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**THE IMMEDIATE COGNITION PROBLEM  
IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF DESCARTES, KANT,  
AND FRIES**

The philosophical turn towards the subject made by Descartes initiated a large and multi-branch current of the philosophy of the subject. The followers of Descartes's method described their projects from the perspective of reflective paradigm of philosophizing. The research into human reflectiveness and the phenomenon of self-cognition from the critical perspective of transcendentalism led Jakob F. Fries to present in his philosophy a new way of argumentation supporting immediate cognition, which I would like to describe in my essay.

Jakob Friedrich Fries belongs to the branch of psychologicistic Neo-Kantianism due to the fact that he referred to the sources of transcendental philosophy from the psychologicistic and anthropological point of view. Fries studied philosophy in Leipzig and Jena and was also a physicist and mathematician. He became a professor of philosophy in Heidelberg (1805) and Jena (1816) and in 1812 he also received a professorship of physics at the university of Heidelberg. In 1819 he was deprived of the chair of philosophy as a result of his anarchism, however in 1824 he returned to the university of Jena as a professor of mathematics and physics and, from 1825, also philosophy.

Emphasizing analytical, descriptive and methodological aspects of critical philosophy, he polemicalised with constructive-speculative idealism claiming that the goal of philosophy is not speculation but description based on self-observation and close to logical or phenomenological analysis. Fries derived immediate cognition from the possibility of distinguishing philosophical logic from the anthropological one. In philosophical logic, which is a system of analytic judgments, the laws of thought are objectively laws of the possibility to think a thing. On the other hand, anthropological logic based on inner experience, explains the relationship of thinking with

other activities of human spirit. In Fresian continuation of Kant it was demonstrated that metaphysical propositions are not only assumptions of our judgments in sciences and everyday life but they have their own principle of validation and are consolidated by the psychological theory of reason.

### Attitude of Descartes towards immediate cognition

In order to present Descartes' position towards immediate cognition, it seems necessary to define the core of his description of cognition, that is the act of reflection and intuition. Following Wojciech Chudy, I assume that all transformations and shapes of reflection have their structural genesis. They are shaped differently by a type of reflection defined already in the classical paradigm of philosophizing.<sup>1</sup> Reflection in the epistemic sense is a quality of human consciousness with a distinctive cognitive function thanks to which a man who approaches an object in an actful way (firstly, an object transcendent towards itself and secondly towards its own inside) is able to formulate both the act of this approach and the manner in which this act is carried out.

From the ontic side, reflection is a self-appearing or self-perceiving basis for all conscious human acts. Descartes undoubtedly intuitionizes *cogito*. The author of *Meditations* interprets reflective consciousness as a turn towards itself. It is, according to him, a turn towards intellect but only as much as it is connected with the reference to the I and the existence of the I, i.e. as much as it refers to I think.

*Cogito* self-consciousness is connected with the notion of thinking *cogitatio*. Thinking manifests itself through two kinds of modifications: perceptions and acts of will. It is not, however, formulated through reflection but is grasped when one is anchored in the I "with a simple perception of the mind as an obvious thing."<sup>2</sup> Self-consciousness in this broad and primary sense is a direct and straightforward presentation of diversities and processes happening in the I. It is a subjective obviousness which has the properties of intuition "patterned" after natural cognition linked with external reality.

Wojciech Chudy notes that the absolutization of subject plane which was started by Descartes has its determinants in the sphere of reflective

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<sup>1</sup> Chudy, W. 1995. *Rozwój filozofowania a pułapka refleksji. Filozofia refleksji i próby jej przewycięzania*, Lublin, p. 140 and following.

<sup>2</sup> Descartes, R. 1948. *Rozmowa z Burmanem*. in: *Metytacje o pierwszej filozofii. Zarzuty uczonych mężów i odpowiedzi na nie. Rozmowa z Burmanem*, translated by M. i K. Ajdukiewiczowie, S. Swieżawski, I. Dąbska, Kraków, vol. 2, p. 239.

cognition. Transition from the acts of external perception and perception of one's own body to *cogito*, which takes place under the methodological pressure of the doubting principle, is nothing else than the transition from perception to reflection. Furthermore, Descartes identifies intuition with reflective cognition. This is a peculiar intuitionization of reflection which significantly strengthens the status of *cogito*. It is because, whereas any intuitive cognition is a direct, intuitive and straightforward expression of the object, the reflection is immediate cognition and in a certain (weak) way also intuitive but non-straightforward. Claiming that *cogito* has reflective character would necessarily weaken the cognitive value of the whole Cartesian structure which has properties of natural intuition.

