

# Hegel's View on Fichte's Aesthetical Conception\*

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**ABSTRACT:** Hegel's relation towards Fichte's aesthetic conception can be clarified through three distinct perspectives. The first one examines the relation to the consequences of Kant's aesthetic position, and it indirectly deals with Fichte's role in these consequences to German idealism. The second one discusses Hegel's critique of Fichte's philosophy in general, from which it is possible to deduce his relationship towards the aesthetic phenomena in his philosophy. The third way examines the rare and sporadic topics in Hegel's philosophical writings which directly reflect on Fichte's aesthetic views. The author will try to combine all three of these perspectives and to provide a comprehensive insight into Hegel's relation towards Fichte's aesthetic position. Finally, it will be demonstrated that Fichte's philosophy remains significant by the fact that it abolishes the dualism of Kant's philosophy and provides the foundation for Hegel's conception, in which the aesthetic field takes an important position.

**KEYWORDS:** Aesthetics, Art, Fichte, German Idealism, Hegel.

## 1. Fichte's contribution to the development of Aesthetics

A very few number of authors have engaged in thematisation of aesthetics within Fichte's philosophical system. Aestheticians mostly do not consider Fichte as one of the authors who directly contributes to aesthetics as a science, while Fichte's interpreters usually do not consider significant several of his unsystematic treatises on aesthetics. Therefore, fundamental thematization of aesthetical problem in Fichte's philosophy remains a very isolated phenomenon. One of the first serious studies on this subject is considered to be the work titled *L'estetica dell'idealismo tedesco*, that Luigi Pareyson published in 1950, and whose chapter on Fichte was later<sup>1</sup> separately published as *L'Estetica di Fichte*<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It has been published by the *Italian Institute of Philosophy in Milan*, in 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Stated by CECCHINATO, G. Form and Colour in Kant's and Fichte's Theory of Beauty. In: Breazeale, D., Rockmore, T. (orgs), **Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism** (Fichte-Studien Supplementa) Amsterdam - New York: Rodopi, 2010, p. 62-63. Prior to Pareyson, we find clarification of Fichte's understanding of aesthetics primarily in the works of Tempel and Wundt: TEMPEL, G. **Fichtes Stellung zur Kunst**. Metz, 1901; WUNDT, M. **J. G. Fichte**. Stuttgart, 1929, pp. 241 ff. Other significant studies of Fichte's understanding of aesthetics: RAMOS, M., ONCINA, F. Introducción, in: Fichte, J., G., **Filosofía y estética**. Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 1998; RADRIZZANI, I. Von der Ästhetik der Urteilskraft zur Asthetik der



Fichte's discussion *On beauty and sublime*, written within his work *Practische Philosophie*<sup>3</sup>, is the most frequently emphasized and, along with his *Eigenen Meditationen über Elementar-Philosophie*, it represents the most important text from the time before Fichte's academic engagement in Jena. The work *Practische Philosophie* actually represents the continuation of *Eigenen Meditationen über Elementar-Philosophie* and it is considered to be the genuine foundation of transcendental philosophy that Fichte developed independently leaving the Kant's teachings behind<sup>4</sup>. Although unfinished, the text *Practische Philosophie* represents Fichte's most significant discussion regarding aesthetics, among other discussions that are elaborated within the framework of his teaching on *Wissenschaftslehre*<sup>5</sup>.

Fichte claims that art represents the way of forming a man *as a whole*, in contrast to the science, for example, which forms *only the reason*. In that sense, art should never be a medium of fragmentary and particular determinations because its purpose is to aim at *all or nothing*. Therefore, art is a field that should be the object of interest of all important philosophical disciplines, and not just aesthetics in a narrow sense. For this reason, one would not be wrong if one concludes that the *idea of art itself as an absolute* represents one of the main reasons why Fichte had not found aesthetics as a specific part of his philosophical system. This position is quite similar to that of later Hegel.

Although initially close to Schiller and Kant, Fichte develops his aesthetic teaching in a completely different direction. Primarily, he rejects Kant's idea of *thing in itself*, and interprets the external world as the product or the work of self-consciousness, i.e. self-activity (*Tathandlung*). On the other hand, he rejects Schiller's idea by which the aesthetic education is the main way that could lead a man to freedom. Fichte's position is opposed to Schiller's: it is not that case that an aesthetic principle lies in the basis of freedom, but the contrary. Freedom lies in the basis of all, including aesthetic, principles! In other words, Fichte claims

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Einbildungskraft, oder von der kopernicanischen Revolution in der Ästhetik bei Fichte. In: Fuchs, E., Ivaldo, M., Moretto, G. **Der transzendental-philosophische Zugang zur Wirklichkeit**. Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: Fromman/Holzboog, 2001, pp. 341–359.; PICHÉ, C., The Place of Aesthetics in Fichte's Early System. In: Breazeale, D., Rockmore, T. **Essays on Fichte's later Jena „Wissenschaftslehre**. Illinois: Evanston, 2002, p. 299-310; and – within the International Fichte Congress “J.G. Fichte: Das Spätwerk (1810–1814) und das Lebenswerk”, held in Munich in 2003: Lohmann, P. Der Stellenwert des Künstlers in der Philosophie J.G. Fichtes; Österreich, P. Fichte und die Kunst; Cecchinato, G. Fichtes Aesthetik.

