

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

NCLC

186

Volume 186

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Philosophers, and Other
Creative Writers Who Died between 1800
and 1899, from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations



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Preface

Since its inception in 1981, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)* has been a valuable resource for students and librarians seeking critical commentary on writers of this transitional period in world history. Designated an “Outstanding Reference Source” by the American Library Association with the publication of its first volume, *NCLC* has since been purchased by over 6,000 school, public, and university libraries. The series has covered more than 500 authors representing 38 nationalities and over 28,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical reaction to nineteenth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *NCLC*.

Scope of the Series

NCLC is designed to introduce students and advanced readers to the authors of the nineteenth century and to the most significant interpretations of these authors’ works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. By organizing and reprinting commentary written on these authors, *NCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *NCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *NCLC* is devoted to literary topics that cannot be covered under the author approach used in the rest of the series. Such topics include literary movements, prominent themes in nineteenth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

NCLC continues the survey of criticism of world literature begun by Thomson Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*.

Organization of the Book

An *NCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the list will focus primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Thomson Gale.

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In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Thomson Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *NCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Frank, Joseph. "The Gambler: A Study in Ethnopsychology." In *Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson*, edited by Elizabeth Cheres Allen and Gary Saul Morson, 69-85. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 168, edited by Jessica Bomarito and Russel Whitaker, 75-84. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.

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Johann Gottfried von Herder

1744-1803

German critic, essayist, translator, editor, poet, and playwright.

The following entry provides critical commentary on Herder's works from 1987 to 2005. For further information on Herder's life and works, see *NCLC*, Volume 8.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent and influential critics in literary history, Johann Gottfried von Herder is also well known as a primary theoretician of the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) and Romantic movements in Germany. His essays on various topics, including religion, history, and the development of language and literature, are considered important to later studies on evolution and the development of the social sciences. Although his works are often faulted for their lack of organization, critics nevertheless praise Herder for his intellectual diversity and erudition.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Herder was born in Mohrungen, East Prussia, into a family of limited means. His father, a cantor, sexton, and schoolmaster, reared his three children in the Protestant faith and emphasized gentle discipline and manners. He encouraged his son to complete his education at the town school where the youth also mastered Latin and Greek studies. Following his graduation, Herder worked as a secretary to a manufacturer of religious pamphlets. He then entered the University of Königsberg where he studied medicine and theology. Herder remained at Königsberg until 1764, when he accepted a post as both master and minister at the Cathedral School of Riga. Although Herder did not begin writing seriously until after his move to Riga, his later works reflect two major forces in his life at Königsberg—the influence of his professor, the philosopher Immanuel Kant, and his friendship with the religious writer Johann G. Hamann, who challenged the eighteenth-century school of rationalism. In 1769, Herder left Riga and sailed to Brittany and Nantes, France, where he met the prince of Holstein. Although he agreed to become the prince's tutor and accompany him on a grand tour of Italy, Herder remained with him for only a short time

before a painful eye infection forced him to seek corrective surgery. During his recuperation Herder met Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and formed an influential and fortuitous friendship. He urged the young Goethe to study and value his German cultural heritage. By this time, Herder had come to be regarded as the leader and initiator of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, which is characterized by emotional intensity and which often derived its inspiration from folk legend. He also promoted the study and emulation of “natural” poets such as Homer and Shakespeare instead of the “artificial” poets of French Neoclassicism. Under the recommendation of Goethe, Herder became the general superintendent at Weimar Court in 1776, but felt disassociated from Goethe's literary and cultural circles and was unhappy. The ideas presented in Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-91; *Outlines of a Philosophy on the History of Man*) met with considerable disapproval from his colleagues, particularly from Goethe and the followers of Kant. Although Goethe later insisted that he and Herder had remained on amicable terms, Herder considered the breach between them to be irreparable. Herder further isolated himself by challenging the doctrines of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, a study in transcendental philosophy. He never reconciled with his former colleagues and in 1803 died in isolation at Weimar.

