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Answering Aenesidemus: Schulze's Attack on Reinholdian Representationalism and Its Importance for Fichte

JAMES MESSINA

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of Gottlob Ernst Schulze's *Aenesidemus*¹ for the history of German Idealism has been widely recognized. Much as Hume had awoken Kant, Aenesidemus jolted the young Fichte out of his slumbering adherence to Reinhold's formulation of Kant's philosophy, leading him to re-evaluate the claims, methods, and foundations of the Critical philosophy. In his "Review of the *Aenesidemus*"² Fichte

¹Gottlob Ernst Schulze, *Aenesidemus, oder über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Prof. Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie. Nebst einer Vertheidigung des Skepticismus gegen die Anmaßungen der Vernunftkritik* [*Aenesidemus*] (originally published anonymously and without details of publication, 1792). A new edition of the *Aenesidemus* based on the critical edition prepared by Arthur Liebert (vol. 1 of *Nachdrucke seltener philosophischer Werke* [Berlin: Reuther & Richard, 1911]) is available in a volume edited by Manfred Frank (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996). A partial English translation is available in George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris, trans. and ed., *Between Kant and Hegel* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000). I cite the *Aenesidemus* according to the pagination of the first edition. Where possible I have provided a citation to di Giovanni and Harris's translation as well. This citation makes use of the abbreviation BKH, and follows the first reference and a semi-colon. In all cases where I have cited an English translation, I have followed it, occasionally with minor modifications; otherwise, the translations are my own.

²J.G. Fichte, review of *Aenesidemus, oder über die Fundamente der von dem Hrn. Prof. Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie. Nebst einer Vertheidigung des Skepticismus gegen die Anmaßungen der Vernunftkritik* ["Review of the *Aenesidemus*"], by G.E. Schulze, (originally published in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, no. 47, 48, and 49 [1794]: 369–74, 377–83, 385–89). References to Fichte's writings are to J.G. Fichte, *J.G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, eds. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacobs, and Hans Gliwitzky, 42 vols. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1964–). References to the *Gesamtausgabe* are preceded by the abbreviation "GA" and indicate the series, volume, and page number respectively in the form (X/Y:Z). Where available, I also provide a citation to a modern English translation. This citation follows the reference to the *Gesamtausgabe* and a semi-colon, and makes use of the following abbreviations:

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set out the results of this re-evaluation, which included his doctrine of intellectual intuition with remarkable and uncharacteristic clarity.³ According to a widely accepted story about the genesis of Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, the early Fichte was largely sympathetic to Schulze's attack on the validity of Reinhold's principle of consciousness and the definition of representation that he derives from it. Reinhold's principle of consciousness constituted the basis for a view that some have called "Reinholdian Representationalism," the view that "all our conscious states are representations, exhibiting the fourfold structure articulated in Reinhold's first principle."⁴ As the widely accepted story runs, because of considerations about the nature of consciousness, representation, and self-consciousness that Schulze brought to bear against Reinhold, Fichte rejected both Reinholdian Representationalism and reflection theories of self-consciousness like Reinhold's. This story credits Schulze with being one of the first to recognize the need for a non-reflection-based model of self-consciousness, and attributes to him a regress argument directed at Reinhold's reflection theory that later appears in Fichte's work.⁵

The standard story

The widely accepted story offers a straightforward, philosophically attractive explanation of how Fichte's encounter with Schulze led him away from Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* and toward some of the key doctrines of the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*. Moreover, it is at least consistent with Fichte's own avowals of the importance of the *Aenesidemus*.⁶ However, the widely accepted story is at best misleading, ignor-

SOE: J.G. Fichte, *The System of Ethics*, trans. and ed. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöllner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

IW: J.G. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994).

BKH: [See previous footnote.]

SOK: J.G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. and ed. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

³For a seminal discussion of the importance of Fichte's "Review of the *Aenesidemus*," see Daniel Breazeale, "Fichte's *Aenesidemus* Review and the Transformation of German Idealism" ["Fichte's *Aenesidemus* Review"], *Review of Metaphysics* 34 (1981): 545–68. See also Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 147–84.

⁴See Wayne Martin, "From Kant to Fichte," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, ed. Günter Zöllner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). See also Wayne Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity: Understanding Fichte's Jena Project [Idealism and Objectivity]* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 88.

⁵For representative statements of this view, see Frederick Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 71–75; Martin, "From Kant to Fichte"; Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity*, 88–92; and Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 251n. For a critique of this narrative, see Paul Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism [All or Nothing]* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 221–26. Key elements of this narrative also occur in German scholarship, in particular, the claims that (1) Schulze invokes considerations about the need for a non-reflection-based model of self-consciousness in the course of his attack on Reinhold's principle of consciousness, and (2) these considerations influenced the development of Fichte's theory of self-consciousness. See, for example, Manfred Frank, introduction to the *Aenesidemus* [Introduction], by G.E. Schulze (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996), ix–lxxxii; and Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung: Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik [Unendliche Annäherung]* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 293–94.

⁶See, for example, Fichte's letter to Friedrich Flatt in late fall of 1793 (GA III/2:19), his letter to Heinrich Stephani in December 1793 (GA III/2:28), and his remark in the *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* (GA I/2:280; SOK 118).

ing some key features of Reinhold's theory of representation, such as his distinction between representation and mere representation, and obscuring deep differences in Schulze and Fichte's views about the nature of representation, consciousness, and self-consciousness. In the end, the view is fundamentally misguided, distorting Schulze's true objections to Reinholdian Representationalism and the real nature of their influence on the early Fichte.⁷ First, Schulze brings nothing like a regress argument to bear against Reinholdian Representationalism, much less the sort of regress argument that Fichte later invokes to attack reflection theories of self-consciousness. Instead, his actual objections to Reinholdian Representationalism turn on a different set of considerations and take place within a philosophical framework that combines Humean skepticism with a broadly Wolffian account of representation, consciousness, and self-consciousness. Second, the early Fichte does not accept the validity of Schulze's objections to Reinholdian Representationalism, but rather commits himself to the truth of Reinholdian Representationalism. Third, the early Fichte does not accept Schulze's critique of Reinhold's account of self-consciousness; indeed, he accepts several key Reinholdian assumptions about the nature of the subject and about self-consciousness.⁸

Once the widely accepted story is out of the way, there is room for a more nuanced account of Fichte's reaction to Schulze's critique of Reinholdian Representationalism. According to this account, while the early Fichte disagrees with the specifics of Schulze's objections, he agrees with Schulze about a general point: the subject and object do not depend on representations in Reinhold's sense for the fact that they are available to be related and distinguished in consciousness. In this respect, they, along with the mental acts of distinguishing and relating that are also required for consciousness, are prior to representations in Reinhold's sense. Thus, the concept of mere representation is not the most basic concept of philosophy, the concept from which all others are to be derived. However, Fichte seeks to accommodate this insight within the framework of an acceptance of Reinholdian

⁷Paul Franks (*All or Nothing*, 221–26) has recently attacked parts of this narrative—in particular, the ascription to Schulze of a regress argument that re-surfaces in Fichte's attack on the reflection theory of self-consciousness. However, as I shall argue, while Franks is right to deny that Schulze espouses such an objection, his positive reconstruction of the objection misses the key point of the argument, which is that the very same assumption that leads Reinhold to affirm that mere representation must exist in consciousness prior to being distinguished from, and related to the subject and object, can be used to show that the subject and object must exist in consciousness, and thus be perceived, prior to their being distinguished and related in Reinholdian representations. Moreover, Franks's reconstruction mischaracterizes Schulze's attitude toward skepticism and dogmatism (in particular, the sort of direct realism advocated by Jacobi). On my view, Schulze's critique of Reinhold takes place from the standpoint of Humean skepticism, a skepticism that takes it for granted that we are only in immediate epistemic contact with representations (and not external objects). *Pace* Franks, Schulze thinks we can rule out direct realism without further ado.

⁸Though Paul Franks (*All or Nothing*, 225–26) similarly faults the widely accepted story for overlooking the overlap between Fichte and Reinhold's views on the self and self-consciousness, I disagree with him about the nature of this overlap. Whereas Franks suggests that Fichte is at least partially indebted to Reinhold for the idea that self-consciousness involves a pre-representational relation of the self to itself, namely an intellectual intuition, I argue that Fichte is indebted to Reinhold for a rather different idea: namely, that (1) it is the representing (rather than absolute) subject that occurs in consciousness; and (2) in its self-consciousness, the representing subject is necessarily distinct from that of which it is conscious (the represented subject).

Representationalism. One consequence of this acceptance is that, like Reinhold and unlike Schulze, Fichte is forced to distinguish between the absolute subject and the representing subject and to attribute a certain elusiveness to both: *qua* absolute, the subject cannot occur in consciousness or be represented because it is that which makes possible everything in consciousness, including representation. *Qua* representing, the subject cannot represent, or become conscious of itself, as a representing subject, because even in self-consciousness, that which is conscious must distinguish itself from that of which it is conscious. In this revised account of Schulze's influence on the development of the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte emerges not as an adherent of Schulze but rather as a highly original and resourceful rehabilitator of Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie*.

In §2, I explain the philosophical project of Schulze's *Aenesidemus* and lay out the Reinholdian view that he is attacking. I focus especially on Reinhold's principle of consciousness and definition of representation, his distinction between representation and mere representation, and his views on the self and self-consciousness. In §3, I reconstruct Schulze's objections to Reinholdian Representationalism, which are all attempts to demonstrate that there are states of consciousness that do not satisfy Reinhold's principle of consciousness, and representations that do not satisfy Reinhold's definition of representation. These arguments can be divided into three classes, depending on whether they turn on (1) phenomenological considerations, (2) features internal to Reinhold's principle of consciousness and definition of representation, or (3) facts about self-representation, self-consciousness, and the nature of the self. In §4, I show that Fichte not only rejects Schulze's objections to Reinholdian Representationalism, but also commits himself to its truth. In §5, I argue that the early Fichte retains features of Reinhold's theories of the self and self-consciousness that Schulze rejects. In §6, I conclude by offering an alternative story about Fichte's debt to Schulze.

