

## Fichte's Account of Free Will in Context

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**Abstract:** In this paper, I offer a novel reading of how Fichte's contemporaries shaped the development of his account of free will. Focusing on his emerging views in the second edition of *Revelation* and the Creuzer review, I argue that Fichte's position is closer to Reinhold's than previously recognized. In particular, I demonstrate Reinhold's decisive influence on the development of a key aspect of Fichte's mature, genetic account of freedom: the transition from indeterminacy to determinacy.

**Keywords:** Fichte; Reinhold; free will

»das Bestimmen selbst ist zugleich das Bestimmtwerden,  
und das Bestimmende das Bestimmtwerdende«<sup>1</sup>

Fichte famously calls his philosophy »the first system of freedom.«<sup>2</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that he was preoccupied with the topic of free will leading up to the development of the first published *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794/95). Indeed, the »concept of an absolute freedom« found in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* had revolutionized Fichte's worldview;<sup>3</sup> in September 1790

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<sup>1</sup> GA I/2, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Fichte to Jens Baggesen, April/May 1795 (Draft), GA III/2, 300.

<sup>3</sup> Fichte to Friedrich August Weißhuhn, August/September 1790, GA III/1, 167. Although Fichte's first acquaintance with Kant's works was via the *Critique of Pure Reason* sometime in the summer of 1790 (cf. Fichte to Dietrich von Miltiz, beginning of August 1790, GA III/1, 165), it was only upon reading the second *Critique* that he

he renounced his previously held determinism and solemnly declared: »I am now entirely convinced that the human will is free.«<sup>4</sup>

Between Fichte's indoctrination into the Critical philosophy and the first presentation of his system of freedom, the philosophical landscape was enflamed in the debate on free will incited by Kant. To name but a few examples, C.C.E. Schmid, Karl Reinhold, and Leonhard Creuzer stoked the controversy over freedom.<sup>5</sup> Despite Fichte's decided participation in this debate, Anglophone scholarship has largely ignored its influence on the development of his account of the will. Thus, in her recent monograph on Fichte's ethics, Michelle Kosch limits discussion of this context to a footnote mentioning Reinhold.<sup>6</sup> In his book on Fichte, Allen Wood's discussion of freedom omits treatment of the aforementioned debate altogether.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, in an illuminating new study of Fichte's moral philosophy, Owen Ware argues for Salomon Maimon's influence on Fichte's account of the will.<sup>8</sup> This is a welcome addition to the long-standing investigations of the historical context of Fichte's account in Germanophone scholarship.<sup>9</sup> These studies tend to take Fichte's treatment of the will in the second edition of *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* (1792; 1793; henceforth 'Revelation') and his review of Leonhard Creuzer's *Skeptical Reflections on Freedom of the Will* (1793) to reject Reinhold's account of freedom in the latter's *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, Volume II (1792; henceforth 'Letters II').

In this paper, I offer a novel reading of how Fichte's contemporaries shaped the development of his account of the will. Focusing on his emerging views in the second edition of

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»lived in a new world« (Fichte to Friedrich August Weißhuhn, August/September 1790, GA III/1, 167) and promised »to devote at least several years« to the Kantian philosophy (Fichte to Marie Johanne Rahn, 5 September 1790, GA III/1, 171).

<sup>4</sup> Fichte to Marie Johanne Rahn, 5 September 1790, GA III/1, 171.

<sup>5</sup> For a recent collection of translations documenting the early reception of Kant's account of free will, see: Noller, J. – Walsh, J. (eds. and trans.): *Kant's Early Critics on Freedom of the Will*. New York 2022. In citing authors featured in that volume, I have adopted those translations where possible. All other translations are my own.

<sup>6</sup> Kosch, Michelle: *Fichte's Ethics*. New York 2018, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Wood, Allen: *Fichte's Ethical Thought*. New York 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Ware, Owen: *Fichte's Moral Philosophy*. New York 2020, pp. 23-45.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example: Kabitz, Willy: »Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Fichteschen Wissenschaftslehre aus der Kantischen Philosophie.« In: *Kant-Studien* 6 (1901, 1-3), pp. 129-205; Lazzari, Alessandro: »Fichtes Entwicklung von der zweiten Auflage der Offenbarungskritik bis zur Rezeption von Schulzes *Aenesidemus*.« In: *Fichte-Studien* 9 (1997), pp. 181-196; Piché, Claude: »Fichtes Auseinandersetzung mit Reinhold im Jahre 1793. Die Trieblehre und das Problem der Freiheit.« In: Bondeli, M. – Lazzari, A. (eds.): *Philosophie ohne Beynamen. System, Freiheit und Geschichte im Denken Karl Leonhard Reinholds*. Basel 2004, pp. 251-271; Wallwitz, Georg von: »Fichte und das Problem des intelligiblen Fatalismus.« In: *Fichte-Studien* 15 (1999), pp. 121-145; Zöllner, Günter: »Bestimmung zur Selbstbestimmung: Fichtes Theorie des Willens.« In: *Fichte-Studien* 7 (1995), pp. 101-118.

*Revelation* and the Creuzer review,<sup>10</sup> I argue that Fichte's position is closer to Reinhold's than previously recognized. In particular, I demonstrate Reinhold's decisive influence on the development of a key aspect of Fichte's mature, genetic account of freedom: the transition from indeterminacy to determinacy.

In order to explore the relationship between Fichte's account of the will and his contemporaries, I begin in §1 by outlining relevant aspects of the historical context. In §2 I examine Fichte's new theory of the will in *Revelation* against this backdrop. In §3 I turn to the Creuzer review. Following Reinhold, Fichte rejects Schmid's and Creuzer's objection to the freedom to transgress the moral law, opting for a robust conception of self-determination that prefigures his later, genetic account of the will. In §4 I trace these lines of development in Fichte's 1798 *System of Ethics*. I conclude in §5 by indicating further avenues of research on Fichte's relationship to the immediate reception of Kantian freedom.

### 1. Freedom in Context

Kant's account of free will was hotly debated, involving various aspects and thinkers with sundry philosophical backgrounds.<sup>11</sup> Below I focus on two issues in the debate important to the development of Fichte's account of the will: the justification of the proposition that our will is free and the scope of freedom.

