Seeking Originality: Fichte's Contribution to Higher Education in Germany and the Foundation of the University of Berlin, 1810

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Abstract

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Under the crisis of the failing university system and subsequent Napoleonic war, a number of German thinkers formulated a new idea of the university that spawned the modern concept of the research university. Among these thinkers, one man distinguished himself as a pedagogical giant in his own right due to the complexity and thoroughness of his plan. Yet, in history, his contributions are widely overlooked, in large part because his ideas were not implemented by his contemporary, Wilhelm von Humboldt. That man's name was J.G. Fichte—a thinker perhaps best known for his extremist tendencies and his overwhelming desire to unite all existence under his philosophical system, the *Wissenschaftlehre*. This thesis is devoted to uncovering Fichte's originality as an educational thinker, utilizing a methodology inspired by Quentin Skinner, so as to locate Fichte's intentions within the intellectual matrix in which he found himself in 1807-1808.

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Introduction

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, a number of civic-minded members of the German professoriate took it upon themselves to find a solution to the problems posed by a failing German education system, against the backdrop of the disappearance of the university as an institution all across Europe. While intellectual influence poured in from all sides, Fichte, Humboldt, Schelling and Schleiermacher were all in a position to espouse specific plans for the construction of a new university and thereby guide the future, not only of the German educational system, but also of Berlin, Prussia, and even the German states as a whole. McClelland notes, "At no time in the eighteenth century or the later nineteenth were so many reform ideas produced by members of the German professoriate (one need only mention such names as Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Schelling). The bureaucracy, in contrast to that of other periods, was willing to listen and even act on their ideas."[1] Reasons abound as to why the state bureaucrats were willing to not only listen, but to implement the educational theory of the professoriate, but the advent of the University of Berlin still stands out as a remarkable moment within university history due to influence of professoriate when the university's value as an institution was in question.[2]

The foundation of the University of Berlin was highly contested because the university as an institution had yet to concrete itself as a necessity in German society. Eighteenth century academic life had proven itself barren and of little use to the state and society at large. With the exceptions of Halle and Göttingen, German universities of the eighteenth century lived a largely passive existence, where professors' teachings had been hardened by repetition and their libraries full of outdated literature that was largely unavailable to students due to a paucity of operating hours.[3] Accusations of sterility were leveled at the university from all sides. Scholars of both a humanistic and idealistic bent

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[1] Charles E. McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 105.

[2] McClelland links it to the political make-up of the German states during this era of reform. He notes that Germany had no parliamentary institution to oversee the reforms and therefore, public opinion had no opportunity to play a role as it normally would with a parliamentary government. There is also a case to be made that the vulnerability of the financial situation of German universities led bureaucrats to seek help from unique arenas. Ibid, 105.

[3] Frederic Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities.* (New York: MacMillan, 1948), 1.

lamented the infecundity of eighteenth century academic life, and what is more, neither the church nor the state felt that their interests were being served by the extant system. While it was evident that the old system was not serving the purposes of even one of Germany's major institutions, it was less obvious as to the best way to proceed. Should the university disappear altogether, only to be remembered as an anomaly of antiquity? If it should disappear, what, if anything should replace it? Or should considerable time and effort be invested into overhauling what appeared to be increasingly, a relic of the Middle Ages? A group of like-minded professors and state officials answered resoundingly in favor of overhauling the existing system, but due to the uncharted nature of their venture, the stakes for this undertaking—the foundation of a completely new style of university—were extraordinarily high.

Although the German states were already experiencing a number of problems with their antiquated education system, the subsequent war with Napoleon brought all the existing problems to a head. The loss of Halle to Westphalia was a significant blow to Prussia, which caused King Friedrich Wilhelm III to charge the Minister of Public Instruction, Karl Friedrich von Beyme, to commence with developing plans for a new Prussian university. In response to the loss of Halle, the King was reported to have said, "The state must replace with intellectual strength what it has lost in material resources."[4] Therefore, in 1807, Beyme sent out requests for memoranda regarding ideas for the new university. The list included five former professors at Halle including famed philologist Friedrich August Wolf, and three scholars from Berlin, including Beyme's friend, J.G. Fichte. In response to Beyme's request, Fichte produced his *Duduzierter Plan einer zu Berlin zu erichtenden höheren Lehranstalt,* which stepped outside traditional boundaries in its scope.[5] With the blessing of Beyme, Fichte produced a scheme that not only provided a detailed plan for the foundation of an entirely new type of university, but also provided a serious critique of the extant system, showing at every step how the new university would act as remedy to the problems that flooded the current model. Yet in spite of the thorough nature of Fichte's response, and Minister Beyme's reported admiration of his plan, Fichte's

[4] Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: between Enlightenment and Romanticism* Cambridge Studies in Religion and Critical Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 145.
[5] According to G.H. Turnbull, this was by permission, G.H. Turnbull. *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), 170.

designs for the University of Berlin were never implemented. Though one could make the argument that this has to do with the convoluted or untraditional nature of Fichte's ideas, the reason was purely circumstantial. By the time the project of establishing the University of Berlin was realized, Fichte's friend Beyme was no longer the Minister of Public Instruction. This post was taken over by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1809, and Humboldt ultimately adopted a plan of more moderate scope for the new university, informed by his humanistic proclivities.[6] Seemingly though, this was no personal slight, as Fichte was one of the first professors appointed to the new university and was made it's Rector a mere year later. However, this result considerably shaped the development of the modern research university, and the history of those men connected to it, as Fichte's contributions to the educational debates of the day have been widely overlooked, while Humboldt's reputation, in contrast, has only grown through his connection to the establishment of the University of Berlin.[7] Because Fichte's contributions to the educational debates of the early nineteenth century have been largely relegated to the prophetic "dustbin of history," it is still unclear what his contribution was, and among those scholars who have concerned themselves with Fichte's contributions, what the best way is to interpret his historical reputation.

How to Consider Fichte in Historical Literature

Calling his philosophical system "the first system of freedom," J.G. Fichte has piqued the interest of a plethora of scholars intent on understanding the meaning behind the pen of the eccentric man himself.[8] Yet, there is an ongoing struggle among Fichte historians as to how to properly embed Fichte's thought so that the Fichte of the history books is the closest possible representation of the historical Fichte. Due in part to the extremist

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[6] J.G. Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin." Trans. G.H. Turnbull. *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), 170.

[7] Recent findings have shown that the attribution of the development of the University of Berlin to Wilhelm von Humbolt was a twentieth century phenomenon and that before that his works on university reform were little known. See R. D. Anderson, *European Universities from the Enlightenment to 1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2004), 51.

[8] Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781---1801.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 273.

tendencies of Fichte's thought and the notable discrepancies between his earliest and latest works, historical literature on Fichte focuses largely on the problem of categorization.[9] The result of this focus on categorization is that Fichte has been cast alternately as a liberal individualist, a radical anarchist, a socialist, a nationalist, a communist, and the father of Nazi-ism. It is undoubtedly impossible for a single thinker to wear all these different caps, but it underlines the high degree of disagreement to be found among the interpreters of Fichte's work. This literature review will focus upon the literature produced by political historians and historians of intellectual history rather than that of philosophers because this thesis aims to find the gaps within modern historiography that have not yet been addressed as well as to highlight the points of continual disagreement within contemporary scholarship. Among modern scholars, the refutation of Fichte's reputation as the father of National Socialism has been generally accepted, but to this day he is notorious for being one of the more radical social and political thinkers of his time period.[10]

The liberal interpretation of Fichte's political philosophy is fairly common based on his defense of individual liberty, but among Fichtean scholars that viewpoint is held preeminently by Frederick Neuhouser, the man responsible for editing and writing the introduction to Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right.* He readily admits in the introduction that "even though Fichte's theory remains squarely within the liberal tradition, it at the same time provides a framework for defending many of the ideas espoused by socialist thinkers in the following century."[11] On the face of it Fichte displays liberal tendencies; he declares man to have a set of rights that cannot and should not be violated, so as to provide appropriate freedom for human agency. In Neuhouser's defense, Fichte's work on rights does look strikingly similar to that of the liberal Lockean school, but as David James points out "deliberately going no further than Fichte's account of these original rights…amounts to ignoring not only Fichte's attack on the formalism of other theories of natural right, which

[9] Fichte himself would have considered the intense scrutiny of his writings to be at odds with his entire project, as he claimed to have discovered universal truth. Thus to explain his work as the product of a historical matrix of contexts would be to undermine the validity of his discoveries. Additionally, he urged his readers not to look too closely at the letter of his philosophy, but at its spirit, which could be best expressed through action. See Anthony La Vopa, *The Self and the Calling of Philosophy,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5.

[10] F.W. Kaufmann, "Fichte and National Socialism," *The American Political Science Review* 36, no. 3 (June, 1942): 460-470, 460.

[11] Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), xxviii.

he reiterates in his account of original rights, but also his strictures concerning the idea of original rights."[12] Later on in the *Foundations,* Fichte refers to original rights as "a mere fiction," claiming there are "no original rights of human beings."[13] Although this would appear to be a glaring oversight by Neuhouser, it is simply a complex idea Fichte is positing. His denunciation of original rights is a theoretical problem. According to Fichte, original rights are rights that belong to an individual; however, it only makes sense to speak of original rights in reference to a multiplicity of people because that is when the lines delineating rights become readily apparent. In concert with his theory of intersubjectivity, Fichte finds that rights only emerge in a group setting; therefore, it is impossible to conceptualize individual rights as belonging inherently to an individual, or preceding the establishment of some sort of society. For Fichte, there simply can be no conception of original rights for the individual. Even though Neuhouser refers to Fichte's thought as liberal on several occasions, his last words on the subject paint Fichte as a liberal socialist. Viewing Fichte's proposition to incorporate the traditionally liberal right to private property with the socialist preoccupation with economic justice, scholars like Neuhouser and Nomer have tried to put him in his own category, one in which he is believed to have created a hybrid concept of state called "liberal socialism." According to Nomer, reconciliation between liberalism and socialism is possible and they are, in fact, compatible.[14] He argues that if it is possible to demonstrate how Fichte reconciles liberalism with socialism then it is no longer necessary to debate between the two.[15] Although Nomer's idea is tantalizing and would seemingly solve the debate about how to best categorize Fichte, it is not helpful to combine the two terms, thereby making a separate category for him. It is problematic because both terms already denote specific schools of thought. For example, calling Fichte a liberal socialist potentially equates his understanding of the right to property with the liberal right to property, which he most certainly does not share. Even more importantly, blanket terms such as these fail to take

[12] David James, *Fichte's Social and Political Philosophy: Property and Virtue* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), 27.
[13] Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right,* 102, see also James, *Fichte's Social and Political Philosophy,* 27
[14] This view, while not wildly popular, is held by a few others such as Peter Vallentyne and Hillel Steiner, eds., *The Origins of Left Libertarianism:. An Anthology of Historical Writings.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
[15] Nedim Nomer, "Fichte and the Idea of Liberal Socialism," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (2005): 53.

seriously the push and pull between economic rights and rights to private property, neither of which can be understood using the term liberal socialism.[16] Understanding Fichte's desire to combine the best of positive and negative freedom, Neuhouser also points out that Fichte includes both rights of non- interference and rights of entitlement—trademarks of liberalism and socialism respectively. Even though Fichte posits a number of personal freedoms that align with liberal ideology, he does not leave room for some of the more unfortunate consequences that accompany it. For example, within a liberal tradition, humans are free to die on the streets with no right to government intervention. However, Fichte defends basic entitlements that ensure a workable level of social conditions so as to provide for the possibility of agency. Undoubtedly it is tempting to label Fichte as a liberal socialist, but the words themselves lose meaning when they do not denote an axiomatic political ideology. Rather it is much more helpful to say that Fichte exhibits both liberal and socialist tendencies, but it is probably still best to avoid categories altogether if one aims to understand Fichte as he understood himself.

Other scholars like Reinhold Aris avoid the problem of single categorization by breaking up Fichte's thought into divisions that supposedly reflect his changing views of the best political order. In his book *History of Political Thought in Germany 1789-1815*, Aris divides Fichte's philosophy into four main categories: his early period when he was an "extreme individualist and follower of the doctrine of Natural Law," his second period when he was modifying his views on Natural Law, his third period when he "gave up his liberal point of view and developed the first socialist theory ever put forward in Germany," and the latest period in which "under the spell of Napoleon, he expounded a national doctrine."[17] Another scholar, famous for his work on Hegelian thought, has proclaimed Fichte's work to be "a set of doctrines in evolution."[18] Writing in the late 1960's, George Armstrong Kelly thought it most appropriate to divide Fichte's work into three periods—his Jacobin, transitional, and nationalist periods, respectively. In the same manner as Aris, Kelly describes the evolution of Fichte's thought as "aggressive liberalism" that develops

[16] James, *Fichte's Social and Political Philosophy,* 23.
[17] Reinhold Aris, *History of Political Thought in Germany from 1789 to 1815* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965), 108-9.
[18] George Armstrong Kelly, *Idealism, Politics, and History: Sources of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 189.

towards the "communitarian socialism" of *The Closed Commercial State.*[19] Both Aris and Kelly are quick to point to external factors such as the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars to explain Fichte's development. Aris even points to the psychological factors Fichte must have dealt with as a lowly tutor of non-bourgeois origins, unappreciated by his mentor Immanuel Kant. While these events were undoubtedly important and are still given credence by modern Fichtean scholars like Anthony La Vopa, they are certainly not exclusively responsible for the development of Fichte's philosophy.

Frederick Beiser, Daniel Breazeale, Tom Rockmore, and Anthony La Vopa comprise the new wave of scholars interested in revamping and reassessing Fichte's sullied image. Instead of positing three or more phases of Fichte's thought, contemporary scholars have increasingly shifted towards a two-part format—the Jena period (1794-1799) and the post-Jena period, with considerably less focus on the few years of work published before he gained a seat at the University of Jena. Additionally, contemporary scholarship is much more content to avoid labels and simply analyze his thought as an entity unto itself. In his book *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism,* Beiser lays out his understanding of Fichte's ideal political regime while deftly avoiding the suffocating constraint of political ideologies. "His ideal society is neither the free-for-all advocated by liberals nor the estatist hierarchy championed by the conservatives. Rather, it is a community where each was devoted to the self-realization of all and all to the self-realization of each. The main aim of society is not simply to prevent one person from harming another but to satisfy all the needs of everyone."[20] Recognizing the individual parts of Fichte's work for what they are and avoiding the strain imposed by ideological categorization, Beiser's addition to the modern wave of Fichtean scholarship is invaluable.[21] La Vopa too has recently written an in-depth biographical account of Fichte that paints his contributions in a more positive, less dogmatic light. Revising the existing body of literature, these scholars have attempted to bring Fichte's name back to prominence for his work on political, economic, and social themes that still hold relevance to this day.

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[19] Kelly, *Idealism, Politics, and History: Sources of Hegelian Thought,* 191.
[20] Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790-1800,* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 59.
[21] Admittedly, even he could not entirely avoid categorization. The chapter on Fichte is in Part I of his book in the section entitled "Liberalism."

In 2011, two newcomers to the school of Fichtean scholarship, David James and Isaac Nakhimovsky, published prodigious monographs, illustrating a resurgence of interest in Fichte from more than one camp. David James' work on property and virtue has helped shed a new light on Fichte's complicated and often misunderstood development of freedom, especially as it relates to the political and moral spheres. His differentiation between Fichte's conception of a sphere of right and a sphere of morality is particularly useful for trying to unlock the basic aims of Fichte's political philosophy. Isaac Nakhimovsky's work is equally invaluable as it deals primarily with one of Fichte's lesser-known works in the English-speaking world, *The Closed Commercial State.* Nakhimovsky's book immerses the reader in the eighteenth-century debates about the best way to develop a peaceful community of nations.[22] Both scholars attempt to restore Fichte's reputation and revitalize the debates about Fichte's continuing significance.

In the English-speaking world, precious little attention has been paid to Fichte's educational theory, and whenever Fichte's work on education gains notoriety, it is almost certainly about the infamous nationalistic overtures of his *Addresses to the German Nation.* Until 1927, when Turnbull published a translation of many of Fichte's works on education, Fichte the educational thinker was all but unknown to the Anglophone world. Yet, even after the translation of his educational theory into English, Fichte has remained an obscure thinker in the realm of pedagogical ideas. Overviews of the educational theory during the time period in which Fichte lived, such as those by Charles McClelland and Frederic Lilge, include mention of Fichte's attempts to make strides in the educational realm, but more often than not, historians have been inclined to include Fichte as a thinker who dabbled in education but not as an educational thinker in his own right. I argue that this has happened in large part because Fichte's educational theory was not implemented; Humboldt's overall philosophical reputation, in contrast, has only been strengthened through his connection with the foundation of the University of Berlin, in spite of the fact that little of Humboldt's

[22] Isaac Nakhimovsky, *The Closed Commercial State: Perpetual Peace and Commercial Society from Rousseau to Fichte* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

celebrity came from the publication of his academic works.[23] However, the French tradition has long regarded Fichte as an influential thinker in his own right.[24] Arash Abizadeh argues that the "state of affairs" within French historiography "could not be more different" and that this serious treatment of Fichte's work has yielded greater depths of analysis than the "caricatured readings that have, for too long, justified the scholarly neglect in English..."[25]

As one of the first Anglophone scholars to break the sterile scholasticism characterizing English language analyses of Fichte's *Addresses*, David James' latest article, entitled, "Fichte's Republicanism: Education, Philosophy and the Bonds of Reason," reads as the harbinger of a new age of Fichtean scholarship. James' contribution is to state that Fichte's nationalism has been placed in the wrong context previously, which he alters by considering Fichte's nationalism in light of a lesser known text by Fichte entitled *The German Republic at the Beginning of the Twenty-Second Century under its Fifth Protector*. In it, Fichte writes about the German nation in a fictional way as he sees it in the future (presuming the German nation has followed his course). He paints a picture of a community that is bound only by the dictates of reason, where a republic of scholars rules a democracy, wherein "the only law that applies…is the law of the stronger mind."[26] James argues that this text, while fictional, is an elucidation of Fichte's intentions for the German states and that Fichte's later views are not inconsistent with his earlier ones, but that they represent a totality of thought when considered in light of one another. James claims that previous scholarship has struggled to identify this continuity as such because Fichte's *Addresses* appear to threaten the freedom of choice that is typically associated with Fichte's earlier idealism.[27] James claims that although Fichte does ultimately call for the realization of Kant's "Kingdom of Ends" by reducing morality to necessity due to the demands of pure reason, this "coercion" has been misconstrued in recent history. Rather, Fichte's work on

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[23] Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Humanist Without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), 4-5.
[24] Arash Abizadeh, "Was Fichte an Ethnic Nationalist? On Cultural Nationalism and Its Double," *History of Political Thought* 26, no. 2 (2005): p. 336.
[25] Ibid, 336.
[26] David James, "Fichte's Republicanism: Education, Philosophy and the Bonds of Reason," *History of Political Thought* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 2014): 485-518, 517.
[27] Ibid, 510.

the Future German Republic illuminates his reasoning through the explication of a republic in which men cease to rely upon external authority.

In a short essay on Fichte, Schleiermacher and the University of Berlin, Claude Piche grapples with similar questions as those that inspired this paper, by inquiring why Fichte's plan was passed over by Humboldt for Schleiermacher's plan when he became the Minister of Public Instruction. His conclusion is simply that Humboldt and Schleiermacher share a number of important and deeply entrenched theoretical values. He wrote, "As surprising as it may sound, it is possible to say that the ultimate victory of the liberal view over the Fichtean conception of the new University of Berlin had been decided long before Schleiermacher and Fichte submitted their respective plans to the ministry."[28] In essence, Piche argues that because Humboldt made the final decision on whose plan was to be implemented, it ended up looking more like Schleiermacher's plan than Fichte's. In many ways, I seek to answer the same problems as Piche, as I seek the theoretical roots that differentiate Fichte from his peers, but I am not interested in asking his question about why Fichte's plan was not implemented. The question is one that is not worthwhile to address, for while it is true that Humboldt adopted a plan that looked, in its final estimation, like an embodiment of his own person philosophy, it is not helpful to state that Fichte's plan was rejected for this reason. That Fichte's plan was rejected can only be considered to be a circumstantial effect of Humboldt replacing Beyme as the Minister of Public Instruction. In essence, what I aim to do is to recover the intended meaning and originality of a plan that never came to fruition. Therefore I'm primarily interested in asking: What was Fichte's contribution to the debate? What were his intentions in presenting his theory of education? Does this help us reconsider Fichte's reputation further?

