

Introduction

On Situating and Interpreting Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation*

DANIEL BREAZEALE

In July 1799, shortly after losing his position as professor of philosophy at the University of Jena, Fichte moved to Berlin. At that point, the Prussian capital still lacked a university of its own, and thus Fichte was forced to support himself and his family (which remained in Jena until joining him in Berlin a few years later) solely by means of his writings and privately subscribed lessons and lectures. To this end, he composed and published in quick succession four books intended for a broad “popular” audience: *The Vocation of Man* (January 1800), *The Closed Commercial State* (November 1800), the *Sun-Clear Report to the General Public concerning the Essence of the Latest Philosophy* (April 1801), and *Friedrich Nicolai's Life and Remarkable Opinions* (May 1801).¹ Soon after arriving in Berlin Fichte also became heavily invested in an (ultimately unsuccessful) effort to reform a local branch of Royal York Masonic lodge, and his lectures to his fellow Masons were published, in a heavily edited version, in a local Masonic journal in 1802 and 1803 under the title *Letters to Constance*.²

One suspects that financial exigencies³ were also at least partially responsible for his decision to authorize a new edition of his first (and, as it turned out only) full-scale presentation of the foundations of his new system of philosophy, the so-called *Wissenschaftslehre* or “Doctrine of Science” of 1794/95. This new edition, which was bound with a reissue of *The Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to*

Theoretical Faculty (1795) appeared in 1802.⁴ Yet despite all of this disruption and “popular” literary activity, Fichte by no means abandoned his ongoing “scientific” efforts to perfect his system after arriving in Berlin; on the contrary, he immediately set to work on a new version of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, based upon the text of his lectures on “Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (*Wissenschaftslehre*) *nova methodo*,” which he had successfully delivered three times in Jena. Presumably, this was also the version that he employed as the basis for a private tutorial on his philosophy, which he conducted in late 1800 for a local banker, Samuel Solomon Levy.

Sometime in the winter of 1800–01, however, he abandoned his efforts to revise his Jena lectures and began instead an altogether new presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Once again, as was his custom, he developed this new version in conjunction with private lectures that he delivered daily in his own apartment to a small group of listeners in the spring of 1802. Though he produced a complete manuscript of this new version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (“New Presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*,” 1801–02⁵), he abandoned it as well and began yet another completely new presentation of his system, once again in conjunction with a private tutorial for a local count, which he conducted in the spring of 1803.⁶ Eighteen-four was a year devoted entirely to renewed efforts on his part to construct an adequate presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Over the course of that year Fichte composed and presented to his private students no fewer than three complete sets of lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre*.⁷ The following year he continued to develop this new version of his philosophy in the form of private lectures entitled “Doctrine of God, Ethics, and Right.”⁸ Despite the truly immense effort that he had devoted to these efforts, none of these radically new presentations of the *Wissenschaftslehre* appeared during the author’s lifetime, and some did not appear until the first decade of the twenty-first century.

During the latter part of 1804 Fichte announced plans to deliver, by subscription and individual ticket sales, weekly Sunday lectures in a rented hall in the Academy of Sciences. The announced topic of these Sunday lectures was “A Philosophical Characteristic of the Age.” The series began November 4, 1804, and continued until March 17, 1805. Despite the rather high cost of both subscriptions and individual tickets, the audience for these lectures numbered well over one hundred and included government ministers and foreign ambassadors. These same lectures were eventually published in April 1806 under title *Characteristics of the Present Age*.⁹

The following year, thanks to the intervention of patrons and allies in the Prussian court, Fichte enjoyed a brief, one-semester appointment as professor of philosophy at the Prussian University in Erlangen (May–September 1805). There he presented a series of general introductory lectures on philosophy, which included a “propaedeutic” to the same, as well as lectures on logic and metaphysics. He also produced for the occasion yet another completely new version of his lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre*,¹⁰ while also delivering a series of weekly public lectures on the same theme as his earlier public lectures in Jena: that is, the duties and vocation of the academic scholar. Like the earlier set, these new lectures were published, in early 1806, under the title *On the Essence of the Scholar and Its Appearance in the Realm of Freedom*.¹¹

Upon his return to Berlin, Fichte announced a second subscription series of Sunday lectures, this time on topics associated with the philosophy of religion. These new lectures began January 13, 1806, and concluded March 30, 1806. They were subsequently published in April 1806 under the title *Guide to the Blessed Life*.¹²

Eighteen-six was, of course, another year of crisis and turmoil in European political history, which was marked, above all, by the ongoing Napoleonic wars. In December of the preceding year, the forces of the French Empire had defeated those of Austria and Russia at the battle of Austerlitz, leading to the Peace of Pressburg between Austria and France, which ended the so called “war of the third coalition” against Napoleon and led to the formation of the French-led Confederation of the Rhine, as well as to the official demise of the Holy Roman Empire (August 6, 1806). A new “war of the fourth coalition” (a coalition of Prussia—which had not participated in any of the previous coalitions against France—Saxony, Great Britain, Russia, and Sweden) ensued almost immediately and—just as quickly—resulted in a humiliating rout of the vaunted Prussian forces by those of Napoleon at the battle of Jena-Auerstedt (October 14, 1806). This was quickly followed by the French invasion of Prussia and occupation of Berlin (October 25, 1806).

