

VITALISM AND SYSTEM: JACOBI AND FICHTE ON PHILOSOPHY AND LIFE

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Abstract: This paper thematizes the crucial *agreement and point of departure* between Jacobi and Fichte at the height of the “atheism controversy.” The argument on the proper relationship between philosophy and existence or speculation and life had far-reaching consequences in the history of thought after Jacobi and Fichte in German Idealism on the one hand, primarily advocated by Schelling and Hegel, and on the other hand by existentialism and vitalism. The essay focuses first on Jacobi’s philosophy of life, which centrally influenced and attracted Fichte to Jacobi. Jacobi’s dualism between speculation, of which he was skeptical, and life, became Fichte’s dualism. Fichte’s transcendentalism, however, prioritized, contrary to Jacobi, both speculation and systematicity. Both of these elements became central for later forms of German Idealism. In the last part of the essay Hegel’s absolute idealism becomes the platform affording a critical perspective on Fichte’s transcendental philosophy.

The *immediacy of life* could for Fichte in 1799 not have any reality without the abstraction from life accomplished by *speculative philosophy*. Both “*speculation*” and “*life*” do not really have any common ground between them—a position which Reinhold attempted to find—because both oppose each other but are also dependent upon another. As “*life*” could not be had without speculation, so “*speculation*” is impossible without life, for it needs life to be able to abstract from it. Fichte made this very clear at the height of the “atheism-controversy,” in a letter to Jacobi of April 22, 1799,¹ in which he says this (1799:61):²

The original duality, which traverses through the whole system of reason, and which is grounded in the duality of the subject-object is here on its highest plateau. LIFE is the TOTALITY of the OBJECTIVE ESSENCE OF REASON; SPECULATION is the TOTALITY of SUBJECTIVITY. One is not possible without the other: LIFE, understood as active surrender into the mechanism is not possible WITHOUT ACTIVITY AND FREEDOM (otherwise called speculation), WHICH SURRENDERS. This is so even if it does not right away achieve clear consciousness in each individual. And SPECULATION is not possible without LIFE, FROM WHICH IT ABSTRACTS. Both, life and speculation are determinable only through each other. LIFE is actually NON-PHILOSOPHIZING; PHILOSOPHIZING is actually NON-LIFE, and I

know no better determinations of both concepts than these developed here. Here we have a complete antithesis and a point of unification³ is just as impossible as the understanding of the X, which underlies the subject-object, the I, as its ground. Such a point of unification is impossible except in the consciousness of the philosopher that for him both points of view are present. (Fichte, 1799:61)

If we read such words, we can understand why both Fichte and Jacobi thought in 1799 that their systems are very close. For Jacobi had for all of his life stressed a clear *separation* of thought and life. Nonetheless, Fichte's position clearly differs from Jacobi's in significant points. Also Reinhold,⁴ who had earlier influenced Fichte's attempt to solve a basic *aporia* of Kant's thought in his move toward a coherent system (Bondeli, 1995:124), and who in turn was during the second phase of his thought (Bondeli, 1995:155ff) influenced by Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, should have recognized in the quoted words by Fichte that their thought was *at this time* really no longer in agreement. I will explain how these points of coherence and disagreement came about in the evolvment of transcendental philosophy after Kant. We can now trace in minute detail key elements in the development of transcendental idealism. Addressing the particular discussion between Fichte, Jacobi and Reinhold,⁵ Klaus Hammacher speaks of "one of the most profound conflicts . . . in which transcendental philosophy got involved around 1800, the conflict about *critique* and *life*" (1993:72).⁶ It led to the important separation of two strands of thought that have become influential down to our time. The first we can call the tradition of "*realism*" (or "life"). From Jacobi⁷ and Fichte⁸ (also Herder, Goethe, Novalis, and Hölderlin) this tradition of thought led over the early Schelling, Fr. Schlegel, the early Hegel, and Schleiermacher to Feuerbach, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche to Dilthey and later phenomenological and hermeneutic thought (Dierse, 1980). The second strand of thought, cultivating "speculation" and philosophy led to "*idealism*"—Fichte, Fr. Schlegel, the early and later Schelling and Hegel. First, (a) I will thematize those elements of Jacobi's thought on philosophy and life, expressed in his *novels*, which (b) aroused Fichte's early interest and which he appropriated. After (c) having described Fichte's Jacobian realism I will (d), leaning on Hegel's early Jena interpretation of Fichte, show how the infinite regress is rooted in Fichte's idealistic realism.

A. Jacobi's Philosophy of the Novel

First some comments on the enormous influence of Jacobi's philosophy of the novel. Central to Jacobi's novels *Allwill* (1792) and *Woldemar* is the dichotomy between *philosophy* and *life*. *Life* has priority for Jacobi. The nature and purpose of his novel *Allwill*, Jacobi says in his letter to Hamann of June 16, 1783, is "to disclose being," that is, the being of humanity.⁹ It is the "highest merit" and obligation of the scholar to reveal the "natural history" of humanity. Just this formulation appears also in the *Letters on Spinoza* of 1785. He says here: "According to my judgment it is the highest merit of the scholar to reveal being. . . . Explanation is his means to find a path to the goal. It is his most proximate, never the ultimate goal. The ultimate purpose is what cannot be explained: That which cannot be solved, the immediate the simple."

(1785:29:20–24) So his purpose is to lay bare the modern human soul. What is the central disposition of modern humanity? By means of philosophy and science modern humanity alienates itself from the foundations of life. But why? Modern humanity has a drive, indeed, a *compulsion* to justify itself by means of philosophy and science.¹⁰ In his philosophical novels Jacobi explains why and how this is so. Reinhard Lauth (1971) and Klaus Hammacher (1969, 1990) have provided excellent studies on this subject: The modern intellectual is characterized by the *anthropological* principle of the *necessity* of modern humanity to justify itself. And that places the I in the center of this anthropology. During their evolving dialogue, Jacobi learns to understand Fichte's principle I=I as the best example of this modern disposition of humanity—but this is only one dominant theme Jacobi learns to see in Fichte. For there is, as we shall see, much common ground between them. Pointing to this anthropological propensity of self-justification in modern humanity Jacobi says in his conversations with Lessing, “Whenever someone has fallen in love with his (philosophical) explanations he blindly accepts any conclusion drawn from it, a conclusion which he cannot reject.¹¹ This is so even if he would *walk on his head*.” (1785:29)¹² Such an ego, I-centered fixation, Jacobi insists, is as unnatural and blind to reality as walking on your head. And doing this turns everything upside down.¹³ The question is, however, whether the conceptual *inversion*, which Kant already accomplished with his *Copernican revolution of thought* (1781:BXIf, 1790, §28) is not deeply humanizing. The question is whether it is indeed not *necessary* for the determination of *life* and whether opting for the unreflected, immediate reality, does not *gain* but rather *lose* it, contrary to its intentions. Jacobi's *anthropological* methodology must and will inevitably clash with Fichte's *transcendental* philosophy in “the highest degree of antipathy” (Jacobi, 1799a:9). However, it took some time from the beginning of Jacobi's and Fichte's interest in one another to the high point of their struggle during the *Atheism Controversy* in 1799 until they would see clearly their points of convergence and disagreements. Fichte would ultimately recognize the “harmful error” (1800d:65) of Jacobi's anthropologizing philosophy. It caused him ultimately to misunderstand Fichte, however keen his insights into Fichte's thought were. But first to Jacobi's impact on Fichte.

B. Fichte's and Jacobi's Common Interests

Jacobi's and Fichte's *common* interests become clear in the discussions carried out in their correspondence on the correct relationship of *philosophy* and *life* at the height of the *Atheism Controversy*. But it developed much earlier. In his letter to Jacobi of August 30, 1795, Fichte mentions to Jacobi the “striking similarity of our convictions.” (1930:I, 251, 501) And in the *Second Introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre* (1797:508) he points to an *absolute immediacy* which underlies all mediating demonstration, an immediacy which itself cannot be demonstrated. And he stresses that he and Jacobi share this common assumption.¹⁴

In the late spring of 1794 Goethe had sent to Jacobi Fichte's *Begriffsschrift* right after it appeared in print. On June 7 Jacobi replies, thanking him, and stating: “Right away I turned to Fichte's book and read it . . . attentively. I was pleased by the book”

(Jacobi-Goethe 1846:138). The Atheism Controversy developed four years later, during 1798 and 1799. Jacobi intervened into this development with his *Sendschreiben* (1799a). Here Jacobi expresses to Fichte their points of agreement in theological terminology. But he expresses to the nineteen year younger Fichte not only their points of agreement. The *Sendschreiben* makes clear that Jacobi thinks he has influenced Fichte in key areas. “You have recognized me as the one who stood waiting and prophesying at the door of your lecture-hall, long before it opened” (1799a:9; 1994:505).¹⁵ Jacobi thematizes the prophecies in the *Beilage* on Transcendental Philosophy to his *David Hume* (1787b). He is right that he has anticipated transcendental idealism. The correspondence between Fichte and Jacobi from 1794 to the *Sendschreiben* confirm that Fichte had great interest in Jacobi’s thought: He, Jacobi, stood waiting and prophesying at the door of Fichte’s lecture hall long before it opened. That means at the latest since 1787 (1787b). For this reason he, the “privileged heretic,” occupies an “exceptional seat” in Fichte’s lectures since he knows that his thinking occupies a central place in Fichte’s thought. He is a “privileged heretic” because of his own thoughts expressed already in 1785 (1785) and 1787 (1787b). Those thoughts on philosophy of “identity” identified “the Kantian moral law” as the “necessary drive of the correspondence with ourselves, the *law of identity*”¹⁶ (1799a:18). He complained about the incongruence of Kant’s Categorical Imperative. These incomprehensible incongruencies, these “*stop-gaps* of theoretical reason” are then made “the conditions of the *reality* of the laws of practical reason. . . . Imagine my jubilation, therefore, at the publication of your writing on the *Vocation of the Scholar*, where in the very first pages I found the most complete agreement with my judgments on this subject” (1799a:18). For that reason he is also “exempt in advance from any anathema” (1799a:8). Nonetheless he is—although “privileged”—a “heretic.” This is so because he now, during the Atheism Controversy, he is not really any more capable of identifying with Fichte’s thought, the thought of the “messiah of speculative reason.” For he does not *at all*, as does Fichte, belong to the “Jews of speculative reason.” He is rather only a “Nathanael among the *gentiles*,” the *uncircumcised* Israelite. He is uncircumcised, because for him, the Christian, in contrast to the Jews, the issue of circumcision is moot. He is “Nathanael,”¹⁷ who was recognized by the Messiah from afar as an “Israelite in whom is no guile” (John 1:43–51). This Nathanael proclaimed Jesus as the “King of the Jews,” but it was also he who asked: “What good can come from Nazareth?” Well, what about the privileged heretic’s prophecies?

