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## **Correspondences Between Fichte's Worldviews and World Ages Based on the Fivefold Synthesis of WL-1804-II**

### **Abstract**

*Based on the fivefold synthesis of Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre-1804-II, I examine the implicit logical necessity of both world-plan ages and worldviews in two works of the post-Jena period, in which Fichte seeks to explain the history of humanity from an a priori plan (Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters) and the history of consciousness in its ascent to a higher worldview (Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben) respectively. The purpose of this text is therefore threefold: (1) to verify the relationship between the fivefold synthesis and the worldviews; (2) to verify the relationship between the fivefold synthesis and the epochs of the world plan; and (3) to verify the relationship between 1 and 2. Of course, there are previous studies that examine both works separately, but none that establish a precise correlation between worldviews and world ages. This article fills that gap.*

### **Keywords**

Johan Gottlieb Fichte, worldviews, world-plan Ages, fivefold synthesis, Post-Jena Period, WL-1804-II

## **1. Introduction**

In the post-Jena period, Fichte reformulated his philosophical system by renewing the perspective and terms used up to 1800. The purely idealistic Jena perspective is followed by a more speculative<sup>1</sup> approach with which, however, he seeks to establish a continuum between Life or Light, as terms replacing the absolute I, with respect to its manifestation in the multiplicity of existence.<sup>2</sup> The version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* that best expresses the above-mentioned shift in focus is the version of the lectures Fichte gave at his Berlin home in

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The term “idealistic” refers to subjective idealism or radical transcendental idealism, in which the mind, consciousness, and the subject (the *I*) are considered the ultimate principles. During the post-Jena period, while the *I* remains essential, there is a noticeable shift in focus toward the absolute being (Seyn), which is sometimes equated with God as the ultimate foundation. This is the meaning of “speculative”: the Absolute is increasingly viewed not only as the activity of the *I* but also as a fundamental reality or ground that precedes or underlies the distinction between the *I* and the *Not-I*. For an exploration of the speculative quality of Fichte's post-Jena period, see:

Gaetano Rametta, *Le strutture speculative della Dottrina della Scienza*, Pantograf, Genova 1995. On the distinction between Hegel's speculative idealism and Fichte's speculative project, see in particular pp. 125–126.

2

For an overview of the debate on whether there is continuity between the early Fichte and the post-Jena period, see: Rainer Schäfer, “Systematic and Doctrinal Differences of Fichte's Early and Late *Wissenschaftslehre*: From the *I Tathandlung* to God as Schema”, in: Marina F. Bykova (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Fichte*, Bloomsbury Academic, New York – London 2020, pp. 235–243.

the spring of 1804, the second of the three series of lectures he gave that year. From it I intend to examine the implicit logical necessity of both world ages and worldviews in two works from this second period that seek to explain respectively the history of humanity from an *a priori* plan (*Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*),<sup>3</sup> and the history of consciousness<sup>4</sup> in its ascent to a higher worldview (*Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben*).<sup>5</sup> By “implicit logical necessity” I mean the explanation of the structure and content that these worldviews and ages follow as well as the correlation between them. To be sure, there are previous studies that examine the two works separately, but none (to my knowledge) that establish a precise correlation between worldviews and ages, and this article fills that gap. It seeks to contribute to the understanding of Fichte’s philosophical project as a rational totality in which the parts fit together in a necessary and precise way.<sup>6</sup> Even the apparent contradictions in the alignment of the different ages and worldviews are accommodated in his WL. Thus, the original question to be answered is threefold:

1. Why does Fichte establish only five possible worldviews?
2. Why does Fichte divide his scheme of human history into five epochs?
3. What is the relation between the series of worldviews and the series of world epochs, according to their essential characteristics?

To answer these questions, it is first necessary to set out the structure of the fivefold synthesis as it begins to be expounded and used in the post-Jena period, and primarily in *WL*-1804-II.<sup>7</sup> This structure can be said to condense the whole of Fichte’s metaphysical thought. It articulates the determination and modification of the Absolute or Oneness through the manifold (*mannigfaltige*) and, conversely, the abstraction from the latter to the former, i.e. what Fichte understood to be the essential function of philosophy as metaphysics: “to trace all multiplicity (which presses itself upon us in the usual view of life) back [*zurückzuführen*] to absolute Oneness”.<sup>8</sup> This structure, which extends from a threefold relation to a fivefold relation, ends up seeking to express the manifoldness of the real by means of 25 elements or determinations (*Grundbestimmungen*) genetically deduced from higher principles.<sup>9</sup> The five possible worldviews are deduced in this way, while the five historical epochs assume these worldviews and distribute them on a timeline in which the initial structure of the process of determination in threefold is reproduced. For it can be seen that this first division of the Absolute into consciousness and being is based on a principle of absolute separation related to the way in which consciousness knows the Absolute or Oneness [*Einheit*] in its manifestation or appearance:

“Thus, absolute oneness can no more reside in being than in its correlative consciousness; it can as little be posited in the thing as in the representation of the thing. Rather, it resides in the principle [...] of the absolute oneness and indivisibility of both [*Prinzip der absoluten Einheit*], which is equally, as we have seen, the principle of their disjunction [*Prinzip der Disjunktion*].”<sup>10</sup>

This absolute separateness explains not only “the living absolute separation [*absoluten Sonderung*] within us”,<sup>11</sup> but also, as I intend to argue, the separation exhibited in the arrangement of the ages of the world, which progress dialectically within a unitary plan of Reason, which, denying itself, passes from a state of self-absorption in its indeterminate unity to one of self-recognition. For “thinking oneself as such, is reason” and “absolute reason is absolute (accomplished) thinking [*intelligieren*] of oneself”.<sup>12</sup> Such self-denial implies the intrinsic separability of an image from its represented object (itself), a step associated with the emergence of consciousness.<sup>13</sup> This tripartite scheme will absorb the five possible worldviews (senses, legality, morality, religion, science)

along the line of the historical development of humanity, from blind instinct to its liberation and the ultimate development of Reason in its recognition as oneness, i.e. in the harmonisation of individual human destinies with respect to humanity, so that no one is deluded into thinking of their material individuality as real and true and recognise the supersensible reality of their essential unity.<sup>14</sup> It is this scheme, set out in detail in the post-Jena version of the *WL*, that will enable us to answer the questions posed above. But to do so, I will first present the genetic deduction of the fivefold synthesis [*Fünffachheit*].

3

All English quotations are from *The Characteristics of the Present Age* in Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Popular Work*, vol. II, transl. William Smith, Trübner & Co., London 1889. The references to this English version will appear next to the pagination of the German edition of *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke*, vol. VII, edited by Immanuel Hermann Fichte, De Gruyter, Berlin 1971, and Fichte's *Gesamtausgabe Bayerischen der Akademie der Wissenschaften* I/8, edited by Reinhard Lauth and Hans Gliwitzky, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1995.

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For the concept of the history of consciousness in the context of its emergence in German Idealism, see Víctor Duplancic, “Apariencia, historia y dialéctica: la presencia de Fichte en Hegel”, *Revista de Estud(i)os sobre Fichte* 25 (2024), pp. 1–11, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/125x9>.

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All English quotations are from Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *A Way Towards a Blessed Life or The Doctrine of Religion* in Fichte's *Popular Work*, vol. II, transl. William Smith, Trübner & Co., London 1889. The references to this English version will appear next to the pagination of the German edition of *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke*, vol. VII, edited by Immanuel Hermann Fichte, De Gruyter, Berlin 1971, and Fichte's *Gesamtausgabe Bayerischen der Akademie der Wissenschaften* I/9, edited by Reinhard Lauth and Hans Gliwitzky, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1995.

