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INTELLECTUAL INTUITION: THE CONTINUITY THESIS

By MOLTKE S. GRAM

The notion of intellectual intuition has dominated our understanding of Post-Kantian German Idealism. But what has persisted in our understanding of intellectual intuition is the assumption that the notion has a univocal sense from Kant through Schelling.¹ Theodor Haering has argued it,² Richard Kroner has summarized it,³ and A. O. Lovejoy has given us the most recent and the clearest statement of the view:

For the antithetic to “Understanding,” therefore, Fichte and Schelling adopted the term “intellectual intuition” (*intellektuelle Anschauung*). . . . It too was an expression to which Kant had recently helped to give currency. In several passages he contrasts “sensible intuition,” familiar to us in our perceptual experience, with a possible “intellectual intuition” such as natural theology had ascribed to the deity, the *Urwesen*. The latter mode of perception is distinguished, not only by its assumed freedom from the forms of time and space and the categories of the Understanding, but above all by the assumption that its object is not given up to it from without; i.e., the object and subject in it are not mutually external. . . . Fichte had, however, used the term to express the Ego’s immediate consciousness of its own activity. . . . Neither the term nor the notion, then, was of Schelling’s invention; and there is a measure of justification for the elegantly expressed remark of Liebman that the *intellektuelle Anschauung* was simply “raked out of Kant’s soiled linen.”⁴

¹ I cite the primary sources from the following editions: Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königliche preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1910 ff.); Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Sämmliche Werke*, ed. J. H. Fichte (Berlin, 1845-46); *Leben und literarischer Briefwechsel*, 2nd edition (Berlin, 1862); and F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämmliche Werke* (Erste Abteilung), ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1856). Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are mine.

² Haering, *Hegel, sein Wollen und sein Werk* (Leipzig, 1929), *passim*.

³ Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel* (Tübingen, 1921), I, 103 ff., esp. 109 ff., 427 ff., and 490 ff. Cf. Robert Adamson, *Fichte* (Edinburgh, 1881). Both of these sources are typical: they both say that the notion of intellectual intuition is used differently in its history, but the explanation they give for this difference falsely assumes that all parties to the dispute understand the same thing by the issue which is involved.

⁴ A. O. Lovejoy, *The Reason, the Understanding, and Time* (Baltimore, 1961), 21. Cf. Otto Liebman, *Kant und die Epigonen* (Berlin, 1912), 6-7, for an even stronger statement of Lovejoy’s claim.

I call this the Continuity Thesis and divide it into three parts: (1) “intellectual intuition” denotes a single problem for Kant, namely, the relation of an intellect to objects which are things in themselves; (2) the objects of this intellect are not given to it but are created by it; (3) Fichte and Schelling affirm what Kant denies when he rejects the possibility of intellectual intuition.

The Continuity Thesis is false. The problem of intellectual intuition in post-Kantian German idealism is not unitary. Any attempt to stretch “intellectual intuition” to cloak the problems in the use of that name merely prejudices our judgment about the adequacy of what Fichte and Schelling argue under that rubric, and ultimately makes a facile assumption about the unity of the problem in Kant’s own development. Kant uses one designation to cover three very different issues, but historians of ideas have wrongly assumed that he is discussing only one doctrine. Kant denies three logically independent doctrines of intellectual intuition, all of which rest on different pre-suppositions. Let us take them in turn.

Kant describes an intellect that knows things in themselves independently of any conditions of sensibility. That is the first issue: his difficulties with the Leibniz-Wolff tradition about the applicability of the true concepts of the understanding to things in themselves.⁵ Kant also discusses critically the possibility of an intellect that would intuit the sum total of all phenomena,⁶ and he discusses a kind of intellectual intuition in which the intellect would create its own object. Here a problem about the applicability of the categories either to things in themselves or to an actual infinity of phenomena no longer confronts him. The third kind of intellectual intuition does not involve a problem about the use of the categories at all; it is a kind of knowing in which cognitive acts and their objects are identical.

Kant uses the term “intellectual intuition” in discussing all of these problems, yet each is logically independent of the other since they have essentially nothing in common. We may ask whether we can apply categories to objects which cannot be given to us under *any* forms of sensibility, but nothing is said about whether we can give an actual infinity of phenomena under our forms of sensibility. We may also ask whether cognitive acts can be identical with their objects without asking whether categories apply to objects not given in sensibility or whether the sum total of all phenomena can be given to any single form of sensibility.

⁵ Cf. H. J. Paton, *Kant’s Metaphysic of Experience* (London, 1951), I, 178 and 532 n. Cf. also my “How to Dispense with Things in Themselves (I),” *Ratio* (1976), 107 ff., for background distinctions.

⁶ *Critique of Judgment*, ¶77. Cf. my “Kant’s First Antinomy,” *The Monist* (1967), 499 ff., for the same problem in another context.

