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HERDER'S PHANTOM PUBLIC*

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Some of Herder's most striking ideas stemmed from his early evaluation of German literary publicity, which to his mind stood in stark contrast to conditions in the sociable world. Such a predicament bespeaks the importance of considering the relationship between printed text and lived sociability in the Enlightenment. By charting the heady twists and turns in his intellectual development from 1765 to 1769, this essay treats the young Herder in what for him became an aesthetically charged field between the two. The "phantom" public which he came to envision would be manifest to the senses, at least to the extent that it might be "felt" by the reader of print, but it also amounted to a surrogate for the more tangibly sensual experience of face-to-face community.

In the past fifteen years, scholars have grown increasingly interested in why the young Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) made and then abandoned plans to become a *philosophe*. Too often stale debates about his role in a so-called "Counter-Enlightenment" have framed the historiography, where it is the later Herder who takes center stage.[1] Yet with their focus on his mature work, scholars

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1 See the *JHI* exchange: Robert E. Norton, "The Myth of the Counter-Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68 (2007), 635–58; Steven Lestition, "Countering, Transposing, or Negating the Enlightenment? A Response to Robert Norton," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68 (2007), 659–81; Norton, "Isaiah Berlin's 'Expressionism,' or: 'Ha! Du bist das Blökende!'," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69 (2008), 339–47. Also see Isaiah Berlin, "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *idem*, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York, 1980), 1–24; *idem*, "Herder and the Enlightenment," in *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder* (Princeton, 2000), 168–242. For a broader definition of the term see Frederick C. Beiser, "Berlin and the German Counter-Enlightenment," in

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have overlooked a preoccupation of Herder's datable to the 1760s, namely his ambition to articulate a form of community befitting German-speaking Europe. That early aporia helps to explain his inability to realize a more concrete notion of "human socialization," to quote one interpreter, but it also permits us to explore Herder's complex engagement with his age.[2] This essay traces the period between Herder's entry into a debate on the status of German community in 1765 and his visit to France four years later. I argue that what most exercised the youthful Herder was a conflicted "feeling" of modern publicity as a phenomenon capable of enactment not only in print, but also sociably, in the world outside the text. Herder attempted to circumvent what he viewed as the insufficiently sociable character of German publicity through a dual appeal to the print domain as an "affective" space and to man as an aesthetic being with access to it. France, revealing to Herder the possibility of a significance to modern sociability that he had relegated to classical antiquity, confronted him with an unexpectedly tangible alternative to this vision.

Though attunement to the sociocultural practices of Enlightenment publicity remains unusual in the study of the *Aufklärung*, specialists of France and Britain have made strides in this direction.[3] They have uncovered connections between print and the sociability of men and women in theaters, salons, and coffee houses. Each of these "sites and social spaces," as Charles Withers has demonstrated,

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Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler, eds., *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2003), 107–8; Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 204; Robert E. Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1991), 53.

[2] Brian J. Whitton, "Herder's Critique of the Enlightenment: Cultural Community versus Cosmopolitan Rationalism," *History and Theory* 27 (1988), 162–3.

[3] But see Ernst Manheim, *Aufklärung und öffentliche Meinung: Studien zur Soziologie der Öffentlichkeit im 18. Jahrhundert*, new edn (Bad Cannstatt, 1979), esp. 24–32. For said specialists, start with Elena Russo, "Editor's Preface," in *idem*, ed., *Exploring the Conversible World: Text and Sociability from the Classical Age to the Enlightenment* (New Haven, 1997), 1–7. On the imbrication of canonical French texts with *politesse* see Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1994), esp. 53–135; Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670–1789* (Princeton, 1994); Steven D. Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore, 2004), esp. 19–43. For a contrary view see Antoine Lilti, "Sociabilité et mondanité: Les hommes de lettres dans les salons parisiens au XVIIIe siècle," *French Historical Studies* 28 (2005), 415–45. On how the bodies of actors and orators served as conduits for the spread of a literary public civility in eighteenth-century Britain see Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge, 2005). On the British coffee house see Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995), 807–34.

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lent texture to the textual side of modern publicity.[4] As for the German states, certainly one cannot dispute the existence there of that critical–rational exchange of letters identified by Habermas as a constitutive element of the eighteenth-century public sphere.[5] It is no longer plausible to portray the German print domain as derivative, whether with regard to liveliness or to thematic richness and originality.[6] A profusion of newspapers and journals, for example the new "moral weeklies," drew together a critically conversant audience and counterweight to *ancien régime* authority.[7]

As we shall see, however, Herder complained of the absence of a complement to this vibrant literary life in the world outside the text. How was this possible? It is not news, most obviously, that eighteenth-century German intellectuals lacked an urban center of gravity where print culture and oral culture might directly reinforce each other.[8] Yet the landscape was hardly barren, for the *Aufklärung* witnessed the rise in German cities of a bourgeois associational life with lasting political implications.[9] From Leipzig to Berlin to Hamburg, from reading societies to table societies to patriotic societies and other "clubs," whether

4 Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago, 2007), 62–82. See also Emanuel Peter, *Geselligkeiten: Literatur, Gruppenbildung und kultureller Wandel im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1999), 16.

5 See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA, 1989). For emendations to Habermas refer to Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 289–339.

6 Refer particularly to Ursula Goldenbaum, "Die öffentliche Debatte in der deutschen Aufklärung 1697–1976," in *idem*, ed., *Appell an das Publikum: Die öffentliche Debatte in der deutschen Aufklärung 1687–1796* (Berlin, 2004), 2–118. Additionally see Andreas Gestrich, *Absolutismus und Öffentlichkeit: Politische Kommunikation in Deutschland zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1994), esp. 13–14, 21–3, 135–200.

7 Hans Erich Bödeker, "Journals and Public Opinion: The Politicization of the German Enlightenment in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," in Eckhart Hellmuth, ed., *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1990), 423–45. For the reading of newspapers see Martin Welke, "Gemeinsame Lektüre und frühe Formen von Gruppenbildungen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Zeitungslesen in Deutschland," in Otto Dann, ed., *Lesegesellschaften und bürgerliche Emanzipation: Ein europäischer Vergleich* (Munich, 1981), 29–53; and Holger Böning, "Aufklärung und Presse im 18. Jahrhundert," in Hans-Wolf Jäger, ed., *"Öffentlichkeit" im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1997), 151–63.

8 Cf. Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 247–52.

9 Thomas Nipperdey, "Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert: Eine Fallstudie zur Modernisierung," in *idem, Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1976), 174–205.

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in an active coffee house culture or within the context of a freemasonry whose politicizing function, here as elsewhere in Europe, has been disputed, German society possessed an undeniable sociability.[10] How these sociable forms could be experienced, on the other hand, has yet to be determined systematically.

Within the confines of this article I am concerned with Herder's experience of the situation in Germany, the conceptual resources he mustered to grapple with it, and the repercussions for him as a thinker. Modern publicity disclosed itself to Herder as a phantom of the printed word, but not inherently, and the fashion in which the young preacher and publicist from East Prussia sought to lend flesh to this phantom deserves attention.[11] Here not a few have paved the way. Several works, seeking to bring the Habermas thesis into deeper dialogue with German intellectual history, have returned to writers other than Kant in

