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FICHTE'S WORLD-VIEW AS EXPRESSED IN HIS PHILOSOPHICAL, EDUCATIONAL AND POLITICAL WRITINGS

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ABSTRACT

The idealist philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte's concept of state and nation was derived from the intellectual well-spring of his philosophical system, the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte's intellectual evolution reflected the contemporary tumult of European civilization.

Fichte's basis for an interest in social and political organisms was an irrepressible belief in the individual's 'striving' toward the ultimate human goal of an absolute moral freedom. Influenced by Kant and Rousseau, Fichte developed a unique vision of the state and society. Fichte drew upon aspects of his theological concepts, educational theories and life-experiences to produce a holistic approach to individual self-formation (*Bildung*). The role of the state in controlling the mechanisms for individual *Bildung* changed considerably over his career.

Despite a renewed interest in Fichte's philosophy, English-language scholarship has largely neglected his contributions to German political thought. This thesis traces the development of Fichte's social and political thought through his philosophical, educational and political writings.

RESUME

Dans la *Wissenschaftslehre*, Johann Gottlieb Fichte proposa une définition spécifique de l'Etat et de la nation. L'évolution intellectuelle de Fichte reflèta les crises qui secouèrent la civilization Européenne

L'intérêt qu'il porta à la liberté morale de l'individu détermina ses conceptions sociaux et politiques. Influencé par Kant et Rousseau, Fichte développa une vision particulière de l'Etat et la société. A partir de ses principes théologiques, pédagogiques et de son propre vécu, il proposa un idéal de developpement individuel. Le role de l'Etat dans ce processus évolua au long de sa carrière.

Malgré l'intérêt que suscite la philosophie de Fichte, les études de langue anglaise ont largement négligée sa contribution à la pensée politique allemande. Cette thèse s'intéresse à l'évolution de sa pensée sociale et politique à partir d'une analyse de ses écrits philosophiques, pédagogiques et politiques.

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It will come as no surprise to those who know me that my list of acknowledgements is very long.

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R.E.B.C.
Montréal, 1996

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[...]un Etat qui n'existe pas, qui n'a peut-être point existé, qui probablement n'existera jamais.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Perhaps we should simply say that up till now man has distorted every idea by his all too human actions, and that this is not the fault of the idea but of man himself; just as he has misused the Christian religion of charity for the most horrible persecutions, the careful cultivation of national characteristics degenerated into a murderous undertaking.

Hajo Holborn

INTRODUCTION

As Fichte began the first lecture of his metahistorical treatise, *The Characteristics of the Present Age,* he pointed out the futility of attempting to express abstract concepts as clearly as they appeared in one's mind. Instead, he preferred the lengthy task of breaking up a single, fundamental idea into its constituent parts and leaving the audience with the duty of distilling its unifying message. It was for this reason that Fichte requested that his audience

> ...at the outset not to be surprised if our subject does not at first manifest that clearness which, according to the laws of all communication of thought, it can acquire only through subsequent development; and I must entreat you to look for perfect light only at our conclusion, when a complete survey of the whole shall have become possible.[1]

This was as much a frank admission by Fichte of his own limitations as a communicator as it was an instructive pedagogical device.[2] By the time Fichte

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[1]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Characteristics of the Present Age," trans. by William Smith. *Significant Contributions to the History of Psychology, 1795-1920,* edited and with pref. by Daniel B. Robinson (Washington, 1977), pp. 1-2.

[2]Fichte admitted as much when he confided to Reinhold that "Nature has compensated me for my lack of precision by giving me a multiplicity of perspectives and a fairly agile mind." Fichte to Reinhold, 2 July 1795. Breazeale, ed. *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* (Ithaca, 1988), p. 34.

had written this series of lectures between 1804 and 1805, he had come to realize that his works were commonly misunderstood and criticized. His revolutionary sympathies often undermined the scholarly reception of his work, and his detractors were often influenced by their own political prejudices. However, political controversy could not account completely for the misapprehension which surrounded Fichte's system in the years following his appointment to the University of Jena in 1794. One major handicap was his turgid writing style, which often involved bloated phraseology.[3] Fichte had a tendency to write books which were inaccessible to all but the most astute philosophers of the day. Even his critics often could not fully understand his meaning. Ironically, it was in the privacy of personal correspondence that Fichte could express his ideas most succinctly.[4]

Fichte knew that the 'perfect light' of his thoughts would only be recognized by a few individuals who had taken the time to evaluate his entire life's work. Fichte believed this when he wrote in 1798: "That from which the *Wissenschaftslehre* proceeds can neither be grasped through concepts nor communicated thereby: it can only be directly intuited."[5] Only those who were willing to follow a presumption of God as the Absolute Ego governing the world could fully benefit from the conclusions drawn by the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte did not shrink from admitting that his converts would have to give something of

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[3]Peter Preuss, translator of *The Vocation of Man*, writes that "For the rest of his career, Fichte wrote both in technical professional language and in popular plain language, but he was never satisfied that he had finally made himself understood." Peter Preuss, Translator's Introduction, *The Vocation of Man* (Indianapolis, 1987), xiii.

[4]This is an opinion of the author based on a comparative analysis of his personal correspondence and his published writings. Daniel Breazeale holds a similar opinion, as his translation of Fichte's letters will attest. Daniel Breazeale, "Editor's Introduction: Fichte in Jena," *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* (Ithaca, 1988), pp. 1-45.

[5]Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World," in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis, 1994), pp. 145-46.

themselves to clearly see his point of view.[6] Only a sympathetic eye, scanning the entire corpus of Fichte's works could hope to fully understand him.

Fichte, who always preferred the lectern to the pen when expressing his ideas, found it difficult over a number of attempts to portray the *Wissenschaftslehre*, his chief philosophical work, in the clearest possible light. As one analyzes Fichte's attempts to propound his philosophical system, it is apparent that it became increasingly difficult for him to accomplish this task. The responsibilities which followed Fichte's appointment to the Chair of Philosophy at Jena restricted his time to thoroughly expound his system. Many of his personal letters attest to his general state of business.[7] By the time he had become settled in Jena, however, academic demands pressured Fichte to come out with a preliminary treatise on his subject. His newly-established reputation, both as the author of the well-received *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*, sponsored by Kant, and as the successor to Karl Leonard Reinhold's Kantian legacy at Jena, demanded that he expound his system. Unfortunately, the time constraints of his teaching position prevented a thoroughgoing account. For a number of other external reasons, it remained difficult for Fichte to attend to his primary ambition of producing the definitive work of his philosophical system.[8] At this time, however, it also became clear that Fichte himself was probably having doubts as to the viability of his enormous project. In a draft letter to a contemporary, Fichte declared "I am becoming more and more convinced that it

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[6]Fichte reiterated this point when he wrote in personal correspondence that "No one will grasp this philosophy merely by studying the dead letter; instead one has to produce it out of oneself in accordance with some inner exigency." *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* "Section X: Selected Correspondence," p. 416. Peter Preuss takes note of this when he discusses the necessary "inner contribution by the reader" to understand the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Peter Preuss, Translator's Introduction, *The Vocation of Man*, ix.

[7]Primarily his letters to Reinhold disclose his personal day-to-day frustrations. Breazeale, ed., *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* , pp. 375-78, 380-85, 387-92, 397-404..

[8]Not the least of these external pressures were the numerous controversies Fichte found himself involved in at the university, the last of which forced his resignation from his position.

will require half a lifetime to elaborate the *Wissenschaftslehre*- and a lifetime free of worry and work at that".[9] Indeed, in 1794, the year of the publication of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte admitted that "it will be years before I can promise to be able to lay this system before the public in a worthy form,"[10] and when discussing the *Wissenschaftslehre* a year later he remarked: "(A)s I see it, the presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* will require by itself an entire lifetime."[11]

In the end, the *Wissenschaftslehre* was expressed, in varying stages of development, no fewer than sixteen times.[12] As Daniel Breazeale points out, these versions differed considerably in "format, structure, and vocabulary from all of those that preceded and followed".[13] This casts doubt on whether given all the time needed, Fichte would ever have finished this project to his critics' or his own satisfaction.[14] It was supremely difficult for Fichte to realize his most

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[9]"Draft of a Letter to Jens Baggesen, April or May 1795," *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 385.

[10]Editor's Introduction, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, Daniel Breazeale ed. (Indianapolis, 1994), xix. (The quotation is to be found in the preface to the first edition of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*).

[11]"Letter to Karl Leonard Reinhold, July 2, 1795," in *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, pp. 397-404.

[12]Daniel Breazeale, Editor's Introduction, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, ix.

[13] *Ibid.* Breazeale's long list of published Fichte translations include the *Wissenschaftslehre (novo methodo)*, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and other Writings*, *Fichte: Early Philsophical Writings* (which includes numerous private letters to his colleagues and opponents), as well as numerous articles on Fichte.

[14]"My philosophy should be expounded in an infinite number of different ways. Everyone will have a different way of thinking it - and each person must think of it in a different way, in order to think of it at all." Fichte to Reinhold, 21 March 1797. Passages such as the one above fuel arguments by some that Fichte's numerous *Wissenschaftslehre* productions were more a pedagogical novelty designed to convert a greater cross-section of the public. While this may have been Fichte's wish, it was an impossible undertaking when taken to its logical conclusion. It does, however, support the notion that his treatments, when taken as a whole, produce a more coherent system than when taken in individual parts. Breazeale, ed. *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 417.

passionate aspiration. Not surprisingly, this fact has not been lost on scholars assessing Fichte's philosophy.[15]

Fichte's lectures and writings when analyzed separately cannot, therefore, convey an accurate image of his philosophy. Fichte's insight into his own foibles is instructive to those who wish to glean a genuine understanding of his philosophy. Furthermore, a general approach to his writings will reveal a political relevance in even his most abstract philosophical writings. Inspired by the Kantian framework, Fichte developed a dynamic ethical idealism which reflected his own political sympathies and personal character as well as his intellectual acumen. Fichte's social and political thought should therefore be regarded as a logical development of his philosophy. Despite this, Fichte the political theoretician has been largely ignored as a subject worthy of independent analysis.

Given Fichte's inability of expositing the final, 'unifying' system of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, one is surprised by the seeming lucidity of the *Addresses to the German Nation* and their conspicuous development in the years leading up to the Napoleonic Wars. At many times, Fichte's writings had strong political overtones; certainly almost all of his philosophy had political repercussions

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[15]Daniel Breazeale is a strong advocate of this position and states this most charitably when he writes that the *Wissenschaftslehre* "does not refer to any particular stage or presentation of Fichte's philosophy, and still less to any particular book; it refers instead to Fichte's overall system, to the general orientation of his thinking in the broadest and most encompassing sense." Breazeale, Editor's Introduction, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, ix. Many other scholars who have assessed other aspects of the Fichtean system lend credence to these comments. J.A. Leighton, when discussing Fichte's idea of God, wrote "Fichte has given us no systematic exposition of his doctrine of God. What he said at different times, and in a fragmentary fashion, must be pieced together. When the different expressions of his views are brought into connection with one another, it will be seen that they form a consistent unity." Leighton, "Fichte's Conception of God," *The Philosophical Review* (4: 1895), p. 151. Robert Adamson concurred in one of the earliest English-language biographies of Fichte when he, while claiming Fichte's great accomplishments, stated that "Fichte's work as a philosopher was never, even for himself, a finished whole, and the permanent results of his activity have been absorbed...[by]...the philosophy of Hegel." The lack of unity in Fichte's work seems to have demoted his importance in the mind of Adamson, a conclusion which would be contested by many other scholars, such as Breazeale. Adamson, *Fichte* (Edinburgh, 1881), pp. 5-8, 214-15.

which were either deliberate or inescapably related to issues of his day. However clear and unequivocal the *Addresses* might seem, it was by no means the final statement of Fichte's attitudes towards German nationalism or world history.

For Fichte, nationalism did not preclude cosmopolitanism. He regarded the nation as an essential component of an international world-order which postulated the freedom of the individual. The state was an outgrowth of the nation and facilitated the individual's development. When the author refers to Fichte's nationalism and cosmopolitanism in a mutual relationship, a contradiction is not implied and does not, necessarily, exist.

As much as God could not be fathomed by finite minds, so too Fichte's thoughts could not be adequately expressed by the image of his words on paper. Given Fichte's inability to precisely expound his general philosophy succinctly, how does this colour one's perception of the *Addresses to the German Nation* as his political testament? Was it the exception to an all-too-obvious rule that he could not clarify his thoughts? Or is it merely another example of Fichte's indefatigable keenness to engage a subject tangentially, on many occasions, so as to paint a portrait of his ideas in small sections?

Fichte's exaltation of "acting" upon the environment, so prevalent in his philosophy, lent itself to contemporary crisis. The *Addresses* were the ideal historical event of Fichte's life in which the *Wissenschaftslehre* could manifest itself.

Fichte's political thought has not elicited as much scholarly interest as his general philosophical works. Undoubtedly, most scholars who write about Fichte's philosophy include the political aspects of his general theories; rarely, however, are the political themes given their due attention. This has resulted in

a relative paucity in English-language scholarship on Fichte's nationalism, which leaves a gap in the historiography of German nationalism in general.

Scholars not fully versed in Fichte's works have come to the premature conclusion that works such as the *Addresses* are self-contained meditations that can be assessed in isolation of his other writings.[16] The flamboyance of such an epic work belies the mitigation of many of its contentious points in other works written before and after the *Addresses*. Hence, the positions outlined in the *Addresses*, which are at times chauvinistic, tend to be considered by some as Fichte's overarching political thought. More than a century after his death, Fichte's political ideas were appropriated by the proponents of ideas alien to his fundamental principles. Fichte could never have conceived or supported the political movements which swept Germany following the First World War, and it would be anti-historical to speculate otherwise.[17] Moreover, it is an all too common occurrence for Fichte's *Addresses* to be read in complete ignorance of the many other works he wrote which convey much different thoughts. He has been cited, both in a positive and negative light, as a proto-national socialist or ultra-nationalist, neither of which is accurate. Some scholars have noted the pernicious influence which Fichte's writings have had on late 19th Century German nationalism, but again the political cause they were meant to justify was not intended by Fichte.[18] The breadth of Fichte's work transcends the scope of the *Addresses*. The *Addresses* should be examined within the wider

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[16]Hans Sluga wrote that the *Addresses* "were, in a sense, his [Fichte's] political testament; of all his political writings, only the *Addresses* would be remembered later." To confer the vaunted status of 'political testament' to the *Addresses* only perpetuated the relative ignorance of his other writings. Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 34.

[17]It would be impossible, for example, to understand National Socialist ideology without its basis in the crisis of industrialization, something which had not yet occurred in Fichte's day.

[18]"When German nationalism became able to base itself on a unified state, from about 1860 on, some of Fichte's pronouncements were selectively treated as authoritative, and misconceptions inevitably resulted." Peter Hoffmann, "The 'German Mission,' 1790-1918,"

context of the philosopher's entire life's work. Thus, they should not be taken as the high-water mark of his political thought.

Those scholars who interpret the *Addresses* as Fichte's crowning political statement neglect the many other political works which, on balance, indicate a much broader political perspective. It is a rare occurrence for a single work to define its author; no single work alone defines Fichte as a philosopher. One must also gauge the impact which historical events had on his thinking, as opposed to times of relative political calm. It is difficult for the contemporary reader to fully comprehend the social and political turmoil of the age in which Fichte lived. It would indeed be difficult to imagine what Fichte's attitudes towards the German nation would have been if there had been no French Revolution, if Napoleon had never considered conquering Europe, or if Prussia had not been reduced to a vassal state by 1806. Regardless of what external factors influenced Fichte's thinking, he is ultimately responsible for his words and his actions. It would be a grave error, however, to attempt any understanding of Fichte's political and social thought without a thorough understanding of his life's work.

By analyzing Fichte's writings and speeches translated into English, this thesis will interpret Fichte's political and social thought as a central component of his world-view. It intends to address i) how nationalism was integrated with cosmopolitanism in Fichte's political and social thought, and ii) how Fichte's political thought was derived from and influenced by the *Wissenschaftslehre*. The responsibility which Fichte accorded states to realize national and international development must also be considered.

Secondary Literature on Fichte's Nationalism

The theme of nationalism is treated with cursory attention in most of the secondary literature on Fichte in English.[19] While interest in Fichte as a nationalist has produced a number of volumes in the German language,[20] a glance at the bibliography included with this thesis will indicate very little interest on the part of North American scholars. Whatever nationalist literature that has been written is largely confined to short articles or brief sections of general works.

This is not to suggest that scholars find this aspect of Fichte's thought unappealing. Given his fanatical belief in a dynamic ethical idealism, it is not surprising that, of all of the idealist philosophers in his lifetime, Fichte probably had the greatest impact on contemporary notions of nationalism. This adds dimension to his philosophy which fascinates scholars interested only in his philosophy. Thus, Fichte's nationalism is often illuminated by the numerous philosophical studies which have been produced. However, his nationalism deserves attention as an independent subject.

There is a single work in English devoted exclusively to Fichte's nationalism which was written by Helmuth Engelbrecht and published in 1933. Entitled *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: A Study of his political writings with special reference to his Nationalism*,[21] it attempts to shed light on Fichte's nationalism by the examination and analysis of his major political tracts, which Engelbrecht

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[19]In French, there is a shining example to the contrary. Xavier Leon's two volume biography of Fichte, entitled *Fichte et son Temps*, deals extensively with his political and social thought. Most contemporary scholars refer to it as a source-book.

[20]Nico Wallner, *Fichte als politischer Denker.* (Halle, 1926). More recently, *Fichte-Studien.* Bd. 2 " Kosmopolitismus und Nationalidee." was published by a collegium of Fichte scholars.

[21]Helmuth Engelbrecht, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: A Study of his political writings with special reference to his Nationalism* (New York, 1933).

obtained from German sources. After defining the elements of Fichte's political theory, the author proceeds chronologically, giving brief analyses of Fichte's major political essays. The book then goes on to discuss the impact of Fichte's nationalism on the 19th and 20th centuries, which, owing to its date of publication, does not include a discussion of Fichte in National Socialist ideology. That Engelbrecht was ignorant of what was to come in Germany prevents him from developing any parallels between Fichte's nationalism and National Socialism; on the contrary, he discusses at many junctures Fichte's intellectual influence on socialist thinkers, such as Lassalle.[22] The book includes a brief appendix article concerning Fichte's association with Freemasonry.

While Engelbrecht makes a reasonable, if somewhat cursory, summary of the political tracts, his analysis of Fichte's nationalism does not explicitly include the social and political themes embedded in Fichte's philosophy. Engelbrecht does state that Fichte's nationalism was an outgrowth of his philosophy,[23] but does not explain how this developed. The book's limited scope does not convey a broader perspective of Fichte's nationalism in the context of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

Moreover, the style and content of the book borders on a type of journalism which does not allow for a thorough discussion of the central themes. Engelbrecht accounts for Fichte's changing political theories more often as a reaction to the changing fortunes of current ideas rather than by his own intellectual evolution. No person, especially the theoretician, lives in a social vacuum. Ideas are largely related to contemporary circumstances. But it

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[22]*ibid.*, pp. 170-71, 177-78. Engelbrecht also refers to the Marx-Engels Institute of Moscow as having an extensive collection of Fichteana. *ibid.*, p. 190.

[23]*ibid.*, p. 28.

is important to recognize the thinker that influences the environment, or whose ideas anticipate contemporary problems. In Engelbrecht's case there is not enough focus on Fichte's development independent of current events. But Engelbrecht observes that Fichte's growing nationalism did not extinguish his vision of a cosmopolitan world-state.[24]

There are a number of excellent articles which probe Fichte's nationalism to a more thorough and thoughtful degree. In most cases, they deal with one or more aspects of Fichte's thought, ranging from A.C. Armstrong's article on Fichte's ideas concerning a League of Nations,[25] to G. H. Turnbull's essay on the changes in Fichte's attitude toward state intervention in education.[26]

Walter Simon, H.T. Betteridge and Hans Kohn have written informative and insightful articles on Fichte's nationalism.[27] Each of these articles examines the duality of Fichte's nationalism, but come to this conclusion more as a last resort than as a well-presented argument. In "Fichte's Conception of a League of Nations," A.C. Armstrong argues persuasively that the idea of a League of Nations was for Fichte a central, and firmly-held belief. Armstrong notes, as have others, that Fichte "was caught in the tumult of national and international conflicts as few thinkers who have pondered the questions of peace and war".[28]

Edward Schaub and Paul Sweet examine the lesser known aspect of Fichte's attitudes towards the Jews in their articles published in 1940 and 1993,

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[24]*ibid.*, p. 156.

[25]A.C. Armstrong, "Fichte's Conception of a League of Nations," *Journal of Philosophy* XXIX p. 6, (March, 1932).

[26]G.H. Turnbull, The Changes in Fichte's Attitude toward State Intervention in Education," International Journal of Ethics 47 (1937), pp. 234-243.

[27]Hans Kohn, "The Paradox of Fichte's Nationalism;" H.T. Betteridge, "Fichte's Political Ideas: A Retrospect;" Walter Simon, "Variations in Nationalism during the Great Reform Period in Prussia."