Several protagonists in the debate reject Kant's contention that freedom depends epistemically on the moral law, i.e., that the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom (KpV AA 5:4n). In his preface to Johann Gottfried Karl Christian Kiesewetter's *On the First Principle of Moral Philosophy* (<sup>1</sup>1788; <sup>2</sup>1790), Ludwig Jakob asserts the »fact that we have consciousness of self-activity and freedom,«<sup>12</sup> such that »I know that I am free solely through my self-consciousness« just as »I know that a body is distinct from me simply because I am conscious that it does not belong at all to my self.«<sup>13</sup> Likewise, in his 1791 *Reflections on the Philosophy of*

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<sup>10</sup> A fuller treatment of the development of Fichte's account of the will would include his deterministic conception of freedom in the 1790 *Aphorisms* (cf. Wildfeuer, Armin: »Vernunft als Epiphänomen der Naturkausalität. Zu Herkunft und Bedeutung des ursprünglichen Determinismus J.G. Fichtes.« In: *Fichte-Studien* 9 (1997), pp. 61–82), and his nascent views on the unity of theoretical and practical reason in his 1793 review of Gebhard's *On Moral Goodness From Disinterested Benevolence* (cf. Neuhauser, Frederick: *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*. New York 1990, pp. 34-41).

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of salient features, see Noller and Walsh: *Kant's Early Critics*, xxxiii-xlvii.

<sup>12</sup> Ludwig, Jakob: »Über die Freyheit,« pp. 8-9. In: Kiesewetter, J.G.K.C.: *Ueber den ersten Grundsatz der Moralphilosophie*. Leipzig/Eisleben/Halle <sup>1</sup>1788; <sup>2</sup>1790, pp. 3-28.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.

*Natural Religion*, volume II, Karl Heinrich Heydenreich claims that »[t]he human being is originally endowed with a consciousness of freedom,« which is not »a consequence of consciousness of the moral law.«<sup>14</sup> Reinhold is often interpreted as asserting freedom's epistemic independence from the moral law.<sup>15</sup> In fact, he follows Kant's position that the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom: »the claim, from the *Critique of Practical Reason*, that »the concept of freedom first receives its reality through consciousness of the moral law« is incontestably true.«<sup>16</sup> I return to this issue in §2 below.

Now, I turn to the controversy over freedom's proper scope, i.e. which class(es) of actions can be considered free. Drawing on Kant's characterization of freedom as the »causality of reason« (KrV A551/B579) and his claim that the moral law is »a law of causality through freedom,« (KpV AA 5:48) Carl Christian Erhard Schmid restricts freedom to morally good actions: »to act freely« is to act »in a way that is morally good.«<sup>17</sup> In his *Attempt at a Moral Philosophy*, Schmid conceives of freedom in terms of his doctrine of intelligible fatalism, »the assertion of the natural necessity of all actions of a rational being according to laws of the causality of things in themselves.«<sup>18</sup> In this view, freedom consists in the causality of pure reason to determine the faculty of desire. Since only morally good actions result from pure reason's causality, they alone are free. Immoral actions »in no way depend on freedom,«<sup>19</sup> »such a freedom would be a capacity to act in contradictorily opposed ways, which amounts to a

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<sup>14</sup> Heydenreich, Karl Heinrich: *Betrachtungen über die Philosophie der natürlichen Religion, zweyter Band*. Leipzig 1791, pp. 56-57.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example: Breazeale, Daniel: »The Fate of Kantian Freedom: One Cheer (More) for Reinhold.« In: Bondeli, M. – Heinz, M. – Stolz, V. (eds.): *Wille Willkür, Freiheit: Reinholds Freiheitskonzeption im Kontext des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin/Boston 2012, pp. 91-123; Kosch, Michelle: *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*. New York 2006, p. 56-57; and Ware, Owen: »Fichte's Method of Moral Justification.« In: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 27 (2019, 6), pp. 1173-1193.

<sup>16</sup> Reinhold, Karl Leonhard: *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie, zweyter Band*. Leipzig 1792, p. 276. For interpretations that recognize Reinhold's affinity to Kant here, see: Bondeli, Martin: »Freiheit, Gewissen und Gesetz. Zu Kants und Reinholds Disput über die Willensfreiheit.« In: Ruffing, M. – Waibel, V. (eds.): *Natur und Freiheit: Akten des XII. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*. Berlin/Boston 2018, pp. 517-532; and Röhr, Sabine: *A Primer on German Enlightenment: With a Translation of Karl Leonhard Reinhold's Fundamental Concepts and Principles of Ethics*. Columbia 1995, p. 60f.

<sup>17</sup> Schmid, Carl Christian Erhard: *Wörterbuch zum leichtern Gebrauch der Kantischen Schriften*. Jena 1788, p. 62. The first edition of Schmid's lexicon of Kant's technical vocabulary was appended to an outline of the first *Critique: Kritik der reinen Vernunft im Grundrisse zu Vorlesungen nebst einem Wörterbuche zum leichtern Gebrauch der Kantischen Schriften*. Jena 1786.

<sup>18</sup> Schmid, Carl Christian Erhard: *Versuch einer Moralphilosophie*. Jena 1790, §257, p. 211. For a study of Schmid's intelligible fatalism, see Wallwitz, Georg von: *Die Interpretation und Ausformung von Kants Philosophie durch Carl Christian Erhard Schmid (1762–1812)*. Aachen 1998.

<sup>19</sup> Schmid, Carl Christian Erhard: *Versuch einer Moralphilosophie*. Jena 1792, §252, p. 342.

contradiction.«<sup>20</sup> Instead, immoral actions are the result of intelligible obstacles that »lie beyond experience« and »limit reason's efficacy.«<sup>21</sup> Schmid's interpretation would prove most controversial: since freedom is a condition of imputability, his account apparently precludes culpability for immoral action.

Instigated by Schmid, K.H. Heydenreich proposes a conception of freedom ranging over both moral and immoral actions: »[m]oral freedom is the capacity to contain and make efficacious the complete ground of actions which are in conformity with or contrary to the moral law of reason.«<sup>22</sup> In his *Letters II*, Reinhold responds to Schmid, arguing that intelligible fatalism abolishes moral imputation and that the will must consist in »the capacity to obey or transgress« the moral law.<sup>23</sup> Without mentioning these protagonists by name, Kant himself would contribute to the controversy, arguing in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* that immoral action must be conceived of as free for the sake of moral imputation (RGV AA 6:21, 25, 31, 35, 37, 38, 44).<sup>24</sup> Leonhard Creuzer's *Skeptical Reflections on Freedom of the Will*, which contains a preface by Schmid, surveys these developments.<sup>25</sup> Nodding to Heydenreich, Reinhold, and Kant (as of the *Religion*), Creuzer recognizes the practical advantage, for imputation, of extending freedom to immoral actions; however, this comes at the cost of abolishing morality: an absolutely indifferent will has no reason to prioritize the moral law.<sup>26</sup> Echoing Schmid, Creuzer maintains that these accounts are theoretically unsatisfactory, since a capacity for contradictorily opposed effects is supposedly incoherent, violating the principle of sufficient reason.<sup>27</sup> In the Creuzer review, Fichte renders his judgment on these issues in no uncertain terms. First, I consider his account of the will in the second edition of *Revelation*.