Methodology

Within the tradition of the history of ideas, Fichte has been repeatedly overlooked as a thinker who did little to further Kant's critical philosophy. At best, he has been considered

[28] Claude Piche, "Fichte, Schleiermacher, and W. von Humboldt," in *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism*, ed. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (New York, NY: Rodopi, 2010), 373.

a placeholder, a small speck on the radar between the philosophical giants, Kant and Hegel; at worst, he has been attributed with inspiring the rise of National Socialism based upon the patriotic fervor that oozes from his *Addresses to the German Nation.* It is my contention that the spectrum of reputations that have been given to Fichte are partially a result of the variety of methodologies utilized by scholars who sought to understand Fichte's works as a part of a great tradition of philosophical thought. Although in many ways, newer methods of writing the history of ideas are slowly eroding the hegemony of the "great text" model, there is still more work to be done to replace the old orthodoxy with a more contextually based methodology. As Donald Kelley points out, the "great text" tradition of interpretation that was still alive and well through half of the twentieth century, was nothing more than another attempt by those in the forefront of philosophy to exert their influence through providing interpretive methods which borrowed greatly from the philosophical discipline itself.[29] I argue, in a similar vein as modern scholar Anthony La Vopa, that Fichte's intellectual contribution has been overlooked due to flaws in the methodologies that rule the study of the history of ideas. As this project is driven by its desire to give a fair assessment to Fichte's theory of education, what follows is a brief contextualization of the methodological debate followed by an explication of the chosen methodology for this thesis. In it, I explain why I find the Skinner's methodology to be the most likely to provide a clear and accurate picture of Fichte's contributions to the history of thought.

One question a historian studying this time period in this location rightfully comes up against is why utilize the methodology espoused by a member of the Cambridge School? It has weathered criticism that it is locality driven and not a "one size fits all" type of methodology. Why not consider Fichte's contributions from the viewpoint of *Begriffsgeschichte* within a framework like that of Koselleck's in writing the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*? After all, included in its stated purposes is "to characterize the ways in which language both shaped and registered processes of change that transformed every area of German political and social life, from approximately the middle of the eighteenth

[29] Take for example Lovejoy's "unit-ideas." Donald R. Kelley, "On the Margins of *Begriffsgeschichte,"* in Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter, eds., *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies On Begriffsgeschichte* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1996), 1.

century to the middle of the nineteenth."[30] As Pocock states, it is not that the historians who apply such a methodology are useless scholars; it is merely that like Pocock, I find concepts to be living entities that are nearly impossible to pin down across contexts. Trying to write the history of a concept is akin to hitting a moving target. Additionally, writing the history of a concept requires removal of the concept from the context that gives it its meaning. As Pocock states, "separated from one another and arranged in alphabetical order, they cannot display that interrelatedness they possess when arranged—not by lexicographers but by language-building and—using creatures in the historical past—so as to constitute languages as written or spoken in the complexity of human discourse."[31] To write in the same tradition of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* requires isolating the variable in a way that it could not have been at the time. Notably this could result in viewing the variable in a new light, but it is arguably a less historical light. Additionally, as Pocock argues, what is of interest to the intellectual historian is an examination of the historical use of language, rhetoric and grammar—essentially how ideas were translated between minds. Therefore, the attendant methodology is a history of how these ideas were conveyed and what specifically has been altered or manipulated to accomplish the author's aims. Ultimately, as Pocock argues, concepts are the bi-products of the actor's intentions, and that to write a history of concepts is a misguided effort because concepts change constantly in relation to how and why the author applies them.[32] Although my level of argumentation fails to reach the complexity and eloquence of Pocock's, I find his critique of *Begriffsgeschichte* to be accurate.[33] To write a history of concepts results in a multitude of difficulties resulting from the impulse to isolate a solitary concept; in this thesis, I hope to write a history of discourse that is representative of the time period in which it was employed.

Anthony La Vopa has also been a vocal critic of the "great text" tradition, which he claims has caused Fichte in particular to be relegated to a position of intellectual inferiority. The philosophical tradition has been quick to categorize him as Kant's successor, but a

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[30] Melvin Richter, "Appreciating a Contemporary Classic," in Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter, eds., *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies On Begriffsgeschichte,* 10.
[31] J.G.A. Pocock, "Concepts and Discourses: A Difference in Culture,?" in Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter, eds., *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies On Begriffsgeschichte*, 51.
[32] Ibid, 53.
[33] I find his critique of *Begriffsgeschichte* accurate, but Skinner's replacement better in this instance.

much less original and successful version. Additionally he's become known as the one who paved the way for Hegel, without getting much credit at all for his own originality. What is worse is that this manner of studying philosophers has led some scholars to credit Fichte with the outbreak of National Socialism over a century after Fichte's death. Logic makes such a claim ridiculous, but one of the primary problems with the older, philosophical version of understanding the history of ideas is that Fichte could be interpreted as having added to a collective group of major ideas which can be said to have spawned some of the greatest destruction the world has known. Skinner calls this the "mythology of prolepsis" in which certain authors are credited with outcomes that could not possibly have been of their own doing. Rousseau's reputation has weathered similar problems, as fingers have been pointed at his work for the emergence of totalitarianism.

La Vopa also argues that a number of –isms have exerted their teleological pull on the modern understanding of Fichte's thought; he includes nationalism, liberalism, anarchism, egalitarianism, socialism, totalitarianism, anti-Semitism, and patriarchalism.[34] Instead La Vopa advocates coming at Fichte through the lens of the eighteenth century, which forces the historian to consider seriously the latent effects of Fichte's Protestant Lutheran upbringing. Much like Skinner, La Vopa embraces a contextual approach that considers the rhetorical circumstances in which Fichte was immersed. He too argues for the importance of considering the audience and what the author thought he was doing in writing a particular text. La Vopa contends that, "Fichte is a particularly appropriate subject for this kind of hermeneutic. His efforts to define philosophy as a kind of rhetoric are inseparable from his need to profess, and indeed to live, his convictions in several settings."[35]

As stated above, this project is methodologically driven, drawing upon a desire to overcome the inadequacies found within the orthodox tradition of interpreting the history of philosophy. The methodology that will be utilized was initially made famous by Quentin Skinner, and his fellows of the Cambridge School, although its historical roots go much deeper. Wittgenstein, at the end of the nineteenth century, proposed that language is more deeply interwoven into human action than has been previously considered. He argued that

[34] La Vopa, *The Self and the Calling of Philosophy,* 12.
[35] Ibid, 11.

at any one time it is only possible to convey a range of thoughts linguistically, and in turn, it is only possible to critique those thoughts with the same array of linguistic limitations.[36] Wittgenstein's theories were then developed into a speech act theory by Austin, Searle, and Grice, who argue that at any given time a person utilizing language, either through speaking or writing, is doing two things. The first is what authors have been understood to have been doing for centuries; namely, putting forth a series of words and sentences that have meaning. This is called "locutionary" force. However, the emphasis of Austin, Searle and Grice's theory is the expending of "illocutionary" force. In essence, they claim that authors, in addition to providing meaning through what they have said or written, exert a separate force in the act of writing.[37] This claim gives Quentin Skinner his basis for claiming that if a historian wants to truly understand a given text, then he or she must seek the intentions of the author in writing said text. It is insufficient to understand the words on the page—one must also seek what the author was doing in writing it.

While Skinner's methodology has taken hold within the history of ideas as a serious historical methodology, the execution of the methodology has spawned myriad variations. Therefore, it is insufficient to merely state that one intends to utilize the methodology laid out by the Cambridge School, for within the very school lies numerous iterations of the core idea. Although there is no one sole methodology which all members of the Cambridge school agree upon, there is an emphasis on the importance of illocutionary force throughout the writings of Skinner that I intend to model this project after. According to Skinner it is the concept of illocution that allows the historian the opportunity to decipher an author's intentions in writing a given text. In response to criticism that his methodology is ultimately unworkable even for himself, Skinner has put forth a recipe for understanding the illocutionary force of a given text. The first step is for the historian is to understand the meaning. Skinner readily admits that the meaning itself is not enough to provide insight into the author's intentions, but it does limit the possibilities of the illocutionary act. His example is that of a policeman telling a skater that the ice is thin over there. The meaning

[36] James Tully, ed. *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 8.
[37] Ibid, 8-9.

of this, as Skinner points out, cannot be that of questioning the skater.[38] This is a very simple example, but it does underline the emphasis that meaning must always be considered as it serves to limit the whole range of illocutionary forces that could be performed. The second step is a consideration of context and occasion of the utterance. This is where Skinner's argument divides from traditional methods of textual exegesis. Skinner argues, "all serious utterances are characteristically intended as acts of communication."[39] Therefore, in considering that an author is communicating an idea, he can be said to be arguing for a given position, against a given position, or promoting a position that has never before been promoted. This could be for a number of reasons; perhaps the author is denying a generally held belief or perhaps he is attempting to revise it. He could also be attempting to warn his audience of the need to adopt a different belief from the traditional one.[40] Therefore, it is the task of the historian to seek the context in which the author was performing in order to gain access to the intentions of the author's communication. For this project, that means seeking Fichte's meaning in writing a theory of higher education, and seeking the context in which he was writing. This will be done through researching his contemporaries and what the traditionally held beliefs were in the period during which he was writing. After these two steps have been taken, it will hopefully become clear whether Fichte was attempting to defend a traditionally held belief, oppose it, or promote a new idea with his own theory of education.

In this project, as in all historical projects, there lays the problematic aspect of the role of the historian in possibly misconstruing or misrepresenting the past due to the limited viewpoint that he or she has. Although the writing of a completely objective history is impossible, herein I shall strive to suspend myself and attendant twenty first century proclivities in order to establish a more realistic representation of the conversations that were being had in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the reality of this topic matter dictates a forewarning; the intention of what follows is to study the linguistically structured activity of a certain thinker in a given time period, and doing so requires a study of the universe within which his own subjectivity was formed. However,

[38] Quentin Skinner, "A reply to my critics," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics,* 274.
[39] Skinner, "A reply to my critics," 274.
[40] Ibid, 276.

in explicating Fichte's use of the contemporary linguistic conventions, I am myself limited by the present age and can therefore no more escape the linguistic cage in which I find myself than Fichte could. This both makes the research itself more difficult but at the same time worthwhile. It is difficult to say much with certainty about the past, but hopefully the employment of this methodology will make clear the situated context within which Fichte acted, and will cause inquiry into how it affected his actions, and how he attempted to overcome it.

Another influential aspect of any historical project is the choice and limitations of source material. While it would be preferable to be cognizant of everything that came out of a given time period, such a feat is insurmountable for a single person; therefore, in an effort to acknowledge the influence of my own subjectivity, I intend to be forthcoming about my source choices. While Skinner argues for the use of texts coming from a subject's immediate contemporaries but not necessarily those that have registered in the philosophy of history, I understand his meaning to be the development of a methodology that opposes that of the canon coming from the "great text" tradition. I find his opposition to be largely focused upon avoiding the promotion of the idea that philosophers have always been conversing solely with one another, communicating on a higher plane than that of their contemporaries. While this is a possibility, Skinner finds it much more likely that a historian will be capable of decoding an author's utterance based upon a study of his contemporaries. Therefore, although I do use only authors whose writings that register in histories of philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, I believe that I too am striving against the overuse of the traditional canon. For example, although one cannot but admit the influence of Kant in Fichte's life, I attempt in this project to overcome the traditional leap from Kant to Hegel through providing a fuller illustration of the relevant context so as to make clear what Fichte was doing in putting forth his theory of education. The picture coming out of this time period is unlike any other in German history, as the influence of the scholarly world met up with that of the real world. The scholarly interactions that Fichte and his colleagues were having ultimately determined the development of the first modern research university, and the historical impact of that result cannot be overstated.

By examining primarily the two documents within which Fichte lays out his plan for German higher education, his *Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin* and his *Addresses to the German Nation*, I intend to illustrate Fichte's originality and unique contributions to the debate that was taking place in Prussia in 1807-1808. I contend that examining Fichte through the lens of Skinner's methodology, it will be possible to see Fichte in a new historical light, and that his educational plan was more specifically linked to the time period in which he was writing, than those of his colleagues, and perhaps more than he would have liked to admit. I also argue that this can help us re-assess Fichte's questionable historical image because it contextualizes some of the more nefarious pockets of his philosophy. Though many of Fichte's ideas jump off the page as radical to a twenty-first century mind, his work belonged distinctly to the early nineteenth century, and to consider it as a primitive outline of the destructive German nationalism of the twentieth century would be to willfully disregard Fichte's entire project. His theory was specifically German; by that I mean that he was responding to a particularly German problem with his own, unique, but nonetheless German solution. His intention was not an overwhelming solution to Europe's failing university system, but to the German one. As such, it is important to consider Fichte's theory not as it would be considered today, but only as it would have been considered in his own time and location. This is why the methodology of the Cambridge School best suits my purposes in this paper, as it aims to contextualize Fichte within his own world, which will bring to light his numerous contributions not only to the educational debate surrounding the foundation of the University of Berlin, but to the greater historical index of German educational theory.

The organization takes it shape from the methodology: namely, in order to illustrate the developing linguistic contexts, I have chosen to organize this paper thematically. In the first chapter, I aim to introduce the setting for Fichte's contribution to the educational theory of the early nineteenth century, alongside the more general problems associated with the foundation of the University of Berlin. The guiding question that this chapter seeks to answer is what were the common pedagogical problems of the day and how did scholars react to solve these issues? This section serves as a greater introduction to the problems presented by the failing German education system and allows for a richer contextualization of Fichte's thinking on university education. The task of chapter one to properly embed

Fichte's writings in such a way as to make clear his intentions in putting forth his theory of higher education, which will be explicated in chapter two. The final chapter seeks to locate Fichte's originality, based upon the previously established contexts and my understanding of the limited range of illocutionary forces that Fichte could have been performing when he laid out his contribution for the establishment of the University of Berlin, while the epilogue grapples with Fichte's intentions in putting forth the entirety of his educational theory and what it means for his historical reputation. The epilogue also aims to evaluate the benefits and difficulties of the chosen methodology for this project.

Chapter One: Problems and Solutions

To understand the antiquated university system into which the University of Berlin was born, it is necessary to look back to the Middle Ages when the German states comprised the political heart of the Holy Roman Empire.[41] Within the territorial governmental system, it was a show of power and privilege to be capable of producing one's own university. Additionally, if a territory were capable of supplying its own university, it would be able to meet the demand of educated citizens needed to develop and support government organizations.[42]

The confessional division of German universities began shortly after the Reformation, when it became valuable to establish new universities that were founded on the same religious beliefs of the territorial ruler. Thus, the two centuries post-Reformation saw substantial growth in the number of German universities, which tripled, from fifteen in 1506 to forty-five in 1700.[43] The confessional division was fairly even, with Protestant universities numbering twenty-two and with Catholic universities comprising the rest.[44] The universities themselves varied greatly in their prestige and enrollment, an interconnected phenomenon. Some of the largest universities housed up to twelve hundred students while the smallest only saw enrollment numbers of eighty to one-hundred. Although a university's reputation was linked to its ability to enroll students, a number of other factors influenced the rise and fall of leading German universities. Halle and Göttingen spent nearly the entire eighteenth century as leading institutions due to their progressive Enlightenment views of science.[45] During this time period, the confessional aspect of German universities that had consumed it for the past two centuries gradually began to dissipate and was replaced by the new aim of universities—to educate its students in the enlightened scientific tradition.

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[41] Notker Hammerstein, "History of German Universities", *History of European Ideas* 5, no. 2 (1987): 140.
[42] Walter Rüegg, ed., *A History of the University in Europe: Volume 1, Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10.
[43] Hammerstein, "History of German Universities," 140.
[44] Ibid, 140.
[45] Ibid, 141.

By 1800, the majority of European political systems were no longer bound to a specific religious institution. Although European governments were finally independent of their religious bonds, in many cases it was simply the overthrow of one morality for another, as many of the secular governments had taken on the role of "teacher-state" in which it felt necessary to impose restrictions upon educational institutions that were in line with the accepted political and philosophical notions of the state.[46] This time period was also characterized by political upheaval and instability caused by the French Revolution and the successive Napoleonic regime. After his military success in the Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon reorganized the German states, reducing them in number and making changes to their political organization. This had a notable effect upon universities, as many were destroyed completely, annexed to the French, or reorganized in such a way that a state might now be in charge of more universities than it was previously. For example, the boundaries of the *Landesuniversität* were disrupted so that Baden became responsible for both Protestant Heidelberg and Catholic Freiburg.[47]

According to McClelland, the majority of eighteenth century universities in Germany survived solely on their own, meaning that they did not look to the government to provide them with revenue. Universities were able to subsist upon money gotten in the form of rent from university property.[48] Additionally, the universities looked to their faculty members to accept privileges instead of money as a form of compensation. As a result, the faculty of universities were often forced to seek additional employment, undeniably splitting their focus from their roles as professors. As McClelland notes, this system was neither sustainable nor comfortable for the universities. In order to act as a stopgap, the state became increasingly more involved in providing financial support for its universities in the form of subsidies. The loss of fiscal independence, while beneficial for the long-term stability of the institution, does have a significant detractor. It muddies the relationship between the state and university, as influence could theoretically be bought. McClelland is quick to point out that university economics in the eighteenth century are difficult to pin down with accuracy, in large part because their financial system still employed aspects of a

[46] Walter Rüegg, ed., *A History of the University in Europe: Volume 3, Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800-1945)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 83.
[47] Anderson, *European Universities from the Enlightenment to 1914*, 53.
[48] McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, 11.

pre-money economy. For example, the remuneration of a professorship with food or services cannot be accurately calculated. When this was combined with a modern monied system of compensation it led to confusion, which was only compounded by poor bookkeeping. Because universities were becoming increasingly dependent upon state subsidies to keep their doors open, the state insisted that universities turn over the administration of their finances.[49]

The legal relationship of the university and the state is even less straightforward than its financial one. To begin with, most universities were given their "degree-granting rights" from the Emperor; however, their "moral authority" was derived from their confessional status. In reality though, the local sovereign held the most influence over its day-to-day operations until Napoleon dissolved the ecclesiastical states and began a large-scale political reorganization of Germany.[50]

Problems Facing the German University System

In contrast to the slow and steady progress of university reform that characterized the early modern period in Germany, the decades surrounding the year 1800 turned out to be one of the most important "caesuras" in the history of European university development.[51] As Anderson notes, "At the end of the eighteenth century, there was a common feeling that the universities were in a state of crisis: student numbers were stagnant or falling, many smaller universities were becoming unviable, most universities were mired in archaic corporate privilege, and intellectual vitality existed only patchily."[52] In Germany, the responses to the sweeping political and social changes across Europe only heightened the manifold problems with the university system around 1800. Many of these problems—such as the viability of smaller universities—existed long before the outbreak of the French Revolution, but it was within the frenzied wake that these important responses began to take their shape.

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[49] McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, 90-91.
[50] Anderson, *European Universities from the Enlightenment to 1914*, 53.
[51] Ibid, 3.
[52] Ibid, 51.

The rise of political consciousness within German universities had a number of varying effects. It spawned suspicion about the political views of its inhabitants, as many within the German territorial governments regarded the university system as a stronghold of progressive thinking and even radicalism. Such an effect is illustrated by the plight of Georg Forster, a professor and librarian at the University of Mainz. When the French overtook the German state of Mainz in 1792, Forster joined in the foundation of a Jacobin club called the "Freunde der Freiheit und Gleichheit." Forster, along with his colleague, Andreas Joseph Hoffman, helped to organize the budding Mainz Republic. These revolutionary efforts were regarded as treason, and such examples did nothing to assuage the feeling that universities were harboring radical thinkers under the guise of freedom of thought. As McClelland notes, "The fact that Hoffman and Forster later served as president and vice-president of the French-supported Mainz republic did nothing to lessen the suspicions of other German governments about the potential radicalism of universities."[53] It was during this time period that political loyalties of freethinking university members began to elicit serious concerns to those in political power.

