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German Enlightenment

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German Enlightenment*

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The December 1783 issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* [Berlin Monthly] carried a response by the clergyman Johann Friedrich Zöllner to an anonymous article, published in the journal a few months earlier, that questioned whether the participation of clergy was necessary at marriage ceremonies. Zöllner took issue with the proposal, arguing that it would further corrupt public morality at the very moment when “the most horrible blasphemies are spoken with smiles,” when libertinism ran rampant, when “French charlatanry” threatened to choke off whatever patriotic sentiments still remained, and when — “in the name of *enlightenment* [Aufklärung]” — much confusion had been wrought in the hearts and minds of the citizenry. This confusion, in Zöllner’s view, extended to the very notion of enlightenment itself. So he inserted a footnote in his essay that asked:

What is enlightenment? This question, which is almost as important as what is truth, should indeed be answered before one begins to enlighten! And still I have never found it answered!¹

His query unleashed a flood of answers. Within a year the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* had published responses to the question by both Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Kant.² The debate quickly spread to other journals as other writers joined the discussion.³ By 1790 answers to Zöllner’s question had proliferated to the point where a review article in the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* [German Monthly] catalogued twenty-one different meanings of the term and concluded that the word had become so divorced from any clear conventions of usage that the discussion of the concept had degenerated into “a war of all against all” between combatants who marshaled their own idiosyncratic definitions.⁴

While Zöllner’s question has continued to provoke discussion down to the present day, its contemporary answers have, with one notable exception, faded into obscurity. The exception, of course, is Immanuel Kant’s response. The opening lines of his contribution to the discussion continue to be invoked whenever there is a need to define, discuss, or dismiss the Enlightenment:

Enlightenment is mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to make use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. Self-incurred is this inability if its cause lies not in the lack of understanding, but rather in the lack of the resolution and the courage to use it without the guidance of another.

* To appear (in Hebrew translation) in *The Enlightenment: The Thought of the Eighteenth Century*, Gadi Taub (editor), (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2013). [English text submitted 2006]

Sapere aude! Have the courage to use your own understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment.⁵

The ubiquity of these famous lines is, however, not without its problems.

It is easy to forget that Kant's answer was but one of many responses to a debate that ended inconclusively: *Aufklärung* designated a great many different, and sometimes contradictory, things in the late eighteenth century. It is also sometimes easy to overlook the fact that Kant was answering a somewhat different question than we typically understand him to be answering. His answer is most often cited today as part of an effort to characterize a historical period known as "the Enlightenment." Zöllner, however, was seeking a definition of a *process*, not an historical period and the ensuing dispute was concerned, not with the characteristics of an epoch, but rather with the question of how best to define an activity. The latter question will be the focus of this chapter, which will examine some of the differing ways in which the activity of enlightenment was understood and practiced in eighteenth-century Germany.

Any discussion of the German Enlightenment faces one additional problem. While the custom of distinguishing "the German Enlightenment" from related developments in other parts of Europe can be traced at least as far back as the lectures on the history of philosophy that Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel delivered in Berlin in the 1820s, it bears remembering that this concept, too, is not without its difficulties. During the period in question, "German" referred to a linguistic grouping rather than a state. The political entity known as Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation included non-Germans (e.g., in the Habsburg domains), excluded some German-speaking areas (e.g., in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Alsatia), and was, in any case, politically moribund. Its fragmentation had resulted in a host of smaller territorial units and, as a result, a number of settings in which different German enlightenments developed.⁶ It is also worth stressing that the German Enlightenment did not develop in isolation from developments in the rest of Europe.⁷ Germans were acquainted with the central texts of the broader European Enlightenment both in the translation and in the original. Important representatives of the French Enlightenment spent time in Frederick II's court in Potsdam and occupied positions in the Berlin Academy. German enlighteners journeyed to other parts of Europe and were influenced by what they encountered during their travels. The idea that there was something called the "Republic of Letters," a cosmopolitan community of readers and writers, was not merely an idle dream.

The first section will offer a brief sketch of the shifting philosophical influences that defined the period. The second will discuss how these conceptions of enlightenment were put into practice, focusing particularly on how enlightenment came to be defined in opposition to prejudice, superstition, and fanaticism. The third section will examine the relationship between enlightenment and religious faith, while the fourth section will focus on discussion of the question of whether, in order to preserve public order, it might be

necessary to set limits on the spread of enlightenment. The final section will explore the differing ways in which the notion of toleration, that most important of all enlightenment values, was understood.

I. Enlightenment in Theory: The Philosophical Background

The German Enlightenment is usually seen as falling into two broad phases.⁸ The first stretches from Christian Thomasius' first German lectures in 1688 to the death of Christian Wolff in 1754. The beginning of the period was marked by heated conflicts between disciples of these two thinkers, who have been viewed as establishing different, and indeed rival, conceptions of enlightenment.⁹ The second period commences around the middle of the century, with the gradual weakening of the influence of Wolff's philosophy – which had become the dominant tradition in most universities – in the years prior to his death. It is marked by a variety of attempts, both by those who had still maintained a loyalty to Wolff's system and by those who rejected it, to respond to the recent work of French, English, and Scottish philosophers. This period is usually seen as ending with the publication of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and with the ensuing debates over the implications of Kant's philosophical revolution. While such periodizations are unavoidably schematic, they drive home one important point: eighteenth-century German thought was marked by a number of diverging and often conflicting philosophical tendencies. It also helps to explain why, at the close of the period, there could be such a wide range of views with regard to the question of just what, exactly, the activity of enlightenment involved.

Disagreements about the true nature of enlightenment were, in many respects, present from the very start of the period in the contrasting approaches of the two figures who dominated the first phase of the German Enlightenment: Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) and Christian Wolff (1679-1754). Best known today for treatises on natural law that drew on the work of Hobbes and Pufendorf to provide a non-theological grounding for political authority, Thomasius' career was distinguished by wide-ranging efforts at educational and cultural reform that were aimed, in large part, at producing the group of politically-trained civil servants needed to administer the new territorial states that began to emerge in wake of the Treaty of Westphalia. The point of departure for much of his project lay in the critique of what he termed "prejudices" [*praejudicium*], those "false opinions" that stem from an uncritical acceptance of authorities or a haste in drawing conclusions. In both his lectures at the University of Halle (the first modern Protestant German university) and in his journal *Monatgespräche* (one of the first

monthly journals to appear in German), he mounted a series of attacks on religious intolerance, witchcraft trials, torture, and the other prejudices of the day.¹¹

Thomasius defined prejudice broadly enough to include the Scholastic metaphysical systems that had played a dominant role in traditional university education. Against the academic philosophy of the “schools,” he sought to lay the foundations for a “civil” or “court” philosophy that rejected Descartes’ call for a complete suspension of belief and instead embraced an approach – combining elements from modern natural law theory, classical Epicureanism, and recent strands of Protestant theology – that Thomasius himself characterized as “eclectic.” The body of work that resulted could be put to variety of uses. His distinction between revealed and natural knowledge could be coupled with his rejection of Scholastic metaphysics to foster the growth of approaches to politics that were distinguished by their “empiricist” or “instrumentalist” cast. At the same time, nothing in his rejection of metaphysical and rationalist theology was opposed to the religious tradition known as Pietism, a reform movement within Protestantism in which the faithful joined together in small groups (the *collegia pietatis*) that were devoted to the reading of Scripture, prayer, moral reflection, and philanthropic ventures.¹²

Wolff, in contrast, was inspired in the construction of his philosophical system by Descartes, Malebranche, and Spinoza and his approach became inseparably linked with that of Leibniz (with whom he had corresponded on mathematical questions) when the term “Leibniz-Wolff philosophy” was coined by one of his students.¹³ Between 1712 and 1723 he published a series of German works on a wide-range of philosophical subjects, all of them framed in the rigorously deductive form of Spinoza’s *more geometrico*, a method that he saw as the surest means of inoculating philosophy against the intrusion of dogmatic prejudices and thus securing its status as a foundational discipline, distinct from theology.¹⁴ His work met with considerable resistance from Pietist disciples of Thomasius at Halle, who were repelled by his application of philosophical methods to what they regarded as matters of faith and who argued that Wolff’s system, by producing a comprehensive account of the rationality of the world, culminated in a completely determinist system that left no room for the freedom of the will. A public lecture delivered by Wolff in 1721 that used Confucian morality as an illustration of the possibility of deriving sound moral principles through the use of human reason unaided by supernatural revelation provided the impetus for a cabinet order from the Prussian monarch Frederick William I demanding, under the threat of death, that Wolff surrender his position and leave Prussia.¹⁵ Wolff found refuge at the University of Marburg, and went on to gain a reputation throughout Europe with a series of Latin works that revisited and expanded on the themes of his earlier German publications. When Frederick II ascended to the throne in 1740, he signaled his more liberal attitude towards philosophical disputes by inviting Wolff to return.

