

Equine Driving. Fichte on the Teamwork of the Mind

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“This means that chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business.” (Plato, Phaedrus 246b). The talk places Fichte’s sustained recourse to the concept of drive into the historical and systematic context of Platonic and Kantian thinking about the psychopolitics of self-rule. Section 1 addresses Kant’s account of the twofold, irrational and rational modes of the practical mind (“faculty of desire”) and the related conception of the will’s twofold freedom as arbitrary election and legislative autonomy. Section 2 traces Fichte’s appropriation of the concept of drive for detailing the dynamic structure and functionality of the mind’s multiple and competing drives, including the “natural drive,” the “pure drive,” and the “mixed” or “ethical drive.” Section 3 links Kant’s and Fichte’s thinking about the unity of mind in matters of desire and volition to Plato’s comparison of the soul’s setup and operation to a team of horses of opposed character that are driven by a seriously challenged charioteer. Throughout the talk pays attention to the civico-political origin and horizon of much of the ethico-practical conceptuality employed by Fichte and his precursors for capturing the complex and conflicted unity of the mind.