

The Relation of Right and Morality in Fichte's Jena Period

Master thesis Philosophy

Student

Willam van Weelden
3223337

Supervisor

Ernst-Otto Onnasch

Second supervisor

Herman Hendriks

Introduction

One of the innovations of Fichte is his thorough separation of right from morality. Fichte's contemporaries frequently saw right as dependent on morality. For example, Kant saw right as a subset of morality: the sum of laws that can be promulgated. (MdS 6:229)¹ But Fichte separated right and morality by deducing both concepts from different grounds without any conceptual dependence between the two.

During his Jena period (1795-1800), Fichte published two main works: *Foundations of Natural Right* (1796) and *The System of Ethics* (1798). In these works Fichte emphasises that right and morality are separate domains which cannot be reduced to each other. Fichte most strongly emphasizes this separation with the words: “Both sciences are already – originally and without any help from us – separated by reason itself, and they are completely opposed to one another.” (FNR, SW III, 55; trans. 51)²

Fichte's explicit separation of right and morality in his Jena period has received widespread attention from scholars in recent years. Scholars seem to agree that there is some connection between right and morality in Fichte's Jena system, but it remains unclear what this relation is and how it stands in the broader context of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

Different authors seem to place this relation differently. James (2009) argues that right is a condition of morality and vice versa. In a later work, James (2011) expands this relation by arguing that virtue (a moral disposition) is required if Fichte's state is to function as a state at all. Another view, held by Waibel (2006), is that right and morality (in the *Foundations of Natural Right*) are fully separated because ethics is a relation of the I to itself, while right is the relation of the I to others outside. And right does not aim to allow man to follow his (inner) vocation. Yet another view is that morality gives moral incentives for establishing a rightful condition. In this way, right is still freestanding but it receives extra incentives for the moral rational being. (Estes, 2006) Neuhauser (1994) takes an even different view and argues that both right and morality are freestanding, but moral autonomy is a higher form of self-sufficiency than right. Here, the difference is gradual, where moral existence is a better form of existence. To conclude, Nomer (2013) brings right and morality together. He believes they derive from a common ground: self-positing subjectivity. But from that point onwards, they are separated.

As is clear from the overview above, there is considerable debate on where we can find the connection between right and morality in Fichte's theory, if there is one. Even in the authors who find such a connection, the exact relation between right and morality remains unclear. For if right and morality have a common ground, as Nomer concludes, that does not bring right and morality together as they not only seem to have different domains, but also seem to have different concepts of what it is to be an individual.

¹ The abbreviation MdS stands for *Metaphysik der Sitten*. This reference uses the default quotation style for the *Akademie Ausgabe*, where the first number refers to the volume and the second number refers to the page.

² The abbreviation FNR stands for *Foundations of Natural Right*. For references to this work I will refer to the page numbers of the “I.H. Fichte edition” of the *Grundlage des Naturrechts*, published in *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes Sämmtliche Werke*, vol 3, ed. I.H. Fichte (Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1845/46). The roman numerals refer to the volume and the number to the page number in that volume. The page number after the text trans. refers to the page number in the English translation: Fichte, J. (2006). *Foundations of Natural Right*. (F. Neuhauser, Ed., & M. Baur, Trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In this paper I want to investigate the relation between right and morality in Fichte's theory. My research question for this paper is: What is the relation between right and morality in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* during his Jena period?

I believe there is a fundamental connection between right and morality in Fichte's theory of the Jena period. This connection is not yet found in the current debate on Fichte. My thesis is that this fundamental connection is faith as we find it in *The Vocation of Man*. Fichte uses faith in *The Vocation of Man* to bring knowledge back to our freedom. There is nothing before this free choice and it is only through this free choice that I can understand right and morality at all.

To answer my research question, I will present a thorough analysis of Fichte's work and show how the themes are synthesised in Fichte's work. I will begin by closely analysing Fichte's deduction of the principle of right and the principle of morality. I will use this analysis to make clear in which ways right and morality are separated in Fichte's theory. Since right and morality both govern human action (though they govern different spheres) it is no surprise that there seems to be some overlap. I will investigate this overlap to show that there must be a fundamental connection between the two. This connection is still hidden when we stop with *The System of Ethics*. Therefore I will analyse Fichte's account of faith in book three of his *Vocation of Man*. When we have Fichte's account of faith, I will argue that right and morality are fundamentally connected through faith. Faith is the synthesis of formal freedom (right) and autonomy (morality) and without faith neither right nor morality can exist.

Of course, reading the *Vocation of Man* as part of Fichte's Jena period is problematic as this work was written after Fichte left Jena and also because the theme of this work seems to indicate a breaking point in Fichte's development. Therefore, before I analyse Fichte's account of faith, I will argue why I believe it is justified to read the *Vocation of Man* as part of Fichte's Jena period.

Right

Fichte deduces the concept of right and the applicability of this concept in his *Foundations of Natural Right* (1796). He starts with the concept of right, followed by an account of a social contract that is compatible with his concept of right and a further description of the rightful state. The question that Fichte wants to answer in this book is: "how is a community of free beings, qua free beings, possible?" (FNR, SW III, 85; trans. 46)

To answer this question, Fichte must show that free beings are required to mutually limit their freedom to allow all rational beings to be free. This requirement must itself also be compatible with the freedom of every individual, otherwise the limitation of freedom will ensue a contradiction. To solve this, Fichte deduces the concept of right from rationality (and freedom) itself. Fichte introduces a great innovation in that he posits reason as social: only in a community is self-consciousness, and thus reason, possible.

In this section I analyse Fichte's deduction of right and I analyse the reasons Fichte gives for separating right from morality.

Fichte deduces the concept of right from the concept of a rational being itself. This deduction consists of three steps:

(1) Positing oneself requires ascribing free efficacy: The only way the I can think of itself is through efficacy. Only through acting is it possible for the I to find itself.

(2) Self-consciousness requires a summons from another rational being: The I can only become self-conscious and find itself when it is called to reflect upon itself through the summons of another rational being.

(3) The existence of other rational beings gives the concept of right: When the I becomes self-conscious through the summons, I must recognize that I am summoned by another rational being. The I must therefore find a way to relate to this other free being. This relation is the concept of right.

Step 1: Positing oneself requires ascribing free efficacy

“A finite rational being cannot posit itself without ascribing a free efficacy to itself”. (FNR, SW III, 17; trans. 18)

For Fichte, the subjective I is self-consciousness. (FNR, SW III, 20; trans. 21) Self-consciousness can only be achieved through an activity which reverts back into subjectivity. Reverting in itself means that the I reflects upon itself, and through reflections it makes itself understandable, it limits itself. Doing this, it makes itself both object and subject in the same moment. A rational being is thus by definition a finite rational being. (FNR, SW III, 17; trans. 18) And what is finite, can reflect only on something that is finite itself. Therefore the activity that reverts into itself reflects on something that is finite. This activity limits the I and is thus the self-limitation of the I. (FNR, SW III, 18; trans. 19)

Through this limitation, the concept of an outside world arises: The activity is limited, so there must be something outside of the activity that is limiting the activity. This not-I must be a world outside. This world is, for now, only the opposition of our activity, not the substantial world we encounter daily. In Fichte’s vocabulary, the limited I is *“the I intuited in its original limits.”* (FNR, SW III, 18; trans. 19)

But an activity is always a particular activity, not an activity in general. So there must be some place where this activity is performed. In other words, the activity must be an efficacy and an efficacy must have an object which is acted upon. (FNR, SW III, 19; trans. 20) So there exist objects for the I if the I is to act at all. And since the activity of reflection is an activity, there must exist an object. These objects are not figments of the imagination, but they are intuited by the rational being. (FNR, SW III, 18; trans. 19) The I intuits the limitation of its efficacy.

This activity, according to Fichte, is absolutely free with regards to its content: it must be possible for the I to not be constrained to a single action, but to act in a variety of ways. (FNR, SW III, 19; trans. 19) The actual activity however, is a specific activity and that means that it has a specific object on which it acts. Before the I can perform this activity, it must first select the specific activity from the possible ways in which the I can act.

Selecting a specific activity requires the forming of the concept of an end. Forming the concept of an end is willing. (FNR, SW III, 19; trans.20) The concept of an end is directed at an object, but the I is free in forming this concept, thus the will is free. (FNR, SW III, 19; trans. 20)

From the concept of an end follows the concept of an efficacy, for an end is only possible if it can be acted upon. In order to act, it is again required to have objects which are acted upon. So Fichte synthesises the concept of an end with intuiting an outside world: They not only require one another, they are the same, viewed from a different perspective. (FNR, SW III, 20; trans. 20)

It is crucial to note that we are still thinking of a free efficacy, not something that is in any way determined. The free efficacy is restricted by objects and the efficacy strives to nullify those objects. (FNR, SW III, 19; trans. 20) Only from freedom is the concept of limitation thinkable. Setting an end means that you freely decide to do something. Only when you set an end freely, can you encounter a limitation. And it is only through the limitation of the free efficacy that the I finds itself. The I, as seen subjectively, can only understand itself as free.