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This fivefold structure is also seen in *The Essence of the Scholar and its Manifestations*, lectures given by Fichte during his stay at the University of Erlangen (1805). See: Emiliano Acosta, “The Quintuple Quintuplicity of Forms of (Self-)Consciousness in Fichte's 1804 Wissenschaftslehre”, in: Benjamin Crowe, Gabriel Gottlieb (eds.), *Fichte's 1804 Wissenschaftslehre. Essays on “the Science of Knowing”*, State University of New York Press, Albany 2024, pp. 193–213 (pp. 195–196). I leave the exploration of the structure of this work for another occasion.

7

The first mentions of the fivefold structure already appear in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, but without the precision or methodological scope that it would take on from 1804 onwards, as Emiliano Acosta states: “Already in the doctrine of science nova methodo (1796/1799) Fichte is aware that a ‘complete synthesis has 5 members.’ However, it is only after 1804 that he begins to systematically apply the schema of the quintuplicity as a methodological tool in order to exhaustively analyze or genetically reconstruct a concept.” – E. Acosta, “The Quintuple Quintuplicity of Forms of (Self-)Consciousness in Fichte's 1804 Wissenschaftslehre”, p. 195.

8

I use Walter E. Wright's translation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* 1804: J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowing 1804*, State University of New York Press, Albany 2005, p. 23. In *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 93, and *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 8.

9

For a detailed analysis of the 25 determinations of transcendental knowing, see: Alexander Schnell, *Die Erscheinung der Erscheinung*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt 2023. Particularly illuminating is the table on pages 191–193 with the 25 disjunctions and their union.

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J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing* 1804, p. 25; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 96; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 14.

11

*Ibid.*, p. 60; p. 137; p. 94.

12

*Ibid.*, p. 198; p. 310; p. 414.

13

See Alessandro Bertinetto, “The role of Image in Fichte's Transcendental Logic”, in: Guillaume Lejeune (ed.), *La question de la logique dans l'Idéalisme allemand*, Olms Publisher, Hildesheim 2013, pp. 95–108.

14

J. G. Fichte, *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, p. 143; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke*



## 2. The Fivefold Synthesis from Oneness to Multiplicity and Back Again

A total explanation of reality requires, according to Fichte, to bring manifoldness into account from the original unity. This unity, on the other hand, must not be static but pure activity, by which it is constantly making itself without ceasing to be what it is, which prevents the regression to the infinite that would require the foundation of Schelling's immovable, fixed and static being (in the manner of the Aristotelian argument of the immobile motor). This Absolute or God as the origin of the process in *WL*-1804-II is Light that is projected as its appearance or image.<sup>15</sup> The latter is knowledge. The Absolute is the being of knowledge. This spontaneous projection of itself is governed by a law of recognition since the Absolute is pure activity or light, but without self-knowledge. This act of becoming entails its image or appearance, which is not the absolute being but its manifestation or revelation, and thus carries its essence.<sup>16</sup> This first step comes to rectify Spinozism, which resorted to undifferentiating monism, whereby creation was nothing more than attributes and modes of God. Thus Spinoza "does not know how to make a bridge from it (God) to the manifold; and, on the other hand, if it has the manifold, cannot get from there to oneness".<sup>17</sup> For Fichte, there is a leap between God as Absolute and his manifestation as appearance. There is a separation which explains that to know the Absolute is to recognise its manifestation or revelation in existence, never to gain access to that pure and indeterminate being which is the absolute being. Without the latter as a point of reference, one would fall into the nihilism<sup>18</sup> that Jacobi blamed on him in the "Open letter" of 1799.<sup>19</sup> In this first moment of the process, we have the first image of the Absolute or *Schema I*, as he calls it in *WL*-1812,<sup>20</sup> which is living and energetic life or existence [*das lebendige und kräftige Daseyn*].<sup>21</sup>

In a second moment, from the primordial image or existence, a second image emerges, with which self-recognition is sought (*Schema II*, in *WL*-1812).<sup>22</sup> This is the moment when this original, unconscious image of absolute being unfolds in the subject-object relationship, recognising itself in its image, which is now self-consciousness:

"The existence of (absolute) being must necessarily be a consciousness of itself – of existence – as a mere image or representation of Absolute, self-existent Being."<sup>23</sup>

This second image as image of existence is consciousness, because one cannot be without the other.<sup>24</sup> This act of recognition unfolds in turn into two: the concept (*Bilde*) and the perception (*Begriffe*).<sup>25</sup> While the concept is the *what* or the essential qualities of the primordial image as existence, the perception is the *that* or the realisation of the existence of what is conceived. The subject-object relation is now inverted in the concept-perception relation, so that the concept takes as its object the primordial image as perception.<sup>26</sup> The division between concept and perception shape the primordial image not as fixed and determined concepts and perceptions, but as the determination of possible concepts and perceptions. But these possibilities recognise the Absolute in its primordial image as the seat of insight. Here the fivefold understood as "the appearance [*Erscheinung*] appears [*erscheint*] to be itself, as appearing itself" (This is stated in the *WL*-1812).<sup>27</sup> This second image or consciousness as concept and perception will be the source of every principle of knowledge, for neither the Absolute nor the existence or primordial image is, since it arises without generation (from within the *WL*). The primordial image or existence

will, however, be regarded as *prinzipiieren* or “principle-providing”, being a principle of itself as an image of the inconceivable absolute being, of which its hypothetical existence can only be known as through a gap or irrational leap [*hiatus irrationalis*].<sup>28</sup> The shared world arises at this moment partly through sense data and partly through the I's capacity for conceptualisation, which has its seat in this consciousness upon existence or living life:

VII, pp. 129–130; *Gesamtausgabe* I/8, pp. 295–297.

15

J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing* 1804, p. 43; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 118; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 58.

16

On the Absolute as the construction of itself in existence through consciousness, see Christoph Asmuth, *Das Begreifen des Unbegreiflichen*, Frommann and Holzboog, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 258–259.

17

J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing* 1804, p. 41; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 116; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 55.

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Cf. Emiliano Acosta, “Algunas Observaciones sobre nihilismo y teoría de la imagen en Fichte”, *Revista de Estud(i)os sobre Fichte* 18 (2019), pp. 1–11, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ref.1188>. Acosta contrasts the German author's negative version of Fichte's nihilism with a positive one, in which nihilism (as the absence of a fixed and immutable ultimate reality) would be the condition for the possibility of carrying out the moral improvement of man in parallel with the transformation of the world.

19

For a review of the influence of this criticism in Fichte's post-Jena period, see: Günter Zöller, “Fichte's later presentations of the Wissenschaftslehre”, in: David James, Günter Zöller (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2016, pp. 93–138. For the polemic between Jacobi and Fichte on the need for a truth beyond knowledge that would justify the latter as true, see: Paolo Livieri, “Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi”, in: Edward N. Zalta, Uri Nodelman (eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2023). Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/friedrich-jacobi/#OpenLettFich1799> (accessed on 25 October 2025).

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*Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 338; *Gesamtausgabe* II/13, p. 62. Fichte also calls *Urschema* to this *Schema I*. See also: Jacinto Rivera de Rosales, “Die Welt als Bild”, in: Thomas Sören Hoffmann (ed.), *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre von 1812. Vermächtnis und Herausforderung des transzendentalen Idealismus*, Duncker Und Humblot, Berlin 2016, pp. 97–108.

