

V FICHTE, EARLY ROMANTICISM AND GERMAN IDEALISM

FICHTE'S DEBATE WITH REINHOLD IN 1793

The Doctrine of Drives and the Problem of Freedom

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In the following paper, I propose to examine the relationship between Fichte and Reinhold in the year 1793, more specifically, their debate before Fichte began to work on what was to become the »doctrine of science«. Leaving aside the *Eigene Meditationen*, which also fall within this period, I shall concentrate solely on Fichte's practical philosophy. Fichte is outspokenly critical of Reinhold's theory of freedom at this juncture in his career. Their debate can be traced in Fichte's writings, although, as we shall see, Fichte's criticisms are not always entirely explicit. On the occasion of his *Recension* of Creuzer's book on the theory of the freedom of the will, published in October 1793, Fichte specifically refers to Reinhold's theses on freedom. Albeit brief, the passage in question suggests that the author was more interested in critiquing Reinhold's theoretical approach than in Creuzer's explanations. It seems that Fichte quite deliberately used Creuzer's work as an opportunity to publicly settle his differences of opinion with Reinhold, while he did not even once mention Reinhold by name in § 2 of the second edition of his *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung* published earlier in the same year.

The lack of so much as even a reference in passing to Reinhold is quite surprising since in § 2 of the *Offenbarungskritik* Fichte was markedly inspired by the last section of Reinhold's *Theorie des Vorstellungsvermögens*. This is true of both the structure and the content of Fichte's text. The § 2 is divided into three

parts: the first part deals with the empirical drive (in the context of the doctrine of happiness), the second with the ethical drive and the third with the highest good. This division is exactly like the corresponding section in Reinhold's *Theorie*. The similarities in content are evident in Fichte's analysis of the two drives in accordance with the four types of judgment, namely, Quality, Quantity, Relation and Modality. The terminology used by Fichte is further testimony to the agreement between the two authors. The drives are differentiated into »matter« and »form« and are either »selfish« or »unselfish«; the sensory drive can have either an »unrefined« or »refined« nature. On a careful reading of the text, one cannot fail to notice the allusions to Reinhold, particularly since there is no comparably developed theory of drives in Kant's practical philosophy.¹ In fact, it is Reinhold who must be credited for having made this topic a focal point of discussion.

Despite this definite agreement one must not underestimate the polemical dimension of Fichte's exposition. One can already detect a critical remark in his choice of a title for § 2. Whereas Reinhold presents in 1789 an outline of a »theory of the faculty of desire«, Fichte gives his added paragraph of 1793 the title »Theory of the will« which sounds polemical, not so much with regard to the *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des Vorstellungsvermögens* as with reference to the second volume of the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* of 1792. As testified by Reinhold's letter of September 1792 to Baggesen, the »elaboration of the theory on the freedom of the will« had been difficult and seems to have been a matter which caused him a great deal of concern.² This theory is new in so far as Reinhold, in 1789,³ could still identify pure will with practical reason while in his newly edited *Briefe* he defends the thesis that the will as such enjoys »uncondi-

¹ See Cesa, »Der Begriff ›Trieb‹ in den Frühschriften von J. G. Fichte (1792-1794)« 167, 172.

² Letter of Reinhold to Baggesen, dated September 21, 1792, quoted in E. Fuchs, *Fichte im Gespräch*, Band 6.1, 13. See also Reinhold, *Briefe* II (hereafter quoted in the ed. of R. Schmidt, Leipzig: Reclam, 1923) 297.

³ Reinhold, *Th. Vorst.* 571 : »Die Vernunft heißt *praktisch* in wieferne in ihrer Selbstthätigkeit das Vermögen liegt, das Objekt des rein-vernünftigen Triebes zu realisieren..., und das Vermögen des vorstellenden Objektes [sic] sich durch die Selbstthätigkeit des rein-vernünftigen Triebes zum Handeln zu bestimmen, heißt der *reine Wille*«.

tional freedom« independently of practical reason. In other words, the innovation in the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* lies in the dissociation of freedom from reason. Against this background, Fichte's direct reference to the will in § 2 of his *Offenbarungskritik* clearly indicates his intention to critically discuss this last stage of Reinhold's thought.

In this paper, I shall begin by discussing the actuality of the freedom of the will, second, I shall examine question of the possibility of this freedom, and, finally, I shall deal with the topic of respect (*Achtung*) as a motivating force for the moral subject. The first step bears upon Fichte's disagreement with Reinhold's theses in the *Creuzer-Recension*, while the discussions of the possibility of freedom and of respect are based on a reading of § 2 of the *Offenbarungskritik*. While his criticisms of Reinhold are diverse, Fichte is consistently critical of what he takes to be an absence of the appropriate mediations in Reinhold's practical philosophy. Reinhold is generally regarded as an excellent analyst of the faculty of representation who astutely perceives the need to bring clarity and precision into the Kantian terminology. According to Reinhold, the task of the philosopher is to translate the vague feelings of a sound human understanding into clear conceptual terms. As we shall see, Fichte attempts, in an entirely Kantian spirit, to move beyond the rigidity and at times one-sidedness of Reinhold's systematization. He finds a complete lack of mediation between the strictly separated elements of Reinhold's philosophical system. In Reinhold's account of the actuality of the freedom of the will Fichte criticizes the immediacy of the transition between the intelligible and the sensible world. In Reinhold's construction of the concept of freedom, he also fails to find the fundamental connection between the will and the absolute autonomy of reason that is emphasized in Kant's work. Finally, Fichte tries to overcome the disjointed juxtaposition of the sensuous and the ethical drives by underscoring the importance of the unity of the practical subject.

