

Popular Philosophy: The Cases of Karl Leonhard Reinhold and Jakob Friedrich Fries

Abstract: The broader thesis motivating this paper is that *Popularphilosophie*, apparently a spent force with the waning of the *Aufklärung*, in fact had a large influence in shaping the nineteenth century intellectual climate. This paper concentrates, however, on K. L. Reinhold and J. F. Fries, two representatives of the tradition of *Popularphilosophie* who straddled the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fries is a case in point for the broader thesis because his theory of psycho-somatic parallelism, which had a long history running well into the twentieth century, demonstrates how *Popularphilosophie* was finally capable, on the strength of inner resources, to absorb Kant's Critique of Reason. Reinhold's case is quite different. He has a place in the paper for two reasons: because he commented on *Popularphilosophie* both at the beginning and the very late stage of the Kant-reception, and because, in each instance, he demonstrated a curious lack of awareness both of the nature of *Popularphilosophie* and of the fact that he belonged to it.

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The persistence of *Popularphilosophie*

The immediate aim of this paper is to explore aspects of the thought of Reinhold and Fries as both instances of *Popularphilosophie*. The broader theme motivating this exploration is, however, *Popularphilosophie* itself. What I am presenting here¹ is only a sketch of what is itself only a small segment of a much larger project.

There is no doubt that, from a purely speculative point of view, the interest in the transition from the late *Aufklärung* to early Romanticism lies in Kant's program of establishing metaphysics on a new foundation, as well as Fichte's, Schelling's, and Hegel's subsequent efforts to bring this program to fruition. But history does not proceed along speculative lines. The latter, so far as they can be discerned at all, have to be extracted from the intricate mass of influences that contributed to the intellectual process of the day—be these political events or the weight of established habits of language and thought. For the philosopher, these circumstances might count as mere accidents; in fact, they make up the substance of real history. We all know how much *Popularphilosophie*—considered both as an intellectual and a socio-political movement—shaped the reception of Kant's

¹ This is the enlarged and revised version of a paper originally read at the 2010 Reinhold Workshop held at Siegen. The materials dealing with Fries are based—for the most part, but not exclusively—on earlier research done in conjunction with Hegel. The Fries-Hegel connection, and also—perhaps even more important—Hegel's own debt to *Popularphilosophie*, are subjects that deserve close study. Some results of this earlier research have already been published. Cf.: di Giovanni, George (1997): “*Wie aus der Pistole: Fries and Hegel on Faith and Knowledge*”, in *Hegel and the Tradition: Essays in Honour of H. S. Harris*, ed. Michael Baur and John Russon, Toronto, 212-241. In the present treatment, however, I bring important correctives to my earlier views. Fries was not a phenomenalist as I claimed then, but, like Jacobi, a realist.

Critique of Reason.² The larger question in which I am interested is to what extent the same *Popularphilosophie*, on the surface a spent force with the waning of the Enlightenment, in fact continued to influence and shape the intellectual map of the nineteenth century. If one is to believe Frederick Engels' reports in the December issues of the *Telegraph für Deutschland* of the reappearance of Schelling on the Berlin university scene, one might well think that the epoch making event of the day was the confrontation of the schools of Hegel and Schelling—and so might the public of the day have also thought.³ Yet one has reason to wonder whether *Popularphilosophie* was in fact the force shaping the epoch. One must keep in mind that Schleiermacher—certainly a trend setter for the nineteenth century—counted as his intellectual mentor none other than Johann August Eberhard,⁴ of anti-Critique fame; also that the successor to Kant's chair at Königsberg had been Wilhelm Traugott Krug, an avowed promoter of 'common sense' philosophy. Fries—about whom much more in what follows—had occasion to refer to this Krug with serious interest,⁵ and to Gottlob Ernst Schulze

² This is one of the theme that I develop in: (2005) *Freedom and Religion in Kant and His Immediate Successors: The Vocation of Humankind, 1774-1800*, Cambridge.

³ No. 207 (December 1841), signed as Friedrich Oswald.
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1841/anti-schelling/ch01.htm#004>
 (accessed 26.01.2011)

⁴ Cf. Froese, H. Victor (1992): "Postscript" to *Friedrich Schleiermacher, On the Highest Good*, tr. ed. H. Victor Froese, Lewiston/Queenston/ Lampeter, 105-107.

⁵ I shall cite Fries according to König, G. & Geldsetzer, L. eds. (1967-69): *Jakob Friedrich Fries, Sämtliche Werke*, Aalen, by volume number (Roman numeral), and page numbers; all volumes cited are from *Abteilung* I of the collected works. For volumes that do not have a pagination of their own, the page number is that of Fries' work as reproduced in the edition. For Krug, cf. *inter alias: Neue oder anthropologische Kritik der Vernunft* (1828), V:477. I shall refer to this title as NAKV.

as well, the same Schulze as of *Aenesidemus* fame.⁶ Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg's Aristotelian critique of transcendental and dialectical logic also received widespread attention and approval throughout the nineteenth century. One can add to the list. The fact is that the group of intellectuals who gravitated around Jacobi in the last phase of his career in Munich—Schleiermacher, Reinhold, Fries, Bouterwek, Köppen, Roth—and Jacobi himself, all traced their roots to the late Enlightenment tradition of 'common sense' philosophy which was closely associated with *Popularphilosophie*. In the longer term, Feuerbach's anthropological transformation of Hegel's idealism, especially when considered in connection with Fries's *Psychische Anthropologie*,⁷ can also be seen as influenced by this same tradition. In brief, one has reason indeed to wonder whether all these individuals, straddling as they did the old and the new century, and all beholden in one way or other to the original program of *Popularphilosophie*, were the ones ultimately responsible for setting the intellectual tone of the new century.

I have no intention at the moment of pursuing this larger theme. My subject is much more circumscribed. At its most conspicuous level, this is a paper about Fries' psychological transformation of Kant. I am referring to the erstwhile colleague of Hegel at Jena, and the object of the latter's later contemptuous criticism, whose theory of psycho-somatic⁸ parallelism had a long history that

⁶ *Handbuch der psychischen Anthropologie oder der Lehre von der Natur des menschlichen Geistes*, Band II (1839²), II:69-70. Henceforth, HPA

⁷ HPA (1820¹, 1837-1839²).

⁸ "Es muß einen durchgreifenden Parallelismus zwischen den Geistesthätigkeiten und den Lebensbewegungen im körperlichen Organismus geben, es wird sich dieser aber erst dann mit Glück verfolgen lassen, wenn wir eine gelungenen Theorie des Geisteslebens mit einer eben so glückliche Theorie des körperlichen Lebens vergleichen lernen. [...] Wir behaupten, daß in den Geistesthätigkeiten und im körperlichen Leben dasselbe Wesen erscheine, aber nach ganz verschiedenen Erscheinungsweisen, so daß nie dessen Eines zum

extended well into the twentieth century. This theory, as I shall try to show, was one possible development of *Popularphilosophie*—indeed, one that best capitalized on the strengths of that tradition. At another level, though less conspicuously, Karl Leonhard Reinhold is the main object of interest—for two reasons. The first is because Reinhold explicitly commented on *Popularphilosophie* when he was still engaged in his project of reforming Kant,⁹ and did so again, but this time only by implication, much later when, at a time when he had already rejected all forms of Kant-inspired Idealism, he reviewed and criticized Fries’s major opus.¹⁰ He thus provides both end-pieces, so to speak, for our broader theme of *Popularphilosophie* as presiding over the reception of Kant’s Critique of Reason both at its inception and in its longer term influence. But the second and more substantial reason for my current interest in Reinhold is that, on both occasions when he commented on *Popularphilosophie*, Reinhold had sorely misunderstood its nature, and failed to recognize how much he too belonged to it. He failed to see where the true strengths of this cultural/philosophical phenomenon lay—and hence failed, in his attempted reform of Kant, to capitalize on precisely these strengths. Rather, just like C. C. E. Schmid, his opponent at Jena, he gave renewed legitimacy, on the basis of what he thought to be critical grounds, to elements drawn from scholastic philosophy. These elements too were part of *Popularphilosophie* and, at some levels at least, they still encumbered Kant’s critical work. The belief that sensations are passive

Erklärungsgrund des Andern gebraucht werden dürfe, so oft sie uns auch wechselseitig Erkenntnißgründe ihrer Zustände werden.” HPA, Band II, II.8.

