International Journal of Philosophical Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/riph20

Idealism and Facticity: Kant's Grounding of Metaphysics and Fichte's Challenge

Jens Pier

To cite this article: Jens Pier (20 Dec 2024): Idealism and Facticity: Kant's Grounding of Metaphysics and Fichte's Challenge, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, DOI: 10.1080/09672559.2024.2418616

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2024.2418616

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2024.2418616

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Idealism and Facticity: Kant's Grounding of Metaphysics and Fichte's Challenge

Jens Pier

Department of Philosophy, University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

ABSTRACT

Kant scholarship often refers to transcendental idealism as a 'theory.' Kant's project, however, is not easily reconciled with that term in its current use. This paper contends that his critique and idealism should be seen as a remedial response against our natural albeit confused prejudice of transcendental realism. Kant's idealism articulates a 'metametaphysical' ethos that is supposed to provide a new grounding of metaphysics by proceeding 'from the human standpoint:' it aims to dispel the temptation of transcendental realism in favor of a resolute inhabitation of, and contentment with, our own humanity. This project comes under pressure in post-Kantianism: Fichte is among the first to voice the worry that Kant's critique is well-intentioned, but not well-executed. His concern is that, while it 'bring[s] man into harmony with himself,' this mere contentment with our own humanity will not suffice to achieve the scientificity that, by Kant's own lights, is the mark of any promising metaphysics. Fichte's charge is that Kant's idealism, in its very confinement to the brute facts of the human condition, surrenders itself to unacceptable contingency or 'facticity.' The paper explores Kant's idealist project of grounding metaphysics, Fichte's facticity charge against it, and whether Kantian idealism can withstand it.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 31 March 2024; Accepted 26 August 2024

KEYWORDS Idealism; facticity; Kant; Fichte; self-knowledge; metaphysics; metametaphysics

1. Introduction

Kant scholarship often refers to transcendental idealism (TI) as a 'theory.' In an innocuous sense, this seems unassailable: Kant himself calls it a 'doctrine' (A491/B519).[1] However, if we consider the term 'theory' as it is now usually understood—a system of claims about a given object of inquiry, to be measured against rivaling theories of *prima facie* equal standing—Kant's project is not easily reconciled with it. It is especially instructive to look at his treatment of the position with which he contrasts his idealism: transcendental realism (TR). In his three *Critiques*, Kant repeatedly identifies it, not

CONTACT Jens Pier jens.pier@uni-leipzig.de

as a rival theory, but as a powerful pre-doctrinal human tendency to try and understand objectivity as thought grasping 'things in themselves.' TR, then, may present an alluring and natural *prejudice*—albeit one that ultimately makes metaphysics impossible.

This raises the possibility that Kant's idealism should equally be considered not as a theory in the contemporary sense, but as a remedial response against our natural prejudice. This response is a turn towards self-constraint, and it is this methodological ethos that is supposed to provide a new grounding of metaphysics: on this picture, TI is a reorientation of philosophy itself, *before* all theory, by means of a self-reflexive delineation of the shape and scope of objectivity in human thought. This delineation is needed because as human beings, we have an urge towards a purported 'God's eye' view upon things not considered as they appear but 'in themselves,' i.e. paradoxically, detached from all consideration. Against this, Kant's idealism urges us to undertake our quest for metaphysics 'from the human standpoint' (A26/B42). It aims to dispel the temptation towards TR, and thereby towards metaphysical confusion, in favor of a resolute inhabitation of, and contentment with, our own humanity—by way of a shift in our self-understanding.

This project, however, comes under pressure in the immediate post-Kantian aftermath: Fichte is among the first to voice the worry that was to become a common refrain of German idealism—that Kant's critique and re-establishment of the grounds of metaphysics is well-intentioned, but not well-executed. In the *Nova Methodo*, he writes of 'Kantian philosophy' that 'everyone who understands it must admit that it is true. But [... i]t is not sufficient that our doubts be resolved and that we be consigned to tranquility; we also want science' (GA IV,3: 326).[2] His charge is that Kant's idealism is insufficient because in its very confinement to the brute facts of the human condition, it surrenders itself to unacceptable contingency. From 1799 onwards, Fichte calls this brute contingency '*facticity*.'

The rest of this paper will proceed in five sections: §2 will present two ways of taking Fichte's charge that what is lacking in Kant's philosophy is 'science.' I will suggest that Fichte and, to anticipate, Kant may resist categorization in terms of our contemporary vocabulary for reflection on the legitimate grounds of metaphysics, such as 'theory-building' or 'meta-metaphysics.' §3 will explore the pervasiveness of TR, with an eye especially towards the tension between it and TI. I will argue that, according to Kant, TR is the natural attitude of common sense or 'the common understanding.' §4 will spell out what it means for Kant to make this claim, and what reasons he could have for it and for introducing TI as a transformation of that attitude. §5 will explain Fichte's charge of facticity against Kant's way of articulating TI and grounding metaphysics. §6 will close by bringing out the stakes of the conflict, and what it would take to reach a decision about it. As

I hope to show, the issue has profound ramifications for our understanding of philosophy and metaphysics.

2. Fichte's Scientificity Constraint: Two Interpretive Options

Fichte claims that, while Kant's critical philosophy must be recognized as true, that alone is not enough: 'we also want science' (GA IV,3: 326). What could he mean by this?[3] It seems clear enough that Kant himself thought of his own philosophy as scientific—and, what's more, as the *first* kind of philosophy that could make a legitimate claim to scientificity at all. In presenting reason according to its 'truly articulated structure' (*Gliederbau*, B xxxvii), his first *Critique* paves the way towards a science in the true sense —a system of cognitions ordered in accordance with an idea of reason (A832/B860). Kant is adamant that such systematicity thus far has been nothing but an 'ideal' or 'archetype' (A838/B866), and that actual philosophy, which would only be realized if it displayed the articulated systematicity of reason, has likewise failed to materialize. Later, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he advances this claim in its most radical form by suggesting that 'before the coming of the critical philosophy there was as yet no philosophy at all' (6:206).

But even 'below' these ambitious ultimate aims, Kant uses suggestive terminology to describe what he regards as the core piece of his critical turn—his idealism: he calls it 'our system' (A371) and a 'doctrine' (A491/B519), and he also speaks of his 'theory [. . .] which concedes empirical reality to time but disputes its absolute and transcendental reality' (A36/B53).[4] There seems to be something in these demands of scientificity, systematicity, or the form of a theory or doctrine that Fichte sees Kant's critical philosophy as falling short of. But there are two fundamentally different ways of understanding such a criticism.

The first way is one that we are easily drawn to in our reception of (post-) Kantianism today. It is thus best illustrated by how Kant is mostly read nowadays. Passages like the ones cited above make it common practice to identify Kant's TI as a 'theory.'[5] When that label is used now, the idea is usually that Kant puts forth one theory among others about his objects of inquiry, and that scrutiny of his claims, arguments, and auxiliary hypotheses can determine whether that theory is 'correct,' or 'plausible,' or what speaks in its favor (or against it) when measured against other proposals. Fichte's criticism, if it were uttered in that vein, would be a matter of degree: there is a lot to agree with in Kant's philosophy, but certain arguments and underpinnings might be improved upon in order for it to *fully* live up to its own standards.

