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# The Enigma of Fichte's First Principles

David W. Wood (*Ed.*)

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# The Enigma of Fichte's First Principles

(Das Rätsel von Fichtes Grundsätzen)

# Fichte-Studien

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# Vorwort / Preface: Fichte's First Principles and the Total System of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

The main title of the present volume is: “The Enigma of Fichte’s First Principles/Das Rätsel von Fichtes Grundsätzen.” It is so titled because, surprisingly, even after more than two hundred years of research there still remains many unresolved issues regarding the first principles of Fichte’s philosophical system. In the Preface to the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794/95), Fichte had given some advice about his manner of philosophizing: “I find it especially important to recall that I will not say everything, but I want to leave something for my reader to think about. [...] This is because I wish to promote independent thinking.”<sup>1</sup> – This seems to be particularly the case for the topic of the *Grundsätze*: Fichte has not explicitly stated every single detail, but left to readers and scholars the task of exercising their own intellectual powers to more precisely determine the exact content, form, and scope of the first foundational principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. This foreword will give a brief overview of the contributing articles, as well as some general reflections on why the first scientific principles of Fichte’s philosophy continue to remain enigmatic, including the necessity of seeing these first principles within the total system of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

The majority of the articles in this volume are based on papers given at an international conference originally held from 27–28 April 2018 at the University of Leuven, Belgium. They all have been reworked, updated, and peer-reviewed for this publication. I wish to thank Karin de Boer and Elise Frketich for their help in co-organising the conference, Henny Blomme, Stephen Howard, Luciano Perulli, Pierpaolo Betti and Wai Lam Foo for their assistance, the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Leuven for supporting and hosting the conference, as well as all the participants for generously making their latest research available here in this issue. I also extend my sincere thanks to the other scholars who subsequently agreed to write a paper for this volume. Their further efforts have resulted in a much more comprehensive survey of the topic

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1 J.G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794/95 (GA 1/2: 253). (Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the German are mine). A new English translation of the *Grundlage* is forthcoming in: J.G. Fichte, *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre and Related Writings, 1794–95*, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

of first principles in Fichte's entire system. Finally, I am extremely grateful to the main editorial team of the *Fichte-Studien*: Marco Ivaldo, Alexander Schnell, Thomas Sören Hoffmann, Bryan-Joseph Planhof, and Martin Wilmer, for their expertise and help in bringing this volume to fruition, as well as the editorial staff at the publisher Brill, particularly during these difficult months of a global pandemic.

The first group of three articles in this volume treats the topic of first principles in the very earliest writings of Fichte, from approximately the period 1790–1794. The second group of articles examines specific questions relating to first principles in the technical presentations of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, especially the Jena *Grundlage* of 1794/95, as well as the 1804 Berlin and 1805 Erlangen versions. These specific questions concern the nature and status of the first principle and its connection to the second and third principles; the possibility of a change or rupture in the foundations of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and the relation of the first principles to logic, reflection, existence, facticity, and the deduction of the categories. The third group of articles looks at the question of the first principles in the sub-disciplines of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, including the domains of aesthetics, right, ethics, history and nature. This volume 49 of the *Fichte-Studien* is then completed with five further contributions on various topics and three book reviews.

### The First Scientific Principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

Why does the topic of Fichte's first principles remain so enigmatic? Apart from the pedagogical issue of readers and scholars having to exercise their own powers of thought, one could imagine that this foundational topic has been thoroughly exhausted by Fichte scholars, and that in the year 2021 there is now nothing more to say or discover. As this volume abundantly shows, that is not at all the case, a lot of fresh perspectives can be opened up and new discoveries made, while many apparent or real contradictions need to be overcome or properly addressed.

