

J.G. Fichte, *Transzendente Logik I (1812)*. Newly edited by Hans Georg von Manz, Ives Radrizzani, and Erich Fuchs (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2019), XXXVIII + 251pp. ISBN 978-3-7728-2012-0



*Dies ist ein Zirkel; aber ein unvermeidlicher Zirkel.*¹

In his 1800 *Handbook of Logic*, Immanuel Kant looked back in history, marvelling at the rational height achieved by Aristotle and formal logic in the golden age of Greek philosophy:

Among the Persians and Arabs we do find some speculative use of reason; but they borrowed the rules from Aristotle, i.e. from the Greeks. Not the slightest trace of philosophy can be found in Zoroaster's *Zend-Avesta*. The same holds for the much-lauded Egyptian wisdom, which is mere child's play compared to Greek philosophy.²

Kant had similarly praised the peripatetic philosopher in the Preface to the second 1787 edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Reflecting on how a discipline attains the status of a secure science, Kant positively noted that logic had been able to become one through Aristotle's *Organon* and in toto it had not taken a step backward.³ But negatively for Kant, logic had neither taken a step forward. Logic seems a complete and perfected whole.⁴

Kant's position on the dire lack of progress in the field of logic apparently held for all contemporary thinkers, including J.G. Fichte. Although a disciple of the Königsberg

¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, als Handschrift für seine Zuhörer*, §1 (Leipzig: Gabler, 1794), 4. I will also use the *Sämtliche Werke* (SW), edited by Immanuel Hermann Fichte (SW I: 92). English: "This constitutes a circle, though an unavoidable one", J.G. Fichte, *Foundation of the entire Wissenschaftslehre and Related Writings*, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 200 (henceforth: *Foundation*). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

² Immanuel Kants *Logik, ein Handbuch zu Vorlesungen* (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1800), 30.

³ I. Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft*, 2nd ed. (Königsberg: Hartknoch, 1787), viii (= KrV B viii).

⁴ Kant, KrV B viii; he presumably had in mind the saying about Aristotle that has become commonplace: *flumen orationis aureum fundens*, Cicero, *Academia II (Lucullus)*, 2: 38, 119.

philosopher, Fichte followed his own independent path. This is evident in the prologue to his career prior to the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Here some brief background is necessary, it's not unknown. – When the 1792 *Critique of All Revelation* was published anonymously, its content, language, and spirit were so Kantian, people assumed it was from the author of the critical philosophy. Until the latter publicly stated that the book was not from his pen but the author's name was in truth – Johann Gottlieb Fichte. The next year, in late 1793, Fichte had his fortunate epiphany: the Archimedean point for a brand new philosophical science.⁵ It would remain faithful to the spirit of the teacher, if not wholly the letter. The name, essential content, architectonic, and idea, were announced in a programmatic text. Philosophy was no longer simply philo-sophia, love of wisdom, but following the critical directive, it should be transformed and adopt the form of a *Wissenschaftslehre* – a doctrine of science, or simply *Wissenschaft* (science), whose inner nerve is *Wissen* – cognition or knowledge.⁶ The attempt was made in the 1794/95 *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* not just to posit a vital basis for human cognition and knowledge per se, but what is key for our purpose here – to furnish a fresh foundation stone and transcendental deduction of the discipline of logic itself. In other words, Fichte was in fact trying to take a step beyond Aristotle. Just like Kant himself was when he sought to provide a transcendental deduction of the categories.

But the succession in the transcendental school proved to be rocky. Jacob Sigismund Beck, Karl Leonard Reinhold, Johann Friedrich Schulz, Marcus Herz, and Salomon Maimon, all made, in their own ways, legitimate claims to be the anointed philosophical heir.⁷ A flashpoint came in 1799: during the turbulent crisis of the Atheism Dispute, Kant made his infamous public declaration that he did not see anything original in the 'sophistic' system of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and equated it with lifeless abstract logic. The prodigal son should return to the transcendental source – the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the work that had initiated the true Copernican revolution in metaphysics:

I hereby declare that I regard Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* to be a totally indefensible system. For the *Wissenschaftslehre* is nothing more or less than mere *logic*, and the principles of logic cannot lead to any material knowledge; since logic, that is to say, pure logic, abstracts from the content of knowledge. [...] I have advised him, in a letter, to turn

⁵ According to the 1806 *Anweisung zum seligen Leben*, this insight occurred 13 years previously (SW V: 399), so round the time of his marriage to Johanna Rahm (a niece of Klopstock).

