

FICHTE

Early Philosophical Writings

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Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation

VI,291

Preface

These lectures were delivered this past summer semester before a considerable number of our students. They provide entry into a whole which the author wishes to complete and to lay before the public at the proper time. External circumstances, which can contribute nothing to the correct evaluation or understanding of these pages, have induced me to have these first five lectures printed separately and, moreover, to have them printed exactly in the form in which they were first delivered, without altering one single word. This may excuse several careless expressions. Owing to my other work, I was from the beginning unable to polish them in the way I would have liked. Declamation can be used to assist an oral delivery, but revising them for publication would have conflicted with my secondary aim in publishing them.¹

Several expressions found in these lectures will not please every reader, but for this the author should not be blamed. In pursuing my inquiries I did not ask whether something would meet with approval or not, but rather, whether it might be true; and what, according to the best of my knowledge, I considered to be true I expressed as well as I could.

VI,292 In addition, however, to those readers who have their own reasons to be displeased by what is said here, there may be others for whom what is said here will seem to be useless, because it is something which cannot be achieved and which fails to correspond to anything in the real world as it now exists. Indeed, I am afraid that the majority of otherwise upright, respectable, and sober persons will judge these lectures in this way. For

¹If he had revised the texts in any way, Fichte feared he might be accused of having removed the allegedly "revolutionary" remarks the lectures were rumored to contain.

although the number of persons capable of lifting themselves to the level of ideas has always been a minority in every age, this number (for reasons which I can certainly leave unmentioned) has never been smaller than it is right now. It may be true that, within that area to which ordinary experience assigns us, people have never thought for themselves more widely or judged more correctly than they do now; however, just as soon as they are supposed to go any distance beyond this familiar area, most persons are completely lost and blind. If it is not possible to rekindle the higher genius in such persons once it has been extinguished, then we must permit them to remain peacefully within the circle of ordinary experience. And insofar as they are useful and indispensable within this circle, we must grant them their undiminished value in and for this area. They are, however, guilty of a great injustice if they try to pull down to their own level everything which they cannot themselves reach: if, for example, they demand that everything which is published should be as easy to use as a cookbook or an arithmetic book or a book of rules and regulations, and if they decry everything which cannot be employed in such a manner.

That ideals cannot be depicted within the real world is something that we others know just as well as such persons do—perhaps we know this better than they. All we maintain is that reality must be judged in accordance with ideals and must be modified by those who feel themselves able to do so. Supposing that such persons cannot be convinced that this is true, still, since they are what they are, they lose very little by not being convinced, and mankind loses nothing. It merely becomes clear from this that they cannot be counted on to contribute anything to the project of improving mankind. Mankind will undoubtedly continue on its way. May a kindly nature reign over such persons, may it bestow upon them rain and sunshine at the proper time, wholesome food and undisturbed circulation, and in addition—intelligent thoughts!

Jena, Michaelmas 1794

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First Lecture Concerning the Vocation of Man as Such

You are already somewhat acquainted with the purpose of the series of lectures which I am beginning today. I would like to answer—or rather, I would like to prompt you to answer—the following questions: What is the scholar's vocation?² What is his relationship to mankind as a

²For a discussion of the translation of *Gelehrter* as "scholar" and of *Bestimmung* as "vocation," see the editor's preface, above.

whole, as well as to the individual classes of men? What are his surest means of fulfilling his lofty vocation?

The scholar is a scholar only insofar as he is distinguished from other men who are not scholars. The concept of the scholar arises by comparison and by reference to society (by which is understood here not merely the state, but any aggregate whatsoever of rational men, living alongside each other and thus joined in mutual relations).

It follows that the scholar's vocation is conceivable only within society. The answer to the question What is the scholar's vocation? thus presupposes an answer to another question: What is the vocation of man within society?

The answer to this latter question presupposes, in turn, an answer to yet another, higher one: What is the vocation of man as such? That is to say, what is the vocation of man considered simply qua man, merely according to the concept of man as such—man isolated and considered apart from all the associations which are not necessarily included in the concept of man?*

If I may assert something without proof, something which has undoubtedly already been demonstrated to many of you for a long time and something which others among you feel obscurely, but no less strongly on that account: All philosophy, all human thinking and teaching, all of your studies, and, in particular, everything which I will ever be able to present to you can have no purpose other than answering the questions just raised, and especially the last and highest question: What is the vocation of man as such, and what are his surest means for fulfilling it?

*[Note to the Danish edition.]³ One should be careful not to extend this proposition too far. The concept of man *in general*, disregarding the empirical conditions of his *actual existence*, certainly does not contain the property of being associated with other men. When we are talking about the vocation of man as such we undeniably must disregard these empirical conditions. But a *real* person, a person taken along with all of his specific characteristics, can only be conceived of as an individual, which is to say that he can only be conscious of himself as an individual. But the concept of an individual is an entirely reciprocal concept:⁴ "I am such and such," which is to say, "I am *not* some particular other thing," and the former means no more than the latter. Furthermore, real men are possible only insofar as they are associated with others like themselves. No man exists in isolation. The concept of an individual postulates the concept of his species. In my book *Foundations of Natural Right* (Jena, 1796), I have deduced this conclusion from transcendental principles.⁵

³A Danish translation of these lectures was published in 1796 and included several new "remarks" which the translator had solicited from Fichte. The translation is based on Hans Schulz's German translation of the "remarks" to the Danish edition.

⁴"Wechselbegriff." In the *Grundlage des Naturrechts* Fichte explains that a "reciprocal concept" "is one which can only be thought of in connection with another thought; it is a concept which is thereby conditioned in respect to its form by another thought, and indeed by the *very same* thought" (SW, III: 47; AA I, 3: 354).

⁵*Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre.*

For a clear, distinct, and complete insight into this vocation (though not, of course, for a feeling of it), philosophy in its entirety—and moreover a well-grounded and exhaustive philosophy—is presupposed. Yet the vocation of man as such is the subject of my lecture for today. You can see that, unless I intend to treat philosophy in its entirety within this hour, I will be unable to deduce what I have to say on this topic completely and from its foundations. What I can do is to build upon your feelings. At the same time you can see that the *last* task of all philosophical inquiry is to answer that question which I wish to answer in these public lectures: What is the vocation of the scholar? or (which amounts to the same thing, as will become evident later), What is the vocation of the highest and truest man? And you can see as well that the *first* task of all philosophical inquiry is to answer the question What is the vocation of man as such? I intend to establish the answer to this latter question in my private lectures.⁶ All I wish to do today is to indicate briefly the answer to this question—to which I now turn.

VI,295 The question concerning what the genuinely spiritual element in man, the pure I, might be like, considered simply in itself, isolated and apart from any relation to anything outside of itself, is an unanswerable question, and taken precisely it includes a self-contradiction. It is certainly not true that the pure I is a product of the not-I (which is my name for everything which is thought to exist outside of the I, everything which is distinguished from the I and opposed to it). The assertion that the pure I is a product of the not-I expresses a transcendental materialism which is completely contrary to reason. However, it certainly is true (and, at the appropriate place, will be strictly demonstrated) that the I is never conscious of itself nor able to become conscious of itself, except as something empirically determined—which necessarily presupposes something outside of the I. Even a person's body (which he calls "his" body) is something apart from the I. Yet apart from this connection with a body he would not be a person at all, but would be something quite inconceivable (if one can still refer to a thing which is not even conceivable as "something"). Thus neither here nor anywhere else does the expression "man considered in himself and in isolation" mean man considered as a pure I and apart from all relationship to anything at all apart from his pure I. Instead, this expression means merely man conceived of apart from all relationship to rational beings like himself.

