

# *“Das Eine, was der Philosophie Not ist”*: Reinhold’s argument concerning the absolute principle of philosophy

*“Das Eine, was der Philosophie Not ist”*: o argumento de Reinhold sobre o princípio absoluto da filosofia

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## ABSTRACT

The present essay is devoted to analyzing Reinhold’s contribution to one of the most relevant questions in German idealism, namely, the possibility of an absolute principle of all philosophy, as a task left open by Kant’s critical enterprise. The main aim is to assess the extent to which Reinhold is the first to propose this philosophical problem as a question of language, and in doing so the possibility of an absolutely apodictic philosophical language, as it would be later resumed and developed by Fichte and other authors.

**Keywords:** Reinhold, language, philosophy, principle, consciousness.

## RESUMO

O presente artigo propõe-se analisar o contributo de Reinhold para uma das mais relevantes questões do período do Idealismo Alemão, a saber, a possibilidade de um princípio absoluto de toda a filosofia, enquanto tarefa deixada em aberto pela empresa crítica de Kant. O principal objectivo é avaliar até que ponto Reinhold é o primeiro a propor este problema filosófico enquanto uma questão de linguagem, e, ao fazê-lo, propor também a possibilidade de uma linguagem filosófica absolutamente apodíctica, tal como ela seria posteriormente reatada por Fichte e outros autores.

**Palavras-chave:** Reinhold, linguagem, filosofia, princípio, consciência.

It is widely acknowledged that Karl Leonhard Reinhold is not only one of the main popularizers of Kant’s philosophy, but also and above all one of the most sagacious and faithful supporters of Kant’s system of thought.<sup>2</sup>

Kant, Reinhold said, was his master, and the goal of his theory was mainly to complement and perfect Kant’s, which Reinhold considered as not only correct, but, more importantly, *the only*

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<sup>2</sup> Kant himself acknowledges this, and shows himself forever in Reinhold’s debt for it. Referring to Reinhold, in “On the use of teleological principles in philosophy”, in 1788, Kant says: “The talent of a lucid, even graceful presentation of dry abstract doctrines, without loss of their thoroughness, is so rare [...] and yet so useful, I will not say only for the recommendation, but even for the clarity of insight, the intelligibility and the conviction associated with it, that I consider myself obliged to pay thanks publicly to the man who supplemented my works [...]” (AA 8: 183).

possible for the present age. So it had been *prior to 1790*, when, since the publication of the second *Critique*, the problem of Kant's philosophy progressively fermented in the *Tübinger Stift*, thus setting Tübingen's orthodoxy against Kant and Reinhold himself; so it would be in the following years, when, under the influence of Reinhold's writings, the problem of religion would be accentuated in Tübingen<sup>3</sup> and transferred to Jena as a problem of philosophy and language (for, in truth, the point in discussion was the authority of concepts in the true cognition and designation of objects); and so it would be until the decisive influence of Immanuel Carl Diez<sup>4</sup> and the later outbreak of Fichte's philosophy, the two main factors why Reinhold, in his own words, would have to "destroy [his] elementary philosophy"<sup>5</sup>. And even though, at times, the course of Reinhold's reflection may seem to separate him from Kant, however, this only served the purpose of ultimately reuniting both theories all the more fraternally; a conciliatory factor very true to Reinhold's character, which has perhaps contributed to the unjust notion that Reinhold's philosophy is but a faint echo of Kant's<sup>6</sup>, and to the even more unjust neglect of the importance of his work not only for Kant's philosophy, but for a whole generation of young philosophers<sup>7</sup>.

Now, this trait of theoretical loyalty surely defines not only the course of Reinhold's philosophy, but also the very image of his reflection, which is why it is assumed by Reinhold as the horizon of his philosophy. However, there is at least *one moment* in the course of Reinhold's philosophy that reflects a deliberate separation from Kant's philosophy: a moment which is one of deliberate accentuation, if not of radicalization of the critical enterprise, and which, for that reason, displays a will to *overcome* Kant's philosophy. One such moment takes place in the work *Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, in 1790; the second of three works where Reinhold defines his position with regard to the problem<sup>8</sup>, but perhaps the one containing the fundamental vectors of Reinhold's theory, and surely the only one displaying precisely that which renders him a unique thinker: *his argument on Kant's philosophy not only as a problem of philosophy, but also as a problem of language*: in a word, the factor

which presents said conflicts to the philosophical community of the time and decisively propels the philosophies of Fichte and the young idealists.