2. SCHULZE'S ANTI-REINHOLDIAN PROGRAM

2.1 *Schulze's General Project*

In 1792, Gottlob Ernst Schulze⁹ issued an indictment of the Critical philosophy in the form of an epistolary exchange between two characters: Hermias, a newly minted Kantian, and Aenesidemus, a skeptic of Humean coinage. The full title of the work was *Aenesidemus, Or Concerning the Foundations of the Philosophy of The Elements by Prof. Reinhold in Jena Together with a Defense of Skepticism Against the Pretensions of Reason*. In these letters, Schulze's mouthpiece, Aenesidemus, attacks both the philosophy of Kant and the Kantian-inspired philosophy of Karl Leonhard Reinhold, who had by then become the chief spokesman for the Critical philosophy in Germany. Schulze's skeptical tract was highly regarded at the time, and

⁹For biographical information about Schulze, see Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 260–65; Frank, Introduction, x–xiv; and Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 266–68.

played an important role in the development of German Idealism.¹⁰ For Fichte, it occasioned an acute crisis of faith in the Critical philosophy, of which he wrote:

[Aenesidemus] has overthrown Reinhold in my eyes, has made me suspicious of Kant, and has overturned my whole system from the ground up. One cannot live under the open sky. It cannot be helped; the system must be rebuilt.¹¹

Schulze wages a two-front war in the *Aenesidemus*: one front against the views espoused by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*; the other against Reinhold's attempted systemization of Kant. (It is to Schulze's credit that he recognizes a difference here; for many of his contemporaries, Reinhold's philosophy was no different than Kant's.)¹² While Schulze carries out his attack from a skeptical framework, his is not a dogmatic skepticism that declares knowledge of the existence and nature of things-in-themselves to be impossible due to a "natural incapacity of human reason."¹³ Rather, Schulze's skepticism consists in the claim that all previous attempts in philosophy to say something based on "incontrovertibly certain and universally valid principles" about things-in-themselves, and about the boundaries of human cognitive powers, have failed.¹⁴ Schulze's skepticism is rooted in his commitment to the view that our epistemic access to our representations is immediate, whereas our epistemic access to external, mind-independent objects is not.¹⁵ Like Hume, whose influence is evident throughout the *Aenesidemus*, Schulze thinks that all belief in the existence of external objects rests on some sort of inference.¹⁶ This inference is only a good one, that is, it only justifies the belief, if it rests on some valid principle bridging the gap between representation and reality, a principle that is either itself immediately certain or can be demonstrated from principles that are.¹⁷ The skeptic's challenge to dogmatists, who typically appeal to some version of the causal principle at this point, is to defend their principle of choice against skeptical doubts. By issuing this challenge, the skeptic hopes to prevent us from sinning against one of the basic laws of our reason: to accept nothing without a sufficient reason,¹⁸ which is precisely what we would be doing were we to accept the existence of the external world without satisfactory proof.

¹⁰For a discussion of the importance of the *Aenesidemus*, see Breazeale, "Fichte's *Aenesidemus Review*," 545–68; Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 266–67; Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 242–48; Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, 69–75; Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 252–85; Frank, Introduction, xiv–xxv; Martin, "From Kant to Fichte"; Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity*, 87–94; Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 147–73; Franks, *All or Nothing*, 221–26; Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "The Early Philosophy of Fichte and Schelling," in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117–40; and Robert Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism" ["One-Sided Idealism"], in *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy*, ed. Sally Sedgwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 147–70.

¹¹Letter to Heinrich Stephani, December 1793 (GA III/2:28). Quoted and translated by Breazeale, "Fichte's *Aenesidemus Review*," 551.

¹²See, for instance, Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 96–97; BKH 106–7.

¹³Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 25.

¹⁴Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 24.

¹⁵Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 45, 120–21, and 245.

¹⁶Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 231–38.

¹⁷Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 122.

¹⁸Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 28–29. One can understand this remark as expressing Schulze's commitment to the validity of an epistemological version of the principle of sufficient reason: one ought to

Schulze's task in the *Aenesidemus* is to show that neither Kant nor Reinhold has successfully met the skeptic's challenge. Schulze proceeds by demonstrating that (1) Reinhold and Kant fail to answer Hume's doubts about the causal principle and about the legitimacy of inferences from representation to being—that is, inferences from how we represent things as being to how they really are;¹⁹ (2) Reinhold's attempt to systematize the critical philosophy based on the principle of consciousness is a failure, because (a) the principle does not have the features that Reinhold claims for it, and (b) the derivations based on this principle (for instance, the derivation of the matter and form of mere representation) are invalid. In the context of (1), Schulze takes aim at Reinhold's appeal to a "faculty of representation" to account for the existence of representations in us, and Kant's appeal to *a priori* features of the mind to account for the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments. Both moves, according to Schulze, simply take for granted the causal principle and the legitimacy of inferences from thought to being. Moreover, insofar as Kant and Reinhold invoke causal grounds that cannot be given in empirical intuition to account for cognition, they neglect their own prohibition against applying the category of causality outside the bounds of experience.²⁰

This line of attack, which expands and develops Jacobi's influential objection,²¹ galvanized the young Fichte, forcing him to think carefully about the distinctive features of the critical philosophy. In the "Review of the *Aenesidemus*," Fichte argues vehemently that such criticisms rest on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the mind and of the distinction between causal explanation and transcendental argumentation. I have no bones to pick here with existing accounts of Schulze's objections on this score and the nature of Fichte's reply to them.²² Nor will I discuss Fichte's defense of freedom and belief in God in the face of Schulze's attack on the priority of the practical.²³ My concern is with the objections constituting (2), and in particular with Schulze's critique of Reinhold's principle of consciousness, to which Fichte has been taken to be sympathetic. As I shall show, this statement needs to be substantially qualified, since Fichte rejects Schulze's objections and commits himself to the truth of the principle of consciousness. However, in order to show this, we need to be clearer about the nature of Reinhold's project and those features of his philosophy that Schulze is attacking.

accept no claim as true without sufficient reason. An acceptance of the epistemological version of the principle of sufficient reason need not entail an acceptance of the metaphysical version ("every thing has some cause"), as indeed in Schulze's case it does not.

¹⁹Doubt about the causal principle, the principle that every event has a cause, might be seen as a special case of doubt regarding inferences from thought to being: just because we cannot avoid thinking of a representation as having a cause independent of our thought, does not mean that such a cause actually exists.

²⁰See Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 102–4; BKH 109–10; and Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 153–55; BKH 122–23.

²¹For discussion of Jacobi's influence on Schulze, see Frank, Introduction, xlv; and Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 78.

²²Particularly helpful in this regard are Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 148–57 and 168–76; Frank, Introduction, lviii–lxii; Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 275–84; and Pippin, "One-Sided Idealism," 155–58.

²³See Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 159–64, and Frank, Introduction, lxix–lxx for a good discussion of this.

2.2 Reinhold's Foundationalist Program and Schulze's Doubts

Karl Leonhard Reinhold began as an expositor of Kant's views. His *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, which stressed the relevance of Kant's reconciliation of faith and reason for the sizzling Spinoza controversy, appeared in installments in 1786 and 1787 and helped to popularize the Critical philosophy.²⁴ But Reinhold came to see that the philosophy Kant presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason* was incomplete. What Kant offered was a "propaedeutic to metaphysics,"²⁵ not a finished science of philosophy. Such a science would have to start from an apodictically certain first principle, and derive all further concepts and principles from it. As Reinhold understood Kant's accomplishment, he had merely established the first principle of *metaphysics*: "Every object stands under the necessary conditions of synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in a possible experience."²⁶ But this principle would have to be grounded on an even more fundamental principle for it to be certain and for its constituent concepts and terms to be free of ambiguity. As it stood, Kant had not yet provided an explanation of key terms and concepts he used in the *Critique*: for example, 'representation,' 'intuition,' 'concept,' 'matter,' and 'form.' That Kant's philosophy had not yet attained universal acceptance, and that Kant's critics continued to bicker over Kant's meaning, proved to Reinhold that Kant's work was unfinished. He sought to rectify this by laying the groundwork for a philosophy "without surnames"—not a "Critical Philosophy" but an Elementary Philosophy.²⁷ He presented this philosophy in several works: *Essay Towards a New Theory of the Faculty of Representation* (1789), two volumes of *Contributions to the Rectification of Misconceptions Hitherto Held by Philosophers* (vol. 1, 1790: *Concerning the Basis of the Elementary Philosophy*; vol. 2, 1794: *Concerning the Foundations of Philosophical Knowledge of Metaphysics, Morality, Moral Religion, and the Doctrine of Taste*), and *On the Basis of Philosophical Knowledge* (1791). Schulze's *Aenesidemus* is directed primarily at the position laid out in the first volume of the *Contributions*, in the section entitled the "New Exposition of the Main Points of the Elementary Philosophy," from which he quotes extensively. (Following Schulze's lead, many of Reinhold's early critics and defenders, including Fichte, focused on the "New Exposition"—despite the fact that it lacks two crucial parts of the system laid out in the *Essay*: the theory of the understanding and the theory of reason.)²⁸

²⁴For a more extensive discussion of the content and influence of the *Letters*, see Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 232–37.

²⁵See, for instance, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Bxxxv–xxxvii for a statement along these lines. As is customary, in citations of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, 'A' and 'B' refer to the first [1781] and second [1787] editions, respectively.

²⁶A158/B197. Quoted by Reinhold in *Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* [*Ueber das Fundament*] (Jena, 1791), 68. A partial translation of this work is available in di Giovanni and Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel*. For the remark in question, see BKH 66.

²⁷Reinhold, *Ueber das Fundament*, 105; BKH 82.

²⁸See Dieter Henrich, "Die Anfänge der Theorie des Subjekts (1789)" ["Die Anfänge"], in *Zwischenbetrachtungen: Im Prozeß der Aufklärung*, eds. Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 106–70. Reinhold's theory of the understanding and theory of reason are connected with his views on the self and self-consciousness. Because Reinhold's contemporaries tended to focus on the "New Exposition" (rather than the *Essay*, which presents the

For Reinhold, the starting point of this philosophy is the concept of representation:

If the science of the faculty of cognition is to remedy the confusion which has been the main pitfall of all previous philosophy . . . it must proceed from the concept of representation as such, and exhaustively identify its essential characteristics.²⁹

In order for this concept to be certain and universally accepted, Reinhold holds, it has to be drawn from the consciousness of an actual fact. Thinking he had found such a fact, one whose truth would be immediately obvious to everyone upon reflection, he triumphantly proclaimed the “principle of consciousness [*Satz des Bewußtseins*]”: “[I]n consciousness representation is distinguished through the subject from the subject and object and related to both.”³⁰ Reinhold claims that this principle captures the structural features of *all* instances of consciousness, including episodes of self-consciousness.

Reinhold's
“principle of
consciousness”

Having attained his first principle, Reinhold uses it to determine the essential characteristics of the primitive [*ursprüngliche*] concepts comprising it: representation, subject, and object. “The representation is that which is distinguished in consciousness through the subject from the object and subject and related to both.”³¹ “The object is that which is distinguished in consciousness through the subject from the subject and the representation, and which is related to the representation that is distinguished from the subject.”³² “The subject is that which is distinguished in consciousness through itself from the representation and the object, and which is related to the representation that is distinguished from the object.”³³

Reinhold also defines what he calls the concept of “mere representation [*bloße Vorstellung*]”: “The mere representation is that which can be related in consciousness to the object and subject and is distinguished from both.”³⁴ The presence of the modal operator is what distinguishes this definition from the definition of representation without qualification: “If representation is supposed to be thought as mere representation, it must not be thought insofar as it is *actually* related to object and subject, but rather insofar as it *can* be related to both.”³⁵ Representation and mere representation are not so much different entities as different ways

Mere
representation

theory of the understanding and theory of reason), they did not get a full picture of the role of the subject in Reinhold's philosophy. They also did not see the degree to which Reinhold was on his way toward an elevation of the subject to the first principle of philosophy. For a discussion of Reinhold's views on the subject, insofar they are developed in the theory of the understanding and reason, see Henrich, “Die Anfänge,” 139–59; Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 286–307; Jürgen Stolzenberg, *Fichtes Begriff der intellektuellen Anschauung [Fichtes Begriff]* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 43–45; and Stolzenberg, “Selbstbewusstsein: Ein Problem der Philosophie nach Kant” [“Selbstbewusstsein”], *Revista de Filosofia* 9 (1994): 63–79. In this essay, I will be confining myself mostly to Reinhold's positions in the “New Exposition,” since this is the text that is most relevant for understanding Schulze's criticisms and Fichte's response to those criticisms.