<sup>3</sup> FICHTE, J. G. **Praktische Philosophie (1793/94)** (GA II/3), Stuttgart - Bad Cannstatt: Fromman/Holzboog, p. 181-266.

<sup>4</sup> CECCHINATO. Form and Colour in Kant's and Fichte's Theory of Beauty, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> KUBIK, A. Auf dem Weg zu Fichtes früher Ästhetik – Die Rolle der Einbildungskraft in der „Kritik der Urteilskraft“. **Fichte-Studien**, n. 33, 2009, p. 8.

that freedom is the premise and not the consequence of aesthetic principles<sup>6</sup>. In this sense Fichte does not encounter any problems of a hiatus between nature and freedom (as Kant, Schiller and Schelling do<sup>7</sup>), because he considers freedom as the only autonomous and independent source of all principles that define a man, *including* the aesthetic principle. However, he encounters another kind of difficulty: while claiming that the aesthetic and artistic principles are only *parts of the way* leading to the moral determination of man, he reduces them to simple *steps of the practical process*. In this manner, Fichte avoids the instrumentalization of practical principles by poetic principles, but allows, nevertheless, the instrumentalization of poetic principles by practical ones!

Fichte's philosophy aims to gradually develop an unique system<sup>8</sup>, rather than to delve into the history of philosophy, and to engage in all the disputes that might have risen regarding his thesis. Many of these proceedings resulted in the concepts that make one of the most complex philosophical systems ever to be carried out in the history of western thought. However, Fichte's philosophy does not provide equal treatment for all philosophical disciplines, nor it provides the same opportunities for explanation of every specific philosophical phenomena, including aesthetics. Due to the previously mentioned reasons, aesthetics represents an area that Fichte does not thematise through a specific text or in a systematic manner. In fact, it is explicitly considered only in three more texts: §31 of *Das System der Sittenlehre nach den Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*, titled "Über die Pflichten des ästhetischen Künstlers"; *Über Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie*, and in the posthumously published lecture notes: *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*<sup>9</sup>.

"Young" Fichte tried to establish unique form of philosophical aesthetics that could address intellectual powers, aesthetical education and aesthetic theory in one hand, but also rules of taste, power of judgment and the criterion of good in the other hand<sup>10</sup>. Imagined thusly, Fichte's aesthetics would have included Kant and Schiller aesthetic concepts, but also the constructive critique of those very concepts<sup>11</sup>. However, it could be said that *Fichte's*

<sup>6</sup> KUBIK. Auf dem Weg zu Fichtes früher Ästhetik, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> KUBIK. Auf dem Weg zu Fichtes früher Ästhetik, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> FICHTE, J. G. **Učenje o nauci (1804)**. Beograd: JP Službeni glasnik, 2007, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> WS 1798/99.

<sup>10</sup> TRAUB, H. Über die Pflichten des ästhetischen Künstlers. Der § 31 des Systems der Sittenlehre im Kontext von Fichtes Philosophie der Ästhetik. **Fichte-Studien**. n. 27, 2006, p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> Tänzer wrote his magister thesis that deals precisely with philosophy of aesthetics in the works of early Fichte. TÄNZER, R. **Das Problem der philosophischen Ästhetik in den Frühschriften J.G. Fichtes**. München: Magisterarbeit, 1985.

*theory of aesthetics* is nothing more than deepening and varying of his practical philosophy, which is why this subject once again raises the question of the relation between ethics and aesthetics in German idealism. But the real question here is whether this relation, in Fichte's view, represents the relation between *the wider* and *the narrower* field of practical philosophy, or one could speak of *two equal* and *independent* fields of philosophy in general<sup>12</sup>.

Fichte's text *Über Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie* is indispensable for consideration of early phases of Fichte's philosophy, especially its parts regarding aesthetics. Besides this writing, in which Fichte also points out that the aesthetic feeling is not only related to the artistic genius, but goes beyond such limits, the work *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* contains another one of his well-known formulations on this topic: that the aesthetic sense is essential for philosophy in general<sup>13</sup>! Despite the mostly ambivalent attitude that Fichte employs regarding the aesthetic problems, he gives on several occasions perhaps the most remarkable praise of *aesthetic view* of the world. For example, he compares aesthetic insight with the correct way of execution of moral duties. Namely, he uses it to distinguish between the servitude to an enforced principle from *comprehensive insight* in the autonomy of law that man freely and voluntarily accepts<sup>14</sup>. In his text *Jena Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte claims that the aesthetic standpoint represents a position from which man observes the natural world as if it was his own creation, which is a statement that resembles those of Schiller in the text *Letters on the aesthetic education of man*.