What is man's vocation when he is conceived of in this manner? What is there in the concept of man which pertains to him but not to the nonhumans among those beings with which we are acquainted? What

⁶I.e., the lectures subsequently published as *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*.

distinguishes man from all those beings with which we are acquainted but which we do not designate as human?

I must begin with something positive, and since I cannot here begin with what is absolutely positive, that is, with the proposition "I am," I will have to propose a hypothetical proposition, one which is indelibly etched in human feeling—a proposition which is at the same time the result of all philosophy, a proposition which can be strictly demonstrated and which will be demonstrated in my private lectures. The proposition in question is the following: Just as certainly as man is rational, he is his own end, that is, he does not exist because something else should exist. Rather, he exists simply because *he* should exist. His mere existence is the ultimate purpose of his existence, or (which amounts to the same thing) it is contradictory to inquire concerning the purpose of man's existence: he is *because* he is. This quality of absolute being, of being for his own sake, is the characteristic feature, the determination or vocation of man, insofar as he is considered merely and solely as a rational being.

But absolute being, being purely and simply, is not all that pertains to man. Various particular determinations of this absolute being also pertain to him. It is not simply that *he is; he also is something*. He does not say merely "I am"; he adds, "I am this or that." He is a rational being insofar as he exists at all. But what is he insofar as he is something or other? This is the question we have to answer now.

To begin with, it is not because *one* exists that one is *what* one is; rather, one is what one is because *something else exists in addition to oneself*. As we have already said above and will demonstrate in the proper place, empirical self-consciousness, that is, the consciousness of any specific determination or vocation within ourselves at all, is impossible apart from the presupposition of a not-I. This not-I must affect man's passive faculty, which we call "sensibility."⁷ Thus, to the extent that man is something [definite] he is a sensuous being.⁸ But according to what we have already said, man is a rational being at the same time, and his reason should not be canceled by his sensibility. Reason and sensibility are supposed to coexist alongside each other. In this context the proposition "man is because he is" is transformed into the following: *man ought to be what he is simply because he is*. In other words, all that a person is ought to be related to his pure I, his mere being as an I. He ought to be all that he is simply because he is an I, and what he cannot be because he is an I, he ought not to be at all. This formula, which remains obscure, will become clear at once.

The pure I can be represented only negatively, as the opposite of the not-I. The characteristic feature of the latter is multiplicity, and thus the

⁷"Sinnlichkeit."

⁸"sinnliches Wesen."

characteristic feature of the former is complete and absolute unity. The pure I is always one and the same and is never anything different. Thus we may express the above formula as follows: Man is always supposed to be at one with himself; he should never contradict himself. Now the
 VI,297 pure I cannot contradict itself, since it contains no diversity but is instead always one and the same. However, the empirical I, which is determined and determinable by external things, can contradict itself. And if the empirical I contradicts itself, this is a sure sign that it is not determined in accordance with the form of the pure I, and thus that it is not determined by itself but rather by external things. But this should not be, since man is his own end. A person ought to determine himself and not permit himself to be determined by something foreign. He ought to be what he is because this is what he wills to be and what he ought to will to be. The empirical I ought to be determined in a manner in which it could be eternally determined. Therefore, I would express the principle of morality in the formula (which I mention only in passing and for the purpose of illustration): "Act so that you could consider the maxims of your willing to be eternal laws for yourself."

The ultimate characteristic feature of all rational beings is, accordingly, absolute unity, constant self-identity, complete agreement with oneself. This absolute identity is the form of the pure I and is its only true form; or rather, in the conceivability of identity we *recognize* the expression of the pure form of the I. Any determination which can be conceived to endure forever is in accordance with the pure form of the I. This should not be understood only halfway and one-sidedly. It is not simply that the will ought always to be one with itself (though this is all that moral theory is concerned with), but rather that all of man's powers, which in themselves constitute but one power and are distinguished from each other merely in their application to different objects, should coincide in a complete identity and should harmonize with each other.

At least for the most part, however, the empirical determinations of our I do not depend upon us, but upon something external to us. The will is of course free within its own domain, that is, in the realm of objects to which, once man has become acquainted with them, it can be related. This will be demonstrated at the proper time. But feeling, as well as
 VI,298 representation (which presupposes feeling), is not something free, but depends instead upon things external to the I—things whose characteristic feature is not identity at all, but rather multiplicity. If the I nevertheless ought always to be at one with itself in this respect too, then it must strive to act directly upon those very things upon which human feeling and representation depend. Man must try to modify these things. He must attempt to bring them into harmony with the pure form of the I, in order that the representation of these things, to the extent that this depends upon the properties of the things, may harmonize with

the form of the pure I. But it is not possible purely by means of the will alone to modify things in accordance with our necessary concepts of how they should be. A certain skill is also needed, a skill acquired and sharpened by practice.

Furthermore, and even more important, the unhindered influence of things upon the empirically determinable I, an influence to which we naturally entrust ourselves so long as our reason has not yet been awakened, gives a particular bent to our empirically determinable I. And since this bent is derived from things outside of us, it is impossible for it to be in harmony with the form of our pure I. Mere will is not sufficient for removing these distortions and restoring the original pure shape of our I; we require, in addition, that skill which we acquire and sharpen through practice.

The skill in question is in part the skill to suppress and eradicate those erroneous inclinations which originate in us prior to the awakening of our reason and the sense of our own spontaneity, and in part it is the skill to modify and alter external things in accordance with our concepts. The acquisition of this skill is called "culture,"⁹ as is the particular degree of this skill which is acquired. Culture differs only in degree, but is susceptible of infinitely many gradations. Insofar as man is considered as a rational, sensuous creature, then culture is the ultimate and highest means to his final goal: complete harmony with himself. Insofar as man is considered merely as a sensuous creature, then culture is itself his ultimate goal. Sensibility ought to be cultivated: that is the highest and ultimate thing which one can propose to do with it.

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The net result of all that has been said is the following: Man's ultimate and supreme goal is complete harmony with himself and—so that he can be in harmony with himself—the harmony of all external things with his own necessary, practical concepts of them (i.e., with those concepts which determine how things ought to be). Employing the terminology of the Critical Philosophy, this agreement is what Kant calls "the highest good."¹⁰ From what has already been said it follows that this "highest

⁹"Kultur." In Fichte's usage this term denotes the process of acquiring education or becoming cultivated. In many contexts it would be accurately rendered as "civilization."

