

Chapter Three: A Critical Interpretation of Fichte's Political Philosophy

3.1 Introduction

This section exposes Fichte's philosophical contribution to the idea of whether it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses its citizenry. His philosophy has been associated with the French Revolution that was majorly informed by the enlightenment project. According to the observations of Wood¹, the philosophical standpoints of Fichte informed the French Revolution. It formed a new basis of the history of human species upon which prior human nature and activities on the planet were regarded as preparatory. Fichte was a firm follower of Immanuel Kant and he was also proceeded by Hegel who recommended the philosophy by arguing that a revolution was made in Germany based on the philosophical contributions of Fichte². Since the contemporary world is still ruled by social requirements of modernity such as progress, freedom, justice, and so on, it is imperative to assess Fichte's philosophical contributions to inform the debate on whether it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government. Therefore, before discussing the politico-historical situation under which he philosophised, it is imperative to briefly highlight the life of Fichte as a way of laying a firm groundwork towards a robust understanding of how this philosophy would help in solving the paradox aforementioned.

Born to a humble family on May 19, 1762, Johann Gottlieb Fichte struggled to pursue his education and did not even obtain a formal degree from any university for financial reasons. He dropped out from two universities namely Jena and Leipzig. During his early life, the philosopher did not even know about the Kantian philosophy, something that reformed his thinking of human freedom and determinism later. He particularly came across Kantianism in 1790 while tutoring a student when he was living in Leipzig. According to Wood³, Fichte gave testimony that his immersion to Kantian writings reformed his deterministic view of the world by reconciling human freedom with determinism. He later on decided to meet Kant himself but he did not create a good first impression. However, in 1791, Fichte surprised Kant with a manuscript addressing Critical philosophy concerning divine revelation, Kant's topic of interest that he had not put in print before. Therefore, he arranged for his publisher to bring out the work under the title of *An Attempt at a*

¹ WOOD, A.W., "Fichte's Philosophical Revolution", in *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1991, pp. 1-28, p. 1. Available at: doi:10.5840/philtopics19911921. Consulted on 12 July 2023.

² *Ibid.*

³ WOOD, A.W., "Snapshot: Johann Gottlieb Fichte", in *The Philosophers' Magazine*, no. 75, 2016, pp. 67-69, p. 67. Available at: doi:10.5840/tpm201675131. Consulted on 18 July 2023.

*Critique of All Revelation*⁴. This publication suddenly rose him to prominence. His main contribution to Kantianism is that he extended Kant's philosophical thoughts on morality and religion to divine revelation thus proving to be his firm follower. However, it is worth noting that his sudden rise to prominence was closely related to a strategy that was laid by Kant himself: the title *An Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* omitted his name and profile from the preface and for a long period, people thought that the work was of Kant himself. When it later emerged that the author of the work was Fichte, he mysteriously rose to prominence as an important philosophical figure in Germany. During his period of initial prominence, he also anonymously published two political works namely *Contribution to the Rectification of the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution*⁵ and *Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Oppressed It Until Now*⁶. The two works added further value to his philosophical system that he had begun to develop secretly. When the University of Jena discovered his philosophical contributions from the perspective of Kantianism, they called him to replace an empty chair of philosophy that was evacuated by Karl Leonhard Reinhold who was also a firm follower and interpreter of Kant's philosophical contributions. During his time at Jena which lasted up to 1799, Fichte got an opportunity to publish numerous philosophical manuscripts that established his reputation as an iconic philosophy figure in Germany for instance the *Wissenschaftslehre*⁷.

Breazeale Daniel remarks that *Wissenschaftslehre*

does not refer to any particular stage or presentation of Fichte's philosophy, and still less to any particular book, it refers instead to Fichte's overall system, to the general orientation of his thinking in the broadest and most encompassing sense... it is synonymous with philosophy itself⁸.

This chapter will also offer a comprehensive discussion on this system by focusing on its foundations with particular emphasis on how he defined the concept of subjectivity. Besides, this

⁴ SCHMIDT, H., "Johann Gottlieb Fichte. A Critique of All Revelation", in *Philosophy and History*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1984, pp. 137-138, p. 137. Available at: doi:10.5840/philhist198417272. Consulted on 19 July 2023.

⁵ JAMES, D., and ZÖLLER, G., *The Cambridge companion to Fichte*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, p. 18.

⁶ VON MOLNÁR, G., "What Is Enlightenment, Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions", in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1998, pp. 537-539, p. 537. Available at: doi:10.1353/ecs.1998.0045. Consulted on 19 July 2023.

⁷ BEISER, F., "Fichte and the French Revolution", in *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, 2016, pp. 34-68, p. 38. Available at: doi:10.1017/9781139027557.004. Consulted on 18 July 2023.

⁸ BREAZEALE, D., *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and other writings (1797-1800)*, Hacket Publishing Coy Inc., Cambridge, 1994, p. 9.

section will discuss Fichte's philosophy of state and society as a way of advancing the dialogue on human rights in the enlightenment era. Afterwards, while focusing on the idea of whether it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government, the philosophical contributions of Fichte shall also be used in establishing the difference between idealism and dogmatism, terms that are often confusedly used interchangeably by other modern political philosophers. Also, before providing a critique of his philosophy, this section will attempt to highlight how he views the primacy of practical reason both as a problem and an issue of humanity. Afterwards, the discussion will be oriented towards understanding his prominent *Gelehrtenrepublik*. Also, this section will crack to determine how different or similar was Fichte from Kant. Overall, the role of this chapter is to elucidate on Fichte's philosophical contributions that will offer novel ideas on whether it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses its people.

3.2. Politico-historical Situation under which Fichte Philosophised

Various political philosophy scholars have argued the importance of history in the development of the theory. Some like Jonathan Floyd⁹ have dismissed that political philosophy is based on timeless political principles hence the concept is not too a-historical. On the other hand, some others like Gabriele De Angeles¹⁰ have disbanded the argumentation of Jonathan Floyd by claiming that philosophy theory is based on a decisive clue and in most cases, this idea is based on historical data. Floyd supported the Universalist view whereas De Angeles focused on reconciling universalism with historicism in the explanation of political philosophy. It is worth noting that their argument differed on the extent history plays a role in the development of philosophy theory. Floyd emphasised that it does not play a huge role as per the popular view whereas De Angeles approved the widespread opinion but also accepted that universalism is another significant determinant of its development. Whichever the case, historical data is crucial in determining the roots and foundations of a given political philosophy theory. Therefore, it is also important to establish the politico-historical situation under which Fichte philosophised. By so doing, it will be easy to extend his philosophical standpoints to the current discussion on whether it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses its citizenry.

⁹ FLOYD, J., "Is Political Philosophy Too Ahistorical?", in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2009, pp. 513-533, p. 513. Available at: doi:10.1080/13698230903471376. Consulted on 30 July 2023.

¹⁰ DE ANGELIS, G., "On the Importance of History for Political Philosophy. A Reply to Jonathan Floyd", in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2010, pp. 541-548, p. 541. Available at: doi:10.1080/09692290.2010.517971. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

In the introduction section 3.1, it was indicated that Fichte first started philosophising after dropping out of Jena due to financial reasons. This was around 1790. His political philosophies were also in close conformity with those of Emmanuel Kant whereby he even extended his theory of morality and religion. In this case, the major starting point for the discussion on the politico-historical situation would be the context of the late 1790s, a period when he even gained huge prominence as an iconic political philosophy figure in German.

Since there are arguments that Fichte's philosophical contributions informed the French Revolution and yet he was born in Germany, it is imperative to begin by examining whether he was a nationalist or not¹¹. Johann Gottlieb Fichte developed his philosophical ideas during a tumultuous period in European history. He lived and worked in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a time marked by the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Prussia, Fichte's homeland, was experiencing significant political and social upheaval as it grappled with modernization and the threat of French domination¹². The Enlightenment's ideals were being challenged by Romanticism, influencing intellectual discourse across Europe. Fichte's philosophy emerged as a response to Immanuel Kant's critical idealism and was shaped by the nationalistic fervour sweeping through German-speaking lands. His famous "Addresses to the German Nation" (1808) reflected the growing sense of German cultural identity in opposition to French hegemony¹³. Fichte's work thus embodied the intersection of philosophical inquiry with political activism, as he sought to reconcile individual freedom with collective national purpose in a rapidly changing Europe.

3.2.1 The rise of peasant emancipation in Germany

Political philosophy gained prominence in Germany during the 18th century, emerging from the fragmentation and conflicts among the numerous small states that constituted the German territories in the 17th century. Initially, German culture was strongly influenced by classical ideals and Enlightenment principles¹⁴. However, as the region splintered into multiple minor states, many came under the rule of authoritarian leaders who hindered intellectual and rational development.

¹¹ KELLY, G. A., *Idealism, politics and history: sources of Hegelian thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p. 65.

¹² Ibid., p. 66.

¹³ ZOLLER, G., *Res Publica: Plato's republic in classical German philosophy*, The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, Kennedy Town. 2015, p. 58.

¹⁴ ENGELS, F., and OLGIN, M. J., *The peasant war in Germany*, Routledge, New York, 2015, p. 103.

This political landscape of division and oppression set the stage for. In mid-18th century Germany, King Frederick William I ruled, implementing policies of centralization and militarisation. This was part of a succession of monarchs named Frederick William who shaped the nation's political landscape¹⁵. The country was also occupied by a dense rural population of about 3 million¹⁶, who endured the consequences of a highly centralised government. Although wars continued during this time, they were no longer enormously devastating to the civilian and at the same time epidemics such as famine did not occur. The agricultural sector flourished leading to more births with fewer deaths. Hence, the population of Germany also grew significantly during this period.

It is also worth noting that it is during the 1700s that the numerous small states that comprised of Germany were dissolved into two larger territories namely Prussia and Austria¹⁷. The main political tensions of Germany were rivalry between Prussia and Austria on which to lead to Germany. For instance, between 1740-48, the War of Austrian Succession emerged leading to Maria Theresa successfully taking the throne but later ceded 95 per cent of Silesia to King Frederick William II, the Great, of Prussia during the Silesian Wars and the Seven Years' Wars¹⁸. In 1763, the Peace of Hubertsberg united Prussia, Austria, and Saxony¹⁹. However, merely a few months later, a new rivalry emerged between Prussia and Austria after Prussia became a European power after the peace deal. It is also during this time that the concept of enlightened absolutism emerged in Prussia and Austria after nobility and citizenry resisted the conduct and policies of the two monarchs. Enlightened absolutism referred to policies and conduct of the monarchs after the resistance that was informed by the principles of enlightenment because they were the precepts that were highly acknowledged and recommended by the political philosophers of that era²⁰. Some of the reforms that took place include the abolition of torture and the improvement of the status of

¹⁵ GOTHELF, R. M., *Absolutism in action: Frederick William I and the government of East Prussia, 1709-1730*, University of St. Andrews Press, Berrien Springs, 1998, p. 131.

¹⁶ PFISTER, U., and FERTIG, G., "The Population History of Germany: Research Strategy and Preliminary Results", in *Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research*, Rostock, 2010, pp. 1-73, p. 9. Available at: <https://www.demogr.mpg.de/papers/working/wp-2010-035.pdf>. Consulted on: 17 June 2023.

¹⁷ HEWITSON, M., "Princes' Wars, Wars of The People, Or Total War? Mass Armies and The Question of a Military Revolution in Germany, 1792-1815", in *War in History*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2013, pp. 452-490, p. 458. Available at: doi:10.1177/0968344513483071. Consulted on 14 June 2023.

¹⁸ STURGILL, C. C., and BROWNING, R., "The War of The Austrian Succession", in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 100, no. 1, 1995, pp. 174-175, p. 174. Available at: doi:10.2307/2168049. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

¹⁹ J. C. B., "First Report of The Institution for Idiots at Hubertsberg, Saxony", in *The Asylum Journal of Mental Science*, vol. 2, no. 15, 1855, p. 114. Available at: doi:10.1192/bjp.2.15.114-a. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

²⁰ VAN HORN MELTON, J., *Absolutism and the eighteenth-century origins of compulsory schooling in Prussia and Austria*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 149.

Jews. This period also marked the beginning of peasant emancipations that slowly emerged whereby even compulsory education was also instituted²¹. Therefore, up to this point, it is important to examine how the concept of enlightenment was conceived in Germany. Overall, Fichte philosophised during the early years of enlightenment in Europe, and particularly in Germany. His prominence was probably supported by the fact that the classical culture of Germany was highly aligned with the principles of enlightenment hence its high levels of acceptance by the civilian.

3.2.2 The rise of enlightenment in Germany

At the centre of the enlightenment philosophical thought in Germany was Immanuel Kant. In his philosophical manuscripts, Kant wrote on morality and religion by drawing reference from the classical forms of the Greek and Roman culture²². This was also a well-known feature of the Enlightenment Philosophy in the whole of Europe during the eighteenth century whereby philosophers developed a renascent interest in classical antiquity. These cultural and historical trends resulted in the revolutionary changes in the Western view of history. Also, the philosophical view of history was referred to as historicism. Thus, first and foremost, Fichte, who was also a firm follower of Immanuel Kant, philosophised under the doctrines of enlightenment and particularly historicism. Therefore, in the next paragraph, the foundations of historicism will be critiqued to gain a better understanding of the politico-historical situation under which he philosophised.

A forum paper called *Historicism* published in the *Journal of German History Society* points out as follows:

The nineteenth century was the ‘age of historicism’, with Gothic revival, Romanticism and the cult of chivalry. Yet late medieval and early modern Europe had frequently employed historicizing forms and terminology, and historicism of course played a prominent part in twentieth-century German history. Moreover, it survives today in the form of ‘authentic’ tournaments (*Ritterspiele*), medieval markets (*Mittelaltermärkte*) and forms of re-enactment²³.

The above quote reaffirms that the phenomenon of historicism emerged during the eighteenth century and matured during the nineteenth century and its continual use up to the

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² LIEBEL, H.P., “The Enlightenment and The Rise of Historicism in German Thought”, in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1971, pp. 359-385, p. 359. Available at: doi:10.2307/2737710. Consulted on 17 July 2023.

²³ HAMILTON, P., *Historicism*, Psychology Press, London, 2003. p. 105.

twenty-first century. This concept, as explained earlier, is about viewing history philosophically to address political issues, for example, in the twenty-first century. As also indicated earlier, Immanuel Kant is the central figure in European Enlightenment and particularly anthropological enlightenment²⁴. He is among the philosophers who thought that drawing from classical antiquity would help solve modern problems. Classical antiquity was, therefore, used as the main reference point to obtain reason that would then help in informing political revolutions throughout Europe during this era.

During the medieval era, the importance of history in solving contemporary problems in Germany was considered trivial. People were dependent upon mythology and superstition²⁵. It was up to the enlightenment era that political philosophers established thought on the need to develop a method that establishes rules for appraising and judging political documents critically. This method was intended to sweep away the beliefs that always emerged from folklore, mythology, and superstition that continually undermined the effort to turn the validity of these political documents into actuality rather than fiction. Thus, German philosophers had seen the need to use renaissance learning which was previously possible only when evolving attitudes to power politics cast off the theological aura of the Reformation and emerged *raison d'etat* of Frederick the Great²⁶. During the enlightenment era, philosophers started researching for aims and motives of the *raison d'etat* while drawing inferences from the political activities of the ancient heroes of Rome and Greece thus paving the way for the official birth of historicism. Therefore, Fichte took over from a journey that had already started and pushed it further before the nineteenth century philosophical writers occupied the ideology.

In his *History of Political Thought in Germany 1789-1815*, scholar Reinhold Aris²⁷ acknowledged that Fichte was influenced by the enlightened political thought in Germany during the eighteenth era. Particularly, this was the period when the idea of “reason” was born. Thus, political philosophers particularly focused on bettering humanity through available strategies. At this time, politicians utilised sociability²⁸. As stated earlier, although Fichte was a nationalist, the

²⁴ PURDY, D.L., “Immanuel Kant and the anthropological enlightenment”, in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2005, pp. 329-332, p. 329. Available at: doi:10.1353/ecs.2005.0016. Consulted on 10 July 2023.

²⁵ HAMILTON, P., *op. cit.*, p. 107.

²⁶ LIEBEL, H.P., *op. cit.*, p. 359.

²⁷ ARIS, R., *History of political thought in Germany from 1789 To 1815*, 2nd ed. Routledge, Abingdon, 2013, p. 276.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

political ideology that he utilised was not purely nationalist. Also, as aforementioned, German philosophers highly accepted the phenomenon of historicism as one or rather the only way to form the basis for political actions in the face of enlightenment whereby the theory of “reason” was or is still at the forefront²⁹. Since Romantics were the first intellectual school in Germany³⁰, the state preferred a close and personal collaboration between Roman and German ideologists. In this way, they turned sociability into one of their political principles. It is also worth noting that this was not a nationalist view. Fichte and other ethnic nationalists probably pursued to use these philosophical standpoints to transform their country.

In the process, since Germany was still in close collaboration with Roman for intellectual pursuit, the philosophical views of Fichte would be conceived beyond the national boundaries. During this time, Fichte, through his philosophical contributions, gained prominence in Germany. He, therefore, became influential by extending Kant’s philosophy of morality and religion. Particularly, Fichte philosophised under these conditions that life was in the first place meant to be *symbiosis* and defended his works of philosophy from this ideological standpoint by arguing that to philosophise was to *sym-philosophise*³¹. He then went ahead and rationalised his views that the *sym-philosophise* is the immediate expression of social life. Nonetheless, at the centre of ensuring the marriage between Germany and Roman worked effectively was Novalis who, in parallel to Romantics, theorised that society was no longer an abstract concept of the relation of reasonable human beings as it used to be during the medieval eras. Instead, it was another term for common life in all its forms and expressions. Human is a social being and society an expression of his instincts and thus a fundamental form of human existence. This line of thought led to the development of the concept of State, which never existed in prior centuries to the eighteenth century. This discussion happened contentiously where some philosophers believed that no human can escape the state and no human can question its necessity. Whereas, other political philosophers like Professor Laski³² stood firm with their belief that there is nothing like state that exists and as such the epicentre of political power was the prince. In the next section 3.3, the Fichtean

²⁹ KITTSTEINER, H. D., MONROE, J., and WOHLFARTH, I., “Walter Benjamin’s Historicism”, in *New German Critique*, no. 39, 1986, pp 179-215, p. 179. Available at: doi.org/10.2307/488125. Consulted on 14 July 2023.

³⁰ FLYNN, E.E., “Intellectual Intuition in Emerson and the Early German Romantics”, in *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2009, pp. 367-389, p. 367. Available at: doi:10.1111/j.1467-9191.2009.00334.x. Consulted on 6 July 2023.

³¹ ARIS, R., *op. cit.*, p. 276.

³² *Ibid*, p. 275.

philosophy on the concept of state and society will be covered to further the discussion on the conditions under which Fichte philosophised.

3.3. Fichte's Philosophy of State and Society

In the previous section, Fichte's speculation of human being was revealed. It was principally noted that Fichte partially characterised human beings from the perspective of life. From this point, he argued that life itself was meant to be *symbiosis*. This claim indicates that Fichte was being guided by the idea of "reason" to philosophise because he was trying to establish the reason life exists. In biology, symbiosis is mutuality whereby when two or more organisms exist in a single ecosystem, they benefit each other in surviving³³. He *further argued* that since life was symbiosis, then his works of philosophy can be referred to as *sym-philosophy* because his primary intentions were to better the existence of human beings. From this analysis, it is also worth noting that it is through this basic conceptualisation that other Germany philosophers proceeded to also theorise the state. In regards to society, like-minded philosophers like Novalis and Fichte had concluded that society is fundamental for human existence because it is the mediate expression of their social instincts³⁴. This section intends to focus on how Fichte furthered his philosophical contributions to the concepts of society and state. Nevertheless, since the outset of the speculative standpoints of Fichte towards society and state was the conception of life, it is also imperative to examine how he conceived the giver of that life, which is the conspicuously missing element in the previous discussion.

3.3.1 Fichte's conception of God

As aforementioned, Fichte extended the philosophical standpoints of Kant on religion and morality. In that regard, he had a unique conception of God from the Kantian perspective. This subsection intends to expose how Fichte conceived God to extend the argumentation on his philosophies on state and society. Particularly, this approach offers a novel way of understanding his foundations of religion in addition to Kantism. This method also contributes to the concept of historicism because the current study focuses on determining whether it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government to its citizenry. The refinement of these political-historical concepts will lay a firm groundwork to solving modern problems such as those associated with vehemence

³³ SALE, P.F., "Symbiosis as An All-Inclusive Concept", in *Environmental Biology of Fishes* 26, no. 1, 1989, pp.77- 78, p. 77. Available at: doi.org/10.1007/BF00002477. Consulted on 10 July 2023.

³⁴ ARIS, R., *op. cit.*, p. 277.

when the people revolt against an unjust government. Fichte adding to the assumptions tackled by theoretical to practical reason and other aspects are also directed by a rational motive to nature itself. Nonetheless, the latter is the purview of the transcendental philosophy of religion, which is linked exclusively with the degree to which the scope of nature can be articulated to acclimatize itself to the goals of morality. Fichte's conception of God evolved throughout his philosophical career, ultimately diverging from traditional theistic views. He posited God not as a personal, transcendent being, but as the moral world order itself—an active, living principle that manifests through human consciousness and moral action³⁵. Critics of Fichte's religious philosophy argued his view reduced God to an impersonal moral order, undermining traditional theism. They contended this approach bordered on atheism, neglecting the personal, transcendent nature of the Divine traditionally upheld in religious doctrine³⁶. Undeniably, this is accurately the discrepancy between “theology” and the philosophy of religion. As indicated above, Fichte lacked an opportunity to expound this ultimate portion of his Jena system further than the provisional incursion into this sphere embodied by his contentious article “Concerning the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World” and the mechanism he subsidized to the succeeding “atheism controversy”.

Fichte argues that when philosophy is related, the jurisdiction is perceived of this humankind. However, this is contemplated in terms of the obligations of the ethical law, in which the situation is changed from the natural to the “moral world order”³⁷. There lacks no further interpretation of an unmatched “moral lawgiver” that is tentatively required. Fichte obtained to draft a sudden merit between philosophy and religion which is feature parallel to the keynote distinction between the “ordinary” and “transcendental” perspectives³⁸. Furthermore, it defended philosophy's right to hypothesize on morally a deduced ground with an item like a “moral world order”. Philosophy of religion, therefore, includes an inference of the suggestions that people's moral actions make changes in the world. Nevertheless, this aspect is about to the extent that it can function. The claim of Fichte's paper is principally adverse about God's existence since it openly

³⁵ TIMERMAN, E. H., *A study of Fichte's conception of God*, University of California, California, 1914, p. 14.