MAJOR WORKS

The significant influence of Kant and Hamann is perhaps most evident in his *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (1767), a three-part essay in which Herder responds to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's collection of literary letters, *Litteraturbriefe*. In his work, Herder defines his concept of literary historicism, stating that the current character of every nation is the culmination of an evolutionary process which can be traced through the development of that culture's literature and language. Herder further maintains that literature must be judged in light of this history and not by the standards represented by French Neoclassical literature or the Latin and Greek classics. Thus, with this work, Herder joined the movement against Neoclassicism. Herder's literary theories were also evident in the emerging German Romantic movement. His essay *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache, walche den von der Königl* (1772; *Treatise upon the Origin of Language*) outlines Herder's concept of language, which he considers a

natural development of every culture. Herder's continued interest in folklore, folksongs, and German sagas is further evidenced in his edition of *Volkslieder* (1778), a collection of folk songs, some of which Herder translated into German. *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie* (1782-83; *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*) is another historical and cultural study. In this essay Herder discusses the development of Hebrew literature and cites it as a primary example of the natural historical maturation of folklore. As in his other works, Herder's theories in this essay are informed by his love of primitive poetry. In 1784, Herder published the first part of *Outlines of a Philosophy on the History of Man*, perhaps his most influential treatise. In the essay, Herder expanded his ideas from *Über die neuere deutsche Litteratur* and *Treatise upon the Origin of Language* and added a scientific component on organic evolution.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Critics have often observed that Herder's works lack both the style and structure that distinguish the creative efforts of his fellow German Romantics, and he has been unfavorably compared with Friedrich von Schiller, Goethe, and Lessing. Herder's genius, according to commentators, rests in his ability to recognize in the folklore and myths of Germany and other cultures a literary heritage previously unstudied and unrecognized. Although Herder's methods of analysis are now considered somewhat dated, modern commentators generally agree that his importance lies in his influence rather than in the literary value of his works. Herder remains important for his contributions to both the *Sturm und Drang* and Romantic movements, as well as for his recognition of the importance of German folklore and literature. While his works of literature will undoubtedly remain less important than those of succeeding German writers, his ideas remain central to German literature today.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Über die neuere deutsche Litteratur. Fragmente* (essays) 1767
Kritische Wälder (essays) 1769
Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache, walche den von der Königl [Treatise upon the Origin of Language] (essay) 1772
 "Shakespear" (essay) 1773
Volkslieder [editor] (folk songs) 1778; also published as *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, 1807
Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie. 2 vols. [*The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*] (essay) 1782-83

- Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. 4 vols. [*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*] (essays) 1784-91
Gott! Ein Gespräch [God: Some Conversations] (essay) 1787
Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität. 10 vols. (epistles) 1793-97
Adrastea. 6 vols. (plays and poetry) 1800-04
Der Cid [translator, from the ancient Spanish epic poem *Cantàr de mio Cid*] (poetry) 1805
J. G. Herders sämtliche Werke. 45 vols. (poetry, essays, criticism, and folk songs) 1805-20
Journal meiner Reise im Jahr (journal) 1846
Herders sämtliche Werke. 33 vols. (poetry, essays, criticism, and folk songs) 1877-1913

CRITICISM

Manfred Baum (essay date 1987)

SOURCE: Baum, Manfred. "Herder's 'Essay on Being,'" In *Herder Today: Contributions from the International Herder Conference*, Nov. 5-8, 1987, Stanford, California, edited by Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, pp. 126-37. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990.

[In the following essay, first delivered at a conference in 1987, Baum places Herder's *Essay on Being* within the context of eighteenth-century philosophical debate to demonstrate how the author's innovative approach is informed by other thinkers of his era.]