For example, we already arrive at a first enigma if we ask the simple questions: *when* and *where* exactly did Fichte discover the first foundational principle of his system? There is still no consensus on either the time or the place of this philosophical discovery. In the Prefaces to both the 1794 programmatic text *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* and the 1794/95 *Grundlage*, Fichte himself characterizes the discovery as a form of sudden and fortunate inspiration: a *glücklichen Zufall* or *Glück* (fortune); however, he believes this discovery only occurred because of a serious and honest striving to raise philosophy to



the level of a self-evident science.<sup>2</sup> The suddenness is confirmed by the anecdotal evidence of Eduard Fichte and Henrik Steffens that it took place in a similar manner to Descartes's inspiration by a warm winter stove.<sup>3</sup> In a personal letter to Böttiger written from Zurich, Switzerland, Fichte speaks of an important "discovery" (*Entdeckung*) that was made around the "end of autumn" 1793.<sup>4</sup> Or again, in a December 1793 letter to Heinrich Stephani, Fichte speaks of a philosophical illumination that had happened roughly six weeks earlier: "The system must be rebuilt. And this is what I have been doing for the past six weeks or so. Come celebrate the harvest with me! I have discovered a new foundation, on the basis of which it will be easy to develop the whole of philosophy."<sup>5</sup> This date of late 1793 is further supported by the Preface to the 1806 *Anweisung zum seligen Leben*, where Fichte speaks of his philosophy of religion being in continuous harmony with a main philosophical conception that had been bestowed upon him "thirteen years" previously, i.e. in the year 1793.<sup>6</sup> Thus, based on these textual sources, one general tendency has been to date Fichte's "original insight" to Zurich in approximately October or November 1793. However, there is another tendency in the research that draws textual support from the *Second Introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre*, where Fichte points out that the initial idea for a first principle of philosophy had appeared to him already in Königsberg in Prussia in 1791. This was in conversations with the Kantian expositor Johann Friedrich Schulz, "with whom I once shared my then still vague idea of constructing philosophy in its entirety on the basis of the pure I."<sup>7</sup> So, is the place and time of Fichte's philosophical discovery to be located in Zurich in late 1793, or two years earlier in Königsberg in 1791?

A second enigma concerns the *actual content* and *form* of the first foundational principle (*Grundsatz*). What exactly is the nature of the first principle, and did Fichte later change it? In the 1794/95 *Grundlage*, Fichte does not immediately state his first principle, but indicates that it has to be found:

2 Cf. BWL (GA I/2: 111), GWL (GA I/2: 251–252).

3 See the accounts in volume 1 of *Fichte im Gespräch* (FG), edited by Erich Fuchs, pp. 63–64. See the English translations of these accounts in: J.G. Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 12–13.

4 J.G. Fichte in Zurich to Karl August Böttiger in Weimar, 8 January 1794 (GA III/2: 32).

5 J.G. Fichte in Zurich to Heinrich Stephani, mid-December 1793 (GA III/2: 28); Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 371.

6 AzsL (GA I/9: 47).

7 J.G. Fichte, *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (GA I/4: 225); English translation by Daniel Breazeale in: J.G. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1994), p. 57.

§ 1 *First, absolutely unconditioned foundational principle*

We have to *seek out* the absolutely first completely unconditioned foundational principle of all human knowledge. It cannot be *proven* or *determined*, if it is the absolutely first foundational principle.<sup>8</sup>

In accordance with his commitment to independent thinking on the part of the reader, one can see that at the outset of this text Fichte does not passively present or explain his first principle, but rather sets out the conditions for it to appear: it has to be absolutely first, unconditioned, and can neither be determined nor proved. One could ask: by adopting such an unusual methodological approach, did Fichte likewise wish to stimulate in his readers a sudden philosophical “inspiration”, or as he would later term it, an “intellectual intuition”? In sections § 2 and § 3 of the *Grundlage*, Fichte then presents two further absolutely foundational principles, which differ from the first insofar as they are conditioned with regard to their content (§ 2) or their form (§ 3). Much ink has been shed in trying to understand how these latter two foundational principles relate in turn to the first foundational principle.