⁹Both in (1789): *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens* (1789), Prague & Jena, e.g., 24ff., 133, 154-158, 188; and in (1791): *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens*, Jena, 50ff., 88ff, 97ff.

¹⁰(1809): “Review of J. F. Fries, *Neue Kritik der Vernunft*,” ALZ, 12-14. Januar 1809, Nrs. 10-12, 73-96. Shortly after, Reinhold reviewed another work of Fries, (1812): “Review of J. F. Fries, *Fichte’s und Schelling’s neueste Lehren von Gott und der Welt, beurtheilt von J. Fries*,” ALZ, 9. Januar, 1812, Nr. 7, 49-56.

mental events caused by an external ‘thing in itself’ was a case in point. Reinhold’s was a case of the old taking charge of the new and reasserting itself despite making use of a language that gave the impression—but only the impression—of giving due credit to the new.

This is the reason for the conspicuous presence of Fries in a paper on Reinhold. His theory of psycho-somatic parallelism was itself an offshoot of the *Popularphilosophie* tradition; with respect to Kant, therefore, it was, like Reinhold’s appropriation of the Critique of Reason, a case of the old taking charge of the new. However, the theory also brought a serious corrective to the tradition from which it originated. That this occurred from within the tradition itself was indeed evidence of its strength. But the point now is that the corrective was motivated by the desire to circumvent conceptual problems that genuinely burdened Kant’s critical project—the same problems that Reinhold had rendered all the more acute by restating issues typical of dogmatic metaphysics, which Kant had in fact rendered moot, in what he thought was the new critical mode of thought. The sad thing, as we shall see, is that in his final review of Fries Reinhold failed to recognize how much, and why, *he*, Reinhold, had been part of the problem that motivated Fries’ new theory.

This is not a flattering image of Reinhold. It is only fair, therefore, that we should first let him speak for himself on the subject of *Popularphilosophie*.¹¹

Reinhold on *Popularphilosophie*

Eclecticism is the trait that, according to Reinhold, best typified

¹¹For a fuller treatment on which the following heavily relies, see di Giovanni (2005), Chapter 2, Section 2.

Popularphilosophie.¹² The phenomenon owed its origin to the one-sidedness of Leibniz's and Locke's systems, both of which were based on two inconsistent assumptions regarding ideas (*Vorstellungen* or 'representations', as Reinhold most commonly refers to them in keeping with German scholastic tradition). The first assumption was that knowledge originates in the conformity of ideas to reality in itself; the second, that the object of a representation is the representation itself. Granted these two assumptions, each system adopted a radically different strategy for determining how a representation, in having itself as object, could none the less conform to external reality. Leibniz, relying on the further assumption of a universal harmony of everything in the universe with everything else, postulated the innate presence in the mind of fundamental representations that reflect this harmony and that can therefore be used as criteria for testing the truth of other more particular representations. Issues of truth thus devolved on the analysis of individual representations that clarifies their connection—if any—to assumed universal and necessary truths. And for this, the principle of contradiction sufficed. Locke, for his part, took a directly opposite tack—arguing that all cognition depends on representations that originate in actual experience. What Leibniz considered universal and necessary ideas were for Locke, rather, derivatives of original sense impressions; as derivatives, they therefore lacked the convincing power of the originals. Accordingly, issues of truths devolved on the question of the simplicity—hence the assumed originality—of the sense impressions on which the more complex representations were based. Theory of knowledge in general thus became a historical (psychological) account of the genesis of the mind. As for the original impressions on which the whole account was based, the convincing power was due to the belief, which in Locke's theory played the same foundational function as did universal harmony in Leibniz's, that these impressions were the direct effect of an activity exercised upon the sense

¹²*Fundament*, 14ff., where the story according to Reinhold of the birth of *Popularphilosophie* is detailed.

organs by an external reality.

It did not take long for someone like Hume (so Reinhold's account proceeds) to come along, and to raise the obvious objections to which both Leibniz's and Locke's system were vulnerable. Reinhold expounds on the subject at length. Against Leibniz, Hume argued that the principle of contradiction is purely formal and can only guarantee, therefore, the formal coherence of a representation, never its material truth. Against Locke, he made the obvious observation that, from the existence of a sense impression, that the impression is caused by anything external to it cannot be determined. Reinhold points out, moreover, that Leibniz had already struck a serious blow against Locke's theory by arguing that there cannot be such a thing as a simple sense impression. Upon careful analysis, the examples on which Locke had relied all turn out to be made up of a complex of representations, each amenable to further analysis.¹³

Scepticism was the natural upshot of Hume's criticism. It was a scepticism totally immune to rational argument once the assumption (whether Locke's or Leibniz's) from which it derived had been accepted. Philosophy had reached a dead end. It had exhausted the conceptual possibilities inherent in both Leibniz's and Locke's starting points and, by the same token, had destroyed itself by undermining the grounds of truth. Such being the situation, Reinhold proceeds,

nothing was more natural than the course that Reid, Oswald, Beattie [the three names commonly associated at the time with the so called 'common sense' philosophy], and others embarked upon to refute Hume. They summoned the common sense of mankind against him, for it was the only course open to them given the stage of reason's philosophical advance at the time. They evoked in their writings all the *feelings* at whose tribunal

¹³ *Fundament*, 19-20. The text of Leibniz that Reinhold very likely has in mind here is Book II, Chapter 2, of *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*. In the English translation of Alfred G. Langley (1949), 120.

Hume would necessarily stand convicted [. . .] They were the feelings that for the largest segment of even cultivated people take the place of *thought[-determined]* principles. Some of them, the *moral feelings* (as expressions of *practical reason*), are the one single means of possible orientation for *theoretical* reason in its unavoidable internal dissensions on its way *to* (hence *before*) the discovery of *ultimate* grounds.¹⁴

Reinhold continues, “The proposition: ‘*Thus says man’s common understanding*’,¹⁵ became the *first principle* of an alleged new philosophy which its followers dubbed *eclectic*, since it allowed them the most complete freedom.”¹⁶

This is the genealogy of popular philosophy according to Reinhold. At its root there lay a misunderstanding about the nature of representation that both the rationalists and the empiricists had in common despite their otherwise totally opposite analyses of experience, namely the erroneous assumption that the object of a representation (whatever the source of the latter) is the representation itself, yet that truth consists in its conformity to a reality external to it. This assumption, coupled with Locke’s critique of rationalism, necessarily led to scepticism. This

¹⁴ “Nichts war natürlicher, als der Weg, den *Reid, Oswald, Beattie* u. A. zur Widerlegung *Humes* eingeschlagen hatten; indem sie den gemeinen Menschenverstand gegen ihn aufriesen; denn es war der einzige Weg, der bey der damaligen Stufe der Fortschritte der philosophirenden Vernunft offen war. Sie weckten in ihren Schriften alle die *Gefühle* auf, vor deren Richterstuhl Hume nothwendiger Weise [. . .] verlieren mußte; Gefühle, welche bey dem größten Theile auch der kultivirtesten Menschen die Stelle *gedachter* Principien vertreten, und worunter einige, *die moralischen*, nals Aeüßerungen der *praktischen Vernunft*, das einzige Mittel sind, durch welches sich die *theoretische* Vernunft bey den Uneinigkeiten mit sich selbst, die auf dem Wege *zur* (folgich *vor* der) Entdeckung der *letzten* Gründe unvermeidlich sind, zu orientiren vermag.” *Fundament*, 51-52.