Fichte followed these momentous events very closely and with growing consternation, as is evidenced by his new studies and literary activities during this period. Whereas some citizens of Prussia held themselves aloof from the fortunes of the third coalition and even welcomed the defeat of Prussia’s rival Austria at the battle of Austerlitz, Fichte is reported to have passionately demurred, declaring that “not a year will pass before we will most deeply regretting this defeat.”¹³ As the year advanced (along

with the French armies), Fichte, who had long enjoyed (or suffered from) a well-earned reputation as a supporter of the French Revolution¹⁴ and who had on several past occasions at least toyed with the idea of resettling his family in the French Republic, became more and more adamant in his opposition to the new Napoleonic empire and its leader—and more and more preoccupied with the parlous fate of Prussia in particular and the various “Germanic” lands in general.

Thus, in the summer of 1806, not long before the battle of Jena, he began work on two dialogues titled “Patriotism and its Opposite.”¹⁵ One of the main themes of these unpublished dialogues is the relationship between patriotism and cosmopolitanism, the former of which Fichte describes as a means to the latter.¹⁶ Moreover, he continued, even if a single nation were to take up the common cause of humanity, this “goal of the human species” is one that can be achieved not by force of arms but only by means of a perfected (philosophical) *science*, the goal of which is to spread to all mankind “the original sources of truth and reality, grasped at their point of absolute unity.”¹⁷ This, goal, which is, of course, preeminently that of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, is, he maintains, one that has been pursued and cultivated among the Germans more than among any other people. Hence, another theme of these dialogues: to pose the questions, “What is German?” and what is relationship of Germanness to, on the one hand, the cosmopolitan goals of all humanity and, on the other, the pursuit of science (i.e., philosophy)? These are questions and themes with which Fichte was already quite well acquainted, above all from his familiarity with A. W. Schlegel’s *Lectures on Fine Literature and Art*, which had originated as a series of public lectures delivered in Berlin in the years 1801–04. The direct influence of Schlegel’s *Lectures* upon Fichte is not difficult to detect in both the *Characteristics of the Present Age* and the *Addresses*. Like Herder before him, Schlegel stressed the close relationship between language and national character, and it was Schlegel, not Fichte, who first emphasized the unique character and superiority of the German language and contrasted it with the “dead” Latinate languages spoken by Southern Europeans. Schlegel also assigned to the Germans in particular the task of guiding the moral development of humanity as a whole and stressed the close link between German patriotism and the larger, cosmopolitan values of all humanity.¹⁸

Following the mobilization of Prussian troops on August 9, 1806, Fichte unsuccessfully petitioned the Prussian court to be appointed a chaplain to the army, suggesting that it would be his special task to use

his rhetorical gifts to address and inspire the leaders of the military. In preparation for this task, he composed and submitted to the court a proposed “Address to the German Warrior,” which included a “manifesto” concerning the goals to be achieved in the coming war as well as an impassioned denunciation of Napoleon, to whom Fichte refers simply as “he who bears no name.”¹⁹

Only four days following the defeat of the Prussian forces at the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt, the entire court fled Berlin for the safety of the Prussian outpost of Königsberg in East Prussia, near the Russian border. Fichte, who was by this time receiving regular stipends from the king, accompanied the court on this journey. The entourage arrived in Königsberg at the end of November 1806 and remained there until early the next summer, when the defeat of the combined Prussian and Russian forces by the French at the Battle of Friedland, not far from Königsberg, on June 14, 1807, once again forced the court to take flight, this time to Copenhagen. In evident despair, Fichte described these events to his wife as follows:

Think of how things appeared to us. On the eve of the decisive battle the balance was still equal, and if only we could have avoided *utterly bovine stupidity* then victory could have been our fate. What would you feel in such a case! Still, you can hardly imagine our historically unprecedented helplessness following the battle. . . . I had already resolved to allow the present world and its citizens to die out for me. On this occasion, God’s way was not ours. I believe that the German nation *must* be preserved, but I see that it has been extinguished.²⁰

But Fichte did not let his time in Königsberg go to waste. Among other things, he found the time and occasion to prepare and to deliver yet another entirely new series of lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* at the University of Königsberg, where the king had provided him with a temporary appointment (January 5–March 20, 1807).²¹ In addition, he employed his time for private study, including a renewed study of Italian and Portuguese.

Throughout this period he was particularly preoccupied with questions of education in general and Prussian national education in particular. To this end, he immersed himself in a renewed study of the writings and pedagogical theory of the Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich

Pestalozzi, with whom he had become personally acquainted while living in Zurich in the years prior to his departure for Jena and for whose pioneering ideas and practical achievements he had long expressed great admiration. Pestalozzi's methods emphasized the importance of awakening and fostering the child's sense of his own "self-activity," and his method for doing this was to begin with the simplest manual exercises before gradually proceeding to the most abstract speculations. As Fichte wrote to his wife, in requesting a copy of Pestalozzi's *How Gertrud Teaches Her Children*, "I am now studying his educational system, in which I find the true medicine for a sick humanity—as well as the only way to make this same humanity capable of understanding the *Wissenschaftslehre*."²²