Even before Wolff’s triumphant return to Prussia, his philosophy had become a dominant force, not only within German universities, but also in German intellectual and cultural life. One example of his influence can be seen in the *Société des Aléthophiles*

[The Society of Friends of Truth], a group of churchmen, lawyers, and civil servants dedicated to the dissemination of truth in general, and the philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff in particular, that met at the Berlin home of Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel during the 1730s.¹⁶ The statutes of the group directed its members to apply the principles of Wolff's philosophy to their own conduct: "Hold nothing as true, hold nothing as false," read one of the rules of the society, "so long as you have been convinced of it by no sufficient reason [*zureichenden Grund*]."¹⁷ Further evidence of the spread of Wolffian ideas can be seen in the medal the group had struck in 1736, which depicts the head of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, with the heads of the philosophers Leibniz and Wolff peaking out from the feathers of her helmet. Over the top of the medal are the words of the Latin poet Horace, *Sapere Aude!* ["Dare to be wise!"] – a phrase that Kant would himself hail, in his answer to the question "What is enlightenment?," as "the motto of enlightenment."¹⁸

It had been Frederick's intention to name Wolff to the Royal Academy in Berlin, which had been established in 1700, in large part through the efforts of Leibniz, but which had become moribund after Leibniz's death in 1716. Wolff, however, preferred to return to his previous position at Halle and Frederick wound up bringing the French scientist Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis to Berlin. As disciple of Newton and Locke, Maupertuis was an empiricist in his orientation and hence generally critical Wolff's rationalist approach, which was represented within the Academy by Samuel Formey, its perpetual secretary. From the middle of the 1750s onward a series of prize questions – often formulated in consultation with Frederick who, in turn, corresponded with d'Alembert regarding possible topics – served both to secure the fame of the Academy throughout Europe and to focus attention on some of the central issues in dispute between the Academy's Wolffians and its Newtonians.¹⁹

By the end of the 1750s, Wolff's influence on German intellectual life had begun to wane. In a 1759 essay, Moses Mendelssohn observed that just as Descartes had expelled scholasticism and Wolff, in turn, had supplanted Descartes, it now appeared that Wolff would himself be displaced by Christian August Crusius, perhaps the most skilled of Thomasius' followers. Mendelssohn was a dedicated disciple of Wolff's approach, which he sought to develop in a series of well-received works in the area of aesthetics, and his article lamented the "anarchy" that now prevailed among a youth who, freed from the discipline that the old metaphysics had provided, "criticize everything, laugh at everything." Leibniz's philosophical system, he observed, was now regarded as either "a dream or a joke" and Wolff was seen as "an old windbag."²⁰ In a letter written at the end of 1765 Kant offered a similar view of the philosophical landscape but came to a somewhat more optimistic conclusion: the "eternal trifling of punsters and the wearying chatter of today's reputed writers" signaled the "total dissolution that always precedes the start of a new creation;" it represented the "*euthanasia* of erroneous" philosophy that prepared the way for "the great, long-awaited revolution in the sciences."²¹

The style of philosophizing that came into prominence in the years following Wolff's death has come to be known as "Popular Philosophy."²² An early exposition of the idea, Johann August Ernesti's Rectoral Address from 1754, *De Philosophia Populari* invoked Denis Diderot's summons, in his recently published *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la Naturei* (1753) to "make philosophy popular."²³ Among the figures who are usually viewed as associated with the movement are the writers Johann Jakob Engel, Christoph Martin Wieland, and Christian Garve, the publisher Friedrich Nicolai, and the philosophers Thomas Abbt, Christoph Meiners, Johann Georg Feder, Johann Georg Sulzer, and Moses Mendelssohn. The general ideal behind the movement echoed Thomasius' critique of the philosophical pedantry of "school philosophy," but the movement was, if anything, even more eclectic than Thomasius in the sources on which it drew. There was a broad emphasis on questions of history, aesthetics, and pedagogy, along with an interest in questions involving the relationship of language, thought, and culture that was spurred, in part, by prize competitions sponsored by the Berlin Academy.²⁴ Popular Philosophers were cosmopolitan in their reading. Rousseau's works were avidly consumed and quickly translated (Moses Mendelssohn completed a translation of the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* in 1756) as were works by Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Ferguson, and various representatives of the Scottish "Common Sense" school.²⁵ Journals such as Addison and Steele's *Tattler* and *Spectator* were widely imitated. In their style of writing, Popular Philosophers eschewed system-building of the sort Wolff had championed in favor of an essayistic style that was inspired in large part by the writings of Shaftesbury and Hume. Seeking an audience beyond the academy they sought to play the role – to invoke the title of the influential journal edited by Engel – of "philosopher for the world."²⁶

The "world" which this philosophy addressed was, above all, a world of readers. Beginning in the 1760s, there had been a marked increase in the number of publishers producing books for the German market and a rise in new journals, including Wieland's *Teutscher Merkur* (*German Mercury*), Bole's *Deutsches Museum* (*German Museum*), and Nicolai's *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* (*Universal German Library*), that attempted to keep track of the flood of new publications.²⁷ Reading practices underwent a significant transformation during the period, with a change from so-called "intensive reading" – in which readers owned a few books (usually religious in character) that were read again and again – to what is known as "extensive reading" – in which readers work their way through a number of works. Related to this shift was the emergence of reading societies, where individuals would pool their resources and maintain joint subscriptions to books and journals. These societies were but one particular example of the broader network of clubs and societies that proliferated during the period, forming what has been broadly characterized as the emerging "public sphere."²⁸ To get a better sense of what enlightenment involved in practice, it may be helpful to look more closely at one of the most illustrious and influential of these societies: the Berlin *Mittwochsgesellschaft* [Wednesday Society].

II. *Enlightenment in Practice: the “Friends of Enlightenment”*

The *Mittwochsgesellschaft* was founded in Berlin during the summer of 1783, and almost everything about it – including its name – was shrouded in secrecy.²⁹ It was known to the public (to the extent that it was known at all) as the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*, a name that may have been chosen to foster confusion with the “Monday Club,” a literary society that had been meeting in the city for a number of years. Among its members, however, it was known by a name that was far more reflective of its interests: “the Friends of Enlightenment.” The obsession with secrecy can be explained in part by the group’s having been established in order to explore those delicate political and social questions pertaining to “the enlightenment and the welfare of mankind” – including such issues as the limits of censorship, possible reforms of the legal code, and the legitimacy of aristocratic privileges – that had been excluded from discussion in the Monday Club. There was, however, an even more pressing reason for the desire to shield discussions from scrutiny: members of the society included some of the leading figures in Berlin’s political and intellectual life, including important figures in the Prussian bureaucracy, prominent members of the Berlin clergy, and such major figures in Berlin literary and intellectual life as Friedrich Nicolai, Johann Jacob Engel, and Moses Mendelssohn. A free and open discussion of opinions between its members would be possible only if there was an assurance that they would be able to try out new ideas in a sympathetic setting before submitting them to scrutiny of others.

