

Introduction

What Is Enlightenment? A Question, Its Context, and Some Consequences

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The Enlightenment has been blamed for many things. It has been held responsible for the French Revolution, for totalitarianism, and for the view that nature is simply an object to be dominated, manipulated, and exploited. It has also been implicated in one way or another in European imperialism and the most aggressive aspects of capitalism. While some have insisted that its skepticism about “absolute values” infects our culture with a “nihilistic sluggishness,” others have suggested that liberal societies should divest themselves of the Enlightenment’s obsession with “philosophical foundations.”¹ It is said that its passion for rights and liberties unleashed a destructive individualism that undermines any sense of community.² Yet it has also been argued that its assumption that human nature was infinitely malleable has provided the intellectual inspiration for attempts by totalitarian states to eradicate all traces of individuality from their subjects.³ It has been criticized for its insensitivity to the tragic character of moral conflicts and for its naive assumption that all dilemmas have simple solutions.⁴ It has been argued that its attempt to construct a moral philosophy ended in failure, leaving us with either an impoverished moral vision that suppresses all values that cannot be reduced to instrumental efficiency or a corrupted moral discourse in which ethical evaluations are nothing more than a mask for individual preferences.⁵ It has been castigated for its affection for “master metanarratives” and its hostility toward “otherness.”⁶ Its racism and its sexism have not passed unnoticed.⁷

Looking over this list of charges, one wonders how one period could have been responsible for so much and so many different kinds of harm. Puzzled by the multitude of accusations leveled against it—and astonished at the diversity of its critics—one might well ask, “What is enlightenment?” It turns out that the question is not a new one.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ANSWERS

In December 1783, the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* published an article by the theologian and educational reformer Johann Friedrich Zöllner questioning the advisability of purely civil marriage ceremonies. Observing that all too often “under the name of enlightenment the hearts and minds of men are bewildered,” he asked in a footnote, “What is enlightenment? This question, which is almost as important as what is truth, should indeed be answered before one begins enlightening! And still I have never found it answered!”⁸ He did not have to wait long for an answer. Within a year, the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* published responses from Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Kant.⁹ Other authors entered the fray, and the debate spread to other journals.¹⁰ By the end of the decade, the discussion had become so pervasive that when Christoph Martin Wieland, alone in his privy, glanced at the piece of wastepaper he had picked up to complete his task, he found himself staring at a list of six questions that began with “What is Enlightenment?”¹¹

These attempts at defining enlightenment did little to dispel the confusion that had grown up around the term. Looking back over the literature Zöllner’s question had spawned, the author of an anonymous 1790 article in the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* argued that the term had become so divorced from any clear conventions of usage that discussions of it had degenerated into “a war of all against all,” between combatants who marshaled their own idiosyncratic definitions.¹² The lack of a clear definition of the term can in part be attributed to the way the grounds of the debate shifted in the course of the discussion. At first, the question “What is enlightenment?” centered on the issue of how much enlightenment of the citizenry was possible or desirable and, more concretely, on whether a further liberalization of censorship regulations was advisable.¹³ These questions took on a new urgency in the second phase of the debate, which commenced with Johann Christoph Woellner’s Religion and Censorship edicts of 1788. The debate on censorship was now intimately intertwined with the question of the possible tensions between enlightenment and faith.¹⁴ Finally, with the outbreak of the French Revolution—and especially after the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793—the discussion was extended to encompass the question of whether enlightenment necessarily undermined public authority and led to political turmoil.¹⁵ Thus by the close of the eighteenth century, answering the question “What is enlightenment?” meant exploring the relationship between public discussion, religious faith, and political authority.

The Public Use of Reason

It is doubtful that Zöllner was as confused about the meaning of *Aufklärung* as his article implied. Like Mendelssohn, Zöllner was a member of the

Mittwochsgesellschaft, a secret society of "Friends of the Enlightenment" closely linked to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.¹⁶ On 17 December 1783—the month of Zöllner's request for a definition—J. K. W. Möhsen read a paper to the society on the question "What is to be done towards the enlightenment of fellow citizens?" which urged members to determine "what is enlightenment."¹⁷ Discussion of the topic continued over the next several months, with Mendelssohn delivering a lecture in May 1784 that served as the basis of his subsequent article in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.¹⁸ Zöllner's footnote was thus less a testimony to his ignorance of the term than to the intense interest in the question within the small group of influential men of letters, jurists, and civil servants who made up the Mittwochsgesellschaft.

The Mittwochsgesellschaft was a recent addition to the host of secret societies that flourished in Prussia and the other German states in the last half of the eighteenth century.¹⁹ Such societies satisfied a number of needs. In an age in which many individuals no longer found meaning in the rituals of orthodox religion, the ceremonies associated with some of these societies may well have provided an appealing and powerful substitute.²⁰ In a political system that offered few opportunities for the exercise of political agency outside of the bureaucratic structure of the monarchical state, many of these societies furnished an arena in which political opinions could be debated and programs for reform articulated.²¹ And finally, in a society with a strictly defined social hierarchy, secret societies provided a setting in which members of different religions, professional groups, and social classes could come into contact with one another and find a fellowship and solidarity that was not available in the public realm.²² As Möhsen noted at the close of his talk, the members of the Mittwochsgesellschaft could carry out their responsibilities as "well-intentioned patriots" only because "the seal of secrecy" protected them from both the fear of offending patrons and the "thirst for honor or praise."²³

In his lecture to the Mittwochsgesellschaft, Möhsen was far from sanguine about the future prospects for enlightenment in Prussia. While he began by hailing the triumph of enlightenment in Berlin, he rather quickly suggested that one of the most crucial tasks facing the Mittwochsgesellschaft was to determine why the ideals of the Enlightenment had been resisted by much of the public. Behind the question "What is enlightenment?" stood the more troubling question of "why enlightenment has not progressed very far with our public, despite more than forty years of freedom to think, to speak, and also to publish."²⁴ The "forty years" of which Möhsen speaks refers to the reign of Frederick the Great, who had begun his reign with an easing of censorship laws and a toleration of divergent views on religious questions. Political dissent, however, was less welcome, and, as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing bitterly observed, all that Frederick's reforms ultimately amounted to was the freedom "to make as many idiotic remarks against

religion as one wants." Contrasting what could be said in Prussia about political issues with what was being written in Vienna, France, and Denmark, Lessing concluded that Frederick ruled over "the most enslaved land in Europe."²⁵ By the 1780s, calls for a loosening of censorship had begun to appear in the press, including an anonymous essay (subsequently determined to have been written by the jurist and *Mittwochsgesellschaft* member Ernst Friedrich Klein) published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in which the author, speaking in words taken from the writings of the young Frederick, implicitly criticized Frederick's current policies by subtly urging the aging monarch to follow the example of his younger self.²⁶

Möhsen's lecture launched a debate within the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* on how far the removal of restrictions on the freedom of press should proceed.²⁷ At issue was the concern that a free and unrestricted discussion of religious, moral, and political concerns might undermine the conventional mores and beliefs on which society rested. Some members felt that the dangers associated with too rapid an "enlightenment" of the public were overstated. Mendelssohn reminded the fainthearted that "when weighing the advantages and disadvantages brought about by enlightenment and the revolutions which have arisen from it, one should differentiate between the first years of a crisis and the times which follow. The former are sometimes only seemingly dangerous and are the grounds for improvement." Even if one conceded that "certain prejudices, held by the nation, must on account of circumstances be spared by all judicious men," Mendelssohn asked whether this deference to prejudices should "be set through law and censors" or whether, like "the limits of prosperity, gratitude, and sincerity," it should be "left to the discretion of every individual." He closed his rejoinder by noting that recently the Montgolfier brothers had made the first successful hot-air balloon flight. Even though it was uncertain whether the "great upheaval" caused by their achievement would lead to "the betterment of human society," Mendelssohn asked the membership, "Would one on account of this hesitate to promote progress?" Answering his own question he concluded, "The discovery of eternal truths is in and for itself good; their control is a matter for Providence."²⁸

While Mendelssohn's arguments were seconded by many in the society,²⁹ others were more wary. The jurist Klein was willing to concede that, in general, "every truth is useful and every error harmful." But he also insisted that it was necessary to consider the practical impact of enlightenment on different groups within society. Because it is sometimes difficult to assimilate individual, isolated truths, these truths will remain unconvincing and without effect. It is thus possible that "for a certain class of men, a certain error can serve to bring them to a higher concept of things which are worthy of greater attention." In such cases, a "useful error" will do more to promote the public good than the truth.³⁰ Carl Gottlieb Svarez, Klein's colleague in

the Ministry of Justice, agreed, noting that the morality of the general public rests on beliefs that are "uncertain, doubtful, or completely wrong," and suggested that enlightenment is dangerous when it "takes from the people these motives of ethically good behavior and substitutes no other." In such cases, "one advances not enlightenment but rather a corruption of morality."³¹

The tension between the agenda of enlightenment and the exigencies of society lies at the heart of the essays Mendelssohn and Kant wrote in response to Zöllner's question. While Mendelssohn's initial response to Möhsen's lecture betrayed few reservations about the consequences of increased enlightenment, his essay in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* was less confident. He distinguished "civil enlightenment" (*Bürgeraufklärung*), which must adjust itself according to the ranks of society it addresses, from "human enlightenment" (*Menschenaufklärung*), which, addressing "man as man" and not "man as citizen," paid heed neither to social distinctions nor to the maintenance of social order. Nothing ensures that these two types of enlightenment will complement one another. "Certain truths," he noted, "which are useful to man, as man, can at times be harmful to him as citizen."³² In a short article published a year later in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, he was even more leery of the abusive tone of some of his contemporaries' comments on religion. "Nothing is more opposed to the true good of mankind," he cautioned, "than this sham enlightenment, where everyone mouths a hackneyed wisdom, from which the spirit has already long vanished, where everyone ridicules prejudices, without distinguishing what is true in them from what is false."³³

In his response to the question, Kant sought to balance the demands of enlightened reason and civil order by distinguishing between "public" and "private" uses of reason—a distinction that has puzzled readers for the last two centuries.³⁴ By "public" use, Kant meant that "use which anyone makes of it as a scholar [*Gelehrter*] before the entire public of the *reading world*." It is contrasted to that "private" use which individuals make of their reason in those specific civil posts or offices that have been entrusted to them.³⁵ In one's private use of reason, one behaves "passively," bound by an "artificial unanimity" to advance or to defend certain "public ends." One functions as "part of a machine," and "one is certainly not allowed to argue." In contrast, in one's public use of reason, one acts as "a member of the entire commonwealth [*ganzes gemeinen Wesen*], indeed even of a cosmopolitan society [*Weltbürgergesellschaft*]." Here an individual "can certainly argue, without thereby harming the affairs in which he is engaged in part as a passive member." Restrictions on the private use of reason in no way contradict the goal of enlightenment, but the public use of reason must remain free, since "it alone can bring about enlightenment among men."³⁶

While Mendelssohn was willing to concede that there might be certain

unhappy circumstances in which philosophy must remain silent lest it pose a threat to public order, Kant was uncompromising in his insistence that the public exercise of reason should never be restricted. Examining the question of whether it might be possible for a "society of clergymen" to commit itself by oath to an unalterable set of doctrines, Kant answered decisively:

I say that this is completely impossible. Such a contract, concluded for the purpose of closing off forever all further enlightenment of the human race, is utterly null and void even if it should be confirmed by the highest power, by Imperial Diets, and by the most solemn peace treaties.³⁷

An attempt to require conformity to a fixed set of doctrines is void because it fails the test that any proposed legislation must pass if it is to be legitimate. Invoking his reformulation of social contract theory, Kant explained, "The touchstone of everything that can be concluded as a law for a people lies in the question: could a people have imposed such a law upon itself?" When we apply this test to the proposal to restrict religious belief to a fixed set of doctrines, we find that while it might be possible for a people to agree to such restrictions on free inquiry for a short period of time, "in order to introduce a certain order, as it were, in expectation of something better" even in this case individuals—"as scholars"—would still retain a right to put forward alternative views in writing.³⁸ Thus while individual religious confessions might require their members to conform to a fixed set of doctrines, it would be absolutely impermissible for the state to use its coercive power to prevent the criticism of these doctrines in books and articles.

