

GERMAN AND TEMPORALITY: THE WISSENSCHAFTSLEHRE IN FICHTE'S ADDRESSES TO THE GERMAN NATION

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Abstract. *This essay aims to demonstrate how, in *Addresses to the German Nation*, the Fichtean polemic against Dogmatismus is determined under the concept of temporality and, in particular, within the dimension of the *Geschichtsphilosophie*. As is known, the entire Fichtean work (from the juvenile *Revolutionsschriften* up to the late *Staatslehre*, printed in 1813) is dotted with stands against the dogmatic and fatalistic conceptions of history, where the latter is reduced to an automatic process, independent from human action. Fichte opposes these perspectives - in line with the principles of the WL and the "system of liberty" - a conception of historicity as a non-deductible "series" (*Reihe*) of human actions that articulate themselves over time. The *Reden an die deutsche Nation* of 1808 will be the basis for an examination of the Fichtean conception of temporality and, in particular, to see how the fight between WL and Dogmatismus translates into a new form, that is, a stance against the circular *Zeitauffassung*.*

Key words: *temporality, dogmatism, freedom, history.*

1. FOREWORD

Some of the critics argue, not without good reason, that the critique of dogmatism is the constant cipher of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's thought, in every aspect and at every stage of its development (see, for instance, Martin 1998; Duso 1974; Cesa 1992; Philonenko 1968; Ivaldo 1987). The *Dogmatismus* assigns the primacy to the 'done', the 'being', the existing conditions, the objectivity conceived as a *factum brutum*, and the necessity: for this reason, it is the constant polemical target of the Fichtean *transzendentalphilosophisch* in every field (gnoseological, theological, political, moral), both in the *Darstellungen* of

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the *Wissenschaftslehre* (= *WL*), and in the works of the so-called *populäre Lehre*, i.e. those text that are traditionally considered by the *Fichte-Forschung* to be less significant from a strictly philosophical point of view (Zöller 2011, 350).

The Fichtean *System der Freiheit*, centered as a whole on the "mediacy of positing" and the consequent transcendental assignment of primacy to action, configures itself as a critical stance towards dogmatism, also in the sense of the heroic "titanism" that Hölderlin recognized in Fichte's words while attending his lessons in Jena (Hölderlin 1910, 96). This absolute primacy of the *facere* on the *esse* is the cipher of Fichte's constant polemic against the *Dogmatismus* and, in a convergent way, in the words of Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, "the structural core, the common core of all the doctrines of science" (Thomas-Fogiel 2004, 9), Ariadne's thread for orienting oneself in the archipelago of Fichte's writings (in the "particular sciences", but also in the *Darstellungen* of the *WL*).

Even at a hasty glance, the struggle against dogmatism in all its variations is clearly the *trait d'union* among all the expositions of the *WL*, beyond any alleged *Kehre* in Fichte's theoretical development (see, for instance, Ravà 1958, 254–255). In the field of *gnoseology*, the de-fatalizing purview – coessential with the *System der Freiheit* – articulates itself as the overcoming of the Kantian aporia of the *Ding an sich* through the act of consciousness (and, therefore, by the assumption of knowledge as a *Tat-Handlung*); in the *moral* and *political* spheres, it is intended as an intersubjective action within the community, aimed to transform the state of things in view of its concordance with human subjectivity; in the *religious* sphere, as a rejection of the divinity understood as an "object" of worship and in the assumption of God as a *moralische Weltordnung* (see Fichte 1962, 347; Ivaldo 1999; Brito 2007), i.e. as an *ordo ordinans* that expresses itself in human praxis ("in the intimate consciousness that God actually lives, moves, and perfects his work in us" (*GA*, I, 9, 114), as argued later in *Anweisung zum Seligen Leben*); in the *conception of the scholar*, as a codification of the *Gelehrter* as a practical agent of transformation and as a guide of the human race (see Cantoni 1933); and, finally, in the idea of *art* conceived not as a mere duplicate of the real, but as a free and active creation ("does not present itself for a replica, but for a form that is free and independent from the image itself" /Fichte 1845–1846, 280/). Even the existence of our body is demonstrated as a function of its action in the sensible world (Cogliandro 2011).

This essay aims to demonstrate how the Fichtean polemic against *Dogmatismus* is determined under the concept of *Zeitauffassung* and, in particular, within the dimension of the *Geschichtsphilosophie*. As is known, the entire Fichtean work (from the juvenile *Revolutionsschriften* up to the late *Staatslehre*, printed in 1813) is dotted with stands against the dogmatic and fatalistic conceptions of history, where the latter is reduced to an automatic process, independent from human action. Fichte opposes these perspectives – in line with the principles of the *WL* and the "system of liberty" – a conception of historicity as a non-deductible "series" (*Reihe*) of human actions that articulate themselves over time. The *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (= *RD*) of 1808 will be the basis for an examination of the Fichtean conception of temporality and, in particular, to see how the fight between *WL* and *Dogmatismus* translates into a new form, that is, a stance against the circular *Zeitauffassung*.

