not a third standpoint of transition.

But Fichte's critique concerns not only the alleged completion of the alternative standpoints through a philosophical intermediary standpoint. Drawing on an earlier philosophical portrait of his philosopher colleague,

³⁵ GA III/3: 309

³⁶ GA III/3: 326 and 327 (Fichte's emphasis).

which he had given in private correspondence,³⁷ Fichte diagnoses in Reinhold's attempt at a "practical, not merely scientific philosophy" a conception of philosophy that is incompatible with the *Wissenschaftslehre*. According to Fichte, Reinhold shows here "a *practical warmth* in philosophizing," which still stems from his earlier, pre-Kantian phase, due to which he also originally came to Kantian philosophy, from which he had expected himself "some practical success".³⁸

Fichte's philosophical portrait of Reinhold stresses the latter's ethos of enlightenment:

You have always nourished the hope, and still do so, to *better* the human beings through philosophy and to *convert* them, to *instruct* them about their duties in this life and their hopes in the other.³⁹

For Fichte, Reinhold's recent turn against Fichte is due to the insight that Kantian-Fichtean idealism, far from supporting the practical tendency of philosophy sought by Reinhold, works against this very tendency in an outright scandalous manner.

Fichte then contrasts Reinhold's conception of a practical, application-oriented philosophy with his own, specifically speculative understanding of philosophy in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, according to which speculative knowledge is its own end and not suitable to practical application. Drawing on Jacobi's terminology, Fichte calls the real that is opposed to knowledge - the latter being always ideal - "life." In sharp contrast to the formative influence of (philosophical knowledge) on life defended by Reinhold, Fichte insists on the sober insight:

Only that which comes from life is capable of forming life.⁴⁰

³⁷ See GA III/2: 342-352, esp. 343 (No. 294; letter of 2 July 1795).

³⁸ GA III/3: 327.

³⁹ Ibid. On Reinhold's roots in the German Enlightenment, see Sabine Röhr, *A Primer on German Enlightenment: With a Translation of Karl Leonhard Reinhold's "The Fundamental Concepts and Principles of Ethics"* (Columbia, Missouri, 1995).

⁴⁰ Ibid. On Fichte's concept of life, see Wolfgang Schrader, *Empirisches und absolutes Ich. Zur Geschichte des Begriffs Leben in der Philosophie J. G. Fichtes* (Stuttgart 1972) and id., 'Philosophie als System—Reinhold und Fichte', in *Erneuerung der Transzendentalphilosophie im Anschluß an Kant und Fichte*, ed. Klaus Hammacher and Albert Mues (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1972), 331-344.

In relation to self-forming life, knowledge *qua* speculation is a mere "image" (*Bild*).

Yet in spite of the strict separation between speculation and life, Fichte maintains, and even stresses, the "practical use" of the former for the latter. Indeed in Fichte's comprehensive conception of philosophy the possible effect of the *Wissenschaftslehre* on the leading of one's life provides the very goal of philosophical activity.⁴¹ But it is not philosophy as such (as speculative science) and immediately (as doctrine) that enters into life. Rather philosophy is of use to life by way of the instruction to independent thinking - and this negatively in the critique of dogmatic, unfree thinking and positively or "pedagogically, in the widest sense," through the exemplary presentation of the right "manner of thinking" (*Denkart*).⁴² The chief example of Fichte's commonly useful philosophy is *The Vocation of Man*, chiefly that work's Third Book.⁴³

For Fichte, Reinhold's conception of philosophy as *immediately* practical is not a unique aberration but exemplifies "the prejudice that is deeply rooted in all philosophy hitherto according to which one takes philosophy to be life wisdom (*Lebensweisheit*)."⁴⁴ Put into the language of standpoints or viewpoints, this universal misunderstanding of philosophy consists in ignoring the distinction between the "philosophical" and the "common" view of things. Insights that are gained from the standpoint of philosophy are treated as though they belonged into the ordinary context of life, as though they were life wisdom. In Fichte's *Sun-Clear Report to the Larger Public on the Proper Essence of the Newest Philosophy*, which is roughly contemporaneous with the controversy with Reinhold, Fichte uses the term "popular, edifying life philosophy" or short "life philosophy" (*Lebensphilosophie*) for the philosophy that is reduced to life wisdom.⁴⁵

41. On Fichte's comprehensive conception of philosophy, see Reinhard Lauth, 'J. G. Fichtes Gesamtidee der Philosophie', in id., *Zur Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie* (München and Salzburg, 1965), 73-123.

