

## The Thought of a Principle: Rödl's Fichteanism

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In recent decades, an increasing number of philosophers trained in the analytic tradition have laid claim to strands of thought in the German idealist tradition. Robert Brandom, John McDowell, Michael Thompson, and Steven Darwall have drawn on idealist arguments for the sociality of reason, the primacy of practical reason, the logical concept of life, and the reciprocal recognition of rational agents in an effort to address lacunae in contemporary philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, metaphysics, and ethics. Much of Sebastian Rödl's work seeks to articulate German idealist notions of first-person and second-person knowledge, notions that he holds are necessary for solving persistent problems in epistemology and philosophy of action. In *Self-Consciousness*, he claims to comprehend the German idealist thought that the study of knowledge and action "must be pursued as part of an inquiry of self-consciousness" (Rödl 2007, viii). Although Rödl mostly foregoes analyses of idealist texts after Kant, he clearly grasps the importance of post-Kantian thought and presents his work as post-Kantian in orientation.

Rödl's accounts of first-person and second-person knowledge do not occupy an ambiguous relation to the German idealists, as they are strikingly Fichtean. In "The Single Act of Combining," he argues that self-consciousness is an "original synthesis" that grounds the synthesis of judgments in an inference (Rödl 2013, 219). Rather than cast original synthesis in the merely formal function of apperception, Rödl echoes one of the signature doctrines of the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*:

[original synthesis] cannot be an act of [empirical] knowledge. For, empirical knowledge is in principle incapable of being unified in one synthesis, one act. Only a subject of intellectual intuition conjoins all knowledge in one act, in its one act of intellectual intuition. (Rödl 2013, 219)

In "Intentional Transaction," he says:

As a transaction can be described in two ways, from the side of the patient and from the side of the agent: *Peter is giving to Paul, Paul is receiving from Peter*, so a transactional self-predication can be expressed in two ways, from the side of the agent and from the side of the patient: *I am giving to you, I am receiving from you*. (Rödl 2014, 310)

This bears a remarkable similarity to Fichte's argument that second-person knowledge contains my summons and your response as two aspects of a single event. Rödl's unspoken arrival at two of Fichte's original insights suggests a post-Kantianism distinctly Fichtean in character.

While Rödl adopts core facets of Fichte's accounts of first-person and second-person knowledge, I will argue that he does not fully articulate the distinctive priority that Fichte gives to the former and that this is crucial because the priority of (non-empirical, non-individual) first-person knowledge is central to Fichte's thought and, indeed, definitive of the German idealist tradition that Rödl aims to comprehend. Grasping this priority requires distinguishing, I suggest, between Fichte's view that self-consciousness rests *systematically* on the first-person knowledge he calls "intellectual intuition" and his view that self-consciousness arises *genetically* from the second-person knowledge he calls "reciprocal recognition."

For Fichte, the object of intellectual intuition is the infinite I or the I as first principle, which is meant to rule out the first principle of Spinozism and its nihilistic entailment that human freedom and purposiveness are incoherent. By contrast, reciprocal recognition obtains between finite rational Is or selves, the possibility of whose rational freedom is conditioned *a priori* by their mutual acknowledgment. Intellectual intuition has systematic priority since it not only avoids nihilism, but also grounds reciprocal recognition, namely, by serving as the source from which such *a priori* conditions of finite rational freedom as reciprocal recognition can be derived. Without this source, these conditions would lack a common root and form an arbitrary set.<sup>1</sup> First-person knowledge of the infinite I ensures that experience is a grounded, rational order in which second-person knowledge can so much as occur.<sup>2</sup>

As yet, Rödl does not derive second-person knowledge from a first principle in the manner of either Fichte's doctrine of intellectual intuition and method of genetic deduction or Hegel's development of dialectical logic and use of determinate negation.<sup>3</sup> This overlooks the architectonic and anti-nihilistic significance of first-person knowledge that defines the idealist tradition with which Rödl aligns. He thus neglects the main question with which German idealism grapples, namely, what makes possible the very order of reason, what Fichte calls the "rational mass," within which we address each other. As I will suggest, the idealist answer to this question—its principal thought—is the thought of a principle.

In §§1–2, I examine Fichte's distinction between the I and the self and the related distinction between systematic and genetic priority. In §§3–4, I argue that Rödl's analyses of first-person and second-person knowledge, despite echoing Fichte's accounts of intellectual intuition and reciprocal recognition, do not thematize the systematic priority of the I as first principle. Rödl agrees with Fichte that the object of first-person knowledge is neither perceptual nor demonstrative and that I am the object of your second-personal thought just if you are the object of mine. His analyses are all the more valuable given their lucidity and given his ability to connect them to philosophers including Aristotle, Kant, Frege, Wittgenstein, and Anscombe. But Rödl obscures the German idealist thought he aims to comprehend by, so far, not conceiving of first-personality systematically. This is a conception that, for Fichte and the tradition that he helps to initiate, makes it so much as possible to relate second-personally.

## §1

German idealism can be characterized by two main demands: (1) to show that experience has a single explanatory ground and (2) to show that this ground is accessible first-personally. While (1) serves the goal of systematicity, (2) safeguards human freedom and purposiveness from nihilistic views of systematicity. The explanatory ground of experience is conceived by Reinhold as a fact of consciousness, by Hegel as the result of determinate negation, and by Fichte (and, briefly, Schelling) as the infinite activity of reason or the I. Despite their differences, they agree that this ground cannot be external to the act of its apprehension—lest this act result from infinite external causes, that is, on pain of nihilism—and that this act cannot be a mere ideal—lest its concept lack reality, that is, on pain of empty formalism.<sup>4</sup> The explanatory ground of experience and the act of its apprehension must be identical, such that this ground just is the act of its apprehension, an act that grounds itself.