2. CRITIQUE OF THE *DOGMATISMUS*

As is known, the *Bestimmung des Menschen* (1800) constitutes a *populäre Darstellung* of the *WL nova methodo* and is written, as admitted by Fichte himself, so as to be understood by "anyone capable of understanding a book" (*SW*, II, 167). The first book of the work is significantly titled *Zweifel*: it is an exposition of the dogmatic perspective of those who consider the I as a mere product of the surrounding material world. In fact, the "doubt" to which the title refers concerns the choice between *Idealismus* and *Dogmatismus*, a topic already at the core of the *First Introduction* to the *WL*, dated 1797.

The first dogmatic system outlined in *Bestimmung des Menschen* corresponds, in particular, to the reading of Spinoza diffused by Jacobi in *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (1785) (Verweyen 2001), which shows how Spinozism annulates liberty and, subsequently, moral action; moreover, Spinozism was already presented as the most consistent reversal of the *WL* in the *Grundlage* (dated 1794–95) (Lauth 1978; Ravà 1958; Wright 2003). In the dogmatic perspective, of which Spinozism is the most consistent expression, the I becomes a link in the chain of the necessity of nature, an inert product of a world that acts univocally on him and determines him in a mechanical way. So in the first book of the *Bestimmung des Menschen* we have: "for I do not truly act at all, but Nature acts in me" (*SW*, II, 189). And more: "for I am not the author of my own being, but Nature has made me myself, and all that I am" (*SW*, II, 189).

This critique of *Dogmatismus* and the consequent existential "doubt" suffered by the dogmatist has been rightly described as Fichte's self-criticism towards its juvenile orientation, prior to the discovery of the *praktische Vernunft* and the foundation of the *System der Freiheit* (Radrizzani 1996). This argument has been supported by Stefano Bacin (2003) and, above all, by Reiner Preul (1969)¹ in his seminal study on Fichte's relationships with the German philosophers of the XVIII century who had the most influence on his thought – a work that also shows that the early determinism of the thinker of Rammenau is more Wolffian than Spinozian.

Wissen, the second book of the *Bestimmung des Menschen*, describes biographically the Fichtean development of the *WL* during the *Grundlage* of Jena. It shows, through an imaginary dialogue with the Spirit, how the *Idealismus* attributes to the acting I the same force that dogmatism assigns to nature: "[...] since there shall be no other power over my actions but this will" (*SW*, II, 192). Everything derives from the I and nothing is thinkable without its acting. Convincingly, Ives Radrizzani argued that the *Bestimmung des Menschen* can be rightly understood not as a fracture in Fichte's theoretical development, but as a moment of further investigation, consistent with the previous *Denkweg*, precisely because of the condemnation of that *Dogmatismus* which Fichte embraced at the very beginning (Radrizzani 1996, 672).

Anyway, if we are assuming that this tough and never definitive battle against the *Dogmatismus* (consistent with the program of 'bad infinity' criticized by Hegel /Königsson-Montain 1993; Kiss 1997; Furlani 2006/) is the core of Fichte's *Strebungsphilosophie*, it is also true that the key moment of this struggle – or, one might

¹ On Fichte's determinism, see also Widfeuer 1997.

say, its most accomplished systematization – should be found in the pages of the *Erste Einleitung* (1797). As is well known, the *Erste Einleitung* – strongly influenced by the Schellingian *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus* (1795) (Huhn 1994; Okada 2003) – is the version of the *WL* that, more than any other, recognizes the root of philosophy in a *practical act*. The work is entirely built on the well-known frontal opposition between *Idealismus* and *Dogmatismus* (Brandt 1978; Cogliandro 2000). Written in 1797, it was published along with the *Zweite Einleitung* on the "Philosophisches Journal": the two essays were conceived as a new exposition of the *WL*, the *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der WL*, to be published in four issues of the journal between 1797 and 1798. As is known, the project came to an end due to the controversies of the *Atheismusstreit*.

Dogmatism, as explained in the *Erste Einleitung* (SW, I, 428 ss), is the typical attitude of those who accept the world in its givenness, assuming it as a given empirical fact, moving from the belief in the existence of an external object that is independent from us and is able to determine us – a 'thing in itself' that has to be reflected at the gnoseologic level: "According to the Dogmatist, all phenomena of our consciousness are productions of a Thing in itself (*alles, was in unserem Bewusstseyn vorkommt, Product eines Dinges an sich*)" ("Nach ihm ist alles, was in unserem Bewusstseyn vorkommt, Product eines Dinges an sich": *ibidem*) that is external and independent from a subject who may only reflect it. As a consequence, "Every logical dogmatist is necessarily a Fatalist" (*Ibidem*) (*jeder consequente Dogmatiker ist nothwendig Fatalist*), as "The principle of the dogmatist is: Faith in the things" (SW, I, 433) (*das Princip der Dogmatiker ist Glaube an die Dinge*) and in the dead positivity of the real (Maesschalck 1996, 76 ss).

