

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-64392-4 - Novalis: Fichte Studies  
Edited by Jane Kneller  
Excerpt  
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## Fichte Studies

## Group I: I–210 (fall to early winter, 1795)

### Remarks

1. The proposition *a* is *a* contains nothing but a positing, differentiating and combining. It is a philosophical parallelism. In order to make *a* more distinct, *A* is divided (analyzed).<sup>1</sup> “Is” is presented as universal content, “a” as determinate form. The essence of identity can only be presented in an *illusory* proposition [*Scheinsatz*]. We abandon the *identical* in order to present it.<sup>2</sup> Either this occurs only illusorily – and we are brought by the imagination to believe it – what *occurs*, already is – naturally through imaginary separation and unification – Or we represent it through its “not-being” [what it is not], through a “not-identical” [what is not identical to it] – a sign – [using] a determined thing for an isomorphic determining thing.<sup>3</sup> This isomorphic determining thing must actually

<sup>1</sup> I have added the italics for clarity. Novalis does not use them, nor in general does he have any print conventions for distinguishing mention from use, except by context, throughout the *Studies*. I have followed suit except in cases such as this where it would be unnecessarily confusing.

<sup>2</sup> The translation of *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung* and their cognates is a vexed issue in German philosophy that appears to have its roots in Kant and his immediate successors. For simplicity’s sake I will translate occurrences of *Darstellung* and its cognates as “presentation,” “to present,” etc. Similarly for *Vorstellung* I will use “representation,” although “representation” is often a perfectly reasonable translation of *Darstellung* as well. Cf. Martha B. Helfer, *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). *Darstellung* in its technical, Kantian sense connotes an element of sensation or sensibility in presentation tied to the notion of schematism. Hence Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy refer to it problematically as a “staging” or “figuration” (see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988], p. 31).

<sup>3</sup> The discussion of an isomorphic, i.e., similarly formed, “sign” harks back to Kant’s discussion of the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding, in which he poses the problem of the application of the pure concepts. He argues that what is required to make such application possible

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determine the communicated sign in a completely unmediated way, through just the same movements as the I, freely and yet still like the I. Taste and genius. The former [taste], if it is determined through a medium, a representation, of my act of producing the sign or simply of my *intention*, my *meaning*. The latter [genius], if it is produced immediately, without this medium, the representation of *my* causality – like the I. The former is mere taste, the latter is the taste of genius.

The proposition: If A then A, contains this [same thing]. The rest is explained by the category of relation.

Application of the above to the proposition:

I am I.

Grammatically it contains the same thing three times.

The proposition I am I contains nothing more than what lies in the mere concept of the I.

What is the I? /An absolute thetic faculty/ The sphere of the I must encompass everything for us. As itself content, it can recognize content. The recognition points to its being an I. As the ground of all determining for the I, or of all *form*, it is thus also the ground of its own determination, or form. In short: it is an independent determination of content – thus it gives *itself all* determination.

The spontaneity of its determination – It assumes, e.g., A, because it assumes a.

Why the original act must be a free act – because it presupposes no other – It is, because it is, not because another is. Consequently the determination of the I as I is free. /A not-free act can only be not-free through another act, and so forth. Identity/

Because the I is a thoroughly determined thing, it can only cognize the universal content in itself. Insofar as it transposes universal content outside itself, it must believe in it. The I cannot know [content outside itself] as a determination, because [to do so] it would have to be *in it*. What I don't know but feel (the I feels itself, as content) I believe. The act of positing something outside us must be free – but only mediate – it depends upon the first act – we are unaware of the latter and consequently we feel the former as unfree. Why we are not aware of the first act: because it first makes the awareness possible and consequently this lies *within* the

is a “mediating representation” that can act as an interface between the intellectual concept and the sensible intuition (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 137/B 176ff., trans. Paul Guyer and Alan W. Wood [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], pp. 271ff.).