Descartes neglected in his theory the reflective side of *cogito* in favour of intuition whose epistemologically strong apodeictic value was the most significant for the principal criterion of valuable cognition: criterion of certainty (*certum*). This is what the Cartesian intuitionization of reflective cognition was all about. Describing cognition as such an easy and clear notion of pure and careful reason that we cannot actually doubt what we get to know, he somehow patterned it after the *cogito* notion of cognition, that is after reflection.<sup>3</sup> This is because reflection, which realizes the *cogito ergo sum* thesis, delivers a perfect undoubtedness of cognition; it is – as the second part of the above definition states – “an undoubted notion of pure and careful mind which derives from the very light of reason by virtue of cognitive validity”. Thus it is not the affirmation of being or – to use the language of epistemology – objective obviousness but subjectively certain cognitive obviousness which is rooted in the knowing subject.

The straightforward and non-straightforward cognition is what provides Descartes with undoubted point of departure for his philosophy, and almost since first editions of the works of the French philosopher it has been under discussion together with the problem of immediate cognition.

*Cogito ergo sum* is a linguistic expression of reflective cognition. Reflection being that simple intuition in the I, which results in obviousness and undoubtedness of cognition of existence, is dual in its nature. The act of reflection directed to its proper subject: thinking (*cogitation*) is accompanied by non-act reflection stating constantly (“at the same time”) during the realization of the acts of consciousness the existence-presence of the knowing subject.

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<sup>3</sup> Chudy, W. *Rozwój filozofowania...*, op. cit., p. 143.

The unity of the *cogito* act consists in the inseparable connection of two forms of reflection. Directing the intention of reflective consciousness to *cogito*, I get to know the *sum* fact (“I think, I am”) and I draw my attention to the fact of my own subjectivity (*sum*); in the background of this feeling of oneself I constantly experience *thinking* (“I am, I think”).

The two kinds of reflection taking part in cognition are not, however, equal; it also would not be possible to replace at its point of departure the fundamental formula: *cogito ergo sum* with *sum ergo cogito*. In the genetic (psychological) aspect it is the act of consciousness which appoints (“awakens”) simultaneously the accompanying reflection: the subjective consciousness is genetically primal in comparison with the consciousness itself. Thus it exists together with thinking – by the very epistemological essence of reflective cognition – in the structure of *Cogito ergo sum* argument it reflects a two-levelness and in the *ergo* reflection it draws the line between act reflection and the accompanying one, at the same time pointing to metasubjective character of Cartesian point of departure in relation to the world of things (outside the knowing subject).

### Jakob Friedrich Fries – continuing and going beyond Kant’s transcendental philosophy

The position of critical transcendental<sup>4</sup> philosophy occurred in the early stages of Neo-Kantianism as antagonistic to main currents which, according to Fries, developed the ideas of the great master in a wrong way. The philosopher of Jena believed that Hegel and his disciples tended towards logicism and treated reflection as the only source of cognition. Similarly, K. L. Reinhold moved towards formalism demanding the foundation of critical philosophy on pure presentation of descriptive analysis of “the fact of consciousness”. F. W. J. Schelling, on the other hand, tended towards mysticism accepting only intuition as a source of knowledge, whereas G. E. Schulze and F. E. Beneke to empiricism rejecting any possibility for the existence of rationalistic and pietistic metaphysics.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jakuszko, H. Neofrezjańska Szkoła, in: *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, vol. 7, pp. 574–579.

