

J. G. Fichtes Philosophy in the contemporary World: recognition and cosmopolitanism across boundaries *World Congress Philosophy Rome 2024*

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In 2024 for the first time the *Fichte Society* took part to the World Congress of Philosophy, which has been held in Rome in August. Petra Lohmann, the President of the *Johann-Gottlieb-Fichte-Gesellschaft* and Matteo d'Alfonso, Chief Editor of the *Fichte-Studien* chaired a panel carrying the title *J. G. Fichtes Philosophy in the contemporary World: recognition and cosmopolitanism across boundaries* to highlight the contribution of the Research Community on Fichte's Philosophy to the philosophical research on the German Classical Philosophy and the Transcendental Philosophy more in general. Hereafter we publish some of the papers.

The *Fichte-Studien* as a mirror of the modern philosophical research on Johann Gottlieb Fichte's Philosophy

Matteo Vincenzo d'Alfonso

In 1987 the *International Johann Gottlieb Fichte Society* was grounded. Reinhardt Lauth, Wolfgang Janke, Helmut Girndt, Klaus Hammacher, Wolfgang Schrader, Richard Schottky and Edith Düsing sat in the board of the new society. Wolfgang Janke was unanimously elected president: the formal foundation took place the following year in a notary's office in Wuppertal, Wolfgang Janke's place of residence. According to its Statute, during these thirty years, the International Johann Gottlieb Fichte Society organised eleven international congresses one every three years. The next and 12th congress will take place in Ferrara 17-20 September 2025.

At the same time as the Society was founded, Klaus Hammacher, Richard Schottky and Wolfgang H. Schrader initiated the *Fichte-Studien. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Systematik der Transzendentalphilosophie (Fichte-Studies. Contributions to the History and the systematically Thinking of the Transcendental Philosophy)* as a scholarly publication for Fichte research, the first volume of which appeared in 1990 and has now reached volume 52. In addition, also the *Supplementa* series was founded, publishing monographs and other conference proceedings.

The history of the International Fichte-Society and of the *Fichte-Studien* runs parallel, punctuated by the congresses that also provide most of the material for the articles. In the best cases, in fact, the society's congresses provided a forum for close discussion of the most topical issues for the Fichte research community, which then - reworked and deepened - flowed into the volumes of the *Fichte-Studien*. After all, the *Fichte-Studien* were initially conceived in the form of *Bandreihe* to be published *in unregelmäßiger Form*, but they soon took on the form of a regular journal, which will, however, only be definitively certified as of 2021, under the direction of Marco Ivaldo.

However, it is also necessary to mention another parallel editorial venture of fundamental importance for the development of modern research around Fichte: the beginning in 1962 at the *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Munich of the *Gesamtausgabe* of Fichte's work in four series – I. *Works*, II. *Nachlass*, III. *Briefwechsel* and IV. *Kollegnachschriften* – by Hans Jacob and Reinhardt Lauth. An editorial project that was successfully completed 50 years later, in 2012 thanks to the work of an extraordinary editorial team comprehending Hans Gliwitzky, Erich Fuchs, Peter K. Schneider, Ives Radrizzani and Hans Georg von Manz. It is this exceptional publishing enterprise that has provided an incredible impetus for the research into Fichtian philosophy that is evidenced in the SIF. Indeed, the *Gesamtausgabe* enriched the sources for the study of Fichte's philosophy with an impressive amount of new Fichtian texts and study materials, compared to the, albeit rich, collection of texts prepared by his son Immanuel-Hermann. As examples I mention the extremely rich preparatory material for the lectures of 1794/95 published under the title *Grundlage der gesamten WL - the Eigne Meditationen über die Elementarphilosophie* (1791-92) and the *Zürcher Vorlesungen* of 1793; the publication of the unpublished 1798 Jena lectures, the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, as well as the *Platner-Vorlesungen*; the many unpublished versions of the lectures on the doctrine of science between the years 1801-1814 that his son had partially neglected; the lectures on *Transzendente Logik* and *Thatsachen*

des Bewußtseins; and, finally, the materials relating to the Fichtian *Diaries* of the years 1813-1814.

The publication of this incredible amount of philosophical material, accompanied by that of the philosopher's entire correspondence, had an extremely significant effect not only on the reconfiguration of Fichte's thought, but on that of the entire post-Kantian debate and its protagonists. It has to be noticed, that Fichte, for peculiar biographical reasons, operates in the panorama of the so-called German Idealism under extremely particular circumstances. The fact, that he encountered Kantian philosophy only in 1791, the year in which Kant published the *Critique of Judgement* allowed him to catch the critical philosophy in its entirety at a glance, i.e. being able to read the three *Critiques* one after the other in the space of a few months, whereas authors such as Reinhold, Maimon, Schulze or Niethammer, had to wait years to see the completion of Kant's transcendentalism and sometimes found themselves even puzzled by the innovations that gradually appeared. It was also for this reason that Fichte was able to propose an extremely innovative reading of Kant and formulate a systemic proposal that drew on the entirety of Kant's production with the aim of building that bridge between the sensible and intelligible worlds that Kant had longed for in the *Introduction to the Critique of Judgement*.

Consequently, the flowering of research around Fichte had a great impact on the study of the other interpreters of the period and indirectly, but very decisively, promoted investigations around Reinhold, Jacobi, Maimon, Schulze and Bardili. All of these authors historically considered minors in comparison to the three stars of German idealism – Fichte, Schelling and Hegel – had, with sporadic exceptions, been further neglected by both the neo-Hegelian and neo-Kantian historiographical traditions. Only the specific breakdown of these two specific forms of historiographical enchantment – one that in scanning the philosophers from Kant to Hegel had weighed the value of its various protagonists in the light of their function as a stage towards the final pole represented by absolute idealism; the other that had instead measured their philosophical proposals on the criterion of respecting the limits imposed by a more or less orthodox Kantianism – was able to bring each of these authors back to the centre of historical-philosophical research for their own value and for their contribution to the discussion on the destiny of Transcendental Philosophy. Eventually the *Gesamtausgabe* was the driving force behind the new editions of the letters and works of Schelling, Jacobi, Reinhold as well as, more recently, Maimon.

This movement has found an obvious mirroring in the issues of the *Fichte-Studien*, which have thus gathered the precipitate of this gradual process of valorisation of one of the richest philosophical periods in the history of Western thought. Let us see it then within the volumes.

The publications of the first volumes 1-9 are, as to be expected, devoted to the Fichte of Jena Period, i.e. the *Grundlage* and the two moments that represented, on the one hand the preparatory phase, in the years immediately preceding it, and on the other hand the developments in the applied disciplines, *Rechtslehre* and *Sittenlehre*, and in the elaborations of the *Doctrine of Science* in the years 1797-1798.

It is in the first issue, however, that we also find clear indications of the theoretical significance of the new Fichtian research, aimed at making use of Fichte's philosophy for a renewal of transcendental philosophy more generally. Thus it is that alongside the articles on dialectics by two of the founders of the series, Wolfgang Janke and Klaus Hammacher, we also find three articles that broaden the Fichtian discourse in the direction of a consideration of the transcendental more generally: Chukei Kumamoto – the founder of the *Japanese Fichte Society* – on transcendental freedom; Reinhard Lauth, on the relationship between transcendental philosophy materialism and religion, and Marek K. Siemek and Pentzopoulou-Valas with two Husserlian contributions, Schrader with a reflection on Fichte and the postmodern. Also noteworthy is the presence in these first volumes of constant

contributions by Erich Fuchs on the Fichtian constellation, in this first volume we find some texts on Jacobi and Fichte in a Swedish archive.

The second issue, on the other hand, presents research on Fichte's political philosophy, his idea of the state, his model of cosmopolitanism, and his relations with Freemasonry. This issue is ideally continued in the third, which is expressly dedicated to social philosophy, discussing issues of ethics and philosophy of law, as well as an early paper written by Marco Ivaldo on the problem of evil in Fichte.

The fourth volume deals instead with the specific problem of the relationship between transcendental philosophy and evolutionary theory and investigates the compatibility of the transcendental perspective with the idea that the emergence of consciousness should be considered as the outcome of a selective historical-natural process. After the in-depth investigation of practical reason in the preceding volumes, the fifth volume investigates the questions pertaining to theoretical reason.

The sixth volume starts the collection of the proceedings of *International Fichtian Congresses*, beginning with the Congress which had been held in 1992 in Rammenau with the title: *Reality and Certainty*. This issue is carried out in the light of the thoughts of Bardili, Reinhold, Jacobi and Fichte, demonstrating the inseparability of Fichte's research from the methodology of the so called *Konstellationsforschung*. Another character that begins to be clearly present from this volume is the strong internationality of the contributions, as we find Austria, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United States represented alongside Germany. The seventh volume focuses on a classic theme of modern philosophy, *Subjectivity*, while the eighth is the first to be entirely devoted to the *Philosophy of Religion*. Volumes 9, 10 and 11 show a certain centred coherence, as they go from *Anfänge und Ursprünge. Zur Vorgeschichte der Jenaer WL*, to a volume devoted to the *Grundlage* itself and the transcendental point of view, and finally to the *Material Disziplinen der WL. Zur Theorie der Gefühle*. Wolfgang Schrader, who took over the editorship of the journal, also provides it with the specific theoretical line that touches on the topics of "feeling", "intentionality" and "interpersonality", as well as the "genesis of consciousness" in its relation to drives and feelings also in comparison with Hegel or Jacobi. In the twelfth volume, the issue is extended to the broader relationship *Fichte und die Romantik. Hölderlin Schelling Hegel und die späte WL*. Here the formulations of the WL from 1800 onwards are dealt with for the first time, but also the reception of Fichte's thought is also originally thematised. The 13th volume extends into the 20th century, *Fichte im 20. Jahrhundert*. In this one, we see how the phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition of Husserl and Heidegger, as well as neo-Kantism and currents of social philosophy have dialogued with Fichte's thought. The next volume, the 14th, is edited by Hammacher and remains on the issues of author comparison being devoted to *Fichte and Jacobi*.

Having exhausted an initial series of historical interviews and influences, the editors return to a key question of transcendental thought, dedicating the 15th volume to the *Transzendente Logik*, which is considered within the Fichtian discourse as well as in comparison with other key figures of Transcendental Philosophy such as Edmund Husserl. From volume 16 onwards, the material discoveries made by the editors of the *Gesamtausgabe* return to centre stage: volume 16 is devoted to the *Einheit der Lehre Fichtes. Die Zeit der Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo*: The topic of the unity of Fichtian philosophy at the transition from the Jena phase to the Berlin phase is characteristic of the new research on Fichte and has always been advocated in the Fichte-Studien, here it is fostered by the specific treatment of the lectures on the WL of 1798, the so-called *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo*, which suggests a bridge to the later expositions of 1801 and 1804. Similarly, issues 17 and 18 are entitled *Die Spätphilosophie Fichtes*, where the treatment of the WL 1804 is strongly presented, but issues on WL 1805 and WL 1807 are also taken into consideration. Published in 2000, they collect the contributions of the congress held three years earlier in

Schulppforte. For the first time, the publication of the high number of contributions, more than 30, need to be spread over more than one volume, signalling the growth of Fichtian research and the increase in international contributions.

In 2000, with the Berlin congress, international research showed its new dimension. 40 years of tireless editorial work and almost 15 years of the Fichte-Society's activities have produced significant effects. In France, in Spain, in Italy, but also in Japan and North America, many young scholars are approaching Fichtian philosophy. The crisis in the communist countries dragged with it a decline in interest in Marxism and, consequently, also in Hegelian research. Fichte, alongside Schelling, also gained points thanks to a research perspective that progressively freed him from the Hegelian paradigm and brought to light new perspectives in metaphysics and epistemology that allowed for a renewed dialogue with the philosophical tradition. The proceedings of the Berlin conference occupy no less than 6 issues that cover every aspect of Fichtian philosophy: Literature, the Doctrine of Science divided into its different phases, Jenaean, early-Berlin and second-Berlin, his relationships with the contemporaries philosophers, the figure of Fichte in the history of philosophy and in more times, and, finally, two volumes devoted to practical and applied philosophy with a total of 79 contributions.