¹⁰[Note to the Danish edition.] Expressed more clearly, it does not follow that something is a good thing for us simply because it makes us happy. Quite the reverse, something makes us happy because it was a good thing prior to us and our feeling of happiness. The chief mistake of the eudaemonic system and the most important reason why one cannot get the defenders of eudaemonism to accept the opposite view is that they completely reverse the relationship between the faculties of desire and knowledge. Since eudaemonists are generally transcendent dogmatists who think that everything which appears in the I is determined by things outside the I, they have to begin [their account of] the entire efficacy of rational beings with the impression that an [external] thing makes upon us and with our awareness of this. Whether they clearly say so or whether it remains concealed at the basis of their argument, they think that the faculty of knowledge gives us, above all, an object, and that part of the concept of this object is that it will provide a certain sort of pleasure.

good” by no means consists of two parts, but is completely unitary: the highest good is the *complete harmony of a rational being with himself*. In the case of a rational being dependent upon things outside of himself, the highest good may be conceived as twofold: as harmony between the *willing* [of such a being] and the idea of an eternally valid willing (i.e., as *ethical goodness*), or as the harmony of our willing (it should go without saying that I am here speaking of our rational willing) with *external things* (i.e., as *happiness*). And thus we may note in passing that it is not true that the desire for happiness destines man for ethical goodness. It is rather the case that the concept of happiness itself and the desire for happiness first arise from man’s moral nature. Not *what makes us happy is good*, but rather, *only what is good makes us happy*. No happiness is possible apart from morality. Of course, feelings of *pleasure* are possible without morality and even in opposition to it, and in the proper place we will see why

(They would escape from their error at once if they would only ask themselves how such knowledge [i.e., knowledge that a particular object will provide a particular pleasure] is possible.) They contend that an impulse toward an object arises only as a result of this theoretical understanding. They conclude that something is good because we have been convinced that it will make us happy.

This, however, is not the way it works, but just the reverse. What is first and foremost in man is impulse or drive.¹¹ And impulse demands its object in advance of any kind of knowledge and in advance of the object’s existence. It simply demands something, even if what it demands does not exist at all. What can and will make us happy is determined in advance by our drives. We are happy over something we receive because it was a good thing for us before we received it. This is how all human drives, physical as well as moral, operate. I do not enjoy food and drink because I have found them to taste good on a few occasions—why should they have tasted good to me? But rather, I desire to nourish myself in a particular manner, irrespective of food and drink, and this is why they taste good to me. Similarly I can be satisfied with myself if I have told the truth, but I do not tell the truth because it provides me with this pleasure. The reverse is the case: truth is the only thing that provides this sort of satisfaction, because the moral drive demands truth in advance of any experience.

¹⁰In his introductory remarks to chapter 2 of “The Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason” Kant defines “the highest good” as the combination of virtue and happiness: “That virtue (as the worthiness to be happy) is the supreme condition of whatever appears to us to be desirable and thus of all our pursuit of happiness and, consequently, that it is the supreme good have been proved in the Analytic. But these truths do not imply that virtue is the entire and perfect good as the object of the faculty of desire of rational beings. For this, happiness is also required, and indeed not merely in the partial eyes of a person who makes himself his end but even in the judgment of an impartial reason, which impartially regards persons in the world as ends-in-themselves. For to be in need of happiness and also worthy of it and yet not to partake of it could not be in accordance with the complete volition of an omnipotent rational being, if we assume such only for the sake of the argument. Inasmuch as virtue and happiness together constitute the possession of the highest good for one person, and happiness in exact proportion to morality (as the worth of a person and his worthiness to be happy) constitutes that of a possible world, the highest good means the whole, the perfect good, wherein virtue is always the supreme good, being the condition having no condition superior to it, while happiness, though something always pleasant to him who possesses it, is not of itself absolutely good in every respect but always presupposes conduct in accordance with the moral law as its condition.” *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), pp. 114–15.

¹¹“Trieb ist das erste und höchste im Menschen.”

this is so. But pleasurable feelings are not happiness; indeed, they often even contradict happiness.

VI,300 Man's final end is to subordinate to himself all that is irrational, to master it freely and according to his own laws. This is a final end which is completely inachievable and must always remain so—so long, that is, as man is to remain man and is not supposed to become God. It is part of the concept of man that his ultimate goal be unobtainable and that his path thereto be infinitely long. Thus it is not man's vocation to reach this goal. But he can and he should draw nearer to it, and his true vocation *qua man*, that is, insofar as he is a rational but finite, a sensuous but free being, lies in *endless approximation toward this goal*. Now if, as we surely can, we call this total harmony with oneself "perfection," in the highest sense of the word, then *perfection* is man's highest and unattainable goal. His vocation, however, is to *perfect himself without end*. He exists in order to become constantly better in an ethical sense, in order to make all that surrounds him better *sensuously* and—insofar as we consider him in relation to society—*ethically* as well, and thereby to make himself ever happier.

VI,301 Such is man's vocation insofar as we consider him in isolation, that is, apart from any relation to rational beings like himself. We do not, however, exist in isolation; though I cannot turn today to a consideration of the general connection between rational beings, I must, nevertheless, cast a glance upon that particular association with you which I enter upon today. What I would like to help many aspiring young men to grasp clearly is that lofty vocation which I have indicated briefly to you today. It is this vocation which I would like for you to make the most deliberate aim and the most constant guide of your lives—you young men who are in turn destined to affect mankind in the strongest manner, and whose destiny it is, through teaching, action, or both—in narrower or wider circles—to pass on that education which you have received and on every side to raise our fellowmen to a higher level of culture. When I teach something to you, I am most probably teaching unborn millions. Some among you may be well enough disposed toward me to imagine that I sense the dignity of my own special vocation, that the highest aim of my reflections and my teaching will be to contribute toward advancing culture and elevating humanity in you and in all those with whom you come into contact, and that I consider all philosophy and science which do not aim at this goal to be worthless. If this is how you judge me, then allow me to say that you are right about my intentions. Whether or not I have the power to live up to this wish is not entirely up to me. It depends in part on circumstances beyond our control; it depends in part upon you as well—upon your attentiveness, which I hereby request; upon your own efforts, which I cheerfully count upon with

complete confidence; and upon your confidence in me, to which I commend myself and will seek by my actions to commend to you.

Second Lecture Concerning Man's Vocation within Society

Before it can become a science and a *Wissenschaftslehre*, philosophy must answer a number of questions, questions the dogmatists, who have made up their minds about everything, have forgotten to ask, and which the skeptics have dared to raise only at the risk of being accused of irrationality or wickedness—or both at once.

VI.302 I have no desire to be superficial and to treat shallowly a subject concerning which I believe myself to possess better-founded knowledge. Nor do I wish to conceal and pass over in silence difficulties which I see clearly. Yet it remains my fate in these public lectures to have to touch upon several of these still almost entirely untouched questions and to touch upon them without being able to treat them in an exhaustive manner. At the risk of being misunderstood or misinterpreted I will be able to provide nothing but *hints* for further reflection and *directions* toward further information concerning matters I would prefer to have treated fundamentally and exhaustively. If I suspected that among you there were many of those “popular philosophers” who resolve every difficulty easily and without any effort or reflection, merely with the aid of what they call their own “healthy common sense”—if this is what I thought, then I would seldom stand here before you without quailing.

Among the questions which philosophy has to answer we find the following two in particular, which have to be answered before, among other things, a well-founded theory of natural rights is possible. First of all, by what right does a man call a particular portion of the physical world “*his* body”? How does he come to consider this to be his body, something which belongs to his I, since it is nevertheless something completely opposed to his I? And then the second question: How does a man come to assume that there are rational beings like himself apart from him? And how does he come to recognize them, since they are certainly not immediately present to his pure self-consciousness?*

What I have to do today is to establish what the vocation of man within society is, and before this task can be achieved the preceding questions have to be answered. By “society” I mean the relationship in which

*[Note to the Danish edition.] The author has since answered both of these questions in his previously mentioned book on natural right.

rational beings stand to each other. The concept of society presupposes that there actually are rational beings apart from oneself. It also presupposes the existence of some characteristic features which permit us to distinguish these beings from all of those who are not rational and thus are not members of society. How do we arrive at this presupposition, and what are these characteristic features of rational beings? This is the initial question which I have to answer.