This idea fits well with the picture of philosophical theory-building that is often taken for granted in contemporary philosophical discourse: any theory,

including a philosophical one, is a system of axioms, hypotheses, and claims. This system, in turn, can prove itself in contention with other theories. The standards for such comparisons by way of abductive reasoning can include notions like parsimony, informativeness, elegance, explanatory power, or fit with the evidence.[6]

There is, however, an alternative way of taking Fichte's criticism. On this interpretation, it is much more radical and of a different kind altogether. Fichte grants from the outset that Kant's philosophy is *true*—the one thing that, in a 'theory' in our contemporary sense, would have to be established gradually in the course of its application and subjection to abductive scrutiny. And yet, it seems unfit to deliver on the claim so essential to its own self-understanding: the claim to scientificity. The radical interpretation of Fichte's charge is that there is exactly *one* way of getting this science right as it is the science of all sciences, and articulating it is a matter of all or nothing. Fichte's paradigmatic formulation of this idea of scientificity is given early on, in his 1794 essay 'Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*': 'in a science there can be only one proposition that is certain and established prior to the connection between the propositions' (SW I: 41).[7] And this articulation is concerned, not with any particular object of knowledge, but with the self-conscious structure of human mindedness itself, which is active and present in any given particular act of cognition.[8]

If metaphysics is to have a foundation in this exalted kind of scientificity, then it won't do to simply introduce a 'metametaphysical' level of theory-building. As Fichte puts it, again in 'Concerning the Concept,' responding to Maimon's suggestion that the proper aim for 'sound sciences' is 'to advance a theory of invention' (*Theorie des Erfindens*):

> One should indeed advance such a theory, which will certainly happen as soon as science has advanced towards the possibility of such an invention. But [. . .] how will we invent such a theory of invention? By means, perhaps, of a theory of the invention of a theory of invention? And this one in turn? (SW I: 74)[9]

On this second interpretation of Fichte's point, then, scientific metaphysics must be grounded in something that is 'certain and established prior' to the connections we forge in scientific theories, *and thereby* is itself above and beyond any such theory. Call this Fichte's *scientificity constraint*. If this interpretation is correct, then his understanding of what it takes for philosophy to be scientific may well be orthogonal to the standards of theory-building in which we currently often frame the success or failure of philosophical interventions.

I will assume for the moment that we should understand Fichte in this way. From this, I will argue that Fichte's point corresponds to Kant's own understanding of his project, and that we miss a crucial dimension of the very build-up and aim of Kant's critical philosophy if we don't pay attention

to it. Fichte, then, could be getting at something in Kant that we are now prone to miss, and the question to settle is whether any one of them can live up to their own standard—the standard of radical scientificity.

3. Transcendental Realism as a Pervasive Problem

As is often the case with red-letter terms in classical works of philosophy, the expressions 'transcendental idealism' and 'transcendental realism' occur far less often than the vast amount of interpretive work they inspire would suggest. By name, i.e. as unbroken adjective-noun expressions, they are only treated in detail at two places in the first *Critique*: first in the fourth A Paralogism (A367–72), and then again in §6 of the Antinomy chapter (A490–1/B518–9). Each term makes one further isolated appearance (TI at 392, TR at A543/B571). However, the two 'proofs' for TI in the Aesthetic (A22–36/B37–53) and Antinomy section 7 (A506–7/B534–5) do not refer to it by name at all. This suggests two things: firstly, that Kant was more interested in the position itself and its method than in a label, as is also indicated by his qualms about the misunderstandings that the word 'idealism' may engender, and about what prefix to use to dispel them.[10] And secondly, that his idealism permeates much more of the first *Critique* and the critical philosophy than could be measured by the appearance of certain buzzwords: TI might be the background theme or 'key' in which the *Critique* works overall.[11]

My contention is that TI counters the pervasiveness, within philosophy and without it, of TR: the latter is the paradigmatic guise and articulation, compelling from the pre-critical perspective but ultimately confused, of our *natural attitude toward reality* or our *natural way of thinking*—what Kant calls 'common understanding' (*gemeiner Verstand*). TI, on the other hand, is a *shift* or *transformation* of that original attitude—and by way of this transformation, it enables us to preserve what we actually want to say in it without falling into confusion.[12] I will start with a glance at the treatment of TI and TR in the Antinomy and then focus on the fourth A Paralogism.

In the Antinomy chapter, Kant presents TI as the solution to the cosmological dialectic or antithetic of reason. He introduces the 'doctrine' (*Lehrbegriff*) of TI as follows:

> [. . . E]verything intuited in space or in time, hence all objects of an experience possible for us, are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself. This doctrine I call *transcendental idealism*. (A490–1/B518–9)

This is contrasted with TR:

> The realist, in the transcendental signification, makes these modifications of our sensibility into things subsisting in themselves, and hence makes *mere representations* into things in themselves. (A491/B519)

Even before clarifying what the expressions 'idealism' and 'realism' mean for Kant generally, we can preliminarily define TR as the way of thinking or position that takes *appearances* to be *things in themselves*. It seeks to understand our judgments as being about, not objects as they appear, but objects considered in themselves. The framing in the Antinomy passage suggests that this is a matter of regular or mesoscopic objects—those that ought to be cognizable in spatiotemporally indexed judgments. Later, in the 1793 *Preisschrift*, Kant goes so far as to say that '[taking] objects in space and time [. . .] for things in themselves, and not for mere appearances[, . . .] was unavoidable before the epoch of the critique of pure reason' (AA 20:287). It can seem at first, then, as if TR pertains only to ontology or general metaphysics, and as if TI is likewise solely concerned with ontological questions.[13]

Two questions thus arise regarding TR: what is (a) the scope and (b) the status of the position that seeks to relate our judgments to things in themselves rather than to appearances? The more specific question as to (a) is, is it merely an ontological position? As to (b), is it a symmetrical position on equal footing with TI, just as there are rival theories on certain philosophical questions today? To respond to (a), I think that two things show that TR has at least a cosmological dimension too: firstly, its placement in the Antinomy chapter—the confusion of appearances with things in themselves is what engenders and animates the antinomic conflict. Secondly, over the course of the chapter Kant accordingly broadens the definition of TR: in section 7, he says that 'the fourfold antinomy [. . . is] grounded [. . . in] the presupposition that appearances, *or a world of sense comprehending all of them within itself*, are things in themselves' (A507/B535, my emphasis). It is when the world itself is taken as a thing in itself that the antinomy arises, which makes the antinomy an instance of TR, and TR a position extending, at least partially, into special metaphysics. I will say something about its relation to the ideas of God and the soul in §6 of this paper.[14]

Beginning to respond to (b), Kant's understanding of the antinomies and the antithetic gives us a first hint. Looking back at them in the Discipline chapter, he writes:

> We had [. . .] an apparent antithetic of reason before us above, to be sure, but it turned out that it rested on a misunderstanding, namely that of taking, *in accord with common prejudice*, appearances for things in themselves [. . .]. (A740/B768, my emphasis)

Here, TR does not figure as a theory or even a philosophical position, but as a 'common prejudice'—a position that is already present, and even *prevalent*,

pre-philosophically.[15] This is a first indication that Kant indeed regards the 'transcendental realist' as the spokesperson of our pre-philosophical attitude.

The passage I think is even more important for understanding Kant's TI is the fourth A Paralogism. Originally, it is the place where Kant first prominently discusses the issue of idealism. Even so, it does not receive much attention in scholarship, which focuses mostly on a different passage that allegedly has superseded it: much of the Paralogism has been moved, in the B edition, to the 'Refutation,' albeit crucially *sans* the discussion of the transcendental/empirical distinction (see B274–9).[16]

In the fourth Paralogism, Kant initially defines idealism as what we would now consider an *epistemological* position:

> [According to the fourth Paralogism] the existence of all objects of outer sense is doubtful. This uncertainty I call the ideality of outer appearances, and the doctrine of this ideality is called *idealism*, in comparison with which the assertion of a possible certainty of objects of outer sense is called *dualism*. (A367)

According to this definition, idealism is a form of *external-world skepticism*: it construes objects as 'ideal' in the sense that we can only get at them inferentially via our 'given perceptions' (A367), and thus their existence must remain 'doubtful.' This uncertainty is the 'ideality' of idealism. Accordingly, Kant adds later that this variant of idealism is 'skeptical' (A377) or (in the B 'Refutation') 'problematic' (B274). Within idealism as defined so far, the skeptical guise contrasts with its 'dogmatic' (A377, B274) counterpart, which not only doubts but *denies* the existence of objects distinct from us. Here idealism becomes an *ontological* position in our contemporary sense.

As another bit of vocabulary slightly alien to current usage, Kant initially calls the overall counterpart to idealism in its two guises '*dualism*,' since it denies the ideality of the objects and construes them as dualistically distinct from, and hence independent of, our 'given perceptions.' In some as yet undefined way, this is supposed to make 'certainty of objects of outer sense' possible. It is thus an *epistemological realism*.