The I Fichte talks about is not a mythical existence that is capable of intuiting and positing its efficacy. Rather, the I is the coming together of intuiting and willing (FNR, SW III, 22; trans. 22), it is both the acting subject and the object at the same time. And the I can only find itself (i.e. it can only be self-consciousness) through this activity. (FNR, SW III, 20; trans. 21)

To summarize: The I becomes self-conscious through willing. Willing is setting an end. Setting an end requires that there are objects that can be manipulated to form the end that the I has set. Self-consciousness requires the I to posit an outside world. (FNR, SW III, 23; trans. 24)

This deduction leads to a contradiction: The I can only become self-conscious through ascribing an efficacy to itself. This presupposes that there is an object to which the efficacy is directed. But that means that there must be a cognition of the object prior to forming the concept of an efficacy. But concepts first arise through the I positing an activity. To solve this problem, Fichte introduces the concept of other free beings outside of the I.

Step 2: Self-consciousness requires a summons from another rational being

“The finite rational being cannot ascribe to itself a free efficacy in the sensible world without also ascribing such efficacy to others, and thus without also presupposing the existence of other finite rational beings outside of itself.” (FNR, SW III, 30; trans. 29)

The only way the circularity of the first step can be solved, is when both the object and the efficacy are given to the I in the same moment. In this case, the problem of circularity disappears, because there is no more dependence in time of the concept on the object and vice versa. But this temporal problem can only be resolved if the object and the subject’s efficacy are one and the same. Only in this case are the subject’s efficacy and the object synthetically united. (FNR, SW III, 32; trans. 31)

The I cannot come to this synthesis by itself, for there is nothing in the I that could start the bringing together of object and subject. There must be something outside the I that gives it to the I. But free efficacy cannot be given to the I as self-consciousness arises only when the I finds its own efficacy limited. This action of giving the I as both object and subject to itself must therefore be of such a nature that it calls the I to self-consciousness while retaining the freedom of the I. Otherwise, the I will never become self-conscious.

Fichte introduces the concept of a summons [*eine Aufforderung*] which does exactly this: it summons the I to determinate itself through the concept of its own freedom. (FNR, SW III, 33; trans. 31) This summons is a determination from outside the I that forces the I to reflect upon itself and so to realize its free efficacy. This summons leaves the I free by being a limitation of the unlimited freedom of the I, but it does not force the I to take a certain action. In this respect, the I must reflect upon the limitation and decide what it will do. (FNR, SW III, 33; trans. 32) The I finds itself as an object in that it is possible to exercise its efficacy, but it can also choose to not act at all. (FNR, SW III, 34; trans. 33)

If a summons is to be effective, the I must also understand the summons to be a summons. The opposition of an object makes the I set an end, but it does not make the I itself into an object. This means that the summons cannot be part of the positing of the I, because the summons necessarily precedes and founds the self-consciousness of the I. It is the summons that makes the I available to itself. (Williams, 1994, 145) And only then is the I capable of limiting its free efficacy.

This summons carries within itself the concept of reason and freedom. For it is only when these concepts are communicated in the summons that the I is elevated to self-consciousness. But a concept is not a part of nature, thus the summons must be made by a being that has these concepts as well. Concepts exist only for rational beings. Therefore, the summons is made by a rational being. (FNR, SW III, 36; trans. 35)

To summarize: A summons contains the concept of the I as a free being and with this concept, the I determines itself. This summons can only be given by another rational being, because the concept of freedom does not exist in nature. It is given by something above nature.

Before I proceed to the next step in the deduction, it is important to note that the summons is not the cause of the I's freedom. (Williams, 1994, 151) The summons does not determine the freedom of the I; it does not have the I as an end. For having the I as an end would mean treating the I as a mere object. In this case, the other being would not make a summons, but simply act on the world. The summons calls upon the I to reflect upon itself and so find its freedom.

This account is crucial for Fichte's thoughts about reason: reason is social. As Fichte says, it is impossible to think of individuals, one must always think of the entire species. (FNR, SW III, 39; trans. 38) There is a social relation to other human beings prior to any knowledge or even self-consciousness. (Williams, 1994, 154) This makes Fichte's entire theory of reason, and thus of right, dependent on the other. I will return to the social nature of reason with the synthesis of right with morality.

Step 3: The existence of other rational beings gives the concept of right

"The finite rational being cannot assume the existence of other finite rational beings outside it without positing itself as standing with those beings in a particular relation, called a relation of right." (FNR, SW III, 41; trans. 39)

After having deduced a summons and the existence of other rational beings, Fichte continues to specify the relationship between the I and these other rational beings. In this step Fichte deduces the concept of right: the relation between free and rational beings.

The argument for right is straightforward: Through the summons of the other, the I is called to reflection and thus to self-consciousness. But that the other summoned me means that the other recognized me as a free and rational being: The other did not treat me like a natural object, but as something special. The other has thus limited his freedom through his concept of my freedom.

Fichte here introduces the concept of a sphere of influence. This sphere is the sphere in the world where the I can act with efficacy. That the other limits his freedom means that the other limits his sphere as to leave me a sphere of influence of my own. (FNR, SW III, 43; trans. 41) And because I reciprocally acknowledge the other as a free and rational being, I limit my sphere of activity to allow the other his own sphere. For the action of limiting your activity is the only way to communicate to

the other that you recognize him as a rational being. Recognition simply means limiting your own sphere. (FNR, SW III, 47; trans. 44)

Having a sphere of influence, I must have the means of acting in the sensible world. In other words: I must have a body if I am to act.³ And this body is the sphere of all the possible actions of the I. (FNR, SW III, 59; trans. 56)

This reciprocal recognition is crucial in Fichte's account of right for it shows a fundamental difference between right and morality. Recognizing the other is not an ethical duty. Ethics has not been deduced, so the concept of a duty is not applicable in this situation. Instead, the reciprocal recognition of one another as rational beings is a (mere) requirement of logical consistency. (James, 2013, 118)

Fichte's argument for this is as follows: a summons can only take place if the other recognizes my freedom and limits his sphere accordingly. When I receive a summons, I can only understand the summons as a summons from a rational being. The very possibility of self-consciousness requires me to recognize the other's freedom. Without this recognition (the action of limiting your sphere) the summons could not take place at all. (FNR, SW III, 51; trans. 48) And without the summons, self-consciousness would not arise and I would not be an actual rational being. (FNR, SW III, 74; trans. 69) Recognizing the other thus becomes a requirement for self-consciousness, but this has no ethical dimension.

When limiting your sphere of activity, you limit it through the concept of the freedom of the other. The freedom that Fichte here means is the freedom to carry out the concept of your actions in the world, i.e. to act under the guidance of your concepts. (FNR, SW III, 51; trans. 48) And for everyone to carry out these concepts, we must reciprocally expect one another to keep recognizing the other as a rational being. Right is thus that everyone limits his freedom through the possibility of the freedom of all. In Fichte's words:

The relation between free beings that we have deduced (i.e. that each is to limit his freedom through the concept of possibility of the other's freedom, under the condition that the latter likewise limit his freedom through the freedom of the former) is called the *relation of right*; and the formula that has now been established is the *principle of right*. (FNR, SW III, 52; trans. 49)

The summons means that there are not only individuals, but a community. Only in a community can a summons take place. The very concept of the individual is social. And my individuality requires that I always recognize the other in this community or I would make my own individuality impossible. Therefore I must always recognize other free beings outside of me as free beings. (FNR, SW III, 45; trans. 43)

It is important to note that there are two concepts of recognition at work in Fichte's account. There is a passive recognition where you recognize a summons as a summons and an active recognition to enter into a free reciprocal relation. (Ware, 2009, 265) The passive recognition is automatic, but the active recognition rests on a voluntary decision of both the summoner and the

³ The relation between mind and body in Fichte's thought is too complex to go into given the scope of this paper. For a discussion on the mind-body problem in Fichte, see Zöllner, G. (2006) *Fichte's Foundations of Natural Right and the Mind-Body Problem*. In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Rights, Bodies and Recognition* (pp. 59-70). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

summoned. Because this decision is free, there is no reason why someone would want to enter a reciprocal relation with the other. This makes living in a community optional as there simply is no need to want to live in a community. (Ware, 2009, 266) Only if you want to live in a community must you limit your sphere of influence, otherwise the community is impossible. (FNR, SW III, 88; trans. 81) Consistency (consistently limiting your own sphere) is a free choice and it is always possible to choose to be inconsistent. (FNR, SW III, 86; trans. 80)

To summarize: The I finds another being outside itself through the summons. Both summoner and summoned limit their sphere of activity because they recognize each other as rational beings. This relation, where each freely limits his sphere through the idea of the freedom of the other, is the relation of right.