Another problem faced by German universities during this period was the French occupation and re-structuring of the territorial organization. This forced many universities to close their doors as they became superfluous within the restructured state system. Between the period of 1789 and 1815, eighteen of Germany's thirty-four universities disappeared.[54] A few universities managed to survive the reorganization by consolidating. The closing of a great number of universities had consequences; for one, the reduced number of universities led to reduction in competition for students, which in turn led to a more "streamlined regional base for most of the survivors."[55]

Setting the Scene

[53] McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, 102.
[54] Rüegg, ed., *A History of the University in Europe: Volume 3, Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,* 3.
[55] McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, 103.

Though the problems of the university as an institution were numerous, the setting for its renewal was an auspicious one. In spite of the lack of military strength, exemplified by its humiliating defeat to Napoleon's forces, Berlin was a booming city of cultural and intellectual vibrancy. The educated classes participated eagerly in the city's literary salons, music halls and scientific societies. As the public engagement and spirit of community was growing in Berlin, so was the suspicion that the university as the quintessential historic European institution was in its death throes.[56] At the time the debate was taking place in Berlin, there was no certainty that the university would persist into the nineteenth century. While it was clear that something needed to be done regarding higher education, the specific path was yet to be chosen. Beginning as early as 1795, discussions were held on the value of leaving the goals of Prussian education to the existing institutions in Berlin or if consolidation would be preferable. There was even talk of complete abolition of the university system. In 1800, J.J. Engel, director of a Berlin Gymnasium, urged Minister Beyme to consider the possibility that the university belonged to a bygone era. He argued for a complete break with the academic traditions of the past—including abolition of exams, degrees, and student fraternity life.[57] His argument was not unlike the arguments made by a number of the spiritual fathers of the University of Berlin; namely, he expressed concern that universities had become clannish institutions that exercised a monopoly on higher education and were responsible for obstructing the free dissemination of knowledge. He supported this argument by adding that upper class families were hesitating about sending their sons to Germany's best universities because student life was known to have a coarsening effect on a young man's development. Engel's solution was a complete break with the old provincial system, which would be replaced by an "unacademic" institution where anyone could study or teach, thereby democratizing knowledge acquisition and removing it from the hands of the upper classes.[58]

Around the turn of the century, Berlin possessed a number of valuable institutions: an Academy of Sciences (1700), College of Medicine and Surgery (1724), a mining academy (1770), a veterinary school (1790), a school for military doctors (1795), a building

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[56] Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: between Enlightenment and Romanticism.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 144.
[57] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 6.
[58] Ibid, 7.

academy (1799), and an institute for agriculture (1806).[59] Additionally, Berlin housed a great number of libraries, theaters, opera houses, publishing houses and bookstores. The extant institutions played a significant role in the academic and cultural life of the city, and it was not clear at all that remodeling and bringing together the disparate elements of Berlin's existing institutions was the best way to proceed. Therefore, two sides emerged in this debate; one side called for the re-creation of the university and the reorganization of the city's institutions.[60] The conservative side of the debate called for leaving Berlin's institutions untouched for fear of destroying established traditions. It is worth noting, however, that these represent the extremities of the debate, and that in between these two poles, scholars put forth their own ideas for reworking and improving upon the antiquated university system.

Humanism and Idealism

While categorizing thinkers into schools of thought can obscure important nuances of their work, it does serve some purpose. It allows the reader to understand and see the similarities that one thinker shared with another, thereby allowing them to discern specific topics to which a given group was reacting. Categorization obscures nuance but promotes similarity. In an effort to better illustrate the range of thought available during this period, I first want to briefly describe two different and occasionally oppositional, schools of thought that informed the foundational debates about the University of Berlin. Broadly these two schools are humanism and idealism.[61]

Led by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), the humanist tradition sought active inquiry over stale tradition because it understood that mental activity increased the

[59] Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: between Enlightenment and Romanticism,* 144.
[60] Ibid, 144.
[61] I say broadly because not all scholars agree to such categorization. See McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, who categorizes these thinkers as neo-humanist. However, for this paper, I have decided humanism and idealism better serve my purpose. Also, I have chosen to leave out Romanticism as it was a movement focused highly on aesthetics and very little work was published on education, although that is not to say the Romantics did not care about education, but simply that there is a dearth of source material and no general theory of education.

capacity for the comprehension of one's self.[62] Consider these two quotes, which nicely pinpoint the dual principles upon which the humanistic theory of education rests. German writer and philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) wrote, "It is not the truth which a man possesses, or assumes he possesses, but the honest labor spent in the pursuit of it that determines a man's worth."[63] Humboldt wrote, "The aim of all scientific work is the enlargement of man's character."[64] Humanism argues that work is its own reward because it is through engaging in the outside world that one's inner self is constantly renewed. Humboldt, as the Minister of Public Instruction under whose guidance the University of Berlin came to fruition, best embodies the humanist stance as it was applied to the idea for a new university in spite of the fact that he published very little during his life and has only claimed popularity posthumously.[65] Ideally, humanism argues, the university would exist unencumbered by other institutions such as the state so that it could facilitate the disinterested pursuit of any number of subjects, which would in turn make clear one's vocation and help along the path towards self-realization. Humboldt hoped that "peasants and craftsmen, could perhaps become artists, that is, people who love their work for its own sake and thereby cultivate their minds, ennoble their character, and increase their happiness."[66] Humanist thinkers argued against the old, utilitarian model of education and for the democratization of the faculties and of the university as a whole.

Idealist literature appears much more single-minded in its zeal to emancipate philosophy and to save man by means of increasing human knowledge. The goal of idealist thinkers was more concrete than that of the humanists of the time, who aimed to democratize knowledge so that all men could find their vocation. Idealists sought for the promotion of a moral world order, and were increasingly fearful of the growth of mediocrity in society.[67] Idealists also argued that inequality was a natural state of being and that it was up to the organized intellectual elite to deny themselves with an almost

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[62] Wilhelm von Humboldt, better known in his own time for his involvement in public life than for his intellectual contributions, is nonetheless the man whose name has come to be most strongly associated with the foundation of the University of Berlin, which has borne his surname since 1949.
[63] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 11.
[64] Ibid, 11.
[65] Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Humanist Without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), 4-5.
[66] Ibid, 10.
[67] Humboldt, *Humanist Without Portfolio,* 38.

religious devotion to the public good in order to effect any important shift in the world. Out of the intellectuals who engaged in the debate about higher education, a good representative of the idealists was Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), who is most famous to posterity as the youthful genius who developed a system of transcendental idealism to rival Fichte's own.[68] Like the humanists, the idealists were dissatisfied with the rote and sterile learning that had come to characterize German institutions of higher education. Their proposed fix was to heighten the prominence of philosophy in order to bring about a form of education that could renew itself, as opposed to teaching fixed results. Additionally both the humanists and idealists agreed that the university was no place for professional or utilitarian education. In spite of their numerous differences, it is easy to see how members of both schools of thought could be persuaded to work together to revitalize the failing German university system.

The Relationship between the University and State

After the turn of the nineteenth century, universities were subject to different forms of dependence than those that had previously characterized establishments of higher education. Medieval universities largely enjoyed fiscal independence as they had been endowed with assets such as land and buildings that would make their self-sufficiency possible. In Germany, most universities were established and kept up by the generosity of the local sovereign or ecclesiastical authority, which allowed for the institution's financial independence and in turn, a relatively large amount of academic freedom for students and teachers alike.[69] However around 1800, the financial burden of provincial German universities shifted to the state. This can be seen through the creation of ministries of public education and through the inclusion of universities in the budget of the Holy Roman Empire.[70] While replacing the princely and ecclesiastical authorities with the state allowed for the perpetuation of the university into the nineteenth century, members of the academy

[68] Although Fichte too was an idealist and Fichte's writings from 1794 were some of the first written explications of an idealist philosophy of education.
[69] McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, 91.
[70] Rüegg, ed., *A History of the University in Europe: Volume 3,* 88.

were rightly worried about what this financial dependence would cost them in terms of freedom of thought. As a result, the role of the state in the newly minted University of Berlin occupied a major spot in the educational theory of many thinkers of this time period. Indeed, although the professoriate feared the loss of their current level of academic freedom, it was difficult to deny that the state ultimately saved the university system from economic peril in the late eighteenth century.

Already in the 1790's, Wilhelm von Humboldt had penned an article on this topic entitled *Ideas for an Essay on the Limits of State Action.*[71] It was Humboldt's contention that the state's role in administering education should be conceived as that of a necessary evil. Fully acknowledging that universities would be better off pursuing knowledge free from any government intervention, Humboldt admits that this is no longer a realistic possibility. Therefore, as it is the role of the state to provide a number of institutions for the welfare of its people, higher education must number among them. However, he claims that it is crucial that the state remember that its role is simply that of facilitator, and that it would be detrimental to the very core of the institution if anyone were to attempt to intervene for personal gain. He writes, "On the whole…the state must demand nothing of them which directly concerns itself or its own operations, but must hold fast to the inner conviction that if the higher institutions reach their ultimate aim, its own aim, too, will be thereby fulfilled…"[72] However, Humboldt did not expect financial support alone, but that the government must intervene in determining the proper relationship between the higher and lower institutions of education and that it must be involved in the initial act of organization.

In a number of speeches given on university education in Jena in 1802, Schelling voiced similar concerns about the encroachment of the state in academic life, and he made one point very clear—if the state wants to establish true institutions of science, said institutions must retain absolute intellectual freedom. Without the spontaneous pursuit of knowledge to guide students, science cannot be furthered. If the state, wishing to develop

[71] Published posthumously, Piche, "Fichte, Schleiermacher, and W. von Humboldt," 373.
[72] Humboldt, *Humanist Without Portfolio,* 136.

practical men, desires to limit the scientific spirit, then it should be aware that what it has done is created an industrial training school—not a scientific university.[73]

In an attempt to find a middle way, founding faculty member of the University of Berlin, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) wrote that there must be a natural interdependence between the state and university in order for both to accomplish their ultimate goals; however, he warned that the intentions of the state and those people who run it seldom align with the intentions of the university and its members. While scholars unite in a shared pursuit of truth, the state exists only for its own ends and therefore cannot be trusted to freely promote the unencumbered pursuit of knowledge. Rather, it aims for knowledge that upholds its own ends. "The state works only for itself, historically it is chiefly self-seeking through and through; thus it tends not to offer support to science except on its own terms."[74] Additionally, he noted that those who succeed in climbing the ladder of government need not necessarily be the most highly educated, and their primary concern is evaluating everything in reference to its effects on the state, while the scholar's main focus is on furthering science and the goals of the intellectual community. Thus, Schleiermacher acknowledged a permanent tension between the state and university that cannot be completely overcome, although he hoped rational and responsible people could be counted upon to bridge the natural gap between the two major institutions.

Though it seemed that the university had no other way out of its economic crisis than to run to the state for help, the specter of academic regulation that came with state patronage made this an issue that needed to be weighed seriously. Could the tension between independent scholarship and the needs of the state exist alongside each other perpetually, or would selling out the university eventually cause its collapse because it could no longer hold firm on the principles upon which it was founded? Ultimately, the founders chose to delay the collapse of the university system in accepting the state's patronage. Without financial support, the university's demise was imminent, but it was still yet to be known if the state could aid this important institution without co-opting its most important values.

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[73] Karl Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 23.
[74] Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: between Enlightenment and Romanticism,* 154.

The Inner Organization of the University

The importance of intellectual freedom is intricately tied to the next topic—how to go organize a new university so that the dogmatism and stagnancy of the past will never come to haunt it again. Traditionally, university education served the specific societal function of producing servants of the state. Therefore, the appropriate corresponding education was one built entirely around function. If a given course or idea had no practical application, it was rejected outright as it was unrelated to experience. As a corollary, professional schools, or "faculties," of the university had, since the Enlightenment, been regarded as the higher and philosophy and other liberal arts training as the lower.[75] This distinction was maintained in large part, because it served practical values. However, a number of intellectuals of this time period claimed there to be a flaw in this design, and argued fervently for the philosophical faculty to take its rightful place as the central organizing principle of the university system. Schelling argued that science is the best manner of educating young state servants, and yet, science ceases to be science when it is demoted to a mere means. For science to serve its full educational value, it needs to be pursued as an end in itself, rather than for its practical application. Kant too argued that focus on practical ideas and experience was a mistaken notion, for such experience would not exist without the rudimentary idea to guide it.[76] Yet such a view was problematic for the Prussian government. Was it worth taking the gamble that educating students to no specific practical end would eventually pay off for anyone but the intellectual community?

In 1798, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) published a treatise entitled *The Strife of the Faculties*, in which he set out to develop a philosophy of higher education.[77] He railed against the standard of values that existed within the university system and argued that

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[75] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 13.

[76] F. W. J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, ed. Norbert Guterman, trans. E. S. Morgan (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1966),footnote, 23.

[77] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 13. Although Kant never stopped to write out a complete theory of education, he was nonetheless fully engaged with the topic as ideas on education were abounding in Germany during his lifetime. What remains of Kant's ideas on education is a compilation of his lectures and notes, which he commissioned a former pupil to compile shortly before his death. The result is not an exhaustive theory of education, but rather reflections that speak both about the age itself and even more timelessly about the best way to educate human beings.

free, rational, and disinterested inquiry (characterized by philosophy) should constitute the basis of the university. The fact that providing professional training is a vested interest of the state means that such faculties should automatically be downgraded due to the threat of outside influence. This problem is directly connected to the threat of state interference—only philosophy could provide the way out of the conundrum posed by the state's financial support of the university system. Another problem Kant identified within the German education system was that people tend to be haphazard in what principles they follow, and as a result of this lack of systemization, humanity failed to realize its higher attributes. Philosophy can provide the necessary uniformity, and what is more, due to its disinterested nature, can act as a voice of public reason. As a remedy, Kant suggested that a model must be developed in order to guide such an endeavor, because, as he pointed out, the two authority figures who traditionally guide educational pursuits (parents and rulers) do not consider universal good and the perfection of humanity as the aims of education. Therefore, Kant tasked education to science.[78] What Kant means, and Fichte later develops is science as the "systematic unity of manifold cognitions under one idea."[79] The idea is the guiding entity that determines *a priori* the form of the whole system along with the relation of the parts to one another. For Kant, the idea gives shape to all the empirical aspects of the educational system, and tasking education to science gives it a logical form that is lacking when it is governed by interested parties.

The Idealists, following Kant, focused on philosophy as the way to provide a rational theoretical basis for the organization of the university.[80] They intended university education to be highly theoretical, aiding in the progress of science and knowledge, and replacing practical skills with systematic inquiry and rational understanding. The reason that philosophy was to be the new center of knowledge was because it relied least upon external authority, tradition, and practice. Rather, philosophy as a discipline constantly revises itself as it searches continually for truth. It is a very natural conservator of the disciplines of the university, because it can eliminate the old and wasteful parts of the other

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[78] Immanuel Kant, *On Education*. Trans. Paul Kegan, (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003), 14-15.
[79] G. Felicitas Munzel, "Kant, Hegel, and the Rise of Pedagogical Science," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Education*, ed. R. Curren (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 115-16.
[80] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 13.

disciplines, but most importantly, because it can do the same for itself without undermining its own authority. Because the Idealists understood that only philosophy had such power, they argued that it should occupy the foremost position in the organization and structuring of the new University at Berlin.[81]

But how did Humboldt and the humanists envision the organization of the university? To answer this question, it is necessary to provide further contextualization. One of Humboldt's government positions, as previously noted, was Minister of Worship and Public Instruction. According to his biographer, while he was probably one of the least religious Ministers of Worship, education struck a chord with him and he devoted a significant portion of his tenure in government working to correct the organization of both higher and lower educational institutions.[82] To be certain, this effort was a timely one as the University of Berlin was being established under his watch. In his written works, it is possible to discern one of the primary discussions of the day about the possibility or importance of revamping the Berlin Academy of Sciences, and if so, what should be left to the new university. Such a set up would leave the university to instruction and communication of learning (a glorified secondary school) and the Academy, for research. Humboldt found this to be a superfluous distinction, and that to remove the research goals from the university was to undercut the very purpose of the institution. For Humboldt, what makes a university distinct is not simply learning at a higher level, but the constant striving for knowledge exhibited by both the faculty and student body, who both know that there is no end to what they are seeking but that it should be sought nonetheless. Therefore, Humboldt saw the removal of research goals from the university to destroy its inner purpose. Additionally, he envisioned the dichotomy of academy and university would stir up rivalry and antagonism. The solution was to combine them in one—the University. "A university always stands in a somewhat closer relationship to practical life and to the needs of the state than an academy does, since a university conducts one of the state's principal tasks: the guidance of youth."[83] The Academy is less closely associated with the state as its purpose is entirely on knowledge and research for its own sake. While

[81] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning,* 42.
[82] Humboldt, *Humanist Without Portfolio,* 23.
[83] Ibid, 139.

such an aim is not maleficent in itself, Humboldt finds that the combination of the two will be more effective than either individually. While Humboldt was less directly committed to raising the profile of the philosophical faculty, he did agree that research and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge was the best possible route for the University of Berlin.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of the philosophical faculty as the new organizing principle around which the University of Berlin should be formed, the founders stressed the inculcation of the value of unified principles of scientific inquiry. They argued that study of the higher faculties was not to be utilitarian or practical but rather based in theory. If one wanted to learn a trade, one should attend a trade school. This attack on the practical side of universities was not a new idea, but if instituted, would usher in a return to the pre-Enlightenment style of university, which aimed to train students in the liberal arts rather than for any one particular trade. This emphasis had a number of important results: for one, it acknowledged that there is and should be a divide between trade schools and universities. Additionally, this focus consciously raised the bar for the German professoriate, who were expected to be both active researchers in their fields as well as transmitters of knowledge. And the final result of this emphasis on theory over practice meant that students were expected to know and understand the principles that ruled human existence and they should be able to apply them on command. That this would require much more of both the students and the teachers did not go unnoticed by the founders of the university, all of whom had varying thoughts on how the roles of both the students and the teachers should be understood within this new context. The following two sections will address the new roles for professors and students alike, as the new primacy of the philosophical faculty and research based learning drastically altered what was expected of both.

The Student

Under the new university reforms, students were expected to do more to pursue the principles of scientific inquiry; however, within that general ideal existed a number of different interpretations and expectations. While reformers like Schelling called for strict discipline of the student body in order to increase their focus upon their scientific calling,

Schleiermacher called for more lax standards, arguing that the university would not be nearly popular enough to continue enrolling students if they imposed terribly strict standards.[84] Additionally, Schelling and Schleiermacher occupied oppositional polarities on the question of who would ideally attend the new university.

Unlike his contemporaries Schleiermacher and Humboldt, Schelling disagreed that university education and the scientific ventures that characterize it should become a widespread phenomenon. On the contrary, Schelling understood the scientific community to be an aristocracy—ruled by the best. This view overlaps with who he thought should populate the university. Because of this idea, he found it unnecessary to either encourage students or weed them out, because among those who have a passion for science, the best will rise to the top naturally.[85] He claimed that there is no real need to protect talented individuals so long as they are not being actively discouraged. And this, he argued, is the only policy necessary for the highest educational institutions to flourish. "To make the university a model of organization, nothing is necessary beyond realizing what is in any case desirable and doing so consistently."[86] If the pursuit of science is the ultimate aim of universities, Schelling found no reason to do anything other than equip the institutions with the structure and faculty necessary to cultivate the brightest and most passionate minds.

Unlike the elitist ideas of Schelling, Schleiermacher defended those students who show up to university unprepared for "science in the highest sense."[87] He claimed that even those less talented students have much to gain from attending a university and that the state also benefits as many graduates will be recruited into state service. Richard Crouter points out that by promoting such a stance, Schleiermacher placed himself in opposition to Schelling's elitism, but also against those who were clamoring for the conservation of the status quo in regards to Berlin's academic institutions.[88] While Schleiermacher acknowledged the need for a shift from mechanical learning to scholarship characterized with a spirit of inquiry, he disagreed about the way this spirit should be cultivated.

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[84] Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: between Enlightenment and Romanticism,* 156.
[85] Schelling, *On University Studies*, 26.
[86] Ibid, 30.
[87] Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: between Enlightenment and Romanticism,* 158.
[88] Ibid, 158.