[28]A.C. Armstrong, "Fichte's Conception of a League of Nations," pp. 153-58.

respectively.[29] It is interesting to note that both of these articles were written as responses to the charges of anti-semitism levelled against Fichte. Both authors distinguish between Fichte's conception of civil rights, which he denied to Jews, and human rights, to which he was committed for all humans. With a precise attention to the facts[30] surrounding the Brogi Affair, as it came to be known, Sweet points out the inaccuracies and distortions put forth by Paul Rose in his book on anti-semitism in Germany.[31] Edward Schaub catalogues the texts in which Fichte's anti-semitic statements became controversial, including his sermon at Dubrenski and notorious passages from the "Contribution to Correct the Judgment of the Public about the French Revolution," of 1793.[32] Fichte's cultural condemnation of the Jewish religion is clearly stated, but his acceptance of the Jew, indeed any person, as a human is also clear. Although Schaub comments at length regarding Fichte's character as a "man of impetuous and violent feelings,"[33] his reasoning that this character fault partially mitigates Fichte's remarks is contentious. One is struck by the implied violence, even at a theoretical level, that one reads in the notorious passage of the "Contribution" when Fichte, discussing civil rights, says

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[29]Paul Sweet, "Fichte and the Jews: A Case of Tension between Civil Rights and Human Rights," *German Studies Review* XVI (February, 1993), pp. 37-48.

Edward Schaub, "Discussion: J.G. Fichte and Anti-Semitism," *The Philosophical Review* 49 (1940), pp. 37-52.

[30]Forty-five pages of documents accompany Max Lenz's account of the Brogi Affair; Xavier Leon, we are to presume, consulted with these documents before writing his two volume biography of Fichte. Paul Sweet, "Fichte and the Jews," p. 46.

[31]Paul Lawrence Rose, *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany: From Kant to Wagner* (Princeton, 1990).

[32]Edward Schaub, "Discussion: J.G. Fichte and Anti-Semitism," pp. 39-51.

[33] *ibid.*, p. 38.

> ...as to giving them [the Jews] civil rights, I see no way other than that of some night cutting off all their heads, and attaching in their stead others in which there is not a single Jewish idea.[34]

Here again an 'inner contribution' by the sympathetic reader is required to fully understand Fichte's language. Fichte was discussing the topic of civil rights as it pertained to the freedom he later described in the *Wissenschaftslehre.* He contended that "Jewish ideas" prevented them from realizing true freedom;[35] therefore the above comment spoke only in abstract terms. But as Paul Sweet points out, it is puzzling that Fichte never attempted in writing to reconcile Jewish civil rights with human rights.[36] One can say with certainty that Fichte was a man of principle - there are examples which abound to prove this point. Therefore, assuming a well-established distinction between civil and human rights in Fichte's thought, there is no reason to assume that Fichte would betray his true beliefs. On the contrary, he took pride in standing up for principles, as in the Brogi affair. And although Fichte's rhetoric tended to overstate his point, it is, nonetheless, exaggerating a point which is immoral from the perspective of the modern reader. That there was legislation being promulgated concurrently by the Hardenberg government which would grant Jews "equal civil rights and liberties with Christians"[37] shows clearly that Fichte would not have been alone had he argued for Jewish civil rights.

In his brilliantly written article "The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution,"[38] Anthony LaVopa analyses Fichte's early political writings

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[34]*ibid.*, p. 41.

[35]Paul Sweet, Loc. cit., p. 38.

[36]*ibid.*, p. 45.

[37]Paul Sweet, *ibid.*, p. 44.

[38]Anthony J. LaVopa, "The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History* 22(2) 1989.

against the backdrop of the conservative German intellectual circles. LaVopa argues persuasively that Fichte's ideas and actions were the result of a complex web of intellectual influences, contemporary events, and personal experiences. Taking Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* as the primary impetus toward Fichte's new philosophy, LaVopa also makes clear the Rousseauian lineage which both of these men followed. His close attention to Fichte's correspondence and his knowledge of contemporary intellectuals places Fichte in the heart of a serious debate which had implications well beyond their own time. LaVopa's comparative analysis of Fichte and Edmund Burke (as well as Burke's intellectual heir in Germany, August Wilhelm Rehberg) is tremendously insightful as a document of modern political thinkers grappling with the ideological tumult of their age.

* * *

The first chapter of this study will trace the events of Fichte's early years as a promising student, frustrated tutor and aspiring philosopher. The impact of the Kantian legacy on Fichte will be assessed thereafter. The second and third chapters will examine and analyse Fichte's political, pedagogical, masonic and religious writings which relate to his social and political thought. The intellectual influence of Rousseau will also be considered. The final chapter will deal exclusively with analysing Fichte's *Characteristics of the Present Age*, *The Addresses to the German Nation* and the *Theory of the State*.

Throughout this study, the author will show that Fichte's evolution as a thinker was marked by contemporary events, personal characteristics and intellectual precedents. Fichte's nationalism, developed from his idealist philosophy as political invective, was combined with the central themes of

education and *Bildung* , and became, with the *Wissenschaftslehre*, a holistic world-view which transcended philosophy, politics and religion.

This thesis will attempt to illustrate why there has been a paucity in the study of Fichte's nationalism. It is hoped that it will serve as a contribution to this field of research whose subject is most deserving of attention.

CHAPTER ONE

Fichte's Early Intellectual Development in the Age of Enlightenment, 1762-1790

Johann Gottlieb Fichte was born on 19 May 1762 to parents apparently united across class boundaries.[1] His mother, the daughter of a wealthy linen-spinner and factory owner from the neighbouring town of Pulsnitz, had married his father, Christian Fichte, after he had apprenticed with her father, Johann Schurich. Robert Adamson noted in his biography of Fichte that Schurich believed his daughter's marriage was beneath his family's rank, and that he consented to their union on the condition that they did not plan to reside in Pulsnitz. The couple resided in Rammenau and started a family that grew, after

[1]Robert Adamson, *Fichte* (Edinburgh, 1881) pp. 8-9. In fact, the rigidity of class barriers weakened considerably throughout the eighteenth-century, and marriages of this sort became quite common. As Hajo Holborn writes, "The rise of an individual from a low class to a high group was very exceptional, but a family could achieve it within two or more generations. Practically all the leaders of the German intellectual movement descended from families who over generations had been artisans, till their father, or sometimes grandfather, changed to a higher position, usually by way of academic study." Holborn, A *History of Modern Germany*, Vol. II (Princeon, 1982), p. 306. Fichte's intellectual predecessor, Jean Jacques Rousseau, fell into roughly the same category (His father was a watchmaker; his mother, the daughter of a minister). He commented, in 1781, that "Because of the difference in their station my father had some difficulty in getting her for his wife." Rousseau, "Extracts from the Confessions," in William Boyd, ed., *The Minor Educational Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau* (New York, 1962), p. 9.

the birth of Johann Gottlieb in 1762, to seven sons and a daughter. On the basis of Fichte's letters, Adamson contends that "the marriage was not altogether productive of happiness. Madame Fichte seems never to have been able to quite forget that in uniting herself to a humble peasant and handicraftsman she had descended from a superior station".[2]

Fichte's recollections of his parents' union would foreshadow his own marriage, many years later, to Johanna Rahn, the daughter of a wealthy customs house official. Although he had decided by 1789 that he wished to marry this young woman (and indeed became engaged to her at this time), he hesitated to wed her until October 1793. During this time Fichte moved around central Europe attempting to make a living as a tutor while entertaining larger plans. Practically speaking, a quick wedding following the couple's engagement might have been poorly timed. To have waited over four years, however, reveals perhaps an inhibition on the part of Fichte to fully commit himself when he had not, in his mind, compensated for his modest class position by establishing himself financially. When Fichte did marry Johanna Rahn he had become firmly established as a scholar with the well-received publication of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation.* There was, perhaps, the residue of class-consciousness in Fichte's mind during his early years. However, to explain his early attitudes on the monarchy, the role of government and the individual by his personal sense of class resentment is to seriously underestimate the profound intellectual evolution which occurred in Fichte outside of his personal life. As an analysis of his pre-Kantian writings will show, Fichte revealed much less a class-based anger than a general criticism which transcended class barriers. The anger with which he pursued his interests

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[2] *Ibid.*

revealed the integrity of character which he unfailingly sustained throughout his life. A product of a tumultuous intellectual environment, Fichte was influenced by a host of new ideas.

If anything, the turbulent intellectual climate of the late 1700's brought out in Fichte a personal characteristic which he retained throughout his life. There is some indication that Fichte's extreme temperament may have matched his mother's. Considered a precocious child, he soon developed an emotional intensity when discussing his opinions which made a deep impression on his colleagues and opponents alike. Edward Schaub, in one article, describes Fichte as a man capable of "volcanic abruptness," and of "impetuous and violent feelings and of imperious will." He also pointed out, quite rightly, Fichte's corresponding "lack of social imagination such as is requisite for an understanding of other people and for happy relations with them".[3] Paul Sweet writes that Fichte's tendency of committing "rhetorical overkill"[4] was characteristic of his personality.[5] Even George Kelly remarks Fichte's "hyperseriousness" in his book *Idealism, Politics and History*.[6] Fichte's character at many times revealed a basic lack of tact when dealing with delicate situations. However better a more circumspect position might have served his career, he rejected any option he deemed less intellectually honest.

It is not surprising that Fichte deeply resented the lack of respect accorded to him as a tutor, an unfortunate position he did not occupy by

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[3]Edward Schaub, "Discussion: J.G. Fichte and Anti-Semitism," *Idealistic Studies* (49: 1940), p. 38.

[4]Paul Sweet, "Fichte and the Jews: A Case of Tension between Civil Rights and Human Rights," German Studies Review XVI, no. 1 (February, 1993), p. 44.

[5]Daniel Brezeale adds: "For in fact in many situations, especially those in which the qualities required were either forbearance or tact, Fichte had no worse enemy than himself." Breazeale, introduction, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 22.

[6]George Kelly, *Idealism, Politics and History* (New York, 1969), p. 181.

choice.[7] He considered it both a personal and professional insult to be held in such low regard by the wealthier classes. It further reinforced his condemnation of a society whose decay, in his mind, had been accelerated by its narrow-minded attitude to education. Even after gaining a position in the academic establishment Fichte did not moderate his views. When he held the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Jena, Fichte's fiery rhetoric did not abate. When responding in a letter in 1797 to Reinhold's mild critcism that his tone often wounded persons whom it did not concern, Fichte replied:

> The internal reason for my assuming the tone in question is this: whenever I have to witness the prevailing loss of any sense of truth and the current deep obscurantism, confusion, and wrongheadedness, I am filled with a contempt I cannot describe. The external reason for my tone is the way these people have treated me and continue to treat me. There is nothing that I desired less than to engage in polemics.[8]

Certainly this last sentence cannot be accepted without a realization of Fichte's innate sense of philosophical rectitude. The correspondence he maintained with even his closest friends shows a frequent desire to engage in polemics, if only from the genuine desire to convince them of the 'correctness ' of his ideas.

Kant and the *Critique of Practical Reason*

"I have been living in a new world ever since reading the *Critique of Practical Reason*," Fichte wrote to his friend Friedrich Weisshuhn in the late summer of 1790. "Propositions which I thought could never be overturned have

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[7]Anthony LaVopa writes: "Fichte emerges from his early correspondence and unpublished writings as a frustrated young intellectual, relegated to the margins of his society but searching for a way to command its attention with a genuinely public voice." LaVopa, "The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History*, 22(2: 1989), p. 130.

[8]*Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, pp. 417-18. "Admittedly, his attitude towards those who disagreed with him was seldom conspicuously temperate....", Patrick Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

been overturned for me. Things have been proven to me which I thought could never be proven- for example, the concept of absolute freedom, the concept of duty, etc.- and I feel all the happier for it. It is unbelievable how much respect for mankind and how much strength this system gives us!"[9] Such unequivocal homage to another's ideas was a rare and therefore telling act of humility and perception on the part of Fichte. In a life which had been characterized by confrontation with people he rarely believed were his equals, Fichte considered Immanuel Kant, the author of the *Critique*, as the pre-eminent member of a select group of thinkers whom he regarded with great admiration. Regardless of his later differences with the Königsberg philosopher, his respect for him and his philosophy never ceased. Kant's influence can be assessed at a number of philosophical levels, but certainly his influence on Fichte's political thought was one of his strongest legacies. Indeed, Kant was more able to influence Fichte's political thought from a philosophical standpoint than from his own political writings. In fact, Kant's most profound influence on Fichte's political ideas emanated from the many 'liberating' contentions made in the *Critique*[10] which ultimately re-shaped Fichte's own conception of human society.

Although his influence was merely one of many components which are essential to understanding Fichte's intellectual development, it has been demonstrated that his discovery of Kant's *Critique* signified the most sudden and substantial turning point in his life and thought.[11] This shift was

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[9]J.G Fichte, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), edited by Daniel Breazeale, p. 357.

[10]Kant's moral theory, specifically the inalienable right to reject unsatisfactory government, interested Fichte tremendously. Anthony LaVopa, "The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History*, p. 133.

[11]"Fichte first encountered Kant's ideas through the *Critique of Practical Reason*, which he read in his late twenties, and it was this work above all others that made a lasting impact upon his mind," Patrick Gardiner, "Fichte and German Idealism," *Idealism Past and Present* (New York, 1982), p. 115.

compounded by the relatively young age at which Fichte was exposed to the Kantian *Critique.*[12] Previous to his discovery of the Kantian Critical Philosophy, Fichte had spent his time focused on other thinkers, such as Spinoza, Lessing[13] and Wolff, for his intellectual development. He had essentially considered himself a determinist. This, combined with the French Revolution, enabled Fichte to look beyond his view that people's lives were preordained by God and that individual human initiative was a marginal factor in understanding society. While these concepts were quickly shattered by Kant and the French Revolution, Fichte ultimately realized he could find a shining example of human agency in his own life. The *Critique* launched him in a new philosophical direction which he later developed beyond its original premises but which (Fichte believed) he never contradicted.[14] This was principally caused by forcing Fichte to re-think his fundamental understanding of man, which formed the basis of his social and statist theories. Kant's ideas also helped define the turbulent intellectual environment of the late 18th century, which encouraged a host of other political, social and intellectual developments. These, in turn, heavily influenced Fichte's political thought.

Although Fichte spent a great deal of time defending against his critics that the *Wissenschaftslehre* was in keeping with the conclusions drawn by Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, many scholars agree that what Fichte created was in fact wholly original. This is simultaneously a great compliment and, at another level, a mild rebuke. The difference between the two systems is defined by Patrick Gardiner as between 'transcendental idealism' (Kant) and

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[12]Fichte was 28 when he digested the principal works of Kant. This early exposure, although well after his initial exploration of the major theological and philosophical works of the era, shattered most of the previously conceived notions he held and proved to become one of the fundamental underpinnings upon which all of his later work was based.

[13]R. Adamson, *Fichte.* (New York, 1969), pp. 15-16.

[14]Patrick Gardiner, "Fichte and German Idealism," *Idealism Past and Present*, pp. 113-116.

'ethical idealism' (Fichte).[15] Kant's model distinguished the phenomenal world (reality as it appears to someone) from the noumenal world (reality as it truly is) and asserted that humans could be considered part of both entities. Therefore humans had to realize their being part of a world no different than anything else we perceive, while at the same time "transcend[ing] the limits of a purely naturalistic approach and from which human beings might be viewed, not as phenomenal 'appearances ' falling under the causality of nature, but rather as non-empirical centres of consciousnes and will".[16] Where Fichte fundamentally differed from Kant was his almost total reliance of the latter component over and above the former. Therefore human beings were in fact free on account of their ability to remain independent of nature. This became the basis for the "I" propounded in his system. The ego is set in opposition to the non-ego, or nature. This dialectical approach anticipated the work of Hegel years later. Fichte always believed that he was following Kant's system, and where their differences may have seemed large (to both his critics and exponents), he accounted for this by contending he was merely developing Kant's original ideas a step further. When confronted by Kantians with 'proof' of these differences, he usually claimed that their own inability to interpret Kant properly was the reason for any misunderstanding.[17]

The year 1790 witnessed the increased polarization of the political and intellectual elites. The first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille provoked the renewal of an intense political and intellectual debate. The 'sobriety' which the year had lent to many people's judgments of the Revolution meant that the

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[15]*ibid.*

[16]*ibid.*

[17]Daniel Breazeale has asserted these differences in the Editor's Introduction to *J.G. Fichte: Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, vii.

initial enthusiasm which had greeted it by some was waning. Certainly Kant had come out on the progressive side of the debate.[18] His philosophy argued that human beings were not merely products of nature but were capable of an independent consciousness and free will which transcended previously believed boundaries of 'nature.'[19] Human actions could therefore be based on the abstract notion of 'reason.' Although Fichte shared this view in general, his sympathy for the principle of revolution pre-dated his discovery of the great philosopher.[20] Indeed, these sentiments were in Fichte's mind long before he wrote them. His initial articles, some of which date from 1788, show that in fact his attitudes anticipated the ideals of the French Revolution. Fichte, unlike many of his erstwhile colleagues, became even more vociferously supportive of the developments in France one year after the fact.[21] Even a decade later, after the revolution had lurched toward the political extremism typified by the execution of Louis XVI and the 'Reign of Terror,' his support of the revolutionary principle remained unshaken.

> A people is able to make more progress in half a century through leaps, through powerful convulsions of state and revolutions, than it did in the ten previous centuries[...] It can also, however, regress just as far and be thrown back into the barbarism of the previous millennium. World history provides evidence of both. Powerful revolutions are always a daring risk for mankind[...] if they fail, they force their way through misery to greater misery.[22]

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[18]Frederick Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution & Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought 1790-1800.* (Cambridge: Cambridge,1992), pp. 15-21.

[19]Patrick Gardiner, "Fichte and German Idealism," *Idealism Past and Present.* edited by Godfrey Vesey. (Cambridge: 1982), pp. 113-114.

[20]Fichte's "Zufällige Gedanken in einer schlaflosen Nacht" of 1788 indicate his disillusionment with the present political order. H.C. Engelbrecht, *Fichte's Political Writings with Special Reference to His Nationalism* (Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 43.

[21]This is the contention of Anthony LaVopa in his article "The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History* 22(2) 1989, pp. 130-34.

[22]Fichte, Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, who have

Fichte's pragmatic attitude to the principle of revolutions reflected his belief that not every people should follow this path of social change. While he could justify events occurring in France, he did not necessarily believe revolution was the best option for 'Germany.'

The forthrightness and certitude with which he argued his sympathies for the French Revolution revealed perhaps even a certain pleasure to see his beliefs diametrically conflict with those of so many of his contemporaries. The University officials at Jena, who appointed Fichte after the publication of his first work, were very critical of his point of view after he entered the university.[23] Their misgivings over the matter of appointing Fichte to this powerful position were reflected by the comments of one official who criticized his "democratic ravings."[24] Even Kant had not been as unqualified in his support of either the principle of revolution or the French Revolution as had Fichte. Those who opposed Fichte included Friedrich Karl Forberg, a former professor at Jena, and Ludwig Heinrich Jacob, a professor of philosophy at Halle.[25] Fichte knew that the heady days which followed 14 July 1789 in the German intellectual circles were ending. He regarded it as a test of his will to show the world he remained committed to ideals which many others had rejected either in outright horror or by merely observing political fashion. A controversial public speaker, Fichte seemed unable to avoid conflict because of his overriding sense of intellectual

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oppressed it until now, (hereafter referred to as Reclamation," What is Enlightenment? 18th Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions, ed. James Schmidt (University of California Press, forthcoming) pp. 3-4.

[23]Breazeale, introduction to *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, pp. 35-38. In later years, the Abbé Barruel referred to Fichte's undertakings at the University of Jena in a way which was common among conservative forces at the time: "In Saxony, for example, at Jena,a professor is permitted to instruct youth, telling them that governments are contrary to the laws of reason and humanity, and that therefore in twenty, in fifteen, perhaps even in ten years there will be no further government in the world." *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme*, v.5.

[24]Hans Schulz, ed., *Fichte in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen* (Leipzig, 1923) pp. 6-7, in "Editor's Introduction," Breazeale, ed. *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* (Ithaca, 1988) p. 11.

[25]*Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, Part X (Fichte's Letters), pp. 365-372.

certainty. Indeed, his certitude obliterated any instinct he might have possessed to avoid controversy for the purpose of 'saving face' when principles were involved. After his appointment to the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Jena in 1794, his career was characterized by a succession of controveries which increasingly jeopardized his position. Fichte would not yield to compromises which he believed would call into question his morally conscientious and genuine character.[26]

Although Kant and the Revolution played an enormous role in re-orienting Fichte's intellectual foundations after 1789, there are a number of additional factors which must be assessed before judiciously evaluating Fichte's early political and social thought. Although the personal experiences and increased intellectual confidence he gained after 1790 matured his political thinking considerably (an evolution which, in many ways, did not stop until his death in 1814), by the time the young philosopher was twenty-eight he had been indelibly marked by ideas which he would carry with him for the remainder of his life. The fact that many of these influences were of a personal nature does not diminish their importance in shaping Fichte's mind.

As Anthony LaVopa contends in his book on Prussian pedagogy[27], Fichte displayed throughout his career a natural ability to climb through social classes and to become the model of the self-cultivated man. This was by no means a personal agenda to succeed by forgetting his roots; the reality was that Fichte could not, although coming from of a modest social class, be labelled by class. The development of Fichte's political thought was the result of a number

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[26]Fichte became embroiled in a number of controversies at the University of Jena. The last controversy, commonly referred to as the 'Atheism Controversy,' cost Fichte his position. For a concise treatment of Fichte's Jena years, including the atheism controversy, see Daniel Breazeale's introduction to *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings.*

[27]Anthony J. LaVopa, *Grace, Talent and Merit: Poor Students, Clerical Careers and Professional Ideology in 18th Century Germany.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 355-60.

of influences, including his own personal life experience. After 1790 Fichte believed it was obvious that Kant had outlined the only true path to solving a number of philosophical dilemmas. To arrive at a true understanding of Fichte's early intellectual development, it is necessary to examine his writings and influences before 1790.