1. FROM IDEALISM TO SPINOZISM AND BACK AGAIN

Herder's "metaphysical exercise" (metaphysisches Exercitium: 9)¹ on Being is introduced by the "Prolegomena" and is concluded by a "final observation" (Schlußbetrachtung: 20). These sections contain epistemological reflections on the formation of concepts in human and divine thought. In the introductory part of his [*Essay on Being*] Herder first deals with the empiricist thesis that all our concepts are derived from the senses. In its Lockean form this thesis amounts to the denial of inborn truths (angeborene Wahrheiten).² If Locke's distinction of inner sense from outer senses is also accepted, the empiricist claim could be stated more precisely in the following manner: there is no other way to consciousness or inner sense than through the outer senses. That all our concepts are sensible would then mean that the content of these concepts is provided by the outer senses and that their function as concepts is due to the reflection of this content in inner sense. In this theory of concept formation it is presupposed that

there are objects outside the mind which affect the outer senses and thereby make possible concepts of the inner sense which could not be produced in any other way.

Although this empiricist theory seems to be well-founded by facts of experience, it has a metaphysical implication that is not obviously true, viz., that there are objects outside the mind which are the causes of its concepts. This metaphysical claim cannot itself be established by empirical knowledge since what is at issue here is not one or another experience, but the explanation of the possibility of experience in general in terms of the relation of things to the mind. This relation can and must be called into question. For the empiricist account of experience takes for granted what the idealist doubts, viz., that there are objects whose activity produces concepts in the mind such that experience of these objects is possible. It follows that there cannot be an empirical refutation of idealism since experience itself could have more than one cause.³

Other than being generated by objects of the outer senses, there is another possibility that must be considered, namely, that experience is the product of an inner principle of the human mind, viz., that of imagination. If idealism becomes dogmatic, it flatly denies the existence of outer objects; it does so on the strength of the indemonstrability of the existence of such objects by empirical arguments which already presuppose a realistic ontology. There is, then, an alternative to the empiricist theory of concept formation, namely, a theory that explains the possibility of concepts by their being products of the powers of the knowing mind alone. This would mean that (at least some) concepts would not merely reside in inner sense, but would also be the effects of spiritual powers within the thinking mind.

A refutation of this idealism presupposes certain insights concerning the relation of our faculty of representation to consciousness or inner sense. If the latter would indicate a spontaneity of the thinking self that went beyond the mere awareness of the representations of the outer senses, such a refutation would become difficult if not impossible. What, then, is consciousness or inner sense?

Comparison with other animals shows that they think or have concepts derived from outer senses without being conscious of them. Consciousness is the mark which distinguishes human thought from that of other animals. To be aware of one's thought is to see the pictures provided by the senses as one's own pictures. But is this faculty of consciousness as inner sense restricted to impressions of the outer senses such that there could not be an inner sense if there were no outer senses (as assumed by the realists)? If inner sense is not defined as the faculty of becoming conscious of the outer representations, but merely as a faculty of distinct represen-

tations (or of concepts in general), no realistic ontology is presupposed. For human beings concepts are only the result of abstraction and reflection exercised on the representations of outer things which we—like all other animals—get through the senses. Yet this does not preclude the possibility that such ideas of outer things were not derived from outer senses but are the products of a spiritual power of the mind. These ideas of the outer senses, and the outer senses themselves in their relation to the universe could both be mere ideas of a thinking self. This thinking self would be conscious of these ideas as its own and of the fact that they originate only from within its very self. In this case idealism would be driven to the extreme of solipsism. Whereas idealism takes only thinking beings as real, solipsism (or 'egoism') goes so far as to deny the existence of any beings outside the one thinking self having representations of bodies and persons. Solipsism amounts to the denial of the existence of the objects of thought (be they material or spiritual objects) outside of the thinking self itself. For the allowance of such beings would only be justified if there were an unambiguous way of inferring from a representation to an object as its cause. Since this is at least a doubtful mode of inference, any refutation of idealism or solipsism would require the proof that our concepts cannot be the products of our own mind's spiritual powers. As long as such a proof has not been provided, egoism remains a real possibility in metaphysics.