VI,303 Persons still unaccustomed to strict philosophical inquiry might well answer my question as follows: "Our knowledge that rational beings like ourselves exist apart from us and our knowledge of the signs which distinguish rational beings from nonrational ones have both been derived from experience." But such an answer would be superficial and unsatisfying. It would be no answer at all to *our* question, but would pertain to an altogether different one. Egoists also have these experiences to which appeal is being made, and they have still not been thoroughly refuted on that account. All that experience teaches us is that our consciousness contains *the representation* of rational beings outside of ourselves. No one disputes this and no egoist has ever denied it. What is in question is whether there is anything *beyond this representation* which corresponds to it, that is, whether rational beings exist independently of our representations of them and would exist even if we had no such representations. And in regard to this question we can learn nothing from experience, just as certainly as experience is experience, that is, the system of our representations.

The most that experience can teach is that there are effects which resemble the effects of rational causes. It cannot, however, teach us that the causes in question actually exist as rational beings in themselves. For a being in itself is no object of experience.

We ourselves first introduce such beings into experience. It is *we* who explain certain experiences by appealing to the existence of rational beings outside of ourselves. But *with what right* do we offer this explanation? The *justification* needs to be better demonstrated before we can use this explanation, for its validity depends upon such a justification and cannot be based simply upon the fact that we actually make use of such explanations. Our investigation would not be advanced a single step thereby. We are left facing the question previously raised: How do we come to assume that there are rational beings outside of us, and how do we recognize them?

VI,304 The thorough investigations of the Critical philosophers have unquestionably exhausted the theoretical realm of philosophy. All remaining questions must be answered on the basis of practical principles (a point which I mention merely for its historical interest). We must now see whether the proposed question can actually be answered from practical principles.

According to our last lecture, man's highest drive is the drive toward identity, toward complete harmony with himself, and—as a means for staying constantly in harmony with himself—toward the harmony of all external things with his own necessary concepts of them. It is not enough that his concepts *not be contradicted* (in which case he could be indifferent to the existence or nonexistence of objects *corresponding* to his concepts); rather [in order to achieve the harmony desired] there really ought to be something which corresponds to these concepts. All of the concepts found within the I should have an expression or counterpart in the not-I. This is the specific character of man's drive.

Man also possesses the concepts of reason and of rational action and thought. He necessarily wills, not merely to realize these concepts within himself, but to see them realized outside of him as well. One of the things that man requires is that rational beings like himself should exist outside of him.

Man cannot bring any such beings into existence, yet the concept of such beings underlies his observation of the not-I, and he expects to encounter something corresponding to this concept. The first, though merely negative, distinguishing characteristic of rationality, or at least the first one that suggests itself, is efficacy governed by concepts, that is, purposeful activity. What bears the distinguishing features of purposefulness may have a rational author, whereas that to which the concept of purposefulness is entirely inapplicable surely has no rational author. Yet this feature is ambiguous. The distinguishing characteristic of purposefulness is the harmony of multiplicity in a unity. But many types of such harmony are explicable merely by natural laws—not *mechanical* laws, but *organic* ones certainly. In order, therefore, to be able to infer convincingly from a particular experience to its rational cause we require some feature in addition [to purposefulness]. Even in those cases where it operates purposefully, nature operates in accordance with *necessary laws*. Reason always operates *freely*. The freely achieved harmony of multiplicity in a unity would thus be a certain and nondeceptive distinguishing feature of rationality within appearances. The only question is how one can tell the difference between an effect one has experienced which occurs necessarily and one which occurs freely.

I can by no means be directly conscious of a free being outside of myself. I cannot even become conscious of freedom within me, that is, I cannot become conscious of my own freedom. For freedom in itself is the ultimate explanatory basis for all consciousness, and thus freedom itself cannot belong to the realm of consciousness. What I can become conscious of, however, is that I am conscious of no cause for a certain voluntary determination of my empirical I other than my will itself. As long as one has explained oneself properly in advance, one might well say that this very lack of any consciousness of a cause is itself a con-

sciousness of freedom—and we wish to call it such here. *In this sense* then, one can be conscious of one's own free action.

Suppose now that the manner of behavior of that substance which is presented to us through appearance is altered, altered by *our* free action (of which we are conscious in the sense just indicated), and altered so that it no longer remains explicable by *that* law in accordance with which it operated previously, but can only be explained by that law upon which we have based *our own* free action—a law which is quite opposed to the previous law. The only way in which we could account for the alteration in this case is by assuming that the cause of the effect in question was also rational and free. Thus there arises, to use the Kantian terminology, an *interaction governed by concepts*, a purposeful community. And this is what VI,306 I mean by “society”—the concept of which is now completely determined.

One of man's fundamental drives is to be permitted to assume that rational beings like himself exist outside of him. He can assume this only on the condition that he enter into society (in the sense just specified) with these beings. Consequently, the social drive is one of man's fundamental drives. It is man's *destiny* to live in society; he *ought to* live in society. One who lives in isolation is not a complete human being. He contradicts his own self.

You can see how important it is not to confuse society as such with that particular, empirically conditioned type of society which we call “the state.” Despite what a very great man has said, life in the state is not one of man's absolute aims.¹² The state is, instead, only a *means for establishing a perfect society*, a means which exists only under specific circumstances. Like all those human institutions which are mere means, the state aims at abolishing itself. *The goal of all government is to make government superfluous.* Though the time has certainly not yet come, nor do I know how many myriads or myriads of myriads of years it may take (here we are not at all concerned with applicability in life, but only with justifying a speculative proposition), there will certainly be a point in the a priori foreordained career of the human species when all civic bonds will become superfluous. This is that point when reason, rather than strength or cunning,

¹²This is perhaps an allusion to Kant's contention in “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View” (1784) that “the highest purpose of Nature, which is the development of all the capacities which can be achieved by mankind, is attainable only in society, and more specifically in the society with the greatest freedom. Such a society is one in which there is mutual opposition among the members, together with the most exact definition of freedom and fixing of its limits so that it may be consistent with the freedom of others. Nature demands that humankind should itself achieve this goal like all its other destined goals. Thus a society in which freedom under external laws is associated in the highest degree with irresistible power, i.e., a perfectly just civic constitution, is the highest problem Nature assigns to the human race.” In *On History*, ed. and trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 16.

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will be universally recognized as the highest court of appeal. I say "be recognized" because even then men will still make mistakes and injure their fellowmen thereby. All they will then require is the goodwill to allow themselves to be convinced that they have erred* and, when they are convinced of this, to recant their errors and make amends for the damages. Until we have reached this point we are, speaking quite generally, not even true men.

According to what we have said, the positive distinguishing feature of society is *free interaction*. This interaction is its own end, and it operates *purely and simply* in order to operate. But when we maintain that society is its own end, we are not by any means denying that the manner in which it operates might be governed by an additional, more specific law, which establishes a more specific goal for the operation of society.

