

## The Development from Kant to Hegel



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Introduced by Jonathan Brodey

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## Introductory Note

Thanks to the clarity, organisation, and general self-sufficiency of the present work, a lengthy introduction is not necessary. However, a couple of minor points are worth bearing in mind before reading the work, as, regardless of the quality and independence of any work, it can hardly put itself in context, nor anticipate the changes that have taken place since its appearance.

First, as any student of nineteenth century British philosophy will know, this work came at a time of heightened interest, in the English speaking philosophical world, of the work of the German Idealists. To be more precise, the interest was not solely focused on the work of these Idealists, comparable perhaps to the interest a historian of philosophy may have, but of a far broader sort—on the main theoretical frameworks offered by these scholars and their implications as these appeared to late nineteenth century British thinkers. In other words, the entire way of thinking of late nineteenth century British philosophers was closely connected to the German Idealists. So much so, that they are quite commonly placed in the same rough category as these Idealists, and in opposition to the earlier British thought (i.e. Hume) which these Idealists had refuted. Seth, as with many of his contemporaries, read Kant and Hegel in German, and composed the present work during a stay in Germany.

Second, no important attacks on the main currents of thought in which the British idealists engaged, had yet been launched. These came with Russell, Moore and others, some decades later, when idealists were ridiculed and their ideas generally ignored, *despite*, as has more recently been argued, the influence they had on people like Russell and Moore. British Idealism is now recognised as an important contribution to our thought, and not necessarily deserving of the kind of accusations it received from the new thinkers of the twentieth century. The Development from Kant to Hegel is in any case free of these accusations as it is more a

careful study of German Idealism, than an example of late nineteenth century philosophising. This is in contrast with a good deal of literature from his time, which though presented as studies of specific thinkers, works, or philosophies, are concerned with more than just an analysis of the subjects of their study. An important representative of the latter category is Edward Caird's *Hegel*.

This book is very scholarly and generously adorned with footnotes. It can serve as a useful analysis of German Idealism to present-day readers, and will appeal even to those opposed to British Idealism, as it is relatively free of the material used as the basis of criticism by the analytic philosophers who came later. But this is not to say that it is not in many ways representative of British Idealism. In fact, the second part, the implications of the first part on the philosophy of religion, is more freely written and somewhat less self-conscious. Appropriately, it moves beyond the main object of study, and deals with its applications. How relevant these applications are today is a different matter, but, I expect, even a negative attitude towards this matter will make the reading of this work no less enjoyable and enriching.

## Author's Preface

THE First Part of this Essay was originally written in Germany, in the summer of 1880, at the conclusion of my two years' term of study as Hibbert Travelling Scholar. Since the resolution of the Hibbert Trustees to publish the Essay, I have taken the opportunity of re-writing it almost entirely, with the view of offering, as far as possible, a real contribution to the study of German Philosophy in England. The Second Part, on the Philosophy of Religion, has been added at the special request of the Trustees.

In tracing the development of Kantian thought in the hands of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, I have restricted my attention to the fundamental metaphysical position occupied by the respective thinkers. The plan of the Essay made this imperative, and I think it will also be found to conduce to clearness. The many able works on Kant which have recently appeared in English, permitted me to dispense with an elaborate account of his philosophy. I have confined myself, therefore, in the first chapter to a critical statement of results. The apparently disproportionate number of pages devoted to Fichte, may be defended on the ground that the difference between Kant and Fichte is more radical than that between Fichte and his two successors. In Fichte, the principle of Idealism is first disengaged from the Kantian thought, and it remains henceforth common ground. I have given, therefore, a pretty full account of the process by which Fichte reached his metaphysical theory, as well as a criticism of the weaknesses peculiar to his form of statement. Fichte has received so little attention in this country in comparison with what has been bestowed on Kant, and even on Hegel, that the sketch may perhaps be of use in the way of focusing his distinctive philosophic position.

In the Second Part, on the contrary, the transition is made directly from Kant to Hegel, without mention of the special views of Fichte and Schelling on the Philosophy of Religion. The treatment of Christianity by Fichte in his later period is, in the main,

## 2 Preface

an anticipation of the Hegelian theory. But, however interesting a Fichtian or a Schellingian Philosophy of Religion might be in a monograph, they are not vital in the interests of the historical development here traced, and a considerable amount of repetition is saved by their omission. I have been at special pains to give a full account of Kant's remarkable book, *Religion Within the Limits of Mere Reason*, because neither its historical importance, nor its organic connection with Kant's general scheme of thought, is, as a rule, sufficiently recognized.