In order to satisfy (1), Fichte distinguishes the I from the self. In *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, he says:

The word “self” has frequently been employed of late to designate this same concept [“I” or “I-hood”]. If my derivation is correct, all the words in the family to which the word “self” belongs ... signify a relationship to something that has already been posited, though only insofar as it has been posited *through its mere concept*. If what has been posited is I, then the word “self” is formed. Hence the word “self” presupposes the concept of the I, and everything that is thought to be absolute within the former is borrowed from the concept of the latter. (*IWL* 115 [SW I: 530n])<sup>5</sup>

Without a self to apprehend the I, the latter would transcend our first-person standpoint and thwart (2). Nonetheless, “I” and “self” do not simply co-refer. When I refer to myself as a finite rational subject, I do not strictly refer to the explanatory ground of experience. Rather, my self-reference presupposes knowledge of reason or the I as the *a priori* condition of purposive selfhood. Fichte calls this condition “I-hood,” by which he means an activity that is purposive insofar as it is its own end or is “self-reverting.”<sup>6</sup> A finite self must exhibit or instantiate such an activity—via intellectual intuition—lest she deny, not only that she acts for the sake of ends, but that her free activity is itself an end and not merely nature’s means. First-person knowledge is anti-nihilistic proof that purposive selfhood is grounded, not on Spinozistic substance, but on the self-reverting activity of I-hood.<sup>7</sup>

Intellectually intuiting the I demonstrates how purposiveness is possible. But it does not show how it is livable, that is, under which conditions I can exercise and perfect my purposive agency in the world. Positing the I demonstrates my commitment to purposiveness, but does not determine how it is possible for me to live out this commitment. Each is a distinct philosophical endeavor. As Fichte says in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, philosophy consists of “two parts.” The first shows that the I “is the true object of consciousness [and] the foundation of everything else.” The second begins “at that point ... in the actual process of constructing

[consciousness]" (FTP 354 [GA IV/2: 179]). For Fichte, first-person knowledge of the I is the starting point from which the conditions under which we can enact our purposiveness must then be genetically deduced, conditions that include second-person knowledge. Having posited the I, "[t]he *Wissenschaftslehre* then proceeds to exhibit the conditions that make it possible for the I to posit itself and to oppose a Not-I to itself ... demonstrating these conditions by means of a deduction" (FTP 83 [GA IV/2: 8]).

Fichte echoes this methodological point in the *Versuch*, stating that a deduction

*shows that what is first set up as a fundamental principle, and directly demonstrated in consciousness, is impossible unless something else occurs along with it, and that this something else is impossible unless a third thing takes place, and so on until the conditions of what was first exhibited are completely exhausted, and this latter is, with respect to its possibility, fully intelligible.* (IWL 31 [SW 1: 446])

Deducing the conditions for exercising the purposiveness originally intuited in the I leads Fichte to derive second-person knowledge between subjects, as well as a subject's "spatial extension and subsistence" or "body" and "temporal identity and duration" or "soul." Since such conditions are derived from the initial affirmation of the I's purposiveness, their deduction is what Fichte calls "a genetic account of how the I comes to think of itself" (IWL 81 [SW 1: 495]).

We can clarify Fichte's I/self distinction by distinguishing between systematic and genetic priority. An *a priori* condition is systematically prior if it conditions the possibility of purposiveness, but genetically prior if it conditions the exercise of purposiveness. First-person knowledge of the I in intellectual intuition is systematically prior because it grounds my capacity for willing ends in general. Through it, I own up to the reality of my freedom. By contrast, my second-person knowledge of you who summon me to recognize your selfhood, and thereby to limit my own, is genetically prior, for it grounds the expression of my will in response to you in particular. Through it, I exercise and coordinate my freedom with yours. As Fichte says in *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre*:

the subject's efficacy lies simultaneously *within itself* and in the being *outside itself*. If the external being had not exercised its efficacy and thus had not summoned the subject to exercise its efficacy, then the subject itself would not have exercised its efficacy ... But within the sphere allotted to it, the subject has freely chosen; it has absolutely given to itself the nearest limiting determination of its own activity; and the ground of this latter determination of the subject's efficacy lies entirely within the subject alone. (FNR 40 [SW 3: 41])

You may summon me to exercise my freedom. But the systematic ground of this freedom is reason or I-hood. And I-hood is this ground just if I exhibit it first-personally, via intellectual intuition.

The difference between systematic and genetic priority reflects, not only the "two parts" of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, but also the "two different aspects" of the I that

Fichte discerns in *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, aspects that track his distinction between I and self:

Insofar as the I is absolute, it is *infinite* and *unbounded* ... Insofar as the I opposes to itself a not-I, it necessarily posits limits, and itself within these limits ... and to that extent thus necessarily posits itself as *finite* ... So far as the I posits itself as infinite, its (positing) activity relates to the I as such, and nothing else but that ... So far as the I posits limits, and itself within these limits, as we said above, its (positing) activity does not relate immediately to itself, but rather to a not-I that is to be opposed thereto ... Thus the I is finite, insofar as its activity is *objective*. (SK 225–7 [SW 1: 255–7])

While the I's first, infinite aspect systematically grounds the very idea of purposiveness, which Fichte calls "*pure activity*," its second, finite aspect articulates the "*objective activity*" that is demarcated by second-personal relations between finite selves (SK 226–7 [SW 1: 256]). Hence, he says in the *Versuch* that "[t]he I that appears within pure self-consciousness is determined by nothing but itself" and that we "cannot understand our pure apperception to be the same as our consciousness of our individuality, nor can [we] combine the latter with the former. For consciousness of one's own individuality is necessarily accompanied by another sort of consciousness, namely, consciousness of a 'you,' and it is possible only on this condition" (IWL 61 [SW 1: 476]). Similarly, after deducing reciprocal recognition as a condition of finite rationality in the *Naturrechts*, Fichte repeats his distinction between "the absolute, formal I" and "a determinate, material I," adding: "One would hope that these two quite distinct concepts, which are contrasted here with sufficient clarity, will no longer be confused with one another" (FNR 54 [SW 3: 57]).

Fichte's need to distinguish the I from the self is architectonic. Without first-person knowledge of the infinite I, the conditions under which we exercise our purposive freedom, which include second-person knowledge between finite selves, lack a unifying origin from which to be derived. The former's systematic priority prevents the latter's genetic priority from forming an arbitrary set. We will see that Rödl underplays this crucial distinction in comprehending the German idealist tradition. But first, we must take a closer look at the first-person knowledge that Fichte calls "intellectual intuition."

## §2

Despite differing contexts and motivations, Fichte and Rödl can be seen to engage the question "what is the I." Their answers share a two-step response. First, they argue that the I's *explanans* cannot be other than the I, but must lie in the I itself. Second, they argue that the I's self-explanation yields a special sort of knowledge: grasping the identity of *explanandum* and *explanans* in this case produces knowledge of that which grounds the very intelligibility of experience. I will trace Fichte's steps toward this claim before tracing Rödl's steps in §3.