## 2. *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*

As is well known, Fichte's anonymously published debut work, *Revelation*, was widely supposed to have been written by Kant, a circumstance which catapulted Fichte into the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., §248, p. 335.

<sup>21</sup> Schmid, Carl Christian Erhard: *Versuch einer Moralphilosophie*. Jena 1795, §375, p. 648.

<sup>22</sup> Heydenreich: *Betrachtungen*, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> Reinhold: *Briefe II*, p. 185.

<sup>24</sup> Part I of the *Religion* was published in April 1792 as »Über das radikale Böse in der menschlichen Natur« in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.

<sup>25</sup> Creuzer, Leonhard: *Skeptische Betrachtungen über die Freiheit des Willens*. Giessen 1793, pp. 124-160.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 132f.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 135f., 146ff.

spotlight. In the second edition, Fichte adds a detailed treatment of the will. Influenced by Kant's second and third *Critiques*, Fichte's account also draws heavily on Reinhold's *Attempt at a New Theory of the Human Faculty of Representation* (1789; henceforth 'New Theory'). Fichte's very definition of volition as »determining oneself to bring about a representation with consciousness of one's own activity« (VCO GA I/1, 135) recalls Reinhold's characterization in terms of »self-determination undertaken with consciousness.«<sup>28</sup> As Claude Piché observes, the impact of Reinhold's theory of the faculty of representation on the layout and content of Fichte's new treatment of the will is »unzweideutig.«<sup>29</sup>

Recent commentators take Fichte's new treatment of the will to engage critically with Reinhold's account in the *Letters II*. Thus, besides Reinhold's *New Theory*, Piché claims that the *Letters II* lay »offen auf seinem [Fichtes; Vf.] Schreibtisch.«<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Günter Zöllner claims that Fichte's account is »strongly influenced by Reinhold's *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*,«<sup>31</sup> George di Giovanni maintains that it is »clearly written in view of the debate on the nature of freedom going on at the time between Reinhold and Schmid,«<sup>32</sup> and Alessandro Lazzari asserts that »[i]m Mittelpunkt von Fichtes Kritik steht dabei Reinholds Freiheitsauffassung des zweiten Bandes der *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*.«<sup>33</sup>

In what follows, I submit that Fichte does not address Reinhold's *Letters II* in the second edition of *Revelation*. Passages thought to be aimed at the *Letters II* are best understood as directed at Heydenreich, Jakob, and Reinhold's *New Theory*. This historical circumstance illuminates Fichte's unrecognized conformity to cardinal aspects of Reinhold's 1789 view of the relationship between the will, reason, and the faculty of desire.

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<sup>28</sup> Reinhold, Karl Leonhard: *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögen*. Jena/Prag 1789, p. 567.

<sup>29</sup> Piché: »Fichtes Auseinandersetzung,« pp. 251-252. Corresponding to the basic structure of Reinhold's Outline of the Theory of the Faculty of Desire in Book III of his *New Theory*, Fichte divides his account into three parts investigating the sensible (empirical) drive, the moral drive, and the highest good, respectively. Following Reinhold, he analyzes these drives according to the logical forms of quality, quantity, relation, and modality, distinguishes them according to form and content, and further divides the sensible drive into the coarsely sensible (*grob sinnlich*) and finely sensible (*fein sinnlich*) drives.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>31</sup> Zöllner, Günter: *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*. New York 1998, p. 99. See also Zöllner: »Bestimmung zur Selbstbestimmung,« p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> Di Giovanni, George: *Hegel and the Challenge of Spinoza: A Study in German Idealism, 1801–1831*. New York 2021, p. 18.

<sup>33</sup> Lazzari: »Fichtes Entwicklung,« pp. 182-183.

The circumstances of Fichte's composition of the changes to the second edition of *Revelation* are *prima facie* evidence to doubt he has Reinhold's *Letters II* in his *visueur*. With the exception of a note in §7, Fichte likely completed the revisions in the winter of 1792.<sup>34</sup> The *Letters II* was not published until October 1792 in Leipzig and was not advertised in the *Intelligenzblatt* of the *ALZ* until mid-November,<sup>35</sup> when Fichte was in Danzig (present-day Gdańsk, Poland). This timeframe, coupled with the geographical distance between Fichte's tutoring post in Danzig and the Leipzig book fair, raises serious doubts about Fichte's engagement with the *Letters II* at that time. By comparison, note that Fichte was apparently first made aware of Kant's essay on radical evil three months after its April 1792 publication.<sup>36</sup> It is implausible that Fichte would be immediately informed of Reinhold's *Letters II*, and promptly read and incorporate it into the longest and arguably most complex chapter in his treatise on revelation.

Furthermore, the available evidence of Fichte's acquaintance with Reinhold's works in 1792 does not corroborate a familiarity with the *Letters II* or the previously published essays collected in that volume, but demonstrates an interest in the theoretical foundations of Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy. Fichte's first mention of Reinhold occurs in the upper margins of a letter draft, dated 24 September 1792: »Upon Reading the Reinholdian Writings: On the Possibility of Philosophy as a Strict Science. Treatise V. the Theory etc.«<sup>37</sup> Note the plural 'writings' (*Schriften*) in Fichte's heading, implying his occupation with several works by Reinhold. The subtitle refers to Reinhold's 1790 *Contributions to the Correction of Previous Misunderstandings by Philosophers* (henceforth 'Contributions'), Volume I, the fifth part of which is titled »On the Possibility of Philosophy as a Strict Science.« This is one of three major works expounding the Elementary Philosophy, along with *New Theory* and *On the Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge Along with Some Elucidations on the Theory of the Faculty of Representation* (1791; henceforth 'Foundation'). The letter draft referring to the *Contributions* represents the earliest evidence that Fichte read Reinhold's writings.<sup>38</sup> As we have seen, Fichte was intimately familiar with Reinhold's *New Theory* by the composition of the new account of

<sup>34</sup> GA I/1, 14-15. Cf. Fichte to Gottlieb Hufeland, 28 March 1793, GA III/2, 379.

<sup>35</sup> *Intelligenzblatt der Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, Nr. 134, 14. November 1792.

<sup>36</sup> Ludwig Ernst Borowski to Fichte, July 24, 1792, GA III/2, 321. At this time, Fichte resided in present-day Kraków, Poland.

<sup>37</sup> GA III/1, 341note a. The letter is thought to be intended for Friedrich David Eisentuk.

<sup>38</sup> GA II/3, 5. Cf. GA III/1, 373 note 6.

the will in the second edition of *Revelation*. It is therefore certain that in 1792 Fichte read two of the three principal works expounding the Elementary Philosophy and there is circumstantial evidence to include the *Foundation*.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, the earliest explicit reference to Reinhold's *Letters II* does not occur until Fichte's Creuzer review, published 30 October 1793. Hence the available evidence of Fichte's engagement with Reinhold in 1792 demonstrates only involvement with the chief texts of the Elementary Philosophy.