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sphere of the first act – the act of coming to awareness can therefore not go outside its sphere and hope to grasp the mothersphere.

*Dividing and uniting.*

Pure and empirical I.

Concerning Consciousness

[2.] Knowledge comes from something. It always refers to a something – It is a reference to Being, in the determined being in general, namely in the I.

In *knowledge* of the determined being, the *accent*, the stress is on the being; the determined [thing] is only baggage [literally: “brought along”], it is an accident. With *feeling* it is the opposite. The accent lies on the form, on the determination. The being is only baggage, is an accident.

Consciousness is the sphere of knowledge. In feeling it [consciousness] can only occur mediately.

/Knowledge is here taken exclusively in the strict sense./

What kind of a relation is knowledge? It is a being outside of being that is nevertheless within being.

/Dividing – uniting/

Consciousness is a being outside of being that is within being.

But what is that?

What is outside being must not be a proper being.

An improper being outside being is an image – So what is outside being must be an image of being within being. Consciousness is consequently an image of being within being.

A better explanation of the image. /Sign/ Theory of signs. /Theory of presentation, i.e., of not-being, within being, in order to let being be there for itself in a certain respect.

Theory of space and time in terms of the image.

3. Now if the universal content were only in the I, could one not then place determined-being in opposition to mere-being? *Belief* also forces us to take up just this illusory opposition, which we are in any case capable

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of through our thetic faculty. / Thus thinking and feeling switch the roles of subjective and objective. /

No modification – no concept – clings to mere-being – One cannot posit anything in opposition to it – except to say not-being. But this [word] is just a little connecting hook used for hanging things on pro forma – it only appears thus [to connect things]. It just grasps a handful of darkness. In order to *determine* the I we must refer it to something. Reference occurs through differentiation – Both [occur] through the thesis of an absolute sphere of existence. This is mere-being – or chaos.

Should there be a still higher sphere, it would be the sphere between being and not-being. – The oscillating between the two. – Something inexpressible, and here we have the *concept of life*.

Life can be nothing else – a human being dies – the substance remains – the *middle-joint*, if I may call it that, between substance and annihilation is gone. – The substance becomes indeterminate – Each appropriates what it can.

Here philosophy is at a standstill and must remain so – because life consists precisely in this, that it cannot be grasped. Philosophy can aim only at *being*. Human beings feel the boundary that circumscribes everything for them, for themselves, *the first act*; they must believe it, as certainly as they know everything else. Consequently we are here not yet transcendent, but rather in the I and for the I.

In order to conceive itself the I must represent to itself another like itself, anatomize, as it were. This other being that is like the I is none other than the I itself. The I similarly becomes aware of this act of alienation and respective production only through this same conceptual exercise. – It finds that it is the same in its own case, that the act that precedes this reflection can occur in no other way.

/Clarification of “being,” “life,” “thinking,” “representing” etc./

Natural path of reflection to result and from result to reflection, as to the result of the result.

Life is something composed of synthesis, thesis, and antithesis and yet none of the three.

All subsequent theses, syntheses and antitheses must have the content of the thesis and the form of the first synthesis and antithesis. Consequently Being must be the character of all theses, dividing and relating must be the character of all antitheses and syntheses.

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[4.] Is not philosophy possible only for the use or purpose of reflection?  
 Therefore it must be dogmatic and *appear* transcendent.

[5.] What do we mean by “I”?

Has not Fichte too arbitrarily packed everything into the I? With what warrant?

Can an I posit itself as *I*, without another I or Not-I –/How are I and Not-I opposable/

6. The I has a hieroglyphic power.

7. There has to be a Not-I, in order that I can posit the I as I. Thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

8. The act by which the I posits itself as I must be connected with the antithesis of an independent Not-I and of the relationship to a sphere that encompasses them – this sphere can be called God, and I.

9. The requirement of a universally valid philosophy.

10. Concept of the nothing and the something.

11.1. Theory of the sign or

what can be *true* through the medium of language?

