Beyond Theological Rationalism: The Contemporary Relevance of Herder's Psychology of Religion

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Abstract

J.G. Herder (1744-1804) is acknowledged as a pioneer in philosophy, theology, history, anthropology, and allied disciplines. This paper explores Herder's development of a psychogenetic account of religion through a critical confrontation with the dominant theological rationalism of the age. Herder's view undercuts various false dilemmas posed by the rationalists by situating religion within a reconfigured account of the "lower faculties" of the soul, thereby effecting an important, if somewhat overlooked, revolution in the modern science of religion.

J.G. Herder's (1744-1804) reputation as both a philosopher and a theologian has ebbed and flowed over the two centuries since his death. Recently, there has been a move to rehabilitate Herder as a genuinely systematic philosopher with a distinctive, coherent position on a variety of issues from epistemology to philosophy of language.[1] Moreover, Herder's historical importance in the reception of Spinozism in late eighteenth-century Germany, and the impact of this reception on the formation of German Idealism, has been recognized.[2] On the theological side, Herder's role as a sober defender and practitioner of a modern, humanistic approach to the study of the Bible has never really been in doubt.[3] At the confluence of theology and philosophy, Herder has been recognized as an important pioneer in modern science of religion and its allied disciplines. Herder's criticisms of the Euro-centrism of the Enlightenment, his

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[1] On Herder's epistemology and philosophy of mind, see Adler 1994 and Heinz 1994. On Herder's aesthetics, see Norton 1991. On Herder's philosophy of language, see Forster 2002.

[2] On Herder's role in the reception of Spinoza and the formation of German idealism, see: Beiser 1987; Zammito 1997; and Hammacher 1997.

[3] For an excellent recent study of Herder's work on the Old Testament, see Bultmann 1999.

insistence on the uniqueness and value of national traditions and languages, and his historicism together provided an important impetus for the opening up of new domains in the study of religion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4] Herder's positive assessment of the significance of tradition, of folklore, and of mythology signaled a constructive rupture with the narrow rationalism of his Deist predecessors.[5]

Surprisingly, despite Herder's significant (and increasingly recognized) place in intellectual history, his name is more or less absent from the canon of contemporary religious studies.[6] His acknowledged contributions to the history of religion, Biblical scholarship, and anthropology should each earn him a place in this canon. My aim in this essay is to contribute to a renewed appreciation of Herder as a crucial historical point of reference for the study of religion, focusing on his psychology of religion. This is one domain in which Herder's inclusion within the canon promises to make a significant difference in how the history of the discipline is conceived. Freud and his psychoanalytic successors have a virtual monopoly in contemporary discussions of the development of psychogenetic accounts of religion. Partly as a result of this, there is a widespread assumption that psychogenetic accounts, particularly those that appeal to subconscious processes, universally imply that religion is irrational, a nearly pathological survival from an infantile stage of human cognitive development. Herder, while he indeed develops a psychogenetic account of religion that appeals to subconscious processes, does not share this assumption. Like Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition, Herder has no truck with the pretensions of theological rationalism. Yet, unlike psychoanalytic theorists, he views the subconscious processes that lie at the root of human religiosity as fundamentally *rational* processes.

My argument for Herder's importance takes the form of a reconstruction of his largely overlooked psychogenetic account of religion. Understanding this neglected aspect of his voluminous oeuvre turns out to require some familiarity with the theological and philosophical context in which he wrote. Thus, to begin with, I introduce and outline the salient features of the two dominant

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[4] Two helpful discussions of Herder's role in the formation of the modern science of religion, on which I have relied here are Byrne 1989 and Buntfuß 2004. Buntfuß, in particular, links Herder's theory of religion with the epistemological views discussed by Adler and others.

[5] Two well-known discussions of Herder's divergence from the Enlightenment on the value of history and tradition are Berlin 2000 and Taylor 1997.

[6] Herder is entirely absent, for example, from one of the standard textbooks in religious studies. See Pals 2006. The same is true of two authoritative studies of the history of modern religious studies. See Sharpe 1986 and Preus 1996. More recently, an example of a typical graduate syllabus in religious studies includes both Pals and Preus, and so excludes Herder entirely. See Arnal 1999.

streams of theological rationalism in eighteenth-century Germany, viz., Wolff-ianism and neology. As Karl Aner has described in his now-classic study of the era, there are some important differences between these two approaches (Aner 1964). However, I argue that, for Herder anyway, the commonalities between Wolffianism and neology significantly overshadowed these differences. Second, I present and explicate a selection of some of Herder's explicit criticisms of theological rationalism covering virtually the entire range of his career (from the 1760s to the 1790's). The substance of these criticisms comes down to the claim that the rationalists illegitimately substitute a theological system modeled on the Wolffian conception of science for the actual historical phenomena of religion. For Herder, this move rests upon the assumption that the *only* kind of rationality is that modeled by Wolffian science, and that therefore the only alternative to a rationalized religion is irrational fanaticism. Drawing on the recent work of Hans Adler, I then go on to show how Herder offers a psychogenetic account of religion that is designed to undercut this dilemma, and thus to undermine the plausibility of the theological rationalists' shared program.[7] Importantly, in casting aside theological rationalism, Herder does not adopt the view that religion is fundamentally irrational, or the product of irrational psychological forces. It is precisely here that Herder's position constitutes a significant alternative to the Freudian tradition.

I.   Eighteenth-Century Theological Rationalism in Germany

Unlike most nineteenth- and twentieth-century pioneers of religious studies, Herder developed his theological and philosophical views against an established background of theological rationalism, which had largely been eclipsed after the end of the eighteenth century. This is true not only of the central concern of this paper, viz., Herder's psychogenetic theory of religion, but also of some of his more well-known contributions to Biblical scholarship, homiletics, and practical theology. Broadly speaking, theological rationalism in eighteenth-century Germany developed in two distinct but closely related streams: Wolffianism and neology. Despite their differences, both the Wolffians and the neologians were united in implementing a broad program of subjecting theology to the authority of reason. This program took shape in a variety of overlapping agendas, including the criticism of doctrine, theological system-building, and Biblical scholarship. Herder found points to criticize

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[7] Herder's works are cited parenthetically in the body of the text using the following abbreviations: *DKV* (Herder 1994); *PW* (Herder 2002); *SEW* (Herder 1992); *SWA* (Herder 2006); and *SWS* (Herder 1967).

in all of these domains. The goal of this section is to outline some of the basic positions and key figures of Herder's theological context, which still remains largely unknown to Anglophone scholars.

Perhaps surprisingly, the assumptions about ideal rationality that motivate this eighteenth-century program are also lurking in the background of a significant body of twentieth-century work on the psychology of religion. Indeed, the basic premise of Freud's influential project in works like *The Future of an Illusion* is that since religious beliefs fail to meet ideal standards of scientific rationality, they can *only* be products of irrational psychological processes. Charles R. Elder captures the Freudian position well: "For if religious beliefs are groundless, if they cannot be justified by appeals either to reason or to evidence, then the explanation for *why* people hold them can only be found in the subjective constitution of the believer".[8] Eighteenth-century theological rationalists agreed. If religion cannot be shown to conform to ideal rationality, it degenerates into irrational "enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*]."