I have made a *prima facie* case, based on *historical* circumstances, to reject Fichte's engagement with Reinhold's *Letters II* in the second edition of *Revelation*. Now, let us consider *exegetical* reasons for doing so. Recall Fichte's general adoption of Reinhold's two-drive framework.<sup>40</sup> In his new account of the will, Fichte criticizes Reinhold's designation of these drives as 'selfish' and 'unselfish,' though without mentioning him by name. (VOC GA I/1, 144) Interpreters take Fichte's criticism to be aimed at Reinhold's *Letters II*.<sup>41</sup> While these two drives figure prominently in the *Letters II*, they are already featured in the *New Theory*.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, this criticism is not direct evidence of Fichte's treatment of the *Letters II*.

Similarly, Fichte's claim that consciousness of the moral law, as the »original form of the faculty of desire,« is a »fact of consciousness« (VCO GA I/1, 140) is supposed to refer to Reinhold's *Letters II*, where this locution figures prominently.<sup>43</sup> Here, again, there is no compelling reason to assume the influence of the *Letters II*. In the *Contributions*, Reinhold characterizes the first principle of the Elementary Philosophy as »the fact that occurs in consciousness,«<sup>44</sup> and in the *Foundation* speaks of »facts« (plural) that »constitute consciousness.«<sup>45</sup> Thus, Fichte's claim may affirm Kant's doctrine of the fact of reason, albeit in Reinholdian phrase drawn from works prior to the *Letters II*.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, in his *Attempt at a*

<sup>39</sup> In a letter to Reinhold from early 1794, Fichte writes that he has read Reinhold's "excellent work on the foundation of philosophical knowledge many times" and considers it the "masterpiece among [his] masterpieces" (GA III/2, 75). While it cannot be determined when Fichte first read the *Foundation*, the summer of 1792 coheres with his interest in Reinhold's theoretical philosophy at that time.

<sup>40</sup> See note 29. This is not to say Fichte follows Reinhold to the letter here. Cf. Piché: »Fichtes Auseinandersetzung,« pp. 262-268.

<sup>41</sup> See, e.g.: Breazeale: »The Fate of Kantian Freedom,« pp. 101-102; Zöllner: »Bestimmung zur Selbstbestimmung,« p. 104; Zöllner: *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy*, p. 99.

<sup>42</sup> Reinhold: *Versuch*, pp. 108ff., 562-574.

<sup>43</sup> See Breazeale, Daniel: »Fichte and the Path from ›Formal‹ to ›Material‹ Freedom.« In Bacin, S. – Ware, O. (eds.): *Fichte's System of Ethics: A Critical Guide*. New York 2021, p. 86.

<sup>44</sup> Reinhold: *Beiträge I*, p. 167

<sup>45</sup> Reinhold: *Fundament*, p. 79.

<sup>46</sup> Note the difference between the Reinholdian phrase 'fact of consciousness' (*Tatsache des Bewusstseins*) and Kant's expression, 'fact of reason' (*Faktum der Vernunft*). For discussion of Fichte's use of 'fact of consciousness'



*Moral Philosophy* (1790), Carl Christian Erhard Schmid asserts that the moral law is »given in our consciousness of reason as a necessary fact,«<sup>47</sup> and—in the second edition published in the spring of 1792 and thus before Fichte’s composition of his theory of the will later that year—that a “*desire determinable by pure volition*” is a “fact in human consciousness.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, there are several potential sources for Fichte’s claim that consciousness of the moral law is a *Thatsache des Bewußtseins*.

In the absence of sufficient evidence that Fichte draws on Reinhold’s *Letters II*, the principle of parsimony compels us to interpret Fichte’s second edition of *Revelation* as engaging with Reinhold’s earlier works and those of surrounding figures. Moreover, there is strong evidence that Fichte follows Reinhold’s account of the will in the *New Theory* in important, previously neglected ways.

As shown above, Fichte claims that volition involves consciousness of one’s spontaneous agency. Yet, he cautions against taking this consciousness of freedom to be veridical, since it could be illusory: »But one would do well not to judge what has been said here too hastily, as if we had contented ourselves with this point and immediately inferred from our consciousness of self-activity in volition the actual existence of this self-activity.« (VCO GA I/1, 139) Instead, Fichte proposes, the fact of our will’s determinability by the moral law as the original form of the faculty of desire first discloses that we have a spontaneous will. (VCO GA I/1, 140)<sup>49</sup> This is taken to be a criticism of Reinhold’s supposed view that we know we are free immediately as a ‘fact of consciousness.’<sup>50</sup> However, Fichte’s position corresponds to Reinhold’s claim in the *New Theory* that the representing subject must be conceived of as »absolutely free« insofar as reason »determines the faculty of desire *a priori*.«<sup>51</sup> Consequently, I propose that Fichte’s criticism is

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here and its correspondence to Reinhold’s account of reflection in the *Foundation*, see Stolzenberg, Jürgen: »Reiner Wille: Ein Grundbegriff der Philosophie Fichtes.« In *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52, no. 206 (1998, 4), p. 622.

<sup>47</sup> Schmid: *Moralphilosophie*, §236, p. 196.

<sup>48</sup> Schmid: *Moralphilosophie*<sup>2</sup>, §243, p. 340.

<sup>49</sup> Likewise, in *Contribution to the Public’s Judgment on the French Revolution*, written in early 1793 and published in June of that year, Fichte claims that we are conscious of the moral law as a »fact,« valid for all actions »which do not depend on natural necessity, i.e. only for free actions.« (Beitrag GA I/1, 219).

<sup>50</sup> Breazeale: »The Fate of Kantian Freedom,« p. 114; Lazzari: »Fichtes Entwicklung,« p. 183; Piché: »Fichtes Auseinandersetzung,« p. 261.

<sup>51</sup> Reinhold: *Versuch*, p. 558. For discussions of Reinhold’s account of the relationship between free will and the moral law in the *Letters II*, see note 16.

aimed at Ludwig Jakob or Karl Heinrich Heydenreich, who—as discussed—assert the epistemic independence of freedom from the moral law.<sup>52</sup>

Significantly, in his new account of the will, Fichte claims that freedom of the power of choice depends on the »absolutely first manifestation of freedom« whereby »reason gives itself a law through its own absolute spontaneity, independently of anything external.« (VCO GA I/1, 146) Furthermore, he claims that this freedom »does not merely consist in the capacity to choose between determination according to the moral or according to the sensible drive,« (VCO GA I/1, 146) but includes the capacity to choose between manifestations of the sensible drive.