Assessing Fichte's early political development is difficult from the outset because archival sources to help establish his general attitudes are scarce. For the scholar limited primarily to English-language sources the problem is compounded because the majority of what Fichte wrote before his publication of *An Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* (1792), has not been translated into English. However, even the scholar using German sources is faced with a dearth of information upon which to base an opinion. In the only complete English-language survey to date of Fichte's political writings (which fully consults German sources), Helmuth Engelbrecht lists only two written works as being significant to the development of Fichte's political theories before being shaken by the Kantian *Critique*.[28] The first was his valedictory speech at the Pforta School, where he was educated before attending university, in 1780; the other was his "Fortuitous Thoughts During a Sleepless Night" written eight years later. Letters to contemporaries shed more light on Fichte's politics, but these are by no means in great abundance and were largely written after 1788. Without his own philosophical framework, Fichte's writing before 1792 does not equal in volume or quantity the work he undertook after *An Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation.*

The scant attention paid to Fichte's early years of intellectual development reflect this research dilemma. In most of the English-language

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[28]Engelbrecht, chps. 1-2.

studies of Fichte's philosophy and life experience, a small number of pages is used to cover, quite superficially, the first 28 years of his life.[29] The most common interpretations of his early years correspond neatly with his writings after his Kantian conversion in 1790.

Reference has been made by a number of scholars to Fichte's 'class status' while growing up in the Lusatian town of Rammenau. Of course the earliest impressions are often the most indelible. An attempt has been made by Fichte biographers[30] to portray Fichte as the product of a poor, lower-class upbringing in an effort to explain his egalitarian and republican attitudes at such a young age and before the onset of the French Revolution. A further attempt is made to use Fichte's early years as an itinerant tutor, a job that most scholars agree Fichte detested, to support this class-based argument.

Anthony LaVopa argues that Fichte did not want an academic career, but also writes that his lower-class upbringing was a poor indicator of his early ideas on government and society.[31] The most common narrative portrays Fichte as the son of a Saxon linen-weaver who possessed at a very early age a most remarkable memory which won him praise and, by chance, his first opportunity to escape the parochial environment of Rammenau.[32] It was by reciting a church sermon from memory to the Baron von Miltitz[33] that Fichte attracted the

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[29]Robert Adamson's biography of Fichte, some 222 pages, covers Fichte's "Youth and Early Struggles" (up to his writing the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*) in 20 pages. H.C. Engelbrecht assesses Fichte's political thought up to 1790 . George Turnbull's account of Fichte's pedagogical theories. Xavier Léon. William Smith's *Memoir of Gottlieb Fichte*. Robert Adamson, *Fichte* (Edinburgh, 1881).

[30]Fichte's biographers include Xavier Leon, William Smith, Robert Adamson, and G.H. Turnbull.

[31]"Ultimately Fichte's defiant perseverence was nourished by the conviction that inner strength- sheer force of will- could override the force of external necessity." A.J. LaVopa, *Grace, Talent and Merit...*, p. 359.

[32]The best known English biographies are by Robert Adamson, William Smith (translated from German) and George Turnbull. All are listed in the bibliography. By all accounts the finest Fichte biography was a two-volume French publication written by Xavier Léon.

[33]Baron von Miltitz died in 1774, not long after his discovery of Fichte. Financial support was

wealthy man's attention. The Baron was so impressed that he offered to sponsor the child's education. Therefore a significant break occurred, at an early age, whereby Fichte left the childhood environment which had hitherto been his only experience. From then on Fichte lived a fortunate lifestyle at the Pforta School until he graduated a few years later in 1780. To a large extent his upbringing and education added to his reflections later in his life that he had led an 'uprooted' existence throughout his life.[34] The experience of going away to school most likely contributed to the profound role education played in Fichte's thinking. It is possible that the Pforta School made an early impression on his attitude towards state intervention in schools. It later became a central element in his plan to mobilize the new German nation.

Fichte and Freemasonry

After the conclusion of his schooling at Pforta in 1780, Fichte enrolled at the universities of Jena and Leipzig in theology. In September 1788, Fichte began an occupation as a freelance tutor, and instructed children of various families in Saxony and Switzerland. Fichte was to meet his future bride, Johanna Rahn, during his first stay in Zürich while tutoring with another family.[35] Fichte became acquainted with the intellectual groups of Zürich through Rahn's father, who was well-known in these circles. After a lengthy period where he continued his career in the eastern regions of the Holy Roman Empire, Fichte returned to Zürich in 1793.

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continued, however, by his widow until 1784. The conditions under which Fichte's support was terminated are not entirely known, but they may have had something to do with Fichte's career choices as being contradictory to the wishes of Miltitz's widow. See Breazeale, "Introduction," *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, and Adamson, *Fichte* , pp. 8-17.

[34]"This abrupt uprooting had made him particularly susceptible to the identity crisis that beset so many educated young Germans in the 1780s and 1790s." LaVopa,"The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History* 22(2) 1989, pp. 130-31.

[35]Robert Adamson, *Fichte*, p. 17.

Fichte was introduced to the order of Freemasons by his father-in-law, Hartmann Rahn, and became a member of the masonic lodge in Zürich in 1793.[36] When Fichte moved to Jena to begin his post at the university, he joined the "Günther zum stehenden Löwen" lodge in Rudolstadt since there was no lodge in Jena. When Fichte was forced from his position at Jena and moved to Berlin, he joined yet another lodge, and wrote a treatise on masonry which will be examined in the next chapter. Fichte continued to participate in the masonic culture until 7 July, 1800 when, on account of yet another controversy, he resigned his membership in the Berlin chapter less than six months after joining.[37]

Whatever his differences with the lodge membership, Fichte was well aware of the prominent place the Freemasons held as an intellectual organ of the Aufklärung. French Freemasons had adopted an anti-monarchical and anti-clerical platform since the early 18th Century,[38] which later spread to the German Lodges. No doubt this held tremendous appeal for Fichte as a Jacobin supporter. The membership lists of the French lodges read as a virtual "Who's Who" of the French Revolution.[39] Denis Diderot, one of the leading members of the French enlightenment and co-editor of the first encyclopedia, was also a member, as well as other leading thinkers with whom Fichte was associated. As a meeting-place for intellectual discussions Fichte valued the masonic order to develop his thinking, especially with the non-academic membership.

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[36]H.C. Engelbrecht, Johann Gottlieb Fichte: A Study of his political writings with special reference to his Nationalism (New York, 1933) p. 191.

[37]The controversy surrounded a jealous disagreement between Fichte and the head of the Royal York for Friendship Lodge, Ignaz Fessler. No doubt Fichte's *Letters to Constant* contributed to the antagonistic atmoshpere. *ibid.*, p. 191-96.

[38]The French Lodges adopted the motto "Liberté Egalité, Fraternité." *ibid.*, p. 192.

[39]Marat, Condorcet, Mirabeau, Dupont de Nemours, Robespierre, Danton were all French Freemasons. *ibid.*, p. 193.

CHAPTER TWO

From Fichte's Discovery of Kant to the Atheism Controversy, 1790-1799

By1794, Fichte had in the space of three years been elevated in status from an unknown tutor to the occupier of Germany's most prestigious academic position in philosophy. This was a tribute to his creative and vigourous mind, but also reflected the 'de rigeur' attitude of the academic community to be on the leading edge of Kantian scholarship. Owing to the influence of J.W. von Goethe in the court of Weimar, Karl Leonard Reinhold's replacement would have to remain faithful to the former's Kantian legacy. It was the hope of many that Fichte would fit this requirement admirably, although there were always objectors.[1]

Following his Kantian conversion, Fichte proclaimed his opposition to Prussian censorship laws and his sympathy with the French Revolution. As the

[1]"The Kantian doctrine will prove to be like fashionable clothing: the first models cost the most; then they are copied everywhere and are easier to buy. If Reinhold does not remain, there are still other possibilities. Keep your eye on Magister Fichte." Goethe to C.G. Voigt, July 27, 1793. Daniel Breazeale, Editor's Introduction, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 15.

first of two political treatises, Fichte composed an essay, published in the spring of 1793 entitled "A Discourse on the Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Hitherto Suppressed It".[2] He dated it "Heliopolis, in the last year of the old darkness." Closely following this publication was the first installment of a series entitled "Contribution to Correct the Judgment of the Public about the French Revolution." The second installment, published in 1794, contained such controversial writings that the University of Jena officials requested Fichte discontinue his writing of these tracts.[3] In the "Contribution," Fichte claimed an intellectual connection not only to Kant, but also to Rousseau. As Anthony LaVopa observed, Fichte believed that Kant's notion of the rejection of an unjust government was a development of Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social.* These conclusions were brought to the fore when Fichte used the French philosopher's name in his diatribe against the "empiricists:"

> Not long ago a man appealed to you who went our way, and whose only mistake was that he did not pursue it far enough...Rousseau, whom you called a dreamer time and time again, behaved too kindly toward you, the empiricists, since his dreams are being realized under your eyes; that was his mistake. Under your eyes - and awakened by Rousseau, I can add to your shame, if you do not already know it - the human spirit has completed a work you would have declared the most impossible of all impossibilities.[4]

The political accusations were related to the 'revolution of thought' which Fichte had undergone in his thinking, as is evidenced by the following:

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[2]H.C. Engelbrecht, *Fichte's Political Writings with Special Reference to His Nationalism* (Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 12. An English translation of the "Reclamation" is being published in *What is Enlightment? 18th Century Answers and 20th Century Questions.* ed. J Schmidt, Los Angeles: University of California Press, forthcoming.

[3]Breazeale, Editor's Introduction, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, pp. 10-12.

[4]Anthony J. LaVopa, "The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History* 22(2) 1989, p. 135.

> I hurled myself into philosophy, namely, the Kantian philosophy, as goes without saying. Here I found the antidote for the true source of my trouble, and happiness enough in the bargain. The influence that this philosophy, especially its moral part, has upon one's entire way of thinking is unbelievable -as is the revolution that it has occasioned in my way of thinking in particular.[5]

In the early stages of Fichte's post-Kantian development he had at the forefront of his plans the idea to study the concept of freedom. Kant was again the inspiration for this examination, which Fichte undertook with great earnestness. He made plans to study the philosophical concept of freedom during the summer months in Jena between semesters, which eventually led to his book the *Science of Rights*. As he wrote to his contemporary Jens Baggesen in 1795

> Mine is the first system of freedom. Just as France has freed man from external shackles, so my system frees him from the fetters of things in themselves, which is to say, from those external influences with which all previous systems - including the Kantian - have more or less fettered man. Indeed, the first principle of my system presents man as an independent being.[6]

The above passage is doubly significant, for it not only shows to what degree Fichte was preoccupied with the issue of freedom, but also how easily he related this philosophical notion to contemporary political events. Although it was not uncommon for Fichte to discuss his philosophical system without the aid of concrete examples,[7] he made great use of what he regarded as an

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[5]Draft letter to Achelis, November 1790. Breazeale, ed. *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 360.

[6]"Draft of a Letter to Jens Baggesen, April or May 1795," *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 385. By this date Fichte regarded his work as elucidating Kantian principles even more lucidly than Kant himself - a condescending attitude at first glance, but which revealed Fichte's undying respect for Kant's ideas rather than his words.

[7]"It is also true that Fichte's principal theoretical works - if not his semi-popular writings - are largely devoid of the allusions to scientific, historical, psychological or cultural matters with which his

obvious parallel between his own thinking and the course of world history. The draft letter further revealed that his intertwining of the philosophical with the political was not merely used for literary effect. It revealed the innately political applications of his work. This letter will be discussed later.

The notion of freedom which Fichte maintained he had learned from Kant gave him the opportunity to expand its meaning beyond the limits to which it had been originally confined. Fichte used the term 'freedom' as a philosophical device which gave humans a great deal of responsibility for the world which surrounded them since they, in turn, acted upon the world instead of being the mere receptacles of nature's plan. Since humanity possessed this moral capacity which Kant had earlier propounded, it was not acceptable to view humans, as had many leaders of the Aufklärung, as creatures who could be as easily explained as inanimate natural objects.[8] Thus a deterministic viewpoint of human life was unacceptable, a concept Fichte often labelled 'dogmatist.'[9] Fichte used his firm belief in human agency to condemn the inaction of men in situations they themselves deemed beyond their control. At a philosophical level, humanity was not merely the product of nature but constituted an independent existence of the natural world as it was known (in fact the natural world was, on the contrary, the result of the activity of the human mind). Humans were autonomus entities who were self-directed. Fichte pointed out this notion's

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German contemporaries were prone to illustrate their philosophical doctrines and enliven their more abstract discussions: there is a daunting aridity about much of what he wrote which can raise nagging doubts in the modern reader's mind about the actual issues that are in question." Patrick Gardiner, "Fichte and German Idealism," *Idealism Past and Present*, p. 111. Hans Kohn, in his article on Fichte's nationalism, wrote that Fichte's "philosophy might strike western readers as strangely abstract and void of any relation to its reality." Hans Kohn, "The Paradox of Fichte's Nationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, p. 319.

[8]Organicism was a central concept in the romantic perspective of world-history.

[9]Patrick Gardiner, among others, has contended that Fichte attached a sense of 'spiritual weakness' to those who accorded with the materialist or mechanical interpretation of human consciousness and behaviour. However, he does not draw these conclusions to Fichte as a political thinker or nationalist. Patrick Gardiner, op.cit., pp. 116-117.

political relevance when he wrote in the *Wissenschaftslehre* that "the majority of men could sooner be brought to believe themselves a piece of lava in the moon than to take themselves for a *self*."[10] It was not surprising that, given this philosophical belief, the underlying message of Fichte's political treatises was to "act above all." This is found amply in his early political writings. Fichte vigorously asserted human agency in the *Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought* when, concerning the masses' dilemma over their Princes' censorship of ideas:

> Therefore do not hate your Princes; you should hate yourselves. One of the first sources of your misery is that you have much too high a conception of princes and their accomplices.[11]

Fichte's condemnation of a passive character was therefore deeply rooted in the idea of a moral freedom. Humanity lived in a world which was shaped and molded according to their will; to feel bound by a determinism which precluded human intervention degraded humanity and ignored its capacity for creativity beyond any natural definition. If there were any remaining shreds of determinism in Fichte's thinking, it could only be described as a 'determinism of the ego.' The human ego, capable of a morality beyond all other things on earth, was therefore supreme, and reached its highest point of development when it had conquered its natural habitat. Fichte used robust language to describe man's ultimate control of nature to firmly impress his belief in an idealism controlled by God, and whose existence was manifest in all humans.

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[10]*Science of Knowledge, with First and Second Introductions*, ed. and trans, Peter Heath and John Lachs (New York, 1970), p. 43.

[11]Fichte, "Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, who have oppressed it until now," *What is Enlightenment: 18th Century Answers and 20th Century Questions* (Berkeley, forthcoming) p. 5.

It becomes increasingly apparent that the philosophical notions which Fichte propounded earlier in his career anticipated his political notions. This is entirely natural, since the two, as stated above, were intertwined and could not be readily separated. Although many of these ideas stemmed from his original 'epiphanal' experience of Kant's *Critique*, he developed Kant's contentions well beyond their original conclusions. Indeed, far from attempting to mediate between a deterministic and libertarian outlook on humanity, as had Kant's transcendental idealism, he refuted their symbiotic relationship by insisting on the primacy of the practical standpoint. Above all else was man's ability to impose his own moral will upon the anti-ego, nature, which in any case was an idealistic notion created by his mental activity. This mental activity depended on the super-ego, which Fichte equated with God. Fichte would later write in his *Staatslehre* that the creation of a united state under a common plan would "vanquish nature".[12]

The Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought

Between his immersion in Kantian philosophy (1790) and his appointment to the University of Jena (1794) where, over the course of many years, he expounded the principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in numerous distinct manifestations, Fichte embarked on a project which was related to his system but which was overtly political. He wrote and published two treatises in the name of freedom of thought and the French Revolution between 1793 and 1794. These two works underlined the practical applications which Fichte had intended for his philosophy. Humanity's innate qualities gave them the duty to act upon the world in which they lived; political action was therefore a most

[12]Hans Kohn, "The Paradox of Fichte's Nationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, p. 323.

natural outcome. As his philosophy had claimed a Kantian legacy, so too did his political ideas follow both Kant and other thinkers, such as Rousseau.[13] The ideas which he focused on in these tracts contained both a tangible political agenda and also referred to general themes which Fichte would use again and again over the course of his political philosophy: ideas of an evolving justice, a recognition of world citizenship, and freedom of the individual. Comparisons can even be made between these early works and the *Addresses to the German Nation,* written in 1807 and 1808.[14] That there was at many levels a consistency of thinking which was not affected by current events reflected the rigidity with which Fichte held to his general principles. The crowning phase of human civilization was when each individual possessed complete moral and legal autonomy in a freely adhered-to association which transcended the state.[15]

The *Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, who have suppressed it until now,* published anonymously in 1793, was allegedly directed at the Prussian Censorship Edict and reinforced the premises upon which Fichte argued for the supreme freedom of the individual. But Fichte's general references to the 'Princes of Europe' suggested that his audience was not restricted to Germany. The tone of sarcasm in this essay is

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[13]Fichte's claim to the Kantian legacy is well known. Breazeale makes this contention in the Editor's Introduction to the *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings* (Indianapolis, 1994) vii. Fichte's conception of an international association of states most probably followed from Kant's own *Perpetual Peace*, which he reviewed in 1796. This point will later be discussed in detail. As for Rousseau, it is known that Pestalozzi cited Rousseau's *Emile* as having a great impact on him. Fichte had studied the educational ideas of Pestalozzi before making his positions on education well known. It is likely that Fichte also had a first-hand understanding of Rousseau's political ideas before writing the pre-Jena political works. Anthony LaVopa discusses their differences over 'collective will' in "The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History* 22(2) 1989. pp. 130-159.

[14]*Addresses to the German Nation* , ed. by George Kelly (New York, 1968).

[15]Hans Kohn noted Fichte's 'controlling idea' which remained constant in his life: "The conviction that the end of history is a free and fraternal association of independent individuals throughout mankind, a world-wide anarchy based upon the full realization of the moral law, the kingdom of God on earth." Hans Kohn, "The Paradox of Fichte's Nationalism," p. 322.

pronounced. Specific references to Fichte's sarcastic tone can be found on nearly every page of the essay, as in this example:

> (speaking to the Princes of Europe):
>
> You tell us, on your honour, that these errors are long refuted. Then YOU must at least consider them refuted, since you will surely deal with us honestly. Would you not tell us, illustrious sons of the earth, how many nights spent awake in serious contemplation it has taken you to discover what so many men, free of your additional cares of rule, who dedicate their entire lives to such investigations, have not yet been able to discover? Or tell us if you found it without any reflection and without any instruction, but merely with the aid of your divine genius?[...] If a profane eye is permitted a glance into the mysteries of the administration of the state- which must require a deep wisdom since, as is well-known, the best and the brightest of men are always raised to its helm- then allow me some timid remarks.[16]

Although Fichte was passionate in his defense of inalienable rights, it did not prevent him from sometimes degrading the level of discourse by using cutting sarcasm and political broadsides against his opponents.[17] This, of course, was customary in the polemical environment of 18th Century philosophical circles. Notwithstanding the inflammatory language of this diatribe against the 'Princes of Europe,' the essay accomplished much in the way of strengthening a philosophical basis for political rights.

Similar to exponents of the Auklärung, Fichte argued that the Princes should not be responsible for the happiness of their people. Rather, ensuring

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[16] *What is Enlightenment?18th Century Answers and 20th Century Questions* (Berkeley, forthcoming) pp. 16-17. It is interesting to note that the sharpened tone of his critics made Fichte feel undeservedly criticized for the *Wissenschaftslehre*. For evidence of this, see Fichte's personal letters to K. L. Reinhold translated by Daniel Breazeale in "Selected Correspondence," Breazeale, ed. *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* (Ithaca, 1988).

[17] For example he lambasted men such as Rehberg and Brandes by declaring them "journalists"'under the Princes' supervision who "paint in flaming colours the disorders wrought by divided minds and feverishly opinionated minds." Fichte, "Reclamation....," *What is Enlightenment?* p. 21.

justice was all they could hope to accomplish. Happiness was a product of the relationship between God and the individual which the Prince could not control, since it was a spiritual matter:

> [D]eclare the most unforgiving war against that first prejudice from which all our evils result, that poisonous source of all our misery, the proposition that it is the vocation of the prince to care for our *happiness*... We do not know what promotes our happiness. If the prince knows it and is to guide us to it, then we must follow our leader with closed eyes. He does with us what he wishes and, when we ask him, he gives us his word that it is necessary for our happiness. He places the rope around mankind's neck and cries: 'Silence, silence! everything happens for your own good. No, prince, you are not our *God*. From *Him* we expect happiness; from *you* the protection of our rights. You should not be *kind* to us; you should be *just*.[18]

Fichte's disavowal of the Princes' attempt to control the happiness of his subjects was based on the notion that the individual possessed rights which could not be relinquished. These 'inalienable' rights he distinguished from the 'alienable' sort which the individual could reliquish on the condition that every other member of society did likewise. The result of this collective compromise was the social contract.[19]

In a stirring passage from the *Reclamation*, Fichte explained how the individual must act according to his own 'internal' law.