Kant's decisive claim in the face of all of this is that there is a *superordinate variant of realism* that makes epistemological realism impossible; and a superordinate variant of idealism that saves it. He begins his treatment of the problem by pointing out that 'one would necessarily have to distinguish a twofold idealism, the transcendental and the empirical kind' (A369), and he offers definitions of TI and TR functionally identical to the ones we know from the Antinomy passage. His diagnosis as to their relation to each other is:

> It is really this transcendental realist who afterwards plays the empirical idealist; and after he has falsely presupposed about objects of the senses that

> if they are to exist they must have their existence in themselves even apart from sense, he finds that *from this point of view all our representations of sense are insufficient to make their reality certain*. The transcendental idealist, on the contrary, can be an empirical realist, hence, as he is called, a *dualist*, i.e., he can concede the existence of matter without going beyond mere self-consciousness [. . .]. (A369–70, first emphasis by me)

Three things are of note here: firstly, Kant uses 'realism' and 'dualism' interchangeably here; secondly, their empirical guise is what we want—a reassurance that we can obtain certainty of material objects; and thirdly, Kant thinks TI is what can give us this desired reassurance. TI is the position that grants us *empirical realism* (ER). Exactly *vice versa*, TR gives rise to an *empirical idealism* (EI) because it has a (thus far unspecified) defect that will make 'all our representations of sense' seem 'insufficient' to be sure of the existence and reality of the objects we judge about. Kant goes on to say that TR 'finds itself required to give way to empirical idealism' (A371) and, tellingly, that EI is therefore considered 'one of the problems from which human reason hardly knows how to extricate itself' (A372).

Kant's diagnosis, then, is that TR leads us, by necessity, into EI; that EI is the 'problematic' or 'skeptical' position human reason is forced into; and that it ought to extricate itself from it, but thus far has had little hope of finding a way to do so. This strengthens the *exegetical* case that, according to Kant's critical philosophy, TR figures as a pervasive backdrop of pre-critical thinking. The fact that TR makes ER impossible means that, while it is the 'common prejudice' of our natural attitude towards the empirical world and ourselves, it *is* just that—a prejudice. It fundamentally gets the relation wrong in which we stand to the empirical world, and thereby, to the proper objects of cognition.

And the fact that this obfuscation of ourselves and our cognition is a problem 'from which human reason hardly knows how to extricate itself' means that TR is ultimately a problem for that which Kant identifies as the chief undertaking of his *Critique*: 'the most difficult of all its [i.e., reason's (J.P.)] tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge' (Axi). This quest for reason's self-knowledge will resurface in §4 and take center stage in §6 below: on my reading of Kant, the articulation of the self-conscious structure of human reason and mindedness that he is after is ultimately a matter of overcoming, by way of rational self-knowledge, the temptation of TR. Fichte at first follows him in this, and the way in which he ultimately rejects Kant's TI will throw into sharp relief the conflict between the two as a conflict about the proper articulation of reason's self-knowledge. Before that, I want to take a look at Kant's reasons for his initial diagnosis, and at how he attempts to tackle the issue.

4. Grounding Metaphysics: A Shift in Common Sense

At the end of the A Paralogisms, Kant mentions 'transcendental idealism' once again as that which rescues a 'commonly assumed' conception of cognition (A392). In order to understand this, we should first look at the lead-up to it:

> Now *according to the common concepts of our reason* in regard to *the community in which our thinking subject stands to things outside us* we are dogmatic, and regard these things as objects truly subsisting independently of us, *according to a certain transcendental dualism* [!] that does not count those outer appearances as representations of the subject but rather displaces them, as the sensible intuition that provides them to us, outside us as objects, *separating them entirely from the thinking subject*. Now this subreption is *the foundation of all theories* about the community between soul and body, and *it is never asked whether this objective reality of appearances is completely correct*, but rather this is taken for granted, and the sophistry [*vernünfteln*] is only about the way this is to be explained and comprehended. (A389, my emphases)

Kant says here that dualism or realism in its transcendental variant is inherent *in 'the common concepts of our reason,'* with which reason '*separate[s . . .] entirely*' the objects from itself. And he points out that this displacement or separation is a special instance of the cardinal error behind the fallacies of reason: transcendental subreption. He means by this the confused displacement of representations or principles from their proper context into an improper one where they cannot find legitimate application.[17] And what is more, he says that this displacement is not itself a faulty theoretical move, but '*the foundation of all theories*' pertaining to this issue.[18]

I think that this passage contains, in a very condensed form, Kant's core diagnosis about TR, and I will try and make it explicit. What we aspire to, as rational beings and cognizers, is objectivity: we aim to be guided by standards that transcend our mere subjective perspective. Kant holds that this is easier done in ethics than it is in metaphysics: 'human reason, even in the commonest understanding, can easily be brought to a high measure of correctness and accuracy in moral matters' (4:391), for we can make use of the moral law within us to orient ourselves. What are his reasons, then, for taking matters to be different with speculative reason? It seems to me that the answer lies in the sense reason seeks to make of its *receptive dependence* for theoretical cognition: it cannot reach within itself for theoretical objectivity, but depends on the cooperation of understanding and sensibility which, in us human beings, marks us as *finite*; and so any judgment partially depends on the object.

The subreption that comes naturally to reason is to displace what cognition is concerned with, appearances, and make them into something wholly

alien, things in themselves. But if this *complete separation* is the foundation for all theories of the '*community* between soul and body,' and hence of the relation between thought and the 'objective reality of appearances,' then we must indeed fall prey to the idea that 'all our representations of sense are insufficient' (A369). The naturalness of this subreption is why 'it is never asked whether this objective reality of appearances is completely correct,' but it is also why, due to this very unquestioning acceptance of TR, no satisfying account of the relation of thought and things is forthcoming.

I think that this construal of the status of TR is confirmed by the further descriptions Kant gives of it: he presents the 'syste[m]' of '*physical influence*' of empirical objects on our sensibility as the usual attempt to explain our access to objects, displaced as things in themselves. This system is identified as 'the conception of the common understanding [*die Vorstellung des gemeinen Verstandes*]' (A390).[19] But, once the objects are displaced as noumena, this conception must remain unintelligible: 'what appears as matter could not, through its immediate influence, be the cause of representations, since these are an entirely heterogeneous species of effects.' (A390)

It is in the context of this diagnosis and critique of 'the common conception of a transcendental dualism' (A391) that Kant presents his TI once more: it figures again as the savior of the objectivity that we actually want in our natural attitude, but which is rendered unintelligible by the internal structure of that attitude—here, specifically the conception of 'physical influence.' His claim is that 'no dogmatic objection can be made against the physical influence that is commonly assumed'—once we recognize that we 'must necessarily admit [. . .] transcendental idealism' (A392). In understanding that what we are dealing with are external objects as they appear sensibly and not as they are in themselves, 'separate[ed . . .] entirely' (A389), the illusion of their heterogeneity disappears—or so Kant claims. There are issues with his transcendental idealist solution, and Fichte sees some of the most salient ones. My point here is merely that this introduction of TI over TR should be thought of not as a shift in theory, but as a shift in the attitude of our common understanding altogether.[20]

Kant's idealism is not skeptical or dogmatic, but 'critical' (AA 4:375): it is a delineation, from within, of the very structure, scope, and power of human objectivity. As such, it is not a theory, but an elucidation of what needs to be in place in order for there to be the possibility of theory—namely, reason's 'self-knowledge' (Axi).[21] I will say more about the nature of this self-knowledge in §6. For now, I want to point out that Kant articulates a methodological ethos of self-constraint in TI: metaphysics pertains to appearances, not to things in themselves. But the language of self-constraint that he uses has different ramifications regarding the ontological questions in the Analytic versus the special metaphysical questions of the Dialectic.

In the Analytic, *nothing gets lost*: 'the thing in itself is not and cannot be cognized [. . .], but is also never asked after in experience' (A30/B45). This is not a widely quantified statement across many or all cases of experience, but a *generic* statement of what it means to be objective in experience if all goes well: it describes the paradigm of objectivity.[22] It is therefore a generic description of what we do in experience, be it in the 'common' or the 'philosophical' understanding. However, it is an achievement of the latter's insistence that the former shift toward TI that we are now *entitled* to this description, for it is only then that we understand the transcendental/empirical distinction and can guard ourselves against slipping into subreption toward the noumenal.