While the fame of its members prevents the group from being viewed as in any way typical of the multitude of other societies that flourished during this period, the group’s self-conscious devotion to the idea of public enlightenment nevertheless present us with a compelling picture of one vision of what enlightenment involved during the closing decades of the eighteenth century. The *Mittwochsgesellschaft* has one additional claim on our attention: its discussions provided the impetus for Zöllner’s question in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. Zöllner was a member of the group, as were the journal’s co-editors Johann Erich Biester and Friedrich Gedike and was present at meeting of the group on the evening of December 17, 1783 when Johann Karl Wilhelm Möhsen, Frederick the Great’s personal physician and a scholar with interests in the history of science, offered a series of remarks on the topic “What is to be Done toward the Enlightenment of the Citizenry.” His talk was organized around six theses, the first of which proposed: “That it be determined more precisely: What is enlightenment?”³⁰

While Möhsen did not offer a direct answer to the question, he immediately offered a further set of topics for discussion that reveal much about the context in which the concept of enlightenment was understood by members of the society. He proposed that his colleagues “determine the deficiencies and the infirmities in the direction of the understanding, in the manner of thinking, in the prejudices and in the ethics of our nation

... and that we investigate how they have been promoted thus far.” Once these impediments had been determined, it would then be possible to “attack and root out those prejudices and errors that are the most pernicious” and to “nurture and propagate those truths whose general recognition is most necessary.”³¹ In juxtaposing enlightenment to error and prejudice, Möhsen was drawing on a well-established convention.³² Not only had the critique of prejudices served as the point of departure for Thomasius’ lectures on the proper use of reason, but models for such a critique could be found both in Francis Bacon’s critique of the various “idols” which plagued human understanding and in Descartes’ insistence on the need to put aside the preconceived opinions that prevented us from seeing matters clearly.³³ Of equal importance was the use of the term within Protestant controversial literature, where a blind adherence to tradition and to authority was seen as preventing individuals from understanding the true message of the scriptures. By the time of Möhsen’s lecture, an elaborate vocabulary was in place for distinguishing among the various different classes of errors that were alleged to be the cause of much of the misery of the human race.

“Prejudice” [*Vorurteil*] was the most general, and least inflammatory, of the terms. In its weakest sense – as a preliminary judgment made in the absence of complete information – it was seen as inevitable and not particularly threatening. Its potential danger lay in its tendency to foster, especially among the least educated classes, a disposition towards “superstition” [*Aberglaube*] that, in turn, served as the breeding ground for that enthusiastic and fanatical form of religious fervor that went by the name *Schwärmerei* – a term whose multiple connotations will be explored below. Discussions of the distinctions between prejudice, superstition, and *Schwärmerei* as well as attempts to trace the relationship between them regularly appeared in journals during this period, along with articles that documented some of the most egregious examples of their hold on the population.

Superstition [*Aberglaube*] typically designated one particular class of prejudices: those that postulated the presence of supernatural forces at work in the world. An article in the *Teutsche Merkur* [*German Mercury*] dating from 1787 appealed to Hobbes and Helvetius and traced the origin of superstition to human weakness in the face of nature, a weakness that gave rise to primitive religions and a belief in magical practices.³⁴ A contributor to the *Magazine für Westphalen* [*Magazine for Westphalia*] attributed the prevalence of superstition in the countryside to the lack of newspapers and other up-to-date reading materials.³⁵ In an article on the relationship between prejudice and superstition, Zöllner maintained that at least some superstitions (for instance, the notion that it was bad luck to fail to crush the shell of a hard-boiled egg) could be traced to prejudices that, in fact, might contain sensible rules (in the case of eggshells, the danger of transmission of diseases) but which have now become a matter of irrational superstition, rather than rational understanding.³⁶

Superstitions were of particular concern because of their tendency to promote a much more dangerous mental state: *Schwärmerei*, a term that carries connotations of

mass and mutual contagion (as in the swarming of bees) as well as frenzied disorder (as in the mass violence of the religious wars). Discussions of *Schwärmerei* were, if anything, even more contested than disputes over the meaning of enlightenment, in part because of the desire to distinguish it from those more benign form of enthusiasm associated with artistic inspiration.³⁷ However defined, evidence of the ease with which individuals could fall prey to such contagion filled the pages of eighteenth-century journals. For example, the August 1783 “Anecdotes” section of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* reported how, in response to a rumor that Berlin would be destroyed on July 11, crowds fled the city.³⁸ A year later, the same journal reported on the suicides of two individuals who left behind notes expressing their confidence that the “Blood of Christ makes us free from all sins,” thus suggesting that the decision to take their lives had been inspired by a belief in a doctrine of “vicarious and sufficient salvation” that was contradicted both by reason and by Scripture.³⁹ In order to demonstrate that “no less than religion does medicine have its enthusiasts,” the journal also published a report by the state physician Johann Theodor Pyl on the activities of the “Moon Doctor of Berlin” — a practitioner of “astral medicine” who, in the years 1780-1781 built a sizable practice by treating patients with “moonshine and prayer.”⁴⁰

These public campaigns against prejudice, superstition, and *Schwärmerei* provide a glimpse of what enlightenment looked like in practice. Journals like the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* played a major role in the dissemination of enlightenment, but equally significant were the activities of the Berlin clergy. In addition to Zöllner, a number of important Berlin clergymen were members of the society, including Johann Joachim Spalding, Johann Samuel Diterich, and Wilhelm Abraham Teller, all of whom embraced an enlightened approach to theology which argued that, because the central tenants of Christian belief could be supported by rational arguments, there could be no contradiction between faith and reason.⁴¹ In contrast to the Pietist doctrine that mankind’s fallen state required a protracted struggle against natural dispositions, Spalding and his colleagues reinterpreted Luther’s doctrine of “calling” as the realization of natural dispositions towards happiness and improvement through the pursuit of socially useful vocations. They viewed the mission of the clergy in these terms as well, stressing their pedagogical responsibilities.⁴² Thus, the campaign against prejudice and superstition that was undertaken by the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* was joined by clergy whose sermons offered an interpretation of Scripture that sought to emphasize the civic responsibilities of the faithful and to counter the tendencies towards superstition that seem to have been particularly rampant among those who had only recently come to Berlin from the countryside.⁴³

III. Faith and Reason

The role of the Berlin clergy in the program of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* is in keeping with what has long been seen as one of the defining features of the German Enlightenment: its relationship with established religious practices was far less antagonistic than its French counterpart. For Hegel, the explanation was simple enough: Germany had experienced a successful reformation and France had not. Whatever its shortcomings – among them, its ignoring of the progress of enlightenment in Catholic regions of Germany – Hegel’s explanation would likely have been endorsed by a substantial number of those who were engaged in the activity of enlightenment in Germany. The clerical members of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* saw themselves as carrying on a project whose origins could be traced at least to the Reformation.

One of the more influential examples of the approach such clergy embraced was Johann Joachim Spalding’s *The Destiny of Man*.⁴⁴ First published in 1748 it had, by the end of the century, gone through thirteen editions and been translated into Latin, French, and Dutch. Through a series of reflections on the questions “Why do I exist?” and “What should I do?”, the book sought to discover a fundamental rule that could serve to guide one’s life. After examining, and finding lacking, lives that would be devoted solely to the satisfaction of physical drives or the pursuit of aesthetic pleasure, the book turned to the concept to a life devoted to the pursuit of virtue, which constitutes the first serious possibility as a destiny for man.⁴⁵ Spalding’s discussion of virtue employed a synthesis of elements from Wolff’s philosophy (which he had studied intensively at the start of his career) with the work of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler that was, in many respects, typical of the sort of combinations of British and German influences that began to proliferate in the middle of the century. Spalding saw individuals as having an inherent disposition to work for the common good of mankind and he argued that this “natural” ability to judge matters of right and wrong was, in fact, the “voice of God, the voice of eternal truth, which speaks in me.”⁴⁶ This voice impels us to act to bring about a state of happiness that, because of the contingencies of human existence, can never be achieved on earth. Yet the very failure to attain this end in this world suggests the promise of a future life wherein “my constrained and beclouded soul will be given so much more light and freedom that I will be assured of a complete enlightenment of all the obscure parts of the plan by which the world is ruled.”⁴⁷ This, then, is the ultimate end for which man is said to be destined: immortality in the kingdom of God.