¹⁵ Here as elsewhere, Reinhold uses the German more common expression ‘human common understanding’.

¹⁶ “Der Satz: ‘*Dieß sagt der gemeine Menschenvertand*’, wurde nun der *erste Grundsatz* einer neuen angeblichen Philosophie, die von ihren Anhängern die *eklektische* genannt wird, weil sie ihnen die vollkommenste Freyheit gestattete.” *Fundament*, 53.

scepticism led in turn to ‘common sense’ as the only possible non-discursive defence against it. And, since ‘common sense’ has no single internal self-limiting principle, this move paved the way for eclecticism.

Of course, this was Reinhold’s *mise en scène* for the introduction of his theory of representation that should have resolved, as he thought, the problem posed by his predecessors. And, truth to tell, there was more than a modicum of truth to the account he presented. It suffered, however, from serious historical and conceptual blind spots. Historically, it failed to take note of the fact that there was a tradition of German home-spun eclecticism deeply rooted in the distrust of reason that was part and parcel of Evangelical Christianity.¹⁷ Conceptually, Reinhold’s account failed to recognize that eclecticism did not necessarily lack an internal self-limiting principle. On the contrary, it was a position singularly resilient to external attack.

For our purposes this last is the important point. The list of authors whom Reinhold cites as eclectics—Eberhard, Tiedemann, Reimarus, Feder, Meiner, Selle¹⁸—and also chides for having abandoned the rigour of systematicity, is testimony to this internal coherence. These authors all had their special agendas to promote, and each his special method for doing it. What they all had in common,

¹⁷ Christian Thomasius and Christian Crusius belonged to this tradition. Mendelssohn, writing in 1759, had occasion to advert to this eclecticism, and, with respect to Crusius, he expressed the fear that Wolff’s systematic thought had been driven out of the scene and serious philosophy was at an end in Germany. Crusius was also under British influence. Cf. Albrecht, Michael (1989): “Thomasius—kein Eklektiker? in: W. Schneiders, ed. (1989), *Christian Thomasius 1655–1728. Interpretationen zu Werk und Wirkung*, Hamburg, 73-94; Kuehn, Manfred (1987): *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1800. A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy*, Kingston & Montréal, 264; Mendelssohn, Moses: (1759): *Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend* I, 1. März, 129-134, Cited after Kuehn (1987), 36.

¹⁸ *Versuch*, 155-156.

however, is that they did not detect the presence of any unresolvable opposition between Leibniz and Locke. Reinhold was indeed right in thinking that these two had presided over the genesis of *Popularphilosophie*; right also in seeing them as presenting different strategies for explaining the possibility of human knowledge—the one, *a priori* and analytical; the other, *a posteriori* and historical. But he was wrong in believing that their difference was one of opposition, or that one was forced to choose between the two. On the contrary, the two strategies converged naturally. On the one hand, there was a historical dimension to Leibniz's theory. His innate principles of reason were intended to govern a temporal process of elucidating obscure perceptions drawn from experience. On the other hand, Locke had allowed that there were innate fundamental dispositions (*Grundbestimmungen*) in the soul that made it capable of apprehending (*empfinden*) necessary truths immediately. In this sense, he too allowed for a type of *a priori*.¹⁹ The way lay open, therefore, for subsequent German philosophers to use Locke's psychology to recreate in a more empirical form the harmony that Leibniz had instead postulated *a priori* on the basis of purely logical necessities.²⁰ What Locke's historical method offered to German philosophers, in other words, was precisely a means of forging in their otherwise rational theory of knowledge a more systematic unity between *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements; this method provided them, in other words, with a means of developing the theory psychologically as a theory of the facts of consciousness.

It was wrong, therefore, to think that the German popular philosophers had resorted to common sense as an *ad hoc* defense against Hume's scepticism—a sort of medicament of last resort, not necessarily a bad medicament but deadly if

¹⁹ This, according to Reinhold's own reading of Locke. See *Versuch*, 310-311, his comments regarding Platner's views on Locke.

²⁰ Adam Weishaupt's work is one of the best, if not the best, example of this synthesis. For this, see di Giovanni (2005), 43-47.

administered in place of food.²¹ As a matter of fact, the Germans never really took scepticism to be a serious threat, precisely because they took for granted that, when transposed into the more sophisticated framework of Leibnizian theory, Locke's psychology was immune to it. In that framework, 'common sense' (or 'healthy human understanding') denoted the rationality that even feelings might have just because they reflected in their own way the internal harmony (or disharmony) of an organism. Common sense was in effect identical with the felt interests of reason—interests which, though in the form of subjective dispositions of the mind, already delineated in principle the sphere of the possible objective use of concepts.

In the light of this popular tradition, one can therefore understand why, as Kant came on the scene, those unsympathetic to him would have seen the Critique of Reason as offering nothing new except distinctions that caused new difficulties without resolving any of the old; while others, more sympathetic, could easily have conflated these new distinctions with the older and would have thought that they thus avoided the difficulties that the new created.²² Then there was the already mentioned C. C. E. Schmid. He defined this new, Kant-inspired 'critico-popular' program in an essay appended to the 1788 augmented edition of his Kant-Lexicon.²³ In the essay he contrasted common 'empiricism' with what he called 'Kantian Purism'—this last a kind of empiricism that abided strictly by the overt data of consciousness without in any way trying to explain them, as Locke

²¹ *Fundament*, 52-53.

²² It is interesting to note the list of names, all representative of *Popularphilosophie*, that Fries gives as examples of those who pursued Kant's critique without confusing, as Kant himself had done, psychology with metaphysics. Reinhold was guilty of the same confusion, and so were Fichte and Schelling under his influence. HPA, Band I, I:100-102.

²³ Schmid, C. C. E. (1788): *Wörterbuch zum leichtern Gebrauch der Kantischen Schriften*, Jena.

had done, with extra mental causes. Within this newly defined program, according to Schmid, it made at least *prima facie* sense to accept as an alleged fact of consciousness the idea of a law that commands simply as law (as Kant had argued for), provided it was made clear that only a subject equipped with an especially sophisticated sense of self-identity is capable of entertaining the idea theoretically; provided also that, with reference to actual praxis, one takes into account the social and psychological mechanisms that give rise to the feelings required for acting in accordance with this law.

Schmid went on to pursue his interpretation of Kant's moral law in his *Essay in Moral Theory* of 1790,²⁴ and it was this essay that occasioned the dispute that arose between Schmid and Reinhold regarding the 'will', a noumenal faculty postulated as originating action. According to Reinhold, one had to attribute to this faculty a power of free choice, that is to say, an element of indeterminacy with respect to the action that it initiated which it resolved on its own strength, or freely. Schmid, for his part, argued that the operations of this will, even as conceived noumenally, had also to be subjected, no less than empirical desires, to strict necessity. The dispute is well known. We need not dwell on it.²⁵ The important point for present purposes is that it revealed what Reinhold had not understood about *Popularphilosophie*. He had not understood, most of all, that he too belonged to this tradition. For one thing, in trying to systematize Kant's Critique of Reason in the form of a theory of representation based on what he took to be a simple and immediate 'fact of consciousness', namely 'representation', he was in fact pursuing the Lockean strand of *Popularphilosophie*.²⁶ Indeed, inasmuch as he had assumed as a principle a much more sophisticated definition

²⁴ Schmid, C. C. E. (1790): *Versuch einer Moralphilosophie*, Jena.