⁶ See Fichte, *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1794). K.F. Forberg's (anonymous) *Fragmente aus meinen Papieren* (Jena: Voigt, 1796) recalls the different achievements of this period from the vantage-point of a student under Fichte in Jena.

⁷ Jacobi famously took the inverted position, preferring a philosophy of belief or faith to knowledge, worried that the critical project was a real *Anstoß* on the road to atheism, and labelling the treatment of space and time in the first critique as Spinozistic in spirit. See Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau: G. Löwe, 1785), 123-127.

his fine literary gifts to the problem of applying the *Critique of Pure Reason* rather than squander them in cultivating fruitless sophistries.⁸

Unbowed by this rejection, Fichte kept pointing in good conscience to Kant and repeating the mantra that his system was none other than the Kantian one, just as he had done at the outset: “The author realizes that he will never be able to say anything that has not already been indicated by Kant, directly or indirectly and with more or less clarity.”⁹ In Fichte’s eyes, therefore, the *Wissenschaftslehre* is to be situated in the same contemporary stream of scientific philosophical striving as Kant, but its content and form have arisen from a more comprehensive ordering and employment of the synthetic method. Its aim was to become a “science of the sciences.” It is not at all abstract or formal logic. A closer look at both the early 1794 Jena *Grundlage* and the late 1812 Berlin lectures on transcendental logic confirms this, arousing the suspicion that Kant’s 1799 public judgement was the fruit of a partial and superficial reading.

A new edition of the first cycle of Fichte’s 1812 Berlin lectures on transcendental logic – *Transzendente Logik I* (henceforth T, followed by page number) – has been published by frommann-holzboog. This cycle ran from 20 April to 14 August 1812. Fichte gave approximately 4 lectures per week at the newly founded University of Berlin (founded through the co-initiative of Fichte himself), comprising 57 lectures in total (T: XV). *Transzendente Logik I* is the fourth volume, part one, in the student edition of a series of texts on Fichte’s late scientific lectures. It will be followed by *Transzendente Logik II*, the fourth volume, part two, containing Fichte’s second cycle of lectures on transcendental logic, held at the University of Berlin, from 22 October to 18 December 1812 (T: XVI).

Expertly edited by the principals Hans Georg von Manz, Ives Radrizzani, and Erich Fuchs, these beautiful paperback volumes of the student edition are of the highest philosophical and philological quality. This edition deserves to be much more widely known and used in Fichte research. The books are more affordable than the *Gesamtausgabe*, easier to handle, and more up-to-date and exact than it or any other similar edition. They are the result of meticulous textual work based on the *Gesamtausgabe* itself (since the editors worked on both editions). They have accessible overviews, comprehensive and detailed indexes, while Fichte’s written texts are complemented when required with passages from notes taken by his students. To be sure, because of the lecture notebook format, many of these notes are cryptic, terse, and difficult to understand, and therefore need exegesis and supplements, as well as consultation of Fichte’s often allusive references, to much better grasp the thread of the arguments. In this text, this is done using square brackets, footnotes, reading keys, lists of Fichte’s abbreviations, further bibliographies etc., and in the preface and introduction.

⁸ I. Kant, “Declaration Concerning Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*” (1799), translated by Arnulf Zweig in: Kant, *Correspondence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 559 (AA 12: 370).

⁹ Fichte, Preface, *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) in: *Foundation*, 153 (SW I: 30-31).

Here Hans Georg von Manz has written a very helpful introductory piece on the history, function, and location of transcendental logic in the architectonic of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, as well as outlining the various elements of both general and transcendental logic, such the roles of the concept, intuition, judgement, the a priori, synthesis, the acts of the I, and so on (T: XV-XXXV). A huge compliment to the editors and publisher for this editorial undertaking.