Jacobi’s relationship to Fichte was from beginning to end rather differentiated. At the very beginning of the *Preface and Introduction* of his *David Hume* he refers to what he had already said in the *Briefe*: “All human cognition derives from revelation and faith” (1787a:3f; 1994:538). Two years earlier, in the *Briefe*, Jacobi stressed: “We know through faith that we have a body and that there are outside of us other bodies and other thinking beings. It is truly a wonderful revelation!” (1785:116:5–7). Günter Zöller identifies this view of faith as “irreligious,” indeed, as “emphatically secular” (1998a:31, 28). This view of faith, which, in the eyes of Hegel, “denies the objectivity of Reason in knowledge” (1802b:347:8f; 1802c:97), relies on the

skeptical-realistic thought of David Hume, expressed well in Jacobi's book *David Hume* (1787a). The natural, not religious understanding of faith, derived from David Hume, relies on a "revelation of nature which does not only command but coerces each and every human being to believe and to accept truths through faith" (1785:116:18–20).

"The Christian religion teaches a different view of faith. The Christian religion does not command faith" (1785:116:21–22). "This faith does not objectify eternal truths but rather the finite and fallible nature of humanity" (1785:116:22ff). This specifically religious view of faith does not operate with coercion and with the law.¹⁸ It is based on freedom. So is Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. In §2 of the *Begriffsschrift* of 1794 this "science" is characterized as being completely dependent on the freely originating capacities of the scientific philosopher.¹⁹ Jacobi and Fichte share their pathos for freedom, even if they disagree about speculation. For both the finite, accidental nature of humanity gains focus in the *free*, i.e., *not* speculative acceptance of a trans-natural God. Speculation must in any case be blind over against God. For both speculation as also *any* philosophy must remain blind over against God. For it and every type of philosophy does no more than attempt to secure humanity over against God.²⁰ The coercion of thought promotes the establishment of that security. For this reason God, the goal of true religion, must reside for Jacobi *beyond* or *outside of* thought, for philosophy and speculation attempt only to fatalistically protect finite humanity from true life.²¹ For this reason Jacobi says²²: "God is, and is *outside me*, a living, *self-subsisting being*, or I am God. There is no third" (1799a:22, 1994:524).²³ And Jacobi characterizes this true, religious view of faith as "my *un-philosophy* which has its essence in *not-knowing*." Fichte's thought, on the other hand is subsumed "completely in *knowledge*" (1799a:6).

So Jacobi postulates a double principle of faith as the road to knowledge: The *secular* faith and revelation which imparts knowledge, and the *religious* or Christian faith in a not-knowable God. Although Jacobi anticipates idealism²⁴, this double principle of faith is nonetheless "incompatible with idealism" (Zöller, 1998a:31) for the very purpose of Jacobi's idealism-critique is to put it into question. But precisely Jacobi's intensive preoccupation with and promotion of proto-idealistic thought influenced Fichte—among others. So his hunch is correct that Fichte learned from him. For on the one hand he discovers his own *realistic* view of faith, particularly in view of the Kantian thing in itself, in Fichte's *Begriffsschrift* of 1794. And on the other hand he recognizes the influence on Fichte of his doctrine of freedom and origination. Right in the first paragraph of the *Grundlage* of 1794/95 it is expressed with the concept *Thathandlung*: This concept "expresses that acting deed which does not occur among the empirical conditions of our consciousness nor can it occur among those conditions, for it is the ground and source of all consciousness, making it alone possible." (1794/95:91) Jacobi recognizes here his own views on revelation and faith. It speaks about the *unconditioned* foundation of all human knowledge and action. Jacobi recognizes it in Fichte's "first, altogether unconditioned principle," the *Thathandlung* of the *Grundlage*. It is a thought—I refer to Tom Rockmore (Jacobi 1994:96)—which is influenced both by the *foundational* thought of Reinhold as also by the *antifoundational* thought of Jacobi. See also Christian

Iber. He writes (1999:27): “On the one hand [Fichte] ties [in §1 of the *Grundlage*] into Reinhold’s thesis that only the establishment of a first principle makes philosophy a rigorous science. On the other hand Fichte depends on Jacobi’s thesis that all conditioned knowledge rests on the certainty of something unconditioned.” Jacobi thematizes the rootedness of any foundational undertaking in an unconditioned. But therein lies a circle. Fichte becomes conscious of the circular argument and pronounces it: “The laws according to which human knowledge must think, or—which is the same thing—the laws according to which reflection operates, still are in need of being verified, but they are silently assumed to be known, and they are being presupposed. . . . This is a circle. But it is an unavoidable circle” (1794/95:92).²⁵ Fichte expresses often this circularity. Here he refers to §7 of the *Begriffsschrift* (1794c), where he says essentially the same thing. The rules of logic must *both* be deduced by the process of transcendental reflection *as also* presupposed by this reflection. But also this circular argument is indebted to Jacobi, who had discovered a basic *aporia* in Kant’s thought:

Depending on Hume, Jacobi changes *realistically* the aporia of Kant’s philosophy. He modifies the aporia in such a way that it reappears as a doctrine of immediacy. This is the doctrine which influenced Fichte. (Hammacher, 1993:74) The tongue on the scale of this aporia is the doctrine of the thing in itself. It contains the incongruity which Jacobi expresses in the *Beylage on Transcendental Idealism* (1787b) which Jacobi appended to his *David Hume*. He says here, Kant operates on the one hand with *real-philosophical* and on the other with *idealistic* or *transcendental-philosophical* presuppositions. He observes that Kant presupposes on the one hand *realistically* an objective world which is accessible to us through the senses—the “thing.” But in Kant’s exploration of the way we *know* this world, this objective thing changes into a mere *transcendental noumenon*. For without the explanation of the transcendental grounds of knowledge, which changes things into appearances, we cannot know anything. Kant’s relating aporetically a presupposed *real world*, which, however, dissolves *idealistically* in a mere noumenon in the context of the opposing transcendental presupposition (Arndt 1994:58) caused Jacobi to come to the understanding “that I could not get into the (Kantian) system *without* that presupposition (of the thing in itself) and that I could not remain within the system *with* it.” (1787b:304) Underlying this presupposition of the thing in itself is the conviction of the *objective validity* of our sensual experiences of objects outside us as things in themselves and not only as *merely* subjective phenomenal appearances. But also the opposing conviction of the objective validity of the *transcendental process of reflection* is presupposed “as a realistically real determinant.” (1787b:305) But these are “assertions which cannot at all be squared with the Kantian philosophy” (1787b:305). For that reason it is necessary to remove *both* presuppositions from the process of thought and to substitute them with an *unreflected immediacy*. “The object contributes just as much toward the perception of consciousness as consciousness does toward the perception of the object. I experience that I am and that there is something outside of me in one and the same moment” (1787a:175).²⁶ Klaus Düsing formulates Jacobi’s basic insight in this way: “It is Jacobi’s philosophical

deed to have submerged reason *as a whole* into the feeling of itself” (1993:7). With this deed a new philosophical continent had been discovered. Fichte appropriated it. For Jacobi’s experience of the self as *immediately real* and its “inseparable” experience with what lies “outside” of it leads to Fichte’s “I=I.” Simultaneously Jacobi elevated with his proof of a basic aporia in the thought of Kant the philosophical discussion onto a new plane. That discussion pointed to new avenues which lay beyond Jacobi. For Jacobi proposed the Humeian sensuality and feeling as the reality capable of mediating between self and thing in itself. This new “realism,” to which he subscribes according to his own self-attestations, does resolve the Kantian aporia, but it does so with Jacobi’s unique “idealistic” liability: That realism is itself only produced or represented in thought. This presents new problems and possibilities. Zöller formulates those avenues this way: “We conclude that one cannot get into the Kantian system *without* Jacobi’s realism and that we cannot remain in it *with* that realism” (1998a:31). This *insight* leads Fichte to modify the *unspeculatively* conceived immediate certainty into its *speculative* form of the I=I. But a further step plays a role here:

Fichte discovers in his *Aenesidemus* review, which Dan Breazeale called “a revolution (not only) in his own philosophical development” but also “a genuine watershed in the history of German Idealism” (1981:546),²⁷ “the immediately most certain: I am” (1794:20). It is the result of a process of reflection which followed the goal of overcoming the mentioned Kantian aporia in such a way that the convincing objections of Schulze’s *Aenesidemus* are “completely satisfied”²⁸. Fichte’s *Aenesidemus* review followed this goal. It consisted in “uniting” *dogmatic* and *critical* thinking into one systematic thought. In the *Vorrede* of the *Begriffsschrift* Fichte writes (1794c:29): He, the author, believes “to have found the grounds . . . which are able to satisfy completely those very legitimate objections of the skeptics to critical philosophy. He believes to have found the grounds on which it is possible to unite the dogmatic and critical system completely in their conflicting claims, as are unified through critical philosophy the conflicting claims of the different dogmatic systems.” In note 1 to this aim Fichte makes very clear the presence of Jacobi’s *immediacy in feeling*: “The real conflict between both (dogmatic and critical systems) . . . should be that between the *connections of our knowledge with a thing in itself*. And the conflict should be resolved by a future *Wissenschaftslehre* in such a way that our knowledge is shown to be connected—not immediately through representations—but mediated by *feeling*.” It should be resolved by showing “that the things are indeed *represented as appearances* but that they are *felt as things in themselves*, (and) that without feeling representing is not possible, but that things are recognizable in themselves only *subjectively*, i.e., only insofar as they act on our feeling.” In this way Fichte concentrates himself on the relationship of *speculation* and *life*.²⁹

C. Fichte’s Jacobian Realism

Fichte’s source of this idea of unification are the writings of Jacobi, who was called by Fichte “the brightest thinker of his age”(1797:483).³⁰ This “brightest thinker” suggested, but rejected, the “strongest idealism” (1787b:310). More immediately

below on why he could not accept and therefore had to reject his own suggestion. But already in 1787 and then afterward the “strongest idealism” was conceived by Jacobi as a “unification of materialism and idealism into an inseparable essence” (Jacobi 1799a:7). He conceived this unified idealism as a solution to the mentioned Kantian aporia. Jacobi believed that we had to “let go” the Kantian thing in itself in order to save ourselves from the house of cards of the Kantian Idealism. This house is built on the shifting sand of pure “faith” (1787b:309). “So the transcendentalist must have the courage to assert the strongest idealism which has ever been taught. He should not fear even the critique of speculative egotism” (1787b:310). But Jacobi in reality does not so much want to discard, but rather to reprogram Kant’s thing in itself to give it a new function. It reappears in Fichte’s thought as the “Not-I.” Jacobi believes that the Kantian thing in itself must, in order to get out of the Kantian aporia, be *produced* by the transcendental subject. But this production must be understood as a transcendental *representation* and not as what Kant had in mind, as a *realistic* thing in itself (Jacobi, 1787b:307–309). “For according to the Kantian philosophy, the intended object, which is always only appearance, cannot exist outside of us as something more than a representation” (1787b:301f). The transcendental object must rather itself be produced³¹ by the transcendental subject. Fichte took this suggestion seriously and worked it into his own thought, now reconceived as a “productive idealism.”³² Jacobi, identifying himself as a “realist” (1787b:299), used in his brief suggestion of a “productive idealism” Kantian concepts or pairs of concepts which also flowed into Fichte’s development, such as “spontaneity” and “receptivity” (Jacobi 1787a:285; 1787b:306; Kant 1781:B277),³³ “mediation” (Jacobi 1785:263)³⁴ and “freedom” (Jacobi 1799b:311ff). These concepts then made their way into the writings of Novalis, Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Hegel, and those other giants in the intellectual “supernova” (Henrich 1992:20f) who contributed to the heated post-Kantian discussion at Jena of the time. Kant distanced himself in various writings from this development which he trifled with the same concept of “intellectual intuition” (Kant, 1781:B 335), but developed *positively* in §§76 and 77 of the *Critique of Pure Judgment* of 1790 in the sense of a *productive* capacity on the part of our ability to know: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel made use of this “*intellectual intuition*,” the bridging category between reality and ideality Kant himself proposed in the *Critique of Judgment* to coordinate the *mechanism* of natural laws governing an organism with its *teleological purpose*.³⁵ Extravagant claims made by the new development in the name of “intellectual intuition”³⁶ (Hammacher, 1969:132), claims which disregard knowable empirical evidence, are unhelpful for sound philosophizing, for *intuition* always reacts *receptively* to given sensual input, but the *intellect* produces a “*complete spontaneity of intuition*” (Kant 1790:777; 1790a: 275; AA V 406) “*completely independent*” from the sensibility. Kant himself has promoted since 1790 the importance of an “*intellectus archetypus*” (1790:780; 1790a:277, AA V 408). Jacobi, although rejecting mere speculation, stressed the legitimacy of immediate revelation and urged the primacy of “feeling and intuition” (1785:347; *Vorbericht* 1819 ed.).³⁷ Fichte, who followed him, placed intellectual intuition into the center of the emerging *transcendental idealism*. In the eyes of

Kant this new Fichtean development transgresses against all the *boundaries of reason* he hoped to establish in his critical work. In a shot before the bow of early romantic thought emerging with Jacobi's and Fichte's "intellectual intuition," he believed we should avoid "the realm of super-rationality filled with thick night" for doing this means "to dream enthusiastically instead of thinking" (1786:15, 14). But this development of early romantic thought is rooted in Kant's thought itself. As we have seen, Kant's aporetic philosophy aimed at *limiting* reason to what can be empirically known, but convinced the philosophical world that only the transcendental reflex provided access to that knowability. Ultimately the *real* and its *conceptuality* would have to be *idealistically* conveyed. On top of that, Kant argued in the Third Critique that only a spontaneously produced "*Urgrund*," the *intellectus archetypus* can explain the teleological dimension of organisms, a dimension which in principle did not fit harmoniously with finite understanding grasping of causal determinants: In principle this new departure in Kant is not at odds with the proposal of a "strong idealism" Jacobi had outlined, a path which he himself, however, was unwilling to take.³⁸

How strongly Fichte leaned on Jacobi becomes fully clear in the first essay he wrote at Berlin in 1800 immediately after he left Jena. Although it belongs to the popular genre, it has great systematic significance, recognized by Günter Zöllner (1998b:4,121ff). Zöllner correctly captures Fichte's thought as an interplay of *intelligence* and *will*. The will, however, ultimately has its root in *faith*. The *Vocation of Man* (1800a, 1800c) is paradigmatically organized into three parts, which follow an ascending order from *doubt* to *knowledge* and finally to *faith*. The third book on *faith* contains whole passages taken verbatim from various writings by Jacobi: Ultimately all knowledge is rooted in an unfathomable faith. For example: Jacobi had said in the *Sendschreiben*: "God is outside of me, a living being, existing for itself, or I am God. There is no third alternative" (1799a:22). Fichte writes in the *Vocation of Man*: "I demand something beyond a mere representation, which is, has been and will be" (1800a:248; see 1800c:93). On p. 251 (1800a:251; 1800c:97) Fichte conjectures that the autonomous I "is in reality the impulse of a foreign power invisible to me." He believes here that the assumed autonomy of the I is "merely a delusion." And a little later (1800a:253; 1800c:98f), he clearly pushes knowledge aside as the primary principle of his *Wissenschaftslehre*. "I have found the organ by which to apprehend . . . all . . . reality. Knowledge is not this organ (which I seek):—no knowledge can be its own foundation, its own proof; all knowledge presupposes another higher knowledge on which it is founded, and to this ascent there is no end. It is *faith*, that voluntary acquiescence in the view which is naturally presented to us, because only through this view we can fulfil our vocation." Humanity's *vocation* then is faith, not knowledge. A little later Fichte insists, just as does Jacobi over and over, that all demonstration and knowing will lead to nothing, but that since we will and do know, prove and dispute, any proving, disputing and demonstrating lies rooted in the deeper soil of faith: "The source of my conviction lies higher than all disputation" (1800a:245; 1800c:100).³⁹ This phrase, "higher than all disputation" or "higher than all reason" derives verbatim from Jacobi, who built his philosophy on a faith

“that passes all understanding” as the Philippians 4:7 passage, quoted here by Jacobi, states in the Revised Standard Version translation of the Bible. In the original German Jacobi states, that faith lies “higher than all reason,” “*höher denn alle Vernunft*” in the *Briefe über Spinoza* (1785:117:14–15). To avoid the “nihilism” of Idealism, Jacobi had in his *Sendschreiben* identified his philosophy as one of “*Not-knowing*.” His “Non-Philosophy” must be rooted in faith, which assumes “*a higher place than scientific knowledge*” (1799a:13), which is reached through the immediacy of “feeling,” “intuition” (*Ahndung*) and “faith” (1799a:15). This truth of faith is something we know “immediately” Fichte insists now with Jacobi, for “we are all born in faith” says Fichte (1800a:255) using the exact same words Jacobi used in his *Briefe über Spinoza* in 1785 against Mendelssohn (1785: 115:15ff). All of Jacobi’s accusations of Fichte, coming to a head in the *Sendschreiben*, which contributed centrally to Fichte’s difficulties with the Weimar authorities in 1799, ring hollow. Is Fichte’s thought at this time really all that *different* from Jacobi’s? Is it really “a philosophy of one piece” (1799a:13)? “Nothing could be plainer,” writes Hegel in 1802 (1802b: 397:30–37; 1802c:167)

than the fact that Jacobi has misunderstood this system, when he says in his *Letter to Fichte* that he believes that the Fichtean way produced “a philosophy which is *all of one piece*, a genuine system of Reason, and indeed that the Fichtean way is the only way it can be done.”⁴⁰ He opposes Fichte’s philosophy on the grounds that “what I [Jacobi] understand by the true is something that is *prior to* and *outside* of knowledge.”⁴¹ But on this point Fichte’s philosophy is in full agreement with Jacobi’s. The absolute exists for it in faith alone, not in cognition. (1802b:397: 30ff; 1802c:167)