Standard histories of German philosophy typically cast the influence of Christian Wolff (1679-1754) in largely negative terms. No doubt moved by the impressive edifice of Kant's philosophy, philosophers typically see Wolff as the arch-dogmatist whose fate was sealed by the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Fortunately, some scholars have shown a warranted appreciation for Wolff as an important thinker in his own right, and his influence is now also seen in more positive terms.[9] Though Wolff primarily addressed himself to natural or philosophical theology, rather than to Christian doctrine proper, his influence here was also considerable. His *Theologia naturalis* (1736-37) is a detailed presentation of arguments for the existence of God coupled with an influential deduction of the divine attributes. Wolff is not silent regarding so-called "revealed theology." He maintains that the content of revealed doctrines cannot conflict with the necessary truths of reason, and that they must be shown to be compatible with human flourishing. This position laid the groundwork for the rational criticism of traditional doctrines by Wolff's more radical followers. Perhaps more importantly, however, Wolff's conception of philosophy as a mathematical science had an enduring impact in both theology and philosophy. The Wolffian theologians undertook to construct systematic doctrinal theology on precisely the model set forth by Wolff himself.

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[8] Elder 1995: 360

[9] For some older positive assessments of Wolff, see Blackwell 1961, Carr 1973, and Frängsmyr 1975. I have found Frängsmyr's piece particularly helpful with respect to the reconstruction of Wolffian theology presented here. Two more recent studies of Wolff are Van Peursen 1987 and Morrison 1993.

Not all Wolffians, however, accepted the applicability of this conception of science to theology. Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700-1766), professor at Leipzig, supported and popularized Wolff's philosophy (including Wolff's approach to natural theology), most notably in *Erste Gründe der gesammten Weltweisheit* (*First Principles of All Philosophy*) (1733). However, in his brief essay entitled "Whether One can Treat Revealed Theology according to the Mathematical Method [*Lehrart*]," Gottsched expresses his doubts as to whether Wolffian science constitutes an appropriate model for theology (cf. Gottsched 1983). Gottsched does not deny the benefits that would ensue were theology able to become a science in the strict sense, benefits including the unification of Christendom through the ultimate solution of doctrinal disputes (Gottsched 1983: 578). The difficulty, however, lies in the fact that the doctrines of revealed theology are "mysteries," of which no "clear [*deutliche*]" concepts can be formed (Gottsched 1983: 580). Therefore, revealed truths can neither provide, nor be derived from, the "irrefragable grounds [*unumstößliche Gründe*]" that are required for a genuine science to be formed on their basis. Nor can the Bible be viewed as a storehouse of demonstrable propositions [*Grundsätze*] on which to construct a true "science" (Gottsched 1983: 581). The only basis available to "revealed theology" consists of the testimonies of other people, which, by their very nature, yield "mere faith, not a synthetically demonstrated science" (Gottsched 1983: 585, 586).

Other followers of Wolff were apparently not moved by Gottsched's concerns, and applied themselves with zeal to the project of constructing a scientific theological system. Johann Gustav Reinbeck (1683-1741) was one of the most prominent early exponents of Wolffianism in theology, as emerges quite clearly in his *Betrachtungen über die in der Augspurgischen Confeßion enthaltene und damit verknüpfte Göttliche Wahrheiten* (*Reflections on the Divine Truths Contained in and Connected with the Augsburg Confession*) in four volumes, published between 1731 and 1741 (cf. Hirsch 1964: 90; Philipp 1957: 137-38; Lorenz 2007). Other exemplars of this approach include Israel Gottlieb Canz, author of the *Compendium theologiae purioris* (*Manual of Pure Theology*) (1752) and Jakob Carpov's *Oeconomia salutis Novi Testamenti* (*Economy of Salvation in the New Testament*) (1737-65).[10] Perhaps the most notorious example of the application of Wolffianism to the domain of "revealed theology" is Johann Lorenz Schmidt's so-called *Wertheimer Bible* (1735), a "translation" of the Bible into the language of rationalist metaphysics.[11] Schmidt's position,

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[10] On Canz, see Kolb 1908: 28-34. On Carpov, see Barth 1960: 139, 144.

[11] The actual title of Schmidt's controversial work is *Die göttlichen Schriften vor den Zeiten des Messie Jesus, der erste Theil, worinnen die Gesetze der Jisraelen enthalten sind* (*The Divine Scriptures Before the Time of the Messiah Jesus, First Part: Containing the Laws of Israel*). For some of the

however, was extreme, even by the rationalist standards of the age. Far more representative, and influential, was Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten (1706-1757), brother of the philosopher (and fellow Wolffian) Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (cf. Barth 1960: 139-42.). Siegmund Jakob's *Evangelishe Glaubenslehre* (*Evangelical Doctrine of Faith*) presents a systematic theology in the Wolffian mold. His student, Johann David Heilmann (1727-1764) authored the *Compendium theologiae dogmaticae* (*Manual of Dogmatic Theology*) (1761), which was used as a textbook by the theology faculty in Königsberg during Herder's time there. This stream of Wolffianism was the one to which Herder was most directly exposed.

Besides this Wolffian tradition, the other dominant form of theological rationalism in eighteenth-century Germany was neology, the "new teaching."[12] Beginning in the 1760s, neology gradually eclipsed (though never entirely) the preeminence of Wolffianism in German theological faculties. In spirit, neology was more radical than Wolffianism, and strikes the contemporary student as being closer to English Deism in its attempts to purge revealed religion of any and all doctrines judged "counter-rational" (Aner 1964: 4). As Aner, Barth and others have carefully shown, the standard of rationality employed by the neologians was, by and large, practical rationality. That is, doctrines were judged by the lights of rational morality, as well as of one's inalienable moral convictions (Aner 1964: 151, 156). Thus, for most of the neologians, the principal difficulty with doctrines like original sin and eternal punishment of the damned were not so much that they violated necessary truths (Wolff's primary test) but that they ran counter to the neologians' own moral sensibilities.

Still, the neologians largely accepted the Wolffian model of natural theology as providing the indisputable foundations for rational religion. This combination of Wolffian theory and practical rationality is evident, for example, in the principal work of Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem (1709-1789), court preacher in the duchy of Braunschweig-Wolffenbüttel. His four volume *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion* (*Reflections on the Loftiest Truths of Religion*) went through four editions between 1768 and 1792. Using Wolffian ideas borrowed from his teacher Gottsched, Jerusalem articulates and defends a natural religion consisting of the following articles: (1) God is the creator and moral governor of the world, (2) the vocation of

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voluminous literature on this episode, see Hirsch 1964: 417-438; Ehmer 1992; and, most recently, Spalding 1998.