42. GA III/3: 327 and GA II/5: 194 (fragment "Fichte an Jacobi").

43. See GA III/4: 283 (letter to Fr. Schlegel): "I believe to have presented the mode of thinking which a fully executed philosophy produces for life in the Third Book of *The Vocation of Man*." ("Die Denkart, die eine durchgeführte Philosophie für das Leben erzeuge, glaube ich im 3ten Buche der Bestimmung des Menschen dargestellt zu haben.")

44. GA III/3: 325.

45. GA I/7: 261 and 256.

But the traditional curtailing of philosophy to life wisdom or life philosophy, which Fichte diagnoses in Reinhold, is not only responsible for the misunderstandings of the *Wissenschaftslehre* among philosophers such as Reinhold and Jacobi. According to Fichte, the atheistic misinterpretation of his doctrine by a larger public is also governed by a conception of philosophy that unreflectively locates philosophical theorizing *about* religion at the level of religious practice itself. In his unpublished comprehensive final statement on the atheism dispute under the title *Recollections, Answers, Questions*,⁴⁶ which dates from the same time as the written and published response to Reinhold, Fichte identifies Christianity with "wisdom for life or popular philosophy," from which he then distinguishes philosophy *qua Wissenschaftslehre* as the "theory of the life wisdom" - in contradistinction to life wisdom itself.⁴⁷ Fichte does not deny the significance of life wisdom or Christianity. Rather he defends the independence and autonomy of strict, scientific philosophy against the traditional assimilation of all philosophizing to the striving after life wisdom in popular philosophy. From a methodological point of view, the atheism dispute arises from the systematic disregard for the distinction between life as such and the wisdom pertaining to it (life wisdom or Christianity), on the one hand, and the theoretical account thereof in speculative philosophy (*Wissenschaftslehre*), on the other hand.

Yet in spite of the systematic distance from life and the wisdom pertaining to it, which Fichte imposes on scientific philosophy or *Wissenschaftslehre*, he still insists on the significance of life as the "basis" (*Basis*) of his philosophy.⁴⁸ Fichte illustrates the difference between his own, scientific philosophy and the opposed, popular one by comparing the relation between cognition and life in each of the two types of philosophy. For this purpose, he includes under the title "actual life" (*wirkliches Leben*) the power of desire (*Begehungsvermögen*), the feelings (*Gefühle*) and acting (*Handeln*) and contrasts those to the "mere cognition going after an object" (*bloße, auf ein Object gehende, [...] Erkenntniß*). With its conception of an immediate application of

46. *Rückerinnerungen, Antworten, Fragen*. This work was written between March and April 1799 but remained unpublished during Fichte's lifetime and was first published, in a heavily edited form, by Fichte's son: *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämtliche Werke*. ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, 8 vols (Berlin, 1845/46), 5: 334-373. Reprint in *Fichtes Werke*, 11 vols (Berlin, 1971), 5: 334-373. The original text (along with the son's edited version) was first published in GA II/5: 103-186.

47. GA II/5: 132 (my emphasis).

48. GA II/5: 137.

philosophical cognition to life, popular philosophy turns (theoretical) cognition into something primary and original, while treating life (willing, feeling, acting) as something dependent on the former. Hence in popular philosophy cognition is the "principle of life" (*Princip des Lebens*). On the popular-philosophical view, as reconstructed by Fichte, freely generated cognitions are supposed to "be able to affect the faculty of desire, bring about feelings and determine the human acting."⁴⁹ Thus the practical, application-oriented methodology of popular philosophy goes together with a decided primacy of theoretical cognition over life.

By contrast, on Fichte's conception of philosophy, cognition is dependent on life:

Our philosophy makes [...] life, the system of feelings, of desiring into what is highest and leaves cognition everywhere only the observing.⁵⁰

Hence in Fichte the speculative distance of scientific philosophy from life is intimately tied to the primacy of life over cognition. Contrary to the initial appearances, it is not the popular philosophy but the speculative and scientific one that does justice to the independence of life and specifically to the original independence of the practical from the theoretical. In his methodological portrayal of Reinhold's philosophical outlook Fichte uncovers an element of anti-Enlightenment in the popular philosophy of the German late Enlightenment, its attitude of tutelage and indoctrination of life through (theoretical) cognition and (theoretical) thinking.