Evidence of the pervasiveness of the book’s influence can be found in Moses Mendelssohn’s response to Zöllner’s question, which defined “enlightenment” as one aspect of a more general process, termed *Bildung* [education, formation]. For Mendelssohn, the constant point of reference against which the progress of *Bildung* must be measured is the “destiny of man.” This concept, he wrote, is “the point on which we must set our eyes, if we do not wish to lose our way.”⁴⁸ Spalding’s book was, however, not without its critics. Early in 1764, Thomas Abbt, a young friend of Mendelssohn who had studied philosophy, mathematics, and theology at Halle and had gained early fame

with his patriotic treatise *On Death for the Fatherland*, suggested that the two publicly debate the merits of Spalding's book, whose argument, Abbt wrote, remained "shrouded in mystery."⁴⁹ Abbt had been influenced both by historical Biblical criticism and by the historically informed writings of his friend Justus Möser and his objections — which were published, along with Mendelssohn's defense, in Nicolai's *Literaturbriefe* [*Letters Concerning the Latest Literature*] in June and July of 1764 — were precisely the sort of questions one would expect a more empiricist and historicist reader to raise against Spalding's rationalist reconstruction of Christian faith.⁵⁰ He argued that a historically informed study of customs and mores would show that — far from being a universal "destiny" of mankind — the goals Spalding saw as universal dispositions of the human species were, in fact, the particular products of a refined, eighteenth-century intelligence.⁵¹

A more oblique response to the approach to religion favored by Spalding and his colleagues can be found in the theological writings of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781).⁵² Lessing came to Berlin in 1748, set on a career as a man of letters, moved into the orbit of the publisher Nicolai, and began a life-long friendship with Moses Mendelssohn, who had arrived in the city five years earlier as an impoverished student of the Talmud. In 1770, Lessing left the city to take up a post as royal librarian for the Duke of Brunswick where, drawing both on material in the library at Wolfenbüttel and on his own writings, began a series of publications on religious and theological questions.⁵³ The strategy Lessing adopted in his theological writings was a puzzling one. He devoted a number of essays to defending arguments of more traditional theologians against the enlightened approaches of the sort favored by Spalding and his colleagues. His motive for defending orthodoxy was, however, rather peculiar: he felt that the Berlin theologians had offered, in place of a patently absurd set of beliefs, a slightly less absurd construction that had the additional disadvantage of being more likely to persist than the traditional beliefs they sought to supplant. In a letter from 1777 he wrote: "I only prefer the old orthodox theology (at bottom, tolerant) to the new (at bottom, intolerant) because the former is in manifest conflict with human reason, whereas the latter might easily take one in. I make agreement with my obvious enemies in order to be able to be better on guard against my secret adversaries."⁵⁴ His plan, in other words, seems to have been to use orthodoxy to demolish the enlightened approach to religion that prevailed in Berlin in order to prepare the way for a more radical reformulation of religious doctrine, hints of which were broached in his major contribution to the philosophy of history, *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* [*Education of the Human Race*] (1777).

The question of Lessing's philosophical convictions would become a subject of heated debate during the so-called *Pantheismusstreit* [Pantheism Controversy] that raged in years after his death.⁵⁵ The controversy began as a dispute between Mendelssohn and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi — a young writer and philosopher who was critical of what he saw as the Berlin Enlightenment's one-sided emphasis on reason at the expense of sentiment and feeling — over Jacobi's claim that Lessing had, in a conversation a few years before his death, expressed admiration for Goethe's unpublished (and, in the eyes

of many contemporaries, sacrilegious) poem “Prometheus” and rejected “all orthodox conceptions of the divinity” in favor of the ancient Greek concept of the “One and All” (*hen kai pan*). When a shocked Jacobi asked whether this did not amount to an allegiance to Spinozism, Lessing allegedly responded, “If I were to name myself after someone, I know of no other.”⁵⁶

In many respects, Jacobi reiterated the charges that had driven Wolff from Halle six decades earlier: maintained that, despite its claim to be providing a more rational basis of religious faith, efforts at enlightenment inevitably culminated in a fatalistic determinism that ruled out the possibility of human freedom. What was novel, however, in Jacobi’s critique was that it drew, in part, on many of the same authors from the broader European Enlightenment who had been central to the program of Popular Philosophy. His reading of Hume and Reid convinced him that reason cannot attain certainty about the existence of external objects, and that our experience of such objects takes the form of a revelation that is beyond argument and rests on “faith” alone.⁵⁷ Carrying this dichotomy between the spheres of faith and knowledge into theology, he argued that reason alone can never lead us to certainty of God’s existence. This, he claimed, was the lesson he took from Spinoza. More relentlessly than any other philosopher, Spinoza had sought to provide a complete explanation for the world but failed, in Jacobi’s eyes, to account for human freedom — thus revealing what resisted reason and had to be taken on faith alone.

IV. The Public Use of Reason

One of the more important contributions to the *Pantheismusstreit* was Kant’s “What is Orientation in Thinking?,” an essay published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in October 1786. Written shortly after the death of Frederick II, at a time when anxieties were running high among members of the Berlin Enlightenment about the policies likely to be adopted by the new monarch, Frederick William II, the essay closed with a defense of the freedom of the press that rejected the notion that freedom of the press could be viewed as a mere supplement to the more fundamental right to think whatever one pleased. “How much and how correctly would we *think*,” Kant asked, “if we did not think as it were in community with others to whom we *communicate* our thoughts and who communicate theirs with us.”⁵⁸ Kant’s vigorous defense of what he had characterized in his answer to Zöllner’s question as the “public use of reason” was one of the more important discussions of what had long been a central concern throughout the period: the extent to which individuals had a right to express their convictions.

In the wake of his forced departure from Halle, Wolff defended “the freedom to philosophize,” which he defined as “the permission to state publicly our own opinion on philosophical issues.” To be compelled to adhere to positions contrary to what one

believed was nothing less than “philosophical servitude.”⁵⁹ “Reason,” Wolff insisted, “does not allow itself to be ordered about.”⁶⁰ Yet, even after Frederick had signaled a greater tolerance for the open discussion of religious and philosophical questions by inviting Wolff to return, the nature and the scope of the freedom of expression in Prussia remained controversial. Indeed, Lessing maintained that the range of topics open to discussion in Frederick’s Prussia was, in practice, rather restricted: all it really amounted to was a freedom “to make as many idiotic remarks against religion as one wants.” The scope of such liberties did not extend to political questions and, contrasting what could be said about politics in Prussia with what was being written in Vienna, France, and Denmark, Lessing concluded that Frederick ruled over “the most enslaved land in Europe.”⁶¹

When Frederick II assumed the throne in 1740, the responsibility for censorship had been distributed throughout a number of departments, each with its own sphere of responsibilities. Individual censors had considerable latitude in determining the fate of publications and the process by which individual works came before the censor was, at best, haphazard. Frederick initially attempted to reform the system by giving the Berlin Academy of Sciences sole responsibility over censorship, but quickly abandoned the initiative after it met with resistance both from booksellers (who feared it would increase the cost of book production while curtailing the number of books actually published) and from the members of the Academy (who were unwilling to take on new responsibilities without receiving additional compensation). In 1749 he reverted to the earlier system, leaving individual censors with little to guide them in determining whether books offended against religion, the state, or morality.⁶²