Commentators take these claims about the power of choice to mark a decisive break with Reinhold's account in the *Letters II*, where Reinhold restricts freedom to the power of choice, denying its dependence on any more fundamental freedom,<sup>53</sup> and restricts the *scope* of freedom to choosing for or against the moral law.<sup>54</sup> Concerning the latter, commentators are correct that Fichte criticizes Reinhold here;<sup>55</sup> however, the basis of this criticism can already be found in the *New Theory*. There Reinhold claims that the agreement—constitutive of morality—between voluntary actions and the moral law depends on the agent's power of choice, by dint of which he »has the free choice either to *determine his decision* through reason or to *let it be determined* by objects of sensibility:« »the human being has no other choice between reason and sensibility« and, in exercising his freedom, »he *must choose* between these two.«<sup>56</sup> Concerning the relationship between freedom of the power of choice and freedom *qua* reason's self-legislation of the moral law, Fichte *follows* Reinhold's 1789 view of the fundamentality of reason. Reinhold claims that »the activity of reason is the only possible activity which can be conceived of as

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<sup>52</sup> In a letter to Heinrich Theodor von Schön from 21 April 1792, Fichte suspects Kiesewetter to be the author of an anonymously published text on church administration, implying a deep familiarity with Kiesewetter's work. (GA III/1, 305) So, we may assume Fichte's familiarity with Kiesewetter's *On the First Principle of Moral Philosophy* and Jakob's preface to it. Likewise, in a letter to Friedrich August Weißhuhn, 27 September 1790, Fichte comments on Heydenreich's rise to fame at the University of Leipzig. (GA III/1, 175) Note that Heydenreich assumed a professorship in Leipzig in 1789 and rose to considerable prominence when Fichte first read Kant's *Critiques* while in Leipzig. For an insightful study of Fichte and Heydenreich, see Crowe, Benjamin: »Theismus des Gefühls: Heydenreich, Fichte, and the Transcendental Philosophy of Religion.« In: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70 (2009, 4), pp. 569-592.

<sup>53</sup> Kabitz: »Entwicklungsgeschichte,« p. 178; Lazzari: »Fichtes Entwicklung,« p. 186.

<sup>54</sup> Breazeale: »The Fate of Kantian Freedom,« pp. 98-100; Breazeale: »Fichte and the Path,« pp. 86-87; Zöller: »Bestimmung zur Selbstbestimmung,« p. 106; and Zöller: *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy*, p. 100.

<sup>55</sup> In his 1796 lectures on ethics, Fichte criticizes Reinhold by name on this point (GA IV/1, 177f.).

<sup>56</sup> Reinhold: *Versuch*, p. 90. Fichte's critique may also be aimed at Heydenreich, who asserts: »[m]oral freedom is the capacity to contain and make efficacious the complete ground of actions which are in conformity with or contrary to the moral law of reason.« (Heydenreich: *Betrachtungen*, p. 63)

*free*,<sup>57</sup> and identifies the moral *ought* as »*free volition* with respect to practical reason,« which, with respect to the faculty of desire, announces itself as a »*command*.«<sup>58</sup> Thus, the agent's freedom to obey or transgress the command of the moral law depends on reason's free legislation of it.

For our purposes, the relationship between, the will, reason, and the faculty of desire marks the most important correspondence between Reinhold and Fichte's respective accounts. Several scholars take Fichte's account of the will in the second edition of *Revelation* to conform with various aspects of Reinhold's separation of the will from the faculty of desire and reason in the *Letters II*. Thus, Daniel Breazeale claims that Fichte follows Reinhold in »resisting Kant's identification of practical reason and will«<sup>59</sup> and Willy Kabitz asserts that »[m]it Reinhold unterscheidet er [Fichte] zwischen dem Begehrungsvermögen und dem Willen.«<sup>60</sup> In my view, Fichte instead follows Reinhold's *New Theory* position of correlating these three faculties. To be sure, Fichte distinguishes the freedom of the power of choice from the abovementioned »first manifestation of freedom« (VCO GA I/1, 146), reason's self-legislation of the moral law. However, freedom of the power of choice is a »merely empirical manifestation of freedom.« (VCO GA I/1, 146) The concept of the power of choice is not a mark of freedom proper, since this freedom holds also for God, who is determined solely by the moral law and therefore has no power of choice. The »only correct concept of transcendental freedom« (VCO GA I/1, 147) consists in reason's self-legislation: autonomy. Consequently, free volition, in the transcendental sense, is the manifestation of pure practical reason. Fichte makes clear at the outset of his theory of the will that volition is the exercise of the faculty of desire: »Determining oneself to bring about a representation with consciousness of one's own activity is called *volition*; the capacity to determine oneself with this consciousness of self-activity is called the *faculty of desire* [...] Volition is distinguished from the faculty of desire as the actual from the possible.« (VCO GA I/1, 135) Recall Reinhold's claim, cited above, that »the activity of reason is the only possible activity which can be conceived of as *free*.«<sup>61</sup> Reinhold, too, understands volition as a manifestation of reason's self-activity: »volition [...] is a becoming determined

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<sup>57</sup> Reinhold: *Versuch*, p. 537.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574.

<sup>59</sup> Breazeale: »Fichte and the Path,« p. 85.

<sup>60</sup> Kabitz: »Entwicklungsgeschichte,« p. 178.

<sup>61</sup> Reinhold: *Versuch*, p. 537.

[*Bestimmtwerden*] through reason, an action of self-activity.«<sup>62</sup> The will »consists in self-determination to an action« and is to be conceived of as »a capacity of the spontaneity of reason.«<sup>63</sup> The will and practical reason are conceived of in connection with of the faculty of desire in the wide sense, which serves as an actualizing condition of the faculty of representation.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, Fichte's position on the relationship between the will, reason, and faculty of desire basically follows that of Reinhold in the *New Theory*. In what follows, I show the influence of Reinhold's *Letters II* on Fichte's account of free will in the Creuzer review.

### 3. The Creuzer Review

My primary aim in this section is to argue that Reinhold's model of self-determination in the *Letters II* decisively influenced Fichte's claim that volition involves a unitary act of determining and becoming determined. This is important because it anticipates Fichte's mature view of free volition (discussed in §4) as involving the transition from indeterminacy to determinacy. In doing so, I first detail Fichte's separation of the will from the faculty of desire and his criticism of Reinhold's causal conception of freedom.

As noted above, Fichte's first mention of Reinhold's *Letters II* occurs in his review of Creuzer's *Skeptical Reflections on Freedom of the Will*, published in October 1793. In the *Letters II*, Reinhold breaks with his view in the *New Theory*, adopted by Fichte, according to which free volition is the manifestation of reason's self-activity in the guise of the upper faculty of desire. Maintaining his earlier view that the faculty of desire, broadly conceived, contains two original drives expressing our sensibly conditioned desires and the demand of the moral law, respectively, Reinhold now claims that »[t]he will is distinct from these two drives,«<sup>65</sup> thereby separating the will from the faculty of desire. While previous philosophers recognized the independence of the will from the sensible (selfish) drive, traditionally understood as the lower faculty of desire, they posited the will in the moral (unselfish) drive, or upper faculty of desire. Reinhold argues that the will also must be independent of the upper faculty of desire in order to

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 567. To my knowledge, Reinhold is the first to use the nominal expression '*Bestimmtwerden*.' As we will see in §3, '*Bestimmtwerden*' figures prominently in Reinhold's *Letters II* and is adopted by Fichte in the Creuzer review.