Fichte claims that we have a faculty of intellectual intuition. But he affirms neither an insight into things in themselves (whose existence he denies), nor the synoptic view of the totality of phenomena (which he claims to be impossible), nor the possibility of acts of cognition identical with their objects. Fichte's problem lies elsewhere: he wants to know whether we can be immediately aware of the self. The issue thus shifts, and the notion of intellectual intuition has a new sense. Schelling shifts the sense of intellectual intuition even further. He begins by claiming that any case of our acquaintance with our own mental acts constitutes a case of intellectual intuition, and he concludes finally that any case of such acquaintance constitutes the creation of an object by its knowing subject.

Kant describes intellectual intuition in three different ways. He rejects the Leibniz-Wolff view of the conditions of sensibility⁷ and its relation to the understanding, which commits him to rejecting one kind of intellectual intuition. The success of his rejection depends on two positions. First, Space and Time are *a priori* Forms of our sensibility and not objective properties of things. The cogency of his argument does not concern me here. If space and time are what Kant says they must be—formal properties of *our* mind's way of perceiving objects—then it is logically possible to conceive of an intellect that can be acquainted with the same things without those forms. Such an intellect would be a case of having intellectual intuition, for it might be able to be acquainted with the very things which we ordinarily perceive under the forms of our perceptual conditions in the absence of those conditions. This move gives us a logically consistent concept of intellectual intuition, but it does not grant us the capacity to apply that concept.⁸

Secondly, what Kant calls the understanding must give us objects different in kind from what we intuit through the sensibility. It might be the case, say, that the forms of sensibility are not objective properties of things and it would still be true that there is no distinction between the kinds of objects we can *perceive* and those which we can *conceive*. The arguments of the *Inaugural Dissertation*, the *Prolegomena*, and the first *Kritik* make this distinction and thus generate materials for a logically consistent notion of intellectual intuition.⁹ But that notion is intelligible only within the context of the categories

⁷ *Dissertation on the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World* (hereinafter cited as “Inaugural Dissertation”), ¶¶1-4, cf. esp. ¶5; and *The Critique of Pure Reason*, B60; B332; B56 ff. Unspecified references to this work are hereinafter cited without title.

⁸ *Inaugural Dissertation*, ¶10. Cf. Kant's letter to Marcus Herz of 21 February 1772, in which Kant says that we should have intellectual intuition if space and time were objective properties of things.

⁹ B306-07; *Inaugural Dissertation*, ¶10; *Prolegomena*, ¶34.

and their putative applicability to objects which are not given to us under our forms of sensibility. Kant, therefore, distinguishes between objects as they are given under the conditions of sensibility and those objects independent of sensibility. Thus, he can be led by analogy to conceive of an intellect, unlike ours, that would apply the pure concepts of the understanding to objects apart from the conditions of sensibility.

Kant's distinction between positive and negative noumena supports this notion of intellectual intuition. The concept of a negative noumenon results when we abstract from the conditions of sensibility under which an object can be given to us and thus derive the notion of an object in general: it is the thought of something which is characterized by the unschematized categories. A negative noumenon involves no distinction between sensibility and understanding, but it makes possible the logically consistent notion of a positive noumenon which can be grasped by intellectual intuition.¹⁰ Here we do not simply abstract from the conditions of sensibility but posit an object that requires other conditions: 1) every sensuous condition must be excluded; 2) the object must not be an indeterminate thought of an object in general but a particular object; and 3) the understanding must provide the conditions of intuition.

The part of the Continuity Thesis which holds the object of intellectual intuition to be at once a thing in itself and the *creation* of the understanding runs aground on Kant's view of positive noumena. To an intellect capable of intuiting without space and time, the difference between appearances and things in themselves would dissolve though the distinction between things in themselves and the understanding would remain. We must speak of a negative noumenon as the thought of an indeterminate object, a creation of the understanding, but a positive noumenon is a particular object that affects our sensibility and produces a sensuous manifold. The problem of this kind of intuitive intellect, then, is not whether it could *create* positive noumena but whether it could be *given* positive noumena.

That the intuitive understanding which Kant rejected in the *Inaugural Dissertation* and the transcendental analytic of the first *Critique* would not create positive noumena draws supporting evidence from the way in which Kant conceives the phenomenal-noumenal distinction. Things in themselves are taken to exist quite apart from all references to any kind of percipient. We sense them only spatially and temporally, but that is an accident of our sensibility. Kant tells us as much when he says that every appearance

always has two sides, one by which the object is viewed in and by itself (without regard to the mode of intuiting it—nature therefore remaining al-

¹⁰ B307.

ways problematic), the other by which the form of the intuition of this object is taken into account. This form is not to be looked for in the object in itself, but in the subject to which the object appears; nevertheless, it belongs really and necessarily to the appearance of this object.¹¹

But he goes further. Whenever we say of an object that it is an appearance, we presuppose that it is an appearance *of* something: things in themselves are unknowable but presupposed as productive of appearances. This shows that Kant's distinction between sensuous and intellectual intuition has nothing to do with the creation of the objects of intellectual intuition; Kant's point here is solely that things in themselves can be given in different ways. I conclude from these distinctions that we must separate the kind of intellectual intuition which creates its objects from the kind which has an experience of things in themselves unmediated by any conditions of sensibility.