What exactly is transcendental logic for Fichte?¹⁰ It is his attempt to show that the principles of formal or general logic do not have their foundation in themselves but in a higher science. For Fichte, although logicians may consciously employ these principles, they are generally ignorant of their origins, i.e. unconscious of the unified ground or foundational principle of their own discipline, even though of course it is in the power of every logician to attain this knowledge. This foundational principle is to be supplied by a transcendental deduction, a procedure documented in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. We discover that the higher cognitive principle of logic is ultimately knowledge *or knowing itself*, i.e. the cognitive faculty of the conscious human I. In lecture one of *Transzendente Logik I*, Fichte speaks about the epistemological relationship between the logician and the transcendental philosopher:

φ = *Wissenschaftslehre*¹¹: i.e. it is the theory of knowledge itself as one absolute principle of a system of phenomena. [...] I'm now saying it is *knowledge* as such: but what *is* that, what *is* knowledge then? The logician [answers]: knowledge is an abstract concept, where I bring together what is common and particular and think it! That's [provisionally] fine. [But] Who is this 'I', which does the thinking: from where does it draw this power [of bringing these elements together]?

(φ = *Wissenschaftslehre*: d.i. Lehre von dem Wissen selbst als einem absoluten Princip eines Systems von Phänomenen. [...] nun sage ich *das Wissen* überhaupt: was *ist* das, *ist* es denn? Der Logiker [antwortet]: es ist ein abstrakter Begriff, in welchem ich das gemeinsame zusammennehme u. besonders denke! Damit [sei es vorerst] gut. [Aber] Wer ist denn dieser Ich, der dies thut: woher hat er die Kraft [des Zusammenfassens]?) (T: 3)

Although both logic and philosophy intersect in the sphere of knowledge, Fichte demarcates the *particular* science of logic from the more *universal* science of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. “φ considers *knowing*. Logic is distinguished from it. [...] φ has the whole of knowledge as its object. This is *not* the case for logic and the mere logical view” (T: 4). Yet if logic is not strictly part of general philosophy for Fichte, how could a thinker

¹⁰ For two of the best fuller treatments of Fichte's transcendental logic, see Stefan Schick, *Contradictio est regula veri. Die Grundsätze des Denkens in der formalen, transzendentalen und spekulativen Logik* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2010), esp. 123-277 on Fichte; and Alessandro Bertinetto, *L'essenza dell'empiria. Saggio sulla prima 'Logica trascendentale' di J.G. Fichte (1812)* (Naples: Loffredo Editore, 2001).

¹¹ φ is Greek shorthand in Fichte's lecture notes for philosophy.

like Kant conflate Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* itself with mere logic? – Doubtlessly due to a misreading of the admittedly enigmatic opening paragraphs §§1-3 of the *Grundlage*.

It is highly recommended to read these 1812 lecture notes on *Transzendente Logik I* in conjunction with Fichte's published works, especially the *Grundlage*, since the practical exercises and deduction of transcendental logic (without using that name) are found in the latter text in an especially illuminating manner. Moreover, as is customary for Fichte, some of the terminology in the *Transzendente Logik I* has become metamorphosed, and its “double-sense” (T: 47) needs to be deciphered in order to recognize it in the *Grundlage*. For instance, the 1794 operation of “synthesis” is called in 1812 “composition” or literally “positing together” (*Zusammensetzung*) (T: 64-66), and positing is “seeing oneself” (*Sichsehen*) (T: 105-107). In the *Grundlage*, the first three main principles of formal logic are directly interconnected with the first three foundational principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre*: the principle of identity with the first principle of the absolute I; the principle of non-contradiction with the second principle of the Not-I; and the principle of sufficient reason with the third principle of the creative imagination, which ultimately becomes spirit or absolute reason.¹²