21

J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, p. 343; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 443; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 89.

22

*Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 347; *Gesamtausgabe* II/13, p. 69.

23

J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, p. 342; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 442; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 88.

24

J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing* 1804, p. 30; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 101; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 24.

25

J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, p. 345; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 444; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 90.

26

J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, pp. 355–356; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 453; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 97.

27

*Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 356; *Gesamtausgabe* II/13, p. 76. The entire chapter 2 of *WL-1812* is devoted to this topic as its title shows: “Deduktion der Fünffachheit in der Form der Erscheinung”. *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 350; *Gesamtausgabe* II/13, p. 71. See also J. Rivera de Rosales, “Die Welt als Bild”, p. 107.

28

J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing* 1804, p. 124; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 217; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 248.

“... only to concept and in concept there is a world, as the necessary form of life [*als die nothwendige Erscheinung des Lebens im Begriffe*].”<sup>29</sup>

In a third level, we have the creation of multiplicity (Schema III in *WL*-1812),<sup>30</sup> which implies reflection as the ability to fix a concrete vision upon the common world as it has been conceived in its essential possibilities.

This development from absolute being to the emergence of potential multiplicity and worldviews can be schematized by the inclusive and unfolding structure of the three and fivefold as it appears in *WL*-1804-II, especially in Lecture XV, which reads as follows:

“Therefore, the unity of understanding, which reason presupposes here, cannot merely be a simple self-determined oneness; instead it must be a unity in-relation [*relationseinheit*], meaningless without two terms which arise within it in two different connections: in part as positing one another and in part as negating one another, thus the well-known “through” [*Durch*] and the five-foldness [*fünffachheit*] recognized in it.”<sup>31</sup>

It must be emphasised that at all times this structure of multiple syntheses belongs to the activity of reason, for which unity always appears already as a unity in relation, since from consciousness one can only aspire to the knowledge of absolute being in relation to its manifestation. In the transcribed text, the procedure is based on two essential concepts, namely “through” and five-foldness. The former is a neologism used by Fichte in these lessons to account for the fact that related concepts in the structure of reality are interdependent and mutually constitutive.<sup>32</sup> It is understood then that, even in its character of negation, absolute being or Oneness requires its manifestations and vice versa, these would not be without the former. The “through” or “one-through-the-other” [*Durcheinender*] determines the threefold synthesis between Oneness and its spontaneous manifestations, being and consciousness or thinking.<sup>33</sup> This first triangular structure arising from a stroke represents the relation between  $A - b$ , where  $b$  is Being ( $b1$ ) and Thinking ( $b2$ ), which in turn oscillate with respect to the Absolute ( $A$ ). At this point the duality in relation to the Absolute term that makes them both possible and in which both are one and the same, while remaining separate. Being ( $b1$ ) is the primordial image, pure existence and self-enclosed-life and Thinking ( $b2$ ) is the image of the image with which the being-in-itself (projected image of the Absolute) becomes aware of itself as reason (i.e. unity of subject and object).<sup>34</sup> This is the threefold whose basis is expanded by the following division, which in the text is treated as an oscillation between the two terms  $b1 - b2$ , so that they affirm and deny each other. These two terms as a function of the “through” determine each other and constitute the next level of the structure of reality, and complete the fivefold.

As it is consciousness or thinking that has the capacity to divide itself by presenting itself in the subject-object relationship, it is only thanks to it that the manifold exists, which, again, is not proper to being but to consciousness:

“... a manifold being exists only in consciousness.”<sup>35</sup>

Thus, at this level of the structure, the members of the base of the triangle ( $b1 - b2$ ) mutually affirm and deny each other.<sup>36</sup> It begins with the affirmation of being by consciousness, which is equivalent to the affirmation of the concept with respect to the perception of the primordial image; consciousness in this pure concept shows a content, thanks to which being is known in its basic perception. At the same time, however, the concept denies this perception in those qualities that it does not succeed in showing beyond the essential ones. Let us say that at the same time, it shows and hides the being.<sup>37</sup> Here it

initiates this unfolding of consciousness into supersensible consciousness and sensible consciousness respectively [*sinnlichem und übersinnlichem Sein und Denken*].<sup>38</sup> Going a step further, this unfolding of consciousness is reproduced in the being that now affirms and denies it equally by obtaining the supersensible being and the sensible being. Being itself affirms the content of consciousness insofar as it recognises itself in it, while at the same time denying the concepts of consciousness in which it is not (or only minimally) reflected.

In the explanatory addition to *WL-1804-II* one can read the deduction I have just made, and together with the content of lesson 28 (the last lesson), one can reconstruct the correspondence of this double distinction in being and consciousness with respect to the worldviews. If so far we have the structure of the fivefold already unfolded, from this last level we get the multiplicity of the real. The possibilities of world conception are reconstructed by a new division. From supersensible consciousness emerges a new distinction between religious and moral worldviews; and so does sensible consciousness, from which legal and natural worldviews bifurcate. Consciousness projects itself into being, dividing the being into a double distinction. Supersensible being is bifurcated into God and the moral law, while judicial law and nature are drawn from sensible being. Finally, says Fichte, each of these worldviews must be related to the other three and to the unifying principle, giving a combination of 20 elements, which added to the original five of the fivefold synthesis are 25:

“... this division into twenty-five forms coincides with the absolute breakdown of the real.”<sup>39</sup>

We have already seen the worldviews deduced, but only four of them have been named (religious, moral, legal, natural). What is the fifth one? Supposedly the

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J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, p. 68; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 454; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 97.

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*Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 364; *Gesamtausgabe* II/13, p. 82.

31

J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing 1804*, p. 120; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 212; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 241.

32

For an exploration of this fivefold structure (*Fünffachheit*), see: A. Schnell, *Die Erscheinung der Erscheinung*, pp. 32–34.

33

J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing 1804*, p. 74; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 155; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 128. Fichte uses the terms “consciousness” [*Bewusstsein*] and “thinking” [*Denken*] interchangeably as opposites of being, see: *Science of Knowing 1804*, p. 25; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 95; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 12.

34

See: E. Acosta, “The Quintuple Quintuplicity of Forms of (Self-)Consciousness in Fichte's 1804 Wissenschaftslehre”, p. 193.

35

J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing 1804*, pp. 206, 200; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 314; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 420.

36

For an analysis of the use of this argumentative structure in the enactment of Fichte's discourse, see: Matthew Nini, “Fichte's Fivefold Transcendental Argument in the WL-1804-II”, *Fichte Studien* 52 (2023) 1, pp. 156–174, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18795811-05201009>.

37

“Fichte employs the negation of the concept, which is itself determined in and through the concept, to conceptually determine what exceeds the concept, to schematise in language (and language is already concept) what refers to its beyond.” – G. Rametta, *Le strutture speculative della Dottrina della Scienza*, p. 123.

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J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing 1804*, p. 58; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 135; *Gesamtausgabe* II/8, p. 90.

