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Reflection from Kant to Fichte through Marx

Vinicius Berlendis de Figueiredo

EDITOR'S NOTE

Translated by Victor Portugal

I

My objective in this paper is to discuss assumptions and implications of the first major interpretation of Fichte's philosophy in Brazil. I am thinking here on the doctoral thesis defended by Rubens Torres Filho at the University of São Paulo (USP) in 1972 and also published as a book in 1975, entitled *O Espírito e a Letra - A Crítica da Imaginação Pura, em Fichte (The Spirit and the Letter - The Critique of Pure Imagination in Fichte)* (São Paulo, Ática, 1975, 272p.).

As preliminary steps to achieve this objective, it is worthwhile examining the interpreter's intentions and subsequently make a few remarks about the intellectual constellation to which the book's writing and its publication belong.

But, before this, let me speak briefly comment on the author himself. Rubens Rodrigues Torres Filho (Botucatu, Brazil, 1942) finished his bachelor in philosophy at the University of São Paulo in 1963. He concluded his doctorate in 1972, under the initial supervision of José A. Giannotti. He was a professor at the Philosophy department of Usp between 1965 and 1994. During this period, he produced much recognized translations of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Nietzsche and Novalis. He was also an essayist and poet (he won the Jabuti Award for poetry with *O voo circunflexo* in the year of 1981). He currently lives in São Paulo.

II

Here, I'll just dwell on the 1975 book *O espírito e a letra*. To identify his purposes, it is worthwhile examining how the interpreter inscribed his research on the imagination in Fichte's philosophy within the framework of the studies on Fichte in the 1960s. Despite the influence that French philosophical historiography had on University of São Paulo's department (I will return to this point later), Rubens' book does not follow Martial Gueroult's studies on Fichte. One could even claim the opposite: although he quotes him in a complimentary manner in a note in the middle of the book (TORRES FILHO, 1975, p. 128), Rubens moves away from the idea, dear to Gueroult, that the thinking of Fichte is understandable only if one takes into account his evolution and refinement¹. Quite on the contrary, Rubens follow Fichte to the letter regarding the coherence of his work, as he puts it, and it is from this point on that we can measure the controversial scope of his interpretation concerning the international state of the art.

It is known how Hegel, in *The Difference of the Philosophical Systems of Fichte and Schelling* (1801), characterizes Fichte's position as that of the subjective idealist based on the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794). One of the responses to this was to defend that, with the evolution of his thought, Fichte would have revised the point of view defended in 1794 and replaced the absolute self by the *absolute Wissen* as the principle of his system. The other response to Hegel ("more comprehensive", as Rubens puts it²) went on to show that the exhibition of 1794 had a simple propaedeutic and preparatory function in relation to the Doctrine of Science itself, whose well-finished exhibition corresponded to the 1804 version. This is the interpretation defended by Reinhard Lauth, who produced a real inflection in the studies on Fichte³. One can see that, by sticking to Fichte's statements about the continuity of his work from 1794 to 1801, Rubens engaged in polemical debate not only with M. Gueroult, but also with R. Lauth and, indirectly, A. Philonenko. And, besides them, by reintegrating the *Grundlage* of 1794 into the whole *corpus*, he took Fichte's party against Hegel's reading, as is clear in this step:

Neither provisional as a doctrine of science, nor definitive as the foundation of a doctrine of future science, this text [VBF: the *Grundlage*] then conserves its enigmatic nature. And there's no choice but to try to understand by one self, without wanting to find its key away from it, even if that leads to not taking into account his Hegelian image – which might well be more illuminating regarding the thought and the genius of the reader than about the originality of the text. ⁴

A strong thesis, therefore, that sought to measure itself with that which was the best in the contemporary international debate on Fichte. In my opinion, this boldness was only possible because Rubens Torres Filho took advantage of the internal debate that animated the Department of Philosophy of the University of São Paulo, which, in the 60s, consolidated itself as a center of seriousness and rigor in philosophical researches, against the style of bacharelesque philosophy which until 1950 enjoyed hegemony in the country. Let's see, then, in its general lines, which were the main interpretative lines working at the end of the 50s and in the course of the 60s, when Rubens did practically all of his *Bildung*.

