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# Schelling's *Vom Ich* as a Reading of Fichte's *Grundlage des gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*

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## I

Fichte wrote the *Grundlage* in great haste in 1794–95, though he first formed the idea of a philosophic system built upon the I in 1791.[1] Before claiming his professorship in Jena as Reinhold's successor, Fichte had crafted a prospectus of the new philosophy, meant to attract students to his lectures.[2] In "On the Concept of Theory of Science," he promised a system that not only satisfied Reinhold's formal demand—philosophy must be based on universally admitted principles—but adopted Reinhold's ultimate fact—the subject-object structure of consciousness—as its content. Fichte planned the *Grundlage* as a course book to accompany the first set of lectures; it was written, printed, and distributed in installments to Fichte's students and selected friends. It was never meant for public view as either a popular or technical statement of the system of transcendental philosophy.

Someone unfamiliar with Fichte's systematic intentions, as announced in the "Review of Aenesidemus" and part 3 of the prospectus essay, would have found reading the first number of the *Grundlage* a demanding task.[3] Fichte had a vast capacity for sustained and detailed argument, but he rarely stepped back to a wider framework to provide transitions, overviews, or simple statements of the conclusions that his arguments advanced. Even if by August 1795 the attentive reader had the whole work before her and could appreciate the practical part—which employs a novel psychological vocabulary to construct the subconscious (or in principle unconscious) platforms for modeling empirical consciousness—there were still few clues

about the author's systematic intentions and how these particular discussions of presentation and feeling advanced them.

Before Fichte came on the scene in 1793–94, Reinhold had cleared the ground for a system of transcendental philosophy by demanding that Kant's writings be turned into a philosophical system. Yet his own work substituted for a *philosophical* system a popularization of Kantian epistemology, for Reinhold could not think any farther than the sheer givenness of subject-object polarity in empirical consciousness.[4] Fichte takes the same contents in the *Grundlage* and goes beyond the "facts of consciousness" to a foundational or "principled" deduction of the being-for-a-subject of objectivity as such (i.e., a deduction of presentation) and of the subject's drive-to-alter-objectivity as such (i.e., a deduction of appetition).[5] It is these deductions that transform facts of consciousness into Theory of Science. Fichte added argument or logical rigor to support the "facts" and so turned the Kantian transcendental (or heuristic) analysis of consciousness into theory, or as it was then said: science.

Fichte publicly laid claim to this accomplishment in the "Introductions" to Theory of Science he published in 1797–98. What he does not do is explain the peculiarity of this first version of the first *Wissenschaftslehre* and its tortured deductions. I find it is similar to Gottfried Leibniz's *Monadology*: the construction of "spiritual substance" as a psychic machine driven by the opposed forces of perception and appetition.[6] Like Leibniz's elegant metaphysical construction, Fichte's deduction of objectivity or empirical limitation inside consciousness has two interrelated sides: what from the cognitive side supplies objectivity because it is felt to be sheer limitation or "*check*" is from the practical side self-affection or the noncausing causality of *striving*.[7] Though this double deduction of objectivity (i.e., the set of necessary conditions for empirical consciousness) is in its own right an argumentative tour de force, the basic task of the Theory of Science is to show transcendental idealism: explanation from the point of view of the experiencing subject, free of contradiction. As Fichte read Kant's text, Kant's philosophy was not free of contradiction, especially in its unargued adopted of the "thing in itself" as the ground of objectivity. In place of this ad hoc (or unexplained) explainer, Fichte's deduction of objectivity provides a coherent platform for anchoring more detailed accounts of logic, knowledge, nature, society, law, and morality and for theoretically unifying them all as products of the I's self-realizing activity or spontaneity. Fichte himself seems unaware that "system" is possible only as a coherentist, not a foundational program.