I *The actuality of the freedom of the will in the Creuzer-Recension*

I shall begin this section with a brief discussion of Reinhold's reformulation of the problem of freedom in the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*. As we shall see, it is motivated by the following difficulties which have their roots in the Kantian doctrine of the autonomy of the will: first, if one conceives of the freedom of the will as ›autonomy‹, then an act can only properly be called free if its maxim can be subsumed under the ethical law, that is, under the law which reason sets for itself. The will is free, that is, autonomous, only if the act accords with the self-legislation of reason. It follows from this that only moral acts can really be called free (since only they derive from the autonomy of the will) while the immoral acts cannot be included in the class of free acts. They must therefore be considered as constrained. However, this, of course, raises the question of whether an agent is responsible for an immoral act, that is for an act that was not ›freely‹ chosen: if immoral acts are carried out by a heteronomous will, how could they be described as acts for which an agent can be held accountable? In Kant's practical philosophy — despite his theory on autonomy — an agent is nonetheless regarded as accountable for an immoral act. (*Briefe* II 512)

Reinhold's colleague Schmid, amongst others, drew attention to this problem and Reinhold took it upon himself to improve the Kantian conception. He reproaches Kant for not having an exact definition of the will,⁴ and, in his *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* he proposes to define the will as a self-sufficient faculty which, as such, is not dependent upon the legislation of reason. The will must be understood as absolutely free even if it is not immediately determined by the ethical law of reason. The will is also free against the demands of the sensory drive. In this respect, the will takes an independent position between the moral and the sensory drive. The will proceeds in this manner with absolute self-determination: »absolute freedom belongs therefore to the will not insofar as it

⁴ Reinhold, *Briefe* II 297; »Über das vollständige Fundament der Moral« in *Beitr.* II, 213, 230-231. See also Fabianelli, »Die Theorie der Willensfreiheit in den ›Briefen über die Kantische Philosophie‹ (1790-92) von Karl Leonhard Reinhold«, 428-443.

acts as a *pure* will, nor insofar as it acts as an *impure* will, but given that it can act in accordance with both of these characteristics.« (*Briefe* II 503) In order to distinguish between the self-determination of practical reason and the self-determination of the will Reinhold is forced to introduce this important distinction into moral philosophy, and this dichotomy constitutes the source of Fichte's disagreement with him in the *Creuzer-Recension*.

According to Reinhold, there are two fundamentally different spontaneous activities in practical philosophy. The first functions at the level of practical reason and accounts for the fact that reason is self-legislating. The second bears upon the will as such, that is to say the capacity of a finite being that is not determined by the moral law in an immediate manner in a given act, but is also affected by the demands of sensuous inclinations.

We have been reminded by the friends of critical philosophy — and Reinhold has clearly shown — that a careful distinction must be made between *those* manifestations of the absolute self-activity [*Selbsttätigkeit*] through which reason is practical and legislates its own law, and *those* through which man determines himself (and in this function: his *will*) to follow or not to follow the law.⁵

In principle, Fichte is not opposed to the above terminological distinction between the two levels of spontaneous activities. On the contrary, he emphasizes this necessary distinction in the *Offenbarungskritik* (FW V 32) as well as in the *Gebhard-Recension*. (FW VIII 426) However, difficulties arise when one raises the question of the place assigned to freedom in Reinhold. According to Reinhold, the first manifestation of spontaneity is not the locus of freedom since reason has no choice but to legislate in accordance with the law that corresponds to its nature. Thus Reinhold claims that the self-determination of reason is necessary, *un-*

⁵ Fichte, *Recension von Creuzers skeptischen Betrachtungen über die Freiheit des Willens*, FW VIII 412. Cf. Reinhold, *Briefe* II 509: »Das Positive bei der Freiheit besteht in der Selbsttätigkeit der Person *beim Wollen*, einer ganz besonderen Selbsttätigkeit, die von der Selbsttätigkeit der Vernunft, oder durch Vernunft genau unterschieden werden muß, die von manchen Freunden der Kantischen Philosophie aber mit der Selbsttätigkeit der praktischen Vernunft, in der sie das Positive des freien Willens aufsuchten, verwechselt wurde«.

willkürlich. It is an entirely different matter when one addresses the nature of the second manifestation of spontaneity, namely, the freedom of the will. Here the subject determines its act without coercion — its acts are arbitrary (*willkürlich*). In fact, freedom, as freedom of choice, can only occur at this second level. The will chooses between the demands of the sensory drive or the ethical drive and in both cases the act is free and therefore an act for which a subject is accountable.