Although in Fichte's exegesis both theoretical and pedagogical significance of art and other aesthetic phenomena remain unsolved<sup>15</sup>, and his system demonstrates the lack of systematically founded aesthetics, Fichte's philosophical investigation on the subject of aesthetics remains an indispensable and highly important stage in its history! One reason for this is related to the significant meaning of Fichte's theses on the aesthetic issues, however fragmentary they may be. The other reason rests on the significant fact that the aesthetic principles are *implicitly* present in the very core of Fichte's philosophy.

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<sup>12</sup> TRAUB. *Über die Pflichten des ästhetischen Künstlers*, p. 76.

<sup>13</sup> TRAUB. *Über die Pflichten des ästhetischen Künstlers*, p. 81.

<sup>14</sup> More in: FICHTE, J. G. *Das System der Sittenlehre nach den Principien der Wissenschaftslehre*. Jena und Leipzig: Christian Ernst Gabler, 1798 (New York: Astor Library, 2016), p. 459.

<sup>15</sup> LOHMAN, P. Die Funktionen der Kunst und des Künstlers in der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes. *Fichte-Studien*, n. 25, 2005, p. 116.

Fichte distinguishes antithetical (disclamational) and synthetical (affirmative) judgments<sup>16</sup>, so even though the logical scheme “thesis-antithesis-synthesis” is often being arbitrarily tied to the Hegelian system, the truth is that it is actually Fichte's invention. He is the one that explicitly states: *no synthesis is possible without antithesis*<sup>17</sup>. Hegel's philosophy, it will be shown later, evades this kind of simplified and static scheme. Although his speculative-dialectical method indeed involves elements of thesis-antithesis-and-synthesis, they must be understood as a strategy to *overcome* the artificial bridge between two antithetical fields.

One of the themes of Fichte's philosophy that provides unexpectedly fertile ground for consideration regarding aesthetic is the term *Vernunftkunst* - a compound word which Fichte utilises when he wants to explain the way in which humanity, at the point of eventually reaching its freedom, could turn towards its innermost being with living and „spiritualized“ knowledge of self. *Vernunftkunst* refers to the knowledge that understands the world as the *embodiment of praxis*<sup>18</sup>. In the worldly plan of *the a priori history of mind* there are four epochs, claims Fichte: the first is the epoch of the instincts of mind (*Vernunftinstinktes*), the second is the epoch the authority of mind (*Vernunftautorität*), the third is the epoch of science of mind (*Vernunftwissenschaft*), and the fourth and final is the epoch *the art of mind* (*Vernunftkunst*)<sup>19</sup>. This division of epochs actually resonates the very spirit of German idealism and its dynamics, which – despite of numerous internal differences - still articulates the need to shed the light on the entire reality and to present it in a comprehensive, synthetic and dynamic way. Therefore, it is not too surprising that Fichte, who showed no systematic interest for aesthetic and artistic phenomena, talks about philosophy in the similar way in which art production is interpreted: as a unique path through the seemingly contradictory areas of nature and freedom.

Aesthetical field is philosophical field, claims Fichte, which means that it belongs to the science of knowledge and to transcendental area, and aesthetics should be an integral part of a serious philosophical science. Therefore, aesthetic area has nothing aesthetically pleasing and

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<sup>16</sup> FICHTE, J. G. *Osnova cjelokupne nauke o znanosti (1794)*. Zagreb: Naprijed, 1974, p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> FICHTE. *Osnova cjelokupne nauke o znanosti (1794)*, p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> JANKE, W. *Die dreifache Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus Schelling, Hegel und Fichtes ungeschriebene Lehre* (Fichte-Studien Supplementa), Amsterdam - New York: Rodopi, 2009, p. 224.

<sup>19</sup> JANKE. *Die dreifache Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus*, p. 224

artistic in its definition<sup>20</sup>. The spirit of philosophy in general should have an *aesthetic character* - not in the sense that the philosopher should be a poet or a calligrapher, but rather this character “breathes life” into philosophy and gives it energy to go forward. Else it only gets troubled by letters<sup>21</sup>, without being able to penetrate their meaning.

## 2. Fichte's *aesthetical insights*

*Die Aestetic ist also auch practisch*<sup>22</sup>.

