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Fichte's Fictions Revisited

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ABSTRACT *Fichte's most influential presentation of his Wissenschaftslehre, which coincides with his tenure at Jena, has, ironically, been subjected to incredulity, misunderstanding, and outright hostility. In a recent essay, noted scholar Daniel Breazeale has undertaken to challenge this history of neglect and misunderstanding by pointing to the significance of striking passages from Fichte's writings in which he asserts that his philosophical system is fictional. At the same time, Breazeale also notes some of the tensions between this fictionalist reading of the Jena Wissenschaftslehre and Fichte's equally forceful insistence on the reality of his system. In this essay, I argue that these two sides of Fichte's conception of his philosophy can, in fact, be reconciled by looking more carefully at distinctions that Fichte himself draws between realities, philosophical fictions, and mere fabrications. What results is a clearer picture of Fichte's conception of transcendental philosophy that builds upon Breazeale's valuable insights.*

Even during the most influential period in Fichte's intellectual career, when he was at the height of his fame, during and shortly following his tenure at the University of Jena (1794–1799), his *Wissenschaftslehre* was met with incredulity, misunderstanding, and outright hostility. Fichte was forced to publish numerous introductions, prolegomena, clarifications, and polemical essays in, as the title of one of these essays suggests, “an attempt to force the reader to understand.”¹ Despite his valiant efforts, Fichte's clarifications seem to have fallen on deaf ears, both during his own lifetime and in the subsequent history of the reception of his work. However, in recent years a number of Anglophone scholars have labored diligently to explicate Fichte's complex position, and have succeeded in dispelling some of the most egregious misunderstandings of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.² Among this group

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of scholars, Daniel Breazeale stands out as having devoted particular care to the interpretation and presentation of Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*. However, one of Breazeale's most important contributions to continuing Fichte's own attempts to combat misunderstandings has yet to have been examined in detail. More precisely, I have in mind a recent contribution to a volume on the later Jena period, in which Breazeale draws attention to Fichte's striking use of the term "fiction" to describe the contents of his philosophical system.

Breazeale presents a number of passages in which Fichte seems to adopt (and adapt) Salomon Maimon's contention that philosophers employ *fictions* [*Fikzionen* or *Erdichtungen*] as tools for achieving systematic unity. On Breazeale's reading, Fichte's explicit comments suggest that the *Wissenschaftslehre* itself, understood as a genetic deduction of actual, first-order consciousness, "is a philosophical *fiction*."³ As Breazeale correctly observes, this reading has a number of attractive features. Still, he is careful to point out that, these attractions notwithstanding, if one takes seriously the claim that Fichte adopts a version of Maimonian fictionalism, then serious tensions ensue. In particular, Fichte's talk of "fictions" seems to conflict with his equally vociferous claims regarding the reality of his philosophical system. My aim in this essay is to examine the tensions that result from taking Fichte's fictionalism seriously. I contend that Fichte has the resources to avoid these tensions, and to coherently maintain *both* his fictionalism *and* his insistence on the reality of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. More precisely, Fichte is able to make distinctions that Breazeale does not draw in his own account of Fichte's views: the distinction between "reality" and "fiction" on the one hand, and between a "philosophical fiction" and a "mere fiction" on the other hand. With these distinctions in hand, one can see how Fichte's fictionalism can be salvaged without, as Breazeale seems to suggest we do, jettisoning his insistence on "reality."

I. Fichte's fictionalism

Breazeale presents six passages, representing a period extending from Fichte's residence in Zurich in 1793 to his departure for Berlin in 1800, in which Fichte clearly asserts that significant elements of his mature system (or, in some cases, the system as a totality) are "fictional."⁴ These passages are drawn from both unpublished and published writings, all of them significant locations for Fichte's philosophical views. Rather than recapitulate each of these passages, it is sufficient to present one of the more unequivocal endorsements of fictionalism. This passage comes from the *Sonnenklare Bericht*, one of Fichte's notable (though, it might be added, equally unsuccessful) attempts to clarify his basic project, methods, and views to a hostile public. Fichte writes:

Actual [*wirkliche*] consciousness exists; it is a whole and is completely finished, just as we ourselves are finished and have self-consciousness. The *Wissenschaftslehre* concludes with self-consciousness as its final step. [...]. According to our philosophy, this [self-consciousness] that is absolutely present can be *treated of* and *judged* in real life *just as if* it has arisen through an original construction of the sort that the *Wissenschaftslehre* carries out. [...]. To take this *just as if* for a categorical *that*, to take this fiction for the narrative of a true event that is supposed to have occurred at such and such a time is a crude misunderstanding. Do you actually believe that we want to produce with the construction of fundamental consciousness in the *Wissenschaftslehre* a history of the acts of consciousness that existed prior to consciousness, the life-story of a man before his birth? (I/7, 249).

The import and scope of Fichte's fictionalism is particularly evident in this passage. The entire *Wissenschaftslehre*, understood as the systematic construction of the conditions of self-consciousness, is not a piece of arm-chair psychoanalysis that delves into the pre-conscious mind, but is instead a *construction*, a "fiction," as Fichte calls it here, produced for the purposes of philosophical explanation. Just what this amounts to will be seen in more detail below. Here, the purpose of quoting the *Sonnenklare Bericht* is merely to provide the general flavor of the view that Breazeale attributes to Fichte, as well as to ground further exposition of it.

