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6. In *The Gift of Death*, trans. D. Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), Derrida defines this as "the moment when the soul is not only gathering itself in preparation for death but when it is ready to receive death, giving it to itself" (40).


8. Rebecca Comay, "Dead Right: Hegel and Terror," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103: 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 376.


14. It is the strongest degree of "absolute subjectivism" (in contrast to hypocrisy) that persistently marks the policies of the Bush administration and, most conspicuously, its politico-theological slant. Above and beyond trying to convince others in the truthfulness of its self-representation as the force of and for the Good and as the embodiment of freedom and morality, the administration (or, at least some of its members including the President) sincerely believes in the accuracy of this representation and, as a result, feels justified in its own eyes. Cf. Robert Wright's editorial, titled "Faith, Hope and Clarity," in the October 28, 2004, issue of the *New York Times* for a curious analysis of Bush's certainty and "optimism."


16. Karl Marx, *The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. A. Jolin and J. O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 42. Here, Marx undoubtedly refers to a growing revolutionary sentiment that would produce a failed experience of the Paris Commune several years after the composition of the *Critique*. For our purposes, suffice it to say that the ultimate irony of this theoretical finale is that, instead of bringing dialectical development to its logical conclusion, the fulfillment of the "intrinsic conditions" for German emancipation through the inner determinations of the Idea actualized in the German state is outweighed by the external crowning of the "Gallic cock," calling for the emancipation of a different kind altogether.


lecture seminars, which were delivered in Freiburg and Marburg, can easily sense a Fichtean radicalism and revolutionary spirit in Heidegger. Indeed, particularly the concepts that Heidegger later introduces in section II of Being and Time not only remind us of the presence of Kierkegaard, Luther, and St. Paul in Heidegger’s world; rather, his focus on decision, action, and resolution lead systematically back to Fichte’s primacy of practical reason presented a century earlier. Although in the form of explicit confrontations Heidegger dealt more with Schelling and Hegel in his works, Heidegger’s early philosophy, which emerged out of the philosophy of life, out of Christian philosophy and out of Neo-Kantianism, shows an astonishing nearness to a Fichtean conception of subjectivity when conceived from a structural point of view. The concept of life in German philosophy during the nineteenth century goes (partly) back to Fichte, and the tradition that determines Heidegger’s worldview in general Lutheran. In addition to these roots, this train of thought could also lead us to the most obvious connection between Heidegger and Fichte, which is to be found in their political philosophy, as it is presented by Fichte in his Reden an die Deutsche Nation (1806) and Heidegger’s Die Selbstbehauptung der Deutschen Universität (1933). Much could be said about the connection between philosophy, the role of universities, higher education and the public reflection on national fate within the tradition of German thought, especially as represented by Fichte, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Humboldt, and Heidegger, all of whom were presidents of German universities at some point of their careers. In this essay, however, I am not so much concerned with the political and educational aspects of the Fichte-Heidegger relationship, especially since I think that such an elaboration first requires a careful philosophical analysis of the concept of action and decision that both philosophies imply. Accordingly, in this essay I will outline the latter, though I will not explain Heidegger’s interpretation of Fichte’s Wissenschaftslehre, which he delivered in 1929; rather, I shall attempt to shed light on the central practical concepts both in Heidegger’s existentialism and in Fichte’s idealism which come to the fore as long as we are willing to merge both perspectives and to take notice of Fichte’s “proto-existentialism.” The task, then, should be seen as consisting in a reconsideration of the phenomenological-hermeneutical “existential” point of view, in the light of idealism (and the other way around).

Let me first outline the basic context from which my considerations start. Fichte tries to show in his System der Sittenlehre (1798) that Kant’s moral philosophy is not radical enough because he does not analyze the inner speculative conditions and structures of certain concepts, such as conscience, duty, the categorical imperative, and freedom. According to Fichte, the categorical imperative (Sittengesetz) is not only a normative principle that can be conceived as the guiding clue for determining right and wrong, it is also an ontological category since our existence—if thought of in a speculative way—is itself determined by it. Our empirical consciousness, or, as Fichte calls it, the “facts” of consciousness, only be philosophically clarified when we refer to their fundamentally normative grounds. Accordingly, we understand ourselves, so to speak, always in relation to the Sittengesetz and not, as one might think, only in exceptional situations. T Sittengesetz, as Fichte puts it in his Sittenlehre, is the “final definition [Bestimmung of one’s essence” (GA I, 564). In addition, in his Wissenschaftslehre of 1794/95 at in his Sittenlehre Fichte’s intellectual intuition, the absolute identity of subject and object, is ultimately transformed into a practical concept, within which the unity and identity of subjectivity and self-consciousness is conceived as a for and striving towards this identity. Put simply, conscience and consciousness are intertwined in Fichte’s philosophy. It is this ontological dimension that should remind us of the Heideggerian analysis, which tries to show that an agent must understand herself in relation to the possibility of being resolute, which determine our existence and its disclosedness as such. Indeed, we find the same structure in Heidegger’s Being and Time: the self can not be conceived as a punctual identity, into which all categories collapse; rather, it must be re-described as a practice, which becomes established as this unity by the fundamental practical and dynamic structure of life itself.

Both Fichte and Heidegger, though from different philosophical frameworks and with different results, address this practical moment by developing [1] an non-epistemic concept of certainty, in connection with [2] a temporal analysis of the conditions of action, which leads to the primacy of the future in their analyses. Both [1] and [2] shed light on their concept of subjectivity, and on the concept of freedom.

In what follows, I will try to reconstruct the problem of practical subjectivity within the framework of Heidegger’s and Fichte’s theories in four steps: I will first analyze Fichte’s first thesis that the concept of action requires a non-propositional form of certainty (=faith), I shall then deal with Fichte’s second thesis that this non-propositional form of certainty must be further understood as a relation towards a future situation of reason and world (=moral world order). Afterwards, I will deal with Heidegger’s first thesis that resoluteness requires a non-propositional form of certainty (=being certain), which leads to his second thesis that this form of certainty must be understood as a relation towards the future of existence (=death). These four theses are prefaced by my introductory reflections, in which I attempt to clarify Fichte’s and Heidegger’s basic ontological assumption about the being of the “I” (Fichte) and the being of Dasein (Heidegger). The ontological frame and the four theses will lead me, finally, to the proposal to merge both perspectives into what I would like to call “existential idealism.” As we will see, Fichte’s and Heidegger’s practical philosophies can be taken as two sides of the same coin. Taking them this way provides a perspective which opens up a new paradigm for reflections in this area.
SELF AND SUBJECTIVITY IN FICHTE AND HEIDEGGER

The aforementioned outline of the following considerations on Fichte and Heidegger deserves further clarification, given that it is likely that most scholars who operate within the Heideggerian or the Fichtean paradigm might not be convinced by the claim that Heidegger’s and Fichte’s notion of the self have more than nominal similarities in common. However, given the following structural elements, the aforementioned position should be revised:

[1] Dynamic Concept of Subjectivity

One of Heidegger’s attacks on the tradition is the claim that thinkers before himself have thought the “subject” and “subjectivity” in the form of something that is present-at-hand (BT, 150). In doing so, they have confused the status of entities that understands entities with the entities that are understood by that entity that understands entities. Exemplarily, Heidegger criticizes Descartes (for example, HCT, §22) for having made this mistake. Interestingly, it is precisely this same claim about ontological self-confusion that Fichte makes in his considerations that are to be found in his popular works (IWL, 26), when he claims that Idealism conceives subjectivity as a form of doing, by which he simply means that subjectivity is not a present-at-hand entity that stands over against something.