The question of the proper scope of censorship played an important role in the discussions within the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* spurred by Möhsen’s call for a closer consideration of the question “What is enlightenment?” Mendelssohn was initially rather skeptical about the alleged dangers of too much or too rapid an enlightenment of the public, a view that was seconded by Nicolai, who argued that “one has more to fear in terms of disadvantages to truth and happiness from the smallest restriction than from the greatest extension” of the freedom of the press.⁶³ Other members of the society, however, counseled greater caution. The noted jurist Ernst Ferdinand Klein was willing to concede that in general, “every truth is useful and every error harmful,” but went on to argue that it was necessary to consider the practical impact of ideas on different groups within society and suggested that, “for a certain class of men, a certain error can serve to bring them to a higher concept of things which are worthy of greater attention.”⁶⁴ Gedike agreed, noting that enlightenment was a “relative” concept that was differentiated according to such criteria as “place, time, rank, sex.”⁶⁵

The views of Klein and Gedike mirrored what had become the established practice during the last years of Frederick’s reign. Censors generally granted the greatest latitude to those printed works that were intended for an educated audience. The chief concern was with the potential for social unrest should enlightened ideas spread beyond

the sphere of educated readers and writers. The case of the clergyman Johann Heinrich Schulz – known to his contemporaries as “Pony-tail Schulz” because of his habit of preaching to his congregation without wearing a wig – illustrates the considerations that came into play in deciding what sorts of expressions and what sort of conduct could be tolerated.⁶⁶ What troubled the authorities charged with examining Schulz’s conduct (a group that included a number of members of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*) was less the content of his rather heterodox writings than the unconventional style of dress that he adopted when addressing his congregation (Schulz had explained the wigs that clergy traditionally wore made his head so hot that he became dizzy). Yet, despite concern that his failure to wear a wig might have an unsettling effect on his congregation, Schulz was not, in the end, reprimanded. There was, after all, no law requiring clergy to wear wigs and, more generally, the committee investigating Schulz’s conduct seems to have wished to avoid having his unconventional dress become a matter for public debate in the print media. Schulz went on to survive scrutiny of subsequent, and even more radical, writings on religious questions, with Karl Abraham Freiherr von Zedlitz, the head of the Prussian *Geistliches Departement* [Ecclesiastical Department], drawing a clear line between Schulz’s written work and his conduct as a clergyman.

The distinction that von Zedlitz made between Schulz’s views in works that addressed the reading public and his conduct as a clergyman, discharging his responsibilities toward his own congregation, was echoed in the demarcation that Kant proposed, in his answer to Zöllner’s question, between “public” and “private” uses of reason. Kant defined the “public” use of reason as the “use which anyone makes of it *as a scholar* [*Gelehrter*] before the entire public of the *reading world*.” He contrasted it to the “private” use that individuals make of their reason in those specific civil posts or offices that have been entrusted to them. In the private use of reason, individuals behave “passively,” directed by the government “through an artificial unanimity” to advance or to defend certain stipulated ends. While Kant argued that restrictions on the private use of reason in no way thwart the progress of enlightenment, he insisted that the public use of reason must remain free, since “it alone can bring about enlightenment among men.”⁶⁷

Kant’s use of the term “public” diverged markedly from established conventions in jurisprudence and instead embraced an emerging usage of the term that had been employed by the writers and publicists who published in journals like the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. In this conception, “the public” referred to a *reading* public, those individuals with the inclination, the time, and the taste to read, discuss, and criticize the stream of books and journals that flooded the literary marketplace in the last half of the eighteenth century. In selecting a clergyman, a soldier, and a citizen [*Bürger*] as examples of individuals who are capable of making public use of their reason to address a reading public, Kant dramatically expanded the scope of those who could qualify as “men of learning [*Gelehrte*].” As John Christian Laursen has observed, “If soldiers, clergymen, and *Bürger* all qualify as *Gelehrten*, then hardly any official or male head of an urban household, which is to say hardly any full member of society by eighteenth-century standards, would not qualify.”⁶⁸

Kant's emphasis on the centrality of the public use of reason in his definition of enlightenment is consistent with the emphasis he placed on the ideal of "publicity" – the free and public exchange of ideas – in his political philosophy. It also is a testimony to one of the fundamental ideals of the broader European Enlightenment: the notion that readers and writers, divided though they might be by national boundaries, were members of a single "Republic of Letters." Eighteenth-century Europe saw the emergence of a number of institutions – scientific academies, salons, coffeehouses, Masonic lodges, and an international book trade – that transcended the borders of the nation state and brought individuals into contact with one another. Kant's essays on the philosophy of history – from his 1783 contribution to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim" to his examination, in *The Conflict of the Faculties* (17XX) of the question of whether it is possible to see evidence of a moral improvement of the human race in history – are animated by a hope that this cosmopolitan community of readers and writers might one day culminate in cosmopolitan political structures that would end what he viewed as humanity's greatest scourge: war.⁶⁹

While Kant's is the most famous of responses to Zöllner's request for a definition of enlightenment, there were a number of other important responses, most notably, Moses Mendelssohn's contribution, which appeared a few months before Kant's in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. Mendelssohn saw enlightenment as one aspect of a more inclusive process that he called *Bildung* – a term which defies translation and refers to the ideal of cultivating, forming, and educating fully developed individuals. Enlightenment, in Mendelssohn's view, was concerned with "theoretical matters," that is, with "rational knowledge" and "rational reflection about matters of human life." He contrasted it to *Cultur* [Culture], which he argued was "oriented towards practical matters" such as "goodness, refinement, and beauty." Thus, "Enlightenment is related to culture as theory to practice, as knowledge to ethics, as criticism to virtuosity." Ideally, both work together to advance the "destiny of man," but there is no assurance that, in fact, there will not be discrepancies between them, producing either an excess of enlightenment that "weakens the moral sentiment, and leads to hard-heartedness, egoism, irreligion, and anarchy" or an excess of culture, which manifests itself in the production of "luxury, hypocrisy, weakness, superstition, and slavery." Even more troubling for Mendelssohn was the potential for conflicts between what he termed "the enlightenment of man as man" and the "enlightenment of man as citizen." The former proceeded without concern for the particular position that individuals held in society. The latter, in contrast, "changes according to status and vocation." While Kant held that there were never grounds for placing restrictions on the public use of reason, Mendelssohn maintained that it was possible for efforts aimed at the enlightenment of individuals "as men" to come into contact with the variegated forms of enlightenment that individuals required in their role as citizens. Particularly pressing for Mendelssohn was the propriety of censorship, a topic that had been extensively debated within the Wednesday Society in conjunction with the discussion of Möhn's lecture. While Mendelssohn was opposed to governmental restrictions on the press, he nevertheless granted that too much, too rapid, or too reckless an enlightenment might wind up undermining the goals that it sought to achieve.⁷⁰ He

was particularly troubled by the conduct of the French *philosophes* was particularly troubling for him. “Nothing is more opposed to the true good of mankind,” he insisted, “than this sham enlightenment, where everyone mouths a hackneyed wisdom, from which the spirit has already long vanished; where everyone ridicules prejudices, without distinguishing what is true in them from what is false.”⁷¹

V. Tolerantion, Universalism, and Multiplicity

The question of whether efforts at enlightenment must be limited in the name of preserving public order became even more pressing during the early years of the reign of Frederick William II. Members of the Berlin Enlightenment had long viewed the new monarch, who was known to be inclined towards religious enthusiasm and mysticism, with concern.⁷³ Matters came to a head during the summer of 1788, when von Zedlitz was replaced as head of the Ecclesiastical Department by Johann Christoph Woellner, a long-time advisor of the new king who appears to have harbored an animus against both Frederick II and some of the more prominent figures in the Berlin Enlightenment. On July 9, 1788 Woellner issued an edict on religious questions, which included a sharp criticism of the Berlin clergy for reviving “the miserable, long refuted errors of the Socinians, deists, naturalists, and other sectarians” and disseminating them among the people in the name of “*Aufklärung*.” While allowing clergy, in their role as private citizens, to believe whatever they wished, the edict stipulated that, in their teaching, they adhere to the articles of the faiths in which they had been ordained. Those “so-called enlighteners [*Aufklärer*]” who refused to conform were threatened with dismissal and future candidates for pastoral and teaching positions were to be carefully scrutinized so that there would be no doubts as to their “internal adherence to the creed they are employed to teach.” The intense criticism that greeted the edict prompted Woellner to issue new censorship regulations in December 1788 requiring that writings on religious matters be submitted to a special commission for scrutiny.