However, Kant uses intellectual intuition to characterize an intellect—viz., God's—that *does* create its object, as we see in the *Inaugural Dissertation* (¶10):

Thus, in our minds intuition is always passive, and so is possible only so far as something is able to affect our senses. But the divine intuition, which is the ground of its objects, not consequent on them, is, owing to its independence, archetypal, and so is completely intellectual.

And again in his famous letter to Marcus Herz (21 February 1772):

If what in us is called representation were active in regard to the object, i.e., if even the object were created by it as divine knowledge is imagined to be the prototypes of things, their conformity with objects can be understood. Thus the possibility of the archetypal intellect, on whose intuition things themselves are grounded as well as that of the ectypal intellect, which derives the data of its logical treatment from sensuous intuition of things, is at least intelligible.

Here the problem is not another case of using pure concepts to know positive noumena or things in themselves, for even if we were able to use the categories to know things in themselves, we could not produce or literally create these particulars. Even then, they would have to be given to us, albeit under conditions other than space and time. In the case of an intellect that knows things in themselves, then, Kant assumes a cognitive relation between the categories of the under-

¹¹ B55; cf. A251 ff. and Kant's *Anthropologie*, ¶7. For a detailed discussion of the entire issue, see my "The Myth of Double Affection," in *Reflections on Kant's Philosophy*, W. H. Werkmeister, ed. (Gainesville, 1975); see also A249 and B307. In all of these passages Kant distinguishes between positive and negative noumena as involving ways in which objects can be given and not the difference between the reception and the literal creation of objects.

standing and noumena. When he talks of an intellect that creates its object by the act of knowing, he is speculating about the creation of objects in the act of knowing them. But this notion of a ‘‘thing in itself’’ cannot have a place in a theory of knowing which takes the object of knowledge to be something independent of any act of cognition.

The notion of an archetypal intellect changes the very notion of intellectual intuition. To know the conditions of our knowledge of phenomena is, for Kant, to know the categories (causality, substance, modality, relation, etc.). If we were to know the conditions of the existence of phenomena, we would have to know things in themselves. Thus, even if we could know the conditions of phenomena, the latter would still be something very different from the conditions of our knowledge of them,¹² so that only if we gave up the notion of a thing in itself as the efficient cause of objects, could we have the conception of an intellect that would create its own objects just in knowing them. We would have to make the conditions of those things themselves, which could never happen so long as we retain the distinction between concepts and things in themselves. There can thus be no notion either of a thing in itself or of a pure concept of the understanding in the context of a knowing in which the object of knowledge is identified with the conditions of knowing such an object. When, say, the *Urwesen* creates its object by knowing it, what is being created is neither a thing in itself nor an appearance.¹³ If we could create something by conceiving it, then there would be no distinction between a concept which we might think and an object which we might intuit but could not bring into being by thinking. The notion of intellectual intuition in the sense of an acquaintance with objects given to us independently of the forms of our sensibility would be logically incoherent. Yet, the stubborn fact remains that Kant also uses ‘‘intellectual intuition’’ in the second way I have been describing, and such a use becomes logically coherent only if we distinguish it from the first use of the notion.

The hermeneutical difficulty does not end here because Kant uses ‘‘intellectual intuition’’ in still a third way: he retains the distinction between an archetypal and an ectypal intellect, merely using those words in a context that radically alters their meaning. His *Reflexionen* evidence this shift. In *Reflection* 1244, Kant says:

An Idea is the representation of the whole insofar as it necessarily precedes the determination of the parts. It can never be empirically represented be-

¹² Cf. esp. his polemic against philosophers like Jacobi in *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie*, Academy Edition (Berlin, 1923), VIII, 389 ff.

¹³ A419-B447; A420-B447; cf. A686-7-B714-5; A699-700-B727-8; A701-B729.

cause in experience one goes from the parts to the whole by successive synthesis. It [an Idea] is the archetype of things because certain objects are possible only through an Idea. Transcendental Ideas are those by which the parts in the aggregate or succession are determined by the absolutely universal whole.¹⁴

The same theme emerges in *The Critique of Judgment* (¶77) with even greater clarity:

Our understanding has the characteristic that it must go in its knowledge (e.g., in the cause of an effect) from the analytically universal (from concepts) to the particular (the given empirical intuition). . . . But we can, however, conceive of an intellect that, unlike ours, is not discursive but intuitive because it goes from the synthetically universal (the intuition of a whole as such) to the parts.¹⁵

The present notion of intellectual intuition has shifted even further from its two predecessors. We now have that capacity for Kant if we could, *per impossibile*, intuit in one experience the totality of phenomena constituting the world. This does not involve the claim that an intellect can know any given object independently of the conditions of sensibility, nor does it involve the claim that an intellect can create the object it knows by thinking it. Neither of these senses of “intellectual intuition” can render the present use of that polymorphous term intelligible, for what we are said to know here, should we have the faculty of intellectual intuition, is a set of phenomena and not a thing in itself. What I single out as Kant’s third use of the term implies nothing about our ability to create the objects we know by intuiting them. The third sense of the notion is logically compatible with the existence of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves; it is even compatible with our inability to create objects by conceiving them.