If, according to the teaching of the first Kantian *Kritik*, "The *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience" ("Die Bedingungen zur Möglichkeit der Erfahrung und zugleich der Gegenstände derselben": Kant 1781 (e 1787), B 197), then, once the *Ding an sich* is removed, the human subjectivity is given the full opportunity to determine the objective world without external influences, positing it into being according to "*a priori* conditions" which coincide with those of unconditioned practical liberty. Also from this point of view, the strong nexus that links the Fichtean reflection and the Revolution is clear: as pointed out by Gurvitch, "his rejection of the dogmatic premises of Kant's philosophy is related to the realistic and heroic humanism of the French Revolution" (Gurvitch 1962, 9–60), a living image of the I that posits itself to determine the not-I (on the relation between Fichte and French Revolution, see Duso 1987; De Pascale 1975; La Vopa 1989; Giubilato 1979).

In contrast to the dogmatism as a *philosophia pigrorum*, the *Erste Einleitung* promotes transcendental idealism as the only philosophy of liberty, since it moves from the I and its creative and transformative activity (Amadio 1991, 52 ss). Transcendental idealism moves from the belief that the subject is truly free and nothing can be given apart from his action, at a due distance from the dogmatism of those who, like Kant, move from the assumption that there is an object that falls beyond the scope of the subject. One choice lies at the core of each orientation and is evidence of the liberty of the I: in the words of the *Erste Einleitung*, "The dispute between the Idealist and the Dogmatist is, in reality, the question, whether the independence of the I (*Selbstständigkeit des Ich*) is to be sacrificed to that of the Thing (*Selbstständigkeit des Dinges*), or vice versa?" ("Der Streit

zwischen dem Idealisten und Dogmatiker ist eigentlich der, ob der Selbstständigkeit des Ich die Selbstständigkeit des Dinges, oder umgekehrt, der Selbstständigkeit des Dinges die lies Ich aufgeopfert werden solle": *SW*, I, 433).

In the second *Kritik*, Kant's critical philosophy laid the foundations of the absolute liberty of the I. If one wants to take advantage of this acquisition, he has to free himself from the dogmatic assumption of the first *Kritik*, i.e. the maintenance of a "thing in itself" that subsists apart from that *absoluta* liberty. Therefore, the consistent completion of the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* is not the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, but the *WL*, that is, the transcendental idealism for which nothing exists regardless of the practical liberty that manifests itself by determining the objective world. So we come back, by citing Xavier Léon, to the "idea that inspires the whole philosophy of Fichte: Liberty, the causality of Practical Reason" (Léon 1902, 38), i.e. the active determination of the world by the acting I (Massolo 1948, 159). This is the essence of Fichte's philosophy, which – according to Massolo's formula – fights "for Reason and the reasons of men" (Ivi, 23). As suggested by Wayne Martin (1998, 53–54), dogmatism and realism are not synonyms for Fichte, since the idealist is realist (in terms of explaining the real in idealist terms, in such a form called "ideal-realism" in the *Grundlage* of Jena by the philosopher of Rammenau /Fuchs, Ivaldo, Moretto 2001/), whereas the dogmatic is a materialist that moves from the given objectivity of the world and, on the basis of this, gives reasons to everything else.

As stated in the *Erste Einleitung* (*Der letzte Grund der Verschiedenheit des Idealisten und Dogmatikers ist sonach die Verschiedenheit ihres Interesse*: *SW*, I, 433), the irremediable clash between the two different philosophical positions of idealism and dogmatism leads, in first order, to two different practical interests: for the dogmatist, the unlimited maintenance of the existing; for the idealist, the free transformation of reality in view of its concordance with reason. The former, by virtue of its apologetic acceptance of what 'is', reflects the existing in its givenness by assuming it as an unchangeable *datum*, which exists regardless of the subject and his praxis; the latter, moving from the antithetical assumption that there are not things-in-themselves, but only the inexhaustible praxis of the subject that acts, transforms and changes the *Gegenstände* by positing it into being, is involved in a perpetual quarrel with the existing, which he refuses to assume as an untranscendable "thing in itself". For the dogmatist, the I is a passive reflection of the world (or also a product of objective circumstances); the idealist believes instead that the world is the result of human action and, at the same time, the object on which exercise this action.

For the *Dogmatismus*, all is derived from the object as a datum that is independent from the subject: knowledge is the reflection of the existing and politics is the preservation of the world as it is, thus considering history as an automatic process, circular and devoid of novelty. For the *Idealismus*, everything derives from the 'doing': 'knowing' is the action that entails the subject-objective unity, politics is the inexhaustible transformation of the existing in view of its always deferred identity with the *Ich*, and history is a theatre where non-deductible human actions freely articulate themselves over time. It is up to us to choose the nexus for thinking our relation with the world, with all the ensuing consequences that this entails on the practical sphere (Tagliavia 1998).