The aim of the present essay is therefore to address the aforementioned moment and, by analyzing the *Beiträge*, attempt not only to underscore the *singularity of Reinhold's philosophy*, thus rescuing it from the apparent indifference into which it has fallen, but also to discern Reinhold's image as a keystone in one of the main problems of German idealism: namely, the problem of *the destination of philosophy as a field of knowledge*.

Additionally, the essay has two further objectives:

- (i) To show that, after Kant, Reinhold was the first to elevate philosophy to the condition of a *problem of reason*, which he did due to the necessity to render philosophy systematic, obedient to a single absolute principle and therefore *scientific*;
- (ii) To prove that Reinhold was one of the few to consider this problem as a *problem of language*, and the *one* to show the philosophical community of his time that the main, perhaps most arduous difficulty in Kant's philosophy was in understanding the aspirations that Kant had placed in its language, and not so much in the height that his philosophical edifice had attained; which precisely proved Kant's irrefutable importance as a thinker of language *through* the language of philosophy itself, and how that would come to transform the very face of philosophy in general.

The *Beiträge* occupy a central position not only in Reinhold's work, but also in his line of thought, and, as was said, their tendency shows as much of a theoretical advance in relation to the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* (2015 [1790-1792]), the "Abhandlung über das Bedürfnis einer neuen Untersuchung des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens" (Reinhold, 1789 [1976]), or the "Fragmente über das bisher allgemein verkannte Vorstellungsvermögen" (Reinhold, 1789b, p. 3-22), as it is a sign of what was to be consolidated shortly afterwards, in the *Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (1791).

<sup>3</sup> A reference to the work of supernaturalists such as G.C. Storr, J.F. Flatt or F.G. Süßkind, Theology professors at Tübingen, to whom the truths of the genuine Christian doctrine were irrefutable truths, visible not only *beyond*, but precisely *independently from reason*, in revelation.

<sup>4</sup> On the influence of Immanuel Carl Diez, Professor at Tübingen, on Reinhold, see Henrich (2004); Frank (1998), and Diez (1966).

<sup>5</sup> See Reinhold's letter to Baggesen, 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1797, in Fuchs et al. (1978, p. 403): "Es ist meine heiligste, dringendste Pflicht, die Elementarphilosophie selbst einzustürzen, aus ihren brauchbaren Trümmern eine Sacristei für den Tempel der reinen Vernunft zu errichten, den Fichte begründet hat – laut – laut zu sagen daß ich diese Begründung anerkenne [...]."

<sup>6</sup> Despite the general neglect of Reinhold, there are notable exceptions to this, such as Henrich (1989, 2004); Frank (1998); Bondeli (1995); Bondeli and Schrader (2003); Lauth (1974); Klemmt (1958).

<sup>7</sup> Reinhold lectured on Philosophy in Jena between 1787 and 1794, and due to his quarrel with the Tübingen theologians, his influence was felt at the *Stift* as well. As a Professor in Jena, he had such notable students as J.P.A. Feuerbach, J.B. Erhard, C.L. Fernow, Novalis, F.I. Niethammer or F.K. Forberg (on Reinhold's [positive] influence on his students, see Forberg, "Über die bisherigen Schicksale der Theorie des Vorstellungsvermögens", in "Fülleborn's Beyträgen zur Geschichte der Philosophie", St. 1, 1791, p. 91-113); as an influence in Tübingen, he was read by many future philosophers, among whom Hölderlin, Hegel and Schelling (not to forget that one of Schelling's two lost *specimina* was entitled "Über die Möglichkeit einer Philosophie ohne Beinamen, nebst einigen Bemerkungen über die Reinholdsche Elementarphilosophie"). On the theme, see Fabianelli (2003).

<sup>8</sup> The other two were *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* (1786) and *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (1791).

The fundamental idea that emerges from the work and presides over Reinhold's thought is, in a way, akin to the one which would preside over the later philosophies of Fichte and Schelling, namely, that philosophy lacked a fundamental ground, a "first and universally accepted principle of all philosophy" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 3) which united its theoretical and practical parts. For Kant's philosophy, and philosophy in general, Reinhold thought, were becoming more and more divided due to the abusive misinterpretation of its domain and language by the different philosophical sects growing around it. The absence of one such regulating principle not only concealed the horizon of man's knowledge from his sight (thus leading him to believe that this horizon was more or less ample than it really was), but also legitimated the belief that the progress towards that point in knowledge – that is, the possibility of a critical language, the suppression of all doubt through language – could be attained without the aid of reason: which, in turn, only encouraged the pretensions of those who defended common understanding as one such vehicle. But even more ominous to Kant's critical endeavor, the language and form of philosophy "drew away from the form of rigorous science [...]", instead "assuming [...] the form of history",<sup>9</sup> where chance and the contingency of life precede the scientific ground, and scientific laws are elevated to the condition of "universally valid" ("allgemeingültig"), but not "universally accepted" ("allgemeingeltend") laws<sup>10</sup>; which not only prevented the acquisition of an absolute principle, but cast a shadow of doubt over the whole problem.