Fichte rightly identifies this project in Kant's TI as that of 'bring[ing] man into harmony with himself' (GA IV,3: 326). However, Kant's *foundation* for this internal reconciliation within human reason via self-constraint and, as we shall see, *what it means for reason's ultimate ends in the Dialectic*, are what reveal his solution to be open to a radical Fichtean charge.

5. Fichte's Charge of Facticity

There are a number of well-rehearsed points concerning whether Fichte's attempts to radicalize Kant's ideas on idealism and self-consciousness towards the absolute and unconditioned succeed or fail.[23] In what follows, I will bracket these issues in favor of the more fundamental question of what *motivates* Fichte's project: what lies at the bottom of his efforts to ground and, ultimately, overcome TI? And how does it relate to his scientificity constraint?

Fichte views himself as a proponent of TI in his Jena period. At the same time, there is a worry as to whether Kant can follow through on what he sets out to accomplish with his version of it. Right after his remark on Kant's reconciliatory project, and his insistence that its goal has been 'completely achieved by Kantian philosophy,' Fichte describes the relation between his *Wissenschaftslehre* (WL) and Kantianism in a way that raises doubts about that high praise:

> Human beings have a need for science, and the Wissenschaftslehre offers to satisfy this need. The conclusions of the Wissenschaftslehre are therefore the same as those of Kant's philosophy, but the way in which these results are established is quite different. Kant does not derive the laws of human thinking in a rigorously scientific manner. But this is precisely what the Wissenschaftslehre is supposed to do. It provides a derivation of the laws that apply to any finite rational being whatsoever. (GA IV,3: 326)

Note the insistence on humanity and finitude. If TI is indeed a radical inhabitation of our own humanity, and a way to own up to our own finitude such that we become free of the doubts engendered by it, then the trajectory Fichte sketches here for the WL gets at Kant's point. However, his charge that Kant is not rigorous in the establishment of that transformative liberation is severe: nothing would be gained if our reasons for shifting towards TI were not rigorously compelling. What, then, is Fichte's conception of TI itself? In the 1794 'Second Introduction' to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, he writes:

> [. . . T]he overall gist of the Wissenschaftslehre, summarized in a few words [, . . .] is this: Reason is absolutely self-sufficient; it exists only for itself. But nothing exists for reason except reason itself. It follows that everything reason is must have its foundation within reason itself and must be explicable solely on the basis of reason itself and not on the basis of anything outside of reason, for reason could not get outside of itself without renouncing itself. In short, the Wissenschaftslehre is transcendental idealism. (SW I:474)

As Bruno (2021), 182–3) points out, this account of TI seems puzzling: reason's self-sufficiency is hardly absolute in Kantian TI, especially when it comes to theoretical cognition, as we have seen in §4 above.[24] But in a sentence that Bruno does not address, Fichte seems to go even further: it is not just that reason is self-sufficient in that it 'exists only for itself;' Fichte also insists that 'nothing exists for reason except reason itself.' Reason is not simply the sufficient ground of itself but of *everything* there is for it: there can be nothing that presents itself to reason as alien and uncognizable, as the idea of such a thing would be that of something 'outside of reason,' and for reason to entertain such an idea would be for it to 'renounc[e] itself.' *This* is the basis from which, according to Fichte, there 'follows' a self-grounding relation of reason with itself. But that phrasing sounds much more like a prefiguration of Hegelian *absolute* idealism than like re-statement of TI.

In a move both famous and notorious, Fichte justifies this by claiming to spell out, and adhere to, 'the spirit and the innermost soul of Kant's entire philosophy' (SW I:479), rather than its letter. This spirit is summarized by Fichte as the attempt 'to divert the attention of philosophy away from external objects and to direct it within ourselves' (SW I:479). We have seen that *in a certain sense*, this describes (part of) Kant's shift towards TI: we have to stop ourselves from separating the objects of cognition 'entirely' from reason and our own thinking subject. Yet Kant reserves a sense of externality for spatial objects. What leads Fichte to downplay this external dimension of one of our forms of intuition is also what animates his facticity charge.

The concept of facticity makes its appearance at various points in Fichte's works starting in 1799, but it is in his Berlin period that it takes center stage and he gives it a more precise and thematic articulation.[25] In his *1804*

Lectures on the Wissenschaftslehre, he frames his criticism of Kant, now more pronounced, entirely in terms of facticity:

> Kant [. . .] run[s] up against something unexplained and perhaps passed off as inexplicable. [. . .] We have no right to assert anything before we have seen into it. So if we posit some other hidden quality, we have either invented it, or better, since pure invention from nothing is completely impossible, we have manufactured it by trying to supply a principle for some facticity. This happened with Kant when he first factically discovered the distinction between the sensible and supersensible worlds and then added to his absolute the additional inexplicable quality of linking the two worlds, a move which pushed us back from genetic manifestness into merely factical manifestness, completely contravening the inner spirit of the Wissenschaftslehre. (GA II,8: 60–1)

Facticity figures here as the benchmark of a radicalized version of Fichte's scientificity constraint: it is a radical form of contingency that precludes, by necessity, any claim to systematicity and scientificity.[26] It goes beyond empirical contingency, and therefore also reaches deeper than contingent empirical facts, which would be permissible within TI as ultimately in accordance with the laws of nature our intellect authors and prescribes autonomously. Rather, facticity denotes *sheer bruteness within us*: it is a feature of our cognitive capacities, our having the forms of intuition and thought that we do, whose ultimate origin and constitution Kant himself freely admits are non-derivable in his TI. Kant concedes that 'for the peculiarity of our understanding, [. . .] a further ground may be offered just as little as one can be offered for why we have precisely these and no other functions for judgment or for why space and time are the sole forms of our possible intuition' (B145–6).[27]

We can now see why Fichte initially tries to construe TI as resting on a self-grounding reason encompassing all existence, and why he later turns against Kantianism: his facticity charge gives expression to the sense that Kant's concession to contingency is simply unacceptable; a scandal unto reason itself. Kant sets out to bring us reconciliation with our own humanity and finitude via metaphysical self-constraint; but that self-constraint, as it were, constrains too much: for Fichte, it puts out of reach precisely what should have finally been revealed, by TI, to be unproblematically ours. This casts Fichte as moving from an attempt at a charitable immanent critique of TI—one that establishes it 'in a rigorously scientific manner' (GA IV,3: 326)—to a wholesale rejection of it; always adhering, however, to the same methodological ethos he shares with Kant: to reconcile 'man [. . .] with himself' by way of an articulation and cognition of reason itself. Ultimately, for the later Fichte such rational self-knowledge could not possibly allow for facticity. I now turn to the stakes of this conflict between Kant and Fichte.

6. Kant, Fichte, and the Abysses of Reason

Fichte's initial assessment of Kant's philosophy is that it 'resolve[s]' our doubts and *thereby* 'consign[s]' us 'to tranquility' (GA IV,3: 326). As it turns out, this may be misleading: Kant does aim at a resolution—but the tranquility he promises us is of a special and restricted kind. His treatment of the classical questions of special metaphysics seeks to settle the doubts *concerning human reason itself* that arise from the ceaseless back and forth between dogmatism and skepticism. Regarding this dispute, his TI claims to show that while it *appears* to be an expression of an inner strife and disunity of reason, there is actually 'no real *contradiction of reason* with itself' (A740/B768). The disunity is only an illusion of TR: it leads reason into a dialectic between making dogmatic claims about things '*outside*'[28] our non-derivable forms of cognition (see A752–4/B780–2) and skeptical objections that stifle reason's legitimate movement *within* the use prescribed by those forms (see A767–9/B795–7). Once we have seen this illusory self-division for what it is, we can see that both conflicting parties are confused—they 'fence in the air and wrestle with their shadows' (A756/B784), and so 'we can regard all [... their] shadow-boxing with tranquility and indifference' (A743/B771). Reason is unitary after all, and it is in fact this unity of reason that grounds metaphysical scientificity (see A832/B860).[29] To this extent, Kant is engaged in the task Fichte sees in his philosophy: 'to bring man into harmony with himself' (GA IV,3: 326).

