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## **Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Freedom**

*...I am so sure about principles of my system that it is impossible for me – unless I go mad – to doubt them.*  
J.G. Fichte

Let's begin from a paradox; in an introduction to J. G. Fichte's *Vocation of Man*, published in 1956, Tadeusz Kroński writes about Fichte's obsession; about "propaganda passionate to an almost embarrassing degree" [Kroński; 1956, p. XXI], which was done by him about his conceptions.

What it is that was done by Fichte what seemed to be "embarrassing propaganda" in the eyes of a philosopher writing still in the times of Stalinism?

In a different epoch and in a different context another author, Justyna Nowotniak, began her monograph dedicated to Fichte's theory from a statement that the thought of the author of a Science of Knowledge is characterized by extremism, which is simultaneously "fascinating and grotesque", and a moment later she proclaims that "whatever is touched by our philosopher, strangely loses a sense of proportion" [Nowotniak, 1995, pp. 5,7].

Within the philosophical tradition, the picture of Fichte as a philosopher of extremes can probably be matched only by Friedrich Nietzsche. Fichte is sometimes regarded as a philosopher who crossed the Rubicon separating Kant from subjective idealism – or separating him from ridiculousness and fiasco. That way, he became an extreme subjective idealist, but a subjective idealist who is more dangerous, more demonic, more irrational than a quiet, contemplative solipsist in some significant way.

The situation becomes paradoxical when we remember that the first great Fichte's work – *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung*, mistakenly published without the

author's name – was attributed to Immanuel Kant, the most reputable figure, who probably was not refused respect by anybody. So what was written by Fichte later – or maybe even as early as in the aforementioned first work – that made him deserve to be treated so unseriously and patronizingly?

After all, Fichte himself proclaimed also – similarly as the first readers of his philosophical work – that he did not go beyond Kant in his considerations; although maybe it was not always proclaimed by him and not without reservations. In the course of time his initial almost absolute identification with Kant transformed into a belief that it is necessary to interpret Kant “in the spirit of Kant” and not “according to his letter”, and even into proclaiming that Kant's works constitute only an introduction into propedeutics of transcendental philosophy, whose development is “Science of Knowledge”. It caused even Kant's retort, who strongly dissociated himself from Fichte:

Regarding metaphysics according to Fichte's principles, I take part in it to so a slight degree that in one letter I even advised him to cultivate his ability to lecture, which could be used to the benefit of critique of pure reason, rather than to deal with sterile sophistry (*apices*). Fichte, however, kindly rejected my advice, explaining that *he is not going to lose sight of the scholastic moment yet*. Thus, the question whether I recognize the spirit of Fichtean philosophy to be true criticism has been answered by Fichte himself and hence there is no need for me to talk about its merits or lack of merits, because it is not about any evaluated object, but about an evaluating subject – so it will be enough if I disclaim responsibility for any participation in that philosophy. I must also add that misrepresenting me by saying that I only wanted to give *propedeutics* of transcendental philosophy – and not its *system* – is something which is inconceivable for me. Such a thought could never come to my mind, because I myself recognized the definite character of pure philosophy in *Critique of Pure Reason* as the best proof of its veracity. Finally, if the reviewer maintains that *Critique* should not be understood *literally* in reference to that what it literally teaches about sensuality, but that everybody who wants to understand *Critique* must get a proper *viewpoint* (Beck's or Fichte's) first, because Kant's letter, similarly as Aristotle's one, kills the spirit, I explain once again that *Critique* should, of course, be understood according to its letter – and, moreover, from the viewpoint of a reason which is an ordinary one except of being properly educated for such abstract considerations. An Italian proverb says: *Lord – I can defend myself from my enemies, but save me from my friends* [Kant, 1913, pp. 267–269].

It is worth remembering in that place that the words of criticism formulated by Kant were said in the times when Fichte was accused of atheism, what led to his expulsion from Jena. Thus, they meant Kant's public distancing from the creator of the

Science of Knowledge and even they constituted – as it is maintained by Z. Kuderowicz – Kant’s “expression of cowardice” [Kuderowicz, 1963, p. 24]. Special spice is added to the whole affair by a great probability that Kant did not know Fichte’s book: it is said that of all Fichte’s works he read only *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* during his lifetime and principles of the Science of Knowledge were known by him “of second hand” [Siemek, 1977; Medicus, 1922; Leon, 1958].

The relation between Kant’s theory and Fichte’s views cannot be reduced to their statements – even if they are extended to include a broadly understood social context. What is needed is “descending to hell” – that is, entering at the beginning the fundamental solution of the Science of Knowledge. I will not do it, however, to make a complete comparison between the philosophical conceptions – that based on *Critiques* and that formulated in more and more improved versions of the Science of Knowledge; it is a research work in itself and it was, to a considerable degree, already done in an excellent book by Marek Siemek *Idea transcendentalizmu u Fichtego i Kanta*. Nevertheless, those fundamental problems cannot be avoided when problems of freedom are being considered.

As it is usually assumed, the starting point for the Science of Knowledge is constituted by its three supreme principles. It seems, however, that a major role in understanding the meaning of the Science of Knowledge is played by Fichte’s earlier assumptions. It would be difficult to explicate all of them here, so we must make a selection of various moments of Fichte’s standpoint and refer only to those of them which are the most significant for the presented line of reasoning.

The most important assumption which must be made by us is the assumption of understanding Kant’s philosophy by Fichte and of continuation of the basic threads of the transcendental philosophy in the Science of Knowledge. It enables to treat the earlier considerations concerning Immanuel Kant’s philosophy as a direct theoretical background of not only Fichte himself but also of the present analysis. Thus, it is not necessary for us to remember here in an extended way that the whole reality is affected by the cause-and-effect relation, that the subject of cognition in *Critique of Pure Reason* is not an individual one but the subject of cognition as such, for which an individual subject is something accidental and phenomenal, that for Kant practical reason is not something separate from pure reason but rather its autonomous – and hence qualitatively different part – characterized by determination which is describable with different categories than natural determination; and hence Kant’s theory by no means can be treated as naturalist, humanist and subject-centric description of cognition and morality.

If Kant’s philosophy and its anti-naturalist breakthrough were described with more modern categories, I would be willing to recognize it as a case of creation of a specific theoretical object, different than the empirical object which is sensually accessible to individual subjects, and with establishment of a separate type of social practice –

that is, theoretical practice – whose field of activity is the theoretical object, which has been created by the theory simultaneously<sup>1</sup>. I am of an opinion that if we reveal the reasons of vitality of the whole German classic philosophy – not only of Kant's and Fichte's transcendental philosophy – the reasons which are placed in philosophical matter itself, this is just the moment of “great German idealistic systems” which we will have to recognize as the basic one.