[10] For an analysis of eighteenth-century forms of (German) sociability, see Ulrich im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert: Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Munich, 1982); Richard van Dülmen, *Die Gesellschaft der Aufklärer: Zur bürgerlichen Emanzipation und aufklärerischen Kultur in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986). On reading societies: Marlies Prüsener, "Lesegesellschaften im 18. Jahrhundert: Ein Beitrag zur Lesergeschichte," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 13 (1972), 369–594; Otto Dann, "Die Lesegesellschaften des 18. Jahrhunderts und der gesellschaftliche Aufbruch des deutschen Bürgertums," in Ulrich Herrmann, ed., *Die Bildung des Bürgers: Die Formierung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft und die Gebildeten im 18. Jahrhundert* (Weinheim, 1989), 100–18. Table societies are treated in Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 34–6; Rudolf Vierhaus, "Friedrich Nicolai und die Berliner Gesellschaft," in *idem*, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert: Politische Verfassung, soziales Gefüge, geistige Bewegungen* (Göttingen, 1987), 157–66; Markus Fauser, *Das Gespräch im 18. Jahrhundert: Rhetorik und Geselligkeit in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1993), 280–99; Falko Schneider, *Öffentlichkeit und Diskurs: Studien zu Entstehung, Struktur und Form der Öffentlichkeit im 18. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld, 1992), 222–49. For coffee houses: Hans Erich Bödeker, "Das Kaffeehaus als Institution aufklärerischer Geselligkeit," in Etienne François, ed., *Sociabilité et société bourgeoise en France, en Allemagne et en Suisse, 1750–1850* (Paris, 1986), 65–80; Ulla Heise, *Kaffee und Kaffeehaus: Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Hildesheim, 1987); Peter Albrecht, "Kaffeetrinken: Dem Bürger zur Ehr', dem Armen zur Schand," in Rudolf Vierhaus, ed., *Das Volk als Objekt obrigkeitlichen Handelns* (Tübingen, 1992), 57–100. On the lodge see Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*, trans. Maria Santos (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 70 ff. For a critique, Anthony J. La Vopa, "Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe," *Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992), 83–98. Salons, incompatible with a post-Napoleonic culture of masculinity, had a brief florescence in 1790s Berlin. See Fauser, *Gespräch*, 25–8, 32–5; Klaus Hermsdorf, *Literarisches Leben in Berlin: Aufklärer und Romantiker* (Berlin, 1987), 220–31; James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), 219–24. Also refer to Peter Seibert, *Der literarische Salon: Literatur und Geselligkeit zwischen Aufklärung und Vormärz* (Stuttgart, 1993); Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven, 1989); and Petra Wilhelmy, *Der Berliner Salon im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1989).

[11] On Herder's upbringing see Rudolf Haym, *Herder*, new edn, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1954), 1: 17–35.

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order to show the diversity of reactions to the eighteenth-century literary public sphere. Benjamin Redekop describes the rise of a new personality in German letters, the "public writer." This "transcendent" archetype heralded the stirrings of "common political culture" in pre-1789 Germany, a community concentrated in print but difficult to locate. The later Herder in particular is characterized as desirous of an "organic" public synthesis.[12] Yet, as Anthony La Vopa has pointed out, the written encounter could be ambivalent for the public writer, since the modern print domain not only offered level terrain for ideas but threatened to level ideas outright.[13] La Vopa and Harold Mah have pursued this line of thought with emphasis on Herder and his attitude towards modern print culture. Mah describes Herder's reservations about "the abstract and phantasmatic space of the modern public sphere" and its power to homogenize language. For La Vopa it was Herder's occasional skepticism vis-à-vis print publicity, compounded by his refusal to accept the French "linguistic regime," or what Herder viewed as a despotic collusion of language with courtly sociability, which proved decisive.[14]

La Vopa's analysis focuses on the relationship between print, orality, and power. What it does not address, however, is the crucial aesthetic–affective dimension of Herder's misgivings. This forms the focus of my discussion here. I disagree that Herder truly longed for "the vital oral culture of a purified nation," since it was the vital oral culture of Paris that so challenged him.[15] Herder's actually quite deep faith in the potential power of print as a tool for cultural reform, pitfalls aside, was almost a blinding one; he longed for the "purity" of an aesthetic construct, his ideal print-based public of affective belonging. This fact emerges only against the backdrop of his intellectual pursuits in the mid- to late 1760s.

Herder's early work was fueled by German patriotic yearnings with which he sympathized, but he espied at their core the lack of a tangible community, a "true" public. This suggested to Herder a need of a different order, which he attempted to redress with recourse not to a praxis of sociability but to aesthetic theory. When I refer in this essay to sensation, therefore, I knowingly adduce something with an ambiguous provenance: sensuous experience can arise sociably, indeed can even derive from particularly visceral reading, but it can also be theorized in the language of aesthetics, with all of the ideality and abstract seamlessness such

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12 Benjamin W. Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community: Lessing, Abbt, Herder and the Quest for a German Public* (Montreal, 2000), 37–57, 185–8.

13 La Vopa, "Conceiving a Public," 108–9.

14 Harold Mah, "The Man with Too Many Qualities: The Young Herder between France and Germany," in *idem*, *Enlightenment Phantasies: Cultural Identity in France and Germany, 1750–1914* (Ithaca, 2003), 25–8; Anthony J. La Vopa, "Herder's *Publikum*: Language, Print, and Sociability in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1996), 11–15.

15 La Vopa, "Herder's *Publikum*," 15.

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a move entails. Rarely does this ambiguity pose a dilemma of great magnitude, but it did for Herder, whose early ambitions depended upon it. His "imagined community" was unusually imaginative, and the frustrations which he thereby incurred were that much more intense.[16] Nothing short of an aesthetic plan for cultural reform accompanied Herder on his journey to France in 1769. It also set him up for disappointment. Like any intellectual, Herder thought and wrote within a set of personal motivations and expectations. In France these gave way to a crisis of expectations and a reorientation of priorities that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

THE LIMITS OF PATRIOTISM

The Seven Years War (1756–63) incited a flurry of patriotic tracts in the German states, above all in Prussia, marking a watershed both for the political self-awareness of a bourgeois reading public and for the vigor of German intellectual debate.[17] For publicists a "war of the pen," the conflict "contributed to an astounding boom in collective models of identity within the early patriotic discourse," as Hans-Martin Blitz has noted.[18] Since on the Continent it pitted Prussia not only against Russia and Sweden but also against Austria, the war and the burgeoning particularistic patriotism bound up with it threatened both the already fragile Holy Roman Empire and an older *Reichspatriotismus*, or Holy Roman patriotism, which was forced into a defensive position.[19] As a whole, however, this enlightened, frequently cosmopolitan movement—inflected in the Protestant lands by the ecumenicism and emotionalism of Lutheran Pietism—was notable less for any consistent political referent than for its common goal of testing the boundaries of German community in a rapidly changing Europe.[20] Herder tailored his initial remarks on the issue to this patriotic discourse. A

[16] I refer of course to Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, new edn (London, 2006).

[17] Hans-Martin Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland: Die deutsche Nation im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 2000), 153–71; Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 219–30. Eckhart Hellmuth looks at Prussian patriotism as emblematic of the artificiality of the nation in "Die 'Wiedergeburt' Friedrichs des Großen und der 'Tod fürs Vaterland': Zum patriotischen Selbstverständnis in Preußen in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts," in Hellmuth and Reinhard Stauber, eds., *Nationalismus vor dem Nationalismus?* (Hamburg, 1998), 23–54.

[18] Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland*, 148–49.

[19] Karl Otmar Freiherr von Aretin, "Reichspatriotismus," in Günter Birtsch, ed., *Patriotismus* (Hamburg, 1991), 25–36.

[20] Gerhard Kaiser, *Pietismus und Patriotismus im literarischen Deutschland: Ein Beitrag zur Problem der Säkularisation*, 2nd edn (Wiesbaden, 1973), esp. 70–84; Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland*, 150–52, 184–6; Christoph Prignitz, *Vaterlandsliebe und Freiheit: Deutscher Patriotismus von 1750–1850* (Wiesbaden, 1981), 7–38. See also Rudolf Vierhaus,

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vogue for war-tinged, sentimental patriotism spurred on the young publicist, who found before him a consciousness-building exercise of the spirit whose core he would attempt to preserve as he challenged its premises.

Especially influential for Herder was Thomas Abbt (1738–66), also something of a transient and lonesome *Wunderkind*, whose treatise "Vom Tode für das Vaterland" appeared in 1761.[21] Abbt concluded that a modified neoclassical patriotism could address a major question posed by the Seven Years War: what sort of stance was required of the literate citizen and spectator, and how involved should that stance be? Abbt looked to the human heart for a potential answer, devising a patriotically minded program with a strong emotional impress. His brand of affective patriotism subsisted in the encounter between a classically stylized fatherland and the enthusiastic commitment of the patriotic subject. "Vom Tode," with its innovative employment of sentimentalism, recalled Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), which had met with instantaneous acclaim in the German states. Montesquieu's praise of patriotism as the affectionate, subjective counterpart to a legalistic construct of national spirit had broken with a Baroque tendency to conceive of patriotism in conventionally classical terms.[22]

"Vom Tode" saw Abbt give pride of place to such subjectivity, which induced him to draw most prominently upon the idea of *sensus communis* in Shaftesbury as well as the motif of *vita activa* in Ciceronian oratory.[23] Abbt developed a war patriotism superficially modeled on the *patria* of Roman republicanism. Self-sacrifice is the patriot's tie to his native land, whether by birth or by choice; the

"'Patriotismus': Begriff und Realität einer moralisch-politischen Haltung," in *idem*, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, 101–7.