Fichte does not announce that the *Grundlage* works a highly abstract abstractive reflection upon the I's activity,[8] and that it uses arguments both intricate and pedestrian to convey *intellectual intuition* of the I in its completely skeletal, transcendental (i.e., wholly nonempirical) shape. Nor does he admit that the work provides only foundations for an eventual system, or better, a logical canon for all possible systems that do not in principle exclude an account of consciousness. Some early programmatic statements by Fichte suggested that an idealistic philosophy as a totality would connect empirical cognition with action and resolve the object-dependence of cognition into the infinite moral task of object-conquest. Though Goethe's stage manager might promise scenic excursions through heaven, earth, and hell, Fichte makes no such extravagant promise in 1794–95.[9] He cannot at the start display the whole pageant of the realm of consciousness: sensation, matter, nature, individual will, community, world, and providentially ordered history. Schelling will do this concisely and beautifully in the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, a work that lives up to its name. Eschewing this large canvas and grand theme, Fichte first tackles the question of the foundation of idealism at its problematic core: *if* there is to be *idealism*, one must find an explanation for objectivity and for the object-dependent states of presentation—which run through and mediate all acts of empirical consciousness, volitional and affective and well as directly cognitive. If at any point objectivity is explained by objects, by "things" on which the I and its activity depend, idealism is abolished and the freedom, spontaneity, and self-positing activity that idealism seeks to defend are swept away.

For one wishing to make a philosophy of Kant's Criticism, Kant's resort to a "thing in itself" as a final ground of reality and objectivity was more than a minor difficulty: Some *account* of objectivity is needed, some explanation of the intractable resistance of the known to alteration by consciousness and for the imperviousness of empirical reality to alteration by will. Absent this, presentation would be indistinguishable from dream, present sensation from one imaginatively reproduced. But if the philosopher takes the realistic path and ontologically privileges objectivity, he makes knowledge a commerce of things imaged and things "without" and the knower becomes a machine among things, a shuttle shifting between woof and warp, not the activity of relating, interrelating, self-relating. Realism can product "picture theories," but *never* a viewer of the picture. There is no inching into realism, no quiet accommodation with dogmatism. Reinhold had made all the accommodations; battling for a textually

"correct" Kant, he had lost the war for idealism. The activity that is I and does I must be beginning, middle, and end for transcendental idealism.

## II

In 1795 Schelling was finishing his theological studies at Tübingen, where he had deeply studied Plato and Kant. Irritated by the "theologizing" Kantians there who wished to use Kant's moral postulate of God's existence to make quick work of their apologetics, Schelling made the question of the possibility of a systematic transcendental philosophy his own.[10] Though he has been represented as a mere popularizer and disciple of Fichte's early in his career (not least of all by Fichte himself)[11] Schelling in many ways shows himself to be Fichte's equal in the years of supposed "discipleship." In 1794–1797 Schelling is more consistently interested in the scope and completeness of systematic philosophy than Fichte is, while Fichte is more careful about guarding the transcendental perspective and securing its foundations. Schelling's taste for abstraction pulls him away from the transcendental perspective, both in theoretical philosophy and in practical domains such as ethics and philosophy of history. In the early essays that Fichte was pleased to read as evidence of discipleship I find more metaphysical anticipations of the identity philosophy of the 1801 *Presentation of My System* than I do evidence of a careful thinking along with Fichte. The latter's detailed phenomenology of cognition and volition is missing; in its place is the metaphysical scaffolding for the grand architecture of system.

Though both philosophers use some version of the contrast between dogmatism and criticism to situate their vies, Schelling is consistently attracted (and repelled) by the explanatory seamlessness of dogmatism, personified in the steel rigor of Baruch de Spinoza's axiomatized metaphysics.[12] Though he sometimes allies himself with a pure transcendental position from 1794 through 1800, Schelling is receptive toward Spinoza's fatalism or the absence of freedom, at least on the level of empirical volition.[13] Or to put it another way, Schelling lacks Fichte's vivid intuition that spontaneous activity is the core of selfhood, or that the I is self-realizing as self-thinking. He prefers the third-person grammar of *production* to describe the transcendental subject and its activity, while Fichte favors the first-person language of *self-positing*. In *On the I as Principle*, Schelling uses the terms "I" and "the absolute" interchangeably.