39

*Ibid.*, p. 200; p. 314; pp. 418–419.

fifth one, which we are going to see is the scientific-philosophical worldview, would be the one that deals with first principles. In particular, the philosophical science is represented by Fichte's *WL* which is in charge of identifying the principles in order to bring the manifold to unity and vice versa. The fifth element that enters into the combination of worldviews is the unifying principle (*Einheitsprinzip*), which can only be reason as the unifying principle of the *WL*, in its endeavour to reduce the manifold to unity:

"... the science of knowing (*WL*) is reason's immediate expression and life: the single life of reason unfolded immediately in itself and permeated by itself."<sup>40</sup>

However, that principle can only be reason as the recognition of itself as being:

"This pure reason is equally immediately inner being and completely one with it."<sup>41</sup>

And at the same time the recognition of being as the image of the Absolute, for "image as image is the crucial premise".<sup>42</sup> This recognition implies the knowing of the necessary possibilities that the being carries within itself, which is an insight [*einsehen*] beyond conceptual understanding.<sup>43</sup>

### 3. The Worldviews as a Deduction of the Fivefold Synthesis

It is only recently that Fichte is being recognised as the first thinker to identify worldviews (*Weltanschauung*) as an object of philosophical study in their own right.<sup>44</sup> However, in this task, he will follow the timid steps taken by Kant, for whom the worldview was how the imagination united the different sensible perceptions and made them correspond to a concept of the world, although already in the *Critique of Judgement* he points to the regulation of this concept by an idea of reason, as a point of reference (*Grundmaß*). It was the latter that added the transcendental dimension to the worldview.<sup>45</sup> There seem to be only two possibilities in Kant, either a sensible worldview or a theological-moral worldview, although the latter was the preferred one.<sup>46</sup> In Fichte the possible worldviews will be five as we have seen. But these will be divided according to the structure elaborated above into two binomials: one corresponding to the visions of the sensible world and the other to those of the supersensible world. The fifth and last is the highest vision corresponding to the identification of the first principles by the *WL* and which would be within the activity of reason that recognises and establishes the rest of the visions. This implies that at the centre of the fivefold structure, the threefold still perseveres: a reason that is divided into sensible and supersensible or moral. This structure will be present in Fichte's subsequent works, so that in the "Fourth address" of the *Reden an die deutsche Nation*,<sup>47</sup> he continues to divide between two types of men: one with a purely sensitive consciousness, of obscure feelings (*dunklen Gefühls*), driven by self-interest, and another with a super-sensible consciousness, based on a clear knowledge (*klare Erkenntnis*) of the moral order to be established, to which he directs his love and his efforts.<sup>48</sup> The fivefold division that Fichte will make, necessarily following the unfolding structure of the *WL*, does not hide the fact that it stems from the Being/Consciousness binomial, itself divided into sensible and supersensible (or moral). Of course, as we shall see, Fichte's worldviews possess dimensions that were not preconceived in Kant, whose moral theory of duty will be included in the sensible portion of the worldviews and not in the properly supersensible ones.



What, then, is a worldview for Fichte? It is how the I (*Ich*) actively constitutes its understanding of the world by establishing a point of reference through which the chaotic multiplicity of sensory existence is ordered. It should be stressed that for Fichte, one's view of the world determines the way one lives and the tenor of one's existence. Different visions of the world entail different ways of being because they determine the guiding principle of the self (I), as a determinate being, and the object that the self (I) as a subject seeks to realise or enjoy.<sup>49</sup> If so, is it possible to live without a worldview? Fichte will say yes, but it leads to undesirable living conditions. Living without a worldview resembles an animalistic existence, associated with instinctive life in his description of historical epochs, as we shall see below. When there is no worldview and therefore no point of reference from which to give coherence and meaning to sensory data, the individual is at the mercy of the multiplicity (*Zerstreuung über das Mannigfaltige*), of the unrestrained flow of life that keeps him in mental darkness and confusion.<sup>50</sup> The one in this state is not fully conscious of himself and has no interest or love for anything. He calls this state of non-spiritual existence or spiritual non-existence (*geistigen Nichtexistenz*). And he contrasts it with the existence that has been ordered under a unitary view of life, which exhibits the inner spiritual energy (*geistige Energie*) "in immediate consciousness [*unmittelbaren Bewusstseyn*], as a concentration, comprehension, and contraction of the otherwise distracted spirit into one point, and as a persistence in this one point, in opposition to the constant natural effort to throw off this concentration [*Kontraktion*], and to become once more diffused abroad [*sich wiederum auszudehnen*]"<sup>51</sup>

What does each of the possible worldviews consist of? The first of which Fichte speaks is what he calls the "sense worldview". Its object is reduced to that which can be experienced by the senses. In knowledge they are empiricists. And they cannot regard anything as true as such, for they are at the expense of the opinion produced by individual experience. They are therefore also sceptics.<sup>52</sup> Their mind is not capable of reaching clear ideas produced by their own

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Ibid., p. 194; p. 306; p. 404.

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Ibid., p. 136; p. 233; p. 277

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Ibid., p. 179; p. 286; p. 371.

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Ibid., p. 158; p. 260; p. 325.

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Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel. Lectures on German Idealism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2003, p. 20.

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Alexander T. Englert, "The Conceptual Origin of Worldview in Kant and Fichte", *Journal of Transcendental Philosophy* 4 (2023), pp. 1–24, here p. 3.

46

A. T. Englert, "The Conceptual Origin of Worldview in Kant and Fichte", p. 15.

47

Translation from Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, Gregory Moore (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009.

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J. G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, pp. 39–40; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* VII, pp. 302–303; *Gesamtausgabe* I/10, p. 136.

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J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, p. 434; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 515; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 147.

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Ibid., p. 410; p. 493; p. 130.

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Ibid., pp. 410–411; pp. 493–494; p. 130.

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Ibid., p. 321; p. 424; p. 73.

reason, hence they cannot think beyond what they receive through the senses, either by reading, listening or watching what others do, which inspires their tendency to follow fashions, and which is driven by their personal, sensuous, well-being (*Trieb des persönlichen, sinnlichen Wohlseyns*).<sup>53</sup> His intellectual attitude is based on conceptualisation, the concept being understood as the mental image formed from experiences. In the absence of experience and sensory images, his thinking is pure mental digression and fantasy. For Fichte love is the affection that every being has for himself (as self-reliant, self-sufficient and self-complete), which he calls it *Affekt des Seyns*, and this love determines what one finds enjoyment in.<sup>54</sup> Each worldview defines being from one point of view. In the sensory worldview, “being” refers to the empirical world, where enjoyment is linked to sensory pleasure. In this context, individuals derive joy from their experiences, often driven by self-interest and the pursuit of sensory gratifications. Any question of morality is dealt with by these criteria. Fichte considers it the lowest, emptiest and most confused of worldviews.<sup>55</sup>

This is followed by what he refers to as the “worldview of legality”, for which the individual seeks as the object and criterion of his conduct not personal experience but abstract law. The ultimate reality is the law, which is addressed to free and autonomous individuals. The object of desire is the fulfilment of the law. That the law is fulfilled makes them autonomous and free, because it implies cutting off dependence on everything else. Following the law, which in turn is inscribed in their inner self, makes them dependent only on the law, i.e. on themselves.<sup>56</sup> In this legalistic view, the social relationship is between free and autonomous individuals who might not be law-abiding, but who voluntarily aspire to it, avoiding other sensory world tendencies. They love the law for its own sake, which makes them find contentment in nothing, not even in themselves as law-abiding individuals. The latter would be against the law, which must be fulfilled for its own sake and no other reason or emotion. The law thus in morality is the Kantian categorical imperative. The individual does not seek self-satisfaction or wish to prove his honour, only to be in harmony with the law, for otherwise he would have to loathe himself. His ultimate motivation is to act in a way that allows him to approve of himself:

“There is no third course: either man is not in harmony with the Law, and then he must despise himself [*sich verachten*]; or he is in harmony with it [*demselben entsprechen*] and then he has nothing to allege against himself [*hat man sich eben nur nichts vorzuwerfen*].”<sup>57</sup>

In this view, morality is therefore still tied to the sensible world. By not having anything to allege against himself, the individual pretends to be a god, who has taken the law into his own sphere, and does not depend on anything but himself alone. This law, however, is not the eternal law of the supersensible world, which implies a universal will with which to identify oneself after renouncing the individual will [*Selbstvernichtung*].<sup>58</sup>

In this renunciation lies the passage to the worldview of the highest morality [*höheren Moralität*], the first of the supersensible binomial. The ultimate reality is now the Ideas (derived from Goodness, Beauty, and the Holy). In this realm, humanity advances by recognising archetypes (*Vorbild*). This contrasts with the sensory worldview, which focuses on images (*Nachbild*) and concepts (*Begriff*), as well as with the legal worldview, which addresses merely the formal aspect of ideas, such as the categorical imperative. It is now essential to intuit and understand the qualitative content of these ideas related to the super-sensible world, in order to align human reality more closely with the divine image:

“The inward and absolute nature of God manifests itself in Beauty; it manifests itself in the perfect dominion of man over nature; it manifests itself in the perfect state and polity of nations; it manifests itself in science; in short, it manifests itself in what I call ideas in the strict and proper sense [*es tritt heraus in demjenigen, was ich die Ideen im strengen und eigentlichen Sinne nenne*].”<sup>59</sup>

Their vision is limited in that this intuition is expressed through the sensible world in actions, works of art, writings, etc. The latter can lead to enjoyment in the sensual form taken as a means of expression rather than in the idea itself. Furthermore, it raises the doubt and uncertainty [*Zweifel und Ungewissheit*] that what is thus expressed is no more than conjecture and imagination on the part of these individuals. The next view, the one in which ideas are taken as qualities of God (as absolute being), dissipating any doubt, is the one that makes religion its way of life. The knowledge of ideas gives way to the knowledge of God, as the ultimate source of all reality in its multiplicity.<sup>60</sup> The philosophical insight surpasses even the religious worldview in its degree of knowledge and therefore of beatitude. What was faith for the religious standpoint is now from the philosophical worldview (and fundamentally Fichte's *WL* and the Platonic tradition in which it moves), rational knowledge:

“Religion without philosophy [*Wissenschaft*] is a mere faith [...]; philosophy [*Wissenschaft*] supersedes all faith, and changes it into insight [*Schauen*].”<sup>61</sup>

The understanding of the whole of reality in its dialectical relationship from God as oneness to multiplicity and from the latter to the former has been achieved. By this time the five worldviews with their respective combinations, which are arrived at in the last moment of the fivefold synthesis, are also recognised. Fichte will emphasise that each of the worldviews are presented as driving principles of life subsuming the other remaining principles. For example, the religious view would take moral ideas, law and the sensible world as means for its realisation, without discounting the unifying principle which, as we have said, is Reason and the law of the development of humanity.<sup>62</sup>

What does the order in which the worldviews appear imply? Is it a necessary progress? Fichte himself answers:

“... this gradual progress is only the ordinary course of things, and only the established law [*gewöhnliche Gang und die Regel*], which however is by no means without exception.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>53</sup>  
Ibid., p. 323; p. 425; p. 74.

<sup>54</sup>  
Ibid., p. 416; p. 498; p. 133.

<sup>55</sup>  
Ibid., p. 417; p. 500; p. 135.

<sup>56</sup>  
Ibid., p. 421; p. 503; p. 137.

<sup>57</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>  
Ibid., p. 422, 438; p. 504, 518; p. 138, 149.

<sup>59</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 448f; p. 526; p. 156. The last line of the quotation in English has been modified for clarity.

<sup>60</sup>  
Ibid., p. 476; p. 549; p. 173.

<sup>61</sup>  
Ibid., p. 377; p. 472; p. 112. I translate *Wissenschaft* as philosophy, rather than as science, because Fichte refers to the *WL* as philosophical science or the foundation of all knowledge.

<sup>62</sup>  
For more on these relationships between the principles of worldviews, see: E. Acosta, “The Quintuple Quintuplicity of Forms of (Self-) Consciousness in Fichte's 1804 *Wissenschaftslehre*”, pp. 202–211.

<sup>63</sup>  
J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, p. 369; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 465; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 106.

For him there is clearly a progress from the sensible to the philosophical view, in which the various previous syntheses are now seen in a unitary sense. But this progress is only from the point of view of the understanding of the unitary whole as expressed in the *WL*, which incidentally serves Fichte to establish the superiority of his system over that of other thinkers (Kant, Jacobi, Stoics, Hume, Schelling, etc.). However, it could not be considered a necessary progress from consciousness as such, which in its reflexive quality is constituted as an I (*Ich*), whose essential properties are independence and freedom (*ein selbstständiges und freies Ich*).<sup>64</sup> The adoption of one worldview or another is ultimately a product of the I in its constitutive reflexivity. For Fichte, whether one opts for a sensuous or a supersensible view depends on the lesser or greater concentration of thought energy. It requires a greater reflexive effort to look at the common world from a supersensible point of view. Thus the greater the effort of intellectual reflection, the greater the clarity of vision:

“... this difference, not in the object itself, but only in the view taken of the object [...] can only arise from the obscurity or clearness, the depth or shallowness, the completeness or incompleteness of the view [*Ansicht*] thus taken of the one unchanging world [*Einen bleibenden Welt*].”<sup>65</sup>

For the reasons given, the order of precedence of worldviews cannot be taken as necessary, although it seems to be understood that as the individual and humanity advance, there is a tendency towards a greater reflexive propensity.<sup>66</sup> A while later, in his 1812 lectures on ethics, he stated categorically that the fivefold synthesis is the structure of consciousness:

“The consciousness as a whole is fivefold [*das ganze Bewusstsein ist Fünffach*]; it has two chief parts, each of which is [in turn] a transition that has two parts, and [the whole] is linked through a fifth member.”<sup>67</sup>

It is for this reason that, taking the analogy with human life in its development, Fichte identifies the Non-spiritual existence with the natural state in which every human being is born [*in ihr werden wir geboren*],<sup>68</sup> and which, in the work we are about to analyse, he associates with the epoch of blind instinct (the first epoch of the world plan).

#### 4. Correspondences Between World Ages and Worldviews

In the previous sections, it has been shown how the different worldviews are the result of the free and independent I in its reflexive capacity. And we deduced this from the final synthesis of the fivefold expression of Oneness as outlined in the Fichtean *WL* of the post-Jena period. And this answers the first of the questions we asked above. It now remains to check the correlation between those and the epochs of the world as described in *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, lectures given at the end of 1804, and published in 1805.<sup>69</sup> It should be noted that the dates justify externally the choice of the version of *WL*-1804-II as the interpretative text for the logical structure in the world plan offered by Fichte in the first mentioned work. Its internal justification would undoubtedly lie in the fact that in *WL*-1804-II, the fivefold structure is set out more clearly than in other works, including an account of the principles of the various worldviews.

In exploring the correspondences between worldviews and historical epochs it becomes clear that, although they coincide in number, not all historical epochs correspond to worldviews, nor do they follow the order of the progressive development of consciousness as Fichte found it to be the usual order.