The contrast can be put even more strongly. The existence of an intellect which, as Kant claims, comprehends in one fell swoop the totality of all phenomena demands distinctions which are incompatible with the other two versions of the notion. It requires, for one thing, a distinction between a phenomenon and a thing in itself; otherwise, there would be no phenomena and, further, no infinite totality of phenomena for an intuitive intellect to grasp simultaneously; and, for another, the third notion of intellectual intuition is incompatible with the claim that the intellect creates what it knows by merely thinking it. Phenomena, whether known successively or at once in their totality, must be given even to an intuitive intellect of this kind. The condition which Kant sets here is that an intuitive

¹⁴ Cf. *Reflection* 5248; *Logik*, ¶3, footnote 2; A317-B374.

¹⁵ Cf. B135.

intellect apprehend what is given to it without the need to synthesize the parts of what it apprehends; but it cannot create something that must be given to it. Such an intellect can, at most, apprehend what is given to it without the conceptual machinery of a synthesis of parts.

This discrimination among various sorts of intellectual intuitions has both a short and a long range value: it reconciles apparent contradictions in Kant's text and provides a clearer understanding of the fate of that notion in the hands of Kant's successors. The distinctions remove what would otherwise be a glaring contradiction in what Kant says about the place of the categories in intellectual intuition. Sometimes he says that the categories are employed in intellectual intuition, and sometimes he flatly denies this. Consider the evidence. At B308 of the first *Critique* he says:

If, therefore, we should attempt to apply the categories to objects which are not viewed as being appearances, we should have to postulate an intuition other than the sensible, and the object would thus be a noumenon in the *positive sense*. Since, however, such a type of intuition, intellectual intuition, forms no part whatsoever of our faculty of knowledge, it follows that the employment of the categories can never extend further than to the objects of experience.

This example is not isolated, for at A253 he tells us that "a pure use of the category is indeed possible [logically], that is, without contradiction; but it has no objective validity, since the category is not then being applied to any intuition so as to impart to it the unity of an object."¹⁶ So it would seem that the categories are active in intellectual intuition and that the distinction between thinking something and intuiting it does not, after all, collapse in such cases. However, at A286-B342 we are told:

Even if we were willing to assume a kind of intuition other than this our sensible kind, the functions of our thought would still be without meaning in respect to it. If, however, we have in mind only objects of a non-sensible intuition, in respect of which our categories are admittedly not valid . . . noumena in this purely negative sense must be indeed admitted.¹⁷

Here intellectual intuition is a kind of knowing in which there is no distinction between concepts and things in themselves nor, for that matter, a distinction between concepts and intuitions. The obvious but misleading conclusion from all of this is that what Kant continually calls intellectual intuition is not a kind of intuition at all and that the very notion of intellectual intuition, so far from being an alternative view of what it is to be acquainted with something, is a contradic-

¹⁶ Cf. *Reflection* 4634; A92-B125; B128; B146; A289-B346; *Prolegomena*, ¶8.

¹⁷ Cf. B148; *The Critique of Judgment*, ¶76n.

tion in terms. Such an absurdity begets another: if the notion of intellectual intuition is a contradiction in terms, then the notion of what Kant calls sensible intuition seems logically necessary since it would be logically impossible for us to form a concept of any other kind of intuition, much less the three different versions of intellectual intuition I have distinguished.

The apparent absurdity, however, is illusory. When Kant denies that we can have other forms of intuition, he is denying that we can apply our categories to things in themselves. When he claims that intellectual intuition would obliterate the distinction between concepts and objects, he is drawing the natural conclusion from saying the intellectual intuition creates its objects and hence destroys the distinction between subject and object in knowing. Each of these claims addresses a very different problem: the former questions whether we can apply concepts to things in themselves; the latter, whether the distinction between concepts and forms of sensibility can be applied at all to cases of intellectual intuition. These are different issues, demanding a more microscopic examination of intellectual intuition than Kant himself explicitly gives.

Still, somebody might say that my entire line of reasoning collapses because it conflates what Kant calls the transcendental object with a thing in itself. And, so the objection might go, the distinction between these two notions does not demand the recognition of a multiple use of the term “intellectual intuition” at all. It merely requires that we pay attention to a distinction already in Kant’s text between the transcendental object and a thing in itself. This would allegedly dissolve the difficulty which demands the more involved examination I have begun into the notion of intellectual intuition.

The counter argument runs as follows. Kant’s “categories of the understanding” apply to objects in general, but this does not imply that an object in general is a thing in itself (*Ding an sich*). It need imply only that the categories are compatible with any form of intuition, not that they apply to objects independently of any form of intuition. This has nothing to do with the issue of intuition, for it abstracts from any specific kind of intuition, distinguishing only between some kind of object or other and a kind of object that relates to our categories by the forms of intuition we happen to have. Such a distinction does not, it would seem, demand a semantical investigation of the notion of intellectual intuition but rather a retention of the familiar distinction between a thing in itself and a transcendental object.