  [12] My discussion of the primary figures of the neological movement relies upon Aner's classic study (cited previously). However, as discussed below, I differ somewhat from Aner in his assessment of the divergence of neology from the main stream of Wolffianism.

humanity is to become like God through morality, and (3) the human soul is immortal. But Jerusalem also goes on to attack traditional doctrines such as the Fall, original sin, and the Trinity in a way more characteristic of early English freethinkers.

Another leading light of the "new teaching" is Johann Joachim Spalding (1714-1804). Like Jerusalem, Spalding was trained in Wolffian philosophy. Following a series of provincial appointments, Spalding eventually joined the *Oberkonsistorialrat* in Berlin in 1764. He translated the works of Shaftesbury, and was a close student of other British thinkers like Hutcheson and Butler. His writings advocate the typically neological view that the role of the clergy is to provide moral instruction rather than doctrinal catechesis. Spalding is most famous for his *Bestimmung des Menschen* (*Vocation of Man*), composed while in retreat in his hometown in Swedish Pomerania. This work went through eleven editions between 1748 and 1798, and exercised an enormous influence on both the philosophical and theological discourse of late eighteenth-century Germany.[13]

Johann August Eberhard (1739-1809), professor at Halle from 1778, was another highly visible and influential member of the neologians' movement. Eberhard achieved his initial fame with his *Neue Apologie des Sokrates* (*New Apology for Socrates*) (1772), in which he defended the salvation of righteous pagans and rejected the traditional notion of the eternal punishment of the damned. His appointment at Halle, however, was based upon his *Allgemeine Theorie des Denkens und Empfindens* (*General Theory of Thought and Sensation*) (1776), a lucid defense of Wolffian philosophical psychology that won the Prize Essay competition of the Berlin Academy. From his position as editor of the *Philosophisches Magazin* (1788-92) and *Philosophisches Archiv* (1792-95), Eberhard vocally defended Wolffianism against the insurgent Kantian philosophy.[14] In addition, Eberhard authored one of the few philosophically salient criticisms of Fichte's philosophy of religion during the sordid "Atheism Controversy" of 1799.

Two other neologians had a Wolffian background as well. Johann Gottlieb Töllner (1724-1774) was a student of both Wolff himself and of the theologian S.J. Baumgarten at Halle. He went on to teach theology at Frankfurt am Oder, where he defended the liberal views of the neologians in works such as *Beweis, daß Gott d. Menschen bereits durch seine Offenbarung in d. Natur zur Seligkeit führt* (*Demonstration that God has already led Man to Blessedness Through His Revelation in Nature*) (1766). Töllner's successor in his academic

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[13] For a recent helpful discussion of Spalding's influence, see di Giovanni 2005.

[14] See Allison 1973 for an important discussion of this aspect of Eberhard's wide-ranging career.

position, Gotthilf Samuel Steinbart (1738-1800) also employed Wolffian ideas. Specifically, he borrowed from Wolff's practical philosophy in his own exposition of the traditional doctrines of salvation and eternal blessedness in *System der reinen Philos. oder Glückseligkeitslehre des Christenthums f. die Bedürfnisse seiner aufgeklärten Landesleute u. andrer die nach Weisheit fragen eingerichtet* (*System of Pure Philosophy, or Christianity's Doctrine of Happiness for the Need of His Enlightened Countrymen and Others Who are Drive to Ask for Wisdom*), which went through four editions between 1778 and 1794. Also worth mentioning in this group is Wilhelm Abraham Teller (1734-1804), a professor at Helmstedt whose *Lehrbuch des christliche Glaubens* (*Textbook of Christian Faith*) (1764) was a kind of neologians' *summa* that attacked traditional doctrines of a prelapsarian state, original sin, the eternal divinity of the Son, and the hypostatic union (Aner 1964: 87). Like Töllner and Steinbart, Teller's training was Wolffian, in this case under Gottsched in Leipzig.

Herder's personal and educational links with representatives of both of these streams of theological rationalism are complex. As my discussion below will make clear, with respect to the more orthodox Wolffians, Herder's judgment is primarily negative. With respect to the neologians, the situation is more ambiguous. Indeed, Aner makes a case for the claim that Herder should be grouped with the younger generation of neologians who came to prominence in the 1770s (Aner 1964: 134). He bases his argument on Herder's occasional criticisms of doctrine, as well as his broadly liberal and moral approach to theology (Aner 1964: 135). From the perspective of Lutheran orthodoxy, it would be difficult to see any important *theological* differences between Herder and the neologians. Still, if Aner's claim is taken as asserting an unambiguous kinship between Herder and his contemporaries, it must be significantly mitigated in light of the textual evidence. Herder's *Briefe, das Studium der Theologie betreffend* (*Letters Regarding the Study of Theology*), for example, testifies to his simultaneous respect for and critical distance from the principal figures of the neological movement. For example, he takes Jerusalem to task for his rigidly allegorical reading of Genesis and for his clumsy and speculative attempts to provide a naturalistic explanation for the Exodus miracles (*DKV* 9/1: 153-54, 178). In the earlier *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* (*Oldest Document of the Human Race*) (1773), Herder complains that even "the excellent *Betrachtungen* of Jerusalem" are tainted by Wolffianism (*DKV* 5: 198). Yet, in the *Briefe*, Herder praises some of Jerusalem's insights, particularly into the "spirit" of the Mosaic legal material, and recommends his work on the grounds of its general utility for students of the Old Testament (*DKV* 9/1: 169, 172, 175). Similar ambiguities attach to Herder's relationship with J.J. Spalding. His *An Prediger: Funfzehn Provinzialblätter* (*To a Preacher: Fifteen Provincial*

Letters) is an all-out attack on Spalding's *Über die Nutzbarkeit des Predigtamts und deren Beförderung* (*On the Utility of the Preacher's Office and its Promotion*) (1772). Yet, in the *Briefe*, he praises the style of Spalding's sermons (*DKV* 9/1: 540), and his translations of Shaftesbury (*DKV* 9/1: 406). In the late *Von Religion, Lehrmeinungen, Gebrauchen* (*On Religion, Doctrines, and Rituals*) (1798), Herder has more praise for Spalding's last work, *Religion, eine Angelegenheit des Menschen* (*Religion, a Human Concern*) (1798). If Herder's judgments of Jerusalem and Spalding are somewhat equivocal, this is not at all the case with respect to other neologians. In the *Briefe*, he heaps scorn on Steinbart's *System der reinen Philosophie* (*DKV* 9/1: 458). In *An Prediger*, he strongly distances himself from Töllner's theological manual, *Grundriß einer Anleitung zur Fleiße in der Gottesgelehrsamkeit* (*Outline of an Introduction to the Study of Divinity*) (1766) (*DKV* 9/1: 141). Töllner's interpretation of the creation story is attacked in *Älteste Urkunde* (*DKV* 9/1: 193).

