

Kant and the End of the Enlightenment in Prussia*

Steven Lestition

University of Chicago

Much of Immanuel Kant's mature scholarly work, and particularly his moral and political philosophy,¹ developed against the background of what may be termed the end of the Enlightenment in Prussia—the sharp swing to conservative religious, cultural, and political policies following the death of Frederick II in 1786. Yet Kant has been one of the most difficult figures to place within what is now becoming a more historically nuanced understanding of the German Aufklärung and its context.² In part that is due to Kant's penchant for abstract forms of expression and oblique allusions; but in part it is also due to the unwillingness of scholars to avoid often crude simplifications of his potential relation to his context: either treating him as a pure philosopher, transcending his time and place, and carrying on a dialogue with other figures in the western philosophic pantheon; or else conceiving the meaning of Kant's political or sociocultural behavior so narrowly that he is reduced to little more than an academic bureaucrat—scheming to dodge censorship, somehow defending absolutism and freedom of thought at the same time.

This article analyzes Kant's relationship to the altered political and cultural climate in Prussia of the late 1780s and 1790s by giving attention to several of his less well known writings of the period: the essay "What Is Orientation in Thinking?" (1786), the new preface he added to the second edition (1787) of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, and portions of his collection of essays entitled *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798). I argue that, through the lens of such works, the "end" of the Enlightenment in Prussia appears as a process

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¹ His *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* appeared in 1786, a second edition of the first *Critique* in 1787, the critiques of practical reason and of judgment in 1788 and 1790, followed by major works on religion in 1793 and a two-volume metaphysics of morals (the foundations of coercive law and of virtue) in 1797–98.

² In this article I will refer to the broader European cultural movement and its idiom as "the Enlightenment," while using the term Aufklärung occasionally to designate specifically German forms (which themselves were often regionally diverse).

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of dialectical polarization. On the one hand, the Enlightenment began to assume radical forms that were easily marginalized and stigmatized by its opponents as narrowly one-sided or politically and intellectually dangerous. On the other hand, it also began to produce its own negations or inversions in the form of "conservative" theories of social or cultural behavior. Reading neglected texts in relation to such developments, we gain new insights into both their historical significance and meaning, as well as their philosophical import. Kant's strategy emerges as a "mediating" one: by pluralizing the inner structure of reason—into theoretical, practical, imaginative, but also pragmatic-technical dimensions—he sought to make sense of the pluralizing of social and cultural positions he saw emerging around him. His goal was to show that his philosophic system could cope with the challenges arising from both facets of the polarization process. His last writings thus pose for the historian some of the deepest paradoxes of Kant's contributions as a German cultural figure: did success in analyzing the pragmatic or affective behaviors at the core of elite or popular resistance to the *Aufklärung* perhaps end up isolating, or rendering deeply inconsistent, Kant's own vision of the Enlightenment, making it less capable of realization in what he and others recognized were the altering circumstances of sociopolitical and cultural life? Or did Kant's contributions succeed in developing a broadened understanding of human rationality as it was reflected in modern relations of church and state, in schools and specialized professions, in print media and the sort of "public sphere" they made possible?

I

In examining developments in late eighteenth-century Prussia and Germany, I think it is important to keep in mind—if only for clarification by contrast—some of the models that have been used to describe, for example, the end of the Enlightenment in France. One, that of Robert Darnton,³ argues that certain modes of thought and practice central to the Enlightenment were, in the context of the final crisis and breakdown of the Old Regime, conceived and applied in a more consistent and radical fashion, but thereby also marginalized as socially or politically dangerous. His primary instances, of course, were the Mesmerist movement on the one hand, and the radicalized outlook of Grub Street intellectuals, alienated from an Enlightenment establishment, on the other. But a second important model, sketched some decades

³ Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), and *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982).

earlier by Robert Nisbet,⁴ analyzed the way in which conservative social philosophies and a conservative "social science" were born out of a dialectic of gradual applications, but also inversions, of Enlightenment views of human nature, social institutions, and social processes.⁵ Looking at the work of postrevolutionary writers like Bonald, DeMaistre, Comte, and Saint-Simon, Nisbet argued that many of the ideas that became central to the sociological tradition emerged through such applications or inversions of value: attention to the phenomena of community and social cohesion, of status stratification and authority, of alienation from modernity by contrast with the continued importance of "the sacred" in the symbols and motivations of social life.

Such models serve to highlight the way in which the gradual radicalization and popularization (or even vulgarization), and ultimate splintering, of the Enlightenment—in movements such as the rationalization of Protestant theology ("neologism"), freemasonry, and the enthusiasm for the French Revolution⁶—took significantly different forms than in France. In place of the stark confrontation between radically anti-Christian intellectuals and a reactionary Catholicism in France, there emerged in Prussia (as elsewhere in north Germany) a set of controversies that basically accepted the framework of Protestantism: the validity of partial secular control over the church, and a tradition of reform and internal criticism. By contrast with the alienation of "gutter Rousseauists" from an increasingly comfortable Enlightenment "establishment" in France, German intellectuals continued to struggle for status and patronage within the largely decentralized, diversified hierarchy of a "service elite" slowly modernizing itself.⁷ Their controversies were fought

⁴ It is one that also anticipates aspects of Foucault's thesis of "epistemic breaks."

⁵ Robert Nisbet, "Conservatism and Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 58 (1952–53): 167–75, "DeBonald and the Concept of the Social Group," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 5 (1944): 315–31, and "The French Revolution and the Rise of Sociology in France," *American Journal of Sociology* 49 (1943–44): 156–64.

⁶ See, e.g., Hans-Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann, eds., *Aufklärung als Politisierung—Politisierung als Aufklärung* (Hamburg, 1987); and Bödeker and Herrmann, eds., *Über den Prozess der Aufklärung in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert: Personen, Institutionen und Medien. Acht Beiträge* (Göttingen, 1987).

⁷ For an overview of some of the recent literature, see Anthony J. La Vopa, "Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe," *Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992): 89–92; as well as C. B. A. Behrens, *Society, Government and the Enlightenment: The Experiences of Eighteenth-Century France and Prussia* (New York, 1985). La Vopa, in "The Politics of Enlightenment: Friedrich Gedike and German Professional Ideology" (*Journal of Modern History* 62, no. 1 [1990]: 37), argues that Henri Brunschwig's explanation of Prussian intellectuals' social isolation and alienation in terms of frustrated upward mobility is, in the light of current research, no longer persuasive. See H. Brunschwig, *Enlightenment and Romanticism in Eighteenth-Century Prussia*, trans. Frank Jelinek (1947; Chicago, 1974).

over control of offices, patronage, and influence in traditional institutions like the regional Protestant clergy, bureaucracy, universities, and print publishing (privileged, supervised, and censored by a variety of local or central authorities). Thus the different centers of the German Enlightenment had more in common with the regional Enlightenments of Scotland or Italy (or the "Enlightenment in the provinces" of France) than it did with that of Paris or London. In a similar manner, the conservative inversion of categories and values, as analyzed by Nisbet, took a less radical, polarized form in Germany. German absolutist princes and their administrative elites had already adapted utilitarian and functionalist justifications of their rule and social statuses; elements of a modern "public sphere" and cameralist welfare state had already merged with traditional sacral or corporatist legitimations of state power.⁸

For Prussian intellectuals, the possibilities for a radicalization, partial application, but also marginalizing or even inversion of the Enlightenment began to emerge between the 1770s and the late 1780s in three interrelated areas: (1) in a religious and academic sphere, (2) in the changing social and cultural practices associated with freemasonry and other secret societies, and (3) in the arena of Prussian domestic politics, as the implications of an impending change of throne became apparent.

Unresolved tensions within German Protestantism had surfaced in the 1770s and 1780s in the form of a tripartite conflict. On one side stood an orthodox Lutheran fideism, holding to a theory of "verbal inspiration" in the Holy Scriptures but also deeply skeptical of any natural human capacities for salvation or happiness. On another, Pietists emphasized promoting congregations' spiritual development through individual self-scrutiny, innovative pedagogy, or revitalized devotional practices. And, on a third side, a tradition of historical and rationally critical theological study, increasingly influenced by the language and thought models of the Enlightenment, gained a strong foothold in schools, territorial-state administrative bodies, and in the sphere of print publishing.⁹ What therefore emerged was a confrontation of naturalistic and utilitarian views of the clergy's vocation—promoting altered understandings of humans' inner nature, their talents and duties, the needs of society, and the de facto inequalities produced by wealth and power—with forceful restatements of more traditional theisms, pessimistic or providential views of humans' fallen natures. Even the specific issue in which Kant later became

⁸ In addition to Behrens and Böderer and Herrmann, one may cite Hans Maier, *Die ältere deutsche Staats- und Verwaltungslehre (Polizeiwissenschaft): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Wissenschaft in Deutschland*, 2d rev. ed. (Munich, 1980).

⁹ A helpful recent sketch of these conflicts is contained in Anthony J. La Vopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit: Poor Students, Clerical Careers, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (London and New York, 1988), chaps. 6 and 7.

embroiled—the 1788 religious edicts mandating strict interpretation and teaching of the Lutheran confession's "symbolic books"—was itself not new: orthodox clergy in different Prussian territories had begun to raise it beginning in the late 1760s and 1770s;¹⁰ and in 1780 the Duke of Württemberg, influenced by Pietist-oriented estates, had set the precedent of forbidding deviation from Christianity's "fundamental articles" and the Lutherans' concordial formulas.¹¹

For Kant and others, such developments came to a head intellectually in a variety of forms: in the Halle neologist J. S. Semler's defense of a "freer mode of teaching" the Protestant canon, and of a sharp division between the inner, "private religion" of mature Christians and the merely time-bound disputes of theologians;¹² and in Lessing's publication of H. S. Reimarus's deistic speculations. In the subsequent controversy over Lessing's supposed "Spinozism" (1784–86), a young writer, F. H. Jacobi, himself torn between Enlightenment ideas, freemasonry, and a subjectivist (and preromantic) religious orientation, sought assurances, first from Lessing and then from Moses

¹⁰ Karl Aner, "Germanus Lüdke: Streiflichter auf die Theologie und kirchliche Praxis der deutschen Aufklärung," *Jahrbuch für brandenburgische Kirchengeschichte* 11/12 (1914): 160–232; Paul Schwartz, "Philipp Rosenfeld (1731–88), ein neuer Messias in der Mark," *Jahrbuch für brandenburgische Kirchengeschichte* 11/12 (1914): 113–59; Ulrich Herrmann, "Der Streit zwischen Schule und Kirche im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert als Säkularisierungsprozess," *Braunschweigischer Jahrbuch* 62 (1981): 113–36. Ernst Cassirer, in his discussion of Kant's stance on the censorship edicts (in *Kant's Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden [New Haven, Conn., 1981], pp. 376–80), points out that Kant had worked out the essential features of his stance on religion a decade earlier, as witnessed by his letter to Lavater in 1775. I would agree but also stress that such views were in large part a result of Kant's decades-long interaction with the antirationalistic outlooks of Hamann and Herder.

¹¹ Fritz Valjavec, "Das Woellnersche Religionsedikt und seine geschichtliche Bedeutung," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1953): 393.

¹² In a profile in the recent collection edited by Martin Greschat, *Gestalten der Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 8, *Die Aufklärung* (Stuttgart, 1983), Gottfried Hornig argued that Semler (1725–91) ought to be viewed as the "most important German theologian of the 18th century" (p. 267). His neglect may in part be due to the absence of modern critical editions of his voluminous works, as well as the tendency of modern eighteenth-century scholars to view religious controversies as simply exemplary of the German Aufklärung's "unpolitical," retrogressive nature. Josef Boháček is one of the few to emphasize Semler's importance for an understanding of Kant's whole position on the relations of philosophy and religion, church practice and secular learning: *Die Religionsphilosophie Kants in der "Religion innerhalb der Grenzen des blossen Vernunft": Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer theologisch-dogmatischen Quellen* (Hamburg, 1938; reprint, Hildesheim, 1966). Compare also Frieder Löttsch, *Vernunft und Religion im Denken Kants: Lutherisches Erbe bei Immanuel Kant* (Cologne and Vienna, 1976), pp. 18, 109. The major work of Semler's in question, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon* (1771), ed. Heinz Scheible, is available in *Texte zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte*, no. 5 (1967).

Mendelssohn, that the rationalist tradition of philosophizing they represented would not lead, as critics charged, to an inevitable atheistic determinism and idealistic self-isolation from human realities.¹³ Jacobi was significant because of the paradoxical nature of his approach: taking up rationalist arguments (concerning, e.g., knowledge of the external world, God, etc.) he sought partly to prove their thoroughgoing consistency. Eventually, however, he came to stress the irrationality of any such rationality, and thus the inherent danger of the whole project of the Enlightenment. Starting from an appeal to empirical sense experience of nature on one side and internal moral-religious sentiments on another, he ended up essentially justifying an orthodox-fundamentalist theism.¹⁴ Jacobi was provocative in invoking Hume's "realism" about sense experience to confirm his own Christian faith: the "revelation of nature," he argued, compelled each and every man to "believe" (e.g., what the senses taught) and then, through that, to accept higher, eternal truths. The empirical, antirationalistic thrust of British Newtonians could seemingly be invoked against the German Aufklärers themselves.¹⁵

In the same period, however, the expansion, inner fragmentation, and politicization of freemasonry and various secret society movements in Germany cut across the philosophic-theological controversies in a different direction.¹⁶ Freemasonry, beginning first as a framework to promote relatively

¹³ The philosophic background of the controversy is discussed in Henry E. Allison, *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore, 1973); and in Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 352–60. Manfred Agethen, *Geheimbund und Utopie: Illumination, Freimaurer und deutsche Spätaufklärung* (Munich, 1987), pp. 114, 205, 271, gives important evidence of Jacobi's Enlightenment and freemason-Illuminati leanings, as well as connections to the conservative circle (the "familia sacra") of the Fürstin Amalia von Gallitzin at Münster. Jacobi's own texts were *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau, 1785), and *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus: Ein Gespräch* (Breslau, 1787).

¹⁴ Such a dualism of theoretical knowledge and moral-religious praxis was common to neologians such as Semler, as well as to orthodox Protestant Aristotelianism (going back to Melancthon); what was different were the more sharply "irrationalist" conclusions Jacobi now drew. Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), interprets it as the birth of a modern dialectical or even existentialist view of reason's limits. By contrast, Robert T. Clark, *Herder: His Life and Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955), pp. 339–47, stressed how Jacobi's friends, Herder and Goethe, viewed it as the overreaction of a naively pious soul. They preferred to pursue a vaguely "Spinozistic" pantheism for the sake of what they viewed as its possibilities for intellectual and aesthetic innovation.

¹⁵ For a survey of the range of such philosophic developments within the late Aufklärung, see Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1800* (Kingston and Montreal, 1987).

¹⁶ Hamann, Herder, Jacobi, and most of their "rationalist" opponents were all participants in the masonic movement.

egalitarian forms of social interaction and allegiance to Enlightenment ideals among the educated and governing elites of diverse urban centers in midcentury Germany, soon splintered into relatively progressive-egalitarian and conservative-hierarchical forms.¹⁷ More starkly than in west European countries, the proliferation of, and competition among, masonic and secret societies testified to an internal crisis of the German service elite when faced with the consequences or options of "modernization."¹⁸ The effort to create a new, egalitarian "social space" where different social estates and professions could meet to promote humanitarian, utilitarian, or "patriotic" goals soon succumbed to conflicts over the means used to promote those goals (secrecy and enlightened rationality), and over the degree of accommodations to be made to the partly reformed, but partly traditionalist (hierarchical and authoritarian), public sphere itself.

These contradictory tendencies were epitomized in the emergence by the late 1760s (in Prussia and elsewhere) of relatively more conservative-hierarchical forms of freemasonry ("Strict-Observance"), in which elaborate systems of "grades" and stages of initiation, of clothing and ritual, of forms of deference and obedience were introduced. The effort was to mobilize a modern elite to recapture the supposed "lost wisdom" of medieval orders like the Templar-Knights. But by the mid-1770s, competitors emerged to these "Strict-Observance" masons in the forms of a distinctly proto-Catholic masonic "Clerisy" (*Klerikat*) project, as well as avowedly anti-Enlightenment secret societies like the Goldcrucians and Rosicrucians. These tendencies polarized even more following the critique and collapse of the "Strict-Observance" form of masonry (at the Wilhelmsbad Conference in 1782) and the parallel rise of the Illuminati-Bund—a radically egalitarian, politicized offshoot of freemasonry. The latter was conceived as an explicit counterforce to the conservative-hierarchical tendencies thought to be threatening the masonic movement from within.¹⁹ However, when the Illuminati were uncovered and suppressed in Bavaria (between June 1784 and August 1785), they became yet another symbol of the dangers toward which Enlightenment and masonic "utopians"

¹⁷ In addition to Agethen, see Richard van Dülmen, *Die Gesellschaft der Aufklärer: Zur bürgerlichen Emanzipation und aufklärerischen Kultur in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), chap. 4.

¹⁸ Horst Möller, "Die Bruderschaft der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer: Struktur, Zielsetzung und Wirkung einer anti-Aufklärerischen Geheimgesellschaft," in *Freimaurer und Geheimbunde im 18. Jahrhundert in Mitteleuropa*, ed. Helmut Reinalter (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), pp. 216–18; as well as La Vopa, "Conceiving a Public" (n. 7 above).

¹⁹ Agethen. He argues the Illuminati were themselves responsible for developing a "conspiracy thesis," directed against the "Strict-Observance" masons and secret societies like the Gold- and Rosenkreuzer, which would later be turned against the progressive wing of freemasonry itself in the wake of the French Revolution.

seemed headed. Intellectuals sketched in theory "a possible world" that consciously went beyond the bounds of existing realities and then engaged in conspiratorial practices to bring about that world.²⁰ It gave those elements of ruling and educated elites who now called for an end to "the excesses and errors" of the Aufklärung a new publicistic appeal and legitimation.