Thus, Fichte's unavoidable circle is a methodological one: he starts with logic, but logic does not form the ground of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, but precisely the opposite relation holds – the *Wissenschaftslehre* forms the ground of logic.¹³ How is that possible? Because, as the 1812 *Transzendente Logik I* explains, the cognitive attention of the Fichtean philosopher is not merely focused on any particular logical syllogism (T: 66), or on an analysis of a set of specific sentences or propositions in the text (T: 18), but on the mental operations of the entity that is carrying out the logical deductions, that is, on the knowledge of that agent designated by the word “I”. We first have to carry out some kind of intellectual operation in order to obtain better insight into the rational laws, nature, intuition, and idea of the I. The science of logic is just one example of an intellectual discipline that can be employed to this end. Mathematics, geometry, arithmetic, and algebra, which are all closely affined with logic and its axioms, are similarly excellent stepping stones onto the meta-science of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, especially since the third foundational principle can also be derived from an arithmetic division to infinity.¹⁴ In any event, this I is not an “abstract”, hidden or “occult I” (T: 13), but it is the same I that consciously performs the mental acts. Just as the natural thinker

¹² See Fichte, *Foundation*, §§1-3, in: *Foundation of the entire Wissenschaftslehre and Related Writings*, 200-224 (SW I: 91-122).

¹³ In a review, the Kantian S.M. Beck belittled this procedural circularity, claiming the *Wissenschaftslehre* was full of “magic circles” (Fichte, GA I/2: 172).

¹⁴ In addition to Kant's response to Eberhard and the works of Maimon, two further contemporary sources for Fichte's ideas on infinity and mathematics in relation to logic are Lazarus benDavid and Christian Wolff. See L. BenDavid, *Versuch einer logischen Auseinandersetzung des mathematischen Unendlichen* (Berlin: Petit und Schöne, 1789), and C. Wolff, *Kurzer Unterricht, von den Vornehmsten Mathematischen Schriften* (Vienna: Trattner, 1763), especially §§1-10. For further details on a number of these topics, see my: *Mathesis of the Mind: A Study of Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre and Geometry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi/Brill, 2012).

cognitively abstracts from the factual material world to generate concepts and ideas, like with colours and bodily forms, so the transcendental thinker does the same with the facts and acts of consciousness. Real separate, disparate, or even antithetical elements, are brought into an ideal relation or synthesis, but the latter already presupposes an inherent unity or original thesis. Philosophy is an ideal-real construction, logic is an abstract after-construction: “*The I. – the I joins – colours, forms, matter of this sort. Logic cognizes as knowledge, and only joins the latter in a given after-construction*” (T: 9). Since the goal of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is to trace logic back to its underlying transcendental ground, back to the mental operations of the I, its content and goal are altogether different from formal logic. In this sense, the particular science of logic can be viewed as a propaedeutic leading to the more universal science of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Or as the 1812 *Transzendente Logik I* puts it:

More precise explanation of philosophy: it is the grounding of the phenomenon of the *logical I*.

(Nähere Erklärung der Ph[ilosophie]. [: sie ist] Begründung des Phänomens [des] *logischen Ich.*) (T: 11).

Contrary to Kant’s 1799 public judgment, the *Wissenschaftslehre* does have a real and material content, an empirical touchstone or *Grundsatz*. In the 1794 *Grundlage*, the first grounding principle or axiom of the whole human being is: *I am (Ich bin)*; this is the “first absolutely unconditioned principle of human knowledge.”¹⁵

The first grounding principle remains identical in the 1812 *Transzendente Logik I*. It is merely cloaked in another linguistic guise: “The *I am* is the reflection of the appearance itself [...] the expression of seeing is called *I am*; seeing presents itself as the stationary reflection of a flow” (T: 194). The three logical principles remain formal, since they are abstracted from this material basis (cf. T: 24-25). It is no different in the *Grundlage*, where Fichte states how the first logical principle of identity is obtained: “The purely formal, logical proposition ‘*A = A*’ arose from the material proposition ‘*I am*’ by means of abstraction from the content of the latter.”¹⁶ Thus, the logical principle of identity, expressed in the notation $A = A$, is not the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (cf. the symbolic notation on T: 235). To correctly posit the *Grundsatz* or the “first ring of the comet” (Fr. Schlegel), presupposes intellectual effort and “the power of freedom of an inner intuition” (SW I: 88), also known as an intellectual intuition (*intellektuelle Anschauung*). Similar to Spinoza, in the 1812 *Transzendente Logik I* intellectual intuition is abbreviated to its Latinate form ‘*intuition*’ (T: 192-194); as well as being expressed in innovative visual German terms like “absolute seeing” (*absolutes Sehen*) (T: 192). While the conscious carrying out of a synthesizing or

