Fichte's Heritage to Agentialist Account of Self-Knowledge

By

Rojin Mazouji

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Philosophy.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor

Ferenc Huoranszki

Vienna, Austria

2021

Abstract

Critics of Richard Moran's transparency account often point out that his account is not widely applicable. The deliberative mode of self-knowledge proposed by Moran cannot account for certain forms of self-knowledge, such as knowledge of appetite or a recalcitrant attitude.

 In his renowned work *Two Kinds of Self-knowledge*, Matthew Boyle attempts to shed new light on the question of limited applicability by drawing on Kant's ideas about two kinds of self-knowledge. The knowledge of perceiving ourselves as passive beings and the knowledge of realizing ourselves as active beings. While the former reveals our sensations, the latter involves our thoughts and judgments. Boyle contends that the transparent form of self-knowledge is fundamental in several respects, although it must be admitted that Moran's theory of transparency has limited application.

There is a much more fundamental question to which this distinction between the two different forms of self-knowledge relates. In what context should the concept of consciousness be understood? Should we consider self-consciousness as a representation obtained objectively through introspection or a 'looking inward', or should it be considered as a subject referring to itself while at the same time performing an action?

For the first time, Fichte emphasized that all of his predecessors' theories of the self and consciousness were based on reflection. The consequence of this approach is that we will never be able to understand the subject I and instead assume an objective I. The difficulty is that the objective I cannot demonstrate agency. Fichte's pre-reflective theory of self-consciousness was the answer to this problem.

I argue that Fichte's foundational principle of the *Science of Knowledge* provides a robust framework for Boyle to maintain the fundamentality of Moran's theory while resolving the challenge of the limited applicability of Moran's theory.

Acknowledgements

My innumerable thanks and appreciation to Professor Huoranszki for bringing me to this Subject. My countless thanks to my family, my father for always enlightening me with his brilliant insight. My mother never questioned me and believed in what I do, and my sister, without her, the world is very bitter and brutal. I also dedicate this brief research to all my friends in Iran who encouraged me to further my study at CEU.

Table of Content

Introduction

"Whenever I have said that Fichte is the most influential figure in the continental tradition since 1800, this has been dismissed as exaggeration. That skepticism is only to be expected. If Fichte were generally recognized as occupying such a pivotal position, he would obviously be much more widely studied than he is. I nevertheless persist in the assertion. Here's my challenge: You pick any major figure in the continental philosophical tradition, and I will identify an idea (sometimes several ideas) that you will agree is absolutely central to that philosopher's thought—even constituting one of that philosopher's chief contributions. Then I can show you that the original author of that idea is Fichte." (Wood, 2016, Preface)

The main goal of this study is to address particular difficulties in today's epistemological discussion of self-knowledge, which is inspired by the period of German idealism in philosophy when self-consciousness and self-knowledge were prevalent. According to epistemologists, knowledge of one's feelings, thoughts, and mental states is distinguished from other knowledge categories, such as propositional knowledge. Some view this distinction in terms of epistemologically secure knowledge; others argue that each person has privileged access to his or her own beliefs and mental processes in terms of how he or she obtains this information (method). Others have examined the semantics of assertions about the truth of mental states and identified them as possessing first-person-authority.

However, this research topic of self-knowledge is not confined to states in which the subject is apparently in a passive state. Under the Agentialist explanation of self-knowledge, self-knowledge, on the other hand, reveals the individual's agency in active circumstances, including one's beliefs and intentions. (Boyle 2009, Moran 2001 and Bilgrami 2006).

Kant influenced practically all Agentialists in their distinction between active and passive self-knowledge. In his famous study *Two Kinds of Self-Knowledge*, Matthew Boyle begins his

analysis within a Kantian framework, contrasting the knowledge by which we conceive ourselves as passive beings with the knowledge by which we perceive ourselves as active creatures. While the former is the result of our faculty of perception, the latter is the result of our faculty of understanding. (2009) (Boyle)

In chapter four of his book *Authority and Estrangement*, Richard Moran discusses the Kantian tradition that ties consciousness's reflectivity with rational freedom. (Moran, 2001, p. 138)

In his book on *self-Knowledge and Resentment*, Akeel Bilgrami labels himself as a "transcendental idealist" on the subject of mental dispositions, which is consistent with a Kantian viewpoint. (Bilgrami, 2012, 184)

Critics of the Agentialist theory of self-knowledge claim that Richard Moran's deliberative approach to self-knowledge undermines the uniformity assumption and that Moran's transparency theory cannot be regarded fundamental due to the restricted applicability, according to Matthew Boyle. A theoretical framework for the study of self-knowledge must provide a fundamental explanation that includes all types of self-knowledge in order to be valid. Boyle's proposed solution resolves this issue: Moran's explanation is fundamental, but the relation between being fundamental and the uniformity assumption is irrelevant. We must return to the Kantian distinction, reject the assumption of uniformity, and acknowledge the possibility of two different kinds of self-knowledge. Turning to Fichte's pre-reflective self-knowledge, I intend to conclude this work by stating that it is possible to maintain the assumption of uniformity and yet accept knowledge of the active self or f/Act as the a priori assumption of all forms of self-knowledge.

I try to illustrate where the backdrop of the discussion of the activity of self-knowledge comes from in the first chapter, and I deal with Kant's distinction between receptivity and

spontaneity, as well as 'I think' as a synthetic representation of apperception. The second and third parts discuss how Fichte identifies a key error in prior conceptions of self-knowledge. Furthermore, it discusses Reinhold and Schulze's critiques, which give the conceptual basis for Fichte's intellectual movement, as well as how Fichte modifies Kant's principle of spontaneity and presents the first foundational idealistic principle of the *Science of Knowledge*. I contend that Fichte's ideas, as well as his reactions and changes to the Kantian framework, might throw new light on present self-knowledge discussions. In particular, I analyze Fichte's notions regarding active and self-positing I, as well as the nonrepresentational character of self-positing I in Fichte, as Neuhouser interprets it. (Neuhouser, 1990)

In the following remark, Fichte briefly describes the essence of the foundational principle:

"The only thing the philosopher adheres to, and from which he proposes to account for what is to be explained, it is a conscious being or subject, ..., but when all existence of or for the subject is taken away, it has nothing left but an act; more especially concerning the existence, it is that (subject) which acts." (Fichte, 1982, I 457)

The Agentialists' debates, in particular the difficulty that Boyle wants to answer (limited application), are covered in the following chapters. In the last chapter, I'll show how Fichte's pre-reflective theory of self-knowledge could be a better fit for describing Boyle's objective.

Chapter One – On Kant's Spontaneity

1.1. Background

Understanding the world outside ourselves, or even our own reality, is one of the most fundamental concerns of philosophy. Three main responses to this issue have led philosophy down three different paths. First, some hold that reality (object) existed before the human mind (subject). This group is called realists. Second, there are sceptics who argue that reality is inaccessible without the mind. Therefore, one can never claim to have knowledge of mind-independent objects, dating back to the pre-Socratic period. In addition, the pioneers of German idealism argue that if we cannot comprehend and know reality without the mind, we can study and investigate the mental architecture of the subject. Constructivists are the latter category.

Several significant occurrences during Kant's lifetime compelled him to speak of a kind of constructivism that Fichte and Hegel subsequently developed. The first was the intellectual and philosophical climate of the time, which was shaken by Hume's allegations that the idea of causality was imaginary when Newtonian physics was in its heyday. For this reason, Kant had to defend a priori synthetic propositions in order to firmly support the status of natural science.

The second incident is vividly depicted in the essay "*What is Enlightenment?*" Kant saw it as a question of giving a man a form of dignity and autonomy that had hitherto been seen as a utopian desire. Kant's attempt in *Critique of Practical Reason* advanced how enlightenment is theoretically articulated and accomplished in practice.

The third occurrence was the formation of ethical, legal and state-theoretical principles. How can a person have a stronger connection to individuals and government if he is free, autonomous, self-determined, and self-legislative? What are the boundaries of human

freedom if freedom is to be the cornerstone of any philosophical system? Kant sought to demonstrate that his practical reason springs from man's volition, and individuals were no longer expected to obey natural rules or be a slave to innate drives.

In this regard, Kant's Copernican revolution represents a movement from the assertion "all our cognition must conform to the objects" to the proposition "all objects must conform to our cognitive powers." However, the critical question here is whether Kant could adequately accomplish that project. The answer, according to Reinhold, Maimon, Schulze, and Fichte, is negative. However, how effective was Kant in bringing about this revolution? Furthermore, how did he provide the theoretical foundation for this significant shift? In the *Science of Knowledge*, Fichte states explicitly: "that our proposition is the fundamental principle of all knowledge, was pointed out by Kant, in his deduction of the categories; but he never laid it down specifically as the basic principle." (Fichte, 1982, I 100)

Fichte, in this quote, refers to the principle that "The self begins by an absolute positing of its own existence" (Fichte, 1982, I 98)

But how does Kant approach constructivism, and can Kant overcome the realist approach?