A third event signaling a potential "end of the Enlightenment" was the accession in Prussia of Frederick William II (following the death of Frederick II in August 1786). Frederick William II, like the figures who exercised great influence over him, J. C. Woellner and Rudolf von Bischoffwerder, had begun as a "Strict Observance" mason in the late 1770s, only to shift over by the early 1780s to the Christian mysticism, cabalism and theosophic promises of the Gold- and Rosicrucians.²¹ (Some of these developments were evident on a trip through Kurland and Königsberg in 1780, when Frederick William II came in contact with the proponent of the *Klerikat* project, J. A. Starck, and subsequently delivered strong attacks on the "Strict Observance" masonry then still predominant in the Königsberg lodge.)²² Together with the crown prince's fondness for attending churches, this caused Berlin Aufklärer like Friedrich Nicolai (a member of the Illuminati-Bund) to raise an alarm (in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* throughout 1785) over the prospective threat of a "cryptocatholicism."²³ (This was a preferred code word of the Illuminati

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²¹ For a description of Frederick William II's conversion, and the public sense of it, see Paul Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf in Preussen um Kirche und Schule (1788–1798)*, Monumenta Germaniae Paedagogica no. 58 (Berlin, 1925), chaps. 2 and 3. This is corrected, in some details, by Johannes Schultze, "Die Rosenkreuzer und Friedrich Wilhelm II," in his *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen und preussischen Geschichte: Ausgewählte Aufsätze, Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission zu Berlin* no. 13 (Berlin, 1964), pp. 240–65; and by Möller, "Die Bruderschaft der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer." Johann Christoph Woellner published, along with works (in the 1760s) on economic and legal aspects of noble-estate management, texts that apparently documented his conversion from freemasonry to Rosicrucianism: *Die Pflichten der G[old]. R[osen]. C[reuzer] alten Systems in Juniorats-Versammlungen abgehandelt* (Berlin, 1782), and a collection of *Reden* (Munich, 1792).

²² Frederick William's visit with Starck in Mitau and his behavior in Königsberg are briefly described in Paul Konschel, *Hamanns Gegner, der Kryptokatholik D. Johann August Starck, Oberhofprediger und Generalsuperintendent von Ostpreussen: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Aufklärungszeit*, Schriften der Synodalkommission für ostpreussische Kirchengeschichte no. 13 (Königsberg, 1912), p. 53.

²³ Kant was explicitly warned about such developments in letters from a former pupil, and aspiring philosophy teacher, F. V. L. Plessing, in February and March 1784: Immanuel Kant, *Kants Werke: Akademie Textausgabe*, 29 vols. (Berlin, 1902–83), 13:129–30, 10:348–50. (Hereafter referred to as *Ak.*, with the volume and

for a supposed conspiracy of former Jesuits, following the order's dissolution in 1773, to infiltrate Protestant territories under the guise first of the hierarchic-conservative variant of freemasonry, and then of the various "secret societies." Also at work was Nicolai's desire to deflect the criticisms of orthodox Lutherans and pietists that Aufklärer were "secular popes" and allies of atheistic absolutists.) However, as an observer of Nicolai's publicistic campaign also suggested, the Berliners' hue and cry perhaps arose as much from "a local concern over the Crown Prince, from whose piety (*Frömmigkeit*) they fear that, when he reigns, there will be a destruction of the whole Aufklärung of the present king."²⁴

After Frederick William's accession in 1786, a confrontation with the Enlightenment only emerged slowly. The new king, for one thing, was typically described as having a vacillating character, and as taking little pleasure or interest in day-to-day government. He allowed Frederick II's centralized "cabinet" style of governing to collapse slowly into chaos until a power-seeking individual like Woellner could emerge (by 1787 and 1788) as the "de facto first minister" of domestic affairs.²⁵ A first issue became the maintenance and even reinstatement of an orthodox Lutheran presence in some new secondary schools projected for provinces like East Prussia and elsewhere.²⁶ But, with the king's Religion-Edict in July 1788, the replacement of the Enlightenment-minded von Zedlitz as head of the Spiritual Department, and the sharpened Censorship Edict of December 1788, Woellner and the king made it clear that they intended a peremptory counterstroke

page numbers of the Berlin Academy edition. Pages in the first edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* will be referred to as A, and pages in the second edition as B.)

²⁴ J. F. Kleucker, then in Osnabrück, writing to his friend Sprickmann (a member of the Gallitzin "familia sacra" circle in Münster), January 6, 1786; cited in Agethen (n. 13 above), p. 282.

²⁵ The chaos of Frederick William's first half-year, his immersion in the trivialities of court life and love affairs, and Woellner's slow ascent to be "king in the domestic realm," was outlined in scandalous detail by Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, comte de Mirabeau, in *Histoire secrète de la cour de Berlin, ou Correspondence d'un voyageur français depuis le 5 juillet 1786 jusqu'au 14 janvier 1787*, 2 vols. (Alençon, 1789). Mirabeau's essential concern, however, was with speculation that the simple change of regime in Prussia inevitably heightened the prospect for war (with Austria or France) over the distribution of power in Germany.

²⁶ Königberg's Bürgermeister, Theodor Hippel, had been working on a proposal for the institution of a Bürgerschule (a "technical" school, standing midway between the town Volksschule and the Latin gymnasia) for some time prior to mid-1787, when the Berlin minister von Zedlitz published his own plans for such projects. But, as a result of Woellner's and the king's opposition to the secular emphasis of the schools, both plans (Hippel's and von Zedlitz's) came to naught by late 1788. See Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf*, pp. 467-70.

against what they viewed as the pernicious consequences of forty years of the Enlightenment.²⁷ In practical terms, it meant that clergy and teachers who spread what were termed "Enlightenment errors" were threatened with loss of their posts; secret societies thought to be threatening the state (e.g., Illuminati) were forbidden. Lutheran orthodoxy, with the exception of the tolerance of Catholic and Calvinist confessions, was explicitly declared as the "guideline, norm and rule" on which the political stability of the Prussian monarchy must rest.²⁸ It appears this attack on the Aufklärung, coming from the former citadel of Frederician rationalism and freethinking, worked as a signal to sharpen the rhetoric and conceptual terms within which public debate on the merits (or dangers) of the Enlightenment was henceforth carried on.²⁹ However, it was only in May 1791 that further practical steps were taken in Prussia: the introduction of new secondary school textbooks, of the inspection of schools in each province, and of the testing of all regular and military pastors for their orthodoxy by a special "Direct Spiritual Examination Commission" recruited from trusted orthodox clergy in each Prussian province.

II

Before analyzing the way in which Kant responded to such developments—threatening a radicalization, inversion, or simple repudiation of the Enlightenment—it is necessary to stress the particular way in which he was likely to have become aware of such conflicts.

East Prussia had had a history of competing (and compromising) orthodox, pietistic, and rationalist groups during the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century; and during the Russian occupation of the province in the Seven Years' War and the following decade, freemasonry had gained a firm foothold among bourgeois, academic, and aristocratic circles.³⁰ After the war, Fred-

²⁷ Frederick William's orders explicitly cited "the errors of neologism and the so-called Aufklärung."

²⁸ The 1788 Religion-Edict justified this "because such a conscienceless and evil man could never be a good state-subject (*Untertan*), and even less a true servant (*Diener*) of the state in great or small matters." Therefore, all "conventicles dangerous to the Christian religion and the state" were forbidden, as "the means by which dangerous men and new teachers have in their minds to acquire followers and proselytes." Quoted in Ludiger Lütkehaus, "Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, Immanuel Kant und die Gegenaufklärung in Preussen (1788–1798)," *Jahrbuch des Instituts für deutsche Geschichte* 9 (1980): 86–87.

²⁹ Valjavec, "Das Woellnersche Religionsedikt," pp. 396–400.

³⁰ For the complex religious history, see Walther Hubatsch, *Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche Ostpreussens*, 3 vols. (Göttingen, 1968), 1:134 ff. For the development of freemasonry, see Heinz Ischreyt, "Die Königsberger Freimaurerloge und die Anfänge des modernen Verlagswesens in Russland (1760–63)," in *Russland*

erick II, Berlin administrative officials, and provincial ruling elites sought to promote "modernization" in the theological, legal, and medical faculties, while overcoming nepotism and corporatist provincialism as well.³¹ The result was that by the 1770s in the province, tendencies in cultural, social, and academic life were quite mixed: moderate to conservative viewpoints were represented alongside moderately progressive ones.³²

The threat of radicalization, but then marginalization or repudiation, of the Enlightenment was soon close at hand, however; and Kant as a self-styled proponent of that movement was quickly implicated. A young instructor of Oriental (Near Eastern) languages and theology, Johann August Starck, a pupil of the Göttingen rationalist and historical critic of Scriptures, J. D. Michaelis, was appointed to the philosophy and theology faculties for a brief period (1769–77) by Frederick II and given the desirable extra post of *Oberhofprediger*.³³ While Starck alarmed his colleagues with provocatively

und Deutschland: Festschrift für G. von Rauch, ed. Uwe Liszkowski (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 108–19; and Richard Fischer, *1760–1910: Geschichte der Johannistloge "Zu den drei Kronen" zu Königsberg i. Pr.* (Königsberg, 1910). Gerhard Krüger's ambitious argument that lodges at Königsberg and elsewhere (e.g., at Göttingen) and figures such as Christian Jakob Kraus and Theodor von Schön successfully resisted the corrupting of "true freemasonry" in this period would need to be tested by more careful study of lodge activities, membership, and publications than his rather popularized account offers: . . . *gründeten auch unsere Freiheit: Spätaufklärung, Freimaurerei, preussisch-deutsche Reform, der Kampf Theodor v. Schöns gegen die Reaktion* (Hamburg, 1978). He is also one of the few scholars to stress the impact of Frederick II's regulations (of 1779) against Prussian subjects participating in "Strict-Observance" masonry.

³¹ Records concerning supervision of the Universität Königsberg by the East Prussian Regierung (later the Etats-Ministerium) and by the Berlin Geistliche Department, are housed in the Geheime Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin) (hereafter cited as GStA) and the former Zentrales Staatsarchiv (Merseberg) (hereafter cited as ZStA). Unfortunately, many of the texts used to teach theology, law, medicine, and the humanities have (until now) not been readily accessible in (West) German or American libraries; they have therefore rarely been included in discussions of eighteenth-century disciplinary and institutional developments in this period. Hopefully, following 1989–90, this will now change. For this assessment of teaching practices see GStA, Königsberg Etats-Min. 139b, no. 25, vols. 3 and 4 (1762–66), Bl. 172–73; and ZStA, Dt. Msbg., Rep. 7, Universität Königsberg, General Acta, vol. 2 (1763–64), pass., Rep. 7, no. 187 (1766–68), pass.

³² Konschel (n. 22 above), chap. 1, offers a brief sketch of the religious situation in Königsberg in 1769.

³³ The fullest account of Starck's career and the complexities of his appointments at Königsberg are contained in Konschel. Figures like Spalding and von Zedlitz in Berlin, and reform-minded aristocrats on the East Prussian Regierung, all saw Starck as a convenient young candidate able to promote more "rational," textually accurate theology teaching than had been the case under his orthodox Lutheran and pietist predecessors.

revisionist scholarship (claiming, e.g., that the Bible's "wisdom" was derived in large part from Egyptian sources), and thus might be suspected of harboring a radical deism, he was also deeply involved first in "Strict Observance" masonry and then in his own ambitious *Klerikat* offshoot—which readily took on the trappings of a hierarchic-aristocratic secret society. Starck, however, soon proved to be a disappointment, or a thorn, to all camps. After voluntarily leaving Königsberg to take up posts at Mitau (Kurland) and then after 1780 at Darmstadt (as *Oberhofprediger* and consistorial official), he combined a moderately enlightened but moderately conservative viewpoint—simply blurring differences between Catholicism and Protestantism—together with renewed attacks on Strict-Observance masonry. Critics of the Enlightenment like J. G. Hamann and Jacobi were deeply ambivalent toward Starck. Sympathetic toward him as a person, and finding some of Starck's attacks on the shortcomings of masonry and his call for a deeper spirituality quite telling, they nonetheless viewed him as a deeply confused and troubling figure.³⁴ Hamann in particular interpreted him as an opportunist who shifted his ground to take advantage of the different power interests shaping German cultural life—from absolutist princes, to dogmatic clergy, to equally dogmatic Aufklärer.³⁵

Perhaps more directly challenging to Kant than such Enlightenment excess or apostasy was the criticism that Königsberg figures like Hamann (and, to an extent, Herder) began to level against his work from an emerging new anti-rationalist, religious perspective. As Hamann delved further into the outlook of Enlightenment writers like Michaelis and Kant, he became convinced that their deism and natural law theories (of human nature and society) were at the root of the spiritual and practical-political corruption of the modern age.³⁶ In a 1774 exchange of letters over Herder's new publication, *The Oldest Document*

³⁴ Starck seemed troubled by Hamann's criticisms; the latter met such gestures halfway by asking Starck to be his "spiritual counselor" (*Beichvater*)—in part to try and "convert" Starck back to Lutheranism. For Hamann's complex relation to Starck and his writings, see Konschel, pp. 27–33, 36–37, 50–52, 60–62.

³⁵ In a letter to Herder in 1774, Hamann sardonically summed up what he viewed as Starck's bizarre shifts from an earlier apologetics for freemasonry, to the arcana of hermetic-alchemical practices (in the *Klerikat* scheme), to his blurring of pagan wisdom's relation to Christianity: "In the end, the whole is a soap-bubble. [He is] a worthy successor to and imitator of Quandt" (the recently deceased orthodox Lutheran Starck had just replaced). Quoted in Konschel, p. 25.

³⁶ Hamann's political stance was complex, if not self-contradictory: he criticized the absolutist style and secular values of Frederick II in his cryptic, allegorical writings, yet he also gratefully accepted a post, arranged in part by Kant and other friends, as clerk in Frederick's town tax administration (the *Linzent* and *Admiralitätskollegium*). See Josef Nadler, *Johann Georg Hamann, 1730–1788: Der Zeuge des Corpus mysticum* (Salzburg, 1949), pp. 138–45, 211–15, 273–78. For Hamann's

of the Human Race (an interpretation of Genesis), Kant offered a distressed Hamann the following sobering depiction of Michaelis's significance:

When a religion is so arranged and established that critical knowledge of ancient languages, philological and antiquarian learnedness make up the firm foundations on which it must be erected — throughout all ages, and among all peoples — those who are best-skilled in Greek-Hebrew-Syrian-Arabic-etc. and in the "archives" of antiquity drag along wherever they wish all orthodox believers, as depressed and unwilling as they may be, just as one does children; and the latter may not say a word, stir a muscle, or complain; . . . and they must timidly watch a Michaelis melt down and reform their ages-old treasure and give it a wholly new form.³⁷

Stirred by publications such as Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), Kant's first *Critique* (1781), and Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* (1783), Hamann by mid-1784 began to publish parts of his diagnosis of the corrupting influence of what he viewed as the essentially pagan philosophy of the modern age.³⁸ The vision of a "natural religion," operating beyond all doctrinal "parties" — including divisions such as those between Jews and Christians — struck Hamann as premised on a false, unhistoricized notion of reason; such a power of abstraction, which accepted no "material" or "symbolic" base on which to work its transforming power, was literally "nothing."³⁹ Against it he posed a different source of authority: the historically situated truths of biblical revelation, and the poetically graspable incarnation of human rationality within specific forms of language. Although he never published the full version of the "Metacritique" of Kant that he had envisioned, aspects of it did appear in his numerous publications of the 1770s and 1780s; and he forwarded drafts of his Metacritique to Herder,

general views of Kant and the Enlightenment, Sven-Aage Jørgensen, *Johann Georg Hamann* (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 87–91.

³⁷ Kant, letter to Hamann of April 8, 1774, in Immanuel Kant, *Briefe*, ed. Jürgen Zehbe (Göttingen, 1970), p. 59.

³⁸ The text was, in Hamann's usual fashion, cryptically entitled *Golgatha und Scheblimini*; in vol. 7 of Johann Georg Hamann, *Hauptschriften*, ed. Fritz Blanke et al. (Gütersloh, 1956), with an informative commentary by Lothar Schreiner.

³⁹ Oswald Bayer, "Die Geschichten der Vernunft sind die Kritik ihrer Reinheit: Hamanns Weg zur Metakritik Kants," in *Hamann-Kant-Herder: Acta des vierten Internationalen Hamann-Kolloquiums im Herder-Institut zu Marburg/Lahn 1985*, ed. Bernhard Gajek, Regensburger Beiträge zur deutschen Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft no. 34 (Frankfurt am Main and Bern, 1987), pp. 9–87. Hamann's alternative view of language was complex. He viewed it as a genuine "third thing," or "middle term," a coincidence of the divine and the human. Current Protestantism — orthodox and neologist alike — had failed to grasp the sacramental, transforming power of language: as when sacramental words penetrated and encompassed the material elements of bread and wine (in a mass), or human bodies (in marriages or in the conferral of civil statuses and offices).

who in turn passed them on to Jacobi. It was thus that by late 1785 and 1786 Kant could see Hamann's critique of the Enlightenment feed into the public controversy over Lessing's "Spinozism," and what Jacobi soon would attack (in 1787) as Kant's fundamental "idealism" (by contrast with the "realism" German preromantics saw in Hume).⁴⁰ The empirical, antirationalistic thrust of Hume's Newtonianism, on which Kant had presumed to draw for his own "critical philosophy" in 1781, was now being invoked against him. Hamann concluded that the Enlightenment had in fact already reverted, in the case of Kant, into its opposite. What Hamann termed Kant's "purism of reason" was in fact a new "mysticism of reason"; Kant's appeal to the authoritative legitimacy of reason's own standards was in fact a new version of age-old forms of despotism and princely-papal tyranny over men's consciences. Hamann saw himself as reenacting St. Paul's (and Luther's) resistance to a new, coercive and spiritually deadening "Mosaic Law" of philosophic rationalism.⁴¹ A potential "dialectic of the Enlightenment," with its roots in the interrelations of religion and philosophy, politics and institutional change, began to be consciously articulated and debated.