Schleiermacher argued that students only need to attend university for a short time and for the very specific purpose of harnessing the scientific spirit; he claimed that once that happens, they should move on. "Only one moment is actually spent at the university, only one act is complete: the idea of knowledge, the highest consciousness of reason, awakens in the person as a regulative principle."[89]

The final result at the University of Berlin was closer to Schleiermacher's vision than Schelling's, but the rules were still stricter than those that characterized older German universities.[90] However, due to circumstances outside of the control of these thinkers, Schleiermacher's warning was disproven, as the University of Berlin became a very popular place in spite of its new, stricter focus on scientific inquiry. For one, it didn't matter that the University placed no emphasis on teaching a trade, as the late eighteenth century economy was already overflowing with such professionals.[91] Additionally, Berlin was the capital of the Prussian government and therefore of interest to any student wishing to go into state service. And because of the destruction of Halle, attending the University of Berlin was the only reasonable option for budding theologians. Within Prussia, most other universities were dying off, so Berlin held a strong pull. And finally, the Prussian government was in a position to attempt to overcome its recent failures by seeking prestige in other arenas, namely education.[92]

The Professoriate

While the idea of a professor performing the dual roles of researcher and teacher is familiar to twenty-first century minds, such a concept was extraordinary to their eighteenth century counterparts. The nature of research up until the nineteenth century was based on knowledge accumulation and resulted in encyclopedic collections, in which professors were encouraged but not required to take part.[93] In fact, there was a pervasive understanding that only a small minority of the professoriate had the skills requisite for

[89] Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: between Enlightenment and Romanticism,* 156.
[90] McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, 96.
[91] Ibid, 97.
[92] Ibid, 97.
[93] Ibid, 171.

publication. Therefore, the new idea that the founders of the University of Berlin insisted on was a considerable change from the old, compendium-based model. It consciously raised the bar for the professoriate by not only insisting that they become active researchers in their field, but also by transitioning from the older model of an encyclopedic collection of knowledge to the pursuit of new theoretical truths. While the founders of the university all understood that the level of the professoriate needed to be improved if the overall quality of the university was to improve, they all had slightly different views on how to bring about such a result.

Schelling articulated an idea of the university that still holds considerable value today. For one, he emphasized the importance that a university be a stronghold of the scientific spirit. But he also argued that the teaching methods of universities be more than simply the recitation of previous scientific developments; for this reason, it is crucial that the professors employed by universities be scientists in their own right. "Otherwise, why should lectures by living men be at all necessary in a university? The student could as well be referred to popular textbooks expressly written for him or to voluminous compilations which exist in every branch of knowledge."[94] For Schelling, activity in the scientific world outside of teaching ensured that the teacher was capable of more than simply regurgitating older scientific discoveries. He was, in fact, wary of any teacher who did not pursue science outside the classroom, as "a teacher who merely transmits will often give a radically false version of what he learned."[95] While such fears seem overstated in the modern university system, the professorial environment of Germany in the nineteenth century was significantly different than that of the twenty-first century Western world. Further on in the same lecture, Schelling admitted that the "apprenticeship" requirements for teaching at a German university were very low. He even suggested, based upon how easy it was to get a professorship, that teaching is the lowliest of vocations.[96]

Not unlike many of his reform-minded colleagues, Humboldt was well aware that in order to improve the status quo regarding education, the level of teaching and teachers had to be improved. This was a popular point of view, as the intellectual elite understood that

[94] Schelling, *On University Studies*, 26.
[95] Ibid, 26.
[96] Ibid, 28.

the way to ensure the progress of enlightening civilization hinged upon teachers and their ability to reproduce a higher level of morality, culture, and scientific achievement in each successive generation.[97] But Humboldt had a more nuanced vision informed by his understanding of the workings of higher and lower educational institutions. He proclaimed that the difference between the two can be most easily seen in the relationship between the teacher and student. Lower educational institutions are only made possible through the hierarchy of teacher over student, of the more knowledgeable passing down wisdom. However, at a higher institution, the teacher and student have a mutual goal of learning, and neither exists for the other. Instead, they exist in tandem, with the express goal of seeking knowledge through helping one another.[98] Humboldt's vision placed less emphasis on the professor and more upon the idea of an open space where people, be it students or teachers, could go to share and participate in doing science with the ultimate aim of advancing human knowledge.

One major difference between the professoriate of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was in their respective lifestyles. The university reforms of the early nineteenth century improved the economic existence of professors and allowed them the leisure time requisite to whole-heartedly pursue science.[99] This picture was simply impracticable in the eighteenth century when professors took on multiple jobs outside of the university simply to make ends meet. Such a lifestyle resulted in a lonely existence for academics, who were essentially cut off from civil society, expected but financially incapable of completely devoting themselves to scientific inquiry. However, the turn of the century brought about a change not only in expectations of the professoriate but also in their lifestyle. Rather than existing on the outskirts of society, professors formed a new enlightened gentility, whose "wide perspective lent by classical—cosmopolitan education," made them considerably more urbane than the preceding generations of scholars.[100] Therefore, while it is important to note that the ideology surrounding the professoriate was changing during this

[97] Munzel, "Kant, Hegel, and the Rise of Pedagogical Science," 120.
[98] Humboldt, *Humanist Without Portfolio,* 141.
[99] McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, 173.
[100] Ibid, 170.

period, so were the more practical aspects of their existence, and realistically, such a heady ideology could never have been enacted without these correlating economic measures.

Moral Education

The potential for an education that caused its recipients to lead a more moral life was a dream that pervaded the university as an institution since its very beginnings when it relied closely upon the Church for guidance.[101] While it may seem that inducing morality was a focus only religious thinkers sought, such an assumption is disproven by a number of writers in this time period. Even if the thinker himself was a religious man, the focus in this era was upon using education as a tool to form a better, more enlightened citizenry. The aim was not to teach morality so that people could find their just rewards in the next life, but to teach morality so that this life became its own reward.[102] The impulse to bring about morality never changed; rather, its objective shifted and Kant led the way in bringing about the possibility for morality when he overcame Humean determinism with his critical philosophy. But before Kant, Rousseau penned an educational treatise in which he sought to overturn popular ideas about education and its role in society in eighteenth century France. Rousseau grounded his pedagogical ideas in the foundation of man's innate goodness—claiming that it was society's corrupting influences that led man astray as opposed to some innate sinfulness. He argues that the sins of pride and vanity do not "have its germ in children's hearts, cannot be born in them of itself; it is we alone who put it there,

[101] Admittedly, the topic of moral education is a broad one, and an argument can even be put forth that all education is moral education and that education differs only in its chosen ends. While this argument can be made to topple the distinction between moral education and education writ large, in this context, moral education refers specifically to the teaching and encouragement of man to lead a moral life. Additionally moral education can be distinguished from the idea that all education is moral education by its effort to distinguish certain parts of the curriculum as having impact on the aimed moral education or not. Here what is of import is what thinkers pursued consciously to improve the morality of any given recipient. What is arguably more important is the thought that backed up and informed the given thinkers idea of what a moral education should entail and why moral education was a worthy goal.

and it can never take root except by our fault."[103] Thus Rousseau states that the goal of education is to cultivate nature, as opposed to corrupting it.

Many of Kant's reflections on pedagogy were responses to trending ideas about education; particularly that of Rousseau's *Emile*, which was published in 1762, a book which details the education of a young boy who is being raised in such a way that he could learn to survive the corrupting influences of society.[104] In it, Rousseau seeks to identify the type of education that could become a model for the creation of his idea of natural man and how such a man can exist in the modern world. The moral education given to Emile did not consist of codified rules, rights and wrongs imposed from above. Rather, Emile was encouraged to discover these rules and moral impulses on his own, to engage with his own instincts. This self-discovery of moral rules results in Emile's desire to take part in the moral rules of society. Kant, however, reacted strongly to Rousseau's work, calling the "savage love of freedom" undeveloped human nature—in essence, barbarism.[105] Kant advocated discipline to cover up what Rousseau was attempting to make more pronounced.

Kant argued for the perfection of humanity through a culture of discipline and instruction, but not necessarily as an attempt to overcome free will. Kant found that education must accomplish four things: first, it must make man capable of exerting discipline over his "animal nature."[106] Next, it must supply culture, which makes men aware of their own abilities and proclivities. Thirdly, education must provide refinement and discretion so that he is able to conduct himself appropriately in society. And finally, education should provide moral training so that he will learn to choose nothing but good ends, "good ends being those which are necessarily approved by everyone, and which may at the same time be the aim of everyone."[107] Kant finds that the fourth and most important aim of instilling morality has been dreadfully neglected. For the most part, eighteenth century education left teachings of morality to the Church. Kant argues that this is not

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[103] Eric Schwitzgebel, "Human Nature and Moral Education in Mencius, Xunzi, Hobbes, and Rousseau," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (April., 2007): 147-168, 152.
[104] Munzel, "Kant, Hegel, and the Rise of Pedagogical Science," 115-16.
[105] Kant, *On Education*. 4.
[106] Ibid, 18.
[107] Ibid, 20.

enough, but that children must learn that vice is detestable in and of itself; for without such a teaching, they might find no harm in acting immorally now and then if the only barrier was God's teachings.[108] For this reason, Kant prescribes a moral education stemming from the categorical imperative—to teach men that they must only act if their maxim could be at the same time raised to the level of a universal law. Consider Kant's example of disciplining a child:

> Supposing a child tells a lie, for instance, he ought not to be punished, but treated with contempt, and told that he will not be believed in the future, and the like. If you punish a child for being naughty, and reward him for being good, he will do right merely for the sake of the reward; and when he goes out into the world and finds that goodness is not always rewarded, nor wickedness always punished, he will grow into a man who only thinks about how he may get on in the world, and does right or wrong according as he finds either of advantage to himself.[109]

Kant argues that the difference lies in the type of discipline. He finds the variety taught by the Church to be only a preventative of bad habits; acting by one's maxims is an act of rationality that requires an individual to think and act accordingly. Kant finds this to be a more solid basis for instilling moral action than that of the current model. The desired effect of Kant's conception of pedagogy is to direct the child to realize its own freedom and ability to engage in rational self-determination.

In this same way, thinkers of this age adapted Kant's ideas about morality and the potential to instill it as a rational impulse in children. The idea of the categorical imperative and Kat's critical philosophy informed thinkers of both an idealist and humanist bent. It was not only for idealists, but for the entire younger generation that Kant defined the problems of morality, and provided the possibility for establishing an effective moral education.[110] Humboldt adopted Kant's idea about the categorical imperative as the best way to formulate a system in which all men could live and proceed to pursue their own separate interests. He wrote, "The highest ideal, therefore, of the co-existence of human beings seems to me to consist in a union in which each strives to develop himself from his

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[108] Kant, *On Education,* 21.
[109] Ibid, 84.
[110] David Sorkin, "Wilhelm von Humboldt: The Theory and Practice of Self-Formation (Bildung), 1791-1810," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44, no. 1 (Jan., 1983): 55-73, 68.

inmost nature, and for his own sake."[111] And yet, Humboldt and Schleiermacher were unable to concede that the categorical imperative could successfully define morality for an infinite number of individuals. Both humanists and idealists agreed that Kant's critical philosophy offered a way in which a moral education could be built, even if the humanists were not convinced that the categorical imperative could serve as the dictator of moral behavior. What was more important was that Kant found a way to re-introduce free will to the conversation, and by extension was able to present the possibility for a moral education that could be more effective than that handed down by the Church for centuries prior.

National Education

On the topic of national education, an obvious split appears between the humanist and idealist thinkers. Humboldt, along with Schleiermacher, believed that the proper role of education was "not to nationalize man, but rather to humanize the state."[112] Humboldt was especially concerned with what a nationalized, unified program would do to the humans that comprised it. The humanists feared that nationalizing the education system would result in a high level of conformity of opinion and aspiration, making it increasingly difficult for man to seek out his true vocation. Although he did not desire a national education program, Humboldt admitted that the university needed the state to act in an administrative capacity. He simply desired its involvement to be as limited as possible. He wrote, "The state must principally not demand anything from the university which would serve its purposes directly, but it should cherish the conviction that if the universities accomplish their ultimate aims, they will thereby also serve its purposes..."[113] On the other side of this debate were the idealists, who argued for the education of the intellectual elite to take place within a central German university which would provide them with a unified national outlook, which was in turn the first step towards creating a unified German nation.

Although Fichte is well remembered during this period for promoting nationalism through education, he was far from the first thinker of his age to consider the possibilities

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[111] Sorkin, "Wilhelm von Humboldt: The Theory and Practice of Self-Formation, 68.
[112] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 10.
[113] Ibid, 16-17.

of a national education program. The Middle Ages in Europe saw the hardening of ecclesiastical controls on education, and one of the major problems that Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers dealt with was shifting the popular understanding of the purpose of higher education. Prior to the turn of the nineteenth century, advanced education had two primary purposes—to create priests and government officials. However, Rousseau, and Herder recognized that education had the potential to be more than a vehicle for religion or government—it could bring about the strengthening of a nation. Both Herder and Rousseau preceded Fichte with this idea, and both thinkers treated the idea in disparate manners that align with their respective philosophies and national loyalties.

J.J. Rousseau (1712-1778) rejected the cosmopolitan education of the Enlightenment thinkers and replaced it with the idea of a patriotic education.[114] Instead of encouraging scholars to think about what connected all mankind, Rousseau argued for the strengthening of national bonds through the development of an educational program that would focus on the distinctly national qualities of a state.[115] In this way, Rousseau claimed that nationalism could be created.[116] He argued that people are products of their government and that state institutions are instruments of guidance for the people. This also ties into his idea of a general will—though the general will has been formed, he claims that people still need guidance to learn to perceive what is good and what is in their common interest as a group. Here education plays a major role, as he understood education to be capable of elevating the individual to the level of the national collective.[117] Rousseau also used this argument to campaign for national public education to replace home schooling.[118]

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[114] Rousseau appears as an outsider due to his French origins and Swiss allegiance, but he was an important companion to this group largely because his work served as the counterpoint to many influential German academics such as Kant and Herder. Additionally, Rousseau's writings on education had a resounding influence for a number of years in Germany, whose rulers, up until the late eighteenth century, were convinced that an adaptation of the French model of intellectual life was highly desirable. See Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 6.

[115] Susanne Wiborg, "Political and Cultural Nationalism in Education. the Ideas of Rousseau and Herder Concerning National Education," *Comparative Education* 36, no. 2 (2000): 235-243, 237.

[116] Ibid, 237.

[117] Ibid, 238.

[118] Ibid, 238.

While J.G. Herder (1744-1803) recognized that he shared much in common with Rousseau, particularly their mutual disavowal of the cosmopolitan education of the Enlightenment, he also formulated his ideas about cultural nationalism as a counterpoint to Rousseau's political nationalism.[119] Herder disagreed with Rousseau that nationalism could be created, but nonetheless argued for education's role in bringing it about. He contended that the purpose of such an education was to develop the extant national sentiments in individuals, as opposed to creating them from nothing.[120] Part of the opposition created between Herder and Rousseau revolves around their respective understandings of nature; for Rousseau, nature has been replaced by layers of society that obscures what is truly natural. Therefore, in Rousseau's view, society was in need of renewal. For Herder, society had not developed perversely and nature could still be seen in society through language.[121] Herder regarded language as more than simple communication or imitation, but rather as an expression of nature. In terms of political theory, Herder's reworking of the conventional understanding of nature had large ramifications. Rather than defining the nation as Rousseau did—the unity of a people under a political sovereign—Herder's understanding of nature altered the traditional definition of nation. Instead of delimiting the nation based upon a common sovereign, Herder claimed that political legitimacy was derived from a shared cultural history that is rooted first and foremost in a common tongue.[122] Herder fortified his argument by contending, "neither blood and soil, nor conquest and political fiat can engender that unique consciousness which alone sustains the existence and continuity of a social entity. Even if the state perishes, the nation remains intact provided it maintains its distinctive linguistic traditions."[123]

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[119] Herder, like Rousseau and Kant, never lived to see the establishment of the University of Berlin and consequently had no direct role in the debates surrounding its foundation. However, a few important ideas promoted by J.G. Herder decades earlier, such as the idea of nation as a cultural entity and the importance of the inward aspects of sociopolitical cohesion resonated with the spiritual fathers of the University—in particular Schleiermacher and Fichte. See Wiborg, "Political and Cultural Nationalism in Education. the Ideas of Rousseau and Herder Concerning National Education," 235. See also Hans Kohn, "The Eve of German Nationalism (1789-1812)," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, no. 2 (April 1951): 256-84, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2707517., 261.

[120] Wiborg, "Political and Cultural Nationalism in Education. the Ideas of Rousseau and Herder Concerning National Education," 239.

[121] Ibid, 239.

[122] Ibid, 240.

[123] Ibid, 240.

As with Rousseau, education played a large part in Herder's vision for the perfection of mankind, but for Herder, education played a slightly different role. Due to Herder's understanding that national sentiments already exist within people, it became the object of education to bring it out. In contrast, Rousseau argued for the creation of patriotism through education. Additionally for Herder, education had a dual purpose. The first was the cultivation of national leaders who, through the proliferation of education, would be able to overcome the need for political leaders. Education's second purpose was as a vehicle for the transmission of the cultural history of a people so as to preserve historical consciousness in society.[124] In practice, Herder wanted to develop a school in which students would be taught about their own past in their own language so as to come to understand what it was to be "German." Though Herder and Rousseau trod separate paths for much of their educational theory, both of these thinkers pioneered the idea of using education for national purposes, albeit in very different ways. While Rousseau viewed education as a means to create patriots, Herder saw it as a means of cultivating the extant patriotic sentiments within people.

Conclusion

Although there was agreement among intellectuals that something needed to be done about the future of German higher education, there was nothing near a consensus about the appropriate path to take. And while the outcome of whose theories were implemented and whose ideas were overlooked was seemingly influenced by a few practical developments, there is still much that can be taken away from these conversations.[125] The high value placed on education in German society is indisputable; this conviction can be seen in the attempts made by philosophers to produce doctrines of education while Napoleon ravaged their homeland. It is clear that reform of the education system was understood to be the best way to improve society and its institutions. Though there were people who argued in favor of protecting the status quo in regards to Berlin's educational institutions, none of these influential thinkers were among them. To the spiritual fathers of the new university,

[124] Wiborg, "Political and Cultural Nationalism in Education. the Ideas of Rousseau and Herder Concerning National Education," 240.
[125] See Beyme/Humboldt controversy, introduction.

it was evident that the absence of a university was never a real possibility, but the real questions were what type of university it should be, and upon what principles it should be founded. The idealists argued for a more elitist style of institution organized hierarchically, with the hope that the gifted would rise to the top and ultimately affect political and societal change. In contrast, the humanists offered a more inclusive system in which all men would be encouraged to pursue their own vocations and individual self-development. Within such broad categories, existed numerous iterations of a particular idea, and the above reconstruction of the historical debates surrounding the foundation of the new university were meant to serve as a platform and background upon which Fichte's theory of education can be presented and understood.

Chapter Two: Fichte's Contribution

While Fichte put forth a number of different documents with reference to his thoughts on education, there are two primary documents that offer a clear picture of his theory of university education, and the potential for the University of Berlin in particular. The first of these documents is his *Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin*.[126] It was written in 1807 at the behest of then-Minister of Instruction Beyme. This request was part of new reform program that was intended to aid Prussia in recovering from its losses at the hands of the French, and the new policy was intended to address the numerous social ills caused by Napoleon's imperial agenda.[127] Relative to the other documents produced for this same purpose, Fichte's scheme went above and beyond. In it, he considered not only a proposal for a new university, but he also provided a critique of the traditional university system and advocated for its thorough revitalization, claiming sterility and unviability. Fichte envisioned an entirely new style of university, based around a single philosophical system, which produced critical thinkers and not simply professionals in a particular field. Fichte's *Deduced Scheme* offers extraordinary depth for a document of this kind, and is arguably the best articulation for a new university that was produced during this debate.

