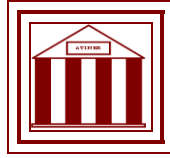


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Belief in F.H. Jacobi's Philosophy**

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## **Concepts of Sensation, Feeling and Belief in F.H. Jacobi's Philosophy**

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### **Abstract**

F. H. Jacobi's philosophy, such as a philosophy of the circle of thinkers to which he belonged (J. G. Hamann, F. Hemsterhuis), may seem like a peripheral phenomenon in the philosophy of the last quarter of XVIII – first quarter of the XIX century. But a closer acquaintance with his philosophy urges to think that F. H. Jacobi (1743-1819) often goes ahead of his time in the way he poses the philosophical questions. One of the most important examples of this is the development of the question of scientific ("proven") knowledge as rooted in the pre-scientific experience ("knowledge without proof" - F. H. Jacobi calls it "belief"). The question of the relationship between the experience and scientific knowledge was raised, of course, in the XVIII century by the British empiricists, the philosophers of the French Enlightenment, and by I. Kant, but all these thinkers suppose that the field of knowledge is homogeneous; they don't see any qualitative difference between the scientific knowledge and the knowledge of the world in the pre-scientific experience. F. H. Jacobi, on the contrary, seeks to show the qualitative and systematic difference between the scientific knowledge and the knowledge in the pre-scientific experience: pre-scientific knowledge, "knowledge without proof," "necessarily precedes knowledge, obtained by proof, justifies it, and constantly sways over it." This way of thinking brings F. H. Jacobi close to the philosophy of W. Dilthey, phenomenological philosophy of the XX century, and M. Heidegger's philosophy. The ground of the pre-scientific knowledge is for F. H. Jacobi a perceptual experience. This brings him close both to the sensualists of the XVIII century and to the phenomenologists of the XX century, in particular, M. Merleau-Ponty. But, unlike the sensualists, F. H. Jacobi argues that along with such form of receptivity as sensation, there is another, qualitatively different from it form of receptivity, which he calls "feeling". According to Jacobi, feeling is a reception of ideas in the way Plato defines them, and this form of receptivity is inherent to the reason. In such a consideration of the feeling, Jacobi is moving away from Kant and towards Plato, removing Kant's denial of the intellectual intuition. This move allows him to reveal some important aspects of the human perception. What these aspects are, we will attempt to show in our report, tracing the interrelations between sensation, feeling and belief in the F. H. Jacobi's philosophy.

**Keywords:** Pre-Scientific Knowledge, Sensation, Feeling, Belief.

## Introduction

The philosophy of the XX century seems to develop a lot of new philosophical themes and ways of posing the problems. Such themes as the theme of pre-scientific knowledge and its relations with the knowledge attained by sciences, of life-world and being-in-the world, of unity and multiplicity in the human perception as related to the problem of different ways of perception, seem to be tightly inscribed in the philosophical thought of the XX century. But when we make a more close acquaintance with the earlier philosophy, we can see that these themes were already developed in the philosophy of the XVIII century. These themes and the authors who developed them, don't belong to the philosophical mainstream of those times, but as we can see it now, they go ahead of their times. One of them is F.H. Jacobi. In his philosophy Jacobi poses the problem of rooting of the scientific knowledge in the pre-scientific experience, which he understands as a perceptual experience. He describes two receptive abilities – sensation and feeling – interrelated in the process of perception. And this helps him pose the problem of the unity and multiplicity in the perception.

## F.H. Jacobi on Sensation, Feeling and Belief

F. H. Jacobi's philosophy, such as a philosophy of the circle of thinkers to which he belonged (J. G. Hamann, F. Hemsterhuis), may seem as a peripheral phenomenon in the philosophy of the last quarter of XVIII – first quarter of the XIX century. But a closer acquaintance with his philosophy urges to think that F. H. Jacobi (1743-1819) often goes ahead of his time in the way he poses the philosophical questions.

One of the most important questions he raises is the problem of the interrelation of the scientific and pre-scientific knowledge. Of course, he was not the first to conceive this interrelation. As a problem of the relationship between the experience and the scientific knowledge, it was also discussed by the British empiricists (J. Locke, G. Berkeley, D. Hume), the philosophers of the French Enlightenment (f. ex. E.B. de Condillac) and by I. Kant. But all these thinkers supposed homogeneity of the field of knowledge as a whole, or, homogeneity of the experience and the scientific knowledge. They have not thought about any qualitative differences between the scientific knowledge and the knowledge of the world in the pre-scientific experience.