Breazeale places passages like this one at the center of his account of Fichte's Jena system. The attractions of this move are many. First of all, there are many places in his important writings from this period in which Fichte explicitly endorses fictionalism. Moreover, as Breazeale points out, and as will be examined in more detail below, the fictionalist reading also coheres with many other explicit statements from Fichte about the nature and status of his system. The second attraction is, as I have already suggested, that taking Fichte's fictionalism seriously goes a long way towards dispelling some of the most egregious and persistent misunderstandings of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. For example, beginning in his own lifetime, Fichte has been dubbed a kind of hyper-active egoist, who disregards Kant's admonitions about the limitations of reason and creates a fantastical metaphysics in which all reality is the product of an even more fantastical "Absolute I." If Fichte's fictionalism is taken seriously, the charge of metaphysical egoism seems to have considerably less bite to it. Third, as I have argued elsewhere, fictionalism allows one to make progress in clarifying more local difficulties in Fichte's system, such as in the philosophy of religion.⁵

However, these attractions notwithstanding, if one adopts Breazeale's interpretation of Fichte's fictionalism, serious difficulties ensue. These are

difficulties of which Breazeale himself is all too aware.⁶ According to Breazeale, Fichte's fictionalism entails commitment to the idea that the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (and, by extension the transcendental deductions derived from it) is "freely fabricated."⁷ But this strong version of fictionalism is quite manifestly incompatible with Fichte's insistence, documented carefully by Breazeale, on the reality of his system and of his first principle, in contrast with the fictional nature of both dogmatist and pseudo-Kantian attempts to do metaphysics. Given the attractions of the fictionalist reading, Breazeale tentatively recommends that Fichte's insistence on reality be elided from the *Wissenschaftslehre*, though he also recognizes that Fichte "would never have willingly endorsed a characterization of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as nothing more than a fiction."⁸ Thus, one is faced with the following dilemma: either to accept fictionalism as the proper understanding of Fichte's philosophical system, and thereby ignore the explicit intentions of its author, or abandon fictionalism, and thereby relinquish a valuable tool for clarifying and defending the *Wissenschaftslehre* against superficial criticisms.

It would seem, however, that this dilemma has been thrust upon us a bit too quickly. Upon reflection, it becomes clear that Breazeale has left a number of important questions both unasked and unanswered. In the first instance, calling something a "fiction" surely assumes at least some tacit conception of truth or reality. After all, the whole point in calling a philosophical theory fictional, as the passage quoted above from *Sonnenklare Bericht* makes clear, is to distinguish it from a real narrative of real events. Thus, understanding Fichte's fictionalism requires understanding how he uses concepts like "reality," "actuality," and "truth." For his part, Breazeale leaves this issue out of the account altogether. As a result, his reading of Fichte's fictions is importantly incomplete.

Second, while he occasionally adds some qualifications, Breazeale clearly thinks that Fichte in some sense adopts Maimon's views on the philosophical "method of fictions." Breazeale is certainly right to highlight Maimon's (often overlooked) influence on Fichte's early philosophical development. However, the project within which Maimon's talk of "fictions" finds its home is not the same as the Fichtean program. As Breazeale observes, Maimon views philosophical fictions as useful tools not for *discovering* anything new, but rather for *organizing* existing cognitions into a systematic whole.⁹ Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is a positive project with significantly greater scope than this. Indeed, Fichte repudiates a similar project (i.e., the project of giving systematic unity to scientific knowledge) espoused by Schmid (I/3, 249; EPW, 319). The *Wissenschaftslehre* is not simply an encyclopedia; it is supposed to *explain* and *ground* significant elements of first-order experience.

Perhaps as a result of importing Maimon's views into Fichte's system, Breazeale reads Fichte's talk of "fictions" in an exceptionally strong way. In

Breazeale's version, a Fichtean fiction is a fabrication, something that is simply made up. It is indeed the case that there is an inconsistency involved in claiming simultaneously that one's philosophical system consists of fabrications *and* that it has the advantage of reality over rival systems. However, before quickly concluding that Fichte is hopelessly caught in this inconsistency, it is worth inquiring about whether or not he can avail himself of another distinction in addition to that between fiction and reality. For Fichte's view to be consistent, in fact, he *must* have such a distinction on hand. In what follows, I will show how both of these distinctions are indeed present within Fichte's system, and that Breazeale's valuable fictionalist reading can be salvaged from the inconsistencies that Breazeale himself presents.

II. Fiction and reality

In order to make sense of what Fichte means when he describes the elements of his system as "fictions," one first has to get a handle on his understanding of the distinction between a fiction and a reality. Fichte uses "fiction" (and cognate terms used to describe the same idea) contrastively; that is, he uses it to draw attention to the special status of the elements of his philosophical system. Fictions are most obviously contrasted with "realities," or with narratives of things that actually exist. At this point, a commentator on Fichte runs into (at least) one serious problem. Fichte uses a number of different terms to describe the opposite of a fiction, and it is not entirely obvious that these terms capture the same concept. Fichte employs talk of "reality," "objectivity," "truth," and "validity" as names for the same thing, i.e., whatever it is that is not a fiction. While more precision would certainly be of benefit here, I will simply follow Fichte in treating these terms interchangeably.

Once one gets over the taxonomical hurdle, one soon discovers that Fichte is remarkable clear and consistent in his understanding of reality, objectivity, truth, etc. Perhaps the clearest and most unequivocal statement of what Fichte means by "reality" as such comes from his lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* from the late 1790's, the so-called *Wissenschaftslehre* "according to a new method [*nova methodo*]." Discussing the very issue at hand, i.e., the reality of the elements of his philosophical system, he draws an important distinction. To say that something "*actually*" exists is to describe "a *being* within experience, an occurrence in space and time" (IV/2, 26; WLnm, 104). But then Fichte observes that "What does not lie within the realm of experience possesses no actuality in the proper sense of the term; it cannot be considered to be in space and time. Instead, it must be thought of as something that is necessarily thinkable, as something ideal" (IV/2, 26–27; WLnm, 104).