Fichte's first step is driven by the nihilistic threat that systematic philosophy undermines freedom and purposiveness. In the *Grundlage*, he says that, in Spinoza's system, the I "does not exist absolutely *because* it exists; but because *something* else exists," namely, substance or the Not-I (SK 101 [SW 1: 100]). However, Spinoza "ought to have stopped forthwith at the unity given him in consciousness" (SK 118 [SW 1: 121]). Fichte rejects the dogmatic view that the I's explanation transcends its standpoint,<sup>8</sup> for it entails I-hood's determination by infinite external causes and thus the impossibility of its purposive freedom.<sup>9</sup> On pain of nihilism, the I's *explanans* must be immanent to itself. As Fichte says, the I "*posits* itself by merely existing and *exists* by merely being posited" (SK 98 [SW 1: 97]). If the I posits itself just if it exists, then it explains itself. Fichte's first step in showing what the I is accordingly consists in denying that its *explanans* is third-personal.

Fichte's second step is to ground systematic philosophy by articulating our knowledge of the I as first principle. He first shows that the dogmatist's purported knowledge of the Not-I as first principle is practically self-refuting.<sup>10</sup> In positing the Not-I, the dogmatist betrays his capacity purposively to do so: "he is not well prepared to defend himself against [idealist] attacks, for there is something within his own inner self which agrees with his assailant" (IWL 19 [SW 1: 434]). Positing a first principle is a response to philosophy's primary purpose or "first task" of discovering the explanatory ground of experience, described as (1) above (IWL 8 [SW 1: 423]). Despite itself, the dogmatist's act is inescapably purposive.<sup>11</sup> It is the performative contradiction<sup>12</sup> of positing a principle that is incompatible with its nihilistic consequences.<sup>13</sup> As Fichte says: "I am only active. I cannot be driven from this position. This is the point where my philosophy becomes entirely independent of all arbitrary choice and becomes a product of iron necessity—to the extent, that is, that free reason can be subject to necessity; i.e., it becomes a product of *practical* necessity" (IWL 50 [SW 1: 466–7]).

The I is thus the sole first principle of systematic philosophy. But this is just to say that satisfying the demand (1) of accessing the explanatory ground of experience requires satisfying the demand (2) of accessing it first-personally. Indeed, we find that philosophy's "first task" of finding the explanatory ground of experience and what Fichte calls its "first demand" (IWL 7 [SW 1: 422]) of attending to the first-person standpoint are one and the same, for unless that ground is sought from this standpoint, the former is external to the latter, threatening nihilism. Hence Fichte's claim:

a philosophical system is not a lifeless household item one can put aside or pick up as one wishes; instead, it is animated by the very soul of the person who adopts it. Someone whose character is naturally slack or who has been enervated and twisted by spiritual servitude, scholarly self-indulgence, and vanity will never be able to raise himself to the level of idealism. (IWL 20 [SW 1: 434])

If purposiveness is ineliminable from philosophy's first task, then a person must be judged by how high she rises to "the level of idealism." The *Wissenschaftslehre* accordingly contains the only standard by which to judge systematic philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

Having ruled out the Not-I as first principle, Fichte can characterize our knowledge of the I. By "I" or "I-hood" he means an activity that is identical to its end, that is, a purposive or self-reverting activity: "'I' and 'self-reverting acting' are completely



identical concepts" (*IWL* 45 [*SW* 1: 462]). Furthermore, as the explanatory ground of experience, it signifies "that *Act* which does not and cannot appear among the empirical states of our consciousness, but rather lies at the basis of all consciousness and alone makes it possible" (*SK* 93 [*SW* 1: 91]). Such an act cannot be known conceptually, for a concept mediates access to a particular with a universal, whereas the I, which is identical with its end, exists immediately for itself. Hence, it must be known by intuition. Fichte describes this intuition as "consciousness in which what is subjective and what is objective cannot be separated from each other at all, but are absolutely one and the same" (*IWL* 113 [*SW* 1: 527]). Intuition here differs from sensation, which presupposes a difference between a passive subject and an object. It is instead an act of apprehension that is identical to what it apprehends—an act that Fichte calls "intellectual intuition."

Intellectual intuition is knowledge of the I, not of the self. A self has no priority regarding the possibility of purposiveness. And yet Fichte says intellectual intuition is "the immediate consciousness that I act, and of what I do when I act" (*IWL* 46 [*SW* 1: 463]). This ties intellectual intuition to the first-person standpoint—as we would expect given (2), the demand that the explanatory ground of experience be accessible from this standpoint. Nevertheless, Fichte denies that intellectual intuition is simply identical with self-consciousness.<sup>15</sup> How, then, are selves capable of it?

In intellectual intuition, I embrace my purposive freedom and renounce nihilism. I thereby exhibit the actuality of purposiveness and, with it, the actuality of its systematic condition. As Fichte says in *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*:

I, however, that which I call my 'I', my person, am not the anthropogenetic force itself but only one of its expressions: and when I am aware of myself I am aware only of this expression and not of that force which I only infer because of the need to explain myself. This expression, however, seen as it really is, emanates from an original and independent force and has to be found as such in consciousness. That is why I take myself to be an independent being. (*VM* 14)

Intellectual intuition is not simply knowledge of my finite self because it demonstrates my instantiation or "expression" of a general activity or "force." This is why Fichte treats "I," "I-hood," and "reason" as synonymous:

The character of rationality consists in the fact that that which acts and that which is acted upon are one and the same; and with this description, the sphere of reason as such is exhausted. —For those who are capable of grasping [reason] (i.e., for those who are capable of abstracting from *their own I*), linguistic usage has come to denote this exalted concept by the word: *I*; thus reason in general has been characterized as "I-hood." (*FNR* 3 [*SW* 3: 1])

The 'pure I' of the published *Wissenschaftslehre* is to be understood as reason as such or in general, which is something quite different from personal I-hood. (*FTP* 437 [*GA* IV/2: 220])

The activity threatened by dogmatism is not merely purposive, but rationally so: it is the activity we express as norm-responsive, goal-oriented selves. I-hood characterizes

the “sphere of reason” because experience is purposive in this robust sense. We are therefore capable of intellectual intuition insofar as it is the actualization of reason so characterized.<sup>16</sup>

Grasping Fichte’s Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* depends crucially on bearing in mind his architectonic distinction between the infinite I and the finite I, according to which first-person knowledge of I-hood has systematic priority in the order of philosophical explanation. We will now see that Rödl’s account of first-person knowledge, for all that it shares with Fichte’s, overlooks this distinction, which, given its centrality in the German idealist tradition, complicates his admirable project of extending that tradition into contemporary discussions of knowledge and action.