Hence, to Reinhold, peace between philosophical sects presupposed not only identifying that which united them in their objection to Kantian purism, but also rectifying what was inconsistent with their language. In a word, the aim was to oppose these sects' obstinacy in stating the impossibility of a single principle of philosophy, thus protecting the critical edifice from such attacks and gathering the different sects around a single critical language; under pain of forever neglecting the regulative enterprise of reason and consigning it to a constitutive and heteronomic progress.

According to Reinhold, the primary cause of this problem has a double origin, both of a *philosophical* nature. Reinhold refers to one of them in the Preface to *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*, in 1789, entitled "Vorrede ueber die bisherigen Schicksale der kantischen Philosophie" (Reinhold, 1789, p. 1-68). The first one is the reformulation of the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophical system, which, though still unconcluded, had expanded too quickly throughout the philosophical community, thus creating a phenomenon of *popularization of philosophy*<sup>11</sup>, as well as "the fall of the ancient [...] division wall between world and school".<sup>12</sup> It was this dispersion that resulted in the fragmentation of the philosophical community: a process which reached its peak during Reinhold's stay in Jena, by 1790; more precisely, in the dialogue between Reinhold and the Tübingen theologians, the skeptics and the Kantian orthodoxies, the aforementioned philosophical sects, which by refuting Kant only accentuated their incomprehension of the Professor of Königsberg and thus contributed to an even greater dissemination of different factions (and the subsequent proliferation of different *languages*) within philosophy.

The second origin of this problem is more complex. It is presented at the beginning of a chapter in the first volume of the *Beiträge*, bearing the title "Verhältnis der Theorie des Vorstellungsvermögens zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft". In this chapter, Reinhold's aim is to further the aforementioned issue, and this he does by explaining that the problems arising from the inexistence of an absolute principle of all philosophy should be attributed not only to the exacerbation they had suffered at the hands of the sects, but also to the insufficiency of Kant's theory. For though with regard to the faculty of knowledge – that is, the acquisition of the forms of intuitions, concepts and ideas – Kant's theory was to Reinhold incontrovertible, which explains why Reinhold's aim could never be to surpass Kant, rather to attain his master's results through a different path<sup>13</sup>, however, *in a deeper regard*, namely, the degree of concord of all knowledge with a single absolute principle, Kant had left his enterprise unfinished.<sup>14</sup> The reason for this was obvious to Reinhold and similar to the ones later con-

<sup>9</sup> See Reinhold (1789a [1796], p. 10), "In den Lehrbüchern nahm die Philosophie in eben dem Verhältnisse die Form der Geschichte an, als sie sich von der Form der strengen Wissenschaft entfernete".

<sup>10</sup> "Es muß ein allgemeingeltender Satz als erster Grundsatz möglich sein, oder die Philosophie ist als Wissenschaft unmöglich [...]" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 248).

<sup>11</sup> "Noch nie hat ein philosophisches System eine so schnelle und so allgemeine Aufnahme gefunden, als das Leibnitzisch-wolffische. [...] Allein eben darum und fast eben so bald verloren die wesentlicheren Grundsätze dieser allgemein beliebten Philosophie den Reiz der Neuheit. Sie erhielten durch ihren vielfältigen Gebrauch die Popularität gemeiner und alltäglicher Maximen [...]" (Reinhold, 1789, p. 3-4).

<sup>12</sup> "Ein Zusammenfluß günstiger Umstände, deren Aufzählung nicht hieher gehört, schien den Einsturz der alten leidigen Scheidewand zwischen Welt und Schule vollendet zu haben [...]" (Reinhold, 1789, p. 4-5).

<sup>13</sup> "[...] So stellt er [die Zurückführung der Hauptmomente der kr. Philosophie auf einen allgemeingeltenden Grund] die ganze kritische *Elementarphilosophie unabhängig* von den Gründen, auf welchen sie in der Kr. d. r. V. feststeht, von neuem auf; und dient, da er auf einem ganz verschiedenen Wege zu eben denselben Resultaten führt, den Kantischen Entdeckungen, als eine den *Rechnungsproben* ähnliche Bestätigung" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 184).