The 25th issue is instead again dedicated to a single theme, namely the *Briefwechsel Schelling-Fichte 1794-1802*, drawn in close collaboration with the working group publishing Schelling's works and Nachlass represented by Jorg Jantzen and Thomas Kisser. This letters had recently been republished and bear witness to the friendship and collaboration first and the personal and theoretical crisis which brought to a their split later. Two subsequent issues are anew devoted to two timely aspects of Fichte's production: the WL 1807 and the two versions of the *Sittenlehre* from 1798 and 1812 respectively.

This brings us to the following, 5th congress of the Fichte Gesellschaft, organised by Gunther Zöller in Munich in 2003 and dedicated to his *Spätwerk 1810-1814*. The participation in the work of the congress and the subsequent publications was enormous and, for the first time, massively international. Although not all the unpublished Fichte materials from his Berlin lifetime had already been published, informally the product of the *Fichte-Kommission's* editorial work had been widely circulated. In particular, the large number of courses he gave at the newly founded University of Berlin between 1810 and 1814 made it possible to complete the picture of Fichte's prematurely interrupted philosophical activity as well as his public figure. Erich Fuchs had in the meantime also completed the edition of *Fichte in Gespräch*, the collection of all the places where contemporaries dealt with the thinker from Rammenau. The *Fichte-Studien* testify to this effort by collecting the vast majority of contributions in five volumes between 2006 and 2009. This is a period in which publishing activity struggled to keep up with the production of Fichtean research.

Completing the overview of Fichtean philosophical production was the subsequent conference, organised by Jürgen Stolzenberg in Halle, with the title *Wissen, Freiheit, Geschichte. Die Philosophie Fichtes im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert*. This was devoted to the reception of Fichte's thought, and issues 35.-38. accommodate the product of this enormous work divided into thematic areas (philosophy of the spirit, metaphysics, logic / mathematics / sciences, theology, aesthetics, practical philosophy / politics / law,); philosophical movements (neo-Kantism, Hegelianism and late idealism, phenomenology, existentialism, contemporary philosophy); geographical areas of study. Significantly, the first non-German president of the society, Jean-Christoph Goddard, was also elected in 2006. In the years that followed, the journal also took on a character no longer restricted to the publication of contributions from congresses. Guest editors appeared who delved into specific aspects of Fichtean thought: the relationship to Kant (issue 33), the work at the University of Erlangen (issue 34), the relationship to Scepticism (issue 39), the very important question of the relationship between Nationalism, Society and Individualism (issue 40), *Fichte und die Kunst*

(issue 41), *Bild, Selbstbewußtsein, Einbildung* (issue 42). Due to the amount of material produced by the Fichteian research community for the first time the papers from the 2009 Brussels congress – the first outside Germany within a long series – carrying the title *Fichte/Schelling. Der Idealismus in Diskussion* will be published separately, demonstrating that the research output around Fichte's thought has become very substantial. The following congress took place in Bologna in 2012, the one after that in Madrid in 2015, then Aix-en-Provence 2018. In the meantime, several national societies that organise research on Fichte have also flourished. In addition to the historical one in Japan, there are study and research groups in France, Italy, the Iberian Peninsula, North America and Latin America that in turn meet on an annual or biannual basis. In view of the enormous increase in the number of participants at the Fichte-Gesellschaft congresses, since 2012 the publishing policy of the *Fichte-Studien* has become more rigorous and introduced the double-blind peer-review process. The historical publishing house Rodopi is acquired by Brill – in the last year in turn acquired by De Gruyter. With this strong publishing partner, under the leadership of Marco Ivaldo and Alexander Schnell the *Fichte-Studien* in 2021 become a full-fledged journal with two issues per year and a structured editorial schedule. The organ of Fichteian research is ripe for the challenges that contemporary society presents to Fichteian thought.

The Beginnings of an Art of Reason in the Philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte

Petra Lohmann

1.

‘Art’ is a key concept in Fichte, which finds a characteristic and original application in almost all areas of his philosophy. From a systematic point of view, talk of the ‘art of philosophising’ (cf. GA II/8, p. 2) is a fundamental prerequisite for understanding and implementing the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the ‘art of philosophising’ is closely related to the imagination, with which the philosopher ‘educates’ himself into the development of the ground of all consciousness. In the ‘*Sittenlehre*’ of 1798, wisdom is categorised as an ‘art’ rather than a science (cf. GA I/5, p. 307) and, similarly, in the ‘*Rechtslehre*’ of 1796, it is also an art with which we assure ourselves of our own body (cf. GA I/3, p. 378). In the ‘*Closed Commercial State*’ (1800), the approach to the rational state is owed to the ‘art of reason’ (cf. GA I/7, p. 56). From the perspective of the philosophy of history, the development of human life is completed in the ‘epoch of the art of reason’ (GA I/5, p. 308). In addition, there are countless references to the fine arts and the specific talent of the artist, which Fichte had already integrated into his philosophy since his time in Jena and which he also repeatedly contrasted in later writings with the philosopher’s ‘art of reason’ (GA II/8, p. 2) and its subject matter, i.e. the science of science (cf. GA II/10, p. 185). The enthusiastic approval that the *Wissenschaftslehre* received among Fichte’s contemporaries and in the early Romantic period¹ can probably be attributed not least to the inspiring force that emanated from the *Wissenschaftslehre* as the product of an art of reason. Regardless of these essential aspects, however, there is no independent sub-discipline of aesthetics in Fichte’s philosophical system. This leads some authors in the secondary literature to deny Fichte almost any aesthetic sense.²

This is precisely what needs to be refuted. It is true that Fichte wanted to develop aesthetics as a material sub-discipline of the science of science – as Giorgia Cecchinato, among others, shows – but ultimately he failed in this endeavour³. Apart from this, however, there are numerous references to art in general and to specific arts – such as architecture –

¹ Cf. Schrader, Wolfgang H. (Ed.): *Fichte und die Romantik. Hölderlin, Schelling, Hegel und die späte Wissenschaftslehre. Fichte-Studien Bd. 12* (1997) and Nicolai Hartmann: *Die Philosophie des Deutschen Idealismus*, part 1: *Fichte, Schelling und die Romantik*. Berlin 1923.

² Marco Ivaldo also criticises this „commonplace[...]“, cf.: *Einbildungskraft als Geist in der Philosophie und der Kunst bei Fichte*, in: *Fichte-Studien Vol. 41* (2013), p. 125-144, here S. 125. Fichte’s alleged lack of understanding of art is passed on not least through quotes from descriptions of situations, such as those found in Dorothea Stock’s letter of 24 October 1798 to Charlotte Schiller, in which she is amused by the Schlegel brothers’ visit to the Dresden Picture Gallery in the company of Schelling and Fichte, in: *Fichte im Gespräch*, ed. by Erich Fuchs, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1980, Vol. 2, p. 10.

³ Cf. Giorgia Cecchinato: *Das Problem der Ästhetik bei Fichte*. Würzburg 2009. The important role of the imagination by Fichte in relation to the present cf. Violetta Waibel: *Horizont. Schweben. Grenze. Eine philosophische Betrachtung der Malerei Rothkos*, in: *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen XIX. Deutscher Kongreß für Philosophie 23. – 27. September in Bonn*, Bonn 2002, p. 989-1000 and Hartmut Traub: *Ästhetik und Kunst in der Philosophie J. G. Fichtes Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, in: *Fichte-Studien Vol. 41* (2013), p. 305-391 and Vol. 41 *Fichte und die Ästhetik in total*, ed. by Ives Radrizzani in co-operation with Faustino Coves.

scattered throughout his oeuvre, and it should not be underestimated that he himself was also received by artists as a science teacher (e.g. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Louis Catel)⁴. Although these references are present in various fragmentary approaches and are certainly relevant for tracing the scope of his concept of art,⁵ they also show that Fichte was not primarily concerned with fine art in the narrower sense, but that, according to Peter L. Oesterreich and Hartmut Traub, his concept of art was primarily committed to a “completely ‘different, expanded concept [...] of art’⁶, which affects his philosophy as a whole. For this reason, there is no specific theory of the fine arts in his work. In the few cases on specific arts mentioned above, the artists who referred to Fichte were therefore also concerned with very specific philosophical aspects relating to Fichte’s concept of freedom (cf. Schinkel) and the construction of a doctrinal building in the form of a system (cf. Catel). What Fichte developed specifically on aesthetics and art was hardly ever taken up by artists. The orientation of Fichte’s aesthetic motifs can therefore best be described as the design of a new “art of philosophising” (GA II/8, p. 2), i.e. an “art of reason” (GA II/8, p. 2). By means of the art of reason, philosophy and art are united in such a way that philosophy becomes a work of art.⁷

How this function of the art of reason can be concretised in Fichte will be outlined in the following sections using the example of Fichte’s definition of the scholar. According to Fichte, the scholar is the one who must mediate philosophy with himself on the basis of his own “certainty of existence”⁸ and must be able to relate it to the everyday world. According to Fichte, transcendental philosophy and philosophical life practice cannot be separated from each other. Philosophy is never an end in itself, but philosophical knowledge serves the formation of life. In order to be able to form the aforementioned subject-immanent and life-world-external units, the art of reason is required with which Fichte’s philosophy can be developed and communicated as a highly lively philosophy. Its centre is the scholar who, in the course of the development of the doctrine of science, can approach it again and again from many different approaches and changed perspectives, expand it and apply it in the interpersonal historical world. The touchstone for the scholar is never an external criterion, but always his innermost, ineluctable awareness of himself, i.e. his sense of truth and certainty (cf. GA I/5, p. 161).

This unity of philosophy and life in the personal identity of the scholar manifests itself in Fichte’s famous dictum: “What kind of philosophy one chooses depends on what kind of person one is” (GA I/4, p. 195). With the philosophical art of reason, Fichte emphasises that a philosophy of freedom, as his philosophy is, must never be a fixed, fully thought-out and purely self-referential, speculative system from the outset. This also means that a sufficient

⁴ Cf. Petra Lohmann: „Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Architektur als ‚Symbol des Lebens‘. Zur Wirkung der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes auf die Architekturtheorie Karl Friedrich Schinkels (1803 – 1815)“. München/Berlin 2010 and the same: „Architektur und System. Zum Verhältnis von Baugedanke und Gedankengebäude“, in: Karl Leonhard Reinhold and the Enlightenment (Series in German Idealism), Vol. 9, ed. by. George di Giovanni, Heidelberg u. Berlin 2010, p. 241-254.

⁵ Petra Lohmann: „Funktionen der Kunst und des Künstlers in der Philosophie J. G. Fichtes (1780 – 1801)“, in: Grundlegung und Kritik. Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schelling und Fichte 1794 – 1802, ed. by Jörg Jantzen/Thomas Kisser/Hartmut Traub. Amsterdam /New York, 2005, S. 113-132.

⁶ Peter L. Oesterreich/Hartmut Traub: Der ganze Fichte: die populäre, wissenschaftliche und metaphilosophische Erschließung der Welt. Stuttgart 2006, p. 82; to reason cf. p. 34, 84ff., 90, 208, 148, 208, 252, 264.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Wolfgang H. Schrader: Empirisches und absolutes Ich. Zur Geschichte des Begriffs Leben in der Philosophie J. G. Fichte. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1972, p. 99.

understanding of his philosophy presupposes the active participation of the philosopher and his willingness to engage with the openness of thought. The dictum on the choice of philosophical standpoint virtually demands a freely formed conviction from him.