²⁵ For a full treatment, see di Giovanni (2005), 118-124.

²⁶ Apparently Reinhold had Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* in front of him when penning his *Fundament*. Cf. *Fundament*, 22.

of ‘representation’ than any that Locke himself, or any of his followers, had offered, he was on the right track for what could perhaps have been a significant theory. But, as the controversy with Schmid made glaringly apparent, Reinhold had imported into the theory, under the rubric of the ‘merely thought’ for which Kant had critically allowed, a whole array of alleged hyper-physical entities that past metaphysics had simply assumed dogmatically. In doing so, as we have already indicated, Reinhold had in fact re-legitimized that metaphysics on what he took to be critical grounds. Reinhold was not alone in this. It was another tack that popular philosophers had adopted in order to appropriate Kant’s work for their conceptual agendas. The problem was that, even when reintroduced under the rubric of the ‘merely thought’, the entities of past metaphysics came with a baggage of unresolvable conceptual problems. The Reinhold-Schmid controversy demonstrated precisely this. Here is where Fries comes on the scene.²⁷ For, from the start, Fries’s intention was to rid the Critique of Reason, even as advanced by Kant, from its rationalistic encumbrances, and thus to turn it into an unsullied theory of the facts of consciousness.

Popularphilosophie: The case of Jakob Friedrich Fries

Fries pursued his studies at Jena first in 1797–1798—when he was exposed to Fichte but, as he said, was done with him in a matter of hours²⁸—and then again in 1801–05, when his sojourn coincided with Hegel’s. It was in this second period that he developed his system. He did so with Kant constantly in mind, whom he criticized severely, but not as devastatingly as he criticized Reinhold, Fichte and

²⁷ So would Hegel. During their common sojourn at Jena, Fries’ and Hegel’s intellectual development seemed to run parallel—though not equal—courses, witness the remarkable similarity of themes in the works that the two either published at the time or (in the case of Hegel) intended to publish. For this, see di Giovanni (1997), 227-228.

²⁸ Henke, E. L. T., ed. (1867): *Jakob Friedrich Fries: Aus seinem handschriftlichen Nachlasse dargestellt*, Leipzig, 47-48.

Schelling.²⁹

Fries' position was based on a fundamental distinction between what he called *transcendental* and *empirical* truth.³⁰ Transcendental truth consists, as *per* the traditional definition, in the conformity of mind to reality. We shall return to this. Of more immediate interest is the empirical truth, which, by contrast, depends on the accuracy of the observations that we perform on facts that are immediately or intuitively present to the mind as given to it, as well as on the accuracy of the abstractions, inferences, and theoretical constructions established on the basis of such facts. As far as this last type of accuracy is concerned, right method is there to guarantee it. In this, Fries thought to have distilled the essence of critical philosophy. As he never tired of repeating, "the only essential element of Kantian philosophy is its *critical* method."³¹ As for the other type of accuracy—accuracy of observation—the very immediacy of the observed facts, the convincing power that they yield in *being given*, should do the job of guaranteeing their truth. Here is where Fries strikes his most decisive blow against Kant.³² According to Fries, Kant was wrong in believing, and guilty in leading his followers (notably Reinhold and Fichte) to believe, that sense-intuitions are impressions caused on the senses by external objects—that is to say, that the intuitions are *of* the effects of these causes and not directly of the objects which are the presumed causes. To

²⁹ The criticism of Hegel came later. Cf. "Nichtigkeit der Hegelschen Dialektik," in *Für Theologie und Philosophie: Eine Oppositionsschrift*, eds. Fries, Schröter und Schmid, I.2 (1828) 86-112.

³⁰(1828²): *Neue oder anthropologische Kritik der Vernunft*, § 71, IV:408-11 (hitherto cited as *Neue Kritik*); (1824²): *Reinhold, Fichte und Schelling*, XXIV:466-67 (hitherto cited as RFS).

³¹ "Das einzig wesentliche der *Kantischen* Philosophie ist die *kritische* Methode." RFS, XXIV:310.

³² RFS, XXIV:455-470; Kant had made his whole critical theory vulnerable to the sceptical attack of *Ænesidemus*, with which Fries could not but sympathize. 466-67.

claim as much was to assume Locke's conception of sensation. But to state the matter in this way was, according to Fries, to expose oneself to irrefutable objections. For one thing, we would be committed to defending claims about objects by measuring their truth against these objects as they presumably are in themselves—on the basis, however, of only the subjectively received affections that the objects produce on the senses. But this is impossible. Indeed, that there are objects external to the sense, and that the impressions found in the latter are the effects of a causality exercised upon the senses by such objects—all this must be a matter of inference for which there is no unimpugnable evidence. Here is a situation which would call for the first definition of truth—that is, truth as transcendental—yet makes its application impossible.

Even more important for Fries was that the relation of sense-intuition to its object as so defined is false *as a matter of experiential fact*. Here is where Fries brought in his corrective to the tradition of *Popularphilosophie*. The observable fact of experience is that an object of sense-intuition, say a 'tree', is given to the mind, or is present to it, precisely as a tree in itself, bearing no causal relation to the sense apprehending it.³³ It is a tree *there*, with traits that pertain to it *as tree*: any question about it would have to be resolved in terms of the tree itself, even though the resolution might well involve the repositioning of the sense on the subjective side of the mind (a shift, for instance, in the angle of vision or the expansion of one's view); and, when it is a matter of construing a 'science of trees', this also involves a conceptual process of abstraction and theory construction by the mind. In this respect Fries was no less a committed realist than Jacobi was. Of course, it still made sense for Fries to say that the mind is affected by external objects. But, according to him, *that* there is such an external affection is apparent to us, not on

³³ *Neue Kritik*, §15. Cf.: "Die Anschauung in der Empfindung hat für sich allein unmittelbare Evidenz, indem sie den Gegenstand als gegenwärtig vorstelle." IV:153.

the evidence of sense-intuition as such, but because of other experiences, such as the feeling of being constricted or constrained. Here one must carefully distinguish between ‘feeling’ and ‘sensation’ [*Gefühl, Empfindung*]. (One serious objection that Fries repeatedly raised against the whole tradition of English empiricism is that it had failed to make this distinction, or at least to abide by it consistently).³⁴ However, Fries continued, inasmuch as we consider the sense as causally affected, we are taking it as itself an object of sense-intuition. We are taking it as a thing among other things and, like all things, as causally affected by these other things. One might want indeed to develop a physical theory of the mind on the basis of this interplay of causes and effects (a ‘physiology’, as Fries occasionally calls it), and also correlate the facts of this theory with facts internal to the mind, that is, the mental events (the ‘seeings’ or the ‘hearings’)³⁵ which are *per se* directed at the objects that constitute the physical theory. However, one set of facts does not amount to the other: the physical theory in no way warrants the claim that, in intuiting a tree, we see the tree as affecting us. As Fries characteristically puts it, the claim is based on the mistake of taking what is intuited *in* sensation (the sense-given or *das Sinnliche*) for the sensation itself, meaning that we have to account for the latter with factors external to it.³⁶

Here we already have a first sketch of Fries’ theory of psycho-somatic parallelism. More needs to be said, however. Intuition is not restricted to the external sense. There is also the intuition of the inner sense, as well as the peculiar intuitive presence of the objects of the imagination. Mathematical space, on which,

³⁴ *Neue Kritik*, 406.

³⁵ *Neue Kritik*, §15.