In Kant's philosophical framework, the categories and the principle of the spontaneity of understanding are the essential generative aspects of cognition. Later, the goal of the post-Kantians was to make spontaneity the foundational principle of their entire system and to overcome any kind of representationalism. Representationalism arose in the Cartesian tradition and was perfectly compatible with the idea of realism. According to Fichte, a true constructivist cannot believe in representationalism since representationalism acknowledges the source of the emergence of the representations to be the thing-in-itself. Fichte addresses the idea of spontaneity in the second introduction to the *Science of Knowledge*. In a few

paragraphs, he claims that we have employed the Kantian 'I think in the same way in the *Science of Knowledge*.

"However, we shall not merely argue here but will cite the words of Kant himself. At B132, he says: But this representation (I think) is an act of spontaneity, that is, it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility." (Fichte, 1982, I 476)

"We, therefore, find quite definitely in Kant the concept of the pure self, exactly as it is framed in the *Science of Knowledge*." (Fichte, 1982, I 476)

The German heritage of idealism was born out of the concept of spontaneity, thus it's important to explain it.

1.2. Spontaneity versus Receptivity

In Plato, the concept of spontaneity indicates the vitality and power that life gives. This notion is transformed by Aristotle into the word automaton, which signifies an entity with self-movement. Returning to Aristotle's function of the meaning of spontaneity, Christian Wolf renews the notion of this term in sixteenth-century philosophy in a debate about freedom and fatalism. Wolf counters Spinoza claiming that spontaneity refers to the "power of self-determination" and is inextricably tied to the concepts of freedom and agency. When an act deviates from natural law, it is said to be spontaneous. Thus, the act of spontaneity means that thinking is spontaneous since it adheres to its own set of laws. (Sgarbi, 2012, 37)

Marco Sgarbi says that the concept of spontaneity has two independent meanings in Kant: spontaneity as 'inner determining force' and as 'thinking substance'; the second meaning is influenced by Leibniz's concept of the spontaneity of monads. (Sgarbi, 2012, 38) The Monads, with their closed windows to the outside world, derive all of their changes and

interactions from their own spontaneity. Kant rejected this Leibnizian idealistic principle because he believed that following Leibniz's ontological theory would result in no distinction between internal mental production and perceptible objects of the world.

The conventional point of view of the theory of knowledge was displaced by the Copernican revolution in philosophy. Instead of being subject to the rules of the objective world, the objective reality aligns itself with our cognition's laws. Kant tended to favor the latter position, and the basis for his argument was the spontaneity of thought. In the section on the transcendental deduction, Kant makes a crucial distinction between receptivity and spontaneity. However, Kant first explains why he maintains this distinction.

"If we will call the receptivity of our mind to receive representations insofar as it is affected in some way sensibility, then, on the contrary, the faculty for bringing forth representations itself, or the Spontaneity of cognition, is the understanding. It comes along with our nature that intuition can never be other than sensible, i.e., that it contains only how we are affected by objects. The faculty for thinking of objects of sensible intuition, on the contrary, is the understanding." (Kant, 1998, 214)

According to Kant, one mental faculty cannot simultaneously receive and generate representations. We must thus acknowledge two different kinds of functions and consequently, capacities in our minds. Using the distinction between receptivity and spontaneity, Kant attempts to prove that in order to achieve knowledge, one must have both the powers of both intuition and understanding (spontaneity) to arrive at knowledge. When sense-data (given) are combined with the faculty of "spontaneity of mind," ideas and phenomena that were previously abstract can acquire a concrete foundation through this process.

7

1.3. Synthetic role of Spontaneity

Spontaneity, according to Kant, is what brings disparate presentations of objects together in the mind. Because of the several senses that affect the mind, the mind invariably integrates disparate presentations into a single cohesive thought.

"Then I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me. [B132]" (Kant, 1998, 272)

Kant refers to this specific role in understanding that derives from the spontaneity of thought as judgment. Kant identifies two types of spontaneitithe es here: the spontaneity of imagination and the spontaneity of judgement.

Kant contends that imagination plays a fundamental role in integrating multiple representations. However, the role of imagination stems from spontaneity. However, there is another function of spontaneity that is more abstract and simply deals with the connection between thought components. This type of spontaneity is known as judgement and is closest to absolute spontaneity[1] and is called judgement. Until now, we have concluded that the two faculties of the mind (spontaneity and receptivity) always act in collaboration, and that spontaneity affects the given.

---

[1] Allison also defends a strong spontaneity or in precise term believing in an absolute spontaneity he believes that we cannot explain the activity of mind and judgement by applying the content of memory and internal mechanism of mind like a computer. (Appropriate causal history) (Sgarbi, 2012)
Pippin also defends a strong spontaneity against the weak reading of spontaneity in contemporary debate of spontaneity like the relative spontaneity construes by Sellars. In which Sellars believes that the spontaneity of the mind is like an automaton spirituale incapable of imputation but once a problem and a challenge inserted to it provoke its logical routine to act. (Pippin, 1997)

1.4. Features and function of Spontaneity in Kant first critique

According to Kant, this transcendental unity, which is the act of spontaneity, cannot be the object of cognition since it is not a representation in and of itself but is present in all representations and therefore unites the manifoldness of experience.

"But this representation is an act of spontaneity. It cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. I call it the pure apperception, to distinguish it from the empirical one, or also the original apperception since it is that self-consciousness which, because it produces the representation I think, which must be able to accompany all others and which in all consciousness is the same, cannot be accompanied by any other representation. I also call its unity the transcendental unity of all self-consciousness to designate the possibility of a priory cognition from it." (Kant, 1998, B 131)

Consequently, Kant's transcendental "I" is not the empirical "I" that results from objective reflection. While this process of representation cannot be explicitly experienced, the transcendental I is the logical possibility and condition for the possibility of all experience. In other words, the transcendental I is required to connect various representations, to perceive the unity in all things, build a connection between concepts, and make judgments about those concepts. Certain characteristics can be derived from transcendental I.

First, 'I think' is not achieved by sensibility but by spontaneity and cannot be a given. Second, the I contained in the phrase 'I think' is not a mere subject but exhibits a synthetic unity. The next feature is the role of self-ascription of the I. Finally, the I that manifests itself in I think, brings about a unification of all presentations.

In the next chapter, on the basis of Kant's principle of spontaneity, Fichte proceeds to explain the foundation of the *Science of knowledge*.

Chapter Two – Fichte's Theoretical and Practical Self-positing I

Controversy arose between Reinhold and Schulze about Kant's concept of unity of apperception. It was in this ongoing debate with Reinhold and Schulze's critics that Fichte developed his own version of Kant's concept of self-awareness. Understanding these criticisms, we can better comprehend Fichte's attempts and reasons to go beyond and improve upon the "I think" of pure apperception. The next section is devoted to Fichte's response to Schulze's specific difficulty. Moreover, it points out the main features Fichte had in mind when formulating the self-positing I. The self-positing I, according to Nuehouser's understanding of Fichte, is a nonrepresentational self-awareness, or, in other words, a subject-object I.

Finally, we will examine the main reasons for Fichte's justification of the *Science of knowledge* and its modifications, as well as his efforts to unify theoretical and practical reasons. Self-consciousness, in turn, has two theoretical and practical roles, the first of which appears in the *Science of Knowledge* and the second of which appears in the Foundation of Natural Right, where self-consciousness takes the shape of an embodied social phenomenon.

2.1. Background

The origins of the dispute regarding the "I" in self-knowledge theory traced back to Descartes and Hume's competing viewpoints. While Descartes supports a type of rational intuition, Hume dismisses the notion of I, which is accompanied by all sense perception, as an illusion. Finally, Kant's Copernican revolution awarded the I a function in constructing and comprehending our universe.

Kant's transcendental theory rests on two pillars: the transcendental I and the thing-in-itself. The material basis of knowledge is supplied by the thing-in-itself, and the formal structure of

knowledge is supplied by the transcendental I and its spontaneity. According to Kant, our knowledge is limited to the phenomenal world, and we cannot grasp the thing-in-itself (the noumenal realm). In Kant's philosophy, the thing-in-itself is the cause of representations in humans. Kant presents causality as one of the twelve categories that apply only to the phenomenal world, yet he applies causality in the noumenal realm or the sphere of the thing-in-itself.

The transcendental I is the condition of human knowledge, but the consciousness of a subject cannot grasp it, and it is unknown. Kant had no satisfactory and convincing justification for the transcendental I, which is the condition for the unity of apperception. The spontaneity of the transcendental I is the cause of the unity of concepts, but the existence of an a priori subject is necessary to understand this spontaneity. Fichte's other criticism is that a mechanical causality arising from the thing-in-itself cannot produce two existential effects of the natural and the ideal in the mind (being and seeing). All causation is mechanical, and no presentation comes about through a causal mechanism. (Fichte, 1982, I 439).

