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NOTE DE LA RÉDACTION

En el presente número la *Revista de estudi(o)s sobre Fichte* reúne contribuciones de cinco de los especialistas sobre Fichte más relevantes en la actualidad. El lector encontrará en estos artículos no sólo nuevos modos de leer a Fichte, sino también argumentos consistentes contra interpretaciones que, a pesar de haberse vuelto obsoletas a partir de la publicación de la totalidad de manuscritos de Fichte, siguen siendo aquí y allá defendidas o reproducidas de un modo acrítico o conformista yendo así no sólo contra el espíritu fichteano sino también contra el del estudio filosófico en sentido estricto. En particular deben ser mencionadas aquí las lecturas que hacen a Fichte un fundacionalista, las que creen ver diferencias fundamentales o un progreso en las distintas etapas de la doctrina de la ciencia, y, por último, las que sostienen que el inacabamiento de la doctrina de la ciencia es o bien un defecto o un efecto no deseado de su autor.

Günter Zöllner propone un estudio del propósito de Fichte de una “filosofía aplicada” llamada a reflejar el modo en que se relacionan el pensamiento filosófico (especulación) y la realidad externa a la filosofía (vida). Este artículo se concentra en la así llamada *Doctrina del Estado* (1813) de Fichte. En su artículo Zöllner explica además de manera convincente la razón principal por la que tanto Reinhold, como Schiller, Fichte y Schelling entre otros, leyeron el programa kantiano de una filosofía trascendental como una mera crítica que necesitaba ser elevada a sistema. Por último, resulta una gran contribución a las investigaciones sobre Fichte el argumento que defiende aquí Zöllner contra la lectura de la obra de Fichte en clave evolucionista.

En su artículo, que de algún modo puede ser considerado aporético, Tom Rockmore, por su parte, analiza la naturaleza y los límites en la capacidad explicativa de la noción fichteana de subjetividad en el contexto epistemológico del idealismo alemán. Este artículo dirige una crítica contra la revisión fichteana de la concepción kantiana de sujeto entendiéndola como una contribución defectuosa al problema del conocimiento. Rockmore sostiene que el modo fichteano de revisar la concepción kantiana de sujeto comete un error garrafal al hacer de lo objetivo algo excesiva o totalmente dependiente de la dimensión subjetiva.

La cuestión acerca de la incompletitud de la filosofía de Fichte es el tema de los artículos de Diogo Ferrer e Ives Radrizzani. Ferrer analiza distintas paradojas y formulaciones circulares en la obra de Fichte entre los años 1794 y 1805. La hipótesis de Ferrer es que este modo de formulación vienen exigidas por el carácter partículas de conceptos centrales del pensamiento de Fichte. El estudio de estas paradojas y circularidad argumentativa permite

ver cierta legitimidad o necesidad en la naturaleza inacabada de la doctrina de la ciencia. Por su parte, Radrizzani ofrece dos razones por las que el proyecto de una versión definitiva de la *Doctrina de la ciencia* es *estructuralmente* imposible. En primer lugar, Radrizzani ve en la estrategia fichteana de conceptualizar y/o deducir *ex negativo*, un gesto ciertamente inspirado en la tradición de la teología negativa, el instrumento del que Fichte se vale para poner en tela de juicio la capacidad del lenguaje de ser performatividad pura. En segundo lugar, Radrizzani logra mostrar de manera convincente que la necesidad de este inacabamiento viene exigida por la apertura, que Fichte entiende necesaria, del sistema hacia la vida misma en sus diversas formas (libertad creativa cultural, científica y política, experiencia religiosa y experiencia de lo absoluto en cuanto saber absoluto). La quinta contribución está a cargo de Mario Jorge Carvalho quien reconstruye con detenimiento, claridad y profundidad el significado y las implicaciones de la noción fichteana de cuerpo propio o cuerpo articulado en cuanto acción efectiva tal como se halla expuesta en el *Sistema de la doctrina de las costumbres* de 1798. Carvalho muestra que para Fichte la representación del cuerpo propio forma parte de la representación de cualquier *actividad en primera persona* o de *mi actividad sin más*. De allí que la consciencia de la *acción propia* no pueda darse sin la consciencia del *cuerpo de uno mismo* o del cuerpo que siempre es pensado y vivenciado como exclusivamente mío. Actuar, obrar en el mundo, entonces, significa algo más que un mero predicado del cuerpo, dado que la acción es inherente al cuerpo propio. El artículo concluye con un interesante estudio acerca de la dimensión espacial del cuerpo en cuanto efectividad.

Por último, el editor y los miembros del consejo de redacción de esta revista quieren agradecer tanto a los autores como a los evaluadores por su trabajo (en algunos casos bajo presión), paciencia y comprensión.

Emiliano Acosta
(Ghent University/Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Blandijnberg, 7 de diciembre de 2016

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Artículos/Artigos

Sistema y Vida: El legado filosófico de Fichte

Günter Zöller

Traducción : Emiliano Acosta y Héctor Arrese Igor

»[...] sólo son las leyes.« ¹

Esta conferencia considera el propósito de Fichte de una “filosofía aplicada” que refleje en su entramado intrínseco el pensamiento filosófico (especulación) y la realidad externa a la filosofía (vida) –la cual también es previa y posterior a la filosofía. El foco está puesto en las “conferencias sobre diversos contenidos” ² del último año de vida de Fichte, anunciadas como tales y que constituyen aquel texto titulado como *Doctrina del Estado*. Publicado póstumamente este texto integra tanto el último estrato de la exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia como la fundamentación filosófica de la historia, el derecho, la religión y la política. La unión de sistema y vida mencionada en el título de esta conferencia se demuestra en relación a Fichte y en particular a sus últimas obras, tal como está desarrollada ejemplarmente en la *Doctrina del Estado*, en cuanto que implicación recíproca de una filosofía estructurada vitalmente y una vida determinada filosóficamente. Esta conferencia retrata la filosofía eminentemente práctica de Fichte ³ en cuatro secciones: acerca de la relación entre el sistema y la crítica, entre el sistema y la auto-crítica, entre el sistema y la vida y, por último, entre la filosofía pura y la aplicada. En el centro del interés está siempre la validación vital del conocimiento en el último Fichte, lo cual debe ser visto como su legado filosófico. ⁴

1. Sistema y crítica

La distinción entre crítica y sistema es de origen kantiano, su redefinición en cuanto oposición es una maniobra postkantiana. En la introducción a la *Crítica de la razón pura*, con motivo de la exposición de la “(...) idea de una ciencia particular, bajo el nombre de una crítica de la

razón pura”⁵, Kant había diferenciado la fundamentación completa de la filosofía trascendental –en la forma de una crítica de la razón meramente teórica (especulativa) del “sistema”– de la filosofía trascendental misma que debía ser construida sobre ella. Él presentó allí la fundamentación por medio de la *Crítica de la razón pura* como algo completo en sí mismo, mientras que la construcción sistemática eventual era más bien un proyecto editorial que debía llevarse a cabo según el modo de los libros de enseñanza filosófica escolar.⁶

Es sabido que Kant mismo nunca se propuso completar la primera *Crítica* llevándola a un sistema de la filosofía trascendental. Es cierto que él puso en juego después una distinción entre crítica y sistema, justo al comienzo de la segunda edición de la *Crítica de la razón pura* (1787), cuya realización al menos parcial él mismo llevó a cabo. Frente a esta segunda distinción pertinente se ubica la *Crítica* –más precisamente: la

Crítica de la razón pura – sobre cuyos fundamentos se erigen la “Metafísica tanto de la naturaleza como de las costumbres”.⁷ A decir verdad Kant nunca llegó a publicar un “sistema de la naturaleza”⁸, salvo los *Principios metafísicos de la ciencia natural* (1785) y los intentos desesperados en este sentido en la *Obra póstuma*. Sin embargo, una obra de los últimos años de Kant como la *Metafísica de las costumbres* (1797) suministra el cumplimiento del segundo de ambos proyectos parciales de un sistema filosófico fundamentado críticamente (“sistema de la libertad”).⁹

En suma, la relación entre la crítica y el sistema en Kant no está restringida a la secuencia objetiva en el marco de una arquitectura filosófica. Con la palabra ‘sistema’ Kant caracteriza no sólo una construcción mental filosófica en vista de su fundamentación fiable y su realización completa, sino también –incorporando un uso de la palabra y del concepto propio de una escuela filosófica– una concepción filosófica fundante (*Lehbegriff*), cuyo supuesto problemático o asertorio permite solucionar en principio problemas filosóficos más amplios.¹⁰ En este sentido doctrinal en lugar de arquitectónico, el sistema de Kant es el del idealismo trascendental, que él también denomina como “idealismo formal” o “crítico” –en reacción a malentendidos anteriores.¹¹

Mientras el concepto arquitectónico del sistema en Kant implica también la diferencia entre la crítica como propedéutica y preparación y el sistema como ejecución y elevación, en su concepto doctrinal del sistema, sin embargo, coinciden la crítica como criticismo y el sistema como filosofía crítica. La filosofía trascendental es para Kant filosofía crítica, tanto de acuerdo con su fundamentación (crítica) como según su realización (sistema). Se trata de una filosofía a partir del concepto filosófico fundante de la teoría del idealismo trascendental.

Los sucesores de Kant –los representantes del idealismo alemán– adoptan la diferencia arquitectónica kantiana entre la crítica propedéutica y el sistema enciclopédico. Sin embargo, lo convierten al mismo tiempo en lo opuesto. En esto vuelven contra Kant la interpretación que él mismo dio de su *Crítica de la razón pura* como una “mera” propedéutica para un sistema que aún debía ser elaborado, para así, primero, poder atribuirle a Kant el haber restringido su proyecto, si bien no a partir de un principio, al menos de acuerdo con los hechos, al trabajo de la crítica y no ya al sistema y, luego, poder, de este modo, poner en cuestión esta auto-restricción. El Kant reducido de esta manera a la crítica propedéutica se deja utilizar de modo excelente para el propio proyecto neokantiano de producir el sistema filosófico pendiente –sea éste como doctrina de la ciencia (Fichte), como filosofía de lo absoluto (Schelling) o como filosofía del espíritu (Hegel). ¹²

En todos sus gestos y pretensiones de sobrepasar de modo propio y original a la obra crítica de Kant, los representantes postkantianos de la filosofía clásica alemana están sin embargo siempre dispuestos a confesar y reconocer su compromiso, por no decir su deuda para con la tarea previa de Kant. Este es el caso particular de Fichte, quien ya tempranamente y sin excepción hasta sus últimos días denomina a Kant no sólo como el motivador decisivo para la propia obra filosófica, sino también confirma la identidad esencial entre la vinculación kantiana de idealismo y criticismo y la propia teoría de la preponderancia del conocimiento frente a la cosa, del conocimiento y el deber frente al ser.

¹³ Aquí es Fichte en especial quien comparte la disociación de Kant entre el criticismo estructurado de modo idealista –o el idealismo realizado críticamente– de un realismo (trascendental) desenmascarado y denigrado como dogmatismo. La equiparación acoplada que hace Fichte entre el criticismo y el idealismo, así como entre el dogmatismo y el realismo, lo lleva de comienzo a fin a considerar como una filosofía falsa o una no-filosofía a todas aquellas que no son exclusivamente idealistas. Entre ellas, sobre todo la filosofía natural de Schelling, pero también el realismo lógico de Bardili o el populismo de Fr. Nicolai. ¹⁴ Fichte comparte también con Kant, desde sus comienzos en Zúrich y Jena, el zeugma estratégico de la filosofía trascendental y la filosofía moral críticas. Si bien el sistema completo “de la libertad” –una fórmula programática que se encuentra tanto en Kant como en Fichte– ¹⁵ se suspende en ambos filósofos por diferentes motivos, Kant y Fichte están de acuerdo en la orientación última de la filosofía teórica hacia la filosofía práctica, del conocimiento al querer, del pensamiento al hacer, del concepto del objeto al de fin y del mundo sensible al mundo moral.

¹⁶ Tanto en Kant como en Fichte el primado de la razón práctica que ellos exigen, conciben y amplían de modo diferente, no se da de manera reductiva ni monopólica, sino que es la expresión de un orden normativo y una jerarquía de intereses que coloca al pensamiento al servicio del actuar, a la determinación del objeto al servicio de la determinación de la voluntad y al conocimiento del objeto al servicio de la realización de la libertad.

Más allá del consenso doctrinal entre Kant y Fichte sobre la reconciliación del criticismo con el idealismo, Fichte sigue también la praxis de Kant, para establecer expresamente su pensamiento propio original por medio de una reflexión preliminar de tipo metódico y metodológico (“crítica”). Tanto en el primer Fichte (1793-1799) como en el último (1809-1814), se encuentra, sumado a su propósito central de una filosofía trascendental completada de modo actualizado (“doctrina de la ciencia in specie” ¹⁷), todo un corpus de obras destinadas a servir de introducción a la *filosofía primera*. La proto-filosofía crítica abarca en Fichte diferentes lugares textuales: introducciones a la doctrina de la ciencia en sentido estricto y propio, tratamiento de los hechos psicológicos relevantes para la doctrina de la ciencia (“hechos de la conciencia”), tratamiento diferencial del pensamiento trascendental puro lógico y específicamente trascendental (“lógica trascendental”). Fichte actúa en conformidad con Kant al sujetar el criticismo de la filosofía trascendental, continuada como teoría de la ciencia, a un comportamiento espiritual y a una actitud intelectual (*Denkart*) generales, ¹⁸ exigidas y promovidas por el pensamiento autónomo a partir de la destitución de la tradición, la convención y el prejuicio. El imperativo ilustrado del pensamiento crítico vale aquí no sólo para la forma de la praxis filosófica, que debe consistir en el pensamiento propio, sino que abarca también los contenidos del filosofar independiente. Es la continuación de la máxima de investigación conocida como el Principio de Vico, que declara como convertibles a lo conocido correctamente (*verum*) y aquello que se ha hecho por sí mismo (*factum*). Kant y Fichte unen el conocer y el saber al hacer-por-uno-mismo y al actuar-por-uno-mismo. Para Fichte, que en esto sigue a Kant, el idealismo crítico es performativo y está asentado sobre la actividad, que además debe ser una actividad propia, y se orienta teóricamente a la espontaneidad y prácticamente a la libertad.

2. Sistema y autocrítica

La relación íntima y la identidad de contenido entre la crítica y el sistema en Fichte afecta no sólo a la estructura interna del sistema filosófico fundamentado críticamente. También es crítica en Fichte la relación de la filosofía consigo misma. En cuanto filosofía crítica, la teoría de la ciencia es, por ponerla en una palabra, autocrítica: está relacionada de modo reflexivo y productivo con las posibilidades y límites de su capacidad conceptual. También desde esta perspectiva Kant cumple el rol, para Fichte, de ser caso precedente y modelo. La filosofía crítica es para Kant esencialmente la autocrítica de la razón. Desde la filosofía trascendental en sentido estricto (*Crítica de la razón pura*), pasando por la filosofía moral crítica (*Crítica de la razón práctica*), hasta la filosofía crítica de la naturaleza y del arte (*Crítica de la capacidad de juzgar*), siempre se trata en Kant del origen, las posibilidades y los límites del uso de la razón en general y del uso “puro”, libre de la experiencia, de la razón en particular.

En Fichte la autocrítica filosófica se convierte en un programa y un método. La doctrina de la ciencia debe proporcionar los primeros principios de todo conocimiento y al mismo tiempo allí debe participar en la fundamentación de la forma propia de conocimiento. Conceptos artificiales como “poner”, “acción-hecho” (*Tathandlung*) e “intuición intelectual” y formaciones conceptuales tales como “ver espiritual” y “ojo interior”, sirven a la auto-justificación estratégica de la doctrina de la ciencia, en términos de un meta-conocimiento evidente de los últimos fundamentos de todo conocimiento junto con los objetos allí involucrados. ¹⁹

También la diferenciación entre, por un lado, el sujeto genérico articulado artificialmente del pensar y del actuar (Yo), y, por otro, su instanciación individual y concreta por medio de cada sí-mismo particular, pertenece a la situación autocrítica de la doctrina de la ciencia que se halla más allá –o más bien más acá– de la psicología y la antropología. Del mismo modo que el Yo de la doctrina de la ciencia no debe ser confundido con el yo de su autor, en la doctrina de la ciencia no se trata de otro yo individual, sino que se dirige a un portador idéntico-invariante del conocimiento y del querer basado en el conocimiento, a cuyo conocimiento y reconocimiento la doctrina de la ciencia quiere guiarnos.

La dimensión autocrítica de la doctrina de la ciencia se demuestra ante todo en su permanente transformación por medio de su autor, quien

expone la teoría trascendental del conocimiento durante dos décadas una y otra vez de un modo diferente. El motivo externo para la exposición modificada está dado más que nada por los malentendidos y opiniones erróneas, que le tocaron en suerte a la doctrina de la ciencia en su primera forma publicada: el *Fundamento de toda la teoría de la ciencia* de 1794/95. La *Nueva exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia* o *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, expuesta posteriormente entre 1796 y 1799, se enfrenta a la comprensión errónea del Yo trascendental, de tipo individual-psicológica, por medio de la reducción de la Yoidad de principio a una auto-relación pura práctica (“querer puro”) y la reducción de la individualidad a la sociabilidad (“mundo espiritual”).

En las obras posteriores de Fichte influye de modo aún más dramático y directamente traumático la interpretación errónea de su concepto moral de Dios como ateísmo (Disputa del ateísmo, 1798-1799). Esta interpretación lo pone indirectamente y de modo mediato sobre la picota y da lugar a su escepticismo frente a la mediación escrita de su propia filosofía trascendental avanzada (doctrina de la ciencia). Luego de 1799 Fichte prácticamente renuncia a publicar en forma de libro la continuación de su trabajo sobre la doctrina de la ciencia y limita la comunicación de la misma a numerosas y extensas series de conferencias, dictadas frente a un público privado, con excepción de 1805, siendo profesor en Erlangen, así como una vez en 1807 en la Universidad de Königsberg y a partir de 1810 como profesor de la recién fundada Universidad de Berlín.

En los años que van desde 1800 hasta 1814 Fichte expone su doctrina de la ciencia no menos de doce veces –y siempre de modo distinto, con una terminología y conceptualidad cambiantes, con una construcción diferente, con diversas referencias históricas y sistemáticas. La exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia, tanto serial como variada, no sólo da cuenta de la situación del discurso filosófico del siglo XIX, que se modifica a sí mismo. Fichte recurre deliberadamente a expresiones y conceptos que se originan en el arsenal de sus competidores y oponentes –desde el concepto de la vida en Jacobi hasta el de lo absoluto en Schelling.²⁰ Sin que Fichte entonces concuerde con estos autores asimila el propio discurso a la situación lingüística e intelectual de su tiempo con la intención de permanecer en diálogo filosófico y de ejercer una influencia en adelante, además de cumplir con su rol de motivador del idealismo postkantiano.

Sin embargo, la estrategia de Fichte de presentar siempre de modo diferente la doctrina de la ciencia, además del empréstito ocasional y oportunista de teoremas extraños, tiene también fundamentos

metodológicos profundos y consecuencias sistemáticas trascendentes. Como consecuencia de su carácter eminentemente crítico y en especial autocrítico, la doctrina de la ciencia de Fichte no constituye una doctrina completa, que podría ser expuesta y divulgada. El elemento particular de la doctrina de la ciencia no es para Fichte la *letra* rígida y fija, sino el *espíritu* movable, flexible. Por lo tanto la exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia no está al servicio de la instrucción y el adoctrinamiento, sino de la iniciación e inspiración. La doctrina de la ciencia no se dirige a recipientes pasivos, sino a co-ejecutores y co-realizadores espontáneos de un pensamiento filosófico que consiste esencialmente en la realización de sí mismo y en cada adquisición individual y totalmente propia de conocimiento.

Con su forma de exposición siempre diferente, Fichte da cuenta de su conocimiento central: que el saber no consiste en el reflejo de datos previamente dados, sino en la producción de estructuras normativas, es decir, objetos debidos, que se pueden conocer y reconocer como objetos o cosas desde el punto de vista teórico o como fines y metas desde una disposición práctica. Pero esto vale, más allá del tabú de repetición dominante, no sólo en relación a su público, que en primer lugar debe oír y escuchar y recién secundariamente leer y releer –posteriormente o a modo de sustituto. También para el mismo Fichte la repetición y la reglamentación del pensamiento movido-moviente representa un peligro cognitivo, que amenaza con convertirse en un pensamiento detenido. Para poder evitar la objetivación siempre al acecho y la osificación del propio pensamiento autónomo y hacer justicia a la genuina agilidad del pensamiento, se necesita del cambio ininterrumpido en la comunicación de la doctrina de la ciencia –ningún concepto debe solidificarse, ninguna comprensión debe fijarse, ningún proceso de pensamiento debe gelificarse.

La exigencia de modificación desde el punto de vista del productor así como del receptor da a la exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia un dinamismo intrínseco: nada debe ser simplemente repetido; la forma de exposición debe ser modificada sin interrupciones, de modo tal de que su contenido –el contenido espiritual de la doctrina de la ciencia– permanezca conservado como tal. Pero la alteración y la variación no son ya también progresión y perfeccionamiento. A fin de que el cambio se convierta en progreso y la modificación en desarrollo, es menester un movimiento deliberado y un criterio para el movimiento orientado hacia el fin. El estado final que se busca de la doctrina de la ciencia no debe ser de nuevo un producto final. No puede haber una exposición definitiva, sino antes bien el esfuerzo continuo y deliberado para lograr la

comunicación efectiva del concepto central de la doctrina de la ciencia, que consiste en el carácter crítico-idealista del conocimiento en cuanto tal.

Si por tanto la doctrina de la ciencia no es, según su esencia, *ergon* sino *energeia*, no es *opus* sino *operari*, no obra (*Werk*) sino producir o efectuar (*Wirken*), entonces está prohibida la adopción de un proceso de desarrollo de la sucesión cronológicamente manifiesta de sus diferentes exposiciones. Puede ocurrir que a la base de las exposiciones de los últimos años haya ciertas comprensiones y experiencias que son desconocidas para las primeras versiones. Sin embargo ellas serían antes bien comprensiones y experiencias respecto de las posibilidades y límites de la *exposición* de la doctrina de la ciencia y no tanto de la doctrina de la ciencia misma –de su núcleo esencial, idéntico, metódico-doctrinal y sistemático en cuanto que teoría de los principios de todo el conocimiento y de todo lo conocido.

La impresión contraria de un desarrollo dramático de la doctrina de la ciencia misma y en cuanto tal –en especial su desarrollo posterior desde la filosofía trascendental crítica hasta una metafísica post-crítica o incluso una mística anti-crítica–, que puede deducirse del trabajo de los primeros intérpretes y exégetas, más bien se retrotrae a una lectura selectiva de textos y fragmentos, gracias a la cual los procesos de pensamiento continuos y comprensivos se deforman en expresiones doctrinales de tipo dogmático. Del mismo modo que el *work-in-progress* de la doctrina de la ciencia no conoce ningún estado final fáctico, esto prohíbe también la fijación a una única exposición, no importa cuánto se destaque por la originalidad y calidad. Lo que precisamente contradice el espíritu de la doctrina de la ciencia es aislar artificialmente y preparar con gran calidad técnica siguiendo criterios de la doxografía partes de un texto de Fichte que es más abarcador que los pasajes en cuestión y que se halla en un proceso continuo de pensamiento.

En orden a la exculpación de los primeros intentos de interpretación del último Fichte, debe decirse que hasta hace poco –esto es, hasta el cierre de *la J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe* de la Academia Bávara de las Ciencias (2012)– todo el volumen y la magnitud del trabajo realizado por Fichte durante dos décadas en su exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia no se tenía en cuenta ni se conocía. De este modo podía parecer que algunas exposiciones posteriores, en particular la monumental segunda conferencia de la doctrina de la ciencia del año 1804, habían producido aportes filosóficos singulares y definitivos no superados fácticamente. Pero en el contexto completo de las exposiciones últimas así como en las muchas versiones previas, cada exposición individual de la doctrina de la

ciencia deviene una estación entre muchas otras de un recorrido que seguramente no está caracterizado por el escalamiento y el remiendo y seguro que tampoco por la conversión y la retractación, sino más bien por la *alteración* y la *variación*.

3. Sistema y vida

Aun cuando la forma de exposición serial y en clave de variaciones de la doctrina de la ciencia no conoce ninguna versión definitiva ni movimiento progresivo ascendente alguno, en esta sucesión de unas dieciséis versiones pueden distinguirse distintas fases. La división en dos fases, que era usual en el pasado, es decir entre el Fichte de Jena y el último Fichte de Berlín, debe no obstante ser revisada a la luz de la obra completa editada críticamente. Puede añadirse otra fase para el período que Fichte pasa en Berlín con pocas excepciones (Erlangen en 1805, Königsberg en 1807), luego de su salida forzosa de Jena. Esta fase establece una diferencia dentro de la secuencia de conferencias sobre la teoría de la ciencia, entre los años intermedios (1800-1805: siete conferencias) y los últimos años de Berlín (1810-1814: cinco conferencias), a los que conecta la conferencia de Königsberg sobre la doctrina de la ciencia (1807).

La sucesión histórica que de allí resulta, a saber: fase primera, media y última ²¹, se presenta también sistemáticamente en tres partes a partir del concepto que en cada fase sirve como concepto conductor para las exposiciones en particular: desde el Yo (absoluto) en el primer Fichte a través del ser (absoluto) en el medio hasta la vida (absoluta) en el último Fichte. En todas estos tres casos y fases, el concepto conductor correspondiente sirve a la articulación conceptual de la instancia de fundamentación última del conocimiento en vista de su validez, independientemente de sus circunstancias contingentes y de las condiciones casuales desde el punto de vista de los sujetos y objetos involucrados fácticamente en el conocimiento.

La división triádica en fases de las dieciséis exposiciones de la teoría de la ciencia tiene una estructura que se repite y que sigue el esquema ABA –o más bien ABA’-. Luego del foco de la exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia durante los primeros años sobre la teoría del Yo trascendental, con su doble tema del pensar y el querer o del conocer y el actuar, el centro de gravedad cambia en el Fichte medio hacia la concepción lógico-trascendental del conocimiento en su cualidad “absoluta”, válida a nivel teórico, para incluir de nuevo en las últimas exposiciones de la doctrina de la ciencia la impronta práctica de la estructura del querer en la

fundamentación principal del saber.

Las fases primera y tercera en el proceso de exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia concuerdan entre sí en que en ellas la exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia está vinculada con obras de cuño sistemático que preceden y siguen a la doctrina de la ciencia en sentido propio y estricto tanto en cuanto propedéutica como en cuanto aplicación. Esto vale en particular para las exposiciones de las fases primera y última, las cuales son completadas en cada caso por una doctrina del derecho y de la moral (*Fundamento del Derecho Natural* de 1796/1797; *Sistema de la Doctrina de las Costumbres* de 1798; *Doctrina del Derecho* de 1812; *Doctrina de las costumbres* de 1812). Frente a esto las exposiciones de la doctrina de la ciencia del periodo intermedio se hallan sistemáticamente aisladas: una circunstancia que se retrotrae a la falta de integración de las primeras conferencias de Berlín en un programa de enseñanza universitario, que Fichte, previamente en Jena y más tarde en Berlín, fijó en el marco de una exposición completa curricular del sistema de la filosofía.

En la división triádica *grosso modo* de la historia de la exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia se manifiesta así una curva de desarrollo que otorga a la doctrina de la ciencia expuesta una estructura global cíclica. Con la conexión entre vida, conocer y querer el Fichte último regresa, apoyado en el fundamento de su fase media que incluye la reconciliación entre el conocer y el absoluto, a los temas y perspectivas centrales de su fase primera. La relación fundante y repetitiva entre las exposiciones primera y última de la doctrina de la ciencia vuelve a expresarse en el hecho de que el último Fichte remite, si bien de modo sumario y breve, a las doctrinas y detalles de sus versiones primeras, en especial a la única versión publicada de 1794/1795, pero sin retomar su agudeza y complejidad constructiva. Tanto en el Fichte último como en el Fichte medio aparece en lugar de la preferencia por la deducción, la derivación y la demostración, una inclinación hacia la monotonía y lo monotemático, lo cual serviría para la exposición insistente de nociones y posiciones centrales.

El caso extremo de la abreviatura y la condensación en el Fichte último es la reducción radical de todos los elementos teóricos de la doctrina de la ciencia a “un pensamiento” ²², el pensamiento de que el conocimiento y sólo el conocimiento es la manifestación de lo absoluto. La reducción formal del trabajo de toda la vida de Fichte no sirve en realidad a la introducción argumentativa a la teoría fundamental de la doctrina de la ciencia (última), la cual tampoco, para decirlo de algún modo, la debe reemplazar. Más bien sirve al giro perfecto para que sea eficiente la memorización, sobre cuyo fundamento entonces el sistema

crítico de la doctrina de la ciencia debe ser reconstruido. Considerando el tema a partir del doble trasfondo de las exposiciones primera y media de la doctrina de la ciencia, el aporte original de las exposiciones del período último de la doctrina de la ciencia no reside en los detalles doctrinales y los complementos específicos, sino en la auto-interpretación crítica de la doctrina de la ciencia en general y en particular de su localización en relación con la realidad previa, externa y posterior a la filosofía (vida). En las conferencias del período último sobre la doctrina de la ciencia Fichte reflexiona con más fuerza que en las exposiciones anteriores sobre la forma y el modo, pero también sobre el sentido y el fin del filosofar, el cual se aparta claramente de la realidad vital del mismo modo que está relacionado intrínsecamente con ella. La perspectiva pre-filosófica del Fichte último puede ser en especial captada en el texto de una conferencia del año 1813, la cual conecta la representación sumaria de la doctrina de la ciencia en su estado de exposición cronológicamente y *de facto* último con la aplicación explícita de la filosofía a la vida, de la doctrina de la ciencia a la realidad efectiva en los ámbitos de la historia, el derecho, la política y la religión. Respecto de esta fusión de la doctrina de la ciencia pura y aplicada, fundamentada así como realizada en aquellos ámbitos mencionados previamente, en las “Conferencias de diverso contenido”,²³ editadas recién luego de la muerte de Fichte bajo el título inauténtico de *Doctrina del Estado* (1820), se trata del legado filosófico de Fichte, su *Opus Postumum*, que no sólo expresa como en un espejo cóncavo la disposición sistemática de Fichte en la doctrina de la ciencia, sino que también conduce a su realización.