²⁹Reinhold, *Ueber das Fundament*, 74; BKH 69.

³⁰Reinhold, “Neue Darstellung” [“New Exposition”], in *Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Misverständnisse der Philosophen* (Jena, 1790), 1:167. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 58.

³¹Reinhold, “New Exposition,” 1:168. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 77.

³²Reinhold, “New Exposition,” 1:169. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 78.

³³Reinhold, “New Exposition,” 1:171. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 79.

³⁴Reinhold, “New Exposition,” 1:172. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 79.

³⁵Reinhold, “New Exposition,” 1:172 (emphasis Reinhold's). Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 79.

of conceiving of a single component of consciousness. According to the first way, we conceive of representation relationally, as something that is distinguished from and related to the subject and object. According to the second way, we conceive of it as something endowed with intrinsic features that enable it to stand in the appropriate relations with the subject and object. As we will see below, **some of Schulze's objections to Reinholdian Representationalism turn on claims that Reinhold makes in the course of his discussion of mere representation.** For this reason, it is necessary to understand Reinhold's views on mere representation.

As that which *can* be related to, and distinguished from, the subject and object, mere representation is prior—not temporally, but rather “according to its nature [*seiner Natur nach*]”—to the subject and object:

[Subject and object] occur in consciousness only through the representation, only through the fact that the representation is related to them; this, however, is only possible through the fact that the mere representation, that is, that which can be related to both of them, is present [*vorhanden*].³⁶

The subject and object, according to Reinhold, cannot occur in consciousness without being related to a representation. But in order for the subject and object to be related to a representation, the representation must already be present: “[I]nsofar as nothing can be related, when nothing is present that is able to be related.”³⁷ Mere representation, for Reinhold, is that which precedes the subject and object and makes possible their relation. Based on this characterization of mere representation, Reinhold concludes that it occurs immediately in consciousness, while the subject and object occur only mediately:

Subject as well as object are only possible in consciousness through the mere representation; [they are only possible] as the representing thing [*das Vorstellende*] and the represented thing [*das Vorgestellte*] through the fact that the representation can be related to them; [they are only possible] as subject and object in themselves [*an sich*] through the fact that the representation can be distinguished from them.³⁸

For Reinhold, ***Elementarphilosophie* is a science of mere representation and its “inner” or essential conditions: these are the intrinsic features (such as matter and form) that allow a mere representation to be related to, and distinguished from, the subject and object.** By contrast, the subject and object belong to the “outer” conditions of mere representation.³⁹ They only occur in consciousness mediately, *via* mere representation, and can only be understood mediately, *via* the concept of mere representation and the principles that apply to it. By means of the latter concept, the subject and object can be understood in two ways: insofar as they can be related to mere representation, in which case the subject is thought in its capacity as the *representing* thing and the object in its capacity as the *represented* thing; or insofar as they can be distinguished from mere representation, in which case the subject is thought apart from its capacity as representing thing, as a *subject in itself*, and the object apart from its capacity as represented thing, as an *object in itself*. It fol-

³⁶Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:173. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 80.

³⁷Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:173. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 80.

³⁸Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:174. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 80.

³⁹Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:174–75. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 81–82.

lows trivially that we cannot know the subject and object as they are in themselves because this is how they are apart from all representation.⁴⁰

With his peculiar principle of consciousness and closely connected definition of representation, Reinhold commits himself to the following claims: (1) *all* our conscious states are representations, and (2) *all* representations have a four-fold structure, consisting of a subject, an object, a distinguishing of the mere representation from the subject and object, and a relating of the mere representation to the subject and object. The combination of views (1) and (2) results in a doctrine that Wayne Martin usefully labels “Reinholdian Representationalism”: “[T]he view that all our conscious states are representations, exhibiting the fourfold structure articulated in Reinhold’s first principle.”⁴¹

Reinhold's
commitments

Reinholdian
Representationalism

Because this view entails that I represent x if and only if I am conscious of x , Reinhold is forced to deny the existence of unconscious representations.⁴² He nevertheless attempts to incorporate into his account the traditional distinction between clear and distinct states of consciousness. I have a distinct consciousness of x , for Reinhold, either when x is myself or when my consciousness of x is accompanied by self-consciousness.⁴³ Reinhold’s discussion of clear and distinct consciousness has two important implications for his theory of self-consciousness. First, self-consciousness, for Reinhold, does not accompany all episodes of consciousness; it is possible to be conscious of an object x without being conscious of oneself as the subject of consciousness (this is the case whenever one lacks a distinct consciousness). Second, during self-consciousness, as Reinhold understands it, the subject becomes the object of a special state of consciousness, which as such must conform to the conditions laid out in the principle of consciousness. The principle of consciousness requires that the object of consciousness (whatever it may be) be distinguished from the mere representation and the subject.⁴⁴ This means that in self-consciousness, the subject as representing thing must distinguish itself as the object of consciousness from itself as subject of consciousness:

distinct
consciousness

Even with that kind of consciousness that is called self-consciousness . . . the representing thing [*das Vorstellende*] as subject and as object, as the representing thing that thinks and as the representing thing that is thought, are distinguished. In the first respect, it behaves as the thing that distinguishes through the representation; in the second, as the thing distinguished through the representation—as representing and as represented. As the thing that distinguishes it cannot simultaneously be the thing that is distinguished (just as little as the eye can see itself).⁴⁵

⁴⁰Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:185–86. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 184–86.

⁴¹Martin, “From Kant to Fichte”; and Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity*, 88.

⁴²Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:218–19. See also Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 342–43.

⁴³See Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:222–23. I have a clear consciousness of x , for Reinhold, either when x is a representation or when my consciousness of x is accompanied by a consciousness of my representation of x .

clear
consciousness

⁴⁴Reinhold makes this explicit at “New Exposition,” I:182.

⁴⁵Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:197. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 312. See also Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:181–82: “Even here [in self-consciousness], object and subject are distinguished; indeed, self-consciousness can only be thought through the fact that the ‘I,’ the subject, in the role of the subject [*in der Eigenschaft des Subjektes*], the representing thing, distinguishes itself through a special representation from itself in the role of the object [*in der Eigenschaft des Objektes*], the represented thing.” Cf. Reinhold, “New Exposition,” I:171: “The representing thing is only made into an

There is no self-consciousness, according to Reinhold, that does not embody the structural features of all consciousness.⁴⁶

There was considerable sympathy at the time for Reinhold's general project of locating a secure, self-evident first principle that would illuminate and justify the myriad technical terms and distinctions that Kant introduces in the first *Critique*, which otherwise appeared arbitrary and lacking in theoretical support. The concept of representation was a natural enough starting point given its central role in the Wolffian philosophy, and Reinhold could point to the well-known *Stufenleiter*⁴⁷ passage for evidence that Kant took this to be the fundamental concept of his philosophy. Even Schulze, notwithstanding his criticisms of Reinhold, is sympathetic to Reinhold's project of locating a foundational principle of philosophy that involves the concept of representation.⁴⁸

What Schulze denies, however, is that the principle of consciousness has the features that Reinhold claims for it: it is not the highest principle, since it is subordinate at least to the principle of non-contradiction;⁴⁹ its meaning is not univocal and self-evident, since the terms comprising it can be interpreted in a number of different ways; it is not an analytically true proposition, but rather an empirical generalization derived from observation of our mental states; and it is not universally valid, since there are representations that do not satisfy the principle of consciousness (nor the definition of representation that Reinhold derives from it). In the context of attacking the universal validity of the principle of consciousness, Schulze brings to bear considerations about representation, consciousness, and self-consciousness that are commonly thought to have influenced the early Fichte.

3. SCHULZE'S CRITIQUE OF REINHOLDIAN REPRESENTATIONALISM

Schulze's general strategy in critiquing Reinholdian Representationalism is to identify states of consciousness that do not satisfy Reinhold's principle of consciousness and definition of representation. Since, according to Schulze, all states of consciousness are representations in some (not necessarily Reinholdian) sense of the term, and since Reinholdian representations are defined in terms of the principle of consciousness, to identify states of *consciousness* that do not satisfy the principle of consciousness is *ipso facto* to identify *representations* that do not satisfy Reinhold's definition of representation. (Similarly, to identify representations

object through the fact that it distinguishes itself through a special representation [*durch eine besondere Vorstellung*] from itself; whereby it behaves in the role of the subject as the thing that distinguishes through the representation, as the representing thing, and in the role of the object as the thing that is distinguished through the representation, the represented thing."

⁴⁶Reinhold's subordination of episodes of self-consciousness to the principle of consciousness, entailing as it does a distinction between the subject as representing and the subject as represented (or between the subject as subject and the subject as object) fits at best awkwardly with the characterization of self-consciousness that he gives in other contexts: self-consciousness is consciousness of oneself *as* the representing thing. For a discussion of this, see Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 291–93; Stolzenberg, *Fichtes Begriff*, 43–45; and Stolzenberg, "Selbstbewusstsein," 66–69.

⁴⁷A320–21/B376–77.

⁴⁸See Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 54.

⁴⁹Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 64.

that do not conform to the definition of representation, for Schulze, is *ipso facto* to show the falsity of the principle of consciousness, since Reinhold's definition of representation is supposed to be implied by this principle.)

It is interesting to distinguish Schulze's strategy from a similar strategy which he might have employed but does not. It would have sufficed for the purposes of refuting Reinholdian Representationalism to provide examples of states of consciousness which are not representational in any sense, Reinholdian or otherwise. Indeed, we might be sympathetic to such a strategy, since we are inclined to think that there are, for example, emotional states that are not cognitive or representational in any sense.⁵⁰ But this is not Schulze's strategy, since he is committed to the claim that all our mental states are representations, a view which we might call "simple representationalism." Indeed, as Paul Franks points out,⁵¹ Schulze spends no small amount of time arguing that it is in accord with common usage of the term 'representation' to apply it to the various non-Reinholdian mental states that he identifies.⁵² Schulze's commitment to "simple representationalism" is a byproduct of his peculiar starting point, which combines (what he takes to be) Humean skepticism with a broadly Wolffian⁵³ account of representation, consciousness, and self-consciousness. According to Schulze's version of this account, (1) all mental states are representations; (2) to represent some object *x* does not entail being conscious of *x*, since to be conscious of *x*, it is necessary that one represent *x* and distinguish it from oneself; (3) to be self-conscious, it is necessary that one represent oneself and distinguish oneself from something else, be it a representation or an object.⁵⁴ It is this starting point that allows Schulze to agree with Reinhold that the concept of representation is the highest that can occur in philosophy while also providing the basis for his main criticisms of Reinhold's theory.