Fichte claims that the aesthetic standpoint is neither *common sense* nor transcendental one<sup>23</sup>, but that it is a kind of a mediator between them, since it is not the area that philosophy has yet to clarify, nor it is an area which is completely “occupied” by philosophy. He defines aesthetics<sup>24</sup> as a specific philosophical discipline that deals with this aesthetic standpoint towards reality and constitute its rules. The concept of the world is a theoretical concept, and *the way* the world becomes constituted invites practical notions, because its principle lies within a man. *Aesthetics is also practical*, claims Fichte, although it does not belong to the same area as ethics<sup>25</sup>. At this point Fichte highlights the crucial difference between aesthetics and ethics: although it is not possible without freedom, the aesthetical standpoint is originally based on instinctive and natural principles, while the ethical standpoint is entirely product of freedom. Although with this thesis Fichte fails to take a step beyond the limits of Kant's view and to establish the concept of creativity on the principle of freedom, he still sees a strong connection between the aesthetic principles and living philosophical spirit, claiming that the philosopher needs to possess *an aesthetic sense* or spirit, because otherwise he would not be able to reach the transcendental standpoint. Furthermore, Fichte explicitly uses here the term *schöner Geist* (beautiful spirit) as a necessary precondition for philosophy<sup>26</sup>. Fichte claims that the aesthetics in its history was ambiguously determined: in Leibniz problems of *sensuality* were discussed in the context of the knowledge issues, at Baumgarten it comes to

<sup>20</sup> FICHTE, J. G. *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo, Kollegnachschriften 1794 – 1799*. (GA IV, 3) Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: Fromman/Holzboog, 2000, p. 523.

<sup>21</sup> FICHTE. *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, p. 523.

<sup>22</sup> “So the aesthetics is also practical” – FICHTE. *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, p. 266.

<sup>23</sup> FICHTE, J. *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, p. 522.

<sup>24</sup> More on Fichte's view on aesthetics: SEDGWICK, S. *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 180-181.

<sup>25</sup> FICHTE, J. *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, p. 266. (620-621).

<sup>26</sup> See also: FICHTE. *Das System der Sittenlehre*, § 479.

the aesthetics of *beautiful*<sup>27</sup>, and Mendelssohn explores *the pleasant*. In his study *Platner, Philosophische Aphorismen*, Fichte differs *the aesthetic perfection*, which is constituted by works of art and science, from *the perfection of reason*<sup>28</sup>, that comes in form of wit and virtue.

Unlike Plato, Descartes and Leibniz, Fichte explicitly claims that the senses are never deceiving: what is deceiving is power of judgment that incorrectly interprets them<sup>29</sup>! The mind, that constitutes all of these processes is the power common to all intellectual beings<sup>30</sup>. Acquisition of the ability to modify man's erroneous tendencies and transforming them into the *concepts* Fichte calls *culture*. Through the varieties of its realization in reality, it is the highest mean for achieving the final purpose of man. If a man is understood as a conscious being, then culture refers to his identification with himself, and if the man is perceived as a sensual being, culture appears as the ultimate purpose<sup>31</sup>. Similarly to Schiller's understanding of culture, Fichte will raise the question if the aesthetic education and the culture of reason of the past world exceed today's aesthetic education and culture, finding that it could be plausibly concluded that the human race has not progressed, but regressed<sup>32</sup>!

When it comes to the concept of beauty, Fichte's aesthetical position is much closer to future Hegel's absolute idealism than to Kant's position. Like Hegel's, Fichte's concept of beauty is also bonded to spiritual, and not to the natural area<sup>33</sup>. *The world of beautiful spirit* Fichte finds within mankind (the human race) and *nowhere else*<sup>34</sup>! Fichte claims that fine art *leads a man into himself* and makes him "authentic and domestic", and furthermore, fine art frees man from the natural features and sets him as an autonomous and independent: "for

<sup>27</sup> FICHTE. *Praktische Philosophie*, p. 200.

<sup>28</sup> FICHTE, J. G. Platner, *Philosophische Aphorismen*. In: Fichte, J. G. **Supplement zu Nachgelassene Schriften**. (GA II, 4) Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: Fromman/Holzboog, 1977, §907, p. 258.

<sup>29</sup> FICHTE, J. G. Pet predavanja o određenju naučnika. In: Fichte, J. G., **Zatvorena trgovačka država**. Beograd: Nolit, 1979, p. 185.

<sup>30</sup> FICHTE, J. G. Drugi uvod u nauku o znanosti. In: Fichte, J. G. **Odabrane filozofske rasprave**. Zagreb: Kultura, 1956, p. 257.

<sup>31</sup> FICHTE, J. Pet predavanja o određenju naučnika, p. 145. (FICHTE, J. G. **Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten**. § 325. in: Fichte, I. H. (ed.), *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes sämtliche Werke*, Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1845-1846 - <http://www.zeno.org/Philosophie/M/Fichte,+Johann+Gottlieb/Einige+Vorlesungen+%C3%BCber+die+Bestimmung+des+Gelehrten/4.+Ueber+die+Bestimmung+des+Gelehrten> - 28.03.2017.) On the relation between sensuality and reason within sensual area: FICHTE, J. G. **Logik und Metaphysik WS 1796/97 - Nachschrift Eschen**. p. 124.