III

The one who most dedicated himself to this was Paulo Arantes, he himself being a contemporary of Rubens and the author of an important book on Hegel, his doctoral thesis of 1975, published in 1981⁵. Reviewing the trajectory of the Department from the 30s until the 60s, Paulo Arantes insists on the importance that the French mission, composed by professors such as Jean Maugué, Lévi- Strauss, Gilles Gaston Granger, Michel Debrun and Gérard Lebrun⁶, played among Brazilian teachers and students. Differences aside, the presence of these professors consolidated the professionalization of philosophy as academic knowledge, dealing with philosophical works with a less ideologically biased attitude, which claimed to return to the texts and their "internal truth". The backbone of this novelty was the structural method, practiced by French historiography and presented by Victor Goldschmidt in a sort of methodological summary translated in Brazil in 1963 by Oswaldo Porchat⁷, who was then one of the prominent professors.

As Paulo Arantes rightly points out, the structural method, by making from "the reading of classics the only way of learning to philosophize", was, in truth, "an institutional adaptation of the remote Kantian maxim that it is not possible to teach philosophy, but only to philosophy. According to P. Arantes, by excluding from the list of explanations in the text the analysis of the elements belonging to the "historical time", the structural method became an "effort of internal understanding [...] that turns its back to the raw material of social experience"⁸. But, assuming the Kantian point of view, one might wonder if debugging the philosophical teaching of the doxographic bias ("Plato said this, Aristotle, that", etc.) implies turning one's back to the social reality. The original Kantian intention was the opposite: to achieve neutrality in relation to the dogmas of the philosophies of the past was, according to Kant, the condition for thinking freely and thus for standing in the world with autonomy. To verify the importance that this had in Kant's eyes, one has only to remember the physical geography and anthropology courses that he gave throughout his teaching career. This link between free reflection and practical positioning, incidentally, remained alive in German culture, at least until Fichte.

Whether or not this pedagogical ideal took place during this period is another story. It is certain that the realization of this correlation is not automatic. In France, for example, it consolidated itself throughout the Third Republic (1870-1940), accompanying a certain pedagogical ideal that attributed to philosophy an *aufgeklärt* role. One can see, as an illustration, the tribute made by M. Gueroult, back in 1963, for Xavier Léon in the "French Society of Philosophy":

Il incarnait dans sa plus grande pureté l'idéal républicain de l'époque, idéal d'une communauté de citoyens libres, s'éduquant les uns les autres dans l'exercice de la liberté, travaillant d'une même âme à l'accroissement et à la diffusion de la science, idéal optimiste de progrès et de vertu dont il croyait avoir trouvé le modèle dans son auteur préféré.⁹

It is easy to imagine why the implementation of the structural method taken from France in São Paulo was, at the least, peculiar. Brazilian politics in the 60s had everything but republicanism and liberal ideas. It should be added to this the fact that the national academic environment was incipient, reducing itself to a few irradiation centers in an essentially illiterate country. The "community of free citizens educating each other for the exercise of liberty", which, in the France of M. Gueroult, ensured the

linkage between free thinking and well-reflected world positioning, was the social presupposition of the Kantian maxim that we missed here.

IV

How can the recollection of this context (here, very badly drawn) assist to read Rubens' book on Fichte? I see two points following from this.