Before turning to Kant's philosophic and publicistic responses to such developments, a further sketch of Kant's biographical situation is in order. It was in this same period (the summer and fall of 1785) that a minor scandal broke out in East Prussia when some theology students, and a young house tutor in a provincial town not far from Königsberg, claimed to deduce antireligious principles from the teachings they had heard while attending Kant's courses. As Hamann reported to Herder, Jacobi, and others, the Königsberg consistory intervened to discipline and silence the young theology students. Combined with the earlier episode with J. A. Starck, this may have reinforced the qualms the still-centrist faculty may have had about the Enlightenment. For those or perhaps related reasons, there arose "certain difficulties" (as Hamann termed them) within the university concerning Kant's first election as university rector in March 1786. It took Kant's onetime pupil (and now professor for practical philosophy), C. J. Kraus, to intervene to "masterfully deduce and explain things" so that Kant's election could be assured.⁴²

⁴⁰ Jacobi, *David Hume* (n. 13 above).

⁴¹ Hamann was even more explicit about his anti-Judaism in his correspondence. To Herder in 1780 and Jacobi in 1785 he affirmed his "briefest, oldest, most enduring confession of faith": that modern philosophic rationalism and Judaism were equatable; that the "reason" of philosophers was "Moses incarnate among us"; that contemporary philosophy was the "Judaism of a transfigured and incarnate Pope," whose "spirit" was natural religion without any messiah. Quoted in Bayer, p. 20.

⁴² J. G. Hamann *Briefwechsel*, ed. Walther Ziesemer and Arthur Henkel, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1955-59), letter to Jacobi, March 25, 1786.

Space does not permit exploring the important historical question of how Kant's new systematic ideas were received in the years after 1786 in German academic circles, as he began to develop a theory of a multifaceted rationality, with its practice-oriented and imaginative-heuristic sides.⁴³ Initially only a few scholars, such as Carl L. Reinhold and C. G. Schütz at Jena, and the court-preacher Johann Schultz at Königsberg, began to comment and publish favorably on his critical philosophy. Even on the philosophic faculty at Königsberg, Kant had no "adherents," strictly speaking. A young docent (himself a Königsberg graduate) began offering courses on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in the summer semester of 1788 and the winter of 1788–89. But, probably because of the clear implications of Woellner's 1788–89 religion and censorship edicts, no such courses were offered again until after Frederick William II's death (in 1797).

Reception among legal and medical scholars was in general quite slow and hesitant.⁴⁴ However, two examples of the potential impact of his work may have shaped his thinking about the interrelation of disciplines in the German university. In 1785, a twenty-five-year-old docent at Jena, Gottlieb Hufeland,

⁴³ By the early 1780s, Kant's own teaching began to take on the regular form it would have down through his retirement in 1796. Apart from the necessity, as professor for logic and metaphysics, to offer free public lectures in both those traditional fields, Kant sought to explore further the basic dualities or pluralities (in knowledge and capacities for knowledge) that his philosophy now claimed to perceive. Thus, in summer semesters, he typically offered a series—from logic and physical geography (including man as a part of nature) to theoretical physics—that sought to develop the sort of austere restricted "doctrine of [physical] bodies" that (as he had argued in the first *Critique* and in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* [1786]) was inherent in the structuring categories of the mind's relation to an objective world. In winter semesters Kant regularly lectured on metaphysics as the meeting ground as well as transitional perspective to his other major interest, human praxis: in courses on "anthropology" (first begun by him in 1771–72), and moral philosophy (or, at times, "natural theology"). There were of course other variations to this basic pattern. In some semesters he substituted a course on natural law (using the Göttingen jurist Achenwall's handbook) for his theoretical physics course. In others, he occasionally substituted a course on a "complete encyclopedia of philosophy" (using a text of Feder). Finally, in the summer of 1789, in order to compensate for lessening energies and the desire to write, he reduced his teaching load by about one-third, but maintaining the same basic patterns of semester offerings. For the details of Kant's lecturing, see Emil Arnoldt, "Möglichst vollständige Verzeichnis Kants Vorlesungen," in his *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1907–9), 5:173–343; as well as the introductions by Gerhard Lehmann to the Berlin Academy editions of the lectures.

⁴⁴ Early views of Kant's first *Critique* among doctors and medical professors, like Sprengel, Platner, Selle, or Kant's colleague Metzger at Königsberg were critical or only moderately comprehending. A first enthusiastic supporter from that faculty was Girtanner at Göttingen (in the mid-1790s). For brief overviews, see Erich Adickes, "German Kantian Bibliography," *Philosophical Review*, vol. 2 (1893), and vol. 3 (1894).

published an *Essay on the Fundamental Principle of Natural Law* in which he tried to use aspects of Kant's new "critical" moral philosophy (as found in Kant's brief *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* of 1783) to critique thoroughly the tradition stretching from Grotius and Hobbes to Hamann and recent German physiocrats. While Kant ended up completely disagreeing with this first "Kantian" legal theorist in his own publications of the late 1780s and 1790s, he nonetheless could begin to see the potential obstacles, inconsistencies, and mixed allegiances his new mode of thinking would illuminate in the juristic tradition.⁴⁵ More striking, because it came after the Woellner decrees, was the response of the thirty-year-old theology professor at Göttingen, Carl Friedrich Stäudlin. His 1791 text, *Ideas for a Critique of the System of the Christian Religion*, was structured analogously to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but its argument sought to eliminate ambiguities in the perspective of moderate neologians like Semler by more sharply separating "rational morality" from a Christianity that stood beyond it in some sense.⁴⁶

It was also in that context that Kant learned, from a young instructor of philosophy at Marburg that, by cabinet order of the Landgraf of Hesse-Cassel in August 1786, lectures on his philosophy were to be forbidden for the coming academic semester. Traditional-minded Wolffians on both the philosophical and theological faculties—supported perhaps by the eclectic and empiricist-oriented philosophers at Göttingen, Christoph Meiners and J. G. H. Feder—had judged that Kant's philosophy fostered skepticism and undermined the certainty of all knowledge.⁴⁷ (After a report of the philosophical faculty, the ban on teaching Kant's philosophy in private courses was lifted at Marburg in October 1787—but not that on its public teaching.)⁴⁸ Kant's situation was

⁴⁵ Kant reviewed the work, *Versuch über den Grundsatz des Naturrechts*, in the Jena *Allgemeine Litteratur Zeitung* in April 1786: Kant, *Ak.* (n. 23 above), 8:127–30. A helpful analysis of the often highly divergent perspectives of the early "Kantian" legal theorists is Wolfgang Kersting, "Sittengesetz und Rechtsgesetz—Die Begründung des Rechts bei Kant und den frühen Kantianern," in *Rechtsphilosophie der Aufklärung: Symposium Wolfenbüttel 1981*, ed. Reinhard Brandt (Berlin, 1982), pp. 148–77.

⁴⁶ No detailed studies of the mutual relations of Stäudlin's and Kant's views of religion, philosophy, and academic disciplines exist. A brief description is contained in Joachim Ringleben, "Göttinger Aufklärungstheologie—von Königsberg her gesehen," in *Theologie in Göttingen: Eine Vorlesungsreihe*, ed. Bernd Moeller, Göttinger Universitätsschriften, ser. A., no. 1 (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 104–7.

⁴⁷ *Kant: Philosophical Correspondence*, ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago, 1967), pp. 122–23, letter of April 7, 1786, to Johann Bering, together with Zweig's notes on subsequent developments. For Meiner's polemic against Kant's *Critique* in his 1786 *Grundriss der Seelenlehre*, see Adickes, vol. 2, no. 4 (1893): 436; for Feder, *ibid.*, pp. 448–49.

⁴⁸ There was in 1786–87 as yet little published reaction to Kant from either legal or medical faculties in German universities; that would emerge largely in response to his second *Critique* and works on natural science and teleological judgment. Two

therefore a mixed one when the change of throne took place in Prussia. However, when Frederick William II and his entourage visited Königsberg in September 1786 for ceremonies of coronation and fealty, Kant was singled out for special recognition by the Minister von Hertzberg. And, as Hamann and others had already been rumoring, Kant was elected in November 1786 to be a corresponding member of the Berlin Royal Academy. And, as late as 1789, von Zedlitz and East Prussian noble administrators induced Woellner and Frederick William II to add a special supplement of 220 Reichstaler to Kant's (already considerable) salary as senior member of the philosophical faculty. This made him the highest-paid faculty member at the university (725 Reichstaler), with only a professor for medicine and for history and eloquence coming near that total, by virtue of their holding two teaching posts each.⁴⁹ But how was such preferment to be judged by Kant and others? As a recognition of the distinction he was bringing to the university? Or as an indirect effort to secure his cooperation or silence in the changes that were under way after 1788?⁵⁰

III

How, then, did Kant respond to this complex situation: an impending radicalization of the Enlightenment; a splintering into competing and often

exceptions were the physician C. G. Selle at Berlin, who, as early as 1784 (in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*) and then in fuller works in 1788 and 1793, could find no other way to make sense of Kant's "transcendental" perspective other than to see it confirming the inductive empiricism he had developed as a natural-scientific practitioner.

⁴⁹ ZStA, Dt. Mbg., Rep. 76, alt. II, no. 238, Bl. 27–30, 40–43, 49–52, no. 255, Bl. 37–39. The average salary for the senior member of each faculty was otherwise 504 Reichstaler. La Vopa, in "The Politics of Enlightenment" (n. 7 above), pp. 38–39, notes how most Prussian schoolmen—including gymnasium directors and rectors—typically fell into either a lower-income bracket of less than 150 Reichstaler, or a middle-income bracket of 150–600 Reichstaler. One may compare such salaries with the incomes of nonnoble officials in the Prussian bureaucracy, like Johann Friedrich Gentz (father of Friedrich Gentz). In 1777, as director of the Prussian mint in Breslau, he earned 900 Reichstaler; after his move to Berlin in 1779 to become director of the central mint, his salary rose to 2,000 Reichstaler per year. The young Friedrich, as minor official in the Prussian Seehandlung (commercial bank) from 1786 to 1792, earned 300 Reichstaler and then eventually 400–500 Reichstaler per year. Paul R. Sweet, *Friedrich von Gentz: Defender of the Old Order* (Madison, 1941), pp. 3–4, 28.

⁵⁰ La Vopa, in "The Politics of Enlightenment," p. 56, notes how Frederick William used such tactics, successfully, with the Berliner Aufklärer Friedrich Gedike. Appointing him to a post in the Royal Academy in 1790, Gedike gave up his coeditorship of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* a year later and ceased to campaign actively against Woellner's programs.

contradictory interpretations of its principles and implications; its possible proscription and reversal at the hands of conservative social and political groups that viewed it as dangerous? Essentially his response grew out of the trajectory of his own philosophic development by the mid-1780s, the strategies he was adopting to promote such views, as well as his growing consciousness of the social, political, and institutional conditions that helped to make such a cultural project possible or effective in the first place. Thus, in the last decade of his activity (1786–98), Kant's texts reflected (1) an attempt to explain the plurality, and not simple univocality, of the forms that rationality actually took in human behavior; (2) an analysis of the sources that threatened an end to the free, autonomous use of such rationality, either on individual or collective levels in German society; and finally (3) a justification of his own new philosophic principles as part of the interplay of critical thinking and practical action that illuminated both sides of that cultural process. Put in structural terms, this meant Kant attempted to ground and to balance the cognitive and theoretical use of reason (the subject of the first *Critique*) in the practical and moral use of reason (the *Critique of Practical Reason* [1788] and essays on politics and history). By 1790 (the *Critique of Judgment*), he further supplemented and restrained those two forms of rationality through a third, aesthetic imagination and the heuristic self-regulation of reason (as, e.g., in the "transition" from theory to practice in the empirical natural sciences, or in the technical-pragmatic use of rational norms).⁵¹ Needless to say, for those who did not share some of the fundamental assumptions on which he based his analyses, Kant's very descriptions and insights might seem as much a part of the problems of modern thought as pointing to their solutions.

⁵¹ For the general thesis of the major shift in Kant's ethical thinking, from grounding ethics in the insights derived from a critique of theoretical reason to the reverse, see Dieter Henrich, "Der Begriff der sittlichen Einsicht und Kants Lehre vom Faktum der Vernunft," in *Die Gegenwart der Griechen im neueren Denken*, ed. Dieter Henrich et al. (Tübingen, 1960), pp. 77–115. The classic questioning of the grounds for such a radical shift in Kant's whole philosophy (focusing on the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*) is Martin Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Onora O'Neill, in *Constructions of Reason* (London and New York, 1988), takes an opposite approach and proposes that a grounding in practical reasoning was anticipated in the *Critique of Pure Reason* from the first. Other interpreters, such as Leonard Krieger in *The German Idea of Freedom*, find it more convincing that Kant simply became confused and inconsistent; the conflicting demands of reconciling the implicit "naturalism" and determinism of the first *Critique* with the impulse to defend practical freedom in the second *Critique* (in the atmosphere of the late Enlightenment and French Revolution) were just too great. A recent argument that Kant's whole ethical project involved a "historically situated understanding of itself, and [was] addressed to the specific cultural needs of its own age," may be found in Allen Wood, "Unsocial Sociability: The Anthropological Basis of Kantian Ethics," *Philosophical Topics* 19, no. 1 (1991): 325–51, quote at 336.

It was in such a spirit that Kant answered the pleas of Marcus Herz and J. H. Biester to intervene in the Jacobi-Mendelssohn controversy with an essay entitled "What Is Orientation in Thinking?" (appearing in the October 1786 issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*).⁵² But, in order to gauge the nature of Kant's analysis and defense of Mendelssohn, it is necessary to summarize briefly the way in which he had already begun, in an earlier, more famous essay, "What Is Enlightenment?" (of December 1784), to deal with the range of issues involved.⁵³ Kant's own approach was in part inspired by Mendelssohn's formulations in a 1783 work, *Jerusalem: Or, On Religious Power and Judaism*.⁵⁴

For Kant, Mendelssohn's text had been significant in two respects. First, it had sought to refute directly the charge (of the orthodox or of avant-garde critics like Hamann) that Judaism was simply a disguised deism, a rationalism no better than atheism, that was destined to be superseded by the historical, moral, and supernatural claims of Christianity. Second, and equally provocatively, it had reversed that very set of imputations and explored the way in which current Protestant claims—for example, to have resolved problems of relating church and state, of safeguarding freedom of conscience and thought—were in fact inconsistent, halfhearted, or even hypocritical. While it would take extensive analysis to argue the point in detail, Kant appears to have read Mendelssohn as having incorporated in his defense of Judaism some of the implicit arguments of moderate neologists like Semler: that Judaism, for example, in its contemporary as well as historical forms had in fact mixed "culture," philosophy, and a transcendent religiosity in a way that made it an active participant in the modern, but also timeless, process of ongoing spiritual progress. Thus, the challenge Mendelssohn leveled (as had Semler)

⁵² The essay was therefore probably completed by July 1786, since three months appears to be the shortest turnaround time for replies to earlier articles in the journal. It is perhaps not impossible that the final portion of the essay—on the freedom of thought and the nature of the Enlightenment—might have been written in response to the death of Frederick II in August, and the accession of Frederick William II.

⁵³ Recent scholarship has begun to emphasize some of the similarities and differences of Kant's and Mendelssohn's views of the Enlightenment but focuses on a somewhat narrow interpretation of what was at stake in the conflict over oaths on the Lutheran "symbolic books." See James Schmidt, "The Question of Enlightenment: Kant, Mendelssohn, and the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50, no. 2 (1989): 269–91, and "What Enlightenment Was: How Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Kant Answered the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 1 (1992): 77–101. At the end of this second article, Schmidt suggests that the Spinozism controversy with Jacobi introduced a whole new set of issues for which Kant and Mendelssohn were perhaps unprepared.

⁵⁴ Kant's letter to Mendelssohn of August 1783 stated that he had read the work and was much impressed with its arguments, and the sort of "reform of religion" it had proposed. Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence*, pp. 105–7.

at orthodox and pietist Protestantism was a charge that its adherence to a fixed set of articles of faith, to be enforced by a state-church, was in fact a denial of humans' inner "freedom of religious-intellectual conscience." As soon as concerns of worldly status and success were mixed in, Mendelssohn argued, it was impossible that a clergyman not feel coerced or "bribed."⁵⁵ Such oaths defeated their own proposed ends; clergy forced to take them were encouraged to be hypocrites, and to take revenge on those (e.g., "the Jewish nation") who did not conform in the same debased fashion.

Mendelssohn had argued that the solution was not, however, simply to collapse the distinction between religion and secular rationality. He charged that the so-called liberal tolerationism of Locke merely gave up trying to deal with the very real human passions religion aroused. It simply invited clerical despots (whether in Catholic or Protestant guise) to offer promises to men and women about their "eternal welfare."⁵⁶ Mendelssohn was pointing to the dilemma that neologians like Semler (and later Stäudlin and even Kant in his own very different "mediating" way) would try to resolve: that humans were "mixed beings," who knew they would never experience "eternity," but for all that their lives did not really end in the present either. They faced an "endless future" for which they needed to prepare. Mendelssohn then mixed the sacred back into the secular by arguing that the duties men felt toward themselves and toward a Divine Creator required them to step out of the "state of nature" and to enter into a society with other men to try and satisfy needs as contradictory as "care for temporal well-being" and "care for eternal well-being." The spheres of government, society, education, and religion were to be kept separate but were nonetheless inextricably interrelated.⁵⁷

Yet if Mendelssohn was undoubtedly troubling to the orthodox, pietists, and preromantic Protestants,⁵⁸ aspects of his argument contained paradoxes

⁵⁵ Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Or, On Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. Allan Arkush, with introduction and commentary by Alexander Altmann (Hanover, N.H., 1983), p. 62. Altmann's notes are suggestive: Mendelssohn may have been aware of ongoing debates in German ecclesiastical law textbooks, such as those of the Halle jurist J. C. Boehmer, and was deliberately invoking a recurrent antistatist tradition in Protestantism itself. But Mendelssohn was also doing so at the expense of overlooking disagreements and complexities in the Jewish tradition concerning such issues.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41. It was such statements that only confirmed Hamann's suspicions: Jews and heterodox (deistic) Christians were formed into de facto "churches," public institutions which competed with Lutherans or Catholics in seeking to educate humans about their "felicity."