<sup>32</sup> FICHTE, J. G. Određenje čovjeka. In: Fichte, J. G. **Odabrane filozofske rasprave**. Zagreb: Kultura, 1956, p. 118.

<sup>33</sup> FICHTE, J. G. Vorlesung über die Moral SS 1796, in: Fichte, J. G. **Kollegenachschriften 1796 – 1798**. (GA IV, 1), Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: Fromman/Holzboog, 1977-1978, p. 143.

<sup>34</sup> FICHTE. **Das System der Sittenlehre**, p. 460.

himself". Thus, independence of the mind is the final purpose not only from a theoretical and practical perspective, but from an aesthetic perspective as well.

In his text *Praktische Philosophie* Fichte quotes<sup>35</sup> first determination of judgment of taste from Kant's *The Critique of Judgment*, maintaining that beauty for Kant remains the matter of pure judgment, without the interference of any interest. However, Fichte includes a different concept of taste in his practical philosophy, claiming that the taste does not differ from pleasure in a qualitative sense, but only in intensity. On the one hand, he sees the difficulty of a strict distinction between beauty and pleasure<sup>36</sup> - on the other hand, due to the structure of his own teaching, Fichte is not forced to make such a distinction, nor to defend the purity of judgment of taste, like Kant was. In contrast to Kant, Fichte claims that aesthetic judgment does not need to be separated from practical purposes. However, Fichte states that external beauty is mere beauty of form in space, ie. of contours, and claims that *Kant was absolutely right*<sup>37</sup> to link beautiful nature with the form of the object.

Fichte's extensive understanding of one more aesthetic phenomena - the concept of *play* - is evident in the writing *The Closed Commercial State*, where he gives a short, but highly accurate and effective diagnosis of the modern age, precisely thematizing the concept of play.

The characteristic of the modern age, Fichte claims, which separates us from the seriousness and sobriety of our ancestors, consists in the fact that the modern man wants to play and *to daydream with fantasy*. Since there is no many opportunities to satisfy the urge to play, man tends to turn his whole life into play, for what the poetry and philosophy were usually "the ones to blame"<sup>38</sup>. Fichte, however, thinks that it is actually a matter of naturally occurring and necessary step on the way of progress of humankind: man tries to evade the rules and seeks hazardous *way of cunning and luck* in order to achieve his goals, which is finally manifested as the fact that the "cunning achievement" becomes more valuable than "safe possession". The insistence on the freedom from any institution, from order, from rules and from customs, leads, in Fichte's view, to the ultimate *recklessness* - both on a personal

<sup>35</sup> FICHTE. *Praktische Philosophie*, p. 206.

<sup>36</sup> FICHTE. *Praktische Philosophie*, p. 215; CECCHINATO, G. Form and Colour in Kant's and Fichte's Theory of Beauty, p. 79.

<sup>37</sup> FICHTE. *Praktische Philosophie*, p. 211.

<sup>38</sup> FICHTE, J. G. *Sonnenklarer Bericht an das größere Publikum über das eigentliche Wesen der neuesten Philosophie*, p. 243. More detailed explanation on Fichte's idea of aesthetics in: RAJKOVIĆ, M. Estetika u Fichteovoj filozofiji, in: ARHE, no. 25. Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, 2016.



and on a general level – so that even politics turns into the *skill to get out of the current difficulty*<sup>39</sup>, without worrying for the future ones.

However, in his writing *Friedrich Nicolai's Leben und Meinungen sonderbar*, Fichte examines the phenomenon of play in the context of artistic genius<sup>40</sup>, and discusses the spirit and its impulse for play.

Despite many significant insights and theses on art, beauty and sensuality, Fichte does not develop his concept into the systematic investigation of these phenomena in all their features, definitions and relations. He does not develop the aesthetics as philosophical or scientific discipline of sensuality, nor the philosophy of art that would deal with works of art as products of the human spirit, but he contributes significantly to their development by other authors. Fichte's particular aesthetic conceptions have always been discussed in the light of the aforementioned conflict with Schiller, even after 1800, when Fichte manages to publish the article *Über Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie*, which was not published earlier in the journal *Horen* on the grounds of Schiller's objection to it. Another reason for the absence of Fichte's name from the list of *aestheticians* and *philosophers of art* lies in the fact that his philosophy almost always treats aesthetics in the same context as ethics, which is why it is not easy to see how unique and significant are its highly specialized topics. Stating that the mind can not be theoretical, if it is not practical, Fichte refers to the only way one can achieve the ultimate purpose of man: striving to master *all that which is not reasonable*<sup>41</sup>, and to do so in a free and autonomous manner. And only in this spirit is truly evident the meaning of his famous thesis that a scientist should be *morally best man of his time*<sup>42</sup>. The real purpose of man is in action, which will never be fully achieved and accomplished, but will always - as striving - have the form of infinite. For Fichte, therefore, aesthetical field, posited between the fields of knowledge and morality, resolves into something that *has the character of morality*<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> "...und Politik bei Staaten in der Kunst besteht, sich nur immer aus der gegenwärtigen Verlegenheit zu helfen, ohne Sorge für die zukünftige." - FICHTE, J. G. **Der geschlossene Handelsstaat. Ein philosophischer Entwurf als Anhang zur Rechtslehre und Probe einer künftig zu liefernden Politik.** 1800, III, 510 - 512, p. 140 - 141.

