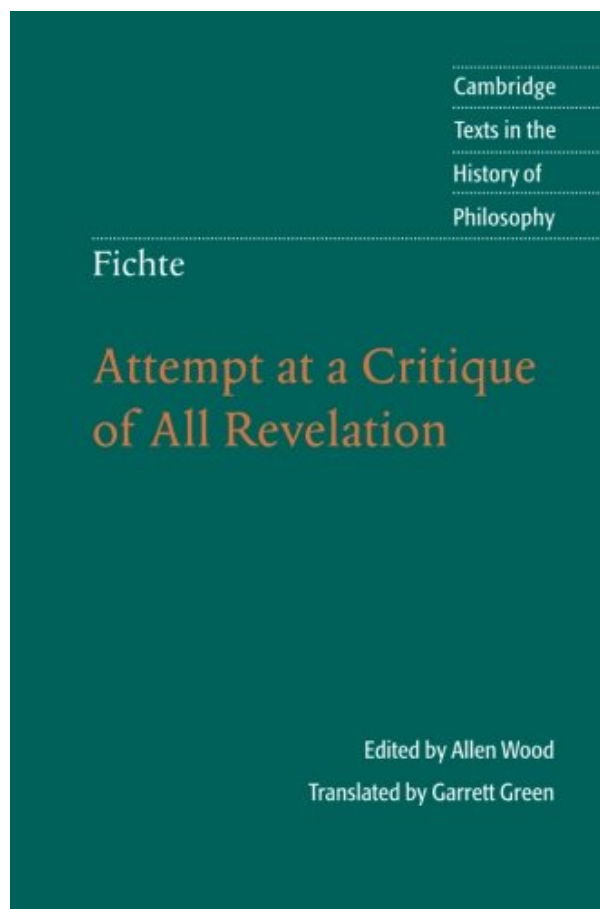


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Cambridge
Texts in the
History of
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Fichte

Attempt at a Critique
of All Revelation

Edited by Allen Wood
Translated by Garrett Green

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Review

"Annotated translation of the first published work by the German philosopher (1762-1814)..."

--The Chronicle of Higher Education

"....this text is important both historically and in its own right as an attempt to investigate religion from a transcendental standpoint.... Readers also will benefit from Wood's interpretation of the method Fichte utilizes in the text.... English-language Fichte scholarship has been quite vibrant in recent decades, ranging from new translations of key Fichte texts to the activity of the North American Fichte Society. This new edition of *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*, especially as it includes Wood's excellent introductory essay, is a fine addition to this resurgence of interest in and attention to Fichte's work."

--Kevin Zanelotti, McKendree University, *Philosophy in Review*

About the Author

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The Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation (1792) was the first published work of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), the founder of the German idealist movement in philosophy. It predated the system of philosophy which Fichte developed during his years in Jena, and for that reason - and possibly also because of its religious orientation - later commentators have tended to overlook the work in their treatments of Fichte's philosophy. It is, however, already representative of the most interesting aspects of Fichte's thought. It displays an affinity with his later moral psychology, introduces (in theological form) Fichte's distinctively 'second-person' conception of moral requirements, and employs the 'synthetic method' which is crucial to the transcendental systems Fichte developed during his Jena period. This volume offers a clear and accessible translation of the work by Garrett Green, while an introduction by Allen Wood sets the work in its historical and philosophical contexts.

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Nice

By Philonous

I really enjoyed this book because it really did remind me of Kant. However Fichte successfully tackled the topic of divine revelation by using Kant's moral philosophy including Fichte's own form of egoism (not to be confused with narcissism or psychological egoism). Fichte believes that we cannot prove the empirical validity of divine revelations (since such revelations is in the realm of noumena) but instead of confirming the validity of them Fichte proposes that we decide which divine revelations are acceptable as divine revelations on the basis of morality (in the Kantian sense). Strangely, Fichte did not believe that people have to depend on divine revelations to be moral but people who do depend on narratives or stories to guide their moral compass should be receptive to divine revelations. The problem I find with this general argument is that it seems to be missing the point of what the bible means to Christians in general; while I do agree that many Christians depend on the bible for moral guidance, those very same Christians depend on the bible for other reasons such as spiritual growth and intimate communication with God (I personally find these reasons to be dubious but I am merely stating how Christians generally see their bible). Fichte seems to be using the Kantian version of Occam's Razor to take out a lot of narratives that appear immoral, but the problem is that by doing this it seems too similar with what Thomas Jefferson is doing to the bible (Thomas Jefferson took everything out except some of the sayings of Jesus). Not that I am personally against what Fichte is implying but the consequence of applying such measures seems to be counter-productive because it backfires what was originally intended. If not much of the bible (which Fichte presumes to be a form of divine revelation) is left due to Fichte-Kant's Razor, then it only seems to show that divine revelation does not say very much about morality but actually very little. Nonetheless I enjoyed this book for other reasons.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Difficult Text for the Specialized Reader

By Nick Nicholas, MSW

The philosophy of German idealism, represented by figures such as Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, is notoriously difficult, and this text is no exception. It is a philosophical (or theological) work written for other philosophers (or theologians). This is not a text for the general reader. Even I found large segments of the text to be little more than word salad, replete with grandiose prose. Accordingly, this is a book that requires careful and close reading, with considerable thought given to teasing out the meaning and consequences of its passages -- passage by passage.

Nevertheless, it is an important book in the canon of German idealism, and Cambridge University Press is to be praised for bringing this (and many other) obscure texts to light, keeping them in print so that they may be available to contemporary readers and scholars.

The title was deliberately chosen because Fichte submitted this work to the author of the similarly dense *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Judgement*, and Kant responded favorably to Fichte's text to the point that he helped him get the book published, Fichte's first. This should be no surprise because Fichte tried so mightily to emulate Kant's own approach in his *Critiques*, but as applied to religion and religious experience.

I really needed a secondary work to help me fully appreciate this text: throughout most of the text I was

under the impression that Fichte was seeking to expand the a priori categories enunciated by Kant such as space and time, cause and effect. The earlier sections gave me the impression that Fichte was claiming that acceptance of a code of moral law and the provider of that moral law -- God -- were a priori concepts on the order of the ones identified by Kant. In one of the final chapters, however, Fichte stated outright that this was not the case: "[N]o assumption whatsoever of the reality of this concept in general takes place." Religion and revelation still have their place, but it does not emanate from a priori sources.

Although I'm tempted to give this text only two stars because of the excessive difficulty I had when reading it, I am giving it three instead because I'm sure I would have gotten more out of this text if I had read it in the context of a philosophy class or if I had the benefit of secondary explanatory works. While Fichte is an important thinker in the school of German idealism (some identify him as the founder of German idealism rather than Kant), his writings are sufficiently obscure that most readers would need some degree of assistance in order to fully appreciate the text. A list of suggested readings follows the introduction, and perhaps after reading some of these I may want to add a star or two to this work.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

This was an interesting personal view of Fichte's view on life

By R. Moore

I bought this for my son who is a college student studying for his Master's in Philosophy. I peeked inside to see what Fichte had to say and enjoyed the excellent introduction about him. I read only parts of the book before giving it to my son, so I am really not qualified for a very informative review. But I have to say from what little I read, it seems that Fichte's contemporaries took issue with Fichte's personality as well as his views. He was a student of Kant and was continually compared to him but really had his own ideas. I sympathized with Fichte as he had a rather tortured existence brought on by his lack of tact in getting along with his fellow scholars. He defended his beliefs to the end, losing many past supporters along the way. Kant took no issue with him really and even helped him get his work published in the beginning of his career. Fichte was a German idealist and a brilliant thinker.

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