These were, in Fichte's opinion, flaws in the Kantian theory. As a result, he attempted to resolve Kant's shortcomings in his system. More crucially, Fichte seeks to reconcile Kant's first and second critiques; in other words, obtaining unity of theoretical and practical reason was part of his goal. Kant's practical philosophy had a profound impact on Fichte. As he reported in a letter of late summer, 1790 to F. A. Weisshorn: "I have been living in a new world ever since reading the Critique of Practical Reason. Propositions that I thought could never be overturned have been overturned for me. Things have been proven to me which I thought never could be proven—for example, the concept of absolute freedom, the concept of duty, etc . . . . Thus, I was deceived by the apparent consistency of my previous system, and thus are thousands of persons perhaps still deceived." (Wood, 2014, 164)

12

Fichte recognizes that freedom (the foundation of practical philosophy) should determine necessity (nature), rather than the other way around. So his purpose was to make nature and freedom identical by deriving it from a theory that has both practical and theoretical aspects.

2.2. The unity of Theoretical and Practical Reason in Fichte

Fichte argues that idealism begins to explain its system from **rational intuition** (the absolute I), whereas dogmatism emerges from the concept of the "thing- in- itself." Rather than relying on Kant's transcendental I, Fichte posits the absolute I as the **single and unified principle** from which the entire *Science of Knowledge* can be derived.

"The *Science of knowledge* is a very different matter. Its chosen topic of consideration is not a lifeless concept, passively exposed to its inquiry, of which it makes something only by its own thought, but a living and active thing which engenders insights from and through itself and which the philosopher merely contemplate. His role in the affair goes no further than to translate this living force to purposeful activity, to observe the activity in question, to apprehend it and grasp it as unity." (Fichte, 1982, I 454)

Neuhouser interprets Fichte in a way that sheds light on Fichte's greatest motivation in The *Science of Knowledge*. Fichte believed that the main problem in Kant's philosophical system was not the riddle of the thing-in-itself or the divergence of representationalism and constructivism. Fichte himself had repeatedly admitted that he followed Kant's philosophy.

"I also know with equal certainty that Kant envisaged such a system; that everything that he propounds consists of fragments and consequences of such a system, and that his claims have sense and coherence only on this assumption. Whether he had not thought out this system for himself to a pitch of clarity and precision where he could also have expounded it to others or

whether he had in fact done so, and simply did not want to expound it, as certain passages seem to indicate, might well, as it seems to me, remain wholly unexplored, or if it is to be looked into, someone else may do it; for on this point I have never expressed any view. However, such an inquiry might turn out the eminent author still retains unique credit for this achievement, having first knowingly diverted philosophy away from external objects and directed it into ourselves. This is the spirit and innermost heart of his philosophy, as it is also the spirit and heart of the *Science of Knowledge*." (Fichte, 1982, I 479)

Fichte's main problem with Kant was rather the separation of theoretical and practical reason.

"I can go no further from this standpoint, because I may not go any further; and transcendental idealism thus appears at the same time as the only dutiful mode of thought in philosophy, that mode wherein speculation, and moral law are most intimately united" (Fichte, 1982, I 467)

He believed that Kant could not adequately describe the relationship between practical and theoretical causes. Human freedom was a central theme in Fichte's philosophical contemplation. To this end, he was an opponent of Spinoza's deterministic philosophy, which denied human will and freedom. As a result, Fichte believed that the idealistic system, as formulated by Kant in the later parts of the First Critique, was preferable to dogmatic systems arising from nature. Kant's practical philosophy, however, enlightened him in the same way that the sun shone unexpectedly on dark days; Fichte was dissatisfied with the rigorous separation of theoretical and practical reasons. Of course, Reinhold influenced Fichte's

thinking when he argued that the philosopher must construct a fundamental principle that can demonstrate the union of practical and theoretical reasons.[2]

 Fichte's assumptions, according to Neuhouser, changed during the course of his teaching career. His first assumption shows that he can prove the compatibility of theoretical and practical reasons.[3] In the second period, the time of the writing of the *Science of Knowledge*, Fichte tries to prove that these two intellects (the practical and the theoretical) should be derived from one fundamental principle; therefore, the principle would testify to the compatibility and unity of the two reasons. Moreover, in later periods, he attempts to establish the identity of the structure of these two.

"First development before 1800 was divided into three major phases: 1) the pre-systematic writings before 1794; 2) *the Science of Knowledge* of 1794; and 3) the system of 1797-1799."(Neuhouser, 1990, 34)

As a result, despite Fichte's multiple revisions, understanding his philosophical system, foundational[4] principle, and the cornerstone of his philosophy is made easier when one is

---

[2] "Fichte comes to believe that the discovery of such a principle will enable him to provide a more steadfast defense of Kant's moral theory than Kant himself was not able to give".(Neuhouser, 1990, 23)

[3] "In his early philosophical writings, Fichte concentrates primarily on the task of demonstrating the unity of reason in the second of the three senses (where both theoretical and practical reason are to be brought together into one system that proceeds from a single first principle) by 1797. However, Fichte comes to have a different understanding of his enterprise, one that embodies the third sense of the unity of reason, according to which theoretical and practical reason are to be comprehended as a single faculty, each of which exhibits the same "structure" of reason in general" (Neuhouser, 1990, 32).

[4] For a proper translation of the phrase "Grundsatz", E. Acosta suggests that since the *Science of Knowledge* follows a geometric model, it is better to call it axiom since the *Science of Knowledge* has three axioms eight theorems. However, in Breazeal's most recent translation of the doctrine of knowledge, he equated the term with the 'Foundational principle', while in older versions, it was used as the 'Fundamental Principle'. Therefore, I also translated according to the 2021 version.
"The term "Grundsatz" is sometimes imprecisely translated as "fundamental principle" (see i.a. *Science of Knowledge*, 93), but actually this German word is Wolff's German translation for the Latin (and originally Greek) "axioma". Further "Lehrsatz" (theorem) is often translated as "discourse" (see i.a. *Science of Knowledge*,

15

familiar with Fichte and his objectives for constructing the *Science of Knowledge*. At first, Fichte sought to derive the fundamental principle of the *Science of Knowledge* from practical reason and not from theoretical reason.

His attempts in the middle years demonstrate that he investigates the unity of consciousness from the standpoint of theoretical reason. As a result, there is much disagreement on whether the foundational principle of Fichte's philosophical thought, namely the absolute I or the unconditioned I, should be viewed from the practical or theoretical standpoint. In other words, the question is whether Kant's spontaneity of consciousness can be regarded as a practical determinant of will and freedom. Does it merely play an epistemological function or does it also provide a basis for will and freedom?

Neuhouser's approach to understanding the *Science of Knowledge* is based on the belief that much of this disagreement can be resolved by looking at the texts from 1793 to 1799. He does not view these treatises as representing a single coherent system, but rather as stages in a turbulent process of insight, self-criticism, and revision, all aimed at developing a more consistent philosophical position. (Neuhouser, 1990, 33)

Up to now, Fichte has been compelled by two fundamental difficulties. First, it was unclear how the subject of spontaneity became aware of his spontaneous act in Kant's system of thought and logic. Kant's integrated intellectual framework, on the other hand, had shortcomings, such as the separation of theoretical and practical reasoning. For these reasons,

CEU eTD Collection

---

120). This translation makes it difficult for the English reader to see that the Foundations of the entire Science of Knowledge, as Acosta suggests, follows a geometrical model of demonstrations, since it is composed of three axioms (Grundsäzte) and eight theorems (Lehrsätze). Hence, it follows that Fichte is not a foundationalist. See E. ACOSTA, Transformation of the Kantian table of the categories in Fichte's Foundations of the entire science of knowledge of 1794/95, "Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía" 33/1 (2016) 113, n. 47." (Rockmore, 2020)

Fichte delved into a deeper understanding of consciousness and self-awareness. I will take a closer look at the features of the seIf positing I in the following section.

2.3. Self-positing I as Nonrepresentational Self-awareness

According to Dieter Henrich's notable paper "Fichte's original insight" (Henrich, 2015), Fichte's response to his predecessors' improper method of defining the 'self' is remarkably distinct. According to Henrich, from Descartes to Kant, they attempted to build the foundation of their theory on the notion of I.

"Thus, in Descartes' case, self-consciousness was the basis of evidence, in Leibniz, of categories in Rousseau and Kant, of judgments." (Henrich, 2015, 37)

Fichte, on the other hand, pioneered a new path by demonstrating that all of the predecessors' attitudes toward consciousness and self were founded on the **theory of reflection**.