As I read Schelling's essays of 1794 and early 1795, I find Spinoza as

obvious an influence as Fichte. Accordingly, I find little surprising in the metaphysical ambivalence Schelling voices later in 1795 in the *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*. Though he there ranks the *Theory of Science* alongside Kant's *Critique* as a universal standard to measure all possible philosophies, he nonetheless finds naturalistic metaphysics equally choiceworthy as philosophy of freedom.[14] All theoretical philosophies have posed the same unanswerable problem: Why is there experience at all? (Kant); Why has idea stepped out of the absolute and become opposed to objects? (Spinoza, rephrased by Lessing); Why are my perceptions accompanied by the feeling of necessity and unalterability? (Fichte). Schelling finds the basis for choice between systems is personal and idiosyncratic: logically considered, the option for fatalistic self-annihilation under dogmatism is as cogent as is the choice for autonomy.[15]

We now turn directly to Schelling's *On the I*. The essay was occasioned, inspired if you will, by receipt of the first fascicle of the *Grundlage*. Its title reflects that inspiration, and the first eight sections paraphrase of Fichte opening three sections on the fundamental principles, both in their content and their vocabulary. That the reflection is direct can be seen in Fichte's reception of it as a popularization of his own work. Comments he made to Reinhold about the his dissatisfaction with the literary form of the *Grundlage*, and about the desirability of a reader linking up with his intuitions, not his words, show Fichte was more interested in having others share his general position than he was in their recitation of a catechism.[16] Fichte, however, seems not to have noticed that Schelling's adherence to the transcendental position soon wears thin in *On the I*, just as it had in Schelling's first work, *On the Possibility of a Universal Form of Philosophy*. The public noted their difference more carefully; in his historical review, Reinhold suggests that Fichte and Schelling made the breakthrough to a purified Kantian philosophy at roughly the same time.[17]

How faithful a reflection of Fichte's line of thought is found in even these opening sections of Schelling's essay? Fichte's style of thought is original and rigorously systematic or deductive; his writing is generally a long march from hypothesis to conclusion, uninterrupted by metacomment or historical comparisons. Schelling, on the other hand, is a synthetic or historical thinker who works at some distance from direct hypothesis and argumentation, though he will argue to cinch a point. When Fichte speaks of a philosophy founded on principles and of the necessity for an unconditional principle, he seems to be making a plainly logical demand. When Schelling paraphrases the same arguments one sees—as in the most

Fichtean parts of the 1794 *Universal Form* essay, where absolute philosophy is viewed as an interpenetration of form and content, and where *what* is to be thought determines *how* it is to be thought—that the discussion is also driven by historical figures and their similar styles of argument, e.g., by Plato's quest for a nonhypothetical and deductive science or by Reinhold's search for a philosophy secured by universal principles. In that essay Schelling in fact takes Fichte's I—the principle that unites form (identity) and content (selfhood)—as but one convenient illustration of this deductive model of absolute philosophy.[18] Since his concern is more with metaphysics than epistemology or psychology, he feels free to abstract the logical content from Fichte's three basic principles and use the so-called laws of identity, sufficient reason, and synthesis to generate Kant's quite unexplained table of categories.[19]

Schelling's attempt to deduce Kant's categories in *Universal Form* is an original effort on his part to unify Kantian philosophy, as is the final section of *On the I* where he brings all the forms of judgment Kant discussed under the general heading of a modal synthesis which progresses from possibility, to actuality, to necessity. By contrast, Fichte uses Kant's categories in the theoretical section of the *Grundlage* (§ 4) in a "destructive" rather than deductive manner: the argument reduces all the categories of relation—cause and effect, substance and accident, and reciprocal determination—to the paradoxical idea of a "determinate determinability." When thought gives up trying to think this thought and "imagination" is brought in to reinterpret it as the wavering inside and beyond a boundary that is intuition, and when that interpretation is surpassed as well in the curious alienation of productive activity to a "fictive" not-I in the "Deduction of Presentation," it seems that Fichte has dissolved the theoretical into *aporia* and that only recourse to models of *action* will permit the stabilization of any discourse about cognition.