Schulze argues for the existence of non-Reinholdian states of consciousness in various ways. While some of these arguments overlap, it is possible to distinguish three general types: the first appeals to phenomenology to identity counterex-

⁵⁰Another example is pain. See Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 132 for a discussion of this.

⁵¹Franks, *All or Nothing*, 224.

⁵²See, for instance, Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 86–87, where Schulze appeals to ordinary speech usage to argue that "relating" and "distinguishing" are representations.

⁵³Schulze's account does not line up exactly with Wolff's, but he does agree with Wolff on the following general points: (1) not all representations are conscious; (2) consciousness requires distinguishing; and (3) self-consciousness requires distinguishing oneself from something else. For a very helpful discussion of Wolffian and neo-Wolffian views of consciousness and self-consciousness, see Falk Wunderlich, *Kant und die Bewußtseinstheorien des 18. Jahrhunderts [Kant und die Bewußtseinstheorien]* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 18–40 and 49–62.

⁵⁴For evidence of Schulze's commitment to the claim that both consciousness and self-consciousness require distinguishing oneself from something else, see Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 350–51. Schulze's theory of consciousness and self-consciousness seems closest to the view that the neo-Wolffian Johann Georg Sulzer lays out in "Von dem Bewußtsein und seinem Einflusse in unsre Urteile," in *Vermischte philosophische Schriften* (Leipzig, 1773), 199–221. In the course of his discussion of consciousness and self-consciousness in the *Psychische Anthropologie* (3rd ed. [Göttingen, 1826], 22), Schulze explicitly recommends Sulzer's essay. Schulze (*Aenesidemus*, 349) also seems to be thinking of Sulzer in the *Aenesidemus* when he mentions "those philosophers" who have investigated consciousness primarily with an eye toward deriving "fundamental principles for empirical psychology and rules for the doctrine of applied morals and prudence." For a discussion of Sulzer's view, see Wunderlich, *Kant und die Bewußtseinstheorien*, 49–52.

Simple
Representationalism

Schulze's
representationalism

amples; the second tries to show that states of consciousness satisfying Reinhold's principle presuppose states that do not; and the third appeals to special considerations about self-representation and self-consciousness.

3.1 *The Phenomenological Argument*

Schulze thinks it will be undeniable to “those who have been attentive to their various mental states [*die auf die mancherlei Zustände ihres Gemüths aufmerksam gewesen sind*]” that in some expressions of consciousness [*Außerungen des Bewußtseins*] representations occur that exhibit the structure Reinhold identifies in his principle of consciousness. This is the case, according to Schulze, when we recall an object that we have seen before.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Schulze claims, **it is equally undeniable that in some expressions of consciousness representations occur that do not exhibit all the components of Reinhold's principle: representation, object, and the relation of the former to the latter.** During “deep reflection about something [*beim tiefen Nachdenken über etwas*],” for instance, we are conscious of the representing “I” and its representations, but we are not conscious of a particular object that has been distinguished from the representations.⁵⁶ In such moments, we are too immersed in the contents of our minds to note any distinction between the representation and the thing we are representing. Moreover, Schulze claims, “it is sufficiently familiar from experience that the distinction of the subject, or the representing I, from the object and the representation is wholly lacking during several activities of the mind through which something is represented.”⁵⁷ In contrast to deep reflection, where the subject fails to distinguish the representation from the object, Schulze has in mind cases where the subject fails to distinguish itself from the object or the representation. Though Schulze does not give examples, Johann Schwab's 1791 review of the first volume of Reinhold's *Contributions*—a review that clearly influenced Schulze⁵⁸—helps to fill in the gaps:

Is there not a consciousness where we do not distinguish ourselves from the object; and is this not the case when we lose ourselves, as one says, in a sensation [*Empfindung*]? Consciousness cannot be denied to children; however, it appears to take a long time before they distinguish themselves from their representations and the objects.⁵⁹

Schulze, like Schwab, is presumably thinking of sensation, along with other primitive mental states that are not accompanied by any explicit self-awareness on the part of the subject (such as occur in children prior to the advent of self-consciousness).

So far, Schulze's phenomenological critique of the principle of consciousness does not differ significantly from Schwab's. **Where Schulze departs from Schwab is in discussing intuition,** which Schulze takes to be yet a further counterexample to the principle of consciousness. “[I]n the intuition of an object that is supposed

⁵⁵Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 72.

⁵⁶Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 73.

⁵⁷Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 72–73.

⁵⁸Frank (*Unendliche Annäherung*, 240) points out Schulze's debt to Schwab.

⁵⁹Johann Schwab, review of volume 1 of *Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Misverständnisse der Philosophen* [“Review of *Contributions*”], by Karl Reinhold, *Philosophisches Magazin* 4 (1791): 335.

to be really present outside me [*in der Anschauung eines außer mir wirklich vorhanden sein sollenden Gegestandes*],” according to Schulze,

I indeed notice [*bemerke*] my “I,” which intuits, and a representation, which constitutes the content of the intuition; however, in this intuition and during it, there is no perception [*Gewahrnehmung*] of an object that is distinct from my “I” and the representation that is present in it.⁶⁰

The point here is not that one might be fooled by one’s intuition, such that one believes during an intuition that one’s representation corresponds to some external, mind-independent object, when no object is in fact present. Nor is the point that one can withhold belief (on theoretical grounds) that there exists an external object corresponding to one’s intuition. Schulze supposes for the sake of the argument that there is such an object corresponding to one’s intuition, and also assumes that the subject of an intuition has good reason for believing this.⁶¹ Instead, Schulze’s point is that, *during the intuition*, the subject is only aware of herself and her representation. Although, *ex hypothesi*, she represents some external object, she does not *perceive* it, where perceiving for Schulze means not just representing an object that is assumed to be distinct from the representation but also noticing, or representing it, *as such*. This is what Schulze means when he says, “[A]s long as the intuition lasts, no object whatsoever different from it is noted; indeed the emergence of the distinction between representation and object **would immediately annihilate intuition.**”⁶² Because consciousness of an object requires representing it as distinct from one’s representation, the subject is not conscious of an object during an intuition, though she is self-conscious.⁶³ Thus, intuitions are representations that do not conform to Reinhold’s definition of representation, as well as expressions of consciousness that do not conform to Reinhold’s principle of consciousness.

intuition vs. perception

In intuition one is not conscious of an object, but only intuition (representation)

3.2 *Immanent critique of the principle of consciousness*

In addition to arguing on phenomenological grounds that there are *in fact* representations that do not conform to the principle of consciousness, Schulze attempts to draw on internal features of Reinhold’s account of representation, together with putative facts about speech usage, to show there are at least four classes of representations that could not in principle conform to Reinhold’s definition of representation: distinguishing (*Unterscheiden*), relating (*Beziehen*), perception (*Gewahrnehmung*), and intuition (*Anschauung*). According to Schulze, representations of the first three sorts necessarily accompany representations satisfying

⁶⁰Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 72.

⁶¹See Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 72–73: “[A]nd notwithstanding that I perhaps assume and am convinced on the basis of speculation that that representation which I call intuition corresponds to an object that is different from it and objectively actual, nevertheless during the act of intuiting and as long as it lasts, the representation is not at all distinguished from the object to which it is supposed to be related.”

⁶²Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 85.

⁶³Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 89. As we will see, by Schulze’s lights it is sufficient for self-consciousness that one distinguish oneself from a representation. Because the subject of an intuition distinguishes herself from her intuition, she is self-conscious.

Reinhold's definition of representation. By contrast, intuitions, which Schulze had earlier argued for on phenomenological grounds, do not necessarily accompany representations satisfying Reinhold's definition, though their non-conformity with Reinhold's definition is likewise assured.

In the case of the first two representations, distinguishing and relating, Schulze's claim is relatively straightforward: distinguishing and relating must accompany representations satisfying Reinhold's definition, since a representation is defined as "that which is distinguished in consciousness through the subject from the object and subject and related to both."⁶⁴ Now, as Schulze argues, the terms 'distinguishing' and 'relating' are ordinarily used to denote representations, in particular, acts of thought. But such representations do not themselves need to be distinguished and related in consciousness in order to occur. Thus, **distinguishing and relating are two sorts of representations that do not satisfy Reinhold's definition of representation but that necessarily accompany representations that do.**⁶⁵

In the case of the third and fourth classes of representations, matters are less straightforward. Schulze offers a rather subtle argument designed to show, first, that intuitions could not in principle conform to Reinhold's definition, and second that perceptions, which are distinct from intuitions, necessarily accompany all representations in Reinhold's sense and also could not in principle conform to Reinhold's definition. This argument has attracted a good amount of critical attention because of its alleged importance for Fichte. Several commentators claim that Fichte accepts the validity of Schulze's argument and draws on it in his famous attack on the reflection model of self-consciousness. Given these claims, it is important to gain clarity about the nature of (what I shall call) Schulze's immanent critique of the principle of consciousness.

As it is initially formulated, the argument runs as follows:

For if a representation is made up only of something that is distinguished by the subject from the object and subject, and is related to both; if it is certain, moreover, that only something that has been perceived [*was wahrgenommen worden ist*] can be distinguished from, and related to, something else by the mind (for the operation of distinguishing and relating can occur only if there is something there that can be related to, and distinguished from, something else; and where there is nothing present [*vorhanden*] that can be distinguished, "distinguishing" cannot be thought of at all), then it follows that "intuition" is not a species of the genus "representation" because the concept of the genus is not applicable to it at all. During the intuiting no distinction of an object from a representation occurs, because for as long as the intuition lasts, no object at all different from it is noted [*bemerkt*].⁶⁶

While it is obvious from this passage that Schulze is trying to show here that intuitions do not satisfy Reinhold's definition of representation, it is less obvious that he is also trying to do this for perceptions. Nevertheless, the next paragraph makes clear that this is his aim:

Furthermore, it is just as certain that general speech usage has also determined the word 'representing' for the perceiving [*Gewahrnehmen*] and noting [*Bemerken*] of the

⁶⁴Reinhold, "New Exposition," I:168. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 77.

⁶⁵See Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 86–87.

⁶⁶Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 84–85.

object and subject, to which the representation is related and from which it is distinguished; and the object as well as the subject, insofar as they occur in consciousness, are also represented in it.