<sup>5</sup> Reinhold, K. L. 1789. *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögen*. Reinhold, Karl Leonard. 1790. *Beyträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophen, Erster Band*. Reinhold, K. L. 1791. *Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens*; Georg Wilhelm Hegel. 2002. *Fenomenologia ducha*, translated by F. Nowicki, Warszawa; Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *System*

## 1. What is cognition?

What is nature? – asks Fries:<sup>6</sup> it is our intuition of reality determined by pure forms of intuition and rules of our thinking. He agrees with Kant that “human intellect is not in itself an ability to *possess* [italics D. J.] intuitive data”<sup>7</sup> and our “intuition is not primal, i.e. it does not even assure us of the existence of the object intuited (which, inasmuch as we have insight into it, is only accessible to the Primal Being).<sup>8</sup> Therefore we do not have original intellectual intuition (*intuitus originarius*), but only derivative intuition (*intuitus derivativus*) which has to rely on what is given in the presentation primary to the act of cognition. Fries agrees with Kant that this intuition is imperfect due to the very nature of the subject which is cognitively imperfect and existentially finite. At this stage we have to ask a question: what cognitive elements constitute cognition? Cognition takes place in the distinction between cognizing subject and the object of cognition. To get to know anything, the subject has to have access to the representation of an object. It has to present the object to oneself and distinguish oneself from it. The notion of representation possesses therefore three necessary elements: a knowing/representing subject, a conscious act of presentation and a represented object.<sup>9</sup> Cognition is presentation of object’s existence or presentation of a principle thanks to which the being of the object exists.”<sup>10</sup> For Fries there exists a directly subjective reference of sense representations which does not have a status of indirect knowledge but direct certainty.

## 2. The view on Kant’s transcendental idealism

In his main critical work *Neue oder antropologische Kritik der reinen Vernunft* Fries points out that Kant’s study of sources, scope and limits of rational cognition requires the critique of reason to distinguish the content of

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*idealizmu transcendentalnego*, translated by K. Krzemieniowa. Warszawa 1979; Gottlob Ernst Schulze. 1826. *Psychische Anthropologie*. Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen; Friedrich Eduard Beneke. 1832. *Kant und die philosophische Aufgaben unserer Zeit*, Repr. d. Ausg.: Berlin: Mittler; see also: Dhubacz, W. 2002. *Jakob Friedrich Fries* in: *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, vol. 3, Lublin, pp. 642–643.

<sup>6</sup> Fries, Jakob Friedrich. 1828. *Neue oder anthropologische Kritik der Vernunft*, rep. in: *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. G. König, L. Geldsetzer, 1967 Scientia Verlag, Allen, vol. 1, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> Kant, I. 1986. *Krytyka czystego rozumu*. B 153. translated by R. Ingarden, Warszawa.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* B 72.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Fries: *Neue Kritik* 1. Bd., 132 (WW 4, S. 68). With this guideline concerning necessary references to the object Fries anticipated Brentano’s science of intentionality.

<sup>10</sup> Fries: *Neue Kritik*. 1. Bd., S.128 (WW 4, S. 64).

this critique and its object.<sup>11</sup> Fries wants to defend transcendental idealism but in his opinion it is possible only by developing a science of antinomies of pure reason, and not, like Kant, by transcendental aesthetics which wrongly assumes the object to be the basis for presentation and image. Analyzing Kantian antinomies he claims that Kant fails to notice that the content of an antinomy is perceived in the inner experience which is of assertoric character, whereas the object of critique, which concerns a priori cognition, is apodeictic.

According to Fries, Kant's description of presentation-object relationship, which was developed in order to reach objective (subject independent) validity of synthetic judgments a priori, was also incorrect. The critical question about the relationship of representations with their objects and the fundamentals of conformity between them leads Kant to a conclusion that it is not the object which is a fundament for cognition but reason and its laws which are thought of as "laws of nature". The justification of objective validity by way of finding evidence for the harmony between presentation and object is declared impossible by Fries. That is why he wants to deal only with *the truth of consciousness*. The truth is a matter of self-observation since it does not compare cognition to its objects but merely compares our representations with one another.<sup>12</sup>

An a priori proposition possesses its own truth criterion. This *criterium veritatis* is of such a kind that we can perceive it as formal conditions for getting to know objects in general.