From the above account, the following two questions arise: first, if freedom is grounded exclusively in the spontaneity of the will in the intelligible world, how is it possible to verify the actuality of this freedom in the world of the senses? Reinhold's response: on the basis of a fact understood as a fact of consciousness (*Tatsache des Bewusstseins*). Fichte finds this answer to be wholly inadequate. The second question concerns Reinhold's strict separation between reason and freedom in so far as this separation renders impossible a plausible account of freedom. I shall deal with this second problem in the next section of the paper.

In the *Creuzer-Recension* the first question is dealt with as follows: Fichte remarks that the act of the self-determination of the will never appears as such in the sensible world. This spontaneous activity belongs to the intelligible world, whereas in the world of the senses the self-determining (*Selbstbestimmung*) of the will does not appear but rather merely its determinateness (*Bestimmtheits*). In so far as the spontaneous originary ground of this determination does not belong to the phenomenal realm, it is not at all verifiable and thus the alleged spontaneity of the original act might well be an illusion. Fichte emphatically states that the determination of the will as such leaves behind no trace of its spontaneity in the sensible world, not even in sensation. To those who claim they can sense the act of self-determination of the will Fichte retorts: »The alleged sensation of the act of self-determination is not a sensation, but a conclusion, implicitly drawn, from the failure to sense the determining power.« (FW VIII 413-414) As Fichte sees mat-

ters, nothing in Reinhold's theory safeguards him from the objection of natural determinism — it is merely an unfounded assumption that the will is free.

The *determinateness* of the will appears, and then the question arises: knowing that it is recognized as a postulate of reason which renders possible accountability, is the act of self-determination to a certain satisfaction or non-satisfaction [of the sensory drive], the *cause* of the *appearance* of the determinateness to this satisfaction or non-satisfaction? If one answers this question with yes, as Reinhold (p. 284 of his *Briefe*) in fact does..., then one reduces something intelligible into the necessity of the *natural causes*, and runs the risk of transposing it into the series of the natural effects... (FW VIII 414)

In the above passage, Fichte draws on Reinhold's *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*, more specifically, on the section where Reinhold answers this objection by pointing out that the effects of the free will upon the senses points to an indisputable »fact of consciousness«. Still, the problem of verifying the will's absolute freedom of choice remains unsolved since the »fact of consciousness« only makes known the empirical effects of the alleged self-determination of the subject in the intelligible world. The fact of consciousness attests solely to the empirical determinateness of the moral subject, a determinateness whose ground can as well be interpreted as a mere link in natural causality. Thus the hypothesis of a naturalistic explanation of moral acts cannot be dismissed. In fact, in Reinhold's thought, the transition from a free act of the will to its effects in the sensible world remains unexplained and therefore unmediated.

On the basis of his own philosophical premises Reinhold cannot understand why Fichte still perceives the danger that consists in locating the ground of determination for moral acts within the »chain of natural effects«. In what follows, I shall quote from a letter dated January 10, 1794, from Hermann Coch, one of Reinhold's students, to a fellow student, Johann Smidt. This letter is of interest since it refers to a discussion with Reinhold in which he addresses the *Creuzer-Recension* and Fichte's objections against him. Reinhold, according to Coch,

complained that Fichte accused him of not having »taken into account natural necessity when dealing with the will at the level of appearances — i.e. how in the case of single actions [,] in which the absolute cause of freedom is not at all perceivable — is this to be reconciled with natural causality... [Reinhold however] says [,] that this is the way things are [,] absurd as it may seem...«⁶ Evidently Reinhold could not accept Fichte's objection, first, since Kant had explained the possibility of a free act in the sensible world by means of his idea of transcendental freedom,⁷ and, second, since, according to Reinhold, man is definitely conscious of the spontaneity of his will.

The counter claim that Fichte elaborates in the rest of the *Creuzer-Recension* is noteworthy. After having done away with the fact of consciousness as a dubious piece of empirical evidence for the spontaneity of the will, Fichte criticizes the Kantian notion of transcendental freedom as it is presented in the third antinomy of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Suggesting that this idea deals with a provisional (*vorläufig*) view of Kant, Fichte contests the thesis whereby »freedom must exert a causality in the sensible world«. For the reader of Fichte's *Versuch eines erklärenden Auszugs aus Kants Kritik der Urteilskraft* of 1790-1791 this statement is not at all surprising. We can recall, that, after the remarks that Fichte makes in this excerpt dealing with the introduction of the third *Critique*, the problem of freedom cannot in any way be understood as having been solved in Kant's first two *Critiques*. This is why in the *Creuzer-Recension*, Fichte prefers to adopt the later version of the mediation between nature and freedom that one finds in Kant's theory on reflective judgment. So instead of describing freedom of the will as encroaching directly into the realm of natural causality,

⁶ Letter of H. Coch to J. Smidt, dated January 10, 1794, quoted in Fuchs, »Reinhold und Fichte im Briefwechsel zweier Jenenser Studenten 1793-94« 160, see also 153: »... das einzige sagte [Reinhold] konnte er [Fichte] nicht vergeben daß er ihn darüber tadle er habe in [einen] Briefen [über die Kantische Philosophie] bey d. Lehre v. d. Freyheit nicht auf d. *Naturnotwendigkeit* — Rücksicht genommen — er wundere sich daß H. Fichte darüber etwas sagen könne...«

⁷ Reinhold's letter to Fichte, January 12, 1794, GA III/2 37.