Fichte also devoted his six months in Königsberg to the study of the writings of Machiavelli and went so far as to translate excerpts from his writings and to publish these, along with his own commentary, in the journal *Vesta* in June 1807.²³ In this essay, as in his earlier unpublished writings, Fichte was clearly intent on applying some of the lessons of Florentine Renaissance republicanism to the present situation in central Europe, as is also indicated by another unfinished project he worked on off and on during the spring of 1807: an ambitious eight-part "utopian tract" entitled "The German Republic."²⁴

Following the Peace of Tilsit (July 1807) between France, Russia, and Prussia, and a two-month pause in Copenhagen, Fichte finally arrived back in occupied Berlin on August 19, 1807. Hardly had he arrived when he learned that the king (who had not yet returned to his capital) intended to establish a new Prussian state university in Berlin and officially invited Fichte (along with other leading academics) to submit detailed ideas and plans for the same. Accordingly, in less than a month he completed and sent to the cabinet an elaborate plan for the new institution, though the plan that was eventually adopted for the new Prussian university was not Fichte's but Alexander von Humboldt's.²⁵ Hence, even after returning to Berlin, he continued to occupy himself primarily with questions of moral pedagogy and national character and explicitly conceived of the new university as an "institute of national education."²⁶

In late November 1807 Fichte publicly announced his intention to resume his Sunday lectures. In fact, he had begun drawing up plans for a new lecture series while still in Copenhagen during the summer of 1807, inspired in part by his correspondence and personal conversations with the eminent historian Johannes von Müller. Von Müller too lamented the embarrassing collapse of the Prussian army and the ensuing French

occupation and proposed to Fichte that the most effective way to respond to this situation would be “through words and writings of many kinds, with gentleness and rigor, in order to kindle feelings, prevent despair, and illuminate the path toward improvement.”²⁷

The new Sunday subscription series was first announced as a continuation of Fichte’s earlier lectures on the *Characteristics of the Present Age* and as an effort “to bring them up the present age.”²⁸ The relationship between those earlier lectures and the new ones is made clear enough in the first *Address*: In the *Characteristics* (again, partly inspired by A. W. Schlegel’s *Lectures*), Fichte had laid out a bold, a priori schema of human history as divided into five parts: (1) an original era of “innocence,” in which reason is present among mankind only in the form of instinct; (2) an era of “progressive sin,” in which reason is present in the form of an external authority demanding blind faith and obedience; (3) an era of “complete sinfulness,” in which mankind has liberated itself from the authority of reason in every form; (4) an era of “progressive justification,” in which reason is operative in the form of knowledge; and finally, (5) an era of “complete justification and satisfaction,” in which reason is present as an art and humanity has become a perfect reflection of reason itself. In the *Characteristics*, Fichte had described his own age as occupying the third era, that of complete sinfulness; but in the *Addresses* he suggests that, thanks to the utter defeat of Prussia, he and his contemporaries now stand on the cusp between the third and the fourth eras. A major goal of the *Addresses* is therefore to make members of the audience and readers of the text explicitly aware of their parlous situation and of the unique opportunity it offers them: an opportunity to make the all-important transition from an age of lawless freedom and corruption to one of freedom governed by rational (moral) laws. Fichte’s explicit aim was to persuade his audience and readers that they were indeed capable of beginning a new era in human history and life—that they were capable, in Fichte’s words, of being “born again.”

The plan was to have each of the fourteen *Addresses* printed and distributed individually, over the course of the series, in order, as Fichte explained, “to lose no time in renewing and cultivating a German way of thinking.”²⁹ With this aim in mind, he duly applied to the office of the Prussian censor for advance approval of his plan. But after examining the text of the first *Address*, the censor rejected Fichte’s application. Calling attention to some politically sensitive passages in the first *Address*, the censor demanded to evaluate the entire series of lecture before approving

publication of any of the same. Eventually, however, Fichte was allowed to print and distribute the rest of lectures in the series individually, despite some misgiving from the censor concerning certain passages in the fourth, eighth, and fourteenth *Addresses*, and despite the unfortunate loss by the censor of the only copy of Fichte's thirteenth lecture, which required him to compose the published version completely afresh.

When the series was completed on March 20, 1808, and it was time to publish the entire text, the censor had still not approved the first *Address*, though permission was eventually granted. Meanwhile, production of the book continued, with the printer simply leaving space for the first *Address* to be inserted. Due to a miscalculation, however, more space was left than was required for the first *Address*, which is why the published version is prefaced by brief excerpts from Fichte's previously published essay on Machiavelli and from his first unpublished dialogue on "Patriotism and its Opposite." The full text of the *Addresses to the German Nation* was published in May 1808, seven months before the ending of the French occupation in December and the return of the king at the beginning of 1809.