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4. La filosofía pura y aplicada

La exposición sumaria de la doctrina de la ciencia en la parte de la apertura de la *Doctrina del Estado* retoma absolutamente la concepción del conocimiento como la “esencia de la imagen”,²⁵ que ya se encuentra la fase media de la exposición de la doctrina de la ciencia.²⁶ Con la identificación entre conocimiento e imagen el Fichte medio y el último articulan, por un lado, el carácter del conocimiento producido de modo explícito y fabricado libremente, que no refleja lo que ya está dado mecánica y automáticamente, sino que ante todo pone o bien “forma” el ser objetivo –y por ello independiente. Por otro lado, la equiparación entre conocer y formar indica el carácter de deducido (en vez de originario) de los objetos de conocimiento, que surgen sólo en y a través de la tarea formadora del conocimiento. En la medida en que el Fichte

medio y el último formulan el idealismo crítico de la doctrina de la ciencia, validado desde el comienzo, como idolatría [Idolismus] e imaginismo [Imagismus], Fichte puede al mismo tiempo desenmascarar el realismo alternativo y el dogmatismo que se opone a la doctrina de la ciencia como una confusión entre imagen y cosa.

Pero, para el concepto de imagen propio del último Fichte, la confusión entre la imagen y la cosa por medio de la consciencia pre-filosófica y su “visión natural del mundo” ²⁷ es más importante que la discusión intra-filosófica sobre la estructura fundante de la filosofía –en torno al idealismo o el realismo, el criticismo o el dogmatismo. Lo que se le aparece a la consciencia natural como un mundo de objetos existentes con independencia de la consciencia que tengamos de ellos (“sistema de cosas” ²⁸), se demuestra en la reflexión filosófica crítica como un orden de apariencias puestas en el conocer, por medio del conocer y para el conocer (“sistema de imágenes” ²⁹).

Sin embargo el último Fichte no se contenta con la reducción crítica de los objetos a las apariencias y de las cosas a imágenes. A la reducción crítico-idealista del sistema de las cosas al sistema de las imágenes, se le agrega en la exposición última de la doctrina de la ciencia (tal como se da en la *Doctrina del Estado*) la reducción adicional de las imágenes-cosas a las leyes de su generación. La ley genérica de la formación de la imagen o de la generación del objeto es concebida por Fichte como ella misma constituida gráficamente –como “imagen ante todo” o “*imagen originaria*” ³⁰ para la formación de imágenes. La comprensión crítico-idealista sobre el status derivativo de cosas presuntamente independientes en tanto que imágenes generadas meramente por medio de leyes complementa y rectifica el conocimiento fáctico de la visión natural del mundo por medio del “*conocimiento genético*” ³¹ de la cosmovisión filosófica. En sentido estricto ni el “sistema de las cosas” ni el “sistema de las imágenes” tienen existencia para Fichte. ³² En realidad sólo hay leyes. Las imágenes-cosas o las cosas-imágenes deben ser consideradas como la manifestación (“*Ersichtlichkeit*” ³³) de las leyes.

El regreso gradual desde las cosas a las imágenes y desde las imágenes a las leyes termina en el último Fichte–y de modo ejemplar en la *Doctrina del Estado* última– en un concepto de ley, por su parte, estructurado doblemente. En relación a las leyes, por medio de las cuales las imágenes-cosas surgen en primer lugar, se trata de leyes del ordenamiento natural y de sus objetos (“leyes naturales” ³⁴). El pensar sobre las cosas, localizable en este estadio, vale para Fichte como deficitario. El recurso a legalidades naturales repite para Fichte, con vistas a las leyes operativas, la fijeza del pensamiento dogmático de la supuesta facticidad de las

cosas, criticada en el pasado. La sublimación deficitario-dogmática de las leyes naturales en leyes sin más –en realidad una “no-filosofía”- ³⁵ es caracterizada por el último Fichte con la fórmula programática tomada del primer Schelling: “filosofía natural” ³⁶ , que aquí representa en general el pensamiento erróneo y cosificado y en particular la cosificación de la naturaleza en la instancia innegable de la donación de la ley y de la imagen.

Por el contrario, lo que caracteriza el principio crítico-idealista de la doctrina de la ciencia es el hecho de superar la legalidad de la naturaleza hacia otro tipo de ley, la cual no sólo actúa de modo ciego, sino que entra en acción por medio de la razón y la reflexión como ley práctica (“*ley moral*” ³⁷), que rige el actuar y además, por medio de la acción de mediación de la voluntad, también causa la acción. En relación con la legalidad del querer y el actuar, para el Fichte de la *Doctrina del Estado* la legalidad de la naturaleza y sus objetos es sólo el fundamento (“materia”, “esfera” ³⁸) de la actividad extra- y sobrenatural, dimensionada moralmente. De acuerdo con la concepción anti-dualista de Fichte lo material es para lo espiritual solamente el funcional estar-frente [das funktionale Gegenüber], que se opone a lo espiritual del mismo modo que puede y debe salirle al encuentro.

Con el ascenso desde la legalidad natural a la legalidad moral la *Doctrina del Estado* acompaña en Fichte el pasaje desde lo teórico a lo práctico, del conocimiento de objetos y la determinación de los objetos a poner fines y determinar la voluntad. En cuanto conocimiento práctico, el conocimiento empuja hacia el querer y el actuar conforme a normas específicas del querer y el actuar (“*ley moral*” ³⁹). La función causal de la libertad, como la iniciadora incondicionada del actuar práctico y de la producción a él asociada de la realidad objetiva (“comienzo absoluto del ser” ⁴⁰), es determinante para la legalidad del querer y del actuar, a diferencia de la legalidad de la naturaleza. Para el último Fichte la libertad es un principio cosmológico, como lo había sido anteriormente para Kant (“fundamento independiente de [...] determinaciones del ser” ⁴¹). La voluntad considerada como radicalmente libre y absolutamente espontánea está por sobre toda determinación natural (“ninguna naturaleza sobre la voluntad” ⁴²) y sobre todo principio de toda naturaleza y todo ser (“ninguna naturaleza y ningún ser salvo por medio de la voluntad [...]” ⁴³). La naturaleza no es, en la perspectiva práctico-idealista de Fichte, un origen y un fundamento, sino un resultado y una consecuencia (ninguna [naturaleza] entonces como *principado* [Principiat]” ⁴⁴). ⁴⁵

La perspectiva primariamente práctica de la doctrina de la ciencia dada en general en el último Fichte y, en particular, en la *Doctrina del Estado*, retoma la focalización primera de los años de Jena, puesta en el primado de lo práctico y la función de principio que tiene la voluntad. También la relegación de la naturaleza a, por un lado, proveedora del material de la acción libre y, por otro, arena para la comprobación moral del sí-mismo tiene su impronta previa en el Fichte de Jena. Lo que es nuevo en el último Fichte frente a la versión primera de la doctrina de la ciencia como idealismo práctico es la fundamentación última de la legislación moral en una instancia de fundamento último llamada a evitar el recurso a clases cada vez más altas de leyes. Con esto el último Fichte se enlaza con las explicaciones orientadas a lo absoluto, al ser y al Dios de la etapa media de Fichte.

El recurso a un absoluto en el último Fichte está también fundamentado de modo funcional, como el intento filosófico de reivindicar el carácter absoluto de las leyes de la libertad, a fin de proteger su validez del escepticismo epistémico, el relativismo ético y el nihilismo moral. Tanto en la *Doctrina del Estado* como en las exposiciones separadas de la doctrina de la ciencia Fichte llega incluso tan lejos como para introducir un ser absoluto (“Dios”) a fin de vincularlo con las leyes del pensamiento del entendimiento (“Dios mismo *existe* en el conocimiento” ⁴⁶), a fin de recuperar de modo idealista la realidad aparentemente absoluta de un ser detrás del deber. “Dios”, “lo absoluto” o “el Ser” se confirman de este modo en cuanto que indicadores y modos de expresión de la validez incondicionada de la ley (moral). ⁴⁷ También aquí se confirma la identidad esencial y la concordancia substancial entre el último y el primer Fichte. Ya en la exposición de Jena de la doctrina de la ciencia Fichte había descrito el momento de la incondicionalidad en la actividad del Yo (“poner”) por medio del título “absoluto” (“el Yo absoluto” ⁴⁸), sin con ello afirmar una entidad propia separada de la acción trascendental del Yo.

El último Fichte vincula la impronta práctica de la doctrina de la ciencia, ya conocida desde su primera fase y ahora retomada, con su capacidad de producción práctica. La doctrina de la ciencia es por cierto también en cuanto teoría trascendental del querer y el actuar nada más que una teoría separada categorialmente del querer y el actuar. Pero para el último Fichte la doctrina de la ciencia se abalanza más allá de sí misma desde el saber sobre el querer hacia el querer mismo y en particular desde el saber sobre el querer moralmente cualificado hacia el querer moralmente cualificado al actuar conforme a él (“una vida moral” ⁴⁹). El último Fichte concibe el paso desde la teoría fundamentada

filosóficamente a la praxis determinada posteriormente como el tránsito desde la ciencia a la sabiduría y ve en el hecho de que la doctrina de la ciencia se supera a sí misma volviéndose “doctrina de la sabiduría” ⁵⁰ la culminación de la filosofía en la vida. La filosofía acabada es para el Fichte de la *Doctrina del Estado* la “filosofía aplicada” ⁵¹

Hablando en sentido estricto, la aplicación de la filosofía yace pues fuera de la filosofía. En cuanto aplicada la filosofía ya no es más filosofía, sino vida – *idealiter* una vida determinada por la filosofía. De acuerdo con la concepción del último Fichte, quien en esto adhiere a sus propias ideas del primer periodo, la vida marcada por el saber filosófico y su sabiduría práctica es la vida modelada éticamente. De todos modos, la filosofía, aun cuando sea una doctrina de la ciencia devenida doctrina de la sabiduría, no puede simplemente prescribir su aplicación ética ni intervenir por decreto. Más bien la aplicación de la filosofía debe resultar en cada caso algo individual y surgido de la propia iniciativa. El modo de la instrucción filosófica en general y de la educación práctica en particular es para Fichte, desde sus comienzos en Jena, un llamado a la libertad y responsabilidad de cada uno (“exhortación” ⁵²).

Sin embargo, Fichte desarrolla en su *Doctrina del Estado* del periodo último otra concepción, que se añade a la anterior, de la filosofía práctica y aplicada, la cual reivindica un dominio de aplicación para la filosofía misma y en cuanto tal. La “filosofía aplicada” de la *Doctrina del Estado* del último periodo es una filosofía sobre la aplicación: una reflexión filosófica sobre las condiciones bajo las que puede lograrse – o ante todo es posible– la realización vital del saber práctico en la forma de la “vida moral”. La tesis central del último Fichte en su *Doctrina del Estado* consiste en que la vida ética –eticidad vivida– necesita de un marco social, dentro del cual se puede vivir efectivamente de una manera ética, lo que en primer lugar significa que se puede actuar éticamente.

La *Doctrina del Estado* , en cuanto “filosofía aplicada”, no tiene que ver con los principios universalmente válidos y generales de la eticidad, que son el objeto de una ética construida explícitamente (doctrina de las costumbres). Más bien se trata en ella de las condiciones concretas, específicas, históricas, bajo las cuales puede llevarse a cabo fácticamente el actuar ético de acuerdo con el idealismo ético de Fichte (sistema de la doctrina de las costumbres). El marco general para la moralidad posible es para Fichte el dominio del derecho como un ordenamiento social impuesto políticamente, que posiciona a cada uno en relación con sus iguales de un modo tal que está garantizado el espacio para la libertad, para el querer y el actuar éticos libres para cada uno de los participantes. Desde el punto de vista de su realización la *Doctrina del Estado* de Fichte

constituye entonces una filosofía política de la evolución histórica del derecho, en cuanto principio, y de los derechos como su configuración. El interés particular de Fichte reside allí en el avance teórico y la realización práctica de la igualdad en relación con el derecho y los derechos en el transcurso de la historia. Desde la perspectiva jurídica el curso de la historia lleva a una doble igualdad social: la igual participación de todos en la regulación legal de la vida social (“igualdad del derecho”) y de la participación de todos en los mismos derechos (“igualdad [...] de los derechos” ⁵³).

En la filosofía política de la historia de la *Doctrina del Estado* la reunión liberal [freiheitlich] de la legalidad y la igualdad no es un fin en sí mismo ni tampoco el fin último del desarrollo histórico. El dominio del derecho expandido racionalmente (“el imperio del derecho” ⁵⁴) coloca por su parte todo el fundamento social de la moralización masiva y la eticización [Ethisierung] extensiva de la existencia humana individual y trans-individual. La libertad general de la injusticia y el poder capacita y promueve, según Fichte, la posibilidad de una auto-compleción éticamente genuina del ser humano. El último Fichte localiza el punto preciso del tránsito desde la regulación legal a la disposición ética en el necrosarse finito del Estado en cuanto institución que ejerce la coacción legal exterior. La comprensión creciente de los ciudadanos formados políticamente y con convicciones cívicas acerca del sentido liberador y el fin del orden jurídico y político lleva, según Fichte, a la expansión de la acción voluntaria conforme al derecho a partir de la convicción cívica y con ello a la renuncia fáctica a los instrumentos de la coacción legal (poder sancionado, castigo).

De todos modos el último Fichte evita la confusión entre el derecho y la moral (ética) en la perspectiva del Estado que se aniquila a sí mismo – en esto sigue adhiriendo a su obra temprana de Jena. La convicción legal restante del Estado como institución coactiva afecta de aquí en adelante el actuar exteriormente conforme a derecho, excluyendo la motivación ética pura. Sólo sobre el fundamento del estado (estatal-)civil pacificado voluntaria y legalmente puede tener lugar aquella transformación adicional que deja surgir una comunidad ética más allá de la comunidad puramente legal. De modo similar, Kant ya había distinguido, en su escrito postrero sobre la religión, entre la sociedad estricta legal y civil (“Estado”) y la comunidad ética civil (“iglesia”) y allí había identificado a la república de la virtud como global y al Estado de derecho como territorial. ⁵⁵

1 El Kant y el Fichte últimos comparten la división institucional y conforme a principios entre Estado y religión así como entre derecho y moral, deudora de

la ilustración europea – aun cuando en ambas las esferas separadas de validez de lo jurídico y lo ético se integran en un desarrollo progresivo histórico-filosófico que debe conducir desde la exterioridad del derecho a la interioridad de la ética. En especial con respecto a Fichte se debe tener presente que el tratamiento sistemático de la aplicación de la filosofía a las esferas del derecho y la ética desemboca en una filosofía práctica que permanece comprometida con el pensamiento crítico. Precisamente así como la doctrina de la ciencia en sus últimas exposiciones no se transforma ni en metafísica ni en mística, así tampoco la teoría del derecho y de la moral del último Fichte degenera en un romanticismo político y un socialismo ético.

NOTAS

1. StL, GA II/16, 22 (*Die Staatslehre, oder über das Verhältnis des Urstaates zum Vernunftreiche 1813*).
2. StL, GA II 16, 15.
3. Acerca del concepto de la filosofía práctica en Fichte, ver Zöller, G. & von Manz, H. G. (eds.) *Fichtes praktische Philosophie. Eine systematische Einführung*. Hildesheim: Olms, 2006.
4. Los argumentos siguientes se basan en investigaciones llevadas a cabo a lo largo de muchos años y en publicaciones del autor, las que serán indicadas en el transcurso del texto.
5. KrV B 24.
6. KrV B 22s. Acerca del concepto de lo trascendental en Kant, ver Zöller, G., “Conditions of Objectivity. Kant’s Critical Conception of Transcendental Logic”, en: *Yearbook of German Idealism/Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus* (en prensa).
7. KrV B XLIII. Ver también KrV A XXI.
8. KrV A 690/B 718.
9. KrV A 815/B 843.
10. Al respecto ver Zöller, G. “ »Die Seele des Systems«. Systembegriff und Begriffssystem in Kants Transzendental-philosophie ”, en: Fulda, H.-F. & Stolzenberg, J. (eds.) *System der Vernunft. Kant und der deutsche Idealismus I. Architektonik und System in der Philosophie Kants*. Hamburg: Meiner, 2001, pp. 53-72.
11. KrV A 491/B 519 así como también *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik* (AA 04, 337).
12. Para la relación entre Kant y sus sucesores críticos ver Zöller, G., „ *Die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Vernunft. Kant und der deutsche Idealismus* “, en: Vossenkuhl, W. & Fischer, E. (eds.) *Die Fragen der Philosophie. Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Disziplinen*

und Epochen der Philosophie . München: Beck, 2003, pp. 295-312.

13.ZE, GA I/4, 230s. Ver además Zöllner, G., "From Transcendental Philosophy to Wissenschaftslehre. Fichte's Modification of Kant's Idealism", en: *European Journal of Philosophy* 15 (2007), pp. 249-269.

14.Acerca del estatus del realismo en el idealismo alemán ver Zöllner, G. "German Realism. The Self-Limitation of Idealist Thinking in Fichte, Schelling and Schopenhauer", en: Ameriks, K. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. Cambridge: CUP, 2000, pp. 200-218.

15. AA 06:218 (*Metaphysik der Sitten*), así como también GA III/2, 298 y 300 (primer y segundo borrador respectivamente de una carta a J. Baggesen de abril o mayo de 1795).

16.Para este tema ver Zöllner, G., „Am Anfang war ... die Tat. Der Primat des Praktischen und das Faktum der reinen Vernunft in der Philosophie Kants“, en: Mülder-Bach, I. & Schumacher, E. (eds.) *Am Anfang war.... Ursprungsfiguren und Anfangskonstruktionen der Moderne*. München, Fink, 2008, pp. 91-105. Así como también del mismo autor: „Das »erste System der Freiheit«. Fichtes neue Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre (1795-1899)“, en: Danz, Chr. & Stolzenberg, J. (eds.) *System und Kritik um 1800*. Hamburg: Meiner, 2011, pp. 13-28.

17. WL-1804-II, GA II 8, 376.

18. KrV B XI.

19. Acerca de las metáforas conceptuales visuales de Fichte, ver Zöllner, G. „Life into which an Eye has been inserted. Fichte on the Fusion of Vitality and Vision“, en: *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 69 (2014), pp. 601-617.

20. Para esta cuestión ver Zöllner, G. „Das Absolute und seine Erscheinung. Die Schelling-Rezeption des späten Fichte“, en: *Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus/Yearbook of German Idealism* 1 (2003), pp. 165-182. También del mismo autor: „Fichte, Schelling und die Riesenschlacht um das Sein“, en: Hiltcher, R. & Klingner, S. (eds.) *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. Neue Wege der Forschung*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012, pp. 221-236; y *Fichte lesen*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2013, pp. 47-59.

21. Acerca de las tres fases de la obra de Fichte en relación con un desarrollo de la obra análogo en Beethoven ver Zöllner, G., "Parallellen. Fichte und Beethoven", en: Radrizzani, I., & Oncina Coves, F., (eds.), *Fichte und die Kunst . Fichte-Studien Jahrgang 25. 2014/1. Band 41*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2014, pp. 279-301.

22. WL-1812, GA II/13, 48.

23. StL, GA II/16, 15.

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28. Idem.

29. Idem.

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31. StL, GA II 16/22 (resaltado en el original).

32. Ver StL, GA II 16/21.

33. StL, GA II/16, 21 (resaltado en el original).

34. StL, GA II/16, 22.

35. StL, GA II/16, 20.

36. StL, GA II/16, 27.

37. StL, GA II/16, 28 (resaltado en el original).

38. StL, GA II/16, 27.

39. StL, GA II/16, 29 (resaltado en el original).

40. StL, GA II/16, 29.

41. StL, GA II/16, 25.

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43. StL, GA II/16, 27.

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51. StL, GA II/16, 15 (resaltado en el original).

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RESÚMENES

This article discusses the purpose of Fichte of an “applied philosophy” aimed at reflecting the relationship between philosophical thinking (speculation) and the external reality to philosophy (life). The analysis focuses on the so-called Doctrine of the State (1813). The text is divided into four sections: 1) about the relationship between system and critique, 2) between system and self-critique, 3) between system and life and, finally, 4) between pure and applied philosophy. It is argued that the philosophical legacy of the last Fichte consists of the vital validation of knowledge .

ÍNDICE

Keywords: life, system, Kant, Doctrine of the State 1813

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Fichte, Kant, the Cognitive Subject, and Epistemic Constructivism

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“ The absolute self must therefore be cause of the not-self, insofar as the latter is the ultimate ground of all presentation; and the not-self must to that extent be its effect.”

J. G. Fichte ¹

- ¹ German idealism can be understood as an effort by different hands, beginning in Kant, and continuing in Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and others to formulate a successful version of the constructivist approach to cognition. ² Fichte, who is often understood as a philosopher of freedom, ³ further contributes to the epistemic theme running throughout German idealism. This paper will consider the nature and explanatory limits of the Fichtean view of subjectivity in the epistemic context of German idealism.
- ² Kant’s critical philosophy presupposes a distinctive conception of the transcendental subject he claims to “deduce” as the capstone of his transcendental deduction. Fichte defends a post-Kantian conception of the subject. I will be arguing that Fichte’s distinctive revision of the Kantian subject goes too far in making the objective dimension of cognition wholly dependent on the subjective dimension. After Kant and after Fichte we still lack an effective solution for the problem of cognition.

1. On Kant, German idealism and Parmenides

- ³ In a recent collection of papers on Kant’s transcendental idealism, Dennis Schulting directs attention to the distinction between “Kant’s controversial doctrine of idealism, most notably his notion of ‘the thing-in-itself’ and its distinction from ‘appearance’, which is Kant’s term for an empirically real object but of which he also notoriously says that it is a ‘mere representation’.” ⁴ The distinction between reality and appearance, which goes all the way back in the tradition, points to Parmenides early formulation of the cognitive problem in terms of the identity of thought and being.

According to the Parmenidean cognitive approach, any cognitive theory must include three elements: reality, or mind-independent reality, or again what is as it is, what is sometimes called the really real; then the appearance or, if there is a difference, the representation of that reality as it really is; and finally a relation of cognitive identity as the normative criterion of cognition. The Parmenidean approach further suggests the three main solutions to the cognitive problem are: epistemic skepticism, then metaphysical realism, and finally epistemic constructivism.

- 4 The influential Parmenidean approach echoes through the later tradition. Plato, who reacts to Parmenides, suggests two basic points. On the one hand, the forms or ideas are not unreal, but real, in fact the most real, or mind-independent, eternal, unchangeable reality, and appearances depend on or derive from them as the subjective manifestation of objective reality. On the other hand, if there is cognition, then on grounds of nature and nurture some selected individuals at least some of the time literally “see” reality.
- 5 Kant’s view that prior philosophy is dogmatic suggests that, like Descartes, he begins anew from the beginning. Yet Kant depends in many ways on selected predecessors, including Hume as well as Plato. ⁵ Kant, like Plato, accepts a causal approach to cognition, or the view that reality causes appearances. But unlike Plato he rejects intellectual intuition.

2. Some contemporary reactions to the Kantian thing in itself

- 6 Kant, who thought he was misunderstood, suggests there is no difficulty in mastering the idea of the whole. But the critical philosophy has always been read from widely differing perspectives. A central difficulty consists in the recognizably Platonic problem of how to understand the thing in itself as the causal source of an empirically real object that is also a mere representation.
- 7 Kant’s view of reality is shrouded in technical language he often appears to utilize in imprecise fashion. His two aspects approach to causality through a conception of reality as the thing in itself that can without contradiction be thought as intelligible in its action and, in his words, “as sensible in the effects of that action as an appearance in the world of sense,” hence as not given in intuition as an appearance ⁶ has never satisfied more than a very few observers.
- 8 Kant’s contemporaries interpret this view in many ways. Maimon, for instance, thinks the thing in itself functions only as an object of inquiry rather than as an independent, noumenal entity. ⁷ This approach leads to cognitive skepticism since we can never penetrate beyond appearances to

grasp mind-independent reality.

- 9 Maimon was countered by various forms of epistemic representationalism ultimately traceable to Parmenides' conviction that we know being, or mind-independent reality. Representationalism and constructivism are incompatible epistemic approaches. In the critical period, Kant still uses representationalist language, which suggests that appearances are the visible side of an invisible reality. He later moved away from representationalism and towards constructivism. In the critical period, Kant suggested that "representation" could not even be defined.
- 10 In part in reaction to Maimon, representationalist interpretations of the critical philosophy were quickly formulated by Jacobi, Schulze, Schopenhauer, Beck and others. Jacobi, who relied on belief (*Glaube*), influentially defended realism against Kant in his book on Hume that appeared in the same year as the second edition of Kant's first *Critique*. His famous aphorism "Without the presupposition [of the "thing in itself,"] I was unable to enter into [Kant's] system, but with it I was unable to stay within it"⁸ suggests that Kant must inconsistently know reality he cannot know. Schulze, following Jacobi, thinks it is incoherent to posit a mind-independent object beyond experience as its cause. He argues Kant illegitimately relies on causality through the thing in itself that is the source of sensations. According to Reinhold, there is a basic distinction between the noumenon, which is a mere idea of reason, which always lies beyond experience, where it functions as a demand or ought, and things in themselves. The latter are mind-independent objects that are closer to phenomena than noumena. Kant's student, J. S. Beck, interpreted the thing in itself as merely another way to refer to the object that appears, as distinguished from a mysterious supersensible object that does not and cannot appear.⁹
- 11 The confused debate concerning the thing in itself point to contemporary efforts to gain clarity about the Kantian conception of reality. One suggestion is that if we cannot cognize reality, then the result is skepticism. Another is the view that Kant illegitimately makes claims about reality he cannot know. A third is to claim against Kant that the thing in itself in fact appears.

3. Is Kant a representationalist, a constructivist, or both?

- 12 I believe the main interpretive difficulty consists in reading Kant as either a representationalist, or as a constructivist. We can interpret Fichte, while Kant is still active, as seeking to formulate an updated, revised form of the Kantian view from a non-representationalist, constructivist perspective.

- 13 Kant lived in a period dominated by representational, causal theories due to various rationalists and empiricists. Representationalism is any form of the effort at least as old as Parmenides to demonstrate indirect cognition of reality through its representation, in short through representing the mind-independent real. My hypothesis is that he was initially attracted to representationalism before later inventing the so-called Copernican revolution, since, as he famously writes, he was unable to make progress in grasping a mind-independent object, in other words on the assumption that the subject depends on the object.
- 14 The various representational approaches to the critical philosophy share the view that we can make sense of the critical philosophy if and only if reality under the heading of the thing in itself in fact appears. This requires a solution of the cognitive problem along metaphysical realist lines. Though they are metaphysically realist passages in the first *Critique*, Kant is not consistent. In my view Kant's best moments, are devoted to the constructivist approach at which he barely hints, which is not often discussed in detail, but which was recognized by Kant's contemporaries (Reinhold, Schelling and Fichte) under the heading of the Copernican revolution.

4. Kant, Fichte and the rise of the modern cognitive subject

- 15 Representationalism and constructivism differ i. a. with respect to the cognitive subject. Descartes distinguishes at least implicitly between the widely known view of the subject as a spectator and the nearly unknown view of the subject as an actor. A representational approach to cognition supposes a passive subject to which something appears. A constructivist view of cognition is based on an active subject that "constructs" what it knows.
- 16 Hegel correctly points out that the critical philosophy "constitutes the foundation and the starting point of the new German philosophy [...]" ¹⁰ Kant, Fichte, Hegel and in a different way Marx are all cognitive constructivists. Epistemic constructivism is a view that the subject knows only what it can be said to construct. The Kantian transcendental subject describes the general conditions of cognition in focusing on the logic as opposed to the psychology of cognition. Kant rejects so-called Lockean physiology, or what Husserl later calls "psychologism." Though Kant explain the general possibility of cognition in general through a transcendental subject, he cannot explain, despite his interest in anthropology, how finite human beings are capable of cognition in his specific sense.

5. Fichte's anthropological shift and the thing in itself

- 17 The Kantian subject is passive in receiving sensation and active in constructing a perceptual object. Fichte simply drops the thing in itself in featuring an account of experience in which the cognitive subject is solely active. As Hegel points out, Fichte explains experience and knowledge through a new view of the subject as practically finite, constrained in its action by its surroundings, but theoretically infinite, or wholly unconstrained, hence forever suspended, as it were, between what is and what ought to be.
- 18 Kant sketches an account of the interaction of the transcendental subject and reality as a third-person, causal account. Fichte reformulates the Kantian view as a first-person account of the interaction of subject and object in a statement of the axioms (*Grundsätze*), which begins the initial, most influential version of the Science of Knowledge .
- 19 According to the modern causal approach to perception, objects “cause” ideas in the mind that justify a reverse, anti-Platonic cognitive inference from the idea to the mind-independent object. Kant, who departs from this model, suggests a functional model in which external reality affects the subject, which in turn constructs empirical objects of perception and knowledge. Fichte’s turn away from Kant’s functional account of subjectivity and toward a new conception of finite human being as the philosophical subject leads to an account of ontology from a subjective point of view – roughly to a view of philosophy as systematic but “ungrounded”– and to a view of cognitive claims as intrinsically circular.
- 20 Fichte rejects the very idea of the thing in itself as “produced solely by free thought” and without any “reality whatever,”¹¹ hence a representationalist approach to the cognitive problem. He indicates his agreement with Kant’s Copernican turn, hence with epistemic constructivism, in writing that “the [cognitive] object shall be posited and determined by the cognitive faculty, and not the cognitive faculty by the object”.¹²
- 21 Kant’s conception of the subject as passive as well as active restates a form of the Cartesian approach to passive subjectivity as a philosophical fiction whose relation to finite human being cannot be described. Fichte reacts to Kant through an anthropological reformulation of the cognitive subject as intrinsically active.