It is in this section on right that Fichte explicitly rejects the idea that right is based on morality. What is at stake here is right as a condition of self-consciousness. (FNR, SW III, 52; trans. 49) Right has been deduced without any reference to morality. And since a concept can only be deduced from a single ground, it is impossible to deduce right once more from morality. (FNR, SW III, 54; trans. 50)

The other difference between right and morality is that the moral law commands categorically, while right permits. Right is an end that I can freely change: I can choose to no longer limit my freedom, i.e. right is voluntarist. But morality is categorical. (James, 2009, 340) In other words: Right is limiting one's sphere of influence. Within this sphere of influence I have the freedom to do what I will; there is no limit to what I may do within this sphere. Morality is different in that it prescribes or forbids actions even if the action would be within my right. I will go into these differences into more detail when I analyse morality.

Coercion, rights and the social contract

Because (actively) recognizing is always based on a free choice, a community is only possible under the presupposition that others want to live in a community as well. Because this is a free decision of all members, we may expect each other to be consistent since we all make ourselves subject to that law. But not everyone will be consistent, since consistency is a choice. And when another is not consistent, he can impede my sphere of influence, impede my freedom.

The specific freedom I have in a community, is my right. Right is thus permissive as it sets the boundaries in which I may act and where no one may interfere. As long as this right is derived from the concept of me being a person, it is an original right. (FNR, SW III, 94; trans. 87) When someone enters my sphere of influence, my right is being violated. This gives me the right to violate the freedom of the other until my freedom is restored. In this situation I have a right to coercion. (FNR, SW III, 95; trans. 88)

The problem with coercion is that I need enough power to coerce. If someone who impedes my freedom is stronger, I may have a right, but I can't actually coerce him. Therefore, we must found a state in order to give me as much coercive power as I have right. This state must be founded upon the free choice of all individuals. In the social contract, the individuals agree to the state and agree to its laws in order to secure their own freedom.

The complete deduction of the state and the social contract is not important for my purpose, so I will leave it at this short summary. The important point here is that right must be enforceable and that the only way to achieve this, is to have a state which can coerce its members in order to protect the

freedom of all. A state is thus necessary if a community of free beings is to exist. This is different from morality, where there is no coercion. I will return to this point in the next chapter when I compare rights to duties.

Morality

Fichte deduces morality in his *The System of Ethics* (1798). The deduction of the sphere of morality partly follows the same path as the deduction of right in the *Foundations of Natural Right*. The *Foundations of Natural Right* gives a brief account of self-consciousness and then focusses on the application of the concept of right. *The System of Ethics* gives a more thorough account of self-sufficiency. *The System of Ethics* then follows with a theory of action to show that the concept of morality is applicable to human beings. Only a small part of the book is devoted to a deduction of the particular duties of human beings.

In this section I analyse Fichte's deduction and applicability of morality. I will also look at how morality and the duties derived from morality seem to relate to right.

Deduction of the principle of morality

Fichte begins his book by remarking that human beings find themselves performing actions for the sake of these actions themselves. This is what he calls the moral or ethical nature of human beings. (SS, SW IV, 13; trans. 19)⁴ The question Fichte wants to answer is how a human being can feel this compulsion to act for the sake of such a specific act.

The deduction of the principle of morality starts out the same way as the *Foundations of Natural Right*: The I can only become self-consciousness by willing, by ascribing a free efficacy to itself. As already outlined in the *Foundations of Natural Right*, the I can only understand itself as willing (setting an end). The I thus determines itself through its limitation of what is outside the I. In this, the I posits itself as active and this positing is a causality by means of a concept, i.e. an absolute activity. The other name for this activity is freedom, (SS, SW IV, 9; trans. 14) or the "absolute power [of the I] to make itself absolutely". (SS, SW IV, 32; trans. 37) This way the I becomes an intellect.

Fichte's concept of freedom is hard to grasp, precisely because freedom is incomprehensible: it is complete detachment from every form of external determinacy (it is freely positing itself). Remember that a finite rational being can only reflect on something that is finite itself. (FNR, SW III, 18; trans. 19) So reflecting on freedom, understanding freedom means to limit it so that it becomes finite. But limiting freedom means making it determinate. Determinate freedom is no longer freedom. This means that freedom is incomprehensible.

The I is a tendency: it is what it posits itself to be. A tendency manifests itself as a drive in the I. (SS, SW IV, 40; trans. 44) This drive is not free, it comes from necessary being and in that way it is conditioned. But from a drive comes a thought. And this thought, the way the I experiences the drive

⁴ The abbreviation SS stands for *Das System der Sittenlehre* (The System of Ethics). For references to this work I will refer to the page numbers of the "I.H. Fichte edition" of *Das System der Sittenlehre*, published in *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes Sämmtliche Werke*, vol 4, ed. I.H. Fichte (Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1845/46). The roman numerals refer to the volume and the number to the page number in that volume. The page number after the text trans. refers to the page number in the English translation: Fichte, J. (2005). *The System of Ethics*. (D. Breazeale, & G. Zöller, Trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

in thinking, is pure agility, is free. (SS, SW IV, 46; trans. 49) The I is thus free in thinking because it determines itself through the concept of itself.

The I (the rational being) can only produce itself through thinking, in concepts. Thinking is free, so we have to think of the rational being as free. (SS, SW IV, 51; trans. 53)

This freedom is a freedom under the law of self-sufficiency (or self-activity). Thinking of yourself as free is thinking yourself under this law of self-sufficiency or, in other words, the law of freedom. (SS, SW IV, 53; trans. 55) That means that in thinking, the I gives itself the law of self-activity and this makes the I its own ultimate ground. (SS, SW IV, 50; trans. 52)

It is important to note that Fichte concedes that the reason to believe in the freedom of the I and the law of freedom is thoroughly practical. You must want the moral law to be true. There is no theoretical reason for this inference. (SS, SW IV, 53-54; trans. 56) You simply must want it to be true. This faith in the existence of freedom is a recurring theme and we will find this again when we look to the vocation of man.

After Fichte deduced the law of freedom, he makes the step to morality: I think my freedom only under the law of freedom. And all my acting must be brought under this law; an unbroken chain of freedom. This unbroken chain of freedom is moral existence. (SS, SW IV, 56; trans. 58) This brings Fichte to the principle of morality:

THE PRINCIPLE OF MORALITY IS THE NECESSARY THOUGHT OF THE INTELLECT THAT IT OUGHT TO DETERMINE ITS FREEDOM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONCEPT OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY, ABSOLUTELY AND WITHOUT EXCEPTION. (SS, SW IV, 59; trans. 60)

It is interesting that Fichte does not mention the summons of the other in his deduction of the principle of morality. As we learned in the *Foundations of Natural Right*, the summons is required for the I to become self-consciousness. Without a summons, there is no actual rationality. It is only through the summons that I am brought to freedom.

I believe we find here one of the differences between Fichte's theories of right and morality. Although a summons is required to become self-conscious, morality turns inwards on the I while right turns to the outside. In right, I must attribute a sphere of activity to myself through which I limit my freedom through the concept of the freedom of the other. And the only way to do this is to act; to show the other that I recognize him as a rational being. But for morality, the I turns inwards in itself and makes freedom its absolute law. Although a summons is required, the other is no longer needed once the I becomes self-conscious. Both right and morality share a common ground: freedom. But they have a different result because of the direction the I takes: the freedom of myself and the other, or the freedom of myself alone. This is what Fichte means when he says that right and morality are deduced separately. (FNR, SW III, 54; trans. 50)

A more fundamental difference between right and morality is that the idea of freedom at play in the deduction of the principle of morality is different from the idea of freedom in the deduction of right. In right, freedom is external freedom (formal freedom in Fichte's terminology): my sphere of activity in which I can do what I want. Another has no right to impede this freedom as long as I do not impede on his freedom. In morality, freedom is the freedom of making a law for yourself: autonomy. And only that act which strives towards my self-sufficiency is a moral act.

Acting requires that I make the concept of an end. Right only limits the ends I can set through the freedom of all. It does not judge the ends I set substantially. But morality does not

approve of just any end. Our freedom is determined under the law of freedom and that law prescribes what I should do: the thought under the law of freedom is necessary. It issues an *ought*. (SS, SW IV, 60; trans. 61) I will get back to this point in the next section where I look at duties.