Perhaps with the exception of Spalding, Herder failed to see the distinction that Aner and other scholars of eighteenth-century theology have drawn between the Wolffians and the neologians. As has been shown above, most of the latter were trained by prominent Wolffians at premier universities such as Halle and Leipzig. Eberhard, while initially famous for his liberal theological views, was much more visible to his contemporaries in his role as a standard-bearer for Wolffianism. Moreover, while the neologians certainly went farther than most of the Wolffians (with the possible exception of Schmidt) in challenging orthodoxy, their commitment to rationalizing Christian theology certainly shares a great deal with the spirit, if not the letter, of Wolffianism. Thus, by Herder's lights, the theological rationalism of the eighteenth century constituted single, coherent stream united by common assumptions, common methods, and a common agenda.

II. Herder on Theological Rationalism

Even the most cursory examination of Herder's writings uncovers his deep concerns with the agenda of theological rationalists in his era. For the most part, the precise targets of Herder's criticisms are not made explicit by Herder himself. Thus, Herder's comments should be read as aimed at what he viewed as the common agenda of the dominant theological stream of the age. It should be noted that, in emphasizing Herder's criticisms of theological rationalism, I am by no means asserting either that Herder was a defender of the older scholastic orthodoxy of the Lutheran establishment or of some version of irrationalism. On the contrary, from early on in his post-university career,

Herder was critical of the cornerstone of Lutheran orthodoxy, viz., the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Similarly, Herder advocated a humanistic, reasoned approach to theology. This more nuanced stance turns out to be possible for Herder because he rejects a model of rationality that was common coin in the eighteenth century. Wolff and his followers identified ideal rationality with geometrical-type deductive reasoning, and shared a conviction that religion can only be rational if it conforms to this ideal rationality. His repudiation of both claims allows Herder to simultaneously reject rationalism *and* irrationalism.

While there are various lines of argument in Herder's writings that express his dissatisfaction with theological rationalism, my focus will be one in particular. In essence, Herder's complaint is that the attempt to rationalize religion characteristic of both the Wolffians and the neologians rests on a misunderstanding of the essence of religion, revealed primarily in a failure to appreciate the unique features of religious (especially Biblical) language and the thought-patterns it expresses. My aim in this section is to outline this line of argument. In the next section, I will show that this concern is derivative of Herder's deeper view of the psychogenetic origins of human religiosity.

Two early writings, the *Versuch einer Geschichte der lyrischen Dichtkunst* (*Essay on the History of Lyrical Poetry*) (1766) and *Über der neuere deutsche Literatur: Erste Sammlung von Fragmenten* (*On Recent German Literature: First Collection of Fragments*) (1767-68), testify to Herder's growing antipathy towards the project of rationalizing revealed or Biblical theology. In the first of these pieces, Herder considers Hebrew poetry, by which he means the Old Testament. The alleged absurdities involved in the attempt to rationalize the Old Testament will form one of the principal exhibits in Herder's efforts to move beyond the common agenda of the Wolffians and the neologians. While Herder questions the orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration by maintaining that God could only address people in a "human" way, primarily by allowing the Biblical writers the "free exercise of their poetic imagination (shaped by the character of their land and of their age)," he also turns this insight against attempts to rationalize the Bible (*SEW*: 77-78). He makes the point by rhetorically contrasting the actual situation of the composition of the Bible with a hypothetical situation in which God had addressed "sages capable of conviction without sentiment." In such an event God "would have addressed the mind alone, and so what is made necessary by our weakness is turned into a hallmark of divine splendor" (*SEW*: 80). This hypothetical situation is, for Herder, a *mere* hypothesis devoid of all historical validity, and designed to show up the shortcomings of the theological rationalists' program. Herder is arguing that one ought not to expect the Bible to reflect the concerns, much less the conceptual vocabulary, of eighteenth-century theologians. Implicit in

this observation is Herder's concern to defend the value of pre-Enlightenment cultures against the prejudices of his own contemporaries. At the same time, the historical point Herder is making places the rationalizing ambitions of the Wolffians and the neologians in an awkward position. The very character of the Biblical text renders it recalcitrant to their attempts to convert revealed religion into a science.

   This basic point is also made by Herder in *Über der neueste deutsche Literatur*. Attacking the aesthetic theory of Johann Georg Sulzer (1720-1779), an eclectic follower of A.G. Baumgarten, Herder sarcastically observes that "if we were pure mind, we would speak only in *concepts*, and correctness would be our only guide; but a *sensuous* language must contain *figurative* words, *synonyms*, *inversions*, and *idioms*" (*SEW*: 110). His example of a so-called "sensuous language" is Hebrew, which he explicitly contrasts with the scholastic idiom of Wolff, Baumgarten, and even the pre-critical Kant, his erstwhile teacher (*SEW*: 117). Buried in this contrast is the same thought introduced in the "Essay on Lyric Poetry," viz., that the language of the Bible is of a different kind than that of eighteenth-century rationalist philosophy, and so is irreducible to the latter.

   In the "Second Collection" of Herder's *Über der neueste deutsche Literatur*, Herder again frames the concern in historicist terms. Contrasting ancient Israel with eighteenth-century Germany, he notes that "The *spirit of religion* has changed. In the days when poetic art flourished, there still prevailed a certain wild simplicity in which God also shaped religion, which was the mistress of that age" (*SEW*: 181). "Religion," he writes, "then incorporated more within itself, it had a different objective, and it followed a path other than our own religion" (*SEW*: 182). Ancient Israelite religion was the product of a semi-barbarous nation, living in a dangerous region in a dangerous era. "Our religion," i.e., eighteenth-century Protestantism, "on the other hand, is of higher reason, with the most sublime object of auspicious eternity" (*SEW*: 182). Their religion was "sensuous," and had no place for abstract notions of moral goodness or perfection in the Wolffian mode (*SEW*: 182). Herder's point is that the attempt to rationalize Biblical religion after the eighteenth-century mold simply, as it were, changes the subject. The result is no longer the same religion at all. As will be seen in more detail below, Herder even has doubts about whether the result still counts as "religion" in any sense.[15]

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   [15] In *Kritischer Wälder: Erst Wäldchen* (*Critical Forests: First Grove*) (1769), Herder expands this criticism to include various readings of classical mythology. He observes at one point that "I have never studied mythology as an index of general concepts in this fashion and have found myself in some embarrassment each time I have seen how others prefer to regard it as such" (*SWA*: 106). His target seems to be the forced allegorical readings that were popular in the eighteenth century.

Herder's first extended study of the Old Testament, *Über die ersten Urkunden des menschlichen Geschlechts* (*On the First Document of the Human Race*) (1769) develops the line of argument sketched out in the previous paragraphs with more specificity and detail. At the opening of the study, Herder signals his intention to challenge rationalist denigration of the imagistic language of the Bible, explaining that the historical context of its authorship necessitates a language "devoid of abstractions and scientific concepts" (*DKV* 5: 14). He is similarly critical of some of his contemporaries' attempts to read the Old Testament (in particular, Genesis) as either a textbook of dogmatic theology or as a compendium of primitive natural science (*DKV* 5: 21, 62). The following comments reveal the core of Herder's concerns:

> That God created *the best world* cannot be proven *on this basis* (Gen. 1:31) according to the strict sense of our *Wolffianizing* theologians: that obscures what is intuitive in the days of the week and the artist's contemplation at the end of each day's work, which are essential to the poem. Whoever feels this as well as Leibniz's real intention in his theory will not want to demonstrate *Leibniz* on the basis of *Moses* (*DKV* 5: 168-69).