Faith and Reason

These discussions of the question of the limits of enlightenment were only the prelude to the impassioned debate on censorship sparked by an abrupt change in Prussian policy regarding freedom of expression. Frederick II died in August 1786 and was succeeded by his nephew, Frederick William II, whose ascent to the throne prompted considerable anxiety within the Berlin Enlightenment.³⁹ In the early 1780s, Frederick William had been drawn to Christian mysticism and was increasingly influenced by opponents of the Enlightenment such as his most trusted adviser, Johann Christoph Woellner.⁴⁰ The year before Frederick William became king, Woellner sent him a treatise on religion that stressed the importance of Christian faith for supporting the Prussian state, denounced the malevolent influence of such "apostles of unbelief" as Friedrich Gedike and Johann Erich Biester, the publishers of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, and called for the replacement of K. A. Zedlitz, the enlightened head of the Prussian Ecclesiastical Department.⁴¹ Woellner did not shrink from criticizing Frederick himself, charging

that Frederick's public display of his lack of religious faith was the chief cause of the irreligion and unbelief that was rife in Berlin.⁴²

The first Sunday after his ascent to the throne, Frederick William made it clear that he intended to set a different example from that of his predecessor. He attended services at the Marienkirche, from whose pulpit Zöllner delivered one of his typically unorthodox and enlightened sermons. It is unlikely that Frederick William was pleased by what he heard, nor could subsequent visits to the churches where Johann Joachim Spalding and Friedrich Samuel Gottfried Sack preached have made him any more comfortable with the religious teaching that had flourished during Frederick's reign.⁴³ Zöllner, Spalding, Sack, and other enlightened members of the Berlin clergy embraced an approach to Christian doctrine known as "neology" that combined historical and critical approaches to the interpretation of Scripture with an emphasis on the primacy of the moral and practical dimensions of Christian teaching.⁴⁴ While they continued to maintain the importance of revelation as the basis for Christian faith, they assumed that the doctrinal content of this revelation contained nothing beyond the fundamental tenets of "natural religion" and hence was completely accessible to natural human reason. Any part of the Scriptures that presented problems for them—for example, such doctrines as original sin, eternal punishment, or predestination—was shown through historical and philological criticism to be of dubious authenticity and was typically avoided as a subject for sermons.⁴⁵ They saw no conflict between enlightened reason and Christian faith: enlightenment battled superstition, fanaticism, and prejudice—and, properly understood, Christianity had nothing to do with superstition, fanaticism, or prejudice. The goal of their preaching and writing was to purge such misconceptions from the minds of the faithful and instill a sense of moral rectitude and social responsibility that often extended to such political matters as the loyalty of subjects to the Crown.⁴⁶

While neologists may have seen no conflict between enlightened reason and Christian faith, when pushed far enough, their attempt to "purify" Christian faith could lead to conclusions that were antithetical to conventional Christian teaching. Few pushed harder than Hermann Samuel Reimarus and Carl Friedrich Bahrdt. Reimarus's massive *Apology for the Rational Worshipers of God*, fragments of which were published by Lessing after Reimarus's death, argued that revelation could add nothing to what was already known through natural human reason.⁴⁷ He called into question the historical veracity of the biblical narrative and explored the internal contradictions in the account of Christ's resurrection. Jesus' teaching was distinguished from that of his disciples, who in Reimarus's view transformed what had been an attempt to revitalize Judaism into a new religion centered on the image of Jesus as savior of the entire human race. The result of Reimarus's critique, in Henry E. Allison's pithy summary, was that

"Jesus becomes regarded as a well meaning, but deluded fanatic, the apostles clever and self-seeking deceivers, and the Christian religion a colossal fraud."⁴⁸

In much the same spirit, between 1782 and 1785 Bahrdrf published a series of widely read articles recounting the life of Jesus in a thoroughly rationalized fashion.⁴⁹ Convinced by Johann August Eberhard that there was nothing in Christ's teaching that was not already present in Socrates and persuaded that a process of mythologization similar to what Gedike found in stories surrounding Socrates' birth must be at work in the New Testament, Bahrdrf presented a Jesus whose intentions were confined to removing superstition and prejudice from Judaism. He speculated that as a boy Jesus had been instructed in Socrates' teachings by a group of Alexandrian Jews, from whom he also learned to use medications capable of awakening individuals in deathlike comas—hence the explanation for the "miracles" he allegedly performed. Bahrdrf's Christ founded a secret society, which like the Masonic movement was dedicated to the spread of rational faith and brotherhood. Its members nursed him back to health after his near-fatal encounter with the cross. After a few subsequent appearances before his followers, he withdrew to spend the rest of his life in a secret lodge, where from time to time he advised Saint Paul.⁵⁰

In the face of writings such as these, it is little wonder that Woellner regarded enlightenment as a threat to the religious fabric that held Prussian society together. But opposition to Bahrdrf could also be found among less reactionary thinkers. For example, the moderate Friedrich Karl von Moser, appalled by Bahrdrf's New Testament translation of 1773, succeeded in having him removed from his teaching position at Giessen.⁵¹ Moser was well known as an advocate of enlightened absolutism and constitutionalism, and in his writings he sought to strike a middle course between enlightenment and orthodoxy. At pains to distinguish "true enlightenment" from "false enlightenment," he insisted that "all enlightenment that is not grounded in and supported by religion . . . is not only the way to destruction, immorality, and depravity, but also to the dissolution and ruin of all civil society, and to a war of the human race within itself, that begins with philosophy and ends with scalping and cannibalism."⁵² Moser argued that when enlightenment "takes from man what he requires for comfort, light, support, and peace" or "wishes to give him more than he can use, employ, and manage according to his powers of intellect and understanding," it turns into the very enemies it sought to thwart. It becomes "deception, fraud, fanaticism [*Schwärmerei*], treachery against man."⁵³

Despite Woellner's revulsion against the Enlightenment, the first two years of Frederick William's reign were difficult to distinguish from that of his uncle.⁵⁴ The break came only after Woellner had consolidated his position within the court, eventually replacing Zedlitz as minister of justice on

3 July 1788 and assuming responsibility over the Ecclesiastical Department. Six days later he issued his Religion Edict, which criticized Protestant clergy for reviving “the miserable, long-refuted errors of the Socinians, deists, naturalists, and other sectarians” and disseminating them among the people in the name of “*Aufklärung*.” While allowing clergy to believe privately whatever they wished, the edict required adherence to the Bible and the “symbolic books” in their teaching. Those “so-called enlighteners [*Aufklärer*]” who refused to conform were threatened with dismissal, and future candidates for pastoral and teaching positions were to be carefully scrutinized so that there would be no doubts as to their “internal adherence to the creed they are employed to teach.”⁵⁵

The reaction to Woellner’s edict was immediate and intense. Prominent members of the Berlin clergy including William Abraham Teller, Sack, Spalding, and Zöllner requested that their preaching responsibilities be terminated, and in September 1789 five of the six clerical members of the Lutheran Upper Consistory resigned their positions in protest.⁵⁶ A flood of pamphlets denounced the edict.⁵⁷ In one of the most widely read polemics, Andreas Riem, co-editor of the *Berlinisches Journal der Aufklärung* and pastor at the *Friedrichshospital*, launched a passionate attack on the central assumption behind the edict—that restrictions on the spread of enlightenment were necessary in order to prevent an undermining of the customary religious faith that secures public order.⁵⁸ Listing the atrocities spawned by religious fanaticism, Riem argued that it was enlightenment rather than religious orthodoxy that provided the most secure foundation for political rule. Riem published his pamphlet anonymously but was soon identified as the author. Stating that he could not abide by the provisions of Woellner’s Religion Edict because they would force him to teach doctrines that—since they contradicted what could be known on the basis of pure reason—were contrary to his own convictions, he resigned his position at the *Friedrichshospital*.

To silence critics, Woellner issued the Censorship Edict in December 1788, which stipulated that writings on religious matters had to be submitted to a commission for approval.⁵⁹ While this measure did force the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* and Friedrich Nicolai’s *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* to leave Berlin, prosecutions under the edict proved difficult, since most censors were drawn from the same enlightened group of councillors who had opposed Woellner’s Religion Edict in the first place.⁶⁰ In the hope of securing a more energetic enforcement of the Religion and Censorship edicts, Woellner established the Summary Commission of Inquiry (*Immediat-Examinations-Kommission*) in May 1791, entrusted with the task of examining the fitness of clergy and teachers as well as with the responsibility for censoring theological books. But here too his actions met with considerable and often successful opposition, and whatever hope he might have had for a decisive victory over the partisans of enlightenment remained frustrated.⁶¹ As Moser

observed four years later, enlightenment had advanced too far to be turned back. "The times have passed, and it is too late to try to shut out the light. The longer it goes on, the more it comes to this: whether this light should only illuminate and enlighten [*leuchten und erleuchten*] or ignite and inflame?"⁶² Attempts to preserve public order by restraining the freedom of expression made as much sense as trying to "pave the meadows, so that moles could not harm them."⁶³

Nevertheless, Woellner's efforts were not entirely without consequence. Bahrdt was briefly imprisoned in the fortress at Magdeburg for his satirical farce, *Das Religions-Edikt*; Riem was exiled from Prussia in 1793 for his political criticisms of the regime; and, in probably the most famous case, after the publication of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Frederick William threatened Kant with future "unpleasant measures" should he continue to "misuse" his philosophy to "distort and disparage many of the cardinal and basic teachings of the Holy Scriptures and of Christianity."⁶⁴ Nor should it be assumed that Woellner's efforts met with universal condemnation, even among enlightened intelligentsia. Shortly before Johann Gottlieb Fichte wrote his "Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe"—an impassioned defense of the freedom of the press—he drafted a short defense of Woellner's edicts, arguing that they were aimed only at abuses of freedom of expression that undermined the faith of the common people.⁶⁵ It was only after his own *Critique of All Revelation* was censored in Halle that Fichte revised his views and, drawing on arguments from social contract theory, mounted one of the most theoretically ambitious of eighteenth-century defenses of freedom of expression.

Fichte's vacillation is less puzzling than it may initially appear. It should be remembered that the institution of censorship was by no means anathema to all partisans of enlightenment. There was a widespread recognition that the enlightenment of the citizenry must be sensitive to the particular requirements of the differing estates within society.⁶⁶ In his comments on Möhsen's lecture to the Mittwochsgesellschaft, Gedike stressed that enlightenment was a "relative" concept differentiated according to such criteria as "place, time, rank, sex." "Thoroughgoing equality of enlightenment," he assured his fellow members, "is as little desirable as full equality of ranks, and fortunately just as impossible."⁶⁷ Because enlightenment is differentiated according to the differing ranks in society, it falls to the censor to determine, in Svarez's words, "the degree of enlightenment of powers of comprehension, of capacities of thought and action, and of expressive capabilities" appropriate to each class.⁶⁸ Hence while Svarez expressed an admiration for the efforts of his colleagues to refine and rationalize morality and religion, he nevertheless hoped that they would "not seek to explain away and define away hell and the devil, in the usual sense of these words, from the heart of the common man."⁶⁹ The members of the Mittwochs-

gesellschaft and Woellner agreed on at least this much: customary religious beliefs were an indispensable means of maintaining the coherence of civil society.

The Politics of Enlightenment

After 1789, a new element entered into the discussion of the question "What is enlightenment?"—the problem of the relationship between enlightenment and revolution. The French Revolution marked the culmination of a century of political upheavals that began in England with the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 and continued with uprisings in Holland (1747 and again in 1787), Corsica (1755 and 1793), Geneva (1768 and 1781–1782), the American colonies (1775–1783), London (1780), Ireland (1780–1785), Bohemia (1783), the Austrian Netherlands (1788–1790), and Poland (1791). Writing in 1794, Kant's disciple, Johann Heinrich Tieftrunk, observed, "We now live in a century of enlightenment. Should this be said to be an honor or a disgrace for our century? We also live in a century of revolutions. Is it enlightenment which currently undermines the peace of states?"⁷⁰ The possibility that too much or too rapid an enlightenment of the citizenry might rend the social fabric had haunted considerations of the question "What is enlightenment?" from the outset. But after the summer of 1792, as the news from France became more and more disturbing and with French armies advancing into the Rhineland, it seemed as if the worst fears about enlightenment were being confirmed daily.