⁵⁸ Two further examples may be mentioned: (1) his suggestion that Protestant clergy, like Jewish teachers, might be expected to receive no pay at all but only be compensated by society for the specific loss of time that resulted from religious

and inconsistencies that could challenge the neologians or Aufklärung liberals themselves. How did he make the link between what he insisted was Judaism's religion of mere "divine commands" (*Gebote*)—in the absence of any historical revelation or theological dogmas—and the tolerant, progressive view of a "natural religion" all humans might share?⁵⁹ How did he combine his own intense respect for culture and creative philosophic inquiry with his proposal that spiritual development was really a process internal to a small community, transmitted via oral and interpersonal communication and not written culture? Was he serious in criticizing the modern practice of expecting deep moral and spiritual truths to be communicable through the faulty medium of words and printed texts?⁶⁰

I think it was not accidental that, at the same time Kant was composing his famous essay "What Is Enlightenment?" he was also teaching a university course on "Philosophical Theology" for the first time.⁶¹ (Significantly, he used textbooks of the Halle Wolffians, Eberhard and Baumgarten, whose standpoint underlay much of Mendelssohn's own theories.) The way in which Kant's essay framed the issue of the nature of "enlightenment" gains a new significance—at once historically situated and philosophical—when viewed in the context of what I have been terming the potential "end of the Enlightenment" in Prussia. From its opening paragraphs, the essay used the language of recent religious, publicistic, and pedagogical debates to argue that what was at stake were not simply narrow religious, political, or intellectual issues, but broad questions of different levels of human freedom and rationality, of their proper exercise or loss. Thus the bold opening statement—"Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage"—employed the religious and philosophic imagery of Semler⁶² or Mendelssohn to raise recent controversies

instruction; and (2) his deliberate invoking of Spinoza's description of the fortunate environment of seventeenth-century Holland in lauding Frederick II's limiting the state to supervising external actions of religious groups while at the same time expecting that gradual cultural-intellectual change would work to dismantle the remaining "external privileges" (*Vorrechte*) and civil discriminations Protestants still enjoyed. *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 78–79.

⁵⁹ One answer seemed to be an implicit elitism, and even cynicism, that was left understated: that most common people, most of the time (including the Jews in ancient or even modern times), were at only a crude level of culture, so that at best "rational truths" could only be scattered in among "divine commands." *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 104–18.

⁶¹ In the winter semester 1783–84, and again in 1785–86. See Wood's introduction to Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, trans. Allen Wood and Gertrude M. Clark (Ithaca, N.Y., 1978), pp. 14–15.

⁶² Kant's word for "tutelage," *Unmündigkeit*, had important conceptual roots in the argument of neologians like Semler that carryovers of "Judaic-legalistic" thinking into church life could easily represent a way that clerics kept the often "incapable

up to the level of what Kant thought should be genuine "public" concerns: questions of the longer-term development of human societies or human nature over time. Even the formulation that caused commentators—then and now—the most perplexity, that between the merely "private use" of one's reason in official posts versus the "public use" of reason in scholarly and publicistic debates, may have simply been Kant's way of dramatizing the logical reversal that was needed to see the whole thrust of what neologians and Aufklärer like Mendelssohn were saying. The so-called inner, private moral development of individuals was in fact the longer-term concern of any given community, and of the human race itself. By contrast with that largest goal, the kind of reasoning clerics or obedient scholars undertook in limited historical-cultural settings was truly "private," pragmatically self-serving and no more.

Most important for his subsequent strategy in coming debates was his way of redefining rationality itself as a result. What might heretofore have been taken at face value as the nature of enlightened (or dangerously atheistic) "reason"—for example, the speculations of different camps of theologians (on "proofs of God"), or rational justifications of princely power to compel humans to attain the ends necessary for their "natural" or "social welfare"⁶³—could now be seen, under his new perspective, as "self-isolating," "private" uses of reason that withdrew from what Kant was defining as genuine participatory-communicative rationality.⁶⁴ It was in a combination of conceptual analysis, allusive description of existing social-cultural debates, and a new synthesis that the power of Kant's publicistic style resided.⁶⁵ Kant's vision of participatory rationality was inspired

majority" (*unfähigen Haufen*) of their parishioners at the level of "immature individuals" (*Unmündige*) for their own, or perhaps state, ends. Semler, pp. 27, 33–34, 40. Frieder Löttsch, "Zur Genealogie der Frage 'Was Ist Aufklärung?': Mendelssohn, Kant und die Neologie," *Theokratie: Jahrbuch des Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* ("Festgabe für Karl Heinrich Regstorff zum 70. Geburtstag") 2 (1970–72): 307–22, also emphasizes Semler's influence on Kant but suggests the lectures of the Berlin neologian J. J. Spalding (published in 1768) as another potential source of Kant's "tutelage-maturity" terminology.

⁶³ For a recent helpful survey of this major model of early Enlightenment legal thought, absolutist "Enlightenment via the ruler," see Diethelm Klippel, "Von der Aufklärung der Herrscher zur Herrschaft der Aufklärung," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 17, no. 2 (1990): 193–210.

⁶⁴ La Vopa, "Conceiving a Public" (n. 7 above), pp. 79–82, 98–116, discusses the origins of Habermas's conception of the "public sphere" in his reading of Kant, but not the notion of communicative rationality.

⁶⁵ One of the first discussions of such stylistic questions was Hans Saner, *Kant's Political Thought: Its Origins and Development*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Chicago, 1973). Compare Kant's own advice to F. V. L. Plessing, February 1784, on the style needed to hold modern audiences' attention: compact, richly allusive, and combined with a clear "plan" of argumentation. Kant, *Ak.* (n. 23 above), 10:129–30.

by the sight of two ongoing practices in his culture that seemed not to know their own significance or implicit principles: the moral solidarity being invoked by projections of a "universal religion" of moral practitioners, united beyond all merely ecclesiastical boundaries (as in Semler's definition of Christianity or Mendelssohn's vision of Judaism); and the practical moral humanism of the freemasons, relegated to secrecy because existing patterns of social-political life could not find room for it. Kant's own tactic was to apply the ambitious stance of west European intellectuals like Diderot (epitomized in the "Preliminary Discourse" of the *Encyclopaedia*): the language of men of letters, who could frame issues in a new, more universal way, could give public recognition and legitimacy to people's inherent practices. "Men of letters" could help set the terms of public debate. What had previously seemed only "private" or "secret" could now be seen as the shared concern that continued to drive public controversies and actions. What had seemed to be central to "public" order and cultural life could now be analyzed, partly critically but partly realistically, as the limited, pragmatic struggles of different groups for their own power or benefits. This alone explained how and why clergy, lawyers, doctors, and rulers sought to keep their audiences in the state of tutored "children."

Finally, even Kant's famous praise of Frederick II's regime in this essay — "argue as much as you will, only obey!" — pointed toward a different emphasis than Mendelssohn had given to it. On the one hand, Kant was deliberately invoking the Prussian clergy's own (perhaps grudging) formulations of the conditions for, and limits to, clerical discipline. These had been their own words in the proceedings to discipline J. A. Starck, for example.⁶⁶ (Central and regional state officials had been aided in upholding Starck's freedom to publish his controversial scholarship, one should note, because he had in fact kept his activities as court preacher, university teacher, scholar, freemason, and *Klerikat* organizer largely separate.) On the other hand, the thrust of Kant's criticism was to argue that the prevalence of socially sanctioned "disciplining" on all sides — whether in military life, bureaucracies, or state-churches — would be deadening and detrimental even to the ruling and educated elite if it did not also promote and participate in a "public sphere" of self-criticism and participatory interaction.⁶⁷

Thus, in 1784, two years before the Mendelssohn-Jacobi controversy, Kant had supported Mendelssohn's critique of orthodox compulsion of conscience

⁶⁶ Konschel (n. 22 above), pp. 38–39, cites the 1775 memorandum of the East Prussian consistory, controlled by moderate orthodox and pietists. This point is also made by Schmidt, "What Enlightenment Was" (n. 53 above), p. 98, but he emphasizes it as the stance of Berlin officials like Zedlitz.

⁶⁷ This facet of Kant's essay has been emphasized well by John Christian Laursen, "The Subversive Kant: The Vocabulary of 'Public' and 'Publicity,'" *Political Theory* 14, no. 4 (1986): 584–603.

and yet also suggested shortcomings or inconsistencies in Mendelssohn's own combination of Enlightenment and religiosity. His new contribution, the 1786 essay "What Is Orientation in Thinking?" had three broad themes: a criticism and reinterpretation of the positions represented by both sides in the dispute; an explanation of why his own version of a moderated theoretical rationalism, combined with a constructivist theory of moral action, could grasp the principles immanent within both the practices of and social conditions for such intellectual debates; and, finally, a renewed defense of the Enlightenment as "the freedom to think," and as the capacity of individuals to decide for themselves, in the face of all claims for secretive or "special knowledge."

Kant chose to frame his essay as a commentary on a metaphorical image Moses Mendelssohn had used in a crucial chapter of yet another of his works, *Morning Lessons, or Lectures on the Existence of God* (1785). In what he termed an "allegorical dream," Mendelssohn had envisioned human rationality as still always the guide that would, in some sense, lead humans to "orient themselves" when they were left temporarily abandoned by common sense on the one hand, or speculative theorizing on the other, on their journey through life. (Perhaps no more fitting image could be found for the perplexed state of "Enlightenment rationality" in 1785.) Mendelssohn had also, however, prefaced the text with a picture of philosophic developments in Germany that seemed to confirm only too well the point of Kant's (and the Aufklärung's) new critics.⁶⁸ He had agreed that the school of Leibnizean-Wolffian thought—with which he still identified—had come to be resented as an outmoded dogmatism, imposing its authority on an intellectual community become restless with such rule. But Mendelssohn argued that what had taken its place was simply a dangerous fragmentation: on the one side, a rejection of "speculation" in favor of immersion in "facts," in observations and experiments graspable by the senses (to the exclusion of any interest that these might generate "general principles" of any sort again);⁶⁹ and on another side, a different minority who, dissatisfied with this seeming revival of "materialism,"⁷⁰ sought (according to Mendelssohn) "to see and taste what, by its nature, cannot be seen and handled." The latter thus shifted over into what he viewed as an irrational intuitionism (*Schwärmerei*). Mendelssohn noted that, since the early 1770s, he had been too ill to keep up with new philosophical

⁶⁸ Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften; Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. F. Bamberger et al. 19 vols. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1972-), 3, pt. 2:3-5.

⁶⁹ This situation reflects what Horkheimer and Adorno, in *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, and then Michel Foucault, in *The Order of Things*, described as the emergence of "positivistic" mentalities out of the internal dialectic of Enlightenment thought.

⁷⁰ This was the mid-eighteenth-century term for what, in twentieth-century historiography, might be called "pre-positivism," positivism avant la lettre.

literature (except through secondhand reports). He nonetheless ventured the opinion that the same Kant who, in this destructive process, had played the role of a "great destroyer" (*des alles zermalmenden Kants*) might some day continue his "deep reflections" to the point at which he could perhaps help reconstruct the very rationalism he had so decisively undermined.

Kant's text pursued a complex mediating strategy. It offered a partial defense of Mendelssohn, and a partial recognition of the cogency of aspects of Jacobi's criticism of the rationalist tradition. Kant began the essay with a very specific, considered concession to the empiricist-irrationalist position: no matter how "abstracted" from sense experience one's philosophic concepts were, for the sake of their practical use there always necessarily adhered to them some "pictorializing representations" (*bildliche Vorstellungen*).⁷¹ But Kant appeared to make that concession only in order to try and bring another arena, and set of considerations, back into view: namely, the issue of the very nature of empirical experience and the practices of natural science (which he had examined in the first *Critique* and would shortly do so again in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* of 1786 and a large portion of the *Critique of Judgment* of 1790). It was only against the background of a proper assessment of "natural knowledge"—and not in the alchemical-mystical terms of various "secret societies," or the now merely polemical terms of the religious orthodox and pietists—that one could gauge the contrasting tasks of moral praxis and imagination. Thus, in a few short pages, Kant sketched three ways of "orienting oneself" that the merely intuitionist or religious perspective did not perhaps take seriously enough: geographically, in space; mathematically, in space and time; and then logically, in the construction of both of them into other sorts of consistent wholes. With that, Kant hoped to show that he was in agreement with Jacobi (and other critics of his supposed "idealist" philosophizing) that what he was in fact talking about were principles and practices immanent to the experience of nature, and of humans' inner nature.⁷²

But it was also on that basis that Kant thought he could nonetheless build a bridge back to Mendelssohn, and through him to much of the tradition of rationalism that had evidently been powerfully at work in Protestant theology, German jurisprudence, and teaching and research in medicine and experimental natural philosophy during the past half century and more. Kant proposed that what Mendelssohn had defended in his "pedagogical lessons" to his young sons as universally human and necessary thoughts—namely, of God, a

⁷¹ Kant, *Ak.*, 8:133.

⁷² This line of defense, that he was an "empirical realist" about the sense experience of nature, was at the core of the revisions he was making to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Providence, and an immortality of the soul, echoing the educational theorist Basedow (in the 1760s) or neologists like Semler⁷³—were not some dangerous Spinozism, or deistic plot to undermine the Christian tradition. They were, rather, simply assumptions that humans rationally made when they “judged” at all about practical goods to be pursued. As such they stood in a spectrum with the heuristic-regulative maxims of the empirical-experimental sciences. They differed, however, in being “subjective feelings” on the basis of which reason met its own self-imposed needs for consistency, completeness, and a nonregressive insight into causation, and so on. Kant was projecting ahead to some of his themes in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790); except that, at this point, their linkage to the context of current cultural and religious controversies was much more evident and explicit.

He differed from Jacobi and Mendelssohn in two important respects, however. What he was now willing to call a “rational belief” (*Vernunftglaube*) he styled as nothing less (but nothing more) than reason’s continued belief-in-itself, and a belief that arose in the face of the dialectic caused by its failure to meet its own impossibly high, and often self-contradicting theoretical perspectives.⁷⁴ It was in no way, then, to be the sort of mystic intuitionism to which Jacobi had appealed; and it was premised on the continued critical decentering⁷⁵ of the less self-critical rationality that Mendelssohn (and the traditions of Protestant Aristotelianism in German universities) could now be seen to represent. In the coming decades, however, critics began to raise the question: had Kant, in this recognition of the inwardly divided structure of rationality in fact introduced a major element of irrationality—of voluntarism or decisionism—into his practical philosophy? Had a major German Aufklärer, in recognizing the cogency of his critics, begun to be dominated by the very categories he had sought to master or exclude?

It was against this background that Kant shifted, in the last half of the essay, to a discussion of the tendencies threatening a radicalization or even proscription of the Enlightenment by the mid-1780s. He turned his criticism

⁷³ Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3, pt. 2:69. Basedow had spoken of a “duty to believe” in God, Providence, and immortality. Hornig (in Greschat, ed. [n. 12 above], p. 273), notes that for Semler the individual Christian need only believe three things, which were not in any way beliefs in “dogmas”: in God-as-Creator, in the crucified and resurrected Christ as Savior, in the Holy Spirit as continued renewer of Christian life. This was an intentional “middle-way” between a Pietist emphasis on simple faith and simplified teachings, and the Enlightenment emphasis on historical criticism and rational theology.

⁷⁴ Kant, *Ak.*, 8:140–41.

⁷⁵ Kant’s story of “antinomical” dialectics of structures of reason being questioned and counterbalanced by the criticism of such structures helped to inspire a series of “dialectical” theories of the Enlightenment, from Fichte and Hegel to Adorno, Horkheimer, and Foucault.

first against both of the parties in the "Spinozist" controversy itself: they were jointly responsible for showing the extremes to which "speculative reasoning" was capable of going when not checked by the mediating ground of the very "common sense" or "reason" that they each kept invoking.⁷⁶ He then sought to explain the specific scope, and limits, of the "faith-in-reason" he had just outlined. He used the example (only too central for some of the audience he sought to reach) of whether the historical-critical investigation of the Scriptures could ever prove or disprove the truth of events like Christ's life, his miracle working, death, and resurrection. His argument was that the "faith-in-reason" operating there could only turn into a genuine knowledge (*Wissen*) if the principles and causes (*Gründe*) scholars sought out to decide such an issue were the sorts of things about which criteria of "objective validity" could be relevant. He thought that things like reports of a great man's death, the record of a last will and testament, and so on did meet such criteria. But he quickly pointed out that the other sorts of rationally constructed principles of which he had been speaking—those that testified to a search for reason's own completeness, self-consistency—were not directly of that sort at all.⁷⁷ They were, in the model he was proposing, to be seen as being continuously "transcendent," even in this historically situated way. They testified to the ever-renewed possibility of a return to a timeless basic structure of the human mind.⁷⁸ Kant was thus proposing to both the empiricist-intuitionist camp and to the Leibnizean-Wolffian rationalists (and Protestant Aristotelians) that his own multiperspective theory of human knowledge could do effective service in refuting atheists and skeptics who sought to disprove someone else's faith on the basis of this or that piece of "historical evidence."

In undertaking this explanatory strategy, Kant was seeking a concession in return. (It was a concession that would redound to the benefit of moderate neologists, or so he thought.) Contrary to the self-understanding of the irrationalist and intuitionist theories (implying direct events of "revelation"), or Hamann's philosophy of language as an embodied "coincidence of divine

⁷⁶ Kant, *Ak.* (n. 23 above), 8:133–34.

⁷⁷ Kant, *Ak.*, 8:141–44. The similarities and differences of Kant's and Semler's stances on the relation of historical-textual evidence to convictions arising from moral practice need to be explored more fully than they have been. They are given an important but brief place in Bohatec's (n. 12 above) discussion of Kant's later text, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793).