Even when Schelling is conceptually the closest to Fichte in *On the I*, he speaks a different language. In the first section of the *Grundlage* Fichte describes the I as pure self-positing and pure activity, as that which exists in virtue of its self-positing and vice versa, as simultaneously agent and product, action and cause of action.[20] The language is not particularly psychological, but it does focus on act, action, and agent. Schelling, however, takes pains not to speak of the I as a subject: if it is called "I," it is at the conclusion of a process of reasoning similar to the "negative theology" of the medievals. The absolute and unconditioned cannot be an object, argues Schelling, for an object is both a thing and something conditioned: be-

thinged, or limited by other things. But by the same reasoning the unconditioned cannot be a subject either, for subjects "have" objects and their subjecthood is conditioned by their epistemic dependence on an object. To speak of an "unconditioned" subject would be almost as oxymoronic as to speak of an absolute object. Philosophers ought to speak carefully, scolds Schelling, and not fall into blather about the "existence" of God or a "thing greater than which cannot be conceived." To call the unconditioned "the absolute I" may be permitted as a concession to inexact habits of speech, but its sole meaning is *the utterly nonobjective*.[21] When Schelling includes this essay in his *Works* in 1809, after the public break with Fichte, he underscores the "purity" of its conception of transcendental idealism and its lack of contamination by the subjectivism (Fichte's, of course) which later befell philosophy.[22]

Schelling could not (or choose not to) follow the theoretical deductions of the *Grundlage*, for he is not interested at this point in Fichte's precise problem: the objectivity and necessity conveyed by presentation, even when explained from the I's activity and self-positing. He instead chooses to do what Fichte does not, or to do extensively what Fichte does briefly, to characterize the absolute I in terms of categories. If one takes "categories" in the strict sense Kant gave to the term, neither philosopher "categorizes" the unconditioned I. Fichte connects *I am!* with *I think!* or self-positing to explain the self-realization and self-assertion involved in the I's positing, but *being* or *existence* is not a Kantian category. Schelling characterizes the unconditioned I at length, but not in terms of finite categories, e.g., multiplicity, or finite substance, or causality, for these can be applied only to objects or finite things. He does employ the metacategories used to group the twelve: *quantity*, *quality*, *relation*, and *modality*. In general, his approach is negative-theological here, too, as in the basic characterization of the unconditioned principle. He begins to work through the Kantian table in a straight line, e.g., denying empirical unity, plurality, or multiplicity and so concluding to supernumerical unity. His argument soon veers back to Spinoza's *Ethics*, however, and under the metacategory of "quality" it asserts the infinity, indivisibility, and immutability of the I. Under relation, Schelling again follows Spinoza rather than Kant and ascribes to the I absolute immanent causality rather than moral or purposive causality. He treats modality not as a metacategory, but even in considering the triad of possibility, actuality and necessity, he most plainly departs from Kant's guidance. These concepts which Kant thought not real categories, i.e., not strictly objective features of phenomena, but points of

view dependent on our perception and judgment of things, Schelling calls the "syllepsis of all categories," or "the sylleptical concepts of all synthesis." A certain Fichtean unification of Kant's table is achieved here, it should be noted, for possibility, actuality, and necessity are interpreted as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