[2] Self-Consciousness

One could believe that Heidegger overcomes the primacy of the for-itself and self-consciousness in Being and Time. However, this observation is not convincing, since Heidegger mirrors Fichte’s claim that the immediate self-having of the intellect has absolute priority over every relation towards entities that are not defined by intelligence with his claim that subject-affection in the form of Befindlichkeit is absolutely prior to affection through something in the world. Attunement, according to Heidegger, “makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something” (BT, 176). In addition, disclosiveness, taken as Heidegger’s phenomenological term for self-consciousness, is prior to and the very condition of the possibility for any relation towards worldly things. In §28 of Being and Time, Heidegger explains that due to its disclosiveness, Dasein, “together with the Being-there of the world, is 'there' for itself” (BT, 171; emphasis mine). As Heidegger further explains in §34 Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, subjectivity in its essential form (time) should be conceived as “pure” self-affection, the same immediacy of which Fichte conceives as a form of self-feeling: “I sense myself,” as Fichte puts it, “not in the object, for I am myself and not the object; I therefore sense only myself and my condition, and not the condition of the object” (VM, 31). This is precisely Heidegger’s starting point, too. Given this absolute priority of subjectivity/Dasein (which, for Heidegger, can be traced back to time), Heidegger remains (up until 1928) clearly a transcendental idealist and anti-naturalistic philosopher.¹⁰

Existential Idealism?

[3] Practical Subjectivity

Fichte differentiates himself from Schelling and Hegel especially through radical conception of practical reason and practical subjectivity, which led him finally, (at least around 1800) to an almost anti-intellectualist philosophy. I “point of departure” as he emphatically states in his Vocation of Man, is “I will, not the intellect” (VM, 72). Though Heidegger is much more ambivalent regarding the position of the will and action, especially after the “Kehre,” should not forget that the term “for-the-sake-of which” determines the wholeness of Dasein and leads Dasein “into action,” in German clearly indicia a form of willing (wollenwillen). In addition, as Heidegger states in §41, “in the phenomenon of willing, the underlying totality of care shows through” (BT, 31). Finally, (still) in 1931, Plato’s “Cave Allegory” is interpreted as a radical form of self-liberation, and Kant’s practical philosophy is welcomed in its central notion of self-willing (EHF, 109).

Given these points, which, admitted, do not cover all aspects of the notion of subjectivity in Fichte and Heidegger, it should become clear why it seems reasonable that a more careful consideration of the structural kinship of Fich and Heidegger is needed. The following reflections are just the starting point for such a project.

FICHTE’S ONTOLOGICAL PREMISE: THE EGO IS NOT AN OBJECT

Let me proceed with outlining Fichte’s ontology of the ego, the analysis of which will lead us to see that Fichte’s basic assumptions about the being of the ego as radical in spirit as Heidegger’s assumption about the being of Dasein. In order to understand Fichte’s conception of action and decision in confrontation with Heidegger’s position, it is necessary first to recall his general conception of the nature of the ego, as it is of importance for the further elaboration of Fichte’s theory, and because it implicitly steers the whole debate both in Fichte and, as we will see later, in Heidegger. As Fichte maintains in his discussions of the relation between idealism and dogmatism, especially within his First and Second Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre (1797/98), the nature of the “I” cannot be conceived as something that “is” the way things are. Put in Kantian terms, the categories of thinking cannot be applied to the ego because the “I” in the form of the transcendental apperception is not an appearance (Erscheinung) and, hence, not a representation (Vorstellung). I shall briefly outline Fichte’s position.

Both dogmatism and idealism are based on the same conceptual distinction, namely, the distinction between thing and intelligence (being and activity, Tun), though the dogmatist does not admit that all philosophy must operate within this difference. Instead, the dogmatist tries to explain intelligence (the free thinking activity of the “I”) as an effect of the objective world (the thing in itself). However,
as Fichte argues, the attempt to explain intelligence and the thinking activity of the ego as something that is an effect or result of an objective process, material cause, or whatever else we might think of in this context, already presupposes what it tries to explain, namely, that there is such a thing as thinking and free activity. This activity appears as what the dogmatist wants to explain as an effect of something else. In other words, the “I” in the form of intelligence must show up first, before we are able to explain it as an effect of being. An explanation of something presupposes that what the explanation is an explanation of already shows up. This is, of course, a classical idealist argument: if we want to explain self-consciousness through empirical or material causes then we already presuppose two things, namely [1] that there is something that can be explained in a material way, as well as [2] that we are in some form or another acquainted with what should be explained in a dogmatic way. Fichte’s argument, as Pippin has put it, shows “why a subject must judge that all objects of its experience are in, say, a causal relation to others is still an argument about how a subject construes or determines itself.”11 Accordingly, the dogmatist already knows something about her own thinking activity and must presuppose what she wants to deny. This is what Fichte famously introduced as the “intellectual intuition,” by way of which the act of thinking “knows” about itself, independent from things, world, and the thing in itself (IWL, 14/43/46). The intellectual intuition is the ultimate reason for the primacy of the intellect, before the intellect can refer to something that it is not, it must be acquainted with itself. As Fichte writes:

The intellect as such, observes itself, and this act of self-observation is immediately directed at everything that the intellect is. Indeed, the nature of the intellect consists precisely in this immediate unity of being and seeing. Everything included within the intellect exists for the intellect, and the intellect is for itself everything that it is; only so far as this is true is the intellect what it is, qua intellect. (IWL, 20–21)