Yet, another of Fichte's works in which he laments the state of the German education system while simultaneously calling for its regeneration has commanded a greater historical presence. Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* were delivered in Berlin to large audiences in 1807 and 1808. In the two years prior, Napoleon had conquered and humiliated Prussia, resulting in a treaty in which Prussia was forced to pay large sums of money to France and reduce its standing army.[128] When Fichte returned to Berlin after fleeing during the French invasion, he took it upon himself to arouse the fight in his fellow men. These fourteen speeches are a continuation of Fichte's philosophical works,

[126] J. G. Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," in *The Educational Theory of J. G. Fichte,* 170.
[127] Alexander Schmidt, "Bildung and the Reform of German Higher Education," in *Ideas of Education: Philosophy and Politics from Plato to Dewey*, ed. Christopher Brooke, trans. Elizabeth Frazer (Routledge, 2013),168.
[128] J.G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation. Translated by R.f. Jones and G.h. Turnbull* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1922), xix.

while they simultaneously aim to inspire political action.[129] This was Fichte's opportunity to engage in the political realm and to realize his philosophy of action in a significant way. However, his audience was not always willing to fight for his ideas with the same fervor that he presented them. The majority of the German population of this time period was Protestant and in spite of the recent spread of Enlightenment-style thought through the German states, which provided a more secular and rational idea of contemporary life, their worldview was still heavily influenced by a Lutheran ethic. Hans Kohn adds that "The masses were bound by traditional obedience; the educated classes confined themselves to dreams in the free realm of the mind; both desired peace above all."[130] According to Kohn, the German people were a docile group, desiring neither the freedom nor equality that caused such strong disturbances in France a decade earlier. This orderly behavior was encouraged by the political forces of the day, some of which even forbade the discussion of politics in pubs and inns.[131] Additionally, the lower classes were concerned primarily with their own day-to-day existence, with their horizons consisting of hard work and occasional diversion from their simple lives. That is to say that the majority of people did not give political life a second thought; such activities were left to the educated elite.

Among the educated classes there was also a reticence to effect any radical political changes; rather, it was the slow, incremental change, like that provided by education that the German public preferred. Kohn argues that even those who supported the French Revolution were not convinced that a similar result was desirable in Germany, and that "the few poets and writers who began to sound a patriotic note were extremely rare; they made no impression."[132] A little less than a decade before Fichte's *Addresses*, Herder tried to rouse the sleeping beast to little avail, saying "Germany are you slumbering on? ...Do none of your ancestors, does not your own heart, does not your language mean anything to you? …Who does not protect himself, does he deserve liberty?"[133] According to Kohn, most

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[129] Tom Rockmore, "Fichte, Heidegger and the Nazis," in Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore, eds., *Rights, Bodies, and Recognition: New Essays On Fichte's Foundations of Natural Right* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub Co, 2006), 227.
[130] Hans Kohn, "The Eve of German Nationalism (1789-1812)", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, no. 2 (April 1951): 256-84, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2707517.
[131] Ibid, footnote, 259-260.
[132] Ibid, 260.
[133] Ibid, 261.

intellectuals either served a local prince or were possessed of a decidedly cosmopolitan, non-political outlook.[134] Thus German patriotism consisted of a small section of the educated elite, but Kohn argues that even among the more patriotic thinkers, the centralized State was regarded as a straightjacket to liberty.

Although the rhetoric of Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* has been misappropriated during the course of the past century, nonetheless, it is important to note the nationalistic tone that characterized his *Addresses.* In them, he calls unabashedly for the unification of Germany, imploring all German people to unite in order to form the "empire of spirit and reason" not only for themselves and their progeny, but for humanity in general.[135] In reference to education, Fichte linked the present state of the education system to the corruption and immorality of the German people, and he claimed that as a result of the weakening character of the age, French occupiers were able to conquer the hallowed German lands.[136] However, Fichte also contended that it is a useless task to place blame on a single individual or institution; he relegated said blame universally, to the spirit of the age. From there, he sought for a possible antidote to help the German people escape the current state of affairs. He considered a number of possibilities, including resistance to French forces, but rejected it on the grounds that the German people failed once when they were in complete control of their own forces; to try again would be suicide. He also considered the possibility of allowing the French to restructure the German states as they had restructured France. This too seemed to be an untenable solution as it would indicate a cowardice that Fichte considered to be completely at odds with the character of the German people.[137] Therefore, Fichte came to the conclusion that the only way to overcome the situation was to improve the morality of the citizenry through education. In education, Fichte believed there to be the possibility of regeneration, but he found the existing German system incapable of accomplishing such a monumental task.

The Relationship between the University and State

[134] Kohn, "The Eve of German Nationalism," 265.
[135] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 269.
[136] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 2. cf G.H. Turnbull. *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte*, 32.
[137] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation.* 4.

To better understand Fichte's view of the state's role in the university system, it is valuable to understand how he envisions the university relative to the state and to the other levels in the German education system. While Fichte's thoughts on the relationship of the university to the state changed over the course of a decade, his final formulation finds the two in close connection with one another, as they both serve the ultimate purpose of educating humanity in such a way that the individual is capable of conducting himself in accordance with the laws of reason.[138] In its earliest formulation, Fichte envisioned the state as a loose association formed by men acting voluntarily to limit their own freedom in exchange for certain protections. Nearly a decade later, in *The Closed Commercial State*, Fichte adjusts his formulation of the role of the state, emphasizing that it should also aim to provide all men with work and to organize society in such a way that man is never faced with idleness or poverty. In his final and strongest formulation of the state, which comes in his works such as *Addresses to the German Nation,* he claims that the aims of the state are synonymous with the goals of human development; therefore, in all cases, it is the responsibility of the state to perfect humanity.[139] As a part of this strong state formulation, education plays a central role. Therefore, it is Fichte's contention that university education on a large scale is the most logical solution, because the two institutions are natural allies working towards a common goal. The state, in his estimation, should promote the welfare of its members through providing equal access to educational and cultural activities, while also providing men with complete equality of rights. While some might find Fichte's vision of state to be overly intrusive in the lives of individuals, Fichte understands the state to be the institution most capable of creating a perfect society. Although the realm of morality cannot be touched by the state, it can remove the biggest obstacles to morality, and educating man is Fichte's idea of how to impose morality upon society. This is why Fichte argued that the aim of government was to become superfluous; when humanity is educated correctly, man is no longer in need of lawful restraint because rationality will dictate it for him.[140] However, at such an early stage of state development, Fichte advocates for the state

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[138] For more on this topic, see G.H. Turnbull, "The Changes in Fichte's Attitude Toward State Intervention in Education," *International Journal of Ethics* 47, no. 2 (January 1937): 234-43.
[139] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 4.
[140] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 189.

to provide national education as means of developing an educated society. In terms of the division of labor among institutions, Fichte envisions a close relationship between the university and its lower counterparts. Thus he assigns each specific functions: to the lower institutions such as secondary schools, he declares their task to be that of developing the understanding and memory in order to prepare it for the critical scientific methods of the university. The university's function is to develop the scientific understanding in such a way as to prepare the individual to wield his understanding as judgment over the outside world. The aim of the university is not simply to build up knowledge in the student, but to make him capable of using it.[141] Therefore, the improvement of both systems is necessary to achieve his desired end result.

Like the other spiritual fathers of the university, Fichte understood that the current trajectory was an untenable one; however, he had a particular idea in mind when he called for the overthrow of the old, provincial system. In line with his strong state formulation, Fichte was convinced that the state should implement a single central university in which to educate the nation's intellectual elite. His reasons for this were threefold. First, Fichte understood the current system of "provincial Universities" to be a clear paradox, because "the University removes the particular, and that a State should by right have but one University."[142] He claimed that it would be in the best interest of the state to operate from a centralized body because it would provide the elite of the nation with a unified outlook, which was for practical purposes, impossible under the older provincial system. The second reason he gives is closely tied to the first: namely, that the extant university system failed to imbue a sense of nationalism in its students. Fichte argued that this could be remedied by a single state university because it would force students to leave their homes and comforts in search of enlightenment. His strong feelings on this topic are traceable back to his conception of the ideal learning environment. Fichte argued that early childhood education should be had away from one's parents, but Fichte considered the same to be true of university education. He claimed that "to have school and university very near home, and to continue to grow up stupid in the district in which one has grown up stupid and senseless and to spend one's life there, is first and foremost in our opinion

[141] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 174.
[142] Ibid, 232.

degrading to man."[143] He continued the argument by positing that the man of science is one who needs to be able to transcend his own time and place, and therefore must have seen more of the world than that in which he was raised. His proposal was a closure of all other universities within Prussia, so that students might be forced to courageously leave their birth homes to pursue science and after university, be spread in all directions to pursue a particular vocation. The final reason Fichte gave for supporting a single German university is derived from his ideas about how to instill the spirit of scientific inquiry among the student body. He argued that "science and philosophy admitted of but one unified *Geist*," only one method of rational inquiry, and that it would be simplest for the state to oversee the cultivation of that spirit in one location.[144] In theory, a single localized body would be best equipped to prevent the perversion this spirit of inquiry to which Fichte referred.

Fichte notes that the state has always used the university system as a means to develop a class of considerable consequence to it and he planned for the continuation of this time-honored tradition.[145] Fichte intended the state to make use of one central university, thereby nullifying any regional jealousies and competition. He argued that this would also benefit the university; not only will the best and brightest finally be brought together, but it demands that students venture outside their hometown and essentially forces them to develop a sense of cosmopolitism, which Fichte considered very important for the scholar.[146] Ultimately, Fichte hoped that bringing together the strongest students would inspire "mutual stimulation," and after university, graduates would spread far and wide "each to the place into which he fits, not where he was born, so that in this nobler class at least a generation of men arises who are nothing but citizens and who are at home in every part of the State."[147] Fichte considered the plan to develop one university to be beneficial to both institutions.

What is more, Fichte intended for the development of the single state university to serve the further purpose of an experiment in politics.. Consider the following:

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[143] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 231.
[144] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 51.
[145] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 189.
[146] Ibid, 232. "No one who has grown up under such limitations has ever become a clever man or a far-seeing statesman."
[147] Ibid, 232.

> Our Academy, considered in and for itself, shows in the realization indicated by us the picture of a perfect State; honest interaction of the different powers which are welded together to organic unity and completeness for the promotion of a common purpose. In it the real statesman sees ever present and existing that from which he endeavors to give his material to, and accustoms to it his eye, which is henceforward to be satisfied by nothing else.[148]

Additionally, he saw in the university the ability to model the relations between states in the international system, as exemplified by the different scientific bodies that exist within the university itself. "The same Academy shows, in its union with the other scientific bodies that are outside it, the picture of the perfectly correct relationship of States. All, remaining otherwise in themselves alone, closed and independent, strive with all their might for the same prize, the promotion of science and of scientific art."[149] When the goal is a shared one, Fichte contended that similar bodies would find it in their best interest to work together, just as he hoped the state and university would capitalize on their common interests to continually mold people in such a way that they serve the best interests of the state, university and German society at large.

In his *Deduced Scheme* for the University of Berlin, it appeared as though Fichte intended to use the state in order to help fund and administer his plan for universal national education; however, in a series of lectures delivered shortly before his death, it becomes clear that not only is Fichte using the state to support the university but the university to support the state.[150] He intended to use reorganization of the university to affect the establishment of his ideal type of society in a very specific way. It seemed that in his earlier writings he was focusing on the moral renewal of the German people through education—a more general renaissance than a methodical plan, but in final estimation, it appears Fichte had hoped that the two systems would support and strengthen each other, growing together to form a more cosmopolitan and enlightened German society.

The Inner Organization of the University

[148] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 258.
[149] Ibid, 258.
[150] The lectures were entitled "The Theory of the State; or the relationship of the Primitive State to the Kingdom of Reason."

In large part, Fichte's stance on philosophy's role within the university system is a reiteration of Kant's position in *The Strife of the Faculties*—namely that philosophy is the one discipline that has the right to the rational critique of all other principles within the various branches of education.[151] Fichte, following Kant, argued that the tradition within the older faculties (medicine, law, and theology) of teaching to a practical end had eroded the progress of rational scientific inquiry, and that the only solution was a complete overhaul of the extant system. The new system would be organized by the philosophical faculty as it was the only one capable of disinterested inquiry—in other words, philosophy was the best discipline for the task because it was not tied to any tradition or external influence. Installing philosophy as the organizing principle of the university would also serve to minimize the potentially harmful effects of the state's role in financing the university. The faculty of philosophy alone could stand up to the state as it relied least upon outside opinion, prior experience, and convention.

Like Kant, Fichte argued for philosophy to be the central organizing principle of the university, but he took it a step further by contending that the only way to successfully accomplish this idea was to have one philosopher at the center. He wrote,

> When the institution begins, this philosophical artist must be a single person and no one else will have any influence on the pupil's development in philosophizing. He who might object to this that, I order to guard youths from partiality and blind faith in one teacher, there must be a variety of views and systems and therefore of teachers in an institution for higher education, would thereby show that he has no idea either of philosophy in general, or of philosophizing as an art.[152]

Fichte continues by stating that he has no particular candidate in mind, but that the appropriate person for the job should have an impeccably thorough knowledge of his subject matter and must be in possession of a system, for without this, Fichte claims said man will not have "finished philosophizing, would never have practised the whole art of philosophizing and would therefore be quite incapable of penetrating with consciousness

[151] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 48.
[152] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 192-193.

this art in all its extent and of communicating it to others…"[153] The aim of placing one man with one system at the center is intricately connected to the way in which philosophy would be taught throughout the university.

Philosophy serves a further purpose in organizing the other faculties of the university by stripping away the old and conventional practices and revising each discipline by infusing systematic, rational and scientific inquiry. Fichte has specific prescriptions for each of the three major faculties, all of which, he argues, need to be humbled and brought to recognize their natural place as a lower faculty within the university setting.[154] Previously, the law faculty was used to train judges and legislators of the next generation. Fichte intends to overthrow this focus by revolutionizing the faculty of law by revitalizing its very base. The philosophical faculty would inform the law faculty of a more thorough concept of right throughout history. For it is only through philosophizing that Fichte argues it is possible to see the entire "history of the development and formation of the conception of right among men."[155] This history would in turn be applied by judges and legislators to carry out their practical duties. However, he notes again, that the practical application of this History lays outside the scope of this university. Here the law faculty teaches the history of the conception of right as established by the philosophical faculty. Fichte envisions the instruction of medical science to be established in the same vein as jurisprudence, with students encouraged to study the natural sciences as opposed to the simple application of a collection of medical practices. Theology too needed to undergo a serious revitalization. Fichte stated that if the faculty of theology were to be admitted to the university it would have to give up its claim to revealed truth, for otherwise the very goals of the university would be subverted. It would be impossible to infuse the spirit of scientific inquiry in students if one of the University's faculties was still claiming access to revealed truth. Fichte understood that the aims of theology were incongruent with that of a scientific academy, and so to retain the faculty without maligning the inner unity of the university, Fichte recommended that theology be taught as a "history of the

[153] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin,"193.
[154] Ibid, 200.
[155] Ibid, 193.

development of religious ideas among men."[156] The scope of this new focus was intended to be vast—not simply a history of protestant theology but a thorough survey of the development of religious conceptions—including those of the so-called pagan religions. Fichte envisioned the study of theology to become an instructive endeavor and not simply the remnant of a previously critical faculty. He even hoped that in time, "we shall find it just as instructive and delightful to read Isaiah as Aeschylus, and John as Plato."[157]

Though many of the spiritual fathers of the university aimed to overthrow the older professional training for a broad scientific education, Fichte arguably took this idea more seriously. As his plan unfolds, it becomes increasingly obvious that he intends to make a firm break with the practical training institutions that littered the educational grid. That is not to say that practical training had no place in society, but rather that Fichte left no place for it within the university. If his plan succeeded, he aimed to eliminate any coursework that was meant to prepare a student for a specific profession—a complete reversal of the educational model coming out of the Enlightenment which contended that higher education should only include that which was relevant to experience. Fichte turned this idea on its head, arguing that such a focus had only served to retard the growth of science. In order for science to blossom, mechanical learning must be overthrown for the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. In his writings, it is clear Fichte felt that it was below the dignity of the university to include technical training, but additionally he feared that including it would only muddy the university's mission and confuse the student by including some practical courses alongside a more general theoretical survey of the faculties.

The Student

As indicated above, Fichte determined it more important to alter how people learned as opposed to what they learned. He was convinced that before a student entered a classroom, it was crucial for said student to understand the value of this type of education and the purpose of its requisite methods. He hoped that this would circumvent any correlating

[156] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 49.
[157] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 205.

problems and would allow the student to focus his efforts at fully understanding the material in order to develop his critical thinking capacities. To bring about these results, Fichte had a specific plan in mind. A student's first year would be spent in introductory courses which he named "encyclopedias." As the name suggests, such a class was meant to provide a comprehensive overview of a specific branch of knowledge. Additionally, he intended for students to take and pass all encyclopedic courses, not just those related to the student's field of interest. This served a dual purpose. For one, it was a certain guard against the specialization that characterized professional schools. It also served to inform students that the pursuit of scientific knowledge was a characteristic of all the disciplines, and that the disciplines were closely connected to one another based upon this shared pursuit. Of course, this broad theoretical base allowed students to develop and pursue their own interests outside of any pre-conceived ideas that they brought with them to the university. After a student passed the encyclopedic courses, he was allowed to join the bulk of the student body.

Fichte envisioned the student body divided into two primary groups—the "Regulars" and "Confederates." The two groups were conceptually distinct. The "Regulars" occupied an elite position—essentially, a fraternity of serious students who had successfully passed their novice year of encyclopedic learning. Passing the first year meant that a novice gained admission to the "Regulars," at which time, he would be given his uniform and be given the additional responsibilities required of the fraternal organization. Fichte's writings on the "Regulars" depict an elite group who are gifted with the responsibility of a higher education and in return, they work as a group to elevate the status of the whole. He also notes that the state and the police force will in time regard the regulars "as a family whole, which answers as such for its members…If wrong is done by its members the whole is to be held responsible and punished…"[158] The Confederates, on the other hand, have no such affiliation. By contrast Fichte writes, "Since the Confederates are neither proper members of our institution nor really resident citizens, they are under the general police who must, without any assistance from the institution and entirely on their own responsibility, make the arrangements whereby the requisite guarantee in regard to

[158] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 215.

these strangers is afforded to the rest of the citizens."[159] The Confederates have less direct ties to the university and are consequently to be regarded as individuals who exist outside the fraternal bonds of the Regulars. While the Regulars are consciously cultivated from the novice group, it is not outside the realm of possibility for a Confederate to join the ranks of the Regulars, but it requires giving up one's individual identity for that of the whole, not to mention passing all the introductory encyclopedic courses. Fichte writes, "In a sense the latter grow wild, as in a wood; the former are carefully cultivated tress in a nursery, which must always exist and from which many noble seeds will fly even to the wood. The former are Regulars…the latter are Irregulars, mere Companions and Confederates."[160]

After the novice year, students are tracked into the Confederates or Regulars based upon an essay. Fichte here refers again to the singular philosophy teacher, designed to judge and rule over the whole and whose responsibility it is to determine a student's potential for philosophical and scientific thought based on an entry essay exam. However, Fichte also included one teacher who instructed the novices in an encyclopedic class to judge the content of the student's essay. If the student successfully passed in the eyes of both teachers, the novice would gain entrance to the College of Regulars. If, however, just one rejects the essay, it remains rejected and said student becomes a Confederate. Fichte states that this collaboration is intricately connected to the very nature of the university he set out to create; namely, a philosophical and scientific institution grounded in concrete historical fact so as to protect against an "*a priori* reverie instead of a thorough scholarship in empirical subjects."[161] However, this was only the first step in Fichte's design. The second allows for an exercise of will. The essay exam is given in order to determine who is cut out for the rigor of the scientific education. From there though, Fichte contends that it is up to the admitted student whether or not he desires to pursue it by coming together to form the "nucleus of a *learning part,* in the higher and better sense, of our scientific academy."[162] He admits that the preparation of the entrance essay does seem to speak to the desire to join the College of Regulars, but he acknowledges that the student nonetheless

[159] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 212.
[160] Ibid, 209.
[161] Ibid, 208.
[162] Ibid, 208.

has the ultimate veto power in regards to his educational destiny. However, in order to proceed with the plan, Fichte presumes that all who should join will do so.