Duty

After having deduced the principle of morality, Fichte continues by deducing the existence of the body and the sensible world. Although this argument is much more thorough than the argument in the *Foundations of Natural Right*, the central point of the argument is the same: in order to think of myself as free, I need a place to act. In order to act I require an object on which I can act. And to act in the sensible world, I require a body. (SS, SW IV, 128; trans. 122)

Since my body is a natural object, it is subject to the determination of the sensible world. But my freedom is opposed to causality and not subjected to the determination of the sensible world. (SS, SW IV, 115; trans. 110) Because my nature is a closed whole, I am never fully self-sufficient: I am always under the influence of a drive. The ethical drive, the drive to absolute self-sufficiency, demands freedom for the sake of freedom. I will never reach that point, I will never be completely self-sufficient as long as I live in the sensible world. So the final end of the rational being, i.e. absolute self-sufficiency, lies in infinity. (SS, SW IV, 149; trans. 142)

I cannot grasp infinity. The I is by its nature finite and can only have finite goals. But every step on the way, every finite goal I set, must bring me closer to this absolute goal. This gives the principle of ethics: “*Fulfill your vocation in every case [...]*”. (SS, SW IV, 150; trans. 143)

To fulfil my vocation, I must act freely to become free. (SS, SW IV, 153; trans. 145) But how can I act freely? Since the I is limited, it must act in a determinate manner. But how can I be free then? The only way to act free is if the ground of the action is a duty. For only a duty determines the I through the consciousness of the I itself. This is the only way in which the action is determinate, yet freely given by my freedom; the only way to synthesize causality and freedom: “The ethical drive thus aims both to possess causality and not to possess it; and it possesses it solely by not possessing it, for what it demands is: be *free*.” (SS, SW IV, 154; trans. 146)

If I act morally, I act with self-awareness and consciousness. This means that there are no actions that are morally indifferent, for I am either conscious or not, (SS, SW IV, 155; trans. 148) I am either free or not. There is no middle road. The moral law, the law of freedom, is always involved in acting, because I must always act freely. And there are no actions that are at the same time free and not free. The ethical drive drives us therefore to form a categorical imperative.

This is an important distinction between rights and duties. A right permits: it is the sphere of influence in which I can do what I want. But morality commands: it commands that I take an action because I ought to take that action.

This now makes more clear the two different concepts of freedom at play in Fichte’s theory of right and theory of morality. In right, my freedom extends so far as I do not interfere with the freedom of others. This is external freedom. But for morality, it is freedom that makes a law to itself. Freedom makes free by issuing an ought. The freedom in ethics is internal freedom. These two kinds of freedom can conflict. I can perform an action which I have a right to do and in that way I am free. But that same action may be immoral because it is not a duty. Because right and ethics preside over two completely different ways in which an individual can be free. It is necessary for Fichte to separate them.

Why be moral?

Morality is also called the good will. (SS, SW IV, 157; trans. 149) In the *Foundations of Natural Right*, Fichte defined the will as the freely setting of an end. In *The System of Ethics*, he defines an act of will as the “absolutely free transition from indeterminacy to determinacy, accompanied by a consciousness of this transition.” (SS, SW IV, 158; trans. 149) The first words are important: this transition is absolutely free. Acting morally depends on my arbitrary choice. But if it is an arbitrary choice, I need to know why I ought to act in accordance with the moral law and also, which action the moral law demands of me at a given time.

To start with the second question: how do I know what I must do? To know this, I must have a conviction of my duty. But that just pushes the question back one level: for how do I become convinced of my duty? The moral law is formal and cannot give me this conviction itself. (SS, SW IV, 166; trans. 157)

I become convinced of my duty through a feeling. A feeling that coldly approves a determinate cognition. A feeling of truth and certainty that approves, as though the outcome was already expected and needed merely to be discovered. (SS, SW IV, 167; trans. 158) This feeling is my conscience. The condition of the morality of my actions is therefore acting according to my conscience. (SS, SW IV, 173; trans. 164) This feeling, conscience, cannot err. For if it could, I could never be certain what my duty is. Conscience is the highest consciousness and can therefore not be judged by anything else. (SS, SW IV, 174; trans. 165)

Now that I understand how I can know my duty, the question is: why should I do my duty? I cannot answer simply that I have to do it because it is my duty, for that is precisely the conclusion being doubted. This problem becomes even more important when we reflect on Fichte’s account of how an I becomes conscious of his duty.

Instrumental rationality is the first level of the rational being. The I can simply choose to only act on natural impulses such as hunger and thirst and never reflect on itself. No real freedom would occur in this situation. To rise to the level of morality, the I must have a maxim. But something becomes a maxim only if the I freely chooses the maxim as the rule of the I’s own acting. (SS, SW IV, 180; trans. 171) When choosing a rule, the I becomes self-conscious and the I can only understand itself as free, thus raising itself to the level of morality.

But as Fichte says, freedom cannot be comprehended. (SS, SW IV, 182; trans. 173) To comprehend freedom would be to limit it, to make it determinate. And then it would stop being freedom. That means the choice of going from instrumental rationality to making maxims is based on a free choice. And there is nothing to explain why an I would make this transition to the level of morality.

Fichte holds that the I *ought* to raise itself to this level (SS, SW IV, 181-182; trans. 172), but the I can only see his duty after he has raised himself to this level. (Simply because morality is not available at the lower level.) Evil is then, in Fichte’s view, not doing something against morality, but the absence of the knowledge of what is moral; the laziness of the rational being to not bring itself to the level of morality. (SS, SW IV, 202; trans. 191)

Becoming a moral agent is the result of a free decision. Without freedom there is no morality. (SS, SW IV, 232; trans. 221) A decision everyone *ought* to make. However, since the ought can only be understood from the standpoint of morality, this ought will hold no sway towards non-moral rational agents.

More importantly, an action is only moral when the motivation of the action is the conscience that the action is a duty, that is, an action targeted at my freedom. (Self-sufficiency for self-sufficiency's sake.) Here lie two fundamental differences between right and morality. First, though right is based on a free choice, I must acknowledge right if I want to live in a community. There is no equivalent requirement of consistency in ethics, instead there is an ought. Secondly, right can be enforced, while morality cannot.

When I recognize the other as a rational being, I must limit my freedom. I have an ethical duty to do so. This is because the body is a prerequisite for morality. And I may never stand in the way of morality, thus I must give the other his freedom so that he can be moral. (SS, SW IV, 232; trans. 221) In order to be consistent, I have to assume that the bodies of others are likewise prerequisites for the morality of others. But when I am summoned, I can limit my freedom for the wrong reasons: I can limit my freedom because I know I cannot overpower the other, or I can limit my freedom while abiding my time in order to get what I want. All these considerations are immoral, even though they are compliant with right. The other who summons me cannot ask more of me than that I limit my freedom. The reason for which I do this is irrelevant to him. From the standpoint of morality, I must limit my freedom, but I must do this because morality commands it. No other reasons are acceptable.

The second difference, enforceability, works in the same way. When I do impede on the freedom of the other, he can coerce me into leaving him a sphere of freedom precisely because I do not limit myself through the concept of right. (FNR, SW III, 95; trans. 88) But when I limit my freedom, he has nothing more to say. The other has a claim only to the legality of my actions, not the morality of my actions. Again, for morality, the picture is different: morality is the result of a free choice. The thought that I can be forced to act freely for the sake of self-sufficiency is incomprehensible. Therefore, it is impossible to coerce someone into being moral. This second reason is a strong reason to separate right from morality. Right without coercion is empty, while morality with coercion would not be morality at all. And right "[...] must be enforceable, even if there is not a single human being with a good will;" (FNR, SW III, 54; trans. 50)

To summarize, there are several fundamental differences between right and morality in Fichte's theory: (a) Right is deduced from the summons by the other who calls me to limit my freedom through the idea of the freedom of the other. Morality is deduced from the concept of self-sufficiency alone. (b) Right requires consistency if I want to live in a community, but no more than that. Morality gives an *ought*, I simply must do it. (c) Right can be coerced, since right only rules over the actions I take, but not over the reasons for my actions. Morality also prescribes actions, but an action is only moral insofar as the reason for acting is self-sufficiency. (d) Freedom in right is formal while freedom in morality is autonomy where the I acts for self-sufficiency's sake. Right and morality are grounded in different principles. (Neuhouser, 1994, 174)

This makes clear that Fichte is right to separate right from morality. They govern separate domains and they hold no sway in each other's domain.

The problem: interdependence of right and morality

In the previous sections, I have analysed why Fichte separated right from morality. Given the two domains, this separation is necessary in Fichte's larger framework. But this does not end the debate, for there seem to be several dependencies between right and morality that confuse the separation that Fichte so thoroughly made. In this section I will show what these dependencies are.

Many of the duties and rights of humans are independently deduced within both right and morality. For example, in right you must choose a profession in one of the estates. This is needed to allow anyone enough property to live. In morality it is a duty to create these same estates, but for a different reason: to distribute the responsibility to further reason's self-sufficiency. For right, I must limit my freedom because I must be consistent. From morality's point of view, I must leave the other room to be moral and I even have a duty to be sincere to the other. (SS, SW IV, 283; trans.270) Another example is the sanctity of the body. In right, the body is absolute property because it is a prerequisite for freedom. And allowing the other a sphere of freedom means that his body is inviolable. In morality, the body is the actualisation that allows the agent to be moral, i.e. act morally in the sensible world. In order to allow the other to be moral, his body is sacred. These are a selection of duties that have corresponding rights as the list is longer still. I believe that this is a sign of a fundamental connection between right and morality and not just mere chance. And this connection lies in the social nature of reason.