What follows from the assumption that by means of an intellectual intuition the thinking “I” is absolutely identical with itself (being=seeing)? What follows is simply this: the idealist must, against the dogmatist and empiricist, maintain that the “I” in the form of thinking has a privileged access to itself that cannot be compared to the form of access that the “I” has to something that it is not (e.g., things). If, in addition, it is true that this immediate and absolute unity with itself is, as Fichte claims, the nature of the ego, then it follows that we have to maintain a crucial ontological distinction that infinitely separates the “I” from everything else, making it impossible to conceive it as an object. Accordingly, in every reflection on this “I,” the non-objectifiable unity is presupposed. In other words, the theoretical reflection about the ego presupposes that the “I” is not something that we make into an object through our reflection; rather, what “I” am when I think about “me” (as being thought) is something that is, as Fichte shows in the first section of the Wissenschaftslehre 1794/95, not just “there.” Instead, the “I” car identified with pure activity, for, in Fichte’s language, the “I” is not being. Or, in the words of Fichte’s Science of Knowledge, its being is its activity: for it is p life.12 This activity must always be presupposed, but it can never be represen (vorgestellt) in thought, for it is not an object for thinking in the way that thin are objects for acts of thinking. Accordingly, we must “know” about the “I” i non-conceptual way, which Fichte determines as an intellectual intuition. ccording to Fichte, we “know” through an intellectual intuition of the absoh status of the ego that it is not determined through objects, and that by means its absolute status the ego determines the being of objects. This thought has t consequences: it forbids us to think the “activity” and the non-being of the “I” a property of the ego, since any reflection on properties presupposes the categorization framework and, hence, representation of the ego in thought. From this it follo that the “I” is not “something,” it is not being, and it does not exist in the form of: empirical thing. The “I” is not something “real”; rather, it constitutes itself all ti in a dynamic relation towards itself. Hence, according to Fichte, the radic philosopher must maintain a double position. On the one hand, every thought about the ego, necessarily, objectifies this ego and transforms it into being. For example, in this essay I talk about the ego as if it is something that we can referto as we refer to other things in our world. On the other hand, this objectificpresuposes—as thinking and intelligence—the immediate unity with itself which escapes any attempt to objectify it. For example, while I am talking about the “I,” the ego itself has to perform these thoughts.13 Consequently, for Fichte the ego must be thought of from two different angles: on the one hand, the concept of the ego is that which we produce in our thinking about it, while on the other hand, the ego is that which it ideally does as being presupposed in what we do when we reflect about ourselves (see GA I, 2, 274). The “I” in its thinking activity is both performance (absolute activity) and performed (thought of) at the same time. This split between two aspects of Fichte’s radical reflection and his thinking about the “I.” leads him to his practical philosophy, for it is clear that we cannot claim that the “I” is really two things at the same time; rather, we are forced to maintain that there is only one ego. At the end of the considerations about theoretical reason we are left, therefore, with the problem of how to think about the unity and identity between the ideal and real part of the “I.” Fichte reconstructs this theoretical problem in practical terms, first in section 5 of his Wissenschaftslehre (1794/95), after which he further elaborates this problem in his Sittenlehre (1798), and, finally, in his popular writings.

Fichte starts out his reflections on ethics and morality in the same way we reconstruc the problem between dogmatism and idealism. Fichte writes: “Reason is not a thing, which is there and exists; rather, it is activity [Tun], mere, pure activity [Tun]” (GA I, 5, 68). Here, we can see that Fichte conceives
broader terms in his popular writings. For example, what Fichte in philos-

phical language tries to deduce in his Sittenlehre becomes part of his philos-

phic religion in his popular writings; for, according to Fichte, the everyday relig-

ious consciousness is just the transformation of what the philosopher reconstru-

cts in rational terms into the everyday consciousness. The concepts of ought a

Sollen within the sphere of morality become “visible” at the level of the facts

of conscious as faith, since the phenomenological features of faith imply the f

owing: [1] faith requires a certainty that is beyond the certainty of proposto-

beliefs, [2] faith is a conviction rather than a rational or logical conclusion, [3]

faith is the conviction that one’s own capacity to act morally is a real possib-

ility in this world, and, finally, [4] faith opens up a temporal future horizon for t

gent. We shall further explain these four elements next.

Every action presupposes a form of force, a “necessitation” in Kantian terms.

Whenever an impulse or “drive” to act occurs, a moment that we could expres-

with “I must act,” or “I ought to act” is in play. 74 Seen from a Fichteian point of v

we must reconstruct this force of our actions and our consciousness of actions e

s “n”-negative, since what it really expresses is the thought that we are not allowed to

take the world as a mere appearance within the ego: “It is impossible to deduo

activity [Tun] from being as we would transform the former into mere appearance

but I am not allowed to [ich darf nicht] conceive it as appearance” (GA I,5,65). Th

analysis of the concept of action and activity, according to Fichte, leads us to admi

and to confirm that there is more than what can be explained by theoretical reason

Understanding the possibility of actions presupposes a concept of confirmation

(Billigung, GA I,5,137), which appears in the form of “this should be done,” “this is ri

ght,” or “I must do this,” which is experienced by theagent as a call for or a clai

m (Forderung, Anforderung, GA I,5,138) that accompanies the action. Put di

derently, everything that we do is accompanied by a confirming normative self-

consciousness. This consciousness is called by Fichte “conscience,” which litera

ly means “knowledge-with” (cum scientia, see my remarks later in this essay). Pu

in psychological terms, our conscience is “the immediate consciousness of that

without which there would not be consciousness; it is the awareness of our higher

nature and absolute freedom” (GA I,5,138). What Fichte has in mind here is simply

this: the internal, speculative reconstruction of consciousness and action, as we ha

said, comes to a point at which the real status of freedom remains unclear.

How do I know that freedom is not a mere chimera and, in Fichte’s words, a mere

appearance? How do I know that freedom is not an illusion and only something

that belongs to my “inner” world? Fichte’s answer is very powerful: we never kno

w in a propositional form whether we are free or not, and we will never find a th

eoretical proof for the reality of freedom; rather, something must lead and forc

us to believe—as a presupposition for every action we take—that freedom is mor

more than mere appearance and belongs to the real world. 75 At this point of ou

Fichte’s First Thesis: Action Requires Non-Epistemic Certainty

As is well known, Fichte draws a distinction between the so-called popular works and the Wissenschaftslehre. What Fichte tries to deduce in purely rational terms and what is carried out as a speculative theory of reason becomes analyzed in
reconstruction of Fichte's theory, it is important to note that we should slightly change the terminology. In German there is only one word for belief and faith, which is Glaube. Thus it is not without reason that Fichte speaks of “an article of faith” in what I quoted above (GA I,5,65). Indeed, if we are to follow Fichte up to this point, “faith” is identical with the agent’s conviction that freedom is not a mere chimera and appearance. “I am unable,” as Fichte states in On the Basis of our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World, “to doubt this freedom and this determination thereof, at the same time, renouncing myself” (IWL, 147).

However, exactly is the status of this conviction? Above all, we must explain how this conviction is a form of “force,” which for Fichte has to do with the status of the moral law (Sittengesetz). For the everyday consciousness, the moral law appears in the form of faith in the reality of freedom and in the possibility of right and wrong (morality). For the philosopher, the moral law is nothing else than our conviction that there is freedom. “I ought to posist my freedom,” as Fichte puts it, “as the ground of an actual [wirklichen] action” (GA I,5,139). Accordingly, for the philosopher “faith” and “conviction” is the expression of the normative force that the moral law has over the agent (see IWL, 147).

Let us further inquire into the nature of the conviction and the required positng act that is necessary for a rational reconstruction of the concept of action. The belief in the reality of freedom has a striking feature: “I am unable to possibly believe that my conviction is wrong [irrig]” (GA I,5,152). For, as Fichte argues, if I would believe—in the very moment of an action—that I should not do what I am doing in this moment, I would not act. I would, so to speak, become a skeptic about my own possibility to act, and ultimately the impulse to act would disappear. Actions, therefore, presuppose that the agent is convinced in the moment of her action that she believes that her action is right and—at least for the moment of decision—she is free from any doubt. Put simply, the agent must believe that her action is right in the moment in which she acts. In Fichte’s words, the agent’s action presupposes her conviction and a basic trust in her own conscience. For the philosopher this is identical with faith in the moral law itself. To repeat the main point: although after her action she might come to the conclusion that her action was wrong, at the moment of the act she must be convinced that there is a real possibility of acting in a right and hence a moral way. Action without the conviction that morality is real, is impossible.