Edinburgh, February 1882

## Part I

### The Development from Kant to Hegel



# Chapter One

## Kant

THOUGH the estimates of what Kant did are various, there is a general agreement among competent authorities that his Critical investigations form a new point of departure in philosophy. People differ in their reading of Kant and in their evaluation of his results. His name is invoked in support of mutually incompatible doctrines, according as stress is laid upon this or the other element of his thought. But at the bottom of all these conflicting opinions lies the conviction that the Kantian system, and whatever claims to be its legitimate outgrowth, have a present-day interest and application beyond the historic value which all the systems of the past possess. So much has been written on Kant lately in English, that it would be a thankless labour in me to seek to unravel anew the tangled skein of Critical thought. I have confined myself, therefore, to a general statement of what, in my opinion, are Kant's most valuable results, and what are the inconsistencies that prevent us from regarding his system as final. This will probably be sufficient to suggest to the reader the process of criticism by which my positions have been reached. My present purpose is to show how the question Kant asked himself, and the method, he followed in answering it, expanded under his hands and those of his immediate successors in Germany into a new solution of metaphysical problems. The second part of the essay indicates the bearing of this new solution on the philosophy of religion.

Kant's uniform method in his various investigations cannot be better described than in his own well-worn phrase—an inquiry into the conditions of the possibility of experience. His results are a retrogressive conclusion from the facts of ordinary and scientific experience. What conditions are requisite in order that the

fact of knowledge may be possible? What are the presuppositions which the very notion of ethical action involves? How, or on what conditions are the feeling of beauty and the idea of organic co-ordination possible? In this way the problems of the three Critiques may be brought together, and the identity of their method perceived. In each case a portion or phase of human experience is analyzed, in order to discover *the conditions of its possibility*. There is no question of demonstrating its actuality. It is useless, for example, to discuss the existence of matter. We all know, or science at least can tell us, what we actually see and feel. The Kantian question is—what notions and existences are necessary to the constitution of the experience, such as we know it? But the transcendental method does not consist, as it has sometimes been said to do, in taking the facts and re-baptizing them as faculties or conditions for the production of themselves. The answer to Kant's question can be neither more nor less than an analysis of experience into its constituent elements. If the analysis is correct and exhaustive, it will embrace a demonstration of the organic interdependence of these elements. When this is done, the demand for a producing cause will probably be found to be out of place. For experience, viewed as such a unity, no cause can be assigned except itself.

The *Critique of Pure Reason*, to which we at present confine ourselves, is usually, and correctly, described as a contribution to "Erkenntnisstheorie," or Theory of Knowledge. It is of the utmost importance to grasp at the outset the meaning of the term. Otherwise the whole drift and scope of the transcendental method is missed. If Kant was merely trying to show the presence in the individual of certain faculties or aptitudes for the acquirement of knowledge, then we may admit at once the relevancy of Herbert Spencer's proof that their connateness in the individual is the result of the consolidated experiences of his ancestors. But if that was Kant's aim, he ceases to have any distinctive place in philosophy at all, except as the last *à priori* speculator who is worth the pains of slaughtering in public. Kant may be partly to blame for the misconception, by the psychological aspect which he sometimes communicates to his investigation;<sup>1</sup> but he was well aware

of the difference between the method of the transcendental logic in his hands, and the historical or descriptive procedure of empirical psychology. In discussing the principles of his method, Kant distinguishes rigidly between what he calls the *quid facti* and the *quid juris*.<sup>2</sup> An answer to the former question would imply a comparative observation of all known varieties of cognitive effort. A natural history of the inchoate intelligence of children, of savages, and of non-human animals might be in place here. But its merely probable conclusions would have no bearing, according to Kant, on the strictly necessary results of the transcendental method. The transcendental method is the demonstration, in the case of any conception that without it knowledge could not exist. It analyzes what is involved in the very notion of rational knowledge. Only such a method can give the required “deduction” or vindication of the necessary place of the conception in reason, and of its *jus* or right to function in the constitution of experience. Kant is continually insisting that this transcendental account of the nature of knowledge, as knowledge (or, as he elsewhere calls it, the logical form of all cognition), is wholly independent of the extent to which the elements of its synthesis are apprehended in this or the other empirical consciousness. He says, in one place, of the idea or empirical consciousness of the Ego—the supreme condition of knowledge—that whether it be clear or obscure “matters not here, no, not even whether it actually exist or no.”<sup>3</sup> The recurring use of the terms “possible” and “capable”<sup>4</sup> is itself an indication how distinctly the perfectly general character of his investigation was impressed upon his mind.