> Man can be neither inherited, nor sold, nor given; he can be no one's property, since he is and must remain his own property. He bears deep in his breast a godly spark- his conscience- which raises him above the animals and makes him into a fellow citizen of the world whose first member is God. It commands him absolutely and unconditionally to will this and not to will that; and it commands freely and autonomously,

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[18] Fichte, "Reclamation....," *What is Enlightenment?* pp. 6-7.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

> without any external compulsion. If he is to follow this inner voice- and it commands this absolutely- then he must also not be compelled externally; he must be free of all alien influences. No stranger may rule over him; he must himself act according to the law in him: he is free and must remain free. Nothing other than this law in himself may order him, for it is his only law, and he contradicts this law if he allows another law to be forced upon him- the humanity in him is destroyed and he is degraded to the class of animals.[20]

The individual was a free and autonomous being and a member of the world community. Fichte's cosmopolitan premises are reiterated in later writings and strengthen the contention that his idea of an international league of nations was genuine.[21]

Fichte made it clear in the *Reclamation* that alienable rights, the type surrendered to the community for mutual protection, could never be forced by the community.[22] This anticipated Fichte's novel conception of revolution which precluded the role of social organizations. The primacy of the individual dictated that collective organization was severely handicapped, regardless of its purpose or leadership, since these organizations were established by the unconditional alienation of the individual's rights. Unlike Rousseau, who wrote about the 'volonté generale,' as a social construct to guide the progress of a people according to its collective will, Fichte doubted this possibility. As Fichte's political thinking matured, the agency of social organizations, such as the Freemasons, and state organizations, was given increasing predominance, provided that it was connected to the individual's striving for self-cultivation.

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[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Armstrong, A.C. "Fichte's Conception of a League of Nations," *Journal of Philosophy* XXIX p. 6., (March, 1932), pp. 153-58.

[22] "Rights of this second type are therefore alienable; however, man must surrender them voluntarily, he must never have to surrender them. " Fichte, "Reclamation...." *What is Enlightenment?* p. 9.

Although Rousseau's writings influenced Fichte's thinking, there is unquestionably an advancement in Fichte's analysis which could have been informed by contemporary events such as the Reign of Terror in France. Fichte's ideal society was one based heavily on the individual rights he had outlined in the *Reclamation* and later in the *Correction*. As Anthony LaVopa points out in his article on Fichte and the French Revolution, Fichte believed that in an ideal revolution, "the revolution was not a collective seizure of political power, but an individual withdrawal from power".[23] Hence a revolution was not considered a collective process, but rather one of individual decision to opt out of a social contract with the state.[24]

Fichte was wise to have discounted the importance of Rousseau's 'volonté generale' because of its tendency to justify those who claimed to be speaking for the collective. This was certainly the case with the Princes, whom Fichte did not let escape from his wounding criticism. Of course in France there were many other examples of self-anointed demagogues who claimed to execute the 'will' of the general public.

Conversely, the grounds upon which a Fichtean revolution might take place were scarcely, if ever, achieved. A new state, based on the principles of the general public, would come into existence when each individual had voluntarily agreed to relinquish his alienable rights to a new collective. At that point, the previous revolution would be complete.[25] This improbable reality underlined Fichte's belief that steady civilizational progress was preferable to

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[23]Anthony LaVopa, "The Revelatory Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History* 22(2) 1989. p. 158.

[24]*Ibid.*

[25]*Ibid.*

revolution. As Fichte stated in the *Reclamation*, an improvement of the human condition depended on the progress of human history. Improvement

> has happened, as far as we are able to trace previous human history, and will happen, for as long as there is human history, in two ways: either through powerful leaps, or through gradual, slow but steady steps forward. A people is able to make more progress in half a century through leaps, through powerful convulsions of state and revolutions, than it did in the ten previous centuries - but this half century is also full of misery and trouble. It can also, however, regress just as far and be thrown back into the barbarism of the previous millenium. World history provides evidence of both. Powerful revolutions are always a daring risk for mankind; if they succeed, the victory that is achieved is well worth the adversity that has been endured; if they fail, they force their way through misery to greater misery. Gradual steps forward are a more certain path to greater enlightenment, and with it to the improvement of the political constitution. The progress they make is less noticeable when it occurs, but when you look back, you see a path on which a large distance has been traversed.[26]

Fichte therefore established a civil society on the basis of Rousseau's social contract, with the prince as its executive power. Fichte observed a dialectical process of development where man acted upon nature to procure a moral development.[27]

Fichte reminded the Princes that their purpose was not to procure the happiness of the citizens, but the protection of their rights. Any powers beyond this belonged to God. Fichte foreshadowed the theme of decline and re-birth in the *Addresses to the German Nation* when he wrote that

> There is one who truly can build a new world from the ruins of devastation, and living bodies from the putrefaction of decay, who lets

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[26]Fichte, "Reclamation...." *What is Enlightenment?* , pp. 9-10.

[27]"It belongs to our destiny [Bestimmung] to make free use of all that lies open to us for our spiritual and moral development." *ibid.*, p. 12.

> mountains of blooming grapes flourish on top of collapsed volcanoes, and, above the grave, allows men to dwell, live, and enjoy themselves.[28]

The "one' which Fichte refers to is God. Fichte reiterated this theme when he wrote that "new life can only come from complete decay".[29] What distinguishes the latter passage from the former is the implicit understanding that a national regeneration must take place, which required state intervention.

In both Rousseau and Fichte, "will" served as the basis of the state and justified its actions to serve the public welfare. Rousseau regarded the state as an organic construct of the "general will." Therefore man possessed rights even while in a "state of nature," in other words, before civilization had developed to the level of governments. Fichte rejected this concept, observing that man did not possess any "natural rights" without the existence of the state. William Dunning argues that Fichte believed that the state was man's natural condition.[30] Fichte later extended the exalted view of the state to economic principles, when he argued for autarky in *The Closed Commercial State* (1800).

The *Reclamation* and the first part of the *Contribution* were met with hostility among the German conservative elites. This was acknowledged by Fichte in a letter to Heinrich Stephani in mid- December, 1793.

> My "Contribution" has caused something of a stir, and (according to what people write me) I am unfortunately rather widely held to be the author. I hear Reinhold is the one who made this public. The printing of the second part was not completed in time for the fair, but it will be ready soon[...]Both of my writings are banned in Berlin.[31]

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[28]Fichte, "Reclamation...." *What is Enlightenment?* p. 21.

[29]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (New York, 1968), introduction.

[30]William Dunning, *Political Theories from Rousseau to Spencer* (New York, 1950), p. 139.

[31] Breazeale, ed. *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings* (Ithaca, 1988) p. 370.

It did not, however, mitigate his strong feelings about the continued printing of the second part. He did not seem to be greatly concerned that the reading public knew who had written the two essays.

The *Reclamation* and *Contribution* were a response to the debate surrounding the French Revolution in intellectual circles. Fichte defended the authority of the collective to re-define the state against writers such as Edmund Burke[32] who contended that the French Revolution was an alien concept imposed on the French nation. Fichte's literary tone exuded a pride which was characteristic of him in questions of controversy. Fichte felt comfortable in discussing these matters with Reinhold, his predecessor at Jena, who seemed to hold similar political sympathies.[33]

Rousseau and Fichte

Fichte made an intellectual homage to Rousseau when, concerning the topic of anonymous authorship, he wrote in the *Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought* that

> chaque honnête homme doit avouer, ce qu'il a écrit.[34]

Fichte was making a clear reference to Rousseau's remark in the preface to the ideological novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Heloïse* in which Rousseau wrote "[T]out honnête homme doit avoir les livres qu'il publie".[35]

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[32]Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis, 1987). A.W. Rehberg expounded Burke's thought in Germany and was therefore considered his intellectual disciple.

[33]"Letter to Reinhold, November 13, 1793," *Ibid.*, p. 378.

[34]Fichte, "Reclamation...." *What is Enlightenment?* p. 3.

[35]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1964), II, p. 5.

Besides the individualist perspective of Rousseau's most famous educational work, the *Emile*, the French philosopher had written two smaller but no less intriguing pronouncements on pedagogy which influenced Fichte.

A brief article on 'Political Economy' in the *Encyclopédie* of 1755 advocated a state-controlled school system which resembled that of the ancient city-state of Sparta[36] in its brutal acquisition of authority over the nation's children. This ran counter to the ideas of another educational theorist who had great influence on Fichte: Heinrich Pestalozzi. A central theme of Pestalozzian schooling was the large educating role which the family played while rearing its children. Fichte's early writings would have concurred with Pestalozzi, and there were other leading minds of the day, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, whose thinking on the subject was at a polar opposite with Rousseau. In Humboldt's masterpiece of libertarian theory, *The Limits of State Action*, a self-guided approach to education was advanced over one instituted by the state. One of the crowning achievements of Humboldt's career, however, was the establishment of the University of Berlin through state action for the purpose of educating the nation's intellectual elite. All three thinkers, therefore, developed a stage in their thinking which required state involvement for the welfare of its citizens.

Fichte's extensive career as a tutor no doubt assured his belief in the individual pedagogical method, regardless of whatever problems he had dealing with the parents.[37] Fichte's early writings on small-scale educational

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[36]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "An Extract from the Article on 'Political Economy' composed for the Encyclopédie (1755)," in *The Minor Educational Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* ed. and trans. by William Boyd (New York, 1962), pp. 39-43.

[37]Those scholars who have studied Fichte's early career conclude uniformly that Fichte had great difficulty dealing with the parents expectations of his services as a private tutor. See Breazeale, introduction to *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, and Adamson, *Fichte*.

themes indicate a more personal approach to education.[38] Fichte obviously found aspects of Rousseau's theories useful although he did not prescribe similar solutions until historical events conspired to bring the German states to the brink of annihilation.

Similar themes are advanced in Rousseau's second treatise on state-led education. Although it resembled the first essay in many respects, there was a sense of urgency attached to the proposals for the Polish Government which reflected the level of crisis facing the nation.

Only months before the first Polish Partition, Rousseau wrote *Considerations on the Government of Poland and on the Reformation of it projected in April, 1772.* Rousseau outlined a strategy to strengthen Polish civil society and its position in central Europe by utilizing government institutions for the purpose of creating a 'national spirit.'[39] The idea of an educational system taught by Poles, which would instruct its youth regarding national history, culture and duty was the life-blood of a patriotic spirit capable of heartening its citizens with a love of their country. In other writings, Rousseau made clear the distinction between educating 'men' and educating 'citizens.' Regardless of this point, however, he insisted that national education was "the privilege of free men".[40] Only by becoming free could men realize their common interests and respect for the law.[41]

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[38]See G.H. Turnbull's translations of Fichte's writings in G.H. Turnbull, *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte: A critical account together with translations* (London, 1926), pp. 119-281.

[39]Rousseau observed that " it is the national institutions that form the genius, the character, the tastes and the morale of the people, and make it different from every other people." Rousseau, "Considerations on the Government of Poland,"*The Minor Educational Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* , p. 96.

[40]*ibid.*, p. 97.

[41]"National education is the privilege of free men. Only free men have common interests and are really united by the law." *ibid.*

One cannot help but notice the ease with which educational theories flowed into nationalist concepts. In Fichte's mind these notions lent themselves so strongly to each other that they became joined within an all-encompassing theory of the state. Depending on which stage of thinking is examined, Rousseau, Humboldt and Fichte all had developed structures which either showed a high level of agency, or an abrupt discounting, of the individual.

Teaching at the University of Jena

The University of Jena posed a new challenge for Fichte as a teacher. Whereas before coming to Jena his audiences rarely exceeded double-digits, as holder of the Chair of Philosophy, Fichte was responsible for the teaching of a least two courses to audiences reaching at times over five hundred people.[42] His experiences as a lecturer only strengthened his confidence in a unique teaching style that was at the time considered unorthodox. Fichte's innovations included providing the printed text of his lectures to students, and establishing 'conservatoria' meetings in which he would field questions from his students; creating essay competitions and publishing the winning essay in the *Philosophisches Journal*; [43]and the very popular idea of giving 'public' lectures which the entire university community could attend.[44] Whatever problems existed between Fichte and the university faculty and administration, his popularity with the students was legendary.[45] Fichte's force of personality, combined with the weight of the subject matter, produced in him a desire to impress his audience with the will to 'act' in accordance with the philosophy of

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[42]*Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 19.

[43]Fichte co-edited the *Journal* at this time.

[44]ibid., pp. 18-21.

[45]*ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Daniel Breazeale noted that the aim of Fichte's public lectures was to "show a connection between higher learning and the problems of mankind as a whole".[46] Once again this illustrates Fichte's goal of man attaining freedom through 'activity.' The concept of 'striving' towards the creation of a moral world was a necessary ingredient in his philosophical world-view. Later, in the *Addresses,* the striving of the individual becomes synonymous with the striving of the nation, so as to encompass both concepts in a single plan to achieve the objectives of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

At this point the reader will note two central aspects of Fichte's conceptual framework: i) the revolving, or dialectical, nature of his thought-process, and ii) a constant dynamism which drove this dialectic, the source of which was God. Fichte reconciles what seem to be two opposite points of view into an all-encompassing whole. Therefore the dialectical opposites of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, self-guided *bildung* and national education, inviolate individualism and unbridled statism are all given a relevance to each other which Fichte regarded as a totality. He hoped that conventional society would be transcended to achieve a moral utopia.

Draft Letter to Jens Baggesen

A draft letter which Fichte wrote to the Danish poet, Jens Baggesen in April-May 1795 is one of the first proclamations, but by no means the only one, of support for the newly established French Republic. Fichte allied himself with the republican side by concluding that the *Wissenschaftslehre* was "incompatible with kings and princes".[47] He speculated on whether France

[46]ibid.

[47]Fichte, "Draft of a Letter to Jens Baggeson," p. 385.

would offer him a pension to write the entire *Wissenschaftslehre*, which he would accept, chiefly because his system "was the first system of freedom." He continued:

> During the very years when France was using external force to win its political freedom I was engaged in an inner struggle with myself and with all deeply rooted prejudices, and this is the struggle which gave birth to my system. Thus the French nation assisted in the creation of my system. Its valor encouraged me and gave me the energy I required for grasping my system. Indeed, it was while I was writing about the French Revolution that I was rewarded by the first hints and intimations of this system. Thus in a certain sense this system already belongs to the nation of France, and the question is whether that nation wishes externally and publicly to appropriate my system by supplying me the wherewithal to develop it.[48]

Fichte could hardly have written a more enthusiastic letter illustrating both his admiration of the French Revolution and the philosophical impact which it had on his philosophy. It is remarkable the degree to which Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* had been propelled by a political act.

Fichte maintained his francophile sentiments in a letter he wrote to Reinhold on 22 May 1799, shortly after the atheism controversy.[49] Hans Kohn observes Fichte's political ideas and concludes that "in these years Fichte showed a complete indifference to the idea of patriotism. The fatherland of every man was the land of individual liberty; this ideal seemed to Fichte at that time realized in France."[50]

Thus, Kohn suggests that Fichte believed the development of mankind was only possible under French hegemony. Furthermore, he argues, Fichte's

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[48]*ibid.*, pp. 385-86.

[49]Hans Kohn, "The Paradox of Fichte's Nationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* X (3: 1949), p. 321.

[50]*ibid.*

benevolent attitude towards France continued well into the next decade. By 1805 Kohn states that Fichte remained ambivalent about which nation would lead Europe toward the next level of civilizational progress.[51]

While Fichte was certainly not ignorant of national distinctions, he allied himself with the country he believed was best equipped to bring about his philosophical system. The *Wissenschaftslehre* had still not been articulated to Fichte's satisfaction, however. This allowed for the development of his philosophy to be guided by his political principles, which heretofore had not been the case.

Intersubjectivity

Judging by his letters to contemporaries, the notion of freedom continued to dominate Fichte's intellectual ruminations. He wrote to Reinhold on 29 August, 1795:

> I have been investigating natural rights this summer and have found that no deduction of the reality of the concept of rights exists anywhere. All explanations of it are merely formal, semantic explanations which already presuppose both the existence within us of such a concept (as a fact) as well as the meaning of this concept.[52]

Another fragment of Fichte's letter to Reinhold deserves repetition here on account of its elucidation of Fichte's ideas concerning 'natural rights,' a pivotal concept which became the centrepiece in the *Wissenschaftslehre* :

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[51] *ibid.*, p. 325.

[52] Fichte re-considered the Kantian interpretation of rights before writing the Science of Rights. "Letter to Reinhold, August 29, 1795,"Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings, p. 407.

> In the synthetic course of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the following proposition is to be found: I must think of myself *as an individual*, that is, as *determining* a sphere of things which cannot initiate anything (beginning with my body). (Individuality expresses itself only in the realm of sensibility. The pure, infinite I is one, and since the individuality is supposed to be that of an I, it must be an actively determining individual). I must also think of myself as determined in a realm of rational beings outside myself, which I can do only if I am an individual and only if I also posit such a sphere and each object within that sphere as an individual as well; therefore, etc. There can be no individual unless there are at least two of them. *The conditions which make individuality possible* are called *"rights."* It is absolutely impossible for me to attribute a right to myself without attributing it to a being outside of myself, because it is absolutely impossible for me to posit myself as an individual without positing a being outside of myself as an individual.[53]

This was the foundation of Fichte's concept of intersubjectivity. Since the ego could not posit itself without, at first, recognizing the existence of other egos, a philosophical basis for 'natural rights' was found. Human freedom, outlined by Kant and later developed in Fichte's *Foundations*, only existed when the "spheres" of other individuals was respected.

The Science of Rights, or *The Foundations of Natural Law* (*Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre*) was the partial result of these labours, published in 1796. As the German title suggests, it was related heavily, indeed could be regarded as an appendage to his basic ideas expressed in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. An "analysis of the idea of freedom"[54] preoccupied his attention for a good reason. It was a fundamental concept which Fichte had to establish before developing his philosophy any further. Moreover, it lent a tangible foundation to the somewhat abstract language used

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[53] *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, pp. 408-09.

[54] Patrick Gardiner, "Fichte and German Idealism," *Idealism Past and Present*, p. 111.

in philosophical discussions. In the *Science of Rights* he began to formally outline his ideas on social organization and the state's role in the general welfare. Fichte's political ideas and his contribution to German national consciousness depended greatly on his idea of freedom and individuality.

The Foundations was not only an abstract discussion of natural rights; it was also an opportuntity for Fichte to indicate his political sentiments. By way of an example, Fichte emphasized his support of the French Revolution when he outlined the efforts of the Republican Army to compel its opponents to recognize it as a legitimate state.[55] Thus the principle of intersubjectivity was applied to the legitimation of nation-states.

In a section of the *Science of Rights* entitled "An Outline of International and Cosmopolitan Law" Fichte further developed his theory of individual rights in the context of nation-states. Since Fichte rejected the Rousseauian concept of man's 'natural rights' in a 'state of nature' (i.e. before the existence of states) the individual must be compelled to exist in a state. Otherwise the individual did not exist, since "the state itself is man's natural condition".[56] The purpose of this was not to deny rights to any human, but rather to argue for the necessity of the state in bringing about the conditions in which man could develop. Fichte continued:

> It is a proof that the state is not an arbitrary invention but is demanded by nature and reason if in all places where human beings exist.

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[55]J.G. Fichte, "The Foundations of Natural Law According to the Principles of the Theory of Science," in Reiss, ed. The Political Thought of the German Romantics, 1793-1815 (Oxford, 1955), pp. 76-77.

[56]William Dunning, *A History of Political Theories from Rousseau to Spencer* (New York, 1950), pp. 138-140.

Fichte's ultimate goal was for "all men who dwell on the earth's surface [...] to become united in one single state".[57]

The Atheism Controversy

The Atheism Controversy, as it came to be known, is significant in terms of Fichte's evolving political thought in a narrow but relevant sense. Primarily, the charge of atheism against Fichte which followed the publication of his brief essay in the *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrter* forced Fichte to clarify his attitudes towards temporal government and its relationship to God. Secondly, it confirmed Fichte's reputation for having a sharp and unyielding temperament, which would suggest a more careful reading of his controversial texts.

The general thrust of Fichte's beliefs in this sphere of theology can be obtained from his essay "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World," written in 1799 as a preface to an article written by Friedrich Karl Forberg which dealt with the topic of religion.[58] Fichte felt a "pressing urgency" as co-editor[59] of the journal and as a fellow philosopher to clarify not so much his critcisms of what Forberg wrote, but rather to draw conclusions from Forberg's article which the author himself "failed to arrive at".[60] In typically Fichtean fashion, it was this 'clarification' which was misinterpreted and actually fuelled the first accusations of atheism.

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[57]*ibid.*, p. 73.

[58]Forberg's article was entitled "Entwickelung des Begriffs der Religion" and appeared in Vol. VIII, no. 1of the *Philosophisches Journal*, pp. 21-46.

[59]Fichte co-edited the *Philosophisches Journal* with Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer.

[60]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World," in Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings* translated and edited by Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis, 1994), p. 143.

From the standpoint of Fichte's political thought it is interesting to observe the increasing agency which Fichte, when writing this essay, accorded man as a creature capable of changing the world. Fichte contended that a belief in God was present in human beings without any instruction. What was at issue with Fichte was "[h]ow does a human being arrive at this belief?"[61] Fichte asserted that the materially determinist outlook did not solve the matter of how one accounted for the world in which one lived. The transcendental viewpoint, however, did explain the 'sensible' world (i.e., the world around us) since it denied the possibility of the world existing on its own. However, to contend that the sensible world was merely the product of intellectual machinations was an equally hollow argument. "Wherever we look," Fichte wrote, "we see nothing but the reflection of our own inner activity".[62] The sensible world was the creation of God's transcendence in man. Therefore God enabled man's idealism. Humans were capable of activity and therefore possessed a freedom above and beyond the sensible world. The impulses which guided human activity were manifested in the 'supersensible' world which was, for Fichte, the foundation of a moral world-order. The individual must propose for himself the goal of morality.[63] Governing an individual's morality was an overarching world-order. Fichte wrote that "[t]his living and efficaciously acting moral order is itself God".[64]

It was this final statement which landed Fichte in controversy. Fichte's rejection of an anthropomorphic God and his contention that God existed in the morality of men's minds, constituted for some the notion that God *would not*

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[61] *Ibid.* p. 144.