Between 1792 and 1793, the Revolution entered its most radical phase. In August 1792, Louis XVI was deposed and a revolutionary republic established. Mass arrests of royalist sympathizers followed, many of whom were among the hundreds of prisoners slaughtered when mobs entered the prisons during the "September Massacres." The newly established National Convention initiated treason proceedings against Louis, and he was executed in January 1793. By the summer of 1793, the Jacobins had crushed the Girondist opposition, and the Committee on Public Safety inaugurated the Reign of Terror against suspected opponents. A notice in an August 1793 issue of the *Oberdeutsche Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, the most prominent journal of the Catholic enlightenment in Austria, suggests how disturbing this turn of events must have been for those who supported the cause of enlightenment.

The empire of ignorance and superstition was moving closer and closer towards its collapse, the light of the *Aufklärung* made more and more progress, and the convulsive gestures with which the creatures of the night howled at the dawning day showed clearly enough that they themselves despaired of victory and were only summoning up their reserves for one final demented counter-attack. Then the disorders in France erupted: and now they reared again their empty heads and screeched at the tops of their voices: "Look there at

the shocking results of the *Aufklärung*! Look there at the philosophers, the preachers of sedition!" Everyone seized this magnificent opportunity to spray their poison at the supporters of the *Aufklärung*.⁷¹

As revolution turned to terror, conservative critics of enlightenment were transformed, in T. C. W. Banning's words, "from outmoded alarmists into farsighted prophets."⁷²

The idea that there is a connection between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution is by now so familiar that it is difficult to imagine how troubling the relation must have seemed in the early 1790s.⁷³ Because we tend to assume a natural affinity between the Enlightenment and liberal politics, we forget that many *Aufklärers* were not liberals, that some of the more ardent liberals were by no means well disposed toward the Enlightenment, and that it was by no means assumed that political revolution was a means for advancing the cause of enlightened political reforms. In the years immediately following 1789, a good deal needed to be sorted out.

If liberalism is defined as a conception of politics that gives priority to "rights" over the "good" and holds that the chief end of the state is to secure individual liberty rather than to attain public happiness, then few of the leading figures in the Berlin Enlightenment could be classified as liberals.⁷⁴ They accepted Christian Wolff's view that it was the duty of the state to undertake measures that would further the common well-being of its citizens and viewed as legitimate the police powers that the state exercised over the material and spiritual lives of its citizens in pursuit of this goal.⁷⁵ Kant insisted, in an essay published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in September 1793, that a "paternal government," established on the principle of "benevolence" toward its people, represented "the greatest conceivable *despotism*" and called instead for a "*patriotic* government" in which each citizen was pledged to defend the individual's right to liberty.⁷⁶ But his rejection of "public well-being" as the proper goal of politics was as novel as his rejection of happiness as the foundation of moral philosophy. Mendelssohn was closer to the norm. Solidly based on Wolff and hearkening back to Aristotle, he saw the ultimate purpose of political life as residing in the greatest possible expansion of the capacities of its citizenry. Such a conception of politics was willing to accept a degree of state intervention in the lives of its citizenry that Kant would have rejected as "paternalistic."⁷⁷

Just as it was possible in eighteenth-century Prussia to embrace enlightenment but eschew liberalism, so too it was possible to advocate liberalism while attacking enlightenment. No thinker demonstrated this better than Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. His reading of David Hume and Thomas Reid convinced him that reason cannot attain certainty about the existence of external objects. Our experience of such objects, he argued, takes the form of a revelation that is completely beyond argument, which he described as

"faith."⁷⁸ Carrying this dichotomy between the spheres of faith and knowledge into the domain of theology, he rejected the neological project of reconciling faith and reason, insisting that reason alone can never lead us to certainty of God's existence. In his famous discussions with Lessing that sparked the "Pantheism Dispute," he argued that Spinoza's philosophy demonstrated that any attempt to proceed on the basis of reason alone inevitably resulted in a completely deterministic and fatalistic system that denied both the possibility of human freedom and the existence of a personal divinity.⁷⁹

Jacobi's disgust with the Berlin Enlightenment—which he dubbed the "*morgue berlinoise*" and whose members' "magisterial, self-satisfied demeanour" he despised⁸⁰—extended to its politics. Appalled by "the stupidity of people who in our century regard superstition as more dangerous than the growing power of unrestrained autocracy," he was one of the earliest and most vigorous advocates of liberalism in Germany.⁸¹ His 1782 essay "Something Lessing Said" argued that civil society was "a mechanism of coercion" whose function should be simply "to secure for every member his inviolable property in his person, the free use of all his powers, and the full enjoyment of the fruits of their employment."⁸² Attempts to justify a more extensive state intervention in the lives of its citizens—whether justified by appeals to "interests of state" or the "welfare of the whole"—led only to "the advancement of self-interest, money-grubbing, indolence; of a stupid admiration of wealth, of rank, and of power; a blind unsavory submissiveness; and an anxiety and fear which allows no zeal and tends toward the most servile obedience."⁸³

The response of German thinkers to the French Revolution tended to trace a course that ran from early enthusiasm to subsequent disillusionment, although there are enough exceptions to make this a gross generalization at best. It was possible for a supporter of enlightened absolutism such as Ewald Friedrich von Hertzberg, who served in the foreign ministry of both Frederick and his successor in addition to pursuing a career as a man of letters in his role as curator of the Berlin Academy, to welcome the French Revolution while defending the Prussian monarchy. He insisted that while the French monarchy was despotic and ruled without restraint, Prussian monarchs were restrained by ancient rights and corporative privileges.⁸⁴ As long as the revolution in France appeared to be nothing more than an attempt to set constitutional limitations on the monarch, it could be viewed as little more than an effort to bring about a state of affairs that had long existed in Prussia. It was only when it became clear that the institution of the monarchy itself was under attack that the Revolution became something more troubling.

For at least some supporters of the Enlightenment, the idea of revolution itself was suspect. Writing a year before the Revolution, Riem viewed

the "Patriot Rebellion" in Holland as the work of "unenlightened demagogues" and held that the American Revolution was a misfortune that could have been avoided had there been more enlightened leadership in England and the colonies.⁸⁵ Tieftunk came to much the same conclusion in his 1794 essay, "On the Influence of Enlightenment on Revolutions." Far from promoting violent revolutions, he argued, "true enlightenment... is... the only way to work against them successfully." Enlightenment instructs citizens to obey their princes and teaches princes how to improve their nations. The threat to public order comes from a "pseudoenlightenment" that "mocks, doubts, and speaks with arrogant self-assurance about everything others hold sacred and venerable." It is this "pseudoenlightenment" that must bear the blame for events in France. For if France had been "truly enlightened," it "would either never have begun its revolution or else certainly have carried it out better."⁸⁶

Johann Adam Bergk, a younger and more politically radical follower of Kant than Tieftunk, came to different conclusions in his 1795 essay, "Does Enlightenment Cause Revolutions?" For Bergk, revolutions—which he distinguished from "insurrections" by isolated individuals and from "rebellions" by a majority—could occur only if the "moral enlightenment" of a people had evolved to the point where they were capable of recognizing rights and duties. Mere "speculative enlightenment" would produce, at best, a "cunning, clever, refined, selfish, and still cowardly" nation that, out of fear of violence, "quietly endures all insults to its inalienable rights." This, Bergk argued, was the state of Europe before the French Revolution. In the French Revolution—and, equally important, in Kant's moral philosophy—Bergk saw evidence of a transition to a new level of moral development.⁸⁷ Now it was possible for peoples to demand that material conditions "correspond with the pronouncements of conscience," and "if the nation recognizes or senses the injustices that burden it and mock its humanity, then a revolution is unavoidable." Enlightenment thus stands "justly accused as the cause of revolutions." But there can be no question of restraining enlightenment, since "once enlightenment spreads its roots in a nation, it is easier to exterminate mankind than to exterminate enlightenment."⁸⁸ His advice to rulers who sought to avoid revolutions was simple enough: "Do not worry about the welfare of the world; you do not know what you want. One thing is demanded of you: to do what is right."⁸⁹ For Bergk, the age of revolutions and the age of enlightenment led to a common goal: a state that rejected the paternalistic concern with improving its citizenry and instead dedicated itself to the preservation of liberty.

Kant's paradoxical stance toward the French Revolution is well known: he opposed revolutions on principle but regarded the French Revolution as evidence of the moral improvement of the human race.⁹⁰ His 1793 essay, "On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not

Apply in Practice,'” rejected the notion of a “right to revolution” largely on the grounds that such a right is typically established by invoking the principle of happiness as the end for which civil society is founded.⁹¹ Yet in his most extended treatment of the French Revolution—the second part of *The Conflict of the Faculties*—Kant argued that the “wishful participation that borders almost on enthusiasm” that greeted the French Revolution constitutes a “sign” within history that demonstrates the presence of a principle at work that would allow us to have hope for the future progress of the species.⁹² What is notable here is that Kant has shifted the grounds of the debate from a consideration of the course of the Revolution to a consideration of the reaction of spectators to the event. With this move, the success or failure of the Revolution becomes irrelevant to the question of moral progress. For Kant, the Revolution marked the moment in history when there was an actual effort to put into practice the goal that nature had dictated to the species: the achievement of a republican form of constitution. What mattered was not the ultimate success or failure of that attempt but rather the fact that it spoke so powerfully to the hopes of those who first beheld it.

With the French Revolution, discussion of the question “What is enlightenment?” came to a close. How one understood the Enlightenment came to be determined by the stance one took toward the Revolution. For critics of the Revolution, enlightenment was a process that undermined the traditional patterns of belief on which political authority rested and thus reduced politics to a brutal battle between despotism and anarchy. For those who remained loyal to what they saw as the ideals of the Revolution, enlightenment embodied the vision of a society governed by law and reason. As the new century dawned, the lines of engagement were clearly drawn. For the Right, enlightenment was a synonym for a political naïveté with murderous consequences.⁹³ For the Left, it expressed the unfulfilled dream of a just and rational society.⁹⁴ With both sides sure that they knew the answer, the question “What is enlightenment?” no longer needed to be asked.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY QUESTIONS

It is only in the last fifty years that the question of enlightenment has been reopened in earnest. Both “the Enlightenment” (spelled with a capital “E” and preceded by the definite article) and “enlightenment” (with neither the capital nor the definite article) have once again intruded into scholarly and political discussions. Historians, sociologists, and political theorists have probed the social roots of the Enlightenment, stressed its relation to eighteenth-century political and social movements, and contrasted its development in differing national contexts. At the same time others have criticized,

from a variety of philosophical and political perspectives, the blindness, naïveté, and inconsistencies of what they term "the project of enlightenment." We are thus in the curious position of having gained a greater appreciation of the diversity of opinions and intentions within the Enlightenment while becoming increasingly suspicious of many of the things that we once assumed the Enlightenment represented. "What happened," Jean Améry asked a year before his death,

that the Enlightenment became a relic of intellectual history, good enough at best for the diligent but sterile exertions of scholars? What sad aberration has brought us to the point where modern thinkers do not dare to employ concepts such as progress, humanization, and reason except within damning quotation marks?⁹⁵

What happened can best be understood by tracing how three broad lines of argument, originating in differing responses to the relationship between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, have come to dominate recent accounts of the nature and viability of "the project of enlightenment." The first, which is concerned with the relationship between reason, authority, and tradition, takes the form of a deepening of Edmund Burke's misgivings about the Revolution. The second, which focuses on the disturbing affinity between reason, terror, and domination, continues a line of argument inaugurated by G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The third, which seeks to liberate the ideal of enlightenment from all association with the French Revolution, finds its origins in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. While all three of these lines of criticism sometimes resemble one another, there are important differences that justify their being treated separately. And, conversely, while these criticisms diverge in important ways, they share one important feature. Since they originate after the debate on the question "What is enlightenment?" had been displaced by other concerns, these criticisms of "enlightenment" share an ignorance of the Enlightenment's own efforts at self-definition.