But this tranquility concerning human reason itself is due to its having fulfilled 'the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge' (Axi)—and that self-knowledge includes knowledge of the ways in which reason deceives itself into the confused attempt to reach beyond itself. Reason is no longer in doubt about itself and can remain calm vis-à-vis those that try to settle the illusory conflicts arising from its ideas and principles. But that is because it now understands that cognition of those ideas' purported objects—as opposed to cognition of appearances—is not an option, and as we shall now see, Kant emphatically points out the disquieting effect of these constitutive blank spots. In other words, there is a decided *lack* of tranquility concerning our ignorance regarding the purported *objects of cognition proper to reason*: what used to be thought of as the objects of special metaphysics.

The most vivid case of this perturbance is in the Transcendental Ideal, Kant's critical treatment of rational theology: here, he introduces the metaphor of an 'abyss' into which reason is thrown in contemplating God as a locus of (self-)cognition:

> The unconditioned necessity, which we need so indispensably as the ultimate sustainer of all things, is for human reason the true abyss. [...] One cannot resist the thought of it, but one also cannot bear it that a being that we

> represent to ourselves as the highest among all possible beings might, as it were, say to itself: 'I am from eternity to eternity, outside me is nothing except what is something merely through my will; *but whence then am I*?' Here everything gives way beneath us [. . .]. (A613/B641)

Kant says here that to truly try and inhabit the perspective of God, as would be required in order to understand the idea of God and the unconditioned necessity we think in it, leads us to an abyss of thought—one that is at once unbearable and irresistible.

As it turns out, however, this is not the only time Kant uses the metaphor of an abyss and its simultaneously compelling and repellant nature. In his 1794 essay 'The End of All Things,' he remarks about our belief in our soul's immortality that 'It is a common expression of pious language to speak of a person who is dying as going out of time into eternity.' Registering that this entails the notion of 'an end of all time along with the person's uninterrupted duration,' he continues:

> This thought has something blood-curdling about it: for it leads us as it were to the edge of an abyss from which, for anyone who sinks into it, no return is possible [. . .]; and yet there is something attractive about it too: for one cannot cease turning his terrified gaze back to it again and again [. . .]. (AA 8:327)

These abysses that the ideas of God and the soul open up before (or within) us are not to be reconciled by TI; if anything, its resolute insistence on their inscrutability makes them all the more mesmerizing and terrifying. Kant also says repeatedly that even the concept of nature, itself the restricted and merely regulative guise of the idea of the world, still does not guarantee us to remain free of metaphysical puzzlement: in investigating nature, the great variety of its order and laws and the sublime we encounter within it can still lead us to astonishment he identifies as an 'abyss' of its own (see AA 5:258, AA 7:261).[30]

And so, Kant himself is very clear that there will always remain an urge towards what our transcendentally realist tendencies will suggest to us is *full-blown* metaphysics: not only does he insist that transcendental illusion will stick with us *even after* the critique of pure reason, just as certain optical illusions do not disappear after we have mastered optics (see A297–8/B353–6). He also points out that it is 'humiliating for human reason that it accomplishes nothing in its pure use' (A795/B823). There is an 'unquenchable desire' of reason 'to find a firm footing beyond all bounds of experience' (A796/B824).

Wood (2010, 251) finds evocative words for this when he writes that, according to Kant, we cannot expect 'that we can ever finally rid ourselves entirely of the sense of puzzlement and dissatisfaction occasioned by these abysmal problems,' and that in all likelihood 'we can never entirely escape the sense of metaphysical torment [. . .].' These

ineradicable abysmal terrors are, and remain, what we have to come to terms with after the reorientation of our natural attitude towards reality via TI.[31]

In the face of this, Fichte's increasingly radical criticism of Kant appears to be motivated differently than he himself initially frames it: it is not the consignment to tranquility, but to an acceptance of reason's unsettling abysses that the Fichtean aspiration finds intolerable in Kantian idealism. Kant's ultimate response, and thus the lesson he draws regarding the aims and prospects of metaphysics, is for reason 'to check its extravagances' (A795/B823). He thinks that he has given us everything we need to recognize those extravagances for what they are, and that his TI has equipped us to come as close as we can to 'arriving at enduring philosophical tranquility' (A757/B785). Kant might be thought of, in this regard, as an important precursor to those who came to see facticity as a constitutive part of human life and sense-making that ought to be scrutinized and integrated into philosophy, rather than come under (futile) attack by it.[32]

The conflict between Kant and Fichte, then, does indeed come down to a question of all or nothing: while their shared endeavor is to articulate the self-conscious structure of human mindedness, and to thereby help reason gain self-knowledge and reconcile it with itself, they are fundamentally at odds as to what this means. Kant calls for self-constraint, whereas Fichte sees this as an unacceptable surrender to facticity. He calls for an establishment of philosophy and metaphysics on a foundation that is self-grounding and leaves no room for the thought of anything out of reach for reason. It would be a foundation in the establishment of which all talk of 'some other hidden quality' or any 'supersensible worl[d]' (GA II,8: 60–1) would have to be abolished. From a Kantian perspective this could seem like a step back into just the unrestrained, presumptuous, and self-undermining attitude of TR that TI aims to overcome. We have reason to believe that Kant saw things just this way and was ambivalent about Fichte's attempted defense of TI by way of what I described in §5 as a friendly immanent critique: he states the moral of his 1799 'Declaration concerning Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*' by way of a proverb: 'May God protect us especially from our friends, for we shall manage to watch out for our enemies ourselves' (AA 12:371).

Ultimately, whether we find the methodological ethos of self-constraint convincing (as Kant does), or rather see reason as *rightfully* persisting in its unquenchable desire (as Fichte does), might go beyond Kant's and Fichte's ideas and arguments considered in isolation. Even though the issue between Kantian TI and Fichte's facticity charge may not be resolvable just yet, the stakes of what a resolution would depend on could give the edge to Fichte on another front: 'The kind of philosophy one chooses' on this foundational issue of metaphysics may indeed 'depen[d] on the kind of person one is' (SW I: 434).[33]

Notes

1. References to Kant's works are given in parentheses in the main text and refer to the pagination of the *Akademieausgabe* (AA) according to volume and page number (e.g. 'AA 5:31' for 'AA volume 5, page 31'), with the usual exception of the *Critique of Pure Reason* which is cited according to the pagination of the 1781 first (A) and 1787 second edition (B). Translations generally follow the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, with occasional modifications.
2. Depending on the edition used as the basis for the respective English translation, references to Fichte's works correspond to the pagination of one of the two major German editions. They are given in parentheses in the main text and refer either to the *Gesamtausgabe* (GA) according to series, volume, and page number (e.g. 'GA IV,3: 326' for 'GA series IV, volume 3, page 326'); or to the *Sämmtliche Werke* (SW), according to volume and page number (e.g. 'SW I: 434' for 'SW volume I, page 434'). Translations follow the available English editions where possible, with minor modifications. Additionally, in the case of the *Nova Methodo* I have corrected the faulty GA page references in Fichte (1994).
3. It should be stressed that this question goes beyond what, for reasons of space, I can discuss here. Although, anticipating the radicalization of Fichte's charge discussed below in §5, I frame Fichte's scientificity constraint as a straightforward *criticism* of Kant, the historical situation around 1794 was more complicated: his attempt at grounding scientific metaphysics was supposed to *fix* and thereby *defend* TI—namely, against the criticisms raised by Maimon (2010), 19–43, 85–9, in his 1789 *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy* and by Jacobi (1994), 331–8, in his 1787 *David Hume on Faith*, the latter having been taken up by Schulze (1996), 22–5, 98–129, in his influential 1792 *Aenesidemus*. For discussion, see de Boer (2015), 276–81, Dunphy (2024), 227–31, 241–4, Schmid (forthcoming). As we shall see going forward, however, Fichte's very attempt to defend TI would later lead him to mount his own radical criticism of it.
4. One caveat on Kant's terminology of theoreticity and systematicity: he likely means to indicate that his critique and idealism are committed to the *rationalist* demands on philosophy—that their reasoning is sound and proceeds from apodictic principles. These methodological constraints are crucial for the first *Critique*: Kant insists that it must proceed in accordance with the standards of the Wolffian-Baumgartenian rationalist *Schulphilosophie* ('*schulgerecht*,' see Bxxxvi, A54/B78) and that 'in the future system of metaphysics, we will have to follow the strict method of the famous Wolff' (Bxxxvi). However, he is just as clear that his critique is but 'the propaedeutic to the system of pure reason,' and that it is therefore 'not [. . .] a *doctrine*, but must be called only a *critique*' (A11/B25). I think that both Kant's critique and idealism, then, need to be contradistinguished with this full-blown systematic theoreticity, as do Fichte's later attempts to salvage transcendental idealism. What will become even more important, however, are two points. First, both Kant and Fichte have seen clearer than their Wolffian-Baumgartenian predecessors just how radical the rationalist demands of systematicity (and the need to ground them) truly are. This is shown by the passages from Fichte I will discuss in this section and by