[21] Hans Erich Bödeker, "Thomas Abbt: Patriot, Bürger und bürgerliches Bewußtsein," in Rudolf Vierhaus, ed., *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Heidelberg, 1981), 225–6, 246–9; Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community*, 165. Unfortunately I do not have space in which to develop the problem of intra-German "foreignness," or the experience of Germans in German-speaking principalities to which they had no native ties. It is certainly worth exploring.

[22] Rudolf Vierhaus, "Montesquieu in Deutschland: Zur Geschichte seiner Wirkung als politischer Schriftsteller im 18. Jahrhundert," in *idem*, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, 9–32; Nicholas Vazsonyi, "Montesquieu, Friedrich Carl von Moser, and the 'National Spirit Debate' in Germany, 1765–1767," *German Studies Review* 22 (1999), 231–3. In the *Lettres persanes*, Montesquieu embraced the "sentimental Troglodyte" as a unified "man-citizen" and ideal bearer of rights. See Susan Maslan, "The Dream of the Feeling Citizen: Law and Emotion in Corneille and Montesquieu," *SubStance* 109 (2006), 76–81.

[23] Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community*, 126–38.

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bond of blood is externally expressed, which is to say, shed.[24] Such fondness for classical-republican tropes might make Abbt's fervent support for Prussia seem puzzling, and moreover it set him at odds with Montesquieu, who had tightly linked patriotic attachment to the republican form of government.[25] Abbt preferred monarchy for what he saw as its power to bring the *Stände* (estates) closer together.[26] Paramount, however, were his concerns for the spatial coherence of the polity, and it was in this respect that he found the crown most salutary. Abbt linked space with power, claiming that "in republics, zeal for the fatherland lessens accordingly as its territory grows. Monarchies, however, are generally of great scope." Far from causing the patriotism of its subjects to sleep, one of Rousseau's concerns, this would promote the communicability of that patriotism: "All glory accruing to the prince, all resplendence which circulates around him, constitutes as it were a light ether around the entire nation."[27] Civic virtue could not thrive within a decentralized territory like the Holy Roman Empire, asserted Abbt, whereas a monarchy like Prussia might sustain such virtue indefinitely. Abbt favored the framework he considered most capable of fostering an affective bond that an entire people could share.

Abbt preached the glory of obeying a spirited call to die for the fatherland, reasoning that the pathos of mass immolation would invoke the community of common sentiment allegedly known to the Greeks and Romans.[28] He also wondered, however, whether there existed any forum in Germany where such a call could resonate and be heard. This difficulty struck him as sensory in nature. The call of ancient patriotism, the call to death, was for Abbt always oral, the "voice of the fatherland." Yet while antiquity had its ancient orators to mediate that voice, in Germany there existed "no public places where we congregate for deliberations," where the "sleepy citizen" might hear the clarion call to "die joyfully for the fatherland." Abbt's halting suggestion that the German clerisy adopt a patriotic evangel pointed up the severity of the problem.[29] Here an image of ancient sociability, the frictive and fructive coming together of engaged citizens, had been translated into strongly sensuous terms, and the present was found wanting. The voice of patriotism could reverberate as a command intuitable to

[24] Thomas Abbt, "Vom Tode für das Vaterland," in Johannes Kunisch, ed., *Aufklärung und Kriegserfahrung: Klassische Zeitzeugen zum Siebenjährigen Krieg* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 613.

[25] Bödeker, "Thomas Abbt," 236–7; Vierhaus, "Montesquieu in Deutschland," 20–21.

[26] Abbt, "Vom Tode," 600. See also Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community*, 140–41.

[27] Abbt, "Vom Tode," 603, 614.

[28] On death for the fatherland as a popular poetic *topos* of these years see Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland*, 223–65.

[29] Abbt, "Vom Tode," 594. Refer also to Dagobert de Levie, "Patriotism and Clerical Office: Germany 1761–1773," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14 (1953), 622–7.

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the senses, but without a proper forum in which it might be heard, no ignition of Abbt's affective flame could be possible and thus no emergence of a genuine community. "Vom Tode" posited, indeed "felt," a collective aesthetic dilemma, but it promised no solution.

Four years later, a twenty-one-year-old Herder affirmed the desirability of Abbt's ideal while calling into question the power of affective patriotism to realize it. At that moment Herder, who had just finished his studies at Königsberg, was teaching in the cathedral school in Riga, then home to a sizable German merchant elite.[30] "Haben wir noch jetzt das Publikum und Vaterland der Alten?" was completed in 1765 as a ceremonial speech, one perhaps never delivered, for the council of elders at Riga as well as Catherine II. It was published the following year. Herder interpreted in the civic spirit of classical antiquity a division between public and fatherland, weighing the adaptability of each to the nominally Russian *respublica Rigensis*, but also with advertence to his German-language readership.[31] He recast Abbt's patriotic "voice of the fatherland" as the "voice of the people" or the "voice of the state," linking them to the ancient polities of a bygone era. But Herder's purpose was not merely to historicize. In his piece he confirmed Abbt's doubts and explained why the flame of patriotism, in the eighteenth century, would not spring up at the sound of a voice. Herder emphasized what he claimed was the different quality of modern orality, arguing that the passing of Greco-Roman democracy and republicanism had put an end to ancient orality's former importance. Public oratory was no longer charged with meting out punishment or deciding affairs of state. Who could doubt that its classical role was irrevocable?[32] Accordingly—and in a text commemorating the dedication of a municipal building, no less—Herder went so far as to allege that the present-day orator had no place from which to deliver a speech.[33]

Herder's sharp distinction between the oralities of antiquity and those of modernity typified the later eighteenth-century aftermath of the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, for he emphasized an unbridgeable historical gulf between the two epochs, rather than continue, as generations of humanists had done, to pursue polemical comparisons between them.[34] With the older Herder the wish to analyze rather than emulate the ancients would become a "program,"

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30 The details of his appointment can be found in Haym, *Herder*, 1: 81–4.

31 See Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community*, 180 ff. Cf. Mah, "The Man with Too Many Qualities," 17–18; Haym, *Herder*, 1: 123–7.

32 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. Martin Bollacher *et al.*, 10 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1985–2000), 1: 42–3.

33 Ibid., 1: 45–7.

34 Dietrich Harth, "Über die Geburt der Antike aus dem Geist der Moderne," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1 (1994), 99; Hans Robert Jauß, "Modernity and Literary Tradition," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005), 347 ff. For background on the *Querelle* see Joan

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signifying his rejection of a Winckelmannian philhellenism directed against the present.[35] However, the younger Herder appears also to have generalized his analysis of German orality to the dispensation of modernity as such; this speaks volumes about his shock four years later in Paris, where modern orality in fact did command considerable cultural capital, if not exactly within the surroundings of the *agorá*.[36]

Having dismissed the oral plank of "Vom Tode" as an anachronism, at any rate, Herder extended his critique of German publicity to the theater and letters, implicitly calling into question Lessing's attempts to erect a public on such foundations.[37] Thus in his reading of Abbt's aural dead end, Herder construed a more fundamental problem of public circulation in the German-language context. Yet he had drawn an important distinction: if the German public appeared little responsive to Lessing's harnessing of drama and literature, it was positively insensate to the primal summons of Abbt. For though his censure of the literary situation was severe, Herder's rejection of the "voice of the fatherland"

DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a* fin de siècle (Chicago, 1997); and Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca, 1991). On the protracted German reception of the *Querelle*, which bled into questions of confession and national identity, see Thomas Pago, *Gottsched und die Rezeption der* Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes *in Deutschland: Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung des Vorzugsstreits für die Dichtungstheorie der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989); Peter K. Kapitza, *Ein bürgerlicher Krieg in der gelehrten Welt: Zur Geschichte der* Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes *in Deutschland* (Munich, 1981); and Manfred Fuhrmann, "Die *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, der Nationalismus und die Deutsche Klassik," in Bernhard Fabian, Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, and Rudolf Vierhaus, eds., *Deutschlands kulturelle Entfaltung: Die Neubestimmung des Menschen* (Munich, 1980), 49–67.

35 Harth, "Über die Geburt," 105–6. See also Maike Oergel, "Ende der 'Querelle'? Deutsche und britische Definitionen der modernen Identität im Kulturschatten der Antike 1750–1870," in Gesa von Essen and Horst Turk, eds., *Unerledigte Geschichten: Der literarische Umgang mit Nationalität und Internationalität* (Göttingen, 2000), 72–99.