Reason, Authority, and Tradition

In 1781, at the start of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant announced,

Our age is, in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit. Religion through its sanctity and law-giving through its majesty may seek to exempt themselves from it. But they then awaken just suspicion, and cannot claim the sincere respect which reason accords only to that which has been able to sustain the test of free and open examination.⁹⁶

In characterizing his age as "an age of criticism," Kant anticipated the answer he would give three years later to the question of whether his was "an enlightened age." "No," he responded, "but we do live in an age of enlightenment."⁹⁷ Church and state have been put on notice that they can no

longer count on the deference traditionally accorded them. Nor can the individual simply accept passively whatever tradition teaches or what authority dictates. Enlightenment demands that we “think for ourselves”—that is, one must always “look within oneself . . . for the supreme touchstone of truth.”⁹⁸

For Burke, the notion that tradition could simply be set aside as an unfounded prejudice was a dangerous illusion. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, he wrote,

In this enlightened age I am bold enough to confess that we are generally men of untaught feelings, that, instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a considerable degree, and, to take more shame upon ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them. We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that the stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages.⁹⁹

Contrasting the attitudes of English “men of speculation” to French “literary men and politicians,” he observed that while the French “have no respect for the wisdom of others,” those English who are not part of the “clan of the enlightened,”

instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them. If they find what they seek, and they seldom fail, they think it more wise to continue the prejudice, with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice and leave nothing but the naked reason; because prejudice, with its reason, has a motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence.¹⁰⁰

The “naked reason” of enlightenment was politically dangerous because it was incapable of turning virtues into habits or of making one’s duty become a part of an individual’s nature. Prejudice’s reasons, in contrast, could move men to action.

There is, however, at least one problem with Burke’s argument. He writes that we “cherish” our prejudices “because they are prejudices”—because they are familiar and well established—but immediately offers a rather different reason for respecting prejudices: they have served us well and thus are, in a sense, “reasonable.” Since Burke’s central concern was to insist that our familiar and well-established prejudices serve us much better than any of the utopian schemes of the partisans of enlightenment, he avoided both the difficult question of whether we would still cherish a prejudice should we not be successful in finding that “latent wisdom” we are seeking and the even more difficult question of who exactly composes the “we” that finds such wisdom in these well-established prejudices. Certain

prejudices that are undoubtedly “cherished” by one group in society might strike others as abhorrent. A defense of enlightenment need not insist that all prejudices be rejected simply *because they are prejudices*. Voltaire, for example, acknowledged that there are “universal and necessary prejudices” that, on reflection, prove to be sound and useful: our idea of virtue, he suggested, is made up of such prejudices.¹⁰¹ All it needs to suggest is that before we avail ourselves yet again of “the general bank and capital of nations and of ages,” we make sure that the account is not bankrupt.¹⁰² Against this line of criticism Burke is faced with the unpleasant alternative of defending prejudices simply *because they are prejudices* or of conceding the Enlightenment’s position and granting that we ought to cherish prejudices only insofar as they have proven to be reasonable and thus *deserving* of our affection.

A more successful defense of tradition against enlightenment would involve raising the question of whether “reason” itself does not itself ultimately rest on prejudices. It is this line of argument that lies at the heart of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s critique of the Enlightenment.¹⁰³ He argues that the Enlightenment itself rests on a “fundamental prejudice”—a “prejudice against prejudice itself.”¹⁰⁴ The Enlightenment’s tendency to equate “prejudice” with “false,” “hasty,” or “unfounded” judgments rests on the presupposition that reason, not tradition, constitutes the ultimate ground of authority. But what is this if not a prejudice in favor of reason?

Against the Enlightenment’s overly hasty identification of “prejudice” with “false judgment” Gadamer appeals to the literal meaning of the German *Vorurteil*, “prejudgment.” He argues that all our efforts to make sense of the world necessarily begin with anticipations and projections of meaning that are rooted in the particular, historical situation of the interpreter. These preliminary judgments are not barriers that must be removed before true understanding begins; they are instead the indispensable conditions for any understanding. Because of its misunderstanding of the role of prejudices, the Enlightenment overlooked what for Gadamer is central to authority, properly understood: “authority has to do not with obedience but rather with knowledge.”¹⁰⁵ It involves a recognition that one’s own knowledge is limited and that others may well have a better understanding. Nor is tradition, as Gadamer understands it, opposed to reason. Tradition does not persist simply through inertia; it must be “affirmed, embraced, cultivated.” It must be preserved, and “preservation is an act of reason, though an inconspicuous one.”¹⁰⁶

The critique of prejudice prevented the Enlightenment from recognizing that individuals can never free themselves completely from the historical tradition in which they are situated.¹⁰⁷

In fact, history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live.

The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. *That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.*¹⁰⁸

Thus, for Gadamer, Kant's imperative to "think for oneself" is abstract, empty, and ultimately impossible. All thinking is grounded in traditions and prejudices that can never be entirely eliminated.

Gadamer does not deny the possibility of reflection and critique. While Burke attributed to traditions a "wisdom without reflection," Gadamer recognizes that a properly functioning tradition is capable of reflecting on and, to a certain extent, criticizing the presuppositions on which it rests.¹⁰⁹ But though Gadamer recognizes that we are never so bound by a particular historical situation as to be unable to engage in dialogues with other traditions, he nevertheless insists that the attempt to illuminate our own historical situation will always remain incomplete.

We always find ourselves within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished. . . . All self-knowledge arises from what is historically pregiven, what with Hegel we call "substance," because it underlies all subjective intentions and actions and hence both prescribes and limits every possibility of understanding any tradition whatsoever in its historical alterity.¹¹⁰

The task Gadamer assigns to philosophical hermeneutics is thus "to retrace the path of Hegel's phenomenology of spirit until we discover in all that is subjective the substantiality that determines it."¹¹¹ Reflection can make us aware of the tradition we inherit, but it can never release us from it.

In his critique of Gadamer's rehabilitation of tradition, Jürgen Habermas has questioned Gadamer's assumption that what has been given historically "does not remain untouched by the fact that it is taken up into reflection."¹¹² He suggests that Gadamer's "undialectical concept of Enlightenment" has underestimated the ability of reflection to criticize authority and to break the hold of dogma. In the process of questioning tradition, we are forced to take a stand on norms and beliefs that had previously been simply accepted. By reflecting on the reasons that support the claims tradition makes on us, blind acquiescence is transformed into conscious agreement. Viewed this way, enlightenment is opposed, not to authority per se, but rather to those forms of authority that are maintained by force and deception rather than by recognition and consent.¹¹³ Gadamer thus overlooks what Albrecht Wellmer takes to be the Enlightenment's central insight:

The enlightenment principle of reason can be interpreted as the demand for the abrogation of all repressive conditions that could claim no legitimacy other than their sheer existence. . . . [T]he "dialogue" which we, according to

Gadamer, "are," is also a context of domination and as such precisely no dialogue.¹¹⁴

For Habermas, it is the emancipatory promise of reflection, which lies at the heart of Kant's notion of enlightenment, that represents "the permanent legacy bequeathed to us by German Idealism from the spirit of the eighteenth century."¹¹⁵

What is ultimately at issue in the dispute between Habermas and Gadamer is the nature of the claim this legacy has on us today. Gadamer argues that because Habermas has been misled by the Enlightenment's "abstract antithesis" between an "ongoing, natural tradition" and the "reflective appropriation" of this tradition, he fails to see that "reflection" is itself a part of a particular historical tradition.¹¹⁶ Far from constituting a break with all tradition, the Enlightenment represented an elaboration of particular elements *within* one tradition. The imperative "think for yourself" makes sense, then, only because those who heed Kant's call are not thinking *by* themselves. They are rather thinking with others, as members of a particular tradition in which activities like "critique" and "reflection" have a meaning. But if reflection has meaning only within a particular tradition, there will be limits on its ability to call this tradition into question. To suppose that it is possible to place ourselves in a position where we could reflect on the validity of the tradition we inhabit is on a par with the assumption that we could somehow step outside of our language and certify that it indeed gives us a true account of the world. For reason to accomplish either, it would be necessary for it to sever its ties to tradition or to language. From Johann Georg Hamann through Gadamer to Alasdair MacIntyre and Richard Rorty, the more persuasive of the Enlightenment's critics have stressed the impossibility of doing this.¹¹⁷

Enlightenment, Disenchantment, and Domination

While the question of the relationship of reason and tradition originated among critics of the general program of the Enlightenment, more recently those who share its ideals have been plagued by the sense that something has gone terribly awry. The Enlightenment's attempt to free the world from the domination of mythology and superstition has fallen prey to a fatal dialectic in which enlightenment itself reverts into mythology and fosters new forms of domination that are all the more insidious since they claim to be vindicated by reason itself. This is the argument of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Written in 1944 as the Second World War ground to a close, it sought to understand what had brought reason to turn against itself.¹¹⁸ Much of the force of the book lay in its profound ambivalence. At the outset, Horkheimer and Adorno affirmed their allegiance to the progressive hopes of the Enlightenment. They saw their

task as “not the conservation of the past, but the redemption of past hopes” and insisted that “freedom . . . is inseparable from enlightened thought.”¹¹⁹ Yet at the heart of their argument lay a bitter paradox: “Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.”¹²⁰ Enlightenment itself, they argued, “already contains the seed of the regression apparent everywhere today.”¹²¹

In this account of the self-destruction of enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno were resuming an analysis of the Enlightenment that, like Gadamer’s critique, can be traced to the discussion of the relationship between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Their model, however, was not Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* but rather Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel’s account of the world of the “self-alienated spirit”—a world that, perhaps ironically, he dubs “culture” (*Bildung*)—culminates in a section entitled “Absolute Freedom and Terror.”¹²² It argues that the Enlightenment’s efforts to emancipate mankind result only in “death”—a death “which has no inner significance or feeling,” a death that is “the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water.”¹²³ The Enlightenment, which sought to create a new world in which reason would ascend the throne and in which all institutions would be measured against the standard of utility, turns out to be incapable of building anything. The universal freedom that the Enlightenment brought into the world culminates in a “fury of destruction.”¹²⁴

While much of Hegel’s language resembles Burke’s, his account is, in a fundamental sense, opposed to that of *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.¹²⁵ For Burke, the Revolution was a mistake, the consequence of a terrible foolishness that ought, and perhaps could, have been avoided. If the French aristocracy and clergy—on whom Burke lavishes what has struck some later commentators as excessive praise—had somehow been able to hold out, if the legions of politically naive writers and philosophers had somehow been kept out of the National Assembly, perhaps disaster could have been avoided. “Rage and frenzy will pull down more in half an hour,” he observed sadly, “than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in a hundred years.”¹²⁶

Hegel, however, doubted whether the survival of an institution over time testified to its reasonableness. Writing in 1817 of the demand by the Württemberg Estates that their king restore the rights guaranteed to them by their “ancestral constitution,” he observed,

One might say of the Württemberg Estates what has been said of the returned French *émigrés*: they have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing. They seem to have slept through the last twenty-five years, possibly the richest that world history has had, and for us the most instructive, because it is to them that our

world and our ideas belong. There could hardly have been a more frightful pestle for pulverizing false concepts of law and prejudices about political constitutions than these twenty-five years, but these Estates have emerged unscathed and unaltered.¹²⁷

For Hegel, the French Revolution inaugurated a new age in which, in Joachim Ritter's words, "the future has no relation to tradition."¹²⁸ While Burke saw the disaster of the Revolution to lie in its forgetting of the lessons of the past, for Hegel, its disaster lay in its failure to find an institutional form adequate to the principles on which the present rests.

As Hegel saw it, the task was to create political institutions that could be reconciled with the principle that, for him, represented the irrevocable achievement of the modern age: the freedom of the individual. This required some way of mediating between the particularity of the individual and the universality of laws. The analysis of "culture" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* traces a number of failed attempts at finding such a reconciliation. The French Revolution was but the last and greatest of these failures, in which an attempt to measure all things against the standard of the good of the whole ultimately expressed itself in a rage against the individual. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "General Will" thus leads to Robespierre's Terror, not—as Burke would have argued—because Rousseau had turned his back on the lessons of the past, but rather because the ancient models of democracy that Rousseau invoked were no longer adequate to the modern age.

But what sort of political organization would be adequate? In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel thought he found a solution with the development of that uniquely modern domain that he denoted with the venerable term "civil society" (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*). In civil society individuals meet as free and independent creatures of need and carriers of rights. Here they give free play to their uniqueness and peculiarity while, behind their backs, the universal has its way with them through the system of laws that it is the task of political economy to map. Civil society is the domain in which "particularity is educated up to subjectivity."¹²⁹ It is here that the *bourgeois*—the individual who cares only for his own interests—learns to become a *citoyen*—an individual who is capable of willing the general good.¹³⁰ Or so Hegel argued in 1820. A decade later, in the wake of the July Revolution in Paris, he observed in letters to friends that everything that had once seemed so "solid and secure" had begun to "totter."¹³¹ As his most famous disciple would later observe, all that was solid was melting into air.