Anyway, the *Grundlage* of 1794-95 had already sarcastically pointed out that it would be easier to convince most people to consider themselves "a piece of lava on the moon" (*ein Stück im Lava Monde*) than an autonomous, active and responsible I. Inertia,

cowardice and vileness push the individual toward dogmatism, which is nothing else than the tomb of the praxis of the social subject and his unlimited possibilities of operation. As an antithesis to this attitude, the idealist believes that the praxis can change the state of things and nothing is impossible for the subject-agent: “When he says: 'I can not', it is because he does not want” (*SW*, VI, 102 ss). As suggested by Claudio Cesa, Fichte considers the “thing in itself” as “a phantom to be removed to secure one's liberty” (Cesa 1992, 134), i.e. to release the praxis from every given dead positivity. Again, from the point of view of transcendental idealism, the theoretical profile of Kant is contradictory, since the maintenance of the thing-in-itself totally contradicts the practical absolute liberty thematized in the second *Kritik* (Ivaldo 2012).

Thus Fichte addresses the reader, showing him how independence and liberty can be gained through the removal of the dogmatism of the *Ding an sich*: “The reality in which you formerly believed – a material world existing independently of you, of which you feared to become a slave – has vanished” (*GA*, I, 6, 252). In a diametrically opposite way to the idealistic orientation, dogmatic philosophy opposes a positively given, dead reality to the I, assuming the *ens* as equal – if not superior – to the I: “In the critical system the thing is posited in the I. In the dogmatic system is that in which the I is posited” (Amadio 1998, 46; Bourgeois 1968, 5).

The issue of the *Auseinandersetzung* between the idealist and the dogmatist resurfaces in the *Zweite Einleitung*, in which it is argued that - reformulating the thesis of the primacy of action over 'being' (and the consequent deduction of the 'being' from the 'doing'²) – “the only positive for the idealist is Freedom; being is the mere negative of freedom” (*SW*, I, 462), i.e. the concrete objectivation in which it crystallizes must always, in first instance, be removed from its free action: “But dogmatism, which believed itself safely reposing upon being, as a basis no further to be investigated or grounded, regards this assertion as a stupidity and horror” (*SW*, I, 463; see also De Pascale 1995; Fonnesu 2002).

3. DOGMATISM AND IDEALISM IN THE REDEN

Among all Fichtean works, the *RD* have been most frequently subject to mystifying interpretations. Now considered as an episode of the Reaction, or even as a first step towards Nazi madness (according to a hegemonic line that included Arnold Gehlen among others /Gehlen 1935, 12/), the *RD* have been almost immediately subject to a particular *Wirkungsgeschichte*, which prevented its interpretation as a resumption of the struggle against dogmatism from a new perspective, and, *eo ipso*, as a coherent development of the *System der Freiheit*.

In what sense is anti-dogmatism (and the idealistic passion for practical liberty) at the core of the *RD*? This aspect remains incomprehensible as long as we insist on interpreting the work, dated 1808, as a mere defence – maybe not free from racialist connotations – of Germanness against other European cultures and peoples (De Pascale 1977; Rametta 2003). In order to understand the anti-dogmatic scope of the *Addresses* and, therefore,

² *Ist das Seyn aus dem Thun abzuleiten*: *GA*, I, 5, 66. On the freedom in *Sittenlehre*, see Fonnesu 1999). See also Ivaldo 1992.

their full consistency with the “system of liberty”, it is necessary to disrupt this *locus communis*. In other words, we have to show that the *RD*, far from being a racist polemic against non-Germanic peoples, are completely faithful to the cosmopolitical system codified by Fichte since the times of Jena (De Pascale 2001, 2004; Picardi 2009; about Fichte’s philosophy in Jena, see Fonnese 1993).

In very concise terms – but nonetheless faithful to the wording of the Fichtean text – the *RD* change the perspectives laid down in Jena not in virtue of a rejection of cosmopolitanism, but because they move from the assumption that cosmopolitanism can be built only from patriotism (Maeschalck 1996b. Fonnese 1996). In fact, as Fichte repeatedly states in the *RD*, it is necessary to walk along the path of patriotism to achieve the goal of cosmopolitanism. The former was not intended to be opposed to the latter: one cannot love and take care of humanity if he does not move from its specific geographical location, that is, the national state in which he lives. So Fichte writes about the German:

“In his frame of mind love of fatherland and sense of world citizenship are most intimately united, and, indeed, stand both in a definite relation. Love of fatherland is his act, sense of world-citizenship is his thought; the first is the phenomenon, the second is the inner spirit of this phenomenon, the invisible in the visible” (*GA*, I, 8, 450).

In other words, the patriot is called up to always consider his fatherland – which he loves and cares for – as a part of humanity, and therefore not as a territory to be expanded at the expense of other peoples (colonialism is absent in Fichtean works, and is even openly condemned in *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat* /Thomas-Fogiel 2004, 235/), but as an asset that, in its irreducibility, stands as a treasure for humanity. The latter is intended as a multiplicity of differences where the unity of the human race is expressed.

