

POST-HEGELIAN SYSTEM BUILDING: IMMANUEL HERMANN VON FICHTE'S

ATTEMPT TO RECONSTRUCT HEGEL'S WORK AND TO COMPLETE IT WITH

A SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY

by



Albert F. Hart

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ABSTRACT

This work is concerned primarily with the significant elements of the philosophical system which Immanuel Hermann von Fichte developed in support of his speculative theism and in reaction to the incompleteness and shortcomings which he perceived in the dominant Hegelian system, notably the deterministic character of that system, its apparent suppression of individuality and its pantheistic implications.

In developing his philosophical positions Fichte considered himself to be particularly inspired and influenced by the ideas and examples of Kant, J.G. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. The tensions which these primary loyalties set up in his thought and on its evolution are examined and assessed.

The work then briefly reviews the general significance of the major works of Fichte's later period which marked an interesting departure from the earlier system building period. Finally it considers the ultimate status of his professed Kantianism as well as his place in the annals of philosophy.

RESUME

Dans ~~cette étude~~ nous relevons les éléments principaux du système philosophique construit par Immanuel Hermann Fichte pour établir son théisme spéculatif et pour rectifier la philosophie de Hegel, le système dominant de la période. En s'opposant à Hegel Fichte se préoccupait notamment du déterminisme, de la suppression de l'individualité et du panthéisme qui, à son avis, étaient les erreurs cardinales du système hégélien.

Deuxièmement, parce que pour Fichte les pensées et les doctrines de Kant, J.G. Fichte, Schelling et Hegel revêtaient une importance primordiale sur l'évolution de sa pensée, nous examinons et évaluons les diverses impressions de ces quatre philosophes sur l'ouvrage de Fichte.

Troisièmement, nous résumons brièvement la dernière période de l'ouvrage philosophique de Fichte dont les écrits principaux signalent son dégagement de sa précédente préoccupation de construire un système philosophique. Enfin nous considérons la justesse de l'insistance de Fichte sur sa profession de fidélité aux doctrines de Kant ainsi que la place le nom de Fichte a pris dans l'histoire de la philosophie.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Who is Immanuel Hermann Fichte? The student of philosophy whose mother tongue is English can recall the famous father, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, but is usually surprised to learn that there was another philosopher of the same name. J.D. Morell, an English scholar, who made the son's acquaintance during a visit to Germany in the mid-nineteenth century, has paid eloquent tribute to the influence of his writings on contemporary German and English thought and to his popularity as a lecturer. Morell felt certain that the son would stand side by side with his father in the intellectual history of Germany. This view has not so far proved to be prophetic. There are only a few brief references to Immanuel Hermann Fichte in English histories of philosophy. Even in similar German surveys, where space is devoted to his work, several pages seems to have been considered adequate. A notable exception is the somewhat more generous accounts which are given by J.E. Erdmann in his History of Philosophy and by E.V. Hartmann in his Geschichte der Metaphysik.¹

Only one short fragment of Fichte's prolific output has appeared in the English language. It was translated by Morell and published 120 years ago. Copies of it have remained buried in a few hospitable university libraries in the English-speaking world.² The German texts of Fichte's works are more readily available but, for the most part, aside from the cataloguing efforts of the librarians, they have a pristine, untouched quality.

Yet, if we take ourselves back to the nineteenth century we find that some historians and commentators of that period considered Fichte's work and influence to be important. Morell describes him as the first scientific psychologist; Erdmann attributes to him and to Christian H. Weisse, Fichte's close friend and collaborator, a prominent share in the dissolution of the Hegelian school; and Caponigri briefly points out that Fichte was one of the thinkers in the initial movement of spiritualism which was "an important current in contemporary philosophy."³ With the passage of time these views have been ignored rather than challenged. They do, however, suggest that Fichte's work was of more than ordinary interest and they provide some justification for an attempt to rescue him from the complete neglect in which his achievements languish outside of Germany.

By upbringing, inclination and general outlook, as will also be seen in the biographical note of the next chapter, Fichte's approach to philosophy was dominated by strong religious convictions and considerations. Against the growing menace of positivism and atheistic materialism associated with developments in the natural and physical sciences, against also the contemporary disunity in philosophical and theological thought, Fichte engaged himself in unremitting efforts to bring together philosophy and religion on a basis that would overcome the contradictions between faith and knowledge and satisfy both the demands of reason and the requirements of Christian belief. Within the Christian fold itself he

was anxious³ to see doctrinal dissensions dealt with in a way which would allow a spirit of religious toleration to be promoted. To these ends he developed his campaign on two fronts: first of all through his voluminous writings, particularly his massive exposition of his own philosophical system which culminated in a speculative theism, and secondly, through the establishment of a Zeitschrift⁴ to provide a regular forum for articles on current questions of philosophical and Christian speculative thought. In this publishing activity he secured the cooperation of a number of distinguished German philosophers and theologians of both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds.

This work will be concerned primarily with significant elements of the philosophical system which Fichte developed in support of his speculative theism. The system is set out in the three volumes of his Grundzuege zum System der Philosophie. Fichte embarked on this enterprise firmly convinced that philosophy must be based on a theory of knowledge and that it must become a theosophy. The historical starting point, by his own assertion, is taken from his father's Wissenschaftslehre.⁵ However other influences are clearly evident in the shaping of his thought: that of Schelling particularly in the exposition of the first volume and, as Fichte himself states, the second volume parallels the structure of Hegel's Wissenschaft der Logik (Logic). Indeed Fichte asserts that in Volume Two he tries to bring together Hegel and Schelling on the basis of consciousness, the significant element differentiating his father's

later from his earlier Wissenschaftslehre. Hegel, in Fichte's view, was much indebted to J.G. Fichte but made a fundamental mistake in basing himself on the first Wissenschaftslehre and his system could not, therefore, when it reached that stage, make the transition to the Absolute other than by a leap.⁶ The exploitation of consciousness to make the transition is, as will be seen, crucial to the development of Fichte's position on individuality and a personal God.

The Grundzuege reads like a sustained polemic against Hegel. Yet with respect to his role in the dissolution of the Hegelian school, as portrayed by Erdmann, Fichte would have placed his position in a rather different perspective. For he admired the main achievements of the Hegelian system and wished to preserve them. In the anti-Spinozistic zeal stimulated by his concern for the defence of the Christian faith he conducted an unrelenting crusade against any manifestations or suggestions of pantheism. These manifestations were to be detected in Hegel's system and accordingly must be eliminated. At the same time, in conformity with his overall objective, the necessary further step would be taken to complete the Hegelian system with a true exposition of the Absolute.

This approach to Hegel's work found its rationale in Fichte's view that his own philosophy was not a new system but rather comprehended all previous philosophy and was also a history of philosophy. The names of ancient, medieval and modern philosophers to

whom he refers in his works are too numerous to mention. In his autobiographical work he pays particular tribute to the influence of Descartes, Locke and Hume. Equally in the modern period the ideas of Spinoza, Leibniz and Schleiermacher decisively influenced him.

Three less well-known philosophers of the generation immediately preceding his own should be mentioned here because Fichte found certain strands of their thought and outlook congenial and encouraging for the direction in which his own thought happened to be moving. Franz von Baader (1765-1841) was an important member of a group of Catholic thinkers and writers in Munich who took the view that true philosophy should have its foundations in faith and who, in company with Schelling, derived inspiration from the writings of Jakob Boehme (1575-1624), the mystical shoemaker of Corlitz. J.F. Herbart (1776-1841) who occupied for some years at Koenigsberg the chair once held by Kant professed to be a Kantian opposed to post-Kantian idealism. Fichte was mainly interested in a principle of individuality which Herbart had developed from his psychological inquiries. K.C. Krause (1781-1832) professed to be a Kantian also, but on the idealist side and with a flair for system building which appealed to Fichte because Krause's architectonic embraced the transcendent as well as the immanent nature of God.

By his own profession Fichte's main loyalties were to Kant, J.G. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel and to the first two in particular; for, without being conscious of any inconsistency, he mentions in

separate contexts each of the two as the point of departure for his own philosophical work. An attempt will be made in this work to examine the tensions which these primary loyalties set up in his thought and on its evolution, to assess their consequences and to consider how far he gave them their proper due.

The first two volumes of the Grundzuege appeared in 1833 and 1836 respectively. There was then a gap of ten years before the system was completed with the publication of the third volume. For the next thirty-three years, that is, until his death in 1879, Fichte maintained a productivity which diminished only relatively in his final years. Inevitably one asks whether in this whole remaining period of his life Fichte changed his mind in any significant way about the general or detailed thrust of his system. There are indications of misgivings on which some comment will be offered. Finally I will examine briefly the general significance of the works Fichte produced after the Grundzuege. His major works of this period were inspired, so he asserted, by the need to return to Kant. While this objective suggests that his loyalty to Kant prevailed over all others his interpretation of which constitutes a return to Kantian principles requires cautious scrutiny and a judgement on the ultimate status of his Kantianism may serve to throw some light on Fichte's place in the annals of philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Immanuel Hermann Fichte was born in Jena on July 18, 1796. The influence of his parents, a father, already famous and even notorious for his philosophical writings, and a deeply religious mother, had a decisive impact both on his upbringing and on his philosophical development. This influence was fully acknowledged in his autobiographical work, Vermischte Schriften, where he inscribed a particularly moving and appreciative expression of his spiritual debt and fidelity to his mother.¹ Her impact on her son was perhaps all the greater because the father's early death ended his direct association with the education of the son. An interest in philosophy which might otherwise have been encouraged by the father did not emerge until the later stage of the young Fichte's studies at the Werderschen Gymnasium in Berlin during the period 1813 to 1818. By that time his concentration on classical studies, with some emphasis on philology, had stimulated some interest in philosophical questions and had provided him with a useful background of knowledge and preparation for a more serious concern with such questions. This growing interest combined with his earlier philological studies was reflected in the choice of his Dissertation in 1818 which bore the title De philosophiae platonicae novae origine.

The Dissertation also revealed the young Fichte's preoccupation, with mystical and theosophical problems and in general with what he

considered to be the practical and human issues of ethics and religion as opposed to abstract, theoretical philosophical positions. His studies in preparation for his "Promotion" in 1818 in so far as they touched on contemporary thought leaned heavily on Leibniz, Kant and Schelling as well as on the later Wissenschaftslehre of his father. It is supposed that he attended lectures given by Schleiermacher and by Krause.²

Following his "Promotion" Fichte became a lecturer in the Philosophical Faculty at Berlin. The next few years were difficult. His mother died in 1819. The conservative Prussian Government held the memory of his father in hostile regard for the alleged demagoguery of his opinions and, suspecting the son of a similar outlook, made life so unpleasant for him that he was obliged to leave Berlin in 1822. For the next four years Fichte taught school in Saarbrücken and wrote there his first substantial philosophical work. Then, weary of the tedium of small town life, he moved to Düsseldorf to take up a similar post there.

The next ten years in Düsseldorf were to be a very productive and fruitful period for Fichte. The appearance of his Beiträge zur Charakteristik der neueren Philosophie in its first edition in 1829 stimulated a lively correspondence with Weisse who was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Leipzig. This marked the beginning of a close friendship and working relationship between the two men which ended only with the death of Weisse in 1864. Fichte was to be greatly influenced by the ideas of Weisse and particularly by his

criticism of Hegel's system. In establishing the Zeitschrift fuer Philosophie und spekulative Theologie in 1837 and in publishing and editing it over the next ten years he depended primarily on the collaboration of Weisse. The Zeitschrift was an interesting early example of ecumenicism in action, for the Catholic theologian, Guenther, was also an important early collaborator in the enterprise. The Zeitschrift endeavoured to serve and to present on a proper philosophical basis the interests of Christian speculation, particularly in relation to contemporary developments in anthropology and natural philosophy. On the same basis, it dealt with those questions of dogmatics and practical theology which deeply concerned both the Protestant and Catholic Churches of Germany.

In recognition of his extraordinary philosophical output Fichte received an appointment as Extraordinarius at the University of Bonn in 1836. He then commenced in Bonn a similarly remarkable and successful lecturing and writing activity. The subjects of his lectures covered a wide field, including a general history of philosophy, a survey of philosophical systems from Kant through Herbart and Hegel, philosophy of religion, psychology, pedagogy and anthropology. In 1842 Fichte was invited to take up an appointment at the University of Tuebingen and over the next twenty years in this post he fully maintained the brisk pace of his written output. His many-sided talents and concerns were to be seen in the organization of an all German conference on Philosophy at Gotha in 1847 and in his close interest in political developments, notably the events of 1848. In

a manner reminiscent of his father's sense of patriotic duty he submitted a brief of constitutional proposals to the first German national conference in Frankfurt in 1848. The leading ideas of his submission featured a Volksmonarchie which, as a central authority, would be balanced by a standing Parliament and a People's Assembly.

In 1862 Fichte, who had already lost two of his three sons, was thrown into a deep depression by the death of his wife. This affliction and ailing health caused him to take his retirement in the following year. His literary productivity was not, however, much reduced and his remaining years, spent in Stuttgart with his third son, until his death in 1879 saw the writing and publication of a number of important works.

CHAPTER 3

THE SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF FICHTE'S PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

Fichte's first published philosophical work, Saetze zur Vorschule der Theologie, appeared in 1826. It presented a preview of the position which was to be the basis of his later Spekulative Theologie. He sent copies to Schelling and Hegel. An encouraging response came from Schelling but none at all from Hegel. In fact Hegel could scarcely have been expected to look benevolently on the work. For it was the opening salvo in Fichte's campaign against the perceived implications of pantheism in Hegel's system. It conveyed emphatically the need to incorporate in philosophy the idea of a personal God and defended the freedom of the individual in the face of the overwhelmingly deterministic character of the Hegelian dialectic and its absorption of the finite in the Absolute.¹

Concurrently Weisse was articulating similar views in reaction to the errors and deficiencies he perceived in Hegel's system. A community of interest thus opened up from which Fichte clearly benefited. In this connection Weisse's attack on the formalism of Hegel's system was probably particularly thought-provoking. In Weisse's views, the Hegelian concept failed to capture the richness and immense variety of actuality and the Logic had omitted to show how time and space, applied to actuality. Moreover the Hegelian Notion stopped short of the upper reaches of reality. Through these open doors, therefore,

there was room for freedom to reenter the picture. For both Weisse and Fichte, the formalism of the Hegelian Logic indicated a failure to keep concepts fully related to experience. Thus the method had to be supplemented by a science of experience of a most real sort and, particularly at the upper reaches, by a different perception of reality, a perception based on a different method.²

Progress towards meeting these requirements began with what Fichte describes as a turning point in philosophy. The point involved a significant difference with Hegel over the answer to the question with what must philosophy begin. Following the emphasis attached by Weisse to the element of concrete experience Fichte insists that the starting point must be in the given. The dead and empty character of Hegel's Sein could not meet this requirement because it presupposed thought and thought arises in the human consciousness or ego. It is therefore from consciousness as uniquely the precisely certain and objective beginning that philosophy must launch its speculative pursuit of the Absolute and, as self-consciousness, it becomes the middle and the end also of philosophy. In this interpretation the Absolute is to be understood, not as dead substance, but as creating consciousness. Consciousness contains the Idea of the thing as both subject and object and a permanent harmony prevails between it and the world.³

Fichte's reflections on the role of consciousness are developed at some length in his Ueber Gegensatz, Wendepunkt und Ziel heutiger Philosophie which was published in 1832. This work was apparently

conceived as the companion and preceding part of Volume One of the Grundzuege. The latter, entitled Das Erkennen als Selbsterkennen (Erkenntnislehre) shows how consciousness raises itself from the stage of perception to that of knowledge. It then emerges that knowledge must go beyond self-knowledge to knowledge of Being which is treated in Volume Two, entitled Die Ontologie. Knowledge of Being leads to knowledge of God which then becomes a matter of speculative intuitive knowledge relying on the revelation of God in the individual consciousness. Fichte's investigation of the Idea of God in its main aspects is set out in Volume Three, entitled Die spekulative Theologie oder allgemeine Religionslehre. The significant elements of these three volumes are set out below.

A. Die Erkenntnislehre

Fichte defines knowledge simply as a product of thought and intuition. Intuition is always connected with experience, that is, it is always in time and space and is never empty in the sense that Fichte attributes to Kant's view of time and space as the forms of intuition. Intuition is always the first source of reality for consciousness and the basis of all knowledge. Both intuition and thought, if knowledge is to result, must deal with specific and definite content (Grundzuege I, pp. 205-07).

With similar conciseness, Fichte states that all consciousness is thought in more or less developed state. In its immediate activity consciousness strives to grasp and bring together in the finite particular the fleeting and the changing in the given. Thereafter

at its various levels of development it seeks to transform the finite particular into the universal through the application of the categories and the concepts. The significance of the categories, according to Fichte, lies in their functioning as universal forms or laws of the intuiting and thinking consciousness. As consciousness develops as thought it produces naturally out of its activity the categories in their correct and appropriate ordering (pp. 87, 88, 182-83). The Erkenntnislehre relates the history of this development of the ego, as consciousness, from its lowest level in the immediately given to the level of speculative thought or philosophy. This process finds its ground within consciousness itself. The history covers four stages which Fichte designates as epochs and each stage in turn is marked in similarly ascending fashion by three subdivisions or levels.