A century after Hegel's death, Horkheimer assumed the directorship of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. The work of Horkheimer and his colleagues in the Frankfurt School represented a concentrated effort at seeing how the relationship between the family, the market, and the state had been transformed in advanced capitalism.¹³²

While Hegel had argued that the relative independence of these three spheres allowed for a differentiated articulation of freedom in which one found different sorts of satisfactions in one's roles as family member, as bourgeois, and as citizen, the research of the Frankfurt School argued that the boundaries between these spheres had been effaced. State and market had become intertwined, while the socialization of children within the structure of family—which had allowed for the development of individual autonomy—had been overwhelmed by powerful social forces.¹³³ Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia seemed to them to prefigure a horrifying new world in which all traces of individuality would be extinguished.¹³⁴ Against this grim background the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, that bleakest of books, was written.

Hegel prefaced his account of the dialectic of culture with his famous analysis of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Horkheimer and Adorno went back further, to Homer's Odysseus. Here they found, in one and the same figure, the first Aufklärer and the first bourgeois.¹³⁵ The mythic powers Odysseus confronts are locked in a cycle of endless repetition; like blind nature, they do the same thing over and over. He is able to overcome them by mastering the art of appearing to yield to them but always somehow finding an escape clause in the contract. "The formula for the cunning of Odysseus is that the redeemed and instrumental spirit, by resigning itself to yield to nature, renders to nature what is nature's and yet betrays it in the very process."¹³⁶ Thus Odysseus, bound to the mast, can listen to the song of the sirens, while his men, their ears stopped, row grimly onward. In this, Horkheimer and Adorno found an apt image for the role of art in modern society: stripped of its mythic powers, it becomes a pastime for those who are freed from labor.

This apparent triumph of enlightenment over mythology, like the triumph of enlightenment over faith in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, turns out to be only a struggle of enlightenment with itself.¹³⁷ Mythology, as the authors of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* understood it, was already a step in the direction of enlightenment.

Mythology itself set off the unending process of enlightenment in which ever and again, with the inescapable necessity, every specific theoretic view succumbs to the destructive criticism that it is only a belief—until the very notions of spirit, of truth and, indeed, enlightenment itself, have become animistic magic.¹³⁸

Enlightenment, as Hegel recognized, demands that everything be measured against the standard of utility. Reason does not exempt itself from this demand and hence is now defined solely in instrumental terms.

The more ideas have become automatic, instrumentalized, the less does anybody see in them thoughts with a meaning of their own. They are considered

things, machines. Language has been reduced to just another tool in the gigantic apparatus of production in modern society. . . . [J]ustice, equality, happiness, tolerance, all the concepts that . . . were in preceding centuries supposed to be inherent in or sanctioned by reason, have lost their intellectual roots.¹³⁹

Enlightenment routs superstition and obscurity, but in the process it corrodes the substantive principles that had once served as incentives to progress or—at the very least—as checks on barbarism. Once reason has become a mere instrument, it serves whatever power deploys it. Hegel's account of the self-destruction of the Enlightenment ended with the image of the guillotine, a machine that so rationalized punishment that it needed only to touch the body for a moment to deliver its sentence. Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* kept pace with advancements in the technology of rationalized cruelty: it closed with an examination of that rage against all that is different that culminated in the death camps of the Third Reich.

The last sentence of the discussion of anti-Semitism in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—added, the preface tells us, three years after the initial “publication” of the book in mimeographed form (the initial form of publication, perhaps, can be viewed as exemplary of the book's thesis, since if its account of the eradication of individuality is correct, this should be a book with very few readers)¹⁴⁰—strikes a strangely hopeful note: “Enlightenment, in possession of itself and coming to power, can break through the limits of enlightenment.”¹⁴¹ But how?

In a letter Horkheimer wrote to Herbert Marcuse shortly after the completion of the first chapter of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—which he characterized, accurately enough, as “the most difficult text I ever wrote”—he admitted that the work “sounds somewhat negativistic.” While promising to do something to remedy this, he confessed,

I am reluctant, however, to simply add a more positive paragraph with the melody, “But after all rationalism and pragmatism are not so bad.” The intransigent analysis as accomplished in this first chapter seems in itself to be a better assertion of the positive function of rational intelligence than anything one could say in order to play down the attack.¹⁴²

By the time Horkheimer had completed the excursus entitled “Juliette, or Enlightenment and Morality,” he must have concluded that it was only through a mercilessly “negativistic” critique of what enlightenment had become that the “past hopes” of the Enlightenment might be redeemed. He appeared to have found a model for his own work in those “dark writers of the bourgeoisie”—such as Mandeville, de Sade, and Nietzsche—who “have not tried to ward off the consequences of enlightenment with harmonizing doctrines.” It was the failure to recognize the ties between for-

malized morality and evil, between reason and crime, and between civil society and domination that bound enlightenment to that which sought to negate it. In contrast, the dark writers' merciless revelation of the Enlightenment's complicity with domination "frees from its shell the utopia that inheres in the Kantian conception of reason as well as in every great philosophy: that a humanity that no longer distorted itself, would no longer need to distort."¹⁴³ Thus, paradoxically, it was only by taking up the arguments of the Enlightenment's most vehement critics that the hopes of enlightenment might be kept alive.

Nietzsche's New Enlightenment

Among the "dark writers" to whom Horkheimer turned for inspiration, none had a more complex relationship with the Enlightenment than Nietzsche. At times, Nietzsche spoke as if his goal was that of disentangling the eighteenth-century Enlightenment from its complicity with democratic revolutions. Thus he labored to finish *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* so that it might appear in 1878, the hundredth anniversary of the death of Voltaire.¹⁴⁴

It is not *Voltaire's* moderate nature, but *Rousseau's* passionate follies and half-lies that called forth the optimistic spirit of Revolution against which I cry: "*Ecrasez l'infame!*" It is this spirit that has for a long time banished *the spirit of the Enlightenment and of progressive evolution*: let us see—each of us within himself—whether it is possible to call it back!¹⁴⁵

Enlightenment, as Nietzsche understood it, "addressed itself only to the individual." Its association with revolutionary politics was not the least of the damage done by Rousseau.

He who grasps this will also know out of... what impurity it has to be cleansed: so as then to *continue* the work of the Enlightenment *in himself*, and to strangle the Revolution at birth.¹⁴⁶

The enlightenment Nietzsche demanded must be clear-sighted enough to see the shallowness and the commonness of the egalitarian dreams of the French Revolution.¹⁴⁷

One way of furthering the goals of the Enlightenment was to call on the very forces that had opposed it. In a section of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* entitled "Reaction as Progress" he argued that apparently reactionary responses to "blunt and forceful spirits" often only prepare the way for further progress. Thus Arthur Schopenhauer had a deeper historical understanding of Christianity than the Enlightenment, but once "the mode of historical interpretation introduced by the Age of Enlightenment" had been corrected, "we may bear the banner of the Enlightenment—the banner bearing the three names Petrarch, Erasmus, Voltaire—further onward."¹⁴⁸

The same argument is made even more forcefully in *Morgenröte* when Nietzsche suggested that even though German resistance to the Enlightenment had taken the form of a piety toward tradition and a cult of feeling,

after appearing for a time as ancillaries of the spirit of obscurantism and reaction, the study of history, understanding of origins and evolutions, empathy for the past, newly aroused passion for feeling and knowledge one day assumed a new nature and now fly on the broadest wings above and beyond their former conjurers as new and stronger genii of *that very Enlightenment* against which they were first conjured up. This Enlightenment we must now carry forward: let us not worry about the "great revolution" and the "great reaction" against it which have taken place—they are no more than the sporting of waves in comparison with the truly great flood which bears us along!¹⁴⁹

In such passages, Nietzsche—like Karl Leonhard Reinhold before him—outlines what might be characterized as "a dialectic of the counterenlightenment": all attempts to resist enlightenment paradoxically turn out only to serve the cause of further enlightenment.¹⁵⁰

What is troubling about this secret complicity between enlightenment and counterenlightenment is that the relationship can easily be reversed: while counterenlightenment may serve the cause of enlightenment, it is just as possible that enlightenment will lead to a new obscurantism. In a cryptic note from 1885 Nietzsche observed, "When I believe that I am a few centuries ahead in enlightenment not only of Voltaire but even of Galiani, who was far profounder—how far must I have got in the increase of darkness [*Verdüsterung*]." ¹⁵¹ The idea that a progress in *Aufklärung* was simultaneously an advance in *Verdüsterung* finds its most powerful expression in Nietzsche's famous parable of the madman who announces the death of God. Even in "the bright morning hours" he must carry a lantern and asks, "Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning?" ¹⁵²

This sense that every advance of enlightenment may well be only a further step into the darkness permeates the work of Nietzsche's most faithful twentieth-century disciple, Michel Foucault. From his very first book—which he described as a part of that "great Nietzschean inquiry" that seeks to confront "the dialectic of history" with the "immobile structures of tragedy"¹⁵³—he sought to demonstrate how every victory of enlightenment was also a triumph of a new and insidious form of domination. Tuke and Pinel arrived in eighteenth-century prisons to separate criminals from the insane—and forced the insane "to enter a kind of endless trial for which the asylum furnished simultaneously police, magistrates, and torturers."¹⁵⁴ Freud shattered the silence surrounding sexuality—and inaugurated the "nearly infinite task of telling—telling oneself and an other, as often as possible" anything that might be linked in the remotest way to the body

and its pleasures.¹⁵⁵ In *Birth of the Clinic*, the light that penetrates the dark interior of the body in search of life finds only death, just as in *Discipline and Punish* the prisoners who have been freed from the darkness of the dungeon are captured all the more securely in the light that floods through the Panopticon.¹⁵⁶ Like the “dark writers of the bourgeoisie,” everywhere Foucault looked he found a complicity between enlightenment and domination.

But—once again like Nietzsche—at times Foucault took up the banner of the Enlightenment. In the last decade of his life, he reflected again and again on Kant’s 1784 essay, “What Is Enlightenment?” and in the end announced that he would like to see his own work understood as a part of the “critical ontology of ourselves” that Kant’s work had opened.¹⁵⁷ In the very last of his discussions of Kant’s essay, enlightenment marches under a banner on which an even more unlikely set of names is inscribed than Nietzsche’s trinity Petrarch, Erasmus, and Voltaire. The enlightenment to which Foucault declared his loyalty somehow manages to embrace both Immanuel Kant and Charles Baudelaire.¹⁵⁸

Foucault’s peculiar coupling of Kant and Baudelaire suggests he was concerned neither with the content of Kant’s account of enlightenment nor with its connection to Kant’s moral philosophy. His emphasis instead fell on what he understood Kant to be doing in posing the question “What is enlightenment?” in the first place. Just as Constantin Guys—the painter whose work Baudelaire examines in his essay “The Painter of Modern Life”—sought to capture what was eternal in “the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent,” so Kant—as Foucault read him—attempted to find a philosophical significance in the passing controversies of his age. Like Guys, Kant sought “to distil the eternal from the transitory.”¹⁵⁹

Foucault thus came to see in Kant’s essay a way of doing philosophy that could serve as a model for his own efforts. Kant is said to herald a “critical ontology of ourselves” in which “the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.”¹⁶⁰ Kant found the “motto of enlightenment” in Horace’s *Sapere Aude!*—which he glossed as “Have the courage to use your *own* understanding!” Foucault kept the motto but changed the exegesis: for Foucault, like Nietzsche before him, enlightenment meant above all else having the courage to reinvent oneself.