In Fichte's philosophy it is identified with scientific values of the created theory; let us recall in this place that the cult of scientificity is extremely important for the creator of the Science of Knowledge and that he was the first who formulated the slogan about the end of philosophy and creation of scientific philosophy, the slogan which later on was repeated on quite different occasions<sup>2</sup>.

Remembering those conclusions from an analysis of Kant's philosophy is important for understanding the Science of Knowledge.

First of all, the famous Fichtean “I” equalling itself cannot be treated as “every I” or simply as “I-Fichte”. Thus, the first principle of the Science of Knowledge, proclaiming that “I am I” – or that “I = I” – has nothing in common, and cannot have anything in common, with any subjective idealism in the popular sense of the term. The formula “I = I” means establishment of a necessary *a priori* condition for any empirical knowledge of consciousness and any self-knowledge, and hence it is simply groundwork for the category of reality, a declaration of monism and the basic homogeneity of being. That being is man's being in his world, but it is nothing like being of “ink in an inkpot”. Being outside of man – when it is regarded from the perspective of man and his scientific cognition of the world – does not exist, because it, of course, cannot exist. Human cognition does not exist outside of man, hence talking

<sup>1</sup> My reasoning here refers to the conception of the “epistemic” and the “epistemological” level of reflection and of, respectively, the “the science of knowledge” and “epistemology”, which was presented by Marek Siemek [Siemek, 1977, pp. 18–82]. However, my reasoning is to a greater degree than Siemek's based on Louis Althusser's conception of the object of cognition and theoretical practice [Althusser, Balibar, 1975, especially pp. 60–97].

<sup>2</sup> “That kind of science – writes Fichte – whose possibility is, for the time being, questionable, can be called anyhow. However, if it turns out that the area which, according to all earlier experience, is fit to cultivate sciences is already occupied by relevant sciences and that we can see only one piece of land which is not cultivated yet – namely, that which is for a science of sciences as such; and if the idea of such a science – which, after all, also wants to be or become science, but which cannot reach an agreement with itself regarding the place where it is to be practiced – is found under some name, for example under the name of philosophy, it will not be bad to grant it that found empty place. Whether the word “philosophy” has been understood so far just in that way or differently is irrelevant; then, anyway, such a science, if it already becomes science, rejects finally that name which has been born by it so far because of quite unexaggerated modesty – the name connected with some sophistry, amateurishness, dilettantism. The nation which will invent such a science will certainly deserve calling it a name coming from its language; and then it could be called simply the science or the Science of Knowledge. That what has been called philosophy so far will be the science of science as such” [Fichte, 1996, pp. 23–25].

about the thing-in-itself is not properly justified and it should be abandoned. But it is not all what comes from Fichte's conception.

The basic reason of misinterpretations of Fichte's conception – let us remember that he almost madly kept writing newer and newer versions of his Science of Knowledge, complaining about general misunderstanding of his intentions – is the way of defining monistic character of being by referring to "I". This is the moment of Fichte's conceptions which causes that his interpreters often forget about the generally anti-dualistic orientation of the whole classic German philosophy, about accepting fascination with Spinoza, about the position which – in the course of time – started to be occupied in Fichte's views by culture and about many other issues which are grossly inconsistent with the subjective-idealistic scheme. And yet similar types of terms have been appearing since the history of philosophy since its beginning. Thales proclaimed that water is the arch-principle of the world not because he believed that the world was some kind of a big snowman, but rather because of the fact that universality of water and its occurrence in three physical states, its dynamics, metamorphoses and all other sensually accessible features made water an excellent analogon of the existing reality, an arch-principle not in the sense of the origin but rather of the essence, a model or nature of the world.

The situation is the same in the case of Pantheism; Spinozian *causa sui*, nature being its self-reason, gets its self-dynamics, processuality, thanks to deification. *Deus sive natura* does not mean that God is nature; as a matter of fact, it is an atheistic standpoint, rejecting personal God and animating the world understood as a thing with the light of the divine notion of God. But Spinoza does not do it without paying costs. The disappearance of personal God is elimination of not only God but also of the person. The human being becomes subordinated to the machine of nature; there is no place for specificity of the personal being. This is just the moment in Spinoza's works which is fiercely criticized both by Kant and Fichte.

If we treat such a problematic situation as a possibility of choice only between Spinoza's objectively existing reality and the subjective "I", it will always remain for us a mystery why – in spite of such an absurd standpoint – Fichte's works kept fascinating and why they played such a great role in shaping philosophy of Shelling, Hegel and even Kant himself.

Referring to "I" – which is, moreover, often absolute – in spite of being polemical against Spinoza, is deeply similar to deification of nature in pantheism, because it is restitution of subjectivity, although not of divine but of human character. The Fichtean "I" is the foundation of homogenous being – though not only simple human being anymore but that being as something which is, firstly, dynamic, active; secondly, anthropo-material; thus, the primary unity "I = I" should be treated as close

to Shelling's philosophy of identity, Hegel's march of the spirit through history<sup>3</sup> and (where maybe the affinity is the closest)... the category of *praxis* in Karl Marx's works<sup>4</sup>.

The category of "I", serving creation of the perspective of anthropo-material *praxis* is – if implemented in such a way – exceptionally rich and inspiring, but it also has a basic fault: susceptibility to pre-Kantian interpretation. However, if we translate "I" into the language of *praxis*, the definition of ontological homogeneity in Fichte's sense means that there exists only human practice, which is its own starting point and destination point. Fichte writes:

The source of all reality is I and those elements are directly constituted. Thus, the notion of reality is given together with the notion of I. However, the notion of I exists because it self-constitutes itself and it self-constitutes itself because it exists. This is just the reason why self-constitution and existence are one and the same. The notions of self-constitution and activity as such are also one and the same. Thus, all activity is reality [Fichte, 1908–1912, p. 329].

Being interpreted in such a processual way is not impersonal being reducing man to nature, but human activity which is not torn by a contradiction between practical and pure reason anymore and also free from the disturbing and unknowable thing-in-itself, but which saves also those moments as internalized, general forms of thematization of "I's" global practice. So, if somebody even insists on Fichte's solipsism, subjective idealism, he can only be suggested the idea of recognizing Fichte as a cultural solipsist.