- 22 Through the shift from the a priori to the a posteriori plane, Fichte is bound by the limits of finite human being. Fichte thinks the concept of a “thing in itself” as a mind-independent, external “cause” of sensations is indefensible on critical grounds. He breaks with Kant's denial of “intellectual intuition” in invoking the finite subject's presence to itself in two ways: theoretically as a cognizing subject and practically as a striving moral agent.
- 23 Fichte's distinction between idealism and dogmatism refutes the Kantian view of the thing in itself. For Fichte, taken together representationalism and constructivism exhaust the possible approaches to cognition. According to Fichte, though neither approach can refute the other, dogmatism, which relies on the thing in itself, cannot explain experience.
- 24 Kant and Kantians often rely on “representation” (*Vorstellung*) to refer, as Heidegger suggests, to what is present in its absence, in short reality. Fichte uses the same term in a different way to refer to what is given in consciousness. The Fichtean theory of cognition is an account of experience understood as “The system of representations [Vorstellungen] accompanied by the feeling of necessity,” or again what “is also called experience....”.¹³ Though Fichte understands experience as a series of representations in consciousness, he rejects a causal approach in favor of the constructivist alternative that, according to this line of reasoning remains as the only possible approach. In other words, he follows Kant's view that the subject must construct the cognitive object as a necessary condition of cognition.
- 25 Kant deduces a philosophical conception of the subject, which Fichte replaces through an anthropological shift. Kant's transcendental deduction reaches a high point in his conception of the transcendental subject, or original synthetic unity of apperception as “the supreme principle of all use of the understanding”.¹⁴ According to Kant, the subject, or “I think” that “must be able to accompany all my representations” is a “pure apperception,” not “an empirical one”.¹⁵ Fichte, on the contrary, approaches the cognitive problem to begin with through finite human being in a social context.
- 26 According to Fichte, cognition depends on a subject that cannot be deduced but must be assumed. Fichte, who understands deduction as a progression from conditioned to condition, hence as regressive, invokes a pragmatic perspective in contrasting dogmatism and idealism. Though neither can refute the other, dogmatism cannot explain experience.¹⁶ The thing in itself is an arbitrary assumption that explains nothing, but through intellectual intuition the subject perceives itself as active.¹⁷ Idealism in this way explains experience through intellectual activity based on the necessary laws of the intellect.¹⁸ If the subject is independent and the object is

dependent, then philosophy finally depends on subjective factors, according to Fichte on the kind of person one is. ¹⁹

6. The Fichtean subject and ontology

- 27 Fichte's view of cognition based on an active but finite subject influenced Hegel, Marx, perhaps Dewey, and others. ²⁰ Fichte's approach to the subject as intrinsically active further underlies his original conception of ontology.
- 28 In "The Aenesidemus Review," the *terminus a quo* of his position, Fichte prepares the ground for a new theory of ontology in claiming all philosophy must be traced back to a single principle: the subject. He notes, in tacitly denying Kant's rejection of intellectual intuition, that what is most certain is the self, or "I am," in adding that "all that is not-I is for the I only." ²¹ Fichte's suggestion that what is not the subject is only for it points to a conception of reality as mind-dependent. This approach leads to a new understanding of objectivity. In the critical philosophy, objectivity takes two incompatible forms: as the mind-independent external object, or thing in itself, as well as the mind-dependent cognitive object of experience and knowledge. In Fichte's view, objectivity takes the single form of what is experienced in practice but understood theoretically as the result of the subject's activity.
- 29 According to Fichte, an explanation of experience requires an account of its ground in an object situated outside the possibility of experience. ²² Kant's regressive analysis begins from the cognitive object in running from conditioned to condition thereof and ending in the subject (or transcendental unity of apperception), the highest point of transcendental philosophy. Fichte, who "inverts" the Kantian approach, begins not from the object but from the subject –more precisely, from the assumption that "a finite rational being has nothing beyond experience". ²³
- 30 Since Fichte thinks the ground of all experience lies outside experience, he, unlike Reinhold, rejects epistemological foundationalism as a cognitive strategy. ²⁴ His account of "The Axioms of the Entire Science of Knowledge" ²⁵ begins in describing the task as seeking a first axiom, which, since it is first in a series of axioms, can be neither proven nor defined. "Our task is to discover the primordial, absolutely unconditioned first axiom of all human knowledge. This can be neither proved nor defined, if it is to be an absolutely primary axiom". ²⁶
- 31 The term "ground," which for Fichte does not refer to epistemological foundationalism, can be interpreted two ways: as the cognitive object, which, in a causal framework, is the cause or source of experience; or again, as the

subject, which experiences. According to Fichte, a finite rational being cannot cognize anything beyond the limits of experience, for instance, what lies beyond these limits in the form of an object. ²⁷ As for Kant, so for Fichte: one simply cannot know anything about mind-independent reality, which lies outside experience. But for Fichte, unlike Kant, the thing in itself plays no cognitive role.

- 32 Fichte's turn away from the Kantian thing in itself has three consequences. First, following Kant, whose precise view is unclear, in accepting epistemic constructivism he gives up metaphysical realism for empirical realism. It has already been noted that metaphysical realism, which goes back at least to Parmenides, runs throughout the Western tradition and remains popular in the debate. Sophisticated thinkers continue to believe to know means to grasp the mind-independent world as it is. Second, despite Fichte's retention of Kantian terminology, and despite his attention to "The Deduction of Representation," he abandons representation, hence representationalism. ²⁸ For Kant, "representation" and "appearance" are apparently synonymous terms. All appearances are phenomena, but only some phenomena are appearances. A phenomenon is an appearance if and only if there is something that appears. An appearance is a representation if any and only if it successfully depicts the mind-independent world. If one gives up the thing in itself, then one can no longer refer to reality as appearing, since in this case experience consists of phenomena only. In other words, in the absence of reality understood within a causal framework, there are no representations, since reality does not appear. Third, in ruling out a mind-independent cognitive object as an explanatory principle, Fichte's only remaining recourse, on pain of falling into skepticism, is to appeal to the subject, or in his terminology, the self (*das Ich*).
- 33 The result, as Fichte quickly points out, is a comparatively simplified approach to cognition. In the *Herz-letter*, Kant suggests an analysis of the relation of the representation to the object in a triadic relationship between the subject, the thing itself, and the empirical object given in experience and knowledge. ²⁹ As a result of his turn away from the thing in itself, Fichte recasts the cognitive relationship as dyadic.
- 34 The immediate occasion for Fichte to state the first version of his theory was provided by his review of Schulze's study of Reinhold. Since Schulze used the pseudonym Aenesidemus, this text is better known as the *Aenesidemus-review*. In his *Elementarphilosophie* Reinhold reformulated the Kantian position in introducing a principle of representation (*Vorstellung*). "In consciousness the presentation is distinguished by the subject from subject and object, and related to both." ³⁰ Schulze objected that Reinhold had failed to observe the asymmetry in the relation of the so-called representation to the subject and

object of experience. Although representation occurs in and is in this sense identical with the subject, it differs from the object that it represents. In his review, Fichte endorses Schulze's criticism, but rejects the latter's skeptical conclusions.

- 35 Fichte reformulates Reinhold's principle as the claim that the "representation is related to the object as an effect to its cause, and to the subject as an accident to its substance."³¹ This statement gives, in the compass of a single sentence, the outlines of an ontology of consciousness based on two components only: subject, object, and their interrelation. It is this same ontology that Fichte further develops in the initial version of the WL and which is the basis of his entire position.
- 36 Fichte justifies his rival deduction of representation, in fact a rejection of representation, by his remark that Kant fails to prove that representations possess objective validity, or in other words successfully goes beyond mere appearance, and hence fails to demonstrate his theory. Fichte's alternative deduction presupposes inter alia three points. First, there is nothing higher than the subject or self, which functions as his ultimate explanatory concept.³² Second, in philosophy we must start from the subject that cannot be deduced from something else, hence simply cannot be deduced.³³ Fichte, who takes the human subject as a given, rejects the Kantian effort to deduce the transcendental subject. Finally, in Fichte's theory, deduction takes the form of a direct, genetic demonstration focused on the self.³⁴ In short, in abandoning the conception of the thing in itself, or the mind-independent external world as a presupposition, he gives up the Kantian aim of analyzing the relationship of the contents of mind to the world in favor of a so-called "deduction" of knowledge solely from the point of view of the subject.
- 37 Fichte's deduction, like Kant's, is extremely complex. We need not describe it here in detail. Suffice it to say that, starting from the hypothesis that the self, or subject, is active, he insists on two main points: only the subject is left when all objects have been eliminated by the power of abstraction, and the object or not-self is that from which abstraction can be made. Either can be considered as determined by the other, and conversely. The deduction concludes with the claim that the subject is finite (or determined), or on the contrary, infinite, hence determining, and that in both cases it is reciprocally related merely to itself. According to Fichte, theoretical philosophy can go no further. In summarizing his deduction, Fichte, unlike Kant, concludes subject and object mutually determine each other.
- 38 Fichte's turn to a post-Kantian form of constructivism follows from his reaction to Reinhold and Schulze in the *Aenesidemus review*. His analysis of the so-called "Axioms of the Entire Science of Knowledge" is an obviously

revised version of Kant's transcendental cognitive subject. In this first part of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte distinguishes three axioms: the first, absolutely unconditioned axiom, which postulates that the subject is solely active and never passive; the second axiom, conditioned as to content, which is his version of the Kantian reception of sensation through the sensory manifold; and the third axiom, conditioned as to form, which is Fichte's restatement of the Kantian analysis of the categorial synthesis of the sensory contents as a cognizable object.

7. On Fichte's deduction

- 39 Fichte's deduction of representation (*Vorstellung*) is clearly intended to replace Kant's transcendental deduction. His deduction identifies the cognitive subject, object as well as their interrelation. Fichte suggests that the subject's consciousness (of the cognitive object) as well as its self-consciousness are both explicable through the supposition of its activity through which it constructs both the object as well as itself in objectified form. Since Fichte's analysis is perhaps unduly complex, for present purposes a reconstruction of some main points will suffice.
- 40 Fichte begins from a logical proposition, which he takes as true and then later deduces through an obviously circular argument. According to Fichte, logical identity ($A = A$), which is absolutely certain, is not as an existential claim but rather a necessary connection. The statement "I am I" as absolutely valid, since in any explanation of the basis of empirical consciousness the self (*das Ich*)—again, his name for the subject—is presupposed. The activity of the human mind, which is supposedly both the agent and the product of action, or again its origin and its result, is position. According to Fichte, "action and deed are one and the same".³⁵ Fichte here is building on Descartes. The "I am," which for Descartes is an existential claim, for Fichte "expresses an Act" (*ibid.*). Fichte's self is an absolute subject, which posits that itself and the finite self exist only as self-consciousness. It follows that $A = A$ amounts to the claim that the self posits itself absolutely, since this applies to reality.
- 41 Fichte situates his view of the self as the source of all reality with respect to the ongoing debate. He thinks his view has affinities with the Cartesian *cogito* and Reinhold's principle of representation. He further thinks his view was adopted earlier in Kant's transcendental deduction. The object is the result of, hence identical with, the subject's activity, and any object is no more nor less than the subject in external form.

- 42 Fichte continues his analysis in an account of the second axiom, which, like its predecessor, cannot be proven, and also cannot be derived from the first axiom. The overall account serves to identify the cognitive object from the perspective of the subject, hence not as it supposedly is, in beginning, as for the first axiom, with a fact of empirical consciousness.
- 43 The analysis of the second axiom follows that of the first axiom. According to Fichte, though it cannot be proven, everyone will accept the proposition that $\sim A \neq A$. It follows that the absolute and unconditional opposition, which is a fact given in consciousness, must simply be posited. Fichte further observes that counter-positing is possible only on the basis of positing, or the identity of the self. This point establishes the priority of the subject over the object, which is possible only through the opposition to, or rather the negation of, the subject. Yet the subject and object, or the self and what opposes it, are not only different but also unified, since opposition presupposes the unity of consciousness. In other words, ontological difference rests on cognitive unity. From the perspective of the subject, the not-self, or object, is merely what is opposed to the self, or subject. In sum, the proposition "I am" is equivalent to $A = A$, and $\sim A \neq A$, or the principle of opposition, which presupposes negation.
- 44 Fichte has so far sketched the basis of a novel form of subject-object ontology from the subject's angle of vision. The first axiom, in following Kant's transcendental unity of apperception, asserts the centrality of subjectivity. The second axiom describes sensation, or formless content, through the subject. In his account of the third axiom, conditioned as to form, Fichte restates Kant's Copernican view that we know only what we construct through an account of the interaction between the other two axioms.
- 45 In this passage, Fichte restates in many different ways his central insight in stressing his resolutely first-person perspective. According to Fichte, this interaction must be understood from the perspective of a subject that is theoretically unlimited but practically limited by its surroundings.
- 46 The analysis is divided into three parts (A, B, C). In part A, Fichte suggests that the subject and object are opposed. In part B, he describes his task as discovering, on the basis of an act of the mind (Y), the relation between subject and object (X) that preserves the identity of consciousness. The obvious answer is that subject and object limit each other in virtue of what Fichte calls their "divisibility." This is an early form of what later becomes a theory of dialectical interaction between human individuals in a social context. In part C, Fichte examines his proposed solution. According to Fichte, consciousness contains the whole of reality; that is, insofar as reality is not attributed to the object, subject and object are posited within the subject. In other words, the context or surroundings are known through the

interaction with the subject on the level of consciousness and from which they are inseparable. Fichte suggests that it is possible to bring together subject and object in an account of knowledge if and only if we take into account synthesis, or counter-positing, and the so-called act of combination. In that case, subject and object can be understood as interacting from the angle of vision of the subject. In other words, he appears to be trying to grasp the cognitive subject as simultaneously limited and unlimited by its surroundings, and on that basis to understand knowledge as arising in the interaction between the subject and object, leading to consciousness.

- 47 Since the third axiom concerns synthesis, Fichte regards his account as answering Kant's question about the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments. According to Fichte, all syntheses are rooted in the interrelation between subject and object. Further according to Fichte, his revised version of the critical philosophy turns on the view of the absolute self as "wholly unconditioned and incapable of determination by any higher thing".³⁶ Since a philosophy that opposes anything to the subject is dogmatic, or not critical, Fichte sharply rejects the Kantian conception of reality, or the thing in itself, as inconsistent with the critical philosophy and akin to Spinozism, which grounds consciousness in a substance. As a further consequence of rejecting the thing in itself, he also rejects Kant's effort to combine both subjective and objective sources in a single cognitive approach. In short, Fichte thinks that Kant inconsistently relies on a mind-independent noumenon that is incompatible with the critical philosophy. This suggests that Kant is finally a dogmatist and that Fichte's revision is the initial version of a view that is finally consistent with Kant's position. On Fichte's reading of the critical philosophy, the cognitive object –hence experience– must be explained solely from the perspective of the subject. According to Fichte, for whom the only two possible approaches are criticism and dogmatism, Kant inconsistently seeks to straddle this unbridgeable divide. For Fichte, who follows a strict reading of the critical philosophy, it is not possible to go beyond the subject.

8. Conclusion: Fichte, the subject and cognition

- 48 A summary of the Fichtean view of the subject which emerges from his reaction to Kant and others in the contemporary debate through this complicated train of reasoning can now be rapidly sketched. Fichte, who like Kant begins with the problem of the conditions of knowledge and experience, considers the finite human subject from two perspectives. As a finite human being, a person is both a theoretical entity, namely, a subject of consciousness, who is unlimited, and a practical, or limited moral, being. As a

real finite being, the individual is limited through the relation to the external world. Fichte further invokes the concept of absolute being on the philosophical or meta-experiential level, as a philosophical concept useful in the explanation of experience.

- 49 To the types of finite human being or so-called self (das Ich) Fichte associates kinds of activity. As theoretical an individual posits, as practical he strives, and as absolute he acts in theoretical independence of his surroundings. The concept of an ideally existent absolute being is justified as a means to understand the experience of the really existent finite being. Forms of activity need to be subtended on the theoretical plane by activity in general, and from the side of realism a finite human being is above all a practical being. But from the idealistic perspective, the concept of pure activity is identified with the absolute self, an acknowledged philosophical construct in Fichte's discussion. Yet, since from this perspective a view of finite human being follows from the concept of absolute self, Fichte may be said to "deduce" the concept of the individual from that of the absolute. As he notes in a letter: "My absolute self is clearly not the *individual* [...]. But *the individual must be deduced from the absolute self.*" ³⁷
- 50 Fichte's rethinking of the subject removes the ambiguity in the critical philosophy about the status of the noumenon, or mind-independent real, which Kant inconsistently describes as uncognizable but as also indispensable for cognition. Fichte's shift to cognitive explanation from the perspective of subjectivity or the finite human subject overcomes some problems in the critical philosophy, but leads to others.
- 51 An obvious difficulty in the Fichtean position results from the anthropological reformulation of the subject that reinstates the psychologistic concern that Kant is at pains to avoid. An important virtue of Fichte's reformulation of the critical philosophy lies in its effort to remove the basic ambiguity in the critical philosophy due to its simultaneous commitment to epistemic representationalism as well as metaphysical realism, on the one hand, and epistemic constructivism and empirical realism on the other.
- 52 This point can be explained in referring to the triple distinction between a phenomenon, an appearance, and a representation. In simple terms, a phenomenon is simply given to consciousness but does not refer beyond itself, an appearance is given to consciousness and further refers beyond itself but does not necessarily represent or correctly depict that to which it refers, and a representation refers to and correctly depicts that to which it refers beyond itself.

- 53 Now Kant, whose position evolved in the writing of the first *Critique*, is simultaneously committed in his treatise to incompatible cognitive theories. In simplest terms he is both a representationalist and an anti-representationalist or again an anti-representational epistemic constructivist. On the one hand, he is committed to epistemic representationalism, or the view that to know requires a causal account, or more precisely a reverse, anti-Platonic inference from the appearance to what appears, hence a representation of reality. On the other hand, since, as he says, there has never been any progress toward grasping a mind-independent object, he is committed as an alternative to the view that we can base cognition on epistemic constructivism, or the construction of the mind-dependent object.
- 54 Plato is a cognitive anti-representationalist, who rejects the backward causal inference from effect cause in favor of intellectual intuition of reality. Modern philosophy reverses the Platonic rejection of the backward causal inference in featuring it in a series of efforts to demonstrate epistemic representation of the mind-independent real. Epistemic representation of the real, which is on the agenda at least since Parmenides, is often asserted but as Kant indicated has never been demonstrated. Hegel, for instance, points to Kant's inability to explain the relation between uncognizable reality and the cognitive subject, or in other words the inability to explain the unbridgeable gap between ourselves and cognition, subjectivity and objectivity, thought and being, the knower and the known. ³⁸
- 55 Fichte rejects Kantian representationalism in criticizing a causal approach to knowledge. Fichte's enormous contribution lies in rejecting the representationalist causal model, hence in removing the inconsistency in Kant's simultaneous but inconsistent commitment to two rival views of cognition in restating the Kantian epistemic constructivist model on the basis of the subject's activity. In this way, Fichte sets the agenda running throughout post-Kantian German idealism that consists in an effort to restate the a priori Kantian constructivist approach to cognition in an acceptable a posteriori form.
- 56 Fichte's view of cognition is, however, deeply problematic. His solution consists in replacing the dualism of subjectivity and objectivity through the single explanatory theme of subjectivity. This improves on Kant's third person account of the relation of subject to object in an account from the first person perspective of experience in Fichte's technical sense of the term. Yet in revealing the limits of a quasi-Cartesian approach to objectivity through subjectivity, he reduces objectivity to subjectivity so to speak. Modern philosophy features the view that the road to objectivity runs through

subjectivity. The difficulty lies in understanding how to combine subjectivity and objectivity within a single cognitive theory. I conclude that, though Fichte clearly improves on Kant, he fails to solve the basic Cartesian problem of the relation of subjectivity to objectivity within cognition, a problem that has never been solved.

NOTES

1. *GWL*, GA I/2, 389 (Fichte, J. G., *Science of Knowledge with the First and Second Introductions*, trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 222).
2. See Rockmore, T., *German Idealism as Constructivism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
3. See, e. g., Philonenko, A., *La Liberté humaine dans la philosophie de Fichte*, Paris: Vrin, 1980.
4. Schulting, D. & Verburgt, J., *Kant's Idealism: New Interpretations Of A Controversial Doctrine*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2011.
5. See Ameriks, K., "Kant's Idealism on a Moderate Interpretation," in: Schulting, D. & Verburgt, J., *Kant's Idealism*, p. 36.
6. *KrV* B 566. (Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Guyer, P. & Woods, A., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 535, from now on CPR).
7. See Maimon, S., *Essay on the Transcendental Philosophy*, London: Continuum, 2010, p. 249.
8. See Jacobi, F. H., *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch*. Breslau: Gottlieb Löwe, 1787, p. 223.
9. See Kant, I., *Correspondence*, translated and edited by A. Zweig, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 22.
10. Hegel, G. W. F., *The Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni, 2010, p. 40.
11. *EE*, GA I/4, 190 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 10).
12. *EE*, GA I/4, 184-5 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 4).
13. *EE*, GA I/4, 186 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 4).
14. *Krv* B 136, CPR 248.
15. *KrV* B 132, CPR 246.
16. *EE*, GA I/4, 198 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 19).
17. *EE*, GA I/4, 196 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 17).
18. *EE*, GA I/4, 199-200 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 21).
19. *EE*, GA I/4, 195 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 16).

20. Fichte influenced Hegel's view of the cognitive object as constructed by the plural subject in an ongoing historical process that the latter briefly describes in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Fichte further influenced Marx's approach to modern industrial society as constructed by finite human beings who objectify and alienate themselves in what they do within the confines of modern industrial society.

21. Rez.Ae, GA I/2, 62, (Fichte, J. G., *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed., Daniel Breazeale, Ithaca: Cornell U. P., 1988, p. 73).

22. See *First Introduction to the Science of Knowledge* §2 (GA I/4, 187-8)

23. EE, GA I/4, 188 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 8).

24. It is therefore ironic that Fichte was understood as a cognitive foundationalist by the early German romantics, who refuted the theory they attributed to him in opting for antifoundationalism. Hölderlin, Fichte's former student, played an important early role in this anti-Fichtean reaction. See Hölderlin, F., "Judgement and Being" (1795), in: *Essays and Letters on Theory*, trans. and ed. T. Pfau, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.

25. "Grundsätze der gesammten [sic] Wissenschaftslehre". The term „Grundsatz“ is sometimes imprecisely translated as „Fundamental principle“ (see i.a. *Science of Knowledge*, p. 93), but actually this German word is Wolff's German translation for the Latin (and originally Greek) "axioma". Further "Lehrsatz" (theorem) is often translated as "discourse" (see i.a. *Science of Knowledge*, p. 120). This translation makes it difficult for the English reader to see that the original German text says that the *Foundations of the entire Science of Knowledge* follows a geometrical model of demonstrations, since it is composed of three axioms (Grundsätze) and eight theorems (Lehrsätze). It follows that Fichte is not a foundationalist (See Acosta, E., "Transformation of the Kantian table of the categories in Fichte's Foundations of the entire science of knowledge of 1794/95", in: *Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofia*, vol. 33, Is. 1, p. 113, n. 47).

26. GWL, GA I/2, 255 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 93).

27. See *First Introduction to the Science of Knowledge* §3 (GA I/4, 188-9).

28. See Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, *Critique de la représentation: Étude sur Fichte*, Paris: Vrin, 2000.

29. KrV B xxvii, see CPR 115.

30. Reinhold, K. L., *Beyträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophen*, I: *Das Fundament der Eelementarphilosophie betreffend*, (1790), p. 167.

31. Rez.Ae, GA I/2, 60 (*Fichte: Early Writings*, p. 73).

32. GWL, GA I/2, 390 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 224).

33. GWL, GA I/2, 426 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 262).

34. GWL, GA I/2, 399-400, 434 (*Science of Knowledge*, pp. 233, 269).

35. GWL, GA I/2, 259 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 97).

36. GWL, GA I/2, 279 (*Science of Knowledge*, p. 117).

37. GA III/2, 392, letter from Fichte to Jacobi of August 30, 1795 (emphasis in original).

38. See Hegel, G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, New York: Oxford University Press, §73, 1967, pp. 46-47.

ABSTRACTS

This paper will consider the nature and explanatory limits of the Fichtean view of subjectivity in the epistemic context of German idealism. I will argue that Fichte's revision of the Kantian conception of the subject is both a basic contribution to the cognitive problem as well as fatally flawed, hence not a viable solution to the cognitive problem. Fichte's distinctive revision of the Kantian subject goes too far in making the objective overly, even wholly dependent on the subjective dimension. After Kant and after Fichte we still lack an effective solution for the problem of cognition .

INDEX

Keywords: Kant, constructivism, subjectivity, transcendental philosophy

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Paradox, Incompleteness and Labyrinth in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*

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1. On the form and development of the *Science of Knowledge* (WL)

- 1 Although there are some similarities between the main divisions of Fichte's successive expositions of the WL, especially after 1805, a common form or method is hardly to be found. We could compare the common character of the different versions of the WL to family resemblances, like a set of features which intersect, return and become recognized again under different guises, appearing without a necessary order or sequence. Fichte successively employs concepts such as "absolute I", "consciousness", "absolute knowing", "intellectual intuition", "existence", "image" or "appearance as appearance" to express the main principle of the WL, and such differences contribute to the changes in the forms of exposition.
- 2 The crisis in Fichte's thought that followed the charge of atheism at the turn of the 19th century was caused, first, by the need, imposed on Fichte primarily by external factors, to clarify the role of the absolute in the WL, and secondly, by the pressure to produce an epistemological justification for his point of view. Both problems, namely the question regarding the role of the absolute, and the question regarding the epistemological justification of the WL, are met in the large propaedeutic and critical Introduction to the WL at the beginning of the *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* (*Exposition of the WL*) from 1801/1802. This Introduction is completely different from the 1st and 2nd Introductions of 1797, which take knowing (*Wissen*) as an object, and not as an act of the subject.
- 3 Following the charge of atheism and the criticism of the "point of view of reflection", which started around the same time, the problem of an epistemological justification of the WL began to be taken seriously by Fichte.

The Introduction to the WL can no longer consist in simply bringing the reader into an external and alien object to be known, but it must reflect knowing in itself and construct a “knowing of knowing” (“*Wissen des Wissens*”) or “absolute knowing”, which does not admit a subject outside it. A significant innovation in the *Exposition of the Wissenschaftslehre* of 1801/1802 is thus the extensive propaedeutic and critical introduction which precedes the WL in the strict sense. This innovation is distinctive of the lectures on the WL from 1801/1802, and is not to be found in a similar way in any of the expositions in the following or in the preceding years. The reason for this exception is that, according to the new concepts and definitions of the later WL, the functions of a critical and propaedeutic introduction do not fit into a previous and separate place, but can and should be included in the body of the WL. The so-called “*Wahrheitslehre*” (“Doctrine of Truth”) of the second exposition in 1804, for example, is in some of its functions comparable to the Introduction of 1801/1802, but it is conceptually part of the WL, and not just a preliminary to it. The result of including propaedeutic and critique in the theory itself is the illumination of some inner tensions of the WL, which will be essential in its late presentations, as I will discuss later.

- 4 The changes in the external form of the WL, such as the addition of an Introduction and large divisions of the text, are much greater before 1804 or 1805 than after. Notwithstanding significant internal differences in the way of exposition and argumentation, the external form is relatively stable after 1805. This stability occurs by virtue of the assimilation into the WL of the above mentioned features, including the self-justification of its own procedures and, also, a transcendental-critical approach to the problem of the absolute and ultimate foundations. These are no longer treated as matters to be solved prior the presentation of the WL itself but as the core theoretical elements in it. This relatively stable external form comprises too many points of departure, contents and concepts to be studied in detail here. Therefore, I will restrict my focus to some difficult points which seems to me especially important for interpreting Fichte’s WL in its different expositions and in its development.

2. On the role of oppositions in the WL

- 5 As a result of those developments, the WL becomes, on the one hand, a theory constantly examining its own epistemological conditions. At every step it calls into question how its own statements and concepts can be thought or realized. On the other hand, as a consequence of this, the WL “oscillates” (“wavers”: “*schwebt*”) between idealism and realism, problematic and categorical – according to the well-known expression “

wenn...soll.../so...muss... ” (“if it should.../then it must...”) – between intuition and understanding, consciousness and self-consciousness, WL and actual knowing, amongst others. The point is now to show the impossibility of thinking one term of these oscillating pairs without the other. The general unifying term of the disjunction is the concept Fichte calls “light” and which he defines as “pure genesis”. “Light” is accordingly often characterized as “absolute sequence” or “absolute relation”, which means insight into the unity of the two terms. But because Fichte also tries to show that pure “light” cannot be thought without generating its opposite, the content of the system is essentially unstable, and its epistemological clarification always involves a game of mutual eclipses and mutual interference of its terms.