The promulgation of Woellner’s edicts has usually been seen as marking the end of the Enlightenment in Prussia.⁷⁴ More recently, however, Ian Hunter and Michael Sauter have suggested the controversy that greeted the edicts might better be seen as a consequence of differing interpretations of one of the most central concepts in the European Enlightenment: religious toleration.⁷⁵ They argue that the edicts were, in many respects, simply a continuation of previous Prussian policies that were intended to maintain a civil peace between differing religious confessions. Thus, the first article of the Religion Edict stipulated that the three main Christian confessions (Reformed, Lutheran, and Catholic) “should be maintained and protected in their prior condition,” while the second article extended the same protections to such “previously publicly tolerated” sects as Judaism, the Herrnhutter, the Mennonites, and the Bohemian Brethren. The principal thrust of the Religion edict, according to Hunter and Sauter, was to reassert a conception of religious toleration that both prevented the state from imposing a particular religion on its citizens and sought to check attempts by individuals to disturb the religious liberty of others by engaging in efforts a proselytizing. Thus, rather than

being an attack on “the Enlightenment,” *per se*, the Religion Edict might better be understood as one particular interpretation of what enlightenment demanded: the preservation of a civil peace between diverging religious confessions.⁷⁶

The debate over Woellner’s edicts suggests that, by the end of the period we call “the Enlightenment,” there were a number of different ways in which the notion of toleration was understood. One interpretation, quite close to the view that Sauter and Hunter associate with the Religion Edict, is vividly depicted in an allegorical representation of toleration dating from 1792 by the Prussian engraver Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki.⁷⁷ At the center of the engraving stands a helmeted Minerva, with her arms outstretched, as if bestowing a blessing on the figures that surround her, who are clad in traditional dress of a multitude of different religions. The meaning of the allegory is clear enough: it is only under the protection of reason that the various different religious confessions can live together in peace. The engraving also includes a vivid reminder that the means by which the protection is assured rests on something more than simply the light of reason that streams out from behind her: there is also a large lance leaning against her left shoulder. In the engraving, the members of the differing religious confessions appear to be carrying on their customary practices with no apparent alternation. Toleration alters nothing in the content of their beliefs; its mission is confined to maintaining pacific relations between the different faiths.

A markedly different vision of what toleration implies can be found in a letter that Moses Mendelssohn received from his friend August Hennings in the spring of 1782. Hennings argued that those who sought to advance the cause of toleration must work to ensure the spread of the principles and doctrines that “sound reason” demonstrated as common to all religions. Only in this way, he maintained, could the “poison of partisanship” that separated mankind into different religious confessions be overcome and “universal enlightenment” be achieved. While the beliefs of those representatives of the various religious confessions who gathered around Minerva in Chodowiecki’s engraving remain unchanged, Hennings was convinced that peaceful relationships between religions could be achieved only if it was possible “to unite everyone in the worship of the one true God.” Hence the question that this admirer of Voltaire posed to Mendelssohn: “What need do we have for Judaism or Christianity?” Would not toleration be better served through the spread of a universal religion, based on reason alone, that could draw adherents from all faiths?⁷⁸

The question would have been all-too familiar for Mendelssohn, who had spent his life responding to requests – both well-intentioned and not so well-intentioned – to renounce Judaism in favor of one or another version of a rationalized Christian faith. The peculiar interest that Spalding and other members of the Berlin Enlightenment had in Mendelssohn’s conversion can be traced to millenarian traditions that persisted even among enlightened Christians: the conversion of Jews to Christian faith was, in many quarters, still viewed as a sign that would serve as a confirmation that Christianity had, indeed, reformed itself to the point where it might, at last, become a “unitarian” faith,

embracing all reasonable men of good will.⁷⁹ Mendelssohn, as the most famous enlightened Jew in Europe, was an obvious candidate for conversion.

Mendelssohn closed *Jerusalem*, his treatise on religion and civil power, with a discussion of religious toleration that called Henning's vision into question.

A unity of faiths [*Glaubensvereinigung*] is not tolerance ... let us not feign agreement where multiplicity [*Mannigfaltigkeit*] is the evident plan and purpose of Providence. None of us thinks and feels exactly like his fellow man; why then do we wish to deceive each other with delusive words? ... Why should we make ourselves unrecognizable to each other in the most important concerns of our life by masquerading, since God has stamped everyone, not without reason, with his own physiognomy? Does this not amount to doing our very best to resist Providence, to frustrate — if it is possible — the purpose of creation, to oppose our vocation [*Beruf*], our destiny [*Bestimmung*], in this world and the next?⁸⁰

Mendelssohn's defense of religious diversity was based on a long-standing conviction that the ultimate purpose of nature was "unity," but not "uniformity." As he observed in a letter from 1777,

I hold that unity [*Einheit*] is indeed to be distinguished from uniformity [*Einerleiheit*]. The latter negates multiplicity, the former brings it into connection [*Verbindung*]. Uniformity stands opposed to multiplicity; unity, however, is all the greater the more multiplicity is linked together and, indeed, the more intimately this is done. When this linkage of multiplicity takes place harmoniously, unity passes into a perfection which uniformity cannot endure.⁸¹

When applied to the question of the relationship between differing faiths, this notion implies that the goal of toleration would be to foster ties between different religions that would affirm the truths that united them while still preserving the particular identities of individual faiths.

There is a powerful invocation of this vision in Lessing's play *Nathan der Weise*, a work that is both one of the era's most important explorations of the theme of religious toleration and a touching personal tribute: Lessing modeled the figure of Nathan on his friend Mendelssohn. Set in twelfth-century Jerusalem, during a time of uneasy peace between Christians, Jews, and Muslims, the play wrestles with issues that remain all-too-current. At one of the more significant turning-points in the play, Nathan — a wealthy merchant who finds himself under threat of persecution from the fanatical Patriarch of the Catholic church in Jerusalem (a figure modeled on Lessing's own nemesis, Johann

Melchior Goeze, the chief pastor of Hanover) – reveals to a Christian Friar who has been his long-time friend that, long ago, his family had been slaughtered by Christian crusaders and, in his anguish, he had sworn an irreconcilable hatred against all Christians. Three days later, the Friar, then a young monk living in the desert, placed in his care an infant girl whose Christian parents had also been killed in the conflicts that wracked the region. The Friar's gesture, Nathan explains, reconciled him both with the God and man. At this point, the Friar exclaims, "O Nathan, Nathan, You're a Christian soul! By God, a better Christian never lived!" To which Nathan replies, "And well for us! For what makes me for you a Christian, makes yourself for me a Jew!"⁸²

The Friar's well-tended, but somewhat tactless, characterization of Nathan as "a Christian soul" might well serve as a symbol of the empty "universalism" for which the Enlightenment is often criticized. It has been claimed that harsh light of reason, while allegedly neutral, carries a bias: it is inherently blind to difference. But the words that Lessing gave Nathan remind us that there were other strains within the Enlightenment that had a more subtle understanding of the nature of toleration: a recognition that what binds individuals together is not the recognition that others are just like them, but rather the more complex relationship in which we realize that the very traits that allows others to see themselves in us, also allows us to find ourselves in others. In the two centuries that separate us from the Enlightenment, it has become clearer how difficult this task may be. But little in that history suggests a better alternative.