¹⁵ Fichte, *Grundlage* (SW I: 91-98). Of course, many modern philosophers are incredibly sceptical of Fichte’s claims here, i.e. of fully grasping the self or I. E.g. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of the Mind* (1949), or Daniel Dennett, *Intuition Pumps* (2014).

¹⁶ Fichte, *Foundation*, 210 (SW I: 105).

unifying logical operation is denoted “immediate apperception” (*unmittelbare Apperzeption*) (T: 6).

Both Fichte’s early Jena and later Berlin presentations on the first logical principle of identity remain Kantian in spirit, because they are actually a concrete application of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There Kant notes that logic can be deduced from the synthetic unity of apperception: “And so the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which we must attach all use of the understanding, and even the whole of logic, and consequently, transcendental philosophy; indeed, this power is the understanding itself.” (KrV: B 134).¹⁷ Pure apperception is of course none other than a different word in Fichte for intellectual intuition. Fichte’s first step beyond Aristotle in the *Grundlage* therefore is the transcendental deduction of the logical principle of identity from the rationality of the I itself.

The second principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the positing of the Not-I, bears a parallel with the principle of non-contradiction. Here Fichte strives to take a second step beyond Aristotle, whose philosophy K.L. Reinhold believed was based on the logical principle of non-contradiction.¹⁸ While the third principle of sufficient reason, tries to find the *ground* of something. In the *Wissenschaftslehre*, it becomes in turn inwardly derived from the human power of the creative imagination, or the pure rationality of the spirit. This faculty of the mind oscillates or hovers between two extremes or dualisms, those of the archetypal conflict between the I and the I-Not, the ideal and the real, the infinite and the finite, striving to find a synthesis to overcome the contradiction between the two.¹⁹ The true nature and power of this third principle of the productive imagination is often overlooked, as both Fichte and Kant recall. But it is via this power that the posited absolute I provides itself with a foundation. Fichte’s argument on the logical principle of sufficient reason was elaborated by engaging with the sceptics Aenesidemus and Creuzer.²⁰ Logically, materially, and structurally, the *Wissenschaftslehre* is not dualistic

¹⁷ For two insightful studies on Fichte’s logic in relation to Kant’s logic, see Angelica Nuzzo. “‘Das denkt nicht, sondern das Wissen denkt – sagt der transzendente Logiker.’ Fichte’s Logic in Kant’s Aftermath”, *International Yearbook of German Idealism* 12 (2014): 189-211; and Christoph Asmuth, “‘Sie muss drum als Wissenschaft nicht nur vernachlässigt, sondern positive bestritten, und ausgetilgt werden’ – Fichtes Logik als Logikkritik”, *International Yearbook of German Idealism*. 12 (2014): 213-235.

¹⁸ See Karl Leonhard Reinhold, *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (Jena: J.M. Mauke, 1791), 28. Regarding Fichte’s early reading of Reinhold during the period of discovering the *Wissenschaftslehre*, see Elise Frketich, “The First Principle of Philosophy in Fichte’s 1794 *Aenesidemus* Review”, *Fichte-Studien* 49 (2021): 59-76.

¹⁹ A Kantian-Fichtean perspective on this problem of synthesis, see Günter Zöller, *Fichte’s Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For a renewed philosophical diagnostic of the problem in general, see John McDowell’s now classic: *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1994, 2000).

²⁰ Fichte engaged with these sceptics in two early book reviews from late 1793 (SW I: 3-25; SW VIII: 411-417). Cf. Aenesidemus (pseudonym for Gottlob Ernst Schulze), *Aenesidemus oder über die Fundamente der von dem Prof. Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie* (1792) and Leonhard Creuzer, *Skeptische Betrachtungen über die Freyheit des Willens* (Giessen: Heyer, 1793). On Aenesidemus and Creuzer, see the respective ground-breaking articles of Daniel Breazeale, “Fichte’s Aenesidemus Review

but triadic. However, it is ultimately a unity for Fichte, since the second two of the three foundational principles can be transcendently deduced from the first absolute principle, that identity expressed in the proposition “I am”.