In the first epoch the ego which, as Fichte says, can only have actuality in its temporal and spatial embodiment operates immediately as sensibility in the first subdivision. The immediately given comprises sensations such as cold, heat, sweetness, sourness, blueness, etc. The ego in the second subdivision develops awareness and, as intuition, becomes active. It reacts to the given in a creative manner and in so reacting takes the form of will or drive (Trieb) to master and appropriate what is foreign to it. The creative activity, or reactivity, of the ego moves in two directions: (1) the separating out and the determining of the sensations, and (2) the separating out of the sensations from the ego itself. From the first direction arises consciousness and from the second, self-consciousness. We are

still in the sphere of consciousness but the ego, if it has not yet learned to think, can distinguish the outer from the inner sensations and by joining and ordering the former can set them over against itself (pp. 44, 45). In accomplishing this activity, the ego passes over to the third level in which it begins to recognize things and to identify them, that is, to name them. Here the ego must not only distinguish what is given to it in sensibility; it must in addition identify perceptions derived from sensibility with general representations in which a variety of perceptions can be united or with an individual representation in which a particular perception is specified. Thus ends this first epoch of perceiving consciousness in which the ego expresses itself as absolute activity without being conscious of the activity itself (p. 51).

In the second epoch the ego brings into play those elements which enable it to become fully representing. The awakened spirit, arising in the perceiving consciousness, seeks to become independent and to retain the outside world in its conscious possession. It is the memory already present in perception which now emerges to make this possible (p. 52). Memory is the conscious renewing of the activity of consciousness, that is, of what it has derived from the given, namely its intuitions. Thus memory reproduces this self-activity, the intuitions which consciousness has acquired and appropriated. But the results are no longer intuitions; they must now be described as representations and as such they are the products of the representing faculty within consciousness. It is at this point that the intuition

of the ego itself assumes importance. In bringing together past and present intuitions by, for example, comparing them with one another, consciousness sets them over against itself as a common object or representation. The ego thereby sets itself off as the common subject and, according to Fichte, it is only by presupposing the intuition of itself as the common subject that consciousness can accomplish its representing activity (p. 57).

The complete explanation of the formation of representations in consciousness remains to be supplemented by the exposition continued in the second and third levels of this epoch. Memory allows us to reach the level where representations can be freely formed and this is achieved through the productive imagination which is presupposed by memory. With the productive imagination joined to memory in support of a freely operating, representing faculty the consciousness has now developed to the point where the soul, now become self-conscious, can best be determined as the element within the ego which exercises this faculty. Indeed, at this stage the soul can be designated as absolute faculty of representation (p. 65).

In its operation the power of imagination demonstrates capacities for abstraction (from which the logical concept arises), for analysis (which is based on the principle of reflection), for synthesis (indicating the principle of thought) and for creative phantasy. The free representing activity which results from these capacities has its inner expression in consciousness but there is also a drive for outer expression which is presented in art and in speech. The development

of speech indeed reflects the development of consciousness. For speech is applied thought, the presentations of the categories (the forms of thought) in their varied ways and contexts (pp. 68-75).

On the presuppositions established in the preceding epoch, that is, the freely operating faculty of representing and its expression in speech, the third epoch presents the thinking ego and traces the development of thought as a dynamic process in the way indicated by Hegel in the Subjective Logic Division of his Science of Logic. The functions of analysing and synthesizing first revealed in the performance of the productive imagination become fully effective in the working out of the concept, the judgement and the syllogism which designate the three successive levels of this epoch.

When thinking completes its development it shows itself in its most general meaning to be the stripping off of the finite and the contingent in the given intuitions in order that what is permanent in these intuitions can be known. The process leads through the formation of concepts, from the determined or specific to the abstract universal. At this ultimate or primal level the concept stands in opposition to the permanent because it is an abstract, unreal, simple thought. Thinking must then fill in the void by resorting to the judgement and the syllogism which take the empty universality of the concept to an inner determinateness, to concrete universality, conferring life on it as the Idea. Judgements which involve a particularizing of the universal are of four groups: immediacy, combination,

universality and foundation or substantiation and they arise out of the concept itself as part of the concept's continuing determination of itself. The syllogism then develops the resulting situation back to the origin of the universal in its self-formation in the particular. The particularized or concrete universal is the real and the particular is no more and no less than the self-realization of the universal.

The various forms and divisions of the judgement and syllogism constitute for Fichte principles or universal forms for achieving a complete empirical investigation and they provide the basis for the deduction of the categories as the culminating feature of the third epoch. Underlying all intuitions and thought are three primal categories from which all other categories, including the abstract forms of time and space, are derived. These are Being (Sein oder Ist), Something (Bestimmt-Sein) and Pure Synthesis (Sichverhalten der Bezogenheit).

According to Fichte the categories have a twofold significance. In the first place, as mentioned above, they are universal forms or laws of the intuiting and thinking consciousness. Secondly, they are fundamental determinations not only of the subjectivity of Being but also of the objectivity of Being. The exposition has so far served to establish their subjective validity. The substantiation of the objectivity remains a task to be tackled in the Ontologie (p. 182).

With the third epoch culminating in the development of consciousness to thought the ego is now ready to proceed to knowledge,

that is, to the sphere of philosophy which in turn becomes théosophy. In this respect the fourth epoch, in Fichte's treatment, provides a condensed history of modern philosophy. As such its three successive divisions cover respectively empirical, reflective and speculative knowledge. Another way of describing his treatment, bearing in mind the character of the Erkenntnislehre as a kind of history of consciousness, would be, as Fichte himself states, to show how in the development of consciousness the relations of subject and object are modified (p. 262).

It has already been noted that Fichte defines knowledge as a product of thought and ~~of~~ intuition derived from experience and in his introductory comments to the fourth epoch he once more emphasizes the connection. In the comprehension of reality, thought and intuition must complement each other and it is on this basis that Fichte sees the solution to the Kantian problem of the unknowability of the thing-in-itself. On the same basis, the gap between God and the finite world which pushes thought to speculation must be overcome. (pp. 295, 311).

The philosophy of experience (die Erfahrungsphilosophie) could not resolve the problem because of its one-sided emphasis on the derivation of its concepts and conclusions from intuition. Its a posteriori approach and the method of induction and analogy on which it relied could not give certainty and left the thing-in-itself as an assumed empty abstraction. The reflective stage of philosophy which followed prepared the way for speculative philosophy

by asserting the consciousness's uncertainty of itself and the validity of thought thinking itself. But this emphasis on the subject, as consciousness, and on the a priori basis of knowledge which went with it was equally unsatisfactory in its oneness and Humean scepticism exposed its vulnerability. Kant's insight that universality and necessity are not abstracted from experience but are to be found as a priori truths in consciousness refuted the Humean attack on the a priori but the object remained independent of the Kantian forms and the thing-in-itself for Kant had to remain unknowable. In fact, although he had designated the transcendental unity of apperception as the principle of the deduction of the categories, Kant, by simply taking over the categories from the traditional logic, missed the possibility of a solution lying in consciousness which this principle offered (pp. 235-265).

At the next stage of the reflective philosophy, that of the Idealismus der Reflektion, represented by J.G. Fichte, the focus shifts to consciousness as the source of the division between subject and object. The ego posits its own other, that is, its own representation or image, and objectivity as such is cancelled. The result is that consciousness cannot go beyond itself to the object and is simply abstract knowledge of itself. But at the culmination of the reflective philosophy the turning point is reached beyond which is to be achieved the speculative philosophy. Fichte indicates that his father managed to break out of the confines of the reflective philosophy when he claimed that God could be found

in the depths of the "verlorenen" consciousness (p. 278). God, as the Absolute, indicates the path which the speculative philosophy takes, that is, through the mystical (Vernunftanschauung) approach of Jacobi, the speculative thought of Schelling and Hegel, to, finally, the speculative intuitive knowledge of Fichte.

In the speculative intuitive philosophy consciousness is to be seen as derived, as the image and revelation of an unconditioned being. The individual ego remains of primary importance. The ego through its existence and its essence is a witness of the Being of the Absolute. Thus the Absolute is the unique content of consciousness. In this connection Fichte notes that he has yet to justify the substitution of the term God for that of the Absolute (pp. 281-84). God is nevertheless the principle or ground which enables us to see the universal in the individual (as achieved by the thinking ego in the third epoch) and to bridge the infinite chasm between the Ideas and experience, including the gap in our knowledge of things-in-themselves (p. 213). Intuition is, it seems, restored to its Kantian indispensability for knowledge because it is through the immediacy of intuition in consciousness that the revelation of God is obtained.

B. Die Ontologie

In the Erkenntnislehre the Absolute emerges as the infinite self-actualizing and all-mediating principle present in everything. It is not, therefore, a colourless, empty, formal, abstract concept. Consciousness knows itself as the Nicht-Absolute but, at the same

time, has become aware of the Absolute present in itself, working within itself and not something purely external to it. In the concept of the Absolute is the correct concept of actuality, of the infinite positive. Thought, impelled by the unreality of the limitations imposed by what is contingent and of the contradiction suggested by the separation of form from content, feels the need to go beyond to an understanding of the Absolute. The task of the Ontologie is thus to give a more profound exposition of the Absolute (Grundzuege II, pp. 4-8).

In the introduction to the Ontologie Fichte notes that he has taken into consideration particularly the metaphysical principles of Herbart. Also he suggests that this part of his system could be regarded as the consistent mediation and reconciliation of the Realprincip in Schelling with the Formalprincip in Hegel (p. 16). Some clarification of these statements will be useful in placing his approach to the Ontologie and the overall direction of his thought in perspective.

Fichte's first recorded comments on Herbart's thought in Ueber Gegensatz reflected great admiration for Herbart's extraordinary speculative talent. In general, however, the comments offered strong criticism of Herbart's main ideas and of Herbart's contemptuous dismissal of the significance of all previous and of most of contemporary philosophizing. Shortly thereafter, as Fichte notes in an article in his Zeitschrift (Volume XIV, p. 120), he came to recognize the "great metaphysical significance" of Herbart's

Monadenlehre and to see that this doctrine could allow him to complete an unfinished direction of Leibnizian thought; and to redress the one-sidedness of Hegel's. Accordingly the inspiration thus derived from Herbart becomes, as he indicates in the introduction to it, an important element in the shaping of the Ontologie.

Undoubtedly, as against the perception of contradiction in the real which he attributes to Hegel, Fichte could appreciate Herbart's claim that the problem was really one of clarification of our concepts. Derived from this process, Herbart's postulation of a plurality of simple, unextended and unchanging entities as the ultimately real filled for Fichte a speculative vacuum. Having, like the Leibnizian monad, a purely metaphysical quality but, unlike that monad, being subject to reciprocal influence in an infinity of relationships, these entities could be described as forming a universe of qualitative atomism. This interpretation would then constitute the necessary refutation of the attempts of contemporary physics and scientific positivism to portray reality as a universe of quantitative atoms and molecules subject to the laws of mechanism.⁴

But even those ideas of Herbart which seemed initially acceptable presented awkward implications. As E.v. Hartmann has noted, the consistent development of Herbart's monadic pluralism leads to atheistic pluralism and, if it is taken as Herbart's last word, then a God must be denied.⁵ For Fichte's purpose, in this his system building period, a theory of monads required a concept of absolute unity which he had himself to develop in his formulation of a

universe of monads. Another difficulty with the Herbartian approach, inevitably arising from the metaphysical character of his monads, is the purely phenomenal or illusory nature Herbart ascribes to spatial relations between the monads. Fichte avoids this difficulty, or thinks he does, by asserting, as will be seen below, that the monad soul is specified in time and space when it is joined to body.

With respect to his suggestion that the Ontologie could be regarded as the reconciliation of Schelling's Realprincip with Hegel's Formalprincip, Fichte's concern has its relevance to the view, which he shared with Weisse, on the limitation which must apply to the scope of the Hegelian dialectic particularly its application to the Absolute. The soul of the negative dialectic was contradiction and Hegel had been mistaken to base his whole system on it (Grundzuege II, p. 29). Both Fichte and Weisse were influenced by Schelling's advocacy of a positive philosophy which Schelling in some of his later writings sought to achieve. For Fichte this Schellingian position meant a recognition of the Offenbarungsreligion and a turning away from conceptual philosophy. Fichte had begun to describe his own philosophy as that of Spekulative Theismus and professed himself to be in possession of the positive system that Schelling advocated. In the outline of such a system the basis would consist of two parts: the first part would establish the necessity of the identity of thought and being; the second part would develop the a priori forms or categories of reality and both parts would result in what Schelling described as the negative

Absolute. However, for Fichte, they would, as actually accomplished in the Erkenntnislehre and the Ontologie, simply be introductory disciplines to the third part. This latter part would constitute the real or positive philosophy and would comprehend God and nature. The transition to the positive philosophy would emerge from the second part of the system.⁶

If Schelling's influence was so strong in the general direction just mentioned it nevertheless remains the case that the model for Fichte's development of the Ontologie is primarily that of Hegel's system. Some of the more significant features of the Ontologie as it unfolds, particularly for their relevance to Fichte's most important ideas, will be mentioned below. There are some more general points of difference in approach between Fichte and Hegel which should perhaps first be looked at.

The content of the Ontologie, as Fichte notes, is only the consciousness of Form, that is, it constitutes a Formwissenschaft, and, as such, is confined to an examination of the forms of actuality and their substantiation quite separately from every determinateness and every content to which they might be relevant. Thus the forms have no Sein an sich; they are simply the constitutive principles of actuality. This view marks what Fichte considers to be a fundamental difference between himself and Hegel not only in regard to his own view of the Formwissenschaft as a prescience but also in the relation of form and content. For Hegel the dialectical unfolding of the concept produces actuality itself. Form produces its content

out of itself and goes over into content. In this way is established their identity. Hegel's Ontology contains its own content and his presupposition is the Absolute Spirit, God Himself. For Fichte, as in Kant, the content comes from an external given. Without content form cannot be independent and therefore a Formwissenschaft has to be supplemented and completed by a Gehaltwissenschaft, that is, by a Realphilosophie. Thus knowledge of the Absolute is the presupposition of the Ontologie, and after the task of the Ontologie has been completed this knowledge remains to be obtained in the revelation of God in intuition.⁷

It may appear that the fundamental difference to which Fichte refers arises from his own misunderstanding of Hegel's position. For in the totality of actuality their positions on the relation of form and content seem to be indistinguishable. Perhaps Hegel would have argued that an isolated consideration of form such as Fichte attempts in his Formwissenschaft is bound to lead to such a misunderstanding. Fichte himself seems to give some credence to such an outcome when he states in an article in his Zeitschrift that Hegel is partially right in not making a distinction between the Realprincip and the Formalprincip. The former, he admits, can only be grasped through the latter.⁸ Yet, for Fichte the preservation of the distinction is quite important. For he agrees with Weisse that the excessive weight attached to the Formalprincip gives the Hegelian doctrine a nihilistic and deterministic character which excludes the development of a positive philosophy of the real (pp. 244-49).

The Ontologie is divided into two main parts which generally correspond to the similarly designated part of Hegel's Logic. The first part is the doctrine of Being, the sphere of the simple or relationless concepts; the second part presents the doctrine of Essence, the sphere of the concepts of relation. Each part is characterized by the Hegelian triadic articulation so that an upward progression takes place from the most abstract level of Being which with increasing concreteness at successively higher levels of synthesis culminates in the realm of the Ideas (Ideenlehre). The Ideenlehre, according to the program Fichte has set himself, is to bring together the categories of the two parts of the Ontologie which then lose their onesidedness through "die positive der Ergänzung." In contrast to the Ontologie as a purely Formwissen-schaft, the Ideenlehre embraces the real and "hier wird Gott erkannt als selbst ein realer, zeiterfuellender (p. 33)." At its highest point, the Absolute Idea, which is God as Absolute Personality, the Ideenlehre becomes a speculative theology. On this approach Fichte's conception of the Idea assumes an Hegelian objectivity. It is derived from the given but the given includes the supersensible as well as the sensible elements of experience and this enlarged view of experience clearly distinguishes his conception from the Kantian approach. When, however, the Spekulative Theologie is written Fichte no longer considers that the Erkenntnislehre is capable of reaching the concept of the Absolute. He could have recast his Ideenlehre in a Kantian direction. He does not do so

and, as will be seen, in the Spekulative Theologie he proceeds to the Idea on an inductive basis. But the result is a kind of vacuum of objectivity which Fichte will seek to fill through the empirical inquiries of his later work.

In organizational arrangement the Ontologie is divided in each of its two parts into three epochs. Under the doctrine of Being the categories treated are: Primal, Quantity and Quality. Under the doctrine of Essence the categories treated are: Ground and Consequence, Actuality and Substantiality. Within each epoch there is also a breakdown into three levels of progression. The system of categories as thus presented is simply in its inner moments the Ideas broken down into their constituent elements (p. 28). Contradiction, or more exactly, the self-negation of the concept arising from the unstable and self-suspending nature of its determinations, is the moving force of the system and constitutes the essence of the dialectic method. This method, Fichte acknowledges, is the great merit of the Hegelian Logic and Hegel's mistake in basing his whole system on the negative dialectic does not, in his view, in any way diminish the greatness of this discovery (p. 29).