- ¹ Johann Friedrich Zöllner “Ist es rathsam, das Ehebündniß nicht ferner durch die Religion zu sanciren?”, *Berlinische Monatsschrift* II (1783) 265-275.
- ² Mendelssohn’s essay appeared in the September 1784, Kant’s in December 1784. See Moses Mendelssohn, “Über die Frage: was heisst aufklären?”, in Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* Vol. 6/1 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1981) 115-119 and Immanuel Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”, in *Kant’s Gesammelte Schriften* Akademie Ausgabe [hereafter “AA”] Vol. VIII (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1923) 33-42.
- ³ For an overview of the debate see Werner Schneiders, *Die wahre Aufklärung* (München: Karl Alber, 1974), which includes a comprehensive bibliography. English translations of some of the material, along with interpretive essays, are available in James Schmidt, ed., *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
- ⁴ Anonymous, “Kritischer Versuch über das Wort Aufklärung zur endlichen Beilegung der darüber geführten Streitigkeiten,” in *Deutsche Monatsschrift*, Vol. III (September-December 1790) pp. 11-43 and 205-237.
- ⁵ Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?” AA VII:33.
- ⁶ For a general survey of political and social background, see Rudolf Vierhaus, *Germany in the Age of Absolutism*, translated by Jonathan B. Knudsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- ⁷ On this point, see especially Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987) and Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- ⁸ For a concise discussion, see Manfred Kuehn, “The German Aufklärung and British Philosophy,” in Stuart Brown, ed., *British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment* [*Routledge History of Philosophy* Vol. V] (London: Routledge, 1996). For general surveys, see Paul Raabe and Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, eds., *Aufklärung in Deutschland* (Bonn: Hohwacht Verlag, 1979), Franklin Kopitzsch, ed., *Aufklärung, Absolutismus und Bürgertum in Deutschland* (München, 1976), Peter Pütz, *Die Deutsche Aufklärung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and his Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969) 243-425, and Thomas P. Saine, *The Problem of Being Modern, or The German Pursuit of Enlightenment from Leibniz to the French Revolution* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997).

⁹ See Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹¹ For an overview of Thomasius' moral and political thought, see Hunter 197-273, Werner Schneiders, *Naturrecht und Liebesethik: Zur Geschichte der praktischen Philosophie im Hinblick auf Christian Thomasius* (Hildesheim: Olms Verlag, 1971). For a discussion of his theory of prejudices, see Werner Schneiders, *Aufklärung und Vorurteilkritik: Studien zur Geschichte der Vorurteilstheorie* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1983) 92-154.

¹² Hunter 199-200

¹³ For a brief discussion, see Catherine Wilson, "The Reception of Leibniz in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 442-474.

¹⁴ For a succinct expression of this ideal, see Wolff, *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere* (1726) §§151-170.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the controversy, see Saine, 146-152.

¹⁶ On the society and its membership see Uta Janssens-Knorsch, "Jean Deschamps, Wolff-Übersetzer und 'Aléthophile français' am Hofe Friedrichs des Großen," in Werner Schneiders, ed. *Christian Wolff 1679-1754* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983) 259-263.

¹⁷ Janssens-Knorsch 259.

¹⁸ Franco Venturi, "Was ist Aufklärung? Sapere Aude!," in Venturi, *Europe des lumières* (Paris: Mouton, 1971) 39-42..

¹⁹ See Hans Aarsleff, "The Berlin Academy under Frederick the Great," *History of the Human Sciences* (1989) 2:2, 193-206.

²⁰ Mendelssohn, "Zwanzigster Brief," *Briefe, die neueste Litteratur betreffend*, IX (March 1, 1759) 130.

²¹ Letter to Johann Heinrich Lambert of December 31, 1765, in Immanuel Kant, *Correspondence*, trans. and ed. Arnulf Zweig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 82.

²² For discussions, see Johan van der Zande, "Popular Philosophy and the History of Mankind in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Storia della Storiografia* 22 (1992) 37-56, van der Zande, "In the Image of

Cicero: German Philosophy between Wolff and Kant,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56:3 (July 1995) 419-442 and John Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) 15-42.

²³ Roger Mortier, “Diderot, Ernesti, et la ‘Philosophie Populaire,’” in John Passas, ed., *Essays on Diderot and the Enlightenment in Honor of Otis Fellows* (Geneva, 1974) 207-230.

²⁴ For discussions of these competitions, see Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) 146-209.

²⁵ See Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense* and Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*.

²⁶ *Der Philosoph für die Welt* (Leipzig 1775-77),

²⁷ For an analysis of the composition of the new reading public, see Müller, *Vernunft und Kritik* 268-280 and Raabe, “Aufklärung durch Bücher,” in Raabe and Biggemann, 87-104.

²⁸ For the now-classic discussion, see Jürgen Habermas, *Zur Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1962). For a recent overview, see James van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁹ For discussions of the society, see Günter Birtsch, “The Berlin Wednesday Society” in Schmidt, *What is Enlightenment?* 237-241, Ludwig Keller, “Die Berliner Mittwochs-Gesellschaft,” *Monatshefte der Comenius-Gesellschaft* V :3.4 (1896) 67-94, Heinrich Meisner, “Die Freunde der Aufklärung: Geschichte der Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft,” in *Festschrift zur 50jährigen Doktorjubelfeier Karl Weinholds* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1896) 43-54, and Birgit Nehren, “Selbstdenken und gesunde Vernunft: Über eine wiederaufgefundene Quelle zur Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft,” *Aufklärung* 1:1 (1986) 87-101.

³⁰ Johann Karl Wilhelm Möhsen, “What is to be Done toward the Enlightenment of the Citizenry” in Schmidt, *What is Enlightenment?* 49

³¹ Möhsen 49

³² For discussions of the Enlightenment critique of prejudice see Gehard Sauder, “Aufklärung des Vorurteils — Vorurteile der Aufklärung,” *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 57:2 (1983) pp. 259-277 and Werner Schneiders, *Aufklärung und Vorurteilkritik*.

³³ For the translation of Bacon, see E. C. W. Ackermann, “Lord Verulam's Meinung vom Aberglauben,” *Der Neue Teutsche Merkur*, 1799 (1) 295 – 298

- ³⁴ K. v. Knoblauch, "Ueber Aberglauben," *Der Teutsche Merkur*, 1787 (4), 193-200.
- ³⁵ Anonymous, "Ueber den Ursprung des Aberglaubens und die Mittel, solchen zu vertilgen," *Magazin für Westphalen*, 1799, 145-158.
- ³⁶ Johann Friedrich Zöllner, "Etwas von Vorurtheilen und Aberglauben," *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 1783 (1) 468-475.
- ³⁷ For discussions of the concept, see Norbert Hinske, "Die Aufklärung und die Schwärmer, Sinn und Funktion einer Kampffidee," *Aufklärung* (3) 1988 and Anthony La Vopa, "The Philosopher and the Schwärmer," in Lawrence Klein and Anthony J. La Vopa, eds., *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1998) 85-91. There was at least one contemporary attempt to unravel the terms, Simon Höchheimer, *Bestimmte Bedeutung der Wörter Fanatismus, Enthusiasmus und Schwärmerey* (Vienna: Stahl, 1786), but no copies of this 36 page book seem to have survived. The *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* [1788 (82:1) 138] dismissed in a one sentence review: "Undefined wavering concepts and superficial reasoning characterize this text, which at least has the virtue of doing little harm."
- ³⁸ Johann Erich Biester, "Der gefürchtete elfte Julius in Berlin," *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, II (1783), 143-150. Similar documentation can be found in the *Journal von und auf Deutschland* [*Journal of and on Germany*], which included a regular section entitled "Enlightenment - Prejudices" and in the *Archive of Fanaticism and Enlightenment* [*Archiv der Schwärmerey und Aufklärung*].
- ³⁹ "Zwei schwärmerische Selbstmörder," *Berlinische Monatsschrift* (1784) 428-9
- ⁴⁰ Biester, "Der Mond doktor in Berlin," *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, I (1783), 353-6.
- ⁴¹ For a discussion of Spalding and, more generally, of tendencies in theology during this period, see Joseph Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Aufklärung* (Gütersloher, 1967).
- ⁴² See Anthony J. La Vopa, "The Politics of Enlightenment: Friedrich Gedike and German Professional Ideology," *Journal of Modern History* 62 (March 1990) 41-43 and, more generally, La Vopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit: Poor Students, Clerical Careers, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 137-196.
- ⁴³ Günter Birtsch, "The Christian as Subject: The Worldly Mind of Prussian Protestant Theologians in the Late Enlightenment Period" 310-312 in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, edited by Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁴⁴ Horst Stephan, ed., *Spaldings Bestimmung des Menschen (1748) und Wert der Andacht [Studien zur Geschichte des neueren Protestantismus; 1 Quellenheft]*,. (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1908). See also *Aufklärung* 11/1 (1999), for a reprint of the text and essays on the topic.