This reference to freedom as the basis of philosophy is both a gain and a problem for the scholar. Freedom is a gain because the choice of philosophical standpoint is self-responsible and is not the result of external coercion. It is a problem because the scholar is, on the one hand, separated from the immediate world of life in his profession as a transcendental speculative thinker and, on the other hand, must participate in it if life is to be organised according to the philosophical idea. In this respect, the aspect of the mediability of philosophy not only concerns the relationship between the scholar and the other co-philosophers,⁹ but it also concerns the scholar's self-relationship, in which the scholar must mediate transcendental knowledge with the ordinary consciousness of everyday life.

For the success of these two ways of mediation – inner and outer – Fichte cites the art of reason in terms of property theory. The aesthetic is given to man “naturally and instinctively” (GA IV/2, p. 266). It is always already part of the life-world of the real human being. This means that man always already has the receptivity for something aesthetic and does not have to learn it first.¹⁰ As Fichte shows in his novella “Das Thal der Liebenden” (The Valley of Lovers, late 1780s) using the example of landscape,¹¹ the sense of the aesthetic is directly given to man (cf. GA II/1, p. 267f.). The consciousness-theoretical approach can build on this, which, as Fichte explains in the theory of drives in “Ueber Geist und Buchstab” (1800), relies on the aesthetic point of view as a hinge in the transition from the ordinary to the transcendental point of view (GA II/3, p. 137). The decisive figure of thought for this is that of the “as if”.¹² In the aesthetic state, the world of necessity manifests itself as if it were the longed-for world of freedom.

Within this horizon, the role of the art of reason in Fichte can be concretised below by means of the two aspects of, firstly, the communicability of speculative philosophy in the context of rhetoric and, secondly, the inner conflict of the scholar in the context of the speculative mood. With regard to the two aspects mentioned above, their central importance for him goes hand in hand with the question of the genetic-speculative and the factual-propaedeutic preconditions of philosophy itself. It follows that Fichte's definition of philosophy as the art of reason relates to the centre of his *Wissenschaftslehre* as a systematic representation of the consciousness of the human mind and its practical application. The art of reason is thus directly related to the problematisation of the realisability of the doctrine of science as a whole, which Fichte formulates at the end of his “*Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*” (1789/99) (cf. GA IV/2, p. 266). Accordingly, for Fichte, not only the artist but also the scholar must necessarily have an aesthetic sense (cf. GA I/2, p. 143).

⁹ Peter L. Oesterreich: *Das gelehrte Absolute Metaphysik und Rhetorik bei Kant, Fichte und Schelling*. Darmstadt 1997.

¹⁰ Oesterreich/Traub 2006, p. 208.

¹¹ Cf. Petra Lohmann: „Das Thal der Liebenden“ – Biographische und ideengeschichtliche Aspekte einer Novelle J. G. Fichtes im ästhetischen Kontext seiner Jugendschriften“, in: *Fichte und die Kunst*, (Fichte-Studien Bd. 41), ed. by Ives Radrizzani in Zusammenarbeit mit Faustino Oncina Covas. Amsterdam / New York 2014, p. 145-161.

¹² Cf. Hans Vaihinger: *Die Philosophie des Als Ob*. Berlin 1911.

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On the first point: the art of reason as the art of mediation in the context of rhetoric. The difference between the level of transcendental thinking and the everyday thinking of immediate life harbours a further profound difference. This is the difference between abstract philosophical evidence and its persuasive power in empiricism. Fichte says about this in the “Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo”: “For philosophy itself, an impulse arises in it to explain its own possibility. What kind of transition is there between the two points of view?” (GA IV/2, P. 265). According to Peter L. Oesterreich and Hartmut Traub, this question marks the core of the problem of mediation in the doctrine of science.¹³ Speculative philosophy must find points of connection to everyday life. Otherwise it cannot be taught or applied. It would remain dead theory and thus the purpose of the doctrine of science would be profoundly defeated. This is because the doctrine of science sees itself from the outset as living, organic knowledge and therefore relies on the dynamic participation of the recipient, whereby he is expected from the outset to dare to cross over from his immediate, concrete everyday life to the transcendental ground of his life. In order for the scholar to succeed in a dialogue with the recipient aimed at this, he must affect the recipient’s powers of consciousness. The emotional state of the recipient would be one of these points of connection. The “emotion of the mind”¹⁴ therefore also constitutes the essence of Fichte’s art of reason. According to this theorem, the doctrine of science cannot be understood solely “through the mere letter”, but must above all “communicate itself through the spirit[...]” (GA I/2, p. 415), which means that it must prove itself in each case through the certainty of its own inner existence, i.e. through the voice of the heart or, as Fichte also calls it, through its conscience or its feeling for truth and certainty (cf. GA I/2, p. 415; GA I/5, p. 161).

This issue becomes relevant not only, but particularly forcefully, in his middle and later philosophy. His “Ideas for the internal organisation of the University of Erlangen” (1806), in which he explicitly calls for a “school of the art of the scientific use of reason” (GA II/9, p. 359), bears witness to this. Fichte’s main intention was to transform the one-sided direction of the lecture from scholar to student into a two-way conversation in the Socratic style. The conviction that an insight gained by the student through Socratic maieutics appears to the student as an insight gained independently and can therefore also be attributed to himself was already set out in detail by Fichte in his “Valediction Speech” (1780) and rhetorically concretised many years later in his debate with Schiller on the relationship between concept and image in philosophical instruction.¹⁵ Just how serious he was about this is shown once again by his “Deducirter Plan einer zu Berlin zu errichtenden höhern Lehranstalt” (1807) (cf. GA II/11, p. 87). By combining science and art into the art of reason, the scholar should be enabled to relate transcendental knowledge to life. In addition to rhetoric, methods such as popular philosophy and experimentation (cf. GA I/8, p. 222) play an important role in the art of academic discourse. Furthermore, the aforementioned ability to “use the intellect[...]” (GA II/1, p. 87) is not one-sidedly related to the scholar, for the students

¹³ Oesterreich/Traub 2006, p. 12f.

¹⁴ Reiner Preul: *Reflexion und Gefühl Die Theologie Fichtes in seiner vorkantischen Zeit*. Berlin 1969, p. 9ff.

¹⁵ Petra Lohmann: „Grundzüge der Ästhetik Fichtes. Seine Ausführungen zur Bedeutung der Ästhetik für die Wissenschaftslehre anlässlich des Horenstreits“, in: *Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus*, Bd. 4, ed. by Jürgen Stolzenberg u. Karl Ameriks. Wien/New York 2006, p. 199 – 224.

actively involved in teaching implicitly educate themselves in the artistry of learning during the learning process.

Fichte's great commitment to an art of reason, which runs like a common thread through his entire oeuvre, becomes particularly relevant in the period around 1804. At this time, he questioned the effectiveness of his philosophy in contemporary discourse. With the lectures of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in 1804 and the three Berlin popular philosophical treatises, in particular the "Anweisung zum seligen Leben" (1806, cf. above all the second lecture), Fichte assumed that he had explained his philosophy clearly and insightfully in its central points by means of a scientific lecture and its popular philosophical adaptation. In fact, this self-conception of his philosophy obviously did not correspond to the historical facts. Accordingly, at the beginning of his Königsberg lecture on the theory of science in January 1807, Fichte wrote: "My writings: -. Not understood, without any exception" (GA II/10, p. 111). Only when philosophy is understood, i.e., for Fichte, understood by the recipient, can it, as he writes towards the end of the 'Wissenschaftslehre 1810 im Umriss' in §14, devote itself to "real life" and become "wisdom teaching" (GA I/10, p. 19), so that the "divine[...] life that is to become visible in us" (GA I/10, p. 19) manifests itself in the real world of life and thus the historical world of life is shaped according to the idea. In this, the art of reason explicitly proves itself to be the practical art of education for self-education.

In the "Wissenschaftslehre" of 1794, Fichte refers to the imagination in the question of which faculty of the human mind is capable of such creative insight. It 'brought forth' the doctrine of science, just as "the whole business of the human mind proceeds from the imagination" and "imagination [...] cannot be conceived in any other way than through imagination" (GA I/2, p. 415). In "Spirit and Letters in Philosophy", Fichte elevates it as productive imagination to the power that forms consciousness. There it says: the imagination "is, at least for empirical consciousness, a complete creator, and creator out of nothing" (GA II/3, p. 316).

For Fichte, the cultivation of one's own self-consciousness through the increasing formation of imaginative powers is an indispensable prerequisite for the creation of speculative science by the philosophical teacher and its communication to the student. Fichte assumes that the reflections of the scholar can be repeated in the student: "What happened in one [reflection] can also renew the other in itself" (GA IV/4, p. 14). The creative reflections of the scholar must be able to be comprehended by the student in such a way that he co-produces the scholar's insights as the results of his own creative power. Introspective reflections of the scholar directed into the inner consciousness and interpersonal co-reflections of the students are to be brought into unity through the rhetorical art of reason. The art of reason makes philosophical knowledge transferable. In the background is a pedagogical model that Fichte had already developed in the "Valediction Speech" and according to which knowledge is not a one-off act, but something to be achieved in constant dialogue with oneself. For Fichte, cognition is therefore the result of a "spontaneous act"¹⁶, which is originally composed of "intellectual clarity and emotion" of the mind or the appeal of the aesthetic sense (cf. GA II/1, p. 88).

2.2.

In the following point, the art of reason is to be considered in the context of the cultivation of the scholar's imagination in the intrapersonal sense. Part of the speculative

¹⁶ Preul 1969, p. 14.

constitution of the scholar is that he arrives at his original insight from within himself. In terms of the theory of consciousness, the scholar's actions are unconditional and unconditional. It resembles a *creatio ex nihilo*. According to Fichte, imagination is decisive for this genetic way of thinking of the scholar for the following reason: while the formation of concepts by the intellect refers to what is already given, imagination in the form of not only reproductive but also productive imagination proves to be originally creative of consciousness. The aesthetic quality of imagination lies in this creative act. As the "primal imagination" (GA II/7, p. 223), it designs the world of thought of the philosopher and the pupil and is thus the creator of ideal and empirical consciousness in terms of content.

The "UrPhantasie" (GA II/7, p. 223) plays an important role above all in the "Wissenschaftslehre" 1804/2. Wolfgang Janke comments on this concept as follows: "The root of our human finite life of consciousness is Urphantasia. The title names the way in which absolute being generates its meaning, and at the same time, by merging our consciousness into it, names the primordial state of our consciousness. Primal fantasy is the primal act of productive imagination (*phantasia*), namely the hovering between the view of the self and the negation of all construction. In this way, primal fantasy holds together what is present (the self as pure being) with what is absent (the negated for-us). What is thereby kept present, as it were, in the overlap, is the totality of all references to consciousness stored in the for-us."¹⁷

The primal imagination creates the potential content for intellectual activity. It is subordinate to the imagination because it does not create its own, but only processes material that is given to it by the imagination. Fichte's general transcendental philosophical valorisation of the imagination continues in the already cited "Wissenschaftslehre 1810 im Umriss", but from then on it takes place at a critical distance from the imagination. The unity of productive imagination and transcendental primal fantasy breaks down. In the individual self-awareness of the scholar, the imagination, now defined as irregular, sometimes deceptive and seductive, appears as a counterpart to the power of imagination.