Hence, logic on the one hand is a separate discipline apart from philosophy, almost set in opposition to it at times, but on the other hand, it is a pedagogical path for students to arrive at the more complex and comprehensive presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.²¹ Fichte’s ultimate aim is therapeutic as it were: to awaken the student’s “organ for philosophy”, to “open the eye” of those who have been temporarily blinded by the abstract nature of conventional logic (cf. Introduction, T: XX).

The 1812 *Transzendente Logik I* also refers to other propaedeutics. To this extent these late lectures do not just cover logic, but touch on other sub-disciplines of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

In conclusion, I’ll briefly mention a couple of these. Fichte’s idea of nature in the 1812 lectures on logic continues the earlier Jena reflections insofar it is grounded in bodily existence and experience: the outer world of nature is known via the body and empirical experience on the whole (T: 51). “Dogmatists do not have an I, they are Not-Is, nature” (T: 7) This of course recalls Fichte’s negative footnote in the *Grundlage* about dogmatists who have failed to divine Kant’s spirit, and find it easier to see themselves as “a piece of lava on the moon”, as a machine of nature, than as a pure I.²² But we also find a conception of nature in which the different kingdoms are sketched in a positive hierarchy: the order of concepts passing from “mineral, plant, animal, human etc.” (T: 51). In its “*Urfassung*” (archetypal constitution) this is the attempt at properly determining nature, the “essence of nature” (T: 51). Both *Über den Begriff*²³ and the *Grundlage* had already wrestled with the problematic idea of nature’s order or continuity, the chain or ladder of being, which was most thoroughly defended at the time in the science of biology by Charles Bonnet. This where the scientist of nature has a rightful role to play in constructing correct conceptions of nature. Paragraph §3 of the *Grundlage* briefly evokes this idea for the world of nature and the different natural sciences, where the need for more precise conceptual determinations of the facts (*Tatsachen*) are paramount. Heuristically, one could start with mineralogy, with the inorganic matter of the mineral world, such as specific metals like gold or silver, before ascending to the

and the Transformation of German Idealism”, *Review of Metaphysics* 34/3 (1981): 545-568, and Wayne Martin, “Fichte’s Kreuzer Review and the Transformation of the Free Will Problem”, *European Journal of Philosophy* 26/2 (2018): 717-729.

²¹ On logic as a propaedeutic, see Hans Georg von Manz’s illuminating article: “Fichtes Theorie des Begriffs und der Empirie in der ‘Transzendentalen Logik I’: Zur Methodik, zu ihrem Status als Propädeutik für die Wissenschaftslehre und eine kurze Darstellung ihrer Ausgangsthesen” *Fichte-Studien* 45 (2018): 44-60.

²² See Fichte, *Foundation*, 265, footnote (SW I: 177-176). On the Kantian background to this dogmatic form of thinking, see I. Kant, *Über die Vulkane im Mond* (1785).

²³ Fichte, *Concerning the Concept*, 177, footnote.

concept of metal itself²⁴, then to the organic world of botany, like a blade of grass and its concept, further to biology and the concept of an animal like a bird, then to the physiology or anthropology of the human being, and finally, from the perspective of astronomy, determining the planets, constellations, and fixed stars etc.²⁵ In the cosmogonies of the time, the philosopher J.G. Herder conjectured the star Sirius as the highest central star of the cosmos. Here he was appealing to the scientific theories of Kant and Bonnet.²⁶ But the philosopher of the *Wissenschaftslehre* does not remain of course at the outer stage of natural empirical facts or *Tatsachen*, but has to transcendently carry out an inner cognitive operation. The work of the natural scientist is not rejected, but complemented by the philosopher. This is embodied in Fichte's position on an infinite, unconditioned, and absolute first principle expressed by a *Tathandlung*. The *Transzendente Logik I* mints new terms for this *Tathandlung* such as "absolute seeing" (T: 192) or "a systematic seeing that sees" (T: 192). The 1795 *Grundriss* crucially reminds us that the *starting point* of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is the universal and infinite, and not finite empirical facts. The vocational task and path of the transcendental philosopher is inverted to that of the natural scientist: "The *Wissenschaftslehre*, which is supposed to encompass the whole system of the human mind, has to follow this path and descend from the universal to the particular."²⁷ Furthermore, it is to perceive, uncover, and present the unity between the two real and ideal systems of knowledge, to arrive at a "total science" in the words of Hemsterhuis.