This principle, as Fichte admits, is merely formal (GA I,5,154–155), because the moral law itself does not contain any (propositional) content. The moral law only calls for action per se. It only demands the action itself, in the form of the command “act!” The other side of this coin is the agent’s conviction of the inner righteousness of the action. Accordingly, conscience for Fichte is not an inner voice or a psychologically determined experience; rather, it is the very condition that is in play when we want to understand how agents bring themselves to act.

In other words, it is the awareness of the practical nature of the “I” itself. As Fichte puts it in his Sittenlehre, it is “the immediate awareness of our pure origin above which no other awareness is possible; it cannot be proved or corrected another reflection” (GA I,5,161).

Having clarified this belief we should now go one step further and note that it is impossible to understand this belief as a propositional belief, for a propositional belief in the form of “X believes that ‘p’” can be wrong. However, if we want to understand the necessary transcendental condition of actions, then we must claim, according to Fichte, that the action is ruled by a belief that cannot be doubted in the moment of an action. The nature of the conviction, therefore not a belief, but a form of practical certainty, namely faith. The reason for this is the following: If the agent would have doubts about her action when she is able to act, she would reflect on the rightness or wrongness of her action. Accordingly, her consciousness would be split into two levels, where the second level would be the object of the first level of consciousness. Such a consciousness would merely be a form of doubt, inasmuch as doubt is a reflective second order consciousness about one’s beliefs. For example, if I really (and not only hypothetically) doubt in this very moment whether my writing this essay is the right thing to do, then I would ask myself in the form of a second order consciousness whether my first order consciousness is right or wrong. Accordingly, the certainty that is required for knowledge is not a form of propositional knowledge; rather, it is, as Fichte nicely says in his Vocation of Man, a belief that “applies knowledge” (WI,6,25; and transforms knowledge into something indubitable.

In addition, the difference between the doubting consciousness and the doubted consciousness would introduce a temporal delay and a hesitation, which would postpone my action for at least a minimal moment. Real doubt, in another word, would, perhaps just for a second, make me not act. A postponed action, however, we conceive of the time gap that it introduces, is not an action. Hence, if we wish to transcendently understand the agent’s consciousness, we must claim that in the moment of action this reflective moment is impossible. Conviction necessarily implies immediate action, it does not “allow delay” (GA I,5,180).

Let us now move to the last step of our reconstruction of Fichte’s theory of action namely to the future temporal dimension of the non-propositional certainty that has thus far only been introduced, and to Fichte’s claim that this future moment can be explained as faith in a moral world order that transcends one’s individual life. Both [1] faith, as well as [2] faith in the future reality of the inner righteousness are the main conditions of the possibility of actions, according to Fichte.
Fichte's Second Thesis: Non-Epistemic Certainty Requires an Understanding of the Future as Moral World Order

Every reflection about actions requires some reflection about goals or consequences that are part of the concept of an action. The difference between the action and the result of the action further leads to the introduction of a temporal moment, as the realization of freedom can only be thought of as happening in the future. Accordingly, we must explain how the agent relates herself towards this moment of future. Put differently, how should the self-understanding that is involved in this relation be conceived? The first moment that Fichte points out goes back to his discussion of faith as the inner trust in the agent's conscience, namely the agent's faith in the realizability of the action and her goals. Put in Fichte's words, "I at the same time posit that it is possible to accomplish this goal through real acting" (IWL, 148). The difference between the action and the future moment of goals and consequences, therefore, can be narrowed down to a reflection on what is necessary for faith in the accomplishment of the action. The self-understanding implies that the goal that an agent posits as determining the action must be thought of as not yet realized, but as realizable in the future. We know that positing the realizability of this goal is constituted through a form of faith. However, the second element deserves further clarification. In this vein, Fichte writes: "I am unable to possibly believe that my conviction is wrong (irrig), or to believe that it is wrong for an infinite period of time [Existenz]" (GA 1,5,153). What Fichte introduces within his practical philosophy is an "existential" moment, namely, time; for he claims that the concept of right and wrong—if connected to the concept of action—cannot be conceived as a mere logical universality in which the agent must necessarily trust. Rather, practical self-consciousness presupposes that the agent believes that the action that she takes is not only right in the moment in which it is realized, but moreover, right after the action was realized. For example, when an agent saves a drowning child, in the moment of her impulse to act she is unable to believe that this impulse will be wrong tomorrow or in any alternative world. In a letter Fichte uses an extremely helpful example in order to further explain his point. In this example he asks us to suppose that someone wants to engage herself in the action of sowing seeds. This action will not be taken for the mere sake of sowing seeds, however; rather, the action will be taken in view of a certain goal, namely, the goal of harvest. The difference between the present action of sowing seeds and the future result forces the agent into a strong belief in the fruitfulness of her action, a belief which is, according to Fichte, the "necessary condition for the future harvest" (IWL, 168). In other words, if the agent would not unite the present and the future within one temporal horizon through her action, the action could not be realized, since the agent must have “confidence” (IWL, 168) in an order that will lead to the wished results. Since in the moment of action the consequences are incalculable, which is to say, that they do not refer to any condition, the agent must have faith that ultimately the action will be right tomorrow as well, even if the consequences do not turn out as intended, and even if the action was performed out of duty. According to Fichte the agent must have trust in the future prosperity of the inner righteousness of her actions, since this is what connects the agent with future generations after her own individual life. A good will, in other words, can only be good if it is not only thought of as being right in all times, but also as being right for everyone in all future times. Fichte goes far beyond Kant at this point, inasmuch as he transforms the universality that is thought in Kant's theory (only in an abstract sense) into a concrete we within a historical horizon. This could be conceived as a first step towards Hegel's transformation of Fichte's subjective Idealism. The force and necessity of the action, and what I have explained as the inner certainty of the agent's action, can only be explained by the conviction of the agent that the action is right for all future. The visibility of this for us in every moral action can only be thought of, according to Fichte, as a reference to what comes after the individual agent's life has ended. The consequence of this thought is that the agent must, to use a Heideggerian term, "awaken" the future within her present situation. We must conclude that it is the phenomenon of time in Fichte's theory that shifts the focus away from Kant's moral theory.

Heidegger's Ontological Premise: Dasein is Not an Existent (Vorhandenes)

Although one might think that Heidegger rejects Fichte's Idealism, in his lecture seminar on Fichte and German Idealism in 1929 he positively reacts to Fichte's philosophy. Fichte's basic ontological assumptions, as he states in his lecture seminar, "display a deep insight into the whole" (GA28,110). We shall first outline the fundamental kinship between Heidegger's and Fichte's philosophies, which can be found in their ontological assumptions regarding subjectivity. Heidegger, as is well known, tries to shift the focus within the theory of subjectivity to a practical and non-epistemic theory of the self and its understanding. Prior to epistemic self-understanding, according to Heidegger, there is a non-epistemic and non-reflective acquaintance with ourselves that can be described by hermeneutic phenomenology, which is worked out in detail in Being and Time. As Heidegger shows in his early writings, the idea of a substantial ego and 'I' should be modified, especially since our understanding of the self in its everyday life is the opposite of an understanding of itself as itself. This is because in our everyday life we usually understand ourselves as and out of what we are not. Self-understanding is—as Heidegger puts it in one of his early lectures—"blurred" (diesig), which is to say that usually we are not faced directly with our own being and our own self. In
this vein, Heidegger writes: "The Self of everyday Dasein is the they-self, which we distinguish from the authentic Self—that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way [eigens ergriffen]. As they-self, the particular Dasein has been dispersed into the ‘they,’ and must first find itself" (BT, 167). The German word "ergriffen" (= to take hold of) means to realize a possibility or chance.