Herder does not specify which of the "Wolffianizing theologians" he has in mind here, but the general thrust of his objection is fairly clear. On the Wolffian model of a science, one must proceed in a strict deductive manner to derive conclusions from propositions that are either necessary truths, or are themselves derivable from such truths. Applied to Biblical theology, this involves "translating" passages like the creation story into abstract propositions suitable for this procedure. Herder's point is that this is a mistake because it elides the essential features of the Biblical story, namely the fact that it employs sensuous imagery in constructing the narrative. What Herder elsewhere calls the "refined, late-invented metaphysical language" of the eighteenth century (*PW*: 68) is of an entirely different order.

Herder's first published study of the Old Testament, his controversial, expressionistic *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* (1773), contains some of the most strongly worded criticisms of theological rationalism in any of his writings. In his opening salvo, Herder wonders why, rather than try to force the Bible to conform to the new "wishy-washy religion [*Wasser-Religion*]" of the eighteenth century, one should not simply write a new "bible" suitable to the latter? (*DKV* 5: 183). A bit further on, he takes aim at Wolffianism in particular, mocking the common exposition of the Genesis story of creation in terms of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* by asserting that it is "our metaphysical proofs" that are in fact "built on nothing" (*DKV* 5: 198). The result of such attempts at rationalization is that "the holy voice of God from the Orient is *degraded into the stupid professorial tone* [*Kathederton*] *of our*

schools" (*DKV* 5: 199). Herder goes on to criticize the rationalists' tendency to erase the historical specificity of the Bible and to render it into a "watery deistic soup, in which every article and book is repeated like *Wolf's paragraphs*" (*DKV* 5: 238).

Picking up on the line of argument developed in the writings described above, Herder draws a rhetorically pointed picture of the contrast between eighteenth-century rationalism and the world-view of the Biblical authors:

> I know well that you in your time [i.e., the eighteenth century] can find means for this—*dividing* [*absondern*], *isolating* [*einzeln nehmen*], *analyzing* [*zergliedern*]—*lightning*! *plants*! *tree*! *animal*! *stone*! You have time to make enough *fish-* and *worm-theologies* and to put them to use; but do you consider whether that was the situation in the earliest world? To thus divide [*absondern*], to slowly analyze, to *pursue* a *reasoned conclusion* or a *fallacy*—they had no *time* for that, no *means* or *tools*, no *gift for abstraction*—no *desire* or *heart* for it. The whole creation interwove in a *living way* before their eyes. Creation—such great *tumult*! *infinite chaos* of beings, forces, shapes, forms—who could *partition* [*abteilen*] you, who could *separate* [*sondern*] you? Only the cold philosopher with his analytical ruler in his hand (*DKV* 5: 247).

Eighteenth-century natural theology was characterized by a deep, though perhaps somewhat superficial, appreciation for the scientific achievements of people like Isaac Newton. The intricate mechanisms of nature were interrogated relentlessly for evidence of divine design. A famous proponent of this approach is Friedrich Christian Lesser (1692-1754), and occasional correspondent of Linnaeus and author of the 1740 *Insecto-Theology*, subtitled "A Rational and Biblical Essay on How a Person Can Attain a Vital Knowledge of and Wonder about the Omnipotence, Wisdom, Goodness and Justice of God Through the Attentive Observation of the Lowliest Insects." For Herder, the Biblical idea of creation rests not on careful observation and classification of species of animals, but rather upon a kind of total impression of the vastness and order of the universe. In this respect, the passage quoted here reveals the ultimate basis of Herder's dissatisfaction with theological rationalism as lying in his alternative conception of the origins of human religious ideas. This point will be examined in some detail below. For the present, the important thing is to see Herder's insistence on the contrast between the intellectual outlook of eighteenth-century insecto-theologians and that of the originators of the tradition that they attempted to rationalize.

To read the Bible in terms of the project of constructing a rational theology simply does too much violence to the character of the text and of its vision of the world. Unlike in the pieces discussed so far, however, Herder expands his criticisms beyond the rationalists' readings of the Bible to include their program in natural theology. "Judging from our philosophers, nothing should be

certain except what they *demonstrate*—and what *can* one demonstrate? and what does it *mean* to demonstrate? and *how much* can demonstration, on its own, teach us?" (*DKV* 5: 251). Herder's claim is that the abstract natural theology developed by Wolff and appropriated by his successors is somehow taken to be suitably rationalized substitute for *actual religion*. He writes:

> *Wolf* has discovered a *new*, *irrefutable demonstration for the existence of God*? A *new* one? So then no person ever *knew* or *inwardly felt* this before? So then no one can *sympathize* [*nachfühlen*] with him! Then it is certainly not *true* (*DKV* 5: 252)!

Herder's point, left largely implicit in this passage, is that religion depends on natural theology neither for its *origin* nor for its *support*. Prior to any demonstration, an "inner feeling" both produces belief in God and convinces one of its veracity. Indeed, Herder suggests that in the absence of such "inner feeling" these demonstrations would have no purchase, no ability to produce conviction. For similar reasons, Herder attacks the deists' pseudo-historical fiction of a pristine, rational "religion of nature" (*DKV* 5: 285). For Herder, this postulated primal condition of religion only makes sense on the even less plausible view that, in the "state of nature," each human being is a "*quite comfortable, reasonable creature*" (*DKV* 5: 286). The implication is that such a "reasonable creature" would not have religion in the first place. Were human beings really ever the way the deists make them out to be, we would find ourselves in a situation in which we would "*live* in the world with so much divine knowledge and religion *without God* in the world" (*DKV* 5: 286). In other words, were the deists' "groundless, fantastic ideas and figments of the brain" in fact accurate depictions of human nature, religion, which is based on "inner feeling" rather than "demonstration," would not exist at all.

   Herder's concerns about theological rationalism in any of its various guises are not isolated to his writings from the 1760s and 1770s, but extend throughout his career. For example, in his *Briefe, das Studium der Theologie betreffend* (1780-81), he also castigates the "abstractions" of "foolish modern scholastics" (*DKV* 9/1: 151). He likewise attacks the use of the Wolffian model of science in theology:

> Whatever one might say in its defense, it was a false methodology when the Wolffian philosophy arrogated to itself dominion over theology, placed its definitions at the basis of every doctrine, derived what one liked from it, and now directed one's attention to some Biblical passage that might apparently say the same thing (*DKV* 9/1: 414).

