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DIE WILLKÜR DER ICHSUCHT:
JEAN PAUL'S CLAVIS FICHTIANA
AND THE CRITIQUE
OF GERMAN IDEALISM

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
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ABSTRACT

Die Willkür der Ichsucht:
Jean Paul’s Clavis Fichtiana
and the Critique of German Idealism

by

John W. Nelson

It was no coincidence that the dawning of the Romantic movement in Germany occurred simultaneously with the emergence of the philosophical idealists. The attempt to expand upon Kant’s Critical Philosophy resulted in the development of a number of ambitious philosophical systems, all of which claimed to be the completion and ultimate culmination of Kant’s ideas. For the early German Romantics the most influential among Kant’s successors was Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Much has been made of Fichte’s speculative philosophy and its subjective foundations as being the major factor that contributed to the unbridled subjectivity of the Romantics as well as their own penchant for speculation. While the literature of the time abounds with examples of Fichte’s influence, the following study analyzes a direct confrontation with Fichteanism by a popular author of the period, Jean Paul Friedrich Richter. Although he may have shared the Romantic fascination with Fichte’s philosophy, Jean Paul was anything but a devotee -- nor was he inclined for that matter to number himself among the Romantics. Deeply influenced by the Gefühlspolitik Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, he remained critical of Kantianism and post-Kantian idealism throughout his life. And for Jean Paul, it was Fichteanism that best exemplified the inherent danger in any philosophy that
granted reason sovereignty over all other human faculties and elevated the intellectual powers of the subject to such an extent that it threatened to displace the Deity. In 1800 he published a satirical tract, the *Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana*, with which he hoped to counteract Fichte's growing influence. Through the fictitious character of Leibgeber, an enthusiastic Fichtean eventually driven mad by his own philosophy, Jean Paul tried to demonstrate the absurdity that resulted from following Fichte's principles through to their logical conclusion. The ultimate effectiveness of his parody, however, is mitigated by his own selective understanding of Fichte's philosophical system. Nonetheless, Jean Paul's satire remains a powerful testament to the intensity of the philosophical debates of the time, and it is with an eye towards its historical significance that I have also provided the first complete, annotated English translation of the *Clavis*. 
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Many people have helped me to reach this point, but several deserve special mention. To Dr. Michael Winkler fell the painstaking task of reviewing and improving my translation of the *Clavis*. I am very grateful for his assistance, as well as his guidance throughout my graduate career. I am equally grateful to Drs. Klaus Weissenberger, Brigitte Z. May, Margret Eifler, and Paul Lockey for their constant support and encouragement. A special thank you to Mr. Roye Templeton whose non-idealistic perspective often helped me to regain my own when I was up to my *ich* in Fichte. Last, but by no means least, I wish to thank my family: Mom, Dad, Nana, Aunt Beverle, Uncle CJ, and Sunni. They deserve more gratitude than I could ever express.

*

In Memory of Ryan Smart (1974-1998)
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Ich ist -- Gott ausgenommen: dieses Ur-Ich und Ur-Du zugleich -- das Höchste so wie Unbegreiflichste, was die Sprache ausspricht und wir anschauen.

-Jean Paul, Levana, §31 (1807)
1. Introduction

Unser Zeitalter ist das eigentliche Zeitalter der Kritik, der sich alles unterwerfen muß.
-Immanuel Kant

It has become a commonplace to introduce studies of Fichte's influence upon the literary world of his day with the assessment of Friedrich Schlegel. This author, the most prominent among the early Romantic critics, promoted Fichtean philosophy as one of the "greatest trends of the age."¹ Schlegel's well-worn phrase may indeed be an accurate reflection of the attention Fichte's work had garnered, at least among intellectuals. But his positive valuation was not a judgement shared by all. Among those who were considerably less partial to Fichte's unique brand of idealism we must count the poet and novelist known as Jean Paul (1763-1825). Taking his cue from Hamann, Herder and Jacobi, all of whom were impassioned critics of idealism as represented by Immanuel Kant, Jean Paul engaged in his own ardent and prolonged assault upon transcendental idealism and upon the aspiring heir to Kant's Critical Philosophy in particular. In arguments ranging from heavy-handed mockery to surprisingly subtle analysis, Jean Paul subjected Fichte to numerous taunts and critiques which he scattered throughout his literary corpus and personal correspondence. When the latter's influence had assumed alarming proportions, he went so far as to subject his philosophy to a sustained attack, the result of which was the popular and yet short-lived satire entitled *Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana* (1800).

I.

As a philosophical Kampfschrift, the Clavis Fichtiana was one in a long line of polemics designed to weaken the growing hold of Kant’s philosophy in the late eighteenth-century. Given the initially poor reception of Kant’s main work, it would have been difficult for anyone to foresee that the Kritik der renen Vernunft (1781) would be responsible for single-handedly ushering in a new era in philosophy -- especially since the successors to Kant would so frequently come to conclusions contrary to his own. Nevertheless, the Kritik quickly found a considerable number of vociferous detractors, all of whom proved to have a profound impact on Jean Paul.

The first to begin the offensive against Kant was Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), a long-standing critic of the Enlightenment faith in reason whose predilection for revealed religion and mysticism helped earn him the title of the Magus of the North.² Not being a professional philosopher, Hamann considered himself Kant’s intellectual inferior and was reluctant to publish his critique of his fellow Königsberger. Ultimately, it would not find its way into print until after Hamann’s death; yet even though it first appeared publicly in the same year as the Clavis, the Metakritik über den Purismum der reinen Vernunft had been circulating privately among Hamann’s circle of friends since 1784. Among the first recipients of the Metakritik was Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), who had been one of Kant’s most devoted students at the University of Königsberg 20 years earlier and was by then a distinguished philosopher in his own right. It was no doubt this early acquaintance with Kant

²Hamann’s claim to seniority was due to the fact that he had surreptitiously obtained the galley proofs of the Kritik from Kant’s publisher. For a more detailed account of perhaps the most neglected of Kant’s early critics see Beiser, The Fate of Reason, pp.16-43.
that led to Herder’s youthful advocacy of the ideals of the Enlightenment. However, by the

time he published his *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte* in 1777, a work that interpreted

history largely in terms of standards of conduct that vary for different societies, he had

unequivocally gone over to the anti-rationalist camp. His sympathies had thus already lain

with Hamann long before he had set eyes on the latter’s *Metakritik*. (It was, in fact, Herder

himself who had urged him to undertake the project in the first place). Even though it would

be years before he would try his own hand at a critique of transcendental idealism, Herder

remained greatly influenced by the Magus of the North.³ In particular, it was the latter’s claim

that it was illogical to speak of the ‘purism’ of reason, i.e., the view seemingly espoused by

Kant that reason is a separate faculty apart from every other human faculty (if one can even

speak of such a thing), which had made the greatest impression upon him. Hamann argued

that by abstracting reason from its manifest role as a function or characteristic of particular

human *activities*, Kant had unwittingly granted it the status of an independent and self-
sufficient entity of some sort; it is easy enough to conceive of the activity of ‘reasoning,’ but

to speak of ‘reason’ as if it exists in isolation amounts to nothing more than the familiar

Platonic absurdity of postulating another realm of existence apart from that known to us.⁴

³Although a second-hand account, Jean Paul’s letter to Christian Otto from September 2,

1798 provides a good indication of Herder’s indebtedness to Hamann: “[Herder] schreibt

nächstens eine Metakritik Kants, der sich, wie er sagt, vor Hamann tief gebogen haben sol”

[B,III,3:94]. An explanation of the notations from Jean Paul’s collected works can be found

in the bibliography. All citations from Jean Paul will be reproduced as originally published

with no attempt made to correct the often unconventional spellings in his earlier works. For

an analysis of the peculiarities of his orthography see Eduard Berend, “Zur Orthographie des

jungen Jean Paul.” [II,4:87-94].

⁴Beiser, pp.39-40.
By the time Herder was finally moved to write his own critique of Kant in 1799, the *Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, he had established a deep and paternal friendship with Jean Paul that would continue unbroken throughout their lives.\(^5\) Herder respected his young friend’s intellectual acumen enough to send him the preliminary draft of his *Metakritik*. And while he may not have expected to receive several pages of suggested improvements in return,\(^6\) he adopted many of them -- a fitting tribute to one who had likened him to Phoebus shooting the arrow into the “kritischen Python” [B,III,3:117].

As lasting as the influence of Herder and Hamann proved to be for Jean Paul,\(^7\) there was yet another who had openly aligned himself against Kant’s deification of reason and won Jean Paul’s lifelong admiration: the *Gefühlsp hilosoph* Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819). Jacobi had shared the view of Herder and Hamann that reason was subordinate to human interests and desires and as such not a self-governing ‘faculty,’ but he had also distinguished himself from both men through his insistence that reason and faith were incompatible. Whereas Hamann maintained that the realm of faith was superrational and could never be threatened by the claims of reason, Jacobi believed that a singular pursuit of reason resulted

\(^5\)Herder’s death was a tremendous blow to Jean Paul. It is a sign of his devotion to his friend that the last book he read as he himself lay dying was Herder’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-91); see De Bruyn, *Das Leben des Jean Paul Friedrich Richter*, p.151. It is also worth adding here that Herder did not remain content with just one critique of Kant. A year after the *Metakritik*, he published *Kalligone*, a work criticizing the theory of aesthetics advanced by Kant in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790).

\(^6\)See the letter to Herder from November 23, 1798 [B,III,3:117-122].

\(^7\)Among Jean Paul’s many (unrealized) projects was the publication of an annotated edition of Hamann’s collected works which he had contemplated into his 54th year; see the letter to Wilhelm Dorow from September 18, 1817 [B,III,7:147-148].
in atheism.⁸ And as for Herder, it was his partiality for the ultra-rationalist philosophy of Spinoza -- then experiencing a renewed interest in Germany thanks to Lessing's commendation of the philosopher -- that led to the rift between them. In a move mirroring the basic controversy that surrounded Spinoza in his own time, Herder had creatively tried to interpret the former's philosophy in a manner that attempted to remain consistent with the traditional claims of religion and morality; Jacobi, of course, took the opposite and decidedly more orthodox interpretation: Spinozism was unadulterated atheism.⁹

From Jacobi's point of view, Spinoza and Kant represented philosophical antipodes. The latter's emphasis upon freedom and creativity stood in stark contrast to the rigid determinism of the former.¹⁰ As one would expect, however, this did not entail that Jacobi found Kant's subjective idealism any less dangerous. Jacobi's criticisms will be dealt with in later chapters. For our purposes here, we need only note that his work was more than just a source of inspiration for Jean Paul; it became the basis for his own critique of Kant and the "Philosophen-Horde" [B, III, 3:7] to follow. It was in reference to Jacobi's own critique of Spinoza, Über die Lehre des Spinoza (1785), that he made just such an admission himself:


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⁸Beiser, p.47.

⁹Jacobi, Über die Lehre des Spinoza, p.216. For a discussion of Jacobi and the Spinoza Controversy see Beiser, pp.44-91.

Four years later, after reading Jacobi’s *Über das Unternehmen des Kritizismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen* (1802), he went so far as to praise the elder philosopher’s work as “das jüngste Gericht (Krise) über die Kritik wie über Fichte, wo sich die Sache mit Feuer endigt” [B,III,4:165-166]. Be that as it may, our concern is with the critique of the Critical Philosophy and Fichte in particular that emerged in the intervening years. As we shall see, Jacobi’s dialogue *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus* (1787) put forth the popular critique of idealism, namely that according to the principles of idealism it is exclusively the activity of consciousness which is responsible for the external world; if the idealist were to be truly consistent, he would not shy away from embracing this unabashed egoism. Over Fichte’s frequent objections that his idealism was not of the ontological kind, Jean Paul took up this reductio ad absurdum argument and gave it literary expression in his *Clavis Fichtiana*.

That which served as the immediate inspiration for his satire of Fichte, however, was Jacobi’s open letter to the philosopher in 1799, which appeared in print at the height of the controversy surrounding the atheistic implications of Fichte’s philosophy.\(^{11}\) In Jean Paul’s eyes, Jacobi was the first to have revealed Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* to be but the latest and most pernicious incarnation of Kantianism in its attempt to establish an unassailable and self-enclosed system of reason. For Jacobi, any philosophy that granted unqualified sovereignty to human reason and looked to self-consciousness for the sole explanatory force (as idealism

\(^{11}\)Like Hamann’s *Metakritik*, Jacobi’s letter to Fichte had been circulating privately until its growing popularity led him to publish it. See Jean Paul’s letter to Jacobi from August 20, 1799: “Schlichtegrol sagte mir, daß dein Brief an Fichte gedruckt werde. Gott und dir sei Dank! In Jena trugen sie ihn herum als Trophäe und Ehrenbogen, der diese Philister doch erschlägt” [B,III,3:227].
must do) effectively eliminated the need for God, amounted to nothing but speculative egoism, and culminated in nihilism. The fact that Jean Paul’s own refutation of the “Messias der spekulativen Vernunft” shares the very same themes (and was published the following year) suggests that his satire should be seen as a continuation of Jacobi’s critique, a work which Jean Paul studied enthusiastically — “Auf deinen Brief an Fichte lauer’ ich mehr als auf die ganze Ostermesse” [B,III,3:165] — but which apparently did not nullify Fichte to his satisfaction — “Dein Brief an Fichte ist für mich so kurz als wär’ er an mich” [B,III,3:251].

If Jean Paul thought his 40-page satire was more up to task, Jacobi did not want to disappoint his most obsequious admirer, even though he believed that his Brief an Fichte was a more accurate assessment of Fichteanism. (It was for this reason that Jacobi allowed Jean Paul to dedicate the Clavis to him on the express condition that it not be stated that he had read it

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12 Jacobi, Brief an Fichte, p.183. Although the term “nihilism” had been used earlier in the century, this marks the occasion when the word first entered into the popular parlance of philosophy. Jean Paul himself would employ the term four years later in §2 of his Vorschule der Ästhetik, wherein he castigated the Romantics under Fichte’s spell as “poetische Nihilisten” [I,5:31].

13 Jacobi, p.158.

14 Nor did Fichte feel the sting of the criticism that Jacobi believed he had delivered. In his response, Fichte wrote: “Meinen wärmsten Dank, verehrungswürdiger, innigst geliebter, für das treffliche Schreiben, das Sie die Güte hatten, für mich zu schreiben. Meine Zeit, die durch die Wendung, welche mein Schicksal genommen, für ganz andre Dinge in Anspruch kommt hat mir noch nicht erlaubt, dasselbe so sorgfältig zu studieren, um zu finden, wie jenes Schreiben gegen mich seyn könne” (Letter from April 22, 1799). Fichte, Briefwechsel, II:88. See also the letter to Reinhold from April 22, 1799. Ibid., II:80.

15 As an example of the fawning devotion that Jacobi was accustomed to receiving from Jean Paul see the following letter from March 3, 1800: “Mein guter Heinrich, sage mir doch einmal bei Gelegenheit wieder, daß du mich lieb hast. Ich will gleich den Mädgen, dasselbe wenn nicht Trillionen- doch Millionenmal wiederholen hören” [B,III,3:301].
prior to publication, which would have implied that the work had his full approval).  

Judging from the poet’s own estimation, his incisive little broadside had dispatched Fichteanism so handily that further comment was unnecessary. But no matter how firmly Jean Paul may have held to this conviction, he would still find occasion to rebuke the philosopher, especially in his tendency towards self-aggrandizement. The most notable instance occurred in 1808 when Fichte had again attained prominence — ‘restored to prominence’ would perhaps be more accurate in light of the loss of esteem incurred after the so-called Atheism Controversy — with the extremely favourable reception of his Reden an die deutsche Nation. The unbridled enthusiasm for this work wherein Fichte extolled the inherent uniqueness of the Germans (and the German language in particular) is understandable in light of the political events of the time. However, the simultaneous championing of his Wissenschaftslehre prompted a review from Jean Paul which accused him of suffering from the same affliction that continued to grip so many of his followers, namely, a seemingly incurable “Fichtiomanie” [II,3:694].

II.

One aspect that Jean Paul and Fichte do have in common — albeit posthumously — is the fact that they are little read in the English-speaking world. Given the current resurgence of interest in German idealism in this country and abroad, the situation is beginning to change, at least for the latter. Thanks largely to the recent work of Daniel Breazeale, key texts of Fichte’s have been made available in English for the first time which provide a substantial

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16Harich, Jean Pauls Kritik des philosophischen Egoismus, p.273.
contribution towards a fuller understanding and appreciation of his philosophical project.¹⁷

With these new translations, the nature of the critical literature on Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre has also come a long way since John Lachs' 1972 assessment that the existing English commentaries were essentially of little value and should be consulted "without any great hope of enlightenment."¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is all too easy to lose one's way in the heady realm of Fichtean idealism, even for those initiated in the tradition of continental philosophy; when Hermann Schmitz, one of the foremost German scholars in the field of idealism and consequently no stranger to the complexities of speculative philosophy, makes just such an admission, it is difficult not to be a little daunted at the prospect of confronting Fichte's thought.¹⁹ And it should go without saying that those philosophers from the


¹⁹See his Die entfremdete Subjektivität: von Fichte zu Hegel: "Was Kant angeht, kann Punkt für Punkt nüchtern Rechenschaft gegeben werden; bei Fichte, Schelling und Hegel gerät die Antwort ins Stocken" (p.1).
analytical tradition who approach Fichte at all overwhelmingly share Roger Scruton’s recent condemnation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as “abstract to the point of unintelligibility.”\(^{20}\)

In light of the difficulties inherent in Fichte’s work, the newly-afforded ‘accessibility’ of Fichte to English speakers should thus be understood in a very limited sense. In the case of Jean Paul, accessibility remains a problem even among his own countrymen. Outside of specialists in the field of German studies, the majority of contemporary Germans know the poet by name only and at best as the author of the best-selling *Hesperus* (1795).\(^{21}\) If one of the leading Jean Paul scholars is correct and this novel truly was “das gelesenste, gefeiertste und [...] wirkungsvollste belletristische Prosabuch deutscher Sprache in der ganzen Periode zwischen der Französischen Revolution und den Kriegen von 1813 bis 1815,”\(^{22}\) the time when it was required reading in a course on German literature has long since passed. Even Jean Paul himself had no misconceptions about the esoteric nature of his work. It was with a hint of pride that he admitted to his closest friend Christian Otto in 1793 that his writing appealed less to the “Minorität” and more to the “Minimität” [B,III,1:397]. When he reached the height of his popularity a few years later, this self-assessment would still ring true. For

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\(^{20}\)Scruton, *Modern Philosophy*, p.504. Schopenhauer’s oft-quoted denigration of Fichte’s philosophy as the “Wissenschaftsleere” reveals that this is not a contemporary problem by any means.

\(^{21}\)It should be remembered that the German book trade was then just emerging from its infancy, and the notion of a best-seller was far different from contemporary standards. In his own lifetime Jean Paul saw three editions of *Hesperus* published, each of which averaged 2,500 copies. For a succinct description of the state of the literary profession at the time Jean Paul was writing see Ludwig Fertig, “Jean Paul und das moderne Berufsschriftstellertum,” in *Jahrbuch der Jean-Paul-Gesellschaft* (München: C.H. Beck, 1989), pp.93-116.

\(^{22}\)Harich, p.105. Harich also uses this claim to question the validity of Schlegel’s choice of *Wilhelm Meister* in his characterization of the age quoted at the beginning of this chapter.
despite the more wishful accolades of contemporary Jean Paul enthusiasts, he enjoyed what could only be called a moderate success. Like Fichte, he had an undeniably loyal and dedicated following (including a significant number of female admirers whom he referred to as his Erotic Academy!). But the number of unsold copies of his works that burdened his publishers attests to the fact that he was far from attaining the status of Goethe and Schiller, and both men paid him little mind indeed.

For many aspiring authors in the late eighteenth-century, Goethe embodied the creative and successful genius. And Jean Paul, as a fellow countryman as well as a contemporaneous, held him in the highest esteem. He counted his works among the “Schoosbücher” [B,III,2:124] he knew by heart, and after seeing a popular engraving of the Weimar poet he confessed to his friend Otto that he “hätte mit den lebendigen Lippen auf die himlischen – gestochenen fallen mögen.”23 With a letter almost reverent in tone,24 Jean Paul sent Goethe a copy of his first novel, Die unsichtbare Loge, and followed it with a copy of Hesperus two years later. If he had hoped for some form of recognition from Germany’s unofficial poet laureate, he was sorely disappointed. Truth be told, he would not even receive a polite acknowledgement.

Following on the heels of the success of Hesperus, Jean Paul’s first visit to Weimar

23See the letter from June 20, 1795 [B,III,2:96]. The praise evoked by an engraving of Schiller is equally as lavish: “Schillers Portait oder vielmehr sein Nase daran schlug wie ein Bliz in mich ein: es stellet einen Cherubim mit dem Keime des Abfals vor und er scheint sich über alles zu erheben, über die Menschen, über das Unglück und über die – Moral. Ich konte das erhabene Angesicht, dem es einerlei zu sein schien, welches Blut fliesse, fremdes oder eignes, gar nicht sat bekommen.”

24See the letter to Goethe from March 27, 1794 [B,III,2:8].
in June of 1796 had been anxiously anticipated by most men (and women) of letters. Early enthusiasts of his work like Herder welcomed the poet with open arms, but Goethe and Schiller simply regarded him as more of a curiosity than a literary equal. Schiller’s amusing description of Jean Paul after their first encounter shows how wide the personal gulf between them was; he characterized him to Goethe as “fremd wie einer, der aus dem Mond gefallen ist”\textsuperscript{25} — a sentiment that Jean Paul would also come to feel towards these literary giants. He developed a profound distaste for their rigid Classicism: since Goethe had deemed the formal and emotional restrictiveness of Classicism to be ‘healthy,’ Jean Paul gladly consigned himself to the ‘ailing’ and tempestuous inner world of the Romantics.\textsuperscript{26} Moreover, the seeming inability of these “ästhetischen Gaukler in Weimar” [B,III,3:77] to endure any form of criticism and their unconcealed arrogance\textsuperscript{27} were alien to Jean Paul, and they (not to mention Fichte) would later become subjects for parody in his most ambitious novel, \textit{Titan} (1800-25)

\textsuperscript{25}Quoted in DeBruyn, p.156.

\textsuperscript{26}After reading Goethe’s autobiography, \textit{Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit} (1811-1813), Jean Paul wrote to a friend that he too planned to write an autobiography, although it would be more “eine des Innern [...] wie bei Moritz, als eine des Äußen wie bei Goethe” [B,III,6:297]. (Letter to Hofrat Jung from October 24, 1812). For a more thorough analysis of the often strained relationship between the two poets see Norbert Miller’s “Jean Paul \textit{versus} Goethe: Der Dichter und die Forderung des Tages” [II,4:459-496].

It must be made clear here that the equation of Jean Paul’s work with Romanticism is done by way of contrast only, for in actuality his feelings toward this new literary school were often characterized by ambivalence. As Jean Paul himself summarized his literary standpoint: “Die alte Dichterwelt ist mir untergesunken, ich gehöre nicht zu ihr; ich gehöre auch nicht zur neuen, sondern ich stehe und bleibe allein.” (Quoted in Müller, \textit{Jean Paul und seine Bedeutung für die Gegenwart}, p.6). A good account of Jean Paul’s reception of the Romantics has been provided by Eduard Berend; see the first part of his “Jean Pauls Ästhetik” in \textit{Forschungen zur neueren Literaturgeschichte} (35) 1909: 1-294.

\textsuperscript{27}See the letter to Charlotte von Kalb from November 8, 1796 wherein Jean Paul criticizes “der genialische Egoismus” [B,III,2:271] of both men.
1803), a four-volume work that demanded ten years of his life.  

While the steadily waning interest in Jean Paul is due in large part to the poet’s own eccentricity, it is tempting to attribute some degree of blame to Goethe as well; if the later reception of Jean Paul was not coloured by the caustic couplets in the Xenien or the acrimonious poem in Schiller’s journal Die Horen, then surely Goethe’s vitriolic condemnation of the poet after his death has prejudiced more than one potential reader.  

Nevertheless, if criticism is indeed a form of praise, then Jean Paul was in good company, since Fichte was also the recipient of Goethe’s pointed inattention on more than one 

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2⁹It was the excesses of the Romantics that compelled Jean Paul to reconsider the merits of Classicism — something which led to an eventual reappraisal of Goethe as well. See the letter to Jacobi from October 4, 1809, for example, wherein Jean Paul states that Faust (1808) is antithetical to the “Titanen-frechheit” [B,III,6:57] he had perceived earlier in Goethe.

2⁸“Richter in London! Was wäre er geworden! Doch Richter in Hof ist / Halb nur gebildet, ein Mann, dessen Talent euch ergötzt.” The reference to London is a veiled reference to Weimar. For his part, Jean Paul refused to comment on the Xenien at all; in the above-mentioned letter to Charlotte von Kalb he wrote: “Doch habe ich gegen Göthe und Schiller eben so viele Liebe als eigenliches Mitleid mit ihren eingesehen Herzen” [B,III,2:271].


3¹The appearance of Wahrheit aus Jean Pauls Leben (1826), a collection assembled and published posthumously by Jean Paul’s nephew, had raised Goethe’s ire since he considered the title to be a personal swipe at his own Dichtung und Wahrheit. As he wrote (quite unjustly) to Eckermann: “Jean Paul hat nun, aus Geist des Widerspruchs, ‘Wahrheit’ aus seinem Leben geschrieben. Als ob die Wahrheit aus dem Leben eines solchen Mannes etwas anderes sein könnte, als daß der Autor ein Philister gewesen!” (Letter from March 30, 1831). Goethe, Gespräche mit Eckermann, p.624.
Besides the common difficulty of their work and their relative neglect in the Anglo-American world, there are a large number of historical similarities that point to a closer communion between Jean Paul and Fichte than I have thus far suggested. Born only one year apart, both men emerged from very humble origins. As the sons, respectively, of a pastor and a ribbon-weaver, they belonged to the most impoverished in German society. In keeping with tradition, the focal point of their communities was the church. They were each raised by (and to become) fervent Lutherans. An early indication of their prodigiousness can perhaps be found in their reputed ability to memorize the pastor’s sermons almost verbatim and repeat them with equal conviction — a talent which undoubtedly contributed to Fichte’s skill as an orator and to Jean Paul’s documented ability at school debates. The former’s precociousness was so evident in fact that he had even attracted the attention of a local baron who decided to finance his university education. Yet whatever their early promise, their later academic careers were less than exemplary. While they both entered the university as students of theology (Fichte with the help of the above-mentioned private funding and Jean Paul with testimonium paupertatis in hand), their interests were quickly drawn to other areas, not the least of which was philosophy. Unwilling to commit themselves to a single discipline, they both left the university without completing their studies; whereas Jean Paul left of his own accord, Fichte was forced to withdraw since his obvious lack of direction and progress led

32Goethe’s jabs at Fichte often took place in private correspondence; for example, see the letter to Jacobi from February 2, 1795 where he refers to Fichte as “ein wunderlicher Kauz.” (Schulz, Fichte in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen, p.45). Goethe had a great deal of admiration for Fichte initially, but the latter’s unyielding self-righteousness — especially in his later dealings with the court authorities — was more than the Geheimrat could bear.
to a falling out with the baron’s widow.

Faced with the need to support themselves, they followed the early route of many German intellectuals and accepted a number of rather frustrating positions as private tutors. The source of their dissatisfaction, however, was less the children under their charge and more the necessity of having to earn a living through something other than their desired occupations; 33 Fichte still hoped to earn a degree in theology, and Jean Paul had long since convinced himself that he was destined to be a writer. Nevertheless, the experience was not entirely unprofitable since it encouraged them to develop their own educational theories. 34 The time-honoured mechanistic method of rote memorization was contrary to the individualistic natures of both Jean Paul and Fichte, and they extolled personal creativity in their students along with the necessity of thinking for one’s self -- so much so that Selbstdenken was to become the cornerstone of Fichte’s later philosophical system.

It is with a comparison of their philosophical positions that the similarities come to an end. Jean Paul’s intellectual opposition to Fichte has already been established. The following work will analyze the grounds of his objections, more specifically, the argument as presented in his Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana. Jean Paul’s own claims notwithstanding, the conclusiveness of this ‘key’ was by no means commonly accepted, certainly least of all by

33Jean Paul was, in fact, quite enamoured with his pupils, but Fichte’s overly-developed sense of pride exacerbated an already burdensome duty when the more well-to-do families whose children he tutored often treated him as a common servant.

34Jean Paul’s educational doctrine, Levana oder Erziehlehre (1808), was far more elaborate than that of Fichte, however, who had jotted down his observations in informal notebooks for his own benefit; see the Tagebücher zur Erziehung der Otschen Kinder (1788-89) found in Vol. II, 1 of the Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften of Fichte’s work (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann, 1964-).
Fichte himself. In the public announcement of a new presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1800), he addressed his more vocal critics and in reference to Jean Paul's critique bluntly stated: "Dieser Schlüssel mag wohl nicht schließen; denn der Verfertiger desselben ist nicht hineingekommen." Fichte's own partiality aside, it is an opinion that has been borne out in the research on his intellectual adversary. For despite the claims of scholars such as Norbert Miller, who describes Jean Paul's satire as the "Frucht einer genialischen Laune" [I,3:1,130], and Wolfgang Harich, who lauds it as "einer der glänzendsten Polemiken, die die Philosophiegeschichte kennt," the *Clavis Fichtiana* is not a work deserving of praise for its philosophical lucidity and perspicacity, and it is today -- much like its author -- all but forgotten. If one finds mention of it by name in contemporary studies of idealism, it is usually relegated to a footnote reiterating matter-of-factly the reason for Fichte's own outright dismissal of the work: that Jean Paul had failed to penetrate into his philosophy (or, at the very least, failed to appreciate Fichte's aspirations) and thus attacked what the *Wissenschaftslehre* did not contend.

35 Fichte, "[Ankündigung:] Seit sechs Jahren," p.158. For Jean Paul's reaction to this comment see the letter to Christian Otto from March 30, 1801 [B,III,4:59].

36 See, for example, Storz, *Studien zu Jean Pauls "Clavis Fichtiana,"* p.9; Brose, "Jean Pauls Verhältnis zu Fichte," p.83; and Schweikert, *Jean Paul*, p.43.

37 Harich, p.42.

38 A relatively recent anthology of works written in immediate reaction to Fichte's philosophy (sympathetic as well as unsympathetic) has seen fit to include the full text of the *Clavis*; see *Aus der Frühzeit des deutschen Idealismus. Texte zur Wissenschaftslehre Fichtes 1794-1804*, ed. by Martin Oesch (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1987). But even here it is roundly admitted that Jean Paul missed his mark: "Fiches Intention, Bewuβtsein zu ergründen, ohne in den dogmatischen Fehler zu verfallen, hat er -- wie sein Lehrmeister Jacobi -- nicht verstanden" (p.38).
In light of the complexity of Fichte’s thought and the wide-spread disagreements that continue to surround his philosophical project, it is difficult to condemn Jean Paul for interpreting Fichte as an ontological idealist in the strict sense of the word and thereby oversimplifying the aims of the *Wissenschafstlehre*. One need only examine a few contemporary works on Fichte to see the varied nature of interpretations in our own day: an “egology,” a “first-person ontology, or theory of being from the point of view of the experiential subject,” “both a phenomenology of consciousness and an idealist metaphysics” and “a dynamic ethical idealism” are but a few of the designations.

All questions of philosophical merit aside, Jean Paul’s polemical little treatise is significant as a historical document testifying to the intensity of the controversy that raged around 1800 and centered on the ethical and spiritual implications of Fichte’s *Wissenschafstlehre* — as it was popularly understood. To that end I share Harich’s opinion that the *Clavis* does indeed possess “einen zeitüberdauernden Wert” and it is with this consideration in mind

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40 Rockmore, *Fichte, Marx and the German Philosophical Tradition*, p.11.
41 Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, p.44.
42 Ibid., p.51.
43 Harich, p.42. Harich’s praise of the *Clavis* is based primarily upon its relentless critique of the solipsistic implications of idealism, however, he too recognizes that it fails to rise to the level of its opponent: “Jetzt nämlich muß ohne Beschönigung gesagt werden: Es ist das philosophische Grundgebrechen der *Clavis*, daß ihr für die Tiefe, die Originalität und den rationellen Kern der Fichteschen Freiheitsdoktrin jeder Sinn fehlt. Sie erschöpft sich in der Widerlegung und Verhöhnung der subjektivistischen Erkenntnistheorie, in der phantasiebeflügelten satirischen Ausmalung ihrer abstrusen Konsequenzen und sieht dabei gar nicht, worum es Fichte letzten Endes gegangen ist” (p.89).
that I have made the complete text of the *Clavis* available in English for the first time along with a considerable body of annotations.

While most works on Fichte assume at least a passing familiarity with the history of idealism, if not the philosophy itself, I make no such assumption in this study. It would, of course, be impossible to address here all of Fichte’s philosophical precursors as well as those who exerted an equivalent influence upon Jean Paul. The first chapter is therefore a presentation of Jean Paul’s philosophical development with particular emphasis upon his own confrontation with Kant, the most prominent of the idealists. A discussion of the historical reception of Kant, be it ever so brief, would carry us too far afield; the focus upon Jean Paul’s reaction to the Critical Philosophy is sufficient for our purposes here since he was representative of those opposed to the overwhelmingly rationalist strains of Kant’s work. As we will see in the second chapter, the Critical Philosophy was of far greater concern and importance to Fichte than to Jean Paul. I will therefore present a synopsis of the former’s philosophy in its own terms, i.e., as a refinement of Kant’s transcendental idealism. The exposition of Fichte’s *Wissenschafstlehre* can only be cursory, however. My intention is to present enough of the foundations so that the reader can acquire both an appreciation of Fichte’s philosophical path and see the point at which Jean Paul fails to follow him. (In actuality, all Fichte himself had ever succeeded in presenting was the *foundations* of his philosophical system. His main work -- like so many of Jean Paul’s -- would remain fragmentary). It remains for the final chapter to analyze the *Clavis* in detail as the product of Jean Paul’s rancor at “die fröstelnde und erkältende Ichsucht, welche Fichte in unsere Zeit verlegt” [II,3:697].
2. “Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten”:
Jean Paul as Poet and Philosopher

Der vollkommene Philosoph muß ein Dichter
mit sein und umgekehrt.

-Jean Paul

That the most celebrated era of German literary history should coincide with the Age of Idealism is hardly surprising. The creative energy at the turn of the nineteenth-century was of such immensity that it penetrated into all intellectual pursuits, and novel achievements in German philosophy were arguably rivaled by those in German letters. The emergence of authors such as Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis signalled a clear departure from the Classicism of Winkelmann, Goethe, and Schiller -- if for no other reason than that their fascination with the prevailing philosophy of Fichte with its basis in subjectivity and intuition aided them in fashioning aesthetic ideals which appealed to no authority outside of their own.¹

Following on the heels of the Enlightenment, it is perhaps in keeping with tradition that the nature and extent of the interaction between the philosophes and the littérateurs of Germany at this time was as fluid and undefinable as their very designations, since it was not uncommon for both personages to be found within one man. Indeed, this had been one of the foremost ideals espoused by this new generation of authors in anticipation of an innovative

¹As evidence of the extent of Fichte’s influence see Schlegel’s letter to Novalis from May 5, 1797: “Wie schön wäre es, wenn wir so allein beisammen sitzen könnten ein paar Tage und philosophierten, oder wie wirs immer nannten -- fichtisieren!” Friedrich Schlegel, Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, XXIII, p.363. It would be inaccurate, however, to conclude that their understanding and application of Fichte’s philosophy always harmonized with his own intentions, and he would, in fact, come to criticize both men in his Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters (1806).
era of artistic creation. As Schlegel expressed his own hope for the age: "Vielleicht würde eine ganz neue Epoche der Wissenschaften und Künste beginnen, wenn die Symphilosophie und Sympoesie so allgemein und so innig würde, daß es nichts seltnes mehr wäre, wenn mehrere sich gegenseitig ergänzende Naturen gemeinschaftliche Werke bildeten."2

Despite his ambivalence towards the program of the Romantics (not to mention Schlegel’s initial antipathy towards him), there are inarguably few German authors who rose to this challenge more adroitly and are more deserving of the title Dichterphilosoph than Jean Paul. And yet this appellation is not without its difficulties. Fortunately, they are difficulties which are easily resolved, for the problem is not one of documentation but rather one of reception. That is to say, the interests of contemporary scholarship have tended to focus upon the literary merits of Jean Paul’s works — much to the detriment of their philosophical worth.3 However, even a cursory glance at Jean Paul’s literary œuvre reveals that he

2Schlegel, Athenäums-Fragmente, p.42. The Romantic yearning for the communion of philosophy and poetry is a recurrent theme in many of Schlegel’s fragments, e.g.: “Die ganze Geschichte der modernen Poesie ist ein fortlaufender Kommentar zu dem kurzen Text der Philosophie: Alle Kunst soll Wissenschaft, und alle Wissenschaft soll Kunst werden; Poesie und Philosophie sollen vereinigt sein.” Schlegel, Kritische Fragmente, p.22.

3In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the philosophical aspects of Jean Paul’s work. Especially relevant to the present study is Wolfgang Harich’s Jean Pauls Kritik des philosophischen Egoismus (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), although Harich concludes that Jean Paul “in der Hauptsache eben doch ein Dichter gewesen ist” (p.91). Among those that seek to place Jean Paul within the Enlightenment tradition see Ulrich Rose, Poesie als Praxis: Jean Paul, Herder und Jacobi im Diskurs der Aufklärung (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts Verlag, 1990). Albrecht Decke-Cornill’s study Vernichtung und Selbstbehauptung (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1987) is recommendable for its thorough investigation into Jean Paul’s confrontation with the problem of self-consciousness. For one of the only full-length studies devoted to illustrating the relation between Jean Paul and eighteenth century philosophy in general see Robert G. Eisenhauer, Mythology of Souls: Philosophical Perspectives in the Novels of Jean Paul (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).
maintained a keen interest in philosophy throughout his life. Furthermore, not only were his works read with great interest by the philosophers of his time, but these men frequently praised his philosophical talents.\(^4\) As mentioned in the previous chapter, Herder and Jacobi regularly sent Jean Paul drafts of their manuscripts and often incorporated his suggested revisions. It may have been this very practice which led Jean Paul to toy with the idea of publishing a philosophical journal in collaboration with both men.\(^5\) And it was none other than Hegel, whom Jean Paul would later describe quite unflatteringly as “ein dialektischer Vampyr des innern Menschen” [B,III,8:96], who had stepped forward on his behalf and persuaded his detractors to award him the honorary doctorate from the University of Heidelberg in 1817.\(^6\) It would, in fact, be more accurate to speak of Jean Paul’s philosophical

\(^4\)See Nohl, “Jean Pauls Philosophie,” pp.88-89. In addition to documenting the favourable reception of Jean Paul by his contemporaries, Nohl also attempts to sketch the aspects of his work that anticipate the concerns of later thinkers. If we are to believe his estimation of the poet’s genius then Jean Paul’s preoccupation with dreams and the nature of the soul not only prefigures Freud’s investigations into the unconscious, but his critique of language also makes him a precursor of none other than Fritz Mauthner.

\(^5\)See the letter to Jacobi from October 13, 1798 [B,III,3:107]. This was more wishful thinking on Jean Paul’s part than anything else since he was well aware of the antipathy which Herder harbored for Jacobi after they had staked out different sides in the Spinoza Controversy a decade earlier. This most likely accounts for the reason why Jean Paul mentioned nothing of the plan to Herder.

\(^6\)Harich, Jean Pauls Kritik des philosophischen Egoismus, pp.8-9. Harich also notes that Hegel and Jean Paul had even considered cooperating on an introductory philosophy text that was to be aimed exclusively at female readers. In truth, the suggestion was made by a third party during a Punschabend at the house of Heinrich Voß, a professor of philology and one of Jean Paul’s closest friends. After Hegel dismissed the idea, it was then suggested that Jean Paul undertake the task himself in the spirit of Hegelianism, at which point Hegel jokingly suggested that the poet should be made a doctor of philosophy -- something which occurred three days later at Voß’s instigation. As De Bruyn suggests, the actual wording of the honourary diploma suggests that it too owes its origin to a Punschlaune! See De Bruyn, Das Leben des Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, p.332.
motivations rather than his philosophical interests, for many of his works originated in a need
to take a stand in the intellectual debates of the day. It should, of course, go without saying
that he also valued philosophy as the foremost source of mental stimulation: “Ausser den
Philosophien weis ich kein so gutes Treibmittel des Gehirns als höchstens Kaffee und Schach”
[B,III,3:273].

The aforementioned difficulty for contemporary interpreters stems from the fact that
a full appreciation of Jean Paul necessitates an attempt to acquire a thorough understanding
of the philosophy of idealism which -- to use an analogy that would no doubt have appealed
to the poet -- is at times much like the attempt to untie the Gordian knot.⁷ As Manfred Frank
has pointed out, such a task is further complicated by the rigid academic specialization of the
university which all too frequently engenders a form of intellectual snobbery.⁸ Professional
philosophers and contemporary scholars of German literature have typically had a less than
cooperative relationship, especially when it comes to eras such as the early Romantic period;
whereas the former tend to eschew poets whose often fragmentary works reek of philo-
sophical dilettantism, the latter rarely acquire the requisite knowledge themselves to even
begin to appreciate the intensely philosophical concerns of authors like Jean Paul, Hölderlin
or Novalis. And yet one needs to understand both wings of the early Romantic production
as complementary in order to understand the period as a whole. We can perhaps take heart

⁷In the midst of writing the Clavis, Jean Paul found an equally appropriate metaphor from
mythology: “Je weiter und tiefer ich wieder mit den philosophischen Landstreitern in ihre
Minotaurus-Höhle hineingerathe und es merke, wie aus ihrem Ariadnese-Faden nur etwas
zum Strangulieren zu stricken ist: desto mehr hass’ ich das lahme, öde, genielose Volk”

that in a monograph written in an age closer to Jean Paul’s than our own, the author despairs of his own “spekulativ greisenhafte Zeit” ever being able to understand the extent to which the ideas of the idealist philosophers permeated all spheres of German life and letters.9 Nevertheless, any study which hopes to present an accurate portrait of Jean Paul must begin with considerations of a philosophical nature.

That said, the reader may find it surprising that the disparaging remarks on philosophy found in Jean Paul’s works and letters are legion. One would be hard pressed to imagine a more damning judgement than that made to Jacobi in reference to the philosopher’s ill-health: “Wirf doch die Philosophie deiner Gesundheit wegen eine Zeitlang weg und athme nicht immer in diesem Giftfang. Hast du nicht Dichtkunst und alles andere vor dir?—” [B,III,3:283]. Such an openly hostile stance towards philosophy in favour of poetry is even more surprising when one considers that it comes from the very man who at 55 years-old, and with numerous literary successes to his credit, had quipped that he was “vielleicht mehr der Philosophie als der Dichtkunst zugeboren” [I,6:1061]. Despite his penchant for interweaving fact and fiction, this may be one instance where we can take Jean Paul at his word. Not merely because the remark stems from his own incomplete autobiography, but because an examination of the earliest examples of his work presents us with clear evidence of his predominant philosophical leanings.10 Thus, if the above mentioned derision of philosophy

9Müller, Jean Paul und seine Bedeutung für die Gegenwart, p.119.

10The importance of Jean Paul’s early literary production has not gone unrecognized. See Wolf Köpke, Erfolglosigkeit: Zum Frühwerk Jean Pauls (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1977) and Engelhard Weigl, Aufklärung und Skeptizismus: Untersuchungen zu Jean Pauls Frühwerk (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1980).
is not to be viewed as disingenuous it must first be determined how Jean Paul’s conception of the practice of philosophy had evolved and what was the actual target of his criticism.

2.1 Jean Paul’s Intellectual Development

_Keiner denkt mehr frei, der ein System hat._
-Jean Paul

Considering that Jean Paul was the son of an orthodox Lutheran pastor, one might expect that theological instruction played a larger role in his early years than in other youths his age, and perhaps served to whet his intellectual curiosity. This was indeed the case, although not in the consequent manner which one would anticipate. Born Johann Paul Friedrich Richter in 1763 (the adoption of the French equivalent of his Christian name would be a later homage to Rousseau), the inauspicious beginnings of this _Pfarrerssohn_ seemed most unsuited for producing one of Germany’s most popular and eccentric writers, for the young Fritz was surrounded by an almost stifling provincialism and impoverishment. The theological studies of his father, Johann Christian Christoph Richter, had in fact been motivated less by religious enthusiasm and more by the simple desire to alleviate his family’s poverty. Despite his obvious musical gifts, the ministry remained the only avenue open in
eighteenth-century Germany to someone of his unfortunate economic background who hoped to attain a position of security. The comfort of a secure career as a country parson did little, though, to improve the economic situation of the Richters. Jean Paul’s father grew increasingly distant and was given to frequent fits of depression, presumably brought on by both his failure to realize his musical potential and by his dissatisfaction with the provincial village of Joditz where the family had taken up residence. As Jean Paul would later reflect in his Selberlebensbeschreibung (1818): “Nur einen einzigen Fehlentschluß meines Vaters könnte man vielleicht auf die Rechnung der Dürftigkeit setzen, [...] daß [er] sein Ton-Genie in eine Dorfkirche begraben ließ” [I,6:1,045].

After a minor altercation between Jean Paul and one of his classmates from a neighboring farm, his father rashly decided to remove his oldest son from school. But the education imparted to him and his younger brother at home, which consisted primarily of rote memorization with little concern for genuine comprehension, was far less inspiring than that which he had been receiving at the country school-house:

Vier Stunden vor- und drei nachmittags gab unser Vater uns Unterricht, welcher darin bestand, daß er uns bloß auswendig lernen ließ, Sprüche, Katechismus, lateinische Wörter und Langens Grammatik. Wir mußten die langen Geschlechtregeln jeder Deklination samt den Ausnahmen, nebst der beigefügten lateinischen Beispiel-Zeile lernen, ohne sie zu verstehen.11

The overt absence of lessons in other areas such as history, geography, or math during these seven daily hours of Latin and religious instruction did not go unnoticed by Jean Paul, and he longed to be free of this “geistige Saharawüste” [I,6:1,056].

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11[I,6:1,054]. One can only wonder how much of an influence his father’s instructional method played in the development of Jean Paul’s own philosophy of education.
It was only after the family had moved to Schwarzenbach in 1776, and especially after the death of his father in 1779, that the intellectual climate became less restrictive for the young Jean Paul. His return to a proper school with a competent, albeit uninspiring, instructor helped to broaden his basic education. A true desire for knowledge, however, was sparked by his daily tutoring sessions with Johann Samuel Völkel (1748-95), a young chaplain who introduced him to the pleasures of philosophy (as well as chess). Völkel, a firm supporter of the heterodox rationalist theology of the Enlightenment, would present his new student with an essay topic, normally philosophical or religious in nature, and insist that he develop his answer without reliance upon anything but his own reason. As Jean Paul would later remark, it was these assignments that stimulated his already fertile imagination and his burgeoning interest in philosophy:

Meine wöchentlichen Ausarbeitungen gäbe ich jetzo für keine jetzigen hin, sie mögen auch die Welt noch so sehr bilden; denn jene bildeten noch weit mehr mich selber, besonders da ihre Gegenstände meinem Triebe zum Philosopieren die Schranken auftaten und ihn sich auslaufen ließen. [I,6:1,095]

The earliest examples of this influence on Jean Paul's thought are a series of mandatory school essays beginning in 1779. With titles such as *Über den Nutzen des frühen Studiums der Philosophie* and *Über den Nutzen und Schaden der Erfindung neuer Wahrheiten*, one cannot fail to see both young Fritz's precociousness and his love of philosophy, "die verehrungswürdigste der Wissenschaften" [II,1:22]. The reluctance he expresses in the former essay to accept any belief based upon outside authority and not upon one's own critical analysis owes its origin to the influence of Völkel's heterodoxy. It is understandable therefore to find Jean Paul advocating the study of philosophy to all
theologians; not only will an acquaintance with philosophy enable them to more easily explain religious matters, but it will also allow them to think more independently: "[Der Theologe] wird nicht zu viel verbessern und reformiren wollen, noch auch alles annehmen, was die Alten behauptet haben, noch glauben, daß man, bloß weil es andre auch so gesagt und vorgetragen haben, in der Theologie kein Jota verändern und das System immer in dem Zustande, wo es vor 100 Jahren war, bleiben müsse" [II,1:19]. Most significantly, this endorsement of philosophy by the 16 year-old Jean Paul reveals an early scepticism which, as we shall see, will come to play a central role in the formation of his future views.