Kant's insistence, quoted above, that before the *Critique* there was no true philosophy: such philosophy would amount to 'the inventory of all we possess through pure reason, ordered systematically' (Axx)—'[t]he unity of reason' itself would be 'the unity of the system' (A680/B708). And 'since [. . .] there can be only one human reason, there cannot be many philosophies,' which is why Kant anticipates for his '*new system*' to 'exclud[e] all the others' (6:207). Secondly, this radicalness also takes Kant and Fichte far beyond our contemporary conception of theoreticity—and I want to suggest that we need to regain their uncompromising depth and scope. I thank Robb Dunphy for urging me to become clearer on the status of the rationalist idea of systematicity and theoreticity for Kant and Fichte.

5. See, e.g. Shabel (2010), 116–7, Rosefeldt (2022), 37–8, Stang (2022).
6. See Williamson (2022), 351–71.
7. I am ignoring here that in this early phase, Fichte went back and forth on whether the grounding of scientific metaphysics requires only *one* or a well-defined set of *several* first propositions. For discussion of this ambivalence, especially with an eye to the 1794 *Zurich Lectures*, see Schwab (2021), 102–3. As far as I can see, however, this does not touch upon Fichte's steadfast commitment to the requirement of establishing this/these proposition(s) (i) in a unitary and final manner and (ii) '*prior*' to all further connection and construction, and thus his commitment to the requirement of establishing the foundation of science once and for all *before* all theory, as I will now go on to suggest.
8. On this point in post-Kantian idealism, see especially Franks (2005), 84–145, and Förster (2012), 153–76. Both present evidence that, beyond Fichte, a similar fundamental concern animated Reinhold's, Schelling's, and Hegel's attitude towards, and criticism of, Kant. As Franks goes on to emphasize, it is this commitment to the overall structure of mindedness as the explanatory ground of *everything* that leads post-Kantian idealism beyond Kantian constraints again and towards the attempt at a monistic 'system that aspires to grasp "*das All*," or the real as a totality' (Franks 2005, 147). For a recent variation, see Kern (2023). She claims that, precisely *in* being beyond any specifiable object of inquiry, the self-conscious shape of human mindedness and life represents 'all *and* nothing:' as it permeates everything we know and do, the knowledge we have of the human being is our *being* human, and *vice versa*.
9. Breazeale's translation erroneously renders '*Erfinden*' as 'discovery.' While the German term carried associations of discovery or experience up until late medieval times, those had almost certainly dissipated by Fichte's time: since approximately the 15th century, the primary meaning of it has been 'invention,' which also fits decidedly better with Fichte's emphasis on the creative and radically spontaneous powers that, according to him, any philosopher must possess.
10. See the *Prolegomena* where Kant considers the labels '"formal" or, better still, "critical idealism"' (AA 4:375) as alternative labels for TI (see also B519n).
11. I will not argue specifically for this claim here, though I think that the points I will address lend it some plausibility. It is, however, not an unopposed interpretive stance: for an interpretation that denies the importance of TI for Kant's critical project, partially on the basis of its rare appearance as an expression, see Onnasch (2009). An interpretation of TI as the pervasive

theme or key of the first *Critique* (and of TR as the equally pervasive key of pre-critical philosophy) is developed in Allison(2004), 27–34.

12. Going forward, my picture of TR and TI will thus be that of two mutually exclusive *attitudes* or *ways* of thinking. Note that this is different, not only from casting them as *theories*, but also as *assumptions* or specific *propositions*: they may give rise to specific assumptions and theories; but as attitudes or ways of thinking (both ordinary and philosophical), they go deeper. I shall at times call them '*positions*' for convenience of expression, without detracting from my claim that their status is deeper and broader than that of assumptions or theories. And I hope to show that Kant's remarks on TR and TI make this the most adequate interpretation. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me on this.
13. On Kant's commitment to the *Schulphilosophie* division of metaphysics into general metaphysics (i.e. ontology) and special metaphysics (i.e. psychology, cosmology, and theology), see de Boer (2020), 16–43, and Förster (2012), 3–12, 32–4. See Stang (2017) for an interpretation of TI as an ontological and 'meta-ontological' position.
14. For an interpretation of the ideas of the soul, the world, and God as paradigmatic instances of concepts of things in themselves, and transcendental idealism as concerned with their reinterpretation, see Kreis (2023), 59–68.
15. By this, I do not want to suggest a complete separation of philosophy and whatever is deemed 'pre-philosophical,' as will become clearer in due course.
16. The significance of the absence of the transcendental/empirical distinction from the B 'Refutation' often goes unmentioned in the literature. Wuerth, for instance, writes without qualifications that the ideas of the fourth A Paralogism have been 'move[d] from the Paralogisms to a new chapter, the Refutation of Idealism' (Wuerth 2010, 223, without commenting on the loss of the distinction. I suspect that this is why not much is made, by and large, of Kant's seemingly superseded remarks on the nature of idealism in the A edition. An exception that emphasizes the significance of the A Paralogisms, and of the fourth Paralogism specifically, for the first *Critique*'s transcendental idealist orientation, can be found in Allison (2004), 340–1.
17. See also A407, A509/B537, A583/B611, A619/B647, A643/B671, A792/B820.
18. Crucially, being 'the foundation of all theories about the community of body and soul,' this subreption and the attitude of TR that comes with it *do* play a role in all such theories: Kant's claim as I read him is not that TR is solely an *extra*-theoretical attitude. On the contrary, it will figure heavily in all uncritical philosophy and the theories and doctrines it constructs. The way in which it figures in them, however, is not as a specific assumption or premise from which such theories infer or proceed otherwise, but as their overall outlook, attitude, or way of thinking. On this, see again Allison (2004), 27–34. The language Allison employs there of TI and TR as 'models,' however, is at odds with the reading developed here: I think that Kant's (and Fichte's) methodological master insight is precisely that, as an attitude or 'spirit' (SW I:479, GA II,8: 61, see §5 below) of philosophizing, their visions of a critical philosophy go beyond assumptions and model-making: they are supposed to be a self-conscious articulation of human mindedness itself, by itself. I elaborate on this difference of my reading to Allison's in Pier (forthcoming), ch. 5.1). I thank an anonymous reviewer for their insistence that I become more precise on TR and TI as elements *within* philosophical theory-building.