In the treatise *Wissen, Glauben und Ahndung*<sup>13</sup> Fries distinguishes three kinds of relationship with reality: knowledge, faith and apprehension. He develops the psycho-transcendental motive of intuition in his work *Handbuch der praktischen Philosophie*. In his works he builds a bridge between knowledge and faith inspired by Jacobi's irrationalism and, similarly to F. D. E. Schleiermacher, he stresses the role of emotional experience. In the sphere of faith, knowledge and apprehension (or, in a wider sense, the sphere of feelings and emotions) we remain, according to Fries in a state of immanent consciousness. In all three areas one question remains unanswered: **"Is there any object which in any sense refers to the**

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<sup>11</sup> Fries, J. F. 1935. *Neue oder anthropologische Kritik der Vernunft*, Neudr. d. 2. Aufl. Berlin.

<sup>12</sup> See also: Bloching K.-H. 1969. *J. F. Fries' Philosophie als Theorie der Subjektivität*, Münster, p. 134 and following.

<sup>13</sup> Fries Jakob Friedrich. 1805. *Wissen, Glaube und Ahndung*, Neu hrsg. von Leonard Nelson. – Jena, Göttingen 1095.

**inner experience?”** Is there any objective reality behind the spheres of knowledge, faith and apprehension, even though they do not have any evidence?

Fries claims that if we answer these questions positively we in fact take advantage only of the trust of human reason towards itself that it is really so. What is important is that according to Fries faith and intuition are not only a system of individual ethical and moral convictions but they are subjectively necessary assumptions which cannot be ultimately justified but are nevertheless crucial. Neither science nor knowledge could exist without them.<sup>14</sup> Regulative ideas of human reason are neither more nor less real or obvious than sensual experience or pure forms of perception and thinking. All the three ways of reference to a multilayer reality are similar sources of certainty and to a similar extent can be either supported or demolished by skeptical arguments.

Reading *Critique of pure reason* Fries notices that Kant wants, as he himself puts it by means of **dialectics of the idea** to show on the one hand there regulative application to subject knowledge but, on the other, he wants to equip them with objective meaning in the face of doubts when, for instance, they are expressed from a different point of view than the sensual and intellectual one. Kant wants to achieve this goal also in the field of moral ideas, in the form of practical reason imperatives. This aim, however, according to Fries, is not fully achieved. His main argument ultimately revising Kant's status of regulative ideas – God, soul and freedom, is a thesis that the certainty of our sensual perceptions does not rely on provable *connection* of representation with object but exclusively on perceivable *order* (or mutual conformity of data coming from our experience). The possibility of experience is only a psychological fact which is only possible to analyze by intuition and a priori concepts if its a priori is acknowledged without reservations. Although we project our experience onto objects, the reference to objects is only *given* secondarily in representation.

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<sup>14</sup> According to Fries we experience immediate cognitions in the medium of feelings; Fries, J. F. *Neue Kritik D. 1.* p. 482. Cf. also Fries *Neue Kritik*. Vol. 1, p. 55 (WW 4, S. XXVII) f. As Elsenhans puts it the acknowledgement of objective validity of our cognition consists ultimately in feelings and motivation of the will Elsenhans T. 1902. *Das Kant-Friesische Problem*. Heidelberg, p. 54, so ultimately on the conviction that the world makes sense. Moreover, Klaus Sachs-Hombach writes even that Fries is under Leibniz's theory of obscure representations (*dunklen Vorstellungen*) when he claims that cognition is given as feeling and becomes transformed into knowledge by reflection. Reflection is understood here as realizing a cognition. See: Sachs-Hombach, Klaus. *Kant und Fries*. 2002. *Erkenntnistheorie zwischen Psychologismus und Dogmatismus*. "Kantstudien" 93, Jahrg, Walter de Gruyter, p. 210.

Similarly to Jacobi<sup>15</sup> Fries points out that observation of sensual perceptions as objects affecting senses through affects contradicts fundamental theses of Kantian critique,<sup>16</sup> i.e. the thesis that it is impossible to apply the category chart to thing-in-itself. This is because the thing-in-itself is in fact finite immanent consciousness of subject thinking of itself. If one wants to get from possibility of experience evidence for reality of thinking forms, one ends up in a dead end street. Acknowledging a priori forms of intuition and thinking as suiting each other is a false conclusion since it applies the principle of causality of thinking and of thing-in-itself which is immanent finite consciousness of self-knowing subject.