[62] *Ibid.* p. 145.

[63] Fichte goes on to write: " My entire existence, the existence of all moral beings, and the sensible world, as the common theatre of our actions, thereby obtain a relation to morality." *Ibid.* p. 149.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 151

exist but for man. Therefore God did not exist outside of man. Fichte's critics were misapprehending his ideas if they believed he was an atheist, since he emphatically believed in God as a moral world-order. However, Fichte's notion of what God actually was suggested strongly that his philosophy was not 'objective,' since it was only certain that God *did* exist in man's consciousness. Indeed, Fichte's notion of God, although pious, was rather abstract. It is not, therefore, clear whether Fichte's idealism was objective or subjective, that is, whether God, the absolute Ego, had any existence beyond the finite egos of men.[65] What does become clear after reading Fichte's essay is his belief that man existed above his sensible surroundings of the world, that he possessed a moral capacity which no other thing could possess, that he was superior to his surroundings and was destined by God to improve upon what he saw before him. Man's duty was to harness nature to his purposes, a notion which suggests a scientific approach to the environment. This, of course, was Fichte's intention, since he regarded his philosophical system as a science which would ultimately be mapped out for future generations. His ultimate goal was to create a world fit for all humans to live in.

Although the focus of the controversy surrounded how Fichte perceived God as the highest form of a moral world-order, the side-effect was to clarify the relationship between God and man in the temporal universe, which had been earlier ascertained in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte equated God with the absolute Ego which governed the individual ego and natural anti-ego. However, the individual possessed the power of free choice - the 'Godly spark' ignited in man - and was therefore not possessed by anyone, including God.

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[65]J.A. Leighton, "Fichte's Conception of God," *The Philosophical Review*, p. 145.

This notion, controversial in 1799, had already been made in Fichte's *Reclamation* of 1793 when he wrote,

> You know - or can convince yourself if you do not already know - that you are not even God's property, but that He has impressed deep in your breast, along with freedom, his divine seal, to belong to no one but yourself.[66]

Consequently the notion of man being the master of his worldly surroundings took on a meaning which had never before been so profound. There was a political subtext to this statement which was not lost on either his supporters or critics.

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[66]Fichte, "Reclamation....," *What is Enlightenment?* p. 7.

CHAPTER THREE

Fichte, the Freemasons, and the Central Concept of *Bildung*, 1800-1804

Fichte's dismissal from the University of Jena in 1799[1] had a sudden impact on his financial position. He spent many of the following years in Berlin for the purpose of securing employment which would, at the same time, permit him to elaborate the definitive version of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

Fichte's long-standing association with the masonic order was revived when he settled in Berlin. On 11 April 1800, Fichte became a member of the masonic Royal York for Friendship Lodge in Berlin. Shortly thereafter he wrote a lengthy essay on the subject of freemasonry entitled *Philosophy of Masonry: Letters to Constant.* As the title suggested, the styling of the essay resembled a

[1]The accusation of atheism was brought to Friedrich-August, prince elector of Saxony, who in November 1798, issued a statement condemning Fichte's article "On Our Belief in the Divine Order of the Universe." All issues of the *Philosophisches Journal* were confiscated. While the court at Weimar considered issuing an official reprimand to the authors, Fichte wrote a letter to Privy Councillor Voigt indicating that he would resign if censured. On March 29, 1799, Duke Karl-August announced Fichte's resignation. Daniel Breazeale, "Editor's Introduction," *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 41-44. It has been noted by Paul Sweet that Goethe "had *not* been altogether unhappy to see Fichte ejected from Jena." Paul Sweet, "Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte and the Idéologues," *Historiographia Linguistica* XV (3: 1988), p. 365.

written correspondence to a colleague, although in this case there was no Socratic dialogue.[2] However, there was little doubt that Fichte intended to address a wider audience. The subject of his letters was the writer and Jacobin politician Henri Benjamin Constant de Rebecque. Constant was born of Huguenot stock in 1767 (five years after Fichte), educated at Oxford, Erlangen and Edinburgh and lived in Paris soon after the French Revolution.[3] He entered the Tribunate in 1799, but was banished from France in 1802 for denouncing the despotic acts of Napoleon. He later wrote a multi-volume work on religion.

It is probable that Fichte was at least indirectly acquainted with Constant through the friendship of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who from 1794 to 1797 resided in Jena when Fichte lived there and conducted an extensive intellectual discourse with the philosopher on the *Wissenschaftslehre*.[4] During his stay in Jena, Humboldt became influenced by Fichtean idealism both in a general sense and as a linguist.[5] Later, after moving to Paris (1797-1801), Humboldt became friends with Constant and also Madame de Staël, both of whom had an active interest in German philosophy and Humboldt's linguistic theories[6] (Fichte later met De Staël in Berlin in 1804[7]). The transcendental viewpoint which Fichte outlined in his philosophy influenced Humboldt's approach to general

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[2]Dialogue was used on a number of occasions by Fichte to elucidate his philosophical position. *The Vocation of Man* stands as an example of this writing style.

[3]"Constant de Rebecque," *Chambers' Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Magnus Magnusson (Cambridge, 1990), p. 339.

[4]Paul Sweet, "Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte and the Idéologues," pp. 349-55.

[5]On the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Humboldt wrote " there has perhaps never been anything more acute or more penetrating." Humboldt said that he admired Fichte for his "great speculative mind." *ibid.*, p. 351.

[6]*ibid.*, p. 363.

[7]George Kelly, "Introduction," *Addresses to the German Nation* (New York, 1968), xvii.

grammar;[8] these linguistic matters will be discussed in the context of the *Addresses to the German Nation* in the fourth chapter.

It is reasonable to assume that Fichte regarded Constant as a contemporary with similar political allegiances. The lecturing tone of Fichte's essay, *Philosophy of Masonry: Letters to Constant* was overbearing considering the stature of his colleague, and therefore one could conclude that the title was little more than a rhetorical flourish, and that the treatise was meant for the reading public.

Fichte's essay was not merely an expository piece written to show his faith in the masonic brotherhood. It was, for Fichte, an opportunity to relate the rudiments of freemasonry with the subject of *Bildung*, or personal formation. Central to this connection was a universal morality, used by man to shape nature, which Fichte described as when "one do[es] his well understood duty, with absolute inner freedom, without any external incentive, simply because it is his duty".[9]

The general concept of a striving for a full development of the individual's capacities had been championed by many leading thinkers of the period, but none more brilliantly and lucidly than the distinguished philologist and statesman Wilhelm von Humboldt. In 1791 Humboldt wrote a lengthy essay on various libertarian subjects relating to the individual and society. Originally entitled *Ideen zu einem Versuch die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimmen*, the essay later developed an English audience in 1854 under the title *The Sphere and Duties of Government.*[10] Humboldt opened his treatise

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[8]*ibid.*

[9]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Philosophy of Masonry: Letters to Constant," in *Masonic Addresses and Writings*, (New York, 1953) edited by Roscoe Pound, p. 171.

[10]J.W. Burrow, "Editor's Introduction," *The Limits of State Action* (Cambridge, 1969), xvii.

with a statement that revealed such confidence in his choice of life-long interests that it offered individual self-formation as a universal method of improving society-at-large. "The true end of Man," he wrote,

> or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole.[11]

Humboldt's passionate declaration of individual liberty was matched by Fichte's thoroughgoing belief in personal action stemming from moral compulsion. Although stylistically dry and sometimes murky in its language, the *Letters to Constant* state Fichte's opinion of human development, and they outline a vision for a political organism which would yield the finest aspects of civilization. The state was an inherently idealist notion which operated on the premise that it could develop rather than hinder individual growth.

The *Letters to Constant* are compelling proof that Fichte strongly considered a more libertarian approach before abandoning it later. Many of the beliefs Fichte espoused later, around the height of Prussia's humiliation disagreed considerably with the principles expounded in Humboldt's *The Limits of State Action*, most notably state-sponsored education. However, in 1800, there was a much larger area of convergence between the two men's world-views. As an exponent of Freemasonry, Fichte outlined the universal qualities of *Bildung* which would ultimately make humanity morally perfect. "The one end of human existence upon the earth," he wrote, "is neither heaven nor hell, but solely the quality of being men, which we have here in ourselves, and its highest possible development".[12] Whatever did not relate to this development

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[11]Wilhelm von Humboldt, *TheLimits of State Action* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 10.

[12]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Philosophy of Masonry: Letters to Constant," p. 137.

could not be the purpose of man. Only that which the individual could truly know or develop was the human.

In a broader context, Fichte's sense of *Bildung* underwent changes in form and application according to contemporary problems. This is illustrated by his change in position regarding the authority of a state to impose controls on its citizens. Something which he once considered within the personal realm of control was later relinquished to the state in what Fichte believed were the best interests of the nation. In the *Letters to Constant*, Fichte referred to the 'unseen hand of Providence,' as leading 'the work of the individuals to the welfare and development of the whole.'[13] Writing less than a quarter-century after Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, the Fichte would appear to have borrowed Smith's libertarian notion of the self-interest of individuals serving communal improvement. The 'night watchman' theory of the state propounded by Humboldt paralleled Fichte's early writings on Freemasonry, but differed considerably with Fichte's belief, after the occupation of Prussia, that state intervention in cultivating national education was essential. Thus Fichte's political ideas regarding state agency underwent a significant development during the Prussian crisis.

Fichte observed the narrow purpose of all occupations, regardless of their field, and declared this 'pedantry' to be contrary to the goals of *Bildung* and, therefore, Freemasonry.[14] The history of the masonic order showed its rapid development in the bosom of society, whether despised or encouraged by its rulers. Freemasonry sought to cultivate and unify all of the human capacities and talents. The freemason had the opportunity to become more fully human by striving for perfection; he would then be able to re-design society in a morally

[13]*ibid.*, p. 139.

[14]*ibid.*, pp. 139-44.

free image. It followed that the masonic order was an integral part of any society which sought this perfection. The very existence of the masonic order, Fichte wrote, was proof that man had not fully developed.[15] This teleological point suggested that the masonic order would gradually 'wither away' when society had progressed toward a perfect moral freedom. In this way it is obvious that the masonic order possessed at this relatively early stage qualities and responsibilities which would later be assigned to the state in *Addresses to the German Nation*. In the *Addresses*, a central concept of the "new" education was the separation of the corrupted generations from the "pupils."[16] The notion of the state as a purposeful tool both serving and recasting society found currency in many later philosophical systems, most notably Hegel and Marx. This concept was based firmly on the premise of the perfectability of man, something which Fichte deeply believed, which indeed was crucial to his philosophical notion of constant 'striving' which made man a moral being. Fichte accorded this fundamental power of social change to a group kept on the margins of society by persecution and secrecy. Later it was incorporated into his philosophy and, under extraordinary circumstances, became the domain of the state.

From another standpoint, the society of freemasons could be regarded as a microcosm of general society. Fichte asked how it was that such a group could bind together such diverse modes of thought , life and education.[17] This rhetorical question served the purpose of entrenching the importance of the masonic order in the reader's mind as the surest way toward social progress. The best way to ensure social progress was to keep the masonic order distinct

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[15]*ibid.*, p. 153. "But of itself the very existence of Masonry shows that what we have called an end in itself has not yet been attained."

[16]J.G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (New York, 1968) p. 26.

[17]*ibid.*, p. 134.

from but not wholly separate from general society.[18] Separation from general society was a common aspect of Fichte's ideas, whether they were philosophical, political or pedagogical. Fichte predicated individual or collective moral progress on its ability to strive toward a higher level of existence which necessitated the severing of mundane social contacts. It was paradoxical that in order to progress morally, society would have to follow the lead of an elite group which disregarded the source of its own moral conscience. At the heart of this plan was the belief that previous generations were of little use in the striving toward moral perfection. Therefore, Fichte adopted a somewhat problematical attitude toward the sources of morality from which a civilization inculcates its progeny. The notion of civilization as an organic structure which developed from its own history, and was therefore hostile to "a priori" concepts, was central to Burke's condemnation of the French Revolution. Seven years after the *Letters to Constant*, at the height of Napoleonic tyranny, Fichte concluded that the new national education, compulsory for all, would be taught in complete isolation of society, since the corrupted older generation had precipitated Prussia's annihilation.[19]

In the Third Letter, Fichte reiterated the basic tenets of the *Wissenschaftslehre* when he noted that a humanistic determinism was at work in the world, the highest development of which was its goal. The role of nature was rejected as irrelevant to this progress. Society was the only organism which could lead man out of his moral abyss. But again Fichte clouded the supposed theological premises of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Regarding *Bildung,* Fichte wrote earlier in the treatise that "[W]e know nothing else, and what we call

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[18]*ibid.*, p. 143-44.

[19]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* , p. 26.

godlike or devilish or animal is nothing other than human".[20] This suggested that God was a human construct which was within the human realm. Less than a year earlier Fichte had lost his position as holder of the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Jena after suggesting, to some, that God was alive only in the human mind (see chapter 2). This once again reinforced man's unassailable position in the universe. In the context of the *Letters to Constant*, it placed the freemasons in the vanguard of civilizational development.

Owing to the cosmopolitan nature of freemasonry, Fichte might have felt obliged to discuss world citizenship in a favourable light. The *Letters to Constant* show clearly that Fichte regarded this concept as progressive. When discussing the ultimate goal of Freemasonry, Fichte was clear that its members would have a beneficial effect upon the world, not upon their respective countries.[21] Fichte even endorsed the Masonic order as potentially "one of the most important institutions for the world, which without it is essentially defective".[22] In his Seventh Letter, Fichte contrasted the cultivated Freemason to the narrowly-trained 'pedant' whom Fichte likened to a "blind machine": an inhuman automaton which was the antithesis of *Bildung*. World history was therefore a progressive science which was driven by the continual enlightenment of individuals against the pedantry of the status quo. This, of course, had implications for the state. The sphere and duties of the state regarding national education (outlined in the *Addresses*) easily adopted those of the masonic order. Fichte's contention that the state would eventually "wither away" was therefore at odds with granting it more discretion in bringing about this utopian environment. On a pragmatic level, one could argue that the

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[20]Fichte, *Letters to Constant*, p. 137.

[21]*ibid.*, p. 158.

[22]*ibid.*, p. 162.

"withering" state, whether national or international, was a stage of development which Fichte did not forsee happening in the near future. This was because he realized the importance of state agency for the protection and development of the individual. Fichte therefore anticipated a striving toward perfection of the state.[23]

It did not take Fichte long to extend the analogy of the Freemasons to the state. Fichte made an implicit advocation of two social classes: the governors and pedagogues, on one side, contrasted with their dialectical antithesis, the class "which care[s] for the needs of the living on earth".[24] This statement reveals the remarkable faith which Fichte had in the teaching class. As in the relationship between freemasonry and general society, Fichte believed that the two fundamental classes should actively influence each other. There could not arise a perfect state until the dialectic conveyed a natural and healthy reciprocity.[25]

After stepping on the precipice of atheism in the early letters, Fichte 'clarified' his position on the humanistic determinism he had espoused by connecting it with a pious belief in the infinite moralism of God. As he stated in the 'First Fundamental Principle' by which Freemasonry was to be judged, Fichte wrote that "the end-purpose of human existence is not at all in this present world".[26] This was a departure from the "neither heaven nor hell" comment Fichte made earlier in the essay.

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[23]" I remind you here in passing of the state in which we both live and to which one would not without the highest injustice deny the fame of striving for perfection." *ibid.*, p. 160.

[24]*ibid.*

[25]*ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

[26]"This first life is only preparation and germ of a higher existence, the certainty of which we feel within, notwithstanding we can think nothing as to its condition or kind or manner." *ibid.*, p. 163.

Fichte unified his theory of man's development by formulating a cosmopolitan basis for his moral freedom. In the Eighth Letter, Fichte states without qualification that "[t]he whole of humanity ought to make a single purely moral and devout community".[27] This paralleled the goals of world-wide Freemasonry. Even so, one cannot doubt that Fichte's conclusions are genuine, since they parallel both his early and later writings. Therefore Fichte believed that all humanity ought to constitute a single thoroughly just state.

Indeed, Fichte's commitment to a single world state is difficult to challenge. Fichte made reference to the importance of laws "thoroughly ordered by the eternal rules of right prescribed by reason".[28] This was a veiled reference to his own interpretation of laws, *The Foundation of Natural Law (Grundlage des Naturrechts.)* discussed earlier in chapter 2. These laws, which were prescribed by the state for the welfare of the individual, were not bound by national boundaries.

This conceptual duality is an inherent aspect of Fichte's political and social thought. It is important to recognize that Fichte could reconcile the interests of the nation-state with international goals. He clarified the dual-purpose of his statism when he wrote:

> I do not believe that the perfectly trained man will thereby withdraw from his state and be given over to a cold, inert cosmopolitanism. He will, on the contrary, become through this disposition the most perfect and useful citizen.[29]

Unquestionably, love of fatherland and world citizenship are most intimately connected.

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[27]*ibid.*, p. 164.

[28]*ibid.*

[29]*ibid.*, p. 180.

In concluding the *Letters to Constant*, Fichte made an appeal to the individual to strive for self-cultivation on practical grounds which deserves repeating:

> One who in viewing the deficiency in human relations, the unserviceableness, the peverseness, the corruption among men, drops his hands and passes on and complains of evil times, is no man. Just in this that you are capable of seeing men as deficient, lies upon you a holy calling to make them better. If everything was already what it ought to be, there would be no need of you in the world and you would as well have remained in the womb of nothing. Rejoice that all is not yet as it ought to be, so that you may find work and can be useful toward something.[30]

There is, therefore, a practical relevance to Fichte's philosophy of masonry which is apparent. The philosophy of masonry was a distinct manifestation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* which related to the political themes discussed above.

Less than seven years later, Fichte would utilize his own talents for the purpose of achieving a national regeneration in Germany.

The Closed Commercial State

Fichte exhibited a similar regard for the civilizing role of scholars in his treatise on political economy, *The Closed Commercial State*. Written in 1800, the *Closed Commercial State* was an application of the state's moral duty to the economic sphere.[31] Unlike many proponents of an autarchy, Fichte believed

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[30]*ibid.*, p. 198.

[31]J.G. Fichte, "The Closed Commercial State," translated by H.S. Reiss and P. Brown. In Reiss, ed. *The Political Thought of the German Romantics, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1955), p. 94.

that the state's discretion over economic matters was the surest means of preventing war and procuring a general welfare.[32]

Fichte's closed state system was dependent on each state to recognize its "natural frontiers". Fichte observed that

> certain parts of the earth's surface, together with their inhabitants, are visibly destined by nature to form political entities.[33]

This was hardly a sanctification of territorial aggrandizement, but rather a pragmatic solution to the problem of war. War was, by and large, created by the desire of one state to control the land and resources of another. Fichte believed there must be a rough equity of resources between states. The closed commercial state would therefore possess its natural frontiers, either by gaining or ceding territory, before closing its borders to foreign trade. In exceptional circumstances, commercial treaties could be established which would allow for the trade of some products (such as French wine) between states with mutual disparities.[34]

In this way, general prosperity would increase, Fichte reasoned, since standing armies would no longer be necessary and taxes would be reduced to a minimum.[35] Poverty would be abolished.[36] The reduced contact with foreigners would attach the citizens to the fatherland; national honour and national character would develop. Only the scholar and creative artist would be permitted foreign travel, but these classes should be encouraged to continue contact with the outside world.

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[32] *ibid.*, pp. 92, 97.

[33] *ibid.*, p. 94.

[34] *ibid.*, p. 98.

[35] *ibid.*, p. 101.

[36] *ibid.*, p. 98.

> The scholar's and the artist's travels are for the good of mankind and of the state; far from preventing them, the government ought to encourage them and should send scholars and artists abroad at public expense.[37]

Fichte's vision of the closed commercial state was therefore based on socialist precepts, since international borders were closed for the economic benefit of the individual. The individual should be able to enjoy the most satisfaction and suffer no more than the average requirements of "hard and continuous labour". Those who possessed a surplus of resources would offer it to those who did not possess the minimum. This implied the equalization of ownership.

Fichte's project of political economy was not a parochial attempt at severing the ties of communities and did not presume the importance of one state over another. Fichte accepted the conventional existence of nation-states and attempted to secure the development of its citizens by allowing the nation-state a greater degree of political discretion. Indeed the economic discretion of the state was a rational extension of its legal and political duty:

> [the state must] shut itself off completely from all commerce with foreign countries and form a separate commercial body as it has already formed separate legal and political bodies.[38]

Man's command over nature would permit his happiness and freedom.

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[37] *ibid.*, p. 99.

[38] *ibid.*, p. 94.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Philosophy of the State,
1804-1813

This thesis has shown that scholarship on Fichte's social and political thought has been largely neglected as a subject of independent study (see Review of Secondary Literature, Introduction). The central objective of this thesis is to show that the historiographical literature on Fichte's political writings in English has failed to consider the wider context of the philosopher's life-work. The previous three chapters have, in a historical context, analyzed Fichte's lesser-known writings in order to illuminate the salient political themes which are evident in his work. This chapter will analyze Fichte's most famous political document, *The Addresses to the German Nation*, within the context of his philosophical world-view. Rather than rejecting the *Addresses* as unrepresentative of the philosopher's life-work, the analysis will show that there are underlying themes in the *Addresses* which have been ignored by many observers who have not given full consideration to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.