The Doctrine of Being

The primal categories of the first epoch are so called because at this ultimate level of abstractness they are not yet the forms that determine actuality; rather they are the forms of these forms. Being, recalling, as Hermann notes, the terminology of J.G. Fichte,

is simply posited and, in a process which provides the model for the complete development of the system of the categories, Being (Sein) moves by self-negation through the second primal category, Something (Etwas), to the epoch's third primal category, Synthesis (Bezogenheit or Dies zum Andern). The three primal categories of Sein, Etwas, and Bezogenheit form the original triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis and contain or envelop, notably in the synthesis, the complete truth which then remains to be unfolded in increasing concreteness at succeeding levels of synthesis until it is completely revealed in the highest synthesis. The primal category of Synthesis is relation-establishing in its formulation of a "this" over against "another," and it effects thereby the transition to the completely new sphere of thought relations articulated in the second epoch (pp. 71-73).

In general all the remaining categories, Fichte asserts, can be seen in their further development as simply special modifications of the primal category of synthesis (p. 69). The ultimate step of concretisation is achieved in the category of Wechselwirkung. The decisive role which Hegel gives to contradiction is then in Fichte's system seen to be replaced by this last category and its synthesizing function. This interpretation conjoined with Fichte's interpretation of the concept of Becoming (Werden) is related to Fichte's general disagreement with Hegel on the significance of the role of contradiction. It can only have logical significance and not the real significance which he considers Hegel attaches to it. This

point of difference becomes quite important for the development of Fichte's position on individuality. Thus, "Nicht das Sein des Endlichen besteht in Widerspruche ... sondern das Denken des Endlichen in seiner Unwahrheit oder als fuer sich Seiendes erzeugt denselben" (p. 359):

Fichte's attack on Hegel's category of Becoming is reflected in his omission of it from the first epoch and his justification conforms to the above-mentioned position. Becoming is much too concrete a category to find a place at this most abstract level of abstraction (p. 65). It emerges at the level of concretisation of Finitude (Endlichkeit) and is opposed to that concept. Thus Becoming is not, as Hegel believes, the unity of Being and Nothing but rather "das weit ausgebildeterere Gedankenverhaeltnis des Uebergehens desselbigen in sein Anderes, waehrend es daher, einerseits sich veraendernd, andererseits sich gleich bleibt. Was da wird, muss eben desshalb in anderer Beziehung als nicht werdend, sondern unveraenderlich seiend gedacht werden" (pp. 160-61).

The order of the second and third epochs, the categories of Quantity and Quality respectively, in their reversal of the sequence followed in Hegel's Logic, constitutes in Fichte's view, a fundamental difference in their system (pp. 80, 81). Fichte's ordering corresponds to that of Kant's Table of Categories but his argumentation is not directly related to this precedent. For Fichte, what follows in the dialectical process must always be the truth and the surmounting of the contradiction of the preceding moments

of the process (pp. 125-26). In this sense the Qualitative emerges as the difference between the moments of the Quantitative arising from its subjection to limitation and demarcation. The significant, however, in the relation of Quantity to Quality is its relevance to time and space on the one hand and to the real on the other, more generally, the relation of the form to the real. In this respect all the preceding exposition of his system indicates "dass Qualitaet oder Inhalt sich nur in bestimmter Quantitaet, in specifischem Maasse quantitativer Intensitaet und Extension darstellen oder wirklich sein koennte; heisst, realphilosophisch ausgedrueckt; dass alles Wirkliche oder Reale nur als ein Zeit-raeumliches zu denken, und zwar solchergestalt, dass es nicht etwa erst eintritt in Zeit und Raum, wie in besondere Formen, als ob das Reale selbst Etwas waere ausser seiner zeit-raeumlichen Verwirklichung, oder die Zeitraeumlichkeit Etwas ohne jenes ... Was naemlich ontologisch Quantitaet, bedeutet realphilosophisch Zeit und Raum" (p. 126). On this approach then quality presupposes quantity; quantity presupposes time and space, and the forms of time and space are not, as in Kant, the empty forms of intuition but rather are both "mit der Wirklichkeit des Realen schlechthin identisch" (p. 127). As Hildegard Hermann points out, Fichte's views on time and space recall those of Leibniz with the difference that Leibniz restricts the application of time and space to the phenomenal world.⁹

There remains to be mentioned under the doctrine of Being Fichte's unique emphasis on the finite thing which sets him, in his own view, in direct opposition to Hegel and which is of great

importance for his philosophical position and objective. The difference with Hegel centres on the concept of Infinity (Unendlichkeit). Hegel's conception of the true Infinity in its characterization of the Absolute leaves the finite thing negated and apparently submerged or completely overcome. For Fichte the Absolute is not only as "innere Unendlichkeit" negation of the finite but also "das positive Setzen desselben, und zwar dergestalt, dass mit seinem Setzen auch sein Begraenzen und Bestimmen identisch ist, indem in der Graenze des Endlichen seine Negation liegt." Thus there dwells in everything finite as determinate through the Absolute "ein unendlich sich Behauptendes, (eine absolute Urqualitaet oder Urrealitaet) aus dem Absoluten bei ...". (pp. 188-89). Thus also is reached the concept of the true or positive "Endlichkeit." It carries within itself at the same time the moment of "Unendlichkeit" and in this true unity of both, as against Hegel's purely formal conception of their dialectical opposition, is the "Unendliche das Reale, allerfuellend Gegenwaertige im Endlichen" (p. 193).

Fichte frequently reproaches Hegel for arriving at results which only give a one-sided account of the truth and that in the negative sense. Hegel, in his view, failed to see that the principle of negation, the negation of the negation, leads on to the positive principle of self-affirmation which, in its individual manifestations, diverges decisively from the Hegelian doctrine. This new principle, found in the concept of the Absolute, is the

principle of the infinite primal positions (Urpositionen). Some idea of the principle or, at least, of its emergence in Fichte's system may have been grasped from the above comments. The primal positions express themselves as primal qualities (Urqualitaeten) or primal realities (Urrealitaeten) in the finite. The significance of the primal positions therefore for Fichte's doctrine of Individuality (Individualitaetslehre) can perhaps best be seen in a very brief summary of his exposition of the concept of "innere Unendlichkeit" (p. 185). In this concept everything stands in connection with everything. The infinite other is present in every finite. The finite can only be thought of as seized in the infinite and from such a perspective offers the first actual account of the Absolute operating within every finite (or individual) as the self-asserting or self-actualizing character of the finite. This character or determinateness arises from the bestowal on the finite of primal positions or primal realities from their source in the Absolute. The primal positions allow the truly infinite to be comprehended at the same time as truly finite and in this linkage with the finite thing the primal positions, as the ways in which the Absolute expresses itself, reveal the Absolute to have a monadic pluralistic character. As Fichte's own comments indicate, this interpretation points to the exceptional influence of Leibniz and Herbart on this aspect of his thought (pp. 182-85).

The Doctrine of Essence

As the second part of the Ontologie the doctrine of Essence treats of the articulation of the conceptual relations of the Absolute to real being and accomplishes this process in three epochs which respectively examine the categories of Ground and Consequence, Actuality and Substantiality. The first epoch places the emphasis on the relation as such rather than on the members of the relation. The second and third epochs present a generally Hegelian elaboration of the Kantian categories of modality and relations. In an introductory sentence, notable for its uncharacteristic succinctness, Fichte sums up the results of his inquiry as follows: "Das Wesen hat, um Wesen sein zu koennen, schlechthin ~~urspruenglich~~ ^{urspruenglich} sein Anderes in sich; es vollzieht sich (selbstverwirklichend) zum Gegensatze seiner selbst, theilt sich in eine Grundzweiheit, welche doch Einheit ist" (p. 209). Essence as so defined brings out, as is also the case with Hegel, the importance of the element of reflective thought.

As developed in the Ontologie, however, the true distinguishing mark of Essence in its reflective aspect is the concept of Wechselwirkung rather than that of the Hegelian Widerspruch. This difference of interpretation is illustrated in the treatment of the relation of form to content in the first epoch, for the emphasis is on their interaction in an inseparable relation. The difference is reflected in a highly subtle but important distinction in the nature of their unity which has already been referred to above.¹⁰ As noted there the

distinction serves the purpose of opposing the threat to a positive philosophy of freedom which Fichte and Weisse saw in the formalism of the Hegelian doctrine. According to the Hegelian explanation form produces content out of itself, that is, through contradiction one passes over into the other and from what were opposed an identity is produced. In Fichte form is the specific or quantitative expression of content; they are not only inseparable but are also internally linked, essentially thereby one and the same in an interacting relation (Wechselwirkung) which receives expression in all the ascending forms of the whole scope of Essence. From this perspective this interacting relation can then be seen to take on the status of a primal relation.

As so expounded Wechselwirkung becomes for Fichte one of the most comprehensive relations of the whole Ontologie and reveals its unique importance for its role in grounding his Individualitaetslehre "indem sich daran die beiden unabtrennlichen Seiten des goettlich wie des kreaturlich Wirklichen gefunden haben: kein eigentuemlicher Gehalt, ohne seine ihm ebenso eigentuemliche Formgestaltung, deren unabtrennlich Einheit das Prinzip des Individuellen, als alles Wirklichen, ausmacht" (pp., 243-44). Thus the primal relation of Wechselwirkung grounds the individual character of everything actual, and form and content can only be thought of as one and the same in so far as this relation links them together in their indissoluble correlation with an individual entity.¹¹

As noted above, form for Fichte is the specific expression of content. The form remains abstract and unreal when it is not

united with its content. Specification occurs in time and place, that is, it is a determinate implementing of time and space. As such time and space are not categories but rather specifications of the categories and only as so specified can Essence as form be thought as actual. Similarly content, in order to be actual, posits time and space as specifications. Content in-itself, according to Fichte, nevertheless remains free and independent of the spatial and the temporal (pp. 126, 255, 259, 262). Thus here again is to be noted a coincidence of Fichte's views on time and space with those of Leibniz, specifically in the application of time and space to the monads' perceptions of the phenomenal world while the monads themselves as metaphysical entities are independent of time and space.

The peculiar relation of Fichte to Hegel and thereby of the sense of Fichte's Individualitaetslehre clearly appears in the transition to the second epoch of Actuality, and in his criticism of Hegel Fichte bases himself on what he conceives to be two unestablished Hegelian presuppositions: those of the identity of form and content, as noted above, and also the identity of the method and the content in his system. For Fichte Hegel's transition from the Begriff to the Objektivitaet or the actuality of nature is unjustified because there can be no transition to the actual as such within the Ontologie since the latter is merely dealing with the forms of actuality. Hildegard Hermann attributes this criticism to a misreading of Hegel's utilization of the dialectical process and she suggests that Fichte's concern can be related to his different interpretation of the actual.¹²

For Hegel the actual is Spirit and is only to be found in the form of a process of development of absolute Spirit. Within the process Spirit goes out of itself at the level represented by the descent into nature and only comes back to itself at a later stage where nature reaches the human level. One can speak therefore of actual being in nature in a dialectical sense only and, against the actuality of Spirit, nature is actually unreal or contingent.

For Fichte the ultimate criterion of actuality is its individual character. From this point of view the actual is the whole of nature in all its individual being and it is also "uebernaturliche" ground of this nature, that is, the divine primal ground of all Being in general. There therefore exists a radical contrast between the actuality of nature and the actuality of God, a contrast which must be preserved and overcome in a way consistent with Fichte's crusade against pantheism. This is achieved by the correlative idea of God as both immanent and transcendent, both aspects necessarily connected in a relation which Fichte designates as a primal one (Urverhaeltnis). The ambiguous division into two aspects of actuality, the one that of the firm category of ongoing actuality and the other that of the absolute actuality which is inaccessible to the category, precludes Fichte from accepting the validity of the transition to nature or Objektivitaet in Hegel's Logic.

Similarly Fichte cannot follow Hegel in the treatment which Hegel gives to the Absolute itself in the Logic; for the Absolute, as Absolute, goes beyond the competence of the Ontologie and its

methodology while for Hegel the Absolute, as Absolute, is only a determination of the concept of reality as Spirit in all the fullness and concreteness of that concept. In other words for Hegel "the dialectic process professes to do more than merely describe the stages by which we mount to the Absolute Idea - it also describes the nature of that Idea itself."¹³ For Fichte, however, the dialectic is inadequate to the task of providing access to the Absolute Idea. At this stage it must be replaced by the positive method of his spekulative-anschauenden Erkennen.

Fichte's treatment of the category of Actuality in this second epoch shows the strong influence of his friend Weisse, notably in the resistance to the determinism of the Hegelian system and the acceptance of Weisse's position on freedom, a position which is essential to Fichte's own concept of a freely-creating personal God who reveals Himself in the self-actualizing individual. For Weisse the actual is more than the concept and the thing-in-itself goes beyond it into the irrational Etwas. This, however, leaves open the possibility of freedom and the abundance of possibilities. Thus nature and Spirit do not belong to the realm of necessity but rather to the realm of freedom which is not accessible to the Logic and which therefore calls for a different method of comprehension.¹⁴ Similarly in Fichte's exposition necessity is relegated to an appropriately limited role. The sphere of necessity is the system of categories. But, consistently with the relation between form and content which he has treated earlier, form is simply the self-

shaping expression of its content and "dies Concrete aber sich unendlich in ihr specificirt, d.h. die Moeglichkeit des Andersseins als Moment in sich traegt, damit selbst in den Begriff der realen Moeglichkeit, des unendlichen Andersseinkommens eingeht. Es eroeffnet sich damit eine Sphaere positiver Freiheit innerhalb der Form-Nothwendigkeit fuer Gott wie fuer die Kreatur, wo das Princip der Entscheidung ueber jene gleichgueltige Moeglichkeit indess nicht in einem ontologisch Nothwendigen, ueberhaupt nicht mehr im Bereich der Ontologie gesucht werden kann" (p. 421). Thus in no sense can necessity be regarded as an ultimate principle. Its sphere is found within the shaping and limiting character of form which the Absolute, as self-determining and unceasingly individualizing itself, constructs. The sphere of positive freedom is a concept to which Fichte attaches importance for its relevance to the concept of creation in the Spekulative Theologie.

If Fichte has drawn strongly on Weisse in the second epoch he seems to rely no less strongly on Leibniz in dealing with the categories of Substantiality in the third epoch. At the first level Substance is to be understood as Monas which produces its Accidents out of itself and, in this more precise expression, shows that the true infinite possesses at the same time the character of the true finite. The accidents or monads have their true individual status: every monad carries its representation of the infinite all but is not, as in Leibniz, a closed world (p. 406). The double relation of the monads to another and of the monads to the Monas finds its

appropriate expression only when the concept of unity which underlies the whole of the third epoch becomes the category of Wechselwirkung at the third and final level of the epoch. In turn Wechselwirkung articulates itself into the concepts of Organism, Soul and Spirit. These three concepts in which the scope of the Ontologie culminates are described as Vorbilder des Realen. For they absorb and complete all the preceding series of categories and are at the same time already Ideas which must be filled out and obtain their significance in the Ideenlehre. From them is derived the determination of the concept of the Absolute as absolute, personal, thinking and willing Spirit. They provide therefore the transition to the Spekulative Theologie (pp. 470-71).

Organism is to be understood as system and totality. At the same time it has actuality only as individual organism. It has a monadic character with the distinguishing feature of a fundamentally determining inner purposiveness, that is, that every member of organism is connected to every other member as purpose or object. From organism as such the Absolute can be designated as "Totalorganismus," as "ein Lebendiges, All-Organismus in ewiger Ordnung und Zweckerfuellung" (pp. 481-82). Organism thus reflects a harmonising principle which is also at work in the world.

The organic, as its concept indicates, is present in all its parts. Nevertheless there is something contradictory and therefore vulnerable about the distinction between the whole and the parts in the concept of organism. The distinction must nevertheless be

preserved and it must also be shown how the organic achieves all-sided expression and development in its parts and as a whole. This requires the concept of an inner being or soul which initiates and instinctively conducts organic activity. This view of the soul as the principle of organic life is closely linked with Fichte's theory of the monads with their a priori and eternal features. It has also its application to the characterization of the Absolute. The Absolute can be comprehended as Weltseele which stands in Wechselwirkung with individual souls. But, for Fichte, this concept of the Absolute, implicitly pointing to an origin in unconscious nature, betrays an inadequacy which must be overcome at a higher level (pp. 491-93).

Finally the concept of spirit emerges from the need to account fully for the world creating and shaping activity contained in the concept of Weltseele, particularly the emergence of consciousness from the unconscious. The concept is presented as the universal Spirit "der, in der Wirklichkeit der Welt sich als den unendlichen Gedanken verwirklichend, in allen ihren Gegensätzen bei sich selbst und in sich Einer bleibt" (p. 493).

As Hermann points out, Fichte has taken over the Hegelian concept of Spirit. It may well be asked whether he has not thereby left himself open to the pantheism which so concerns him in his criticism of Hegel's system. He undoubtedly considers that he has removed this risk by endowing Spirit with the character of individuality which is lacking in the Hegelian concept. Fichte's reasoning seems to be as follows: Only the individual can confer actuality on Spirit. This implies that the God of Hegel's concept of universal Spirit can have no actuality. In contrast, Fichte's God as

personal and individual does have actuality. As personal and individual and eternal He stands over against the personal and individual and eternal in man. Clearly these conclusions, preserving a necessary distinction between God and man, are the ones Fichte would have wished Hegel to reach but the purely transitory character Hegel gave to the finite made this impossible.