Everything what is realized in cognition is represented in sensual intuition, pure mathematical perception or in indirect judgments of reason. Methodological demands from metaphysics that its explanations should achieve the highest level of obviousness and necessity are possible to be satisfied only on these planes. For Fries, as well as for classical idealists of who came later, reason critically analyzing itself, that is its own absolute a priori cognitive conditions, is rigorously called the thing-in-itself.

All progress in rational cognition is governed by definite, constant, common rules to which there are no exceptions. That is why reason has to be thought of as a creator of rules determining its activity and thinking about the world, which is shown by Fries. In this way reason as a function becomes reason “as a substratum”<sup>17</sup> as Cassirer puts it. Immediate cognition is where functions and determinants of this substratum are accessible. Purely functional connections which exist in the framework of rational cognition are reinterpreted in the transcendental philosophy as a substantial being.

### 3. The justification of immediate cognition existence

The Copernican revolution of Kant changed the paradigm of reciprocal reference existing between the subject and object within cognition. In the cognitive process the object is not so much reflected as constructed by abso-

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<sup>15</sup> Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich. 1816–1980. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, Meiner Verlag, Hamburg 2000, and idem, *Jacobi an Fichte. Über das Unternehmen des Kritizismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen. Über eine Weissagung Lichtenbergs. Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung. Briefe an Verschiedene*, Werke; Bd. 3, Nachdr. d. Ausg. Leipzig.

<sup>16</sup> See remarks on this subject in: Bousset, D.W. 1909. *Kantisch-Friessche Religionsphilosophie und ihre Anwendung auf die Theologie* ed. D. W. Bousset and D. W. Heitmüller Theologische Rundschau XII Jahrgang, 12 Heft, Tübingen, pp. 471–488.

<sup>17</sup> Cassirer, E. 1971. *Siebentes Kapitel. Fries*. in *Das Erkenntnisproblem in: der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neuen Zeit*, vol. 3, *Die Nachkritische Systeme*, Hilesheim. New York, p. 448.

lutely a priori structures which the subject has at its disposal. Objects are given to a man thanks to perceptive ability of sensuality and mind's ability to be stimulated by objects. The effect is that sensations are gathered together and organized according to definite rational rules. The reason for objects' representations is the existence of objects themselves and the objects affect subject's perceptiveness.

Fries notes, however, that not only our representations but even the simplest intuitions refer to objects, in the sense that they contain propositions through which one knows the activity of cognition and what is distinguished from this activity, that is the object. Primary type of such simple proposition is a proposition stating the existence of an object of cognition. It is not the object which is a formal reason that it exists for the subject in the representation form but it is made possible by natural equipment of the subject.

Fries emphasizes however, that intuition is not given to us as a pure a priori structure but only its modification thanks to which one's cognitive equipment process external projections into an object which is real to us. Intuition brings into cognition its own features thanks to which it assures us of the object's real existence. Fries disagrees with Fichte presenting his own arguments *per exemplum*: Let us consider an example: I can see a green tree in front of me by which also impressions reach my cognition. I am only asking: What is going on? What do I get according to a usual reaction to the question? The tree stimulates my eyes through which a sensation of greenness reaches me. Since it has to have a reason I conclude on the basis of the tree, which is a stimulant, the reason for perceiving something green. Some add, following Fichte's argument: "If I call a tree green and sugar white, I am utterly false because we name the greenness and the sweetness [...] the tree is green and the sugar sweet because otherwise, if I see a tree and I see it in a direct sensation of something green, nobody would have any reason to ask me about my sensations".<sup>18</sup>

This argument is based on an assumption that in intuition there is a presupposed possibility of experiencing something extra-subjective, and the representation of object and its real existence is not passed to us as late as in the reflection but is given first in the fact of cognition. "The perception in intuition has a direct evidence for itself in such a way as it imagines an object as being present".<sup>19</sup> For Fries the object, before it is represented,

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<sup>18</sup> Fries, J. F., *Neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, §15 (I.52 ff); cf. §71 (I, 290 ff).