2. of philosophy in general – the possibility of a system, etc.

3. System itself.

What is thought?

Free successive isolation outside of space.

Speech and writing?

<the same, only in a determinate way in space.>

determinate presentation of thought in space – Consequently, because space and time reciprocally *signify*, determine, and restrain each other – determinate signs of thought.

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The relationship of the sign to the signified.  
 Both are in different spheres that can mutually determine each other.  
 The signified is a free effect[,] likewise the sign.  
 They are thus the same in the one who is doing the signifying – otherwise completely different – but this also only for the one signifying – both are related to each other only in the one who is signifying.  
 Insofar as the signifying [agent] is *completely free* either in the effect of the signified or in the choice of the sign, and not dependent even on its own determinate nature, then to that extent both [signified and signifier] are there in mutual relationship only for the signifying [agent], and neither of them is necessarily related to the other for a second signifying [agent].<sup>4</sup>  
 For a second signifying agent they are completely separate.  
 Thought, however, can be communicated to a second signifying [agent], as with all things *from outside*, only in space, via an intuition or a feeling.

/Space is the *outer* condition, time the *inner* condition, of sensible intuition, or feeling/

Consequently only through a sign. But if, as just stated, sign and signified are completely separated, if they are related only in the first signifying [agent], then it can only be an accident or a miracle if the signified is received by the second signifying [agent] through such a sign.  
 Objectively and subjectively necessary signs, /which at bottom is the same/ are therefore the only things through which something that is thought can be communicated.  
 In order to communicate, the first signifying [agent] need only choose such signs as have a well-grounded necessary relationship to the signified in the homogeneous being of the second signifying agent. The homogeneity of the alien being with that of its own [being] in this relationship will have to be studied by it in this communication.  
 The necessity of the relationship of a sign to the thing signified should lie in the signifying agent. In *this* agent, however, both are freely posited. Therefore a free necessity of the relationship of both must exist in the signifying agent. It [the relationship of sign/signified] should be free with

<sup>4</sup> Here I am following Schulte-Sasse et al. in translating *der Bezeichnende* as a reference to an individual subject in its activity of signifying, as opposed to the sign (*das Bezeichnende*) itself. I have for that reason preferred “signifying agent” to their “signifying person.” (Cf. Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al., *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997], pp. 63, 93ff.)

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respect to this signifying agent – it can be necessary therefore only with respect to *the signifying agent in general* or to other signifying agents. – Free necessity could be called self-determination. Consequently self-determination would be characteristic of the *signifying agent in general* or of other signifying agents – thus the essence of self-determination is synthesis – absolute positing of a sphere – thesis [is the] determinate positing of a sphere – antithesis [is the] indeterminate positing of a sphere. Every one of these three is all three and this is proof of their belonging together. The synthesis is, or can be, thesis and antithesis. The same with the thesis, and the antithesis. Original schema.<sup>5</sup> /One in all./ All in one./ Every *comprehensible* sign must therefore stand in a *schematic* relationship to the signified.

In order to make this clearer we must investigate the original schema more closely.

The schema stands in reciprocal action with itself. Each in its place is only what it is through the other. The first signifier [*das Bezeichnende*] finds an original schema in the second signifier – and it chooses the signs to be communicated accordingly.<sup>6</sup> The second signifier is only free insofar as it is necessary, and conversely, is only necessary inasmuch as it is free – in short – it is *necessarily free*. [“]Free[”] must stand last, because freedom either reached the second signifier first or occurs to it last in its process of thought. It is free in the thesis – the opposite and the sphere only comprise the predicate – and must be so, so that in the schema the thesis just is the thesis – as it must be.