<sup>14</sup> "Daß die Formen der Vorstellungen, so wie sie in der Kritik d. V. aufgestellt werden, auf keinen allgemeingeltenden Grundsatz zurückgeführt sind; und daß in diesem Werke von keinem ersten Grundsatz der Wissenschaft des Erkenntnisvermögens, noch weniger von einem ersten Grundsatz der Philosophie überhaupt, die Rede sei, welcher die Elementarphilosophie unmittelbar und durch dieselbe die von ihr abgeleitete theoretische und praktische Philosophie mittelbar begründen soll, weiß jeder Leser derselben" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 185).



veyed by Fichte or Schelling: Kant had indeed indicated an absolute principle of philosophy, but had not *elevated it to that condition*, had not *realized* it; that is, he had not consolidated it conceptually, nor had he consigned it to the perpetuity of words. But because the possibility of that first principle was undeniable and its realization, as the main task of philosophy in general, all the more necessary, then the task of resuming Kant's endeavor could only mean to Reinhold taking one step further towards *the consolidation of the language of that principle*, thus fulfilling the aforementioned omissions and once and for all instituting philosophy in the field of science.

Reinhold had already started developing this twofold effort earlier, in the aforementioned text which served as introduction to the *Versuch*, in 1789. The text, as noted earlier, was entitled: "Über die bisherigen Schicksale der kantischen Philosophie." The topic here is, quite specifically, the *procedure* of Kant's philosophy.

Hence, according to Reinhold, while seeking to render his principles universally accepted (absolute), Kant had been forced to choose a singular path, different from that of popular philosophers: "instead of determining the nature and reach of the faculty of knowledge by means of known objects, he [Kant] had had to determine the cognizability of objects themselves by means of the pure faculty of knowledge" (Reinhold, 1789, p. 46). That is, "instead of [...] descending from universal to particular" (from the infinite to the finite, that is, from the faculty of knowledge in general to known objects), "Kant had had to ascend"<sup>15</sup> from the particular to the universal, from the objects themselves to the pure faculty of knowledge. But in doing so – and this is to Reinhold the most relevant – *only apparently* had Kant only ascended from a common particular to a common universal; for, to Kant, neither is the pure faculty of knowledge just a common universal, nor is the object thus subsumed just a common particular. Quite on the contrary, Kant had turned the most infinite that philosophy possessed, the pure faculty of knowing, into its own finite, its own particular instance – and only then, through this *veiled inversion*, did he elevate himself to the universal, which, in this perspective, is the infinite of known objects, *the very cognizability of objects*, "the boundary of everything conceivable"<sup>16</sup>. In other words, Kant has operated a methodological twist between particular and universal, ascent and descent through which he attained a reflexive circle between contraries<sup>17</sup> which, to any philosopher who did not understand the *singular nuance* of this analytical method,

would be but a mere transition from the finite to the infinite and therefore a "vertigo"<sup>18</sup> in which philosophy was always entangled. Yet to Reinhold, what Kant had thus accomplished was no less than the boldest and most illuminating progress of philosophy: the reflexive mobile of a whole generation, which inverted not the elements that compose the philosophical analysis, but the very direction, the very *language* of the analysis itself, thus pre-consummating the form of philosophy and fulfilling Kant's prerogatives on the impossibility of an endless progression or on the presupposition of an ideal.

Now, to Reinhold, *this unique process surely meant the most complete development of the faculty of knowledge*; but despite this faculty's infallibility, which is visible in the way how the universal is identified with the particular, an instance was still missing. Namely, an instance proving that just as the universal may freely assume the form of the particular, the particular too is nothing but the dismembered universal; in other words, something that could unite both ends of the invisible beam that connects philosophy (the voice of the human spirit) and the human spirit itself (the ample echo box of philosophy), so that, in the presence of philosophy, the human spirit could *spontaneously* discern or rediscover itself and its mute language. For, on the one hand, only this absolute apodicticity, this veiled language between the spirit and its most privileged form of expression may serve as proof for the existence of an absolute principle; and, on the other hand, only this absolute principle may prove, in the eyes of philosophy and the spirit, that *the particular is universal, and vice versa*, or, in Reinhold's words, that the "true premises of a science may be discovered only after science itself"<sup>19</sup>: an inverse, yet complementary order of things, which is a direct consequence of the analytical course as the natural progress of the human spirit.

In a word, Reinhold states, though he identified the particular with the universal, thus defining the forms of intuitions, concepts and ideas as elements of knowledge, Kant had not succeeded in discerning among the latter *a form other than the cognizable* (which, Reinhold says, only proves that Kant did not think the possibility of a different connecting element between the voices of philosophy and the human spirit). Hence, by indicating the original premises of the faculty of knowledge and by particularizing the universal and uniting cognizability to the finite, Kant had no doubt ensured that cognizability became universal (in language), *but not that this form of thinking was redirected to a higher authority, to a more elementary form of knowledge and language*, in a word, to a higher degree of cer-

<sup>15</sup> "Anstatt des leichten [...] Herabsteigens vom Allgemeinen zum Besondern, vom Abstracten zum Concreten [...], müßte er [...] das mühsamere und langweiligere Hinaufsteigen wählen [...]" (Reinhold, 1789a [1796], p. 23-24).