The fundamental drive was the drive to discover rational beings like ourselves, that is, *men*. The concept of man is an idealistic concept, because man's end qua man is something unachievable. Every individual has his own particular ideal of man as such. Though all of these ideals have the same content, they nevertheless differ in degree. Everyone uses his own ideal to judge those whom he recognizes as men. Owing to the fundamental human drive, everyone wishes to find that everyone else resembles this ideal. We experiment and observe the other person from every side, and when we discover him to lie *below* our ideal of man, we try to raise him to this ideal. The winner in this spiritual struggle is always the one who is the higher and the better man. Thus the *improvement of the species* has its origin within society, and thus at the same time we have discovered the vocation of all society as such. Should it appear as if the higher and better person has no influence upon the lower and uneducated person, this is partly because our own judgment deceives us. For

*[Note to the Danish edition.] But if it is impossible for either party to be convinced—which is something which may easily occur, despite the sincere intentions of each—then what is right remains in dispute, and one of the parties suffers a wrong. But what is right should never remain in dispute, for there ought not be any wrong. Beyond this [appeal to reason via the path of mutual argument] there must also be an infallible and supreme judge to whom one is duty-bound to submit oneself. And there must be positive laws, since judgment can only be passed according to law. And there must be a constitution, since this supreme judge could not be appointed except in accordance with a rule. Thus, to the extent that the state is related to human fallibility and is, in the final instance, that which puts an end to human quarreling over questions of right, then the state is completely necessary and can never cease to exist.

But to the extent that the state is related to an evil will, to the extent that it is a compulsory power, then its final aim is undoubtedly to make itself superfluous, i.e., to make all compulsion unnecessary. This is an aim which can be achieved even if goodwill and the confidence in it do not become universal. For if everyone knows on the basis of long experience that every act of injustice will surely bring misfortune and that every crime will surely be discovered and punished, then one may expect that, on grounds of prudence alone, men will not exert themselves in vain, nor will they willfully and knowingly bring harm upon themselves.

VI,308 we frequently expect fruit at once, before the seed has been able to germinate and develop. And perhaps it is partly because the better person stands upon a level which is so much higher than that of the uneducated person that the two do not have enough points of mutual contact and are unable to have sufficient effect upon each other—a situation which retards culture unbelievably and the remedy for which will be indicated at the proper time. But on the whole the better person will certainly be victorious, and this is a source of reassurance and solace for the friend of mankind and truth when he witnesses the open war between light and darkness. The light will certainly win in the end. Admittedly, we cannot say how long this will take, but when darkness is forced to engage in public battle this is already a guarantee of impending victory. For darkness loves obscurity. When it is forced to reveal itself it has already lost.

Thus the following is the result of all of our deliberations so far: Man is destined for society. *Sociability* is one of those skills which man ought to perfect within himself in accordance with his vocation as a man, as this was developed in the previous lecture.

However much man's vocation for society as such may originate from the innermost and purest part of his nature, it is, nevertheless, merely a drive, and as such it is subordinate to the supreme law of self-harmony, that is, the ethical law. Thus the social drive must be further determined by the ethical law and brought under a fixed rule. By discovering what this rule is we discover what *man's* vocation within *society* is—which is the object of our present inquiry and of all our reflections so far.

To begin with, the law of absolute self-harmony determines the social drive *negatively*: this drive must not contradict itself. The social drive aims at *interaction, reciprocal* influence, *mutual* give and take, *mutual* passivity and activity. It does not aim at mere causality, at the sort of mere activity to which the other person would have to be related merely passively. It strives to discover *free, rational* beings outside of ourselves and to enter into community with them. It does not strive for the *subordination* characteristic of the physical world, but rather for *coordination*. If one does not permit the rational beings he seeks outside of himself to be free, then he is taking into account only their *theoretical ability*, but not their free practical rationality. Such a person does not wish to enter into society with these other free beings, but rather to *master* them as one masters talented beasts, and thus he places his social drive into contradiction with itself. Indeed, rather than saying that such a person places his social drive into contradiction with itself, it is far more true to say that he does not possess such a higher drive at all, that mankind has not yet developed that far in him, that it is he himself who still stands on the lower level of the half human, the level of slavery. He is not yet mature

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enough to have developed his own sense of freedom and spontaneity, for if he had then he would necessarily have to wish to be surrounded by other free beings like himself. Such a person is a slave and wishes to have slaves. Rousseau has said that many a person who considers himself to be the master of others is actually more of a slave than they are.¹³ He might have said, with even more accuracy, that anyone who considers himself to be a master of others is himself a slave. If such a person is not a slave in fact, it is still certain that he has a slavish soul and that he will grovel on his knees before the first strong man who subjugates him. The only person who is himself free is that person who wishes to liberate everyone around him and who—by means of a certain influence whose cause has not always been remarked—really does so. We breathe more freely under the eyes of such a person. We feel that nothing constrains, restrains, or confines us, and we feel an unaccustomed inclination to be and to do everything which is not forbidden by our own self-respect.

Man may employ mindless things as means for his ends, but not rational beings. One may not even employ rational beings as means for their own ends. One may not work upon them as one works upon dead matter or animals, that is, using them simply as a means for accomplishing one's ends without taking their freedom into account. One may not make any rational being virtuous, wise, or happy against his own will. Quite apart from the fact that the attempt to do so would be in vain and that no one can become virtuous, wise, or happy except through his own labor and effort—even apart from this fact, one ought not even wish to do this, even if it were possible or if one believed that it were; for it is wrong, and it places one into contradiction with oneself.

VI,310 The law of complete, formal self-harmony also determines the social drive *positively*, and from this we obtain the actual vocation of man within society. All of the individuals who belong to the human race differ among themselves. There is only one thing in which they are in complete agreement: their ultimate goal—perfection. Perfection is determined in only one respect: it is totally self-identical. If all men could be perfect, if they could all achieve their highest and final goal, then they would be totally equal to each other. They would constitute but one single subject. In society, however, everyone strives to improve the others (at least according to his own concept) and to raise them to the ideal which he has formed of man. Accordingly, the ultimate and highest goal of society is the complete unity and unanimity of all of its members. But the achievement of this goal presupposes the achievement of the vocation of man as such, the achievement of absolute perfection. The former, therefore, is just as inachievable as the latter, and it remains inachievable so long as

¹³*Of the Social Contract*, Bk. I, chap. 1.

man is not supposed to cease to be man and to become God. The *final goal* of man within society is thus the complete unity of all individuals, but this is not the *vocation* of man within society.

Man can and should approximate endlessly to this goal. Such approximation to total unity and unanimity may be termed "unification."¹⁴ The true vocation of man within society is, accordingly, unification, a unification which constantly gains in internal strength and expands its perimeter. But since the only thing on which men are or can be in agreement is their ultimate vocation, this unification is possible only through the search for perfection. We could, therefore, just as well say that our social vocation consists in the process of communal perfection, that is, perfecting ourselves by freely making use of the effect which others have on us and perfecting others by acting in turn upon them as upon free beings.

VI,311 In order to fulfill this vocation and to do so ever more adequately, we require a skill that is acquired and increased only through culture. This skill has two aspects: the skill of *giving*, or affecting others as free beings, and the capacity for *receiving*, or for making the most of the effect which others have upon us. We will specifically discuss both of these skills at the proper place. One must make a particular effort to maintain the latter skill alongside a high degree of the former, for otherwise one remains stationary and thus regresses. Rarely is anyone so perfect that he cannot be further educated in some respect by almost anyone—perhaps concerning something that seems unimportant to him or that he has overlooked.