This divide between the Regulars and Confederates served still a further purpose. Upon admission to the College of Regulars, students make their status known by wearing a uniform so that their superiority is outwardly visible. He argued that his arrangement would promote the moral training of students by instilling in them a love of honor. "When his love of honour is developed the thought that his dress marks him out, and that this dress should not be dragged about the streets in idleness or be seen in low places and among crowds but, as indicating a member of the Society, should appear only in honourable house, will help his external training."[163] Fichte also hoped that this would help prevent the debauchery that was known to characterize universities because it would be immediately obvious whether or not a Regular was responsible. It is also worth mentioning that Fichte feared that the Confederates stood a real chance of appearing to hold a loftier position due to their broader range of freedoms; as a result, Fichte desired to dress the Regulars in uniforms so as increase their fraternal bond, making the Confederates seem like the outsiders.

Fichte's reasoning in regards to this division of the student body is not self-evident. Certainly, the Regulars appear to be the core of the student body, and the only people elitist, idealist thinkers like himself would regard as necessary for a university. However, Fichte made an effort to include an unincorporated sector of the student body, who may at any time choose to try and join the College of Regulars, but who are conceptually distinct because they exist outside of any official authority and have no claim to the favors, "which the police and the University have given them, as only a free gift, which can be taken from them again."[164] The Confederates form an institution of private freedom wherein they are free to do as they please just as long as they are cognizant of the fact that the university has a right to revoke said privileges whenever it deems necessary. The College of Regulars appears to be in a symbiotic relationship with the state and university, in which the latter provide a level of comfort and security to its more promising students in exchange for developing new members for the academy and state offices.

[163] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 211.
[164] Ibid, 217.

The Professoriate

In the initial pages of Fichte's plan for the new university, he argues that universities should not exist if they only teach the content of books. If that was all that a university education consisted of, students would be better off accessing those books directly rather than having it filtered through another person. Therefore, Fichte argued for the transformation of the professoriate through teaching not simply a collection of human knowledge but through extending human understanding. Teaching required knowledge of historical truths along with the ability to think critically about the applicable criticisms of said ideas. But it is not enough for the professor to possess this ability alone—he must be able to encourage his students to engage their minds in the same way through seminars and exams. Fichte illustrates this idea with the example of an examination in a fictional class on Roman law. The professor could give an oral examination in which he provides an imaginary case and requests that the student derive a law from it that would be in congruence with the totality of Roman law. This, according to Fichte, would separate those students who grasped the spirit and idea of Roman law and those who had simply studied and remembered isolated facts. As for day to day operations, Fichte preferred the idea of seminars to lectures, as the former would allow for the active engagement of the student as well as the professor. He even suggested the re-introduction of the Socratic method as an effective way to bring about a continuous student-teacher dialogue.[165] He argued, "Not only the teacher but also the pupil must continually express himself and communicate his thoughts, so that their mutual relationship may become a continuous conversation in which each statement by the teacher shall be the answer to some question asked by the pupil…In this manner the teacher addresses not someone quite unknown, but one who continually reveals himself until the teacher completely penetrates his mind."[166]

Fichte admitted the difficulty of realizing such a lofty goal, and therefore he suggested a plan for evaluating and hiring new professors. He planned to regularly hold a professors' seminar in which teachers would essentially show off the breadth of their

[165] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 184.
[166] Ibid, 184.

knowledge and teaching abilities. He intended this seminar to provide a controlled training area where the head of the university could ensure that the professors hired were of high quality, and were capable of instilling a spirit of scientific inquiry among students.[167] Training professors was a central idea of Fichte's educational works; he considered it exceptionally problematic that preachers and teachers of lower levels were all educated in how to do their jobs and yet the old system gave no instruction whatsoever.[168] Therefore, Fichte proposed an overhaul of the teaching body in much the same way as he proposed an overhaul of the learning body. He acknowledged and critiqued the previous mode of teacher selection, saying, "Hitherto in Universities doctors and extraordinary professors have been allowed to experiment in lecturing and to wait for an audience to collect round them."[169] While he admits that some professors will have to be grandfathered in under previous modes of selection, he intends to create a better system for the future. Those professors whose teaching prowess has been proven secure will be allowed to teach encyclopedic courses to the Regulars and to those Novices trying to become Regulars, and that group of teachers will be classified under the familiar category of Ordinary professor. However, their counterparts—the Extraordinary professors—will be tested rigorously under Fichte's scheme. The Extraordinary professors are given the chance to "experiment" on the Confederates, and in so doing, will be judged not only by fellow professors but by the best of the Regulars as well. Fichte writes, "Yet not only should Regulars, and indeed the most skillful and able of these, be called upon by the encyclopedic teacher of the subject to attend the lectures of these [Extraordinary] professors, but he himself and other teachers should be empowered to attend them until they have obtained a definite idea of the knowledge and teaching ability of the man."[170] Judgment on the new professor's teaching ability is done in much the same way as students are judged on their abilities in order to gain entrance to the College of Regulars. Namely, the professor is judged both on empirical knowledge and philosophical ability. However, there is one considerable difference between the two systems of selection. For students, both judges (the judge of empirical knowledge and the judge of philosophical ability) needed to agree in order for the student

[167] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 186.
[168] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 203.
[169] Ibid, 217.
[170] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 217-18.

to gain access to the College of Regulars. A single "no" relegated the student to the Confederates. However, in regards to the judgment of new professors, Fichte argued that a single "yes" would become an overall yes. This is not because it is only necessary for a professor to possess one skill or the other, but because being appointed to a prominent position naturally entails some jealousy and trepidation, and he feared that the younger judges would be jealous of new talent and that the older judges would be fearful of innovation. So as a way to counterbalance the fact that new professors would be appointed by their peers, Fichte contended that only one vote in favor was necessary. "The result is that neither the one's fear of innovation nor the other's jealousy can hinder progress towards what is better, and an effective counter-balance is given to both things."[171]

In much the same way as he included the Confederates as an additional group to the College of Regulars, Fiche included the extraordinary professors as an outlying, but still included group within the whole of the Professoriate. Because the idea of a division between the extraordinary and ordinary professors predated Fichte and the University of Berlin, it is logical to conclude that this perhaps led to a comfort level with dividing students into groups much in the same manner as professors.

Moral Education

The idea of providing education for morality implies the belief that humans can and should be perfected. This belief pervaded the works of many of the biggest thinkers of this era. Fichte was also intrigued by the possibility that man could be educated to morality and expressed his plans for such an education in his Second Address.

> Now perchance someone might say, as indeed those who administer the present system of education almost without exception actually do say: " What more should one expect of any education than that it should point out what is right to the pupil and exhort him earnestly to it; whether he wishes to follow such exhortations is his own affair and, if he does not, his own fault; he has free will, which no education can take from him." Then, in order to define more clearly the new education which I propose, I should reply that that very recognition of, and reliance upon, free will in the pupil is the first mistake of

[171] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 218.

> the old system and the clear confession of its impotence and futility. For, by confessing that after all its most powerful efforts the will still remains free, that is, hesitating undecided between good and evil, it confesses that it neither is able, nor wishes, nor longs to fashion the will and (since the latter is the very root of man) man himself, and that it considers this altogether impossible. On the other hand, the new education must consist essentially in this, that it completely destroys freedom of will in the soil which it undertakes to cultivate, and produces on the contrary strict necessity in the decisions of the will, the opposite being impossible. Such a will can henceforth be relied on with confidence and certainty.[172]

Fichte claims that humans are comprised of the will and the understanding.[173] In Fichte's estimation, the current education system has failed on the first count because it has only trained a part of man. The old system presumed it could train men to act morally, and thus attempted to train the will. However, in spite of the goals of the old system, its proponents were still forced to admit that men have free will, which Fichte viewed as an admission of failure on the part of that education system. His new system, on the other hand, aims to present morality as the only viable option, thus negating the ability of free will to act in any way other than rationally.

In his Second Address, he continues the argument by pointing out that the current system, while aiming to produce morality, has failed utterly, because no matter how one educates a human being, free will, which is responsible for adherence to moral principles, still exists. Therefore, the aim of education should not be to force morality, because such an effort will certainly fail because of man's free will. But it should also not be modeled after the existing system's supplication for morality, because such a weak request has no real or lasting effect. Fichte's proposal, on the other hand, is stronger handed in producing morality. He argues for the removal of free will from the equation, and in its place, provide a situation that requires strict necessity, thereby inducing someone to morality. Therefore, Fichte does not intend to remove education's ultimate goal of producing morality, but rather to find a better way to accomplish the stated aim. He argues that humanity has striven to find a way to induce morality among people and all the systems up until now

[172] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 22.
[173] Ibid, 33.

have failed—angry sermons, threats of hell, excommunication, social exile. None of these methods succeeded in producing wide-spread morality. Fichte, on the other hand, believes that he has happened upon both the problem and solution and that it is the aim of education to bring about this situation.

His inquiry into the best way to go about producing this moral education continues in Addresses Nine and Ten, with a deeper examination into human nature. Fichte notes that the usual assumption about man is that man is selfish, and that this quality which is characteristic of human nature can only be overcome if education implants morality in man. Fichte argues that such an idea is founded upon a superficial understanding of human nature. He argues that "nothing can be created from nothing, and the development of a fundamental instinct, no matter to what extent, can never make it the opposite of itself."[174] He goes on to ask how education would be capable of implanting morality if it did not exist in people originally. He claims that because morality does exist prior to any education, the aim of moral education is therefore to seek out morality in its most primitive form in order to coax it out into the light of day.

Fichte's conclusion is that morality's most primitive form is the instinct for respect, and it is this instinct that gives shape to our beliefs about what is and is not moral behavior. In children it makes itself evident in the child's desire to gain the approval of a stern parent, to be respected by one whom the child is inspired for whom to have the highest level of respect. Fichte posits that the level of respect that the child receives in turn becomes the measure by which the child knows how far he should have respect for himself. This external locus of the self, he claims, is characteristic of childhood, and is therefore a crucial aspect of developing children to become perfect adults. Through the notion of respect a child learns to have esteem for others as well as esteem for his own self. This instinct for respect, Fichte posits, will grow into something very akin to Rousseau's *amour propre* and *amour de soi,* as the child needs both self-esteem and mutual recognition from peers to develop naturally. While Fichte, like Rousseau before him, approaches *amour propre* with hesitance, he ultimately finds that it is a necessary aspect of human existence and that if it

[174] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 172.

can be stimulated in the right way (i.e. in a rational way), it is a crucial component in the formation of an education that could lead to the redemption of humanity.

Ultimately, Fichte hoped that he, or later others, would be able to develop a moral education that stimulated a child's love for learning, and along the way, develop a child's understanding of moral matters in such a way that the child came to delight in what was moral and despise what was immoral. Fichte wrote, "Pleasure in the right and good for its own sake ought to be set, by means of the new education, in the place of the material hope or fear that has been employed hitherto; this pleasure, as the sole existing motive, ought to set all future life in motion; this is the essential feature of our proposal."[175] That the system needed a complete overhaul, Fichte was certain, but even in his final conclusions, his best and most confident answer sounded hopeful rather than sure that such a plan would succeed in finally capitalizing on the possibility of developing a moral education.

National Education

A crucial component of Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* is his plea for a universal national education. When considered as a whole, the *Addresses* represent Fichte's attempt to illuminate the path towards a rebirth of the German nation through education. He anticipates that the moral renewal of the German people will precipitate a new era in history—one where collective interest is valued above self-interest—and that this regeneration will in turn lead to independence of the German nation.

One of Fichte's primary criticisms of the extant system, namely that of education's limited scope, is remedied by his national program. He argues that the old education system played a major role in Germany's downfall. The upper classes were trained to develop a cosmopolitan outlook, meaning that their interest in German affairs extended only as far as their person, as opposed to developing any interest in the good of the nation. The lower classes consisted of an uneducated mass whose interest in national affairs also extended only as far as their own needs.[176] Thus Fichte regards one of the greatest sins of the day to be the egoism running rampant in education. He claimed that these false

[175] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 177.
[176] Turnbull, *The Educational Theory of J.G. Fichte*, 40.

principles only kept the individuals in the dark and prevented the German states from taking their rightful place on the world stage. But more specifically, in his Tenth Address, Fichte further defines the form of his universal national education.

Fichte's universal national program is an effort aimed at raising the level of the lower educational schools, so in a way it is disconnected from the university system with which Fichte was so concerned. But in reality, Fichte envisions the two as intricately tied together, because by raising the level of the whole, the level of the top will be elevated as well. While Fichte had elitist ideas about who should populate the university and who was fit to lead it, he had no doubt that allowing better educational access to all was a necessity for raising the level of the nation's scholars. For Fichte, the university was the top of the pyramid—its existence contingent upon a strong and sturdy foundation. National education needed to exist on the lower levels in order to insure that the best of the best reached the top. Allowing students to escape poverty and insecurity by providing them with an equal education at an early age would result in a change in their destiny from necessarily selfish economic survival to a more connected and national outlook. It is also only from a position of national education that the state can be certain that the best have risen to the top. If hard-working, intelligent people are never given the opportunity to escape the situation they were born into, the state is missing out on potentially valuable human capital. Fichte's national program aims to remedy this situation, and by extension, elevate the level of the university.

As implied by its name, Fichte's universal national education was aimed at educating not only budding scholars but workmen alike. In fact, Fichte admits that the majority of his universal program will aim at educating the working classes, although he does allow for differentiation between people entering the workforce and entering academia. Fichte's universal national education is two-pronged, in order to cater to the needs of both academics and non-academics. Fichte considered the education of the working man to be of the utmost importance. He admits two reasons for this. First, some form of education is required to make them good working men, but more importantly, he argued that education would supply men with much needed confidence in their own abilities, and that feeling of

personal independence would in turn condition man's moral independence.[177] Unlike a number of his contemporaries, Fichte placed considerable value on the education of all citizens, as he understood their advancement to be the key component to the moral regeneration of society. And what is more, educating all the nation's population allowed people to access their own talents, because as Fichte notes, "the class into which children were born makes no difference to their talents…"[178]

In constructing his universal national program, Fichte combined the logic of Rousseau and Herder in a unique way. To begin with, Fichte was seeking to find an answer as to how to best construct an educational program that would be capable of restoring and regenerating the moral fortitude of the German people. For Fichte, there is no question that it can be re-established and that it is only a matter of constructing the proper program in which to bring it about. Fichte shares with Herder the conception that nature can be seen in society and he argues that nature has not been covered up as Rousseau paints it. Rather, Fichte sees the possibility for the moral regeneration of society in children, where he claims man's nature can be seen. The basis for this claim is that children want to be good and it is only the passing years that corrupt man's childlike innocence—a very Rousseauian idea. However, it is important to note that Fichte understands nature to be seen in children, because it indicates that a regeneration of a people is a continual possibility. Fichte claims that a child's instincts to morality are what should serve him until that time that a rational judge has been developed in him.

> The new education ought to recognize this truth, but little known until now, and guide towards what is right the love that exists independent of education. Up to now, this simplicity and childlike faith of the young in the higher perfection of adults has been used, as a rule for their corruption. It was precisely their innocence and their natural faith in us that made it possible for us, before they could distinguish good from evil to implant in them, instead of the good that they inwardly wished, our own corruption, which they would have abhorred if they had been able to recognize it.[179]

[177] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 182.
[178] Ibid, 170.
[179] Ibid, 178.

Seemingly, the biggest obstacle that Fichte sees is the corruption of adults, who continue to pass on their corruption to their unsuspecting children. Fichte posits that if the child possessed natural instincts alongside the rationality of the adult, then the child would be immune to such corruption and be able to recognize it for what it really is. But as it actually stands, children are incapable of noticing this distinction and in turn, become corrupted adults themselves. His solution sounds distinctly Platonian as he advocates for removing children from the tutelage of their parents at a young age, much like Plato insisted upon in the *Republic.* While this idea was bound to be wildly unpopular, it would help to break the cycle of corruption identified by Fichte. In final estimation, Fichte's plan for universal national education appears to be closest to Herder's national education because Fichte understood there to be national sentiments already existing within man, simmering beneath the surface. As he put in the tenth address, "nothing can be created from nothing," and therefore it was up to the educators of the nation to unearth these dormant nationalistic feelings and harness them for the moral renewal of the German people.[180]

Conclusion

Fichte offered much to the higher education debate in his day, as he sought to not simply accept what came before him but to offer a new picture of university education. Compared to his contemporaries, Fichte envisioned a larger role for the state in bringing about universal education and ultimately moral renewal for the entire German nation. While some thinkers, such as Humboldt were fearful of what state financial backing would do to academic freedom, Fichte fully embraced the state as he understood the two entities to be working in concert for the betterment of German society. He also called for a central state university, an idea he hoped would improve the level of learning and teaching. While a singular location would be easier to monitor, it would also require students to leave their homes to pursue education, which Fichte hoped would imbue a sense of cosmopolitanism that the old system lacked. Also unique among the suggestions for university improvement was Fichte's division of students into Regulars and Confederates, as well as the insistence

[180] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 172.

upon teaching professors how to teach. He desired to raise education to the level of an art, and there was no aspect of the university that was immune to his ideas for improvement. From this basis, he felt confident in asserting that the arts taught at a university—namely learning and thinking—could be perfected to such a degree that would inevitably result in numerous original scientific discoveries.

Chapter Three: Seeking Fichte's Originality

The Relationship between the University and State

One of the primary problems that Fichte and his fellow academics sought to solve was the ideal extent of state involvement in academic life. While many of his colleagues were hesitant about including the state in the university any more than was absolutely necessary, Fichte welcomed the state with open arms. He sought not only financial support but a fuller integration of state and academic life. His rationale for the project was that the state and university exist pursuant of the same goal—the perfection of mankind. Therefore, Fichte found it logical that the two institutions should join forces at every turn in order to achieve this goal. While the logic of "two is greater than one" is hard to deny, many of Fichte's compatriots questioned his certainty in thinking that the state and university shared the same goals. Schleiermacher in particular warned that the state only seeks its own interest, and that it can never be relied upon to become subservient for such far-reaching ideas like the common good. Whether or not one agrees with Fichte, his reasoning on this topic is sound if the premise is proven secure. If the state is truly seeking to achieve the betterment of its people, then it would be a very logical companion to the university, which Fichte claims seeks the same thing.

As noted in the previous chapter, Fichte's ideas about the role of the state changed dramatically from his earliest work on political theory to his last. In its earliest formulation, Fichte upheld the individual as the final arbiter of his own fate in every instance, even if it meant anarchy for the state. In 1793, he argued that the French were justified in overthrowing the monarchy because it was the prerogative of the individual to change the state when necessary, and consider oneself unbound by the tacit agreement one lives under when the state begins to threaten individual security.[181] However, his formulation swung completely the opposite direction by the end of his career, a mere two decades later. In its final estimation, Fichte considered the state to be the highest power

[181] La Vopa, *The Self and The Calling of Philosophy,* 104.

available to mankind, and he seemed so set on its good intentions in fighting for the common good that he was willing to let the state into the lives of individuals to an unprecedented level.[182] Unlike his colleagues, Fichte was not wary of the growing power of the state and was not fearful of its encroachment in people's private lives. Instead, he was enthralled by the possibilities of what a strong state could accomplish, and in particular, what effects a burgeoning state would have on the nationalism of its people. At the time Fichte was writing, the modern state was still in its early stages, and people had a good deal to be fearful of as Napoleon was their only real life example. In the German states, the academic community in particular had adjusted to the relationship between the academy and the state under the Holy Roman Empire. In this decentralized format, academics had learned what to expect in terms of the amount of academic freedom allowed by the regional authority; at times, academic freedom flourished and at other times it was scaled back, but either way, the academy felt comforted by that fact that when their fortunes were down, they would inevitably turn back again, and that it was just a matter of time and the overturn of the existing ideas. However, the advent of the modern state promised, first and foremost, the unknown. The state represented uncharted territory, and as such, the institution had yet to establish boundary lines between the public and private sphere. Therefore, many thinkers eyed the state with hesitation, and acted to protect their current level of academic independence. They were not willing to turn over what they had gained for the possibility of ultimate academic freedom when betting pseudo-independence meant that complete censorship was still on the table.