Fichte clearly intends that “actuality in the proper sense of the term” is not what Kant would call a “real predicate,” but rather something that we ascribe to a representation of a certain sort. He says so explicitly later on in the same series of lectures (IV/2, 91; WLnm, 230). “Reality” is a term that applies, *sensu proprio*, only to what Fichte elsewhere calls “representations that are accompanied by a feeling of necessity” (I/4, 186; IW, 8). These are representations “that refer to a truth determined without any help from us” (I/4, 186; IW, 8). Considered as a totality, these representations constitute “experience” (I/4, 190; IW, 13). “Objective truth,” which Fichte uses interchangeably with “reality,” belongs within that “type of realism that presses itself upon all of us,” i.e., “the assumption that objects exist outside of and quite independently of us” (I/4, 211; IW, 38). Like Kant, Fichte draws a tight connection between “reality” or “actuality” and experience. Talk of “reality” reduces to the ascription of correspondence with mind-independent reality to some representation. Such ascription is exhausted by the domain of experience.¹⁰

The project of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is to deduce or explain the totality of experience. This deduction is *a priori* in two ways. First, the actual procedure of deducing the system of “representations accompanied by a feeling of necessity” is not constrained by empirical facts. In his “Second Introduction” to the crucial 1797 text, *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte makes this point quite clearly. “In the course of its derivations,” he writes, “idealism knows nothing of experience and takes no heed of it whatsoever” (I/4, 205; IW, 31). Or again, a bit further on in this same “Introduction,” he observes that the “proper territory” of his philosophical system is “not the domain of ‘facts of consciousness’; it is not part of the realm of experience” (I/4, 206; IW, 33). Fichte makes what is manifestly the same point in the previously mentioned *Sonnenklare Bericht*, where he asserts that “The *Wissenschaftslehre* therefore derives *a priori*, without regard to perception, what ought to occur as a result in perception, *a posteriori*” (I/7, 213). The actual content of the philosophical system does not consist in experiences or empirical representations, but rather in “models [*Abbildern*] and sketches [*Vorzeichnen*]” of the same (I/7, 213).¹¹ The import of these observations is that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is not to be understood as armchair psychology. Transcendental deductions are not descriptive, but rather explanatory; and the explanations constitutive of the philosophical system do not appeal to the contents of “facts of consciousness,” which are the very things that, according to Fichte, need to be explained.¹²

The other sense in which transcendental philosophy is robustly *a priori* rests upon Fichte’s understanding of the requirements for a legitimate philosophical explanation. These requirements are articulated quite early on in Fichte’s mature philosophical career. In 1793, Fichte composed a “Review of Friedrich Heinrich Gebhard, *On Ethical Goodness as*

Disinterested Benevolence (Gotha: Ettinger 1792).”¹³ Combining elements from Hume and Adam Smith, Gebhard argues, *pace* Kant, that moral philosophy should rest on the natural foundation of human sentiments, such as the “disinterested benevolence” of the title. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant had appealed to a “fact of reason,” which Fichte describes as “a feeling that directs us to leave many things undone, even if this should result in the deepest, greatest, and most widespread misery,” in order to refute the attempt to ground morality naturalistically (II/2, 270). Fichte, however, has reservations about the ability of appeals to facts to undermine philosophical explanations of those facts. In the final, published version of this essay, he writes:

The chief question is whether the feeling of what is simply right (and not the feeling of a benevolence that is intended to produce happiness), a feeling whose existence within consciousness the opponent can fully concede, can or cannot be derived from something higher, and indeed, from practical reason. Against anyone who would deny such a possibility, one cannot yet again appeal to a fact, for though such a person will concede anything that is an actual fact, it is not a fact that reason is practical, nor that it has the power to produce the feeling of what is simply right (I/2, 26).¹⁴

In other words, when the issue at hand is the correctness of a philosophical explanation of some “fact of consciousness,” further appeal to a “fact of consciousness” fails to advance the argument. Both the Gebhardian system and the Kantian system can perfectly well accommodate the “facts” (I/2, 27). Philosophical explanations, and, by extension, genuine philosophical disputes, concern something higher than facts. This idea reappears in Fichte’s “Review of *Aenesidemus*,” where the target is Karl Reinhold’s rendition of Kantianism. Reinhold famously tries to ground the unity of the Kantian system upon the “Principle of Consciousness,” which he takes to be a *fact* about how our minds operate. Fichte, however, contends that a fact can never provide a skeptic-proof first principle of the sort required if philosophy is to be a science. In a remark that links the previously discussed sense in which the *Wissenschaftslehre* is *a priori* with the issue presently under consideration, Fichte writes that “This reviewer [i.e., Fichte] anyway is convinced that the Principle of Consciousness is a theorem which is based upon another first principle, from which, however, the Principle of Consciousness can be strictly derived, *a priori* and independently of all experience” (I/2, 46; EPW, 64). The upshot is that, whatever the first principle turns out to be, it is “not given through empirical intuition” (I/2, 48; EPW, 65).

In writings from the later 1790’s, it is clear that Fichte is still committed to the idea that the principle that anchors the *a priori* explanation of experience

cannot itself be an object of experience in any sense. In his "First Introduction" to the *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte argues, *pace* the self-proclaimed Kantians "with their 'facts of consciousness' and hence of 'inner experience'" that "philosophy's object must necessarily lie *outside of all experience*" (I/4, 187; IW, 9). In his roughly contemporaneous lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* "*nova methodo*," Fichte is quite explicit that the postulated "ground [*Grund*]" of experience is an Idea in the Kantian sense, i.e., a construction of reason to which no possible empirical representation corresponds (WLnm, 88). It is "beyond experience as a whole," or "something that by no means lies within the domain of facts or of experience" (WLnm, 88). Philosophy elevates itself above experience, such that it "adduces not a single fact of experience" (WLnm, 90). Similarly, in the introductory section of the *System der Sittenlehre*, Fichte asserts that the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre* "can only be inferred; it cannot be demonstrated [*nachweisen*], so to speak, 'immediately,' as a fact of actual consciousness" (I/5, 21; SE, 7). As in his review essays from the early 1790s, Fichte is here committed to the thought that the explanatory ground of experience *as a totality* cannot be an element of experience itself. Were it so, the explanation would lack ultimacy.¹⁵

Given Fichte's clear commitment to the notion that reality is an item of experience (a commitment which surfaces throughout his career at Jena), it follows that, if a philosophical principle is "beyond experience," it is not real. The claim that this is indeed Fichte's view does not, however, depend solely on rational reconstruction of this sort. On the contrary, Fichte himself draws this inference repeatedly and explicitly. In the "Second Introduction" to the *Attempt*, Fichte asserts that, when engaged in the sort of philosophical explanation that he is undertaking, there is no question of there being any "objective validity" (I/4, 211; IW, 39). Around the same time as he composed this "Introduction," in the portion of his lectures discussed above in which Fichte tries to clarify his concept of "reality" or "actuality" he asserts that the "pure I," the ultimate principle of philosophical explanation "is, in this sense, nothing actual" (IV/2, 26; WLnm, 104). Earlier on, he had made it clear that this "pure I" is not "a representation that is necessary and therefore discovered within consciousness" (IV/2, 23; WLnm, 96). Instead, it is a concept that is produced by a philosopher who is interested in giving an adequate *a priori* explanation of experience. According to Fichte, the ground of experience is "something that is only produced by pure thought for the purpose of providing a necessary foundation for experience" (IV/2, 20; WLnm, 91).