As regards the content of this first foundational principle of § 1 of the *Grundlage*, scholars seem to understand it in different ways. Either as the “absolute I”, or the “pure I”, as “I am” or simply as the “I”; some consider it to be “I = I”, “I am I”, or again: the “I-hood” – the unity of the subject-object. Other scholars prefer a longer statement of the first principle, often the formulation found in point 10 of § 1 of the *Grundlage*: “the I originally posits its own being absolutely” (*Das Ich setzt ursprünglich schlechthin sein eigenes Sein*).<sup>9</sup> Are all these different formulations valid as the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre*? Fichte had asked his readers to think for themselves and seek out the first foundational principle of his philosophy, a principle forming the basis for the entirety of human knowledge, and the result in the scholarship appears to be many different formulations that might very well contradict one another. Most strikingly, *several* different first principles are put forward, despite Fichte’s insistence that there is *one*, and only one, first principle. Some scholars think this contradiction is only apparent, and can be resolved by viewing many of these formulations as variants of the same first principle of the “absolute I”, expressed either in an abbreviated or more extended form. This would not be surprising, as Fichte himself said he would change his terminology and presentations, and perhaps this therefore holds for the multiple formulations of the first principle itself.

<sup>8</sup> GWL (GA 1/2: 255).

<sup>9</sup> GWL (GA 1/2: 261).

Yet Fichte also underscored that the first principle must be self-evident to all: "Since this proposition is supposed to be certain immediately and through itself, this can only mean that its content determines its form and its form determines its content."<sup>10</sup> Are all the above formulations immediately certain and self-evident? Fichte was similarly clear as early as the 1794 *Recension des Aenesidemus* that in order to have a living foundation for his philosophy, the content of any true first principle had to be "real" or "material", and not abstract, formulaic or theoretical, like those found in the sciences of logic or mathematics.<sup>11</sup> This is furthermore a distinction that can be easily overlooked – the classic and crucial Fichtean distinction between the outer letter (*Buchstabe*) and inner spirit or mind (*Geist*). That is to say, we have to clearly distinguish between the mere linguistic expression of the first principle that can be summarized in words or signs, and the actual living content or cognitive *act* to which these words refer: "The *Wissenschaftslehre* establishes a proposition (*Satz*) that has been thought and then expressed in words. Such a proposition corresponds to an action (*Handlung*) of the human mind."<sup>12</sup>

Other researchers have argued that perhaps there is no one single *Grundsatz*, or even that Fichte's system is not foundational at all. This leads to the related problem or charge: the reason why there exists many variations of the first principle is because Fichte himself continually changed or modified it. That is to say, Fichte adopted a different first principle later in Berlin, because supposedly his early Jena system was not working. If this is the case, then there is a distinct rupture in the transcendental and scientific foundations of Fichte's system. Indeed, this alternative seems tempting and even obvious to many people, especially since many of the later Berlin writings clearly appeal to some kind of transcendent or religious foundation. Or can this contradiction between the early Jena and later Berlin presentations be satisfactorily resolved? In this regard, we have to remember that Fichte's primary philosophical method in the *Grundlage* is the *method of synthesis*, which concerns none other than the resolution of cognitive paradoxes or apparent contradictions. And of course: properly answering the question of a rupture in the foundations of the *Wissenschaftslehre* first of all involves correctly determining what exactly the first principle of the early Jena system is. If researchers choose the wrong first principle for the Jena period, then it will be hard to convincingly and accurately prove a rupture later on in Berlin. Hence, it is extremely necessary for Fichte scholarship to attain a more comprehensive consensus regarding the first principle

10 BWL (GA 1/2: 121); Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 109.

11 Fichte, *Recension des Aenesidemus* (GA 1/2: 46); cf. GWL (GA 1/2: 267, 272, 363).

12 BWL (GA 1/2: 148); Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 132.

in Fichte's chief scientific text in Jena, the 1794/95 *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*. And that is exactly what many of the contributions in this volume have striven to do.