Yet Fichte's conception of cognition as grounded in life is not exhausted by the reversal of the relationship of dependence between thinking and living maintained in popular philosophy. For in Fichte thinking and cognition are by no means limited to the mediate, reflective thinking *about* life but are to found in life itself and as such, as *immediate* cognition. For Fichte, who here follows Kant,⁵¹ life is not a specifically biological notion but indicates the activity structure of consciousness as such. Life for Fichte is primarily the life of spirit or mind. Accordingly, Fichte can ascribe to life its own, pre-reflective cognition, which is grounded in the "system of feelings", from which it follows immediately

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. On Kant's non-biological concept of life, see my essay, "Makkreel on Imagination and Interpretation in Kant," *Philosophy Today* 36 (1992), 266-275, esp. 271f..

and without reasoning. Philosophical thinking has to follow this original, *lived* cognition.⁵²

Due to the presence of thinking and cognition both in reflective, philosophical thinking *about* life as well as in pre-reflective, immediate cognition *in and through* life, Fichte can maintain a far more intimate relation between philosophy and life than could be expected from an external relation of scientific cognition (philosophy) to its object (life). Fichte's crucial reflections on the double presence of thinking and cognition, *objectively* in life and *subjectively* in philosophy, are to be found in a text entitled 'Fragment' that forms part of the larger work, *Recollections, Answers, Questions*, and which had been appended to his letter to Reinhold of 22 April 1799.⁵³

In the 'Fragment' Fichte begins by contrasting life and speculation as "totality" (*Totalität*) of objective and subjective "knowledge" (*Wissen*), respectively, and goes on to determine their relation to each other as that of mutual presupposition. Fichte links the necessary mutual supplementation of speculation and life with the conception of dual unity which, under the title "original duplicity" (*ursprüngliche Duplicität*), had already stood in the center of his three lecture courses on the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* (1796-99). The term refers to the internally complex, more precisely, duplex basic structure of consciousness that underlies the latter's overt articulation along the oppositional lines of the subjective and the objectives, the ideal and the real, doing and being.⁵⁴ In the first and only chapter of the *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte had discussed this original state of affairs also under the designation "subject-object" (*Subjekt-Objekt*).⁵⁵ The original doubling pervades the entire life of consciousness in a recursive manner: in each case, two moments stand in

52. See GA II/5: 138.

53. Since the version of the 'Fragment' included with Fichte's letter to Reinhold has survived only in the edition of Fichte's son (GA III/3: 300-333; No. 440) and since the first edition of *Recollections, Answers, Questions* was heavily edited by Fichte's son (see note 47), it seems wise to cite and quote the 'Fragment' from the manuscript version in GA II/5: 111ff.

54. See WLnM 184f., 189, 211ff., 222, 227, 234.

55. See GA I/4: 277.

opposition to each other, yet also refer to each other, such that one of them cannot be what it is without the other being what it is.⁵⁶

For Fichte, the opposition of speculation and life represents the original duplicity of the subject-object "at its highest level".⁵⁷ For in this instance, the opposed moments or members are the farthest removed from each other and still connected to each other through their relationship of mutual completion. In identifying both sides of the opposition, speculation as well as life, as "knowledge", Fichte indicates that each of the sides is itself structured in a twofold way. Drawing on Hegel's roughly contemporaneous terminology, one could consider life the *objective* subject-object and speculation the *subjective* subject-object.⁵⁸

The mutual requirement of speculation and life maintained by Fichte would have to consist in the dependence of speculation on life together with the reverse dependence of life on speculation. Of these two, the necessity of life for speculation is immediately evident. Life is the object of speculation, even if the latter removes itself from life through reflection: "Speculation [is] not [possible] without the life from which it abstracts."⁵⁹ It proves far more difficult to establish that speculation is necessary for life. In order to achieve this goal, Fichte has to trace back the explicit speculation that is *opposed to life* to its implicit prefiguration *in life*. It is not speculation *qua* free reflection *on* life that pertains to life itself but only that generic, pre-reflective moment of consciousness which underlies all life *qua* life of consciousness.

More precisely, the original subjective-objective double structure of life consists in the cooperation between life's objective side, the proper procedure of life ("mechanism"), and its subjective side, the free giving oneself up to this procedure or process—Fichte's chosen term is *sich hingeben*. To be sure, the latter occurs for the most part implicitly and without clear awareness of it:

56. On the fundamental systematic significance of the original duplicity of the human mind in Fichte, see my work, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge, 1998).

57. GA II/5: 182.

58. See *Differenz der Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie*, in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt/M., 1970), 2: 7-138, esp. 50, 63ff., 99ff.; Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, tr. H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany, New York, 1977), 117, 128ff., 159ff.

