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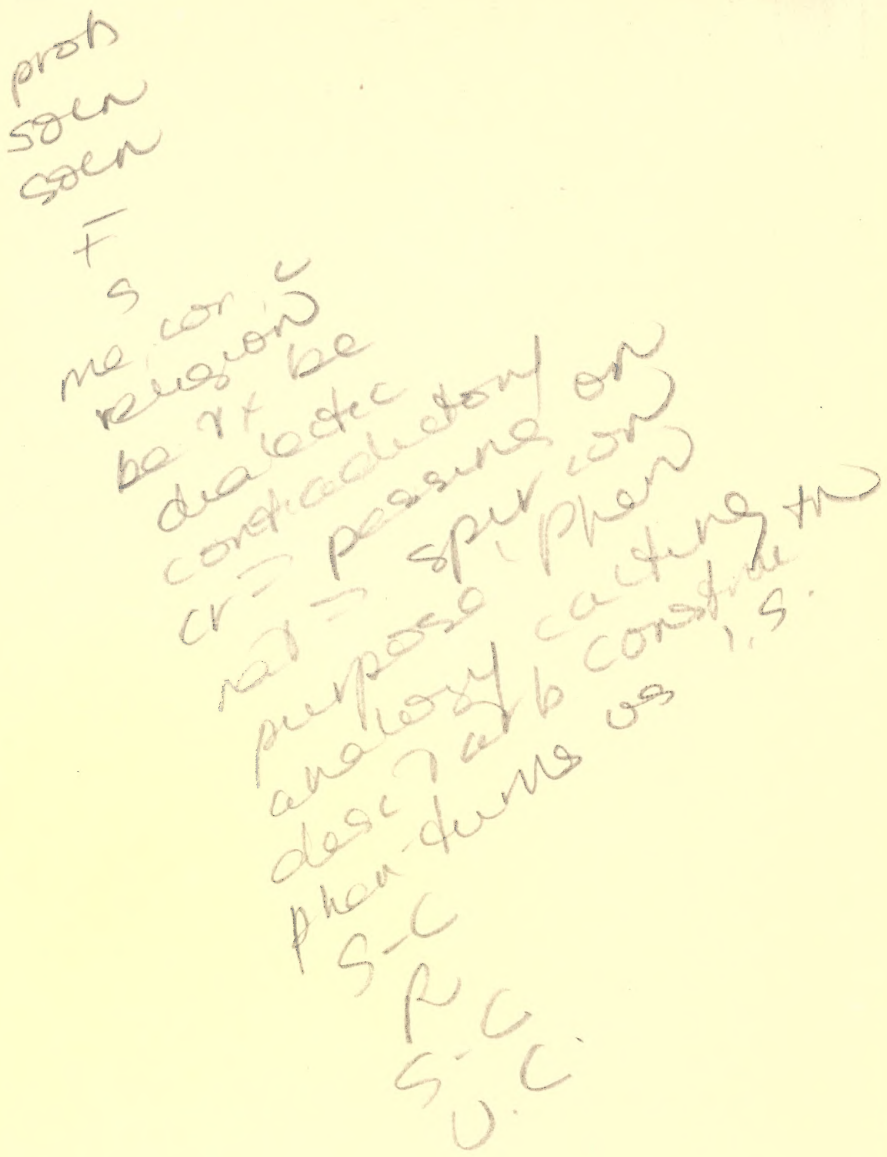

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CORNELL STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY

No. 7

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF FICHTE'S PHILOSOPHY

BY

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PREFACE.

THE purpose of this monograph is to make a careful study of Fichte's conception of the ultimate principle. In his various writings the principle appears under many different names. 'The Ego,' 'the Idea of the Ego,' 'the moral world-order,' 'God,' 'the Absolute,' 'Being,' 'the Light,' are some of the phrases by which it is most commonly designated.

ERRATA.

Page 4, line 33, for *things in themselves* read *things-in-themselves.*

Page 54, line 12, for *ker* read *der.*

Page 18, line 12, for *idea* read *Idea.*

Page 83, line 32, omit comma after *Fichte.*

reinen Vernunft are indicated by the letters A (for the First Edition) and B (for the Second). All other references to Kant's writings are made to Hartenstein's second edition of the *Sämmtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1867–1868, 8 vols.) and are indicated by the letter H.

My thanks are due, first of all, to my former teacher, Professor J. E. Creighton, of Cornell University, for many valuable suggestions during the progress of the work and for assistance while it was passing through the press; then, to Professor Ernest Albee, of Cornell University, for his kindness in reading part of the proof; to my colleague, Miss Paula Höfer, of Mount Holyoke College, and my former colleague, Dr. Natalie Wipplinger, now

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It is not the main purpose of this study to examine the much discussed question of the relation between the two periods of Fichte's philosophy. But the question is so intimately connected with the problem which I have undertaken that some discussion of it is inevitable. I have tried, however, to keep well within the limits of my theme, and instead of considering the relation between the two periods in all its aspects, have sought merely to determine how far the conception of the fundamental principle which we find in Fichte's later writings differs from that which appears in the earlier ones.

The references to Fichte's writings are to the *Sämmtliche Werke* (Berlin, 1845–1846, 8 vols.) and to the *Nachgelassene Werke* (Bonn, 1834–1835, 3 vols.). References to the *Sämmtliche Werke* are indicated by the letters S. W.; to the *Nachgelassene Werke*, by the letters N. W. References to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* are indicated by the letters A (for the First Edition) and B (for the Second). All other references to Kant's writings are made to Hartenstein's second edition of the *Sämmtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1867–1868, 8 vols.) and are indicated by the letter H.

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of Wellesley College, for help with regard to a nice question of German syntax; and to Miss Grace Hadley, of Mount Holyoke College, for her assistance in reading part of the proof. I wish also to express my thanks to the editors of *Kant-Studien* and *Mind* for permission to use parts of my articles upon Fichte which have appeared in these journals (in *Kant-Studien*, Vol. IV, pp. 286 ff., and in *Mind*, N. S., Vol. X, pp. 336 ff.).

E. B. T.

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE,
SOUTH HADLEY, MASS.,
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CHAPTER I.

Kant and Fichte: The Relation of Human Consciousness to Its Ideal.

The relation of Fichte to the master to whom he always gave the chief credit of his own doctrines has been carefully studied many times and has been discussed from various points of view. The present chapter does not profess to give an exhaustive treatment of this question. Its purpose is rather to consider it in the particular aspect which will be of most service in our further examination of Fichte's doctrine. The problem of the relation between human consciousness and the ideal unity which it is ever seeking to attain, suggests an interesting comparison between the two philosophers and gives at the same time a convenient method of approach to the more detailed study of Fichte which we shall attempt in the later chapters.

In the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, a sharp line of distinction is drawn between the formal and the material aspect of human cognition. On the one hand, we have the matter, which is given from without; on the other, the formative activity, which comes from within. These two seem to be utterly disparate: the matter is mere matter; the form, mere form. The content of knowing, if we look at it in itself, is a mere manifold — chaotic, unrelated, meaningless. It is only through the unifying activity of the understanding that this formless mass receives shape and meaning; it is only because the scattered sensations have been worked upon by a relating activity that they have been united into significant wholes.[1] In itself the matter is essentially formless. "In

[1] It is implied in this interpretation that space and time, as well as the categories, are phases of the activity of the self. It would take us too far from our main problem if we should stop to discuss the correctness of this assumption. Explicitly, Kant makes space and time pure forms and yet denies spontaneity of them. But it seems that the logic of his system requires him to say that the entire formal aspect of our experience is due to the spontaneity of consciousness, while only the material aspect is to be referred to receptivity. And perhaps it may be urged that by introducing the imagination, which is to mediate between sense and understanding, and by making the pure *schema* a transcendental determination of time, Kant implicitly corrects his explicit statements.

the phenomenon I call that which corresponds to the sensation its *matter*, but that which makes it possible for the manifold of the phenomenon to be arranged[1] in certain relations I call its *form*. . . . That through which alone the sensations can be arranged and put into a certain form cannot itself in turn be sensation." [2]

And on the other hand, if we look at the unifying activity of thought by itself, it seems to be mere form. For its content it is wholly dependent upon something external. As soon as the manifold is given, the unifying activity can shape and mould it; but the manifold must be given. The formative principle has no power to create its own content; the form of knowledge is essentially empty. "The manifold must be given for perception before the synthesis of the understanding and independently of it. . . . The categories are rules only for an understanding whose whole faculty consists in thinking (that is, in the act of bringing to the unity of apperception the synthesis of the manifold which it has received in perception), an understanding, therefore, which by itself knows nothing, but which merely binds together and arranges the material for knowledge, the perception which must be given to it by the object." [3]

Even when we consider this formative principle in its highest manifestation, the transcendental unity of apperception, the case is no better; here, too, the form is mere form. One might think, indeed, that in this pure self-consciousness we have, at least implicitly, that union of subject and object which must always constitute the ideal of knowledge; here, if nowhere else, it would seem, we may hope to find a form which can supply its own content, which needs no aid from any foreign principle. But Kant does not long permit us to cherish this hope. On this point his statements are very explicit: we may not say that in the pure Ego, form and content, subject- and object-self, are one; for in the pure Ego there is no content, no object-self, at all. The transcendental unity of apperception is mere form; in itself it has

[1] I have followed the reading of the Second Edition, "geordnet werden kann"; the First Edition has "geordnet, angeschaut wird."

[2] A, 20; B, 34. [3] B, 145.

no content whatever. We may call the Ego simple "because this idea (*Vorstellung*) has no content and thus no manifold." [1] "Through the *Ego* as simple idea nothing manifold is given; the manifold can be given only in perception, which is different from the Ego." [2]

Thus we seem to have a complete opposition between the two factors of human knowing: its matter is essentially formless; its form, essentially empty. We must not forget, however, that we have discovered this opposition by considering the two elements abstractly. In the concrete process of thought, the content is not formless, nor is the form empty. As a matter of fact, we never have mere form or mere content; we always have a union of form and content. How clearly Kant himself sees this, is perhaps an open question.[3] It is one, however, that we need not stop to consider; for even if we maintain that Kant regarded his separation of form and matter as a methodological device, we must still admit that his doctrine of the nature of thought is far from satisfactory. He may not mean to say that the two elements of our knowledge ever actually exist apart; but there can be little doubt that he represents their union in thinking as more or less artificial. The two factors are always found together, but

[1] A, 381. [2] B, 135.

[3] There are, no doubt, many passages in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* which speak of the formal element of thought as if it existed in the mind ready-made, like a mould waiting to be filled. But words like the following seem to indicate that Kant sometimes rose above this crude conception:

"In this I or He or It . . . which thinks, nothing more is represented than a transcendental subject of the thoughts — an *X* which can be known only by means of the thoughts, its predicates, and of which, apart from them, we can never have the least concept" (A, 346; B, 404).

"The manifold given in a sensuous perception belongs of necessity under the original synthetic unity of apperception" (B, 143.)

"The understanding cannot perceive anything; the senses cannot think anything. Only from the union of the two can knowledge arise. But we should not on this account confuse their respective contributions; on the contrary there is good reason for our carefully separating and distinguishing the one from the other" (A, 51; B, 75 f.).

Perhaps we shall come nearest to the truth if we say that Kant held both views without clearly differentiating them; that he never quite outgrew his earlier and cruder notion of form and matter as actually existing apart, but that on the other hand he sometimes had glimpses of the truer conception.

they are not shown to belong together; they imply, but at the same time repel, each other; they do not constitute an organic unity. As Professor Creighton says: "Each object of knowledge is taken as really composed of a contribution from sense and a contribution from understanding. These elements really enter into it, and can be analyzed out of it. . . . The synthetic character of thought . . . is conceived . . . as analogous to a process of mechanical fabrication, or chemical combination." [1]

This defect in human knowing, as Kant conceives it, comes out most clearly when we consider the contrast between our cognition and that ideal of knowledge which he holds before us in his conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung*. The whole question of the nature of *intellektuelle Anschauung* and of its relation to the other features of Kant's system is one of much interest. Thiele's careful study,[2] to which I am much indebted, has made it evident that the conception, as it appears in the *Kritik*, has more than one form. According to his interpretation, there are three main stages in the development of the doctrine. On this point I am inclined to disagree with him: the conception, it seems to me, has only two distinct phases; and it has these two because at different times Kant approaches the problem from two different points of view.[3] In human cognition, form and matter seem to stand apart; but in the ideal of knowledge they must constitute a perfect unity. Now in one phase of the doctrine of *intellektuelle Anschauung*, Kant starts with the concept of matter and seeks to pass from it to the thought of this organic unity, while in the other phase he attempts to reach the ideal by starting with the concept of form. In the one case, he tries to give us a matter which contains its own principle of form; in the other, a form which supplies itself with content.

The first attempt gives us the doctrine in its cruder aspect. *Intellektuelle Anschauung* is the faculty of immediately apprehending things-in-themselves. Our cognition is defective because it deals with mere phenomena; the objects of perceptive under-

[1] "The Nature of Intellectual Synthesis," *Philosophical Review*, V, 145.

[2] *Kant's intellektuelle Anschauung als Grundbegriff seines Kriticismus*, Halle, 1876.

[3] For a discussion of this question, see Appendix, Note A.

standing are noumena. "We are of such a nature that our perception can never be other than sensuous; that is, it is nothing but the way in which we are affected by objects."[1] And since this is so, we can never know objects as they are; their real nature is warped by the fact that they are apprehended in space and time. If, however, there were a mode of perception which was non-sensuous, it might apprehend objects as they are. Such a faculty Kant calls *intellectual perception* or sometimes *perceptive understanding*. "If I assume things which are mere objects of the understanding and which yet as such can be given to a perception — which, however, would be, not sensuous perception, but *intuitus intellectualis* — things of this sort would be called noumena or *intelligibilia*. . . . For if the senses merely represent something to us as it appears, this something must still in itself be a thing and an object of a non-sensuous perception, that is, of the understanding. In other words, a kind of knowledge must be possible in which no sensibility is found and which alone has absolute objective reality, in which, that is, objects are represented to us *as they are*, whereas in the empirical use of our understanding things are known only *as they appear*."[2]

In this passage, *intellektuelle Anschauung* seems to be conceived as pure receptivity. Objects are still 'given' to perception, are 'represented' to the understanding which apprehends them. This intellectual perception is superior to our knowledge simply in the fact that the content is given as it is in itself, and is not altered in the process of being received and unified. The matter given in human experience is warped by being subjected to the unifying activity which works through the pure forms of perception and conception. As given, it is a shapeless mass, which receives form only through the activity of a new principle; and this principle is regarded by Kant, not as dwelling in the matter itself, but as working upon it from without. In *intellektuelle Anschauung*, on the contrary, the form is immanent. No discursive faculty of understanding imposes upon the discrete con-

[1] A, 51; B, 75. [2] A, 249.

tent a unity that is foreign to its nature.[1] The matter of *intellektuelle Anschauung* contains its own principle of unity; the content is at the same time the form.

This conception, however, is far from being satisfactory. For, although from one point of view *intellektuelle Anschauung* seems to have its form within itself, and in so far to be an organic unity, yet from another, we see that the unity is by no means perfect. So long as we have the faculty of apprehension set over against that which it apprehends, there must be at least a partial opposition of form and matter. The given content may bring its form with it; but in the process of being received, it will of necessity undergo some modification; the form of the apprehended content must differ from that of the content which is not apprehended.

In the second and higher phase of the doctrine, this difficulty does not exist. Here Kant starts with the formal principle of knowledge, and asks himself how it must be modified in order to correspond to our notion of ideal cognition. The great defect of the pure Ego is its emptiness; the *I think* is indeed the highest form, but it is form devoid of content. And because of its emptiness, it cannot in itself give us any cognition whatever. "In the original synthetic unity of apperception . . . I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself; I am conscious merely that I am. *This conscious state* (*Vorstellung*) *is a thinking, not a perceiving.* Now for knowledge of the self, we need, not only the act of thinking, which brings the manifold of every possible perception to the unity of apperception, but also a definite mode of perception, by which this manifold is given."[2]

Thus it is the emptiness of the *I think* which prevents it from meeting the requirements of our ideal. It is because it has no content of its own, because it is dependent upon something else for the matter with which it works, that it is defective as a principle of knowledge. If then we are to conceive of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as free from the limitations of the pure Ego of

[1] "An understanding to which [the noumenon] belongs, that is, one which cognizes its object, not discursively through categories, but intuitively (*intuitiv*) in a non-sensuous perception" (A, 256; B, 311 f.).

[2] B, 157.

apperception, we must think of it as self-consciousness which is not empty, but which finds within itself the material upon which it is to work. And this is the conception to which Kant comes. In the higher form of the doctrine, *intellektuelle Anschauung* is described as a pure self-consciousness which is its own object, a self-consciousness in which the act of unifying the manifold is at the same time the process whereby this manifold first comes into being. "The consciousness of self (or apperception) is the simple idea (*Vorstellung*) of the Ego; and if through it alone all the manifold in the subject were given *by self-activity* (*selbstthätig*), then the inner perception would be intellectual." [1] "An understanding in which, through its self-consciousness, all the manifold was also given, would perceive." [2] In this thought of the pure self-consciousness which is one with its object because it has itself for object, we have Kant's highest conception of the ideal of knowledge. Here at last we find the perfect union of form and content; here the dualism which is so manifest in human cognition gives place to a higher unity.

This is certainly a more satisfactory conception of the ideal of knowledge than that which we have in the first form of the doctrine. Still it is by no means free from difficulty. For Kant's *intellektuelle Anschauung* is at best but a problematic concept; we can never assert that there is any reality corresponding to it. Moreover, our notion of this perfect cognition is so vague and indefinite that strictly speaking we have no right to call it a concept at all. "We could . . . not prove that another kind of perception [than the sensuous] is possible, and although our thought can abstract from every kind of sensibility, still it remains a question whether after the abstraction any object at all is left, whether what we have, is not merely the form of a concept." [3] "One cannot assume that [noumena] can be given without presupposing that another kind of perception than the sensuous is possible; and this presupposition we have no right to make. . . . We have an understanding which *problematically* extends beyond the sphere of phenomena; but we have no perception, nor even

[1] B, 68. [2] B, 135. [3] A, 252 f.

the concept of a possible perception, by which objects lying outside the field of sensibility could be given to us."[1] But the case is even more serious than this. Not only is it true that our ideal of knowledge is, and must be, vague, and that we have no warrant for saying that there is any reality corresponding to it; there is the further difficulty that it is for us utterly unattainable — nay, more, that it is a goal to which human knowing cannot even approximate. The limits of our cognition are fixed once for all. Whatever progress the future may bring, must always be a progress within these limits, never a transcending of them. We know only the appearance; we can never come face to face with the thing-in-itself. Progress in knowledge can consist merely in learning more and more about phenomena; it can never bring us one whit nearer to the reality behind them.

That Kant draws this sharp line of demarcation between human knowing and its ideal, is evident, I think, as soon as one considers the general spirit of the *Kritik*. The declaration that metaphysics is impossible, the assertion that our knowledge must be limited to phenomena, the insistence that our perception is always sensuous and that the transcendental Ego cannot have the slightest content, indicate a belief that the difference between our cognition and *intellektuelle Anschauung* is one, not of degree, but of kind. The few passages in the *Kritik* which seem to throw any doubt upon this interpretation are those in which Kant speaks of the possible common root of sensibility and understanding. "Human cognition has two stems, sensibility and understanding; these perhaps spring from a common root, which, however, is unknown to us."[2] "That something which forms the ground of external phenomena . . . might also, regarded as noumenon (or better, as transcendental object), be at the same time the subject of the thoughts."[3] From these passages it seems that Kant recognized the possibility that the formal and material aspects of thought might have the same origin. Still his emphatic repudiation of the principles of the *Wissenschafts-*

[1] A, 254 f.; B, 309 f.
[2] A, 15; B, 29. *Cf.* A, 835; B, 863.
[3] A, 358.

lehre[1] shows that this recognition did not affect his general position. So much at least he would say, that *for us* the dualism of form and content is ultimate;[2] that our ideal of a unity in which it is surmounted, is only a problematic concept; and that *so far as we can ever know*, our cognition is wholly different in kind from this ideal unity.

It seems necessary to lay some emphasis upon this point because it is often overlooked.[3] Reading Kant, as we do, in the light of those who came after him, we are sometimes prone to attribute to him doctrines which should really be credited to his successors. In a sense, of course, it is true that the conception of knowledge as an ever-deepening unity of subject and object owes its being to Kant; but it is true chiefly in the sense that, by drawing a sharp line of distinction between the two aspects of consciousness, Kant set others to thinking how the opposition might be overcome. The thought that subject and object *must* be a unity, that the apparent dualism in our knowing *cannot* be ultimate, is to be credited, not to Kant, but to Fichte; and I do not see what is to be gained by attributing to Kant a doctrine which he explicitly rejected, and which is at variance with the general spirit of his philosophy.

[1] In the *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung* for 1799, Kant explains his attitude toward Fichte's development of the critical philosophy. "I regard Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*," he says, "as a system which it is utterly impossible to accept. . . . Why it should be assumed that I have meant to give merely a *propædeutic* to the transcendental philosophy, not the system of this philosophy itself, is incomprehensible to me. Such a purpose has never entered my mind, since I have regarded it as the best evidence of the truth of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* that we have in it the completed whole of pure philosophy" (H., VIII, 600).

[2] That is, in this life. In one passage he speaks of the possibility that death may be "the end of this sensuous use of our knowing faculty and the beginning of the intellectual use of it" (A, 778; B, 806 f.).

[3] *E. g.*, by Thiele. His position is not stated with so much clearness as is to be wished; but apparently he tries to show that our own self-consciousness, *as Kant conceived it*, not merely suggests the ideal, but is itself a partial realization of the ideal. *Intellektuelle Anschauung* in its highest form is, according to Thiele, "absolute knowing, absolute identity of knowing and being." "Our human self-consciousness is a very feeble reflection of this absolute knowing." Apparently, however, the difference between the two is not in kind, but merely in degree. "In the act of thought, 'I,' subject and object coincide; here the knowing is the known; *here is* identity of knowing and being" (*Kant's intellektuelle Anschauung*, 95). In the Appendix, Note B, Thiele's interpretation is briefly considered.

It is often said, however, that the dualism which is so manifest in the earlier *Kritik* is overcome to a considerable extent in the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* and the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft.* With regard to the former of these two works, there is one respect, as we shall presently see, in which the statement is true; but there are other defects of Kant's ethical theory which quite counterbalance this gain. And in general I incline to think that the amount and value of the correction which Kant is said to have made in these later writings have been greatly overestimated.

In the sphere of knowledge, we have seen, there is no possibility of the slightest approximation to the ideal; the difference between human cognition and *intellektuelle Anschauung* is absolute. In the moral realm, however, the case seems at first sight to be somewhat better. Apparently Kant believes that we may gradually approach the ideal of morality; the task is indeed infinite, yet there is a possibility of progress. "The perfect conformity of the will to the moral law is *holiness*, a perfection of which no rational being in the world of sense is capable at any moment of his existence. Since, however, it is demanded as practically necessary, it can be found only in an *infinite progress* toward this perfect conformity. . . . For a rational, but finite being, there is possible only an infinite progress from the lower to the higher stages of moral perfection. The *Infinite Being* . . . sees in what is to us an endless series, a complete conformity to the moral law." [1]

At first thought this may seem to be a decided advance upon the doctrine of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft.* As soon, however, as we examine the matter closely, we see that the gain is more apparent than real; for the advantage has been secured by lowering the concept of the ideal. In the earlier *Kritik*, the ideal is described as an organic unity of content and form; but in the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* it seems to be conceived as mere form.

The dualism which appears in the sphere of knowledge as the opposition of sense and understanding meets us in the moral realm as the opposition of desire and the moral law. According

[1] *Kr. d. pr. V.*, H., V, 128 f.

to Kant, the law is purely formal; its whole content must be sought in natural desire. And the relation between it and this desire is represented as complete opposition. Natural impulse has its source in the world of sense. It is utterly disparate from that pure self-consciousness which forms the basis of all morality. "The will is placed between its *a priori* principle, which is formal, and its *a posteriori* impulse, which is material." [1] "Only a formal law, that is, a law which prescribes to reason, as the highest condition of its maxims, nothing else than the form of its universal legislation, can be *a priori* a ground of determination for the practical reason." [2] Now if the two elements of our ethical experience are essentially opposed, the only morality possible for us will consist in the subjugation of one of them by the other. And this is precisely the conception which Kant seems to have of the nature of moral progress. The development is regarded as the gradual annihilation of our natural impulses. Desire is not to be taken up into the law and purified until it is worthy to be the content of the moral life; it is to be crushed out. The ideal is to be found, not in the organic unity of content and form, but in the complete subjection of content to form. "The essence of all moral worth in actions depends upon *the immediate determination of the will by the moral law.* If the determination of the will takes place *in accord* with the moral law, but yet only by means of a feeling, *of whatever sort it may be*,[3] which must be presupposed in order that there may be a sufficient ground of determination for the will, . . . then the action will have *legality*, to be sure, but no *moral quality*." [4] "The moral law . . . does violence to all our inclinations." [5] "Only that which is united with my will solely as ground, never as effect, only that which instead of obeying my inclination, overpowers it, or at least utterly excludes it from calculation in the choice, thus, only the law, existing solely for itself, can be an object of respect." [6]

[1] *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, H., IV, 248.
[2] *Kr. d. pr. V.*, H., V, 68.
[3] The italics in this phrase are mine.
[4] *Op. cit.*, H., V, 76.
[5] *Op. cit.*, H., V, 77.
[6] *Grundl. zur Met. d. Sitten*, H., IV, 248.

These quotations seem to show that the advance which is made in the ethical writings is only apparent; that the ideal to which we are able to approximate, is not a unity of form and matter, but mere empty form. It might be urged, however, that in identifying the formal law with the ideal of the moral life, we are misrepresenting Kant. Holiness, he tells us, is indeed the highest good, but it is not the complete good. The *summum bonum* in this latter sense is "happiness distributed . . . in exact proportion to morality." [1] I mention this as a possible interpretation, not as one which I myself accept; the conception of the moral ideal as a union of happiness and virtue seems to me quite foreign to the spirit of the Kantian ethics. For our present purpose, however, it is not necessary to decide between these two interpretations. For even if one maintained that Kant's moral ideal is the *summum bonum* in the sense of the 'complete good' and is therefore a unity of form and content, it would still be true that this is a lower conception of the ideal than that which we find in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft.* The complete good is indeed a union of form and matter, but it is by no means an organic union. Virtue and happiness are not one in essence; they are held together by an external force. In themselves they are utterly opposed; in order to make their union intelligible, we must postulate the existence of a Divine Being. "One must regret that the keenness of these men [the Stoics and Epicureans] . . . was unfortunately directed to the task of searching out an identity between the most dissimilar concepts, those of happiness and virtue." [2] "Happiness and morality are two specifically *different elements* of the highest good, and their union, therefore, cannot be known *analytically*, . . . but is a *synthesis* of the concepts." [3] "Thus the highest good is possible in the world only in so far as a Supreme Being is assumed who has a causality corresponding to the moral nature." [4]

[1] *Kr. d. pr. V.*, H., V, 116. [2] *Op. cit.*, H., V, 117.

[3] *Op. cit.*, H., V, 119. We have here another illustration of that mechanical conception of synthesis to which Professor Creighton calls attention in the article from which we have quoted. See above, p. 4.

[4] *Op. cit.*, H., V, 131.

We see, then, that whichever view we take of Kant's moral end, it is far from being the organic unity of form and content which we have in the higher stage of the doctrine of *intellektuelle Anschauung*. We are therefore justified in saying that with regard to the relation between human experience and its ideal, the second *Kritik* makes no real advance upon the first. The ideal of morality is less inaccessible than that of knowledge only because it is lower. And we are as far as ever from the conception of human experience as being implicitly that unity of form and content which we must always regard as the ideal.

Nor can I see that the case is much better when we come to the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*. It is often said, to be sure, that in this work Kant finally overcomes the dualism of his system; that in the æsthetic judgment we have the unity of subject and object for which we have long been searching; and that the concept of design bridges the gulf between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds.[1] It does not seem to me, however, that Kant really solves the problem in either of these cases, though he perhaps indicates the direction in which the solution is to be sought. At

[1] Professor Caird, for example, seems to incline to this view. He admits that Kant himself, after seeming to assert the unity of subject and object in the æsthetic Ideas and in the concept of design, finally "recoils" from this conclusion and "determines as subjective the very Ideas by which the opposition of objective and subjective seemed to be broken down." But he thinks that "this reversion to Dualism . . . should not conceal from us the real tendency" of Kant's thought, "which in the *Critique of Judgment* has all but come full circle and returned to the unity which it began by breaking up" (*The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, Glasgow, 1889, II, 453).

It may be of interest to notice Fichte's judgment upon this question. In the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1804, he says that the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, which professes to mediate between the sensible and intelligible worlds, does not fulfill its promise. Instead of one Absolute, Kant has three. "In the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, his Absolute is *sensible experience* $= x$." The *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* gives us "the second Absolute, a *moral world* $= z$." These two worlds are utterly opposed to one another. Now in the *Introduction* to the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, we have "the admission that the supersensible and the sensible world must be united in a common, but quite inaccessible root, which root would be the third Absolute $= y$. [Presumably Fichte's reference is to § IX of the *Introduction*, H., V, 201 ff.] I say a *third*, separated from the other two Absolutes and subsisting by itself, although it is to serve as the connection of the other two members. And in saying this, I do Kant no injustice. For if this y is inaccessible, then it may contain the connection of the other two; but I, for my part, cannot penetrate it nor conceive the other two mediately, as proceeding from it" (N. W., II, 103 f.).

first, indeed, it may seem that in the immediate apprehension of the beautiful, we have that harmony of subject and object for which the theoretical consciousness seeks in vain. But when we recall Kant's comparison of æsthetic and rational Ideas, we see that this can hardly have been his meaning. "Ideas . . . are conscious states (*Vorstellungen*) which are referred to an object according to a certain (subjective or objective) principle, but in such a way that they can never become knowledge of the object. Either they are referred to a perception according to a merely subjective principle of the agreement of our faculties of cognition (imagination and understanding), and in this case we call them *æsthetic* Ideas; or they are referred to a concept according to an objective principle and yet can never give a knowledge of the object, in which case we call them *Ideas of reason.* . . . An *æsthetic Idea* cannot become knowledge, because it is a *perception* (of the imagination) for which an adequate concept can never be found. An *Idea of reason* can never become knowledge, because it contains a *concept* (of the supersensible) for which the corresponding perception can never be given." [1]

The natural inference from this passage seems to be that the ideal of knowledge is no more fully realized in the æsthetic, than in the rational, Idea. Just as the latter needs perception, in order that it may become valid knowledge, so the former needs conception. There is a defect even in our apprehension of the beautiful; the adequate concept (formal element) is lacking. Even if we were willing to grant that in his doctrine of the beautiful Kant comes somewhat nearer to the perfect harmony of subject and object, still we cannot help feeling that there is an essential difference between æsthetic contemplation, as he conceives it, and his ideal of *intellektuelle Anschauung.*

And when we turn to the teleological faculty of judgment, there seems to be still less reason for maintaining that the dualism of the earlier works is overcome. For Kant frequently reminds us of the difference between our cognition, with its inevitable dualism, and the ideal of a perceptive understanding, in whose

[1] *Kr. d. U.*, H., V, 353.

act of thought the existence of the object is given.[1] And he tells us more than once that the concept of design, which is supposed to mediate between the sensible and the intelligible world, has merely subjective validity. All that it does, is to make it possible for us to *think* the unity of nature and freedom. "The concept of the purposiveness of nature in her products is one which it is necessary for the human judgment to use in considering nature, but not one which touches the determination of objects themselves. Thus it is a subjective principle of reason for the judgment, which as regulative (not constitutive) has just as much necessary validity for our *human judgment* as if it were an objective principle."[2]

It seems clear, then, that Kant's conception of experience had not changed when he wrote the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft.* The opposition which the first *Kritik* finds between the two aspects of human experience, and which reappears in the ethical treatises, meets us for the third time in the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft.* In themselves, form and matter may not be opposed; but Kant is very sure that *as aspects of our experience* they stand apart; that, alike in our simplest perception and in our most complicated processes of reasoning, in our æsthetic consciousness and in our moral life, the dualism of content and form persists. We have indeed a vague notion of a kind of consciousness in which this dualism is surmounted: intellectual perception as a self-consciousness by whose act of unity the manifold content comes into being, is a perfect harmony of subject and object. But the concept of this harmony is merely problematic; we do not know that any such cognition really exists. And we may be sure that if it does exist, it is wholly unlike our own consciousness.