In this sense, Fichte argues that cosmopolitanism without a fatherland “goes in the opposite direction, it is worthless and meaningless (*GA*, I, 8, 450)”. On the one hand, it remains entirely abstract on a theoretical level and does not operate on a practical level (the only way to be actually cosmopolitan is, in fact, to promote the universalism of emancipation moving from a national community); on the other hand, in the historical dimension, it corresponds to the alienated cosmopolitanism belonging to the universalism of the *Handelsanarchie* (*SW*, III, 453; Furlani 2005) denounced in *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat*, i.e. the “commercial anarchy” that produces, in its own image and likeness, the conformation of mankind by reducing it to an amorphous aggregate of selfish atoms.

The idea of a dialectic union of cosmopolitanism and patriotism is also at the center of *Der Patriotismus und sein Gegenteil*, where it is argued that the “opposite” of patriotism is, at a closer look, its essential correlate:

“While cosmopolitanism is the dominant will that the purpose of the existence of the humanity be actually realized in humanity, patriotism is the will that this end be first realized in the particular nation to which we ourselves belong, and that this achievement thence spread over the entire race. [...] In fact, cosmopolitanism is necessarily patriotism. [...] And every cosmopolitanism is necessarily patriotic through the limitation given by the nation. And he who, in his nation, is the most energetic and diligent patriot is rightly, for that very reason, the most diligent cosmopolitan, since the ultimate goal of every making of a nation is always that this making extends itself to the whole human race” (*GA*, II, 9, 399–400).

As pointed out by Günther Zöller, in confirmation of the indissoluble bonds between patriotism and cosmopolitanism in the Fichtean reflection, “the education of the German nation is the starting point for a creative education of the whole of mankind. In such a cosmopolitan perspective, Fichtean nationalism appears as a provisional nationalism or even as a temporarily limited cosmopolitanism” (Zöller 2011, 354). Both in the “first” as in the “second” Fichte, the *telos* is always cosmopolitical, as it coincides with the emancipation of mankind conceived as a unity.

Moreover, against the well-established demonizing trend that condemns Fichtean nationalism as racist and as a forerunner of the worst tragedies of the twentieth century (Abizadeh 2005), one would seek in vain any reference to race in the *RD* (and, more generally, in the entire production of Fichte). In fact, the German nation conceived as a cultural and linguistic unity – never racial nor biological – is always seen as the starting point for a renewal and a universalizing progress, intended to be a world-historical force. As suggested by Walz, aberrant ideas such as racial and blood unity are completely unconnected with the Fichtean perspective and, more generally, with all forms of idealism (Walz 1928, 536).

On the other hand, since the *Von der Sprachfähigkeit und dem Ursprung der Sprache* dated 1795, Fichte unconditionally rejects the possibility of discriminating people on ethnic or racial grounds. As argued by Guérout with reference to the *Volk of Reden*, in Fichte “It is no longer race that defines this ‘absolute people’, but rather its aptitude for liberty and its revolutionary mission. The word German thus takes on an entirely cosmopolitan signification. [...] Germanness no longer designates anything but the character possessed by all those who recognize themselves as belonging together to a single fraternal humanity (a people)” (Guérout 1939). For this reason, according to Léon, the *RD* are in all respects a continuation of the struggle “that he never ceased to lead for the realm of liberty and the triumph of democracy” (Léon 1922–1927, 119). So in the seventh address of the *RD* there is a famous passage that needs to be carefully examined:

“Whoever believes in spirituality and in the freedom of this spirituality, and who wills the eternal development of this spirituality by freedom, (*ewige Fortbildung dieser Geistigkeit durch Freiheit*), wherever he may have been born and whatever language he speaks, is of our blood; he is one of us, and will come over to our side. Whoever believes in stagnation, retrogression, and the round dance of which we spoke, or who sets a dead nature at the helm of the world’s government, wherever he may have been born and whatever language he speaks, is non-German and a stranger to us; and it is to be wished that he would separate himself from us completely, and the sooner the better” (*SW*, VII, 375).

More than between Germans and foreigners, the *RD* create a polarization at the universal level between progressives and regressionists, i.e. between the supporters of the *lineare Zeitauffassung* and the advocates of the cyclical conception of temporality. The Germans have to assume the future as the realm of the *novum* and colonize it with projects aimed at the rejuvenation of the world, through a tireless engagement in transcending the existing conditions which ‘presentifies’ themselves – in accordance with the framework of the *System der Freiheit* – in view of the deferred unity of the human race.

In the *RD*, the polarization between idealism and dogmatism declines itself in temporality, in the form of the opposition between the futurizing conception of those who

bet on an open future and determine it actively through thought and action, and the cyclical perspective of those who accept fatalistically the state of things, which is considered as unavoidable, senseless and recursively immutable. For those who believe in the future, the praxis and the freedom of action remain the only means capable of ensuring that the future corresponds to their projects; for them, “history, and with it the human race, does not unfold itself according to some mysterious hidden law, like a round dance; on the contrary, in his opinion a true and proper man himself makes history, not merely repeating what has existed already, but throughout all time creating what is entirely new. Hence, he never expects mere repetition” (*SW*, VII, 368). In contrast, we have the cyclical conception of temporality: “once this foreign spirit is present among Germans it will, therefore, reveal itself in their actual life also, as quiet resignation to what they deem the unalterable necessity of their existence, as the abandonment of all hope of improvement of ourselves or others by means of freedom, as a disposition to make use of themselves and everyone else just as they are, and to derive from their existence the greatest possible advantage for ourselves” (*SW*, VII, 368).