Just as Völkel had encouraged his student to freely develop his own thoughts and come to his own philosophical conclusions, so too did a neighboring vicar, Erhard Friedrich Vogel (1750-1823). Although less direct, Vogel’s influence was equally decisive, for he had generously given Jean Paul access to an extensive personal library containing the leading works of the Enlightenment. There he would tirelessly and unsystematically devour book after book, beginning a habit of voracious reading that would characterize his entire life. As one of Jean Paul’s biographers has commented, there has probably never been a more well-read author in the history of German literature,\(^\text{12}\) and Richter would continually indict others for not following the same practices.\(^\text{13}\)

Perhaps with the thought of his eventual career in mind, Jean Paul began to make

\(^{12}\)De Bruyn, p.27.

\(^{13}\)This was but one of the many criticisms directed at Fichte, e.g.: "Fichte gewinnt sehr, daß die andern <jetzigen> Leute so wenig lesen als er; denn dann halten sie viele seiner 50 mal gedruckten Sätze für so neu als er." Jean Paul, Ideen-Gewimmel, p.211. See also the letters to Otto from December 17, 1798 [B,III,3:137] and Jacobi from May 15, 1799 [B,III,3:197].
countless excerpts from his readings which would turn up in later novels and provide seemingly unlimited material for future inspiration. One can gain some appreciation of his diligence from the following passage in *Die Taschenbibliothek* (1795), wherein Jean Paul describes a character who practices the very same technique of extracting thought-provoking passages from every book that comes into his hands:


The 18 volumes of excerpts which Jean Paul accumulated between the years 1778 and 1781 are invaluable to the biographer for they provide a marvelous window into his intellectual development. As one of the first scholars to concentrate on Jean Paul’s philosophical

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14Altogether Jean Paul amassed 110 volumes of excerpts over the course of his life, the last of which dates from 1823, two years before his death. Encompassing over 6,000 pages (not including an index of 1,244 pages!), the size alone is prohibitive in terms of publication, however, an extremely detailed analysis of the general structure of a few representative excerpts along with their corresponding indexes has been undertaken by Götz Müller in “Jean Pauls Privatencyklopaüdie. Eine Untersuchung der Excerpte und Register aus Jean Pauls unveröffentlichtem Nachlaß,” in *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 11 (1986): 73-114.

15Jean Paul himself had recognized their value as a testament to his life: “Um meine Lebensgeschichte zu haben, brauch' ich bloß die Bände der Exzerpte vor mir aufzuschlagen: an jedem extrahierten Buche hängt ein glimmendes Stük meiner Geschichte” (*Ideen-Gewimmel*, p.76). A substantial list of the works that were excerpted by Jean Paul in these four years can be found in Weigl, *Aufklärung und Skeptizismus*, pp.207-214. For a complete list of all the excerpts from 1778 to 1823 see Götz Müller, *Jean Pauls Exzerpte* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1988).
development has already observed, what is most interesting among them from a religious point of view is the number of excerpts culled from rationalist works opposed to the tenets of revealed religion.\textsuperscript{16} It is this to which Jean Paul no doubt owed his success when he was chosen to "defend" a heretical position in a school debate and did so handily enough that the embarrassed instructor stormed out of the room. While none of Jean Paul's biographers fail to mention this story as evidence of his early acumen, its real significance lies perhaps in bringing to light his own unorthodoxy which, as touched upon earlier, he had also inherited in part from Völkel.

Although the incident unjustly branded him as an atheist, it is nonetheless indicative of Jean Paul's constant attempts to approach matters of the mind on his own terms; just as the manner of his father's academic instruction proved questionable, so too did the established dogmas to which he was exposed. The seeds of his lifelong scepticism had been sown. And yet even though the teachings of the church would always strike him as dubious, he never doubted the existence of God.\textsuperscript{17} In later years he became one of the harshest critics of the atheism of the French Encyclopedists. Nevertheless, the young Jean Paul still found a great source of inspiration in these free thinkers of the Enlightenment and their critiques of established religion. His early sympathy for Voltaire, for example, is evident in a short essay from the period entitled \textit{Vergleichung des Atheism mit dem Fanatism} (1781) in which he concludes that it is preferable to be an atheist than a religious fanatic since the latter is the


\textsuperscript{17}It is interesting that Mauthner had deemed the religious views of this "gottloser Gottsucher" unorthodox enough to warrant inclusion in his four-volume \textit{Der Atheismus und seine Geschichte im Abendlande} (Stuttgart/Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1923), IV:14-18.
more intolerant of the two.\textsuperscript{18}

As admirable as the attempt to educate himself may have been, the general lack of
direction in his readings presented him with a jumble of opposing ideas and systems all of
whose originators expressed equal confidence in their supposedly axiomatic conclusions. The
resultant confusion manifested itself in an essay from May of 1781, whose title alone, \textit{Die
Warheit -- ein Traum}, reveals the extent to which Jean Paul had begun to doubt the very
existence of truth itself:

Ich les' einen Zeno, Epikur, Moses, Spinoza, Paullus, La mettrie, Leibniz,
Baile, Luter, Voltaire und noch hunderte -- und verirre mich in ein Labyrinth
on' Ausgang. Lauter Widersprüche -- und Widersprüche zwischen grossen
Geistern! Der, der mit Adlersblick den Gang der Warheit bis in ihre geheimste
Hölen verfolgte, hat sich geirt, und ich Kurz sichtiger, der ich kaum im Stande
bin, die nächsten Gegenständ’ um mich herum zu erkennen, sot’ entscheiden,
welcher von beiden Scharfsichtigen recht gesehen habe? -- Mein Herz war
beklemt. [II,1:96]

In an effort to overcome his increasing scepticism, and out of a greater sense of filial
responsibility as the oldest son, Jean Paul enrolled at the University of Leipzig in May of 1781
as a candidate in Theology. The anti-materialistic lectures of Ernst Platner (1744-1818), a
professor of medicine and physiology who was famous throughout Germany, were among the
few enthusiastically received by the new student.\textsuperscript{19} Although a strong supporter of Leibnizian

\textsuperscript{18}[II,1:1,084]. Compare the following excerpt from Voltaire's \textit{Dictionnaire philosophique}
(1764): “Which is more dangerous, fanaticism or atheism? Fanaticism is certainly a thousand
times more deadly; for atheism inspires no bloody passion, whereas fanaticism does [...] Fanaticism causes crimes to be committed.” Quoted in Haught, \textit{2,000 Years of Disbelief}, p.53.

\textsuperscript{19}See the letter of September 17, 1781 to Pastor Vogel: “Platner ist unstreitig einer der
besten Philosophen Deutschlands. Welch Glück für mich! sein Zuhörer sein” [B,III,1:19].
Platner’s influence upon Jean Paul has been documented by Alexander Košenina, \textit{Ernst
Platners Anthropologie und Philosophie. Der philosophische Arzt und seine Wirkung auf
epistemology, Platner had grudgingly begun to acknowledge the weight of certain sceptical questions, which he expressed in the first edition of his extremely popular *Philosophische Aphorismen* (1776). While it seems probable that this may have exacerbated Jean Paul’s own scepticism, he was surely astute enough to recognize the intellectual integrity in Platner’s embodiment of what Košenina describes as the signature of scepticism, the “antidogmatische Geisteshaltung.”²⁰ It is no doubt with thoughts of his esteemed professor in mind that Jean Paul wrote at the close of 1781: “— Nur der Skeptiker ist der beste Lerer der Philosophie, allein nur für die, welche Philosophen werden können, nicht für die, welche sich blos so nennen wollen. *Der philosophische Geist* wird sich alsdan mer ausbreiten, wenn es weniger Pedanten, Demonstratoren und Gelerte geben wird” [II, 1:300].

The impression that Platner’s erudition and polished style had made upon the unworldly youth is not hard to imagine, but they had the additional effect of casting Jean Paul’s other professors in a less than favourable light. As evidenced in a letter home to Pastor Vogel, he quickly grew disenchanted with a university he saw as inhabited by “mittelmässige Leute” [B,III,1:19] whose ingenuity paled in comparison to his own. Considering the half-heartedness with which he originally embarked on his academic career, it is tempting to think

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*Johann Karl Wezel und Jean Paul* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1989). Whether Jean Paul was familiar with Platner’s work before arriving at the university is an open question. Košenina notes (p.43) that although there are no excerpts from Platner’s work to be found in Jean Paul’s notebooks, it seems likely that he was at least familiar with second-hand accounts of Platner’s work, since he excerpted from several volumes of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* which contained reviews of various of his publications. Moreover, there is also one notebook of Jean Paul’s from 1781 that remains unaccounted for.

²⁰Tbid., p.48. See also Beiser’s *The Fate of Reason* for a brief but lucid discussion of Platner’s eventual espousal of scepticism as “the only consistent point of view in philosophy” (p.215).
that Jean Paul had fully anticipated such disappointment. In the short novel *Abelard und Heloïse* (1781) -- written several months before he entered the university -- we can hear him foretelling his own frustration in the voice of his main character: “Da bin ich nun da, auf der Universität! und zu was Ende? daß ich Geld verzere, das ich besser hätte’ anwenden können, Sachen vergesse, die ich gewust habe, und Dinge lerne, die mir nichts nüzzen [...] Was mir al die Professoren sagen wollen, kan ich aus den Büchern besser -- gründlicher -- und mit weniger Zeit und Geldverlust lernen” [II,1:149]. It was a mere four months after his arrival in Leipzig that he abandoned his studies completely and decided to devote himself to his own creative talents -- much to the chagrin of his remaining family who had far fewer misconceptions concerning the financial prospects of an author than Jean Paul himself. Yet despite the economic straits that awaited him (to say nothing of those within which he already found himself) Jean Paul pursued a course of action fully in line with his ‘idealistic’ temperament. In an extant draft of a letter from November of 1781 he wrote in way of an explanation to Pastor Vogel: “Ich wüste keine Sache in der Welt wodurch man sich nicht Brod erwerben könte. Ich wil das verschweigen, daß der nie weit kommt, der sich in seinen Studien blos die Erwerbung eines notwendigen Bedürfnisses zum Endzweck setzt” [B,III,1:32]. In order to persevere through the difficult times that were to come such optimism would be indispensable.

Before proceeding to an analysis of Jean Paul’s first literary attempts it is befitting here to take into account the influence of yet another individual whom he had ‘discovered’ at the university, for one would truly be remiss not to mention the influence of Richter’s namesake, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Although Jean Paul had read the German
translation of Rousseau’s *Emile ou de l'éducation* (1762) before arriving in Leipzig, it was only at the university that he undertook an enthusiastic study of the original version and of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). In light of the nature of his intellectual pursuits up to this point, it is understandable why Rousseau’s tireless championing of the autonomistic and intuitive nature of man would have struck a chord with Jean Paul. Yet perhaps even more appealing to the student who had suddenly found himself intellectually adrift was the anti-rationalist tendency which pervaded Rousseau’s work as a whole. The idea that reason was only *one* aspect of a human being, and one that was perhaps being overly cultivated to the detriment of other abilities, was undoubtedly a source of solace for Richter; his increasing dismay at the priority given to reason over the emotions had been confirmed by Rousseau.

In yet another prophetic passage from *Abelard und Heloïse* we find the main character bemoaning this very tendency at the university: “Ich finde noch überal mer den Verstand kultivirt und Rücksicht auf ihn genommen, als das Herz verbessert -- zu feinen Regungen gemildert. Wirklich ein gescheuter Kerl wird tausendmal mer geschätzt, als ein empfindsamer Jüngling.”

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21See the letter to Pastor Vogel from September 17, 1781 [B,III,1:20]. As Jean Paul himself acknowledges, it was *Emile* that had served as the model for his *Levana* [I,5:527].

22[II,1:150]. Jean Paul’s distrust of reason and his ultimate faith in one’s own inner feelings (in addition to his veneration of Rousseau and Herder) has led some scholars to accord him a place among the *Stürmer und Dränger*. See Hoppe, *Das Verhältnis Jean Pauls zur Philosophie seiner Zeit*, pp.4-5. Further evidence for such a claim could also be found in Jean Paul’s reverence of Shakespeare; see the letter to Thomas Beddoes from March 21, 1806 wherein Jean Paul writes that Shakespeare was “anfängs mein Geliebter, dann mein Gott” [B,III,5:84]. Nevertheless, Jean Paul did not believe that reason or feeling should be cultivated at the expense of the other; see the letter to Oerthel from June 17, 1783: “Lieber mag das Herz dem Kopfe widersprechen als ihm unterliegen” [B,III,1:76].
Jean Paul had also found a soulmate in Rousseau due to the latter’s aversion to Christian dogma and his advocacy of natural religion over revealed religion; for both men, Hoppe writes, “Religion [ist] Religiosität.”\textsuperscript{23} The extent to which this remained true for Jean Paul can be seen from a fragment he wrote as late as 1818: “Niemand hat mehr gegen das Christentum -- aber nicht gegen das leichte, kurze der Bibel, sondern das spätere -- als ich; das spätere zerfließt in die Irrgänge aller falschen Religionen. *Nur Eine wahre Religion gibt, der angeborene Religionstrieb.*”\textsuperscript{24}

The autonomy that Rousseau had cherished so much and the desire to see individuals develop in accordance with their own nature was exemplified in Jean Paul, and this is perhaps a good point to return to a consideration of his next attempts at writing, the *Übungen im Denken* (1780-1781). Although retaining the style of his earlier school assignments, these essays were undertaken exclusively for his own elucidation; as he explained in the preface: “Diese Versuche sind blos für mich. Sie sind nicht gemacht, um andre etwas Neues zu leren. Sie sollen mich blos üben, um’s einmal zu können. Sie sind nicht Endzweck, sondern Mittel -- nicht neue Wahrheiten selbst, sondern der Weg, sie zu erfinden” [II,1:36].

While the topics of these mental exercises range from physiognomy to the concept of God, what is of interest to the current study is the fact that the 17 year-old Jean Paul already displayed an antipathy toward the systematic method of philosophizing that was so characteristic of Leibniz -- even though Jean Paul (like Platner) remained an ardent admirer

\textsuperscript{23}Hoppe, p.6.

\textsuperscript{24}Jean Paul, *Ideen-Gewimmel*, p.203. [Emphasis added]
of his thought\textsuperscript{25} -- and that would characterize the influential works of Kant and his successors that were soon to come.

In these essays Jean Paul theorizes that intellectual systems originate in one of two ways: they develop over time through the contributions of a great number of people, as did the systems of theology, or they are produced by men of singular genius of their own accord, which accounts for most philosophical systems. Setting aside the contestability of the latter claim (since it seems a truism that philosophers and theologians alike are indebted to their historical antecedents in some degree), the characterization of a philosopher as a genius within an aphorism chastising the very activity of system-building itself presents us with an example of the seeming contradiction in Jean Paul's assessment of the philosophical enterprise mentioned earlier. However, the genius of which Jean Paul speaks does not guarantee the overall validity of a system (even though there may be particular tenets within that system which do have a claim to truth);\textsuperscript{26} it serves instead as evidence of the originality and creativity of the one who produced it, traits which the aspiring author had greatly admired: "Das Genie, das ein gutes Buch schreibt, schöpft aus sich selbst, ist sich selber Leiter und geht seinen eignen Gang" [II,1:60].

\textsuperscript{25}See the essay "Etwas über Leibnizens Monadologie" in the \textit{Rhapsodien} (1781): "...[\textit{Die Monadologie}] ist ein Stral vom himlischen Lichte, eine Wahrheit, die noch nicht für diese Erde gehört, und ein Gedanke, den man erst in seiten des Grabes denkt" [II,1:287].

\textsuperscript{26}See the letter of April 27, 1790 to Rector Wernlein: "Es solte ein Buch geben, worin das Wahre stände, das alle Systeme haben; kein falsches System gab es nie, solange Welt und Systeme stehen" [B,III,1:290]. It is this attitude which helps explain why Jean Paul could regard Leibniz with such high esteem while simultaneously poking fun at particular aspects of his philosophy, such as the idea of pre-established harmony. See, e.g. \textit{Auswahl aus des Teufels Papieren} (1789) [II,2:174-175].
The inherent problem that Jean Paul saw in intellectual systems was not their very construction — that being an almost inevitable product of our intellect²⁷ — but rather the tendency, one could almost say the logical necessity, of their creators to force everything under consideration to fit within the framework of that system rather than allowing a degree of freedom for the adoption of other perspectives and other conclusions that may present themselves:

Es ist mit’n Systemen eine eigne Sache. Nichts ist unsrer denkenden Natur mehr gemäs, als Wahrheiten im Zusammenhange zu denken - nichts freut uns mer, denn hier ist die gröste Anstrengung des Geistes mit Vergnügen, das aus der vereinten Mannigfaltigkeit kommt, verbunden -- allein nichts kan uns auch mer irre füren, als eben dieses. Denn wir stellen uns dan die Dinge nicht so vor, wie sie sind, sondern wie wir sie in unser System hinein haben wollen -- wir schmelzen und formeln so lang’ an dem Dinge, bis es in unsre Ideenreihe hineinpast. [II,1:58]

This self-imposed restriction of intellectual freedom stood in direct opposition to the one trait which Jean Paul had cherished above all, the ability to think for oneself: “Nichts ist nötiger als Selbstdenken, nichts ist schäzbarer, und vielleicht auch nicht[s] schw[erer] zu erwerben” [II,1:225]. The decision not to continue with his formal education takes on a new light in view of the stark contrast he had perceived between the opportunity presented to him by Vogel and Völkel to cultivate his intellect and sharpen his reason and the necessity of subjecting himself to a form of mental confinement at the university. After four months at the University of Leipzig he wrote plaintively in his Tagebuch meiner Arbeiten (1781):

Warum wil uns doch ieder Lerer der Philosophie das System aufdringen,

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welches er für's ware hält; warum wil jeder Professor aus seinen Schülern Anhänger der Sekt machen, welche ihm die beste scheint? -- Daß doch ieder Mensch der Despot über unsre Sele sein wil, der er über den Körper werden wil. Jeder verflet seines Zweks, der uns denken wil lernen, indem er uns an sein System anckettet -- das heisit nicht unsern Verstand, sondern unser Gedächtnis üben. [II,1:225]

Without getting too far ahead of ourselves, it is clear that Jean Paul’s contemptuous branding of his philosophy teachers as the ‘despots over his soul’ was an indication of things to come; the arrogance and self-assuredness of his own professors surely must have paled in comparison to that exhibited by Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, these “philosophische Statthalter Christi, welche ihre Werke, was kein Dichter bei dem seinigen tätte, für ewige und beste erklären” [I,5:1,080].

These early attempts to stake out his own intellectual position helped to define those philosophical tendencies which Jean Paul had found so disagreeable, but they did little to abate his scepticism. His increasing despair at ever arriving at immutable truths (the existence of God excepted)\(^28\) was matched only by his contempt for the pedantry and naive self-assuredness of other intellectuals that he had seen exhibited at the university. He thus turned to the literary form most appropriate for expressing his scorn: the satire.\(^29\) Although this

\(^{28}\)See the letter to Jacobi from August 16, 1802: “Mein Ernst ist das überirdische bedekte Reich, das sogar der hiesigen Nichtigkeit noch sich unterbaut, das Reich der Gottheit und Unsterblichkeit und der Kraft. Ohne das giebts in der Lebens-Oede nur Seufzer und Tod. Mein ganzes Leben zog darauf zu, nie lies ich es, sogar im früheren Skeptizismus...” [B,III,4:168 (Emphasis added)].

\(^{29}\)One can only surmise, of course, as to the actual motivation surrounding Jean Paul’s decision to try his hand at satire. Harich also admits as much and suggests that the exposure to Kant may have lead to a weakening of his philosophical beliefs, and the consequent avoidance of intense philosophical activity could be seen as a kind of metaphysical self-preservation. (Jean Pauls Kritik des philosophischen Egoismus, p.48). This interpretation will be treated at length in the next section. For another view see De Bruyn (p.35) where it
genre was as yet unexplored by Jean Paul, the progression seems quite natural, for with its essayistic nature and critical tone the satire shares many of the facets of philosophical argumentation that he had already been practicing — something which Jean Paul appeared to have recognized as well. As he wrote to Jacobi on November 10, 1799: "Seit dem 13 Jahr trieb ich Philosophie — warf sie im 25 weit weg von mir, aus Skepsis und holte sie wieder zur Satire."30

His first satirical attempt, Das Lob der Dummheit (1781/82), was written in emulation of Erasmus' The Praise of Folly and is noteworthy in this context for its sharp criticism of philosophy, especially as practiced at the university.31 It was most likely the adoption of this style to which he owed his first, although poorly received, publication, a satirical collection entitled Grönländische Prozesse (1783) which had been accepted by Lessing's friend and publisher, Christoph Friedrich Voß. Despite Voß's reluctance to publish additional volumes, Jean Paul continued to write satires, not finding another publisher until 1789 when an an additional collection entitled Auswahl aus des Teufels Papieren (completed 1787) appeared.

Throughout this period Jean Paul did not regain his interest in his more abstract intellectual pursuits. The extent to which his trust in the efficacy of philosophy and theology is suggested that the turn to satire was due to his desire to heap scorn on the provincial little village of Hof where he resided with his mother.

30[B,III,3:253]. As Köpke has also noticed, Jean Paul should have more accurately said 'in his 20th year' for the major satirical works begin to emerge around 1783 and not 1788. (Erfolglosigkeit, p.193).

31See the following passage, for example: "Bald kriech' ich [die Dummheit] in das finstre Gehirn eines Schulphilosophen, mache Sekten durch meine Unverständlichkeit, demonstriere den Unsin durch Schlüsse und in Paragraphen, und ersetze durch den Tiefsin auf dem Gesichte den Mangel desselben im Gehirne" [II,1:308].
had deteriorated is nowhere more clear than in a letter to Vogel from May 1, 1783. With unmistakable despair, Jean Paul wrote: “Ich bin kein Theolog mer; ich treibe keine einzige Wissenschaft ex professo, und alle nur insofern als sie mich ergözen oder in meine Schriftstellerei einschlagen; und selbst die Philosophie ist mir gleichgültig, seitdem ich an allem zweifle” [B,III,1:66]. With the rise of Immanuel Kant, however, he would soon find occasion to rekindle his interest in philosophy.

2.2 Immanuel Kant and the Deification of Reason

*Kant und Fichte:*
*Sie sind der Welt unentbehrlich durch ihre Polemik; aber ihre Thetik verdirbt alles.*

-Jean Paul

In hindsight, Jean Paul’s particular state of mind was perhaps an enviable position to be in after 1781 since there remained little of his former beliefs to be dismantled by the sweeping claims to come in Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. As we have already seen, the gradual dissolution of his metaphysical certainty began long before his exposure to Kant and had, in a very real sense, insulated him against the sudden loss of his philosophical bearings that so many others had experienced when confronted with the Critical Philosophy for the first time; it is not entirely tongue-in-cheek when we find him caricaturizing a university
student in *Die Baierische Kreuzerkomodie* (1789) who was filled with such doubt upon reading Kant’s work that he called into question his own existence so rigorously that he eventually ceased to exist [II,2:563].

For the modern reader the enormity of Kant’s influence on the philosophical world is at times as difficult to understand as the sensation caused in the world of *belles-lettres* by Goethe’s *Leiden des jungen Werther*, a work which had appeared just seven years earlier.\(^{32}\) But the epistemological uncertainty that had been unwittingly unleashed by the thought of Kant, “dieser Antichrist für die Metaphysik, dieser Messias der Philosophie” [II,2:563], was far more devastating than any work of fiction. The results were only less dramatic because the requisite philosophical acumen needed to understand the intricacies of Kant’s argument demanded an extraordinarily high level of intellectual maturity (to say nothing of a considerable expenditure of time). It would be both overly-ambitious, as well as unnecessary, to attempt a comprehensive résumé of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* here -- and not merely because there are perennially new interpretations of this seminal work of Western philosophy.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{32}\)It was the overwhelming success of *Werther* that had inspired Jean Paul to write his very first work of fiction, the previously mentioned *Abelard und Heloise* (1781). Its similarity with Goethe’s work went far beyond the external form of an epistolary novel, so much so that De Bruyn (p.36) suggests its only claim to originality lies in its orthography. Jean Paul himself was aware of the novel’s shortcomings and composed his own rather severe critique; see his *Mein eigen Urteil über den Abelard* [II,1:172].

\(^{33}\)Bearing in mind the following words of Schlegel, it is also difficult to see how any interpretation of Kant could be approached without a certain trepidation: “Die, welche Profession davon gemacht haben, den Kant zu erklären, waren entweder solche, denen es an einem Organ fehlte, um sich von den Gegenständen, über die Kant geschrieben hat, einige Notiz zu verschaffen; oder solche, die nur das kleine Unühe hatten, niemand zu verstehen als sich selbst; oder solche, die sich noch verworrenen ausdrücken als er.” *Athenaum-Fragmente*, p.29.
Rather, it is because 1) it was Kant's second critique, the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, that had exercised a more direct and significant influence on Jean Paul, and, as I will argue, 2) Jean Paul himself most likely possessed no more than a superficial understanding of the first *Kritik*. Nevertheless, the second *Kritik* is inconceivable without the first, and it is there that we must begin.

I.

The scepticism which Jean Paul had been unwillingly cultivating since leaving the university could only have resonated with the conclusions of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (as it had been popularly understood), for Kant's attempt to delineate the boundaries of objective knowledge culminated in the claim that we can never know the world 'as it is.' According to Kant, all that we can ever know are appearances (*phenomena*), i.e., the things of which we are aware are derived exclusively from the ordinary means of sense experience. Nevertheless, it is possible for us at least to conceive of a world and objects within that world that exist outside of our experience, and these Kant refers to as 'things-in-themselves' (*noumena*), i.e., those things that are forever outside of our cognitive capacities. As we will see in the following chapter on Fichte, the very tenability of the concept of things-in-themselves would be the singular issue that would define the self-proclaimed successors to Kant, but for our purposes here it is enough to note that it was Kant who was responsible for popularizing this dichotomy. In simpler terms, the view that was being proffered here is that the world *itself* is unknowable as it exists apart from the perspective of the subject -- and it was this awareness, albeit in a far less sophisticated formulation, that had lain at the root of
Jean Paul’s scepticism:


It is perhaps one of those paradoxes of history that the very work which had been undertaken in part to combat the scepticism so forcefully expounded by the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) and which, as its author believed, had provided the solution to every conceivable metaphysical problem, was in turn responsible for engendering a scepticism of its own. Like the other British empiricists before him such as Hobbes and Locke, Hume had charged that sense experience alone dictates that there are no grounds for espousing the rationalism characteristic of men like Descartes; a coherent and indubitable philosophy simply cannot be founded upon empty metaphysical terms like ‘God,’ ‘substance,’ ‘self,’ or ‘cause’ which have no counterpart in the material world. With the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* Kant had sought to circumvent the dilemmas of scepticism by locating the basis of certainty not in the content of experience, for this was Hume’s domain, but rather in the form (categories) of reason itself. Hume had rightly asserted that the epistemological claims of rationalism went beyond the limits of human understanding, so Kant had set out to rescue the authority of reason by demonstrating the limits within which it could and must operate. (The

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34 *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A xiii. As is customary, all page references will be to either the first (A) or second (B) edition.
word 'critique' should thus be understood in the original Greek sense of 'discerning' or 'distinguishing'). But to establish the grounds of certainty in the mental faculties of the knowing subject seemed to many to be the ultimate expression of subjectivism along with its concomitant relativization of truth -- despite Kant's claims to the contrary. As Jean Paul wrote to Herder: "'objektive Realität in Raum und Zeit' ist nach der kritischen Schule ja nur subjektive" [B,III,3:121]. Lest one discount the potential impact of the *Kritik* upon those who shared the temperament of Jean Paul, it is only necessary to recall the case of Heinrich von Kleist, an author with a similarly introspective nature whose self-described *Kantkrise* left him with a belief in the inaccessibility of objective knowledge and ultimately compelled him to take his own life in 1811 at the age of 34.\textsuperscript{35}

In view of what has been said so far, it may seem ironic to discover that Jean Paul's first reference to the *Kritik* in a letter from September 17, 1781 describes it as "wizzig, frei und tiefgedacht!" [B,III,1:19]. This description, however, could not have been his own since Kant's work is only mentioned as one of several forthcoming books for which he thought Vogel may have an interest. It is apparent that Jean Paul was anxiously awaiting the publication of the *Kritik*, but his initial enthusiasm quickly faded, and he would not mention

\textsuperscript{35}Compare Kleist's letter to his fiancée from March 22, 1801 with Jean Paul's admission of his own skepticism: "Wenn alle Menschen statt der Augen grüne Gläser hätten, so würden sie urteilen müssen, die Gegenstände, welche sie dadurch erblicken, sind grün -- und nie würden sie entscheiden können, ob ihr Auge ihnen die Dinge zeigt, wie sie sind, oder ob es nicht etwas zu ihnen hinzutut, was nicht ihnen, sondern zum Auge gehört. So ist es mit dem Verstände. Wir können nicht entscheiden, ob das, was wir Wahrheit nennen, wahrhaft Wahrheit ist, oder ob es uns nur so scheint." Kleist, *Sämtliche Werke*, II:634.
Kant’s name again to his spiritual mentor until seven years later.\textsuperscript{36} “Wenn Sie werth sein wollen, daß Sie die Sonne -- des Stoizismus bescheinet: so kaufen Sie sich ums Himmels Willen 2 Bücher, 1) Kants Grundlegung zu einer Metaphysik der Sitten und 2) Kants Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, 1788. Kant ist kein Licht der Welt, sondern ein ganzes stralendes Sonnensystem auf einmal” [B,III,1:244]. The significance of this pronouncement is twofold, for not only does it appear as if Jean Paul had regained his former enthusiasm for philosophy, but it was to due to the very person whom he had called a “Misgeburt” [B,III,1:147] a few years earlier!

The key to this reappraisal of Kant is found in the emphasis upon the word ‘practical,’ for it was the ethical nature of Kant’s second major work that had left a decidedly greater

\textsuperscript{36}Considering his obsessive manner of excerpting and commenting upon all that he read, the scant number of references to Kant between these years raises the question of whether Jean Paul had really undertaken a serious, first-hand study of the Kritik der reinen Vernunft, or whether he had derived his information about it from second-hand sources as did so many others. Granting this to be the case, the most likely source of his information would have been Platner, whom Jean Paul had continued to read even after leaving the university. In the second edition of his Philosophische Aphorismen (1782-84) Platner had clearly expressed his opposition to Kant by attempting a refutation of scepticism as well as the claim that metaphysics could never be a science -- although he would come to fully accept both of these ideas by the third edition of the Aphorismen in 1793; see Beiser, The Fate of Reason, pp.214-215. In support of the claim that Jean Paul had but a passing familiarity with Kant see the letter to Christian Otto from May 22, 1795 (even though this may be somewhat of an exaggeration on his part): “Daher giebt jezt das kantische System wie jedes neue grosse, eine Zeitlang allen Köpfen Einseitigkeit und Fesseln: das starke Licht wird selber Gegenstand und stelt sich also zwischen die Gegenstände. Blos dem nuzt jenes System, der schon vorher sein System hatte und ders also in seines zerlassen kan, oder dem Man von Kraff wie Jakobi; und blos dem schadet es nicht, ders -- nicht studiert hat, z.B. ich und es kan also nicht Herr über mich werden. Solt ichts aber einmal versehen und die kritische Philosophie wirklich davontragen: so wäre mir immer zu helfen und müße völlig denken wie sie es haben wolte.” (Second emphasis added). [B,III,2:88]. All questions of derivation aside, however, he apparently had enough confidence in his understanding of the Critical Philosophy to offer Herder the several pages of suggested improvements to his Metakritik mentioned earlier.
impression upon the young author. Jean Paul may have been able to understand the despondency of someone like Kleist after reading Kant’s critique of ‘pure’ or theoretical reason, but he did not share it\(^{37}\) -- partly because the force of the first *Kritik* had been tempered by his already existent scepticism, but more significantly because the essence of the first *Kritik* was symptomatic of the inherent problem that Jean Paul had perceived in systematic philosophy. And given his mistrust of the myriad concatenations of claims founded solely upon the authority of reason, how could he have derived any degree of confidence from a system that went so far as to attempt to critique the very nature of reason itself by means of reason alone? Moreover, these conflicting ‘truths’ of reason were highlighted within Kant’s own work where he attempted to show through the antinomies that the application of reason to certain areas such as causality and cosmology resulted in logical and yet contradictory conclusions.\(^{38}\) In his response to the section in Herder’s *Metakritik* concerning the antinomies Jean Paul wrote: “Ich bekenn’ es, trotz meines horror vacui-critici dauert meine Qual über die Widersprüche und Fragen einer unendlichen und doch anfangenden Zeit a parte ante, über die Gränze der Gränzen, ich meine über die rund um mich aufgehängene Sonnenwelt und über die Nacht um diese usw., usw., usw. gleichwohl fort” [B,III,3:121].

\(^{37}\)It is not my contention here that he *did* in fact empathize with Kleist’s personal dilemma, only that he was well aware of *how* the Kantian faith in pure reason could lead to such a demoralizing subjectivism. There is actually very little reference to Kleist in all of Richter’s works, although what there is is quite favourable; see the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (1804) [I,5:383] where Kleist’s *Familie Schroffenstein* (1803) is regarded as a work representative of true poetic striving; see also the “Vorrede” to *Museum* (1813) where Jean Paul praises Kleist’s talent as a dramatist even though he counts him among “die poetischen Un- oder Mißformer” [II,2:882].

\(^{38}\) *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, II. Abteilung, II. Buch, II. Hauptstück.
The disdain with which Jean Paul initially viewed this dialectical nature of reason would become a permanent feature of his intellectual position as we can see from a later letter to Jacobi from January 27, 1816, wherein he chooses to criticize scholasticism by equating its use of reason with that of the Kantian antinomies: “Die größte Beschämung der Philosophie des Verstandes ist die Scholastik -- diese größere kantische Antinomistik -- aus welcher man den schärfsten Skeptizismus als aus einer kritischen Essigmutter bereiten könnte” [B,III,7:56].

Kant’s proposed resolutions to the antinomies fall outside the scope of this study, and they were apparently of little interest to Jean Paul. The very fact that it was possible for pure reason to contradict itself -- in Kant’s view “inevitable” (unvermeidlich)\(^{39}\) -- was sufficient to solidify his distrust:

Wenn ich annehme mit Kant, daß das, was für unsern Verstand wider-sprechend zu denken ist, für einen andern Verstand möglich sein könne, so begeh’ ich selbst so einen Widerspruch, daß ich in der einen Minute meinem Verstande trau, -- da ich mit ihm jenes schließe -- und nicht trau. Sobald wir das Widersprechende für möglich halten, so ist kein Grund da, warum wir etwas glauben.\(^{40}\)

Once one allowed for the fallibility of reason, then the pursuit of reason as an end in

\(^{39}\)Ibid., B433,434/A 407.

\(^{40}\)Jean Paul, *Literarischer Nachlaß*, p.94. My analysis of Jean Paul’s reaction to Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* differs from that of Köpke who argues that Kant had actually been a help to Jean Paul in combating his scepticism and “keineswegs eine Bestärkung in skeptischen Ideen oder gar der Anlaß davon.” (p.217). The only overt indication given by Jean Paul that he did not consider Kant a sceptic is found in a letter from February 9, 1785: “Ich weis aber nicht wie Platner [Kant] mit Hume vergleichen können, da er nichts weniger als ein Skeptiker ist: es müßte denn jeder sein, der etwas läugnet.” [B,III,1:147]. This disagreement with his former teacher’s assessment is hardly a ringing endorsement of the Critical Philosophy. And as Köpke himself notes, it was Kant’s stand against moral indifference that had found Jean Paul’s approbation, not the former’s confidence in the products of pure intellect. Thus, in the absence of any direct evidence to the contrary, I find it difficult to conclude that Jean Paul’s familiarity with the first *Kritik* renewed his faith in the efficacy of reason.
itself becomes yet another dubious philosophical project. For a spiritual nature like Jean Paul’s there had to be something higher than pure reason, something more satisfying than this “logical enthusiasm” that would later find its champion in Friedrich Schlegel:

Die erste subjektive Bedingung alles echten Philosophierens ist — Philosophie im alten Sokratischen Sinne des Worts: Wissenschaftsliebe, uneigennütziges, reines Interesse an Erkenntnis und Wahrheit: man könnte es logischen Enthusiasmus nennen: der wesentliche Bestandteil des philosophischen Geistes. Nicht was sie meinen, unterscheidet den Philosophen und den Sophisten: sondern wie sie meinen. Jeder Denker, für den Wissenschaft und Wahrheit keinen unbedingten Wert haben, der ihre Gesetze seinen Wünschen nachsetzt, sie zu seinen Zwecken eigennützig mißbraucht, ist ein Sophist; mögen diese Wünsche und Zwecke so erhoben sein, und so gut scheinen, als sie wollen.\textsuperscript{41}

Even though Schlegel’s introduction of this concept into the impending philosophical fray would not occur until 1796 in a barbed review of Jacobi’s novel \textit{Woldemar}, it is significant in this context, for the spiritual kinship between Jean Paul and the philosopher whose work he had yet to encounter is already evident.

Schlegel’s extolment of “logical enthusiasm” had been intended as a slap at Jacobi, whom he held to be consumed by a hatred of philosophical reason,\textsuperscript{42} and yet, as we have already seen, it could equally well have been directed at Jean Paul. Neither had accorded an absolute value to \textit{philosophical} truth, and although the following aphorism is Richter’s, it is fully in line with the sympathies of Jacobi:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Was nützt uns Wahrheit?} Liebe hat keinen Zweck und Nutzen als Liebe; so die Tugend. \textit{Wahrheit muss einen andern haben, als Wahrheit,} sonst wärs gleichviel, den Schweif eines Fuchses oder eines Kometen zu berechnen. [...] Nicht das Sehen als Sehen, sondern der Gegenstand bestimmt den Werth;
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{41}Schlegel, “Jacobis \textit{Woldemar},” p.272. [Emphasis added].

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid, p.274.
In the eyes of both Jean Paul and Jacobi, truth in and of itself was just as effectless (positively speaking) as Kant’s pure reason, for without spiritual import the concept of truth lacked all application in the external world and remained a sterile product confined within the realm of abstract reason. Yet before turning our attention fully to the philosophical bond that was to develop between Richter and Jacobi, it is necessary to briefly return to Kant since it was this conflict between “reiner Objektivitätstrieb und sittliches Bedürfniss” that would ultimately pave the way from Kant to Jacobi.

II.

As stated above, it was Kant’s shift of emphasis from pure reason to practical reason that had captured Jean Paul’s attention, for it was the Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (1785) and the Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (1787) that had responded to the latter’s insistence that the employment of our rational faculties must have something else besides truth

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43Jean Paul, Literarischer Nachlaß, p.83. [Second emphasis added]. See also p.93: “Die Wahrheit muß uns als etwas anders denn als Wahrheit theuer sein; denn sonst dürfte der Einfältige ja nur die Resultate des Klügern annehmen, die immer wahrer wären, als seine” [Emphasis added].

44Müller, “Jean Pauls philosophischer Entwicklungsgang,” p.376.

45In the above-mentioned letter to Vogel, Jean Paul states the date of publication of Kant’s second Kritik as 1788, presumably since that was the date on the original title page. The work actually appeared towards the end of 1787 however. See Beck, Early German Philosophy, p.434.
as its aim. For Kant of the second *Kritik* this aim had become the endeavor to provide the foundation of morality. It was not a resolution of the dialectic of reason which Jean Paul had found here, but rather its meaningful employment in ascertaining what he had considered to be the most important aspects of human existence: "Die zwei Hände der reinen Vernunft, die einander in der Antinomie zerkratzten und schlugen, legt die praktische friedlich zusammen und drückt sie gefaltet ans Herz und sagt: hier ist ein Gott, ein Ich und eine Unsterblichkeit!" [I,1:1,099].

In essence, Kant’s basic distinction between theoretical (pure) and practical reason was hardly new. Any philosopher of his stature would have been aware of the Aristotelian contrast between theoretical knowledge (what Aristotle referred to as philosophical wisdom) and practical knowledge,46 and Kant does, in fact, acknowledge as much in the Preface to the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. However, what truly distinguishes Kant is the fact that he did not draw a clear dichotomy between these two forms of reason, as so many of his interpreters have thought, but rather strove to show their essential unity. Pure reason, for Kant, can indeed be practical, for ultimately there is but one faculty of reason that has to be distinguished simply in terms of its application.47

In the very first sentence of the second *Kritik* he explains that the work is not entitled *Kritik der reinen praktischen Vernunft* since he intends to be comprehensive in his investigation of reason’s practical use, i.e., both the pure and empirical components of practical

46See the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book VI, 1138b35-1139b5.

47*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, p.391. All page references to the *Grundlegung* and other works by Kant refer to the edition published by the Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1902/10).
reason are considered. Thus while the respective aims of these two interrelated forms of reason remain the same for Kant as they did for Aristotle, i.e., truth or knowledge for its own sake vis à vis knowing how to act morally, Kant distances himself from the eudaemonia of the latter by concluding that the greatest good to be sought is not the happiness which comes from a life lived in accordance with reason, it is rather the undeniable and unerring sense of duty that issues from a good will. And this will is identified by Kant with pure practical reason, for an unequivocal sense of duty can only come from a reason that is intrinsically practical and thereby capable of deriving laws of conduct which can be universally applied without reference to our desires and the contingencies of particular situations.48

Just how much Jean Paul had truly admired Kant’s new moral direction is evident in a letter of November 17, 1795 to Emanuel Osmond, one of his closest friends:

Ich bitte Sie, alles was Kant über die Moral geschrieben, zu lesen: es ist leichter als sein Werk über oder gegen die Metaphysik und sezet die Lektüre des letzter nicht voraus. Glauben Sie mir auf mein Wort, das Geschrei über seine Unverständlichkeit werden Sie nicht mitschreien, wenn Sie bloß in die ewig glänzenden Sonnen schauen, die er im Reiche der Moral aufgehen läßt. Ihm fehlt zu einem zweiten Sokrates nur der Giftebecher und zum 2ten Christus nur das Kreuz. [B,III,2:128]

48In a work concerned essentially with Jean Paul, I have tried not to get mired down in the subtleties of Kant’s argumentation, particularly since the former shared the same inclination. A sufficiently thorough description of the notion of the will here can be found in Lewis White Beck’s introduction to his English translation of the Critique of Practical Reason: “The book before us is a critical examination of will understood in this sense, as practical reason, reason applied in conduct. And its main thesis is that though practical reason generally has an impulsive component or drive, which it more or less successfully guides by maxims and rules of experience, it is also possible for one’s reason to guide one’s behavior without any drive springing from variable subjective impulses directed to the gaining of pleasure. Such reason provides not just long-range control of impulses but, as pure practical reason, it can provide the motives and and even set the goals of action” (p.xi). See also his Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960), pp.37-41.
Excessive as the praise may be, it is understandable coming from one whose scepticism had finally been alleviated in some small degree at least by the one person who “endlich sich und die ganzes Nachwelt zum ersten Grundsätze der Moral durcharbeitete.” As an example of the almost immediate influence that Kant’s moral philosophy had upon him, Jean Paul had decided to add an essay of a more serious nature -- an *Ernsthafter Anhang* bearing the title *Ueber die Tugend* -- to his satirical collection *Auswahl aus des Teufels Papieren*. (He even goes so far as to excuse himself for being audacious enough to offer his own thoughts on morality so soon after Kant!) This short essay holds few surprises in terms of the general antipathy that Jean Paul had so frequently expressed towards systematic philosophy, yet it is clear from the very first sentence that he is of one mind with Kant as concerns the importance of the moral realm: “Eine einzige gute Handlung enthüllt uns die heilige Gestalt der Tugend mehr als zehn Systeme und Disputationen darüber und der beste Mensch hat die beste und rigthigste Vorstellung von der Tugend.”

While the move from the satirical to the moral owed its impetus almost exclusively to Kant, Jean Paul soon came to view the former’s moral philosophy in a more critical light. Kant’s concern with the ethical realm was laudable, and he was to be commended

49[II,2:242]. This preference for the moral side of Kant was not unique to Jean Paul. As his English contemporary Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote: “throughout the Universities of Germany there is not a single professor who is not either a Kantean or a disciple of Fichte, whose system is built on the Kantean, and presupposes its truth; or lastly who, *though an antagonist of Kant, as to his theoretical work, has not embraced wholly or in part his moral system.*” Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p.298. (Emphasis added).

50[II,2:242]. See also the *Brief über die Philosophie* (1798), written to his fictitious son Hans Paul: “Vozüglich handle! O in Taten liegen mehr hohe Wahrheiten als in Büchern! Taten nähern den ganzen Menschen von innen, Bücher und Meinungen sind nur ein warmer nahahfter Umschlag um den Magen” [I,4:1,023].
('apotheosized' is perhaps the more appropriate term given Richter's language in the above letter) in his search for the grounds of the validity of ethical statements, yet it is easy to see how his proposed answer could not have satisfied Jean Paul for very long. This good will, pure practical reason itself, which Kant had postulated as the basis of morality, was necessarily characterized by the very attribute of pure reason which was so deleterious in Jean Paul's eyes: it was granted an inherent importance. In other words, it was not the benevolent actions of the good will, actions which arose from individuals as moral agents, that demonstrated its goodness, because even if it were unable to bring about its desired ends, it would still be good in and of itself.\footnote{See the Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten: "Der gute Wille ist nicht durch das, was er bewirkt oder ausrichtet, nicht durch seine Tauglichkeit zur Erreichung irgend eines vorgesehenen Zweckes, sondern allein durch das Wollen, d.i. an sich, gut und, für sich selbst betrachtet, ohne Vergleich weit höher zu schätzen als alles, was durch ihn zu Gunsten irgend einer Neigung, ja wenn man will, der Summe aller Neigungen nur immer zu Stande gebracht werden könnte" (p.394).}  

Kant comes to such a conclusion by drawing attention to an (admittedly) observable occurrence which also sheds some light on his anti-eudaemonistic stance: namely, the more that human beings cultivate their reason, the less inclined they seem to be to find happiness. In fact, those who are most adept at this cultivation of the intellect often find within themselves, should they be honest enough to admit it, a certain degree of misology, i.e., a hatred of reason itself. As we saw in Schlegel's criticism of Jacobi mentioned above (the Kantian overtones should now be apparent), it would not be entirely inappropriate to see just such an instance in Jean Paul as well. In anticipation of Darwin's theory of natural selection, Kant maintains that every faculty (Werkzeug) in a living being has a purpose for which it alone
is best suited and adapted. Since reason is clearly unable to consistently produce human happiness, its purpose must lie elsewhere, and yet as a *practical* faculty, it must necessarily exercise some influence on the will. Thus its true purpose (*Bestimmung*) must be the very creation of a will which is not good as a *means* to something else (granting that there is no guarantee that the desired *ends* will result in happiness) but in itself.

Kant had stressed that a good will followed the moral law, i.e., the categorical imperative, and acted out of respect for this law and not out of self-interest or inclination. Nevertheless, its consequent divorce from the realm of action by its elevation to an intrinsic good was simply intolerable for Jean Paul: "Ein Wille, der nur sich will, heißt eine Absicht ohne Absicht; der Gegenstand muß früher sein, als das Verhältnis dazu. Nimmt man die Materie aus der Form, so könnte eben so gut das entgegengesetzte Prinzip das moralische sein." We find him expressing this same idea again in a letter to Christian Otto from November of 1794:


52c "...ich soll niemals anders verfahren als so, daß ich auch wollen könne, meine Maxime solle ein allgemeines Gesetz werden." Ibid., p.402. See also §7 of the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* for another statement of the categorical imperative.

The explanation that Jean Paul had sought was simply not to be found in the formalism of Kant's ethical system for there was very little room within for the one thing that had managed to sustain him throughout his period of scepticism, a belief in God. It goes without saying that Kant was by no means an irreligious man. His devotion, tempered as it was by a Pietist upbringing no less austere than that received within the orthodox Lutheran church, surely shared similarities with that of Jean Paul's. He too had faced charges of unorthodoxy due to his contention that reason was incapable of substantiating the traditional proofs for God's existence, and he even found himself in direct conflict with the political authorities upon publication of his Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft (1793) whose criticism of Christianity and biblical theology was more than Frederick William II could abide (So much so that the philosopher was forced to promise that he would never again venture into the realm of religion). Yet Kant never abandoned his religious convictions, even going so far as to find it necessary to deny (aufheben) knowledge in order to make room for faith.54

To take issue again with another of Jean Paul's interpreters, the suggestion that Kant's scepticism concerning the veracity of the proofs for God's existence had offended the poet's religious sensibilities seems incongruous with his intellectual position as I have sketched it to this point.55 If Kant's admission of the inadequacy of reason in this realm warranted a reaction at all from Jean Paul, it was surely one of indifference; he did not need to prove the

54Kritik der reinen Vernunft, B xxx.