Fichte's position as just outlined depends heavily, if not completely, it will have been noted, on his idea of the personality and individuality of God. In support of his position in this context of the Ontologie Fichte discusses the nature and role of will and at the same time, ignoring the circularity of the reasoning involved, asserts that his principle of individuality provides the solution to the Kantian problem of bringing together thought and will, the theoretical reason and the practical reason. It is the will which exercises the unifying activity and on this interpretation will is the essential substance of spiritual individuality, thought is the accident and the vehicle is Selbstthat. "Wollen, also gefasst, ist daher gleichfalls nicht bloss ein einzelner Zustand des Geistes, sondern Alles in ihm ist Willenserweisung, und es gibt in hoechster Bedeutung gar keine andere Wirklichkeit, denn durch Wollen, aus der Tiefe der sich bestimmenden Individualitaet" (p. 501). The will as the fundamental essence of individual spirituality makes it impossible to conceive of its expression in the Absolute other than on the same individual basis, namely, a personal God (pp. 501-02).

Fichte's treatment of will here has its ambiguous implications which are compounded rather than clarified when it is set beside the exposition of will in the Spekulative Theologie. For in his ideas of creation and of man's ethical vocation Fichte's concept of the divine Spirit seems to come together again with Hegel's universal Spirit. In creation it is the divine will that concedes freedom and independence to the human will, and it is the divine love which then draws the human will back to union with the divine.

Comparisons with the thought of Schelling and of J.G. Fichte do not help to dispell the ambiguous implications. Hildegard Hermann notes that on the subject of the will Fichte's views may be compared with those of Schopenhauer. However, she thinks that they reflect more the influence of Schelling who already in his Freiheitslehre of 1809 speaks of the will in the Absolute. Presumably this is a reference to that primal will "which deserts its supernatural status in order to make itself as general will also particular and creature will at one and the same time."¹⁵ Another influence not mentioned by Hildegard Hermann is that of Fichte's father. The claim that everything in the individual spirit is "Willenserweisung" recalls J.G. Fichte's view of the pure ego as activity, a restless striving towards the goal of self-realization.

In the concluding epoch of the Ontologie Fichte also emphasizes his difference with Hegel on another important point. This point relates to the concept of purposiveness which emerges in the articulation of the categories of Causality and Dependence. Every-

thing actual is permeated and shaped by absolute purposiveness and it was, he asserts, Spinoza's great merit to have successfully defended the speculative importance of the concept of teleology (pp. 450-53). The unity of purposes in the Absolute is only conceivable on the basis of an infinite self-consciousness, that is, a personal God. Here purpose with respect to God has a different role to play from that envisioned by Hegel. For Hegel, God or Spirit is the ultimate purpose and God, in the moment of Sichandersseins, goes out of Himself as means in order to return to Himself as absolute end. For Fichte, in contrast, God must be seen as giving purpose to all of his freely creating activity which thereby comprises a totality of freely chosen purposes. This concept of God as bestowing purpose is inseparable from the concepts of the personality and freedom of the Absolute (pp. 464-65).

C. Die spekulative Theologie oder allgemeine Religionslehre

The content of the Spekulative Theologie, an inquiry into the Idea of God, has three main divisions which roughly correspond to the organization of the subject matter of the Ontologie. It deals first with what might be described as an inquiry into the Being of God, then examines the Essence of God and finally the Essence of God in relation to others in Himself. But this organization is not as in the Ontologie a progression dictated by the dialectical method. The latter no longer applies. In the examination of the Idea of God it is found that love not contradiction is the main pulse.

This third and final part of Fichte's system, as mentioned earlier, appeared ten years after the first two parts and it is hardly surprising that the lengthy interval of further reflection and the comments of contemporary critics should have led to some misgivings about some aspects of the earlier parts. In an important sense the Spekulative Theologie was shaped by Fichte's perception of a fundamental weakness of the Erkenntnislehre and by his desire to remedy it. Specifically the inadequacy of the first part of his system lay in the fact that it was solely based on the finite ego in consciousness and not on a true unity of subject and object. From such a point of departure one could not reach the concept of the Absolute (Grundzuege III, p. 3). Fichte attributes this mistake to the strong influence of his father's work. He acknowledged later that it was one of the most incautious and precipitate acts of the new speculation.¹⁶

A new deduction of the Absolute thus becomes necessary. As Fichte explains at the beginning of the Spekulative Theologie, the highest aim of philosophy is to think the thing as originally thought in God. He approvingly cites Malebranche that we know all things only in God and through the mediation of His spirit. Following Plato and Aristotle he completes the necessary linkage in noting that our individual spirit stands in original connection with the primal knowing divine spirit. This kind of knowing is to be based on a new kind of intuition of things and of their highest principle. The most profound results of metaphysics are not obtained through an abstruse transcendental world of concepts

but in the intuitable, real, immediately apprehended. This concept of an intellectus archetypus in which intuition and thought collapse together, gives access to the Idea of the Absolute. God not only presents Himself in the real world to be thought of and believed but also as revealing Himself in intuition in the world (pp. 5, 6, 10).

This approach bestows on nature the importance which Schelling accords it in his Naturphilosophie but which was missing from Hegel's interpretation and from his father's view of nature. In this final part of his system Fichte still looks at his task within the framework of the Hegelian outlook and sees it necessary to fill in the gaps between the Logic and the Naturphilosophie. However, in rescuing nature from the unreal finitude of Hegel's treatment of it and in uniting it with the realm of grace Fichte is also concerned to establish that the ultimate purpose of the world is not in nature but in man. As in Kant, but with an emphasis on the teleological rather than the moral proof of God, it is the unconditioned in man which responds to the moral imperative but the response^{an} only be an endless striving of the will unless God comes into the picture. We are motivated and our end is determined by the eternal truths which are present to our consciousness before sense knowledge emerges. These truths can only have their ground in an absolute Spirit and Thought and, if properly examined and developed, can be distinguished and used as an intellectual proof of God's existence (pp. 53, 54).

The Development of the Idea of God

Fichte asserts that nature finds its ground in the spiritual substance of God and that this is not a simple postulate but arises out of the thought process from which the concept of the world has been developed. From this latter concept and from the categories of the Ontologie in general the Idea of God can be developed and the true concept of the Absolute reached.

The world, as the immediately given, in its concept presents itself as the sum of its finitudes, as the system or universe of specific differences and as an ascending series of levels of means and purposes. The finite has not in itself durability and the Ontologie has shown that there dwells in it on a temporary basis a primal reality (Urrealitaet) reflecting the presence of the infinite in every finite thing and giving to the finite thing its determinateness. The Ontologie has also shown that the true infinite possesses a monadic character. As such it presents a system of primal positions (Urpositionen), a system which in its inner relations constitutes a unity or universe (Universum). The possibility of such a universe according to Fichte, must lead to a highest principle of unity, that is, the ultimate unity of the Absolute itself and the ultimate power necessary to implement it. It is in the thought of such an ultimate unity and power that the concept of God can first be reached as distinct from the pantheistic concept of an Absolute in general (pp. 57, 151).

In the Ontologie the universal causality and dependence of things obtain their true expression in the context of teleology. What makes the world a united universe is the universally governing relation of means and purposes which culminate in an ultimate or final purpose. The ultimate purpose points to a power which generates purpose and this in turn presupposes an absolute self-conscious personality. It also points to an exercise of will which inevitably, as mentioned above, must be associated with personality.

In the course of this part of the exposition Fichte seems to feel obliged to offer a further clarification of his difference with Hegel on the category of Becoming. The difference is indeed relevant to his different concept of the Absolute. The identity of the permanent and the finite is rendered impossible, he points out, when the finite is regarded, as with Hegel, as simply rising and passing away. Fichte asserts that nothing arises or passes away. It is the determinateness of the finite thing which accounts for the differentiation of every thing from every other thing and therefore for the world as a system or universe of specific differences. But this determinateness is a persisting element, a primal quality, which Fichte designates as a primal position (Urposition) to which the finite thing, impelled by purpose, through changing conditions eventually fully conforms. Thus the finite being as primally determined must take up a definite relation to every other finite being in the universe and the changing conditions of this purpose fall within the concept of Becoming. What Hegel interprets

as the persisting of change is really the persisting within change (pp. 65, 87, 90).

For Fichte the pantheistic viewpoint implicit in Hegel's system arises from the concept of the Absolute as itself the enduring element in the finite thing which then means that the finite must be absorbed by the Absolute. The finite thing as such has therefore only an illusory existence and the act of creation underlying the finite individual also loses existential significance. Thus this pantheistic concept is distinguished by two members: the Absolute and the perishable or transitory finite thing. But, against this view, Fichte considers that he has shown the concept of the Absolute to have a third intermediate member, namely, the enduring substantial finite thing (p. 111). He claims, therefore, that he has undermined pantheism from below and that he has made possible, what Hegel's doctrine cannot offer, the achievement of a true concept of creation. Moreover he considers that the persisting of the permanent in the finite individual, standing over against the permanent in the infinite, while the Absolute nevertheless obtains expression at the finite level through the primal positions, enables him to reach in its most abstract form a fundamental proposition of his Spekulative Theologie, namely, that God cannot be thought of as immanent in the world without at the same time being thought of as transcendent and above the world (pp. 112-13). In His essence God remains otherworldly and his perpetual life is not the perpetual finite of the world nor is the development of the primal positions, or realities in the finite thing to be seen as the self development

of the divine existence. While Fichte is concerned in the interests of his anti-pantheistic position to maintain a clear distinction—— between the immanent and the transcendent aspects of God this is not an easy task and ambiguity and ambivalence seem to arise when he later affirms that the world is only the actuality and development of God and that the problem of the relation between the Absolute and the finite individual is only in appearance because the finite thing is actually the self-expression of God (p. 118).

The Essence of God in and for Himself

Having reached what he conceives to be the correct concept of the Absolute as an absolute, omniscient and self-conscious personality Fichte must now seek to deal with its essence. He wrestles first with the question of the feasibility of the task. He cannot accept either Kant's position that God cannot be known but only may be thought as an ideal of reason or Hegel's view that God is completely knowable through the categories of the Logic. However he makes it clear that, in principle, he agrees with Hegel on the question (p. 200). At the same time he adheres firmly to Kant's position on the essentiality of intuition to knowledge. In general what this means, as he has indicated in the Ontologie, is that God is knowable to the extent that we perceive His self-revelation in the intuitable datum and this is what he believes his new kind of intuition of things can achieve. This does not mean that we can obtain an intuition or representation of God Himself. God an sich remains "ein in sich Verborgenes" and an adequate knowledge of

Him is therefore not possible (p. 231). God, however, can be thought, not as a concept emerging from an empty process of the self-development of its determination but as a result of Fichte's new kind of intuition based on the given with which, it seems, thought collapses together. The Idea of God in its various manifestations, including the sphere of the real, as presented in the Spekulative Theologie is apparently intended as the outcome of an inquiry based on this approach. By the very nature of the approach the inquiry can never aspire to finality.

In his examination of the idea of God as Absolute Personality Fichte distinguishes three moments of the divine essence: (a) the real or objective side; (b) the ideal or subjective side, and (c) God as the highest personal union of the ideal and the real. Generally speaking the first two moments correspond respectively to the immanent and transcendent aspects of God and, in the reverse order, they may be regarded as having the relation of substance to accident. Within the real or objective side of God, His manifestation in the world, a similar analogy might be drawn. For the permanent in the finite thing may be conceived as the substance underlying the appearances of the sensible world. Substance in both cases is, of course, spiritual: the finite human ego or consciousness in the world, and the omniscient consciousness of the divine ego in the ideal universe. Since the union referred to in (c) above is a union of the real and the ideal in infinitude it must account for the reconciliation of the finite things of the real world with the infinite of the ideal world.

As the above highly compressed summary indicates Fichte's general approach still bears an Hegelian imprint. God is Absolute Spirit and the finite is taken up in the infinite. Fichte has, however, already diverged from Hegel in adopting Weisse's position on the inclusion of the forms of time and space amongst the universal forms of existence or reality and he derives inspiration particularly from Leibniz in his effort to neutralize the pantheism and the suppression of the individuality which he perceives as the major flaws of the Hegelian system. The influence of Leibniz can be seen in Fichte's theory of the universe of monads which becomes a fundamental element in his treatment of the divine essence and is used to ground his Individualitaetslehre. The monads as simple, eternal, individual, conscious elements comprise a universe which overlaps both the ideal and real sides of the divine essence. They rotate, as it were, between both sides, in conformity with the primal positions or ways by which God manifests Himself in His essence, and in the world. The monad in its human incarnation acquires "temporal existence only when and so long as the material of life, and the outward conditions of its realization, meet together ...", that is, as soon "as the material of life is afforded it, the whole process of realization in time begins, first in the form of Incorporation, and then of Consciousness. In all this, be it observed, it is simply the original individuality of the mind which is developed and comes to itself,"¹⁷ Perishability applies only to the material conditions of life, and death is the release of the monad or soul, allowing it to resume its status in the eternal. Thus

the true finite individual, as monadic expression of the divine essence, is also the eternal, included in that infinitude of God which is the highest personal union of the real and ideal sides of God.

Fichte's position on the eternity of the monadic finite individual is consistent with his opposition to Hegel's category of Becoming. As we have seen, nothing, Fichte maintains, really comes into being or passes away. Our commonsense experience contradicts this view. But this arises from our inability to distinguish between true time and space and false time and space. The latter apply to the false finitude, the Nichtseinsollende, which is empirically known to us and is not an illusion. The false finitude is a concept which Fichte appreciatively attributes to Franz Baader. It expresses the constraint, deficiency, misfortune and vicissitudes, fatal or otherwise, of the finite world. These arise when the mutually interacting relation of things with one another which allows them to progress to self-realization cannot function because the finite thing is isolated from its other by inflexibility and impenetrability. In contrast true time and space, which have to be grasped conceptually, apply to the permanent in the finite thing and in this sense to the manifestation of God in the world (p. 263).

What about time and space in the ideal realm of the divine essence? Here their application would appear to be anomalous if not contradictory to the eternal and unchanging character of this side of the divine essence. Fichte's account of the relation of form and content is relevant to his consideration of the application of

time and space but it is of little help in removing the anomaly and ambiguity. Form, it will be recalled, arises out of content, and involves a specification of the forms of time and space. Essence, as content only, is thus not subject to the forms of time and space; and, as comprised in the divine essence in the ideal realm, the monads and primal positions are not characterized by these forms. In this realm they preexist simply as possibilities of "schlummernde Kraefte." (p. 463.) They are characterized or specified by the forms of time and space when, by an act of the divine will, they assume an existence in the world. In effecting such acts God posits the monads and primal positions out of His own consciousness, that is, His own essence. In other words the universe of the ideal realm reflects the dynamic character of a divine essence constantly engaged in infinite self-creativity and generation of life. This perpetual process expresses the personality of God not only as intelligence and nature but also as feeling and the true expression of this feeling is love.

In the concluding section of this part of the Spekulative Theologie Fichte relates, as they have for the most part already emerged in the preceding exposition, the properties of God to the two aspects of His essence and to the union of these two aspects. Since it is in the nature of thought to separate out and distinguish the various properties of God Fichte reminds us that the divine essence is one substance within which His properties fuse together. To the real properties of God belong His unity and infinitude as nature and spirit. His omnipresence is manifested in what is permanent and enduring in the substance of the spatial world. Fichte incidentally notes that

should time and space not be associated with God His presence in a temporal and spatial context would present the most rigid in contradictions. To His ideal properties belong His all-consciousness which has as its content the primal positions and the universe of monads, His absolute self-consciousness and His absolute spirituality. From these ideal properties can be drawn the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The properties of the union of the real and the ideal in God are His divine will, His absolute freedom and His omnipotence (pp. 352, 397, 405).

Fichte cautiously points out that there may be properties of God of which we can have no inkling. He also notes that there are properties which do not fit into the above classification because they have their source in feeling. Feeling is an attribute of individuality or personality and does not have a universal or metaphysical character. Such properties are nevertheless highly important. They include love, holiness, justice and blessedness (p. 429).

The Essence of God in His Relation to the Other in Himself

The conception of God as both in and outside the world, which Fichte admired in the thought of Krause, shapes the pattern to which the relation treated in this part of the Spekulative Theologie conforms. In Fichte's development of this conception there is a sphere where the essence of God overlaps with the sphere of the world. This overlapping region is the universe of monads and primal positions. The relation of this universe to the divine essence as the ideal universe

on the one side and to the finite world as the real objective side of God on the other thus presents the essential aspects for consideration.

In the relation as so formulated Fichte sees the problem of the creation of the finite world as the central one (pp. 433-34). More specifically the problem may be put in the following terms: How does God allow the finite world to come into being and continue in existence as His creation, and what is the ultimate purpose of God's unceasing creativity? The response to the first question depends on the divine utilization of the universe of monads and primal positions and of purposiveness, that is, of the teleological principle with its whole series of purposes and means. These matters have been explored in the Ontologie. They have been reviewed in the preceding parts of the Spekulative Theologie and they are now drawn upon to provide the answers to both questions.