<sup>40</sup> FICHTE, J. G. *Friedrich Nicolai's Leben und sonderbare Meinungen* In: Fichte, J. G. **Werke 1800 – 1801.** (GA Werkeband 7) Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: Frommann/Holzboog, 1988, p. 379 (VIII, 14).

<sup>41</sup> FICHTE. *Pet predavanja o određenju naučnika*, p. 147.

<sup>42</sup> FICHTE. *Pet predavanja o određenju naučnika*, p. 180.

<sup>43</sup> KROČE, B. **Estetika.** Beograd: Karijatide, filozofska biblioteka, 1934, p. 379.

Fichte defined the essence of aesthetic impulse<sup>44</sup> and showed that there is a direct and necessary relation between it and the cognitive and practical impulses. He does not question the possibility of notions of aesthetic figures appearing both in the sensory and in a reasonable world<sup>45</sup>. It is necessary to determine the way in which both of these impulses can appear, considering that the aesthetic impulse never gives rise directly to an action in which the observation can be fully presented, while practical impulse does, but *not always*<sup>46</sup>. Both aesthetic and practical impulse can be realized, but in different ways: practical impulse, although completely autonomous and independent from heteronomous purposes, strives towards the object that man does not recognize as his own work, but as something external and independent from him<sup>47</sup>. With the aesthetic impulse matter is completely different: although not entirely founded on freedom and autonomous principle as practical impulse, it does not aim toward external objects, but towards something that it carries within itself<sup>48</sup>, and not as an object, but as a notion or idea. Therefore, aesthetic and practical impulse should not be observed as separate and unconnected, on the contrary, since they always go together<sup>49</sup>, they should be observed only in correlation with each other. Fichte, however, warns of the danger that any vague pleasure or tendency that could be based empirically or practically, could therefore be confused with *the aesthetic principle*<sup>50</sup>, which is why therein lies an uncertainty regarding the existence of a special impulse which fully specifies and describes what the aesthetic impulse is.

Fichte's thesis that *the beautiful spirit sees everything from the standpoint of beauty* can be connected to Goethe's belief that *the artist observes everything artistically, including everyday life*. Only on the basis of understanding the specific and unbreakable bond between the aesthetic and practical, it is possible to understand how far-reaching is the mentioned thesis, and the extent of the impact that aesthetic principles have on the human life in general. Fichte also finds that artistic life and aesthetic sense make for the necessary preconditions of

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<sup>44</sup> TRAUB. Über die Pflichten des ästhetischen Künstlers, p. 187.

<sup>45</sup> "...sondern durch den praktischen" - FICHTE, J. G. Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie, in: Band I,6: **Werke 1799–1800**, p. 343.

<sup>46</sup> FICHTE. Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie, p. 343.

<sup>47</sup> "Der praktische Trieb geht, wie gesagt wurde, auf einen Gegenstand außer dem Menschen" – FICHTE. Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie, p. 344.

<sup>48</sup> "Er geht auf nichts außer dem Menschen, sondern auf etwas, das lediglich in ihm selbst ist" – FICHTE. Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie, p. 345.

<sup>49</sup> FICHTE. Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie, p. 345.

<sup>50</sup> FICHTE. Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie, pp. 346-347.

true genius<sup>51</sup> and that the idea of genius represents an example of misunderstanding of philosophy and one of the reasons why it happened.

Examining the position of aesthetics in Fichte's early philosophy, Traub claims that Fichte had no intention of establishing scientific approach to aesthetics, that could have an anchor in the architectonics of science of knowledge. In his later philosophy, however, aesthetic art can - as beautiful art - be built into the system of arts and professions, as shown in Fichte's writing *Sittenlehre und Rechtslehre (1812)*<sup>52</sup>. Within detailed investigation of relation between knowledge and freedom in the context of imagination, impulses and the aesthetic taste, Fichte exposes the connection of spirit and taste, which he finds very closely related. Fichte in that way directly links the spirit with the free creativity<sup>53</sup>, defining it as the power of the ideal. It would not be an overstatement to say that Fichte emphasized the creative principle and made a real Copernican turn in understanding aesthetics as a theory of artistic creation. Ives Radrizzani and Claude Piché claim that Fichte conceived the new aesthetics based on the spirit, although not systematically exposed, and precisely because of this that Fichte's differentiation between taste, as a passive process, and mind, as the creative principle, represents a real milestone in the history of aesthetics.

Genuine Fichte's invention in the aesthetics is the idea that original field of aesthetics is not the sensual world - which actually belongs to the domain of necessity – but spiritual world, which falls within the domain of creativity!