### The Sub-Disciplines of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

The *Wissenschaftslehre* was not merely to have a rigorous foundation based on three interrelated first principles, but also to be a general system of the whole of human knowledge and of all the other specific sciences. In sum: "The *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to be the science of all the sciences."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Fichte was fully convinced of the *originality* of his philosophy: "this science is a *newly discovered* science whose very idea did not previously exist, and this can only be obtained and judged from the *Wissenschaftslehre* itself."<sup>14</sup>

As early as the year 1795, after the publication of the *Grundlage* and the *Grundriss*, Fichte believed that he had now done enough for a competent reader to already have a perfectly sufficient overview of the method, ground, and scope of his system, and how this foundation could be further expanded upon:

In the present book [*Grundlage*], as well as if one includes the text: *Grundrisse des Eigentümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre in Rücksicht auf das theoretische Vermögen*, I believe I have developed my system so far that every competent judge can completely have an overview of both the ground (*Grund*) and extent (*Umfang*) of the system, as well as the method (*Art*) as to how one can further build on the former.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1794 *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte had listed a number of disciplines that were to be built on the foundation of the more general *Wissenschaftslehre*. These projected sub-disciplines or particular sciences included: a theory of aesthetics, the philosophy of nature, a doctrine of God, a doctrine of right, and a theory of ethics, and again, "whose first foundational principles are not merely formal, but material."<sup>16</sup> Each of these specific sub-

13 BWL (GA I/2: 127); *ibid.*, p. 114.

14 Fichte, [*Ankündigung*] "Seit sechs Jahren", 1801 (GA I/7: 153); Fichte, "Announcement" in: J.G. Fichte/F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling. Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800–1802)*, trans. and eds. Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood (Albany/N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2012), p. 85.

15 GWL (GA I/2: 252).

16 See the section "Hypothetical Classification of the *Wissenschaftslehre*" (Hypothetische Einteilung der *Wissenschaftslehre*), in: Fichte, BWL (GA I/2: 151).

disciplines of the *Wissenschaftslehre* should likewise have a first foundational principle. The *Wissenschaftslehre* is to provide the first principles to these other particular sub-disciplines, and they should in turn relate back to the first principles of the general *Wissenschaftslehre*. Hence, each of the foundational principles are to be viewed from *two* sides, from the side of the main foundational principle, and from the side of the specific sub-discipline:

In this respect the *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to provide all the sciences with their first principles. It follows that all those propositions which serve as first principles of the various particular sciences are, at the same time, propositions indigenous to the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Thus, one and the same proposition has to be considered from two points of view: as a proposition contained within the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and also as a first principle standing at the pinnacle of some particular science.<sup>17</sup>

Here we encounter further puzzling aspects of Fichte's system. How exactly does the first principle of the general *Wissenschaftslehre* relate in a twofold manner to the first principles of the particular sub-disciplines? And how many sub-disciplines or particular sciences are there? Similar to the first 1794 edition of *Über den Begriff*, the 1798/99 lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* conclude with a classification of the different sub-disciplines of the system, including a theory of nature, a system of ethics, a doctrine of right, a philosophy of religion, as well as a theory of aesthetics.<sup>18</sup> While the 1806 *Anweisung zum seligen Leben* seems to list five main disciplines in a hierarchical manner, with the conception of nature at the bottom and the system of science at the summit.<sup>19</sup> To complicate matters, the second series of the 1804 lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* had argued that any five disciplines can in turn be split up into a further five, with the total result of "twenty-five" sub-disciplines, or what Fichte also terms as forms or "basic determinations of knowledge."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, in the later Jena, Berlin and Erlangen periods Fichte gave presentations on other topics such as political theory, economics, the theory of the state, philosophy of history, theory of the scholar, the philosophy of mathematics, and so on. So does the *Wissenschaftslehre* have five, twenty-five, or even more sub-disciplines?

<sup>17</sup> BWL (GA I/2: 151), Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 114.

<sup>18</sup> WLnM-K (GA IV/2: 262–266).

<sup>19</sup> AzsL (GA I/9: 106–114).

<sup>20</sup> WL-1804-II (GA II/8: 419).