### §3

Rödl’s answer to the question “what is the I” is driven by contemporary forms of nihilism:

It has been held that, since its essential normativity cannot be accommodated within the natural sciences, we might be forced to throw the concept of action and with it action concepts on the trash heap of outdated theories. With action concepts a logical basis of first person thought disappears. Renouncing action concepts is a form of self-annihilation: logical self-annihilation. It annihilates a source of the power to think and say “I.” (Rödl 2007, 63)

Rödl is primarily concerned with confusion regarding the sense of “I,” that is, how this term refers. Following Anscombe, he rejects demonstrative and perceptual accounts of how “I” refers, arguing that its sense is inseparable from its referent because I can refer with “I” only by being its referent and can be its referent only by referring to it. Examining this identity of being and referring will reveal the extent to which Rödl’s two-step answer follows that of Fichte.

In “The First Person,” Anscombe argues that philosophers falsely suppose that “I” is a referring term. That it does not refer does not owe to its purported referent, for surely one has “the right sort of thing to call ‘I,’” namely, oneself (Anscombe 1975, 50). It owes instead to the very idea of the term’s sense. First, it cannot be demonstrative. If I utter “that man,” I may be surprised to find a post, and if my utterance successfully refers, this is contingent on empirical facts. The potential for unsuccessful or accidentally successful reference fails to capture the use of “I,” which Anscombe says involves an assurance of presence to oneself: “thinking ‘I ... ’ guarantees not only the existence but the presence of its referent. It guarantees the existence *because* it guarantees the presence, which is presence to consciousness” (Anscombe 1975, 55). Second, the sense of “I” cannot be perceptual. If it were, then, in sensory deprivation, I would be absent to my utterance of “I” and so absent to myself. Moreover, the possibility of the unnoticed substitution of a perceptual object undermines the guarantee of self-presence.

Anscombe infers that “I” does not refer, observing that we cannot prove that a term refers by eliminating inadequate models of reference:



[g]etting hold of the wrong object *is* excluded, and that makes us think that getting hold of the right object is guaranteed. But the reason is that there is no getting hold of the object at all. With names or denoting expressions (in Russell's sense) there are two things to grasp: the kind of use, and what to apply them to from time to time. With "I" there is only the use (Anscombe 1975, 59).

However, Anscombe's conclusion leaves open the possibility that "I" refers in a non-demonstrative, non-perceptual way. Such a possibility must avoid the spoiling feature of demonstrative and perceptual reference, which Anscombe herself identifies when she says that the "grammatical illusion of a subject" results from "the connection of what is understood by a predicate with *a distinctly conceived subject*" (Anscombe 1975, 65, emphasis added). It may be that our use of "I" presupposes no such distinction between subject and predicate. I take Anscombe's argument, then, as a challenge to leave the negative path of excluding inadequate models of reference and take the positive path of showing precisely how uttering "I" involves an assurance of reference, which alone can ensure an illusion-free answer to the question "what is the I."

Rödl takes just this path. In *Self-Consciousness*, he argues that, in first-person knowledge, I refer to myself as myself. When Oedipus refers to Laius' murderer, he refers to himself, but not as himself. He is unaware that, in his mouth, "I" and "Laius' murderer" co-refer. He expresses his thought without the pronoun "I" and so lacks self-consciousness. Such a case, Rödl observes, reveals the importance of grasping the sense of "I": "we are concerned with the sense, rather than the meaning, of 'I.' We do not want to know *what* one refers to with this word, but *how* one refers with it" (Rödl 2007, 2). Grasping the sense of "I" is essential to answering the question "what is the I," for unless I know how "I" refers, I cannot refer to myself as myself and so cannot know the I that I am. Knowing the sense of "I," then, is inseparable from knowing the nature and identity of the I.

Rödl distinguishes identification-dependent from identification-free judgments. My judgment  $Fa$  is identification-dependent if it rests on judging  $a=b$  and  $Fb$ , but identification-free if I need refer to  $a$  in no other way to know that it falls under  $F$  (Rödl 2007, 5–6). Rödl argues that the sense of "I" cannot be perceptual<sup>17</sup> because perceptual reference is an instance of identification-dependence: my perceptual judgment "I am sitting by the fire" depends on judging "I am this object" and "This object is sitting by the fire." Here, the identity of the sense of "I" and its referent is accidental, given the possibility of sensory malfunction or undetected substitution. But accidental reference falls short of Rödl's thesis that I am self-conscious and so have first-person knowledge just if I refer to myself as myself. This thesis demands the necessary identity of the sense of "I" and its referent.

Following Fichte's first step, Rödl denies that the identity constitutive of the use of "I" is explicable third-personally. Perception, he says, is knowledge of myself "*as other*" (Rödl 2007, 8), knowledge in which I move from the observation that some object is sitting by the fire and that I am this object to the inference that I am sitting by the fire. Here the identity of "I" and its referent is accidental because it is mediated by third-personal identification, which is fallible. But then first-person knowledge is not knowledge of oneself as other: "referring to an object first personally, I am in a position

to know ‘from the inside’ how things stand with it. It does not so happen that I know the object ‘from the inside.’ Rather, this is how I refer to it” (Rödl 2007, 9). I do not contingently refer to myself with “I” because how “I” refers is necessarily identical with being its referent. Here, sense and reference are one and the same. Such an identity is only explicable “from the inside,” that is, first-personally. Compare this thought to Fichte’s *Versuch*: in thinking something other, “the thinking subject and the object of thought are posited in opposition to one another,” whereas in thinking oneself, “the act of thinking and what is thought of within this act are one and the same” (IWL 45 [SW 1: 462]).