And specifically on Jacobi’s critique of Fichte’s “scientific” nature of truth, Hegel goes on correctly saying that

Fichte is very far from sinning, as Jacobi claims (in the preface to his *Letter* p. viii)⁴² against “the majesty of the place” where the true resides outside the range of knowledge, nor does he want to “include it within the sphere of science.” On the contrary, absolute identity is, for him, quite outside of the sphere of knowledge, and knowledge is only formal, just as Jacobi would have it, and within the difference [of I and Non-I]. (1802b:397:37–398:5; 1802c:167f)

Both Fichte and Jacobi share here the same skeptical-realist perspective, which has *no knowledge of the absolute*. Therefore, reality participates for both Fichte and Jacobi in that “atheism of the ethical life” (Hegel, 1821:7), a reality not really participating in God and truth.⁴³ This charge of atheism, however, which Hegel does not make here explicitly but only implicitly, a charge which has its root in the incommensurability of God and world, is quite different from the official critique of Fichte’s work as equating the moral world order with God and of teaching “doctrines that oppose the general worship of God,” the specific charge formulated by Goethe⁴⁴ (Vieweg 1999:191–194).

It is now quite clear that Fichte came in 1799/1800 to share Jacobi’s “Non-Philosophy.” (Neuhausser, 1990:21ff) “LIFE is *actually* NON-PHILOSOPHIZING;

PHILOSOPHIZING *is actually* NON-LIFE” Fichte had said, as I had quoted above, at the height of the “atheism-controversy,” in his letter to Jacobi of April 22, 1799 (1799a:61). It is important to recognize this *skeptical* development of *non-knowledge* as an important step toward the full potential of German Idealism. Fichte’s *subjective* Idealism stands in a consistent line moving from the Cartesian “skeptical” idealism, which rejects the empirical foundation of knowledge, to Schelling’s *objective* and Hegel’s *absolute* idealism. (Janke, 1987:1) But it is clear that in Fichte’s subjective form that Cartesian skepticism was retained as Jacobi’s *Non-Philosophy*. For faith “is no knowledge, but rather a resolution of the will to admit the validity of knowledge” (1800a:254; 1800c:100).

D. Fichte’s Realistic Idealism and the Infinite Regress

Nevertheless, despite Fichte’s appropriation of significant elements of Jacobian thought, major differences and friction appear to remain.⁴⁵ Jacobi accuses Fichte’s philosophy in the *Sendschreiben* of having its reality “alone in *knowledge*” whereas his own philosophy, his “*unphilosophy*” has its “essence in *Not-Knowing*” (1799a:6). But if Fichte characterizes also his own philosophy as “*Non-Philosophy*,” as *does Jacobi*, where exactly is the point of disagreement? Why does Jacobi attack Fichte’s thought as a “nihilism” and why does he insist that *any* idealism, like Fichte’s, is essentially identical with being a “nihilism”? (1799a:19). For Jacobi all science is identically “nihilistic.” Late in his career, in the year of his death, in his *Vorbericht* to volume IV of his collected works of 1819 Jacobi says that it “is the interest of *science* that *God is not*.” (1819b:343:18–19). He had expressed this thought earlier in his *Von den Göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* of 1811 (1811:216). Scientific truth found by reason and demonstration inevitably leads to “fatalism,” Jacobi had already said in 1785 (1785:248:11), whereas his own true philosophy, just as also Fichte’s, is essentially a science of “not-knowing” which is “higher than all reason” (1785:117:15).

The place where Fichte and Jacobi differ, and at which Jacobi attacks Fichte, can best be understood in terms of one of the “two sides” (Hegel, 1801a:7:9; 1801b:82) in Fichte’s thought, the “authentic” speculative or the transcendental side on the one hand and the realistic side on the other. The first is philosophy in the genuine sense (Hegel, 1801a: 7:17; 1801b: 82) and derives from Kant’s idealism. As a genuine idealism it is the absolute identity of the principle I=I, the absolute identity of subject and object (1801a:36:13; 1802b:121). It *skeptically* denies the reality of anything outside of this identity of subject and object in the principal I=I: “Outside of it (is) nothing” (1801a:36:17f; 1801b:121). Hegel agrees with the one side, the speculative side in Fichte. So Hegel diagnoses Fichte’s speculative, transcendental thought as being “simultaneously an idealism and a skepticism” (Hegel, 1802b:320:35; 1802c:62). But it is identical with not the modern skepticism of Schulze but rather with the ancient form of skepticism, present in Plato’s *Parmenides* “which grasps and destroys by means of concepts of understanding the whole area of . . . (finite, realistic) knowledge” (1801c:207:17f) of which skepticism is so proud, that “heap of facts of consciousness” (1801c:207:10), that “bag of capacities,” that “collection”

of psychological capacities that can be gathered “as in a bag” (1807: 169).⁴⁶ Fichte had further developed this skeptical idealism, as we had seen, having been influenced by Jacobi. Hegel emphatically endorses Fichte’s *speculative* idealism, but is critical of the Jacobian (and also *Aenesidean*, i.e., Schulzean) *realistic* critique of transcendentalism. For Fichte’s thought is also indebted to Jacobi’s *realism*:

Besides the *genuine speculative idealism* there is another side to Fichte’s thought, which mixes up, in Hegel’s view, the Kantian transcendental tradition of *reason* (Vernunft) and reflexive *understanding* (Verstand). Fichte’s *realistic* indebtedness to Jacobi “has equated Reason with pure consciousness and raised Reason as *interpreted in a finite form* to the status of principle” (Hegel, 1801a: 7:11f; 1801b: 82).⁴⁷ The *realistic* side of Fichte’s thought has retained the Jacobian reflexive consciousness, a mere “finite form” in Hegel’s words, and has elevated it “to the status of principle” (1801a:7:1ff; 1801b:82). This latter must, as we had seen, be characterized as being deeply indebted to Jacobi’s realistic faith assumptions (Vieweg, 1999:194).

Hegel recognized clearly these “two sides” in Fichte (Hegel, 1801a:7:9). He affirmed Fichte’s transcendental *idealism*, which is identical to *skepticism*: All empirical sources of knowledge required to constitute the self need to be negated (Hegel, 1801c:207:22) to reach Fichte’s transcendental ground of self-constitution (Hegel, 1801a:36:5–20; 1801b:121). But Hegel rejected Fichte’s *realism*. It is essential that we retain this *nuanced shift*⁴⁸ of perspective in the development of thought from Fichte to Hegel with all that depends on this, like the emergence of Hegel’s *absolute* idealism out of a *critical* dependence on Fichte’s *subjective* idealism with the impotence of the *ought*. I need to clarify Hegel’s position in greater detail:

Fichte’s transcendentalism was identified by Jacobi as the principle of identity in the formula $I=I$. But opposing this principle of identity stands in Fichte’s thought a principle of non-identity, derived from Jacobi’s realism. But Hegel observes that “both principles $A=A$ and $A=B$. . . remain in their antinomy side by side, unsynthesized” (1801a:33: 19–20; 1801b:116).⁴⁹ And that means that the synthesis remains only a striving, not a real synthesis at all. It is at best a postulate (Vieweg, 1999:194f).⁵⁰ The pure *ought* reproduces the Non-I of the identity, but “this absolute opposition of Idea and intuition, and their synthesis . . . is nothing but a self-destructive demand, since it postulates a union which still must not happen” (1801a:46:26–28; see Vieweg 1999:195). With this mere *demand* the unacceptable infinite regress of the argument emerges,⁵¹ an issue thematized already by the ancient skeptics. Here Fichte retains his indebtedness to the practical philosophy of Kant, a debt further developed, as we have seen, in discussion with Jacobi’s suggestive “productive idealism.” Hegel is critical of the Jacobian *productive idealism*, for the realistic non-identity and the idealistic identity do not really achieve an identity or a unity. They are rather elevated into the mere production, understood as “an absolute production” in which “the product has no stability” (1801a:32:32, 1801b:116). Hegel clarifies the unsatisfactory nature of the Fichtean situation: The *realistic*, causal influence of what is known on the intellect, and the *idealistic* causal determination of empirical intuition as a knowable thing are unsatisfactorily related in Fichte’s thought. Their unification is at best a mere possibility and as such “only

an accident” (1801a: 33:3; 1801b:116; see Theunissen, 1970:20). The unity is no more than an *ought*. The antinomy between realistic and idealistic assumptions remains unresolved (Vieweg, 1999:194f). “This absolute juxtaposition of the (idealistic) idea and of the (realistic) intuition and the synthesis of both, which is nothing but a self-destructive demand, since it postulates a union which still must not happen—all this is expressed in the infinite progress” (1801a:46:26–29; 1801b:134). Hegel diagnoses Fichte’s “synthesis” of idealistic and realistic principles as insufficient, for the principle of identity of the infinite idea excludes non-identical multiplicity, whereas realistic temporality manifests pluriform juxtaposition and separateness, excluding all infinite identity (1801a:46:33ff; 1801b:134). A synthesis is not accomplished. It is only hoped for. A concrete presence of the I remains an illusion. A true temporality of the ideal is not achieved. And non-identical multiplicity precludes all possible redemption in the infinite.

