

“J. G. Fichte’s Account of Human Sexuality”

[H]ow can one lead the human species from nature to virtue? [...] [O]nly by reproducing the natural relation between the two sexes. There is no moral education of humankind, if it does not begin from this point.¹

Introduction

There are myriad debates regarding the definition of gender and myriad others regarding the connection of gender differences to sexual inequality and thereby, to social injustice. Although it might be unusual to employ 18th and 19th century transcendental idealism to illuminate these issues, I propose to do so. In this essay, I shall offer an interpretation of J. G. Fichte’s account of human sexuality and its relation to sexual inequality and social justice and shall apply this interpretation to contemporary questions about gender, equality, and justice. For texts, I shall rely primarily on Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo* (1796/99), *Foundations of Natural Right* (1796-97), *System of Ethics* (1798), and *Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar* (1794-95).²

Fichte’s explanation of human sexuality stood in marked contrast to those provided by his contemporaries. He claimed that social unification or equality presupposed communication or reciprocal influence between individuals. Although gender differences were the source of sexual inequality, only the inequalities resulting from gender differences allowed for the ethical development necessary to develop the skills of communication that establish human equality within a just society. Fichte argued that feminine sexuality was essential to raising the masculine gender to an ethical consciousness whereby it might become capable of constructing and participating within a just and equitable society; he also asserted that the human being was not originally

masculine or feminine but both and that the human being only became complete within a sexual relationship.

According to my interpretation of Fichte, femininity and masculinity are not aspects of the body but rather expressions of sexual desire. Sexual intercourse provides an initial natural relationship wherein human beings cultivate their capacities for communication or reciprocal influence—passive receiving and active giving—by expressing desires guided by both feeling and reason. The sexual relation is a dynamic process wherein each sexual partner cultivates the skills of giving and receiving in the other. Thus, sexual tenderness—an interchange of love and solicitude, or magnanimity, initiated by the feminine gender—is the original basis for all other social skills and ultimately, for any form of social justice.

My essay will assume the following structure. Firstly, I shall discuss the position of Fichte's account of sexuality within his philosophy. Secondly, I shall provide a synopsis and interpretation of this account—including the natures of female and male sexual drives and the roles of love, solicitude, and sexual tenderness in relations between the feminine and masculine genders—analyzing its implications for contemporary questions about gender difference, sexual inequality, and social justice. Finally, after broaching so lingering concerns about my reading of Fichte and my approach to sexuality, I shall respond to some very informed and insightful questions raised by Dr. Jane Dryden.

The Place of Fichte's Account of Sexuality within his Philosophy

Drive or impulse is first and foremost in man. And impulse demands its object in advance of any kind of knowledge and in advance of the object's existence. It simply demands something, even if what it demands does not

exist at all.³

Fichte's account of sexuality is embedded within his unique system of transcendental idealism that he called *Wissenschaftslehre*.⁴ According to Fichte, the task of *Wissenschaftslehre*, or philosophy, consists in providing an account of the "system of representations accompanied by a sense of necessity" or a description of the "vocation of man": Specifically, "a scientific knowledge of all his drives and needs, a complete survey of his entire nature."⁵ In order to accomplish this goal, Fichte based his philosophy on the concept of intellectual intuition or I-hood: "the immediate consciousness that I act and what I do when I act."⁶

The motor of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is the question: "How is this activity possible?"⁷ Fichte argues that free activity presupposes an intelligible individual (a will), an intelligible realm of rational being (other wills), a sensible objective thing, a sensible realm of objective being (the world), and a summons to freedom from another intelligible individual.⁸ In the *Wissenschaftslehre*, this five-fold synthesis—or synthetic *periodum*—serves as a mere philosophical hypothesis—or *qualitas occulta*—that would have no real, extra-philosophical ground if it did not occur in actual consciousness as an immediate awareness of willing in recognition of the summons by another free, rational being.⁹

Fichte believes that the feminine sexual drive creates a natural locus wherein sexual partners summon and recognize one another. He claims that willing results from the interaction between sensible natural drive, which demarcates our possibilities for free choice, and supersensible rational will, which determines the possibilities we try to realize. Drives are innate forces, impulses, or compulsions that become conscious as desire, or feelings of yearning.¹⁰ Insofar as each seeks some integral equilibrium, Fichte

calls the basic longing for unity or consistency the original pure drive.¹¹ The original drive dictates: “Man is always supposed to be at one with himself, he should never contradict himself.”¹² Thus, each empirical individual should strive to bring herself into harmony with the concept of pure I-hood by choosing only those specific actions that lead her ever closer to complete self-consistency. This, however, only raises the question: Which actions lead toward complete self-consistency? Fichte’s response is: Those specified by the concepts of I-hood and self-sufficiency.