⁷⁸ Kant was, quite consciously, accepting what Schleiermacher would shortly describe as a hermeneutical circle. Reason, for Kant, had a capacity to know itself; and, in knowing itself, it made no distinction about time, place, conditioning factors, in describing its recurring structure. What was changing were the "pictorializing representations" making it suitable for use.

and human," Kant argued that such alternative practices were already invoking an active, structuring presence of some sort of rational-classificatory principles: for example, in knowing that some new revelatory experience was an experience of "God," and not of "nature," "the body," or "the devil."⁷⁹

It was in this context that Kant then shifted to his final concern, the status of the Enlightenment and the free, critical use of reason in public debates. He asserted that both Mendelssohn and Jacobi were guilty of raising types of claims—for intuition or for overextensions of "faith"—that brought reason itself into disrepute. This radicalization or misapplication of rationality did, he agreed with critics, open the door to "enthusiasm, superstition, and atheism itself."⁸⁰ But, against such possibilities, he appealed to their own deepest intentions: both, he claimed, were seeking to maintain unimpeded their "freedom to think." Both should therefore reconsider the social and cultural preconditions supporting such independence of thought, and the sort of practices that constituted and maintained it. That transition to his concluding theme gave Kant the opportunity to restate, in simplified form, his own definition of the Enlightenment (from his 1784 essay).

It is significant that Kant omitted here the troublesome distinction he had earlier made between the "private" (restricted) and "public" (freely critical) uses of reason.⁸¹ Instead, Kant argued that the "freedom to think," as a basic human activity, stood in tension with another human trait, the need for civil society, and all the compulsions and restraints that the latter entailed. As in his 1784 essay, he described that first activity as a complex freedom that included freedom from prior restraints like "compulsions of conscience" (in the area of religion). And, with a warning to Hamann and others ("secret-society" adepts?), he argued it was also threatened by the capacity to give oneself over to self-immersion: for example, in the "genius" who presumed to be beyond the restraints of any "laws" of rationality he might share with others. In intentionally sobering terms, he proposed that such "flights of genius" were the sort that simply courted being subjected, by society or rulers, to laws that

⁷⁹ Kant, *Ak.*, 8:143–44. Some recent Hamann interpreters, like Oswald Bayer, *Zeitgenosse im Widerspruch: Johann Georg Hamann als radikaler Aufklärer* (Munich and Zurich, 1988), chaps. 7 and 9, have sought to question whether Kant's types of replies are convincing, when viewed in either eighteenth- or twentieth-century terms. My point is not to decide such issues here, but to establish that these were important systematic and publicistic concerns for Kant—which is too often ignored by commentators quick to insist Kant had no significant stance on language, or the contextual dimension of his philosophizing. And again, the parallels with Semler's insistence on the presence of "concepts," "knowledge" (*Kenntnisse*), and truths in the minds of neophyte as well as mature Christians need to be explored.

⁸⁰ Kant, *Ak.*, 8:143.

⁸¹ For Mendelssohn's and others' trouble with that distinction, see Schmidt, "The Question of Enlightenment" (n. 53 above).

would then necessarily be felt to be "alien to themselves." Kant described that as the source of the poles of the current highly splintered social-cultural situation: those seeking "illumination" (*Erleuchtung*) through individual flights-of-genius were met by those opposing them with "externally proven facts [*Facta*] and traditions," and with supposedly long-ignored "documents." The latter, however, were for Kant little more than blatant appeals to the human capacity for superstition (*Aberglaube*).⁸² (The allusion to disputes between freemasons, conservative secret societies, crypto-Catholics, and the like would have been obvious to his audience.) And lest there be any room for unthinking polemics, Kant (in schoolmasterly fashion) rounded out his explanation with a definition of what he thought the much-feared category of "unbelief" (*Unglaube*) actually was: simply the renunciation of any faith-in-reason, a mistaken rejection of reason's dependency on its own setting-of-its-needs. Kant was seeking to fight against the incommensurable assumptions in competing cultural visions. His definition of genuine "unbelief" was not therefore to be confused with the orthodox-pietist definition: a mere nonbelief in specific historical "facts" (as the confrontation over the Lutheran "symbolic books," or Hamann and Herder's "historicity of language" would make it appear). Kant thus implicitly defended the heritage of historical biblical criticism, by proclaiming it was simply in reason's nature and power to always dispute such "facts" by its own standards.⁸³

Kant ended the essay with a direct, impassioned appeal to the diverse groups of the German public to unite around his proposal that a core of the *Aufklärung* (which he now named for the first time) be preserved. He argued that, no matter which side one stood on—whether one sought grounds for belief in "facts" or in a simple "faith-in-reason"—one should now share an understanding that reason itself (within the limits he had proposed for humans' capacity for "experience" of their selves and a world) had the sole right to be the measure of truth. He fought to counter what he implied was the essentially defensive reaction of secret societies or historically developed traditions (like orthodox Lutheranism, legal positivism, and historical law) in proposing that "Enlightenment" could somehow consist in heaping up all sorts of specific knowledge (*Kenntnisse*), over which certain groups could then claim privileged insight. He proposed, by contrast, that there existed a few simple tests by which individuals—made uncertain by such claims—could learn to "think-for-themselves": Ask, can I find reasons or causes to

⁸² Kant, *Ak.*, 8:145. The pedagogical-pedantic nature of this discussion by Kant should be noted. These pages read as if he wished to finally "define the terms" that should be used in public controversies over deists, mystics, secret societies, etc. once and for all—and on his terms.

⁸³ Again, this echoed Mendelssohn's similar statement in the *Jerusalem* (1783; n. 55 above), as well as Kant's own first preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

accept something (as, e.g., right or true)? Can I, based on what I accept, find the rule that I must follow to make that very acceptance into a “universal principle of [every individual’s] use of their reason”? With such recommendations Kant sought to steer a course between the extremes that he thought were threatening the heritage of the Aufklärung in 1786.

IV

Recent scholarly studies that have sought to emphasize the deeply political nature of Kant’s “critical philosophy” have above all focused on the image Kant had offered of his “critique of reason” in the first edition preface of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781): as the instituting of a new judicial instance, a supreme “Tribunal,” to enable philosophic reasoning to judge as if by “eternal and unalterable decrees.”⁸⁴ But if the foregoing analysis is correct, such interpretations need to confront more directly questions about the nature and historical meaning of Kant’s publicistic and argumentative strategies in the context of a threatened “end of the Enlightenment.” One subtle shift after 1786 has already been noted: the more Kant sought to understand and account for conservative, anti-Enlightenment behavior as pragmatic social and cultural options (e.g., “faith”), the more he might be perceived as accepting or endorsing the opposite of what had previously been the self-understanding of “enlightened rationality.” In such a context, a text like the new preface Kant added to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (published in 1787) gains a new interest. It dealt with the tensions of authority and subjective freedom, of secretive or hermetic versus public and shared modes of thought, in a new way. First of all, the community of natural-scientific practitioners — united around Francis Bacon’s practical project for a “new instauration of the sciences,” which Kant invoked — is held up as a model of genuinely cumulative, participatory, and productive intellectual activity; the dogmatic and corporatist-monopolistic spirit of traditional academic and professional communities is contrasted with it. In addition, human freedom was protected (and not abused) by human power being directed outward toward a nonhuman object, nature, as well as toward a specific class of human objects, intellectual errors and sectarian illusions about nature. Against the backdrop of a dramatic appeal to reorient thought in the manner of Copernicus,⁸⁵ Kant cast his re-

⁸⁴ O’Neill (n. 51 above).

⁸⁵ That is, to consider that the source of error lay in the perspective of the viewer, and in the discrepancy between what was necessary (or empirically grounded) and what was individually or socially contingent. The issue of what Kant specifically said, or did not say, in invoking Copernicus has recently been reviewed by I. Bernard Cohen, *Revolution in Science* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), chap. 15, and, in very

construction of philosophy as essentially an appropriation of the pattern of dialogue and disciplined interaction which the community of scientific practitioners had established among its members, and in their very way of interrogating nature.

Second, in order to cut short any identification of his project with radicalized variants of the Enlightenment—and particularly ones that would claim to disseminate wholly new “truths” to a naive, passive populace—Kant compared the restrictive function of his critique to the negative, but indirectly positive, function of administrative “policing” (*Polizei*): that of maintaining a proper social space between different state subjects, their diverse affairs and roles.⁸⁶

Perhaps his most ambitious point was that this new communicative and nonauthoritarian form of rationality among an academic-scientific elite could in fact understand and interact with the more restricted (and often only implicit) rationality of “average people.” What Kant specifically meant by that was indicated in his famous proposal that his goal in restricting pretensions to knowledge (via his “Critiques”) was to make room for moral freedom, for faith, and for the imagination of a rational ideal of a Creator-God.⁸⁷

When it came to practical questions of public teaching, Kant staked out a mediating position in the embattled, and now fragmenting, movement of the German Aufklärung. Claiming that the “common understanding” was never in fact moved by the sorts of “subtle speculations” advanced by the past generations of speculative rationalists, Kant nonetheless sought to sketch a model of the implicit rationality and sources of conviction (*Vernunftgründen* and *vorbereitende Überzeugung*), which did effectively serve to move average men and women—and which scholars, popularizers, and administrators must thus all take into account.⁸⁸ Echoing Mendelssohn (in *Jerusalem*), he argued that humans—because of capacities genuinely lying in their nature—never saw themselves gaining full satisfaction through the “temporal” (the conditions for and duration of their lives). The result was a “hope for future life,” on which traditions of speculative theology had built—except often in far too unscrupulous and questionable a manner. A second major human capacity on which a moderate Enlightenment project must now learn to build was the ability of even average intellects to sense the contrast between all “claims of

different terms, by Robert Hahn, *Kant's Newtonian Revolution in Philosophy* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill., 1988).

⁸⁶ Kant, *Ak.* (n. 23 above), B, 3:xxv.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, B, p. xxx. And, in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), one might say these were supplemented by the imagination of an ideal “substrate” of all physical nature—a Creator-God, but perhaps more immediately conceived as a teleological force-of-life.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, B, p. xxxiii.

inclinations” and the “simple, clear presentation of duties” (*die blosse klare Darstellung der Pflichten*). Kant, beginning with his *Critique of Practical Reason* of 1788 and after, would begin to narrow and specify his version of a natural-law foundation for moral freedom: into the form of a negative “freedom from” external incentives (eudaemonism and utilitarianism), balanced by a positive presentation of a universalizable rationality in oneself.⁸⁹ In the second preface, this was defined as an ever-present “consciousness of freedom,”⁹⁰ which was in no way contradicted (or so he thought) by the simultaneous capacity of humans to be led by groups who mesmerized them (e.g., clergy, despotic political leaders) with talk of the dangers of determinisms of various sorts (atheistic materialisms) or of the need to submit to pragmatic or utilitarian necessities. (He thus reinvoked his 1784 theme of “self-incurred tutelage,” with the promise now that the broader scientific-academic community might be its proper “teacher,” and not “guardian.”)

A third and final human capacity was the belief in a “wise and great Creator.” Arising from an ordinary human response to the order, beauty, and seeming “providential care” at work in nature, this capacity (as the controversies of the 1770s and 1780s had shown only too well) was also in danger of distortion and exploitation. Building on his “Orientation” essay, Kant here explicitly warned of the dangers of going beyond anything but a basic use of “arguments from the design of nature” in straightforward aesthetic, moral, or religious activities. More elaborate rational “proofs” of the existence of God and his characteristics, he implied, were only likely to stand in the service of ulterior corporatist power-and-knowledge ambitions.⁹¹

⁸⁹ For a brief sketch of Kant’s growing difference, in the late 1780s and 1790s, from the late phase of “natural law jurisprudence,” including from figures who seemed to be inspired by “Kantianism,” see Kersting (n. 45 above).

⁹⁰ In Kant’s anthropology lectures of this period, he made clear his conviction that no human was ever so degraded or debased that he did not sense the force of a negative “freedom from” all specific means to limited ends or could not be taught to build upon that consciousness of such a freedom. Student transcriptions of Kant’s anthropology lectures of the mid- to later 1780s are contained in the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin): *Ms. Germ. 400*.

⁹¹ This may indeed sound very much like Foucault, but I would argue that that is largely because *Discipline and Punish*, like *The Order of Things*, was heavily influenced by Foucault’s early study of Kant’s lectures on anthropology. As his *thèse complémentaire* at the Sorbonne, Foucault had translated, and offered an extended philosophic commentary upon, Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798). In the “Notice historique” he added to the 1970 publication of that translation (Paris), Foucault went so far as to promise a future work on Kant’s anthropology itself. The few modern scholars who have read Foucault’s commentary have not sought to develop any independent assessment of Kant’s anthropology. For an exploration of the implications of the Kant-Foucault relationship for historical study of the eighteenth century, see Steven Lestition, “Kant, Foucault, and the Human Sciences of the

Kant, like the neologians themselves, was at once elitist and egalitarian in that he described the "common man" as being motivated to act on simpler, and ultimately incomplete, anticipations of a fully mature rationality. But, precisely because Kant could make (and soon defend philosophically) the teleological presumption that the rationalities of such common minds might, for certain purposes, be viewed as forms of full epistemological, moral, and imaginative rationality, he could imply that there was a potential for growth on their part, and for greater communication and sharing between educated elites and the different levels of the common people. There was something to carry on a dialogue about. Kant was moving, in the last decades of his scholarly activity, toward articulating an idea of social pluralism and of an intracultural division of labor that would replace an older, more rigid corporatism and paternalist elitism.⁹²

V

With Woellner's religious and censorship edicts of 1788 and the outbreak of the French Revolution, new incentives emerged for polarization among adherents to the disputed project of "Enlightenment," as well as for new forms of confrontation with its critics. The Halle neologian J. S. Semler, for example, defended Woellner's edicts in print, even though he did not combine that with any renunciation of his historical-critical and rationalist approach to the Protestant tradition.⁹³ By contrast, the young theology professor at Göttingen (appointed in 1790), C. F. Stäudlin, sent Kant a copy of his book attempting to balance Kantian moral philosophy with the claims of a modern Protestant religiosity along with a letter that concluded, "Heaven bless even further your noble and outstanding efforts toward the enlightenment of your age (*zur Aufklärung ihres Zeitalters*) and toward the promotion of truer

Enlightenment" (paper presented at the meeting of the midwest section of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Macomb, Ill., October 1990).

⁹² For a very interesting discussion of the idea of an essentially "corporatist" form of the Enlightenment in Germany, by contrast with western Europe, see Jonathan Knudsen, *Justus Möser and the German Enlightenment* (London and New York, 1986).

⁹³ This defense came despite the fact that he had been disciplined by Frederick II in 1779 for having successfully led the resistance of the Halle theologians to the appointment of the radical Aufklärer Karl Friedrich Bahrdt to the faculty. (Semler was removed as director of the Halle "Theology Seminar" that trained and certified prospective pastors.) See Hornig, in Greschat, ed. (n. 12 above). A potentially important source for gauging the influence of Semler's late thought on Kant's 1793 essays on religion was not available to me: the posthumous text edited by the Jena Kantian Ch. G. Schütz and published in Königsberg in 1792, *Letztes Glaubensbekenntnis über natürliche und christliche Religion*. Semler had died in March 1791.

morality.”⁹⁴ As has already been noted, J. A. Starck engaged in even more radical denunciations of freemasonry and freethinking as the causes of the revolutionary disorders in France. A few years later, however, in 1793, a onetime pupil of Kant’s, Theodor G. Hippel,⁹⁵ published a highly satirical novel exposing all variants of freemasonry and secret societies as disguised social climbing, aristocratic-corporatist politics, foolish hermeticism, and pseudoreligious ritualism that had lost touch with reality. Yet the novel avoided drawing specific political implications and implicitly sketched a story of a young Bürger’s ability to be educated via “experience” in general.⁹⁶

Two generalizations may be made about the sort of connections Kant sought to make, from 1786 through 1798, between his publications (and teaching) on the one hand and the two major ways in which the Enlightenment now appeared to be coming to an “end” on the other. First, he continued to extend both the skeptical reflexivity and the constructivist rationalism that characterized his first *Critique* into philosophies of practical and moral action, law, politics, and history. In so doing he thought he was being true to his own deepest philosophic principles while meeting one of the most insistent objections of the Enlightenment critics: that there was (as Jacobi had put it) still “an impotence to prove” to all overly ambitious proponents of a traditional rationalistic theorizing. On the other hand, Kant also wagered—perhaps mistakenly—that those involved in such criticisms could be brought to see that there was also “an idea of truth”—a moment of rational judgment, shared understanding, or rational practice—to which they themselves were appealing as they spoke or acted. The Enlightenment could be preserved, he was proposing, as a process of immanent critique and self-understanding.

It is therefore understandable that Kant, for the sake of clarifying the overall coherence of his “systematic” standpoint, should try to combine this inner diversification of rationality with a renewed attention to the philosophy of empirical-experimental natural philosophy with which he had begun (in 1781).⁹⁷ In that process, however, he endeavored to outline nothing less than

⁹⁴ Cited in Ringleben (n. 46 above), p. 104. Kant responded by dedicating his 1798 collection of essays, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, to Stäudlin.

⁹⁵ Bürgermeister of Königsberg (1780–90) and subsequently raised to the nobility by Frederick William II.

⁹⁶ Joseph Kohlen, “‘Kreuz- und Querzüge des Ritters A bis Z’: Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel als Kritiker der geheimen Gesellschaften des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts,” *Aufklärung* 3, no. 1 (1988): 49–72. The article focuses almost exclusively on an internal analysis of Hippel’s novel and does not try to pose questions about the reasons for Hippel’s switch from being an enthusiastic “Strict Observance” mason (in the 1760s and 1770s) to his later sharp, disillusioned parody.