Reopening the Question of Enlightenment

The Enlightenment’s critics are in agreement, then, that there is something sinister about the light it casts. Burke complained that

all the pleasing illusions which made power gentle and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assim-

ilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason.¹⁶¹

Hamann dismissed the Enlightenment as "a mere northern light," a "cold, unfruitful moonlight" that served only as a cloak for self-appointed guardians who sought to rule over others.¹⁶² As he explained in a letter to Mendelssohn, "I avoid the light, my dear Moses, perhaps more out of fear than maliciousness."¹⁶³ And Horkheimer and Adorno's fears have been echoed in Foucault's famous discussion of that most unsettling of all enlightenment schemes, Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*.¹⁶⁴ An untroubled partisan of enlightenment, Bentham sought to replace the dark dungeons of the old regime with buildings composed of cells open on two sides to the light which together would form a large ring of as many stories of cells as were necessary to house the population at hand. In the center of the ring he proposed the construction of a watchtower, from whose shielded windows the activities of the residents of the sunlit cells could be observed. This arrangement gave those in the tower a power far beyond what they normally possessed: since those in the tower see but cannot be seen, it really does not matter who is in the tower (Bentham noted that children might find useful employment here) or even whether, at any given moment, there was anyone in it at all. It was enough that the tower serve as a reminder to the prisoners in their sunlit cells that they can always be watched. Those who watch are hidden and hence omnipresent. Those who are watched are isolated, atomized, and always visible—released from dungeons but held all the more securely by the light that bathes them.¹⁶⁵ Here is a vision worthy of Horkheimer and Adorno's darkest moments: the fully enlightened world has become a massive prison.

It is worth asking, however, whether this portrait of the Enlightenment is at all faithful to its subject. Reservations can be registered on at least two fronts. First, the images of the Enlightenment we have considered here are, at best, caricatures that highlight certain features but miss others. Second, what these caricatures miss may very well be what is of greatest importance in understanding the continuing viability of some version of the hopes of the Enlightenment.

What is striking is how rarely the critique of "enlightenment" ever bothers to engage thinkers who were part of "*the Enlightenment*." Burke goes after Dr. Price but never troubles himself with asking whether French thinkers might not actually have given some thought to the question of whether "prejudices" could ever be completely eradicated.¹⁶⁶ Gadamer, as usual, does better. He acknowledges that the "prejudice against prejudices" never went as far in Germany as it is alleged to have gone in England and France and suggests that the German willingness to recognize "the 'true prejudices' of the Christian religion" in part brought about that "mod-

ification and moderation of Enlightenment" that laid the groundwork for the romantic movement. "But," he quickly assures us, "none of this alters the fundamental fact."¹⁶⁷ True prejudices still must be confirmed by reason, even if some Aufklärer were less confident than their French counterparts that reason was up to the task. But more recent and more extended discussions of the history of the concept of prejudice provide a more complex picture in which reason is not quite so imperious and prejudice not quite so despised as one would assume from reading Gadamer.¹⁶⁸

Similar misgivings may be voiced with regard to the image of enlightenment emerging from Hegel, Horkheimer, and Adorno. The difficulties of deciding to whom Hegel happens to be referring at any given point in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are formidable enough to have fostered a cottage industry of commentaries ready to make suggestions. And it is even more curious that Hegel, who in his youth was an avid reader of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* as well as of Mendelssohn and other now-forgotten Aufklärer, could manage to provide an account of something called "Die Aufklärung" without a single recognizable German figure. Horkheimer and Adorno drop some eighteenth-century names—Voltaire, de Sade, and Kant—but far more of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is devoted to probing the intricacies of the *Odyssey* or the "culture industry" than to exploring how Hamann's critique of Kant (to suggest only one example) turned on such issues as the relationship between mimesis and conceptualization.¹⁶⁹

The point here is not simply the somewhat pedantic one (though the virtues of pedantry may be grossly underestimated today) that much which passes as a critique of "enlightenment" does not measure up to current standards for historical accounts of "the Enlightenment." There is, after all, probably little danger that anyone would mistake the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a guide to eighteenth-century thought.¹⁷⁰ Rather, the point is that any serious attempt to understand the promise and limits of "enlightenment" might profit from at least a passing acquaintance with the ways in which eighteenth-century thinkers dealt with the question "What is enlightenment?"¹⁷¹

When Kant answered the question "What is enlightenment?" in 1784, it is notable that he did not invoke those images of light that have cast such a shadow over recent criticisms of the Enlightenment. He instead talked about speech. For him, enlightenment demanded not a world in which everything stood naked to the light but rather a world in which it was possible to speak without fear. The idea that knowing involves seeing lies so deeply embedded in our tradition that it is little wonder we sometimes speak of thought as if it were an inner light. It was Kant's great achievement to recognize that this metaphor is in many ways misleading, and from this recognition flowed his energetic defense of the right to freedom of expression.

We do admittedly say that, whereas a higher authority may deprive us of freedom of *speech* or of *writing*, it cannot deprive us of freedom of *thought*. But how much and how accurately would we *think* if we did not think, so to speak, in community with others to whom we *communicate* our thoughts and who communicate their thoughts to us! We may therefore conclude that the same external constraint which deprives people of the freedom to *communicate* their thoughts in public also removes their freedom of *thought*, the one treasure which remains to us amidst all the burdens of civil life, and which alone offers us a means of overcoming all the evils of this condition.¹⁷²

While we can see alone, we think best “in community with others”—and this suggests a rather different way of talking about enlightenment.

In Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, the phrase he had employed as the “motto of enlightenment” serves as the first of his three maxims of understanding: “(1) think for oneself; (2) think from the standpoint of everyone else; and (3) think always consistently. The first is the maxim of an *unprejudiced*, the second of a *broadened*, the third of a *consistent* way of thinking.”¹⁷³ It is only by becoming skilled at the first two—which he labeled the maxims of “understanding” and of “judgment”—that we become proficient in the third, which he called the “maxim of reason.”¹⁷⁴ We become reasonable by thinking for ourselves and by thinking from the standpoint of everyone else. And the way in which we can best do this is by thinking in the company of others, offering our ideas to others, who will take them up and criticize them, and by responding in turn to these criticisms.

There is, of course, at least one thinker who has never lost sight of the peculiar connection between speech and enlightenment. In his first work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas examined the explosion of new forms of public debate and discussion that for him defined the European Enlightenment.¹⁷⁵ In his subsequent writings he has sought to examine how language brings us together into a community with others. “Our first sentence,” he once wrote, “expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus.”¹⁷⁶ In the act of speaking we enter into an implicit and unavoidable contract with others that commits us to clarifying, to discussing, to reformulating what it is that we have said.¹⁷⁷ Our language is extraordinarily well stocked with devices for initiating further discussion, a fact that Habermas argues is central to the way in which language works to bind us together. For it to work in the way that it does—and this is obviously a very large claim—it must implicitly contain within itself the promise of a community bound together by mutual understanding and agreement.

Were the dream of enlightenment only that of seeing the world without shadows, of bathing everything in the light of reason, then indeed there might be something pathological in that dream: for to want to see every-

thing is to aspire to the standpoint of God or to that of the guardian in the Panopticon's tower. Perhaps the most important thing the Enlightenment taught was that we are neither gods nor guardians who survey the world from outside but rather men and women who speak from within it and must summon the courage to argue about what is true and what is false and what is right and what is wrong. And perhaps a reconsideration of the Enlightenment's own discussion of the question "What is enlightenment?" can enlighten our own understanding of what is still at stake when we argue about "enlightenment."

NOTES

1. Leszek Kolakowski, "The Idolatry of Politics," *Atlantic Community Quarterly* 24 (Fall 1986): 219–230, advances the first of these arguments, insisting that the Enlightenment's skepticism about absolute values "threatens our ability to make the distinction between good and evil altogether" (223), that its belief that human beings are "entirely society-made" leaves us "conceptually defenseless in the face of totalitarian doctrines, ideologies, and institutions" (224), and that its "erosion of historical consciousness" leads to a "progressive decline of awareness that our spiritual life includes the sediment of the historical past" (227). For the argument that liberal societies can dispense with "philosophical foundations," see Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge, 1989), 52–54.

2. See, for example, James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York, 1993), 244–250, which argues that part of the "ambiguous legacy of the Enlightenment" is the "fatally flawed assumption... that autonomous individuals can freely choose, or will, their moral life." Wilson argues that this overemphasis on individual rights leads to a system of laws and institutions "that leave nothing between the state and the individual save choices, contracts, and entitlements."

3. See Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York, 1990), 124–133, 135–138. See also Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Chicago, 1990), 165–206, for a discussion of the "affiliation" between Enlightenment ideals of universality and Nazi genocide.

4. See Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (London, 1990), 33–34, 39–40, 51–52, 183.

5. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 321–340, and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, 1981), 49–75.

6. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis, 1984), 31–37, and Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1973), 35–36, 107–116. See also Hartmut and Gernot Böhme, *Das Andere der Vernunft* (Frankfurt, 1983).

7. On racism, see Richard H. Popkin, "The Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism" and "Hume's Racism," reprinted in *The High Road to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego, 1980), 79–102 and 267–276; and Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance!* (Philadelphia, 1982), 61–65. For a discussion of feminist critiques of the Enlightenment,

see Robin May Schott, "The Gender of Enlightenment," this volume; Sandra Harding, "The Instability of the Analytical Categories of Feminist Theory," *Signs* 11, no. 4 (1986): 645–664, esp. 655–657; and Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," *Signs* 12, no. 4 (1987): 621–643.

8. Johann Friedrich Zöllner, "Ist es rathsam, das Ehebündniß nicht ferner durch die Religion zu sanciren?" *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 2 (1783): 516. Reprinted in *Was ist Aufklärung? Beiträge aus der Berlinischen Monatsschrift*, 2d ed., ed. Norbert Hinske (Darmstadt, 1977), 115.

9. Moses Mendelssohn, "Über die Frage: Was heisst aufklären?" *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 4 (1784): 193–200 (reprinted in Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 6/1 [Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt, 1981], 115–119) (translated below, pp. 53–57); and Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 4 (1784): 494 (reprinted in *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, Akademie Ausgabe (hereafter cited as AA) (Berlin, 1923), VIII:33–42) (translated below, pp. 58–64).

10. For an overview of these essays, see H. B. Nisbet, "'Was ist Aufklärung?' The Concept of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of European Studies* 12 (1992): 77–95, and Werner Schneiders, *Die wahre Aufklärung* (München, 1974), which includes a comprehensive bibliography.

11. Wieland's essay is translated below, pp. 78–83.

12. The author went on to distinguish twenty-one possible meanings of the concept. See "Kritischer Versuch über das Wort Aufklärung zur endlichen Beilegung der darüber geführten Streitigkeiten," in *Deutsche Monatsschrift* 3 (September–December 1790): 11–43, 205–237. Reprinted in Zwi Batscha, ed., *Aufklärung und Gedankenfreiheit* (Frankfurt, 1977), 45–94.

13. See Eckhart Hellmuth, "Aufklärung und Pressefreiheit: Zur Debatte der Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft während der Jahre 1783 und 1784," *Zeitschrift für historisches Forschung* 9 (1982): 315–345.

14. For a comprehensive overview of this phase of the discussion, see Steven Lestition, "Kant and the End of the Enlightenment in Prussia," *Journal of Modern History* 65 (March 1993): 57–112. For a collection of essays from this period, see Batscha, *Aufklärung und Gedankenfreiheit*.

15. For a recent discussion of German reactions to the French Revolution, see Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

16. For discussions of the Mittwochsgesellschaft and its membership, see Günter Birtsch, "The Berlin Wednesday Society," translated below, pp. 235–252; Ludwig Keller, "Die Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," *Monatshefte der Comenius-Gesellschaft*, 5, nos. 3–4 (1896): 70–73, 88–91; Heinrich Meisner, "Die Freunde der Aufklärung: Geschichte der Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," *Festschrift zur 50jährigen Doktorjubiläumsfeier Karl Weinholds* (Strasburg, 1896): 43–54; Hinske, *Was ist Aufklärung?* xxiv–xxxii; and Horst Möller, "Enlightened Societies in the Metropolis: The Case of Berlin," in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (London, 1990), 226–232.

17. Möhsen was a prominent Berlin physician with an interest in the history of science. He also served as Frederick the Great's personal doctor. His lecture is trans-

lated below, pp. 49–52; the request for a consideration of the question “What is enlightenment?” occurs on p. 49.

18. Norbert Hinske, “Mendelssohns Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?” 87–88.

19. For a helpful overview of the literature on Enlightenment societies, see Richard van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, trans. Anthony Williams (New York, 1992), and the brief discussions in Horst Möller, *Vernunft und Kritik: Deutsche Aufklärung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 1986), 213–231, and Ulrich Im Hof, “German Associations in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century,” in Hellmuth, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, 207–218. Two influential earlier studies, which situate the proliferation of secret societies in the broader process of the development of modern “civil society” are now available in English: see Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), esp. pp. 62–97, and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), esp. pp. 31–43.