³⁶ JAMES, D., and ZÖLLER, G., *The Cambridge companion to Fichte*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, p. 104.

³⁷ LOHMANN, P., “The Aesthetic Implications of Fichte on Feeling”, in *Ethics in Progress*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2022, pp. 57-79, p. 58. Available at: doi.org/10.14746/eip.2022.1.5. Consulted on 22 July 2023.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

refutes those philosophical arguments justify any assumption of the presence of a God unbiased to the ethical law³⁹. As a consequence of the atheism debate, Fichte resumed this matter and endeavoured to iterate his opinion in a way that seemed more attuned to the appeals of theism.

Nonetheless, before focusing on particularly how Fichte conceived God, it is important to begin with Immanuel Kant himself. Teleology forms the main basis of Kant's argumentation of the existence of a Supreme Being⁴⁰. Kant acknowledged that nature was created by God, and from a teleological perspective, the ultimate goal of this creation was a moral human being⁴¹. In this view, Kant intersects morality and religion. Kant further acknowledged that there is no method to rationally prove God's existence other than teleology that further gave birth to moral theology. Scholar Alexandru Petrescu made the following observations from Kantian philosophy of religion:

In the theoretical philosophy of the Critique of Pure Reason, the idea of God as Unconditioned, as a being that is absolutely necessary, is seen as a transcendental ideal determined through an idea as a prototype of perfection necessary to everything that is contingent and determined in our sensible world⁴².

From the above quote, it is deducible that Kantian philosophy of God supports the idea that God does not exist physically, but rather spiritually. The spirit of God is associated with perfection whereby it is presupposed in many Kantians works that in everything done by human beings, there is always the perfect prototype that no one can predict⁴³. The role of human beings is to try as much as possible to imitate God to obtain such a situation. It is also worth remarking that Enlightenment was based upon this ideology. Maesschalck *argued that*⁴⁴ Hegel sought to demonstrate how Fichte's Science of Knowledge advanced beyond Kant's position in the Critique of Pure Reason. While enlightened thought has been associated with closeness to God, the perfect approach remains elusive. As a spirit, God has been associated with a condition of supreme moral life in Kantism with its ultimate effect being a life of virtue and happiness. Also, this view of God as per Kant informed the formulation of human rights, which were postulated to bring a life of

³⁹ WOOD, D.W., *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁴⁰ PETRESCU, A., "The Idea of God in Kantian Philosophy", in *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 163, 2014, pp. 199-203, p. 200. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.307>. Consulted on 30 July 2023.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁴⁴ MAESSCHALCK, M., *Transformations of ethics: from radical phenomenology to social pragmatism*, Peter Lang, Lausanne, 2010, p. 131.

dignity, freedom, and happiness to the component of humanity. Based on the arguments by Professor M. Maesschalck, For Fichte, faith occupies a mirror position for the transcendental philosopher as an immediate manifestation of life⁴⁵. In other words, philosophy and religion are a mirror reflection of each, hence the reason Kantian and Fichtean conception of God, among other philosophers, informed the formulation of human rights as highlighted earlier.

Hence, Kant and like-minded philosophers like Fichte philosophised under the situation of improving human life from a universality perspective because they conceived that every living thing operating under the element of humanity should enjoy freedom, dignity, and happiness. Late 18th and 19th century empiricist philosophers endorsed certain methods for achieving moral human existence. Kant's conception of God was rooted in practical reason, a central tenet of the Enlightenment that extended into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries⁴⁶. Professor M. Maesschalck posits that religious ideals possess a projective and sublimating nature, useful in hypostasizing reason's demands⁴⁷. In this case, it is through the Fichtean and Kantian conception of God that the demands of reason can be considered a concrete reality however, this perspective is directly opposite to the one presented in this section since it was believed that Kant and Fichte both ranked below these religious ideals and they only came to understand them through a deductive approach to conceptualising practical reason.

As it was indicated earlier, the Kantian philosophy of religion and particularly his conception of God was predominantly intended to provide a foundation for Fichtean philosophy of religion and his philosophical understanding of the idea of God. Therefore, this paragraph focuses on this topic domain to determine if there are any deviations between the two philosophers. It's crucial to note that Fichte accepted Kant's philosophical foundations, merely expanding on ambiguous areas. Fichte viewed life from a moral perspective, likening it to symbiosis - a biological term for mutual existence. He argued that for humans to live happily, with dignity and freedom, they must embrace this symbiotic nature. Fichte believed God conceived this nature with

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁴⁶ MAESSCHALCK, M., *Reflexive governance for research and innovative knowledge*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, 2017, p. 98.

⁴⁷ MAESSCHALCK, M., *Law and social creation in Fichte: a modern philosophy of political action*, Peeters Publishers, Leuven, 1996, p. 89.

the ultimate goal of creating moral human beings, thus introducing a new concept of moral existence as per divine command⁴⁸.

While serving as a chair of philosophy at the University of Jena, Fichte was forced to resign following the controversy surrounding his teachings that were often regarded as “atheistic”⁴⁹. This notion was created from his extension of Kantism that God *does not* exist physically but rather as a spirit of perfection by virtue. Human beings constantly seek to attain this spirit, but they have little knowledge of how to “get there”. As such, Fichte conceived the ultimate goal of knowledge as a pursuit for unity. In this case, he derived the concept of unity from the moral desires, ideals, and purposes of human beings⁵⁰. According to Fichte⁵¹, people pursue unity by constantly seeking to accomplish these desires, ideals, and purposes. He then went ahead and idealised that these elements can be put together to form a single unit or entity, which he terms as God. In other words, people tend to seek knowledge on how to achieve their legal desires, ideals, and purposes that be conceptualised as unity thus reiterating the symbiotic purpose of life. In this world, phenomena are diverse hence there is a need to unify them in a single understanding to universally solve problems that impede human beings from achieving their desires, ideals, and purposes. Hence, it is also worth noting that the term “unity” as used by Fichte in this context signifies a different meaning from the popular opinion. He particularly referred to the need to unite different phenomena when seeking universal solutions. Therefore, based on this ideological view, it can be said that people have a right to revolt against an unjust government, and if this right has been limited by the state (legality), then it is overall wrong. The next paragraph extends this discussion to his conception of the society before proceeding to his philosophical argumentation of the state.

Previously, it was identified that Fichte conceptualised the idea of life uniquely, from which he also visualised the idea of society. In that argument, it was indicated that Fichte saw life from a symbiotic or mutual standpoint⁵². Formation of society intends to help people survive regardless of their different expressions and emotions. Fichte argued that God is not a separate entity, but the moral world order itself, manifesting through human consciousness and ethical

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴⁹ LEIGHTON, J.A., “Fichte's Conception of God”, in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1895, pp. 139-143, p. 143. Available at: doi:10.2307/2175479. Consulted on 10 July 2023.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² ARIS, R., *op. cit.*, p. 276.

action⁵³. In other words, Fichte tried to figure out why society exists. From his observations, he concluded that it exists to allow people to freely, dignifiedly, and happily enjoy humanity. The main advantage of this theory is that it acknowledges the existence of social diversity. Different people or groups possess dissimilar kinds of expressions. From Fichte's concept of unity, to promote symbiosis in the physical existence of humans, these different kinds of expressions need to be "unified". Thus, the function of society is to provide an expressional platform that capably accommodates the divergent views of humanity. Observably, his doctrine of society was purely informed by the concept of enlightenment where practical reason is deeply emphasised. The enlightened thinkers of the eighteenth-century including Kant accentuated the need to view things using practical reason. Fichte also viewed the concept of society teleologically and based on Roman classical antiquity (or simply historicization), he concluded that the purpose of the society is to provide a social dais where the divergent views of the people can be accommodated without "unreasonable" vehemence. However, his doctrines of society alone are not effectual in answering the question of whether it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government. Therefore, it is also imperative to examine how he conceived the state.

In his "Contribution to the Rectification of the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution", Fichte emphasised on the need of a legitimate government in place and even concluded that it is rightful to revolt against an illegitimate government⁵⁴. Therefore, although not mentioned beforehand, it is worth noting that Fichte supported the French Revolution. Other scholars like Frederick Beiser⁵⁵ have also argued that the philosophical contributions of Fichte were also at the centre of the French Revolution. Therefore, before providing insightful epistemological contributions on how he hypothesised the idea of the state, it is imperative to briefly highlight the happenings of the French Revolution.

3.3.2 The French Revolution

The French revolution coincidentally happened the time when Fichte had begun to pen down his philosophical writings. It is through chance that the French Revolution has been frequently associated with Fichtean philosophies by many political-philosophical writers like Frederick Beiser. Indeed, Fichte defended this political approach because his overall belief was

⁵³ DE VREEDE, A. M., *The nature of consciousness in Fichte's philosophy of religion (1804–1806): a blessed life as the vocation of humankind*, McGill University Press, Montreal, 2019, p. 97.

⁵⁴ BEISER, F., *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

that people can revolt against an illegitimate government. The revolution began in 1789 and extended to the late 1790s. In 1794, Fichte introduced his philosophical system called the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In a letter explaining the foundations of this philosophy, he wrote as follows:

I believe that my system belongs to this [the French] nation. It is the first system of freedom. Just as that nation has torn away the external chains of man, my system tears away the chains of the thing-in-itself, or external causes, that still shackle him more or less in other systems, even the Kantian. My first principle establishes man as an independent being. My system arose through an inner struggle with myself and against rooted prejudices in those years that the French struggled with outer force for their political freedom. It was their *value* that spurred me to conceive it. When I wrote on the Revolution there came the first hints and inklings of my system⁵⁶.

Beiser⁵⁷ noted that the above quote indicates a strong connection between the politics of Fichte and the French revolution. However, there is a limited scholarly contribution to the exploration of the nature of the relationship. Fichte himself did not plainly state how the French revolution had inspired his politics or how his politics had inspired the French revolution. First and foremost, it is worth noting that the ideal of the revolution was liberty. Generally, Fichte defended this idyllic using his philosophical understanding of life, human rights, and society. From the perspective of society, as also indicated earlier, Fichte had a firm belief that humans differ ideologically based on their way of life, politics, or political views. Therefore, the purpose of the society is to give them an expressional platform for unity mutual pursuance of solutions to problems facing humanity. In this view, it is also worth remarking that although Fichte viewed humans as different, he did so cautiously to accommodate the idea that humans also face common challenges in life that, if approached individually, they cannot be defeated hence his emphasis on unity. This unity can be equated to the concept of liberty, which also emphasises on the need for human independence.

Mainly, in defence of the French Revolution, Fichte argued as follows: (a) a nation has a right to change its constitution and (b) that it has the right to defend its new constitution through force⁵⁸. In regards to (a), it is ambiguous what Fichte referred to as “a nation”. There are two possible interpretations. First, a nation can symbolically represent the citizenry, which is the possible correct interpretation because Fichte’s philosophy was people-centred. He was promoting

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

universality in the pursuance of independence as a major attribute of humanity. Second, it can mean the “state” or simply the authorities. To affirm the correct interpretation of “a nation”. it is imperative to examine the theory of social contract under which forms the basis for (a).

The theory of social contract was frequently referenced by eighteenth and nineteenth-century philosophers but originated during medieval times⁵⁹. Social Contract Theory, developed by thinkers like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, posits that individuals consent to surrender some freedoms to a governing authority in exchange for social order and protection of rights, forming the basis of legitimate political authority⁶⁰. This philosophical concept emerged during the Enlightenment as a way to understand the relationship between individuals and the state, challenging traditional notions of divine right and absolute monarchy⁶¹. From a moral or political perspective, members of the society are not allowed to act in ways that undermine the existence of others. Therefore, for Fichte, based on his argumentation in defence of the French Revolution, a state is considered a single entity that is also legally obliged to politically or morally act in ways that do not undermine the humanity of the citizenry⁶². In the previous chapters, the values of mankind were defined in terms of freedom, progress, dignity, happiness, and more. Fichte defended the French Revolution because he believed that previous regimes were undermining the natural values of the people of France. When it extends to that level, Fichte argues that people can revolt against such as a government to restore their happiness and dignity among other values of humankind. Therefore, “a nation” as used in (a) as highlighted in the previous paragraph represents the social composition of a nation whereby even the state is included. Also, in regards to (b), Fichte argues that a nation has a right to revolt against any force that opposes their new constitution. The main philosophical assumption made by Fichte in this regard is that the collective desire of the people can be considered moral. A new constitution is a new collective desire of the people hence considered moral. Even the state as one of the formations of “a nation” does not have any authority to subvert this desire or wish. Therefore, citizens have a legal right to revolt against a government that represses them by engaging in activities that take away their freedom, dignity, and happiness. Overall, Fichte philosophised that a state might sound superior to the people through its economic

⁵⁹ RITCHIE, D.G., “Contributions to The History of The Social Contract Theory”, in *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.6, no. 4, 1891, pp. 656-676, p. 656. Available at: doi:10.2307/2139203. Consulted on 19 July 2023.

⁶⁰ WEALE, A., *Modern social contract theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020, p. 84.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 85.

⁶² ARRESE, I.H.O., “Morality and State in The Fichtean Political Philosophy”, in *Araucaria*, no. 41, 2019, pp. 79- 96, p. 79. Available at: doi:10.12795/araucaria.2019.i41.04. Consulted on 30 July 2023.

and financial power. However, it should not misuse this position to undermine the natural rights of other entities in society. Fichte's philosophy of the state will be expanded further in the subsequent sections such as his defence of the French Revolution.

3.4. Fichte's Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge: Die Wissenschaftslehre

During his tenure as a philosophical writer, Fichte developed a formal system of his philosophical standpoints on the issues of nature, right (law), ethics, and religion. He named it the *Wissenschaftslehre* "Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge". Fichte drastically revised it and organised it into a sort of transcendental idealism⁶³. He based the whole system under the concept of subjectivity which Fichte expressed as Pure I. Therefore, before discussing his philosophies of nature, right, ethics, and religion as composed in the system, it is imperative to start with the concept of subjectivity as philosophised by him. The primary mission of Fichte's system of philosophy (the *Wissenschaftslehre*) was to merge freedom with inevitability. According to Calkins⁶⁴, Fichte elaborated on how morally responsible intermediaries can be considered part of a world with causally habituated substances in space and time. Fichte's policy for answering the question in his early works has been tackled and explained. Calkins⁶⁵ states that through the ungrounded proclamation of the idiosyncratic impulse and freedom of the I, one may progress to a mystical origin of objective prerequisite and constraint (finitude) as a state necessary for different possibilities. Calkins⁶⁶ denotes the explanation of his description, "First Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*", as a philosophy's mission showing the basis of experience or elucidating the source of the system of illustrations supplemented by a feeling of need.

The particular task of Fichte's rights theory right reflects on different ways in which a person's freedom may be restricted, allowing several individuals to live collectively with an equal level of mutual freedom. The theory cultivates deduced notions regarding social laws of interaction entirely from the pure idea of a person I as circumstances for the probability of the matter. Therefore, Fichte's hypothesis of right achieves its attachment force from general laws of thinking and liberal self-interest. The power of such contemplations is theoretical rather than categorical.

⁶³ VERWEYEN, H.J., "Fichte, Johann Gottlieb", in *Philosophy and History*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1976, pp. 157-159, p. 157. Available at: doi:10.5840/philhist19769257. Consulted on 18 July 2023.

⁶⁴ CALKINS, M.W., "Notes on Fichte's 'Grundlage Der Wissenschaftslehre'", in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1894, pp. pp. 459-462, p. 460. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2175907.pdf>. Consulted on 30 July 2023.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

The theory of rights scrutinizes how the freedom of individuals must be outwardly partial if a free society and equal persons are to be achievable. Unlike Kant, Fichte fails to treat political philosophy purely as a section of moral theory. Quite the reverse, it is a self-governing ethical subject with a matter and a priori philosophies. However, ethics evaluates what is required of an easily enthusiastic issue the theory of rights ascertains what such a subject can accomplish. Ethics is related to the inner world of integrity.

On the other hand, the idea of rights is associated only with the public realm, as the former can be observed as an incarnation of freedom. Having recognized the overall assumed perception of right, Fichte then decides to use the investigation of the circumstance's indispensable for the attainment or "application" of the same: explicitly, for the genuine synchronism of free individuals or the survival of a free civilization. The computation of these "conditions" establishes the aggregate of "natural rights" as human beings consequently, these rights can be instantiated and certain only within a consciously built free society⁶⁷. On totally deduced justifications, therefore, Fichte maintains the ability to determine the general rations of such a public and the sole validation for reasonable political compulsion and prerequisite.

Fichte obtained this conception of the task and approach of philosophy from his analysis of Kant. He entertained no opinion because he appeared to diverge from "the letter" of the critical philosophy. Fichte maintained that this approach stayed true to "the spirit" of a similar concept. Crucial to this "spirit", Fichte believed it to be unconditional perseverance upon the realistic conviction of human freedom and comprehensive devotion to the task of offering a divine account of the conventional experience that could expound the neutrality and necessity of hypothetical aim (cognition) in a method coherent with the realistic declaration of human liberty⁶⁸. Even though Fichte accredited the realization of this task to Kant, he assumed that it was initially completed effectively only in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and he termed this as a significant scheme of human freedom.

3.4.1. Concept of subjectivity: "Pure I"

The concept of subjectivity and selfhood was commonly defined by various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political philosophers such as Hegel, Husserl, Kant, Heidegger and many

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 462.

⁶⁸ MARTIN, W.M., "Nothing more or less than logic: General logic, transcendental philosophy, and Kant's repudiation of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*", in *Topoi*, vol. 22, 2003, pp. 29-39, p. 30.
Available at: doi.org/10.1023/A:1022120402227. Consulted on 13 July 2023.

others including Fichte. The main focus of this concept is “I” Since it is known that Fichte was a follower of Kant who extended his philosophical works in a congruent way, it is important to also begin with Kant’s speculation of the theory of subjectivity. First and foremost, while explicating this concept, Kant posed four closely related questions: (a) What can I know? (b) What should I do? (c) What may I hope? (d) What is the human being⁶⁹? The first question (a) was identified from a metaphysical standpoint⁷⁰. In regards to this question, Kant explored the nature and existence of “knowing”. To what extent people can know? This indicates that Kant also appreciated epistemology through the nexus it forms with metaphysics. Nonetheless, the second question is based on the principle of morality⁷¹. People should do what is considered to be moral, or something that is universally accepted by “others” in society. It is through this principle that people should pick the right from the wrong. Also, in regards to the third question, Kant drew from his philosophy of religion⁷². As indicated earlier in this chapter, Kant and Fichte had a closely related conception of the idea of God. When people do something, due to their epistemological limitations, they tend to be uncertain about its outcome. Therefore, they “hope” that whatever they have done is the desire of God. Finally, the fourth question, which was missing in his earlier critiques, was identified from an anthropological standpoint⁷³. Scholar Dennis Johanssen⁷⁴ observed that Kant said that all these four questions can principally be attributed to anthropology because the first three are closely related to the fourth question.

With Fichte's determination to explain the technique and task transcendental philosophy, he maintained upon the severe difference between the “standpoint” of ordinary mindfulness (which it is the mission of philosophy to “derive”, and therefore to “explain”) and that of mystical reflection, which is the perspective necessary of the philosopher. Additionally, he insisted there lacks an argument between transcendental idealism and the rational realism of daily life. Nonetheless, this was quite the reverse, and the entire point is to show the necessity and absence of the latter. Fichte's enterprise implies that he was keenly aware of what was considered glaring flaws and shortcomings in Kant's performance of this project. He took reviews of such colleagues

⁶⁹ STEVENSON, M.R., “Subjectivity and Selfhood in Kant, Fichte and Heidegger”, in *Ph.D Columbia University*, 2012, pp. 1-225, p. 20. Available at: doi.org/10.7916/D85D8ZVJ. Consulted on 13 July 2023.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ JOHANNSEN, D., “Toward A Negative Anthropology”, in *Anthropology & Materialism*, no. 1, 2013, pp.1-14, p. 1. Available at: doi:10.4000/am.194. Consulted on 31 July 2023.

as F. H. Jacobi and G. E. Schulze and proposed a fundamentally appraised account of the Critical philosophy. Firstly, he claimed that the notion of a “thing in itself” is assumed to be a mind- self-governing, external “cause” of feeling, which is unfortunate on Critical grounds. Kant's refutation of the likelihood of “intellectual intuition” which is undoubtedly vindicated as a veto of the chance of any non-sensory consciousness of external items and is difficult to resolve other Kantian principles concerning the I's direct existence to itself both as a hypothetically cognizing theme. The mystical apperception focuses on a striving moral agent in the doctrine of definite necessity.

Fichte studied the writings of K. L. Reinhold, and he was convinced that the systematic unity of the Critical philosophy mainly, the concord of the theoretical and realistic reason of the initial Critiques was inadequately evident in Kant's exhibition of his philosophy. He implied that the most assuring way to show the unity in question is to offer both hypothetical and concrete philosophy with a joint basis. Fichte resolved that the first task for philosophy is to discover a single or self-evident preliminary point where somehow a person would “derive” both hypothetical and applied philosophy⁷⁵. The practical part entails personal experience as finite agents. This strategy would ensure the logical unity of philosophy and display what Kant suggested but never proved by visualizing the fundamental unity of motive itself.

Given that it is the central and interpreted task of philosophy to establish the actual likelihood of any wisdom or science (Wissenschaft) whatsoever, Fichte anticipated substituting the argued term “philosophy” with a better word Wissenschaftslehre or 'Theory of Science'. This name was intended to emphasize characteristically “second order”, which is the nature of logical reflection⁷⁶. Even though Fichte's proposition was overlooked and would never be changed for what was once referred to as “philosophy”, Wissenschaftslehre became the globally admitted name for its distinctive interpretation of transcendental idealism. However, “Wissenschaftslehre” is not the name of any specific Fichtean's dissertation⁷⁷. Instead, the overall term for his whole project allegedly encompasses a system and several interconnected parts or methodical sub-disciplines and a predominant plan illustrated in a sequence of profoundly different reports, utilizing a confounding array of systematic terminologies. To structure genuine philosophy of freedom,

⁷⁵ MARTIN, W. M., *Idealism and objectivity: Understanding Fichte's Jena project*, Stanford University Press, Redwood City, 1997, p. 98.