The difference between Kant and Fichte is nowhere more

[1] "For the human understanding it is absolutely necessary to distinguish the possibility from the actuality of things. The ground of this necessity lies in the subject and in the nature of his faculty of knowledge. For there would be no such distinction (between the possible and the actual) if it were not that our faculty of knowledge needs for its exercise two quite different things, the understanding for concepts, and sensuous perception for the objects which correspond to the concepts. That is, if our understanding were perceptive, it would have no objects except the actual" (*Op. cit.*, H., V, 414).

[2] *Op. cit.*, H., V, 417.

clearly marked than at this point. The motive of Fichte's philosophy is its constant effort to rise above the opposition of form and matter. Kant regards this dualism as insurmountable; Fichte insists that it can and must be resolved. His repeated attacks upon the notion of the thing-in-itself show how utterly he repudiates the doctrine of a fundamental opposition between the content and the form of thought. Knowledge, *our* knowledge, is a unity. It appears indeed as duality: but its task is just to rise above this dualism; to conquer this phenomenality; to know itself, not in its appearance, but in its truth.

But although Fichte insists that thought is essentially unitary, he does not deny that it seems to itself dualistic, nay, more, that it must seem so. "Egohood consists in the absolute identity of the subjective and the objective (absolute union of being with consciousness and of consciousness with being). . . . The essence of the Ego is not the subjective nor the objective, but — an identity. . . . Is it possible for any one to think this identity as himself? Surely not; for to think of oneself, one must *make that distinction between subjective and objective* which is *not* made in this concept [of identity]. Without this distinction no thinking is in any wise possible." [1]

We see then that Fichte admits as readily as Kant the dualism of form and matter in our cognition; he makes no attempt to deny that on the plane of ordinary consciousness these two aspects of knowing are sharply opposed. But he differs from Kant in his insistence that we can rise above this plane, to a point from which we can see that the opposition is not the highest truth. "For a thorough-going idealism, *a priori* and *a posteriori* are not two, but one; only, this one is looked at from two sides." [2] The insight into this truth is a philosophic insight. It is only by philosophical reflection that we can hope to discover the unity which underlies the seeming duality of our experience. The finding of this unity and the exposition of the relation between it and the superficial duality is the great task which the philosopher must undertake.

[1] *Das System der Sittenlehre* (1798), S. W., IV, 42.
[2] *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, S. W., I, 447.

That human thought is essentially a unity, is in the first instance, as Fichte readily admits, an assumption. But he maintains that it is one of those assumptions which every philosopher must make. Philosophy as he conceives it, is simply the systematic effort to bring all the facts of experience, discordant though they seem, into relation with one supreme principle. In assuming the possibility of metaphysics — and Fichte of course does this without hesitation — we are practically assuming that the apparent duality of our experience is not ultimate, that beneath all the oppositions which force themselves so insistently upon our thought, there is an underlying unity. "It is easy to see that in presupposing the possibility of such a *Wissenschaftslehre* in general . . . we are always presupposing that human knowing actually constitutes a system. But if it is to be a system, then we can also . . . show that there must be an absolutely first *Grundsatz*."[1] That human thought is essentially unitary, follows, then, from the assertion that philosophy, as Fichte conceives it, is possible. But this assumption of the possibility of philosophy involves also another presupposition. For it is conceivable that human experience might be the dualistic manifestation of an underlying unity and yet that metaphysics should be quite impossible for us. Kant himself admits that our experience *may* have its roots in a unitary principle; but he maintains that, supposing this principle to exist, yet from the very nature of the case we can never know anything about it and that therefore the problems of metaphysics are for us utterly insoluble. If philosophy is to be possible, then, it must be true, not only that there is such an underlying unity, but also that we may have some sort of acquaintance with it. It cannot be utterly inaccessible to human thinking; our own consciousness must give us the key to its nature.

These, then, are the two presuppositions with which Fichte starts — that human thought, in spite of all its superficial oppositions, is the expression of a unitary principle, and that in some degree we are able by philosophical reflection to get at this principle. As we have already seen, he clearly recognizes that these

[1] *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, S. W., I, 52.

are assumptions. From the very nature of the case they cannot at the outset be proved; they are the fundamental postulates of every philosophy. The only way in which we can hope to justify them is by working out a satisfactory system of thought based upon them. When philosophy shall have fulfilled her task, that is, when the unitary principle shall have been discovered and the seeming duality of its manifestation explained, then, and then only, will our primary assumptions have received their justification. "Before the actual investigation one cannot determine whether the solution of the problem [of philosophy] is possible or not, that is, whether all our knowing has a firm ground which can be discovered (*erkennbar*), or whether on the contrary it . . . rests ultimately on nothing, or at least nothing *for us*. But if our knowing is to have a ground for us, then this problem must admit of solution and there must be a science in which it is solved. And [conversely] if there is such a science, then our knowing has a ground which can be discovered. Hence, before the investigation we can say nothing as to the nature of our knowing, as to whether it has or has not a ground. The possibility of the requisite science can be shown only through its actuality."[1] But while Fichte admits that the correctness of his assumption can be shown only by the actual discovery of the supreme unity, he by no means accepts the counter-proposition that the failure to make the discovery indicates that experience has no unitary principle or even that we are incapable of finding it. "If we do not succeed" in discovering it, one of two things must be true. "Either there is no such system" as we have supposed, in human knowing, "or we ourselves have simply failed to find it and must leave the discovery to more fortunate successors. To jump at the conclusion that there is no such system, simply because *we* have not found it is to make an assumption which does not deserve to be dignified with a serious refutation."[2]

We see then that Fichte's point of departure from Kant is found in his unwillingness to admit that the dualism in human

[1] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 43 f.
[2] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 54.

consciousness is insurmountable. He refuses to accept the outcome of Kant's argument — the doctrine of the impossibility of metaphysics. No one, he insists, can be justified in asserting that philosophy is impossible. The most that one has a right to say, is that he himself has not succeeded in working out a satisfactory philosophical theory; but that any one should presume to set absolute bounds for the human reason is preposterous. And in the courage of this belief, Fichte presses on in quest of the great solution which perhaps thought may never attain, but which at least it must ever seek.

And the clue which guides him in his search was given him by the very master who has told us that all search is vain. Not only did Kant, by pointing out the dualism of human thought, set the problem for his successors, but the very means which he took for emphasizing this dualism seems to have suggested to Fichte the way of escape. When Kant wishes to show us how poor a thing our knowledge is, he does it by contrasting the actual attainment with the ideal. What we need in order that the ideal of thought may be realized, or as Kant would put it, that we may attain to perfect cognition, is a self-consciousness which, besides being a unitary principle, as our self-consciousness is, shall also be a creative principle, an understanding whose very act of unifying brings into being a manifold of perception. Our self-consciousness is not thus creative; on the contrary, the *I think* is "the poorest of all ideas."[1] The vast difference between *intellektuelle Anschauung* and our human way of thinking should suffice to convince us that the barriers within which our thought is confined, are insurmountable.

This comparison with the ideal, which seems to Kant so disastrous for self-consciousness, suggests to Fichte the key to the solution of his problem. For this ideal which lies so far removed, is yet the ideal of *human thought*, is the principle which must guide this thought through all its development — is indeed its real essence, its highest truth. Or, to put the matter otherwise, we may say that the ideal — the Idea of the Ego — is that very creative principle for which we have been looking. "In the

[1] B, 408.

ideal is life forever." It is a motive power, a principle of activity, a productive force. Consciousness, regarded as merely intellectual, is bound in the fetters of an inevitable dualism; to the 'Ego as intelligence' a Non-Ego is ever opposed. But if you regard consciousness merely in this way, you mistake its true nature. It has also an ideal side, an aspect of infinity; and he who would know the full meaning of experience must not ignore this aspect.

Thus we see that the means by which Fichte effected his transformation of Kant's doctrine is a simple one: it consists in pointing out that the chief value of the ideal is not in showing us the defects of human knowledge, but rather in helping us to a better understanding of its real nature. All knowing is a union of form and matter, of subject and object. This union may have various degrees of completeness; the duality is never quite overcome in actual or individual modes of knowing. The essence of thought, however, consists not in its particularity, but in its absoluteness. The more perfectly the duality has been overcome, the more has the true nature of knowing been manifested. For its true nature is not the actual, but the ideal. Our consciousness becomes intelligible only when it is considered in its relation to absolute knowing.

This insistence that the nature of thought can be understood only when it is interpreted in the light of its ideal, illustrates a difference in method between Kant and Fichte. Kant starts with human experience and finds in it certain oppositions, all of which may be regarded as different phases of the fundamental opposition between content and form. Since he sees no way of rising above these, he accepts them as ultimate. If we hold that thought is essentially dualistic, however, we can never hope to bridge the gulf between it and that ideal unity in which all differences are harmonized. Thus for Kant the relation between experience and its ideal is conceived negatively; the ideal is the negation of the real. Now Fichte, we have said, sees as plainly as Kant the dualistic aspect of our experience; but he does not succumb to it so readily. For him a purely negative relation is unthinkable; the ideal cannot be the negation of the real. And if it be true that by starting with experience we can never show the relation

between it and its ideal, then we must not start with experience. If we cannot explain the ideal by means of the real, we must try to explain the real by means of the ideal.

The way in which Fichte attempts to do this will be described in the next chapter. Here we have simply pointed out the path that he follows in his attempt to pass beyond the barriers which Kant had set for the human mind. The clue which guides him in his search is the thought that the explanation of the real is to be found in the ideal. How he conceives this ideal and how he works out his doctrine of the relation between it and actual experience, must be considered in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

The Works of the First Period: The Idea of the Ego.

In the more detailed study of Fichte upon which we are now entering, the two periods of his philosophy will be considered separately. Whether or not the works of the so-called 'second period' represent a change in any of his essential doctrines, they are, at least outwardly, less closely connected with Kant than the earlier writings are; and it will be more convenient for us to study first the works in which the relation to Kant is more obvious. In the present chapter, therefore, we shall confine ourselves in the main to treatises whose date is prior to the year 1800. In Chapter III we shall take up the later works, and in this connection the vexed question of the relation between the two periods will receive some attention.

In the preceding chapter we suggested that one of the great differences between Kant and Fichte lies in the conception of the relation between consciousness and its ideal. For Kant, as we have seen, the relation is a negative one; the ideal is that which consciousness is not and never can be; nay, more, that to which it cannot even approach. Fichte, on the other hand, conceives the relation positively. He maintains that consciousness is not essentially unlike its ideal, but that in spite of its explicit duality, it is implicitly a unity.

Now the task of philosophy, as Fichte understands it, is to explain the dualism of consciousness by showing how it could have arisen from a unitary principle. And the only way in which he can hope to accomplish it is by calling to his aid that very consciousness which is to be explained. If we do not find the clue to the solution of the problem in our own experience, we cannot hope to find it anywhere. The philosopher after all is only a man, and he has nothing to work with, except that which is in some degree accessible to every man.[1]

[1] "The finite rational being has nothing outside experience; experience contains the whole matter (*Stoff*) of his thinking. The philosopher of necessity is subject to

We must appeal, then, to experience. But the problem is to find the explanatory ground of experience, and it is involved "in the very concept of ground" that it lies "outside that of which it is the ground." How then can we hope that experience will help us solve our problem? To this question Fichte's answer is that by an act of philosophical reflection we must make an analysis of experience, must separate the elements which are united in it. When we do this we see that experience has two aspects, the objective and the subjective, the thing that is known and the intelligence that knows. "The philosopher can abstract from either one of these and thus . . . raise himself above experience. If he abstracts from the former, he gets, as the explanatory ground of experience, an intelligence *in itself*, that is, intelligence abstracted from its relation to experience; if he abstracts from the latter, he gets a thing *in itself*, that is, in abstraction from the fact that it is presented in experience. The first procedure is called *idealism;* the second, *dogmatism.*" [1]

These two are the only philosophical systems which are possible; that is, the only consistent philosophical systems. For since experience has but these two aspects, the subjective and the objective, we can hope to show its essential unity only by exhibiting one of them as a special form of the other; we must either explain intelligence by deducing it from the thing, or explain the thing by deducing it from intelligence. Dogmatism takes as its principle of explanation, the thing-in-itself — mere lifeless being — and seeks to deduce life and consciousness from it. Idealism takes as its principle, intelligence or the Ego, which is an activity. Every consistent philosophy is thus either dogmatism or idealism.

Now Fichte admits that there is no way of proving directly that the true philosophy is idealism rather than dogmatism. "It is a mere presupposition" that intelligence is the explanatory ground of experience, "that from it can be deduced the whole system of our necessary ideas, not only of a world as composed

the same conditions" (*Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, 1797, S. W., I, 425).

[1] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 424 ff.

of objects which receive their determinations from a subsuming and reflecting judgment, but also of ourselves as free and practical beings, subject to laws." [1] Nor is it possible for the idealist to offer any direct refutation of dogmatism. "Neither of these two systems can directly overthrow the other; for their conflict is with regard to the first principle," which is assumed as a starting-point and is therefore "incapable of deduction." [2] The only justification that either can have, must consist in the successful accomplishment of its task. But if this is our criterion, then, Fichte claims, we have at the outset a partial justification for idealism. For it can be shown that "dogmatism is utterly incapable of explaining what it has to explain. . . . It must explain the idea, and it undertakes to make this conceivable by a reference to the influence of a thing-in-itself; but in doing this it must not contradict what immediate consciousness tells us with regard to the idea." [3] If now we should take the thing as our principle of explanation, all that it could possibly give us is a being, not an idea (not a being for intelligence). "In intelligence — to use a figurative expression — there is a double series, of the being and the contemplating, of the real and the ideal." The most that dogmatism can give us is the "single series of the real." [4] Dogmatism then is utterly unable to bridge "the gulf between things and ideas. Instead of an explanation it offers a few empty words. . . . It is not a philosophy, but only a feeble affirmation and assertion. Idealism remains as the only possible philosophy." [5]

It will readily be seen that this does not give us a complete defence of idealism. And Fichte himself maintains, as we have said, that the real justification of idealistic philosophy must consist, not in the failure of the rival theory, but in its own success. Nevertheless he feels that even at the outset of the investigation the idealistic hypothesis has the advantage. For it is not condemned by the very nature of the problem as is the case with realism. Dogmatism takes as its starting-point mere lifeless

[1] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 445. [2] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 429.
[3] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 435. [4] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 436.
[5] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 438.

being, the thing-in-itself, and seeks by this principle to explain the existence and nature of consciousness. In so doing, it is attempting the impossible : it is trying to explain thought through something which by hypothesis has no relation to thought. With idealism the case is different. Starting with thought, it does not attempt to deduce a being unrelated to thought, but rather a being which exists simply in and for the thinking process. Thus there is no irreconcilable opposition between the two terms which it seeks to relate ; and even before the attempt is made, there is reason to suppose that the solution of the problem of knowledge must lie in some form of idealism.

Fichte's principle of explanation, then, is the Ego. It is possible, however, to understand this Ego in two different ways : namely, as pure subject (mere form) and as the unity of subject and object (of form and matter). The first interpretation is at least suggested by the discussion in the *Erste Einleitung* which we have just been considering. Consciousness itself contains two principles, a formal and a material. But its material principle is just that which leads us to postulate the existence of the thing-in-itself. Hence when Fichte says that instead of trying to explain the Ego by the thing we should rather seek to explain the thing by the Ego, one can hardly be blamed for supposing him to mean that the subjective principle is ultimate and that the objective is a secondary manifestation of it. And if we interpret the *Wissenschaftslehre* in this way, it seems to be a thoroughgoing subjective idealism, in which all the material aspect of thought is regarded as mere *Schein*, while the formal aspect alone is taken as real.

But this does not seem to be Fichte's meaning. Our key to the nature of the ultimate principle is consciousness in its *dual* aspect of subject and object. In experience we always find both form and matter, and it is impossible for us to conceive of the one as existing without the other. Each principle has its rights ; to make either the explanatory ground of the other would be to do injustice to this other. Hence the unitary principle which the analysis of consciousness reveals, must not be identified with either one of the two aspects taken alone, but rather with both of

them. Now in consciousness, the two aspects are in opposition ; subject and object are always found together, but they are found opposed. The one principle, then, which is to explain both and to do justice to both, must be that unity of subject and object which is never explicit in consciousness but which is always implied in it.

This, it seems to me, is Fichte's real meaning. There can be little doubt, indeed, that many of his contemporaries interpreted him as teaching that the ultimate principle is the formal or subjective aspect of experience. Schelling, *e. g.*, apparently understood him in this way and hence regarded his own *Identitätsphilosophie* as making a distinct advance upon the Fichtean doctrine by pointing out that the true principle is neither the subjective nor the objective, but the harmony of the two.[1] Fichte himself, however, insists that he has been misunderstood, that his principle is, and always has been, the unity of subject and object. That some of the most emphatic statements of his position are found in his later writings[2] should not be interpreted as meaning that he held one view in the first period and afterwards, under the influence of Schelling, abandoned it for another.[3] Schelling himself may have thought this to be the case. But in the first

[1] See, *e. g.*, a passage in the *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*. After warning the reader not to misunderstand him when he calls his system idealism, Schelling continues as follows : " But now it may very well be that the idealism, *e. g.*, which Fichte at first worked out and which even now he still defends, has a significance quite different from mine. Fichte, *e. g.*, seems to have regarded idealism in a wholly subjective sense, whereas I regard it in an objective sense. Fichte in his idealism seems to have remained at the standpoint of reflection, while I, with my principle of idealism, have placed myself at the standpoint of production. Idealism in the subjective sense might say, 'The Ego is all' ; idealism in the objective sense would reverse this and say, 'All is the Ego'" (S. W., Zw. Abthl., II, 109).

[2] In the second edition of the *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*, *e. g.*, Fichte appends to his discussion of the first *Grundsatz* a note in which he says: " All this means, in other words in which I have since expressed it, that the Ego is necessarily identity of subject and object, subject-object; and it is this absolutely, without further mediation" (S. W., I, 98, note). The second edition of the *Grundlage* appeared in 1802. For similar statements, see *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* (1801), S. W., II, 76 ; also the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1804, N. W., II, 96. *Cf.* with these I. H. Fichte's defence of his father against Schelling's misinterpretation (*J. G. Fichte's Sämmtliche Werke*, Bd. I, *Vorrede des Herausgebers*, S. XV, ff.).

[3] If the statements in the second period are more numerous and more emphatic, the reason is not far to seek. From the comments and criticisms of his contempo-

place, as we have just said, Fichte explicitly denies it; and in the second place, we have, in the works of the first period, a few very definite statements which should convince us that even at this time he conceived his ultimate principle as a unity of the subjective and objective aspects of human experience. *E. g.*, in the *Sittenlehre* of 1798, we find the following passages:

"No one can hope to solve the problem of all philosophy . . . who does not find a point in which the objective and the subjective are not separated at all, but are entirely one." The *Wissenschaftslehre* "finds such a point and starts from it. Egohood, intelligence, reason, . . . is this point. This absolute identity of subject and object in the Ego can only be inferred; we can never put our finger upon it as a fact of actual consciousness. Whenever actual consciousness arises, even if it be only the consciousness of self, the separation ensues. I am conscious of myself only in so far as I distinguish myself, the conscious subject, from myself as the object of this consciousness. *The whole mechanism of consciousness is based upon the various aspects of this separation of subjective and objective and of their subsequent union.*"[1]

"Knowing and being [the formal element and the material] are separated, not outside consciousness and independently of it, but only in consciousness; their separation is the condition of the possibility of all consciousness. . . . The One which is thus separated is the ground of all consciousness."[2]

And even in the *Erste Einleitung*, which, as we saw, seemed to suggest the other interpretation, there are indications that Fichte did not mean to represent his ultimate principle as identical with the merely subjective aspect of consciousness. The point upon which he is insisting in his discussion is that intelligence, and not the thing, shall be our explanatory ground. But when he tells us that intelligence contains, as it were, a double series, — the real and the ideal, — he is evidently thinking of his ultimate principle as a unity of subject and object. The chief difficulty apparently is one of termi-

raries Fichte realized that the earlier works had been misunderstood; in the later writings, therefore, he tried to express himself more exactly.

[1] S. W., IV, 1.

[2] S. W., IV, 5. *Cf.* S. W., IV, 42, quoted above, p. 16.

nology. Fichte's theory is that consciousness, as an imperfect union of subject and object, points to an ultimate ground in which the union is complete; but the relation in which his doctrine stood to contemporary thought made it almost inevitable that his terminology should be somewhat confused. His arch-enemy is the conception of the thing-in-itself, and it is in his crusade against this pernicious notion that he unconsciously falls into modes of speech which subject him to misinterpretation. He seems to have used the term 'Non-Ego' in two different senses. Sometimes the word signifies simply the objective principle in consciousness. When this is so, the object is regarded as the correlate of the subject, as standing on the same plane with it, and the finite Ego, or the Ego as intelligence, is merely the subjective principle. In this case, the absolute Ego — the explanatory ground of experience — is thought of as being related just as closely to the Non-Ego as to the individual Ego; it is the unity of the two. At other times, however, Fichte means by the Non-Ego, not the objective aspect of consciousness, but the thing-in-itself, conceived as existing without any necessary relation to consciousness. In this case, the individual Ego is no longer merely the subjective principle; it is consciousness in its dual aspect of subject and object. Hence Fichte is now concerned to prove that the Non-Ego does not stand on the same plane with the individual Ego. The Non-Ego, conceived of as existing apart from consciousness, *is* mere *Schein*, a creature of the imagination, an *Unding;* consciousness, not the thing-in-itself, gives us the clue to the nature of the ultimate principle.

This interpretation, I think, disposes of the particular difficulty which we have just been considering. So far as we have gone, there seems to be no objection to our saying that Fichte regards his ultimate principle as a unity of form and content, rather than mere form. There is, however, another aspect of the question which calls for more detailed consideration. It appears in connection with Fichte's doctrine of the Idea of the Ego, and before we consider it we must examine that doctrine in some detail.

The development of the conception of the Ego as Idea may best be traced in the *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*

(1794). As we have already seen, Fichte believes that the task of philosophy is to discover the unity which forms the foundation of all experience and to show the relation which it bears to the dualistic nature of our ordinary consciousness. This underlying unity, we have also seen, is to be found by a philosophical analysis of experience. The correct analysis gives us as our ultimate principle, the Ego rather than the thing; an idealistic interpretation of experience is the only one that is possible for us. So much we have learned from the *Erste Einleitung*, which, though published three years later than the *Grundlage*, is really an introduction to it and was written for the purpose of making its meaning clearer.

The *Erste Einleitung* tells us that the ground of experience can be discovered by a philosophical analysis of consciousness; in the *Grundlage* this analysis is performed for us. The book opens with an attempt to get at the nature of the fundamental principle by considering a simple act of judgment. The proposition "*A* is *A*" is the one which Fichte selects; but, he tells us, any affirmative judgment that is universally accepted would serve equally well. What now is involved in this proposition of identity, this assertion that a thing is itself? The ground of the judgment, that which alone enables us to make it, is the fundamental principle of all consciousness, "The Ego originally posits its own being." The line of reasoning by which Fichte seeks to show us that this *Grundsatz* forms the basis of the proposition of identity[1] is somewhat artificial and would perhaps scarcely convince any one who was not already prepared to admit the contention. We may therefore pass over the set argument and content ourselves with dwelling for a little time on the essential meaning of the assertion that all affirmative judgment implies the self-positing of the Ego.

Since Kant's deduction of the categories from the transcendental unity of apperception, the thought that every act of judgment involves the assertion of the self has been familiar to students of philosophy. It seems, however, that Kant himself failed to grasp the whole meaning of his doctrine. The task of discovering its full significance remained for his successors; and

[1] S. W., I, 92 ff.

all the forms of post-Kantian idealism may be regarded as so many attempts to get a clearer conception of the nature of judgment in its relation to the self. As Fichte points out, however, Kant was not the first to have a glimpse of this truth. Descartes's "Cogito, ergo sum," though it is an inadequate formulation and though Descartes himself seems quite unconscious of its deeper significance, is yet a gleam of real light. The "Cogito, ergo sum," Fichte tells us, regarded "not as minor premise and conclusion of a syllogism, but . . . as immediate fact of consciousness," is at bottom simply a recognition of that self-assertion of the Ego which is involved in all thinking.[1]

The fuller meaning of the doctrine may be seen when we consider Fichte's statement that this self-affirmation of the Ego gives us the category of reality. The declaration that something is, or is real, has no meaning save as it embodies an implicit reference to the self for which this something is real. He who hesitates to affirm the existence of himself[2] cannot logically affirm anything; for in the act of asserting anything whatever about any subject, he inevitably proclaims the existence of his own consciousness.

Self-consciousness then, as Descartes dimly saw, must be our starting-point. But self-consciousness as revealed to us in judgment, the primary intellectual act, involves something more than mere consciousness of self. Judgment has not only an affirmative, but also a negative aspect. In the negative judgment — for example, "*A* is not not-*A*" — this second aspect of consciousness is revealed. It is expressed in our second *Grundsatz*, which forms the basis of all negative judgment, "To the Ego a Non-Ego is absolutely opposed."[3] This *Grundsatz* is in a sense subordinate to the first one. The first is unconditioned

[1] S. W., I, 99 f.

[2] In this discussion, I mean to use the terms 'self' and 'existence of self' without any implication of a substantial self which is supposed to support and possess consciousness. There seems to be no need, either in psychology or in metaphysics, of asserting the existence of such a self, either as immediate datum of consciousness or as necessary inference from the facts of consciousness. The self, as I use the term, is identical with consciousness or experience; it has just as much substantiality and unity as experience has — so much and no more.

[3] S. W., I, 104.

both in form and content. The second is unconditioned in form, but conditioned in content — derives its content from the first. It is unconditioned in form because negation is in a sense as truly a primary act of consciousness as affirmation is ; it is conditioned in content because negation is *negation* only as compared with affirmation. "If the consciousness of the first act did not accompany the consciousness of the second, then the second positing (*Setzen*) would not be an opposition (*Gegensetzen*), but merely a positing. It first becomes an opposition through reference to a positing." [1]

Negation then, as well as affirmation, is a fundamental aspect of judgment. If we consider the matter a little, we see that any judgment, when taken in its full meaning, involves both assertion and denial. The simplest affirmation that we can make brings with it an implied negation. All judgment is at once inclusive and exclusive : to declare that a thing is *this*, is to declare that it is not *that*.[2] It should be noted, however, that affirmation is *ordinarily* more effective than negation.[3] To say that a particular flower *is not* a Crucifer is to exclude one possibility, but to leave many others open ; to say that it *is* Composite is to destroy at one blow a host of possibilities. This greater effectiveness of the affirmative judgment justifies us in assenting to Fichte's proposition that the fundamental characteristic of thought is affirmation.

But when we have shown that consciousness involves both

[1] S. W., I, 103.

[2] This view of the matter, as is readily seen, rests upon the doctrine that every judgment involves some approach to disjunction. And for my own part I cannot see how any other doctrine is tenable. For if my assertion that *A* is *B* does not imply a denial that *A* is something else, *e. g.*, *C*, then it tells us nothing whatever and thus is not a judgment. *Cf.* Bosanquet, *Logic or the Morphology of Knowledge* (Oxford, 1888), I, 340. "The whole assertory state within which the simpler forms of judgment, at any rate from Comparison upwards, have their import, is from the first of a disjunctive nature." Professor Bosanquet guards his statement by excluding what he calls the 'judgment of quality,' but I think he would admit that even this, the simplest type of judgment, has an aspect of negation. For in another passage he tells us that negation "has from the first its essential place in knowledge" (*Op. cit.*, I, 297).

[3] When we have a perfect disjunction, consisting of only two members, negation is of course as effective as affirmation. But in this case the negation derives its effectiveness in large measure from the disjunction upon which it rests ; and this disjunction, while it of course involves negation, is still predominantly affirmative.

affirmation and negation, we have not even yet disclosed its full nature. For these two moments, as Fichte points out, are apparently in utter opposition to each other. On the one hand we have bare identity; the Ego posits itself. On the other hand we have bare contradiction; to the Ego a Non-Ego is absolutely opposed. Now if consciousness is to be understood, this contradiction between its two moments must, in some way or other, be resolved. For if affirmation and negation are both aspects of experience, their opposition cannot be ultimate. That they are aspects of one reality and that therefore they cannot be in absolute contradiction, Fichte indicates in his third *Grundsatz*, "In the Ego I oppose to the divisible Ego a divisible Non-Ego";[1] that is, being interpreted, the opposition is an opposition *within* consciousness and not an opposition *to* consciousness — one which consciousness itself creates, not one which is thrust upon it by something external.

In these three propositions which Fichte develops at the outset of his study, we have the three moments which are involved in every act of thought — thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. This dialectic nature of thought, which Hegel makes the basis of his system, is thus recognized by Fichte, though he does not work it out so fully as his successor did.

But the postulation of this fundamental synthesis is little more than a recognition that Ego and Non-Ego are correlative aspects of consciousness and that hence they must be harmonized. *How* they are to be harmonized, still remains to be shown; and this is the task of the rest of the *Grundlage*. In general, Fichte's method consists in bringing to light one opposition after another and in resolving these oppositions by a succession of syntheses. Thus in this first synthesis, by which he seeks to reconcile Ego and Non-Ego, he finds yet other oppositions. This third *Grundsatz* involves two opposed propositions: (1) "The Ego posits the Non-Ego as determined by the Ego" and (2) "The Ego posits itself as determined by the Non-Ego."[2] The first of these, Fichte tells us, forms the basis of the practical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre;* the second, the basis of the theoretical part. This

[1] S. W., I, 110. [2] S. W., I, 125 f.

opposition between the practical and theoretical aspects of consciousness must of course, in due time, be resolved by synthesis; but Fichte passes by this task for the present and proceeds instead to develop the theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, from the proposition, "The Ego posits itself as determined by the Non-Ego."