I am acquainted with few ideas more lofty than this idea of the way the human species works upon itself—this ceaseless living and striving, this lively give and take which is the noblest thing in which man can participate, this universal intermeshing of countless wheels whose common driving force is freedom, and the beautiful harmony which grows from this. Everyone can say: "Whoever you may be, because you bear a human face, you are still a member of this great community. No matter how countless many intermediaries may be involved in the transmission, I nevertheless have an effect upon you, and you have an effect upon me. No one whose face bears the stamp of reason, no matter how crude, exists for me in vain. But I am unacquainted with you, as you are with me! Still, just as it is certain that we share a common calling—to be good and to become better and better—it is equally certain that there will come a time (it may take millions or trillions of years—what is time!) when I will draw you into my sphere of influence, a time when I will benefit you too and receive benefit from you, a time when my heart will

¹⁴"Vereinigung."

be joined with yours by the loveliest bond of all—the bond of free, mutual give and take.¹⁵

Until here

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Third Lecture Concerning the Difference between Classes within Society

We have now presented man's vocation *qua man* as well as his vocation *within society*. The scholar exists as a scholar only within the context of society. Accordingly, we could now turn to an investigation of the particular vocation within society of the scholar. However, the scholar is not merely a member of society; he is at the same time a member of a particular class within society. At least one speaks of "the learned class."¹⁶ Whether such talk is justified is something which we will see at the proper time.

Thus our main inquiry concerning the scholar's vocation presupposes not only the two inquiries we have just completed, but also a third, an investigation of the following important question: How does the difference between the various classes of men arise in the first place? Or, what is the origin of inequality among men? Even without any preliminary investigation, we understand by the word *class* not something which originated accidentally and without any help from us, but rather something determined and arranged by free choice and for a purpose. Nature may be responsible for that *physical inequality* which arises accidentally and without our assistance, but the *inequality of classes* appears to be a moral inequality. Concerning this moral inequality the following question naturally arises: What is the justification for the existence of different classes?

Many attempts have already been made to answer this question. Some persons, proceeding from first principles derived from experience, have seized upon and rhapsodically enumerated the various purposes which are served by the difference between classes and the many advantages we derive from this. By this means, however, we would sooner answer any other question whatsoever than the one just raised. The *advantage* which someone derives from a particular arrangement does nothing to

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¹⁵Compare the conclusion of this lecture with the very similar conclusion of the lecture *Concerning Human Dignity* which Fichte had delivered in Zurich a few months earlier (section II, above.)

¹⁶"von einem Gelehrtenstande." By *Stand* Fichte does not primarily mean to designate a social or economic class. He employs the term with something of the sense of the French term *état* or the English *estate*. As he explains a bit later in this lecture: "my class is determined by the particular skill to the development of which I freely dedicate myself."

VI,323 cataract, and to the crashing clouds in their fire-red sea. "I am eternal!" I shout to them, "I defy your power! Rain everything down upon me! You earth, and you, heaven, mingle all of your elements in wild tumult. Foam and roar, and in savage combat pulverize the last dust mote of that body which I call my own. Along with its own unyielding project, my will shall hover boldly and indifferently above the wreckage of the universe. For I have seized my vocation, and it is more permanent than you. It is eternal, and so too am I!"

Fourth Lecture Concerning the Scholar's Vocation

[Resume from here](#)

I must speak to you today about the vocation of the scholar.

VI,324 I find that I am in a peculiar situation in regard to this subject. For all of you, or at least most of you, have chosen the sciences as your life's work, and so have I. Presumably, you devote your entire energies to the goal of being respected members of the scholarly class, and so have and so do I. I am thus supposed to speak as a scholar before prospective scholars on the subject of the scholar's vocation. I am supposed to examine this subject thoroughly and, if possible, exhaustively—omitting from my presentation nothing which is true. Suppose that I should discover that the vocation of this class is a very honorable and lofty one, more distinguished than that of any other class: how can I say this without being immodest, without depreciating the other classes, and without seeming to be blinded by conceit? Yet I am speaking as a philosopher, and as such I am obliged to specify precisely the meaning of every concept. So what can I do if the concept which comes next in the series happens to be the concept of the scholar? It is impermissible for me to suppress anything which I recognize to be true: it remains true in any case. Even modesty is subordinate to truth, and it is a false modesty which stands in the way of the truth. For the time being let us investigate our subject impartially, as if it had no relation to ourselves and were a concept borrowed from a world totally alien to us. Let us demand all the more precision in our proofs. And let us not forget something which I intend to present with no less force in its proper place: that every class is necessary and deserves our respect, that an individual's merit is not determined by the class to which he belongs, but rather by the way he fulfills his role as a member of that class. For every person deserves to be honored only insofar as he approximates to fulfilling his role completely. For this reason, the scholar has reason to be the humblest person of all: since the goal which is set for him must always remain very distant,

and since he has to achieve a very lofty ideal—one from which he normally remains very distant.

We have seen that men possess various drives and talents and that the vocation of every individual is to cultivate all of his talents to the best of his ability. One of man's drives is the social drive. This drive offers man a new, special type of education. that is, education for society, as well as an extraordinary facility for education as such. It is up to each person to decide whether he shall cultivate all of his talents immediately within nature or whether he shall cultivate them indirectly through society. The first course is difficult and does nothing to advance society; therefore, within society every individual quite legitimately selects his own special branch of general education, leaving the other branches to his fellow members of society in the expectation that they will share the benefits of *their* education with *him*, just as he will share the benefits of *his* with *them*. This is the origin of and the justification for the difference between the various classes within society.

VI,325 Such were the results of my previous lectures. A classification of the various classes according to pure concepts of reason (which is entirely possible) would have to be based upon an exhaustive enumeration of all of man's natural talents and needs—not counting those needs which are purely artificial. A specific class can be dedicated to the cultivation of each specific talent or—which amounts to the same thing—to the satisfaction of each of man's natural needs (i.e.; each need which has its origin in a basic human drive). We will reserve this investigation for some future time in order to devote this hour to a topic which lies nearer to us.

If someone were to ask about the relative perfection of a society organized according to the above first principles (and as our investigation of the origin of society has made clear, every society, in accordance with man's natural drives, is organized in this way by itself and without any guidance), then in order to answer this question we would first have to investigate the following question: Are *all* needs cared for in the society in question? Are they all developed and satisfied, and are they developed and satisfied *equally*? If they are, then the society in question is perfect qua society. This does not mean that it would attain its goal (which, according to our previous deliberations is impossible), but rather that it would be so organized that it would necessarily have to *approximate* more and more closely to its goal. If all needs are not equally cared for in this manner, then it would of course remain possible for the society in question to make cultural progress through a fortunate accident. This, however, could not be counted on with any certainty; the society might just as well regress through an unfortunate accident.

The first presupposition for seeing to the equal development of all of man's talents is an acquaintance with all of his talents: a scientific knowl-

edge of all of his drives and needs, a complete survey of his entire nature. Yet such complete knowledge of man in his totality is something which is itself based upon a talent, one which must itself be developed. Man certainly has a drive to *know*, in particular, he has a drive to know his own needs. The development of this drive, however, requires all of one's time and energy. If there is any common need which urgently demands that a special class of persons be dedicated to its satisfaction, it is this one.