The discussion in the preceding paragraphs has shown that, during his career at Jena, Fichte avails himself of a relatively sharply drawn distinction between reality (or truth or objective validity) and philosophical fiction. Reality, for Fichte, is always an item of experience, of the *explanandum* of

transcendental philosophy. Fichte takes experience to be the totality of representations “accompanied by a feeling of necessity,” in which he includes not only representations of an external world, but also representations of other minds, of God, and of moral obligations. The *explanans* of experience, however, cannot be a representation “accompanied by a feeling of necessity.” It is, therefore, not *real*. The philosopher does not claim “objective validity” for the content of his system. This distinction, between reality and fiction, is what underwrites, and, ultimately, vindicates Breazeale’s “fictionalist” account of the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*.

III. Fabrications and philosophical fictions

The attractions of fictionalism rest, first of all, on the textual evidence. In the preceding section, a crucial piece of this evidence has been presented, i.e., Fichte’s explicit concept of reality, and his argument that the requirements of philosophical explanation force one to locate the ultimate principle of explanation outside of the domain of reality. Fichte’s principled reasons for adopting fictionalism are both readily reconstructable and explicitly articulated by Fichte himself. However, as noted previously, the fictionalist account of the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* also seems to run aground on the textual evidence. Breazeale (and, in their own ways, Lauth and Zöller), as a partisan of the fictionalist reading, is careful to present this conflicting evidence. However, as has already been discussed, his preferred response to the presence of awkward texts is to simply excise Fichte’s insistence on the reality of his system and of the first principle upon which it is based. This would be radical surgery indeed, given that Fichte appeals to the reality of his system quite often as a way of defending it against its many critics. Thus, cutting out Fichte’s insistence on reality actually mutilates the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, however convenient it might be for the fictionalist reading. Moreover, Breazeale’s proposal forecloses the possibility of learning anything of philosophical significance from Fichte’s embracing of two apparently conflicting interpretations of his own philosophical project.

The conflict is indeed all too apparent, right on the surface of Fichte’s writings. A brief sampling of comments from Fichte will suffice to make this clear. A particularly recalcitrant text is the 1796 “Comparison between Professor Schmid’s System and the *Wissenschaftslehre*.” Schmid, a prominent voice amongst Fichte’s many critics, had explicitly charged Fichte with trafficking in fictions.¹⁶ The problem for fictionalism is that Fichte replies quite directly to this charge by unequivocally rejecting the idea that he propounds fictions. *Pace* Schmid, Fichte argues that his first principle, the “I,” is not a “fiction [*Erdichtung*]” because it is grasped through “inner intuition” (I/3, 254; EPW, 323). This inner “act” is what guarantees the “*reality* of what we are going to analyze” (I/3, 255; EPW, 324). The following year, in the “First Introduction” to the *Attempt*, Fichte

writes: "Regarding [idealism], it will indeed become clear later on that what is called 'the intellect' is actually present within consciousness, albeit under another designation, and is not, therefore, something produced purely by means of abstraction" (I/4, 189; IW, 11). Or again, the I "actually appears within consciousness as something real" (I/4, 190; IW, 13). Finally, in a 1798 response to an essay by Johann Christian August Grohmann (1769–1847), Fichte wryly observes:

Kant may well have meant to say that one should not base one's inferences upon *arbitrarily fabricated concepts*, which is something that was also said several times before Kant. The *Wissenschaftslehre* establishes the reality of its concepts within intellectual intuition, and it employs these concepts in no wider sense whatsoever than that which they have acquired within intellectual intuition (I/4, 487; IW, 131).

The difficulty posed for the fictionalist reading by passages like these is plain. Against various dogmatist and pseudo-Kantian opponents, Fichte contends that the first principle of his system, and, by extension, the system itself, is *real*. Moreover, at least at first glance, it seems to be real in the only sense in which Fichte uses the notion of reality. That is, what makes the *Wissenschaftslehre* real is that it appeals to something that actually occurs within consciousness, in much the same way that Kant had appealed to the "fact of reason" to undermine the plausibility of naturalistic moral philosophy. The question now becomes, is there a coherent way to salvage the fictionalist reading without simply excising passages like the one quoted above from the response to Grohmann? In order for there to be an affirmative answer, Fichte must be able to avail himself of a further distinction beyond the distinction between reality and a philosophical fiction; that is, Fichte must have the resources at his disposal to distinguish between a philosophical fiction, a real fiction, if I may, and a *mere* fiction or fabrication. As it turns out, Fichte does indeed have the necessary resources. There are two distinct, but closely connected, ways in which Fichte can defend the reality of his philosophical system without abandoning his clear commitment to fictionalism.

The first of these concerns the structure and conditions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. The clue for working out this way of justifying the system comes towards the end of the "First Introduction" to the *Attempt*. Fichte asserts that "the only sort of reality that pertains to the content of philosophy is the reality of necessary thinking" (I/4, 207; IW, 34). Fichte is addressing himself to the very question at issue here, i.e., that of the supposed reality of a philosophical system. Just before making this remark, Fichte had made it clear that this reality cannot be that which is properly located in "the domain of 'facts of consciousness'" or in "the realm of

experience” (I/4, 206; IW, 33). It is in this sense that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is best understood as fictional. However, Fichte clearly wants to make a distinction between the sort of fiction that characterizes his philosophical system and a mere fabrication. The key to making this move lies in this notion of the “reality of necessary thinking.” One must look elsewhere for clarifications of what this important idea amounts to, in particular one should look at the roughly contemporaneous lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* “according to a new method.”