For Fichte the concept of the creation of the world is not conditioned by dialectical necessity nor is God, as the Creator, contained in the metaphysical Idea of Him (p. 442). The fact of the existence of the world alone must lead us back to God as its ground. By an expression of His divine will God allows the ideal universe of His own essence to be modified so that it may be manifested on His real side. Thus the divine Spirit externalizes itself in the world Soul as the blind will of nature guided unconsciously by purposiveness (pp. 465, 466). Incidentally Fichte points out that this does not mean, as Schelling wrongly put it, that the divine will itself is at this stage no more than such a blind will of nature. In line with the foregoing the first or negative moment of divine creativity is that of an act of divine concession permitting

the emergence of the finite world. God bestows on the monads, which, as indicated above, are only potentially real in the ideal universe, their own independent wills. In this way the creative act is initiated: the monad breaks out of the ideal universe of true time and space into the finite world of false time and space. The individualization of the monad then commences and this is the second or positive moment of the creative act which, engaging the world and nature in fully purposive activity, shows nature accomplishing its development in an ascending series of organisms and creatures which culminate at the highest level in human self-consciousness. Thus the finite self-conscious spirit is the final end of the creative act, the goal of the power of purposiveness with which God animates the world.

In conformity with Fichte's conception of time and space as universal forms of existence or reality time applies to the world with its coming into existence in the act of creation (pp. 500, 501). The finite individual in time, having its primal ground in the ideal universe where eternity applies, can therefore not be conceived as having its sufficient ground in a preceding finite thing. Thus the notion of a beginning in time as taking place once and for all in the past can convey no meaning and the sense of beginning must be understood as the constant initiating of the finite individual out of the eternal.

The notion of the unceasing creativity of God in the emerging of the finite individual out of the eternal is relevant to the purpose which God thereby accomplishes. In the course of the exposition of the properties of God Fichte has pointed out that the divine blessedness lies in an eternally satisfied love directed towards Himself. This

love can ascend to a higher level if the subject and object of the love do not collapse together but rather stand independently over against each other. This independence of a will which can express itself in love towards another is achieved through God's deliberate concession of such a will to the individual. The love which the human, self-conscious spirit, itself arising out of the divine essence, dedicates to God is, for God Himself, the ultimate fulfillment of His blessedness. So God creates the world to bring about the perfection of love.

In God's love Fichte finds not only the ultimate explanation for the creation of the world but also the source and justification for man's ethical vocation. The essential element of this vocation derives from the relation of love which the Spekulative Theologie draws between God and man. In the light of God's love the highest ethical idea which the human will can serve is to seek and accomplish the divine will, to do so by renouncing his own independence and becoming one with the divine will. For man this is a task and a challenge which he himself takes up. The achievement of an inner Godliness is an ethical ideal which is possible only on the basis of the freedom of the individual will. With this freedom, a gift bestowed on man by God, is also given the basis for moral evil because the individual can choose to do otherwise than pursue the purpose of the divine will. Thus the possibility of evil, but not its actuality or necessity, is posited with the creation. From this account the actuality of evil in the world can only be explained by original sin which arises from human freedom. Salvation, however, lies in the redeeming power of God's grace which, through the remission of our

sins and the divine dispensation, leads us to our ultimate vocation. . .

History, for Fichte, bears witness to this divine dispensation (pp. 629-47).

CHAPTER 4

THE CONFLICTING AND INSPIRATIONAL ASPECTS
OF THE INFLUENCE OF KANT, J.G. FICHTE, SCHELLING AND HEGEL

As noted in the introduction to this paper Fichte's closest ties were to Kant, J.G. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel and to the first two in particular. An attempt will now be made to identify the more significant points of influence, often conflicting in nature, of these philosophers on Fichte's own thought and to indicate those considerations and concerns which may have determined what he accepted, criticised or rejected.

In the Beitraege, Fichte's history of modern philosophy, the four philosophers are treated in the order indicated above and the detailed comments offered below will follow the same sequence. However, as the abundance of references to Hegel in the Grundzuege and the unusual length of the chapter on Hegel in the Beitraege indicate, Fichte was overwhelmingly concerned with the system devised by Hegel and its influence on contemporary philosophical trends. Since it affected his approach to the other three philosophers a brief introductory comment on this major preoccupation seems necessary.

When he began his own philosophical work Hegel's influence, according to Fichte, was of such decisive importance that it shaped the nature and course of further philosophical enquiry. In spite of his professed admiration of Hegel's achievements his early attitude to them was strongly ambivalent and remained so in his later years.

Fichte claims that he was the first in the early post-Hegelian period to produce a thorough critique of Hegel's system. From such reflections he realized that the Hegelian system was so firmly entrenched that it could only be effectively replaced by reconstructing it on a basis which would correct the errors, inadequacy and incompleteness of Hegel's enterprise.¹

As Fichte saw it, Hegel's system had failed to reach to a speculative theism as the necessary and desirable crowning point of its structure. It did, however, offer the basis from which such a theism could be developed. Fichte had no quarrel with Hegel's great principle, viz, that "alles wirkliche vernuenftig sei."² But the principle had to be released from its worldly moorings and established on a basis of individuality. Fichte had been repelled by the impersonal dialectic of Hegel's History of Philosophy and sought to counter it in the Beitraege. Thus the task which Fichte set himself was to construct an alternative system, to adapt the Hegelian system to this project and to complete it, as he did in his Grundzuege, by adding a speculative theology.

Weisse, Fichte's friend and close collaborator, fully recognized the need for such a reconstruction and development of Hegel's work but differed on how it should be carried out. Weisse was prepared to accept the Hegelian system very much as it stood and to go on from there with the next and higher stage of a speculative theism which would bring back the balance in favour of the principles of freedom, individuality and personality. Fichte, however, could not agree that the Hegelian base should remain unchanged. He had, he notes in Vermischte Schriften,

reached Hegel by way of Kant, J.G. Fichte and Schelling and he did not feel that the ideas and views of these three great philosophers could be ignored and certainly not the extraordinary seminal influence of Kant's work.³

The three volumes of the Grundzuege refer frequently to Kant, J.G. Fichte and Schelling as well as to Hegel. Fichte makes a number of interesting comments on all four philosophers in Vermischte Schriften. A more extensive treatment of the work of each of them is given in Fichte's Beitraege. Apart from other concerns related to Hegel's thought Fichte's main objective in the Beitraege was to justify his campaign against the reigning pantheism in philosophical thought. The campaign had been first launched nine years earlier in his initial philosophical work, Saetze zur Vorschule der Theologie. The criterion of pantheism was a standard by which all contemporary philosophical writings had to be judged and while Kant escaped criticism on this score in the Beitraege the other three frequently were found wanting.

To look first in more detail at the essential substance of Fichte's relation to Kant, in a number of statements Fichte forthrightly declares his great admiration and respect for Kant and professes himself to be Kant's faithful and devoted follower. He places Kant along with Leibniz, Plato and Aristotle as the four greatest original thinkers of all time.⁴ With these expressions of high regard in mind the readers of Fichte's Beitraege cannot help being astonished and surprised at the demolition of the few but important Kantian theories singled out for attention in this work. From the introductory comments

in the chapter on Kant readers may have felt they had been invited to join in praise of the great advance towards a true science of metaphysics represented by his doctrine of subjective idealism. Instead they find themselves called upon to join in the burial of the doctrine. Elsewhere Fichte makes it quite clear that Kant's acknowledgement of the impossibility of reaching a true science can be completely ignored. In an article in his Zeitschrift he notes that the question is not whether, but how, a science of metaphysics can be realized.⁵ As a further irony part of his answer is that it must be achieved, as Kant had indicated, on the basis of an exhaustive Erkenntnislehre. The Kantian emphasis on the necessity for knowledge of both thought and intuition is perhaps the theme which Fichte most frequently cites and approves. He chastises Schelling and Weisse for going well beyond Kant's "anthropologischen Ausgangspunkt" in their theistic speculations.⁶ But the elaboration of his own system seems to have obliged him to take on occasion a similarly flexible approach and, as will be suggested, the enlarged view he takes of intuition or the given and what could be derived from it pointed in the same direction. In general, if ambivalence characterized Fichte's attitude to Hegel it was hardly less evident in his professed dedication to Kant.

Although he explicitly states that "eine subjektive Erscheinung" in the Kantian sense destroys the whole basis of subjective idealism, Fichte wishes to salvage the Kantian a priori forms and give them an objectivity which would conform to the tendency he attributes to Kant's own thinking as expressed in the Critique of Judgement.⁷ His exposure

of the fragility of subjective idealism appears, at first sight, to leave Fichte with little or no scope for a salvaging operation. For example, according to Kant, concepts refer only to the appearances of things. Apart from such a reference they have no meaning at all. Therefore things-in-themselves cannot be known and the understanding so limited cannot deal with the essence of things. Moreover, for Kant, intuition is "rein Sinnliches;" the categories are "absolut Unsinnliches."⁸ How then, Fichte asks, can the latter be applied to the former?

Finally Fichte notes that, in Kant's view, time and space only have meaning in reference to appearance. The thing-in-itself must therefore be thought of as timeless and spaceless. It is indeed on Kant's theory of time and space that Fichte focuses a good deal of his attack. In so doing he has had several concerns in mind mainly related to the cogency of his own speculative approach. He sees, however, the theory as the Achilles' heel of Kant's subjective idealism and that to dispose of it, therefore, would remove an important obstacle to the transformation of Kant's idealism into a truly speculative system.

Fichte's analysis moves along the following lines. Kant separates the understanding from intuition in consciousness. He might have brought them together on the basis of his theory of the transcendental unity of apperception in much the same way as he suggests in the third Critique that mechanical causation and teleology could be brought together in a possible higher consciousness, that is, what Fichte himself would call an Urintelligenz. However, the presupposition that the a priori forms and intuition are opposed and heterogeneous elements contradicts the

unity of consciousness. Therefore Kant relies on time and space as subjective forms of sensible intuition to connect the two divergent elements in consciousness, but the subjectivity which they thus take on inevitably locks the a priori forms into a similar subjectivity. Kant's ultimate justification for this approach is his determination that time and space do not arise in our experience but precede it. But, Fichte insists, this is wrong. Time and space do arise in our experience as the universal forms of actuality which fundamentally condition that experience. From this changed perspective the a priori forms lose the purely subjective character Kant has bestowed on them and they can be recognized as having both subjective and objective reference in the structure of actuality.

That Fichte could speak out so confidently against the principal views of a philosopher whom he greatly revered has perhaps something to do with the strength of Fichte's religious convictions and theological preoccupations. However, the confidence may possibly also be attributed to the unique importance attached by Kant's followers to the notion of intellectual intuition as a vision of the whole bringing together God and the world, spirit and nature. For Fichte himself this importance is fully revealed in the first ten pages of his Spekulative Theologie. His view of intellectual intuition has, however, its own distinctive character. Intellectual intuition is not simply, he points out, the parallel identity of subject and object (spirit and nature), as in Schelling and Hegel, but rather their identity under a unifying principle represented by an Urintelligenz, a divine intelligence which

conforms to his idea of a transcendent and personal God. He sees Kant as reaching much the same conclusion if Kant had followed up the speculative leap involved in his doctrine of the a priori forms of consciousness. Indeed, for Fichte, this is also clearly indicated by Kant's concept of an intellectus archtypus in which intuition and thought collapse together. For Kant "hat damit dem Principe nach ebenso die Schranken seiner eigenen Reflexionstheorie durchbrochen, als er jenen Begriff sogleich selbst dazu anwendet, um durch ihn die spaeter aufgekommene Vorstellung einer blindzweckmaessig wirkenden Weltseele im Voraus zu widerlegen."⁹

With respect to religious and theological preoccupations one may well imagine that a good deal of Kant's importance for Fichte lies in the way his critical philosophy rescued contemporary thought from the risks and temptations of Spinozistic dogmatism. Fichte's larger view is directed, however, to the possibility of a speculative theology which, as he sees it, would be threatened by the subjective idealism emerging from Kant's theories. When time and space are, however, considered as universal forms of actuality then every kind of real, from the Absolute to the most conditioned world essence, must be thought as positing itself in space. In the Spekulative Theologie the entry of the monads into the realm of the real involves their specification in the forms of time and space. Located thus in the middle of reality these forms obtain objective truth and validity as do intuition and the understanding and its a priori forms and rules, and we are thereby provided with the comprehensive laws and firm analogies

by means of which "aus dem Gegebenen" we can know the "Nichtgegebenen."¹⁰

For Fichte the discovery of the a priori forms and rules is Kant's great original achievement. But Kant would undoubtedly have resisted the interpretation of this achievement which Fichte attributed to him as well as the speculative use to which Fichte thought it could be put. According to Fichte it involves a recognition of a universal, non-empirical, infinite in the human consciousness which can serve to take us back to an origin in a divine intelligence.¹¹ Thus the universal applicability of the categories to the real enables us to derive from the given, from experience, a concept of the world from which in turn we can proceed to a concept or idea of the divine essence. In the Spekulative Theologie experience becomes, therefore, an important and indeed crucial element in the development of this and related Ideas. But it is experience in the special sense of God revealing Himself in His acting in the world. This seems to enlarge the meaning and scope of experience in a similarly radical fashion to the amplitude which Fichte gives to the a priori forms and the Ideas. Thus the boundaries and limits which Kant cautiously observed with respect to thought and intuition and with respect to the possibility of the Ideas have been left far behind.

In the lengthier exposition which he devotes to his father in the Beitraege we can see reflected an attitude on the part of Fichte which seems to identify him more closely with his father than with Kant. This hardly arises from a sense of filial piety, though the influence of that sentiment need not be ignored altogether. However, when

Fichte refers to his father's work as the historical point of departure of his own work he clearly means to attach all possible personal conviction to that judgement. It is J.G. Fichte, as the immediate follower of Kant, setting out to complete Kant's work, who has found the exit from the impasse in which Kant has left the problem of knowledge and it is his innovative and fruitful ideas which point further metaphysical inquiry in the direction of the final resolution of its problems in what seems to be the ineluctable basis of transcendental idealism.

For the son the great and enduring achievement of the father from the second Wissenschaftslehre is the discovery of the identity of subject and object, the intellectual intuition which Kant's third Critique seemed to foreshadow. However, in the context of the Wissenschaftslehre it has a precise relation to Kant's Critique of Practical Reason. From the account in the Beitraege the revision of the first Wissenschaftslehre arose from its inadequacy for the grounding of a moral faith. According to its principles there was no way by which a moral faith could be derived from, or its existence explained by, the evidence of the world of sense. Such a faith would have to find its ground, therefore, in the supersensible world. But this requirement posed an apparently impossible demand.

As it turned out, J.G. Fichte in dealing with the requirement did not need to go beyond the facts of the individual consciousness. There was the fact that "Ich finde mich schlechthin gebunden durch einen uebersinnlichen Zweck."¹² In other words I am bound through my consciousness of the Kantian Categorical Imperative which I must accordingly

posit as possible for me to carry out. The unity of the moral law and the content of the moral faith lead to the conviction of a living and effective moral world order which, as God, gives harmony and a purposive basis to the world, and, as pure ego, universal reason, spirit or will, actualizes itself in the finite ego. Reality thus lies within the finite consciousness and from the concept the finite ego can form of the world it can reach to higher levels of reality which will include the revelation of an active God in all such forms of reality and of the certainty of His existence.¹³ The Wissenschaftslehre ends in a Religionslehre and this outcome, along with the emphasis J.C. Fichte has placed on the problem of knowledge as the problem of consciousness, brings out more clearly the way in which the father's ideas in their general structure and thrust if not in their detailed elaboration show a remarkable identity with the system the son developed.

The remarkable identity owes a great deal to a recognition of the limits which an anchorage in the facts of finite consciousness places on the philosophical enterprise. For the pilgrimage of the pure ego, as Wissen, through consciousness is the "Durchfuehrung der Reflexion" which culminates in the absolute "Negation." As such it cannot offer the "Uebergangsmoment" to the grounding of the absolute principle. Reflexion, having served its purpose, has now to be abandoned and the Absolute must then be completely realized by the principle of the "Positive."¹⁴ Here we have, it seems, the origin of Schelling's demand for a positive philosophy which so greatly

affected the direction of the philosophical outlook of Weisse and Fichte and which in the latter, as we have seen in his system, has its intended expression in the Ideenlehre and in the general purpose of the Spekulative Theologie.

Fichte's account of his father's Religionslehre, based on J.G. Fichte's lectures of the years 1805 and 1806, also highlights those points which recur in his own thought or impels him in a similar direction. Thus from his father Fichte finds support for the conviction that the religious standpoint is the only one to possess the truth. The task of thought, that is, Wissenschaft, is to explain the empirical variety and division of a simulated being of the Absolute. From the perspective of finite consciousness we cannot know God directly. This is possible only through His revelation of Himself in the actuality of life.¹⁵ It is this possibility, clearly, which encourages Fichte on the basis of his principle of individuality to formulate his new kind of intuition in his Erkenntnislehre although, as will be suggested later, he finds more definite inspiration for it in Schelling's thought.

Fichte sees the pure ego, or absolute principle of the Wissenschaftslehre, as the paradigm for Schelling's principle of the identity of subject and object and therefore as the basis for the two systems which Schelling built on that principle. He might have added that his own system follows the same general scheme. He asserts that Schelling's method or concept or an upward process of progressive levels or stages of consciousness which Schelling claimed was an original feature of his

own work can find its analogy in the Wissenschaftslehre. In his own Erkenntnislehre, however, the language employed is borrowed from Schelling. This shift from a departure point in his father's philosophy to a more complete expression borrowed from either Schelling or Hegel recurs often in Fichte's system.