The moral law is general and formal, but the content of duty can be determined by combining the concepts of self-sufficiency and I-hood. Insofar as I-hood is characterized by body, intellect, and individuality, these features of subjectivity imply specific limitations of the original drive. Insofar as the I is a body, the original drive must be materially determined in three specific ways. The empirical individual must not treat her body as an end in itself; she must cultivate it to serve all ends of freedom; and she must relate her pleasures to a moral goal. Insofar as the I is an intellect, the original drive must be formally determined in three specific ways. The empirical individual must never subordinate her intellect to any external goal; she must cultivate it as much as possible; and she must relate it to some duty. Insofar as the I is an individual, the empirical individual’s original drive is limited by her relations to other rational beings. Although the empirical individual should overcome all external limitations, she must not do so in manner that obstructs or encroaches on the freedom of others.

Each empirical I should strive to bring herself into harmony with her original drive by choosing only those specific actions that lead her ever closer to complete self-consistency and self-sufficiency and only those actions that honor the limitations

determined by combining the concepts of self-sufficiency and I-hood. This, however, raises yet another question: Which specific actions lead her closer to complete self-sufficiency? Fichte's response is: Those that satisfy her drives.

The original drive generates many particular drives, including the theoretical, aesthetic, and practical drives.¹³ These drives become inclinations or interests, which require satisfactions only if first awakened, stimulated, and trained through repeated feelings in experience. However, as an individual's experience does not depend entirely on her activity, so also her inclinations and interests do not depend entirely on her activity. Nature provides every individual with the same drives distributed in unequal measures by fate and developed in uneven degrees by experience. Indeed, precisely these differences characterize human beings as individuals possessing diverse interests and capacities.

Society mitigates natural inequality by allowing individuals to receive an education, whereby personal strengths are cultivated and weaknesses remedied, and to choose a class, or occupation, whereby individuals share the benefits of their education with others.¹⁴ Education and class membership merge the disparate talents of many to achieve the common goal of developing and satisfying all human drives within a community. Thus, social unification facilitates man's original goal "to *perfect himself without end* [...] to become constantly better in a moral sense [...] to make all that surrounds him better *sensuously* and—insofar as we consider him in relation to society—*ethically* as well, and thereby to make himself ever happier."

As free beings, we *ought* to be at one with ourselves. But absolute self-determination is a regulatory idea—an ideal. "[I]t is not man's vocation to reach this

goal. His true vocation [...] insofar as he is a rational but finite, a sensuous but free being, lies in *endless approximation toward this goal.*"¹⁵ The human vocation consists in continuous self-perfection, or self-improvement. Self-improvement requires not merely will but also skill. The skill required for self-improvement is sociability. In order to develop as human beings, we must interact with others. "It is man's destiny to live in society; he ought to live in society. One who lives in isolation is not a complete human being. He contradicts his own self."¹⁶

Fichte argues that the final goal of human beings in society is unity, or total equality. As free beings, we *ought* to be united as equals, but social unity is—again—a regulatory idea—an ideal. The vocation of humanity in society is ongoing unification, or association. Unification also requires more than will. The skill required for unification is communication: Explicitly, giving by "affecting others as free beings" and receiving by "making the most of the effect which others have upon us."¹⁷ By giving—cultivating in others those aspects of ourselves that are strong—and receiving—allowing others to cultivate those aspect of ourselves that are weak—we mitigate the mistakes and inequities of fate and experience.¹⁸

Synopsis, Interpretation, and Analysis of Fichte's Account of Gender and Sexuality

The physical human being is neither a man nor a woman, but is both; and the same is true of every moral human being. The human character has several sides, and its most noble ones are precisely those that can be developed only in marriage: the woman's devoted love; the man's magnanimity, which sacrifices everything for his companion; the necessity of being worthy of honor, if not for one's own sake, then for that of one's spouse[.]¹⁹