59. GA II/5: 182.

Life, as giving oneself up to the mechanism, [is] not [possible] without the freedom that gives itself up, even if the latter were not to come to (actual) consciousness.⁶⁰

The pre-conscious but free giving oneself up to the mechanism of life here has the function of a preformation *within life* of any subsequent speculation *about* life. It is in this sense that Fichte's son, Immanuel Hermann Fichte, in his edition of the 'Fragment' as part of *Recollections, Answers, Questions* as well as in his edition of his father's correspondence, supplements the expression "freedom" in the quotation just given through the parenthetical remark "elsewhere speculation" (*sonst Spekulation*).⁶¹

Fichte's reflections on the original duplicity of speculation and life in the 'Fragment' from *Recollections, Answers, Questions* sent to Reinhold provide a fundamental critique of Reinhold's understanding of philosophy. They are also immediately relevant for Fichte's judgment of Reinhold's efforts toward a philosophical standpoint *in addition* to Fichte's standpoint of speculation and Jacobi's standpoint of life. For Fichte, speculation and life may presuppose each other and thereby be clandestinely implied in each other, but the two cannot properly be united, if that means the elimination of their opposition to each other, as intended in Reinhold's efforts at systematic and personal conciliation.

In the 'Fragment' communicated to Reinhold Fichte explicitly rejects the latter's claimed intermediary standpoint by characterizing the relation between speculation and life as an "antithesis." Their unification in a third philosophical standpoint, so Fichte, is as impossible as it is to specify the unknown unitary ground behind and beneath the pervasive dual subject-object structure of consciousness.⁶² In the original manuscript version of *Recollections, Answers, Questions* the passage corresponding to the 'Fragment' sent to Reinhold even mentions Reinhold's name parenthetically ("such as Reinhold seems to be looking for").⁶³ To be sure, in the 'Fragment' as well as in *Recollections, Answers, Questions* Fichte also concedes a minimal sense in which a possible unification of the two standpoints could be maintained. But this would not be a genuine, third standpoint between those of Fichte

60. Ibid. According to a note in the *J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe*, the parenthetical abbreviation might also read "endl." (for "endlich", meaning "finite").

61. See GA II/5: 182 (lower half of the page) and GA III/3: 333.

62. See GA II/5: 182 and GA III/3: 333.

63. GA II/5: 182.

(speculation) and Jacobi (life) but the philosophical consciousness of those two standpoints as such and of their mutual exclusion and requirement in "the mere consciousness of the actual philosophizing that there is the possibility of those two standpoints and hence that they exist."⁶⁴

IV. Non plus ultra or Fichte on Reinhold on Bardili

The methodological difference between transcendental or speculative and popular or common thinking also forms the center of Fichte's critical reaction to Reinhold's adoption of Christoph Gottfried Bardili's *Outline of First Logic*⁶⁵ for his continued metacritique of Fichte.⁶⁶ In early 1800 Reinhold lets Fichte know in private correspondence that he views Bardili's theory of thinking as such ("thinking as thinking"; *Denken als Denken*) as an alternative formulation of the Kantian-Fichtean position in general and of Fichte's system of positing in the *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* in particular.⁶⁷ For Reinhold, Bardili's orientation of the conception of thinking toward *logic* serves to replace what he perceives to be the *psychological* notion of thinking in transcendental philosophy, especially the latter's egological variant in Fichte's doctrine of the positing, opposing and compositing I.

While for Reinhold Bardili offers a logified and depsychologized transcendental idealism, Fichte views Bardili as a dogmatist who has fallen back into a pre-Kantian position and who "should not be in the first place."⁶⁸ But first Fichte does not make any public pronouncements

64. GA II/5: 182.

65. *Grundriß der ersten Logik* (Stuttgart 1800; reprint in *Aetas Kantiana*, Brussels, 1970).

66. On Bardili's logical and rational realism and its reception in Reinhold, see Wolfgang H. Schrader, 'C.L. Reinholds 'Systemwechsel' von der Wissenschaftslehre zum rationalen Realismus Bardilis in der Auseinandersetzung mit J.G. Fichte', in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation: Der Steit um die Gestalt einer Ersten Philosophie (1799-1807)*, ed. Walter Jäschke. Philosophisch-literarische Streitsachen, vol. 2 (Hamburg, 1993), 85-104, and Martin Bondeli, *Das Anfangsproblem bei Karl Leonhard Reinhold. Eine systematische und entwicklungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Philosophie Reinholds in der Zeit von 1789 bis 1803* (Frankfurt/M., 1995), 261-414.