Not only is the number of sub-disciplines puzzling, Fichte maintained that once the entire system was completed it would return back to its original starting point. In other words, the architectonic of the system is supposedly circular:

A first principle has been exhausted when a complete system has been erected upon it; that is, when the first principle necessarily leads to *all* the established propositions, and *all* the established propositions necessarily lead back in turn to it. [...] When this science is established, it will be shown that this circular course (*Kreislauf*) is really completed, and the researcher will be left back precisely at the point from which he had started.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, there is a beginning point and an endpoint to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and when the system is exhausted one will see how they harmonize and that the researcher has circled back to the starting point. In the *Second Introduction*, Fichte stated that the start of the *Wissenschaftslehre* commences with the “intuition of the I”, and it concludes with the “idea of the I”.<sup>22</sup> He stressed that the intuition and idea should not be confused with one another and are therefore distinct. But how exactly is the architectonic circular if these two points are distinct? This is another problematic issue concerning the intersection between the main foundational principle and the first principles of the sub-disciplines of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

### The Total System of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

In any event, Fichte viewed the general foundation, together with all its particular sub-disciplines, in which the researcher returns and circle backs to the original starting point, as constituting a philosophical whole, or as the *total system* of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. It was conceived as a scientific foundation for *all* human knowledge or as a modern philosophical encyclopaedia. In fact, in 1813 Fichte advertised a series of lectures at the University of Berlin with precisely this title: “Allgemeine wissenschaftliche Encyclopädie” (General Scientific Encyclopaedia).<sup>23</sup>

But was this total encyclopaedic system of the *Wissenschaftslehre* ever completed? We have to remember, for Fichte the system attains completion (*Vol-*

21 BWL (GA I/2: 130–131); Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, pp. 116–117 (trans. modified).

22 Fichte, *Zweite Einleitung* (GA I/4: 265–266).

23 Cf. editors' preface to GA II/16: 3.

*endung*) or is exhausted when it returns back to its starting point. That is the difference between the general *Wissenschaftslehre* and any of the particular sciences. Unlike the latter, the former can be completed:

The *Wissenschaftslehre* therefore has absolute totality. In it, the One leads to the All, and the All to the One. It is the sole science that can be completed; accordingly, completion is one of its defining characteristics. All the other sciences are infinite and can never be completed; because they do not return back again to their first principle.<sup>24</sup>

There is much debate on this point, both for and against the completion of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. With the publication of the *Grundlage des Naturrechts* in 1796/97 and the *Sittenlehre* in 1798 we do appear to have finished versions of at least two major sub-disciplines of the *Wissenschaftslehre* already by the year 1798. Notwithstanding, in the Preface to the second 1798 edition of *Über den Begriff*, Fichte admitted that his system was still far from complete, and there remained a lot of work to finish it: “For the completion of the system, there is still indescribably much to do. The ground has hardly been laid, and the building has scarcely begun.”<sup>25</sup> Significantly, however, in that same text he did dispense entirely with the “hypothetical classification of the *Wissenschaftslehre*”, that is, with the above-mentioned projected sketch of the architectonical idea of its various sub-disciplines, because he now considered that its contents had been sufficiently incorporated into the *Grundlage* text.<sup>26</sup>

In 1806, in the Preface to his chief text on the philosophy of religion, the *Anweisung zum seligen Leben, oder auch die Religionslehre*, Fichte declared that his late popular writings were perfectly in harmony with his earlier scientific system, and that the *Anweisung* should henceforth be viewed as the “summit” and “brightest point of light” of all his writings.<sup>27</sup> If so, with this detailed study on the philosophy of religion had the *Wissenschaftslehre* finally become completed in 1806? Or was it now just philosophically transcendent? According to Fichte, his system remained fully immanent and transcendental, and never became transcendent or dogmatic. Many critics and current scholars disagree with him on this point. They see the later turn to popular writings on religion and faith around 1800 to be no longer compatible with a scientific and rational system of philosophy. However, if this interpretation of a later irreconcilable

24 BWL (GA 1/2, 131); (cf. Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 117).

25 Ibid. (GA 1/2, 162).

26 Ibid. (GA 1/2, 160–161).

27 AzsL (GA 1/9: 47).

religious turn is correct, why did Fichte already state in the 1794/95 *Grundlage* that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is “not atheistic”,<sup>28</sup> and room must therefore be made in it for a philosophy of religion?<sup>29</sup>