But the *acquaintance* with man's talents and needs would be an extremely sad and depressing thing without the scientific knowledge of how to *develop* and *satisfy* them. It would also be something empty and quite useless. It is most unkind of someone to show me my shortcomings without at the same time showing me the means by which I may overcome them, or to produce within me a sense of my own needs without putting me in a position to satisfy them. It would be far better for him to leave me in my state of animal ignorance. In short, such knowledge could not be the sort which society desires and for the sake of which society requires a special class possessing such knowledge; for such knowledge does not have the aim it is supposed to have, namely, the improvement, and thereby the unification, of the species. Accordingly, this knowledge of men's needs must be joined with a knowledge of the *means for satisfying them*. Both sorts of knowledge are the business of the same class, because neither sort of knowledge can be complete, much less efficacious and vigorous, without the other. Knowledge of the first sort is based on principles of pure reason; it is *philosophical* knowledge. Knowledge of the second sort is partly based on experience; to that extent it is *philosophical-historical* knowledge (not merely historical knowledge, since before I can evaluate as means to ends the objects given in experience, I must first be acquainted with the ends to which these objects refer, and such ends can only be recognized philosophically). The knowledge in question is supposed to be useful to society. It is, therefore, not enough merely to know what talents man has and the means for developing them. Such knowledge would still always remain entirely fruitless. In order to obtain the desired utility, an additional step is required: one must know the particular cultural level of one's society at a particular time, as well as the particular level it has to reach next and the means it has to employ to do so. Using reason alone and assuming only the existence of experience as such, one can certainly determine in advance of any particular experience the course which the human species will follow. One can specify in an approximate manner the various steps it has to climb in order to reach a particular stage of development. One cannot, however, determine the level of a particular society at a particular time solely on the basis of reason. For this one has to examine experience as well. One has to study the events of former ages, albeit

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with an eye purified by philosophy. One must look around oneself and observe one's contemporaries. The last element in the knowledge which society requires is thus purely *historical*.

Taken together (and if they are not, they are of much less use) the three types of knowledge just indicated constitute what is—or at least should be—called “learning”; the person who dedicates his life to the acquisition of such knowledge is called a “scholar.”

VI,328 Every individual scholar does not have to master the entire field of human knowledge in all three of these respects. Such total mastery would be for the most part impossible, and just for this reason the attempt to gain it would be fruitless and would lead to the waste, without any gain for society, of a person's entire life—a life which could have been useful to society. Individuals may stake out for themselves individual portions of the domain of knowledge, but in his own area each person should cultivate all three: philosophical and philosophical-historical, as well as purely historical knowledge. In saying this, I wish to indicate in a merely provisional manner something which I will discuss more fully at a later time. I wish to assert here (on my own testimony at least) that the study of a properly grounded philosophy does not make it superfluous to acquire empirical knowledge—not, at least, if such knowledge is thorough. On the contrary, such a philosophy demonstrates in the most convincing manner the indispensibility of empirical knowledge. We have already shown that the purpose of all human knowledge is to see to the equal, continuous, and progressive development of all human talents. It follows from this that the true vocation of the scholarly class is the *supreme supervision of the actual progress of the human race in general and the unceasing promotion of this progress*. Only with great effort do I here restrain my feelings from being carried away by the lofty idea which is now before us, but the path of cold investigation is not yet at an end. Yet I must at least mention in passing what it is that those who attempt to hinder the advance of science would actually do. (I say “*would do*,” for how can I know whether there really are any such persons?) The whole progress of the human race depends directly upon the progress of science. Whoever retards the latter also retards the former. And what public image does the person who retards the progress of mankind present to his age and to posterity? With actions louder than a thousand words, he screams into the deafened ears of his own and later ages: “So long as I am alive, at least, my fellowmen shall become no wiser and no better. For if mankind were to advance, then, despite all my resistance, I too would be forced to advance at least in some respect, and this I abhor. I do not wish to become more enlightened or enobled. My element is darkness and perversity, and I will summon up my last ounce of strength in order to keep from being budged from this element.” Mankind can dispense with, can be robbed of, everything without risk of

losing its true dignity—it can dispense with everything, that is, except for the possibility of improvement. Like that foe of mankind whom the Bible depicts, these misanthropes have deliberated and calculated coldly and cunningly; they have explored the most sacred depths in order to choose where mankind has to be attacked in order to be nipped in the bud. They have found the spot. With indignation mankind turns away from the spectacle presented by such persons, and we return to our inquiry.

Science itself is only one branch of human development—every branch of which must be advanced if all of man's talents are to be further cultivated. Hence, like every person who has chosen a particular class, every scholar strives to advance science, specifically, that area of science which he has chosen. He has to do what everyone has to do in his special area, and he has to do far more than this. He is supposed to supervise and promote the progress of the other classes, but is he himself *not* supposed to make any progress? The progress of all of the other special areas of development depends upon the progress of the scholar. He must always proceed in advance of the other areas in order to clear and explore the path and then to guide them along it, but is he himself supposed to stay behind? From that moment he would cease to be what he is supposed to be, and thus—since he is nothing else but this—he would be nothing at all. I am not saying that every scholar *actually has to advance* his own area; perhaps he cannot do so. But I am saying that every scholar must *strive* to do so, and that he may not rest or believe himself to have discharged his duty until he has advanced his area of science. And so long as he lives he can continue to advance it further. If he is overtaken by death before he has achieved his purpose then he is of course released from his duty within this world of appearances, and his sincere attempt will be counted as his accomplishment would have been. If the following rule applies to all men, it applies especially to the scholar: he ought to forget his accomplishments as soon as they are completed and he always ought to think only of what he still has to accomplish. The person whose field is not enlarged with every step that he takes has not yet advanced very far.

VI,330 The scholar is especially destined for society. More than any other class, his class, insofar as he is a scholar, properly exists only through and for society. Accordingly, it is his particular duty to cultivate to the highest degree within himself the social talents of *receptivity* and the *art of communication*. If he has acquired the appropriate empirical knowledge in the appropriate manner, then his receptivity should already be highly cultivated. He should be familiar with his scientific predecessors. And this familiarity cannot have been produced merely by rational reflection, but has to have been learned through oral or written instruction. By constantly learning something new he should preserve his receptivity

and try to guard against that total lack of openness to foreign opinions and ways of thinking which one often encounters, occasionally even among excellent and independent thinkers. For no one is so well instructed that he could not always learn something new and occasionally something very essential, and seldom is anyone so ignorant that he could not tell even the most knowledgeable man something new. The scholar always needs skills of communication, since he does not possess his knowledge for himself, but rather for society. He has to practice this art from childhood and has to preserve it in all of his activities. At the proper time we will examine *the means by which* he does this.