Underlying all of Herder's discussions of theological rationalism is a concern with the relationship between the eighteenth-century conception of rationality and the nature of religion. This concern is not the same as the traditional

problem of the relationship between reason and faith. Instead, Herder wants to challenge the ways in which religion is expounded and explained by theological rationalists of various stripes. As described in the previous section, eighteenth-century theologians were primarily occupied with developing rational systems of theology on a Wolffian model, and of purging traditional theological doctrines of anything contrary to reason, where "reason" also included the moral sensibilities of the theologians themselves. For Herder, this program of rationalization runs aground on the substance of religion itself. His primary example is the Bible. The imagistic, anthropomorphic, poetic language of the Bible, and the "sensuous" mentality of the culture in which it was produced, constitute almost a different world from the abstract scientific rationality of the Enlightenment. To recast the former in terms of the latter is, at the very least, to eliminate many of the distinctive and definitive features of Biblical religion. On a deeper level, however, Herder contends that this rationalizing approach is doomed to failure because it attempts to substitute the products of reason for something that has its roots and continued vitality only in "inner feeling." Thus, Herder's rejection of theological rationalism is based not on a concern for defending orthodoxy, but rather on an account of the origins and nature of human religiosity as such.

III. Overcoming Rationalism with Psychology

There can be little doubt that eighteenth-century theological rationalism was largely motivated by a pervasive aversion to the lurking bugbear of the Enlightenment, i.e. "enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*]," or irrational religious fanaticism. The Wolffians and neologians were united in their distaste for the more extreme manifestations of the pervasive pietistic religious sensibility of the age. Herder clearly shared this concern. For example, in *An Prediger*, Herder argues that "enthusiasm" (i.e., the claim that one has direct contact with God in intense emotional experiences), were it true, would involve the "sudden *annihilation* of nature [*Wesens*]" and "a human being from whom not only his thinking forces but all his essential forces have been removed" (*DKV* 9/1: 99). Similarly, in *Gott. Einige Gespräch* (*God. Some Conversations*), the Shaftesburyian character Theano expresses his willingness to embrace the charge of "enthusiasm," only to be corrected by Theophilus, who reminds him that "Whoever desires to merely taste and feel the Creator without also seeing and cognizing Him denies humanity" (*DKV* 4: 765). At the same time, Herder contends that the theological rationalists inherit from the debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a false dilemma between the "Christianity of sensibility

[*Empfindungschristentum*]" and a merely "rationalized [*vernünftelnde*]" version of the historic faith of the Church (*DKV* 9/1: 96). In his own century, this dilemma has been grafted onto the division between "higher" and "lower" faculties of the soul, between reason and mere feeling (*DKV* 9/1: 99). In articulating the essence of the rationalist program in these terms, Herder is implicitly opening up a new approach to the study of religion by moving psychology, the study of the faculties of the human mind, into the center of the discussion. It is precisely on *psychological* grounds that Herder ultimately comes to reject the assumptions of the theological rationalists.

This is also where Herder's significance for a broader view of the nature and history of the psychology of religion is located. While cognitive and behavioral approaches have made important contributions to the field, especially recently, the psychology of religion was dominated by Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition for most of the twentieth century. Moreover, as noted previously, standard texts in religious studies sill represent Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition as paradigmatic of the psychology of religion as a whole. There are, importantly, many points at which Herder's view and psychoanalytic views overlap. First, both Herder and psychoanalytic theorists are staunchly anti-rationalist (cf. Vergote 1986). For Freud, rather than being based on evidence or scientific reasoning, religion is an "illusion," a product of irrational unconscious processes. More specifically, in Heimbrock's paraphrase, for Freud "religion is essentially the unconscious repetition of infantile helplessness and longing for father's protection" (Heimbrock 1991: 74). The hallmark of psychoanalytic approaches to religion is the explanatory role of the unconscious.[16] This is true of orthodox Freudian approaches as well as of derivative approaches, including object-relations theories and attachment theories.[17] As will become evident below, Herder shares the idea that religion is the project of largely subconscious mental processes. The crucial point of difference is that, for Herder, the processes in question are not irrational or pathological.

This simultaneous contrast and congruence with Freud and the larger Freudian tradition becomes particularly salient in view of the historical links between eighteenth-century theories of mind and later developments in nineteenth- and twentieth-century psychology. The most direct link between Herder and later developments lies in Romanticism and Idealism. Frederick C. Beiser has carefully examined the profound impact of Herder's metaphysics on the early post-Kantian generation. More specifically, Beiser argues that

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[16] See Elder 1995 for a clear articulation of the nature of psychoanalytic explanation.

[17] The classic examples of object-relations theories are Winnicott 1977 and Rizutto 1979. For a defense and programmatic outline of an attachment-theory approach to religion, see Kirkpatrick 1992.

Herder's holistic, organic view of nature influenced Schelling's early *Naturphilosophie* as well as the philosophy of history developed first by Friedrich Schlegel and later, more famously, by Hegel (Beiser 1987, 2003). More directly, David E. Leary has pointed to various ways in which Herder's ideas, mediated by a variety of traditions within nineteenth-century German thought, resurface in the later Freudian tradition. These include the key concept of the unconscious, the assumption that myth and allegory are tools for psychological analysis, and the general attempt to develop a "genetic" or "depth" approach to psychology (Leary 1980). Matthew Bell also situates Herder within the broad tradition of German psychology that stretches from Wolff through the nineteenth century (Bell 2005). He traces the gradual development of the Wolffian notion of "dark ideas" into a full-blown theory of the unconscious, culminating in mid-nineteenth-century figures like Schopenhauer and Carus. Carus, in particular, was profoundly influenced by *Naturphilosophie* and by the organic conception of nature that was most influentially developed in the eighteenth century by Herder.

Herder's position in the fascinating development of eighteenth-century theories of mind and rationality has been extensively examined by Hans Adler.[18] Adler places Herder at the far end of a theoretical trajectory that begins with Wolff's *Psychologia empirica* in the 1730's. According to the Wolffian model, all of our mental activities can be seen as modifications of a basic power of representation. Thus, strictly speaking, there is no *absolute* distinction between sensation and feeling on the one hand and rational cognition on the other. Instead, the apparent differences between these types of representations are explained by placing them on a continuum from "obscure" and "confused" to "clear" and "distinct." On the surface, this theory seems to break with any sort of rigid faculty-psychology. Indeed, Herder appreciated the Wolffian tradition precisely for this reason.[19] However, as Adler points out, the main stream of the Wolffian tradition still regarded these obscure representations (*cognitio obscura*) as unanalyzable, as a largely opaque penumbra that surrounded the "brighter" cognitive region of clear and distinct ideas (Adler 1988: 202-203, 208). The latter is, of course, also the domain of *scientific rationality*. Recall that Gottsched, a faithful Wolffian, denies revealed theology the status of a science precisely because it is concerned with "mysteries," which lack the requisite degree of clarity and distinctness, and so can never figure into a properly deductive science. For other theological rationalists, the

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[18] See the discussion in the now classic essay, Adler 1988. This discussion is expanded considerably in Adler 1990.