36 "Über Thomas Abbts Schriften" (1768) would see Herder explicitly identify this orality problematic with "Vom Tode." Herder struck a patronizing note, but he showed sympathy with Abbt's work. His motivation to eulogize his late peer had been the sight of Abbt's "shadow before me, which beckoned me to his early grave," though the two had never met or exchanged letters. Around the same time Herder confided to Friedrich Nicolai, "Abbt's death is irreplaceable for Germany. If ever there has been for me, in terms of mindset and mood, an author so complete, as it were, then it was he in his writings. But how few there may be who can extrapolate from what he delivered to what he could have done and wanted to do." Herder, *Werke*, 2: 598, 565–6; Herder to Christoph Friedrich Nicolai, 19 Feb. 1767, in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Briefe: Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm Dobbek and Günter Arnold, 14 vols. (Weimar, 1977), 1: 70–72. See also Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community*, 174–8.

37 See John H. Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago, 2002), 163–5.

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as a spur to a dynamic German public was absolute. An exasperated Herder asked his readers, "But the great multitude of this many-headed creature: where does it have its seat and voice? Where should one stand in order to address this public, on the marketplace or in private homes?"[38] The problem of orality as formulated by Abbt was for Herder, in other words, a sociable one. Germans possessed no robust public in the classical mode because they had no site where a bygone sociability might gather and sustain itself. Their voices could not carry, as Abbt had feared, and Herder's backward glance to a distant Greco-Roman past indicated his inability to imagine how they ever might.

In the patriotic turn of "Publikum und Vaterland" from the ancient public to the ancient fatherland and the question of its modern relevance, one might interpret a reversal. Herder pursued this course with gusto, slandering Helvetius, Mandeville, Hobbes, and Machiavelli along the way as "base and cold misanthropes," despoilers of "the sweet sensation of patriotism." Peter the Great, conversely, he called a savior of patriotism, the father of a Russia reborn. But there was a problem even with this partial rehabilitation of Abbt's model, for besides depriving it of its classical–oral fulcrum, Herder downplayed its sentimental core: "Admittedly, we no longer sacrifice ourselves blindly. The warlike cavalcades are gone ... but has the fire that is love of country gone out with them?"[39] Herder provided ample grounds for doubt, for in the text he continually undercut any sentimentally affective basis for the fatherland, and with marked skepticism towards the notion of a self-sacrificial author–patriot, which he would again evince three years later in his obituary for Abbt.[40] Instead, Herder adopted a moderate position, proposing to refine affective patriotism by valorizing mercantilism. Thus both Mah and Frederick Beiser situate "Publikum und Vaterland" within an eighteenth-century discourse of enlightened commercial republicanism.[41] Herder did contemplate a suitably Rigan revision of the patriotism so dear to Abbt, namely by extolling the temperate self-sufficiency of the commercial republic. In doing so, however, Herder projected only a tepid alternative to Abbt's exciting schema, and one inapplicable to most German states.

It is clear that, for Herder, affective patriotism could not realistically hope for a German public realized along classical lines, and outdated invocations of Hanseatic pride offered but a poor substitute. Any attempt to resolve this dilemma would require that Abbt's notion of "felt" community be regrounded. Herein lay

[38] Herder, *Werke*, 1: 47.

[39] Ibid., 1: 51.

[40] Ibid., 2: 575.

[41] Mah, "The Man with Too Many Qualities," 18–25; Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, 198–201.

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a major intellectual impetus for Herder in the 1760s. Mere patriotism, with its martial overtones and need of an energetic public orality—which presupposed a locatable public sociability, as Herder had recognized—simply would not do. The forum for a palpable public needed a more hospitable site, which Herder would locate within the literary realm so familiar to him. The print domain might unite Germans in a way that their orality could not, but its letters would first somehow have to be made living and vital. Like the sound of a voice or bustle of a crowd, their content—conveyed by the right form—would have to stimulate the sensuous powers of the reader. Here Herder, inspired by "popular" intellectual currents, seized upon a potential homology with the work of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62), which blurred the lines between cognition, sensation, and bodily experience. If Abbt had inspired Herder with a "feeling" of what a fully fledged public could be, Baumgarten seemed to offer a set of conceptual tools with which to call it into being.

POPULAR PHILOSOPHY, PRODUCTIVE ANTHROPOLOGY

Herder had reached an impasse, but he had at his disposal other resources. One was the German *Popularphilosophie* movement, born at early eighteenth-century Halle in connection with the teachings of Christian Thomasius. "Popular philosophy" was both doctrine and ethic, spanning the divide between learned works and the more accessible writings of the publicists.[42] It stressed cognitive autonomy and common sense, influencing the moral weeklies with its emphasis on practical experience and everyday know-how.[43] Herder encountered popular philosophy at Königsberg under Kant between 1762 and 1764.[44] He seems to have taken this primer and run with it, seizing upon popular philosophy's epistemological message despite the warnings of Kant. Herder was drawn to the mantra of the teachable human subject, one whose awareness of the world depends on the encouragement of a discriminating aesthetic capacity.[45]

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42 Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 8–35. On Thomasius see Peter, *Geselligkeiten*, 37–85; Schneider, *Öffentlichkeit und Diskurs*, 138–49. Along with Samuel Pufendorf he stands at the center of a vigorously revisionist study of the post-1648 German philosophical scene, in which the dominance of metaphysics was hardly a given. See Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2001).

43 See Johan van der Zande, "In the Image of Cicero: German Philosophy between Wolff and Kant," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995), 421–33; Peter, *Geselligkeiten*, 86–114; Fauser, *Gespräch*, 76–91.

44 Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 145 ff. See also Haym, *Herder*, 1: 44–66.

45 See Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Die Ästhetische Ordnung des Handelns: Moralphilosophie und Ästhetik in der Popularphilosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1989), esp. 34–75.

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Here Herder also saw applications for his study of Baumgarten, the founder of aesthetics as a discrete area of inquiry. The attraction made sense, for despite the loftiness of the rationalist Leibnizian–Wolffian lineage to which he belonged, Baumgarten held the purpose of aesthetics to be not the "perfection" of metaphysics but a comprehensive theory of sensation and cognition. This "advocacy of sensibility" is what Herder appropriated.[46] And he was a man of his time to do so: whether in the sentimental novel, philosophical treatise, or neurological tract, eighteenth-century European discourse was aflame with sensibility, "a language of feeling for the purposes of representing necessary social bonds," in the words of John Mullan.[47] The fluidity with which such concepts coursed through the writings of Abbt and Herder testifies to how steeped in aesthetics was the age, as well as how liberally these concepts could be appropriated for the contemplation of humankind. The *Aufklärung* was distinguished by an "aesthetic idea of humanity," one heralded by Baumgarten's reconciliation of sense impressions with human reason and then elaborated by Lessing, Moses Mendelssohn, Christian Garve, and Herder. Only with Kant was this pervasive association between "feeling" and the human condition challenged in Germany.[48] The "almost anxious regression to phenomena of art" characteristic of later aesthetics represented a curtailment of the discipline named and developed by Baumgarten.[49]

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[46] Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics*, 33; Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 39; Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge, 2002), 4. This is not to say that Herder did not already explore aesthetics as a theory of art, as the essays published anonymously as *Kritische Wälder* (1769) demonstrate.

[47] Catherine J. Minter, "'Empfindsamkeit' and Nervous Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Modern Language Review* 96 (2001), esp. 1016–28; Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 2005), 147–54; John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1988), 2. A sampling of additional related works: Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge, 1993); David J. Denby, *Sentimental Narrative and the Social Order in France, 1760–1820* (Cambridge, 1994); G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 1992). Thomas Reinert has described Adam Ferguson's "aesthetic" proposal in the 1767 *Essay on the History of Civil Society* that the disenchantment of commerce be counteracted with noble public feeling. See Thomas Reinert, "Adam Ferguson's Aesthetic Idea of Community Spirit," *Studies in English Literature* 48 (2008), 613–32.

[48] Roman Gleissner, *Die Entstehung der ästhetischen Humanitätsidee in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1988), esp. 26–9, 142–69, 186–221; Frederick C. Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (Oxford, 2009), 138–43. The personal impact of this intellectual schism on Herder at the end of his life is poignantly discussed in Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics*, 234–5.