According to Fichte's son, during the period he was composing and delivering the *Addresses* Fichte was also engaged in an intensive historical study of the resistance of the ancient German tribes to the Roman invasion, specifically as described in Tacitus's *Germania*. Indeed, his son claims that this "was almost the only book he was reading while composing the *Addresses*." Fichte even went so far as to translate extensive passages from Tacitus, which he completed following the fourth *Address*, passages specifically dealing with the essence of "Germanness." Moreover—again, according to Fichte's son—Tacitus's text also exercised a strong influence on the distinctive rhetorical style of the *Addresses*.³⁰

The circumstances surrounding Fichte's actual delivery of the *Addresses* quickly became and in many quarters still remains the stuff of patriotic legend. It is certainly true that Fichte exposed himself to a certain amount of personal risk in delivering these lectures during the French occupation of Berlin. Not long before he commenced his Sunday lectures, namely, in August 1806, the Berlin bookseller Johann Phillip Palm had been executed on the order of Napoleon for disturbing a seditious pamphlet. Fichte duly reminded one his correspondents of Palm's fate, before going on to declare his own willingness to risk his life by delivering his *Addresses*.³¹ This fear was shared by Fichte's wife, Johanna, who wrote that her husband's public lectures had "cost me a much fear,

since I was constantly aware of the fate of the unfortunate Palm. I was constantly hearing about the firing squads and could not sleep a single night so long as the foreigners, who have frightened many people in unprecedented ways, remained. This book [the *Addresses*] is written with deepest love and out of the strongest sense of duty and resignation, for the author was very well aware of the danger to which he was exposing himself.³²

The atmosphere in which Fichte delivered his addresses was described some years later by one of the members of Fichte's audience, Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, who also emphasized that many in the audience were all too aware of Palm's recent fate and thus fearful for Fichte, "whose freedom and life hung upon his every word." They were thus in awe of the "extraordinary courage of the German professor," who had the courage to continue to speak even as his lectures were frequently interrupted and threatened "by the drums of the marching troops."³³ This same account, further embroidered with reports of the presence of French spies in Fichte's audience, was duly repeated by Fichte's son, I. H. Fichte (who was only twelve at the time the *Addresses* were presented), in his biography of his father and then handed down to future generations.³⁴

Though there can be no doubt that Fichte and his wife, along with many others, did indeed fear retaliation by the occupying power, there is also evidence that the French were not particularly concerned with nor bothered by the Sunday *Addresses* by this professor of philosophy, if indeed, they were aware of them at all. In any case, they certainly took no action against Fichte, though they did investigate other politically suspect writers and intellectuals in Berlin.³⁵

Nearly six hundred copies of the *Addresses* were sold within a month, and it was at first widely read and received generally positive reviews.³⁶ However, there is little evidence that it exercised the kind of immediate galvanizing influence upon the "German people" or the Prussian government that Fichte had hoped and that subsequent mythology implies. It does not, for example, seem to have been the case that the *Addresses* played any significant part in provoking or sustaining the Prussian role in the successful "War of Liberation" against Napoleon in 1813–14. Indeed, as Gregory Moore has recently pointed out, Fichte's name and his *Addresses* were seldom invoked in this context; on the contrary, the ideas expressed in the *Addresses* were more likely to be criticized as naive or suspect. No German prince made any effort to institutionalize Fichte's ideas for a revolutionary new system of German national education. Instead, "when

reaction set in after the Vienna Congress, German governments cracked down on any subversive ‘demagoguery’ that would upset the post-war restoration. The *Addresses* were not celebrated as a brave rallying cry to the German nation in its darkest hour but seen rather, by the Central Commission of Investigation in Mainz, as the *fons et origo* of liberalism and republicanism, corrupting German youth and striving to unite them ‘in a community independent of the individual governments.’³⁷ Thus, when I. H. Fichte proposed a second edition of the *Addresses* in 1824, his request was rejected out of hand by the Prussian censor, forcing him to turn to a printer in Saxony. Nevertheless, at the time of Fichte’s death, January 19, 1814, the *Addresses* was probably his best-known work, through which, in the words of one obituary, “this profound thinker performed his greatest service to his fatherland.”³⁸

To be sure, the *Addresses* did inspire some republican sympathizers and activists during the decades following Fichte’s death, especially those associated with the radical student movement (the so-called *Burschenschaften*), and somewhat later Fichte was cited as an inspiration by German constitutional liberals involved in the abortive revolutionary movements of 1848 (several of whom ended up in the United States, including the family A. E. Kroeger, who went on to make the first, earnest but deeply flawed, English translations of many of Fichte’s philosophical writings). Fichte’s political ideas also had a direct influence upon the socialist movement in Germany under the leadership of Ferdinand Lasalle, who authored several books on the relevance of Fichte’s ideas to contemporary German and international politics. Such influences, however, were vastly overshadowed by the growing conservative mood following the Congress of Vienna and by subsequent events, including the period of strong reaction following the events of 1848. Consequently, for several decades following his death in 1814 Fichte’s name was virtually forgotten and the *Addresses* seldom cited.