In an important section of the extant transcript for these lectures, Fichte raises the question, which had been raised critically in 1795 by Schmid, as to whether or not “the actions described by idealism actually occur” (WLnM, 102). “Do they possess reality,” he asks, “or are they merely invented by philosophy?” Fichte’s first move is to reiterate his commitment to the fictional status of the elements of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. He writes:

Do these actions occur? *Where?* How? Not within the realm of experience; for if they did, then they would themselves be items of experience, and, as such, they would not belong within philosophy, which is supposed to display the foundations of experience. Therefore, these actions do not possess the sort of actuality that experience does; nor can one say that they occur within time, for only appearances have temporal reality (WLnM, 103).

The actions Fichte is referring to here are the concepts that originate during the course of the *a priori* explanation of experience. Lest his talk of actions mislead one into conceiving of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as a kind of armchair psychology, Fichte is careful to deny them the sort of reality “in the proper sense of the term” that belongs only to experience. But, in another transcript of this series of lectures, one reads the following important addition:

The series of necessary actions of reason disclosed by *Critical* idealism possesses no reality except this: if one is to succeed in explaining what one is trying to explain, then one necessarily has to assume that these actions do occur. But they require no other sort of reality, for in this system there is no other sort of reality at all except for reality of the sort indicated (i.e., necessary thinking) (IV/2, 27; WLnM, 103).

To ascribe to these actions the “reality of necessary thinking” is to assert that “As certainly as we engage in philosophical inquiry, we must think of these actions” (IV/2, 26; WLnM, 104). The “must” here is clearly a kind of logical “must.” In other words, if we carry out the *a priori* deduction of experience correctly, we arrive at the concepts that populate the *Wissenschaftslehre*. This is indeed a bold claim for a philosopher to make, but it is one that is perfectly intelligible. There is, according to Fichte, a right

way and a wrong way to engage in philosophical inquiry, and one way to guarantee that one is going the right way is that one's inferences obey laws of thinking.

The course of the deduction itself is guided by foundational assumptions. In *System der Sittenlehre*, Fichte makes this clear: "The path of the deduction will be as follows: we will assign ourselves the task of thinking of ourselves under a certain specified condition and observing *how* we are required to think of ourselves under this condition" (I/5, 35; SE, 22). The reality of what is arrived at along this path of deduction is that which is appropriate to a "series of grounds of which we become aware" (I/5, 36; SE, 23). In other words, *modulo* a certain self-imposed task, we are simply compelled by the laws of thought to draw certain conclusions. This point can be brought out further by comparing it with an interesting remark found in the *Grundlage des Naturrechts* from 1796. Fichte writes:

But since the philosopher no longer finds this originally acting I present in empirical consciousness, he presents the I at its starting point through the only act of choice that is allowed to him (the free resolve to want to philosophize), and he lets the I (under his observation) go on acting, beginning from this starting point and according to its laws, which are well known to the philosopher (I/3, 316; GNR, 7).

In other words, *given* one's decision to engage in the philosophical project of constructing a transcendental explanation of experience, the content of the ensuing account is entirely constrained by one's original assumptions in combination with the laws of thought. Admittedly, Fichte's talk of "observation" here is potentially misleading. After all, one typically only observes things that actually exist. The best way to understand the language of observation in this passage is to keep in mind that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is a kind of thought experiment. What this means can be seen more clearly by comparison between it and other famous thought experiments. For example, Galileo's justly famous experiment on falling bodies involves (1) imagining a certain scenario (i.e., dropping two objects of unequal weight from a tower), (2) making certain assumptions (i.e., Aristotle's theory of motion), and (3) drawing the logical conclusions (i.e., that a contradiction follows from Aristotle's theory of motion in this imagined scenario). There is some sense in which Galileo can be said to have observed this imaginary scenario, in that the results of the experiment are clearly constrained by things over which Galileo had no control.¹⁷ Fichte is claiming that the same is true of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

Elsewhere in the *Grundlage des Naturrechts*, Fichte provides another scientific analogy in order to clarify more exactly the nature of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. First, he reiterates the claim that the elements of his

system have “merely a reality for philosophical understanding” (I/3, 336; GNR, 25). That is:

If one wanted to unite the operations of the human mind systematically in an ultimate ground, one would have to assume that this and that were actions [*Handlungen*] of the human mind; every rational being who attempts such a systematization will find himself in this necessity; this and nothing more is what the philosopher asserts (I/3, 336; GNR, 25).

Notice the *conditional* nature of Fichte’s claim: *if* one undertakes a philosophical explanation of a certain sort, *then* one must arrive at certain results. These seems no more mysterious than the claim that *if* one wants to derive the factors of the number 21, *then* one must arrive at 1, 21, 3, and 7. Fichte, however, goes on to draw an instructive analogy. Following the passage quoted immediately above, Fichte writes that “These original actions [*Tathandlungen*] have the same reality that is possessed by the causality of things in the sensible world on one another and by their universal reciprocal interaction” (I/3, 336; GNR, 25). As Fichte tells the story of the progress of scientific knowledge, “primitive peoples” had no notion of universal causation, of a rational order in nature, and instead attributed events to quasi-personal spontaneous agents. However, as one traces out the “path of synthetically progressive human reason,” one is driven to adopt the project of trying to understand nature as a unified system (I/3, 336; GNR, 26). And when in the course of human events people get around to attempting this project, we find that people “must necessarily connect them” by appealing to universal causality. In other words, given human reason’s project of understanding nature as a unity, the concept of universal causality, of the sort that figures into mechanistic physics, emerges with logical necessity. The situation with transcendental philosophy, Fichte asserts, is entirely the same (I/3, 336–37; GNR, 26). That is, once a person turns reason’s quest for unity towards experience *as such*, in the way that Kant had done in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, certain concepts simply *must* follow.