"We become conscious of the consciousness of our consciousness only by making the latter a second time into an object, thereby obtaining consciousness of our consciousness, and so on ad infinitum. In this way, however, our consciousness is not explained, or there is consequently no consciousness at all if one assumes it to be a state of mind or an object and thus always presupposes a subject but never finds it. This sophistry lies in the heart of all systems hitherto, including the Kantian." (Ibid, 40)

The subject I (the producer of the I) can never be grasped. We will eventually fall into the trap of assuming an objective I (the product of the subjective I). But, as Christian Klotz argues, the explication that Fichte discovered was the "unconditionedness of the I." (Ibid, 2016, 62). In what follows, I will attempt to enumerate some key parts of the *Science of Knowledge* until it arrives at the idea of unconditionedness of I.

17

In *Fichte's theory of subjectivity*, Neuhouser demonstrates that "for Fichte (as well as for Kant), the self-consciousness constitutes the most basic condition upon which the possibility of all empirical knowledge depends." (Neuhouser, 1990, 68). This quotation shows the central role of self-consciousness in all of Fichte's and Kant's analyses of the extent to which our knowledge of the world depends on our knowledge of ourselves. The account of self-consciousness that Fichte initially models is, as Neuhouser explains, non-representational. For a detailed understanding of the result of an appeal to non-representational self-consciousness in philosophy, the dispute between Reinhold and Schulze should be outlined. Reinhold believes that self-consciousness is the highest principle of Kant's critique. In any consciousness of X, there is a subject that is conscious of X, and there is an object that is X, but we also have something additional here that is a representation of X in our consciousness. To use Reinhold's words, "I recognize my representation of an object as distinct from myself, the representing subject." (Ibid, 71) Reinhold's idea implies two crucial features of consciousness. On the one hand, the subject is distinct from objects and representations. On the other hand, "every representation is related to a subject." (Ibid., 71) Schulze rejected the idea that consciousness should recognize the subject when this process occurs within consciousness.

"Schulze's criticism implies that the defender of Critical philosophy must reject Reinhold's claim that the structure of representational consciousness is the structure of all consciousness and must provide an account of the self-awareness involved in representational consciousness instead avoid the infinite regress into which any account based on Reinhold's model inevitably falls." (Ibid, 72)

In other words, I am a subject who is aware of X and who is aware of myself when I think about X; I am aware that being aware of myself requires that I be aware of my thinking in the

first place. During this process, I cannot be considered an object, since the recognition of myself as an object presupposes the understanding of another subject. Consequently, the presence of self-consciousness in an account according to Reinhold's concept of representational consciousness cannot lead to a convincing analysis of a subject's consciousness. To solve this specific issue, Fichte attempts to provide a non-representational explanation of self-consciousness.

"To save what he takes to be the critical doctrine that every representation of an object is related within consciousness to the subject of consciousness, he must find a way to characterize this relationship that does not rely on the structure of representational consciousness, in which the subject of awareness is always distinct from what it represents." (Ibid. 74)

So far we have understood what leads Fichte to take some further steps to reformulate self-consciousness in a way that differs from Reinhold's representational consciousness. What are the features of this new account of the self-positing I, and how does Fichte's self-consciousness avoid falling into the same flawed pattern as Reinhold's version?

The self-positing I, according to Fichte, has a special aspect of immediacy. Fichte uses the term "immediacy" to emphasize that this type of immediate self-awareness is implicit and unarticulated. (Intellectual intuition) Furthermore, when we think about an object, we have a totally different sense of I than when we think about ourselves. The former is a self-positing act of I, whereas the latter is self-consciousness.

"The self-positing subject does not observe "itself," at least not in the sense that it attains a "picture" of itself as if regarding its image in a mirror." Continuing with the conscious subject

19

never succeeds in making itself into its object. Instead, its "self-observation" refers merely to consciousness's awareness of its states, that is, to its awareness that it is aware. (Ibid, 80)

The precise definition of the immediacy of self-consciousness would be our sense of self-awareness when our consciousness is directed toward external objects. Immediacy is implicit, non-obvious, and intangible. However, we can have the immediate awareness that my consciousness is aware of X. This reformulated self-consciousness does not have immediate access to the object, but immediate access to the act of thinking. The activity of thinking that I, as the actor of the action, perform it.

2.4. Fichte's original insight and his revisions of Self-positing I

Günter Zöller's particular interpretation of Henrich's article (Fichte's original insight) explains three different stages of formulations of the self-positing I in Fichte's thought. The first stage is an attempt to understand an aspect of the I that produces itself. In this stage, the emphasis is on the activity of the I with the simultaneous understanding I as it begins its activity. In the second stage, Fichte attempts to emphasize the constitutive structure of the "I." This stage is not about the conceptualization of the I but about the existence of the I in consciousness. The final stage is one that Zöller calls "An activity into which an I is inserted." (Zöller, 2015, 51) This stage refers to the union of practical activity and theoretical aspects of this act.

2.5. Kant's Denial of Intellectual intuition and Fichte' affirmation of Intellectual Intuition

First, it is crucial to conceive of the theoretical I and the practical I as knowing and acting, respectively. The theoretical I and the practical I, which form the foundational principle of Fichte's philosophical system, are themselves the product of the philosopher's abstract thinking. As Wood explains, my actions in ordinary experiences are definite and determined.

20

Moreover, in my dealings with others (not-I), I perceive myself as finite and limited. In the realm of possibilities, "I" misses some possibilities and gains other possibilities. (James and Zöller, 2016, 172) However, Fichte held that ordinary experiences are the product of abstract conditions that must be analyzed through transcendental philosophy.

"I acting and positing itself" is the foundational principle of the entire *Science of Knowledge*; yet, in revisions to his work, he had used the phrases unconditioned I, absolute I, intellectual intuition, and F/Act (Tat-Handlung) interchangeably.

According to Kant, intellect (reason) is the activity of the mind, and objects are formed and determined by the intellect, while intuition is immediate awareness. Consequently, intellect is an activity and not an immediacy. Thus, the concept of intellectual intuition must be understood in a pre-reflective sense. Pre-reflective self-awareness implies that I have an implicit intuition of myself in all my activities and presence in the world. That is, 'I' is aware of its presence as soon as it performs an action. The I, according to Fichte, is the product of its activity as it begins to act. As previously stated, Kant's conception of cognition has two major components: sensation and conceptions. He believes that intuition is merely sensory and apperception is only reasoning based. Thus, Kant's transcendental I, or pure apperception, lacks any type of sensitivity and cannot have a sensual aspect. As a result, Kant categorically rejects these intellectual intuitions.

2.6. Theoretical Self-positing I

The interpretation of sitzen/positing that is most relevant to Fichte's philosophy has provoked discussion. Positing has been equated by some with the word creating. Fichte's theory has been accused of radical subjectivism on several occasions because of this view. He claims that the object cannot be generated from the thought itself, and therefore rejects this view. It is

important to stress that pre-reflective consciousness does not imply that we are unable to reflect on our own thoughts and feelings. There are instances where Wood (1991) claims that Fichte distinguishes between self-positing and self-reiterating. Overall, in Fichte's philosophy, there are three distinct stages in which the I is determined.

1- The self-positing I, in which the subject and the object, as well as the action and the thing, are unitary and equal. The I that self-posits its infiniteness and indeterminacy.

2- I uses the process of reiteration to exercise its capacity for self-reflection. Through the concept of identity, A (absolutely posited) = A (the object of reflection) are equivalent. (Fichte, 1982, 103; Fichte, 1982, 103)

3- The I is finite, limited and determined. It occurs when the I asserts that it is limited by not-I. We have two actions according to this principle: one that goes from the I to the not-I, and one that returns from the not-I to the active I. 'Check' (Anstoß) is the name of the second move.

Franks (2016) explains that after rejecting Kant's thing-in-itself, Fichte attempted to reconcile theoretical and practical reasons. Fichte concluded that rational agency was necessary to explain the ontology and logic of philosophy. And a purely logical or ontological system is not a good starting point when trying to understand morality and the freedom of the mind as well as the capacity for rational agency. In this way, it becomes clear that Fichte's foundational principle is the principle that recognizes and springs from the rational agency. In light of this development that Fichte's idealism must be understood. (Franks, 2016, 374-404)

According to Charles Everett, there are two kinds of logical affirmation: one in which a positive result is inferred, and another in which the affirmation is in immediate form.

Setzen/positing seemed to him to be one form of immediate affirmation. However, as the *Science of Knowledge* text shows, much of the act of self-positing is accomplished by inference. (Franks, 2016, 374-404)

The term Setzen/positing was employed to connect ontological entities with logical concepts in the post-Leibniz tradition, as Frank recognizes. "Determine a thing for a reason" and "act of positing commit one to another" were the roles of Setzen/positing. Kant, on the other hand, disentangled the two. Fichte's major objective, as previously said, was to integrate theoretical and practical reason, and in his final modifications of the *Science of Knowledge*, he believed his foundational principle to be practical rather than theoretical.