20. This was particularly true for the so-called Strict Observance lodges (a branch of the Masonic movement that placed a considerable emphasis on ritual and flirted with mysticism) as well as among the Rosicrucians. For a discussion, see Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton, 1966), 104–111.

21. The Mittwochsgesellschaft exemplified this function. See van Dülmen’s discussion of “Patriotic Societies” (pp. 65–81) and “Political Societies” (pp. 104–127). Among the most famous of the “Political Societies” was the Illuminati, which was founded in 1776 with the goal of transforming the absolutist state by infiltrating its offices with individuals dedicated to the ideals of egalitarianism and enlightenment. It was banned in 1784. For a discussion, see van Dülmen, *Society of the Enlightenment*, 104–118, Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 87–95, and Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, 90–97, 131–137. For an exploration of the political significance of Masonic lodges in Western Europe, see Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York, 1991).

22. The initial announcement of the formation of the Mittwochsgesellschaft expressed the hope that within the society “no one would be called by title or rank, but rather simply by his name.” See von Irwing’s letter of 3 October 1783, reprinted in “Die Gesellschaft der Freunde der Aufklärung in Berlin im Jahre 1783,” *Litterarischer Anzeiger für christliche Theologie und Wissenschaft überhaupt* 1, no. 8 (1830): 59. For a brief overview of the new patterns of sociability inaugurated within the Masonic lodges, see Margaret C. Jacob, “The Enlightenment Redefined: The Formation of Modern Civil Society,” *Social Research* 58, no. 2 (1991): 475–495, esp. pp. 484–488.

23. Möhsen, below, p. 51. Horst Möller has noted the irony of the fact that a discussion of the ideals of enlightenment could only take place in a secret society. See “Enlightened Societies in the Metropolis,” 227.

24. Keller, “Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft,” 74.

25. Lessing to Nicolai, 25 August 1769, in Lessing, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Karl Lachmann and Franz Muncker (Stuttgart, 1904), 17: 298. For a discussion of Fredrick’s views on censorship, see Franz Schneider, *Pressefreiheit und politische Öffentlichkeit* (Neuwied, 1966), 64–66. For an examination of the rather limited range of public discussion in eighteenth-century Prussia, see Thomas Saine, “Was ist Aufklärung?”

ung?" in *Aufklärung, Absolutismus und Bürgertum in Deutschland*, ed. Franklin Kopitzsch (München, 1976), 332–338.

26. See Klein, below, pp. 87–96. For a discussion of the agitation for freedom of the press in the 1780s, see Möller, *Vernunft und Kritik*, 281–283.

27. For a discussion of the debate within the Mittwochsgesellschaft, see Hellmuth, "Aufklärung und Pressefreiheit."

28. Keller, "Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," 80–81 (also in Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften* 6, no. 1: 113).

29. See the responses by Dohm, von Irwing, and Nicolai in Keller, "Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," 83, 86, and 88.

30. Keller, "Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," 77–78.

31. *Ibid.*, 79.

32. Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften* 6, no. 1: 117 (translated below, p. 55).

33. Mendelssohn, "Soll man der einreissenden Schwärmerey durch Satyre oder durch äussere Verbindung entgegenarbeiten?" *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 5 (February 1785): 133–137 (*Gesammelte Schriften* 6, no. 1: 139).

34. Mendelssohn described the distinction as "somewhat strange" in his notes for a discussion of Kant's essay within the Mittwochsgesellschaft and rephrased it as a contrast between "vocational" and "extravocational" uses of reason; see Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften* 8: 227–228. For a discussion of the distinction, see John Christian Laursen, "The Subversive Kant: The Vocabulary of 'Public' and 'Publicity,'" *Political Theory* 14, no. 4 (1986) (reprinted below, pp. 253–269); Onora O'Neill, "The Public Use of Reason," in *Constructions of Reason* (Cambridge, 1989), 28–50; Thomas Auxter, "Kant's Conception of the Private Sphere," *Philosophical Forum* (1981): 295–310; and James Schmidt, "What Enlightenment Was: How Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Kant Answered the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30 (1992): 94–95.

35. AA VIII:37 (translated below, p. 60).

36. AA VIII:37 (translated below, p. 60).

37. AA VIII:38–39 (translated below, p. 61). In taking up this example, Kant was joining an ongoing discussion of the status of the "Symbolic Books" of the Lutheran faith, to which Lutheran clergy were supposed to swear conformity. Mendelssohn had already criticized such oaths in his *Jerusalem* as well as in an earlier article in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. See my discussion in "What Enlightenment Was," pp. 95–98.

38. AA VIII:39–40 (translated below, p. 61).

39. Frederick's death had been anticipated for some time. An anonymous article published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* a year before Frederick's death suggested that while a great monarch such as Frederick could leave his mark after his death through the laws he gave his people, these laws could be secured against the actions by his successors only if the form of the regime itself was transformed into a republic, with the head of the ruling family serving merely as president. See "Neuer Weg zur Unsterblichkeit für Fürsten," *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 5 (1785): 239–247. Friedrich Nicolai published a number of articles during 1785 warning of the dangers of "crypto-Catholicism"—a conspiracy of former Jesuits who, after the order had been dissolved in 1773, were alleged to have begun infiltrating Masonic lodges and

secret societies with the intent of bringing about a counter-reformation in Germany. See Lestition, "Kant and the End of the Enlightenment," 64–65. Kant's former pupil F. V. L. Plessing reported rumors of forthcoming restrictions on freedom of thought in his letter to Kant of 15 March 1784; see Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence, 1759–99*, trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago, 1967), 113–115.

40. For a discussion of Frederick William's religious beliefs and the influence of Woellner, see Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 356–372, and Lestition, "Kant and the End of the Enlightenment," 64–66.

41. For an abbreviated version of the essay, see Paul Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf in Preussen um Kirche und Schule, 1778–1798* (Berlin, 1925), 73–92. The comments on Gedike and Beister appear on p. 74, and the attack on Zedlitz—a "free-thinker and enemy of the name of Jesus"—may be found on pp. 83–84.

42. Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf*, 81. Frederick and Woellner had been bitter enemies ever since Frederick attempted to prevent Woellner's marriage into an old Junker family. Woellner was the son of a poor clergyman, and while his bride's mother approved of the marriage, other members of the family objected to his crossing of class boundaries. When the messenger Frederick dispatched to forbid the marriage arrived too late, Frederick had the bride arrested for a month while an investigation was conducted to see if the marriage was the result of undue pressure. Though no evidence of any wrongdoing was found, Frederick nevertheless refused to grant Woellner a patent of nobility and placed the administration of the estates of his bride's family under state supervision. See Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 357.

43. Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf*, 18.

44. The classic discussion of the various tendencies within eighteenth-century German theology is Karl Aner, *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit* (Halle, 1927). For a very helpful English summary, see Henry E. Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment* (Ann Arbor, 1966), 38–49.

45. For a discussion of how this approach is deployed in Johann August Eberhard's *New Apology for Socrates*, see Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment*, 40–42.

46. For a discussion of typical themes from their sermons, see Günter Birtsch, "The Christian as Subject," in Hellmuth, ed., *The Transformation of Political Culture*, 317–326.

47. Lessing published the first fragment in 1774. This was followed in 1777 by five more selections, with a concluding fragment published in the next year. For a summary of their contents and a discussion of the controversy they sparked, see Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment*, 42–49, and Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 129–133.

48. Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment*, 48.

49. Bahrtdt, *Briefe über die Bibel im Volkston*, 5 vols. (Halle, 1772–1783), and *Ausführung des Plans und Zweckes Jesus*, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1783–1785).

50. For a summary, see S. G. Flygt, *The Notorious Dr. Bahrtdt* (Nashville, 1963), 250–267.

51. For the struggle between Moser and Bahrtdt, see Flygt, *Dr. Bahrtdt*, 71–91, 109–118.

52. Moser, "True and False Political Enlightenment," below, pp. 214–215.

53. Ibid., p. 215.

54. In a 1787 defense of freedom of the press, Bahrdr equated Frederick William's views on the question of freedom of expression with those of his uncle. See Bahrdr, "On the Freedom of the Press and Its Limits," below, p. 106.

55. On the Religion Edict, see Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 142–153, and Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf*, 93–106. For a discussion of the literature on the edict, see Fritz Valjavec, "Das Woellnersche Religionsedikt und seine geschichtliche Bedeutung," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1953): 386–400.

56. See Henri Brunschwig, *Enlightenment and Romanticism in Eighteenth-Century Prussia*, trans. Frank Jellinek (Chicago, 1974), 168. The Upper Consistory (*Oberkonsistorium*) was the chief governing body of the Lutheran Church. Established as a part of the Prussian bureaucracy in 1750, it was responsible for the appointment and supervision of clergy, the instruction of theological students, and the approval of candidates for teaching positions at the Lutheran seminaries (the Reformed Church Directory exercised similar control over the Calvinist Reformed Church). In 1788 the six ecclesiastical members of the consistory were Friedrich Samuel Gottfried Sack (who came to the consistory in 1786 on the death of his father, the enlightened theologian Friedrich William Sack), Johann Joachim Spalding, Anton Friedrich Büsching, Johann Samuel Diterich, William Abraham Teller, and Johann Jesaias Silberschlag. Spalding, Diterich, and Teller were members of the Mittwochsgesellschaft (their colleagues in the Mittwochsgesellschaft, Karl Franz von Irwing and Friedrich Gedike, were lay members). Sack and Büsching shared their commitment to enlightened approaches to theology. The sole ecclesiastical member of the consistory who did not resign was Silberschlag, a Pietist who remained loyal to Christian orthodoxy mainly because his interests lay in the areas of science and engineering and he did not bother to keep up with recent developments in theology. For a discussion of the Oberkonsistorium and its responsibilities, see Günter Birtsch, "The Christian as Subject," 310–317.

57. Nicolai's *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* devoted an entire volume (114, no. 2) to a review by H. P. C. Henke of forty-eight articles in response to the edict. The review was subsequently republished by Henke as *Beurtheilung aller Schriften, welche durch das Religions-Edikt und andere damit zusammenhängende Verfügungen veranlasst sind* (Hamburg, 1793).

58. The first installment of Riem's essay is translated below, pp. 168–187. For discussions of his essay, see Schneiders, *Wahre Aufklärung*, 95–100; Valjavec, "Das Woellnersche Religionsedikt," 395–396; and Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 116–117.

59. On the Censorship Edict, see Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf*, 129–150; Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 362–363; and Brunschwig, *Enlightenment*, 167–168 (who mistakenly dates the edict as having been issued in December 1789).

60. Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 363.

61. For discussions of the work of the commission and resistance to it, see Brunschwig, *Enlightenment*, 168–170; Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 363–369; and Schwartz, *Der erste Kulturkampf*, 172–214.

62. Moser, "Publicity," below, p. 115.

63. Ibid.

64. On the case of Bahrdr, see Flygt, *Dr. Bahrdr*, 297–302, and Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 118–120. Kant himself offers an account of his conflict with Woellner in the preface to his *Conflict of the Faculties* and reprints the text of Frederick William's letter of 1 October 1794, from which I have quoted. For discussions of the conflict, see Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden (New Haven, 1981), 376–381 and 391–397, and Wilhelm Dilthey's classic study, "Der Streit Kants mit der Zensur über das Recht freier Religionsforschung," in Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Stuttgart, 1959), 4: 285–309. For a comparison of the responses of Kant and Bahrdr, see Ludger Lütkehaus, "Karl Friedrich Bahrdr, Immanuel Kant, und die Gegenauflärung in Preussen (1788–1798)," *Jahrbuch des Instituts für deutsche Geschichte* 9 (1980): 83–106. For a comprehensive and thoughtful account of the broader implications of Kant's response, see Lestition, "Kant and the End of the Enlightenment."

65. Fichte, "Zuruf an den Bewohner der preussischen Staaten," *Gesamtausgabe* II/2: 184–197. For a discussion, see Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, 78. Woellner's edict was also supported by Jakob Friedrich Rönning, a professor at Rostock University noted for his opposition to serfdom. See Epstein, *Genesis of German Conservatism*, 146.