In a very brief reference to K.C. Krause in the first volume of the Grundzuege (p. 279) Fichte suggests that the exposition of the development of consciousness in his Erkenntnislehre may be compared with the principal features of the development of the Ego which Krause presents in his Vorlesungen ueber das System der Philosophie published in 1828. In Fichte's other writings the few references to Krause are again too laconic to reveal much about Krause's influence on him. This treatment of Krause seems uncharacteristic on Fichte's part, particularly in the light of the favourable comment Fichte makes in Ueber Gegensatz (pp. 224, 232-33). Here Fichte describes Krause's philosophy as Transcendental Absolutism and considers that it correctly indicates the "allgemeine Architektonik" and the complete philosophical treatment to be achieved in system building. He is particularly appreciative of Krause's division of his system into subjective-analytic and objective-synthetic parts which, since Krause was apparently strongly influenced by Schelling, must have seemed to meet Schelling's demand for a positive or Realphilosophie as the essential complement to a negative philosophy. However, Fichte's own system differs noticeably from the model of Krause in its reliance on an inductive method in the Spekulative Theologie. In concluding the brief comments contained in Ueber Gegensatz Fichte remarks that the strange and unusual terminology employed by Krause

robbed the presentation of his work of almost all penetration and we are left with this difficulty as the only explanation for the disproportionately modest attention Fichte has given to a philosopher about whom he speaks so highly in general terms.

In the Ontologie the positing of Sein as the initial primal category recalls J.G. Fichte's mode of proceeding. However, Fichte then employs the Hegelian dialectic in the development of the Form-wissenschaft. He does so because the principle of contradiction, related as it is to the objectivity of the Hegelian system, undoubtedly constitutes, in his view, an essential corrective to J.G. Fichte's principle of limitation which is associated with an ego that posits its own other and thereby cancels objectivity. While his Ontologie thus owes a great deal more to the influence of Hegel than to his father's influence Fichte nevertheless sees the Wissenschaftslehre as the indispensable basis of a speculative development of philosophy which receives its necessary complement in the "realistische Philosophie" of Schelling and then is incorporated in Hegel's great project of a complete system.¹⁶

Fichte records at one point in his exposition his father's admission of dissatisfaction with the Wissenschaftslehre and his own criticism of his father's work, as will have been seen from one or two examples already mentioned, is fairly frank and substantive. He shows some sensitivity over the ambiguity that seems to surround the grounding of the non-ego. It lacks any reality and this in turn, he implies, reverberates on the status of the pure ego as both real and ideal. Partly this view of the inadequacy of the philosophy of nature reflects

Fichte's criticism of his father for failing to discard the Kantian subjectivity of time and space. This latter criticism is directly related to Fichte's larger concern with a principle of individuality and personality which shapes his idea of the essence of God and the immortality of the individual ego. The Kantian view excludes the reality of both from our consciousness and deprives nature of all reality. As implanted in the Wissenschaftslehre, it leads to a highly ambiguous concept of God as pure impersonal spirit which then puts the concept at odds with Fichte's view of personality as ineluctably flowing from his father's attribution of infinite will to the Absolute.¹⁷

While Fichte recognizes in his father's later thought, notably in the Religionslehre as expounded in the lectures of 1805 and 1806, a more congenial concept of God, it does not appear that he saw this evolution finalizing itself in the notion of a personal God. In the final analysis J.G. Fichte's philosophical treatment of the Absolute remains unsatisfactory because it does not go beyond an immanent expression of its activity and the pure ego, rising to self-consciousness through its actualization in the finite ego, leaves in doubt the possibility of attributing consciousness to God Himself apart from His manifestation in the World. To the question as to whether J.G. Fichte has managed to overcome the threat of pantheism the son responds ambivalently ~~but~~ in a way which nevertheless seems to be weighted negatively.

From Fichte's comments on Schelling in the Beitraege it is very evident that he was strongly attracted and fascinated by Schelling's writings and was perhaps unduly inclined, as a result, to see Schelling's pantheism as a transitory phenomenon which would not survive Schelling's own unceasing generation of new and imaginative ways of treating the problems of Idealist philosophy. Fichte's opening remarks do not immediately establish this favourable impression because he firmly supports his father's complaint against the validity of Schelling's action in transplanting the pure ego of the Wissenschaftslehre into the objectivity of the Naturphilosophie. The basis of Fichte's favourable attitude towards Schelling is nevertheless soon revealed in his recognition that Schelling, unlike Hegel, has preserved the principle of individuality and it is this principle together with Schelling's idea of freedom and the concept of a personal God, developed in the Freiheitslehre of 1809, and in the later religious writings, which respond most closely to, and were perhaps most influential on, the direction of Fichte's own thinking.¹⁸

In the light of the foregoing basic identity of outlook it may seem curious that Fichte, as he tells us in Vermischte Schriften, should have turned, in launching his own philosophical enterprise, primarily to Hegel for his model. The explanation lies, he indicates, in the fact that Hegel's work offered the only completed system in that period.¹⁹ This is in line with the evaluation of Schelling's thought which Fichte offers in the Beitraege. In the course of his comments Fichte distinguishes four different epochs in Schelling's thought qualified, however, by his admission of difficulty in the interpretation

of Schelling's ideas. He is able to note with satisfaction that in the later writings of Schelling the philosophy of art as the culmination of the system of transcendental idealism has been overshadowed by the emphasis Schelling now attaches to religion. For in no way, in Fichte's view, could the objectivity of a work of art be compared with the objectivity of God. At the same time he detects in this later work a continuing attachment to the metaphysical presuppositions of the earlier writings of Schelling. This is the basis on which Fichte finally judges Schelling. He draws a great deal of inspiration and stimulation from Schelling's later thought but he pronounces Schelling's philosophical system unfinished and his method inadequate to the task Schelling set himself. These views, incidentally, do not prevent Fichte in his chapter on Hegel in the Beitraege from extolling the virtues of Schelling's system and defending Schelling's method against Hegel's criticisms.

If Fichte seems to have found a truly kindred spirit in Schelling his reservations about Schelling's philosophical positions were hardly less substantive than the criticism he directed against Kant, J.G. Fichte and Hegel. On the question of the Anfangspunkt of philosophy the gap seems unbridgeable. For in this case Schelling completely ignores the Kantian stipulation of a point of departure in the given. The beginning, or presupposition, is simply absolute reason, in so far as it is thought as the total indifference of subject and object. This raises the problem of how there can be a beginning as such if there is no appropriate expression in consciousness, that is, in intuition.²⁰ The weakness, it seems, stems from Schelling's

failure to develop a pre-science (Vorwissenschaft) in the shape of the Formwissenschaft which Fichte himself sets out to do in the Ontologie. These drawbacks have their relevance to Fichte's claim that Schelling has not succeeded in establishing in his system either the transition to nature from the Absolute or the transition from the negative philosophy to the positive philosophy.

The two transitions bring together those elements of Schelling's philosophy which most interest Fichte, that is, the principles of freedom, individuality and the personality of God and these in turn can be looked at in terms of God's relation to the world, of the relation of the infinite to the finite. With respect to the relation of the finite individual to the infinite Schelling makes, in Fichte's view, dubious detours in the itinerary of his thinking before he reaches the acceptable position that what is knowable in the finite individual is its eternal character.²¹ It is, of course, important to Fichte's own philosophical position that the finite individual should not be a fleeting element in the Absolute of identity or indifference, as one of Schelling's earlier thoughts seemed to suggest. With respect to Schelling's views on God, which Fichte cautiously notes have varied before and may change again, Fichte seems to experience particular difficulty. He feels that Schelling has given overwhelming weight to the idea of God as will even if will, expressed as love, plays an important role in support of the attribute of personality. He regrets that Schelling does not reach his idea of God, as he himself does, by way of a concept of the world. For Schelling, in the imaginative and dynamic role he gives to purpose and organism, in his Naturphilosophie,

develops precisely those elements on which Fichte relies,

Fichte is particularly attracted by Schelling's view of the finite world as the result of the free creative act of God bestowing, by this act, freedom and individuality on His creatures and assuring their union with him by love. Such a God who, as described in Schelling's Freiheitslehre, reveals Himself in the real world and redeems mankind, undoubtedly responded more to Fichte's own deep religious sensibility than the austere doctrine of a religion within the limits of reason to which Kant and his father subscribed.²² However, the divinity of the free creative act is compromised in Fichte's eyes by Schelling's continuing insistence on portraying its implementation as the effect of the dark principle or side of God's nature. This unfortunately still indicates a God who acts initially as blind will in the process of coming to consciousness through His objectification in nature.

Fichte notes that Schelling eventually saw that he could not remain with this anomalous view of God. But Schelling's original metaphysical presuppositions, particularly those "alten pantheistischen Voraussetzungen," have a way of recurring in the unceasing flow of his ideas.²³ Fichte cannot be sure therefore that Schelling's future thoughts will not reintroduce a pantheistic emphasis or cloud the distinction between a transcendent Absolute and the immanent manifestation of the Absolute in the world. This latter distinction is brought out, Fichte indicates, in a later permutation of Schelling's thinking and in so doing Schelling most clearly breaks out of his former pantheistic framework. It is revealed in his Platonic concept

of a universe of ideas within the Absolute but separate from the world. The similarity of this concept to a key idea of Fichte's Spekulative Theologie is hardly coincidental. But Schelling links

it with the dubious notion of the world as an "Abfall" from the realm of Ideas in the Absolute and such an interpretation cannot be reconciled with the idea of creation as the free act of God.²⁴

Fichte acknowledges that this Platonic concept as Schelling has developed it can be called theism; it has, however, a naturalistic meaning which, for him, deprives it of ethical sense. Interpreted in such a way, Fichte undoubtedly regarded the concept as a threat to the ethical idealism which he finds and welcomes in other strands of of Schelling's thinking.

Fichte's encounter with Schelling's thought enables us to see the importance which Fichte himself attached to a philosophical system which would give speculative theology a truly philosophical basis. Schelling's achievement fell short of this requirement, but it did give Fichte inspiration of a decisive kind in his own efforts to work out such a system. In the outcome Fichte's allegiance shifted noticeably from his father to Schelling. He acknowledges this outcome in Vermischte Schriften. In the crucial dispute between his father and Schelling he takes his stand on Schelling's side. His father's view, he states, gave no reality or meaning to nature; Schelling however gave nature overwhelming worth, as the objectification of spirit and the revelation of God.²⁵ This meant that a speculative theology became possible because philosophical enquiry, adhering to the Kantian principle, could proceed from the given in nature. Thus

Fichte accepted Schelling's view of the need to complete the negative philosophy of the Hegelian system with the upper layer of a positive philosophy. But in taking his stand with Schelling Fichte, ironically, seems to have been prepared, as his father was not, to ignore the pantheistic implications of Schelling's position and of reaching a speculative theology from a starting point in nature.

In this context another Schellingian position was to have an equally important influence. A cardinal assumption of empiricism, Fichte notes in the Beitraege, was that the eternal, represented by the Ideas, could only be thought and, as thought, remained for the finite individual an unreachable, transcendent and confused beyond. To this assumption Schelling opposed his great and simple principle that the eternal, the Ideal, was also the uniquely immediate and actual and was to be found in its self-actualizing in the finite individual. In this way, according to Fichte, the unity of thought and intuition was expressed, on the model, he might also have added, of Kant's intellectus archetypus. Here essentially seems to be set out the principle of speculative intuitive knowing which Fichte, tying it closely to his principle of individuality, adapts to the requirements of his speculative theology.

Returning to Hegel, in the extremely detailed comments devoted to him in the Beitraege, we are readily made aware of the contrasting impact of Hegel and Schelling on Fichte. In comparison with the inspiration which he derived from Schelling Hegel's thought seems to have provided Fichte with a host of difficult problems and with a serious challenge to the whole project of a speculative theology. At

the risk of possible repetition of the various points of criticism of Hegel which have been noted in the Grundzuege, it seems worth commenting here on the nature of the challenge and the difficulties which Fichte perceived in Hegel's thought.

From his account of Hegel's evident presuppositions it seemed clear enough to Fichte that Hegel entertained the basis from which a speculative theology could be established: The traditional aim of philosophy was a super-worldly God and this was Hegel's aim in the Logic before God externalizes Himself in nature and spirit.²⁶ But with the culmination of the dialectic in the World Soul Hegel does not go on, as his words had promised, to God as absolute personality. The Logic, therefore, remains at the level of a Weltlehre expounding an Absolute which turns out to be a pantheistic God. Thus, for Fichte, the ambiguity, and a fatal deficiency of the system, is that the whole of God's creation, the world in its innate spirituality and man created in the divine image, is taken for God Himself.²⁷ This outcome is a strongly anomalous one because, as Fichte points out, Hegel took over Schelling's Ideal principle and, as Absolute Spirit, employed it, as Schelling had failed to do, to ground reality. However, the Weltlehre, as the outcome of the Hegelian articulation of Schelling's intellectual intuition of the Absolute, reveals also that the system has not achieved a proper transition to the real or nature. Hegel, therefore, vitiates the Schellingian perspective of nature as the self-revelation of God and the use to which this revelation can be put by a positive philosophy or speculative theology.

How does Fichte justify this criticism? His explanation has
(2) a point of departure in his view of the shortcomings of Hegel's

Phenomenology of Spirit. The Phenomenology should have provided

Hegel with the basis his system needs in both a "realphilosophische" and "erkenntnistheoretische" sense but it fails to do either.²⁸

It presents consciousness as simply its own object unrelated to the given or to existence. The identity of subject and object falls within Wissen itself, pure subjectivity, and within this subjectivity the object is imprisoned. In proceeding in this way Hegel, Fichte asserts, has gone back to the subjective idealism of J.G.

Fichte's principle of Wissen as "die formelle Identität des Ich,"²⁹ which in its operation is simply the agreement of the representations of the consciousness with one another. This approach, in Fichte's opinion, cannot either grasp or deal with the Erkenntnisproblem because it does not show, as that problem requires, how subject and object, the knowing mind and the external truth can be brought into agreement. Yet, as he goes on to note, the correct principle on which the resolution of the Erkenntnisproblem can be based was discovered by Schelling. It lies in the agreement of spirit with nature. It remains therefore for Fichte in his Erkenntnislehre to carry out the task which Schelling overlooked and which Hegel seems to have misunderstood.

But also, in Fichte's view, the concealed presupposition of the Phenomenology and the universal scope which it assumed disqualified it as an Erkenntnislehre and as the introductory part of a system of philosophy. For the history which the Phenomenology relates is not

concerned with the progress of the finite consciousness to absolute knowledge. It is dealing with "das allgemeine Individuum, der Weltgeist."³⁰ Thus, instead of treating the simple erkenntniss-

~~theoretischen~~ question of how subject and object are brought into agreement, the Phenomenology seeks to show how the Weltgeist manifests itself in the objectivity of a spiritual universe which embraces the whole of civilization and its political, social, cultural, educational, religious and scientific developments and institutions. In the process the work expands to assume the dimensions of a complete system of knowledge.

With respect to the question of the transition to the real or nature it will have been noted from Fichte's criticism of Schelling that his approach is influenced and indeed shaped by the way he conceives God's relation to the world, and perhaps the criticism which he so generously addresses to this point of Hegel's Logic can best be understood in this light. Here both the notion of the free creative activity of God in his bestowal of free will, and therefore of an ethical vocation, on His creatures and the positive philosophy are at stake. For the possibility of freedom and ethical vocation are excluded by the deterministic character of Hegel's system and its concept of the Absolute conceived in pantheistic terms. Ambiguity thus surrounds this possibility and the nature of God's creativity. In this latter respect love is presented by Hegel as the truly creating and binding element in all existence. But it is God's love alone even where it is manifested as the individual's response to God. The universe is also to be conceived as created by thought demonstrating the intel-

lectual, self-intuiting power of the Absolute. But this description involves also the notion of a self-conscious Absolute possessing personality whereas Hegel's Absolute never breaks out of the abstract and impersonal concept formed from the categories of his Logic. On this latter basis the transition from the Logic to the Naturphilosophie cannot, Fichte declares, be made.