2.7. I posited itself as not-I and social self-consciousness

Fichte concludes that the self must be aware of its own limitations in order to be an individuated self. Understanding this limitation is the result of a reciprocal relationship between my active self and the obstacles I experience in reality. This gives rise to the concept of check (Anstoß) in Fichte's philosophy. I will use Allen W. Wood's distinction between "act of self-positing" and "reiteration of positing" to discuss this issue in more detail. (Wood, 1991) Within the framework of this distinction, we must recognize that when I posit itself, we are dealing with not one, but two acts of positing. The first is an action arising from I's activity and directed toward the not-I (the act of self-positing); the second is a return to I from the not-I. (reiteration of positing).

In contrast to the typical paradigm of analyzing consciousness as processes in our isolated mind, Fichte speaks of a social and embodied aspect of self-consciousness. As mentioned earlier, for Fichte, the self-activity of the I is not the same as the creation of all things out of nothing. Nevertheless, he considers the I's self-activity as part of the implicit permanent

23

activity of self-ascription. Self-ascribing has both theoretical and practical implications. The theoretical element refers to my tacit experiences in the world and the practical element refers to the actions that I, as the author, performed with intention. Actions also have two particular forms. The first is the Deed, that is, the actions that change the world or alter a situation, and the Handlung are actions that I perform intentionally. For example, when I study, I unconsciously shake my legs. This change affects both my physical state and the airflow around my legs in the environment. But when I perform the same leg shakes more quickly as an exercise, I had a specific intention in mind. According to Fichte, if people did not attribute the second category of my actions (Handlung) to me as the performer of this action, the distinction between Deed and Handlung would disappear. Consequently, if someone does not attribute a Handlung to me, I cannot attribute my actions to myself. As already said, I's self-activity is a kind of self-ascription, and without it there is no self-consciousness.

2.8. Embodied self-consciousness and self-positing as self-locating

Body composition is a means by which we communicate and interact with the world. My living body must enact my intentions and motivations in the world as a realization of the activity of the I and its movement toward the external world. In contrast to the Cartesian tradition in which the cogito, as the condition of all thinking in the world, can go its way without the body, Fichte asserts that self-consciousness is impossible without the body. This is because the constructive dialectic of self-positing I and non-I is accomplished through the active and reactive powers of the body. One of the essential properties that the body has for Fichte is its possibility of self-identity due to its endurance in time.

Thus, he sees freedom in humans as expressed through the body's combination of fixed and dynamic traits. The more diverse a creature's movements are, the more self-aware a person is.

24

The main argument against the assumption that Fichte's consciousness could actually be reflective is the importance Fichte places on embodied self-consciousness and his pre-reflective awareness. Franks (2016) presents his own interpretation of the meaning of positing in his essay (Franks, 2016, 394), which is pertinent to this discussion. Frank claims that positing should be understood as self-locating in the space of reason. He assumes that Fichte's project aims at elucidating the reason for reflective self-ascription. Or, to put it adequately, what is the ground of rational agency? Fichte's possible answer is that the act of self-positing itself is a form of self-location in an empirical and reasoning space that is implicitly at work being clarified and making itself explicit whenever necessary. One of the characteristics of self-consciousness is its embodiment and sociality. It seems that there is a logical parallel between the act of self-positing and self-locating in empirical space. According to Frank, the concept of agency and self-positioning can be understood in terms of spatiality.

2.9. Practical Self-positing I

Fichte is concerned with whether it is possible to demonstrate a kind of self-determination that is not dependent on forces outside the individual. A form of self-determination that derives from the act of self-positing I. Or, to be more precise, can the tangled network of the subject's behavior be explained not by external incentives but by the single principle of the *Science of knowledge*? The principle that provides a theoretical and practical basis for understanding the freedom of the subject. Fichte's answer is affirmative, and he believes that the capacity for reflection, or reflective self-consciousness, enables man to regulate incentives and impulses and transform them into decisive action. Fichte sees man's ability to "tear away" and retrace himself as the reason why the subject can judge and determine his path independently of the external pressures upon him.

"By means of reflection ... the individual tears himself away from the natural drive and makes himself independent of it *(stellt sich unabhangig von ihm hin)* as a free intelligence; he thereby obtains for himself the capacity to postpone the self-determination and, with this, the capacity to choose between various ways of satisfying the natural drive."[5] (Neuhouser, 1990, 125)

But what is the criterion for making a decision, or affirming or denying external incentives? He speaks of a conceptual framework of the Zweckbegriff/purposive concept. With this purposive concept, the subject eliminates uncertainties and performs certain actions. Through the power of reflection of self-consciousness, the subject can form a network of beliefs and can gain self-determination from within. However, the foundational principle perceives itself as will, and its act of self-positing arise from itself and not from an external source.

"How can the unity of our cognitive-perceptual and our practical, reality-transforming relation to objects be adequately described and explained?" (Koltz, 2016, 66)

It is Fichte's fundamental claim that a subject is not simply what it is, like a 'thing', but that it is essentially engaged in a self-referential activity by which it is 'for itself' what it is. This 'being-for-itself' is constitutive both of the subject's existence and of its determination.

---

[5] Compare with this quote of Korsgaard: "A lower animal's attention is fixed on the world. Its perceptions are its beliefs and its desires are its will… But we human animals turn our attention on to our perceptions and desires themselves, on to our own mental activities, and we are conscious of them… I desire, and I find myself with a powerful impulse to act. But I back up and bring that impulse into view, and then I have a certain distance. Now the impulse doesn't dominate me, and now I have a problem. Shall I act? Is this desire really a reason to act?" Matthew Boyle, Making up our mind and the activity of reason, Philosophers' Imprint, Volume 11, No 17, December 2011.

2.10. Logical inference of absolutely unconditioned principle from the identity principle of A=A

According to Fichte, his foundational principle is not one that can be seen or manifested, but rather one that is deduced by the philosopher's abstracting reflection. This is the fundamental principle of all human knowledge. It is an activity that is empirically incomprehensible. Rather, this activity is the basis for any awareness or empirical experience. He begins to justify the foundational principle of *Science of Knowledge* based on the irrefutable and indisputable principle of identity A=A, which no one can doubt its adequacy.

Fichte then contends that this principle of identity must be regarded as a relation. Because this principle does not strive to show the ontological predicate for A, if A exists, then A exists. However, all this sentence indicates is a link between 'if and then.' According to Fichte, creating this required connection, which he refers to as X, is done by the act of the I. By virtue of the act of positing.

"X is at least in the self, and posited by the self, for it is the self which judges in the above proposition, and indeed judges according to X, as a law; which law must therefore be given to the self, and since it is posited absolutely and without any other ground, must be given to the self by itself alone." (Fichte, 1982, I 94)

This essential connection is called X; it acts as a given rule, it must be in I, and I create it. Fichte's significant point is that we should consider I as a judge. So far, we have found that the connection of A=A, which is the law of identity called X, is in I and was given by I, so I must be able to apply this law. Now that I am an X is present in I and is posited by I, then A must also exist because the connection (between A=A) X is impossible without A being posited. From X inferred that we must assume an A, which I posits it and also posits the law

27

of identity, which is X. It is concluded that an I posits the X and A. Still, it should have posited itself already (I am) because of the X and A product of I 's act of relating and judging.

"It is by virtue of X that the I posits that A exists purely and simply for the judging I, and it exists at all only because it is posited in the I as such. In other words, what is posited is that whatever the I may be doing — whether it is positing or judging or doing anything else — there is something [= X] in the I that is constantly self-identical, constantly one and the same; and this X that is posited purely and simply can also be expressed as follows: "I = I" or "I am I." (Fichte, 2021, 202)

It is important to understand Fichte's foundational principle as a living and driving force. A principle that generates itself at every moment through constant activity. This principle should not be understood as a fixed event in a single moment of time. Rather, it is a description of the living life of consciousness, which is believed to be the source of all human knowledge.

2.11. Summary

The following is a summary of the various sections of the chapter:

First, we looked at the changes Fichte made to Kantian transcendental idealism. Due to the paradoxes it had generated, the thing-in-itself was first eliminated. To achieve the second purpose, he endeavored to unite practical and theoretical reasoning, which had previously been separated in Kant's formulation, under the overarching concept "The I posits itself absolutely." Explain Fichte's non-representational principle and how it integrates subjective and objective features.

During our conversation, we learned that all theories of self-consciousness before to Fichte were problematic, and Fichte concludes that a type of pre-reflective self-awareness is attainable.

This was followed by an explanation of why Kant could not accept intellectual intuition. Fichte, on the other hand, developed it further and allowed his foundational principle to be understood exclusively in this way. I have examined the theoretical and practical aspects of Fichte's Foundational principle, which serves as the basis from which the entire concept of knowledge is derived. The following are the main themes on which I will focus in the coming chapters. Our study of the Heidelberg School and Dieter Henrich's commentaries have shown that Fichte's idea of self-consciousness was highly original and differed in many ways from earlier views. We have discussed the difficulties associated with theories of self-knowledge prior to Fichte. After reading Dieter Henrich, we have concluded that Fichte's self-knowledge must be interpreted in a pre-reflective manner.