Social unification or equality presupposes communication or reciprocal influence between individuals. Fichte argues that only the gender differences resulting from dyadic sexuality allow for the ethical development necessary to develop the skills of communication that establish human equality within a just society. He claims that the feminine gender is essential to raising the masculine gender to an ethical consciousness whereby humanity might become capable of constructing a just society wherein all individuals participate as equals.²⁰

Fichte asserts that human beings are not originally male or female but both and that man and woman first become complete human beings within a dyadic sexual relationship.²¹ Woman and man have identical sexual drives. Her sexual drive—like his—aims at nothing other than satisfaction.²² However, as her body contains the organic structure for conceiving and bearing offspring whereas his provides the structure for inseminating, her body is receptive or penetrable and thus, her sexual satisfaction requires passivity whereas his requires activity.²³

As a human being, woman's nature consists in free activity, so expressing her sexuality as mere passivity contradicts her humanity and original drive toward self-sufficiency. Thus, in order to remain consistent with herself, she must transform and manifest her sexual drive as a drive toward an activity.²⁴ According to Fichte, the feminine sexual drive appears as love, which is a drive to freely give or surrender oneself to another for the other's sake.²⁵ As a human being, man's nature requires recognition of others' freedom, he cannot treat another human being as a mere passive means to his own sexual satisfaction but must defer to a woman's freedom in the act of accepting her love. Thus, in order to remain consistent with himself, he must modify and manifest his sexual

drive as an act of regard, or of magnanimity and solicitude, which is guided by the concept of moral respect.

Woman reconciles her moral and sexual natures by transmuting sexual desire into love—a freely chosen deed—or activity—of submission—or passivity. In doing so, she surrenders her entire self, because her desire and love are inseparable from her self as an individual personality. This surrender depends on her belief that her sexual partner is desirable and respectable and hence, worthy of her love.²⁶ Man reconciles his moral and sexual natures by transforming his moral regard into magnanimity—a natural—or passive—acceptance—or activity. In doing so, he acknowledges the significance of her love and hence, acknowledges his responsibility to prove that he is loveable by acting in a manner worthy of her desire and respect.²⁷

Love is self-sacrifice for the sake of another, not on the basis of a concept, but as the result of a natural drive.”²⁸ Magnanimity, or solicitude, is “conscious self-sacrifice in accordance with concepts, specifically it involves a natural manifestation of the moral effort to set aside one’s own wishes and to adopt another’s as if they were one’s own.”²⁹ Nature and reason—drive and will—coincide in the love and solicitude shared between sexual partners.³⁰ The sexual relation is thus a mode of mutual education: She learns solicitude and he learns love.³¹

Fichte claims that woman initiates the most significant of human relationships. Although her body is originally receptive and she assumes an initial passive role in the sexual act, she assumes the active role in loving. By choosing to love a particular man, she establishes the moral bond of conjugality between human beings.³² Conjugal tenderness, consisting in a mutual sacrifice of self and a mutual summoning to freedom

on the part of the sexual partners, creates an environment wherein both develop the skills of receiving and giving.³³ It is not static condition but rather a dynamic process wherein each strengthens those characteristics that are weaker in the other and thereby becomes more fully developed as a human being.

It is not a duty to be loving or solicitous, but if sexual relations occur, love and solicitude—and hence, conjugal tenderness—must be present.³⁴ Moreover, since “it is only in union with a loving woman that the masculine heart opens itself to love, to a love which gives of itself without restraint, and loses itself in its object; it is only in marital union that the woman learns magnanimity” one cannot eschew sexual tenderness and conjugal relations without willfully depriving oneself of the opportunity to become a complete human being.³⁵

According to my interpretation of Fichte’s account of sexuality, sexual intercourse provides an initial natural relationship wherein human beings cultivate their aptitudes for reciprocal influence by expressing both feeling and reason. The sexual relation is a vital practice wherein both sexual partners cultivate the skill of communication upon which social unification depends. Thus, sexual tenderness—an interchange of love and solicitude educed by the feminine gender—is the original basis for all other social skills and ultimately, for any form of social equality and justice.