With the juxtaposition of imagination and fantasy, Fichte ultimately contrasts actions of consciousness that are guided by rules of reason and those that act arbitrarily. He deepens this difference in his "Introduction to his Philosophical Lectures" (1810, Twisten-Nachschrift) by attributing the power of imagination to the free and evident ego consciousness and the imagination to the "quite strange [...] dreams" (GA IV/4, p. 14) of the human psyche, which arise involuntarily. "But whoever notices such strange phenomena in himself, in which his freedom ceases, I advise him, if he is not aware that he is to blame, to send for a doctor" (GA IV/4, p. 14).

But even the imagination is not entirely free from danger. This becomes clear, despite the enormous contribution it makes to intellectual activity, when one considers the speculative mood of the scholar, which manifests itself as an inner conflict in his philosophical self-relationship. For Fichte, this conflict is a constitutive theme of his philosophy. According to the definition of the doctrine of science, knowledge is an act of spontaneity, i.e. it is a free act. This means, however, that knowledge is not simply factual, but is always only in free self-expression. If the realisation is free, it is intentional, i.e. selected from a totality of possible free acts. The totality of free acts is life. The knowledge of knowledge, according

¹⁷ Wolfgang Janke: *Fichte Sein und Reflexion Grundlagen der kritischen Vernunft*. Berlin 1970, p. 386f.

to Reinhard Lauth, is therefore a certain free way of being.¹⁸ If one considers that in extreme cases this way of being extends to the "imits of absolute reflection"¹⁹, then the danger of losing oneself fantastically in speculation easily arises. The consequence for the scholar is a problematic self-relationship in the sense of what Reinhard Lauth calls the "inner self-endangerment of modern subjectivity", which threatens to end in "nihilism"²⁰. In view of the enormous degree of abstraction of his ideas, the scholar can make errors of thought in the construction of his philosophical system, "to which no researcher is more exposed than the researcher of the human spirit" (GA I/2, p. 145), because the science of science is produced by freedom and the scholar thus gives himself the "rules" according to which the "calculation" (GA I/2, p. 145) is made. Fichte's transcendental approach is based on the fact that the place of creation and development of science in general, and of the doctrine of science in particular, is the innermost consciousness or, in other words, the inner sense of the scholar. The origin and criterion of the doctrine of science stem from the scholar's immediate self-relationship. He cannot shift the ultimate distinction between the true and the untrue to a demarcation from a competing philosophical counter-position, but must answer for it before the judgement of his conscience, i.e. before himself.

Fichte defines the speculative mood as a new and hitherto unthematized phenomenon: "I am talking about something, as far as I know, not yet described" (GA II/5, p. 74). It is the extreme position of a theoretical stance taken to an extreme, which is exclusively concerned with itself without any practical considerations. It thus represents an extraordinary possibility of philosophical existence, which with the *Wissenschaftslehre* in the history of philosophy has reached an extreme of reflexive self-reference that goes far beyond all previous philosophical theories of consciousness (Descartes, Kant) or, as it is called in the "*Neue Bearbeitung der Wissenschaftslehre*" (1800), "systematic insight of the mind into itself" (GA II/5, 377) – an attitude that can lead to the false attitude of an absolute turning away from the external world of life and its practical purposes. This is "the point of view where one is only interested in inner contemplation, in the theoretical, and where this is the last thing we ever do [...] Here one only looks at the inner determinations of one's spirit and character, without relating them to life, and without either acting much at all, nor subjecting how one acts to a conscientious self-examination, nor asking what happens outside of us from these determinations" (GA II/5, p. 74).

This problem demonstrates not least the necessity of an art of reason with which the scholar masters his philosophical creativity. The doctrine of science cannot be separated from the insight into the method for the genesis of philosophical knowledge. Fichte provides instructions on the practice of this method of the art of reason in "*Ascetics as an Appendix to Morals*" (1798). "*Ascetics*" proves to be the art of combating the "oblivion of moral principles". Its "main rule" is: "always observe yourself", "do everything you do with prudent freedom" (GA II/5, p. 71) in order to bring yourself into a controlled relationship with your own philosophical reflections and to combat the "forgetfulness of moral principles" (GA II/5, p. 68).

¹⁸ Reinhard Lauth *Fichtes Gesamtidee der Philosophie*, *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 71, 1963/1964, p. 253–285, here p. 254.

¹⁹ Oesterreich 1997, p. 52f.

²⁰ Lauth 1963/64, p. 254.

3.

By means of the examples given, i.e. the mediation of the transcendental and empirical standpoint, the philosophical inventiveness and the intellectual crisis of the philosopher, the explanations should show that for Fichte “the philosopher must have aesthetic sense, i.e. spirit”, must be creative and creative and that “without this spirit [...] one will never achieve anything in philosophy” (GA IV/2, p. 266). “For a philosophical system is not a dead household item, but is animated by the soul of the person who has it” (GA I/4, p. 195) and the animation of philosophy succeeds through the “art of philosophising[...]” (GA II/8, p. 2), i.e. through the art of reason.

The Inherent Polysemy of Aesthetics in Fichte. A Development Through the *Fichte-Studien*

Giorgia Cecchinato

The journal *Fichte-Studien* is an exemplary representation of the ongoing research surrounding the issue of aesthetics in Fichte's philosophy. In order to understand the development of the investigation around the role of aesthetics in Fichte's philosophy within the context of our journal, it is imperative to pose three fundamental inquiries: a) firstly, what is Fichte's relationship with art and the primary themes of aesthetics as a discipline, namely the beautiful, the sublime, and art? B) Secondly, did he provide a philosophical exposition of these issues? And c) thirdly, how does this exposition relate to the broader development of the *Wissenschaftslehre*?

It is well-known that Fichte has often been criticised for the strong moral and religious elements of his thought, which, it has been argued, prevent him from developing a genuine interest in aesthetics, either as a specific discipline or more generally as a theory of sensibility. Indeed, the number of passages devoted to aesthetics in his works is limited, despite his previous commitment to systematically developing this discipline during his time at Jena. As Luigi Pareyson elucidated in his 1950 work *Fichte il sistema della libertà*, the scarcity of explicit references does not substantiate the assertion that Fichte lacked an aesthetic inclination. In the first instance, Pareyson asserts that Fichte's thought is characterised by a 'hidden inspiration' and a 'secret aesthetic subtext' that runs through his entire philosophy. Secondly, Pareyson emphasises that from his texts one can draw not only vague suggestions or mere hints, but 'real insights, even if not extensively expounded or fully elaborated or completely unfolded' of an aesthetic doctrine.

It was only after a resurgence in interest in Fichte studies, driven by the publication of Fichte's *Nachlass* and the consequent 'discovery' of the late Fichte, and undoubtedly due to the establishment of the journal *Fichte-Studien*, that researchers began to explore the full potential of the 'secret aesthetic subtext' that Pareyson had previously identified.

In order to ascertain the trajectory of this development, the three questions posed above will be used as a framework. The first question to be addressed is how Fichte relates to the themes of the sublime, beautiful and art. A preliminary response to this question is offered by several articles in *Fichte-Studien* no. 12, entitled *Fichte und die Romantik*, which was edited by Wolfgang Schrader. This issue contains a selection of papers from the *Tagung der Internationalen J.G.-Fichte-Gesellschaft*, which was held in Jena in the autumn of 1994.

Particularly pertinent to the subject of this paper are the articles written by Dorothea Wildenburg (Bamberg), entitled "*Aneinander vorbei*"- *Zum Horenstreit zwischen Fichte und Schiller*, and the one by Violetta Waibel (München), entitled *Wechselbestimmung. Zum Verhältnis von Hölderlin, Schiller und Fichte in Jena*, as well as Ives Radrizzani's article *Zur Geschichte der romantischen Ästhetik: Von Fichtes Transzendentalphilosophie zu Schlegels Transzendentalpoesie*.

The primary objective of these articles is to demonstrate how Fichte and his philosophy were in dialogue with contemporary philosophies and/or other philosophers' elaborations of his thought. Hölderlin, Schiller and Schlegel are known to have engaged in discursive exchanges with Fichte, contributing to the development of original knowledge and the creation of significant literary works. Wildenburg's article, for instance, elucidates the misunderstanding between Fichte and Schiller concerning the function of the concept of 'spirit' [*Geist*] in philosophy and art. In Waibel's article, the author demonstrates the movement of the concept of "mutual relation" from the *Grundlage* to Schiller's *Letters on Aesthetic*

Education and Hölderlin's *Empedocles*. Radrizzani's article defends the assertion that the defining feature of Schlegel's poetics is the transposition of Fichte's conception of the transcendental into the domain of aesthetics. These three articles represent an inquiry into Fichte's influence on poets and thinkers who refer to his philosophical system in order to criticise, preface, or simply use, in a different form, key concepts taken from it: it is not yet, strictly speaking, a Fichtean aesthetics.

Fichte-Studien's Issue no. 19, *Fichte and Literature*, which collects the papers of the 4th International Fichte Congress held in Berlin in 2000, can be seen as a further attempt to answer the same question: How did Fichte's philosophy contribute to aesthetics, understood as the philosophy of art, and to art in general? The editors of that issue, Helmut Girndt and Klaus Hammacher, write that the aim of this issue is not to understand Fichte's 'authentic' thought, but rather to shed new light on his influence in the world of literature. In Issue no 19, the theme of the function of "imagination" in Fichte's philosophy and the issue of its revision in the context of Romanticism, are addressed separately.

The situation drastically changes from 2000 onwards, when Petra Lohmann publishes *Der Begriff des Gefühls in der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes* (*Fichte-Studien-Supplementa* Bd.18) in the *Fichte Studien Supplementa* (Rodopi: Amsterdam 2004). We are now at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and the focus is shifting from Fichte's influence on aesthetic thought to Fichte's theory of aesthetics, where 'aesthetics' is meant in the broadest possible sense: as *feeling*, but also as a structural element in the project of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In this sense, Lohmann's book shows how Fichte, on the one hand, aligns himself with the Kantian approach to *feeling* as a mediator between freedom and sensibility, and, on the other hand, goes beyond Kant's position, by giving a fundamental role to the realm of the aesthetic, no longer from the merely subjective standpoint of Kantian judgement.

The following stage of this project involves the research and analysis of Fichte's so-called 'popular works', with a view to enhance their articulation within the project of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In issue 27 of the *Fichte-Studien*, devoted to the *Sittenlehre* (1798 and 1812), an important article by Hartmut Traub anticipates and summarises some of the main points of the book *Der Ganze Fichte. Die populäre, wissenschaftliche und metaphilosophische Erschließung der Welt*, which Traub wrote in collaboration with Peter Oesterreich and published in 2006. The article is entitled *Über die Pflichten des ästhetischen Künstlers. Der § 31 des Systems der Sittenlehre im Kontext von Fichtes Philosophie der Ästhetik*. The analysis of § 31 of the *Sittenlehre* is preceded by an immanent contextualisation within the development of Fichte's moral doctrine, and followed by a broadening of a perspective that aims to bring together the reflections on aesthetics scattered throughout the Jena writings and earlier ones. Traub asserts that, already in the Jena period, Fichte's primary concern lies within the transcendental principle of freedom in art, with its internal differentiation, according to various trends and with specific forms, organisation, and rules for the application of art.

Through this excursus, the doubts and prejudices on Fichte's interest in aesthetic themes are definitively dispelled, and the question regarding the relationship between the subject of art and the *Wissenschaftslehre* is addressed. Concluding this discussion, Traub opens up perspectives on further developments of the art-morality connection in late Fichte's work, which form the basis for the development of the book *Der Ganze Fichte*. In the book, Traub and Oesterreich claim that 'Fichte is not so much interested in aesthetics in the narrower sense, such as a theory of sensory cognition, a doctrine of the beautiful and sublime or a philosophical reconstruction of art and its history, because his actual philosophical project, which is linked to the subject of art, is of a completely different nature'. The authors first refer to the strong rhetorical influence of Fichte's entire philosophical activity and to the development of his late philosophy. In the Berlin phase, Fichte had

endeavoured to promote an 'integration of art and science in the form of a rhetorical art of reason or art of philosophizing' with regard to the issues of the communicability of and the introduction to *WL*.