Using Paul Franks' ideas, we have established that Fichte's foundational principle can be thought of as a kind of spatial self-relation in the logical space of reason and in the empirical space of reality.

The self-relating and self-predicative (self-ascribing) property of Fichte's self-consciousness enables the agent to relate to the world from her standpoint, independent of the laws of nature, and to empower her with agency and a measure of will.

Finally, in the section on the logical and ontological conclusion of the foundational principle, which was the product of the philosopher's abstraction, the foundational principle itself is understood only by a relation (we arrive at the I by understanding the X, X is the if-and-then identity relation of A=A). It is the sign of the subject's ability to judge, which also results from the self-relating property of subject I. In the following chapters, the subject-luminosity will be reconciled with the self-relating property of Fichte's subject, which "posits itself absolutely".

Chapter Three – Pre-reflective Self-consciousness

The influence of the Heidelberg School has led to several clear and effective divisions in our understanding of self-knowledge. It should be noted that this tradition developed under the influence of Dieter Henrich's discussions and his careful reading of the German idealists, particularly the concept of self-consciousness in Fichte. One of the major divisions that emerged in the Heidelberg tradition is that of the egological self and the non-egological self. (Frank, M., Williford, K., & Borner, M, 2020)

In the first case, the analysis takes place on a personal and subjective level, using the personal pronoun I. The second form, on the other hand, means that self-awareness is analyzed on an impersonal level in the mind as an event or stream of consciousness. In the second subdivision, which is of great importance for our topic and provides a suitable explanatory framework, self-awareness is divided into two types: non-introspective reflection and pre-reflective self-awareness. In the non-introspective paradigm, the unconscious mental state becomes aware of itself through a higher-order mental state or a modified alternative model of a mental state of the same order. (Proponents of the same-order model attempt to solve the problem of numerically distinct mental states).

A permissible objection to the higher-order theory, which the same-order theory has tried to account for (regardless of how successful it has been), is that the represented (content) should correspond one-to-one to what it representing (vehicle), which presupposes at least some prior knowledge or familiarity that can establish an equivalent relationship between these two distinct mental states. In the language of today's analytic tradition, how does the higher-order reflection, which in its practice must perform the act of reflecting, prevent itself from being hetero-directed without self-familiarity?

This fundamental insight that every representation belongs to an I (self-ascription) is the premise that Matthew Boyle initially attempts to justify with Kant's ideas on spontaneity before defending Moran's Agentialist perspective.

The preceding criticism applies to any theory that regards self-consciousness as the result of reflection. As an alternative to the higher-order and same-order theories, a kind of pre-reflection influenced by Dieter Henrich's ideas has been explained. This theory aims to show that a true theory of self-awareness requires that the subject be aware of referring to itself during the act of presentation.

"I posit itself as itself." (Fichte, 1982, I 98)

I will argue about a feature mentioned by Dieter Henrich in his famous article "Fichte's Original Insight", which became known as pre-reflective self-consciousness. This principle derives from the third modification of the first principle of the *Science of Knowledge*,

"The I is a power into which an eye is inserted." (Zöller, 2015, 51)

In order to accurately define pre-reflective self-consciousness, we must speak of a kind of self that reveals itself, not by objectification, but by implicit self-revelation in the experience of the world. As a result, this theory does not include ideas such as higher-order consciousness, same-order consciousness, or transitivity from the unconscious to the conscious level. Instead, this pre-reflective consciousness refers to the same common sensations we have in the world, the sense of being in a world where actions and reactions are interconnected. Proponents of this theory, therefore, emphasize that pre-reflective self-consciousness is a kind of implicit self-disclosure related to our presence in the world.

31

Fichte correctly recognized that the foundational principle of the *Science of Knowledge* is perceived through intuition (intellectual intuition - detailed explanation in 2.5.) and must be both subject and object. While Kant finds it difficult to accept the subject's capacity for intuition (being receptive to certain states of intuition) and being spontaneous at the same time, Fichte acknowledges that it is difficult to invoke the theory of reflection. Since it is an act and strives, the subject could still be receptive while witnessing its pure activity. When Fichte formulates the second principle of positing, 'I posits not A,' we see how ontological Fichte's analysis is. In the sense that as an active subject I bring my activity into the world and know myself through the experience of my free action in the world. Fichte's central idea of check and embodied consciousness in the development of his self-consciousness shows how much Fichte's self-consciousness is influenced by his constant engagement in the world.

Consequently, like Dieter Henrich and the Heidelberg School, we might regard Fichte as advocating a kind of pre-reflective self-consciousness. In the sense that the subject is involved in and with the world through its actions and activities. Pre-reflective self-consciousness thus implies that the subject achieves a state of self-disclosure by actively participating in and experiencing the world. Fichte's social and embodied self-consciousness supports the idea that his thesis of pre-reflexive self-consciousness has survived his revisions and periods of contemplation and is firmly embedded in his scheme of thought.

Chapter Four – Agentialists and active self-knowledge

4.1. Making up our mind

It seems that humans are the only species on the planet that has the ability to make up their minds among other living beings. This means that only humans in addition to their innate impulses, motives, and even desires, possess at least one other characteristic. The ability to logically examine their environment and social space, to doubt their impulses, to put them on hold, to distance themselves, to analyze, to consider alternative possibilities and even to reject the fulfilment of their desire altogether.

In the background of every action of a living being, there is a tangled chain of logical links between different kinds of beliefs that lead it to a final decision or to a certain view. The concept of freedom and agency we are discussing here does not derive from the concept of will, intention, and authority, but refers to the particular capacity of human beings to reflect on their actions and beliefs. This ability to reflect on one's ideas and actions, as well as to detach oneself from oneself and gaze at oneself, enables man to distinguish between what the laws of nature impose on him and what he chooses to do or believe. Agentialists emphasize man's innate ability to reflect on his actions and the role that this reflection plays in forming his views and judgment, which enables him to exercise his rational agency. For many years there has been intense debate in philosophy about whether we have the capacity to reflect on the conditions of our minds. However, there is a school of thought that argues that this unique capacity is closely related to the power of human agency and that it is the same part of active self-knowledge that is associated with our actions, rather than the passive component.

4.2. Two distinct kinds of self-knowledge

For a more detailed description of these two different forms of self-knowledge (passive and active), I refer to Burge's 1996 article, Entitlement to self-knowledge. Burge explains why stereotypical theories of self-knowledge have resorted to the concept of inner sense to explain self-knowledge. Of course, this conceptual framework is not adequate to explain all forms of self-knowledge. Agentialists speak of a different form of self-knowledge, the knowledge of our tendencies and beliefs that are associated with responsibility and commitment. Moreover, as beings with the capacity for critical reasoning, we have characteristics that are not accounted for by standard theories of self-knowledge.

At the beginning of his article, Burge speaks of a form of cogito-like judgments, for instance:

I am thinking that there are physical entities.

Arguing that we cannot grasp this proposition with the inner sense. In summary, we do not require an inner observation to comprehend this proposition. Burge explains why he is interested in these kinds of propositions.

According to his research, propositions are often influenced by content-determining environmental factors. Therefore, cogito-like propositions are not influenced by the environment. However, what is the source of these non-local-sensitive propositions? His response is twofold:

 "One is the role of the relevant judgments in critical reasoning. The other is a constitutive relation between the judgments and their subject matter-or between the judgments about one's thoughts and the judgments being true." (Burge, 1995)

What, according to Burge, is critical reasoning, and how does it relate to the cogito-like-judgment debate? In response to this question, he claims that some mental states and mental activities must be "knowledgeably reviewable."

That is, we are able to understand the reasoning and its functions with the very powers of reason, which includes re-evaluation and re-examination, weighing and checking, which indicates the ability to understand the mental processes themselves and their content and relevance with other propositions.

Concerning the constitutive relation between the judgment and the subject matter, we must note that we are not passive in cogito-like judgements. When we feel pain, we cannot act against that sense-impression. Nevertheless, in cogito-like judgments, we can evaluate our views in light of our network of beliefs and with the norm of reason; this demonstrates that we take an active stance and are committed to our tendencies and beliefs.

Burge's ideas are comparable to Moran's concept of "making up our minds" and even to Fichte's argument about a philosopher's power of abstraction and reflection.

4.3. Moran's Transparency

To understand Moran's idea of transparency, it is necessary to first describe Evan's theory of transparency:

In one of Evans' most cited quotes, he gives a brief explanation of his theory:

"In making a self-ascription of belief, one's eyes are, so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward – upon the world. If someone asks me "Do you think there is going to be a third world war?", I must attend, in answering him, to precisely the same outward phenomena as I would attend to if I were answering the question "Will there be a third world war?" (Evans 1982, 225)

Evans believes that in answering the question whether I believe in the outbreak of world war III, I am directing my attention to the external world rather than to my internal state. Thus, the answer to the question of whether I believe in the outbreak of world war III is tied to the answer to the question of whether world war III will take place. Moreover, to answer the first

question, which is about my belief (mental state), I come to my answer from examining the second question, which focuses on the state of affairs in the non-mental world, independent of my own psychology.