Relative to Humboldt, Fichte's view of the role of state in the university has an even deeper theoretical divergence. Not only did Humboldt fear an encroachment of the state over the boundary line of academic freedom, but he feared the standardization of education that would most certainly occur if the state was put in charge of its administration. As Piche notes, Humboldt's views on education centered on the individual as a microcosm, and his ultimate concern was to sculpt the individual in such a way as to develop his faculties proportionately—to create the consummate well-rounded man.[183] With *bildung* as his ultimate goal, it follows that Humboldt would have been strongly against the idea of any

[182] Turnbull, "The Changes in Fichte's Attitude Toward State Intervention in Education," 234.
[183] Piche, "Fichte, Schleiermacher, and W. von Humboldt," 377.

education that would produce a group of homogenous people. He wrote, "Like causes produce like effects; and hence, in proportion as State interference increases, the agents to which it is applied come to resemble each other, as do all the results of their activity."[184] By contrast, Fichte sought to fulfill a greater goal—that of the moral regeneration of the German people—and he was willing to sacrifice the individual to accomplish it. In final estimation, Humboldt and Fichte represent polarities in this debate. While Fichte desired to harness the power of the state to bolster the power of the university, Humboldt feared the levelling of individuality that would take place if the state was put in charge of producing its own citizens.

The Inner Organization of the University

As noted in the previous chapter, philosophy as the organizing principle of the faculties was not an idea for which Fichte could claim originality. Kant had eloquently defended philosophy as the natural organizing principle of the university a decade earlier. Yet Fichte could count an original contribution in this topic area. Extending Kant's idea, Fichte considered how philosophy would be administered in the new university and he came to the conclusion that if the university were to seriously apply Kant's idea, it would need one man at the center—one man with his own philosophical system that could aid in the administration of the other faculties and the student body. He even went so far as to claim that that if one truly understands philosophy, one must understand that it is vital to have only one philosopher at the center.[185] There are obvious problems with this claim, not to mention the question about Fichte's intentions, as he was one of the few who could claim qualification for such a lofty position.

In regards to the selection of the correct person for the job, Fichte answered definitively in a series of lectures he delivered at the University of Berlin in 1813 entitled "The Theory of the State; Or the Relationship of the Primitive State to the Kingdom of Reason." In it he clarifies previous statements by saying that no one may declare himself sovereign over human understanding, but that this may only be discovered through an

[184] Piche, "Fichte, Schleiermacher, and W. von Humboldt," 379, footnote 17.
[185] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 193.

examination of the matter itself, i.e. the ruler over human understanding must also be able to produce that understanding in those people below him.[186] Fichte stressed that in order to identify whether the individual is actually aiding men in discovering objective knowledge, the experiment must be tried over and over again until it can be shown clearly that one man can lead others to objective knowledge. This leads, however, to the next question about Fichte's theory—if the one man is simply educating people to objective knowledge, why not select a group of these men to the lead the university? After all, in the logic utilized by Fichte for the role of the state in the university, two is better than one when the bodies in question seek the same goal. So why not a group of men all shown to be capable of bringing students to objective knowledge? Fichte answered that the point of selecting one to rule over all is so that the one can act as an umpire and so that controversy is never able to get a foothold within the university. He wrote, "He who might object to this that, in order to guard youths from partiality and blind faith in one teacher, there must be a variety of views and systems and therefore of teachers in an institution for higher education, would thereby show that he has no idea either of philosophy in general, or of philosophizing as an art."[187] He continued this argument by positing that the aim of the head philosopher is to stimulate systematic thought in students so that they will eventually arrive at the same conclusion which is equally accessible to all with the capacity for serious thought because of its objective characteristics. Problems arise, however, when contradictions emerge, because according to Fichte, assertions and contradictions lead to thesis, which in turn leads to the "narration of the result of…previously practiced active philosophizing," as opposed to practicing the art of philosophy.[188] Therefore, Fichte concluded that for the good of the university, controversy must be denied entrance, and the best way to assure this is to provide unity at the very highest point in the university system.

Fichte's claim that one person at the top would circumvent controversy that led away from active philosophizing is a unique position among other thinkers of this time period. Fichte could not shake his elitist proclivities which led him to believe in a natural

[186] Fichte, "The Theory of State," in *The Educational Theory of J. G. Fichte,* 266.
[187] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 192-193.
[188] Ibid, 193.

hierarchy of human abilities, and that where a best exists, the best should rule. This was not a new idea, but an ancient principle of ruling that Fichte was applying to education, and he readily admitted that the idea was not developed by him.[189] Plato, in *The Republic*, spoke of ages of bronze, iron, gold and silver, essentially positing that birth divides people naturally by ability and capacity, and that the good ruler is cognizant of this fact. Fichte re-asserts and defends Plato's theory, arguing that such a division is "pure fact", and "impenetrable to conception."[190] However, Fichte came to a somewhat alternate conclusion than Plato did in *The Republic*, because for Plato, the best ruler did not want to rule. Fichte failed to address this dissonance; perhaps he thought it unnecessary, because after all, the head of a university does appear to be a more natural place for a philosopher than as the leader of a state. Yet, in the corollary he admits that this new university mimics the proper organization of the state.[191] Still the biggest problem with this plan would likely arise with regime overturn, and Fichte did not offer a satisfactory conclusion in that regard.

The Student

Based upon Fichte's reputation as an elitist thinker, his plan for how to best address the learning body of the new university appears unique when placed in the greater context of his philosophical work. The idea involved the division of students into the College of Regulars and Confederates, where the former were admitted into a fraternal-like association with the state and university, while the latter were allowed to retain greater freedom over their daily choices but in return, were gifted with less protections. Not unlike his contemporaries, Fichte understood that the development of a new style of university would have resounding effects at every level, and that it would lead to myriad changes for all its students as well as its administrators. If Fichte's plan was to be implemented, he intended that students be made cognizant of the value of what they were learning and why it was being taught to them. He hoped to remedy the haphazard effects of the old university system by imbuing self-awareness. Fichte had a number of ideas that he

[189] Fichte, "The Theory of State," 269.
[190] Ibid, 269-70.
[191] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 258.

anticipated would have a direct effect upon stimulating a student's consciousness, such as encyclopedic courses for first years, where they would broaden their horizons and learn to see past their pre-conceived notions. Yet what stands out as original about Fichte's writing on the role of the student within the new university is his division of the student body into Regulars and Confederates.

In order to get at Fichte's intentions let us first ask, what caused the dilemma at all? For a number of decades leading up to the establishment of the University of Berlin, university life was famed for having a roughening quality upon the young men who attended it.[192] This roughhousing was not generally perceived to be injurious to the young men, but it was enough to raise questions about why a parent would send their children to the university. In the early nineteenth century, the job market was saturated with degree-bearing candidates, so there was no longer any assurance that a university degree would land its recipient a job in one of the primary fields (law, medicine, theology) that required higher education.[193] Something had to be done and scholars like Fichte took it upon themselves to revitalize the university, because without a serious overhaul of the system, academia was at risk of losing its next generation of scholars due to the poor reputation of university life. Was the university to become a very specialized institution, just for those prepared for "science in the highest sense"? Or was it to be very inclusive—a Humboldtian utopia where man sought simply to learn what he desired for no specific purpose other than greater cultivation of his soul? Or did the solution lie somewhere in between these two extremes?

Surprisingly, Fichte's idea about including the Confederates in with the College of Regulars appears to be aimed at finding the middle ground—simultaneously encouraging a wide array of students while enticing serious scholars too. In designing the plan that was elaborated in chapter two, Fichte created a meritocracy of scholarship where men have the final say in their own academic destiny, so long as they are deemed worthy of pursuing science in the highest sense. In many ways, it appears that Fichte has created a controlled microcosm of the world as he wished it would appear. It was no secret that Fichte's own early attempts to enter academia were rebuffed, not for want of talent, but for a want of

[192] Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: the Failure of the German Universities,* 2.
[193] Ibid, 1-5.

good fortune and connections.[194] He famously sought Kant's mentorship as he attempted to create an entire philosophical system that would fix the noumena-phenomena distinction that Kant's system was not able to overcome and was denied. Persistence and an amount of notoriety paid off for Fichte in his career as a scholar, but presumably, Fichte's aim in creating such a university would be to right what he perceived to be a wrong; to correct an ailing institution by implementing a meritocracy where men were ultimately looked to as the final arbiter of their own respective fates. Ultimately it appears that Fichte created the College of Regulars and the tag-along Confederates in order to track students based upon the dual pillars of capability and desire. This system allows for the congress of both capability and desire, while also allowing for the possibility of a person exhibiting one or the other. Fichte's originality lies in his creation of a division as a means of tracking students according to capacity *and* desire. Adding the tracking according to desire as well as capacity meant that students who really wanted it but were not ready still had a shot, and that those who had the capacity but lacked the desire were left out of the serious college of scholars. What Fichte did was create an improvement upon the existing system where capacity and self-determination were often intermingled, with a final result of muddying an otherwise clear division of people into appropriate career paths. Fichte was unique in considering the desires of the students as well as their usefulness to the scholarly world. It appears that Fichte understood that a crucial part of success as a scholar is passion, and those who lack it will only ever be dissatisfied academics. While at the outset it seemed that Fichte had left his elitist ways behind with this proposition, in final conclusion, he has not ended up so far away from Schelling after all. In essence, Schelling was prepared only to let students in to the university who were both prepared and desirous of undergoing a rigorous scientific education. Fichte offers the same rigor and exclusivity, but he simply delays it a year and offers a safety net of sorts for those students not yet prepared or not yet desirous of pursuing science in the highest sense. So in final estimation, Fichte's solution does meet the bar of originality, as he managed to find the middle way between Schelling's elitism and Humboldt's democratic utopia.

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[194] La Vopa, *The Self and The Calling of Philosophy,* 428.

As a brief reminder of how his fellow thinkers responded to this dilemma, their ideas ran the gamut from Schelling's elitism to Humboldt and Schleiermacher's open arms, welcoming those yet uninitiated students alongside those who already took science quite seriously. However, Schleiermacher's dissent with Fichte about student life ran deeper than a disagreement about who should populate the new university; Schleiermacher opposed Fichte's ideas about how the student body should be treated. In his article on the philosophical differences between Fichte and Schleiermacher, Piche argues that understanding why Fichte prescribed uniforms for the student body while Schleiermacher opposed it, is key to unlocking the differences between these two thinkers. He finds that Fichte sought to extinguish differences among students while Schleiermacher hoped for the outward expression of individuality. His conclusion is that Schleiermacher did not hate uniforms so much as he despised uniformity, and he took Fichte's intentions to clothe students in the same garb as a suppression of their academic freedom.[195] While Piche's point is well taken, it does appear to be slightly too reductive. It is true that Fichte intended to provide uniforms to the students, but as the context in the prior chapter illustrated, the uniforms were intended to demarcate the confederates and the regulars, providing the latter group with a sense of unity that he feared would escape them if everyone dressed differently. Although Piche overlooked this detail, his summation of their differences remains true: Schleiermacher sought to eliminate uniformity as he feared it would result in the production of uniform scientific activity, and Fichte intended to utilize the uniformity in order to motivate students to achieve together their common goal of enlightenment.[196]

The Professoriate

In many ways, Fichte's view of the professoriate was a standard one among the spiritual fathers of the university; there was a general consensus that raising the value of the university required raising the level of the professoriate first. No one was completely content with the professoriate of the eighteenth century, and yet Fichte was one of the few to offer concrete solutions to the problem. Schelling spoke out vehemently against

[195] Piche, "Fichte, Schleiermacher, and W. von Humboldt," 382.
[196] Ibid, 379.

professors who simply reproduced the content of written texts, arguing that students may as well self-educate by reading if that was all a professor was going to contribute. Schelling's vision was a professoriate consisting of active scholars who also happened to teach on the side. Scholarship however, was first and foremost a professor's duty. Here is where Fichte branches off of Schelling. While Fichte too regarded it as important that a professor be an active researcher in his field, he also recognized the importance of didactics. For this reason, he saw fit to institute a training seminar for teachers, which would ensure that those who were exposed to the College of Regulars were prepared to share their knowledge in an effective way. As if to underline the originality of this idea (at least among German universities), Fichte remarked upon how strange it was to see preachers being taught how to preach and yet, the arguably more important position of professor was left to chance.[197]

Schleiermacher and Humboldt too included research as an important and defining aspect of university life, but in the case of the professoriate, there is a clear divide between the visions of Fichte/Schelling and Schleiermacher/Humboldt. Fichte and Schelling understood there to be a hierarchy within the learning body, where the professor passed down knowledge to his students. This implies that the professor is in possession of a body of knowledge only accessible to the student through the pathways illuminated by the professor. Therefore, the fusion of teaching and research played an important role in ensuring the professor's best possible preparation for teaching. For Humboldt and Schleiermacher, the inclusion of research goals in the university played a somewhat different role, as they understood science and scientific research to be a pursuit that the professoriate and student body had in common. It was for everyone to pursue science together, and it is that very instinct towards scientific pursuits that Schleiermacher in particular aimed to stimulate. Fichte's plan for the professoriate was to create a group of men capable of transmitting knowledge from generation to generation; Schleiermacher, on the other hand, hoped to instill a more general spirit of mutual scientific pursuit in which the professoriate aided students by helping to develop individual personalities, who would in turn, aid in scientific progress. The differences between the two ideas are subtle, but

[197] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 186.

they bespeak the larger philosophical divide between the humanists and idealists. Humanists sought to eliminate anything that would stymie the development of the individual personality, while the idealists understood the world hierarchically. This meant that while humanistic theory centered upon what was best for the individual, idealistic theory found its center in larger, more abstract aims such as the progression of science, or in Fichte's case, in the moral regeneration of the German people. For the idealists, the individual can be sacrificed at the altar of progress, but for humanistic thinkers, the cultivation of the individual spirit was the highest ideal and one that could not be subsumed to any greater cause.

Moral Education

Fichte's ideas about the possibility of a moral education, as outlined in the previous chapter, were heavily influenced by his Protestant upbringing and the popular ideas of the age which insisted upon the perfectibility of the human race. Prior to the publication of Kant's works refuting the skepticism and determinism of Hume, scholarly thought on this subject had hit a dead end. If man was not ultimately in control of his own actions, his own destiny, then what point is there in seeking to educate man morally? However, the advent of Kant's critical philosophy allowed once again for the admission of free will in men's lives, meaning that the possibility for moral education reasserted itself. Fichte was overjoyed with Kant's triumph, as many of his developmental years were spent mourning the destiny of man in Hume's deterministic world. With fervor, Fichte wrote about how Kant had opened his eyes to the possibility that man had free will, and with it, the potential to act in a self-determined way. This idea was crucial for Fichte, and it informed much of his early work. In a letter to his friend Achelis he shared his joy at encountering Kant's works, saying "The influence of this philosophy, and particularly the moral part of it…upon the whole spiritual life, and particularly the revolution which it has caused in my own thought, is indescribable…I now heartily believe in the Freedom of Man…"[198]Yet toward the end of his life, Fichte considered the problem of moral education and sought to institute something

[198] William Smith, *The Popular Works of Johann Gottlieb Fichte* (Edinburgh: Robert Hardie and Company, 1942), 37.

akin to Hume's deterministic world wherein the subject had but one choice—the moral one.

Fichte's discussion of morality differs in a number of ways from those of his humanist compatriots, Schleiermacher and Humboldt. Both thinkers criticized Kant's moral theory on the basis that one theory could not possibly dictate the conduct of an infinite amount of unique personalities. Additionally, they found problem with a philosophy that would presume to limit the development of the individual for the gain of the abstract whole.[199] For Schleiermacher and Humboldt, morality can only be conceived of on individual terms, so any discussion of moral education as the possible savior of the German people would have been instantly dismissed. And yet, Fichte was not satisfied that Kant had solved the problem of morality for mankind, because accepting Kant's categorical imperative as the final authority on morality meant accepting that at times, individuals could choose to override the objectively good choice for the subjectively good one. Therefore, Fichte envisioned the institution of a morality so strong that human selfishness and subjectivity could not sway it.

Morality takes center stage in Fichte's works on education because Fichte conceives of morality as the missing link between education and creating the change that he wanted to see in the world, i.e. the liberation of the German people. Therefore, the widespread establishment of morality through education is seen as conditioning the independence of the German nation.[200] Fichte intended that his new university instill a love of learning in students that could not be co-opted by selfish needs, but was instead subject only to a sense of universal duty and he hoped to accomplish this by providing an education that would respond to the dictates of pure reason alone.[201] While Fichte's may have envisioned himself on the noble quest of freeing the German people from their French oppressors, his formulation for instilling morality at the cost of freedom of choice seems nefarious, giving David James more than enough reason to conclude that "such a viewpoint has a despotic

[199] Piche, "Fichte, Schleiermacher, and W. von Humboldt," 380.
[200] James, "Fichte's Republicanism: Education, Philosophy and the Bonds of Reason," 500.
[201] Ibid, 500.

appearance, and it does not seem to involve a conception of freedom that in any way captures what human beings mean when they speak of freedom."[202]

What is unique about Fichte's formulation is that he was considering the solution from a German point of view, with a German solution to what was a widespread European phenomenon. Kant before him had failed to answer as convincingly as Rousseau did in France. In fact, Kant, could only go so far as to implore men to act in a given way—to educate out their ability to choose badly was not his solution. Prior to Kant, German thinkers had left the possibility for moral education up to the Church, and it is this to which Fichte refers in his Second Address. Old moral education has been insufficient because it admits that the will is the problem and yet has no desire to take away that with which the problem originates. One key difference between Fichte's teaching and that of the Church is that Fichte argues "at the root of man's nature [exists] a pure pleasure in the good."[203] Because of this, Fichte is able to develop a system that educates men to morality, developing their nature "to such an extent that it becomes impossible for him to leave undone what he knows to be good and to do instead what he knows to be evil."[204] It is a complex quandary that can be explained in part by examining the imprint left on the German psyche by the religious difficulties of the preceding centuries. Theology had long run the scientific world and that yoke was only beginning to be overthrown when Fichte was sermonizing on the limitations of the old moral education. The legacy of Catholicism and the Reformation left contradictory ideas about the place of the will and its role in human sin. The existing paradigm taught people from youth onwards that man was naturally inclined to stray from God's commandments, and that it is impossible for a non-divine entity to live free from sin. Sinning is therefore, man's nature and no amount of education, prayer or good will can alter this basic characteristic. Such a negative view of human nature certainly is not the sole possession of the Church; numerous thinkers and political actors have held the same view. But what makes the Church's teachings paradoxical is the combination of man's unchangeable nature of a sinner and the supplication to act morally. As Fichte proclaims,

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[202] James, "Fichte's Republicanism: Education, Philosophy and the Bonds of Reason," 511.
[203] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 48.
[204] Ibid, 48.

> What else can be expected of such instruction, if it is taken seriously and believed, than that each individual should yield to his absolutely unchangeable nature, should not try to achieve what has once been represented to him as impossible, and should not desire to be better than he and all others can be? Indeed, he accepts the baseness attributed to him, the baseness of acknowledging his natural sinfulness and wickedness, because such baseness in God's sight is represented to him as the sole means of coming to terms with Him.[205]

In what follows, Fichte goes on to note that this method of instruction has been so consuming that Fichte's alteration would come across like a bad joke—the student would harbor the distinct feeling of being tricked by someone wanting to destroy his religious sentiment.

The looming issue with Fichte's plan for instituting moral education is that it requires again, one person at the top, deciding upon what the "right" choice is in any given situation. And yet, this very ability to decide was the joy of Fichte's very existence in the early 1790's. It meant the freedom to assert one's own brand of morality against that of the establishment, the ability to seek good governance when one feels the current system to be destructive. How can we square the Fichte of 1793 with the Fichte of 1808? Kant's views had already had their effect on Fichte prior to 1793, so what did he read, or do, or seek to do by changing his allowance for the self-determination of individuals? Or was this a change at all or rather a misconception in the historiography? In a new take on an old question, James argues that this was not some radical offshoot of Fichte's philosophy, but rather has its roots in his earlier idealism and the role of necessity.[206] Just as he envisioned the scholar's willingness to sacrifice subjectivity for the progress of science, Fichte hoped that he could reproduce a similar effect on a wider level—individuals who recognized the objective validity of moral law and understood it to be subjectively necessary—through his program for German moral education.

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[205] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 48.