67. See GA III/4: 199 (Reinhold's letter to Fichte of 23 January 1800).

68. See GA III/4: 271-273, esp. 272 (Fichte's letter to Jacobi of 4 July 1800) and GA III/4: 311 (draft of Fichte's letter to Reinhold of 18 September 1800). Fichte's

about Bardili's work, which had been recommended to him in the highest terms by Reinhold.⁶⁹ Only after Reinhold publishes his transcendental-idealist interpretation of Bardili in a favorable review of the work, does Fichte publish his own decidedly negative view of Bardili in a review that appears in the *Litteratur-Zeitung Erlangen* in October 1800.⁷⁰

Right at the start of his Bardili review Fichte refers to the incorporation of the work into the search for a "standpoint *between* the Fichtean and Jacobian philosophy (which latter is notoriously an obstinate dogmatism)".⁷¹ He reports on the allegation that the "intermediary standpoint" sought "by fearsome [...] minds" in order to balance the systematic extreme of idealism, and which is supposed to consist in an orientation toward "pure objective being" (*reines objektives Seyn*), has been found in Bardili. But rather than detecting expansion and completion of the system of transcendental idealism in Bardili's work, Fichte finds, "that the present book is, from its most noticeable side, a recasting of the late Reinholdian Elementary Philosophy."⁷²

This devastating judgment not only contradicts the compatibility of Bardili's position with Fichte's idealism publicly defended by Reinhold but goes further in diagnosing in Reinhold's philosophical identification with Bardili an outright regression to Reinhold's own earlier standpoint, which he had allegedly left behind over the encounter with Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Accordingly Fichte revives his earlier criticism of

vehement reaction to Bardili's work and to its immediate absorption by Reinhold were also influenced by the fact that the *Outline of the First Logic* is dedicated to Friedrich Nicolai, the leading public and publishing representative of the opposition to Kantian and post-Kantian transcendental philosophy on the part of popular philosophy. See also Fichte's polemical piece, edited by A. W. Schlegel, *Friedrich Nicolai's Leben und sonderbare Meinungen. Ein Beitrag zur Litteraturgeschichte des vergangenen und zur Pädagogik des angehenden Jahrhunderts* (Friedrich Nicolai's Life and Particular Opinions. A Contribution to the Literary History of the Previous and the Pedagogy of the Beginning Century), from 1801 (GA I/7: 365-463).

69. For Fichte's responses in private correspondence with Reinhold after reading Bardili's work, see GA III/4: 271-273 (4 July 1800), 311-314 (18 September 1800) and 356-358 (15 November 1800).

70. GA I/6: 433-450; reprinted in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 115-123. See also Fichte's notes "Zu Bardilis Grundriß der ersten Logik" (On Bardili's Outline of the First Logic) in GA II/5: 243-318.

71. GA I/6: 434; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 115.

72. GA I/6: 434f.; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 115f.; see also GA III/4: 358: "lieber Reinhold, Bardili's Logik ist Ihre ElementarPhilosophie" (Dear Reinhold, Bardili's Logic is your Elementary Philosophy.).

Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy and characterizes Bardili's system as "an inventory of facts (*Thatsachen*) of common consciousness, together with some transcendent assertions, a philosophy of common or sound understanding [...]. No trace of the *transcendental*, of elevation above common consciousness."⁷³

For Fichte, the operation of philosophical reflection on the standpoint of common consciousness in Reinhold and Bardili results in an inadequate concept of thinking and in a basic misunderstanding of Fichte's specifically speculative conception of thinking. Bardili contrastst "pure thinking" (*reines Denken*) with the latter's subsequent, additional application to something real that is independent of thinking and through which an object of thinking is first supposed to arise. Pure thinking in Bardili is the infinite repeatability of what is posited under the formula "A=A". Fichte concedes the significance of identical positing for the formal concept of thinking in logic - even referring to the pertinent passages in the opening sections of his own work, *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*. But he denies the sufficiency of Bardili's pure thinking for the *transcendental* thinking that originally refers to objects and that moreover is in this original objective reference *self-referential*.

In radical departure from Reinhold's assessment, Fichte then locates Bardili's pure thinking not *above* Fichte's pure I but *below* it - as legitimate but one-sided, merely formal view of the activity of reason. The abstraction from the I's basic form involved in formal, "pure" thinking yields a derivative conception of thinking that remains at the level of what is factually given ("facts") in consciousness and thus corresponds exactly to the popular philosophical orientation of Reinhold as well as Bardili. By contrast, the conception of thinking to be found in transcendental philosophy concerns not given empirical facts but the generic, pre- or proto-conscious activity of reason as such that is reconstructed in speculative reflection and of which thinking, and a fortiori Bardili's (and now Reinhold's) "pure thinking," is but one of several possible specific actualizations. Fichte explains,

that pure thinking does not at all stand above the I, that the latter signifies - to express myself this way - the intelligizing *kat'exochèn*, of which *thinking, intuiting, willing*, etc. are only subspecies, which are not posited absolutely but must be derived from the former.⁷⁴

⁷³ GA I/6: 436; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 116.