<sup>16</sup> "[...] das heißt, das *allgemeinste* was die bisherige Philosophie aufzuweisen hat, müßte ihm das *Besondere* werden, von dem er sich zu dem Allgemeinen bis an die *Gränze alles Begreiflichen* erheben müßte [...]" (Reinhold, 1789a [1796], p. 24).

<sup>17</sup> A circle according to which *the minimum of finitude is infinitude, the minimum of infinitude is finitude*.

<sup>18</sup> "Wie sollte ihm der Populärphilosoph ohne Schwindel folgen können?" (Reinhold, 1789a [1796], p. 24).

<sup>19</sup> "Daß die eigentlichen Prämissen einer Wissenschaft erst *nach* der Wissenschaft selbst gefunden werden ist nichts neues, sondern eine nothwendige Folge des analytischen Ganges, der den Fortschritten des menschlichen Geistes durch die Natur desselben vorgeschrieben ist" (Reinhold, 1789a [1796], p. 67).

tainty which would prove it spontaneously and apodictically in view of the human spirit – to Reinhold, *the act of representing*. And it was precisely this, to Reinhold and later to Fichte, which promoted the chasm between theoretical and practical and, in the absence of a principle previous to the faculty of knowledge, rendered the critical edifice incomplete.

Quite naturally, the results of this non-distinction between cognition and a higher authority would have different repercussions in the scrutiny of the pretensions of human knowledge; and, of course, according to Reinhold, they would also arise in the guise of various inconsistencies.

One of these, however, concerned Reinhold above all others, and it is this one that leads us to the core of Reinhold's problem: the repercussions of the problem of philosophy as a *problem of language*. Hence, the problem was surely, first and foremost, in the fact that Kant had not thought of a more elementary form of knowledge; but by not doing so, that is, by not having referred the faculty of knowledge to a higher ground, what that meant to Reinhold was something far more important and dangerous, namely, that not only knowledge, but also *the language of philosophy* was not referred to an absolute principle; that is, it too was not absolutely apodictic<sup>20</sup> and therefore it was exposed to the most diverse interpretations (the most diverse linguistic inconsistencies), to the extent that, according to Reinhold, *predicates only pertaining to the act of representing were transferred to the cognition of things itself*. This meant that even amidst an analytical method which legitimately progresses from the infinite to the finite, the act of cognition tended to excessively subsume the "species" (*Arten*) under the "genus" (*Gattung*) – but not so due to the variability of species, rather due to an *insufficient delimitation of the genus*: after all, the same insufficiency that led to the inexistence of a final scientific genus, an ultimate principle for the faculty of knowledge (Reinhold, 2003, p. 189-191). According to Reinhold, Kant had discerned *the latency of the genus in the species*; but, Reinhold adds, he had failed to follow the concept of genus to its last ground – to the absolute principle (Reinhold, 2003, p. 187). That is to say: Kant had indeed established the concept of causality as the image of a genus that precedes species; but he had always stated that this was due to the fact that species could never precede the genus, and never, as does Reinhold in the *Beiträge*,

*because reason can only form the concept of genus from that which is common to the species; but this communitarian element only*

*ascends to the condition of consciousness when the matter from which the concept of species is formed ascends as a whole to the condition of consciousness (Reinhold, 2003, p. 186).*

Needless to say, the hereby referred "matter" of the concept of species that ascends to consciousness is precisely *the genus*. That is, the ascension (which is followed by the processes of composition and dismemberment of concepts, which, in turn, alternate amongst themselves from the most composite to the least composite, thus dismembering and justifying the genus in species) must be preceded by a plane *prior to consciousness*: and therefore prior to subject and object (Reinhold, 2003, p. 189); a plane in which one progresses from the least composite to the most composite, thus – and only thus – rendering it possible to ascend to consciousness. For, Reinhold adds, it is the composition (of the philosophical concept, as well as of the *whole body of science*) that "must precede any dismemberment" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 18),<sup>21</sup> and justify that which is finite.