19. Two things are worth mentioning here: firstly, Kant consistently posits 'the common understanding' as our attitude towards reality *before* philosophy, and as inept to guide it (e.g. A53/B87, A184/B227). A special case may be seen in his construal of the religious beliefs of the common understanding as the highest confirmation of his treatment of the ideas of reason (see A831/B859)—though even here, Kant insists that philosophical inquiry into the common understanding is indispensable. Secondly, Kant's own terminology comprises several expressions for notions that are presumably intimately connected, but may well be distinct from one another: apart from 'gemeiner Verstand,' there are 'Gemeinsinn (*sensus communis*)' (AA 5:293–4), 'gesunder Menschenverstand' (e.g. A783/B811, AA 5:294, AA 7:218), and 'Mutterwitz' (A133/B172). The first three of these are all rendered as '(human) common sense' in English, which is less than ideal, especially as *healthy* common understanding seems to suggest an improvement over *mere* common understanding.
20. This reading is similar to some earlier interpretive proposals regarding Kant's TI: Kreis (2015), 116–20, discusses it as the 'legitimized, enlightened' guise of our 'attitude' toward reality (*legitimierte aufgeklärte Einstellung*, Kreis 2015, 120. Something similar seems to me to be at work in Conant (2016), 121n27), though his remarks are too concise to be conclusive. It *differs* from a paradigmatic reading of Kant as concerned with our common or natural attitude: McDowell (2009), 141–4, sees him as trying, and failing, to simply *vindicate* common sense realism (in the guise of 'empirical realism'). But Kant's numerous remarks cited and discussed above clearly indicate that he takes himself not to simply adopt and vindicate common sense, but to transform it and thereby show what within it can remain after the critique of reason.
21. I am using 'reason' somewhat loosely here to summarize the overarching unity of our mental and practical powers. There is a question here whether, and in what sense, the label 'reason' is apt for this in Kant. Pippin (1987) introduces the idea, influential to this day, to simply think of the overarching power of the Kantian mind, active in all its acts, as *spontaneity*. Recently, however, there seems to be a sea-change: Schafer (2021), for example, argues that for Kant, all of our faculties form a teleological system unified by reason as the highest one. The main qualms one might have with this stem from the fact that Kant at one point claims that it is actually the 'understanding in general' (A130–3/B169–72) that encompasses reason (along with the understanding more narrowly construed and the power of judgment) within it as the overall higher (i.e. non-empirical) faculty of cognition. He seems to stick with this at times: the third *Critique* (AA 5:168, AA 5:177–8) and the *Anthropology* (AA 7:227) continuously refer to the understanding as the overarching power—at least of theoretical cognition—and as the topic of the first *Critique*. However, Kant *also* explicitly allows for another nomenclature: in his final remarks on the faculties in the Architectonic, he stresses that 'By "reason" I here understand [. . .] the entire higher faculty of cognition, and I therefore contrast the rational to the empirical' (A835/B863). In keeping with this, Engstrom (2022), 14–7, sees reason as the *highest grade of unity and completion* within our cognitive power. Therefore, and since it makes for more cohesion across the theoretical and the practical, I am sticking with 'reason.'
22. On generic propositions, see Rödl (2012), 171–208.

23. The *locus classicus* of a defense and elaboration of Fichte's transformation of the Kantian project is Henrich's 1967 'Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht,' recently republished and extended in his (Henrich 2019). For discussion of some classical points made against this attempted transformation, see Ameriks (1990) and Mittelstraß (1995).
24. To be sure, Kant does take 'the result of the entire Transcendental Dialectic' (A679/B707) to lie in the insight that '[p]ure reason is in fact concerned with nothing but itself' (A680/B708). On my reading, however, this is precisely an expression of reason's insufficiency. Kant goes on to say that 'what is given to [. . . reason] is not objects to be unified for the concept of experience, but cognitions of the understanding to be unified for the concept of reason' (A680/B708). That is to say, reason itself has no objective purport: it is, via the understanding, dependent on its unity with sensibility in experience. I thank Karin de Boer for pushing me on this point.
25. For an overview on the continuity of Fichte's thinking concerning his criticism of Kant leading into his Berlin period, see Bruno (2021), 179–83, 187–93. On the continuity of his thoughts on the theme of TI from the Jena period to the 1804 Berlin lectures, even if not by usage of that name, see Bruno (forthcoming), ch. 5.3.
26. On this, see Bruno (2021), 176–8, 181.
27. This non-derivability need not be a failing or a blind spot: as Gomes, Stephenson, and Moore (2022), §5, point out, especially as concerns the forms of thought, no *further* ground may be given because the Transcendental Deduction itself is the best possible, non-derivative defense of their objectivity for any intellect. Derivation, then, may simply not be what is required here. I won't argue for the correctness of this Kant reading or for its systematic point here, but I am in agreement with it—I make the systematic and exegetical case for it in Pier (forthcoming), ch. 5.4. It may also be part of the best line of defense against Fichte's charge in the dialectical situation I will close out with in §6.
28. I am using inverted commas here because it is not clear that Kant is committed to a noumenal sphere outside our forms of cognition—in fact, he stresses explicitly that the division of the world into a phenomenal and noumenal world 'can [. . .] not be permitted at all in a positive sense' (B311). A lot would need to be said about what the permission of such a division *in a negative sense* would amount to; but the point here is that Kant may well be committed to there being no determinable things from whose cognition we are cut off or restricted. For discussion of the two options of reading Kant in a 'restrictive' or 'nonrestrictive' way and a case made for the latter, see Conant (2016), 86–9. I give an interpretation of Kant's use of the negative phenomenal/noumenal distinction and its consequences in Pier (forthcoming), ch. 7.
29. See de Boer (2020), 212–54, on the sustained importance of a projected truly unitary and scientific system of metaphysics in Kant's critical philosophy.
30. On Kant's treatment of the notion of an abyss entailed by the noumenal concept of the world, see also AA 18:249–51, 397–414, esp. R5608, R5610, R5954, R5959, R5970, R5979. There is even the suggestion, albeit without the 'abyss' metaphor, that the questions surrounding the objects of *general* metaphysics, after having been deflated by Kant via the concept of appearances, still continue to puzzle us: against Mendelssohn's proposal in his 1785 *Morning Hours* to simply contend ourselves with the empirical descriptions of objects in

general—a suggestion arguably congenial to Kant's TI—he insists in his 1786 reply that even then, 'the question what the thing in itself is' remains 'fully legitimate' (AA 8:153–4).

31. Kant does reserve a place for special metaphysics in a more positive and cognitive key—namely, in his *practical* philosophy: there, two of the ideas of reason—*soul* and *God*—are to acquire 'objective though only practical reality' (AA 5:48). They gain this 'practical reality' as postulates; articles of belief in a rationally sanctioned moral faith (see AA 5:142–3). Without being able to go into detail, I think that the purpose that reason's pure concepts serve in its practical use does not undo or offset the problems they engender in its speculative use. The chief reason is that, since Kant is clear that 'Th[e] postulates [. . .] do not extend speculative cognition' (AA 5:132), I do not see how they could possibly help what he calls our 'unquenchable desire' for *just such* cognition. In fact, we have just seen that Kant continues well into the 1790s to leave room for abysmal worries engendered by our thirst for speculative cognition of the ideas of reason; chief among them the 'blood-curdling' effects of contemplation of an immortal soul in 'pious language' (AA 8:327). Taking immortality as an article of moral faith does nothing to alleviate our urge to *cognize* what it would be for us to endure eternally. I thus think that throughout the critical philosophy, it remains a master insight of Kant and TI that our urge for speculative cognition of the soul, the world-whole, and God '*irremediably* attaches to human reason, so that even after we have exposed the mirage *it will still not cease* to lead our reason on with false hopes, *continually* propelling it into momentary aberrations' (A298/B354–5, my emphases). I thank Eliza Starbuck Little and Robb Dunphy, who have both rightly pushed me to clarify the relation of my reading of TI to Kant's practical philosophy. Much more would have to be said to appropriately answer their queries, and I hope to soon be able to do so in a separate forthcoming text.
32. On this, see Bruno's (forthcoming, ch. 2.6) case for a 'hermeneutics of facticity.' He presents Schelling's lectures from the 1830s and 40s (ch. 4.6) and Heidegger's 1920s and 30s works (ch. 6) as attempts at such a hermeneutics or science of facticity carrying on a Kantian heritage.
33. Thanks to audiences in Freiburg and Bonn for their feedback on earlier versions of this paper. I want to thank in particular G. Anthony Bruno, Zachary Hall, Andrea Kern, James Kreines, Eliza Starbuck Little, Jelscha Schmid, Philipp Schwab, and Gesa Wellmann for comments and discussion. Special thanks for extensive comments and feedback are owed to Robb Dunphy, Karin de Boer, and two anonymous reviewers; they all helped to greatly improve the paper.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

Allison, H. E. 2004. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. Rev. ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ameriks, K. 1990. "Kant, Fichte, and Short Arguments to Idealism." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 72 (1): 63–85. https://doi.org/10.1515/agph.1990.72.1.63.