Hegel does not reject Fichte’s thought. He is diagnosing his thought as inconsistent and imperfect. The truly transcendental side of Fichte does find the “identity of idealism and skepticism” (1802b:320:35; 1802c:62). It is nothing but a genuine reconciliation of infinite and finiteness. Hegel sees this present in the genuinely speculative idealism of Fichte: “When time was fulfilled the infinite longing that yearns beyond the body and the world reconciled itself with existence. But the reality with which it became reconciled . . . did not itself lose the character of absolute opposition implicit in beautiful longing. Rather, it flung itself upon the other pole, of the antithesis, the empirical world” (1802b: 318:4–10; 1802c:58f). So reconciliation is carried out *imperfectly*. This is Hegel’s critique of Fichte: His version of transcendental philosophy, as also Jacobi’s thought, is at best a dualism. Only the “one side” of Fichte’s thought, the genuinely speculative side, can claim idealistic status, but because it operates with the “realistic” assumption, its idealism is tainted, and complete reconciliation, which achieves the ideal, has not been found. Fichte’s merely “*formal* idealism which in this way sets an absolute Egoity and its intellect on one side, and an absolute multiplicity, or sensation, on the other side, is a dualism. Its idealistic side—which claims for the subject certain relations, called categories—is nothing but an extension of Lockeianism” (1802b:333:24–28; 1802c:78, my emphasis). Hegel says this from the perspective of the emerging philosophy of Spirit, which takes in the early Jena essays the form of the philosophy of identity, which stands close to Schelling’s philosophy of identity at this time.⁵² In the early Jena essays Hegel thinks that Kant’s, Fichte’s and Jacobi’s juxtaposition of “idealism” and “realism” is meaningless. This kind of dualism, permeating the line of thought from most recently Fichte, to Jacobi, and Kant to Locke, operates with a problematic view of consciousness. It is problematic because this view of consciousness is not “*Mitte*,” mediation (1803/04:277:18) or spirit or true consciousness at all (*Philosophie des Geistes* 1803/04:265ff): To truly understand the process of knowing the juxtaposition of the real and the ideal or of the known object and the knowing subject, of active spontaneity and passive receptivity, requires a reconceptualization of the concept of consciousness: A concept of consciousness that understands it as *mediating* spirit. “The concept of spirit determined in this way is *consciousness*

understood as the concept of the unity of simplicity and infinity” (1803/04:266:2–5). Hegel operates here with the category of “true” infinity (1803/04:266:4f). It is as the mediating work the “true infinity” of “spirit” which is identical with consciousness. However, the emergence of this concept of mediating “spirit” in 1803/04 is the later emergence of the solution to the problem of the ultimately *realistic* dualism of the tradition of thought from Fichte to Locke. With the concept of “spirit” which emerges in the lectures of 1803/04 Hegel “believes to be able to solve the idealism/realism dilemma as well as the epistemological problem in general” (Bienenstock, 1989:28). What emerges is the argument of the *limit*, the “Grenze.” Fichte’s and Jacobi’s “infinite” is not true infinity at all (1812/13a:79–81).⁵³ On the contrary: Because Fichte’s consciousness has no determinateness at all, his “is a completely ludicrous idealism, which interprets the subject, the active agent of the opponents, as one member of the opponents and sees it as determined while at the same time hoping to liberate it from the determinateness of an externality” (1803/04:293:16–19).⁵⁴ It cannot be both determined and *not* determined. If the infinite is conceived as separating itself from the finite and determined for the sake of hoping to gain true autonomy, it is no more than a part of the finite itself insofar as it is *determined* by the finite (Hegel, 1830:87:27–32). In the Fichtean juxtaposition of the infinite and the finite the former stands in a *Wechselbeziehung*⁵⁵—in an “alternating determination” to the finite:

The finite is so only in relation to the ought or to the infinite, and the latter is only infinite in relation to the finite. They are inseparable and simultaneously completely other over against one another. Each has the other of itself in itself.

It is this alternating determination (*Wechselbestimmung*) . . . which emerges as the *progress to infinity*, a progress which in so many forms and applications is accepted as something ultimate beyond which thought does not go, but, having got as far as this *and so on to infinity*, has usually reached its goal. The reason why this *transcending is itself not transcended* has become apparent. It is merely the bad infinite that we have at hand; it is indeed transcended, for a new limit is posited, but the result is rather only a return to the finite. This bad infinity is in itself the same thing as the perennial ought; it is indeed the negation of the finite, but it cannot in truth free itself therefrom. (1812/13b:81:4–17)⁵⁶

This infinite of the infinite progress, which remains affixed with finitude, has its other, the finite in itself. For this reason it is thereby conditioned and is itself *finite*. For this reason it is the *bad* infinite because it is not so in and for itself but only insofar as it relates to its other. *This infinite is itself finite*. (1812/13b: 81:22–27)⁵⁷

To be sure, Hegel concedes that “indeed, the unity of the finite and infinite” is found in Fichte. “But this unity is not reflected on. Yet it is this unity alone which evokes the infinite in the finite and the finite in the infinite. It is the mainspring of the infinite progress.” What remains is the

vain unrest of advancing beyond the limit to infinity only to *find* in this infinite a new limit in which, however, it is as little able to rest as in the infinite. This infinite has the fixed determination of a *beyond*, which cannot be reached, for the very reason that *it is not meant* to be reached. (1812/13b:81:26–36; 1812/13a:142)

The Sage Colleges

Notes

This paper is a significantly modified version of a paper with the title “Jacobi, Fichte und Reinhold über Spekulation und Leben,” read on October 4, 2000, at the Fichte conference on the theme “Fichte in Berlin,” sponsored by the *Internationale Fichte Gesellschaft*. That paper has been published in *Fichte und Seine Zeit*, ed. Hartmut Traub (Beiträge zum vierten Kongress der Internationalen Johann-Gottlieb-Fichte-Gesellschaft in Berlin vom 03–08. Oktober 2000). *Fichte Studien*, vol. 21, Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2003, pp. 5–29. This adaptation differs in these points: For space reasons the role of Reinhold in the Jacobi-Fichte dialogue around the turn of the century is almost completely deleted. Also, for the same reason, much of the contextual discussion of that dialogue, which had been relegated to the notes, is deleted. This English-language version also differs in a more substantive way in its last part, in which Hegel’s critique of Fichte’s *Sollen* is highlighted, an argument completely lacking in the original paper.

1. Fichte to Jacobi April 22, (1799:61) In translating the original I leave intact Fichte’s own way of accenting in capital letters, as also other forms of accentuation such as cursive print. Throughout this paper, I consult available translations wherever possible. Occasionally I will modify available translations for reasons of precision, style, or new standardization of terminology, e.g. Hegel’s “spirit” has been substituted for the older “mind.”

2. See W. Schrader, (1993) See also K. Hammacher (1993a).

3. Fichte here adds this note after “point of unification”: “Which Reinhold, if I understand his last letter correctly, appears to seek, being misled more recently by Jacobi’s opposition to speculation.” Fichte’s reference to Reinhold’s “last letter” indicates Reinhold’s (first) *Sendschreiben*, his letter to Fichte of March 27 and April 6, 1799 (1799). Fichte rejects any possibility of finding a mediating position, a *Vereinigungspunkt*, between the common, ordinary perspective, which views objects directly, without interjecting the transcendental reflex, and the transcendental reflective process, which thematizes thought itself. Schrader observes (1993:91) that this letter indicates a first step Reinhold takes distancing himself from Fichte. Reinhold is “the first theoretician of unification of the post-Kantian philosophy” (Bondeli, 1995:20).

4. Fichte was knowledgeable of and centrally influenced by Reinhold’s writings, and they corresponded with each other—during the second phase of Reinhold’s thought, he was very close to Fichte. Reinhold’s main influence on Fichte consisted in the impetus to transcend Kant’s duality of the sources of knowledge, intuition and conceptual originality. Furthermore, Reinhold and Jacobi were in close contact and talked with each other about Fichte’s position. Reinhold writes to Fichte in a letter dated March 27 and April 6, 1799, his first *Sendschreiben*, (Reinhold, 1799) which was published, that he had met Jacobi in Eutin

and talked with him and that it became clear to him that he, Reinhold would “have to take position between *him* and *you*.” (1799:47) Reinhold comes to speak about this, his intermediary position between Jacobi and Fichte also in his 2nd *Sendschreiben* of 1801 (1801:126–134 See esp. p. 128). Fichte finally, after repeated requests by Reinhold to look at Bardili, responds in his devastating *Bardili Rezension* of 1800 (1800b). Reinhold himself was implicated by this harsh criticism. See on this Schrader, (1993).

5. For reasons of space limitations, this paper must de-emphasize Reinhold’s position in the convoluted issues debated in the post-Kantian debate.

6. Italics added. I should mention here that Hammacher’s first book on Jacobi of (1969) carries the title *Kritik und Leben, Critique and Life*, the two major conflicting themes in Jacobi’s philosophy which became so pivotal for early Romantic and early Idealistic philosophy. Hammacher stressed the existential-philosophical roots of the later so called school to Jacobi and Fichte. On Fichte’s philosophical existentialism see the excellent essay by Hartmut Traub, “Fichtes Lehre vom Sein. Ein existenzphilosophischer Deutungsversuch” (2003b) in Rolf Ahlers, editor, *System and Context/System und Kontext*. Vol. VII, (2003a) forthcoming.