The investigation of Fichte's aesthetic treatises, in addition to review of Kant's transcendental aesthetics, sheds light on the field which for most aestheticians remained "hidden in the dark": Fichte's influence on the development and future fate of aesthetics, which inspite its implicit and "invisible" form had highly visible impact. In order to underline even further the strenght of Fichte's influence, one should invoke the name of one of the most prominent figures in the history of aesthetics and poietic philosophy in general - Schelling.

Although Schelling severely criticizes Fichte, claiming that his entire theoretical philosophy is a failure<sup>54</sup>, and although their professional and personal relation is remembered

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<sup>51</sup> FICHTE. Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie, pp. 346-347.

<sup>52</sup> PETROVIĆ, S. Fichte: estetika u funkciji etičkog idealizma. *Ideje*, n. 1/2, 1974, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> FICHTE. Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie, p. 351 – 352.

<sup>54</sup> SCHELLING, F. W. J. Darlegung des wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie zu der verbesserten Fichteschen Lehre. In: Schröter, M. (ed.) *Schellings Werke*. Dritter Hauptband, München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965, p. 595 – 720.

by their strong conflicts<sup>55</sup>, it is important to emphasize the positive influence that undoubtedly existed between them. However, it is Fichte's philosophy that had a key impact on Schelling's philosophy of art, primarily due to the difference between imagination and fantasy, with which Fichte opens the possibility for the future positioning of art above philosophy, even though it was not his intention. Fichte has set speculation *above the philosophy*, whereas Schelling did the same, except that he expresses speculation *as art*, contrary to Hegel's teaching. Fichte's theory of imagination undoubtedly left a significant footprint on future development of philosophy, which contemplative implications go far beyond the boundaries of aesthetic theories<sup>56</sup>.

His influence is primarily related to the Romantics, above all Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, although Fichte in their eyes was never a theoretician of aesthetics, but above all a philosopher, who has indirectly contributed to the development of aesthetics more than many aestheticians have done directly - as of Baumgarten up to Romantic school. Therefore, it is a common view<sup>57</sup> that when aesthetics is concerned, even if Fichte's written opus is negligible, his *influence* on the development of aesthetics is immense<sup>58</sup>!

### 3. *Hegel and Fichte*

Hegel's relation towards Fichte's notions regarding aesthetic can be clarified through three distinct perspectives. The first one examines the relation to the consequences of Kant's aesthetic position, and it indirectly deals with Fichte's role in this development of German idealism. The second one discusses Hegel's critique of Fichte's philosophy in general, from which it is possible to deduce his relationship towards the aesthetic phenomena in his philosophy. The third way examines the rare and sporadic topics in Hegel's philosophical writings which directly reflects on Fichte's aesthetic views.

Hegel's critique of romantic irony as a radicalization of Fichte's teaching on "the I" targets precisely on that teaching: namely, Hegel does not think that romantic irony is a result

<sup>55</sup> Details in: FICHTE, J. G. *Werke 1800 – 1801*, p. 152.

<sup>56</sup> HENRICH, D. *The Science of Knowledge (1794–1795). Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*. Massachusetts - London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 205.

<sup>57</sup> RADRIZZANI, I. Von der Ästhetik der Urteilskraft zur Ästhetik der Einbildungskraft, oder von der kopernikanischen Revolution in der Ästhetik bei Fichte. In: Fuchs, E., Ivaldo, M., Moretto, G. (Eds.). *Der transzendental-philosophische Zugang zur Wirklichkeit*. Stuttgart - Bad Cannstatt: Fromman/Holzboog, 2001, p. 343.

<sup>58</sup> LOHMAN, P. Die Funktionen der Kunst, p. 115.

of *misinterpretation* of Fichte's teaching on "the I", but on the contrary: a necessary *result* of this teaching. In that way, Hegel demonstrates his critique of Fichte's philosophy in general through the interpretation of one seemingly narrow topic.

Admittedly Fichte does not intend his teaching to be aestheticized, so Hegel admits that he is not referring to any kind of poetic perception or feeling<sup>59</sup>, but he does indicate the implications of an extreme intellectual subjectivism that Fichte develops. Instead of radicalization of Fichte's subjectivity<sup>60</sup>, Hegel insists that it is necessary to find an approach that synthesizes ancient *immediacy* with *mediation* that characterizes the modern age. According to Hegel's opinion, Fichte actually shares the ground of *Descartes's* and *Kant's* philosophy<sup>61</sup> when it comes to defining certainty of cognition. On the other hand, Fichte's conception represents a form of an old and improper point of view<sup>62</sup>, which, Hegel claims, in spite of the efforts to define "I" as a synthetic unity of conceptual and real, makes it so by deducing the reality from the fundamental position of "I". Unlike Kant, Fichte does not constitute the categories from logic, but from the I, which Hegel considers as progress, but insufficient one, due to Fichte's founding of the intellectual intuition as a principle of production. Although Fichte starts correctly, Hegel believes, he fails to constitute a consistent conceptual structure of consciousness and reality, but rather "flees" towards the solution of the conceptual "fall" to the instinctive level<sup>63</sup>. It could be concluded that Fichte has to deal with the similar problem as Plato's "third man", only in a slightly different way, because now it is "the third I" in question. The third I is not absolutely pure, nor absolutely empirical, but grows as a middle solution, which simultaneously represents both a creator and its creation.