Since usually we are not faced with what we are as what we are, we must continuously re-assure ourselves of our own identity and our own being, which means that someone becomes one’s own and gets hold of one’s is in an ongoing struggle over one’s status as a self. Here Heidegger’s shift within the theory of subjectivity becomes immediately clear: the question of what I am can no longer be solved within a propositional and epistemological paradigm; rather, being oneself—being a self—is a practical task, a call and a temporal process, and not a theoretical piece of knowledge. Put differently, usually we are not aware of our own practical nature (though we are practical). It is not given to us, the consequence of which is that we can only be aware of it when our ability to act and our ability to determine ourselves. Put simply, the self as self (=authenticity) is only in its being a self, which is to say, while performing self-determining actions. I will come back to this point, for we will see that this structure is the existential expression of what Fichte reconstructed within the idealistic paradigm.

In his lecture on Fichte, Heidegger compares his own project with Fichte’s project and claims that Fichte has already seen the special ontological status of ourselves as beings that cannot be conceived as being part of entities that just exist (vorhanden); rather, Fichte’s reflection on the "I" in his Wissenschaftslehre should be conceived as the attempt to show that the being of the subject is not identical with being a present-at-hand (vorhanden) entity. Heidegger explains Fichte’s concept in his own terms in the following way:

My being free is not a property present-at-hand; rather, my being free is only in my self-liberation.... My being free is not given in me; rather, it is assigned over [aufgegeben] to me.... This being assigned over is my specific being as I, that is as ‘I act.’ (GA 28, 112)

What Heidegger finds fascinating in Fichte is precisely Fichte’s ontology of subjectivity, which I have explained above. Fichte’s absolute primacy of the active intelligence and their inner practical tension leads to a breakdown of a concept of self-identity in simple, empirical or theoretical terms, and in its place the ego must be conceived as a relation, within which it dynamically constitutes its own being in the form of relating itself towards its “ideal” identity, which in Fichte is addressed as the “ideal” component of the ego, while in Heidegger it is addressed as authenticity. The self, in both Heidegger and Fichte, is not a “punctual” self; rather, it is only in its becoming a self through its determination (WI, 2.277). The self’s activity must not be conceived as a property of this ego, for the substance—property model of subjectivity objectifies it and misses its true ontological status, which is it’s difference from things. Accordingly, the self, as Heidegger maintains, cannot be conceived as something present-at-hand (vorhanden); instead, we must acknowledge that it is and exists only by way of relating itself towards it’s in the form of possibilities (see GA 28, 114).

Famously, Heidegger says in Being and Time: “Dasein is an entity which do not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it” (BT, 32). The important point here, as also Fichte maintains, is that we must reconstruct the self as a confrontation with itself, which must be differentiated from a formal “relation” between tv present-at-hand things. Though we come to the limits of our language, the use of the term “relation” is inappropriate, because it presupposes two objectified sides of what the “relation” is a relation of. However, it is exactly this objectificational that both Fichte and Heidegger try to avoid in their thinking about subjectivity. It is not only the case that we operate with a simple dualism between Dasein at Vorhandenes or, in Fichte, between intelligence and objects; rather, the dualism is a dualism conceived from an idealistic point of view, for this dualism is itself in a very “relation” that constitutes Dasein. In other words, there is not simply a distinction between Dasein and entities; alternatively, the distinction between Dasein and entities is at the very core of how Dasein understands itself, namely, either: as something present-at-hand (objectified, fixed) or as facticity (non-relation) temporal, see BT, 174). Dasein, in different words, (actively) distinguishes itself from things by virtue of its own practical being towards becoming itself; it exists as differentiating itself from what it is and from what it not. This seems to be the ultimate reason for Heidegger’s attraction to Fichte’s radical practical position, and for his claim that idealism has understood more about being an subjectivity than any positivism and empirical philosophy within the tradition of philosophy (BT, 251).

HEIDEGGER’S FIRST THESIS:
RESOLUTIONNESS REQUIRES NON-EPISTEMIC CERTAINTY

Some scholars, such as Dreyfus, have developed their interpretation of Being and Time not only by separating it into two divisions, but also by developing interpretations that treat these two divisions as two separate parts, the “pragmatic” part and the “existential” part. Upon a close examination, however, this interpretation is not tenable, given that the composition of Being and Time is such that Heidegger moves forward in circles, by way of which he tries to lay out the phenomena, as the are introduced in the first part, again in the sections on resoluteness, conscience, time, and history. The existential concepts of time and history are, as we learn from the last sections of Being and Time, the actual horizon of the phenomena that were introduced earlier in the text, the meaning of which can be revealed b
a thorough hermeneutical interpretation of their inner sense. For example, what
was developed as basic mood (anxiety) becomes re-interpreted on a deeper level
as a temporal phenomenon in the later part of the text. According to Heidegger,
anxiety is a temporal phenomenon. What shows up, in other words, in our ev-
everyday life, can be laid out in certain temporal structures. Also, the difference,
as Heidegger maintains, between our everyday understanding of ourselves and
the "authentic" understanding of ourselves can be hermeneutically laid out as a
different temporal structure. In an inauthentic self-relation, the self relates itself
to itself, through the connection of past, present and future, and this is different
from an authentic self-relation. Whereas in inauthentic existence the self under-
stands itself in an objectified way and, hence, disconnects the dimension of the
past and future from its own present situation, in the moment of what Heidegger
calls "resoluteness," the self unites itself in temporal terms, which is to say, it re-
integrates past (=repetition/wiederholen) and future (=running ahead/Vorlauf
en) into its own present situation, and understands itself explicitly as being a whole
life-coherence, or, as Heidegger puts it, as "taking the whole of Dasein in advance"
(BT, 309). In authenticity, the self, we might say, constitutes itself in an eminently
practical way, and it just realizes what it already is.

It is in this context that Heidegger introduces the terms "resoluteness" and
"certainty." The term "resoluteness" in German has two aspects, both of which
Heidegger tries to bring into focus in his analysis. On the one hand, being reso-
lute means the very relation that the self has to itself, that is, to say, how the self
understands itself as a deciding agent. On the other hand, being resolute, further
described, means a basic form of openness towards itself and its situation. In Ger-
am"schliessen" is used in the context of opening and closing doors. By using the
term "ent-schloessen," therefore, Heidegger tries to describe the specific attitude
of the agent in the very moment of a self-determining action. According to Hei-
degger, the understanding that is involved in this moment can only be described
as a "relation" that the agent has towards her own being, which is her life. If, and
this is Heidegger's thesis, the action is really accompanied by resoluteness, the
agent's situation must be described as an existential "openness" towards her own
being and the temporal synthesis of the past, present, and future according to
which this wholeness is constituted. Seen from this point of view, it is clear why
Heidegger deals with the concept of certainty and conscience when he introduces
the concept of being resolute, for a resolute agent must be certain about her self.
For Heidegger, since certainty does not mean a propositional form of certainty,
certainty must be reinterpreted in hermeneutical terms. The first step towards
a non-propositional concept of certainty, which involves making my own being
certain, is introduced by Heidegger's analysis of conscience. We shall briefly
investigate this connection, before coming back to the temporal problem that is
included in the analysis of the agent.