<sup>19</sup> Cassirer, E. 1971. *Siebentes Kapitel*. p. 446.

stimulates our subjective receptiveness in the intuition, not as affecting the mind but as given directly in the perception according to its properties. Every cognition is a creation of the subject's cognitive abilities. Therefore, according to Fries, every cognition is an object of inner experience, i.e. psychological anthropology. Every subject can "observe" all cognition from the anthropological point of view because it belongs to subjective activities of his mind. "I can examine here their transformations, variety, regularity which are the properties of these cognitions which are, in turn, activities of the mind. The observation of cognitions is a directness if every object can be for me a subject of cognition. Cognitions are the properties of our mind: objects are presented to our mind only through cognitions in accordance with the conditions of our mind."<sup>20</sup> If immediate cognition is indispensable to the finite mind and it is necessarily present in the mind, we have to ask a question: How is it possible to prove immediate cognition by way of psychological and empirical self-observation which is not contained in the content of consciousness?

First question we have to ask is: What is given to us in the consciousness? Four different elements are distinguished here: direct knowledge coming from sensual perception, direct knowledge from pure perception and indirect knowledge coming from reason and reflection. The elements can be most adequately characterized by anthropological theory of thought which provides insight into logical forms of thinking. It does not only determine their place but also where each form of thinking begins within the whole structure of reason.

Presenting justification for the existence of immediate cognition, Fries notes that the basic a priori form of our cognition surpasses a purely synthetic unity in variety of intuitive data.<sup>21</sup> This form does not only concern the location of objects close to each other, or sequence of events in time but it also refers to their dynamic correlation, objective and necessary relationships which they create with one another and through one another, the relations we assume basing on the law of substantiality, causality and mutual influence. "Judgments which concern this kind of connection can be neither demonstratively shown nor logically proven. They can be only deduced if we understand deduction as this very inductive-psychological<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 446.

<sup>21</sup> See Kant, I. *Critique of Pure Reason...*, A 103.

<sup>22</sup> We do not mean the induction in the contemporary psychological sense, that is induction which means in psychology the transfer of emotions and other psychical contents between given people in the communication process.

demonstration which tells us in what place a given knowledge occurs within our cognitive framework.”<sup>23</sup> Fries stresses here that cognition which we, in accordance with its pure content, call immediate because, not being justified by any other “medium”, it is its own ultimate justification and it is not, in the psychological sense immediately given. “It does not occur to us in any different way than by means of judgment and reason with its forms of reflection. It is once we have made this reflection that we are aware of its repetitiveness; we become aware that what the reflection contains is not created by itself but comes from primary creative spontaneity of reason, which we cannot grasp directly but we characterize it on the basis of its results and achievements, reflecting it in logical consciousness”.<sup>24</sup>

#### **4. Immediate cognition and indirect cognition.**

##### **The kinds of immediate cognition**

If apodeictic determinations in our cognitions are to exist and if the notion of necessity is to exist at all in our imaginations, then reason must possess some primary and permanent activity by which all its cognition will be described as an activity of natural cognitive predisposition. Otherwise we could not at all discuss the whole of the history of cognition. For Fries, *the immediate apodeictic cognition* must exist simply in such an original activity. Other cognition can remain valid thanks to its dependence on apodeictic cognition.

“Immediate cognition lies hidden in the inner essence of our reason; it cannot perceive reason immediately in itself but is connected with inner sense with which it carries out reflection and which gradually leads us onto the level of abstract thinking. The whole secret of philosophy lies in this relation”.<sup>25</sup> In these words Fries distances himself slightly from Kant’s position. For Kant it is the reflection which, not being only a purely arbitrary connection of representations, is a primary spontaneity which contains source principles of reason. This principle does not give real existence to any thing nor does it give real properties to our reason. It only means a higher and superior rule for the validity of any synthetic a priori judgments, and it is valid only *as long as it is*. The overall objectivity of reason principles is in their formal *meaning* for the system of absolute a priori cognitions – for the justification of the possibility of experience. Hence, reason is not

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<sup>23</sup> Fries, J. F., *Neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, §18 (I. 55).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

any *container* in which primary principles lie but is only a *combination* and unification of representations for the functional unity and functional status of cognition itself.