And yet, the order of the historical sequence is not random but is based on the process of self-recognition of absolute being as reason.<sup>70</sup> As we said above, reason is the recognition of itself as absolute being or Oneness. This implies the fivefold synthesis that begins with the separation between absolute being, which is pure activity without self-consciousness, and its image as being, which begins the process of becoming self-conscious as an image of absolute being, constituting itself as reason. The passage from the unconsciousness of the absolute being to the progressive self-consciousness of reason implies a self-negation, that of the absolute being with respect to its image. Absolute being in its initial state has to be denied in order to initiate its self-recognition, so that the image will recognise itself as the essence of that being without being it absolutely (to the point of not being able to be known except by an irrational hiatus). This dialectic is what we see unfolding in the plan of the world offered by Fichte whose ultimate end is the realization of Reason by the life of humanity.<sup>71</sup> In that plan, there are five epochs, but only three of them respond to worldviews as deduced from the *WL* and as described in *Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben*. And as I say, this is no coincidence. For as the author himself assures us, the history of humanity responds to two variables: a necessary one, the plan itself,<sup>72</sup> and a contingent one, the facts with which the former can be associated. The necessary as deduced by the principles of

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Ibid., p. 431; p. 512; p. 145.

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Ibid., p. 368; p. 464; p. 105.

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On this point and for a detailed discussion on the topics of Fichte's *The Way towards the Blessed Life*, see: "... it is in concentrating on something singular in the world, and being aware of my capacity for such attention, that a true interior life is established. The blessed life consists in turning one's attention completely over to the absolute unity that is God and away from the dispersion that distraction by multiplicity entails". – Matthew Nini, *Fichte in Berlin. The 1804 Wissenschaftslehre*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal 2024, p. 189.

67

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Lecture on the Theory of Ethics (1812)*, Benjamin Crowe (ed.), State University of New York, Albany 2015, p. 13; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* XI, p. 10; *Gesamtausgabe* II/13, p. 312.

68

J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, p. 308; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 413; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 64.

69

See David James, *Fichte's Republic. Idealism, History and Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015.

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See: Angelica Nuzzo, "Fichte's Philosophy of History: Between *a priori* Foundation and Material development", in: Steven Hoeltzel (ed.), *The Palgrave Fichte Handbook*, Palgrave MacMillan, Cham 2019, pp. 373–394. In that chapter, she explores the inner logic of Fichte's philosophy of history as a systematic and doctrinal project of framing "a moral development of humanity toward the good, with providence as the underlying condition" (p. 381). Nuzzo analyses in depth the historical and philosophical context of the formation of Fichte's philosophy of history. She shows how Fichte takes the *WL*'s principles as the only possible foundation of human history (rejecting the foundation in anthropology, thus in the history of human consciousness) and makes it compatible with "the agency of human freedom" (p. 391). Although she does not identify the fivefold synthesis as the guiding frame of the process from multiplicity to unity (as necessary possibilities for human freedom), our accounts are complementary.

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J. G. Fichte, *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, p. 15; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* VII, p. 16; *Gesamtausgabe* I/8, p. 205.

72

For David James (*Fichte's Republic*, pp. 107–108), necessity is moral rather than logical, in the sense that it depends on human freedom to reach that state which necessarily constitutes its self-realisation on earth. According to the Fivefold synthesis deduction, this necessity would not only be moral but also



his *WL* is the only thing that counts for the philosopher,<sup>73</sup> to the extent that one may argue whether one is currently in one or other of these epochs depending on the facts adduced by the observer of the world.<sup>74</sup> But what is not questionable is that this epoch shapes the development of universal history, which, Fichte is confident that “proceeds and moves onward according to a settled plan which must necessarily [*nothwendig*] be fulfilled [*erreicht muss*], and therefore shall certainly [*nothwendig*] be fulfilled [*erreicht wird*]”.<sup>75</sup>

In Fichte's world plan, the historical epochs are five, but they are structured as in the *WL*, and first of all in the threefold, i.e. in two binomials corresponding to the progress of reason's self-recognition. The binomial of unconscious reason covers the epoch of instinct and the epoch of authority (the law); and the binomial of conscious reason includes the epoch of life in accordance with reason and the epoch of art (the state as an artistic institution). Unconscious reason is that in which there is still no knowledge of the presuppositions of its actions, so that it is reduced to feelings.<sup>76</sup> The passage from the unconscious to the conscious is sealed by this self-denial of reason as absolute being in its indeterminacy. The negation of reason is represented by the third epoch, which is associated with the Enlightenment.<sup>77</sup> In this process, reason seeks self-recognition, as the Idea will later do in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>78</sup> Again, reason is being insofar as it thinks itself through the unfolding of the various possibilities determined in consciousness until it recognises itself as unity and absolute reason, as *hen kai pan* (*Eins und Alles*).<sup>79</sup> The path of reason implies recognising the essential unity of all its elements. If individuals are unconsciously determined by reason through nature and the laws that arise from it, to live according to reason is to recognise that the only thing that exists is the unitary whole, beginning with the social community and ending with humanity and the universe as a whole. This presupposes not taking the individual for the whole, and believing that the former is the true reality. It is this false belief of the third epoch that constitutes the negation of reason as unity. Now that the two binomials and the epoch of transit are established, let us briefly explore the different epochs of this Fichtean world plan and their correspondences with the worldviews.

Every human being comes into the world in that state which Fichte called “non-spiritual existence”, in which a unitary view of reality has not yet been adopted.<sup>80</sup> Thus necessarily humanity, at its moment of emergence, is in this previous state. It is the moment when one acts instinctively without opposing nature. He associates it with the primitive peoples of the earth. They live in a state of innocence as well as confusion and darkness. They are overwhelmed by natural multiplicity and the possibilities of reflection are yet to be determined. Reason rules by the blind force of instincts. Reason is nature.<sup>81</sup> The next epoch is marked by the imposition of a few individuals over others. The individuals who impose themselves do so through their laws. Reason rules indirectly through the instincts of these individuals in which there is an instinctive surplus. With them, individual freedom begins to be recognised as a contrast to the law, which the followers must respect and comply with. This period coincides with the worldview in which the world appears to be ordered by law. At this time Fichte pays more attention to the external than to the internal law, but both are taken as correlative. Here we have the first worldview that enters human history: the constriction of freedom by authority.<sup>82</sup> The law, as the legalistic worldview posits, is to be respected and loved for its own sake, but this implies recognising that one might not abide by it. While the law

governs each individual, it also governs the community, thus demonstrating its homogenising character: all are equal before the law. This is precisely the spur of the third epoch, which he deplores as the only one opposed to reason. If he calls the first two epochs respectively that of the “innocence of humanity” and “progressive sinfulness”, the third epoch is that of selfishness and evil, he calls it that of “completed sinfulness” (*de Stand der vollendeten Sündhaftigkeit*).<sup>83</sup> In it, the human being is liberated from authority, and thus also from reason-in-instinct. In the catalogue of possible worldviews, this epoch, associated with the Enlightenment, embodies that which sees in sensory experience the ultimate reality. By wanting only what they can smell, touch, or see, and thus only themselves as subjects of experience, they assert their individuality and their knowledge of the sensible world. In morality they consider that “there is no other motive for action in man than self-interest [*Eigennutzes*]”.<sup>84</sup> And as for knowledge, his maxim is not to accept anything that one cannot understand through one’s own experience “that is to say, through the mere empirical conceptions of experience [*empirischen Erfahrungsbegriff*]”,<sup>85</sup> which implies in Kantian terms applying the innate categories of understanding to sensible data, rejecting any kind of intellectual intuition or immediate apprehension

logical, since morality is nothing but living in accordance with thought in its process of progressive reflection. It is precisely the necessary logic of progress that confers the a priori character to the plan, although its realisation implies setting the necessary conditions for this evolution to take place in the conscience of individuals.