<sup>63</sup> Reinhold: *Versuch*, p. 571.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 560ff.

<sup>65</sup> Reinhold: *Briefe II*, p. 182.

account for free immoral action: if free volition is the manifestation of reason's self-activity, then immoral action, contrary to the demand of pure practical reason, cannot be conceived of as free and therefore cannot be imputed to the agent.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, Reinhold asserts that the will is a »basic faculty,«<sup>67</sup> free to determine itself in accordance with the normative demands expressed by the two drives constitutive of the faculty of desire. In the Creuzer review, Fichte confirms his »complete agreement with this assertion« and claims that the determination of the upper faculty of desire by the moral law »must not be confused with the will.« (GA I/2, 9) He rebukes Creuzer for failing to recognize that an »absolutely free will« must be assumed for the sake of imputation, a claim »intimately intertwined with the spirit of the Critical philosophy,« (GA I/2, 12) and denounces Schmid's inability to account for »imputation, blame, and merit.« (GA I/2, 13) Fichte, then, follows Reinhold's *Letters II* position on the will's independence from the faculty of desire and absolute freedom to determine itself in accordance with or contrary to the dictates of the moral law. The overlap between Fichte's account of the will in the second edition of *Revelation* and Reinhold's *New Theory*, and between the Creuzer review and the *Letters II*, indicates that Fichte first engaged with Reinhold's *Letters II* in 1793, sometime after composing the additions to the second edition of his treatise on revelation.

Despite Fichte's adherence, in the Creuzer review, to Reinhold's account of free will, he does not adopt Reinhold's position unqualifiedly. Thus, Fichte claims that »the error of Reinhold's account« lies in features that suggest the will is not a basic faculty: specifically, Reinhold conflates the »act of determining« with »being determined.« (GA I/2, 9) As intelligible, the will's self-determination does not appear, only the state of being determined does so. By taking »the act of self-determination« to be »the cause of the appearance of being determined,« Reinhold supposedly drags »something intelligible down into the series of *natural causes*.« (GA I/2, 10) This has led one commentator to view the Creuzer review as a poignant critique of Reinhold's account of free will: »the main target of Fichte's critical review was not Creuzer himself but Reinhold.«<sup>68</sup>

In my view, Fichte's criticism of Reinhold here is situated in a broader critique of Creuzer and Schmid. Consider this passage, immediately following Fichte's criticism: »Whoever

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 248, 267.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>68</sup> Martin, Wayne: »Fichte's Creuzer Review and the Transformation of the Free Will Problem.« In: *European Journal of Philosophy* 26 (2018), p. 717.

believes he is warranted in asking on what *ground freedom* determined itself to *A* instead of not-*A* demonstrates by circular argument the nullity of freedom from its already presupposed nullity.« (GA I/2, 10) Fichte's point is that the principle of sufficient reason is not applicable to freedom: by inquiring after a sufficient ground of a particular exercise of freedom, one subsumes freedom under this principle and thereby abolishes freedom. By conceiving of freedom as the cause of its manifestations in appearance, Reinhold implicitly appeals to the principle of sufficient reason. Note, however, that Reinhold himself thinks that no objective ground for the exercise of freedom can be provided: »the ultimate conceivable ground of free action« is »freedom itself.«<sup>69</sup> Prefiguring Fichte's claim in the Creuzer review, Reinhold asserts that to inquire after another ground for the exercise of freedom »is to deny the will its freedom.«<sup>70</sup> By contrast, it is Creuzer and Schmid who deem the application of the principle of sufficient reason to the exercise of freedom to be legitimate. Thus, in the second edition of his *Attempt at a Moral Philosophy*, Schmid asserts that freedom does not entail »groundlessness, or independence of free actions from a *sufficient* reason:«<sup>71</sup> an »indifferent capacity« is a »nonsensical capacity.«<sup>72</sup> Likewise, Creuzer claims that »a freedom that contains the sufficient ground for the adoption of contradictorily opposed maxims stands in contradiction with the demands of practical reason as well as with the laws of speculative reason.«<sup>73</sup> By conceiving of freedom as a cause, Reinhold exposes himself to the objections of Creuzer and Schmid. So, Fichte's criticism of Reinhold is meant to be corrective: Creuzer and Schmid are its primary targets.

Having identified the root of the dispute on the scope of freedom, Fichte claims that free activity must be conceived of as a unitary act of self-determination: »the principle of sufficient reason cannot be applied at all to the *act of self-determination* (to *volition*) of absolute self-activity, for that is a single, simple, and fully isolated action. The act of determining is, at the same time, itself the act of becoming determined, and that which determines is, at the same time, that which becomes determined.« (GA I/2, 10-11) Freedom cannot be conceived of causally, whereby an intelligible cause grounds a determinate empirical effect, since this conception gives rise to the familiar objections based on the principle of sufficient reason; instead, free activity

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<sup>69</sup> Reinhold: *Briefe II*, p. 282.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Schmid: *Moralphilosophie*<sup>2</sup>, §255d, p. 348.

<sup>72</sup> Schmid: *Moralphilosophie*<sup>2</sup>, §249, p. 335.

<sup>73</sup> Creuzer: *Skeptische Betrachtungen*, p. 151.

must be understood as a unity of determining [*das Bestimmen*] and becoming determined [*das Bestimmtwerden*].<sup>74</sup> So, Fichte maintains, the will is not determined by anything but its own act of determination, which is absolutely free.

Despite his critical evaluation of Reinhold's characterization of freedom as an »absolute, first cause,«<sup>75</sup> Fichte's thesis that determining and becoming determined are united in an act of self-determination is influenced by his Jena predecessor. Recall that Reinhold conceives of the activity of freedom as independent of the principle of sufficient reason: »[i]ts ground is freedom itself.«<sup>76</sup> The will is faced with, but independent of, the respective demands of the selfish and unselfish drives. Hence, »volition is no mere becoming determined [*Bestimmtwerden*] by pleasure«<sup>77</sup> nor by practical reason. These demands confront the will as so-called occasioning grounds, one of which the will makes a determining ground through an absolutely free act of self-determination: »[t]he will has only a *single self-determining* ground and this is freedom [...] through which one of the two *occasioning grounds* is made into a *determining ground*.«<sup>78</sup> Thus, the will *becomes determined* through its own *determining* self-activity.