An egoistic world of thought (*mundus egoisticus*)⁴ consisting only of concepts generated by the thinking self is not only a possibility but a metaphysical fact. There is one *mundus egoisticus* of thought, namely God, or rather the God of the philosophers, which has no exterior objects related to it through outer senses. God is conceived of as free of all sensible impression or as Herder would put it, without any *given* concepts.⁵ This thinking being is a spiritual principle of thoughts endowed with consciousness of its thoughts and with self-consciousness or an image of itself. The divine consciousness is not conditioned by representations of outer senses and therefore its inner sense cannot be a mere awareness of such outer representations. The faculty of self-consciousness can be expressed by God's saying "I" to himself and, as Herder adds, God is perhaps the only being that can truly say "I" to itself, because all there is in it is a product of itself. The divine self-consciousness is not only denoted by the self-ascription of the "I", but by an expression of its absolute independence in thinking: "I think through myself" (*ich denke durch mich*: 11). Everything other than itself is only thought through it and is thereby immanent in it or is its thought. 'Being' means either God's being or being a thought of God in God. This divine egoism is not only a conception which can serve as a means of contrasting the human dependent mode of thinking with God's self-sufficient thought. For if it is true that every-

thing other than God is thought by God, his all-embracing thought is the sole principle of being. And this means that all other thinking beings, and all human beings are only the thoughts of God. God as "one egoistic world of thought" (eine egoistische Gedankenwelt: 11) is the one Being of a Spinozistic monism in terms of Wolffian metaphysics. Herder's presentation of divine egoism reveals a Spinozism *avant la lettre* (independent of Spinoza's actual writings) that can be construed from elements of sensualistic idealism.

This is confirmed by a remark that Herder makes in his concluding reflections after he has expounded his doctrine of being and its knowledge. There he notes in passing the "childish inference" (auf kindische Art geschlossen: 21) that God to whom no concept is given from outside has a concept of his own being as unanalyzable to him as our concept of being is to us. Since such an unanalyzable concept derived from the consciousness of his own being must also be called a sensible concept, his relation to himself must be that of inner sense. This yields a sensible impression or idea which would, as such, have the obscurity and yet certainty that is characteristic of the unique concept of being. But since all his other concepts are not given to him, but are products of his own thought, his own being would be the only thing that remained opaque to him.

This connection of metaphysical egoism as an extreme form of idealism with Spinozistic monism is not Herder's own invention. In Kant's *Reflexionen* on Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, stemming from the years 1764-66, that is from about the time that Herder heard Kant, we find the remark: "Omnis spinozista est egoista. Quaeritur, utrum omnis egoista necessario sit spinozista".⁶ The latter question which addresses Herder's way of understanding egoism as a metaphysical monism is answered in Kant's later lectures on metaphysics: "Dogmatic egoism is a hidden Spinozism." (Der Dogmatische Egoismus ist ein versteckter Spinozismus.)⁷

Now this identification of solipsism with Spinozism was to have a great career in the future of German Idealism. Jacobi in his *Letters on Spinoza* reports of his conversations with Lessing shortly before his death. There we read: "One time Lessing said with a half smile: he himself might be the supreme being, and presently in the state of the utmost contraction.—I—says Jacobi—asked for my existence".⁸ This Lessingian joke can only be understood if we assume that he was combining solipsism with Spinozism. If I can be certain only of my own existence, and if there is only one existing thing, these two existences must be one and the same thing. This means that I myself am the supreme being or Spinoza's unique substance. Jacobi mentions another occasion on which he had a conversation with Lessing: "When we sat at Gleim's table in Halberstadt,

suddenly a rain came and Gleim regretted this because he wanted us to go into his garden after the meal, Lessing, who sat beside me, said to me: 'Jacobi, you know, perhaps I do that [namely, let it rain].' I responded: 'Or I'".⁹

These playful allusions to solipsistic Spinozism are only the occasional reflections of the ways in which metaphysical monism made its way through this epoch of German philosophy. It was Herder who gives us another account of Lessing's Spinozism in his letter to Jacobi (February 6, 1784). On the wallpaper in Gleim's house he found a formula from Lessing's hand: "Hen ego Kai pan" (I am one and all) in which Spinoza's monism is expressed in terms of a metaphysical egoism. This was a memento of Lessing's visit to Halberstadt and his jocular conversations with Jacobi.