We see here perfectly that Fichte could easily feel that he was a real continuator of Kant's ideas and simultaneously an advocate of the thesis on initial character of his solutions. It is also clear that many interpreters of Fichte's work recognize expansion of practical philosophy onto the whole philosophical system to be a characteristic

<sup>3</sup> "Fichte is [...] – writes M. Siemek on another occasion – not so much «Kant's epigone» [...] but rather «Hegel's precursor» who has not become mature yet" [Siemek, 1977, pp. 192–193]. In another place the same author writes: "[...] Fichte's «the science of knowledge» is situated on a historical trail of investigations aimed at removal of Kant's dualism of the form and the content of cognition, *a priori* and *a posteriori*..." [Siemek, 1967, p. 49].

<sup>4</sup> An interpretation of Fichte's standpoint in terms of *praxis* goes beyond the way of interpreting presented by M. Siemek, for whom the Fichtean "I" is only "a necessary structure of all human subjectivity" [Siemek, 1967, pp. 56]; a similar, somehow immanent, interpretation of Fichte is presented by Siemek in the introduction to the *The Science of Knowledge* [Siemek, 1996]. But in another place he proclaims: "Being is objectified act – that is the conclusion from *The Science of Knowledge* [Siemek, 1967, p. 81]. The position which is the closest to mine is taken by M. J. Siemek in the paper *Poznanie jako praktyka* [Siemek, 1998, p. 21]. The problem of a theoretical bond between the Science of Knowledge and Fichte's great successors in the context of his contribution into development of dialectics is discussed by R. Kozłowski in the paper *Spekulatywna dialektyka Fichtego* [Kozłowski, 1975, pp. 51–74].

feature of his philosophy – and others recognize the same allusively, maintaining that in Fichte’s philosophy we have to do with domination of the moral perspective. All of that are symptoms of the basic significance of a new *praxis* perspective emerging from his works. Fichte’s attitude can seem to be failed, really clumsy and unnecessarily generating subject-centric associations. However, let us look at the fact that the problem of practicalness – understood in that or another way – as a specific philosophical fulcrum in utilitarianism, Marxism, pragmatism, *Lebensphilosophie*, some variations of existentialism or even in the philosophy of dialogue is taken up in various ways which are at least equally far from being perfect. Thus, the proposition included in the Science of Knowledge should be perceived, on the one hand, in the context of later problems with *praxis* and, on the other hand, in juxtaposition with utilitarian propositions; then it starts to look more attractive, reveals its precursory character in its relation to some of them and an unparalleled level of theoretical thinking in relation to others.

However, a monistic and activist perspective generated by the Science of Knowledge does not translate into individual activism as early as on the level of its three basic principles. An interpretation of derivability of “not-I” from “I = I” as creation of the world by the individual subject is madly exotic. Its almost heroic extravagance is masked by a matrix of petty-bourgeois practicability hidden under that type of “explaining” Fichte. Besides it is possible that the discussed matrix has not only petty-bourgeois character but that it is also more generally fixed in universal epistemology of everyday life, similarly as traditional recidivism of anthropomorphization. And yet Fichte’s reasoning has strictly limited character on that level – and it is by no means about some individual or doing anything... and especially about creating of the world from nothingness...

The distinction between “I” and “not-I” takes place within “I” itself, it is not creation of “not-I” outside of “I”, it is not its emanation. In other words, the human being in the world – as a practical and dynamical unity, interprets the world in a subject-object form, he assumes contradiction between “I” and “not-I” referred to each other. It is the foundation of all cognition which always takes an object-subject form. The term “the human being in the world” is also a concession to make the reasoning more expository and if we wanted to replace that phrase with something even more adequate, we would have to talk about total social self-defining practice constituting itself in the dimension of theoretical practice as an object-subject act, a cognitive process. Let us pay attention to the fact how much “philosophical energy” is wasted because the sense of that Fichte’s finding is unrecognized.

Considerations on the level of the Science of Knowledge – in spite of the fact that there is no place for an individual in them – concern, however, the problem of freedom in a fundamental way. Fichte’s conception constitutes here a direct continuation and development of Kant’s standpoint; the category of “I” makes it really possible



to extend practicalness into the whole reality, practicalness becomes that way the only reality; thereby the opposition between natural necessity and human freedom disappears<sup>5</sup>, but – taking the idea further – human freedom is not arbitrariness but only specifically human necessity. In Kant’s works it is spontaneous and voluntary subordination to the moral law. In the case of Fichte, the situation is the same, but the place of the torn world, morality hidden behind its necessary “vehicle” and, finally, of the “thing-in-itself” is occupied by *scientia*, science, the Science of Knowledge, which confronts the world in full light and holding the head high.

The specific human form of determination turns out to be some kind of over-determination, which subordinates the object-subject interpretation of cognition generating reified, naturalist understanding of necessity. Thus, the world becomes free from *fatum*, fortune, *Moirai*, the whole existence is shined upon by freedom, creation of the individual subject faithful to his vocation. But the act of defining freedom in its individual aspect sends us to the dialectics of the general, to *praxis* and to the individual. Its development places us, however, beyond the Science of Knowledge or – actually – in the field which is defined by it, but where it is absent, because it itself is a Science of Knowledge, knowledge about knowledge, science of sciences. The Science of Knowledge defines “those activities of spirit where it acts because of necessity, but not those where it acts being free” [Fichte, 1996, p. 47].

Thus, the Science of Knowledge is not a domain of freedom – as it is often assumed by those writing about creation of “not-I” by “I” – but of that what is necessary; it is not a proclamation of “I’s” activity but foundation of *praxis*, the space of human freedom understood in the most general way.

Fichte’s philosophy is a philosophy of freedom in the aforementioned sense, but it is also a philosophy of freedom in the sense of creation of an active individual subject faithful to his vocation. The Theory of Freedom maintains Immanuel Kant’s basic solution also in that case and also in that case we have to do with stressing the necessity of authenticity of subordination to moral principles, stature of happiness which is connected with moral conduct. The basic change consists in significant radicalization of Kantian ideas – not only in the sense of acceptance for masses’ political revolt against authorities.

Fichte comes to “direct action”. If we want to become aware of the difference existing in this field, it is good to remember Kant’s statement from the time when he was forbidden writing about religious issues. Then probably the most important

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<sup>5</sup> An acute reader of philosophical works is going to find out after some time that the most sophisticated attempts at defining freedom are very far from the negation of the cause-and-effect relation, *determinatio omnis*, but they lead to placing it in the realm of morality – whatever that word is going to mean in that context. As a matter of fact, all such endeavours are a way of restituting Cartesian dualism, but now in a philosophical field defined by the language of Kant’s philosophy. But does freedom feel better in morality than in the pineal gland?



argument which was put forward by Kant was the argument that he used a difficult language in his works and hence the risk of causing social unrest by that kind of treatises is low. Let us also remember about Kant's standpoint in difficult moments when Fichte was accused of atheism.