Fries distinguishes immediate cognition from indirect one. The immediate one, which includes constitutive rules of rational acting, should be absolutely certain and apart from being demonstrable it should not need any evidence because, as Fries often argues, the sole fact of its objective existence allows any possibility of theoretical and cognitive considerations. Necessity which *manifests itself* in the thinking process, in the reflection process exists only successively and thus fragmentarily, and has to be given as a source entirety of all the reflection inside reason. The act of reflection does not give anything new; it merely repeats this what is. Hence the consciousness of cognition in the immediate cognition is another pure realization of consciousness in which we have already assimilated this what is finitely existing.<sup>26</sup> Fries's notion of immediate cognition assumes that there exist certainties in which there is no point to doubt. They include, on the one hand, the contents of perception, and on the other, Kantian (formal) synthetic a priori judgments. Thus immediate cognition is justified either by the manifestation of perception, or by deduction, and since it is equipped with doubtless certainty, it can ensure the truth of knowledge in the indirect judgment.

"Intuition is its own witness of truth: I know something about the being of actual objects only as much as I trust intuition".<sup>27</sup> Fries considers justification by intuitive demonstration as unproblematic since immediate cognition is given itself in perception and the judgment is only its official confirmation. They can be proven neither from basic principles, nor from perceptive demonstration, although Fries understands deduction, similarly to Kant, as a subjective method, which in fact seems to him a notionally-rational reconstruction of methodological primary determinations within human cognitive abilities.<sup>28</sup>

Serving as an authority justifying judgments immediate cognition remains problematic because it is not given differently than a judgment but is realized in a judgment. Fries' deduction of synthetic a priori judgments

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Fries: *Neue Kritik*. vol. 1, pp. 302–321 (WW 4, pp. 238–257), especially, p. 313 (WW 4, p. 249).

<sup>27</sup> Here we can find the project of autointerpretation of reason in a new anthropological sense: Fries: *Neue Kritik*. vol. 1, p. 56.

<sup>28</sup> In comparison to subjective and objective deduction in which we do not deal with empirical deduction and especially in Kant's version A of *Critique of Pure Reason*.

consist, as a result, in showing that judgments actually correspond to immediate discursive cognition.<sup>29</sup>

According to Fries “authority to judge is as good as intuition in the direct, actual possession of metaphysical cognition when it takes nothing from intuition.”<sup>30</sup>

It has to show within the reflection framework that principles really express actual, formal structures of rational cognition. “Deduction can solely consist in the fact that we conclude from the theory of reason which primary cognition we have to necessarily possess and what principles in our reason must follow from that”.<sup>31</sup> What deduction do we have in mind?

Fries writes about the deduction of metaphysical primary principles – the deduction which should, according to him, consist in that we show in our immediate cognition the laws that fundamental to it. If we realize this law only through the basis it may only mean that we derive it from the theory of reason as primary cognition. It is essential that we are equipped with it. What basic principles, however, have to follow from them in our reason? He writes only: “I do not prove that every substance is permanent, I only point out that the axiom of substance permanence lies in every finite reason: I do not argue that God exists but I merely point out that every finite reason believes in God”.<sup>32</sup>

If the fact of the existence of absolute conditions of a priori cognitions is not obvious and is ultimately undetermined by the structure of pure reason, Fries contemplates a possibility of accepting an unobvious status of immediate cognition and, what is more, accepting it as unexpressable and obscure for itself. As Fries emphasizes: “It lies beyond any cognitive error as a simple *Dasein* existing in our reason. Immediate cognition consists in acknowledging as axioms certain basic metaphysical theses, for example the one that in the limited human existence we cannot think in a totally different way than by contrasting it with another, more-embracing being, which would have to primarily exist as existentially and cognitively unconditioned.

Immediate cognition, when it ceases to be immediate, enters the sphere of indirect reflections and loses thus its essential, principal character. What

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<sup>29</sup> For these reasons Fries calls judgments transcendental if they hold a priori judgments as a necessary element of reason, as an assumption which we have to yield to. These judgments are of a different sort because dealing with them we have to demonstrate the first kind of cognition, they are not a priori themselves but they are a result of anthropological clarity of notions.