⁷⁶ SEIDEL, G.J., “Introduction” *Fichte's wissenschaftslehre of 1794: a commentary on Part I*, Purdue University Press, 1993, p. 17.

⁷⁷ CALKINS, M.W., *op. cit.*, p. 462.

Fichte upheld the reality of freedom to be basically accepted and thus preserved as an irrefutable “fact of reason” using the Kantian logic of reasoning. This aspect is not meant to contradict the likelihood of raising cynical and hypothetically substantiated objections to such claims. Quite the reverse, the unlikelihood of any hypothetically acceptable retraction of cynicism regarding the reality of freedom drove Fichte to assert the indisputable “primacy of the practical” with admiration for the collection of one's ethical preliminary point.

Nevertheless, since the four questions are anthropologically related, is there an explicit answer by Kant himself to question four, because it stands out as the main focus by principle? According to academician William Bristow⁷⁸, this question can be answered by drawing reference from Kant's transcendental idealism which Hegel interpreted as subjective. In this regard, people know objects as they appear to them, but not as they are in themselves. So, what is subjectivity according to Kant? To answer this question, it is also important to seek Kant's relativization of knowledge to the human standpoint, which in this case can be explored by relating the first question to the fourth question. Some philosophers like Karl Ameriks⁷⁹ have denied Hegel's interpretation that Kantian categories, in the form of his thoughts, were subjective. However, they have also faced strong criticism from other philosophical scholars like Johannsen who find it more logical to argue that Kantian categories were subjective than not. When the concept of subjectivism is interpreted from a humanistic standpoint, scholar Michael Robert Stevenson indicates as follows: “the human being [is] considered as a purely natural being, moulded and determined entirely by nature, and the human being considered as a ‘free-acting’ being capable of a certain degree of self-determination”⁸⁰. Since the concept of subjectivity from the perspective of Kant is highly contentious, it is imperative to examine how Fichte interpreted him. From his standpoint, it will be less challenging to support or reject the previous argument on Fichte's philosophy of state and society that the citizenry, or a nation, has the right to revolt against a government that represses them from enjoying their natural rights such as freedom, happiness, dignity, and so on and forth.

⁷⁸ BRISTOW, W.F., “Are Kant's Categories Subjective?”, in *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2002, pp. 551- 580, p. 551. Available at: jstor.org/stable/20131751. Consulted on 13 July 2023.

⁷⁹ AMERIKS, K., “Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy”, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1985, pp. 1-35, p. 1. Available at: [http://home.lu.lv/~ruben/Ameriks%20\(Hegel's%20Critique%20of%20Kant's%20Theoretical%20Philosophy\)%20B.pdf](http://home.lu.lv/~ruben/Ameriks%20(Hegel's%20Critique%20of%20Kant's%20Theoretical%20Philosophy)%20B.pdf). Consulted on 24 July 2023.

⁸⁰ STEVENSON, M.R., *op. cit.*, p. 20.

Whereas Kant's categories were broadly subjective in nature, Fichte narrowed down the conception by concentrating on the metaphysical import of Kant's Copernican Revolution, which, in this case, relates to the first question of Kant (What can I know?). Fichte also drew from transcendental idealism to inform his arguments on self-hood and subjectivity. Before advancing on the direction Fichte took to explore this concept, it is worth noting that the metaphysical import of Kant's Copernican Revolution comprehends self-activity from the viewpoint of *sui generis* as a feature of subjectivity itself⁸¹. In that regard, Fichte takes a unique philosophical position to present his conceptions of self-positing or self-constituting and how they could be useful in solving the paradox of the unity of reason from the viewpoints of self-legitimacy and self-sufficiency of reason as a whole. In this case, Fichte strongly tied the theories of self-sufficiency and self-constitution to form a particular brand of idealism.

The theory of self-positing was initially explained in part I of *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*. However, it, later on, turned out to be problematic in explanation and Fichte slightly changed its composition in the *1796/99 Wissenschaftslehre nova method*⁸². Firstly, in the initial argument, Fichte demonstrated that "the I posit itself". When a person uses "I" he or she posits him or herself as "I"⁸³. This illustration formed the first principle of *Die Wissenschaftslehre*. However, initially, Fichte discovered that it was challenging to connect this starting point to the law of logical identity. This problem arose in the face of an attempt by Fichte to introduce two additional "first principles" that link to the logical laws of non-contradiction and sufficient reason. This observation is congruent with scholar Michael Robertson that self-constitution and self-sufficiency are not necessarily abstractly linked as it is for Fichte⁸⁴. However, Robertson argued with the attempt to demonstrate that Heidegger's *Daseinsanalytik* is an ontological account of predetermined subjectivity which is influenced by the Idealist strategy of Immanuel Kant. In this paper, this issue is also dealt with by exploring the dispute existing between dogmatism and idealism. To yield a fruitful discussion at this stage, the separation of self-constitution from self-sufficiency becomes necessary. This attempt also aligns with the later revelations by Fichte in the *1796/99 Wissenschaftslehre nova method* by removing the conceptual obstructions relating to the

⁸¹ SONG, D., "Kant's Copernican Revolution", in *Neuroquantology*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2019, pp.1-18, p. 2. Available at: doi:10.14704/nq.2019.17.1.1955. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

⁸² STEVENSON, M.R., *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

connection between self-sufficiency and self-constitution by using “postulate” or “summons”. Therefore, before discussing how dogmatism and idealism differ in the account of Fichte, it is imperative to expose their Fichtean interpretations concerning Kantism.

From the Fichtean account, what is self-positing and how does it inform the argument of whether it is legitimately right to revolt against an unjust government? To begin with, subjectivity refers to the quality of existing in someone’s mind rather than the external world⁸⁵. Based on a personal interpretation in this project, the “I” theorises one’s conception of self. For instance, if someone says, “I reject Kant’s idealism” means that the person has formed a different logic in his mind that differs with the philosophical conceptions of Kant’s idealism. Similarly, philosophical interpreters of the Fichtean viewpoint of self-positing argue that Fichte meant the connection between self-identity and the external world. In this case, “to posit” equates to “to be conscious of” or “to be aware of” or “to reflect upon”⁸⁶. Therefore, the whole idea of self-positing translates to “to be conscious of oneself”. However, it is worth noting that the “I” do not necessarily need to form “self-consciousness” (*Bewußtsein*)⁸⁷. Thus, the principle in question is whether self-positing lies in the declaration of one’s self-identity. From an epistemological viewpoint, people have formed different self-identities based on their interaction with the external world. Nevertheless, some people might fail to form these identities since people possess different levels of intellectual intuition. Other external factors such as interest towards something determines the level of interaction with the external world and the subsequent development of self-consciousness. Although not solely Fichtean, the interpretation concerning these assertions is that the points of universality in society lie within virtues of independence, freedom, dignity, happiness, justice, liberty, and so on. Therefore, a government that limits individuals from exercising their intellectual intuition by delimiting independence and freedom practices inhumanity. Since individuals have a natural right to exist, practice morality, and enjoy other forms of freedom and independence, the government lacks legitimacy to limit them. The government can be considered an entity in society that should respect the natural rights of other entities. Thus, like it is for self-defence when someone is attacked physically, people have a right to revolt against a government that represses

⁸⁵ ARRESE, I. H.O., “The Right to Education in The Fichtean Theory of Natural Right”, in *The Philosophical Forum* vol. 46, no. 4, 2015, pp. 403-420, p. 403. Available at: doi.org/10.1111/phil.12086. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

⁸⁶ BYKOVA, M., “Fichte’s Doctrine of The Self-Positing Subject”, *Fichte-Studien*, vol. 32, 2009, pp. 129-139, p. 129. Available at: [doi 10.5840/fichte20093249](https://doi.org/10.5840/fichte20093249). Consulted on 15 June 2023.

⁸⁷ FICHTE, J., *Sämmtliche werke*, vol. III, ed. by Fichte, I. H., Berlin, Veit, 1845-1846, p. 2

peoples natural rights. To further this argument, it is also imperious to determine how Fichte connected the principle of self-positing to solving the absurdity of the unity of reason from the viewpoints of self-legitimacy and self-sufficiency of reason as a whole.

“A. Ego, as subject.

I. The I (which is interpreted as)

- a. The more-than-individual consciousness (überindividuelles Ich), in its subject-aspect. or
- b. The Absolute I (Ich), in its subject-aspect.

II. The i (ich): the individual ego, as subject.

B. Ego, as object.

I. The Me (which is interpreted as)

- a. The more-than-individual consciousness, in its object-aspect.
- or b. The Absolute Me (Mich), in its object-aspect.

II. The me.

- a. The individual me (mich); the individual, as object.

b. The empirical me (nich).

- i. The mere object-moment of consciousness (an abstraction).

2. The fact-of-consciousness as object (percept, emotion, etc.)⁸⁸.

From the above quotes Ego and ego are different words. Consecutively these words act as subject-object and will also be utilized untechnically where the discrepancy between subject and object is not created. Evidently, all these terms match with actual discrepancies in real systems of viewpoint, though not all of them are self-proclaimed by all thinkers. Overall, as observed by Curtis Bowman⁸⁹, the first principle of *Die Wissenschaftslehre* was the concept of subjectivity which Fichte commonly referred to as “Pure I”. Bowman further acknowledged that scholars find it challenging to translate *Wissenschaftslehre* to modern English. Some of the translations commonly used include “Theory of Scientific Knowledge”, “Science of Science”, or the “Doctrine of Science”⁹⁰. Fichte implied that *Die Wissenschaftslehre* can be viewed as a science because it was arranged systematically, but did not imply that its content is “scientific”. The reason why modern English translations are not informative is that whatever perceived as “scientific” in the modern world is associated with natural sciences and to some extent to social sciences. Due to this, most

⁸⁸ CALKINS, M.W., *op. cit.*, p. 460

⁸⁹ BOWMAN, C., “Johann Gottlieb Fichte: Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge”, in *Central Works of Philosophy*, 2005, pp.43-68, p. 43. Available at: doi.org 10.1017/upo9781844653607.004. Consulted on 27 July 2023.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

scholars including the present research leave it untranslated. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, science was an expansive concept. Despite that vast broadness of the concept, Fichte consistently referred to the system as scientific owing to the following characteristics: (a) it is in a system form, (b) its first principle of “Pure I” is certain, and (c) the system forms a foundational discipline composed of all conceptual and hypothetical knowledge and validate their essential unity⁹¹. Therefore, Fichte himself would have liked the term “science of science” more than other translative interpretations. The subsequent sub-sections will advance this discussion by examining the specific elements of this system such as the dispute between idealism and dogmatism and the problematic primacy of practical reason. After taking a precise standpoint, I will also advance the discussion towards the determination of whether it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government from the perspectives of humanity concerning the primacy of practical reason. Towards the end of this chapter, I will attempt to criticise these philosophical contributions in the light of post-modernity considering that is the position of the twenty-first century.

3.5. Dispute between Idealism and Dogmatism

Fichte is commonly academically taken as an idealist. On the other hand, Kant was a dogmatist and that is where their main difference emerged. Many scholars have examined the dispute existing between idealism and dogmatism. According to the Oxford Scholar, Daniel Breazeale⁹², the main difference between idealism and dogmatism is their conception of the concept of subjectivity. As stated earlier in this chapter, Fichte was a follower of Kant. He extended most of the philosophical standpoints of Kant. However, although both agreed that subjectivity is the fundamental determination of unity, they differed on the conception of the theory. According to Kant, the experience upon a thing in itself is the cause determination of the “I”⁹³. On the contrary, according to Fichte, the experience is the ultimate product of the self-constitutive activity of the “I”⁹⁴. By assuming that the role of philosophy is to explain the existence to the consciousness of depictions escorted by a sense of inevitability, Fichte argued that dogmatism and idealism are the only two possible ways to philosophy. According to Professor M. Maesschalck, Fichte also saw the solution to the modern problem of freedom through

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.48.

⁹² BREAZEALE, D., “Idealism Vs. Dogmatism”, in *Thinking Through the Wissenschaftslehre*, 2013, pp.301-333, p. 301. Available at: doi. org 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199233632.003.0011. Consulted on 28 July 2023.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

a philosophy of consciousness to the extent that even D. Henrich saw that the future of Fichte's philosophy is dictated by the development of sophisticated conceptions of self-awareness⁹⁵. Therefore, the above assumption can be considered valid and reliable thus also proving the Fichtean argument that dogmatism and idealism are the two possible ways of philosophy. Moreover, Fichte denied that there is no direct way to compare the two concepts hence one cannot be used to refute the other. If that is the case, it is the freedom, self-conception, and practical interests of an individual that will determine his or her course of action. Though, he went ahead and asserted categorically that dogmatism can never successfully "explain" ordinary experience⁹⁶. It is from these sentiments that Fichte is considered an idealist. Hence, the role of an idealist is to educate and cultivate others through "explaining" ordinary experience.

Different political philosophy scholars have provided different opinions regarding the dispute between idealism and dogmatism. For instance, according to Kien-how Goh⁹⁷, Kant was not previously prominently regarded as a dogmatist. His philosophy was largely accepted, however, also in the face of stiff competition from opponents. The scholar argues that it is the series of Fichtean works such as the two 1797 introductions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, *Annalen des Philosophischen Tons* (1797), and *Vergleichung des vom Herrn Prof. Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit der Wissenschaftslehre* (1796) that pushed the philosophical works of Immanuel Kant to be widely considered as a dogmatist⁹⁸. Particularly, he portrayed the other followers of Kant as dogmatists that were even more capricious than their kin. Kien-how Goh then goes ahead to defend Kantism by arguing that it was not purely dogmatist as Fichte portrayed. However, apart from this unique difference between Kant and Fichte, they shared many philosophical thoughts such as transcendental philosophical standpoints to shape their arguments. Fichte urged Kantian followers to transition from dogmatist to idealist so that they can reach the ordinary people to solve their problems. Therefore, to further this discussion, it is also imperative to focus on how one can transition from a dogmatist to an idealist while advancing towards understanding whether the

⁹⁵ MAESSCHALCK, M., *Droit et creation sociale chez Fichte: une philosophie moderne de l'action politique*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Editions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1996, p. 312.

⁹⁶ BREAZEAL, D., "Idealism Vs. Dogmatism" *op. cit.*, p. 301.

⁹⁷ GOH, K.H., "The Ideality of Idealism: Fichte's Battle Against Kantian Dogmatism", in *Fichte and Transcendental Philosophy*, 2014, pp. 128-142, p. 128. Available at: link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137412232_9. Consulted on 3 July 2023.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

citizenry has a legal right to revolt against a government that represses them politically, socially, and economically.

In the view of Fichte, dogmatists choose to minimize and deny that they are free agents whereas idealists decide to recognize and exercise their freedom. He then went ahead and argued that one can choose to convert from a dogmatist to a self-conscious free agent in the world. However, considering that he had admitted that dogmatism can be a viable way through which humans think, his suggestion for conversion in a unidirectional approach has been considered non-rational by some political philosophers like R.S Kemp⁹⁹. The scholar then goes ahead and argues that the best conversion suggestion would be bi-directional to be considered rational. A bi-directional approach would mean that Fichte was not deliberately trying to outshine the kin¹⁰⁰. Nevertheless, this philosophical difference between Kant and Fichte informs why Kantians would recommend that the citizenry lacks a legal right to revolt against an unjust government whereas Fichtean political philosophers would recommend the vice versa. Indeed, this topic domain implies that dogmatism and idealism are the only two possible ways to interpret philosophy. In this case, the subsequent sub-sections of this chapter will continue exploring the advantages of the Kantian standpoint vis-à-vis that of Fichtean. Especially, one sub-section is dedicated to critiquing the Fichtean philosophical standpoints to validate his support for a revolution.

3.6. The Problematic Primacy of Practical Reason

The idea of “practical reason” was invented by Immanuel Kant. Its main counterpart is theoretical reason whereby Kant at the outset argued that reason is the same thing twice: whether applied practically or notionally¹⁰¹. His belief that the same reason can be applied both conceptually and practically is what he referred to as the unity of reason. However, before providing detailed explanation of the difference between practical reason and theoretical reason, it is imperative to begin with determining the possibility reason to be realised in the world. According to Professor Marc Maesschalck and his colleague Jacques Lenoble in *Democracy, Law*

⁹⁹ KEMP, R.S., “How to Become an Idealist: Fichte on the Transition from Dogmatism to Idealism”, in *British Journal for The History of Philosophy*, vol. 25, no. 6, 2017, pp. 1161-1179, p. 1161. Available at: doi:10.1080/09608788.2017.1301372. Consulted on 14 July 2023

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ KLEINGELD, P., “Kant on the Unity of Theoretical and Practical Reason”, in *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 52, no. 2, 1998, pp. 311-339, p. 311. Available at: pure.rug.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/3185922/Kant_on_the_unity.pdf. Consulted on 15 July 2023.

and Governance, reason is a form of shared belief among people¹⁰². For instance, “To assume that the mere internal play of the formal constraints of debate ensures the adjustment of beliefs disregards the fact that the possibility for debate is itself only made possible by a shared belief that motivates participants to use it”¹⁰³. It is upon this possibility that reason can make meaning in the real world. Otherwise, the definition of reason itself can be philosophically controversial. They go ahead and cite J. Fichte that “It is not reason itself that justifies belief in its own capability of transforming reality. Rather, the reverse application of reason in the world depends on belief in its potential fulfilment”¹⁰⁴.

Nevertheless, the main point of nexus between practical and theoretical reasons is their purposiveness in nature, which further indicates that the two were under disunity at the beginning. However, during his tenure as a prominent philosopher, I. Kant argued that the unity of reason is yet to be demonstrated in the real-world perspective. Therefore, he authored another book called *Critique of Practical Reason*¹⁰⁵ where he once more postpones it by arguing that it will be demonstrated “someday”. As his follower, these are some of the aspects that Fichte was interested in expanding. It is this “someday” that Professor M. Maesschalck and his colleague demonstrated that the *probable* source of unity between the two is the criticality of *belief* as elaborated in the previous paragraph.

Moreover, before discussing further the meaning of primacy of practical reason, it is imperative to provide a little appraisal of Kant’s Critique of Judgement as encompassed in the concept of the “unity of reason” this will help lay a firmer groundwork to the discussion ahead. Many authors have examined and critiqued the concept of the “unity of reason”. According to author Nuzzo¹⁰⁶, the explanation that was provided by Pauline Kleingeld is rather basic because it only talks on how Kant conceptually unified theoretical reason and practical reason. In that regard, Nuzzo takes a new approach to interpret the method in a useful real-world demonstration. Many

¹⁰² LENOBLE, J., and MAESSCHALCK, M., *Democracy, law and governance*, Abingdon: Routledge, New York, 2016, p. 64.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ ADORNO, T.W., TIEDEMANN, R., and LIVINGSTONE, R., *Kant's critique of pure reason*, Polity Press, Oxford, 2018, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ NUZZO, A., and KANT, I., *Kant and the unity of reason*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette (IN), 2005, p. 44.

philosophers including Fichte have advocated for the need for both “thinking” and “acting”¹⁰⁷. Nuzzo who is seemingly a firm follower of that philosophical tenet says as follows: “It proposes a new reading of Kant's notion of human experience in which domains as different as knowledge, morality, the experience of beauty and life are finally viewed in a unified perspective”¹⁰⁸. The author was referring to the concept of the “unity of reason” whereby he gave a teleological account the purpose of unity of reason in a real-world perspective. In this case, the author argues that the main purpose why Kant developed the theory was to elucidate the notion of human experience, something that was highly segregated in his earlier works into the idea of knowledge, the law of morality, and the experience of beauty and life¹⁰⁹. The view that both notional reason and practical reason are one, but two separate ideas can be translated into a real-life perspective by unifying the theories of knowledge, morality, and experience of life and beauty. Therefore, based on this information, the idea of the primacy of practical reason will less challengingly be comprehended.

What is the primacy of practical reason? In the explanation of Kant’s philosophy of reason, it was noted that it is pre-eminent because it is based on moral laws that indicate what is of unconditional value and interest to the people. According to Kantism, the moral will of the people is the unconditional interest¹¹⁰. To understand precisely the primacy of practical reason, Kant directs his followers to the perspective of seeing something as both valuable and of “primary” interest. In that regard, scientific activities always add positive value to society but they are always of “secondary” interest hence cannot be qualified as pre-eminent. On the other hand, morality attracts “primary” interest from the people hence plus the positive value it adds to society, it is incomparable with such scientific events. This argument is where the problematic primacy of practical reason originates. According to Karl Ameriks¹¹¹, theoretical reason can lead individuals through the realm of experiences of other people, but cannot fill the need for “actual” reason in its broad sense because it cannot be gratified fully by what is given within the boundary of possible experience. Kant made the following remarks in his *Critique for Practical Reason*:

¹⁰⁷ TIRUNEH, G., *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ NUZZO, A., and KANT, I., *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ WONG, P.L., “The Primacy of Practical Reason in Kant's Philosophy”, in *The Chinese University of Hong Kong*, 2008., pp. 1-83, p. 3. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48548141.pdf>. Consulted on 15 July 2023.

¹¹¹ AMERIKS, K., Kant, Fichte, and the radical primacy of the practical, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 131.

Essential purposes are not yet, on that account, the highest purposes, of which (in the case of perfect systematic unity of reason) there can be only one. Hence essential purposes are either the final purpose itself or subsidiary purposes that necessarily belong to the final purpose as means. The final purpose is none other than the whole vocation of the human being, and the philosophy concerning it is called morality¹¹².

From the above extract, Immanuel Kant demonstrated that “primary” interest can be observed both in speculative and practical forms of reason. Therefore, speculative primary interest can substitute practical primary interest, but the only part with a better real outcome is the practical reason. In general, Immanuel Kant perceived practical reason as superior to theoretical reason. Moreover, from this standpoint, Kant went ahead and theorised that people should access happiness that is proportional to their morality¹¹³. This is the only way to practice moral law which would otherwise be illusory. Hence, the primacy of practical reason lies in the possibility of outspreading the employability of reason beyond the realms of experience. Furthermore, philosopher Jane Kneller¹¹⁴ interpreted the Kantian standpoint by extending that this leap of “reason” is based on the immortality of the soul, the postulates of practical reason and the existence of God. Kneller¹¹⁵ further confirms that practical reason is superior to theoretical reason because the presence of the three factors above in a reasoning realm can sometimes lead to evasion of “speculative reason” for the sake of practice. Therefore, in the account of whether it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government, Kant would have recommended the application of practical reason, which can yield diverse outcomes because if applied strictly within its postulates, in some cases it could be right to revolt whereas in others it could not be right. Besides, considering that the philosophical standpoints of Immanuel Kant were subjective plus his dogmatist view, his application of practical reason yielded the results of it is “illegal” to revolt against an unjust government. Additionally, it is imperative to also examine the position of Fichte himself regarding the problematic primacy of practical reason in the next paragraph below.