According to the line of argument of the *RD*, all those who believe in the freedom of human action and in an unlimited process of emancipation of mankind that has to find its expression in future – regardless of sex, age, and origin – should go into partnership with the German people, in order to achieve the goal already described in the *Bestimmung des Gelehrten* of Jena (“all the powers of man, which are essentially but one power, and only become distinguished in their application to different objects, should all accord in perfect unity and harmony with each other” /*SW*, VI, 297/): this conception of time, typical of Germans, is “the view that regards the human race as eternally progressing, and that refers all its activities in this world solely to this eternal progress” (*SW*, VII, 394).

This explains the seemingly cryptic statement contained in *Der Patriotismus und sein Gegenteil*, which argues that only Germans are able to “put the whole of humanity as the aim of their nation” (*GA*, II, 9, 404-405), since only Germans can actually save human civilization from its reversion into barbarism: “If Germany does not save human civilization, no other European nation can do it” (*SW*, VII, 184). In the *RD*, the *WL* assumes the status of a theoretical platform for an action program that, through the *Gelehrter* and the concrete ethics of the German people, is destined to have a profound effect on the history of mankind.

In the fourteen addresses of the *RD*, therefore, the dichotomy between Germans and non-Germans is a re-proposal of the oppositions between idealists and dogmatists at the center of the *Erste Einleitung*, between transcendental criticism and conservative dogmatism, between the creative idealism of Germans and the fatalistic dogmatism of other peoples that have opted for a circular and iterative conception of temporality. An example of this is the seventh address of the *RD*, characterized by a *pathos* bordering on enthusiasm that is heavily influenced by the historical context in which it was written:

“So, let there appear before you at last in complete clearness what we have meant by Germans, as we have so far described them. The true criterion is this: do you believe in something absolutely primary and original in man himself, in freedom, in endless improvement, in the eternal progress of our race, or do you not believe in all this, but rather imagine that you clearly perceive and comprehend that the opposite of all this takes place? All who either are themselves alive and creative and productive of new things, or who, should this not have fallen to their lot, at any rate

definitely abandon the things of naught and stand on the watch for the stream of original life to lay hold of them somewhere, or who, should they not even be so far advanced as this, at least have an inkling of freedom and do not hate it or take fright at it, but on the contrary love it—all these are original men; they are, when considered as a people, an original people, the people simply, Germans. All who resign themselves to being something secondary and derivative, and who distinctly know and comprehend that they are such, are so in fact, and become ever more so because of this belief of theirs; they are an appendix to the life which bestirred itself of its own accord before them or beside them; they are an echo resounding from the rock, an echo of a voice already silent; they are, considered as a people, outside the original people, and to the latter they are strangers and foreigners” (SW, VII, 373).

As we have seen, Germans are not defined by racial or ethnic connotations. Fichte believes that their quintessential prerogatives, in a cultural sense, are both creativity and spirit of transformation, namely the anti-adaptive passion that characterizes the *WL*: Germans are, in fact, the idealists, “all who either are themselves alive and creative and productive of new things” (GA, I, 10, 195), that is, those who act for and believe “in endless improvement, in the eternal progress of human race.” These are “original men; they are, when considered as a people, an original people (*ein Urvolk*), the people (*das Volk schlechtweg*) simply, Germans. All who resign themselves to being something secondary and derivative [...] they are an appendix to life” (*Ibidem*), and, for that very reason, cannot be Germans.

Just like the opposition between idealists and dogmatists at the center of the *Erste Einleitung*, also the contraposition between being German or non-German described in the *RD* is actually the free choice of the individual, done accordingly to his own inclinations. Every free spirit will choose to belong to the German people: “whoever believes in spirituality and in the freedom of this spirituality, and who wills the eternal development of this spirituality by freedom” (SW, VII, 375). More than an actually existing people, we have the impression here that Fichte is talking about an ‘ideal people’, to be constructed from the cultivated circle of listeners of the *RD* during Napoleon's occupation of Germany.

As noted by Radrizzani, “national categories remain foreign to the reflection of Fichte. Fichte does not think in terms of nation: he also states clearly that it is not enough to speak German and live in Germany to be Germans” (Radrizzani 1996, 120). For example, Schelling (who Fichte once addressed as “Polyphemus without an eye” /GA, II, 5, 485/), dogmatic Germans, and Nicolai cannot be considered as such, since they are standard bearers of world views that are incompatible with the *WL*. Therefore, the *RD* theorize an ‘inner border’ (according to Etienne Balibar's formula /Balibar 1990/), that is, a purely philosophical border that the individual may freely cross if he chooses to adhere to idealism and create a political community capable of thinking and acting according to the principles of the doctrine of science. The “true criterion of differentiation” (*eigentliche Unterscheidungsgrund*) lies precisely in the will to pursue human liberty: this is, as we read in the above quotation, the only criterion for differentiation among individuals and peoples. Just as in the *EE* one could freely choose whether to be idealist or dogmatist, in the *RD* one can opt for being a German (endorsing the *WL*) or not (embracing the fatalistic laziness of dogmatic views) (Kohn 1949). This choice would not definitively exclude a possible reconsideration or a change of perspective.