All of this, taken together, strongly suggests that, when calling his system a fiction or denying reality to it (or to any other properly philosophical theory), Fichte is not suggesting that one simply *invents* or *fabricates* explanations. On the other hand, it is certainly the case that the explanations that one does arrive at depend upon certain assumptions, including the assumption that reason demands that one find a transcendental ground for experience as a such. But this does not imply that philosophical explanations are just made up out thin air, any more than that, because the laws of physics are arrived at through idealized experimental conditions they do not obtain of actual objects in motion. By appealing to the notion of “the reality

of necessary thinking,” then, Fichte is able to draw a clear distinction between a *philosophical* fiction and a *mere* fiction. This, in turn, allows us to make sense of Fichte’s seemingly contradictory assertions regarding the nature of his system as both fictional and real.

The account offered in the preceding paragraphs is not, however, the only way in which Fichte seeks to safeguard the reality of his philosophical system against rival claimants. There is a second way, and it presents more immediate problems for the fictionalist reading, as will become clear below. Note that I am not claiming that this second way of grounding Fichte’s claims to reality is incompatible or in competition with the first way. To the contrary, taken together, both of these ways provide a unified account of how it could be that a philosophical system is both fictional and real. One approach into this second way of guaranteeing the reality of the system is to start with Fichte’s insistence on the certainty of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Here, Fichte rests his case upon an implicit appeal to a sort of deductive closure principle, i.e., to the claim that certainty is closed under strict entailment. What this means for the *Wissenschaftslehre* is that, if it begins with a proposition that is certain, and if it proceeds by rigorous inferences, then each stage of the deduction is also certain. Fichte presents this idea most clearly in an early prospectus of his mature system, published in 1794, called “Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.” Here, Fichte maintains that valid inferences transfer certainty from one proposition (which is certain) to other, otherwise uncertain, propositions (I/2, 113–14; EPW, 102). He writes:

Consequently, at least one proposition has got to be certain [*gewiß*], and this proposition, then, so to speak, communicates its certainty [*Gewißheit*] to the other propositions: so that if and insofar as the first proposition is certain, then a second proposition is too: and if and insofar as this second one is certain, then a third one is, etc. (I/2, 114; EPW, 103).¹⁸

The implication of this is that one way to ensure the “reality” of a philosophical system is to first of all anchor it upon a first principle that is certain, and then to proceed carefully and methodically to draw valid inferences from this principle.¹⁹ This is indeed something that Fichte takes to be a distinctive virtue of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and this is a point that emerges at least as early as the “Review of *Aenesidemus*” in 1793. Fichte’s contention is that his system begins with an act of self-determination of which one is immediately and intuitively aware. This is what his notorious appeal to “intellectual intuition” amounts to. The idea is that this act of self-determination is beyond doubt, and so, when formulated into a proposition, such as “The I posits itself absolutely [*Das Ich setzt sich schlechthin*],” it provides the infallible starting point for a rigorous science.

Everything turns, of course, on the immediacy and indubitability that characterizes one's awareness of this act of self-determination. To put this another way, it matters to Fichte that one can indeed actually be aware of the act of self-determination, that it actually occur in a person's consciousness. He makes this clear a number of times in his important writings from the 1790's. For example, in his response to Schmid's charge that Fichte's system is purely fictional (in the sense of "made up"), Fichte writes:

The *reality* of what we are going to analyze is guaranteed by the inner act we have described. This act actually occurs; it is actually performed by the person who undertakes it, and thus it possesses reality (I/3, 255; EPW, 324).

In his lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, one finds Fichte at pains to distinguish his first principle, i.e., the act of self-determination or "self-reverting activity," from the dogmatists' "thing-in-itself," which he calls contemptuously a "mere thought" (WLNm, 94). The clear implication is that Fichte does not simply "think up" the pure I (another term for the act of self-determination), but instead that it is something of which a person can actually become aware. Thus, "The idealist's principle is present within consciousness, and thus his philosophy can be called 'immanent'" (WLNm, 95). Why is it so important to Fichte to stress this distinctive feature of the first principle of his system? Perhaps, lurking unexpressed in the background, is another kind of deductive closure, according to which "being made up" is also closed under entailment. If the first principle of a system is simply made up, then the whole series of conditions derived from it would appear to share this unfortunate feature. At the very least, it would seem that, however tightly argued, a system of this sort would swing free of its *explanandum*, i.e., empirical consciousness, too much; it would lose any connection with what it is trying to explain, so that it would be hard to call such a system an explanation at all.

However, Fichte's insistence that the first principle of his system "actually appears within consciousness as something real" (I/4, 190; IW, 13) seems to conflict, once again, with his emphasis on the ideal and fictional character of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. It would seem as though Fichte, for all his bluster about the inadequacy of appeals to "facts of consciousness," does just that when faced with the pressing question of the "reality" of his system. It looks as though fictionalism has found itself in difficulties once again.

Such a conclusion would be too hasty, however, for Fichte frequently adds significant qualifications to his statements about the reality of the act of self-determination that forms the basis of his *a priori* explanation of experience. These qualifications may not completely eliminate the tensions involved in Fichte's account of the nature of his own project, but they

certainly mitigate the appearance of incoherence. Recall that, in characterizing his system as ultimately fictional, Fichte has committed himself to the claim that no element of it possesses reality in the sense of being the content of a “representation accompanied by the feeling of necessity.” For Fichte, such representations do not exhaust the contents of our minds. In addition, there are representations that are best understood as products of freedom, such as imaginary creatures, and, more importantly, concepts that are arrived at through processes of abstraction and reflection. As it turns out, the “pure I” or “self-reverting activity” belongs among these latter. And so, when Fichte stresses that the first principle of his system occurs within consciousness, he is not committed to the further claim that it possesses reality “in the proper sense of the term.”