When the conception of knowledge is submitted to this analysis, Kant discovers “the static and permanent Ego in pure apperception”<sup>5</sup> to be the fundamental condition of the possibility of all connected experience. But the Ego, or permanent subject, is static only in the sense that it does not pass with its ideas: it is not static in the sense that we can remain standing by its blank identity. The unity of apperception, as Kant calls it, cannot be rendered intelligible except in reference to an object, whose synthesis it is. Here the peculiar enchainment or involution of conceptions becomes apparent, on which the method relies for its convincing power.

The knowing Self, though the first or supreme condition of experience, demands in turn, as the indispensable prerequisite of its existence, a knowable world to which it is related. It would be irrelevant to carry out the process further here, and to show how the intelligible connection of subject and object, or, in other words, the existence of the intelligible universe, is proved to depend on such principles as those of substantiality, causality, etc. It is enough to have indicated the principle of the demonstration.

Previous philosophy, proceeding on the presupposition of an essential dualism between thought and things, had ended with Hume in scepticism as to the possibility of real knowledge. The result of the Kantian method was to abolish this latent postulate. But Kant himself, in his refutation of Hume, proceeded throughout on the same assumption, which, in his case too, brought the same sceptical conclusion in its train. If Kant vindicates against Hume a certain reality for our knowledge, it is still not a knowledge of realities. Man has, on the Kantian scheme, a thoroughly trustworthy and indefinitely perfectible knowledge of phenomena; but these are only the images of real things distorted in the glass of his own mind. Things in themselves or noumena exist in a world beyond,<sup>6</sup> and man has no faculty by which he can penetrate into that region. He cannot abjure the nature of his own thought; he cannot know things otherwise than he does know them. But this way of stating the case inevitably suggests the inquiry whether the Kantian demand to know noumena as something behind, and different from, phenomena, is anything more than the desire to know and not to know a thing at the same time. For, if we merely exchange human thought for some other kind of thought, we are no better off than before as regards a knowledge of realities, seeing that the realities, in being known, must be equally coloured by the nature of this new thought. Unless, therefore, we could escape from thought altogether, that is, know a thing without knowing it, we should never be able to satisfy this fantastic demand for reality.<sup>7</sup>

But Kant left the philosophic question and its dualistic statement in a very different position from that in which he found them. With Hume the world was reared by the senses and the imagina-

tion out of recurrent impressions. That is to say (though Hume disclaims any hypothesis as to the source of the impressions), the mind is throughout passive, and played upon by an external something.<sup>8</sup> Kant succeeded in showing that out of mere impressions no knowledge could arise; and established, as the chief factor in knowledge, an active synthesis undertaken by thought. The conceptions by which we express the connection and system of things (*e.g.*, number, substance, cause, etc.) are the different ways in which the central unity of the Ego arranges and binds up the formless manifold of its impressions. These conceptions or categories it is, which constitute the permanent in the universe; and, in transferring them to the subjective side of the account, Kant vindicated for mind the chief function in the creation of the known world. The further we follow Kant in his analysis, the more does the contribution from the side of things, in the shape of impressions, tend to vanish away. But though Kant goes the length of saying that in itself this manifold is “as good as nothing at all for us,”<sup>9</sup> it never actually disappears. Indeed, it is inevitable, if the question is approached from this side, that there should appear to be a kernel of matter, or a prick of sense, round which all the swathings of thought are wrapped. But Kant’s own example showed that this residuum was a vanishing quantity; and the form in which he presented it—the “Ding-an-sich”—was the first point upon which criticism fastened. This remnant of dualism was speedily discovered to be inconsistent with other, and more fundamental, doctrines of his philosophy; and, whatever may be thought of the possibility of escaping an ultimate dualism, there will hardly be a question that the acuteness of Jacobi, Maimon, and Fichte was fatal to the Kantian method of formulating it.

But Kant’s real service to philosophy is not affected by such criticism. It consists, as has been seen, in his discovery of the true nature of knowledge—a discovery which, when fully embraced, raises us above a view which would compound knowledge of so many subjective and so many objective elements. In the *Critique* the discovery of the categories appears, in the first instance, simply as a transference of these conceptions from the nature of things to the nature of the mind—from the objective to the subjective