³⁶ “Es ist also hier ein Bewußtseyn *der* Empfindung, und ein Bewußtseyn *in der* Empfindung. Nun wird zwar ganz richtig gesagt: Empfindungen seyen bloße Modifikationen des Gegenstandes, denn dies ist die einzelne Thatsache, *daß ich empfinde*, jederzeit; man verwechselt aber dann mit der Empfindung das in ihr Angesehene.” *Neue Kritik*, § 16, IV:156.

according to Fries, the physical sciences all depend,³⁷ is another notable case of intuition. Intuition, furthermore, is not the only type of events constituting the mind. There is also an emotive side to the mind, made up of a variety of feelings, sentiments, and appetitive forces. Most importantly, all these mental events, be they intuitions or otherwise, are, *as a matter of fact*, themselves the objects of a reflective activity by the mind by virtue of which they become present to it as facts susceptible to immediate inspection. This reflective activity—itsself the possible object of further reflection—is responsible for the abstractions and conceptual constructions that give rise to science, both the physical science of the facts that are intuitively apprehended in external intuition, and the science of facts that are internal to the mind. These last, though available only by virtue of reflection, are none the less just as intuitively apprehended as those external to the mind. Included among them are the external objects again, but this time precisely as apprehended and, as the case may be, imaginatively and/or conceptually reconstructed for the sake of science.³⁸ In this complex of reflectively

³⁷ “In unsrer Erkenntniß kann das historisch gegebene individuelle Daseyn niemals aus der philosophischen Einheit [as it would have to be for Fichte] begriffen werden, sondern beyde kommen nur durch Mathematik in Verbindung, durch ein hypothetisches System von Grund und Folge.” Fries (1808): “Selbstrezenion der Neuen Kritik der Venunft. Drei Bände,” in *Heidelbergische Jahrbücher der Literatur*, Jahrgang 1, Abteilung 1, Heft 2, 241-255; 349, IV:15. In the same text, however, Fries stresses the need of a healthy process of induction. Philosophy and mathematics require ‘speculation’, i.e. the process of abstracting laws from given historical data. But natural science must be based on induction, i.e. on precisely such historical data. IV:349. See also Fries’ criticism of Herbart who—quite dogmatically—according to Fries, was trying to construe a science of objects outside space/time. (1847) “Über den Unterschied zwischen Anschauung und Denken gegen J. F. Herbart,” in *Abhandlungen der Fries’schen Schule*, Heft 1, 7-30. XXIV:795.

³⁸ This is the subject matter of the *Neue Kritik*. For a sketch, see § 26. See also, *inter alias*, “Erst wenn ich über meine Empfindung denke, und nicht unmittelbar (z.B. beym Sehen) bin ich mir meines Sehens als einer Modifikation meiner selbst be- [95] wußt. Unmittelbar schaue ich im Sehen etwas gefärbtes außer mir an. [. . .] Nur für die Thätigkeiten der Reflexion und dasjenige, was im Wissen durch Reflexion ist, d.h. die logischen Funktionen des Verstandes wird

apprehended objects, however, the divide between facts internal to the mind and facts external to it remains irreducible, so that neither set of facts can be explained in terms of the other.³⁹ It is possible, however, to detect a parallelism between the two sets of facts inasmuch as certain physical facts are found to be *de facto* accompanied by counterparts in the mind, or, conversely, mental facts are found to be accompanied by physical counterparts. Fries went to great lengths exploring this parallelism, indeed to extremes that to us might seem absurd.⁴⁰

Science is the product of reflection, and philosophy, as *scientia prima*, is the product of ultimate reflection. Fries named the product of this ultimate reflection,

diese Wahrnehmung der Wahrnehmung nothwendig vorausgesetzt." RFS, XXIV:94-95.

³⁹ "Psychische Anthropologie und Physiologie des menschlichen Körpers werden also als theoretische Wissenschaften zwei ganz von einander getrennte Systeme behaupten. Bilde sich niemand an, durch das Geistige etwas Körperliches, durch das Körperliche etwas Geistiges *erkläret* zu haben oder *erklären* zu können." HPA, Band I, I:6-7. Also: "Über das Gebiet der Mathematik hinaus gibt es also gar keine Theorie und innerhalb desselben können wir auch die verschiedenen Qualitäten der materiellen Daseyns und des geistigen Lebens nie in eine Theorie der Naturlehre zu vereinigen hoffen, sondern äussere und innere Naturlehre behält jede ihr eignes für sich geschlossenes Gebiet." *Selbstrezension*, XXIV:15.

⁴⁰ "Stellen wir diesem nun den Geist zur Vergleichung gegenüber. Die Grundlage aller Vergleichungen wird hier immer die alte Platonische bleiben: die sinnliche Begierde (*epithumia*) gehört dem Unterleib, die untere Thatkraft (*dumos*) der Brust, Verstand (*logos*), Erkenntniß und Bewußtsein dem Kopf (dem Gehirn).

"Wir erkennen körperlich die Bedingungen der äußern Anregung und der äußern Wirksamkeit unsers Geistes, sind aber in dem zeitlichen Schicksal unsers Geisteserlebens so durch und durch von diesem Äußern abhängig, daß wir keinen Theil dieser Vergleichung entziehen können. So müssen wir nun den vereinigten Lebensproceß durch das ganze Nervensystem unsers Körpers dem Geist gegenüber stellen. Könnten wir tiefer eindringen, so möchten wir wohl am unmittelbaren die Parallele alles Geisteslebens im Gehirn zu suchen haben, denn dort scheint doch körperlich der Mittelpunkt aller eigenthümlichen Nerventhätigkeiten." HPA, Band II, II:27, § 100. See § 154, where *clime* is associated with the alleged differences in racial characters.

in the form that he gave to it in 1828, “New or Anthropological Critique of Reason.” In the original edition of 1808, he had entitled it “New Critique of Reason.” It was a ‘critique of reason’ because it pursued Kant’s project of a reflection on reason, conducted by reason itself, by which reason establishes its limits. It was a ‘new’ critique, because the idea of reason with which Fries was now operating was substantially different from Kant’s. And the adjective added in 1828, ‘anthropological’, indicated precisely where the difference lay.⁴¹ I have been using the language of ‘mind’, ‘mental events’, and ‘mental activities’ in an effort to find entry into Fries’ complex theory. But Fries’ more typical language is that of ‘reason’—the ‘events’ and ‘activities’ at issue being such as belong to reason. The most distinctive feature of Fries’ theory of mind was that the mind has only one faculty, namely ‘reason’—a reason, moreover, understood in explicit organic terms as a ‘form of life’. For Fries, reason is the life-form specific to human existence.⁴² And, since philosophy consists of a critical reflection on reason, and since this reason is constitutive of human existence, philosophy is fundamentally a study of human nature: its critique is ‘anthropological’. Gone for Fries, therefore, is the need that Kant felt to distinguish between transcendental logic and psychological construction. Critique is essentially psychology, or more precisely, as Fries puts it, ‘anthropology’.

What does Fries mean by reason as a form of life? Any definition, in so far as one can be gleaned from a variety of passages of his works, would have to combine

⁴¹ Fries defines this difference at length while criticizing Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*. “Sie [die Wissenschaftslehre] muß also eine Kenntniß der Organisation unsrer Vernunft enthalten, wiefern diese eine Erkenntniskraft und die philosophischen Erkenntnisse ihre ursprünglichen Handlungen sind. Das heißt sie gründet sich auf innere Erfahrung und Anthropologie; sie ist nichts anders als das, was *Kant* transcendente Kritik genannt hat, die Wissenschaft von der Organisation unsrer Vernunft, um daraus erfahrungsmäßig zu zeigen, welche ursprüngliche Erkenntnisse wir allein besitzen.” RFS, XXIV:78.