1 Let's take in consideration the remark of Paulo Arantes, when he says that the adoption of the structural method in Brazil has professionalized philosophy, but at the price of distancing the philosophical studies of Brazilian intellectual and political life. It should be noted that the need to be limited to the internal structure of the text has not been passively accepted. The most widely held examination suggests the opposite: there were many of theoretical choices which, although not abandoning the structural reading of the texts, clearly set out to overcome them. This purpose is central to Rubens' book on Fichte and is evident already in his title: the *spirit* and the *letter*. Starting from the statement made by Fichte in the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794, according to which "the doctrine of science is such that it cannot be communicated in the letter but only in the spirit"¹⁰, Rubens puts forward the idea that the work of Fichte requires the transgression of the structural reading, at least in its current meaning:

Anyone who wanted to study the system only in its objectivity, solely in its textual reality, without considering the status that Fichte confers to such objectivity, would risk joining, under his criticism, those who read literally these sad and dangerous 'lyricists' (*Buchstaber*) that he complains about so asperously. (...) this would happen not because the Fichtean text does not lend itself or refuses itself to a structural-type of analysis, but because this structural analysis would be insufficient as such. It would leave aside a piece of data from the structure that is being examined, namely the fact that this structure gives an account of the relationship between literality and that which necessarily goes beyond it. To be complete, this analysis does not have the right to forget this. On the contrary, it should be able to explain why such a structure would be refractory **to an explanation according to the order of reasons**. It should therefore explain this agility of a text which, because of the operability of certain concepts, which are at stake, **could become inaccessible to purely textual analysis** (my emphasis)¹¹.

In this way, by relativizing the "explanation according to the order of reasons", Rubens attenuated what, according to Paulo Arantes, was implied by the structuralist method, especially the creation of a "historical vacuum around philosophical discourse, whose autonomy should be preserved".¹² However, in which direction does the overcoming of the internal order demanded by Rubens in his interpretation of Fichte point? In the direction of the author's "truth": Fichte himself conceived his work as inseparable from the bias mobilized by each of his listeners or readers. Thus, Rubens ensures that the resumption of the text by the transcendental imagination of its recipient is the condition *sine qua non* for the understanding of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In Fichte's words, the fundamental ideas of the doctrine of science "must be produced in all those who study it by the creative imagination itself, as it could not fail to be in a science that goes to the last foundations of human knowledge, since all the operation of the human spirit starts from the imagination, and imagination can only be captured by the imagination"¹³. Conclusion: Even though it lacks any thematic scope¹⁴, pure imagination proves to be the indispensable condition for exploring the themes raised by it.

2 We have now an indication – although a negative one – regarding how Rubens' book about pure imagination in the *Wissenschaftslehre* interpreted the debate under way at

University of São Paulo in the 1960s: at least as far as Fichte is concerned, if one only worries with "purely textual analysis", it would mean understanding him wrongfully. But which place does this conclusion reserve for philosophical activity in general? At this point, a footnote in the first chapter of *O Espírito e a Letra* provides a good clue. The context in which it is registered is that of Fichte's debt with Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), in particular with the concept of "Reflection", as it appears in the *Erste Einleitung*. In fifth part of this text, reflection is presented by Kant as a condition for the formation of concepts in general, which gives him the forefront in relation to formal logic. We are therefore faced with the prerogatives of reflection; to qualify it, Rubens, in the footnote to which I was referring a moment ago, directs the reader to the interpretation made by Gérard Lebrun in his *doctorat d'Etat*, defended in 1970 and published in the following year, *Kant et la fin de la métaphysique*¹⁵. In this book Lebrun defends that, with the 3rd *Critique*, Kant makes reflection the method of philosophy itself. Therefore, because "properly speaking, there is no jurisdiction (*Gebiet*) in relation to objects"¹⁶, the *Critique of Judgment* was capable of considering the unity between freedom and nature. This would be the core of philosophical activity, understood as a reflective exercise that, taken up and deepened by Fichte, will be built as a "fundamental unit [of transcendental philosophy], from which the sensitive world and the suprasensible world are differentiated"¹⁷. The conclusion that Rubens draws from this is twofold. In Fichte's plan of exegesis, he concludes that there has been a "system" since the *Grundlage* of 1794 - but "system" understood with a specific and unprecedented meaning, since the "knowledge" made possible by the *Wissenschaftslehre* no longer relates to any objective region. If, as stated in the 3rd *Critique*, philosophy corresponds to practicing "a-doctrinal"¹⁸ reflection, then Rubens concludes, "the interest of the study by Fichte cannot be exactly in the themes he exploits. It is in that which his philosophy intends, explicitly, to be constituted in a discourse that says absolutely nothing, in a non-thematic science *par excellence*." It is therefore a non-figurative philosophy¹⁹ which is definitely breaking with the meshes of Representation.