The *5th Congress of the Internationale Fichte Gesellschaft*, held in Munich, focused on the Berliner Fichte, and the proceedings included two papers on aesthetics, one of which, written by Giorgia Cecchinato and entitled *Fichtes Ästhetik. Eigene Reflexionen über Kunst und Wissenschaftslehre*, poses the problem of the lack of a systematic aesthetic reflection in Fichte's philosophy and was the germ of a wider research project on the same topic, published as a book in 2009. The other article, by Peter Oesterreich, entitled *Fichte und die Kunst des Philosophierens*, broadens, even more, the spectrum of possibilities for thinking about the realm of aesthetics in Fichte, somehow realising what Pareyson had stated: philosophy has an aesthetic root and it is, in some way, a form of Art.

At that time, this theme was then established and would be articulated more or less creatively thereafter. The deepening of the various articulations of free creativity, ultimately embodies precisely what Fichte called *Kunstphilosophieren*, i.e. the philosophy of art. In this way, thinking about the freedom to create actually increases the creativity of philosophical thought in general.

The new early 2000s focus on the aesthetic aspects of Fichte's philosophy underwent significant development, culminating in the *6th Congress of the Fichte Gesellschaft* in Halle in 2006, where an entire section was dedicated to aesthetics, as documented in the proceedings published in issue 36 of the *Fichte-Studien*. Such a level of engagement with aesthetic theory was unthinkable only a decade before. Within this section of the *Congress*, Alessandro Bertinetto's article *Bild. Fichte und der ikonische Turn* (Bertinetto, 2006) is noteworthy. Bertinetto engages with contemporary theories of the image, i.e. the recent concept of a turn in thought that emphasises the significance of the figurative nature of knowledge: a perspective that asserts the epistemological primacy of the image over any metaphysical or abstract-conceptual dimension, and particularly over language. Bertinetto's argument can be summarised as follows: the iconic turn is a late development, since we already find in Fichte an accomplished theory of the image. Bertinetto's interpretative framework would be later fully expounded in a book published in 2010, entitled *La Forza dell'immagine*.

The trajectory of the journal *Fichte-Studien* reveals the role it has played over the course of the last 25 years, which has been to facilitate, encourage and collect research outcomes in a synthetic form, with the intention of subsequently presenting these in a more extensive manner, in the form of books. And the case of aesthetics is paradigmatic: from being a marginal theme, it has been developed in an increasingly less literal and more creative way, being stimulated by the study of late and popular writings. In addition, it presents untold possibilities for further articulation. The issue no. 41 of *Fichte-Studien*, edited by Ives Radrizzani and Faustino Oncina Coves, entitled *Fichte und die Kunst*, presents the result of a decade of ever-growing interest in the subject of aesthetics.

The title of the article by Faustino Oncina Coves, *Fichtes Ästhetik und Kunstkonzeption. Keine terra incognita mehr?*, should use the exclamation mark and not the question mark, which is in fact only rhetorical: *Keine terra incognita mehr!* Indeed, the entire volume showcases this and demonstrates, above all, the richness and multiplicity of possible declinations of the theme of aesthetics in Fichte.

The fifteen articles in this issue were written, among others, by the same authors we mentioned before, Lohmann, Cecchinato, Bertinetto and Traub, each of whom has his or her own specific perspective (related to the themes of feeling, system, image or rhetorics). They were joined by M. Weiss, E. Acosta, Manuel Ramos Valera and Cristiana Senigallia, who explore the idea of the Doctrine of the Science as *Kunst* (art); Marco Ivaldo and Faustino Oncina Coves, who delved deeper into the connection between spirit as a vital

part of art and philosophy; Laure Cahen-Maurel and David W. Wood, who explored Fichte's relationships with the Pre-Romantics; and Günter Zöller, who compared Fichte's unique mix of philosophical thinking and political ambition with the life and work of Ludwig van Beethoven. This *Fichte-Studien* issue is particularly rich and interesting, but I leave it to readers to find out more about this multifaceted topic.

Fichte's relationship with arte and aesthetics still undoubtably holds surprises and there is still much *terra incognita* to be discovered. We will perhaps discover this during the next congress of the Internationale Fichte Gesellschaft "Philosophie als Kunst" to be held in Ferrara in 2025.

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Fichte Beyond the Clichés

M. Jorge de Carvalho

When it comes to philosophers and philosophies, one of the main sources of misunderstandings are the clichés. What they say about slander also applies to them: once they get into circulation, *semper aliquid haeret*. Hasty and impatient readings of a small part of someone's works (or, worse still, of summaries or general presentations of someone's thought), reinforced by what is rushed through by others who have not gone much further, end up forming a kind of *consensus universalis pigrorum* – a consensus of the lazy, the distracted or Mr Magoos. And this consensus is all the easier to achieve the more difficult and demanding the first contact with a philosophical work. So it turns out that what Rilke says at the very beginning of his essay on Rodin is largely true: fame is ultimately but “the epitome of all misunderstandings that gather around a name”.²¹

Fichte is no doubt one of the philosophers on whom this iron grip of clichés seems to be strongest. You will find all sorts of made-up ideas about him: Fichte the unintelligible, Fichte the king of Galimatias, hair-splitting and metaphysical nonsense, Fichte the arch-idealist, the sophist, the charlatan, the nihilist, the authoritarian, the philosophical sans-culotte, the ultra-nationalist – you name it. And some of these clichés even interfere in the philosophical debate itself, putting glasses or filters on the eyes of those who read his works – so much so that there is no shortage of people who read into them precisely the opposite of what they state, in black and white. An example of this is a great thinker – and one with such a deep knowledge of the history of philosophy – namely Dilthey, when he sets out to interpret Fichte. When writing on the foundations of our belief in the external world, Dilthey sketches a history of this question and makes the glaring mistake of presenting Fichte as one of the exponents of intellectualism – when all the evidence (N.B. even all the evidence available at Dilthey's time) clearly and unequivocally shows the exact opposite.²²

The result of all this is a disconcerting fact: Fichte is both a well-known reference point for anyone with a minimum of philosophical training and basically unknown even to most of those whose philosophical training can be described as very solid.

As with many other authors, in Fichte's case the layer of clichés that has stuck to him like a mask resulted from the public's contact with his published work. The clichés therefore flourished in complete ignorance of what remained unpublished, buried in libraries and archives. And this is all the more significant because, in Fichte's case too, a) the part of his work that was published (and this includes what was published in the 19th century and the first two-thirds of the 20th century) is only a tip of the iceberg, and b) the submerged part of the iceberg has such characteristics that it drastically changes the overall picture of his thought.

But at least *this* has changed. For not long ago, after almost five decades of intense research, the publication of Fichte's complete works, the *Gesamtausgabe*, which began to appear in 1964, was finally completed. As a result, we are roughly the first generation able

²¹ R. M. RILKE, Auguste Rodin, 1903, in: IDEM, *Gesammelte Werke*, Band IV, Schriften in Prosa. Erster Teil: Cornet Christoph Rilke – Geschichten vom lieben Gott – Prosafragmente – Auguste Rodin, Leipzig, Insel, 1927, 299: “Denn Ruhm ist schließlich nur der Inbegriff aller Mißverständnisse, die sich um einen neuen Namen sammeln.”

²² W. DILTHEY, Beiträge zur Lösung der Frage vom Ursprung unseres Glaubens an die Realität der Außenwelt und seinem Recht (1890), in: IDEM, *Gesammelte Schriften V Die geistige Welt: Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Erste Hälfte: Abhandlungen zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften*, Leipzig/Berlin, Teubner, 1924, 90-138, in particular 93f.

to truly take possession of his philosophical legacy. Or we are the first generation not condemned to know him only *at a glance* and peering through keyholes.

We mention this to point out that, if there was already a great chasm between the Fichte of the clichés and the one you find as soon as you begin a serious study of any part of his work, this chasm takes on even more extraordinary proportions when you enter the vast *continent* of Fichte's entire philosophical legacy and begin to make exploratory journeys into this huge *terra incognita*. It is no exaggeration to say that worlds open up one after the other – and that the surprises that this unsuspected Fichte *absconditus* holds for us are many and great.

But – you might ask – why pay attention to Fichte, from whom we are more than two centuries apart? Why delve into the chest of the past, rummaging through musty old things? Why look back? Why shouldn't we follow the maxim of the legion of present-worshipping chauvinists, for whom only the most recent developments make sense and nothing older than a few years should be considered? As if the present age had a monopoly on discernment and maturity – and we could apply to all philosophical reflection from the past that famous saying from the *Letter to the Corinthians*: “*Cum essem parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus, sapiebam ut parvulus, cogitabam ut parvulus Quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quæ erant parvuli*” (“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”)²³

This is not the place to discuss at length this extraordinary prejudice (in the 18th century they called it *præjudicium novitatis*) – which over the centuries reigned again and again in every age and has always been a major source of blindness.²⁴ Let us just bear in mind that

²³ 1 Corinthians 13:10. We quote from the *King James Version*.

²⁴ On the *præjudicium novitatis* see for example J. G. WALCHEN, *Gedancken vom philosophischen Naturell als eine Einleitung zu seinen philosophischen Collegiis aufgesetzt*, Jena, Böttcher, 1723, 111, F. WAGNER, *Versuch Einer gründlichen Untersuchung, Welches Der wahre Begriff Von der Freyheit des Willens sey?*, Berlin, Rüdiger, 1730, 32, C. T. MARQUARDT, *Philosophia Rationalis Methodo Naturali Digesta In Usus Academicos, Regiomontani & Gedani*, Knoch, 1733, § 147, p. 137, J. G. WALCH, *Philosophisches Lexicon, darinnen die in allen Theilen der Philosophie, als Logic, Metaphysic, Phisic, Pneumatic, Ethic, natürlichen Theologie und Rechts-Gelehrsamkeit, wie auch Politic fürkommenden Materien und Kunst-Wörter erkläret und aus der Historie erläutert; die Streitigkeiten der ältern und neuern Philosophen erzehlet, die dahin gehörigen Bücher und Schrifften angeführet, und alles nach Alphabetischer Ordnung vorgestellet worden*, Leipzig, Joh. Friedrich Gleditschens seel. Sohn, 1733, 1899-1901, M. KNVTZEN, *Elementa philosophiæ rationalis seu logicæ cum generalis tum specialioris mathematica methodo in usum auditorum suorum demonstrata; cum indice et tabulis synopticis*, Regiomonti, Lipsiæ, Hartung, 1747, § 532, p. 344, S. C. HOLLMANN, *Philosophia Rationalis, Quæ Logica Vvlgò Dicitur, Editio Avctior et emendatior*, Gottingæ, Vandenhoeck, 1747, § 210, p. 310, G. F. MEIER, *Vernunftlehre*, Halle, Gebauer, 1752, § 202, p. 277, G. F. MEIER, *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre*, Halle, Gebauer, 1752, § 170, p. 47, G. F. MEIER, *Philosophische Sittenlehre Anderer Theil*, Halle, Hemmerde, 1754 § 318 p. 163, J. P. MILLER, *Johann Peter Millers Historisch-Moralische Schilderungen zur Bildung eines edlen Herzens in der Jugend Zweyter Theil*, Frankfurt/Leipzig, s. n., 1756, 121f., F. K. von MOSER, *Beherrzungen*, Franckfurt a. M., Knoch- und Eßlingerische Buchhandlung, 1761, 32f., G. F. MEIER, *Beyträge zu der Lehre von den Vorurtheilen des menschlichen Geschlechts*, Halle im Magdeburgischen, Hemmerde, 1766, 28, 57, J. G. TÖLLNER, *Von dem Vorurteile des Altertums und der Neuigkeit einer Erkenntnis*, in: IDEM, *Kurze vermischte Aufsätze*. Erster Band, 1. Sammlung, Frankfurt an der Oder, A. G. Braun, 1767, 1-20, C. R. RENATUS, *Über die Nationalvorurtheile*, ein Buch für alle Stände. Erster Theil, Frankfurt a. d. Oder, C. G. Strauß, 1773, 258ff., P. VILLAUME, *Practische Logik für junge Leute die nicht studieren wollen*, s.l., s. n., 1788, § 209, 189f., J. M. SAILER, *Vernunftlehre für Menschen wie sie sind*, d.i. Anleitung zur Erkenntniß und Liebe der Wahrheit. II. B., München, J. B. Strobel, 1795, 85ss, pp. 184ff., J. G. C. C. *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik nach Kantischen Grundsätzen zum Gebrauch für Vorlesungen*. Zweiter Theil, welcher die angewandte allgemeine Logik enthält, Berlin, Lagarde, 1796, 267f., J. G. C. C. KIESEWETTER, *Compendium einer allgemeinen Logik so wohl der reinen als der*