By the centennial of Fichte’s birth, however, in 1862 (the same year Otto von Bismarck became prime minister of Prussia), both the domestic and the international political situations had altered markedly, and the veritable flood of solemn public addresses, newspaper articles, and pamphlets that commemorated this event all tended to focus not on the *Wissenschaftslehre* but rather upon the portrait of Fichte as the heroic prophet of German nationalism, and emphasized the special significance of the *Addresses* in this respect. A good example of this may be found in the description by the historian and avid nationalist Heinrich von

Treitschke, in 1862, of the author of the *Addresses to the German Nation* as “the first prominent herald of the ideas that motivate Germany’s national party today.”³⁹

Fichte’s reputation as a fervent German nationalist grew apace during the latter half of the nineteenth century, with the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war and the ensuing consolidation of the German *Reich* under Prussian leadership in 1871. Similarly, during the period leading up to and surrounding World War I (a period that included numerous, fervently nationalistic centenary celebrations of Fichte’s death), the *Addresses* were frequently cited as providing prescient confirmation of the unique character and special destiny of the German nation. At the same time, of course, and for many of the same reasons, this same text was vilified by authors in Great Britain, France, America, and Italy.⁴⁰

Even in the aftermath of the Great War, Fichte’s name continued to be a nationalist rallying cry in Germany, and was invoked by Friedrich Ebert, first president of the Weimar Republic, in his inaugural address to National Assembly, February 6, 1919, when he declared that the task facing the new government was to put Fichte’s ideas into effect and to make good on “what Fichte gave to the German nation as its vocation.”⁴¹ Subsequently, both National Socialists and Marxists appealed to Fichte and the *Addresses*, though of course it was the claims of the former that triumphed. This, of course, only cemented Fichte’s notoriety among his many opponents. Here, for instance, is how the *Addresses* were described in 1941 by the conservative American poet-historian, Peter Viereck:

Fichte’s *Speeches to the German Nation*, during the War of Liberation [*sic!*], are the philosophic foundation of modern German *Realpolitik*. He preached a double moral standard: what is wicked for the individual to do becomes holy if done by the state. Unlike the individual the state should use for victory, if needed, all possible frauds, violations of law, and violent crimes. The collective Volk-ego should be bound by no external laws or limits.⁴²

It is largely because of the close association of Fichte’s *Addresses* with the more virulent forms of German nationalism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that this particular text, and indeed, Fichte’s philosophy in general, was largely ignored or dismissed by many philosophers and political theorists, even following the end of World War II.

As worldwide interest in Fichte's philosophy revived in the 1960s and thereafter, the *Addresses* remained toxic material in the eyes of many scholars, both in Germany and abroad. As a result, this text, for all its fame and notoriety, has been largely neglected by two recent generations of Fichte scholarship. It is, therefore, high time to reexamine and to reconsider the content of this controversial text, independently of the myths and the reception history that surround it. Such a reexamination, at least for English speaking readers, has been greatly facilitated by the recent appearance of not one but two excellent new English translations of the *Addresses*. It is our hope that the papers collected in this volume will contribute to a revival of scholarship in this area and stimulate new interpretations of the *Addresses to the German Nation*.

As first-time readers of the *Addresses* often discover to their surprise, the fate and calling of "the German people" is by no means the only focus of this rich text, which includes a variety of diverse themes and investigates a wide number of topics. Among the contents of the *Addresses* are the following: (1) an inquiry into the reasons for the capitulation of the Prussian army in the face of the Napoleonic invasion and the heavy responsibility for the same borne by Fichte's own countrymen, and especially by the prevailing system of education; (2) a sustained investigation of the question "What is German?" and of the relationship of the German *Volk* and of German *Kultur* to that of other Europeans; (3) a meditation, inspired by A. W. Schlegel and Herder, on the relationship between a "people" and their native language and on the important differences between those who possess a "living" or "primordial" language (*Ursprache*) and those who speak a dead and derivate Latinate tongue; (4) a new theory of education, greatly indebted to the work of Pestalozzi, as essential to both the moral development of the individual and the political progress of the nation; (5) an inquiry, with roots extending back to Fichte's earliest Jena writings, into the conditions that make possible the moral development of an individual and of a society, and indeed of humanity at large; (6) an argument, derived from A. W. Schlegel as well as from the ideologues of the French Revolution, that at certain specific historical points a certain specific nation has the mission and indeed the duty to serve as the "advance guard," as it were, of humanity at large, thus affirming the cosmopolitan ideals long affirmed by Fichte, but now in the context of an apology for Prussian nationalism; (7) a number of concrete proposals for instituting a series of truly radical educational reforms, first in Prussia and then in other German lands and finally in Europe as a

whole; and finally, (8) an account of the intimate connection between all of these practical goals and the cultivation of the science of philosophy, as perfected in Fichte's own *Wissenschaftslehre*.

All of these themes and several more are discussed by the authors included in this volume, who also represent a variety of different modes of analysis and styles of scholarship.

In chapter 1 Daniel Breazeale confronts what appears to be a serious tension between Fichte's early enthusiasm for human freedom and the system of education proposed in the *Addresses*, which calls for the "complete eradication" of the pupil's freedom and aims to produce individuals incapable of acting in opposition to the moral law. Breazeale insists, however, that a careful investigation of Fichte's early writings, with special attention to the crucial distinction between "formal" and "material" freedom, reveals that he did not, in the *Addresses*, retreat from his earlier position, but always viewed the term *freedom* as deeply ambiguous and maintained from the first that purely formal or "apparent" freedom must be replaced by genuinely material or "essential" freedom. It is precisely the task of the new system of primary education or moral cultivation proposed in the *Addresses* to foster, but not to compel, such a development of the individual and nation.

In chapter 2, Mário Jorge de Carvalho addresses the fact that one can think something and be completely convinced of its truth in a manner that may have little effect upon one's own life. After a concise revision of some milestones in the history of this question (notably Plato, Pascal, and Kierkegaard), de Carvalho focuses on Fichte's analysis of life's resistance to thought and outlines Fichte's very intricate model for explaining how life can offer resistance to thought and remain impervious or indifferent to it.