But does it? I think not. The problem of intellectual intuition arises with respect to the relation between appearances and things in themselves. The issue about the relation between things in themselves and the categories is logically posterior to this; hence, to say

that the categories are compatible with any form of intuition is true but irrelevant. The issue of intellectual intuition arises with respect to the relation between those categories and the things which, under whatever forms they might appear to us, are not indeterminate objects but specific, no matter what forms of intuition there might be. *The relation between the categories and things in themselves can be raised with regard to any form of intuition*, and thus entails one more defect in the Continuity Thesis: it shows that Fichte does not use the notion in any of the ways in which Kant uses it and that we must assess Fichte's theory of intellectual intuition in quite different terms. Let us listen to Fichte:

In Kant's terminology all intuition pertains to a being. . . . [I]ntellectual intuition would thus be the immediate consciousness of the thing in itself by means of a concept. . . . Intellectual intuition in Kant's sense is an absurdity for it [the Theory of Science] . . . evaporates whenever one wants to conceive it and does not deserve any name at all.¹⁸

Fichte rejects not the possibility of intellectual intuition but Kant's description of it. Fichte tells us that intellectual intuition is

the immediate consciousness that I act. What I do is that by means of which I know something because I do it. The existence of such a capacity of intellectual intuition cannot be demonstrated by concepts, nor can its nature be conceptually demonstrated or communicated through concepts.¹⁹

So, after all, intellectual intuition exists for Fichte, but his notion of it has nothing to do with what Kant claims does not exist. Let me explain. I am aware of myself performing certain acts. The awareness is not an acquaintance with things in themselves as Kant describes them, for these things are not cases of self-awareness. And what I perceive when I am aware of my own activity is in time—which disqualifies it from being a case of an instantaneous awareness of a thing in itself. Nor is it yet an awareness of a totality of phenomena. It is merely the acquaintance I have of myself as an agent, but it is not conceptual because our awareness of concepts, our acquaintance with what they are, and even our application of them when we are not explicitly aware of their analyses—all this assumes a prior awareness only of the self that has this acquaintance, that applies these concepts, and perhaps also, that can give an accurate analysis of the concepts applied. Yet the awareness is both intellectual and intuitive. The departure from Kant is dramatic: Fichte's notion of intellectual

¹⁸ *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre, Sämmliche Werke*, I, 471.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 463; cf. *ibid.*, I, 461: "Activity can only be intuited and not developed and communicated by means of concepts." Cf. also *Recension des Aenesidemus* (1792), *ibid.*, 10, 16, and 22.

intuition entails a collapse of the Kantian distinction between things in themselves and appearances because the ego that is aware of itself in its own activity is the same ego that becomes the object of that awareness. It is *not* a thing in itself, numerically distinct from an ego that perceives it under certain forms of sensibility.

What is worse is that Fichte's notion of intellectual intuition actually entails the collapse of the distinction between concepts and objects since the awareness of a concept is the acquaintance with something that is applicable to many objects. However, the distinction between concepts and objects cannot be used to explain the ego's awareness of itself without blatant circularity. Calling the ego an object and explaining self-awareness in terms of one's subsuming an object called the ego under a general concept assumes the self-awareness of the ego performing the very action which is alleged to explain the fact of self-awareness. Thus, there is yet one more dent in the Continuity Thesis: *Fichte's pure Ego is neither noumenal nor phenomenal.*²⁰ The self-consciousness that posits itself as limited by the Non-Ego is not the particular self. It is just that numerically different but qualitatively identical activity found in all acts of knowledge.²¹ Fichte's use of substantives to characterize this activity is misleading, for it suggests that he is opening up an area of supersensible apprehension of noumenal objects. The activity of the pure Ego is supersensible only in the sense that it cannot be given as an object. When Fichte speaks of the pure Ego as presupposed in all experience, we are constrained to assume a universal form of egohood (*Ichheit*) which is the condition of experience of objects.²² It is not something given in experience as an object and is thus not the object of sensible intuition. Nor is it something beyond the pale of experience and cannot be given in any intuition of supersensibles. Yet, it is present within experience because the experience of the pure Ego accompanies all other experiences.

Such knowledge cannot, therefore, be a collection of psychological generalizations about particular egos any more than it can be an apprehension of some macrocosmic psyche over and above the self-consciousness that all subjects have in common.²³ To ask Fichte what the pure Ego is, beyond giving an account of what it does, is like

²⁰ Cf. *Die Tatsachen des Bewusstseins*, *Sämmliche Werke*, II, 609-10.

²¹ Cf. the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1801, *Sämmliche Werke*, I, 91; also Fichte's letter to Reinhold (1801), *Leben und literarischer Briefwechsel*, II, 505.

²² Cf. *Die Tatsachen des Bewusstseins*, *Sämmliche Werke*, II, 688; also the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1801, *Sämmliche Werke*, II, 14 and 382.