55See Müller, Jean Pauls philosophischer Entwicklungsgang, p.395: "Das Weitere, was J.P. am Kantianismus irritirte, war dessen Skepsis gegen die Gottesbeweise."
existence of something for which he had always felt an inward assurance: "Das Dasein Gottes beweisen, so wie bezweifeln, heißt das Dasein des Daseins beweisen oder bezweifeln."\textsuperscript{56} He had attempted to clarify his position along these lines in \textit{Das Kampaner Tal oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele} (1797) -- a work which, incidentally, Kant had admired -- where he provided his own 'proof' for God's existence by appealing to the higher feelings, the inner stirrings of the soul:

Es gibt eine innere, in unserem Herzen hängende Geisterwelt, die mitten aus dem Gewölke der Körperwelt wie eine warme Sonne bricht. Ich meine das innere Universum der \textit{Tugend}, der \textit{Schönheit} und der \textit{Wahrheit}, drei innere Himmel und Welten, die weder Teile, noch Ausflüsse und Absenker, noch Kopien der äußern sind [...] Dieses innere Universum, das noch herrlicher und bewunderungswerter ist als das äußere, braucht einen andern Himmel als den über uns und eine höhere Welt, als sich an einer Sonne wärmt. [I,4:611-612]

It was not the inadvertent refutation of traditional theological arguments brought about by Kant's delineation of reason's potential that had raised Jean Paul's ire so much as it was the fact that Kant had simply made no allowance for the Creator in his moral system. For Jean Paul the only basis of morality had to be divine in origin:

Ohne den Aufblick zum volk kommensten Wesen ist die Tugend kalt, oft ohne Aufmunterung und Flügel, ohne Freude; und das nämliche Ideal der Tugend, das ich in meinem Kopfe aufgestellet habe und an dem ich iede andere, selbst die göttliche zu prüfen scheine, ründete ia eben erst der Schöpfer selbst: wie sol er nicht das Ideal der Tugend sein können, da er mir erst meines einschuf. "Die Tugend ist Nachahmung Gottes" wäre eine der erhabensten Vorstellungen, wenn nicht die Kanzeln es zu einer der abgegriffendsten gemacht hätten. [B,III,1:226] (Letter to Pastor Vogel from July 15, 1787).

\textsuperscript{56}[I,5:580]. See also the letter to Pastor Vogel from May 27, 1781 as evidence that this was a position which Jean Paul had embraced before he ever had to contend with Kant: "Allein ich glaub' Ihnen beweisen zu können, daß es gar kein absolutes \textit{Nichts} geben kan. Schon in dieser Rücksicht nicht: weil Got überal ist — und wenn wo ein absolutes \textit{Nichts} wäre, so würde Got nicht sein" [B,III,1:10].
Despite the acrimony that Jean Paul heaped upon the church of his day, his belief in God never wavered. 57 One cannot say the same about his allegiance to reason. While its inability to prove the existence of God led the poet to seek refuge in a unshakable religion of feeling that would eventually unite him with Jacobi, it had led Kant to seek a purely formal moral principle that did not need to be predicated upon religion, for “to base morality upon dogma was, in his opinion, to destroy the purity of morals just as surely as basing it upon the desire for happiness would destroy it.” 58 Yet the exclusion of God from the moral realm was no less destructive in the eyes of Jean Paul. As disenchanted as he may have been with the attempts of the Critical Philosophy to locate the center of morality within the individual himself, the successors to Kant would carry this project even further. With the appearance of Johann Gottlieb Fichte and his own version of the Kantian philosophy, a version that appeared to have completely displaced the Divinity in favour of the subject, Jean Paul felt compelled to respond.

57Based largely upon the most famous of Jean Paul’s Traumdichtungen, the “Rede des toten Christus vom Weltgebäude herab, daß kein Gott sei” (1789), we are assured by one of Jean Paul’s biographers that he “knew very well the despair of the true atheist” [! J.N.] (Berger, Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, p.87). Whether this particular Traumdichtung owe its origins to a spiritual crisis brought on by the suicide of his brother Heinrich in 1789 and the death of one of his closest friends in 1786, or whether it was simply an attempt to present what Jean Paul perceived to be the dire consequences of a materialist world-view, it should be clear that his scepticism was ultimately philosophical in nature. His questioning of religion was aimed at the vehicle of theology, not the content. And although he may have understandably succumbed to moments of despair, he never underwent a period of sustained disbelief (all questions of despair as a consequence of disbelief aside). For an extensive study of the “Rede des toten Christus” see Walther Rehm, Jean Paul-Dostojevski: Zur dichterischen Gestaltung des Unglaubens (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962).

58Beck, Early German Philosophy, p.428.
3. J.G. Fichte and the German Idealist Tradition

_Der Fichtianismus wird, glaub' ich, sein handelndes Leben
nicht hoch bringen; aber was hilft der Tod des Teufels,
wenne seine Großmutter fortlebt, die kritische Philosophie?_

-Jean Paul

It is only with considerable historical distance that one can properly speak of Fichte
and his role within the German idealist ‘tradition,’ for it was none other than he who first took
over the reins of the Critical Philosophy.¹ His rise to prominence would be as sudden as his
downfall, but the philosophical method that he endeavored to articulate would find a worthy
if only temporary successor in Friedrich Schelling and ultimately culminate in the philo-
sophical system of the quintessential idealist, Hegel. Common origins aside, the intellectual
positions which these men had staked out are by no means easily reconcilable, and yet despite
their differences, what had united them all was the common belief that they were each the true
successor to Kant who was most capable of completing his philosophical project. The
relative success of each of these attempts remains as much a matter of debate today as it was
then. Jean Paul’s own depreciatory characterization of these self-proclaimed successors —
the ‘diabolical’ Fichte in particular — as “Speckhauer hinter dem Walfisch” [I,4:1,017] was

¹Naturally, there were other philosophers who attempted to recast the Critical Philosophy
in such a way as to overcome the objections which had been raised against it — objections
which they had often raised themselves. Most notable among them was K. L. Reinhold, who
acquired a good deal of fame before Fichte. As we will see, his influence on Fichte and his
role in the history of post-Kantian philosophy is significant, but he was far from considering
himself the guardian of Kant’s legacy. For an excellent study of this period see Frederick C.
Beiser, _The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte_ (Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University, 1987).
no less severe than that of the Königsberg philosopher himself; the mere suggestion that his philosophical system was in some way incomplete or even needing of revision would offend Kant greatly. Nevertheless, while it may at times pain the master, he would be done an even greater disservice if his disciple did not (to borrow a metaphor from Wittgenstein) throw away the ladder after he had climbed to the top. Like the other idealist philosophers after him, Fichte would never go so far as to repudiate the Kantian philosophy entirely, but the heights which he reached on its back would not meet the approval of its creator.

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Anyone who wishes to advance the claim that Fichte was indeed the legitimate successor to Kant would do well to restrict themselves to the early relationship that developed between them, both personally and intellectually, for in the events which transpired soon after their initial meeting Fichte was unquestionably the heir apparent. His willingness to accept such a role is clear from his enthusiastic reaction to his very first reading of Kant as we will soon see. To be sure, it was a reaction shared by countless others. It is nonetheless worthy of note in this study that the admiration he expresses for Kant’s work is directed particularly at the moral nature of the second Kritik, and it echoes the praise that had been lavished upon it by Jean Paul. Even more interesting is the fact that Fichte’s equally critical reception of the Kritik der reißen Vernunft was due in part to the very same reservation that had been

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2 The following presentation of Fichte’s early intellectual development is based upon the preface to Daniel Breazeale’s Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings (Ithica, NY: Cornell University, 1988) as well as Fichte’s own correspondence found in Briefwechsel, ed. by Hans Schulz (Leipzig: H. Haessel, 1930), 2 vols. With the appearance of the Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften of Fichte’s work (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann, 1964-), the few biographies of Fichte which had been undertaken earlier are now in need of updating.
expressed by the poet, namely, the seeming inapplicability of the conclusions of the work to the world of everyday experience. In perhaps the only words that would have met Jean Paul’s approval, Fichte had castigated the fundamental principles of the first *Kritik* as “kopf-brechende Speculationen, die keinen unmittelbaren Einfluß aufs menschliche Leben haben.”

Nonetheless, he too recognized that they were the necessary foundation for the second *Kritik*, and at a time when mechanistic accounts of human behaviour were threatening the very notions of freedom and responsibility, there was nothing more cherished or crucial to either man than the establishment of moral certainty. Just as Jean Paul had implored his childhood friend to likewise acquaint himself with the ethical works of Kant, we see Fichte with an equal desire to share his newly discovered fortune with the closest friend of his youth:

> Ich lebe in einer neuen Welt, seitdem ich die *Kritik* der praktischen Vernunft gelesen habe. Sätze, von denen ich glaubte, sie seien unumstößlich, sind mir umgestoßen; Dinge, von denen ich glaubte, sie könnten mir nie bewiesen werden, z. B. der Begriff einer absoluten Freiheit, der Pflicht u. s. w., sind mir bewiesen, und ich fühle mich darüber nur um so froher. Es ist unbegreiflich, welche Achtung für die Menschheit, welche Kraft uns dieses System gibt! [...] Welch ein Segen für ein Zeitalter, in welchem die Moral von ihren Grundfesten aus zerstört, und der Begriff *Pflicht* in allen Wörterbüchern durchstrichen war.

It was almost a year later on July 4, 1791 when Fichte had first decided to pay the

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then 67 year-old Kant a visit. With no academic titles and little to his credit other than the
gratitude that he felt towards the man who had freed him from his earlier belief in
determinism, his reception was considerably less than warm. His next appearance at the elder
philosopher’s door the following month was far more successful. In lieu of a traditional letter
of recommendation (something which he had also lacked on his first encounter with Kant!),
he had preceded his second visit by sending Kant a work that he had composed in both the
spirit and the letter of the Critical Philosophy, the Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung
(1792). As one who had first read Kant’s work a mere year before, it is a testament to
Fichte’s ambition as well as his intellect that in this hastily composed work he had tackled that
most difficult and pressing of problems in Kant’s religious thought which had been touched
upon in the previous chapter, namely, how to provide a justification for faith within the
framework of practical reason.

With this work written over the span of a month, a work with which he himself was
not entirely pleased, Fichte had only hoped to gain Kant’s favour. He had in fact achieved
significantly more, for Kant was so impressed with the Kritik aller Offenbarung that he not
only encouraged Fichte to continue with his philosophical work, he also managed to sell
Fichte’s manuscript to his own publisher. It was the latter act which probably assured the
aspiring philosopher’s fame more than anything else for when the work appeared in print

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5Circumstances which, as Fichte himself acknowledged soon after, warranted no less. See
the letter to Kant from August 18, 1791. Ibid., pp.196-197.

6Kant’s own attempted resolution of this problem appeared (partially) that same year in the
Berlinische Monatsschrift. It was later published in its entirety as Religion innerhalb der
Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft (1793).
Fichte’s name was nowhere to be found, nor was his preface explaining the origin of the work. As an indication of just how well he had digested the Critical Philosophy, Fichte’s first publication was so well-received that it was immediately taken to be the newest offering of Kant, even though it had exhibited what Breazeale describes as “a clarity of exposition that Kant himself could not match.”\(^7\) When Kant promptly corrected the confusion and assured that credit was given to whom it was due, Fichte was appropriately hailed as one of his foremost disciples.\(^8\)

Just as Jean Paul’s first successful publication had freed him from the necessity of earning his living as a private tutor, so too was Fichte relieved of this thankless duty by the success of the *Kritik aller Offenbarung*. Shortly after its appearance and after the question of its authorship was finally resolved, he was offered a position as a book-reviewer for one of the leading intellectual journals of the time, the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. While working on reviews and on a revision of the *Kritik aller Offenbarung* he composed his next two works, *Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit von den Fürsten Europens, die sie bisher unterdrückten* (1793) and *Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urteile des Publikums über die französische Revolution* (1793/94). As is clear from the titles, both were overtly political in nature and argued respectively for greater freedom of the press and for a more positive evaluation of the goals of the French Revolution. The controversial nature of the subject

\(^7\)Breazeale, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p.7.

\(^8\)Considering that just such a work had been hotly anticipated by Kant’s admirers, one is tempted to think that the omission of both the author’s name on the title page and the preface was hardly an oversight on the part of the publisher since they would have surely anticipated the confusion -- and the resultant publicity.
matter necessitated that Fichte publish them anonymously, but this time there was no confusion as to whose pen they had originated from. (An unfortunate circumstance for Fichte, since the latter work would earn him the lasting reputation of a democrat and Jacobin, a factor which would later work against him in the coming Atheismusstreit.)

It was in his capacity as a reviewer that Fichte first came upon the realization that the Kantian philosophy was not the "unüberwindliche Festung" which he had earlier held it to be. In the course of his work he had been exposed to the ideas of Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1758-1823), an influential professor of philosophy at the University of Jena whom, unbeknownst to Fichte at the time, he would soon succeed. The chair that Reinhold occupied had been established exclusively for the promulgation of Kantianism, something which he had done quite successfully with the publication of his popular Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie (1786-87). Yet Reinhold was no mere expositor. He recognized that the Critical Philosophy fell short of some of its goals, and he took Kant to task for -- among all things -- being insufficiently critical. According to Reinhold, Kant had only provided a presentation of the nature of transcendental knowledge. What was called for was a rigorous investigation into the conditions by which we acquire this knowledge, a phenomenology of consciousness in other words, for without an understanding of the 'facts of consciousness' the Critical Philosophy fared no better in his eyes than earlier forms of metaphysical speculation. It was out of this demand for a new foundation that his Elementarphilosophie was born, so called because he insisted upon finding a single, self-evident, and incontrovertible principle that would form the basis of a new philosophical system; and it must be a system, for an additional

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9Fichte, Briefwechsel, I:265-266. (Draft of a letter to Reinhard from February 20, 1793).
source of Reinhold’s dissatisfaction with the Kantian philosophy was that it simply proceeded too haphazardly and lacked the cohesiveness needed to withstand the other criticisms to which it had been subjected.10

Fichte had come to believe that these revisions were indeed necessary, and Reinhold’s influence is unmistakable in the former’s uncompromising systematic procedure and his own attempt to secure the first principle of philosophy.11 The impetus that had first set Fichte on his own course was his third review for the Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung, a work by the sceptic philosopher Gottlob Ernst Schulze (1761-1833), the full title of which reads Aenesidemus, oder über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Prof. Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie. Nebst einer Verteidigung des Skeptizismus gegen die

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10To those with little knowledge of the genesis of Kant’s philosophy, Rheinhold’s charge may seem almost incomprehensible considering that Kant’s most famous works are popularly held to be prime examples of logical and consequent reasoning (not to mention that Kant himself continually underscored their systematic nature). It should be remembered, however, that Kant was 57 years-old when he published his first Kritik, a work which some interpreters claim was essentially pieced together from various manuscripts that he had written over the course of many years. As Beck has argued, the tenability of this “patchwork theory” is tenuous, not only because of the lack of evidence concerning these earlier manuscripts, but more importantly because it presents us with the impossible task of dividing the Kritik up and rearranging it into sections that do indeed reveal a perfect internal consistency. (Early German Philosophy, pp.468-69). Whatever the reason for the incongruities, the fact remains that they do exist. Kant was not even consistent in his choice of terminology — something which continues to plague his interpreters.

11For a thorough investigation of Fichte’s debt to Reinhold see Daniel Breazeale, “Between Kant and Fichte: Karl Leonhard Reinhold’s ‘Elementary Philosophy’,” Review of Metaphysics 35 (1982): 785-821. It should be noted that the search for a fundamental and incontrovertible principle upon which to found the Critical Philosophy did not originate with Reinhold. Kant himself had alluded to the desirability of such a proposition, although he did not pursue it with equal vigor; see the Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, p.91.
Anmaßungen der Vernunftkritik (1792). Schulze’s work was nothing less than a frontal assault on both Kant and Reinhold, and its powerful objections to the *Elementarphilosophie* had caused quite a commotion among Kantians in general. According to Beiser, “all but the most hide-bound Kantians were challenged by it; and for the first time they were forced to respect one of their critics.”

To see the demoralizing effect that Schulze’s arguments had exercised on his contemporaries we need look no further than Jean Paul. It hardly bears repeating that the challenge of scepticism was one which the poet himself, however unwillingly, had acknowledged long before. Nevertheless, his satirical portrayal of the intellectual quandry within which the all too self-assured Kantians found themselves after Schulze’s critique (and after Fichte’s later enhancements) aptly illustrates their genuine reluctance to relinquish the cherished security which the Critical Philosophy had promised:

Ich erinnere mich deutlich, daß ich als Stubengelehrter in meiner Studierstube saß und das Kantische Lehrgebäude für mich wie eine gute Loge zum hohen Licht im Kopf trug, als ein Teufel von Buchhändler mir einen Bücherballen von Œnesidemus und Fichte und andern ins Haus schickte, wovon ich schon vorher durch andere erfahren, daß der Ballen das Lehrgebäude erschütterte. »Jetzo um 1 Uhr bist du noch«, sagt’ ich auf- und abgehend, »glücklich und kantisch und sitzest fest und froh auf dein kritischen Dreifuß; nun kommits auf dich an, wann du das noch eingepackte System annimmst, das dem Dreifuß die Beine abbricht.« Ich entschoß mich aus Vorliebe, noch die ganze Nacht zu den Kantianern zu gehören und erst am Morgen den Ballen aufzuschnüren, um später zu renegieren. Es würde Schmerzen geben, wenn ich meine Empfindung vom Lebewohl der Kritik, und wie ich diese ordentlich

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12 Aenesidemus was both the title of the work and the pseudonym under which Schulze wrote (The historical Aenesidemus was one of the most well-known of the Greek sceptics after Pyrrho). Faring better than other ‘anonymous’ works of the time, it was not revealed until a year later that Schulze was its author.

noch einmal glaubend überlief unter dem Aufschnüren, malen wollte. [I,5:1,175]

The impact of Aenesidemus on Fichte was doubly decisive, for while he had been forced to admit that the Critical Philosophy fell short of its proposed goals, he recognized that he needed to secure his philosophical system upon an unassailable first-principle, and he was forced to formulate his own (in this respect, Fichte and Reinhold were following the foundationalist path charted earlier by Descartes, who had hoped to establish a philosophical system whose propositions possessed the certainty of geometric axioms):

Aenesidemus, den ich unter die merkwürdigen Produkte unseres Jahrzehends zähle, hat mich von dem überzeugt, was ich vorher wohl schon ahndete, daß selbst nach Kants, u. Reinholds Arbeiten die Philosophie noch nicht im Zustande einer Wißenschaft ist, hat mein eignes System in seinen Grundfesten erschüttert, u. hat mich, da sich's unter freiem Himmel nicht gut wohnt, genötigt von neuem aufzubauen. Ich habe mich überzeugt, daß nur durch Entwicklung aus einem einzigen Grundsätze Philosophie Wißenschaft werden kann, (am Rande: daß sie aber die eine Evidenz erhalten muß, wie die Geometrie) daß es einen solchen Grundsatz giebt, daß er aber als solcher noch nicht aufgestellt ist: ich glaube ihn gefunden zu haben, u. habe ihn, soweit ich mit meiner Untersuchung bis jetzt vorgerückt bin, bewährt gefunden.14

The importance of Fichte's self-imposed task cannot be underestimated, for should such a principle not have been found, he believed that he would have had no other option but to embrace scepticism, even “den unwidersprechlich widerlegten Humeschen.”15 While he

14Fichte, Briefwechsel, I:315. (Draft of a letter to Johann Friedrich Flatt from November / December, 1793). See also the letter to Stephani from December of 1793: “Haben Sie den ‘Aenesidemus’ gelesen? Er hat mich eine geraume Zeit verwirrt, Reinhold bei mir gestürzt, Kant mir verdächtig gemacht, und mein ganzes System von Grund aus umgestürzt.” Ibid., p.319. An elaboration of the exact nature of Schulze’s critique would carry us too far afield from the concern of the present study. For a more in-depth analysis of Schulze’s critique see Neuhouser, pp.69-86.

15Ibid., p.266. (Draft of a letter to Reinhard from February 20, 1793).
had hoped for a period of uninterrupted leisure in which he could fully develop this *Grundszatz* he believed to have discovered, the following month he received an offer to take up Reinhold's vacated position at the University of Jena. Knowing that he could not refuse such a prestigious appointment, Fichte accepted the position although he was acutely aware that his philosophical system was as yet unfinished. Ultimately, it would remain so for the five years he spent at Jena -- although extraordinarily productive -- would be beset by controversy.

3.1 The Atheism Controversy

*Fichte also soll die Religion angegriffen haben?*
- *Wenn das Interesse am Übersinnlichen das Wesen der Religion ist, so ist seine ganze Lehre Religion in Form der Philosophie.*
- Friedrich Schlegel

Fichte's reputation as a radical Jacobin had already secured him a fair number of detractors before he arrived at the university in May of 1794, and the first incident to arise during his time there was no doubt instigated by this segment of the faculty. Not long after the initial success of Fichte's lectures became a regular occurrence (reports abound of his natural talent for public speaking), a rumour began to circulate that he had been promulgating
treasonous ideas.\textsuperscript{16} Even though the court in Weimar had never seriously entertained the accusation and therefore never gave him any cause for concern, Fichte was outraged (perhaps inordinately so) and decided to publish his unaltered lecture notes in order to squelch the rumour.\textsuperscript{17} Shortly thereafter, he once again found himself the subject of controversy because he had chosen to schedule his next series of lectures on a Sunday in the hour immediately following church services. While Fichte’s rationale had simply been to avoid any scheduling conflicts with other university affairs and thereby secure for himself as many listeners as possible, his opponents had seized on the move as a chance to accuse him of everything from unlawfulness to blasphemy. Once again the court proved itself partial to Fichte, but not before he had again provided his own able defense for his actions.

Fichte barely had time to relax before the next crisis fell upon him. This time it was not his political enemies who were involved, but a not insignificant portion of the student population who continued to promote the growth of secret societies which Breazeale describes as bearing “a closer resemblance to street gangs than to present-day student fraternities.”\textsuperscript{18}

While such organizations had been banned at the university for quite some time, the often violent nature of the student protests led most of the university authorities to shy away from any direct confrontation. Not so Fichte. In the course of his public lectures, he had railed

\textsuperscript{16}Breazeale cites a letter from C.G. Voigt, the court administrator in charge of academic affairs, in which Fichte is reported as saying that “in twenty or thirty years there will be no kings or princes anywhere.” Letter to Hufeland from June 13, 1794. (\textit{Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings}, p.23).

\textsuperscript{17}The work appeared in September of 1794 as \textit{Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten}.

\textsuperscript{18}Breazeale, \textit{Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings}, p.25.
against the irresponsible activities of these brotherhoods, which in turn led to series of personal attacks against him and his family which quickly turned violent. In the summer of 1795 a few students had tried unsuccessf ully to break into Fichte’s home, after which they hurled rocks through his windows, one of which very nearly missed hitting his ailing stepfather in the head. 19 After these events Fichte fled Jena for Osmannstädt on the outskirts of Weimar and threatened not to return to the university until he received sufficient assurances from the court that the situation was resolved and the safety of his family was no longer threatened.

When all was said and done, it took the temporary military occupation of Jena in order to restore order and give Fichte the peace of mind to return that winter. The resumption of his duties was marked by a deeper commitment to his teaching rather than the public lectures which he had become accustomed to delivering, and he gave special attention to an introductory class in philosophy that proved to be immensely popular. 20 For three years after his return he worked prodigiously on his philosophical system and managed to steer clear of any new controversies until his role as co-editor of the Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten drew him into a philosophical debate, the ramifications of which would eventually extend far beyond the borders of Jena and assure him of a popularity for which he would never have wished.

19 Goethe’s scathingly humourous remark that such an occurrence would have been “die unangenehmste Weise, von dem Dasein eines Nicht-Ichs überzeugt zu werden” provides an indication of just how rarefied Fichte’s own philosophy had become in some circles. Cited in Lindau, Die Schriften zu J.G.Fichtes Atheismus-Streit, p.365.

20 As was the custom at the time, professors normally chose a well-known philosophical text and formed their lectures around a critique of its claims. Additional evidence of the common influences upon Fichte and Jean Paul is found in the fact that he had chosen Platner’s Philosophische Aphorismen for his class.
One of Fichte's former colleagues at the university, Friedrich Karl Forberg (1770-1848), had submitted an article to the *Philosophisches Journal* that essentially equated religious belief with faith in a moral world order. Adhering to the Kantian idea that talk of a personal God who intervened in the empirical world (much less possessed attributes thereof) was merely unfounded theoretical speculation, it is not difficult to see why Forberg chose to locate the object of religion in the certainty of an inner moral law given to us by conscience. Fichte had objected to the article on the grounds that it bore a superficial resemblance to his own position — no doubt concerned that it would lead to yet another misrepresentation of his philosophy and thereby end the relative peace he had enjoyed since his return from Osmannstädt. When Forberg pressed Fichte to approve its publication, the latter consented with the stipulation in mind that he would publish a counter article in the same issue (preceding Forberg's of course!) clarifying his own position on the relation between religion and morality. Little did Fichte know that this effort to preserve what remained of his good name would be his own undoing.

When the journal appeared in the fall of 1798 with the contributions in question, both Fichte's article ("Über den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung") and Forberg's ("Entwicklung des Begriffs der Religion") had elicited a response that neither could have predicted.\(^{21}\) Regardless of their stated differences, both authors were looked upon as

\[^{21}\text{It does seem reasonable to expect that both men were familiar enough with the import of spiritual matters in Germany (especially in the wake of the Spinoza controversy) to have anticipated some fallout over such a sensitive issue, but by no means the degree to which which actually occurred. To this end, it may have been an extremely shrewd move on Fichte's part, though ultimately ineffective, to close his essay with citations of a pantheistic nature from Goethe and Schiller as indirect 'testimonials' for his own position.}\]
advocating a form of atheism. In the eyes of some of his accusers, Fichte had committed the larger transgression by actually identifying God with the moral world order and not just some informal conception of religion as Forberg had done. Nevertheless, Fichte was univocal in his assertion that ‘God’ (as necessarily conceived by transcendental philosophy) does in fact exist:

Es ist daher ein Missverständniss, zu sagen: es sei zweifelhaft, ob ein Gott sei oder nicht. Es ist gar nicht zweifelhaft, sondern das Gewisseste, was es gibt, ja der Grund aller anderen Gewissheit, das einzige absolut gültige Objektive. A more resolute statement can hardly be imagined, and in the context of the controversy, it is certainly far less inflammatory than Forberg’s insistence that it is impossible to claim whether God does or does not exist:


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22 "Jene lebendige und wirkende moralische Ordnung ist selbst Gott; wir bedürfen keines anderen Gottes, und können keinen anderen fassen." Fichte, _Über den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung_, p.32.

23 A conception which, admittedly, bears little resemblance to the more common notion of a personal God. See Fichte’s _Gerichtliche Verantwortungsschriften gegen die Anklage des Atheismus_ (1799): “Rein philosophisch müßte man von Gott so reden: Er ist (die logische Kopula) kein Sein, sondern ein _reines Handeln_ (Leben und Prinzip einer übersinnlichen Weltordnung).” (p.221).

24 Fichte, _Über den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung_, p.34.

25 Forberg, _Entwicklung des Begriffs der Religion_, p.57. In truth, the conclusions of both men were hardly surprising for anyone with more than a passing acquaintance with Kant’s moral philosophy. The difference is that what had always remained implicit in Kant’s work was stated with uncharacteristic bluntness by Fichte and Forberg. In fact, the latter had made just such an admission in his _Apologie seines angeblichen Atheismus_: “Es war die Tendenz
Whether Fichte's admission of belief was more than just a play on words quickly became an academic question in all senses of the word, for the already charged matter took on a degree of public urgency with the appearance of an anonymous broadside entitled *Schreiben eines Vaters an seinen studierenden Sohn über den Fichtischen und Forbergischen Atheismus* (1798). Now both men found themselves in the familiar Socratic dilemma of having to contend with their alleged corruption of the youth. When word of the affair reached Frederick-August, the prince-elector of Saxony, he was compelled to issue an official censure on the grounds that Fichte was irresponsible in permitting publication of the controversial issue, and he ordered the confiscation of all remaining copies.

It should go without saying that Fichte provided a written justification of his actions, but the matter had already assumed such proportions that the actual content of his essay was of little importance. Frederick-August demanded that Fichte and Forberg be punished. The authorities in Weimar, who by now had grown accustomed to controversy surrounding Fichte, were more understanding and hoped to pacify all parties involved by issuing a mild

der ganzen Abhandlung...den Kantischen bei weitem nicht immer gehörig gefassten Begriff in sein gehöriges Licht zu stellen.” (Quoted in Heinrich Rickert, *Fichtes Atheismusstreit und die Kantische Philosophie*, p.5). Rickert notes that Forberg actually goes beyond Kant, however, by insisting that the realization of a good act (“das endliche Gelingen des Guten”) was of more importance than the mere possession of a good will. (p.3).

26Actually, Fichte wrote two separate defenses (his temperament would never have allowed him to write a self-effacing ‘Apology’ as Forberg had done), the first of which was directed at the larger public and the second for the authorities in Weimar; respectively: *J.G. Fichtes des phil. Doktors und ordentlichen Professors zu Jena Appellation an das Publikum über die durch ein Kurf. Sächs. Konfiskationsreskript ihm beigemessenen atheistischen Äusserungen* (January, 1799) and the previously-mentioned *Der Herausgeber des philosophischen Journals gerichtliche Verantwortungsschriften gegen die Anklage des Atheismus* (March, 1799).
rebuke that criticized the philosophers primarily for failing to take into consideration the misunderstandings that their views could generate among those who lacked an understanding for the subtleties of philosophical reasoning. Fichte, however, would tolerate no such condemnation, and in a blustery letter he threatened the court authorities that any official reprimand would result in his resignation from the university. It had never occured to him that they would take him up on the offer. On March 29, 1799 the planned censure appeared along with the acceptance of Fichte’s resignation.

In June of 1799 Fichte left Jena for good and played an integral role in the founding of a new university in Berlin. (He would in fact be its first rector and acquire his own reputation for sternness). Looking back on the affair several months later, he was wise enough to realize that his own democratic sympathies had lain at the bottom of the controversy, and he had merely provided his opponents with the tools they needed to finally remove him:

Ich habe nie geglaubt, daß sie meinen vorgeblichen Atheismus verfolgen; sie verfolgen in mir einen Freidenker, der anfängt, sich verständlich zu machen (Kant’s Glück war seine Obscurität); und einen verschrienen Demokraten.  

He was indeed right on both counts. His democratic sympathies had cast a shadow over his academic tenure from the very beginning, and none but the most obstinate and resolute in their opposition to Fichte could have seen an atheist in him. In fact, as perceived by those intellectuals most intimately involved in the philosophical controversies of the time, this particular controversy was less about Fichte’s supposed heresy and more about the freedom to publish scholarly work among colleagues without fear of government censure.

27Fichte, Briefwechsel, II:105. (Letter to Reinhold from May 22, 1799).
The fact that both Jean Paul and Jacobi had vigorously defended Fichte in this matter is enough of a testament to his faith. Nevertheless, both of these men were to remain harsh critics of his *Wissenschaftslehre* throughout their lives, and in order to understand their objections, we should now take a closer look at his philosophical system.

### 3.2 The Argument of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

*Die Welt ist ihm [Fichte] nur ein Ball, den das Ich geworfen hat und den es bei der Reflexion wiederfängt!*

-Friedrich Schiller

The desire to provide his philosophy with the clarity that Kant’s lacked had consumed Fichte from the moment he conceived of his own unique modification to the Critical Philosophy. It was in some respects unfortunate that his early fame had preceded him as it did, for just when he had hit upon his own idea of an indisputable *Grundsatz* to serve as the basis of transcendental philosophy, he was summoned to the University of Jena. The system which had thus just begun to germinate in his own mind required presentation to an audience with high expectations of the most heralded of Kant’s disciples, and Fichte did not intend to disappoint them. As he wrote to a friend at the time, the system that he was working on was nothing less than “eine wissenschaftliche Philosophie, die sich selbst mit der Mathematik
meßen könne." 28 Appropriately, Fichte called his new method of thought Wissenschaftslehre and even went so far as to emphasize its distinctiveness from "der bloßen Liebhaberei des Wissens oder der Philosophie." 29 The Wissenschaftslehre was more than just love of knowledge; through a critical investigation of philosophical knowledge itself it was to attain the status of metaknowledge, i.e., knowledge of the most pure and objective kind.

Little has been said of his philosophical system up to now, for it was necessary to set the stage in order to account for the often fragmentary manner of its appearance. The necessity of having to introduce his evolving and increasingly elaborate philosophy anew to his students every term compelled Fichte to formulate various introductions to his thought in the hopes of facilitating its comprehension. In the short period of time he had before assuming his duties at Jena, Fichte set to work on the first of these introductions, a prospectus of sorts designed to illustrate his own personal Denkweg and set off its distinctiveness from other philosophical systems to date. In writing this first exposition, entitled Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie (1794), Fichte consciously adopted a very casual tone (in contrast to the often bombastic style of his later writings), since he had hoped to engage a larger cross-section of readers rather than just his prospective students. Moreover, as the title indicates, it was explicitly a work about the Wissenschaftslehre and not a presentation of its principles. The first attempt to do this would appear a few months later as the Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre (1794), a work which emerged from his lecture notes after his first two semesters at Jena with the appropriate subtitle Handschrift

28Fichte, Briefwechsel, I:332. (Letter to Böttiger from February 4, 1794).

29Ibid., p.339. (Letter to Böttiger from March 1, 1794).
für seine Zuhörer.\textsuperscript{30}

The exegetical difficulties of his philosophical system were not lost on Fichte. Nor were they lost on Forberg, Fichte’s anticipated foil in the \textit{Atheismusstreit}; in his \textit{Fragmente aus meinen Papieren} (1796) Forberg wrote: “Man hat bey der Kantischen Philosophie über Dunkelheit geklagt: bey der Fichtischen wird man über Finsterniß klagen müssen.”\textsuperscript{31} And in fact, the misunderstandings that arose in the wake of Fichte’s first publications concerning the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} were many. When he wasn’t embroiled in the previously discussed controversies, he occupied himself with constant revisions and perenially ‘new’ introductions in the hopes of more clearly articulating the first principles of his system.\textsuperscript{32} A letter to

\textsuperscript{30}Fichte had, in fact, originally published the work prior to his classes in hastily written installments that were never intended to be read without the assistance of his own lectures. Public demand, however, led him to allow its unrestricted distribution.

\textsuperscript{31}Cited in Fichte, \textit{Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre}, p.114.

\textsuperscript{32}In all Fichte drafted no less than 16 different versions of the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} (not to mention the many versions found among his Nachlaß), yet the first and second Introductions to the \textit{Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre} (written 1797/98) are generally held to contain the clearest exposition of his system. For an overview of the circumstances surrounding these publications see Breazeale’s Introduction to \textit{J.G. Fichte: Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings} (1797-1800) (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994). Breazeale writes that the \textit{Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre} was the only version published during Fichte’s lifetime, although several pages later he writes that the above-mentioned \textit{Versuch} was published over the course of 1797/98 in the \textit{Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrter}. I presume that Breazeale means here the \textit{Grundlage} was the only ‘complete’ version published by Fichte, since the \textit{Atheismusstreit} forced him to break off work on the \textit{Versuch} after publication of the first chapter. Nevertheless, as Beazeale duly notes, both works are complete only in so far as they are an attempt to present the foundations of the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} and not the philosophical system \textit{in its entirety}. (p. xii).

In addition to passages from personal letters, the textual evidence used in support of the following exposition of Fichte’s thought will be drawn primarily from the various versions of the Jena \textit{Wissenschaftslehre}. The \textit{Versuch} will be cited frequently given its unusual ‘clarity’ — a word which always requires some qualification in application to Fichte —, as well as the
Reinhold from 1795 reveals that the fresh professor was not overly discouraged by this initial confusion since he recognized that the ideas he was trying to express “läßen sich auf unendlich verschiedene Weise ausdrüken, und es ist, von mir wenigstens, nicht zu erwarten, daß die zuerst gewählte Darstellungsart die vollkommenste sey.” Six years later, after the gravity of the misunderstandings had finally cost him his position, Fichte’s frustration was evident, so much so that it manifested itself in the almost hostile title of the draft he had been working on at the time: *Sonnenklarer Bericht an das grössere Publikum über das eigentliche Wesen der neuesten Philosophie. Ein Versuch, die Leser zum Verstehen zu zwingen* (1801). The fact that it was to be followed by countless other expositions -- no doubt equally as clear as the light of day in Fichte’s eyes -- speaks to its effectiveness.

I.

The quest to set down the fully authoritative version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* has

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*Grundlage* of 1794 since this is the version which Jean Paul frequently cites in his *Clavis*. (As we will see in the following chapter, however, it is difficult to conclude that Jean Paul had truly studied this work even in light of the numerous citations).

33Fichte, *Briefwechsel*, I:477. (Letter to Reinhold from July 2, 1795). In this same letter Fichte finds additional consolation by drawing a parallel between the confusion resulting from his own work and the misunderstandings which arose from Kant’s philosophy which, as indicated earlier, Fichte’s correspondent had criticized for being unsystematic and unnecessarily complicated by an inconsistent terminology. The fact that Fichte agreed with Reinhold’s assessment makes the following statement from the introduction to the *Grundlage* all the more quixotic: “Die Darstellung erkläre ich selbst für höchst unvollkommen und mangelhaft, [...] theils weil ich eine feste Terminologie -- das bequemste Mittel für Buchstäbler, jedes System seines Geistes zu berauben, und es in ein trockenes Geripp zu verwandeln -- so viel möglich zu vermeiden suchte” (p.87).
been seen by some as characteristic of the Romantic striving after an unattainable ideal.\textsuperscript{34} Given Schlegel’s description of Romantic poetry as that which “ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann,”\textsuperscript{35} the analogy is even more fitting, and yet Fichte’s goal was far more ambitious than to content himself with that Romantic manner of feeling which at times seemed to amount to striving for the mere sake of striving.\textsuperscript{36} Whether his philosophical statement is ultimately any less nebulous than that of the Romantic authors and poets is an open question. What is clear, however, is that he believed his philosophical system to be within everyone’s reach; if the manner of presentation was unsatisfactory, it was so necessarily, since the ideas he sought to articulate could only be acquired through intuition:

\begin{quote}
Das, was ich mittheilen will, ist etwas, das gar nicht gesagt, noch begriffen, sondern nur \textit{angeschaut} werden kann; was ich sage, soll nichts weiter thun, als den Leser so leiten, daß die begehrte Anschauung sich in ihm bilde. Wer meine Schriften studiren will, dem rathe ich, Worte Worte seyn zu laßen, und nur zu suchen, daß er irgendwo in die Reihe meiner Anschauungen eingreife; fortzulesen, auch wenn er das vorhergehende nicht ganz versteht, bis irgendwo an einem Ende ein Lichtfunken herausspringt.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

In light of such a characterization, it is easy to see why Fichte’s philosophy had appealed to the littérateurs of his time -- at least in spirit. But the form of intuition advanced


\textsuperscript{35}Schlegel, \textit{Athenäums-Fragmente}, p.39.

\textsuperscript{36}This is not to imply that the concept of striving has no role in Fichte’s thought. In fact, before settling upon the name of \textit{Wissenschaftslehre}, Fichte had actually considered calling his system \textit{Strebungsphilosophie} (‘philosophy of striving’), which is a clear indication of its central importance. However, this is yet another instance where the tenor of Fichte’s thought proved to be more infectious among the Romantics than the letter, since striving is a ‘technical’ concept referring to the infinite activity of the transcendental self to be discussed later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{37}Fichte, \textit{Briefwechsel}, I:477. (Letter to Reinhold from July 2, 1795).
by Fichte was not the personal and subjective intuition that the Romantics seemed to have cherished as the guarantor of some quasi-mystical insight, but rather the supra-personal intellectual intuition that had been raised and then dismissed (in its application to sensible, finite beings that is) by the Critical Philosophy.

Since we are finite experiential beings whose representations (Vorstellungen) are dependent upon the existence of objects, Kant had argued that sensible intuition (intuitus derivatus) was the only form of intuition that was open to us. Should there be such a thing as intellectual intuition (intuitus originarius), an intellect or consciousness whose representations originated from super-sensible entities transcending experience, it could only be found among the characteristics of the divinity. 38 Fichte had seized upon this notion of intellectual intuition in order to introduce his own notion of consciousness, “ein unmittelbares, aber kein sinnliches [Bewußtsein]” 39 whose very nature was that of activity (Handeln) and which did indeed serve as the foundation for all its representations:

Die intellektuelle Anschauung ist der einzige feste Standpunkt für alle Philosophie. Von ihm aus läßt sich alles, was im Bewußtsein vorkommt erklären; aber auch nur von ihm aus [...] Ich kann von diesem Standpunkte aus nicht weiter gehen, weil ich nicht weiter gehen darf; und so zeigt sich der transzendentale Idealismus zugleich als diejenige Denkart, wo die Spekulation und das Sittengesetz sich innigst vereinigen. Ich soll in meinem Denken vom reinen Ich ausgehen, und dasselbe absolut selbsttätig denken, nicht als bestimmt durch die Dinge, sondern als die Dinge bestimmend. 40

38 This analysis of intellectual intuition as found in Kant and Fichte is presented in greater detail by Vladimir Zeman in “Appropriation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason: Fichte’s Second Introduction to Wissenschaftslehre [sic]” in New Perspectives on Fichte, ed. by Tom Rockmore and Daniel Breazeale (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), pp.213-225.

39 Fichte, Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre, p.472. The pagination from the Versuch is that of the first volume of Fichte’s Sämtliche Werke edited by his son, I.H. Fichte (Berlin: 1845-46).

40 Ibid., p.466-467.
This is in essence Fichte’s first principle of philosophy, and we will return to the idea of intellectual intuition presently. What is important to note at this stage of our exposition is that the Kantian overtones here are more than just apparent, for Fichte openly acknowledged that his philosophical system was “kein anderes als das Kantische.” 41 In actuality, he saw himself as the one person who not only understood Kant better than anyone else, but the one who understood the Königsberg philosopher better than he understood himself. (The hubris of this claim is somewhat lessened when one recalls that Kant had made the same claim about his knowledge of Plato). 42 Fichtean philosophy was thus more than just a refinement of the Critical Philosophy; it was quite simply the Critical Philosophy carried through to its logical conclusion, or, in Fichte’s own words, “ächtter durchgeführter Kriticismus.” 43

Despite Fichte’s ardent assertions, this was not a claim that found wide acceptance, and in light of the portrait of Fichte sketched so far it should not be surprising to discover that he was particularly agitated at having to defend his position. When he argued that the very fact that his philosophical forebear had been so poorly understood necessitated that his own philosophy could not be properly understood, his critics responded by citing the master

41Ibid., p.420.

42See the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B370/A314.

43Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*, p.89. See also the *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*: “Aus einem ganz anderen Grunde sonach, als aus dem, seine Lehre zu empfehlen, ist der Verfasser der Wissenschaftslehre mit der Vorinrinnerung aufgetreten, daß dieselbe mit der Kantischen Lehre vollkommen übereinstimme, und keine andere sei, als die wohlverstandene Kantische. In dieser Meinung ist er durch die fortgesetzte Bearbeitung seines Systems, und durch die Vielseitigkeit, die er seinen Sätzen zu geben veranlaßt worden ist, immer mehr bestärkt worden.” (pp.468-469).
himself, who was so outraged that Fichte would dare to presume his system was imperfect that he proclaimed Fichte's to be nothing but sophistry.\textsuperscript{44} If ever there were an example of that uncompromising rigidity and presumptuousness which Jean Paul had detested in the systematizers of philosophy, it is surely to be found in Fichte for the unshakeable certainty which he possessed in his system made him immune to criticism from even the most revered of his teachers. (Although considering that such inflexibility was also to be found in Kant one could argue that Fichte's emulation of Kant went beyond the 'theoretical'). He dismissively attributed Kant's objections to the fact that the elder philosopher had assuredly not delved into his work and merely relied upon second-hand accounts — the charge which had similarly been made against those who could not gain entry into the \textit{Kritik der reinen Vernunft} ---, but the ultimate show of vaingloriousness was to come in his assertion that Kant had actually reasoned on the basis of his own philosophy! In a letter to Reinhold from March 1, 1794,

Fichte writes:

Eben so geht es mir mit Kant, deßen Schriften verstanden zu haben ich jedoch mit weit größerer Ueberzeugung glaube. Es wird mir immer wahr-scheinlicher, daß K. [ant] gerade aus meinen Grundsätzen gefolgt habe, ob er sie gleich nicht wörtlich, sondern öfters etwas, das ihnen den Worten nach zu widersprechen scheint, aufstellt, und weit weniger systematisch ist, als ich zu sein wünsche.45

Even if one makes allowances for Fichte’s renowned Rechthaberei, it is hard to believe that he would have seriously advanced such a position (even privately) had he intended it to be taken at face-value. It would have been patently absurd to claim that Kant was endowed with such prescience as to have based his philosophy upon Fichte’s thought which, as we have just seen, the latter freely admitted to be derived from the Critical Philosophy. While I would suggest that Fichte’s statement here should be taken as another indication of just how intrinsically related he viewed their respective systems to be, his insistence upon the common starting point of their philosophies is of even greater significance. An examination of these positions is now in order to finally see what Fichte had perceived as the uniqueness of his Wissenshaftslehre.

It should be clearly reiterated at this point that among the central concerns of both men was the possibility of acquiring objective knowledge. As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, even though Kant was willing to admit that all knowledge begins from the world of experience, he was not inclined to follow the empiricism represented by Hume and claim that all knowledge arises solely from experience since that would preclude there ever being knowledge of a kind that did not depend upon — and thus vary with — the subjective state of

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45Fichte, Briefwechsel, I:341. [Emphasis added].
the knower. According to Kant, it was the faculty of reason that played the stabilizing role in the cognitive process for it was reason that gave form to the bare content of experience. Thus, the much heralded Copernican revolution in philosophy initiated by Kant had been the shift of perspective brought about by viewing the subject as more than just the passive receptor of external stimuli whose mind conformed to the objects of experience; instead, the knowing subject actively ‘shaped’ the external world (Fichte would say ‘determined’) since all objects of perception “müssen sich nach unserem Erkenntnis richten”\(^46\) and thus conform to the necessary manner in which reason processes experiential data.

The claim to objectivity is brought into play with Kant’s introduction of the notion of a priori truths, i.e., truths that can be ascertained by reason alone quite independent of experience (as contrasted with a posteriori truths). Such truths are both necessary and universal, and Kant makes an additional distinction between a priori truths which are ‘analytic,’ i.e., logically true by virtue of the meaning of their terms -- in the way that the word ‘bachelor’ means the same as ‘an unmarried male’ -- and those which are ‘synthetic.’ The latter do not derive their truth from a logical derivation, but in Kant’s view they do nevertheless affirm something about a term that can not be revealed by the mere analysis of its accepted meaning. In his own vague words there exists a “Verknüpfung ohne Identität.”\(^47\)

The distinction between synthetic and analytic a priori truths remains a contentious one, and it is peripheral to our main purpose here which is to shed some light on both the philosophical kinship and variance between Kant and Fichte. It is sufficient to note that the

\(^46\)Kritik der reinen Vernunft, BXVI.

\(^47\)Ibid., B10/A7.
belief in the objective validity of these \textit{a priori} truths (the ‘synthetic’ in particular) and the concomitant objectivity of reason itself formed the basis for Kant’s conception of transcendental philosophy:

\begin{quote}
Ich nenne alle Erkenntnis \textit{transzendentals}, die sich nicht so wohl mit Gegenständen, sondern mit \textit{unserer Erkenntnisart} von Gegenständen, so fern diese \textit{a priori} möglich sein soll, überhaupt beschäftigt. Ein System solcher Begriffe würde \textit{Transzendental-Philosophie} heißen.\footnote{Ibid., B25/A11.}
\end{quote}

In as far as Fichte also accepts the necessity of these \textit{a priori} truths, it is a view of transcendental philosophy which he appears to share as well:

\begin{quote}
Inwiefern der Idealismus diese einzig \textit{vernunftmäßige bestimmte}, und wirklich erklärende Voraussetzung von \textit{notwendigen Gesetzen} der Intelligenz macht, heißt er der kritische, oder auch der transzendentale.\footnote{Fichte, \textit{Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre}, p.441. [Emphasis added].}
\end{quote}

But a close comparison of the two statements reveals that Fichte’s conception is somewhat more restrictive in light of what is \textit{not} stated. He clearly accepts the premise that the intellect, or reason, operates according to necessary laws, however, the \textit{presumption} of external objects (\textit{Gegenstände}) as the focus of the intellect is noticeably absent. The reason for such an omission becomes quite clear if we recall once again that Kant’s philosophical project was motivated by the desire to provide an explanation of how we could legitimately claim to have objective knowledge -- more specifically, objective knowledge of experiential objects. According to Fichte, Kant did not err in his reliance upon \textit{a priori} truths as the foundation of objectivity; it was rather the Critical Philosophy’s implicit assumption as to the very existence of these objects that led Kant in the wrong direction and resulted in the burdening of his
philosophical system with such internally inconsistent ideas as the notion of things-in-themselves.\textsuperscript{50}

Before examining the reasons for Fichte's own rejection of things-in-themselves, we need to pursue the analysis of what he judged to be Kant's misstep a little further. By assuming the existence of objects, Kant had simply gotten ahead of himself and opened his philosophy up to objections that would never have been raised had he proceeded in a much more rigorous fashion and, more importantly, in a way that remained in accordance with the very essence of transcendental philosophy. An indication of the way which Fichte deemed most appropriate is found in the following passage from the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo} (1798/99):\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{quote}
Es ist, wie Kant sagt, ein Vorteil für eine Wißenschaft, wenn man das, was sie zu leisten hat, auf eine Formel bringt. Kant bringt das, was die Philosophie zu leisten hat, auf die Aufgabe zurück: "wie sind synthetische Urtheile A PRIORI möglich?" DOCENT [Fichte] drückt die Frage so aus: wie kommen wir dazu anzunehmen; daß den Vorstellungen in uns etwas auser uns entspreche? Beide Fragen heißen daßelbe.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

Both questions are indeed the same in respect to their common goal, i.e., how to account for the possibility of objective knowledge. However, Fichte's formulation is especially instructive in elucidating why he had described his philosophy as "die

\textsuperscript{50}In the supplement to his \textit{David Hume über den Glauben} (1787), entitled \textit{Über den transcendentalen Idealismus}, Jacobi stated his now famous objection to this central tenet of the Critical Philosophy, namely, that \textit{without} assuming the existence of things-in-themselves he "[konnte] in das System nicht hineinkommen, und mit jener Voraussetzung darin nicht bleiben." (p.304).