The best way to reveal the difference clearly is to refer to maybe the most popular Fichte's work – *The Vocation of Man*<sup>6</sup>. As early as on the first pages of his dissertation he proclaims that:

This book is therefore not intended for philosophers by profession, who will find nothing in it that has not been already set forth in other writings of the same author. It ought to be intelligible to all readers who are able generally to understand a book at all. To those who only wish to repeat, in somewhat varied order, certain phrases which they have already learned by rote, and who mistake this business of the memory for understanding, it will probably be found unintelligible.

It ought to attract and animate the reader, and to elevate him above the world of sense, to a transcendental region, – at least the author is conscious that he has not entered upon his task without such inspiration. Often, indeed, the fire with which we commence an undertaking disappears during the toil of execution; and thus, at the conclusion of a work, we are in danger of doing ourselves injustice upon this point. In short, whether the author has succeeded in attaining his object or not, can only be determined by the effect which the work shall produce on the readers to whom it is addressed, – and in this the author has no voice.

I must, however, remind my reader that the "I" who speaks in this book is not the author himself, but it is his earnest wish that the reader should himself assume this character, and that he should not rest contented with a mere historical apprehension of what is here said, but really and truly, during reading, hold converse with himself, deliberate, draw conclusions, and form resolutions, like his representative in the book, and, by his own labour and reflection, developed out of his own soul, and build up within himself, that mode of thought the mere picture of which is laid before him in the work [Fichte, (10), p.1].

As you can see, the idea of the book is basically different from the abovementioned Kant's isolationistic intentions. Fichte is guided by the idea of direct interference with public awareness, civic awareness understood in the broadest possible way – and not with philosophical awareness. He is interested in ideological – and philosophical – practice. *The Vocation of Man* is a fully aware attempt at direct ideological practice. When we look at various Fichte's declarations, we see that parame-

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<sup>6</sup> Nota bene it is the only Fichte's work which was published in the People's Republic of Poland in the complete form and, moreover, in the times of Stalinism because before 1956. If we look at the list of works published in a series Library of Classic Philosophers, we see that publication of *The Vocation of Man* had been preceded, regarding German philosophers, only by publication of Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1953).

ters of efficient and necessary activity in order to promote the vocation of man are often *expressis verbis* identical with the definition of ideology we have initially adopted. Fichte assumes that his mission consists in shaping social awareness by appeals for adopting scientifically constructed picture of the world by a particular citizen as his own; and his aim is not, of course, passive acceptance but real and authentic activity for realization of the presented social project<sup>7</sup>.

The starting point for ideological practice understood in such a way must be, however, creation of a humanocentric meaning of the human existence. The next step, after acceptance of Kant's attitude to religion, is in that case Fichte's recognition of a necessity of creation of a fully rational subject which has a way of justifying the human existence being in competition with religious versions of perceiving the world. Similarly as the religious model, it must take into account that happiness and immortality are something what the human being needs in order to make his life meaningful.

In Kant's practical philosophy fixing morality takes place by means of a "vehicle" of religion or with the help of "good will". The "vehicle" of religion and "good will" are not, however, foundations you can fully rely on. The very duality of the foundation of morality is disturbing. Popularity and elitism of morality interpreted in such a way – differentiating subjects of morality, which, after all, was intended to be universal – are also disturbing. Acceptance of such a duality has practical, compromise and historically limited character.

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<sup>7</sup> Fichte's deep fascination with Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's pedagogical conceptions – and especially with his idea of universal national education of people, a quite new way of education assuming creation of a new social subject – is rightly, although probably not sufficiently, stressed. "How it is possible – asks Pestalozzi determining the basic aim of education – to educate a child, taking into account his destiny as well as changeability of his situation and relations, so that it would be easy for him to do what necessity and duty are going to demand from him in his life and so that it would become his nature" [Pestalozzi, 1972, p. 368]. A climate very similar to the climate of Fichte's statements can be found in all Pestalozzi's works. He writes for example: "A child who is educated in their spirit is prepared for looking for stimulations for moral, intellectual and artistic efforts just using those forces. A comprehensive character of our method caused that a child can be independent in each situation. It does not compare itself to anybody, it compares itself only to itself" [Pestalozzi, 1972, p. 442]; and a bit later: "According to that view, a child through education in freedom must come to understanding of necessity and through education in principles of necessity it must acquire the sense of freedom, and be capable of both" [Pestalozzi, 1972, p. 444]. "Because freedom of our children – writes Pestalozzi in another place – must be restricted in the name of their preparation for fulfillment of their responsibilities, it should be restricted to the end without leaving any hope. That way it will be easier for children to overcome themselves and enjoy fuller freedom, which can be fully given them later eliminating restrictions and compulsion, which was compulsion only at the beginning" [Pestalozzi, 1972, p. 13]. Fichte judged Pestalozzi enthusiastically and it was expressed, among others, in such a statement: "That man made a really great discovery, which is of greater practical significance than he could desire. He wanted only to help people, but his discovery, treated as a whole, uplifts people, abolishes all difference between people and the educated class and, instead of education of people which was intended, it gives national education and helps people and all mankind to emerge from the depth of the hitherto fall" [Fichte, 1921, p. 190].

Moreover, a transcendental connection of morality, in spite of application of the formula *as if*, is strikingly provisional – similarly as in the case of morality freed from religion, fragility of being based solely on good will is visible. Thus, in both cases we do not have to do with “real” groundwork for morality: happiness is momentary, immortality is illusory. Fichte does not accept such a state of affairs and looks for a new road to happiness and infinity, hence immortality, infinity are something necessary for happiness. Fichte writes:

Shall I eat and drink only that I may hunger and thirst and eat and drink again, till the grave which is open beneath my feet shall swallow me up, and I myself become the food of worms? Shall I beget beings like myself, that they too may eat and drink and die, and leave behind them beings like themselves to do the same that I have done? To what purpose this ever-revolving circle, this ceaseless and unvarying round, in which all things appear only to pass away, and pass away only that they may re-appear unaltered;—this monster continually devouring itself that it may again bring itself forth, and bringing itself forth only that it may again devour itself? [Fichte, (10), p. 48]

Finitude understood in such a way cannot be the aim and sense of existence. But what infinity is achievable for the human being freed from the “vehicle” of morality constituted by religion? That – let us use that term – secular infinity in Fichte’s interpretation is connected with a bond between the individual and the humanity, with activity for the good of mankind, with contributing to realization of progress, with uniting individual existence with vocation of man. “It is the vocation of our race to unite itself into one single body – maintains J. G. Fichte – all the parts of which shall be thoroughly known to each other, and all possessed of similar culture.” [Fichte, (10), p. 50].