To follow, through all its windings, this involved and somewhat artificial discussion would be a wearisome task and perhaps of comparatively little value. We may therefore pass over it with a brief statement. In this proposition upon which the theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre* rests, we still have an opposition. For accordingly as we emphasize the one or the other phrase in it, we represent the Ego as passive or as active. If we say, "*The Ego posits itself* as determined by the Non-Ego," we emphasize its activity. But if we say, "The Ego posits itself as *determined by the Non-Ego*," we emphasize its passivity. Both these aspects of the Ego — its activity and its passivity — are involved in our proposition, and thus we have once more a contradiction to be removed. Fichte's solution, if we pass over some intermediate steps, is this. We must suppose that the activity of the Ego has two opposite directions — one centrifugal or outward-going, the other centripetal. The infinite outward-going activity (production) receives a check (*Anstoss*) and in consequence is driven back upon itself (reflection). This double process of production and reflection, repeated in successively higher stages, gives rise to the various forms — sensation, perception, imagination, conception, and reasoning. In these successive products of reflection, the Non-Ego comes into view, first as mere sensation which is not referred to an object, and later as brought under a concept and regarded as the cause of our perception. Finally in reason, the last stage of all, the Non-Ego is recognized by the Ego as its own product; all determination of the Ego is seen to be self-determination.

Thus Fichte overcomes the difficulty in the proposition, "The Ego posits itself as determined by the Non-Ego." The limitation of the Ego by the Non-Ego is really a limitation by itself. The Non-Ego is simply the product which comes into being in

this process of self-limitation. The entire realm of consciousness, in its objective as well as its subjective aspect, is seen to be grounded in the activity of the Ego. There is one point, however, which the theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre* leaves unexplained; this is the *Anstoss*. Why is it that the Ego is driven back upon itself and that thus its activity assumes the opposite direction? This question the theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre* is powerless to answer; for explanation we must turn to the practical *Wissenschaftslehre*.

The practical *Wissenschaftslehre*, as we have said, starts with the proposition, "The Ego posits itself as determining the Non-Ego." This involves an antithesis between the Ego as intelligence and the Ego as absolute. The Ego regarded as absolute is seen to be wholly self-sufficient. It is the self-posited, the self-dependent — the Ego of the first *Grundsatz*. But the Ego regarded as intelligence, while in one sense self-dependent, in another sense is not so. *If* it is intelligence, then it is indeed the source of its determinations; perception, conception, reasoning, are the products of its own activity. The whole external world, if it is to exist, must be developed by the Ego from within itself, cannot conceivably be the product of an external force. But *that* the Ego shall be intelligence, *that* there shall be an external world, seems to be posited, not by the Ego itself, but by something outside it. To quote Fichte's own words, "The *mode* and *manner* of representing (*Vorstellen*) in general, is certainly through the Ego; but *that* the Ego shall represent at all is determined, as we have seen, not by it but by something outside it. That is, we are not able to think the representation possible in any other way than by the presupposition that the undetermined, infinite, outward-going activity of the Ego should receive a check. Hence the Ego, as *intelligence in general*, is *dependent* upon an undetermined and as yet indeterminable Non-Ego [that is, the *Anstoss*] and only through and by means of such a Non-Ego is it intelligence."[1] We have then an opposition between the absolute Ego, which is wholly self-dependent, and the Ego as intelligence, which is self-dependent as to its *how*,

[1] S. W., I, 248.

while for its *that* it depends upon the *Anstoss*. This is the fundamental antithesis which the practical *Wissenschaftslehre* has to solve.

Here again Fichte gives us a long and involved discussion, which we can condense into a comparatively brief statement. In the first place it should be understood that the opposition which we have, is an opposition *within* the Ego. The Ego as intelligence and the Ego as absolute (or as Fichte often calls them, the finite and the infinite Ego) are really not two, but one; the opposition is between two aspects of the one Ego. Now since an absolute opposition within the one Ego is impossible, since the Ego cannot be in the same sense finite and infinite, we must suppose that in one sense it is infinite and in another finite. How can this be? How can the apparent inner contradiction be removed?

The key to the solution of the difficulty is to be found in the concept of the ideal. "The Ego is infinite" in that it "strives to be infinite," [1] that it sets up for itself an infinite ideal; it is finite in that it never fully attains the ideal. If we interpret the Ego in this way, if we regard not the *Is* (*das Sein*), but the *Is-to-be* (*das Sollen*) as the clue to its nature, we shall get rid of our difficulty with the *Anstoss*. We saw that the *Anstoss* determines not the *how*, but the *that* of the Ego as intelligence; that is, we had to assume the *Anstoss* in order to answer the question why there is an external world, why the infinite Ego should not remain locked within its calm self-sufficiency instead of manifesting itself in the finite consciousness. The only answer which the theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre* could give, was an appeal to the *Anstoss*. The infinite activity of the Ego is checked, and its rebound upon itself brings into being the external world and the finite subject. But this explanation does not suffice; for it leaves the *Anstoss* as something foreign to the Ego, as a veritable *Ding an sich*. If we are to fulfil the task of philosophy, to exhibit all phases of experience as manifestations of a unitary principle, we must somehow get the *Anstoss* within the Ego, must show that the Ego itself furnishes the *that* of the external world. This the

[1] S. W., I, 270.

concept of the ideal enables us to do. The limitation of the Ego is a self-limitation. And the Ego limits itself, not because some external influence urges it to do so, but because of an inward impelling force, the Idea of the Ego. The Ego limits itself in order that it may become an Ego,[1] limits itself because only in and through self-limitation can it attain the ideal of ego-hood. The absolute Ego, the mere infinite activity, is not really an Ego; it is "nothing *for itself*" and is therefore "nothing."[2] In order that it may be an Ego — that is, in order that it may really be at all — it must set bounds to itself, must determine itself; and the outcome of its self-determination is the world of conscious individuality, the world in which Ego and Non-Ego seem opposed to each other.

Here we have exhibited the teleological aspect of Fichte's philosophy. The explanation of the problems of thought is to be found in the concept of the ideal. This world is, because the Idea of the Ego is; it comes into being through the creative power of the Idea. The *Ought-to-be* is the basis and explanatory ground of the *Is*.

In this doctrine we have a fuller development of a tendency which appears in Kant, but which in his case is held in check by other tendencies. In the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* the Ideas of God, freedom, and immortality are declared to be, not constitutive, but merely regulative principles. In the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* this position is somewhat modified by the supreme importance which is attributed to the moral law. In his exaltation of the practical reason Kant gives a suggestion which strongly appealed to Fichte and which doubtless had much to do with the development of his doctrines. Kant himself, however, holding steadfastly to his theory of the fundamental opposition between the content and form of experience, does not attempt to make the moral law a constitutive principle for the explanation of this experience. And in like manner, in the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, he makes the principle of teleology merely regulative. It was reserved for Fichte to work out the suggestion of the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, to show that in the concept of the ideal we have the explanatory ground of the world-process.

[1] S. W., I, 276. [2] S. W., I, 264.

It should be noted, however, that the Idea of the Ego, which Fichte takes as his ultimate principle, is regarded by him as unattainable. In this respect he fully agrees with Kant; the ideal is infinite and therefore can never be realized by any finite being or system of finite beings. "The highest unity we shall find in the *Wissenschaftslehre;* not however, as something which *is*, but as something which *ought* to be produced through us and yet *cannot* be."[1] "The unity of the pure spirit is for me *unattainable ideal;* final purpose, but one which never becomes actual."[2] But although Fichte believes that the ideal can never be realized, there is still an important difference between his conception of its relation to consciousness and that which was held by Kant. In the preceding chapter we expressed this difference by saying that while Kant conceives the relation as negative, Fichte insists that it is positive. This means for one thing that Fichte believes in the possibility of progress, believes that we can approximate to our ideal even though we can never reach it. The perfect unity of subject and object is the goal of an infinite process and hence can never be realized. Nevertheless the process is a true progress, a movement toward the goal.[3]

[1] *Grundl. d. ges. W.*, S. W., I, 101.

[2] *Über die Würde des Menschen*, S. W., I, 416, note.

[3] The following citations will support this statement:

"The highest goal of the striving of reason . . . is only Idea; it cannot be thought definitely, and it will never be actual; but we are simply to approximate to it through an infinite progress" (*Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, S. W., I, 516).

The ideal "is an infinitely distant goal, never to be attained; hence our task can only be to show *how* one must act in order to *approach* to this goal" (*Die Sittenlehre*, 1798, S. W., IV, 131).

"The final purpose of the rational being is of necessity infinitely distant; it is a goal which he can never attain, but to which, in consequence of his spiritual nature, he must constantly approximate" (*Op. cit.*, S. W., IV, 149. The passages in which this and the two preceding statements occur, are quoted more at length below; *cf.* pp. 38 ff., 48 f., 51).

These passages show clearly that Fichte believes in the possibility of progress. One might, however, raise the question whether he has any right to speak of our approximating to an infinitely distant goal. If we say that the point which has been reached at a given stage in the progress is separated from the end by an infinite distance, and if we conceive of this infinite distance as a quantity greater than any assignable quantity, then in one sense, we must certainly admit, no approximation is possible. For however far we may travel, we shall still be separated from the goal by an infinite distance. This might in itself suggest that the conception of infinity as

But more than this is implied in Fichte's conception of the relation between human experience and its ideal. When we say that the relation is positive rather than negative, we mean not simply that consciousness may gradually approach its ideal; we mean also that in a sense it already *is* the ideal. The Idea of the Ego is not transcendent, but immanent — not so much a goal outside thought which attracts it, as a moving principle within, which impels it forward. "The Ego is only that which it posits itself as being. 'It is infinite' means 'It posits itself as infinite, *determines* itself by the predicate of infinitude.'"[1] "The idea of such an infinity to be completed hovers before us and is contained in the innermost depths of our nature."[2]

In the *Zweite Einleitung* there is a passage which throws much light upon the conception of the Ego as Idea and its relation to finite consciousness. We must carefully distinguish, Fichte tells us, between two conceptions, "the Ego as *intellektuelle Anschauung*, from which the *Wissenschaftslehre* starts, and the Ego as

quantitative is not an altogether satisfactory one, that it is at best one-sided and misleading. Without trying to develop this thought, however, we may content ourselves with pointing out that the very nature of measurement involves reference to the finite, rather than to the infinite, — in the sense in which we are here using the terms, — but that this does not compel us to reject the concept of measurement as invalid or meaningless. Progress implies measurement, and measurement in turn implies finitude. But for all that, progress may be real — real just in so far as measurement and the measured (the finite) are real. Thus from the point of view of the goal, which is infinitely removed, no approximation, no progress, is possible; but from the point of view of the finite subject, progress is possible. Any finite distance is indeed negligible as compared with an infinite distance, but it is none the less an element of the real world.

This is practically the way in which Fichte himself solves the difficulty. In the *Sittenlehre* of 1798 there is an interesting passage in which he discusses this very question. "How, men ask, can one come nearer to an infinite goal? Does not every finite quantity disappear into nothingness when set over against infinity? But when men bring forward this difficulty, one might suppose that they were talking about infinity as a thing-in-itself. *I* approximate *for myself*. But I can never grasp infinity; hence I always have my eyes fixed upon a *definite* goal, to which without doubt I can come nearer. But after it has been attained, then, because of the consequent enlargement of my whole nature and thus of my insight, my goal may be pushed just so much farther beyond me; and thus from this *general* point of view, I never come nearer to the infinite" (S. W., IV, 150).

[1] *Grundl. d. ges. W.*, S. W., I, 214. This passage is quoted at greater length below, p. 44.

[2] *Op. cit.*, S. W., I, 270.

Idea, with which it ends. In the Ego as *intellektuelle Anschauung* there lies merely the form of egohood, the act which returns into itself, which indeed also becomes its own content. . . . In this form the Ego is, only *for the philosopher*, and it is by grasping this conception that one rises to the philosophical point of view. The Ego as Idea [on the other hand] is present (*vorhanden*) *for the Ego* itself, which the philosopher studies. . . . The Ego as Idea is the rational being, first in so far as this being has perfectly manifested in himself the universal reason, in so far as he is actually rational, and nothing but rational, in so far then as he has ceased to be an individual — for it is only through the limitations of sense that he is an individual. Again [the Ego as Idea is the rational being], in so far as this being has fully realized reason outside himself in the world, which thus also is posited in this Idea. The world remains posited in this Idea as world in general, as substrate governed by certain definite laws of mechanisms and organisms; but these laws throughout their whole range are fitted to express the final purpose of reason. The Idea of the Ego has only this in common with the Ego as *Anschauung*, that in neither of them is the Ego conceived as individual; it is not so conceived in the latter because in it egohood is not yet narrowed down (*bestimmt*) to individuality; nor in the former because in it, through development according to universal laws, individuality has disappeared. But the two differ in this, that in the Ego as *Anschauung* we have only the form of the Ego and take no account of a proper content (*Material*) for this Ego, — a content which is thinkable only through the Ego's thinking of a world,— whereas in the Ego as Idea the complete matter (*Materie*) of egohood is thought. From the first [the Ego as *Anschauung*], all philosophy starts, finding in it its fundamental concept. To the second [theoretical] philosophy does not extend; only in its practical part can this Idea be set up as the highest goal of the striving of reason. The first, as we said, is original *Anschauung* and becomes concept in the way which we have already sufficiently described [that is, through philosophical reflection]. The second is only Idea; it cannot be thought definitely, and it will

never be actual; but we are simply to approximate to it through an infinite progress."[1]

In this passage we have the most complete expression that Fichte gives us of his conception of the Ego as self-developing form. The Ego as *intellektuelle Anschauung*,[2] the absolute Ego

[1] S. W., I, 515 f.

[2] It is hardly necessary to point out that Fichte uses the term *intellektuelle Anschauung* in a different sense from that in which Kant employed it. With Fichte the phrase seems to have two significations, which are, however, closely connected. Sometimes, as in the passage just quoted, *intellektuelle Anschauung* seems to be thought of as the form which has not yet unfolded its content, as the still undifferentiated unity which is the basis of experience; here it is identical with the absolute Ego of the *Grundlage*. At other times, however, Fichte speaks of it as the act by which we become conscious of this underlying unity (See, *e. g.*, *Zweite Einleitung*, S. W., I, 463, and *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, S. W., I, 526 ff.). In neither case is the term used in the Kantian sense; and in one place Fichte himself points out that the phrase has with him a different meaning from that which Kant gives it. "In the Kantian terminology," he says, "all perception is directed toward a being, something which is posited, something which persists. Intellectual perception would therefore be immediate consciousness of a non-sensuous being, immediate consciousness of the thing-in-itself, and that too through mere thinking; thus it would be a production of the thing-in-itself through the concept. . . . But the *Wissenschaftslehre* . . . knows . . . that this is an utterly irrational conception. . . . Intellectual perception in the Kantian sense is for it an *Unding*, which escapes from our grasp as soon as we try to think it and which is not even worthy of a name. The intellectual perception of which the *Wissenschaftslehre* speaks, is directed not toward a being, but toward an acting, and it is not even mentioned by Kant, except, if you will have it so, in the phrase 'pure apperception.'" But its parallel really exists in Kant's categorical imperative. "Our consciousness" of the categorical imperative is "intellectual perception" (*Zweite Einleitung*, S. W., I, 471 f.).

From this passage it appears, as Thiele points out (*Op. cit.*, 173, 182), that Fichte does not recognize the higher form of Kant's doctrine of intellectual perception. What he has in mind here is *intellektuelle Anschauung* as knowledge of things-in-themselves. And since the thing-in-itself is for him an *Unding*, we can readily see why he applies this name to Kant's intellectual perception. That the concept of *intellektuelle Anschauung* must be formed on the analogy of our own self-consciousness he clearly recognizes, but he fails to see that this very conception is found in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Certainly Kant's *intellektuelle Anschauung*, regarded as a self-consciousness in whose very act of unity the manifold content is given, is not an *Unding* for Fichte. Its parallel in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, however, is not the Ego as *intellektuelle Anschauung*, but the Ego as Idea.

Thiele, not content with defending Kant against Fichte's criticisms, makes the countercharge that Fichte himself has never risen to the highest conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung* (*Op. cit.*, 178 ff.). This charge, it seems to me, indicates some misunderstanding of the relation between Kant and Fichte. It is true that for Fichte intellectual perception does not represent the perfect unity of form and con-

of the *Grundlage*, is form whose content has not yet become explicit; hence Fichte speaks of it as mere form. But it is evident that the content which it gains in the process of development does not come to it from without. As Fichte himself says, "the form of egohood, the act which returns into itself . . . becomes its own content." In short we have here the germs of Hegel's conception of the Idea which realizes itself through successively higher stages, the universal which develops by becoming more concrete.

In this doctrine, human experience seems to have an intermediate position between the form which has as yet no explicit content and the fully developed form, in which the content has been perfectly explicated. This enables us to understand the dualism which is so apparent in experience. In the process of development the content is set over against the form, from which it has proceeded and with which it is really identical. This opposition of form and matter is essential if their higher unity is ever to be made manifest. In order that the apparently empty identity may show itself as identity in difference, the difference must be emphasized. In order that the Ego may be *for itself* and thus be a true Ego, it must oppose to itself a Non-Ego. Thus human consciousness, in spite of its seeming dualism, is a necessary stage in the realization of the ideal unity of content and form.

We have now before us in its general outlines, Fichte's conception of his fundamental principle. In the earlier part of the *Grundlage* it is described as the absolute Ego, but as the argu-

tent, but rather form whose content is only implicit. But in the Ego as Idea we have, as has just been said, the conception which corresponds to the highest phase of Kant's doctrine. Apparently Thiele would reply to this that according to Fichte the Idea is not and cannot be realized. "In the *Ought*," he says, "the opposition between positing (knowing) and posited (the known) is still stronger" (*Op. cit.*, 179). Believing, as he does, that Kant finds in the 'I think' an actual unity of form and content, he is disposed to censure Fichte because no such perfect unity is recognized by the *Wissenschaftslehre* as actual. In the Appendix, Note B, I have given my reasons for dissenting from Thiele's interpretation of Kant's 'I think.' If these are accepted, one must admit, it seems to me, not only that Fichte's conception of the Ego as Idea is a close parallel to the highest form of Kant's *intellektuelle Anschauung*, but also that Fichte, in representing the relation between human experience and its ideal as positive rather than negative, reaches a higher position than that held by Kant.

ment advances, we see that this conception is not adequate to explain the facts of experience. If the ultimate principle had no other aspect than that self-contained independence which is symbolized by the absolute Ego, then the nature of consciousness, with its opposition of Ego and Non-Ego, could be made intelligible only by the assumption of the *Anstoss* and the consequent admission of dualism. But when the concept of the absolute Ego is transformed into that of the Ego as Idea, the difficulty with regard to the *Anstoss* disappears. The fundamental principle is now seen to be, not a mere undetermined form — as such it would *be* nothing and *explain* nothing — but a form which develops its content through the act of self-limitation. Not the undetermined, but the self-determined, is the true infinite.

We may now return to the question that we were considering in the early part of the chapter — the question, that is, whether Fichte conceives his ultimate principle as mere form, or as a unity of form and content. In our discussion of the passage in the *Erste Einleitung* we were disposed to maintain that there is nothing in it to prevent us from assuming that he regards his principle as such a unity. But we pointed out at the time that the question has another aspect, which appears in connection with the doctrine of the Ego as Idea.

Our study of the *Grundlage* has shown us that the unitary principle which is described in the *Erste Einleitung* is an *ideal* principle. In the realm of the actual we always find opposition; both in the intellectual and in the moral life, subject and object are set over against each other, and in actual experience this opposition can never be fully overcome. But in all our intellectual endeavor, in all our moral striving, we are guided by the ideal of unity. This is the true ground of consciousness; this it is which brings into existence, which makes actual, the world of the finite being and his infinite striving. And now that we have before us this conception of the Ego as Idea, the question whether the fundamental principle is a perfect unity of subject and object meets us in a new guise. The ultimate ground of all reality is not something which is actually existent, but an ideal

that *is to be realized*. Hence the question as to the unity of the principle now becomes the question, what sort of unity is it toward which the world-process is striving? How does Fichte conceive the ideal itself? Is *it* pure form, or is it a unity of form and content? As long as there is a world of conscious beings (and since the goal is infinitely distant, there will always be such a world), so long there will be both subject and object. But if the unattainable goal could be attained, what would it be? Would it be mere form, devoid of content, or would it be an organic unity of form and matter?

If we study the works of the first period with reference to this question, we seem to find in them traces of two different conceptions of the ideal. Sometimes, apparently, Fichte thinks of it as mere form and at other times as a union of form and content. In the *Grundlage*, as we have seen, the dualism of subject and object, which at first appears as an opposition of Ego and Non-Ego, soon develops into an opposition between the Ego as infinite and the Ego as finite. Now if we believe that finite and infinite are aspects which are essentially opposed, then the unity which we regard as the ideal of thought must be conceived as purely formal; but if on the other hand we maintain that the opposition is not irreconcilable, our ideal becomes an organic unity of content and form. In the one case the goal of the endless progress is conceived as the annihilation of content, the complete absorption of the finite into the infinite; in the other, as the perfect interpenetration of form and content, as the finite which has developed into the infinite, the infinite which is fully realized in the finite.

There are some indications in the *Grundlage* of a tendency to adopt the first alternative — to emphasize the opposition of finite and infinite and thus to suggest that the unattainable ideal of experience is empty form. "Both Ego and Non-Ego, as put upon the same plane (*gleichgesetzt*) and opposed to each other, through the concept of mutual limitation, are something (accidents) in the Ego as divisible substance, are posited by the Ego as the absolute subject, which is incapable of limitation, to which nothing is like and nothing is opposed."[1] And again: "In so

[1] S. W., I, 119.

far as the Ego is limited by the Non-Ego, it is finite; but in itself, as it is posited by its own absolute activity, it is infinite. These two aspects, the infinity and the finitude, must be united. But such a union is inherently impossible. For a long while the strife is settled by mediation; the infinite limits the finite. But at length, when the utter impossibility of the desired union is seen, the finitude must be utterly destroyed (*aufgehoben*). All boundaries must disappear; the infinite Ego alone must remain as One and as All." [1]

These passages give the best expression which I have found in the *Grundlage* of the tendency to oppose the finite and the infinite aspects of the Ego. On the other hand we have several emphatic statements in favor of the higher conception of the ideal. "These two [the finite and the infinite aspects of the Ego] must be one and the same. Briefly put, this means: *no infinity, no limitation; no limitation, no infinity; infinity and limitation are united in one and the same synthesis.* If the activity of the Ego did not go out toward infinity, then the Ego could not limit this its activity; it could not set bounds for it, as it nevertheless is to do. . . . Furthermore if the Ego did not limit itself, it would not be infinite. The Ego is only that which it posits itself as being. 'It is infinite,' means 'It posits itself as infinite, *determines* itself by the predicate of infinitude.' Thus it limits itself (the Ego) as substratum of the infinitude." [2] "Without this reference" to an object "there would be no object for the Ego, but the Ego would be all in all and for this very reason . . . nothing." [3] "The absolute Ego is simply like itself; all within it is one and the same Ego and belongs (if we may express ourselves so improperly) to one and the same Ego; there is nothing here to distinguish, no manifold; the Ego is all and is nothing, because it is nothing *for itself*, because no positing and no posited can be distinguished in it." [4]

Thus we see that both interpretations of the ideal seem to find support in the *Grundlage*, that some passages suggest that Fichte thought of the goal of the infinite process as empty form, while

[1] S. W., I, 144. [2] S. W., I, 214.
[3] S. W., I, 261. [4] S. W., I, 264.

others seem to show that he conceived it as the organic unity of form and content. At this point we may pause for a moment to compare his position with that of Kant. In the preceding chapter, we saw that in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* Kant conceives of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as a unity of form and matter but that his doctrine has two main phases. In one of these (*intellektuelle Anschauung* as passive apprehension of things-in-themselves) the unity is artificial; in the other (*intellektuelle Anschauung* as a pure self-consciousness which is its own content) it is organic. In both cases, however, finite consciousness, with its inherent dualism, is utterly opposed to the ideal, can never approximate to it in the least degree. In the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* somewhat different tendencies were revealed. In the moral world Kant seems to recognize the possibility of an approximation; but he conceives the ideal, we saw, either as pure form or (possibly) as an artificial union of form and matter. Hence the advance which we seem to find in the second *Kritik* is made only by lowering the concept of the ideal.

When we compare these results with what we have thus far learned of Fichte's doctrine, we see that the *Grundlage* does not offer a complete parallel either to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* or to the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft.* In two respects Fichte's position in the *Grundlage* represents an advance beyond that of his predecessor. In the first place he does not believe, as Kant does, that human experience is altogether unlike its ideal, cannot approximate to it in the least degree. And in the second place we see no disposition to conceive of the ideal as an artificial union of form and matter. But though in these two respects he avoids the errors into which Kant falls, yet his position is not above criticism. For when we ask whether the ideal is mere form or an organic union of form and content, his answer is not so clear and unhesitating as might be desired; on the contrary he seems to waver between the two positions.

On the whole, it will probably be admitted that the second conception is the more prominent one in the *Grundlage.* Further evidence in favor of this second conception is found in the very emphatic statement in regard to the ideal, in the passage which

we have already quoted from the *Zweite Einleitung*.[1] Here Fichte says explicitly that the Idea of the Ego is not mere form, but that it must be thought as possessing "the complete matter of egohood." Again in the *Recension des Æenesidemus* there is an interesting passage, which, although not quite free from ambiguity, seems on the whole to be in favor of this second conception. "The Ego in the *intellektuelle Anschauung* is . . . absolutely self-subsistent and independent. But the Ego in the empirical consciousness, as intelligence, *is* only in relation to something known (*ein Intelligibles*), and in so far it exists as dependent. Now this Ego which is thus opposed to itself must constitute, not two Egos, but only one, and this is impossible in the degree in which it is required; for dependent and independent are in contradiction to each other. But since the Ego cannot give up its characteristic of absolute self-subsistence, there arises a striving [on its part] to make the thing known dependent upon it, so that thus it may bring the Ego as intelligence into unity with the self-positing Ego. And this is the meaning of the expression, 'The reason is practical.' Reason is not practical in the pure Ego, nor in the Ego as intelligence; it is practical only in so far as it strives to unite these two aspects. . . . This union, an Ego which through its self-determination determines at the same time all the Non-Ego (the Idea of the Deity), is the final goal of the striving. . . . This striving cannot cease until the goal is attained." [2]

Here the Idea of the Ego is described in almost the same words which Kant so often applies to the *intellektuelle Anschauung*.[3] "An Ego which through its self-determination determines at the same time all the Non-Ego" surely cannot be regarded as empty form; clearly the ideal is here conceived as a unity of form and content. The only difficulty in the passage is that Fichte speaks of the impossibility of uniting the two aspects of the Ego because of their contradiction. This might suggest that he inclines here to Kant's theory, that with all our striving,

[1] See above, pp. 38 ff. [2] S. W., I, 22 f.

[3] *E. g.*, "An understanding in which, through its self-consciousness, all the manifold was also given, would perceive" (B, 135).

we never make any real progress toward the goal. But since this would be wholly at variance with all his other utterances on the subject of progress, we must seek a different explanation of the statement. Either we must say that it is not to be taken quite literally, that Fichte does not regard the contradiction as absolute, or we must suppose that it is the expression of that other tendency which we have found in him — to distinguish sharply between the two aspects of the Ego. In the latter case we must say that the two opposed conceptions of the Ego here find expression in the same passage ; but we shall see that this is not the only instance of such inconsistency in Fichte's writings.

If we turn now to the *Sittenlehre* of 1798, we find again indications of the two opposed tendencies in Fichte's thought. Here, as elsewhere, there is no trace of a disposition to conceive the ideal as an artificial union of form and matter. Clearly it would be impossible for Fichte to accept Kant's doctrine of the *summum bonum* as a mechanical union of happiness and virtue, for the simple reason that he utterly rejects the conception of God as the Ruler of the universe. He conceives of God, at least in the works of the first period, to which our attention is at present confined, [1] not as transcendent being, but as the immanent principle of all conscious life. The influence of Kant's ethical doctrine is shown rather in the tendency to think of moral progress as the triumph of form over content. But here too there are traces of the higher conception of the ideal as perfect unity of form and matter.

In the *Sittenlehre*, as in the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, the dualism of experience takes the form of an opposition between desire and the moral law. The natural impulse is directed toward enjoyment ; the higher impulse toward the self-determining activity of reason. "In so far as man directs his efforts toward mere enjoyment he is dependent upon a *given*, namely upon the presence of the object of his impulse. Thus he is not sufficient

[1] In limiting this statement to the works of the first period, I do not mean to imply that Fichte later conceived of God as a transcendent being ; the restriction is made simply because it is sometimes said that he does so conceive of God in the later writings. The correctness of this statement will be considered in the next chapter.

unto himself; the attainment of his purpose depends also upon nature. But in so far as man reflects and thereby becomes subject of consciousness, . . . he becomes an Ego, and there is manifested in him the tendency of reason to determine itself *absolutely through itself*, as subject of consciousness, as intelligence in the highest sense of the word." [1] What now is the relation between these two impulses? Are they to be regarded as mutually exclusive, or does their apparent opposition rest upon an underlying unity? Sometimes Fichte seems to hold that the opposition is fundamental. But if it is, then the harmony that is demanded by the moral law can be reached only by the annihilation of the lower impulse. The impulse toward self-activity is to reign supreme; natural desire must be thwarted, negated, blotted out. "Only the pure absolute activity . . . is the true Ego. To it the impulse is opposed as something foreign; [the impulse] belongs indeed to the Ego, but it *is* not the Ego. That activity is the Ego." [2] The pure impulse "does not aim at enjoyment, *of whatever sort it may be*, but rather at regarding all enjoyment as of slight value. It makes enjoyment as enjoyment, contemptible. It aims solely at the asserting of my dignity, which consists in absolute self-subsistence and self-sufficiency." [3]

In another passage Fichte tells us that the two impulses are not essentially opposed, and yet even here one may have some doubt whether he really has in mind the conception of the perfect unity of form and matter. "My impulse in so far as I am a part of nature, my tendency in so far as I am pure spirit, are they two different impulses? No; from the transcendental point of view both are one and the same original impulse (*Urtrieb*), which is my essential nature; only, this impulse is seen from two different sides. In other words, I am subject-object; and my true being consists in the identity and inseparability of

[1] S. W., IV, 130.

[2] S. W., IV, 140. It should be noticed that the statements which seem to commit Fichte to the theory that the ideal is mere form do not imply that it is essentially unlike consciousness. Here, *e. g.*, Fichte insists that the formal aspect of consciousness is its true nature.

[3] S. W., IV, 142. The italics are mine. *Cf.* the equally strong statement by Kant (H., V, 76), quoted above, p. 11.

these two aspects. If I look at myself as *object*, completely determined by the laws of sensuous perception and of discursive thought, then that which is really my sole impulse becomes for me natural impulse, because from this point of view I myself am nature. If I look at myself as *subject*, then this impulse becomes for me a purely spiritual one, the law of self-dependence. All the phenomena of the Ego depend solely upon the interaction of these two impulses, which is really only the interaction of *one and the same impulse with itself*. Thus at last we have the answer to the question, how so complete an opposition as that which exists between these two impulses can be found in a being that is to be absolutely one. Both impulses are really one; but the whole of egohood rests upon the fact that they appear as different; that which makes the separation between them is reflection. . . . Both impulses [as we have said] constitute one and the same Ego. Then both must be united in the sphere of consciousness. We shall see that in this union the higher impulse must give up the *purity* of its activity (its freedom from determination by an object), while the lower must give up enjoyment as its aim. The result of the union will be *objective* activity, whose final purpose is absolute freedom, absolute independence of all nature. This is an infinitely distant goal, never to be attained; hence our task can only be to show *how* one must act in order to *approach* to this goal. If one considers only the higher faculty of desire, one has a mere *metaphysics of ethics*, which is formal and empty. Only through the synthetic union of the higher with the lower faculty of desire, have we a *theory of ethics* (*Sittenlehre*), which must be real." [1]

The interpretation of this passage is not an easy task. In the main it seems to argue against the Kantian conception of morality. The moral law and natural desire are not in fundamental opposition; they *appear* as contradictories, but in reality they are only two different aspects of an underlying unity. But although this certainly seems to be the general drift of the passage, there are one or two sentences that suggest another interpretation. The ideal to which we are to approximate, Fichte tells us, is

[1] S. W., IV, 130 f.