The notion of the *Addresses* as the apotheosis of Fichte's political philosophy has not been lost on scholars. Indeed, many historians have unfairly singled out the *Addresses* as the crowning political statement of Fichte's life. The result has been a misleading perspective of Fichte's overall political theory. The grandiose tone and style of the *Addresses to the German Nation* reflected Fichte's bravery and sense of moral authority. Indeed, it is an epic document richly endowed with metaphorical assertions and a vast perspective. Given the gravity of circumstances surrounding them, contemporary observers must have had an exalted view of their importance both to the country and as a reflection of Fichte's deeply-held beliefs. One cannot help but be taken in by the idea that when delivering the *Addresses*, Fichte was at the height of his creative powers. They have therefore attained an historical importance which rivals the content of the speeches themselves.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to assess the impact which Fichte's *Addresses* have had on German nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Treated selectively, Fichte's writings have shown to be an easily-manipulated source for demagogues.[1] Of all his political writings the *Addresses to the German Nation* are by far the most frequently cited. Remarkably, the vulgarized contexts in which Fichte's *Addresses* have been used has often distorted the perspective of many scholars.[2] Thus it is not surprising to find Hans Sluga

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[1]For extensive treatments of the degradation of Fichte's political thought by future movements, see: F.W. Kaufman, "Fichte and National Socialism," *American Political Science Review* (36:1942), pp.460-470; H.T. Betteridge, "Fichte's Political Ideas: A Retrospect," *German Life and Letters* I (1936-37), pp. 293-304; Wilfred Koch, "Educating the Right: Fichte Society and Fichte Colleges in the Weimar Republic," (Dissertation Abstract, University of East Anglia, 1993), *German History* 12 (Oxford,1994).

[2]In his M.A. thesis on the reception of Fichte 's thought in German history, Michael Burtscher catalogues a number of passages made by racial anti-semites and national-socialists which misrepresent Fichte's thought. He then writes: "The effectiveness of such claims for propagandical [sic] uses is demonstrated well by the fact that also a number of later historians have been taken in by it." Michael Burtscher, " The Reception of Fichte's Thought in German History, 1860-1919," M.A. Thesis (Munich, 1991), p. 13.

contending that the *Addresses to the German Nation* was predicated on the assumption that "individualism was to be extirpated".[3] Indeed, many of these distortions abound in the secondary literature on German nationalism.[4] These assumptions are historiographical pitfalls which could be avoided by a more careful reading of the *Addresses* and a more thorough attention to Fichte's life-work.

It will be shown that a close textual analysis of the *Addresses* will reveal: i) that Fichte never relinquished his philosophical underpinnings for the sake of "German nationalism;" ii) that the "national regeneration" of which Fichte spoke and his proposed "national education" was not, by and large, of an aggressive nature; iii) that Fichte's linguistic contentions, despite the strong language employed, were nevertheless based on contemporary philological scholarship; and iv) that despite the chief subject of the *Addresses*, Fichte continued to express his optimistic vision of the foundation of a cosmopolitan federation of states.

The interrelation of Fichte's polemics and scholarship are presented together in the *Addresses*. The central ideas and terminology of the *Addresses* are related to the fundamental concepts of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. As an extension of Fichte's philosphy, the *Addresses* were a vital component of his political thought. Despite the extraordinary circumstances which precipitated their inception, the *Addresses* demonstrate the overarching influence of his philosophical meditations. At the same time, his political ideas were born of a reaction to the external events of the day. Fichte's world-view, taken in a broad context, formed a coherent ideological corpus. The *Addresses to the German Nation* illustrate this vividly.

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[3]Hans Sluga, "Fichte, Nietzsche, and the Nazis," *Heidegger's Crisis*, (Cambridge, 1993), p. 39.
[4]Burtscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15.

At face value, the *Addresses* are a nationalistic document. However, to gain a balanced perspective of the *Addresses*, one must observe the unifying themes of Fichte's philosophy which circumscribe his nationalism. Whatever sort of high-water mark the *Addresses* represented, shortly thereafter Fichte continued to enunciate his statist and educational concepts without nationalist overtones.

Characteristics of the Present Age

In the winter of 1804-1805 Fichte delivered a number of lectures collectively known as "Characteristics of the Present Age," in which he informed his audience that Germany lay in the third of five epochal stages of historical development.[5] The current stage represented complete civilizational decay.

Fichte's notion of universal history was progressive and one filled with qualified optimism. Fichte viewed human progress through a fixed sequence of stages, from the distant past to the future. Each stage was associated with a fundamental idea or concept which followed in logical succession. The historical present was the focal point at which the lines of historical development converged.[6] Therefore, the task of the historian was to understand the epoch of history in which he lived. Fichte's teleology was necessitated by his philosophical assumptions, since humans required a time-line to fully develop. Informed by Rousseau in *La Nouvelle Heloïse*,[7] Fichte' universal history later influenced other world-historians and philosophers alike.

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[5]G.A. Kelly, introduction, J.G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. by George Kelly (New York, 1968), xi.

[6]R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London, 1952), pp. 94-106.

[7]James F. Jones, *La Nouvelle Heloïse: Rousseau and Utopia*, (Geneva, 1977), p. 21.

The first epochal stage was that of unlimited reason as "instinct: the State of Innocence of the Human Race".[8] The second age corresponded to an age of absolutism, where an authority "demands blind faith and unconditional obedience, or "the state of progressive sin".[9] The epoch of complete sinfulness, characterized by a disregard for truth composed the third epoch; this was the focal point of the study.[10] The present epoch would then be succeeded in the future by the fourth and fifth stages: the epoch of reason, and the epoch of reason as art, or "the State of completed Justification and Sanctification".[11] Fichte noted with some importance that there were some individuals who were in advance of the Age in which he was living, and carried the "germs of a future time" in his breast.[12]

The *Addresses to the German Nation*

The position in which Fichte found himself at the outset of his lecture series in the Berlin Academy on 13 December 1807 was unprecedented in Prussian history and is, therefore, difficult to overstate. The French occupation of Prussia following the defeat of its army at Jena and Auerstädt in 1806 was a demoralizing blow which reached every level of society. Prussia was compelled to cede all her territiories west of the Elbe as well as those gained through the Polish partitions, reducing its territory to roughly half its previous size; it was forced to recognize the sovereignty of the three brothers of Napoleon; the

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[8]J.G. Fichte, "Characteristics of the Present Age," translated by William Smith. *Significant Contributions to the History of Psychology, 1795-1920.* Edited and with prefaces by Daniel B. Robinson (Washington, 1977), p. 9.

[9]*ibid.*

[10]*ibid.*

[11]*ibid.*

[12]*ibid.*, p. 11.

Prussian Army was limited to 42 000 men.[13] Prussia was also forced to pay all arrears of war indemnities, which grew to 140 million francs by 1808, to ensure the evacuation of French troops from its remaining territories.[14] Napoleon's occupation of Berlin compounded the country's humiliation at the hands of France. In the midst of this, Fichte had prepared a series of speeches which not only prescribed a national regeneration to throw off the French yoke, but proceeded to make an elaborate argument for the cultural mission of the Germans in Europe.

Before the Battles of Jena and Auerstädt, the Nuremburg bookdealer Johann Palm had been executed by the French for publishing a pamphlet entitled "Germany in Her Deepest Humiliation."[15] The ensuing public outcry fuelled further anti-French sentiment throughout Prussia. Fichte was acutely aware of such recent events. Other literati, such as Schleiermacher, had been threatened with harsh reprisals if they encouraged the national outcry by writing about Prussia's national disaster.[16] Before reading his *Addresses*, Fichte wrote a letter to Prussian cabinet counsellor Beyme indicating his belief that, by making the *Addresses*, he might suffer a fate similar to that of Palm.[17] Regardless of these threats to his person, Fichte resolutely declared that if he should die, his family would be supported by the "nation." It was far better, he wrote, for his son to have a martyr for a father.[18]

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[13]W.L. Langer, ed., *Encyclopedia of World History* (Boston, 1968), p. 642.

[14]William Maehl, Germany in Western Civilization (University of Alabama Press, 1981), p. 291.

[15]W.L. Langer, *op. cit.*, p. 641.

[16]According to Immanuel Hermann Fichte, in his biography of his father, there were rumours circulating prior to the *Addresses* that Fichte had been arrested by French authorities. *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's Leben und literarischer Briefwechsel*, herausgegeben von seinem Sohne Immanuel-Hermann Fichte, Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1862), p. 528.

[17]*ibid.*

[18]*ibid.*

Ever defiant, Fichte delivered the *Addresses* to a group of subscribers in the Prussian Academy while French troops marched by in the street, his lecture often being drowned out by the noise of French drums. No doubt Fichte was also aware of the generally known informers who appeared in the lecture hall.[19] By publicly attacking the French occupiers, and appealing to national pride, the philosopher jeopardized his professional and personal security. The thinly-veiled contempt with which he described the occupying power, and his observations of its cultural depravity challenged French hegemony. It is not surprising, therefore, that Fichte attained fame for his exhibition of bravery and strength of character, which was attested to by eyewitness accounts, such as the following:

> many a heart was trembling for the fearless man whose life and liberty hung on each of his words as on a thread, but who remained undisturbed in his undertaking by the warnings that reached him from many sides, by the concerns of the lower Prussian authorities who feared problems and reprisals from the French, and even by watching the intrusion of French observers.[20]

For Prussia, Fichte represented the prophet of civilizational resurrection. In his *Addresses*, Fichte outlined his method for national regeneration. He exclaimed various ideas, but by far the most crucial for him was a system of "national education." The tone of his *Addresses* approached the epic, and although they had little immediate impact, they came to be recognized by many leading individuals as the patriotic call to national greatness. Although Fichte did not control the levers of power in Prussia, he nonetheless popularized the notion of a national education to serve the interests of the state.

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[19]*ibid.*

[20]Varnhagen von Ense, *Denkwürdigkeiten, 1832*, in Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 33, quoted in Erich Fuchs, ed. J.G. *Fichte im Gespräch* Vol. 4 (Stuttgart, 1987), p. 73.

At the beginning of the *Addresses*, Fichte confidently stated that Prussia had reached its fourth epochal stage.[21] It was up to Germans everywhere to "destroy the Kingdom of self-seeking by the alien neighbour".[22]

Fichte described Germany as an organic body which had become divided into self-seeking parts. In order to repair the damage that had been done by poisonous external forces, Germany had to resurrect the nation by extraordinary methods. The plan required the energy of every individual of the nation. Fichte invoked a national spirit to bring the country out of its darkest hour.

Fichte's plan of action was straightforward. "A total change of the existing system of education" was proposed "as the sole means of preserving the existence of the German nation".[23] Fichte planned to inculcate the 'new generation' by national education. He criticized the old system as not having "penetrate[d] to the roots of existence," and because it was "conferred only to an elite 'educated class'".[24] The new system should be more profound, deeper, integrative and national. Fichte compared the former age of "self-seeking" to a tree which had fallen, its fruit fully ripe. By examining its "inner sap and fibre" it was possible to elucidate the "inner nature of its creator".[25] The old system was not able to "penetrat[e] to the roots of vital impulse and action". In much the same way, Fichte had, in the *Letters to Constant* (1800) criticized the "pedantry" of people who were not completely developed individuals. He wrote, "as the old system was able at best to train some part of man, so the new must train man

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[21]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (New York, 1968), p. 1.
[22]ibid., p. 3.
[23]*ibid.*, p. 11
[24]*ibid.*, p. 12.
[25]*ibid.*, p. 12.

himself".[26] The new education, "not the education of a single class, but the education of the nation"[27] must penetrate the core of each individual with a yearning for the moral world-order.

When Fichte discussed the quality of "self-seeking" he was inherently referring to the French First Empire, "a state which calls itself in alien words humanity, liberality and popularity". For Fichte the true meaning of these words had become hollow in the French context. Indeed it was cruelly ironic that Fichte had, a decade earlier, attached a tremendous intellectual and emotional importance to the nation of France. His letter to the poet Baggesen was evidence of this passion (see Chapter 2).

Fichte undoubtedly realized the enormous potential a 'national' education might have in regenerating Prussian society. When Prussia was being controlled by the French in almost every aspect imaginable, the idea of creating a legacy of national renewal had an understandable appeal. In 1807 Prussia was in desperate need of a psychological boost. Under the duress of occupation was born a plan for educational reform. The 'etatist' methods of this educational reform would subtly influence the future German political mentality.

Fichte's Use of Language

Just as Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* was founded upon the Kantian *Critique*, Fichte's call to national greatness was a unique elaboration of German cultural and literary precedents at the turn of the 19th Century. Friedrich Schiller composed a draft poem, referring to the Peace of Lunéville, which claimed Germany's cultural "greatness" on the basis of its religious enlightenment

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[26]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Philosophy of Masonry: Letters to Constant," pp. 139-44.
[27]Fichte, *Addresses*, p. 13.

(Protestantism) and its language.[28] Friedrich Hölderlin expressed his belief in a German "mission" in his poems entitled "The German's Song" and "Germania".[29]

In a unique fashion Fichte used the *Addresses* to elaborate two interlocking principles: the need for a "national education" and exclaiming the metahistorical mission of the Germans. Both of these themes were directly related to Fichte's linguistic theories which he elaborated in the fifth and sixth addresses. It is necessary to examine the prevailing linguistic theories of the early 19th Century to help explain Fichte's depiction of language in the *Addresses.*

Fichte's fourth address concerned "The Chief Differences between the Germans and the other Peoples of Teutonic descent".[30] In order to justify a national education for Germany which could raise the Germans to superiority over their occupiers, conquerors and oppressors, Fichte had to prove what qualities of the nation made it exceptional. This exceptional characteristic had been possessed by Germans "ever since he began to exist".[31] This promordial characteristic was language.

The field of linguistics had in the decades leading to the *Addresses* developed into a serious scholarly subject.[32] Articles on grammar were featured in the first *Encyclopédie* edited by D'Alembert and Diderot. French scholars led the field of linguistics in grammatical systematization by the middle of the 18th

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[28]Peter Hoffmann, "Nationalism and the Concept of the 'German Mission,'" (paper read at the XVIIIth International Congress of Historical Sciences, Montreal,1995), p. 2.

[29]*ibid.*

[30]Fichte, *Addresses*, p. 45.

[31]*ibid.*

[32]This general trend is described as an "explosion" of scholarship in: Jere Paul Surber, "J.G. Fichte and the 'Scientific' Reconstruction of Grammar," *New Perspectives on Fichte*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (New Jersey, 1996), p. 61.

Century.[33] The rapid growth of knowledge about various non-western languages led to two fundamental themes in linguistics: i) the comparative analysis of languages, which underlined the diversity of human communication, and ii) the unifying aspects of all languages, which was informed by an historical perspective and contributed to the concept of a "universal" language. This universal language was often equated with scientific or mathematical modes of expression. Rationalists such as Descartes (1596-1650) entertained the notion of a universal language which corresponded to the supposed uniformity of rationalism.[34] Leibniz also desired a universal 'scientific' language which was based on an axiomatic base of meaning.[35] The French linguist Condillac, however, rejected the innateness of language and thought-contents, and stressed the role of sensation in the process leading to knowledge. He favoured a 'science language' with algebra as the example.[36]

Whatever linguistic theories were proposed, a common feature was their relationship with an elaboration of a 'higher' theory, or philosophy. This relationship applied to the case of Wilhelm von Humboldt, the author of the *Limits of State Action* (mentioned previously in Chapter 3). Unlike Fichte, Kant disregarded the study of grammar as it pertained to his philosophy;[37] this, however, did not stop Humboldt from developing his linguistic theories on idealist foundations. Kant and Fichte were central figures who dominated Humboldt's philosophical beliefs, and who therefore influenced his linguistic theories. As a result of his extensive personal contact with Fichte in Jena (1793-1797), it can be reasonably assumed that as well as being influenced by

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[33]"History of Linguistics," *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* Vol. 2 (Oxford, 1992), p. 156.
[34]*ibid.*, p. 155.
[35]*ibid.*, p. 156.
[36]*ibid.*
[37]Jere Paul Surber, "J.G. Fichte and the 'Scientific' Reconstruction of Grammar," pp. 61-62.

Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Humboldt's linguistics later had an impact on Fichte's own theories of language as expressed in the *Addresses*. Indeed, far from propounding concepts which had no scholarly basis, Fichte's linguistic contentions reflected the state of scholarship around the turn of the 19th Century.

The writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt therefore present a fascinating perspective of Fichte's linguistic notions because he was both a Fichtean devotee as well as being one of the most distinguished philologists of his day. Humboldt's fascination with languages from diverse regions of the globe (Basque, American Indian, Kawi) helped develop a pluralistic perspective on language - a perspective which no doubt was encouraged by his contact with his brother Alexander, the famous explorer of foreign continents, as well as the extensive travelling which his later career as a diplomat demanded.[38]

The corpus of Humboldt's linguistic thought can be divided into two subgroups: his early phase, which occurred before his foray in the Prussian government as an educational reformer and diplomat (1793-1806), and his later phase, which occurred after his formal retirement from government service (after 1820). It has been noted that many of Humboldt's early thoughts about language were confirmed later in his life, although some developments occurred.[39] For the purposes of this thesis, a brief examination of his early writings will only be necessary, as his later writings were predated by Fichte's death in 1814.

During his Jena years, Humboldt derived his theory of grammar from Fichte's philosophy and from August Ferdinand Bernhardi's two-volume work,

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[38]Martin L. Manchester, *The Philosophical Foundations of Humboldt's Linguistic Doctrines* (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 105.

[39] *ibid.*, pp. 103-22; Sweet, *Wilhelm von Humboldt: A Biography* Vol. 2 (Columbus, 1978), p. 395.

the *Sprachlehre*.[40] While under Fichte's influence Humboldt developed a theme described by Paul Sweet as the "tendency of words to develop a life of their own defying logic or exact definition".[41] He also contended, as did Fichte, that speech cannot intrinsically give meaning to the listener; rather, "it can only stimulate something already in the partner's mind".[42] This is tremendously relevant to Fichte's conception of his philosophy, since he believed that an "inner contribution" by the reader was necessary to understand the *Wissenschaftslehre* (see Introduction).

Humboldt's early meditations on language are of tremendous value for understanding Fichte since it was around this time that Humboldt and Fichte had regular personal contact when they both lived in Jena between 1793 and 1797.[43] Their contact undoubtedly included discussions of Fichte's philosophical theories as well as the concept of language.[44] Of particular interest to the discussion of Fichte's use of language in the *Addresses* are Humboldt's theories of 'national character' of language and on his 'linguistic relativity thesis.'[45] These theories were elaborated in two works entitled *Über das Studium des Altertums* (1793) and *Latium und Hellas* (1806).[46]

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[40]Humboldt wrote: "I am accustomed to follow Bernhardi's linguistic principles in dealing with concepts of general grammar." Paul Sweet, "Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte and the Idéologues," *Historiographia Linguistica* XV (3: 1988) p. 354.

[41]*ibid.*, p. 354.

[42]*ibid.*, p. 355.

[43]*ibid.*, pp. 349-51.

[44]Paul Sweet remarks that Humboldt attended many of Fichte's lectures at the University of Jena with some regularity. It could therefore be argued that Humboldt did not consider himself Fichte's equal in matters of philosophy. However, in linguistic matters, Fichte relied on Humboldt's opinion to strengthen the veracity of his own ideas on the relationship between language and philosophy. It is fair to conclude, therefore, that Fichte held Humboldt's linguistic doctrines in high esteem. *ibid.*, pp. 349-54.

[45] *ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

[46]Martin Manchester, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-07.

Humboldt believed that each language possessed an "inner meaning" which helped make it distinct from any other language. More profound, perhaps, was his contention that the 'character' of a nation established the differences between languages.[47] Character, Humboldt believed, was the "highest and ultimate explanatory principle".[48] Conversely, Humboldt regarded language as having the ability to make men think differently.[49] This was the 'linguistic relativity thesis' as defined by Martin Manchester in his study of Humboldt's linguistics (see footnotes). Although these dual claims seemed to create a contradiction, Humboldt recognized their reciprocal relationship.[50] Whatever dilemmas this may cause a linguist, from the standpoint of Fichte it is important to observe a number of things.

Foremost was the inherent 'subject-object' relationship which Humboldt regarded as central to the idea that 'national characteristics' influenced language or that language defined a mode of thinking. "Language must, therefore, take up the twofold nature of the world and of man,"[51] Humboldt wrote. This meant that he regarded language from the same perspective that Fichte regarded philosophy: the ego (man) and non-ego (nature). Language was created by objects and the human perception of such objects. According to Humboldt, both objects and ideas are considered differently by different nations.[52] An obvious ramification of this concept was the impossibility of synonyms between languages. Also relevant was Humboldt's belief that such contentions were quite commonplace in the contemporary field of linguistics.[53]

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[47] *ibid.*, pp. 104-05.
[48] *ibid.*
[49] *ibid.*
[50] *ibid.*
[51] *ibid.*, p. 106.
[52] *ibid.*, pp. 106-07.
[53] *ibid.*, p. 104.

However 'national character' was not simply the result of environmental or historical circumstance, but was "original." As one observer has noted, this was a problematical assertion.[54] It is difficult to ascertain what a nation could be if one disregarded the historical circumstances which helped define its differences. When considered in the context of Fichte's philosophy, however, it becomes more understandable. Fichte opposed the "tabula rasa" notion of epistemology that the individual was the sum of its experiences. Rather, the individual was human, a proof of the transcendence of a moral world-order. Man was therefore innately moral, and secured his morality on earth by acting on the surrounding environment (non-ego). There was, therefore, nothing to be acquired from the world. In the same manner, Humboldt insisted that the 'national character' was an innate, primordial quality. In this sense Humboldt's philosophical foundations inform his linguistics. However, by making a distinction between national cultures on something so ahistorical, Humboldt perhaps extended his argument too far. Deviations from the language as established by "national characteristcs" included: the borrowing words or idioms from foreign languages; how abstract concepts are discussed in a given language by using newly-formed words or existing expressions; by meditating on the nature of language by members of the nation.[55] Above all else, Humboldt believed that each language was uniquely human. This belief was encouraged by Fichte's notion of a common humanity.