A prevalent and recurrent theme in the *Transzendente Logik I* is the idea of the "Kunst des Denkens" (art of thinking) or "Denkkunst" (thinking as an art) (T: 17-18), with Fichte insisting on the practice of "Socratic proofs" (T: 77). This is perhaps obvious for logic, but his discussions repeatedly transition over to the discipline of philosophy as an art of construction of inner images (*Bilder*) (cf. T: 87, 176, 207-211). Once more we are reminded of the need in philosophy to correctly employ the force of the creative imagination. Indeed, it is this faculty that leads us over to the fine arts, and the feelings and ideas generated by the best artistic works and images. Like formal logic and mathematics, art is a particular propaedeutic to the universal *Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte's 1795 *Über Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie* argues for this at length with specific models. Here the artistic genius can help us scale the heights, up to the sphere of aesthetic feelings, like beauty, the pleasant, and the sublime, which are all stimulated in genuine art and literature. Fichte's concrete contemporary examples of the latter include Goethe's

²⁴ Fichte, SW I: 116. In Fichte's time the scientific idea of these metals was in flux; see Abraham Gottlob Werner, *Neue Theorie von der Entstehung der Gänge, mit Anwendung auf den Bergbau, besonders den freibergischen* (Freiberg: Gerlach, 1791). Historically, this text goes back to gold mining in Diodorus Siculus's account of Egypt.

²⁵ Further background to this can be found in Fichte's French Revolution book (SW: 124-125).

²⁶ Kant of course had created a model more based on Isaac Newton's mechanical principles. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Erster Teil (Riga & Leipzig: Hartknoch, 1784), 6. For Herder, the earth is a "star among stars" and the human being is the central ring in creation.

²⁷ Fichte, *Grundriss* (Outline), in: *Foundation*, 383 (SW I: 333).

Faust, Wieland's creative literature and fairy tales, the music of Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Schiller's poems, Lessing's *Laocoon* and dramas, or the art of architecture – they all form creative bridges to the art of philosophy. One philosophical source for this architectural link in the *Wissenschaftslehre* between the fine arts and the art of thinking is of course Kant again, who gave in the 3rd Critique examples like poetry and architecture as a means for evoking pure aesthetic feelings, such as the experience of the sublime when beholding enormous buildings like the pyramids or Saint Peter's in Rome.²⁸

Finally, Fichte's 1812 lectures on transcendental logic also contain some late reflections on the sub-discipline of religion. These include a discussion of a *Gesicht* (T: 131-133) – literally 'face' in German; his reference to the "illumination" (*Erleuchtung*) of the "seer" (T: 62); the idea of a "symbol" (T: 63); or the "image" (*Bild*) of God (T: 48-50). This reinforces how important it is not to study these kinds of lecture comments in isolation, where they can often remain obscure. The reader additionally needs to consult Fichte's other published writings to smooth over some of the dissonances. That said, they will probably always remain problematic to some readers. For instance, *Gesicht* is mentioned in both the *Addresses to the German Nation* and the 1811 *Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar*. In the first book the seer Ezekiel experiences a *Gesicht*. From the standpoint of religious feeling, *Gesicht* signifies a *vision*, but from the higher standpoint of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, it designates a perception of a rational *idea*. It is just that the religious inclined needs more the support of sensible images. Key too is the 1798 *Sittenlehre*, where Fichte explains how these sensible images or symbols are a necessary counterpart of the inner religious life. Here the enlightened priest or artist takes up the mantle and interprets them for the community of believers. This is why sensible images are found in Fichte's texts on religion and art, such as light or food in the early *Revelation* book (SW V: 26, 134), flowers in the 1795 essay on language (SW VIII: 316), or a sparrow²⁹, heavenly council and divine author (*Urheber*) in the 1798 essay "On the Ground of our Belief in a Divine World Governance" (SW V: 177-189). But idolatry happens when a lower sensible thing is worshipped as an idol (*Götze*) instead of striving for the higher supersensible sphere, as Fichte warns when pleading his case in the *Appellation* (SW V: 220). Fichte drew many of these distinctions and interconnections between the sensible and supersensible, the moral law, the voice of conscience, and the divine, from the same philosophical source: Kant. In fact, the Kantian-inspired language, name, and content of Fichte's 1798 essay on religion was offered as a gravitational