our era has no monopoly on reason. And that, in fact, it may well be that we have a lot to learn from the past – and indeed so much so that many future developments have their seeds in the thoughts of our forefathers. In short: who knows if in many respects Hofmannsthal is not still right in what he wrote: “In order to see at all, you have to get the sand out of your eyes that the present is constantly scattering into them” (“Um überhaupt nur zu sehen, muß man den Sand aus den Augen kriegen, den die Gegenwart beständig hineinstreut.”).²⁵

Having said that, it should be borne in mind that the benefits that can be derived from taking up this challenge and studying Fichte’s philosophical work go fundamentally in three different directions, complementary to each other, but which, at least to a certain extent, can be explored independently.

The first of these three directions has to do with getting a good understanding of Fichte’s philosophical system itself – its genesis, its complexity, its various versions, etc. This is a complex task – like a jigsaw puzzle made up of countless pieces, the assembly of which is

angewandten, nach Kantischen Grundsätzen zum Gebrauch für Vorlesungen, Berlin, Lagarde, 1796, 267s.B. ORTMANN, *Principia Cvm Sacrae, Tvm Civilis Eloqventiae*, Monachii, Lentner, 1798, 228, G. I. WENZEL, *Vollständiger Lehrbegriff der gesammten Philosophie*. 1. Logik dem Bedürfnisse der Zeit gemäß eingerichtet, Linz, Verlag der k.k. privill. akademischen Kunst-, Musik- und Buchhandlung, 1803, § 94, pp. 248ff., G. I. WENZEL, *Elementa logices methodo critica adornata*, Lincii, Eurich, 1806, § 167 p. 164f., I. KANT, *Logik Jäsche*, AA IX, 80, *Logik Blomberg*, AA XXIV, 179f., 184f., 193f., 431, *Logik Philippi*, AA XXIV, 431f., *Logik Pölitz*, AA XXIV, 554, *Logik Busolt* AA XXIV, 643f., *Logik Dohna-Wundlacken*, AA XXIV, 741, *Wiener Logik*, AA XXIV, 878f., *Aus de Logik Hoffmann*, AA XXIV, 952, *Logik Bauch*, in: T. PINDER (ed.), *Immanuel Kant, Logik-Vorlesung Unveröffentlichte Nachschriften I* Logik Bauch, Hamburg, Meiner, 1998, 141, *Logik Hechsel*, in: T. PINDER (ed.), *Immanuel Kant, Logik-Vorlesung Unveröffentlichte Nachschriften II*, Logik Hechsel Warschauer Logik, Hamburg, Meiner, 1998, 371, *Warschauer Logik, ibi*, 590.

For an overview, see W. SCHNEIDERS, *Aufklärung und Vorurteilstheorie*. Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Vorurteilstheorie, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Fromann-Holzboog, 1983, 46, 140, 154, 172, 180, 184f., 192, 211, 216, 220, 234, 269, 315, 318 and 320.

Nowadays the *praejudicium novitatis* is often reinforced by the other three maxims of so-called “scientific oblivionism” (‘wissenschaftlicher Oblivionismus’), namely:

- 1) “forget anything published in a language other than English”;
- 2) “forget anything published in a form other than a journal article”;
- 3) “forget anything not published in one of the prestigious journals x, y and z”.

Cf. H. WEINRICH, *Lethe*. Kunst und Kritik des Vergessens, München, Beck, 1997, 263ff., in particular 267.

As 18th century theories of prejudice emphasized, there is a serious cognitive flaw in all these varieties of “philosophical bigotry”. And the negative effects of this are eloquently described by Daniel Jenisch in his *Diogenes Laterne*:

“Jahrhunderte verändern nur die Art
der Narrheit: unaustilgbar bleibt der Stamm.
Die Köpfe wechseln nur: die Schellen-Kappe
tönt, unaufhörlichen Geklingels, fort;
und schwerlich wird die Weisheit je was andres,
als *Thorheit nach der Mode* seyn : und Mode
die Weisheit – nie.”

(Centuries change just the type of foolishness: the stalk remains ineradicable. The heads only change: the fool’s cap continues to make itself heard, ringing incessantly; and wisdom will scarcely ever be anything but folly according to fashion: and fashion – never wisdom).

Cf. D. JENISH, *Diogenes Laterne*, Leipzig, Rein, 1799, 119.

²⁵ H. von HOFMANNSTHAL, *Aufzeichnungen* (Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben), Frankfurt a. M., Fischer, 1959, 45.

still a long way off. Accomplishing this task is a worthwhile endeavour in itself. And it is of interest to anyone who does not want to take a position on the big questions that life itself confronts us with without thinking them through and taking into account all the possible relevant answers.

The second benefit to be gained from studying Fichte has to do with the light that knowledge of his work can shed on much of the development of philosophical thought in the 19th and 20th centuries. The works published in his lifetime and those published before the *Gesamtausgabe* are especially important for this purpose. For it was these works that had an impact on later generations. But on closer inspection it emerges that what we have termed the *Fichte absconditus* is also important in this respect. For an in-depth knowledge of it paves the way for a better understanding of several relevant things. On the one hand, it gives us access to the Fichte who had an impact on those who attended his lectures (e.g. Schopenhauer) and, therefore, paves the way for a better understanding of the influence hidden behind silence or attempted intellectual parricide as a means of self-assertion. On the other hand, knowledge of the entire corpus *fichteianum* also provides a means of contrast to detect what misunderstandings have taken place in the reception of Fichte's thought and how the divergent paths followed by Fichte and others relate to – and challenge – each other. This aspect is all the more important because the repercussions of Fichte's thought were not limited to his lifetime or the time closest to his (late 18th century, early 19th century). In fact, it spread, in successive waves, throughout the 19th and indeed much of the 20th century.

It turns out that this task too is a difficult puzzle. And there are several reasons for this. The first is the fact that there are so many threads of influence between Fichte and other thinkers. The second is the fact that these connections do not just lie where it would seem most obvious – say, between Fichte and Bouterwek, Fichte and Schelling, Fichte and Hölderlin, Fichte and Hegel, Fichte and the Romantics (for example, Novalis or Schlegel), Fichte and Maine de Biran, Fichte and Coleridge or Fichte and Carlyle, etc. Rather, they also go in less expected directions. For there is also a line of influence that leads from Fichte to Kierkegaard and from Fichte to Schopenhauer, not to mention the link between Fichte and Feuerbach or Fichte and Marx. In all these cases, what you find is a dense and tangled web of links, both in terms of the basic concepts and the fundamental insights, and in terms of more specific phenomena, problems and notions. And pretty much the same applies to later waves of influence, such as the reception of Fichte by Rickert, Natorp,²⁶ Lask, Bergson, Heidegger or Sartre, to name but six of the more notorious. But the difficulty also lies in the fact that, beyond this, there are more or less hidden threads of connection. For there are cases in which Fichte plays the role of a *tacit* interlocutor or else has a discreet presence, which needs to be detected and brought to light through careful hermeneutic work. As already mentioned, this is what happens with Schopenhauer. But this is also the case with Kierkegaard or Marx, and indeed also with Rickert, Dilthey or Heidegger's analysis of facticity before the summer semester of 1929 (volume 28 of the *Gesamtausgabe*), in which Heidegger's reception of Fichte becomes manifest. Research in this area is therefore very much *detective* work, requiring in-depth knowledge of both the *corpus fichteianum* and the other philosophical works in which Fichte resonated.

But there is yet a third direction in which one can benefit from studying the *corpus fichteianum* and what we have termed the *Fichte absconditus* (which thanks to the *Gesamtausgabe* can finally stop being *absconditus*). This third direction differs from the other two in that it has a broader scope. In fact, everything we have considered so far may give the impression that it concerns a niche or a restricted sector within the field of philosophical studies – something certainly relevant for those who are interested in German

²⁶ Especially in lectures given in the last years of his life.

Idealism or the history of philosophy, but much less so for those with other elective affinities.

This impression is, of course misleading. For, at the end of the day, the philosophical relevance of one's interest in Fichte, German idealism or the history of philosophy has to do with the way in which all different views on any given philosophical question confront and challenge each other and take part in that great debate or that great council Aristotle tells us about²⁷ and whose role is emphasised again by Kant when he writes: "Thinking minds belong to a scholarly world that is in continuous connection (even if some centuries bring a dream [or]sleep in between). In this way the old belong to the young scholarly or thinking world, the new to the old – if, mind you, the old benefit from the insights of the younger [scholarly] world".²⁸

At the beginning of Book III of his *Metaphysica*, Aristotle details the reasons for this claim. He emphasises that in order to really solve a question (in order to find a real λύσις), one must go through the totality of the difficulties or aporias that could thwart the solution in question: "ἢ γὰρ ὕστερον εὐπορία λύσις τῶν πρότερον ἀπορουμένων ἐστὶ, λύειν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγνοοῦντας τὸν δεσμόν (...)". According to him, in order to fulfil this requirement, it is helpful to consider "ὅσα τε περὶ αὐτῶν ἄλλως ὑπελήφασί τινες" (the divergent views that some have held about the same issues). But that is not enough. According to Aristotle, the latter must be *completed*. For there is always a possibility that the others, too, may have overlooked something or left it unnoticed. This is why Aristotle adds the crucial clause "κἂν εἴ τι χωρὶς τούτων τυγχάνει παρεωραμένον" ("and if there is anything else that is being overlooked").²⁹

In other words: every real λύσις must therefore confront itself with the possibility of ἄλλως ὑπολαμβάνειν, i.e. with the possibility of its own narrow-mindedness: that the supposed solution has blind spots, wears blinkers, as it were, and completely ignores something, the consideration of which could make the issue appear in a completely new light. In this respect, the consideration of the differing views of others can be useful. For the differing views actually held by others can help one to see beyond one's own point of view: they make it easier to achieve what Montaigne once termed the "voir au delà de sa veue"³⁰: 'to see beyond one's sight' (or to see "further than one's sight", as Florio puts it).³¹ Which, at the end of the day, may also turn out to be insufficient. For the ἄλλως ὑπολαμβάνειν in question here has to do with the possibility of παρορᾶν (of overlooking) – both one's own and that of others. And Aristotle's point is that a real λύσις must be able to ensure that it is immune to all possible παρορᾶν (to all possible overlooking), the discovery of which could prove it wrong.