Also important from the standpoint of Fichte's *Addresses* was Humboldt's deep affinity for the Greek culture and language. This is evidenced by Humboldt's *Latium und Hellas*, where he attempted to describe the national

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[54]*ibid.*, p. 107.

[55]ibid., p. 106.

character of the Greeks.[56] Humboldt also went on to deduce a theory of the superiority of languages which contained a higher degree of inflection.[57] What is important to clarify, however, was that Humboldt's linguistic theories did not assume the superiority of German above any conventional European language, but merely theorized reasons which explained their differences and applied these conclusions to related fields of research. Once again, these beliefs, which Humboldt firmly held, were widespread notions of linguistic formation which found currency in France, Italy and England.[58]

Later, when Humboldt moved to Paris in 1797, he became intrigued by what Paul Sweet refers to as "the problem of ambiguity in communication".[59] Put quite simply, Humboldt was surprised by the degree to which French intellectuals were, in his opinion, incapable of comprehending the Kantian and Fichtean philosophies. Humboldt's contentions had a basis in his earlier theories of 'national character' and the linguistic relativity. For Humboldt, this dilemma had a special relevance to philosophy; undoubtedly, it was a topic of fundamental importance to him (as it was, of course, to Fichte). In 1801 Humboldt was shocked to learn that a French colleague of his had read a review of the Kantian system by another Frenchman and concluded that "Kant's philosophy was no different from Locke's".[60] Indeed, this statement would have enraged Fichte. Humboldt could only conclude that his French counterparts "lacked a 'metaphysical sense'".[61] When discussing Condillac's works, Humboldt commented that the French linguist "had no conception of 'self-

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[56]*ibid.*

[57]*ibid.*, pp. 125-42.

[58]*ibid.*, pp. 145-46.

[59]Paul Sweet, "Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte and the Idéologues," p. 362.

[60]*ibid.*, p. 365.

[61]*ibid.*, p. 361.

activity.'" Describing the French reception of Kant and Fichte's ideas, Humboldt continued:

> Even when they use the same words as we do they always give them another meaning. Their reason is not our *Vernunft*, their space is not our space, their imagination is not our Einbildungskraft. [...] The words *abstraction, notion abstraite* have another meaning for them. For us they mean something apart from all experience, from everything 'given;' for them it is merely the arbitrary act of directing attention to one or another object within experience.[62]

While Humboldt's liguistic doctrines had a Fichtean philosophical basis, it cannot be assumed that Humboldt's ideas of language had a direct impact on Fichte's *Addresses*. However, as stated above, these two men had regular personal contact and extensively discussed their two respective fields of interest. That Humboldt's ideas were echoed by many other linguists would also lend weight to the assumption that many of Fichte's ideas on language were culled from contemporary sources.

Added to Humboldt's belief that, at a certain level, the French language was incapable of understanding the *Wissenschaftslehre,* was the idea propounded earlier by Johann Heinrich Voss concerning the relationship between Greek and German. In Humboldt's time Voss was the most renowned translator in Germany, whose version of Homer's *Odyssey* had been published in 1790. Humboldt criticized Voss for contending that Greek was not fundamentally different from German.[63] Humboldt's reasoning behind his disagreement was established by his earlier theories and confirmed by his observations in France: that a language was an organic whole. Humboldt also noted that the individual speaker using the language had "a most intimate

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[62]*ibid.*, p. 362.
[63]*ibid.*, p. 355.

connection with the organic whole".[64] But it is significant that Humboldt's love of Greek culture and language did not convince him of any features which Greek shared with the German language.

It is entirely possible that these ideas later influenced Fichte's opinions on the French and German languages, although it must be stated that these concepts were not mutually compatible. However, if one assumed that Greek and German were of the same organic whole, which according to Humboldt they clearly were not, then it was possible to deduce that the Germans were privy to a linguistic heritage which not only was indecipherable by other languages, but which also "understood" the true meaning of the Greek cultural and philosophical legacy. Therefore beyond any political hyperbole present in the *Addresses*, Fichte was also elucidating a linguistic theory which was, while inconsistent, based on scholarly opinion.

What Fichte did express in the *Addresses* was: i) language formed man - man did not form language; ii) the French language had become severed from its roots in part because of the use of borrowed words from other languages; iii) the French language could not understand the *Wissenschaftslehre* as it was manifested in the *Addresses*, and iv) beyond their Indo-European heritage, the German and Greek languages were innately connected. With the exception of the last point, Fichte's remarks on language found precedents in Humboldt's linguistic doctrines.

National Education

Fichte believed the success of the educational reforms was predicated on German linguistic superiority. Germans, he wrote, were different from all

[64] *ibid.*

other teutonic races because they spoke a language kept alive "ever since it first issued from the force of nature".[65] Because Germans remained in their original dwelling place, their language continued in an unbroken strain of development from the beginning to the present.[66] The German language, since it was living, enabled its peoples' "mental culture" to influence their life; in dead languages, such as French, this was not possible.[67] From this it was deduced that the former language was moral, while the latter was "easygoing and guided by its happy nature".[68] What Fichte meant by "mental culture" was the ability to create the new life "such as has never hitherto existed"; namely the morally perfect utopia which was elaborated in the *Wissenschaftslehre.* [69] That Fichte did not rule out the possibility that other peoples could do the same underlined Fichte's belief in a common humanity.[70]

Germans were incapable of comprehending words like 'humanity,' 'popularity' or 'liberality' simply because they were derived from Roman-based languages.[71] Here Fichte combined polemics with linguistics. It is clear that to Fichte the above-mentioned words had become a mere pretense for French imperialism. However, Fichte's contention is not merely based on venomous hyperbole. In fact, the history of Gallo-Romance languages by the linguist Bonamy in the 18th Century had correctly deduced that Vulgar Latin was the ancestor of the Romance languages.[72] When taken in the context of Humboldt's observations of his French colleagues, it is possible that Fichte was implying

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[65]Fichte, *Addresses*, p. 59.
[66]ibid., p. 54.
[67]*ibid.*, p. 60.
[68]*ibid.*
[69]*ibid.*, p. 63.
[70]*ibid.*
[71]*ibid.*, p. 56.
[72]"History of Linguistics," *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, p. 159

that these words were foreign to French tongues, and they therefore did not know their true meaning. Language was primordial. "Hence they [the people] do not form language; language forms them".[73] This was a linguistic notion which was current and supported by Humboldt. Consequently, education in the German language could be mass-based while in other languages this was not possible.[74] The unbroken development of the German language made it superior to all others. The first step towards national resurrection was universal education.

Fichte acknowledged his debt to the Swiss educational reformer Pestalozzi in the ninth address.[75] Fichte stated that the new national education would have to include Pestalozzi's central pedagogical principle: " to stimulate his mental activity [...] and learn everything by free formation".[76] He also endorsed Pestalozzi's ideas on the necessity of physical development through exercises.[77] Fichte's main criticisms of the Pestalozzian method concerned the central role of parents in their children's instruction, and the class-based assumptions which Pestalozzi's writings implied. Following Rousseau's doctrine of state education,[78] Fichte demanded that pupils be instructed in isolation of the previous generation. This meant the separation of parents from their children. According to Fichte, Pestalozzi's system presupposed an idyllic

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[73]Fichte, *Addresses*, p. 53.

[74] "[I]n a nation of the former kind [a 'living' language, ie. Germany] the mass of the people is capable of education[...] whereas in a nation of the latter kind [a 'dead' language, ie. French] the educated classes separate themselves from the people". ibid., p. 61

[75]*ibid.*, p. 135.

[76]*ibid.*, p. 137.

[77]*ibid.*, p. 142.

[78]In Rousseau's article on "Political Economy" he wrote: "If the reason of each individual is not allowed to be the sole judge of his duties, still less should the education of children be left to the ignorance and prejudices of their fathers. [...] The matter [education] is one that concerns the state more than the fathers; for, in the course of nature, the death of the father often robs him of the final fruits of this education, but sooner or later the nation feels the effect of it. The state abides: the family passes." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Political Economy," *The Minor Educational Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. and trans. by William Boyd (New York, 1962), p. 41.

existence which was impractical for the working classes.[79] Fichte's vision for the new education was a classless nation, whereas Pestalozzi's system incorporated existing social barriers.[80] Although Fichte was a disciple of Pestalozzi's pedagogical method, the educational plan propounded in the *Addresses* was a creation which made Pestalozzi's original purpose nearly unrecognizable. A central theme of the Swiss pedagogue's system was the importance of parental devotion and family support for the child. This was completely disregarded by the *Addresses.* Nevertheless, Fichte credited Pestalozzi for revealing the necessity of the pupil's 'mental activity' in his self-formation. Fichte's continued contact with Pestalozzi was evidenced by his sending the Swiss teacher a copy of the *Addresses* before delivering them to the Berlin Academy of Sciences.[81]

In the introductory address, Fichte clearly stated the purpose of German national regeneration, and the conspicuous role of the state in realizing this goal:

> From this state, in which all its past world is removed from its independent influence and in its present world only the merit of obedience remains to it, it could raise itself only on condition that *a new world should arise for it*, the creation of which would begin, and its development fill, a new epoch of its own in history.[82]

Thus a new world, i.e. a new age which would transcend Germany and the entire world was necessary to leave behind the past epoch. The past epoch had reached its highest development of "self-seeking" and was therefore ideal

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[79]*ibid.*, p. 139.

[80]*ibid.*, p. 137.

[81]G.H. Turnbull, *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte: A critical account together with translations* (London,1926), p. 21.

[82]Fichte, *Addresses,* p. 2 (author's emphasis).

for replacement by the new moral order. Fichte noted that self-seeking "is most highly developed when after it has first affected, with insignificant exceptions, the whole body of subjects".[83] In other words, France had violated legal and moral norms which paralleled the individual principle of intersubjectivity. Fichte had earlier elaborated the principle of intersubjectivity in the *Science of Rights* as the premise upon which human rights were based. Therefore the French presence in Germany, indeed in most of Europe, prevented the healthy progression towards an absolute moral freedom as prescribed in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte therefore developed an analogy between human rights and the rights of nations. The individual was accorded rights on the basis of the existence of others, and was encouraged by the state to realize his individual *Bildung*. In a similar fashion, nation-states were legitimated on the basis of other state's existence. Of course, there was no 'Higher State,' or world-state in existence which could encourage the development of nation-states in the same manner as individuals under the aegis of the state. But Fichte strove for the ultimate establishment of such a state. The French Empire was violating this principle by disregarding other state's independence. Fichte also criticized the German States, such as Saxony which, "in its slothful sleep"[84] was deluded by territorial gains made at the expense of Prussia. This fratricidal antagonism was yet another obstacle to German regeneration.

Near the end of his first address, Fichte stated emphatically that the purpose of Germany's national regeneration was not to emulate French nationalism, which at that time had become a doctrine justifying France's imperial ambitions.

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[83] *ibid.*, p. 7.

[84] *ibid.*, p. 7-8.

> [I]t would be a fatal error to propose this method with us Germans. Apart from the tie of fear and hope, the coherence of that part of the outside world with which we have now come into contact is founded on the motives of honour and national glory. The clear vision of the German, however, has long since come to the *unshakeable conviction that these are empty illusions, and that no injury or mutilation of the individual is healed by the glory of the whole nation*, and we shall indeed, if a wider view of life is not brought before us, probably become dangerous preachers of this very natural and attractive doctrine.[85]

Fichte feared the recurrence of the French model in Germany. He therefore proscribed a movement towards the French model of national pride. Fichte defended the individual and protected him from the dangerous implications of French nationalism. Instead of calling on the masses to sacrifice their lives for the fatherland, Fichte's "assault" was a spiritual one. Indeed, the spiritual overruled the wordly. Fichte later concluded: "you shall now not conquer them with temporal weapons; your spirit alone shall rise up against them and stand erect [...] spirit alone, pure and freed from all sensuous motives, shall take the helm of human affairs".[86] The sole end was a spiritual life.[87] Therefore the *Addresses* issued no direct call for rebellion.[88]

Fichte hoped to produce students who were not aggressive nationalists, but rational beings striving for moral freedom. Thus he wrote

> the mental activity of the pupil [...] should be stimulated to create an image of the social order of mankind as it ought to be, simply in accordance with the law of reason.[89]

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[85]*ibid.*, pp. 13-14 (author's emphasis).

[86]*ibid.*, p. 225.

[87]*ibid.*, p. 64.

[88]H.T. Betteridge, "Fichte's Political Ideas: A Retrospect," p. 298.

[89]Fichte, *Addresses*, p. 27.

By this moral striving the pupil would become "a link in the eternal chain of spiritual life in a higher social order".[90]

It would be naïve to ignore the historical context of the *Addresses* and, by textual analysis alone, insist that Fichte did not directly sponsor a rebellion against the French. Fichte understood that his words would be taken as an act of sedition; otherwise he would not have feared for his life. Fichte stated in the ninth address that the pupil of Germany would "harden itself like steel, and at the right moment break forth in youthful strength and restore to the state its lost independence".[91] Two pages later he described the German as a "peaceful and honest citizen".[92] What must be recognized is that the *Addresses* represented a manifestation of a liberal and humanistic philosophy which responded to extraordinary political circumstances. Fichte could not ignore this reality, but it did not cause him to abandon his overriding ethical idealism.

If Germany avoided the pitfall of French nationalism, "[t]hen the outside world, as certainly as it knows its own interests, will be guided by them, and prefer to have us in the latter state [Fichte's system] rather than in the former [the French model]".[93] Consequently the French, and all those states who followed her, had relinquished their civilizing mission to the world. French rationalism and the commitment to individual liberty had been replaced by imperialism. The German States could only realize their development if they abandoned the French "self-seeking" and followed the German lead. What was difficult for Fichte to grapple with was the extinction of the republican spirit, since this had been his political guidepost for almost his entire career. Fichte had to invent a

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[90]*ibid.*, p. 32.
[91]*ibid.*, p. 132.
[92]*ibid.*, p. 134.
[93]*ibid.*, p. 14.

national consciousness which had no living examples. The result was a plan for national education which was similar to Rousseau's political project for the Polish Government in 1772. In order to revive the dying nation, Fichte turned to the intellectual lineage of Prussia's occupiers for Germany's salvation.

Fichte stated that a nation destroyed by the depravity of its culture must save itself only "by means of something completely new and never previously employed, namely, by the creation of a totally new order of things".[94] Conceptually speaking, there was little novel about a plan for national education, as Rousseau's educational writings indicate. However, in terms of content, Fichte declared that the opposite of the previously existing order of education was to be established.[95] This was because the previous system could not prevent the ideas of "self-seeking" from developing in its pupils. What was more, the prevailing attitude among the nation's pupils had become desensitized to such a degree that they could not recognize the "self-seeking" within the nation. All of this meant that the individual was no longer a part of the larger community. To bring the individual and the community together, "a new binding tie" was needed.[96]

> It follows, then, that the mean of salvation that I [Fichte] promised to indicate consists in the fashioning of an *entirely new self*, which may have existed before perhaps in individuals as an exception, but never as a universal and national self[...] and in the education of the nation.[97]

Hence the salvation of the individual followed the precepts of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

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[94]*ibid.*, p. 8.

[95]*ibid.*, p. 9.

[96]*ibid.*, p. 10.

[97]*ibid* (authors' emphasis).

What Fichte planned was "a total change in the existing system of education [...] as the sole means of preserving the existence of the German nation".[98] Although the achievement of Fichte's goals was unlikely, it was a rationally-deduced plan to create individual moral freedom.

To achieve his goals, Fichte placed a great deal of faith in the teaching class of the nation. However, the teacher's role was somewhat problematical, since Fichte had shown contempt for thinkers and scholars when he wrote

> often you went on in the sphere of pure thought too unconcernedly, without troubling yourselves about the actual world, or trying to find out how the two might be brought into connection; you described your own world, and left the actual one too much alone, despising and scorning.[99]

Therefore the teachers themselves must be examples of the new age of self-realization. Fichte wrote that the old education

> has never succeeded in making its picture of a moral world-order so vivid that the pupil was filled with passionate love and yearning for that order, and with such glowing emotion as to stimulate him to realize it in his life-emotion before which self-seeking falls to the ground like withered leaves.[100]

Therefore, if a national education was taught that would immerse the student in these qualities, the old epoch would pass and be replaced with the morally perfect society. The language of the above passage, especially its reference to the "moral world-order" showed a parallel between Fichte's call for national regeneration and his philosophical principle of the moral world-order.

Fichte does not explicitly state anywhere in the *Addresses* that national regeneration was the only possible method *for all time* of attaining moral

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[98]*ibid.*, p. 11.
[99]*ibid.*, p. 221.
[100]*ibid.*

freedom. Fichte regarded nationalism as a pragmatic solution to reverse the effects of "self-seeking" given the circumstances of Prussia's position of weakness. What is significant is Fichte's designating the state, in the eleventh address, as the cornerstone of an effective national education.[101]

In the conclusion to the *Addresses*, Fichte's philosophical goals are explicitly united with his nationalism. Apathy in political matters is, to Fichte, yet another manifestation of 'dogma,' or material determinism. Someone who is not willing to 'strive' for the perfection of the nation, but wallows in past ideas of dynastic glories, is degraded to a sub-human category, in Fichte's words "an animal or vegetable existence".[102] Conversely, those Germans who had recognized the truth in Fichte's *Addresses* were "of all modern peoples the one in which the seed of human perfection most unmistakably lies, and to whom the lead in its development is committed".[103]

There is also a relationship between nationalism and world history which Fichte clarifies for his audience.

> If[...]you bestir yourselves and play the man[...]you will see this nation the regeneration and re-creator of the world.[104]

Therefore the German nation had a cultural mission of world-historical importance. Clearly Fichte's vision of 'national re-generation' was based on a grand level of state intervention which intertwined ethical and temporal principles in order to re-create man and society. Fichte's insistence on the valuelessness of empirical knowledge[105] belied an educational system which aimed at inculcating a new moralistic existence. Fichte employed national

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[101]*ibid.*, p. 160.
[102]*ibid.*, p. 227.
[103]*ibid.*, pp. 227-28.
[104]*ibid.*, p. 215.
[105]Fichte, *Addresses*, p. 25.

regeneration as the primal source for securing a path to the end-goal of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in light of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the country. The striving of the individual for moral perfection was unified with the crisis of the nation to achieve perfection or to perish.

Final Years

In the years following the *Addresses to the German Nation*, the importance of education and its integration within the sphere of a rational state policy was developed. By this time, however the political hyperbole surrounding "national education" based on the cultural mission of the Germans was excluded from Fichte's writings. Instead the term "universal" replaced the term "national" in education.

On 19 October, 1811, Fichte delivered an inaugural lecture to the University of Berlin as its rector. Entitled "Concerning the Only Possible Disturbance of Academic Freedom," a large segment of the speech was devoted to the estimation of the university in a general civilizational context. As was customary, these two matters were united by Fichte's elocution of a broad manifestation of his philosophical system. Once again, Fichte's progressive view of history was projected toward the future with qualified optimism.

Fichte began by stating that "the whole world exists solely in order that the supernatural, the Godhead, may be displayed in it, and displayed indeed by means of conscious freedom".[106] Therefore the transcendence of the moral world-order (i.e. God) in the environment was brought about by "conscious freedom," of which only man was capable. The intellectual progress of man was

[106]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Concerning the Only Possible Disturbance of Academic Freedom," translated by G.H. Turnbull *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte: A critical account together with translations*. (London,1926) pp. 262-65.

the only method of achieving a higher level of existence on earth.[107] Since the university was devoted to intellectual progress, it was, according to Fichte, "the most important institution and the most holy thing which the human race possesses".[108] This reinforced the fanatical belief which Fichte had in his ethical idealism and his own role in attempting to bring it about. The role of education had been sanctified as an indispensable tool of civilizational improvement. There are strong parallels to be drawn to Fichte's earlier attitudes towards the role of the Freemasons in procuring a similar moral freedom, where individual *Bildung* would flourish. Indeed, Fichte had drawn attention to institutions which, at one time or another, appeared to exemplify the *Wissenschaftslehre* and at the same time appeal to many people on a practical level. This showed an eagerness on the part of the philosopher to realize his own philosophy in a contemporary context.

The Theory of the State

In the *Staatslehre*, or *The Theory of the State*, Fichte elaborated his final political treatise before his death on 29 January 1814. Between October 1811 and April 1812 Fichte had been rector of the University of Berlin. However by the time Fichte delivered the *Staatslehre* at the University in the summer of 1813, he had resigned from this position.[109] Fichte's resignation was precipitated by the controversy surrounding the Brogi affair. Fichte's unalterable principle of universal human rights conflicted with the anti-semitic attitudes of

[107]"The uninterrupted and steady progress of the intellectual education of our race is, therefore, the sole condition under which the supernatural, as the model of creation, can continually appear in mankind in new and fresh transfiguration, and can be exhibited by mankind in the external world." *ibid.*, p. 263.

[108]*ibid.*

[109] For a more thorough account of the Brogi Affair, see Paul Sweet, "Fichte and the Jews: A Case of Tension between Civil Rights and Human Rights," *German Studies Review* XVI (February, 1993).

the university senate. Fichte believed that the senate's treatment of certain Jewish students violated their human rights, which he refused to condone.[110]

In the *Staatslehre* Fichte projected a plan for the union of education and the state. In the third chapter, entitled "The establishment of the Kingdom of Reason," Fichte propounded a social order which strove for a closer approximation to the moral utopia outlined in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. This society was divided into two fundamental classes: the teachers and the pupils. The teaching class was a community, or "republic," of scholars which from its midst would select a sovereign.[111] "He will always be an elderly man," Fichte wrote:

> But he has reflected on the State throughout his lifetime, in accordance with his idea and the immediate circumstances in which this is realized. He knows the State and what is immediately necessary. The chief government officials, the ministers, must also proceed from this highest sphere of intelligence.[112]

Someone who had attained the "highest human understanding" would therefore be sovereign. This person could not impose himself on the state; rather, he would distinguish himself by leading others to objective knowledge. The pedagogue's flawless success at accomplishing this objective was the only means of judgment.[113] In fact, a great deal depended upon the judiciousness of the college of scholars, who in theory would be responsible for selecting a sovereign who was their intellectual superior.