This explanation offers promise of enhancing our contemporary understanding of the nature of sexuality and the role of sexual intercourse in human life because it makes sense of certain readily obtained observations about sexuality. Considerable contemporary debate has been devoted to questions about the nature of sexual intercourse—for example, whether it is a primarily biological urge, whether it is a form

of communication, whether it is conformable to standards of normalcy, and so forth—and this account allows for the evident truth that “normal” sexual relations are multifaceted and variable even within the individual sexual relationship. It acknowledges the empirical fact that sexuality involves a physiological urge that precedes emotional love; but unlike many accounts that recognize this biological aspect of sexuality, it separates the reproductive function of sexuality from its other carnal and emotional functions. Moreover, it provides for the clear verity that human beings transform a basic animal function into a complex and dynamic activity whereby they develop as social beings.

It also follows from my reading that femininity and masculinity are modes of expressing sexual desire. Human beings are neither solely passive or active nor are they solely feminine or masculine and thus, gender is not reducible to biological form and prediction, to social role and ascription, or to arbitrary preference and decision. Initial gendered expressions of desire may originate from these and other sources, but gender is an individually malleable and a rationally governable behavior.

If—as I following Fichte have argued—gender is a mode of conduct, if all “genders” convey indispensable human characteristics, and if sexual intercourse is a way of increasing the diversity of valuable behaviors, then sexual intercourse is also a potential remedy for gender deficiencies and inequities regardless of their origin. Indeed, sexual intercourse, rather than merely reinforcing the behaviors already foisted on us by nature or fate, allows us to refine and expand our range of behaviors.

My explanation implies that feminine and masculine traits can (and should) be fostered within people of all sexes: Love and solicitude are not pleasing qualities but rather required components of a fully developed human being. Insofar as sexual

tenderness consists in adopting the ends of one's lover as one's own, it unites natural feeling and rational concepts by providing an initial natural environment wherein human beings can generate the necessary social skill of communication.

My interpretation of Fichte's account of sexuality elevates human sexual activity by allowing for a natural transition from lust to conjugal tenderness without sacrificing carnal desire to an abstract notion of romantic affection. It permits a fluid conception of gender roles—as expressions of individual desire—that promotes the gradual development of the human capacities necessary for mitigating natural and social inequities and thereby, for establishing equality within a just society.

Love is the innermost point of union between nature and reason. It is the only juncture where nature penetrates into reason and is therefore the most excellent of all that is natural.³⁶

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to address several possible lingering concerns about this account of human sexuality and my interpretation of it. Some readers might conclude that my interpretation of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*—and particularly of his account of sexuality—is simply inaccurate. Others might believe that the inherent limitations of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*—its archaic, idealistic, and systematic biases—preclude an effective application of my reading—accurate or not—to contemporary issues related to gender, equality, and justice.

To the first sort of reader, I would reply that while the implications that I draw from Fichte's account of sexuality might be unfaithful to Fichte's personal views, they are only objectionable if they are unfaithful to the arguments presented in Fichte's works. As inferences, they may indeed go far beyond anything that Fichte wrote, stated, or

believed, but that is why they are implicit rather than explicit aspects of his philosophy. To the second sort of reader, I would say that this account of sexuality is indeed drawn from a systematic philosophy that is idealistic and that some would regard as outmoded. Nonetheless, the general account of sexuality that it offers can be separated—even if perhaps it ought not to be separated—from the system of transcendental idealism. In short, one can begin from the premise that femininity and masculinity are expressions of desire and leave aside speculating about the origins of desire and its expressions.

Regardless of which approach we take, regarding gender difference as a manifestation of desire rather than as a biological or social fact allows for a certain flexibility, which some other accounts lack, in negotiating human equality in a just society. Moreover, it offers hope that the members of society—whatever their gender and however defined—might say to one another:

Just as it is certain that we share a common calling—to be good and to become better and better—it is equally certain that there will come a time [...] when I will draw you into my sphere of influence, a time when I will benefit you too and receive benefit from you, a time when my heart will be joined with yours by the loveliest bond of all—the bond of free, mutual give and take.³⁷

My Response to Jane Dryden's Comments

First, a few acknowledgements, reiterations, and clarifications:

- (1) *It is true* that Fichte thought all reproduction involved dyadic, sexuality (FNR 264–66). *About this subject*, Fichte was simply wrong. *However*, the more

interesting aspect of Fichte's account of human sexuality was that *both the male and female sexual drive aims at satisfaction not reproduction.*