Whatever view we adopt regarding the question of continuity or rupture between the early and later presentations of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, we should be aware of another piece of advice that Fichte had given in the 1795 Preface to the *Grundlage*. In fact, it is so crucial, Fichte underscored it twice. And that is, however much we explicitly determine one element in the *Wissenschaftslehre* – and that of course holds for the first foundational principles and those of the sub-disciplines – no one specific element can be fully understood in isolation or on its own, but each and every element should additionally be viewed from the standpoint of the totality of the system:

One has to explain from the context, and first procure an overview of the whole before precisely determining a single isolated proposition; this is a method that obviously presupposes goodwill to do justice to the system rather than the intention of only finding errors in it. [...] I request future critics of this text to examine the whole, and to view every single thought from the viewpoint of the whole.<sup>30</sup>

It is exceedingly difficult for a single scholar, let alone the ordinary interested reader, to have a thorough grasp of the entirety of Fichte’s philosophical writings, including those on the different sub-disciplines of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Hence, this was another of the central aims of this volume 49 of the *Fichte-Studien*, to help serious philosophical readers of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in the imposing task of obtaining a better insight into its total system. Naturally, this volume could not tackle all the above unresolved issues, nor can it provide an overview of every single facet or sub-discipline. Yet it does try to supply vital and up-to-date perspectives on some of the most relevant elements and key domains.

28 GWL (GA 1/2: 410).

29 I have elsewhere argued that Fichte’s scientific idea of a *Tathandlung* in the *Grundlage* has actually been adapted from the sphere of religion, specifically the rational tradition of the Johannine logos. Consequently, Fichte’s philosophical presentation of the *Tathandlung* in the *Grundlage* forms a purely rational transition from science to religion already in the year 1794. See David W. Wood, “Fichte’s Absolute I and the Forgotten Tradition of *Tathandlung*”, in: *Das Selbst und die Welt – Beiträge zu Kant und der nachkantischen Philosophie (Festschrift für Günter Zöller)*, eds. Manja Kisner, Giovanni Pietro Basile, Ansgar Lyssy, Michael Bastien Weiss (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2019), pp. 167–192.

30 GWL (GA 1/2: 252–253).



Eventually for Fichte, any final overview of the *Wissenschaftslehre* can only be generated by readers themselves, who need to freely employ their philosophical forces to attain such a perspective. Not simply their more analytic skills of judging, or the intellect, or understanding and reason, but also their powers of memory, their faculty of intuition, and lastly, the unifying and synthesising force of their own creative or productive imagination. This last point needs underscoring for it is often underappreciated. According to Fichte, it is not just poets and artists who need to utilise their creative imagination, but it is absolutely necessary for *philosophers* too, in order to grasp the central ideas of his system. Once this is done, the resulting insight hits the reader suddenly: “in a fortunate minute the sought-after image presents itself before the soul like a flash of lightning. [...] It depends on this faculty [of the creative imagination] whether a person philosophizes with spirit or not. The *Wissenschaftslehre* is of such a nature that it cannot be communicated at all through the mere letter, but solely through the spirit. This is because for anyone who studies the *Wissenschaftslehre*, its foundational ideas (*Grund-Ideen*) have to be generated by the creative power of the imagination itself.”<sup>31</sup> Failing to deploy the totality of one’s intellectual forces will therefore result in a one-sided and incomplete picture of this system: “The *Wissenschaftslehre* should exhaust the entire human being; hence, it can only be grasped with the totality of the human being’s entire faculties – [...] this is a truth that is very unpleasant to state and to hear, but it remains a truth nevertheless.”<sup>32</sup>

May this volume inspire future scholars to make even further explicit what Fichte left unsaid or only implicitly pointed to. For them to employ all their faculties to try and resolve more precisely many of these puzzling questions and enigmas concerning the first foundational principles of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* on the one hand, and the totality of his system on the other.

*David W. Wood*

31 Ibid. (GA 1/2: 415).

32 Ibid.