The way of achieving infinity and consolidating that way a possibility of happiness is blending in to the process of mankind’s improvement, overcoming cataclysms and evil being consequences of “bad freedom” – that is, catastrophes, wars and acts of injustice resulting from misuse of freedom by human beings. The next, second stage of crystallization of Fichte’s appeal is coming from infinity and meaning of life to a gradually specified program of man’s social vocation.

The interpretative tradition of Fichte’s philosophy presents us two roads of such specification in his works. The first appears mainly in *Addresses to the German Nation* and it has nationalist, chauvinistic character. The second – which is expressed in the purest way in *The Closed Commercial State* – is regarded as constituting a Fichtean version of socialism preceding a later political movement.

It seems, however, that such a duality of Fichte’s standpoint is a misunderstanding. I am of an opinion that it is possible to successfully reconstruct Fichte’s standpoint as relatively homogenous and even I am willing to defend a thesis that his statements

are characterized by considerable harmony and consequence. Approval of such a thesis requires, first of all, abolishment of the basic obstacle – that is, accusations concerning Fichte’s supposed nationalist inclinations. In this moment we must, of course, abstract from historical forms of reception of Fichtean thought and focus on actual views of the author of *Addresses to the German Nation*.

Yes, it is true that Fichte – delivering lectures in occupied Prussia, in Berlin, which inspire Germans for action – talks about the chosen German nation, criticizes everything that is foreign, mobilizes for activity and revival. But Fichte’s interpellations are not connected with calling for some kind of domination of Germans over other nations; it should be also remembered that they were presented when Germany was in an extremely dishonourable situation. And yet that what Fichte persuades for still fully fits the general plan of man’s vocation.

It comes from the fact that the distinguished position of Germans is – according to him – a function of a necessity of going out from national humiliation and of a connected favourable circumstance of unity between Germans’ emancipatory movement and general man’s vocation. Germans are a distinguished nation not because of blood ties, tradition, history; their superiority is connected with existence of German philosophy – namely, Fichte’s scientific philosophy; a rational, subjective premise for elevation of Germany over other nations. But even so far-reaching weakening of Fichte’s national does not fully convey his standpoint. Let us quote two very clear and revealing statements:

So, let there appear before you at last in complete clearness what we have meant by Germans, as we have so far described them. The true criterion is this: do you believe in something absolutely primary and original in man himself, in freedom, in endless improvement, in the eternal progress of our race, or do you not believe in all this, but rather imagine that you clearly perceive and comprehend that the opposite of all this takes place? All who either are themselves alive and creative and productive of new things, or who, should this not have fallen to their lot, at any rate definitely abandon the things of naught and stand on the watch for the stream of original life to lay hold of them somewhere, or who, should they not even be so far advanced as this, at least have an inkling of freedom and do not hate it or take fright at it, but on the contrary love it—all these are original men; they are, when considered as a people, an original people, *the* people simply, Germans. All who resign themselves to being something secondary and derivative, and who distinctly know and comprehend that they are such, are so in fact, and become ever more so because of this belief of theirs; they are an appendix to the life which bestirred itself of its own accord before them or beside them; they are an echo resounding from the rock, an echo of a voice already silent; they are, considered as a people, outside the original people, and to the latter they are strangers and foreigners.

And a bit later Fichte adds that:

[...] whoever believes in spirituality and in the freedom of this spirituality, and who wills the eternal development of this spirituality by freedom, wherever he may have been born and whatever language he speaks, is of our blood; he is one of us, and will come over to our side. Whoever believes in stagnation, retrogression, and the round dance of which we spoke, or who sets a dead nature at the helm of the world's government, wherever he may have been born and whatever language he speaks, is non-German and a stranger to us; and it is to be wished that he would separate himself from us completely, and the sooner the better [Fichte, (5)]<sup>8</sup>.

“German community”, “German nation” are – in Fichte’s version – a community where there is a place for everybody accepting the vocation of man, regardless their nationality, origin, language and culture, but German-speaking foreigners who do not accept the vocation of man cannot belong to it. It is difficult to regard Fichte’s standpoint as nationalist, although it is indubitably characterized by some elitism or exclusiveness<sup>9</sup>.

I have presented such an extensive quotation from Fichte’s addresses also in order to turn attention to its, as a matter of fact, cosmopolitan character. “National” unity is in that case constituted on the level of ideal and it would be probably more correct to call it not national but ideal or ideological unity. In spite of appearances, the category of the nation in Fichte’s works has a fully mock-up character and it is a notion which synthesizes ideological awareness only for a moment. Moreover, looking at Fichte’s category of the nation can lead us to recognition of something which we can call an intellectual, political community, a “philosophical nation” (because the vocation of man is constructed in the field of reformed philosophy but, probably, still philosophy) – and into the area of cosmopolitanism, so back to the issue constituting the essence of human vocation: that of unification of mankind into “one body”.

That way we come back to *The Closed Commercial State* again. It would seem that the idea of the closed commercial state confirms Fichte’s national – in the usual sense – inclinations. One nation, one state... it does not sound good after the 20th century’s experiences... However, a moment ago it was revealed to us that the notion of the nation in Fichte’s interpretation has a very special sense – an ideal, ideological

<sup>8</sup> . Schelling wrote that Fichte “wanted to find evil only in inertia of human nature” [Schelling, 1990, p. 95].

<sup>9</sup> An interpretation assuming Fichte’s “extreme nationalism” and “attitude characterized by nationalism (not to say chauvinism)” is expressed in Bolesław Andrzejewski’s work *Przyroda i język. Filozofia wczesnego romantyzmu w Niemczech* [Andrzejewski, 1989, pp. 33, 35]. Of course, it is difficult to agree with it in the light of the above presented reconstruction. It is also characteristic that a similar attitude to Fichte’s philosophy is accompanied by an overall interpretation of his philosophy in the spirit of romantic thought.

one<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, the idea of the closed commercial state does not have features of the “closed national state”. The description of the postulated organization of society does not refer in any moment to national, German or any other, content. Fichte’s project is as cosmopolitan as a mathematical operation, as  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Rational organization of desired society is applicable in each nation.