Moran reformulates the transparency account with an agential approach. Suppose I want to know whether I believe that p is true or not. It seems that I can usually answer this question by judging whether there is a reason to believe in p, i.e., whether there are compelling reasons to believe that p is true. If you ask me, "Do you believe in p?" I can answer this question by considering the reasons to believe in p itself" (deliberation), which is a better way to describe transparency. Moran's transparency shows that my deliberation about p can be interpreted as my decision to believe p. If my reflection on a subject leads me to conclude that p is true. I cannot believe the opposite. This is because my agency convinces me that my beliefs must be consistent with my reflections.

Moran's central concern is not to provide a new explanation for our epistemic access[6], but rather to show that the distinguishing feature of our relations to our own beliefs is the agency we have over our own beliefs. And with this agency comes responsibility. Thus, it is reasonable to work to ensure that one's beliefs are consistent with the evidence.

Moran makes a significant argument in his book that this active kind of self-knowledge, which is deeply connected with and directly tied to our rational agency, is the most fundamental form of self-knowledge.

"I have argued the case for seeing the ability to avow one's belief as the fundamental form of self-knowledge, one that gives proper place to the immediacy of first-person awareness and the authority with which its claims are delivered. In pursuing this case, I have also tried to provide some foundation for the connection between this capacity and the freedom and

---

[6] Unlike Jordi Fernandez (2003) and Alex Byrne (2005) who intended to show that a kind of privileged access as an epistemic dimension, can be achieved through the transparency method.

36

rationality of the person, a connection alluded to in other traditions of thought. This argument has involved giving a more central place to the person as a reflective agent, and criticizing both certain theoretical accounts of self-knowledge and certain ordinary stances toward oneself that presume (or enact) a more "spectatorial" relation between the person and her own thought." (Moran, 2012, 150)[7]

This claim has raised questions about how a theory that lacks an adequate explanation for all kinds of self-knowledge can be considered fundamental. I will address this issue in more detail in the next section.

4.4. Boyle's Project

According to Boyle (2009), Moran's opponents have taken the fact that there are types of self-knowledge to which his theory does not apply[8] as sufficient evidence to argue that we need to look for a new explanation. This criticism is based on the notion that a sufficient explanation for self-knowledge should be essentially uniform. Many authors writing about self-knowledge, even those with radically different views, accept this idea (uniform account) without question. Following this picture, Matthew Boyle attempts to refute one of the widely accepted concepts in the debate about self-knowledge theories, namely the 'uniformity assumption' (Boyle, 2009), which denotes an integrated and all-inclusive theory that includes all types of self-knowledge.

---

[7] Boyle also attributes such a claim to Moran, "In another passage Moran claims that the capacity to make ''transparent'' attitude-ascriptions is ''what makes the difference between genuine first-person awareness and a purely theoretical or attributional knowledge of one's own states'' (Boyle, 2009).

[8] Like non-deliberative self-knowledge of appetite or a feeling of feelings of rage that I know are unreasonable yet still can't get rid of) or the belief that "The Danube River runs through the city of Vienna." Doesn't demand any reflection, deliberation, or observation.

"We could call this the Uniformity Assumption, for it amounts to the demand that a satisfactory account of our self-knowledge should be fundamentally uniform, explaining all cases of "first-person authority" in the same basic way." (Boyle, 2009)

In an attempt to respond to Moran's criticism, Matthew Boyle found the solution to the puzzle in Kant. According to Kant, the knowledge we have about ourselves, self-knowledge, cannot be reduced to a single kind, and we have two unique kinds of self-knowledge. One is the knowledge of inner-sense/empirical apperception (knowledge of our passive being and corresponds to the reception of our sensations) and the other is the knowledge of pure apperception (knowledge of our active being or spontaneity, corresponds to our judgments and thinking). Moreover, as Boyle notes, Kant asserts a fundamental dependence between these two kinds of self-knowledge, claiming that without pure apperception there would be no knowledge of inner sensation. (For details, see sections 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4).

4.5. Boyle's Solution

A proper theory of self-knowledge, according to Boyle, must distinguish between behaviors that simply reveal the presence of one mental state (manifestation) and behaviors that convey one's own mental state (representation) of the relevant kind.

Imagine the following scenario: I teach a parrot to scream out "I am in pain!" when it is actually in pain. So it is more likely that the parrot is saying something true about itself in the cases where the statement is true. And, of course, it is at least as plausible to claim in the parrot's case that the speech is not formed on the basis of inference or observation. Nevertheless, we would like to emphasize something else: The parrot does not understand what it says: it utters a form of words that has a certain conventional content, but it does not understand that content. A parrot's natural pain-expressing behavior shows that the parrot is in pain, not that it is conscious of its pain. However, this is not the case for a competent speaker,

and its representation presupposes two things: the competent speaker would be able to report an utterance, and it exhibits the ability to self-ascription. (2009, Boyle)

The first point stands for the necessity that the representation be incorporated into the subject's concept of what is true, while the second point captures the requirement that the subject recognize that she is the object of the representation.

So far, Boyle has shown that any theory of self-knowledge must account for the fundamental difference between the manifestation of parrot-like utterances and the representation of utterances by competent speakers such as I am in pain! Accordingly, the ability to represent one's state in a coherent way is related to the ability to reflect on and reconsider what we are asserting. Moran describes the same kind of self-awareness.

Boyle's argumentative steps in his article (Two Kinds of Self-knowledge, 2009) are as follows:

1- He demonstrates the minimal conditions necessary for a subject's utterances to be interpreted as expressions of knowledge about one's mental states.

2- He claims that the ability to represent one's mental states implies the ability to know one's deliberated attitudes.

3- The ability to perceive relations and connections between contents and to change one's assertions in light of these relations and connections is the prerequisite for being able to interpret a standpoint on what is true, a standpoint that is connected to various other standpoints that one might take.

4- In order to understand the interrelation between various systemically related content, a person must be able to adjust his or her endorsement of particular content based on his or her examination of its relationship to other content that he or she endorses.

5- (4) Implies that the subject should be able to reflect on why he or she believes an assertion.

6- Moran's definition of self-knowledge is fundamental because the ability to articulate one's views in the way Moran describes is inextricably linked to the kind of representational abilities needed by a person capable of making intelligible claims.

Another argument Boyle makes in his article is that the ability to make up one's mind to do something must be tied to one's use of the first person. If you understand the first-person perspective, you may recognize your own ability to decide, just as Moran explains. To explain, first-person pronouns such as "A is F" can only be used in the first person by someone who understands herself and is aware that she is imposing the property "F" on herself, i.e., that she is referring to herself when she says "A is F."

A similar condition that Boyle raises with respect to Moran's theory and the condition of having first-person Knowledge is that on Moran's theory, a subject expresses self-consciousness if and only if it shows an awareness that its conclusion that p is the result of a thing he refers to as "A." Moreover, when it decides to perform a certain action X, it has the right to proclaim that "A plans to undertake X". In other words, a subject that concludes, "That plank is about to hit A in the head" and takes evasive action is a subject that uses the indexical "A" with self-consciousness. (Boyle, 2009)

Thus, rather than providing a model that can be applied to all forms of self-knowledge, Moran has provided an explanation of the process by which one comes to know one's own mind, which is a prerequisite of being self-knowledge. Since this form of self-knowledge is the foundation for all other theories of self-knowledge, it is fundamental.

As far as I can tell, Boyle thinks that an adequate account of self-knowledge should also take into account our knowledge of our own sensations and desires. And Moran's theory of transparency has no explanation for this form of self-knowledge. Therefore, we should accept that there are two forms of self-knowledge that are necessary for us to speak authoritatively

about ourselves. The active self-knowledge of our beliefs and intentions and the passive knowledge of our sensations. If this is the case, we must reject the assumption of uniformity.

Although Moran's theory is fundamental because it contains the two minimal requirements for any form of self-knowledge, it does not provide an adequate conceptual framework for other kinds of self-knowledge over which we have little control, such as those associated with appetite and sensation.

I suggest that one can use Fichte's pre-reflective theory to construct a theory that satisfies Moran's criterion while explaining the passive nature of self-knowledge. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Chapter Five – Fundamentality of Pre-reflective theory

5.1. Minimal condition of self-knowledge in Boyle and Fichte

As described in 2-9, Fichte's I, has a network of beliefs through which it arrives at self-determination. According to the conceptual framework of Zweck Begriff, a subject who has the capacity for self-relating and self-referentiality can reevaluate and modify her beliefs in light of the other beliefs to which she subscribes; moreover, she can intend to act.