If one reviews *On the I*'s argument as a whole, one finds two distinct (not easily reconciled) styles of thought in play. On the one hand, there is the transcendental idealism of Kant and Fichte that demands that the thinkable be limited by the conditions of phenomenal subject-objectivity, and on the other, the metaphysical monism of Spinoza that does not hesitate to characterize the whole as such, or even to take the *principle* for the explanation of entities *inside* experience as itself an item of philosophical investigation. Had they carefully read each other's writings and gotten clear about their own assumptions, Fichte and Schelling would have started bickering much earlier than they do in their correspondence of 1800–1802. Schelling's gradually growing into his "own" system, the system of identity, is largely a matter of him getting clear about his Spinozism, namely, recognizing the logical impossibility of being Kantian *and* Spinozist. Though I have suggested in print that the objective idealisms of Schelling and Hegel were merely an extension of transcendental idealism—on the formal side toward heuristic unification, on the material side, toward a broadened notion of "experience" that included community, social interaction, even world history—I now see such that was *not* the case, however much I wish it were. The identity philosophers snuck around the transcendental in order to return to the transcendent; they exploited the ambiguity of theological language applied to cultural entities to do so, leaving it unclear whether they talked of the absolute whether they were talking of the "One and All" or of a "whole of parts." Our histories of philosophy in their desire to see the *Weltgeist* working in a tidy, linear pattern generally omit the uncomfortable fact that both Fichte and Schelling eventually return to philosophical theism.

## III

How much was Schelling prevented from appreciating the Theory of Science by the *Grundlage*'s truncated publication? At the time he wrote *On the I*, he had not seen the section on the foundation of practical philosophy section that was issued at between July and August 1795. Though this lacks a

lucid and popular commentary that would coordinate it with earlier sections of the work, grappling with it is crucial for any reader who would understand Fichte's struggle over the congruence of the empirical I, dependent on the not-I in its presentational mode, with the absolute I, stipulated to be self-realizing and active without external limitation. Without a glimpse into the double exorcism of the not-I from the system, once in the deduction of presentation where it is explained as the I's own activity, alienated and hence pictured by the imagination as alien, and again in the deduction of *drive* where difference is seen as primitively inhabiting the self because the self is self-affected or acts against itself as noncausing causality, it is impossible to see that the *Grundlage*'s train of thought comes to completion. If Fichte's reader does not follow the hints in section three of "The Concept of Theory of Science" and think along with him how the practical *Wissenschaftslehre* is really the foundation of theoretical, she is likely to misread the "foundations of practical theory of science" as the whole practical philosophy sketched out in the Aenesidemus review, and to think of the *Grundlage*'s *striving* as moral endeavor, the collective historical drift of the human community to realize freedom. Schelling indicates in *On the I* that this is his general understanding of Fichte's philosophy as a whole.[23]

The only thing, however, that is deduced in the *Grundlage*'s concluding section is bare will, Leibnizean appetite, the impetus toward the minimal alteration of empirical reality. It is this appetite, or *drive,* that interacts with presentation in that it is drive *to change presentation*, which explains, if anything does, how the empirical I is linked to an objective reality by which it affects itself. In the context of the whole Theory of Science, presentation reduces to will, epistemology to philosophy of action; it is this all-embracing stance of *action within the constraints of empirical finitude and intersubjective limitation* that provides the platform for ethics, and social and legal philosophy.

Schelling is not far from this view of practical philosophy as a whole: his consistent Spinozism drives him to embrace an empirical determinism at the phenomenal level, and to deny the possibility of anything being other than just as it is on the absolute level, where freedom is absolute but no alternatives are possible. The reason he adopts this position, however, is the immanent causality of the unconditional in dependent and conditioned being; he is not yet able to conceive, as he will in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, that the final locator of the phenomenal individual is the interaction of wills in community, or the self-affection of will as a mutually constraining community of agents.

Schelling's faithfulness to the Fichtean transcendental construction

decays at the point in *On the I* where the ultimate Spinozistic metaphysical category of *infinite power* is deployed to explain the causality of the unconditioned upon the conditioned.[24] Had Schelling read the *Grundlage*'s conclusion, perhaps he would have been turned away from the arid metaphysical monism of his essay's second half and explored in earnest the affective context into which Spinoza used the idea of power as *conatus* or "endeavor to exist." Schelling in fact shows no great interest in human psychology or morals or philosophy of action, until he abandons the naturalism of his early systems for the spiritualism of his 1809 essay on human freedom.