- 6 It could be useful to distinguish this way of thinking from Hegel’s dialectics. The latter produces synthetic concepts which preserve and subordinate the opposites, solving the contradiction in a greater concreteness, while in the WL the opposition is not strictly speaking resolved in a synthetic concept, but suspended or extended as an infinite function of knowing. This extension results from the “annihilation” or negation of the concept and the production of the differences that define reflection, intuition and image. Fichte names this absence of an immediate resolution of the oppositions and mutual eclipse of the different insights the “irrational hiatus”, “facticity” or “problematic form” (“*Problematizität*”) which affects the results of the WL, with the exception of the demonstration of this very problematic form. This is indeed apodictic. Since it is problematic, the WL’s methodology is grounded on a “*Sollen*” (“should”) which is neither necessary nor contingent, but an object of free choice. In 1804, for example, “we appear to ourselves as a mere task, that may be fulfilled or not, that wavers regarding its actuality between being and not-being [...]”¹ In its full development this thesis finally becomes the impossibility of thinking the “problematic form” (“*Problematizität*”) without the “categorical form” (“*Kategorizität*”), and conversely, so that one cannot decide whether the ground of the WL is categorical or problematic.²
- 7 But Fichte does not interpret this situation of epistemological pessimism, which finds the apodictic form only at a meta-level of reflection, as an insufficiency or as an unsolvable epistemological problem. The WL, so to say, fills in this insufficiency with content, insofar as it makes it the transcendental condition of consciousness. Hence, the WL will try to show that the mutual implication of the opposites is the necessary condition of human knowing and consciousness.

3. Some principles for the interpretations of Fichte's thought

- 8 The oscillation, which is normally antinomic – the oscillating between realism and idealism where each term generates the other – is closely linked with the production of differences, the understanding of which seems to me essential for interpreting Fichte's text. Fichte's argumentative thread presupposes some main theoretical differences, which cannot be reduced to unity without cancelling the conditions of possible experience and consciousness. Much of the argumentation in the various versions of the WL is grounded on demonstrating the impossibility of annulling these differences, sometimes by *reductio ad absurdum*.
- 9 Thus, it is often asked what would happen if we were unable to distinguish the statement or the thought of something "in-itself" (" *an sich* ") and the transcendental conditions that allow this thought, i.e., the form that the "In-itself" necessarily takes so that it can be thematic. It is also asked what it would be to know without the difference or distance between me and myself that seems to occur in all cases of the conscious reflection which, apparently, "must possibly accompany all my representations." ³ But it should also be asked, finally, what it would mean for us to be unable to distinguish an immediate or intuitive level of consciousness from another one that is conceptual and discursive – either by trying to account for knowing exclusively on the basis of concept alone, or from intuition alone. It can be concluded that any such attempt is based on self-oblivion, lack of reflection and half-philosophies affected by various kinds of blindness.
- 10 The WL systematically uses these three differences, which could be named, according to the vocabulary of the WL, transcendental, reflective and critical difference. The first one, transcendental difference, makes it possible to produce the very object of the WL. As Fichte sometimes says, in order to acquire the object of the WL you must have the "transcendental spirit". Without this "spirit" the discourse will remain empty, because "where you speak, you speak about *something* that, in all other cases, *is known and exists* before this speaking of it: – here, you speak about something that *is and becomes* only by way of speaking about it." ⁴ "Transcendental spirit" establishes the field of the WL, the reflective domain of the conditions of possibility of experience as distinct from the objects of experience. Every thematic object in the WL is defined on the basis of this difference, and its oblivion would mean that the WL is meaningless, because it would be empty.

- 11 The origin of this difference, as Fichte often stresses, is in close relation with the faculty of reflection, and the use of reflection as the main tool of philosophical thought. The second difference addressed by Fichte is, thus, the difference generated by the I, which finds herself only on the condition of distinguishing herself from herself. The statement “I am I” therefore presupposes identity but also non-identity. The place of the Not-I is, thence, foreseen already in the absolute I itself – if it should be an I at all – a question to which I will return further below. This function of the non-identical is essential for the structure of the WL, as it becomes clear, for instance, in the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (*Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge*) of 1794/1795, where the argument appeals to the definition of “concept of the I” as necessarily reflecting on itself: “the I must reflect about itself.”⁵ Or, to take another example, it is essential for the 1805 argument about the absolute light’s untenability: “absolute light {inwardly} (i.e., which for its being does not presuppose anything but its own being), sees necessarily *itself*: a|a.”⁶ The downfall of this difference, the pure I or pure light, which is beyond the statement of its own identity (a|a) would understand the absolute I as a pure expansion, or pure “genesis”, that could not be objectified. Pure genesis, pure potentiality (faculty, “*Vermögen*”), from 1807 on, must interrupt or fix itself in order to make self-consciousness and reflection possible. Also the “image” is the key-concept of the late WL precisely because the image is meaningless without the recognition of the non-identity, as the *absence* of its object. The reflective difference is, finally, the reason why the image can only be image “as” (“*als*”, “*qua*”) such. The whole of the late WL, which begins with the notion of pure appearing (“*Erscheinen*”) that knows itself *as appearing* (“*als Erscheinung*”), is therefore based on the reflective difference.
- 12 But this second form of difference is articulated also with the third one, namely, critical difference. This one is received directly from Kant, as the difference between intuition and concept. It is closely linked to reflection, since it is carried out by the understanding upon immediate intuition. The reflective difference could be systematically seen as the difference between the first act of pure genesis, the pure “springing up” (“*Entspringen*”) ⁷ and its reflective apprehension, which hinges on the conceptual faculty, intelligence or understanding. Fichte’s position regarding the critical division and radical heterogeneity of the faculties, is to accept – contrarily to Kant – intellectual intuition but, as it is well known, as an “intuition of an act, not of any object.”⁸ Intellectual intuition is a condition at the transcendental level of the faculties of experience’s constitution, that confirms precisely the necessity of the split between intuition and understanding as condition of possibility for consciousness.

- 13 Fichte articulates those three forms of difference in various arguments, establishing equivalences and systematically drawing conclusions. Those interpretation principles can be applied to formulations that expresses paradoxes, incompleteness and labyrinth in the WL, as we shall see.

4. Paradoxes, circularity and ambiguity

- 14 Various lectures on the WL describe a movement of thought which leaves no empty space, and which, as in a labyrinth, systematically oscillates between different directions until a central point is reached, from which it returns toward the surface. This is clearly the case of the antinomic wavering discussed in the second exposition of 1804, where the transcendental space is systematically and thoroughly fathomed until the definition of the “*Ansich*” (“In-itself”) in the absolute sense, wherefrom the thought returns again. In this oscillation between idealism and realism, the energy of thought is the condition of possibility for representing its object. The object, in turn, conditions its representation, as object in itself. Expressed in another image, not exactly as a labyrinth, but as a circle, the field of transcendental philosophy is already in 1794/1795 described as an alternation where the thing in itself and the phenomenon reciprocally posit one another. This is “that circle which it [sc. the finite spirit] is able to extend into infinity, but can never scape.” ⁹
- 15 I would like to show that these *tropoi* of paradoxes, circularities, or infinities are not merely formal but settle the conceptual content and conclusions of the WL, according to at least some of its various versions. An analysis of Fichte’s arguments and concepts, centered in some paradoxical, labyrinthine or else ambiguous cases allows one to read the WL, in some of its different expositions, as a systematic production of incompleteness.

4.1. Untying the conceptual knot

- 16 The first passage in the text to which I would like to call your attention is a key passage in the *Foundations of the Wissenschaftslehre* where Fichte presents a main discovery which emerges in the course of the first exposition of the WL. Fichte seems to discover that the exposition actually carried out, where the first principles are presented in an independent way, is inadequate, and even appears to be contradictory. It is this inadequacy and apparent contradiction that Fichte attempts to solve in the following expositions, without essentially changing his main theses. In some way, therefore, the *Foundations* of 1794/1795 work toward their own invalidation, or toward showing that its own exposition is untenable. More specifically, Fichte intends to show that

the unification of I and Not-I is ultimately not possible under the presupposed conditions, i.e., by presenting the principles as unconditioned acts of human spirit understood as three absolutes without a reciprocal relation.

- 17 As noted already by an early interpreter, M. Wundt,¹⁰ the *Foundations* of 1794/1795 display strong tensions, where the contradiction is not resolved, and a “tragic” mode of philosophy is carried out, which stresses the inadequacy of the sensible to the intelligible. But this only happens because the verification of a deadlock, and the impossibility of proceeding further is required in order to solve the problem of the system of knowing. Fichte speaks thus of a “knot [that] is not so much loosed as projected into infinity.”¹¹ Untying the knot is thus presented as an infinite process.
- 18 Notwithstanding the greater or lesser adequacy of the external form of exposition, it should be noted that it is this very impossibility of solving the problem that is raised into a system. In fact, regarding the aforesaid knot, the philosopher states that “we do not so much explain the *explicandum* as show rather, *that*, and *why*, it is inexplicable.”¹² At several key points in the lectures on the WL, the issue is to find the deadlocks, which are sometimes expressed as paradoxes, and to draw systematic conclusions from them. It is the exposition of deadlocks and *aporiai* that causes a change in point of view, that makes it possible to apprehend the WL, or even to enter into it, according to some of its versions.
- 19 Later in the *Foundations* of 1794/1795, Fichte states: “we can see [...] how the very circumstance which threatened to destroy the possibility of a theory of human cognition becomes the sole condition under which such a theory can be established.”¹³ This passage reveals an important feature of the WL as a reinterpretation of Kant’s transcendentalism. This feature, which I will address now, can be found in different concepts with distinct roles in the various versions of the WL. These concepts express synthetic solutions for the problem of oppositions which seems to be irreducible: in the *Foundations*, the “imagination”, later, the concept of “image”. Other concepts sometimes play a similar role, in a somewhat negative stage, i.e., they express that “circumstance which threatened to destroy the possibility of a theory of human cognition”, namely the concepts of “irrational hiatus”, “fact” or “facticity”.
- 20 The aforementioned threatening circumstance is the incompatibility between the absolute opposing concepts which, at the point of the *Foundations* quoted, are the “finite subjective and the infinite objective.”¹⁴ But the problem has no solution insofar as it is posited at the level of what is “merely [...] *thought*.”¹⁵ The answer therefore will not be to give up the

construction of a system of knowing, but to change the way of thinking. Thought must be extended beyond itself, which is done by the faculty of transcendental imagination and intuition. This space –literally outside thought– produces the schematism of empirical reality, insofar as it allows one to think the opposites together, without reducing them to nothing. The sharp conceptual opposites are potentialized and posited by the imagination in simple spatial and temporal extension.

- 21 Fichte's thesis is that the impossibility of proceeding further does not prove that the project of a systematic foundation of knowing is impossible, but it shows, on the contrary, the necessity of facticity, of the hiatus or, finally, of experience as conditions of possibility for the system. Experience is the expression of the contradictory nature of concept in itself, and it is, thus, possible to demonstrate a priori the fact that experience is not a priori deductible.
- 22 Imagination is the non-conceptual production of reality, it constitutes the "state of *intuition*", which links thought to "touching" (*Berühren*) ¹⁶ and to "reality", considering that Fichte accepts the empiricist thesis that "there is no other reality save that derived through intuition." ¹⁷ This reality function will appear again under the form of "existence" ("*Dasein*") in the later versions of the WL.

4.2. Experience as unaccomplished knowing

- 23 Another feature of experience that Fichte stresses in different contexts is its unaccomplished character. It can be clearly seen also in the *Exposition* of 1801/1802 and in the *Wissenschaftslehre* from Königsberg, where he insists on the issue of the infinity of knowing. The resolution of the contradiction by the imagination results, as has been said, in the un-accomplishment of reality, which is described by Fichte as the movement of touching and of being repelled between finite and infinite, or between the requirement to accomplish the task of the system of human knowing and the "impossibility of carrying it out." ¹⁸
- 24 Fichte hence introduces the concept of "*Schweben*" which seems to mean not so much a "wavering", as it is sometimes translated, but a directed "oscillating", without a support, between opposites, which refers to the fact that imagination is self-supporting. Fichte also mentions in the *Foundations* this last thesis as the building of a "bridge" between I and Not-I ¹⁹ because, if it is true that the bridge needs footholds on both sides, it must also support itself and sustain itself in the air by its own inner consistency.
- 25 Although the knot tied by the opposites cannot be untied, and the circle cannot be broken, the imagination's oscillation creates a mix or intermediate

between infinite objective and subjective finite, and the subject of the philosophical demonstration is precisely the impossibility of closing the system. Even the simple thought of the opposites already presupposes the activity of imagination, because without it “we could not even have thought them, for they were nothing at all and one cannot reflect about nothing.”²⁰ Such incompleteness, which belongs to experience, is a direct consequence of the incompleteness of the transcendental constitution of the system itself, according to the principle of the reflective justification of its own proceedings. As has been said, generally speaking, the WL deals with the apodictic demonstration of the impossibility of a demonstration.

- 26 The general thesis about incompleteness or the impossibility of reaching a conclusion, which is present both at the object, with the resulting necessity of experience for human consciousness, and in the system of transcendental philosophy itself, is the problem of the opening vs. closure of the system.

4.3. Opening and ambiguity in the absolute I

- 27 The above mentioned contradiction in the exposition of the *Foundations* of 1794/1795 is explained in a passage which expresses not so much a paradox, as an ambiguity that lies in the absolute I from the beginning and that makes itself increasingly explicit throughout the exposition. At first sight, one would say the whole exposition disallows itself with the conclusion that “if the Not-I is to be able to posit anything at all in the I, *the condition for the possibility of such an alien influence must be grounded beforehand, prior to any effect from without, in the I as such, in the absolute I*; the I must originally and absolutely posit in itself the possibility of something operating upon it; without detriment to its absolute positing of itself, it must leave itself open, as it were, to some other positing.”²¹ We should especially note that the conclusion refers to the absolute I, and not to the finite or divisible I which, contrarily to the absolute I, is explicitly understood as open to determination by the Not-I. Insofar as it refers to the absolute I, the proposition is paradoxical, for the absolute I’s definition was precisely being unconditioned, not admitting any determination, which is now denied by having to keep itself open to a foreign determination.
- 28 Some of the conclusions to be drawn from this paradoxical formula have already been pointed out above. First, concerning the development of the WL, it shows that the exposition of the *Foundations* of 1794/1795 is not suitable; it works in a constant revision of its own starting point, which will eventually lead to totally different expositions. In the lectures after 1804, which explicitly “go beyond the I”, the problems that were already present in the *Foundations* appear in an analyzed way, i.e. divided into clearly distinguished

concepts. The reflection is understood as establishing by itself its difference regarding being, according to the formulae sequence used in 1805: “a”, “a|a” and “a|axb”. It means, “a”, seeing or I, must duplicate itself reflectively, “a|a”, and this duplication is conditioned by the opposition or distinction regarding an absolute being, “a|axb”. The reflection of existence upon itself can only be carried out if it separates itself from its other, absolute being. There is no reflection without opening to being.

- 29 Also, according to the theory of image, image is image for two reasons. First, it must reflect in itself, and so it is autonomous, self-sufficient and posited by itself – and that is why it is also seeing, light or absolute genesis and pure “*Entspringen*” (“springing up”). Image is not an effect or a consequence of its object, but must have spontaneity within itself. On the other hand, however, image is image because, seen from another side, it is not self-sufficient, but depends on being, otherwise it wouldn’t distinguish itself from pure being, and would simply be identified with it. But what distinguishes image from being? Precisely its reflective faculty, the feature which Fichte stresses, i.e., being image “as image” (“*als Bild*”). If the image didn’t recognize itself as image, it would obviously not carry out its figurative function, but would adhere completely to the continuity of being. Every figuration has as its condition “reflexibility” (“*Reflexibilität*”), and the resulting difference toward being.
- 30 Meanwhile, as has been said, the discovery of the opening in the absolute I – which will develop into the theory of existence and image – is, in the *Foundations* of 1794/1795, a consequence of a structural ambiguity in the absolute I. This ambiguity lies in its being simultaneously autonomous and reflective. The problem is that the absolute I, because it is an I, is implicitly reflective, and this condition cannot be explicit from the beginning. However, as reflective, it has already passed into the finite I. The absolute I is ambiguous because it must be a pure non- or still pre-reflective potentiality to reflection. On the one hand, it is an absolute pre-reflective positing, on the other hand (still being an I), it implies a positing of reflection.
- 31 The I, as Fichte will explicitly find out later, cannot be absolute without being reflective. Thence, in the theory of life that Fichte works out in the *WL* of Königsberg, the “absolute life” cannot be but “seeing”, and “seeing” is necessarily “seeing itself”, because the absolute positing cannot refer but to itself. On the other hand, the absolute I cannot be self-referent without ceasing to be absolute. The paradoxical statement of the absolute I’s opening to some other positing and to the determination by something alien to it is only the unavoidable consequence of the duplicity which will eventually make the concept of the absolute I unsuitable.

- 32 Again, this ambiguity or paradox could lead us once again to dismiss the WL as untenable, or to say that its exposition is simply wrong. As seen, on the contrary, the ambiguity should be understood as the very condition of human knowing, which oscillates between reflexivity and absolute autonomy. Such oscillation is – according to the theory of transcendental imagination – the substratum of every knowing and figuration. The object of the WL is to prove that consciousness is only possible under this paradoxical, ambiguous condition or hiatus.

4.4. On the construction of absolute knowing in 1801/1802

- 33 The problem with the *Foundations of the WL* is that the aforementioned ambiguity is not brought to light from the beginning but, on the contrary, the thesis of the absolute position is presented in such a way that the reader is led to admit exactly the opposite, i.e., that the absolute I is absolutely unconditioned and cannot be eclipsed, interfered with or determined by any other positing. Insofar as this ambiguity is not clearly exposed, this insufficiency in the exposition should be taken as a reason for its evolution. The concept of absolute knowing, as present in the introduction to the WL of 1801 is still an attempt to state from the beginning this paradoxical constitution of human consciousness.
- 34 According to the introductory argument of the *Exposition* of 1801/1802, the difficulty of treating absolute knowing or, more clearly, the *knowing of knowing* theoretically, is the impossibility of objectifying it. We know it – thematically and reflectively – always from the outside, as a thematic object of knowing. Any reflective definition of knowing will leave aside the knowing that constitutes this very definition itself. This knowing at a superior level is defined as an act that is not contained in the definition, in the “was” (“what”), or as we could say, in the “*ti esti*” of knowing. This act is by definition, ultimately non-objectified and irreducible to any concept of knowing. Therefore, absolute knowing cannot be built as the object of another knowing about it, but only by assuming that it is required to presuppose in it a pre-reflective act, endowed with a non-intellectual, non-descriptive and also non-predicative component of knowing.
- 35 The non-predicative component is the intuition of an act, or intellectual intuition. The description of the successive reflection levels of the objectified knowing would go on forever unless it is understood that knowing contains a pragmatic component, of absolute spontaneity, also of facticity or of an intuition irreducible to the concept, the “what” (“Was”). As a free self-positing, the act that cannot be objectified is the pure “genesis”²² of knowing. Absolute knowing, as built in the WL of 1801/1802 is mainly the

methodological consciousness of this fact.

- 36 This is therefore a genetic knowing and, in the author's words, "it contains in itself its origin." Absolute knowing is also defined as the "interiority of the origin," i.e., the knowing with the methodological consciousness that the principle of freedom, or absolute self-positing, is the condition for the construction of a knowing of knowing, that is to say, of the WL. The act in question is free because it cannot be objectified – in the sense of being determined by concepts of experience. And thus associating freedom with that which cannot be objectified under concepts, Fichte will argue throughout the lectures that every contingency, incompleteness, and non-conceptual aspect of experience, (i.e., critical difference in general, with the 'mixed' character of experience associated with it), is nothing but an expression of freedom. Among such non-conceptual features studied by Fichte are the directions in space, the multiplicity of the I in space and the sequence of time. This mixed character of experience is what Fichte calls formal freedom determined by absolute being.
- 37 It is so because the genetic feature of the knowing that knows itself as originating from a free act, or from a self-intuition that cannot be objectified, is also an oscillating 'to-be-between', a "*Schweben*". As Fichte states, "the central point and specific focus of the absolute knowing is found. It does not lay in grasping itself as knowing (by formal freedom) nor in the annulation in absolute being, but simply between both; one is not possible without the other." ²³ Knowing "wavers thus between its being and not-being: as it must surely do, since it brings in itself, knowing it, its origin." ²⁴ Oscillating between being and not-being, as Fichte argues in this text, also defines freedom, self-consciousness and experience – i.e., the empirical world, or space and time – and that is why the WL consists in proving the impossibility of thinking any one of these terms without the other two. There is no freedom without self-consciousness or without empirical world; there is no empirical world, time or space without freedom; there is no self-consciousness without empirical world and freedom. This is the unbreakable link between freedom, which is self-positing and therefore disposes of being and not-being, and the reflective self-consciousness. As a conclusion, there is no self-consciousness without an irreducible domain of facticity, contingency and the empiric element.

4.5. Incompatibility of form and matter

- 38 Because of the pragmatic and non-predicative component of the argument, paradoxical constructions and self-cancelling expressions necessarily play a key role in it – according to the oscillation pointed out in the last point. We

will see now how this self-cancelling is a main device, which functions in the content and the form of exposition. The paradox is presented as the annulation of the form by the matter of the insight: “the absolute ‘what’ [Was] of knowing [...], as ‘what’, must find itself, regardless all freedom, [...] it must be for itself. It should thus intuit itself in this absolute ‘what’. Now, any intuition is freedom, just because it is. The form of this insight will be, therefore, annulated by its matter, it just disappears in itself by itself.” ²⁵ The form of the proposition is annulated by its stuff, for the ‘what’ it is, defined as the “being of knowing”, because it is a definition of it, would not admit reflection, that is, the construction of a knowing of knowing, if it should be taken objectively – so to say “regardless freedom”, regardless of its originating act. The form of any expression of knowing, which is free reflection and self-intuition is, thence, annulated by its matter, the simple being of knowing. Fichte explains that this would be “a knowing without self-consciousness,” ²⁶ namely without the methodological consciousness of its own conditions, a knowing without self-explanation, without WL. The presupposition is always that the reflective self-awareness is an act that cannot be objectified or defined in a ‘what’, in a being of knowing, in summa, that cannot be thought. The performative component cannot be structurally translated into a semantic one. That is why the WL, in 1807, will turn into a philosophy of life, with the idea that seeing is living and living is seeing.

- 39 Reflective consciousness is an act that idealizes the ‘what’, the ‘*ti esti*’, i.e., the being of knowing. Idealizing being, reflective consciousness introduces the *question* in general ²⁷ and introduces skepticism or the nothingness of beings as it is thought and defined. Any “Was” (‘what’) should have a “Weil” (‘because’), which can only be given by an ultimate grounding. Without that, being is illusory and subject to critical and skeptical dissolution. If the content of knowing is being as being, fixed and steady, then reflection is banned. The form of the insight, freedom, is thus, annulated by its matter.
- 40 The question returns some pages bellow, ²⁸ where Fichte remarks that “necessity” is a link of knowing in itself, an “absolute thinking” that doesn’t allow “mobility” (“*Beweglichkeit*”), i.e., the logic of questioning, named the “*Weil*” (“because”). The “*Was*” is now the necessity, which contraposes the “mobility” belonging to intuition – that is, to the non-conceptual, which can be or not be, or is and is not, according to the classical definition of movement, and of time and space in the empirical world. “What is in the intuition is there simply because it is: thus, it is no more simply what it is. That’s why this intuition could not intuit, why it could not occur in any knowing, but simply annulated its form by its matter.” ²⁹ This means just that there cannot be any intuition without reflection. The intuition

introduces always the “*Weil*”, because it is the expression of freedom, of the free and reflective speech of questioning. Insofar as only freedom can give an absolute genesis, and only freedom can give the “*Weil*”, the intuition belongs necessarily to such a mobility and genesis. Pure intuition could not occur in any knowing, because it dispenses with the “*Was*” and keeps being indefinable. Fichte understands in this way that the moving and instable form of the intuition of the object is annulated by its matter, i.e., by the need to confer a definable shape to it, and also to itself. According to Fichte in 1801/1802, knowing, – sc., experience – is thus freedom as determined by absolute being.

- 41 Fichte is simply saying that you cannot think pure being, any more than you can think pure freedom, and that knowing is just, transcendently speaking, this very impossibility. Those are self-cancelling expressions and are thus impossible, pointing out the necessity of their overcoming. Such eclipses of the form of the expression by its stuff contributes negatively, in these lectures, to a demonstration of the oscillation of knowing. Knowing lies neither in the self-apprehension in and as the pure formal freedom, nor in its self-annulation in absolute being, and consequent loss of itself, but “between both” (“*zwischen beiden*”), in the “wavering” between them,³⁰ the same solution for the paradoxes of impossibility we have encountered already in the lectures of 1794/1795.
- 42 Two other expressions for this mutual eclipse of the a priori components of knowing should be briefly remarked upon. The incompatibility of an insight’s form and matter also defines the very predicative form of expression, insofar as saying “is” is to introduce something, some matter, into visibility – and hence the “is” is defined also as “light” – as well as into discursivity, that is, the “is” gives the conceptual-judicative form. It is the very act of visibility, the “is”, which is unutterable (it belongs to what cannot be said, but only shown...). It is not possible to express under the strict propositional form the transcendental difference, i.e., the statement of the light which allows seeing, because the propositional order occurs already inside the domain defined by the copula. Saying it would imply bringing the copula into the predicate, reflecting again and making the copula, which is form, content. The consequences are very clear to Fichte. As you can read in 1805, when you say that “*knowing in itself is this or that*, this latter knowing is surely also again a knowing,”³¹ that would not be comprehended in the predicate, and would, so to say, be projected into an exteriority, in two possible ways: so that the definition of knowing be accepted, either the act of the subject must be forgotten; or there would be an infinite iteration. Fichte’s strategy consists in understanding this addition to the objectified knowing as a principle of facticity, or as inalienable life.

43 This paradoxical eclipse can also be expressed under another simpler guise. This is Fichte 's repeated invitation, at the beginning of some courses, simply to think pure being. This yields the evident contradiction that the thought of being is outside it and, henceforth, has no place in it, and is nothing at all. This difficulty results in the above mentioned concept of image as "being outside being." Actually, this is a figure equivalent to absolute knowing, whose construction requires a position at the same time outside knowing but still in some way belonging to it. Thinking the absolute as Schelling and Hegel claimed is an impossible task. In terms of an *intentio recta*, as Schelling proposed and as Kant had already shown, thought entangles itself into insoluble contradictions. Yet, as we know, such difficulties and contradictions won't result in an impossibility, but rather in the necessary incompleteness of the task.

4.6. The form of the highest insight

44 Since I must approach the conclusion, a reference should still be made to a statement in the WL of 1805, which expresses in quite a different way the difficulties already exposed. In some ways, it summarizes the problem and the solution proposed by the philosopher: "The ancient philosophers grasped thus very accurately the form of the highest and absolute insight. The mistake was only that they wanted to realize it. [...] Such insight is contradictory in itself; for insight posits the objectivity of the terms and, furthermore, two terms; while God's interior essence is *immanence* and unity. [...] (Besides, the possibility of consciousness is grounded on the impossibility of this proof.)" ³² Referring to the ontological proof, this passage does not appear to express any paradox, but it is quite explicit about the condition of human consciousness that generates the paradoxes. According to Fichte, only a consciousness to which the ontological proof would be valid would be free from paradoxes.

45 On this point, we don't see any major differences from 1794 until 1805. The late WL accepts, as you can read in the quoted passage, the impossibility of "realizing" the supreme insight, that consists in passing from the absolute, as pure essence, to its existence. In fact, the principle of the whole exposition of 1805 is that "knowing is the existence of the absolute," but this link between the absolute and its existence cannot be an object of proof. In the markedly theologically minded version of 1807, Fichte says that "God only reveals itself as the one who never reveals itself. [...] If he could ever enter entirely as it is into the phenomena, they would be over. It is only God's immediate drive, which will never be realized, to be the root of our apparent existence, that guarantees the infinity of this apparent existence of ours." ³³ "To realize"

hence means to make actual, as accomplishing, to turn into *res*, i.e., the referred objectifying of the terms inside the necessity of a concept. The ontological proof, which would allow one to think the concept of the absolute as comprehending existence, and as separated from any experience, projects a duality that Fichte rejects.

46 The impossibility of realizing the passage from the absolute to knowing, or the non-demonstrability that the absolute exists in knowing, insofar as existence is interrupted by an ultimate facticity, is also stressed by Fichte saying that “as existing, the absolute changes absolute and hopelessly its own inner essence.”³⁴ It is not the absolute that exists, or, if it exists, then it cannot exist as *absolute* – or, paradoxically, it can only exist as absolute. But the “*as*” makes all the difference, because it is the free principle of reflection and image, that may or may not posit itself. That is why Fichte says, in his later lectures, that the absolute’s first scheme is a “*Vermögen*” (“faculty”, “potentiality”).³⁵ “*Vermögen*” is like a point, that may or may not actualize, may or may not extend into a line, acquire dimension necessarily and some direction freely.

47 The realization of the ontological proof is hindered by the very form of human reason, which, under the factual conditions of consciousness, does not allow deducing intuition and existence from any concept of the understanding. Consciousness is possible because the split between understanding and sensibility – i.e., critical difference – is conclusive. To cross this gap means to untie the knot of human consciousness. “Only after time was accomplished would the intelligence be wholly and completely freedom; but then it would be nothing.”³⁶ Freedom depends on the incompleteness of intelligence. But this is not, according to Fichte, a reason for skepticism or for the absence of an ultimate ground for knowing. Quite on the contrary. The issue is, mainly, to prove this very indemonstrability, and that leaves the WL in a unique situation. On the one hand, it shows the incompleteness of its own knowledge. On the other hand, as a consequence of that, it builds an image of itself and of its relation with its object, claiming a mediate realization of the so-called absolute which is at the basis of human knowing, albeit ambiguously and in oscillation. Showing that both the figurations of consciousness and the reflective self-consciousness are not possible except on the basis of the image of an absolute being, the WL tries also to show, indirectly, and presupposing the fact of consciousness, the reference to the absolute as a necessary one.