Though many readers, including Fichte⁶⁷, seem to assume that ‘intuition’ and ‘perception’ are synonyms for Schulze, he explicitly distinguishes them in a passage I cited earlier: “[I]n this intuition and during it, there is no perception [*Gewahrnehmung*] of an object that is distinct from my I and the representation that is present in it.”⁶⁸ A perception, for Schulze, is a representation of something as distinct from the representation of it. Schulze’s argument for the claim that intuitions could not in principle satisfy Reinhold’s definition of representation turns on the distinction between intuition and perception. Schulze first argues that intuitions could not satisfy Reinhold’s definition of representation because Reinholdian representations presuppose a perception of the subject and a perception of the object whereas intuitions do not involve a perception of the object. Schulze then argues that the perception of the subject and the perception of the object constitute additional counterexamples to Reinhold’s definition of representation, because they are themselves representations, according to “general speech usage,” though they do not satisfy Reinhold’s definition of representation.⁶⁹

Schulze’s distinction between perception & intuition

The key premise in this argument is the claim that “only something perceived can be distinguished from, and related to, something else.” In the parenthetical remark immediately following the statement of this premise, Schulze offers what looks to be support for it: “[F]or the operation of distinguishing and relating can occur only if there is something there that can be related to, and distinguished from, something else; and where there is nothing present [*vorhanden*] that can be distinguished, ‘distinguishing’ cannot be thought of at all.” Because a representation satisfying Reinhold’s definition (a Reinholdian representation) is one that is distinguished by the subject from itself and the object and is related to both, Schulze maintains that it must be preceded by a perception of the subject and the object.⁷⁰ He concludes that every Reinholdian representation presupposes a non-Reinholdian perception of the subject and a non-Reinholdian perception of the object. An adequate reconstruction of Schulze’s thinking needs to answer two questions: (1) Why does Schulze think the perceptions of object and subject cannot be Reinholdian representations? (2) Why does Schulze think that something needs to be perceived in order to be distinguished from something else?

Reconstructing Schulze’s argument

It is commonly assumed⁷¹ that Schulze is offering a regress argument here: the perceptions of object and subject presupposed by Reinholdian representations cannot themselves embody the four-fold structure of Reinholdian representa-

Is it a regress argument?

⁶⁷See GA I/2:47; BKH 141, where Fichte paraphrases Schulze’s argument in such a way that intuition is described as “the first perception.”

⁶⁸Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 72.

⁶⁹Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 87.

⁷⁰That Schulze thinks Reinholdian representations presuppose the subject’s perceiving of both the object and the subject is clear from Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 87.

⁷¹See, for example, Neuhauser, *Fichte’s Theory of Subjectivity*, 71–75; Martin, “From Kant to Fichte”; and Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity*, 88–92. See also Franks’s (*All or Nothing*, 219–21) discussion of how this reading fits into a standard narrative of the development of German Idealism.

tions, because these would in turn require further perceptions, which if they are Reinholdian representations would require yet further perceptions. Neuhausser, for instance, writes,

If the self-awareness involved in my representation of X were itself a species of representation, then there would need to be another subject distinguished from and related to that representation of myself, and so on *ad infinitum*. An account of even the simplest state of consciousness would require the assumption of an infinite number of subjects and an infinite number of acts of relating between subject and representation.⁷²

While this makes a certain amount of sense as a reconstruction of Schulze's thinking, its textual basis is tenuous at best. Moreover, as with many regress arguments, it is easier to state in the abstract than it is to formulate more precisely. Granting that a representation of *P* requires that the subject perceive itself in order to distinguish itself from *P* and from the representation, and granting (for the purposes of argument) that this self-perception is a representation in Reinhold's sense, what is the danger? In particular, why should it result in the promiscuous multiplication of subjects? We might try to formulate the worry as follows:

- 1) Assume I represent some object *P*. Call my act of representation *P**.
- 2) Since *P** is a representation, I must distinguish it from myself.
- 3) Therefore, I must have a perception of myself as a distinct object, which we can call *Os*₁. Call this representational act *Q**.
- 4) Since *Q** is a representation, I must have a perception of myself as a distinct object, which we might call *Os*₂. Call this representational act *R**.

And so forth. However, note that this is a problematic result only if there is reason for thinking that *Os*₁ is distinct from *Os*₂ and so on. However, we have been given no reason for thinking this: if perceptions of myself are representations in Reinhold's sense, then it follows that in them the subject must distinguish itself from the representation, and the representation in turn from the object it is representing, here the subject-object. Now, while the structure of representation does seem to require that the subject be distinct from the object of its representation—so here the representing self must be distinct from the represented self (the subject-object is distinct from the subject)—it does not follow that every such representation of myself is of a represented subject-object distinct from every other represented subject-object. But note that this is what premise 4 above requires. Thus Neuhausser's claim that perceptions could not be representations, since it would result in a profusion of subjects, seems unfounded. Nor is it clear why there should be a promiscuous multiplication of representations. Again, for this to be a problem, it has to be shown that the representational act labeled *Q** above is distinct from the representational act labeled *R**, and so forth, for the infinite representations that are supposed to be generated. But we have been given no reason for thinking this. If, for instance, *Q**=*R**, there is nothing to worry about.

Paul Franks has recently offered a different reconstruction of the argument. As Franks reads him, Schulze's guiding philosophical problematic is our supposed

⁷²Neuhausser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, 72.

inability to decide between the following two philosophical positions: a Cartesian (or Humean) skepticism that denies us immediate epistemic access to external, mind-independent objects and thus calls into doubt their very existence, and a Jacobian (or Reidian) direct realism that grants us immediate epistemic access to such objects and thus regards their existence as beyond doubt. On Franks's reading, Schulze's real complaint in the above argument is that Reinhold's principle of consciousness begs the question against both skepticism and direct realism. It begs the question against skepticism because it presupposes that there are external objects; it begs the question against direct realism because it presupposes that our epistemic access to such objects is always mediated by representations. With regard to this last point, Franks proposes that when Schulze asserts that some states of consciousness must be non-Reinholdian perceptions,

Franks'
reconstruction

He may be objecting to the Principle [of Consciousness] on the realist ground that, if there genuinely is an object to distinguish from one's representation, then one's consciousness of that object must ultimately be grounded in an immediate perception of the object.⁷³

On Franks's reading, Schulze is not claiming that we are in immediate epistemic contact with external things; indeed, according to Franks, Schulze does not see a way of overcoming the skeptic's doubts about the existence of such things.⁷⁴ However, Franks's Schulze is claiming that, if there are such things, then the sorts of representations that he had earlier argued for on phenomenological grounds—namely, intuitions—involve an immediate epistemic relation to them. Franks thus equates perceptions with intuitions, and construes the latter along Jacobian lines, as conscious states accompanied by an immediate belief or conviction both in one's own existence and the existence of an external object—that is, a belief that is not mediated by representation and inference.⁷⁵ In support of his reading, he notes that Schulze undergoes a later conversion to Jacobian realism, and points to a passage in which Schulze “sounds strikingly like Jacobi.”⁷⁶

Franks's reading faces several problems. First, as we have seen, intuitions and perceptions are not the same thing; insofar as Franks's reading requires identifying them, it is in trouble. Second, *pace* Franks, Schulze's “intuitions,” at least as they are described in the *Aenesidemus*,⁷⁷ are not similar at all to Jacobi's “simple perceptions”—conscious states accompanied by immediate faith in the existence of an external object. Whereas the subject of such a state believes or trusts in the existence of an external thing, the subject of an intuition in Schulze's sense neither represents, nor is conscious of, anything as distinct from herself and her representation during the intuition; *a fortiori*, her intuition does not involve belief or trust in the existence of some external thing. Third, Franks is wrong to think

Objections to
Franks

⁷³Franks, *All or Nothing*, 222.

⁷⁴Franks, *All or Nothing*, 223.

⁷⁵See, for instance, Friedrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 277.

⁷⁶Franks, *All or Nothing*, 222.

⁷⁷Schulze offers a very different characterization of intuition in later works; see, for example, vol. 1 of the *Kritik der theoretischen Philosophie* (Hamburg, 1801), 56–66. Here Schulze *does* sound strikingly similar to Jacobi.

that Schulze's objection to Reinhold is guided by a conviction that there is no basis for deciding between skepticism and direct realism. In fact, Schulze's attack on Kant and Reinhold is predicated on his commitment to Humean skepticism, a skepticism that presupposes that we are only in immediate epistemic contact with representations. Throughout the *Aenesidemus*, Schulze makes clear that he agrees with Hume that the conviction that there are external objects is the result of an inference, in particular an inference from the necessity inherent in certain representations, to the existence of a cause of those representations.⁷⁸ At the core of Schulze's particular brand of skepticism is the claim that all attempts up to the present to ground this inference have simply presupposed the objective validity of the causal principle and/or the principle that if we must represent things as being such-and-so then they must be such-and-so. Schulze thinks that the existence of external objects will remain open to doubt until we can either prove these principles or find suitable substitutes. *Pace* Franks, direct realism is simply off the table for Schulze, at least at the time of the writing of the *Aenesidemus*. To the extent that he considers it here and in earlier work, he dismisses it as obviously absurd.⁷⁹

A problem common to both Neuhouser's regress reading and Franks's reading is that they do not explain why Schulze thinks that the distinguishing and the relating of a representation presuppose the subject's perceptions of itself and its object. What they fail to recognize is that Schulze supports this claim with a line of reasoning that occurs in the context of Reinhold's discussion of "mere representation." As I explained earlier, mere representation, for Reinhold, "is that which can be related in consciousness to the object and subject, and is distinguished from both."⁸⁰ Given this conception of mere representation, Reinhold argues that mere representation is what occurs immediately in consciousness, not the other components described in the principle of consciousness:

That which is related in consciousness to the object and subject must be present—indeed not according to time but according to nature—before the acts of being related [*Bezogenwerden*], insofar as nothing can be related, if nothing is present [*vorhanden*] that is able to be related.⁸¹

Schulze invokes this point in his immanent critique of the principle of consciousness when he writes,

[T]he operation of distinguishing and referring can occur only if there is something there that can be referred to, and distinguished from, something else; and where there is nothing present [*vorhanden*] that can be distinguished, "distinguishing" cannot be thought of at all.⁸²

Whereas Reinhold uses this line of reasoning to show that mere representation precedes the acts of distinguishing and relating, as well as the subject and object, Schulze relies on it to support his premise that there can be no actual representations in Reinhold's sense without the subject's first perceiving itself and its object.

⁷⁸Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 232.

⁷⁹See, for example, Schulze's *Grundriß der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (Wittenberg und Zerbst, 1790), 2:3 and 7.

⁸⁰Reinhold, "New Exposition," I:173. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 79.

⁸¹Reinhold, "New Exposition," I:173. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 80.

⁸²Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 84–85.