In the “First Introduction” to the *Attempt*, Fichte qualifies his assertions about the “pure I” several times in a relatively brief discussion. Immediately following his claim that his first principle is actually present within consciousness, Fichte quickly adds that “our consciousness of [the intellect or I] is conditioned by an act of abstraction, albeit one quite natural to human beings” (I/4, 189; IW, 11–12). He goes on to clarify the implications of this statement, viz., that the I (or the act of self-determination) “is determined solely by me, and without this determination it is nothing whatsoever and does not exist at all” (I/4, 190; IW, 13). That is, unless I undertake the act of reflection or abstraction in question, no awareness of the act of self-determination arises at all. This is in marked contrast to what, in the same text, Fichte calls “the realism that *presses itself upon all of us*,” and which is co-extensive with the domain of experience (I/4, 211; IW, 38, emphasis added). Unlike the external world, other minds, God, and moral obligations, this pure I “exists in this form only *for the philosopher*,” i.e., for a person who has undertaken the project of deriving the totality of experience *a priori*, a project that Fichte readily acknowledges as being artificial (I/4, 266; IW, 100).

This view is expressed more clearly by Fichte in the *nova methodo* lectures dating from the same period. Following his attempt to contrast the “thing-in-itself” as a “mere thought” with his own first principle, Fichte writes:

Granted, the idealist does not discover the feeling of the freedom and self-activity of his I to be immediately present within his consciousness; nevertheless, he knows how to locate this feeling within himself and how to produce it through a free act of self-positing (IV/2, 21; WLn_m, 93–94).

Or again:

But [the philosopher] also finds that his principle does not occur within consciousness on its own; instead it occurs as a result of his own free

acting. In the course of ordinary consciousness, one encounters no concept of the I, no self-reverting activity. Nevertheless, one is able to think of one's I when a philosopher calls upon one to do so; and then one discovers this concept by means of free activity, and not as something given (WLnm, 95).

Taking these passages together with the rest of Fichte's comments about the nature of his philosophical system reviewed previously, the following picture emerges. First, philosophical inquiry begins with idealization. That is, it begins with a conscious decision to undertake a project which, by its very nature, takes one beyond the bounds of everyday experience. Second, for the purpose of carrying out this project, a further idealization takes place. This time, the philosopher assumes that experience is a "complete, self-contained system" (I/7, 211–12). In other words, one assumes that human experience is a whole unified by laws that are analogous to rules of inference or perhaps to mechanical laws of nature. Third, one assumes that a particular determination of consciousness is "the highest, ultimate result of all consciousness," a move which, Fichte stresses, is a "mere assumption." One then derives the idealized system of experience as a series of necessary conditions for this particular determination of consciousness (I/7, 212; 219).

The determination of consciousness in question is what Fichte calls "the pure I," pure self-determination or "self-reverting activity." This is itself something that one only becomes aware of by adopting an artificial point of view, by reflecting or abstracting from ordinary experience. The standard way in which Fichte expresses this fact in his writings from the Jena period is to invite his readers (or listeners) to engage in a thought experiment. Ordinarily, our consciousness is engaged with representations of the external world. Fichte asks that we abstract away from the object of consciousness, and try to conceive of the consciousness itself. In the course of undertaking this artificial manoeuvre, says Fichte, we become directly aware of the act of self-determination that makes possible this shift in standpoints. Moreover, it is as if this self-determination comes into being only when one actually performs it. It is not found in our experience in the way that, according to Fichte at least, our ideas about the external world, other minds, God, and moral obligations are. Instead, it is produced by us, and it is produced when we adopt a very specific project, with very specific assumptions, and then proceed to engage in an artificial act of abstraction.

Fichte insists that, unless a person is somehow or other deficient, this awareness of self-determination falls out immediately from this procedure. Formulated as a principle, he believes that this is philosophically unassailable. According to Fichte, any philosophical criticism requires that one has already adopted a reflective, abstract standpoint, and so has (at least implicitly) acknowledged the reality of our capacity for self-determination. In this sense, the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is

certain; given deductive closure, it follows that the *Wissenschaftslehre* as a whole can make a claim to share this characteristic.

IV. Conclusion

Daniel Breazeale has presented a compelling case for a fictionalist reading of Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*. This case rests upon a simultaneous appeal to Fichte's actual texts and to the interpretive advantages of this reading for correcting long-standing misapprehensions about Fichte's philosophical system. According to the fictionalist reading, the *Wissenschaftslehre* does not purport to be a *description* of pre-conscious events that actually take place in an individual's mind. Transcendental philosophy is not psychoanalysis. Instead, it is an idealized model of experience, itself conceived in a highly idealized way, that is designed to provide a purely *a priori* explanation for significant features of first-order human experience, including but certainly not limited to beliefs about the external world, other minds, God, and moral obligations. In brief, these features of first-order consciousness, sufficiently idealized, are treated as conditions of a primitive act of self-determination.

As it stands, however, Breazeale's case is incomplete. His strong reading of Fichte's fictionalism, based in part too close of an assimilation of Fichte's views to those of Maimon, leaves him with no way to accommodate Fichte's insistence on the reality of his system over against rival systems. Instead, Breazeale is forced to adopt the unsatisfying proposal that this insistence be simply ignored, in view of the evident advantages of fictionalism. But this not only does unwarranted violence to the integrity of Fichte's system; it is also unnecessary. A closer reading of Fichte's pronouncements about the purpose and nature of the *Wissenschaftslehre* shows that he is able to rely on two distinctions that preserve both fictionalism and the claim to reality. First, Fichte distinguishes between reality or objective validity and the fictional or ideal status enjoyed by the elements of his system. Second, he also helps himself to another, derivative, notion of reality, i.e., the reality of necessary thinking. This notion makes it possible for Fichte to distinguish between a genuine *philosophical* fiction and something that is merely fabricated. Thus, he can claim a kind of reality for his system that does not shut out his equally important insistence on its fictional character.

