

Fichte's 'Second Introduction'

PHIL 971 Kant Seminar

UNL | November 28, 2017

'I astonish myself', said I, casting a cursory eye over my System, while my feet were being bathed, and looking significantly at my toes while their nails were being cut, 'to think that I am the universe and the sum of all things . . . Oh what a being, who creates all but himself (for it only *becomes* and never *is*) . . .'

Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana

JEAN PAUL, 1803

1 Structure of the Second Introduction

1. Introduction
2. Method
3. 'I' as activity
4. The Philosophical Account of the 'I'
5. Intellectual Intuition
6. Relation with Kant's Philosophy
7. Replies to Objections
8. The Constancy of the 'I'
9. General vs. Particular 'I'
10. Esotericism & the *Wissenschaftslehre*
11. Intuition vs Idea of the 'I'
12. Conclusion

2 Fichte's Absolute Subject

- Features of the absolute I
 1. Self-positing (I:489)
 2. Exits as an act/activity (*Tathandlung*) not a fact (*Tatsache*) (I:465)
 3. Represented via intellectual intuition (§5)
 4. Presupposed in all representational consciousness (I:462)
 5. Knowable only via the moral law (I:446)

2.1 The 'I' as Activity

- If the I is "self-positing" then does this mean that it creates itself? Is this notion related to Kant's?¹

¹ The concept of positing [*Position*] or setting [*Setzung*] is perfectly simple: it is identical with the concept of being in general. Now something can be thought as posited merely relatively, or to express the matter better, it can be thought merely as the relation (*respectus logicus*) of something as a characteristic mark of a thing. In this case, being, that is to say, the positing of this relation, is nothing other than the copula in a judgment. If what is considered is not merely the relation but the thing posited in and for itself, then this being is the same as existence. (Kant, OPG 2:73)

- Why must the I be understood as an activity rather than a fact?
 - Is there a similarity/affinity here between Fichte's position and Shoemaker's arguments against self-consciousness as a form of inner sense?
 - * Introspection does not afford object awareness because there is no "in view of" relation which one can enjoy in introspection²
 - * Introspection does not depend, as perception does, on the possession of identifying information about oneself³
 - * Mental states are not really related to as "particulars" in any case; one cannot just "happen upon" them (Shoemaker 1994, 259-60)
- In what sense is the 'absolute' I an activity rather than a being?⁴

2.2 Intellectual Intuition

- Features of intellectual intuition
 1. No distinction between intuition and its object
 2. Occurrence of intuition is a function of subject's spontaneity
 3. Intuition provides an "immediate awareness" of subject's existence
 4. Intellectual intuition is ubiquitous⁵
 5. Always conjoined with a sensory representation⁶

QUESTIONS:

- How should we characterize the sort of awareness that intellectual intuition provides?
 - Reflective: a higher-order state resulting from the subject's directing its attention to itself and making its subjectivity the object of awareness
 - Pre-reflective: a first-order state of object awareness where the subject is nevertheless always in a position to assess the activity of thought as one's own
- How is the immediacy of this awareness compatible with intellectual intuition not itself being a part of empirical consciousness and instead being a kind of theoretical posit?⁷

3 Fichte & Kant

- To what extent is Fichtean intellectual intuition in opposition to Kant's account?
 - Differences from Kant's usage
 1. Intellectual intuition does not create things in themselves (I:472)
 2. Intellectual intuition is not a consciousness of a thing in itself (I:472)

² If we expand condition (3) by saying that perception involves "object-awareness" and that object-awareness of a thing involves having to it a kind of relation such that, first, it is possible for one to have this relation to any of a range of different objects, and, second, having this relation to an object enters into the causal explanation of one's knowing facts of a certain kind about it, then it is clear that introspective awareness of the self does not satisfy it. (Shoemaker 1994, 257)

³ there is no such role for awareness of oneself as an object to play in explaining my introspective knowledge that I am hungry, angry, or alarmed. This comes out in the fact that there is no possibility here of a misidentification; if I have my usual access to my hunger, there is no room for the thought "Someone is hungry all right, but is it me?"... In general, identification-based first-person knowledge must be grounded in first-person knowledge that is not identification-based; and the making of introspective judgments is one of the main cases in which this occurs (Shoemaker 1994, 258)

⁴ What "acting" is is something that can only be intuited; such knowledge cannot be developed from concepts nor can it be communicated thereby. But what is contained within this intuition becomes comprehended through its opposition to mere *being*. "Acting is not being, and being is not acting": this is the only definition of acting one can obtain from its mere concept. In order to understand the true nature of acting, one has to turn to intuition. (Fichte, I:461)

⁵ intellectual intuition occurs at every moment of...consciousness. I cannot take a step, move hand or foot, without an intellectual intuition of my self-consciousness in these acts; only so do I know that I do it, only so do I distinguish my action, and myself therein, from the object of action before me. (Fichte, I:463)

⁶ intellectual intuition is also constantly conjoined with an intuition of *sense*. (Fichte, I:464)

⁷ if it has to be admitted that there is no immediate, isolated consciousness of intellectual intuition, how does the philosopher then arrive at the knowledge and isolated presentation of the same? I answer: ... [by] an inference from the obvious facts of consciousness. (Fichte, I:464-5)

3. Intellectual intuition is always directed at an activity rather than a being⁸
- Similarities to Kant's conception of pure apperception
 1. Form of awareness of one's own activity
 2. Always an awareness that entails existence
 3. Explains the ownership of one's representations
 4. Not a form of awareness of one's individuality
 5. Always requires the existence of an empirical intuition

⁸ The intellectual intuition of which the *Wissenschaftslehre* speaks is not directed towards any sort of being whatsoever; instead it is directed at an acting—and this is something Kant does not even mention (except, perhaps, under the name "pure apperception"). (Fichte, I:472)

References & Further Reading

- Franks, Paul. 2016. "Fichte's Position: Anti-Subjectivism, Self-Awareness and Self-Location in the Space of Reasons." In *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, edited by David James and Gunter Zoller. Cambridge Companions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Henrich, Dieter. 1982. "Fichte's Original Insight." In *Contemporary German Philosophy*, translated by David R. Lachterman, 1:15–55. University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1992. "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God." In *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, edited by David Walford and Ralph Meerbote, 107–202. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, Wayne M. 1997. *Idealism and Objectivity: Understanding Fichte's Jena Project*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2016. "From Kant to Fichte." In *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, edited by Günter Zöller and David James, 7–37. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Neuhouser, Frederick. 1990. *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Shoemaker, Sydney. 1994. "Self-Knowledge and 'Inner Sense': Lecture I: The Object Perception Model." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54 (2): 249–69.
- Wood, Allen. 2000. "The 'I' as Principle of Practical Philosophy." In *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy*, edited by Sally Sedgwick, 93–108. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.