The social nature of reason is found in the summons: After the I is summoned, the I places itself in a relation of right to the summoner. If both subjects are to live in a community, they must limit their freedom in order to be able to live together. In right, a community is voluntary. I can choose not to live in a community with others and there is no problem as seen from right. But morality has a different story. If I am to be free, I must live in a society where I can cultivate my freedom. (Neuhouser, 1994, 169) Only in a community can I be educated to freedom. (SS, SW IV, 183; trans. 174) I have a duty to live in a community precisely because my self-consciousness requires a summons. I am only free when I am recognized by others and so summoned by them, and conversely, I am free only when I recognize the other. Only through the act of recognition am I autonomous. (Nance, 2012, 15)

But this is not the entire story. For I must act morally, but other rational beings must act morally as well. The ultimate goal of morality, complete self-sufficiency, is not an individual goal. The ultimate goal is the absolute self-sufficiency of all rational beings. (SS, SW IV, 231; trans. 220) That means that I can also achieve my end when someone else acts morally. Fichte even goes so far as to say that true virtue is found in acting for the community. (SS, SW IV, 256; trans. 245)

Of course, forcing someone else to act morally is self-contradictory. But in a society the good individual is able to educate his peers. In Fichte's vocabulary: he can harmonize the judgement of what is moral with the judgement of all other rational beings. (SS, SW IV, 233; trans. 221) This makes morality a communal end: all members must harmonize their judgement. In order to do this, individuals need institutions and other structures that enable them to come together and reflect on their judgement. Such institutions can only be realized within the context of a state. So membership of a state is an absolute duty of conscience. (SS, SW IV, 238; trans. 226)

Furthermore, a summons can only occur within a community, for I need to be summoned by the other. Only if I am summoned do I become aware of myself as an I. This in its turn is a prerequisite for becoming aware of both the relation of right and morality through the deductions shown before. Were I not to be summoned, I would not find myself and I would not know morality, I would be an animal. Therefore, the summons is also a necessary prerequisite for morality. And if there were no community, I would never be summoned. Without a summons, there would be no morality at all. And for the summons, there first must be a community. A community necessarily requires the concept of right. It would seem that morality requires right, as without it the summons could not set the I to reflect upon itself and find morality.

But once I become conscious of my morality, my right is no longer optional: I have a duty to enter into a community with the other, even though my external freedom does not require me to. For the rational being, ethics transforms right into something that is mandatory, while the external freedom is untouched.⁵ This is consistent with Fichte's idea that morality is the highest science (SS, SW IV, 218; trans. 207): it can preside over other sciences, but that does not mean that other sciences can be derived from it. (Neuhouser, 1994, 176)

When we approach the connection between right and morality from the other side, it is clear that right requires morality as well. For this, we must look at Fichte's social contract theory. Fichte's contract consists of four stages or contracts. In the first contract, the citizens promise to respect each other's property. But a promise alone is not enough and therefore, in the second contract, they promise to protect each other's property against violation. But this contract gives no security either, because you can never know whether the second contract will be upheld when the time comes. So in a third contract the state is founded. This state must defend the property of all citizens. Together these three contracts make up the civil contract. (FNR, SW III, 204; trans. 177)

For Fichte a contract is only valid as long as all parties adhere to the conditions of the contract. So in the case of the social contract, when one person violates another's property, the contract between the violator and the rest of society is void. In this case, society or its sovereign becomes the judge of the perpetrator. Because the contract is void, all property of the perpetrator falls to the state. This fourth contract, that the whole (society) or the sovereign is the judge, is the subjection contract.

Fichte takes this approach because he wanted to completely separate right from morality. Right is freestanding because it does not have to depend on the good will (morality) of citizens: it is based solely on the idea of universal egoism. (James, 2009, 347) But the strategy Fichte takes has one caveat: Why would an egoistic agent assent to a law that promotes the interest of other agents? The egoistic agent would only do so if it would bring him some advantage. The egoistic agent can assent to the first contract, the property contract, because it would provide him security of his own property. However, the word of another cannot be trusted. If the other is an egoistic individual too, it is clear that he will nullify the contract as soon as it is in his best interest. So who is to govern the state? The people who govern, members of the executive body, are egoistic individuals as well so they would abuse the system by taking away freedom of the subjects and enriching themselves. No rational being would enter into a society in which his freedom would be taken away. So in order to make the members of the executive body obey the law, the executives must be coerced into obedience. But who is to coerce them?

For this Fichte introduces the idea of an ephorate. The ephorate is "a particular power expressly for the sake of judging whether the law has failed to function as it should." (FNR, SW III, 171; trans. 151) The ephorate has the power to nullify the executive body, in other words, disband the executive body so that a new body can be created by the united citizens. The ephorate has no other power than this and it may not interfere in particular judgements of the executive body.

But if both the ephors and the state officials were egoists, there are three possible outcomes: both work together to subjugate the people; one destroys the other and creates a despotic rule; or anarchy and civil war will ensue. The only way to avoid this is when the ephors and

⁵ Fichte does say that morality aims to abolish the state: if everyone is good, there is no more need for the law of right. (SS, SW IV, 253; p. 241-242) This goal cannot be achieved however, since in a finite world there necessarily is scarcity and people will claim a sphere of influence for themselves.

the executive body consist of virtuous individuals who sincerely interpret the common will. Without them, the state will go to ruin. (James, 2013, 148) In short, without a moral ruling class, Fichte's state can never function.

The above shows us that both right and morality have a close connection to the other. They are not conceptually dependent on one another, but they need each other in their actualisation. To be truly free, I both need to stand in a relation of right and be moral. For only then am I free both externally and internally. This is a perplexing relation between right and morality: they are both required, both depend on one another, but they are thoroughly separated.

Both right and morality have their origin in the same instance: the summons of the other. But the summons does not bring right and morality together. It only sets into motion to separate deductions which, while staying close, do not seem to ever come together. I must freely choose to want both if I am to be truly free. I must choose to respect the sphere of influence of the other (right) and I must freely raise myself to the level of morality.

Vocation of Man

In the previous chapters I have analysed the difference between right and morality. I have also indicated that there seems to be an interdependence between right and morality, even though the two cannot be reduced to one another. It does, however, seem clear that there is some kind of relation, for a community is necessary for a summons and from the summons both right and morality follow. This relation becomes clear when we look at our vocation.

In this chapter I want to look at Fichte's *The Vocation of Man* (1800) to see whether we can draw out the connection between right and morality.

Reading *The Vocation of Man* as part of the Jena period

Before I start with the content of *The Vocation of Man*, I will first argue why I use this book in this paper. My research question is limited to Fichte's Jena period and *The Vocation of Man* was written after Fichte left Jena as a result of the atheism controversy (*Atheismusstreit*).⁶ Also, there is considerable debate⁷ on whether *The Vocation of Man* constitutes a break between Fichte's earlier (Jena) and later philosophy or whether this work is a natural evolution of Fichte's thought already set in place with the *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo* and *The System of Ethics*. I will argue why I believe we must read the *The Vocation of Man* as an expected evolution of Fichte's thought.

The first point, that *The Vocation of Man* was written after Fichte moved to Berlin, does not seem problematic. Fichte had to vacate his position as the result of the *Atheismusstreit*, on the charge that he was an atheist. Fichte published *The Vocation of Man* barely a year after he was forced to leave Jena. And the book defends Fichte's position against the charges of atheism brought against him during that time. (Goh, 2013, 177) From this view, *The Vocation of Man* is clearly a part of the

⁶ The atheism controversy ended with Fichte being charged with atheism. This charge is the reason that Fichte had to vacate his professorship at Jena.

⁷ The scope of this paper limits the amount of views I can present on *The Vocation of Man*. For an overview of the debate regarding the position of this work, see Breazeale (2013a), Introduction.

philosophical retinue of Jena period. The book is aimed at readers who know of or have heard of Fichte's work during his professorship in Jena and have misinterpreted it.

The second point, whether *The Vocation of Man* is a sharp break with his earlier works, is more important. Obviously, *The Vocation of Man* differs greatly in style from previous academic works, but since *The Vocation of Man* is aimed at the general public instead of professional philosophers, this is to be expected.

Several scholars have seen in *The Vocation of Man* a radical break with Fichte's earlier philosophy. Peter Preuss even interpreted this work as a call to abandon philosophy altogether. (Preuss, 1987, xii)

Fichte himself says that *The Vocation of Man* is a summary and introduction to his earlier work: "This book is not intended for professional philosophers who will find nothing in it which has not already been presented in other writings by the same author." (Fichte, 1987, 1) I believe we need to take Fichte's claim seriously. Even though Fichte's call for faith in *The Vocation of Man* seems to add a new dimension to his philosophy, I believe it is not a radical break, but a natural addition to his earlier theory.