V

It is not difficult to discern these elements from the archeology of the human sciences carried out in *Les mots et les choses* (1966) - and it is worthwhile to remember that M. Foucault was in São Paulo in 1965, in order to "check" with Lebrun the reading of Kant he was going to propose in the famous Chapter IX on the empirical-transcendental double. The presence of the Foucaultian interpretative scheme in Rubens' book, which closely followed Lebrun's courses, is unequivocal - as attested, among others, by this passage from Chapter III:

if language leaves the sensible world intact, it is not because it has the task of describing it and producing it, as it is the case in representation, limited to redoubling it in image, but because it is used solely as means for guiding to a community that is beyond it. [VBF: that is where the issue of the communicability of philosophy and, by extension, of public opinion as formulated by Illustration and interpreted by Fichte is concerned]. From the beginning, when man sets himself to imitate the world's sounds or to trace figures in the sand, what he 'speaks' is not the language of representation, but that of expression. Its goal is not to constitute a classifying framework that would contain the signs of all things; emitting signs means making known to the other that he *designates* his thoughts or *expresses* the lion.²⁰

The expressive nature of language, then, brings to the foreground the metaphorical nature of the discourse; and this, in its turn, reaffirms the central role of transcendental imagination, not only for the Fichte's philosophy, but also for a more global understanding of philosophy as an essentially non-theoretical activity - in the ordinary sense of theory, understood as an objective and impartial discourse about the world. And that is because "communication is not made in the signs, but through them, and every language, as the transition from the intelligible to sensible, operates only through metaphors"²¹.

The approximation of Ruben's interpretation on the role of the transcendental imagination in Fichte stands out with M. Foucault's investigations on the status of philosophy. After the crisis of representation and after the critique to an unreflected objectivity, ignorant of its presuppositions, philosophy, aware of its metaphorical character, approximates itself to poetry and literature. This approximation, in its turn, inscribes this interpretation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* on a highly discernible and active interpretative line during the 60s in the Department of Philosophy of the University of São Paulo, which, as mentioned above, was led by Lebrun, who was consulted by Foucault on the preparation of the chapter on Kant in *Les mots et les choses*.

But would that be all — a Fichte which reminds us, back to the early 1970s, that philosophy is a knowledge about nothing, a purely critical exercise? This would certainly align Rubens Torres Filho with the refusal that Lévi-Strauss, L. Althusser, M. Foucault and others made of the domain of *Erlebnis*, over which many philosophers had erected their systems since the 30s. And this would be no small accomplishment. After all, it is not so common for a Brazilian monographic work to show such perfect harmony with the French intellectual life, where during the 60s Foucault took the place of Sartre as *maître à penser*. But, by way of conclusion, it is worth at least highlighting the proximity of the research by Rubens Torres Filho to two other interpretative lines present in USP's philosophy department, which is worth briefly mentioning.

First, it is worth recalling the investigations that Bento Prado Jr. (he also being a professor of Rubens) had begun to carry out on the status of language in Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Like Ruben Torres Filhos' Fichte, the Rousseau of Bento Prado Jr. emphasizes the metaphorical and creative character of language²², against what postulate the proponents of grammar's utopia, which dismiss the discourse from each and every particular determination, as if words immediately represented things. Rubens Torres Filhos' interpretation of the *Von der Sprachfähigkeit und dem Ursprunge der Sprache* (1795) recovers this same critical theme.