48 Fichte thus keeps his first statement, that “we do not so much explain the *explicandum* as show rather, *that*, and *why*, it is inexplicable.”³⁷ The paradoxical and self-cancelling formulae converges into an interpretation of Fichte’s WL as a self-referring and formally self-containing system of

incompleteness. As we try to see the object of vision in itself, as we read in the WL of 1807, repeating the assertion in the *Anweisung zum seligen Leben*, “our own eye bars the way to our eye” (“unser Auge selbst steht unserm Auge im Wege”). 38

NOTES

1. WL-1804-I, GA II/7, 144“Wir daher erscheinen uns, als blosse, zu vollziehende oder nicht vollziehende, in Absicht ihrer Wirklichkeit zwischen Seyn u. nichtseyn schwebende Aufgabe [...]”
2. Cf. WL-1804-I GA II/7, 192.
3. KrV, B 131-132.
4. WL-1805 GA II/9, 179: “wo gesprochen, wird von Etwas gesprochen, das in allen andren Fällen vor diesem Sprechen davon bekannt ist und da ist: – hier, von etwas, das nur durch das Sprechen davon, und in diesem Sprechen, ist und wird.”
5. GWL, GA I/2, 409: “Das Ich muß [...] über sich reflektiren” (translation adapted from P. Heath and J. Lachs).
6. WL-1805, GA II/9, 215: “Das absolute {innerlich} (d.i zu seinem Seyn durchaus nichts voraussetzende als seine Seyn selber) Licht, sieht, notwendig sich: a/a.”
7. WL-1801/2, GA II/6, 212.
8. Cf. ZE, GA I/4, 216-217.
9. GWL, GA I/2, 412: “derjenige Zirkel, den er [der endliche Geist] in das Unendliche erweitern, aus welchem er aber nie herausgehen kann.”
10. Cf. WUNDT, M., *Fichte-Forschungen*, Stuttgart: Frommann-Kurtz, 1929, p. 63.
11. GWL, GA I/2, 311: “[...] der Knoten [wird] nicht sowohl gelöst, als in die Unendlichkeit hinaus gesetzt”.
12. GWL, GA I/2, 311: “das zuerklärende nicht sowohl erklärt, als vielmehr gezeigt wird, daß, und warum es nicht zu erklären sey.”
13. GWL, GA I/2, 367: “Wir sehen, daß gerade derjenige Umstand, welcher die Möglichkeit einer Theorie des menschlichen Wissens zu vernichten drohte, hier die einzige Bedingung wird, unter der wir eine solche Theorie aufstehen können”.
14. GWL, GA I/2, 368.
15. GWL, GA I/2, 366.
16. GWL, GA I/2, 367.
17. GWL, GA I/2, 368.
18. Cf. GWL, GA I/2, 367.
19. Cf. GWL, GA I/2, 412-413.

20. GWL, GA I/2, 366-367: "wir hätten über sie nicht denken können, denn sie waren absolut Nichts, und über Nichts kann man nicht reflektieren."

21. GWL, GA I/2, 405 "[S]oll [...] das Nicht-Ich überhaupt etwas im Ich setzen können, so muß die Bedingung der Möglichkeit eines solchen fremden Einflusses im Ich selbst, im absoluten Ich, vor aller wirklichen fremden Einwirkung vorher gegründet seyn; das Ich muß ursprünglich und schlechthin in sich die Möglichkeit setzen, daß etwas auf dasselbe einwirke; es muß sich, unbeschadet seines absoluten Setzens durch sich selbst, für ein anderes Setzen gleichsam offen erhalten."

22. WL-1801/02, GA II/6, 171.

23. WL-1801/02, GA II/6, 182 "Der eigentliche Fokus, und Mittelpunkt des absoluten Wissens ist hiermit gefunden. Er liegt nicht im sich fassen als Wissen (vermitteltst der formalen Freiheit) auch nicht im sich vernichten an dem absoluten Seyn, sondern schlechthin zwischen beiden; u. eines von beiden ist nicht möglich, ohne das zweite."

24. WL-1801/02, GA II/6, 182-183: "Es schwebt zwischen seinem Seyn, und seinem Nichtseyn: wie es wohl muß, da es seinem absoluten Ursprung wissend in sich trägt."

25. WL-1801/02, GA II/6, 171: "Das absolute Was des Wissens [...] als Was, unabhängig von aller Freiheit, [soll] sich finden [...]; für sich seyn. In diesem absoluten Was müsste es daher sich anschauen. Alle Anschauung aber ist Freiheit, schlechthin weil sie ist. Die Form dieser Anschauung wird sonach durch ihre Materie vernichtet, sie verschwindet schlechthin durch sich selbst in sich selbst."

26. Ibid.: "ein Wissen, ohne Selbstbewußtseyn."

27. About the transcendental function of the "question", see WL-1801/02, GA II/6, 174 and GWL, GA I/2, 403.

28. WL-1801/02, GA II/6, 182.

29. "Aber in der Anschauung ist, was in ihr ist, schlechthin weil es ist: mithin nicht mehr, schlechthin was es ist. Daher könnte diese Anschauung sich nicht anschauen, in keinem Wissen vorkommen, sondern sie vernichtete ihre Form schlechthin durch ihre Materie." (GA II/6, 182)

30. WL-1804-II, GA II/8, 182-183.

31. WL-1805, GA II/9, 182: "Der Satz: das Wissen an sich ist das, ist ohne Zweifel selbst wieder ein Wissen."

32. WL-1805, GA II/9, 291: "Die alten Metaphysiker haben daher sehr richtig die Form der höchsten, u. absoluten Einsicht gefaßt. Nur sie realisieren wollen, war ein misgriff. [...] Eine solche Einsicht ist in ihr selbst widersprechend; denn Einsicht setzt Objektivität der Glieder, noch dazu zweier; Gottes inneres Wesen aber ist Immanenz u, Einheit. [...] (Ferner, auf der Unmöglichkeit dieses Beweises beruht die Möglichkeit des Bewußtseyns."

33. WL-1807, GA II/10, 171-172: "Er [sc. Gott] offenbart sich nur, als der nie zu offenbarende. [...] Könnte er jemals ganz, so wie er ist, eintreten in die Erscheinungen so wäre diese zu Ende. Nur daß sein unmittelbar niemals zu realisierender Trieb die Wurzel unsers scheinbaren Daseyns ist, bürgt uns für die Unendlichkeit dieses unser scheinbares Daseyn."

34. WL-1805, GA II/9, 257“das absolute verändert durch das Existieren sein eigenes inneres Wesen absolute, unwiederbringlich.”

35. Cf. WL-1807, GA II/10, 193.

36. WL-1801/02, GA II/6, 321: “Nur nach vollendeter Zeit wäre die Intelligenz ganz und durchaus Freiheit; dann aber wäre sie nichts.”

37. GWL, GA I/2, 311.

38. WL-1807, GA II/10, 112.

ABSTRACTS

This paper studies cases of paradox and circular formulations from the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794/1795 until the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1805. Such formulae are required to produce some of the main concepts of Fichte’s thought, and allow us to draw both systematic and historical-conceptual conclusions about it. After a general presentation of the form and development of the WL, some examples of paradoxical or circular formulae are studied: As a conclusion it is shown why in the WL “we do not so much explain the *explicandum* as show, rather, that, and why, it is inexplicable.” The paradox and circular formulae converge on an interpretation of Fichte’s Science of Knowledge as a self-referent and self-contained system of incompleteness .

INDEX

Keywords: paradox, circular argument, incompleteness

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Ives Radrizzani

1. Introduction

- ¹ En choisissant d'utiliser pour désigner sa philosophie le terme de „Doctrin de la Science“ (*Wissenschaftslehre*), Fichte inscrit délibérément son projet philosophique sous l'idée de science. La première occurrence connue à ce jour du terme de „Doctrin de la Science“ dans le corpus fichtéen figure dans un texte datant de février 1794 et publié il y a tout juste 20 ans sous le titre de *Züricher Vorlesungen über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* , ¹ offrant une première version de ce que Fichte fera paraître quelques mois plus tard dans l'opuscule programmatique: *Sur le concept de la Doctrin de la Science* . ² Fichte écrit dans cette première version zurichoise de la *Begriffsschrift* que „la philosophie serait la science en soi, la science de la science en général, ou la *Doctrin de la Science* “ et ajoute: „Le terme de *philosophie* ne peut guère être conservé. Il deviendra inutilisable“. ³ La version imprimée du texte précise les raisons de la caducité escomptée du terme de „philosophie“: „Cette science, pour peu qu'elle devînt jamais science, abandonnerait non sans raison un nom qu'elle a porté jusqu'ici par une modestie qui n'était pas excessive – le nom d'une prédilection, d'une marotte, d'un dilettantisme (*den Namen einer Kennerei, einer Liebhaberei, eines Dilettantism*)“. ⁴ L'utilisation du terme de Doctrin de la Science est donc soumise à une condition: ce n'est qu'une fois que la philosophie aura véritablement été élevée au rang de science qu'elle méritera pleinement de renoncer à l'appellation sous laquelle elle est traditionnellement connue et pourra légitimement être qualifiée de „Doctrin de la Science“. Surenchérissant sur le fameux passage de la Préface de la seconde édition de la *Critique de la raison pure* , dans lequel Kant déplorait que la métaphysique n'ait „pas encore été jusqu'ici assez favorisée du destin pour pouvoir prendre le chemin sûr d'une science“, ⁵ Fichte se propose de

remédier au dilettantisme qu'il impute à ses prédécesseurs et de mener à bien la tâche identifiée mais laissée ouverte par Kant: élever la philosophie au rang d'une science rigoureuse. Fichte en est en effet convaincu: ni Kant, ni son successeur Reinhold, ne seraient parvenus à s'acquitter de cette tâche, et à l'instar de Kant qui avait eu besoin d'un Hume pour être tiré de son sommeil dogmatique,⁶ il aurait eu lui-même besoin d'une médiation sceptique, comme il le confesse dans la Préface à la *Begriffsschrift*, pour prendre la mesure de l'insuffisance de la solution proposée par ses prédécesseurs.⁷ Au reste, écrit-il dans l'*Essai d'une nouvelle présentation de la Doctrine de la Science*, si Kant avait été en mesure d'apporter à la philosophie critique cet achèvement systématique, nécessaire selon lui pour élever la philosophie au rang d'une science rigoureuse, „l'auteur de la Doctrine de la Science se serait épargné le travail et aurait choisi de s'attacher à une autre branche du savoir humain“.⁸

- 2 En retenant la désignation de „Doctrine de la Science“ pour désigner les diverses présentations de son système, Fichte veut donner à penser qu'il aurait conféré à la philosophie cette systématité jusqu'alors vainement recherchée et qu'il peut désormais se passer du terme désormais caduc de philosophie. Mais la multiplicité des enveloppes dans lesquelles il a présenté sa doctrine n'est-elle pas en contradiction avec le caractère de scientificité qui, selon la conception ordinaire, exige l'unité? Et chaque nouvelle présentation de la Doctrine de la Science n'est-elle pas en quelque sorte un aveu de défaite: l'indice d'une incapacité à arrêter sous une forme fixe le système un et éternel prétendument découvert? Le but de cette contribution est d'engager une réflexion sur la conception fichtéenne de système. Nous nous arrêterons en particulier au rapport entre philosophie et langage, ce qui fera l'objet de notre première partie, et au rapport entre philosophie et vie, à quoi nous consacrerons la seconde partie.

1.1. L'unicité de l'objet de la Doctrine de la Science

- 3 En guise d'introduction à son système, Fichte s'est servi à plusieurs reprises du *Bourgeois gentilhomme* de Molière.⁹ De même que Maître Jourdain prend soudain conscience qu'il a toujours parlé en prose, de même celui qui s'élève au point de vue philosophique, ou transcendantal, prend conscience des opérations nécessaires de son esprit et de son corps dont il s'acquitte au point de vue de la conscience naturelle sans en être conscient. L'ensemble des opérations requises pour que l'homme puisse prendre conscience de lui-même constituent un système.
- 4 Le philosophe transcendantal n'a pas à „inventer“ ce système, il a seulement à le „découvrir“, et Fichte n'hésite pas pour illustrer son propos à établir un

parallèle avec les lois de la physique: de même que le physicien n'a pas à inventer les lois de la physique, lesquelles agissent indépendamment de la connaissance que nous en avons – Fichte mentionne en particulier les lois de l'électricité ¹⁰ –, de même le philosophe n'aurait pas à inventer les lois de la conscience, qui opèrent indépendamment de la conscience que nous en avons.

- 5 La Doctrine de la Science comme système vise la présentation du système de l'esprit qui est son objet. Plus précisément, la nature systématique de la Doctrine de la Science tient à la nature systématique de son objet, l'esprit humain, dont elle prétend uniquement être l'«historiographe», selon la formule bien connue de la *Begriffsschrift* . ¹¹
- 6 Le système transcendantal peut être achevé, car le nombre des conditions qui ont dû être remplies pour permettre la conscience est fini. «Achever» la philosophie revient dès lors à établir le répertoire exhaustif des actions originaires qui doivent être opérées pour permettre la conscience, autrement dit à énumérer l'ensemble des conditions transcendantales de la conscience.

1.2. Multiplicité des présentations de la Doctrine de la Science

- 7 Fichte n'a pas présenté sous une forme unique cet objet un qui fait l'objet de la Doctrine de la Science. Une série impressionnante de présentations s'égrènent au fil de son parcours . Il est difficile d'en fixer le nombre exact. Dans un article récent, Günter Zöller a pensé pouvoir en dénombrer dix-sept, cherchant à établir de façon un peu forcée un parallélisme avec les dix-sept quatuors à cordes de Beethoven. ¹² Peu importe au fond le nombre précis. Il est suffisamment important, pour que l'on puisse écarter l'hypothèse d'un tâtonnement fortuit. Fichte a délibérément choisi de multiplier les entrées dans son système, s'évertuant à modifier autant que faire se peut terminologie, structure, méthode. Selon une formule heureuse de Reinhard Lauth souvent utilisée dans ses cours, Fichte a fait œuvre de „polyglotte“. Il s'est appliqué sa vie durant à mettre en pratique le programme esquissé dans une lettre à Reinhold: „Ma théorie doit être présentée de façon infiniment variée, chacun la pensera – et devra la penser –autrement, pour la penser par lui-même“. ¹³ Hostile à toute pétrification de la lettre de son système, qui permettrait aux aveugles de l'esprit d'avoir trop facilement l'impression de pouvoir s'en rendre maître en se dispensant de l'effort de penser par eux-mêmes, Fichte s'est plu à mettre en œuvre une technique de fluidification de la pensée qui contraigne chacun à se livrer à une véritable expérimentation mentale, sans repères trop commodes auxquels se raccrocher: „J'ai cherché autant que possible, écrit-il dans l'Avertissement à la première édition des

Principes de la Doctrine de la Science, à éviter une terminologie fixe, qui permettrait aisément aux ‚myopes de l’esprit’ (*Buchstäbler*) de vider tout système de sa substance et de le transformer en squelette desséché“. ¹⁴ Son œuvre, telle qu’elle se présente à nous, s’offre comme un véritable laboratoire vivant de pensée. Fichte, comme il le déclare expressément, s’est fait une „maxime“ (*Maxime*) de ce programme de fluidification, et indique qu’il y restera fidèle dans de futures présentations de son système. ¹⁵ Il réaffirme par exemple dans la *Doctrine de la Science nova methodo* son intention d’éviter toute terminologie fixe, ajoutant en lançant une pointe contre Kant que c’est en adoptant le parti contraire que celui-ci se serait fait „tant d’adeptes“. ¹⁶ Avant de s’indigner contre la naïveté d’un tel procédé, si contraire à notre conception de la scientificité, tout entière inscrite sous la bannière de la philologie, force est d’admirer l’étonnante vitalité d’esprit et le puissant génie dialectique à l’œuvre, qui conduit Fichte à remettre quelque dix-sept fois le travail sur le métier pour éviter de se laisser emprisonner dans quelque lettre que ce soit.

- 8 Moyen didactique, cette „variation à l’infini“ est-elle une fin en soi ou doit-elle être considérée comme une simple propédeutique à une présentation définitive qui fixerait pour toujours la lettre de cette philosophie „tout esprit“? Certaines déclarations de Fichte donnent à penser qu’il avait bel et bien en vue une telle présentation „finale“, suggérant que les versions de la *Doctrine de la Science* ne seraient que des approximations imparfaites et provisoires destinées à être supplantées par un exposé définitif, une fois les conditions réunies. C’est ainsi qu’il écrit dans l’Avertissement à la première édition des *Principes de la Doctrine de la Science* qu’il restera „fidèle à cette maxime [consistant à éviter autant que possible une terminologie fixe] dans de futures élaborations du système jusqu’à la présentation finale achevée (*endliche vollendete Darstellung*) de celui-ci“. ¹⁷
- 9 On est en droit de s’interroger sur le statut d’une telle déclaration. Fichte n’avait-il pas quelques mois plus tôt écrit dans les *Conférences sur la destination du savant* que la „perfection“ (*Vollkommenheit*) serait le but suprême mais inaccessible de l’homme, lui assignant uniquement comme sa destination propre de s’approcher indéfiniment de ce but dans un processus de „perfectionnement à l’infini“ (*Vervollkommnung ins Unendliche*). ¹⁸ Or on ne voit pas comment Fichte, sauf à s’affranchir de sa condition humaine, aurait jamais pu se trouver en position de présenter la version „finale achevée“ de son système, et ce qui aurait pu le motiver à tuer l’esprit de sa philosophie, auquel il tient tant, en l’enfermant dans une lettre, toute parfaite fut-elle.
- 10 Quoi qu’il en soit, le fait est que Fichte n’a jamais écrit une telle „présentation finale achevée“.

2. I. Philosophie et langage

2.1. La Doctrine de la Science comme „actologie“ et l’inadéquation radicale du langage

- 11 Allons plus loin et demandons-nous s’il y a des raisons systématiques qui rendent la Doctrine de la Science particulièrement perméable au danger de pétrification. Un premier élément de réponse consiste dans la nature du langage, à l’égard duquel Fichte nourrit une méfiance radicale et qui s’avère particulièrement peu approprié au caractère spécifique de la Doctrine de la Science.
- 12 Il n’est bien sûr pas possible de faire complètement l’économie du langage, véhicule par excellence de la sollicitation nécessaire à l’éveil de la conscience, instrument privilégié de communication, mais le philosophe ne doit avoir de cesse de se méfier de son pouvoir mortifère et d’en dénoncer la portée dogmatisante. Sans langage, il n’y aurait, cela va de soi, pas de philosophie, mais le langage trahit perpétuellement la philosophie, fossilise le fluide, transforme en quasi chose l’acte, et fait constamment resurgir le spectre du dogmatisme. Le langage est à la fois un outil incontournable et foncièrement inadéquat.
- 13 Sans langage, il n’y aurait pas de philosophie. La pensée s’articule en concepts, et le langage se prête en particulier à assurer une fonction logique, que Fichte s’est toujours appliqué à respecter. C’est ainsi que dans les *Principes*, Fichte met le plus grand soin à établir la structure formelle: même celui qui ne serait pas en mesure de procéder sur lui-même à l’expérimentation demandée, ce dont Fichte prend la peine de spécifier que ce ne saurait être le cas d’aucun être raisonnable fini, „devrait cependant en concéder la justesse formelle“. ¹⁹
- 14 La fonction logique ne constitue toutefois que l’un des aspects du langage. La spécificité de la Doctrine de la Science est de ne pas avoir principalement affaire à des faits (*Tatsachen*), à des concepts, à des choses quelles qu’elles soient. En tant qu’analyse immanente des conditions de la conscience, elle ne s’occupe que d’actes (*Tathandlungen*). Pour utiliser une expression chère à Augustin Dumont, elle est en son essence „actologie“ ²⁰, et le langage est l’outil pour communiquer une série de consignes devant permettre à l’interlocuteur ou au lecteur de produire librement l’acte sollicité. Concernant cette dimension actologique, Fichte exprime de très fortes réserves à l’encontre du langage, qui, par une pente naturelle, aurait tendance à transformer l’acte en chose, à faire prévaloir l’être sur la genèse, à

briser la dynamique de la pensée.

- 15 La construction rigoureusement géométrique adoptée pour la présentation des principes dans la *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* paraît répondre à certains égards au critère de scientificité revendiqué par Fichte pour son système. En réalité, ce n'est pas fausse modestie si Fichte a très rapidement marqué son insatisfaction à l'égard de la forme adoptée dans cette première version de son système. Et s'il se fixe pour but de produire une philosophie scientifique qui puisse se mesurer aux mathématiques, ²¹ cela n'implique nullement que la scientificité recherchée doive se calquer sur le modèle des mathématiques. Sans doute, la preuve en géométrie, fondée sur une construction supportée par l'intuition, fera toujours, pour Fichte, y compris dans sa période dite tardive, figure de modèle. Mais si les mathématiques, et plus particulièrement la géométrie, offrent un exemple réussi de formalisation appuyée sur une intuition, qui leur procure la rigueur et la certitude et dont la philosophie, à l'instar des autres sciences, a intérêt à s'inspirer si tant est qu'elle veuille s'engager sur la «sûre route de la science», elles ne détiennent nullement le monopole du modèle de formalisation correspondant au critère formel de la science, pas plus qu'elles ne détiennent le monopole de la certitude correspondant à son critère matériel et, en tant que science dérivée, doivent être strictement subordonnées à la Doctrine de la Science qui, comme science première, doit fonder aussi bien leur forme que la certitude de leur principe premier. Fichte reproche en particulier aux *Principes* le caractère artificiel de la démarche adoptée, où structure formelle et mise en œuvre du pouvoir de vision se trouvent dissociés, et il s'emploiera dans les exposés ultérieurs à remédier à ce défaut, dû selon lui à une trop grande complaisance à l'égard de la tradition. C'est ainsi qu'il renonce dans la *Doctrine de la Science nova methodo* à la division entre théorie et pratique et présente, „selon une démarche bien plus naturelle“ la „philosophie même“, théorie et pratique liées. ²²
- 16 L'important remaniement méthodique opéré dans la *Doctrine de la Science nova methodo* semble bien aller dans la direction de cette „actologie“ qui constitue l'essence de la Doctrine de la Science, et c'est en ce sens que Fichte peut parler d'une démarche plus naturelle. Toutefois, l'amélioration apportée ne permet pas d'éliminer le danger de réification inhérent selon lui au langage, et c'est pourquoi il persévère dans son refus à mettre en place une terminologie fixe.
- 17 Pour écrire la „présentation finale achevée“ dont il a été question, il faudrait trouver le moyen d'inventer un nouveau langage qui ne donne aucune prise à la tendance réifiante du langage ordinaire, un langage purement performatif où l'esprit ne vienne pas butter contre la lettre.

2.2. La ruse du langage et la dimension ironique

- 18 L'une des techniques développées par Fichte pour pallier au défaut intrinsèque du langage consiste en une stratégie de communication qu'il m'est arrivé à plusieurs reprises de qualifier de „ruse du langage“, par analogie avec la ruse de la raison. Cette technique, présente à travers tout le corpus fichtéen et déjà clairement identifiée par Xavier Léon en son temps, ²³ mérite bien ce qualificatif de „ruse du langage“ car elle vise à miner en quelque sorte de l'intérieur le discours de celui à qui il s'adresse. Par le truchement de cet artifice langagier, Fichte entre en quelque sorte dans le jeu de ses adversaires ou de ses interlocuteurs, emprunte par exemple leur terminologie, non pas qu'il veuille signifier par là une quelconque concession ou un inflexissement de sa pensée, mais parce qu'il estime qu'il s'agit du moyen privilégié pour se faire entendre d'eux et pour les amener dialectiquement à la Doctrine de la Science. Face aux Romantiques il parlera en romantique; dans le contexte de l'occupation napoléonienne il mimera un langage nationaliste; en Loge il adoptera la phraséologie maçonnique ; face à Jacobi il deviendra un philosophe de la vie ; face à Schelling et à Hegel il singera un discours ontologique. ²⁴ Cette utilisation curieuse du langage avait déjà frappé les contemporains; c'est ainsi que Jean Paul disait de la *Destination de l'homme* qu'elle était écrite dans un „chiffre destructeur“ (*vernichtende Chiffre*), parce que, „pour les lecteurs exotériques“, elle „signifie toujours le contraire“. ²⁵ Le langage fichtéen est creusé d'une dimension ironique ²⁶ invitant à briser l'univocité de la lettre et nécessitant une lecture dynamique. La lettre ne se donne pas simplement. Elle convie à un acte interprétatif censé ouvrir l'œil de l'esprit. Mais ce procédé langagier qui exige de la part de l'interprète un sens aiguisé de la dialectique, a été la source d'innombrables malentendus. Doit-on s'imaginer que dans la „présentation finale achevée“, Fichte aurait supprimé cette dimension ironique qui fait l'originalité de sa contribution, du point de vue de la stratégie de communication, et dont le but est notamment de contribuer à remédier à la tendance réifiante du langage ordinaire, mais toujours liée à une situation ad hoc et donc apparemment peu compatible avec la prétention éternitaire d'une présentation „finale“?

3. II. Philosophie et vie

3.1. L'ouverture sur la vie

- 19 Il y aurait sans doute beaucoup à dire sur la conception fichtéenne du langage, mais la difficulté à trouver un langage adapté au caractère de la Doctrine de la Science comme actologie n'est pas l'unique raison de l'inachèvement du système fichtéen. Une raison plus profonde tient à la forme même de la Doctrine de la Science. Système clos en tant que description de la structure de la conscience, elle est en même temps un système ouvert. Reinhard Lauth a très bien montré comment la philosophie transcendantale, faisant fond sur la liberté qui est, par essence, non déductible, reconnaît *a priori* et par principe que la réalité dans sa totalité comprend une partie non déductible qui n'est saisissable qu'*a posteriori*. Si la philosophie en tant que Doctrine de la Science peut être achevée, c'est que, par principe, elle ne prétend pas épuiser le concret dans sa concrétude et se meut uniquement sur le plan des principes. Autrement dit, elle procède à une déduction strictement *a priori*. Se mouvant sur le plan de l'*a priori*, elle ne peut pas déduire l'*a posteriori*. En revanche, ce qu'elle peut déduire, c'est qu'il doit y avoir de l'*a posteriori*. Pour l'exprimer dans les termes de Lauth, la déduction transcendantale des conditions de la conscience met en lumière la nécessité qu'il y ait du „concret“, mais ne peut pas déduire le „concrètement concret“, le concret dans sa concrétude. ²⁷
- 20 Or, avant d'être philosophe, le philosophe est d'abord un être immergé dans la vie, historiquement engagé dans une situation unique, répondant aux sollicitations spécifiques qui lui ont été adressées et qui seules lui ont permis de s'élever à la conscience. La vie n'est pas un appendice facultatif qui vient s'ajouter au système, c'est au contraire le système qui vient toujours se développer sur fond de vie. Le philosophe ne peut pas se trouver sans se trouver engagé dans un tissu social d'une extrême complexité, fait d'un jeu de libres entre-sollicitations non déductibles qui offrent une matière infinie à la tâche de rationalisation qu'il s'impose librement.
- 21 La Doctrine de la Science n'est pas et ne prétend pas être une *philosophia perennis*, contrairement à ce que certains de ses interprètes les plus distingués ont pu affirmer. Elle n'est pas une *philosophia perennis* et, d'une façon plus générale, une philosophie de l'absolu, et si l'absolu est appelé à jouer un rôle important en elle, c'est au titre de principe d'explication de la conscience, du point de vue de la finitude qui est le sien, parce qu'elle est philosophie transcendantale, soucieuse de ne pas transcender les limites de la conscience et de produire la genèse de l'hors-conscience admis par le point

de vue de la conscience commune.

- 22 La formidable dialectique à l'oeuvre dans les *Principes* a précisément pour résultat le plus remarquable de montrer que le sens de l'absoluité du premier *Grundsatz* ne devient clair que dans la partie pratique, une fois ce dernier ramené au statut d'une „idée“ de la raison.
- 23 Mettre l'accent sur la partie principielle du système et sur sa clôture, ce qui relève à mon avis d'une fascination pour une conception pérenne de la philosophie, à laquelle Fichte, on l'a vu, n'a lui-même pas toujours été insensible, est une tendance fortement représentée dans la tradition exégétique, mais revient à oublier cet ancrage dans la vie, si emphatiquement souligné par Fichte lui-même et que le système, malgré tout l'achèvement auquel il peut par ailleurs prétendre, est à l'infini incapable de résorber entièrement et qui, par conséquent échappe à l'infini à sa volonté de contrôle et d'arrondissement. Exprimé négativement: l'ouverture est le défaut de la cuirasse, le point faible du système. Exprimé positivement: l'incontrôlabilité est la raison pour laquelle il y aura toujours besoin de la philosophie.

4. Conclusion

- 24 Nous sommes partis de la constatation d'une étonnante discrédance entre l'unité de la science recherchée et la multiplicité des présentations que Fichte a livré de cette science une, ce qui nous a amené dans un premier temps à nous intéresser au problème du langage. Malgré la déclaration explicite de Fichte évoquant la possibilité d'une présentation finale définitive de la Doctrine de la Science, il ne nous a pas été possible d'identifier un langage particulier qui convienne de façon privilégiée à l'exposé de l'édifice scientifique. Au contraire, il est apparu que le langage (en tant que, par son inscription dans le monde phénoménal, il comporte nécessairement une part de lettre – et cela est *a fortiori* valable du langage écrit) se trouve radicalement inapproprié pour rendre compte de la Doctrine de la Science qui, en tant qu'actologie, est tout esprit. L'unique moyen dont dispose le philosophe pour pallier à ce défaut inhérent à l'essence même du langage est de développer des stratégies de communication aptes à en démasquer la tendance ontologisante. L'un des dispositifs mis en place par Fichte pour faire apparaître le décalage entre esprit et lettre est le procédé de distanciation ironique instauré par le recours à la technique de la ruse du langage. L'important n'étant pas la lettre mais l'esprit, peu importe au fond la lettre utilisée, elle devra toujours signifier sa défaillance, renvoyer en négatif à l'esprit qu'elle ne peut que trahir. Même si Fichte a pu suggérer la possibilité d'élaborer une version définitive de son système, la Doctrine de la Science nous paraît nécessairement devoir rester inachevée.