¹¹² WELDON, T.D., KANT, I., and WHITE BECK, L., “Critique of Practical Reason”, in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 58, no. 6, 1949, pp. 625-627, p. 625. Available at: doi:10.2307/2182818. Consulted on 22 July 2023.

¹¹³ WONG, P.L., *op. cit.*, p.4.

¹¹⁴ KNELLER, J., “Aesthetic Value and The Primacy of The Practical in Kant's Philosophy”, in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, vol. 36, no. 23, 2002, pp. 369-382, p. 369. Available at: doi:10.1023/a:1016116906290. Consulted on 14 July 2023.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

Moreover, before considering the Fichtean perspective on this topic domain, it is worth remarking that the previous paragraph has only implied the morality theory as a major component of the idea of “unity of reason”. Based on the arguments of scholar Nuzzo that “unity of reason” is sub-divided into three aspects namely knowledge, morality, and the significance of life¹¹⁶, it is important to also examine how the elements of knowledge and significance of life play their role in the formation of the concept from a unification angle. Modern critics of Kant, such as Holzhey Helmut, and Mudroch Vilem¹¹⁷, argue that knowledge, religion, and morality are inherently intertwined and cannot be separated. Since morality is the core of reason's unity, knowledge is a vital aspect given their inseparable nature in this perspective. Similarly, since religion is the provider of meaning, purpose, and significance of life according to Fichte¹¹⁸ (the third element of “unity of reason”), then it is arguable that the three elements mentioned by Nuzzo¹¹⁹ are unified through mutuality or interdependence. Morality cannot do without knowledge and religion Fichte rejected the possibility that morality can desirably be established without religion by arguing that he saw a relapse into eudaemonism¹²⁰. A visualization of this concept would indicate morality at the centre and is supported by the ideas of religion and knowledge. In that case, if a person is exposed to a certain type of posteriori knowledge and has a certain set of religious beliefs and values, he or she will then develop a relatively different theory of morality. Therefore, the unification of the three brings about a new notion on the human experience. Based on this information that has been supplied from a Kantian perspective, a firm groundwork has been laid to also further this discussion to the Fichtean perspective. Fichte was a firm follower of Kant and only differed on idealism versus dogmatism. However, he picked up Kant’s theory of practical reason and expressed it to new extremes, especially in his philosophical system of *Wissenschaftslehre*. Particularly, he side-lined himself to ethical idealism, which was his sole view of interpreting practical reason. As noted earlier, his reason for distancing himself from dogmatism is because he believed that philosophical interpretation will rarely spread to the ordinary people. Scholar Daniel Breazeale makes the following observations:

¹¹⁶ NUZZO, A., and KANT, I., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹¹⁷ HOLZHEY, H., and MUDROCH, V., *The a to z of Kant and kantianism*, Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland, 2010, p. 104.

¹¹⁸ WOOD A.W., *Fichte's ethical thought*, 1st ed., Oxford University Press, London, 2016, p. 252.

¹¹⁹ NUZZO, A., and KANT, I., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹²⁰ PFLEIDERER, O., “Is Morality Without Religion Possible and Desirable?”, in *The Philosophical Review*, vol.5, no. 5, 1896, pp. 449-472, p. 464. Available at: doi.org 10.2307/2175408. Consulted on 29 July 2023.

Knowing and willing are equally involved in the constitution of finite selfhood and both are implicit in every moment of actual consciousness. There are, however, several senses in which Fichte does recognize the primacy of the practical: with respect, for example, to the role of moral self-awareness in making the transition from the ordinary to the philosophical standpoint and in rejecting sceptical doubts concerning human freedom¹²¹.

From the above quote, Fichte expresses his ethical idealism in support of practical reason. The extract implies the concept of subjectivism, self-hood, and so on which can be associated with humanity from a Kantian perspective. Therefore, the next sub-section interprets the primacy of practical reason from a humanity standpoint while referring to both Kantian and Fichtean philosophical standpoints. This discussion will offer new insights into the discussion of whether it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses its citizenry.

Kant himself, though most frequently translated as a conservative peacemaker unsettled to his paradigmatic guide on Perpetual Peace (1795), documented the transcendent quality of war: asserts that

War itself, if it is carried on with order and with a sacred respect for the rights of citizens, has something sublime in it, and makes the disposition of the people who carry it on thus, only the more sublime, the more numerous are the dangers to which they are exposed, and in respect of which they behave with courage. On the other hand, a long peace generally brings about a predominant commercial spirit, and along with it, low selfishness, cowardice, and effeminacy and debases the disposition of the people ¹²². However, given the very different sources of constraint – constraint by the rules of thought and constraint by what is given to us from without – it seems unclear how they correspond to one another ¹²³.

Regarding this dilemma, Fichte expresses a type of idealism that tries to expound both sources of constraint as a genre of self-constraint: Reality is reducible to the pure action of the I. Fichte contends that only his optimism will offer a broad account of experience, because it justifies the combination of topic and object and the impulsiveness of judgment that merits unprejudiced claims. Idealism began to lack support by the start of the twentieth century. This aspect

¹²¹ BREAZEALE, D., "The Problematic Primacy of The Practical", in *Thinking Through the Wissenschaftslehre*, 2013, pp. 404-439, p. 404. Available at: doi. org 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199233632.003.0014. Consulted on 23 June 2023.

¹²² KANT, I., *Critique of judgment*, Newcomb Livraria Press, Stuttgart, 2008, p. 49.

¹²³ ALTMAN, M. C., and COE, C. D., "The Self as Creature and Creator: Fichte and Freud Against the Enlightenment", *Idealistic Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, (2007), pp. 179-202, p. 181. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5840/idstudies200737313>. Consulted on 21 September 2023.

commenced by the invention of the science of psychology and later on in the years neuropsychology emerged. According to Altman Matthew and Coe Cynthia¹²⁴ The importance changed to an entire physical interpretation of human reasoning. This change has been echoed in the disparity between how Fichte and Freud perceive the connection between perception and realism. As stated by Freud, the Fichtean stress on the thinking aspect topic is distinctive of the puerile ego. Altman and Coe¹²⁵ states that the I first occurs for the personality as the wholeness of the world and later is regulated with the acknowledgment that the inclination fails to control one's whole setting. From this standpoint, idealism fails to recognize one's relation to the world, which is solely the initial stage in a much longer procedure of mental growth. Freud asserts that the natural researcher assumes a materialist notion of the self and the correlative deterministic justification of human action¹²⁶. Therefore, Freud deviates suddenly from Fichte in his pragmatist epistemology and materialist notion of a thinker. As a result of Kant's Copernican revolution, theorists illuminate the relation between whatever is presented in the logic and the method we use to experience different concepts of understanding.

Kant prohibited rationalists' efforts to originate the entire experience from personal endowments and the pragmatists' attempts to pin down ideas back to feelings. Nonetheless, this presents a problem: If the impulsiveness of judgment is fundamentally distinct from the substantial circumstances of experience, then it is imprecise how personal empirical realization exemplifies the world rather than devising an entirely subject of phantasy.

This aspect means, if people's understanding is answerable for how people establish different perceptions, then how should people know that any of their objective claims are precise guides of the world associated, certainly, but at least as it appears to people for whom thinking is judging¹²⁷?

3.7. Humanity and Primacy of Practical Reason

To understand the connection between humanity and the primacy of practical reason towards comprehending whether it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government, it is imperative, to begin with highlighting the Kantian and Fichtean teleological accounts on humanity. First and foremost, both philosophers have defined the idea of humanity from a moral

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.182.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.183.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

perspective¹²⁸. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant introduced the concept of pure practical reason where he argued from the standpoint of the highest good. At the same time, Kant associated the highest good with the idea of God. Fichte picked from here and explored these concepts by introducing others into “a new world” of philosophy. For instance, he attributed the idea of humanity to absolute freedom and the concept of duty¹²⁹. Moreover, Fichte also observed that the ultimate happiness of a human being is proportional to his degree of morality, and from the concept of duty, every human being must act rationally towards another rational being (humanity) this concept is called altruism as elaborated further below.

Humanity is better associated with altruism (selflessness towards others) than egoism – egoistic individuals are seemingly harmful to others in society by escaping their “humanity duty” of giving others mutual respect, compassion, and love. For instance, altruistic approach to leadership has been placed as superior to egoistic leadership¹³⁰. Fundamentally, the concept of altruism has been associated with the idea of being selfless towards others¹³¹. It has been associated with the ideas of friendship and morality. For example, scholar Lawrence Blum has implied that Kant’s *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* is the pioneer of the idea of altruism whereby Immanuel Kant argues that moral value is only obtained when acting through motives of “duty” rather than “sympathy”¹³². In other words, one does not need to be concerned to show compassion and love to others but it is a “duty” of everyone to show these values to other humans this forms the basis of the concept of humanity. It is about the idea of “power to assist others in distress”¹³³. In this case, if sympathy was the foundational base of humanity, then someone who had the power to save others in a distressing situation “may not”; this is simply by not developing that “sympathy”¹³⁴. Therefore, the concept of duty best suits humanity so that regardless of the situation, a powerful person can help others come out of distress because both are humans. It is commonplace that man can lack sympathy for others simply due to indifferent suffering. Although, the concept of free will dictates that one should not be obliged to save others, but should be of free

¹²⁸ JAMES, D., *Fichte's republic: idealism, history and nationalism*, 1st ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, p. 85.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ AVOLIO, B. J., and LOCKE, E. E., “Contrasting Different Philosophies of Leader Motivation”, in *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2002, pp. 169-191, p. 169. Available at: doi.org 10.1016/S1048-9843(02)00094-2. Consulted on 27 July 2023.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² BLUM, L.A., *Friendship, altruism and morality*, 1st ed., Routledge, Abingdon, 2009, p.96.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

will. However, Kant concluded that morality that emerges from saving humanity from the standpoint of duty is superior to the one that saves humanity from the standpoint of sympathy. Critically, Kant saw the possibility of many human beings suffering since a man may lack sympathy in certain situations even though other “humans” are in distress and he has “power” to save the situation.

Personal action cannot and should not be reduced to objective realism. An acquisitive explanation has not been found to expand the normative limit that actualizes every that can be achieved¹³⁵.

Pippin observes that Fichte makes a similar claim.

The distinction between reflective and speculative philosophy is not meant to be a distinction between different schools of philosophy. To Hegel, English empiricism from Locke on as well as continental rationalism (with exception of Spinoza) were reflective philosophies. The whole philosophy of the enlightenment was reflective. And so was most Kant’ transcendental idealism. Reflective philosophy is philosophy that is not really philosophy- inauthentic philosophy over against authentic philosophy which is, and cannot be speculative. In terms of the Kantian faculties, reflective philosophy is philosophy of the intellect (der Verstand), speculative philosophy is philosophy of reason (die Vernunft), but of a reason which has been allowed to trespass on territory Kant believed to be inaccessible to finite man. It is typical of reflective philosophy, though it does not exhaust nature, that relies on arguments of proofs whole apparatus of logic that it insists on clear-cut dichotomies such as those of the infinite and the finite, subject and object, universal and particular, freedom and necessity, causality and teleology; that it tries to solve intellectual puzzles rather than give true conceptual vision of the whole; that it sticks to the natural sciences as the source of the only reliable knowledge of nature thus committing itself, in the first place, to a concept of experience reduced to sense perception and to concept of sense perception reduced to some casual chain and in the second place ¹³⁶.

According to¹³⁷, Kant clarifies that metaphysics tries to distinguish what fails to be recognized. Humans lack perceptual experiences of God, the soul, or a future life. People use these notions to converse about these things but lack perceptions to relate them to. Kant hypothesized that information necessitates both instincts and concepts, so metaphysical subjects continue beyond all

¹³⁵ PIPPIN, R. B., "Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind" in Canadian Journal of Philosophy, vol. 17, no. 2, 1987, pp. 449-475, p. 451. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.1987.10716447>. Consulted on 21 September 2023.

¹³⁶ HEGEL, G. W. F., *The difference between Fichte's and Schelling's system of philosophy: an English translation of GWF Hegel's differenz des Fichte's Chen und Schelling's Chen systems der philosophie*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1988, p. 87.

¹³⁷ MEIKLEJOHN, J. M. D., KANT, I., ABBOTT, T. K., and MEREDITH, J. C., *Critique of pure reason*, Joseph Malaby Dent & Company, London, 1934, p. 11.

conceivable human information. Still, Kant distinguishes that people cannot merely halt deliberating metaphysical notions because they are part of our usual inquisitiveness as human beings. Questions about God and the soul result naturally, and individuals should not attempt to disdain them. People should recognize that it is impossible to attain definitive responses to these questions. Kant's claim causes people to tend to move inward, to view how realization relies on their perceptual thinking outside the world. Notably, Kant's philosophy has had significant influences on how people identify scientific expertise of the ecological world and how it is important to understand beyond the natural world.

Some critiques presented a progressive argument that revolutionized the way philosophers examined their subjects. Previous philosophers, before Kant, concentrated on the perceptive constitution of the world. However, Kant urged Kantians to converge their understanding of the formation of the human mind¹³⁸. Notably, he believed that this would assist people in understanding what human beings can and fail to understand. Kant referred to this as a “critical” attitude. Consequently, this acknowledges the limitations of familiarity and thought. This concept is established as a universal technique for rational ideas about problematic questions. The individual fails to ask about the answer to such a notion, or it is the type of question human beings can respond to. Modern philosophers have protracted the idea of including the boundaries of what language is explicit.

Moreover, critics of Kant and Fichte altogether have argued that they approached their conceptions of humanity with subjectivism. For instance, scholar G. Frankenberg¹³⁹ argues that human rights are an invention to indicate that their philosophical foundations were subjected to the “Is” of Kant and Fichte. The scholar argues further that human rights are indeed inventions of reason but reason itself was invented through subjectivism¹⁴⁰. If that is the case, then Kant and Fichte have contradicted themselves in their philosophical works that are in line with the need for applying reason to avoid the emergence of prototypes of egoism and solipsism which can endanger the existence of others in society¹⁴¹. Also, based on their argumentation on the concept of society

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹³⁹ FRANKENBERG, G., “Human Rights and The Belief in A Just World”, in *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2014, pp.35-60, p. 35. Available at: doi. org 10.1093/icon/mot068. Consulted on 25 July 2023.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ ALTMAN, M. C., “Fichte’s Practical Response to the Problem of Other Minds”, in *OpenEdition Journals*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1-18, p. 1. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ref.859>. Consulted on 21 September 2023.

and state, Fichte draws Kant back to his idealism by arguing that state is an entity in society that is only economically and politically influential than individual citizens. Thus, the state is also subject to respecting humanity by giving an environment for moral accomplishment of human desire such as happiness. According to Philosopher and humanist advocate Lamont, he states that

In the Humanist ethics the chief end of thought and action is to further this-earthly human interests on behalf of the greater glory of people. The watchword of Humanism is happiness for all humanity in this existence as contrasted with salvation for the individual soul in a future existence and the glorification of a supernatural Supreme Being. It heartily welcomes all life-enhancing and healthy pleasures, from the vigorous enjoyments of youth to the contemplative delights of mellowed age, from the simple gratifications of food and drink, sunshine and sports, to the more complex appreciation of art and literature, friendship and social communion¹⁴².

Therefore, from a Fichtean standpoint, the citizenry is also subject to the rule of law and should only revolt against an unjust government “reasonably”. Philosophically, the application of the word “reasonably” is too broad and ambiguous to communicate an exact measure of quantity or quality. That is why there is a subsection that covers how “reasonable” was the French Revolution to bring enormous change to the nation of France. This Fichtean perspective will promote the precision of interpreting “reasonable” in this context. However, before discussing how Fichte defended the French Revolution, it is imperative to introduce Fichte’s Republic of Scholars to lay a firm groundwork towards exploring his defence of the French Revolution.

3.8. Fichte’s Republic of Scholars: The *Gelehrtenrepublik*

Before practically exploring the Fichtean practical reason, it is imperative to examine his view of the republic of scholars, whose members do not rely on external authority to apply reason. Fichte commonly referred to republic scholars as to the *Gelehrtenrepublik*. The members have bought the Kantian and Fichtean philosophy of practical reason, but they are applying it in the “wrong” way. For example, they intend to illustrate their absolute freedom and independence based on their convictions developed through the use of their “own” reason. They lack recourse to any premises that rest on any of the generally held opinions of the age in which they live¹⁴³. Also referred to as “the learned republic”, Fichte argues that its members must communicate their convictions to each other. The main disadvantage of their existence is that it can bring about conflict in society. However, from the perspective of practical reason, Fichte defends them by

¹⁴² LAMONT, C., *The philosophy of humanism*, Humanist Press, Amherst, 1997, p. 248.

¹⁴³ JAMES, D., *Fichte's republic: Idealism, history and nationalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

arguing that they enjoy a natural human right to share their convictions and that anyone who wishes to pull out of being under the authority can freely join them. The main source of conflict in such an arena is the sharing of incompatible viewpoints. However, according to David James in his *Fichte's Republic*¹⁴⁴, the existence of a conflict in an ethical community is a sign of intellectual debate, and as Fichte himself noted, time and cultural progress will prove who was right or wrong. Hence, conflict invites a new political analogy in addition to that of a republic in which its citizenry is subject to common laws which they authored themselves through the political presentation.

At this point, Fichtean views on the republic of scholars contradict his stand that people have a legal right to revolt against an unjust government. According to David James¹⁴⁵, Fichte defended the existence of the republic of scholars composed of individuals who have chosen to be independent and enjoy absolute freedom based on their “own” reasons instead of those supplied by the authority. Although he did not reveal whether he was a member or not, his defence for this cohort translates to a new perspective that contradicts his remarks on revolution, especially his defence of the French Revolution. The view of the republic of scholars indicates that Fichte believed the existence of intellectual conflict is healthy. At the same time, he was cautious about the possibility of violence that can undermine humanity thus leading to the emergence of higher-level human evils. Therefore, he resolved for the establishment of a conflict resolution body whose judgment is based on popularly held reason. Since conflict is inescapable in the republic of scholars, certain generally accepted constraints such as time limitations during an argument in a legal procedural process must be applied to contain the worsening situation. Otherwise, this republic could be dangerous to humanity while trying to enjoy their humanity, which is overall immoral. Similarly, when a revolution takes place in a country, intellectual conflict must exist¹⁴⁶. Over time and cultural progress, the citizenry will be able to differentiate between the wrong and the right. If the wrong is still under authority, a revolution will occur naturally. Overall, the main point of focus is that Fichtean views on the republic of scholars support the view that a revolution should take place only when its time has come. This is unlike the Kantian perspective that completely eliminates the possibility and usefulness of a revolution.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁴⁶ SCHAFFER, S., “The French Revolution and The Creation of Benthamism”, in *Intellectual History Review*, vol.19, no. 1, 2009, pp. 142-144, p. 142. Available at: doi. org 10.1080/17496970902723021. Consulted on 19 July 2023.

3.9. Fichte's Closed Commercial State vis-à-vis Kant's Cosmopolitanism

The previous sections of this chapter have numerously implied the conceptions of state of Fichte and Kant. These discussions have laid a firm groundwork to this particularity approach to understanding their conception of the state in light of his other philosophical contributions such as the idea of practical reason and idealism. In this sub-section, the specific conceptualisations that were applied by Kant and Fichte will be explored once more. Fichte used a closed commercial state approach because he was German nationalist whereas Kant proposed cosmopolitanism.

According to Efraim Podoksik, *The Closed Commercial State* (1800) was a state theory that was developed by Fichte dating back to 1794¹⁴⁷. The foundation of this theory was based on a slight turning point in the intellectual direction of Fichte in response to fixing particular political problems that were facing Prussia during that period (1794). Before that, he could argue from the standpoints of the humanitarian principles of sociability and natural human rights. Essentially, Fichte had begun to demonstrate a revolutionary rejection of the state to introduce the humanitarian principles mentioned above¹⁴⁸. However, after 1794, he abandoned his radical views against the state and theorised that the ideals of human autonomy can be realised only within the state and the system of positive rights established by it¹⁴⁹. He argued as follows:

... a group of people, led by reason in their negotiation of treaties, can divide themselves into different classes, bound by reciprocal obligations in a way that allows them to enjoy a high total level of consumption of life and pleasure without sacrificing the rights of any individual to an equal¹⁵⁰ ...

The above abstract demonstrates how the state should conceptualise the positive rights of individuals from the perspective of division of labour within a closed commercial state. He borrowed this view from a unique interpretation of Kantian realism and his notion of “unsociable sociability”. This view of the state was a Middle point between his radical republicanism and the Kantian and Hobbesian realistic legalism. Even after adopting Kantism and Hobbesian into his political thoughts, Fichte still managed to come up with a unique yet contradicting standpoint from that of Kant. Particularly, like Kant and Hobbes, Fichte accepted that the state, like individual

¹⁴⁷ NAKHIMOVSKY, I., *The closed commercial state: perpetual peace and commercial society from Rousseau to Fichte*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011, p. 141.

¹⁴⁸ WILLIAM, S., *Memoir of Johann Gottlieb Fichte*, Wentworth Press, 2019, p. 27.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ NAKHIMOVSKY, I., *op. cit.*, p. 147.

citizens, also enjoys autonomy and natural right¹⁵¹ However, he formed a divergent opinion from Kant and Hobbes by arguing that there is a prospect for popular political institutions that are instituted democratically. His arrival at this political position is what permitted him to conceptualise further that the state should be a closed commercial state as elaborated further below.

A closed multitude of men, standing under the same laws and the same supreme power of coercion, forms the juridical state. This multitude of men should now be restricted to reciprocal trade and industry with and for one another, and everyone who does not stand under the same legislation and power of coercion should be excluded from participating in this commerce. The multitude would then form a commercial state, and indeed a closed commercial state, just as it now forms a closed juridical state¹⁵².