That Schulze is consciously exploiting Reinhold's own reasoning in his immanent critique is corroborated by the remarks he makes following the reprisal of the argument:

From what has already been said, it is already sufficiently clear what is to be thought of the concept of *mere* representation formulated in §5.⁸³ . . . All one needs to recall is that what is said [by Reinhold] about mere representation and its relation to the possibility of the object and subject in consciousness must also be said of the subject and object with regard to the existence of the *actual* representation in consciousness. . . . Namely, if nothing can be related to another when nothing is present [*vorhanden*] that can be related to another, then the actual representation cannot be related in consciousness to the subject and object, if these are not already there as a mere subject and as a mere object. Therefore, both precede the representation in consciousness; both contain the ground of possibility for the fact that the representation can occur in consciousness.⁸⁴

In order for a representation to occur in consciousness (in order for it to be "actual," as Schulze puts it), it must be distinguished from, and related to, the object and the subject—this follows immediately from Reinhold's definition of *representation*. (In contrast to *mere* representation, Reinhold defines representation in terms of the actual relations that representations stand in when they occur in consciousness.) But since a representation cannot be distinguished from, and related to, the object and subject in consciousness, unless these are already available in consciousness to be distinguished and related (as "mere" subject and "mere" object, as it were), Schulze concludes that the object and subject must be "present" to the mind before actual representation in Reinhold's sense. Given Schulze's simple representationalism, according to which all mental states are representations, something's being present to the mind can only mean that it is represented. Moreover, **if the object and subject are to be present to the mind as object and subject, they must be *perceived*, that is, represented as things distinct from their respective representations.** (Note that the occurrence of a perception of an object in this sense does not entail the existence of an external, mind-independent object.) It is this assumption that allows Schulze to exploit Reinhold's reasoning in support of his claim that every Reinholdian representation presupposes perceptions of the subject and the object. These representations are non-Reinholdian, for Schulze, because their occurrence does not require the distinguishing and relating that are required for Reinholdian representations. In this respect, they are just like the acts of distinguishing and relating themselves, which are also representations, according to Schulze, though their occurrence does not require (another) act of distinguishing and relating. In the next section, we will see that Schulze has further reasons for thinking the perception of the subject cannot be a Reinholdian representation.

3.3 *Self-representation, Self-consciousness, and the Nature of the "I"*

In addition to the arguments previously considered, Schulze appeals to special considerations about self-representation, self-consciousness, and the nature of

⁸³This is the section in which Reinhold introduces the concept of mere representation.

⁸⁴Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 89–90 (Schulze's emphasis).

the self to attack Reinholdian Representationalism. In a footnote attached to his immanent critique of the principle of consciousness, Schulze discusses self-representation, of which the self-perception discussed above is a species. He writes,

According to the explanation that the Elementary Philosophy gives of representing and of its essential properties, the subject is not represented in us until it becomes the object of a special consciousness [*eines besondern Bewußtseins*], which is related to something different from both it and the representing "I." And before this has happened, according to the Elementary Philosophy, the subject can by no means be represented in us [*kann das Subjekt durchaus nicht in uns vorgestellt worden sein*]. According to the generally valid speech usage [*Nach dem allgemeingültigen Sprachgebrauche*], however, the subject can already be represented, even if it has not yet been elevated to the object of a special consciousness, and even if it could never be so elevated [*und auch dazu gar nicht einmal erhoben werden könnte*]. . . . Indeed, if one intends to reject this speech usage, one must accept and defend absurdities [*Ungereimtheiten*]. In particular, if the subject, which is related in the mind to a representation that is different both from it and an object, is not a representation of a something [*nicht eine Vorstellung von einem Etwas*], then it is either more or less than a representation. If the "I," whose consciousness accompanies many representations and can accompany all, is more than a representation, then we are acquainted with the subject of our representations [*so besitzen wir von dem Subjekt unserer Vorstellungen eine Kenntnis*] without representing it, and therefore there are things present in the mind that are not representations. If this "I," however, is less than a representation of a something, then it again follows that something can be cognized and perceived by us without our possessing a representation of it.⁸⁵

Schulze is making several points here. First, whereas Reinhold holds that the subject is only represented when it becomes the object of a special consciousness, which requires that the subject distinguish itself as representing from itself as represented, Schulze notes that ordinary speech usage does not take this to be a condition on self-representation. We would say that a subject represents itself even if it has not yet become the object of a state of consciousness conforming to Reinhold's principle, and even if it *could not*.

Second, with this last remark, Schulze implies that self-representation, as Reinhold describes it, might not be possible. Though Schulze does not elaborate, a remark from Johann Schwab's review of the first volume of Reinhold's *Contributions* offers a clue into Schulze's thinking:

According to [Reinhold], each representation and the subject itself can become an object. In the last case, therefore, the subject is distinguished through the subject from the subject and so forth. Do such propositions, even if they have a sense, belong in an elementary philosophy?⁸⁶

For Schwab (and I think for Schulze, too) the problem is making sense of Reinhold's subordination of self-representation to his general definition of representation, which requires that the subject distinguish itself from itself. There is a worry that Reinhold is asking for something metaphysically impossible, or downright incoherent. What seems to separate self-consciousness from other types of con-

does it make sense to distinguish oneself from oneself?

⁸⁵Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 87–88.

⁸⁶Schwab, "Review of *Contributions*," 335.

consciousness is that, during it, the subject of consciousness is not distinct from that of which it is conscious.⁸⁷

Third, insofar as all representations satisfying Reinhold's definition have a built-in relation to a subject (a representation is that which is distinguished in consciousness through the subject from the object and subject and related to both), Reinhold is confronted with a dilemma. Either the "I" is related to all representations in virtue of its being represented or it is not. If the former, then *pace* Reinhold's claim that the "I" is represented only when it becomes the object of a special consciousness, the "I" is represented whenever there is a representation satisfying Reinhold's definition. If the latter, then since the relation of the "I" to all Reinholdian representations is a cognitive relation, requiring that the "I" be present in all consciousness, then there are things in consciousness that are not representations. But this conflicts with Reinholdian Representationalism.

reinhold's
dilemma

In the course of evaluating Reinhold's distinction between clear and distinct consciousness (where Reinhold discusses self-consciousness), Schulze points to a further problem with Reinholdian Representationalism. The problem with Reinhold's construal of consciousness, according to Schulze, is that it only captures the conditions of one species of consciousness: consciousness of an object. Rather than including *under* itself the other species of consciousness (consciousness of a representation and self-consciousness), what Reinhold calls consciousness in general includes the other types of consciousness *in* itself. Any instance of consciousness in general (that is, a state of consciousness that conforms to Reinhold's principle) is *ipso facto* an instance of consciousness of a representation and self-consciousness. Focusing on self-consciousness, Schulze writes,

only
consciousness of
an object

Thus, self-consciousness is not only present in us when the representing "I" constitutes the object of a special representation, but rather also in general when the representing thing, as a representing thing, is distinguished from the representation and from the object, or when the representing "I" is perceived as existing; and one is conscious of oneself as soon as and insofar as one distinguishes the thinking "I" from some kind of a thought or from the object of the thought.⁸⁸

Self-consciousness, then, does not require that one become the special object of a state of consciousness (or representation) as Reinhold defines it. Rather, self-consciousness for Schulze (as for Wolff and many of those influenced by him) requires only that the subject distinguish itself from something else—be it a representation or an object. Because what Reinhold calls consciousness in general requires that the subject distinguish itself from something else, Schulze concludes that it already contains in itself self-consciousness.

Schulze & the
Wolffian
tradition

Two features of Schulze's own theory of self-consciousness are especially worthy of notice. First, unlike Reinhold, who takes representing something to be the same as being conscious of it, and thus equates self-representation and self-consciousness, Schulze distinguishes these. To be conscious of some object *x* requires not just perceiving *x*, but also distinguishing *x* from oneself. Second, self-representation

Representation
vs.
consciousness

⁸⁷Schulze (*Psychische Anthropologie*, 32–33) says this explicitly, and faults Fichte for introducing a distinction between the "I" that is conscious and the "I" of which it is conscious.

⁸⁸Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 350.

(in particular, self-perception), for Schulze, is necessary but not sufficient for self-consciousness. It is necessary because self-consciousness, as Schulze explains it, requires that the subject distinguish itself from something else. But we have already seen (in the immanent critique of the principle of consciousness) that, for Schulze, things can be distinguished only if they have already been represented as distinct from their representation—that is, if they have been perceived. Self-perception is not sufficient for self-consciousness because the subject can represent itself as distinct from its representation without distinguishing itself from something else. This occurs, for instance, when there is nothing else present (for example, a representation of an object) that can be distinguished from the subject.

In a certain sense, then, Schulze agrees with Reinhold's claim that "in consciousness, the representation occurs as that through which the distinction of the representing thing from the represented thing is possible." Namely, Schulze agrees that a subject cannot distinguish itself from an object (and thus be self-conscious) unless there is a representation present. He disagrees, however, with what he takes to be the stronger (ontological) meaning of Reinhold's claim: the subject and object do not exist at all as distinct things until they are distinguished from, and related to, a representation:

Taken in this sense, [the principle] is entirely false. The subject is namely in itself and without regard to the representation of an object that is related to it something that is distinct from the object and to be distinguished from it. . . . Neither in the representation, which is related to the object and subject, nor in that which the object and subject are supposed to have contributed to this representation, but rather in themselves is the ground contained by means of which the object and subject are distinguished from one another and to be distinguished.⁸⁹

For Schulze, the subject and object, as things-in-themselves, do not depend on representations for the fact that they are distinct from one another (assuming, of course, that there exists an external, mind-independent object, which for Schulze is still open to doubt). They contain their individuation conditions in themselves. Indeed, if the subject were not already something distinct from the object prior to its being distinguished from, and related to, a representation, it would not be the subject that distinguishes the representation from itself and the object and relates it to both. Instead, the representation would be the distinguishing thing.⁹⁰ But the principle of consciousness clearly assigns this role to the subject.

It has been claimed that Schulze's critique of Reinholdian Representationalism stems in part from an awareness of the general difficulties that plague the reflection theory of self-consciousness—the view that the self must turn inward and make an object of itself in order to achieve self-consciousness.⁹¹ It has also been claimed that Schulze's objections to Reinhold's theory of self-consciousness

⁸⁹Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 318.

⁹⁰See Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 319: "If the representation were that through which the subject is first determined as the distinguishing thing, and the object as the distinguished thing, then how would the subject be the distinguishing thing with respect to the representation, and the representation a thing to be distinguished with respect to the object and subject?"

⁹¹For a classical discussion of the problems with the reflection theory of self-consciousness, see Dieter Henrich, "Fichte's Original Insight," in *Contemporary German Philosophy*, 1:15–53.

“represent nothing less than the first serious attempt at a radical, non-objective [i.e. non-reflection-based] explanation of self-consciousness.”⁹² While one can certainly understand the temptation, I do not think this is borne out by a careful examination of Schulze’s criticisms. As we have seen, Schulze criticizes Reinhold’s theory of self-consciousness from the standpoint of a broadly Wolffian theory of representation, consciousness, and self-consciousness. According to Schulze’s version of this theory, all states of consciousness are representations in some (not necessarily Reinholdian) sense of the term; we are not conscious of everything we represent, because consciousness of *x* requires representing *x* and distinguishing it from oneself; and self-consciousness requires distinguishing oneself from something else. Since, for Schulze, one cannot distinguish the object and subject in consciousness without first perceiving them, self-consciousness rests on self-perception. Schulze does not object to Reinhold’s account of self-consciousness on the grounds that it is a reflection theory of self-consciousness, since he, too, is committed to such an account. Rather, he objects to Reinhold on the grounds that (1) he mistakes the conditions on self-representation, requiring that the subject become the object of a special consciousness in order to represent itself, when this is not required; (2) he renders self-representation metaphysically impossible by subordinating it to the principle of consciousness; and (3) he fails to provide a general concept of consciousness that applies to self-consciousness as a species.