In German and French the connection between certainty and conscience is
immediately obvious, since these terms have the same linguistic root. The roots of
the word "conscience" are Latin. "Conscientia" means conscience as con-scien-
tiousness which means "knowing-with," or simply self-consciousness. In German "gewiss
means "certain;" "Gewissen" means "conscience," and "Wissen" means "knowledge.
Let us first briefly recall Heidegger's four features of conscience: [i] it is a call
(BT, 314), [ii] it is empty, [iii] it does not tell us how to act (BT, 318), and [iv] it is
a call of myself by me (BT, 320). In this phenomenological interpretation of the
phenomenon of conscience, Heidegger shifts the focus away from the concept
of conscience as a psychological experience. According to Heidegger, it should
be conceived as a mere form of self-understanding and a "relation" that the set
has towards its own being and existence. As he states in his Jaspers-Review in
1920, conscience is understood as the actualizing of conscience and not merely
in the sense of occasionally having a conscience about something (conscien-
tia). Conscience is a historically defined 'how' of experiencing the self (S, 95).
What we really mean, in other words, when we refer to our conscience in everyday
speech, is a certain form of relating ourselves towards ourselves. It is a certain
form of existential understanding and a mode of existence, but not a psychological
concept. Through conscience, in other words, an agent calls herself into action
and understands her own identity as a non-objectifiable activity. Put simply, she
makes herself ready to act. It is as if the agent commands herself: "be what you
are, that is, act!" Accordingly, the relation that the agent has to herself can only
be described as a form of trust that the agent has about her own being, which is
in this case the mere capacity and the being able (Können) to act.

Through its conscience and through its "listening to it," we might say the self
confirms its own true being, about which it can never be certain in an epistic
way. What Heidegger has in mind by saying that we "listen" to our conscience is
this: the agent must have a basic trust and confidence in her own ability to act
and to decide. If an agent would doubt about her own capacity to act and to
determine her possibilities, she wouldn't act. Consequently, the self must make itself
certain of itself, if it wants to be itself. Accordingly, Heidegger states: "certainty,
in its primordial signification, is tantamount to 'being-certain,' as a kind of being
that belongs to Dasein" (BT, 300). Put simply, conscience is the openness towards
oneself and one's possibilities, the knowledge of which cannot be expressed in
propositional terms, which was called, in Fichte's theory, "faith." By rejecting a the-
oretical conception of certainty Heidegger shifts the focus back to a position that I
discussed in the first part of this paper. The certainty of my conscience through
which I assure my being is beyond any cognitive belief or holding of something
to be true. "Conscience" is the practical expression of how we can be what we are
and how we can be certain about our own being. Conscience is, as Heidegger
puts it in section 54 of Being and Time, the "witness" (Zeuge) and attestation of
this practical certainty (BT, 312/334). If we take into account that conscience, according to Heidegger, does not mean a "voice" within the agent’s consciousness, but a mode of existence, then we can see that Heidegger uses the phenomenon of conscience in order to describe the understanding and the situation of the agent in the moment of action. "Witnessing" means that the agent confirms and becomes aware of her own “being able,” and of her being in possibilities.

Put differently, Heidegger claims that we must take into account two conditions of our own authentic self-understanding, namely: [i] we must be disclosed as what we are, and [ii] we must be certain about this disclosedness of ourselves, the latter of which belongs to our resoluteness in practical situations. Accordingly, one can only be resolute, if one is certain about oneself in one's being resolute. Conscience, we must conclude, is not a form of knowledge that one has about oneself, rather it is the practical form of self-certainty. In resoluteness, which is the condition to act and to determine oneself, Dasein, as Heidegger puts it, “has reached the authentic certainty which belongs to it” (BT, 302). We would not be able to determine ourselves, we would not be able to be ourselves, if we were uncertain about our existence in the moment of a decision that requires our resoluteness to be realized. As long as we are not authentic, we are unable to be certain about our own existence, since the true “nature” of our own existence is not yet revealed and visible to us. However, even when we are becoming authentic, we are unable to "know" our own being in the form of an epistemic or propositional knowledge; rather, we are forced to realize our being, i.e., to be ourselves through an act of self-determination, the certainty of which is a confirmation of ourselves as having conscience. This is ultimately "a way of letting the ownmost self take action in itself of its own accord" (BT, 342).

Again, to “be certain” cannot be a form of propositional knowledge, for an agent's propositional knowledge about her possibilities is not the same as realizing these possibilities as belonging to her being in a practical situation. For example, I can “know” that I could give up smoking and I “know” that I intend to go shopping tomorrow, but this type of epistemic knowledge is not a sufficient condition for a “real” action. Heidegger, consequently, attempts to analyze the certainty that an agent needs for decisive action in practical terms, which can be circumscribed as a basic conviction to be able to act. The agent not only has to know something about her possibilities; rather, she must also, in a non-cognitive way, be convinced that these possibilities are real possibilities. Even if we had an epistemic knowledge of certain possibility, we would not be certain about our own capacity to realize these possibilities. I can only assure myself of my own-ness through an act of self-determination. This is how I make myself certain of myself. Consequently, I create through my conscience, that is to say, through my Being-certain, the situation, within which I am situated. Heidegger writes: "it [Dasein] gives itself the current factual Situation, and brings itself into that Situation.

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The Situation cannot be calculated in advance or presented like something present-at-hand which is waiting for someone to grasp it” (BT, 307). To be cer- tain about possibilities to act requires a reference to my life. Resoluteness, hence not a cognitive state; it is an attitude, a stance towards one’s being and life (BT, 309). This consideration brings us to the next point, which is the temporal aspect of Heidegger’s analysis. In this connection, Heidegger claims that would not act and determine ourselves if resoluteness did not contain a certain self-understanding of the future.

Heidegger’s Second Thesis: Certainty Requires an Understanding of the Future as Final and Finite (Death)

As stated above, the agent’s situation, according to Heidegger, can be traced b to a temporal structure, by means of which the situation of the agent and her self-understanding can further be clarified. One moment of this self-understanding must be identified as the specific understanding of the temporal dimension of the future, which is also one of Fichte’s theses. According to Heidegger, the understanding of the future that is presupposed for the agent’s situation has three aspects: [1] it requires an awareness of the "last" horizon to which a self can re-which is her own death, [2] it requires a unification and confirmation of the last horizon, which Heidegger calls "running ahead;" and, finally, [3] it requires modification of the affective situation, which can be found in Heidegger’s discus- sion of "anxiety." For the purpose of this paper, it is most important to shed light on the first two aspects of the future dimension, since, as we saw above, Fichte struggles with the same phenomenon. Accordingly, I will restrict my commen- to aspects [1] and [2].