\textsuperscript{51}This particular version of the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} exists only as transcribed notes from two of Fichte's students at Jena since the original manuscript has never been found.

\textsuperscript{52}Fichte, \textit{Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo}, p.11.
wohlverstandene Kantische"\textsuperscript{53} for he had shifted the focus away from judgements (\textit{Urtheile}) which ultimately depend upon objects in some form or other and brought it back again onto the true ‘subject’ of transcendental philosophy, the consciousness within which all \textit{Urtheile} and \textit{Vorstellungen} occur. As Fichte explained his own position to Jacobi:

\begin{quote}
Ich bin ja wohl transscendentaler Idealist, härter als Kant es war; denn bei ihm ist doch noch ein Mannigfaltiges der Erfahrung; zwar mag Gott wissen, wie und woher, gegeben, ich aber behaupte mit dürren Worten, daß selbst dieses von uns durch ein schöpferisches Vermögense producirt werde.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{quote}

Thus, even though Kant’s Critical Philosophy had raised the (self-) awareness of the conscious subject to a level theretofore unknown, it did not make consciousness itself the primary object of its investigation, but focused instead on knowledge of objects of consciousness.\textsuperscript{55} In his recent work on the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} of the Jena years Wayne Martin has provided an excellent description of this crucial distinction:

\begin{quote}
On the Kantian definition, to say of a philosophical enquiry that it is transcendental is to characterize only the product it seeks: it seeks \textit{knowledge of our mode of knowledge of objects}. Such a description tells us nothing about how such knowledge is to be acquired.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

It was this awareness — prompted no doubt by Reinhold’s earlier criticism that Kant’s

\textsuperscript{53}Fichte, \textit{Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre}, p.469.

\textsuperscript{54}Fichte, \textit{Briefwechsel}, I:501. (Letter of August 30, 1795).

\textsuperscript{55}Despite his failure to pursue an analysis of consciousness itself, Fichte still gives Kant credit for being the first to emphasize its central importance and ‘formative’ role: “Wie diese Untersuchung auch ausfälle, so bleibt dem erhabenen Manne [Kant] doch das Verdienst ganz eigentümlich, die Philosophie zuerst mit Bewußtsein von den äußeren Gegenständen abgezogen, und sie in uns selbst hineingeführt zu haben.” (Fichte, \textit{Versuch}, p.479).

\textsuperscript{56}Martin, \textit{Idealism and Objectivity}, pp.64-65. [Emphasis added]. As will be clear from what follows, my exposition of Fichte is greatly indebted to Martin’s timely and much-needed work.
analysis of the nature of transcendental knowledge, brilliant as it may have been, failed to investigate the origin of that knowledge -- that compelled Fichte to turn his attention to that which forms the very basis of experience. As the reader may have surmised from the earlier discussion of intellectual intuition, Fichte recognized that the implicit assumption in Kant's critical enterprise (and in all philosophical investigations in general) was that philosophy proceeded from the immediate fact of our consciousness, the incontrovertibility of which entailed not merely that objects assume a secondary importance to that which is primary, namely, "das Bewuβtseiende," the subject itself, but it also provided the key to that which would serve as the indisputable Grundsatz which the Critical Philosophy so desperately needed, for it is only in the self-conscious subject that "der Grund alles Seins" is to be found.\(^57\)

It is thus with the following words that Fichte provided a concise summation of the direction of his philosophical inquiry: "Nun hat die Philosophie den Grund aller Erfahrung anzugeben; ihr Objekt liegt sonach notwendig außer aller Erfahrung."\(^58\)

For Fichte then the object of transcendental philosophy, i.e., the subject matter of its investigations, must be the conscious subject itself. And it is exclusively consciousness, of which we have an immediate and certain awareness, that is best able to explain experience or, in Fichte's words, provide the ground of existence. It was this very conclusion that had

\(^{57}\)Fichte, *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, p.457.

See also Zeman's "Appropriation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason," p.221. Zeman emphasizes that Kant's tendency to begin his *Critiques* from some accepted form of cognitive, moral, or aesthetic "praxis" resulted in an essentially explanatory "model of systematic thinking [which] did not require derivation from first principles. Syntactically it was not like a geometric but more like a physical model of a functioning universe."

\(^{58}\)Fichte, *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, p.425.
led him to establish a rigid dichotomy between idealism, as that philosophical system which granted consciousness or the experiencing intelligence the explanatory force, and dogmatism, which appealed instead to the existence of objects or the experienced things as that which forms the foundation of experience. In Fichte’s eyes the dogmatist view unavoidably leads to determinism and fatalism, since consciousness is not seen as an independent activity (the theory which, as we will see presently, ultimately forms the foundation for Fichte’s philosophy), but rather as a sort of epiphenomenon:

Jeder konsequente Dogmatiker ist notwendig Fatalist [...] Er leugnet die Selbstständigkeit des Ich, auf welche der Idealist baut, gänzlich ab, und macht dasselbe lediglich zu einem Produkt der Dinge, zu einem Akzidens der Welt.59

Moreover, it was especially important that these consequences were well understood because, according to Fichte, there simply were no other philosophical alternatives. One must “choose” to embrace either idealism or dogmatism, for he was of the opinion that reasoning did little to sway one into accepting either position. And since neither is capable of refuting the other, the choice between the two ultimately comes down to nothing more than one’s personal inclination (Neigung) in conceiving of the world. To cite what is assuredly his most-quoted remark: “Was für eine Philosophie man wähle, hängt sonach davon ab, was man für ein Mensch ist.”60 It goes without saying, however, that for Fichte someone interested in preserving the concept of personal freedom -- and consequently the notion of human beings


60Ibid., p.434.
as moral agents — would necessarily choose idealism.\textsuperscript{51}

Fichte had abandoned his own early belief in determinism after reading the \textit{Kritik der reinen Vernunft}, but as the preceding pages have argued, Kant’s idealism became less of an anchor and more of a stimulus for Fichte since he recognized that it was not as thoroughgoing as it should have been. Kant had stepped outside of the boundaries of idealism by implicitly assuming the existence of objects abstracted from all experience, but the introduction of the concept of things-in-themselves as independently existing (and hence unknowable) objects had allowed him to be re-appropriated by the dogmatists and brought back into the realm of empiricism.\textsuperscript{62} Such a misappropriation of Kant was intolerable for Fichte, and his attempt to rescue idealism and reveal its inherent superiority over dogmatism focused around his criticism of things-in-themselves, as one of Fichte’s more prolonged attacks on the subject attests:

\begin{quote}
Das Prinzip des Dogmatikers, das Ding an sich, ist nichts, und hat, wie der Verteidiger desselben selbst zugeben muß, keine Realität, außer diejenige, die es dadurch erhalten soll, daß nur aus ihm die Erfahrung sich erklären lasse. Diesen Beweis vernichtet der Idealist dadurch, daß er die Erfahrung auf andere Weise erklärt, also gerade dasjenige, worauf der Dogmatismus baut, ableugnet. Das Ding an sich wird zur völligen Chimäre, es zeigt sich gar kein Grund mehr, warum man eins annehmen sollte; und mit ihm fällt das ganze dogmatische Gebäude zusammen.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{51}Fichte’s insistence upon the fundamental irreconcilability of idealism and dogmatism is treated at length in Ingeborg Schüssler’s \textit{Die Auseinandersetzung von Idealismus und Realismus in Fiches Wissenschaftslehre} (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972).


\textsuperscript{63}Fichte, \textit{Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre}, p.431. See also p.472: “[Die \textit{Wissenschaftslehre}] weiß, daß es [das Ding an sich] die völligste Verdrehung der
Thus the choice between dogmatism and idealism is in essence a choice between the thing-in-itself and the I-in-itself (absolute consciousness) as the foundation of experience. Should one choose to embrace idealism, as Fichte does, then all attempts to explain experience must needs remain within the confines of consciousness. To phrase it in a manner more in line with the distinction made above, the idealist has to account for the objects of consciousness without any recourse to empirical objects.\textsuperscript{64} If we re-examine the earlier passage from the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo} with these considerations in mind, we can clearly see why Fichte reduced the project of the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} to the following formula:

"Wie kommen wir dazu anzunehmen; daß den Vorstellungen in uns etwas auser uns entspreche?"\textsuperscript{65}

At this point we can finally begin to examine the issue of a \textit{Grundsatz} in more detail, since adopting the idealist standpoint entails that all explanations -- including a first-principle

\begin{quote}
Vernunft, daß es ein rein unvernünftiger Begriff ist." It is interesting to note that Fichte’s censure of this idea can be found as early as the \textit{Aenesidemus} review in which he describes the concept of a thing-in-itself as "eine Grille, ein Traum, ein Nicht-Gedanke" (p.17). In his analysis of Fichte’s position toward things-in-themselves, Wayne Martin argues that the traditional interpretation which has long seen Fichte as advancing a wholesale rejection of things-in-themselves is somewhat oversimplified. Through a very close reading of Fichte, Martin argues rather forcibly that his rejection is more methodological than ontological. In other words, his rejection is restricted "simply in virtue of the parameters of transcendental enquiry," i.e., even granting the existence of such things, transcendental philosophy must proceed without any consideration at all of things-in-themselves (p.67).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{64}In referring to these objects of consciousness, Fichte often uses the Kantian phrase ‘representations accompanied by a feeling of necessity’ (as opposed to those accompanied by a feeling of freedom, i.e., originating from the conscious subject itself). See p.423 of the \textit{Versuch}, for example: "Das System der von dem Gefühl der Notwendigkeit begleiteten Vorstellungen nennt man auch die \textit{Erfahrung}; innere sowohl als äußere. Die Philosophie hat sonach -- daß ich mit anderen Worten sage -- den Grund aller Erfahrung anzugeben."

\textsuperscript{65}Fichte, \textit{Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo}, p.11.
of philosophy -- must be found within consciousness. It is here that the superiority of idealism comes to the fore in Fichte’s view; where better to conclude the search for an undemonstrable and self-evidently true philosophical principle than in the awareness of self-consciousness understood as that which is itself undemonstrable and self-evident? But Fichte does not stop here. Were he to rest content with the awareness of consciousness as that which is most fundamental and indubitable there would be little to distinguish his philosophy from that of Descartes, who did indeed develop his thought upon the basis of the immediate and self-evident cogito. But self-consciousness for Fichte is no mere Cartesian ‘fact.’ Consistent in his disavowal of dogmatism, Fichte claims that consciousness cannot be explained by reference to some existent, i.e., a ‘thing’ such as a person; it must rather be understood as an activity (Tathandlung), and the Grundsatz of philosophy must therefore express that activity “welche unter den empirischen Bestimmungen unseres Bewusstseyns nicht vorkommt, noch vorkommen kann, sondern vielmehr allem Bewusstseyn zum Grunde liegt, und allein es möglich macht.”

It is not necessary at this juncture to clarify the nature of this activity in order to ascertain our awareness of it. According to Fichte, the activity of the I, the conscious subject of experience, is immediately verifiable through the notion of intellectual intuition mentioned earlier. By merely reflecting upon one’s own actions -- be they mental or physical -- one is immediately aware (conscious) of oneself as the one who is acting:

Dieses dem Philosophen angemutete Anschauen seiner selbst im Vollziehen des Aktes, wodurch ihm das Ich entsteht, nenne ich intellektuelle Anschauung. Sie ist das unmittelbare Bewußtsein; daß ich handle, und was

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66Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*, p.91.

It is just such an act of reflection that lies at the heart of transcendental philosophy for it reveals not the I of finite experience, but rather the transcendental I, what Fichte refers to alternately as the pure I (das reine Ich) or the absolute I (das absolute Ich). Frederick Copleston relates a helpful description of the process by which one may attain awareness of the self or I under consideration:

Fichte once said to his students: “Gentlemen, think the wall.” He then proceeded: “Gentlemen, think him who thought the wall.” Clearly, we could proceed indefinitely in this fashion. “Gentlemen, think him who thought him who thought the wall”, and so on. In other words, however hard we may try to objectify the self, that is, turn it into an object of consciousness, there always remains an I or ego which transcends objectification and is itself the condition of all objectifiability and the condition of the unity of consciousness.  

A summary of the argument to this point runs as follows: the inability to reify or objectify the I (in Kantian terms, the consciousness that accompanies all actions or representations) means that it can never be an entity, and yet we nonetheless possess an awareness of it, albeit a very specialized one, understanding it as that which underlies and presupposes all other acts of objectification. Fichte believes that one can thus employ the concept of intellectual intuition without contradicting Kant’s earlier assertion that we can never have an intuition

67 Fichte, Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre, p.463.


69 See the Kritik der reinen Vernunft, B131/132: “Das: Ich denke muss alle meine Vorstellungen begleiten können; denn sonst würde etwas in mir vorgestellt werden, was gar nicht gedacht werden könnte, welches eben so viel heißt, als die Vorstellung würde entweder unmöglich, oder wenigstens für mich nichts sein.”
(awareness) of super-sensible entities, for the intuition we have of the transcendental I, although super-sensible, is not one of an entity, but one of an activity, "ein Tun, und absolut nichts weiter; nicht einmal ein Tätiges soll man sie nennen, weil durch diesen Ausdruck auf etwas Bestehendes gedeutet wird, welchem die Tätigkeit bewohne."\textsuperscript{70} What remains now for Fichte (and us) is to illuminate the essence of this activity.

II.

Were we forced to encapsulate the heart of Fichte’s philosophy in a sentence, and indeed we are, since this is Fichte’s self-imposed restriction in the quest for a \textit{Grundsatz}, it would be the following: the very process of arriving at an intuition of the pure or absolute I does more than just affirm its existence — it is responsible for its existence. In Fichte’s now (in)famous jargon: the I ‘posits’ itself \textit{(setzt sich selbst)}. In other words, it is only through the activity of reflecting upon consciousness, an activity that is philosophically motivated and hence “willkürlich,” that the “notwendig und ursprünglich”\textsuperscript{71} activity of the I comes to exist \textit{for itself}, and, according to Fichte, “was für sich selbst nicht ist, ist kein Ich.”\textsuperscript{72} Fichte acknowledges that the question may arise as to just \textit{what} I was before I arrived at self-consciousness, and he answers that prior to self-consciousness ‘I’ did not exist at all, because

\textsuperscript{70}Fichte, \textit{Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre}, p.440.

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., p.461. Copleston uses the word “spontaneous” to describe the activity in question, which was the term preferred by Kant as well. See the \textit{Kritik der reinen Vernunft}, B132: “Diese Vorstellung: Ich denke, ist ein Actus der \textit{Spontaneität}, d.i. sie kann nicht als zur Sinnlichkeit gehörig, angesehen werden.”

\textsuperscript{72}Fichte, \textit{Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre}, p.97.
it is only the absolute I that is aware of itself, i.e., self-conscious.\textsuperscript{73} The mere posing of the question reveals a confusion (\textit{Verwirrung}) between the I as \textit{subject} and the I as an \textit{object} of the reflection of the absolute subject; as that which underlies and presupposes all acts of objectification, the absolute I is always present, and therefore such a question can not even be formulated without an awareness of it: “Man kann gar nichts denken, ohne sein Ich, als sich seiner selbst bewusst, mit hinzu zu denken.”\textsuperscript{74} In short, it is the process of transcendental reflection that permits the I simultaneously to affirm itself and to exist for itself. When Fichte speaks of ‘positing,’ it is this activity he has in mind, and it is this mental activity that forms the fundamental proposition of his philosophy.

In light of Fichte’s ultimate dissatisfaction with the myriad versions of the \textit{Wissenschaf "{a}tslehre}, anyone who tries to uncover a definitive statement of this fundamental proposition would be looking in vain. At the most basic level, of course, we have just seen that the \textit{Grundsatz} is simply ‘the I posits itself’ (\textit{Das Ich setzt sich selbst}). However, each of Fichte’s distinctive attempts to articulate the nature of this activity reveals that such a simple expression harbors a tremendous amount of complexity. It is thus somewhat ironic that the furiously-written first exposition of the \textit{Wissenschaf "{a}tslehre} is the one generally called upon to clarify the notion of positing. This is perhaps explainable in part by the fact that the \textit{Grundlege der gesammten Wissenschaf "{a}tslehre} (1794) offers several formulations of this \textit{Grundsatz} as well as the only full-fledged attempt to provide a mathematical (logical) model

\textsuperscript{73}The grammatical conventions of the German language allow Fichte to express this idea more succinctly: “...\textit{ich} war gar nicht; denn ich war nicht \textit{Ich}.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid.
for its basis. Given the direction of our exposition to this point, we will proceed in the opposite manner as Fichte and begin not with the introduction of the mathematical model (something which he would abandon in the later versions of the Wissenschaftslehre) but rather with a more comprehensive statement of the self-positing I.\textsuperscript{75}

Also das Setzen des Ich durch sich selbst ist die reine Thätigkeit desselben. -- Das Ich \textit{setzt sich selbst}, und es \textit{ist}, vermöge dieses blossen Setzens durch sich selbst; und umgekehrt: das Ich \textit{ist}, und es \textit{setzt} sein Seyn, vermöge seines blossen Seyns. -- Es ist zugleich das Handelnde, und das Product der Handlung; das Thätige, und das, was durch die Thätigkeit hervorgebracht wird; Handlung, und That sind Eins und ebendasselbe; und daher ist das: \textit{Ich bin}, Ausdruck einer Thathandlung; aber auch der einzig-möglichen, wie sich aus der ganzen Wissenschaftslehre ergeben muss.\textsuperscript{76}

In a word: to posit is to be, and conversely, to be is to posit. So conceived, being and positing are identical activities, and yet, as Wayne Martin writes, this should not be construed to mean that the absolute subject has some “quasi-divine power of self-constitution.”\textsuperscript{77} For Fichte, the absolute I is quite simply a self-reverting act, “a creature capable of immediate self-identification. To be an I, that is, is to be capable of identifying oneself as ‘I’ -- to be capable of making oneself the object of one’s own reference.”\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} It could be claimed that this order of presentation is actually more appropriate since Fichte believed that the axioms of logic are themselves dependent upon the Wissenschaftslehre. Ibid., p.92.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p.96. See also p.98: “\textit{Sich selbst setzen} und \textit{Seyn} sind, vom Ich gebraucht, völlig gleich. Der Satz: Ich \textit{bin}, weil ich mich selbst gesetzt habe, kann demnach auch so ausgedrückt werden: \textit{Ich bin schlechthin, weil ich \textit{bin}}.”

\textsuperscript{77} Martin, \textit{Idealism and Objectivity}, p.98.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. Understood in terms of Fichte’s anti-dogmatic stance, Martin also points out that “to posit myself as an ‘I’ -- as a self-related subject -- means to posit myself as something whose states (representations, judgements, etc.) are not simply effects of causal impingements, but rather the expression of my own autonomous cognitive acts.” (p.97).
Fichte had hoped to strengthen the force of this conclusion by preceding it with a logical proposition that everyone would recognize as absolutely certain in order to ascertain that we do in fact possess the ability to posit something (understood as an activity, i.e., a mental process and not as a substance, or some-thing) absolutely.\(^\text{79}\) From the broad terms of such a prerequisite it follows that it really does not matter what the chosen proposition is as long as it possesses mathematical certainty. Given the afore-mentioned equivalence of being and positing, it is nonetheless understandable why Fichte selects the principle of identity, namely, A is A or A=A, since this proposition is the formal rendering of his Grundsatz; Sein is Gesetztsein and vice versa. However, it is important to state at the outset that no initial existential claim is made as concerns A, nor is there any concern for its content. What is of exclusive interest to Fichte is the form of the proposition, which is that of a necessary relation

\(^{79}\text{In Fichte's own words: "Wenn aber Jemand einen Beweis desselben for dern sollte, so würd e man sich auf einen solchen Beweis gar nicht einlassen, sondern behaupten, jener Satz sey schlechthin, d.i. ohne allen Grund, gewiss: und indem man dieses, ohne Zweifel mit allgemeiner Beistimmung, thut, schreibt man sich das Vermögen zu, etwas schlechthin zu setzen." (Grundlage, p.93). Seidel translates the phrase "etwas schlechthin zu setzen" as "asserting something absolutely" presumably to differentiate between 'setzen' and 'sich setzen' (p.24). While I have chosen to use the word 'positing' for the sake of consistency, 'asserting' is not only an acceptable translation of 'setzen,' it may even be more desirable than 'positing' since the artificiality of the latter tends to over-complicate the original German at times. 'Asserting' has the advantage of being readily understandable by English-speakers, especially when self-consciousness is conceived of as an asserting of the self -- although 'self' would have to be capitalized to emphasize that the self under consideration is the absolute Self, thereby avoiding (one hopes) the connotations of individuality that unavoidably accompany the traditional meaning of 'self-assertion.' It was most likely the concern for such misunderstandings that originally led to the general adoption of the more contrived 'positing' as the word that would best convey the unique and supra-individual nature of the transcendental self. (Among the various other alternatives that Fichte scholars have chosen as a translation of 'setzen' the most common are 'to construct' or 'to constitute').}
between A and itself: "wenn A sey, so sey A."\(^{80}\) In other words, if A exists, then it exists as A, i.e., it is self-identical, and Fichte refers to this necessary relation as X.

At this point one may understandably inquire as to the value of this apparent tautology, but for Fichte’s intentions it is of the highest value because he believes that it implicitly demonstrates the immediate consciousness of the absolute I. That is to say, the absolute I is inferred through this act of philosophical reflection for it is only through the unlimited activity of the absolute I that such a proposition -- any proposition really -- can be posited or asserted at all: “Soll der Satz: A=A (oder bestimmter, dasjenige was in ihm schlechthin gesetzt ist =X) gewiss seyn, so muss auch der Satz: Ich bin, gewiss seyn.”\(^{81}\) One may still rightfully pose a more pointed question: just what are the merits of this notion of positing other than bringing one to an awareness of the transcendental self -- something which had already been accomplished quite successfully in Kant’s version of idealism?\(^{82}\)

In order to answer this question let us step back briefly and survey the general considerations that have brought us this far. As an idealist Fichte is forced to account for, or explain, mental content without appeal to the external world. Next he has to confront the fact

\(^{80}\)Fichte, Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre, p.93.

\(^{81}\)Ibid., p.95.

\(^{82}\)One could also call attention here to Descartes’ earlier ruminations that even if he were to grant the existence of an evil demon whose sole purpose was to deceive him, the very fact that his mind was capable of thinking of that demon provided evidence of his own existence. The fundamental principle of both Descartes and Fichte is a self-establishing judgement, but as Seidel notes, the difference between both men “is the difference between one who simply accepts the certainty of mathematics but must find ‘something’ (the cogito) that is existent as well as certain (Descartes), and one who merely starts with A=A in order to discover that the ‘synthetic’ truth of A=A is really analytic, or better, axiomatic, and depends entirely upon the activity of the synthesizing self (Fichte).” (p.24).
that our mental content contains elements that present themselves 'involuntarily,' so to speak. These elements we have referred to earlier as representations accompanied by the feeling of necessity. Their presence seems to imply that there is a world of external objects within which we operate as perceiving subjects and which are bound inextricably in a causal relationship. The 'dogmatist' and the 'idealist' try to solve this conundrum differently: the dogmatist attempts to explain experience on this causal basis, while the idealist is bound to the parameters of transcendental enquiry. They demand all considerations not rooted in the absolute subject be excluded. Both dogmatist and idealist alike are aware of this subject-object schema as intrinsic to consciousness, but the latter must provide a transcendental account for its existence. His account, in other words, does not rely on the principle of casualty. Martin summarizes the demand made upon the idealist as follows:

The possibility of my engaging in a particular, complex act of representation (of my relating a mental content to a subject and an object and distinguishing it from both) depends on my having at my disposal some conception of a contrast between subjective and objective domains -- some conception of the world as distinct from me and of me as distinct from it. Since the availability of this general notion of a subject-object divide is a condition of the possibility of any representation, it cannot itself be understood as a product of a further set of representational acts. Accordingly, we must attribute to any representing subject a set of cognitive capacities or 'acts' that are not themselves representational.  

Closer investigation shows the real complexity of the Grundsatz lies in the fact that the seemingly unified and all-important act of positing is actually but one of three pre-representational acts. These are acts which Fichte proposes in order to explain the subject-object opposition within consciousness by means of consciousness alone. While the self-positing

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83 Martin, Idealism and Objectivity, p.92.
I naturally accounts for the role of the subject, the necessity of an object requires an act of ‘counter-positing’ (entgegensezten) by the I: “So wie ich irgend etwas vorstellen soll, muss ich es dem Vorstellenden entgegensezten.”\textsuperscript{84} In other words, the I posits that which is opposed to it, the Not-I. To return to Fichte’s logical apparatus: what he refers to as the axiom of opposition (der Satz des Gegensetzens) can be rendered as Not \( \sim A = A \), or more traditionally as \( A \neq \sim A \). And thus: “so gewiss das unbedingte Zugestehen der absoluten Gewissheit des Satzes: \( \sim A \) nicht = A unter den Thatsachen des empirischen Bewusstseyns vorkommt: so gewiss wird dem Ich schlechthin entgegengesetzt ein Nicht-Ich.”\textsuperscript{85} The interdependence of the I and the Not-I should be clear: just as the positing of A in the axiom of identity presupposes the existence (self-positing) of the I, the positing of Not-A in the axiom of opposition presupposes the prior positing of A, i.e., the Not-A (Not-I) could not be counter-posed unless the I had posited itself to begin with. In summary then, the I and the Not-I are both “Producte ursprünglicher Handlungen des Ich, und das Bewusstseyn selbst ist ein solches Product der ersten ursprünglichen Handlung des Ich, des Setzens des Ich durch sich selbst.”\textsuperscript{86}

If we recall that the activity of the self-positing I is absolute (i.e., unlimited), we can begin to see why there is a need for a third pre-representational act, namely, the act of limitation (Einschränkung). As the I posits itself absolutely, so it must also posit the Not-I absolutely. But should these two unlimited activities proceed unchecked, then consciousness could never arise since “each will tend, as it were, to fill all reality to the exclusion of the

\textsuperscript{84}Fichte, \textit{Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre}, p.104.

\textsuperscript{85}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{86}Ibid., p.107.
other. They will tend to cancel one another out, to annihilate one another."\textsuperscript{87} Consequently, the dilemma arises as to how to preserve their opposition while simultaneously imposing some restriction upon their assertion. For Fichte the answer lies in the recognition of the absolute I's capability to posit both a finite I and a finite Not-I; as opposed to that which has the quality of being absolute, that which is finite is by definition divisible (theilbar), and thus both the I and the Not-I can be posited to the degree that the other is not. As heformulates the third component of his \textit{Grundsatz}: "Ich setze im Ich dem theilbaren Ich ein theilbares Nicht-Ich entgegen."\textsuperscript{88}

Let us accept Fichte's analysis to this point and agree with the necessity of mutual limitation in order for consciousness to arise. Even then, we would need to ask what it means to say that the I can be both unlimited or infinite (unendlich) and finite (endlich). Fichte admits that if the I was asserted \textit{in the same sense} as unlimited and finite then we would indeed be faced with an unsurmountable contradiction. However, the nature of the I's activity is different in each case. In as far as the I posits itself as infinite, its activity is directed at itself alone and at nothing else: "Seine ganze Thätigkeit geht auf das Ich, und diese Thätigkeit ist der Grund und der Umfang alles Seyns. \textit{Unendlich} ist demnach das Ich, \textit{inwiefern seine Thätigkeit in sich selbst zurückgeht} [...] Die reine \textit{Thätigkeit} des Ich allein, und das \textit{reine ich allein} ist unendlich."\textsuperscript{89} When the activity of the I is directed at an object, i.e., anything that is not the I, it must necessarily posit itself as limited, and its activity "ist demnach nicht mehr

\textsuperscript{87}Copleston, \textit{A History of Philosophy}, p.46.

\textsuperscript{88}Fichte, \textit{Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre}, p.110.

\textsuperscript{89}Ibid., p.256.
reine, sondern *objective* Thätigkeit (die sich einen *Gegenstand* setzt).\(^{90}\)

The *Grundsatz* that we set out to investigate at the beginning of this chapter can now be fully appreciated as the complex and complementary acts of positing, counter-positing, and limitation (construed in more dialectical terms as, respectively, thetic, antithetic, and synthetic acts). This is the framework of Fichte’s account of consciousness, and he would devote the majority of his work to its further exposition. Even his later works in the field of law and ethics, *Die Grundlage des Naturrechts* (1796/97) and *Das System der Sittenlehre* (1798), were founded upon the conclusions reached in the *Wissenschafstlehre*. Moreover, Fichte would continue to claim as he did in the *Grundlage* that it was only with an acceptance of the principles of consciousness as articulated in the *Wissenschafstlehre* that any future philosophical enterprise could legitimately proceed.\(^{91}\)

Die berühmte Frage, welche Kant an die Spitze der Kritik der reinen Vernunft stellte: wie sind synthetische Urtheile a priori möglich? -- ist jetzt auf die allgemeinste und befriedigendste Art beantwortet. Wir haben im dritten Grundsatz eine Synthesis zwischen dem entgegengesetzten Ich und Nicht-Ich, vermittelst der gesetzten Theilbarkeit beider, vorgenommen, über deren Möglichkeit sich nicht weiter fragen, noch ein Grund derselben sich anführen lässt; sie ist schlechtthin möglich, man ist zu ihr ohne allen weiteren Grund befugt. Alle übrigen Synthesen, welche gültig seyn sollen, müssen in dieser liegen; sie müssen zugleich in und mit ihr vorgenommen worden seyn: und so, wie dies bewiesen wird, wird der überzeugendste Beweis geliefert, dass sie gültig sind, wie jene.\(^{92}\)

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\(^{90}\)Ibid. As Fichte notes, the word ‘Gegenstand’ itself vividly expresses that which it is supposed to describe. If there is nothing ‘wider- oder gegenstehendes’ to an activity, no resistance so to speak, then the activity in question is without an object (in the empirical sense) and exists for itself only.

\(^{91}\)I take this to be the essence of what Fichte establishes as ‘knowledge’: “Ueber diese Erkenntnis hinaus geht keine Philosophie; aber bis zu ihr zurückgehen soll jede gründliche Philosophie.” Ibid., p.110.

\(^{92}\)Ibid., p.114.
Fichte’s confidence in the conclusions of his *Wissenschaflehre* was rarely endangered by the frequent critiques of his system. He attributed all objections to his philosophy to a lack of comprehension, the result being that there was little common ground between himself and his opponents. Nevertheless, he endeavored to correct the rash of misunderstandings, and as we will now see, his exchange with Jean Paul is representative of one of the major challenges he faced.
4. The Critique of Fichte

Beurtheile ein System nicht nach seinen Beweisen, sondern nach den guten oder bösen Folgen desselben.
-Jean Paul

On August 22, 1798 Jean Paul and Fichte met for the first time in Jena, a city whose growing reputation as the intellectual center of Germany was largely due to the philosopher himself. It was a dinner party that had brought the poet and "die Seele von Jena"¹ together, and it was to be the first of several encounters between these two men of such very different natures.² Just how much they interacted with one another that first evening together is unclear, but Jean Paul’s impression of the philosopher was lukewarm at best. Two days later he wrote to his friend Christian Otto: "Fichte ist klein (ich dachte mir ihn lang) bescheiden und bestimmt, aber ohne genialisache Auszeichnung" [B,III,3:90]. Over time he would come to find much to admire in Fichte, though he would also find equal ground for fault. He praised Fichte’s character as “männlich und edel,” but at the same time derided him for being “auffahrend und egoistisch und blindstolz;” he contrasted the philosopher’s academic

¹Such was the description of Fichte provided by Hölderlin four years earlier. Werke, II:622.

²In the eyes of the other luminaries of Jena and nearby Weimar, they had more in common with each other than either would have imagined. See the following letter of Schiller’s to Goethe, wherein his impression of Fichte is no less flattering than his earlier impression of Jean Paul: "Ich bin in diesen Tagen [am 25. August] von einem Besuch überrascht worden, dessen ich mich nicht versehen hätte. Fichte war bei mir und bezeigte sich äußerst verbindlich. Da er den Anfang gemacht hat, so kann ich nun freilich nicht den spröden spielen, und ich werde suchen, dies Verhältniß, das schwerlich weder fruchtbar noch connutig werden kann, da unsere Naturen nicht zusammenpassen, wenigstens heiter und gefällig zu erhalten.” (Letter of August 28, 1798). Schulz, Fichte in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen, p.91.

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“Scharfsin” with the more estimable and insightful “Tiefsin” of Jacobi [B,III,3:197]; and although Richter was never on ill terms with Fichte personally, he lamented that their whole conversation amounted to nothing more than “ein Janein.”

The image of a rather Bohemian poet inclined to romantic Schwärmerei debating the self-important and earnest Fichte with his pronounced “Granitstirn und Nase” [B,III,4:46] is more than a little humourous. Nevertheless, both men had a great deal of respect for one another, despite the fact that they remained unswayed by the other’s arguments. If Jean Paul had heard rumours of the philosopher’s intractableness, it surely paled in comparison to what he experienced first-hand. After wrangling with Fichte for over an hour on one ocassion, he wrote to Jacobi with palpable frustration: “Einseitig ist er [Fichte] bis zur Magerheit des Sinnes.”

The true test of his patience, however, was to come a few years later when in the company of a large group of friends Fichte denied ever having read anything but a brief excerpt from the Clavis. A heated argument ensued in which Jean Paul finally pressed Fichte into conceding that he had indeed read the work in its entirety, especially in light of the perfunctory dismissal of the satire that appeared in a subsequent introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre! Fichte’s weak defense that he had simply forgot angered Jean Paul even

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3[B,III,4:63]. See also the letter to Oertel from March 28, 1801: “Fichte ist gut mit mir, obgleich zwi-schen uns nur solange Waffenstillstand ist, als wir trinken” [B,III,4:57].


5See p.16. Jean Paul’s account of this argument is found in the letter to Jacobi from May 4, 1805 [B,III,5:41].
more, but they managed to come to a reconciliation that same evening. Such anecdotal events may help to explain Jean Paul’s resoluteness in his personal dealings with Fichte, but they do little to account for his philosophical contrariness. Let us thus turn now to an examination of their intellectual divide.

As noted earlier, other authors writing in a similarly anticlassicist vein, such as Schlegel and Novalis, had embraced Fichte’s philosophy and found more inspiration than objections. Jean Paul was, of course, anything but typical. He too could find room for praise in Fichte’s “energische Karakter” and his “edle Prosa” [B,III,5:140], but it did not extend to the actual content of his philosophy. His opposition to Fichte is especially intriguing considering that he did not engage in what could be considered an intensive study of the philosopher. In fact, Jean Paul’s knowledge of Fichte’s thought -- up to and including the time that he was composing the *Clavis Fichtiana* -- was rather limited. Six months before he began to set down his already-developed critique on paper, he revealed in a letter to Jacobi that he had actually read very little of Fichte’s work. This was not intended as self-reproach, however. Nor was it an admission of having unjustly upbraided the popular philosopher. Rather, it illustrated the essence of Jean Paul’s argument, namely, once one had grasped the central principle of Fichte’s philosophy (and the ‘disastrous’ implications that ensued), then it really mattered very little how deeply one delved into the rest of Fichte’s intellectual musings:

Ich habe von Fichte nichts gelesen, als den Abris seines Systems in Niethammers Journal, seine Moral und das was ich aus Schelling und Schlegel errieth; aber es brauchts auch nicht, sondern es kommt auf das Fassen des Prinzips, seines Archäus und fluidum nerveum an, dan lässet sich sogar vom niedern Kopfe alles andere, was sein höherer nachspint, konsequent und
schwizend bei- und nachschaßen.\textsuperscript{6} 

Such admissions lend credence to the remark made by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), who in his survey of the Romantic School concluded that the fabled all-pervasive influence of Fichte’s philosophy was indeed just that — a fable. At most, Heine wrote, he could discern “nur den Einfluß einiger Fichteschen und Schellingschen Gedankenfragmente, keineswegs den Einfluß einer Philosophie.”\textsuperscript{7} But even if such a selective understanding of Fichte truly was the rule among the early Romantic critics rather than the exception, it should come as no surprise that one so keenly interested in philosophy as Jean Paul would (at least to some degree) be more familiar with his work. As a perfect illustration of Heine’s claim we need look no further than to Schlegel’s first encounter with Jean Paul, for the recognized father of German Romanticism and avowed Fichte enthusiast was simply incapable of countering the latter’s objections to the philosopher. As Jean Paul relayed the story to Jacobi, Schlegel was so completely nonplussed that his only response was to admit that “er könne sich nicht sogleich auf den Standpunkt der Reflexion versezen” [B,III,3:338], eventually conceding that he really wasn’t a Fichtean at all!\textsuperscript{8}


\textsuperscript{7}Heine, Die romantische Schule, p.137.

\textsuperscript{8}Another account of this meeting can be found in the letter to Christian Otto from May 16, 1800 [B,III,3:333]. Otto Rothermel has provided a useful study of Schlegel’s understanding of Fichte, although he admits from the outset that his concern is not with Schlegel’s handling of particular epistemological or logical problems that arise within Fichte’s philosophy (as this was never an issue for Schlegel), but rather with the influence of the Fichtean spirit upon Schlegel’s literary program; see his Friedrich Schlegel und Fichte (Gießen: Wilhelm Schmitz, 1934). In this respect, Novalis fares much better than his Romantic counterpart since he had
It is certainly less of an exaggeration on Jean Paul’s part to say that he had read all of Fichte’s works\(^9\) as it is to say that he had read nothing. Given the nature of Jean Paul’s argument mentioned above, the latter statement can undoubtedly be attributed to poetic hyperbole. Assuming that we can gleam some truth from Jean Paul’s contradictory accounts, it seems safe to conclude that he was at least familiar with the *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, the *Sittenlehre*, and the *Appellanz an das Publicum*. If we examine the *Clavis* itself, references to Fichte’s works include the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, and the *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre*. Despite this impressive array of works which Jean Paul had (presumably) read, I still find it difficult to conclude with Wolfgang Harich that he had thoroughly *studied* -- and consequently, understood -- the *Wissenschaftslehre*.\(^{10}\) (One of the more candid statements from the poet during this period is probably that made to his friend Thieriot: “Ich size jetzt ganz im babylonischen Thurm des Fichtianismus fest, vol Bewunderung des Architekten und vol Unglauben an die Höhe, wozu er ihn bauen will” [B,III,3:259]). The reasons for this conclusion will become clear over the course of my analysis of the *Clavis*, but some indication of Jean Paul’s uncertainty in the matter of Fichte’s truly steeped himself in the intricacies of Fichte’s philosophy, leaving behind several copybooks filled with notes and commentary; see Géza von Molnár, *Novalis’ “Fichte Studies”* (Paris: Mouton, 1970).

\(^9\)This is the claim he makes in a letter to Otto from December 20, 1799: “Ich habe alle seine [Fichtes] Werke auf meinem Tisch und kenne sein polytheistisches System, das niemand aus der Apellazion errath und kaum aus ihm ohne Kenntnis des Spinoza” [B,III,3:263]. As we shall see, the equation of Fichte’s philosophy with Spinoza’s will play a prominent role in the *Clavis*.

\(^{10}\)Harich, *Jean Pauls Kritik des philosophischen Egoismus*, p.111.
philosophy can be found in the fact that he sent the preliminary draft of the Clavis to Jacobi for corrections; while it wasn’t uncommon for these intellectual Kampfgenossen to exchange manuscripts, the following plea of Jean Paul’s betrays an uncharacteristic lack of confidence: “sei Richter der Voraussezung oder Misverständnisse — streiche blose einzelne Wörter aus [...] Hast du aber längere Einwürfe als gegen Wortindividuen: so sende sie mir samt dem Gegenstande.”

It is the task of this chapter to determine if he had really understood the central tenet of Fichte’s philosophy as thoroughly as he believed. In the opinion of some interpreters of Jean Paul, however, the question concerning his understanding (or misunderstanding) of Fichte is of little consequence, since that which Jean Paul sought to depict in the Clavis Fichtiana was “die seiner Meinung nach notwendigen und tatsächlichen Folgen des Fichtanismus.” If I understand this curious argument correctly, the focus of our attention should not be the question as to whether Jean Paul’s opinion was well-founded, nor even if it was framed in accordance with at least a rudimentary understanding of the Wissenschaftslehre. We should rather concern ourselves with what Jean Paul perceived to be the necessary and de facto consequences of embracing Fichteanism; more specifically, the consequences of embracing Fichteanism as exemplified by the unflagging subjectivism and self-indulgence of

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[B,III,3:265]. See also the letter to Otto from December 20, 1799, wherein Jean Paul states that he sent the Clavis to Jacobi “um gewis zu sein, daß ich nicht fehlgreife und fehlschlage” [BIII,3:263]. In reality, Jean Paul had been submitting his analyses to Jacobi all along since many of the arguments in the Clavis are taken almost verbatim from his correspondence with the elder philosopher.

the early Romantics — those who were among the “niedere Köpfe” mentioned in the above letter to Jacobi.13

The advantage of such an interpretive strategy, of course, lies in the fact that one can then dispense with any serious study of Fichte’s thought — a course of action presumably in line with Jean Paul’s own14 — and concentrate upon the artistic merits of Jean Paul’s parody. Aesthetic considerations are, after all, the only legitimate subject of enquiry that remains (outside of considerations of the historical situation of the Clavis) once one has decided to ignore the issue as to whether its conclusions are based upon false premises. Had Jean Paul wanted only to be appreciated as a poet, such an interpretive technique would perhaps remain unquestioned. As previously stated, however, not only did he believe his pronouncements on Fichte to have philosophical import, he was convinced that their devastating effect on his system was due to the fact that he had indeed truly grasped the essence of Fichteanism.15

Needless to say, I do not follow the above strategy in my own analysis of the Clavis,

13This claim is echoed by a contemporary Jean Paul biographer, who argues that the poet cannot be accused of having misunderstood Fichte since the Clavis was intended to be “eine Kritik an den Konsequenzen, nicht an der gedanklichen Konstitution der Wissenschaftslehre” (Ueding, Jean Paul, p.117).

14See the letter to Jacobi from January 29, 1800, written in the midst of revising the Clavis: “Studiert hab’ ich eigentlich Fichte nicht [!] J.N.] — und keinen Philosophen ausser dich, der du mir anfangs klar und doch jährlich klarer vorkamst” [B,III,3:283]. This should probably be taken with a grain of salt, however, considering the almost sycophantic relationship he had with Jacobi.

15Other scholars such as Nohl (p.81), who conclude (not incorrectly) that the Clavis has little more than “späßhaft’ Wert,” clearly contravene Jean Paul’s own intentions; see the letter to Böttiger from December 26, 1799: “Ich send’ Ihnen hier den von Herder kommenden Clavis Fichtiana, der mehr eigentlich widerlegen als lachen sol” [B,III,3:265]. (Jean Paul routinely treats the word “clavis” as masculine rather than feminine).
and yet despite the undeniable philosophical unsoundness of such a position, its adoption is almost forgiveable when we recall the deep-seated mistrust that Jean Paul felt towards all grandiose, self-contained philosophical systems. To him they were but a questionable intellectual construct, "ein erweitertes Fragezeichen" [I,5:1,080], whose conclusions could not be asserted as true merely because they had been crafted in accordance with reason and presented in geometric dress. We find just such a claim in the equally derisive Brief über die Philosophie, a work he wrote two years before the Clavis: "Der logische Zusammenhang eines Systems und die Leichtigkeit, womit es recht viele Erscheinungen beantwortet, sei dir [Hans Paul] kein Zeichen seiner Richtigkeit, weil falsche auch dasselbe führen" [I,4:1,014].

And as we saw in the earlier discussion of his reaction to Kant's Antinomies, it was the ease with which reason could be manipulated in the service of opposing interests that Jean Paul found so discomforting. It was also a fact that he used to his advantage in his satire of Fichte.

In a letter to Otto from July 7, 1800, Jean Paul provides us with a key of sorts to his Clavis:


Thus, rather than despair at the the futility of reason, Jean Paul would allow it to serve his own interests. To use a metaphor from the Clavis itself, reason would be employed as an "angespiegelten Basilisken" [I,3:1,026 (338)], thereby becoming the very weapon that would bring down Fichte's own pantheon of reason.

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16Numbers in italics following all citations from the text of the Clavis Fichtiana refer to line numbers in the translation. Since line numbers have been restricted to the text itself, any references to footnotes will be followed by the page number on which the footnote occurs.
4.1 The *Clavis Fichtiana*: The Descent into Madness

"Alles kann ich leiden, nur nicht den Mich,
den reinen, intellektuellen Mich, den Gott der Götter."
-Schoppe (from Jean Paul's *Titan*)

The *Clavis Fichtiana* does not lend itself to easy explication. The subject matter alone is difficult enough in its own right, but the attempt to present a straightforward analysis is complicated by the fact that the work itself exhibits a linear structure only superficially. Keeping with Jean Paul's own method of argumentation, i.e., extrapolating the logical consequences of a philosophical system from its fundamental principle, the most appropriate course to take would seem to be to identify that principle (from Jean Paul’s perspective, of course) and present the various arguments he marshalls against it, wherever they may be found within the work. This is indeed the manner in which I will proceed. (The more peripheral objections to Fichte raised within the *Clavis* are explained in the endnotes to the text itself). It should be made clear at the outset, however, that the *Clavis* — as part of a comic appendix to a larger work of fiction — is not written in the detached and sober style common to more contemporary philosophical refutations.17 And yet neither does it share in the vitriol that so often characterized the philosophical debates of the time. It is a work with both literary and philosophical aspirations, and we should perhaps direct our attention to the former first in order to better understand the latter.

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17Nor was that the author’s intention; see the letter to Otto from January 23, 1801: "Ich bin im komischen Anhang wilder als sonst" [B,III,4:42].
The Clavis Fichtiana was originally written as the second appendix to Jean Paul’s colossal novel Titan. (The first appendix is an equally satirical piece entitled Des Luftschiffern Giannozzo Seebuch (1801), which recounts Giannozzo’s flight over Germany in his airship and the criticism he heaps on the follies of the populace below. Jean Paul’s plan to write two additional comic appendices was never realized). On the advice of his friends, he chose to publish the Clavis separately, convinced that his single-minded satire of Fichte was indeed capable of standing on its own. Be that as it may, it is important to recognize the broader context in which the novel as a whole was conceived. We need not concern ourselves with the notoriously confusing storyline of the work; instead it is sufficient to examine those characters most relevant to the critique of Fichte and idealism in general.

Shortly after he had moved to Weimar in 1798, Jean Paul began work on his long-planned Titan in earnest. His feelings toward Goethe, the city’s most prominent resident, remained coloured by his disenchancing visit two years earlier, and this lingering ill-will no doubt contributed to his determination to write a Bildungsroman that would surpass Wilhelm Meister (1795).18 As if that were not ambitious enough, he had also intended his novel to be a philosophical reckoning with the program of the Romantics of nearby Jena:

Mein Titan ist und wird gegen die algemeine Zuchtlosigkeit des Säkulums gewafnet, gegen dieses irrende Umherbilden ohne ein punctum saliens --

18Ever the Jean Paul enthusiast, Harich contends that he succeeded: “Mit dem Titan hat Jean Paul den bedeutendsten, gendankenreichsten und dichterisch schönensten Erziehungs- und Bildungsroman der deutschen Literatur geschaffen” (p.244). Harich’s praise aside, the work was not (nor is it now) well received and the initial printing of 3,000 copies sold just as poorly. Three failed attempts were made to reissue a shortened version of the work in the nineteenth-century, and Herman Hesse’s decision to reissue the work in its entirety in 1913 came to an abrupt end with the third volume; see De Bruyn, Das Leben des Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, p.242.