In chapter 3, Sila Özkara analyzes the theory of language presented in Fichte's fourth *Address* and does so by considering this as a theory of language on its own and by investigating how it may be situated within Fichte's corpus in the light of his larger metaphysical project. To that end, Özkara begins with a detailed explication and analysis of Fichte's theory of language and stresses the peculiarity of Fichte's theory as well as some of its inherent issues. She then argues that Fichte's theory of language, insofar as it champions a view of language as something that ought to be pure and free of foreign elements and influences, contradicts the three first principles underlying the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, which imply that difference is crucial and inherent in anything we may take as self-identical.

In chapter 4, Benjamin E. Crowe challenges standard histories of the reception of Fichte's *Addresses* and argues that this text engages deeply with issues regarding the nature of religion and its function (both for good and for ill) in society. The context of the *Addresses* helps to set into relief some important aspects of Fichte's philosophy of religion as a whole, as well as helping to situate Fichte's thought within the broader tradition that includes Hegel and the Left Hegelians. Crowe shows how Fichte's discussion of religion in the *Addresses* anticipates some of the central ideas in this later tradition, while still carving out a distinctive and philosophically weighty position.

In chapter 5, Jeffery Kinlaw explores the connection between spiritual and national renewal underlying Fichte's proposal for educational reform in the *Addresses* and in his moral theory. Kinlaw argues that Fichte centers his proposal for reform on the cultivation of one's inherent capacity to acknowledge normative authority and adhere to rational norms.

In chapter 6, Marina F. Bykova rejects a purely nationalistic reading of Fichte's *Addresses* and argues that they are consistent with the chief ideas of his practical philosophy, in particular, with his recognition of the importance of cultural identities for the formation of individuals and actual societies, and thus for the possible realization of a moral order in civil and political life. This self-realization is a journey of *Bildung*, an intricate process of self-cultivation, which necessarily involves enculturation to allow the individual to bring himself into accord with his society and the world. It is therefore most appropriate to read Fichte's *Addresses* in the context of the tradition of German humanism and to understand them as an attempt to offer a more elaborate account of *Bildung*.

In chapter 7, Rainer Schäfer interprets Fichte's nationalism not as an ethnic nationalism, but rather as a cultural and spiritual nationalism. Fichte's epistemology and ontology after 1800 combine the scientific notions of being, freedom, postulates of practical reason, and knowledge. Yet he finds that the concept of "Germanness" harbors a contradiction of universality on the one hand and particular German characteristics on the other. These particular German characteristics form a family resemblance, which is incompatible with the claim of universality. Schäfer argues that, for Fichte, freedom implies universality and cosmopolitanism, whereas the divine, the "One," implies appearance. This contradiction in Fichte's *Addresses* becomes virulent if one applies his scientific concepts to concrete political issues in order to show that only one specific nation is able to realize this form of freedom.

In chapter 8, Gabriel Gottlieb maintains that even though Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* appears to depart from the liberal commitment to freedom central to the writings of his Jena period, it can be reconciled with his earlier writings if one appreciates the nonideal nature of the *Addresses*. As a work of nonideal social and political philosophy, the *Addresses to the German Nation*, he argues, constitute a response to the problem of stability: How in the moment of crisis can a rational state stability be realized? The crisis, for Fichte, is both political and philosophical. By employing the concept of an imagined community, Fichte's response to the problem of stability is a proto- or philosophical nationalism that understands an existential commitment to freedom, as developed in his *Wissenschaftslehre*, to define what it means to be German. Gottlieb further suggests that his view of the German language resembles that of sacred languages, which were understood as giving expression to a divine reality. Likewise, the German language gives expression to rational life so that spiritual culture, or *Wissenschaftslehre*, can intervene in the life of a people, but it is freedom that defines Germanness rather than a commitment to a certain language. By virtue of their existential commitment to freedom, the German people are capable of responding to the political and philosophical crisis of modernity and thereby address the problem of stability.

In chapter 9, Arnold L. Farr examines the relationship between Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right*, *Closed Commercial State*, and *Addresses to the German Nation* with respect to his theory of recognition, rights, and the state and proposes a charitable reading of the *Addresses* in light of these other texts. Though it may seem as if Fichte's nationalism in the *Addresses* undermines his prior theory of right, recognition, and his cosmopolitan impulse, in fact Fichte continues to maintain all of the elements of his earlier works. Farr concludes that Fichte's account of how recognition works and of how rights are to be established and protected is transformed as he moves from the abstract universal idea of recognition- and intersubjectivity-constituted rights to the particular situation of the German people. Recognition functions at three distinct but related levels in Fichte's work, to which there are parallels in the political struggles in the twentieth century.

In chapter 10, Michael Steinberg argues that more is at stake in the *Addresses* than German national rebirth. They seek a way out of the sterility of a culture in which an extreme individualism conceals the intersubjective activity of reason in the world. Steinberg places Fichte's

political and educational prescriptions in the context of his philosophical history, as found in *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, and highlights his demand for an absolute separation between the contemporary generation and those who will be able to grasp and carry forward the work of reason. Fichte's fundamental question concerns the very possibility of conscious social transformation, especially within a world in which "there is no such thing as society." Foreshadowing both the early Marx and the Wagner of the *Ring*, Fichte's analysis is perhaps even more pertinent today.