⁹⁷ These eventually included, besides the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786) and the second half of the *Critique of Judgment*, a set of reflections left in very sketchy form at his death—and subsequently entitled by modern editors an *Opus posthumus*.

a theory of the regulative and application-oriented practices structuring the behavior of the full range of types of disciplinary and "scientific" communities.⁹⁸ In the transformations he carried out in the late 1780s and after within the framework of his long-established "anthropology" lectures, this came to include above all a typology of collective behaviors that would extend from the search for full moral autonomy and political power on the one end, to the merely self-disciplining or instrumental-pragmatic behavior among diverse levels of society on the other.⁹⁹ The concepts that he developed to emphasize this new concern included those of norm-oriented behavior: technical, instrumental, and situationally pragmatic.¹⁰⁰ Seeking perhaps to mitigate what was being criticized as the empty formalism or unrealizability of an austere "categorical imperative" of moral behavior, Kant increasingly sketched, in starkly realistic terms, the pervasiveness of merely norm- and rule-governed action in ordinary interpersonal life.¹⁰¹

Thus, when modern scholars turn to Kant's shorter, occasional essays of this period and focus on the nature of his debates with major authors of the past—Hobbes and Rousseau, Pufendorf and Locke, Grotius and Wolff—they tend to exclude or misjudge a dimension of Kant's more specific concerns: the threatened fragmentation, radicalization, or rejection of the Enlightenment as a cultural option in late eighteenth-century Prussia. But to see this, attention must be given to his debates with essentially "second-rank figures"—like Christian Garve, Friedrich Gentz, August W. Rehberg, and others—who increasingly helped set the terms within which, retrospectively, the Enlightenment (and the German Aufklärung) came to be viewed.¹⁰² For the purpose

⁹⁸ One needs to consider also the model of the debate of the revision and implementation of the Allgemeines Landrecht, and thus the model of "natural law thinking" in the legal community. The possible connections of Kant's later writings on law to those on experimental natural science and its "disciplinary practices" still await fuller exploration.

⁹⁹ This is especially true for the third *Critique*, and for his anthropology lectures. For studies of the latter, see Norbert Hinske, "Kants Idee der Anthropologie," in *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Festschrift für Max Müller zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Heinrich Rombach (Munich, 1966), pp. 410–27; Gerd Wolandt, "Kants Anthropologie und die Begründung der Geisteswissenschaften," in *Kant: Analysen—Probleme—Kritik*, ed. Hariolf Oberer and Gerhard Seel (Würzburg, 1988), pp. 357–78; and Steven Lestition, "Kant's Philosophical Anthropology" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1985).

¹⁰⁰ One of the first to emphasize this shift was Norbert Hinske, *Kant als Herausforderung an die Gegenwart* (Freiburg, 1980).

¹⁰¹ Compare Wood (n. 51 above). For the connection to Foucault's reading of Kant and the emergence of a "disciplinary society" between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see n. 91 above.

¹⁰² Exceptions include Michael Stolleis, *Staatsraison, Recht und Moral in philosophischen Texten des späten 18. Jahrhunderts*, Monographien zur philosophischen Forschung no. 86 (Meisenheim am Glan, 1972) (a reworking of a Munich dissertation

of this analysis, I will focus on one such writer, Friedrich Gentz, and the essays and introduction he appended to his translation (1793) of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. They serve above all to illustrate how the Enlightenment (and particularly Kant's version of it) were being attacked as socially and politically dangerous, even as some of its very categories were being adapted to fit a new conservative social philosophy.

The development of Kant's debate with Gentz was all the more troubling to him because the latter had studied with Kant in Königsberg between 1783 and 1786 and had become skilled enough a pupil to publish some early essays on philosophic issues (defending a Kantian approach); and Gentz subsequently assisted Kant in proofreading the manuscript of the forthcoming *Critique of Judgment* (1790).¹⁰³ Modern biographers seeking to explain Gentz's sudden turnabout in 1791–92 point to several factors at work: the influence of acquaintanceships with Garve and Wilhelm von Humboldt, who were critical of the practicality of Kant's work; the spectacle of the radical turn of the French Revolution (particularly in August 1792 and after); and finally Gentz's own intense desire to rise and succeed in Prussian state service.¹⁰⁴

In the introduction to his translation of Burke's *Reflections*, Gentz argued that a cultural and sociopolitical watershed had been passed. Earlier in the century it was in fact true that writing on political subjects might be a humane and noble task. He seemed willing to accept Enlightenment clichés: mankind had been encouraged to awake from its long sleep; barbarism and repression, misery and servitude had been uncovered and quite properly criticized. And (as Garve had proposed in his commentary on Cicero in the 1770s) every step in the development of such scholarship and writing meant that all levels and estates in society had gradually become more sociable and governable; the interests of the individual coincided with those of the government. But now,

on "Moral und Politik bei Christian Garve"); Dieter Henrich's introduction to *Kant—Gentz—Rehberg: Über Theorie und Praxis*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Frankfurt am Main, 1967); Ursula Vogel, *Konservative Kritik an der bürgerlichen Revolution: August Wilhelm Rehberg* (Darmstadt, 1972); Eberhard Günter Schulz, "Vom Beitrag der Berliner Aufklärung zum philosophischen Völkerrecht (Garve, Kant)," in *Humanismus und Naturrecht in Brandenburg-Preussen*, ed. Hans Thieme, Veröffentlichungen der Historische Kommission zu Berlin no. 48 (Berlin, 1979), pp. 206–41.

¹⁰³ For Gentz's Königsberg years, see Sweet (n. 49 above), pp. 5–10. See Adickes (n. 44 above), vol. 3, no. 2 (1894): 186, for a brief characterization of Gentz's 1791 essay in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* on Kant's concepts of right and freedom.

¹⁰⁴ He began as a minor official in the Seehandlung in Berlin; then, in 1787, he moved to the Brandenburg Department of the Prussian General Directory, followed by a transfer to the South Prussian Department (which oversaw the areas acquired in the second partition of Poland). Sweet emphasizes that Gentz, frequenting Berlin salons, soon led a life beyond his means. Although his salary rose (after 1792) from 300 Rthlr. to 800 and then 1,200, he had to declare bankruptcy in 1797. Sweet, pp. 13–14, 27–29.

Gentz argued, the times had profoundly changed: the age was swamped by a "one-sided, ruleless, inundating exercise of the understanding" (*Verstand*), emerging at all levels of society. Rather than the beneficial "sphere of publicity" (which writers like Kant had evoked in 1784),¹⁰⁵ the veritable flood of writings in France and everywhere in Europe testified to what Gentz labeled an "excess of knowledge" (*Übermass des Wissens*). The mind of men had been overeducated and thus misshapen (*übergebildet und so verbildet*).¹⁰⁶

Gentz then posed the question, What was to be done in such new times? He considered whether silence on political topics was not simply better than drawing attention to new errors and stupidities simply by deigning to comment on them. The older deference of average people before the learned—in areas of jurisprudence, medicine, and metaphysics—was surely gone in political matters: "even the most unpracticed understanding gives itself over to the dream of a blessed all-knowingness." Most disturbing of all, the very real flux in social and political relationships—the fact that "a whole people introduced and then disposed of constitutions as if they were changing clothes"—made it seem like the thoughts sketched by any individual thinker were simply impotent, destined to be irrelevant and outmoded in short order.¹⁰⁷

Gentz had been well enough schooled in the language of Kant and other Aufklärers for his analysis of the deeper causes of this transformation, and the solutions for it, to invoke analogous images and principles—if only to reverse their implications. A first despairing image he offered was: when the very arena of the play, and the actors involved, disappeared, then the finest "critique" of an observer (*Zuschauer*) must become irrelevant to the audience.¹⁰⁸ Equally disastrous was that German and European observers of such scenes—the fall of thrones, the massacres of peoples, trials of

¹⁰⁵ Gentz nowhere mentions Kant by name.

¹⁰⁶ Edmund Burke, *Betrachtungen über die französische Revolution*, trans. with an introduction, notes, and political essays by Friedrich Gentz, 2 vols., 3d rev. ed. (Braunschweig, 1838), 1:1–3. The first edition of Gentz's translation and commentary of 1793 was not accessible to me. It appears that in later editions Gentz essentially updated the commentary by adding an essay "On the Origin and Character of the Wars against the French Revolution." The very real flood of journal and pamphlet literature in Germany in these years is now beginning to be surveyed in quantitative and qualitative terms: see Rolf Reichardt, "'Freimüthigkeit, doch kein Sans-Cülotismus': Transfer und Transformation der Französischen Revolution in Verdeutschungen französischer Revolutionsschriften, 1789–1799," in *Transferts: Les Relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIe et XIXe siècle)*, ed. Michel Espagne and Michel Werner (Paris, 1988), pp. 273–326.

¹⁰⁷ Burke, 1:3–4.

¹⁰⁸ The echoes of Kant's theory of impartial aesthetic judgment, in the newly appeared third *Critique*, are unmistakable. Kant himself made this image of the "spectator" central to his famous answer to critics of the French Revolution in the second essay of *The Conflict of Faculties* (1797): see Kant, *Ak.* (n. 23 above), 7:85.

kings—began to take on the characteristics of the very events they observed. But Gentz was even more pessimistic: their writings became just another sheaf of papers swirling among those produced by demagogues of the streets or Jacobin clubs.¹⁰⁹

Gentz proposed that Burke was worth reading in part simply because his impassioned rhetoric was just what such times needed, a counterweight to the proposals of revolutionary sympathizers and enthusiasts, in part because his few simple “maxims” reflected a careful, factual judgment and many-sided exploration of those very phenomena.¹¹⁰ Gentz then proposed his own contribution would be to sketch some of the philosophic principles that lay behind Burke’s analysis. His approach was to outline some of the general differences of thought dividing proponents of new “revolutionary systems” from their opponents. However, the analysis that resulted may be seen as the beginning of the sort of conservative inversion of Enlightenment categories such as would shortly emerge in Restoration France as well. Gentz was, however, still so indebted to aspects of his older mode of thought that he preferred to lapse into inconsistencies rather than adopt new labels or structures to explain his altered values.¹¹¹

The advocates of the new, Gentz argued, found the basic force of human inclinations and feelings (*Neigungen, Gefühle*) on their side. By contrast, all that defenders of the old could appeal to was “reason.” However, from Gentz’s picture a vicious cycle clearly emerged—a virtual Malthusian politics, driven by the socioeconomic misery of the masses. Members of the vast underprivileged majority held as “true” only that which agreed with their wishes or would serve to improve their lot; therefore, only the elite, with something genuinely to gain from an existing order, would defend the status quo. Because the majority of people were in fact miserable, or tortured by “a thousand illusory needs,” they were in fact driven by a “secret longing for revolution.” Even the failure of one set of revolutionary hopes did not destroy the basic structure: the desire for something better must ever and again produce a partisanship for revolution.¹¹² Gentz had begun sketching “reason” as being all on the side of defenders of the old, of the status quo. But, by the end, it was clear that the lower orders had their “reasons,” and that the actions of the elite toward such unsatisfied masses must continually take the form of force. He suggested that, at the most, the goal of a status quo politics could never be wholesale improvement of the

¹⁰⁹ Burke, 1:4–5.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:19–20, 2:34–35.

¹¹¹ Sweet, chaps. 2–4, emphasizes the deep inconsistency in Gentz’s early outlook. The very concept of “mode of thinking” (*Denkungsart*) was itself a very typical Kantian/Enlightenment category of analysis.

¹¹² Burke, 1:7–8.

people's lot, but simply a lessening of the evil they experienced while at the bottom.¹¹³

It was when Gentz moved from his initial sketch of the different mind-sets to the underlying causes of the recent sociopolitical transformation that he revealed his deepest break from the Enlightenment, and his sense that it itself had been in large part responsible for the uncontrolled evils that prevailed. He argued that, "for some years now," there had been a previously unknown one-sidedness in the modes of thought of whole nations about political systems, in literature, and in the very relations governing men with each other.¹¹⁴ Its goal was to compact the whole species into one and the same form; its result was to destroy the "free movement of the spirit." The genuine final good for mankind, a multifaceted self-cultivation (*Bildung*), had been lost from sight. So, despite its tempting names—and here Gentz still avoided labeling what he meant: the *Aufklärung*—he proposed that this "spiritual slavery" (*Geistessklaverei*) was no better than the barbarism of earlier "dark ages." In both his introduction and appended essay, "On the Morality of Revolutions within States," Gentz inverted Kant's own famous image of the authoritative "Tribunal" of "critical rationality" and attacked directly Kant's key insistence on seeking universal principles. In Gentz's view, the purported "universal" maxims of the new "Paris Synod"—that "the people never err," "liberty and equality"—only disguised that the Commune acted as an inquisitorial court, exhibiting an intolerance not seen since the collapse of papal infallibility doctrines in the face of the Protestant Reformation.¹¹⁵ It was this action and this model that, he thought, had led to the present problem in how political-social issues were being discussed. Unlike Burke's moderate maxims, current discussions always started out at the extremes: making "universal principles" the conflict point in politics always led to exaggeration and excess on both sides, on the part of their defenders and attackers.¹¹⁶ The emergence of such a new "church of sole-salvation"—now in the sphere of politics—had resulted, Gentz sardonically commented, in a power move directed toward the so-called philosophic republic itself. A considerable part of human knowledge and spiritual concerns were now labeled "child's play,"

¹¹³ Here was one major difference Kant would have with Gentz: in order to cut short any mere thinking in terms of utilitarian welfare standards as the ultimate judge of actions, Kant was also willing to attribute an implicit rationality at work in the average person's thinking—or, at least, available to them at every point.

¹¹⁴ As noted earlier, Fritz Valjavec observed how the 1788 Religious Edict in Prussia marked a radical shift in the debate over the *Aufklärung*: it was now denounced in broad, sweeping terms as the cause of multiple institutional and sociopolitical evils. See Valjavec (n. 11 above), pp. 394–96.

¹¹⁵ Burke, 1:15–16.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:35–36.

and another part stigmatized as mere political-social repression. Whoever would not take an oath on the new “symbol” of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, he argued, was treated as a rebel against the fundamental principles of human nature.¹¹⁷ Since Gentz admitted that writers defending “new tastes” had the advantage of ideas (and bold rhetoric) on their side, Burke’s frankly rhetorical appeals were simply fighting with the right tools. Such a clash of simplifying rhetorics might establish a certain equilibrium in ideas and judgments, over against this new “despotic uniformity.”¹¹⁸

The degree to which Kant’s writings on political and historical themes in 1793–97 were a response, both directly and indirectly, to such an altered interpretation of the Enlightenment has, I think, been too little studied. Thus, although Kant posed an essay like “On the Old Saw: That May be Right in Theory, but It Won’t Work in Practice” (appearing in the September 1793 *Berlinische Monatsschrift*) as a debate with three older figures—Garve, Hobbes, Mendelssohn—the whole discussion was also framed as a rejoinder to Gentz (and Burke): that is, “that gentleman bold enough to pronounce on theories and systems” in a way that conceded them an abstract value but then judged them unsuited to the hard realities of real-life practice.¹¹⁹ Kant’s strategy in rebutting such rhetoric was twofold. On the one hand, he treated ironically and sarcastically the claims that such analyses had genuinely understood what he—and the lines of analysis with which he was in debate, from those of Garve and Mendelssohn to those of Hobbes—was saying concerning the inherent linkage (or not) between theory, empirical experience, and practical judgment. And, on the other hand, he sought to defend his claim that a rigorous and comprehensive practical philosophy—taking seriously concepts like freedom, autonomy, and the construction of human rights through social interaction—could provide a “general orientation” for thought and practice even in such turbulent times as the late 1780s and 1790s. Thus, this 1793 essay paralleled “What Is Orientation in Thinking?” (of 1786) in reaffirming the guidance his theories could offer in a series of encompassing spheres: first, in the moral realm (the concern for one’s individual, pragmatic welfare); second, in the political realm (where the issue was the welfare of states, as collective institutions); and finally, in the international arena (of the

¹¹⁷ Gentz overlooked the inconsistency of accepting just such a new demand-for-uniformity in the Religion Edict of 1788 in the first place.

¹¹⁸ Burke (n. 106 above), 1:12–13, 16–17.

¹¹⁹ For a brief note on this relationship, see Paul Wittichen, “Kant und Burke,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 93 (1904): 253–55. In addition to the comparisons I discuss, there is also the way the tripartite division of maxims in the section Kant devotes to Hobbes contrasts with the three maxims of the revolutionary clubs around which Burke centers his opening refutation of the Revolution.

competition between states, balanced off against a consideration for the welfare of the human species as a whole).¹²⁰

Those sympathetic to Gentz's position that the movement of the Enlightenment had gone too far or was impotent before the new needs of nations and of the times—such as the Hannover official A. W. von Rehberg, and the Osnabrück Stadtsyndicus Justus Möser—recognized that Kant's essay was directed at them, and they (along with Gentz) replied in turn.¹²¹ Kant, who was at work on the long-projected volumes of a "Metaphysics of Morals" (published in 1797–98), did not choose to reply again on that issue—except indirectly in the form of a collection of essays, written at various times in the 1790s, and published with an introductory overview in 1798 under the title *The Conflict of the Faculties*. In the introduction Kant reflected on the nature and purpose of the teaching offered by the higher faculties of German universities (theology, law, medicine), as well as the "lower" philosophic-humanistic one, and on how such teaching related to the social behavior of the common as well as educated classes.¹²² But in the specific essay devoted to the conflict of the legal with the philosophic faculty, entitled "An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?" Kant in effect responded to Gentz's image of an age of clashing rhetorics, of the rationality of blocking the people's revolutionary "reasons" by educated prudence and historic traditions. In the sharpest possible contrast to Gentz's depiction of confused and despairing observers, and the irrelevant views of a "critic" after the "play" and the "theater" had disappeared, Kant offered his defense of the sheer spectacle of the French Revolution: even if the acts of the individual revolutionaries could not be morally or politically justified in

¹²⁰ Kant, *Ak.* (n. 23 above), 8:275–78.

¹²¹ The essays by Gentz and Rehberg, of December 1793 and February 1794 in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, are reprinted in Henrich, ed., *Kant—Gentz—Rehberg* (n. 102 above). Since Möser died before completing his response to Kant's 1793 essay, it was published only as a fragment in 1798. But Möser's general stance on Kant's later writings is discussed by Knudsen (n. 92 above), pp. 174–86.