side of the account, as was said above. But gradually a new sense of the terms subjective and objective emerges. Kant's whole industry goes to prove that it is the categories alone which give objectivity and permanence to things; and but a slight extension of his method is required to see that what is true of the things that are thought holds equally of the mind or "the thing that thinks." Thinker and thing are both "as good as nothing at all for us," except as united in knowledge. Philosophy (to put the same thing more scholastically) found it impossible to reconcile the old subject and object, because they were alike empty abstractions, when separated from the organism of knowledge, which is the only whole, and which forms the ultimate objectivity of the universe. The conceptions of reason are the body of reality, communicating, in one aspect, stability to things, in another aspect, reality to the knowledge of them. What it is important to observe is, that these are two aspects of the same fact, and that, therefore, we must not start, as pre-Kantian philosophy did, with an original separation of two poles, which, *ex vi terminorum*, cannot be known except as united. Kant's permanent achievement was the revolution he effected in men's notions of what constitutes reality, and of the direction in which it is to be sought. By presenting the categories as the knot which binds man and the world together, he taught his successors to seek the reality of the universe in the system of these conceptions, and in the unconditioned thought whose members and instruments they are.

With the adoption of this general position, Idealism becomes independent of the weakness of some of the individual arguments which Kant brings forward against Hume and the Association school. It becomes unimportant for philosophy to insist on the *à priori*, as against the *à posteriori*, origin of conceptions. The conceptions remain the same, though the whole psychology of the Associationists be admitted. Indeed, as regards the individual, or, at least, the race, the conclusion seems plain that all ideas and thoughts, without exception, have been beaten out by the slow process of experience. But the ultimate attainment of these conceptions is itself the best proof that they are involved in the structure of experience, independently of their recognition by this or

that individual knower. They are its impersonal rational conditions. In other words, they may be viewed in their own nature as constitutive of the universe, apart from the process by which the individual comes to know them.

The conflict of Kant's dualistic presuppositions with the spirit of his own method is perhaps nowhere better seen than in the Paralogisms of Pure Reason, where he criticizes the doctrines of the Wolffian Rational Psychology. As the line of argument in this section forms a suitable transition to the extension given to the Kantian thought by Fichte, it may be well to concentrate attention upon it for a little. Arguments about the essence of the soul and its necessary immortality confound, Kant says, "the possible *abstraction* from my empirically determined existence with the supposed consciousness of a possible *separate* existence of my thinking self."<sup>10</sup> The "I think" is a consciousness which thinks nothing, except as filled by the process of experience. Apart from this filling it is "a completely empty idea," and to speak of its existence out of reference to that process, as a simple, numerically identical and permanent, substance, is to go entirely beyond our record. Such definitions are, indeed, inherently absurd; for they attempt to fix down as a particular object the subject, which, because it is, as Kant elsewhere describes it, "the correlate of all existence,"<sup>11</sup> can be "cognized only through the thoughts which are its predicates." That is, nothing can be said of the nature of the transcendental subject of knowledge, because it is itself employed in every affirmation, and we cannot, as it were, get round it, to make it an object of observation. The consciousness of myself as an individual, on the other hand, is evolved in the process of experience, and is itself a definite portion of that process. The individual self must be accepted as a fact, but it grounds no inference to anything beyond its present existence. Thus the whole fabric of Rational Psychology falls to the ground.

There are two sides to the foregoing argument. From the one point of view, Kant destroys the old Dogmatism irretrievably, by laying his hand on the fallacy of the thinking thing; from the other, he has not quite risen to the height of his own thought. It is true that the transcendental subject, as the instrument of all knowl-

edge, cannot be known as anything apart from the thoughts whose vehicle it is. But it is precisely this attribute of the Self which determines it as an all-containing sphere, or, in Kant's words, as the correlate of all existence, and as soon as this universal character of the Self is firmly grasped, the question as to what lies beyond the circle of knowledge cannot be raised. The bounds of existence, and of knowledge are seen to be, in their notion, coincident. Kant, however, treated this aspect of the subject merely as an "inconvenience," which we cannot get over, and destroyed the force of such descriptions of the Self, by separating it on both sides from the world of reality. On the one side, the reality of the things-in-themselves lies behind its phenomenal knowledge; on the other, it is not itself identified with the essence of the thinking person. Kant speaks of the universal form of consciousness as "merely a property (Beschaffenheit) of my subject;"<sup>12</sup> which is as much as to say that, besides the transcendental Self of knowledge and the phenomenal or empirical consciousness known by that Self, there is a noumenal reality—a substantial *x*—behind each phenomenal person. "I-ness" is a property of that noumenal being, so far as it thinks, but its thinking is not its very self. In other words, Kant has not emancipated himself from the dogmatic mode of thought. He still holds to a thinking thing: only he maintains that, for us, it is incognizable. The demand for some reality to which this universal function of thought shall belong as its "Beschaffenheit," is the exact counterpart of the assumption of things-in-themselves on the further side of knowledge. It is the impossibility of knowing a noumenon, not the inadequacy of a conception like substance to the thinking self, that constitutes, in *Kant's* eyes, the fatal objection to the old Rational Psychology.