## IV

There are obvious limitations to a comparative study of two philosophers who shared similar visions of the task of philosophy, who work independently but along roughly parallel lines, who read each other's work casually but not fully or in depth. One arrives at no clear linear picture of "causal influence," as if Schelling had wanted to be the devote disciple Fichte took him for, nor at any agonal picture of flatly incompatible positions. This disappoints our dramatic or literary expectations, for a tale ought to be more significant when edited and retold, and a literary dialogue ought to have clear positions and figures, e.g., a Hylas and a Philonous.

Perhaps a historical comparison can bring the work of Fichte and Schelling in 1795 into closer focus. The author of *On the I* and that of the *Foundations* stand to each other as do Spinoza and Leibniz.[25] Spinoza and Schelling share a taste for the metaphysical big picture, and prefer to see substance infinite and will or action finite. Fichte and Leibniz share a taste for the phenomenal, for explanation from the point of view of the perceiver and agent; they share a vitalism as well. Nonetheless Fichte and Schelling (sometimes, for the latter) are post-Kantians and work with the hypothetical-heuristic territory of transcendental supposition, while the pre-Kantian figures acknowledge no in principle intellectual constraints upon their thinking, once the enigmatic Cartesian criteria of clarity, distinctness, and adequacy have been met.

Whether the above comparison is illuminating, I am not sure. If one can recognize, however, that Schelling's construal of transcendental idealism in 1794–95 is metaphysical or Spinozist, that it reifies and distorts the transcendental point of view, perhaps this can shed light on what Fichte was really doing in the *Grundlage*. It is clear that this work does not cash in the

broad systematic promises of "Aenesidemus" and the "Concept of Theory of Science," part 3. I have suggested instead that it brings forward a two-part yoked analysis of the structures of action-and-reaction on which any detailed account of human cognition would have to be built: the logical foundation for phenomenologies of perception and of volition.[26] The first part of this analysis, section 4, is a *statics* of finitude, an account of the epistemic dependence of subjecthood on objectivity. It seems to be an idealistic counterpart of the account Spinoza offered of mind as *idea* or reflection of a state of body (or self), or rather of *change of state* in the body (or self). The second part, section 5, is a *dynamics* of finitude. It seems to be a reflection of Leibniz's monad or perception substance that is driven by *appetite*, i.e., by anticipation of *change of state*. The finite subject or empirical I perceives only its own states, or change of states, and its awareness is either coupled with or fueled by movement toward a change of state. Because the I never *is* a state, but is always and only the *process* of changing states, the space between subject and object first opens up and the difference between *having* states and the states that arise and pass away comes to prominence. That opening up of the epistemic and logical-predicative gap is *consciousness*. If this is what Fichte did, we indeed have a deduction of the Reinholdean "facts of consciousness."[27]

## Notes

1. Fichte got a hint that philosophy might be built upon the I from the preacher Johann Schulz of Königsberg in 1791. By 1793–94 he was privately announcing his conviction that the I was both self-realizing and self-thinking. See Manfred Zahn, "Editorischer Bericht" to J. G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794–95), in *J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, eds. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Gliwitzky, and Erich Fuchs (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1964ff), I/2: 176, 177n.

2. Fichte wrote *Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* between February and April 1794, while delivering the outlines of what would become the *Grundlage* in a lecture series at Zurich. Though there was no firm outline of the practical philosophy at this time, the main framework of the theoretical philosophy was in place. Ibid. pp. 179–81.

3. *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*'s first number, comprising the ground principles and the theoretical philosophy, was published in September, 1794. The rest of the work, chiefly the foundations of practical philosophy, did not appear until the end of July the following year. Ibid., p. 175.

4. See Karl Leondard Reinhold, *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen*

*Vorstellungsvermögens* (1789) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), pp. 216–97, and "Ueber die Möglichkeit der Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft," in *Beyträge zur Berichtung bisheriger Mißverständnisse der Philosophen: Erster Band, das Fundament der Elemetarphilosophie betreffend* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1978), p. 165.