But, perhaps more less evident, but no less important than the dialogue with M. Foucault, G. Lebrun and Bento Prado Jr., is the debate that Rubens Torres Filhos' book establishes with the investigations that had been carried out by his professor and first supervisor, José A. Giannotti. At that time, more precisely in 1965, Giannotti had already defended his "Habilitation's Thesis" about the philosophy of the young Marx, entitled *Origens da dialética do trabalho*²³. In the Book's acknowledgments, Rubens Torres Filho is mentioned — and I heard from Giannotti himself that, besides frequent conversations, Rubens, his student at the time, typed up significant parts of the book at his request. In order to understand what could have been this interlocution, it is worth remembering the year of 1968.

In 1968, effectively, Giannotti published his famous article which would become very important for Marxist studies in Brazil "Contra Althusser"²⁴, in which he refuted the *epistemological cleavage* proposed by the French philosopher. In the same year, Giannotti

also published his translation of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, by Wittgenstein (São Paulo, Ed. Nacional) - which is cited right at the beginning of Rubens Torres Filho's book about the problem of expression in Fichte - a point that, as one can guess, has become decisive for an understanding of the relations between the letter and the spirit in Fichtean thinking, as presented by the interpreter²⁵. The question that I am interested in asking could be put in this way: what relationship could exist between Giannotti's Marx and the Transcendental Imagination of the Fichtean philosophy, as Rubens understands it? In other words, how does the reflection followed its course in that moment of debate in São Paulo, from Marx to Fichte, going through Kant?

VI

If I am not wrong, it was Giannotti who introduced the term "*reflexionante*" (the German "*reflektierend*") in the Brazilian philosophical lexicon, in the thesis defended in 1965 about the young Marx²⁶. The main ideas of this book were mobilized in 1968 in the polemic against Althusser — he who, as we know, introduced the notion of a "theoretical practice" and, from it, instituted a separation between the orders of concept and of reality. The intention was to make it possible for this "theoretical practice" to take forward the knowledge of reality without interfering with the studied reality. Nevertheless, objects Giannotti, the mirroring of reality by the abstract reality "only becomes possible because a categorical constitution process occurs in reality itself, that is opposed to the becoming of the phenomenon"; the essence of the capitalist way of production and of the kind of social relationship associated with it, as Giannotti had championed, is set up by this dialectic between discourse and reality. There lies the open opposition to Althusser:

The essence is part of each moment of the concrete, without, however, exhausting its dimensions, in a manner that the discourse would only become scientific when it reproduced the order of this ontological constitution²⁷.

To paraphrase the text, a genuinely scientific discourse does not close itself or, at least, it can only do justice to its cognitive pretension if it accompanies the movement of the objects it intends to know in its categorical constitution. Thus, social science cannot remain outside its object in its non-closure; on the contrary, the discourse is inseparable from the representations' historicity and that which is found in its basis - the exchange operations, the processes by which "concrete men [...] transform certain objects into the expression of others, inserting them into an eminently social context."²⁸

A similar understanding of social processes is taken up by Rubens in his approach to Fichte - and this point, as far as the relationship between the spirit and the letter is concerned, is essential to his interpretation. When commenting Fichte's warning, according to which the determination of each proposition of his philosophy should be explained only from the context and by acquiring a global vision (*Übersicht*) of the whole, Rubens states:

(...) this primacy of the spirit and this insufficiency of the letter, apparently suitable for minimizing the role of the exhibition, ultimately exacerbate the importance of the letter: it is necessary to follow it carefully, not to interrupt it at any moment in the name of a disclosure of the content, not to compete with any of its isolated formulas, taking it as a key, since all of the text, in its tense fabric, works to attain the spirit, absent in principle, but which could not be otherwise. The

communication, through a systematic construction of something that is beyond all figuration, which is in life and not in image, demands this patient mediation work.²⁹ Such inseparability between the spirit and the letter, which only reinforces the function of mediating accomplished by the imagination, aligns Rubens Torres Filho's Fichte with Giannotti's controversy against Althusser, insofar as Giannotti and Rubens defend, each through its author, that all knowledge worthy of this name is *dialectic knowledge* - that is (in Fichtean terms), a knowledge resulting from *the inscription of the spirit in the letter and its exposition in the latter*. This departure to materiality is always mediated by linguistic relations which, in the interior of determined social practices, secure the communicability of its expressed contents. Hence the reason why, for us to concentrate ourselves on Rubens Torres Filho's Fichte, the letter has to be repeatedly read and animated by the consciousness of each reader of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. It is as a result of this point that the spirit can only be seized by the way in which it is presented (*Darstellungsweise*) in the text that one has in his hands. If the spirit or the letter is absent, the understanding becomes impossible. Thus, "conceiving" is equivalent to "composing", and conception and composing make up a single operation, made possible by transcendental imagination. In order to reassess Giannotti's text against Althusser, that is apparently what he had in mind when he said that, from German idealism to Marx, the Discourse is positional.

It is not the time to go further on these approximations, whose examination would also demand inspecting the differences between these perspectives. Since the pair spirit/letter is interchangeable with the opposition between *form* and *matter*, it is even more tempting to approximate, through this approach the fichtean reflection hailed by Rubens Torres Filho and the dialectical materialism pursued by Giannotti. But one could also not ignore that Rubens Torres Filho's approximation to the domain in which moved M. Foucault and G. Lebrun produced a certain departure with that which, in Giannotti's perspective, would take him to the project of bringing forth an ontology of the social grounded in the reflective character of the work. Let us, for the time being, stay with these preliminary remarks about a local debate concerning the meaning and scope of Reflection - a debate of which, as I hope I have pointed out, Rubens' book on Fichte constituted a relevant moment which is worth being revisited.

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NOTES

1. Cf. M. Guérout, *L'Évolution et la Structure de la Doctrine de la Science chez Fichte*. Strasbourg: Belles Lettres, 1930. 2 vol.
2. R. R. Torres Filho, *O Espírito e a Letra - A crítica da imaginação pura em Fichte*. São Paulo: Ática, 1975, p. 129.
3. R. Lauth, "J. G. Fichtes Gesamtidee der Philosophie", in: *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* (t. 71) e *Zur Idee der Transzendental-Philosophie*. Anton Puslet, München / Salzburg, 1965.
4. R. R. Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op. cit., p. 130.
5. P. Arantes, *Hegel e a ordem do tempo*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1981; and, from the same author, *Um departamento francês do ultramar*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1994.
6. G. Lebrun arrived in Brazil in 1963. Even I had in 1984 my own french professor in the first bachelor year at the University of São Paulo, Francis Wolff, and had the privilege of following the courses of G. Lebrun during the 80's.
7. Victor Goldschmidt, "Tempo histórico e tempo lógico na interpretação dos sistemas filosóficos", in: *A religião de Platão*. (Trad. O. Porchat). São Paulo: DIFEL, <1963> Second ed. 1970, pp. 139-147.
8. P. Arantes, *Um departamento*, op. cit., p. 17.
9. M. Guerout, "La Wissenschaftslehre comme système nécessaire de la liberté", in: *Études sur Fichte*. Hildesheim/New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974, pp. 1-15, p. 1.
10. J. G. Fichte, WL 1794, SW, I, 284 apud: Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op.cit., p. 131.
11. R. R. Torres Filho, *O Espírito e a Letra*, op. cit., p. 132.
12. P. Arantes, *Um departamento*, op. cit., p. 19.
13. J. G. Fichte, S.W. I, 285; cited in: R. Torres Filho, "A Filha Natural em Berlim", in: *Ensaio de filosofia ilustrada*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987, pp. 102-123, p. 117.
14. It consists in the examination of the role of imagination in Fichte - even though it is known that "there is not even a history about the theme of imagination in philosophy" (R. R. Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op. cit., p. 12).
15. G. Lebrun, *Kant et la fin de la métaphysique*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1971.
16. I. Kant, *KdU*, XX, apud: R. Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op. cit., p. 34.
17. R. Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op. cit., p. 35.