This curious imbroglio of the three selves—the I-in-itself, the "I think" or transcendental subject, and the phenomenal or historic individual—arises simply because Kant was still in bondage, in part, to the thought he was controverting. The idea that there could be a knowledge of things *in themselves*, that is, otherwise than through their predicates, never left him. It was "self-evident" to him, he says, "that a thing in itself is of different nature from the determinations which merely make up its state."<sup>13</sup>

Hence thought remained to the end with Kant a subjective modification, a mode of representing something which is, in its own nature, prior to thought. It gives the reality neither of thinker nor of thing. It was quite in accordance with this general view that, in the section we have been considering, Kant should treat as the poverty of *our* intelligence what is really the prerogative of intelligence as such: *viz.*, that it cannot be bound by its own creatures or instruments, least of all by categories like substance, which are of use only in the exposition of material things.

But Kant is continually, by his very mode of statement, leading us beyond his own point of view. "Self-consciousness," he says, in the first edition of the *Critique*, "is that which is the condition of all unity, and is yet itself unconditioned. It does not so much know *itself through the categories*, as the categories, and, through them, all objects, in absolute unity of apperception, consequently *through itself*."<sup>14</sup> These striking phrases suggest at once the true nature of the universal Self, as it was insisted on by his successors, notably by Fichte. The insight into this nature and dignity was used by them to make Kant's system consistent with itself by freeing it from alien presuppositions. The Ding-an-sich had been retained, because thought was supposed to be something peculiar and subjective. But if the transcendental apperception be nothing less than the consciousness of universal thought, then it is evident that the world of knowledge which exists for that thought is not different from the world of reality. The presence of this identical Self in the individual becomes at the same time a sufficient explanation of the fixity and determinateness of external experience, which all acknowledge as independent of their fluctuating states, and which it was one of the functions of the things-in-themselves to account for. The relations of the universal and the individual self—of God and man are thus visibly changed. They no longer stand outside of one another as, for example, in a theory like Berkeley's, where the rationale of a permanent external world is also sought in God. God no longer smites us, so to speak, across the void; but through consciousness we are born into a system of thought, the same for all intelligence, and unrolled as a knowable world in each individual, through the pres-

ence in him of a universal function. Man, the world, and God are not three separate things, as in the Dogmatic systems which Kant criticized and overthrew. Viewed from the speculative standpoint, that is, *from the inside*, they are seen to be parts or moments of one whole. Kant's Copernican metaphor meant, in fact, more than he himself supposed. The comparison virtually asserted that we can overcome the presuppositions of our station as men upon the earth, and view the universe, in adumbration at least, as it appears from a universal or theocentric position.

It was Kant's firm conviction that he had made an end of metaphysic, and substituted for it a doctrine of the limits of human reason. What he had really done was to transform the notion of the science. The barriers which he supposed to stand in the way of human intelligence have been shown to be only the shadows cast by an imperfect logic. On the other hand the undeniable limitations of partial knowledge do not affect the character of our intelligence as such. The identity of all thought in kind is, indeed, something which we only imagine that we ever question. Thus the *concentricity*, if we may so speak, of the creative and the reproductive reason, though denied by Kant, became, as the result of his labours, the starting-point and immanent presupposition of his followers. In destroying the old, Kant had become the founder of a new metaphysic, in which every question is presented to us with a new scope and meaning.

## Chapter Two

### Fichte

IT is not necessary here to follow step by step the progressive criticism by which the new metaphysic was at last systematically formulated. Where the earlier expositions have been manifestly superseded by the later, the former cease to have more than a historic value. Besides, minor differences ought not to be permitted to obscure a fundamental unanimity. The most detailed examination would only show, what will be readily admitted without it, that Hegel is the summing up and most perfect expression of the general movement of thought known as German Idealism. But, for the sake of making clear the full meaning of the terms which meet us in Hegel, an indication is needed of the line along which they were reached. The peculiar form of statement in which his theory is presented cannot be understood without a review of his historical antecedents. This method has also the advantage of giving us Hegel by bits, and so sparing much laboured exposition when his special contributions to the general system of thought come to be considered. A sketch of the main positions of Fichte and Schelling, so far as these proved historically important, will be sufficient for the present purpose.