Rödl’s second step, like Fichte’s, exhibits a special kind of knowledge: “first person thoughts articulate knowledge I possess, not by *perceiving*, but by *being* their object. If I know without mediation that I am *F*, then I know it, not by perceiving that I am *F*, but by being *F*” (Rödl 2007, 9). First-person knowledge is explicable, not by something other, but by itself. This is because, in such knowledge, I am the referent by referring to it and I refer to it by being it. The identity of being and referring in this case bears an affinity to that in which, as Fichte says, “the I *exists* because it *posits itself*, and *posits itself* because it *exists*” (SK 129 [SW 1: 134]). Indeed, seemingly in line with Fichte’s idealist thesis (from (1) and (2) above) that the explanatory ground of experience is identical with the “*Act*” of its apprehension, Rödl subsequently adopts the term “intellectual intuition” and describes it as both “the ground of the possibility of all knowledge” and an “act” (Rödl 2013, 219).

Despite this affinity, Rödl does not articulate Fichte’s principal thought, namely, the distinction between the infinite and finite I.<sup>18</sup> This distinction gives first-person knowledge architectonic significance by giving it systematic (as opposed to genetic) priority over second-person knowledge. Without first-person knowledge of the infinite I, indispensable to the German idealist response to nihilism, we cannot grasp the ground of purposiveness. For Fichte in particular, intellectual intuition is the derivational source of genetic conditions such as reciprocal recognition. In the final section, we will see how Rödl’s neglect of this source obscures the idealist tradition he seeks to champion.

#### §4

In “Intentional Transaction,” Rödl argues that the concept “I” determines or specifies the concept “I–you.” On this view, thinking second-personally under the concept “I–you” is logically prior to thinking first-personally under the concept “I” (Rödl 2014, 311). In other words, the sense of “I”—the way its referent is given to one who utters it—is grounded on the sense of “you”—the way its referent is given to two who address each other. Rödl does not derive the logical form of second-person knowledge from a first principle. To grasp his divergence from Fichte in this respect, we must first review Fichte’s account of second-person knowledge.

Fichte conceives of second-person knowledge in the *Naturrechts* in terms of reciprocal recognition, which he derives as a genetic condition of the exercise of one’s purposive agency. There must be a condition, he says, on which I find myself “as

something that *could* exercise its efficacy, as something that is summoned to exercise its efficacy but that can just as well refrain from doing so" (FNR 33 [SW 3: 34]), that is, a condition on which I discover myself as "*being-determined to be self-determining*" (FNR 31 [SW 3: 33]). No mere efficient cause can incite a subject's efficacy with such latitude as to "leave the subject in full possession of its freedom to be self-determining" (FNR 32 [SW 3: 33]). Only a similarly purposive entity can issue the appropriate, non-necessitating determination, namely, in a summons. Your summons is an invitation whose "ultimate end is [to bring about] the free efficacy of the rational being to whom the summons is addressed" (FNR 35 [SW 3: 36]): me. I may respond in many ways, some you intend but do not compel, others you prohibit but only by conceding their possibility. In this way, you are an "intelligence" whose end is my response (FNR 35 [SW 3: 36]). Since my response in turn takes you as its end, our exchange is reciprocal. I recognize you as an intelligence just if you recognize me as one—I respond to you purposively just if you summon me in kind. Fichte expresses this reciprocity thusly: on the one hand, "the cause of the summons must itself necessarily possess the concept of reason and freedom," while on the other hand, "the summons is conditional on the understanding and freedom of the being to whom it is addressed" (FNR 35 [SW 3: 36]). Summons and response, then, are "*partes integrantes* of an undivided event" (FNR 33 [SW 3: 34]).<sup>19</sup>

The concept under which this event falls is the concept of right. "Right" denotes the necessity of my standing in relations of mutual recognition with other free rational beings.<sup>20</sup> Second-person knowledge is accordingly constituted by my contraction into a sphere of agency from which I recognize your sphere of agency. Hence, whereas first-person knowledge of I-hood grounds purposive activity in general, second-person knowledge grounds my participation in this activity with others. As Fichte says in the *Nova Methodo*, it is by another's summons that "my own individuality arises from the total mass of reason" (FTP 355 [GA IV/2: 179]), which mass in turn rests on the I as first principle, on pain of nihilism.

Fichte's deduction of reciprocal recognition demonstrates our essential sociality: "*if there are to be human beings at all, there must be more than one ... [T]he concept of the human being is not the concept of an individual—for an individual human being is unthinkable—but rather the concept of a species*" (FNR 37 [SW 3: 39]).<sup>21</sup> Being with others genetically conditions the exercise of my purposive agency. Yet purposiveness as such—that "general mass of rational beings" from which your summons "select[s]" me (FTP 351 [GA IV/2: 177])—is systematically conditioned by the infinite I. As we will now see, this I is absent from Rödl's otherwise Fichtean account of second-person knowledge.

In *Self-Consciousness*, Rödl argues that second-person knowledge is a single form of knowledge with two sides. This form makes it the case that my thought that I help you and your thought that you are helped by me express the same thought. Just as "yesterday" spoken today and "today" spoken yesterday express one thought, so, too, our thoughts express one thought (Rödl 2007, 197). Developing this idea in "Intentional Transaction," Rödl argues that second-person knowledge has a "universal" form. The form uniting our thoughts in second-person knowledge is not empirical, for our respective thoughts, each falling under the concept "I," are abstractions from our

logically joint thought, falling under the concept “I–you.” Thus, to the question of what shows me that you and I share in the form of second-person knowledge, Rödl responds: “nothing shows me this ... because any apprehension of a partner in transaction by a partner in transaction is a specification of the universal one-another-thought in which any partner always already recognizes any partner” (Rödl 2014, 313).