By its claim to seize the Absolute in the concept and to see the principle of contradiction at work in the real the Hegelian system excludes a positive philosophy as well as the possibility of freedom. In so far as freedom is concerned it will be recalled that Weisse and Fichte denied that the concept could capture the infinite individual variety of actuality and that in this inadequacy of the concept lay the possibility of freedom. Similarly the denial that the dialectic process is at work in the real as well as in the movement of Erkennen in consciousness seems to be essential to the credibility of a key position of Fichte's. This is his view that knowledge of God and of His relation to the world is to be obtained through immersion in the object, a method which in the immediacy of its speculative intuitive character is radically different from the progressive character of the dialectical method. Its relation to this radical difference of approach undoubtedly helps to explain Fichte's almost obsessive pre-occupation with Hegel's category of Becoming in the Grundzuege and it comes to the surface again in his comments on the Phenomenology in the Beitraege. Here Fichte sees Hegel subordinating the immediacy of knowledge to the "becoming" of knowledge as the process, and the only way, it seems, by which absolute knowledge is achieved.³¹ If

consciousness had remained merely an observer of the world in Hegel's treatment of it in the Phenomenology, presumably Fichte could have felt that the dialectical method was being kept within proper limits. The trouble was that in the Phenomenology consciousness projects itself into the world, "das erkennende endliche Subjekt ... als Moment, des substantiellen, als Welt sich auswirkenden." Thus in introducing the principle of Becoming Hegel gives the world the same structure as consciousness.³²

Like the plot of a good mystery novel where the clues point the reader to one conclusion and the chief detective ultimately produces another and surprisingly different conclusion Fichte's comments on Kant, J.G. Fichte and Schelling have, as we have seen, followed this scenario and his treatment of Hegel is no exception. In spite of the far reaching nature of his criticisms of Hegel his verdict finally is a generally favourable one. The fatal ambiguity in Hegel's system which had so concerned Fichte several years earlier is overshadowed in the Beitraege by his expression of agreement with the results of the Hegelian system in their relative truth and within the limits to which Fichte thinks the system should apply. This means for Fichte that the system is true in so far as it goes but it only provides the half of the truth. At its incomplete level it runs the risk of a pantheistic interpretation but, even against this uncomfortable aspect, Fichte finds that the system in its theistic implications contains the possibility of its favourable further development which Fichte produces in his Spekulative Theologie. Fichte believes that

the immanence of God in the world which Hegel has securely and for all time established in the Philosophy of Spirit ranges Hegel definitively on the right side, that is, the side that opposes the Deists. Parenthetically it might be noted that if Hegel's 'God' can be interpreted as transcendent, his ethical opposition too can be more easily rehabilitated. For Fichte the moral imperative needs to be grounded in a transcendent will although at the same that will must divest itself of the abstract character which Hegel gives to the notion of will.³³ Perhaps because his own convictions on the matter were so strong Fichte could see in Hegel the basis for the favourable development. "Wird als Grund der Welt auch nur ein schöpferischer Selbstanschauungsakt 'der absoluten Idee' gelehrt, so ist selbst ein solcher nur denkbar in einem urfaenglich selbstbewussten Geiste, nicht in dem duester unverständlichen Abstractum einer 'Idee'."³⁴ However, as he admits in the Beitraege, Hegel's position was again not free from ambiguity and this ambiguity, he notes, led to the split in the Hegelian school from left and right wings.

Fichte's assessments of the work of Kant, J.G. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel are consistently based on criteria which are related to the main positions and principles of his own philosophical system. Such consistency does not mean that he avoids partiality or ambiguity in his interpretation and judgement of their work and his analysis seems to be vulnerable on these counts where Hegel is concerned. On the one hand he has been unduly selective and harsh

in his treatment of Kant in focussing primarily on the subjectivity of Kant's theory of time and space. On the other hand he maintains a reasonably objective posture towards his father and an equally reasonable balance and philosophical conscientiousness in separating out the wheat from the chaff in the work of Schelling. In spite of the cautiously favourable view Fichte finally reaches, his judgements on Hegel are not always uniform or straightforward and his attitude to Hegel as it emerges at the end of his discussion of Hegel's philosophy is highly ambivalent.

Fichte's final view of Hegel is perhaps most surprising in the light of his passionate defence of the principle of individuality, the central problem of his own system, against the threat to it which he perceived in the Hegelian Absolute. Either the threat was real, in which case the Hegelian and Fichtean positions are irreconcilable; or it was not real and arose simply from an ambiguity in Hegel's thought which, if clarified and interpreted in the right light, would make reconciliation possible. Clearly the latter direction was the way in which Fichte wished to see the matter go. It undoubtedly appealed to his predilection for conciliation and harmony in philosophical and religious thought. On the question of the finite individual a great deal of identity can indeed be found in the positions of the two philosophers. Does that of Hegel involve the annihilation of the human individual? But Fichte admits that Hegel sees the universe actualized only in the individual. Moreover, the Hegelian view that the freedom and inner worth of the individual and

of his full spiritual development becomes possible only in the unity of collective social relations is hardly distinguishable from the situation at the culminating point of Fichte's Ontologie where the individual soul or monad stands in its double relation to other monads and to the Weltseele under the unifying and harmonizing category of Wechselwirkung.

But Hegelian ambiguity is such that the finite individual can be interpreted in a quite different light. As Herbert Marcuse presents it, "the finite has no veritable being ... To say this does not mean that the true being must be sought in a transmundane Beyond or in the inmost soul of man. Hegel rejects such flight from reality as 'bad Idealism'."³⁵ On this interpretation the positions of Fichte and Hegel seem inescapably and radically opposed ... until we remember that Fichte's own position is not free from ambiguity. Has he not indicated in the Spekulative Theologie that the monads in the ideal universe are absorbed in the self-consciousness of God and in that universe they have only a potential status? The absolutes of the two systems may be quite different but there does seem to be a convergence of the two systems in the ultimate fate of the finite individual.

CHAPTER 5

THE LATER PERIOD: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Although the summit of Fichte's philosophical system is presented in the Spekulative Theologie his original aim of a positive, or Realphilosophie failed to find in it complete expression. As Hildegard Hermann points out, Fichte offered in this final part of his system only a very rudimentary sketch of a philosophy of nature and by this time, that is, the middle years of the century, a full treatment may well have seemed too incongruous with the trend of developments in the natural sciences.¹ In any case Fichte's own studies now led him to devote himself to the fields of psychology and anthropology.

Fichte's philosophical inquiries after the appearance of the Spekulative Theologie in 1846 involved a shift of emphasis to the examination of experience and in his works of the following period he repeatedly portrays his mission as simply that of a labourer in the vineyard of empirical research. It could, of course, be said that this mission followed logically from the requirements of a positive philosophy. Such a philosophy demanded a different method, that of the speculative intuitive knowledge, which Fichte regarded as his own innovative contribution to the history of philosophy. As a philosophy of freedom, immersion in the object and unceasing inquiry into the given were basic methodological requirements. For the content

of reality eluded the necessity of the concept and remained, as it were, open-ended in its revelation of a free creative activity. If such considerations gave overriding importance to experience the changed focus of attention meant the return to Kant which he had often advocated and which his further reflections on Kant's thought had convinced him was very necessary and desirable. In an important sense it could also be said that this shift of emphasis away from the a priori was a return to Fichte's youthful preoccupations with practical and human issues of ethics and religion as opposed to abstract, theoretical, philosophical positions and clearly, in this later period, he had not abandoned these interests.

As will be seen, Fichte's earlier philosophical ideas and objectives reassert themselves continuously in the later period. Nevertheless the continuity of his thought with that of his earlier period is more apparent than real and, whatever validity may be attached to it, his claim to have returned to Kant conveys the impression of his own feeling of a misplaced effort in his past work. In fact, while he holds on to a number of philosophical presuppositions and objectives from the earlier period, he develops over the following years what was for him a rather radical change of view on the nature and the scope of philosophical inquiry and, whether justifiably or not, he repeatedly appeals to a Kantian source or inspiration to support a particularly speculative line of thought.

The general philosophical challenge in the later period is still for Fichte the reconciliation of faith and knowledge. With the passing

of the era of system building pantheism no longer seems to pose a major problem and gives way to an overriding concern with the chasm between religion and the contemporary scientific culture. Fichte

is not ashamed to admit in response to his critics that the correct solution means the "Christianizing" of philosophy. Kant had preceded him in this endeavour as had those who immediately followed Kant. But,

in a judgement expressed in 1867 and which must be assumed to apply to

his own attempt in the Spekulative Theologie, Fichte declares that all efforts up to that time had failed.² This judgement marks Fichte's

repudiation, not of the main idea of the Spekulative Theologie which

he still defends, but of the usefulness of system building and hence

his disengagement generally from the influence of Hegel. More explicitly in works published in this year he speaks of system building as stupid

and narrow-minded pretention.³ Singling out Hegel and Schelling he

derides the pursuit of the illusory Absolute, that of an Absolute Reason,

which has been rashly constructed from the a priori rational content of

Kant's theory, which has no relation to the given and is therefore not

real.⁴ In contrast Fichte can claim continuing validity for his

Erkenntnislehre because, following Kant, he took in it his point of

departure from the given, that is, from consciousness.

If systems of absolute knowledge are excluded, what then can philosophy comprehend? As far as method is concerned the speculative intuitive knowledge is relegated to the background and the emphasis is on a scientific inductive treatment of the facts of experience.

The metaphysical deductive approach is often denigrated in Fichte's

later writings and he claims that these works do not rely on a priori

metaphysical presuppositions.⁵ Philosophy cannot claim absolute mathematical certitude and as a universal science it can never be completed. One "must pursue the more modest pathway of drawing a hypothetical conclusion concerning the nature and operations of the universe from facts which lie open to our observation."⁶ This, according to Fichte, is the spirit of the Kantian philosophy and it is within that spirit to give the human soul or consciousness the first and most important place among all the facts of this nature. Thus all philosophical problems must be submitted to the control of psychology.

This changed outlook does not exclude speculation and, as we follow him in his empirical investigations, we have increasingly strong reason to doubt that Fichte has freed himself from his past metaphysical presuppositions and conclusions. He has always argued, he asserts in 1859, that speculation must go back to Kantian principles to find a solid foundation and on that basis only probable conclusions can be drawn.⁷

The appeal to Kant in this context does have some relevance. For, in rejecting the absolute idealism of Schelling and Hegel, Fichte is thrown back to the relative idealism of Kant. But his Grundzuege owed a great deal to Schelling and Hegel and consequently we now seem to be witnessing the self-destruction of Fichte's own system. Fichte is, however, a thinker of infinite resourcefulness. Whatever we may have thought earlier about his exceeding the limits of Kantian caution in the Spekulative Theologie, it ultimately transpires that its main thesis can be supported by the results of Fichte's later empirical investigations. For the Spekulative Theologie, it appears, has followed the

same pattern of inquiry within appropriate speculative limits. It reaches a moral idea of God and it discovers in the moral and religious facts of human nature the premises on which it seeks to comprehend the nature of God, of man and of the universe.⁸

The human soul or consciousness, from which the facts of human nature are obtained, thus remains the focus of attention in the later empirical stage of Fichte's philosophical inquiries. These investigations and their results are set out in two major works, the Anthropologie (1856) and the Psychologie (Volume 1, 1864 and Volume 2, 1873); and in two minor works, Zur Seelenfrage (1859) and the Seelenfortdauer (1867). As Fichte notes in the latter work, his overall aim is to give a complete account of the religious consciousness and to show how deeply the divine spirit enters into the human spirit.⁹ In other words Fichte has not relinquished the search for his own Absolute, the personal God, and for the evidence that will help to establish the immortality of the human soul.

A detailed examination of the four works just mentioned is beyond the scope of this work. However, a brief reference to the more unusual features, difficulties and conclusions of his treatment of their two main themes may bring out more clearly the relationship between the earlier and later periods of Fichte's thought.

Fichte's consideration of the religious consciousness reveals a mood of disenchantment with the usefulness of metaphysical and theological speculation about the concept of God. At the same time his attitude towards such speculation is ambivalent. His approach to his subject is

influenced by the work of Schleiermacher to whom he refers and also defers. The religious consciousness has its source in feeling and feeling, as Fichte has pointed out in the Grundzuege, is not susceptible to metaphysical treatment. Nor does it require any theological grounding. This does not mean, we soon realize, that in the emphasis he now gives to experience the a priori has lost any of its significance for Fichte. For his objective is to establish the a priori nature of feeling, to locate its source in God and to show in the process what he now conceives to be the only adequate and satisfactory proof for the existence and ethical essence of God. Such a demonstration will therefore support what he claims to have presented in the Spekulative Theologie, that is, a moral idea of God.

From Schleiermacher Fichte derived the view that religious faith is grounded on the feeling of dependence on the infinite and in the Seelenfortdauer and the Psychologie Fichte develops his analysis of feeling along similar lines. Feeling, which, he claims, proceeds from a Grundwille or drive of a spiritual nature at the root of the human soul, expresses itself in two mutually interacting and indissolubly linked ways in consciousness. It forcefully makes us aware of our own finiteness, limitation and helplessness and at the same time it gives us the consciousness of our immersion in, and subordination to, an infinite, unlimited and unconditioned being. Both these sides of feeling fuse together to give it the character of an Andachtsgefuehl, a feeling of devotion which has as its object the infinite being. This feeling arises entirely spontaneously and when we trace it back to a cause or source outside consciousness its nature excludes any relation

to a sensual or material object. In these circumstances the Andachts-
gefuehl and the representation of the infinite within our consciousness
cannot have a finite source. It has to be concluded that the religious
feeling is an evidence of the essence and working of God in us.¹⁰

It will be observed that the speculative leap Fichte has
accomplished in his account of religious feeling relies heavily on
supersensible support. Has he not thereby transgressed Kantian
principles? It seems, however, that when we examine the religious
feeling we must also take into account the ethical consciousness
because the two are indissolubly linked and therefore come from the
same source, that is, from God. But it was Kant himself who showed
that it is our consciousness of duty which takes us beyond the sensible
into the supersensible world. "Er findet in der Thatsache einer
'transcendentalen' Freiheit, einer 'causa noumenon', welche den blos
'sinnlich' bewirkten Causalnexus unserer Willensbestimmungen mit der
unwiderstehlichen Macht eines absolut 'Verpflichtenden' durchbricht,
den einzig möeglichen, sogar einzig vollgenuegenden 'moralischen'
Beweis fuer das Dasein Gottes."¹¹

In his investigations relating to the a priori nature and the
independence and immortality of the human soul Fichte proceeds from
the concept of the monad soul which he has expounded in the Grundzuege.
In the course of these inquiries the element of fantasy in human con-
sciousness assumes a great deal of importance and is used to support
his theosophical interpretation of the soul.

In the Psychologie the monad soul in its earth-bound existence is described as the inner or aethereal body which it is Fichte's purpose to show can function independently of the outer organic or corporeal body. This purpose, he acknowledges, ranges all contemporary opinion in psychology and physiology against him. Explaining the physical relation of the inner body to the outer body and to the outside world in general presents, in the light of his theory that time and space apply to the monad soul, the greatest difficulties. One question, for example, is the precise location of the inner body in the outer body. Fichte's answer is that they completely interpenetrate each other and he seems to be unaware that this claim can be given a monistic materialist twist. By this formulation, however, as is undoubtedly his intention, Fichte avoids the problem of dualism in the relation of mind and body and in this connection he rejects the relevance of any notion of pre-established harmony.¹³ But the problem reappears in the question of the relation between consciousness and the outside world. Here, it seems, Fichte sees the need, particularly in the face of contemporary scientific opinion, to protect his fundamental premise, that is, that the monad soul develops according to its inner nature alone. Thus he seems to move noticeably in the direction of a Leibnizian pre-established harmony when he speculates that the only satisfactory explanation must be the existence of a hidden congruence between the internal life drive (Triebleben) of the human spirit and an outer source of excitation or influence. It can also be described as the existence of a reciprocal Parallelismus between all real essences in the world.¹⁴

The foregoing considerations have their relevance particularly to Fichte's desire to preserve the a priori nature of the soul. He considers that he can provide a more substantial support for this view of the soul and establish its independence and immortality if he can show that the connection between the inner and the outer body is in no way indissoluble or necessary. For this purpose he believes it to be sufficient to identify activities of the mind which take place without the cooperation of the sensory apparatus or the brain and which reveal the mind's capacity to operate with elevated intellectual power in such "emancipated states."¹⁵

Fichte, who claims to have relied on the "most extended inductive power," includes among the emancipated states of the mind somnambulism, clairvoyance, second sight, ecstatic visions and related events.¹⁶ Since the mind thus has its roots beyond the world of sense Fichte suggests that communication between all such real existences whether they are located in the sensible world or in a higher region must be possible.¹⁶ This latter conclusion remains only a supposition. However, in the last years of his life Fichte followed closely accounts of such psychical experiments in various countries.

In the Psychologie the world of dreams as an emancipated state of the soul falls, as a subordinate part, under Fichte's treatment of the activity of fantasy. Fantasy provides an important element of continuity. For its activity is expressed in the preconscious, conscious and dreaming states of the soul and it enters into the religious consciousness. In effect fantasy constitutes the self-actualizing

faculty of the soul driving it from its preconscious state upwards to the eventual state of self-conscious spirit. Fantasy finds its ultimate and inexplicable expression in artistic creative genius. Such expression is inexplicable for Fichte in terms other than a feeling of inspiration that there lives in us and through us something which is more than human. This points to an eternal self and also to an ultimate source of inspiration, an individual and personal God.²¹ Feeling in this sense, establishing a channel of communication between the finite individual and the infinite, is indistinguishable from the religious consciousness which attributes to religious feeling this role.

It is in the perspective of the purpose and outcome of Fichte's anthropological and psychological research that his claim to have returned to Kant can best be judged. As in the case of his system building the only common ground seems to lie in an agreed point of departure for philosophical inquiry, that is, in the given, in consciousness. From that point on, the caution which Kant observed in restricting the a priori forms to the finite phenomenal individual and in maintaining intuition within the bounds of sense experience is ignored by Fichte. In both cases Fichte's parameters are radically enlarged. For him it is the a priori eternal individual, whether God or man, which is at issue and experience has a supersensible as well as a sensible content so that, as Fichte himself admits, his treatment of his subject matter has to rely heavily on hypothesis and speculative flight.