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This apodictic character of the world plan, independent of the historical entanglement of facts, is precisely what diminishes its explanatory power from a scientific point of view. For a critical assessment of the scientific status of Fichte’s philosophy of history, see: Pavel Reichl, “The Role of First Principles in Fichte’s Philosophy of History”, *Fichte Studien* 49 (2020) 1, pp. 288–308, doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004459793\\_015](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004459793_015).

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J. G. Fichte, *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, p. 18; *Fichte’s Sämtliche Werke* VII, p. 19; *Gesamtausgabe* I/8, p. 207.

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*Ibid.*, p. 16; p. 17; p. 206.

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*Ibid.*, p. 7; p. 8; pp. 198–199.

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Jacinto Rivera de Rosales, “Fichte and Hegel: Critics of the Enlightenment”, *Philosophy and Conflict Studies* 35 (2019) 2, pp. 308–319, here p. 311, doi: <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu17.2019.207>; Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz, “‘Wir alle werden im Egoismus erzeugt und geboren...’: Fichtes Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters als

Selbstreflexive Kritik der Moderne”, *Fichte Studien* 44 (2017) 1, pp. 234–254, doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/18795811\\_04401017](https://doi.org/10.1163/18795811_04401017).

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Cf. J. Rivera de Rosales, “Fichte and Hegel: Critics of the Enlightenment”, p. 313.

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For the origin of this expression within incipient German idealism (Jacobi, Lessing), see: Toshimasa Yasukata, *Lessing’s Philosophy of Religion and the German Enlightenment*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003. For Fichte this expression would be correct if, as I have pointed out, it refers to the being-image of the Absolute, but not to the latter, otherwise one would revert to a Spinozist monism.

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J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*, p. 308; *Fichte’s Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 413; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 64.

81

J. G. Fichte, *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, pp. 9, 16; *Fichte’s Sämtliche Werke* VII, pp. 10, 17; *Gesamtausgabe* I/8, pp. 199–200, 205–206.

82

*Ibid.*, p. 7, 16; p. 9, 17; p. 199, 205–206.

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*Ibid.*, p. 9; pp. 11–12; p. 201.

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*Ibid.*, p. 30; p. 31; p. 216.

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*Ibid.*, p. 76; p. 71; p. 248.

of ideas.<sup>86</sup> Both attitudes separate it and oppose it to reason, which implies recognition of the ultimate unity of everything in the supersensible realm of absolute being as self-consciousness. Of course, these characteristics also set this epoch in opposition to the epochs of instinctual life, where neither knowledge nor individuality per se were possible. The negation of reason through the affirmation of sentient individuality can only be rectified by the sacrifice of the individual for humanity, or the harmonisation of the part within the whole. This initiates the binomial of progressively self-conscious reason.

In this second binomial, the first epoch is that of life in accordance with reason, which “consists herein, that the individual forget [*vergesse*] himself in the race [*Gattung*] and dedicate it thereto [*ihr Leben an das Leben der Ganzen setzen es ihm aufopfern*]”.<sup>87</sup> It is the opposition to the egoism of the previous epoch. The overcoming of individuality is identified with the dedication of life to an idea, for our humanness as a species (*Gattung*) is expressed essentially in ideas. Ideas, as opposed to concepts, are “independent of all experience, kindle into self-sustaining life [*das in sich selber selbst-ständige Leben*] in those who are inspired by them”.<sup>88</sup> In ideas lies the original energy of absolute being as Life and Light. Dedicating one's life to ideas makes us forget ourselves as concrete individuals, and even forget our bodily needs and desires, which leads to heroism, and to devotion to the fatherland and to humanity. Every great feat in human history, says Fichte, has been driven by the realisation of an idea. In this fourth epoch, there is a progressive ascent from ideas to God, “the all-embracing [*umfassendste*] and universally comprehensible [*aufnehmende*] form of the idea”, in a conscious dwelling of all activity in the One.<sup>89</sup> Thus, one's entire life is now a work for humanity. In morality, what was imposed by the law of duty in the age of authority, in this new epoch becomes spontaneous conduct and through fine arts, ideas find expression in outward matters. This epoch is all-embracing and leads to the knowledge of the entire reality in its multiple relational structure originating in Oneness. Here the worldviews of morality and religion gradually open the way to the blessed life identified ultimately with philosophy as the doctrine of knowledge [*Wissenslehre*]<sup>90</sup>:

“... only the philosophical (self-) consciousness truthfully represents the absolute knowledge in the phenomenal world.”<sup>91</sup>

However, it will not be until the last epoch, the second of this binomial, that this philosophical knowledge of ideas, God, and its multiple manifestations will become an effective reality in the life of humanity through the figure of the absolute state. This epoch of Art implies the artistic institution of the state as the one charged “to direct [*richten*] all individual Powers [*individuellen Kräfte*] towards the life of the race [*das Leben der Gattung*] and to transfuse [*verschmelzen*] them therein; and to realise and manifest in individual life the general form of the ideas”.<sup>92</sup> It seems to Fichte that if in the previous epoch there will be a general disposition to live in accordance with reason, it will not be until this last epoch that the process will finally come to a close with the full manifestation of Reason, and thus with the ultimate recognition of being itself in its consciousness as absolute being. The undifferentiated Oneness becomes multiplicity, and finally returns to Oneness now conscious of its inner division and multiplicity.

We insist that the correspondences of historical epochs with respect to worldviews are not symmetrical. Rather, as we said, the first epoch corresponds to non-spiritual existence, determined by the blind force of nature (which is not considered a worldview by Fichte). It contains everything. It is being as



nature. The last epoch, the epoch of the state as an artistic institution, is the epoch of culture as second nature:

"The purpose of the humanity [*Der Zweck der Gattung*] is culture [*Cultur*], and the honourable subsistence which is the condition of culture."<sup>93</sup>

In this last epoch the process of reversion has been completed, returning to the original state of innocence, now with full consciousness of a world crafted in accordance with the highest ideas of reason and "where all as individuals are dedicated to the humanity [*Gattung*]"<sup>94</sup> Between these two extreme epochs we have, first, the imposition of common laws demanding blind obedience (Legality); then their breaking through the consciousness of the free individual, which claims itself as the only true reality (life of the senses); and, finally, the realisation of the essential unity of humanity in ideas and in the Godhead (life in accordance with reason). In any case, it becomes clear that the gap in Reason between the unconscious<sup>95</sup> and the conscious constitutes a further binomial unfolding respectively nature/lawfulness (pertaining to the sphere of the sensible) and knowledge/art (pertaining to the sphere of the supersensible). Here the fivefold structure, although maintained, takes on a different meaning from what we have seen in the unfolding of the worldviews: the odyssey of reason from dispersion in unconscious multiplicity to the recognition of itself in its free activity and in its essential unity as Oneness. The historic progress is thus placed, as Radrizzani writes, between "the lost Paradise in which life was ruled by instinct, and the Paradise that humanity reconstructs after the image of the first one".<sup>96</sup> This settles the answer to the last question we asked earlier (question 3).