Fichte particularly conceptualised that open and free trade between states would result in increased competition and thus results in powerful states oppressing the weaker ones. This sharply contrasted with the view of Kant that free and open trade will lead to increased competition between states and ultimately encourage demilitarisation, hence leading to the formation of stronger interstate ties. This will eventually culminate into a peaceful federation¹⁵³. This philosophical formulation by Kant is what is commonly referred to as cosmopolitanism. Then again, with regards to his perspective, Fichte invalidated Kant's cosmopolitanism by contending that the making of conditions for state self-sustenance is critical to the foundation of tranquil states on the planet. Fichte then moved to the intrastate level where he contended that the role of the administration is to improve the implicit agreement hypothesis to guarantee that all residents can continue themselves through work. Along these lines, with respect to the hypothesis of the state, Fichte and Kant remained at contrasting focuses, yet whenever analysed intently, the two viewpoints are intently integrated through the idea of perpetual peace. In this manner, the protection Fichte offered towards his hypothesis of a closed commercial state, particularly at the intrastate level, suggest his affirmation that individuals can rebel against a treacherous government.

Kant had claimed that trade liberalization or 'the spirit of commerce' (der Handelsgeist) would gradually lead to a kind of association of people. Fichte agreed with Kant about how the

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² FICHTE, J.G., *The closed commercial state*, *op. cit.*, p. 79

¹⁵³ NAKHIMOVSKY, I., *op. cit.*, p. 198.

“whole race that inhabits our globe will become assimilated into a single republic including all peoples”¹⁵⁴. However, he failed to establish free trade and economic moderation as a direction to perpetual peace. Fichte was terrified of how the economic rivalry between states would create new hostilities leading to war formation. Furthermore, unlike his previous supporter’s adoption of classic economic liberalism, he made a lawsuit for economic tariff barriers and a premeditated economy in *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat* (The Closed Commercial State, 1800). This book’s explanation of social justice empowered by government intervention is one of the reasons it has been considered the first methodical case for the good interest state¹⁵⁵. The main agenda for the Closed Commercial State book is acting as a metaphysical Rubicon for Fichte. Throughout his life, he upheld that all individuals ultimately would be integrated into a solo “peoples’ republic of culture” and here he commenced to bear in mind how this would be accomplished, progressively coming to the inference that the German individuals perform a crucial task in the manner of establishing a multicultural land. Fichte’s philosophy can be seen as an index or substitute for the historical enactment of ideas in his body of work. He states that philosophy is “philosophology,” moving beyond the sterile academic lens. Fichte does not dwell on his Kantian precedent but delivers lectures with repetition, exploring the self-sustaining qualitative oneness of knowing. He concludes that primordial knowing is constructive and intrinsically genetic. The manifest is tactical and factual, yet alienated, betraying the gap between knowledge and its auto-invention, which Kant separated as the domain of faith. Fichte views the world as facticity, where actuality and representation coexist, allowing us to draw on “the ancients” or adopt working models of reality, leaving the metaphysical debates to others¹⁵⁶.

Fichte implicated the social contract theory in his argumentations by declaring the need for proper economic mechanisms as a role of the government to address social and economic inequalities within a state. From this perspective, it can be concluded that citizens have a natural right to defend themselves from a repressive state and one of the effective ways of doing so is through a revolution since most repressive governments tend to shut individual activists. The next discussion on his defence of the French Revolution furthers this discussion.

¹⁵⁴ WILLIAMS, R.E., and CALDWELL, D., *op. cit.*, p., 312.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹⁵⁶ WOOD, A.W., *op. cit.*, p. 256.

3.10. Fichte's Defence of the French Revolution

In the past segments, it was shown that before 1794, Fichte would in general fundamentally dismiss the state henceforth was alluded to as a Jacobin. By considering the foundations of Jacobinism, scholar David James¹⁵⁷, for example, considers Fichte a Germany Jacobin since his moral and political contemplations are in close arrangement with the two parts of Jacobinism to be specific a concern for private rights and a worry for the public good. Indeed, in his defence of the French Revolution, especially in his works of *Foundations of Natural Right*¹⁵⁸ and *The System of Ethics*¹⁵⁹, Fichte demonstrated the virtues of a Jacobin. For example, in his *Foundations of Natural Right*, Fichte argued as follows:

But then what determines how much can be granted to each individual for himself? Evidently the common will, in accordance with the rule: this particular number of human beings should be free alongside one another in this particular sphere for freedom in general; so much belongs to each individual¹⁶⁰.

This extract from his work indicates that Fichte indeed was concerned about individual natural right and the public good by referring to “individual” from a collective standpoint. This confirms the arguments of David James that Fichtean political philosophies were Jacobin in nature.

In this sub-section, the author will extensively focus on the various forms of expression that Fichte employed to defend the French Revolution. Since in the previous sections the author acknowledged that practical reason is somewhat superior to theoretical or speculative reason, this sub-section will examine which form of reason that Fichte employed in his defence. In this way, it will be less challenging to philosophically determine if it is legally right to revolt against a government that does repress its people.

Many scholars explored how Fichte approached the French Revolution. Hans Kohn¹⁶¹ examined this phenomenon from a nationalistic viewpoint. He argued that Fichte, although not primarily or rather previously a philosopher or academician like Kant, managed to interpret

¹⁵⁷ JAMES, D., “Fichte's Jacobinism”, in *History of European Ideas*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2008, pp.104-115, p. 104. Available at: doi. org 10.1016/j.histeuroideas.2007.11.004. Consulted on 3 July 2023.

¹⁵⁸ FICHTE, J.G., NEUHOUSER, F., and BAUR, M., *Foundations of Natural Right*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 216.

¹⁵⁹ FICHTE, J. G., *Fichte: the system of ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 141.

¹⁶⁰ FICHTE, J.G., NEUHOUSER, F., and BAUR, M, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁶¹ KOHN, H., “The Paradox of Fichte's Nationalism”, in *Journal of The History of Ideas*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1949, pp. 319- 343, p. 319. Available at: doi. org 10.2307/2707040. Consulted on 11 July 2023.

Kantism in a way that can lead to action. He regarded his philosophical standpoints (idealism) as the true foundation of political action. He reputed the dogmatist approach of Kant by asserting that he was only willing to think, but not act. For him, he was willing to both think and act. In the previously sub-sections, it was discovered that their intersection was their form of thinking but Fichte diverged away from Kantism somewhat because he supported the idea that people can revolt against an unresponsive government, which Kant was against. Kohn¹⁶² observes that Fichte interpreted life from the standpoint not only an imposition of his will upon others and as a personal creation but also as “action”. His introduction of the aspect of “action” into his ethical and political thoughts formed the foundation for his defence for the French Revolution.

Particularly, combining the thought and action and idea of ego takes a central position. Scholar Kohn¹⁶³ interprets his personality as domineering. He had a great acquaintance of Kantism and his re-interpretation of its central position in the aggressive spirit of Storm and Stress, he discovered how to combine thought and action. At this point, he drew the concept of ego by arguing that the objectiveness of the world can limit and determine the ego of an individual. Therefore, such a world can be considered creation and as an idea of this very ego, dependent upon it. He then went ahead and revealed that there are two forms of ego namely rational and irrational. As much as the ego is considered rational, or pure ego as Fichte puts in his words, it is not subjugated by nature, but nature dominates it in freedom. A person with a pure ego can metaphysically be considered free by following his or her moral law. In that view, that person can be considered the absolute in whose activity and creative act theory intersect. From this perspective, human autonomy and freedom can be considered ever-progressive to greater heights. The view also reveals that the life of political societies is ever-advancing to form more perfect rational institutions. It is from this nationalistic viewpoint that Fichte came to defend the French Revolution as rational voluntarism and abstract universal legislation¹⁶⁴. Therefore, before providing more views of how other scholars interpreted the Fichte’s defence of the French Revolution, it is imperative to expose the happenings of the event and the kind of political philosophy that informed its advancement throughout the period.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Many scholars have examined the political thought and practice of the French Revolution from many angles. For instance, in his study, Kenneth Margerison¹⁶⁵ explored this topic domain from the perspective of P.L Roederer, who was an active politician during the French Revolution. It is worth noting that this revolution was informed by many political philosophies both from Britain and America in the context of the idea of Enlightenment, and Fichte only defended what had already happened. Therefore, it is erroneous to interpret that the philosophical thoughts of Fichte informed the French Revolution. Instead, local politicians like Roederer informed its occurrence. Therefore, since Enlightenment has already been discussed in the previous subsections of this chapter, it is imperative to focus on what particularly motivated the local French politicians to follow this path.

Kenneth Margerison describes Roederer in the following words in relation to interpreting his political thought and practice during the French Revolution:

From his youth he was highly ambitious and willing to use all the tools available to him in the last years of the ancient regime to achieve personal advancement. At the same time, he was intrigued with the possibilities that enlightened reform offered to France. This fascination with reform was perhaps natural to a highly intelligent youth maturing in the last decade of the ancient regime, an era dominated by interest in theoretical and practical ideas of reform. As an advocate of reform, Roederer was as capable of writing persuasive memoirs as he was of pulling all the political strings at his command in order to achieve his goals. This combination of innovative, analytical, and reflective political thought with practical political activity remained an essential feature of Roederer's political career up to 1800¹⁶⁶.

From the above extract about one of the most influential French politicians that supported the French Revolution, it is apparent that the idea of enlightenment was at the centre. Predominantly, enlightenment informed the concepts of autonomy, something that Roederer pursued since he was a young man. Therefore, the arrival of the enlightened political thought fascinated him. One of the most notable issues in regards to the extract above is that Roederer, unlike Kant, was also action-oriented. This is the main point of intersection between his political thought with that of Fichte, who always believed in action after keen application of reasonable thought. Indeed, the French Revolution, which took place between 1789 and late 1790s, was a

¹⁶⁵ MARGERISON, K., *P.-L. roederer: political thought and practice during the French revolution (transactions of the American philosophical society)*, Amer Philosophical Society Press, Philadelphia, 1983, p. 134.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

practice of the enlightened political thought on government structures and formations such as the European monarchies and feudal system. Therefore, it is also imperative to examine in brief the main causes of the French Revolution as a foundational approach to understanding the defence that was offered by Fichte in his philosophical writings on the public perception of the revolution.

The main cause of the French Revolution was the ineffective economic policies of King Louis XVI. The French debt was caused by intervention its intervention in the American War of Independence and had much issues with taxation system¹⁶⁷. This war expenditure was about 1.3 billion livres which was double the yearly revenue, they could earn in year¹⁶⁸. Therefore, for the seven years of war 1.8 billion livres, was spent ¹⁶⁹. Notably, France encountered an impossible problem on how it would uphold its global position and rank while engaging in these conflicts, and funding them with an ancient and unacceptably unproductive system.

The nation's royal coffers were depleted followed by poor agricultural harvests that sent the country into economic turmoil despite citizens paying heavy taxes. In this case, the citizenry felt repressed because they were paying something without valuable returns. Due to an increase in the cost of living of the prices of bread went high¹⁷⁰. People, especially the urban poor, expressed their discontentment and desperation by looting, striking, and demonstrating. The Jacobin authoritarianism was well-known for endorsing the Reign of Terror, which besieged opportunists, counterrevolutionaries, and conspirators and which eventually led to their beheadings¹⁷¹. Moreover, the Jacobins included established the world's first universal military outline. The Jacobins were recognized due to how they formed a solid government that was able to handle war requirement, economic pandemonium, and internal rebellion. These radical events led to significant bloodshed, but in the end, a new political landscape following the abolition of a monarchy and the establishment of a republic was established.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the French monarchy led by the King had tried to encompass some political philosophies of enlightenment thinkers, but Jacobins were still dissatisfied. For instance, on August 4, 1789, the assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights

¹⁶⁷ PETER, M.P., *The French revolution*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2017, p. 34.

¹⁶⁸ STACY, S., *A great improvisation: Franklin, France, and the birth of America*, Macmillan Publishers, New York, 2006 p. 5.

¹⁶⁹ SCHAMA, S., *Citizens: a chronicle of the French revolution*, Vintage, New York City, 1990, p. 61.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

of Man and of the Citizen which contained a statement of democratic principles grounded upon the Enlightenment ideologies by philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau¹⁷². Some of the principles that were introduced include freedom of speech, equal opportunity, representative of the government, and popular sovereignty. However, in the face of this movement, France also adopted a new constitution on September 3, 1791, which still supported a monarchic government whereby the king still enjoyed royal veto power and the legal aptitude to appoint ministers¹⁷³. Even after taking these actions, some political radicals like Georges Danton and Camille Desmoulins still discovered that this kind of system still delimits the principles of republicanism¹⁷⁴. They then began to drum up popular support for the formation of a more republican nation and even advocated for the legal trial of King Louis XVI. In this case, these Jacobins desired “pure” reform and transformation of the nation of France from a monarchy to a republican country. This formed the foundation of the turning point of the revolution from peaceful strikes, demonstrations, and lootings into radicalism. This slowly transformed into a reign of terror after Jacobins executed the king for treason and crimes against the state¹⁷⁵. Many other people exceeding 17,000 were also executed during this time¹⁷⁶, turning France into one of the most violent and turbulent phases in history. However, it is also worth remarking that the political ideology of Jacobins did not finally form the ultimate government during the rise of Napoleon at the end of the revolution. During the rise of Napoleon, a bicameral legislature was formed. The Jacobins tried to resist this kind of regime but they were silenced by the military.

Throughout the French Revolution, an agreement developed about the demand for an antimonarchist form of government. However, there was an insignificant settlement as to how that type of government could be recognized, and even less conjunction on whether or not it would be essential to present some types of freedom to obtain a liberated republic. Disputes regarding what

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ MARGERISON, K., LUDWIKOWSKI, R. R., and FOX, W. F., “The Beginning of The Constitutional Era: A Bicentennial Comparative Analysis of The First Modern Constitutions”, in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 5, 1994, pp. i-xvi+1475-1887+1(a)-50(a), p. 1649. Available at: doi. org 10.2307/2168405. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ POPKIN, J.D., “The Royalist Press in The Reign of Terror”, in *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 51, no. 4, 1979, pp. 685-700, p. 685. Available at: doi. org 10.1086/241986. Consulted on 31 July 2023.

¹⁷⁶ LYNN, M.R., “A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in The French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789-1794”, in *French History*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2012, pp. 259-260, p. 259. Available at: doi. org 10.1093/fh/crs017. Consulted on 15 July 2023.

the republican government would entail in both speculative and applied terms managed to establish the custom of political consideration, within which Rousseau and Montesquieu were particularly crucial¹⁷⁷. However, the increasingly nerve-wracking politics of the Revolution unfolded, shifting the attention towards expressing forms of un-freedom constrictions or expenses that might be concerned with effectively establishing a steady republic. Monarchy and Oligarchy were the option of two different ways of constituting exclusive power. In this context, Sieyès patently indicated his inclination to a monarchical government.

In his famous exchange with Thomas Paine in 1791, he ostensibly defended a monarchical form of government claiming that, “It is not out of fondness for ancient customs, or any superstitious royalism, that I prefer monarchy. I prefer it because it seems to me that there is more freedom for the citizen in a monarchy than in a republic. Any other means of deciding seems puerile. The best social regime in my view is the one under which all enjoy the greatest possible extension of freedom”¹⁷⁸.

Three reasons led to the absence of freedom in the early republican disputes of the 1790s: political, social, and economic. In every domain, the question of democrat exclusivism (i.e., the assertion that the nation is the only genuine form of government) was dominant ¹⁷⁹. Members in the debates of the 1790s questioned themselves on the possibility of being free politically, socially, or economically –in the country with methods that are not agreeable through any other method of government. Naturally, given the ultimate downfall of the French monarchy in 1792, optimistic reactions to this question were propagated. These responses went beyond practically recognizing the republic as the genuine and essential form of government in revolutionary settings after 1789¹⁸⁰. Arbitrators and extremists alike drew on an opulent inheritance of antiroyalist notions to make sense of the concrete dilemma of soothing France and determining a new constitution and government well-matched with the Right Declaration of Citizens. With a severe strive to attain a practicable form of government after 1789, apprehensive questions happened to deem the political, social, and economic constraints within which a country should be secured. The Revolution

¹⁷⁷ SCURR, R., “Unfreedom and the Republican Tradition in the French Revolution”, in *To Be Unfree: Republicanism and Unfreedom in History, Literature, and Philosophy*, edited by Christian Dahl and Tue Andersen Nexö, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014, pp. 93-116, p. 93. Available at: doi.org 10.1515/transcript.9783839421741.93. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

¹⁷⁸ FORSYTH, M., *Reason and revolution: the political thought of the Abbé Sieyès*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1987. p.177.

¹⁷⁹ SCURR, R., *op. cit.*, p.93.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

commenced with the abbot Sieyès's proclamation of the comprehensive nature of the Third Estate's dominant and founding power¹⁸¹. However, it was settled into a sequence of severe disagreements about how to demarcate boundaries to political, social and economic independence in situations where pressures between civic and personal interests were hard to explain in theory and settle in practice.

After establishing what unfolded during the French Revolution, it is now imperative to discuss some of the philosophical arguments that Fichte presented in its defence. As stated earlier, scholar Kohn¹⁸² interpreted Fichte's defence from a nationalist viewpoint whereby he argued that the French Revolution was exemplary of the "action" that Fichte was presenting in his idealistic philosophical contributions. Kohn used metaphysical juxtapositions to claim that the French Revolution was informed by the human's need for great autonomy and freedom from time to time. At this time in French history, people were tired of a monarchic and feudal system of government whereby socio-economic policies were flawed. People could no longer accept the leadership ways of King Louis XVI that were characterised by extravagance and paying heavy taxes with little returns to the public. Some scholars like David James¹⁸³ have also argued that Fichte's defence of the French Revolution was informed by Jacobinism-nationalism whereby he developed two concerns namely private freedom and shared public good. Indeed, the French Revolution took place with motives of defending the public good following France's costly involvement in the American Revolution which took place merely a decade earlier and the king's extravagance with little returns to the public good. The cost of living was rising as evidenced by an upsurge in commodity prices. In this case, the government could be considered repressive because it served a different interest other than the common good of people. In the next paragraph, the specific philosophical principles of Fichte will be explored in his defence for the French Revolution.

Fichte's explicit defence of the French Revolution can be located in his essay *Contribution*, which he published before the political writings of Kant. When the French Revolution turned into a Terror in the late 1790s whereby a bloody conflict emerged with neighbouring European nations, most political philosophy intellectuals of Germany began to condemn it. However, Fichte took a polarised defence for it in his essay. His *Contribution* was particularly a response to A. W.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁸² KOHN, H., *op. cit.*, p. 319.

¹⁸³ JAMES, D., *Fichte's republic: idealism, history and nationalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Rehberg's *Investigations Concerning the French Revolution* (*Untersuchungen über die französische Revolution*) which was posed against the revolution. In the introduction section of his *Contribution*, scholar Frederick Beiser in conjunction with David James observes that Fichte based his contention with Rehberg on the conventional struggle between rationalism and empiricism in politics¹⁸⁴. Fichte took a firm stand with rationalism rather than empiricism. He believed that people should judge history and tradition according to the principles derived from reason rather than deriving principles from history and tradition¹⁸⁵. In this case, he was defending his principles of morality as derived from the transcendental philosophy of Kant. In that regard, he argued that it is better to judge history and tradition based on the principles of morality rather than taking these principles from history and tradition. Fichte positioned political empiricists as individuals “who do not want” by using “we cannot” in their support of the idea of deriving standards from history and tradition¹⁸⁶. However, Fichte poses his conflict with Rehberg as if it were a contention between empiricism and rationalism, the issue was more complicated than thought.

Rehberg did not support “pure” empiricist politics whereby every moral judgmental principle is derived from history and tradition. Instead, he also believed in reason as a fundamental guide in politics. Like Fichte, Rehberg additionally accepted that standards of morality and natural law were official on the populace. Therefore, he was not completely an empiricist in politics, but believed that the principles of reason as derived from morality and natural law are “insufficient” in practising politics¹⁸⁷. Nevertheless, both of them agreed that the moral principle leaves a void through which the liberty of the citizenry is limited. Be that as it may, for Rehberg, governmental issues must be guided by chronicled practice, which gives a stage to apply the guideline of practical reason to explicit political conditions. Then again, Fichte answered to him that the populace has a characteristic right to go into new ties paying little heed to past political foundations and customs. Indeed, the French Revolution was completely a new binding that even saw the king go under execution for treason and crimes against the state. Since the people have a natural right to abandon their past bindings after confirming that they are no longer effective, Fichte justified the French Revolution. In this case, it is a bit challenging to justify who was correct between Fichte and Rehberg. However, as Fichte himself confirmed, time and cultural progress are the best parameters

¹⁸⁴ BEISER, F., *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

in judging a philosophical standpoint. Therefore, the next section critiques Fichte's philosophy from a postmodern standpoint to determine its applicability in contemporary world politics.

3.11. Critique of Fichte's Political Philosophy

At the outset of this critique, the tenets of postmodernism as the main framework to use will be critically discussed. The previous sections of this chapter have indicated that Fichte philosophised during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when political thought was being shaped by Enlightenment. The idea emphasised human rights by advancing their autonomy and freedom to meet the social expectations of that era. Also, it is worth confirming that since the discovery of the political thought of Enlightenment, many social and economic changes have taken place, especially during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Certainly, in the argument of empiricism versus rationalism, history and tradition can shape political thoughts in the contemporary world. The main assumption of this study is that cultural progress and time are the best parameters for determining the precision of classical philosophical thought. Since epochs have moved since Fichte philosophised, it is imperative to critique his political philosophy in the light of postmodernism, a contemporary social movement. In this way, it will be less challenging to determine if it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government in support of Fichte's view of the French Revolution.

The question of whether Fichte's political philosophy belonged to Jacobin still stands. However, Fichte's argument in revolutionary writing and Jacobin's notion has some similarities. Fichte guards the right to revolution and the responsibility to protect

I believe that my system belongs to this [the French] nation. It is the first system of freedom. Just as that nation has torn away the external chains of man, my system tears away the chains of the external thin-in-itself or external causes, that still shackle him more or less in other system even the Kantian. My first principle establishes man as an independent being. My first system arose though an inner struggle with myself and against rooted prejudices in those years that the French struggled with myself and against rooted prejudices in those years that the French struggled with outer force for their political freedom. It was their value that spurred me to conceive it. When I wrote on the revolution there came the first hints and the inklings of my system¹⁸⁸.