²⁷ Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysica* α, 993b: "ἀλλ' ἕκαστον λέγειν τι περὶ τῆς φύσεως, καὶ καθ' ἓνα μὲν ἢ μῆθ' ἢ μικρὸν ἐπιβάλλειν αὐτῇ, ἐκ πάντων δὲ συναθροισμένων γίνεσθαι τι μέγεθος (...)."

²⁸ I. KANT, *Refl.* 1448a, AA vol. XV, 632-633: "Die denkenden Köpfe gehören zu einer Gelehrtenwelt, die in ununterbrochenem Zusammenhange steht (wenn auch einige Jahrhunderte einen Traum (schlaf) dazwischen kommen lassen). Auf diese Weise gehören die Alten zur jungen Gelehrten- oder denkenden Welt, die neuen zur Alten, wohl zu verstehen, wenn sie sich der Einsichten der jüngeren Welt zu Nutze machen."

²⁹ ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysica* B, 995a.

³⁰ M. de MONTAIGNE, II, XVII, Cf. J. BALSAMO/ M. MAGNIEN/C. MAGNIEN-SIMONIN (ed.), *Montaigne. Les essais*. Édition des notes de lecture et des sentences peintes établie par A. Legros, Paris, NRF/Gallimard, 2007, 696.

³¹ M. de MONTAIGNE, *The Essayes*: or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses of Michael de Montaigne; First Written by Him in French and Now Done into English by [John Florio], London, Blount/Sims, 1603, 381.

This is also what Kant's second maxim of the *critical way of thinking* (namely the maxim of the *enlarged* or *broad-minded* way of thinking: *erweiterte Denkart*) is all about.³² According to this maxim, every cognitive claim should be made in such a way that one is at the same time in a position to 'put oneself in the place of other points of view' or 'in the place of everyone else'. This means that every cognitive judgement should take into account other points of view, indeed all other possible viewpoints.

It goes without saying that Kant's second maxim does not recommend following other people's judgement, but rather "testing one's judgement against others" ("sein Urtheil an andern zu prüfen"³³), i.e. to consider other people's judgement as a possibility – as a *possible* judgement of *one's own*. Or as Kant says in one passage: 'The judgement of he who refutes my reasons is my judgement, after I have first weighed it against the scale of self-love, and then in the same scale against my supposed reasons and have found it to have a greater content in it. Formerly I viewed the general human mind merely from the standpoint of my own: now I put myself in the place of a foreign and external reason, and observe my judgements, together with their most secret causes, from the point of view of others. The comparison of the two observations results, it is true, in strong parallaxes, but it is also the only means of preventing the optical illusion and of placing concepts in the true positions in which they stand with respect to the cognitive powers of human nature."³⁴ Pretty much the same can be found in Kant's *Reflections on Anthropology*: "Others are not apprentices, nor judges, but colleagues in the great council of human reason and have a *votum consultativum*",³⁵ "not *decisivum*".³⁶ In short: "One must (...) also be able to put oneself in

³² On the maxim or principle of "erweiterte Denkart", cf. I. KANT, *Logik Jäsche*, AA IX 57, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, §40, AA V, 294-295, *Refl.* 1486, AA XV, 715f., *Refl.* 1508, AA XV, 820, 822, *Anthropologie Dohna-Wundlacken*, in: A. KOWALEWSKI (ed.), *Die philosophischen Hauptvorlesungen Immanuel Kants nach den neu aufgefundenen Kollegheften des Grafen H. zu Dohna-Wundlacken*, München/Leipzig, Rosl & Cie, 1924, 146, and *Anthropologie Matuszewski*, 255, in: S. L. KOWALEWSKI/W. STARK (ed.), *Königsberger Kantiana* [Immanuel Kant. Werke. Volksausgabe, Bd. 1. hrsg. v. A. Kowalewski], Hamburg, Meiner, 2000, 277s. See also I. KANT, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, §§ 43 and 59, AA VII, 200, 228f., *Refl.* 454, AA XV, 187, *Refl.* 456, AA XV, 188, *Refl.* 2273, AA XVI, 294, *Refl.* 2564, AA XVI, 418-419, *Anthropologie Busolt*, AA XXV, 1481.

³³ I. KANT, *Refl.* 2564, AA XVI, 418-419: "(egoism: das Vorurtheil der Gleichgültigkeit des Urtheils anderer als eines criterii der Wahrheit des unsrigen.) (Erstlich Selbstdenken. An der Stelle jedes andern zu denken. also sein Urtheil an andern zu prüfen)". Cf. also *Refl.* 1506, AA XV 812-813: "(...) seine eigene Urtheile (...) zugleich aus dem Standpuncte anderer prüfen zu können (...)".

³⁴ I. KANT, *Träume eines Geistersehers*, AA II, 349: "Das Urtheil desjenigen, der meine Gründe widerlegt, ist mein Urtheil, nachdem ich es vorerst gegen die Schale der Selbstliebe und nachher in derselben gegen meine vermeintliche Gründe abgewogen und in ihm einen größeren Gehalt gefunden habe. Sonst betrachtete ich den allgemeinen menschlichen Verstand bloß aus dem Standpuncte des meinigen: jetzt setze ich mich in die Stelle einer fremden und äußeren Vernunft und beobachte meine Urtheile sammt ihren geheimsten Anlässen aus dem Gesichtspuncte anderer. Die Vergleichung beider Beobachtungen giebt zwar starke Parallaxen, aber sie ist auch das einzige Mittel, den optischen Betrug zu verhüten und die Begriffe an die wahre Stellen zu setzen, darin sie in Ansehung der Erkenntnißvermögen der menschlichen Natur stehen." See also *Metaphysik Herder*, AA XXVIII, 7.

³⁵ I. KANT, *Refl.* 2566, AA XVI, 419-420: "Andere sind nicht Lehrlinge, auch nicht richter, sondern Collegen im großen Rathe der Menschlichen Vernunft und haben ein *votum consultativum* (...)."

³⁶ I. KANT, *Refl.* 2147, AA XVI, 252: "Ausserwesentliche Merkmale der Wahrheit bestehen nicht in der Einstimmung der Vernunft mit ihren eignen Gesetzen, es sey nach inneren oder äußeren Merkmalen, sondern in der Übereinstimmung mit fremder Vernunft. Diese giebt kein Kennzeichen (§ Beweis), sondern praesumtion der Wahrheit; also haben [die Meinung] andere ein *votum consultativum*, nicht *decisivum*. Daher mit der Wisbegierde der Trieb sich mitzuthellen verbunden ist, weil unser eigen

someone else's place in order to think things over from a different point of view."³⁷ For "the lack of being able to think in someone else's place is not good. One must certainly be able to put oneself in the place of another; because one can thereby also be very careful not to make false judgements."³⁸ Or as we read in a letter to Markus Herz: "I always hope, by looking at my judgements impartially from the point of view of others, to find out some third thing that is better than what I had before."³⁹

But – you may ask – what does all this have to do with Fichte and the third direction in which an interest in Fichte's philosophical legacy can prove to be not only fruitful, but very fruitful?

Well, this third direction has to do precisely with what we have just said: with the fulfilment of the second maxim of the critical way of thinking, namely the *erweiterte Denkart* (the enlarged or broad-minded way of thinking). But, contrary to what one might think, it does not have to do with applying this second maxim to Fichte's own philosophical system in its entirety (viz. to the various forms it took between the early 1790s and 1814). Put another way, the third direction we are talking about does not have to do with the alternative between Fichte's entire/whole philosophical system and other divergent philosophical systems. Rather, it has to do with the role that Fichte's thought can play in relation to numerous specific questions that the various branches of philosophical enquiry have to deal with. For each of these specific questions raises the challenge of the *erweiterte Denkart*.

But why is Fichte especially relevant in this regard? Is it not exactly the same for everyone else, as long as some philosopher has worked on this or that specific question and what he says about it has uncovered something pertinent (i.e. as long as they have contributed to the debate with at least that *μικρόν* Aristotle refers to in the aforementioned passage from *Metaph. α*)? Of course it is. But Fichte can still play a *particularly important* role in a large number of specific philosophical questions. And the reason for this is some particular features of his thought, which should now be mentioned.

In the 20 years or so of intense philosophical production by Fichte, his thought went through various metamorphoses. So much so that the question arises as to whether there is really only *one* Fichtean philosophical system, or whether it would be more appropriate to speak of Fichte's *several* philosophical systems. There is nothing special about that. For something similar happens in many other cases too. And this feature does not make any philosophical *corpus* particularly suitable as a means of fulfilling the second maxim of the

Urtheil durch einen fremden Standpunkt muß rectificirt werden. Selbst sich dünkende und theilnehmende Vernunft. Egoist und pluralist, im logischen Verstande; dagegen die blöde Vernunft ist die, welche andern die Entscheidung über warheit zutraut, ist oft auch knechtisch."

It should be noted that the judgement of others can only become a *votum consultativum* if our own judgement becomes one as well, viz. if we adopt the same *impartial and*, as it were "*arbitral*" attitude towards our own judgement and that of others. There is a clear indication of this in a passage from the *Logic Blomberg*, AA XXIV, 210: "(...) einem Richter, der die gründe sowohl vor, als wieder die Sache erweget, und so wohl den Kläger, als auch den Beklagten anhöret, ehe, und Bevor er die Sache decidiret, und ein Urtheil fället."

³⁷ I. KANT, *Anthropologie Busolt*, AA XXV, 1480: "Man muß sich (...) auch an die Stelle eines andern setzen können, um die Sachen aus einem anderen Gesichtspunkte zu überdenken."

³⁸ I. KANT, *Ibidem*: "Der Mangel an der Stelle eines Andern denken zu können, ist nicht gut. Man muß sich durchaus in den Stand eines andern setzen können; weil man sich auch dadurch für falsche Urtheile sehr hüten kan."

³⁹ I. KANT, *An M. Herz*, 7. 6. 1771, AA X 122: „Daß vernünftige Einwürfe von mir nicht blos von der Seite angesehen werden wie sie zu wiederlegen seyn könnten sondern daß ich sie iederzeit beym Nachdenken unter meine Urtheile webe und ihnen das Recht lasse alle vorgefaßte Meinungen die ich sonst beliebt hatte über den Haufen zu werfen, das wissen sie. Ich hoffe immer dadurch daß ich meine Urtheile aus dem Standpunkte anderer unpartheyisch ansehe etwas drittes herauszubekommen was besser ist als mein vorigtes." Cf. *Logik Blomberg*, AA XXIV, 147.

critical way of thinking in the realm of specific philosophical questions. What is so special about Fichte is that the truly *kaleidoscopic* nature of his thought (not only in terms of the overall architecture of his philosophical views, but even in relation to specific questions) is due to the very particular way in which his philosophical reflection resembles snakes, which have to shed their skin again and again because they no longer fit into it. Or rather: what is so special about Fichte is that this kaleidoscopic character of his thought is due to a constant effort to start again and again, not because of instability or inconstancy, but rather as a result of a permanent re-appropriation and re-exploration of what was, admittedly, already being probed, but in ways that were still unilateral (which still did not take everything relevant into account). In other words, Fichte's thought stands out because of his permanent revision or reconsideration of the same fundamental views from ever new angles, which end up giving rise to metamorphoses of the fundamental views themselves. In short: its form is a constant and systematic search for the "κἄν εἴ τι χωρὶς τούτων τυγχάνει παρεωραμένον".

Whether we follow him from one writing to the next, in the order in which they were written, or explore the archipelagos of writings and passages in which this or that question, this or that phenomenon or concept is particularly in focus, we rarely find what we were led to expect. More often than not we find surprising developments viz. the exploration of blind spots. In other words, we find something very different from the views by means of which we thought we had deciphered Fichte's thought on a given subject. But then again what is so special about Fichte is precisely that this 'something *different*' his thought is all about is also very far from being something predictable. Rather, it is a wholly unexpected "different thing", namely an *idem sed aliter*, with the emphasis on *aliter* – but in such a way that, paradoxically enough, this *aliter* within the sphere of *idem* turns out to be no less *aliter* than the simple and straightforward *aliter* which any *negation of sameness* spontaneously tends to suggest.