When Fichte published his *Science of Knowledge* (1794/95), he compared his transcendental idealism with Spinoza's metaphysical system and found an important agreement between the theoretical part of his philosophy and Spinoza's monism: "The theoretical portion of our Science of Knowledge . . . is in fact . . . Spinozism made systematic; save only that any given self is itself the one ultimate substance".¹⁰ Instead of Herder's divine egoist, we have here "any given self" (eines jeden Ich) as the idealistic principle which is in certain respects the same as Spinoza's unique substance. Herder's youthful construction of an egoistic world of thought has now become a doctrine of the self's being all reality. By that time Lessing's joke had been taken seriously.

2. THE CONCEPT OF BEING AND THE LIMITS OF PHILOSOPHY

Herder arrives at the concept of Being by a meditation on the human condition, i. e. on the sensibility of all our ideas and concepts. Being is introduced as the most sensible (der allersinnlichste: 12) and, therefore, the most unanalyzable concept, which is yet a most certain (höchst gewiss: *ibid.*) concept, but one that is entirely indemonstrable. For human beings it is therefore true that their conviction of Being, of the existence of the objects of their senses, is at once most certain and most obscure.

The sensualist doctrine that all my representations are sensible is accepted by Herder simultaneously with the Wolffian doctrine that the sensibility and obscurity of a representation (or concept) are synonymous. A good reference for this doctrine is Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* § 520 f: to know something "*obscure confuseque seu indistincte*" depends on the faculty called "*facultas cognoscitiva inferior*", and the representation which is "*non distincta*" is called "*representatio sensitiva*". Since all analysis of sensible representations has a limit in the

first origin of our concepts in sensibility, the unanalyzable remnant of sensibility and indistinctness is in principle undisposable.

But the expectation that a lack of analyzability is equivalent to a lack of certainty is only a prejudice of the philosopher. This opposition of the philosopher and the common man, or of the philosopher and the plebeian (Pöbel) is one of the traces of Herder's study of Hume's *Inquiry*.¹¹ (The presence of the plebeian in Hume's text indicates his indebtedness to Cicero on this account.) The most unanalyzable concept would be the most uncertain concept for the philosopher, but not for man. Whereas for man sensible concepts are certain in the sense that they have a convincing power, the analyzed concepts of the philosopher owe their certainty to their power of demonstration. Demonstration as well as all logical truth rests on the analysis of concepts. This Leibniz-Wolffian theory of judgement and inference, also present in Kant's *Falsche Spitzfindigkeit* (1762) and in his lectures on metaphysics as reported by Herder,¹² complements the sensualist theory of concept-formation (as far as man is concerned). Here again we find the mixture of British empiricism and Wolffian rationalism which was characteristic of Kant at that time and which is Herder's Kantian heritage lasting the rest of his life.

This Herderian syncretism is manifest when he exclaims: "Take here the two extreme thoughts of our hybrid humanity. . . ." (11). Man is as such a hybrid of animality and rationality, and within mankind this double character is represented by the opposition of the philosopher to the plebeian. Both of them stand for a one-sided preponderance of the rational or sensible powers of man who is as such neither a philosopher nor a plebeian. The same thought is more drastically expressed in Kant's lecture on metaphysics; this we know from Herder's lecture notes: man is "half an angel, half an animal: a centaur".¹³