⁷⁴ GA I/6: 447; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 122.

Moreover, according to Fichte, Reinhold's and Bardili's exclusion of the I's basic form from the popular philosophical conception of thinking also leaves unexplained and unexplainable the self-referential structure of thinking, due to which thinking is more than a manifold of discrete identical positings. The coherence of multiple, in principle infinitely many acts of thinking and hence the unity of consciousness is provided only by the "reflection on the being posited" (*Reflexion auf das Gesetzseyn*),⁷⁵ which accompanies the positing and being posited and first renders the latter complete. Fichte considers the unitary-apperceptive structure of consciousness to be an integral part already of the possible use of the copula in identical positing ("A is A"). In Fichte's publications on the *Wissenschaftslehre* from the Jena period this constitutive self-referentiality of consciousness under the form of self-consciousness is introduced under the formula of "positing oneself as positing" (*sich setzen als setzend*).⁷⁶ Starting with the writings and lectures on the "new presentation" of the *Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte addresses this state of affairs by resorting to the phrase "for oneself" (*für sich*).⁷⁷

Fichte also attributes to the one-sided, reduced concept of thinking in the popular philosophy of Reinhold and Bardili their uncritical assumption of an externally given matter (*Stoff*) on which thinking is supposed to find its application. The external completion of pure, formal thinking by contents that are provided in an intuition which as such remains external to thinking has to be rectified by the insight that thinking and intuiting do not meet subsequently but that "everything is throughout inseparable and one, the one indivisible intelligence itself."⁷⁸

Reinhold's reply to Fichte's critique of his appropriation of Bardili for the search after an ideal-realist intermediary standpoint is contained in a second open letter to Fichte, this one entitled *Open Letter to Professor Fichte on the Second Review of Bardili's Outline* and dated 23 April

⁷⁵ GA I/6: 447; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 121.

⁷⁶ See GA I/2: 409 (*Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, Part Three) and GA I/4: 276 (*Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, Chapter I, Section II). On Fichte's doctrine of positing in general and of predicative positing in particular, see my essay, "Setzen und Bestimmen in Fichtes *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*," in *Der Grundansatz der ersten Wissenschaftslehre Johann Gottlieb Fichtes*, ed. Erich Fuchs and Ives Radrizzani (München/Neuried, 1996), 178-192.

⁷⁷ See GA I/4: 273; *WLnM* 54, 88 and 94.

⁷⁸ GA I/6: 448; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 122.

1800.⁷⁹ Reinhold's reply employs the argumentative strategy of *tu quoque*. He now declares that the "third standpoint" previously sought by him to have been none other than the one "on which you [sc. Fichte] placed yourself subsequently, namely in the Third Book of your work *The Vocation of Man*."⁸⁰ Reinhold here refers to Fichte's reflections on practical certainty regarding the moral order under the latter's divine creator and guarantor in the concluding section, titled "faith" (*Glaube*) of that work, which had appeared in 1800.

Without further ado, Reinhold identifies the standpoint of faith in *The Vocation of Man* with Fichte's own advanced philosophical position. Reinhold even goes so far as to outright deny that the passages in *The Vocation of Man* which he has in mind could be "mere condescension to the popular manner of thinking."⁸¹ However, this reading of Reinhold's is rendered more than dubious by the circumstance that *The Vocation of Man* consists in a dialectical series of standpoints strategically arranged by the author and that the concluding standpoint of faith is the temporarily lost and then deliberately reacquired, reassumed or regained *natural* standpoint of moral certainty, which has to be distinguished carefully from Fichte's own *philosophical* standpoint of speculation regarding the grounds and forms of the natural standpoint. Completely ignoring that crucial distinction, Reinhold misunderstands Fichte's philosophical reconstruction or deduction of the natural standpoint of faith in *The Vocation of Man* as Fichte's own, finally achieved intermediary philosophical standpoint.

While assigning Fichte's doctrine of faith in *The Vocation of Man* to the standpoint between Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and Jacobi's philosophy of faith, Reinhold himself is no longer content with assuming this previously sought-after standpoint. Rather than continuing to pursue a conciliatory stand between Fichte's scientific idealism and Jacobi's fideist realism and to interpret Bardili's position as the missing third standpoint, Reinhold now declares to "have to leave behind for good [any such intermediate standpoint], after I have learned to think from Bardili's (sc. standpoint) that *pure being* which is neither something *subjective* nor something *objective*."⁸²

79. *Sendschreiben an den Herrn Professor Fichte über die zweite Rezension von Bardilis Grundriß* (GA III/4: 372-398; reprint of the open letter without the enclosure in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 126-134).

