

Master class: The Tale of Two Deductions in Fichte's *Sittenlehre*

By Plato Tse, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

February 8, 9, and 10, 2-6pm (Australian Eastern Daylight Time)

UNSW Sydney, Matthews Building, Room 105 and online

Organized by the UNSW Sydney Philosophy Program with the Australian Hegel Society

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If you wish to attend, in person or online, please email h.ikaheimo@unsw.edu.au to receive the reading material and Zoom-link

Description

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), a prominent post-Kantian idealist philosopher, once claimed that his Doctrine of Science (*Wissenschaftslehre*) is ‘the first system of freedom.’ It can be said that the system of freedom, at least during the Jena period, culminates in his *System of Ethics* (*System der Sittenlehre*, 1798). The general aim of this three-day intensive class is to expose and discuss the systematic significance of the notion of freedom in the context of Fichte’s ethics by engaging with his two ‘deductions’ dedicated to proving the principle of morality and establishing its applicability in the sensible world.

To initiate the audience into Fichte’s view on freedom and his transcendental idealism, I will spend the first day on the *First and Second Introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre* (1797), where Fichte seeks to repudiate the freedom denier and offers up intellectual intuition as a special first-personal access to the activity of the mind in support of a commonsense realism about free will. This will help us set the stage for examining how Fichte arrives at practical freedom in the *Sittenlehre* and how he appropriates it as a theoretical principle.

On the second day, I will reconstruct Fichte’s deduction of the moral law and take it as answering the skeptical worry that moral sentiments might have no rational foundation. This deduction is intended to show how the sense of an *ought* emerges from the essence of rational being. Yet, Fichte is not content with deducing morality from rationality. He is also concerned with the question whether the world we live and act in is a world where moral progress is possible.

Fichte’s deduction of the reality and applicability of the moral law, which is the focus of the third day, bears out this possibility. I will reconstruct the deduction as one tracing the transcendental conditions for our actual self-consciousness as efficacious agents, and these conditions will also come to determine our conception of the sensible world as one that is understood in terms of drive and potentials and not in terms of strict causal necessity.

Reading

1. “First and Second Introductions to The Science of Knowledge”, in *Fichte: Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre)*, ed. Peter Heath and John Lachs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982
 - o(German) *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 42 volumes, Erich Fuchs, Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacobs, and Hans Gliwitzky (eds.), Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964-2012. (=GA), I/4: 183-281
2. Introduction & Part I, *The System of Ethics in accordance with the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöller, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
 - o(German) GA, I/5: 21-71
3. Part II, *The System of Ethics in accordance with the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöller, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
 - o(German) GA, I/5: 73-146

Bio

Plato Tse is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at National Chengchi University in Taiwan. He received his PhD from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in 2018. His research interests include Classical German Philosophy, Transcendental Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, and Metaphysics. His work focuses mainly on Kant and the post-Kantian philosophers. Currently, he is also the chief investigator of a research project on Metaphysical Idealism funded by the National Science and Technology Council of Taiwan.