The artistic impropriety committed by the Romantics was their tendency to privilege the poetic imagination, their creative self in other words, as that which not only provided knowledge of the deepest reality but was in some way responsible for the very world around them. Novalis, in fact, had exalted the productive consciousness to such an extent that he often spoke of ‘magical idealism.’ For Jean Paul, this overly-developed aestheticism was the result of the lawless, capricious spirit of the age that “lieber ichsüchtig die Welt und das All vernichtet, um sich nur freien Spiel-Raum im Nichts auszuleeren” [I,5:31]. Significantly, it is the actor Roquairol, the anti-hero of the novel, who embodies the self-indulgence and egotistical nature of the aesthete. In the words of Wolfgang Harich:


For one with such a deeply religious nature as Jean Paul, this egocentrism and lack of humility was unquestionably symptomatic of those less traditional and, consequently, less authoritative conceptions of the Deity that had been steadily gaining currency in the late eighteenth-century. (The pantheism of Goethe and Schiller was but one instance). And yet as distasteful as such beliefs may have been for the son of a pastor, it was certainly less egregious than the outright atheism endemic to the materialism of the French philosophes --

¹⁹Harich, p.113.
to say nothing of Spinozism, which was then undergoing a revival in Germany along with all
the concomitant denunciations. What made the Zuchtlosigkeit of the Romantics anathema
(literally) to Jean Paul was the fact that it seemed inextricably linked to a complete lack of
belief in God at all. What need, he asks, can an autonomous, self-creating I possibly have of
the Divinity? And moreover, should this new (ir)religiosity gain further acceptance, its
repercussions would spell disaster for the age:

Wo einer Zeit Gott, wie die Sonne, untergeht; da tritt bald darauf auch die
Welt in das Dunkel; der Verächter des All achtet nichts weiter als sich und
fürchtet sich in der Nacht vor nichts weiter als vor seinen Geschöpfen. [I, 5:31]

It is a baleful prediction by any account, and in light of the preceding characterization
of the age, it should come as no surprise that Jean Paul did not attribute the blame for this
spiritual malaise solely to the Romantics themselves. They were, of course, products of their
time and thus quite naturally influenced by the intellectual fashions of the day. And nowhere
was this infectious hubris more evident than in the philosophy of Fichte: "Der höhere -- als
Kunstwerk unsterbliche und genialische -- Idealismus Fichtes strecket seine Polypen-Arme
nach allen Wissenschaften aus und zieht sie in sich und tingiert sich damit" [I, 3:1,030 (413-
15)]. Even more of a concern for Jean Paul, however, was the philosophical separation of
the I from Creation seemingly demanded by the subjective nature of Fichte’s idealism:

Fichte ist in dem Grade subjektiv, daß er gar keine Existenz, die immer
objektiv ist, zulassen, sondern die eigne immer als ein subjektives Handeln
geben solte; kurz er solte die Schöpfung läugnen.  

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[B, III, 3:316] (Letter to Jacobi from April 1, 1800). This was nothing that Jacobi did not
already know. He had in fact made the same charge in his Brief an Fichte: "Eine solche Wahl
aber hat der Mensch, diese einzige: das Nichts oder einen Gott. Das Nichts erwähnend macht
er sich zu Gott; das heisst: er macht zu Gott ein Gespenst; denn es ist unmöglich, wenn kein
Gott ist, dass nicht der Mensch und alles, was ihn umgibt, blos Gespenst sei. Ich wiederhole:
The absolute activity that occupied the central place in Fichte’s philosophy and the pure I within which it took place were but “Synonymen der Gottheit” [I,3:1,033 (483)]. The thought of such unabashed impiety may have been that which led Jean Paul to conclude several years later that Titan should actually have been entitled Anti-Titan, since “jeder Himmelsstürmer findet seine Hölle” [B,III,4:236]. All of the more ichbesessen characters in his novel do indeed come to an unenviable end, but our main concern here is the character intended to represent Fichte. As Harich has pointed out, Jean Paul could easily have chosen Roquairol as the literary advocate of Fichte’s subjectivism since he seems to ruthlessly carry over the self-serving doctrines of the Romantics into his daily life -- an attempt which results not only in purely aesthetic justifications for his many crimes, but even for his own suicide, an act which he appropriately carries out while on stage.\textsuperscript{21} It is the more upstanding and sympathetic figure of the artist Schoppe, however, who succumbs under the influence of Fichte’s philosophy. And it really requires little reflection to see why Jean Paul would have made such a choice: who better to represent the dangers of Fichteanism than one whose character remained unsullied until exposure to the Wissenschaftslehre? In contrast to Roquairol, however, the manifestations of Schoppe’s enthusiasm for Fichte’s philosophy remain more internal than external. He is, in fact, led so far astray by the teachings of the Wissenschaftslehre that he is ‘systematically’ driven insane. His eventual collapse is triggered by the appearance of his Doppelgänger, Siebenkäs, the main character in Jean Paul’s earlier

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{21}Harich, p.113.}

Gott ist -- und ist \textit{causser mir}, ein \textit{lebendiges, für sich bestehendes Wesen}, oder \textit{Ich} bin Gott. Es gibt kein Drittes” (p.189).
novel of the same name. Upon seeing Siebenkäs (his double in all respects, physical as well as psychical), Schoppe believes himself to be confronted with the I that plays the central role in his (Fichte’s) philosophy and with which he has become so obsessed. His last words before collapsing, “Ich gleich Ich” [I,3:800], parody the axiom of identity that Fichte had used to encapsulate a philosophy that derives everything from the I, including the I itself.

Before turning to a direct analysis of the Clavis Fichtiana, an additional point must be made concerning the relationship between the characters of Schoppe and Siebenkäs. Just as the Doppelgänger plays a pivotal role in Titan, it also comes to fore in the novel Siebenkäs where the main character has his own Doppelgänger by the name of Leibgeber. Thus, the fact that Siebenkäs is the one character who retains his identity in both novels seems to indicate that Schoppe is merely Leibgeber under a different name. Jean Paul even hints at this in the Clavis when Leibgeber, who is presented as the fictitious author of the work, requests that all letters be addressed to him as “Herrn S.” [I,3:1,020 (177)]. Even though it is a literary device that leads to Schoppe-Leibgeber’s demise in Titan, this should not be taken to imply that Fichte’s philosophy posed no real threat for the poet. As we shall see in the Clavis, “das Produkt meiner Ergrimmung” [B,III,3:265], Jean Paul believed that the greater danger lie in internalizing the principles of Fichteanism and allowing them to proceed to their ultimate conclusions. He puts the following words into Leibgeber’s mouth, which can serve as an

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22 The full title of the novel is actually Blumen-, Frucht- und Dornenstücke oder Ehestand, Tod und Hochzeit des Armenadvokaten F. St. Siebenkäs (1796).

23 According to Harich, Schoppe’s last words are supposed to reflect those of Jonathan Swift, with whose work Jean Paul was well acquainted since his earlier attempts at satire. Swift, who had also drifted into insanity as he died, is reputed to have said: “I am what I am.” Harich, p.114.
overall synopsis of the *Clavis Fichtiana*:

Nur *einen* wichtigen Beweis führ’ ich, obwohl implicite. Indem ich nämlich die Resultate [meines Fichtianismus] konsequenter und so stelle, daß sie dem sogenannten Menschverstand eigentlicher echter Wahnsinn sind: so zeig’ ich wahren gebornen Philosophen, was sie aus dem leider so allgemeinen Menschenverstand, der sie ewig vexiert und pfetzt, zu machen haben, sobald er imstande ist, ein so fest gewölbtes Lehrgebäude zu einem Irrenhaus zu verrüken. [I,3:1,022 (224-29)]

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The full title of Jean Paul’s satire, *Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana*, indicates that the work is designed to be just as much a key to Fichte as it is a key to Leibgeber. In light of the preceding introduction, it should be clear enough to us whom the character of Leibgeber is intended to represent. And bearing in mind that Schoppe’s ultimate undoing is due to the appearance of his *Doppelgänger*, we can see why Jean Paul decided to revive a character from one of his earlier novels to serve as the protagonist and ‘demonstrate’ that the mere espousal of Fichteanism is sufficient to induce insanity (the only mention of Schoppe in the *Clavis*, in fact, is the elliptical reference above). As stated previously, however, Leibgeber is more than just the main character of the work, he is also its author. Jean Paul’s own fictitious and ubiquitous role is that of Leibgeber’s editor; his presence is felt throughout the work due to the large number of footnotes he adds to help clarify the text of the *Clavis*.

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24 As one would expect, Jean Paul’s revival of Leibgeber in the *Clavis* (and Siebenkäς in *Titan*) was anything but arbitrary. In *Siebenkäς* both characters stood for those who despised middle-class values and sought complete freedom — even at the cost of their own destruction. See Berger, *Jean Paul Friedrich Richter*, p.85.

25 Anyone even slightly familiar with Jean Paul’s writing knows that the usage of footnotes was de rigueur for the author, almost as much as the need to write multiple prefaces. Chamberlain has pointed out, however, that if one takes a seemingly innocuous footnote from ‘the editor’ rather seriously, it provides a formal illustration of one of the main criticisms of
But let us not forget that Leibgeber is a Fichtean who embraces a doctrine that Jean Paul finds highly objectionable to say the least. As the actual author of the Clavis he can take pleasure in the fact that this renegade of his own creation is a faithful presentation of a Fichtean “im vollsten freiesten Grade” [I,3:1,029 (40-4)], but he does not wish to be associated with the logical enthusiasm of Leibgeber. To that end, he appends a preface to the work entirely ‘of his own hand’ as well as a “Protectorium for the Editor,” both of which are designed to distance himself from the views espoused by Leibgeber. It is not until midpoint in the preface, however, that the reader becomes aware of this literary ruse. The Clavis begins straight-forwardly enough: the work is identified as part of the Comic Appendix to Titan and there seems to be little confusion as to its authorship, especially since Jean Paul’s overt pride in his diminutive work (diminutive in comparison to the usual length of his own works, that is) leads him to refer to it frequently as his “Kind” [I,3:1,013 (6)]. Nonetheless, his pride is second only to his allegiance to Jacobi as he writes that he would not be surprised if everything he has to say in the Clavis had not already been said by the elder philosopher. And when stood head to head with the latter’s work, his own “Kind” is diminished to an “unmündig Infant” [I,3:1,013 (14)].

idealism, namely, its inherent circularity (pp.78-83). The note in particular concerns the overall structure of the Clavis: “Ich habe aber die alphabetische Ordnung des Clavis in eine systematische umgesetzt und Paragraphen über die Artikel geschrieben, um es manchem faßlich zu machen, auch bündiger” [I,3:1,022f. (161f.)]. If one were to reconstruct the ‘original’ alphabetical order, then the Clavis should begin with §6 - “Aseitas” and conclude with §2 - “Zirkel,” thereby directing the reader back to the beginning and itself replicating the independence of a closed system. For an examination of Fichte’s own confrontation with the problem of circularity see Daniel Breazeale, “Circles and Grounds in the Jena Wissenschaftslehre” in Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies, ed. by Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994), pp.43-70.
In the “ Protectorium” we are told that Leibgeber had set out to study Fichte simply to have a laugh at the oddity of the philosopher, but “es erging ihm in der Folge wie dem Rotterdamer Bürgersmann Bredenburg, der den Spinoza, um ihn gründlich zu widerlegen, in eine demonstrative Schlachtordnung stellte, sich aber unter dem Stellen unversehends vom Juden festgehalten und überwältigt sah” [I,3:1,019 (162-66)]. A situation, incidentally, not unlike Schoppe’s own conversion in Titan: “Wer Fichten und seinen Generalvikar und Gehirndiener Schelling so oft aus Spaß gelesen wie ich, der macht endlich Ernst genug daraus” [I,3:766].

The comparison with Spinoza is by no means accidental. Jean Paul had previously equated Fichte’s philosophy with Spinozism in a letter to Jacobi, just as the latter had called the Wissenschaftslehre an “umgekehrten Spinozismus” -- something which Jean Paul does not fail to mention in the Clavis [I,3:1,034 (528)]. In a similar vein, Jean Paul describes Fichteanism as a “Metastase” of Spinozism [I,3:1,034-35 (529)], implying that whereas Spinoza had located the divinity in Nature, Fichte had transposed it to the I. But as Karl Brose has pointed out, the comparison of Fichte’s philosophy with that of Spinoza is hardly fitting. Fichte himself had criticized Spinozism as the most logically consistent form of

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26See the letter of October 13, 1798 [B,III,3:106].


28Brose, Jean Pauls Verhältnis zu Fichte, p.67.
dogmatism since it grounded the unity of consciousness in an ultimate substance existing outside of the I, a step which Spinoza could only account for by saying that he felt the need for some higher and absolute unity. But, as Fichte argues, “wenn er das will, so hätte er ja gleich bei der ihm im Bewusstsein gegebenen Einheit stehen bleiben sollen, und hätte nicht nöthig gehabt, eine noch höhere zu erdichten, wozu nichts ihn trieb.”

Most revealing of all in the preface, however, is that Jean Paul’s critique of idealism is clearly based upon an earlier argument of Jacobi’s. It was in the dialogue David Hume über den Glauben, a work intended to reveal the merits of realism as opposed to idealism, that Jacobi issued the following challenge:

Der transcendental Idealist muß also den Muth haben, den kräftigsten Idealismus, der je gelehn worden ist, zu behaupten, und selbst vor dem Vorwurfe des spekulativen Egoismus sich nicht zu fürchten, weil er unmöglich in seinem System behaupten kann, wenn er auch nur diesen letzten Vorwurf von sich abtreiben will.  

Clearly, for Jacobi, the transcendental idealist’s reliance upon consciousness as that which provides the ‘foundation’ of reality was nothing less than unmitigated egoism. Whereas the certainty of consciousness proclaimed by Cartesianism had accounted for both the existence of the self and the existence of God, the transcendental idealist — if he possessed the intellectual integrity and courage which Jacobi demanded — must admit that he had simply fallen back into a radical form of solipsism by making his singular consciousness the creator

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29 Fichte, Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre, p.121. Such an egregious misunderstanding of Fichte’s relation to Spinoza testifies to Jean Paul’s (and Jacobi’s) misunderstanding of Fichte’s whole project. This is especially puzzling considering that Jean Paul had cited these anti-Spinoza passages in the Clavis [I,3:1,034 (178f.)].

30 Jacobi, David Hume über den Glauben, p.310. (Emphasis added).
of the external world.\footnote{By implication of course, the idealist can also destroy that which he has created. It is a thought mentioned only incidentally in the \textit{Clavis} itself \cite[I.3:1,021 (160-61f.)], but one to which Jean Paul had given much fuller expression in his earlier satire \textit{Auswahl aus des Teufels Papieren} \cite[II,2:119-20].} (In light of this charge, there is even more significance to be found in Jean Paul’s choice of Leibgeber -- a name that means, literally, “the giver of the body” -- as the ultimate Fichtean). As we saw in the previous chapter, however, to speak of transcendental idealism as that which provides the foundation of reality or the ground of experience is not to speak of consciousness (the absolute I) as that which has the power to produce or create objects, i.e., those representations accompanied by a feeling of necessity, but rather as that which accounts for their reality based upon the \textit{a priori} conditions of cognitive activity. Therefore, if Jacobi’s critique has any merit at all, it is only to be found in its application to a version of idealism that does indeed accord consciousness such productive powers. And this is not \textit{transcendental} idealism, but \textit{transcendent} (ontological) idealism, which is univocally rejected by Fichte:

\begin{quote}
Ein transzendenter Idealismus würde ein solches System sein, welches aus dem freien und völlig gesetzlosen Handeln der Intelligenz die bestimmte Vorstellungen ableitete; eine völlig widersprechende Voraussetzung, indem ja, wie soeben erinnert worden, auf ein solches Handeln der Satz des Grundes nicht anwendbar ist.\footnote{Fichte, \textit{Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre}, p.24.}
\end{quote}

Jean Paul had embraced Jacobi’s uncritical rejection of idealism before he ever had to contend with Fichte. While he was still an admirer of Kant’s commitment to ethical philosophy (if not the cold formalism of his actual ethics)\footnote{In a remark equally applicable to Kant, Jean Paul speaks in the \textit{Clavis} of Fichte’s “stofflose formale Moral, welche der Sonne einiger älteren Astronomen gleich, die bloß mit ihren}
Auswahl aus des Teufels Papiere to take aim at Kant’s subject-centered epistemology. In a passage from the resulting Paligenesien (1798) he wrote: “es ist überhaupt, kantisch davon zu sprechen, nicht mehr als einer möglich, und der bin ich selber” [I,4:735]. One can already see here the egoistic and solipsistic implications of idealism that had reached their zenith with Fichte, “da jener wie dieser nicht weiter zählt als bis eins, höchstens bis zur Dyadik, nämlich zum Sich und Nicht-Sich oder dem Teufel” [I,3:1,031 (430-31)].

In a more elaborate passage from Die Paligenesien found in the “Alte Vorrede von Siebenkäs selber” — again incorporating the character of Siebenkäs as an opponent of idealism — we find yet another statement of Jean Paul’s aversion to idealism. What is of interest here is that Jean Paul does share one point in agreement with Fichte, namely the redundancy of the thing-in-itself:

[Ein kritischer Philosoph] tat mir dar, der Raum und die Zeit und die Kategorien wären an und für sich oder für andere Wesen ganz und gar nichts, aber für Menschen alles, und wir erschüren uns durch diese Denkformen die ganze Sinnenwelt (so daß wir sie sogleich darauf oder darunter empfänden) — Inzwischen bezögen sich alle diese innen von uns gemachten äußern Erscheinungen unverhofft auf wahre echte Dinge an sich, auf wirkliche, ihm ganz unbekannte X’s (wiewohl nicht auszumitteln sei, wie und warum), und er selber, als sein eigner optischer Betrug, bezöge sich auf ein solches in ihm angemessenes X, welches eben der eigentliche Granitkern und das Ich seines Ichs sei. — Und da er von diesem ganzen Inkognito-Universum nie, auch nicht nach dem Tode, etwas oder nur so viel zu sehen bekomme, als Hogart auf seinen Nagel zeichnen könne, so seh’ er nicht ab, warum er sich um ein ewig gleich dem Nichts verstecktes Etwas, um eine ewig unsichtbar Spiegelfolie sichtbarer Gestalten im geringsten so viel wie um gute hübsche Erscheinungen scheren solle, die er doch wenigstens als solche kenne. [I,4:735-736]

The tenor of Jean Paul’s critique is unmistakable, and it is worth examining a similar

Strahlen, ohne wechselseitige Anziehungskräfte die Erden um sich lenken soll” [I,3:1,031 (426-28)]. This critique will be treated at length in the remainder of this chapter.
argument found in the letter to Herder which contained the suggested revisions to latter’s

_Metakritik:_


Such is Jean Paul’s argument _in nuce_. He recognized along with Fichte the logical inconsistency and redundancy of things-in-themselves, but he could not understand why the latter transposed the validity which they possessed for the Kantians onto his own consciousness. In his opinion, Fichte had abandoned the concept of things-in-themselves as the ultimate reality but only at the cost of privileging his own subjective consciousness as the ultimate reality and thus rendering God unnecessary. And it should be clear by now that this usurpation of the divinity was intolerable to Jean Paul, who had believed that God was “das wahreste und einzige Subjekt.”34 In yet another passage from the same letter to Herder the charge of impiety borne of egoism is made even more explicitly:

Ich weis nicht, ob nicht jeder Idealismus in der höchsten Konsequenz Egoismus werden mus. In der Sinnenwelt, _die der Idealist nicht findet sondern erschaft_, ist die Körper Larve jedes Ichs ja ein Theil dieser Schöpfung

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34[B,III,3:316]. Letter to Jacobi from April 1, 1800. See also the following passage from the _Vorschule der Ästhetik:_ “Ewig dringen wir -- als auf das Ur-Letzte und Ur-Erste -- auf etwas Reales, das wir nicht schaffen, sondern finden und genießen und das zu uns, nicht aus uns kommt. Uns schaudert vor der Einsamkeit des Ich (wenn wir uns nur z.B. den unendlichen Geist des All vormalen); wir sind nicht gemacht, alles gemacht zu haben und auf dem ätherischen Throneipfel des Universums zu sitzen, _sondern auf den steigenden Stufen unter dem Gott und neben Göttern_” [I,5:444-45]. (Empahsis added).

The Clavis is rife with metaphors for this process of (self-)creation, ranging from the whimsical, such as the Viennese count who fashions a hairpiece from the hairs which had fallen from his own head [I,3:1,052 (908-10)], to the more serious, such as the central charge that in making the absolute I the creator of the the external world Fichte is undeniably and inexcusably his own God and creator. In a simultaneous swipe at the exaggerated rationalism of both the scholastics and Fichte, Jean Paul describes the philosopher in terminology of the former which was used to express the self-creating nature of God, i.e., "generatio aequivoca" [I,3:1,025 (311)], "aseitas" [I,3:1,033 (482)], "natura naturans" and "natura naturata" [I,3:1,037/39 (581/617)], and "prima causae, causa sui aliorumque" [I,3:1,038 (610-11)]. In an earlier conversation with Goethe, Jean Paul had even gone one step further by accusing Fichte of being the greatest scholastic of all, since "die ganze Sekte hält das Licht (oder das Auge) für das Objekt" [B,III,3:129].

In contradistinction to the realism of Jacobi, which recognizes the limitations of reason, the reason of the idealists is imbued with such creative omnipotence that it knows no boundaries: "Diese [Vernunft] kennt keine Geschöpfe als ihre; ihr Sehen ist nicht bloß ihr Licht —wie die Platoniker schon vom körperlichen Auge behaupteten, daß es alles durch sein Ausstrahlen sehe, und die Stoiker, daß es dadurch die Finsternis erblicke — sondern auch ihr Objekt" [I,3:1,037 (568-70)]. In this autonomous process of creation, object and subject (the Not-I and the I) become interchangeable concepts for both are "die gleichzeitigen Zwillinge
Since the I (as subject) is responsible for the world (as object), they are mutually dependent upon each other and neither can survive without the other: “Denn [Fichte] (absolut gedacht) hat zwar Himmel und Erde und alles geschaffen, aber auch Fichten als Beschauer, und mit jenen verginge also dieser” [I,3:1,035 (536-38)]. All that remains, according to Jean Paul, is the fiction known as the absolute I which can be discussed as little in terms of permanence or Being as in terms of width or weight:

Die zur Erklärung des Bewußtseins ertytrote Ob-Subjektivität des Ichs wird durch ein tertium comparationis, durch eine absolute Frei- oder Ichheit begründet und gesetzt, der man als dem Grund des Denkens die Denkbarkeit, als dem Grund der Akzidenzen, Substanzen und Kräfte alles dieses, als dem Grund der Existenz die Existenz (die sich zum absoluten Handeln verhält wie die zur Ewigkeit, Dasein zur Allgegenwart) allgemein abspricht. Ja ich würde dieser absoluten Ichheit — da es hier gar nicht mehr auf das Denkbare kommt, die höchste Gattung, das Sein, verlassen haben — dieser Ichheit würd’ ich, insofern sie der Grund ihres Grundes ist, auch diesen ableugnen.35

Such is the argument against idealism from the side of pure reason, but Jean Paul’s main preoccupation in the Clavis is with the argument from practical reason; for if a strict interpretation of the former leads to a denial of the independent existence of the world, the latter must necessarily presuppose the existence (or the creation, to keep with Jean Paul’s interpretation of Fichte) of the external world in order to even have a moral realm within which to act:

Postuliert er einmal die Realität der intramundanen oder fremden Ichs und will er sie also auch so extramundan wie sein eignes haben: so muß er auch die

35[I,3:1,014 (37-46)]. See also the letter to Jacobi from February 21, 1800: “Ich kann nie über das Sein hinaus; und das absolute Handeln ist stets für mich. Wozu mengt Fichte die Statik der sinnlichen Substanz hinein? Umgekehrt lieber — wie Plato sagt — eben die sinnliche Erscheinung ist nicht, nur wir” [B,III,3:300].
In the very beginning of the preface, in fact, Jean Paul states that the *Clavis* seeks to undermine idealism -- as a philosophy motivated by the issue of moral freedom -- with that which is supposed to be its very support, the apodictic existence of other human beings. But, says Jean Paul, "der Idealismus, der sich zum Egoismus hinaufdestillieren müssen, [kann] sich noch immer so mit der moralischen Welt abfinden wie mit der sinnlichen" [I,3:1,013 (8-10)]. In other words, just as the external world is dependent upon the mind of the idealist, so too is the moral world: "Gerade wie der Kantianer Gott und Unsterblichkeit, so postuliert Fichthes Ich Ichs" [I,3:1,039 (628-29)]. The pure or absolute I of Fichte, as that which lacks both consciousness and Being, can act against another pure I just as little as it can act against an empirical I. It is therefore forced to create the Not-I:

Meine absolute Freiheit oder Ichheit macht sich vorher, um zu handeln und zu reagieren, diesen Widerstand (das Nicht-Ich) [...] bloß zu ihrer Verherrlichung tut die absolute Ichheit alles. Aber Gottes Wollen ist Tun, sag' ich dann mit den Theologen; dei (i.e. aseitatis vel ameitatis) benefacere est benefacere; kurz das innere Handeln macht alles aus, und das äußere ist nur ein scheinbar äußeres. [I,3:1,042 (692-98)]

When faced with the impossibility of believing in other beings besides themselves, Fichte and his ilk must admit that the moral world ceases to be -- except as a self-serving invention. The argument is sketched more fully in §13 of the *Clavis* wherein Jean Paul again ridicules Fichte's positing of other I's as an action undertaken exclusively for his own benefit,

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36[I,3:1,040 (644-49)]. In the same letter to Jacobi, Jean Paul writes: "Seine praktische Philosophie ist immer nur die Folge und (Schminke) Erläuterung seiner theoretischen, und nicht ihre Schöpferin" [B,III,3:299].
"bloß um nur jemand zu haben, mit dem ein moralischer Umgang zu pflegen wäre" [I,3:1,039 (627-28)]. Thus it is, Jean Paul argues, that moral egoism is more related to transcendental egoism than Fichte realizes. And perhaps the ultimate satire of all resides in Leibgeber’s own admission that it is entirely up to his own ethical politeness whether or not he allows Fichte himself to exist! [I,3:1,038 (590-93)]

But with what right, Leibgeber asks, does he necessarily posit another immorality? In the preface Jean Paul had already made it clear that the positing of evil-doers is enough by itself to make the activity of the absolute I circumspect [I,3:1,015 (66-71)]. In the actual text of the Clavis, however, he makes his most significant appearance as editor when he notes that with this question Leibgeber brings down his and every other form of idealism by failing to recognize the realist implications in positing a plurality of other subjects:

Denn die Gewißheit fremder Moralität und Immoralität ist nur eine sinnliche -- durch lauter sinnliche Media --, und doch ist die sinnliche so groß wie die moralische, weil diese kategorische Befehle auf jene gründet [...] Kurz die praktische Vernunft setzt mit keiner grössern oder andern Gewißheit das Dasein fremder Ichs als das Dasein des eignen und fremden Körpers und also der Sinnenwelt voraus, weil ich mit dem eignen Körper und mit fremdem Eigentum ja in lauter moralischen Beziehungen stehe; und kann sie handeln, wenn die letzten nur ein subjektives Dasein für uns haben, so kann sie es auch bei den ersten. [I,3:1,043 (190f.])

Jean Paul’s attempt to refute Fichte by reducing him to the status of an unconscious realist is not as convincing as he seems to think, for he (like Jacobi) fails to comprehend that Fichte was concerned with providing the non-empirical ground of experiential (objective) knowledge, and for one to do that, it follows a fortiori that one must accept the existence of

37 See the letter to Thieriot from March 7, 1800: "Lesen Sie doch vor meinem Clavis Schad. -- Sein System wil kein transsz. Egoismus sein, weil sonst die Moralität zerstiebt; aber konsquent mus man es, wie ich gethan, hinauffolgern" [B,III,3:303].
the experiential world. Had Jean Paul read the *Versuch* a little closer, he would have seen that Fichte never suggested that being an idealist required one to completely abandon a belief in realism. If we recall the earlier contrast that Fichte drew between what he believed to be the only two possible philosophical standpoints, we see that he had opposed “idealism” to “dogmatism,” and not to “realism.” The wording is crucial, for it is only from the standpoint of philosophy that one can be -- and must be, according to Fichte -- an idealist. From the standpoint of everyday life, however, the necessity of being an empirical realist is inescapable. In this respect, Fichte was of one mind with both Jean Paul and Jacobi. But what neither of these critics of idealism seemed to understand was that realism is just as little a philosophical theory as transcendental idealism is an actual mode of living.38 In words that harken back to the conversation between Jean Paul and Goethe in which the former accused the philosopher of being the greatest scholastic of all, Fichte wrote in a footnote to the *Grundlage*: “Wir sollen nicht ohne Auge sehen wollen; aber sollen auch nicht behaupten, dass das Auge sehe.”39 For someone so fond of footnotes, it is odd that Jean Paul did not pay much attention to this, nor to the following explicit note found at the beginning of the Second Introduction to the *Versuch*:

> Der Realismus, der sich uns allen, und selbst dem entschiedensten Idealisten aufdringt, wenn es zum Handeln kommt, d.h. die Annahme, daß Gegenstände ganz unabhängig von uns außer uns existieren, liegt im Idealismus selbst, und wird in ihm erklärt, und abgeleitet; und die Ableitung einer objektiven

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Wahrheit, sowohl in der Welt der Erscheinungen, als auch in der intelligibeln Welt, ist ja der einzige Zweck aller Philosophie. --Der Philosoph sagt nur in seinem Namen: Alles, was für das Ich ist, ist durch das Ich. Das Ich selbst aber sagt in seiner Philosophie: So wahr ich bin und lebe, existiert etwas außer mir, das nicht durch mich da ist [...] Der letztere [Standpunkt] ist nur vom ersteren aus begreiflich; außerdem hat der Realismus zwar Grund, denn er nötigt sich uns durch unsere Natur auf; aber er hat keinen bekannten und verständlichen Grund; der erstere ist aber auch nur lediglich dazu da, um den letzteren begreiflich zu machen. Der Idealismus kann nie Denkart sein, sondern er ist nur Spekulation.\(^{40}\)

If there is a philosophical relationship to be found between realism and idealism, it is simply that the latter has the task of explaining the former. In his *Sonnenklärer Bericht* (1801) Fichte elucidated this point by drawing an analogy between his philosophical method and a demonstration of the workings of a clock. Just as an adequate account of the internal mechanism of a clock must relate each of its parts to the whole, so too does the idealist account of experience attempt to relate each part of experience to some overarching, unified theory of consciousness. Fearing perhaps that his point was not clear enough, Fichte adds that only a complete fool (*ein ausgemachter Thor*) would suggest that a representation of a clock’s inner workings is the actual, moving machine itself executing its functions in the everyday world.\(^{41}\)

What is again of interest in our attempt to gauge Jean Paul’s familiarity with Fichte is the fact that the latter had not only tried to dispel this confusion as early as the *Grundlage*, but he had done so by simultaneously addressing the so-called atheistic implications of his thought. The passage in question occurs towards the end of the work (again in a footnote)

\(^{40}\)Fichte, *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, p.35.

\(^{41}\)Fichte, *Sonnenklärer Bericht an das grössere Publicum*, p.351.
where Fichte contrasts his *Wissenschaftslehre* with Stoicism in order to highlight the idealist distinction between Being as conceived both absolutely and empirically. While the terms “idealism” and “realism” are not stated explicitly, the argument clearly prefigures the more direct statement cited above:

Im consequenten Stoicismus wird die unendliche Idee des Ich genommen für das wirkliche Ich; absolutes Seyn und wirkliches Daseyn werden nicht unterschieden. Daher ist der stoische Weise allgenugsam und unbeschränkt; es werden ihm alle Prädicate beigelegt, die dem reinen Ich, oder auch Gott zukommen. Nach der stoischen Moral sollen wir nicht Gott gleich werden, sondern wir sind selbst Gott. Die Wissenschaftslehre unterscheidet sorgfältig absolutes Seyn und wirkliches Daseyn, und legt das erstere bloss zum Grunde, um das letztere erklären zu können. Der Stoicismus wird dadurch widerlegt, dass gezeigt wird, er könne die Möglichkeit des Bewusstseyns nicht erklären. Darum ist die Wissenschaftslehre auch nicht atheistisch, wie der Stoicismus nothwendig seyn muss, wenn er consequent verfährt.\(^ {42}\)

In light of passages such as these, it seems highly counter-intuitive to interpret Fichte’s commitment to idealism in anything other than purely epistemological terms as laid out in the previous chapter. His idealism was not that of Berkeley, who did indeed believe that all objects of knowledge as well as the entire external world existed only as images in his own mind, or to use his now famous phrase: *esse est percipi*. (Timothy Casey has aptly noted that Jean Paul’s ineffectual refutation of Fichte often reminds one of Dr. Johnson’s feeble attempt to refute Berkeley simply by kicking a heavy stone!).\(^ {43}\) Considering that Fichte was used to far more sophisticated objections from the professional philosophers who disagreed with him (although Fichte would say ‘misunderstood’), his frustration with the *Clavis* is

\(^ {42}\)Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*, p.278.

\(^ {43}\)Casey, *Jean Paul: A Reader*, p.206.
understandable—especially in such passages where Jean Paul presents a long-winded litany of creatures big and small, from the elephant to the tapeworm, all of whom rely upon the whim of the philosopher in order to exist [I,3:1,044-45 (734-46)]. And how is Fichte to respond to the accusation that the absolute I is also responsible for dead bodies, or dead I’s?: “Moralisch konnte man mich nicht mehr zwingen, dieses Nicht-Ichs-Fragment des entwischten Diebesgottes zu postulieren; und doch hing die Ichs-Schwarte noch da” [I,3:1,048 (823-25)]. This playfulness is fully in keeping with the literary nature of the Clavis and speaks to Jean Paul’s wish that the reader would be able to discern the difference between “Leibgebers Zusammenschüttten des Spaßes und Ernstes.”

The question remains, however, as to whether Jean Paul himself knew the difference.

At least two contemporary scholars have made the unsubstantiated claim that Jean Paul was well acquainted with the three different conceptions of the I that had arisen up to that time in the history of philosophy, namely, 1) the empirical I, 2) the I as subject of Kant’s philosophy, i.e., the transcendental unity of apperception and 3) the aseity, or the absolute I of Fichte. Even if we grant Jean Paul the degree of philosophical sophistication needed to make these distinctions, the fact remains that the concept of the empirical I and the absolute

44See the letter to Jacobi from July 27, 1800: “Fichte ist sehr zornig über den Clavis; aber nach Herder’s Ausdruck fand der Clavis viele Löcher in Jena” [B,III,3:357].

45[I,3:1,017 (105)]. See also the letter to Jacobi from January 27, 1800: “Mit Frühlings-Freude gebähr’ ich den Clavis wieder, da ich darin philosophieren und spassen zugleich kan” [B,III,3:282].

46See Brose, p.77 and Harich, p.100.
I are unfailingly conflated within the *Clavis* itself.\(^47\) Brose in particular appears to base his claim upon nothing more than the earlier interpretation of Max Kommerell, who suggested that Jean Paul’s confusion of the absolute I and the empirical I in the *Clavis* is intentional and serves to demonstrate (through Leibgeber) that it is simply impossible to keep these concepts apart.\(^48\) But if we look at §7 of the *Clavis*, which focuses exclusively on these concepts of the I, we again see that Jean Paul’s misstep occurs when he endows the absolute I with more ‘creative’ power than a Fichteian idealist would be willing to grant:

Das unendliche (reine) Ich ist als solches kein endliches, also kein bestimmtes, also noch kein Etwas, nichts Existierendes. Um nun doch ein Etwas zu sein, darf es nicht selber bleiben. *Aber da alles Sein von reinen Ich entspringt*, mithin auch das »Nicht es selber sein«: so muß es sich selber als solches entgegengesetzt aus absoluter Kausalität; dadurch wird es bestimmt (beschränkt) und erscheint als endliches, wirkliches Ich und stellt sich *etwas vor*. [I,3:1,033 (494-99)] (First emphasis added).

Not only is this misrepresentation of the empirical I continued in the next section, but Jean Paul commits the further mistake of introducing another empirical element into Fichte’s dialectic of the I, the Not-I, and the absolute I by making the antithesis (the Not-I) personal as well: "Vorstellen setzt ein Vorgestelltes nicht voraus, sondern zugleich, das (empirische) Ich ein Nicht-Ich oder *Du*, das Sub- ein Objekt" (Emphasis added) [I,3:1,034 (502-4)]. This confusion is escalated to such an extent that from §9 on we begin to find Leibgeber speaking

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\(^{47}\) Berend notes that in an unpublished letter to Jean Paul from May 22, 1800, Thieriot had made this very objection [B,I,8:cii].

\(^{48}\) Kommerell, *Jean Paul*, p.347. While Harich cites Kommerell as well, he also calls attention to Jean Paul’s response to Thieriot (see the above footnote) from *March 7, 1800*. Even assuming that Berend made a mistake in the date of the unpublished letter, Jean Paul’s "response" to Thieriot is not very satisfying since it does not speak directly to the objection.
of "mein reines Ich" [I,3:1,035 (532)] and "mein absolutes Ich." 49 No matter how sympathetically one reads the Clavis, it is equally plausible that it is not Leibgeber who is incapable of separating these two concepts of the I, but rather Jean Paul himself.

Given Fichte’s choice of terminology, the popular conception of the philosopher as one who held the finite individual ego or consciousness to be responsible for the creation of the world is understandable, but nonetheless incorrect. It bears repeating once again: Fichte’s absolute I was a philosophical construct. It was not intended to be the expression of the consciousness of a concrete individual, but rather a supra-individual principle integral to consciousness itself. To read the following summary of the Wissenschaftslehre provided by Wayne Martin, who correctly emphasizes the work’s reconstructive nature, it would seem that Fichte’s claims are far less sensational than Jean Paul would have us believe: "The claim is not that the subject somehow creates objects ex nihilo, or that only objects so created can be known. It is rather a claim about the cognitive activities in virtue of which a substantive consciousness state comes to acquire objective content [...] All that is ruled out is the possibility that objectivity might be utterly matter-of-fact, that it might be independent of any particular cognitive activity of the subject.” 50 Letting Fichte speak for himself, it is interesting to note that he had encountered this tiring objection long before Jean Paul had taken it up.

Five years before the appearance of the Clavis Fichtiana he had attempted to dissuade Jacobi

49[I,3:1,035 (547)] (Emphasis added). Storz cites Jacobi’s letter to Jean Paul from March 16, 1800 as evidence of the former’s influence in interpreting the absolute I as an individual (empirical) I: "Reine Selbstheit ist reine Derselbigkeit ohne Der. -- Der oder das ist notwendig immer ein Individuum” (Studien zu Jean Pauls »Clavis Fichtiana«, p.48).

50Martin, Idealism and Objectivity, p.73.
of the same idea:

Mein absolutes Ich ist offenbar nicht das Individuum; so haben beleidigte Höflinge und ärgerliche Philosophen mich erklärt, um mir die schändliche Lehre des praktischen Egoismus anzudichten. Aber das Individuum muss aus dem absoluten Ich deducirt werden.⁵¹

Considering that Jean Paul was wont to think of himself as Jacobi’s “adjunctus philosophiae” [B,III,4:63], it is dubious as to whether he truly understood Fichte’s distinction here any more than Jacobi did. Should that indeed be the case, then it would be inappropriate to conclude that Jean Paul had willingly misconstrued Fichte’s Grundsatz in the Clavis Fichtiana. Some commentators have suggested that his intended parody of Fichte reads at times more like a Clavis Jean Pauliana for nowhere does the poet express his own extreme subjectivity or betray more of his own ‘solipsistic’ tendencies by playing such a prominent role in the lives of his characters.⁵² And yet the work is not entirely without merit. As Harich has

⁵¹Fichte, Briefwechsel, I:501. (Letter to Jacobi from August 30, 1795). Fichte had also made a similar point in the Versuch (p.97). Ten years later, in his Berlin lectures, he would again protest at length against this crude interpretation of philosophical dilletantes: “Man hat ziemlich allgemein die Wissenschaftslehre so verstanden, als ob sie dem Individuum Wirkungen zuschriebe, z.B. die Production der gesammten materiellen Welt, und dergleichen, die demselben durchaus nicht zukommen könnten. Wie verhält sich die wahre Wissenschaftslehre zu diesem Vorwürfe? Also, jene sind in dieses Misverständniss gerade darum verfallen, weil sie selbst dem Individuum weit mehr zuschreiben, als ihm zukommt, und so selber den Fehler machen, dessen sie die Wissenschaftslehre bezüchtigen, und darum, nachdem sie einmal die ersten Grundsätze misverstanden haben, ihn in diesem Systeme noch weiter getrieben finden müssen, als sie selbst geneigt sind, ihn zu treiben. Aber sie haben sich ganz geirrt; nicht das Individuum, sondern das Eine unmittelbare geistige Leben selbst ist Schöpfer aller Erscheinung, und so auch der erscheinenden Individuen [...] Die Vernunft, das allgemeine Denken, das Wissen schlechthin ist höher und mehr, denn das Individuum.” (Published in 1817 as Die Thatsachen des Bewusstseyns, pp.607-08). The transformation of the absolute I into the ‘spiritual Life’ is an indication of the more religious bend that Fichte’s thought had taken. This will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

⁵²See Storz, p.70; Schweikert, p.43.
argued, the *Clavis* is deserving of a place in the history of philosophy and the philosophy of language in particular, for Jean Paul was the first to meet the arguments of the *Wissenschaftslehre* with semantic ones.53

No doubt influenced by Hamann and Herder in this respect as well, Jean Paul was inclined to view many philosophical problems as a mere *Wortspiel* -- particularly in the case of Fichte, "dessen logische Algeber ein Sorites aus Wörtern ist" [B,III,3:252]. As he wrote to Jacobi: "Zugeben mus man alle seine Schlüsself, wenn man ihm die Sprache zugiebt" [B,III,3:253]. And this he was not willing to do, for it was Fichte and the Romantics under the spell of his idealism who were most responsible for propagating the "unauflösliche schwärmerische Sprachen- und Gedanken-Verwirrung" [I,3:1,030 (412-13)] of the age.

From a contemporary perspective, the linguistic critique found in the *Clavis* is especially intriguing since Jean Paul seems to anticipate the ordinary-language philosophers of the early-twentieth century. In making comparisons between such historically distant figures, it is often tempting to attribute a degree of over-sophistication to the earlier party. While religious considerations would have undoubtedly prevented Jean Paul from accepting their wholesale rejection (ontologically speaking) of any concept which failed to express either a logical truth or an empirical hypotheses, i.e., those of metaphysics, he openly acknowledged the unavoidable confusion that results from any attempt to discuss such matters in a logical and coherent way:

Hätte nur irgendein Mann ein dünnes, aber herrliches Buch darüber geschrieben, wie mißlich und leer das metaphysische Differenzieren und Integrieren bloß darum sei, weil es durchaus polnisch oder deutsch oder in

53Harich, p.81.
And anyone who could exclaim "Für die Sinnen sei die Sprache!" [B,III,3:253] would surely have had some appreciation for the anti-metaphysical stance of logical positivism, especially since it is the very accusation that Fichte's philosophy rests upon just such a misuse or misappropriation of language which is at play in the *Clavis*:

Die Wissenschaftslehre ist die philosophische Rechnung des Unendlichen. Ist man nur einmal aus der Region der endlichen und erklärbaren Größen in die der endlichen und unerklärlichen hinausgestiegen: so versiert man in einer ganz neuen weiten Welt, in der man sich vermittelst der bloßen Sprache — denn weder Begriffe noch Anschauungen langen herauf oder halten in diesem Äther aus — wie auf einem Faustsmantel leicht hin- und herbewegt. [I,3:1,016 (80-84)].

For Jean Paul, Fichte is guilty of making language into a "Lügnerin und Verfalscherin" [B,III,3:252] by making concepts the objects of concepts, abstraction the object of abstraction, and reflection the object of reflection.\(^4\) Moreover, complicated activities like those which take place within consciousness are made into seamless *concepts* of the same. That is to say, since the activity of consciousness can never be portrayed outside of itself (just as it is equally impossible for the activity of seeing to observe "itself"), consciousness can never provide a truly exhaustive description of its own activity, much less the contrived notion offered by Fichte resting upon the distinction between subject and object. And as we have already seen, the separability of the two was puzzling to Jean Paul. As he expressed the

matter to Jacobi:


Jean Paul came to the conclusion that Fichte’s object was nothing but “ein weites leeres Quantitätswort” [B,III,3:252-53], for to speak of an ‘object’ of consciousness is to transpose our sensory-dependent language, this “Zeichenmeisterin der äußern Wahrnehmungen” [I,3:1,024 (282-83)] onto the realm of the abstract and intangible; the quantities, “diese einzigen physiognomischen Fragmente der Sinnenwelt” [I,3:1,024 (284)], constitute the entire contents of language, whereas the qualities are those “Kräfte, die Monaden der Erscheinung” [I,3:1,024 (285-86)] which, although equally as real, are only a product of consciousness. Whereas the Atomists and the Encyclopedists sought to transform the qualities into quantities, i.e., reducing all spiritual precepts into ones of matter, Fichte committed the opposite mistake of elevating the quantities into qualities:

Man nehme z.B. das Fichtische Wort Begrenzung oder Einschränkung des absoluten Ichs. Es bezeichnet eine Quantität und kann nach der höchsten Abstraktion und Ausbälzung nur gerade so auf eine Qualität angewandt werden wie die Wörter: Einengung, Einzäunung, Eindämmen, Fesseln, Zusammenpressen, Verdichten, etc. Will ich durch diese lebendigem Wörter das Verhältnis des Unendlichen zum Endlichen bezeichnen: so merk’ ich, daß ich etwas Falsches denke; tu’ ichs mit jenem Wort: so merk’ ichs weniger, weil ich bei dem Worte selber weniger denke [...] So ist das Fichtische Zurückgehen der Tätigkeit in sich selber eine Quantitätsmetapher, die, auf Kräfte angewandt, rein nichts bedeutet, noch weniger erklären kann. 55

55[I,3:1,025 (165f.)]. See also §10: “Und ohne diese Sprache der höchsten Reflexion ist auch das Setzen eines Nicht-Ichs und Ichs oder das eigenhändige Einschränken des absoluten um nichts begreiflicher als die so oft getadelte Schöpfung aus nichts” [I,3:1,036 (559-61)].
Because the identity of sign and object does not occur in language as it does in mathematics, words are nothing but "willkürliche, nichts malende Schnupftuchsknoten der Besinnung" [I,3:1,025 (317-18)]. Language thus becomes an indispensable tool for the idealist who attempts to explain both the external world and the world of his own perceptions by melting them down into one world of his own creation: "dann fährt man fort und macht sich Begriffe aus Begriffen, bis man so weit ist, daß das ganze Universum nun mit allen seinen Kräften und Farben bloß durchsichtig als ein weites luftiges Nicht-Ich dasteht" [I,3:1,026 (327-29)].