80. GA III/4: 378.

81. GA III/4: 379.

82. GA III/4: 382.

Reinhold's definitive abandonment of idealism in favor of a Bardilism which he now interprets realistically soon leads him to further polemical attacks on Fichte's position as well as person, to whom the latter responds first only selectively and finally not at all. For instance, in his work, *Ideas for a Heautogony or Natural History of I-hood Called Pure Reason* (1801),⁸³ Reinhold repeats the charge of formalism and subjectivism against transcendental philosophy, with which he now associates not only Fichte but also Schelling after the latter's *System of Transcendental Idealism* had appeared in the previous year. The non-distinction between the individual or natural standpoint and the generic or speculative standpoint, which is symptomatic of Reinhold's underlying notion of popular philosophy, even leads him to an explicit "identification of the pure I with the philosophizing I" and specifically with the "individual I of Messrs. Fichte and Schelling."⁸⁴ In particular, Reinhold critiques the one-sided subjective conception of thinking in Fichte and Schelling and their resulting desperate recourse to intellectual intuition to assure themselves of some non-subjective reality. Reinhold responds to the final resort to intellectual intuition in Fichte and Schelling by insisting that even the I *qua* subject-object, including the latter's alleged reality in and as intellectual intuition, is "entirely sensory (*sinnlich*)" and hence subject to the charge of private individuality.⁸⁵

In his response to Reinhold's second open letter, entitled 'J.G. Fichte's Answer to Professor Reinhold to the Latter's ... Open Letter to the Former',⁸⁶ which appears in the same year, Fichte once again traces

83. *Ideen zu einer Heautogonie oder natürlichen Geschichte der reinen Ichheit, genannt, reine, Vernunft*. In *Beyträge zur leichtern Übersicht des Zustandes der Philosophie bey dem Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. C. L. Reinhold. Fasc. 1 (Hamburg, 1801), 113-134. Reprinted in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 137-144.

84. *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 140 and 141.

85. See *ibid.*, 141.

86. *J. G. Fichte's Antwortschreiben an Herrn Professor Reinhold auf dessen ... Sendschreiben an den erstern* (Tübingen, 1801); GA I/7: 289-324; reprinted in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 148-167. After writing the *Answer* Fichte saw a further polemical attack by Reinhold on transcendental philosophy, the essay, 'Der Geist des Zeitalters als Geist der Philosophie' (The Spirit of the Age as Spirit of Philosophy) in the *Neuer Teutscher Merkur* of March 1801 (167-193). Fichte said of the latter piece that he found it to be "by far *sillier* than it is malicious" (bei weitem *dümmer*, als er [sc. der Beitrag] boshaft ist) (letter to Schelling of 31 May 1801; GA III/5: No. 605). Fichte responded by writing a

Reinhold's individual-psychological misunderstanding of the *Wissenschaftslehre* to Reinhold's rootedness in popular philosophy.⁸⁷ Yet Fichte adds to his renewed discussion of the relation between philosophy and life several new thoughts which already belong into the wider context of the further development of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. For instance, Fichte now understands life no longer, or no longer primarily, from its opposition to philosophical thinking. Rather he introduces a doubling into the concept of life itself, maintaining that this distinction is rendered by thinking but not produced or made by it. There is now, on the one hand, the "original, purely rational life," which cannot be known or grasped as such by means of philosophical reflection; this is the life of reason as such that has to be thought, negatively and minimally, as "absolute identity of subjectivity and objectivity"⁸⁸ and of which one can at most become aware through "intellectual intuition." And then there is, on the other hand, the empirical and knowable life, which Fichte also calls "time life" (*Zeit-Leben*), and which arises from the "analysis" or temporal dissolution of the original life that is in itself timeless. To be sure, the doctrine of the temporal finitization of the noumenal or intelligible to the phenomenal or sensible belongs already to the core of the lecture courses on the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*.⁸⁹ But now Fichte goes even beyond the views of his later Jena years by insisting on the (comparative) passivity and receptivity of "time life" and by stressing that "the human being [...] absolutely cannot truly bring into life (*erleben*) and produce alive anything, only the original pure rational life [can] represent [*darstellen*] itself [...] in time."⁹⁰ The demotion of human reason from actor to stage is entirely in line with the emerging key conception of the

'Spottgedicht auf Reinholds Bardilismus' (Satirical Poem on Reinhold's Bardilism), which he did not publish (GA II/6: 15).