<sup>30</sup> Fries: *Über die Aufgabe der anthropologischen Kritik der Vernunft*, (S.4 71).

<sup>31</sup> Fries: *Neue Kritik...* vol. 1 5.406 (WW 4, 5.342).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

is, for Fries, the obviousness of immediate cognition about? It reflects the *actual* (not hypothetical) *state* of natural cognitive equipment and, as this equipment, it exists in every mind in the same proportion.<sup>33</sup>

## Summary

The contribution of Descartes to the development of philosophical tradition is undeniable and widely known today while Fries's contribution can be summarized in the assertion that the traditional dichotomy of immediate cognition as intuitive and indirect as unintuitive has to be supplemented with immediate non-intuitive cognitions. This thesis led him to a trilemma expressing primary epistemological dilemma: how to justify our convictions? If we demand every conviction to be justified, we have to reject dogmatism, i.e. accepting anything without justification. On the other hand, however, any attempt at justification by way of logical procedure leads to regress *ad infinitum*. We have to refer to a third method: anthropological analysis of reason. It became a source of regressive method understood as a special way of justifying our convictions through immediate experience. The regressive method consisted in selecting appropriate premises for the justification of a proposition whose truth we otherwise acknowledge.<sup>34</sup> Not rejecting the a priori elements in cognition it attempted at explaining them by the analysis of human cognitive abilities introducing what is a priori in cognition and justifying fundamental metaphysical theses. It is especially important today because the ways of dealing with linguistic material led to the same postulate in the field of cognitive research: to broaden the notion of experience with a kind of non-intuitive immediate experience as a basis for insights into language and the tools stabilizing information: semantic memory, grammatical categories, recognition of phonemes etc.<sup>35</sup>

What do the philosophers ultimately have in common when it comes to immediate cognition? Both Descartes and Fries focus in their cognitive ef-

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<sup>33</sup> Cassirer stresses the fact that with this actual state of our reason we gain nothing for the explanation of our absolute cognitive determinants. They remain their own problem from whose inside they are given to us only in our consciousness by becoming aware of them. Cassirer asks, therefore, how can anything be true for myself if it lies in the dark inside of my thought.

<sup>34</sup> For Fries it is a revision of Kant's transcendental deduction from *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is not a purely deductive procedure, in the formal logical sense of deduction, but rather regressive.

<sup>35</sup> See remarks on this subject in an excellent book of Woleński J. 2005. *Epistemology*, Warszawa, p. 458.

forts on the justification of knowledge and the nature of convictions. Both of them take an a priori position when it comes to the question of justification. Descartes applies it to truths constituting obvious and universal principles and Fries additionally holds that a priori is constructed by the structure of human mind. Both philosophers claim that there exists such a group of convictions which play a fundamental role in gaining and, above all, justifying knowledge. This fundamental role consists in our privileged access to fundamental knowledge which is a starting point for our cognitive activity. Fundamental knowledge is, after all, directly justified. From this point of view Cartesian thought is perceived as rationalistic fundamentalism<sup>36</sup> whose main argument is that its formulation is the only one free from Fries's trilemma, that is *regressum ad infinitum*, vicious circle and dogmatism.

However, focusing on the process of justification, Descartes thinks rather about its properties and an answer to the question how to understand its sufficiency. Fries, on the other hand, wants to concentrate on the character of appropriate processes or mental states and perhaps their causes.

Cartesian cognitive method is shaped after mathematics and is supposed to lead to undisputed cognition whose point of departure and axiom for further epistemological analysis is the *ego cogito, ego sum* formula. This cognition is possible, however, only thanks to the trust in perseverant mind, similarly to Fries, to the conviction that we have direct and unquestionable access to the content of our own mind. In the content of consciousness certain ideas are discovered as innate. These ideas are understood as notions in the psychological sense. Innate and, therefore, peculiar, the data of consciousness are expressed in an act of intuition which Fries understands in the same way as his great predecessor, as the one which captures its object in its integrity, embraces its dynamics and thus delivers immediate cognition capturing the essence and free of symbols.

translated by Grzegorz Milecarek

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<sup>36</sup> Cf *ibid.* p. 375.