And here we come to the decisive point: the constant change of scale that reigns in Fichte's thought – the fact that he is always tightening the mesh of the net with which he goes fishing; or, to change the metaphor, the fact that his thought always resorts to a kind of *conceptual microscope*, where only the distracted (or the short-sighted who like to be so) can see no more than empty hair-splitting or sophistry (*vanae argutationes*). Fichte stands out for his remarkable ability to get off the beaten track (we could almost say for his inability to stay on it). He is extraordinarily perceptive in detecting the possibility of alternatives to what spontaneously seems most obvious. He therefore possesses, to a very high degree, that special skill that Kant characterised as the opposite of "logical egoism", calling it the "Geschicklichkeit Standpunkte zu nehmen" (viz. *Standpunkte verschieden zu nehmen* – i. e., the ability *to rise to new points of view* viz. *to take different points of view*).⁴⁰ And

⁴⁰ Cf. I. KANT, *Bemerkungen zu den Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, AA XX, 12: "Der logische *egoism* Geschicklichkeit Standpunkte zu nehmen".

Taken by itself, this remark is too brief and telegraphic for us to determine its meaning clearly. But if we compare it with other texts, it becomes clear that Kant has in mind the *opposition* between "logischer Egoismus" and "Standpunktnehmen" – and what the latter is all about. Compare, for example, *Refl.* 939, AA XV, 417:

"Weil die philosophie Alles brauchen kan, was der literator oder der schwärmende originalgeist liefert, so schätzt er alles, was eine Gewisse Seelenkraft in ihrer Große beweiset. Überdem ist er gewohnt, die Standpunkte verschieden zu nehmen, und mistraut selber seinem Urtheil über dem Vorzüglichsten, weil er die Unbegreiflichkeit des Gantzen vor Augen hat. Daher Philosophie demüthig macht oder vielmehr sich nach der Idee und nicht im Vergleich mit anderen zu messen antreibt. Demuth geht auf das Verhältnis mit der Regel, Bescheidenheit auf Vergleich mit anderen. Die Philosophie macht demüthig in der Selbstschätzung und bescheiden in der Schätzung anderer."

this not only with regard to the “tectonic plates” (the all-encompassing views without which there can be no philosophical *system*), but also with regard to the manifold specific questions dealt with in his research. In virtually all specific questions he acts like a philosophical Moses: always promoting some kind of *exodus*, always setting off for a *terra incognita*, always probing the possibility of seeing everything in another light and understanding key problems in ways that naturally tend to remain completely unsuspected, overlooked and unexplored. In other words: the *corpus fichteianum* is a veritable treasure trove not only of changes in perspective, but of *paradigm shifts* in the strictest and truest sense of the expression. Or, as we might also say, speaking like Kant, it is a veritable treasure trove of changes in the way of thinking (*Veränderungen der Denkart*). What we are talking about now is, of course, paradigm shifts or changes in the way of thinking *within the framework of specific issues*. But the point is that, within these restricted frameworks, the changes in question do what is characteristic of paradigm shifts or *Veränderungen der Denkart* – namely they revolutionise the basic assumptions in such a way that the whole picture changes.

This, then, is the main benefit to be gained from the *corpus fichteianum* in the third form of contact with it: the one that has to do with specific philosophical questions. Even if there is no interest in getting to know Fichte’s philosophy as a whole or the influence it may have had on others, the *corpus fichteianum* is an incredible school of intellectual sharpness and rigour, a privileged place for training the philosophical eye, especially with regard to changes in the way of thinking. And Fichte’s analyses present a powerful challenge to anyone who wants to tackle at least some part of the fundamental questions philosophy is all about.

And if, dropping the clichés and having the patience required to overcome the initial difficulties (concerning the type of language, etc.), one engages in a serious study of the *corpus fichteianum*, one will discover a treasure trove in it like that we have just described. The result will not be that we all become Fichte fans, but rather that we get rid of many of the naiveties that tend to persist if we do not go through the *Veränderungen der Denkart* (the changes in thinking) that we can achieve by reading Fichte’s philosophical work – and which, once achieved, allow us to do many things and, among them, to follow very different paths from those that Fichte trod.

In this sense, we can apply to the *corpus fichteianum* that line from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, which Wittgenstein thought of as a motto for his own research: “(...) my interest is showing that things which look the same are really different. I was thinking of using as a

See also *Anthropologie Friedländer*, AA XXV, 475. Although this passage deals with a different aspect of the perception of views alien to us, everything it says applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the issues we are considering here:

“Im moralischen Beurtheilen, ist das Vermögen nöthig sein Ich zu versetzen, und sich in den Stand Punckt und die Stelle des andern zu setzen, so daß man mit ihm dencket, und sich in ihm fühlt. Wenn wir von andern Menschen urtheilen wollen, so müssen wir den Standpunckt verändern und zwar

1. meinen Standpunckt versetzen und denn
2. mich in des andern seinen versetzen, und alsdenn können wir den Werth der Handlungen eines andern bestimmen, wenn wir die zwey Stand Punckte verändern können. Standpunckte zu nehmen ist eine Geschicklicjkeit, die man sich durch Übung erwerben kann. Man findet in der Gesellschaft, daß sich Menschen in die Stelle der andern nicht setzen können, daß sie *nicht* mit ihm fühlen, empfinden, und sehen wie das vorkommt, sondern sie sehen immer auf sich. Alle Regeln, von dem, was da läßt, und sich schickt, sind Regeln, wo ich mich aus einem andern Standpunckt anschauen kann, und der weiß sich geziemend aufzuführen, der solche Standpunckte außer sich nehmen kann.”

motto for my book a quotation from King Lear: ‘I’ll teach you differences’.⁴¹ We could also say: Fichte’s motto is ‘I will teach you not to be carried away by blind presuppositions and to see how it is possible to change the way you think.’ For this is precisely what his philosophical work does with regard to a large number of specific questions.

So, just to give a few examples, this is what he does about a) the nature and structure of sensibility (what it takes to make a sensation), b) the relationship between sensation and drive (*Trieb*), sensation and feeling (*Gefühl*), and feeling and drive, c) the absolute inseparability of representation and action and the intrinsically *practical* character of all our representations, d) the transcendental role played by *resistance* and the *drive*-related and *resistance*-related character of everything, e) what it takes to make an *image*, f) what it takes to make *one’s own body*, g) what it takes to make a *thing*, h) what it takes to make *space*, i) what it takes to make *time*, j) what it takes to make a *world*, k) what it takes to make a *point of view* (*Standpunkt*) l) the link between *point of view* and *attention* (the omnipresence of attention and the role it plays in the constitution of everything), m) the transcendental nature of *perspectivist fragmentation* and its main *cleavage lines*, but also n) what concepts like “realism” and “idealism” really stand for (their various meanings and the relationships between them), or o) how our fellow human beings appear and everything else is intrinsically shaped by their presence, and p) what it takes to make an imperative (and in particular a categorical imperative) and the role this plays as a *sine qua non* of all action and representation – and so on and so forth. This is just a handful of random examples, the choice of which can only be entirely arbitrary and scandalously incomplete. But this randomness and incompleteness simply cannot be helped, as completing this list would take hours and hours and is indeed a never-ending task, as new aspects are discovered all the time.

In all these cases, what is at stake in Fichte’s philosophical work is a radical change in perspective regarding basic assumptions shared both by the vast majority of *pre-Fichteian* and the vast majority of *post-Fichteian* philosophical tradition. The result being that in all these cases the challenge raised by Fichte still stands today – and rising to meet this challenge may well be the starting point for future breakthroughs.

But, as it is time to conclude, let us just add a remark on the proverbial difficulty of Fichte’s prose. The *corpus fichteianum* offers a particularly eloquent example of that saying by Antiphanes, which – as Plutarch tells us in one of his writings – someone applied to the *corpus platonium*.⁴² Antiphanes is reported to have said jokingly that in a certain city the weather was so bitterly *cold* that words *froze* as soon as they were spoken. They got thawed again in the *summer*, so that only then could one finally hear what had been said in the

⁴¹ Cf. M. O’C DRURY, *Conversations with Wittgenstein*, in: R. RHEES *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984², 97-171, in particular 157. See W. SHAKESPEARE, *King Lear*, Act 1, Scene 4. Shakespeare’s character and Wittgenstein are not talking about the same thing. The former is referring to differences in *social* status or rank. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, sets out to suppress merely apparent similarities or identities: to teach us differences that are usually hidden under the cloak of similarity or identity – the very similarity or apparent identity that Plato warns us against because, as he puts it, it is the most slippery sort of thing: “ὀλισθηρότατον γὰρ τὸ γένος” (*Sophist* 231a).

⁴² PLUTARCH, *Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus*, 79a, in: G. N. BERNARDAKIS (ed.), *Plutarchi Chaeronensis Moralia*, Lipsiae, Teubner, 1888, 190-191: “συμβαίνει δὴ τὸ τοῦ Ἀντιφάνους, ὃ τις εἶπεν ἐπὶ τῶν Πλάτωνος συνήθων. ὁ γὰρ Ἀντιφάνης ἔλεγε παίζων ἐν τινὶ πόλει τὰς φωνὰς εὐθύς λεγόμενας πηγνυσθαι διὰ ψῦχος, εἴθ’ ὕστερον ἀνιεμένων ἀκούειν θέρους ἅ τοῦ χειμῶνος διελέχθησαν· οὕτω δὲ τῶν ὑπὸ Πλάτωνος ἔφη νεοῖς οὔσιν ἐτι λεχθέντων μόλις ὀψὲ τοὺς πολλοὺς αἰσθάνεσθαι γέροντας γενομένους. καὶ πρὸς ὅλην δὲ τοῦτο τὴν φιλοσοφίαν πεπόνθασιν, ἄχρι οὗ κατάστασιν ὑγιεινὴν ἢ κρίσις λαβοῦσα τοῖς ἦθος ἐμποιοῦσι καὶ μέγεθος ἀρξήται συμφέρεσθαι καὶ ζητεῖν λόγους, ὧν κατὰ τὸν Αἰσωπον εἶσω μᾶλλον ἢ ἔξω τὰ ἴχνη τέτραπται.”

winter. According to Plutarch, someone compared Plato's writings to Antiphanes' frozen words, and pointed out that young people who get acquainted with the *corpus platonicum* cannot grasp its meaning, so that only after some time do most of them come to understand it. The comparison is apt. Plato's text needs to be 'heated' in order to become audible, viz. fully intelligible. And pretty much the same is true of the *corpus fichteianum*. Here too, first contact can produce an impression of impenetrability and keep the text 'frozen' and 'mute'. And it is an understatement to say that Fichte does not make life easier for those who try to read him. However, if we do not lose heart in the face of the first difficulties and start the thawing process (i.e., if we insist, if we go ahead with our own reflection and begin to put the pieces of the puzzle together), what awaits us is a truly *horizon-broadening* cognitive journey. To be sure, this does not mean that what we find in Fichte's philosophical work is ever simple. His business is complexity – full stop! But in the final analysis we can say about the *corpus fichteianum* what André Gide puts into the mouth of one of his characters: "ma valeur est dans ma complication" ("my value lies in my complexity").⁴³

⁴³ A. GIDE, Saül, V, 3, in: IDEM, *Œuvres complètes*, édition augmentée de textes inédits établie par L. Martin-Chauffier, Paris, NRF, 1939, 398.