Critical philosophy evolved at the excursion of the twentieth century as a result of Russell and Moore's realization of idealism. However, at the beginning of the 1960s, Strawson and rational

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

thinkers like Sellars, McDowell, and Brandom developed an interest in banning idealism. The outcome brought a transformed awareness of analytic figures to most German idealists, like Fichte. Fichte, together with other German idealisms, was inferred beneficiary of the materialization of professed transcendental claims as a particular theme in logical philosophy. These claims, as fathomed in analytic philosophy, were inspired by Strawson's substantial elucidation explanation of the critical philosophy without optimism. This aspect led to a discussion on transcendental arguments, as understood from a Human evaluation, to contradict perceptive scepticism. This degree emphasizes the connection between Fichte and the metaphysical approach¹⁸⁹. The subject of the method is a dominant modern metaphysical theme. In responding to Montaigne, Descartes centered this tactic to expertise squarely on an approach that was allegedly appropriate and enough to assure arguments to realization in incapacitating the most drastic method of cynicism. According Rockmore¹⁹⁰, the contemporary discussion between the rationalists and the empiricists, which mainly committed to the cognitive approach to be retained, ultimately involves Kant. Notably, it is believed that Fichte is a self-declared dependable Kantian. The significance of the process for Kant and the Kantians has been long documented. Fichte's practical philosophy and explicitly his idea of human action has remained the intention of precise consideration in French-speaking philosophical spheres¹⁹¹. For decades, neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen's effectiveness was deceptively obliged to two main perceptions: deduced laws entrenched in mind regulate what counts as a conceivable cognitive thing, and viewpoint studies reasoning through the purported transcendental approach. Maesschalck states that¹⁹²

Fichte's discovery of the power of intersubjectivization of life by social norms makes it possible to found the modern collective destiny on a "legal humanism". What we constitute as a free spirit in solidarity with a human becoming, it is the power to recognize mutually as subjects of rights, and this by commitment to a destination common and not according to the simple incompleteness of our own self-position¹⁹³.

¹⁸⁹ ROCKMORE, T., *Introduction to: Fichte and transcendental philosophy, Fichte and transcendental philosophy*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2014, p.2.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ MAESSCHALCK, M., "The 'Fichtean moment' in theory of action and the subject Current issues of Fichteanism", in *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 2013, pp.233-265, p. 233. Available at: DOI:10.2143/RPL.111.2.2985266. Consulted on 28 July 2023.

¹⁹² MAESSCHALCK, M., "The Late Fichte and the Contemporary Legal Theory", in *Fichte-Studien*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2012, pp. 321-337, p. 325. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5840/fichte20123660>. Consulted on 28 July 2023.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

Jeffrey¹⁹⁴ states that Authoritarianism was the prime of body descriptions and body policies, as the influential studies of Kantorowicz, Elias and Foucault have revealed. The state was imaginary as a body, embodied in the absolutist monarch, who was frequently showed as the soul, mind spirit that animated initial subjects. The fundamental notions of the early Russian structuralism within an epistemological outline concentrates on the method in which linguistic information is structured. Bernaz and Maesschalck¹⁹⁵ discusses this objective, and organize the notion of episteme established by Michel Foucault in his works. Therefore, the next sub-section will define the principle of postmodernism and offer its characteristics to lay a groundwork for this appraisal. In this way, the author highlights the methodological approach that will be used in the actual critique as presented after the postmodernism discussion.

3.11.1 Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a philosophical theory of the twentieth century that is categorised by scepticism, relativism, and subjectivism. Scholars have examined the theory in various disciplines such as literature¹⁹⁶, sociology¹⁹⁷, education¹⁹⁸, political science¹⁹⁹ and many others. The introduction of aspects like scepticism, relativism, and subjectivism have caused significant controversy in the interpretation of this theory in various disciplines due to the multiplicity of postmodernism concepts and its divergent implications from one critic to another²⁰⁰. This section will particularly focus on how it has been interpreted by various political science scholars. In this way, it will be less difficult to exploit the critique of Fichte's political theory from this perspective

¹⁹⁴ MERRICK, J., 'The Body Politics of French Absolutism', From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998, p. 13.

¹⁹⁵ BERNAZ, O., and MAESSCHALCK, M., "Subjectivity and normativity in the early Soviet Russian structuralism", in *Epistemology & Philosophy of Science*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2018, pp. 155-170, p. 155. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5840/eps201855114>. Consulted on 28 July 2023.

¹⁹⁶ CHUNG, C. H., and LEE, S. Y., *Postmodernism & Literature*, Hanshin Pub. Co., Seoul, 1993, p. 88.

¹⁹⁷ KELLNER, D., "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems", in *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 5, no. 2-3, 1988, pp. 239-269, p. 240. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276488005002003>. Consulted on 28 July 2023.

¹⁹⁸ PETERS, M. A., TESAR, M., and JACKSON, L., "After Postmodernism in Educational Theory? A Collective Writing Experiment and Thought Survey", in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, vol. 50, no. 14, 2018, pp. 1299- 1307, p 1301. Available at: [doi.org 10.1080/00131857.2018.1457868](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1457868). Consulted on 29 July 2023.

¹⁹⁹ ARONOWITZ, S., "Postmodernism and Politics," in *Social Text*, no. 18, 1987, pp. 99-115, p. 99. Available at: [doi.org 10.2307/488695](https://doi.org/10.2307/488695). Consulted on 25 July 2023.

²⁰⁰ ELAATI, A. A. N., "Postmodernism Theory", in Research Gate, vol. 13, no. 2, 2016, pp. 1-6, p. 2. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Abdulazim-Nelaati/publication/303812364_POSTMODERNISM_THEORY/links/5754f8f008ae17e65ecccbbf/POSTMODERNISM-THEORY.pdf. Consulted on 29 July 2023.

so as to determine if the “right to revolt against an unjust government” is applicable in the contemporary world. Fichte presumptuous from his article on Sprachfähigkeit is that a debate around language is essential to another era of science ²⁰¹.

Nevertheless, before discussing these aspects in-depth, it is imperative to differentiate between modernism and postmodernism. The theory of modernism heralded postmodernism. It was a period of Enlightenment when Fichte and Kant philosophised. The theory focused on the need to apply reason in daily lives such as politics, economics, sociology and others. Indeed, even Fichte and Kant philosophised by arguing that practical reason is a better approach to the real-world situation than theoretical or speculative reason. According to Aslan and Yilmaz²⁰², the main characteristic of modernism that can be used to conspicuously differentiate it from postmodernism is the concept of Enlightenment, whereby the world was derived from a Greek world called *modo* which means the separation of the past and the present. In the argument of Fichte about rationalism and empiricism, Fichte preferred rationalism to empiricism due to its minimal application of the philosophical idea of historicism whereby the present is derived from the past. In his argument, Fichte claimed that people, from the perspective of humanity, have freedom and autonomy to leave the past and adopt the present without making any reference to the past. Therefore, modernism was the period, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when philosophers argued from the present rather than from the past. Scholar Saribay defined the concept of modernism as follows:

A situation in which a differentiation of progressing, economic and administrative rationalization and social world opposite to traditional order in parallel with modern capitalist industrial government and which has been started to be used in West with the Enlightenment in the eighth century²⁰³.

Therefore, Fichte and Kant philosophised during modernism hence there is a need to interpret their philosophical standpoints from a postmodern perspective as a way to contextualise them in politics of the contemporary world.

What is postmodernism? In the introductory paragraph of this sub-section, some of the concepts that were associated with it include relativism, subjectivism, and scepticism. Before

²⁰¹ MAESSCHALCK, M., *The philosophical language as the speculative scientific and popular philosophy Fichte*, Revue philosophique de Louvain, 2014, p. 307.

²⁰² ASLAN, S., and YILMAZ, V., “Modernizme Bir Başkaldırı Projesi Olarak Postmodernizm”, in *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2005, pp. 93-108, p. 94. Consulted on 17 June 2023.

²⁰³ SARIBAY, A.Y., *Postmodernite, Sivil Toplum ve İslam*, Alfa Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, pp. 4.5.

digging deeper into each of them, it is imperative to begin by remarking that, as Fichte and Kant argued, humanity is characterised by the desire for continuous progress away from the status quo. The invention of modernism was motivated by this interpretive aspect whereby philosophers of the eighteenth century believed that the aspects of this theory would help in setting the pace of progress that meets the socio-economic expectations of human desire. However, when major world chaos like the world wars set in, philosophers became sceptical about the usefulness of modernism in meeting humanity demands. Therefore, the idea of postmodernism was invented later on as further elaborated below.

Postmodernism became popular in various disciplines like political science in the 1970s, but its roots can be traced back to the 1940s. Scholar Abdulazim Elaati²⁰⁴ argued that the concept has appeared in complex political circumstances, especially at the end of World War II and the emergence of Cold War and nuclear weapons. It also appeared during the birth of human rights. For example, the UDHRs took place in the 1940s, a time thought to have birthed to the theory of postmodernism. Similarly, the emergence of the theatre of the absurd also occurred during the postmodern era. Some of the philosophical theories that emerged during this period include nihilism, absurdism, surrealism, and existentialism²⁰⁵. Besides, deconstruction of major philosophical concepts of modernism took place during this period thus prompting authorities to shift from modernism to postmodernism. The primary motive for the invention of this theory was the deconstruction of modern Western thought such as identity, language, origin, voice and mind²⁰⁶. Some of the philosophies that formed its foundation include disassembly, disorder, meaninglessness, nihilism and anarchy. Some of the mechanisms that have been used to explain postmodernism include uncertainty, westernisation, dispersal, and disagreement²⁰⁷. As stated earlier, after the events of World War I and II and the emergence of the Cold War that was characterised by deadly weapons such as nuclear bombs, philosophers discovered that the idea of Enlightenment alone was inadequate in explaining the real-world perspectives in politics, military, sociology, literature and more. Therefore, they had to employ mechanisms such as those stated above to again look for better approaches that can govern humanity seamlessly. Thus, it is

²⁰⁴ ELAATI, A.N., *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

imperative to also expound on some of the philosophies of postmodernism to lay a firmer groundwork towards critiquing Fichtean thoughts from the viewpoint of the contemporary world.

3.11.1.1 Nihilism and postmodernism

In the context of postmodernism, the idea of nihilism has been viewed from various angles. In ancient and the advent of Enlightenment eras, the ideological norm was the dominant philosophical thought. For example, Fichte and Kant defined their philosophical standpoints from the principles of morality and practical reason. They relied on ideological norm to pose their arguments. On the other hand, a nihilistic thought is the exact opposite of the ideological norm. Nihilism is often characterized by a sense of meaninglessness and nothingness, where nothing is considered absolutely true. Nihilists question the very existence of existence itself. During the Enlightenment era, Christians associated nihilism with secularism, while for authoritarian belief systems, skepticism was seen as political unrest. From a post-Christian perspective, Christianity itself is viewed as a form of skepticism. In the context of contemporary rationality, nihilism is often perceived as a crude and destructive worldview²⁰⁸. In his *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, scholar Ashley Woodward defined nihilism as follows:

The root of the term “nihilism” is the Latin *nihil*, meaning “nothing”; it carries with it the obvious connotations of nothingness and negation, and has been employed in a wide variety of ways to indicate philosophies or ways of thought, belief, or practice that primarily negate or reduce to the point of leaving nothing of value²⁰⁹.

Ashley Woodward²¹⁰ further indicated that the external and internal contradiction of “postmodernism” is an indication of the postmodern itself as “inherently hopeless.” The idea of hopelessness can be connected to the major world events that took place after the arrival of the ideological thought of postmodernism. Therefore, the idea of postmodernism currently remains to be controversial and unclear, an indication of an attempt to examine the contemporariness of the world. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the idea of Enlightenment was purely based on ideological norm principles of morality and practical (and theoretical) reason. Their application in political and socio-economic thought did not yield the expectations of humanity as marked by the world chaos of World War I and II as well as the emergence of the Cold War. This resulted in hopelessness amongst the people thus leading to the attempt to explain “the current situation”. The

²⁰⁸ SLOCOMBE, W., *Nihilism and the sublime postmodern*, Routledge, New York, 2013, p. 132.

²⁰⁹ WOODWARD, A., *Nihilism in postmodernity*, 1st ed., Davies Group, Aurora (CO), 2009, p. 7.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

ambiguity surrounding postmodernist political thought indicates that humans are still to fully explore the “current situation.” However, at the same time, it can be argued, from a nihilistic point of view, that the “nothingness” or “meaningless” surrounding the term itself is a characteristic of “the current situation” which is also marked by uncertainty. From a Fichtean perspective, it is only God (the perfect prototype of a human) that can “very” correctly predict the future to avoid the upcoming uncertainty. However, from an epistemological standpoint, since human beings are intellectually limited, they must face these uncertainties as they come. Their attributes like resilience will determine their survival beyond them. Also, since no one knows who will survive beyond them, then the world is “nothing” or “meaningless.” At the same time, this kind of interpretation has clear roots to the ideological of Enlightenment. In this case, it can be argued that the Enlightenment thought brought about new human instincts of their surroundings. Since these instincts are not yet fully explored by the humans themselves, they have to undergo deconstruction to capture new ideas about life. This only happens through escaping the pre-occupations of the Enlightenment era to transition smoothly to a new era, which is currently unknown due to the ambiguities surrounding the implications of the idea of postmodernism.

Overall nihilism is a “transitional” term whose meaning entails the human desire to escape the strict application of morality and practical reason as set by Fichtean thoughts and other like-minded philosophers since its application did not produce expected outcomes as previously philosophised by Kant and Fichte. From a nihilistic point of view, it can be said that postmodernism has laid the groundwork to these novel discoveries that are motivated by “doing away with the principles of modernity”. This section will particularly focus on critiquing the Fichtean ideological norm as a way of filtering out “what is working” from “what is not working” in the contemporary world. Therefore, it is also imperative to understand other theories that formed the foundation of postmodernism as a journey towards novel discoveries about humanity that would help in improving the practicality of existence.

3.11.1.2 Absurdism

Absurdism, together with nihilism, were among the founding philosophical theories of postmodernism. According to Scholar James Wolken who drew from the works of Albert Camus, a French novelist and journalist, the word “absurd”.

Refers to the general experiences of confronting the utter meaninglessness of life and being faced with a strangeness to oneself and the rest of the world. It is the moment when we realize that our

reason, our desires and demands for certainty, hope, and meaning, have failed and gone unfulfilled²¹¹.

Through this explanation, it is apparent that absurdism and nihilism are closely related. The theory undermines Fichtean reasoning on morality and practical reason, and especially his firm support for rationalism. Therefore, the ideological thought of absurdism forms a basic foundation for the critique of Fichtean thoughts on whether it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses the citizenry. This argument is based on the fact that most political scholars have centrally placed the absurd in the ideas of revolt, rebellion, or resistance. For instance, in his study, academician Sean Derek Illing²¹² argued that Albert Camus practised politics during the age of absurdity and he even conceptualised the theory in the context of “revolt”. Particularly, scholar Illing²¹³ argued that the origins and implications of Camus’ politics cannot be comprehended properly apart from the account of its engagement with the politics of Friedrich Nietzsche who, in turn, focused on the concept of essentialism and absolutism. Nietzsche gave rich views on the origins of morality and intellectual authority in the modern world. These views informed the philosophical points of view of revolt. The connexion that the author creates between Camus and Nietzsche indicated that there is a connection between absurdism and the philosophy of revolt. In other words, the author is among the few who have examined the practical implications of the theoretical foundations of postmodernism in contemporary politics. Therefore, during the actual critique of the political-philosophical thoughts of Fichte, this linkage will be explored to determine its imperativeness in informing the current topic on whether it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses its people. Additionally, the concept of ambivalence has centrally been positioned in the discussion of rebellion, revolt, or resistance in the light of absurdity. For instance, David Walker²¹⁴ argued that politicians like Camus were faced with mixed reactions of absurdity. Similarly, Malpas Simon argued that the concept of ambivalence holds a central position in

²¹¹ WOLKEN, D.J., “Toward A Pedagogy of The Absurd: Constitutive Ambiguity, Tension, And the Postmodern Academy”, in *Journal of Inquiry & Action in Education*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2016, pp. 64-79, p. 69. Available at: files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1133544.pdf. Consulted on: 27 June 2023.

²¹² ILLING, S.D., “Camus and Nietzsche on Politics in An Age of Absurdity”, in *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2016, pp. 24-40, p. 24. Available at: doi.org/10.1177/1474885114562977. Consulted on 19 June 2023

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ WALKER, D.H., “Albert Camus and The Political Philosophy of The Absurd: Ambivalence, Resistance, And Creativity”, in *French Studies*, vol. 68, no. 4, 2014, p. 567. Available at: doi.org/10.1093/fs/knu198. Consulted on 27 June 2023.

discussions of rebellion, revolt, or resistance, as it encapsulates the absurdity of simultaneously desiring and rejecting social or political change within a context of perceived existential meaninglessness and purposelessness ²¹⁵.

The above extract practically demonstrates the state of being ambivalent about absurdity. A revolution takes place when people can endure the ambivalence of the absurd. This contradicts the surety pose of Fichte that people have a right to revolt a government that represses their freedom, justice, autonomy, and other general principles that define humanity. Therefore, scholar David Walker's ²¹⁶ observation that Camus believed that a revolution occurs through the endured ambivalence extends the philosophical thoughts of Fichte from a postmodern perspective. Indeed, the theories of absurdism and nihilism did not formally exist during the time Fichte philosophised. Walker simply supports the idea that revolting against a government that does not consistently meet the expectations of the people is legally right, but for the revolution to take place, people must collectively undergo that kind of ambivalence as demonstrated in the extract above. Does it mean that a revolution is practically impossible if that "enduring ambivalence" is extremely challenging? The obvious answer to this question is "no" because the American and French Revolutions took place successfully however, both were influenced by the principles of Enlightenment. Therefore, eliminating the possibility of a revolt taking place is rather an erroneous philosophical observation.

There is an absurdism difference between the anticipation of significance and the catastrophe of accomplishing it. However, the use of Camus terminology should not deceive us. The misfortune to apprehend this anticipation is not factual and the outcome of some epistemological flaw but an illustration of God's pre-eminence. Believers fail to transcend the absurdity of existence through faith, instead opting to dwell within it. Absurdism confronts individuals with the choice to either commit to belief in God and serve in the world as it is, or reject the search for meaning ²¹⁷. In a move conventional of phenomenological-existentialist custom, Camus pulls a discrepancy in *The Myth of Sisyphus* has stances of the absurdism: one as a datum of human experience and the second as a notion, re-explicates the human experience with the process of its conceptualization. Camus suggests various formulations using this myth, such as, for instance: "This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said.

²¹⁵ MALPAS, S., *The postmodern*, Routledge, New York, 2004, p. 104.

²¹⁶ WALKER, D.H., *op. cit.*, p. 567.

²¹⁷ GAVINS, J., *Reading the absurd*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2013, p. 138.

But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd relies much on man as on the world”²¹⁸.

Through this explication, “the feeling of the absurd becomes clear and definite. The basic data of the sense of the absurd are: (1) The loss of a sense of continuity in the sequence of daily gestures, which acts as a unifying element. (2) The experience of real time as a sequence of events, leading us to lose our sense of the present. (3) The presence of death. (4) Alienation from the world. The world becomes strange and threatening because we cannot truly understand it. Precisely because cognition is “too human”, it creates a sense of detachment from the world, since the world becomes known to us only through “the images and designs that we had attributed to it beforehand”²¹⁹. This cluster of feelings is organized in the concept of the absurd, which reflects their shared structure.

According to Gavins²²⁰, this description, the source of the rift is the basic ontological datum of human reality. The natural order compels human beings but desires to exceed this. This nonconformity, or this trend regarding superiority, displays those human beings are not exclusively part of nature. Camus uses this trend as apparent in realization and decision, which do not function by the righteousness of the natural order. Leibowitz, therefore, embraces human history as the incarnation of human preeminence: History is a ground for the operation of human realization, which fails to operate in natural reality and is not subordinate to its laws. Natural reality lacks realization and operates corresponding to its intrinsic laws; while human history is fashioned by human beings in natural authenticity, there is no will either. However, the narration is a countenance of human decision²²¹. The difference for Camus is principally clarification of human reality. The primitive datum of human survival is the perception of absurdity, which influences clear formulation in its explanatory illumination. This view and explication are not an issue of a controlled choice but a part of human existence²²². Since this aspect is value-centered rather than a phenomenological description of human reality, other justifications are achievable. The schism orientation could be undermined by showing an alternative experience of unity with the world. A substitute view proposes different methods of contesting absurdity. The following approach is offered in *The Rebel*.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.81.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p.76.

²²² *Ibid.*

This harmony of human beings with their absurd existence reflects their liberation from hopes and illusions. We become aware of the full meaning of our existence as human creatures, and this awareness fill our hearts with happiness. But this happiness is inseparably related to freedom in both its negative and positive meanings. One who endorses the absurd is free of illusions and expresses “the return to consciousness, the escape from everyday sleep”. Although this liberation appears to be confined to the conscious realm, it has the power to generate in us a new attitude to our existence because it liberates us to live and exhaust the given. We are liberated from the future in favor of experiencing the present or, in sum, to realize our existence as human creatures. In other words, liberation from illusions enables freedom in its positive sense. Happiness as self-affirmation thus expresses these two meanings of freedom²²³.

Furthermore, although considered separately, the other remaining philosophies that formed the basis for the ideological pattern of postmodernism are closely or even internally encompassed in nihilism and absurdism. For instance, the concept of meaninglessness was encompassed in both theories discussed above. Other closely related words are disorder and disassembly. Since they have already been implied in nihilism and absurdism, they lack abstraction to be discussed as independent pieces of theory. Thus, the next section of this paper will focus on the postmodern philosophy of existentialism to further this discussion.

3.11.1.3 Existentialism

Existentialism is one of the principles of postmodernism alongside absurdism and nihilism. This theory has been mostly emphasised in literary works such as authorship novels of American and British writers. However, it can also be extended to the political standpoint of postmodernism hence useful in critiquing the political philosophy of Fichte. However, some scholars like Dirk Richter²²⁴ argue that this principle lost its influence in the 1960s. Before providing some of the reasons for this occurrence, it is imperative to, first of all, define its basic tenets from a critical angle.

The aftermath of World War II cultivated the roots of postmodernist thought, as the devastation and disillusionment with grand narratives and absolute truths led to a rejection of

²²³ *Ibid.*, p.87.