¹²² Discussions of that text include Reinhard Brandt, "Zum 'Streit der Fakultäten,'" *Kant-Forschungen*, vol. 1 (1987); Günther Bien, "Räsonierfreiheit und Gehorsamspflicht," in *Akten des 4. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses, Mainz 6.-10. April 1974*, ed. Gerhard Funke, pt. 2:1, *Sektionen* (Berlin, 1974) pp. 617–32; Mary Gregor, "Introduction" to Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Gregor (New York, 1979); and briefly that in Frederick Gregory, "Kant, Schelling, and the Administration of Science in the Romantic Era," *Osiris* ("Science in Germany: The Intersection of Institutional and Intellectual Issues," ed. Kathryn M. Olesko), 2d. ser., 5 (1989): 17–23. See also Ralf Selbach, "Eine bisher unbeachtete Quelle des 'Streits der Fakultäten,'" *Kant-Studien* 82, no. 1 (1991): 96–101. Although helpful, I think that these discussions each overlook major features of the historical process that Kant was attempting to analyze.

themselves, still the ideas and feelings they aroused in morally capable, self-responsible individuals were something that would never be forgotten by humanity. Those thoughts and feelings did testify to the capacity for participation in a virtually timeless freedom and rationality-in-practice. And, in a long discussion of why the process of predicting the course of human affairs was so difficult—another of the issues over which Gentz thought the Enlightenment must flounder in the new era—Kant sought to turn the onus back on the conservatives and empiricists. Since viewers were responsible (individually and collectively) for shaping and acting in the world, even as they sought to interpret it, confusion or clarity, the choice of particularized or universal principles, took the form of self-fulfilling prophecies. The “jere-miads” of outraged prophets and politicians in states that they themselves had overloaded with “religious and civil burdens,” as Kant put it, must not therefore be taken as the last word on the human future, and on the structure of human capacities.¹²³

VI

Kant’s phrase “religious and civil burdens,” in “An Old Question,” was an indication of the degree to which he had assimilated a lesson from the previous twelve years of cultural controversies: namely, that the phenomenon of religion was one key to understanding the dilemmas of the Enlightenment, as well as a ground for projecting religion as a persistent trait in human nature. The essays Kant would publish in 1793 under the title *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* were in some sense his fullest philosophical rejoinder to the challenge posed by Woellner’s edicts and Frederick William II’s conservative, anti-Enlightenment regime. Space does not permit any detailed analysis of those essays here. Kant did, however, incorporate and extend important aspects of their argument in sections of the publication he issued shortly after Frederick William II’s death, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798).¹²⁴

The “Introduction” and first part of his text (on the “Relation of the Faculties”) sought to counter the potential marginalization or repudiation of the Aufklärung with two overarching images: first, that the “conflicts” witnessed during the previous two or three decades were the natural results of

¹²³ Kant, *Ak.*, 7:79–80.

¹²⁴ Kant apparently composed a major portion of what he subsequently made an “Appendix” to the opening section of the text as early as 1793 or 1794, in the context of his initial response to the Woellner edicts. See Gregor’s introduction to *The Conflict of the Faculties*, pp. xv–xvi. It was entitled there “An Elucidation of the Conflict of the Faculties, by Means of [the Conflict] between the Theological and the Philosophical” (pp. 60–61).

a transition from a sort of guild and state-monopoly “economy” over the production and distribution of ideas to an increasing “free market” in them. The latter was produced by a division-of-labor among self-interested “specialists” (university scholars) and state-regulated professionals whose task was to produce functional (“pedagogical”) versions of those higher “truths” to meet certain specific needs of different communities. (While it is not clear that Kant was explicitly reflecting on Adam Smith’s critical approach to higher education in book 5 of *The Wealth of Nations*, that possibility cannot be ruled out.)¹²⁵ The second predominant image promoted by the text was that it was time to outline the “constitutional structure” which had gradually evolved over the past century or two but now needed to be brought to the consciousness of the ruling, service, and educated elites. His purpose was to make clear what he thought were the de facto “legal” and “illegal” transactions within the “public space” that had been created. Kant argued that German states had in fact established their universities to be “judicial authorities” over all educated individuals and the print media, while also conceding them a more far-reaching coparticipation in the “legislative” power of society over itself. For, like the British Parliament’s power to call executive ministers to account for their execution of laws, the right of the “philosophic” faculty to question any of the temporary pragmatic teaching practices of the professional faculties (of theology, law, medicine) was, in Kant’s imagery, a legal “representation” on their part of the higher power of all humans to act freely and morally—whether within the given social frameworks they had created or critically and open-endedly in relation to physical “nature” and its determining laws.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Kant’s colleague and former pupil, Christian Jacob Kraus, had begun teaching “political economy” according to “his own sketch” (which itself increasingly became a commentary on Adam Smith) in the summer semester of 1788. (Kraus had been appointed in 1780 as professor for “politics” [practical philosophy] with the duty of teaching natural law in particular.) For some reason—perhaps a fallout of the religion and censorship edicts, or the French Revolution—Kraus appears to have dropped that course until 1794–95, when he began offering an “Encyclopedia of the Cameral Sciences.” In the winter semester of 1796–97, however, he listed courses on “A Theory of the Causes of Public Wealth” (and *Staats-Wirtschaft*) according to the text of Smith (as recently excerpted by Sartorius), and one on “Public Debts” (also according to Smith). Details are in ZStA, Dt. Mbg., Rep. 76, alt. II, no. 255, vol. 1, Bl. 22–29, 87–92. The changes that took place in state testing procedures and requirements for professional advancement in the course of the eighteenth century make it probable that Prussian scholars were well aware of the complex sociopolitical and economic issues involved in debates about corporate monopolies versus the “natural needs” of the state or society: see Hans-Werner Prah, *Sozialgeschichte des Hochschulwesens* (Munich, 1978), pp. 162–71.

¹²⁶ This image recurs in Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, pp. 27–29, 35, 43–47, 55–59.

With this pair of images, Kant appeared to have in mind the British model whereby a "laissez-faire" economy was promoted alongside limited interventions of a constitutional and "balanced" sovereign state power. (Kant did not exclude the French experience, for in a footnote, he attributed the idea of "laissez-faire" to the French eighteenth-century physiocrats.)¹²⁷ Thus *The Conflict of the Faculties* was a fitting counterpiece to *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*: if the latter adopted the standpoint of "pure" critical philosophy interrogating the principles of religion and historically evolved churches and confessions, the former represented Kant's idea of the more specifically "legal" and political implications he saw flowing from his interpretation of the past decades of cultural and religious controversies.¹²⁸

But, within this overall framework, Kant also sought to draw new attention to the way that narrowly pragmatic, or explicitly "conservative," social and political behaviors threatened to isolate, or subtly invert into its opposite, the cultural project of Enlightenment. This, of course, was a problem he had already alluded to in his 1784 essay "What Is Enlightenment?" Kant approached this now by sketching the nature and function of the German university in a serious but also ironic and playful tone that alerted readers to expect a deeper set of meanings.¹²⁹ The strategy of his whole introduction

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 27–29. The implications of such a reference were perhaps more complicated, however. A recent appointment to the Königsberg legal faculty, Theodor Schmalz, published an *Encyclopedia of Cameral Sciences* (*Encyclopädie der Cameralwissenschaften* [Königsberg]) in 1797, as a handbook for his university lectures. A convinced physiocrat (and critic of Smith), Schmalz also proclaimed that "unlimited (*unumschränkte*) monarchy" was the state form most suitable to that "system" of economic thought—and that form alone in which "respect for human dignity, the right of humanity, and civil freedom" existed along with the security in which the "self-cultivation of humanity" (*Bildung der Menschheit*) could unfold (pp. vii–viii). The text was dedicated to J. C. Woellner. Thus conservatives, too, had learned to adapt new realistic-utilitarian analyses to their purposes.

¹²⁸ Gregor, p. xvi, briefly mentions this relation but does not develop it. The perspective of *The Conflict of Faculties* might be viewed as adopting the "legal" viewpoint (as Kant had finally interpreted it in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Justice* [1797]) while the *Religion* essays might be viewed as adopting the more purely "moral" viewpoint on the practice and teaching of religion (as suggested by the *Metaphysical Foundations of Virtue* [1797]). This might help account for discrepancies in tone and publicistic strategy in the two collections of essays.

¹²⁹ A clue to the ironic, and yet deeply serious, nature of his analysis was a long footnote on the seemingly bizarre origins of the post of faculty Decan. Unlike the more matter-of-fact, tentative derivation an encyclopedia like Zedler's had offered, Kant suggested that there was literally a sort of migrating "disciplinary strategy" at work here: Decans arose from imitation of and competition with medieval astrologers, but also from the model of military commanders. And now, like petty regents, the Decans thus highlighted (for Kant) one of the ongoing functions that current scholars seemed

was to challenge his readers to grasp the sort of reasoning and social practices that such institutions entailed, but to evaluate them by the broader standards that, he implied, his own philosophy and moral-political view enjoined.

From the outset of the introduction, his point was that institutions such as the university (and the "public sphere" itself) were rife with a series of natural and necessary conflicts. On the one hand, it was appropriate to see the university as divided, factory-like (*fabrikenmässig*), into specialists and subindustries (professional and humanistic faculties) whose "product" was "lettered individuals" (*Litteraten*) and various sorts of teachers (*Doctoren*). And it was perhaps natural that universities, still organized as privileged corporations, initiating members into their ranks (as did the clergy or nobility),¹³⁰ now also had to learn to compete with "non-guild" (*zunftfreie*) workers operating in a diversity of work environments (*Werkstätte*). (Kant was of course referring here to the "academies of arts and sciences," reading societies, and publishing ventures like Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopedie*, which had developed to challenge the "monopoly" of Protestant universities since the relegitimation of their structures in the era of the Reformation and after.) But on the other hand, Kant was quick to emphasize that the government's perceptions of what was "valuable" in the university's function simply clashed with that of the academic specialists themselves, and of the "public" who consumed, or were influenced by, the products of the whole educated and ruling elite. Governmental regimes had gained an insight that there were in fact a set of basic instrumental means at hand to gain an influence over the forces (*Triebfedern*) motivating their populace.¹³¹ Those studies that enabled them to do so they labeled "higher" faculties. Thus, through the church and the faculty of theology, the government claimed to reassure people of their "eternal well-being"; through the institution of legal rights and law faculties, of their civil well-being (property, social honor,

to take on: to be "title-creators," ideological laborers in the still hierarchic society of orders and estates in Germany. Compare the article "Decanus," in Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexikon* (Halle and Leipzig, 1734), 7:301-3.

¹³⁰ Kant was going against the grain of an early-modern tradition that viewed all university faculty as members of a single "learned estate" (*Gelehrtenstand*), despite emerging specializations and the gradual end to automatic promotion through a hierarchy of teaching posts (the system of *Aufrücken*) in the course of the eighteenth century. The general German situation is discussed in Thomas Broman, "University Reform in Medical Thought at the End of the Eighteenth Century," *Osiris*, 2d ser., 5 (1989): 36-56. However, to the extent that Broman did not have available archival material on Königsberg (or other Prussian universities), his conclusions may need to be qualified.

¹³¹ Kant was here developing an argument he had already sketched in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1787 (*Ak.* [n. 23 above], B, 3:xxxii).

sharing in power over others); through the instrument of health ordinances and a medical faculty, of their desire for a longer and more physically comfortable life.¹³² A first set of natural conflicts arose from what Kant thought was overwhelming evidence that the “people” (*Volk*) themselves viewed their priorities and interests differently. Ruled by “natural instinct,” they viewed the prolongation of life, and then the security of possessions as most important; issues of spiritual salvation came in a distant third, thus subtly thwarting the government’s (and educated elite’s) project of shaping the people’s “innermost wills and opinions” (*verschlossensten Willensmeinungen*).¹³³ And perhaps most ironically, the way in which the government used the higher, “professional” faculties to influence the people stood in tension with the fact that it did not, and could not, claim to really “know the truth” of the product it was asking its educated elites to deliver. Kant here just repeated the fundamental standpoint he had developed in the Mendelssohn-Jacobi (and neologist-orthodox) debates: that the only thing that produced rational insight (e.g., into truth, moral action, regulative imagination) was the free action of reason, which could not be *compelled* to believe but only articulated that which it *did* “believe.”¹³⁴

A first, positive result was that, out of the very conflict of conservative versus “enlightened” positions of the previous decades, Kant sought to derive a new pluralistic model of the “public sphere.” The university, and each of its faculties, contained a portion of the larger, progressive “freedom to think” and to act out of moral freedom that he had implicitly been arguing might also be found in four other arenas: (1) the church (when viewed as the idea of a universal moral religion, eventually transcending its historically specific ecclesiastical forms); (2) the state and society (as meeting grounds that permitted and required the pursuit of practical moral ends); (3) scientific and scholarly communities operating beyond the university; and (4) average “common sense” (when it confronted nature, and thus reason’s antinomies as well as harmony with itself).

But Kant’s point was also to reconsider a dilemma to which he had also given attention in his 1784 essay. The multileveled and even dispersed “public sphere” also had deep tensions, restrictions, and possibilities for manipulation. He recognized that he had perhaps been overly optimistic in proposing that the “public sphere” could simply function as a relatively open forum that scholars (*Gelehrte*)—whether inside the university or without—could claim to shape to suit their ends. That arena, he was now arguing, had in part been created by the aims and self-interests of modern governments as

¹³² Kant, *Ak.*, 7:21–22.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 22, and *Conflict of Faculties* (n. 122 above), pp. 31–33.

¹³⁴ Kant, *Ak.*, 7:20, and *Conflict of Faculties*, p. 29.

they sought to "have an influence" over the public.¹³⁵ Thus the large group of literate individuals (*Litteraten*) who took up posts as mere "instruments" of the government (or, as he said, "handworkers" or "merchants" of learning)¹³⁶—as clerics, judicial officials, doctors—were trained simply to grasp some "theory," but only enough as was needed to make a passive, classificatory use of it in assembling empirical knowledge within the statutes outlining their posts. Thus the appeal for critical thought, where one could be a dutiful official under one hat, but a critical writer under another, came up against the obstacle that such individuals were simply unlikely to follow theoretical arguments far enough to see the sorts of inconsistencies, perplexities, or skillful resolutions on which Kant based the necessity for his whole "critical method."

An additional problem arose among the intellectuals earning their livelihood outside the university or bureaucracy. Living in something like a "state-of-nature" with respect to the others, because of the absence of official precepts or rules structuring their behavior, they were unlikely to take on the systematic self-disciplining, the questioning of their thoughts and practices in the search for rules and principles, in the way he thought was so central to the success of scientific disciplines and communities over the last several centuries.¹³⁷ Finally, and most significant, he recognized that state officials (the *Litteraten*) and the people could collude to bypass the criticism of the free market of ideas (circulating between "philosophers" on the various faculties and the "state-of-nature" intellectuals), or even the "official censorship" of university professionals. Officials did so, he argued, because of narrow conceptions of their self-interest and institutional power; the people did so because it reflected their natural tendency not to "exert themselves" to alter their lives in the ways any higher conception of human character and capacities might require of them. By the end of the essay, therefore, multiple

¹³⁵ For the mid-century background of this recognition of the political and social creation of a sphere of "public opinion," above all in France and England, see Keith M. Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention," in his *Inventing the French Revolution* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 167–99; as well as Laursen (n. 67 above).

¹³⁶ This was an old metaphor in Kant's self-understanding, for variants of it appear in his letters of the 1750s and 1760s, as well as in some published course announcements. It already has an ironic, self-critical connotation for Kant, only his underlying explanatory model is not yet developed in so explicitly a political-social direction.

¹³⁷ Kant was confronting the point that was implicit in the French Encyclopedists' project of staking out a public and political role for "men of letters" in order that their collective work might "change the popular way of thinking." It presupposed that something like a "scientific" community's "disciplinary matrix" (Thomas Kuhn) be established for the broader popular culture.

obstacles to his 1784 appeal—"dare to think freely," dare to join in the creation of a truly critical public sphere—had become clear. The audience for his version of the Enlightenment, he seemed to be saying, had perhaps always been narrower than he or other Aufklärer had originally anticipated.

It is worth dwelling a bit more on Kant's analysis of the third difficulty mentioned above, the misleading of the people by professionals or by officials in state service. Kant was here reflecting on nothing less than the way in which the Aufklärung had begun to be blocked and potentially marginalized in Prussia in the late 1780s and 1790s.¹³⁸ And, to the degree that he came to an understanding and analysis of those forces, he was in danger of framing an interpretation that—in the absence of his own deepest systematic principles and commitments—might endow those very practices with the appearance of a pragmatism or rationality that could stand on its own.¹³⁹ That threatened a dialectical inversion of the very force of his analysis, and of the ironic challenge he had hoped to lay before his readers: to use a broadened conception of reason and moral freedom.

Kant began by noting the sort of instrument needed to diffuse authority while combining it with obedience to pragmatically set goals: the medium of printed texts themselves. By giving each of the higher faculties an authoritative written text, and prescribing its teaching through statutes—that is, the Holy Scriptures and symbolic books of the confessions, codes of laws, medical ordinances—one could effectively spread a norm of thought and behavior among a dispersed group in society. It was this that enabled the higher faculties in part to escape the challenge of the philosophic faculty's self-critical, autonomy-seeking rationality, even as they still satisfied the

¹³⁸ In his instructions to the new Spiritual Examination Commission (*Geistliche Immediats- und Examination-Kommission*) Woellner had set up to enforce the Religion Edict in the various provinces, it was stipulated that all candidates be tested on their "confession of faith" and on whether they had accepted "damaging errors of the present Neologians and so-called Aufklärer." ZStA, Dt. Mbg., Rep. 76, alt., Abt. XV, Bl. 10. P. Schwartz, *Erste Kulturkampf*, p. 264 cites a Cabinet memo from the King (and Woellner) to the Kommission in April 1794 in which Kant (along with his theological colleague Hasse, and professors Niemeyer and Nösselt at Halle, Steinbart at Frankfurt an der Oder) was singled out as a "recalcitrant evil-doer" whose resistance to the Religion Edict must be dealt with in exemplary and rigorous fashion. Hasse appears to have submitted to Woellner's pressure and declared himself "orthodox": see Götz von Selle, *Geschichte der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg in Preussen*, 2d rev. ed. (Würzburg, 1956), pp. 186–89.