On the contrary, F.H. Jacobi seeks to show the qualitative and systematic differences between the scientific knowledge and the knowledge in the pre-scientific experience. He calls the pre-scientific knowledge “knowledge without proof” or “first-hand knowledge”, and says that such knowledge “necessarily precedes knowledge obtained by proof (*i.e. scientific knowledge – A. L.*), justifies it, and constantly sways over it”. This philosophical position brings him closer to W. Dilthey, who, for example, substantiates the possibility of descriptive psychology as a scientific project, referring to how the psychic

life is given in the pre-scientific experience, and to E. Husserl with his problematic of lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), and also to some other phenomenologists, such as M. Merleau-Ponty and M. Heidegger. For comparison we can take an excerpt from the "Phenomenology of Perception" by M. Merleau-Ponty. Presenting some late Husserl's ideas, he writes: "All I know about the world, even through science, I know <...> from life experience, without which the symbols of science would be empty. The whole universe of science is based on the lifeworld, and if we want to think rigorously science itself, if we want with all the precision to determine its meaning and direction, we must first go back to this experience, the secondary expression of which is the science" (Merleau-Ponty 1945).

As for Merleau-Ponty, for F.H. Jacobi the pre-scientific knowledge is first and foremost a perceptual experience. Of course, the theme of perception as a basis for understanding the world tightly fits into the context of the 18th century. We can remember f.ex. E.B. de Condillac as an author who develops this theme. But F.H. Jacobi makes here something untrivial for his time. At first, he seeks to transcend the dichotomy of empiricism and rationalism, posing his conception of realism. This conception states that our experience is an experience of being in the world, so that neither consciousness nor the world is something primary in the process of perception. "The object contributes as much to the perception of consciousness, as the consciousness to the perception of the object", - writes Jacobi in his dialog "David Hume on belief, or the talk about idealism and realism". Such a position places him also close to the phenomenologists of the XX century.

At second, Jacobi distinguishes two different receptive abilities: 1) sensation (*Sinnes-Empfindung*), as the ability to perceive sensual data such as color, sound, touch, taste, smell, and 2) feeling (*Gefühl*), as the ability to perceive what Plato calls ideas. According to Jacobi, feeling is a receptivity of reason (*Vernunft*).

Differentiating sensation and feeling, F.H. Jacobi poses a problem that will be discussed much later. The distinction between these two abilities is one of the important topics in psychology in the end of XIX – beginning of the XX century (cf. authors like W. Wundt, H. Höffding, T. Lipps, O. Külpe and others.). We also find this differentiation in C.G. Jung's psychological typology (Jung 1921). However, all these psychologists confuse the concept of feeling with the concept of emotion. But when we examine the terms closely, feeling and emotion can be strictly differentiated. The word "emotion" derives from the Latin *motio*, movement; in this sense, emotion is a reciprocal movement of the soul, some kind of response to a situation. The basis for such a response may be different, and is not necessarily associated with feeling. For example, the reaction of irritation in view of an obstacle that intercepts our will, is certainly an emotion, but has nothing to do with feeling.

Jacobi introduces the concepts of sensation and feeling, appealing to I. Kant. Kant – writes F.H. Jacobi – rightly remarks regarding sensation and understanding, that it's impossible to prefer one of these abilities of our soul (*Eigenschaften unseres Gemüts*) to another, because "the thoughts without

<sensual> content are empty, and the sensation without concepts is blind”. But the situation is similar – insists Jacobi – for the couple of understanding and reason: they are mutually necessary for the human being. Reason – says Jacobi – is essentially the faculty of feeling (*Vermögen der Gefühle*). Feeling as well as sensing gives the content to the understanding. The content delivered by the sensation refers to the sensual world, and the content delivered by the feeling refers to the invisible, intelligible things. (Jacobi 1815)

Both sensation and feeling are needed to get the pre-scientific experience, “knowledge without proof”. This knowledge without proof Jacobi calls it belief. In this understanding of the belief, he appeals to D. Hume. But we can cite one more source providing this perspective of the belief in relation to the receptivity of the feeling. And it is Apostle Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews.

In this epistle, Paul, talking about the religious belief (faith), says that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (“ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων”) (Heb. 11: 1). And for Jacobi “the evidence of things not seen” is the belief as evidence, delivered by feeling.

Now, if we refer to the terms of Kant’s philosophy, we can see that according to Jacobi’s conception of feeling as a receptivity of reason, the contents of sensation and feeling meet in the understanding, whereupon the human being understands the world as a unity of the visible and invisible, the sensual and the intelligible. F.H. Jacobi calls feeling a universal human ability that distinguishes human being from the animals. Indeed, as shown by Plato (to which F.H. Jacobi refers), the very human perception of a thing as a singularity is not possible if “in the sight of” the perceiver isn’t present the invisible “eidos” of this thing. By the feeling as vision of the invisible (“ideal” in the Platonic sense) the world becomes “articulated”.

So the faculty of the feeling as a vision of the invisible structure of visible things is necessary for the perception of individual things. And that is feeling that makes the whole dominate and organizing its parts. By the feeling the other person will be perceived as a kind of sustainable self-identical unity – the unity that is primary to the various manifestations of this person. And the feeling opens the world as the world of intersubjectivity. So, the feeling as the perception of an idea in the Platonic sense and the feeling as a concrete, personal relationship to the other, are two inseparable aspects of a faculty of feeling. the inextricable connection between these two aspects in the context of the feeling of love is shown by Plato in the dialogue “Phaedrus”. At the same time, not only people, but also the things are implicated by the feeling in the space of intersubjective relations.