"absolute independence of all nature." The meaning of the statement is not perfectly clear, but one must admit that it at least suggests the thought that if the ideal were ever to be realized we should have the complete annihilation of the lower impulse, and consequently what gives the objective principle its importance is the fact that the ideal never *can* be realized. If this interpretation be correct, one must also suppose that in distinguishing between the *Metaphysik der Sitten* and the *Sittenlehre*, Fichte means that the latter deals with our actual moral experience and the former with the nature of the moral ideal.

There is a similar uncertainty with regard to another discussion.[1] "The natural impulse," Fichte tells us, is directed merely "toward enjoyment for the sake of enjoyment; the pure impulse toward absolute independence . . . of the natural impulse, toward freedom for the sake of freedom." Now if the two impulses are thus opposed, the ideal of morality, it would seem, can consist only in the annihilation of natural desire. Fichte himself puts it thus: the "causality" of the pure impulse "can produce no positive *action* (except the inner one of self-determination), but merely *inaction* (*Unterlassung*). . . . All who have adopted this purely *formal* conception of morality can come, if they are consistent, to nothing else but a continuous *self-abnegation*, utter annihilation and disappearance [of selfhood]. Thus the mystics teach that we must lose ourselves in God." At first Fichte seems dissatisfied with this conception of morality. If the higher impulse is really to be supreme, he says, the causality of freedom must not be merely restrictive and negative. Freedom must be positive, the ground of a real action. Now all actual willing is directed toward objects; but in the world of objects — the sense-world — I can act only by satisfying some natural impulse.[2] Hence the free will, in order to become actual, must take natural desire as its content. We must not indeed fall into the error of supposing "that the natural impulse as such is the source of will. *I* will, not nature; but so far as the content [of the volition] is concerned, I can will nothing except that which

[1] S. W., IV, 147 ff.

[2] "Every possible concept of an end is directed toward the satisfaction of a natural impulse" (p. 148).

nature also would will, had nature the power of willing." Thus we are involved in difficulty. Reason demands that the material, as well as the formal, ground of action shall be found in the moral law; but "as a matter of fact, I never do and never can perform an action which is not demanded by the natural impulse." The only way of solving this difficulty is to say "that the matter of the act must in one and the same action conform both with the pure and with the natural impulse. . . . Just as the two impulses are united in the *Urtrieb* [the ultimate principle], so must they be united in the real action."

The most natural inference from such statements is that Fichte does not regard the two impulses as fundamentally opposed; but when he goes on to explain his position, the correctness of the inference becomes doubtful. In declaring that the matter of the two impulses must be the same, we mean, he tells us, something like this: "The purpose, the concept, of our acting looks toward complete freedom from nature; but that the action is still in harmony with natural impulse is the result, not of our freely formed concept of it, but of our limitation. The sole determining ground of the matter of our actions is [the purpose] to shake off our dependence upon nature, although the independence which is demanded is never attained. The pure impulse aims at absolute independence; the action is in conformity with it if it also aims at independence, that is, *if it forms part of a series through whose continuance the Ego must become independent.* Now . . . the Ego can never become independent so long as it is to be an Ego. Thus the final purpose of the rational being is of necessity infinitely distant; it is a goal which he can never attain, but to which, in consequence of his spiritual nature, he must constantly approximate. . . . The error of the mystics consists in this, that they represent the goal (which is really infinite, which cannot be attained in any period of time) as capable of being attained in time. The complete annihilation of the individual and his absorption into God, into the absolutely pure form of reason, is certainly the ultimate goal of the finite reason; only it is not possible in any period of time."

But though the moral ideal seems here to be conceived as the

annihilation of natural desire, yet Fichte points out that in approximating to it we must use this desire as means; moral action consists in a choice among our natural impulses. In every moral act "there is something which is in harmony" with the ethical end; this something "is at the same time . . . demanded by the natural impulse; but it by no means follows that *everything* that the natural impulse demands is conformable" to the law. If we represent by *A*, *B*, *C*, *etc.*, the series of events as it would be if the natural impulse were the sole determining ground, then "by the moral choice of the individual only a part of *B*, perhaps, is . . . made actual." Hence the series is not the same as it would be if nature were left to herself. *B* is changed, and "thereby the natural impulse which succeeds *B* is different" from what it would otherwise have been. Thus "in every possible choice the two impulses meet; only so can morality become actual." Now in this actual morality the higher impulse is not the pure impulse; its end (*i. e.*, its conscious or proximate end) is not "absolute independence," but a "particular action." It "gets its matter from the natural impulse; *i. e.*, the natural impulse, which is synthetically united with it and fused into one with it, is directed toward the same action — at least in part — toward which it is directed. On the other hand, its form is derived solely from the pure impulse. . . . Its ultimate end . . . is complete independence."

Here again we have a passage that is not easy to interpret. That there is some confusion of thought is probable; but on the other hand it may be urged that there is also much sound psychology. So far as actual moral life is concerned, Fichte sees clearly that it depends constantly upon desire, that if there were no desire there would be no action. Hence moral action must be, not the negation of all desire, but the fulfilment of one desire rather than another. This seems to imply that in the completed moral life, desire would not have been annihilated, but rather perfectly conformed to the law. Thus the ideal would be an organic unity of form and content.

That this conception of the ideal is logically involved in what Fichte says about actual morality, seems clear. If morality in-

volves the harmonizing of desire and the law, and if it is at the same time, as Fichte says it is, an approximation to the ideal, then the ideal must be the perfect union of desire and the law. But although what is said of actual moral life seems to imply that we are to think of the goal of the process as a unity of form and content, it is not certain that Fichte does so conceive it in this discussion. On the contrary, when he speaks of the goal itself, his words suggest that he is thinking of it as pure form; the end toward which we are striving is said to be the complete annihilation of the individual, the absorption of the finite by the infinite. Now it is obvious that if we think of the ethical ideal thus, we cannot without contradiction describe the moral life as Fichte here describes it. If the ideal is pure form, then one of two things must be true — either that actual moral progress consists in the gradual annihilation of desire, or that as a matter of fact there *is* no moral progress, that approximation to the goal is impossible. The second of these alternatives Fichte would surely reject. He insists always that the real and the ideal do not constitute two utterly distinct realms, but rather that the ideal is the guiding principle in the development of the real. We must, then, adopt the first alternative and say that if the ideal is purely formal, the progress of morality means the gradual crushing out of natural desire.

Apparently, then, what Fichte says about the ideal does not agree very well with his account of the nature of actual morality. In the one case he seems to teach that the ideal is empty form, and in the other he sets forth a theory which logically involves the doctrine that it is a unity of form and content. In short, we find in the *Sittenlehre*, as we have found elsewhere, indications of two different conceptions of the Idea of the Ego.

It remains to consider whether this apparent contradiction can be resolved, or whether it must simply be accepted. In our attempt to answer this question we should be on our guard against undue desire to make Fichte perfectly self-consistent. It is well to bear in mind that the problem of the nature of the ideal was not so well defined for him as it is for us. There are a few questions upon which he is very clear. He never wavers

in his belief that there is a unitary principle in which all the oppositions of human experience may be resolved; and he is equally confident that we find the clue to the nature of this principle in our own consciousness, that consciousness implies a deeper unity than any which is manifest in it. It is also safe to say that, at least in the first period, he conceives of this unity both as the ideal toward which consciousness is working and as the moving principle in the development. But while he seems clear upon these three points, his doctrine of the nature of the ideal is not so well worked out. Apparently he does not realize that there are two theories between which he must choose, does not definitely raise the question whether the ideal is pure form or unity of form and content. Hence it is that some of his statements suggest one of these doctrines, while some seem to commit him to the other, and that occasionally the opposed statements are even found in the same passage.

But although we need not try to make Fichte perfectly consistent, it may be possible to show that one of these theories more truly represents his thought than the other. There is one point, as yet unnoticed, which suggests that the opposition between the two tendencies is less serious than we might at first suppose. We have seen that the world of consciousness is regarded by Fichte as a necessary stage in the realization of the ideal. Now consciousness, as he conceives it, is inevitably dualistic; it is possible only through the opposition of a Non-Ego to the Ego. But if we admit this, we must, according to him, admit two other propositions. In the first place we must say that consciousness exists only in the individual, the finite being. For the Ego to which a Non-Ego is opposed, is the Ego as finite intelligence, the Ego as individual, particular, determined. In the second place we must admit that in the fully realized ideal, consciousness will have disappeared; if consciousness is impossible without opposition, then when the opposition has been fully overcome, consciousness as such can no longer exist.

The bearing of this upon the problem before us is evident. If the attainment of the goal means the disappearance of consciousness, and thus of the Ego as finite individual, it is not hard to

understand why Fichte should speak of the ideal as the absorption of the finite into the infinite. It is at least conceivable that in his descriptions of the infinitely distant goal he wished to suggest merely the transmutation of individual consciousness, and not the disappearance of all content. When he says that the finite must be absorbed into the infinite, he may mean, not that the goal is pure form, but simply that it is a unity in which the differences are perfectly harmonized. Since for him individuality, consciousness, finitude, depend upon the existence of oppositions which are *not* perfectly harmonized, he tells us that the attainment of the goal involves the disappearance of individuality, the lapse of consciousness, the absorption of the finite. But this is not necessarily to say that the goal is mere form. For although conscious individuality will have disappeared, because the end for which it existed has been attained, yet it is not as if it had never been. The end of the process is not identical with the beginning; the unity which has harmonized and resolved its differences is not the same as the unity which has never known difference.

It is possible, I think, to interpret Fichte in this way, to maintain that when he seems to conceive the goal as blank identity, his chief purpose is to emphasize the thought that its attainment would involve the disappearance of the finite individual and thus of consciousness in his sense of the word. And if this were granted, we might try, with the help of this conception, to harmonize the various statements that he makes with regard to the relation between human consciousness and its infinitely distant goal. The ideal, we might say, is always conceived as the unity of form and content, never as empty form. The passages that seem to suggest the latter interpretation are to be understood as asserting simply the ultimate overcoming of finite individuality, not the disappearance of content as such. It would be possible, I say, to interpret Fichte thus, but I am not disposed to go quite to this length. It seems to me far better to admit the existence of the two contradictory tendencies in his thought. For while the suggested interpretation disposes fairly well of the inconsistencies in his descriptions of the ideal, we should still have to explain the passages in which he speaks of the funda-

mental opposition between the two aspects of the Ego. These seem to suggest that he does sometimes tend to think of the ideal as mere form, or at least that he did not see very clearly that it must be a unity of form and content. As we have said, it is doubtful whether he ever really faced the question which we have been considering, whether he saw the problem; and while we are justified in saying that the conception of organic unity is more consistent with the general principles of his philosophy, we may still admit that the notion of blank identity also had some hold upon his thought. This is probably due in large measure to the influence of the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, with its ascetic conception of morality.

The only point, then, upon which I am disposed to insist, is that we should not interpret Fichte as teaching uniformly, or even predominantly, that the goal of the infinite process is blank identity, but that we should rather recognize that he usually rises to the higher conception of a unity which includes and preserves all differences without thereby ceasing to be a perfect unity.

There is, however, one more question that suggests itself in this connection, the question, namely, whether the assertion of the ultimate disappearance of individuality does not *logically involve* the doctrine that the ideal is purely formal. Can we say, as Fichte does, — *e. g.*, in the passage already quoted from the *Zweite Einleitung*,[1] — that in the Ego as Idea "individuality has disappeared," and yet that in it we have "the complete matter of egohood"? This is an aspect of the problem which calls for careful consideration.

That the doctrine of the purely formal nature of the ideal is logically involved in the assertion of the ultimate disappearance of individuality, is, if I mistake not, the purport of the interesting criticism of Fichte's Idea which is made by Professor Seth Pringle-Pattison. "Morality," he says, "becomes illusory, if it is represented as the pursuit of a goal whose winning would be suicidal to morality itself, and to all conscious life. . . . We may well . . . withdraw our eyes from the goal, if we are not to

[1] See above, pp. 38 ff.

lose heart for the race. Fichte's account, in short, leaves no permanent reality in the universe whatever. The world is hung, as it were, between two vacuities — between the pure or Absolute Ego, on the one hand, which is completely empty apart from the finite individuals whom it constitutes, and 'the Idea of the Ego,' on the other, which is admittedly unattainable, and, if attainable, would be a total blank, the collapse of all conscious life." [1]

It may be that I am wrong in interpreting Professor Pringle-Pattison as I have done; but at any rate the objection which I suppose him to be raising is one which might naturally enough be raised, and which it will therefore be well to consider. What Fichte himself would say upon this point, we may infer, I think, from some statements that he made in attempting to defend himself against the charge of atheism. The article which furnished the immediate occasion of the attack upon his orthodoxy is entitled *Über den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung* (1798). In this work he describes, in somewhat popular form, his conception of the ultimate principle as the ideal of human experience. The principle is designated as 'God,' but it is clear that the term, as here used, is synonymous with 'the Idea of the Ego.' The belief in a divine government of the world, Fichte tells us, cannot be justified from the ordinary point of view, which takes the world as thing-in-itself, independent of consciousness, and yet conceives of God as its creator. But from the transcendental point of view, in which the sense-world is regarded as the manifestation of a spiritual principle, as having existence only in relation to the self, the belief in a divine world-order is intelligible. The moral consciousness, the consciousness of the self as principle of activity, is our starting-point. The sense-world has meaning only as the sphere in which this activity displays itself; it exists simply that the ideal may become real, or as Fichte puts it, that the moral world-order may be established. "Our world is the material of our duty, presented to us in sensuous form." [2] According to this view God is not substance. The "living and working moral order is itself God; we

[1] *Hegelianism and Personality* (2d edition, Edinburgh, 1893), 58 f.

[2] "Das versinnlichte Materiale unserer Pflicht" (S. W., V, 185).

need no other God and can conceive no other. Reason does not justify us in going beyond this moral world-order and assuming (by an inference from the grounded to the ground) a particular being (*Wesen*) as its cause." [1]

Now this divine order must not be regarded as completely existent; it is a progressively developing order; it is gradually "built up by right-doing." And further, if we conceive God thus, we cannot say that he has personality and consciousness. For I know personality and consciousness only as I see them in myself, the finite rational being. If we attribute these finite predicates to God, we make of him a being like ourselves. "The concept of God as a particular substance is impossible and contradictory." [2]

As is well known, the publication of this article subjected Fichte to the charge of atheism. Accordingly, in a later discussion, he makes an effort to explain his meaning. In the *Gerichtliche Verantwortung gegen die Anklage des Atheismus* he reverts to his statement that we may not ascribe personality and consciousness to God. He begs his readers not to overlook the distinction on which this assertion rests. "I am speaking," he says, "of *our own conceptual consciousness*, and am pointing out that its concept necessarily involves the notion of limitations, and that therefore this concept of consciousness cannot be applied to God. Only in this respect, only in respect to the limitations and the conceivability which results from the fact of limitation, have I denied that God has consciousness. As to its matter — I am trying to express the inconceivable as well as I can — as to its matter, the Godhead is pure consciousness; it is intelligence, pure intelligence, spiritual life and activity. But to comprehend this intelligence in a concept and to describe the way in which it knows itself and others is utterly impossible." [3]

From this declaration it would appear that Fichte does not himself believe that the lapse of individual consciousness would involve the disappearance of content. The opposition of subject and object is essential to individuality and consciousness *as he uses the terms;* hence in the perfect unity which is the goal of all

[1] S. W., V, 186. [2] S. W., V, 188. [3] S. W., V, 266.

our striving, individuality and consciousness will be done away. But this does not necessarily imply that the goal is a total blank. On the contrary, Fichte would say, it means that the goal is a higher stage than consciousness, a stage in which all content is somehow preserved, although its oppositions have been reconciled. The question of terminology is, of course, of slight importance. We may, if we like, describe this perfect unity as a higher form of consciousness ; and in this case we should say that unreconciled oppositions are characteristic, not of consciousness as such, but of its lower form, of human consciousness. Fichte himself, as we have seen, prefers to keep the word 'consciousness' for the stage of unreconciled oppositions, and hence cannot speak of the goal as a higher form of consciousness. But this does not justify us in supposing that he conceives it on the analogy of the unconscious. To think of it thus would be to make it dead being, whereas Fichte always declares that the fundamental principle of his philosophy is life and activity. Evidently his meaning is that in so far as it differs from consciousness, it is not lower, but higher. Experience is steadily working toward the point at which the dualism of subject and object shall be surmounted. If this point were ever reached, we should see beyond the dualism, should apprehend subject and object in their true relations. Now Fichte gives the name of 'consciousness' to the stage in which we do not see beyond the opposition ; hence he says that in the completed ideal, consciousness will have disappeared. But this hardly justifies us in maintaining that the goal of the process is a blank identity.

I am aware that this is a point which will not bear much laboring. One accepts it or one does not, but in either case there is little room for discussion. Many will doubtless deny Fichte's right to the concept of what, in default of a better word, we may call 'the supra-conscious.' According to their view there are simply the alternatives of conscious individuality, as we know it, which involves the opposition of subject and object, and the total blank, pure nothingness. Fichte maintains, and it seems to me rightly, that there is a third possibility — a unity of subject and object which yet is not a blank, but which, on the contrary, is richer and fuller than the stage that he calls consciousness.

It must be remembered, however, that this third possibility is only a *possibility for thought*, that, according to Fichte's doctrine, the supra-conscious is an ideal that can never be fully actualized. It does not describe for us a world which now is, or which ever will be, actual; but it does help us to understand, in some measure, the *trend* of the world-process.

It is matter for regret that Fichte never worked out his doctrine of the nature of individuality, so that one might say with some confidence what he means by declaring that the "ultimate goal of the finite reason" is "the complete annihilation of the individual and his absorption into God,"[1] or that the "unattainable ideal" is the inclusion of "all individuals . . . in the one great unity of the pure spirit."[2] Fortunately, however, we may get from a few passages in the works of the second period, a hint as to the nature of individuality, which may help us to understand better this concept of the ideal. In general, we have limited ourselves, in the present chapter, to the writings of the first period; but in this particular case it seems better to make an exception to our rule and to avail ourselves at once of whatever aid the later writings may furnish. The passages in question are of such a nature that we do not need to discuss the doctrine of the second period in order to understand them; and they are more closely connected with our present problem than with anything that we shall take up in the succeeding chapter.

In the works of the second period in which Fichte develops his *Geschichtsphilosophie*,[3] emphasis is laid upon the thought that history involves the constant production of the new.[4] Whereas the philosophy of the French Enlightenment tended, Fichte thought, to regard history as moving in cycles, so that in any given period the race repeats the experiences of some earlier period,[5] he himself maintains that history means the continual

[1] *Die Sittenlehre* (1798), S. W., IV, 151.

[2] *Über die Würde des Menschen*, S. W., I, 416, with note.

[3] *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, *Die Reden an die deutsche Nation*, and others.

[4] This point has been well brought out in the interesting monograph by Natalie Wipplinger, entitled, *Der Entwickelungs-Begriff bei Fichte* (Freiburger Dissertation, Leipzig, 1900). See especially pp. 73 ff.

[5] *Cf.*, *e. g.*, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, S. W., VII, 367 f.

appearance of new values, the realization of the Idea in unique forms. "For me," he cries out in the *Bestimmung des Menschen*, "the universe is no longer, as formerly, that circle returning into itself, that play of ceaseless self-repetition, that monster which devours itself only to bring itself to the birth again; before my gaze it is now spiritualized and bears the characteristic stamp of the spirit — constant progress toward the more perfect in a straight line which goes out to infinity." [1]

It is in connection with this doctrine of history as the production of the new, that Fichte gives us some hints with regard to the nature of the individual which are of importance for our purpose. In the first place, the mere insistence upon the thought that the Idea of the Ego, or as Fichte more often designates it in the later writings, the divine Idea, is continually realizing itself in *new* forms, seems to show that the goal is not conceived as the disappearance of all content. But this general consideration is supplemented by some definite statements as to the nature of individuality which suggest that the progress of the race does not consist in doing away with individual differences, but rather in developing them. We are told more than once that each person has his peculiar vocation, which no one save himself can perform. "Man ought to be and do something; his life in time ought to leave behind, in the world of spirit, a result that is undying and eternal. The life of every particular individual is to have a particular result, . . . demanded of him alone." [2] "I, . . . this particular . . . person, am here and am come into existence for this purpose, that in me God's eternal decree as to the world may be thought out in the time-process in a new and as yet wholly unknown way." [3]

But how are we to reconcile this thought with the doctrine that individuality would disappear if the Idea of the Ego were ever completely actualized? In so far as Fichte answers this question, it is by pointing out that there are two different senses in which we may use the word 'individuality.' The distinction is brought out most clearly in a striking passage in the *Grundzüge*

[1] S. W., II, 317.

[2] *Das Wesen des Gelehrten* (1805), S. W., VI, 383 f.

[3] *Op. cit.*, S. W., VI, 386.

des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters. In many places in this work, Fichte has insisted that all personal interests must be sacrificed to the one great purpose of the realization of the divine Idea. This is quite in keeping with the doctrine of the *Sittenlehre* of 1798, which demands as strenuously as the Kantian ethics, that all individual desires shall be subordinated to the moral law. But in the passage in the *Grundzüge* to which we have referred, Fichte explains his meaning thus. If the critic maintain that "our unconditioned condemnation of all individuality cannot be reconciled" with the thought that individuality is something "beautiful and lovable," he "has simply failed to notice that by individuality we mean merely the personal, sensuous existence of the individual. In no sense do we deny, on the contrary we expressly affirm and emphasize, the thought that the one eternal Idea, in every individual in whom it breaks forth into life, reveals itself in a wholly new form, which never has been before. And it does this quite independently of the sensuous nature, through itself, by its own decree. It is, then, by no means determined by the sensuous individuality. On the contrary, it negates this sensuous individuality, and solely of itself determines the ideal individuality, or more correctly, originality." [1]

What now is the meaning of the distinction that Fichte makes in this passage? If I understand him, it is this. The divine Idea, as self-realizing principle, manifests itself to some degree, attains to partial actualization, in every individual life; but it is more fully realized in some lives than in others. From time to time there appear, among the children of men, lives which are so wholly given up to the divine Idea — so completely under the

[1] S. W., VII, 69. With this may be compared another passage in the same work (p. 110), in which Fichte tells us that in order to be perfect, a work of art must have a "clarity . . . and transparency untroubled by individuality or anything else that is not pure art. . . . The individuality of the artist, by means of which we can understand his work more intimately," is "as such, never a sensuous, but an ideal" individuality. That Fichte makes this distinction between the sensuous and the non-sensuous individuality, has been pointed out by Lask (*Fichtes Idealismus und die Geschichte*, Tübingen und Leipzig, 1902, 203 ff.) and by Maria Raich (*Fichte, seine Ethik und seine Stellung zum Problem des Individualismus*, Tübingen, 1905, 152 ff.). In my interpretation of the relation between the two kinds of individuality and of the meaning of Fichte's assertion that the lower individuality must be suppressed, I think that I have added something to the discussions found in these two works.

sway of their ideals — that they are in a peculiar sense the vehicle of its manifestation. In all ages, says Fichte, men have lived and died for the sake of ideas ; and through such living and dying has come into being "all that is great and good in our present-day civilization."[1] Now when a human life surrenders itself thus to the Idea, when it becomes merely the mouthpiece through which the universal reason may speak, then we have always a man of strongly marked characteristics, a unique personality. The divine life, in its infinite fulness, has no need to repeat itself in any of its manifestations. Rather does it pour itself out, through each person who has devoted himself to it, in a distinctive form, which never has been before, which never will be again. Thus the self-manifestation of absolute reason in a human life does not involve the suppression of individual difference. On the contrary, it is precisely the man whose life most perfectly embodies the Idea, who has the richest, most distinctive personality. But if it be true that the indwelling of the Idea *creates* individuality, what is the sort of individuality whose doing away is the condition of all progress ? It is individuality in the sense of absorption in one's petty personal interests. An individuality which finds its reason for being in personal enjoyment, in the gratification of its own desires, this is the 'sensuous' kind, whose suppression is absolutely necessary to progress. Upon this point Fichte is uncompromising : the utter subordination of personal ease and enjoyment to ideal considerations, the surrender of the whole self to the guidance of the Idea — this 'annihilation,' as he calls it, of the lower individuality is the indispensable condition of the attainment of the higher.[2] Herein consists the paradox of personality : 'He that loseth his individuality shall find it.'

[1] *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, S. W., VII, 41.

[2] *Cf.* the following passages : "The Idea . . . pours itself out into the personal life of him [who has surrendered himself to it], destroying all his sensuous impulses and desires ; and the man is artist, hero, scientist, or saint" (*Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, S. W., VII, 119). "The love for the Idea dwells in him and constitutes his personality. . . . The eternal divine Idea here comes into existence in particular human individuals. This existence of the divine Idea in them encompasses itself with inexpressible love. Then we say, speaking according to the appearance, 'This man loves the Idea and lives in the Idea,' whereas in truth it is the Idea itself which lives and loves itself, in his stead and in his person, and his person in no sense exists or lives in and for itself, but is merely the appearance, in sensuous

It is important to distinguish at this point between what Fichte means by the surrender of the self to the absolute reason and what is ordinarily called altruism. To the best of my knowledge, Fichte nowhere makes this distinction very clear, and much of what he says about the suppression of individuality may seem to involve the denial of such a distinction. Nevertheless, I think we shall see that his doctrine of the two kinds of individuality really requires us to say that the self-surrender to the Idea and the conscious devotion of one's life to the service of the race are not perfectly synonymous phrases.

It is true, as we have just admitted, that Fichte sometimes speaks as if there were no difference between these two conceptions. *E. g.*, he describes the Idea as "the living and active thought . . . which is never directed toward the single person, but always includes the race."[1] Again, he says, "Reason aims at the one life, which appears as the life of the race. If from the human life we take away reason, there remains only individuality and the love of individuality. The rational life, then, consists in this, that the person forget himself in the race, identify his life with that of the whole, and sacrifice his life to the whole. The irrational life, on the other hand, consists in this, that the person think of nothing but himself, love nothing but himself, . . . identify his whole life merely with his own personal well-being.

form, of this existence of the Idea. . . . In the true scholar the Idea has won a sensuous life which has completely annihilated and absorbed his personal life. He does not love the Idea more than all else — he loves nothing but it. . . . It alone is the source of all his joys and pleasures, it alone is the moving principle of all his thoughts, endeavors, and actions" (*Das Wesen des Gelehrten*, 1805, S. W., VI, 356). When the Idea "attains to life" in a human being, "it works irresistibly through its own inner life, not through the individual's. . . . Every one whom it has really seized upon, it drives forward against the will and desire of the personal, sensuous nature in him, using him as a passive instrument. . . . Wholly of itself and without needing assistance from the intention of the person himself, it ceaselessly acts and develops itself till it has won the living and influential form which it can win in this case" (*Op. cit.*, S. W., VI, 377).

That a work of genius often seems to its creator the product of a power which is not his own, is vouched for by the testimony of many. *Cf.*, *e. g.*, George Eliot's statement to her husband. "She told me," he says, "that, in all that she considered her best writing, there was a 'not-herself,' which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting" (*George Eliot's Life*, edited by J. W. Cross, Chap. XIX).

[1] *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, S. W., VII, 119.

. . . There is only one virtue — to forget yourself as person — and only one vice — to think of yourself." [1]

But though Fichte seems, in these and other passages, to identify the true life with altruistic conduct, this is not his whole meaning. The true life consists in the surrendering of personal interests for the sake of that which we recognize as a 'Higher than Happiness,' whatever guise this 'Higher' may wear. The poet whose love for his art leads him "to scorn delights and live laborious days," may have no definite purpose of serving his fellow-men; probably, so far as his intent goes, he does not live for mankind — just as he does not live for himself — but solely for his art. And yet, if he but serve his art with purity of purpose, we see in him precisely that devotion of the personal life to an ideal which Fichte lauds so highly. It is not essential that one should think of others; the essential is that one should forget self. And there is no question that the devotion of one's life to the service of some great ideal often involves a certain detachment from the life of the community. To work *consciously* for the sake of humanity may often be to defeat the highest aims of art and science.

And yet we cannot suppose that there is any real contradiction between the service of the ideal and the service of one's fellow-men. Surely it is by our fidelity to our ideals that we most certainly further the progress of the race. What Fichte would say, I think, is that whenever a life has surrendered itself to the guidance of the Idea, it does inevitably contribute to the progress of the race, whether there be any definite purpose to do so or not. That the conscious devotion of the individual may be to æsthetic or intellectual ideals rather than to the service of humanity, is occasionally suggested by Fichte himself. "The life of the race is expressed in the Ideas. . . . The formula which we used above, 'to identify one's life with the race,' may also be expressed, 'to identify one's life with the Ideas.' For the Ideas are directed to the race as such and to its life; and thus the rational — and hence right, good, and true life — consists in this, that one forget oneself in the Ideas, that one desire and know no

[1] *Op. cit.*, S. W., VII, 34 f. *Cf.* 36 f.

other joy than that which comes from them and from sacrificing all the other joy in life for their sake." [1] And again: "They identified . . . their personal life and their joy with the Idea, and through this Idea with the race." [2]

It may be remarked also that, according to the doctrine of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the human race is not, strictly speaking, an end in itself, but a means to the realization of the end. The end is the actualization of the Idea of the Ego, or, in other words, the realizing of absolute values. The human race and human history are the means to the attainment of this end. Hence, strictly speaking, the devotion of oneself to the Idea, the constant effort to realize the supreme values through the medium of one's personal life, is the fundamental attitude, and devotion to the service of humanity a subordinate form of it.

It seems to me, then, that we are not justified in saying that by the higher individuality Fichte means the conscious surrender of all personal interests for the sake of humanity, but that we must rather say that he means the domination of the individual life by some great idea. That this conception does not adequately describe the individuality of all the great ones of the earth, must be admitted. There are many instances of genius — that of Goethe is one of the most striking — in which self-feeling seems to have been developed to a remarkable degree, and which could not without some forcing be described as the domination of the personality by the Idea. But at any rate there can be no question that our interpretation of Fichte's conception corresponds much more nearly to what we mean by genius than the interpretation which identifies the higher individuality with the conscious service of the race.

These suggestions as to the nature of individuality, which we have found in the works of the second period, may help us to understand in part what Fichte may have meant in the first period by the annihilation of individuality. Probably the chief thing that he meant, was that overcoming of the petty personal point of view which is at once the condition and the result of high endeavor.

[1] *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, S. W., VII, 37.
[2] *Op. cit.*, S. W., VII, 45 f.