25 Dans un second temps, nous nous sommes intéressés au rapport entre philosophie et vie et nous sommes parvenus à la conclusion que, même si l'on admettait que la Doctrine de la Science puisse parvenir à un achèvement sur le côté des principes, elle comprend par principe une ouverture sur la vie qui brise cet achèvement. La philosophie est constamment et inéluctablement renvoyée à la vie. La clôture est nécessairement un but qu'elle se fixe en point de mire. Mais la clôture est un but que nécessairement elle n'atteindra jamais, sauf à s'affranchir des lois de la finitude. La philosophie fichtéenne est radicalement une philosophie de la finitude, de l'existence, une philosophie qui s'enracine dans la vie, une philosophie du risque et de l'engagement, devant laquelle s'ouvre une tâche infinie. Ce n'est pas un hasard si Fichte n'a jamais produit l'exposé définitif un temps envisagé. On peut se livrer à un petit jeu de devinettes : et s'il avait vécu plus longtemps, y serait-il jamais parvenu ? Ma thèse est que sa philosophie est foncièrement réfractaire à toute clôture définitive, et cela pour des raisons d'ordre systématique. Le philosophe est dans le labyrinthe de la vie, et ce labyrinthe – belle lapalissade – est une impasse sans issue dont il ne sortira jamais. Mais la tâche infinie qui s'ouvre devant lui, loin d'être une faiblesse, est tout au contraire sa force. C'est le prix à payer pour rester une philosophie de la finitude, dénonçant toutes les impostures de la raison visant un arraisonnement définitif du réel et une mise sous tutelle de la vie. C'est pour une raison systématique que la philosophie fichtéenne est et demeure un système inachevé. Cet inachèvement, impliqué par l'ouverture sur la vie, est au demeurant l'unique inachèvement possible compatible avec l'idée de Doctrine de la Science conçue comme système clos des conditions transcendantales de la conscience. Plus précisément, abstraction faite de la question du langage, l'achèvement spécifique de la Doctrine de la Science est de ne point tolérer d'autre inachèvement que l'ouverture sur la vie requise par le système.

NOTES

1. FICHTE, J. G., *Züricher Vorlesungen über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre. Februar 1794. Nachschrift Lavater*, ed. Erich Fuchs, Neuried: Ars Una, 1996.

2. FICHTE, J. G., *Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie, als Einladungsschrift zu seinen Vorlesungen über diese Wissenschaft*, Weimar 1794.

3. RADRIZZANI, I., „La ‚Première‘ Doctrine de la Science de Fichte. Introduction et traduction“ [= Cours zurichois], in : *Archives de Philosophie*, 60/4 (1997), pp. 615–658,

641 (ZV, GA IV/3, 22).

4. Cf. „Sur le concept de la Doctrine de la Science ou de ce que l'on appelle philosophie“, in: Fichte, *Essais philosophiques choisis (1794-1795)* [= Concept], trad. L. Ferry et A. Renaut, Paris 1984, p. 36 (trad. revue; BWL, GA I/2, 117 sq.).

5. *Critique de la raison pure*, trad. J.-L. Delamarre et F. Marty, in: E. Kant, *Œuvres philosophiques* [= OP], vol. I, Paris 1980, p. 738 (B XIV).

6. Cf. KANT, E., *Prolégomènes à toute métaphysique future qui pourra se présenter comme science*, trad. J. Rivelaygue, in: OP, vol. II, Paris 1985, p. 23 (AA IV, 260).

7. Cf. *Concept*, p. 19: „L'auteur de cet essai fut, par la lecture de nouveaux sceptiques, particulièrement de l'*Enésidème* et des excellents écrits de Maimon, pleinement convaincu de ce qui pour lui avait déjà été extrêmement vraisemblable: que la philosophie, même à travers les plus récents efforts des hommes les plus pénétrants, n'a pas encore été élevée au rang d'une science évidente.“ (BWL, GA I/2, 109).

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21. Cf. la lettre de Fichte à F. V. Reinhard du 15 janvier 1794, GA III/2, 39 sq.

22. DSNM, p. 49 (WLnM-H, GA IV/2, 17).

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RÉSUMÉS

For some years Fichte seems to have envisioned the possibility of presenting a definitive and final version of his *Science of Knowledge*. This article develops two reasons why such a project is structurally impossible. On the one hand, Fichte, inspired by the tradition of negative theology, challenges the capacity of language of being pure performativity: it always involves an element of letter which prevents it from being all spirit. On the other hand, the opening of the system to life implies a kind of incompleteness which is the only possible and consistent with the idea of the Doctrine of Science (understood as closed system of transcendental conditions of consciousness). More precisely, the specific completion of the Doctrine of Science cannot tolerate another kind of incompleteness but that resulting of the opening to the life required by the system.

INDEX

Keywords : life, system, incompleteness

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Fichte and the Body in Action

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- 1 The purpose of this paper is to zoom in on some fundamental aspects of Fichte's transcendental account of the body in action, as laid down in the introductory remarks to his 1798 *Sittenlehre*. ¹
- 2 Before we plunge *in medias res* three things should be borne in mind.
- 3 *First*, what we are dealing with here is a *transcendental* account. This means Fichte focuses on mere *Vorstellungen*, or to be more precise, on what he terms "das System des nothwendigen Denkens". ² On the one hand, the point is that, in the final analysis, everything we deal with has the nature of a *Vorstellung* –and that this holds true even for what claims to be more than just a *Vorstellung*. On the other hand, the point is that some *Vorstellungen* are absolutely *necessary*, both in the sense that they must occur (that they are an indispensable condition of *it all*) and in the sense that they are an indispensable condition of *one another* and cannot occur without each other.
- 4 *Secondly*, it should be borne in mind that in Fichte's view one of these necessary representations is the representation of *efficacious action* (*Wirksamkeit*) – or, to be more precise, of "first-person efficacious action": of my efficacious action or of "*meine Wirksamkeit*" ³ viz. of what he terms "*efficacy exercised upon something outside of me* [*Wirksamkeit auf etwas außer mir*]". ⁴ It is the representation according to which at least some of "my representations have an effect upon the world": ⁵ "something objective results from what is subjective" ⁶ –"a being corresponds to and follows from our representations", ⁷ so that we "take some of our representations to be the ground of a being" ⁸ (i.e., of things that supposedly exist independently of any representation). ⁹
- 5 Among other things, Fichte draws attention to the fact that the representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* is intrinsically complex: it cannot take place as a single representation of a simple content. In other words, the representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* (of my own efficacy or efficacious action) requires a *manifold* of representations – a complex set of representations that are entailed in it. ¹⁰ And here is where the *body* (N.B. *my body* viz. *one's body*)

comes into play. Fichte claims that the representation of one's body is part and parcel of the representation of one's *Wirksamkeit überhaupt* : i.e. that the latter cannot take place without the former, so that the representation of one's body is necessarily *contained* and *posited* in the representation of one's *Wirksamkeit* .

- 6 And this is what “the body in action” is all about. Fichte speaks of the representation of one's own body as a condition *sine qua non* for the representation of one's efficacious action (*Wirksamkeit*). He speaks of my body as a *Vorstellung* – the point being that, in the final analysis, my body is a *complex set of representations* . And he speaks of the body in *action* – the point being that action is more than just a particular feature of one's body among many others: the representation of one's efficacious action is rather the framework within which the representation of one's body is formed – it is *what constitutes one's body (my body) as such* .
- 7 But this is not all. *Thirdly* it must be borne in mind that, in Fichte's view, representing one's own body is not just an indispensable component without which there can be no representation of one's *Wirksamkeit* – as if the latter were just one possible representation among many others. His point is that “without this consciousness of my own efficacy, there is no self-consciousness; without self-consciousness, there is no consciousness of something else that is not supposed to be I myself”. ¹¹ In other words, Fichte's point is that the representation of my *Wirksamkeit* is an indispensable condition for the representation of *everything überhaupt* – and that pretty much the same holds true for the representation of one's body: as a necessary component of the representation of one's *Wirksamkeit* , it, too, is an indispensable condition for the representation of *everything überhaupt*; so that according to him the representation of one's own body plays a *transcendental role* in the strictest sense of the term: it is somehow entailed in *all* our representations without exception. In short, one's body is the very opposite of what it seems to be (a contingent, particular, empirical representation): it is necessary, anything but particular and anything but empirical: it is “contained in consciousness as such and is necessarily posited along with it [*im Bewußtseyn überhaupt enthalten, und mit demselben nothwendig gesetzt sey*]”. ¹²
- 8 With this by way of introduction, let us now plunge *in medias res* .

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- 9 First of all, Fichte focuses on two representations that are entailed in the representation of one's *Wirksamkeit* – and indeed so much so that they are, as it were, the two poles around which everything else revolves.

- 10 On the one hand, “I act efficaciously” (*ich wirke*) is not possible without some representation of *myself*: it all depends on the fundamental representation of the I viz. of *Ichheit* (*I-hood*) – that is, of subjectivity as such. My *Wirksamkeit* means: “I am the ground of this change”,¹³ i.e.: “that which knows about this change is also that which effectuates it”, so that “the subject of consciousness and the principle of efficacy are one”.¹⁴ When I ascribe efficacious activity to myself I ascribe it to what is *subjective* in me. “I posit myself absolutely as active”,¹⁵ so that the action in question “starts with what is subjective, as determining what is objective”.¹⁶ The principle is “das Subjective” –the action in question is originally determined by what is subjective (by *myself*, by what is *subjective* in me)– “and indeed so much so that what is subjective in me is not in turn determined by something else objective but is determined absolutely in and through itself [nicht wieder durch ein anderes objective bestimmt werden kann, sondern absolut in, und durch sich selbst bestimmt ist]”.¹⁷
- 11 When we speak of subjectivity and I-hood it should, of course, be borne in mind that what we are talking about is not entirely free of an *objective* element. Fichte himself emphasizes that “I make a distinction within myself between a knowing subject and a real force, which, as such, does not *know* but *is*.”¹⁸ He points out that what is subjective in me presupposes and requires something objective and *vice versa*, so that “I view the two as absolutely one”.¹⁹ Or, as he also puts it, “I do not know anything about myself without becoming something for myself through this knowledge –or, which is simply to say the same thing, without separating something subjective in me from something objective”.²⁰ And, what is more,
- “through this very separation (...) the relation of what is subjective and what is objective to each other is also immediately posited. What is objective is supposed to subsist through itself, without any help from what is subjective and independently of it. What is subjective is supposed to depend on what is objective and to receive its material determination from it alone. Being exists on its own, but knowledge depends on being.”²¹
- 12 Fichte’s point is of course not that there is such a thing as an absolutely independent being of the I, which is there regardless of whether there is any knowledge (any *Wissen*) or not. He is speaking of the being of *subjectivity itself* – i.e. of the being of *Wissen* viz. of knowledge (i.e. of something that simply does not exist if there is no *Wissen*). In other words, Fichte’s point is precisely that in the case of the I there are not two completely separate elements, subjectivity and objectivity. His point is that *neither of them exists without the other*. His point is that in this case both elements result from a *Trennung* (a separation) that is part and parcel of the representation of I-hood as such:

“they [knowledge and being] are separated only within consciousness [...] and it is only through this separation that the two of them first arise. [...] I am required to bring about a separation simply in order to be able to say to myself “I”; and yet it is only by saying “I” and only insofar as I say this that such separation occurs”. ²²

- 13 We can also express this by saying that the I is of such a nature that I must represent it both as *something I know because it is* and as *something which is only because I know it*: “I know myself because I am, and I am because I know myself [ich weiß von mir dadurch, daß ich bin und bin dadurch, daß ich von mir weiß]”. ²³ And when Fichte emphasizes that in this case too what is subjective is supposed to depend on what is objective, etc., he is only stressing the fact that subjectivity or *Wissen*, too, has a cognitive relation to itself, and that this cognitive relation of subjectivity viz. *Wissen* to itself is such that it “witnesses” its own being and sees its knowledge of itself as determined by its own being.
- 14 But be that as is may (and even if there is no “chemically pure” subjectivity), the crucial point is that in order for there to be any efficacious activity of *mine*, activity must be started and determined by what is *subjective* (not by what is *objective*) in me. The action is *mine* if and only if it stems from *the subjective* in me. If it stems from something else, then the I (the subjective in me) does not start and determine the action in question: even if the I is there and plays a certain role, it is not itself the agent, it is *acted upon* (or it plays the role of the *agent* only insofar as it is *acted upon* –which amounts to saying that it is not the agent at all). The result being that, in the final analysis, the action (the *Wirksamkeit*) is not mine. Or, as Horace puts it, if the action is not started and determined by what is subjective in me, “duc [or] ut nervis alienis mobile lignum ” ²⁴ –I am not the *agent* of the activity in question; I am just a means (a link in the chain) of something else’s activity (a *puppet* in its hands, as it were). ²⁵
- 15 But this is not all. On the other hand, there is a second absolute requirement without which it is impossible to represent such a thing as *meine Wirksamkeit*. As Fichte emphasizes, when I ascribe *activity* to *myself* “this certainly does not mean that I ascribe to myself activity in general, but rather that I ascribe to myself a determinate activity, precisely this one and not the other [eine *bestimmte*, gerade eine solche, und keine andere]”. ²⁶ But an activity “becomes determinate or determined” “merely by having some resistance posited in opposition to it – posited in opposition: that is to say, a resistance that is thought by means of ideal activity and imagined to be standing over against the latter”. ²⁷ In short: “Wherever and whenever you see activity, you necessarily see resistance as well, for otherwise you see no activity”. ²⁸

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- 16 Now, on the one hand, this means that no activity can be represented without an object (without the object *it is related to* : without *its* object). On the other hand, it also means that the object in question is necessarily represented as something *objective* – that is, as something of such a nature that in relation to it I (the subjective in me) am “entirely dependent and thoroughly constrained”,²⁹ in the sense that “ I have to consider myself purely as a cognizing subject and, in this cognition, entirely dependent upon objectivity”.³⁰ In other words, even if what is at stake is the representation of *subjective* action (i.e. of something started and determined by what is *subjective* in me, so that what is objective is determined by what is subjective, and not the other way around), the very representation of subjective action requires the representation of something *objective* , that is of something that is supposed to be there regardless of whether it is represented or not – and indeed so much so that, in this case, what is subjective (my representation of it) “is supposed to be determined by what is objective, and not vice versa”.³¹ And this is why Fichte speaks of *resistance* – and indeed of resistance to what he terms my *ideal activity* . The point is that the object of my action must be represented as something *being there* in the sense that it *impinges itself* upon my *Vorstellung* and binds my *Vorstellung* to what is there anyway, so that the *ideale Thätigkeit* sees itself *bound by –and to – something independent of it* .³²
- 17 But this is still not all; for Fichte “develops the distinctive features of this representation of resistance” and “does so merely from the manner in which it originates”.³³ According to him,
“this resistance is represented as the opposite of activity [als das Gegentheil der Thätigkeit vorgestellt], hence as something that merely endures, lying there quietly and dead [als etwas nur bestehendes, ruhig, und todt vorliegendes], as something that merely *is* and in no way *acts* [das da bloß ist, keineswegs aber *handelt*], as something that strives only to continue to exist and thus resists the influence of freedom upon its territory only with that degree of force that is required to remain what it is, but is never able to attack the latter in its own territory [das nur zu bestehen strebt, und daher allerdings mit einem Maaße von Kraft zu bleiben was es ist, der Einwirkung der Freiheit auf seinem eigenen Boden widersteht, nimmermehr aber dieselbe auf ihrem Gebiet anzugreifen vermag]. In short, resistance is represented as *mere objectivity* [bloße Objectivität]. The proper name for something of this sort is *stuff* [Stoff].”³⁴
- 18 But what does this mean? *First* , to avoid any possible misunderstanding, it should be underlined that according to Fichte the said features are what must characterize the object of my efficacious action insofar as it plays this role (i.

e. insofar as it is the object of any such action). Put another way, the point is that, regardless of whether it may play other roles and therefore present other features, as long as it is represented as *something subject to my Wirksamkeit* (as long as it is represented as the *object of meine Wirksamkeit*) it is and must be represented as *mere Stoff*.

- 19 *Secondly*, it should be borne in mind that Fichte is referring to *two kinds* of resistance, not just to one. On the one hand, as pointed out above, the object of my *Wirksamkeit* must resist what Fichte terms the *ideal activity* (*ideale Thätigkeit*): we cannot represent the object of one's *Wirksamkeit* without representing it as something that *impinges itself* upon one's *Vorstellung* and binds one's *Vorstellung* to what is there anyway. But, on the other hand, Fichte is also referring to the object's resistance to the *reale Thätigkeit* ³⁵ –his point is that, even if the object is represented as *mere Stoff*, it must be assigned at least some degree of resistance to *real activity* i.e. of resistance to one's *Wirksamkeit*, so that the latter consists precisely in the power to overcome this resistance. In other words, the object must have its own *density*, as it were; the fact a) that it has its own density and offers at least some resistance to one's *Wirksamkeit* and b) that this resistance is overcome is what *gives reality to one's action* (what makes it *real Wirken*, *real efficacy*, *real action*).
- 20 But *thirdly*, it should be borne in mind that these two kinds of resistance are intrinsically connected to each other. The point is that the object's resistance to real activity viz. to one's *Wirksamkeit* is represented as *stemming* from the fact that its independent existence (its being-itself-what-it-is – i.e. the very core of its resistance to the ideal activity) is something intrinsically *bound to itself* and which therefore *resists any interference with itself*. When Fichte contends that the object “strives to continue to exist” (*zu bestehen strebt*) “and thus resists the influence” of *Wirksamkeit* “upon its territory” (*der Einwirkung der Freiheit auf seinem eigenen Boden widersteht*), what he has in mind is this *Gebundenheit* and not something incompatible with its being *mere Stoff* (that is: “etwas nur bestehendes, ruhig, und todt vorliegendes, das da bloß ist, keineswegs aber handelt” ³⁶).
- 21 So much for the *I* and *objectivity*. Fichte calls them “the two extremes of the entire world of reason” ³⁷ in order to emphasize that all our possible representations lie *between these two extremes*: no representation goes beyond the one or the other, for there is nothing more subjective than the *I*, and nothing more objective than “the absolutely self-positing being (of the material *Stoff*)”. ³⁸ In short, the representation of the *I* is as *subjective* and the representation of what Fichte terms *Stoff* is as *objective* as a representation can possibly be. Furthermore, Fichte's point is that neither of these two extremes has to do with a “chemically pure” subject or a “chemically pure”

object. Both entail objective as well as subjective elements. As pointed out above, the representation of the I entails an indispensable objective component. And, contrary to what may seem, the representation of “the absolutely self-positing being (of the material *Stoff*)” contains an indispensable subjective component. When all is said and done, the difference between these two extremes concerns what might be termed the role played by the subjective and the objective element, their “*relation of forces*” or, as Fichte puts it, “das Verhältnis des subjectiven, und objectiven zueinander” (“the relation of what is subjective and what is objective to each other”).³⁹ In the case of the I, the subjective element is the pole around which everything revolves, so that what is subjective determines what is objective. In the case of the object viz. of what Fichte terms *Stoff*, it goes the other way around: what is objective determines what is subjective.

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- 22 But what interests us here is the fact that any representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* must entail the representation of these two extremes and indeed in such a manner that they play the role of the two poles between which everything else takes place. In other words, the representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* covers the distance between the two extremes in question, so that they define the interval – the whole field, as it were – of one’s efficacious action, and the latter is defined by the fact that it reaches *from one extreme to the other*.
- 23 But this is not all; for, on the other hand, Fichte also stresses the fact that the representation of these two extremes does not exhaust the *manifold* of representations that are entailed in the representation of one’s efficacious action.
- 24 In this respect, four things must be borne in mind.
- 25 *First*, all the other representations Fichte refers to fall within the interval between these two extremes, both in the sense that they are less subjective than the one and less objective than the other and in the sense that they have to do with the representation of *what leads from one extreme to the other* (or, as we might also say, with a *chain of mediating instances* between one extreme and the other).
- 26 *Secondly*, this means that all the other representations that according to Fichte are also entailed in the representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* concern, as he puts it, *besondere Ansichten* – particular ways of looking at or particular aspects – of the relation (that is, the separation and correspondence: the *Trennung und Übereinstimmung*)⁴⁰ between what is subjective and what is

objective. ⁴¹ In other words, what is at stake in each of these various representations is a *particular kind of connection* between the subjective and the objective element: what might be described in grammatical terms as an *inflection or declension des Verhältnisses des subjectiven, und objectiven zueinander* (of the relation of what is subjective and what is objective to each other).

27 *Thirdly*, Fichte's point is that each of these other representations he refers to is as indispensable for the representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* as the two said extremes. The representation of the extremes alone (I-hood and objectivity) is not enough to constitute a representation of *meine Wirksamkeit*: everything depends on the representation of the *transition* from one extreme to the other – i. e. on the representation of the process leading from the I to objectivity.

28 *Fourthly*, what characterizes the manifold of representations Fichte refers to is utter *asymmetry*: its *unidirectional* character. *Meine Wirksamkeit* is all about the transition from what is subjective to what is objective – and not the other way around. Fichte expresses this by speaking of the influence (*Einwirkung*) of what is *subjective* “upon the territory of objectivity”, while the latter is unable to “attack the former in its own territory.” The point is that the representation of such a thing as *meine Wirksamkeit* entails a distribution of different roles: it is all about the *subject's* capacity to *exert influence beyond its confines: in the territory of objectivity*; it is all about the subject *going beyond itself* and, as Fichte puts it, “attacking the object in its own territory”, so that the subject plays the role of the *agent* while the object plays the role of *what is acted upon*.

29 The above sets the framework for Fichte's more detailed description of the manifold of representations that are entailed as *condiciones sine quibus non* in the representation of such a thing as *meine Wirksamkeit*.

30 Fichte gives a first and provisional glimpse of this manifold in section 4 of the Introduction. The representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* must include a) a “representation of the *Stoff* that endures while I am acting efficaciously and is absolutely unchangeable thereby” (*die Vorstellung des bei meiner Wirksamkeit fortdauernden und durch sie nicht zu verändernden Stoffes*), b) a “representation of the *properties* of this *Stoff*, properties that are changed by my efficacy” (*die Vorstellung der Beschaffenheiten des Stoffes, die durch meine Wirksamkeit verändert werden*), c) a “representation of this progressive process of change” (*die Vorstellung der fortschreitenden Veränderung*), which continues d) “until the shape that I intended is there” (*bis die Gestalt dasteht, die ich beabsichtigte*).

⁴² This first and provisional glimpse (which focuses primarily on the representation of the *object* of *meine Wirksamkeit*) is completed in sections 7, 8, and 9, where more attention is paid to the complexity of what is subjective viz. of what leads *from the subject to the object*.

31 In sections 7, 8 and 9 Fichte describes in the following terms the manifold of representations that are required if there is to be any representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* :

a) The action must be represented in such a way that its starting point is the unified and indivisible I (*das Eine, untheilbare Ich*), insofar as what is subjective in me has the power to reach out beyond its own bounds towards what is objective in me, so that “that which acts upon the body” (viz. upon objective being, upon the *Stoff*) “is what is objective in me, the real force” (*dies objective in mir, die reelle Kraft*). ⁴³

32 b) I cannot represent this activity otherwise than as the “causality of a concept”: ⁴⁴ as “the causality of a mere concept exercised on what is objective, and to this extent the concept in question is not in turn determined by something else that is objective but is determined absolutely in and through itself.”. ⁴⁵ In other words, this activity cannot be represented otherwise than as the *designing of a concept* (“Entwerfen eines [...] Begriffs”) ⁴⁶ – of a concept from which an objective determination is to follow (“aus welchem eine objective Bestimmung erfolgen soll”). ⁴⁷ The representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* must take the shape of the representation of being as arising from a concept (“ein Seyn aus einem Begriffe”). ⁴⁸ In short, my activity must be represented as a *Zweckbegriff* (as the *concept of an end*). ⁴⁹ Or, as Fichte puts it, I must “presuppose a concept designed by myself [einen von mir selbst entworfenen Begriff], which is supposed to guide my efficacious acting and in which the latter is both formally grounded and materially determined”. ⁵⁰

c) But this is not all. As Fichte points out, I cannot represent *meine Wirksamkeit* without adding something else –namely “the representation of a will” (*die Vorstellung eines Willens*). ⁵¹ As he puts it, it is indispensable that the concept itself appears to me as something objective (*daß der Begriff selbst mir als etwas objectives erscheine*); ⁵² that is, I must also represent the transition from the *Zweckbegriff* as such to its *realization* . I must represent the *change* by means of which the *Zweckbegriff* becomes more objective than itself (this is what Fichte is talking about when he writes that “the concept of an end, viewed objectively, is called an act of willing”; ⁵³ i.e., I must represent *myself as really acting* or my *Zweckbegriff* as *having a real effect upon what is objective* (*auf den Stoff wirkend*). ⁵⁴ Or, as Fichte also puts it, I must represent something subjective in me as transformed into something objective, the *concept of an end* as transformed into a *decision of the will* (*ein Subjectives in mir selbst sich in ein Objectives, der Zweckbegriff in einen Willensentschluß*). ⁵⁵ In short, I must represent a *second positing* of the *Zweckbegriff* –the one by means of which it reaches out beyond its own bounds towards what is objective and has an effect upon *Stoff* .

33 d) “Now I am supposed to have an effect upon [...] *Stoff*. But it is impossible for me to think of this *Stoff* as being affected by anything other than something that is itself *Stoff*” (*aber es ist mir unmöglich eine Wirkung auf ihn zu denken, außer durch das, was selbst Stoff ist*).⁵⁶ “Consequently, since I do – as I must – think of myself as having an effect on this *Stoff*, I also become for myself *Stoff* (*wie ich mich daher, wie ich muß, wirkend denke auf ihn, werde ich mir selbst zu Stoff*); and insofar as I view myself in this way, I call myself a *material body*. Viewed as a principle of efficacy in the world of bodies, I am an articulated body (*bin ein artikulierter Leib*); and the representation of my body is itself nothing but the representation of myself as a cause in the world of bodies and is therefore indirectly only a certain way of looking at my own absolute activity” (*und die Vorstellung meines Leibes selbst ist nichts anderes, denn die Vorstellung meiner selbst, als Ursache in der Körperwelt, mithin mittelbar nichts anderes, als eine gewisse Ansicht meiner absoluten Thätigkeit*).⁵⁷

34 In this regard, Fichte emphasizes two points.

35 *On the one hand*, he stresses the fact that “the will is supposed to exercise [...] an immediate causality upon my body”, so that “the body as an instrument, that is, the articulated body [die Artikulation] extends only as far as this immediate causality of the will extends”.⁵⁸ The will is therefore also different from the body, and it appears as not being the same as the body (*der Wille wird daher vom Leibe auch unterschieden; erscheint daher nicht als dasselbe.*)⁵⁹ In other words, what constitutes one’s body as such is first the fact that it is represented as *Stoff* and secondly the fact that the *Stoff* in question is represented as *directly* controlled by one’s will, so that the will can have an *immediate* effect upon it.⁶⁰ One’s body is that part of the field of objectivity (i. e., that part of what is represented as exterior to one’s will and exterior to one’s I-hood) that can be immediately acted upon by one’s will. In short, one’s body has to do with the representation of “something subjective in me transformed into something objective”, only that this time what is at stake is not the transformation “of a *Zweckbegriff* into a *decision of the will*”, but rather “the transformation of the latter into a certain modification of my body”.⁶¹ The emphasis is therefore on the contrast between *Wille* and *Stoff* viz. between *will* and *body*.

36 But, on the other hand, Fichte also emphasizes a second point. He writes: “This distinction, however, is nothing more than yet another separation of what is subjective from what is objective, or more specifically, it is a particular aspect of the original separation. In this relationship the will is what is subjective and the body is what is objective (*der Wille ist in diesem Verhältnisse das Subjective, und der Leib das Objective*).”⁶² And in section 9 he speaks of something that “is entirely the same (...), simply viewed from a

different side” (*ganz dasselbe (...), nur angesehen von einer anderen Seite*) – so that “the causality of the concept with respect to what is objective” appears, “respectively, as will and as body when viewed from different sides”.⁶³ The point seems to be the following: my body is not just that part of the realm of *Stoff* which is represented as being immediately under the power of my will (and which therefore can be immediately changed by my will). If this were all there were to it, then the body would *not* appear *as part of me* – it would *not* be *endowed with I-hood*: it would not be *my* body. It would appear as the *nearest part* of what is *exterior* or as the first field of implementation (*viz.* as the permanent exterior instrument for the implementation of) my will. But the point is that what constitutes my body as such is not only this, but rather an *equation* between *will* and *Stoff*: an equation owing to which my acts of will and the immediate material starting points of my intervention in the realm of *Stoff* are *equated with each other*. In short, what constitutes *my* body is the fact that I represent such a thing as *Stoff* with will (with *my* will) or my will as *Stoff* (and this means *Stoff* with I-hood or I-hood as *Stoff*). In section 8 Fichte insists on this point almost *ad nauseam*:

“wie ich mich daher, wie ich muß, wirkend denke auf ihn, *werde ich mir selbst zu Stoff*; und inwiefern ich so mich erblicke nenne ich *mich einen materiellen Leib*. Ich, als Prinzip einer Wirksamkeit in der Körperwelt angeschaut, bin ein artikulierter Leib, und die Vorstellung meines Leibes selbst ist nichts anderes, denn die Vorstellung *meiner selbst* als Ursache in der Körperwelt”.⁶⁴

37 The emphasis is therefore not on the contrast between *Wille* and *Stoff* (*viz.* between *will* and *body*), but on the contrast between *myself* (*including my body*) and *what is exterior*.⁶⁵

38 e) But this is not all. The manifold of representations that are required if there is to be any representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* must include still other elements. Fichte focuses on what he terms “my actual causality” (*meine wirkliche Kausalität*), and “the change that it is supposed to ensue thereby in the sensible world” (*die Veränderung, die dadurch in der Sinnenwelt erfolgen soll*).⁶⁶ And not surprisingly he contrasts the modifications of my body with all other modifications in the realm of *Stoff* (i.e. with the whole range of non-immediate effects of my will upon what is exterior to me).