Fichte claims that we must live our life for the sake of a future life (after our death), a life in faith. (Fichte 1987, 97) This does not seem strange if we compare it with Fichte's earlier claims that the final end of reason is a communal end and that men's final end lies in infinity: absolute freedom cannot be attained in the sensible world. (SS, SW IV, 149; trans. 142) What Fichte seems to add to the final end from his ethics, is the philosophy of religion. (Breazeale, 2013b, 204) The philosophy of religion adds the belief in the supersensible world where I am sure to reach my vocation even if I cannot reach it in this sensible world. What Fichte adds is thus an even higher mode of being transcending the rationality of all in *The System of Ethics*: the absolute, or God.

The introduction of this absolute is already present in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*. Breazeale makes the point that the relationship between finite self and absolute will in *The Vocation of Man*, is the same as the role of the pure will in the fivefold synthesis of the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*. (Breazeale, 2013b, 224) This puts the thoughts about finite I and God of *The Vocation of Man* directly into the dialectic development of the *Wissenschaftslehre* that started in the Jena period. As Goh (2013) also acknowledges, this turn towards God or the absolute is an application of Fichte's transcendental philosophy, not Fichte's abandonment of it. (Goh, 2013, 183)

Even though the work was created after Fichte left Jena, I believe it is justified to read *The Vocation of Man* as part of Fichte's Jena period because firstly, the work is in time closely related to his Jena period. Secondly, it tries to settle the account of the atheism charge that began in the Jena period and therefore immediately concerns the Jena period. Finally, the subject of *The Vocation of Man*, the relation between finite I and the absolute willing is clearly part of Fichte's development of the Jena period.

Faith

Now that I have argued why I read *The Vocation of Man* as part of Fichte's Jena period, it is time to look into the account Fichte gives in this work.

Fichte begins in book one (Doubt) with a lamentation on the determination of (human) nature. He laments the impossibility of human freedom within a completely determined world. Then in book two (Knowledge) he is visited by a Spirit who shows him that the world he envisioned in book one is false and holds no knowledge. The spirit acts like Socrates in guiding Fichte to find a world made by consciousness. (A parody of Fichte's transcendental idealism.) This world also lacks knowledge, it is completely empty. The spirit leaves Fichte devastated, but not without a spark of hope. Devastated because Fichte could find knowledge in neither the first nor the second world. The hope with which the spirit leaves Fichte is that he has a means of grasping truth.

In book 3 Fichte reflects on himself. He concludes that he can only think of himself as acting. But for acting, he must connect a being. He must ascribe to himself an efficacy. But wherever he turns, he must find something higher to connect it.

Every knowledge presupposes something still higher as its foundation, and this ascend has no end. It is faith, this voluntary acquiescence in the view which naturally presents itself to us because only on this view can we fulfil our vocation; it is that which first gives approval to knowledge and raises to certainty and conviction what without it could be mere deception. Faith is no knowledge, but a decision of the will to recognize the validity of knowledge. (Fichte, 1987, 71)

Knowledge can never be its own foundation, so a higher knowledge must be found. Fichte introduces faith to stop this infinite regress. Faith is a different category and can therefore be the foundation of knowledge. Faith itself has no further foundation as it is the free choice to accept that knowledge is true.

As I noted earlier, freedom for Fichte is complete absoluteness. It is completely devoid of any determination from outside. That means that it is incomprehensible for finite rational beings. Likewise, my faith is incomprehensible: I cannot understand it, for it is faith that first makes knowledge possible. I cannot limit it, for that would destroy freedom⁸. I simply must choose, I must believe. I require faith to avoid the worlds of book one or book two of the vocation. But why would I have faith? There are no reasons, so what can bring me to faith? Faith is found because I despair of the worlds of book one and two. I will return to this point, despair, later.

The nature of faith does not become clear from Fichte's text. We can read this faith as both epistemological and religious faith. (Rockmore, 2013, 150) The nature of faith is, however, not relevant for this paper.

This observation has an important consequence: my knowledge doesn't start in theoretical reason, but in practical reason. Faith is an act of the will and thus practical reason is the root of all reason. (Fichte, 1987, 79) I begin by willing, not by knowing. I begin by faith and all my knowledge depends on this act of will.

After I have found faith, it becomes clear that everything depends on faith. When the I reflects upon itself, it finds in itself a drive to absolute independent self-activity. (Fichte, 1987, 68) This drive seems to be the same drive that is the manifestation of our tendency towards self-sufficiency as we found it in *The System of Ethics*. (SS, SW IV, 40; trans. 44) And although Fichte does not make this explicit,

⁸ Fichte uses the terms 'freedom', 'self-sufficiency' and 'complete absoluteness' in *The Vocation of Man*. These words all indicate an unqualified freedom or, in the vocabulary of Fichte's earlier works, complete self-sufficiency of the I. In this section I will use these three terms to always mean complete self-sufficiency of the I but I will use these different terms to reflect the use of these terms in Fichte's text.

this absolute independent self-activity seems to mean unqualified independence or the absence of any external determining influence on the I in the same way as we find it in *The System of Ethics*: the “absolute power [of the I] to make itself absolutely”. (SS, SW IV, 32; trans. 37)

There is an important conclusion that follows from the preceding: our thinking is not separate from our drives and inclinations. My act of will to want to follow my drive brings my drive into the realm of thought. Thinking, drives and inclinations are so unified through the will. Through this act of will, faith, I thus find myself as a unit. (Fichte, 1987, 73) This means that the sensible realm and the realm of thought are not two separate entities. They are one and the same, they are just apprehended in a different way. (Fichte, 1987, 61, 73)

I find my vocation through the drive to absolute self-sufficiency: I will follow this drive, because I want to be free. And because I found this drive I now have the insight that it is our vocation to become absolutely independent: I have no reasons for this, but I simply want to be free. My vocation is this compulsion to be independent. (Fichte, 1987, 73) Fichte does not go into details on this compulsion. He seems to take it for granted that if I want to be free first and foremost, this willing to follow my drive also constitutes my vocation. I believe Fichte’s account here is plausible since if my starting point for everything is that I will to be free, there can be nothing before this starting point. It is the beginning of me as an I and therefore my vocation will be to fully realise this freedom from which the I begins.

But how am I to become absolutely independent? I am free only if I can originate concepts within myself. If concepts originate from outside the I, they are caused and I would not be free. Therefore, I must ascribe to myself this capacity of originating concepts and I must also ascribe myself the efficacy to bring about these concepts in the world. (Fichte, 1987, 69). For if I can originate concepts but not bring them about, my freedom would be empty and I would revert to the world of book two. So how am I to become independent? By acting freely. And since my vocation is to become absolutely self-sufficient, all my actions must be focused on this one thing: acting freely to become free. (Fichte, 1987, p. 74) For only acting freely brings me closer to my vocation and every unfree act sets me back on this way.

Being able to bring about concepts in the sensible world means that this world in which I have to act is construed in such a way that I am able to act in it. For if the world would be thoroughly alien to me, I could not act and hence, I could not be free. But since I am to be free, I can also act in the world. (Fichte, 1987, 75) The argument here clearly mimics the conclusion about the existence of the world in §9 of *The System of Ethics* where Fichte makes the same point.

Faith thus gives me my drive to absolute independence and from that drive I find that I can act freely in the world to become free. Fichte then follows by asserting that I need to act in a specific way in the world. This means there is something that I ought to do in every situation. To show this is so, Fichte introduces conscience as an infallible voice that tells me what I must do in every particular situation. Fichte bases this account on the intuition that people want certain freedoms and that they will demand these freedoms of one another. Wanting a freedom means that you have to assert a right to other beings. And asserting a right means that you act under the idea of your freedom, since asserting a right means demanding a space where the other cannot interfere. Fichte’s strategy here clearly resembles his use of conscience in §15 of *The System of Ethics*. But in the case of *The Vocation of Man*, I believe the argument does not succeed because it only explains why we need to

think of freedom as a sphere of action. It does not explain why there should be a determinate action in any circumstance we can think of.

A better way of understanding Fichte is, I believe, to simply look at consistency. If I will to be absolutely self-sufficient, it follows that I must act in such a way as to become absolutely self-sufficient. – This is the principle of ethics (SS, SW IV, 150; trans. 143) – In other words, I must act in a determinate way in any given situation, namely: I must act in that way that in the given situation allows me to become absolutely self-sufficient. Any other way of acting is not in compliance with my will and thus I must refrain from acting in that way.