In chapter 11, Tom Rockmore investigates what he characterizes as the deep tension, even contradiction, between Fichte's interest in freedom and his authoritarian substitution of a religious model as a necessary condition of the fulfilled life. Fichte's desire, in the wake of the Napoleonic invasion, to apply philosophy to Prussian politics, accords with his consistent aim to join theory to practice. Yet, according to Rockmore, this step forward is assorted with a step backward, for Fichte depicts the philosopher as someone who intervenes on behalf of true religion in order to bring about the Christian realm on earth, which represents a retreat from the modern effort to free reason from faith.

In chapter 12, Anthony N. Perrovich explains how, with the coming of World War I, debate arose about the relation of the Germany of classical idealism to the contemporary Germany that many British and American observers regarded as militaristic and aggressive. Fichte's *Addresses* played a key role in this debate, as opponents cited the text—indeed, often the same passages—to illustrate and support their assertions. Perrovich shows how these wartime attacks on classical German idealism played an important role in discrediting idealism more generally and in shaping the character of postwar British and American philosophy.

Finally, in chapter 13, George J. Seidel considers the historical context within which Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* were first presented, as well as the relation of this text to Fichte's early writings on political philosophy. He also discusses Fichte's notion of a nation, the role of education, and that of language in the formation of a people. Seidel finds serious fault lines in each of these motifs: the difference between a people (society) and a state; education as passing on the culture or as active learning and problem solving; and also the problem of fashioning a common German language amid a plethora of dialects. He concludes with a discussion of the serious difficulty, then as now, of nation building of any sort.

Notes

1. *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* [*The Vocation of Man*, trans. Peter Preuss (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987)]; *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat* [*The Closed Commercial State*, trans. Anthony Curtis Adler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012)]; *Sonnenklarer Bericht an das grössere Publikum über das Wesen der neuesten Philosophie* [*A Crystal-Clear Report to the General Public concerning the Actual Essence of the Newest Philosophy*, trans. John Botterman and William Rasch, in *Philosophy of German Idealism*, ed. Ernst Behler, (New York: Continuum, 1987)]; *Fr. Nicolai's Leben und sonderbare Meinungen*.

2. *Philosophie der Maurerei. Briefe an Konstant*, GA, I/8: 409–62. *The Philosophy of Masonry: Letters to Constance*, trans. Roscoe Pound, in *Masonic Addresses and Writings of Roscoe Pound* (New York: Macoy, 1953), 130–98.

3. See Fichte's December 15, 1802, letter to his brother Johann Gottlob, lamenting his financial situation and begging for assistance and his June 9, 1803 letter to Schelling, in which he reports that he has devoted three years to work on a new version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* without any lucrative employment, which left him in great financial difficulty. See too his July 1, 1803 letter to Cotta, in which he solicits help with his financial difficulties and inquires about the possibility of obtaining a position at a new school to be established in Paris for the purpose of training Protestant ministers.

4. This new edition was published by the Tübingen publisher Cotta, publisher of the first edition. That same year another, unauthorized edition of the *Foundations* was published in Jena by Gabler, an edition that includes some minor revisions that Fichte had sent to Gabler at a time when he was considering changing publishers for a projected (but never completed) revised version of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

5. *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre aus den Jahren 1801/02*, GA, II/6, 129–324.

6. *Privatissimum <für> G. D.*, GA, II/6, 329–73.

7. *Wissenschaftslehre 1804-I* (January–March), GA, II/7, 66–235; *Wissenschaftslehre 1804-II* (April–June), GA, II/8, 2–421 [*The Science of Knowing. J. G. Fichte's 1804 Lectures on the Wissenschaftslehre*, trans. Walter E. Wright (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005)]; and *Wissenschaftslehre 1804-III* (November–December), GA, II, II/7, 301–68.

8. *Die Principien der Gottes- Sitten- und Sittenlehre*, (February–March 1805), GA, II/7, 378–489.

9. *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, GA, I/9, 189–396. *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, trans. William Smith, in *PW*, Vol. I, 1–268.

10. *Institutiones omnium philosophiae*, GA, II/9: 34–171. *Vierter Vortrag der Wissenschaftslehre—Erlangen, im Sommer 1805*, GA, II/9, 179–311.

11. *Ueber das Wesen des Gelehrten, und seine Erscheinungen im Gebiete der Freiheit*, GA, I/8, 59–139. *The Nature of the Scholar and Its Manifestations*, trans. William Smith, in *PW*, Vol. I, 207–317.

12. *Die Anweisung zum seeligen Leben, oder auch die Religionslehre*, GA, I/9, 45–212. *The Way towards the Blessed Life, or Doctrine of Religion*, trans. William Smith, in *PW*, Vol. II, 289–486.