Jacobi may have been the one who initially raised the charge of nihilism against Fichte, but it was Jean Paul who did his best to portray the ominous consequences of the ceaseless and egoistic positing which serves as the hallmark of his system. Despite the mockery and jest that characterizes the Clavis as a whole, there is no mistaking the grave note on which it ends:

In der finstern unbewohnten Stille glüht keine Liebe, keine Bewunderung, kein Gebet, keine Hoffnung, kein Ziel — Ich so ganz allein, nirgends ein Pulsschlag, kein Leben, nichts um mich und ohne mich nichts als nichts — Mir nur bewußt meines höheren Nicht-Bewußtseins — In mir den stumm, blind, verhüllt fortarbeitenden Dämonorgon, und ich bin er selber — So komm’ ich aus der Ewigkeit, so geh’ ich in die Ewigkeit — — Und wer hört die Klage und kennt mich jetzt? — Ich. — Wer hört sie, und wer kennt mich nach der Ewigkeit? — Ich. [I,3:1,056 (1,004-10)]

As the creator of the universe, Fichte’s absolute and autonomous I is identical with everything within it and thus quite incapable of being separated from its own products. All that remains for the idealist to speak of is a desolate world of his own making, conceived through nothingness and characterized by the same.
6. Conclusion

Ich kenne nur Ein Ich, dieß ist Gott — das übrige sind Hunde.
-Jean Paul

If the nature of the controversy surrounding Fichte at the end of the eighteenth-century strikes the contemporary reader as surprising, it may help to bear in mind that the social relevance of philosophy was not the contestable issue that it is today, especially if the philosophical system under consideration was thought to be undermining the very foundations of religious belief. As a case study of the spiritual dangers which many believed to have been brought on by the Kantian revolution in philosophy, the Clavis Fichtiana is a vivid portrait of the concerns of more religiously-oriented men like Jean Paul. As a critique of Fichte’s philosophy in particular, however, it is decidedly less successful. About halfway through the very first version of the Wissenschaftslehre, one comes upon a footnote which is perhaps deserving of a far more prominent place than that which Fichte gave it. It could arguably stand over his philosophical production as a whole, for what was intended as a preemptory persiflage against his expected critics turned out to encapsulate both the lasting difficulty of his philosophy and the reason for its continued misunderstanding. In words revealing of his own ingeniousness as well as his equally-cultivated haughtiness, Fichte wrote: “Die meisten Menschen würden leichter dahin zu bringen seyn, sich für ein Stück Lava im Monde, als für ein Ich zu halten. Daher haben sie Kant nicht verstanden, und seinen Geist nicht gehndet; daher werden sie auch diese Darstellung, obgleich die Bedingung alles Philosophierens ihr an die Spitze gestellt ist, nicht verstehen. Wer hierüber noch nicht einig mit sich selbst ist, der
versteht keine gründliche Philosophie, und er bedarf keine."  

Whatever one may say about Jean Paul's opposition to the transcendental idealism of Kant and Fichte, he owed the philosophers a debt of inspiration if nothing else. He may never have attained the intellectual acuity of either man, nor did he produce a magnum opus to share a comparable place in the philosophical tradition, but more popular works of his own such as Kampanerthal, Brief über die Philosophie, and Titan (to say nothing of the Clavis itself) would hardly have been possible without their influence. And to Jean Paul's credit, this was not a debt that went unnoticed. In contrasting himself with Herder of the Metakritik, he wrote that "[e]s fehlt ihm die hohe Freiheit, ein feindseliges Individuum zu verstehen und zu benutzen" [B,III,4:235]. As we have seen, the claim to have understood either Kant or Fichte is certainly contestable, but their presence in his works is undeniable, even in those which are less directly philosophical in nature.

While the influence of idealism would continue to thrive through the work of philosophers like Schelling and Hegel, that was of little importance to Jean Paul -- and not because their philosophy bore little outward resemblance to Fichte's. The poet's scepticism towards all philosophical systems (like his unorthodoxy) remained present up to the end of his life. On May 10, 1821, four years before his death, he wrote to his son Max: "Das Wahre such' ich bei den jetzigen Philosophen gar nicht."  

In the end, truth for Jean Paul, as for his mentor Jacobi, would always be found in the vitalistic faith of feeling and not in the arridness

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56Fichte, Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre, p.175.

57[B,III,8:113]. See also the letter to Jacobi from September 6, 1807: "Mir gehts wie dir, nur dir aus höhern und genialen Gründen; nichts hoffend von der Philosophie, les' ich doch die Philo-sophen" [B,III,5:164].
of the intellect. Even the more religious modifications which Fichte's system underwent failed to meet Jean Paul's approval. A year after the publication of the *Clavis*, Fichte remarked that he had begun to assume the existence of something above and outside of the absolute I that could only be expressed by the name God. 58 If he had thought that such an admission would have appeased Jean Paul (even though that would have never been his motivation), he was mistaken. Instead, it only served to reinforce Jean Paul's opposition since it seemed to him as if Fichte had suddenly and without reason started to philosophize beyond the boundaries imposed by his own system. As Jean Paul wrote to Jacobi:


If ever there were an illustration of Fichte's belief that a man's philosophy emerged from his temperament, it is surely to be found in Jean Paul. 59 However one may try to classify the poet, be it as a *Stürmer und Dränger*, a rebellious Romantic, a product of Empfindsamkeit, or any of the other suggested designations, his unshakeable belief in God combined with his heterodox religiosity formed the core of his life and work. At a time when philosophy was judged by many to have gained the upper hand on theology, it was men like Jean Paul,

58 The conversation is reported in the letter to Jacobi from April 9, 1801 [B,III,4:62-63].

59 As an interesting example of the more subtle influence that the philosopher exercised on him, we can see this belief of Fichte's echoed almost verbatim by Klothar in the *Fiegeljahre* (1804): "Der Wille arbeitet den Meinungen mehr vor als die Meinungen dem Willen; man gebe mir eines Menschen Leben, so weiß ich sein System dazu" [I,2:768].
Hamann and Jacobi who assured that the German Enlightenment remained distinct from its precursors in France and England by retaining an active concern with the spiritual realm as well as the philosophical. As the more mature Jean Paul would write in his Freiheits-Büchlein (1805): “Religion als solche kann von Philosophie nicht erzeugt und erklärt, folglich nicht vernichtet werden; umgekehrt gibt erst Religion dem Denken Richtung und Stoff. Alles Denken kann nur das Gemeine, nie das Göttliche, nur das Tote, nicht das Lebendige auflösen und ändern” [II,2:849-850]. No matter how close the transcendental idealism of Fichte came to approximate the Deity, philosophy could never supplant religion. For Jean Paul, it was not the “Nicht-Ich” that the I was eternally seeking, but rather the “Ur-Ich” [I,5:580], and this was quite simply God.

Despite their philosophical differences, relations between Jean Paul and Fichte remained cordial up to the latter’s death in 1814. He may not have counted Fichte among his friends in the way that he did Jacobi or Herder, but he could still find much to respect in the man. As he wrote to Jacobi at the height of the controversy: “Der Mensch selber ist gut und tolerant; das siehst du aus seiner Amnestie für den Clavis Schmidt” [B,III,4:63]. In his obituary for Fichte, Jean Paul would repay the favour:

6. APPENDIX:

An Annotated Translation of

Jean Paul's *Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana* (1800)
A. Remarks Concerning the Translation

Jean Paul ist ein großer Dichter und Philosoph, aber man kann nicht unkünstlerischer seyn als eben er im Schaffen und Denken.
-Heinrich Heine

The English reader is rather at a loss when it comes to the works of Jean Paul. Not only is there a genuine scarcity of translations, but there is also a significant lack of secondary literature.\(^1\) As an author often mentioned in the same breath with the titans of German letters, this apparent absence of interest in Jean Paul is somewhat curious especially when one considers just how prolific a writer he actually was.\(^2\) It is only after undertaking the following translation of my own that I began to understand the reasons for this glaring lacuna in Anglo-American scholarship on Jean Paul, for despite the fact that he may have rivaled the likes of Goethe and Schiller in productivity, it is there that they part company. The voluminous output of Jean Paul and the daunting length of his novels is complicated by a style so far removed from that of his contemporaries that Goethe had praised him (scant though it was) in terms of his Oriental qualities.\(^3\) It is perhaps this very uniqueness that has assured Jean Paul

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\(^1\)An anthology of selections from Jean Paul has recently been published which serves as a much-needed introduction to his work. See Jean Paul: A Reader, ed. Timothy J. Casey and trans. Erika Casey. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992).

\(^2\)Despite his talent for exaggeration, there is probably some truth to be found in the remark made by the 24 year-old Jean Paul that he “began to write books at about the same time [he learned to write] the alphabet [Bücher und Buchstaben fast zu gleicher Zeit zu schreiben anfang].” Quoted in Müller, “Jean Pauls philosophischer Entwicklungsgang,” p.205.

\(^3\)Goethe believed the characteristic trait of Eastern thought to be its affinity for perceiving an interrelatedness among all the disparate elements of nature, and it was this desire to direct everything towards a certain unity which he saw exemplified in the works of this “Chinaman in Rome.” (West-Östlicher Divan, pp.476-77).
a permanent place, if not a popular one, in the history of German literature.

As Heine would remark shortly after Jean Paul’s death, the Hesperusdichter stood “completely isolated in his time” — a laudable accomplishment considering that his literary world was defined by the antipodes of Classicism and Romanticism. His style is so distinctive, in fact, that it seems to resist any attempt at classification; long before Stirner lay claim to the title, it was Jean Paul who could boast of being “the unique one” [Der Einzige].

Contemporary interpreters would perhaps do well to adopt the more modern dictum of Nietzsche that likens the gulf between the Classical and the Romantic to that between the Apollinian and the Dionysian, for Jean Paul’s work assuredly belongs in the latter category.

His long rhythmic sentences, ebullient and rife with affectations, are capable of making even the most ardent Romantic feel a little uncomfortable, particularly when they are found alongside verbose passages detailing the most mundane of events. In between the sentimental and the trivial one encounters genuine revelry and passion. Pretension is commonplace, and yet so is the display of erudition. It is Jean Paul’s constant demand upon the reader’s attention, be it to marvel at one man’s enthusiasm for the world, or (albeit rather less flattering) to persevere through pages of somewhat less discriminating subject matter that promises both his continued acclaim and reproach.

4Heine, Die romantische Schule, p.474.
5Ibid.
6This is not meant to imply, however, that Nietzsche himself held Jean Paul in high regard; quite the contrary — he ridiculed the poet, reducing him to a “scourge in a housefrock” [ein Verhängnis im Schlafrock]! (Nietzsche, Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, p.254).
7Seeing as one of the leading Fichte scholars has described Fichte’s writing as characterized by “an unpredictable oscillation between bone-dry exposition and rhetorical tantrums,” one
Moreover, Jean Paul distinguishes himself as one of those writers who *seems* to be in a constant struggle to overcome the formal limitations of language, something which further complicates the job of the translator. I emphasize the word "seems" since Jean Paul was by all accounts an autodidact who did not even normalize his spelling until he was 41 years of age. For this reason one has to exercise a certain amount of caution when making pronouncements on the formal conventions of his writing. Nevertheless, to cite an example of particular relevance for the current translation, his usage of semi-colons was unusual even for his own time. Rather than concluding sentences with periods, he regularly uses semi-colons to string together entire paragraphs, giving the impression of an impassioned and almost breathless declaration. While I often found it necessary to break these longer sentences into several shorter ones, I have tried to preserve Jean Paul's style as much as possible. I have also retained such things as the ubiquitous dashes which he seemed to consider an essential element of his writing.

In the case of the *Clavis Fichtiana*, the subject matter itself can only contribute to the challenges inherent in Jean Paul's style. In those instances where I was forced to strike a balance between the literary form and the philosophical content, the nature of my dissertation could make the claim that he and Jean Paul were kindred spirits on the level of style if nothing else. See Breazeale, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p.35.

*Berger, Jean Paul Friedrich Richter*, p.19.

*In the “Preface to the Second Edition” of *Hesperus* Jean Paul notes his fondness for holding the most “dissimilar and antagonistic things” apart with dashes (*Gedankenstriche*). [I,1:480]. Nevertheless, the actual occurrences of dashes within the *Clavis* more closely resemble their ineffectual usage which the younger Jean Paul had chastised so severely as a “waste of ink,” likening them to “furrows without seeds” and “the bones of dead thoughts.” [II,1:424].*
entailed that the emphasis be placed on the latter. Nevertheless, I hope that I was able to convey enough of Jean Paul’s style to allow the reader to appreciate its uniqueness.

* * * * * *

Although written as an appendix to *Titan*, Jean Paul chose to publish the *Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana* separately on the advice of his friends before publishing it with his momentous novel as he had originally intended. It came off the presses on May 19, 1800 with the first volume of *Titan* following later that same month. While *Titan* itself appeared in English in 1862, the appendix containing the *Clavis* and the additional works was simply omitted from the translation. To the best of my knowledge, an annotated English translation of the *Clavis* has not been published to date, and I am only aware of a very selective translation of the concluding sections of the text which can be found in the above mentioned *Jean Paul: A Reader* (the authors of which deserve recognition for producing a translation that is arguably more literary and eminently more readable than the original).

The following translation is based upon the original 1800 edition of the *Clavis* published by Henning, which was the only separate edition to appear during Jean Paul’s life. For those who wish to find a more readily available copy in the original German, the most recent publication of *Titan* along with the complete appendices is found in the third volume of Jean Paul’s *Werke* (1961), edited by Norbert Miller. In composing the notes to the *Clavis* I am greatly indebted to the notes provided in this edition, as well as the notes found in the

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10 See the letter to Jacobi from December 26, 1799 [B,III,3:267].

1933 historical-critical edition of Jean Paul's *Sämtliche Werke* (Part I, Vol. 9), edited by Eduard Berend. (No substantial differences exist between these two editions and the original printing of the *Clavis*). In addition, I have also made frequent use of the notes in Ludwig Storz's 1951 dissertation *Studien zu Jean Pauls "Clavis Fichtiana."*

In seeking to provide comprehensive annotations I have at times incorporated notes from all three of the above-mentioned works, while on other occasions I have selected only what I considered to be the most relevant and helpful information. Moreover, I often found it necessary to elaborate upon many of the text glosses, and I have, of course, contributed my own notes to the text. It is for this reason (as well as to avoid the multiple references required by the frequent redundancy of the notes from these three works) that I have only cited the original source of the note when quoted directly, or when I was unable to independently verify the reference. All references to Berend and Miller in the endnotes adhere to the same method of citation used throughout my dissertation and explained in the bibliography.

Notes within the text will adhere to the following pattern: Jean Paul's original footnotes are denoted with lower case letters. My own annotations are numbered and appear as endnotes. In order to facilitate the reading of the text any annotations required of Jean Paul's own footnotes will be found in brackets -- [ ] -- following the footnote itself. The use of italics has been restricted to titles of works and to words emphasized by Jean Paul himself. All translations from additional works are my own unless otherwise noted.
CLAVIS
FICHTIANA
seu
LEIBGEBERIANA.

don
Jean Paul.

(Aufged zum Leomischen Anhang des Titans)

Erfurt,
in der Henningschen Buchhandlung
1800.

Fig. 1: Facsimile of the original title page
The Clavis is originally the last part of the Comic Appendix to Titan; it takes leave of the old Naïde, however, in order to move more freely around obstacles through which the corpulent Titan would never be able to pass. Were it proper to bestow laurels upon one’s own child, I could make five wreaths for him; in the meantime, I can at least make them known.

The first and most important is that this child, in my opinion, is right at all times, especially in that it seeks to undermine Fichtean idealism with that which is supposed to be its very support, the apodictic existence of other Fellow-I’s. However, even idealism, which must reduce itself to egoism, is always able to come to terms with the moral world in the same way it does with the sensory world; -- no one has the final word above philosophy and the nymph Echo. -- Yet the child of whose laurel wreaths I have been speaking so much should have penetrated into Fichte’s elementary spirit, into his absolute activity or Actuosit Albini, more with theoretical reason and not merely with practical reason; and I would be amazed if this, like everything my intellectually immature infant has said, had not already been presented by several mature and distinguished minds other than Jacobi’s, had this very philosophy not up to now been more in the ears rather than in the head. In the realm of knowledge -- as opposed to the physical realm -- sound always arrives prior to light. If just
once the Fichtean philosophy were allowed to stand more illuminated and unshrouded, then the bare ice of this Mont Blanc would gradually soften and melt under rays warmer than its own, and it would no longer support the sky.

As I said, that upon which my child should have been able to insist more is this: the, as it were, idealistic idealism of Fichte lives and breathes in the Absolute in such a way that -- since the attribute of indetermination allows existence to elevate [aufheben] itself to the center of its already existing universe, just like gravity is elevated by being within a world’s center of gravity -- that there is now no way back into finiteness and existence (just as little as there is a way out of this backwards into the Absolute) without the immeasurable dogmatic leaps, flights, and other inexplicable things that require explanation, but here claim to do the explaining. -- Only from the side of individuation, says Jacobi, can one penetrate into Spinozism; that also applies to the Wissenschaftslehre and to every philosophy, in so far as it would be pure or absolute; -- and no philosophy is this with the exception of that of the eternal Genius, because our brightest lanterns always cast shadows in realistic forests [Eckhöhlern], or in a metaphor more in accordance with the absolute I, the empirical I, and the Not-I, because each of the three tones that help to explain a chord already carry this chord within themselves. -- This very mistake, however, that either the keystone or the foundation

4) Schad wants to do his part toward this; he is clear enough and is to be recommended to every Fichtean novice, only he reiterates the permissible philosophical reiterations too frequently, using them as proof and too often without any order. Order, so say the economists, is half the task; for us philosophers, however, it is always -- the whole.

[N.B. Johann Baptist Schad’s A Comprehensible Presentation of the Fichtean System and the Resulting Theory of Religion (Gemeinfaßliche Darstellung des Fichteschen Systems und der daraus hervorgehenden Religionstheorie) was published between 1800-1802 by the same publisher of the Clavis. Jean Paul thought highly of this work, and Fichte himself even approved of the exposition. See the letter to Jacobi from January 29, 1800 [B,III,3:283].]
of an intellectual castle-in-the-sky is realistic, makes it true to our senses. Philosophy deceives us best through *Steftenstücke*.\(^8\)

The ob-subjectivity\(^9\) of the I, as that which is *wrested by force* in order to provide an explanation of consciousness, is founded upon and posited by a tertium comparationis,\(^10\) by an absolute freedom or I-hood [*ichheit*], to which one generally does not grant thinkability, being itself the cause of thought, nor substances and energies, being itself the cause of accidents, and to which one does not grant existence, since it itself is the cause of existence (which is to absolute activity as time is to eternity and existence is to omnipresence). *In so far* as it is the cause of its own cause [*der Grund ihres Grundes*], I would also deny this to this absolute I-hood -- since we are no longer dealing here with something capable of being thought, seeing as we have left behind the category of categories, the highest classification, Being; so that in the end both *nothing* remains -- that would be too much and already *determined* because 'nothing' already rules out the 'All' -- and *infinitely* less than nothing and *infinitely* more than everything, in short the foundationlessness of foundationlessness. (One could go even further and more thoroughly from this point, for the realm of the inconceivable is inconceivably greater than that of the conceivable). Therefore, the absolute I (this undetermined thing that is itself undetermining [*dieses unbestimmt Unbestimmende*], this logical after-birth and absolute mother of ob-subjectivity), I say that this I, this completed answer to the most hotly contested of eternal questions in man's mind, is entirely the boldly phrased question itself, or that presupposed anonymous X demanded by all skeptics, and thus the last but transcendent qualitas occulta of every qualitas occulta.\(^11\) Along with this demand

\(^8\) This is what the magician calls those acts where he is in need of an accomplice.
for a cause, the rest, or finiteness, is now easily explained and founded, and, so to speak, out of one's thirst as much refreshment is being provided as one needs.

Viewed *practically* or morally, the Fichte's God -- the absolute I, which both consumes itself like Erysichthon\(^1\) and resurrects itself in the manner of Christ, and which does not share in that consciousness of consciousness of which we, of course, are aware -- is (in order to preserve the *unity of action* that is essential to philosophy) freedom, not ours per se, but rather the cause of our freedom. This freedom of freedom posited or created that which was necessary (the Not-I) simply to have the resistance, without which a *second* positing would be impossible. It is unbelievably difficult to comprehend this battle of the non-existent Absolute against existence itself since it is impossible to conceive of a relationship between them. Things become even more incomprehensible if we associate [*angeben*] the intent and nature of the battle or activity that is nothing but free activity merely for the sake of acting freely, not only with the holy, but also with the evil-doers -- the only difference being that, owing to this freedom, the latter do not freely act in the *correct* manner (something essential is missing here, and yet we cannot introduce something which falls outside of the limitations imposed by our subject). The most obscure point concerns the concept of purposiveness, i.e., that with this absolute activity, freedom -- as that which cannot be more free, and therefore according to this teaching there is no more certainty to be found in a thousand year old holy-man than in a fresh convert -- wants to realize itself in that which is necessary or real through conquest of the same, which, however, must leave somethings forever unconquered, for with the complete cessation of resistance the judgement day of Being, Consciousness and all virtues and vices would dawn, and the universe would come asunder. Then there would be
nothing else left; the non-existent Absolute excepted.

Leibgeber, the Fichtean and the very author of the following *Clavis*, wrote me in regard to this: “The *Wissenschafstelehre* is the philosophical reckoning with the Infinite. Once one has climbed out of the realm of finite and explainable quantities and into that of the infinite and unexplainable, one then becomes versed in an entirely new and vast world where one is easily jostled to and fro like a Faustian cloak by means of language alone -- for neither concepts nor intuitions are sufficient here, nor do they tolerate this atmosphere --, and thus the unexplainable is, so to speak, that broom found irresistible by the witches of folklore and upon which they ride through the air high above the earth.”

The second laurel wreath, which I justifiably wove for my child without being allowed to set it upon him, is that he learned from me how to politely and respectfully remove one’s hat before the newest founder of a philosophical order, who bored through the globe of spirit into its very center, just as Maupertuis¹³ had suggested boring through the globe of the earth. Other polemicists besides myself and my child, however, prefer to spare the system rather than the man and cleverly borrow a stratagem from the Romans, preferring instead to attack the driver rather than the elephant.

Am I expecting then too much of the idealistic Order when I ask them to politely contend with myself and my child and -- even if they should hack father and son to pieces, incinerate us, reduce us to coals, turn us into stone and curse us -- to at least do it with the politeness which characterizes the Order? -- Good heavens! Since the *Xenien*¹⁴ practically all of us have mysteriously become, and we hardly know how -- for nothing is more infectious --, to speak coarsely: we have become entirely coarse; and even this remark is not a refutation
of the same. Wouldn't this Belgian bad habit avoid the disadvantage of bitterness if my opponents covered me with praise, albeit ironically? And shouldn't I be able to demand that, since I have so often bombarded them with the same, be it that I used asteism, or charientism, or mimesis, or even diasym? From the third paternal laurel wreath no more than a crown of straw can grow for the poor chick, namely out of Leibgeber's mingling of jest and seriousness. In the meantime I insist that every reviewer bring his abomasum along, with which he allows the mixture to separate into both of its constituent parts, and that he understands what is jest, and thereby what is serious.

I had gathered a fourth wreath together for the frankness with which my child calls many things by their name; idealism, for example, he frequently calls idealism. Instead of taking the modest liberty of their forefathers, i.e., to present old ideas as new ones, the best minds of the above mentioned Order take the richer liberty with the public of announcing new ideas for old and presenting other older ideas in the language of idealism. Just once, if only for an hour, would I like to belong to that vast segment of the public unfamiliar with the newer systems, if only to know how that idealistic sugarplum passed around in the shapes and sizes of every coarse victual of realistic reason would taste and agree with me. In the course of this neo-Platonic, early-Christian, Japanese-Jesuitical accommodation, I believe that half of me, in my realistic sense, would completely misunderstand the point that the author wishes to make, and my other half would sit there in an indescribable state of confusion, reading in the dark and yet continuing to torment myself because the author -- oscillating between obfuscation and flights of fancy, much like the octopus who uses both techniques to evade
his enemy -- uses his moral fire to ignite my own. -- No, even half an hour would be too long for me to be a part of that public that sits there and discontentedly hungers in wait for something else."

But the fifth laurel-wreath that I picked and wound for my good nestling and dauphin -- the fifth and most beautiful of the crowns, just as the King of Poland had five crowns, of which the fifth was the crown of the Queen -- I want to place this securely upon his head in front of the whole world. I want to dedicate and inscribe the newly-crowned to you,

Dear Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi!

It is dedicated to you just as my innermost being has been dedicated to you for so long. As

5) Much of this is contrary to Fichte’s Vocation of Man that returned with me from J [ena] the day before yesterday. Without knowledge of the Wissenschaftslehre, the first sections cannot be understood, and the third section, which is the most popular, would be completely misunderstood. The popular reader finds realism on p.208 etc., 330 etc., and idealism on page 296 etc. and then exactly the opposite in the next periods; and then to see on p. 292 etc. the presentation of the absolute I and the moral world order! -- Really, this popularity, this dark embodiment of the disembodied even becomes burdensome to the philosophical reader who must always dress with the one hand while undressing with the other and continually make something old out of that which is new.

[N.B. In a letter to Thieriot from February 23, 1800 Jean Paul goes so far as to call Fichte’s Vocation of Man (Die Bestimmung des Menschen, 1800) an “idealistic hocus-pocus” [B,III,3:294]. The pejorative usage of the word ‘popular’ here can only be understood within the context of the Popularphilosophie movement and the resulting debate that arose from its Enlightenment-inspired goals. While they ardently argued for the superiority of reason over faith, the Popularphilosophen also believed that reason could serve to buttress religious convictions and should not be disparaged by the latter. It was their vehement opposition to Jacobi, as the leading representative of those religiously oriented thinkers who were openly hostile to the claims of reason, that raised Jean Paul’s ire. His implication here (see also the footnote on p.22) is that it is not merely the unfortunate manner of Fichte’s presentation that leads to confusion, but rather the comparable faith in reason espoused by Fichte that leads to conclusions just as unintelligible and fallacious as those of the Popularphilosophen. Nevertheless, Fichte was unequivocal in his claims that his own transcendental philosophy was superior to popular philosophy which often eschewed systematic rigorousness; see the Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, pp.244-45. ]
you know, the letters we write are only the successors to the ones that we have already printed. Yes, Heinrich, I have loved you earlier or longer and far deeper. For from your hand I have received that damascus blade fashioned from beauty that shatters the knives of today raised to dissect life. When the poet has one eye, like Polyphemus, in the middle of his chest,²¹ and the philosopher has one eye atop of his head like the blessed in Muhammed's paradise, and he sees into the blue the way those see into the depths: so the upstanding man has two eyes between his forehead and his chest and sees everywhere. -- And therefore I shall continue to love you in this manner. But why is it that I have yet to see you, my Heinrich?²²

Weimar, 7 March 1800.

Jean Paul F. Richter
I must clarify something here in order not to be unduly misunderstood by my friends, who may think that my publication of the *Clavis Leibgeberiana*, which is so well-disposed to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, entails that I have gone over to the side of the Fichteans. I am therefore including with the following *Clavis* a private letter from the author, as well as a few excercitations on philosophizing in general, as a pre-emptory ice-breaker so to speak, in order to weaken the initial impact of Fichte’s system. Should someone still want to count me among the admirers of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, let him try. Nevertheless, Fichte is not the man for me.

The conversion of my good Leibgeber, whom every German may know from my *Flowerpieces,* to the adherents of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is a completely natural development of his own unique nature. It is for this reason that the brothers Schlegel, who are Fichteans themselves, make so much out of his manner of thinking and writing in their *Athenäum* — out of every other manner of thinking and writing in my work, out of my own, for example, they make very little; even at that time he was probably corrupted and my renegade, and perhaps they both knew him personally. According to an old letter originating from Blitzmühl (I don’t know where that little hovel is) he at first sat down and studied Fichte simply to have a good laugh at the man’s oddity. I see all too well now that things transpired
with him much as they did with Bredenburg, the gentleman from Rotterdam, who set out to clearly demonstrate the consequences of Spinoza’s thought with the intention of thereby providing a sound refutation. In the course of all this, however, he found himself suddenly overpowered and entrapped by the Jew. Traces of Leibgeber’s original intention of revealing the Wissenschaftslehre as laughable shimmer throughout the entire Clavis; and as often as he strives to take on a solemn, serious, sober style, he turns around almost immediately and casts everything in such a comical light that he does a good job of making the common reader feel quite foolish (which is in keeping with Leibgeber’s entertaining and grotesque nature).

Here is the letter from his own hand. Afterwards my own excercitations will appear.

*

Hamburg.

"Your answer to this letter, my dear biographer, must be sent to Dreckwalle Nr. 46 in the care of Herr Samson Herz, from whom I bought two punch glasses, and addressed: To S.T. Herrn S. I have just come from Switzerland, a tortured and bleak country, which should itself be the recipient of St. Bernards now, for the Gallic Guardians and Rescuers have reduced it to the bone. If one accompanies the five-director body of freedom through a few

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4) Bayle’s Dictionnaire, art[icle] Spinoza, not[e] M.
   [N.B. Pierre Bayle’s Dictionnaire historique et critique (1695-7, 2nd ed. 1702; German trans. 1741-44 by Johann Christoph Gottsched). Bayle supports the view that Spinoza was an atheist and therefore discounts his philosophy entirely.]

5) Well-known hunting dogs. The St. Bernards are more deserving of the name, since they are sent off by the good monks on Mount St. Bernard to refresh and lead those who have lost their way. (Editor’s remark)

5) One is familiar with the eight-director and three-director bodies of Nuremberg. (Editor’s remark)
   [N.B. In 1798 the French army ordered the establishment of a directorate in Switzerland]
alley-ways, then one ends up cursing everything eventually. The entire century is a race of small men after large goals. For all that the general race for freedom and truth resembles a similarly rich race that I saw several times in Greenwich, where sailors play for combs, pipe-bowls, pocket-knives, etc. by placing two lice on the table and then waiting apprehensively to see which louse — that of the opponents or one’s own — reaches the edge of the table first.

For a few weeks I’ve been running alongside of them myself. I philosophized deeply while in Bern (so as not to have to look any longer at the misery and wounds beneath the fallen Gallic avalanches) and wrote the accompanying Clavis in a flurry of enthusiasm.

I hear that a certain Professor Schad is supposed to be coining the gold bars of my Wissenschaftslehre for the general public. Tell him that I am much obliged. Myself, Fichte, the Schlegels, Schelling, Hülsen, Schad and our students cannot empty our critical Fichtean ink-wells on the wall often enough — much like Luther emptied his against the devil — if our black ink should be as hard to scratch away as Luther’s, which still clings fast. We do not yet have even 30,000 listeners, and nevertheless the great John Duns, who had just that number of listeners in Oxford, has died with his philosophy and lies in the dust and is dust. I do believe, however, that I will see the day when my Fichtean Wissenschaftslehre will be heralded by night watchmen (instead of the historical epochs, which they have been advised to recite) — when it will appear in calendars for the common man, in Spaßpredigten on Easter

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Sunday (which still exist in Spain), during grace in refectories, in comedies\textsuperscript{a} devised especially for it, and even from Kempele’s wooden, chess-playing Turk,\textsuperscript{32} who is reputed to be quite skilled at executing with his little cane all the necessary moves. -- A meager and well-deserved reward for the philosopher who spends the entire day dissecting his thoughts and -- just as special dogs are kept for experiments in the Grotto of the Dog\textsuperscript{33} -- is simultaneously the grotto and his own dog that he suffocates hourly in the deadly-thin air of idealism and awakens in the common, life-sustaining air of realism.

No matter how often it tortures itself, debases itself and dreams of dreaming,\textsuperscript{34} reason as such, much like the dreamer, can not leave its own confines. It resembles the windpipe in that it can tolerate nothing outside of itself with the exception of air (word, spirit). It was bound to happen that the destructive Leibgeber (for whether or not I morally postulate Fichte himself remains to be seen in the Clavis) would arise in the wake of the crushing Kant,\textsuperscript{35} who still left large pieces remaining, such as the things-in-themselves. Leibgeber also solidified Kant and left nothing standing except the white nothingness (nilatum album, as the chemists refer to fire-resistant chalk), namely, the ideal finitude of infinity. Were one to entirely do away with that as well (and Fichte hints at this\textsuperscript{b}) then only the black nothingness, infinity,

\textsuperscript{a}) Comenius poured the history of philosophy into comedies (as the Jesuits did with grammar). In my opinion, this is the best means to purely convey the history of philosophy as well as the history of the philosophers. (Editor’s remark)

[N.B. Johannes Amos Comenius (1592-1670), a Czechoslovakian theologian and pedagogue.]

\textsuperscript{b}) Fichte says popularly (and, therefore, incomprehensibly) that our spirit can turn the universe back into nothing “with one breath.” Interpreted according to his system this means the following: our absolute, infinite I can raise itself above its limitations, i.e., the positing of a Not-I (the universe), and consequently, along with the object, also the subject or the conscious I, therefore with all of existence. For the I itself only \textit{is} as long as it is always
would remain, and reason would have nothing left to explain, for reason itself would no longer exist. The former, I think, would be that which entire schools and all of us are struggling to achieve, namely genuine philosophical Fohism.  

Take here the beginning, this bit of my Clavis, biographer, and give the world the key. It was not my intention to offer these proofs as the results of my Leibgeberianism in the form of an easily-thumbed dictionary\(^3\) (much like the Kantian dictionaries)\(^37\) to enlighten those readers who can make neither heads nor tails of my Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre (Leipzig: Gabler, 1794) nor of the more difficult Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre (1795) — and one can safely assume that half of the female sex has not understood me.

Only one important proof do I offer, albeit implicitly. Namely, whereby I present the results more logically so that they appear to so-called human reason as bona fide, genuine nonsense. Thus do I demonstrate to the true-born philosophers just what they can really make out of the unfortunately all-too-common human reason (something which has never ceased to puzzle and vex them) as soon as it is able to transform a vaulted institution of

\footnote{becoming or acting. (Editor’s remark)}

[N.B. The passage to which Jean Paul is referring is most likely the following in A Public Appeal Against the Charge of Making Atheistic Assertions, a Charge Made in a Confiscation Rescript by the Elector of Saxony (1799): “Just what is it then that nevertheless binds us because of a general consciousness; that causes us to hold our own products as things independent of us, to fear our own creations, admire them, desire them, and believe our fate to be dependent upon a chimera [Schein], which a single breath of that free being could destroy?” (Fichte, Appellation an das Publicum, p.210).]

\footnote{I have, in fact, rearranged the alphabetical order of the Clavis into a systematic order and written section headings above the topics, in order to make it more understandable to some, as well as more concise. (Editor’s remark)}
learning into a madhouse. In their eyes and mine, reason is completely reduced to being the	negative touchstone of a system, meaning that what it does not pronounce to be mad is not
purely philosophical to us — only the opposite does not apply, and a thought can be quite mad
without being rational. We gladly accept, therefore, Cicero’s praise: “There is nothing so
foolish that a philosopher has not argued in its favour at least once.” Only Cicero must
concede that that applies exclusively to our age of philosophical perfection. Likewise,
Wendeborn notes that the greatest abundance of reason, as well as the greatest abundance
of insane asylums, is to be found in England; and falcons can only be used for hawking as long
as they retain the derangement which has been forced upon them due to sleep deprivation.

Enough with all of this! If my key doesn’t bring the clockwork to a halt, but winds
it up instead, then I will carry it with me my whole life long as I would a master bedroom key,
a pass key, a skeleton key, etc...

Farewell, biographer! My Fichtean paper-dragon, which you are now allowing to sail
up into the anti-Fichtean storm cloud, may direct a few lightning bolts in your direction since
you are standing under it holding the string. Put it away! — Apropos! Don’t you remember
the burly man with the limp and the nose protuding to one side who visited you in Weimar
and, immediately upon entering, said he was eager to meet the man in person who had always
been so inaccurately engraved in copper? Think back! His Elegance shipped out just in
front of your house on the corner in a long line of sleighs, and because of the cold you
looked through the window with your spectacles. Don’t you recall that a limping man
hammered away on your almost six octave long, but nevertheless pathetic piano and that he
made an allegory about it resembling the century? Didn’t he say that he had come directly
from Jena and had seen not merely the old septem miracula Jenae,\textsuperscript{41} the Fox Tower, Weigel’s house, etc., but also the newest wonders that were equally as great? And didn’t you steer the conversation afterwards toward the characters in your works, proudly elevating Leibgeber among the others and modestly swearing to that limping man (naturally, you had hoped thereby that a special light would fall upon you as a painter) that you would promptly become shy and bow down before that magnificent, free, and bold character, were he to stand before you?--

I was that limping man.

Leibgeber.”

*

My memory has deserted me entirely concerning all these events, and they don’t belong here anyway. I shall therefore proceed without delay to

\textit{The Exercitations on Philosophizing in General.}

The very section in Leibgeber’s letter where he betrays the hope of convincing us through a stricter proof that his teaching is nonsense, and to insist upon this and argue for it, accounts for my excuse for the publication, for this very proof drives us out of his intellectual edifice. As soon as the two-fold evidence — the evidence of the \textit{senses} and the evidence of \textit{reason} — rises within us and shines forth, and as soon as one is forced to completely act like an hermaphrodite, who upon the discovered equivalence of his gender, must renounce one of them in favour of the other: thus do I here renounce the weaker of the two, which begets nothing.
But for heaven's sake! This is completely unnecessary. If only someone had written a short, yet marvelous book about how unpleasant and vacuous the metaphysical differentiation and integration is simply because it must take place in Polish, or German, or in any language at all: then all we philosophers would no longer have been adrift, and we would have seen dry land.

What I mean is this:

Our language is originally nothing but a sign-master [Zeichenmeisterin] of external perceptions. The later, inner perceptions only receive from language the sign of the earlier sign; therefore, the quantities, these solitary physiognomical fragments of the sensory world, make up almost the entire contents of language. The qualities -- in other words, the energies, the monads of appearance, given to us only in consciousness and not in a concept -- these souls are always and only clothed in that body of quantities, i.e., in the clothing of clothes. If only language were derived more from the audible world, for example, than from the visible world, then we would have an entirely different philosophy and, in all likelihood, one that was more dynamic than atomistic. In the end every image and sign must simultaneously also be something other than this, namely, itself a primary image [Urbild] and thing which one can reproduce and draw again, etc. If the philosopher stretches his arithmetical mind and wants to use it to conduct the transcendent chain of logical derivations, then language in and of itself points out three certain paths where he can -- miscalculate.

The oldest among the false paths is making the qualities into quantities in order to add and differentiate the pieces and substrates of the energies as it was done by the atomistic school and the Encyclopedists. Through the transformation of spiritual precepts into ones
of matter -- which is similar to Haller's transformation of physiology into anatomy\(^7\) -- the one performing these operations wrests out a mathematical result which would be similar to the aesthetic result of weighing and measuring a poem instead of reading it from beginning to end. For example, the singular optical metaphor present in words such as 'imagining,' 'modeling after,' 'intuiting,' 'idea,' and 'picture' has drawn an atomistic haze and fog over our mental activity, something which an acoustical metaphor would have spared us.

The second way to go astray is when the one who is performing the calculations attempts to distill and elevate the quantities to qualities and the body to spirit. Since this can never succeed, nor even offer an approximation,\(^4\) and since the philosophical dynamic can not have quantities as exponents, like the mathematical dynamic can (for example, energy can have the space it traversed), so he must either creep back onto the first false path, or else quickly produce an embellished, empty quantity, in order to calculate further, to come to conclusions, and to correct, or to posit a quality, a true hieroglyphic like those on old bowls: half letters, half painting, a magician-like imitation of the generatio aequivoca,\(^4\) half atomistic, half dynamic. --

The third and related path, which is, however, the best work of art, is to hammer the

\(^4\) Take, for example, the Fichtean words 'limitation' or 'restriction' of the absolute I. They denote a quantity, and only after the most extreme abstraction and contortion can they be applied to a quality, much like the words 'restraintment,' 'enclosure,' 'dam,' 'bind,' 'compress,' 'condense,' etc. If I want to indicate the relationship of the infinite to the finite through these more living words, then I notice that I'm thinking something incorrect; if I do it with the Fichtean words, then my mistake is much less obvious, because I myself, by the usage of these words, am thinking much less. The Wolffian school and the Critical school are in possession of the most talented cabinet makers of empty conch shells. -- Thus is the Fichtean regression of activity in itself a metaphor of quantity, which, at its very best, means absolutely nothing and explains even less.
gold of the real [Wirkliches] thin and wide in order to see through it. Because the identity of sign and object does not occur in language as it does in mathematics, and because words never give silhouettes, much less even five points of an object\textsuperscript{49} -- for these at least present something of the subject -- they are arbitrary knots in the handkerchief of consciousness which portray nothing: thus, language per se is an indispensable tool for the philosopher, who always blows the egg empty rather than allow it to hatch.\textsuperscript{50} The worlds of the real (within and outside of the philosopher), which he explains by melting them down into one unexplainable world, only cloud themselves in the imagination\textsuperscript{a} as revolutions of the previous spheres; and these revolutions or ideas become once again points [Punkte] or centers within language. It is this art of transposition [Punktierkunst] with atoms, this logical algebra, that is now called philosophy. In other words, the imagination projects a suitable silhouette from the rays of the real, whereupon all the distinctive differences are eliminated until the imagination can accommodate several more objects and one can, for example, define taste as a pleasant smell or vice versa.\textsuperscript{51} And thus does one continue making concepts out of concepts for oneself, until one has gone so far that the entire universe in all its might and brilliance simply stands there transparent before us as a vast and intangible Not-I. From here it is only one small step until this Not-I is distinguishable from the I by the degree that one differentiates “darkness from light,”\textsuperscript{b} that which is intuited is intuition and intuition in turn is the intuiting subject or

\textsuperscript{a}) “The actual can no more be portrayed outside its immediate perception than consciousness can be portrayed outside of consciousness, life outside life, or truth outside truth.” Jacobi’s Hume on Faith, p.140.

\textsuperscript{b}) Foundations of the Ent. Wissenschaftslehre, pp.78-80.

[N.B. The passage to which Jean Paul is referring is the following: “Light and darkness are not opposed to each other at all, but rather only distinguishable by degree. Darkness is
I -- and thus the vast Carthage, this unending city of God, is cut from the hide of the I.\textsuperscript{52}

Since we spend years thinking and phantasizing with \textit{loaded} words, we don’t immediately notice when we are thinking with \textit{empty} ones, just as Darwin\textsuperscript{53} claims that someone who is long accustomed to having a filled pipe in his mouth would not immediately perceive, were he to find himself in the dark, that it had gone out.

In order to defend themselves against philosophy everyone must now arm themselves with philosophy and use a mirrored basilisk\textsuperscript{54} in the falconry of that philosophy which stands before us. But the right philosophy, as is the Jacobian, knows and admits that reason is a Danaidean-sieve,\textsuperscript{55} which can \textit{purify} that which is meant to be drunk, but cannot \textit{create}\textsuperscript{56} it, and that it only, as Herder says,\textsuperscript{57} listens and thus receives, finds but doesn’t invent. But it is man to whom explaining and naming is more familiar than reflection and perception, and this is even easier than sensing, this ingenious form of perception. There are truths (and these are the more important ones) that concern neither the head nor the heart to the exclusion of the other, but rather concern both together; at the poles the \textit{cold} will blind you, below the equator it is the \textit{heat}.

What is striking is how little the philosopher himself puts his trust in mere syllogistic chains when one makes the unusual observation, that he often accepts them based upon an outside authority or upon his own authority. It is important that I am not misunderstood here. The mathematician allows long calculations to be repeated by others, no matter how sure he is of the certainty of the multiplication tables, in order to be even more certain that he was

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merely a very meagre quantity of light. -- This is exactly how things stand between the I and the Not-I.” Fichte, \textit{Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre}, p.145; see also p.208.\end{flushright}
correct in his own observation; or he repeats them himself. The savage, who doesn’t count beyond his ten fingers, would have to fall back on the burden of repetition even during the calculation of simple multiplication tables. Moreover, in his introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre, Fichte says that it is nonetheless possible that he is wrong, and he is therefore submitting it to outside critiques. In other words, the correctness of the logical multiplication tables does not ensure the correctness of his application of them. The weak, but rational head must place less trust in his own application of the tables than in Fichte’s and, therefore, believe in the latter’s evidence against his own. — In exactly the same way do the philosopher and the mathematician trust the great chemists and the great historians, etc., and likewise — as proof that it is not the historical element of truth that makes a difference — do these trust the philosophers and mathematicians. — In the end, to be sure, a brilliantly keen intellect can rest upon his final conclusions high above an entire population of nay-sayers; but this trust — not in the logical rules, for both he and the world have these in common, but rather — in the application of these rules can only rest upon one conclusion from one fact, namely, that he has greater powers and is a more gifted thinker; and he is thus his own authority.

What is the result of all of this? First, that logical evidence requires another type of evidence beyond that of its application (to objects). — Second, that we are not in need of authorities in the case of sensory and moral evidence, but rather overcome them; logical evidence may certainly borrow from the other two forms, but it cannot improve upon them. Third, that probability calculus — and the hope that several will fulfill the logical rules rather
than just one\(^a\) (since the majority in and of itself would simply continue the repetition of the mistake), or the hope that the greater power of thought will apply these more certainly according to the same rules — that this probability calculus, I say, unconsciously presupposes that behind the clouds of our murky perceptions [Dunstkreisen] and our brains there lies within human nature an innate belief in a higher truth, which, like everything in it that is good and pleasant, eternally reveals itself to us in the rule and not in the exception. --

Allow me to continue. The more common and empty the soul (or the younger), the happier and easier it enters into an edifice of learning, where it is astounded by the general illumination within, simply because it is there that it first comes to know the symbols through the things and the puzzles through the solutions -- instead of the other way around. It is always easier for reason to proceed in a straightforward manner in empty and barren heads, just as it is only in cadavers where empty arteries form straight lines. On the other hand, a fertile mind was never the planet or neighboring sun of another fertile mind — it had enough of its own dark world to illuminate, but easy is its journey on the concentric rotation around the central sun.

The longer a system lives — I am thinking specifically of the Kantian here — the easier, more transposable, more mechanical, and more intelligible it becomes, and thus the more wretched become its serfs, benefices, and wards. One can apply and revere the most profound system in years without oneself possessing any profundity, whereas, its first disciples and apostles are always men of spirit. — Eventually every other language (except for its own

\(^a\) And with good reason. The minority has always been unjust to the majority when both possess the same mental strength: a single man against his century behaves the same. If he has greater strength, however, then he is an anticipated century and a future majority.
lingua franca)⁴⁹ becomes incomprehensible to a systematic guild, -- if I may again single out the Critical Philosophy, these regents and nabobs of 2,000 word lexicons⁵ -- and therefore inaccessible to any intuition. Thus the Hesychasts or even the Rhinoptics⁶ among them justly complain about the poetic obscureness of works, which are not as clear as works of Kantianism (not the Kantian). And in fact cataract patients have every right to complain that they are not able to see the cataract-needle any more than they can see the optician. On the other hand, they should recognize with gratitude that nature has given them a third eyelid like the cat,⁷ which they can allow to close in day-light in order to preserve the eyeball for seeing at night. --

I hope that this short protectorium is long enough for my friends to clear me of the suspicion that my intention upon publishing the Clavis was to further Fichteanism more than a philosopher of my persuasion has the right. Nevertheless it delights me that my Leibgeber,

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* An Indian nabob proclaimed himself the ruler of 2,000 words and asked the French consul: "Over how many words is your King master?" The consul handed him the Encyclopedia along with the request that the court should kneel down before it. Lamberg's Journal of a Man of the World, p. 111.


⁷ The former and the Brahmins look at the nose, and the Rhinoptics look through the nose.

[N.B. The Hesychasts were a sect of quietest monks who lived on Mount Athos in the 14th century. They were often ridiculed due to their practice of focusing their eyes upon their navels in the attempt to improve their powers of concentration; Rhinoptics are those who have a visual disorder affecting the muscles of the eyeballs and causing the lines of vision to converge.]


[N.B. Ernst Anton Nikolai (1722-1802), a professor of medicine in Jena who published an influential six-volume work entitled Pathology, or the Science of Diseases (Pathologie oder Wissenschaft der Krankheiten, 1769-79).]
since he is a Fichtean, is one in the fullest and most natural degree; whoever has the ability and the desire can convince himself, be it that he holds the Clavis together with the quotations from Fichte or more concisely with Jacobi’s presentation of Spinozism -- in which a minor reversal and transfer of the ens reale⁴ allows that section of the Wissenschaftslehre to be developed wherein practical reason does not yet take part in the mental contrivance and become wrapped up in itself -- or easier with Neeb’s Outline of the Teaching of the I.⁵ –

ᵃ) See Foundations of the Ent. Wissenschaftslehre, p.47.

[N.B. Ens reale (realissimum) is another Scholastic term used in reference to God which means ‘the (most) real being.’ The reason for Jean Paul’s application of the term to Fichte’s absolute I can be seen in the passage cited above where Fichte’s view on the relationship of his philosophy to Spinozism is clearly expressed: “The theoretical portion of our Wissenschaftslehre...is in fact, as will be shown later, systematic Spinozism; with the exception that every I is itself the one ultimate substance.” Fichte, Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre, p.122.]

ᵇ) See his Reason Against Reason etc. published by Andrea in 1797, p.72 etc. This sharp and profound thinker, who attacks as passionately as he embraces and who has a heart, is to be recommended to friend and foe alike. He is worthy of recommendation to our foes, the Critical School, primarily because he too composed a system of Critical Philosophy, and in the sixth volume of Niethammer’s Journal (1795) he wrote the essay “The Impossibility of a Speculative Proof for the Existence of Things.” Secondly, he is to be recommended to our friends, the metacritical school, due to the excellent book cited above. I recommend him here and add — in order to do so —, that he was recommended to me by my friend Jacobi, who would gladly have cited this noble philosopher in his “Letter to Fichte” had he not become acquainted with him only much later through Gerstenberg. Whomever is not driven away from the Wissenschaftslehre by Neeb (driven away from this chirographic philosophy to the hypothecary philosophy) as well as by Jacobi’s unsurpassable seventh supplement on Spinoza and his litterae laureatae to Fichte, deserves to be excused — if he hasn’t invented the Wissenschaftslehre — only if he has read it over a long time and not if he has only heard about it.