By means of the feeling both people and things are perceived as belonging not to the space of multiplicity, but to the space of unity (All-Einheit, according to F.H. Jacobi, based on Plato). Every man and every thing as individuality bears the stamp of unity; the world in its differentiation grows from the original unity like a tree growing out of a simple unity of seed. It is the feeling that underlies the perception of the world as having a “tree”, i.e. hierarchically built, structured. This kind of perception, G. Deleuze and F.

Guattari (1972, 1980) oppose it to the schizophrenic perception of the world, whereby the world is perceived as having the structure of the rhizome (i.e. a multiplicity that is not rooted in any original unity and can't be reduced to that). Developing the ideas of F.H. Jacobi, we can say that this rhizomatic perception will be present when a person lacks the ability of feeling.

By the way, F.H. Jacobi touches upon the question of unity and multiplicity and gives an interesting example of the perception, that we can call rhizomatic. "Fénelon<sup>1</sup> - writes Jacobi - complained that everything is lost to him in a multiplicity, and this multiplicity is lost in nothing. 'I do not find myself, - he says - in this set of thoughts, moving in me, and yet these thoughts are all that I can find about myself. I am such a wide variety of ideas, none of which is the same with another, that among them I become nothing for myself, and so I can't see that One that is the truth I know about and look for. To make a yardstick of my vague knowledge, I have to divide this One and make it into multiple and varied; I do it, and doing so, I see that this One disappears and I disappear for myself. - Oh, who will set me free from the numbers, additions, bindings and sequences? As I immerse myself in them, they become more and more insignificant, more and more distant from what is seen by my mind's eye as the only truth. Varied and multiple seems to be brilliant and promising, full of unity and based on unity, but this unity does not reveal itself, it constantly slips and mocks my quest, whereas the numbers and sets only increase and grow. And the rows disappear with the disappearance of an order in them, getting lost in nothingness. Do you want to catch something that is? It is already gone! To catch something that immediately follows it? It is over! What will happen next? It will follow, but will not exist! - It will not exist, but will be integrated with all that was before it and that is not present already" (Jacobi 1815).

With this rhizomatic perception the unity crumbles and the world becomes a space of interaction between impersonal singularities, the value of each of whose is determined by what other units can coincide and interact. We can see the analysis of such a perception in the dilogy "Capitalism and Schizophrenia" by Deleuze and Guattari. But it's interesting that Jacobi had already described such a perception.

### **Concluding Remarks**

We see that Jacobi develops some questions that are usually associated with the philosophy of the XX century. The way he deals with these subjects is untrivial and interesting. In this paper we tried to describe the way Jacobi treats certain philosophical questions tracing the interrelations between the concepts of sensation, feeling and belief in his philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup>François Fénelon (1651 - 1715) – French theologian, poet and writer. Fénelon's liberal views on politics and education as well as his involvement in a controversy over the nature of mystical prayer caused opposition from church and state. Nevertheless, his pedagogical concepts and literary works exerted a lasting influence on French culture.

Jacobi poses the question of the interrelation between the pre-scientific knowledge (“knowledge without proof”, that he also calls “belief”) and the scientific (“proven”) knowledge. He seeks to show that pre-scientific knowledge “necessarily precedes knowledge obtained by proof (*i.e. scientific knowledge – A. L.*), justifies it, and constantly sways over it”. This way of thinking relates him to the phenomenological philosophy of the XX century.

According F.H. Jacobi, the pre-scientific knowledge is first and foremost a perceptual experience. And the perceptual experience for him is an experience of being in the world, so that neither consciousness nor the world are something primary in the process of perception. “The object contributes as much to the perception of consciousness, as the consciousness to the perception of the object”, - writes Jacobi. Such a position associates him also to some phenomenologists, f. ex. to M. Merleau-Ponty.

Speaking about perception, Jacobi distinguishes two different receptive abilities: 1) sensation (*Sinnes-Empfindung*), as the ability to perceive sensual data such as color, sound, touch, taste, smell, and 2) feeling (*Gefühl*), as the ability to perceive what Plato calls ideas. F.H. Jacobi calls feeling a universal human ability that distinguishes the human beings from the animals. By the feeling as vision of the invisible (“ideal” in the Platonic sense) the world becomes “articulated”.

By means of the feeling, both people and things are perceived as belonging not to the space of multiplicity, but to the space of unity (*All-Einheit*, according to F.H. Jacobi, based on Plato). We see that F.H. Jacobi touches here upon the question of unity and multiplicity. This question will be discussed in the XX century, inter alia, in the dilogy “Capitalism and Schizophrenia” by G. Deleuze and F. Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari describe a type of perception called “rhizomatic” – the perception, when the unity crumbles and the world becomes a space of interaction between impersonal singularities, the value of each of whose is determined by what other units can coincide and interact. Developing the ideas of F.H. Jacobi, we can say that this rhizomatic perception will be present when a person lacks the ability of feeling. And it’s interesting that Jacobi gives an example of such a perception, appealing to F. Fénelon.

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