To be sure, Rödl’s thesis that self-consciousness “essentially manifests itself in mutual recognition of self-conscious subjects” (Rödl 2007, 192) echoes Fichte’s claim in the *Naturrechts* that reciprocal recognition is “a necessary condition of a rational being’s self-consciousness” (*FNR* 33 [SW 3: 34–5]). Indeed, Rödl states in a footnote that we might paraphrase the priority of the concept “I–you” “by saying that *I* is a *Wechselbegriff*—as Fichte does” (Rödl 2014, 315n6), and then cites the *Naturrechts*:

the concept of individuality is a *reciprocal concept* [*Wechselbegriff*], i.e., a concept that can be thought only in relation to another thought, and one that (with respect to its form) is conditioned by another—indeed by an *identical*—thought. This concept can exist in a rational being only if it is posited as *completed* by another rational being. Thus this concept is never *mine*; rather, it is—in accordance with my own admission and the admission of the other—*mine and his, his and mine*; it is a shared concept within which two consciousnesses are unified into one. (*FNR* 45 [SW 3: 47–8])

It is clear from this passage that Fichte’s reciprocal concept signifies a relation between finite *I*s. A reciprocal concept uniting “two consciousnesses” denotes what he describes elsewhere as one self’s selection by another self from the general mass of rational purposiveness. But this general mass, for Fichte, is itself systematically conditioned by first-person knowledge of the *I* in intellectual intuition, a ground that “lies entirely within the subject alone.” Hence, when, in a final footnote, Rödl claims that Fichte “conceives the unconditional activity, which returns to itself, that is, self-consciousness, the *I*, not as monadic, but as universal *one-another*-predication” (Rödl 2014, 316n14), he speaks at once of the self-reverting activity of *I*-hood and the cognitive activity of selves without distinguishing their systematically and genetically conditioning roles, respectively. But Fichte deduces reciprocal recognition from the “unconditional” activity of *I*-hood, which serves, on pain of arbitrariness, as the former’s derivational source.

In articulating the nature and contemporary significance of the German idealist project, and in strikingly Fichtean terms, Rödl, at least so far, overlooks the architectonic perspective of the infinite *I*. With his claim that “I–you” is “man’s first word” (Rödl 2014, 314), he departs from Fichte’s idealist view that there is no word prior to “*I*” (not to be confused with “*me*”). As he says in the *Versuch*:

[t]he concept of *I*-hood that arises within ourselves is then transferred to and synthetically united with ... an “*it*”, a mere object, something outside of us. It is by means of this conditioned synthesis that a “*you*” first arises for us. The concept of the “*you*” arises from the union of the “*it*” and the “*I*.” (*IWL* 87 [SW 1: 502])

From an architectonic standpoint, "I" denotes the self-reverting activity on condition of which you and I are capable of reciprocal recognition—of so much as uttering and hearing words as words.

My aim has not been to diminish the similarity between Fichte and Rödl, but only to make precise Rödl's proximity to the tradition he aims to comprehend. When Rödl says that your second-person knowledge of me "comes to fruition only as my power to return it is actualized" (Rödl 2007, 190), we hear Fichte's claim that your summons is purposive only if I realize its end (*FNR* 44 [SW 3: 46–7]). When he says that I, in turn, have second-person knowledge of you only if I see you as "anticipating my thought returning to you" (Rödl 2007, 190), we hear Fichte's claim that my response presupposes that you are an intelligence (*FNR* 35 [SW 3: 36]). But this, for now, is as close as he comes to Fichte's position in particular and to German idealism in general.<sup>22</sup>

As I have suggested, the principal thought of German idealism is its thought of a principle. Whether this thought signifies the dialectically emerging shapes of an "Absolute" that results from the "becoming-of-itself" (*PhG* 13 [GW 9: 19]), following Hegel, or the purposive activity of I-hood exercised as the space of recognitive embodied selves, following Fichte, it is meant to grasp the explanatory ground of experience first-personally, vindicating philosophical systematicity while avoiding nihilism. Despite the differences that remain, Rödl's achievement to date is to have significantly furthered the development of the idea of German idealism for a contemporary audience through remarkably Fichtean accounts of first-person and second-person knowledge.

## Conclusion

It is perhaps telling that Rödl's few references to Fichte are limited to the *Naturrechts*, for it is in the *Grundlage*, the *Versuch*, and especially the *Nova Methodo* that Fichte makes explicit the derivational relation between first-person and second-person knowledge, that is, between intellectual intuition of the infinite I and reciprocal recognition between finite Is. I have noted that this relation assumes a distinction between systematic and genetic priority: whereas *a priori* conditions like spatiality, temporality, and relations of right make the exercise of purposiveness possible, the I as first principle conditions the possibility of purposiveness as such, while ensuring the former conditions' collective unity. To be sure, Rödl's account of second-person knowledge compellingly articulates the German idealist insight into our essential sociality, justifying our engagement with the idealist tradition as a way of overcoming a persistent tendency to think atomistically about finite rational agents. But if we are to inherit this tradition without overestimating our affinity with it, we must discern its driving problems and basic concepts.

In particular, if we overlook Fichte's thought of a first principle, we neglect the transformative experience we are said to undergo by intellectually intuiting it. While the idea of a first principle is available to pre-Kantian philosophers, it is only after Kant that it becomes a real, livable possibility, namely, through its first-personal apprehension. Fichte is all too aware that its apprehension cannot be compelled,

on pain of nihilism, but rather must be invited. In this regard, he reserves a special, metaphilosophical conception of the summons:

One would hope that every person will be able to think of *himself*. One would hope as well that every person will become aware that, insofar as he is summoned to think of himself, he is summoned to engage in a type of *inner acting* that depends upon his own self-activity and will realize that, in accomplishing what is thus requested of him, he actually affects himself through his own self-activity; i.e., he *acts*. (IWL 45 [SW 1: 461–2])

Fichte can invite us to embrace our self-sufficiency, but he can only serve as midwife: “Everyone must freely generate it within himself” (IWL 14 [SW 1: 429]). As important as registering philosophy’s first principle, then, is registering the contingency of apprehending it.<sup>23</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Compare Fichte’s criticism of Kant’s metaphysical deduction of the categories from the logical forms of judgment: “To a Critical idealist ... who does not derive the presumed laws of the intellect from the very nature of the intellect, one may address the following question: How did you obtain any material acquaintance with these laws? I.e., how did you become aware that the laws of the intellect are precisely these laws of substantiality and causality?” (IWL 27 [SW 1: 442]).
- 2 The full titles of Fichte’s theory of right—*Grundlage Des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien Der Wissenschaftslehre*—and theory of ethics—*Das System der Sittenlehre nach den Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*—indicate that their subject matter is logically downstream from knowledge of philosophy’s first principle.
- 3 According to Paul Franks, Fichtean intuition and Hegelian dialectic are “competing interpretations of the same underlying methodological idea: the idea of a metaphysical deduction that begins with the *ens realissimum* and proceeds to trace the necessary delimitations or determinate negations of the ‘space’ of all possible transcendental realities ... Whereas [Hegel] and Schelling had previously insisted that the system must begin with the absolute—by which they meant the idea of the *ens realissimum* from which the totality of the real is to be derived—Hegel now says [in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*] that the absolute ‘is essentially a *result*, and only at the *end* is it what it is in truth’ (PhG 13 [GW 9: 19]). This might mislead one into thinking that Hegel has given up the project of a progressive derivation from the idea of the *ens realissimum*. But this would be incorrect. What he means is that the first principle disclosed through the *Factum* of ‘self-consummating skepticism’ (PhG 52 [GW 9: 56]) is an initial and still inadequate expression of the first principle, which achieves adequate expression only through its dialectical articulation in the system. Hegel’s system is still progressive and, moreover, still progresses from the idea of God, although this idea is at first expressed in its most impoverished form, as mere ‘being.’ For ‘being’ and all the other determinations of Hegelian logic are ‘the *metaphysical definitions of God*’ (Enc. 1 §85) (Franks 2005, 373, 377). Compare Fred Rush’s gloss of Schelling’s charge that Hegel “operates with an epistemically charged