But what are the two extreme thoughts of our hybrid humanity, which pair of concepts is alluded to? It must be the concept of something (Etwas) and the concept of Being (Sein). Being is the most sensible concept that underlies all other concepts insofar as they are concepts of beings. As such, Being also appears to be the most general concept, the most abstract concept. But this is implicitly denied by calling it the most sensible concept. The most abstract concept is taken from Baumgarten's ontology: something. It is only the most general of all the concepts that presuppose the concept of Being. But Herder says nothing of the logical status of this most sensible concept, whether it is a concrete or a singular concept. And since there is no distinction between concepts, thoughts, images, sensations, impressions etc., the notion of concept means just the same as representation or distinct representation. Clearly Herder insists

on its sensibility. Taken literally this would mean that the concept lost its universality and thereby its logical character as *notio communis*. Thus Being would not only be undefinable (since it is logically insoluble), but also not a concept at all. If, however, we take its sensibility only as a synonym for unanalyzability, then the concept of Being becomes describable in terms of its logical development in the human mind. Here, and on several other occasions of Herder's *Essay*, its indebtedness to Crusius' logic and metaphysics becomes obvious.¹⁴ For Being is thought to be at the top of a hierarchy of unanalyzable concepts, and it is followed by the concepts *juxta*, *post* and *per*, i. e., space, time and force. By this order of abstractness of unanalyzable concepts, the concept of Being becomes the most abstract and the common content of space (place) and time.

"Being" and "Something" are related to one another as "real Being" (Realsein) to "logical Being", or as the natural impression (Eindruck der Natur) of Being to its copy in thought. This manner of disposition clearly shows Herder's attempt to reconcile Baumgarten's ontology with Hume's doctrine of the origin of ideas. The unanalyzability and indefinability of real Being is an indication of the greatest possible certainty despite its logical unaccessibility. Such a certainty derives from mother nature, or from a "theoretical instinct" (12) of man, and not from the human understanding as exercised in philosophy. Idealism on the other hand can be seen as an attempt to deny Being with the intention of pointing out to philosophers the "end of philosophy" (13) as a demonstrative and rational undertaking.¹⁵

Herder's criticism of Baumgarten's attempt to define his logical Being or *aliquid*¹⁶ largely proceeds on Kantian lines. His arguments are taken from Kant's *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Grössen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (1763) and his *Einzig möglicher Beweisgrund* (1763). When Baumgarten defines *aliquid* as *non-nihil*, he ignores that the nothing from which he proceeds must be the absolute cancellation of real Being, and not the logical nothing that is the result of a contradiction, or something impossible. But if real Being is absolutely cancelled, there can be no logical contradiction. For any such logical impossibility presupposes something that is posited and cancelled at the same time. Such a formal relation of contradiction can only arise if there is already something posited as material, and this is excluded *ex hypothesi*. But without any matter or material, the formal relation of contradiction is itself impossible, or rather, without some material, impossibility is impossible. Thus Baumgarten's attempt to define *aliquid* as *non-nihil* or the logical opposite of the impossible fails insofar as his *nihil* already presupposes something and therefore Being. Being is to be considered as the basis (Grundlage) and element of all thinking, of all contradiction, and of all logic.

But even if the attempted definition of Being does not proceed from nothing, but from possibility (Wolff's *existentia* or *actualitas* as *complementum possibilitatis*) it can be shown with Crusius that the concept of Being (actuality) is prior to the concept of possibility, and that real possibility is earlier than logical possibility. Herder elucidates the subjective priority of real possibility by a reflection on the discovery of causality and the concept of force by early mankind. The explanation of the actual as a consequence of the possible presupposes the concept of force, and thereby the concept of something existing that has this force. Such forces and the substances in which they reside are only empirically knowable. Being as allegedly derived from real possibility therefore proves to be an entirely empirical concept. And since logical possibility cannot be understood without real possibility and force, which can only be empirically known, all logical attempts to define Being in an original way have failed.

But Baumgarten's and Wolff's definition of Being can also be rejected with the empiricist argument that any concepts of Being are only concepts which—as such—must be abstracted from their objects. They remain themselves untouched and unaltered by such abstraction. Logical possibility as the possibility of thoughts and real possibility thus both presuppose real Being.