²³ *Sonnenklarer Bericht*, *Sämmliche Werke*, II, 365; see also Schelling's letter to Fichte, 3 October 1801, in *Leben und literarischer Briefwechsel*, II, 350. Also Fichte's letter to Jacobi, 3 May 1810, *op. cit.*, 182.

asking about the location of a university after having seen all the buildings on its campus. Similarly, when I know the universal forms of activity by which the Ego reacts to the limitation of the Non-Ego, I know the Ego.²⁴ The categories cannot be for Fichte pre-existing forms into which the matter of experience falls. The conditions of the object are given with and through the object. And, while I have a sensuous intuition of any given object, I can have at the same time an intellectual intuition of the transcendental conditions in virtue of which this object is an object for *me*. Hence Fichte can say that in "the Science of Knowledge [the categories] arise simultaneously with objects."²⁵

The historical irony of all of this is that Fichte agrees with Kant's description of what Kant calls intellectual intuition but produces evidence that there is a kind of intellectual intuition which escapes Kant's objections. I have already tried to show that the collapse of the noumenon-phenomenon distinction in cases of self-awareness does not entail, as Kant claims, that we are aware of things in themselves which are not temporal or that we are even aware of a *thing*. Nor does Fichte's notion of intellectual intuition entail that the ego creates what it knows. The Fichtean claim is only that the awareness of self and the awareness of things outside the self are genetically connected:

the fact of genesis is simply the revelation of the law and the behavior of this being. Misunderstandings have pre-dominated about this. We have always opposed them. . . . *It is not historical or factual but simply an intelligible causation of laws.*²⁶

Nothing follows from the recognition by intellectual intuition that the ego creates what it knows. This disqualifies any putative identification of Fichte's notion of intellectual intuition with one more of the ways in which Kant interprets it.

However, suppose that Fichte's notion of intellectual intuition were to be at least a case of the synoptic apprehension of all the sensuous particulars which an ego observes in one act of knowledge. Not even this much can be granted to the Continuity Thesis. Fichte admittedly speaks of the unity of the Ego and the Non-Ego, but what he says about the unity forbids an assimilation of his view to Kant's description: "We will find its highest unity in the Theory of Knowledge; but not as something that *is*, rather as something that *ought but*

²⁴ Fichte, *Sämmliche Werke*, I, 460.

²⁵ *Grundriss des Eigentümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre*, *Sämmliche Werke*, I, 443.

²⁶ *Nachgelassene Werke*, I, 195. Cf. *Sonnenklarer Bericht*, *Sämmliche Werke*, II, 377 and 397.

cannot be produced by us.”²⁷ Fichte’s intellectual intuition is not, then, a synoptic view of all the particulars of experience through an examination of the facts of self-consciousness.²⁸ When the Ego intuits itself in activity, it intuits only the form of experience, not the particulars given to it by the Non-Ego. Striving to reduce the Non-Ego to the Ego is inspired by the assumption that the Non-Ego is ultimately constructed by the Ego, but it does not constitute a claim that any such construction either can be or is realized.

In Fichte, thought does not create particulars, and there is still less an all-embracing vision of the totality of phenomena. He thus rejects Kant’s two different doctrines of intellectual intuition. What Fichte offers as intellectual intuition is implicitly sanctioned by Kant, for Kant describes the self-consciousness of the Ego in its own activity as neither sensuous nor intellectual (by “intellectual” he means an insight into things in themselves).²⁹ The knowledge the Ego has of its own spontaneity is called “intellectual intuition” in Kant’s pre-Critical period.³⁰ Elsewhere Kant calls this awareness “transcendental consciousness” and not “experience.”³¹ This evasion continues in the first *Critique* (B278) where he says that “the consciousness of my self in the representation of the ego is not an intuition at all but rather a merely *intellectual* representation of the self-activity of a thinking subject.”³² *Ich denke* ends up in Kant’s hands as a kind of intellectual representation which requires a manifold of sensuous representation on every occasion of its employment.³³

None of this, however, gives any aid and comfort to the Continuity Thesis. It does not show that Kant and Fichte use the same notion in the same way, merely that they call it by different names. The fact is that Kant wavers in his theory that knowledge does not apply to our acquaintance with the transcendental ego yet requires an acquaintance with that ego. All he can provide, consistent with his own theory of knowledge, is the explanation that we have an *intellectual* representation of the ego.

Kant’s is not Fichte’s “intellectual intuition” in another verbal guise but is, in fact, the exact opposite of such an intuition. Let us examine what Kant calls intellectual representation more closely. An intellectual representation is a concept of what it is to be an ego; it is not an acquaintance with the ego of which we may have a concept,

²⁷ *Wissenschaftslehre* (1802), *Sämmliche Werke*, I, 101; cf. *Über die Würde des Menschen*, *Sämmliche Werke*, I, 416 n.; *Die Sittenlehre* (1798), *Sämmliche Werke*, IV, 131, 149.

²⁸ *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, *Sämmliche Werke*, I, 516. Cf. *ibid.*, IV, 131, 149. ²⁹ B157-8 n.

³⁰ Cf. *Reflections* 4228, 4336, and 6001. ³¹ A117 n. ³² B278; cf. B423

³³ B278; B420; B422 n. Cf. Fichte, *Sittenlehre*, *Sämmliche Werke*, I, 91, where he says that intellectual intuition is impossible without sensuous intuition.

but remains a conceptual representation of what it means to be an ego that thinks. This makes an intellectual representation logically no different from any other concept the ego might have, none of which can be substituted for whatever falls under that concept. Kant's struggles with the availability of self-knowledge may have occasioned Fichte's revision of the notion of intellectual intuition but did not anticipate it, for what Kant gives us here is at most a deception of a problem which has yet to be solved.