But in Fichte’s considerations there is one more moment, which is usually paid little attention as a result of a hypnotic influence of the idea of the closed commercial state. I mean what the author of the fascinating social construct can tell us about the future of that state, future of the humankind in the context of realization of the project of the closed commercial state. Fichte’s standpoint, although not very developed, is perfectly clear: the discussed state, rich and happy as a result of introduced reforms, becomes a model for others, the object of desire and envy, and other states – those which, thanks to the power of the closed commercial state cannot realize themselves in a predatory way – must, because of that, take a path of imitation and voluntary similitude to the closed commercial state. Thus, all the states follow the example of the first closed state.

So what is finally got?

The humankind united in the global social project. The closed commercial state is a medium of introducing a social project concerning the whole humankind. A detailed analysis of the closed commercial state makes it possible to reveal specific features of Fichte’s standpoint and verify contradictory opinions regarding its supposedly socialist character. Anyway, so it seems.

The problem is, however, more complicated – first of all because of the fact that nowadays it is difficult to discuss in a responsible way about what socialism is and then measure relations between Fichte’s ideas and some negotiated model. After all

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<sup>10</sup> Claus Träger is of an opinion that “It was dangerous to have ideas. Dangerous in double sense. Who had ideas constituted a threat to the state and exposed himself to state persecution. Ideas even simply as ideas constituted an antithesis to traditional faith as well as to rules and laws which were derived from it and were in force in an absolutist state... The fact that then people subordinated the notion of the idea to the notion of the revolution was only its unavoidable consequence. In everyday language a defender of ideas meant a defender of the idea of the bourgeois revolution. And when the system of revolutionary ideas in France turned out to be «ideology» and revealed itself to Germans as its concrete expression, «idealists» from that side of Rhine were usually suspected of favouring revolution. In the eyes of reaction they constituted the only possibility in existing conditions of infiltrating life of the nation and assuming a living form by the spirit of revolutionary changes. An idealistic belief in the power of the written word, which had not been undermined yet, did the rest – and only one more step was needed to sense a Jacobin in every professor of philosophy” [Träger, 1981, pp. 134–135]. Although I am not fully convinced, I feel a temptation for an interpretation which historically understood notions – such as “classic German idealism”, “great German systems of idealistic philosophy” – defining Kant’s, Fichte’s, Schelling’s and Hegel’s philosophy would generally connect with such a revelation of the genesis of the notion of idealism which is found in Träger’s statement.

our object of interest in that book is, as a matter of fact, different. However, it is hard to avoid some important moments of the Fichtean social project.

Contrary to views depreciating utopianism and “subjectivism”<sup>11</sup> of Fichte’s social conception, the idea of the close commercial state which he developed is unusually precise and – looking from the perspective of contemporary sociology – you would often say: “professional”.

What in Fichte’s conception is used for spreading principles of reason is not religion – like in the case of Kant – but a real state which gradually introduces principles of the state of reason. And the principles of reason can be constructed when during creation of a desired social system you are guided by reason and respect for laws coming into being “according to the concepts of Right, by presupposing men to be without any of the relations that, resembling rightful relations, had previously existed” [Fichte (9), p. 87]. It does not mean, however, complete “detachment from reality”. Fichte is perfectly aware that real states deviate from the “rational state” as well as of the fact that his advice concerning introduction of the closed commercial state based on the example of closed legal states will probably be used by nobody. And let us notice that “lack of realism”, consisting in referring to “abstract” principles which are interpreted “only in a juridical way”<sup>12</sup>, what amounts to “subjectivization of social being”, is an excellent way of connecting the new society with the only real field where French Revolution realized its democratic and fraternal ideas. That only reality is a reality of juridical fiction remote from real functioning of law. What makes Fichte’s standpoint even more interesting is the fact that he avoids connecting postulations of justice with natural equality of human beings and relativizes ideals of new society to that what is human, historical and created by “man himself” – and, specifically, to that what exists in the system of law as its basis: equal and free people. That Fichtean *ab ovo* is not, however, a real historical beginning but a logical beginning determined by the wind blowing from Paris.

While considering a social project such as a project of the close commercial state we usually focus our attention on utopianism vs. realism of such a conception; in Fichte’s case, however, even a very justification of probably minimal influence of his idea on states of that time is interesting. Johann Gottlieb Fichte creates on that occasion an abbreviated conception of colonialism. According to his opinion European states are united in a European commercial community, which – by means of

<sup>11</sup> In the past an accusation of subjectivism which was to be manifested by Fichte while conceiving society – and especially property – was formulated by Zbigniew Kuderowicz in a paper *Problematyka wolności w doktrynie społecznej Adama Müllera* [Kuderowicz, 1961].

<sup>12</sup> To provide a counterpoint to such standpoints I will quote only the following opinion by Alain Renaut: “In his 1796 work [Renaut writes about Fichte’s *Grundlage des Naturrecht...*] he makes an effort to safeguard realization of law without going beyond the legal sphere. In this sense it is not baseless to see there the first attempt to build a pure theory of law in modern thought” [Renaut, 1985, p. 109].



violence and commercial exchange – exploit other areas of the world. They are not willing to introduce any changes. Fichte writes:

The reason for this unwillingness, be it thought through clearly or be it not, is that Europe has a great advantage in trade over the remaining parts of the world, whose forces and products {393} it takes for its own use without giving anywhere near a sufficient return payment. Every single European state, however unfavourable its own trade balance stands in relation to the others, still draws some advantage from this common exploitation of the rest of the world, nor will it ever abandon the hope of improving the trade balance in its favour and thus drawing an even greater advantage. With its departure from the greater European commercial society it would have to renounce all this. If we are to remove the reason for this unwillingness, we must show that a relation like that which Europe has to the rest of the world – a relation grounded neither in Right nor in fairness – cannot possibly continue [Fichte, (9), p. 85].

Thus, impossibility of introducing reforms results from an international system of commercial relations, from global relations of exploitation. Injustice is the source of wealth of European states and they will not want to give up their privileged position. It is impossible to prove that those circumstances will ever end – and even if it was possible, the opponents would say that it is not going to happen during our lifetime: “Let us then take advantage of this for as long as it continues, leaving it to the generations that are around when it finally comes to an end to figure out for themselves how they will cope”. I confess, writes Fichte, “I have no answer to this” [Fichte, (9), p. 85–86].