- (2) *It is true* that Fichte thought males and females had biological/physiological properties (e.g. penises and vaginas) that forced them to assume entirely active or entirely passive roles in satisfying their sexual drives (FNR 266). *About this subject*, Fichte was simply uninformed or unimaginative. Passivity and activity in sexual relations are not determined by the presence of male or female genitalia—indeed masculine and feminine sexual bodies are not limited to genitalia—and thus, the passive or active roles that human beings assume in sexual relations are not determined by biological/physiological sex. *Gender is a manner of expressing sexual desire.*
- (3) *It is true* that Fichte thought the biological and the rational were connected (FNR 78). *However*, the biological/physiological and the rational are connected because the biological/physiological reflects the rational, i.e. rational beings transform their bodies by willing. *So*, human bodies, human sexual organs, human sexual relations are expressions of the rational will.
- (4) *It is true* that Fichte thought women should not have sexual satisfaction as their end, and true that anyone, male or female, should not have pleasure itself as an end. *However*, pleasure is morally commendable if it is a means to the improvement of the human being; and the development and satisfaction of a pure drive is morally commendable and mandatory. *So*, sexual pleasure as a means to the improvement of the human being, and as the development and satisfaction of a pure drive, is morally commendable and mandatory.

- (5) The direct expression of the female sexual drive is the “foundation of all vice” because “Love is the innermost point of union between nature and reason—the only juncture where nature penetrates into reason.”³⁸ Consequently, without the feminine expression of sexual desire as love, “There is no moral education of humankind.”³⁹

Second, some answers to Dr. Dryden’s questions:

- (1) *Question:* Is sexual activity that fails to become love morally bad and repugnant or just not fully developed. *Answer:* Everything that is morally bad and repugnant is not fully developed and vice versa. Moral development is a continuum; and moral goodness/completion are ideals, i.e. objects of infinite striving. Ideally, human sexual relations express love and magnanimity, or solicitude—conjugal tenderness—but human beings learn to be loving and solicitous by engaging in sexual relations.
- (2) *Question:* Expand on the claim that “Fichte’s account of sexuality “can be separated—even if perhaps it ought not be separated” from Fichte’s system. *Answer:* It is possible to claim that gender is an active or passive expression of sexual desire; that ideally human beings should be both sexually passive and active; and that human sexuality allows for human development toward this ideal *without* accepting transcendental idealism, foundationalism, intellectual intuition, etc. *But*, as a transcendental idealist, I cannot affirm such an approach without reservation, i.e. I think any account of sexuality and gender must be incorporated within a complete account of humanity. *And*, I suspect Dr. Dryden’s real concern is expressed in her final question.

(3) Question: Is the “logic of transformation” (of the sexual drive to love) detachable from Fichte’s analysis of sexual desire? Answer: There are many ways of explaining love as a transformation of the sexual drive, but I am only interested in this particular (Fichtean) manner of doing so. Moreover, I am not interested in detaching this “logic of transformation” from this analysis of sexual desire. My point would be that activity and passivity are both expressions of sexual desire; that gender and sexual identity are usefully construed as willful expressions of natural sexual drive; and that the sexual relation between relatively active or passive participants is usefully construed as a locus for human ethical development.

Abbreviations:

EPW = *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988);

FTP = *Fichte: Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) nova methodo*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000);

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GA = *J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, ed. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Gliwitzky, and Erich Fuchs (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1964ff.);

IWL = *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994);

SE = *System of Ethics*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöllner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005);

VM = *Vocation of Man*, trans. by Peter Preuss. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987);
Breazeale, Daniel.

¹ FNR, p. 273

² When Fichte assumed his duties as a professor at the University of Jena in 1794, he was required to offer a public course (for all interested students, professors, and residents) in addition to his private courses (for paying students enrolled in his classes). Fichte chose the topic “Morality for Scholars” for these public lectures, which were listed in the university catalog as “Concerning the Scholar’s Duties” and announced in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* as “The Doctrine of the Duties of the Scholar.” The public course proved enormously successful—with lively crowds of over 500 listeners—but the lectures were not preserved in entirety. The remains of the “Morality for Scholars” lectures comprise three texts, which were published separately after the public course concluded. These three are “Some Lectures Concerning the Scholar’s Vocation” (1794); “On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth” (1794); and “Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter in Philosophy” (1795) [EPW pp. 137-231].

³ EPW, p. 151.

⁴ The *Wissenschaftslehre* was “scientific” insofar as it was an organized, complete, and coherent body of knowledge derived from a fundamental principle. (See “Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre” in EPW, p. 101-2.) Like Kant before him, Fichte distinguished between empirical experience and the transcendental conditions necessary for experience. (See “A Fragment” in EPW, p.