Only in passing Herder criticizes Kant's definition of Being as absolute positing. The two arguments he adduces are: (1) positing is synonymous with Being and can therefore not define it. (2) If Being could be defined as absolute positing, one could also speak of God's Being as his absolute positing which is not an adequate way of talking about God.

After Herder's proof of the undefinability of the concept of Being, he analyzes existential propositions in order to prove the indemonstrability of every such proposition, that is, of Being.

According to Herder existential propositions have no logical predicate. The way Herder tries to prove this assertion is rather curious. For Herder every logical predicate must be contained as a partial concept in its subject. This is Leibniz's doctrine that every true judgement asserts the inherence of a predicate in a subject, which in its Wolffian form says that every true judgement is an analytic judgement (to use Kant's later terminology). In the time of Herder's sojourn at Königsberg, Kant was still an adherent of this doctrine. Now Herder's argument makes a particular use of this doctrine based on his conception of concepts. Since concepts are only logical creatures of our mind, every subject-concept of a proposition must be a logically possible combination of all (possible) predicate-concepts that can be asserted of it in a true and therefore analytic judgement. But since Being has not to be taken as a logical concept, it

cannot be a partial concept of the subject-concept that is combined with other possible predicate-concepts according to the rule of logical possibility, i. e., to the rule of non-contradiction. Therefore Being should and could not be a possible predicate of any subject. (In Kant's later terminology: existential propositions are not analytic, but synthetic propositions. But this implies that Being is a logical predicate.) Now Herder does not say that Being is not a possible predicate of *any* subject, but he says that "this" subject of the proposition "God is existent" is only a logical creature, a relation of concepts according to logical possibility. The subject-concept of this particular proposition is "God," or the "*ens realissimum*" whose determinations are thought as united in him without contradiction. The logical possibility of the *ens realissimum* does not imply its existence since Being as a real concept (*Realbegriff*) cannot be asserted of God on the strength of an analysis of the logically possible concept of the *ens realissimum*. Thus Being cannot be deduced from possibility by way of an analysis of concepts which would have to be the case if there should be a proof of existential propositions. This is true of every existential proposition since Herder thinks (with the Kant of that period) that proof of a proposition can only be established by means of concept-analysis. On the basis of the theory of true judgements as analytic judgements, every proof requires the establishment of a partial identity of the predicate and the subject in the conclusion by means of a middle term. The general result of this argument is that every existential proposition is indemonstrable since Being is a real concept and as such not contained in any logical subject-concept. This argumentation relies heavily on Kant's *Einzig Möglicher Beweisgrund*, but it makes no use of Kant's definition of Being as absolute positing. Instead Herder employs the unclear notion of a "real concept" which, according to him, is an exclusively empirical concept and which cannot be predicated *a priori*. Herder's argument against the ontological proof thus consists of a combination of Kantian and Humean insights. It amounts to the claim that every existential proposition is indemonstrable *because* it is exclusively empirical.

The same is true of Herder's argument against a demonstration of the reverse proposition: "something existing is God" (etwas existiert: ist Gott: 17).¹⁷ This reversal of an existential proposition is taken from Kant's *Einzig Möglicher Beweisgrund*, but the argument that such a proposition cannot be proved by an analysis of its concepts rests entirely on the claim that the subject-concept of existence is not a logical concept in which the concept of God is contained. This is true because the subject-concept is an empirical concept. Herder's empiricism precludes any proof of existence because it opposes the *a priori* connection of this concept with any logical concept, be it subject or predicate of a proposition. And Herder appeals to mere common sense

when he says: "You do not try to prove *a priori* any empirical concept" (17).¹⁸

Finally Herder criticizes Kant's new proof of God's existence which rests on the concept of an absolutely necessary being. Herder argues that Kant made an unjustified move when he proceeded from the lack of an inner possibility (in the absence of a material for thought) to the absolute impossibility of anything (under the same condition). For from there not being a possibility of something there follows no absolute impossibility of something. As Kant himself had shown in his *Einzig Möglicher Beweisgrund*, a denial of a possibility for lack of the material of possibility is not the same as impossibility, since the latter is only a result of a logical conflict or a contradiction. This formal relation within the impossible presupposes two materials that stand in conflict and cancel each other out.¹⁹ Now just this material is denied being if all inner possibility is sublated and therefore there is no way of thinking an impossibility as a result of the lack of inner possibility.