So what is the sense of creation of the conception of the closed commercial state? It is about creating a scientific program of realization of happiness on earth:

Everyone wishes to live as pleasantly as is possible. Since everyone demands this as a human being, and no one is more or less human than anyone else, everyone has an equal right in [making] this demand. In accordance with this equality of their rights, the division must be made in such a way that one and all can live as pleasantly as is possible when so many men as they are exist next to one another in the given sphere of efficacy. Each, in other words, must be able to live about as pleasantly as the other. I say: be able to, and not have to. Should someone live less pleasantly than he is able, the reason for this must lie with him alone and not with anyone else [Fichte, (9), p.93].

Fichte realizes the aim defined in the aforementioned way coming from property relations – and property is understood by him as a right<sup>13</sup> to conduct some type of monopolized, exclusive activity within the limits of an existing division of social labour (we could say: “economic practice”). Thus, the object of property is not a “thing”, but some type of legally safeguarded activity, where property understood in a traditional way is its special form<sup>14</sup>. Then Fichte comes to the social division of labour, which divides society into producers (farmers, fishermen, orchardists, etc.), processors (artisans, industrial workers), commerce (merchants); those types of activity – together with a multitude of their specialized variants – should be, according to Fichte’s opinion, regulated. Translating it into a more modern language we can come to a conclusion that it was about a right to conduct one’s own economic activity and a duty of exchange and cooperation with other segments of the division of labour safeguarded by the rule of law. Thus, it is a declaration of a duty of work and cooperation, but also of a universal access to work and impermissibility of unemployment. That regulation concerns property relations, but Fichte connects it also with division relations; it is, first of all, to serve providing everybody with decent living conditions:

“Let all be sated and dwell securely before someone decorates his dwelling. Let all be comfortably and warmly clothed before anyone dresses himself sumptuously” [Fichte, (9)]<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Law in Fichte’s conceptions seems to perform a basically different function than in Kant’s views. A reversal of a dependency relationship takes place there. Not morality is to determine the legal sphere, but quite the opposite: law, as intersubjectivity, is primary and defines individual subjectiveness with its morality. It leads, among others, also to such an interesting conclusion that there must be a possibility of imposing law on a man deprived on Kantian good will by compulsion. The issue is discussed in an interesting and broader way by A. Renaut in the already quoted paper *Fichte i problem autonomii prawa* as well as on the occasion of discussing Kant’s views in the book *Era jednostki* [Renaut, 2001, pp. 293–337]. Changes of Fichte’s views about the relationship morality-law are discussed by: A. Philonenko [Philonenko, 1966]; L. Ferry [Ferry, 1981]; J. Bouveresse [Bouveresse, 1967].

<sup>14</sup> It is a very modern conception and much better than traditional – but also modern – conceptions reducing property to owning things. Let us remember that property as property of things makes it impossible to distinguish between a slave and a worker – as, respectively, someone deprived of his labour power ownership and someone who owns it. In order to do it a category of labour power ownership is necessary and ownership of one’s own labour power is not ownership of things. The Fichtean interpretation of ownership not only includes labour power ownership, but it even creates a more general category which can perfectly contain all currently distinguished types of property. The Fichtean conception of property is referred to by G. Simmel in *The Philosophy of Money* [Simmel, 1997, pp. 277–280]. The subject of property was discussed by me in the book *Klasy społeczne...*, [Kochan, 1990] and *Studia z teorii klas społecznych* [Kochan, 2011], also: S. Kozyr-Kowalski [Kozyr-Kowalski, 1977, 1999].

<sup>15</sup> “The three estates we have presented are the fundamental constituent parts of the nation. Here I am only concerned with the reciprocal relation of these fundamental constituent parts. The members of the government, as well as the estate of teachers and guardians, exist only {406} for the sake of these first three estates, and will not be included in the calculation.” [Fichte, (9), p. 97].

And there are many more appeals for frugality and much more criticism of luxury, and they concern not only decorating homes, but also sumptuous meals, attire, importing rare and luxury goods. It does not mean, however, absolute equality. The division is made, as a matter of fact, according to labour, everybody is a servant of the whole and gets on that basis a just share in the whole's goods, nobody can become especially rich, but also nobody can grow poor<sup>16</sup>. "All individuals are guaranteed that their present state of existence will continue into the future, and, through this, the whole is guaranteed its own quiet, steady continuity" [Fichte: (9), p. 107].

But, according to Fichte's opinion, the needs of an office worker – who because of his job, needs clean clothes, peace, silence and special meals – are different than the needs of people who do manual labour in dirt and sweat in open air; thus, differentiation in division relations is justified not only by labour efficiency but also by different features of performed work determining differentiation of living and working conditions.

The need of regulation of division relations leads Fichte to taking up the problem of money and looking for a universal meter for measuring value of various goods and, in spite of the fact that he stops at adopting bread, grain as such a meter because of the fact that they are most needed for human life, it is difficult not to see a close similarity between those considerations and initial analyses in Marx's *Capital*.

Fichte must, however, come back to international relations; there is no possibility of construction of such a state-organized society in existing conditions of international trade, dependency of particular societies on the world economy with its whimsies and unpredictability. In order to become free from such an influence of the global economy Fichte demands closing the state regarding the commercial aspect, in other words: state monopoly on international trade, state monopolization of ownership of the global currency and placing on the internal market a national currency which would be non-convertible into the global currency. That reform not only separates from fortuity of the global market, but also cumulates global currency – which earlier was diffused in the hands of citizens – in the hands of the state and that way it gives the state which decides to make the reform a radically privileged position among other states.

Peace, law, order, cooperation, strong and rich state, lack of poverty, easy management of society, elimination of fortuity from social life and, moreover, replacement of a standing army with something like a levy in mass, a militia (and hence a very cheap state) – all of these is going to cause harmonious and unprecedented development of

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<sup>16</sup> Maybe it is not out of place to quote a rhyme cited by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, who was respected by Fichte so much:

My cottage is poor

But there lives joy there.

[Pestalozzi, 1972, p. 466].

such a society leading to unparalleled thriving and citizens' happiness<sup>17</sup>, and other states, seduced by its example, will willingly follow its footsteps.

There appears the aforementioned global society in sight – the society which is not a closed commercial state anymore, but which preserves all its values and exists globally now. It is not even a state anymore. In many Fichte's texts we can find statement rejecting necessity of a state's existence; thus, the closed commercial state is in this sense also a medium leading to rejection of statehood: "To make government obsolete – this is the aim of all government" [Fichte, 1956, p.53]<sup>18</sup>.