Fichte's concept of intellectual intuition is nothing more than an instinctive principle, claims Hegel, adding that it remains only a convenient formula to refer to the field in which the consciousness has not yet penetrated. Hegel acknowledges the significance of Fichte's determination of "I" as pure cognitivity, and even adds that Fichte develops *the first true synthetic judgement a priori*<sup>64</sup>. Hegel acknowledges this as a highly important achievement, because it finally demonstrates philosophical principle in the form of comprehended concept.

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<sup>59</sup> DÜSING, K. Der Begriff der Vernunft in Hegels Phänomenologie. In: Köhler, D., Pöggeler O. (eds.), **G.W.F. Hegel: Phänomenologie des Geistes**, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998, p. 162.

<sup>60</sup> PEROVIĆ, M. A. **Početak u filozofiji**. Novi Sad: Izdavačka kuća Vrkatić, 1994, p. 28

<sup>61</sup> PEROVIĆ. **Početak u filozofiji**, p. 69.

<sup>62</sup> PEROVIĆ. **Početak u filozofiji**, p. 70.

<sup>63</sup> PEROVIĆ. **Početak u filozofiji**, p. 71.

<sup>64</sup> PEROVIĆ. **Početak u filozofiji**, p. 69.

However, that in which both Kant and Fichte are wrong, according to Hegel, is their insisting to find a foundation of cognitive principles within something that should not be indirect or mediate, but “must be” immediate and direct<sup>65</sup>. The principle of cognition *can* (or even *must*) be indirect, claims Hegel, rejecting the need for some straightway foundation in order for something to be recognized as a subjective principle. Therefore, we should not be surprised by Hegel's opinion that the fundamental error lies not in the fact that Fichte is too much of an idealistic philosopher, but on the contrary: that he is not idealistic philosopher *enough*, because he does not defend the view of absolute self-consciousness (the pure I), from the standpoint of ordinary empirical self-consciousness (the subjective I) consistently enough<sup>66</sup>!

Hegel realizes that it is not about eliminating or avoiding empirical consciousness, but rather discovering the key way in which empirical consciousness can comprehend consciousness in general<sup>67</sup> – just like, for example, Plato understands that it is not about removing the lower (sensory) part of the soul, but simply not allowing it to take the “reins” of the entire soul.

#### 4. Conclusion

Position of aesthetics and aesthetic phenomena in Fichte's philosophy and Hegel's review of that position represent a significant segment of relation between their concepts of aesthetics in general. Although Fichte has no direct influence within aesthetics as a science, his idea, according to which beauty can refine the soul and direct it to its final determination – to ethical imperative<sup>68</sup>, gets “saved” by Hegel, who manages to preserve the dignity and spiritual essence of the principle of beauty. Hegel, however, did not direct this principle towards the ethical imperative, but to the truth as the content of all forms of absolute spirit<sup>69</sup>. In his first published philosophical work, *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*, Hegel notes that Fichte's understanding of beauty is extraordinary,

<sup>65</sup> More in: ZANTWIJK, T. Weg des Bildungsbegriffs von Fichte zu Hegel. In: Stolzenberg, J., Ulrichs, L-T. (eds.), *Bildung als Kunst; Fichte, Schiller, Humboldt, Nietzsche*, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010, p. 72.

<sup>66</sup> ZANTWIJK. Weg des Bildungsbegriffs von Fichte zu Hegel, p. 70.

<sup>67</sup> PEROVIĆ. Početak u filozofiji, p. 76.

<sup>68</sup> GRILIĆ, D. *Estetika*, Zagreb: Naprijed, 1983 p. 102.

<sup>69</sup> More in: SCHNEIDER, H. Die Logizität des Schönen und der Kunst bei Hegel. In: Schmied-Kowarzik, W., Eidam, H. (eds.), *Anfänge bei Hegel*, Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2008, p. 116.

but inconsistent<sup>70</sup> in terms of his own system, because the idea of beauty is being wrongly included within the idea of the moral law.

Finally, Fichte's philosophy remains significant by the fact that it abolishes the dualism of Kant's philosophy and provides the foundation for Hegel's conception, in which the aesthetic field takes an important position.

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<sup>70</sup> HEGEL, G. W. F. **Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie**, ed. by Karl-Maria Guth. Berlin: Hofenbergl, 2013, p. 90-91.

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