⁴² HPA, I:23-25, §§ 6, 7.

the notions of spontaneous activity (something like Aristotle's ἐνέργεια) and reflectivity.⁴³ But, in a Friesian context, these two notions naturally tend to come together, for it is of the nature of a self-contained activity, such as we expect spontaneous activity to be, that it confirm itself precisely as activity,⁴⁴ and this is precisely what reflectivity does. Rational acts are self-confirming acts—each, in some way or other, a kind of assertion (*Behauptung*). Fries' theory of knowledge is not a simple form of intuitionism. This is an important point to note. Fries clearly indicates as much early in his theory, where he argues that there is more to knowledge than just intuition. For knowledge to come to fruition, judgement is also required—an assertion confirming the truth, the *givenness* or *actual presence*, of the intuited object. Reflection is of course responsible for this confirmation: it amounts to precisely a faculty of judgement. And there is a good reason why such a faculty is required. For, according to Fries, reason, or at least human reason, though a source of spontaneous activity, is not thereby infinite in this activity.⁴⁵ On the contrary, human reason, *as a matter of fact*, is limited, and, as such, internally differentiated. Reason is sensitive (*erregbar*): therefore, it is also receptive (*empfänglich*). In this, however, it remains a spontaneous activity. As receptive, it is not simply presented with sensed objects but it actively also represents them: it makes present, as given again (*wiedergegeben*) in the medium of representations, what would be otherwise simply sensed or felt by it. The senses, feelings, the whole conative side of the mind, and the understanding, are for Fries, not independent faculties, but aspects of the one faculty of reason. This reason reflectively apprehends itself as limited and, in so doing, also sorts out the various facts at play in its activities, in each case sealing the facts, so to speak, in

⁴³ HPA, I:21-22, § 5.

⁴⁴ “Erkenntniß ist die *assertorische* Vorstellung, durch welche eine Behauptung begründet wird.” NAKV, IV:130.

⁴⁵ “Erregbarkeit müssen wir einer Spontaneität schlechthin entgegensetzen, sie ist eine Selbstthätigkeit, welche sich nicht genug ist.” NAKV, IV:75. The whole § 12 is relevant.

appropriate judgements. In each case, moreover, the judgement is accompanied by what Fries calls a ‘feeling of truth’ (*Wahrheitsgefühl*)⁴⁶—the subjective appropriation, one can suppose, of the otherwise objective evidence of facts *as facts*.

The architectonic of Fries’ system is based on the three (and only three) methods available for the attainment of judgement and the corresponding feeling of truth.⁴⁷ There is, first, what Fries calls *Beweis*, or ‘proof’. This is the method typical of the sciences, where the original facts on which a science is based are external and alterable. Fries insists that this method must be regressive, in the sense that it proceeds starting with facts which are first submitted to analysis and then reconstructed by means of abstractions, theories and hypotheses. On the basis of these, it is then possible to return to the original facts, in this way ‘proving’ them. In no way, however, can this proof claim apodeictic force. Only mathematical proof can do this, since mathematics can validate its constructions with reference to *a priori* intuition.⁴⁸ Since in the sciences, by contrast, all abstraction entails an element of arbitrariness, it follows that the sciences are artificial (*künstlich*) products contingent on individual circumstances. They are always reformable, in other words. “For [science],” Fries interestingly says, “is in general only a product of human culture.”⁴⁹

The second method,⁵⁰ for which Fries reserves the Latinate name of *Demonstration*, is more historical in nature. It consists, as the Latin root of the

⁴⁶ NAKV, § 85.

⁴⁷ Fries’ most concise and clearest statement of method is to be found in *Selbsrezenion*, IV:14-15. See also RFS, XXIV:382-92.

⁴⁸ RFS, XXIV:380.

⁴⁹ RFS, XXIV:369.

⁵⁰ The two differ *in kind*, not just by degree. Neither can, therefore, either replace or approximate the other. RFS, XXIV:374, 376 ff.

term indicates, in the ‘exhibiting’ or ‘displaying’ of clearly identifiable facts. Fries’ critique of reason, limited as it is to the immediate facts of consciousness, is an obvious case in point. This second method, Fries insists, differs from the first in kind, not just by degree. Neither method, therefore, can either approximate or replace the other. None the less, the judgements on which they are both based still fall under the common rubric of ‘empirical truth’. It is with the third method, to which Fries assigns an equally Latinate name of *Deduktion*, that the concept of ‘transcendental truth’, or of truth as the mind’s conformity to a transcendent reality, finally comes to its own.

How and why this is the case makes for one of the most interesting elements of Fries’ theory of reason. At issue is still Fries’ realism, or his belief that the intention motivating all judgements is to express reality *as it is in itself*. In the case of sense intuitions and the feelings connected with them, since the reality *given in these* is restricted to the subjective limitations of reason qualified as *sensitivity* and *receptivity*, the ‘in itself’ at issue is attained in judgment only as it is *for the senses* or *for feelings*. This does not mean that the reality in question is not known,⁵¹ but only that it is not *completely* known, or known only inasmuch as it is known—indeed, a tautological assertion. There is here a disproportion between ‘the known’ and ‘the unknown’. There is, however, nothing paradoxical in this, as there is in any supposed disproportion between merely subjective phenomena and a thing-in-itself that lies *ex hypothesi* hidden behind them. However, Fries makes a further move in his theory that introduces another, much stronger, meaning of ‘disproportion’. Fries argues that reason’s reflective awareness of its finitude *as sensitive* and *receptive* brings with it an equally reflective awareness of its own transcendence with respect to the sensed and felt objects. In virtue of this awareness, reason is immediately convinced that it also

⁵¹ *Neue Kritik*, IV:122-123.

belongs to a higher realm of existence—one not subject to the contingencies of space and time; one not itself available to immediate inspection; one of which, however, it has an intimation (*Ahndung*)⁵² and, along with this intimation and associated with it, also a host of other feelings. As measured against this reality, the objects of the senses will take on indeed the character of ‘appearances’—not, however, of *mere subjective* appearances but, rather, of appearances as manifestations of an eternal reality.⁵³ On the basis of the feelings connected with this fundamental *Ahndung*, reason constructs such objects as belong to the realms of art, morality and religions, or, in general, to what we would nowadays call the realm of values. The truth of such objects is asserted in appropriate judgements. But, in the case of these judgements the paradox obtains entailed by the traditional definition of truth—namely that they have to measure the truth of their objects against a reality that *ex hypothesi* remains hidden. Fries argues, therefore, that these judgements must be based, not on the intimated reality which they intend but which remains unknown, but on the subjective intimation itself that motivates the judgements in the first place, as well as on the equally subjective feeling of truth which, *as a matter of fact*, accompanies them. Fries sometime refers to judgements of this sort as ‘aesthetic’, relying a lot on Kant’s aesthetic doctrine. Such judgements cannot be said to yield *knowledge* in a strict sense. The latter is restricted to intuition. What they yield, rather, is *faith (Glaube)*—knowledge indeed, but one based on subjective evidence alone.⁵⁴ The essential point for Fries is that, since the convincing power of this kind of judgements is no less compelling than that of other judgements, and since this is the case *as a matter of*

⁵² “Die Erkenntniß durch reines Gefühl nenne ich Ahndung des Ewigen im Endlichen.” *Wissen, Glauben und Ahnden* (1805), III:604.

⁵³ *Wissen, Glauben und Ahnden*, III:482; *Fichte’s und Schelling’s neueste Lehren von Gott und der Welt* (1807), XXIV:605-06; *Selbstrezension*, IV:18; *Neue Kritik*, IV:122-23.

⁵⁴ NAKV, IV:461ff, § 82; *Selbstrezension*, IV:18.

fact, their claim to truth is just as legitimate as that of the other judgements.⁵⁵

It is likely that Fries gave the name of *Deduktion* to this third method because the judgements on which it is based, rather than being constrained by the overt truth of their assertions, are on the contrary only subjectively *led* to the assertions (as *per* the Latin *ducere*). Be that as it may, the method represents the crowning piece of Fries' critique of reason. The system of experience that emerges from this critique can best be characterized as a generalized form of positivism—a positivism *sui generis*, for, while based on facts, it allows for a variety of them, and, while admitting irreducible and even substantial differences between them, it grants to all of them, including facts that we would label 'religious', 'moral' or 'aesthetic', equal legitimacy precisely *as facts*.