87. See GA I/7: 296; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 152: "The systematic reflection on this common cognition is psychology proper, and hence the *Wissenschaftslehre* must become for them a psychological science [...]" ("Die systematische Reflexion auf dieses gemeine Erkennen ist eigentlich Psychologie; und die Wissenschaftslehre muß Ihnen sonach eine psychologische Wissenschaft werden [...]").

88. GA I/7: 300 and 294; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 154 and 150.

89. See WLnMk 135ff.

90. GA I/7: 300; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 154.

later *Wissenschaftslehre* according to which knowing and willing are the 'I-ly' modes or forms for the appearance of the absolute.⁹¹

Fichte goes on to contrast his own, enlarged, more precisely doubled conception of life (infinite and finite life) with Reinhold's idea of the instructing and bettering influence of thinking on life, noting that in Reinhold there still remains from the latter's "very first period a piece of popular philosophy."⁹² The elevation above life by means of thinking, which Reinhold considers possible and is actually seeking through popular philosophy is, in Fichte's view, entirely illusory, since life cannot be subject to any example or image external to it but always only images itself. Philosophy is reduced to observing (speculation). To be sure, this does not exclude the perfectibility of life. But the latter cannot be brought to life from without, in the manner of popular philosophy, but must originate in life itself.⁹³

In the metaphilosophical debate about natural, popular and scientific, speculative thinking between Fichte and Reinhold a dramatic, unexpected reversal of positions has taken place. It is the representative of the *Wissenschaftslehre* who cognizes and recognizes the independent and self-forming character of life, while the representative of popular philosophy insists on the external shaping of life through the application

91. On the decentralization of the I in the later *Wissenschaftslehre*, see my essays, 'Denken und Wollen beim späten Fichte', in *Fichte-Studien* (in preparation), and 'Einheit und Differenz von Fichtes Theorie des Wollens,' *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 106 (1999), 430-440.

92. GA I/7: 300; *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 154.

93. Reinhold's duplic to Fichte's replic to Reinhold does not represent a further advance in the substance of their controversy - and was never answered by Fichte. See Karl Leonhard Reinhold, *Über das Fichtesche Antwortschreiben auf mein Sendschreiben* (On Fichte's Answer to my Open Letter). In *Beyträge ...*, fasc. 3 (Hamburg, 1802), 185-209; reprinted in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, Quellenband, 173-181. Among Fichte's literary remains there are further critical reflections on Reinhold's Bardilism, which date from April and May 1801. In those reflections Fichte distinguishes between (1) the unreflected immersion into an object ("contemplation"), (2) the explicit, voluntary and free return to some prior contemplation ("reflection") and (3) the implicit, presupposed and involuntary reflection in the form of intellectual intuition ("reflex"). This tripartite division is designed to meet Reinhold's charge that the reflective moments of conscious life always depend on "arbitrary choice" (*Willkür*) and on the individuality of the philosopher. In contrast to Reinhold's simplistic view of things, Fichte explicitly attributes the character of a reflex - and of a reflection of sorts - to life itself and as such ('Nachschrift an Reinhold' [Postscript to Reinhold], in GA II/5: 457-473, bes. 469-470).

of pure life-less thinking. In the dialectic of enlightenment the appeal to life in popular philosophy regresses into the quackery of the prescriptions misused as medicine, while the sustained distance from life in transcendental philosophy takes on the traits of a speculative macrobiotics.

Identity and Original Duplicity in Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* and Schelling's Jena *Naturphilosophie*

CHRISTOPHER GROVES

*The putting into question of the authority of consciousness is first and always differential.*¹

Introduction

The theme of epistemological antifoundationalism has come to be central to much recent Continental and Anglo-American philosophy. Following research conducted by scholars into the treatment of the notion of the Absolute by the German Idealist and Romantic schools of philosophy and literary criticism,² it is also increasingly accepted that the question of the viability of antifoundationalism became pivotal for philosophy's image of

¹ References are given to the German original first, and then to the English translation, if available. Where no English translation is available, English renderings in the text are my own.

² Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', trans. Alan Bass, in Peggy Kamuf, ed., *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991, pp. 59-79, at p. 70.

³ Some examples of this scholarship are: the work of Manfred Frank, especially *Der unendliche Mangel an Sein*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1975, Andrew Bowie's *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction*, London, Routledge, 1993, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, London, Routledge, 1997, Frederick C. Beiser's *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), Harvard University Press, 1987, and contemporary Fichte research, some fine examples of which are collected in Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore eds., *Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1994.