In this sense, Radrizzani continues, “under the veneer of nationalistic language, Fichte seeks to promote his own ideas, which aren't nationalist at all. In the final analysis, to be German means to be Fichteian, that is, to assume the German nation to make a commitment to criticism; the real nation of the true patriot is the supra-national science, i.e. the realm of 'pure spirit' (Radrizzani 1996, 121)”, the framework of the *WL* and its cosmopolitical message directed to every man as such, aimed to the emancipation of mankind conceived as a unity.

The German people – says Fichte – “will be characterized by a spirit that is not narrow and exclusive, but universal and cosmopolitan” (*GA*, I, 10, 189). Called upon to fight against the Napoleonic oppression, the German people become a beacon of human liberty against slavery, showing every other nation how to act concretely, be it against foreign invasions (“a nation of slaves is not possible” /*SW*, VII, 549/) or for the internal development and organization of the State. According to Fichte, this goal should be achieved by balancing liberty and equality (“all citizens are born equal” /*SW*, VII, 554³), suppressing the aristocracy and granting free cultural education to every member of the community (“no hereditary aristocracy, but free education for all” /*SW*, VII, 559/).

Here we come to Fichte's transition from his original conviction (at the center of his juvenile *Beitrag*), that is, the development of the human race under French hegemony, to the new idea that the German people should accompany humanity along its process of emancipation. Also from this point of view there is some continuity with the early works, even taking into account the remarkable and undeniable novelties in Fichteian thought. All the deeds done by France as an educator of mankind are now contradicted by the Napoleonic conquests, which Fichte considers a perversion of the love for freedom and emancipation.

Therefore, Germans have to comply with the duty of educating humanity, embracing the linear conception of time: their metabolization of the *WL* leads them to assimilate the free and revolutionary spirit of French revolution, which is the foundation of the doctrine of science. We could then argue, without exaggeration, that the *RD* may be considered a rewriting (though full of novelties and acquisitions related to the different historical context) of the *Beitrag*, with the universalist role previously attributed to the French at the time of *Revolutionsschrift* now assigned to the Germans. As the French awakened humanity in 1789 from the sleep of the ruling dogmatism, now it is up to the Germans to defeat the dogmatic laziness that consider the existing power relations and the completed sinfulness of our time as an ineluctable fate. The only way to be idealists consists in adopting the *lineare Zeitauffassung* and acting in freedom to determine history.

The anti-dogmatic vocation of the whole *System der Freiheit* is perfectly highlighted in the fourteenth address of the *RD*, where Fichte argues that “all human relationships, the whole special province of man, are made only by men themselves and by absolutely no power outside them” (*SW*, VII, 487). History is not conceived as a circle in which each event is repeated eternally, but as a linear process determined by the acts of human liberty that articulates itself over time – a topic already developed in *Bestimmung des Menschen*.

³ See Fonnesu 1985. See also Moretto 1999, 156. As said by Luigi Pareyson, for Fichte “la società degli individui in reciprocità è la realtà e l'assoluto è la vita della società come reciprocità degli individui” (Pareyson 1950, 304).

Moreover, the *WL*, as pointed out by Reinhard Lauth and Giannino Di Tommaso (Di Tommaso 1986, 68 ss; Lendvai 1997), contains in its own structure a philosophy of history of the free human praxis that articulates itself *sub specie temporis*. The *WL*, in fact, is based on the mediation of time, on the infinite effort of action, and thus on the necessary *temporalization of praxis* that is the very condition of making and thinking history as an inexhaustible work of positing, overcoming and maintaining the existing objectivations, i.e. the results of the *unabhängige Tätigkeit*.

The *lineare Zeitauffassung* codified by Fichte as the driving force of his conception of history is, in itself, the essential condition (a transcendental prerequisite) for human praxis to take place in the form of a continuous determination, as opposed to the circular dogmatic view: “The first end of all my actions is a new acting in the future” (*GA*, I, 5, 234) and, through a synergistic nexus for which the opening on the future makes the acting possible, and the latter, in turn, is able to determine the future, “the will not only embraces, but also determines the future” (*SW*, III, 118; Ivaldo 1987b).

On the one hand, the extraordinary events of his time – from the French Revolution to the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, the rise of Napoleon and his downfall – led Fichte to endlessly focus on history and to develop a thought full of historical questions; and, on the other hand, the very structure of the *WL* – sparked from the events of French Revolution – explicitly lays down the foundation of a linear conception of temporality, insofar as it theorizes the tension between the I and the not-I. As never definitively resolved at a finite level, this tension produces the space of history as a theater of continuous action by the empirical I.