[49] Friedrich Solms, *Disciplina aesthetica: Zur Frühgeschichte der ästhetischen Theorie bei Baumgarten und Herder* (Stuttgart, 1990), 9–11, 18 ff. Baumgarten's debt to Christian Wolff

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From this side of the critical Kant, it can be easy to lose sight of the appeal that a figure like Baumgarten might hold for a generation of thinkers, regardless of whether or not they had read his work in any detail. They constituted a "Baumgartian school," which besides Herder included Abbt, Mendelssohn, Johann Georg Sulzer, Georg Friedrich Meier, and Johann Jacob Engel, all of whom took away from Baumgarten an appreciation for the flexibility of aesthetics, its potential closeness to art but also feeling, as well as its ability to "protect the affective life from philosophy" itself.[50] They recognized in Baumgartian aesthetics not just an art-oriented branch of philosophy or solely a theory of the beautiful and sublime, but rather an expansive doctrine of the relationship between mind and body.[51]

This was broad terrain, and like *Popularphilosophie*, with which it often overlapped, Baumgartianism belonged to a still broader area of eighteenth-century European ideas, namely that of Enlightenment "anthropology."[52] Beyond the numerous meanings then attached to this term, as Wolfgang Proß has illustrated, the overriding concern of anthropological discourse was to "place" the seemingly enhanced yet murky significance of the human being within a cosmology radically altered since the Middle Ages. In a world whose religious foundations had been shaken, the language of feeling and thinking won newfound analytical significance.[53] Viewed from this angle, the theoretical pillars of Herder's project cease to appear so eclectic, for their reliance on aesthetics, as with other "utopian" enlightened visions of human perfectibility, was by eighteenth-century association also "anthropological"—oriented to the study of man as a sentient and sensuous creature.[54] Baumgartian aesthetics helped prepare Herder

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has been underappreciated. On the revision of his legacy and the problem of originality see Beiser, *Diotima's Children*, 118–23.

50 Kevin F. Hilliard, "Die 'Baumgartensche Schule' und der Strukturwandel der Lyrik in der Gefühlskultur der Aufklärung," in Achim Aurnhammer, Dieter Martin, and Robert Seidel, eds., *Gefühlskultur in der bürgerlichen Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 2004), 13–14, 22.

51 Hans Adler, "Aisthesis, steinernes Herz und geschmeidige Sinne: Zur Bedeutung der Ästhetik-Diskussion in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts," in Hans-Jürgen Schings, ed., *Der ganze Mensch: Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1994), 96–7.

52 See Rudolf Vierhaus, "Moses Mendelssohn und die Popularphilosophie," in Michael Albrecht, Eva J. Engel, and Norbert Hinske, eds., *Moses Mendelssohn und die Kreise seiner Wirksamkeit* (Tübingen, 1994), 25–42.

53 Wolfgang Proß, "Nachwort," in *Herder und die Anthropologie der Aufklärung*, vol. 2 of Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke*, ed. Wolfgang Proß (Munich, 1987), esp. 1130–32. See also Bödeker, "Thomas Abbt," 228–9.

54 See Rolf Grimminger, "Die Utopie der vernünftigen Lust: Sozialphilosophische Skizze zur Ästhetik des 18. Jahrhunderts," in Christa Bürger, Peter Bürger, and Jochen Schulte-Sasse, eds., *Aufklärung und literarische Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980), 116–32. For a

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for the specific anthropological journey ahead of him.[55] And that journey, reconstructable only with the aid of a fragmentary textual basis, was arduous.

EN ROUTE TO A PUBLIC-BUILDING AESTHETICS?

In biographical terms, Herder's life in Riga between 1764 and 1769 unfolded within stable bounds, including his work at the cathedral school, which extended to the pulpit; his productivity as a writer, which had gathered pace; and his 1766 induction, a rite expected of all prominent men in the city, into the lodge Zum Schwerdt, in which he soon rose to the rank of secretary.[56] This last facet of Herder's Rigan existence makes tempting an excursus on masonic sociability, for the nebulous brotherhood of the freemasons has been convincingly identified as a significant element of the "mobile" Enlightenment imagination.[57] I concede the possibility of a masonic tint to what follows, even if Herder almost never commented on his membership in any of his writings, private or published. Yet chronologically we deal here with an original momentum pre-dating Herder's freemasonry; the latter may then have served to reinforce his tendency to conceive of the public, indeed "humanity," in the abstract.[58]

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treatment of such undertakings in the *Aufklärung* refer to Michael C. Carhart, *The Science of Culture in Enlightenment Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

55 Hans Dietrich Irmscher, "Grundzüge der Ästhetik Herders," in Peter Andraschke and Helmut Loos, eds., *Ideen und Ideale: Johann Gottfried Herder in Ost und West* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2002), 46–7.

56 Haym, *Herder*, 1: 102–23.

57 Pierres-Yves Beaurepaire, "The Universal Republic of the Freemasons and the Culture of Mobility in the Enlightenment," *French Historical Studies* 29 (2006), 407–31.

58 Note the emphasis on the "pure" humanity of the lodge in Manheim, *Aufklärung und öffentliche Meinung*, 89–98. On the subsequent utopian–political turn of German freemasonry, exemplified by the *Illuminati* of the 1770s and 1780s, see Manfred Agethen, *Geheimbund und Utopie: Illuminaten, Freimaurer und deutsche Spätaufklärung* (Munich, 1984). After Koselleck, German historians have brought fine-grained specifics of social structure to bear upon the scholarly study of the lodge, integrating it into a better-rounded picture of bourgeois associational life during the *Aufklärung*. See Norbert Schindler, "Freimaurerkultur im 18. Jahrhundert: Zur sozialen Funktion des Geheimnisses in der entstehenden bürgerlichen Gesellschaft," in Robert M. Berdahl *et al.*, eds., *Klassen und Kultur: Sozialanthropologische Perspektiven in der Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), 205–62; Helmut Reinalter, ed., *Aufklärung und Geheimgesellschaften: Zur politischen Funktion und Sozialstruktur der Freimaurerlogen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1989); Horst Möller, "Enlightened Societies in the Metropolis: The Case of Berlin," in Hellmuth, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, 219–33. That freemasonry differed from other Enlightenment forms of sociability to the extent that it privately "reconstituted the polity and established a constitutional form of self-government" is a claim that outstrips the temporal bounds of this article, at least within the German context. See

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It is at the conceptual level that the various strands of this story—how Herder attempted to articulate what I have described as his ideal print-based public of affective belonging—are to be isolated and tied back together. For the historian committed to neat chronology this can make for rough going, and here my argument is not simple, but I know of no more convincing frame in which to situate Herder's earliest work.[59] From the mid-1760s until the end of the decade, Herder struggled to transpose the sociable–oral logic of affective patriotism, which he had deemed unfeasible, into a written register, the realm of print, for him the most viable "aesthetic" space of communicable sentiments. Taking to heart the popular-philosophical notion that a sophisticated, public-fostering sensibility could be imparted to Germans, Herder resolved to reground that mission in an aesthetic anthropology. This was a blueprint for cultural reform, an "aesthetic state" pre-dating Weimar classicism.[60] To dismiss the fact because difficult concepts were involved, to apply distinctions between "high" and "applied" theory, would be anachronistic. Here lay for Herder the royal road to a lively German public, however airborne that road may look to us now. Along this road lay three waypoints for Herder: an anthropology derived from Baumgarten; a pedagogy *à la* popular philosophy; and, lastly, the study of language, which not only opened up vast intellectual frontiers for Herder but secured him an initial measure of fame.

As for the first of these waypoints, in his Königsberg essay "Versuch über das Sein," from 1763, Herder had already proclaimed the proper role of philosophy to be "handmaiden of anthropology."[61] Reading Baumgarten, Herder concluded that questions of ontology resolve themselves historically. Existence is a field of sensuous "obscurity" gradually penetrable by human consciousness, and this process of unconcealment is open to theoretical inquiry only after the fact, by "genetic" means.[62] Hence Herder's conviction that an anthropology in the mode of Baumgarten would, strictly speaking, concern itself with the

Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1991), 20, 23–51.

59 Thus the thesis that "Herder's philosophy originated with the theoretical problem of sensation and reflection," from my vantage point, requires qualification: why, and how inflected? Cf. Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics*, 45.

60 See Josef Chytry, *The Aesthetic State: A Quest in Modern German Thought* (Berkeley, 1989).

61 Quoted in Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 152–7. See Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics*, 33–42.

62 Hans Adler, *Die Prägnanz des Dunklen: Gnoseologie, Ästhetik, Geschichtsphilosophie bei J. G. Herder* (Hamburg, 1990), 97–101; Solms, *Disciplina aesthetica*, 39 ff. Also apposite are Marion Heinz, *Sensualistischer Idealismus: Untersuchungen zur Erkenntnistheorie des jungen Herder, 1763–1778* (Hamburg, 1994); and Jeffrey Barnouw, "The Cognitive Value of Confusion and Obscurity in the German Enlightenment: Leibniz, Baumgarten, and Herder," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 24 (1995), 29–50.