Popularphilosophie triumphant

Fries' idea of reason as a spontaneous activity which, in trying to get hold of itself reflectively, finds itself affected by an external limit has strong Fichtean overtones. Perhaps Fries had learned more from Fichte in the few hours that it took him to dismiss him than he realized, or was at least ready to admit. But, even more important, his conception of reason also brought him back, past Fichte, to Kant. Albeit in more imaginative language, this conception harked back to two theses of Kant. The first is that there is no direct consciousness of an object without self-consciousness, that is, without the consciousness of having consciousness of that object. The second, which is in fact only a further specification of the first, is that knowledge requires judgement—a point that Kant made clear by setting up the whole problematic of the Critique in terms of the

⁵⁵ "Allein diese der Wissenschaft und dem Wissen nebengeordneten Überzeugungen, mögen sie nun Glaube, Ahndung oder wie sonst, müssen doch selbst wieder wissenschaftlich erkannt, Gegenstand der Selbsterkenntniß werden können." *Von deutscher Philosophie, Art und Kunst* (1812), XXIV:48-49.

possibility of various types of judgement. Judgment is more than just the joining of two concepts (subject and predicate) but includes the validation of any such joining on grounds which the judgment must be at least in principle ready to declare. For this reason—that is, because it always entails a moment of self-justification—judgment is a reflective activity.

It follows from this that sense intuition too had to be a kind of judgment— an ‘*Aussage*’ or ‘*Behauptung*’.⁵⁶ Fries defended this claim explicitly against Ernst Reinhold (the son of the more famous father) who objected to it in a review of the second edition of his *System der Logik*.⁵⁷ The review was a serious one. It clearly indicated why psychology, though perhaps an aid to logic, could not be its ground.⁵⁸ It also rightly stressed the contribution of language to the process of cognition, a factor to which Fries had perhaps not given due attention.⁵⁹ Most importantly, it focussed on precisely Fries’ claim that sensation is an aspect of reason and itself a kind of *Aussage* or *Behauptung* that testifies to the presence before the senses of an object external to the mind.⁶⁰ The reviewer obviously recognized that this, more than any other, was the claim that set Fries’ system at odds with the tradition of empiricism. His argument was that to speak of an ‘assertion’ of the senses goes against common language usage as well as against the language of philosophers of

⁵⁶ RFS, XXIV:455-456.

⁵⁷ ALZ, Junius 1819, Nrn. 104-105, 345-360. The review was signed.

⁵⁸ “Unsere mit dem Vf. gleichzeitigen Meister der Philosophie, welche sich differente Theorien und Systeme verfertigt, und in denselben sich festgesetzt haben, gehen freylich auch von anderen psychologischen Voraussetzungen aus, als er. [. . . Aber es] erhellt, daß alles von dem Vf. neu Gegebene in der Anordnung und Ausführung [. . .] der Logik mit der Gültigkeit seiner psychologischen Ansichten steht und fällt.” Column 347.

⁵⁹ Column 357.

⁶⁰ Columns 350-352, where E. Reinhold summarizes Fries’ position. He is surprised to see Fries accept as incontrovertible ‘matter of fact’ what is in fact only a matter of popular opinion. The point is sharpened in Column 355.

all stripes;⁶¹ that it is a mistake due to linguistic confusion to speak of the senses as the ‘receptivity of reason’; that sensations, rather, are events that fall within the domain of bodily events;⁶² that, as such, they should be considered simple ‘impressions’ of the mind (*Gemüth*) on the basis of which, but only by way of psychological associations and inferences drawn from these, the concepts of things independent of the mind are generated.⁶³ Of course, in practical life belief in the existence of such things comes naturally. But why this is the case, is at the present stage of philosophical development still an unresolved problem.⁶⁴

This was as good a Lockean response to Fries as could be had, though the reviewer thought that he had Kant on his side.⁶⁵ Fries took the review very seriously, dedicating to it a long essay in reply.⁶⁶ To the reviewer’s specific charge that he had offended common language usage by attributing ‘assertion’ to the senses, he replied that, of course, the attribution was metaphorical, but so also was much else that was said about the senses or the understanding, whether in

⁶¹ “Es macht uns schon der Genius der vaterländischen Sprache aufmerksam auf einen wichtigen negativen Grundsatz [...] eine wortlose Aussage, eine sprachlose Behauptung ist unmöglich.” Column 354.

⁶² Column 355.

⁶³ Column 356. E. Reinhold concludes: “Für das bloß sinnliche Vorstellungsvermögen sind die Gegenstände keineswegs existirende Dinge. Sondern sie sind für dasselbe kommende, schwindende und wiederkehrende, jedoch vermöge der unwillkürlichen Thätigkeit der empfangenden, bewahrenden und vergegenwärtigenden Einbildungskraft von den Einzelbildern und Gemeinbildern derselben begleitete Impressionen.”

⁶⁴ “Wie nun aber und weshalb mit unseren sinnlichen Wahrnehmungen, so oft die Objecte in der Anschauung hervortreten, die Behauptung unwillkürlich sich einstelle, daß die wahrgenommenen Dinge unabhängig von unserer Wahrnehmung da sind, [. . .] dieß ist biest jetzt philosophisch nicht erkannt worden.” Column 356.

⁶⁵ Column 356.

⁶⁶ “Verteidigung meiner Lehre von der Sinnesanschauung gegen die Angriffe des Herrn Doktor Ernst Reinhold” (1819). VI. 1.729-754.

common or philosophical parlance.⁶⁷ We need not be detained by the details of the essay. One point that Fries could have made, but did not, was that, in the matter of a ‘judgement of the senses’, Kant might well have been on his, not the reviewer’s side. Had not Kant said that sensations without concepts are blind? Metaphors apart, Kant’s claim implies that, so far as experience is concerned, sense intuitions are significant only to the extent that they are implicated in judgements that bring concepts to bear upon them. Abstracted from these judgements, sensations belong to the pre-history of experience, not to experience itself. Here is where the issue of *a priori* synthesis arose for Kant. By restating Kant’s analysis of experience in terms of the one faculty of reason and its many activities; by systematizing these activities under the general rubric of judgement—a judgement being in every case a product of reason’s reflectivity—Fries had rid Kant’s Critique of Reason of the need for the syntheses of *a priori* and *a posteriori*, understanding and the senses, and reason and understanding, which made it vulnerable to sceptical attack

Indeed, with respect to Kant, this is what Fries had accomplished. First, his theory was a sustained and sophisticated attempt at reducing both *philosophia prima* and the particular sciences to a grand theory about the facts of consciousness. In this, Fries still clearly operated within, indeed, also greatly expanded on, *Popularphilosophie*’s typical philosophical program. Second, he had preempted even the possibility of reintroducing within the ambit of the Critique of Reason, under the rubric of the ‘merely thought’, such issues regarding the nature of the will considered as a noumenal entity as had divided Reinhold and Schmid. Such issues, still the legacy of dogmatic metaphysics, had no room in Fries’ theory of psycho-somatic parallelism. All that now counted was to discern all that goes into

⁶⁷ “Warum soll ich denn hier auf einmal an die kyriologische Bedeutung des Wortes Aussage gebunden seyn, warum soll ein so einfacher metonymischer Gebrauch unmöglich seyn?” 745.

the *feeling* of being free at the psychic level of experience, and to identify the cluster of somatic events that are associated with this feeling. The issue of causality, whether noumenal or phenomenal, did not arise. Third, by virtue of his theory of faith, and particularly his analysis of ‘feeling’, which bestowed upon the latter intuitive value, Fries had saved the sense of transcendence that accompanies all experience. He had equally saved the autonomy of morality. Yet, he had done all this while avoiding Kant’s unknown ‘thing in itself’—according to Fries, a source of vacuous formalism and scepticism.