variant of intellectual intuition," a "form of rational insight" that is "*internally articulated*, indeed dialectically so" (Rush 2014, 220–1).

- 4 See Franks 2005, Chapter 3.
- 5 This distinction is obscured by Heath and Lachs' translation of "*Ich*" as "self" in the *Grundlage* and the introductions to the *Versuch*.
- 6 See Fichte: "Though you may have included many things in your concept of the I which I have not (e.g., the concept of your own individuality, for this too is signified by the word 'I'), you may henceforth put all of this aside. The only 'I' that I am concerned with here is the one that comes into being through the sheer self-reverting act of your own thinking" (*IWL* 108 [SW 1: 523]).
- 7 We may wonder if Fichte is a foundationalist. Tom Rockmore defines three types of foundationalism: ontological, which involves a direct grasp of reality, perceptual, which asserts incorrigible knowledge, and principal, which relies on assumed principles (Rockmore 1994, 100). Given these definitions, he denies Fichte is a foundationalist and reads the *Wissenschaftslehre* as anti-foundationalist in spirit, focusing on the circular relation between the I's activity and its product, namely, itself. But these definitions are not exhaustive: a fourth type of foundationalism is exemplified by the I's self-reverting activity, which explains and thus founds itself. Indeed, a common feature of Rockmore's definitions is an external relation between foundation and founded, whereas the I relates internally to what it founds.
- 8 See Fichte: "Any philosophy is ... *dogmatic*, when it equates or opposes anything to the I as such; and this it does in appealing to the supposedly higher concept of the *thing (ens)*, which is thus quite arbitrarily set up as the absolutely highest conception. In the critical system, a thing is what is posited in the I; in the dogmatic, it is that wherein the I is itself posited: critical philosophy is thus *immanent*, since it posits everything in the I; dogmatism is *transcendent*, since it goes beyond the I. So far as dogmatism can be consistent, Spinozism is its most logical outcome" (*SK* 117 [SW 1: 119–20]).
- 9 See Fichte: "if the explanation of presentation, that is, the whole of speculative philosophy, proceeds from the premise that the not-I is posited as the cause of the presentation, and the latter as an effect thereof, then the not-I is the real ground of everything; it exists absolutely, because it exists and as it exists (Spinoza's fatalism). Even the I is a mere accident thereof, and not a substance at all, and we arrive at materialistic Spinozism, which is a form of dogmatic realism" (*SK* 146 [SW 1: 155]).
- 10 Fichte acknowledges that the antinomy between dogmatism and idealism is theoretically insoluble: "Neither of these two systems can directly refute the opposing one; for the dispute between them is a dispute concerning the first principle, i.e., concerning a principle that cannot be derived from any higher principle. If the first principle of either system is conceded, then it is able to refute the first principle of the other. Each denies everything included within the opposite system. They do not have a single point in common on the basis of which they might be able to achieve mutual understanding and be united with one another. Even when they appear to be in agreement concerning the words of some proposition, they understand these words to mean two different things" (*IWL* 15 [SW 1: 429]).
- 11 See Robert Pippin: "To assume [the opposite of idealism] would still be to determine oneself to act as if determinism were true. But that would make it a norm for action and so to refute oneself" (Pippin 2000, 158).
- 12 See Fichte: "in presupposing the thoroughgoing validity of the mechanism of cause and effect, [dogmatists] directly contradict themselves. What they say stands in

contradiction with what they do; for, to the extent that they *presuppose* mechanism, they at the same time elevate themselves above it. Their own act of thinking of this relationship is an act that lies outside the realm of mechanical determinism. Mechanism cannot grasp itself, precisely because it is mechanism” (IWL 94 [SW 1: 509–10]). Compare Schelling: “The dogmatist, who assumes everything to be originally *present* outside us (not as *coming to be* and *springing forth* from us) must surely commit himself at least to *this*: that what is *external* to us is also to be explained by external causes. He succeeds in doing this, as long as he remains within the nexus of cause and effect, despite the fact that he can never make it intelligible how this nexus of causes and effects has *itself* arisen. As soon as he raises himself above the individual phenomenon, his whole philosophy is at an end; the limits of mechanism are also the limits of his system” (IPN 30).