The forgetting of one's private interests in the pursuit of a great ideal is precisely what he calls, in one of the passages already quoted from the *Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, the "annihilation of the sensuous individuality."[1]

But can we suppose that this is all that he means? Does not his doctrine that individuality and consciousness imply opposition, require us to say that the infinitely distant goal is not merely the complete subordination of self-regarding impulses, but the disappearance of consciousness itself? In a sense we must certainly say this; but, as has been already urged, we are not bound to suppose that the disappearance of consciousness, in Fichte's sense of 'consciousness,' involves its disappearance in every sense. It is probable that for Fichte the goal means what most of us would call a higher form of consciousness — an experience in which all sense of opposition and foreignness has vanished, in which self-feeling — the feeling of self as a unit, an isolated individual — has disappeared. While we cannot say with any definiteness what this higher form may be, yet certain states which we do experience give us a clue to its nature. In æsthetic rapture, in religious ecstasy, in the highest forms of intellectual activity, there is often a submergence of the distinct consciousness of self, a blurring of the line of division between subject and object, which gives us a suggestion of what Fichte may mean by the disappearance of consciousness as the goal of all our striving. Certainly we must admit that in such experiences the oppositions of life are overcome to a much greater degree than ordinarily; and certainly also we must admit that these moments represent the height of our attainment and may therefore be taken as furnishing faint glimpses of the infinitely distant goal, toward which the world-process is tending.

We have now finished our study of Fichte's conception of the ultimate principle as it is found in the earlier works. One or two questions which might naturally enough have been treated here, will be considered instead, as a matter of convenience, in the following chapter. The discussion in Chapter III, it may be

[1] "Die sinnliche Individualität vernichtend." (S. W., VII, 69.)

hoped, will throw additional light upon Fichte's conception of the ultimate principle as the Idea which is gradually realizing itself in the world, and upon the problem of the relation between this Idea and the process of its self-realization.

CHAPTER III.

The Works of the Second Period: Being and Existence.

In the preceding chapter we discussed in some detail the conception of the ultimate principle as it is found in Fichte's earlier writings. Our present task is to compare this conception with that which appears in the later works. The question of the relation between the two forms of Fichte's philosophy is one which has often been discussed and upon which widely different opinions have been held. Some have maintained that in the later writings we find a complete abandonment of the fundamental doctrines of the earlier, while others declare that there is no essential difference between the two periods. When there is so great disagreement in a matter of interpretation, one often finds that the truth lies somewhere between the extreme views; and with regard to the relation between the two phases of Fichte's philosophy, this seems to be the case. That there is a difference between the prevailing doctrines of the two periods must, I think, be admitted; but that the difference is not so far-reaching as many have supposed, is equally evident.

One of the works which are most commonly supposed to show the change in Fichte's system is the *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre aus dem Jahre 1801*.[1] In this treatise the term 'Ego,' which appears so frequently in the *Grundlage*, is usually replaced by the word 'knowing' or 'absolute knowing.' Fichte describes this knowing as a perfect union of being and freedom. First, it is absolutely *what* it is; in this aspect it is fixed, changeless, complete within itself — absolute being. Again, it is absolutely *because* it is; it exists simply through itself, without the aid of anything external; this is its aspect of absolute freedom.[2] Neither of these aspects, taken by itself, can give us absolute knowing:

[1] This work, though written in 1801, was not published until 1845, when it appeared in Vol. II of the *Sämmtliche Werke*.

[2] S. W., II, 24, 27, 38.

for it "is not resting being, nor on the other hand is it freedom; . . . but it is the mutual interpenetration and fusion of both."[1] Moreover, the unity is an organic one. We should not regard the two elements as standing "in a relation of mere contiguity," as constituting "a formal and negative unity, a *Nichtverschiedenheit*." On the contrary, they must fuse so perfectly as to be indistinguishable. "It is precisely in this absolute fusion that the essence of knowing as such, or the absolute knowing, consists. . . . In this inseparable union, this perfect interpenetration, both elements lose their distinctive character and stand before us as one essence and an entirely new essence."[2]

This description of absolute knowing as an indissoluble union of being and freedom seems to correspond to the earlier doctrine of the Ego as the unity of the subjective and objective aspects of consciousness. 'Being' corresponds to the 'given,' the content of knowing; 'freedom' to the uniting activity, the form of knowing. "If we look at absolute knowing with reference to its inner immanent . . . essence, we see it as absolute being; if with reference to its inner immanent production, we see it as absolute freedom." But knowing itself is neither the one nor the other. If we take it as either one alone, we are looking at it abstractly. "In knowing . . . the duality is fused into unity";[3] content and form are one.

In like manner, the relation between absolute and particular knowing seems to be the same as that which we found, in the earlier works, between the individual consciousness and its ultimate principle. Particular knowing is the realization of absolute knowing. As absolute, knowing is never actual; it has actuality only in so far as it is a "knowing of something," *i. e.*, in so far as it involves a distinction between subject and object. Consciousness is an inadequate realization of that perfect unity of subject and object — or, to use the terminology of the *Darstellung*, of freedom and being — which is never completely actual.

The following passages will justify the description which we have given of the train of thought of the *Darstellung:*

"Our actual and possible knowing is in all cases, not an abso-

[1] S. W., II, 19. [2] S. W., II, 17. [3] S. W., II, 24.

lute, but only a relative knowing, determined and limited in one way or another. . . . Absolute knowing comes or can come to consciousness only as form, or, in another way of looking at it, only as a matter or object, of actual knowing." [1]

"All our actual knowing is a knowing of something — of *this* something, which is not that second or third something." But "it could not be a knowing of something unless it were a knowing in general, merely and absolutely as knowing. In so far as it is a knowing of something [*i. e.*, *this* knowing of *this* something], it differs from itself [as manifested] in every other knowing of every other something; but in so far as it is knowing, it is like itself and absolutely the same in all knowing of something, although this knowing of something may go on to infinity and in so far may vary through all infinity. Whenever we speak of absolute knowing, the reader is called upon to think of knowing as the one which is self-identical in all particular knowing, and through which the latter is not *this* knowing, but just *knowing*." [2]

So far the *Darstellung* of 1801 seems to be in harmony with the prevailing view of the first period. Knowing is, absolutely in and for itself; it is absolutely what it is and absolutely because it is. Apparently, then, it is self-sufficient and self-explanatory. If we should strike out a few passages here and there in the *Darstellung*, we should have a consistent exposition of the theory that the absolute principle is the ideal unity which is immanent in the individual consciousness.[3] There are, however, a few statements which put the matter in a different light and which seem to show a tendency to think of the first principle more abstractly. For although knowing is absolute, still, Fichte tells us, it is not the Absolute. "It is clear from the mere concept of absolute knowing that it is not the *Absolute*. Every word that is added to the expression 'the Absolute,' destroys the absoluteness. . . . The Absolute is neither knowing nor being, nor is it either identity or indifference of these two; it is simply the Absolute." [4]

[1] S. W., II, 13. [2] S. W., II, 14.

[3] To be sure, Fichte does not emphasize here so strongly as in the *Grundlage* the thought of the ideal character of the Ego; still his statement that absolute knowing is never completely actualized, seems to suggest the same interpretation which we gave for the earlier work.

[4] S. W., II, 12 f.

These words certainly suggest a doctrine somewhat different from that of the earlier writings. In the first period, Fichte takes, as his supreme principle, the unity which is immanent in consciousness. In the quotation before us, however, he seems to posit a transcendent principle: absolute knowing, which is implicit in every act of thought, and which corresponds to the Ego of the *Grundlage*, is declared not to be the Absolute. The ultimate principle, it seems, lies back of and beyond absolute knowing. This apparent disposition to substitute a transcendent for an immanent principle is not confined to the *Darstellung;* there are traces of it in nearly all the writings of the second period. The terminology varies in different works,[1] but everywhere there seems to be a tendency to postulate an Absolute behind the absolute Ego. The following passages will serve as examples:

The origin of absolute knowing is to be sought in "something which is not knowing at all," and which "we may perhaps call *being*." [2]

"Nothing exists outside God . . . except *knowing;* and this knowing is the divine existence itself. . . . God not only is (*ist*), inwardly and concealed within himself, but he also exists (*ist da*) and expresses himself." [3]

"What is outside God dissolves into mere perception (*Anschauung*), image (*Bild*), knowing . . . and in it there is not the slightest trace or gleam of true formal being, which remains wholly in God." [4]

"Only one is entirely through himself — God. . . . Through his being is all possible being given. Neither within him nor without him can a new being arise. If then, in spite of this, knowing is to be and yet is not to be God himself, it can only be . . . God himself, but outside himself, God's being outside his being, his expression. . . . Such an expression is an image or *schema*." [5]

[1] The ultimate principle is usually designated as 'God,' 'Being,' or 'the Absolute'; 'knowing,' 'absolute knowing,' 'the concept,' 'the divine Idea,' are terms that are apparently equivalent to the Ego of the earlier works.

[2] *Die Wissenschaftslehre* (1813), N. W., II, 3.

[3] *Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben* (1806), S. W., V, 448 f.

[4] *Die Thatsachen des Bewusstseins* (1810), S. W., II, 686.

[5] *Die Wissenschaftslehre in ihrem allgemeinen Umrisse* (1810), S. W., II, 696.

"*The concept is the ground of the world.* . . . *All* being which the *Sittenlehre* can know, is the being that is grounded in the concept." Now the *Wissenschaftslehre* shows that this concept, which seems absolute and which "the *Sittenlehre* must . . . take as absolute," is really the "copy of a higher being," that it is "the *image of God.*" [1]

"The Absolute can have only an absolute . . . *manifestation*, and this is the *absolute knowing*. The Absolute *itself*, however, is not a being nor is it a knowing; nor is it identity or indifference of the two; but it is merely — the Absolute; and every added word is evil." [2]

One of the most striking passages of all appears in the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1804. Fichte complains here that all his critics have misunderstood the nature of his first principle. "The *Wissenschaftslehre*," he says, "has been interpreted as a purely idealistic system, which takes . . . the absolute Ego for the *Absolute* and tries to deduce everything else from it. No writer who is known to me, friend or foe, has risen to a higher conception" of the system. [3]

It is the existence of passages like these that has led some students of Fichte to regard his later works as representing a radical change of doctrine. Some have even gone so far as to declare that in the second period he thinks of the ultimate principle, not as activity, but as fixed, resting being. The incorrectness of this latter interpretation, it seems to me, has been conclusively shown by Loewe.[4] The term 'being,' he maintains, is used in the various expositions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in two different senses.[5] When Fichte says, in the earlier works, that mere being can never serve as an ultimate principle of explanation, he has in mind *being* as opposed to *activity* — mere lifeless being, the thing-in-itself. But in the later works, where he often

[1] *Das System der Sittenlehre* (1812), N. W., III, 3 f.

[2] Letter to Schelling (1802), *Fichte's Leben und literarischer Briefwechsel*, 2te Aufl., II, 367.

[3] N. W., II, 193.

[4] *Die Philosophie Fichtes nach dem Gesammtergebnisse ihrer Entwickelung* (Stuttgart, 1862), 29 ff., 50 ff.

[5] Loewe really recognizes three uses of the word (*Op. cit.*, 72). But for our purposes it is not necessary to consider more than two.

applies the word 'being' to his fundamental principle, he takes pains to tell us that this being is at the same time life and activity.

Loewe supports his interpretation by many citations from the writings of both periods. He has done his work so thoroughly that we need not stop to go over the ground again. We may simply pause to notice a few of the passages from the later writings which show that the 'being' which is identified with the Absolute is not the 'being' against which Fichte inveighs in the earlier works. In a letter to Schelling, written in 1801, Fichte says, "If we wish to give the name *being* to that which even the insight that we have now gained, cannot penetrate, . . . then God is pure being. But this being, in itself, is not, so to speak, compression; it is, throughout, agility, transparency, light. . . . It is *being*, only for the finite reason, but not in itself." [1] Again, in the *Wissenschaftslehre in ihrem allgemeinen Umrisse* (1810), we read, "God is not the dead concept, . . . but he is in himself pure life." [2] In the *Bericht über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* (1806), we are told: "The Absolute is only in immediate life, and except immediate life there is no other being." [3] And in *Das Wesen des Gelehrten* (1805), are the words, "Being, absolutely as being, is living and active of itself, and there is no other being than life. In no sense is it dead, stationary, resting within itself. . . . The only life is the life of God or of the Absolute." [4]

In the face of these emphatic statements and others which Loewe cites, we certainly cannot say that the fundamental principle is conceived in the later works as *being* rather than *activity*. But although this may be granted, yet the passages which we have quoted from the *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* and other works, seem, if taken by themselves, to show that Fichte now thinks of his principle as something higher than absolute knowing. And if this is really the case, if he now tries to explain consciousness, not by a unity implicit within it, but by an external principle, then we must grant that the change of doctrine, though not so great as some have believed, is still considerable.

Some writers indeed there are, who maintain that there is no

[1] *Leben und Briefwechsel*, 2te Aufl., II, 345. [2] S. W., II, 696.
[3] S. W., VIII, 370. [4] S. W., VI, 361.

difference of any consequence between the two periods. Fortlage, *e. g.*, says that the only change which Fichte makes in the later writings is one of terminology, and that he was led to it by the charge of atheism.[1] In the article which provoked the attack upon his orthodoxy, Fichte identifies God with the moral world-order. This position, says Fortlage, was liable to misapprehension: in the popular mind, the world-order is regarded as subordinate to the world-substance, of which it is supposed to be an attribute. When Fichte became aware that his statements had been misunderstood, he changed his terminology and spoke of God as the absolute *being*, whose *existence* is absolute knowing. But the alteration was merely in mode of statement; his conception of God remained the same throughout his system.

With Fortlage's main contention, that there is *no* change except in terminology, I cannot quite agree. Nor does it seem to me that the change of phraseology is to be explained wholly, or even mainly, by the charge of atheism. It is not unlikely — and this, I think, is the element of truth in Fortlage's interpretation — that the theological controversy in which Fichte became involved, opened his eyes to the fact that he had been greatly misunderstood and led him to alter some of his modes of expression. But in so far as the change in terminology does not represent an alteration of some sort in his thought, its chief cause is rather to be found in the charge of subjective idealism and solipsism. The almost complete abandonment of the word 'Ego,' even in the more technical writings of the second period, seems to me the most important change in *mere* terminology,[2] and this it is more natural to connect with the charge of solipsism than with that of atheism.

My most serious disagreement with Fortlage, however, is that I believe the difference between the two periods to be more than a difference in mode of expression. It seems to me that there is at least a noticeable shifting of emphasis. Thoughts which in the earlier writings are quite in the background, become promi-

[1] *Genetische Geschichte der Philosophie seit Kant* (Leipzig, 1852), 136 ff.

[2] The other important changes — the references to the Absolute and the designating of God as *being* — are not mere changes in terminology, as we shall try to show presently.

nent in the later ones; and doctrines which are implicitly present in the first period, arise into clearer consciousness in the second. The difference between the earlier and later forms of Fichte's philosophy, as we shall try to show, is by no means so great as at first glance it seems to be; but it is a real difference. What its nature is, we shall now try to learn.

In the passage from the *Darstellung* and the similar ones which we have quoted from other works, the Absolute and absolute knowing seem to be regarded as two distinct principles. I hope to be able to show, however, that Fichte does not really think of them in this way. And if we believe that he conceives them rather as two aspects of one principle, the most obvious way of describing the difference between the two periods, is to say that in the first he seems disposed to emphasize the temporal aspect of the ultimate principle, whereas in the second he dwells upon its timeless aspect. Apparently he came to feel that the earlier expositions of his philosophy were inadequate because they gave undue prominence to the conception of the principle as realizing itself in time. In the later writings, therefore, he took pains to point out that it has a timeless aspect as well.[1] Unfortunately the words in which he seeks to express this thought are not always well chosen. What he means to show, is that to describe the fundamental principle merely as an Idea which can never be fully realized, is at best to describe it inadequately, to call attention to one side of its nature and to ignore another, equally important, side. But in his effort to do this, he often seems to separate the two aspects by a sharp line of division, to make of them two distinct principles, one of which is primary and the other secondary. Absolute knowing, or the manifestation of the Absolute, which represents the temporal aspect, is often sharply distinguished from the Absolute itself, the timeless aspect.

The result of this unfortunate mode of expression is that Fichte

[1] It should be noted, however, that his interest in the philosophy of history is confined almost wholly to the second period; and in this respect the later works may be said to pay much attention to the conception of the realization of the ultimate principle in the time-process.

has often been misunderstood. Many have believed that in the first period his ultimate principle is immanent in consciousness, while in the second he goes beyond the Ego of the earlier works and postulates a transcendent principle as its ground. In partial opposition to this interpretation, we shall try to show that he does not mean to describe absolute knowing and the Absolute as two distinct principles, but rather as two aspects of one. At the same time the fact that he tends, in the second period, to emphasize the timeless aspect much more strongly than in the first, may justify us in dissenting somewhat from the opinion of those who maintain that there is no change of any consequence in the later doctrine. There is, to say the least, a marked shifting of emphasis.

In the writings of the first period, as we have seen, stress is laid upon the thought that the Idea of the Ego is not, and never can be, fully realized, that it is the goal of an unending progress. What *actually is*, then, what *exists*, is the world of finite consciousnesses. But now, in this world, shot through and through, as it is, by the opposition of subject and object, we none the less see a partial realization of the ideal unity. Our world is a world in which values are realized — intellectual, moral, æsthetic values. How is this? Why is it that eternal values are actualized in this world of time, that the infinite process is also an infinite progress? The answer is found in Fichte's conception of the nature of the Idea. The Idea of the Ego, as he conceives it, is not simply *our* ideal, a psychological fact; in this case the only values that were realized, would be subjective ones. Again, it is not merely an objective norm, with which we may compare reality in order to determine its worth; on this supposition the *presence* of value in the world of reality would still be unexplained. Once more, it is not something fixed and stationary outside the world-process, which guides that process by the force of attraction; strictly speaking, this conception has no meaning when one frees it from spatial implications. The Idea of the Ego is none of these three. Fichte's conception is rather that the supreme value is itself a moving power, a principle of activity. The reason why values are realized in this world of ours, is that the Idea of the

Ego, the absolute value, *realizes itself*, and the form that its self-realization takes, is the world-process. God is at once the supreme value and the indwelling principle of the world-process. He is the moral world-order, which is, however, an *ordo ordinans*;[1] not, strictly speaking, a world-order that is *built up by us*, but one that *builds itself* in and through us.

But if this is true, then we cannot rest satisfied with the statement that all that *is*, is this world-process, in which values are progressively realized. If the Idea were merely a norm by which we measured the progress, then we could say that nothing is except the process itself. But if the Idea is the indwelling force, by virtue of which alone there *is* a process, if it is, as Fichte maintains, the world-ground, then there is a sense in which we may say that it is, and that because it is, the world is.

In this sense, then, we may speak of the *Sein* of the Idea — *i. e.*, of the absolute value as itself a mode of reality — and of its *Dasein* — *i. e.*, of its progressive actualization in time. Now if we consider the Idea simply as absolute value, leaving out of account the thought of its actualization, we are dealing with it as a non-temporal reality; it is of the essence of value that it is timeless in its nature. Hence the *Sollen*, which is the ground of all existence, the motive power in all process and change, is, when considered in itself, changeless and eternal.

It must have been somewhat in this way that Fichte was led to make the distinction, which appears so prominently in some of his later writings, between the self-manifestation of the Absolute and its own inner life — between what he often calls its *Fürsich* and its *Ansich*. The one is the ultimate principle considered as in time, the absolute life, unfolding itself in ever new and higher forms. The other is the same principle considered in its own inner nature, without reference to the fact of its self-manifestation and therefore without reference to time; hence Fichte speaks of it as a timeless reality and tells us, in words which at first glance seem far removed from the spirit of the earlier *Wissenschaftslehre*, that

[1] "The *moral world-order*, or — if one cannot accustom oneself to the word in the sense of *ordo ordinans*, *absolute*, *eoque ipso creans* — moral principle, creative moral force — whatever we are to call it, at any rate God is, exists (*existiert*), in himself only as such order" (*Zu "Jacobi an Fichte,"* 1799, N. W., III, 392).

in it is no change or movement, that it never becomes, but simply is.

The transition from the first to the second way of looking at the principle is most clearly shown in a discussion found in the *Thatsachen des Bewusstseins* (1810). In this work, Fichte begins with an examination of the lowest stages of consciousness and gradually develops the doctrine of the Idea or the final purpose, as the ground of the world's existence. "Life exists," he concludes, "not for its own sake," but in order that the end may be realized. Hence it does not "exist *through* itself; that is, the ground of its existence is not in itself, but in another, in the final purpose." Now we cannot say that the end "*is* as a fact (*faktisch ist*) in the sphere of phenomena," but only that "it *shall* be and become in this sphere through life itself. If the final purpose is, it is only through life [that is, it has actuality only in so far as it is realized in the world-process]; and, on the other hand, life itself, in its own existence, is only through the being of the final purpose [that is, the ground of the process is a *Sollen*, a demand that what is not, shall be]. . . . Thus the being of life is not something absolute: its ground has been discovered; it is created and determined by the final purpose." [1]

So far we have the doctrine with which we are familiar in Fichte's earlier works. But the argument now takes a new turn. In the world of phenomena, as we have just seen, the ideal *is* not; it simply *becomes*. In itself, however, in abstraction from this world, it does not *become;* it simply *is*. "The absolute final purpose is, and it is altogether complete (*ganz und durchaus fertig*) and self-determined; it is what it is, wholly through itself.[2] . . . It is; it does not become, and nothing becomes in it." [3] We see that this must be so, as soon as we consider carefully the concept of becoming; for an absolute becoming, in which there

[1] S. W., II, 658 f.

[2] But although the end is, wholly through itself, there is still a necessary connection between it and the world. "In the very concept of a final purpose is contained the necessity" that it fulfil itself. "It *will* be realized" [the italics are mine], and it finds its realization in life. The perfect realization, of course, is never attained. "The absolute final purpose never becomes [completely] visible"; but each new world is a fuller manifestation of it (pp. 659, 678 f.).

[3] S. W., II, 659.

is no element of fixity, is manifestly unthinkable. Mere becoming would "vanish into nothingness." "In all this infinite becoming there is a being, which *is* and does not become, which is not altered, which has no part in change."[1]

The result of our discussion, then, is this: "The being of life, which must be assumed as its ground, becomes final purpose merely in the synthesis with the becoming as the form of life. Outside this synthesis, beyond this form, we must not speak of a final purpose, but only of a being pure and simple. The final purpose is thus the *expression* of being in becoming, in order that being may be made visible."[2]

In this discussion we get some clue as to the motive of the change which we find in Fichte's later writings. The feeling which seems to be uppermost here is this: that the conception of a *mere* temporal process is meaningless, that all change implies the unchanging, every temporal a non-temporal; and therefore that if it be, from one point of view, admissible to conceive of the ultimate principle, not as that which *is*, but as that which *ought to be*, and thus to identify what *is* with the world of consciousness, in which the *Ought-to-be* never fully *is*, still this is not the only possible point of view; that, on the contrary, the principle has its own being, which is not dependent upon or grounded in its realization, but which is rather to be conceived as the ground of this realization.

Now, as we have said, Fichte often speaks as if this inner being of the ultimate principle were something quite distinct from its self-realization in the world-process. This leads to the appearance of a great difference between the doctrine of the first period, where the principle is conceived almost exclusively in its aspect of self-actualizing Idea, and that of the second period. That the change in the later writings is, however, not so great as it might at first seem to be, we shall try to prove in two ways. We shall try to show, in the first place, that the tendency to distinguish between the Absolute and its manifestation, which is so noticeable in the second period, is present also, though in less degree and in a different form, in the works of the first; and in the sec-

[1] S. W., II, 681 f. [2] S. W., II, 683.

ond place, that Fichte does not really make so sharp a distinction between the Absolute and its *Dasein* in the later writings as one might be disposed to think.

We turn at once to the task of establishing our first point. As we have seen, there is a marked disposition in the later writings to insist upon the timeless nature of the Absolute and to distinguish sharply between its changless inner being and the manifestation of this being in the temporal process. This tendency is a distinctive characteristic of the second period; but we shall see, I think, that it is not altogether without its parallel in the first. *E. g.*, with the passage in the *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* which declares that we may not ascribe any predicates whatever to the Absolute,[1] we may compare the following from the *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre:* "The absolute Ego of the first *Grundsatz* is not *something* (it has no predicates and can have none); it is absolutely *what* it is, and this cannot be further explained."[2] Again, there are passages in the earlier works in which Fichte even designates the ultimate principle as 'being.' *E. g.*, in a note in the *Grundlage*, in which he is contrasting his philosophy with Stoicism, he says, "In consistent Stoicism the infinite idea of the Ego is taken for the actual Ego; absolute being (*absolutes Sein*) and actual existence (*wirkliches Dasein*) are not distinguished. Hence the Stoic sage is self-sufficient and free from limitation. To him are attributed all the predicates that belong to the pure Ego or God. According to the Stoic ethics, we are not to become like God, but we ourselves are God. The *Wissenschaftslehre* carefully distinguishes absolute being and actual existence and simply takes the former as ground, in order to be able to explain the latter."[3]

This second passage seems to show that even in the *Grundlage* of 1794 Fichte thought it not unfitting to designate the Idea of the Ego as 'being.' The *existence* of the Idea, the actual world of consciousness, is process; in it the temporal aspect is prominent. But the Idea has a *Sein* as well as a *Dasein*, a timeless nature as well as a temporal realization. The thought is

[1] Quoted above, p. 71. [2] S. W., I, 109.
[3] S. W., I, 278, note; *cf.* 279.

not further developed here, and there are not many places in the earlier works in which Fichte describes the ultimate principle as 'being.' The latter fact may be explained in part by reference to Loewe's distinction between the two uses of the term 'being.'[1] In the earlier writings Fichte ordinarily identified 'being' with the thing-in-itself and thus would be loath to apply the word to his principle.

But though we may be justified in saying that the attribution of being to the ultimate principle is not wholly confined to the later writings, we are far from wishing to maintain that the difference between the two periods is one of mere terminology. On the contrary, it is evident that in the earlier works the emphasis is, throughout, upon the temporal aspect of the ultimate principle. What we wish to point out is simply that even in the first period Fichte could not have believed that this temporal aspect is the only one. The very fact that he follows Kant in regarding time as simply the form of human experience[2] and thus only a means to the manifestation of the Idea, seems to suggest that this cannot have been the case.

We seem justified, then, in maintaining that the doctrine of the second period, with its emphasis upon the timeless aspect, is not wholly unrelated to Fichte's earlier mode of thought. This can also be brought out in another way. In the preceding chapter we saw that there are traces, in the earlier works, of a disposition to insist upon the unlikeness between consciousness and its ultimate ground. The way in which Fichte sometimes emphasizes the opposition between the finite and infinite aspects of the Ego (in the *Grundlage* of 1794) or between the natural impulse and the impulse toward self-activity (in the *Sittenlehre* of 1798) has already been dwelt upon. Now it seems to me not unjustifiable to regard this as evidence of the same general tendency which we

[1] See above, pp. 73 f.

[2] *Cf.* the deduction of time in the *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre* (1795), S. W., I, 405 ff. Another deduction, belonging to the second period, is found in the *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, S. W., II, 100 ff. Both deductions are exceedingly difficult, and most of the expositions — *e. g.*, those of Kuno Fischer and Loewe — simply repeat Fichte's involved statement without explanation. The only exposition that I know which gives the reader any assistance, is that of Léon (*La Philosophie de Fichte*, Paris, 1902, pp. 109 ff., 435 ff.).

find so prominent, though in another form, in the later writings. We have seen that this tendency is held in check, in the first period, by an even stronger disposition to insist upon the oneness of the two aspects of the Ego ; and we have maintained that if we take the first period as a whole, the trend of thought is obviously toward the more concrete view of the relation between the Idea and the world of actual existence. But the fact remains that even in the earlier works, Fichte seems sometimes to distinguish rather sharply between the world of consciousness and its ultimate ground. It seems, then, not unreasonable to suppose that his later insistence upon the non-temporal aspect of the Idea and his disposition to separate the *Ansich* from the *Fürsich* are simply a new form of a tendency that was present, though less markedly, in the earlier writings.

From this brief argument in support of our first point, we may now pass on to our second — which will require more detailed discussion — and may try to show that even in the later works the gulf which seems to have been set between the Absolute and its manifestation is not so wide as one might at first think.

We have already considered a number of passages from the later works, in which Fichte distinguishes between the *Sein* and the *Dasein* of the Absolute, between the outer life, of which the *Wissenschaftslehre* professes to give an exposition, and the hidden inner life, which it can indicate to us, but which it cannot describe. We are now to see that there are many passages in which another tendency appears, in which Fichte insists upon the unity of these two aspects of the one principle.

In the discussion in the *Thatsachen des Bewusstseins*, which we have already examined with some care, there is one important statement that has not yet been quoted. As soon as he has reached the conception of God as the ultimate being, whose image is the being of life, Fichte continues thus : " From the mere concept [of God] we can say nothing more about him than that he is the Absolute and that he is not perception (*Anschauung*) or anything else that inheres in the perception by reason of its capacity for life (*Lebendigkeit*). This, however, is the mere form of God's being, and it is such form only as opposed to the

being of the appearance. What God actually is, of and in himself, appears in the perception. This expresses him completely, and he is in it as he is inwardly, in himself. This perception, however, is not in its turn perceived; it expresses itself only through the freedom that is joined with it. Thus God's being, as it is in God himself, reveals itself progressively to all infinity, first and immediately in the perception of the eternal final purpose. Life, therefore, in its proper being, is the image of God, just as he is within himself. But as formal life, as really living and active, it is the infinite striving really to become this image of God, which, however, it never can become, because the striving is infinite." [1]

Similar statements are found in other works. In the *Anweisung zum seligen Leben* Fichte says: "The real life of knowing is then, in its root, the inner being and essence of the Absolute itself and nothing else. Between the Absolute or God, and knowing, in the deepest roots of its life, there is no separation, but the two completely coincide." [2] And again: We now see "that being and existence completely coincide. . . . For to his [God's] being of and through himself, belongs his existence, and this existence can have no other ground; conversely, to *his* existence belongs all that which he is inwardly and through his essence. The whole distinction between *Sein* and *Dasein*, which we made in the previous discussion, and the lack of connection between the two, now show themselves as only for us and as a consequence of our limitation, but in no sense as in themselves and as being immediately in the divine existence." [3]

The *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, as we have said, is one of the works that are most commonly supposed to represent the change which Fichte's doctrine undergoes in the second period; and we have already quoted from it a passage in which he distinguishes sharply between the Absolute and absolute knowing. Yet in this very treatise we find several instances in which he seems to be implicitly correcting the abstractness of his view. The correction is made in two ways. In the first place he sometimes speaks as if being and freedom — the two characteristics of absolute know-

[1] S. W., II, 684 f. [2] S. W., V, 443. [3] S. W., V, 452.

ing — were predicates of the Absolute itself. "Let the reader think the *Absolute* merely as such. . . . He will find, we maintain, that he can think it only under two aspects: first, as being absolutely *what* it is, resting firmly upon and in itself, without any change or wavering, completely enclosed within itself; and secondly, as being what it is, absolutely *because* it is, of itself and through itself, without any foreign influence; for there can be nothing foreign left outside the Absolute, but all that is not the Absolute itself, disappears. . . . These two characteristics of the Absolute must completely fuse and coincide in knowing." [1] "The Absolute is neither" being nor freedom, "but it is both as absolutely one; and in knowing, at least, this duality is fused into unity." [2] "Knowing is not the *Absolute*, but only the fusion of the two predicates of the Absolute into a unity. Hence it must be absolute as for itself, but in this absoluteness it is only secondary, not primary." [3] The Absolute "is perhaps nothing else than the union of the two primal qualities in the formal unity of thinking." [4]

These passages do not seem in all respects perfectly harmonious, but they agree, at least, in suggesting a vital connection between absolute knowing and the Absolute. The central thought seems to be that the Absolute *finds* its unity only in and through the world-process or knowing. If this is so, if absolute knowing is the unity of the Absolute, then it is possible to understand the connection between the two. The world of consciousness may now be regarded as the progressive *coming to unity* of the Absolute, as the progress from an undifferentiated, to a higher, unity by means of difference. The One in its *Dasein* is not a perfect unity: absolute knowing is never completely actual. But the perfect unity is the goal of the process, and all particular knowing is a partial realization of it.