And so, in a word, Reinhold concludes that *it is the genus that precedes any species*; but it does not do so as a result of any cognitive operation, rather as something *absolutely spontaneous in the human spirit, an absolutely innate kind of language of the human spirit*. Which means that, in this theoretical frontier between Kant and Reinhold (which, to Reinhold, is but one, yet seen from different perspectives), the elevation of matter to the condition of consciousness was in Kant only *partial*, due to the inalienable presence of subject and object in consciousness, whereas in Reinhold it is *total*, namely: one can *only* proceed from genus to species, as the first mutual, active and passive action from subject and object. By not considering the genus in its ultimate grounds, Kant could not have attained the concept of representing in general, for the genus is, in itself, the concept of representing in general – and by not doing so, Reinhold adds, Kant had also left undetermined what rendered the concepts of sensible representation, concept and idea a single genus, obedient to a single principle, thus inadvertently creating a problem of inconsistency in the fundaments of philosophy in general.

Now, the first consequence of this *difference in intensity of the concept of genus* is fairly obvious, namely: *Reinhold's total ascension no longer refers to the domain of cognition*. For what is prior to consciousness (because it is "whole" before being dismembered) cannot be referred to the sphere of cognition,

<sup>20</sup> "Da sich der Begriff von Philosophie auf nichts Anschauliches und Empfindbares bezieht: so läßt er sich, wenn er einmal erzeugt ist, nur durch Worte festhalten, hervorrufen und andern mitteilen; und er selbst ist in so ferne nichts von dem Sinne der Worte, oder des Wortes, womit er bezeichnet wird, Verschiedenes. [...] Dies gilt sogar von allen philosophischen Begriffen und den Bedeutungen ihrer Zeichen. Jedes Wort kann in der Philosophie nur einen einzigen bestimmten Begriff bezeichnen, und für die Sprache der Philosophie kann es durchaus keine völlig gleichbedeutende Worte geben. Wir haben daher keinen bestimmten Begriff von Philosophie, wenn wir keine bestimmte Bedeutung des Wortes aufzuweisen haben" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 16).

<sup>21</sup> "Die Zusammenfassung nun, die der Zergliederung vorhergehen und zum Grund liegen muß, wird bei philosophischen Begriffen durchs *Denken*, bei historischen durchs *Empfinden* bestimmt" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 18); or "Die Zusammenfassung im philosophischen Begriffe wird lediglich durchs *Denken* bestimmt, und zwar durch ein Denken, welches keine Zergliederung, sondern das Gegenteil von derselben ist, und aller Zergliederung vorhergeht" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 18).

rather is referred to the act of pure representing (Reinhold, 2003, p. 88-89), a sort of empty container of reason, understanding and imagination in their production of ideas, concepts and representations, without which the concepts of sensible representation, concept and idea could not be thought – to sum it up, to an *elementary philosophy*. To Reinhold, the act of representing is therefore previous to all cognition, simply because all cognition is representation, but, conversely, not all representation is knowledge.

The second consequence, however, would prove absolutely decisive both to Kant's upcoming reception and to the near future of philosophy in general. It relates to the very procedure undertaken in Reinhold's intensification of the analytical method. For, as was seen, although in the sphere of knowledge the concept of genus may only be drawn from the species, and hence one such dismemberment must prove the veracity of the genus, however, in the sphere of pure representing it is the species that need orientation from the genus regarding their legitimation. This means that the main orientation of Reinhold's elementary philosophy is *retroactive*: it is the species that have to *return* to the genus as an original authority, so as to achieve the perfect identification of the whole with itself. Though, *in order for this to happen, it is necessary that the genus already exists as such*; otherwise the species would return nowhere, rather they would err aimlessly, and the voice of the human spirit would reverberate *ad infinitum*, thus drifting astray. *The genus is, therefore, departing point for the species – but also their arrival point, and what applies to the particular genus and species is also applied to the universal ones, up until the final genus: the genus of the absolute principle*, through absolute circularity, for sure, but also, recalling Fichte, through absolute infallibility, free from all *acoustic interference* from the outside.

In a word, this means that Reinhold's *radicalization of the analytical method* was indeed based upon a progression from the whole to its parts, and this in such a way that, as if by a ripple effect, progression was ultimately determined by a *final form* which not only had to be known from the onset of the process, but also forced the process to obey without ever overpowering or corrupting it. But what this really means is that, if before knowing the species one already has a representation of the genus, and this applies from the least to the most universal in the domain of philosophy, then one such foresight must extend all the way to the *very essence of philosophy*, which is expressed in the very act of philosophizing. Hence, if we transfer this problem from the simple philosophical procedure to its repercussion *in the form of philosophy in general* (for, to be fair, one is the other, especially in a philosophical period so keen on philosophizing about philosophy as a whole), then – and here lies the core of Reinhold's problem – *all philosophy, its own development, its own language could not but reflect this analytical procedure, and therefore they too aimed for the pure principle, the pure form of science even before attaining the premises of*