Fichte was always ready to maintain that his own system was nothing but “the Kantian doctrine properly understood”—“genuine Criticism consistently carried out.”<sup>15</sup> But he confessed, at the same time, that he had first had to discover the *Wissenschaftslehre* in his own fashion before he was able to find a good and consistent sense in Kant’s writings. The disconnected form in which Kant had left his conclusions was utterly repugnant to the systematic mind of his successor, who demanded a philosophy *in one piece* (*aus einem Stück*), as the only ultimate satisfaction of reason. Accordingly, in the earliest essay in which his advance be-

yond the form of Kantianism becomes apparent, he concludes by saying that, while the Kantian philosophy in its inner content stands firm as ever, there is still much to do before the materials are marshalled in a well-jointed and irrefragable whole.<sup>16</sup> Fichte determined to take the task upon himself; he resolved to bring the different parts of the Kantian theory into harmony, and, if possible, to exhibit the universe as the development of a single principle. To this resolve is attributable the wide difference which exists on the surface between his philosophy and that of Kant, and also the radical difference of philosophic method to which that striking dissimilarity is mainly due. Kant had to seek for his principle or principles, and he proceeded tentatively by an analysis of sphere after sphere of experience. He mined patiently till he had brought to light in each the conditions of its possibility. He believed, of course, that the results of his three Critiques did not conflict with one another; but he did not take much trouble to exhibit their connection, still less to reduce them to a unity of principle. Fichte, on the other hand, started with the acceptance of the principle in which, after patient meditation, he believed that Kant's different investigations centred. He was able, therefore, to dispense with the preliminary analysis, and to begin at once to develop the principle synthetically. At the same time, it would be a misrepresentation of Fichte's procedure to suppose that his starting-point depends for proof, in any external or logical way, on the previous acceptance of Kant's analysis. The principle shines, as he is at pains to show, by its own light, and is therefore above proof; while its actual sufficiency to explain the intelligible world must be evinced by the systematic development of that world from it. Hence while the principle came to him historically in all its significance from Kant, the truth of the starting-point, and the adequacy of the system stand on their own basis, independent of any proof from without.

Starting from an analysis of perception, Kant was unable to get rid of dualism, because, in the act of perception, subject and object seem to be *brought* together out of a previous state of independent existence. "There is no deception in reason," as Fichte truly says; but philosophy must explain the meaning of this ap-

pearance—must show how alone it is possible—in a word, deduce it. Perception, we know from Kant, is an act of synthesis. But when perception is so described, the question that naturally arises is—a synthesis of what? The “given” manifold on Kant’s theory was an answer to this “what,” and Kant maintained the presence of that element to be indispensable to the possibility of a synthetic act. That may be true; but to say that it is “given” is merely to say that it has been assumed—that no account of it has been offered. If philosophy is to be true to her mission, however, she must deduce the seemingly unintelligible or non-rational from a principle of whose intelligibility there is no doubt. So Fichte reasoned in presence of the surd of the Kantian philosophy. The derivation of sensation from the impression of a thing-in-itself, which is occasionally suggested or implied by Kant, he considered too great an absurdity to credit him with, except on his own express testimony. “Should he make such a declaration I shall consider the *Critique of Pure Reason* the offspring of the strangest chance rather than the work of a mind.”<sup>17</sup> It is impossible, according to Fichte, seriously to offer the Ding-an-sich as a *philosophical* explanation of sensation. We have no direct evidence of its existence, nor do we know what we mean by the predication of existence in such a case. We have, in fact, explained as by *x*; for the Ding-an-sich is merely the duplicate or reflection of our first inexplicable, erected into its own cause. In philosophy this method of explanation is inadmissible; we must start there from a principle whose existence is at once intelligible and self-evident; and deduction consists in proving of any conception or fact, that it is involved in the circle of the conditions of the primary and indemonstrable, but at the same time all-embracing, Fact. In Fichte’s own language, everything must “hang firmly in a single ring, which is fastened to nothing, but maintains itself and the whole system by its own power.”<sup>18</sup>

This principle or fact, it need hardly be said, can be no other than the Kantian unity of apperception, or, in simpler terminology, the Ego. Here Fichte found the “single ring” of which he was in quest. Self-consciousness is what we ultimately mean by existence, and existence is not in this case, merely problematical.