Fichte suggests a new version of pre-established harmony,⁸ thereby doing away with the fundamental conflict between the laws of freedom and those of nature. Although only a regulative idea, the Kantian idea of purposiveness offers the much-needed mediation in the form of a *dritte Gesetzgebung*. (FW VIII 415)

II *The Tenability of the Concept of Freedom of the Will*

As we saw above, Fichte agrees with Reinhold's distinction between the two types of spontaneous activity — the self-determination of practical reason grounded in the moral law and the self-determination of the will as freedom of choice. However, a consequence of Reinhold's distinction is that the will enjoys a monopoly on freedom since the self-determination of the will is arbitrary (*willkürlich*) whereas the spontaneous activity of practical reason is necessary. Precisely herein lies the problem of the validity of the notion of freedom. Because Reinhold conceives free will as fundamentally separate from practical reason, it has absolutely no basis in the intelligible world; thus one can easily dismiss this freedom as a »beautiful illusion«. For Fichte, a freedom of the will completely severed from reason is simply untenable. Reinhold's account of the freedom of choice is in Fichte's view absolutely arbitrary. The following quote from the *Offenbarungskritik* clarifies Fichte's objection. While Fichte, in the same manner as Reinhold, distinguishes two types of spontaneous activity, it is decisive for Fichte that the spontaneous activity of practical reason also possesses a dimension of freedom — indeed the most fundamental dimension of freedom.

The *freedom of choice* (*libertas arbitrii*), given to consciousness empirically in this function of choosing, also occurs in a determination of the will by sensuous inclination... This freedom is indeed to be distinguished from the absolutely first expression of *freedom* [emphasis added] through the practical law of reason, where freedom does not mean choice at all,

since the law allows us no option but rather commands by necessity; here freedom signifies, only negatively, complete liberation from coercion of natural necessity... and presupposes a faculty in man for determining himself independently of natural necessity. Without this absolutely first expression of freedom, the second, merely empirical expression could not be saved; it would be a mere illusion...⁹

This passage is properly read as a deliberate response to Reinhold. Fichte takes up the »distinction« between practical reason and will, but with a quite different purpose in mind. He emphatically states that practical reason is the fundamental ground of all freedom, and that no form of spontaneity would be conceivable without it. The freedom of practical reason may well be merely »negative«, but this negation — turned against the determinations of natural necessity — nonetheless constitutes the human will's only defense against the causality of the sensible world. We have already seen that freedom of choice cannot itself provide such a guarantee. In this regard, free will, when it is bereft of the sanction of the ethical law, is without this essential connection to practical reason simply untenable. In the absence of practical reason the notion of free choice makes no sense in Fichte's view. In other words, freedom of choice is not a defensible notion, when it is not somehow derived or deduced from practical reason. It is otherwise not redeemable as far as Fichte is concerned.

»It is not practical reason that acts morally, but my freedom«, wrote Reinhold to Baggesen, and further stated »my freedom transcends all laws«. ¹⁰ The meaning of this statement is clear: if Reinhold wants to eliminate the problem of freedom conceived as autonomy and the ensuing problem of the moral account-

⁸ See Reinhold's criticism of this Leibnizian theory in his *Briefe* II 552.

⁹ FW V 31, see also 22. All translations are mine except for the passages of the *Offenbarungskritik*, like the one here, that are taken (and sometimes modified) from G. Green's edition of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

ability of unlawful acts, he is forced to distance himself from all laws — even the moral law. Reinhold's intention is obvious and legitimate. However, on this account another dimension — and for Kant an essential dimension of morality — is lost, namely, the binding character of the moral law on the will. The end result of Reinhold's solution suggests that human choice stands between the sensory drive and the ethical drive without showing any preference towards the latter.

This overestimation of the freedom of the will leads Reinhold to a new conception of the final requirements of practical philosophy vis-à-vis Kant. For Reinhold the starting point of practical philosophy lies in freedom of the will which is the very condition for the possibility of morality. In Kantian terms one can say that the freedom of the will is the ratio essendi of the moral law, that is, its ontological prerequisite, without which the moral law would be an empty proposition. This is the classical Kantian position. However, Reinhold wants to regard the will as a foundational faculty that does not derive from any even more foundational faculty. Thus from the outset the subject can be certain of his or her freedom of will in so far as it is for him or her a fact of consciousness. The subject does not, as Kant suggests, need to refer to the ethical law to be assured of this fact. On the contrary, the concept of freedom leads by itself to the science of the moral law.