*science*. Moreover, since “the essential form of philosophy, or philosophy itself is not according to its matter, but according to its essential form – a product of the human spirit; and indeed a product which can never contain anything fortuitous or of a casual constitution of the human spirit” (Reinhold, 2003, p. 22), then this essential form, this absolute genus, this first principle had to stay clear of any shade of a doubt, *by manifesting itself prior to its legitimate constitution*, thus being spontaneously (in a latent, not a sensible manner) included in the circle of science, and that circle in the orbit it itself describes in its relation to the species. Hence, and recalling Fichte, who is one with Reinhold in this regard, philosophy could not rest on a sensible nature (a feeling), rather on a *rational nature* (“a thinking”<sup>22</sup>) – and in this case, not on an ordinary thinking, on an ordinary language, rather *on a nature and a language generated by the original composition of the essential form, prior to the dismemberment inherent to the formation of concepts*: for

*through dismemberment, only due to insufficiency or excess do I become conscious whether my concept is flawed; and however, I only do this in the presupposition that the rule according to which I judge these insufficiency and excess is known prior to the dismemberment and is independent from the latter* (Reinhold, 2003, p. 17).

Hence, to Reinhold, only within a perfect concurrence between composition and dismemberment does cognition occur, and that perfection implies the most rigorous *necessity* between the parts that constitute the whole (not only with regard to its application, but also to the natural and spontaneous communication and/or perception of this *inverted phenomenon* by the human spirit). According to him, if all the propositions that constitute science may only be legitimated *in the image* of the supreme principle, not through an effort of compatibility; if all the species that compose the whole proceed towards this supreme authority inasmuch as *they already existed before they even were what they are*, and hence they just need to return through the same path that they once trudged in order to reach a principle which is beginning and end of all philosophy, then to Reinhold the path of philosophy is precisely *this circular path which has its beginning and end in consciousness itself, as a privileged plane between an elementary philosophy and a philosophy of knowledge*. And hence, in order to become scientific, philosophy, as any particular species before its genus (in this case, the doctrine of the faculty of representation, or, somewhat later, Fichte's doctrine of science before science) *would only have to gravitate around this absolute principle of consciousness*, thus spontaneously progressing towards its nearest difference, towards its nearest genus and fulfilling its circle.

<sup>22</sup> “Der Begriff der Philosophie aber erhält seinen Inhalt aus andern Begriffen, diese wieder aus andern, und immer nur durch ein Denken das sich niemals in ein Empfinden auflösen läßt [...]” (Reinhold, 2003, p. 19).



The question is now evident, and yet no less decisive: what results from this *transition of philosophy towards its nearest difference*? The answer is given by the very radicalization of this method: for if it is the genus' task not only to manifest itself, but to affirm itself prior to the species, so as to retroactively give them a form; and if this happens from the most elementary philosophical concept up until *philosophy itself*, as a plane where one such phenomenon happens par excellence, then, once the whole is imbued with this spirit, something like a chain reaction must spread from its most insignificant parts to its most universal ones, thus culminating, as was Reinhold's aim, in *the very idea – a new idea of philosophy*. Reinhold's divergence in relation to Kant attains herein its peak. For in Reinhold's eyes, it was Kant who had promoted this very revolution in the heart of philosophy. But now the task was to raise philosophy above itself and consummate it in its own exteriority, in a principle greater than the whole process. In a word, the fact that philosophy should move towards its nearest difference meant that *philosophy should come to be science*; and that its history, its language, its individuality of a living organism should give way to an infallible, scientific whole. Science was not just the genus of philosophy, but, to Reinhold, science was rather philosophy's *logical destination* – just as necessity is the inevitable becoming of that fate. Which is why, to Reinhold, this fundamental *factum* should be *universally* accepted, i.e., totally independent from "tempers, characters and talents of individual men, or of whole nations, climates, governments or religious conceptions" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 22)<sup>23</sup> and this "ha[d] to become clear to all men in all times and under all circumstances in which these might reflect about it – through pure reflection" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 99).<sup>24</sup>