Whenever I act freely, I act from my freedom. And while I still reside in the temporal, determinate world, acting freely already exalts me to the level of freedom, if only temporarily and incompletely. Every free act thus brings me closer to my vocation as that act makes me self-sufficient. Fichte does not explicitly argue for this consistency. But I take Fichte's text to implicate just that when he says: "As I live in obedience, I at the same time live in the intuition of its purpose, live in the better world which it promises me." (Fichte, 1987, 80-81)

Fichte goes from faith to self-sufficiency and then to having to act in a determinate manner. We can also say this in other words: In every situation, I *ought* to act in a specific manner. Worded like this, it is clear that I have entered the realm of morality. So it is through faith that I find an ought, that I find morality. Morality is based on my will.

Man has freedom and freedom is his vocation. But in this world, freedom does not only exalt us to the level of our vocation. At the same time, it is precisely this freedom that creates most of the disorders⁹ for man. (Fichte, 1987, p. 83) Because people are free, they inflict the most horrible acts on each other: they pillage, murder and wage war because in their depravity man seeks his own advantage. The good can never win, because the good, i.e. realising one's vocation in unity with everyone, can only be loved¹⁰ for its own sake and will thus fall prey to the depravity of man, creating disorder. (Fichte, 1987, 84) To escape this disorder, we must unite with the whole of mankind. (Fichte, 1987, 85)

Only if humanity is united in a true state¹¹, can we create a condition in which man can direct himself to the good. This state is the means for a peaceful and lasting foundation where there is no temptation and thus there is room to direct oneself to realising the vocation of man. In this true state, one can either act freely to realise one's vocation and be truly free or one can act from necessity. But since the conditions of the state take away all temptation, every necessary action will be an action to advance mankind on the road to his vocation. In the terminology of *The Vocation of Man*: "The use of freedom for evil is eliminated. Man must decide either to give up this freedom of his entirely and willingly become a passive wheel in the great machine of the whole, or to use this freedom for good." (Fichte, 1987, 89)

⁹ Fichte starts with the term 'disorder', but from page 84 onwards he uses the term 'evil' to indicate this disorder and the actions born from seeking one's own advantage. It seems however, that Fichte uses the term evil to designate any action not born from the idea of advancement in our vocation of the whole community. This foreshadows Fichte's idea that reason is communal, as we already saw in the *System of Ethics*. Unfortunately, Fichte does not make clear what he means with the term 'evil'. Therefore, I avoid the term 'evil' in this text and instead use the term 'disorder' to avoid confusion.

¹⁰ Fichte uses love to indicate how man must view the good. What exactly this love means is not clear from the text, but it seems to mean 'taking an interest in' since Fichte contrasts love of the good with the most despicable and selfish behaviour of man, which are born from one's interest in oneself.

¹¹ As opposed to a state of necessity. The state of necessity also figures in the *Foundations of Natural Right*. The distinction between a state of necessity and a true state is not relevant for this paper.

This true state points to an extremely important insight of Fichte: Man's vocation is not an individual vocation. Instead, it is a communal end of the whole of mankind. Fichte words is that the narrow self is annihilated and that everyone will love the other as himself. (Fichte, 1987, 90) This is no surprise as Fichte already argued that the final end is the self-sufficiency of all rational beings. (SS, SW IV, 231; trans. 220) And acting for the community is the means to further this goal.

The true state is something that we need to realise in the sensible world. Fichte therefore calls this true state an 'earthly goal'. But, so Fichte concedes, this earthly goal is not the final goal of man. I live in the sensible world, but my vocation is absolute self-sufficiency. Therefore, my vocation lies not in the sensible world. (Fichte, 1987, 96) My vocation lies in the other world, in the spiritual realm. The sensible world is only a means to advance in the spiritual. (Fichte, 1987, 96)

I can never realise my vocation in the sensible world. For even if I act freely, the consequences of the action in the sensible world may not have the intended result. This is the reason that man must have a purpose beyond the sensible world, and by extension, beyond the current life as a member of two realms. (Fichte, 1987, 97).

When I act freely, I act in a certain way because I will to advance towards my vocation. My will gives me an ought. But if my action does not bring about the intended result, the action is pointless. And by extension, the ought is pointless. But if the ought is pointless, there simply is no reason to be moral. If I am to be moral, there must be a realm different from the sensible realm in which every action has the intended effect. (Fichte, 1987, 97) I thus have another life, which Fichte calls a life of seeing, which is a life of the pure will. My true goal lies in the world of reason. Only by acknowledging that I am a being of two realms will I be able to find my true vocation:

This, therefore, is my whole sublime vocation, my true being. I am a member of two orders. One purely spiritual, in which I exist through the bare pure will: and one sensible in which I act through my deed. The whole final purpose of reason is its own pure activity, simply through itself and without needing an instrument outside of itself, i.e., independence from everything which is not itself reason, absolutely unconditioned being. The will is the living principle of reason, is reason itself, if reason is conceived purely and independently. (Fichte, 1987, p. 99)

Every finite will is a member of both realms and is therefore subject to the law of the realm of the will. (Fichte, 1987, 105) This law is that every action done from duty must have consequences (Fichte, 1987, 104), for otherwise the commands of morality would be empty and void. Fichte argues that since every being is subject to this law of the spiritual world, this law transcends the individual, finite wills and governs all these individual wills. (Fichte, 1987, 104) All individual wills are so united, because they are all subject to that one law. (Fichte, 1987, 107-109). But a law is in reason. And this law is acting upon individual wills. That means that this law is reason acting upon itself. This law therefore is itself a will. (Fichte, 1987, 106) This law at the same time limits all finite wills because it prescribes a law to them. Now reason can only be limited by reason and a finite reason can itself only be limited by an infinite reason. This law is thus infinite reason, One Eternal Infinite Will. (Fichte, 1987, 110) The voice of our conscience, which Fichte employed earlier to explain how I know my duty, can now be understood. Our conscience does not come from ourselves, instead comes from the One Eternal Infinite Will and is thus the voice of God. (Breazeale, 2013b, 208)

This one will bring together all individual wills under a single law. That means that we have the same vocation and that our vocation is shared. Therefore, we must form one moral community, for man's final end is communal. (Gho, 2013, 181) This community is not just a community in this sensible realm for we are all members of two realms and we are all united in the spiritual realm. Therefore, we must also create a community in heaven. (Fichte, 1987, p. 115) Of course, not everyone may see his vocation and so not everyone may want to strive for heaven. It is precisely because man is free, that he can choose not to follow his vocation. But everyone is free, so everyone can make themselves free. (Fichte, 1987, p. 119) And we must create a community so that I can set an example as to try to convince others of their own freedom so that they can make themselves free as well.

I now have my whole vocation. I know what I need to do in every situation, for I am a member of the spiritual world. My conscience tells me the action that will further humanities progress towards its vocation. In the spiritual world I am united with all other human beings through the One Eternal Infinite Will, through God. Though Fichte's account in *The Vocation of Man* yields the same conclusions as *The System of Ethics*, it adds to these conclusions an extra dimension, the spiritual realm. Fichte introduces the philosophy of religion which transcends the individual rationality and the rationality of all with the One Eternal Infinite Will, or God. The I is a member of two realms: sensible and spiritual. Man's vocation lies in the spiritual realm and the sensible realm is the realm where I must act to advance on the road to my vocation. Without faith, I would not know my vocation and by extension, I would not know morality. Faith is the starting point.

Synthesis and Conclusion

In the previous chapter I have given a short analysis of Fichte's journey in *The Vocation of Man*. I hesitate to call it an argument, because *The Vocation of Man* doesn't have the rigid structure of Fichte's academic works. Also, *The Vocation of Man* seems to employ many different types of argument even though Fichte's strategy often resembles arguments from his earlier works. What is clear, is that *The Vocation of Man* introduces a new, higher life for man. And that brings our vocation to a new level: that of the spiritual. With Fichte's account in *The Vocation of Man* we can now also see where right and morality are brought together: in faith.

The human being is an absolute unit and so the I is the synthesis of subject and object (Fichte, 1987, 61). This unity is the synthesis of my freedom and the determination of the sensible world. These two domains, subject and object, have different laws: right and morality. The realm of the subject is the realm of the I where the I finds itself and reflects upon itself. Morality rules here because the I prescribes duties to itself. The realm of the object is the external world in which the I finds other rational beings with whom the I must find a way to live in community. Hence right governs the sensible world. But as Fichte says, the I is an absolute unity of subject and object. Therefore, both the laws governing the subject and object are unified in the I as well.

As is clear in the distinction between subject and object, right and morality are separate because they serve different purposes: prescribing how free beings can live together or the duties the I prescribes to itself. Because right and morality have different purposes and preside over different realms, they have different deductions and are conceptually independent. Fichte's claim that right and morality are separated in reason itself (FNR, SW III, 55; trans. 51) is correct when we look at both sciences independently.

However, when we take a step back and reflect on our vocation, both right and morality are unified in my free choice to want my efficacy to be true. It is here, in this single point, in faith, that right and morality are synthesised.