For Reinhold, this self-determination takes the form of a decision [*Entschluß*] by the power of choice. I argue below that Reinhold's conception of decision is significant to Fichte's mature account of the will as involving the transition from indeterminacy to determinacy.

#### 4. *The System of Ethics*

*The System of Ethics* represents Fichte's most developed account of the will in the Jena period. A central feature of his account is the transition from indeterminacy to determinacy. Recently, Owen Ware has argued for Maimon's influence on Fichte's »genetic account of our transition from indeterminacy to determinacy of choice.«<sup>79</sup> In this section, I propose an alternative line of influence for the development of Fichte's genetic account of the will. I argue that this development should be understood in the context of the debate between Reinhold, Schmid, and

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<sup>74</sup> I bracket Fichte's claim that the agreement between freedom and the causality of nature is to be posited in a pre-established harmony between them. For discussion of this, see Martin: »Fichte's Kreuzer Review,« p. 724.

<sup>75</sup> Reinhold: *Briefe II*, p. 282.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>79</sup> Ware: *Fichte's Moral Philosophy*, p. 24.

Creuzer. Furthermore, I argue that Reinhold's account of free will in the *Letters II* anticipates Fichte's genetic account.

Maimon's dispute with Reinhold on free will stems from their correspondence, which Maimon published, without Reinhold's consent, in *Forays into the Field of Philosophy* (1793). There, Maimon charges Reinhold's account of freedom in the *Letters II* with being tantamount to chance, since the power of choice lacks an antecedent determining ground.<sup>80</sup> Hence Maimon's complaint in a letter to Kant that Reinhold's »concept of free will leads to the most inexplicable indeterminism,«<sup>81</sup> a sentiment which Ware apparently shares. According to Ware, Reinhold advances »a theory of indeterminism,«<sup>82</sup> which Maimon criticized as incapable of objective reality, since a capacity must operate determinately according to a law.<sup>83</sup> In Ware's view, Fichte was led to his genetic account via the false dichotomy represented by Reinhold's and Maimon's views: »the mistake common to Reinhold and Maimon is to think nongenetically about the concept of freedom [...] Fichte's aim is to reframe the free will debate in dynamic terms.«<sup>84</sup> Thus, Fichte steers a path between the Scylla of indeterminism and the Charybdis of determinism by conceiving of volition as a transition from indeterminacy to determinacy.

To be sure, Maimon's critique of Reinhold gets to the heart of the difficulties implicated in a conception of freedom whose scope includes both moral and immoral actions. Moreover, it is certain that Fichte read Maimon's work and held it in high regard, declaring that his »respect for *Maimon's* talent knows no bounds.«<sup>85</sup> However, *pace* Ware, there is no evidence that Fichte seriously engaged with Maimon's criticisms of Reinhold's account of free will; all of Fichte's references to Maimon concern theoretical philosophy.<sup>86</sup> That he never mentions Maimon's critique of Reinhold's account of free will wants for explanation. I submit that Fichte's reticence here is explicable by the fact that he had already encountered basically the same criticisms in Schmid and Creuzer. According to Schmid, since the concepts of *necessity* and *chance* are mutually exclusive, »regarding the supersensible determining grounds of our actions, we are not

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<sup>80</sup> Maimon, Salomon: *Streifereien im Gebiete der Philosophie*. Berlin 1793, p. 233ff.

<sup>81</sup> Maimon to Kant, 30 November 1793 (AA 11: 390).

<sup>82</sup> Ware: *Fichte's Moral Philosophy*, p. 31.

<sup>83</sup> Maimon develops this line of reasoning more explicitly in *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung des Moralprinzips und Deduktion seiner Realität* (1794) and *Der moralische Skeptiker* (1800).

<sup>84</sup> Ware: *Fichte's Moral Philosophy*, p. 38.

<sup>85</sup> Fichte to Reinhold, March/April 1795, GA III/2, 282.

<sup>86</sup> For discussion of Fichte's reception of Maimon, see: Beiser, Frederick: »Maimon and Fichte.« In: Freudenthal, G. (ed.): *Salomon Maimon: Rational Dogmatist, Empirical Skeptic*. Dordrecht 2003, pp. 233-248.



permitted to assume any (irrational) chance, i.e. lawlessness.«<sup>87</sup> Drawing on Schmid, Creuzer asserts the mutual exclusivity of *necessity* and *chance*,<sup>88</sup> arguing that freedom of indifference is »groundless« and »lawless.«<sup>89</sup> As discussed in §3, both Schmid and Creuzer argue that the concept of a capacity for contradictorily opposed effects is incoherent, since it violates the principle of sufficient reason. Thus, in the Creuzer review, Fichte already critically engaged with the supposed dichotomy between indeterminism and determinism as manifested in the dispute between Reinhold, Schmid, and Creuzer, rendering Ware's thesis explanatorily otiose. Below I argue for Reinhold's influence on Fichte's account of the transition from indeterminacy to determinacy. But first, I consider passages from *The System of Ethics* that further support Fichte's consideration of Creuzer and Schmid.

Immediately after asserting that »the will is always a capacity to choose, as *Reinhold* quite correctly characterized,« (SL GA I/5, 148) Fichte makes the same argument, found in the Creuzer review, that the application of the principle of sufficient reason to freedom assumes the nullity of the latter: »Some philosophers have purported to find a contradiction in the claim that it is equally possible for freedom to make opposed decisions, A or –A [...] they presuppose precisely what is here being denied, [namely] that the will lies in the series of natural forces and is itself nothing but a force of nature [...] Thus, they demonstrate that the will is not free by presupposing that it is not free.«<sup>90</sup> (SL GA I/5, 149-150) Furthermore, several passages in *The System of Ethics* reveal a critical treatment of Schmid's conception of freedom. Recall, from §1, that Schmid's conception of freedom consists in the practical manifestation of reason's causality: the moral law is akin to a »law of nature,«<sup>91</sup> since it is »an essential law of my supersensible I,«<sup>92</sup> or proper self *qua* intelligence. Against this, Fichte asserts that the thought of something as free implies that it »determine *itself* and not be determined externally or even by *its own nature*« (SL GA I/5, 51; my emphasis) and that »the intellect, as such, is absolutely self-determining [...] incapable of any determination *by its nature and essence*.« (SL GA I/5, 53; my emphasis) A hallmark of Fichte's mature conception of volitional self-determination is the transition from

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<sup>87</sup> Schmid: *Moralphilosophie*<sup>2</sup>, §260a, p. 358.

<sup>88</sup> Creuzer: *Skeptische Betrachtungen*, p. 136.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>90</sup> See also SL GA I/5, 130.

<sup>91</sup> Schmid: *Moralphilosophie*<sup>1</sup>, §111, 110

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, §245, 203.

indeterminacy to determinacy. This conception is anticipated by Reinhold, who maintains a multi-tiered process account of volition.