13. As reported by I. H. Fichte and cited in *FiG*, 6, pt. 2, 663.

14. See his anonymously published two-part tract, *Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publikums über die Französische Revolution* (1793/94), GA, I/1, 201–404. See too *Zürückforderung der Denkfreyheit von den Fürsten Europens, die sie bisher unterdrückten. Eine Rede* (1793) [*Reclamation of Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Oppressed it until Now. A Speech*, trans. Thomas E. Wartenberg, in *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schimdt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 119–41. Regarding Fichte's attitude toward the French revolution, see *La revolution français dan la pensée Européenne*, ed. Daniel Schluthess and Philippe Muller (Neuchâtel: Presses Académique, 1989).

15. *Der Patriotismus, und sein Gegentheil*, GA, II/9, 393–445.

16. "Cosmopolitanism is the dominant will that the goal of the human species be realized by the human species; patriotism is the will that that this goal be attained first of all in that nation to which we belong, and that from this nation this success will then spread to the entire species" (GA, I/9, 399).

17. *Ibid.*, 426.

18. For a detailed examination of the parallels between A. W. Schlegel's views on language and culture and Fichte's, see Xavier Léon, *Fichte et son Temps* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1950), Vol. II, Part I, and Vol. II, Part II, 67–78.

19. *Reden an die deutschen Krieger zu Anfange zu Feldzugs 1806 and In Beziehung auf dem Namenlosen*, GA, II, 79–85.

20. Fichte to Johanna Fichte, July 29 1807, GA, III/6, 153–54.

21. *Wissenschaftslehre, Königsberg*, GA, II/10, 111–217.

22. Fichte to Johanna Fichte, June 3, 1807, GA, III/6, 121. For Fichte's notes on Pestalozzi's book, see GA, II/10, 431–57.

23. *Über Machiavelli, als Schriftsteller, und Stellen aus seinen Schriften*, GA, I/9, 223–75.

24. *Die Republik der Deutschen*, GA, II/10, 377–426. The description of this work as "eine geplanten utopischen Schrift" comes from the editors of GA, II/10, 374.

25. *Deducierter Plan einer zu Berlin zu errichtenden höheren Lehranstalt*, GA, II/11, 83–170. [*Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin*, trans. G. H. Turnbull, in *ET*, 170–259.]

26. GA, III/6, 185.

27. Von Müller to Fichte, July 25, 1807, GA, III/6, 151.

28. From Fichte's public announcement of his new series of Sunday lectures, November 28, 1807, *GA*, I/10, 9.

29. Fichte to Beyme, January 2, 1808, *GA*, III/6, 213.

30. I. H. Fichte, *Fichtes Leben und literarische Briefwechsel*, 2nd ed. (Sulzbach: Brockhaus, 1862), Vol. I, 427–28. Re. Fichte's (now lost) Tacitus translations, see Léon, Vol. II, Part 2, 70–71.

31. "I know very well what I am risking; I know that a bullet may kill me, as it did Palme. Yet I do not fear this, I would gladly die for my cause" (Fichte to K. F. Beyme, January 2, 1708, *GA*, III/6, 213).

32. Johanna Fichte to Charlotte von Schiller, December 20, 1808, *GA*, III/6, 282.

33. *FiG*, 4, 73.

34. See I. H. Fichte, *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes Leben und literarische Briefwechsel*, Vol. I, 525–39.

35. See H. C. Engelbrecht, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: A Study of his Political Writings with Special Reference to his Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 126–28. For a detailed survey of the actual (as opposed to alleged) influence of Fichte's *Addresses* on the rise of German nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Rud Körner, "Die Wirkungen der Reden Fichtes," in *Forschungen zur Brandenburgische und Preussischen Geschichte*, 40 (1927): 65–87.

36. Eight contemporary reviews, not all of them positive and several very extensive, are collected in *Fichte in Rezensionen*, ed. Erich Fuchs, Wilhelm G. Jacobs, and Walter Schieche (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995), Vol. 4, 265–374.

37. Gregory Moore, "Translators Introduction," in *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. Gregory Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) = *AGN*.

38. *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, February 10, 1814, as cited in *FiG*, 5, 71–72.

39. Henrich von Trietschke, "Fichte und die nationale Idee," in *Deutsche Lebensbilder*, ed. Lotte Blasche (Leipzig: Fikentscher, 1927), 62.

40. See, e.g., Hermann Reincke-Bloch, *Fichte und der deutsche Geist von 1914* (Rostock: Warkentien, 1915); Hermann Schwarz, *Fichte und Wir* (Osterwieck/Harz: Zickfeldt, 1917); Jay Holland Rose, *Nationality and Modern History* (New York: Macmillan, 1916); E. L. Hovelatqem, *The Deeper Causes of the War* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1916); E. Goblot, "L'origine philosophique de la folie allemande. Les Discours à la Nation Allemande de Fichte," *Revue du Mois* (1915): 687–708; Felice Momigliano, "Amadeo Fichte e le caratteristiche del nazionalismo tedesco," *Nouva Antologia* 185 (1916): 62–75; John Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics* (New York: Holt, 1915); and George Santayana, *Egotism in German Philosophy* (New York: Scribner's, 1916).

41. Cited in Moore's Introduction to *AGN*, xxxv.

42. Peter Viereck, *Meta-Politics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind*, 2nd ed. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), 192. This passage is unchanged from the first, 1941 edition. Viereck thus insists that there is a "long but unbroken chain linking Fichte's nineteenth-century theories with Hitler's twentieth-century practice" (194).