[206] "For just as it must be assumed that the philosopher who is not subject to any distorting influences will be better able to pursue and to describe the necessity of his own acts of thinking, the moral agent's ability to recognize ethical duties will presumably be all the greater the less his or her own will is subject to any form of ethical distortion." James, "Fichte's Republicanism: Education, Philosophy and the Bonds of Reason," 510.

National Education

This brings us to the final point—that of the universality and national aspects of Fichte's educational program. While Fichte's works in which he discussed national education have developed a bad reputation, at the beginning of the nineteenth century national education as a principle was not a necessarily inflammatory idea. Herder and Rousseau considered variants of it decades earlier, and while Fichte's plan differed, the general principle of utilizing education as a means to strengthen the bond between people remained the same. Furthermore, Fichte's intentions to execute this plan on a universal scale on highlight the serious nature of his endeavor. If one views education as the means to a better future, then it naturally follows that the more people who have access to education, the better the future will be not only for the individual but for the whole. This of course, also lies on the presumption that raising the level of the individual also elevates the collective, which is where Humboldt and Schleiermacher would have had issue with this idea. Subjugating the individual for the benefit of the collective ran contrary to their "ethics of individuality", which argued for the primacy and cultivation of the individual.[207] Additionally, national education would have certainly required administration by a government body, whose increasing participation Humboldt in particular feared for the homogenization it would cause. Fichte, however, found no reason to fear the production of "like effects." [208] On the contrary, he hoped to produce widespread morality through his universal national education program.

Fichte unmistakably viewed education as the vehicle of transformation for the German people; it was science and philosophy that would be able to pull Germany from her slumber. As noted in the second chapter, Fichte's national program was a unique combination of the programs of Herder and Rousseau. With Herder, Fichte shared the idea that human nature is still visible in society through language, and that language forms the boundary of the "nation," thereby sharing with Herder the redefinition of nation as a cultural entity. Yet from Rousseau, Fichte derived the claim that the possibility for moral regeneration lies in children, because this is where human nature exists, unsullied. Until

[207] Piche, "Fichte, Schleiermacher, and W. von Humboldt," 380.
[208] Ibid, 379.

they are corrupted by the adults of their generation, children possess an instinct for morality that Fichte, like Rousseau before him, desired to develop through building a national education program.

In his writings on national education, Fichte critiqued the idea of family-run primary education—a popular practice in the early 1800's.[209] As an alternative, he proposed to take children from their parents at a young age and to raise and educate them much in the same way Rousseau's Emile had been educated. In regards to family-run education, Fichte saw no other alternative than the complete overthrow of the existing system, because even if parents are entirely capable of educating their children and if they carry out that education with the best possible intentions, Fichte argues that the result will be the same—another corrupted generation. This is because even without intending it, children emulate adults. "They educate themselves to us; to be like us, that forces itself upon them as their pattern. They emulate us, even without our requiring this, and desire nothing more than to become just as we are."[210] So even parents with the best possible abilities and intentions would be incapable of making a significant dent in the education system because children naturally model themselves to be like adults. In regards to adults, Fichte argues,

> Now, usually the great majority of us are thoroughly perverse, partly without knowing it; and because we are ourselves just as simple as children, we consider our perversity to be what is right. Even if we knew that we were perverse, how could we suddenly lay aside, in the presence of our children, that which a long life has made second nature to us, and exchange our whole former disposition and spirit for a new one? In contact with us they must become corrupt; that is unavoidable.[211]

Corrupt children leads to corrupt adults who in turn, pass on their own perversions to the next generation. Fichte viewed this as a cycle that was only breakable if children were not only taken away from their parent's tutelage, but taken away from their very presence altogether at the earliest possible age. Additionally he argues that they should only be

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[209] McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, 31.
[210] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 180.
[211] Ibid, 180.

allowed to reclaim their place in society when they have learned "to detest thoroughly all our corruption, and are thereby completely safe from infection."[212]

The idea itself—that of taking children away from the corrupting influence of their elders and educating them to a separate purpose—is not a new one, but a recycled idea that was once popular to a number of ancient thinkers. Plato, in *The Republic*, advocated for the education of the guardians in a heavily controlled environment, which was meant to develop certain traits such as loyalty, courage, moderation and a love for justice while reducing the effects of others, such as lying, gluttony, sloth, and injustice. Socrates argued that youth "assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it."[213] The idea of educating children to a specific purpose does have a real life example as well; the idea was taken seriously and implemented by the Spartans, who famously took young boys from their home to develop a warrior morality within them at a young age. Nearly two millennia later, Rousseau repurposed the ancient idea of educating children away from their parents in order to limit the corrupting influences of society, but Rousseau added his own twist on the classical idea by arguing that education should be made to complement the autonomous development of a child's capacities.[214] A child's educator should not stand over the child as an authority figure but instead should quietly manipulate the child's environment so that the child feels like he is drawing his own conclusions at all times, as opposed to absorbing information from an approved curriculum. Rousseau found this type of education to be much more harmonious than any previously existing educational system, and he is able to make such a large leap from the extant system to his own because of his belief in humanity's innate goodness. Rather than seeking education to cover up the faults of human nature, Rousseau sought education to make human nature more pronounced.

Fichte's idea was different from Rousseau's for a couple reasons. For one, Rousseau's patriotic education aimed to produce people who despise anything that is not held to be in the interest of the nation. Fichte's universal national education, on the other hand, aimed to teach people to ignore their selfish inclination in favor of the dictates of

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[212] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 180.

[213] John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson, eds., *The Republic* in *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 377b.

[214] Schwitzgebel, "Human Nature and Moral Education in Mencius, Xunzi, Hobbes, and Rousseau," 156.

pure reason. This difference is a small one, and no doubt Fichte intended his program to produce good, civic-minded people in the same vein as Rousseau's patriotic education, but it is important to note the difference because it highlights the character of Fichte's "nationalism." Far from an early version of National Socialism, Fichte's nationalist program charged the individual to follow the dictates of pure rationality in order to achieve morality on a widespread scale. Additionally, while Fichte shared with Rousseau the conception that children are innately good, Fichte did not fear the teacher's influence as the authority figure in the same way that Rousseau did. Rather, Fichte viewed authority as a natural hierarchy of being, and not in conflict with the natural growth of a child.[215] But the most important difference between Fichte and Rousseau's respective conceptions is that Fichte's solution was fitted specifically for Germany. Fichte understood that the greatest barrier to the implementation of his universal education project was the idea that it would require more resources of the State than the State would gain in return. Fichte sought to dispel that notion in the Eleventh Address, saying,

> All branches of the State's economy will in a short time attain, without much difficulty, a prosperity which no age has yet seen; and the State's original expenditure will be repaid a thousandfold, if it cares to reckon up and if by that time it has learnt the true fundamental value of things. Hitherto the State has had to do a great deal, and yet has never been able to do enough, for law and police institutions. Convict prisons and reformatories have caused its expense. Finally, the more that was spent on poorhouses, the more they required; indeed, under the prevailing circumstances, they seemed to be institutions for making people poor. In a State which makes the new education universal, the former will be greatly reduced the latter will vanish entirely. Early discipline is a guarantee against the need in later years of reformation and penal discipline, which are very doubtful measures, while in a nation so trained there are no poor at all.[216]

Fichte called upon to the State to immediately change its fundamental conception about the aim of education, because he understood that the entire project of educating the masses would be impossible without its orchestration by the State. And he admitted that the State would be likely to say that educating the masses is an untenable project because of the cost;

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[215] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 174.
[216] Ibid, 191-92.

but for Fichte, the cost of not educating the masses is the exorbitant one. Therefore, he implored the German authorities to recognize that national education beginning at a young age is the only solution to their current predicament. He writes that "other countries have other consolations and other resources; it is not to be expected that they will give any attention to the thought of education, or have any faith in it, should it occur to them," but that for Germany, "it is education alone that can save us from all the ills that oppress us."[217]

Conclusion

While much of his theory takes its inspiration from philosophers dating as far back as Plato in Ancient Greece, there is still plenty within Fichte's framework for German education that is distinctly Fichte's own. There are a couple key contributions that can be noted in which Fichte himself modified conventional thinking about a given issue, illustrating his discontent with the proposed solutions of his peers. Fichte's plan for universal national education stands out as a prominent example of a case in which Fichte modified historical ways of thinking in order to produce a version that was made to fit Prussia in 1808. In this way, it is evident that Fichte was unhappy with the contributions that had come before him, and felt the need to come to his country's aid in their time of need. Additionally, his modification of the conventions surrounding moral education were significant, and unique among the thinkers of his era. Yet, unfortunately, what stands out about Fichte's educational theory is the unresolved oddities that appear due to his insistence that pure theory can be implemented in reality. For example, the idea of taking children from their parents in order to raise them in an uncorrupted environment would have been radically unpopular in practice. In the same Address in which he called for raising children away from the influence of previous generations, Fichte railed against adults, calling even the most enlightened perverse, and claiming that they find their own perversity to be good because it was taught to them as such by the generation before the. If in fact, the entire society is perverse and unaware of its own perversity, then who is to lead and teach the children? Are they to figure things out on their own? Rousseau was rightfully worried

[217] Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation,* 193.

about the role of instructor when it came to raising Emile, and yet Fichte willfully overlooks this crucial aspect of raising children.[218] Presumably, Fichte found himself immune to the corruption of the current age, and could therefore envision himself leading the next generation of children to enlightenment. While this example is the most obvious one within all Fichte's educational theory, there are a number of others. For instance, the same problem emerges within the philosophical organization of the new university. Fichte claims that anyone who understands philosophy knows that only one can be at the pinnacle. Again, such a claim seems blatantly false, and extremely dangerous when such an important role would fall into the wrong hands. In this way, Fichte exemplifies his extremist tendencies. Aside from being self-serving, he seems to be incapable of admitting when an idea has a natural conflict in its implementation. He exhibits no flexibility, and continually seeks theoretical purity when rational men, such as Kant before him, were forced to admit that there is no way to resolve these ideas in reality.

[218] While Fichte's suggestions for state intervention in the education appears untenable at this stage, earlier in his career he suggested that the State impose regulations on parents in regards to the treatment of their children. See G.H. Turnbull, "The Changes in Fichte's Attitude Toward State Intervention in Education," 243.

Epilogue

Prussia's period of educational reform saw more than just the establishment of a new University in Berlin. The King's emphasis on a thorough reformation of the educational structure also resulted in the establishment of a new university in Bonn, the expansion of the University of Konigsberg, as well as the consolidation of several institutions to form a University of Halle-Wittenberg as well as a University of Breslau.[219] Additionally, these reform measures brought about the abolition of a number of less viable institutions and academies, which meant that resources could be pooled to support a lesser number of intellectually vibrant universities. At the secondary school level, numerous reforms also took place under the leadership of Humboldt. The state instituted a standard testing requirement for those students desirous of attending a university after graduation. The addition of a college entrance exam had a number of positive results: it helped regulate secondary school curricula across geographical regions, it bolstered the universities by only permitting the entrance of a certain level of applicant, and it helped demarcate the division between secondary schools and universities. At the same time, the state issued a decree that teachers seeking employment in secondary schools had to undergo examinations, which ultimately raised the level of the secondary school teacher and as a consequence, the level of its students.[220] Yet this period of great institutional reform came to a grinding halt in 1818 after the establishment of the University of Bonn, which was followed by two decades of mistrust between the state and university, during which time the state pursued censorship against those it found guilty of liberal provocations.

While the foundation of the University of Berlin was the most directly applicable cause for which these great thinkers formulated their ideas, their roles in formulating a new idea of the university had resounding effects for educational reform, not only in the German states, but around the world. And while it is Humboldt's name that will forever be attached to these important reforms, the collaborative effort of the professoriate of this time period resulted in a glorious convolution of ideas that radically altered the conception

[219] R. Steven Turner "The Growth of Professorial Research in Prussia, 1818 to 1848--causes and Context," *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences* 3 (1971): 137-82, 140.
[220] Ibid, 140.

of the university in German society. Although no consensus was reached among top academics on a variety of topics spanning the appropriate limits on state involvement in university life to how to educate a man to morality, these intellectuals were able to agree that university education should occupy more than a simple propaedeutic function and that it should be venerated for more than just its utilitarian aspects. Rather, the university was envisioned as place where man would be able to develop into a moral, civic-minded member of German society.

Fichte's thought can be differentiated from that of his compatriots on any number of levels, but in its totality, Fichte appears to be the only one who sought to utilize the construction of a new university for a greater goal than that of education in its own right. Fichte had a higher plan and it would require sacrificing the individual for the betterment of humanity writ large. Because of his grandiose intentions, his plan was never meant to become the model of the modern research university. His intentions were more timely—to develop the specific German qualities that could release the German people from their French oppressors, and any future ones. Therefore, the originality of Fichte's educational work is best understood as a whole, rather than in its artificially designated parts. Its prescriptions cannot be understood to be relevant outside the specific circumstances of the early nineteenth century in the German states. And though Fichte would not have wanted us to consider his work for anything but its philosophical elements—because he believed that he had discovered universal truths—it cannot be that.[221] Fichte was intending his plan for a very specific, German purpose.

Organized thematically, it is possible to view the development of the different linguistic conventions used in reference to university education in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In many ways, Fichte was a simple transmitter of the linguistic conventions, but in a couple important ways, he modified the historical thought-patterns to create a novel theory of education—one that was fitted specifically for the German states. The most obvious example of this is his plan for universal national education, in which he combined strands of thought from Herder, Rousseau, and even Plato to establish a convention of universal education that would train children from a young age

[221] That is not to say that the spirt of Fichte's philosophy could not be adapted, but to utilize the very letter of his philosophy would be a mistaken project. La Vopa, *The Self and The Calling of Philosophy,* 5.

to recognize the objective validity of moral law. Fichte's universal national program encompasses the whole of his theory of education and makes plain the backdrop upon which the University of Berlin would be established. Yet even in the more minor point of the role of the student within the new concept of university, Fichte's modifications of the conventional ideas can be seen. The traditional polarities of thought about students were fairly oppositional based upon the one hand, the humanist's desire to embolden the individual and his or her originality at every turn, and on the other, the idealist's vision of subsuming the individual to a greater cause. In spite of Fichte's idealist proclivities, he altered the traditional thought patterns about the role of the student through illustrating the middle way in which students have the ability to choose their own educational path. In this way, Fichte's work appears curious, as he obviously desired to utilize individuals to achieve a higher goal, and yet he was unable to restrain himself from leaving the final choice up to the individual. La Vopa calls this Fichte's tendency to be "elitist with an egalitarian impulse."[222] It appears as though Fichte did not want to make the choice between marginalizing the individual and originality for the sake of a higher cause, but he also did not want to forsake the achievement of a higher purpose either. For Fichte, education represented that middle way, because to educate people to rationality would ultimately result in them choosing objective morality (or so he hoped). In this way, Fichte would be able to leave the "choice" at the foot of the individual, while being able to achieve the type of higher goal associated with the subjugation of the individual for the collective good. This was the most important way in which Fichte altered the historical thought patterns about education in the nineteenth century. He was unwilling to bend to the "cult of individuality" represented by Humboldt and Schleiermacher, but he was also unwilling to execute his idealist inclinations which called him to fully subjugate the individual for the good of the collective.

A related aim of this paper was to evaluate the effectiveness of Skinner's methodology on the study of Fichte. The biggest problem in attempting to apply Quentin Skinner's methodology is that it adds restraints on the possible coherence of an author's mind. At the outset, Fichte appeared to be a very appropriate thinker for Skinner's

[222] La Vopa, *The Self and The Calling of Philosophy,* 429.

methodology because his philosophical legacy is scattered, and there has yet to be anything like a consensus about Fichte's contributions to history and philosophy, which stems from a perceived lack of coherence in Fichte's writings. Skinner's methods, however, provide a solution, as he argues that we should not expect the intentions of a writer to cohere with his intentions across time and space. Similarly, he does not expect a thinker to produce ideas that necessarily cohere with one another when the topic has changed, for example from theological issues to political ones. Thus, the problem of how to best categorize Fichte is solved when viewed from Skinner's perspective, since authors never need to exhibit any type of unity in contributions over time or topic. And yet, something about this type of hermeneutic feels off. Bevir explicates this feeling masterfully by critiquing Skinner's confluence of intentions and beliefs. He notes that while Skinner focuses his theory on illocutionary intentions, he also identifies beliefs as a central aspect within the history of ideas. Skinner has even gone so far as to say that "the primary aim [of historians of ideas] is to use our ancestors' utterances as a guide to the identification of their beliefs."[223] Because Skinner conflates intentions with belief, the same argument against coherence within the mind of the author still applies, and this is what feels off. Bevir writes, "If our interest is in Hobbes's beliefs, we will want to know not only that he believed such and such about the prudential basis of obligation, but also how such and such fits in with the rest of his beliefs including any he held about the religious basis of political obligation. We will want to do so precisely because we expect people's beliefs to be fairly coherent."[224] We desire to understand not only what Fichte intended to do in producing his writings on higher education, but how he was able to square these beliefs with his other beliefs about the importance of human freedom. This makes the application of Skinner's methodology problematic, because even if the author's beliefs were not coherent, presumably he himself thought they were. If this holds true for the average individual, it certainly held true for Fichte who understood himself to be one of the only men who had a system, and had therefore "finished philosophizing."[225] This makes it difficult to faithfully execute

[223] Mark Bevir, "Mind and Method in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 36, no. 2 (May 1997): 167-89, 175-76.
[224] Ibid, 176.
[225] Fichte, "Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin," 193.

Skinner's methodology when I find myself constrained by my belief that Fichte found himself to be coherent.

Another of the minor goals of this paper was to re-examine the way in which Fichte's reputation has been conceived of in contemporary historiography, and if the above noted revelations can do anything to further expand our historical knowledge of Fichte.[226] In reference to the historiographical debate about the degree to which Fichte's thought changed over the course of his career, La Vopa makes a serious point about the unchanged nature of Fichte's intentions: "With the failure of his attempt in the Contribution to bond with 'the great crowd,' he turned his attention to using the universities to create the new spiritual elite…"[227] Over the course of his career, Fichte's view towards creating large-scale change for the masses never wavered; he simply changed the medium from political revolutionaries to students and his aim from protecting people from overly intrusive government policies to utilizing education as a means of bringing about the Future German Republic.[228] Although it is possible to see Fichte's noble intentions even as he adjusts his overall aim, it is impossible to escape the authoritarian impulses of Fichte's thought. Yet this too is a curiosity, as the historical Fichte was an outspoken member of the German professoriate with progressive views that dictated a full rejection of the *ancien regime* and its paternalistic rhetoric.[229] The irony comes not from Fichte's beliefs about the state but from his suggested replacement—a state with mechanical enforcement of the conditions of rationality. Fichte's ideal seems to provide not so much a solution to the extant political problems but a theory that could give rise to the type of totalitarian state seen in the twentieth century.

Even if one views Fichte's works in light of his noble intentions, there is still an unsettling aspect to his philosophy that La Vopa pinpoints perfectly: "We are apt to find his rationale for the dignity of the human being as such so categorically abstract as to be dehumanizing. But there is also a sense in which Fichte's universalist discourse

[226] This is done with full knowledge of the fact that Skinner would deny that you can look at Fichte's intentions as possibly connected over time.
[227] La Vopa, *The Self and The Calling of Philosophy,* 429.
[228] James, "Fichte's Republicanism: Education, Philosophy and the Bonds of Reason," 500.
[229] La Vopa, *The Self and The Calling of Philosophy,* 435

disappoints, and indeed exasperates, because it is not universal at all." [230] Although La Vopa was referring to the anti-Semitic discourse in Fichte's *Contribution,* the point remains applicable to his work on education. Fichte's plan to establish a world in which the only choice is the moral one is dehumanizing is a very basic sense of the word as it seeks to eliminate the very freedom of choice that Fichte once celebrated as belonging distinctly to mankind. It also denies the possibility that multiple moralities exist within the world. Additionally La Vopa's criticism about Fichte's failed attempts at universalism rings true. Aspects of his educational theory, such as his plan for a universal national education, indicates his impulse towards egalitarianism, but in spite of himself, he is never able to suspend his elitist proclivity towards hierarchy in order to achieve the universality that he desires.

[230] La Vopa, *The Self and The Calling of Philosophy,* 434.

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