5. See Fichte's comment in the programmatic part 3 of the essay "On the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre": ". . . It is only in the second part that the Theoretical Part is precisely delimited and given a sound foundation" (Daniel Breazeale, ed. and trans., *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988], p. 135). Schelling shows some awareness of this, perhaps, when he writes: "Your empirical I would never strive to maintain its identity if the absolute [I] were not originally posited through itself as pure identity by its absolute power." (*Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie, Schelling Werke: Akademie Ausgabe* I/2 [Stuttgart: Frommann, 1980], 105.)

6. See *Monadology*, §§ 14–15, 19, 64, 79.

7. " . . . The concept of a causality which is not a causality is, however, the concept of *striving*. Such causality is conceivable only under the condition of a completed approximation to infinity. . . . This concept of striving (the necessity of which has to be demonstrated) provides the foundation of the second part of the Wissenschaftslehre, which is called the Practical Part." "On the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre," in Breazeale, *Fichte*, pp. 134–35. See also "Review of Aenesidemus," in ibid., pp. 74–76.

8. See Fichte's comments on the method of abstraction and reflection in "On the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre," pp. 126–27, 132–33.

9. *Faust* I: 339–342.

10. In a letter to Hegel of January 6, 1795, Schelling speaks of contemporary philosophy as oppressed by the dead letter of Kant's text. He quotes with approval Fichte's quip that it requires the genius of a Socrates to figure Kant out, and points to him as the "new hero" on the philosophical scene. The event that occasions Schelling's enthusiasm is his receipt of the first section of *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*. See Hartmut Buchner, "Editorischer Bericht," *Vom Ich*, pp. 18–20.

11. On July 2, 1795, Fichte writes to Reinhold about the publication of *Vom Ich*. He sees it only as a commentary on his thought; though he is happy it can serve as a vehicle for his being understood by those who cannot understand *him*, he wishes that Schelling would acknowledge its unoriginal origin. Fichte nonetheless pronounces himself pleased with the work, *especially* with its references to Spinoza, whose system is most apt to explain his own. Ibid., pp. 37–38.

12. In a letter to Hegel on February 4, 1795, Schelling replies to his friend's question whether he thinks Kant's moral "proof" for God's existence leads to a personal God. He says he has traded theism for a Fichtean, purely moral concept of deity: "In this respect, I have become a Spinozist. Do not be surprised." He clarifies the remark by explaining that both Kant and Spinoza pose concepts of an absolute, Kant one of the I or its freedom, Spinoza one of an absolute object or

not-I. Ibid., p. 23. Buchner cautions that this text ought to make an interpreter wary of seeing too much Fichte in *Vom Ich*. But he also notes that the Spinoza that Schelling incorporates into this essay is a Spinoza viewed through transcendental lenses (ibid., p. 27).

13. In the letter to Hegel of January 6, 1795, where he praises Fichte as the present-day hero of philosophy, Schelling closes by voicing his determination to provide a modern (transcendental?) counterpart of Spinoza's *Ethics* (Ibid., p. 19.)

14. *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus* (1795) in *Sämtliche Werke*, hrsg. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart & Augsburg: Cotta, 1856 ff.), vol. 1, pp. 302–305.

15. Ibid., pp. 310–13.

16. In a letter to Reinhold of April 1795, Fichte confesses that the theoretical philosophy is haunted by an intrinsic darkness, which he hopes the practical philosophy will be able to dispel (Zahn, "Editorischer Bericht," p. 185). On July 2, 1795, Fichte writes to Reinhold: "What I want to say is something that cannot be said, nor conceived, but only *intuited*. What I say can do no more than lead the reader to form the desired intuition in him. I would warn him who would study my writings to let words be words, and to seek only to tap into the series of my intuitions, even to keep reading when he does not understand until in the end a spark of light is struck." (Cited in ibid., pp. 216–17). Fichte repeats the same warning to Reinhold when he sends him the practical philosophy in August 1795, saying that the sense of the whole of his philosophy is not to be built up from its individual parts, but rather the reverse: the individual part must be illuminated in and through a sense of the whole (ibid., p. 219).