I must find myself as synthesis of subject and object. If I fail to see this synthesis, I will find myself in the dilemma in which Fichte finds himself in book one and two of *The Vocation of Man*. I will either (book one) find a world fully determined by nature that is empty and in which knowledge does not exist, because everything I can think is simply part of deterministic nature. Or I will find myself (book two) in a world that is entirely construed by my imagination. In this world there is no knowledge either, as my imagination created the world and there is nothing but me.

The only escape from this dilemma is my free choice: I must first ascribe a real efficacy to myself (Fichte, 1987, 69), but that is not enough. For if I ascribe efficacy to myself, I must then freely choose to acknowledge that the knowledge gained through my efficacy is real knowledge and not an illusion. (Fichte, 1987, 71) This starting point for the entire deduction of knowledge through efficacy, can only be understood from the standpoint of faith. Through faith, I see that efficacy gives me true knowledge because I choose to recognize this knowledge. If I make this crucial step, I can find my true vocation. If I do not make this choice to recognize the knowledge as valid, I will be trapped in the dilemma of book one and two.

There are no reasons to justify faith. The only indication that my choice is right comes from my drive towards absolute independent self-activity. (Fichte, 1987, 68) I am only independent when the intuiting and the intuited are one and the same. (Fichte, 1987, 68) Only if I choose to fulfil this drive, can I leave the dilemma. Faith is my free choice to want my knowledge to be real knowledge. (Fichte, 1987, 71) It is in this moment of willing that my will makes the I both object and subject. In other words, my will brings two realms together. (SS, SW IV, 53; trans. 56) This freedom gives me my true being and my whole vocation, my citizenship of two realms: sensible and spiritual. (Fichte, 1987, 99)

This synthesis of the objective and subjective becomes clear in Fichte's account of the summons. When I am summoned, I am brought to reflect upon myself. In this reflection of the I upon itself, the I is truly a unit: Since I reflect upon myself, I am in thinking both the object and subject. (FNR, SW III, 36; trans. 35) From this point onwards, the deduction splits in two: external freedom in order to live together with the other found in the external world and internal freedom where the I gives duties to itself.

From faith onwards, Fichte's account becomes even more interesting. First, let us look at morality: When I choose to believe in my efficacy, I must believe several things if I am to keep hope. I must believe that the moral law governs the supersensible (spiritual) world. (Fichte, 1987, 104) I must believe that this law is self-active reason. (Fichte, 1987, 105) I must believe this one infinite Will unites all finite wills and gives me my duties. (Fichte, 1987, 108) In short, it is faith that unites everyone in infinite reason.

The ground of my conscience, which tells me what my duty is in a particular situation, is given to me by the One infinite will, which Fichte calls God. This means that the basis of all morality does not lie in the I, it lies in the unification of all rational beings, in God. This is clearly foreshadowed by Fichte's account in *The System of Ethics* where he says that I will morality as such, not just my private morality. (SS, SW IV, 232; trans. 220)

This can only be understood from the viewpoint of faith. Without faith, I would not have to believe in the supersensible world and I would not have to believe in the One infinite will. Only through faith am I exalted to the level of morality, only through the free acceptance of my own efficacy do I truly find morality. Without faith, I would not have this viewpoint and I would linger in the dilemma of book one and two. Furthermore, I would be immoral since morality governs all free actions (SS, SW IV, 152-153; trans. 145) and a free action not under the moral law is immoral.

For right, the account is simpler: For my vocation I must unite with all beings in the world. If we look at right alone, there is no reason to want to limit my freedom. (FNR, SW III, 88; trans. 81) If I am truly selfish, I will simply abuse the system until I can betray the other for my own benefit or I could elect to simply not limit my own freedom. I could simply leave all community behind, were it not for faith. Faith requires me to form a moral community with my fellow rational beings to advance on the road of our vocation. (Fichte, 1987, 85) This requires us to found a true state. I require the community with others for the sake of my vocation. In other words, through faith, right is no longer optional but instrumental on the road to our vocation; our vocation because morality lies in the one infinite will that transcends individual rationality.

Fichte's formulates man's vocation as follows:

This, therefore, is my whole sublime vocation, my true being. I am a member of two orders. One purely spiritual, in which I exist through the bare pure will; and one sensible in which I act through my deed. The whole final purpose of reason is its own pure activity simply through itself and without needing an instrument outside of itself, i.e., independence from everything which is not itself reason, absolutely unconditioned being. (Fichte, 1987, p.99)

I only find my vocation if I first have faith. For, without faith, all my knowledge is fallacious. (Fichte, 1987, 72) And it is through knowledge that I find myself as a unit and it is only through this that it is the I itself that shapes its own way of thinking. (Fichte, 1987, 73) When the I shapes itself in thinking, it becomes independent. The I ought to find this compulsion in itself and this compulsion is my vocation. (Fichte, 1987, 73)

It is only after I found my vocation that both morality and right are given to me. Both right and morality are required to fulfil my vocation. This means that both morality and faith are made subordinate to my vocation. I cannot fulfil my vocation with only one; I need both. Through faith, I see their necessity: requirements to reach my vocation in both realms, spiritual and sensible.

It is now clear that it is in the moment of faith and the absolute unity of the I, right and morality are synthetically united. Both are means to my vocation and my vocation comes from my absolute unity and drive towards self-sufficiency. Without faith, right and morality may be deduced but are separated though they are at the same time inexplicably bound. With faith, I can clearly see their common origin: the unity of the I. The synthesis is complete: right and morality are the two ways in which the I follows the road to its vocation.

Bibliography

Altman, M. C. (2008). The Significance of the Other in Moral Education: Fichte on the Birth of Subjectivity. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 175-186.

- Breazeale, D. (2013). Introduction: The Checkered Reception of Fichte's Vocation of Man. In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Fichte's Vocation of Man New Interpretive and Critical Essays* (pp. 1-18). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Breazeale, D. (2013). Jumping the Transcendental Shark Fichte's "Argument of Belief" in Book III of *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* and the Transition from the Earlier to the Later *Wissenschaftslehre*. In B. Daniel, & T. Rockmore, *Fichte's Vocation of Man New Interpretive and Critical Essays* (pp. 199-224). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Estes, Y. (2006). Fichte's Hypothetical Imperative: Morality, Right, and Philosophy in the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*. In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Rights, Bodies and Recognition* (pp. 59-70). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Fichte, J. (1987). *The Vocation of Man*. (P. Preuss, Trans.) Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Fichte, J. (1994). *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*. (D. Breazeale, Trans.) Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Fichte, J. (2005). *The System of Ethics*. (D. Breazeale, & G. Zöllner, Trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fichte, J. (2006). *Foundations of Natural Right*. (F. Neuhouser, Ed., & M. Baur, Trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goh, K.-H. (2013). Intersubjectivity and the Communitarity of Our Final End in Fichte's Vocation of Man. In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Fichte's Vocation of Man New Interpretive and Critical Essays* (pp. 173-184). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- James, D. (2009). The Relation of Right to Morality in Fichte's Jena Theory of the State and Society. *History of European Ideas*, 337-348.
- James, D. (2013). *Fichte's Social and Political Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, I. (2011). *The Metaphysics of Morals*. (M. Gregor, Trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nance, M. (2012). Recognition, Freedom and the Self in Fichte's Foundations of Natural Right. *European Journal of Philosophy*.
- Neuhouser, F. (1994). Fichte and the Relationship between Right and Morality. In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Fichte Historical Contexts Contemporary Controversies* (pp. 158-180). New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc.
- Nomer, N. (2013). Fichte's Separation Thesis. *The Philosophical Forum, Inc.*, 233-254.
- Nuzzo, A. (2013). Determination and Freedom in Kant and in Fichte's *Bestimmung des Menschen*. In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Fichte's Vocation of Man New Interpretive and Critical Essays* (pp. 225-240). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Preuss, P. (1987). Translator's Introduction. In J. Fichte, *The Vocation of Man* (pp. vii - xiii). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Rockmore, T. (2013). The Traction of the World, or Fichte on Practical Reason. In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Fichte's Vocation of Man New Interpretive and Critical Essays* (pp. 145-154). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Waibel, V. L. (2006). On the Fundamental Connection between Moral Law and Natural Right in Fichte's Contribution (1793) and Foundations of Natural Right (1796/97). In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Rights, Bodies and Recognition* (pp. 45-58). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Ware, O. (2009). Fichte's Voluntarism. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 262-282.

- Williams, R. R. (1994). The Question of the Other in Fichte's Thought. In D. Breazeale, & T. Rockmore, *Fichte Historical Contexts Contemporary Controversies* (pp. 142-157). New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc.
- Wood, A. W. (unpublished). Fichte's Philosophy of Right and Ethics. In G. Zöllner, *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from www.stanford.edu/~allenw/papers/Fichte's.doc