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disclosure of being to the receptive faculties of the human subject over time; after all, the human being possessed an "essential autoproductivity" as a creature endowed with sensuousness, the innate capacity to generate meaning.[63] This early formulation of an "anthropological and historical aesthetics" was heavily Baumgartian, without a doubt, but from the start Herder's borrowing was goal-driven.[64] Faithful to the spirit of popular philosophy, the young Herder channeled this abstruse impulse into an educational project, one inchoate, impetuous, and more suggestive than prescriptive.

For another interest of Herder's in these years, second, was a didactics of perfectibility, which he consistently conceptualized in the language of aesthetics.[65] We know that his docentship at the Collegium Friedericianum in Königsberg from 1762 to 1764 gave him an early taste for pedagogy.[66] Several pieces written following his 1764 appointment to the cathedral school in Riga outlined an educational program that dovetailed with his university studies.[67] In "Wie die Philosophie zum Besten des Volkes allgemeiner und nützlicher werden kann" (1765), foreshadowing his festival essay and invoking Abbt, Herder examined the concerns of the contemporary patriotic dialogue through the lens of popular philosophy: "If one educates [*bildet*] citizens as a patriot—this fire spreads, propagates itself, etc." This was immediately followed by a section with the heading "A finer people from books."[68] In such fragmentary remarks we find a confident writer absent in "Publikum und Vaterland." There Herder had spotted in the affective patriotism of Abbt only the glimmer of a solution to the lack of a tangible German public, but he had withheld emendation. Now Herder intervened more aggressively. Patriotism, he reckoned, implied a specific sensuous–cognitive disposition, "a logic of intelligence which deserves general dissemination among our people; a logic still undiscovered."[69] In his "Begründung einer Ästhetik in der Auseinandersetzung mit Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten" (1766–7), a memorial fragment for the philosopher, we find

63 Here see John H. Zammito *et al.*, "Johann Gottfried Herder Revisited: The Revolution in Scholarship in the Last Quarter-Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71 (2010), 672–8.

64 Angelica Nuzzo, "Kant and Herder on Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006), 578, 591–2.

65 In this Herder steered close to Moses Mendelssohn, whose "psychological aesthetics of perfection ultimately underwrites an anthropological model that unites the sensual perfection of art with the perfectability [*sic*] of man." Hammermeister, *German Aesthetic Tradition*, 19.

66 Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 147; Haym, *Herder*, 1: 36 ff.

67 Haym, *Herder*, 1: 97–103.

68 Herder, *Werke*, 1: 130–34; Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community*, 183–5.

69 Herder, *Werke*, 1: 114.

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utterances as to what this might require. If Baumgarten had attributed sensuous receptivity to the individual perceiving subject, so Herder, then one could extrapolate this to a collective perceiving subject, to the people. This insight might, figuratively speaking, help to "hellenize" them; "that would be aesthetics!" he exclaimed.[70]

It is within this intellectual horizon, third, that one ought to view Herder's growing interest in language. Johann Georg Hamann's teachings on the divine immanence of primitive language had been pivotal to Herder's education in Königsberg, affording him an early example of the "holistic" possibilities of language as an aesthetic category. Yet it must be remembered that Hamann's meditations were only ever viable for the young Herder as part of a less ecstatic aesthetic anthropology.[71] "Über den Fleiß in mehreren gelehrten Sprachen" (1764), composed six years before the Berlin Academy prize essay "Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache," shows Herder's indebtedness to Condillac and his theory of correspondence between national character and language, as well as to Montesquieu, for whom language constituted a mentality. Still more provocative was Herder's sensitivity—on display both in the finished version of "Über den Fleiß" and in an identically titled lecture manuscript—to the work done by language as an aesthetic "space" that can draw the nation together in a common bond of learned letters. "Über den Fleiß" features a slippage between comparatively concrete metaphors like "common chain of peoples" or "great bond of learning" and more recondite formulations, e.g. "narrow sphere of its language," "reach of a language," "field full of thoughts," and a striking description of language as a "boundless sea."[72]

With language, the road widened and led to a signal work in the Herderian *oeuvre*. Herder's enthusiasm for language, his elevation of the same to a master concept capacious enough to accommodate both his interest in Baumgarten and his commitment to the German public, inspired a series of manuals for the advancement of literary publicity in Germany. These were the *Fragmente über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (1766–8), Herder's rejoinder to the *Briefe, die*

[70] Ibid., 1: 693–4. See also Van der Zande, "In the Image of Cicero," 431.

[71] Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics*, 65–70. See also Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "The Aesthetic Holism of Hamann, Herder, and Schiller," in Karl Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge, 2000), 82. Herder did not adopt Hamann's derision of the public: Robert Sparling, "J. G. Hamann and the Problem of Public Reason," *Monatshefte* 98 (2006), 12–19. For a clear-eyed look at the underappreciated influence of Johann Georg Hamann in German letters, consult John R. Betz, "Reading 'Sibylline Leaves': J. G. Hamann in the History of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70 (2009), 93–118. See too Haym, *Herder*, 1: 68–78.

[72] Herder, *Werke*, 1: 23–7, 9/2: 138–40.

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neueste Literatur betreffend (1759–65), the Berlin-based project of Lessing, Nicolai, and Mendelssohn. The story behind the publication of the *Fragmente* lends itself to thematization of Herder's fraught relationship with the condition of the modern author. Its various twists and turns, however—the reversals and reissuings of his publisher Friedrich Hartknoch, relentless criticism from the Berlin neoclassicist Christian Adolf Klotz, Herder's waffling over anonymity—likewise bespeak the anguished first steps into the literary limelight of a gifted young writer, one who had dared to subject the German literary establishment to wholesale scrutiny at the age of twenty-two.[73] Herder's letters from the late 1760s are full of trepidation over the spread, reception, and potential misunderstanding not just of the *Fragmente* but of all his writings, which had multiplied since his departure from Königsberg. These letters are also filled to the brim with mundane expressions of Herder's thirst for news from the world of German letters. This amounted to a stocktaking necessary for his rehabilitation of the print realm in Germany.

The *Fragmente* blossomed as the first fruits of these labors. In the text Herder stormed out of the gate with the charge that the *Briefe* furthered nothing but pedantry and narrowness, whereas a more authentic print venture would function as "the voice of patriotic wisdom and the improver of the people." Literary self-sufficiency required self-awareness, not slavish imitation, he scolded. These considerations induced Herder to consider the "fit" between different ages or national contexts and manners of literary expression.[74] A unifying and indigenous German literature needed a timely style, something like the moderate tempo and lucidity of French prose.[75] But Herder's intent was practical and pedagogical. He had the edification of the reading public in his sights: "My *Fragmente* are written purely in order to be used," Herder explained to his Königsberg acquaintance and fellow publicist Johann Georg Scheffner.[76]

Herder's hasty revision of the *Fragmente* stemmed largely from anxieties over his reception and reputation, but these encouraged him to sharpen his arguments. Nor did he revise in a bubble. For just as Herder was not alone in his engagement with aesthetics, he was once again accompanied in his preoccupation with issues of German community. A certain radicalization of the *Fragmente* should be led back to the pull of the *Nationalgeistdebatte* in Germany between 1765 and

73 See the commentary in ibid., 1: 1004–19, 1201–4. In addition refer to Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 160–63; and La Vopa, "Herder's *Publikum*," 7–8.