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[110]*ibid.*

[111]J.G. Fichte, "The Theory of the State," translated by G.H. Turnbull, in Turnbull, ed. *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte: A critical account together with translations.* (London, 1926), p. 266-67.

[112]*ibid.*, p. 282.

[113]"there is no other means, no standard but that"; *ibid.*, p. 267.

Fichte equated "universally valid scientific teaching"[114] with the grace of God. Thus, the teaching of objective knowledge was the one true earthly manifestation of God. Was Fichte suggesting himself as a prospective sovereign? There is little doubt that the *Wissenschaftslehre* was the only document which in Fichte's estimation could provide truly "objective knowledge" (i.e. the 'science of knowledge' or *Wissenschaftslehre*). As one observer noted, 'knowledge science' at the time of the *Addresses* "existed only in Germany - through Fichte's own work, his *Wissenschaftslehre*, and its greatest possible dissemination was the most immediate assigned purpose of mankind".[115] The conclusion drawn is that there was only one system, and only one who understood it; namely, its creator. Fichte's failure to effectively communicate his own philosophy throughout his career would, however, shadow this assumption with considerable doubt.[116]

Below the collegium of scholars lay the 'pupil' class: government, administration and teaching sectors which had been "wholly produced" and therefore intimately understood by the controlling class of scholars.[117] Each individual's occupation was determined according to the social structure's requirements - in Fichte's mind there was "a definite number" for each position which would be "fixed by calculation".[118] Below this stratum was the working class, which was to be sub-divided in the same fashion. However the "main division" was between the original two classes.

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[114]*ibid.*

[115]Peter Hoffmann, "Nationalism..." p. 5.

[116]Fichte's own doubts as to the possibility of producing a definitive version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* illustrate his failure to reach the reading public. Since Fichte was cognizant of his own limitations as a pedagogue, it is fair to assume that there were better teachers capable of leading people to objective knowledge. See the Introduction of this thesis for a further elaboration of this point.

[117]Fichte, "The Theory of the State," p. 269.

[118]*ibid.*

An individual's place in the social hierarchy of the Kingdom of Reason was primarily determined by his or her intelligence, which would be assessed through "universal education." Much like the "national education" outlined in the *Addresses*, universal education was intended for the entire student body and did not prejudice against rich or poor.

> The first requisite, therefore, would be that all should be admitted to the same common education. This should give the training that each needs who is to be a citizen of this kingdom, at this time and at this stage of its [the Kingdom's] development. Universal popular education. Now this education will undoubtedly prove which individuals are satisfied with this instruction, which can embrace only the results and final general consequences of the deeper and comprehensive insight of the understanding which is possible and actually exists in the teachers, and which are not satisfied therewith but rise higher to a notion of greater reasons and demand these. In this way the pupils of the common education separate themselves; by their original destiny. Here is decided who was born noble or ignoble, by an obvious fact, which the teaching profession does not create (for all have had the same schooling) but which they simply recognize and take as it is.[119]

As had Rousseau before him, and as Fichte himself had stated in the *Addresses*, teachers in the Kingdom of Reason superseded the parents as educators. Education, as did everything else, followed rational guidelines. It was absurd, Fichte reasoned, to prevent children from receiving instruction from those who were "better and properly skilled".[120]

In the Appendix to the *Staatslehre*, Fichte summarized the new purpose of the State:

> The principle is now quite easy that the State, with all its compulsory measures, must regard itself as an educational institution [...] Systematic

[119]*ibid.*, p. 270.

[120]*ibid.*, p. 283.

popular education and government are one: the legislature expresses what they have been educated to and prepares for the new education.[121]

Here was a uniform educational system in which the pupils were an integral aspect of a corporatist social structure. The regime which created it was not authoritarian, nor with a political agenda; rather, it was a hierarchy which was constructed and guided by an elite class of teachers. Its goals transcended politics in any contemporary sense. The Kingdom of Reason was an elaborate vision of state and society which would guide human civilization to a perfect moral freedom.

[121] *ibid.*, p. 281.

CONCLUSION

It was a paradox of Fichte's life that he was a philosopher who sought a way out of philosophy. As Peter Preuss observed, Fichte's philosophy "ends in total cognitive skepticism, ie., the abandonment of philosophy proper".[1] Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* was conceived as a model of human development which transcended philosophy, politics and religion. Indeed, it was a totality of thought which sought to bring about a moral utopia on earth. For this reason, notions such as nationalism, pietism, and idealism were sublimated into the theoretical whole of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

The intellectual historian Frederick Copleston remarked that at the end of Fichte's philosophy was "a vision of a multiplicity of moral vocations converging towards a common ideal end, the establishment of a moral world-order".[2] After

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[1]Peter Preuss, Translator's Introduction, *The Vocation of Man* (Indianapolis, 1987), xii.

[2]Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Volume 7. Modern Philosophy Part I: Fichte to Hegel* (Garden City, 1965), p. 45.

analyzing Fichte's political writings, it is quite apparent that Fichte employed a variety of methods to achieve this goal. Whether the path toward a moral utopia was accomplished individually, through private associations, public institutions or through the state itself, every method was directly related to individual self-improvement, or, more simply, education.

Fichte's progressive view of history was essential to the functioning of his world-view. The *Characteristics of the Present Age* projected a sequence of historical stages in which man would further harness nature to his purposes. This lent a degree of temporal structure to the goals already outlined by the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte's world-view is made more difficult to summarize in part because his intense personality rivalled his own theories. Comparing Kant to Fichte, Heinrich Heine wrote:

> With Kant we had only to take account of a book. But with Fichte there was a man as well as a book, a man whose ideas and qualities of mind and character, [...] impressed themselves upon contemporaries as a magnificent unity.[3]

The 'unity' which Heine noted makes a full appreciation of Fichte's thought challenging. Unfortunately, Fichte's personal exuberance and aggressive character have been too often overlooked by esoteric scholars and too often seized upon by those with darker motives.[4] Fichte was the producer

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[3]Paul Sweet, "Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte and the Idéologues," *Historiographia Linguistica* XV (3: 1988), pp. 350-51.

[4]Michael Burtscher concurs with Hermann Lübbe's observation that Fichte's rhetoric turned into a political discourse. This thesis has shown how from 1793 to 1813 Fichte's political thoughts were tightly interwoven with supposedly abstract philosophical notions. Indeed, some of Fichte's deeply-held political beliefs had a direct impact on his philosophy (see Letter to Jens Baggesen). Michael Burtscher, " The Reception of Fichte's Thought in German History, 1860-1919," M.A. Thesis (Munich, 1991), p. 15. H.T. Betteridge asserts that the Prussian defeats in 1806 "shook Fichte from his complacent speculation about the true end of life, and he came for the first time to grips with reality." The contention that Fichte was complacent about anything relevant to his philosophy reveals an ignorance of the philosopher's personal dynamism, impetuousness and personal and metaphysical "activity." H.T. Betteridge,"Fichte's Political Ideas: A Retrospect," *German Life and Letters* I (1936-37), p. 298.

and promoter of the *Wissenschaftslehre* to a degree which is rarely accomplished in intellectual history.

The basic premise of the moral world-order, or Super-Ego, as being the foundation of man's moral capacity in the natural world could be applied to nearly every social or political concept. Fichte's grand scheme attempted to circumscribe all disciplines, including philosophy, into a single system. Thus, Fichte called his work the *Wissenschaftslehre*, roughly translated to mean a "science theory" or "doctrine of scientific knowledge". It was his intention to reduce all of the disciplines of learning to a unified theory which possessed the supposed clarity and objectivity of "pure" science. But it was not only a theory, since a theory could not convey Fichte's desire for "action". The *Wissenschaftslehre* was equally a doctrine of personal motivation which demanded change. It was, therefore, a powerful document which aspired to accomplish nothing less than the re-casting of the individual and society in a morally perfect existence.

It can be established that Fichte held libertarian views on education in his early career. This is evidenced by: i) his early educational writings as a tutor;[5] ii) his being an early disciple of Pestalozzian methods;[6] and iii) his affirmation of personal *Bildung* in the *Letters to Constant.* Fichte's libertarian notions were inspired by Rousseau and reflected a sense of personal responsibility. Fichte's own life-experiences had taught him the value of self-developed *Bildung.* This sense of responsibility was revealed in Humboldt's *Limits of State Action* and in Fichte's *Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought*, the *Science of Rights* and *Letters to Constant.* A fundamental characteristic of Fichte's libertarianism was

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[5]J.G. Fichte, "Early Writings on Education," George Turnbull, ed. *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte: A critical account together with translations* (London, 1926), pp. 119-153.

[6]Fichte had read Pestalozzi's *Leonard and Gertrude* by 24 July, 1788. George Turnbull , *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte: A critical account together with translations* , p. 19.

the self-formation of the individual (*Bildung*) which was achieved through education.

As Fichte's libertarianism evolved towards a statist perspective, the primary responsibility of education was placed on private associations, such as the Freemasons, larger institutions such as universities, and eventually the state itself. Again he drew from Rousseau's educational writings. This did not negate the individual or his "striving" for moral development. Rather, Fichte realized that only with a national perspective could the education of the masses be facilitated. Fichte's reasoning meant that the Pestalozzian method, which depended on the family for the pupil's education, was an outdated concept. But in keeping with the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the individual was the primary feature of a morally perfect society. Considering the political circumstances of the *Addresses*, the judicious reader would be neglecting his duty if he did not conclude that they represented an extraordinary exposition of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.

Far from being an extremist notion, the concept of national education as prescribed by Fichte foreshadowed modern educational institutions and the state's involvement in this sphere of public policy. Fichte was, as were Humboldt and Rousseau, prescient in recognizing this fact. E. H. Carr once observed that "educational policy is an integral part of any rationally planned social policy".[7] Fichte's proposed system of education anticipated the rational expansion of the state into spheres it had not previously controlled.

The dialectical nature of Fichte's philosophy allowed him to incorporate aspects of nationalism within the more salient theme of cosmopolitanism. Nationalism and cosmopolitanism were mutually related in the context of the

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[7]Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (London, 1968), p. 142.

world federation of states. Far from being polar opposites, these concepts were intimately united in a system which, above all else, held the individual in the highest moral authority. Fichte's commitment to a cosmopolitan perspective was established as a fundamental principle in his elaboration of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In 1796 Fichte wrote in the *Science of Rights* that "[..]all men are compelled ultimately to become united in a single state".[8]

In Fichte's later writings, state agency was given an increasing role in procuring the goals of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Education was a state prerogative which superseded other duties in importance. This development can be observed in Fichte's *Closed Commercial State*, the *Addresses to the German Nation* and the *Staatslehre*. Fichte's writings after the *Addresses* attest to his philosophical consistency and to the marginal importance of "nationalism" in his world-view. Although in the long term the state was unnecessary in a world perfected by absolute human morality, Fichte must have realized that the state would play a considerable and lengthy role in procuring the final stage of existence. Similar to Rousseau's volonté générale, there have been many instances where this concept has been abused to justify the existence of criminal governments and their unlimited exercise of power. Fichte's ultimate goal of a world federation of nation-states depended upon his liberal and cosmopolitan beliefs as well as his observance of the system of nation-states in Europe.

Therefore, to discuss Fichte's "nationalism", or even Fichte's general political thought is, at a certain level, insufficient. This is because all aspects of Fichte's political and social thinking were derived from a central theory which transcended all subjects. Indeed, it would be inaccurate to label Fichte a

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[8]Fichte, "The Science of Rights," translated by H.S. Reiss and P. Brown. In Reiss, ed. *The Political Thought of the German Romantics, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1955), p. 73.

nationalist in all but the most narrow definition. Fichte supported the existence of nations as constituents in a world federation of states which observed universally-valid moral and legal concepts. Nation-states were crucial in this aspect of his thought, just as individuals were crucial to the existence of the state. But this theory did not support the idea of world domination or imperialism. On the contrary, these ideas were anathema to Fichte's world-view.

Given the context of Fichte's life-work, it is possible to recognize the contemporary circumstances which compelled him to react. The two external events which had the greatest impact on his intellectual ferment were the French Revolution, which helped inspire his liberal thought, and the Napoleonic domination of Prussia, which reversed his faith in French leadership and aspired towards the German "mission." This "mission" was an elaborate doctrine which combined the fundamentals of the *Wissenschaftslehre* with the political crisis of Germany. Thus, Fichte's overriding dedication was to the creation of a morally perfect existence for all of humanity.

Fichte was propelled by an inner dynamic which was unwilling to accept the human condition as it existed. Instead he strove to improve the general well-being of society by changing human beings through the founding of an educational state. This was the essence of his political theory.

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NOTE

This bibliography was compiled over a period of three years. During this time, the author consulted with computerized on-line catalogues from across North America and with scholars from Canada, the United States and Great Britain. The author would like to thank in particular Professor James Schmidt, from Boston University, who did me the great service of providing me with an advance copy of Fichte's "Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought," before its publication.

Every attempt has been made to conform the entries to the McGill University History Department's Student's Guide To Bibliographical and Footnote Style, which is based on the manual entitled A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations[1], written by Kate L. Turabian. There are, however, entries which are not complete; these sources were not used by the author. These volumes have been left in this bibliography to be of use to other researchers who might not have otherwise been aware of their existence.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte

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APPENDIX

J.G. Fichte's Political Writings[1]
1780-1813

The following writings are cited in German along with their English translation in parentheses. The author has consulted only those writings where an English translation is listed without parentheses.

1780

October 5. "Über den rechten Gebrauch der Regeln der Dicht- und Redekunst". ("The Valedictory Speech at the Pforta School").

1788

July. "Zufällige Gedanken in einer schlaflosen Nacht". ("Fortuitous Thoughts during a sleepless night.")

1793

Spring. "Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit von den Fürsten Europens, die sie bisher unterdrückten. Heliopolis, im letzten Jahre der Finsternis."
"A discourse on the Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Hitherto Suppressed It. Heliopolis, During the Last Year of Darkness."

"Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urteile des Publikums über die französische Revolution."
("Contribution to correct the judgment of the public about the French Revolution."[2] Part One, first Installment.)

1794

"Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten."

February. ("Contribution to correct the judgment of the public about the French Revolution." Part One, second Installment.)

May. "Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre."

1795

April or May. "Letter to Jens Baggesen."

1796

January. (Review of Kant's *Perpetual Peace.*)

"Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre." 1796-1797.
"Foundations of Natural Law (Nature of Right)."

1798

"Über den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung."
"On the Foundation of Our Belief in a Divine Government of the Universe."

1800

April 13, 27. "Philosophie der Maurerei [Briefe an Constant]."
"Philosophy of Masonry: Letters to Constant."

"Der Geschlossene Handelsstaat."
"The Closed Commercial State".

1801

"Sonnenklarer Bericht an das grössere Publikum, über das Wesen der neuesten Philosophie."
"A Crystal Clear Report to the General Public Concerning the Actual Essence of the Newest Philosophy: An Attempt to Force the Reader to Understand."

1804

"Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters." to 1805.
"Characteristics of the Present Age."

"Aphorismen über Erziehung."
"Aphorisms on Education."

1805

"Ideen über die innere Organisation der Universität Erlangen." to 1806.
"Ideas on the Inner organization of the University of Erlangen."

1806

"Reden an die deutschen Krieger zu Anfange des Feldzuges."

"Der Patriotismus und Sein Gegenteil. Patriotische Dialoge." 1806 and 1807.
("Patriotism and Its Opposite.")

"Episode über unser Zeitalter, aus einem republikanischen Schriftsteller." to 1807.

1807

"Politische Fragmente: Die Republik der Deutschen zu Anfang des 22. Jahrhunderts."

"Deducirter Plan einer zu Berlin zu errichtenden höheren Lehranstalt."

"Über Machiavelli als Schriftsteller und Stellen aus seinen Schriften."

"Reden an die Deutsche Nation." 1807-1808.
"Addresses to the German Nation."

1812

"Das System der Rechtslehre." Lectures delivered 1812.

1813

"Aus dem Entwurfe zu einer politischen Schrift im Frühlinge."

"Die Staatslehre, oder Über das Verhältnis des Urstaates zum Venunftreiche."
"The Theory of the State." Lectures delivered 1813.

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[1]Sources: Helmuth Engelbrecht, Johann Gottlieb Fichte: A Study of his political Writings with special reference to his Nationalism (New York, 1933); Daniel Breazeale, "Appendix: Fichte's Lectures and Writings, 1792-1799," Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings (Ithaca, 1988), pp. 46-49; Daniel Breazeale, ed., J.G. Fichte: Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (Indianapolis, 1994).
[2]The French translation of the *Beitrag* has been consulted by the author. See bibliography.

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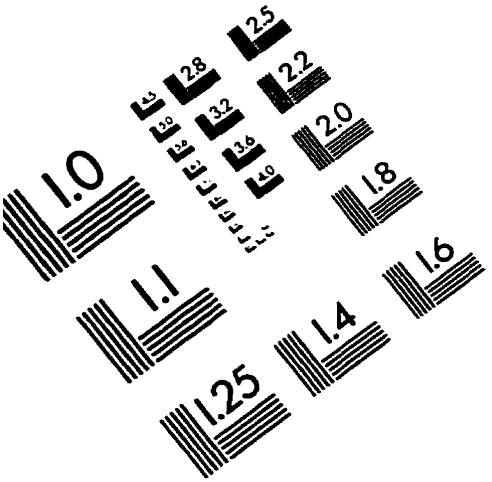

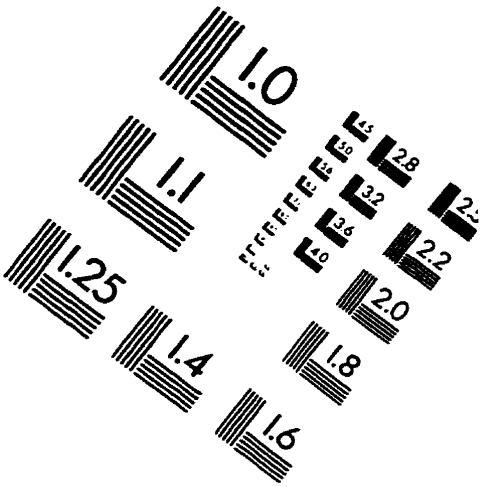

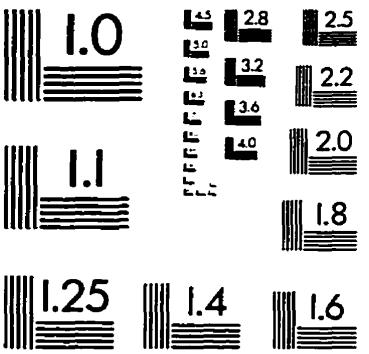

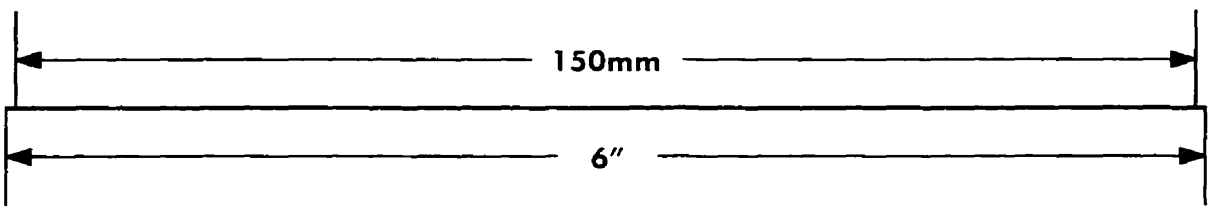

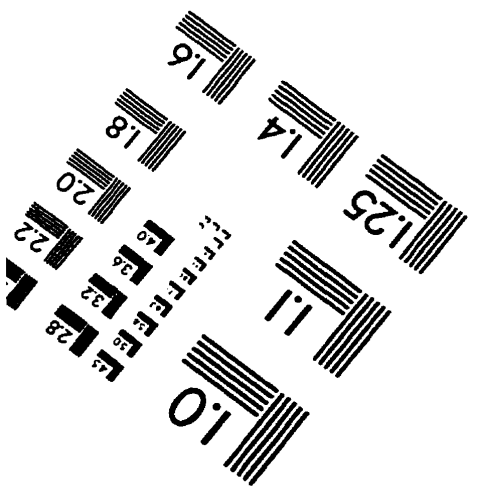

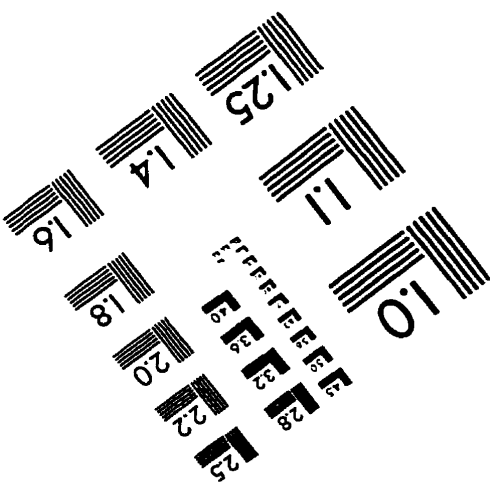

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