[N.B. Johann Neeb (1767-1843) was an admirer of Jacobi who had praised his book Reason Against Reason, or a Justification of Faith (Vernunft gegen Vernunft oder Rechtfertigung des Glaubens, 1797); “I recommend him here and add — in order to do so...”: Jean Paul is making a pun on the German verb ‘setzen’ (‘to posit’ in Fichtean usage) which forms the root of the verb ‘dazusetzen’ (‘to add’); Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg (1737-1823), German dramatist and literary critic who admired Jean Paul’s work; the distinction Jean Paul makes between chirographic and hypothecary philosophy is based upon the distinction of debts made under ancient Roman law: a debita hypothecaria referred to a incurred debt or
But when men such as Leibgeber and the many transcendent and bragadocious people of Jena commit themselves to the *Wissenschaftslehre* then it is time to heed the tolling of the clock.

It is truly time for us to recognize what an ineluctable and blithely irresponsible confusion of language and thought we are creating. The higher -- and, when considered as a work of art, immortal and ingenious -- idealism of Fichte stretches out its polypos arms towards all the sciences and draws them into itself, tainting them in the process: the hylozoism of some Fichteans in physics and chemistry animates an organism by the Not-I, which is only different from the I by a measure of degree, while other Fichteans embody the spirit in physical or galvanic phenomena or metaphors; the idolization of art and fantasy, because the images of the latter are as real as all its original images; the poetic game with no underlying seriousness and the killing (instead of enlivening) of material through form; the Jacob Böhmian Image-Philosophy, which resembles a Gothic church within which an

* loan which the debtor had secured by leaving a suitable deposit, whereas a *debita chirographaria* was a loan obtained with only a written promisory note. The implication here seems to be that one should have an easy choice between a purely speculative philosophy, such as Fichte's, and a more realistic, well-grounded philosophy like Jacobi's; *litterae laureatae*: a laurel-crowned letter, here meaning Jacobi's "Letter to Fichte." [)

*) In the works of the Schlegels, for example, whose partial obscurity arises more from the mixed-in Leibgeberianism and less from the chemical-metaphysical-metaphorical language, which can show its opponents much better how little their preference for Greek models excludes the recognition and imitation of newer models, even that of the above mentioned cobbler. Yet that which deserves praise in them belongs to no one else but themselves: their talent for translation and the related, albeit more seldom, talent of critique, which in spite of some preference for the Greeks is nevertheless more liberal, more encompassing and more elevated above the French micrology of taste than most of the academic critiques. On the other hand, what is deserving of censure in them is the predominantly foreign material found when one removes their cynical shell, namely their philosophical and theoretical discoveries; and many an opponent could shame them if they were to simply detail and establish just once, how little -- their friends would say "nothing" -- from them can be attributed to them (the much disputed statement concerning the three trends of the century, for example) and how
ennobling darkness should result from the painted over window panes; the tolerance, more poetic than philosophical, for every mania, especially for every superstitious mania of the distant past, even the poetic, playful belief in them and often in the truth, in order to avoid the seriousness of it; the artistic standpoint towards all religions like that which the poet has for mythological religions and the painter has for the Catholic religion; the empty, formal morality, which resembles the sun of a few old astronomers that was supposed to direct the earth around itself with mere rays and without reciprocal attractive forces; and moral egoism, which is more related to transcendental egoism than the honourable Fichte would surmise, since everyone like him does not count beyond one, at most to the dyadic, namely to themselves and what is not-themselves, or to the devil -- -- -- what do all of these signs indicate to us other than that the snow on so many of these high mountains (for the 12 disciples of the newest idealism are not the 72 Kantian disciples, but rather excellent minds, just as this system is difficult to reproduce, at least in this century) is melting now and that the forest streams are converging to form the vast Great Flood which will remove the foundation much they have just faithfully repeated what Kant, Fichte, and Goethe had said a long time ago.

[N.B. “The above mentioned cobbler”: The German mystic Jacob Böhme (1575-1624) was a cobbler by trade; “The three trends of the century”: “The French Revolution, Fichte’s Wissenshaftislehre und Goethe’s Meister are the three greatest trends of the century.” (Schlegel, Athenäums-Fragmente, p.48). ]

4) I mean the otherwise excellent On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers. He gives the word religion a new, nonspecific, poetic meaning, which -- without his knowing it -- lies at the foundation of the old, theological meaning, because every entirety [Ganze], and thus the universe as well, is an entirety for a spirit only through a spirit.

[N.B. Friedrich Schleiermacher’s Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeien unter ihren Verächtern (1799). Jean Paul read this work with great admiration in the beginning of 1800. See the letter to Jacobi from November 19, 1800 [B,III,4:22-23]. ]
of everything? —

Truly, if one reflects just a little on the course of these deluges and considers the enormity of what they would bequeath us and the all-encompassing currents of this system that would result from the immeasurable combination of chemistry, physics, aesthetics, morality and metaphysics, of Brownianism\(^4\) and Galvanism\(^5\) and of — metaphors: a one can console oneself, if one is a Neptunist,\(^6\) with the result of similar floods that triumphed in the end and left nothing behind but a world to begin anew.

We have to hope for time, for an eternal I within us and an eternal Thou above us. — We prefer to make credible the mania of the old astronomers by creating worlds splintered-off from the eternal sun. Just as they held the blue sky to be a crystal vault and the sun to be its shifting opening through which the fires of heaven blaze down, so is reason, or the luminous I, not a self-sufficient, attracting sun, but rather a glimmer of light and a gap in the earthly convent-vault through which the distant and expansive fires of heaven break and burn in a gentle and completed orb. —

\(^4\) Without demonstrating through all these combinations something other than an error, as I have shown in my letter to Hans Paul.

[N.B. The reference is to Jean Paul's *Letter on Philosophy. Written to my Firstborn Son Hans Paul, Which He Must Read While at the University* (Brief über die Philosophie. An meinen erstgeborenen Sohn Hans Paul, den er auf die Universität zu lesen hat, 1798). The tone of this letter shares the same sense of urgency and warning against the false doctrines preached at the university which had been expressed by the anonymous open letter that elevated tensions during the Atheism Controversy and which ultimately led to Fichte's resignation from the University of Jena (See Chapter 3.1). The similarity of the titles is also intriguing: *A Father's Letter to His Studying Son Concerning Fichte's and Forberg's Atheism* (Schreiben eines Vaters an seinen studierenden Sohn über den Fichtischen und Forbergischen Atheismus, 1798).]
§ I

What is truth? I tossed this question out in the courtyard (not in the library) of the monastery in Prague, when I played the role of Pontius Pilate in the Passion Play there. It bothered me the next day, however, that I had left (true to my role), before hearing what the man from Prague said, whom I had held hostage and had crucified. Now I will let bygones be bygones, for according to my Wissenschaftslehre I can learn nothing from him aside from my own dictata, and since I am simultaneously Pilate and the crucified (§9), moreover, even the father of the latter (§3-6), namely, unmediated and infinite reality itself, thus do I, as he who is infinite, contain all truths within myself and create them before I possess them.¹ The Wissenschaftslehre proves that I can do this, and if this is possible, then I can posit and create the Wissenschaftslehre itself, which amounts to nothing but a complete circle.

§ 2

Circles. All the circle-smiths and spherometers, namely the philosophers, always describe in their foremost basic principles a circle. I like to sketch their systems in the same way architects draw toilets in blueprints, namely as a circle with a small handle. In the circle

¹) According to the Cartesians, it was the will of God that determined the result of 2 x 3, etc. Leibniz’s Theodicy. II. §186.
known as the *Wissenschaftslehre* this handle is practical reason. Every *Wissenschaftslehre* has this handle *well within everyone’s reach*.  

§ 3

**I, absolute, pure.** See Aseitas.

§ 4

**Immanent noumenon.** See Aseitas.

§ 5

**Causa sui, absolute freedom, unconditioned reality.** See Aseitas.

§ 6

**Aseitas.** This and the absolute or pure I (§3), and unconditioned reality (§5), and immanent noumenon (§4) are synonyms for the Deity. May Heaven -- which I am -- bequeath that I become comprehensible. Reason demands an unconditioned existence, a reality that posits itself, i.e., an infinite reality, whose product is everything finite. The country parsons call this *ens reale* quite correctly God the Father and are incorrect only as to place. As that which is unconditioned, reason can seek absolute reality -- its daughter -- nowhere else than in the mother, i.e., in itself; in the pure, unconditioned, causative I. Were one to posit the child

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b) See the entire third part of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, and before that the first and second parts -- Also Neeb, pages 76 and 88, etc.

[N.B. Seeing as the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* only has three parts, Jean Paul means the *entire* work.]
outside of the mother, then one would turn it into the mother of its mother. And one
transplants and distributes the form and the material of knowledge into two separate beings,
which is absurd.

§7

Empirical I, the I itself, the intelligent, conscious I, subject. The infinite (pure) I is, as
such, not finite, therefore not determined, and therefore also not some ‘thing’ nor something
that exists. But in order to be some ‘thing’ after all, it may not remain that which it is. But
since everything that exists arises out of the pure I, including therefore “Not being itself,” thus
it must oppose itself as such out of absolute causality; thereby it becomes determined (limited)
and appears as a finite, actual I and imagines something.

§8

Object, Not-I, expansion. The act of imagining does not presuppose something that has
already been imagined, but rather posits it as simultaneous; the (empirical) I posits a Not-I or
Thou, the subject posits an object. The confessors [Beichtkinder] of our imagined country
parsons call that which is imagined the earth, or the world, or the Creation; the Kantians refer
to it as phenomena.

§9

Idealism. Strictly speaking, this is not Fichteanism or Leibgeberianism. But I dare say the
Leibnizians, the Kantians, and the Influxionists⁷¹ share the guilt of this designation.
Through the idea of harmonia praestabilita the Leibnizians make monads out to be the mirror of the universe, which is itself made up of mirrors; the isolated, enclosed monad develops the Not-I entirely out of itself, something which does not exist as such outside of the monad, but has become again an I.

The Kantians carry space or container [Behälter] within themselves and consequently that which lies within it, nature in its entirety; within the product-lists and incubation-tables of their categories everything that we possess and know of nature becomes an indigenous creation of our I. What is the reason then for the utterly pointless and invisible Phoenix-ashes known as the things-in-themselves? --

Finally, I make so bold as to reproach even the influxionists and the realists with the contention that they are neither. Since it is less the reason for the existence of the world -- which cannot be conveyed at all -- and more the reason for its order that weighs heavy upon them and upon all of us explicators, and since they have to posit this as the intention and cause before that which has been brought about: thus do they only push idealism out into infinity and into Him who is infinite.

Fichte, to be sure, calls the realization of the Not-I a materialistic Spinozism;* thus,

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*) Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre, p.94 and p.47.

[N.B. The passages referred to here are the following: “To put it briefly: if the explanation of the idea, that is to say the entire speculative philosophy, proceeds from the assumption that the Not-I is posited as the cause of the idea, which is posited as an effect of the Not-I, then this is the real cause of everything; it is quite simply, because it is, and because of what it is (the Spinozistic fate); the I itself is merely an accident of the same and not a substance at all; and we receive materialistic Spinozism, which is dogmatic realism, a system that presupposes the problems of the highest possible abstraction from the Not-I, and, since it does not establish the final cause, is completely unfounded.” (Fichte, Grundlage, p.155); and “In as far as dogmatism can be consistent, Spinozism is its most logical product.” (Ibid., p.120).
his idealization of the same would be an idealistic Spinozism -- and therefore Jacobi calls our Wissenschaftslehre an inversion of Spinozism, although one could just as correctly call it the metastasis of Spinozism. But let us not get confused. The Not-I and the I, or object and subject, are interchangeable concepts, for both are the concurrent twins of aseity, the vowels and consonants in the absolute air or I-hood.

Consequently, my spirit (subject), which was created by my pure I, does not exist any more or any differently than the world that I made in order that spirit would have something to look at. And my I and the world can not survive without the other for one minute. Fichte had it well thought out, therefore, when he made his empty declaration concerning his long viability as only an appeal to the public. For he (conceived of absolutely) created heaven and earth and everything else, of course, but also himself, Fichte, as an observer, and thus does this person die with the other; what remains is his pure I which, however, according to mine or his own Wissenschaftslehre, can be discussed as little in terms of permanence or Being as in terms of width or weight.

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a) Because every vowel presupposes a consonant, just like a consonant presupposes a vowel, and sound requires some kind of a relationship with the tongue, the lips, etc.

b) Anaximenes held the air to be the Deity. Ciceronis de Natura Deorum. I. 10

c) The section in the Appeal where he says that the I will outlive the galaxies, etc. [N.B. Towards the end of A Public Appeal Against the Charge of Making Atheistic Assertions Fichte writes: “Yet when the youngest sun among the millions of suns which now shine above my head has long given off its last spark of light, I will then be just as unscathed and unchanged as I am right now.” (Fichte, Appellation an das Publicum, p.237.) ]
§10

**Highest peak of reflection.** I do believe that my footing is quite firm on this peak; not for one moment do I find what stands below me at the base of my Pico\textsuperscript{75} contemptible and petty, but rather completely indiscernible.

My absolute I, “which is completely identical with itself and within which everything is one and the same I, and there is nothing to be distinguished from anything else, for it is all and nothing, because it is nothing for itself”\textsuperscript{a} -- this I, that Robinet\textsuperscript{b} describes quite exactly under the name of God, namely as that without understanding, reason, will, or consciousness, recreates itself first to become an empirical I, to which everything is the same -- it itself, however, remains what it is, for as Leibgeber I am finite, and only as the creator of this Leibgeber am I infinite -- and then secondly to the world as it exists to its fullest extent... At these dizzying heights the air becomes so thin that no concept\textsuperscript{c} is adequate enough to bring

\textsuperscript{a) Wissenschaftslehre, p.251.}

[N.B. Berend correctly notes that this is not a verbatim quote, although Jean Paul has accurately captured the sense of the actual passage: “The absolute I is completely identical to itself: everything within it is one and the very same I and belongs (if one is permitted to express oneself so inauthentically) to one and the very same I. There is nothing there to be distinguished, and no multiplicity; the I is Everything, and it is Nothing because it is nothing for itself, and because an I which is positing and an I which is posited cannot be distinguished from itself.” (Fichte, *Grundlage*, p.264). It should be noted that the inaccuracy of citations does not betray a lack of scholarly concern on Jean Paul’s part since it was a fairly common practice at the time to quote other authors in such a casual manner. Hegel was especially egregious in this respect and even went so far as to omit quotation marks entirely.]

\textsuperscript{b) De la Nature. Pt. II.}

[N.B. Jean Baptiste René Robinet (1735-1820), a French littérateur and speculative philosopher whose main work, *De la Nature* (4 vols., 1761-68), attempted to prove the existence of a divine cause of nature.]

\textsuperscript{c) For as that which is created, we have no intuition of the process of creating, and as creators we have no consciousness of it. The I, as infinite, does not know itself; as finite it
us to our goal, rather we must endeavor to climb higher with and on language itself. Whoever commands a language free of all concepts and intuitions like me, enlightens himself through two eternities, the one that the absolute I brings about through Becoming or undetermined activity without Being, and the second which it simultaneously, although finitely, directs through Being⁴. And without this language of the highest reflection, the positing of

is again not extensive enough to have an intuition of the infinite, without it being the case that a concept of finiteness is unimaginable. Here it is merely language in its purity that helps more than anything else in expressing what one wanted to think in this matter.

⁴) One raises here yet another scholastic question: an creatio sit res creata, vel increata; offenbar increata. For the act of positing is just as eternal as that which does the positing, the effect just as old as its cause, infinity as old as finiteness, the Son of God is from eternity, for everything is identical to itself. (See Jacobi’s Spinoza, 2nd. edition, p.27) -- By the way! I find the older and very poorly understood scholastic philosophy so similar to my own that I wish someone would write a liber conformitatum for both of them. For example, one can see in Cramer’s fifth continuation of Bossuet the (very weak) outline of scholastic thought. For example, when Alanus says on page 456, God the Father (the pure I) brought material (the Not-I) into substance, the Son of God (the empirical I) brought the form (the forms of intuition and thought) and the Holy Spirit (the moral world order) brought the union of the two: so do I see here that He thought before I acted. Likewise, one can read on page 364 Gaunilon’s objections to Anselm’s proof of God’s existence, which have been appropriated and mindlessly repeated in our own time. -- I believe that the logical enthusiasm of these two logical gladiators is purer (they have no other kind of logic, p.498, etc.) and less often found among ourselves.

[N.B. *an creatio sit res creata, vel increata; offenbar increata*: Whether Creation was ever created or not, i.e., whether or not the world had a beginning in time; *liber conformitatum*: a book presenting the similarities exhibited between two authors; *Cramer’s fifth continuation of Bossuet*: a reference to Jacques Benigne Bossuet’s *Introduction to the General History of the World up to Charles the Great* (*Einleitung in die allgemeine Geschichte der Welt bis auf Karl den Großen*, 8 vols., 1752–80) which was translated into German by Johann Andreas Cramer; *Alanus*: Alan of Lille (d.1203), a scholastic who attempted to prove the claims of theology through mathematical axioms; *Gaunilon of Marmoustier*: a monk who became famous for his critiques of St. Anselm’s ontological argument for the existence of God; *logical enthusiasm*: in his scathing critique of Jacobi’s *Woldemar* (1796), Friedrich Schlegel had criticized Jacobi for not possessing logical enthusiasm, which he defined as follows: “The first subjective condition of all genuine philosophical activity is philosophy in the Socratic sense of the word - love of knowledge, the unselfish, pure interest in knowledge and truth. One could call this logical enthusiasm.”
a Not-I and an I, or the single-handed limitation of the absolute I, is just as incomprehensible as the much reproached creation of the world from nothing. This absolute freedom, which itself creates resistance (the sensory world) not so much to act (for the process of creating is also activity) as to act against this resistance -- because every activity, with the exception of creative activity, presupposes an element of resistance -- lies no longer in our ability to think, but rather simply in our ability to speak.

§11

**Reason.** This knows no creations except its own; its *seeing* is not merely its own *light* -- as the Platonists claim of the human eye that it sees everything through its own emanation, and the Stoics claim that this is what enables the eye to see darkness* -- but also its *object*, so that its eye, by raising it towards the transcendent heavens, stands there immediately as God or a star, just as the sextant of Tycho de Brahe von Hevel* was added to the other heaven as a constellation next to the Great Lion.

§12

**Leibgeber.** “It even amazes me,” (I said this as I threw a cursory glance over my system during a foot-bath, and looked meaningfully at my toes that were having their nails cut) “that

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(Schlegel, "Jacobis Woldemar," p.272). Jacobi himself makes reference to this concept in his *Letter to Fichte* (See Endnote number 141, pp.232-33). ]

*) Both are found in Fr. Pici Mirand. *Exam. doctr. vanit. gent. I.*

[N.B. Francesco Pico della Mirandola (1469-1533), the nephew of the well-known philosopher of the same name. The reference is to his main work, *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium.* I. (6 vols.) ]
I am the All and the Universe; one cannot become anything more in the world than the world itself (§8) and God (§3) and the spiritual world (§8) on top of that. I just should not have squandered so much time (which is also my creation) before realizing after 10 metamorphoses of Vishnu,78 that I am the natura naturans,79 and the demiurge,80 and the bewind-hebber81 of the universe. I feel now like that beggar who awoke from a drunken-sleep to suddenly find himself king.82 What a creature is that which makes everything, with the exception of itself (for it is always becoming and never is), my absolute, all-creating, -foaling, -lambing, -hatch-ing, -emerging, -birthing, -positing I!”8

At this point I could not keep my feet in the water any longer and paced barefoot, dripping to and fro: “Just try and consider,” I said, “all your creations in their entirety — space — time (presently into the 18th century) — that which is in both space and time — the worlds — what is on them — the three kingdoms of nature — the inconsequential, royal kingdoms — the kingdom of truths — the kingdom of the Critical School — and entire libraries!” — And, therefore, the few volumes that Fichte wrote as well, since I have to first posit or create him, before he can dip his pen — for whether or not I allow him to live rests upon my ethical politeness — and secondly, because both of us, as anti-influxionists, if I also understand myself in this, can never be able to listen to our own I’s, but rather each of us must invent what he reads from the other, he, my Clavis and I, his writings. Therefore, I make so bold as to call the Wissenschaftslehre my work as well as Leibgeberianism, assuming that there ever were a Fichte who held similar thoughts; he would only be Newton with his fluxion here, and I would be Leibniz with his differential calculus there, two men of similar greatness!83

*) The last three participles are taken from hunting.
Likewise, there are just as many philosophical messiahs (Kant and Fichte); and just as many Jewish ones, of whom the first was the son of Joseph, and the other was the son of David.

§13

Polytheism or polyselfism. The Mosaic Decalogue forbids me to have other Gods or I’s before myself just as ardently as the Fichtean one allows it. The author of this *Clavis* must roundly admit to all who read and review it that he, being a strictly logical *theoretician*, is unable to believe in other beings beside his own, because through this everything about which one has asked and fought, the existence of the imagined (§8) and the imagining universe (§7) and the activity of the pure I or the Deity, is sufficiently explained, produced and integrated. Otherwise, beings -- and the infinite ones at that -- will be multiplied unnecessarily, since all things need but *one* Creator and Primate. Millions, trillions of absolute I’s, primae causae, causae sui aliorumque, unconditioned realities and aseities or deities -- i.e., Weimarians, Frenchmen, Russians, Leipzigers, Pestizians, Iroquois, people from all countries and ages -- all of these highest beings come and grow without ceasing and bring their own universes with them (which, moreover, I should also buy as authenticated copies of my own); but, as a strict Unitarian and Singularis, I ask: for what purpose and with what right and under what limits of the populace and coinvestiture? -- I ask you, do I find said I’s anywhere else than in the natura naturata that is posited by me, in my expansive Not-I as figures woven into this infinite Hautelisse tapestry, as limitations and determinations of my noumenon, but not

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4) The absolute naturally precludes number and, therefore, plurality, but it also rules out unity.
noumena themselves? -- And if I admit this, then these emanations and triplet-, or rather, sextillion-births of my own can, if they want, reduce me to an offshoot of their own, their derivative and adjective, a little tile in the mosaic of their Not-I. And the old question of Augustine's as to whether the Son could also beget God the Father would be repeated and affirmed. --

To this Fichte retorts, as often as I personally explain to him that according to pure reason he can not be at every moment that which he has written in his *Doctrine of Ethics* and everywhere else: it is necessary for him to detach other I's, although they are only heraldic figures in the painted Not-I, and allow them to step forth animated and embodied, simply in order to have someone with whom a moral relationship could be tended. Just as the Kantian postulates God and immortality, thus does Fichte's I postulate other I's.

I implore him to remember what I said to him, with my pipe in my mouth as we paced together back and forth in the room in Jena, and then decide for himself whether or not he

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*) *de trinit.*, from which Pet. Lombard. *Lib. II distinct. 6.* cites it.

[N.B. Berend notes that this citation is incorrect. It should read Petrus Lombardus. *Sententiarum, liber I, distinctio 7* from *Augustinus contra Maximinum.* The main work of Petrus Lombardus (c.1100-1160), *Sententiarum libri quattuor* (1155-58), became the standard reference work of Catholic Theology during the Middle Ages.]

b) It says on p.214: "That without which there could be no duty, is absolutely true, and it is a duty to consider it as true." The first half of this period is a circle and above all else a question like the following: how -- if just the *opposite moral precept were moral*? The second can -- since no one has pangs of conscious on account of opinions -- be phrased in no other way but: in such a case it is a duty 1) to investigate -- 2) to act as though it were true -- 3) to want it to be true -- and 4) if need be, to prefer to contradict reason rather than self-respect, for it is better to be a sceptic than a scoundrel. For wanting and believing are two incommensurable quantities, and it is more difficult to find a bridge between the two as such than the bridge which Lessing found from historical truths to truths of necessity.

[N.B. Fichte, *Sittenlehre*, p.162.]
exists.

First: that which is written in the note.

Second: a moral law such as this presupposes nothing outside of itself, no existence; it presupposes a God as an object no more than a God as the giver of the laws. The pure I cannot act against any pure I (both have no existence and no consciousness) and just as little can it act against an empirical I or as an empirical I; as little as a modification has a duty towards a modification -- therefore, Fichte also finds within the moral Ought the exponent of the transcendent process of Becoming --. The hermit of the Bastille, the insular Robinson, these two can collect just as many moral treasures as any General at the peak of the century; even in empty eternity the God of the Kantians was a parte ante\textsuperscript{90} holy without anything else but himself.

Fichte always replies that he probably knows all of this better than I.

Third: once he postulates the reality of the I's of this world, or other I's, and wants to also have them just as external to this world as his own I: then he must also allow the reality of the sensory world, which clings to these, in which it is only possible to act against these other I's, to be morally pleasing to itself; and then the old, gray snow-drift of realism, which we melted before with so much heat and ink, is once again placed before the door of us Fichteans; and it is impossible to overlook our systematic misery. In order not to step in these mounds of snow Fichte reaches for the following walking staff:

I, Leibgeber, can, for example, save more than 70 K (i.e., Kantians and Anti-Leibgeberians) from death by starvation (for example, as book dealers or as a crown prince),
therefore I should do this; that means (he assumes) I dream that these 70 K have nothing in
their stomachs but their own digestive juices; fortunately these dream the same, so that all
together we have a simple moral exercise in religion, a few ascetic and canonical hours. If
I want to give something to the 70 rascals now, I dream about really giving, and they dream
about receiving; in fact, however, all of us, fastened securely in our beds with Vulcan’s iron
chains and ropes, have shared with each other nothing more real than the dream.

For heaven’s sake! I have wanted to take on this statement for three days and nights.
Primo (this should not be confused with my initial ‘first’ above), how should L. (I), who lives
beyond all objective connections with the 70 disciples, ever investigate and inquire if he and
they together meet within time and space and dream? Am I not like the hunter who takes a
moral free-shot out of his Jena window, aware of the roebuck which I have brought down
in the Harz forest? For no man can guarantee that I don’t have my dream of feeding and
starving within the eighteenth century and here in this world, while the 70 translators dream
their hunger and my charity upon the dog-star in the first or in the thirtieth century.

Let’s assume I sit down and morally postulate something again, namely the
simultaneity of the dreamers and the dreams: yet I will unfortunately not see any executive
power around me, which would step beyond and between us God-I’s and Venerables and
act as the director responsible for sending out the invitations to attend our gathering and for

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*) Only for the reader in need of assistance do I mention the quite popular Fichtean (in the end, Leibnizian and Kantian) idea, that there are just as many universes as there are I’s; that none of them among them can leave their immediate, although not indirectly created dream world and enter into that of another, and that these worlds have just enough preestablished harmony or similarity among them so that it would seem that there were only one world and we were all in it. (Editor’s note).
creating a parallelism and a sensorium commune\textsuperscript{95} of dreams in the least; \textemdash I see and hear no one.\textsuperscript{a}

Secundo. Let's assume that we were granted a simultaneum\textsuperscript{96} from an unknown hand. The result is that there is little that we would be able to do with it. I am completely surrounded by my Not-I, into which is also built the dead wax-figure-museum of human forms. I could actually pulverize and shred these wax figures and ancestral images like other character masks (for they are nothing but my product and lacking all absolute freedom and I-thood). The other, corresponding, absolute I has nothing to do with this figure; it already posits for itself a (similar) figure in its own Not-I. Therefore, according to this system, from every I as many bodies are running around, aside from its own, as there are I's encountering other I's and simultaneously positing I's. Nevertheless, since God is to be brought into these statues without the act of consecration,\textsuperscript{b} I am supposed to consider a minor transgression against these statues as similar to a transgression against the imperial Roman statues,\textsuperscript{c} namely, as a crime against the state. In the manner of a witch I am supposed to try to affect the distant original through its copy, or like the Catholics, I am to honour the saints and God.

\textsuperscript{a}) For the so-called moral world order of Fichte can probably introduce an optimistic harmony between my I and my Not-I, but never between my I and other I’s, and Not-I’s and their moral world orders.

\textsuperscript{b}) God first entered the statues in this way. In opposition to this, Arnobius adv. gentes raises the same objections that the Protestant raises against the effect of a similar consecration of the host (since God would have to reside in a number of statues.)

[N.B. Arnobius. \textit{Adversus gentes}, Liber VI, 19.]

\textsuperscript{c}) Tac[itus]. \textit{Ann[a]les}. I. 73. 74. Sueton[ious]. \textit{Tiber[ius}]. 58 and throughout.
through their images; thus Bellarmino⁴ really says, in the images there is something divine in
and of itself independent of the original. -- Am I really supposed to do this? --

Good heavens, what is the point of that? In so doing I don’t bring any more value to
the original (if it exists) — it must derive its own value and heaven out of itself —; it is also not
demanded of me. Only a practicing marionette of my morality, a fellow-actor, should stand
before me as the other showman [Schaumensch], whom I love and award on the stage, with-
out him gaining anything of it, only the dramatic art of virtue should profit thereby; in order
to act and react my absolute freedom or I-hood creates this resistance (the Not-I) beforehand;
it resembles the father of Sobouroff,⁹⁷ who loaned money to himself, wrote checks to himself,
often refused to honour them, and treated himself sternly enough according to the laws of
exchange; the absolute I does everything only for its own glorification. But I say with the
theologians “God’s will be done;” dei (i.e., aseitatis vel ameitatis) benedicere est benefacere;
in short, inner activity is all-important, and external actions only appear to be external.

Since the other I, like a bad actor, either plays a statue (body) or a spirit (pure I) on
the stage, and never both in one person: so could I demolish this statue, whose Pygmalion I
am, or just as easily animate it, just as soon as I knew how to make it suitably evident and
apparent to myself that I am its sculptor; but I can’t do that, and I also don’t want to mutilate
the statues I encounter, but rather complete them.

I don’t deny that since my Leibgeberism, whenever I make noble or large sacrifices

⁴) de imag. Sanct. II. 21.

[N.B. Roberto Francesco Bellarmino (1542-1621), an Italian theologian and Cardinal,
was among the most influential leaders of the Counter-Reformation and was later canonized.
The reference is to the second book of Bellarmino’s Controversia de ecclesia triumphante:
de reliquis et imaginibus sanctorum.]
for others that involve many external arrangements — which should be easier to accomplish, since only my I should provide the moral spark — I appear to myself almost like that merchant of Montaigne’s who, in order to take an enema, had all his tools and ingredients laid out on the table in front of him and briefly inspected them, whereupon he passed the stool without one actually having given him the enema, and this had only failed to happen once when his wife had brought cheaper remedies out of miserliness.  

*Fourth.* With what right do I necessarily posit another immorality? By what omniscience of the absolute outside of myself can my absolute freedom divine not merely the immoral use of an other absolute, but posit it as surely as my own so that it acts morally accordingly.  

If we don’t assume that there are any other sinners, however, then the optical ones are only the galloping moral horses of my exercises; nevertheless there is something missing here too. Truly spelling, to which Heinecke attributed all misery, and especially the inability to read, can be no worse than philosophizing, this transcendent spelling, which also makes reading the book of nature more difficult.

*) It is with this single question that Leibgeber brings down his and every other form of idealism. For the certainty of *other* moralities and immoralities is only a sensible certainty — through nothing but sensible media —, and yet the sensible is just as large as the moral, because these categorical commands are founded upon the former. To say, like a few Fichteanians, that I can already notice the presence of a free being from its activity, means nothing; for *that* I notice, not *what* I notice (the *what* also appears in dreams and fevers, but without the *that*), is the question and point. This sensible evidence is the *same*, whether I see moral or lifeless beings, or whether I hear a speaking-machine or a man. In short, practical reason presupposes no great or *other* certainty the existence of other I’s as the existence of my own and other bodies and therefore the sensory world, because I stand in exclusively moral relationships with my own body and with other property; and if practical reason can act if the latter has only a subjective existence for us, then it can also act in the case of the former. (Editor’s remark).
Fifth, if the striking abundance of worlds weren't enough to make me feel uneasy, then the universe does. Every court-drummer, every tailor of liveries, every Pécherais, in short, 100 billion local people step forward as living diamond mines of the starry heavens, as repositories of silver, arsenic and worlds; everyone carries before them their created heaven and earth with the animals and everything else, this world-kaleidoscope made for their benefit. In the process of positing and creating (i.e., travelling) a new bit of Not-I, I simultaneously find a corresponding number of new aseities or ameities. In the year 1788 I was able to posit 6,171 Gods or porte-dieu's in Weimar and 4,344 of the same in Jena (without the students and apprentices). According to what transcendental rule does this populace of gods and people arise and grow? Wouldn't it have been better conceived if one accepted a single, absolute I and divine being (and thereby only one Creation), like the old theologians did, and at the same time called upon one subject, who had enough reason and strength to administer this highest post? And then the vocation can be given exclusively to the one being whose existence is certain; and that is no one other than myself.

Eventually even the animal kingdom would come over to my side, since it would otherwise become a true Bochartian Hierozoicon with Fichte. For I must also objectively postulate animals as feeling and, consequently, moral objects — that is easily said, but just

*) This is the name of those impoverished priests who carry the divine host to the sick in Paris. (Editor's remark)

*) He is right. Animals cannot also be used like lifeless beings as a mere means, which we only have to protect for their mere usability towards rational ends. If I stab and cripple a living horse out of fun, then I feel that I have done an injustice to the horse itself. If I cut a horse of Wouverman's, then I feel that I have at the most done an injustice to another being than the horse. It follows from the critical claim that reduces animals to means that it would be a greater injustice were I to cut slices from a stuffed, rare elephant in Europe than from the
look at the consequences! They all become demigods -- the Egyptians with their veneration of animals saved more than I would have been willing to -- every beast posits and creates a metamorphic piece of the world, the lap cat is the mother of their deity and mistress -- the horse posits its rider, the rabbit its landowner -- the mouse, which ate the divine host in Deggendorf, it itself just as divine as that which it ate, and the host is merely posited by the mouse and the priest conducting the mass -- then it goes even deeper in this Pantheon (I am speaking of this natural history cabinet and zoo) to those beasts that may only be named in epics (those of Homer and Peter Pindar)\textsuperscript{103} -- and the playful mayfly posits for 2 hours, first the setting sun and then its mate -- and then comes the tapeworm inside me that also wants to take part in this divine positing... (§3–8).

The devil with that! If this were the case the best system in the world would become moronic and absurd, and genuine logical consequence would create more feeble gods and lares\textsuperscript{104} than the Pope himself.

In the section entitled \textit{Fetishes}\textsuperscript{5} I have provided a sample of how comical I also found the world when I, like Fichte, still possessed and posited other Gods beside myself. After such proofs I casually await the divisions of the Leibgeberian school, and I hope to at least have brought a few Leibgeberians to serious ponderance and doubt as to whether something else could exist other than myself alone, this sufficiently rational and irrational root of all

\textsuperscript{5} many originals in Asia; and two callous critics and anthropologists with whom I have argued also said boldly that they would draw the same conclusion. (Editor\textsuperscript{1}'s remark).

[N.B. Philips Wouerman (1619–1668), a Dutch landscape painter whose paintings of horses were highly regarded.]

\textsuperscript{103}) See the next section.
things -- the weaving-shuttle\textsuperscript{105} of all shuttles and weavers -- the pendulum of the world’s gears -- the heart of Being -- the master builder of the world -- the One and All.

If Fichte finds my reasons sufficient -- which I dearly wish -- then he would certainly be the first man to admit that he doesn’t exist, indifferent to the lamentable contradiction which only healthy human reason can find in such cases; -- or he would at least say that I do not exist, which I will then (since my existence is all I want for myself) interpret to my advantage and at his expense.

\textbf{§14}

\textbf{Fetishes.} Otherwise my Leibgeberianism was much the same; and it is funny (but nothing more than that) how I earlier -- when I still followed Fichte and made the entire earth into a graveyard of gods -- cut the people to fit into my pantheistic system. The philosopher’s seriousness that tagged along with me appeared to have deserted me completely; but only from the outside; on the inside I was making faces.

When I saw, for example, the poor and starving, the embittered government scriveners, the clerks, pensioners, and accountants rowing with their pens in the writing-galleys, then I would ask: “All of you divine beings, tested ship-carpenters of so glorious a world-fleet drifting through the universe, why do they now (they are merely preserving the universe) want to make nothing but numbers (and so wretchedly at that), which according to other philosophers were the building materials of the world?”\textsuperscript{106}

When I saw the 12 heralds of the Imperial Supreme Court, then I would say: “You 12 good messengers from God and Apostles in the truest sense of the word, your creations
are, apart from your style, good enough from head to toe; but just don’t create so much time in Wetzlar, we would rather posit together more assessors and Court directors.”

When I saw an owner of a manor, then I would say: “Considered as deus majorum gentium, you are the father of your great-, great-grandfather and of your entire family tree, just as the producing class is your product; you can be proud, but only in accordance with the principles of the Wissenschaftsllehre (§6-8).”

When I saw a prince, then I would have to say: “Creator of your country and of all other countries, Columbus, who creates his America and is America, Generalissimo of all armies and nutritor of all academic nutritors! Since your absolute I simultaneously creates, prints, engraves and sells the opera omnia of the universe, as Gessner does for his own, and since all we gods pull your state-wagon like a team of horses, like the Greek Gods pulled the state-wagon of the God of Love: either pluck the cross away from the immeasurable world-apple, which your hand carries like a bough, or create a Prince of Wales or an infinite son who redeems the world and is a lamb and carries his own cross -- as I said, everything revolves around the hereditary prince.”

When I saw a princess then I would say nothing at certain times, for women were goddesses long before Fichte and I were gods. They are actually like the earth, matres deorum, the mothers of the gods, namely, our mothers.

When I saw a philosopher of our school, then I would give him a hearty slap on the back and say: “Keph! dear Keph!” (for the tongue that preaches the Wissenschaftsllehre lays

5) The Egyptians believed that Keph, the creator of the world, produced an egg from his mouth which contained the world within it. Eusebius. Praeparatio evangelica. III.ii. [N.B. ‘Keph’ is the Greek form of the Egyptian ‘Khem’ or ‘Khnum,’ the spirit of the
the egg, the I, the salient point of the world), you are unquestionably all-knowing and a divine autodidact, and you read very little, since you do not find anything in books other than what you yourself put in them. You prefer to sit at your writing desk and say with Vespasian: "ut puto deus fio." Indeed, if you would sweat more than speak when taking an exam, then it would only be because you have loaned everything that you have to the examiner, like the one that comes upon us in dreams; but I beg you, why have you created the 20th century and why do you wander back and forth within it haughtily next to future generations? That is, of course, purely philosophical, but not polite. Continue creating together with us other ultimate beings in the 18th century: don’t we have a whole eternity before us in which to create centuries?"

When I saw rogues wearing ribbons of distinction, murderers of entire populations, thieves of countries, those drunk with blood, impaling Iron Virgins\textsuperscript{113} of the Septembriseurs\textsuperscript{114} of the chaste or maidens, then I would become a Manichaean\textsuperscript{115} and Stercoranist\textsuperscript{116} and say: “Here stands the Ahriman and the Ormazd\textsuperscript{117} for one man. Fichte’s God and Erhard’s Devil\textsuperscript{118} have here communicatio idiomatum.\textsuperscript{119} The matter can hardly be explained, even assuming that one has read the deduction of our inborn-evil in Fichte’s \textit{System of my Doctrine of Ethics}, published by Gabler in 1798.\textsuperscript{120} When the absolute or divine I sins and becomes a devilish I, as soon as it comes to its senses and becomes a Not-I (an intelligent Not-I): what then should one think of Reason, Enlightenment, Creation, and other such concepts?”

When I saw a printer with dropsied legs printing my Leibgeberianism, then I would

supreme creative deity Amen, who was depicted anthropomorphically as a man with the head of a ram. Egyptian cosmology actually portrays him as creating the primeval egg of life on a potter’s wheel.]
allow myself a rather weak pun and say: "Why in the world is the sick Lord God and
 demiurge printing the positing of positing?"\

Had I seen my wife, then I would have examined the universe, taken myself for its
birth-father \textit{[Patriz]} and she as its birth-mother \textit{[Matriz]} and said: "A tolerable Pantheon,\textsuperscript{121}
within which merely two Gods stand, Mars and Venus, who represent the rest."\textsuperscript{2}

When I walked by a thief at the gallows, this dangling puppet of a departed God and
bird of the night, then I had to assume that I could no longer be morally forced to postulate
this Not-I fragment of the god of thieves who has quietly slipped away; and nevertheless the
I's weathered frame \textit{[Ichs-Schwarte]} still hung there. In any case we moral beings had to
posit and publish just as many copies of the hung body as there were ours; only the original
edition, the body posited by the hung causa sui, was out of print.

When the Pope blessed me in Rome, I declared him not to be the emissary of Christ,
but rather Christ himself. For it was easy for me to recognize him as such by the charac-
teristics which the orthodox had given to me: the Pope had his orderly absolute I -- i.e., the
divine nature --, his empirical I -- i.e., the human soul --, and his Not-I -- i.e., the body. --
From St. Peter and Judas on, such a man of God is probably every Cardinal, Prince Bishop,
General of the Jesuits, Consistorial Councillor, and penance imposing priest -- well, am I
myself not such a servant of all servants?\textsuperscript{123}

When I came upon an insane asylum, then I would naturally not conceal my
amazement that the gods and first causes here so closely resembled their authors whose works
are more intelligent than they themselves. What I mean is that the insane have posited such

\textsuperscript{5)} Only these two Gods stood in the Roman Pantheon.
a wonderfully ordered macrocosm, and yet ruined their own microcosm: "Why is the God", I said, "again so conspicuously partial towards the object and opposed to the subject?"

When I saw my oldest friend I would say nothing but "I = I."

When I saw Fichte — since I was Castor and he Pollux\(^{124}\) and since the both of us consisted of an alternating and never-ending positing, I used to say nothing but: "Soyons amis, Auguste!"\(^{125}\) —

\[\text{§15}\]

**The suffering of a god in the garden of Gethsemane.** Theopaschite and Patripassian\(^{126}\) that I am, I can sing a Passions song about this. The Scholastics raised the critical question concerning whether God is God nolens or volens.\(^4\) I can speak from experience and say: nolens volens. Anybody who is one will agree with me that even a mere Prince has it better. Listen to my 4 maestosos\(^{127}\) on this! — My first maestoso is this: seen absolutely, I have been sitting here since time immemorial, which I create, blind and without consciousness, pulling together my invisible immeasurableness into some substance and my ether into a bolt of lightning and then I have the empirical, relatively understanding I, which is writing here, yet continuously creating behind its back, knowing my world as little as the Stahlean soul (anima Stahlii)\(^{128}\) knows its corporeal abode. This is also what the Greeks had in mind when they made night into the general creator of gods, or when the Egyptians appointed the mole among the gods

\(^{4}\) Pet[rus] Lombard[us]. dist. 6. v. c.

[N.B. Sententarum. Liber I, distinctio VI, versus C; nolens/volens: 'unwilling/willing.']
merely on account of its blindness. As a somnambulist unconsciously creates sermons and other essays, thus do I unconsciously create worlds. I (in the empirical sense) shudder before myself (in the absolute sense) and before the hideous Demogorgon dwelling within me.

My second maestoso is that, while I do have a great deal of reason, I do not have enough; and in Meusel’s *Scholarly Germany* there are several pages full of gods who are entitled to complain about that much more than I. I concede that the faculty of reason is deserving of wonderment, infinite, and (in the actual sense) not a faculty of human origin, which I (as an absolute being) proved in the establishment of the universe (the Not-I); but I don’t know what I was thinking when I allowed my own subjective reason to bite so stingily and meagrely that now it doesn’t understand my own objective reason. Am I not in the lowly situation of animals within whom, according to Herder, the mechanical increases in the same ratio that reason decreases? -- For heaven’s sake! I (empirical) should have become the greatest mind around, a universal genius appropriate to such a universe. But as it is, my imagined I grasps for all practical purposes essentially nothing of an object that was posited there exclusively for its own benefit.

Furthermore, the Not-I is created (by myself as an absolute) instantaneously, while the

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a) Plut[arch]. *Quaest[iones] conv[ivales]*. 4.5.

b) A horrible, moss-covered old man who sits in the center of the earth upon a small ball. He made everything, even the gods, and it is forbidden to call him by name. Ramler.

[N.B. See the first volume of Karl Wilhelm Ramler’s 1758 German translation of Charles Batteux’s *Les Beaux Arts Réduits à un Même Principe*. (1747). A Gorgon is also a mythical Greek monster capable of changing people to stone by looking into their eyes, the most well-known among them being Medusa. Jean Paul is playing upon this meaning as well, since he had made an earlier reference to the fact that they could only be defeated by observing their own reflection (line 338).]
empirical I is hardly ever created in 40 years. -- Moreover, the Not-I's are all created with relatively the same value amongst them, while all the I's are of very different values; either this difference or this sameness is a wonder. Therefore, the partiality for the object is obvious, which I (as an aseity) reveal by my becoming a man or by my metamorphosis into both object and subject (§7-8), and this of course to the degree, that I as a sun refracting myself colorfully into this double rainbow seem to turn the poor subject into a mere pallid inverted minor-bow and -- finding within this sorry affair a lively pun -- I more correctly deserve to be called Leibgeber [lit. “the giver of the body”] rather than Seelsorger [lit. “the caretaker of souls”].

True, I am expected to find comfort in the fact that I (as an intelligent I) am the most profound of the sages whom Germany is nurturing at present. I can easily admit that without thereby giving my opponents an advantage. Kant spent 10,957 ½ nights, namely 30 years, on his Critique; Fichte needed perhaps less than 3 months for it (for reading is creating); but all the more years in order to invent his Wissenschaftslehre. I, on the other hand, created this difficult work in one month or, to speak popularly, I read it in one month. In this manner, we surpassed each other. With two hours of this so-called reading a simpleton could complete my Clavis, which took me at least 14 days to compose. But now it is all too clear that every later I, without knowing how and why, a always creates all the developments of prior I’s, b as

a) This incomprehensibility applies to and punishes all the schools, including the school that accepts Dualism. For this school transfers this incomprehensibility out of the I into the Not-I, where it becomes even greater, or it allows this incomprehensibility to alternate captivatingly between them both, i.e., one posits oneself between two chairs.

b) For a past time is already posited in itself by the present (Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre, p.106) -- as little as it can be asked of the absolute I
well as the riches of several centuries, within a few years and hours; the last will (in the actual sense) be first.

That is one of the evil consequences, whenever one, like Fichte, establishes several divinities as one's own. If, for example, one agrees to the existence of an ordinary fellow who tends the stove of a library: then one has 1,000 maestosos instead of one. For the stoker -- who, by the way, naturally represents a god in much the same way as, according to Clemens of Alexandria, a block of wood represented Juno, the queen of heaven, in Thespia and a board in Samos -- has in the meantime created not only nature complete with its lower and higher math (and is even continuing to do so), but the majestic mathematical works and other works concerning the world of his making, and all the languages in the library that he heats weekly, are completely his works and products so far as the letters and figures are concerned (as parts of the Not-I which he has produced). Nonetheless, it is practically impossible to communicate the content, the spiritual meaning of the letters, to the caretaker of this heater; if one

about any I before it --; but it is already postulated by the Fichtean plurality of I's, and it thereby becomes more objective than space itself (that cubic number of the Not-I).

[N.B. The cited passage is the following: "There is absolutely no past for us at all to the extent that it is thought in the present. What was yesterday (it is necessary to express oneself transcendently in order to be able to express oneself at all), is not. It only is, to the extent that I am thinking at the present moment, that it was yesterday. The question then as to whether or not a time is actually past is completely identical to the question concerning whether or not there are things-in-themselves. A time is surely past, when you posit one as past; and everytime you raise this question, you posit a past time; if you don't posit a past time, you don't raise the question, and thus no time is past for you." Fichte, Grundriss, p.409.]

*) For according to the Cartesians (actually according to everyone) beings must be created continuously; according to Origen the Son of God is constantly begotten by the Father; -- which is one and the same.

[N.B. Origen (ca.185-254), a Christian theologian who wrote predominantly exegetical works on the Bible.]
nevertheless succeeds in this, and he finally grasps Euler’s *Analysis*,\textsuperscript{131} or the *Clavis* of
Ernesti\textsuperscript{132} or Leibgeber, or whatever else he heats, then he learns only that which he had
printed before, and he invents concepts (like several other philosophers) only *after* the signs,
similar to those stone animal sculptures, which appear to be drinking when they are actually
pouring water.\textsuperscript{*} To speak more refinedly, he and every student resemble an acquaintance of
mine, the Viennese Count who covered a barren bald spot on the back of his head with a nice
false hair-piece that had been fashioned from hair which had earlier fallen from his own head.

