

## PRESENTATION

This publication is a commentary on the *Doctrine of Science nova methodo* (*WLnM, Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*) by Johann Gottlieb Fichte (Rammenau 1762, Berlín 1814). Fichte produced several versions of his philosophy, which he called «Doctrine of Science» and which, at least in his first period, the Jena period (1794-1800), he presented as the culmination of the Kantian project of a transcendental philosophy or a critical idealism, as founded, systematic knowledge about the foundations of all our experience and its different spheres. The first formulation saw the light in his book *Foundation of the Entire Doctrine of Science* in 1794-1795.<sup>1</sup> But Fichte was not satisfied with it because of the haste with which he had to write it. He had not thought out the full development of the system before he was already writing it and using it on loose sheets for his classes, for his students at the to use. In addition, the structure of the presentation still depended strongly on the way that Kant and Reinhold presented philosophy and its division in theoretical and practical philosophy. Nor was he satisfied with the way in which the Non-I is deduced, due to the obscurity of the theoretical part and because it was unfinished. Because of this, the following year, in 1796, he wrote a new version, with its own spirit. Using this manuscript, he taught classes during the three winter semesters of 1796/97, 1797/98 and 1798/99. These classes were announced as lessons on «the foundations of transcendental philosophy (the Doctrine of Science) presented with a new method.» From this second formulation of his philosophy, Fichte published two Introductions, the so-called *First Introduction* and *Second Introduction*, and first Chapter in four installments between February 1797 and March 1798 in the *Philosophisches Journal*, which he directed together with his colleague Niethammer, all under the title of *An Attempt at a New Presentation of the Doctrine of Science (Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre)*. Fichte made several plans to rewrite it with a view to publication, and even attempted to do so, between the beginning of 1799 and the beginning of 1801. But the polemics and the accusation of atheism leveled against him at the end of 1798, the subsequent loss of his chair at the University of Jena in April 1799, the lack of

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish translation of this work is: Fichte, *Doctrina de*, ed. Juan Cruz Cruz, Aguilar, , 1975.

resources and the imperative need to earn money with other literary projects, together with the criticisms he received from Jacobi, Bardili, Reinhold, and later from Schelling and Hegel, resulted in Fichte not finishing his writing and in his distancing himself from this second presentation of his system. So he never actually published it, but soon began another version, the 1801-1802 version, which inaugurated the second stage of his thinking.

So we could place the *WLn*m period between the end of 1795 and the beginning of 1801. On this same horizon of thinking, Fichte published other major works such as the *Foundation of Natural Right according to the Principles of the Doctrine of Science* (1796),<sup>2</sup> *Ethics*, or *The System of the Doctrine of Customs according to the Principles of the Doctrine of Science* (1798)<sup>3</sup> and *The Destiny of Man* (1800),<sup>4</sup> books which help us to understand this period in Fichte. But the actual manuscript of the *WLn*m is lost. In order to know the full development of this version of the Doctrine of Science, all we have are three sets of notes from class (*Kollegnachschriften*) by students who attended these lessons. The first to be discovered, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was called the manuscript of Halle, and it was found at the university library of this city. The author is unknown but was possibly from the winter semester of 1797-1798; it was finally published in 1937.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, there are Karl Christian Friedrich Krause's (1781-1832) notes, taken during the lessons of the winter semester of 1798-1799, found in 1980 and published in 1982.<sup>6</sup> Last of all, in 1992 the existence of the Eschen manuscript was discovered. Eschen was another student of Fichte, possibly from the 1796-1797 course, but his writing is poorer than the other two and this set has only come to us in a fragmentary state; it was published in 2000.<sup>7</sup> The three manuscripts are so concordant among themselves, both in the order and presentation of the ideas and in the succession of the paragraphs and their subdivisions, even in the quotes from other books, that they clearly reveal a common source, that is, Fichte's own notebooks that he used in his classes.

The commentary that we present here has two parts. The first, which includes the first 16 articles, focuses on the *Doctrine of Science nova methodo*, particularly on the Krause manuscript, whose 19 paragraphs are analyzed one by one in order to serve as a reading guide. The object of the second part, articles 17 to 20, is what Fichte published, that is, his two famous Introductions, the *First Introduction* and the *Second Introduction*, and the first chapter of his *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Doctrine of Science*. Our intention is to offer a complete vision of this second formulation of his system.

<sup>2</sup> The Spanish translation is: Fichte, *Fundamento del derecho natural según los principios de de la ciencia*, introd. J.L. Villacañas, transl. J.L. Villacañas, M. Ramos and F. Oncina, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, Madrid, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Spanish translation: Fichte, *Ética*, ed. Jacinto Rivera de Rosales, , 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Spanish translation: Fichte, *El destino del hombre*, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1976.

<sup>5</sup> This is available in the of Baviera edition of the complete works of Fichte: J. G. Fichte. *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Frommann, Stuttgart, 1978: GA IV/2, 17-267. There is a Spanish version: J. G. Fichte, *Doctrina de nova methodo*, ed. José Luis Villacañas and Manuel Ramos, Editorial Natan, Valencia, 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Republished with errors corrected in GA IV/3, 323-535.

<sup>7</sup> GA IV/3, 151-196.

This commentary also hopes to serve as a companion to the Spanish version of these two Fichtean texts, both the Krause manuscript and the work published by Fichte himself. Both will soon see the light in the Editorial Biblos of Buenos Aires (Argentina). The translation and commentary of the *Doctrine of Science nova methodo* has been the object of the second project of the RIEF, the Iberian Network of Fichtean Studies (Red Ibérica de Estudios Fichteanos), created in 2007 and affiliated with the International Fichte Society. This group's first action produced the book titled *La polémica del ateísmo. Fichte y su época (The Polemics of Atheism. Fichte and His Times)* (Dykinson, Madrid, 2009), in which the events of this dispute were presented, the main writings were translated, and articles were offered to interpret the different aspects of this event. Nineteen members of the RIEF from Spain, Portugal, Argentina, and Brazil participated in this second action. Each was responsible for one part, but this individual analysis was presented before the entire group and discussed jointly, by e-mail also, so that what we are presenting here is, to a great extent, a collective work.

We would like to thank the journal *Éndoxa*, which has been good enough to publish this monographic volume. Our desire to be worthy of the quality of this journal has also driven us to make a great effort in our studies and thus offer the Spanish-speaking reader a carefully crafted product which we hope will be useful for reading one of the main works of Fichte and of German Idealism, that is, of modern western philosophy.

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