Notes

1. This phrase comes from the subtitle of the famous *Sonnenklare Bericht*, composed during the aftermath of the "Atheism Controversy" of 1798–1799 and published in 1801 after Fichte's departure from Jena. References to Fichte's works are given parenthetically in the body of the text, beginning with the critical edition, (1964) *J.-G. Fichte:*

Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, R. Lauth, H. Jacobs, H. Gliwitsky, & E. Fuchs (Eds.) (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog). When applicable reference is also made to the relevant English translations according to the following abbreviations:

- EPW (1988) *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. D. Breazeale, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
- GNR (2000) *Foundations of Natural Right According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, F. Neuhouser (Ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- IW (1994) *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, trans. D. Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett).
- SE (2005) *The System of Ethics*, D. Breazeale & G. Zöller (Eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- WLnm (1992) *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy: (Wissenschaftslehre) nova methodo (1796/99)*, D. Breazeale (Ed.) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
2. I have in mind particularly the following studies: Neuhouser, F. (1990) *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Martin, W.M. (1997) *Idealism and Objectivity: Understanding Fichte's Jena Project* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press); Zöller, G. (1998) *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); and Franks, P.W. (2005) *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Scepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). In addition, in his valuable studies of the seminal period of German idealism, Frederick C. Beiser has provided careful, erudite treatments of some central ideas in Fichte's thought. See especially (1987) *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) and (2002) *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). In his superb introduction to the period, Terry Pinkard also presents a clear account of Fichte's place in the post-Kantian development of philosophy. See (2002) *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 105–131.
 3. Breazeale, D. (2002) "Fichte's Philosophical Fictions", in: D. Breazeale & T. Rockmore (Eds.), *New Essays on Fichte's Later Jena Wissenschaftslehre*, pp.175–208 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP). This assertion is found on p. 188.
 4. Breazeale, "Fichte's Philosophical Fictions", pp. 183–188.
 5. See Crowe, B.D. "Revisionism and Religion in Fichte's *Jena Wissenschaftslehre*", forthcoming in the *British Journal of the History of Philosophy*.
 6. Somewhat oddly, Breazeale attacks Reinhard Lauth's attempt to understand Fichte's fictionalism in his (1975) *Die Entstehung von Schellings Identitätsphilosophie in der Auseinandersetzung mit Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre* (Freiburg and München: Karl Alber). See Breazeale, "Fichte's Philosophical Fictions", pp. 186–87. Breazeale dismisses Lauth's challenge to the fictionalist reading a bit too quickly, for, in appealing to "intellectual intuition," Lauth seems to be pointing to the very problem with the fictionalist reading that Breazeale later details. See Breazeale, "Fichte's Philosophical Fictions", pp. 191–193.
 7. Breazeale, "Fichte's Philosophical Fictions", p. 188.
 8. Breazeale, "Fichte's Philosophical Fictions", p. 193.
 9. Breazeale, "Fichte's Philosophical Fictions", pp. 182–183.
 10. Notably, unlike Kant, Fichte wants to include the belief in other minds, in God, and in moral obligation among those "representations accompanied by a feeling of necessity" in which "reality" has its home. This is a significant modification of the Kantian view expressed, most famously, in Book II, Chapter 3 of the "Transcendental Dialectic."

11. Basing his account on *Sonnenklare Bericht*, read as Fichte's definitive statement of the nature of his Jena system, Günter Zöllner defends what he calls the "model-theoretical" reading of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. See *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy*, pp. 22–24. Zöllner's account here is compatible with Breazeale's "fictionalist" reading. Indeed, Zöllner highlights Fichte's talk of the "fictional" character of "the philosophical account of ordinary consciousness" (p. 23). In an earlier essay, Zöllner calls attention to the tension between Fichte's fictionalism and what he describes as Fichte's attempt to "capture the I in its true nature." This is, with some modification, precisely the same difficulty that Breazeale so clearly articulates with regard to his own reading of the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*. However, as with his criticism of Lauth, Breazeale seems to overlook Zöllner's sensitivity to this issue. See Zöllner, (1997) "An eye for an I: Fichte's transcendental experiment", in: D.E. Klemm & G. Zöllner (Eds.), *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Philosophy*, pp. 73–95 (Albany: SUNY Press).
12. In this respect, Fichte can be understood as an ancestor of later German Neo-Kantianism, of both the "Marburg" (Cohen, Cassirer, Natorp) and "Heidelberg" (Windelband, Rickert, Lask, Cohn) schools. These later Neo-Kantians reacted to the widespread tendency amongst nineteenth-century philosophers to read the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a sort of quasi-psychology. Not coincidentally, the Neo-Kantians (particularly in the "Heidelberg" school) appealed to Fichte and were noted scholars of Fichte's thought. For a good overview of this important chapter in the reception of Fichte's thought, see Marion Heinz, "Die Fichte-Rezeption in der südwestdeutschen Schule des Neukantianismus", *Fichte-Studien*, 13 (1997), pp. 109–129. For a discussion of psychologistic Kantianism, see Köhnke, K.C. (1991) *The Rise of Neo-Kantianism: German Academic Philosophy between Idealism and Positivism*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
13. The published version of this review essay is found at I/2, 21–29.
14. I have here followed Daniel Breazeale's translation of this text in *The Philosophical Forum*, 32 (4) (2001), pp. 297–310. This passage is found on p. 303 of the translation.
15. Paul Franks has carefully articulated this aspect of Fichte's system and of the idealist program more generally. He calls the principle at work here the "Heterogeneity Requirement," i.e., that the unconditioned ground of a series of conditions must be *heterogeneous* with the series, in that it is not subject to the law that applies to each member of the series such that it must have an antecedent condition. See Franks, *All or Nothing*, pp. 102–103.
16. The flavor of Schmid's worries is captured by a passage quoted by Fichte in the essay: "Recently, a bold attempt has been made to unite the starting point of philosophy with its end point. This has been done by substituting an idealistic absolute for the concept, which does occur in consciousness, of a knowing subject, and then, on every occasion, deriving from the wealth of this fictitious [*erdichteten*] infinity just what and just so much as one thinks one needs for the derivation of all that occurs within consciousness" (I/3, 251–52; EPW, 321).
17. For a discussion of thought experiments in general, from which the Galileo example is drawn, see Brown, J.R. (2004) "Why Thought Experiments Transcend Empiricism", in: C.Hitchcock (Ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Science*, pp. 23–43 (Oxford: Blackwell).
18. This idea reappears in the "Second Introduction" to the 1797 *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (I/4, 260; IW, 92–93).
19. Manfred Frank makes this the centerpiece of his well-known treatment of the immediate reception of Fichte in the late 1790's by the early Romantics. See especially (1997) *Unendliche Annäherung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).