VI,331 The scholar should now actually apply for the benefit of society that knowledge which he has acquired for society. He should awaken in men a feeling for their true needs and should acquaint them with the means for satisfying these needs. This does not imply that all men have to be made acquainted with those profound inquiries which the scholar himself has to undertake in order to find something certain and sure. For that would mean he would have to make all men scholars to the same extent that he himself is a scholar, and this is neither possible nor appropriate. Other things also have to be done, and this is why there are other classes of men. If these others were to devote their time to scholarly investigations, then even the scholars would soon have to cease being scholars. But then how can and how should the scholar disseminate his knowledge? Society could not continue to exist without trust in the integrity and the ability of others, and accordingly, this trust is deeply etched in our hearts. Moreover, we are especially favored by nature in that our trust is the greatest precisely in those areas in which we are most dependent upon the integrity and ability of others. Once he has acquired it as he should, the scholar may count on this trust in his integrity and ability. In addition, all men have a sense for what is true. By itself, of course, this sense is not sufficient. It has to be developed, scrutinized, and purified, and this is precisely the scholar's task.¹⁸ Such a sense or feeling for truth is not sufficient to lead the uneducated person to all the truths that he needs; but, unless it has been artificially falsified (something which is often done by persons who think of themselves as scholars), it is always enough to permit him to recognize the truth after another has guided him to it—even if he does not see the deeper reasons why it is true. Likewise, the scholar may rely upon this sense of truth. To the extent that we have developed the concept of the scholar so far, we can say that it is the vocation of the scholar to be the *teacher* of the human race.

But the scholar does not merely have to make men generally ac-

¹⁸This "feeling" or "sense of truth" (*Wahrheitsgefühl*) is further explored in several of the later (unpublished) lectures in this series. See below, Sections V and VI.

quainted with their needs and the means for satisfying them. He has to direct their attention to the needs which confront them under the specific circumstances inherent in each particular time and place, as well as the specific means for achieving each purpose as it arises. He does not look only at the present; he looks toward the future as well. He does not see only the present standpoint; he also sees the direction in which the human race must now proceed if it is to continue on the path toward its final goal and is not to stray from this path or go backward on it. He cannot demand that the human race proceed at once to that point which shines before his eyes. No step along this path can be skipped. The scholar simply has to see to it that we do not remain standing in one place or turn back. In this respect the scholar is the *educator* of mankind. I wish to mention explicitly at this point that when engaged in this activity, as in all of his occupations, the scholar is subject to the ethical law, which commands harmony with oneself. The scholar exercises an influence upon society. Society is based upon the concept of freedom; it and all of its members are free. Thus the scholar may employ none but moral means to influence society. He will not be tempted to use *compulsory means* or physical force to get men to accept his convictions. In our era one should not have to waste any further words on such folly. But neither should the scholar employ *deception*. Quite apart from the fact that in doing so he would wrong himself and that his duty as a person would in any case be higher than his duty as a scholar, he would wrong society at the same time. For every individual in society ought to act on the basis of free choice and on the basis of a conviction which *he himself has judged adequate*. In each of his actions he ought to be able to think of himself as an end and ought to be treated as such by every other member of society. A person who is deceived is being treated as a mere means to an end.

The final aim of every individual person, as well as of society as a whole, and thus the final aim of all of the scholar's work for society, is the ethical improvement of the whole person. It is the scholar's duty always to keep this final aim in view and to have it before his eyes in all that he does within society. But no one who is not himself a good man can work successfully for ethical improvement. We do not teach by words alone; we also teach—far more forcefully—by example. Everyone who lives in society owes it to society to set a good example, because the power of example originates only through our life in society. How much greater is the scholar's obligation to set a good example—the scholar, who is supposed to surpass the other classes in every aspect of culture! How can he think that others will follow his teachings if he contradicts them before everyone's eyes in every action of his life? (The words addressed by the founder of Christianity to his followers apply quite aptly to the scholars:

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“Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted?”¹⁹ When the elect among men have been corrupted, where should one search to find ethical goodness?) Considered, therefore, in this last respect, the scholar ought to be the *ethically best* man of his time. He ought to represent the highest level of ethical cultivation which is possible up to the present.

This is the vocation we have in common, the fate we share. It is a happy fate to have a particular calling which requires one to do just that which one has to do for the sake of one's general calling as a human being. It is a happy fate to be required to apply one's time and energy only to something for which one would otherwise have to make time and save up energy with prudent economy. And it is a happy fate to have for one's work, one's business, one's own daily task, something which for other persons is a pleasant relaxation from labor. Here is an invigorating thought, one which elevates the soul and which each of you who is worthy of his vocation can have: “Within my special area the culture of my age and of future ages is entrusted to me. My labors will help determine the course of future generations and the history of nations still to come. I am called to testify to the truth. My life and destiny do not matter at all, but infinitely much depends upon the results of my life. I am a priest of truth. I am in its pay, and thus I have committed myself to do, to risk, and to suffer anything for its sake. If I should be pursued and hated for the truth's sake, or if I should die in its service, what more would I have done than what I simply had to do?”

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I realize how much I have now said and realize equally well that an emasculated age which has lost its nerve cannot endure this feeling and cannot bear to have it expressed. And I realize that, with a timorous voice which betrays its inner shame, such an age will call anything to which it cannot rise “muddled enthusiasm.”²⁰ Anxiously, it will avert its gaze from a picture in which it sees only its own enervation and shame, and something strong and elevated will make no more impression upon such an age than a touch makes upon those who are crippled in every limb. I know all this, but I also know where I am speaking. I am speaking before an audience of young men whose very age protects them from such utter enervation. I would like to provide you with a manly ethical theory, and at the same time and by means of this, I would like to place in your soul feelings which will protect you against such enervation in the future. I frankly admit that I would like to use this position in which providence has placed me in order to disseminate a more manly way of thinking, a stronger sense of elevation and dignity, and a more intense

¹⁹Matt. 5:13.

²⁰“Schwärmerei.” This fairly common term is the bane of translators. If it were not so anachronistic one might well translate it here as “romantic nonsense.”

desire to fulfill one's vocation despite every danger. I would like to broadcast this in every direction, as far as the German language extends and even farther if I could. This I would like to do, so that after you have left this place and have scattered in all directions I could know that in all those places you are scattered there live men whose chosen friend is truth: men who will cling to truth in life and in death; men who will provide a refuge for truth when all the world thrusts it out; men who will publicly defend the truth when it is slandered and maligned; men who will gladly suffer the cleverly concealed hatred of the great, the insipid smiles of the conceited, and the pitying shrugs of the narrow-minded—all for the sake of truth. This is why I said what I have said, and this will remain my ultimate object in saying all that I will ever say to you.

End here

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Fifth Lecture

An Examination of Rousseau's Claims concerning the Influence on Human Welfare of the Arts and Sciences

It is of no special value *for the discovery of the truth* to combat those errors which oppose it. If the truth is arrived at by correct inferences from the proper first principle, then everything which contradicts it must necessarily be false, and no explicit refutation is necessary. Thus when one surveys the entire path that he had to follow in order to arrive at some particular knowledge, one can easily glimpse the side roads which branch off from this path and lead toward various errors. One will then be in a position from which one can easily show everyone who has gone astray the point at which he did so. This follows from the fact that every truth can be deduced from only one first principle. A thoroughgoing *Wissenschaftslehre* has to show *what this* first principle is for every specific problem. General logic prescribes how additional inferences are to be made from this first principle. If this is done then it is easy to discover the true path as well as the false one.

However, reference to opposing opinions is of great value for the *clear and distinct presentation* of a truth which has already been discovered. By comparing truth with error, one is forced to attend more closely to the distinguishing features of each and to conceive of them more specifically and clearly. I am going to utilize this method today in order to provide a brief and clear overview of what I have presented so far in these lectures.

VI,336 I have said that man's vocation consists in the constant advancement of culture and in the equal and continuous development of all of man's talents and needs. I have assigned a very honorable place within human