THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
FICHTE

Each volume of this series of companions to major philosophers contains specially commissioned essays by an international team of scholars, together with a substantial bibliography, and will serve as a reference work for students and non-specialists. One aim of the series is to dispel the intimidation such readers often feel when faced with the work of a difficult and challenging thinker.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) was the founding figure of the philosophical movement known as German idealism, a branch of thought which grew out of Kant’s critical philosophy. Fichte’s work formed the crucial link between eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought and philosophical, as well as literary, Romanticism. Some of his ideas also foreshadow later nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments in philosophy and in political thought, including existentialism, nationalism and socialism. This volume offers essays on all the major aspects of Fichte’s philosophy, ranging from the successive versions of his foundational philosophical science or Wissenschaftslehre, through his ethical and political thought, to his philosophies of history and religion. All the main stages of Fichte’s philosophical career and development are charted, and his ideas are placed in their historical and intellectual context.

New readers will find this the most convenient and accessible guide to Fichte currently available. Advanced students and specialists will find a conspectus of recent developments in the interpretation of Fichte.

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ALLEN WOOD is Ruth Norman Halls Professor at Indiana University and Ward W. and Priscilla B. Woods Professor emeritus at Stanford University. He is author of numerous articles and author or editor of over twenty books, including Karl Marx (1981, 2nd edn 2004), Hegel’s Ethical Thought (1990), Kant’s Ethical Thought (1999) and The Free Development of Each: Studies on Freedom, Right, and Ethics in Classical German Philosophy (2014). His most recent book is Fichte’s Ethical Thought (2016).

GÜNTER ZÖLLER is Professor of Philosophy at Ludwig Maximilian University Munich. A former member of the Fichte Commission of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and a main editor of the critical edition of Fichte’s Complete Works, his publications on Fichte
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ABBREVIATIONS

Writings of Fichte


AGN  Addresses to the German Nation, trans. Gregory Moore [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008].


LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


IWL Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800), trans. and ed. Daniel Breazeale [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994].


VM₂ The Vocation of Man, trans. Peter Preuss [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987].

Writings of Kant


List of Abbreviations


## CHRONOLOGY

1762 Born 19 May in Rammenau, in the Upper Lusatia area of Saxony, the first of eight (surviving) children of the ribbon weaver Christian Fichte and his wife, Johanna Maria Dorothea

1774–80 Attends Princely Secondary School at Pforta, near Naumburg ([Schulpforta](#))

1780–84 Studies at the universities of Jena, Leipzig and Wittenberg, no degree taken

1785–93 Private tutor in households in Saxony, Zurich and Eastern Prussia

1790 August/September: reads Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason, Critique of Practical Reason and Critique of the Power of Judgment*

1791 Visits Kant in Königsberg

1792 *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* [in part anonymously published]

1793 June: returns to Zurich; October: marries Johanne Rahn of Zurich

1793–94 *Contribution to the Rectification of the Public’s Judgement of the French Revolution* [published anonymously]

1794 February: *Zurich Lectures on the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*. As of May: Professor at the University of Jena; *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre, Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (Parts One and Two); *Some Lectures Concerning the Vocation of the Scholar*
xx  CHRONOLOGY

1795  Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre [Part Three]

1796  Foundation of Natural Right [Part One]

1796–99 Three yearly lecture courses on the New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre [Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo]

1797  Foundation of Natural Right [Part Two]

1797–98 New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre [fragmentary]

1798  The System of Ethics

1798  November: beginning of the atheism dispute

1799  April: loses his professorship

1800  July: moves to Berlin; The Vocation of Man; The Closed Commercial State

1804–5 Five consecutive lecture courses on the Wissenschaftslehre

1805  May to September: Professor in Erlangen

1806  The Characteristics of the Present Age; The Way towards the Blessed Life; On the Essence of the Scholar

1807  October: flees with the Prussian court to Königsberg; travels on to Copenhagen; returns to Berlin; Wissenschaftslehre Königsberg

1807  December to March 1808: Addresses to the German Nation

1809  As of December: Professor at the University of Berlin

1810–14 Five yearly lecture courses on the Wissenschaftslehre

1810  August: elected Dean of the Philosophical Faculty [re-elected June 1811]; The Wissenschaftslehre in Its General Outline

1811  August: first elected Rector of the University of Berlin [resigns April 1812]; Five Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar

1812  Doctrine of Right; Doctrine of Ethics

1813  The Doctrine of the State [published 1820]

1813–14 Three-part philosophical diary (Diarium I, II and III)

1814  Dies on 29 January in Berlin