If we interpret the passages before us in this way, we have much the same doctrine that is prominent in the first period. As a logical starting-point, we must assume an Absolute, an undifferentiated unity, the absolute Ego of the *Grundlage*. But the higher unity can be realized only through the positing and overcoming

[1] S. W., II, 16 f. [2] S. W., II, 24. [3] S. W., II, 27. [4] S. W., II, 30.

of difference, *i. e.*, through the development of consciousness. If the differences were ever fully overcome, the ideal of perfect unity — absolute knowing, or, in the earlier terminology, the Idea of the Ego — would have been realized; the Absolute would have come to its unity in and through knowing.

There is another set of passages in the *Darstellung* which shows in a different way the effort that Fichte makes to exhibit the ultimate principle in its less abstract form. We have already quoted a passage[1] in which he tells us that we cannot attach any predicates to the Absolute without destroying the absoluteness. The natural inference from this is that we can have no knowledge whatever of the ultimate principle. In a later discussion, however, Fichte seems to say that there is a sense in which knowing may be said to give us the Absolute. The *Wissenschaftslehre* is the "knowing of knowing." In it, knowing makes itself its object, penetrates the mystery of its being. Hence in this philosophical reflection we must "go out beyond knowing and bring to light elements which indeed . . . are implicit *in* it, but which cannot be present *for* it." This is "the self-forgetting and self-annihilating of knowing."[2] The fundamental characteristic of knowing is its ability to discover its own origin. Knowing is egohood, "penetrability, absolute light"; it is essentially "Fürsichsein, Innerlichkeit des *Ursprunges*." By virtue of its power of self-penetration, it can go back upon itself until it reaches its absolute origin. But this process of return upon self is a process of self-forgetting and self-annihilating. Knowing "cannot contemplate its absolute origin without contemplating its boundary, its not-being."[3] Its ground must be something other than knowing, must be not-knowing or being.

Now although this absolute being is gained by the negation of knowing, yet Fichte does not seem always to conceive the relation between the two as negative. "*Pure being*," he tells us in this same passage, "is pure knowing, thought as *origin* for itself and thought as its own opposite,[4] as the not-being of know-

[1] See above, p. 71. [2] S. W., II, 42. [3] S. W., II, 63.

[4] The text reads, "Das reine Wissen gedacht, als *Ursprung* für sich, und seinen Gegensatz als Nichtsein des Wissens, weil es sonst nicht entspringen könnte, ist *reines Sein*." In spite of the grammatical construction, it seems clear that we must take *Gegensatz* with *gedacht als*, rather than with *für*.

ing, because otherwise [*i. e.*, if it did not proceed from its not-being] it could not come to be. (Or we may say, if only the reader will understand it aright, that the standpoint of absolute knowing is absolute creation as a producing, not as something produced. Knowing produces itself from its pure possibility as that which alone is prior to it,[1] and this [possibility] is the pure being.)"

This passage seems to indicate a doctrine which is essentially that of the *Grundlage*. The "pure possibility, . . . that which alone is prior" to knowing, may be held to correspond with the absolute Ego of the first period. And the context certainly leads one to infer that this possibility (pure being) is what Fichte has elsewhere called the Absolute. Here, then, the Absolute seems to be conceived as no more remote from the world of consciousness than is the absolute Ego of the *Grundlage*. But we find a still more striking resemblance to the earlier doctrine in a discussion which occurs shortly before the one that we have just been considering. "Besides the concept of the Absolute which we formed at the beginning, we have now, through our later investigations, gained a still clearer notion of the form of the Absolute; namely, that in relation to a possible knowing, it is a pure thinking, which is completely bound to itself, which never comes out from itself, to ask for a 'why' or to posit a 'because' of its formal or material being, even if there be an absolute 'because'; a thinking in which, by reason of this absolute negation of the 'because,' the *for-itself* (or knowing) is not yet posited, and which thus is a mere pure being without any knowing, although in our science we must make this being visible (*dies Sein anschaulich machen*) by the help of the absolute pure form of thinking. Knowing, then, as *absolute* and as completely bound in its origin (*Ursprünglichkeit*), must be designated as the *one*, . . . self-similar, unchangeable, eternal, indestructible, *abso-*

[1] Here again an emendation of the text seems necessary. The original reads, "Dies [*sc.* Wissen] erschafft sich eben selbst aus seiner reinen Möglichkeit, als das einzig ihr vorausgegebene, und diese eben ist das reine Sein." I have emended this to read, "als dem einzig ihm vorausgegebenen." One might also say, though less well, "als das einzig ihm vorausgegebene" — the sense remaining the same. But the change from *ihr* to *ihm* is absolutely necessary.

lute being (or God, if one will only admit that this term contains some suggestion of knowing and of a relationship to knowing). . . . But now this Absolute is to be an absolute *knowing*. It must therefore be *for* itself, which, as we have shown, it can be only factually [*i. e.*, only by becoming actual], through the absolute realization of freedom. . . . It must go out from itself, must reproduce itself." But this production must not be "merely a knowing for and of itself, as the product of freedom, for this . . . would be a knowing quite detached from the Absolute; it must rather be . . . a *Fürsich* of the Absolute in and by means of" the realization through freedom. This realization "cannot tear itself away" from the Absolute; if it did, we should have, "not an absolute knowing, but only a free and contingent knowing, utterly without content and substance." We have, then, "a perfectly immediate, nay an absolute *connection*" between the Absolute and its realization. Hence, when we say that the realization "is a knowing, a *Fürsich*, we no longer mean simply that it is a something produced through freedom; we mean also that it is a knowing which is united with the Absolute by means of that absolute connection — a knowing which expresses the Absolute." [1]

The thought that Fichte is trying to develop here seems to be that the Absolute and its manifestation are really one. The 'being' of which we hear so much in the later writings, is not something other than knowing, something distinct from the Ego; it is knowing conceived as source of itself, or, in other words, it is the Ego considered as fundamental principle. The general tenor of the passage seems to suggest that the Absolute of the *Darstellung* is the correlate of the absolute Ego which we find in the *Grundlage*, that particular knowing corresponds to the world of consciousness, and absolute knowing to the Idea of the Ego.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1804 is one of the most important of Fichte's later writings and one which throws some light upon our present problem. In it, as in the *Darstellung*, the doctrine of the self-negation of knowing plays an important part. Instead of the term 'knowing,' however, Fichte now uses the word 'con-

[1] S. W., II, 60 ff.

cept' or 'insight' (*Einsicht*). The Absolute he usually speaks of as the 'living Light,' of which the world of thought is the manifestation. In one sense we cannot get beyond the manifestation of the Light; in another sense, as soon as we speak of it as a manifestation, we are already beyond it. The Light has a dual existence (*Existenz*); an outer, objective one, in and for our thought, and an inner one, "conditioned by the negation of the concept."[1] By negating our insight, we may get a description of this inner life: it is "that which we cannot in any way see into, which remains after the most complete and penetrating insight; it is *das für sich bestehen Sollende*."[2] This is the result gained by negating the insight. Thus we learn that "the insight can see into *itself*, the concept can conceive itself." In doing this, "the concept finds its boundary, . . . beyond which lies the one pure living Light."[3]

So far, the relation between knowing and the Absolute, or the concept and the Light, seems to be regarded as negative; but Fichte goes on to a fuller development of his thought. The discussion[4] is long and complicated, and very difficult of interpretation; but the argument seems to be as follows. If we say that we reach the Absolute by the negation of the concept, two possible points of view at once suggest themselves. Either we may maintain that the *Ansich* which has thus been reached, is the Absolute (this is the realistic theory);[5] or we may say that, since it is reached by the self-negation of the concept, the concept itself is the Absolute (this is the idealistic theory).[6] Both these theories are one-sided. In each we have a factual, rather than a genetic, view;[7] *i. e.*, we are dealing with our thinking of the *Ansich*, rather than with its *self-construction* in us.[8] On the idealistic view, we make our thinking the fundamental principle. But what right have we to assume that simply because we are *conscious* of this thinking, therefore it is *our* thinking?[9] The truth is rather that the living *Ansich* thinks in us. On the realistic view, on the other hand, we set up, as absolute, an *Ansich* that has been gained by the negation of its opposite. Now this

[1] N. W., II, 148. [2] N. W., II, 150. [3] N. W., II, 152. [4] N. W., II, 161–212.
[5] N. W., II, 174–176, 179, 201. [6] N. W., II, 171–173. [7] N. W., II, 181.
[8] N. W., II, 191. [9] N. W., II, 189, 201.

could not be the ultimate principle. That which "is determined by the negation of an opposite" is a "member of a relation" and hence is no true *Ansich*, no Absolute.[1] We must remove from our concept all such negative determination, all relativity. When we have done this, "there remains the positing and persisting and resting of an *Ansich* taken as absolute, . . . a being which for its being needs no other being. . . . The whole relation and comparison with a *Nichtansich*, from which first the form of the *Ansich* arises, . . . is utterly meaningless and useless."[2] In this first form we objectified the pure being, as thought must always do, and thus we had its outer existence. Our task now is to penetrate to its inner essence; and we do this, "when we look at it as a genetic principle for its appearance in the outer existential form."[3]

We have thus reached a higher unity of realism and idealism in the thought of the Absolute as "pure being" in "abstraction from all relation." This being is wholly "*of itself, in itself, through itself.* . . . It is an *esse in mero actu*,"[4] the perfect interpenetration of being and life. "There is no duality or plurality at all, but only unity; for . . . the essence of being consists in a self-enclosed unity." Now "if being is encompassed by its own absolute life and can never get outside its own life, it . . . can be nothing else than a self-enclosed Ego," the "living *Wir in sich*."[5] We have here a new insight into the nature of our ultimate principle. Our previous insight objectified the Absolute — went out from itself to a being which it described as an inaccessible *Ansich*. From our present point of view, being is not objectified. In this new insight, "we ourselves become being." We cannot "go out to it, because we are it. . . . We cannot go out from ourselves because being cannot go out from itself."[6]

This discussion is perhaps the most important expression in the later works of Fichte's belief in the closeness of the relation between consciousness and its ultimate ground. Passages like this furnish the best answer that can be made to the objection raised by Harms, that Fichte's Absolute is conceived negatively.

[1] N. W., II, 202 f. [2] N. W., II, 203 f. [3] N. W., II, 204.
[4] N. W., II, 205 f. [5] N. W., II, 206 f. [6] N. W., II, 208.

According to this critic, Fichte teaches that the fundamental principle is reached by the negation of knowing. But, says Harms, in thus maintaining that ultimate being is inconceivable and unknowable, Fichte is carrying over into the Absolute what is really only a defect of human thought. In reality, being "is not the negation of knowing, but the positing of the known object; it is not *sine notione*, but *præter notionem*." [1]

If we take Fichte's statements literally, it cannot be denied that there are some which seem, at first thought, to justify this criticism. The passages in which he tells us that we cannot apply any predicates to the Absolute and in which he says that it is discovered only by the self-negation of knowing are cases in point. But the discussion which we have now before us suggests a different interpretation. Here Fichte distinctly rejects the doctrine of a negative Absolute. It must be remembered also that after developing, in the earlier part of this work, the doctrine of the self-negation of knowing, he proceeds from this very point to work out a positive conception of the Absolute. Hence it seems that we are justified in regarding the first doctrine as provisional. In this connection we may also quote an interesting passage in this same work, in which Fichte explains what he means by calling his principle unknowable. "The *inconceivability*" of the Absolute, he says, "is merely the negation of the concept, the expression of its abrogation, hence a characteristic proceeding from knowing and the concept and carried over from them. . . . The Absolute is not in itself *inconceivable;* for this does not mean anything. It is inconceivable only when the concept tries to comprehend it." [2] Thus, in speaking of the principle as unknowable, Fichte asserts, what most of us would readily grant, that all attempts to exhaust the Absolute by our concepts are foredoomed to failure. But this is not to say that we have no means whatever of apprehending the nature of the ultimate principle; on the contrary, Fichte believes that all our thinking and all our acting are a revelation of its inmost essence.

The results of our examination seem to show that in the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1804, as in the *Darstellung der Wissenschafts-*

[1] *Die Philosophie seit Kant* (Berlin, 1876), 332. [2] N. W., II, 117 f.

lehre, there is a marked tendency to emphasize the oneness of the Absolute and its manifestation. And in general, we seem to have found considerable evidence in favor of the point which we have been trying to establish, namely, that in the second period the obvious tendency to dwell upon the difference between consciousness and its ultimate ground is to a considerable extent counterbalanced by a tendency in the opposite direction.

But before we can say that we have fully justified our interpretation, we must consider one more aspect of the question. If we take the conception of being which Fichte gives us in the second period, being as a self-dependent, all-embracing whole, if we say that the Absolute, in its inmost essence, is sufficient unto itself, has no need to be supplied, no lack to be made good, how are we to understand the relation between this self-enclosed Absolute and its manifestation as temporal process? Why, on Fichte's principles, need there be any world at all, any system of conscious beings, any history of the human race? Why should the timeless reality enter thus into the form of time? Why should it give up the changeless calm of its own inner life and transform itself[1] into this restless, turbulent world-process, this ceaseless striving for a goal that can never be reached? This is an important question for Fichte's philosophy, and it is clear that he himself recognized it as such.

To this question Fichte seems to make two very different answers. Sometimes he tells us that the Absolute manifests itself through a necessity of its own inner nature. At other times he speaks as if there were in it no ground for its manifestation. It does, *as a fact*, reveal itself, but its self-revelation seems to have no inner connection with its *Sein*. On the contrary, the *Dasein* is declared to rest upon an act of freedom, and the language used,

[1] It is hardly necessary to explain that the expressions 'give up' and 'transform' are not to be taken literally. The relation between *Sein* and *Dasein*, in Fichte's theory, is not, on any possible interpretation, a temporal one. The question, more exactly stated, is this: If the Absolute, in the aspect which we call *Sein*, is all-sufficient, why has it also the other aspect of *Dasein*? Our answer to this question — to anticipate the results of the discussion upon which we are about to enter — is that, in spite of his assertions to the contrary, Fichte does not really regard the *Sein* as all-sufficient, *i. e.*, that it is for him only one of the two complementary aspects of the ultimate principle.

often suggests that by ' freedom ' is meant absolute freedom, liberty of indifference. The actual world, we are told, is a product of freedom and necessity. *If* there is to be a world, there must be in it a certain order and sequence — it must be governed by law. But *that* there should be a world, that the Absolute should manifest itself in the time-process, is by no means necessary ; it is the result of a free activity. This seems to be the teaching of several passages in the *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*. *E. g.*, " We have considered . . . knowing as pure arising out of nothing. Thus we have regarded it positively as actual arising. . . . This is its form. But in the matter (*Materie*) of the arising there is involved the possibility that it was also able not to be. Hence the being of knowing, in distinction from the absolute being, is posited as contingent, as something that could just as well not-be, as an act of absolute freedom. . . . This now is *freedom* and indeed absolute freedom, indifference with regard to the absolute . . . knowing itself. . . . Negatively considered, it is nothing else than the thought of the *contingency* of absolute knowing. (Observe the apparent contradiction : knowing is the absolutely contingent or the contingent Absolute — the aspect of contingency . . . of the Absolute — just because it enters into [the sphere of] quantity and into the absolute basal form of quantity, into the infinite time-series). *Positively* considered, freedom is the thought of the absoluteness of knowing, the thought that it posits *itself* through self-realizing freedom." [1] And again : " Knowing, with reference to its being (its existence, its being posited), is by no means necessary, but has its ground in absolute formal freedom. . . . *If* there is a knowing, then it is necessarily free (freedom bound) ; for its essence consists in freedom. But *that* there is a knowing at all, depends wholly on absolute freedom, and hence there could just as well be none." [2]

The same view seems to be expressed in this passage from the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1812 : " That there is a factual world, depends altogether on this, that the freedom of the appearance (*Erscheinung*) surrenders itself to the law. . . . It is clear that freedom is not *compelled* to surrender itself; for thus it would

[1] S. W., II, 157 f. [2] S. W., II, 52.

not be freedom. . . . It is only after freedom has surrendered itself and thus has destroyed and negated itself as freedom, that this factual law steps in." [1]

These and other passages are quoted by Miss Thompson [2] in support of her interpretation of Fichte. According to her view, his doctrine, both in the first and in the second period, is that the world of consciousness owes its existence to an act of absolute freedom. In her own words: "A free will which as freedom is the power and possibility of anything, of law or of not-law, of existence or of non-existence, wills to be, or, in other words, to appear as law. . . . Hereupon the phenomenal world, the totality of consciousness, becomes visible. . . . Hence the phenomenal world may be defined as Will-stuff freely becoming law: in substance it is Will, in form it is Necessity. Any other form might be assumed, for the substance is absolutely free with the unthinkable freedom of indifference, caprice. But it chooses to renounce this freedom and appear as the world of consciousness with its laws." [3]

It must be admitted that there are passages which seem at first thought to justify this interpretation. Nevertheless I cannot believe that it represents Fichte's real position. He never meant to say, I think, that the relation between the *Sein* and *Dasein* of the Absolute is in any sense an arbitrary one. On the contrary, I should maintain that even where he distinguishes sharply between these two aspects — and that he often does this, I have not attempted to deny — he none the less believes in their necessary interrelation.

In the *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* we are told, not only that absolute knowing is a union of being and freedom, but also that the Absolute itself is such a union.[4] Now if it be true that

[1] N. W., II, 430.

[2] Anna Boynton Thompson: *The Unity of Fichte's Doctrine of Knowledge*, Boston, 1895.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 17. It is hardly necessary to add that Miss Thompson does not mean this as the description of an actual event. As she explains, "The world of consciousness, in its complex wholeness, is all that there is." Freedom and law are its "two *logical* constituents" (*Op. cit.*, p. 18).

[4] S. W., II, 24, quoted above, p. 85. 'Being,' in the *Darstellung*, seems to correspond to 'necessity.'

being — the element of necessity — is contained in the very nature of the Absolute, it is difficult to see how we can speak of the real world as grounded in an act of freedom, — in the sense of liberty of indifference, — how we can suggest that there might equally well have been an utterly different world from this one, or even no world at all. But there are many other statements of Fichte's which make still more strongly against this interpretation. Immediately after the passage which we quoted from the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1812, as seeming to corroborate Miss Thompson's view, Fichte introduces the concept of the Ought in such a way as to suggest a different interpretation. Freedom, he has told us, is not compelled to surrender itself to the law. In fact, there *is* no law, no necessity, until freedom has already made the surrender. Then for the first time we have a "factual law." Now it is only "by the factual seeing" that "the perception (*Anschauung*) of the Real[1] . . . is conditioned. Suppose now that we are to come to this seeing, that the Absolute is to make itself visible, then this is possible only on condition that freedom surrender itself to the factual law. If it does not surrender itself, there is no perception at all [*i. e.*, no world of consciousness, no actual world]. But there ought to be perception. Hence freedom ought to surrender itself. The whole factual world is grounded upon absolute freedom and upon a law for freedom; not, to be sure, so far as we have yet seen, a qualitative and material law — for the world has this within itself — but upon a merely *formal* law of the surrender. . . . What have we now gained? . . . We have reached the point of connection of the two worlds, the factual and the supra-factual. . . . Our last important discovery was a freedom either to remain free or to surrender itself to a law which restricts it. We have now determined this freedom still further and have thus removed a source of error. Freedom [we now see] is in no sense a principle that is real in itself [*i. e.*, a factual existence], but it is merely the principle [of the possibility] of various forms of *seeing*. In itself it is by no means the Real, but it is only the capacity of apprehending (*anschauen*) the Real, which proceeds from and is

[1] 'The Real' means here 'the Absolute.'

grounded upon the apprehensibility of the Real. This principle is *free*, as the ground of determination of various modes of *seeing*. . . . And, further, this variety of the seeing is determined in a twofold way, since it [the principle] either surrenders itself to an already existing necessity or tears itself away from such a necessity. Now it cannot tear itself away, and see by means of this tearing itself away, unless it has first surrendered itself. Hence freedom is subject to a law of necessity, which is grounded in its own nature. Thus all actual seeing is conditioned by a determination of absolute freedom, and this determination necessarily begins with a self-surrender, since the opposed determination — the tearing itself away — is conditioned by the surrender. *All* seeing, then, . . . rests upon this act of freedom as the ground of its actuality. From the Absolute itself, the *Real*, proceeds only the visibility, *i. e.*, . . . freedom, and nothing more. If now one wishes to connect the actual seeing . . . with the Real by a law, one can only say: 'The Real *ought* to be seen; freedom *ought* therefore to surrender itself to the factual law.' Absolute freedom itself is viewed as subject to a law and that a law of freedom, a mere *Ought*." [1] "The ground of determinate actuality, then, must be sought in freedom, and for that matter in a law which governs freedom. . . . Freedom *cannot* surrender itself to the higher realm, unless it has first surrendered itself to the lower; for to surrender oneself to the higher means to tear oneself away from the lower." [2]

From this it seems evident that a passage which at first appeared to offer strong evidence in favor of Miss Thompson's interpretation represents only a provisional view, which Fichte at once proceeds to modify. And the modification is suggested in two ways. In the first place, the conception of freedom which we find in the latter part of the discussion differs materially from that which appears in the earlier part. Whereas at first Fichte seems to think of freedom as mere *liberum arbitrium indifferentiæ*, the conception that appears later is the Kantian one, of moral freedom as freedom from the dominion of the lower impulses, as power to choose the higher, as ability to act in conformity with

[1] N. W., II, 431 f. [2] N. W., II, 433.

the moral law. We seem to have in the passage a doctrine in which are united the two conceptions of freedom — freedom, as the principle of activity which is the ground of the world of consciousness, and human freedom, as the ability to realize the moral ideal. But if we reflect for a moment, we shall see that these two conceptions are by no means contradictory, that on his own principles Fichte is certainly justified in thus uniting them. Freedom, as the world-ground, is what is called in the *Grundlage* of 1794 the infinite outward-going activity of the Ego — the unrestrained, undefined activity, which, because it is without object and without purpose, is, as Fichte so often tells us, nothing for itself and therefore nothing at all — is, one might say, rather the possibility of activity than activity itself. Such a characterless principle may not unfitly be described as *mere* freedom, which knows no law, as liberty of indifference. But, as we saw in the preceding chapter, Fichte is by no means satisfied to describe his ultimate principle in this way. The absolute Ego is a provisional conception, and it is later replaced, or at least supplemented, by the concept of the Ego as Idea, which creates obstacles as a means to the exercise of its activity, which limits itself in order to realize itself. This relation between the conceptions of the absolute Ego and the Ego as Idea helps us to understand the doctrine of freedom in the passage under consideration. For human freedom, as the power to escape from the dominion of the lower impulse, as the ability to realize, in some measure, the ideals which we set before ourselves, is simply the expression, in individual form, of the principle which is active throughout the whole course of human history and which makes of this history a continuous overcoming of limitations. Hence we have in this passage precisely the same transformation of the first provisional conception of freedom that we found in the *Grundlage*. True freedom, like the true Ego, is possible only through the presence of an obstacle to be overcome, of a lower impulse to be subdued. Hence true freedom, like the true Ego, is subject to law. In one sense, as Fichte says, freedom is free either to realize itself or not to realize itself. But, in another sense, we may say that it *must* realize itself, that otherwise it is

not true freedom at all; for this consists in tearing oneself away from the seductions of the lower in response to the call of the higher. "Hence freedom is subject to a law of necessity, which is grounded in its own nature." In spite of what was said at first of the freedom to remain free or to surrender itself, it is really involved in the conception of freedom that it surrender itself.

We have said that the modification of the concept of freedom is suggested in the passage in two ways. One of these we have just considered; what is the other? It is found in the assertion that the Absolute *ought* to manifest itself. "Es soll dazu [zu einer Anschauung] kommen."[1] "The Real *ought* to be seen; freedom *ought* therefore to surrender itself to the factual law." Here, Fichte says, "absolute freedom itself is viewed as subject to a law." This law, however, he describes, not as a law of necessity, but as "a law of freedom, a mere *Ought*." This seems, at first glance, to suggest a rather different point of view from the one that we have just been considering. There, Fichte said that in order that there may be true freedom, there must be this world of ours, this system of finite consciousnesses, in and through which the ideal of freedom may be gradually realized. On this view, the tendency to self-realization is involved in the very nature of freedom, so that from this nature the existence of the world follows necessarily. Here, however, he speaks of the law to which freedom is subject as a 'mere Ought,' which would seem to suggest that although there *ought* to be a world, although the Absolute *ought* to manifest itself, still the relation between it and its manifestation is contingent rather than necessary — rests upon an arbitrary act of freedom.

So it seems at first thought. But a little reflection will convince us that this cannot be Fichte's meaning. No one would admit more readily than he that there can be, for the Absolute, no Ought in the sense of an external command. To say that "the Real ought to be seen," can mean only that the tendency to self-manifestation is involved in the very nature of this Real. Thus we come to the same interpretation which we formerly gained by a different method; and the entire passage, far from

[1] N. W., II, 431.

being an argument for the contingency of the world's existence, is seen to be an expression of the doctrine that this existence is necessarily involved in the nature of the Absolute itself.

The same thought is emphasized in many other passages from the later writings.[1] In the *Wissenschaftslehre in ihrem allgemeinen Umrisse*, we are told that the *schema* — which is another expression for knowing, as the *Dasein* of the Absolute — is, "merely through the fact that God is; and if God is, it is impossible that the *schema* should not be. We should by no means think of it as an effect, produced by a special act of God, in which he transforms himself within himself; but we should think of it as an immediate consequence of his being." [2] Again, in *Das Wesen des Gelehrten* of 1805, Fichte says, "The world is the manifestation . . . or outer existence (*Existenz*) of the divine life." This life "manifests itself just as it actually is and lives within itself, *and can manifest itself in no other way*.[3] Hence between its true inner being and its outer manifestation, there is no arbitrary choice (*grundlose Willkür*), in consequence of which it reveals itself only in part and partly conceals itself. But its manifestation, *i. e.*, the world, is conditioned solely by the two factors of its own inner essence and the unchangeable laws of its expression. . . . God manifests himself as God can manifest himself. His whole inconceivable nature comes forth without division and without repression, in so far as it can come forth in a mere manifestation. The divine life in itself . . . is a self-enclosed unity, without mutability or change. In its manifestation it becomes . . . an infinitely developing and ever ascending life in an endless time-process." [4] And in the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1804 we have the following emphatic statement: "If you posit the pure immanent being as the Absolute, Substance, God, . . . and the appearance, *i. e.*, the . . . inner genetic construction of the Absolute, as the revela-

[1] I consider this question (as to the contingency of the actual world) simply with reference to the second period. My reason for this is that the later writings suggest the doctrine of contingency more strongly than the earlier ones do; and since I hope to be able to show that even in the later works Fichte does not really hold this doctrine, it seems hardly necessary to undertake the easier task of showing it for the earlier works.

[2] S. W., II, 696. [3] The italics are mine. [4] S. W., VI, 361 f.

tion and expression of God, then the latter is seen to be absolutely necessary and to be grounded in the nature of the Absolute itself. This insight into the absolute inner necessity . . . is a characteristic that distinguishes the *Wissenschaftslehre* from all other systems whatsoever. In all others without exception, there is, besides the absolute substance, an absolute contingency." We cannot emphasize too strongly the necessity of the manifestation. Thought struggles against this conception "with all its might. For freedom is always the last thing that we are willing to give up; and if we cannot save it for ourselves, we try at least to find a refuge for it in God." [1]

To these passages we may add one more, from the *Anweisung zum seligen Leben:* "God himself — *i. e.*, the inner essence of the Absolute, *which is distinguished from its outer existence only for our finitude* [2] — cannot destroy this absolute fusion of the essence with the form. To our first, merely factual, way of looking at it, his existence seems to be factual and contingent (*zufällig*). But for real thinking, which alone is decisive, it is not contingent; it exists, and it could not be otherwise; *it must follow necessarily from the inner essence.* In consequence of God's inner essence, then, this inner essence is inseparably united with the form." Paraphrasing the opening words of the Gospel according to John, Fichte continues: "In the beginning, wholly independent of all possibility of the opposite, independent of all arbitrariness, all chance, and thus of all time, grounded in the inner necessity of the divine essence itself, was the form. And the form was with God . . . and the form itself was God; thus God came forth in it just as he is in himself." [3]

These passages show that Fichte often conceived the relation between the *Sein* and *Dasein* of the Absolute as necessary rather than contingent. And it seems to me that it is possible to interpret what he says about freedom so that it will harmonize with this conception. Two considerations may be suggested that will enable us, I think, to reconcile his doctrine of freedom with his theory of a necessary relation between the Absolute and its mani-

[1] N. W., II, 223. It is obvious that the freedom of which Fichte is speaking here, is freedom in the sense of liberty of indifference.

[2] The italics are mine. [3] S. W., V, 510.

festation. In the first place let us ask ourselves what is the essential meaning of the statement, so often made by him, that freedom is the ground of actual existence. There are two or three passages in which he compares his philosophy with that of Spinoza and declares that he is able to do what Spinoza does not succeed in doing — that is, to pass from the Absolute to the individual — solely because he makes use of the conception of freedom, which Spinoza ignores. *E. g.*, in the *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* he says, "The changeless does not pass over into the changeable, for thus it would cease to be the changeless. . . . But it remains for itself, enclosed within itself, like itself and itself *alone*. Moreover, the world is not a reflection, expression, revelation, symbol, . . . of the eternal; for the eternal cannot reflect itself in broken rays. But this world is the image and expression of formal . . . freedom. . . . It is the conflict of being and not-being, the absolute inner contradiction. In the very first synthesis [of being and not-being] formal freedom is wholly separated from being, is for itself alone, just as being is for itself, goes its own way in the product of this synthesis."[1] The great difference between the *Wissenschaftslehre* and Spinozism is that the former employs this notion of freedom. Spinoza has no "point of transition from substance to accident. He does not even ask for such a transition. . . . Substance and accident are not really distinguished [in his system]. . . . In order to get a distinction, he makes being, as accident, dirempt itself into numerous modifications. . . . Now if being is thus dirempted by absolute necessity and if it does not exist (*existieren*) otherwise, how," we may ask Spinoza, "do you come to think of it as the One, and what truth has this thought of yours? Or if it is in itself one, as you maintain, whence arise in it the diremption and the *opposition* of a world of extension and a world of thought? As a matter of fact, you are unconsciously employing a conception which you explicitly reject throughout your system — namely, formal freedom, being and not-being, the fundamental form of knowing, in which lies the necessity of diremption. . . . The *Wissenschaftslehre*, however, posits this

[1] S. W., II, 86 f.

formal freedom as connecting link and regards the resulting diremption, not as the diremption of absolute being, but as the fundamental form which accompanies absolute knowing (the knowing of absolute being)." For the *Wissenschaftslehre*, "the accident of absolute being is not *in it*, for thus absolute being would lose its substantiality, but *outside it*, in the sphere of *formal* freedom. . . . For its existence, and it alone has existence, . . . knowing depends wholly upon itself, but not for its original determination. Hence the *accident* of absolute being is simple and unchangeable, as absolute being itself is. The changeableness has quite another source, namely, the formal freedom of *knowing*." [1]

What now does Fichte mean by saying that the doctrine of freedom enables us to unite the conceptions of the eternal, changeless One and the fleeting, transitory Many? It seems to me that we can answer by referring to our previous discussion of the passage in the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1812 in which he develops his concept of freedom.[2] We saw there that he starts with freedom as liberty of indifference, but ends with the concept of freedom as the power to realize an ideal by subordinating the lower impulses to the higher. And we drew a parallel between this development and the development of the doctrine of the Ego in the *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*. In the *Grundlage*, the principle which is the ground of all actuality is at first described as absolute Ego, as infinite activity which contains within itself no ground of limitation. But in the progress of the argument this conception is transformed into that of the Ego as Idea, as self-realizing principle, in whose nature is contained the necessity that it shall, not simply *be*, but *be for itself*, come to consciousness of itself. And this being-for-self, this coming to self-consciousness, is possible only if it limits itself and triumphs over the limitations.