- 13 Frederick Neuhouser claims that the “inadequacy of dogmatism consists in the fact that, by starting from the thing itself, it will never be able to arrive at an account of the *consciousness* of things and therefore will prove incapable of constructing a single, all-encompassing system ... The decisive strength of idealism, then, lies in its ability to achieve *completeness*” (Neuhouser 1990, 58). But the dogmatist’s problem is not primarily the *theoretical* error of leaving an explanatory gap. It is the *practical* error of betraying his own purposiveness. As Fichte observes in the *Grundlage*, in positing the Not-I, the dogmatist must “think unawares of the *absolute subject as well*, as contemplating this substrate; and thus they unwittingly subjoin in thought the very thing from which they have allegedly abstracted, and contradict themselves. One cannot think at all without subjoining in thought one’s I, as conscious of itself” (SK 98 [SW 1: 97]). Similarly, Fichte acknowledges in the *Versuch* that the dogmatist “does not deny, as a fact of consciousness, that we consider ourselves to be free ... Instead, he uses his own principle to prove the falsity of this claim.” Although the dogmatist alienates himself from his agency, his system nevertheless makes conceptual space for the fact of consciousness, namely, as “illusion” (IWL 15 [SW 1: 430]). This is why Fichte holds that the antinomy of systematicity cannot be resolved theoretically, but only practically.
- 14 This removes the appearance of metaphilosophical pluralism from Fichte’s dictum that one’s philosophy “depends upon the kind of person one is” (IWL 20 [SW 1: 434]). The dictum may suggest that one could legitimately endorse dogmatism. But the dogmatist’s self-refutation shows that he has no first principle: “the object of dogmatism cannot be considered to be anything but a mere invention” (IWL 14 [SW 1: 428]). With no first principle, he has no system. The kind of person one is accordingly amounts to a question about whether one embraces idealism, that is, whether one owns up to one’s freedom or evades it in bad faith. As Fichte says in the *Nova Methodo*: “[w]hether one embraces or rejects [idealism] is something that depends upon one’s inmost way of thinking and upon one’s faith in oneself. A person who has faith in himself cannot accept any variety of dogmatism or fatalism” (FTP 95 [GA IV/2: 17]). It is precisely because a person is either a self-willed or a failed idealist that Fichte can conclude that “[t]he only type of philosophy that remains possible is idealism” (IWL 24 [SW 1: 438]).
- 15 See Fichte: “the act in question is a mere intuition. —Accordingly, it also produces no consciousness, not even self-consciousness ... The described act of the I merely serves to put the I into a position in which self-consciousness—and, along with this, all other consciousness—becomes possible” (IWL 43 [SW 1: 459]).

- 16 See Robert Pippin: "If there is a 'monism' emerging in the post-Kantian philosophical world, the kind proposed by Fichte ... is what might be called a normative monism, a claim for the 'absolute' or unconditioned status of the space of reasons" (Pippin 2000, 164).
- 17 Rödl attacks perceptual and demonstrative models of reference in one stroke since both involve third-personal reference.
- 18 One might deny there is any affinity at all. Rödl adopts Frege's conception of sense as the way in which a referent "is apprehended to fall under concepts" (Rödl 2007, 5). Must I apprehend myself under some concept in first-person knowledge? Would this not disqualify it as intellectual intuition, which Fichte defines as non-conceptual? An answer lies in Rödl's description of demonstrative judgment as (a) unmediated by another judgment and (b) such that no concept governs the knowledge that it provides. My judgment "This drum is taut" is unmediated, for I need refer to this drum in no other way to know that it falls under the concept "taut." Yet neither tautness nor any other concept is the principle governing my judgment of this drum. As Rödl says, this judgment's principle "need not be a piece of knowledge, knowledge that the object (uniquely) satisfies a certain concept. It may be a *relation to the object* by which one is *in a position to know* how things stand with it" (ibid., 6). Here, Rödl broadens Frege's notion of sense beyond apprehension under concepts. One effect is to elucidate the referential character of first-person knowledge. Modifying the above description, my reference to myself is (a) unmediated by any other judgment and (b\*) such that no concept governs the knowledge that it provides because I know the referent by being in a position to know how things stand with it, namely, by being it. The denial above falls because first-person knowledge, for Rödl as for Fichte, is ultimately unmediated by concepts. One may still object that concepts figure in Rödl's account of the identity of being and referring in first-person knowledge. On this account, however, knowing I am *F* presupposes my immediate relation to myself. Like demonstrative knowledge, no particular concept governs this relation. Although first-person knowledge is doubtless expressible by thoughts determined by an "individuating concept," Rödl distinguishes such determination from the grounding sense whereby I relate to myself as "a source of indefinitely many pieces of knowledge" (ibid., 7). In this way, the sense of "I" is a perspective on the space of reasons as such, not merely a point within it. I am open to this space by knowing that I am myself. As Rödl says, first-person knowledge, construed as original synthesis, "is the ground of the possibility of all [empirical] knowledge, but is not itself [empirical] knowledge" (Rödl 2013, 219). Still, one might object that Rödl denies of intellectual intuition that "all knowledge comes out of it in the manner of being derived from it" (ibid.). But the context of this denial is *empirical* knowledge. Fichte would likewise deny that such knowledge is derivable from intellectual intuition of the I. The conditions he derives from the latter, since they are *a priori*, are rather the objects of transcendental knowledge.
- 19 Compare Stanley Cavell: "I (have to) respond to [the other's life], or refuse to respond. It calls upon me; it calls me out. I have to acknowledge it. I am as fated to that as I am to my body; it is as natural to me ... And what happens to me when I withhold my acceptance of privacy—anyway, of otherness—as the home of my concepts of the human soul and find my criteria to be dead, mere words, word-shells? ... I withhold myself ... —Isn't the idea of withholding prejudicial, implying a prior state of union, or closeness? Whereas maybe I never was a part, or party, to these (other) lives. Couldn't I be just different? —But I want to know where this leaves me, what has happened to me. —Then it is the idea of being left that is prejudicial" (Cavell 1979, 84–5).

- 20 See Fichte *FNR* 9 [SW 3: 8].
- 21 Compare Fichte: “No You, no I; no I, no You” (SK 172–3 [SW 1: 189]).
- 22 Rödl has very recently moved closer to the German idealist thought of a principle. In *Self-Consciousness and Objectivity: An Introduction to Absolute Idealism*, he argues that philosophy is the science of judgment, that is, the systematic understanding of the objectivity of judgment, and he says that his argument echoes Hegel’s formula that reason is the certainty of its consciousness of being all reality (Rödl 2018, 14–15). Rödl claims that this science affords knowledge of the principles of judgment, which are the logical concepts that belong to the idea of objectivity, such as those of sensibility, substance, temporality, and teleology (ibid., 17, 62, 81, 140). This affirms the systematic priority of the self-conscious, first-personal character of judgment for the sake articulating the unity of these concepts. However, it amounts to a statement rather than a derivation of this unity: “[i]t is not to our purpose here to articulate the principle, or principles, of logic. But it will be helpful to equip ourselves with a provisional idea of their content ... We need not develop the principles of logic. It is enough that there be [such] principles” (ibid., 139–40). The task in Rödl’s latest presentation is thus to assert, not yet to deduce, the lawfulness of the set of logical concepts by which the first principle of idealism would articulate its absoluteness.
- 23 Thanks to Gabriel Gottlieb, Colin McQuillan, and audiences at the Universities of Emory, Xavier, and Sussex for helpful comments on this chapter.

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