Fichte, however, is convinced that a possibility of achievement of the aim is not constitutive for taking up activity for the closed commercial state; it is about an aspiration, about a definitely aimed activity, about subordinating one's own activity to an extensively described social project, it is not about identification with a utopia and possibility of its realization understood in a zero-one way, but about – as we can say using terminology from another work – accession to the German nation.

Fichte's works as a whole are organized vis-à-vis a freedom interpellation. This time a general appeal for participation in the vocation of man takes a form specified to the level of a detailed social program. Scientific arguments define what is scientific, just, good, true, rational, necessary and they simultaneously exclude that what is unscientific, unjust, bad, accidental. It is the moment of appeal, interpellation for participation in a social program formulated with a scientific language – and simultaneously the moment of exclusion of that what is different, external, those who do not answer the interpellation.

Fichte speak about evil many times. According to his opinion, evil is connected with lack of freedom, disusing it, passivity and sloth. Thus, it appears in Fichte's idea always when the interpellation of human vocation is not answered.

Universalistic ideology turns out to be particular. If it was to be really universalistic, it should recognize as binding that what is universal or medium. But the situation is the opposite: that what is universal turns out to be a misunderstanding, the particu-

<sup>17</sup> Citizens' happiness should concern economic activity, work, as well as time out from work. The following Fichte's statement is interesting in that respect: "It is no mere pious wish of humanity, but the absolutely necessary [unerlässlich] demand issuing from its Right and its vocation, that it live on the earth as easily, as freely, with as much command over nature, in as truly human a way, as nature will permit. Man should labor, and yet not as a beast of burden who sinks into sleep under the weight of its load and, having just barely refreshed its exhausted forces, is roused to bear it anew. He should labor without fear, with pleasure and joy, and have time left over to raise his spirit and eye to the heavens, which he has been formed to behold. He should not simply eat together with his beast of burden, but his meals should differ as much from its feed, his dwelling from its stall, as the build of his body differs from its build. This is his right, simply because he is a human being". [Fichte, (9), p. 110].

<sup>18</sup> In another place Fichte writes: "Here humanity separates itself from citizenship to freely ascend to morality" (J.G. Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*, in: idem, *Werke...*, op.cit., p. 27, quotation after M.J. Siemek [Siemek, 1967, p. 84].

lar is true and rational, although it finally presents itself as the universal (the “infinite” according to Fichte), and that what is different – as finite, past and hostile.

Thus, in the individual dimension freedom is participation in the project of *The Vocation of Man* and enslavement is contestation of that project, failing to answer the interpellation of the Other, which – let us emphasize it once more – is not any Kantian “vehicle” but scientifically constructed ideology.

Thus, freedom does not have universal character, neither is everybody entitled to it. It is for those who answer the appeal and it appears as a value of an ideological bond uniting individuals into a social historical subject. But it is not only that, because – as a matter of fact – when we write about it solely in that way, we reduce its existence to effect occurring in an individual subject, and that is only its subjective and individual way of existing. Freedom which is presented in *The Closed Commercial State* constitutes the core of some social project. However – let us define it even more precisely, avoiding treating freedom as the essence, because after all the essence of the closed commercial state is not freedom, but constructed ideal reality of a new social project – it is much more appropriate to proclaim that freedom itself is some necessity, it is some social space included in the conception of the close commercial state, it is a historically defined type of social practice.

So what is freedom for those who do not answer the appeal, the interpellation of Fichte proclaiming: *Just here, in man's vocation, is freedom!* It is somehow the basic question. Do they not have freedom?

From Fichte's viewpoint, they do not – but only from the viewpoint of Fichte as the creator of some type of freedom practice which aspires for universality and presents itself as universalist.

A fuller answer to that question – a non-ideological one, or in any case a non-Fichtean one – goes beyond Fichte's texts. However, if we assume that his way of understanding, practicing freedom as a medium of interiorization of ideology and of active commitment to practice of freedom included in a definite social project has been accurately reconstructed above, we must recognize that freedom is possible only as a result of that commitment, of answering the interpellation. Of course, those who do not answer Fichte's appeal answer other interpellations, other appeals of other ideologies presenting themselves as true, unique, universal social projects offering real space of social freedom, true individual freedom. Or they answer neither Fichte's appeals nor any others – and hence they are not present in the area of the emerging civil society stopping at those forms of determination of their being which Fichte describes as only natural.

Fichte's philosophy is not an ideology, but the moment of self-constituting of ideology as a new form of social practice which was “caught in the act”. And it was caught in the moment of unique unification of philosophy and ideology, which was splendidly expressed by the philosophy of the creator of the Science of Knowledge,

in all his works but also in his destinies, in his biography. How excellently the presented reconstruction of Fichte's views on freedom goes with his idea – which, after all, was not accepted by relevant authorities – of accompanying the German army as a “secular public speaker” motivating soldiers for sacrifices and courage!

Fichte's philosophy of freedom reveals in the purest form the essence of the notion of “freedom” which was important for the whole later history – also the history of philosophy. It shows the “kitchen” of existence of freedom in one thinker's philosophical practice in the most direct way. That what over the years was to become a complex structure of ideological practices orchestrated for a choir emerging from progressing division of social labour and complicating forms of existence of civil society here appears as individual theoretical effort, a philosopher's interpellation addressed to the human being as such in order to make them aware of their vocation, providing freedom, happiness and immortality. All they need is to answer that interpellation and join realization of the particular social project.

Thus, Fichte as a philosopher of freedom – in comparison with industrial forms of production of freedom of later times (including the present one) – appears to be a bit like an artisan of freedom. A creator for whom that what is professional is sometimes inseparable from that what is amateurish and that what is produced is interwoven with that what is artistic, creative, lived, authentic and one's own.

Probably – from the viewpoint of practitioners of freedom from the times of Stalinism and the times of the multimedia virtual reality - that lack of distance towards freedom, the human being and their vocation may seem especially annoying, affectionate, exaggerated, overstressed, “passionate in an embarrassing way”, “grotesque”, unprofessional.

But it is Johann Gottlieb Fichte who is the philosopher of freedom.

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**Keywords** Fichte, freedom, idealism, materialism, Marx, praxis, ideology, Althusser

### **ABSTRACT**

The article presents a reading of the philosophy of J. G. Fichte as a philosopher of freedom from the perspective of seeing him as a precursor of the philosophy of Hegel and Marx. Fichte and his understanding of freedom are interpreted here from the point of view of Louis Althusser's theory of ideology.