This argument that turns Kant's doctrines against their author ignores the core of Kant's new conception of an absolute impossibility as a consequence of the lack of any inner possibility. For Kant's argument only rests on the consideration that it is contradictory (impossible) to think of something as possible when at the same time nothing exists that provides the matter for the formal relation of possibility. Thus it is absolutely impossible that something be possible without the existence of the necessary condition of any possibility, i. e., the existence of a Being that is thereby known to be an absolutely necessary Being.

In his concluding section Herder draws together all the consequences of his investigation: Being is indemonstrable, therefore God's existence is indemonstrable. And since the existence of something outside the mind is equally indemonstrable, a refutation of idealism is impossible. This seems to lead to the skeptical consequence that certainty concerning the existence of states of affairs and objects or demonstrable knowledge of matters of fact is impossible, since all existential propositions are indemonstrable. If our knowledge of facts rests on the proof of existential propositions, there is no knowledge proper in this greatest part of human cognition. All that could be known with certainty would be Hume's relations of ideas that are expressed in analytic propositions. Herder refers to these analytic relations of ideas in his remark: "All propositions that are now demonstrable in the best way [i. e. analytically] are nothing without Being: mere relations" (19).

But this way of drawing consequences from the preceding investigation would be precipitous. It is not true that all Being is uncertain. The certainty of Being is obvious and it does not rest on demonstration. In fact

there is no need for a demonstration of Being as far as empirical Being is concerned since nobody has ever denied it. Thus it is not the case that the proof of existing things is an uncertain proof, but there is no proof whatsoever for Being. And there need not be a proof since the certainty of Being as the first and entirely sensible concept is even the model for all other certainty in demonstration and science. The reason for this certainty is to be sought in the nature of man. Certainty of Being is an inborn certainty. Nature herself convinces man of Being and it is only philosophy that invented an unnatural skeptical doubt in it. As a result of such an artificial skepticism concerning the existence of an external world, philosophers ventured to give a proof for it. But this was only possible as long as the nature of Being was not understood, and its relation to knowledge, to concepts and propositions, was not made perspicuous.

In Herder's *Essay* such an investigation is undertaken and systematically brought to completeness. Thereby the limits of philosophy are made clear. Since Being is the common principle for all beings in the sensible world and in the world of reason, philosophy has a supreme subject matter, and this—as has been shown—cannot be known by demonstration. However, the limits of philosophy as a demonstrable science are not at the same time the limits of human nature. The most essential concerns of human knowledge lie outside the realm of philosophy, taken as a science. Nature is the teacher of mankind and provides it with all the certainty it can reasonably claim to have. Thus Rousseau's trust in nature neatly combines with Hume's doctrine of the irrationality of our knowledge of Being.

Notes

1. Quotations are from: J. G. Herder, *Werke*, Band 1, ed. U. Gaier, Frankfurt am Main 1985. Page numbers following the quotations refer to this edition, translations are my own.
2. From a deleted passage printed in: *Herder als Schüler Kants*, ed. G. Martin, Kant-Studien 41 (1936), p. 296.
3. Cf. Hume's *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford 1966, p. 152 f.
4. This is the term used in Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, 4th ed., Halle/Magdeburg 1757, §§ 392, 438.
5. We thus have a system of thoughts or representations of the outer and inner senses in the following table:

animals	outer senses	—
humans	outer senses	inner sense
God	—	inner sense