Bruno, G. A. 2021. "Facticity and Genesis: Tracking Fichte's Method in the Berlin *Wissenschaftslehre*." *Fichte-Studien* 49:177–197. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004459793_010.

Bruno, G. A. Forthcoming. *Facticity and the Fate of Reason After Kant*. Oxford: OUP.

Conant, J. 2016. "Why Kant is Not a Kantian." *Philosophical Topics* 44 (1): 75–125. https://doi.org/10.5840/philtopics20164417.

de Boer, K. 2015. "The Vicissitudes of Metaphysics in Kant and Early Post-Kantian Philosophy." *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 71 (2): 267–286. https://doi.org/10.17990/RPF/2015_71_2_0267.

de Boer, K. 2020. *Kant's Reform of Metaphysics: The Critique of Pure Reason Reconsidered*. Cambridge: CUP.

Dunphy, R. 2024. "Schulze's Scepticism and the Rise and Rise of German Idealism." In *Metaphysics as a Science in Classical German Philosophy*, edited by R. Dunphy and T. Lovat, 226–250. London: Routledge.

Engstrom, S. 2022. "The Identity of Reason." In *System and Freedom in Kant and Fichte*, edited by G. P. Basile and A. Lyssy, 9–30. London: Routledge.

Fichte, J. G. 1845/46. *Sämmtliche Werke*. Edited by I. H. Fichte. Berlin: Veit & Comp [=SW].

Fichte, J. G. 1962–2012. *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Edited by Erich Fuchs. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog [=GA].

Fichte, J. G. 1982. "Introductions to the Science of Knowledge" [SW I, 429–518]. In *Science of Knowledge*, translated by Peter Heath and John Lachs, 1–85. Cambridge: CUP.

Fichte, J. G. 1993. "Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*." [SW I, 29-66]. In *Early Philosophical Writings,*translated and edited by D. Breazeale, 94–135. 2nd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Fichte, J. G. 1994. "An Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre." [GA IV,3]. In *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, translated and edited by D. Breazeale, 1–118. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

Fichte, J. G. 2005. *The Science of Knowing: J. G. Fichte's 1804 Lectures on The Wissenschaftslehre* [GA II,8]. Translated by Walter E. Wright. New York: SUNY Press.

Förster, E. 2012. *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*. Translated by Brady Bowman. Cambridge, Mass: HUP.

Franks, P. 2005. *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*. Cambridge, Mass: HUP.

Gomes, A., A. W. Moore, and A. Stephenson. 2022. "On the Necessity of the Categories." *The Philosophical Review* 131 (2): 129–168. https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-9554678.

Henrich, D. 2019. *Dies Ich, das viel besagt: Fichtes Einsicht nachdenken*. Frankfurt/M: Klostermann.

Jacobi, F. H. 1994. "David Hume on Faith or Idealism and Realism: A Dialogue." In *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill,* translated and edited by George di Giovanni, 253–338. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Kant, I. 1900ff. *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*. Edited by Preußische [later Deutsche] Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: De Gruyter [=AA, except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, cited as A/B].
Kant, I. 1996a. "Critique of Practical Reason" [AA 5:1–163]. In Practical Philosophy. translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, 131–171. Cambridge: CUP.
Kant, I. 1996b. "The End of All Things" [AA 8:325–339]. In *Religion and Rational Theology*. translated by Allen W. Wood, edited by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, 217–231. Cambridge: CUP.
Kant, I. 1996c. "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Moral" [AA 4:385–463]." In *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by J. G. Mary, 37–108. Cambridge: CUP.
Kant, I. 1998. *Critique of Pure Reason* [A/B]. Translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: CUP.
Kant, I. 1999. *Correspondence* [AA 10-12]. Translated and edited by Arnulf Zweig. Cambridge: CUP.
Kant, I. 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment* [AA 5:165–485]. Translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, edited by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: CUP.
Kant, I. 2002a. "Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be able to Come forward as Science" [AA 4:255–383]. In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, translated by Gary Hatfield, edited by H. Allison and P. Heath, 29–169. Cambridge: CUP.
Kant, I. 2002b. "What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?" [AA 20:253–332]. In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, translated by Peter Heath, edited by P. Heath, H. Allison, and P. Heath, 337–424. Cambridge: CUP.
Kant, I. 2007. "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View" [AA 7:117–333]. In *Anthropology, History, and Education*, translated by Robert B. Louden, edited by R. B. Louden, G. Zöller, and R. B. Louden, 227–429. Cambridge: CUP.
Kern, A. 2023. "Alles und Nichts: Selbstbewusstes Leben und die Idee einer ethischen Gemeinschaft." In *Die Zukunft der Metaphysik*, edited by C. Erhard, D. Meißner, and J. Noller, 11–35. Hamburg: Meiner.
Kreis, G. 2015. *Negative Dialektik des Unendlichen: Kant, Hegel, Cantor*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
Kreis, G. 2023. "Kant on Why We Cannot Even Judge About Things in Themselves." In *Limits of Intelligibility: Issues from Kant and Wittgenstein*, edited by J. Pier, 57–86. London: Routledge.
Maimon, S. 2010. *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*. Translated by Nick Midgley, Henry Somers-Hall, Alistair Welchman, and Merten Reglitz. London: Continuum.
McDowell, J. 2009. "Conceptual Capacities in Perception." In *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars*, 127–144. Cambridge, Mass: HUP.
Mittelstraß, J. 1995. "Fichte und das absolute Wissen." In *Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre 1794*, edited by W. Hogrebe, 141–155. Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp.
Onnasch, E.-O. 2009. "Kants Transzendentalphilosophie des Opus postumum gegen den transzendentalen Idealismus Schellings und Spinozas." In *Kants Philosophie der Natur, ihre Entwicklung im Opus postumum und ihre Wirkung*, edited by E.-O. Onnasch, 307–355. Berlin: De Gruyter.
Pier, J. Forthcoming. *Artikulierte Einheit: Kants Selbstbewusstseinsphilosophie als kritische Metaphysik*.
Pippin, R. B. 1987. "Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 17 (2): 449–475. https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.1987.10716447.

Rödl, S. 2012. *Categories of the Temporal: An Inquiry into the Forms of the Finite Intellect*. Cambridge, Mass: HUP.

Rosefeldt, T. 2022. "Being Realistic About Kant's Idealism." In *The Sensible and Intelligible Worlds: New Essays on Kant's Metaphysics and Epistemology*, edited by K. Schafer and N. F. Stang, 16–44. Oxford: OUP.

Schafer, K. 2021. "A System of Rational Faculties: Additive or Transformative?" *European Journal of Philosophy* 29 (4): 918–936. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12612.

Schmid, J. Forthcoming. "From Kant to Maimon to Fichte." In *Fichte's Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge: A Critical Guide*, edited by J. Kinlaw. Cambridge: CUP.

Schulze, G. E. 1996. *Aenesidemus oder über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Professor Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie: Nebst einer Verteidigung des Skeptizismus gegen die Anmaßungen der Vernunftkritik*. Edited by Manfred Frank. Hamburg: Meiner.

Schwab, P. 2021. "Difference within Identity? Fichte's Reevaluation of the First Principle of Philosophy in §5 of the *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*." *Fichte-Studien* 49:94–118. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004459793_006.

Shabel, L. 2010. "The Transcendental Aesthetic." In *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, edited by P. Guyer, 93–117. Cambridge: CUP.

Stang, N. F. 2017. "Transcendental Idealism without Tears." In *Idealism: New Essays in Metaphysics*, edited by T. Goldschmidt, 82–103. Oxford: OUP.

Stang, N. F. 2022. "Kant's Transcendental Idealism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2022 Edition)*, edited by E. N. Zalta and U. Nodelman. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/kant-transcendental-idealism .

Williamson, T. 2022. *The Philosophy of Philosophy*. Rev. ed. Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell.

Wood, A. W. 2010. "The Antinomies of Pure Reason." In *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, edited by P. Guyer, 245–265. Cambridge: CUP.

Wuerth, J. 2010. "The Paralogisms of Pure Reason." In *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, edited by P. Guyer, 210–244. Cambridge: CUP.