Now, when Fichte says that freedom is the ground of all *Dasein*, it seems to me that by freedom he means a self-realizing principle. It is because his philosophy, unlike Spinoza's, takes activity as its fundamental concept, because the Absolute is for him a prin-

[1] S. W., II, 88 f.

[2] See above, pp. 95 ff.

ciple, which, by virtue of its inmost nature, is impelled toward self-realization, it is for this reason, he says, that he is able to bridge the gulf which remains impassable for Spinoza. This is the essential meaning of his frequent assertion of the importance of the concept of freedom for his philosophy. And just as his principle of activity in the *Grundlage* is described, now as the absolute Ego, and now — more adequately — as the Idea of the Ego, so in speaking of freedom, he sometimes tells us that it is a mere undifferentiated activity, and sometimes that it is a principle which tends toward self-realization. In the first case, he describes it as liberty of indifference — absolute freedom without any law. In the second case, he shows us that true freedom is not power to do anything whatsoever, the mere possibility of everything and of nothing, but power to realize an ideal; and in order that freedom may be this, it must create and overcome obstacles. It is therefore essentially, fundamentally, a self-manifesting principle; the existence of the world is not contingent, but is inextricably bound up with the very nature of freedom.

This is the first point which I wished to suggest as helping us to reconcile Fichte's concept of freedom with his doctrine of the necessary existence of the world. We can see now that when he speaks of a "freedom to bind itself or to remain free," he is emphasizing only one aspect of the ultimate principle, *i. e.*, the one which is brought out in his conception of the absolute Ego; he is reminding us that there is nothing outside it which can compel it to manifest itself, that it is bound by no external laws. And when, on the other hand, he tells us that God's *Dasein* follows inevitably from his *Sein*, he is emphasizing the other aspect, which finds expression in the doctrine of the Ego as Idea; he is pointing out that, although there is nothing outside it which compels it to manifest itself, yet its self-manifestation follows inevitably — from its own inner nature.

The second point to be suggested is furnished by Fichte himself in another discussion from the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1812.[1] Here he is concerned once more with the question how the changeless One can reveal itself in change and manifoldness.

[1] N. W., II, 326–346.

The Absolute, he says, has necessary being; it could not not-be. As contrasted with this, the being of the manifestation or the being of knowing, is factual. It is a *fact* that there is knowing; knowing vouches for its own existence: but it has no necessary existence as the Absolute has. From the fact that there *is* something else than the Absolute, we learn that something else *can be*.[1]

Now the Absolute appears in its image (*Bild*), or knowing, as it is in itself; therefore the image must be one and changeless. But the image of the Absolute is never actual; it is always *to be;* hence it is an eternal becoming.[2] How can we reconcile these two aspects of the image — its changeless unity and its changing manifoldness? Since we are now in the realm of appearance (the appearance of the Absolute), we are in the realm of the factual. Hence the respect in which the image is a manifold must be given as a fact. It is a *fact* that the image appears to *itself* (*we* are conscious of *ourselves*). But if it does this, then it appears in a new image — a *Bild vom Bilde* — and in this new image there may well enough be infinite change. Thus what would not be possible for the Absolute itself, is possible in its appearance; here, unity can coexist with manifoldness. The possibility of change and manifoldness is grounded in the fixed being of the Absolute, but it is only in the image that being actually *becomes* change and manifoldness.[3]

That the absolute being appears, is, as we have seen, a fact. Hence, "from the point of view of our consciousness, the appearance is something that could also not-be, something *contingent.* But there is a higher question: Is the appearance in itself contingent? *Can* God appear, or also not-appear? And is the appearance merely an act of his freedom, *in the lower signification of the word*[4] — not in the sense of an absolute life that is conceived through itself, but in the sense of a life that is absolutely *without law?* Has God freedom of this second sort, or is his appearing necessary (in the sense which we have just attributed to the word 'necessary')? It is easy to see that the latter

[1] N. W., II, 328 f.
[2] N. W., II, 334.
[3] N. W., II, 337–339.
[4] The italics in this phrase are mine.

is the case: God is *what* he is, simply through the fact *that* he is.[1] Through his merely formal being, his whole being is given. Now, among other things, he appears. Hence, as certain as it is that he appears, so certain is it that he appears by virtue of (*durch*) his absolute being. And, inasmuch as he does appear, he cannot not-appear. The fact (*Faktum*) is an absolutely necessary one." [2] At this point Fichte begs the reader not to misunderstand the nature of the argument. It is not as if "we had a real concept of the Absolute and found in it some characteristic (x) in consequence of which the Absolute must appear. If this were the case, we should have inferred the necessity of the appearance quite independently of its factual givenness (*faktisches Gegebensein*). Here the case is quite different . . . All our knowing, without exception, starts from an absolute fact, the fact, namely, that the *appearance* knows about itself, appears *to itself*. . . . If one posits the appearance of the Absolute as something contingent, perhaps also as an historical event, as something that was not and once upon a time came to be, one puts this appearance into time and gets a time in which God did not appear and another in which he appeared — the ordinary concept of creation. Thus one falls into absolute incomprehensibility. According to our theory, the appearance is with God and is utterly inseparable from him — the appearance, which, through its appearance to itself, tells forth itself and him (the eternal *Word* with God). Neither God nor it is in time; on the contrary, it is only within it that time develops — not, indeed, in so far as God is in it [in the appearance], but in so far as *it* appears *to itself*." [3]

This passage, it seems to me, is of great value in helping us to understand what Fichte means by the frequent statement that the entire realm of the factual, of existent reality, rests upon an act of freedom. He makes it apparent here that he is not using 'freedom' as synonymous with 'liberty of indifference'; this, he says, is the lower meaning of the word. God could not be, with-

[1] "Schlechthin dadurch, *dass* er ist." It is unfortunate that the only good rendering for *dadurch dass* is 'through the fact that'; for we have just been using the word 'fact' to translate Fichte's *faktisch*, which applies always to the realm of the actual, to *Dasein* as distinguished from *Sein*.

[2] N. W., II, 343. [3] N. W., II, 344 f.

out manifesting himself; the factual realm is not contingent in the sense that there might equally well have been no world at all or quite a different world from this. But, on the other hand, our only ground for *knowing* that God must manifest himself is that he does manifest himself. (Since he does reveal himself, we know that he could not remain unrevealed.) And since we start from the *fact* that there is a manifestation, from the *fact* that knowing is, and since this fact is vouched for simply by itself,[1] we say that the existence of knowing is contingent. But by this we mean merely that our assertion that there is a world of conscious experience is not supported by some other proposition which we have previously established. The absolute being is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the actual world, but it is not the *ratio cognoscendi;* the *ratio cognoscendi* of our existence is that existence itself.

It seems to me that we have now established the theory which we have been defending at length — namely, that Fichte conceives the relation between the *Sein* and *Dasein* of the Absolute as necessary, or — what is a better way of putting it — that *Sein* and *Dasein* are for him simply two aspects of the one principle, and hence that to say that the *Dasein* is contingent, in the strict sense of the term, is to talk nonsense. It remains to ask — and this is the last question that we shall have to consider — whether we can determine more exactly what Fichte means by the aspect of *Sein*.

Some of the recent discussions of the philosophy of history, particularly in Germany, have served to throw into new relief the concept of value, which plays so important a part in Fichte's philosophical system. If we say, as Fichte and many other *Geschichtsphilosophen* would, that all that is actual is this world-process, and that in this world-process certain values are more or less completely realized, a question arises which not all philosophers venture to answer, but with regard to which Fichte has taken a decided stand. The question to which I refer, is whether the (partial) realization of values in human history is something to be *understood*, or merely something to be accepted

[1] *That* thought is, thought itself assures us. "Cogito, ergo sum."

and rejoiced in. Is it merely — to use a phrase of Lotze's[1] — a 'fortunate fact' (*glückliche Thatsache*) that this world of ours, with all its failure and all its sin, nevertheless reveals some correspondence — albeit imperfect — to the absolute norms of truth, goodness, and beauty? Is it simply a fact, which we recognize joyfully, but which remains ever an unexplained mystery — for aught we know, a mere coincidence — and which can therefore give us no assurance that the future will contain any such coincidences? Or is it a fact which, as Fichte would say, we can see from the genetic point of view, a fact whose origin we can understand, so that we may have assurance with regard to the future, may look forward to new realizations of the eternal values in the world of time and space?

It is no part of my purpose to discuss this question on its merits; I have raised it simply in the hope that it may help us to understand better Fichte's conception of the ultimate principle. It is evident that Fichte himself does not regard the actualization of values merely as a happy fact. On the contrary, as all our preceding study has tended to show, he believes that the presence of value in the world-process is to be explained by the fact that the supreme value is itself the *ratio essendi* of this process. The world exists in order that the Idea of the Ego may become actual, and the Idea is itself the moving force in the process of actualization. The Idea, for Fichte, is not simply an ideal in the psychological sense — the thought of some non-existent value, which we conceive of and resolve to bring into existence. It has indeed this psychological aspect; all that we ordinarily call our ideals — intellectual, moral, æsthetic — are faint reflections of the Idea itself. But though it has this aspect, it is much more than a psychological fact. Again, it is not merely an absolute standard of value,[2] by which we may meas-

[1] *Logic* (translation edited by Bosanquet), 2d ed., Book I, Chap. II, § 65. Lotze himself uses the phrase merely with reference to logical values. He refers to the 'fortunate fact' that the world of actuality, which might conceivably be quite different in this respect, exhibits a considerable degree of correspondence with the logical norms.

[2] An objective standard, as distinguished from the subjective one that is furnished by our ideals.

ure the worth of any particular part of the world-process. This aspect, also, the Idea has; but it is even more than this. It is, for Fichte, at once the supreme value — the absolute norm — and the directive force in human history. The *Sollen* is not a mere Ought; it is at the same time the ground of all becoming.

In Chapter I, we expressed this thought by saying that for Fichte the clue to the nature of the ultimate principle is to be found in our ideals; that he refuses to believe that the ideals which we are striving to attain, are of such a nature that we never can approximate to them; but that on the contrary, he insists that they reveal to us the very principle which is at work in the world-process itself. The Idea of the Ego, which shows itself to us — though imperfectly — in our ideals of beauty, goodness, and truth (all of which may be regarded as various forms of the unity of subject and object), this Idea of the Ego is also the motive power in the history of the race.

Now if one accepts Fichte's view, one must of course say that the presence of value in the world is not a mere lucky accident, but is something which can be understood. If the supreme value is itself the ground of all that exists, we can see why it is that we find values in the realm of existence. It is true — and Fichte often asserts it in his later writings — that any particular realization of absolute values will always be to us a mystery. No science will ever be able to make intelligible the development of a great moral leader or the genesis of a supreme work of art. Before a Buddha or a *King Lear* we must always stand in silent wonder. But though we can never hope to understand in detail how a great personality or a great artistic achievement comes to be, though every particular actualization of a supreme value has, and always will have, an aspect of mystery, still the more general fact that absolute values find realization in human history, we can understand. Although we can never grasp the *how* of the realization, we can see into its *that*.

And not only can we, on Fichte's theory, understand why human life has this aspect of value, but also we are assured of the future of the race. Since the ground of the world's existence is the eternal *Ought-to-be*, we may rest in the confidence that the

future will show a continuous progress. This is one of the central doctrines of Fichte's philosophy. Human life, human history, is the progressive actualization of the eternal values, the ever fuller realization of the divine Idea.

We have said that for Fichte the ultimate principle is the quintessence of all value, and that it is at the same time the ground of the world-process. This may help us, I think, to understand in some measure the change which appears to have taken place in the second period. The distinction between the *Sein* and the *Dasein* of the Absolute, which has given much difficulty to students of Fichte and has been variously interpreted, can best be understood, it seems to me, by the aid of this conception of the ultimate principle as being at once the supreme value and the world-ground. The Absolute in its aspect of *Sein*, Fichte says, is eternal, changeless, sufficient unto itself. And just this is what we must say of an absolute value. It, too, is timeless in its nature, superior to change and decay. Again, absolute *Sein*, Fichte tells us, is unity; and if we say, as he certainly would, that the supreme value is the unity of subject and object and that all our ideals are so many various forms of this unity, then we can understand how he feels justified in describing absolute *Sein* as unitary. On the contrary, the *Dasein* of the Absolute is at once changeless and changing, one and many. The *Dasein* is the supreme value as self-realizing principle, as manifesting itself in the world-process. It has, therefore, these two opposed aspects. On the one hand, it is changeless, eternal, even though it assumes the form of time. The æsthetic value of Booth's Hamlet did not perish when death claimed the great actor himself; and Paderewski's playing of a Beethoven sonata does not lose its artistic worth when the piano-recital is over. *Even as realized in time*, then, value keeps its timeless nature. But though in this sense the *Dasein* of the Absolute is changeless, yet as world-ground it is the source of time and becoming and thus has an aspect of change and manifoldness.

But this is not all that Fichte means by his distinction between *Sein* and *Dasein*. In saying that the Absolute *is*, he is asserting something more than that value is essentially independent of time.

He is asserting that it has *being* quite independent of the fact of its realization in the world-process. But, we may ask, what kind of being is it that can be attributed to an *unrealized* value? In so far as values are realized, in *so* far they have being or actuality. But can we maintain that they have it, as unrealized? Must we not content ourselves with saying that in this case they have validity? And does not Fichte's ascription of being to the supreme value, *qua* unrealized, suggest that he has hypostatized it?

In answer to these questions, there are several things to be said. In the first place, whether or not we shall designate as 'being' the sort of reality which an unrealized value possesses, is largely a matter of convenience. Lotze, in his admirable discussion of the Platonic Ideas,[1] distinguishes 'validity' (*Geltung*) as one kind of reality, from 'being' (*Sein*) as a second, and from 'occurring' as still a third kind. Fichte, however, uses the word 'existence' (*Dasein*) for what Lotze calls 'being' and employs the word 'being' to designate another sort of reality. As we have seen, he is always very careful to distinguish these two. Existence, in his use of the term, belongs only to the actual world — the world of individual consciousness — or to the Idea in so far as it embodies itself in consciousness; the word 'being' he reserves for a reality of a different kind.

In the second place, it may be well to remember the considerations which Lotze has urged in the following words: "It must be added that we ourselves, in drawing a distinction between the reality which belongs to the Ideas and laws and that which belongs to things, and calling the one Being or Existence[2] and the other Validity, have so far merely discovered, thanks to the resources of our language, a convenient expression which may keep us on our guard against interchanging the two notions. The fact which the term validity expresses has lost none of that strangeness which has led to its being confounded, as we have seen, with existence. It is merely that we have been so long accustomed to it; we . . . take it as a matter of course that the

[1] *Op. cit.*, Book III, Chap. II.

[2] For the single word *Sein*, which Lotze uses, the translator employs the two word 'being' and 'existence.'

content of manifold perceptions and phenomena does invariably adapt itself to general conceptions and can be read by us in the light of general laws. . . . But that this should be the case, that there should be universal laws, which have not themselves existence like things and which nevertheless rule the operation of things, — remains for a mind which realizes its meaning, a profoundly mysterious fact."[1]

Lotze is speaking especially of meanings and general laws; but what he says is equally applicable to values. That there should be objective values, "which have not themselves existence like things and which nevertheless" are valid for the world of things, values which we may employ in estimating the worth of any particular element of this world — this, too, is "for a mind which realizes its meaning, a profoundly mysterious fact." Little wonder that the moral law, with its unconditional demand for realization in the world of fact, should seem to men not less, but more, real than this world and should therefore be said to have *being*. In short, as Lotze's words imply, the distinction which we make between existence and validity is not in any sense the solution of a problem, but merely the statement of one. What kind of reality we ought to attribute to an unrealized value or an undiscovered truth, is a question which it is far easier to ask than to answer.

In the third place — and this is the chief thing to be said in regard to our problem — it must never be forgotten that Fichte's ultimate principle is not merely an unrealized, but rather a self-realizing value. This, it seems to me, is the great difference between the point of view from which our questions have been put and the point of view which Fichte takes, which all of us must take — at least for the time being — if we would understand him. For if the supreme value is at the same time a self-realizing principle, then it *has* some other kind of reality than that of a mere value. There are three different conceptions for which we need appropriate expressions. First, one may be thinking of value merely as such, without reference to its realization or non-realization. Of it one may say that it is *valid;* for it has validity

[1] *Op. cit.*, Book III, Chap. II, § 320.

quite irrespective of its realization. Secondly, one may wish to speak of a value which is already realized, which has assumed individual form and is connected with some definite point in time. To it we may ascribe *actuality* or *existence*. The ideal, we say, has been made actual; the value really exists, is incorporated into the actual world. But thirdly, one may wish to bring out the thought that the value is itself a force, an active principle; that its realization depends upon itself rather than upon something other. In the second case that we have mentioned, the value may be realized through *my* activity, through *my* choice. So far then as *it* is concerned, its actualization is merely contingent. There is no necessary connection between the value itself and the fact that it is realized; that it is realized, is owing solely to another than itself. But if now one wishes to suggest that the actualization is not something contingent, that it is not a mere accident that absolute values are realized in this world, that it does not depend upon the will of this or that particular individual, but that there is something in the nature of value itself by virtue of which the realization takes place, it is necessary to employ some other term besides 'validity,' on the one hand, and 'existence' or 'actuality' on the other. Fichte suggests the word 'being.' He distinguishes it carefully from 'existence'; 'being,' as he uses it, does not imply reality in time, does not imply actuality of any sort. It is not that which *is*, but that which *is to be* actual; in this sense it is distinguished from the realm of existing fact.[1] But again, it is that which *is* to be, and not merely that which *ought* to be; in this sense it is distinguished as self-realizing principle, from a mere value.

The identification of the *Ought-to-be* and the *Is-to-be* is the essence of Fichte's conception of the ultimate principle. In his terminology the same word is employed to express both ideas. His *sollen*, corresponding, as it does, both to our 'shall' — in many uses — and to our 'ought,' unites in one word conceptions

[1] "What *is*, is not that which appears to us as existing, nor that which all of us or even the noblest and best among us *are*, but that toward which we strive and shall strive throughout eternity. . . . The *moral law* is the image of a supersensuous, purely spiritual [reality], thus of something which is not, but . . . is simply to become" (*Die Staatslehre*, S. W., IV, 387 f.).

which the English speech indicates by two separate words, and which even the German language, in the ordinary usage, represents by different forms of the same root. *Das Sollen*, in Fichte's terminology, signifies both what ought to be and what is to be. Availing himself of the fact that, in his language, the same root has the two significations, he unites these widely differing meanings in a single word, and thus gains the best possible expression for his thought.

We must, however, consider more at length the question whether, in ascribing being to his supreme principle, Fichte has hypostatized the absolute value, has transformed it into a substance. It is sometimes urged that the later writings represent a marked change of doctrine, in that what was formerly only an ideal or norm has been converted into an existent reality.[1] This charge I cannot admit. It seems to me that there is really no more tendency toward hypostatization in the second period than in the first. In both the supreme value is conceived as self-realizing principle; and if this be to hypostatize it, it is hypostatized in the earlier writings as truly as in the later. The principal change which takes place in the second period is this: Fichte brings out the thought that inasmuch as the supreme value is at the same time the ground of the world's existence, it may be said to have *being*, which seems to be distinct from validity, on the one hand, and from actuality — existence in time — on the other.[2] But except for the more frequent ascription of

Cf. Lask: "The 'whole' of knowing, which constitutes the Idea, is hypostatized" in the later writings, is made "into a metaphysical reality" (*Fichtes Idealismus und die Geschichte*, 177). "His concept of the Absolute proceeds, indeed, from an hypostatization, but it is an hypostatization of the Idea and not of the formal Ego" (*Op. cit.*, 183). Rickert (*Fichtes Atheismusstreit und die Kantische Philosophie, Kant-Studien*, IV, 137 ff.; also printed separately) seems to incline toward the same view, though he does not commit himself to it so definitely. In the period of the controversy with regard to atheism, he says, Fichte's "philosophical concept of God" was "that of a supersensuous order [which was, however, *ordo ordinans*] and not that of a supersensuous reality." But "a few years later his own thoughts assumed a form which many regard as equivalent to a virtual abandonment of this point of view, and in which at any rate Fichte passes far beyond the limitation which he has here placed upon himself" (*Kant-Studien*, IV, 158 ff.).

[2] The distinction between being and actuality Fichte makes definitely. That between being and validity he does not make explicitly; but there is no reason to think that the being which he ascribes to his ultimate principle is conceived by him as mere validity.

being to the ultimate principle (and the somewhat greater tendency to conceive its relation to the actual world abstractly), his position does not differ from that which he held in the first period. The principle is conceived, in the earlier writings, as having reality in the same sense as in the later works. The moral world-order, the *ordo ordinans*, which builds itself up in us, is certainly something more than a mere ideal or a mere norm; it has some other kind of reality than mere validity or than the reality of a psychical state. And when Fichte says, in the *Gerichtliche Verantwortungsschrift*, that the Godhead, which he has identified with this moral order, is, so far as its matter is concerned, "nothing but consciousness, pure intelligence, spiritual life and activity," and that it is only with reference to limitations and conceivability that one must refuse to call God conscious,[1] he is making of his ultimate principle just as much a being as he does at any time in the second period.[2] The *assertion* that God has being is indeed almost wholly confined to the later writings.[3] But Fichte makes

[1] The passage is quoted above, p. 58.

[2] The thoughtful reader is not in much danger of being misled by Fichte's occasional reference, in some of the later works, to 'Providence' and the 'divine plan.' Sometimes he speaks of the Idea as 'God's plan for the progress of the race.' But such expressions occur only in the popular writings and are obviously an attempt to adapt his doctrine to the point of view of his hearers. Only the most superficial criticism could interpret him as meaning that the God of the later works is a consciousness which sets before itself certain ends, chooses appropriate means for their attainment, and in this way guides the current of human history. On at least one occasion Fichte takes pains to make this clear. In *Das Wesen des Gelehrten* (1805), he explains that in speaking of God's 'plan' he is using the word in another sense from that which is indicated when we talk of human plans. He has just told his hearers that the sense-world is simply a means to the realization of the divine Idea; and having said this, he goes on as follows: "Reason is able to comprehend the connection between means and purpose only by thinking of an understanding which has conceived the purpose. . . . Hence, on the analogy with our understanding, one thinks of God as conceiving the moral life of man as the sole purpose for the sake of which he has manifested himself and has called everything else except this moral life into existence. [Now we represent the matter to ourselves thus], not as if it were really so (as if God thought in the way in which finite beings think, and as if for him existence were something different from the idea of existence), but simply because we are not able to conceive the relation in any other way. And in this absolutely necessary mode of representation, human life becomes, as it ought to be, the Idea, God's chief thought in producing the world, the purpose and the plan, whose carrying out God decreed when he decreed the world" (S. W., VI, 367).

[3] We have seen that there are a few passages in the *Grundlage* of 1794, in which Fichte designates the supreme principle as 'being.' See above, p. 81.

it very clear that by 'being' he means something other than actual existence; and we have therefore interpreted his use of the term as an attempt to indicate a third mode of reality, in addition to actuality and validity. Now, inasmuch as this third sort of reality is ascribed to the absolute value by virtue of its being regarded as the ground of all existence, and inasmuch as Fichte certainly so regards it in the first period, it seems permissible to say that the recognition of the supreme value as having 'being' is really implicit in the earlier writings, though it is seldom explicit there.

On these grounds I am disposed to maintain that we cannot say that Fichte hypostatizes the absolute value in the second period, unless we are prepared to admit that he does the same thing in the first. The question then remains, whether he really does this in the earlier writings, whether to conceive of the absolute value as *ordo ordinans* is to hypostatize it. And upon this question there will doubtless be differences of opinion. Certain it is that in the second period as well as in the first, Fichte conceives his principle as activity rather than a being which acts, as life rather than something which has life.[1] A thing, a substance, — in the most generally accepted meaning of the word 'substance,' — it is not. But on the other hand it is real, and real in a different sense from that in which a mere norm may be said to be real. Rickert seems to think that the 'supersensuous order' of the *Gerichtliche Verantwortungsschrift*, although it is *ordo ordinans*, is still not a 'supersensuous reality';[2] and if one accepts this

[1] This, as we have said, has been proved by Loewe. See above, pp. 73 f.

[2] See above, p. 113, note 1. As we saw, Rickert would probably maintain that although the moral world-order of the *Atheismusstreit* is not an hypostatization, Fichte does hypostatize his principle in the later writings. This position seems to me quite untenable. The 'being' of the later works is also only *ordo ordinans*, self-realizing value. There is nothing that Fichte says in the second period — except such references as those to the 'divine plan,' which we explained above, p. 114, note 2 — which any more strongly suggests a personification of the principle, than his explanation, in the *Gerichtliche Verantwortungsschrift*, of the sense in which he denies that God has consciousness. If therefore one says, with Rickert, that the self-establishing moral order is not a supersensuous reality, one has no ground, it seems to me, for asserting that Fichte hypostatizes his principle in the second period. (It must be remembered that Rickert does not definitely assert this, and my inferences regarding his position may not be justified.)

distinction, one must say, I think, that Fichte's principle is not an hypostatization.

But the question whether we are *hypostatizing* the absolute value in thinking of it as self-realizing principle, is not, it seems to me, the main one. The central point about which the contest must be waged, is this: whether we must believe that the presence of values in human history is simply to be accepted as a fact, which it is futile for us ever to attempt to understand, or whether, on the contrary, we may assert that it is reasonable to seek an explanation for this fact.[1] Inasmuch as philosophy is the effort to understand the facts of experience, to interpret them so as to make them intelligible to ourselves, it certainly seems on the face of it not unreasonable that a philosopher should try to understand the presence of value in human history. And since the only justification that a philosophical formula can hope for, is that it helps to make certain facts of experience more intelligible than they would otherwise be, the theory that the supreme value is itself a motive power will have strong claims to consideration, provided, first, that it is in itself intelligible, and secondly, that it really helps us to understand the presence of value in the world-process.

The two points, then, at which Fichte's conception is liable to attack are these: one might maintain in the first place, that the notion of value as self-realizing principle has no meaning for us — that it is a mere form of words, which does not stand for any definite idea; and in the second place, that even if we waive this objection, it does not explain what it professes to explain. With regard to the first point, it must be confessed that the conception of self-realizing value, of a moral *ordo ordinans*, is not a per-

[1] There is, of course, the still more fundamental question, whether we have the right to say that any values are objective. That certain elements of the actual world have subjective value, that we feel them to be valuable, is an indubitable fact, guaranteed by experience itself. But whether, in addition, they have objective worth, and whether — to speak more generally — there are any objective norms, this is a question, the consideration of which naturally precedes the discussion of the problem to which we have referred in the text. But inasmuch as those who charge Fichte with having hypostatized his absolute value, are apparently agreed that objective values do find actualization in the world-process, it does not seem necessary to consider this question here.

fectly definite and altogether comprehensible notion. It is evident that Fichte himself would admit this up to a certain point. But at the same time he would maintain that the vagueness of the notion can readily enough be accounted for in harmony with his own principles and hence should not be regarded as an insuperable objection to his theory. In the *Bestimmung des Menschen*, one of the popular works of the second period, he designates the ultimate principle as the supreme and living Will, whose activity is the world-process. But he points out at the same time that we cannot attribute personality to it and that we can never hope to comprehend its nature. "How thou art for thyself and appearest to thyself, I can never see, just as I can never become thou. . . . What I comprehend, becomes, through my very comprehension of it, finite. . . . I have only a consciousness which proceeds discursively and I cannot conceive any other kind. How could I ascribe this consciousness to thee? In the concept of personality limitation is involved. How could I attribute personality to thee without attributing limitation?"[1]

What Fichte would say, then, is this. The concept must be vague, because it stands for that which is not a part of our experience. To assert that the absolute norm is a self-realizing principle is another way of saying that the ground of all actuality is a supreme Will which is identical with the supreme value. Now, in our experience will and value stand apart. Granted — what Fichte would of course admit — that we are, in our essence, *will*, it is nevertheless true that this will is directed toward values which we apprehend as *independent of it*. It is this dualism of will and value in human experience[2] which makes it so difficult for us to conceive that ultimately — in their deepest meaning — these two may be one.[3] But it is of course a cardinal doctrine of

[1] S. W., II, 304 f.

[2] Even here, there is a sense in which it may be said that value has motive power. The feeling of value is an indispensable factor in volition, is the moving force in all choice. In this psychological sense, value is, in our experience, a self-realizing principle. Nevertheless, it is always felt here, as other than our will; the dualism of will and value is characteristic of all our volition.

[3] The old question whether right is right because God wills it, or whether, on the contrary, God wills it because it is right, would be answered from Fichte's point of view by saying that neither of these is the ground of the other, but that the two are simply different expressions for the same thing. *Cf.* Lotze, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion* (translation edited by Ladd, 1886), § 81.

Fichte's philosophy that the oppositions which we find in human experience point to an underlying unity, that all difference implies oneness.

That will and value form a duality simply *for us*, is occasionally suggested by Fichte himself. In a passage previously quoted from the *Thatsachen des Bewusstseins*, he says, "The being of life . . . becomes final purpose merely in the synthesis with the becoming as the form of life. Outside this synthesis, beyond this form, we must not speak of a final purpose, but only of a being pure and simple."[1] This contains by implication the thought that what is apprehended *by us* as final purpose, as the goal of all our striving, as the supreme value, is itself the ground of all actuality. The infinite Will is not a will that apprehends values as distinct from it and as issuing commands to it; it is itself the quintessence of all value.

The second objection which we have mentioned as likely to be brought against Fichte's theory is that this conception of a supreme Will, which is at the same time *der Inbegriff aller Werte*, does not, even if we grant that it has some meaning, explain to our full satisfaction the presence of value in the world-process. If the objection were raised, it would probably take this form: we now have the difficulty, it would be urged, of understanding why the absolute values do not receive completer realization than is the case. If the ground of the world-process is the supreme value, it is easy to see why values should receive actualization in this process; but it is not easy to understand why they should have just so much actualization and no more — why there should be so many parts of the process whose value is negative rather than positive. In other words, it would be maintained, the problem of evil is the rock upon which our theory must shatter.