“Insofar as something subjective in me is transformed into something objective, the concept of an end into a decision of the will, and the latter in turn into a certain modification of my body: to this extent, I obviously represent myself as changed. But this last item that I attribute to myself, my physical body, is supposed to be connected with the entire world of bodies; and thus if the former is intuited as changed, so is the latter necessarily viewed as changed as well.”⁶⁷

39 In other words, any representation of *meine Wirksamkeit* must include a representation of the *connection* between *my body* (that is *my will as body*) and *the exterior* – or, to be more precise, it must include a representation of my body as a centre of *action upon other bodies viz. other Stoff*.

40 And in this respect Fichte emphasizes two points. On the one hand, he repeats and explains his thesis concerning what is changeable and unchangeable in the realm of *Stoff*, insofar as *Stoff* is acted upon by my will and constitutes the object of my action:

“The thing that can be changed as a result of my efficacy, that is the specific constitution or the properties of nature, is entirely the same as that which cannot be changed; i.e., it is mere matter, simply viewed from a different side – just as, above, the causality of the concept with respect to what is objective appeared, respectively, as will and as body when viewed from different sides. Viewed subjectively and in connection with me as an active subject or agent, what is changeable is nature; what is unchangeable is this same nature, viewed entirely and solely objectively, and this is unchangeable for the reasons indicated above.”⁶⁸

41 On the other hand, he points out that my body is represented not just as a centre of action upon *some* other bodies, but as a centre of possible action upon *all of them* (upon the whole realm of *Stoff*). In other words, not just part of the latter is represented as being in connection with my body –that is with me– *as an active subject or agent*: what characterizes the representation of my body is a *universal network* of possible actions connecting it with *everything else*, so that everything else (and this means all *Stoff*) is represented as a possible object of *meine Wirksamkeit*.⁶⁹

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42 The above enables us to highlight some main features of Fichte’s account of *meine Wirksamkeit*, in particular the following:

43 a) Fichte depicts a *continuum* of mediation between the two extremes, I-hood and objectivity, and the gradual transition from the more subjective and less objective to the less subjective and more objective. The main steps of this transition are 1) the subjective in me (I-hood), 2) the *real force* in me, 3) the *Entwerfen von Zweckbegriffen*, 4) my will viz. my *Willensentschlüsse*, 5) my body, 6) my body’s action upon other bodies, 7) the action of other bodies upon other bodies. Furthermore, all subjective action upon *Stoff* –and this means both 5), 6) and 7)– takes place in the realm of 8) *what is changeable in objectivity*, as opposed to 9) *what cannot be changed* –the point being that the former is more subjective and less objective than the latter, since the latter defines itself by the fact that it remains *completely out of reach of any subjective action*.

- 44 b) This continuum shapes the inner structure of *meine Wirksamkeit* : the wave of my action , as it were; and the point is that 2) includes 1), while 3) includes 1) and 2), and 4) includes 1), 2), and 3 – and so on and so forth; pretty much the same holds true for 7), since the action of other bodies upon other bodies that is at stake here is the one that results from my body's intervention upon other bodies (i.e., from 6); as for 9), even if it is all about something completely impervious to subjective action, it cannot be represented without representing the whole sequence from 1) to 8).
- 45 c) This continuum has to do with a transition from the *one* (I-hood: *das Eine, untheilbare Ich*) to the *many* . Multiplicity comes into play in the transition from 1) to 2), while 3) – the designing of *Zweckbegriffe* – stands not only for a new development step, but for one that is intrinsically related to multiple *Zweckbegriffe* – to a manifold (and indeed to a “big bang”) of possibilities; as pointed out above, 4) (*will* viz. my *Willensentschlüsse*) has to do with a *second positing* of 3), and there is no assignable limit to the representation of the manifold of *Stoff* viz. of my immediate and mediate action upon it. On the other hand, it should also be noted that the successive links of this continuum (viz. of this chain) of *meine Wirksamkeit* move *further and further away from the “source”* , namely from the *subjective* in me (viz. the most subjective in me: *I-hood* itself), but in such a way that *they never lose the connection with it*, so that *they all bear the imprint of something subjective* .
- 46 d) All *subsequent* components of this continuum have to do with the *fulfilment* of an essential feature of the *preceding* ones, namely the fact that each of them *goes beyond itself* and implies *something more than itself* . In other words, each new step is something the preceding components were already *directed to* and were already *all about* ; the result being that 2) *expresses and fulfils* 1), insofar as 1) goes itself beyond itself and implies something more than itself), 3) *expresses and fulfils* 2) – and therefore 1) – insofar as both 1) and 2) go beyond themselves and imply something more than themselves, and so on and so forth.
- 47 e) On the whole, Fichte's *continuum* of *meine Wirksamkeit* is divided into *two segments*: the first is characterized by the fact that it belongs to the realm of *subjectivity* , while the second belongs to the realm of *objectivity* . The point is that, even if 2) is more objective than 1), and 3) is more objective than 2) (so that, for instance, one's will is more objective than the designing of *Zweckbegriffe*), the fact remains that the result of this *Objektiverwerden* (the result of this something-subjective-being-turned-into-something-more objective) – namely, in this case, one's will – is still something *essentially subjective* . And in this regard the representation of my body marks the *turning point* . From 1) to 4) (that is from I-hood to will) all *Objektiverwerden* remains in

the confines of subjectivity. Conversely, from 6) to 9) all stages of development of *meine Wirksamkeit* are characterized by the fact that they are supposed to take place *beyond the confines of subjectivity*; so that what characterizes them is an *inversion of the relation of forces* between what is subjective and what is objective, the result being that even if there are still some subjective components, these have the nature of *subjective elements in the realm of objectivity*. In short, the representation of *my body* makes the *transition* from the field of subjectivity (where all *objective* elements are something objective *in the realm of subjectivity*) to the field of objectivity (where all *subjective* elements are something subjective *in the realm of objectivity*) – and *combines both realms*. ⁷⁰

- 48 f) But this is not all. What characterizes the representation of my body is not just the fact that in this case the *Objektiverwerden* (*the turning of something subjective into something objective*) goes beyond the confines of subjectivity, so that nothing less than *Stoff* is involved. As mentioned before, Fichte's point is that my body is characterized by what we have termed an *equation* between *will* and *body*, *I-hood* and *Stoff*. In other words, in Fichte's view the representation of my body is intrinsically complex in the sense that it includes both the representation of the *difference* between my *will* and *Stoff* (and therefore between my *will* and that part of the realm of *Stoff* that is immediately subject to its influence) and the representation of their *equation* viz. of their complete *permeation* (i.e. of something that is *uno tenore* *will* and *Stoff*, *Stoff* and *I-hood*). ⁷¹

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- 49 Now, all this may give the impression that one's body is just a particular *link* in the middle of this very complex set of representations: a representation among many others, a particular form of *declension des Verhältnisses des Subjectiven, und Objectiven zueinander*: something *circumscribed* and therefore *isolable*.
- 50 But this impression proves to be misleading.
- 51 On the one hand, Fichte's point is precisely that my body is not just an intermediate instance between the more subjective and the more objective components of the said continuum. His point is that such a thing as the representation of my body is intrinsically complex and presupposes (and contains in itself) *the whole sequence, from the representation of I-hood to the representation of my will*. In other words, the representation of my body is not possible without the representation of *I-hood*, without the representation of myself as a real force, without the designing of *Zweckbegriffe*, without the representation of my *will* –and then, of course, a) without the representation

of a sphere of “immediate causality of the will” viz. of immediate material starting points for my intervention in the realm of *Stoff* and b) without the above-mentioned representation of the *equation* between all these terms (of their complete *permeation*, i.e. of something that is *uno tenore* I-hood, real force, etc. –and *Stoff*). And the point is that none of these representations can occur separately, that they all entail and imply each other.

- 52 This is a very rough outline, and among other things it should be noted that everything depends on three crucial points: on the one hand, it all depends both a) on the connection between what might be termed the *manifold of my will* (the “*inner keyboard*” of *my will* viz. the “*inner keyboard*” of *my possible Willensentschlüsse*) and the narrower *manifold of “immediate causality of my will”* (the narrower manifold of immediate material starting points for my intervention in the realm of *Stoff*, that is, the “*inner keyboard*” Fichte’s *articulate body* is all about) and b) on the fact that these two “*inner keyboards*” are *equated* and represented as *one*; on the other hand, it also depends c) on the fact that the narrower manifold of “immediate causality of my will” (the narrower manifold of immediate material starting points for my intervention in the realm of *Stoff*) is represented as something *stable*, so that all my possible action is mediated by the *very same* set of material starting points (by a *stable* portion of *Stoff*, etc.) 72

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- 53 But we have no time left to examine this point in any detail. Instead, we would like to emphasize that there is still another reason why *my body* is not just a representation among many others. As pointed out above, in Fichte’s view, the representation of *my body* includes the representation of its relation with everything else (at least with everything else in the realm of *Stoff*) – and this all-encompassing net of connections is as constitutive of *my body* as all the above. This is what Fichte’s description of 6), 7), 8) and 9) is all about. Fichte’s claim is that the representation of *my body* is entailed in the representation of the whole realm of *Stoff* viz. of the whole realm of objectivity, insofar as the latter is represented as the realm of *meine Wirksamkeit*. So that, contrary to what may seem to be the case, *everything else* is intrinsically related to *my body* and defined in terms of its connection with it; the result being that the realm of objectivity has the shape of what might be described as a *centred multiplicity* or a *centred manifold*: a multiplicity of concentric circles of objectivity, as it were, revolving around *my body*, and constituted in such a way that everything in them defines itself a) both by being and by not being changeable, i.e. both by being and by not being subject to my action (that is to the action of *my body*) and b)

by various degrees of *proximity and distance* (N.B. of *action-related* proximity and distance) to their being acted upon by *meine Wirksamkeit*, that is by *my body*.

- 54 The combination of these two insights shows that *one's* body is not just an *inflected form* among many others in the framework of what we have termed the *declension des Verhältnisses des subjectiven, und objectiven zueinander* (the *declension* of the “relation of what is subjective and what is objective to each other”). Fichte's point is that *my* body is essentially constituted both by a) all the other *inflected forms* that make it possible and pave the way for it (namely the I, the I's *real force*, the designing of *Zweckbegriffe*, and *my will*) and b) by all the other “inflected forms” of the said relation *my* body is intrinsically related to (namely the realm of *Stoff* – and in this realm both what is changeable and what is unchangeable, that is, both the more subjective and the more objective side of it). In short, *my* body – this particular inflected form of the said relation – *recapitulates* and *anticipates all the other* inflected forms, and indeed so much so that it is defined by (and by the same token defines) all of them. 73
- 55 We must insist on this point. According to Fichte, there is something *global* about *my* body, both a) in the sense that *it defines itself by its relation to everything else* and b) in the sense that *everything else defines itself by its relation to it*. But this is not all – and in a way it misses the decisive point. For the decisive point is that *my* body has a *global character* or a *global bearing* in the sense that it plays the role of *the centre around which everything else revolves*: everything else “orbits” *my* body and is essentially defined by its *practical* – i.e. by its *action-related* – connection with it.
- 56 But there is something inaccurate in this account. To be more precise, one must say a) that everything else revolves *around the I* and b) that everything else defines itself by the particular way it revolves *around the I* – so that the latter is the real *centre* of the *centred manifold* we are talking about. As for *my* body, it defines itself both a) by the fact that it, too, revolves around the I (that it revolves around *my I-hood*, *my activity*, *my Zweckbegriffe*, *my will*), so that it is *intrinsically I-related*, and b) by the fact that it is *equated* with the I and therefore *partakes of its protagonist role* – the result being that everything else *in the realm of Stoff* revolves around *my* body. In other words, *revolving around my body is the way all Stoff revolves around me*. And everything in the realm of *Stoff* defines itself by different ways of being related to *my* articulated body and what it stands for. On the one hand, all the different components of the realm of *Stoff* have in common the fact that they are intrinsically *body-related* (N.B.: *my* -body-related) and revolve around *my articulated* body. On the other hand, they differ from one another both a) by

their particular relation to my *Zweckbegriffe* and b) by their different position with respect to my articulated body (viz. to what Fichte terms the various “starting points” the articulated body is made of) – that is, they differ from one another by the “direction of action” in which they are to be found and acted upon and by their “practical distance” (by different degrees of proximity and distance) to my articulated body (viz. to the “starting points” it is made of): by the fact that they have to do with *short-range* or *long-range* action, etc.

- 57 As mentioned before, this is a crucial point. Fichte emphasizes that what appears to us is not just a *manifold* (which as such could be *de-centred* or *a-centred*, *multi-centred* or whatever). On the contrary, the manifold appearing to us is of a very particular nature: it has a *centred character* and is *decisively shaped by this feature*. On the one hand, *everything* in it is intrinsically *I-centred*; and on the other hand, the whole realm of *Stoff* is intrinsically *my-body-centred*. The bottom line is that these two phenomena are closely connected with each other; for my body plays the said role in the realm of *Stoff* precisely because it is *equated* with *me* – that is, because it is *my body*. ⁷⁴

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- 58 But this is not all. There are still two further points to take into account.
- 59 The first has to do with *finitude* viz. with the fact that *my body* is *finite*. As mentioned before, my body represents a “bottleneck”, so to speak, in at least two senses. On the one hand, the sphere of my articulated body (the “inner keyboard” of what Fichte terms the immediate “starting points” of my action: the sphere of *Stoff directly subject to my will*) is much narrower than the realm of my *Zweckbegriffe* – and indeed of my will. On the other hand, the sphere of my articulated body (the part of the realm of *Stoff* that is *directly* subject to my will) is also *immeasurably smaller* than the whole realm of *Stoff*. As a matter of fact, it comprises only a *very tiny portion* of it.
- 60 Let us take a closer look at this.
- 61 On the one hand, the point is that the sphere of my immediate action is limited: it does not extend throughout the whole realm of *Stoff*. The latter is *divided in two*, not only because, as mentioned before, it comprises both what can be changed and what cannot be changed, ⁷⁵ but also because it falls into two parts: a) the realm of *what is directly subject to my will*, and b) the realm of *what is not directly subject to my will*. ⁷⁶ And this is what Fichte’s characterization of the various points my articulated body is made of – namely their characterization as “starting points” – is all about: they are not only points of intervention in the realm of *Stoff*, they *leave room* for and *give*

rise to *further intervention* or *further action* (*further* transformation of the realm of *Stoff*). In other words, the point is that there is no such thing as a sphere of direct intervention *as wide as the whole realm of Stoff*: there is *no such thing as a total body* . Or, as we can also put it: a significant part of the realm of *Stoff* is *not my body* . ⁷⁷ But, on the other hand, this is not all; for what characterizes my articulated body is not only the fact that it is just a *part* of the realm of *Stoff*: it is rather the fact that it represents *only a very small part* of the said realm. And the question is: is this just a matter of fact or is there something more to it? In Fichte's view it is more than just a matter of fact. The relative smallness of one's body is intrinsically related to the possibility of *further* actions viz. of *complex* actions. The greater the sphere of direct intervention (i. e. the greater the sphere corresponding to my body), the smaller the room left for the *continuation* of my action viz. for *further* action. The smaller the sphere of direct intervention (i.e. the smaller the sphere corresponding to *my body*), the bigger the room left for the *continuation* of my action viz. for *further* action. In other words, if my body were much bigger (and *a fortiori* if the whole realm of *Stoff* played the role of *my body*), the remaining scope for *further* action viz. for *complex* action (the scope for *possible* action) would be much narrower. Most possible actions would be accomplished *uno tenore* , *in one fell swoop*. And pretty much the same holds true for the relationship between my body and the manifold of my *Zweckbegriffe* viz. between my body and my will. The point seems to be that there is a *correlation* between the *smallness* of my body and the *realm of possible action* . One might also say that there is an *inverse proportion* between the *size of my body* and the *realm of possible action* .

62 In the *Sittenlehre* 1798 Fichte does not address this question in connection with the finite size of my body. But he suggests something along these lines when he discusses the question as to whether my body must be represented as something *movable* .

63 This brings us to the second point, namely the fact that, according to him, in order to play its role as an essential component of *meine Wirksamkeit* , my body is, and has to be, represented as *movable* (*beweglich*) – and indeed as something movable *in many different ways* (*eine mannichfaltige Beweglichkeit*) .

64 Let us take a closer look at this.

65 In §7 following on from his analysis of what he terms “Rang A” (“group A”), ⁷⁸ Fichte depicts a chain of “practical crossroads”, or rather a *complex network of chains of “practical crossroads”* that forms the structure of every *continued* (viz. of every *complex*) action :

“To *each* of those points, moreover, several other points attach themselves, and in and through these new points, mediated through the former ones, the I is able to become a cause in manifold ways. I said that *several* [points

are attached] to each one [of the starting points]: for if, starting from each of these points, one could act in only *one* way, then there would be no free acting beginning from the point in question, and thus there would be no second acting at all, but only a continuation of the first. Let us call this system [of secondary points attached to the original starting points] “group B”. To each single point of group B there are attached, in turn, several points of a third group, group C; and thus, to illustrate this with an image, around a fixed middle point there is described an infinite circular area, within which each point can be thought of as bordering upon infinitely many others.” 79

66 Later on, in §9, he sums up his views on this topic in the following terms:

“As a product of nature, therefore, I am matter; more precisely and in accordance to what was said above, I am organized matter that constitutes a determinate whole: *I am my body*.

Furthermore, my will is supposed to be able to unite with me the things of nature or to bring them into a relationship with me. This union or relationship is connected with certain parts of my organized body, and my body is the immediate instrument of my will. The parts in question must therefore stand under the dominion of my will; and, since we are talking about spatial relationship, then these parts [of my body], as parts, i.e., in relation to the whole of my body, must be movable, and my body itself must be movable in relation to nature as a whole. Moreover, since this movement is supposed to depend on a freely designed and indeterminately modifiable concept, my body must be movable in many different ways – Such a construction of the body is called articulation. If I am to be free, then my body must be articulated.” 80

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67 We have no time to discuss these matters in any detail. But it is important to highlight some key points.

68 *First*, Fichte emphasizes that the relation between my body and the changes it gives rise to in the realm of *Stoff* is not such that my body can do no more than trigger changes in its immediate surroundings and powerlessly watch as these changes unleash a chain of effects. On the contrary, the “inner keyboard” of the above mentioned “starting points” (the “starting points” the articulated body is made of) is, as it were, a *changeable keyboard*: my body has the possibility to change what it is immediately attached to (it is able to change its own situation: to change its connections –i. e., to change its relation to other components of the manifold of *Stoff*). And this means that I can move my *sphere of direct intervention* to another area of the realm of *Stoff* and thereby change what can be immediately changed by my body; which in turn means that my efficacious action (*meine Wirkung*) upon *Stoff* can be *controlled* and *steered* in a *sequence of interventions*. And this makes all the

difference: actions differ from one another not only because they have different starting points (and are, as it were, the rigid result of their starting points); ⁸¹ actions differ from each other because there is such a thing as *chains of actions* ⁸² (constituted in such a manner that action B is made possible by action A, action C is made possible by action B, action D is made possible by action C, etc.). In other words, actions can be multiplied because they take different *routes* or follow a different combination of steps. The very same manifold of *Stoff* is multiplied, as it were, by *different ways of touring it* – that is, the very same field of possible action is multiplied by a *variety of courses of action*; the result being what might be described as the *practical* (viz. the *action-related*) counterpart of Leibniz’s idea of *perspectival multiplication*.
⁸³

- 69 Secondly, this is what Fichte’s description of the connection between what he terms “Rang A” (one’s immediate “starting points” –i. e., *my body*) and what he terms “Rang B”, “Rang C”, “Rang D”, etc., etc., ⁸⁴ is all about. Complex action has the form of a very intricate network of possible changes of the position of *my body* relative to the other components of the realm of *Stoff* (that is, a very complex network of modifications of the *distance* between *my body* and the other components of the realm of *Stoff* – and this means a very complex network of possible *changes of what can be immediately changed by the “starting points” of my Wirksamkeit*). ⁸⁵ Fichte speaks of a complex network of “*practical crossroads*”, leading to “*practical crossroads*”, leading to “*practical crossroads*”, etc. Or, to be more precise, he speaks of a network of “*practical crossroads*” constituted in such a way that *each path* leads, in turn (and leads *immediately*) to a further “*practical crossroad*”, and so on and so forth. As a result, the realm of *Stoff* (that is, the field of *meine Wirksamkeit*) has the form of the “*infinite circular area*” (the *unendliche Cirkelfläche*) –the immense complex of concentric circles– he alludes to. And the point is also that this complex of concentric circles is *changeable* –and that change is what it is all about. In a way, this complex *always has the same centre*, for its centre is *my body*. But the point is that *the centre –namely my body– can move its position and thereby change the form of the whole complex*.
- 70 Thirdly, all this means that, in the final analysis, *every single component* of the realm of *Stoff* is represented as a possible object of an *immediate* action of *my body* upon it –and this is so even if the *Stoff* in question is *at a huge distance* from *my body* (so that an *immediate* action upon it presupposes an *immense* – and even a *de facto impossible* – “*voyage*”); ⁸⁶ for the fact that the “*voyage*” viz. the action in question cannot be performed does not change the way I represent distant *Stoff*: it is still represented as the object of a possible *immediate* action (as something I *would be able to act immediately upon*, if the distance separating it from *my body* could be negotiated). And so the bottom

line is this. On the one hand, every object defines itself by this *possibility of immediate action upon it*. On the other hand, *my body* is not least defined by its connection with this infinite field of *possible immediate action* (with the *unendliche Cirkelfläche* –the “infinite circular area”– of possible *immediate Wirkung* Fichte refers to). In short, *my body* defines itself as the “thing” that can bring itself to *immediate action* or *immediate Wirkung* upon everything else.

- 71 *Fourthly*, as the above quotes from §§ 7 and 9 ⁸⁷ clearly show, all this has to do with the connection between *my body* (viz. what Fichte terms *Artikulation*) and *Freisein* viz. *freie Wirksamkeit*. Fichte’s point is the correlation between a) *my body as a finite articulated body* and b) *the utmost multiplication of the field of possibility*. In other words, Fichte tries to show that there is an intrinsic correlation between *my body* (this tiny piece of *Stoff* –that is, Pascal’s “reed” ⁸⁸) and the *maximum expansion of the realm of possibility* viz. the *maximum diversity of possible action*. In Fichte’s view, the former is a condition of possibility for the latter.

* * *

- 72 But we must conclude. To be sure, this is not the whole story of Fichte’s account of *my body* –both because it had to be somewhat simplified and because there are other equally important developments, and other chapters to this story. But I think it is a crucial part of the story and one that can be told in twenty-something pages.

NOTES

1. SSL, GA I/5, 21-30 (FSW IV, 1-12). If not mentioned otherwise, all emphasis in original.
2. SSL, GA I/5, 22 (FSW IV, 2).
3. SSL, GA I/5, 22. (FSW IV, 3.). I follow Breazeale and Zöller’s translation with very slight changes. Cf. Fichte, J. G., *The System of Ethics According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.
4. SSL, GA I/5, 29 (F SW IV, 12).
5. SSL, GA I/5, 21 (FSW IV, 2): “[...] daß wir auf die Welt wirken können.”
6. SSL, GA I/5, 21 (FSW IV, 2).

7. SSL, GA I/5, 22 (FSW IV, 2): “ [...] daß mit unsern Vorstellungen ein Seyn übereinstimme, und daraus folge [...]”.

8. Ibid.: “ [...] einige unsrer Vorstellungen für den Grund eines Seyns zu halten [...]”.

9. In this respect Fichte highlights what he considers to be a *one-sided approach* to the central question of the connection between our representations and what is supposed to exist “in itself”. First, he emphasizes that there are two sides to this question: “The first way in which what is subjective and what is objective are unified, or viewed as harmonizing, is when *I engage in cognition*. In this case, what is subjective follows from what is objective; the former is supposed to agree with the latter. *Theoretical philosophy* investigates how we arrive at the assertion of such harmony. – [The second way in which what is subjective and what is objective are unified is] when *I act efficaciously [ich wirke]*. In this case, the two are viewed as harmonizing in such a way that what is objective is supposed to follow from what is subjective [...]. Practical Philosophy has to investigate the origin of the assumption of such a harmony” (SSL, GA I/5, 21; FSW IV, 2). Secondly, he highlights the *one-sidedness of the more common approach*: “Up until now only the first of these questions, the one concerning how we might come to assert the correspondence of our representations with things that supposedly exist independently of those representations, has been raised. Philosophy has as yet not even so much as wondered about the second point, that is, about how it might be possible to think of some of our concepts as capable of being presented [darstellbar] and, in part, as actually presented in nature, which subsists without any help from us. People have found it quite natural that we are able to have an effect upon the world.” (SSL, GA I/5, 21; FSW IV, 2). To be sure, this is not the place to dwell on the *double “transcendental” wonder* Fichte refers to and on the connection between this *double “transcendental” wonder* and the two branches of *Transcendental Philosophy*, as Fichte conceives it: *theoretical* and *practical* philosophy. But it should be noted that the whole point in Fichte’s views on these matters is that, although theoretical and practical philosophy must follow separate paths, *meine Wirksamkeit* plays a pivotal role in both of them.

10. Cf. SSL, GA I/5, 22 (FSW IV, 3): “Welches Mannigfaltige ist in dieser Vorstellung meiner Wirksamkeit enthalten; und wie mag ich zu diesem Mannigfaltigen kommen?”

11. Ibid.: “Ich finde mich, als wirkend in der Sinnenwelt. Davon hebt alles Bewußtseyn an; und ohne dieses Bewußtseyn meiner Wirksamkeit ist kein Selbstbewußtseyn; ohne dieses kein Bewußtseyn eines andern, das nicht ich selbst seyn soll.”

12. SSL, GA I/5, 23 (FSW IV, 4).

13. SSL, GA I/5, 23 (FSW IV, 3): “Ich bin der Grund dieser Veränderung”. See also SSL, GA I/5, 22-23 (FSW IV, 3): “ [...] so liegt noch etwas in der Vorstellung von meiner Wirksamkeit, was mir schlechthin nicht von außen kommen kann, sondern in mir selbst liegen muß, was ich nicht erfahren, und lernen kann, sondern unmittelbar wissen muß; dies, daß ich selbst der letzte Grund der geschehenen Veränderung seyn soll”.

14. SSL, GA I/5, 23 (FSW IV, 3): “Ich bin der Grund dieser Veränderung, heißt: dasselbe und kein anderes, welches um die Veränderung *weiß*, ist zugleich auch das Wirkende;

das Subject des Bewußtseyns, und das Prinzip der Wirksamkeit sind Eins.”

15. Cf. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (FSW IV, 9): “[...] Es ist jetzt auch die zweite der oben aufgeworfenen Hauptfragen beantwortet; wie komme ich dazu, anzunehmen, daß ein objectives aus einem subjectiven, ein Seyn aus einem Begriffe, erfolge; [...]. Diese Annahme kommt nemlich daher, weil ich mich absolut als thätig setzen muß [...]”.

16. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (SW IV, 9): “Dies alles bedacht, läßt meine Thätigkeit sich nur so setzen, daß sie ausgehe vom subjectiven, als bestimmend das objective (...)”.

17. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (FSW IV, 9).

18. SSL, GA I/5, 23 (SW IV, 4): “Ich setze mich als thätig, heißt [...]: ich unterscheide in mir ein wissendes, und eine reelle Kraft, die als solche nicht weiß, sondern ist [...]”

19. Ibid: “[ich] sehe aber beides als schlechthin Eins an.”

20. SSL, GA I/5, 24 (FSW IV, 5): “Ich weiß nicht, ohne etwas zu wissen; ich weiß nicht von mir, ohne eben durch dieses Wissen mir zu Etwas zu werden; oder, welches dasselbe heißt, ein subjectives in mir und ein objectives zu trennen.”

21. SSL, GA I/5, 24 (FSW IV, 5): “Ist ein Bewußtseyn gesetzt, so ist diese Trennung gesetzt: und es ist ohne sie gar kein Bewußtseyn möglich. Durch diese Trennung ist unmittelbar zugleich das Verhältniß des subjectiven, und objectiven zueinander gesetzt. Das letztere soll bestehen ohne Zuthun des subjectiven, und unabhängig von ihm, durch sich selbst; das erstere soll abhängig seyn vom letztern, und seine materielle Bestimmung nur daher erhalten. Das Seyn ist durch sich selbst, das Wissen aber hängt ab vom Seyn [...]”.