In this regard, there is a crucial passage – among many others – in the *Bestimmung des Menschen* that, while theorizing the linear conception of history, actually makes explicit the premises of the *WL* on a world-historical level: “The universe is to me no longer that ever-recurring circle, that eternally-repeated play, that monster swallowing itself up, only to bring itself forth again as it was before; it is [...] a constant progress towards higher perfection in a line that runs out into the Infinite.” (*SW*, VII, 364). Nor should it be forgotten that, since the *Grundlage* of Jena, time itself is conceived as a product of practical activity, and more specifically of the individual synthetic acts of consciousness, with respect to which the *Zeit* is produced as an inner experience (Rohs 1994; Inciarte 1970). As time is produced in consciousness as a relation among the individual acts of consciousness, so the time of universal history is posited into being as a relation among the acts of the human race that is freely objectivating itself, i.e. as a living relation between the empirical egos that continuously recreate the objective world in new forms and, in doing so, they become more and more aware and united.

Such a linear conception articulates the principles of *Grundlage* on a world-historical level, in which the future-centrism becomes a transcendental precondition for the free praxis (every cyclic conception neutralizes the praxistic determination), and strengthens the entire Fichtean work since the early writings. The possibility of history as a theater of self-consciousness, praxis, and recognition granted only by human freedom is, ontologically speaking, established *a priori* in the framework of the *WL*. This liberty is open towards a constantly deferred future, which allows for rekindling the practical effort over and over again.

“This ontological-metaphysical foundation of human progress is not equivalent to the affirmation of a necessary and automatic movement of history” (PICARDI 2009, 119),

since the latter always stands as one of the many versions of that fatalism against which Fichte had explicitly constructed his “system of liberty” (history itself, in this way, would become a “thing in itself” cut loose from ties with human freedom). To hypostatize the *Geschichte* in an acting and autonomous force means to fall down again into dogmatism, as the objectivations of the I are assumed as autonomous and able to determine the I itself, thus ending up in a lethal reversal of subject and object (the fetishistic absolutization of objectivity) that neutralizes the free human praxis.

There is a passage of *RD* in which the thinker of Rammenau rejects in the strongest possible terms the “historical fatalism” and, at the same time, triumphantly insists on the possibility for men to freely determine, in an active way, their conditions, their ages, their own history:

“To let everything that happens pass by one unperceived, perhaps to close eye and ear diligently to its urgent message, and even to boast of such thoughtlessness as if it were great wisdom - this may be the proper thing for a rock on which the waves of the sea beat without its feeling them, or for a tree-trunk dashed to and fro by storms without its perceiving them; but in no wise does it beseech a thinking being. Even the thinker who dwells in the higher spheres is not absolved from this general obligation of understanding his own age. Everything that is on the higher plane must want to influence the immediate present in its own fashion; and he who truly lives in the former lives at the same time in the latter also” (*SW*, VII, 447).

Therefore, only the linear conception of temporality can be consistent with the teachings of Fichte's *WL* and *Strebungsphilosophie*, by assuming historical time as the unlimited space of human action, oriented asymptotically to the rationalization of all that 'is'. The *lineare Zeitauffassung*, i.e. the way the struggle against dogmatism re-articulates itself *sub specie temporis* in the *RD*, is the only conception of time that is compatible with the unlimited effort *ins Unendliche*, which lies as the foundation of the *WL* since the *Grundlage* of Jena (Pannenberg 1992).

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NEMAČKI JEZIK I PROLAZNOST VREMENA: WISSENSCHAFTSLEHRE U FIHTEOVOM OBRAĆANJU NEMAČKOM NARODU

Cilj ovog rada je da ilustruje kako je, u Obraćanju nemačkom narodu, fihteovska polemika protiv Dogmatismus-a smeštena pod okrilje koncepta prolaznosti vremena, odnosno smeštena u okvir dimenzije Geschichtphilosophie. Kao što je već poznato, Fihteov čitav opus (od ranog Revolutionsschriften pa sve do kasnog Staatslehre, delo štampano 1813.) ispresecan je jakim stavom protiv dogmatskog i fatalističkog shvatanja istorije, u kom slučaju se ovo drugo svodi na automatski proces, koji se posmatra nezavisno od ljudske aktivnosti. Fihte je bio protiv ovakvih stavova – prihvatajući principe WL i "Sistema slobode" – shvatanja istorije kao "niza" (Reihe) nerazdvojivih ljudskih aktivnosti koje se manifestuju kroz vreme. Reden an die deutsche Nation iz 1808. poslužiće kao osnova za analizu fihteovskog shvatanja prolaznosti vremena a pre svega da bi se utvrdilo kako se sukob između WL i Dogmatismus prevodi u jedan novi oblik, odnosno stav protiv cirkularnog Zeitauffassung.

Ključne reči: *prolaznost vremena, dogmatizam, sloboda, istorija.*