It would be asserting too much to say that Fichte has given us a complete solution of this problem. His own answer to the objection is that evil exists precisely in order that it may be overcome. "All death in nature is birth. . . . It is not death that kills, but the more living life, which, concealed behind the old, begins and develops itself. Death and birth are simply the

[1] S. W., II, 683. The passage is quoted above (pp. 79 f.) at greater length.

struggle of life with itself, in order that it may manifest itself in ever greater glory and greater likeness to itself."[1] In other words, Fichte maintains that the good which has triumphed over evil is somehow richer and fuller for that very triumph. And however unable one may be to accept his answer as perfectly satisfactory, one can hardly maintain, I think, that any of the other 'solutions' of the problem of evil is freer from difficulty than this one. Apparently one must choose between accepting a partial solution and giving up the problem as utterly insoluble. Many, indeed, in our own generation, have preferred the second alternative. Resigning all attempts to understand why there is value in the world, and why there is no more than there is, they have contented themselves simply with recognizing the fact that the absolute norms do find realization, to a certain limited extent, in the sphere of existence. The difficulty of explaining both the presence of good and the presence of evil in the realm of existence is surely great enough to give all of us a certain sympathy with this attitude. What I cannot understand, however, is how some of those who adopt it can declare that there is for them no problem of evil; that by their acceptance of the world-process as a factual 'given,' for which they do not attempt to find an explanation, they have avoided the problem which forms so serious a difficulty for any one who tries to frame a theory of the nature of the world-ground. How one can say this, I repeat, is difficult for me to understand. *Of course*, one can avoid any problem whatever, by simply declining to consider it; but we do not make the problem of evil non-existent by employing any such easy device as this. By refusing to look through the field-glass, the commanding general may avoid seeing the enemy in the distance; but he has not thereby warded off the danger which impends. The only thinker for whom there is no problem of evil, would be one — if such a one could be found — who denied the objectivity of all values. For him there would be nothing but fact, and mere fact has no aspect of value; there is therefore neither good nor bad, and hence no problem of evil. But for one who admits objective values at all, for him there is the problem — whether or

[1] *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, S. W., II, 317 f.

not he recognizes it as such — how it is that certain elements in this world of ours have an aspect of value, how it is that there is good in the world and how it is that there is bad.[1]

It is the aspect of value in human experience which Fichte takes as the clue to the meaning of that experience. Every life is, in its essence, the striving to realize ideals (though often mistaken ones). This suggests that the key to the meaning of the world itself is to be found in the conception of an infinite striving toward an infinitely distant goal. The transformation of the original datum which he suggests, is simply this: that whereas for the individual striving, the goal is conceived or imagined, so that we have a duality of will and value, for the infinite striving this duality does not exist. We cannot suppose that the world-ground is altogether of the same sort as the human will. If all reality is to be referred to a unitary principle, — and this, as we know, is the fundamental assumption of Fichte's philosophy,— then the supreme Will and the supreme value cannot stand apart.

But, it may be asked, in describing his principle as Will, does not Fichte virtually imply that it is a conscious being? He does not himself designate it as such, because he thinks of consciousness as always involving opposition. But is not his principle, after all, what we mean by a conscious being, though its consciousness may be of a higher order than ours? If this question is answered in the affirmative, then we have virtually admitted that Fichte's conception of the Absolute has been reached by the hypostatization of a value.

With regard to this question, we must in the first place reiterate our assertion that if this be true, it is at any rate just as true of the first period as of the second. Whatever Fichte may mean by saying, in the *Gerichtliche Verantwortungsschrift*, that the Godhead (the moral world-order), so far as its matter is concerned, is "mere consciousness, . . . pure intelligence," but that it is impossible for us to conceive "how it knows itself and others," and that hence we must refuse to attribute personality and con-

[1] It should be noted that the aspect of this problem which men have chiefly considered, is, How comes there to be evil in the world? The presence of good is not usually regarded as furnishing any difficulty. But it will readily be seen that this naïve assumption obscures a very real problem.

sciousness to it — whatever he may mean by this, there is no reason to suppose that he is giving us a different doctrine from that of the *Bestimmung des Menschen*, which describes the Absolute as supreme Will, and yet points out that we cannot comprehend its nature and may not ascribe consciousness and personality to it.[1]

But when we have said this, the real question still remains to be answered: does Fichte conceive of his Absolute as a higher sort of consciousness — the 'supra-conscious,' if one prefers the term? It is difficult to express our meaning if the word 'consciousness' is to be tabooed; but the issue, it seems to me, is fairly clear. The question is whether Fichte believes that there is a sort of universal consciousness, in which all finite ones are included — a consciousness which differs from ours in that in it all oppositions are harmonized, and that hence the supreme values are not set over against it as norms, but are one with it. Does he recognize such a universal consciousness? Or would he rather say that there is no consciousness save the many finite ones; that the Absolute is conscious only in these; and that, therefore, even for it, there is no consciousness in which all differences are harmonized?

My answer to this question is given with some hesitation. Fichte has not thrown much light upon it, and I do not feel sure that my interpretation is correct. On the one hand, the passages to which we have just referred certainly seem to indicate a belief in the reality of a higher order of consciousness — a supra-conscious being, if one will consent to take the word 'being' without any implication of substantiality.[2] But on the other hand, we must remember that the Absolute *exists* only in and through finite consciousnesses; that except as it is in them, Fichte speaks of it, not as *Dasein*, but as *Sein*. This would seem to imply that

[1] A passage similar to these two occurs in a letter from Fichte to Reinhold, written in 1800 (*Leben und Briefwechsel*, 2te Aufl., II, 278).

[2] We said above that Fichte's principle is conceived as activity rather than something which acts. But the same thing should be said of the human being; it too Fichte thinks of as life, activity, consciousness, not as a substantial self which possesses these as attributes. It is hence no less accurate to speak of a supra-conscious being than to speak of a conscious one.

there is no consciousness of any sort except in the *Dasein* of the Absolute, *i. e.*, in the actual world of finite beings.

It is this second consideration which has decided the matter for me. While I admit that there is room for difference of opinion, it seems to me that Fichte does not recognize a universal consciousness — one in which all the oppositions of human experience are resolved — as existent, as actual. Such universal consciousness is the goal toward which the world-process (the *Dasein* of the Absolute) is tending, but it will never be attained. The Absolute is itself conscious only in and through us ; thus, its consciousness is partial, fragmentary, characterized by the opposition of subject and object.

And yet Fichte would certainly not say that the all-embracing, all-harmonizing consciousness is a *mere* ideal. For this would be to leave the question in doubt, whether the world-process has tended and will continue to tend, toward the goal of perfect unity. And this question, he would say, is not to be left in doubt. The certainty that there is, and that there will be, progress, that the world-process is *in its essence* an approximation to the perfect harmony of subject and object, this triumphant certainty he expresses when he speaks of the 'being' of the Absolute as distinguished from its 'existence.' The conviction that the presence of value in the realm of the actual is neither an accident nor merely the result of the individual choices of isolated, self-dependent consciousnesses, this conviction is the heart and soul of Fichte's doctrine of the being of the Absolute. The assertion that God has being is not the assertion of an actually existent universal consciousness ; it is rather the declaration that the universal consciousness, the "unity of the pure spirit," in which "all individuals are included," is not merely that which *ought* to be, but also that which in ever increasing measure (though never perfectly) *is* to be.

NOTE A.

The Various Forms of Kant's Conception of *Intellektuelle Anschauung.*

The interpretation of Kant's *intellektuelle Anschauung* which has been briefly outlined in the text differs somewhat from that given by Thiele in his thorough and suggestive study of the problem.[1] As we have already pointed out, Thiele recognizes three stages in the development of the doctrine. In the first, "the content of intellectual perception is *given* without receptivity, that of perceptive understanding without spontaneity."[2] In the second, "intellectual perception . . . posits its content *by self-activity*."[3] In the third, "the content and the object of intellectual perception are identical."[4] In opposition to Thiele, I suggested in Chapter I, that it is better to recognize two main stages in the development of the doctrine, rather than three. Several considerations have led me to this opinion. In the first place, it seems to me that it is not well to draw too sharp a line between Thiele's second and third stages. Even if we admit that they represent somewhat different points of view, they are very closely related and might better be regarded as two slightly

[1] *Kant's intellektuelle Anschauung als Grundbegriff seines Kriticismus*, Halle, 1876.

[2] *Op. cit.*, 18. 'Receptivity' is used here in a different sense from that which I have given to it. In denying that the *intellektuelle Anschauung* of the first stage has receptivity, Thiele does not intend to assert the presence in it of any element of spontaneity. All that he means, is that the nature of the given is not changed by having to conform to a subjective mode of perception. He refuses to call *intellektuelle Anschauung* 'receptivity' because the latter term seems to him to imply that what is received, must be phenomenal. In the strict sense this is of course true. Apparently, however, Kant did not at first see this difficulty: for him, in the earlier stages of his thought, objects are phenomenal, not because they are *received*, but because they are received by *subjective* forms of perception. It seems to me, then, that we are justified in speaking of the intellectual perception of the first stage as pure receptivity.

We need not stop to consider Thiele's rather fanciful interpretation of the phrase *intuitiver Verstand* (*Op. cit.*, 25 ff.). As he himself virtually admits, it is hardly justified by Kant's ordinary use of the term, which makes it synonymous with *intellektuelle Anschauung.*

[3] *Op. cit.*, 34.

[4] *Op. cit.*, 94.

different phases of a second main stage. In the second place, there is some reason to believe that in the first stage itself the conception has two aspects which differ from each other at least as much as Thiele's second and third stages. And finally, if we recognize two main forms instead of three, we can correlate these two — as was suggested in Chapter I — with the conceptions of receptivity and spontaneity. Thus we should say that Thiele's second and third stages represent a position which Kant reached by starting with the *formal* aspect of human experience, while Thiele's first stage, and a somewhat different phase of it, which we shall point out directly, were gained by starting with the *material* aspect.

It is Kant's wavering as to the relation between the categories and *intellektuelle Anschauung* which justifies us in recognizing two slightly different phases in what Thiele calls the first form of the doctrine.[1] Sometimes he says that the categories would be applicable to intellectual perception, and at other times he seems inclined to deny it. The first view is represented by such passages as the following:

"If I take away . . . all perception from an empirical cognition, there still remains the form of thinking, *i. e.*, the way in which an object is determined for the manifold of a possible perception. Hence the categories have a wider range than sensuous perception, in that they think objects in general, without reference to the special mode (that of sensibility) in which an object may be given. But they do not thereby prove the existence of a larger sphere of objects, because one cannot assume that such objects can be given without presupposing that another kind of perception than the sensuous is possible; and this presupposition we have no right to make." [2]

"If we wished to apply the categories to objects that are not regarded as phenomena, we should have to assume another perception than the sensuous. . . . Now since such a one, *i. e.*, the intellectual perception, lies quite outside our faculty of cognition,

[1] As a matter of convenience, we shall consider this, which we have just stated as our second point against Thiele, before taking up the first.

[2] A, 253 f.; B, 309.

the use of the categories cannot possibly extend beyond the boundary of objects of experience." [1]

"The categories . . . do not presuppose any determinate mode of perception (possible merely for us human beings), such as perception in space and time, which is sensuous. They are merely thought-forms for the concept of an object of perception in general, of whatever kind it may be, even though it be a supersensuous perception, of which we cannot form any definite concept." [2]

These passages certainly suggest that there is nothing in the nature of the categories which would prevent our applying them to intellectual perception. We cannot so use them, because we are not capable of intellectual perception; but if such perception were possible for us, we could apply our categories to it and thus gain a knowledge of things as they really are. On the other hand, however, there are several passages in the *Kritik* in which the applicability of the categories to *intellektuelle Anschauung* is denied. "If by merely intelligible objects we mean things which are thought through pure categories, without any *schema* of sensibility, this kind of objects is impossible. For the condition of the objective use of all our concepts of the understanding is merely the mode of our sensuous perception, through which objects are given to us; and if we abstract from this perception, the categories have no reference to any object. Even if one wished to assume another kind of perception than this sensuous one of ours, our functions of thinking would have no meaning with reference to it. If [on the other hand] we understand [by intelligible objects] simply objects of a non-sensuous perception, for which indeed our categories are not valid and of which therefore we can never have any cognition, . . . noumena in this merely negative sense must certainly be admitted. . . . But in this case the concept of a noumenon is problematic." [3] And again: "The pure concepts of the understanding . . . apply to objects of perception in general, whether or not it is like our per-

[1] B, 308.

[2] *Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* (1791), H, VIII, 533. *Cf.* also *Prolegomena*, § 34, H, IV, 64 f.

[3] A, 286; B, 342 f.

ception, provided only that it is sensuous and not *intellectual*." [1]

We find, then, definite statements for each of these opposed views. On the one hand, Kant seems to say that the categories would be applicable to a non-sensuous perception if this perception were itself possible for us. On the other, he declares with equal definiteness that with reference to such a perception they would have no meaning. Thiele explains this apparent contradiction by supposing that the denial of the applicability of the categories belongs only to a later form of the doctrine, in which *intellektuelle Anschauung* is regarded as creating its own object.[2] In the first stage, when intellectual perception was conceived as a faculty to which objects are given in their real nature, Kant held that it is subject to the categories; it was only when he abandoned this point of view for a higher one, when the notion of creative activity was substituted for that of passive apprehension, that he ceased to believe in the applicability of the categories. That there are, however, passages in which he denies their applicability and which at the same time suggest his earlier conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung*, Thiele readily admits.[3] But he explains this by supposing that a doctrine which really holds only of the intellectual perception of the second stage is thoughtlessly carried over by Kant to that of the first stage.

It seems to me that a more satisfactory explanation than this is possible. Instead of maintaining that Kant's denial of the applicability of the categories has its source in his new concep-

[1] B, 148. *Cf.* with these passages from the *Kritik*, the following from the treatise, *Über eine Entdeckung* (1790): If we had intellectual perception, "not only should we no longer have need of the categories, but they . . . could not be used at all" (H., VI, 32).

[2] *Op. cit.*, 40 ff.

[3] Perhaps more readily than he is really compelled to do. While I myself believe that some of the passages which deny the applicability of the categories represent the first form of the doctrine of *intellektuelle Anschauung*, it seems to me that there is room for difference of opinion upon this very point. The passages in question—the chief of which have just been quoted—do not unmistakably suggest the earlier conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung; i. e.*, they contain no distinct reference to the knowledge of things-in-themselves, and they do not speak of objects as *given* in intellectual perception. On the other hand, it may be said that they contain no reference to intellectual perception as creative activity, and also that the context seems to suggest that it is conceived as the apprehension of things-in-themselves. On the whole I incline to think with Thiele that these passages represent the first form of the doctrine.

tion of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as creative activity, we may attribute it simply to the natural development of his earlier doctrine of intellectual perception as the immediate apprehension of things-in-themselves. It has frequently been pointed out that he came to believe in the subjectivity of time and space before he conceived the idea that the categories also are subjective forms. During this period, then, when he still regarded the categories as valid for things-in-themselves, it is not strange that he should have thought of intellectual perception as subject to the categories, that he should have conceived it as differing from our sensuous perception merely in being free from the limitations of space and time, not in being free from the categories. But later, when he had come to regard even the pure conceptions of the understanding as forms of human cognition, his view underwent some change. If the content of intellectual perception were brought under the subjective forms of our understanding, it would no longer represent things as they are in themselves. Hence, if there is any faculty that can know the real nature of things, it must be one which does not employ categories, which does not arrange and unify its content, which in fact has no activity, but is mere passive apprehension of noumena. Thus the belief that intellectual perception, in the earlier form of the doctrine, could not be subject to categories, is not, as Thiele supposes, a foreign element thrust into the conception, but is rather the result to which we naturally come if we start with the thought of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as pure receptivity and carry it out to its logical conclusion.

Even in its higher phase, however, the notion is full of difficulty. As long as intellectual perception is regarded as receptivity, as long as its content is supposed to be given to it from without, it cannot strictly be said to know things in their real nature. For things-in-themselves, things apart from the mind that apprehends them, cannot be constituted just as they are when apprehended. It is only when the knowing mind is one with the known object, when, in Kant's words, "the objects themselves . . . are produced"[1] through the apprehension of

[1] B, 145.

them, that we can be said to know them as they really are. But this, though Kant did not see it, does away at once with the notion of an object which exists independently of a subject. Only by means of a conception which completely overthrows the doctrine of the *Ding an sich*, can we understand the possibility of knowledge of the *Ding an sich.*

Thus the difficulties in the notion of intellectual perception as pure receptivity pave the way for the theory that it is pure spontaneity. That these perplexities had something to do with the development of the second doctrine in Kant's mind seems not improbable;[1] but that he clearly recognized the inadequacy of the first theory and deliberately set out to formulate a better one, as Thiele appears to think, is hardly likely. What really happened, was probably something like this: that while Kant was writing the First Edition of the *Kritik* he conceived *intellektuelle Anschauung* as receptivity and therefore described it as the apprehension of the thing-in-itself; and that afterwards, when he was working out the Second Edition, with its detailed treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception, he quite naturally approached the problem from the point of view of spontaneity, and described intellectual perception as the pure self-consciousness which develops its content from within instead of receiving it from without.[2] But we need not suppose that the formulation of this second conception brought with it the abandonment of the first. On the contrary, the cruder form seems to have persisted side by side with the more developed one, so that whenever Kant looked at the question from the point of view of sense in-

[1] The following passage from § 9 of the *Prolegomena* suggests that he sometimes recognized the fact that mere passive apprehension of objects can never be knowledge of their real nature: "If our perception had to be of such kind that it represented things *as they are in themselves*, there would be no perception *a priori*, but it would all be empirical. For I can know what is contained in the object in itself only if the object is present to me, is given. Even then it is indeed incomprehensible how the perception of a present thing should make me know it as it is in itself, since its properties cannot wander over into my consciousness (*Vorstellungskraft*)" (H., IV, 31).

[2] I do not mean to imply that there are no traces of the conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as spontaneity earlier than the Second Edition. On the contrary, as we shall soon see, the germs of the doctrine appear in the *Inauguraldissertation* of 1770; but it was not until the Second Edition of the *Kritik* that the thought was really worked out.

stead of understanding, he fell naturally and unconsciously into the earlier way of thinking.

This seems to be the more reasonable view of the matter. Kant's second conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung* can better be explained as an attempt to surmount the dualism of form and content by starting with the notion of pure self-consciousness than as a deliberate effort to improve upon the first conception. Evidence for this interpretation is found in the fact that definite statements of the earlier and cruder doctrine appear in works which were written later than the Second Edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft.*[1] If we supposed that Kant had definitely abandoned the first form of his theory when he developed the second, we should hardly be able to explain this persistence of the earlier form.

In the second conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung* we may perhaps distinguish two phases, as we did in the first. If so, they correspond to Thiele's second and third stages. According to his interpretation, the intellectual perception of the second stage is regarded as form which creates its own content, as a faculty of cognition through which the object itself is produced. But the content is still something external to the form, and thus we have not yet reached the conception of a perfect unity of subject and object. In the third stage, however, Kant develops the thought of a conciousness in which this harmony is complete.

Some of the passages which most naturally suggest Thiele's second stage belong to a period earlier than that of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft.* In the *Inauguraldissertation* of 1770, *e. g.*, Kant says, "The *perception* of our mind is always *passive*, and thus it is possible only in so far as something is able to affect our senses. But the divine perception, which is the cause (*principium*) of objects, not their effect (*principiatum*), since it is independent, is the archetype, and hence completely intellectual."[2] Again, in a letter to Marcus Herz, in 1772, he writes, "If that which in us is called representation (*Vorstellung*) were in regard to the object an action (*actio*), *i. e.*, if the object were produced

[1] *Cf.*, *e. g.*, the passage in the *Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, quoted above, p. 125. See also H., V, 421 f. (*Kritik der Urtheilskraft*).

[2] H., II, 404.

through it, in the sense in which the cognitions of the divine mind are represented as the archetypes of things (*Urbilder der Sachen*), then the conformity of the representation with the object could be understood. Thus the possibility of the *intellectus archetypus*, in whose perception the things themselves have their ground, . . . is at least intelligible." [1]

We find a somewhat similar statement in the Second Edition of the *Kritik*. Our "mode of perception . . . is called sensibility because it is not original, *i. e.*, it is not a perception through which the existence of the object of perception is given (this kind of perception, so far as we can see, can belong only to the Divine Being); but it is dependent upon the existence of the object and therefore is possible only because the subject's consciousness (*Vorstellungsfähigkeit*) is affected by the object." It is "sensibility . . . because it is derived (*intuitus derivativus*), not original (*intuitus originarius*), and hence not intellectual perception." [2]

According to Thiele these passages show that Kant has not yet risen to the conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as a perfect unity of subject and object. Things are indeed produced through the activity of the divine understanding, but they are, as it were, projected from it, externalized. Although they are wholly dependent upon it for their being, although they are products of its own nature, still they are, in a sense, foreign to it. The conception which Thiele distinguishes from this and regards as the third stage in the development of the doctrine, is not found earlier than the Second Edition of the *Kritik*. The following passages illustrate it:

"That understanding through whose self-consciousness the manifold of perception was also given — an understanding through whose idea (*Vorstellung*) the objects of this idea existed at the same time — would not need for the unity of its consciousness a special act of the synthesis of the manifold." [3]

"The consciousness of self (or apperception) is the simple idea (*Vorstellung*) of the Ego; and if through it alone all the manifold in the subject were given *by self-activity*, then the inner perception would be intellectual." [4]

[1] H., VIII, 689. [2] B, 72. [3] B, 138 f. [4] B, 68, quoted above, p. 7.

That these two sets of passages represent two distinct conceptions of *intellektuelle Auschauung* does not seem to me so evident as it apparently does to Thiele. Of the three quotations which we have given as representative of Thiele's second stage, that found in the letter to Herz is the only one which seems to me to suggest his interpretation at all definitely;[1] but when we have once made this interpretation of the passage in the letter, it is natural enough to extend it to the statements which we have quoted from the *Inauguraldissertation* and the *Kritik*.

On the whole I should be inclined to say that the earlier set of passages represents simply a theory which Kant had inherited from other thinkers and which he had not yet fully made his own. Previously to the great development of the conception of the transcendental unity of apperception in the Second Edition of the *Kritik*, he either regarded *intellektuelle Anschauung* as pure receptivity, or if he thought of it as spontaneity, merely adopted without much reflection the conventional notion of the divine understanding as creative. It was only when he began to work upon the Second Edition that the conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as creative really became an integral part of his own thought. When this took place, the old doctrine of the relation between the created thing and the creative understanding received new significance; then for the first time, Kant saw what is meant by the perfect harmony of subject and object. In the thought of a self-consciousness which does not create, but is its own object, he at last reached the notion of a form that is completely one with its content.

But while we may recognize this difference between the two conceptions of the creative understanding, it seems to me a mistake to emphasize it as strongly as Thiele does. Apparently Kant himself did not discriminate very clearly between them. This is not surprising; for as soon as we ask ourselves what

[1] *I. e.*, it is the only one which seems to imply that the object produced by the activity is yet set over against the perceiving subject; and unless the passages in question suggest this, we have no sufficient ground for recognizing Thiele's second stage as distinct from his third.

[2] This seems to be indicated by the presence in the Second Edition of the passage which we quoted on the preceding page.

we mean by saying that intellectual perception creates its own object and knows this object perfectly, we see that the only thing which can be meant, is that it is one with its object. We can perhaps form the notion of a creative faculty which projects objects from itself by an unconscious activity and hence regards them as given to it from without. But such a faculty would not be intellectual perception. For if it regarded the object as something foreign, it would fail to apprehend its true nature; things would be distorted by this mode of conceiving them. Only in that creative form which is one with its content, in whose apprehension of the object there is no sense of foreignness or givenness, do we find the ideal of cognition.

Thus the doctrine that intellectual perception creates its own object, contains by implication the thought that in it the dualism of subject and object is resolved into perfect unity. Whether Kant himself clearly saw this, may perhaps be doubted; but it cannot be denied that the more developed form of the doctrine is implicit in the cruder one. Nor can we fail to see that this conception of perfect knowledge could have been reached only by starting from the side of spontaneity. If we try to frame the ideal on the analogy of sense rather than that of understanding, we can never get beyond the notion of a faculty which mirrors its object perfectly, and yet can never be perfect knowledge because it mirrors the object instead of being it. And again, if we frame our notion on the analogy of spontaneity, and yet have in mind the spontaneity of consciousness rather than that of self-consciousness, it is doubtful whether we shall rise higher than the concept of an unconscious creative activity. It is only when we think of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as analogous to our own self-consciousness that we get the true conception, which, in all the various phases of his theory, Kant was struggling to grasp.

To sum up in a few words the result of this discussion, there are two objections to Thiele's interpretation. One is that we seem to have no very good reason for recognizing three main stages, rather than two, in the development of Kant's doctrine. For in the first place, the difference between Thiele's second and third stages is not so marked as that between the conception of

intellektuelle Anschauung as activity and the conception of it as receptivity. And in the second place, we have seen that even the doctrine of intellectual perception as receptivity appears in two somewhat different forms. It seems to me therefore much better to distinguish two main stages in the development of the doctrine, and then to recognize within each of them two slightly different phases. This interpretation has the further advantage that it enables us to correlate our two main stages with the conceptions of receptivity and spontaneity — conceptions whose opposition constitutes a distinctive feature of Kant's philosophy.

The other objection is that Thiele apparently regards each stage in the development of the doctrine as representing a definite abandonment of the preceding stage. This seems to me quite incompatible with the fact that in some of Kant's late writings we find passages which suggest the earlier, rather than the later, form of the doctrine. It is more nearly correct to say that Kant never sharply distinguished between the two forms, and that whenever, in his later writings, he looked at the question from the point of view of receptivity, he went back quite naturally to the cruder conception of *intellektuelle Anschauung* as the passive apprehension of things-in-themselves.

NOTE B.

Kant's 'I Think.'

Thiele's contention that Kant regards human knowing as differing from its ideal merely in degree, is supported by a long and somewhat involved argument,[1] which we can notice only briefly. Its thesis seems to be that while Kant denies all content to the pure Ego of apperception, he nevertheless makes it an identity of knowing and being and thus in some measure the realization of the ideal of knowledge. In a passage in the Second Edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Kant declares that the 'I' in the 'I think' is something real and yet is neither phenomenon nor thing-in-itself.[2] This passage is regarded by Thiele as supporting his interpretation. He lays stress upon the fact that the Ego is here designated as an intellectual representation (*intellektuelle Vorstellung*). Kant does not give it the name of intellectual *perception*, he says, partly because 'perception' is associated in his mind with the notion of a manifold, partly because he ordinarily thinks of perception as subject to the categories, and most of all because the term 'intellectual perception' has

[1] *Op. cit.*, 94–172.

[2] "The 'I think' is . . . an empirical proposition and contains within itself the proposition 'I exist.' . . . It expresses an undetermined empirical perception (*Anschauung*), that is, sense-perception (*Wahrnehmung*) — and hence it shows that sensation, which of course belongs to sensibility, forms the ground of this existential proposition — but it precedes experience. . . . An undetermined sense-perception (*Wahrnehmung*) signifies here only something real which has been given, and indeed only to thinking in general; which therefore is given, not as phenomenon and not as thing-in-itself (*Sache an sich selbst*) or noumenon, but as something which exists in fact and which is indicated as such [*i. e.*, as factual existence] in the proposition 'I think.' For it should be noted that when I characterize the proposition 'I think,' as empirical, I do not mean thereby to say that the 'I' in this proposition is an empirical representation; on the contrary it is purely intellectual, because it belongs to thinking in general. But without any empirical representation to furnish matter for thinking, the act 'I think' would not take place, and the empirical factor is [therefore] only the condition of the application or use of the pure intellectual faculty" (B, 422 f.). With this we may compare the following: "The consciousness of myself in the representation 'I' is not perception, but a merely *intellectual* representation of the self-activity of a thinking subject" (B, 278).

for him "a decided reference to the Creator." But we can see in this description of the pure Ego the essential characteristic of intellectual perception — the complete "identity of knowing and being." The 'I' in the 'I think' is not phenomenal, because "that which is indicated in the representation 'I' is not something distinct from the representation, something of which the representation could be the appearance." On the other hand, it is not thing-in-itself, because it has no content, and especially because it rises above the opposition of phenomenon and thing-in-itself. The thing-in-itself can never be an object of knowing. But in this act 'I' the "being of the Ego in itself" is not present as an *Ansich*, "just *because* it is illuminated by knowing." [1]

Another passage which Thiele regards as furnishing strong evidence for his theory is found in a note to § 46 of the *Prolegomena*, which reads as follows: "If the representation of apperception, the 'I,' were a concept, by which something were thought, it could be used as predicate of other things or would contain such predicates. But it is nothing more than a feeling of existence (*Gefühl eines Daseins*), without the least concept; it is only the representation of that to which all thinking stands in relation (in the relation of accident)." [2] In this "feeling of existence," Thiele urges, we have that unity of knowing and being which is the essence of absolute knowing. "In the act of thought 'I' is immediately contained the existence of the Ego as a feeling; at bottom this means nothing else than that the act 'I' is identity of knowing and being." [3]

The force of Thiele's argument is decidedly weakened when we consider the context of the passages upon which he lays so much stress. Both the quotation from the *Kritik* and that from the *Prolegomena* appear as foot-notes in a discussion of the paralogisms of pure reason. In each case, Kant is protesting against our supposing that the pure consciousness of self is a source of knowledge. The 'I think' is purely empty, form without any content; whatever Kant may have meant by speaking of it as "intellektuelle Vorstellung" or as "Gefühl eines Daseins," he certainly did not mean to describe it as a unity of form and

[1] *Op. cit.*, 143 ff. [2] H, IV, 82, note. [3] *Op. cit.*, 139.

matter. The general criticism may be made upon Thiele's whole argument, that it tries to read into Kant a theory which is certainly not in Kant. It is perfectly true that the doctrine of the transcendental Ego suggests to us the way in which its fundamental defects may be corrected, but it is equally true that Kant himself refuses to make the correction. We know that some one, coming after him, conceived the idea of trying to show that human experience, in its inmost essence, must be that very unity of form and content which is the ideal of all its striving. This is what Fichte and Hegel attempted to do, but it is precisely in this direction that they went beyond anything that Kant ever dreamed of. In short the spirit of the *Kritik* compels Kant to maintain that, so far as we can ever know, the dualism of form and matter is absolute. We may frame a vague notion of some superhuman understanding for which this opposition does not exist; but this intellectual perception must always be, not merely an unrealizable ideal, but an ideal to which our cognition cannot even approximate.

In justice to Thiele it should be said that to a certain extent he seems to recognize this. The quotation from the *Prolegomena* he speaks of as "a flash of light, whose gleam has no further influence in Kant's *conscious* philosophizing."[1] Nevertheless, he believes that the unconscious influence of this momentary insight is seen in the Second Edition of the *Kritik*, and he obviously regards the passage as indicating that Kant sometimes caught glimpses of the truth, that our own self-consciousness is, in a sense, that very unity of subject and object which we posit as the ideal. This, it seems to me, is far from being the case. One thing of which Kant seems always certain — in the Second Edition as in the First — is that for human knowledge the ideal is essentially and utterly inaccessible.

[1] *Op. cit.*, 140.

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