Since the moral law can be rightly conceived only as a law of the will, and since the will on the other hand is inconceivable without the correct concept of freedom, the latter embodies the conviction that must precede the science of the moral law and ground it as its *conditio sine qua non*, i.e. the fundamental truth of morality, in the same manner as the conviction of one's freedom as a fact of consciousness grounds every moral or immoral action. (*Briefe* II 568)

¹⁰ Letter of Reinhold to Baggesen, July 23, 1792, quoted in Klemmt, *Reinholds*

From the above, it is clear that the conviction of one's proper freedom, which rests on a fact of consciousness, renders possible an accurate understanding of the notion of freedom. However, it follows from this that the moral law as *ratio cognoscendi* no longer serves the function that it did in Kant's thought. At one point in the 10th *Letter on Kantian Philosophy* (Book II) Reinhold even claims that we only have knowledge of morality if we possess a clear consciousness of our freedom beforehand. He actually speaks of morality »that we either do not know at all, or that we *know* only through the consciousness of our freedom...« (Briefe II 571, emphasis added) Moreover, when one realizes that Reinhold defines morality as a »science of the moral law«, this implies that he indicates that while perhaps consciousness of freedom does not render possible a knowledge of the moral law as such, it at least makes possible a science, which can be developed on the basis of this law. This seems like a marked alteration of Kant's foundational procedure: freedom from now on is not only the *ratio essendi* but also the *ratio cognoscendi* of the whole realm of morality.¹¹

Fichte reacts to this argument, albeit not explicitly, in § 2 of his *Offenbarungskritik*. He establishes that the Kantian theory of transcendental freedom in the *Briefe* is re-interpreted in such a way that transcendental freedom no longer is considered a problematic idea of theoretical reason, and is instead taken entirely for granted. However, Reinhold can only claim such certainty since he takes freedom of the will as an indisputable fact of consciousness. As we have seen above, such a consciousness does not provide Fichte with a reliable criterion. The fact of consciousness can, at the very most, make aware the determinateness (*Bestimmtheit*) of the acting subject; the act of self-determination itself does not, however, appear in the inner sense. For Fichte, the Kantian notion of a faculty that produces an act out of itself, remains a problematic concept as long as it can-

Elementarphilosophie 129.

¹¹ When I wrote this paper, I had not read Alessandro Lazzari's excellent article in which this peculiarity of Reinhold's thought is also mentioned: "K. L. Reinholds Behandlung der Freiheitsthematik zwischen 1789 und 1792".

not be integrated into the realm of practical reason. The critical solution of the third Antinomy based on the concept of transcendental freedom is therefore not at all convincing, since the concept of an originary spontaneity is presented as wholly severed from practical philosophy.

[T]hat is the only correct concept of transcendental freedom: this law commands necessarily and unconditionally, precisely *because* it is *law*; and here no choice, no selection among different determinations, takes place through this law...This transcendental freedom, as the exclusive character of reason insofar as it is *practical*, (emphasis added) is to be attributed to every moral being, hence also to the infinite moral being. (FW V 32)

In Fichte's view, the notion of freedom bears upon the very first manifestation of spontaneity, that is, on the self-legislating nature of practical reason. Fichte draws on the nature of this autonomous reason as paradigmatic for all freedom, thus freedom of choice must be understood as a derivative form of freedom. Following Kant's *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* Fichte does not hesitate in the *Creuzer-Recension* to regard the freedom of the will as a mere postulate. For Fichte, the will's freedom of choice is not accurately described as an object of direct awareness, but rather as an object of belief.¹²

III *Respect as the Ethical Drive*

I have up until this point concentrated solely on the problem of freedom of the will in Reinhold and Fichte. More precisely, I have focused on the question of the existence of free will as well as the question of the very possibility of such a faculty. Now I would like to, with the help of § 2 of the *Offenbarungskritik*, examine the anterior phase of ethical deliberation, that is, the respective manifestations of

¹² Kant, KpV AA V 132. Fichte, *Creuzer-Recension*, FW VIII 413-414.

both the sensory drive and the ethical drive in the practical subject. While the first part of this paper dealt with the feasibility of a moral act and the second part was concerned with the problem of the accountability of such an act, this last section is devoted to the question of the motivating ground of such an act. Fichte intends to examine the motivating force of the will drawing on the very theory of drives that Reinhold elaborates, namely, the one developed in the *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*, and in the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*. It is even plausible to suggest that Fichte had the arguments of both these books in the forefront of his mind as he began the composition of § 2 — indeed that these very works lay open on his desk. However, against the view he found expounded in Reinhold, Fichte intended to sketch, building on Reinhold's theory, a coherent account of the moral subject, and thus to bridge the gap between the intelligible world and the sensible world as much as possible. With this project in mind he makes two important claims that constitute radical departures from Reinhold's theory. First of all, he does not regard respect as a mere feeling, but also as a drive, specifically as the ethical drive. Secondly, he takes issue with Reinhold's characterization of the sensory drive and the ethical drive with the help of the adjectives »selfish« and »unselfish«. At first glance, these changes seem insignificant, however, in what follows, it will become clear that they are elements of a strategy that moves towards a criticism of Reinhold's overstated Kantian dualism. Before examining Fichte's very different account of the notion of a drive, it is helpful to first examine the theoretical preferences that compel him to appropriate this systematically developed concept from Reinhold. Let us recall in this connection the fact that the question about the *principium executionis* of a moral act is posed only for a being that does not carry out an act automatically in accordance with the moral law. The problem is posed for a being who is sensibly affected and who is solicited by the demands of his inclinations. If one carefully examines the definition of a drive in the *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsmögens*, one can determine that it presup-