74 Herder, *Werke*, 1: 170–71.

75 Ibid., 1: 255. Cf. Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics*, 99–103.

76 Herder to Scheffner, 31 Oct. 1767, in Herder, *Briefe*, 1: 91–4.

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1767, the rediscovery of which we owe to Nicholas Vazsonyi. The "National Spirit Debate" involved reactions—printed mainly in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, to which Herder contributed—to the anonymous 1765 publication of Holy Roman patriot Friedrich Carl von Moser's *Von dem deutschen Nationalgeist*. The debate represented a "transitional moment," with respect not only to an increasingly political German public dialogue but also to the reception of Montesquieu. Moser's book adhered faithfully to *De l'esprit des lois*, sounding out the possibility of realizing a German "national spirit" within the legal framework of the Holy Roman Empire, the moribund condition of which he decried. As Vazsonyi points out, the book's opening sentence, "We are a people of one name and language," belied the fact that Moser actually considered these derivative qualities of the German states, less important than the national spirit obtainable only through a body of sound laws. Moser rejected nonstandard interpretation of Montesquieu, and he doubted the existence of national spirit in contemporary German affairs. But Moser's text, no model of clarity, inspired confusion alongside dissent and agreement, heightening the profile of the concept of national spirit in German discussion.[77]

Herder's opinion of *Von dem deutschen Nationalgeist* was critical, and he wondered to Hamann, "who may be the author of these pages full of such wild excess and shapeless caprice?"[78] Yet having already cited Moser in the first edition of the *Fragmente*, Herder saw fit to incorporate some of this modish terminology into the second, and in regard to language, not laws. Whereas in the first edition of the *Fragmente* Herder could aver that the "genius of a language is therefore also the genius of a nation's literature," in 1768 he posed a bolder question: "A language . . . that resembles an ancient temple, erected by the nation after the archetype of its spirit [*Geist*] . . . spacious enough to comprehend the nation and enduring enough to be its eternal monument—would such a language, even after all revolutions, not still be an original, particular national language?"[79] In one sense Herder was invoking an older "spherical" discourse tied to baroque theories of art, climate, and national character.[80] Most significant about these remarks, however, was their more forceful, "spiritual" formulation of a persistent tendency already mentioned, namely the association in Herder's thought between

77 Vazsonyi, "Montesquieu," 231–40. See also Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland*, 281–340. Friedrich Carl von Moser was the son of another prominent jurist–intellectual and staunch defender of the *Reich*, Johann Jakob Moser. See Mack Walker, *Johann Jakob Moser and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation* (Chapel Hill, 1981).

78 Herder to Johann Georg Hamann, mid-March 1769, in Herder, *Briefe*, 1: 130–35.

79 Herder, *Werke*, 1: 177, 570. See also Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community*, 193–6.

80 Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics*, 59–67.

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language as a spatial metaphor and its aesthetic power to unify and refine human beings.

And that is to say, *written* language. Print might afford the forum for a German public with substance, for the "patriotic" flame of community; this would be kindled textually, not sociably. Herder's remarks on literary style constituted a "practical" extension of his theoretical convictions. Print publicity remained a lodestar for Herder during these years, and he wrote the *Fragmente* because he had identified print as the best site for an energetic German public. Yet the *Fragmente* had primarily handled questions of form; there remained content to deal with. As Herder would muse in 1769, one must write "a book for the education [*Bildung*] of peoples," animated by "lively examples, customs, edification [*Erziehung*]" rather than "the silhouette of dry laws" in the manner of Montesquieu.[81] Here was an opportunity for Herder to put into practice what he viewed as the essential aim of the affective patriotism propounded by Abbt. Print could furnish the site for an aesthetic public, a "felt" community.[82] But what would this mean in practice, what ought one to write? If the *Fragmente* had already taken up with language, Herder wanted guidance as to what should be expressed through it. Desirous of concrete knowledge as well as useful ideas, and not a little lonely, he took to the waves.

HERDER ADRIFT

The *Journal of My Voyage in the Year 1769* recounts the twenty-five-year-old Herder's roundabout journey to France. Though fragmentary and loosely episodic, the text relates a crisis in Herder, a collision between his expectations of an avant-garde public and his reaction to the sociability integral to it.[83] The plan for such a trip, which Herder had probably hatched in Königsberg,

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[81] Herder, *Werke*, 9/2: 206. The formulation of a uniquely modern "spirit of moderation" on the part of the legislator was not a concern for Herder. See Thomas L. Pangle, *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism: A Commentary on* The Spirit of the Laws (Chicago, 1973), 271–3. Around this time began for Herder a lifelong desire to make of Montesquieu's system a "usable" method. Vierhaus, "Montesquieu in Deutschland," 30–31.

[82] Whether one ought to designate this site as *Volk*, *Sprache*, or *Nation*, at least at this stage in Herder's intellectual development, and in an age before the dawn of political nationalism, is frankly not vital. On related problems, see in particular Michael Zaremba, *Johann Gottfried Herders humanitäres Nations- und Volksverständnis: Ein Beitrag zur politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Berlin, 1985), 117–20; Vicki Spencer, "Towards an Ontology of Holistic Individualism: Herder's Theory of Identity, Culture and Community," *History of European Ideas* 22 (1996), 252.

[83] Here I rely on the excellent commentary of Rainer Wisbert in Herder, *Werke*, 9/2: 861–972. Refer additionally to Haym, *Herder*, 1: 337–80.

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originally foresaw a grand tour of Europe, with stopovers not just in Paris but also in London, Rome, and Amsterdam, as well as points east. Unswayed by the pleas of the Rigan city council, Herder set out for Denmark in June 1769, where he was convinced by his travel companion, Gustav Berens, to continue to France. There the two found lodging with a business acquaintance of Berens in Nantes. Herder spent nearly all of his time reading and writing, staying until early November. He then departed for a two-month visit to Paris, which despite a cursory introduction to *le monde* concluded on a bitter note. From here the trail led, via Amsterdam and Hamburg, to Strasbourg and Bückeburg.

Apart from his weariness over the quarrel with Klotz, Herder had grown restive in Riga, especially once his reform plans for the cathedral school met with stiff resistance. Despite his initially enthusiastic reception by the local merchant patriciate—which besides general recognition had brought him house visits and polite friendships in such profusion that he sometimes found it hard to attend to his work—Herder claimed to long for a different kind of *Gesellschaft*.[84] The sociability of the mercantile ethos and municipal self-government did not satisfy him. As he wrote to Scheffner in 1766, "I lack nothing so much as literary contact; personally almost completely, in writing also considerably. If only the mute reading of books had not to an extent replaced this company, and indeed so lopsidedly that for me your initiation of an exchange of letters is as enticing as the first embrace between friends."[85]

This sense of regret pervades the *Journal*. Herder bemoaned at the start his premature metamorphosis in Riga into "an inkwell of arts and sciences," resolving to learn a different existence abroad, the "different structure of a different soul." The model for this fleeting aspiration was the French-speaking *philosophe*, whose elan and "universal access to any cultural context," to quote Mah, might offer a gratification which had been denied Herder in his pedagogical capacity in Riga.[86] Naturally, Herder sought new experiences, compensation for the infelicities of his youth, when he might have "enjoyed my years, acquainted myself with sound, real knowledge, and found out how to apply all that I had learned."[87] These longings were hardly solipsistic; nor were they consistent. Herder envisioned returning to Riga as a patriot–reformer, securing for himself a Baltic laboratory for the ideas he had been cultivating since the middle of the decade.[88] He wanted

84 Haym, *Herder*, 1: 87–97, 321–34. Cf. Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 160–63.
85 Herder to Johann Georg Scheffner, 21 June 1766, in Herder, *Briefe*, 1: 55–7.
86 Mah, "The Man with Too Many Qualities," 31–3, 35.
87 Herder, *Werke*, 9/2: 11–13.
88 La Vopa, "Herder's *Publikum*," 8–9, 12–13.

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from his European travels a conceptual socialization, perhaps even schooling in affability, but only to the extent that the reformer needed to possess such tools:

> What to do, in order to eradicate the barbarism, to stamp out the ignorance, to spread culture and freedom, to become for this province a second Zwingli, Calvin, and Luther! Can I become that? . . . [T]ravel through France, England, Italy, and Germany with this in mind, take up the French language and well-being, the English spirit of reality and freedom, the Italian taste for fine inventions, German thoroughness and knowledge, and finally, where necessary, Dutch erudition, wake great concepts and great purposes in myself, accommodate myself to my epoch . . . consider and undertake everything practically, adapt myself, persuade the world, nobility and human beings, know how to bring them to my side—gallant lad! All that sleeps within you?[89]

Herder's self-doubt was characteristic, but initially he did believe that his journey would disclose to him the secret of public effectiveness, which he imagined to emerge "not in writing, not through literary wars, but in a living manner, through education [*Bildung*]." Yet here it would be misleading to take Herder literally, for he had not thrown overboard his earlier judgments about the relationship between sociability and the modern public. In the same breath this aspiring "writer of humanity" fantasized about all of the useful data he might collect for his "living" project, the treasures he might put to public use. "Such a great undertaking, in its completion, what a work it would be for the world!" He would write a book about the human soul: "It shall teach and form!"[90] Nothing about the ambitions tentatively set forth in the *Fragmente* had fundamentally altered. Print, in the whirl of contradictory emotions and fantasies documented by the *Journal*, had become a fixation for Herder, but as an aesthetic force to be "felt" as much as read. Herder's tour of Europe would help him to transcend print and bring about its apotheosis, a "catechism of humanity" through the public's edifying exposure to knowledge.[91]

Without a doubt, the pedagogical tables and outlines that dot the middle of the *Journal*, almost certainly drawn up in Nantes, prefigure much of Herder's later work, but they also reveal how he slid back, once abroad, into the role of the solitary author. This was not the routine of a sociable *philosophe*. His initial

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89 Herder, *Werke*, 9/2: 28–9. Compare the analogous remarks of Herder to Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, late Oct. 1769, in Herder, *Briefe*, 1: 166–71.