7. Jacobi is a major originator of *vitalistic* philosophy. *Life* is the true form of *Vernunft*, reason, insofar as it is consciousness. “Life and consciousness are one and the same.” (*David Hume* 1787a:263f). Life is characterized by *action* and *reaction*. Perception is essentially *reaction*, and the truly perceptive *person* is constituted in its *reasonableness* through feeling, *Empfindung*. So *Vernunft*, reason, constitutes the person and this constitution is nothing but the reaction of *feeling* to the action of vital life: “Every perception is . . . a concept. As the action, so the reaction. If the capacity to take in impressions developed so plentifully and perfectly that an articulated echo arises in consciousness, the word elevates itself above feeling. What appears is what we call *reason*. What appears is what we call person. / So the reasonable being is different from the unreasonable being through a higher degree of consciousness, that is, through *life*. This degree must emerge in the same relationship as the capacity emerges to differentiate from *other* things extensively and intensively. – God differentiates himself most completely. So God must have the highest personality. He must possess *a completely pure reason*.” But Jacobi goes further. There are *gradations of personality*. “The perfection of feelings determines the perfection of consciousness *with all its modifications*. As is the case with receptivity, so also with spontaneity, as with sense, so with understanding. The degree of our capacity to distinguish ourselves from things outside of us intensively and extensively is the degree of our personality. It is the degree *of our spiritual height*. With this most precious capacity of reason we have received *divine intuition* of him WHO IS: OF A BEING *which has its life in itself*. Freedom drifts toward the soul from this source and the realms of immortality open up.” (1787a:285).

8. Fichte says in a fragment added to his letter to Jacobi of April 2, 1799: “Only *nature* gives to us life, not *art*” (1799:60); “art” of course is artificial, reflective and speculative. Philosophy and speculation is art and artificial, not natural. *Wissenschaftslehre* is not *vitalism*: although the *Wissenschaftslehre* “is not *Lebensphilosophie*, philosophy of life, because it does not have the vitality and the immediacy of experience, it nonetheless provides a complete image of it,” i.e., life. (*Sonnenklarer Bericht*, 1801a:408). God, being, the absolute, is the “exclusive” and “true life” (1805:361).

9. Jacobi to Hamann letter of June 16, 1783, *Briefwechsel*, (1987) vol. I,3, quote p. 163.

10. This *theodiceic* idea is central to the thought of Odo Marquard: Modern philosophy from Kant to the beginning of the 20th century is dominated by the “struggle against its own superfluosity.” Marquard, (1989: 414, 416, 420). This formulation derives from Helmut

Plessner's *Die Verspätete Nation*, first published in 1935, Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* 1982 vol. 6, p. 169. See also Marquard, "Unburdenings: Theodicy Motives in Modern Philosophy" (1991:8ff). On Hegel's conception of philosophy as theodicy, see my essay (2000).

11. This principle, which probably Jacobi first pronounced in modernity, has had a long history in our western intellectual tradition. It reappears, e.g., in the law professor Pierre Schlag's recent book *The Enchantment of Reason*. (1998). The thesis is that no system of reason is infallible, and that to claim this implies having "an immoderate confidence, an excessive faith in (your) reason" which "would translate into a kind of overextension of reason." Quote at 1.

12. My emphasis. Hegel took over and inverted the meaning of this Jacobian statement. See e.g. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* ed. Moldenhauer/Michel, TWA vol. 9, p. 20. But shining through this inverted appropriation of Jacobi's formulation is Schlegel's critique of Jacobi in his review of his novel *Woldemar* (1796:265) as an anti-intellectual theologian who *does not use his head*: Whoever asks of philosophy to make a beautiful human being like Shakespeare's *Juliette* "will sooner or later arrive at Romeo's sublime statement in Shakespeare: 'Hang up philosophy!'" Schlegel criticizes Jacobi's "superstition and *Schwärmerei*" as an *anti-philosophical anti-intellectualism*. We know that Hegel was influenced by Schlegel's *Woldemar* review. Hegel is talking in the quoted passage (TWA 9:20) about philosophy of nature, specifically about the science of physics. Philosophy conceptually reformulates the material physics has provided to it. And such philosophical understanding of physics is the true form of understanding such material. See Dieter Henrich, (1989:124). Of course Marx appropriated Hegel's dialectic but believed that he needed to "demystify" Hegel: Religion and philosophy are a drug paralyzing hands and feet. So Hegel's dialectic needs to be turned upside down to walk on its realistic feet.

13. Physics is the pedestrian science, that is, it is essential. "Physics must work together with . . . philosophy so that it can translate its understood generality into the concept by proving how it proceeds as a necessary whole by means of the concept." Hegel, *Encyklopädie* of 1830. (TWA vol. 9:20) The heady, conceptual work of philosophy is required to fashion pedestrian physics into a whole, i.e., coherent and methodologically convincing science. And because philosophy is essential, it is not willful. "Philosophy's way of representation is not a willful fancy to want for a change to walk on your head after having walked by foot for a long time." For "since the ways of physics do not satisfy the concept we must proceed further" through the work of philosophical conceptualization. (TWA 9:20).

14. See. Lauth, (1971:266). In the *Second Introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte pointed to Jacobi in support against his opponents. He says (1797:508): The main source of errors of "my opponents lies in the fact that they do not make clear what it means to demonstrate. They do not observe that at the root of all demonstration is something completely incapable of being demonstrated. Also on this point they could have learned from Jacobi. Jacobi has clarified completely this point, as also many other issues of which my opponents know nothing."

15. When not rendering my own translation of the original text, but quoting George diGiovanni's translation (Jacobi, 1994), I quote that text in addition to the original German text in the Jaeschke edition (1799a).

16. The term "philosophy of identity" is often reserved for Schelling. But it is no longer a secret that Schelling was inspired by the Jacobi. I do not believe that Jacobi actually used the term *Identitätsphilosophie*, or "philosophy of identity." But he did talk about his "inverted Spinozism" (1799a:6) as an "absolute identity . . . (of) the object and the subject"

(1799a:6) or of “the identity of this object-subject” (1799a:12). Schelling was indeed centrally influenced by Jacobi’s discussion of Spinozistic “identity” in the development of his own “philosophy of identity.” See Lauth (1974c:228 and note 15).

17. Jacobi makes reference twice (1799a:7) in his *Sendschreiben* to the New Testament figure “Nathanael” once to “*Nathanael Reinhold*” and just a few lines down he says: “I am a Nathanael only among the *Gentiles*.” See Hammacher (1998:14).

18. Moses Mendelssohn is accused in the *Briefe* of such a religion of the law. Moses Mendelssohn expressed, however, in *Jerusalem Or the Religious Power of Judaism* of 1783, the view that “faith is not commanded. For it accepts no other command than those that come to him on the path of conviction. . . . Wherever eternal truths of reason are addressed we speak of *knowledge* and *recognition*, but not of faith.” Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften* (1971 ff.) vol. 8: 166. It is clear that Jacobi uses here the traditional Christian *misrepresentation* of Judaism and the Torah as the “law.” Judaism is known in Christianity, and specifically in Jacobi’s Lutheran persuasion, as the “religion of the law,” and Christianity knows itself as the “religion of the gospel.” Kant shared this view of Judaism and it is present even in Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem*, although he does correct in the quoted passage the questionable perspective. Jacobi characterizes Fichte as the “Messiah of speculative reason” and Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* is as the speculative “unification of (realistic) materialism and Idealism” (Jacobi, 1799a:7) a book of the *Jewish law*. It has become a “stumbling stone” to the “Jews of speculative reason” insofar as the *Sendschreiben* is written at the height of the Atheism Controversy in which the Christian orthodoxy of Fichte’s speculative thought—Kant belongs to this group—is put into question. Jacobi, however, contributed as much as anyone to condemn Fichte with his *Sendschreiben*, as Fichte fully knew. On the relationship of Jacobi’s, Kant’s and Mendelssohn’s questionable view of Jewish “law,” see Hammacher (1998:14f).

19. The *Wissenschaftslehre* “is not something which exists independent of us or outside of our actions. It is rather something which is to be brought forth through the freedom of our spirit which operates in a certain direction.” The *Wissenschaftslehre* “ist, als solche, nicht etwas, das unabhängig von uns, und ohne unser Zuthun existirte, sondern vielmehr etwas, das erst durch die Freiheit unseres nach einer bestimmten Richtung hin wirkenden Geistes hervorgebracht werden soll.” Fichte (1794c:46).

20. This view is true more of Jacobi than for Fichte.

21. In the *Briefen* Jacobi had argued that *thinking* God would demote him inevitably into a finite being. This argument stands against Kant, who placed barriers before speculative reason for fear of the production of empty dreams.

22. See to the following classic formulation Jaeschke (1986). Interpreting Jacobi’s formulation, Jaeschke says: “Jacobi places the knowledge of non-philosophy in place of philosophical knowledge of nothing. Truth is not in knowledge, but rather outside of any science of knowledge if there is to be any truth at all. If it were humanly knowable, it would cease to be truth” (1986:118).

23. See what Hegel replies to this statement by Jacobi: “Philosophy, on the contrary, says, *there is a third way*, and it is philosophy only because there is one. For philosophy predicates him as the absolute identity of being but also thought, that is, Ego, and recognizes him as the absolute identity of being and thought. Philosophy recognizes that there is no *outside* for God, and hence that God is not an entity that subsists apart, one that is determined by something outside it, or in other words, not something apart from which other things have standing. Outside of God nothing has standing at all, there is nothing. Hence the *Either-Or*,

which is a principle of all formal logic and of the intellect that has renounced Reason, is abolished without trace in the absolute middle" (1802b:399:3ff: 1802c:169).