Heidegger introduces the temporal moment of the future in his discussion the fore-structure of understanding as well as in his discussion of care. Where in his analysis of the fore-structure of understanding Heidegger reveals only t projective moment of every process of understanding, which becomes laid c and articulated in what he calls "interpretation," the care-structure is even more important because in it the self discloses the temporal moments of having-been and future as a unity, by means of a relation and understanding that the self towards its own temporality and wholeness. Future, as Heidegger explains, means the coming [Kommen] in which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, com towards itself” (BT, 373). How does this concept of future become important f the constitution of the agent's self-situation? The possibility of the agent's understand that the whole of life is at stake in a self-determined action presupposes that the agent "discloses" this possibility. According to Heidegger, this possibility "is made possible" by running ahead (BT, 309) towards one’s own "end.” “Death as Heidegger states in Being and Time,” as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to l
actualized: nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself be" (BT, 307). Heidegger's thought is not very difficult: because death can never be actualized, given that it is only pure possibility, the only way that an agent can relate herself towards this possibility is in the confirmation of this possibility as a possibility, which occurs in resoluteness. If death can never be a "real" event in one's life then it follows that death is the "phenomenon" that can never be objectified and understood as something present-at-hand. However, the agent can take over (BT, 373) her own future in the form of her own agency and death. Pure future — future as future — put differently, is identical with the possibility of death. Death is only possibility. By understanding oneself within the possibility of death, one understands one's own being in possibilities and one's own futurity per se. By understanding that death is nothing that can ever appear within my world and to which I could ever have an intentional relation, I immediately understand that my own being is something that is not "there" as other things are in my world; rather, what I am for myself is only as this non-intentional self-relation that cannot be understood as a present-at-hand entity (Vorhandenes). An authentic relation to the agent's future reveals her ontological status and the openness of the present situation as the moment for self-determined action. Indeed, it "awakens" (wecken) (BT, 378) the situation of the agent. As Heidegger puts it in his Dilthey lecture in 1925, "the difficult thing is not to die but to deal with death in the present" (S, 166).

Now, it is important to note that Heidegger does not mean with this establishment of finitude that only the individual life of the agent has to be disclosed in the moment of her action; rather, as he maintains in section 74 on history, the agent disclosed her possibilities as not only her own possibilities but also as a historical situation, which makes the agent aware of a broader horizon within which the action is situated and according to which the possibilities are constituted as a "handing down of a heritage" (BT, 435). This broader horizon is addressed by Heidegger in terms of a nation (Volk) and has produced much debate in Heidegger scholarship. For the purpose of this essay, it is most important to see that Heidegger claims that the agent can only be resolute if this resoluteness implies the awareness of possibilities that go beyond the individual life. The self-determined action, in other words, includes a generational moment, which appears alongside the specific understanding of the agent's death in the moment at which authenticity is at stake. This moment strongly reminds us of Fichte's emphatic claim that the non-propositional certainty that moral action requires necessarily includes a reference to the life beyond the individual's life, since the agent understands herself as being part of all future generations that come after her. If an agent understands herself in this way, she is, to put it in Heideggerian terms, resolute; or, to put it in Fichtean terms, her life is constituted by faith.

Conclusion: Existential Idealism?

As announced in the introductory part of this essay, the preceding reflections were developed, with an eye towards taking two perspectives on the same nomenon. Let me summarize the results: (1) Fichte explains the consciousness of the moral agent by introducing a non-propositional moment, namely faith; (2) he claims that the agent must understand her own present situation as part of the future; while (3) Heidegger explains the being of the authentic a by introducing a non-propositional moment, namely being resolute; and (4) claims that the agent must understand her own situation as a unity of present future too. Interestingly, (5) both Heidegger and Fichte follow the same ontological intuitions. They assume that the difference between self and objects is constituted through the self-agent. Consequently, both Fichte and Heidegger claim that the nature of conscience and practical self is ambivalent: on the one hand, our conscience—which is nothing else but our self-consciousness—enable to act and be what we are, and on the other hand, it has an inner "blind spot," cannot be expressed in theoretical terms but must instead be addressed (i.e., something that is beyond theoretical rationality, namely (ii) either as faith, Fichte, or as Being-certain, for Heidegger.

The result of the confrontation of the idealistic and the existentialistic paradigm is astonishing: for it shows how close both philosophies are in terms of structure. Though it is true that Fichte claims that action must be explained reference to a future world order that transcends all finite life, Heidegger claims that resolute action necessarily requires an understanding of a future that firms the finitude of life. However, despite this difference between idealism and existentialism, it must be noted here that both positions presuppose an identical phenomenon, of which they are each modifications. Both Heidegger and Fichte interpret the future element of the agent's situation as an arrival, as something that has a substantial connection to the present situation of the agent. As Fichte claimed, his philosophy does not presuppose a naïve Christian position regarding the element of future; rather, on his view, the idealistic agent acts as if the world is already realized, which gives her the specific certainty that is needed (moral) action. In other words, even according to Fichte, the agent is "run ahead of herself" in the moment of action by connecting the present with future moment. Future in action, for Fichte, is a form of arrival. This structure is identically thought of in Heidegger: the existential agent acts as if death already arrives, which gives her the specific being-certain that is needed for self-determination. The agent in the situation of her self-determination, according to Heidegger, combines present and future into one unified temporality, instead disconnecting present and future, as we do it in our everyday life. The phenomenon that is at stake in considerations about actions, in other words, is time.
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Although Fichte reconstructs the conditions of the possibility for action as an "original moment" (being right), and Heidegger conceives the conditions of the possibility for action as being dead, the former is something that the latter could never be. The different nature of Fichte's and Heidegger's perspectives on the nature of time and the role of the subject in determining the future is fundamental. According to Fichte, the subject is the creator of the future, whereas Heidegger argues that the subject is constrained by the pre-existing conditions of being.

Heidegger's concept of "existentialism" is central to his understanding of human existence. He argues that the human being is characterized by the absence of any pre-existing essence or purpose, and that the individual is thrown into a world of being without any predetermined role. This lack of inherent meaning leads to a sense of anxiety and a questioning of the meaning of human existence.

Fichte, on the other hand, views human existence as inherently meaningful and purposeful. He argues that the individual is pre-destined to fulfill a specific role in the world, and that this role is predetermined by the individual's rational nature.

The difference between Fichte and Heidegger's perspectives on existence is significant, as it has implications for our understanding of the nature of human beings and their relationship to the world. Fichte's view of existence is more deterministic, while Heidegger's view is more open-ended and receptive to the possibility of change and development.

Notes

2. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

References


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Subjectivity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 119. The being itself, therefore, has to be differentiated from the being of a thing (ibid., 120–3).

10. Other reasons could be given, such as his classical transcendental-philosophica cubr that the understanding of an entity is prior to the encounter with an entity. I agree on this point with Walter Schulz, who has several times analyzed Hesh e to Fichte, see §59 in Walter Schulz, Ich und Welt. Philosophie der Subjektivität (Munich: Neske, 1979).


12. At this point we might detect a thought for which the young Heidegger is seen as a result of his struggle with Husserl’s concept of intentionality. As well, he tries to reinterpret Husserl’s “principle of principles,” which only for an acknowledgment of what is given in mere intuition as a principle of if in other words, realizing itself as a “movement” towards something, as an “outlet” (Theodore Kisiel, Heidegger-Lask-Fichte, 260). Like Fichte, he is a search: a principle that allows for breaking down the concept of intentionality into a fix “objective” relation between two relata. I will come back to this point later.