18. G. Lebrun, *Kant e o fim da metafísica*, op. cit., p. 386.
19. R. Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op. cit., p. 250.
20. R. Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op. cit., p. 152.
21. R. Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op. cit., p. 153.
22. The result of those researches, which date back to the 60s, are exposed in Prado Jr., “A força da voz e a violência das coisas” (The force of voice and the violence of things), essay which presents the translation of J.-J. Rousseau, *Ensaio sobre a origem das línguas* [Essay on the Origin of Languages]. Campinas: Unicamp, 1988; see from the same author, *A Retórica de Rousseau e outros Ensaíos* (Rousseau’s Rhetorics and other essays). São Paulo: Cosacnaif, 2006 and also E. Falabretti, “A Linguística de Rousseau: a estrutura aberta e a potência da linguagem” (Rousseau’s linguistics: the open structure and the potency of language), in: *Analytica*, Rio de Janeiro, Vol 15, no 2 (2011) pp. 147-198.
23. José A. Giannotti, *Origens da dialética do trabalho*. São Paulo: DIFEL, 1966.
24. J. A. Giannotti, “Contra Althusser”, in: *Teoria e prática*, no 3, 1968; reissued in: J. A. Giannotti, *Exercícios de filosofia*. São Paulo: Brasiliense/CEBRAP, 1975, pp. 85-102 (edition referred to here).
25. If these circumstances were not enough to justify the suspicion that there was indeed a contamination of Rubens' research by Giannotti's work, there is also textual evidence, even though it is not, as one might expect, the Marxist investigations of Giannotti, but the translation of the *Tractatus*, by Wittgenstein, done by Giannotti in 1968 (Ed. Nacional). The step concerns the question of expression, in Fichte - or rather, the status of that which *one can not express*, understood by Fichte as "the law of expression: the matrix of meaning, which generates the meaning, but which for that very reason can never become a meaning. Here, Wittgenstein's paradox of 4,121 (sic) denounces but, at the same time, flies through homonym: 'What is expressed in language we cannot express with language' - it is reactivated when one takes the first 'express' in its radicality, with the exposure (*darsellen*) of an exhibition of the doctrine of science, but the second expression, referred to what we can say, has to be summoned to the service of the former' (R.R. Torres Filho, *O espírito e a letra*, op. cit. p. 20).
26. José A. Giannotti, *Origens da dialética do trabalho*. São Paulo: DIFEL, 1966.
27. J. A. Giannotti, “Contra Althusser”, op. cit., p. 90.
28. J. A. Giannotti, “Contra Althusser”, op. cit., p. 95.
29. R. Torres Filho, *O Espírito e a Letra*, op. cit., p. 135.

ABSTRACTS

My objective in this article is to discuss the interpretation on Fichte proposed by Rubens Torres Filho in his doctoral thesis, entitled *O Espírito e a Letra* (*The Spirit and the Letter*) (1975), in which the author took a different stance from those taken by M. Gueroult, R. Lauth and A. Philonenko. I attempt to reconstruct the intellectual constellation in which Rubens Torres Filho's reading was carried out, pointing to its debt with the ongoing debate at the University of São Paulo in the 60s, concerning Gérard Lebrun, José A. Giannotti and Bento Prado Jr.

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Keywords: Rubens Torres Filho, Wissenschaftslehre, Reflection, Transcendental Imagination, Fichte

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