433-35.) Likewise, he intended to defend knowledge from skepticism, eliminate dogmatism in philosophy, and limit knowledge in order to preserve faith. [See “Aenesidemus, or Concerning the Foundations of the Philosophy of the Elements issued by Prof. Reinhold in Jena, together with a Defense of Skepticism against the Pretensions of the *Critique of Reason*,” in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, trans. by George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris (Albany: SUNY, 1985).]

⁵ IWL, p. 8; EPW, pp. 125, 170-72, and 200; VM, pp. 73-4.

⁶ For a more complete discussion of the connection between freedom, I-hood, and intellectual intuition in Fichte’s philosophy, see IWL, pp. 46-50. See also Alain Perrinjaquet, “‘Wirkliche’ und ‘philosophische’ Anschauung: Formen der Intellektuellen Anschauung in Fichtes *System der Sittenlehre* (1798),” *Fichte-Studien 5: Theoretische Vernunft* (1993), pp. 57-81; Daniel Breazeale, “Fichte’s *Nova Methodo Phenomenologica*: On the methodological role of ‘intellectual intuition’ in the later Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4 (1988), pp. 587-616; Yolanda Estes, “Intellectual Intuition, the Pure Will, and the Categorical Imperative in the Later Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*” pp. 209-228 in *New Essays on Fichte’s Later Jena Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002).

⁷ FTP, p. 290.

⁸ FTP, pp. 446-47; SE, p. 19-65; FNR, pp. 31-5, 37, 39, and 41.

⁹ FTP, pp. 293-94 and VM, pp. 91-103. See also, Estes, “Intellectual Intuition, the Pure Will, and the Categorical Imperative in the Later Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*.”

¹⁰ For a more thorough account of Fichte’s drive theory, see Yolanda Estes, “Drive in the Scholar’s Vocation” *Meisei Review* 23 (2008)

¹¹ SE, p. 202; EPW, p. 149; VM, p. 100. See also “On the Spirit and Letter in Philosophy” Translated by Elizabeth Rubenstein. In *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Kant Fichte and Schelling, Scopenhauer, Hegel*. Edited by David Simpson. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

¹² EPW, p. 149.

¹³ The theoretical drive—the truth or knowledge drive—demands knowledge or comprehension of the world. The aesthetic drive demands art or imagination of a different world. The practical drive demands action or transformation of the world.

¹⁴ For an explanation of Fichte’s notion of education and class, see Yolanda Estes, “Drive in the Scholar’s Vocation.”

¹⁵ EPW, p. 152.

¹⁶ EPW, p. 156.

¹⁷ EPW, p. 160.

¹⁸ EPW, p. 164.

¹⁹ SE, p. 315. See also, SE, p. 310.

²⁰ FNR, pp. 270-303 and SE, pp. 310-315.

²¹ FNR pp. 264-65 and SE p. 311.

²² FNR, pp. 264-65, 267, and SE, p. 311.

²³ Fichte intends for this claim that woman’s sexual satisfaction requires passivity to be construed in a simple physiological sense. The purely natural arrangement for perpetuating the species requires fertilization via the vagina and hence, coitus requires penetration of the female body by the male. This does not preclude that the woman or man might obtain satisfaction by means of acts not involving vaginal penetration (or that reproduction might occur by means of acts not involving penetration of the vagina by the penis), because the sexual drive aims at its own satisfaction rather than at the reproductive function arranged by nature. See FNR, p. 266 and 268; SE, p. 311.

²⁴ FNR, p. 266 and 268; SE, p. 311.

²⁵ FNR, p. 269 and SE, p. 312.

²⁶ FNR pp. 270-71.

²⁷ FNR pp. 271-73.

²⁸ FNR, p. 269 and SE, p. 312.

²⁹ FNR, p. 272-73.

³⁰ FNR, p. 269.

³¹ FNR, pp. 272-73.

³² SE, p. 313 and FNR, p. 264.

³³ FNR, p. 272.

³⁴ SE, p. 312

³⁵ FNR, pp. 272-73. See also SE, p. 315.

³⁶ FNR, p. 269.

³⁷ EPW, p. 161.

³⁸ FNR, p. 269.

Abbreviations:

EPW = *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988);

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Breazeale, Daniel.

³⁹ FNR, p. 273