## 5. Conclusion

The importance of the fivefold synthesis for Fichte's philosophical system is evident in the structure of both the worldviews and the historical epochs of the worldview he offers us in his post-Jena epoch. In his 1804 lectures on the

86  
Ibid., p. 21; p. 22; p. 209.

87  
Ibid., p. 36; p. 35; p. 219.

88  
Ibid., p. 74; p. 69; p. 246.

89  
Ibid., p. 63; p. 60; p. 239.

90  
J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards a Blessed Life*, p. 306; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* V, p. 410; *Gesamtausgabe* I/9, p. 62.

91  
E. Acosta, "The Quintuple Quintuplicity of Forms of (Self-)Consciousness in Fichte's 1804 Wissenschaftslehre", p. 194.

92  
J. G. Fichte, *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, p. 160; *Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* VII, p. 144; *Gesamtausgabe* I/8, p. 307.

93  
Ibid., p. 162; p. 146; p. 309.

94  
Ibid.

95  
It must be remembered that the expression "unconscious reason" in Fichte means a reason that does not yet have self-knowledge as the basis of its existence. In individual beings it takes the form of a lack of reflection and thus of full self-consciousness.

96  
Ives Radrizzani, "Fichte's Philosophy of History", in M. F. Bykova (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Fichte*, pp. 271–291, here p. 284.

*WL* he considers this structure as the most original aspect of his thought.<sup>97</sup> My aim in this article has been threefold:

1. To verify the relation between the fivefold synthesis and the worldviews.
2. To verify the relationship between the fivefold synthesis and the epochs of the world plan.
3. To test the correlation between 1 and 2.

I have shown how worldviews constitute the ultimate synthesis of this structure starting from Oneness, as a passage from unity to multiplicity. Specifically, it has been seen how worldviews first require the conceptualisation of a world in which being and consciousness have been reflexively divided into sensible (senses, legality) and supersensible (morality and religion), with philosophy as the vision that encompasses the other 4 and the whole set of relations and syntheses. In this process of explaining the entirety of reality, being itself, the image of absolute being or Light, unfolds, recognising itself in its essential inner possibilities as Reason. The worldviews form one level among others of this process of self-recognition of being in which the original unity is maintained alongside the absolute separability of opposites. The worldviews have been analysed as parts of a usual, but not necessary progress of the development of consciousness from its obliteration in the manifold to the immediate knowledge of God as supersensible being, the source of all reality, and, finally, the philosophical insight in which the previous worldviews are shown in their inner logic. The structure of the fivefold synthesis enables this deduction to be established by identifying the different views and their genesis from the first principles.

With this structure in mind and with the genetic development from the being that thinks itself as Reason, the five epochs of the world plan have been analysed. It has been pointed out that only three of the five epochs respond to worldviews. And it has been shown how, nevertheless, progress is of necessity directed by the rigid application of the fivefold structure, but this time with the transition of reason from unconscious indifference to its final recognition as foundational. This transition is dramatised in the history of the world through the moment of negation of reason itself as blind instinct (nature, legality) in order to rise from its darkness to the luminous heights of the supersensible (morality, religion, and philosophical knowledge), to forge the divine image of being thus contemplated in the earthly life of humanity through the artistic institution of the state, which is responsible for bringing ideas down to the shared world.

**Daniel Rueda Garrido**

**Poveznice između  
Fichteovih svjetonazora i svjetskih doba  
temeljene na Peterostrukoj sintezi u *WL-1804-II***

**Sažetak**

*Na temelju peterostruke sinteze Fichteova Wissenschaftslehre-1804-II ispitujem implicitnu logičku nužnost i svjetsko-planskih epoha i svjetonazora u dvama djelima post-jenskoga razdoblja, u kojima Fichte nastoji objasniti povijest čovječanstva iz a priori plana (Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters) te povijest svijesti u njezinu usponu prema višem svjetonazoru*

97

J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowing*, p. 197;  
*Fichte's Sämtliche Werke* X, p. 146; *Gesamt-  
ausgabe* II/8, p. 113.

(Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben). *Svrha je ovoga teksta trostruka: (1) provjeriti odnos između peterostruke sinteze i svjetonazora; (2) provjeriti odnos između peterostruke sinteze i epoha svjetskoga plana; te (3) provjeriti odnos između točaka 1 i 2. Naravno, postoje ranija istraživanja koja razmatraju oba djela zasebno, no nijedno ne uspostavlja preciznu korelaciju između svjetonazora i svjetsko-planskih epoha. Ovaj članak nastoji popuniti tu prazninu.*

#### Ključne riječi

Johan Gottlieb Fichte, svjetonazori, svjetsko-planske epohe, peterostruka sinteza, postjenski period, *WL-1804-II*

**Daniel Rueda Garrido**

### **Korrespondenzen zwischen Fichtes Weltanschauungen und Weltzeitaltern auf Grundlage der fünffachen Synthese der WL-1804-II**

#### **Zusammenfassung**

*Gestützt auf die fünffache Synthese von Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre 1804-II untersuche ich die implizite logische Notwendigkeit sowohl der Weltplan-Zeitalter als auch der Weltanschauungen in zwei Schriften der nachjener Periode, in denen Fichte einerseits die Geschichte der Menschheit aus einem apriorischen Plan (Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters) und andererseits die Geschichte des Bewusstseins in seinem Aufstieg zu einer höheren Weltanschauung (Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben) auszulegen sucht. Der Zweck dieses Textes ist daher dreifacher Natur: (1) die Beziehung zwischen der fünffachen Synthese und den Weltanschauungen zu überprüfen; (2) die Beziehung zwischen der fünffachen Synthese und den Epochen des Weltplans zu verifizieren; und (3) das Verhältnis zwischen den Punkten (1) und (2) in Augenschein zu nehmen. Selbstverständlich existieren bereits frühere Studien, die beide Werke jeweils getrennt untersuchen, doch keine davon stellt eine präzise Korrelation zwischen Weltanschauungen und Weltzeitaltern her. Der vorliegende Artikel schließt diese Lücke.*

#### **Schlüsselwörter**

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Weltanschauungen, Weltplan-Zeitalter, fünffache Synthese, nachjener Periode, *WL-1804-II*

**Daniel Rueda Garrido**

### **Correspondances entre les visions du monde et les âges du monde chez Fichte, fondées sur la synthèse quintuple de la WL-1804-II**

#### **Résumé**

*A partir de la synthèse quintuple de la Wissenschaftslehre de 1804-II de Fichte, cet article examine la nécessité logique implicite à la fois des âges du plan du monde et des visions du monde dans deux œuvres de la période post-jénaienne, où Fichte cherche à expliquer, respectivement, l'histoire de l'humanité à partir d'un plan a priori (Les Caractères de l'époque actuelle) et l'histoire de la conscience dans son ascension vers une vision du monde supérieure (L'Instruction pour la vie bienheureuse). L'objectif de ce texte est donc triple : (1) vérifier la relation entre la synthèse quintuple et les visions du monde ; (2) vérifier la relation entre la synthèse quintuple et les époques du plan du monde ; et (3) vérifier la relation entre (1) et (2). Bien que plusieurs études antérieures aient analysé ces deux œuvres, aucune n'a établi de corrélation précise entre les visions du monde et les âges du monde. Cet article se propose de combler cette lacune.*

#### **Mots-clés**

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, visions du monde, âges du plan du monde, synthèse quintuple, période post-jénaienne, *WL-1804-II*