

Another History of 19th Century German Philosophy:
Illuminating the Stream of Philosophical Methodology of Fries and Schopenhauer

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This book deals with the philosophical significance of Jacob Friedrich Fries (1773-1843), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and the philosophical movements known as the Friesian school and the Neo-Friesian school.

Traditionally, 19th-century German philosophy has been seen as having a linear structure: 'German idealism', as it is called, begins with Kant, develops through Fichte and Schelling, and ends with Hegel. Recent researchers criticise this depiction of German philosophy as old-fashioned, and many who take this view are working to excavate and re-evaluate forgotten philosophers of the age. They aim to reconstruct the history of philosophy as a constellation of philosophers. However, some philosophers are still overlooked or at least misunderstood in a history of philosophy that retains the imprint of the old narrative.

By contrast, this book clarifies an alternative stream of 19th German philosophy by illuminating the hidden (aspects of) Jacob Friedrich Fries and Arthur Schopenhauer and the activity of the Friesian school and Neo-Friesian School.

Chapter 1: Thematization of the Method of Philosophy through the Radicalisation of Criticism: Jacob Friedrich Fries' Philosophy

Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773–1843) was a 19th German philosopher, contemporaneous with so-called 'German Idealism' and best known for his major work, *Neue Kritik der Vernunft* (1807/1828–1831).¹ Fries' philosophy has been dismissed as a 'psychological approach' to Kant's philosophy with no place in the canon of legitimate German philosophers. However, he had significant influence during his lifetime, and Hegel himself aggressively criticised Fries and two distinct Friesian schools of thought developed after Fries' death.

First, this paper examines Fries' argument regarding the method of philosophy, which is central to his thought. Fries regards Kant's philosophy as incomplete, so he tries to revise and renew it. Since he adopts Kant's spirit of criticism, he emphasises the finitude of human cognition and, in this respect, he criticises his contemporaries: Reinhold, Fichte and Schelling. Fries criticises Kant's conception of transcendental cognition as follows: Although transcendental cognition concerns cognitions *a priori*,

transcendental cognition itself can be acquired only in an empirical way because human cognition always begins with experience. Kant was in error to regard it as *a priori*. German Idealists elaborated on Kant's mistake and interpreted mere inner perceptions as cognitions *a priori*. This led them to adopt the 'synthetic method' as a way of philosophising. Fries criticises them and adopts the 'regressive method' or 'analytical method', whereby he starts from ordinary experience by analysing 'the ordinary opinions (*Beurtheilungen*) in daily life' to reveal the philosophical cognitions that construct the general presuppositions of opinions. According to Fries, these cognitions belong to 'reason', and they are to be distinguished from 'understanding', which conducts the 'analysing' operation by relying on arbitrary reflection.

Second, this paper examines Fries' key methodological concepts such as the 'feeling of truth' and the 'thing in itself'. His explanation of these concepts shows Fries' struggle to expand the object of philosophy on the one hand and to defend himself against so-called German idealism on the other hand.

Chapter 2: Developing the Metaphysics of Will through the Method of Philosophy Based on Criticism: Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy

This chapter reconstructs the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1843) from the perspective of his methodology. The philosophical standpoints of Fries and Schopenhauer share two important characteristics: 1) Schopenhauer and Fries adopt the 'analytical method', which starts from ordinary experience to discover higher philosophical principles. From this viewpoint, they focus on the role of 'abstraction' as a way to reveal philosophical principles. This point also distinguishes them from so-called German idealism. 2) They emphasise the method of philosophy regarding the formation of metaphysics. Schopenhauer also thematises the method of science in §15 of his *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (WWR)*. He recalls it carefully in §18, where he deduces the metaphysical principle as *Leib als Objektivität des Willens* i.e. the identification between will and body.

From this perspective, this chapter reconstructs Schopenhauer's philosophy and claims the following states:

- (1) Pursuing Schopenhauer's development of philosophy from the viewpoint of the method of philosophy, it becomes possible to clarify his deduction of central metaphysical principles such as *Objektivität des Willens* and *Wille als Ding an sich*.

(2) Schopenhauer's philosophical approach, which included the 'analytical method' and 'abstraction', was based on his reception of Fries' philosophy. This enabled Schopenhauer to attribute a wider range to these key methodological concepts.

(3) This methodological conception lies also in Schopenhauer's approach to ethics, including the roles of 'weeping' and 'imagination'.

These considerations show that both Fries and Schopenhauer construct a philosophical stream that is a clear alternative to so-called German idealism.

Chapter 3: Reception and Development of the Method of Philosophy Based on Criticism: The Rise of the Friesian School and the Neo-Friesian School

This chapter examines the philosophical stream of Friesian school and Neo-Friesian School. The two schools were established through the reception and revival of Fries' philosophy. Their members included natural scientists, mathematicians and philosophers, and the schools had a significant influence on the natural sciences of the day.

First, this chapter examines how the stream flowed to the 'Friesian school', established by Ernst Friedrich Apelt (1812–1859). The chapter examines Apelt's reception of Fries' philosophy in his attempt to bridge the gap between philosophy and the natural sciences of his period. He did this by focusing on induction as a method of natural sciences. In his *Theorie der Induction*, Apelt thematises induction as a method of science, and he investigates it from the standpoint of Friesian philosophy. He finds its justification in the precise distinction between induction and abstraction, and he claims that, while abstraction provides cognitions of higher principles, induction establishes its validity through experience. Apelt's philosophy had an influence on the natural sciences of his day. This book illuminates the thought of Mathias Jacob Schleiden, a member of the Friesian School, as well as a well-known botanist. He thematises in his *Grundzüge der Wissenschaftlichen Botanik* the roles of induction and abstraction, and he bases his method on Apelt's philosophy to advance his investigation of natural science.

Second, this chapter examines how the stream flowed to the 'Neo-Friesian school', established by Leonard Nelson (1882–1927). The particular aspect of Nelson's reception of Fries is found in the following points: First, based on Fries' philosophy, Nelson emphasises the subjective nature of the justification of our philosophical cognitions, which was finally formulated as the 'impossibility of cognition'. Second, Nelson's development of thought corresponds to his battle against Neo-Kantianism, and

this constituted the peculiar aspect of the Neo-Friesian school compared to other contemporary philosophical streams. Third, Nelson's development of thought had a significant historical meaning because of its emphasis on the role of language as a means of philosophising. Nelson focuses on the role of abstraction in philosophising and thematises the role of the 'Socratic method', which finds the field of philosophising in Socratic dialogue as an analysis of language. Nelson's approach has an illuminative similarity to the analytical philosophy that arose in the early 20th century.