The principle lives in the very act by which its existence is apprehended; here knowledge and existence are one in the fullest and most literal sense. The act of self-realization alone has the *inevitableness* which Fichte desiderates as the distinctive mark of the first principle. It is not, in a strict sense, a fact or thing (*Thatsache*), but a deed—an action and its product in one (*Thathandlung*). Of a *Thatsache*, or objective fact, the reason or cause may always be demanded, but not so of self-consciousness, which is the condition of all facts, and itself unconditioned. The question cannot be asked, because the “I,” in asking, perpetually supplies the answer. There is, in fact, realized in the Ego the seemingly self-contradictory notion of self-creation or *causa sui*. The contradiction exists only while we remain in the sphere of objects or things. As long as we think even of God as an object outside of us, and apart from self-consciousness, the unconditioned necessity of His existence is, as Kant describes it, the abyss of human reason. “We cannot support the thought that a Being whom we regard as the highest among all possible existences, should say to himself, as it were:—‘I am from eternity to eternity; beside me there is nothing save what exists by my will; but whence then am I?’”<sup>19</sup> We cannot support the thought, because we have reduced ourselves to the child’s question—Who made God? God has been reduced to the sphere of things, and there the law of causality inexorably demands the cause of the cause.<sup>20</sup> But the insupportableness of which Kant complains vanishes from the Absolute Thesis (as Fichte calls it) in which the unity of self-consciousness affirms itself as the necessary pre-condition of intelligible existence.

This brings us face to face with a radical antithesis of philosophical doctrine which is expounded by Fichte with admirable clearness and vigour.<sup>21</sup> All systems are classifiable, he maintains, according to their acceptance or non-acceptance of this fundamental principle. Every system which has this insight into the uniqueness of the Ego, and which makes it the principle by which things are to be explained, is Idealistic; every system is Dogmatic, which starts with the existence of things, and, taking the Ego as a thing among things, explains it, in the last instance, as their prod-

uct. This opposition of Dogmatism and Idealism sums up for Fichte every difference of philosophic thought, and he characteristically refers the speculative difference to a difference of character. "He who is in truth only a product of things will never see himself otherwise; and he will be correct as long as he speaks merely of himself and his compeers. . . The kind of philosophy we choose depends on the kind of men we are, for a philosophical system is not a piece of dead furniture which may be taken up or laid aside at pleasure. It is animated by the spirit of the man who makes it his own."

When Dogmatism starts with the assumption of the existence-in-themselves of things, the first remark to be made is that the Ding-an-sich is not a principle verifiable in experience, for consciousness testifies only to the existence of things *for* it. The Ding-an-sich is therefore more than "a fiction which awaits its realization from the success of the system." Should Dogmatism fail to give an intelligible account of experience, the fiction of independent existence with which it set out may be dismissed as unfounded. The necessary failure of the dogmatic construction is soon apparent. Having chosen the sphere of things as its basis of operations, Dogmatism finds itself rigidly confined within that world. It can render intelligible the mechanical action of thing upon thing, but it cannot pass from things to the consciousness of things. Things form, as it were, a single, or simple series of causes and effects, but intelligence is, in its very nature, a double series—knowledge of itself, being for itself. When approached thus, intelligence and things lie in two worlds, between which there is no bridge. The causality of the simple series acts only in that series, thing causes thing, but not the idea of a thing. Every attempt to fill up the enormous gap which separates the real from the ideal, turns out, as Fichte says, to be no better than "a few empty words, which may, indeed, be learned by rote and repeated, but which have never conveyed a thought to any man, and never will." It remains, therefore, to try our fortune with the principle of Idealism, and to make the act or fact of self-consciousness our starting-point. Philosophy, as Fichte is never tired of telling us, begins in an act of freedom. The first principle is not a proposition, but a

postulate in the geometric sense—a demand made upon a man to perform a certain operation. “Think yourself, construct the notion of yourself, and mark how you do it.” The immediate consciousness of ourselves which we possess in this act is what Fichte called intellectual intuition or perception. Much misconception has gathered round the phrase, but there is nothing mystical about the fact which it denotes. Intellectual intuition is simply the perception of self which accompanies all our consciousness—without which, as Fichte says, we cannot move hand or foot, cannot come to bed or board. It is the “Kantian unity of apperception—the idea of self-consciousness—which constitutes for Fichte, as has been seen, “the one firm standing-ground for all philosophy.”