poses the very finitude of human being. Indeed a drive is relevant only to one who must distinguish between a mere wish and a concrete action, between possibility and actuality. For Reinhold the drive, as one can see from the following quotation, establishes a connection between faculty (*Vermögen*) on the one hand and a power (*Kraft*) on the other. »The relation of the power to its faculty, of the ground of actuality to the ground of possibility of the representation,...I call the *drive* of the representing subject, which consists in the link between the power and the faculty, and which must be present in every finite representing subject in whom the power is distinguished from the faculty.« (*Th. Vorst.* 561) The drive does not possess the actuality of a power, it takes more of a middle position between a faculty and a power. Another word for drive is »tendency«: a tendency drives to the actualization of a desired idea, that is to say to the completion of an act. If the content of the representation is delivered only through the senses, the drive is called »sensory«. If, on the other hand, the content in the drive contains nothing but the pure form of the moral law, it is called »ethical«.

But when Fichte regards the ethical drive and respect as identical, he intends to complete the account according to which the ethical drive consists of the mere determination of the higher faculty of desire by the moral law. The ethical drive bears upon the realm of the senses, and that is not merely because it represses sensibility, but also because the ethical drive itself is impossible without a direct connection to the realm of the senses. This is why the ethical drive manifests itself first as a feeling that takes the form of a negative affect — as a suppression of the sensory drive — but then is also experienced as a feeling of pleasure. For the subjective determination of a finite moral being this reference to the realm of the senses is indispensable. To be sure, Reinhold does lay out in his *Briefe* the role of ethical feeling in morality, however, he barely touches upon the (for Kant) extremely important theme of respect, moreover, he fails to recognize the feeling of respect as a drive. Fichte, on the other hand, proposes to confer an ontological status on the usually elusive phenomenon of respect since he finds in

this drive the heart, not only of the spiritual character of human beings, but indeed of the whole nature of man. »This feeling is the point, as it were, at which the rational and the sensuous natures of finite beings flow intimately together.« (FW V 26) Respect is, however, only one of the two drives in human nature. Although one can without any difficulty ignore the ethical drive while defining the sensory drive, it is impossible to define the ethical drive without any reference whatsoever to the sensory drive. If one examines the text of § 2 carefully, one can determine that Fichte takes it upon himself to show the unity of moral subjectivity: »Why it is that the sensory drive on the one hand and the purely moral drive on the other counterbalance each other in the human will could doubtless be explained by the fact that they both appear *in one and the same subject*.« (FW V 29, emphasis added) One must not think that human nature is divided into a sensory drive and an ethical drive which neatly correspond to purely sensory and purely spiritual components of human being. As we have seen, the ethical drive exerts a direct influence on sensibility. Moreover, as Kant has shown in the part of the second *Kritik* where he offers an account of the motivating force of pure practical reason, finite human being requires a subjective determining ground that consists in the feeling of respect. The objective determining ground contained in the moral law is of course of primary importance, yet alone it proves insufficient: the feeling of respect and its presence within sensibility is required as a motivating force. Indeed, the role of moral feeling as a motivating force for ethical acts is taken so seriously by Fichte that he raises it to the status of a drive.

The requirement according to which the ethical drive has to take explicitly into account the unity of the moral subject is satisfied in § 2 of Fichte's text on *Revelation*, where the concept of respect is interpreted on the basis of the first category of relation. Defined with the help the category of substance respect refers to the I, that is, to *both* dimensions of the I: on the one hand, the subject experiences respect for its »higher spiritual nature«, and, on the other hand for the »congruency of [its] particular form of will with the law«. (FW V 26) In the latter

case, in which the empirical character of the subject comes to the fore, respect is experienced as a feeling of »self-satisfaction«. The I grasps the ground of determination of this feeling as stemming from the moral law, but it is experienced by the empirical subject as a satisfaction with itself. This feeling of satisfaction constitutes part of the motivation of the subject despite the fact that, as a goal of the act, it holds merely a secondary status. The motivating force thus consists, at least in part, in the anticipation of self-satisfaction. In other words, Fichte is prepared to include this feeling of pleasure, which ensues as the consequence of an ethical act as a legitimate determining ground. The prospect of self-satisfaction as well as the »pure« respect of the dignity of mankind both constitute motivating forces. Fichte refuses to exclude the empirical components of motivation from the phenomenon of ethical behaviour. »But in practice the two thoughts fuse so intimately that it must be difficult even for the most astute observer to distinguish precisely the part played by the one or the other in the determination of his will.« (FW V 27) This separation does not have to be made in actual life, thus the moral behaviour of human beings can be regarded as a unified phenomenon. To be sure, a careful »observer« of the ethical life, and, even more so, a keen interpreter of the human faculty of desire such as Reinhold, can make subtle distinctions between what is purely ethical and what is impure in one's convictions and frame of mind. (*Briefe* II 476-477) This is entirely sanctioned from a theoretical standpoint and even Kant offers a brilliant example in his *Grundlegung*. However, these distinctions need not lead to the kind of rigorism that Reinhold underscores in his *Briefe*. In fact, the strict separation of the pure and the empirical character of human beings can only reinforce the dualism in human nature instead of providing a possible bridge to overcome this dualism.¹³