24. Jacobi knows that "standing outside of the door of Fichte's lecture hall" he had prophesied Fichte's "unification of (realistic) materialism and idealism into one inseparable being" (1799a:7). He had prognosticated this in his *Ueber den transzendentalen Idealismus* (1787b).

25. See Zöllner (1995:119) See Breazeale (1981:555f).

26. Schleiermacher appropriated Jacobi's doctrine of the identity of self- and world-consciousness. He was indebted to Jacobi for the duration of his life on this point. We know that for sure now that we have the original of a letter to Jacobi of March 30, 1818 (Schleiermacher 1818). Until recently, this letter had been available only in the form of copies but the original has been found. See Arndt, (1996:1062f).

27. Breazeale does not dwell on Jacobi's *immediacy*. But he does highlight Fichte's "circularity of thought" (1981:555).

28. See Wayne Martin (1996).

29. Wolfgang Schrader says (1972:11): "Only in the course of the Atheism Controversy does the concept of life, conceived in the early stages of (Fichte's) thought, become questionable. This is so because now no longer is the I posited as the principle of life but rather life is now recognized as the origin and source of the reality of the I."

30. See Frank (1997:81).

31. In the *Sendschreiben* Jacobi talks of the "productive imagination" of transcendental idealism (1799a:12). It is as the "strongest idealism" (1787b:310) necessary because he interprets the Kantian philosophy anti-idealistically. Here is the whole passage: "The Kantian philosopher goes right against the spirit of his system whenever he says that the objects produce *impressions* on the senses through which they *arouse* sensations, and that they *bring about* representations. For according to the Kantian hypothesis, the empirical object, which is always only appearance, cannot be outside us and be something more than a representation. On the contrary, according to the same hypothesis we know not the least of the *transcendental object*." (1787b:301f; 1787c:335). If then we cannot really know the thing in itself—Jacobi rejects this "realist" doctrine of Kant as inconsistent with his transcendental hypothesis—Kant's transcendental idealism must be made consistent through the "productive imagination" (1799a:12) of the "strongest idealism" (1787b:310). All true idealism, bent on scientific knowledge, is "productive" in this way (1799a:25, 27).

32. See on this Jaeschke (1999:151–153): "Produktionsbegriff des Wissens und Ausschließlichkeitsanspruch der Wissenschaft." I need to add that theology can very well be interested in Fichte's „productive Idealism“ and in the way Hegel later reworked it and still affirm scientific status. So Jaeschke's „Ausschließlichkeit“, i.e., exclusiveness, which he claims for science and reason can be large enough to also accommodate theological interests.

33. In Jacobi's *David Hume* (1787b:285) "spontaneity" stands opposite to "receptivity." Just this juxtaposition of "spontaneity" and "receptivity" can be found in Kant, (1781a:B274). Schleiermacher developed this pair of concepts in his *Glaubenslehre* and in his *Dialektik*. Because of lack of space I cannot pursue here the unique and varying ways different thinkers after Kant developed this pair of concepts.

34. Jacobi speaks in the famous *Beylage VII* to the *Briefe über Spinoza* of "mediation" (1785:263, 1994:377). On p. 262, Jacobi speaks of a "*beginning* . . . of an inner resolution or of a self-determination" and of that which is "immediately" clear to us in distinction to

“what is the simple result of *mediation*.” See to this Jacobian root of the famous Hegelian (and Schellingian) use of *Vermittlung*, “mediation” Dieter Henrich, *Konstellationen* (1991:237f).

35. Kant uses the concept “intellectual intuition” in various places, e.g. (1781:B 335) in the remark “on the amphibole of concepts of reflection.” At the end of the 3rd chapter of the second book of the transcendental analytic. Generally, the term “intellectual intuition” is used in a positive way at the fountainhead of early romantic and early idealistic thought, e.g. by Fichte and later by Hegel. Fichte uses the term “intellectual intuition” positively e.g. in his *Aenesidemus* review. Fichte says here: “The I is *intellectual intuition* . . . because it is, and it is *what it is*; so it therefore *posits itself* completely self-sufficiently and independently” (1794:22). Here Fichte also expresses the idea of the absolute synthesis of the immediate I which, however, cannot grasp itself in thought, which, rather is present only in the “intellectual intuition.” See to this Arndt (1994:64.) See also Lauth (1974c:251f.) This term “intellectual intuition” also appears in Fichte’s *Antwortschreiben* to Reinhold (1801b:159). In Hegel the “intellectual intuition” is e.g. the recognition of the Spinozistic infinity of substance. It is a knowledge in which “the particular and finite are not excluded [from the infinite] as opposites, as [they are excluded] from the empty concept and from the infinity of abstraction” (1802b:355:33–34; 1802c:107). See the comments of Frank and Zanetti in Kant (1790b:1294ff) esp. on §§76 and 77 of the *KU* (1790b). Eckart Förster traces in his essay (2002) the significant history of the two paragraphs 76 and 77 of the *KU* in the early romantic and early idealistic developments.

36. In the essay “Was heißt sich im Denken orientieren?,” published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in October (1786), but after Moses Mendelssohn had died that same year, Kant favors Mendelssohn’s “*pure reason*.” He stresses this “*mere reason*” (my emphasis) against Jacobi’s “extravagant claims of reason” and “secret sense for truth onto which could in the name of faith be grafted tradition or revelation without the affirmation of reason.” Mendelssohn’s path is to be favored, Kant believes. Humans can orient themselves in thought by trusting reason *exclusively*.

37. See Dierse, U./Kuhlen, R. (1971) “Anschauung, intellektuelle,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* I:349–451.

38. The relationship of Jacobi and Kant is complex. Jacobi’s understanding of *Sein*, specifically on his the relationship of *Möglichkeit* and *Wirklichkeit* in his *Letters on Spinoza* had been influenced by Kant’s precritical essay on *Der Einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes* of 1763. See Henrich, *Grund* (1992) 48ff, see esp. 50–55.

39. In the Berlin *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* of 1801 Fichte speaks of the grounds of certain knowledge: “On what does . . . knowledge rest?” (1801c:5) And he goes on to indicate that “pure being,” the “Absolute,” is that ground. It lies “*above absolute knowledge and is independent of it*.” (1801c:13 my emphasis). Fichte here also speaks of the “feeling of dependence” (1801c:62) of knowledge on this ground which lies beyond and above knowledge, indeed, he uses Schleiermacher’s term *Abhängigkeitsgefühl*. This later development in Fichte lies outside of the more immediate way in which Schelling (and the early Jena Hegel) interacted with and criticized Fichte’s I=I as “abstract,” “empty” and as having no content. Schelling’s critique of Fichte’s early, Jena thought promises to retrieve concrete reality, which lies beyond the restrictions of reason through negative theology. But are not that Schellingian (and Heidegger’s) being and the later Fichte’s Absolute related, being mediated by Jacobi’s idea of an absolute “*beyond all reason*” which grounds all human reason and thought? Höle at least hints at this (1988:38 and note 45). I suspect, however, that Wolfgang Janke is correct

that “possibly the most powerful controversy on the principle and method of the first philosophy in the 19th century has not (yet) happened” (1993a:41).

40. Hegel quotes here, without reference, Jacobi’s *Sendschreiben* (1799a:13).

41. Hegel quotes another passage from Jacobi’s *Sendschreiben* (1799a:15).

42. Hegel quotes another passage from Jacobi’s *Sendschreiben* (1799a:5), again without annotation.

43. Fichte wrote to the Weimar government minister Voigt on March 22, 1799 (Röhr, 1987:366f.). In it Fichte said that a similar charge of atheism must be made over against the *Generalsuperintendent* Herder’s *God*. Herder’s “published philosophical treatise on God is as identical with atheism as one egg is with another,” Fichte said (Röhr, 367). But that critique, which is quite valid, has implications for Jacobi, for Herder wrote his *God* in response to Jacobi’s *Sendschreiben*. Jacobi was quite miffed about Fichte’s accusations of Herder as an “atheist,” although he did want to help Fichte. Fichte says that his own discretion prohibits him from writing on Herder’s atheism. He says he would leave this question to “some one else” who will “soon” do this. Schelling had been planned to be that someone else. But Schelling refrained from writing on Herder’s atheism.

44. See Voigt an Goethe March 29, 1799, Röhr, (1987:372f) and particularly Goethe’s formulation of the official charge in note 227, p. 583.

45. With Hegel I will argue that ultimately the points of difference between Fichte and Jacobi are not very weighty. The perspective of an abiding and irrevocable conflict between Jacobi and Fichte or an “ambivalence” (Hammacher, 1993:75) on the part of Jacobi over against Fichte *despite* the observed mutual influence and similarity in thought-structure is possible only if Hegel’s insight into their basic identity is ruled out of bounds. Klaus Hammacher (1993) observes the mutual influence and proximity. He observes the abiding difference between them that cannot be reconciled. This “both and” dichotomy is absent from Hegel’s analysis. Would Hammacher take Hegel’s perspective, the “both-and” would also disappear. But Hegel’s perspective is today only one of a variety of possible perspectives, for Fichte-research has reestablished a position *sui generis* for Fichte by throwing light on Hegel’s shadow, in which Fichte has stood for a long time. It is an important question, whether Hegel “did justice” to Fichte (Siep, 1990:301). Another question that needs to be asked is whether the ability to bridge the gap between the “abstract” I=I and the empirical totality—the “other”—is possible or not. Hegel does criticize Fichte in *Faith and Knowledge* with the Schellingian argument that the bridging is possible only in “faith.” Is this really an “unjust accusation” (De Vos, 1997: 258f) and does Hegel portray a “distorted image of Fichte” (De Vos, 1997:259)? This is after all a major reason why we identify Fichte’s transcendental idealism as a *subjective* idealism.