[19] In *Kritische Wälder: Vierte Wäldchen*, Herder explicitly endorses the Wolffian view that "everything evolves from a single fundamental facility of the soul to obtain ideas" (*SWA*: 198).

conclusion to be drawn from Wolffian psychology was that *Empfindungschristentum* occupied the "lower" region of obscure sentiments and affects, and so was best judged as inherently irrational. Their choice, therefore was clear: religion must be "rationalized" on the model of Wolffian science in order to be regarded as worthy of rational conviction.

For Herder, however, the lesson of Wolffian psychology was entirely different. As Adler has shown, Herder regards the obscure domain of sensation, the "ground of the soul" largely passed over by his predecessors, as possessed of "pregnancy" or "implicit complexity." As Herder argues in an early essay on Wolff, the otherwise sound substance of Wolffian psychology had fallen prey to a rigid dichotomy between "higher" and "lower" faculties on account of Wolff's own insistence that the fundamental drive of the human mind is for "certainty [*Evidenz*]" (*SWS* XXXII: 157). According to Herder, rather than beginning his account of human knowledge with psychology, Wolff instead started with a classification of the sciences according to the certainty that was possible in each of them (*SWS* XXXII: 158). As a result, Wolff and his successors ignored the true "treasure chest" of the soul, the "obscure regions of the soul" (*SWS* XXXII: 157).

Herder detected the results of this tendency in various domains, most notably in aesthetics. In his *Kritische Wälder: Vierte Wäldchen*, Herder attacks Friedrich Justus Riedel's naïve faculty psychology. In particular, Herder criticizes Riedel's attempt to derive ideas of beauty, truth, and goodness from "immediate feelings." He presents an alternative model of the mind in which a "reflective operation" is necessary in order to move from immediate sensations to sensory concepts of objects (*SWA*: 179-80). The very same process, which Herder elsewhere identifies with "reason" (*PW*: 83) produces our more abstract concepts. At the "intermediate level," between "obscure and distinct ideas," Herder locates "the very horizon that we commonly call the *sensus communis* in matters of knowledge, the conscience in matters of right and wrong, and taste where objects of beauty are concerned" (*SWA*: 181). Far from being immediate, brute feelings, these are "three habitual applications of a single power of the mind" (*SWA*: 181). Thus, on Herder's account, the allegedly "fundamental" senses for truth, goodness, and beauty are not "irrational instincts," forever opaque to philosophical analysis (*SWA*: 183).[20] Instead, reason, the activity of organizing representations into intelligible patterns, functions even at this apparently "primitive" level.

At the same time, Herder certainly does not hold that these senses (for truth, beauty, and goodness) could somehow be *replaced* by philosophical

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[20] Herder makes the same point about "conscience" or "moral feeling" again in *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele* (1778).

analysis. In "Critical Forests, Fourth Grove," he makes this point by contrasting "natural" and "artificial" aesthetics. The former is the "natural ability to perceive the beautiful" that functions "within the bounds of the habitual" (*SWA*: 190). "A natural aesthetics of this kind," he continues, "can neither be furnished by rules nor be replaced" (*SWA*: 190). "Artificial aesthetics" is a "science," a philosophical discipline, that "dissolves," but hardly stands in for, "the habitual" (*SWA*: 190). Importantly, this point is generalized by Herder beyond the domain of aesthetics. Already in his programmatic *Wie die Philosophie zum Besten des Volks allgemeiner und nützlicher werden kann* (*How Philosophy Can Become More Universal and Useful for the Benefit of the People*) (1765), Herder argues that the role of philosophy is not to replace "my sensations, my strength, my moral feelings, and my basic drives," but rather to *analyze* them (*PW*: 15). Elsewhere, he argues that the philosopher must be content to "see how the beautiful flower of thought sprouts from sensation and produces new sensation" rather than attempt to "gape at a dead marionette play" of abstract ideas (*PW*: 183). In other words, Wolffian science is to be jettisoned in favor of a psychogenetic explanation of the sentiments that "always remain the trunk of our concepts," that are ever "strong, powerful, succinct, secure, of the innermost certainty and conviction, as if they were fundamental faculties" (*SWA*: 195).

Herder undertakes to carry out precisely the *same* agenda with regard to religion. In a revealing fragment, undated by Suphan, entitled *Ueber die verschiednen Religionen* (*On Different Religions*), Herder argues that the rational criticism of religion stops short of the "most important" question, viz., the question of the *origin* of a particular religious opinion. What is missing is a "history of religions" as a discipline that goes above and beyond "natural theology" in the typical rationalist mode of the eighteenth century. He lays the blame for this lacuna squarely with the Deists, progenitors of the "emphatic distinction between two or three completely certain truths of our natural theology" and the remainder of religious claims. His advice is that, "instead of fruitlessly bickering […] let us cast our loving gaze on the field of *healthy reason* [*gesunden Vernunft*] (of common sense [*des gemeinen Verstands*]) instead of constantly rummaging through the clothes (and fashions) of philosophical reason" (*SWS* XXXII: 146). Herder goes on to discuss the various ways in which religion impacts the manner of thought characteristic of different historic nations. Anticipating more recent cultural anthropology, Herder argues that the religions of primitive peoples who are "closer to the state of nature" should be studied. Religions should all be regarded as "equally natural and human" (*SWS* XXXII: 147). What is important about this fragment is that it clearly expresses Herder's interest in the study of religion as a natural phenomenon, as a cultural form like any other. At the same time, Herder wants to

break with the rationalist penchant for logical analysis of religious beliefs, and the simplistic Deistic division between natural and revealed religion, to focus on "common sense."

In locating religion at the level of "common sense," Herder is placing it in the "intermediary position" between immediate feelings and the abstractions of philosophical theory that he had demarcated in his discussion of Riedel's aesthetics. Hence, as with our aesthetic, moral, and basic cognitive responses to the world, there is no need to *replace* religion with a Wolffian science. Instead, Herder proposes to understand religion by delving into what he calls, in a 1768 piece,

> the whole *dark foundation* of our soul, in whose unfathomable depths unknown forces sleep like unborn kings, in which, as in an earthen realm covered with snow and ice, the germ molders for a springtime of paradisiacal thoughts, in which, as in dark ashes, the spark glows for great passions and drives (*PW*: 168).

Herder puts this program into practice in some of his studies of the Old Testament, which, as I have shown above, are also the primary *loci* for some of his more forceful criticisms of theological rationalism. In the 1769 study, *Über die ersten Urkunde des menschlichen Geschlechts*, Herder maintains that the imagery of the Bible is rooted not in scientific speculation about the origin of the world, but in "sensation [*Empfindung*]" and "feeling [*Gefühl*]" (*DKV* 5: 53). The ideas presented in the Biblical narrative do not unfold according to some theoretical architectonic, but rather through the organization of "*sensible intuition*" (*DKV* 5: 63). More specifically, the "purest, sublime ideas of God" found in the Bible articulate a *sense* for the benevolent harmony and order of the universe, expressed primarily for Herder in the imagery of light (*DKV* 5: 63).