²⁸ See Immanuel Kant, *Critik der Urtheilskraft*, 2nd edition (Berlin & Libau: Lagarde & Friedrich, 1793), 87-88. Here Kant refers to Savary's experience of the pyramids under moonlight. See Claude Etienne Savary, *Lettres sur L'Egypte* (Paris: Onfroi, 1785), 162-170. Savary's depiction of seeing the pyramid of Zoser in Saccara contrasts lived aesthetic experience with mere information gleaned from reading a book (8-15).

²⁹ Here Fichte is taking a Socratic leaf out of the book of J.G. Hamann, the magus of the north and an early student of Kant, who uses this same symbol. See Johann Georg Hamann, *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten für die lange Weile des Publicums* (Amsterdam, 1759), 24.

counterpoint to Forberg's atheistic tendencies, but it was fatefully misunderstood, distorted, and attacked, sparking the Atheism Dispute.³⁰

In sum: this student edition of Fichte's 1812 lectures on transcendental logic is absolutely recommended. As mentioned, these late lectures do not just cover logic, but many other topics, and it is advised to read them alongside Fichte's published writings. Moreover, they can be profitably read in conjunction with Kant's lectures and writings on logic and transcendental logic.

Under this angle, the Kant-Fichte relationship has an epilogue, one in which the unavoidable circle of logic is timeless and their two lives continue to run in parallel. Understanding alternates with misunderstanding, agreement with disagreement, harmony with disharmony. As we saw, for the duration of his career Fichte had already taken to heart Kant's words about applying the critical philosophy. At the completion of his 1795 *Grundriss*, he once again took pains to guide the reader back to the Kantian source, writing: "and for the moment we take leave of our reader, who will find himself situated precisely at the point where Kant begins."³¹ However, at the same time as Fichte was writing these words in Jena, the original transcendental philosopher was hard at work in Königsberg drafting an updated version of his philosophy, one that would supersede the earlier critical one. Fichte did not live to see its publication, but its architectural form and starting point would have been strikingly familiar to him. It was none other than an axiomatic philosophy based on a single first principle and where the consciousness of one's self is also a logical act.³² Even more, Immanuel Kant's new system, christened *opus postumum* by the editors, appears to have the identical name to his own:

PHILOSOPHY AS DOCTRINE OF SCIENCE [*WISSENSCHAFTSLEHRE*], IN A COMPLETE SYSTEM.³³

David W. Wood

³⁰ A number of the texts relating to this controversy have been translated into English in: J.G. Fichte and the *Atheism Dispute (1798-1800)*, edited by Yolanda Estes and Curtis Bowman (London: Routledge, 2016). See too the untranslated: (Anonymous), *Die Erscheinungen des Engels Gabriel; Oder: der Engel Gabriel und Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Im siebenten Jahr der Fichte'schen Offenbarungen (= 1799)*; and K.L. Reinhold's puzzling *Sendschreiben an J.C. Lavater und J.G. Fichte über den Glauben an Gott* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1799).

³¹ Fichte, *Grundriss* (SW I: 411); *Foundation*, 436.

³² Kant, *Opus postumum* (AA 22: 69).

³³ Kant, *Opus postumum*, edited by Eckart Förster; translated by Eckart Förster & Michael Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 255.