¹³⁹ Kant was already treated to such an example of the "pragmatic" inversion of his own ideas, in some of the "Kantian" theories of natural law that had appeared in the 1790s before his own texts had appeared. See Kersting (n. 45 above), on the efforts at a "relativist deduction" of a right to legal coercion: by Heydenreich (1794), Feuerbach (1796). It is not clear where Schmalz's early "Kantian" text *Das reine Naturrecht* (Königsberg, 1791 [1st ed.], 1795 [2d ed.]) would fit in this process.

government's "interest" in penetrating into the people's mentality and behavior. Kant was perhaps here detecting a dialectic that he was aware he could not fully master. For, as his critics Hamann and Herder had been reminding him for decades, his own appeal for a fully critical rationality and self-responsible practice was itself being conveyed through the compromised medium of written texts and linguistically encoded concepts.¹⁴⁰

Kant claimed that the government nonetheless knew that, if it was really to attain its ends, it had to set against the force of the normatively structured transmission of learning the critical autonomy of another sort of faculty—the philosophic-humanist one. This was perhaps the weakest point of his argument, for it simply asked the reader to grant the logical force of Kant's initial models and assumptions: that governments and societies were being pressured, "naturally," toward an increasingly competitive exchange of specialized "products" and services; and that the de facto "constitution" of modern German states recognized, or ought to recognize, the need for a "balance of powers" (between legislative, executive, and judicial functions of government).

Kant's analysis of the "illegal" conflict of the three professional faculties with the philosophic faculty was thus designed to make a pair of related points. On the one hand, in outlining the distinctive character of what each of the higher faculties could do—that is, theology demonstrate the existence of a concept of God in its texts; jurisprudence exhibit what the legislation willed by the current sovereign power actually was—Kant also wished to draw the line that separated those actions from the free play of reason, from the search for further meanings (what Kant termed the search for truth, for insight into the meaning of acquired experience, or for guidance furnished through a concept of "nature"). If the conflict had been restricted to those issues, Kant argued, it would have been "legal," and in no danger of interesting or provoking average people.

Kant's point, however, was above all to try and account for what I have been describing as the experience of an "end of the Enlightenment." That is, he sought to account for the extra promises or claims that the higher faculties had offered to the "public" to win them over, and then to show why, in his view, that would ultimately be a deeper source of popular unrest than either governments or the Enlightenment's critics had been able to grasp.

The "textual literalists" among the theologians, he argued, wanted to prove more than modern scholarship could genuinely permit, or than their social function within the community actually required: namely, that the text containing those conceptions of divinity was an event of revelation in a place and time; that traces of that event and further characteristics of God that went

¹⁴⁰ See Thomas M. Seebohm, "Der systematischen Ort der Herderschen Metakritik," *Kant-Studien* 63 (1972): 59–73; Sven-Aage Jørgensen, "Zu Hamanns Stil," in *Johann Georg Hamann*, ed. Rainer Wild (Darmstadt, 1978).

beyond the bounds of human reason could nonetheless be found in the text (or in practice) by sheer feeling, or through awaiting further events of grace. It was these extra commitments, Kant argued, that had led to the sort of breakdown of norms and effective governance among officials who themselves were to be responsible for calm behavior among the people. It was such claims that also led the people to expect governmental officials to be more than simply "trustworthy individuals," and the theologians (or, in different ways, jurists and doctors) who ministered to them to be literal "magicians" or "soothsayers."¹⁴¹

Kant was both critical of and attracted by the legislative and judicial authority of monarchical regimes.¹⁴² His analysis of the contradictory ideas initiated by the legal faculty, and the "unrest" it caused among the people, was correspondingly complex. He noted how, among the jurists, the textual literalists had become absolutely blunt: they made no pretense about arguments for "philosophic truth" or "natural justice" in asserting the applicability of a sovereign's decrees. Kant was exaggerating here about the triumph of "positive law" and "historical law" teaching in the past half-century, and about the resulting marginalization of the genre of "natural law,"¹⁴³ but he had a telling point to make nonetheless: that such triumphant new discourses had not resolved the internal contradictions of "enlightened absolutism." Important, therefore, was Kant's observation of where the unrest of the people was likely to come from. Although they could see, unlike in the case of scriptural theologians, where such an "interpreter of the law" was sitting, yet the force of such decision making (he argued) fell far short of the normative strength to which disciplines like theology or science were laying claim. For it was obvious, Kant observed, that positive laws of this sort had to keep changing to account for ongoing "historical experience," and for the new "insights" of officials exercising such power. However, there was then no way that such jurists could offer a satisfactory account: was each and every set of laws so readily insufficient, and judicial decisions deficient? Even the common people, let alone university jurists, Kant implied, could sense the full contradiction in an authority that spoke so decisively—but then was silent

¹⁴¹ Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, p. 49.

¹⁴² It is significant the way the image of philosophic critique as the definitive sentence (*Sentenz*) of a supreme tribunal continues to be used in this text.

¹⁴³ Very little is known about the teaching of law at the University of Königsberg, and the specific sources of Kant's philosophy of law are only now receiving careful attention. See Steven Lestition, "The Teaching and Practice of Jurisprudence in 18th Century East Prussia: Königsberg's First Chancellor, R. F. von Sahme (1682–1753)," *Ius commune* 16 (1989): 27–80; and Karl Bärthlein, "Die Vorbereitung der Kantischen Rechts- und Staatsphilosophie in der Schulphilosophie," in Oberer and Seel, eds. (n. 99 above), pp. 221–72.

about where that authority had come from, and how it emerged from human nature. Kant, like the French revolutionaries, was fascinated by the prospect of capturing a share of that sovereign authority to legislate, so powerfully symbolized in the old regime monarchies.¹⁴⁴

At the end, Kant seemed to outline a final dialectic of the Enlightenment. The three higher faculties had discovered a way of appealing over the head of the philosophical faculty and directly to the people. As he put it, they were able to build upon the people's disinclination to "exert themselves" to attain the sort of full critical rationality and autonomy that he nonetheless continued to imply was available to them. The large majority were swayed by direct appeals to their own "subjective inclinations": for salvation from their ever-repeated sins, and for an empirically measured happiness; for the security of possessions and status even when they themselves continued to be unjust to others; for physical enjoyment of life even when they had misused their bodies. Thus, in paradoxical fashion, he realized that the appeal he made for the realization of his simple formulae for a more "rational," universal answer to popular desires—these being to live righteously, to commit no injustice, to be moderate in one's pleasures and patient in illness (trusting to nature)—was being directed against some of the strongest, most typical inclinations of both the elites and the common people.

With such arguments, Kant may have thought he had once again refuted Gentz's model that implied it was the spread of "Enlightenment" and "big ideas" that had incited the people to unrest.¹⁴⁵ Kant inverted this analysis. With his focus on the false, irrational desires and "shoddy, improvised goods" (*Machwerk*) that officials peddled to the people, Kant argued that the elites and the masses both shared in the fault; both had contributed to the "disorders"

¹⁴⁴ For this interpretation of the French revolutionaries, originating with Tocqueville in particular, see the older study by M. J. Sydenham, *The French Revolution* (New York, 1965); and newer studies by François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (London and New York, 1981); and Keith M. Baker, "French Political Thought at the Accession of Louis XVI," *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978): 279–303.

¹⁴⁵ Gentz's most polemical statement of that, suitably enough, came in his essay "On the Declaration of Rights" (i.e., of Man and Citizen): "The principles in a declaration of rights may be stated as clearly and simply as it is ever possible to do; they remain abstract principles and the great mass of men do not grasp them. . . . But, if one declaims these principles to the people . . . [if] they are transformed into a political 'article-of-faith' (*politische Glaubensartikel*) . . . , then one surrenders oneself to far other dangers. . . . The philosopher forms systems, the mob (*Pöbel*) forges weapons of murder out of them. No more fearful weapon can be placed in the hands of an uneducated man than a universal principle. The fruitfulness of such a principle, which is a source of blessings (*Segen*) for the thoughtful and the wise, makes it into an all-consuming poison, once the great masses are mastered by it" (Burke [n. 106 above], 2:70).

of the previous decades. With that sort of understanding, he hoped the elites would react against the spectacle that they themselves were authorizing their “instrumental officials” to legitimize a “lawlessness,” an incipient revolt of the people from normative standards in favor of merely “private purposes.” He hoped the common people would lend an ear to the rationalized version of the still very traditionalistic (indeed, classically humanist) wisdom he was offering as a substitute.¹⁴⁶ Although he might appear, like Gentz, to be opposing other simple slogans—like “liberty and equality” or, perhaps, “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—it was not with the intent of negating their potential moral and political significance.¹⁴⁷

VII

Kant’s practical philosophy is still far too often interpreted as an exclusively abstract and formalistic enterprise, detached from specific connections to its historical place and time; and if links are sought—as in Kant’s supposed invocation of a “Prussian sense of duty,” or the subjective interiority of German Pietism—they reduce complex historical interactions to overly simple stereotypes. The foregoing analysis has argued, by contrast, that during the last decades of his career, Kant was intensely concerned that the multiple facets of his critical philosophy, and of his understanding of the Enlightenment as a social process, be applicable to, and actively help to shape, the cultural and institutional politics of late eighteenth-century Prussia and Germany.

A more complex and challenging set of interpretations are therefore those that have focused on what may be termed a “dialectic of enlightenment” itself.¹⁴⁸ Beginning with Fichte’s and Hegel’s “speculative idealist” systems, which claimed to correct and go beyond Kant and the Aufklärung, to twentieth-century critics of German liberalism’s failures, a central point has been to attribute part of the responsibility for the “end of the Enlightenment” to the inconsistencies or self-incurred shortcomings of that mode of thought,

¹⁴⁶ The three simple “rules” sound similar to the Roman civil law principles of justice with which eighteenth-century German educated and ruling elites were quite familiar, in their study of Justinian’s Institutes. Kant may have been implying a common ground of rationality between the common people and the elite.

¹⁴⁷ There was, in addition, the danger of legitimizing Gentz’s appeal to elite power, and to the “facts” of historical practices.

¹⁴⁸ The classic statement is by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York, 1972). However, similar implications can be found in authors otherwise as different as Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom* (Chicago, 1957); Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise: Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Stuttgart, 1973); and Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York, 1966).

when taken as a whole. It is argued that it was insufficiently probing or comprehensive; that it accepted an "impoverished language" and a false clarity that strengthened the very forces or cultural processes it sought to resist.¹⁴⁹ Given the story outlined above, the historian may well be inclined to ask: by the time Frederick William III succeeded to the throne in 1797, and Woellner had been dismissed, had the Aufklärung in Prussia been effectively marginalized and stigmatized by its critics? Had Kant's philosophic interpretation of "rational faith," and his recognition of the limits of the "public sphere," contributed their share to a partial legitimization of conservative, antiprogressive modes of thought in the post-1789 era?

Full answers to questions about the effectiveness and consequences of Kant's strategy pose research problems that have only begun to be explored. I have argued that an important part of Kant's creativity and meaning as a publicist lay in his way of keeping his own "critical questioning" in play in the face of the diverse and changing sociopolitical and cultural issues of the late 1780s and 1790s. His stance was at once critical and mediating. It confronted some of the early forms of a "dialectic of enlightenment" and sought to answer them. Kant argued that the deep antagonism between different worldviews and forms of sociability—that between orthodox, or neopietist, religiosity on the one hand, and historical-critical scholarship or freemasonry on the other—could only be bridged if each side recognized the limitations, as well as potentially corrupting misuses to which each was subject. He posed to each the difficult challenge of accepting cultural and social pluralism: that is, recognition of the nature of forms of thought and practice that were radically other than one's own.

Still, the strategy of arguing that his own systematic standpoint could understand and account for such radically opposed positions could contribute to a process of dialectical polarization. On the one hand, the suspicion could arise that Kant's own critical interpolations did not recognize or account for a possible radical "otherness." And his strategy seemed to ask for the acceptance of Kant's own systematic norms as the most adequate understanding of human rationality or praxis. The radicality of Kant's a priori moral theory—his "categorical imperative" of a respect for the moral law in each individual's will—was designed to highlight the way in which only so powerful and specific a kind of human force could simultaneously stand outside of the array of merely pragmatic, naturally or socially determined behaviors his social theory and "anthropology" described, while also claiming to be potentially "immanent" within even the average human agent's self-understanding.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, the paradoxical situation

¹⁴⁹ The formulas are from Horkheimer and Adorno, p. xiv.

¹⁵⁰ Wood (n. 51 above), pp. 336–38.

could also emerge that Kant's description of the diverse forms of practical or imaginative rationality might itself be incorporated into explanatory structures very different from those Kant had intended. Both sides of the polarization process seem to have been at work in the emergence of historicist, antirationalist, and neoconservative philosophies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: first in Herder¹⁵¹ and Jacobi, then in figures like Gentz and others.

In Kant's own understanding of himself, the concept of "practical rationality" had come to include the ability to recognize, and enter into dialogue with, often very historically specific, nonrational standpoints. He seemed to be committing himself to testing the outcome of his principles in part by the recognition or confirmation they could receive in the actions and discourses of others. One of the few specific references he made to the concept of enlightenment in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* occurred in just such a context. Looking back on the experiences of the past decades (or, perhaps, the Christian centuries as a whole), he argued that merely particular religious confessions ("church-faiths") could have a useful influence as "vehicles" so long as, historically and philosophically, one could see them not merely as a momentary "debasement compulsion" of conscience, but as part of an ongoing process. Such a process was one in which confessions were propelled by the success of what he termed a "true enlightenment" to exchange those forms of faith for an "agreement of everyone" around a church-and-confessional form more suitable to a universal and pure "moral religion." Kant added qualifying terms that were highly important for him: it was not necessary, he argued, that the as-yet-unattained goal of full moral reciprocity and social solidarity be realized in any of these specific religious forms. It was simply necessary that the experience of a communally accepted "exchange" (*vertauschen*)¹⁵² be seen to take place according to the sort of human project that the "idea" of a pure moral religion kept alive.

A historical approach to Kant's publicistic and explanatory strategies in the late 1780s and 1790s thus poses new questions. How early, and out of what

¹⁵¹ The connections between Herder and Kant have recently been reexplored in Robert E. Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1991); F. M. Barnard, *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder* (London and New York, 1988); and Harro Segeberg, "Germany," in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London, 1988), pp. 137-56.

¹⁵² Kant, *Ak.* (n. 23 above), 6:122-23. I think this illustrates some of what Kant may have had in mind in stating, in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), that the "idea" of morality was itself a historical product of civilization: see Wood, p. 336.

sources, did Kant begin to develop his pluralistic theory of human social and cultural processes? As he began publishing those views in the mid-1780s and after, how was Kant read and taught at universities in Prussia or elsewhere? How were his principles or political and cultural commitments, his conceptual language or styles of argumentation then criticized, adapted, or ignored by second-rank as well as preeminent writers,¹⁵³ and by the clergy, legal and administrative professions, and the natural scientific community? To what extent did it matter at the time, as recent scholars have reminded us, that Kant's motto for the Enlightenment—"Dare to be wise! (*sapere aude!*) Have the courage to use your *own* understanding!"¹⁵⁴—resonated, beyond its classical and eighteenth-century rationalist roots, toward the sixteenth-century Protestant university reforms of Melanchthon?¹⁵⁵

Recent analyses have pointed out that Humboldt and other reformers who appealed to the new watchwords of educative "self-formation" (*Bildung*) and religious regeneration—in order to help the Prussian state and German nation deal with the setbacks and problems of the revolutionary and Napoleonic era—also thought it was possible or even necessary to link them explicitly to the heritage of "enlightenment."¹⁵⁶ There also appears to have been an important continuity between the masonic and "enlightenment-societies" of

¹⁵³ Some of these issues are raised by Jörn Garber, in his commentaries in *Revolutionäre Vernunft: Texte zur jakobinischen und liberalen Revolutionsrezeption in Deutschland, 1789–1810* (Kronberg/Ts., 1974), and *Kritik der Revolution: Theorien des deutschen Frühkonservatismus, 1790–1810* (Kronberg/Ts., 1976).

¹⁵⁴ I use Hans Reiss's suggestion of the literal translation of Kant's *Sapere aude!* *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (London and New York, 1970), pp. 54, 192 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁵⁵ Scholars have perhaps too readily passed over the significance of Kant's proposal, in the preface to the first edition (1793) of the *Religion*, that it (or "a similar text") henceforth be used in the training of theologians at German universities. It was Löttsch, "Zur Genealogie der Frage" (n. 62 above), pp. 319–20, who found the Horatian motto in Melanchthon's well-known Inaugural Address at Wittenberg (1518) on the subject of "The Reform of Academic Studies." That religious source was overlooked by Franco Venturi's otherwise fundamental article, "Was Ist Aufklärung? Sapere Aude!" *Revista Storico Italiana* 71 (1959): 119 ff. Schmidt's "Question of Enlightenment" and "What Enlightenment Was" (n. 53 above) quite legitimately trace the influences of the neologian Spalding as well as Mendelssohn on Kant but limit themselves to the pre-1786 period.

¹⁵⁶ The interconnection of *Aufklärung* and *Bildung* was noted by Reinhart Koselleck in "Einleitung—Zur anthropologischen und semantischen Struktur der Bildung," in *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck, pt. 2: *Bildungsgüter und Bildungswesen* (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 11–46; and by Ulrich Muhlack, "Die Universitäten im Zeichen von Neuhumanismus und Idealismus: Berlin," in *Beiträge zu Problemen deutscher Universitätsgründungen der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Peter Baumgart and Notker Hammerstein, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen no. 4 (Nendeln, 1978), pp. 299–340.

the late eighteenth century and the new German student movements of the early nineteenth.¹⁵⁷ Kant's defense of the Enlightenment may thus have been instrumental in its survival as a cultural option after 1786/1789.

Kant clearly did not intend that the Enlightenment come abruptly to an end in Prussia. The "inner pluralizing" of human reason that he undertook in his major works appears as an effort to make sense of the radicalization and fragmentation of social and cultural positions within the traditional, but also changing, environment of Prussia after 1786. But his efforts appear also to have made him a historical participant in processes whereby the Enlightenment in Prussia was simultaneously being transformed.

¹⁵⁷ Wolfgang Hardtwig, "Krise der Universität, studentische Reformbewegungen (1750–1819) und die Sozialisation der jugendlichen deutschen Bildungsschicht: Aufriss eines Forschungsproblems," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11, no. 2 (1985): 155–76.

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