90 Herder, *Werke*, 9/2: 29–33. An apt description of Herder's vacillation between the theoretical and the "practical" is to be found in Richard Critchfield, "Herder's *Journal meiner Reise*," in Wulf Koepke, ed., *Johann Gottfried Herder: Language, History, and the Enlightenment* (Columbia, SC, 1990), esp. 102–3.

91 Herder, *Werke*, 9/2: 52. Cf. Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 309–10.

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burst of euphoria long past, Herder gave himself over to the theoretical side of his project, resuming his anthropological meditations and setting a course for his subsequent intellectual career. The problem of actual application in Riga recedes over the length of the *Journal*, until finally the only passages that break up the torrent of ideas concern the supposed shortcomings of the French. This represents a shift in tone on Herder's part, arriving with the last third of the *Journal*, near the end of his stay in Nantes and deepening with the visit to Paris.

If Herder had traveled abroad for public-building knowledge, what he gradually discovered in France, and what repulsed him, was that French ideas and sentiments complemented a heady sociability. For Herder this did involve a sore spot in regard to his command of spoken French. As he wrote to Hartknoch,

> One cannot know a French author when one does not know the nation, and I gladly admit that I have not been able to hear, pronounce, understand, and appreciate French; at the moment I have to learn everything, and I do so with great difficulty, because it is a totally different language, the language of the ear and the living world, as opposed to the dead language of the eyes . . .

Herder recognized his tendency to "reduce" living language to dead, which only made his acquisition of the living article more necessary. And to this end he believed that he could learn French more easily in Nantes than in a Parisian salon.[92]

Herder's attitude to the French language itself was one of anxiety, not scorn. Nor was it orality per se which so stymied Herder and threw his expectations of French public life into disarray, but the ways in which orality, as a linchpin of that public life, could be practiced. For this was a world of lively conversation, with all the trappings of stylized social interaction. From Paris Herder recalled his chat with a man in Nantes, which he dismissed as a vapid display of flitting insincerity:

> And really in this character the French character was apparent, which is nothing but hypocrisy and weakness . . . His judgment [was] the assurance of former years about which he did no further thinking; his dissent often the simplest contradiction, without digression and reasons; in short, in all of his good points the most jaded, most somnolent human soul, with yawns enough to lull to sleep ten other people around him and set them to yawning.[93]

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92 Herder to Hartknoch, 4 Aug. 1769, in Herder, *Briefe*, 1: 155–60.

93 Herder, *Werke*, 9/2: 106.

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Suddenly Herder began to perceive these qualities in the arts and letters of the French, now proclaiming them to be cold, triflingly mannered, devoid of any understanding of the "real substance of metaphysics," which is what Herder had hoped to learn from them in the first place. The Frenchman, Herder grumbled, "has nothing but conventions of the social in his philosophy . . . we [Germans] love abstract truth, which on its own is worthy of regard." Herder still acknowledged the flexibility of the French language and its amenability to a richly idiomatic philosophy, to be sure, but with a caveat: he now asked that the writing of French not be entrusted to the French themselves.[94]

Though Parisian society seemed to Herder a subservient appendage of the court at Versailles, as La Vopa has shown, one finds it difficult to ignore the scent of sour grapes in a letter Herder sent to Hartknoch in November: "In Paris everything is very rambling and, due to the present time of year, particularly inconvenient; much it is better to read than seek out, and greater to read than see . . . I do not believe that I will acquire a taste for it."[95] This tone of renunciation is never a stable one in the *Journal*. To an extent Herder, always self-aware retrospectively, knew that his moments of excessive vehemence were unwarranted. Near the end of his visit to Paris he vacillated between disparaging French culture and blaming himself for his inability to access it:

> Where will you find a friend to accompany you across this land so foreign to you? To see the Louvre and Luxembourg, stroll through the Tuileries and gardens, unlock the libraries and nature cabinets, teach you to ponder artists and works of art? Where will you find him? And will he be a Frenchman or a German? . . . Good fortune, give me such a friend, teach me to know him! And give me flexibility to form [*bilden*] myself after his example! I am already in France, I must take advantage of it, for to come back without any French language, customs, anecdotes, and knowledge at all, what a scandal![96]

In France there lay before Herder, the dauntless Baumgartian, a "world of sensation" that he could only behold with a shudder. This was a problem of feeling that no aesthetics could ameliorate. "I see, I feel in the distance," Herder lamented, "which is how I read, how I plan, how I work, how I travel, how I write, which is how I am entirely!"[97] It may be that Herder's crowning moment

94 Ibid., 9/2: 81–2, 93.

95 Herder to Hartknoch, mid-Nov. 1769, in Herder, *Briefe*, 1: 174–5. Cf. La Vopa, "Herder's *Publikum*," 14–15; Mah, "The Man with Too Many Qualities," 38–9.

96 Herder, *Werke*, 9/2: 101–3.

97 Ibid., 9/2: 105, 111–12.

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came at sea prior to his arrival in Nantes, when he exalted in "the wide, boundless circle of air" shaping the ocean's curve, as though grey water signified limitless potential.[98] As for Paris: "I have tried to study books and people, declamation and plays, dances and paintings, music and public. The seeds, however, are buried, until a springtime in the future."[99]

If La Vopa describes Herder's "profound ambivalence about the role of print in shaping modern public culture" and its "illusion of transcendent universality," I would locate the greater transcendentalism on Herder's side.[100] The fraught quality of the figure "language" in his thought represented a sublimation of print. What gave Herder pause was print's tendency in practice to devolve into petty squabbles between authors. He wanted to refurbish the print domain and rouse it from its torpor, and his impatience with German letters derived from the opinion that they had not gone far enough to foster a mature publicness, one whose absence he "felt" but could articulate only with the aid of an aesthetics of feeling. Herder had looked to nothing *but* print as a basis for modern public culture, and so it should not astound us that he dismissed Parisian sociability as mere contamination.

While it would go too far to say that Herder's was a "reactive nonsensuousness," he did suffer from a kind of dislocation, a metaphorical assimilation of the bodily to the nonbodily.[101] With his diagnosis of German-language publicity as a point of reference, and still more because of his associated philosophical undertakings, Herder's notion of community had displaced itself into an ethereal realm of ideal sensuous subjects, not sociable human beings. In his case, of course, this disaffection would prove stimulating; indeed, without the syncretism of his youthful ambitions, one can hardly imagine the later Herder's qualified pluralism or enthusiasm for folklore and traditional music, not to mention his aversion to imperialistic universalism.[102] But the young Herder had

98 Ibid., 9/2: 14–15.

99 Herder to Hartknoch, mid-Dec. 1769, in Herder, *Briefe*, 1: 181–4.

100 La Vopa, "Herder's *Publikum*," 15–17.

101 Cf. Samson B. Knoll, "The Experience Denied: Herder Abroad," in Koepke, *Johann Gottfried Herder*, 190.

102 Recent scholarship has been attentive to the polarity between pluralism and universalism in the mature Herder, which allows for greater interpretive flexibility than previously assumed. See, for example, Peter Hallberg, "The Nature of Collective Individuals: J. G. Herder's Concept of Community," *History of European Ideas* 25 (1999), 291–304; Damon Linker, "The Reluctant Pluralism of J. G. Herder," *Review of Politics* 62 (2000), 267–93; Sonia Sikka, "Enlightened Relativism: The Case of Herder," *Philosophy and Social*

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cultivated for himself a phantom public. If the abstract clarity of this vision put into words a more rarefied feeling of much that was new about modernity, it also came at a personal price.

Criticism 31 (2005), 309–41. Compare Pauline Kleingeld, "Six Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1999), 515–18. On pluralism see Sankar Muthu, "Enlightenment Anti-imperialism," *Social Research* 66 (1999), 966, 998–99.

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