Herder's account of the origin of Biblical ideas of God parallels his discussions elsewhere about the psychological process underlying poetic expression. In his 1773 essay "Shakespeare," Herder presents the following picture of this process:

> When I read [Shakespeare], it seems to me that the theater, the actions, and scenery disappear! I see only separate leaves from the book of events, of Providence, of the world, blown by the storm of history; individual impressions of peoples, estates, souls, all the most various and independently acting machines, all the unwitting, blind instruments—which is precisely what we are in the hands of the Creator of the world—which come together to form a single, whole dramatic image, an event of singular grandeur that only the poet can survey (*SWA*: 299).

In other words, poetry has its roots in a "dramatic image" of the world, a kind of impression of the coherence of the world. This is clearly not an "immediate feeling" of any sort, for it requires the contribution of what Herder calls a

"reflective operation" in order for the individual sensations and feelings to be shaped into an intelligible totality. At the same time, Shakespeare's poetic vision is hardly, by Herder's lights anyway, a metaphysical theory.

Herder's first published study of the Old Testament, the *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts*, shows how he applies something like the theory of poetic creation to account for the origin of religious texts. The imagery of the creation of heaven and earth in Genesis derives not from cosmological speculations, but rather from a desire to express a sense for the "*eternity, omnipotence*, and *eternal faithfulness*" of God (*DKV* 5: 202). That is, the imagery of the Bible, like that of Shakespeare's poetry, has its roots in a kind of total impression of the world has sustained by a living principle of order and stability (*DKV* 5: 203). This "*whole, undivided, deep feeling of things*," this "feeling of God in Nature" (*DKV* 5: 251, 255) includes not only an impression of the order and stability of non-human natural phenomena, but also of human nature. Herder elaborates:

> Every *virtuous feeling* [*Tugendgefühl*] in a human being is such a ray of the divinity! This inner sensation [*Empfindung*] of *order*, of *justice*, according to which and toward which everything is built, which he cannot deny without destroying himself and everything around him … All the *noble and gentle drives*, through which the *sexes*, father and mother, child and friend, and to a certain degree the entire race can feel *that it can and will be one—justice, truth, mercy* and *gentleness*—divinity! in what a powerful and kindly way have you revealed yourself within humanity (*DKV* 5: 222-23)!

In other works, Herder defends the same essential account. In his *Briefe, das Studium der Theologie betreffend*, he generalizes his remarks about the Old Testament to the Bible as a whole. At the same time, he maintains that this account applies to religion as such. He writes:

> The Bible always speaks of God as a *present, living, active being*, alive in all of his works, active in each individual work, indeed even in the smallest affair of our life; through this the concept of God receives its impetus, and the doctrine of God becomes pleasing and delightful. At any rate, this is the only way to make us certain of God, to perceive him and to make him apparent to others; in short, this is the ground of all religion on the earth (*DKV* 9/1: 424-25).

He elaborates this "basis of all religion on the earth" a bit further on:

> I do not understand the infinite outside of the world, nor does it govern me; it is too far away from me. But the God who surrounds me, looks through me, who created me and everything else, who supports and guides me, He is *my* God and Father! Where there is power [*Kraft*] in nature, He is there; where there is spirit [*Geist*] in nature, there is the breath and power of His spirit: *He is in all, and everything subsists in him* (*DKV* 9/1: 425).

In Herder's crowing statement on religion, *Von Religion, Lehrmeinungen, Gebrauchen* (1798), much the same account is offered. Herder argues that monotheism is a "*conviction* (Rom. 1:19-20) won from an impression of the totality of nature (heaven and earth)" (*DKV* 9/1: 746), the "*noble consciousness* of ourselves in creation, as in the well-ordered house of a father" (*DKV* 9/1: 748). Belief in the one God is not the product of speculation but rather of a "feeling" of the connectedness of all "life" (*DKV* 9/1: 750). "*Religion,*" he writes, is this conviction, i.e., "our innermost [*innigste*] consciousness of what we are as parts of the world, of what we ought to be and must do as human beings; this religion neither borrows nor expects its insight or its efficacy from any mathematical demonstration" (*DKV* 9/1: 752). As in his discussions of the Old Testament, Herder ascribes the conception of God to a sense for the connectedness of life, for the common order of human and non-human nature. Crucially, this is ascribed to "intuition" rather than to metaphysical speculation:

> And since man intuits more than he abstracts, since speculation as such is only the smallest part of his existence; there instead wells up [*wallet*] in him a stream of living forces and drives: thus *life*, the *life* that he perceives in creation and feels in himself, becomes for him as it were the key of creation (*DKV* 9/1: 750).

Herder also highlights the role of "conscience" in the origin of religion. Conscience is precisely one's awareness of the lawful order of nature, of which one is a part (*DKV* 9/1: 753). Conscience is a sense for the "order of God in nature" and for a "fatherly, moral rule of law [*Nomokratie*] in the human race" (*DKV* 9/1: 754). Importantly, Herder returns to his account of the origin of conscience first presented in *Kritische Wälder*. He describes how, in the family circle, and through the employment of our own mental powers, our immediate sensation of our own existence and of that of the external world is gradually formed into a sense of the world and of society as governed by regularities. Speculation, he maintains, plays no role in this process, for "We come to the world as *living beings*, not speculating chimeras [*Scheinwesen*]" (*DKV* 9/1: 820).

IV. Conclusion

For Herder, there is no automatic inference from the fact that theological rationalism is profoundly mistaken to the further claim that religion is irrational. Moreover, his psychogenetic alternative to rationalism does not involve any commitments to the claim that the psychogenetic process is irrational, neurotic, or infantile. Nor does he infer that, since theological reflection is

derivative of a more primal operation of the mind, the subject matter of religion must therefore be something other than God (e.g., the murder of a primal ancestor or our own ego-development). All of these inferences can be found in the mainstream psychoanalytic tradition. Both critics of Freud and his more orthodox followers share these assumptions about the ultimate import of psychogenetic accounts of religion.[21] Some in the psychoanalytic tradition regard it as virtually axiomatic that *if* a psychogenetic theory does not reveal religion to be pathological in some way, *then* it is illegitimately "apologetic" (cf. Beit-Hallami 1993). Herder's work constitutes a powerful and historically significant alternative to this tradition. While he accepts—and, indeed, even promotes—the characteristically modern project of accounting for religion naturalistically, he does not accept the assumptions that have governed the Freudian approach. Like the psychoanalysts, Herder traces religion to the *fundus animae*, to the obscure domain of subconscious and pre-reflective impressions. Yet, Herder sees reason at work even here. Human religion, according to Herder, is neither the expression of blind instinct nor the fruit of abstract reflection. Instead, it emerges alongside other habits of mind that allow us to discern different kinds of coherence in our experience. Like common sense and the conscience, but on a considerably larger scale, religion ultimately consists in a sense of the harmonious order of the universe in its entirety.

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[21] Grünbaum 1993

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