In sum, ‘facts of consciousness theory’ had absorbed the Critique of Reason, and Fries had accomplished this feat of absorption in reforming *Popularphilosophie* at the same time as the Critique of Reason. He had reformed the former by ridding it of the Lockean prejudice about the subjectivity of sensation that had been with it since the beginning and had worked its effect on both Kant’s Critique and its immediate reception. Of course, one can well argue that there was more to the Critique than Fries’ psycho-somatic parallelism; that this parallelism in fact marked an impoverishment of Kant’s original critical project. But at issue now is *Popularphilosophie*, and, from the standpoint of the latter and by its standards, with Fries the absorption was complete.

When one turns, therefore, to the 1809 review of Fries’ *Neue Kritik der Vernunft* by Reinhold père, one has good reason to wonder how much Reinhold was in the clear regarding the current philosophical situation and how much he had contributed to it. In the review Reinhold paid special attention to Fries’ critique of his contemporaries. Reinhold’s final judgement on Fries thus merged with a judgement on the whole current scene, Schelling obviously looming large. The gist of the judgement as it emerged at the end of the long text, after over two

columns of citations on the subject of ‘*Reflexion*’ assembled from Fries’ text,⁶⁸ was that Fries, in keeping with the tendency of the time, had run together the unconscious and reflective consciousness, activity and receptivity, sensation and thought, alterability and stability, manifold and unity, the sensuous and the super-sensuous, in this way causing a confusion of language of the proportion of Babel.⁶⁹ Though Reinhold did not mention the Romantic principle of “the identity of identity and non-identity” which was behind Schelling’s ‘*Indifferenzlehre*’, it was clear that he took Fries’ system to be simply another manifestation of the pernicious influence that the principle had had on the age.⁷⁰ Apparently, a return to correctness of distinctions was Reinhold’s remedy for the philosophical malaise of the day.⁷¹

To anyone mindful of the principle that Reinhold had affixed at the head of his earlier *Elementarphilosophie*, this verdict would have sounded particularly lame. Had not Reinhold said of ‘representation’ that it “is distinguished in consciousness by the subject from both subject and object, and is referred to both”?⁷² The formula clearly denoted a process of reflection which, in one way or

⁶⁸ For the citations, see Columns 91-93.

⁶⁹ ‘Babel’ is not Reinhold’s own image.

⁷⁰ “In Beiden [i.e. Fries’ system and the other current “*Lehrgebäuden*”] wird das Denken and das Anschauen, und die reine und empirische Erkenntniß, und die Einheit oder Unwandelbarkeit, und die Verschiedenheit oder Wandelbarkeit, nur durch *gleichsetzendes Entgegengesetzten vereinigt*, während die *Indifferenzlehre* mehr auf die *Gleichheit*, die neue Kritik der Vernunft *mehr auf den Gegensatz* hinsieht.” 93.

⁷¹ In a letter to Fries of 28. Mai 1806, Reinhold wrote: “Es hat ihnen schon damals eingeleuchtet, daß im Denken der Unterschied dem Zusammenhang vorhergehen müsse, wenn Übereinstimmung stattfinden soll. Mein ganzer Versuch ist Ergründung und Ausführung dieses Gedankens durch die Befreiung der Worte Unterschied, Zusammenhang, Übereinstimmung, Identität, Nichtidentität, Widerspruch.” Henke, 334.

⁷² (1794): “Neue Darstellung der Elementarphilosophie,” in *Beyträge zur Berichtigung der bisherigen Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, Band I, Jena,

another, would finally issue in an assertion about immediately apprehended objects. Reinhold, in other words, had originally made judgement the principle of his system. But judgement required precisely the synthesis of reflection and immediacy which had proved problematic for Kant and still caused problems for Reinhold—though Reinhold himself did not apparently advert to them. Fichte had argued against Reinhold that the latter’s definition could not serve as a first principle because it presupposed mental acts simpler than representation itself. And both Schulze/*Ænesidemus* and Solomon Maimon had argued from a Lockean position that the definition was not universal enough because it did not apply to sense impressions which, by definition, were simple events. Apparently the Reinhold of the 1809 review did not see that what he dismissed as simply a confusion due to inattention about language was the attempt on the part of Fries and Reinhold’s other contemporaries to deal with a problem which had originated with Kant, and which, in the immediate past, Reinhold himself, rather than ever clarifying, had on the contrary only compounded.

Jacobi had no particular affection for Reinhold. Writing to Fries on October 29, 1812, in regard to Reinhold’s recently published *Synonymik*,⁷³ he said: “On my return from the trip I repeatedly tried to read Reinhold’s *Synonymik*, but every time I had to give up; that man is too much of a trial.”⁷⁴ Quite a different attitude he manifested towards Fries, with whom he warmly corresponded in the last years of his life, keeping him abreast of the edition of his collected works that he was preparing.⁷⁵ “As

167.

⁷³ (1812): *Grundlegung einer Synonymik für den allgemeinen Sprachgebrauch in den philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Kiel.

⁷⁴ “Nach der Zurückkunft von der Reise habe ich wiederholt versucht Reinhold’s *Synonymik* zu lesen, aber jedesmal ablassen müssen; der Mann macht es mir zu sauer.” Henke, 324.

⁷⁵ Cf., for instance, the letters of 1. June and 10. August 1815, Henke, 326-328.

for you, my dearest friend,” he said in one letter, “it also often occurs to me that for the most part only language divides us.”⁷⁶ Here is another marker of Fries’ success in sealing *Popularphilosophie* as a force still to be reckoned with in the new century. Jacobi might have had no truck with the scholastic metaphysics which, undoubtedly, was also part of the conceptual heritage of *Popularphilosophie*. Yet from the beginning he had clearly operated within its ambit and, even before Reinhold’s *Versuch* of 1789, had already tried his hand at bringing Kant’s Critique in line with a theory based on the facts of consciousness. This he had done in the dialogue *David Hume über den Galuben, oder Idealismus und Realismus* of 1787, where he tried to cut through Kant’s many distinctions, which tended to turn into dichotomies, by defining reason as a form of life.⁷⁷ In this text Jacobi had also asserted the continuity of reason with the senses—reason being, indeed, “only the characteristic of man’s particular sensibility,”⁷⁸ a claim that dangerously ran into naturalism. Fries could claim that, by defining the senses as an aspect of reason while at the same time distinguishing between facts of the mind and facts of the body, he had finally also done justice to Jacobi’s realism while avoiding the naturalism that had made the early dialogue suspect even in Jacobi’s eye. Seen in this context, the Reinhold of the 1809 review appears strangely out of touch, just as anachronistic as during his debate with Schmid at the closing of the preceding century.

⁷⁶ Letter of 20. April 1813: “Was Sie angeht, mein liebster Freund, so kommt es mir oft auch so vor, als ob uns größtentheils nur Sprache trennte.” Henke, 326. But, regarding Fries’ doctrine of revelation and positive religion, Jacobi had also said: “Meine Lehre hat damit [i.e. Fries’ doctrine] ganz und gar nichts zu theilen, und ich glaube dies wiederholt auf das bestimmste erklärt zu haben.” Letter of 24. Dezember 1808, Henke, 317.

⁷⁷ (1787): Breslau, 127.

⁷⁸ “[. . .] daß die Vernunft [. . .] nur der Charakter seiner [i.e. man’s] besondern Sinnlichkeit sey.” 132.