²²⁴ RICHTER, D., “Existentialism and Postmodernism. Continuities, Breaks, And Some Consequences for Medical Theory”, in *Theoretical Medicine*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1994, pp. 253-265, p. 253. Available at: doi. org 10.1007/bf01313341. Consulted on 31 July 2023.

modernist ideals and an embrace of fragmentation, subjectivity, and scepticism²²⁵. The horrors of WWII shattered beliefs in progress and reason, spurring postmodernists to challenge universal principles and embrace pluralism, relativity, and the deconstruction of dominant ideologies²²⁶. This aligns with the observation of the author at the beginning of this discussion that postmodernism arose after the end of the world wars and its tenets are intended to prove that practical and theoretical reason does not explain the actual existence of humans on earth. People developed “hopelessness” after witnessing the mass killings of the World Wars and the economic downtimes that followed afterwards. Therefore, they decided to restructure their thinking to conceptualise and visualise the chaotic world. Since there was no instant explanation to such kind of happenings, deconstruction became a major influence during the time whereby philosophical scholars advocated for the need to begin to think about the existence of humans afresh, thus refuting the moral and religious principles that were set forth by prior philosophers like Kant and Fichte. Therefore, in this project, a unique standpoint must be approved: existentialism formed the roots of postmodernism versus existentialism is one of the principles of postmodernism. Another interpretive avenue is whether existentialism is the foundational principle of postmodernism.

In his *Man's Search for Meaning*, author Viktor Frankl treated existentialism as a theme which he explained as follows: “to live is to suffer, [and] to survive is to find meaning in the suffering”²²⁷. In this explanation, the issue of scepticism also arises as it will be expounded further in the next section. In this case, the author further states, “If there is a purpose in life *at all*, there must be a purpose in suffering and dying”. Frankl²²⁸, although implicitly, refuted the moral and religious principles of Fichte and Kant by arguing that no man can tell another this purpose and that it is the man himself to find this purpose (from an individualistic point of view) and then accept the responsibilities that come with that meaning. Therefore, he who has a “why” to live must also explore the “how” from an individual standpoint. The principle of scepticism arises in this argument when the author uses the phrase *at all* to delineate that no one knows if there is a purpose to live. As well, the principle of subjectivism also arises because “man” must find purpose in life by himself and then explore how to fulfil this purpose by himself. Therefore, the next two

²²⁵ MOSS, L. R., *Postmodern existentialism in Mervyn Peake's Titus books*, Universal-Publishers, Irvine, 2010, p. 130.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

²²⁷ FRANKL, V.E., *Man's search for meaning*, 1st ed., Simon and Schuster, New York, 1985, p. 11.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

sub-sections will also critically examine the principles of scepticism and subjectivism correspondingly before beginning to critique the Fichtean political philosophy topic by topic.

Additionally, the above categorisation by Frankl is unique on its own. Otherwise, according to William McBride²²⁹, the meaning of existentialism is highly contentious among different groups of thinkers. From his perspective of the twentieth century when it was first founded, the term suggests existence, but explained from a philosophical standpoint as implied in “-ism”. Since existence is traditionally a category of *being*, then existentialism is considered a philosophy of being hence leaving it subject to many interpretations. At this point, it is worth remarking that Fichte and Kant did not explicitly philosophise about *being*. Instead, drawing from their moral and religious principles, they demonstrated a fixed form of *being* which also forms the connection between their ways of thinking. They only remained explicit about the ontological viewpoint of knowledge, which McBride²³⁰ considers a different, but more reasonable philosophy. McBride was subjective about categorising the ontological standpoints of knowledge and language as more reasonable than existentialism, thus pointing out to the observation that was made by Dirk Richter²³¹ that existentialism lost its influence in the 1960s. Thus, existentialism can be considered a philosophical standpoint of its own, which is also an ontology.

Therefore, due to the arguments presented by authors like Richter that existentialism lost its meaning in the mid of the twentieth century, surviving merely for more than three decades, it is also imperative to determine its relevance in the 21st century, which forms the main focus of this project. This argumentation direction will help in determining whether it is pertinent to critique the Fichtean political philosophy from an existentialist viewpoint towards the comprehension of whether it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses its people.

First and foremost, it is imperative to acknowledge that the aim of this project is to interpret the various texts of Fichte as well as some of those of Kant towards understanding the legality of a revolution in a nation. As scholar Thomas Flynn²³² argued, from a hermeneutic angle, existentialism is still relevant in the 21st century. The author made the following observations:

²²⁹ MACBRIDE, W.L., *The development and meaning of twentieth-century existentialism*, Garland, New York, 1997, p. 214.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ RICHTER, D., *op. cit.*, p. 253.

²³² FLYNN, T., *Existentialism: a very short introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, p. 118.

The increased importance of philosophical hermeneutics in the 20th century also contributed a momentum to carry existentialist thought into the 21st. ... hermeneutics has played an important role in Continental thought. ...hermeneutics is primarily a method and not a metaphysical or ontological theory²³³.

Therefore, from this standpoint, the principle of existentialism is important in interpreting the texts of Fichte from a legal perspective to determine the legality of a revolution against an unjust government. Also, it is worth noting that hermeneutics is a neutral method because it does not side-line with the theories of ontology or metaphysics. As mentioned earlier, Fichte and Kant relied heavily on metaphysics on their interpretation of their political thought. As such, an ontological view of the *being* as provided by the principle of existentialism forms a new basis of interpreting Fichtean texts to offer more insight into their applicability in the 21st century.

Moreover, as it was highlighted earlier, it is important to take a unique position regarding existentialism by determining whether it is the foundational principle of postmodernism or the two should be interpreted differently. If they should be interpreted divergently, then the appropriateness of this viewpoint in critiquing the Fichtean political philosophy becomes void. Based on the arguments by Del Loewenthal²³⁴, existentialism and postmodernism may appear distinct, as existentialism focuses more on the individual while postmodernism emphasizes society. However, the underlying belief that the individual and society cannot be fundamentally separated suggests that these two theories are, in fact, inextricably linked. The idea that the individual and the societal realm are inherently intertwined forms a common thread between existentialist and postmodernist perspectives. While existentialism and postmodernism have differing primary focuses, they share a common philosophical foundation in rejecting rigid, universal truths and meta-narratives. Thinkers like Sartre and Foucault, for instance, recognized the inseparable nature of the individual and the societal constructs that shape their lived experiences²³⁵. This perspective paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of the human condition, one that acknowledges the complex interplay between the self and the broader cultural and political landscapes.

²³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

²³⁴ LOEWENTHAL, D., *Existential psychotherapy and counselling after postmodernism: the selected works of Del Loewenthal*, Routledge, New York, 2016, p. 94.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Those scholars like Richter who argued that existentialism lost its influence in the 1960s were motivated to claim so by the emergence of the philosophical theories of nihilism and absurdism. The main difference between the three principles stems from the view of meaning and purpose of life²³⁶. As highlighted earlier, existentialists argue that life has meaning and this meaning can only be sought and defined by individuals who shall then determine the “how” of fulfilling the discovered meaning²³⁷. Nihilists, on the other hand, are deeply sceptical about any inherent meaning or purpose to life, outright denying the existence of such meaning and purposefulness in the human condition²³⁸. Furthermore, the concept of the absurd stems from the paradox that despite life being devoid of inherent meaning or purpose, humans still innately long for significance, meaning, and purpose in their existence²³⁹. Notably, nihilism and existentialism are polarly opposite whereas absurdism plays a Middle ground. Therefore, if the three concepts are to be grounded into a single theory, they will form a continuum. This thesis intends to apply this continuum in determining whether it is legally right to revolt against a government that is unjust to its people. However, anticipatorily, the application of this continuum in critiquing the Fichtean political thought can rise to be problematic due to lack of a single standpoint. To address this issue, the next section discusses the principles of scepticism and subjectivism from a postmodern angle. If combined with an interpretation of contemporary socio-economic and political problems such as trade rivalry between major economies in the world (e.g., China versus the United States), then a pristine standpoint will be born that will give rise to the successful interpretation of the Fichtean political thought.

3.11.1.4 Subjectivism

As previously discovered, subjectivism is one of the main characteristics of the postmodern theory. This theory has an unambiguous subjectivist and relativist edge as opposed to objectivism and absolutism²⁴⁰. According to an article that was published on the National Association of Scholars (NAS), postmodern subjectivism was defined as follows: “...is founded on the idea of

²³⁶ VEIT, W., “Existential Nihilism: The Only Really Serious Philosophical Problem”, in *Journal of Camus Studies*, 2018, pp. 211-232, p. 211. Available at: philpapers.org/archive/VEIENT.pdf. Consulted 15 June 2023.

²³⁷ MCCOY, P., “From Existential Questions to Existential Answers: Now!”, in *Art Education*, vol. 26, no. 5, 1973, pp. 15-19, p. 15. Available at: jstor.org/stable/3191841. Consulted 10 July 2023.

²³⁸ MALPAS, S., *op. cit.*, p. 128.

²³⁹ GAVINS, J., *op. cit.*, p. 142.

²⁴⁰ SZUBKA, T., “The Last Refutation of Subjectivism?”, in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2000, pp. 231-237, p. 231. Available at: [doi:10.1080/09672550050084027](https://doi.org/10.1080/09672550050084027). Consulted on 23 July 2023.

the social construction of knowledge and reality, which emerged as a fundamental basis for Modern thought over the last half of the twentieth century”²⁴¹. Particularly, after the adversities of the world wars and intense militarisation, intellects and scholars turned away from rationalism and empiricism and began to focus more on the unconscious and feeling, which are socially constructed. When people act freely in society, they tend to form mental representations that embed meaning in society²⁴². Therefore, this concept forms a strong basis for critiquing the rationalist edge of Fichtean political philosophy, especially in his conceptualisation of the state. The next sub-section closes the sole discussion on postmodernism as the argumentation now faces the actual critique of Fichtean political philosophy towards determining if it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses its citizenry.

3.11.1.5 Relativism

According to Szubka²⁴³, the theory of postmodernism is accepted by the overwhelming majority in the contemporary world since it has a relativist edge. Fichte had a strong stand that there is a Supreme being that provides the best guidelines for assessment and justification of the truth and falsity, wrong and right, as well as standards of reasoning and procedures of justification. However, that is rather an absolutist point of view because from a relativist standpoint, there is nothing considered to be absolute truth or falsity, or wrong or right²⁴⁴. These determinations are usually performed from the perspective of already formulated frameworks that guide the assessment and justification of truth or falsity, or right and wrong. Therefore, provided that Fichte philosophised in an era where absolutism had an overwhelming majority compared to relativism, it is imperative to extend his theory to the tenets of postmodernism as a way of determining how his political philosophy of whether it is right to revolt against an unjust government can be applied in the contemporary world. The next sub-section below offers the actual critique of the various Fichtean philosophical standpoints that were discussed in this entire chapter.

²⁴¹ YOUNG, W.H., “Modern Vs. Western Thought: Postmodern Subjectivism”, in *National Association of Scholars*, 2017, np, para. 1. Available at: nas.org/blogs/article/modern_vs_western_thought_postmodern_subjectivism Consulted on 29 June 2023.

²⁴² *Ibid*, para. 3.

²⁴³ SZUBKA, T., *op. cit.*, p. 231.

²⁴⁴ FORGHANI, N., KESHTIARAY, N., and YOUSEFY, A., “A Critical Examination of Postmodernism Based on Religious and Moral Values Education”, in *International Education Studies*, vol. 8, no. 9, 2015, pp. 98-105, p. 101. Available at: [doi:10.5539/ies.v8n9p98](https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v8n9p98). Consulted on 3 July 2023.

3.11.2 A postmodern critique of Fichte's political philosophy

This subsection will point out the various political thoughts of Fichte and then discuss them critically using the various elements of postmodernism namely nihilism, absurdism, existentialism, subjectivism, and relativism. The first political thought that we will review is his philosophy of state and society.

3.11.2.1 Critiquing Fichtean philosophy of state and society from a postmodern viewpoint

Hitherto, no study has examined how Fichte conceptualised the state and society from a postmodern perspective. Therefore, although this critique will cite some secondary data such as those discussing the concepts of postmodernism and its various elements, it will heavily rely on primary data to present the argumentation.

In the actual discussion of how Fichte philosophised about the state and society, the outset highlighted the concept of *symbiosis*²⁴⁵ this is how he established the purpose of life. People are to live symbiotically in their pursuit of significance, meaning, and purpose in life. Therefore, he purely applied the principle of practical reason to arrive at this conclusion. However, nihilists would have rejected this argument if Fichte were alive in the contemporary world. They view life as purely meaningless and purposeless²⁴⁶. Consequently, it can be argued that they do not find symbiotic living as the “absolute” meaning and purpose of life. Similarly, in the same ideological continuum, absurdism proponents would have argued against they believe that life is meaningless, purposeless, and not of any significance, but human beings will continue seeking these elements²⁴⁷. The only slight point of correlation between Fichte's sym-philosophy and absurdism is that Fichte had a different view of the purpose of life from postmodern absurdism supporters. In other words, as much as absurdist scholars reject the existence of meaning and purpose in life, they went ahead and confirmed that the “actual” purpose of life is the continuous pursuit by people to find meaning, significance, and purpose in the same life. Finally, existentialists would argue that Fichte was right, but utilised a subjectivist point of view, which is also highly accommodated in postmodernism²⁴⁸. In this case, Fichte, as an autonomous person, [had] a right to establish his view of life because there is nothing that can be considered as “absolutely” wrong or right in a postmodern society.

²⁴⁵ SALE, P.F., *op. cit.*, p. 77.

²⁴⁶ WOODWARD, A., *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁴⁷ WOLKEN, D.J., *op. cit.*, p. 69.

²⁴⁸ RICHTER, D., *op. cit.*, p. 253.

Therefore, from a postmodern perspective, it can also be argued that Fichtean political philosophy that people have a right to revolt against an unjust government is also subject to interpretation from the three principles of postmodernism namely absurdism, nihilism and existentialism. Therefore, since existentialism fully conformed with how Fichte conceptualised about life towards his discussion on state and society, the right to revolt against an unjust government can be practical only from an existentialist point of view, partially practical from a postmodern absurdism point of view and completely impractical from a nihilistic point of view. Thus, up to this point, it is arguable that postmodern philosophers can only find the Fichtean political philosophy applicable in the contemporary world if only interpreted from an existentialist point of view. Nonetheless, in the previous sections, it was also noted that existentialism and postmodernism are rather different ideologies that can be unified to form a single political thought through a possibility that was revealed through research.

Moreover, during the prior discussion, because the foundation of Fichtean political philosophy of state and society is “life,” we examined also how Fichte conceives the idea of God. It was discovered that Fichte extended the morality and religious philosophy of Kant and the two had a similar conception of the idea of God. In this case, both argued that God is “absolutely” necessary²⁴⁹, which means they relied on the concept of absolutism and not relativism. Since postmodernism is relativist, then their conception of God cannot be applicable in nihilism and absurdism. In his *God is Dead*, Dr Ligon Duncan²⁵⁰, a nihilist, argued that God does not exist. This is an atheist claim that ignores the principles of teleology, which better aligns with the tenets of existentialism. Similarly, absurdism, although it acknowledges that people are in pursuit of meaning and significance in life but they will never find them, would have dismissed the Fichtean absolutist conception of God. Therefore, the best postmodern theory that can serve the purpose of interpreting life and the idea of God as Fichte ideologized is existentialism. This observation aligns with the previous discussion that only existentialists can translate the political philosophy of Fichte into real life. Indeed, although slightly different from the theory of postmodernism, existentialism

²⁴⁹ PETRESCU, A., *op. cit.*, p. 200.

²⁵⁰ DUNCAN, L., “God Is Dead - Nihilism”, in *Reformed Theological Seminary*, Last modified 2004, para. 30. Available at: rts.edu/resources/god-is-dead-nihilism. Consulted on 24 July 2023.

forms a nexus with the latter through relativism (existential relativism²⁵¹), which implies the possibility of application in real life.

Furthermore, Fichte's conception of God and the idea of life formed the basis for his argumentation on the theory of state and society. From the foundational concepts, it has been concluded that existentialism is the best way to interpret his political philosophy in the contemporary world. The role of future research is to fully dedicate a project on the relationship between Fichtean political philosophy and postmodern existentialism. Otherwise, the current study has not fully explored this issue as it is slightly outside its scope. The next paragraph extends this critique to his actual conceptualisation of a closed commercial state, while also drawing comparative examples from Kantianism.

First and foremost, it is worth noting that the Fichtean conceptualisation of a state as closed and commercial was based on their foundational beliefs of life and the idea of God. For instance, as also noted earlier, in his *The Closed Commercial State* (1800), Fichte argued that "... bound by reciprocal obligations in a way that allows them to enjoy a high total level of consumption – of life and pleasure – without sacrificing the rights of any individual to an equal..."²⁵² In this case, the most important words are "life and pleasure" meaning that Fichte supports the existentialist view of life, which best explains his Enlightenment philosophy in the postmodern world. Therefore, the concept of absolutism (rather than relativism) is used to theorise *The Closed Commercial State*.

Nonetheless, the main point of connection between this philosophising and postmodernism is that Fichte used a subjectivist point of view to make the above sentiments. Since absolutism and relativism are directly opposite philosophies²⁵³, it becomes extremely challenging to reconcile Fichtean conceptualisation of the state as closed and commercial. Also, the main relationship between Kant's cosmopolitanism and Fichtean closed commercial state is that both were formulated based on the principle of absolutism²⁵⁴ and subjectivism owing to their belief of God and the idea of life. Additionally, existentialism can be viewed from two angles namely relativist²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ SOSA, E., "Existential Relativity", in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1999, pp.132-143, p. 132. Available at: doi:10.1111/1475-4975.00007. Consulted on 24 July 2023.

²⁵² PODOKSIK, E., *op. cit.*, p. 197.

²⁵³ KELSEN, H., "Absolutism and Relativism in Philosophy and Politics", in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 42, no. 5, 1948, pp. 906-914, pp. 906-907. Available at: doi:10.2307/1950135. Consulted on 21 July 2023.

²⁵⁴ MOGGACH, D., "Contextualising Fichte: Leibniz, Kant, And Perfectionist Ethic", in *Mit Fichte Philosophieren*, 2018, pp. 133-153, p. 140. Available at: doi:10.1163/9789004363137_008. Consulted 12 July 2023.

²⁵⁵ HIRSCH, E., *Quantifier variance and realism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, p. 39.

and absolutist²⁵⁶ and when it has to be reconciled with the tenets of postmodernism, philosophers usually utilise the standpoint of relativism. Therefore, future research should focus on how to harmonise the Fichtean and Kantian conceptualisations of the state in the contemporary world towards the determination of how the Fichtean political philosophy could be interpreted in the contemporary world. For example, since relativism has overwhelming scholarly support in the postmodern era²⁵⁷, their absolutist views can be considered as less commonly applied today.

Fichte's political philosophy, which asserts the right to revolt against an underperforming government, is rooted in his theories like the closed commercial state and thus remains open to ongoing discussion. However, from a postmodern nihilist perspective, the argument that life is fundamentally meaningless and devoid of purpose could undermine the rationale for Fichte's justification of challenging political authority based on its failures. If existence lacks inherent meaning, the foundation for revolting against the state on the basis of its performance shortcomings becomes questionable²⁵⁸. Therefore, there is no need to revolt against a repressive government since it is *just* an invention. Similarly, absurdism would sceptically support the idea of revolting against an unjust government this is in support of their view that although life is meaningless and purposeless, people, through their social desires, they will continuously seek meaning, purpose, and significance in life²⁵⁹. Therefore, revolting against an unjust government is an expression of seeking meaning and purpose in life. Finally, existentialism, which is the most conforming theory, would have argued that since life should be pleasurable, the government lacks a legal right to repress any form of life in humanity. Hence, people can revolt against a government that discriminates some people based on their attributes such as race, ethnicity, origin and so on. Overall, existentialism is the most appropriate postmodern theory that supports the idea of revolting against the government. To reveal the exact dynamics involved as a way of translating the whole thing into practicality and reality, philosophers and scholars must find a way of converting the absolutist point of view by Fichte into a relativist one as accepted in the postmodern world.

²⁵⁶ ZOWISŁO, M., "The Existential Overcoming of Phenomenology in Hans Blumenberg's Philosophy of Life and Myth", in *Phenomenology and Existentialism in The Twentieth Century*, 2009, pp. 309-321, p. 309.

Available at: doi:10.1007/978-90-481-2725-2_20. Consulted on 26 June 2023.

²⁵⁷ SZUBKA, T., *op. cit.*, p. 231.

²⁵⁸ SLOCOMBE, W., *op. cit.*, p. 148.

²⁵⁹ WOLKEN, D.J., *op. cit.*, p. 69.

3.11.2.2 A postmodern critique of Fichte's concept of "Pure I"

In the previous discussion of the concept of the "Pure I", it was argued that Kant formed the foundation whereas Fichte extended its interpretation. As well, it is also imperative to begin with critiquing the Kantian "Pure I" to form a foundational critique of the whole concept. Particularly, in this understanding, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant made the following remarks in his conceptualisation of subjectivity and selfhood:

Thus, the original and necessary consciousness of the identity of oneself is at the same time a consciousness of an equally necessary unity of the synthesis of all appearances in accordance with concepts, i.e., in accordance with rules that not only make them necessarily reproducible, but also thereby determine an object for their intuition, i.e., the concept of something in which they are necessarily connected²⁶⁰.

When the above quote is examined from a postmodern angle, it enjoys close conformity to subjectivism and existentialism life is meaningful and purposeful²⁶¹ and that purpose can only be explained by "pure I". However, at the same time, this interpretation of subjectivism by Kant can be rejected by nihilists and absurdism proponents because it endorses the view that life is meaningful and purposeful when one develops necessary consciousness of the identity and unity of the synthesis of all appearances per concepts. In other words, the philosophy of epistemology, from a subjectivist viewpoint, forms the basis of a meaningful and purposeful life people continuously seek to know more and more as an approach to self-realisation and identity formation. Therefore, to accept the Kantian view of subjectivism and selfhood, one must have a foundational belief that life is meaningful and purposeful (existentialism²⁶²). Nonetheless, as also indicated earlier, what determines the applicability of this thought in the contemporary world is its absolutist-relativist inclination the above sentiments were made in the light of Kant's conceptualisation of God as "necessary" thus inclining towards absolutism rather than relativism that enjoys the popular support of postmodern scientists.

On the other hand, while extending the Kantian interpretation of subjectivism and selfhood, Fichte developed the concept of "Pure I". In his *Foundations of Wissenschaftslehre*, he made the following remarks:

²⁶⁰ KANT, I., GUYER, P., and WOOD, A. W., *The critique of pure reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, p.233.

²⁶¹ RICHTER, D., *op. cit.*, p. 253.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

I and my body are absolutely one, simply looked at in different ways. I, as “pure I” in its supreme purity and I as “body” are entirely the same. The distinction that appears to us is based entirely upon the difference between these ways of looking at [the same thing]. The I, considered as the purest form within me, is nothing but the [I] as grasped in the purest type of thinking²⁶³.

