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*Fichte's Anti-Sceptical Programme*

Abstract

It is widely recognised that Fichte, like many other thinkers in his contemporary philosophical environment, was convinced that it was one of the principal tasks of philosophy to defend the possibility of knowledge against sceptical objections. At the same time, he also shared the view of most of those of his contemporaries who engaged directly with Kant's philosophy (Jacobi, Maimon, Schulze, Reinhold, Schelling and, somewhat later, Hegel) that the resources and strategies explicitly presented in Kant's theoretical philosophy were insufficient to establish a conception of knowledge that would be truly immune to sceptical assault, and that new ones would therefore have to be developed. Fichte's assessment of the question was motivated by the insight that the traditional attempts to secure the possibility of knowledge against all sceptical doubts, which were all models oriented to the problem of 'justification', were incapable of accomplishing their purpose, and that sceptical objections could only effectively be undermined by philosophical reflections oriented to the problem of 'grounding'. My essay begins by examining the difference between what I call 'justification-oriented' and 'grounding-oriented' strategies for defeating scepticism. I proceed to discuss the *Doctrine of Science* of 1794/95, the *Doctrine of Science in accordance with a New Method*, and the *Doctrine of Science* of 1801/02 as various attempts by Fichte to realise just such a 'grounding-oriented' anti-sceptical programme. I undertake to show that and why the two versions of the *Doctrine of Science* which he presented prior to 1800, though for different reasons in each case, fail to live up to Fichte's own 'grounding-oriented' intentions. I conclude that it is only with the *Doctrine of Science* of 1801/02 that Fichte properly establishes an approach which finally allows him to escape from a 'justification-oriented' model in his attempt to ground the possibility of knowledge.