These words, which are the result of Reinhold's long reflection on the exteriority of philosophy, have one vital consequence. Hence, by going out of its own cocoon of species and assuming itself as a genus – by exteriorizing itself – philosophy finds itself in a new hybrid position: on the one hand, *an interior position*, on the other hand, *an exterior one*; on the one hand, in its connection to "tempers, characters and talents of individual men," as the connecting thread of their history and language; on the other hand, in its distance (yet not total separation) in relation to these, by dissociating from their history and language, but never so much that its own new *genus-language* may not be understood "in all times and under all circumstances." That is, philosophy henceforth had a visible attire (*as science*) as well as an invisible attire (*as life*);

for, as science, it should maintain a rather ambivalent connection towards life, namely, it should draw away from it and, in that absence, it should not relate to life but to homogenize it in its image (it, the men living in it, the history and language that resound from it), thus preventing itself from being contaminated by the originally metaphorical nature of human language, or by the eternal fallibility of human judgment; and yet, in doing so, philosophy cannot but establish a quite singular bond with philosophy, it cannot but *be life*, and reflect on itself as the life it really is. In a word, philosophy thus exempts itself from human existence; but not in such a way that it stops ascribing life its meaning, rather in a way that, from a *higher*, external point of view, it gives life, through *its own language and historical foresight*, a new, infallibly defined, scientific course; an unalterable horizon to the history of human thought; a steady voice to the language of human philosophy, in its own philosophical image.

*Philosophy, one could then say, becomes spontaneous to life* (and with it, to the human spirit), *by drawing away from it* – even if that meant depriving life from its spontaneity, its activity in favor of this purpose. And hence, if it was philosophy's intention to attain absolute spontaneity in the human spirit (something which was previously unattainable), this process could only be consummated through the perfect conjugation of the two privileged forms of philosophical communication within the human spirit: the *act* – under the form of the event, of history – and the *word* – under the form of language, of the philosophical concept: which is why, not infrequently, Reinhold suggests that only this could mean that philosophy was *independent from history and comprehensible to all men*. Such a conjugation could only take place under the sign of a possible infallibility of philosophical communication: an infallible systematic history (for it was a history of philosophy, born with this new philosophy) and an infallible, systematic conceptual language (for it was purely philosophical, born with this new philosophy), both aiming, as if guided by a scientific magnetism, at the absolute principle of philosophy and legitimating it as much as it legitimates them, thus living in the perfect concord of a reciprocity which, nonetheless, has nothing reciprocal about it, rather emanates absolute, infinite unity.

Finally, this new *historiography*<sup>25</sup> of philosophy meant that philosophy should henceforth renounce anything fortuitous or hypothetical, historical or circumstantial, but also anything remotely *human* – that is, *metaphorical* – in a language. In a word, philosophy – or rather, philosophers

<sup>23</sup> "Diese Form kann weder durch Temperamente, Charaktere und Talente einzelner Männer, noch ganzer Nationen, noch durch Klimate, Regierungsformen, und Religions-Verfassungen bestimmt sein; welche freilich auf die Entwicklung des menschlichen Geistes, und vermittelt derselben auf die frühere oder spätere Existenz der eigentlichen Philosophie, und wenn diese vorhanden ist, auf die nähere Bearbeitung und Gebrauch derselben Einfluß haben, aber welche zu demjenigen, was die wesentliche Form der Philosophie ausmacht, durchaus nichts beitragen" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 22).

<sup>24</sup> "Dieses Faktum muß allen Menschen zu allen Zeiten und unter allen Umständen unter welchen sie darüber reflektieren können, durch die bloße Reflexion einleuchten. Es kann also dasselbe *in keiner Erfahrung des äußern Sinnes* bestehen, welche sich immer auf individuelle Umstände bezieht" (Reinhold, 2003, p. 99).

<sup>25</sup> See Fichte (1971, I, p. 77): "Wir sind nicht Gesetzgeber des menschlichen Geistes, sondern seine Historiographen; freilich nicht Zeitungsschreiber, sondern pragmatische Geschichtsschreiber".

– should renounce the human side of life, thus consigning themselves to a philosophy whose history, whose language, whose destination was in itself scientific. The time had come when *philosophy's character of species* – which had always been philosophy's condition – was exhausted, thus having to make way for *philosophy as a genus*; which, to Reinhold, required the philosopher to identify what had caused that exhaustion; to conceive that philosophy, now destitute of life's active mediation, should return to its primordia (Reinhold, 2003, p. 228) and let itself be transposed to the *genus of science*. The problem of philosophy, Reinhold states in Kant's line of thought, is originally a *problem of language*; up until then a vehicle of the history of knowledge, philosophy was henceforth the incontrovertible vehicle of a language that spoke – and could only speak – about itself, of the rediscovery of a subject who only investigated that which was related to himself, a *language that was what it thought and thought what it was* – as such, the unavoidable path towards the transition of philosophy to its nearest genus. But, above all, this meant the onset of a deeper, more complex problem: that of the establishment of a new, supreme principle of all philosophy and, as such, the final cut with a time when philosophy did not yet exist, or was but the fruit of a *different scythe*, the one of the common understanding, or even imagination. *Philosophy was now reason*.

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