⁴⁵ For the argument thus far, see *Spaldings Bestimmung des Menschen*, 16-24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 25.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 28.

⁴⁸ Mendelssohn, "On the Question: What is Enlightenment?," in Schmidt, 54.

⁴⁹ See the letters from Thomas Abbt of January 11, 1764 and February 20, 1764 in Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 12/1:29-30, 36-39.

⁵⁰ Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 6/1: 7-65. For a discussion of the essays and of Mendelssohn's subsequent comments on the exchange, see Stefan Lorenz, "Skeptizismus und natürliche Religion. Thomas Abbt und Moses Mendelssohn in ihrer Debatte über Johann Joachim Spaldings »Bestimmung des Menschen«", *Moses Mendelssohn und die Kreise seiner Wirksamkeit*, ed. Michael Albrecht, Eva J. Engel, and Norbert Hinske, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1994) 113-134 and Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1973) 130-140.

⁵¹ Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 6/1:10; for the importance of these arguments for the development of the discipline of anthropology, see Hans Adler, "'Die Bestimmung des Menschen: Spaldings Schrift als Ausgangspunkt einer offenen Anthropologie,'" *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 18:2 (1994) 125-138.

⁵² For a discussion of Lessing's theological writings and their relation to other tendencies within the German Enlightenment, see Henry E. Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1966) and Saine, 182-279.

⁵³ For a collection of texts with commentary, see Henry Chadwick, ed., *Lessing's Theological Writings* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1956).

⁵⁴ Lessing, letter to Karl Lessing of March 20, 1777, in Chadwick, 13. See also the discussion in Allison, 83-95

⁵⁵ For the chief texts from the dispute and an introduction, see Heinrich Scholz, ed., *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard,

1916). For other discussions, see Beck, 352-74 and Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) 44-126.

⁵⁶ For the letter, see Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 13:135-153; for the statement on Spinoza see 137-138. For discussions, see Altmann, 613-621.

⁵⁷ For the importance of Hume and Reid, see Klaus Hammacher, "Jacobi und das Problem der Dialektik" in Hammacher, ed. *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi*, 120-121; Jacobi's most extended discussion of Hume is found in Jacobi, *David Hume über die Glaube, oder Idealismus und Realismus* in *Jacobis Werke* II:127-288, esp. 152-153 and 156-163. This reading of Hume is aided by Jacobi's translation of Hume's "belief" by the German "Glaube" (which carries religious connotations not found, for example, in "Meinung"); see Philip Merlan, "Kant, Hamann-Jacobi, and Schelling on Hume", *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia* 22 (1967) 483-484.

⁵⁸ Kant, AA VIII:144.

⁵⁹ Wolff, *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere* (1728) §§ 151-2. See the discussion in Saine, 120-152.

⁶⁰ Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht von seinen eigenen Schriften, die er in deutscher Sprache heraus gegeben* (1726) § 40.

⁶¹ Lessing to Nicolai August 25, 1769 in Lessing, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Lachmann & Muncker (Leipzig, 1904), XVII:298.

⁶² On Frederick's failed censorship reform, see Edoardo Tortarolo, "Zensur, öffentliche Meinung, und Politik in der Berliner Spätaufklärung," *Leipziger Beiträge zur Universalgeschichte und vergleichenden Gesellschaftsforschung* 3 (1991) 81-2.

⁶³ Keller, 80-83. For a discussion of the subsequent debate, see Eckhart Hellmuth, "Aufklärung und Pressefreiheit: Zur Debatte der Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft während der Jahre 1783 und 1784," *Zeitschrift für historisches Forschung* 9 (1982): 315-345.

⁶⁴ Keller, 77-78.

⁶⁵ Keller, 85.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the case, see Michael J. Sauter, "Preaching, a Ponytail, and an Enthusiast: Rethinking the Public Sphere's Subversiveness in Eighteenth-Century Prussia," *Central European History* (forthcoming) and Saine 294-309.

⁶⁷ Kant, "Beantworten die Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?," AA VIII:37.

⁶⁸ John Christian Laursen, "The Subversive Kant: The Vocabulary of 'Public' and 'Publicity,'" in Schmidt, *What is Enlightenment?* 258.

⁶⁹ See Hans Saner, *Kant's Political Thought: Its Origins and Development* trans. E.B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

⁷⁰ See, for example, his letter to August Hennings of November 27, 1784, in Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 13:237

⁷¹ Mendelssohn, "Soll man der einreissenden Schwärmerey durch Satyre oder durch äussere Verbindung entgegenarbeiten?," *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 6/1:139.

⁷³ For a discussion of the Edict on Religion, see Fritz Valjavec, "Das Woellnersche Religionsedikt und seine geschichtliche Bedeutung," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1953) pp. 386-400, Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) 356-372, Steven Lestition, "Kant and the End of the Enlightenment in Prussia" *Journal of Modern History* 65 (March 1993) 57-112, Saine, 286-294, Michael J. Sauter, "Visions of the Enlightenment: Johann Christoph Woellner and Prussia's Edict on Religion of 1788," in H. Blom, J. C. Laursen, and L. Simonutti, eds. *Monarchisms in the Age of Enlightenment: Liberty, Patriotism, and the Public Good* (forthcoming), and Ian Hunter, "Kant's Religion and Prussian Religious Policy," *Modern Intellectual History* 2:1 (2005) 1-27.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Lestition, *op cit*.

⁷⁵ Hunter, "Kant's Religion and Prussian Religious Policy," and Sauter. "Visions of the Enlightenment."

⁷⁶ Hunter. "Kant's Religion," 6-13

⁷⁷ The engraving is reprinted as the frontispiece for Paul Raabe and Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, eds. *Aufklärung in Deutschland*.

⁷⁸ Letter to Mendelssohn of April 27, 1782, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 13:38. For a discussion of this letter, see Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn* 491-2.

⁷⁹ The challenges Mendelssohn faced have been explored in David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). For a discussion of the central role of Judaism for the Enlightenment, see Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁸⁰ Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 8:202-3. See also Mendelssohn's letter to Herz Homberg of March 1, 1784, which characterized the bogus notion of toleration ("*dieser Toleranzgleißnerey*") popular in newspapers — which equated toleration with a "system of unification" — as "more dangerous than open persecution." Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 13:179.

⁸¹ Mendelssohn letter to Karl Theodor Anton Maria Freiherrn von Dalberg of September 5, 1777 *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 12/2: 94. See also the discussion of unity as "Einerley" and "Einhelligkeit," in *On Sentiments* in Mendelssohn, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 77.

⁸² Lessing, *Nathan der Weise* Act IV, Scene 7.