Against Henrich & Frank

Schulze’s mistake

We have also seen that Schulze offers no regress argument of the sort commonly attributed to him. Instead, Schulze’s immanent critique of the principle of consciousness draws on points that Reinhold makes in his discussion of mere representation. Schulze argues in effect that the very same reasoning that leads Reinhold to assert that mere representation occurs in consciousness prior to the subject and the object (and the acts of relating and distinguishing) can be used to show that the “mere” subject and “mere” object occur in consciousness prior to actual representations in Reinhold’s sense. Since Schulze’s simple representationalism dictates that everything that occurs in consciousness is represented, he concludes that the mere subject and mere object are objects of non-Reinholdian representations (namely, perceptions). Schulze thus assigns a cognitive primacy to the subject and object vis-à-vis Reinholdian representations: they are perceived—that is, represented as things distinct from their respective representations—prior to being distinguished from, and related to, the representation and one another. He further argues for an ontological primacy of the subject and object, denying (what he takes to be) Reinhold’s claim that the subject and object do not exist as distinct things-in-themselves until they are distinguished from representation. By Schulze’s lights, the subject and the object are already distinct before the presence of Reinholdian representations.

4. FICHTE’S ACCEPTANCE OF REINHOLDIAN REPRESENTATIONALISM

According to the widely accepted story about the development of Fichte’s early idealism, Fichte accepts the validity of Schulze’s criticisms of Reinholdian Repre-

⁹²See Frank, Introduction, lxxvi.

sentationalism and even draws on Schulze's "regress" argument—what I labeled above "the immanent critique of the principle of consciousness"—for his attack on the reflection theory of self-consciousness. One formulation of Fichte's attack on the reflection theory of self-consciousness occurs in the *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1797/98):

You are conscious of yourself as an object of consciousness only insofar as you are conscious of yourself as the conscious subject; but then this subject becomes, in turn, an object of consciousness, and you must then, once again, become conscious of yourself as the subject who is conscious of this object of consciousness and so on, *ad infinitum*. How could you ever arrive at any original consciousness in this way?⁹³

Clearly, this is a regress argument. Fichte argues that if (1) all consciousness of an object presupposes a prior act of self-consciousness, and (2) all self-consciousness is itself consciousness of an object, there results a vicious regress of states of consciousness. Since Fichte takes the conclusion to be unacceptable and believes (1) to be incontrovertible, he thinks the only alternative is to reject (2). **Not all self-consciousness is consciousness of an object; some self-consciousness is immediate and non-objective.**

In light of the preceding section, one flaw in the widely accepted story should be obvious: Fichte's regress argument is not anticipated by Schulze, since Schulze offers no such argument. Nor does Fichte himself offer anything that obviously resembles this argument in the "Review of the *Aenesidemus*." Taken alone, this is not such a serious problem for the widely accepted story. However, as we shall see, the widely accepted story is further flawed insofar as it takes the early Fichte to have rejected Reinhold's principle of consciousness and definition of representation because of Schulze's objections.⁹⁴ In fact, in the "Review of the *Aenesidemus*,"

⁹³GA I/4:275; IW 112.

⁹⁴See, e.g. Martin, "From Kant to Fichte"; and Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, 69–72. Neuhouser writes, "For [Fichte], Schulze's criticism implies that the defender of Critical Philosophy must reject Reinhold's claim that the structure of representational consciousness is the structure of all consciousness and must provide instead an account of the self-awareness involved in representational consciousness that avoids the infinite regress into which any account based on Reinhold's model inevitably falls" (72). Accepting this reading, Martin writes, "Fichte effectively agrees with Schulze (in a key case of taking Aenesidemus' side against Reinhold) in rejecting the thesis of 'Reinholdian Representationalism.'" A referee argues that it is not necessary to read Neuhouser as denying that Fichte accepts Reinholdian Representationalism, since Neuhouser is using the term 'consciousness' in a loose sense in the above remark such that consciousness also refers to "partial" states of consciousness (such as intellectual intuition), whereas 'consciousness' as it occurs in the formulation of Reinholdian Representationalism can be taken in the strict sense such that it refers only to "full-blown" states of (representational) consciousness. The referee also maintains that it would be more charitable to charge Martin with mere sloppiness when he says that Fichte rejects Reinholdian Representationalism, since Martin does not say this in his lengthier treatment of these matters. However, even if the referee is right that it is better to read Neuhouser and Martin in this way, their remarks continue to illustrate how easy it is to misconstrue Fichte's attitude toward Reinholdian Representationalism. Moreover, even on the more charitable reading, I (still) do not think that Neuhouser's remark quite captures Fichte's attitude toward Reinholdian Representationalism. As I read him, Fichte takes Reinhold's formulation of the principle of consciousness to be true not just for "full-blown" states of representational consciousness, but for *all* consciousness without exception. As I will show, **this is consistent with Fichte's view that intellectual intuition is a type of consciousness because the principle of consciousness describes what happens in consciousness and intellectual intuition does not happen in consciousness.**

Fichte not only denies the validity of Schulze's objections to Reinholdian Representationalism, but commits himself to its truth.

In his "Review of the *Aenesidemus*," Fichte distinguishes between Schulze's phenomenological argument and his immanent critique of the principle of consciousness. In both cases, Fichte denies that Schulze has provided a good reason for rejecting the principle of consciousness. With regard to the former class of objections, Fichte says that phenomenology is an inappropriate arbiter of the validity of the principle of consciousness, since this principle does not ultimately rest on experience. Since, according to Fichte, the principle of consciousness "can be rigorously demonstrated *a priori* from another principle,"⁹⁵ it admits of no counterexamples in experience; if Schulze claims to have found some, he is mistaken.⁹⁶ In the course of evaluating Schulze's immanent critique of the principle of consciousness, Fichte sides with Reinhold about both the validity of the principle of consciousness and the accuracy of Reinhold's definition of 'representation.' Fichte denies Schulze's conclusion that representations conforming to Reinhold's definition presuppose perceptions of the subject and object that do not conform to the definition. He thinks the error lies in the minor premise of the argument, in Schulze's claim that "that alone can be distinguished which has already been perceived." In response to this, Fichte writes, "The original object is not perceived at all, and cannot be perceived. Therefore, intuition can be related, prior to all other perception, to an object, the not-I, which is originally opposed to the subject."⁹⁷ Fichte also disagrees with Schulze that the distinguishing and relating mentioned in the principle of consciousness are representations, and points out that Reinhold has already correctly denied this.⁹⁸

In short, Fichte thinks that Reinhold can and should insist that what Schulze labels "representations"—the perceptions of the subject and object and the distinguishing and relating—are incorrectly so-called insofar as they do not satisfy the true and proper philosophical definition of representation supplied by the principle of consciousness. The Reinholdian claim that Fichte thinks Schulze's arguments *do* succeed in undermining is, ironically enough, precisely a point on which both Schulze and Reinhold agree: the concept of representation is the fundamental concept of philosophy and must figure into its first principle.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, though Fichte thinks that Schulze has unwittingly refuted this claim by gesturing toward (without clearly and correctly characterizing) the various pre-representational mental states and acts that make representation possible, he agrees with Reinhold about the universal validity of the principle of consciousness, and about the universal validity of his concept of representation. But in accepting these, Fichte commits himself to Reinholdian Representationalism.

At this point, one might wonder how Fichte's commitment to Reinholdian Representationalism in the "Review of the *Aenesidemus*" is compatible with his talk

⁹⁵GA I/2:46; BKH 141.

⁹⁶GA I/2:46; BKH 141.

⁹⁷GA I/2:47; BKH 141–42.

⁹⁸GA I/2:47–48; BKH 142.

⁹⁹GA I/2:42–43; BKH 138.

of intellectual intuition. If the acts of self-positing and counterpositing are pre-representational—as Fichte clearly affirms¹⁰⁰—and occur in consciousness, then they would constitute counterexamples to Reinholdian Representationalism. However, in the “Review of the *Aenesidemus*,” Fichte maintains that (1) “all that is discovered in the mind is a representing,” and (2) representation “is undeniably an empirical determination of the mind.”¹⁰¹ **Inssofar as self-positing and counterpositing are non-representational and non-empirical, they cannot occur in consciousness.** Fichte is even more explicit about this point in the *Personal Meditations* (ca. 1793/94), a lengthy series of reflections in which he works out a new version of Reinhold’s Elementary Philosophy, and which he wrote in close connection with the “Review of the *Aenesidemus*.” He writes, “The first and highest facts are not attained in consciousness—the highest fact that attains to consciousness is the Reinholdian.”¹⁰² The first and highest facts here are the acts of self-positing and counterpositing. The highest fact that can occur in consciousness is the one described by Reinhold’s principle of consciousness: the representation is distinguished from the subject and the object and is related to both. Everything that takes place *in* consciousness, for Fichte, conforms to the conditions of Reinhold’s principle. Since Reinhold’s principle dictates that everything that occurs in consciousness is mediated by representation, and since (so Fichte thinks) all representation is empirical, Fichte concludes that everything that occurs in consciousness is empirical.

It is precisely because Fichte accepts Reinhold’s principle of consciousness and assumes that all representation is empirical, that he denies that the absolute subject, which posits itself in intellectual intuition, and the absolute object, which is counterposited by the absolute subject, can occur in consciousness:

The absolute subject, the ego, is not given in an empirical intuition, but is posited through an intellectual one; and the absolute object, the non-ego, is what is posited in opposition to it. In empirical consciousness, both occur in no other way than by a representation being referred to them. They are in it only mediately, *qua* representing, and *qua* represented. But the absolute subject, that which represents but is not represented; and the absolute object . . . of these one will never become conscious as something empirically given.¹⁰³

Qua absolute, the subject and object are neither mediated by a representation nor empirical. If they were to occur in consciousness, they would need to be mediated by representation and thus be empirical. Thus, *qua* absolute, the subject and object do not occur in consciousness. **It might be thought that the absolute subject and object, for Fichte, can be represented in a different type of consciousness: namely, pure consciousness.** But ‘pure consciousness’ (or ‘pure self-consciousness’) is not a phrase that Fichte uses in the “Review of the *Aenesidemus*.” Here, Fichte’s view is that the absolute subject that posits itself and the absolute object that is counterposited are the pure conditions of *all* consciousness and representation, which

¹⁰⁰See, for example, GA I/2:47; BKH 142: “Therefore, intuition can be referred, prior to all other perception, to an object, the non-ego.”

¹⁰¹GA I/2:46; BKH 140.

¹⁰²GA II/3:25.