13. It is, therefore, not totally convincing when Dieter Henrich identifies the intell intuition with self-consciousness, for Fichte makes clear that the non-object absolute identity of subject and object can never be “present” in or as a concept. On this point, see Robert Pippin, Hegel’s Idealism, 50, although his treatment of the systematic problem of the self-preservation of self-consciousness can’t think of as not present for this consciousness, which would imply the abs of an “unconscious” self-consciousness.

14. Though I agree with Frank’s assessment that in his theoretical writings Fichte reaches the point at which the knowledge that the “I” has of itself is merely coincidental in practical terms, he maintains an absolute identity of subject and object (for this thesis, see Manfred Frank, Unmittelbare Anrühmung [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997], 176). I do not agree with Frank’s overall claim: for in Fichte’s philosophical practical reason clearly overcomes the identity claim of his theoretical philosophy. Frank does not take Fichte’s ethics and his philosophy of religion account. As I show in this essay, the gap between the “real” and “ideal” split is the ego is bridged by a belief about its identity (for this, see Ingeborg Schulttes Strittige in den Systemen des deutschen Idealismus,” Heideggers Zweigespräch Deutschen Idealismus, ed. Harald Steubert [Köln: Boehla Verlag, 2003], 3). Faith, in other terms, holds the self together and makes it possible for the self to know itself as being a part of reality; on this point see Günther Zöller, Fichte’s transcendental idealism, 23.

15. In his Sittenlehre, Fichte also deduces the concept of reality (GA 1, 5, 73–88), v is a further development of what he explained in section 5 of his Wissenschaftslehre. On this see Günther Zöller, Fichte’s Transcendental Philosophy, 64–67. A full account of what Fichte is up to would have to include these considerations. However, for the purpose of this study, I must leave these aspects aside.

17. I use the word “impulse” at this point in order to indicate that the “force” and the necessitation that we ascribe to laws, rules and norms appear on the empirical level as “facts of consciousness.” According to Fichte, “practical laws are present to consciousness in the form of drivers” (VS, 21). The agent has the “feeling,” so to speak, that she must do something. Human beings experience this force as something that pushes them into action, though the force cannot be thought of as a natural force. A drive, if transcendentally reconstructed, can never be thought of as a natural or as a mere “biological” phenomenon. As Fichte shows in his *Sittenlehre* and in his *Wissenschaftslehre*, a drive not only presupposes a “being-for-the-I,” it also presupposes the moment against which the drive is directed. A drive, in other words, has a direction. Accordingly, it is determined, and hence it is already thought of as something that is related to a limitation of the activity of the “I.” It must be thought of as being related to freedom since drives are not experienced as natural conditions (see Günther Zöller, *Fichte’s Transcendental Philosophy*, 66). For example, the inner force that the alcoholic “feels” when confronted with the next drink is a limitation for her thought, and different from the movements of her liver.

18. In this vein, Wildenburg proposes an interesting existentialist reading of Fichte’s concept of faith as “groundless” (bodenslos) (Dorothea Wildenburg, *Ist der Existentialismus ein Idealismus? Transzendentalphilosophische Analyse der Selbstbewusstseinstheorie des frühen Sartre aus der Perspektive der Wissenschaftslehre Fichtes* [Amsterdam: Rodopi Verlag, 2003], 438), for Fichte’s introduction of faith points to a foundation that is unexplainable. It fits into this picture that in his Fichte lecture course Heidegger positively mentions that Fichte’s theory is based on an “undeniable” (unableitbar) factual dimension (GA28, 81/82). Accordingly, Heidegger deals extensively with Fichte’s introduction of the “dictum of reason” (Machtsspruch der Vernunft) in his *Science of Knowledge* (GA28, 91), which points to the “groundless” dimension in Fichte’s philosophy.


20. The background of Fichte’s considerations is Kant’s philosophy of religion. As Dieter Henrich notes, Kant’s way of dealing with the concept of faith “is to encounter a sort of existential philosophy: there are well founded beliefs that precede and survive all arguments” (Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel. Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003], 102).

21. It is clear from the outset that Heidegger does not take anything over from Fichte’s theoretical philosophy, including the idea of a deduction of the whole truth through a system of thought. On the other hand, Heidegger claims that Fichte’s description of the “I” as something that is not just given and “there” formulates a fundamental insight into the being of Dasein. It is, as Claudius Strube has maintained, an interpretation of “German Idealism as an indirect hermeneutics of facticity” (Claudius Strube, “Heidegger’s Turn to German Idealism: The Interpretation of the Wissenschaftslehre of 1794,” in *Heidegger and German Idealism*, ed. Rockmore, 130, 135). According to Stolzenberg, Heidegger interprets Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* in the light of *Being and Time* (see Jürgen Stolzenberg, “Martin Heidegger liest Fichte,” *Heideggers Zweise mit dem deutschen Idealismus*, ed. Harald Seubert [Köln: Böhlau, 2003], 7).

22. As Stolzenberg remarks (“Martin Heidegger liest Fichte,” 80), Heidegger sees the change in Fichte’s view of German Idealism around 1927, for in his lecture *Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (1927), Heidegger attacks modern philosophy being ontologically unsatisfactory, since it determines the subject as “self-kg (BPP, 154). However, one must also notice that Heidegger in BPP is aware that distinction between person and thing in Kant and in German Idealism leads own philosophy (BPP, §13). On this point, also see the classical contribution Walter Schulz (1954). Schulz shows that Heidegger’s thesis that Dasein can understood as an object within the world, goes back to German Idealism at “De-substantialisation of substance” (Entsubstanziierung der Substanz) (Schulz, “Über den philosophisch-schichtlichen Ort Martin Heideggers: Heis Perspektiven zur Deutung seines Werks,” ed. Otto Pöggeler [Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969], 99). In addition, he shows that Heidegger’s thesis in *Being and that world belongs to Dasein mirrors Fichte’s thesis that the “Not-I” is the I” (BPP).

23. Heidegger admits in his Fichte lecture course that German Idealism comes still close to the question of the “being of the subject” and to the questions raised *ing and Time* (GA28, 170). The roots of this insight should be seen in Heide interpretation of Kant and the role of imagination that Fichte takes over. As A points out, “in Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, the infinity of Self is nothing other than infinite activity of imagination, namely the process of *Bildung*, of infinite form (Jean-Marie Vassy, “Heidegger and German Idealism,” in *Heidegger and Ge Idealism*, ed. Rockmore, 22).

24. Maquarrie and Robinson translate the term “Vorlauf” as “anticipation,” which exactly the opposite of what Heidegger has in mind. Whereas anticipation is tional act, “Vorlauf” means an attitude of the self towards its own whole (which cannot be described as an intentional act). For an explanation of this see the footnote of the translators in BT, 306. According to van Buren, Heide receives the idea of “Vorlauf” from Luther (see van Buren, *The Young Heid 175*). Heidegger also has the following in mind: in German one can say “die Zu vorweg nehmen,” which literally means “to realize the future in advance.”

25. For the connection between existentialism and idealism in relation to *Satr Fichte*, see the excellent study from Dorothea Wildenburg, in which she poi the ultimate difference between existentialism and idealism, which is markedencentrality of practical and normative reason in Fichte’s theory (Wildenburg, *Existentialismus ein Idealismus? 440*).