The main keyword from the above extract is “absolutely”. In this case, Fichte used an absolutist viewpoint to conceptualise “Pure I”. Therefore, it differs with the principle of postmodernism based on the fact that Fichte used absolutism to remark whereas postmodernism itself is conceptualised within the tenets of relativism²⁶⁴. At the same time, based on the nihilism-absurdism-existentialism continuum that was presented earlier, Fichtean conceptualism of “Pure I” better conforms with existentialism because, as an absolutist viewpoint, its foundation is “God as necessary”²⁶⁵. Additionally, it is worth noting that during his tenure at Jena University, he was accused of atheism and Jacobinism hence, he preferred to shift his thought from Pure I to absolutism to contain the situation that was reputationally worsening²⁶⁶. Therefore, the applicability of the concept of “Pure I” in the contemporary world could be challenging because relativism is majorly accepted when compared to absolutism. Similarly, nihilism and absurdism reject his conceptualisation of “Pure I” based on the fact that Fichte was an adamant supporter of the possibility of a meaningful and purposeful life thus, aligning more closely to postmodern existentialism than nihilism and absurdism. In this context, since existentialism can be viewed from both relativist and absurdist points of view, it forms the conceptual avenue for linking up the Enlightenment age and the contemporary world that is, if scientists and philosophers can transform absolute existentialism to relative existentialism, then it is possible to translate the conceptualisation of “Pure I” into postmodernism. In this way, it will be less challenging to also determine if it is legally right to revolt against a government that represses its citizenry. Hitherto, it is indeterminate because future research should focus on how absolute existentialism can be shifted to relative existentialism to fit the contemporary world without losing the philosophical value of Fichtean conceptualisation of “Pure I”.

²⁶³ FICHTE, J.G., *Foundations of transcendental philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) Nova Methodo (1796–99)*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2018, p. 458.

²⁶⁴ SZUBKA, T., *op. cit.*, p. 231.

²⁶⁵ PETRESCU, A., *op. cit.*, p. 200.

²⁶⁶ RIVERA DE ROSALES, J., “Fichte: Del Yo Puro Al Saber Absoluto (1798-1802)”, in *Contrastes. Revista Internacional De Filosofía*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2014, pp. 1-8, p. 1.

Available at: doi: 10.24310/contrastescontrastes.v19i3.1102. Consulted on 19 June 2023.

3.11.2.3 Solving the dispute between idealism and dogmatism from a Postmodern angle

Philosophical standpoints can conflict significantly to the degree that even solving them momentarily is an impossibility; time and cultural progress are the only parameters for determining which suppositions are correct or wrong²⁶⁷. This is particularly the case of idealism versus dogmatism. In the previous sections, it was observed that Kant was considered a dogmatist whereas Fichte an idealist; this formed their point of divergence despite that Fichte was an adamant follower of Kant. The main difference between their viewpoints is how they treat the issue of “subjectivity”²⁶⁸. Notably, there is a big difference between “subjectivity” and “subjectivism”. Therefore, it is imperative to begin by ensuring the two marry so that the dispute between idealism and dogmatism can be solved in a constructive way that would help in solving the dilemma on whether it is appropriate for citizens to revolt against a government that is repressive to them.

Subjectivism adopts moral minimalism yet it is tradition of modified personal values- subjectivity recognizes the power of unbiased reality, provided there is an existence of mutual relationship with the outer world²⁶⁹. Particularly, subjectivism is a major principle of postmodernism that is associated with a cult of “me” whereas subjectivity is an *absolute* concept associated with “I”²⁷⁰. Therefore, the two concepts differ in the meaning of “me” and “I”. Subjectivism, as a postmodern tenet, emphasizes the “rightness” of an individual, especially based on nihilism whereby it is believed that there is no prototype of a perfect human being (God) but rather everyone is correct in his or her way. On the other hand, subjectivity deals with “pure I”, which, from a humanistic angle, God is conceived as a spirit of a perfect prototype of a human being²⁷¹. From a Fichtean perspective (after he shifted from relativism to absolutism), “I” and “me” are “absolutely” one thing because one’s spirit is “absolutely” attached to his or her body and no other he said, “I and my body are absolutely one”²⁷²... However, from a postmodern perspective, whereby relativism enjoys an overwhelming majority²⁷³, there is no “absolute” truth or falsity: hence, in some cases, the “me” and “I” might be one thing, whereas in other cases, the “me” and

²⁶⁷ JAMES, D., *Fichte's republic: idealism, history and nationalism*, 1st ed, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²⁶⁸ BREAZEALE, D., “Idealism Vs. Dogmatism,” *op. cit.*, p. 301.

²⁶⁹ PERSSON, I., 'Introduction: Subjectivism and Objectivism', *The Retreat of Reason: A dilemma in the philosophy of life* Oxford Academic, 2006, p.110

²⁷⁰ FICHTE, J. G., *Foundations of transcendental philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) Nova Methodo*, 1796 p. 458.

²⁷¹ STEVENSON, M.R., *op. cit.*, p.20.

²⁷² FICHTE, J. G., *op. cit.*, p. 458.

²⁷³ SZUBKA, T., *op. cit.*, p. 231.

“I” might be different even if “physically” existential. Therefore, the only concept that can unite subjectivism and subjectivity, concerning idealism versus dogmatism, is existentialism as further elaborated below.

The particular philosophical difference between dogmatism and idealism is that dogmatists like Kant believed that the main determination of the “I” is the experience upon a thing itself whereas for idealists like Fichte, the “I” is the determinant of experiences upon a thing²⁷⁴. From a relativist-existentialist point of view, both Fichte and Kant can be interpreted as correct, although they relied on absolutism to make their conclusions. If their perspectives can be interpreted from an independent standpoint, Kant wanted to pass across to the world that his precedential philosophy was based on his experiences as an individual whereas Fichte differed by arguing that his precedential philosophy was based on his “own” conceptions of his experiences. Considering that it was extremely challenging to determine who was correct during the time they philosophised²⁷⁵, the postmodern standpoint as a representative of time and cultural progress parameters of truth versus falsity proves that Fichte was *more correct* than Kant: Fichtean conception of subjectivity and its practicality in solving political problems in Continental Europe proves to be more useful in the contemporary world. Nihilists and absurdism proponents can easily agree with Fichte than Kant. Therefore, in this case, idealism proves to be the most effective approach within the scope of postmodernism. Hence, when solving political problems in postmodernism, idealism should be consulted versus dogmatism. In the political dilemma on whether it is legally right to revolt against a repressive government can, therefore, be solved using idealism (as more acceptable than dogmatism). Consequently, from the Fichtean conception of the “I” as a subjectivity issue, if people *determine* that revolting against an unjust government could be the only way to solve existent socio-political problems, then they have a legal right to do so. At the same time, if the people *discover* that there are better alternatives to a revolution, then they also have a legal right to take that direction. This observation is also in alignment with other postmodern political philosophers as elaborated further below.

From the standpoint of the idea of freedom as encompassed in human rights, the ideological difference between Kant and Fichte can be solved by substituting their arguments with those of

²⁷⁴ BREAZEALE, D., “Idealism Vs. dogmatism”, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

²⁷⁵ JAMES, D., *Fichte's republic: idealism, history and nationalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

Karl Christian Friedrich Krause²⁷⁶ he was born in 1781 hence he played a significant role of expanding Kantism through Fichtean philosophies²⁷⁷. In this case, scholar Claus Dierksmeier²⁷⁸ argued that the three philosophers can be conjoined to form a hypothetical triangle that can provide a flexible framework for solving political problems in the postmodern angle. Therefore, although the previous paragraph provides that Fichtean standpoints, from a postmodern angle, were superior to those of Kant, the latter sounds radical. Hence, from a human rights perspective epi-centred at the idea of freedom, a flexible framework is recommended in the postmodern world to accommodate the divergent views of people (such as nihilism, absurdism, and existentialism). This supports the idea of relativism-existentialism which has a significant correlation with the principles of postmodernism like relativism, subjectivism, nihilism and absurdism. Overall, in support of a supple approach, it can be argued that, in the postmodern world, Fichtean philosophical stipulation that it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government can be considered “relatively” right instead of “absolutely” right. In addition to the presupposed marriage between subjectivism and subjectivity, it is arguable that postmodern people tend to apply theories carefully into the real-world perspective as evidenced by the connection between the idea of scepticism and other principles of postmodernism. Therefore, from the same viewpoint, it is imperative to determine how the primacy of practical reason improves the understanding of the legality of the citizenry revolting against an unjust government.

3.11.2.4 Solving the problematic primacy of reason from a postmodern perspective

The main point of incongruence between how Kant conceived practical reason and postmodernism is absolutism versus relativism. As philosophers of the Enlightenment era, Kant and Fichte philosophised in the light of the law of morality, which had absolutism as its main principle²⁷⁹. On the other hand, postmodernism is widely associated with relativism than absolutism²⁸⁰ this results in a conflict between the Enlightenment era and postmodernism. For

²⁷⁶ DIERKSMEIER, C., “Metaphysics of Freedom”, in *Qualitative Freedom-Autonomy in Cosmopolitan Responsibility*, 2019, pp. 45-157, p. 45. Available at: doi:10.1007/978-3-030-04723-8_2. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

²⁷⁷ WOLLGAST, S., “Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832)-Anmerkungen Zu Leben Und Werk”, in *Deutsche Zeitschrift Für Philosophie*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1989, pp.1-9, p.1. Available at: doi:10.1524/dzph.1989.37.3.193. Consulted on 23 July 2023.

²⁷⁸ DIERKSMEIER, C., “Metaphysics of Freedom”, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

²⁷⁹ JACKSON, F., and SMITH, M., “Absolutist Moral Theories and Uncertainty”, in *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 103, no. 6, 2006, pp. 267-283, p. 267. Available at: doi:10.5840/jphil2006103614. Consulted on 19 July 2023.

²⁸⁰ SZUBKA, T., *op. cit.*, p. 231.

instance, Kant believed that individuals should access happiness that is proportional to their morality levels: however, in the scope of postmodernism, there is nothing considered “absolutely” moral hence people can enjoy happiness proportional to their “own” perception of rightness and wrongness each person has a *legitimate* right to exercise their happiness (subjectivism²⁸¹). This intense conflict between the two standpoints can seemingly be worsened by some types of postmodern theories like nihilism and absurdism. For instance, from a nihilistic point of view, scholars argue that every individual they possess their “own” framework of determining right from wrong²⁸². On the contrary, from a postmodern existentialist point of view, people have a right to exist, but from a relativist standpoint, they can exercise their “humanity” based on a widely accepted framework. UDHR is a classic example of a widely accepted framework, which is, at the same time, subject to correction and amendment since it is only “relatively” true but not “absolutely” true. Therefore, a postmodern critique of the problematic primacy of practical reason supports a relativist viewpoint when applying practical reason, politicians and philosophers should consider various alternatives that act as relatively true and accept the one that best fits specific contexts. Since these contexts are also subject to social and cultural progress²⁸³, the basis of practical reason will also shift.

Consequently, since various countries differ contextually, the ideology that revolting against an unjust government also differs in practicality. In some countries, it can be right whereas in others it can be wrong thence, the people should rightfully determine whether or not to overturn a government that they thought would help in fulfilling their desires of progress and continuous pursuance of a meaningful, purposeful, and significant life but has “failed” them. Philosophically, it would be “relatively” wrong to undertake a radical standpoint as Fichte did as it can result in views of “others” being left out. Therefore, to accommodate the views of everyone, a relativist standpoint, coupled with existentialism, would help in solving the dilemma surrounding the *legality* or *legitimacy* of revolting against an unjust government. To reveal the practicality of this argument, the next chapter will provide a detailed case study of a revolution that took place in the 1970s (during postmodernism).

²⁸¹ KRELLENSTEIN, M., “Moral Nihilism and Its Implications”, in *Journal of Mind & Behavior*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2017, pp.75- 90, p. 76. Available at: [jstor.org/stable/44631529](https://www.jstor.org/stable/44631529). Consulted on: 19 June 2023.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ JAMES, D. *Fichte's republic: idealism, history and nationalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

3.11.2.5 A postmodern critique of humanity and the primacy of practical reason

In the previous subsection, it was highlighted that the law of morality is the nexus between humanity and the primacy of practical reason²⁸⁴. Both Kant and Fichte drew from the law of morality to form their basis of humanity argumentation. Contrary to postmodernism, they relied on the concept of absolutism; which forms the main basis of the conflict between their philosophy and the theory of postmodernism. However, if the critics' claim that Fichte and Kant relied on subjectivism to philosophise²⁸⁵ is true, then that forms the main point of connection between postmodernism and their philosophical approach to humanity. In the contemporary world, the idea of subjectivism is more welcome than objectivism. According to scholar Alexandros Lagopoulos²⁸⁶, the postmodern world is characterised by less materialism and more cultural orientation. Subjectivism studies the world of social subjects such as the meaning spatial objects have for them or the ideas connected to them²⁸⁷. Therefore, through the fact that Kant and Fichte were subjectivist in their interpretations and postmodernism is also inclined more towards subjectivism than objectivism, then Fichtean political conceptualisations are still applicable in the contemporary world – however, the line of correlation, which is subjectivism, should be applied cautiously.

Nevertheless, due to the intense conflict between absolutism and relativism in the contemporary world, seemingly the effect of subjectivism on the practicality of the philosophy of humanity in postmodernity is minimal. To improve its practical effectiveness, existentialism can serve as a bridge because it can take both the form of relativism and absolutism²⁸⁸. Therefore, the law of morality can perfectly work in this era of postmodernism if amalgamated with the concept of relativism-existentialism.

Additionally, apart from the principle of morality, it was also argued in the previous section that humanity is also based on the ideas of knowledge and religion. It was particularly noted that knowledge and religion are the key pillars of morality. However, due to the deconstructive nature of postmodernism, this conceptualization can be considered obsolete there is no “absolutely” precise concept. Therefore, even the concept that morality can be separated from religion and

²⁸⁴ JAMES, D., *Fichte's republic: idealism, history and nationalism*, op. cit., p. 85.

²⁸⁵ FRANKENBERG, G., op. cit., p. 35.

²⁸⁶ LAGOPOULOS, A.P., “Subjectivism, Postmodernism and Social Space”, in *Journal Semiotica*, vol. 2011, no. 183, 2011, pp. 129-182, p. 129. Available at: doi:10.1515/semi.2011.008. Consulted on 16 July 2023.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ SZUBKA, T., op. cit., p. 231.

remain desirable is “relatively” true from a postmodern angle. Absurdism proponents and nihilists would have rejected the theorization that morality and religion are deeply interdependent but religion is “not” this is because there is no “absolute” truth that morality not based on religion is false or wrong.

3.11.2.6 A postmodern critique of Fichte’s republic of scholars

In the previous section, it was noted that Fichte’s republic of scholars are individuals who have broken loose from the state’s authority on individual conduct, which is what they refer as “absolute” freedom and independence²⁸⁹. From a postmodern angle, Fichte’s conceptualisation of “absolute” freedom and independence from the perspective of the republic of scholars can face high levels of rejection in the contemporary world since the majority are inclined towards the relativist extreme rather than the absolutist end²⁹⁰. Nonetheless, the main point of correlation between Fichtean conceptualisation of the republic of scholars and contemporariness is that in both eras, the intellectual class exist[ed] in society and that they are [were] the main suppliers of intellect to law and policy formulation in any given country. Since Fichte supported their existence by arguing that they have a legitimate human right to share their convictions²⁹¹ and they exist in contemporariness, then a nexus between them exists that demarcates their co-existence in more than one era. In this case, existentialism plays a major role in their relationship absolutism-existentialism represents Fichtean theorisation whereas relativism-existentialism represents postmodernism. Since existentialism can take both a relativist and an absolutist form, then the concept of existentialism is the connecting factor between the Fichtean perspective and the postmodernism perspective. Nevertheless, future research should focus on how to transition an absolutist-existentialist viewpoint to a relativist-existentialist angle, which fits best with the tenets of postmodernism. Although critics would argue that the claim of this thesis is rigid because it only tries to bond Fichtean philosophy with postmodernism, the main problem it tries to solve offers that possibility of argumentation this thesis aims to determine ways through Fichtean political philosophy would help in solving political problems in the contemporary world. Therefore, to exist the theoretical arena to the practical one, the next section will discuss how the

²⁸⁹ JAMES, D., *Fichte's republic: idealism, history and nationalism*, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁹⁰ SZUBKA, T., op. cit., p. 231.

²⁹¹ JAMES, D., *Fichte's republic: idealism, history and nationalism*, op. cit., p. 34.

Fichtean defence of the French Revolution aligns with postmodernism and how it would help in determining the legality of revolting against a government that represses its citizenry.

3.11.2.7 A critique of Fichtean defence of the French Revolution

In his defence of the French Revolution, Fichte argued as follows: “But then what determines how much can be granted to each individual for himself? Evidently the common will”²⁹²...From this quote, Fichte gave an “absolute answer” this can rarely survive in relativism. Therefore, in his defence of the French Revolution, Fichte used the principle of absolutism based on his philosophical extension of Kant’s law of morality. However, in contemporariness, as severally stated before, relativism has overwhelming majority support²⁹³ therefore, an absolutist argument will probably face huge rejection. At the same time, in the contemporary world, the concept of common will is the foundational basis of human rights frameworks such as UDHR²⁹⁴ this implies that a good number of Fichtean political principles are still applicable today. When examined closely, existentialism plays a major role in their connection the concept pre-existed in the minds of Fichte and Kant but they never demonstrated it explicitly in any of their concepts. This claim is supported by the fact that the two philosophers believed in the existence of a supreme being who serves as the best prototype of a human being. Therefore, existentialism, especially from a relativist standpoint, forms the best approach that can be used to determine if it is legally right to revolt against an unjust government by drawing evidence from the Fichtean political philosophy.

Moreover, another philosophical-political thought that Fichte used in his defence of the French Revolution is that there is a need to “think” and “act” at the same time. According to Fichte²⁹⁵, he later slightly diverged from Kantism because it was largely involved in thinking than acting. Fichte wanted to see the political thoughts expressed by Kant put into action. From a postmodern perspective, Fichte can be considered either an absurdist or existentialist. As an absurdist, Fichte believes that taking political action will fasten man’s pursuit for meaning and significance in life, even if that meaning and significance are fundamentally non-existent. As an existentialist, political action will lead to the *discovery* of meaning, purpose, and significance in life. However, it is indeterminate whether Fichte was fully aligned to absurdism or existentialism.

²⁹² FICHTE, J.G., NEUHOUSER, F., BAUR, M., *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁹³ SZUBKA, T., *op. cit.*, p. 231.

²⁹⁴ BAYEFSKY, A.F., *op. cit.*, p. 283.

²⁹⁵ PODOKSIK, E., *op. cit.*, p. 197.

On the other hand, Fichte argues that Kant believed in “thinking” alone without the necessity for political “action” he was among the Germany philosophers that refuted the French Revolution by arguing that it was not a “real” revolution as it was unlawful and involved violence. Arguably, for Kant, an oppressed citizenry lacks a legal right to revolt against a government that is unjust. Scholar Sydney Axinn²⁹⁶ examined the standpoint of Kant on the French Revolution whereby he discovered that he was pessimistic towards an individual but optimistic towards the common will this was his main point of convergence with Fichte. Nonetheless, Kant went ahead and argued that it is unlawful to revolt against an incumbent regime because it is instituted to maintain public peace and order. In other words, the presence of a government is *necessary* and therefore no group or individual can rebel against it. Their divergence emerged when Fichte questioned his assertion of *necessity*. Particularly, Fichte agreed that the government is necessary, but what if it is not fulfilling the functions it is mandated to do? In this way, Fichte thought that Kant was avoiding action. Even so, Kant went ahead and defended his position by arguing that the French Revolution was not a real revolution because there are instances where secret meetings were held. Legitimate meetings are those that can stand publicity. Therefore, holding secret meetings to overthrow a government amounts to a moral crisis and the involved person or group need to be put to death. Therefore, unlike the interpretation of Fichte that Kant was stuck at “thinking” only, it is arguable that Kant also supported the idea of a revolution but he emphasised on the need for legitimacy whereby arrangements to topple a government should stand publicity. This claim is supported by his stand that if a revolution takes place successfully, the King and the nobility do not have a right to engage in efforts to overthrow the newly instituted government. Thus, is it legal to revolt an unjust government in postmodernity? From both the Kantian and Fichtean perspectives, it is legally right to overthrow an unjust government. However, this legality only emerges when legitimacy is considered. If people collectively agree to revolt through means that stand publicity, then it is legally right for them to do so. However, the practicality of the Kantian perspective is what Fichte mostly questioned. Hence, it is imperative to accommodate the aspects of postmodernism to resolve the contentious dispute between the two.

²⁹⁶ AXINN, S., “Kant, Authority, And the French Revolution”, in *Journal of The History of Ideas*, vol. 32, no. 3, 1971, pp. 423-432, p. 423. Available at: doi:10.2307/2708356. Consulted on 29 July 2023.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter was dedicated to exploring the Fichtean political philosophy. We critically examined the numerous aspects and documents that have been associated with his philosophy. At the outset, the conditions under which Fichte philosophised were examined. We discovered that he philosophised during the Enlightenment era. This chapter also examined how Fichte conceptualised the idea of state and society. We applied a comparative approach to explore the topic: Fichte advocated for a commercialised closed state whereas Kant dogmatised cosmopolitanism. Particularly, it was discovered that both philosophers drew from the law of morality but diverged in their interpretations towards solving political problems during the present-day Prussia, a neighbour of Germany. Another prominent concept that was discussed in this chapter is the Fichtean perspective of “Pure I”. In this discussion, three postmodern theories namely nihilism, absurdism, and existentialism were implicated. It was discovered that one’s interpretation of the “Pure I” is solely dependent on his or her inclination towards the three concepts outlined above. Finally, in their view of the primacy of practical reason, it can be argued that both Kant and Fichte supported the possibility of a revolution, but under certain circumstances. Therefore, revolutions can be hurtful if they occur regularly. This was supported by Kant’s argument that when something is both valuable and carries primary interest is when it shall be considered as legitimate. Illegitimacy arises when secondary interest replaces primary interest. Therefore, a revolution shall occur only under democratic conditions whereby the majority’s interest is served as a primary interest. The next chapter will discuss the various case studies and apply the Fichtean perspective to solve the paradox surrounding the legality to revolt against a government that is unjust to its citizen.