The same problem confronts both Kant and Fichte, but the continuity of the problem is not evidence for the Continuity Thesis. Kant's problem is to reconcile a fact with his disclaimers about the existence of intellectual intuition. Fichte's problem is to show just how Kant's description of intellectual intuition distorts that fact. Kant faces a case of knowing in which the distinction between an appearance and a thing in itself breaks down, in which what we are said to know is indistinguishable from the act of knowing it, and in which the problem is completely irrelevant to the issue of whether anybody can comprehensively intuit the totality of appearances. He supplies the notion of intellectual representation to account for a fact which that very notion assumes. Fichte faces the task of explaining how this fact must be presupposed in any case of knowing as Kant's theory describes it without either giving a circular description of that fact or, worse yet, describing it in a way that precludes anything but a circular description.³⁴

Schelling's theory of intellectual intuition superficially supports the Continuity Thesis. He begins by voluminously reproducing Fichte's view of the notion of Intellectual intuition as the insight the Ego has into its own activity (the system of rules for ordering experience),³⁵ a view as familiar as it is ephemeral. Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* introduces another notion of intellectual intuition which differs from Kant's multiple interpretations of that notion as much as it does from Fichte's single-minded interpretation.³⁶ I examine these departures in turn.

Fichte holds that intellectual intuition is the insight the self has into its own activity. Here there is no distinction between an appearance and a thing in itself, Fichte's crucial departure from Kant's description of what an intuitive intellect is. On the other hand, Schel-

³⁴ Cf. A402.

³⁵ See *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie*, *Sämmtliche Werke*, I, 81; *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre*, *Sämmtliche Werke*, I, 366, 369, 420; cf. esp. 392 and 401.

³⁶ See *Sämmtliche Werke*, I, 451; *Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie*, *Sämmtliche Werke*, IV, 359, 370; and *Verhältnis der Naturphilosophie zur verbesserten fichteschen Lehre*, *Sämmtliche Werke*, VII, 9-11, 17-20; cf. esp. 97.

ling holds that intellectual intuition is really an insight, not into the activity of the self but rather into something that is neither the self nor any of its activities:

I require intellectual intuition as it is required in the Theory of Knowledge for the purpose of natural philosophy. But I require in addition abstraction from *the one who intuits* in this intuition. . . .³⁷ The philosopher of nature never has to correct nature as constructed (i.e., experience) in accordance with that nature which is set over against it because he makes nature independent and lets it construct itself. Nature that constructs itself is infallible, and the philosopher of nature needs only a reliable method in order to avoid disturbing it by his interference.³⁸

So we can intellectually intuit nature—something that both Fichte and Kant deny. What we intuit intellectually, for Schelling, is neither the activity of our various egos nor things in themselves. We have an absolute knowledge of something that cannot be reached in any other way.

Schelling reasons as follows. The understanding is the level of knowing at which “only one finite thing is conjoined to another.”³⁹ This is the kind of knowledge we have of the phenomenal world, but it is knowledge only of a *tiefes Dunkel*.⁴⁰ Whatever this acquaintance may be, then, it is totally foreign to what Kant describes and rejects as intellectual intuition and to what Fichte describes and affirms to be intellectual intuition. Schelling’s intellectual intuition is what he calls absolute knowledge, i.e., the correspondence between subject and object:

Absolute knowledge is only possible where thought and being completely concur, where the question about the relation between concept and object is superfluous, where the concept is itself simultaneously the object and the object the concept. . . .⁴¹ [He explains that intellectual intuition] is the capacity in general to see the universal in the particular, the infinite in the finite, and both combined in a living unity. The anatomist who dissects a plant or the body of an animal probably believes that he immediately sees the plant or the individual thing that he calls the plant or the body. To see the plant in the plant or the organ in the organ and, in one word, the concept or indifference in the difference is possible only by means of intellectual intuition.⁴²

The opacity of this explanation does not prevent it from further shaking the Continuity Thesis. For one thing, intellectual intuition here is not an immediate acquaintance with things in themselves; it must be a cognition of something which resides in a phenomenon. For another,

³⁷ *Über den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie, Sämmtliche Werke*, IV, 86-88.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 404.

³⁹ *Fernere Darstellungen*, IV, 342.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 404.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 346 n; cf. *ibid.*, 347 and esp. 370.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 362.

it is not an acquaintance with the totality of phenomena without having to synthesize them. Schelling's example forbids either interpretation, for what we are said to intuit intellectually is present in the phenomenon and that intuitional capacity arises with respect to every individual phenomenon.

Nor can the activity of the ego be made the object of intellectual intuition. In the first place, if we take the activity of the ego to be the ordering of objects given in perception, it would be irrelevant to the problem as Schelling conceived it.⁴³ Such an insight would disclose only rules of thumb for handling the reflections of the Ideas, and the philosopher, as in Plato's conception of the artist's relation to the Forms, would be twice removed from the Ideas. He would not even know the reflection of the Ideas but only how we are constrained to order these reflections for practice. This would hardly comport with Schelling's lofty—not to say, grandiose—view of the *Naturphilosoph*.