¹³ Reinhold, *Briefe* II 495: »Da das Vergnügen überhaupt weder den subjektiven noch den objektiven Bestimmungsgrund der sittlichen Handlung abgeben kann: so kann unter dem sittlichen Vergnügen durchaus kein solches verstanden werden, welches auf irgendeine Art der Sittlichkeit, es sei nun dem Gesetze oder dem Willen der dasselbe befolgt, zugrunde gelegt werden könnte; sondern es läßt sich nur als dasjenige denken, das mit dem Gesetze und dem Entschlusse, der

The second theoretical decision made by Fichte bears upon the description of respect as an »unselfish« (*uneigennützig*) drive. His characterization is clearly derived from Reinhold's aforementioned writings, for it can be found everywhere in these writings. However, it turns out that Fichte pronounces some reservations about the distinction between the two fundamental drives in his use of the terms selfish and unselfish. His uneasiness stems partially from his view of the concept of usefulness (*Nützlichkeit*) as an empirical feature while Fichte proposes to examine the matter from, as he himself says, a transcendental level. For example, »to use« signifies for Reinhold that which is »a means for obtaining pleasure«. (*Briefe* II 480, 469) For Fichte, however, and this seems to be of paramount importance, the adjective »unselfish« as Reinhold uses it, eliminates the characteristic of the ethical drive's relationship to the self, and, with this, eliminates the self-relation of the moral subject. Fichte has a very important purpose in mind when he takes exception to the account of the ethical drive as unselfish. The descriptor »unselfish« for the ethical drive tends, in fact, to gloss over the precise nature of the relationship to the self in morality. If behaviour determined by the sensory drive can rightly be called »egoistic« — in that this behaviour consists solely in a search for pleasurable feelings — does one then automatically have to conclude that the behaviour which stems from the ethical drive is therefore »altruistic«? Certainly, this seems to be the impression that the descriptor »unselfish« leaves.¹⁴ It seems as though virtuous behaviour must be entirely selfless.

Herein lies the reason why Fichte identifies the ethical drive with the feeling of respect. The self-relationship that is included in this drive is based in more than just the pure act of self-determination of reason through the law.¹⁵ The moral law is not an infallible determining ground for a finite being, but is merely

demselben gemäß ist, als Folge zusammenhängt.« Cf. 476, 481. See also Rotta, »Die Grundzüge der Moral in der zweiten Auflage der *Offenbarungskritik* Fichtes« 143.

¹⁴ Reinhold, *Th. Vorst.* 108 : »Es müssten also im menschlichen Gemüthe zwey ganz verschiedene Grundtriebe angenommen werden, wovon der eine *eigenes* der andere aber *fremdes* Wohlbefinden zum Zwecke hätte...« (Reinhold's italics)

¹⁵ Reinhold, *Briefe* II 404-405 : in this case reason is »für und durch sich selbst geschäftigt«.

a motivating force in that it exerts an indirect influence on the will with the aid of feeling. In the case of a finite being the self-relation implicates the mediation of sensibility: moral self-consciousness involves a reference to itself that necessarily takes the form of respect or contempt. (FW V 27) In the following passage one must take careful note of the use of the word »self«, precisely in its connection to a discussion about the inappropriateness of the use of the adjective »unselfish«.

This [moral] interest certainly relates itself to the self, though not to *love* but rather to *respect* of this self, which feeling is purely moral according to its origin. If one wants to call the sensory drive selfish and the moral drive unselfish, one can surely do so for explanation. But to me, at least, this nomenclature seems inopportune where it is a case of precise definition, since even the moral impulse must relate itself to the self in order to effect an actual volition... (FW V 28)

The essential relationship of the subject to itself in morality is in no case to be identified with egoism. Respect is precisely the concept that the relationship of the self to itself points to: only a finite being can experience such a feeling, God experiences no feeling of respect. Without a doubt respect points to the moral law, and even to the highest law giver, however, the end result is that respect is directed toward the acting subject as the bearer of this law. In this way, respect is always respect for oneself (*Selbtsachtung*) as Fichte writes. Moreover, Fichte systematically refers to the aspect of the selfhood of ethical experience in § 2. Many variations of this selfhood of the moral being are to be found here. Respect is therefore a »self-awareness« and »self-respect« entails in a negative fashion »self-contempt«, exactly as, in the case of the empirical subject, self-satisfaction corresponds negatively to »feeling ashamed of oneself«. In this regard, the mediation of sensibility in morality proves not at all to be a detour or deviation, but is rather properly understood as a necessary condition of the possibility of re-

relationship of the moral subject to itself. Without the subjective motivating force of respect one is hard pressed to conceive the completion of a moral act as possible for a finite being. Without consideration of the ethical drive, understood as respect, there is, for Fichte, no unified conception of man qua finite moral being.¹⁶

* * *

The first question, that we posed in the context of our reconstruction of the debate between Fichte and Reinhold in the year 1793, addresses the issue of the actuality of the freedom of the will for a subject acting in the sensible world. It became evident that Reinhold cannot prove the self-determination of the will as such since only the effect of this act is available to him as the mere state of determination of the subject. In Reinhold's philosophy, the fact of consciousness opens up the access to determinateness but not to self-determination. Evidently, this is an observation that led Fichte, in the last months of the year 1793, to look for a more originary principle than Reinhold's principle of consciousness. The result of his search was made public for the first time in the *Recension des Aenesidemus* (FW I 8). Here Fichte elaborates the famous distinction between his *Tathandlung* and Reinhold's *Tatsache des Bewusstseins*. With this insight Fichte reaches spontaneity in its center: the problems of the mediation between subject and object, between the I and the not-I can be resolved for the not-I is spontaneously posited by the I. Moreover, it is worth noting that Fichte characterizes this act by appropriating Reinhold's concept of intellectual intuition.