/The antithesis [*Gegensatz*] is to be distinguished from the non-thesis [*Nichtsatz*]. Antipodes and antivectors./

Here the all-uniting character of the schema is also shown in the application. The free can only be determined, that is, necessary, and the necessary can only be undetermined, that is, free. Without sphere, thesis and antithesis could become interchangeable, could be one, or nothing – which here comes to the same. Thus [an] I and [a]

<sup>5</sup> Fichte in “On the Faculty of Speech and the Origin of Language” (1795) borrows Kant’s notion of a schematism used to map sensible intuitions to concepts of the understanding. Fichte, however, uses the notion of a mediating function as that between the sensible and the supersensible in the development of language – sense concepts are mapped imaginatively onto abstract, “supersensible” concepts so that philosophical language arises.

<sup>6</sup> Here Novalis uses the neuter *das* presumably to refer to the sign itself as signifying thing, as opposed to the agent’s act of signification. (See Elizabeth Mittman and Mary R. Strand, “Self and Other in Early German Romanticism,” in Schulte-Sasse et al., *Theory as Practice*.)

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not-I, without an absolute I! Which is just sphere, only under the presupposition (co-supposition) of thesis and antithesis/

We have come this far in understanding the second signifier, and we continue to explore it further.

<p>Question? How first to recognize this schema and then to be able orient ourselves by it</p>	<p>The first signifier without noticing it will have painted its own picture in the mirror of reflection, not forgetting to paint the feature, that the picture is painted in the arrangement that it [the first signifier] itself paints./</p>
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It is free according to the original schema. If I then give the signifying agent a sign that stands in schematic relation to the signified then it will find, or rather itself signify, the signified in its [the signifying agent's] necessarily free way. The first signifying agent interacts with the second. The first agent orients himself to the second in the sign, the second to the first in the signified – a *quasi*-free contract. They must both freely want it in order for the effect to succeed. The signified precedes the sign, so it is as if the first signifying agent wants [the interaction] before the second wants it. But it is only an “as if” – (because as soon as the agent thinks the sign and signified in relation, it anticipates the *will* of the other in the representation and [. . .]<sup>7</sup> itself first of all). The will of the other must enter at exactly the same time into the actual activity that takes place *in* the first signifying agent – even if this determination is not clearly thought.

/The representation is the medium of the outer world/ more about this later/

But how will a schematic relationship between sign and signified be determined? And which?

/If the first wants to communicate something to a third signifying agent through the second, what must be presupposed in the second by way of capacities and powers, etc.? All powers and capacities must

<sup>7</sup> Yellowed to the point of illegibility in the original manuscript. (Cf. Richard Samuel's text revisions, *Novalis: Schriften*, Vol. II, p. 695.)

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stand under the absolute synthetic or whatever one wants to call it.  
 The *kind* of activity developed in the schema must ground everything. It must be *generic*./

Deduction of the C[ategories?]

[12.] tangibleness – Property of the Something. Intuitability.

Life – Law of association.

The highest *presentation* of the incomprehensible is synthesis – unity of the un-unifiable.

Positing of contradiction as not-contradiction.

The *simplest thing* is Something.

What is not even 1, is 0.

Every thing can be viewed in relation to itself, and to its not self.

The simplest thing is the simplest thing. It can stand in relation to a composite<sup>8</sup> and to that which is not even 1. But since *relation* itself is a composite, there can be absolutely no relation between 1 and 0. /Negation is first division./

/We are speaking here only of the grounding of the possibility of reflection/or of systematic thought/

/We must make the virtually objective into the virtually subjective, bring being into a form of thinking, in order to be able to investigate it. It is easy to discern how carefully one must then abstract from *the necessary additive*, from the given form, in order to find the original form of being, and with it the possible substrate of all matter./

The Categories must be *free* procedures, or forms of thinking.

We must apply them to themselves in order thus to find their *original* genesis.

We must distinguish the form and matter of the Categories – activity and object, or better, possibility and actuality.

It is only by being applied that they can be found – They produce themselves – One believes to have [found] their producer and repeatedly finds them [the Categories] themselves.

<sup>8</sup> Literally: “something put together”: *das Zusammengesetzten*.