22. SSL, GA I/5, 24 (FSW IV, 5): “Die wichtigste Einsicht, welche wir dadurch erhalten, ist folgende. Wissen, und Seyn sind nicht etwa außerhalb des Bewußtseyns und unabhängig von ihm getrennt, sondern nur im Bewußtseyn werden sie getrennt, weil diese Trennung Bedingung der Möglichkeit alles Bewußtseyns ist; und durch diese Trennung entstehen erst beide. Es giebt kein Seyn, außer vermittelt des Bewußtseyns, so wie es außer demselben auch kein Wissen, als bloß subjectives und auf ein Seyn gehendes, giebt. Um mir nur sagen zu können: Ich; bin ich genöthigt, zu trennen; aber auch lediglich dadurch, daß ich dies sage, und indem ich es sage, geschieht die Trennung.”

23. Ibid.

24. Horace, *Satirae*, II, vii, 82.

25. We leave aside the question of whether this “puppet” is still an “I”, or whether the very fact that it is reduced to being a mere “puppet” and “transmission belt” entails nothing less than the complete removal of the “I” as such, for the latter cannot be dissociated from its *Wirksamkeit* – that is, from its role as an *agent*; so that there is a contradiction in representing the I as this “puppet” or this puppet as an “I”.

26. SSL, GA I/5, 25 (FSW IV, 6).

27. SSL, GA I/5, 25 (FSW IV, 7): “Was heißt nun das; eine *bestimmte* Thätigkeit, und wie wird sie zur bestimmten? Lediglich dadurch, daß ihr ein Widerstand entgegengesetzt wird; entgegengesetzt, durch ideale Thätigkeit; gedacht, und eingebildet, als ihr gegenüber stehend.”

28. SSL, GA I/5, 25 (FSW IV, 7): “Wo und in wiefern du Thätigkeit erblickst, erblickst du nothwendig auch Widerstand; denn außerdem erblickst du keine Thätigkeit.”
29. SSL, GA I/5, 25 (FSW IV, 6): “[...] ganz abhängig, und durchaus gezwungen [...]”. Cf. SSL, GA I/5, 98 (FSW IV, 96): “Was in der Wahrnehmung der Wirksamkeit vorkommt, ist die Synthesis unsrer Thätigkeit mit einem Widerstande. Nun ist unsre Thätigkeit, als solche, wie aus dem obigen bekannt ist, kein Mannichfaltiges, sondern absolute reine Identität; und sie selbst ist nur durch Beziehung auf den Widerstand zu charakterisieren. Mithin müßte das zu unterscheidende Mannichfaltige ein Mannichfaltiges des Widerstandes seyn.”
30. SSL, GA I/5, 25 (FSW IV, 7): “ [...] daß ich mich als bloß *erkennendes* , und in dieser Erkenntniß von der Objectivität ganz abhängiges Subject betrachten muß.”
31. SSL, GA I/5, 26 (FSW IV, 8): “[...] daß das subjective durch das objective bestimmt seyn soll, nicht aber umgekehrt [...]”. See also SSL, GA I/5, 25 (SW IV, 6): “[...] d. h. das subjective erscheint in ihr als ganz und durchgängig, und ohne sein Zuthun, bestimmt.”
32. N.B. The point is not that the object of my efficacious action must be something that is there independently of any representation (as if I had access to any such thing), but rather that the representation of my *Wirksamkeit* must take the representation of its object as something *resulting from* and *corresponding to* what is there regardless of whether it is represented or not.
33. SSL, GA I/5, 25 (FSW IV, 7).
34. SSL, GA I/5, 25-26 (FSW IV, 7).
35. See in SSL, for example, GA I/5, 40 (FSW IV 22), GA I/5, 87 (FSW IV, 81), GA I/5, 133 ((FSW IV, 140).
36. SSL, GA I/5, 25 (FSW IV, 7).
37. SSL, GA I/5, 28 (FSW IV, 10): “[...] die beiden Enden der ganzen Vernunftwelt.”
38. Ibid.: “[...] ein absolutes durch sich selbst gesetztes *Seyn* (des materiellen Stoffs).”
39. SSL, GA I/5, 24 (FSW IV, 5).
40. Viz. the *separation* and *unification* (*Trennung* und *Vereinigung*). Fichte also speaks of “trennen, und doch als Eins ansehen” (SSL, GA I/5, 26/FSW IV, 8).
41. Cf. SSL, GA I/5, 21 (FSW IV, 1). See also SSL, GAI/5, 24, 26, and 29 (FSW IV, 6, 8, and 11).
42. SSL, GAI/5, 22 (FSW IV, 3).
43. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (FSW IV, 9): “Nun soll *ich*, das Eine, untheilbare Ich, thätig seyn; und das, was auf das Object wirkt, ist ohne allen Zweifel dies objective in mir, die reelle Kraft.”
44. Cf. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (FSW IV, 9): “[...] diese Thätigkeit nicht anders beschreiben kann, denn als eine Kausalität des Begriffs [...]”. He also speaks of “Kausalität durch den Begriff” (Ibid.)
45. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (FSW IV, 9): “[...] als eine Kausalität des bloßen Begriffs auf das objective, welcher Begriff in sofern nicht wieder durch ein anderes objective bestimmt werden kann, sondern absolut in, und durch sich selbst bestimmt ist.“

46. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (FSW IV, 10).
47. Ibid.
48. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (FSW IV, 9).
49. Cf. SSL, GA I/5, 27-28 (FSW IV, 9-10).
50. SSL, GA I/5, 27 (FSW IV, 9): “[...] nach welchem die Wirksamkeit sich richten, und durch ihn sowohl formaliter begründet als materialiter bestimmt seyn soll.”
51. SSL, GA I/5, 28 (FSW IV, 10).
52. SSL, GAI/5, 28 (FSW IV, 10): “Aus dem Begriffe erfolgt ein objectives. Wie ist dies möglich? Und was kann es heißen? Nicht anders, als daß der Begriff selbst mir als etwas objectives erscheine.”
53. SSL, GAI/5, 28 (FSW IV, 10-11): “Aber der Zweckbegriff, objektiv angesehen, wird ein *Wollen* genannt, und die Vorstellung eines Willens ist gar nichts anderes, als die nothwendige Ansicht des, selbst nur um unsrer Thatigkeit bewußt zu werden, gesetzten Zweckbegriffs. Das geistige in mir, unmittelbar als Princip einer Wirksamkeit angeschaut, wird mir zu einem Willen.”
54. SSL, GA I/5, 28 (FSW IV, 11).
55. SSL, GA I/5, 29 (FSW IV, 11).
56. SSL, GA I/5, 28 (FSW IV, 11). The question is, of course, whether this principle does not equally apply to the connection between my *will* and my *body* (i.e. between my will and that part of the realm of *Stoff* that corresponds to my body). In other words, if my will is to have any effect upon *Stoff*, it seems inevitable that, at some point or other, my will (that is what is subjective) must affect *Stoff* (what is objective) *without the help, or mediation, of any Stoff*. Fichte’s point seems to be that there must be some kind of *gradual development* and a particular kind of intermediate *link* bridging the gap between the two realms in question: in order for my will to have any effect upon *Stoff*, it must have, as it were, *some Stoff of its own*.
57. Ibid.
58. SSL, GA I/5, 28-29 (FSW IV, 11): “[...] und nur so weit, als diese unmittelbare Kausalität des Willens geht, geht der Leib, als Werkzeug, oder die Artikulation.”
59. SSL, GA I/5, 29 (FSW IV, 11).
60. As opposed to the *Stoff* that can be changed by one’s will only indirectly, namely by means of the change of some other *Stoff*.
61. Cf. Ibid. The full text is quoted in note 67 below.
62. Ibid.: “Aber diese Unterscheidung ist nichts anderes, denn eine abermalige Trennung des subjectiven und objectiven, oder noch bestimmter, eine besondere Ansicht dieser ursprünglichen Trennung. Der Wille ist in diesem Verhältnisse das subjective, und der Leib das objective.”
63. SSL, GAI/5, 29 (FSW IV, 12): “Das durch meine Wirksamkeit veränderliche Ding, oder die *Beschaffenheit* der Natur ist ganz dasselbe, was das unveränderliche, oder die blosse Materie ist; nur angesehen von einer andern Seite; eben so wie oben die Kausalität des Begriffs auf das objective, von zwei Seiten angesehen, als Wille und als Leib erschien. ”

64. SSL, GA I/5, 28 (FSW SW IV, 11) (*italics added*).

65. So that the body, as Fichte puts it, is “the last item that I attribute to myself”: “[...] das letzte, was ich zu mir rechne [...]” (SSL, GA I/5, 29, FSW IV, 12) Incidentally, it should be noted that what we are dealing with here is Fichte’s 1798 answer to a question raised by him in the second of his 1794 *Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*: “[...] mit welcher Befugniß nennt der Mensch einen bestimmten Theil der Körperwelt *seinen* Körper? wie kömmt er dazu, diesen seinen Körper zu betrachten, als seinem Ich angehörig, da er doch demselben gerade entgegengesetzt ist?“ (“by what authority does man call a particular portion of the physical world his body? how does he come to consider this body as belonging to his Ego, whereas it is altogether opposed to it (...)?”). (SSL, GA I/3, 34; FSW VI, 302). The translation is borrowed from Fichte, J. G., *The Vocation of the Scholar*, tr. W. Smith, London, J. Chapman, 1848, 26-27. It is almost needless to add that a) much of what Fichte says on this topic in the SSL has a close parallel both in his GNR (particularly in its *first part*) and in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, and b) the latter focus on other important aspects of the question. Moreover, there are also other significant developments in Part II of the SSL itself. But a complete analysis of all relevant aspects would go far beyond the scope of this paper. We must concentrate on Fichte’s 1798 *introductory remarks* and leave out everything (or almost everything) else.

66. SSL, GA I/5, 29 (FSW IV, 11).

67. SSL, GA I/5, 29 (FSW IV, 11-12): “Indem ein subjectives in mir selbst sich in ein objectives, der Zweckbegriff in einen Willensentschluß, und dieser in eine gewisse Modification meines Leibes verwandeln soll, stelle ich ja offenbar mich selbst vor, als verändert. Aber das letzte, was ich zu mir rechne, mein körperlicher Leib, soll in Verbindung mit der gesamten Körperwelt stehen; wie daher der erste als verändert angeschaut wird, wird nothwendig auch die letzte so erblickt.”

68. SSL, GA I/5, 29 (FSW IV, 12): “Das durch meine Wirksamkeit veränderliche Ding, oder die Beschaffenheit der Natur ist ganz dasselbe, was das unveränderliche, oder die bloße Materie ist; nur angesehen von einer anderen Seite; ebenso wie oben die Kausalität des Begriffs auf das objective, von zwei Seiten angesehen, als Wille und als Leib erschien. Das veränderliche ist die Natur, subjectiv, und mit mir, dem thätigen, in Verbindung, angesehen; das unveränderliche, dieselbe Natur, ganz und lediglich objectiv angesehen, und unveränderlich aus den oben angezeigten Gründen.”

69. It is to be noted that in his introductory remarks Fichte leaves out his own views on the *organized* body and on the connection between what he terms the *articulated* and the *organized* body. Cf. SSL, GA I/5, 29 (FSW IV, 11): “This preliminary survey does not include that aspect of my body known as *organization* [*Organisation*]”. On the *organized* body and on the connection between the *articulated* and the *organized* body, see notably SSL, GA I/5, 44, 124f., 234f. (FSW IV, 29, 127f. 261f.), GNR §6, GA I/3, 373ff.

(FSW III, 77ff.), WL-nm §§ 11, 14, and 19, GA IV/2, 108ff., 155ff., 256ff., and GA IV/ 3, 418ff..

70. In other words, *my body* is where the two realms –the realm of *subjectivity* (I-hood, my activity, my *Zweckbegriffe* and my will) and the realm of *objectivity* (the realm of *resistance* to what is subjective, i.e. the realm of *resistance* to me, to my activity, to my *Zweckbegriffe*, and to my will)– *come into contact with each other*.

71. Put another way, *my body* stands out as being at the same time a) something *opposed to subjectivity* (I-hood, my activity, my *Zweckbegriffe* and my will) – for it is *Stoff*: it belongs to the realm *resistance* to what is subjective, it is made of *resistance* to me, to my activity, to my *Zweckbegriffe*, and to my will – and b) something *equated with subjectivity* (something *equated with me* , with *my activity* , with my *Zweckbegriffe* and with *my will*). Fichte does not put it in these terms, but it can be said that what distinguishes *my body* is the fact that it has, as it were, the nature of an *oxymoron*.

72. In § 7 (SSL, GA I/5, 99-100, FSW IV, 98) Fichte depicts this stable set of starting points (that is, one's *articulated body*) as follows: "The idea governing the deduced series is as follows: First of all, there has to be some starting point where the I departs from its original limitation and exercises causality for the first time and immediately; and if it were for some reason impossible to carry the analysis all the way back to this original starting point, there then might also appear to be a *plurality* of starting points. Insofar as each of these points is supposed to be a starting point, the I is at each such starting point an immediate cause, through its will, and there are no intermediate elements through which it first has to acquire such causality. If the I is ever to be a cause at all then there must be such starting points. [...] we call these points, when thought of collectively, our articulated body; and our articulated body is nothing but these same [starting] points [of efficacious acting in the world], presented in and realized through intuition. Let us call this system of the first moments of our causality group A". (Die Idee der deducierten Reihe ist folgende. Es muß zuzörderst einen Anfangspunkt geben, in welchem das Ich aus seiner ursprünglichen Beschräntheit herausgeht, und zuerst und unmittelbar Kausalität hat; welcher, wenn es aus irgend einem Grunde unmöglich seyn sollte, so weit zurück zu analysiren, auch wohl als eine *Mehrheit* von Anfangspunkten erscheinen könnte. In wie fern es Anfangspunkte seyn sollen, ist es in ihnen das Ich unmittelbar durch seinen Willen Ursache; es giebt keine Mittelglieder, um nur erst zu dieser Kausalität zu gelangen. Solche erste Punkte mußte es geben, wenn das Ich überhaupt je Ursache seyn sollte. Diese Punkte zusammengedacht nennen wir [...] unsern articulirten Leib: und dieser Leib ist nichts anders, als diese Punkte durch Anschauung dargestellt und realisiert. Man nenne dieses System der ersten Punkte unserer Kausalität den Rang A.)

73. Or, to put it in the terms used by Fichte, my body is not just an *Ansicht* of the said *Verhältnis* (of the “relation of what is subjective and what is objective to each other”) among the other *Ansichten* Fichte refers to. The point is that this particular *Ansicht* – my body – is such that it both *recapitulates* and *anticipates* all the others.

74. In other words, Fichte puts his focus on the kind of *centred multiplicity* Hierocles alludes to in his famous *concentric circles* (STOBÆUS, *Anthologium*, IV, ch. 27, sec. 23) – basically the very set of phenomena Heidegger later termed *das Umhafte*. See notably HEIDEGGER, *Gesamtausgabe* 61, 96f., 129, *Gesamtausgabe* 62, 91ff., *Gesamtausgabe* 63, 86, 102, *Gesamtausgabe* 64, 20ff., *Gesamtausgabe* 20, 230f., 308f., SZ, 101ff. On the connection between Fichte’s views on this subject and Stoic οἰκειώσις, see CARVALHO M. J., “The Concept of Drive in the *Sittenlehre* (1798) – Fundamental Aspects of Fichte’s ‘Doctrine of Oikeiosis’”, in *Philosophy Today* 52 (2008), 298-310.

75. This equally holds true for my body: as *Stoff*, it includes both elements.

76. In the final analysis, this second division amounts, of course, to a *subdivision* of the realm of *what can be changed*.

77. The fact that there is a sphere of direct intervention does not in itself mean that this sphere must be *finite*. In this sense, *my body could be infinite*. And the point is that *it is not*.

78. That is, the system of “starting points” the articulate body is made of – see note 72 above.

79. SSL, GA I/5, 100 (FSW IV, 98-99): “An jeden dieser Punkte knüpfen sich nunmehr andere Punkte an, in denen vermittelt der ersten das Ich auf manichfaltige Weise Ursache werden kann. Ich sage an *Jeden Mehrere*; denn wenn von jedem aus nur auf *Eine* Weise gehandelt werden könnte, so würde von ihm aus nicht frei gehandelt, und es wäre überhaupt kein zweites Handeln, sondern nur das fortgesetzte erste. Man nenne dieses System den Rang B. An jedes Einzelne von Range B. Und wieder angknüpft mehrere Punkte eines dritten Ranges C., und so wird, um ein Bild zu geben, um einen festen Mittelpunkt eine unendliche Cirkelfläche beschrieben, in welcher jeder Punkt als mit unendlich vielen grenzend gedacht werden kann.”

80. SSL, GA I/5, 123 (FSW IV, 127-128): “Nun ist das, was im Raume ist, und denselben ausfüllt, Materie. Ich bin sonach, als Naturprodukt, Materie; und zwar nach dem obigen organisierte Materie, die ein bestimmtes Ganzes ausmacht. *Mein Leib*.

Ferner es soll in der Botmäßigkeit meines Willens stehen, Naturdinge mit mir zu vereinigen, oder in ein Verhältnis mit mir zu bringen. Nun bezieht diese Vereinigung oder dieses Verhältnis sich auf Theile meines organisierten Leibes; und dieser mein Leib ist das unmittelbare Instrument meines Willens. Mithin müssen diese Theile unter der Herrschaft meines Willens stehen, und da hier vom Verhältnis im Raume die Rede ist, sie müssen als Theile, d. i. in Beziehung auf das Ganze meines Leibes, beweglich, und mein Leib selbst in Beziehung auf das Ganze der Natur, beweglich seyn. Es muß, da diese Bewegung abhängen soll von einem frei entworfenen und ins unbestimmte modificirbaren Begriffe, eine mannichfaltige Beweglichkeit seyn. – Man nennt eine solche Einrichtung des Leibes *Articulation*. Soll ich frei seyn, so muß mein

Leib articuliert sein.”

81. In which case *my* action (N.B.: *my* action *proper*) would not go beyond the first step; everything else would be the work of *Stoff* itself.

82. Viz. *complex* actions.

83. See notably LEIBNIZ, G. W., *Monadologie*, 57, in: *Die philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt, Berlin, Weidmann, 1875-1890, repr., Hildesheim, Olms, 1978, 616: “Et comme un même ville regardée de differens côtés paroist tout autre et est comme *multipliée perspectivement*, il arrive de même, que par la multitude infinie des substances simples, il y a comme autant de differens univers, qui ne sont pourtant que les perspectives d’un seul selon les differens points de veue de chaque monade.” See also *Discours de Métaphysique* IX, in: *Die philosophischen Schriften*, IV, 434: “De plus toute substance est comme un monde entier et commun miroir de Dieu ou bien de tout l’univers, qu’elle exprime chacune à sa façon, à peu près comme une même ville est diversement représentée selon les differentes situations de celui qui la regarde. Ainsi l’univers est en quelque façon multiplié autant de fois qu’il y a de substances, et la gloire de Dieu est redoublée de même par autant de representations toutes differentes de son ouvrage.” Cf. *Die philosophischen Schriften* I, 69, and III, 623.

84. We might also say: the first, the second, the third, the fourth circle, etc.

85. That is, a very complex network of modifications of the distance between my body and the other components of the realm of *Stoff*.

86. That is, an *immense* – and *de facto impossible* – action.

87. See above footnotes 79 and 80.

88. Cf. PASCAL, fr. 200 (Lafuma)/347 (Brunschvicg). See also 113 (Lafuma)/348 (Brunschvicg).

ABSTRACTS

This paper deals with some fundamental aspects of Fichte’s transcendental account of the body in action, as laid down in the introductory remarks to his 1798 *Sittenlehre*. Fichte claims that the representation of one’s body is part and parcel of the representation of “first-person” efficacious action or of one’s *Wirksamkeit überhaupt*. In his view, the latter cannot take place without the former, so that the representation of one’s body is necessarily *contained* and *posited* in the representation of one’s *Wirksamkeit*. Conversely, action – i. e. *meine Wirksamkeit* – is more than just a particular feature of one’s body among many others: the representation of one’s efficacious

action is rather the framework within which the representation of one's body is formed – it is *what constitutes one's body (my body) as such*. This paper tries to zoom in on the very complex set of representations that, according to Fichte, are entailed in the indissoluble unity of this fundamental representation: “*my efficacious action/my body*”.

INDEX

Keywords: body, efficacious action, Sittenlehre 1798

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Reseñas/Recensões

Ayse Yuva, *Transformer le monde? L'efficace de la philosophie en temps de révolution. France-Allemagne, 1794-1815*

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REFERENCIA

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- 1 Si bien es cierto que, tal como se sugiere en este libro, la cuestión acerca de la eficacia política de la filosofía es casi tan antigua como la filosofía misma, con el advenimiento de la Ilustración tanto el problema de la relación entre política y filosofía como el de los alcances de una influencia de ésta última sobre aquélla se vuelve central en el pensamiento filosófico europeo. Con respecto a esto cabe mencionar aquí que la cuestión de la relación entre política y filosofía que atraviesa implícita o explícitamente la Ilustración francesa y alemana es un fenómeno que también puede verse durante esos años al otro lado del Atlántico. Mientras que en Francia y Alemania este debate tiene como uno de sus puntos críticos la revolución francesa y su posterior desenvolvimiento político y bélico; en Latinoamérica el trabajo intelectual en busca de la mediación política de un ideal filosófico de gobierno de los hombres o de la mediación filosófica de un ideario político tiene como momento análogo a la revolución francesa las distintas revoluciones y guerras independistas en las primeras décadas del siglo diecinueve. En este sentido, puede sugerirse que la investigación llevada a cabo por Yuva puede servir de estímulo para estudios similares sobre el caso Latinoamericano.
- 2 En su análisis de los nudos conceptuales que permitan delimitar teóricamente las condiciones de una penetración recíproca de las instancias

política y filosófica, Ayse Yuva nos ofrece una reconstrucción de las visiones de figuras representativas del pensamiento alemán y francés (Kant, Fichte, Schiller, Rehberg, Humboldt, Schiller, Condorcet, Chateaubriand, Constant, de Staël, Volney, Destutt de Tracy) acerca de la ilustración como proyecto político, filosófico y educativo. Si bien el subtítulo del libro indica que el período estudiado se extiende entre 1794 y 1815, casi el mismo período que comprende el nacimiento y evolución de la doctrina de la ciencia de Fichte, su análisis comprende en realidad el período entre 1784 y 1815, sobre todo por la relevancia que adquieren los artículos que Kant publicó en 1784 sobre filosofía cosmopolita de la historia e ilustración. A su vez, a pesar de lo que se sugiere con el subtítulo personalidades centrales en este debate en Alemania como Nicolai, Jacobi o incluso Goethe no forman parte del estudio de Yuva. El libro da la impresión de un cierto desequilibrio en la profundidad y extensión entre los análisis de los debates en Francia y Alemania. Yuva parece poseer no sólo un mayor conocimiento del paisaje intelectual francés, sino además de la situación política francesa concreta en esos años. De allí que en su estudio del caso alemán se extraña la contextualización política del discurso filosófico que puede verse en el estudio del caso francés.

- 3 El libro se divide en tres partes: I) *La filosofía y los principios de gobierno* ; II) *La difusión de la filosofía en la sociedad: arte de gobernar y educación*; y III) *La filosofía en el discurso público y el pensamiento colectivo*. Estas tres secciones vienen precedidas de una introducción, en la que Yuva intenta justificar tanto la pregunta central, el marco conceptual y metodológico de su investigación como también identificar ciertos riesgos y limitaciones constitutivos al quehacer filosófico en su dimensión política. Las últimas páginas del libro presentan un resumen general del libro a modo de conclusión. En lo que sigue, ofrecemos algunas reflexiones sobre puntos concretos del libro de Yuva. Dada la variedad de temas y autores que Yuva pone en juego en su reconstrucción de la historia intelectual en la Francia y la Alemania directamente posterior al evento revolucionario, se vuelve imposible, dentro de los límites de una reseña bibliográfica, una discusión de la totalidad de la investigación de Yuva.
- 4 La primera parte de este libro comienza con un análisis de la naturaleza filosófica de la revolución francesa. El mismo se concentra en el pensamiento francés y alemán *posterior* a esta revolución. No se trata pues de descubrir la causalidad de la filosofía en la revolución francesa, sino, por el contrario, de describir cómo el acontecimiento revolucionario modifica los ejes de la discusión filosófica. Uno de los puntos más significativos de esta primera sección es la discusión acerca del *tempo* de la evolución política de una sociedad. El desarrollo de una filosofía de la historia en clave iluminista lleva aparejado el problema de la relación entre los hechos reales y el curso que la

historia de la Humanidad *debe* seguir. Puesto en otros términos: el problema (clásico en el marxismo del siglo pasado) entre la necesidad implícita en el discurso científico o filosófico sobre la historia y la contingencia inherente a la praxis humana. Conocer la historia ideal de la Humanidad abre la posibilidad de acelerar el curso de la historia real y crea así un nuevo ámbito de discusión. Surge entonces la cuestión de si la aceleración de la historia debe llevarse a cabo por medio de reformas pacíficas o de revoluciones. En la reconstrucción historiográfica que ofrece Yuva llama la atención la ausencia de la idea kantiana de aceleración de la historia, tal como se halla expuesta en su artículo de 1784 *Idea para una historia universal con una intención cosmopolita*. Si bien este artículo es citado por Yuva en otras partes del libro, y el pensamiento kantiano ocupa un lugar central en el desarrollo del libro todo, Yuva parece haber entendido que el aporte kantiano a la cuestión de la velocidad de la historia de la humanidad no es relevante. Su análisis de la contribución kantiana para pensar la revolución se restringe a la idea kantiana de revolución filosófica o revolución en el modo de pensar a la luz de la primera crítica kantiana.

- 5 En la segunda parte Yuva emprende un estudio de la cuestión de la educación dentro del debate sobre revolución y reformismo. Interesante en la presentación de Yuva es la articulación de la educación como elemento político no sólo con la cuestión específica de la formación del nuevo ciudadano que exige la nueva situación política (sobre todo en Francia), sino también con el arte, devenido en ciencia, de la predicción. Los distintos proyectos educativos de la ilustración tardía francesa y alemana se develan como prácticas políticas para predecir y asegurar un escenario futuro sea de restauración sea de reforma. La propuesta de Yuva de una distinción entre un discurso destinado al gobierno y transformación del cuerpo y otro destinado a la formación del espíritu, a partir de la cual Yuva busca legitimar el discurso filosófico como concentrado exclusivamente en el espíritu del ciudadano o la población, resulta problemática e incluso contraproducente a los fines del libro mismo. Pues no permite ver que uno de los puntos centrales del discurso filosófico sobre la educación, sea en su versión progresista radical como progresista moderada, es el supuesto de que la educación debe volver a poner en el centro del debate el ser humano como totalidad. Un supuesto, por cierto, que nace de la reacción contra las transformaciones económicas de este momento de la historia europea por medio de las cuales el individuo se aliena de aquello que, según el credo de la Ilustración, el hombre es *en verdad*. Así, por ejemplo, la lucha de la razón contra los sofismas de las pasiones en Condorcet no debería ser vista como una apelación exclusiva al espíritu del individuo o de una sociedad, sino como el intento de devolver al individuo o al colectivo social la posibilidad de una idea de sí mismo en cuanto totalidad

de alma y cuerpo, de razón y sentimientos, de intelecto y voluntad.

- 6 La tercera sección está dedicada a la dimensión social y pública de la filosofía. Yuva discute aquí tal vez el elemento más novedoso de este momento de la historia intelectual de Europa, a saber, el surgimiento de la esfera (de la opinión) pública. La apertura del discurso filosófico a un nuevo sujeto cultural que posee un lenguaje diferente del de los intelectuales y los gobernantes, implica el desafío de desarrollar nuevas estrategias comunicativas en pos de una claridad y evidencia para el común de los hombres de una nación. El pensamiento posrevolucionario francés y alemán se agrupa pues detrás del proyecto de *formar* la opinión pública como instrumento político/literario destinado a impedir todo intento de gobierno absolutista o despótico. Las aguas, sin embargo, se dividen, como advierte Yuva, a la hora del planteo del problema de la aceptación de lo popular o vulgar. La tolerancia del progresismo y de la moderación política es puesta en cuestión, cuando un nuevo grupo social, por cierto no-cultivado, gana terreno en el ámbito de la opinión pública. Tal como muestra Yuva en uno de los apartados de esta sección, la intervención del intelectual en lo político y lo social trae por cierto el riesgo de que el intelectual se transforme en un colaborador del régimen, sea éste despótico o republicano. Uno de los logros de este libro es mostrar de un modo desapasionado las razones tanto de aquellos que critican toda colaboración con quien detenta el poder (Volney) como de aquellos que prestan sus servicios para aconsejar al gobernante (Chateaubriand, de Staël). Esta tercera parte se cierra con una investigación acerca del “nosotros” como sujeto de la enunciación y como destinatario del discurso filosófico. Allí el especialista en Fichte leerá con interés y agrado el apartado acerca del “profesorado político de Fichte” (pp. 275-298) en el cual Yuva logra una interesante exposición del desarrollo intelectual todo de Fichte a la luz de su activismo político-filosófico.
- 7 Al inicio de la última sección “Conclusión” Yuva advierte al lector acerca del propósito original de su obra. No se trata más que de constatar las ambivalencias profundas que habitan la filosofía de la Ilustración posrevolucionaria y la definición de su eficacia política. Las conclusiones reflejan este espíritu en la medida en que evitan formular palabras definitivas sobre los temas que se han discutido. Ciertamente la puesta en suspenso de un juicio final que dé una claridad total al paisaje intelectual descrito por Yuva da una cierta libertad al lector que se traduce en una invitación a sacar las propias conclusiones. Tal vez Yuva entendió que esa claridad era imposible o al menos un elemento artificial que no haría más que oscurecer la armonía, que su libro logra con destreza envidiable, dentro de la pluralidad conflictiva de pareceres tan distintos sobre una misma cuestión.

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