¹⁰³GA I/2:48; BKH 142.

are themselves empirical and conform to Reinhold's definitions.¹⁰⁴ Admittedly, Fichte does talk of pure or original consciousness in other texts and identify this with intellectual intuition.¹⁰⁵ But to say that the absolute subject is a pure self-consciousness, or is conscious of itself through such a consciousness, is importantly different from saying that it occurs *in* consciousness. Moreover, the acceptance of such a consciousness is not inconsistent with accepting the principle of consciousness, understood as a principle that describes what occurs *in* consciousness ("in consciousness representation is distinguished through the subject from the subject and object and related to both"¹⁰⁶). Construed as pure or original self-consciousness, intellectual intuition can be thought of as the absolute subject's act of self-positing and self-ascribing the framework of consciousness. Within the framework of its consciousness, the absolute subject becomes the representing subject, and as such it is always distinguished from and related to the representation and the represented object.¹⁰⁷ In other words, Reinhold's principle still holds.

5. SCHULZE AND FICHTE ON REINHOLD'S ACCOUNT OF THE SELF AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

The widely accepted story takes Fichte to be in agreement with Schulze's critique of Reinhold's account of self-consciousness. However, just as the widely accepted story errs in maintaining that Fichte rejects Reinholdian Representationalism because of Schulze's criticisms, it errs on this score as well. In fact, Fichte does not accept Schulze's criticisms of Reinhold's account of self-consciousness. Instead, Fichte accepts key Reinholdian assumptions about the subject and about self-consciousness that Schulze rejects.

As we saw above, Reinhold distinguishes between the subject insofar as it is related to the mere representation, the subject in its capacity as representing thing, and the subject insofar as it is distinguished from the mere representation, the subject in its capacity as subject in itself. According to Reinhold, the subject can never represent itself as subject in itself because that is how it is apart from all representation. But the subject cannot represent, and thus be conscious of, itself as the representing subject either. As we saw, Reinhold denies that all consciousness is accompanied by self-consciousness. Self-consciousness occurs only when the subject of consciousness becomes the object of consciousness. In order to become conscious of itself, the subject of consciousness must distinguish itself as the object of representation from itself as the subject of representation. Because he subsumes self-consciousness under the principle of consciousness, Reinhold is

¹⁰⁴See GAI/2:255; SOK 93.

¹⁰⁵See, for example, GA II/3:144; GAI/2:260; SOK 98; and GAI/4:225–27; IW 56–58. There are also passages in which Fichte seems to explicitly deny that intellectual intuition is a kind of consciousness (see, e.g. GA I/4:214; IW 42–43). Neuhauser (*Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, 76) argues that in such passages Fichte is merely denying that an intellectual intuition constitutes on its own, apart from sensory intuitions and concepts, a complete state of consciousness (or self-consciousness).

¹⁰⁶Reinhold, "New Exposition," 1:167 (my emphasis). Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 58.

¹⁰⁷I do not mean to suggest that this exhausts what Fichte means by the term 'intellectual intuition.' For a discussion of the systematic ambiguity of this term in the later Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, see Daniel Breazeale, "Fichte's *nova methodo phenomenologica*: On the Methodological Role of 'Intellectual Intuition' in the Later Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 206 (1998): 587–616.

forced to attribute a certain elusiveness to the representing subject of consciousness: "As the thing that distinguishes [the subject] cannot simultaneously be the thing that is distinct (just as little as the eye can see itself)."¹⁰⁸ In self-consciousness the representing subject must distinguish itself *qua* representing, distinguishing subject from itself *qua* distinguished, represented object. It cannot be conscious of itself *as* the representing subject.

As I have shown, Schulze attacks Reinhold's account of self-consciousness on the following grounds. First, in defining representation in terms of the principle of consciousness, Reinhold is forced to equate self-representation and self-consciousness, which Schulze thinks are different. (According to Schulze, it is possible—and indeed necessary—to represent oneself prior to becoming the object of a state of consciousness in Reinhold's sense.) Second, self-consciousness as Reinhold describes it is a queer thing, requiring that the subject distinguish itself from itself. What Reinhold calls for is metaphysically impossible. (Fortunately, it is not necessary for self-consciousness, since to be conscious of oneself, it suffices to distinguish oneself from something else.) Third, what Reinhold describes as consciousness in general already includes self-consciousness *in* itself; Reinhold has succeeded only in describing a species of consciousness (namely, object consciousness), not the general structure of all consciousness.

Fichte does not assent to any of these criticisms in the "Review of the *Aenesidemus*." Instead, we find him drawing a distinction closely analogous to Reinhold's distinction between the subject as subject in itself and the subject as representing thing.¹⁰⁹ Fichte distinguishes between the subject *qua* absolute, the self-positing subject that does not occur in consciousness and is not mediated by representation, and the subject *qua* representing (or intelligence), the very same subject insofar as it occurs in consciousness and is mediated by representation. Like Reinhold, he thinks it is trivial that the subject *qua* absolute cannot be represented, since it is, by definition, not mediated by representation. Indeed, Fichte explicitly credits Reinhold with this insight: "Reinhold could well have kept these elaborations to himself for some future occasion."¹¹⁰ Moreover, insofar as Fichte accepts the universal validity of Reinhold's principle of consciousness, he must also accept what Reinhold says about the subject *qua* representing, and how it becomes conscious of itself. That is, if Fichte takes the principle of consciousness to be universally valid, along with the definition of representation that Reinhold derives from it, then he must agree with Reinhold that the representing subject, the subject that occurs in consciousness, can only be conscious of itself by means of a special representation. Moreover, insofar as *self-consciousness* is a species of consciousness, Fichte must agree with Reinhold that the representing subject can only be self-conscious when it becomes the object of consciousness and distinguishes itself from itself.

One might object at this point that the ascription of such a view of self-consciousness to Fichte is incompatible with Fichte's construal of self-consciousness as intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition accompanies *all* consciousness, not

¹⁰⁸Reinhold, "New Exposition," 1:196. Cited by Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, 312.

¹⁰⁹Franks (*All or Nothing*, 225–26) also notes Fichte's debt to Reinhold on this point.

¹¹⁰GA I/2:48; BKH 142.

just special kinds of consciousness; the subject that posits itself in intellectual intuition is identical with that which is posited. If intellectual intuition, for Fichte, is self-consciousness, then he must reject Reinhold's claims about self-consciousness. But if indeed intellectual intuition is a kind of pure self-consciousness—which, to repeat, Fichte does not explicitly state in the "Review of the *Aenesidemus*"—it is not the *representing* subject's consciousness of itself, the subject *in* consciousness. Because everything in consciousness conforms to Reinhold's principle, this subject can only be conscious of itself by taking itself as an object and distinguishing itself from itself. Fichte is explicit about this in the *System of Ethics* (1798): "I am conscious of myself only insofar as I distinguish myself, as the one who is conscious, from me, as the object of this consciousness."¹¹¹ Thus, like Reinhold, Fichte attributes a certain elusiveness to the representing subject of self-consciousness—it behaves like Reinhold's eye that cannot see itself,¹¹² an image that Schulze regards as completely inappropriate for a characterization of self-consciousness.¹¹³

6. CONCLUSION

According to the widely accepted story about the development of Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, Schulze's *Aenesidemus* pushed Fichte away from Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie*, and paved the way for some of the characteristic doctrines of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, such as the rejection of the reflection theory of self-consciousness. Schulze, it is said, convinced Fichte of the falsity of Reinholdian Representationalism, and provided him with a key argument against the reflection theory of self-consciousness (the regress argument). In this paper, I have argued that the widely accepted story is mistaken on these points. Schulze's *Aenesidemus* did not convince Fichte to reject Reinholdian Representationalism, nor did it anticipate his critique of the reflection theory of self-consciousness. Indeed, as we have seen, Schulze was committed to the reflection theory of self-consciousness, and offers nothing like a regress argument against Reinhold. Instead, Schulze appeals to (1) phenomenology, (2) an immanent critique of the principle of consciousness, and (3) considerations about self-consciousness and the nature of the self to attack Reinhold's principle of consciousness. His immanent critique of the principle of consciousness invokes a line of reasoning that enters into Reinhold's discussion of "mere representation." His attack on Reinhold's theory of self-consciousness presupposes a broadly Wolffian theory of representation, consciousness and self-consciousness.

This is not to deny that Fichte's encounter with the *Aenesidemus* played a crucial role in his intellectual development; it clearly did. But the relationship between Schulze's criticisms of Reinholdian Representationalism and the new philosophical

¹¹¹GA I/5:21; SOE 7. Cited by Stolzenberg, "Selbstbewusstsein," 77.

¹¹²Reinhold, "New Exposition," 1:197. A referee points out that Fichte, unlike Reinhold, does not wholly reject the image of the self-seeing eye: Fichte sometimes describes the "I" as an "eye that sees itself" (see, e.g. GA IV/3:355). This is indeed a departure from Reinhold, but I would argue that Fichte takes the image of the self-seeing eye to be appropriate only for the absolute subject, not for the representing subject.

¹¹³Schulze (*Psychische Anthropologie*, 32–33) takes explicit aim at this feature of Fichte's theory of self-consciousness.

position that Fichte sketches in the "Review of the *Aenesidemus*" is different than has been suggested. While Fichte rejects the specific details of Schulze's objections, he nevertheless agrees with Schulze about a general point: the subject and object are ontologically and cognitively prior to the states described by Reinhold's principle of consciousness. However, Fichte seeks to accommodate this insight within the framework of an acceptance of Reinholdian Representationalism. This means that he must deny Schulze's claim that consciousness is preceded by (non-Reinholdian) representations of the subject and the object. Rather, according to Fichte, that which occurs in consciousness presupposes an absolute subject that posits itself and an absolute object that is counterposited. The acts of positing and counterpositing, along with the absolute subject and object, cannot themselves occur in consciousness—precisely because everything in consciousness must conform to Reinhold's principle of consciousness. Unlike Schulze, who thinks that self-consciousness does not require that the subject distinguish itself from itself, Fichte agrees with Reinhold that the representing subject's consciousness of itself requires this. As a result, like Reinhold, Fichte attributes a certain elusiveness to the representing subject; it cannot represent itself as the representing subject.

In emphasizing the views that Fichte continues to hold in common with Reinhold, I by no means wish to downplay the revolutionary character of Fichte's thought. My point is that, where Fichte moves beyond Reinhold—for instance, with the doctrine of intellectual intuition—he does so with the end of preserving the core tenets of the *Elementarphilosophie*. His radical advances over Reinhold take place against the background of a general acceptance of Reinhold's basic concepts and results (including the principle of consciousness). The widely accepted story obscures the novelty of Fichte's thinking—construing, as it does, Fichte's advances over Reinhold as logical outgrowths of Schulze's objections. By contrast, on this new account, Fichte emerges as a quite novel and resourceful rehabilitator of Reinhold's thinking.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴Participants in the 2. Internationaler Workshop Klassische deutsche Philosophie offered useful feedback on an earlier, condensed draft of this paper. Karl Ameriks, Frederick Neuhouser, Falk Wunderlich, and two anonymous referees for this journal provided very helpful criticisms and suggestions on a later, full-length version. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Eric Watkins for reading multiple drafts of this paper and providing me with excellent advice and much-needed encouragement throughout the process of revision. I would also like to thank the Fulbright Commission for their generous financial and logistical support during my time in Germany, where I wrote much of this.