The second problem that Fichte discovers in Reinhold's philosophy, concerns the tenability of the concept of the freedom of the will. One can, in principle, take Reinhold's conception of free will as a *libertas indifferentiae*: the will can, with complete freedom, satisfy (or, alternatively, not satisfy) the demands of both human drives. Thus Fichte lacks a unified concept of freedom insofar as the

¹⁶ See Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy* 146, note 18.

freedom of the will seems *a priori* not to have anything to do with the spontaneity of practical reason. In fact, Reinhold sees in the acting subject two separate spontaneous acts: the self-determination of the will and the self-determination of practical reason. Alessandro Lazzari has drawn attention to the fact that Fichte prefers to speak of two different »expressions« of a single spontaneity.¹⁷ This view is consistent with the account described in the present study of Fichte's attempt to underscore the primacy of the moral law and the autonomy of reason and thereby to show that freedom of choice is a secondary, derivative form of freedom for a finite being.

This does not, however, solve Reinhold's original problem with the conception of human freedom, namely, the accountability of unethical acts. To be sure, one can find in Fichte's book of 1800 *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* expressions that were also present in the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*: Fichte offers an account of lawless acts on the basis of an »misuse of freedom«, that is to say, as a »use of freedom towards evil ends«.¹⁸ Reinhold would, without a doubt, agree, since an unethical act remains a free act of the will. But later in Fichte's *Bestimmung* one can find an expression that is explicitly condemned by Reinhold, namely, the explanation of evil as a »lack of freedom«.¹⁹ For Fichte this suggests that through the unethical act the subject has not raised himself to the level of freedom, to the level of his autonomy. The unethical act is then not so much the effect of freedom thus understood, but much more the consequence of the natural inertia of human being. These difficulties with the whole problem of freedom are well known and extremely complex. However, it is important to draw attention to the fact that Reinhold's position in this regard is to a certain extent legitimate, and that it apparently exerted a significant influence on Schelling's treatise of 1809 on the essence of human freedom. As Martin Bondeli has pointed

¹⁷ See Lazzari, »Fichtes Entwicklung von der zweiten Auflage der Offenbarungskritik bis zur Rezeption von Schulzes *Aenesidemus*« 194.

¹⁸ Fichte, FW II 307, 276. Reinhold, *Briefe* II 529.

¹⁹ Reinhold, *Briefe* II 541-542. Fichte, FW II 314.

out, Schelling's account of freedom as the capacity to do evil as well as good is reminiscent of the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*.²⁰

The third point of reference between Fichte and Reinhold that we examined deals with the role of the drives in moral experience. Instead of placing the sensory drive and the ethical drive alongside one another and describing them as separate impulses, Fichte appropriates Reinhold's account with the end of establishing the unity of human nature in mind. Neither drive is to be understood as a heterogeneous element of human nature. From this vantage point the equivalence of the ethical drive with the feeling of respect proves helpful: a finite being requires not only an objective and intellectual ground of determination (the law) but also a motivating force that sets sensibility in motion. It is entirely clear that the purpose of elaborating a unified conception of human nature also bears upon Reinhold's undertaking. In his *Vorstellungstheorie* he even writes of the »whole drive of human mind«, in other words of exactly the drive that unifies the drive towards happiness and the drive towards the ethical. But his problem comes anew to the fore: he writes, as he also does in the *Briefe*, of the »inseparable unification« (*unzertrennliche Vereinigung*) of both drives. (*Th. Vorst.* 574; *Briefe* II 436, 602). However, it is only possible to unify that which, at the outset, is not found together. Since he is in accord with the classical conception of the human being as »rational animal«, he tends towards, perhaps against his own intentions, a reinforcement of the dualism between the realm of the senses and the intelligible realm. (*Briefe* II 565). As we know, Fichte takes up this problem again in his *Sittenlehre* of 1798, since he attempts there to describe the natural drive and the spiritual drive as two different sides of »one and the same proto-drive«. ²¹ All in all, one can conclude that Reinhold, one of Fichte's most important interlocutors during this period, certainly offered him some very precisely defined conceptual

²⁰ See Bondeli, »Wirkliche, göttliche und naturwissenschaftliche Natur. Neue Literatur zur Naturphilosophie des deutschen Idealismus« 544.

²¹ Fichte, FW IV 130. See De Pascale, »Die Triblehre bei Fichte« 248.

tools which allowed Fichte to move beyond the Kantian ambiguities and ambivalences to a more radicalized position.

Translated from the German by Susan-Judith Hoffmann