But self-consciousness or intelligence must not be treated as itself a thing, a unit, a mind—call it as we may—which has ideas; for in that case there is no vital connection between the nature of intelligence and the form of its experience. Intelligence is degraded into a stage, as it were, over which ideas pass. Its ideas are not its own organic product; they are merely the “things” of Dogmatism under another name, but untransformed. Such an Idealism—Fichte instances the Berkeleian—is still at the dogmatic standpoint, and it is really quite indifferent whether we talk of ideas or of things. The world is still viewed as a mechanically connected series of units, and the passage to a consciousness of the ideas remains as inexplicable as did the passage to a consciousness of things. It is only the ambiguous term “idea” that makes it seem otherwise. If Idealism is to succeed where Dogmatism failed, we must go differently to work. Intelligence, it has been shown, is not a thing but an action—an action which we can repeat at any moment—whose nature, therefore, can be definitely known. It is an action determined by definite laws, and these laws it is our business to discover. The nature of intelligence, as intelligence, has to be analyzed; and whereas Dogmatism failed to derive intelligence from the merely objective, we must be able to show that the object and, in general, experience as we know it, is deducible from the necessary conditions of intelligence. The genetic deduction of experience is the only proof admissible of the sufficiency of our principle; for, in Fichte’s words, so long as we

do not exhibit the whole “thing” taking its rise before the eyes of the thinker. Dogmatism is not hunted out of its last lurking-place. Now, experience is very well defined by Fichte as “the system of ideas which are accompanied by the feeling of necessity.” This necessity or definite determination is manifestly essential to our idea of experience, and demands explanation. It is, in fact, in a slightly different form, the “given” element of Kant, which Fichte resolved to connect intelligibly with the rest of the system.<sup>22</sup> Ordinary dogmatic Idealism either ignores this feature of experience, or refers it, as Berkeley does, to the will of God, who thereby becomes the mere equivalent of the Ding-an-sich. In the *Wissenschaftslehre*, however, it must be seen to be involved in the notion of intelligence.

The *Grundlage* begins, therefore, by developing the conditions of intelligence, and it soon appears that the Absolute Thesis, or the affirmation by the Ego of its own existence is impossible, except through the Antithesis of a non-Ego, or something which is not Self. The opposition of Ego and non-Ego within intelligence, or, in Fichtian phraseology, the positing in the Absolute Ego of a divisible non-Ego, opposed to a divisible Ego, is the necessary condition of the possibility of intelligence itself. In other words, the distinction of subject and object is traceable to the very nature of self-consciousness; but, for that very reason, it is not an absolute distinction, seeing that the object is posited only *for* the subject. Fichte is at no loss to show that the mutual limitation of Ego and non-Ego, which he deduces in his Third Principle, is of the essence of intelligence. Through it both are something (*Beide sind etwas*); without it neither qualitative distinction nor intelligence would exist; all would be a pure blank, for affirmation is only possible as against the negation of something else. The Thesis, therefore, or act of self-thinking with which we began, was merely an abstraction from the synthesis of opposites by which intelligence exists. Thesis and antithesis are, in truth, not separate acts, but moments of one indivisible act. Even the word “act” or “action” is perhaps misleading, for, as Fichte is at pains to explain, he is not dealing with a narrative of what has happened at any time. He does not offer us a cosmogony, or what he

derisively terms the biography of a man before his birth. The world exists, and so does its last term, consciousness; this actual—this “*absolut Vorhandene*”—philosophy has to analyze into its ultimate constituent terms. The synthetic presentation of the results of this analysis may have the appearance of an original construction of the universe, and Fichte’s mode of statement labours at times under grave disadvantages. But it must never be forgotten, that what he is endeavouring to expand before us is simply the *notion* or logical nature of intelligence or self-consciousness. The distinctions which intelligence is shown to involve are the conditions or laws of its existence; their momentary separation in exposition is merely logical and due to the abstraction of the philosopher.<sup>23</sup>

The non-Ego or Thing is deduced, therefore, as the limitation set up by the Ego as essential to intelligence. This is the important point to notice in Fichte, in comparing him with those whom he calls Dogmatists. His Ego and non-Ego are not co-ordinated as two independent realities which are inexplicably brought together in perception; all reality, as he says, is in consciousness. This is, according to Fichte, the essence of Critical philosophy. “*Critical* philosophy sets up an Absolute Ego, as absolutely unconditioned and determinable by nothing higher. . . On the other hand all philosophy is *Dogmatic*, which equates something with the Ego-in-itself, and places the one over against the other. This occurs in the supposed higher notion of Thing (*Ens*), which is at the same time set up in a perfectly arbitrary fashion as the highest notion of all. In the Critical system the Thing is that which is posited in the Ego; in the Dogmatic, that in which the Ego is itself posited. Criticism, therefore, is *immanent* because it posits everything in the Ego; Dogmatism is *transcendent* because it passes beyond the Ego.”<sup>24</sup> Or, as Fichte elsewhere puts it: “The essence of transcendental Idealism in general, and of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in particular, consists in this—that the notion of Being is not regarded as first and original, but solely as a deduced, notion.” Action is what the philosopher starts with, and among the necessary actions of the Ego is one which appears, and must appear, as Being. From the standpoint of empirical realism (which