Schelling abandons the presuppositions of both the Kantian and the Fichtean formulations of intellectual intuition.⁴⁴ Kant asks about the various ways one might apply the conditions of experience to objects of experience, and he classifies the illicit ways as intellectual intuition. Fichte asks about intellectual intuition because he wants to draw a clean distinction between the way one knows objects and the way one knows one's own acts. Kant differs from Fichte only in asking about the relation of these acts, however known, to the objects of experience. In Schelling it is the denial of the difference between the conditions of experience and the objects of experience in philosophical knowledge that prompts him to ask about intellectual intuition.

The transformation in the problem has this consequence: what Schelling calls nature is reduced to a realm of Ideas or archetypes. He says that “if one views the philosophy of nature philosophically, it is up until now the most thorough attempt to present the doctrine of the Ideas and the identity of nature with the world of Ideas.”⁴⁵ So long as nature is only an object of an Absolute Subject, as it is in Fichte, there is no way, according to Schelling's objection, to explain or to account for the structure of the particulars of our experience. In order to give

⁴³ See Schelling's description of the Absolute in *Sämmtliche Werke*, I, 202; cf. Fichte, *Sämmtliche Werke*, I, 472; III, 38; IV, 37.

⁴⁴ *Sämmtliche Werke, Zusatz*, II, 66-67; cf. “Die Platonische Idee, dass alle Philosophie Erinnerung sei, ist in diesem Sinne wahr; alles Philosophieren besteht in einem Erinnern des Zustandes in welchem wir eins waren mit der Natur,” quoted in Kuno Fischer, *Schellings Leben, Werke, und Lehre*, 4th ed. (Heidelberg, 1923), 450; Wilhelm Dilthey also points this out in his *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels, Gesammelte Werke* (Stuttgart, 1959), IV, 203. R. Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel* (Tübingen, 1921), I, 556 ff. calls it the shift from *Weltphilosophie* to *Ichphilosophie*. ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

such an account of Nature, Schelling abandons the attempt to account for nature in terms of self-consciousness and considers the archetypes, or forms of things, apart from reference to the ego and its self-knowledge. Thus, he identifies the conditions of experiencing these Ideas and the Ideas experienced and makes them the objects of intellectual intuition.

I offer no explication of the relation between phenomena and Schelling's Ideas, a relation crucial to his theory of intellectual intuition, because he himself either speaks of it in metaphors that defy exegesis or claims that the relation is intractable to explanation. In *Das Gespräch Bruno* he says that the phenomenal world is the "corporeal inversion of the Ideas" and, in the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, that "nature . . . is the imperfect reflection of a world that does not exist outside it [the Absolute] but rather in it."⁴⁶ Yet Schelling's inability to give a coherent account of the relation between a phenomenon and what he calls an Idea does not alter the fact that, whether he can explain it or not, his use of "intellectual intuition" differs radically from Kant's and Fichte's.

Schelling's intellectual motive for constructing a philosophy of nature partially explains the new use to which he puts the notion of intellectual intuition. He wants to rid Fichte of the constant reference to the conditions of knowing and concentrate on the conditions of nature apart from such conditions. He thus hopes that he can account for all the particular phenomena of Nature that Fichte cannot explain by reference to the pure Ego, but he succeeds only in ceasing to talk about this problem altogether and raises instead another problem about the relation of Ideas to phenomena, i.e., of the Absolute to the phenomenal world. Schelling makes only metaphorical allusions to the relation between particular phenomena and the Ideas, and finally recognizes that there is no clear relation at all—only a break that is inexplicable. In regard to the relation between the Absolute and our knowledge of the Absolute, he never succeeds in getting beyond the position which he erroneously accused Fichte of holding. Hence, he asserts in his essay, *Über Postulate in der Philosophie*, that the object of philosophical knowledge does not exist outside this knowledge.⁴⁷ He says elsewhere that such knowledge "has nothing to do with the real world as such."⁴⁸ And, in the *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums*, he points out that intellectual intuition is identical with its object and its object is the *Urwesen*, all of which is an escape from the so-called subjectivism of Fichte in that it made a substantially existing thing of the Absolute by calling it "nature."

⁴⁶ *Sämmliche Werke*, IV, 258; V, 627; cf. *Über das Verhältnis des Realen und Idealen*, *Sämmliche Werke*, II, 362; VI, 38; also II, 403 ff.

⁴⁷ *Sämmliche Werke*, I, 447.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 408.

I conclude that the Continuity Thesis is a mistake based on a misunderstanding. Kant indiscriminately uses one term to include three different kinds of intellectual intuition. Fichte and Schelling affirm intellectual intuition and infer that they affirm something that Kant denies under that name. But there is no continuity within Kant's thought in the use of the term, and there is none between Kant and Fichte or between Fichte and Schelling. Each uses the term for a solution to a different problem. Any attempt to show that post-Kantian idealists make a common front against Kant on intellectual intuition, therefore, is idle.

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