Boyle states, "When I speak about what I believe, I am speaking about how my mind is made up-even if I am not making it up at the moment, even if I never went through a process of conscious deliberation about the belief in question." (Boyle, 2009)

Following this quotation, I suggest that when writing the *Science of Knowledge*, Fichte went through the same deliberative process. The entirety of the Science of Knowledge's foundational principle demonstrates how judgment operates in the mind and what role I plays in each moment of its actualization. Fichte's pathway from conviction in A=A to belief in "I am" is analogous to Boyle's claim that mental activity leads to a close link between different beliefs, to the point where the beliefs must conform to one another and create a rational unity that symbolizes agency. Similarly, Moran asserts, based on the same convincing reason, that if I accept the truth of a proposition, I cannot accept the opposite as my belief.

We have seen so far that Boyle regards Moran's account as fundamental, and that he wishes to show that Moran's theory of transparency contains basic conditions that any theory of self-knowledge must recognize. Boyle acknowledges two implicit but fundamental criteria in Moran's theory, which are summarized here, as explained in parts 3-4 and 3-5.

A) A) The person must be aware of her ability to make a consistent and rational relationship between beliefs.

B) B) All actions and beliefs of the subject must be viewed from the first-person perspective, not from the perspective of a third-person observer. This quality generally refers to the capacity for self-ascription and self-relating.

The question now is whether the requirements established in Boyle's thesis can be found in Fichte's absolute I. And, if that's the case, how does that influence the entire debate of Boyle?

A) A and A have an identity relationship named X, but my self-positing activity establishes this X. This action demonstrates that I am conscious of the need for equality while also being cognizant of the self-predicating act that I have performed. If Fichte's I is unaware of the equal relationship that it predicates on A and A, it cannot infer itself/I from A = A.

B) B) In the section on the foundational principle of *Science of Knowledge*, Fichte's conclusions on the fundamental premise of *Science of Knowledge* show that each belief imposes logical constraints and obligations on me and that subsequent beliefs must be modified to these constraints and commitments. Similarly, Boyle's fundamental criteria imply that the subject's consciousness should be capable of comprehending both the substance of beliefs and the connections that exist between them.

It follows from A and B that Fichte's I possesses two fundamental characteristics: judging I and self-relating I.

5.2. State-luminosity Vs subject-luminosity

When we consider the pre-reflective self-awareness method, we must consider some passivity in the subject since pre-reflective self-awareness is always associated with self-feeling. As a result, because self-feeling is incompatible with active deliberation, pre-reflective self-

43

awareness cannot serve as a credible foundation for the Moran and Boyle theory of transparency. Fichte's unconditioned I, on the other hand, has both objective and subjective dimensions, as previously described. As a result, it appears that performing a more suitable logical argument in strengthening the agency of the Science of Knowledge's foundational principle is inevitable. So the goal is to demonstrate the fundamentality of pre-reflective self-awareness while keeping two minimal requirements of self-knowledge that Boyle articulated. In order to achieve this goal, I shall make use of the dichotomy between state-luminosity and subject-luminosity. (M. Frank, K. Williford, and M. Borner, 2020)

In state-luminosity if a subject S has a conscious state C, S is necessarily aware of C, but in Subject-luminosity, if a subject S has a conscious state C, S is aware of being the subject of conscious state C. The difference between the first and second forms is that in subject-luminosity, the subject is aware, even if only implicitly, that he is the subject in all of these states. So, if it can be demonstrated that subject-luminosity is a component of pre-reflective self-awareness, the recognition of self-ascription and self-reference follows.

 So the fundamental question to answer is whether the subject-luminosity can be a component of pre-reflective self-awareness or not. Howell's (2020) proposed solution is a form of affordance in Gibson's theory. According to Howell's idea, in every experience, there is at the same time a standing belief. The content of this standing belief is that I can recognize that experiences belong to me and attribute them to myself. The critical point is that this belief is not the product or output of higher-order theory or reflection; it is a capability that experience itself enables it for us. According to pre-reflective theory, Fichte's absolute I gives us the ability to self-locating in empirical space through which we can consider ourselves the subject that self-relates the experiences. (Howell, 2020)

5.3. Fundamentality of Absolute I

According to my understanding, the absolute I is a self-relating action, and self-relating is an act of positing the I. Logical self-relating is a prerequisite for judgement. Bodily self-relating is a prerequisite for having sensations. But these two types of self-relation is not separate in Fichte. They are at work unitedly and implicitly.

If this assertion is correct, we can no longer distinguish between active and passive mental states. Fichte's I is both objective and subjective, which means that it is both the creator and perceiver of activity. This type of self-awareness, on the other hand, is implicit and provides us with specific knowledge as we pass through the stages of cognitive activity.

This self-knowledge entails that it is a necessary condition for any self-knowledge. Therefore, there can be no doubt that it is fundamental. At the same time, it creates minimal conditions for Moran's theory of transparency. This awareness is also necessary to explain our sensations since they are inseparable from our self-feeling in our experiences. Boyle (2011, 2020) seems to have been persuaded to assume a foundational and implicit consciousness in his later work, using the term "non-positional awareness."

Finally, I believe that by relying on Fichte's theory of pre-reflective self-knowledge, we can both defend the fundamental nature of this awareness, as presupposed by Moran's transparency and preserve the uniformity assumption, because Fichte's theory provides a framework to understand and explain both.

45

Concluding Remarks

I have tried to show that Fichte rejects the idea of reflection in self-awareness and offers more plausible alternatives for understanding self-awareness. Dieter Henrich's contemporary interpretations triggered the discussion about the significance of Fichte's works. Fichte influenced a current in the exploration of the idea of self-awareness, which is known as the theory of pre-reflective self-awareness. In exploring the idea of self-knowledge, I have tried to examine the connection between Fichte's legacy and contemporary currents. I attempted to show how Fichte's ideas can untie some of the minor and major knots in current debates about self-awareness and self-knowledge, or at least draw attention to the many challenges Fichte highlighted in describing the relationship between self and consciousness.

Bilgrami, Akeel, *Self-Knowledge and Resentment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Boyle, Matthew. "Two Kinds of Self-Knowledge." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 78, no. 1 (2009), 133-164. doi:10.1111/j.1933-1592.2008.00235.x.

Boyle, Matthew. Transparent self-knowledge. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 85(1), (2011), 223-241. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8349.2011.00204.x

Boyle, Matthew. "Transparency and reflection." *Transparency and Apperception*, 2020, 140 167. doi:10.4324/9781003037040-7.

Burge, Tyler. & Peacocke, Christopher. Our entitlement to self-knowledge. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, *69*(1), (1995), Pp. 255-255. doi:10.1093/aristoteliansupp/69.1.255

Fichte, Johann. Gottlieb. *The science of knowledge: With the first and second introductions*. Edited and translated by Peter Heath and John Lachs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (1982).

Fichte, Johann. Gottlieb. *Fichte: Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre and Related Writings,* 1794-95. Edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale, New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2021.

Frank, Manfred, Kenneth Williford, and Marc Borner. *Senses of Self: Approaches to Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness: ProtoSociology Volume 36*. Norderstedt: BoD, 2020.

Franks, Paul. "Fichte's Position: Anti-Subjectivism, Self-Awareness and Self-Location in the Space of Reasons." *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, 2016, 374-404. doi:10.1017/9781139027557.016.

Henrich, Dieter. "Fichte's Original Insight." *Debates in Nineteenth-Century European Philosophy: Essential Readings and Contemporary Responses*. Edited by Kristin Gjesdal, London: Routledge, 2015. Pp 35-44.

Howell, Robert J. "Reflecting on Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness." *Senses of Self: Approaches to Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness: ProtoSociology Volume 36*. Edited By Frank, Manfred, Kenneth Williford, and Marc Borner. 2020. Pp. 157-185.

James, David, and Günter Zöller. *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Klotz, Christian. "Fichte's Explanation of the Dynamic Structure of Consciousness in the 1794–95 Wissenschaftslehre." *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, 2016, 65-92. doi:10.1017/9781139027557.005.

Moran, Richard. *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Neuhouser, Frederick, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Pippin, Robert B. *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Rockmore, Tom. "Fichte, Kant, and the Copernican Revolution." *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Fichte*, 2020. doi:10.5040/9781350036642.ch-002.

Sgarbi, Marco. *Kant on Spontaneity*. London: A&C Black, 2012.

Wood, Allen W. *Fichte's Ethical Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Wood, Allen W. *The Free Development of Each: Studies on Reason, Right, and Ethics in Classical German Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Wood, Allen W. "Fichte's Philosophical Revolution." *Philosophical Topics* 19, no. 2 (1991), 1-28. (doi:10.5840/philtopics19911921.)

Wood, David W. *The Enigma of Fichte's First Principles (Fichte-Studien, 49)*. Leiden: BRILL; Bilingual edition , 2021.

Zöller, Günter. "Fichte's Original Insight Dieter Henrich's Pioneering Piece Half a Century Later. *Debates in Nineteenth-Century European Philosophy: Essential Readings and Contemporary Responses*. Edited by Kristin Gjesdal, London: Routledge, 2015. Pp. 45-56.