In correspondence with Goethe, Fichte faults himself for his inability to achieve the lucidity of "intellectual feeling" (ibid., p. 186). By 1801, Fichte finds the exposition of the *Grundlage* darker than it needs be, and complains that the letter, fit to name the thing, kills the spirit (ibid., p. 187).

17. See C. L. Reinhold, "Ueber den gegenwärtigen Zustand der Metaphysik und der transcendentalen Philosophie überhaupt," in *Auswahl vermischter Schriften, Zweiter Theil* (Jena: Johann Maukee, 1797), pp. 331–34.

18. See *Ueber die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1, pp. 94–96.

19. See ibid., pp. 104–109. In *Vom Ich* § 10, Schelling argues that the categories originate as forms of synthesis between the I and not-I (112n–113n). This section demonstrates a more detailed acquaintance with Fichte's three fundamental principles than does any other passage in the essay.

20. *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: Viet & Co., 1845–46), I: 96. Reprinted, along with *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes nachgelassene Werke* (Bonn: Adolphus-Marcus, 1834–35), as *Fichtes Werke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971).

21. *Vom Ich*, §. 3, AA I, 2: 89–90.

22. Ibid., p. 81.

23. In an enthusiastic letter to Hegel on February 4, 1795, Schelling pictures the relation of theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy this way: in theoretical philosophy an infinite sphere is divided up into many finite spheres by the positing of limits. A contradiction ensues between the finite and the infinite, and it is suspended only with the breakthrough into the infinite that the practical effects. The practical stance

> demands the destruction of finitude and so transports us to the supersensible world. (Practical reason does what theoretical reason cannot, since it is enfeebled by objects). But we find in the supersensible nothing other than our absolute I, for it alone describes the infinite sphere. There is no supersensible world for us other than the absolute I.

Cited in Buchner, "Editorischer Bericht," pp. 22–24.

24. Section 14 makes clear that ascribing absolute power to the I abolishes the supposed ability of a finite mind to act for the best. The rule of wisdom is suspended in favor of the determinations of force (*Vom Ich, Akademie Ausgabe*, pp. 122–23). To this he joins a spirited polemic against his theological instructors, the "seminary" Kantians. Kant's notorious postulates of God's existence, willingness to reward merit with happiness, and of the endless duration of soul have nothing to do with morality, which is simply the unconditioned command that the limited I become the absolute I. Were this in fact possible, the moral law would be suspended as *obligatory* and instead become a *law of nature* (ibid., pp. 125–26).

25. Schelling makes clear his admiration of Spinoza and his wish to combine certain features of Kantianism and Spinozism in the close of the preface to *Vom Ich*. Though it is at least programmatically clear that for the Kantian philosophy the whole essence of the human is freedom, Schelling thinks that to date this had been worked out only in fragments. He voices the hope that he can produce a *counterpart* to Spinoza's *Ethics* along this line. *Vom Ich, Akademie Ausgabe*, I, 2: 78, 80. Schelling later attempts to formulate a "system of freedom" in the 1809 essay on human freedom.

26. That there is a logical model of action and reaction for all psychic events is a Leibnizean insight: an immaterial substance is defined as one that contains force and perception, "force" being the principle of change or action. "On the Supersensible Element in Knowledge, and on the Immaterial in Nature," in *Leibniz Selections*, ed. P. Weiner (New York: Schribners, 1951), p. 354.

27. The same opening of a gap explains, i.e., provides a necessary but not a sufficient condition for, the *reflection* Spinoza posited between *idea* and *ideatum*; this reflection (based on the registering of changes of state) itself explains self-awareness: the fact that when one has an idea one can also have an idea of the idea. See *Ethics* 2: P13Dem, P16Cor2, P19Dem, P21S.