46. See Hegel (1802b:329:36), see Düsing (1994:246f), Vieweg, (1999b:194), Baur, (1999). A note on Baur’s essay. The way in which for Hegel idealism is *identified with skepticism* in the three mentioned early Jena essays does not become clear in Baur’s essay. He does observe “similarities” and “differences” between Fichte’s and Hegel’s views on *skepticism* (1999:85). But why *idealism* should be *identical* with skepticism does not become clear. True: since the discussion around skepticism of the time is at least in the early romantic discussion rooted in Fichte’s thought, the difference, identity or similarity between Fichte and Hegel *on this point* is of relevance. But symptomatic of Baur’s analysis of that relationship is that he pays no attention to the most authoritative authors on Hegel’s interpretation of Fichte. Most of them are critics of Hegel’s critique of Fichte, such as Helmut Girndt (1965) Ludwig Siep (1970, 1990, 2000), Wolfgang Janke (1983, 1993a and 1993b) de Voss (1997)

and Christoph Asmuth (1999). A single sentence from the most authoritative Fichte scholar should suffice to illustrate the problem. Janke says that “Hegel has not known the true work of Fichte” (1983:168:49).

47. My emphasis. I have here modified Cerf/Harris to highlight the nuanced point Hegel makes here.

48. This nuanced shift of constellations of philosophic issues in the development of idealism is not retained in Michael Baur’s discussion of “The Role of Skepticism in the Emergence of German Idealism” (1999). See above in note 46. That this shift is not retained in Baur’s interpretation of Fichte is quite clear when we realize that Hegel categorizes Kant, Jacobi and Fichte as *realists* who “take refuge” to “common reality” (1802b:318:18) and in whose thought the “empirical” realm takes “*absolute*” priority, which is a “profound crudity” (1802b:318:19). To this crudity relates the fact that all three are identified by Hegel as *eudaimonists*! This comes out in the fairly long untitled preamble of *Faith and Knowledge* (1802b:315–324) prior to the first of these ultimately realistic, eudaimonistic philosophers of understanding, Kant (1802b:325ff). The title of *Faith and Knowledge* of 1802 must be taken seriously: “*Reflective Philosophy of Subjectivity in the Complete Range of its Forms as Kantian, Jacobian, and Fichtean Philosophy.*” My emphasis. With “reflective philosophy” (*Reflexionsphilosophie*) Hegel identifies throughout *Verstand*, understanding. So according to the title Kant, Jacobi and Fichte are all philosophers of *Verstand*, understanding, not *Vernunft*, reason! To interpret Hegel’s later thought correctly it is not a coincidence that he *already here*, in *Faith and Knowledge* of 1802 makes a distinction between two forms of eudaimonistic happiness: the psychological and empirical kind opposed by Kant, Fichte and Hegel, and the Aristotelian “highest bliss” which is the “highest idea” (1802b:318:33; 1802c:59). Hegel makes a very veiled reference (1802b:318f) to the famous passage in Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII,7, on the “highest bliss” of philosophy’s self-recognition, which he later quotes in the original Greek at the end of the *Encyclopedia* of 1830. Aristotle was present to Hegel’s mind throughout certainly his Jena, but we know also his Frankfurt and Bern years, right back into the Tübingen and Stuttgart years. That is important for the emergence of the philosophy of spirit in 1803/04, where not Herder, as Harris assumes, but rather Aristotle played a key role. See Bienenstock (1989).

49. Hegel’s critique of Fichte was influenced by Friedrich Schlegel’s critique of Fichte beginning in the fall of 1796. Schlegel had observed that the principle of identity, of $I=I$, is insufficient and cannot support by itself the claim of systematicity. See Manfred Frank (1996:33f). Schlegel’s “Wechselgrundsatz” “alternating ground,” which appeared earlier as “Wechselerweis,” “alternating proof,” but also “Wechselbegriff,” reappears in Hegel’s *Logic* of 1812/13 as *alternating determination*. And it is no coincidence that Schlegel’s observation that to make Fichte’s first, to his mind insufficient *theoretical* principle $I=I$ work, Fichte requires a second, a *practical* principle of the *ought*, reappears in Hegel’s critique of the *infinite progress* and the “bad infinite” (1812/13: 79ff). It should be added that Schlegel’s critique of Fichte’s philosophy is related to his view that it (and Jacobi’s thought!) is a “mysticism.” That the Absolute is “indemonstrable” and cannot be verified—a position which both Jacobi and Fichte share—destroys Fichte’s claim to scientific clarity. Jacobi’s position displays a “mystical,” “theological talent” (Schlegel, 1796: 267), which will ultimately “hang up philosophy” (1796:265), Schlegel says in his review of Jacobi’s *Woldemar*. In this review his *Wechselerweis*, “alternating proof,” appears as an earlier version of the same idea and partial composite word (1796:266). Jacobi applied this *skeptical principle* of the “alternating proof” also to Fichte: He cannot redeem the *scientific* claim. On Schlegel’s critique of Jacobi and Fichte as mysticism see Frank, (1996:31f). Asmuth rejects as unfounded Schlegel’s critique of Fichte’s thought as a mysticism (1999:68 and note 3).

50. Kant's doctrine of postulates had been central to the development of not only Fichte's thought, but also Schelling's and Hegel's early development, which was then influenced by Fichte's Jena thought. See Klaus Düsing (1999). In *Glauben und Wissen* Hegel sees also Jacobi as belonging to this group of "striving" philosophers, because also he sees the absolute as residing in an unreachable beyond, unrecognizable by reason.

51. The circularity of reason and the infinite regress, affirmed by Fichte as unavoidable although as legitimate, is a central issue in Hegel's critique of Fichte's theory of the subject. Its *critique* was voiced first by Schlegel, just as a similar issue of *circularity* was observed by Carl Christian Erhard Schmid and by Carl Immanuel Diez in Reinhold. See Frank (1996:34). See on Hegel's critique of the infinite regress Klaus Düsing (1976, 1984:13): The problem of subjectivity is the problem of the infinite reiteration. "In the language of German idealism we could formulate the infinite reiteration thus: The I is indeed able to objectify itself as an object by means of its reflection. But in doing so, it must presuppose itself as subjective spontaneity. So the objectification is never possible." This infinite reiteration is a problem because the subject is never determinable because of the infinite regress. Therefore it does not really exist. This is a logical problem and as such it is different from the insufficient form in which it appears in Locke's thought. Here the subject is simply seen as an empirical organ of perception, which categorizes and sorts the perceived objects. Düsing says (1976, 1984:13) of the infinite regress:

This infinite reiteration emerges in the empirical act of reflection in the determination of an empirical self-representation. But it could be harmless as an alternative to the theory of empirical subjectivity if we consider first that an adequate self-determination of a real, empirical self-consciousness is capable of presupposing only a possible, not a real, fully developed self. And secondly, reflection as an act of thought must be able to avoid the infinite reiteration separate from any empirical material in the context of pure thought and self-consciousness. In this way the problem of the infinite regress might not necessarily affect the concept of empirical self-consciousness.

52. See Bienenstock (1989:27f).

53. This chapter in the *Seinslogik* of 1812/1813 carries the title "Alternating Determination of the Finite and the Infinite." Hegel's critique of Fichte's (and Jacobi's) infinite pointed out that it was no more than the "bad" or "finite infinite" (1812/13b:81:13, 80:10 Miller has 1812/13a:150 "spurious infinity"), i.e., it was no true infinite at all, but rather a finite infinite, since it simply borders on finitude and is thus not an infinite at all. Hegel came to resolve this issue with the help of Schlegel's category of the "alternating proof" or "alternating determination," which already in 1796 emerged as the "alternating *Grundsatz*," "alternating grounding principle." See Manfred Frank (1996:33ff).

54. Hegel often does not identify the target of his observations. However, since he discusses (1812/13b: 291:21–293:19) the opposition between realism and idealism, we can assume that he has in mind in this long passage mainly the way Fichte discussed the problematic in the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794. We know that Hegel had read this work carefully and we can surmise "with certainty" (1812/13b:383) that Hegel is discussing here the realism/idealism problematic as Fichte discussed it in his *Grundlage*. I agree therewith with Bienenstock (1989:29).

55. As indicated, Hegel's *alternating relation* ("Wechselbeziehung") or *alternating determination* ("Wechselbestimmung") in the *Logic of Being* is an important category. In fact, Hegel considers it to be *the* philosophical issue, as does Jacobi (1785:18). Ultimately *alternating*

determination (Wechselbestimmung) is a principle of *indifference*. It is a principle of absolute skepticism. It is a category which Hegel here, in the *Seinslogik* brilliantly analyzes as the problem of all philosophy, as it first emerged in Jacobi's *Briefe über Spinoza*, (1785:12–20).

56. See Vieweg (1999:22 and note). In my translation I depended on A. V. Miller's rendition of *Hegel's Science of Logic* (1812/13a:141f). Since, however Miller's translation is based on Lasson's edition of 1923, I have used the critical edition prepared by Hogemann/Jaeschke of 1978. So my rendition varies from Miller's.

57. The great Idealism and Fichte scholar Wolfgang Janke clarifies well Hegel's critique of Fichte in his essay "Das bloß Gesollte" (1993b). See esp. 178f. What I call here with Hegel's term "bad infinite" is identified 179 by Janke as "in the end empirical." "Fichte makes" from Hegel's perspective, "the worthless attempt to achieve a first philosophy with the category of the ought," writes Janke.

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