For Fichte, »a volition is an absolutely free transition from indeterminacy to determinacy, accompanied by consciousness of this transition.«<sup>93</sup> (SL GA I/5, 147) Contrary to recent scholars who take Reinhold's account of free will to be »wholly indeterminate [...] indeterminacy is its sole characteristic«<sup>94</sup> and »completely groundless,«<sup>95</sup> I contend that Reinhold's account involves a transition from indeterminacy to determinacy, conditioned by consciousness. In Reinhold's view, volition always involves consciousness of the respective demands of the selfish and unselfish drives: »[t]he demands of the selfish and unselfish drive must be present in every volition.«<sup>96</sup> This consciousness is not immediately given but involves distinct stages constituting the formal structure of any volition. Through reflection on the demand of the selfish drive, the agent »awakens« to a state Reinhold calls »circumspection« (*Besonnenheit*), in which »consciousness of the practical law emerges.«<sup>97</sup> This state represents the »*transition from the state in which the person behaves merely passively to the state in which he determines himself.*«<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, volition always involves consciousness of one's own capacity for self-determination: »[t]he reality of freedom depends upon consciousness of the demand of the selfish and of the unselfish drive, but also upon consciousness of the capacity to determine *oneself.*«<sup>99</sup> This latter consciousness turns on consciousness of the normative demands facing the agent: through consciousness of these demands, which Reinhold calls »occasioning grounds,« the agent becomes conscious of »the *self-determining* ground which elevates [one of] the occasioning grounds to a determining ground.«<sup>100</sup> Thus, although Reinhold takes the will to be absolutely free to determine itself either in accordance with the demand of the selfish drive or that of unselfish drive, freedom of the will does not *consist in* indeterminacy. Instead, it involves the transition — conditioned by consciousness of the respective demands and one's own freedom

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<sup>93</sup> Note the retention of the condition of consciousness present in the second edition of *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* and influenced by Reinhold's *New Theory*.

<sup>94</sup> Ware: *Fichte's Moral Philosophy*, p. 38.

<sup>95</sup> Neuhauser: *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, p. 149.

<sup>96</sup> Reinhold: *Briefe II*, p. 259.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305-306.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

— from a state of indeterminacy to a state of determinacy grounded in nothing but the agent's own act of absolute self-determination.

A closer look at Fichte's genetic account of freedom reveals the distinctive mark of Reinhold's influence. Just as Reinhold claims that consciousness of the demands facing the agent and of one's freedom to determine oneself to either conditions the exercise of this freedom, Fichte asserts that »consciousness of my indeterminacy is a condition of consciousness of determining myself through free activity.« (SL GA I/5, 131) Moreover, Fichte identifies »consciousness of my absolute self-determination« with »circumspection« (*Besonnenheit*) and »reflection,« and asserts that only with such consciousness »do I act freely.« (SL GA I/5, 144) In choosing »one among several possible objects,« the I »elevates the indeterminacy which the intellect intuits and grasps to a determinacy.« (SL GA I/5, 148; my emphasis) Despite his criticism, in *Revelation*, of Reinhold's names of the selfish and unselfish drives, Fichte now characterizes this choice as one between »the satisfaction of the selfish drive (natural drive) and the unselfish drive (moral drive).« (SL GA I/5, 151) Significantly, Fichte associates Reinhold's conception of the power of choice with this transition from indeterminacy to determinacy: »If the will moves from indeterminacy to determinacy [...] then the will is always a capacity to choose, as Reinhold quite correctly characterized it. There is no will without the power of choice.« (SL GA I/5, 148-149)

I have highlighted key parallels between Reinhold's account of free will in the *Letters II* and Fichte's mature conception of the will in the Jena period. However, I do not want to overstate my case. Fichte *does not* merely adopt Reinhold's view wholesale. Reinhold presents merely 'results' of his practical investigations, which he planned to systematically incorporate into his Elementary Philosophy but never did. In a complex relation involving what he calls formal and material freedom,<sup>101</sup> Fichte connects his account of free will to I-hood itself.<sup>102</sup> For reasons of space, my treatment of Fichte's mature account of free will must remain incomplete, focused on those aspects that directly relate to Reinhold's account and the broader context of the immediate reception of Kantian freedom.

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<sup>101</sup> For a recent treatment of Fichte's conceptions of formal and material freedom, see Breazeale: »Fichte and the Path.«

<sup>102</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between freedom and self-consciousness in Fichte, see Wallwitz: »Fichte und das Problem,« pp. 141-145.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued for a novel view of the development of Fichte's account of the will in relation to the surrounding debates. Tellingly, Fichte is reported to have told Jens Baggesen that he has Reinhold »to thank for everything that he is or will become, as a philosopher.«<sup>103</sup> Though this declaration is certainly exaggerated, I hope to have shown that the development of Fichte's account of the will is more indebted to Reinhold than previously recognized. I conclude by indicating avenues for further research.

As Georg von Wallwitz observes, the systematic role of freedom in the development of the *Wissenschaftslehre* has traditionally been neglected in the scholarship.<sup>104</sup> To be sure, the work of Wallwitz, George di Giovanni, Alessandro Lazzari, and Günter Zöllner is a valuable contribution to scholarship on the development of Fichte's account of freedom, and the work of Daniel Breazeale, Michelle Kosch, Frederick Neuhouser, Jürgen Stolzenberg, Owen Ware, Allen Wood and others provides insight into various aspects of Fichte's conception of freedom and its relationship to his philosophical project more generally. Nevertheless, there is still room for scholarship in this area. For example, Wallwitz notes the importance of freedom for Fichte's *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) and *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (1794/95), but neglects to analyze this connection.<sup>105</sup> Alessandro Lazzari observes the significant deviations in Fichte's account of the will in the Gebhard review, composed in 1793, from that of the Creuzer review, noting that a future investigation of this context must include Fichte's drafts of this review.<sup>106</sup> Breazeale has also noticed parallels between the Gebhard review drafts and the notion of *Tathandlung*.<sup>107</sup> However, these fruitful hints notwithstanding, the connection between Fichte's 1793 foray into the ongoing debates on free will and the development of the *Wissenschaftslehre* remains largely unexplored.

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<sup>103</sup> Baggesen to Reinhold, 8 June 1794, FG 1.1, 59.

<sup>104</sup> Wallwitz: »Fichte und das Problem,« pp. 121-123.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 134-135.

<sup>106</sup> Lazzari: »Fichtes Entwicklung,« pp. 195-196.

<sup>107</sup> Breazeale, Daniel (trans.): »J.G. Fichte Review of Leonhard Creuzer, *Skeptical Reflections on the Freedom of the Will, with Reference to the Latest Theories of the Same*.« In: *The Philosophical Forum* 32 (2001, 4), pp. 289-296.