But where are my maestosos? -- I am still not finished with the second one yet. I
mentioned above that I had heard I was a great Fichtean or Leibgeberian philosopher, and I
am called doctor irrefragibilis,\textsuperscript{133} like the great scholastic philosopher Alexander Hales. I shall
go even further and add that very few people understand me or Fichte, and everyone that
contradicts me (even if it were I myself) shows thereby most surely that he (and naturally I,
whenever I contradict myself) does not understand me. Students (I confess along with
Fichte) enter into me. Still sober (metaphorically speaking), they accept a sickness or a diet
easier, as if they were physically sober, and ingest it more potently. Men who are already
familiar with the earlier systems, the great-, great-grandmothers of my own, cannot do this.
But what does it profit me if I advance as far as Alchakim Biamvillia in Egypt, who had
himself declared a God based upon the signatures of sixteen thousand: when a system is so
soon performed, repeated, reworked, and revised 45 times in a row, like the opera buffa\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{*} For example, in Palermo animals that are supposed to characterize the four corners of the
earth appear to be drinking from a fountain, but are actually filling it.
in Naples (because every fool philosophizes)? The cuckoo clocks leave one cold compared to a real cuckoo bird. After 20 years one will still continue to live with certain limbs nailed to utterly wild and alien systems. A poetic work of art on the other hand will be given like an opera seria, only once. And it will still be whole after 100 years. —

Third Maestoso. In regard to this dirge, there will probably be few infinite beings living in Europe — especially in these troubled times of war — who won’t sing along, since man himself introduced this monstrous, all-powerful giant known as the Not-I, due to which we are now bound,emasculated and dethroned, as the God Saturn was earlier by his three children (the Rulers of Earth, Sea, and Hell). Lavater believes that his happiness will be found in the next world, since he can there (as he quite demonstrates) create geniuses, plants, worlds and heavens. He can see down below here, however, what comes of all that. We absolute I’s have all created often and much, but we have been more partial to hells. At least here the old partiality of the absolute I which is imitated by the new aestheticians can not be

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a) At least every energetic person, if he wants to. The philosopher can not become a poet but a poet can easily descend to the philosopher, from Plato all the way to the one that I just received from the book binder. I am thinking here of Bouterwes' excellent Apodictic, these stumpy cliffs amidst the present-day logical froth. That is how I judge him after only having read the beginning, the apodictical logic. — The ease of philosophizing comes from the fact that philosophy is an opera composed of thousands of interrelated acts to which one can easily compose a new and motivated act. Contrary to that, no outside works help the poet at all, for he must compose an entirely new opera. (Editor’s remark).

[N.B. Friedrich Bouterwek (1766-1828), a professor of philosophy at the University of Göttingen. In 1799 he published his Ideas for a General Apodictic (Ideen zu einer allgemeinen Apodiktik) which Jean Paul read with great enthusiasm. See the letter to Jacobi from February 4, 1800 [B,III,3:284].]

b) His Views into Eternity II. Letter 12.

[N.B. The pronouncements on life after death found within Lavater’s Aussichten in die Ewigkeit (1768-73) was a source of much debate and drew sharp criticism from Goethe among others. (See also Endnote number 42, p.217).]
mistaken for objectivity, since it should have given the subject relatively equal powers in the interest of balance instead of driving the poor dwarf onto the battlefield against a blind Polyphemus. Fichte calls the world the reflection of our divine I. The obsolete free-thinker Edelmann calls it the shadow of God. I prefer to hear the latter, for this shadow darkens and genuinely chills the Lilliputian intelligent I until it freezes to death.

I confess that if absolute I-hood or freedom has created the world, as Fichte claims, merely to have resistance to activity, then it seems to me that quite a few things are limping. Can it be that the many stars which will never tempt me, parts of the world and all the islands, the previous centuries, beetles, mosses and the entire plant and animal kingdom are necessary for my free religious exercises? And if a Sloane proves the existence of God from the stomach -- Donatus from the hand -- Meier from the spider -- Menzies from the frog -- Stengel from birth-defects -- and Schwarz from the Devil, can the existence of these foundlings then be deduced conversely from the divine I just as easily? -- For take the last one in particular, the Devil, namely, other immoral beings. Do I not find everywhere that the resistance which the free I puts up against itself is too powerful? And does not Fichte in §16 of his Ethics deduce evil, i.e., the defeat of the pure I, from the superior strength of the sensory world, namely from resistance, which it posited in too large a degree for itself?

And, finally, just what kind of relationship does the uniform development of the astronomical and historical Not-I (which is actually incomprehensible in itself), as that which extends backwards and forwards of the empirical I, have with my free activity? Nothing but

*) See Derham’s Astro-theology.
questions and difficulties!

*Fourth and last maestoso.* What is ultimately more lamentable than anything else is the idle, aimless, exclusive, and insular life that a God must lead; he has no social contact at all. Do I not sit here all the time and for all eternity, condescending as well as I can* and making myself *finite*, in order to have *something* around me, but have instead, like minor princes, nothing but my own imitative *creatures?* Those two Frenchmen in Berlin who offered to hold — and succeeded in holding — a quite lengthy theological, legal, or any desired colloquium, simply by addressing each other as “Monsieur!” with a varied accent, — those were, however, as I said, a dualis. But how can I compare myself with them, having addressed myself throughout eternity a parte ante — and the one a post is not much better — as nothing but “Monsieur?” It would indeed be something if I could turn around just once and say: “Madame!” or better yet: “Bibi!”

A being, be it whatever it will, even the highest, longs to love and honour something.

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*) “The I is finite insofar as its activity is objective, etc. (it is infinite insofar as it is opposed to itself). But this finiteness or limitation is infinite, because the limits can be extended further and further.” *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, p.242.

[N.B. This is another quotation which Jean Paul cites according to the sense. Fichte’s actual words are as follows: “In so far as the I posits itself as infinite, its activity (of positing) is directed towards the I itself and nothing else but the I. All of its activity is directed towards the I, and this activity is the reason and the entirety of all Being. The I, therefore, is *infinite, in as far as its activity turns back upon itself*, and in so far is its activity infinite, because the product of the same, the I, is infinite” (Fichte, *Grundlage*, p.256).]

b) This is what *Duval*, the naive Viennese librarian (what a conflicting triad!), called all those witty female correspondents dear to him.

[N.B. Most likely a reference to the French emigrant Valentin Jameray Duval (1695-1775), a numismatist and writer in Vienna. Berend explains the ‘conflicting triad’ as follows: “In Jean Paul’s opinion the Viennese are generally not naive, nor are they great lovers of books.” [*B,I,9:589*].]
But Fichtean Leibgeberianism leaves me nothing to that effect, not even that beggar's dog nor that prisoner's spider. For assuming that both animals did exist, then only the *nine* images of ours, those that I, the dog, and the spider paint, can have something to do with one another, not we ourselves. Something better than myself, towards which every love fans its flames, is not to be had. Love's *cloak*, which during the few past centuries has been worn as thin as the episcopal gown, which is four fingers wide, is now burning away entirely; and one has nothing left to love other than his own love. I truly wish that men existed and I were among them! --

The matter would have come to a good end had not I, or Fichte, or both of us been seduced by Satan into positing or reflecting. Like Jupiter I had earlier assumed my attractive human form in order to enjoy and listen to my creations; now, however, I am beyond help. Every divinity, on the chance that one can still be acquired by positing, sits like myself in their thickly encased empyrean\(^{140}\) of ice, dreaming perhaps of the thirtieth century or of Uranus, while I dream of Earth and the 18th, and exists and hears the monochord of its I, the only string of the eternal music of the spheres.

Our actions and our insight are, as Jacobi says, an action of action, an insight of insight.\(^ {141}\) To this I add, just a mere *reflecting of reflecting* — although this unending repeating and reflecting should nevertheless have repeated *something else in the beginning* other than repetition —, and we live just as meagrely as the cat that appeared in *The Herald,\(^ {142}\)* which a British skinflint covered with strips of fat instead of feeding it, so that it had to lick itself the entire day in order to live. — To be sure, Schelling says in his *Philosophy of Nature* that initially this view into the immeasurable nothingness surrounding his divinity left him
feeling dismal and cold as well, but ultimately his inner -- creating brightened his spirits and refreshed him.\footnote{143}

But what is the point of that? -- Creating and acting is then merely a Zimmermanian motion-machine, which one moves in order to move oneself\footnote{144} If no one exists at all -- which I, unfortunately, fear a great deal -- except for a poor dog like myself upon whom the burden must fall, then there is no one whose lot is worse than mine. The only enthusiasm that is permitted me is the logical kind -- All of my metaphysics, my chemistry, my technology, my nosology, my botany, and my entomology amount to nothing but the old adage: know thyself -- I am not merely, as Bellarmino says,\footnote{145} my own saviour, but also my own Devil, Friend Death and Slavedriver -- Practical reason itself (this singular sacred showbread for a hungry philosophical David)\footnote{146} wearily sets me in motion, because I can only do something good for my I and for no one else -- Love and admiration are empty, for just like St. Francis of Assisi, I press nothing to my (agitated) breast but the snow-maidens I created -- All around me an expansive, petrified humanity -- In the dark uninhabited stillness there shines no love, no admiration, no prayer, no hope, no goal -- I, so completely alone, nowhere a heartbeat, no life, nothing around me and apart from me nothing but nothing\footnote{147} -- I, only aware of my higher non-consciousness -- Within me the deaf, blind, concealed Demogorgon toiling away, and I am he -- Thus do I emerge from Eternity, thus do I enter into Eternity --

And who is there to hear my lament and know me now? -- I. -- Who shall hear it and know me after all Eternity? -- I. --
E. Notes

Title: “The Key to Fichte and Leibgeber.” The Latin title is modeled after Johann August Ernesti’s *Clavis Ciceroniana* (1739), which is also mentioned in the text (see §15, p.201). Lest one think that Jean Paul’s inspiration extended beyond the title, it should be noted that Ernesti’s work differs significantly from Jean Paul’s; written entirely in Latin, Ernesti’s *Clavis* is a comprehensive, scholarly (and non-confrontational) concordance to Cicero’s works.

1. *Naide* (nais proboscidea): A type of snail capable of discarding its left appendage, which can then live on its own; the analogy here being that the *Clavis*, although a short appendix to *Titan*, is nevertheless a complete work in itself, capable of standing on its own and deserving of being judged upon its own merits [I,3:1,130].

2. Apodictic or apodeictic [Greek: ἀποδεικτικός, ‘proving,’ ‘demonstrative’]: That which is necessarily true or possesses certainty beyond dispute. Storz points out (*Studien*, p.80) that Jean Paul’s usage of the word in §13 of the *Clavis* conveys the additional sense of “not allowing any contradiction.” For a more thorough discussion of apodictic judgements see p.A75 of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 1781).

3. In Greek mythology the nymph Echo had pined away for the love of Narcissus for so long that eventually nothing remained of her but her voice.

4. *Actuosum Albini* [Latin: actuosum, ‘active,’ ‘energetic’]: A term from the writings of the well-known anatomist Bernhard Siegfried Albinus (1697-1770), who had used it to designate the fundamental, life-giving element (more commonly referred to today as *élan vital*, a similar
notion advanced by the twentieth-century French philosopher of evolution, Henri Bergson). According to Storz (p.78), even though this term is used within the *Clavis* to characterize the fundamental principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Jean Paul had often used it in a more general sense as “an example of the peculiar, optimistic, and partly rationalistic attempts to capture the life-force [*Lebenskraft*] in a single concept. For Jean Paul these attempts have a comical aspect, yet he mentions them again and again since they are characteristic of the uncertainty as to the existence of God and eternal life; for whoever believes in God the Creator has no need for such attempts at explanation.” A good example of Jean Paul’s earlier usage of the term is found in a short story entitled *My Own Funeral (Meine lebendige Begrabung)* written ten years before the *Clavis*: “…I would adequately demonstrate to him the existence of my archeus -- or my anima Stahlii -- or my nerve-ether according to the systems of present and past -- or my aura vitalis -- or my actuosum Albini, if I were to beat upon his face with my hand like a lute…” [B,II,3:290].

5. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819), a writer and philosopher with whom Jean Paul had a deep and lasting friendship. In addition to the popular epistolary novels *Woldemar* (1779) and *Edward Allwill’s Collection of Letters (Eduard Allwills Briefsammlung)*, 1792), Jacobi published several philosophical treatises, the most influential being *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn (Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, 1785) and *David Hume on Faith, or Idealism and Realism: A Dialogue (David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch*, 1787). It was Jacobi’s open *Letter to Fichte* (1799) that provided the immediate inspiration for Jean Paul’s own critique of Fichte.
6. See Supplement VI of Jacobi’s *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*.

7. The title which Fichte accorded to his philosophical system will remain in the original German since it is better known in this form, and all attempts at translation only further complicate what is already a highly specialized term. At best, *Wissenschaftslehre* could be rendered into English as “The Theory of Scientific Knowledge,” but it is important to keep in mind that Fichte conceived of philosophy as a science, and he envisioned his own system as a ‘science of science,’ i.e., as that which would ultimately reveal the irrefutable first principle securing the foundation of all knowledge. See §1 - The Hypothetical Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in Fichte’s *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* (*Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794).

8. Jean Paul is probably thinking here of aliquot tones, more commonly referred to as overtones, i.e., tones which have frequencies that are the exact multiples of the frequency of the fundamental note. A similar analogy can be found in a letter to Jacobi from October 13, 1798: “...In the latest statement of Fichtean Spinozism I find three harmonies without a supramundane harmonist, that of the sensory world, that of the moral world, and a third pre-established world between the two of them in the manner of the 3 scales, the diatonic, the enharmonic, and the chromatic” [B,III,3:106].

9. Ob-subjectivity is a combination of the words ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity.’ Fichte clarifies this concept in his *Theory of Ethics* (1798): “I-hood [*Die Ichheit*] consists in the absolute identity of the subjective and the objective (in the absolute union of being with consciousness, and of consciousness with being). Neither the subjective, nor the objective,
but rather -- an identity is the essence of the I; and the first is only mentioned in order to
designate the empty place of this identity. Now can anyone think this identity itself?
Certainly not, for in order to think oneself it is necessary to make that very distinction
between the subjective and the objective which is not permitted in this concept of identity.
Without this distinction no thinking of any kind is possible [...] This concept, which can only
be described as the task of an act of thinking, but which can never be thought, indicates an
empty spot in our investigation which we shall call X. The I can not comprehend itself due
to the reasons stated. It is quite simply = X.” (Fichte, Das System der Sittenlehre, p.41).
10. Tertium comparisonis: The third, or uniting, element in a comparison, i.e., that which
is shared between two things being compared.
used in reference to something whose true nature can never be known. Observe Schad’s
usage of the term in his exposition of Fichte: “...[Kant] treated the Categories as intrinsic
characteristics of the mind, as lifeless forms that are such true qualitates occultae that no one
can conceive of them clearly.” (Schad, Gemeinfaßliche Darstellung des Fichteschen Systems
12. Erysichthon is a character who appears towards the end of the eighth book of Ovid’s
Metamorphoses. After he impudently cuts down an oak tree sacred to the goddess Cerces,
Erysichthon is punished with an insatiable hunger that eventually drives him to eat his own
flesh. Considering the charges of atheism that were leveled against Fichte in 1799, Jean
Paul’s choice of analogy here is especially rich for Erysichthon is described by Ovid as a
sacrilegious criminal [792, sacrilegi scelerata] who brazenly rejects the divine majesty of the
gods [739-40, *qui numina divum / sperneret*]. Furthermore, one can’t help but wonder if Jean Paul was aware of the following line intended to reveal the depths of Erysichthon’s hunger, but which also serves as a wonderful satire on the activity of Fichte’s absolute I: “In him all food is the cause of food.” [841-42, *cibus omnis in illo / causa cibi est*]. (Naso, *Metamorphosen*, pages cited).


14. The *Xenien* is a collection of rather caustic couplets penned jointly by Goethe and Schiller and prompted in part by the lackluster success of their collaborative journal, the *Horen*. Although originally written more as a form of private satire and cultural criticism, Schiller decided to print approximately 500 of the *Xenien* in the *Musenalmanach* when he served as its editor in 1797. Jean Paul’s criticism of the *Xenien* was due to his own displeasure at seeing himself as well as several of his associates held up to ridicule. (See p.x for the couplet directed at Jean Paul).

15. Jean Paul uses the words ‘Belgian’ and ‘Dutch’ to mean ‘inelegant’ or ‘crude,’ presumably based upon the simple and unadorned Dutch paintings of farmers and peasants. (Storz, *Studien*, p.81).

16. Asteism, charientism, mimesis, and diasyrm are figures of speech characteristic of a rhetorical form of elevated mockery.

17. In earlier times ‘fallen’ women were made to wear a crown of straw on their wedding day as a mark of shame. This eventually developed into the light-hearted custom of presenting all brides with such a crown on the day after their wedding accompanied by a humorous
speech. [I,3:1,131].

18. As an example of Jean Paul’s emulation of Jacobi, it is interesting to note that he had praised Jacobi for the similar mixture of earnestness and humour in his “Letter to Fichte:” “Your preface is an almost demonstrative parody of the Jena paralogisms, and this jesting has become profoundly serious.” (Letter of March 4, 1799) [B,III,3:166].

19. A reference to the debate concerning whether Christian missionaries in China and India should be allowed to cast the teachings of the Catholic church in such a way that they more closely resembled the native religions of those they sought to convert. Jean Paul criticizes Fichte for mimicking this disingenuous attempt at presenting new ideas under the guise of old ideas.

20. Jacobi only allowed Jean Paul to dedicate the Clavis to him on the condition that it not be expressly stated that he had read it before publication, which would have implied that the work had Jacobi’s full approval.

21. The image of a cyclops with one eye in his chest diverges from the traditional conception of a cyclops given to us by Homer, namely as a giant with one eye in the middle of his forehead. (See also Endnote number 136).

22. Jean Paul and Jacobi began corresponding with one another in 1798 and did not meet in person until 1812. Given the number of years that Jean Paul had to develop his own conception of Jacobi’s personality, it is perhaps understandable that the meeting proved to be a disappointment for him. See the letter to Christian Otto from June 12, 1812 [B,III,6:272].

23. Protectorium: a letter designed to legally protect an individual or serve as a disclaimer.

24. The full title of this novel is Flower, Fruit, and Thorn Pieces: or the Married Life,
Death, and Wedding of the Advocate of the Poor, Firmian Stanislaus Siebenkas (Blumen-, Frucht- und Dornenstücke oder Ehestand, Tod und Hochzeit des Armenadvokaten F. St. Siebenkas, 1796).

25. In a fragment from the Athenäum (1798) Friedrich Schlegel wrote: “It is a peculiar phenomenon: an author [Jean Paul], who does not have the rudiments of art within his power, who cannot clearly express one bon mot, who cannot tell one single story well (at least what one usually refers to by a well-told story) and who nevertheless, because of a humorous dithyramb, like the Adam’s letter of the defiant, dynamic, intense, and magnificent Leibgeber, cannot without injustice be denied the title of a great poet.” (Athenäums-Fragmente, pp.80-81). The Adam’s letter to which Schlegel refers is “Adam’s Wedding Speech” (“Adams Hochzeitsrede”), found in a letter of Leibgeber’s; see Chapter Four of Siebenkas [I,2:118-125]. According to Jean Paul, he and Schlegel became fast friends when they met for the first time just prior to the the publication of the Clavis and the latter took back his earlier invectives. See the letter to Otto from May 16, 1800 [B,III,3:333].

26. In the early drafts of the Clavis Jean Paul had jotted down the following, presumably from a newspaper advertisement: “Joseph Samson Herz residing at Dreckwall No. 46 in Hamburg has beer and punch glasses, with or without gold rims” [B,I,9:586].

27. ...To S. T. Herrn S.: “To Salvo Titulo Herrn S.” Salvo titulo is a Latin phrase that was often used in the salutation of a letter when the proper title of the addressee was unknown. Berend claims that Jean Paul did not want to directly state that the characters of Leibgeber (from Siebenkas) and Schoppe (from Titan) were one and the same, and therefore abbreviates his name with an ‘S’ [B,I,9:586].
28. Jean Paul had always idealized Switzerland as a very majestic country, and he therefore resented its oppression by the French. See also Eduard Berend, *Jean Paul und die Schweiz* (Leipzig: Frauenfeld, 1943).


30. John Duns Scotus (ca. 1265/6-1308), a well-known scholastic philosopher whose influence was second only to that of Thomas Aquinas. He earned the title of *doctor subtilis* (the Subtle Doctor) with his sophisticated and elaborate critiques of other mediaeval philosophers.

31. According to Grimm’s Dictionary, the term *Spaßpredigt* [lit. ‘mock-sermon’] referred either to the celebratory sermon delivered on Easter Sunday after the preceding period of penitence, or else to an Easter sermon mass that was intended as a comical imitation of the usual ecclesiastical sermon.

32. Wolfgang van Kempelen (1734-1804), a Hungarian statesman and mathematician who acquired a good deal of fame in Europe through his invention of a chess-playing ‘robot’ that he had clothed as a Turk. In actuality, the robot consisted of nothing more than a man in costume sitting behind a desk with a visible gear mechanism and an area to conceal his legs. Jean Paul had written an earlier satirical piece about Kempelen’s machine in the fifth essay of *Selection from the Devil’s Papers (Auswahl aus des Teufels Papieren)*, 1789.

33. A reference to the so-called Grotto of the Dog (*Grotta del Cane*) in Naples. Due to its peculiar absence of air, this cave had been well-known since antiquity when slaves were
thrown in to die by suffocation. The name is derived from the later practice of throwing dogs into the cave. Jean Paul probably learned of this grotto from J.J. Volkmann's *Historical-Critical News of Italy (Historisch-kritischen Nachrichten von Italien, 1770-71)*. [I,4:1,142].

34. This analogy is most likely an allusion to the beginning of Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1799), where the main character dreams that he is dreaming. See Holdener, *Jean Paul und die Frühromantik*, p.27.

35. In the preface to his *Morning Hours* (1785) Moses Mendelssohn had described Kant as "all crushing" ["*der Alles zermalmende Kanti"] because he had seemingly invalidated the established claims of metaphysics and the reality of appearances. (Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden*, p.235).

36. Fohism is an antiquated appellation for Buddhism. (‘Fo’ or ‘Fohi’ was the Chinese name for the founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, who lived and taught in India in the sixth century B.C.) Miller notes that the early Buddhist teachings advocated indifference towards life and such ideas “do not possess any concrete historical value for Jean Paul, rather he uses them as particular, unchanging, philosophical positions” [I,3:1,132]. See also the letter to Jacobi from October 13, 1798: “You can hardly guess from my works [...] how sad and apprehensive the present fuga pleni makes me, the transcendent fohism that likes to drive the nucleus of every world and comet into a fog” [B,III,3:106].

37. Dictionaries designed to assist the lay reader in understanding the terminology of Kant’s transcendental philosophy had begun to grow in popularity, i.e., Karl Chr. Erhard Schmid’s *Lexicon for the Easy Usage of Kant's Writings (Wörterbuch zum leichten Gebrauch der Kantischen Schriften, 1788)* and Georg Samuel Albert Mellin’s *The Artificial Language of*
the Critical Philosophy Arranged in Alphabetical Order (Kunstsprache der kritischen Philosophie, alphabetisch geordnet, 1798).


39. Jean Paul is thinking here of three copper engravings of his own portrait by Johann Heinrich Pfenninger that he had intended to include in the second edition of Hesperus (1798). The engravings were apparently a less faithful reproduction of the original drawing of Pfenninger’s that had been commissioned by Lavater (see Endnote number 42). Although the whereabouts of this drawing is unknown, Jean Paul himself was quite pleased with it and recommended Pfenninger to others. See the letter to Emanuel from May 12, 1798 [B,III,3:63].

40. Jean Paul’s house in Weimar, where he lived from 1798 to 1800, was situated on the corner of Markt and Wendischengasse.

41. Septem miracula Jenae: ‘The Seven Wonders of Jena’ referred to the main points of interest in the city, which are enumerated in the following Latin couplet: *Ara, caput, draco,mons, pons, Vulpecula turris, / Weigeliana domus: septem miracula Jenae*. Especially popular were the two sites mentioned specifically by Jean Paul: the home of the astronomer and engineer Erhard Weigel (1625-1690), which was filled with his inventions, and the Fox Tower, a remnant of Castle Kirchberg where Konrad von Meißen was imprisoned for a year in 1611. In addition to Fichte, the new wonders of Jena would presumably have included
Schelling, August and Friedrich Schlegel, Schad, Hülsem and Niethammer. (Storz, Studien, p.84).

42. A reference to the work of Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), a Swiss theologian who attempted to merge aspects of Pietism with contemporary philosophy. Believing that the soul determined the appearance of one’s physical abode, Lavater became the most well-known (and frequently lampooned) practitioner of physiognomy, the then-fashionable attempt to discern a person’s character from their physical countenance. Jean Paul himself allowed Lavater to sketch his portrait in 1795. His main work is entitled Physiognomical Fragments to Convey Human Nature and the Love of Man (Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe, 1775-78).

43. Jean Paul is making a reference here to the theory of monads, the ‘simple substances’ from which all empirical objects are composed, which was postulated by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716).

44. According to Storz, “for Jean Paul every philosophy or manner of thinking which produces quantitative explanations is atomistic, be the quantities logical (in linguistic theory, for example), temporal, or spatial [...] The opposite of this is the dynamic view, which is expressed, for example, in Herder’s, Goethe’s, Jacobi’s, and Jean Paul’s conception of language; an irrational element is introduced here, an energy that flows through the quantum. Related to this is the word-pair ‘visible-audible’ [see p.164]: for Jean Paul, as for Herder, the visible is less alive than the audible because it is more static. For them there can also be nothing that would amount to an optical sphere of music.” (Storz, Studien, p.80).

45. The best known among the Atomists was Democritus (c.460 - c.370 B.C.) who set forth
the view that the universe is composed of simple, indivisible, and infinite atoms that underly all appearances.

46. The Encyclopedists were the compilers of the heralded French Encyclopédie (1751-72), edited by Denis Diderot and Jean Le Ronde d'Alembert. Inspired by the typical Enlightenment goals of universal education, secularization of knowledge, and the belief in reason and progress, every leading thinker in France had a hand in its production. What Jean Paul had found so disconcerting was the fact that the majority of these thinkers shared a belief in materialism and used the work as a vehicle to spread their philosophy. In his first novel, The Invisible Lodge (Die unsichtbare Loge, 1793), he recommended Jacobi's Woldemar as a countermeasure, praising it as “still the best work that has been written about and against the Encyclopedia” [I,1:152].

47. Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777), a professor of medicine in Göttingen from 1736 to 1753. Besides being known for his literary works, he was also a very influential physiologist. Jean Paul’s suggestion here is that Haller’s physiological method has strayed from its original study of living organisms in general and their relationship with God and approaches being anatomy proper with all its mechanistic implications. Lewis White Beck has aptly summed up the original appeal of Haller to men like Jean Paul: “The enthusiasm for Newtonian nature led to deism; the enthusiasm for Hallerian nature led to romantic identifications with nature which were almost pantheistic, with both God and man immanent in the living processes of nature.” (Beck, Early German Philosophy, p.364).

48. Generatio aequivoca (or originaria): a scholastic term meaning ‘self-creation’ used in reference to God’s ability to bring himself into existence.
49. There are five points or areas of a human face considered essential in order to render an
accurate drawing. [B,I,9:587].

50. The contrast between these activities is more pronounced in the original German since
the two verbs share the same prefix: ‘ausblasen’ (to blow out) and ‘ausbrüten’ (to hatch or
incubate). The image of an egg emptied of its contents may be Jean Paul’s attempt at
providing a more concrete example of an ‘empty quantity’—especially considering that it is
only done in order to preserve the shell for decorative purposes.

51. Kant had turned this around and defined ‘smell’ as ‘a distant taste’ in §19 of his Anthrop-
pology From a Pragmatic Point of View (Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht, 1798).

52. A reference to the Dido episode in Vergil’s Aeneid. The King of Carthage granted Dido
as much land as she could cover with cowhide, whereupon Dido cut the hide in thin strips and
encompassed a large part of the city.

53. Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), the grandfather of Charles Darwin, was a doctor and
naturalist whose main work, Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life (1795-99), had appeared
in German around the time Jean Paul was writing Titan.

54. A basilisk was a mythological reptile born of a cock’s egg that was hatched under toads
or snakes. They were reputed to have the Medusa-like ability to kill with a mere look and
therefore could only be killed by being forced to look at their own deadly reflection. Jean
Paul’s analogy here is that just as the basilisk can only be killed with its own weapon, so can
a particular philosophy only be refuted by the same, as in this case by demonstrating the
absurdity of its conclusions.

55. According to Greek mythology, the Danaides were the fifty daughters of Danaus, the
King of Argos. At his urging, all but one of them murdered their respective husbands on the night of their wedding. They were condemned to Hades and punished by being forced to draw water from a well with a sieve for all eternity. In his “Letter to Fichte” Jacobi had also employed this analogy in criticizing Fichte’s philosophy by saying that he wished nothing but annihilation upon “such a Danaidic, such an Ixionic bliss.” (Jacobi, “Jacobi to Fichte,” p.511).

56. Jean Paul takes advantage of the multiple meanings of the German verb ‘schöpfen’ here in order to embellish the analogy with the Danaidean-sieve, for while it does mean “to create,” it has the additional meaning of “to ladle” or “to scoop up.”


58. “As a consequence of working through this system three times and every time finding that my thoughts on certain statements had changed, I can fully expect that they will continue to change and take shape with continued contemplation. I myself will work most carefully on them, and every useful thought from others will be welcome to me. -- Further, as deeply convinced as I am that the fundamental principles upon which this entire system is based are irrefutable, and as strongly as I have voiced this conviction here and there with my complete right to do so, the possibility that it would nevertheless be repudiated is one that I naturally cannot conceive of as yet. Even that would be welcome to me though, since the truth would win out in the process.” (Fichte, Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, p.89).

59. Lingua franca [Ital.: ‘Frankish language’]: A language spoken in the Levant resembling a simplified Italian. In contemporary usage lingua franca refers to a common language used
for communication between people of differing nationalities.

60. Hylozoism is a doctrine attributed to the early Ionian philosophers asserting that all matter is endowed with life.

61. See the letter to Jacobi from April 9, 1801: “I’m now reading Jakob Böhme. When he just philosophizes and isn’t chemical, for example concerning the tranquility of God and the 40 questions on the soul, he is profound and noble, a pre-Fichtean even” [B,III,4:63].

62. Dyadic arithmetic (more commonly known as binary arithmetic) is a simplified system of numbers first developed by Leibniz, in which 2 is the fundamental number or radix.

63. Berend believes that Jean Paul inadvertently wrote ‘72’ here instead of ‘70’ if this particular number is a reference to Luke 10:1: “After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was to come” [B,I,9:588]. See also §13 (pp.186-87) where Jean Paul uses the number 70 several times.

64. Brownianism refers to the medical theories advanced by the Scottish physician John Brown (1735-1788). In his principle work, Elementa medicinae (1780), Brown argued that ‘excitablity’ was the singular factor that distinguished all living creatures from those that are dead.

65. Aloisio Galvani (1737-1798), an Italian physicist and professor of anatomy at the University of Bologna. After the accidental discovery of twitching in the leg muscles of frogs he began conducting extensive research in the area of dynamic electricity, now known as Galvanism.

66. Neptunists were believers in the teachings of Abraham Gottlob Werner (1715-1787),
considered to be the father of German geology. Werner believed that the earth arose from a vast primeval ocean and considered volcanic activity to be an aberration of nature. Those who opposed his theory of the aqueous origin of the earth were appropriately referred to as Vulcanists.

67. "What is truth?" Pilate poses this question to Christ in John 18:38.

68. As contrasted with the word ‘phenomenon,’ which denotes an item in the physical world and therefore something which can be known, ‘noumenon’ is the designation used by Kant to refer to things in themselves, i.e., things outside the limits of our experience and consequently unknowable. According to Storz (p.86), ‘immanent noumenon’ is a neologism coined by Jean Paul for Fichte’s Absolute I. It may help to clarify the intended meaning of this term by observing Fichte’s own usage of the word ‘immanent’ in the following passage from *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794): “Criticism is therefore *immanent*, because it posits everything in the I; dogmatism is *transcendent*, because it goes beyond the I.” (p.120). Fichte’s juxtaposition of criticism (in the Kantian sense of ‘Critical Philosophy’) with dogmatism is done to illustrate the superiority of the former; instead of assuming the validity of our cognitive faculty, i.e., reason, as a means to certain knowledge of the world, Critical Philosophy proceeds from an analysis of reason itself in order to reveal the reliability of its conclusions. In other words, it recognizes that the “I” is that which is unconditioned and absolute, and thus the proper starting point for philosophical investigations. (It is important not to confuse Fichte’s pejorative usage of ‘transcendent’ here with ‘transcendental’). Jean Paul’s conjunction of ‘immanent’ with ‘noumenon’ is designed to imply yet again that Fichte’s Absolute I is the
source of all creation, even the so-called things-in-themselves.

69. *Causa sui* (*aliarumque*) is often used interchangeably with *prima causae*, both of which are scholastic designations for God meaning, respectively, ‘the cause of himself (and all else)’ and ‘the first cause.’

70. *Aseitas* [Latin: *from (ens) a se, ‘(being) from itself’*]: The scholastics believed that God’s perfection was embodied in the complete independence of his existence, i.e., God exists in himself, of himself, and through himself. It is Jean Paul’s contention that Fichte makes the same existential claim for his Absolute I. Moreover, through his later usage of the word *ameitas* [correspondingly from *ens a me, ‘(being) from myself’*] to characterize an individual who attributes divine properties to himself, Jean Paul appears to level a more personal criticism against Fichte and the self-aggrandizing claims of his *Wissenschaftslehre* (see p.191).

71. Influxionism (*inflexus physicus*), more commonly known as Interactionism, is the view that there is a causal connection in the concurrent interaction between mind and body, i.e., matter can act immediately upon the mind, just as the mind can act upon matter.

72. *Harmonia praestabiltia*: ‘Pre-established harmony’ was a doctrine advanced by Leibniz to refute theories such as Interactionism. In essence, Leibniz claimed that God had established a harmony between the monads of existence that allowed each to develop purely in virtue of its own nature, thereby eliminating any type of causal relationship.

73. In his “Letter to Fichte” Jacobi writes: “I chose this image because I first found entry into the *Doctrine of Science* [*Wissenschaftslehre*] through the representation of an inverted Spinozism. And I still portray it to myself as a materialism without matter, or a *mathesis pura* in which a pure and empty consciousness counts for mathematical space.” (Jacobi, “Jacobi
to Fichte,” p. 502).

74. The metastasis which Jean Paul has in mind is the shift of emphasis from nature as the divinity in Spinozism to the I as being equivalent to the divinity in Fichte’s philosophy.

75. Pico is an active volcano in the Azores, a Portuguese archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean.

76. A reference to the basic proposition of the physics of Epicurus (341 B.C.- 270 B.C.), namely, “ex nihilo nihil fit” (“nothing arises from nothing”). It is of central importance here to note that Spinoza embraced this idea as well, and it was for this reason that he found the idea of Creation incoherent. Thus, in terms of Jean Paul’s critique of Fichte, the reduction of the latter’s philosophy to Spinozism is not as seamless as he and Jacobi believed; since God could be no creator on Spinoza’s view, it seems inappropriate to accuse Fichte’s absolute I of possessing divine powers of creation.

77. Johannes Hevelius, né Hewelcke, (1611-1687) was a well-known Polish astronomer who had built an observatory in Danzig and published the first topology of the moon’s surface in his Selenographia (1647).

78. According to Hindu doctrine, Vishnu, the supreme God, appears on the earth in ten different incarnations, the final one being Kalki, the judge, who will descend from heaven on a winged horse at the end of the world.

79. Natura naturans (‘nature begetting’) was a term used by the Scholastics, and later by Spinoza, to characterize the creative nature of God. It is often contrasted with natura naturata (‘nature begotten’), i.e., the world as created by God. In light of the fact that Jacobi had criticized the Wissenschaftslehre as an inverted Spinozism (line 528), Jean Paul’s understanding of these concepts most likely corresponds to that of Spinoza, whose idea of God
differed from that of the Scholastics. According to Spinoza, God, as infinite and indivisible substance, is not distinct from his Creation (as the Scholastics had claimed).

80. The word ‘demiurge’ [Greek: δημιουργός] originally denoted a workman or a craftsman. However, since Plato’s usage of the word in the Timaeus (29d-30c), it has come to refer to the Creator of the world.


82. This was a very frequent motif of fairy tales in the 18th century, especially after European readers were introduced to similar stories in the collection of Arabian fairy tales, The Thousand and One Nights, which was discovered by the French Orientalist Antoine Galland (1646-1715) and translated into French between 1704 and 1717. [I,3:1,134-35].

83. It is well known now that both Newton and Leibniz had discovered the differential, or infinitesimal, calculus at approximately the same time, although a dispute arose concerning priority in discovery since both had published their results many years after the fact.

84. The accusation of the polytheistic implications in Fichte’s philosophy can be seen in the following passage from Jean Paul’s letter to Christian Otto from December 20, 1799: “I have written a 40-page satire and refutation of Fichte, the Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana, which is on its way to you. I have all his works on my desk and am well acquainted with his polytheistic system that no one could have deduced from the Appellation and certainly not from his other works without knowledge of Spinoza” [B,III,3:263].

85. The Decalogue refers to the Ten Commandments as found in second and fifth Books of Moses (Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21).
86. See note number 69.

87. Pestitiz is the name of the city in which Jean Paul’s *Titan* is set.

88. As opposed to Trinitarians, Unitarians believe in the unity of God and deny the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

89. See note number 79.

90. *A parte ante*: ‘from the beginning.’

91. The canonical hours (*horae canonicae*) are those periods of the day when Catholic clergy are to devote themselves exclusively to prayer.

92. An allusion to the legend of the marksman who makes a pact with the Devil to obtain bullets that will go wherever he wishes; this legend would later be popularized by Carl Maria von Weber in his opera *The Freeshooter (Der Freischütz, 1821).*

93. A reference to the legend which claims that seventy translators were required to complete the first Greek translation of the Old Testament at the request of Ptolemy II in 270 B.C. Accordingly, this version of the Old Testament is designated as the Septuagint [Latin: *septuaginta*, ‘seventy.’]

94. *Venerabile*: ‘holy of holies.’

95. *Sensorium commune*: the common center for all the faculties of sense and cognition.

96. *Simultaneum*: a decree granting various religious groups the shared right to use the facilities of the church.

97. Aleksandr Vasilyevich Suvorow, Prince Italinskiy (1730-1800), was a Russian military commander who had gained renown for his accomplishments in the wars against Poland (1768-1772) and in the French revolutionary wars.

99. Samuel Heinecke (1727-1790) implemented the first system of comprehensive education for the deaf in Germany. He had ardently opposed the traditional method of teaching spelling in favor of a phonetic method and, consequently, had advocated instruction in lipreading as opposed to sign language.

100. Pécherais: the French name for the indigenous peoples of Tierra del Fuego, an archipelago located at the southernmost end of South America. [I,3:1,135].

101. See note number 70.

102. Samuel Bochart (1599-1667), an oriental linguist and biblical scholar best known for his Hierozoicon, sive, bipertitum opus De animalibus sacrae scripturae (London, 1663), a study of nature in the Bible.

103. Peter Pindar (a.k.a. John Wolcot) composed a small epic on the louse in 1768, but a similar poem from Homer has not been discovered. [B,I,9:588].

104. ‘Lares’ refers to the tutelary gods or spirits of ancient Rome, i.e., household gods.

105. A shuttle is a crucial instrument in weaving used to pass the woof thread between the warp threads. Jean Paul’s choice of this analogy may lie in the fact that Fichte’s father was a ribbon weaver.

106. Followers of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (ca. 570-500 B.C.). The Pythagoreans held that the universe could be explained entirely in mathematical terms since everything was composed of numbers which they believed to have spacial properties. (See Aristotle’s Metaphysics, 1080b).

107. Deus majorum gentium refers to the one supreme god as opposed to the dei minorum gentium, the demigods or half-gods.

108. Nutritor: an academic title meaning (in the broadest sense) ‘he who nourishes.’
109. *Opera omnia*: 'all the works', 'the whole output (of an author).'

110. Salomon Gessner (1730-1788), a Swiss painter and poet who also directed his family's publishing business. Even though he had published his own works they became very popular and were often translated into several languages, especially his *Idyllen* (1758).

111. The Prince of Wales is the title conferred upon the heir to the British throne.

112. In his *De vita Caesarum* (121 A.D.), Suetonius (9-79 A.D.) relates that the last words of the Emperor Vespasian were: "Ut puto, deus fio" ("I think I am becoming a god.")

113. The 'Iron Virgin' (also known as the 'Virgin Mary') was an instrument of torture invented in Spain during the period of the Inquisition. The device was disguised as a statue of the Madonna whose open arms would gradually encircle the unfortunate blasphemer until the concealed knives wrested the desired confession. The German version was more crudely constructed of sheet-iron and resembled a free-standing coffin with a rounded top for the victim's head. The doors of the device were studded with long knives which were designed to kill the victim immediately upon closing. See Scott, *The History of Torture Throughout the Ages*, pp. 223-26.

114. The Septembriseurs were the leaders and participants of the September Massacres which took place in Paris from September 2-6, 1792. During these five days, approximately 1,400 imprisoned Royalists were murdered at the decision of the revolutionary Commune of Paris.

115. Manichaeans were followers of the doctrines of Manes (ca. 216-276), a Persian who was deeply influenced by the Gnostic's attempt to reconcile Christian and Buddhist beliefs with the ancient Persian religion of Mazdeism and Greek philosophy. Manes taught a system
compounded of Zoroastrian dualism and Christian salvation that was characterized by a severe asceticism.

116. Stercoranists [Latin: sterco, ‘dung’] were members of a heretical Christian sect who believed that the claims of transubstantiation necessitated that the body and blood of Christ be digested and evacuated from the body in the same manner as anything else that is ingested. Consequently, they only acknowledged the spiritual presence of God in the Eucharist.

117. The Persian religion of Zoroastrianism teaches that Ormazd, the supreme deity and lord of light and goodness, is engaged in a constant war against the evil and destructive god, Ahriman.


119. Communicatio idiomatum: ‘the commonality of properties.’ According to this theological doctrine, the divine and human natures are united in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, it was the human nature of Christ that allowed him to die on the cross, while his divine nature permitted him to rise from the dead.

120. The section of Fichte’s Ethics under discussion is PartIII, §16: On the Cause of Evil in Finite, Rational Beings. (See p.202 also).

121. The pun Jean Paul is referring to is a play on the word ‘setzen’ which means ‘to print’ and in its more Fichtean sense, ‘to posit.’ (See the footnote on p.95 for a discussion of the verb ‘setzen’).
122. Although a pantheon is a temple or shrine dedicated to all the gods of a nation, it was widely believed that the Roman Pantheon was built by Agrippa between 27 and 25 B.C. to honor Venus and Mars. [I,3:1,100].

123. One of the Pope's titles. [I,3:1,136].

124. In Greek mythology the brothers Castor and Pollux were inseparable. After Castor was slain in battle, Pollux begged Zeus to take his life in exchange for his brother's. According to one version of the legend, Zeus honored the brother's mutual affection by granting them a place among the stars as the constellation Gemini.

125. In Pierre Corneille's tragedy *Cinna, or the Mercy of Augustus* (1640), Emperor Augustus forgives Cinna, the leader of the conspiracy against him, by saying: "Soyons amis, Cinna." ("Let us be friends, Cinna." Act V, Scene 3). Although Storz (p.88) believes that Jean Paul reverses the relationship out of politeness toward Fichte, it seems more plausible that Jean Paul was aware that he more closely resembled Cinna, for the aim of his own critique was to dethrone the heir to Kant's critical philosophy.

126. Both Theopaschites and Patripassians were members of Monophysitic sects of the 6th century, i.e., they maintained that Christ had a single nature that was a composite of the human and the divine. Although the former were trinitarians and the latter were unitarians, the ultimate conclusions of their beliefs were considered heretical, namely that God the Father had actually suffered during the crucifixion.

127. Jean Paul confuses the musical direction *maestoso* [Italian: 'majestic'] with that of *mesto* [Italian: 'sad', 'mournful'].

128. The well-known doctor and chemist Georg Ernst Stahl (1659-1734) had espoused the
principle of animism, i.e., the belief that all natural organisms possess a soul which is the ultimate organizing principle of the universe. Jean Paul's usage of anima Stahlii is identical to his usage of actuosum Albini above (See Endnote number 4).

129. Johann Georg Meusel (1743-1820), an assiduous encyclopaedist of German literature. In addition to Scholarly Germany: A Lexicon of Present-Day German Authors (Gelehrtes Deutschland oder Lexicon der jetzt lebenden deutschen Schriftsteller, 1776-78), Meusel also published a 15 volume collection entitled A Lexicon of German Authors from 1750-1800. (Lexikon der von 1750 bis 1800 gestorben deutschen Schriftsteller, 1802-1816). According to Storz (p.85), Jean Paul took great pleasure in citing compendiums of this nature for it delighted him to imagine catalogists self-assuredly lumping so many diverse and unique individuals into one category.

130. In the first part of the Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind (Bk. III, Ch. V) Herder writes: "It should not be surprising therefore that the more an animal species resembles human beings, the more their mechanical skills decrease." (Herder, Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit, p.110).

131. The Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler (1707-1783) published his Introductio in analysin infinitorum in 1748.

132. Johann August Ernesti (1707-1781), a well-known philologist. See the note concerning the title.

133. Doctor irrefragibilis: the 'irrefutable teacher.'

134. Opera buffa ("comic opera") and opera seria ("serious opera," i.e., an opera having a heroic or tragic subject) are terms commonly used to designate two contrasting forms of 18th
century Italian opera.

135. See previous note.

136. According to Greek mythology, Polyphemus was the cyclops who held Odysseus and his companions captive and devoured two of them daily until Odysseus made him drunk and blinded him.

137. See Fichte’s Public Appeal: “The supersensory world is the place of our birth and our only firm standpoint; the sensory world is only its reflection.” (Appellation an das Publicum, pp.211-12).

138. Johann Christian Edelmann (1698-1767) was representative of those Enlightenment thinkers in Germany who rejected Christian dogma and revealed religion in general without relinquishing all religious belief. Nevertheless, Edelmann’s unabashed criticism of Pietism and his advocacy of a Spinozistic pantheism amounted to nothing more than atheism in the eyes of most eighteenth-century Germans.

139. Jean Paul’s tendency to produce extensive lists of earlier-known physicians along with their respective claims to discovery was influenced by the English author Laurence Sterne (1713-1768). See, for example, the digression of Shandy’s father on the location of the soul in Sterne’s Tristram Shandy (1759-1767), Pt. II, Ch. 19. [I,3:1,114].

140. In ancient cosmology empyrean referred to the highest heaven which was thought to be composed of fire or light. Christian theologians later adopted the word to designate the realm of God and the angels.

141. “Scotch as much as you wish at this pure pleasure in the pure knowledge of pure knowledge alone, a pleasure which has not altogether inappropriately been called naked
logical enthusiasm. We don’t deny that in it we are blessed, no longer concerned about
heaven and earth; and that even if body and soul were to fail us, we would not care because
of this lofty love for the knowledge of knowledge as such, the insight into seeing as such, the
doing of doing as such.” (Jacobi, “Jacobi to Fichte,” p.511).

142. The Herald was a Nuremberg journal in circulation until 1812. The full title read: The
Herald, or A Journal Devoted to the Progress and Latest Observations and Discoveries in
the Arts and Sciences. (Der Verkündiger oder Zeitschrift für die Fortschritte und neuesten
Beobachtungen, Erfindungen in den Künsten und Wissenschaften usw.) [I,3:1,137].

143. Berend notes that he could find no such statement in any of Schelling’s works from this
period. [B,1:9:589].

144. Johann Georg Zimmermann (1728-1795), a Swiss physician and popular writer who
became the private physician to King George III in 1768. According to Storz (p.90), the
above-mentioned machine was invented by Zimmermann to alleviate hypochondria.

145. See the footnote on p.189.

146. Showbread refers to the ancient Jewish practice of placing unleavened bread before
Yahweh in the sanctuary. See the first book of Samuel, wherein David requests five loaves
of bread from the priest Ahimelech. He is given holy bread instead of common bread “for
there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the
Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away” [1 Sam. 21:6].

147. Compare the following passage from the “Speech of the Dead Christ” (“Rede des toten
Christus vom Weltgebäude herab, daß kein Gott sei”) found in the novel Siebenkäs: “the
entire spiritual universe is demolished by the hand of atheism and shattered into countless
mercurial points of 1's which sparkle, run, wander, flee together and apart, without unity and without continued existence. No one is so alone in the universe as one who denies the existence of God” [I,2:266].
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