We need not, however, conclude that Fichte was insincere in his protestations of Kantian loyalty. The explanation of the ambivalence in his attitude may lie in a failure to come to terms clearly with the evolution in his own position and thinking. Even when Hegel's influence on him was strongest he sought to portray himself as a faithful follower of Kant and to ignore the chasm which had opened up between him and his great mentor. In his later period he had clearly distanced himself from Hegel and his jaundiced remarks about the Hegelian and Schellingian Absolutes are best taken as a reflection of his disenchantment with system building. He deluded himself, however, when he claimed to have remained true to his starting points. This was only partly true: It was his religious convictions to which he remained unswerving in his allegiance.

Fichte was nevertheless prepared to see philosophical positions develop and to believe that later positions could justifiably comprehend and supplement earlier ones. As late as 1869 he characterized the Kantian philosophy as a "half Idealism" to which one retreated from the imperfections of absolute Idealism.¹⁸ But the Kantian view, for Fichte, involved a renunciation of the task of philosophy. The task as he defined it at this time had not really changed. Absolute Idealism had to be purged of its half-baked character and theism raised to the definitive concept of a personal Ursubject. Going back to Kant, therefore, meant, as he had indicated in the Beitraege in 1841, that the future pursuit of a true concept of theism, free from abstraction and from all incomprehensibility, would be conducted through research

into the given, into the facts of human consciousness. Herbert had set the example of such a return to the given and the results of his researches, as indicated above¹⁹ greatly impressed Fichte and were readily assimilable to the trend of his own thought both in the earlier period of his system building and in his later turn towards anthropological and psychological research.²⁰

For Fichte the Monadenwelt of a contemporary thinker like Herbart provided a convenient link to the earlier Leibnizian theory. Fichte never wearied of insisting that his own thought represented the development of what already lay in germ in Kant's philosophical work. Yet he admits that he went back to Leibniz to appropriate ideas which essentially involved a correction of Kant. Leibniz had asserted that the sense world with its arising and passing is not real but is only the connecting and disconnecting of real, imperishable essences and with his concept of the soul Leibniz had demolished the pantheism of Spinoza.²¹ This concept of the eternal monad soul became the fixed and enduring element of Fichte's thought in both the earlier and later periods. Its anomalous combination with an idealist view of philosophizing as a process of development is a distinctive and unusual feature which sets Fichte clearly apart from his contemporaries, and, insofar as system building is concerned, from the main stream of philosophical trends of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 6

RETROSPECTIVE

The revolution in thought which Kant accomplished led to an explosion of system building among his followers. This formidable and ambitious enterprise exhausted itself eventually. In Immanuel Hermann von Fichte it found one of its last and perhaps most imaginative expressions. Fichte's own lifetime of philosophical activity admirably reflects both the last stage in the apparently ineluctable drive to reach a vision of the whole unleashed by Kant's critical philosophy and the subsequent abandonment of it in favour of more pragmatic and empirical methods of philosophizing. Each of the great system builders to whom Fichte looked for inspiration considered himself to be completing the work of Kant, although they all depended greatly on each other's innovating ideas and often on mutually close collaboration. Fichte, who followed them in time, did not disguise his debt to all of them.

In commencing his own philosophical work Fichte had to contend first and foremost with the overwhelming influence and success of Hegel's achievement and with the paramount challenge it posed to his religious convictions and philosophical aims. Nevertheless he was a revisionist, not a counter revolutionary. In dealing with the reigning Hegelianism of the time Fichte's intention was to work within the system in order to bring about the desirable changes in it and what he conceived to be the necessary completion of it. Hegel would undoubtedly have

rejected the outcome of Fichte's effort. But Fichte could plausibly have argued that the framework of his system more truly conformed to the shape which, in Kant's conception, a true science of metaphysics should take: a starting point in a theory of knowledge, based on the given or the facts of the finite human consciousness; then the development of a theoretical and a practical reason with, as befits a philosophy which must become a theosophy, the primacy in their unity accorded to the domain of the practical reason.

It is not, of course, suggested that Fichte's interpretation of an appropriate structure, comprising an Erkenntnislehre, an Ontologie or Formwissenschaft, and a Spekulative Theologie, would have proved any more acceptable to Kant than to Hegel. Indeed, apart from objections which we must assume Kant would have raised to the objectification of the a priori forms and to Fichte's inclusion of the supersensible with the sensible in intuition, Fichte's eclectic genius took him back to the Monadenlehre of Leibniz as a crucial element essential not only for the correction of the Kantian approach but also for the grounding of the principle of individuality which he needed to establish the transcendence of a personal and living God of love and to support the related Christian doctrines of free will, original sin, creation, redemption and the immortality of the soul. In Fichte's view the Hegelian system in its existing incomplete state with its overwhelmingly deterministic character, its apparent suppression of individuality and its pantheistic implications presented the greatest contemporary threat to these positions.

Fichte sought to give his system the existential anchorage which he considered to be lacking in the systems of Schelling and Hegel and which in Hegel's case, particularly, had prevented the Phenomenology from serving the proper purpose of an Erkenntnislehre because of its preoccupation with a universal or world consciousness. It was from a finite consciousness as uniquely the precisely certain and objective beginning that philosophy must launch its speculative pursuit of the Absolute and as self-consciousness, that of the finite individual and ultimately that of a personal God, it becomes the middle and the end also of philosophy. The Erkenntnislehre records the progress of the finite ego to self-knowledge which reveals the presence of the Absolute in consciousness and thus the possibility of the cognition of the Absolute through what Fichte considered to be a distinctive step beyond Hegel and Schelling, that is, the speculative intuitive way of knowing. The unity of thought and being emerged as intended from the Erkenntnislehre. Its basis could, in fact, be traced to the intellectual intuition which his father had discovered but which was then broadened by Schelling to give nature its due and important role in the achievement of a true unity of subject and object. On this basis the categories, arising out of the dialectical movement of the knowing mind, could become the forms and the laws applying to the objectivity of Being. The Ontologie records the genesis of these forms and laws.

Thus the Hegelian dialectic is the method which determines the course of Fichte's Ontologie. But the way things happen in conscious-

ness is not the way they happen in the outside world. Fichte rejected the application of the dialectic to the real world and with it he rejected the ultimate subordination of the content of reality, implied in such an application, to the necessity of the category. Thus the Ontologie became simply a Formwissenschaft which, in its totality, was to furnish the Ideenlehre of the Spekulative Theologie with a complete supporting structure of categories. Applying this structure to the totality of actuality the speculative intuitive consciousness with its unique individual capacity to relate, and immerse itself in, actuality, the latter also being interpreted properly as the expression of individuality, would be in a position to bring God and His creation within the range of its knowing and comprehending activity.

Fichte saw, as indeed he had learned from Schelling, that at the rarified height of consciousness which deals with the totality of actuality, where the principle of contradiction was replaced by the principle of love, the dialectic method had to be replaced by a positive method. Ideally, following the example of Krause, the knowing ego would, as it were, reverse gears and actuality would be subsumed in the Absolute in an objective-synthetic process. It could be argued that this outcome would have restored the dominance of the concept and therefore of its deterministic influence on the system as a whole. In any event the Spekulative Theologie, with its continuing use of an inductive-scientific approach did not pursue this direction. One looks in vain for a clear definition and expression of the positive method. The obscurity which surrounds this question hardly seems unrelated to the fact that the

Spekulative Theologie does not accomplish the complete expression of Fichte's aim of a positive or Realphilosophie.

If a point of departure in the finite consciousness determines the shape of the Fichtean system it also turned out, as Fichte was forced to recognize when he came to write the Spekulative Theologie, to be its weak and vulnerable point. For the finite ego could not be used to bridge the gap to the transcendent consciousness of God, in other words, to achieve a complete concept of the Absolute. Fichte sought to repair the deficiency by associating the realm of nature with the realm of grace. Schelling, he felt, had made such an association possible by establishing the reality of nature and, thereby, of nature's importance as the domain of the self-revelation of God. By proceeding from the given in nature, of which the facts of consciousness were a part, and by taking into account the presumed role of an ultimate purpose in the ordering of the universe and the exercise of will which such a purpose must presuppose, Fichte considered that the concept of an absolute self-conscious personality could be reached.

But God was knowable to the extent that man perceived Him in His self-revelation in the intuitable datum. Moreover, Fichte acknowledged, as he was obliged to do in order to preserve the aspect of transcendence, that there remained an unknowable side to God. Thus by the very nature of this approach the Spekulative Theologie could never aspire to finality. Finality indeed lay only with the speculative intuitive consciousness of God Himself. What remained important for Fichte in the Spekulative Theologie, and what he clung to in the later period when he had come

to discard the usefulness of system building, was its presentation of a moral idea of God. In this retention of an ethical theism is to be found the son's enduring affinity with the father's ethical position and the intellectual intuition on which it was based.

Perhaps the two features of Fichte's system which gave it its peculiarly eclectic character and distinguished it most from the ideas of Kant and from the systems of J.G. Fichte, Schelling and from Hegel in particular were his theory of the monads, and, closely related to the significance of that theory, his interpretation of the forms of time and space. The weight of all the principles which Fichte was defending against the universal, deterministic and impersonal character of the Hegelian Absolute was, in the final analysis, precariously mounted on the individual, eternal and unchanging nature of the monads. The permanent monad in the realm of the real standing over against the permanent God in His ideal realm established in Fichte's system the distinction necessary to support the transcendent character of God and to undermine thereby the pantheistic implications of the preceding Hegelian and other Idealist systems. Yet Fichte blurred this distinction when, as a necessary part of his system, the relation of the infinite and the finite individual had to be accomplished by the rotation of the monad between the ideal and the real realms. The resulting ambiguity compromised the transcendent and anti-pantheistic aspects he wished to confer on his concept of the Absolute. Further, the union of the two realms in a personal God, who, in conformity with the conception of intellectual

intuition he had developed in the Spekulative Theologie, remained beyond the two realms added greatly to the complexity of his concept without removing any of the ambiguity. As an apparent alternative route, his attempt in the Spekulative Theologie to reach a concept of God from the given in nature simply compounded the ambiguity.

Once he had posited the monads as real and unchangeable Fichte was bound to reject the application of the Hegelian dialectic to the real. He thus deprived his system of a principle of development which would have explained the process of change in the world. The alternative, associated with the view of a universe in which nothing came into being or passed away, led him to interpret change as a kind of game of musical chairs in which the monads as part of the process of self-realization in the realm of the real sought to reach with each other the appropriate totality of their interrelationships which, in effect, would be equivalent to the actuality of God in His immanent expression in the world. Since actuality referred only to the individual, that is, to the personal God and to the monad soul, and since time and space, for Fichte, were the universal forms of actuality, the process of change in the world, even if no illusion, had to be considered as governed by a different kind of time and space, non-conceptual in character, and therefore labelled as false time and false space. But the result of this interpretation, which had its particular relevance to the establishment of the Deity as a living and personal entity, would seem to be counter-productive. For, if actuality is

identified with the individual in its eternal aspect, time and space in that state lose their meaning and, as E. von Hartmann points out, the notion of a living God becomes a sham.¹ Fichte complained that his father and Schelling had been influenced by Kant's inadequate theory of time and space and, with Weisse, he criticized Hegel's failure to account for time and space in his dialectic. His own attempt to repair Hegel's omission and to correct Kant, however, presents the most difficult and ambiguous element of his system.

The later period of Fichte's work left his position isolated and his influence limited on the subsequent course of philosophy. The direction his work took constituted in its own way a negative judgement on the results of the work of his earlier period. His Grundzuege attracted no followers. His eclecticism, as illustrated above, offered an unusual mixture which was probably too rich for potential disciples to digest readily. In any event the presuppositions of his philosophical enterprise could not be reconciled with the objective he had set himself. The Absolute, a personal God, had to be transcendent as well as immanent, but if God were truly transcendent He could not be known to the mind of the finite philosopher. In abandoning system building after the Grundzuege Fichte seems to have recognized the impossibility of this situation. Nevertheless the work of his later period is shaped by the same presuppositions and objective. It is scarcely surprising that its outcome suffered a similar fate.

In general Fichte's work in the later period should be considered mainly as a contribution to the discussion and defence of the position of religion in a society increasingly dominated by a secular and scientific outlook. If looked at from this point of view his writings of this period are interesting and relevant mainly for what they have to say about the religious consciousness. From this perspective also we can more easily perceive a strong element of continuity in his thought. For his approach to philosophical inquiry remains dominated by a theological aim and the course of his work and its results were pre-programmed by his theism and his concept of the monad soul. Accordingly his positivism had very little in common with the contemporary scientific positivism. Yet he chose to combat his atheistic and materialist adversaries on their own ground of a scientific inductive investigation of experience. In these circumstances he could not win. Fichte claimed to have established in his psychological and anthropological research what he set out to do. But the scientific community of his time remained unconvinced and sceptical and posterity, by leaving the results of his work in limbo, has rejected his claim. Investigations which relied so heavily on the supersensible and the lengths to which Fichte pressed his interest in them did nothing to enhance his reputation and among his contemporaries in the field of psychological research elicited criticism and incredulity.

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²I.H.v. Fichte, Contributions to Mental Philosophy, Tr. and ed. J.D. Morrell, (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860).

³A. Robert Caponigri, A History of Western Philosophy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), IV, pp. 268-69.

⁴Zeitschrift fuer Philosophie und Spekulative Theologie (Published and edited by I.H.v. Fichte, Bonn, 1837-47).

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⁶I.H.v. Fichte, Grundzuege zum System der Philosophie (Heidelberg, 1836. Rpt. Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1969), II, pp. 11-14.

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¹Vermischte Schriften, p. 32.

²Hildegard Hermann, Die Philosophie Immanuel Hermann Fichtes (Berlin: Inaugural Dissertation, Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1928), p. 2.

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¹Hermann, p. 13.

²Albert Hartmann, Der Spatidealismus und die Hegelsche Dialektik (Berlin, 1937. Rpt. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), pp. 13-20.

³Grundzuege, I, pp. iv-xi, 12-16, 211, 213.

⁴I.H.v. Fichte, Beitraege zur Charakteristik der neueren Philosophie, 2nd. ed. (Sulzbach: J.E. Seidel'schen Buchhandlung, 1841), p. 1044.

⁵Eduard von Hartmann, II, pp. 322-24.

⁶Hermann, pp. 45, 46.

⁷Ibid., p. 48.

⁸I.H.v. Fichte, Neue Systeme und alte Schule, Zeitschrift, II (1838), pp. 264-65.

⁹Hermann, p. 55.

¹⁰See page 25 of this work.

¹¹Hermann, p. 71.

¹²Ibid., pp. 74, 75.

¹³J.McT.E. McTaggart, Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic, 2nd. ed. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 133.

¹⁴Albert Hartmann, pp. 19, 54.

¹⁵F.W.J. Schelling, Of Human Freedom, Tr. J. Gutman, (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1936), p. 41. Hermann, p. 83.

¹⁶Vermischte Schriften, p. xviii.

¹⁷Contributions to Mental Philosophy, p. 5.

Chapter 4:

¹Vermischte Schriften, pp. 52-55.

²Ibid., p. 55.

³Ibid., p. 68.

⁴Ibid., p. 51.

⁵I.H.v. Fichte, Neue Systeme und alte Schule, Zeitschrift,
II (1838), p. 235.

⁶Vermischte Schriften, pp. vi, vii.

⁷Beitraege, p. 209.

⁸Ibid., p. 213.

⁹Grundzuege III, p. 10.

¹⁰Beitraege, p. 227.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 188-89.

¹²Ibid., pp. 518-19.

¹³Ibid., p. 529.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 570-71.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 542-43.

¹⁶Beitraege, p. 586.

- 17 Vermischte Schriften, p. xviii. Beitraege, pp. 517, 580.
- 18 Beitraege, p. 593.
- 19 Vermischte Schriften, p. 52.
- 20 Beitraege, p. 606.
- 21 Ibid., p. 624.
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- 27 Albert Hartmann, p. 168.
- 28 Beitraege, p. 808.
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- 31 Ibid., p. 798.
- 32 Ibid., 1027.
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- 35 Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 138.

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²I.H.v. Fichte, Die Seelenfortdauer und die Weltstellung des Menschen (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1867), p. vii.

³Vermischte Schriften, p. vii.

⁴Contributions to Mental Philosophy, p. 88.

⁵I.H.v. Fichte, Die neuere Spiritualismus (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1878), p. 2.

⁶Contributions to Mental Philosophy, p. 122.

⁷Ibid., p. 113.

⁸Ibid., p. 121.

⁹Die Seelenfortdauer, p. xxxix.

¹⁰Ibid., p. xvi. I.H.v. Fichte, Psychologie (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1864-73), pp. 375-76.

¹¹Die Seelenfortdauer, p. xxviii.

¹²Contributions to Mental Philosophy, p. 81.

¹³Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁴Vermischte Schriften, p. 29.

¹⁵Contributions to Mental Philosophy, p. 80.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 21, 22.

¹⁸Vermischte Schriften, p. 144.

¹⁹See pages 22-24 of this work.

²⁰I.H.v. Fichte, Ueber Gegensatz, Wendepunkt und Ziel heutiger
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p. 1045.

²¹Vermischte Schriften, p. 8.

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