66. For a general discussion of the "corporatist" or "estatist" character of the German Enlightenment, see Jonathan Knudsen, *Justus Möser and the German Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1986), 3–19.

67. Keller, "Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," 85. Gedike characterized the enlightenment of a nation as consisting of "the collective summation of the differentiated grades of enlightenment among the different ranks." It begins of necessity with the middle class, and "the rays of enlightenment only gradually spread to the two extremes, the upper and the lower ranks."

68. Keller, "Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," 79.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Johann Heinrich Tieftrunk, "On the Influence of Enlightenment on Revolutions," translated below, p. 217.

71. Cited in T. C. W. Blanning, "The Enlightenment in Catholic Germany," in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich (Cambridge, 1981), 126.

72. *Ibid.*

73. For recent discussion of German reactions to the French Revolution, see Thomas P. Saine, *Black Bread—White Bread: German Intellectuals and the French Revolution* (Columbia, 1988); Wolfgang Albrecht, "Aufklärung, Reform, Revolution oder 'Bewirkt Aufklärung Revolutionen?'" *Lessing Yearbook* 12 (1990): 1–76 (see also the exchange between Saine and Albrecht in *ibid.*, 77–96); and the brief overview by T. C. W. Blanning, "France during the French Revolution through German Eyes," in *The Impact of the French Revolution on European Consciousness*, ed. H. T. Mason and W. Doyle (Gloucester, 1989), 133–145.

74. On the problem of the relationship between liberalism and enlightenment in Germany, see Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, 15–26 and 309–317.

75. See Marc Raeff, "The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of

Modernity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Perspective," *American Historical Review* 80 (1975): 1221–1243.

76. Kant, "On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True in Theory but It Does Not Apply in Practice,'" trans. H. B. Nisbet, in Kant, *Political Writings*, 2d ed., ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge, 1991), 74.

77. For a contrast of Mendelssohn's position with that of Kant, see Alexander Altmann, "Prinzipien politischer Theorie bei Mendelssohn und Kant," in Altmann, *Die trostvolle Aufklärung: Studien zur Metaphysik und politische Theorie Moses Mendelssohns* (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt, 1982), 192–216.

78. Jacobi's most extended discussion of Hume is found in his *David Hume über die Glaube, oder Idealismus und Realismus*, in *Jacobis Werke* II:127–288, esp. pp. 152–153 and 156–163. As Philip Merlan has pointed out, this interpretation of Hume is influenced by Jacobi's translation of Hume's "belief" by the German *Glaube* (which carries religious connotations not found, for example, in *Meinung*—a more likely candidate to capture Hume's sense); see "Kant, Hamann-Jacobi, and Schelling on Hume," *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia* 22 (1967): 483–484.

79. For general discussions of the dispute, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 44–126; Dale Snow, "F. H. Jacobi and the Development of German Idealism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 25, no. 3 (July 1987): 397–416; Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 352–374; and Heinrich Scholz, ed., *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn* (Berlin, 1916), lix–lxxvii.

80. Jacobi, letter to Elise Reimarus, 4 November 1783, in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi Wider Mendelssohns Beschuldigungen Betreffend die Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza*, reprinted in *Jacobis Spinoza Büchlein*, ed. Fritz Mauthner (München, 1912), 17 (the relevant portion of the letter is not reproduced in the version of Jacobi's reply reprinted in *Jacobis Werke* or in Scholz). Jacobi's disgust with the general tenor of the Berlin Enlightenment did not, however, extend to his views of individual members. He respected Wilhelm Dohm, a member of the Mittwochsgesellschaft known for his energetic support of the civil and political rights of the Berlin Jewish community. Dohm served as an intermediary between Jacobi and Mendelssohn in the Pantheism Dispute.

81. Letter to Gleim of 31 May 1782, *Nachlass* 1:54. For a discussion of Jacobi's early political views, see Karl Homann, *F. H. Jacobis Philosophie der Freiheit* (Freiburg/München, 1973), 38–96. For his place in the liberal tradition, see Dale Snow, "Jacobi's Critique of the Enlightenment," below, pp. 306–316, and Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, 24 and 138–149.

82. Jacobi, "Something Lessing Said," translated below, p. 195.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

84. See James van Horn Melton, "From Enlightenment to Revolution: Hertzberg, Schlözer, and the Problem of Despotism in the Late *Aufklärung*," *Central European History* 12, no. 2 (1979): 103–123.

85. Riem, "On Enlightenment," translated below, p. 177.

86. Tieftrunk, "On the Influence of Enlightenment on Revolution," translated below, pp. 217–224.

87. Bergk, translated below, pp. 227–228.

88. *Ibid.*, 230.

89. Ibid., 251.

90. For discussions of Kant's views on the "right to revolution," see Lewis White Beck, "Kant and the Right to Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971): 411–422; Sidney Axinn, "Kant, Authority and the French Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971): 423–432; and Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, 44–48.

91. AA VIII:302 (Kant, "Theory and Practice," in *Political Writings*, 82–83). In view of Kant's problems with the censor, it is notable that the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* published this three-part essay, at his request, "all in one piece, in a single issue," presumably to avoid the fate of the essays that later made up *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. See the discussion in the letter from Biester to Kant of 5 October 1793, which summarizes Kant's request regarding the disposition of the essay (*Philosophical Correspondence*, 208).

92. AA VII:79, 85–86 (*The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. M. J. Gregor [Lincoln, 1992], 141, 153–154).

93. This was the lesson that critics of the Revolution such as A. W. Rehberg and Friedrich Genz took from their reading of Edmund Burke. See Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, 302–309 and 317–326.

94. In this regard it is notable that the Left-Hegelian Edgar Bauer edited a collection of essays from Bahrdr, Riem, and others. See Martin von Geismar [pseudonym], *Bibliothek der deutschen Aufklärer des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1846).

95. Jean Améry, "Enlightenment as Philosophi Perennis," trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld in Améry, *Radical Humanism: Selected Essays* (Bloomington, 1984), 135–141.

96. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, preface to the first edition, A xii.

97. Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" AA VIII:58.

98. Kant, "What Is Orientation in Thinking?" in *Political Writings*, 249. See also the discussion of the meaning of "enlightenment" in *The Critique of Judgment*, §40.

99. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Indianapolis, 1987), 76.

100. Burke, *Reflections*, 76–77.

101. See Voltaire's article "Préjugés" in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*.

102. For a criticism of Burke along these lines, see Christopher Ricks, *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London, 1994), 84–86.

103. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed. (New York, 1989), 265–307. For a helpful examination of Gadamer's account of prejudice and tradition, see Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason* (Stanford, 1987), 75–82. Jürgen Habermas suggests a parallel between the arguments of Gadamer and Burke in his *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 169. See also Jack Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate," *New German Critique*, no. 18 (1979): 67, and Frederick G. Lawrence's introduction to his translation of Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), xxvi–xxvii, which argues that Gadamer's rehabilitation of prejudice, authority, and tradition owes more to Aristotle than to Burke.

104. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 270.

105. Ibid., 279.

106. Ibid., 281.
107. Ibid., 282–283.
108. Ibid., 276–277.
109. Burke, *Reflections*, 29. See Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, 1988), 353.
110. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301–302.
111. Ibid., 302.
112. Habermas, *Logic of the Social Sciences*, 169.
113. Ibid., 168–170.
114. Albrecht Wellmer, *The Critical Theory of Society*, trans. John Cumming (New York, 1974), 46–47. See Habermas's discussion in "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," in *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Method, Philosophy, and Critique*, ed. Josef Bleicher (London, 1980), 204–205.
115. Habermas, *Logic of the Social Sciences*, 170.
116. Gadamer, "Hermeneutik," 68–69, 73 (translated as "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," in Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* [Berkeley, 1976], 28–29, 33).
117. See Hamann, "Metacritique of the Purism of Reason," translated below, pp. 154–167; MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, 1990), 170–195; and Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, 1979), 315–394, and *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 3–7, 44–45, 52. For a very useful collection of essays exploring the implications of the arguments of Habermas, Gadamer, MacIntyre, Rorty, and others, see Michael Kelly, ed., *Hermeneutics and Critical Theory in Ethics and Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990).
118. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam, 1947) (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming [New York, 1972]).
119. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xv, xiii (translation modified).
120. Ibid., 3.
121. Ibid., xiii (translation modified).
122. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford, 1977), 355–363.
123. Ibid., 360.
124. Ibid., 359.
125. For a comparison, see J.-F. Suter, "Burke, Hegel, and the French Revolution," in *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. Z. A. Pelczynski (Cambridge, 1971), 52–72.
126. Burke, *Reflections*, 147.
127. Hegel, "Proceedings of the Estates Assembly in Wurtemberg," in *Political Writings*, 282. See also his critique of historical approaches to the study of law in the *Philosophy of Right*, §3.
128. Joachim Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution*, trans. R. D. Winfield (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 61.
129. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §187.
130. For a discussion, see my article "Paideia for the 'Bürger als Bourgeois': The Concept of 'Civil Society' in Hegel's Political Thought," *History of Political Thought* 2, no. 3 (1982): 469–493.

131. Hegel, letter to Göschel, 13 December 1830, and letter to Christiane Hegel, 18 January 1831, in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg, 1954), 321–324, 329 (translated by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler in *Hegel: The Letters* [Bloomington, 1984], 422, 677).

132. For discussions of the interdisciplinary research program of the Institute for Social Research, see Helmut Dubiel, *Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of the Frankfurt School*, trans. Benjamin Gregg (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), and Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge, Mass., 1994).

133. On the relationship between state and market, see Frederick Pollock, "State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations" (1941), reprinted in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York, 1978), 71–94. For the transformation of the bourgeois family, see Max Horkheimer, "Authority and Family" (1936), reprinted in Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York, 1972), 47–128.

134. See Horkheimer, "The End of Reason" (1941) and "The Authoritarian State" (1940), both reprinted in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, 26–48 and 95–118.

135. In a letter to Friedrich Pollack written in March 1942, Horkheimer described the *Odyssey* as "the first document on the anthropology of man in the modern sense, that means, in the sense of a rational enlightened being." See Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 324.

136. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 57.

137. See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 333.

138. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 11 (translation modified). See also Horkheimer's reiteration of this point in *Dawn and Decline*, trans. Martin Shaw (New York, 1978), 124.

139. Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York, 1947), 22–23.

140. See also Adorno's comment in *Minima Moralia*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London, 1974), 51. "In a world where books have long lost all likeness to books, the real book can no longer be one. If the invention of the printing press inaugurated the bourgeois era, the time is at hand for its repeal by the mimeograph, the only fitting, the unobtrusive means of dissemination."

141. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 208 (translation modified).

142. Letter to Herbert Marcuse, 19 December 1942, quoted in Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 321. For a discussion of the subsequent responses of Horkheimer and Adorno to the position they sketched in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, see Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on the Developmental History of Horkheimer's Work," trans. Mark Ritter in *Theory, Culture & Society* 10 (1993): 61–77.

143. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 117–118.

144. In *Ecce Homo*, reflecting on the dedication of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* to Voltaire, Nietzsche wrote, "Voltaire was above all, in contrast to all who wrote after him, a *grandseigneur* of the spirit—like me.—The name of Voltaire on one of my essays—that really meant progress—*toward me*." *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1969), 283. For a helpful overview, see Peter Heller, "Nietzsche in His Relation to Voltaire and Rousseau," in *Studies in Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition*,

ed. James C. O'Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner, and Robert M. Helm (Chapel Hill, 1976), 109–133.

145. Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, §463 (*Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale [Cambridge, 1986], 169). See also *Götzen-Dämmerung* §48 (*Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale [Harmondsworth, 1968], 101–102).

146. Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* pt. II §221 (*Human, All Too Human*, 367).

147. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §350 (*The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann [New York, 1974], 293).

148. *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* §26 (*Human, All Too Human*, 25–26). Petrarch and Erasmus appear on Nietzsche's "banner of Enlightenment" insofar as they signify freethinking spirits of earlier ages of enlightenment in which an initial progress of "science" was retarded by a subsequent reaction.

149. Nietzsche, *Morgenröte* §197 (*Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale [Cambridge, 1982], 117–118).

150. See Karl Leonhard Reinhold, "Thoughts on Enlightenment," translated below, pp. 73–75.

151. Nietzsche, *Wille zur Macht* §91 (*Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale [New York, 1968], 56).

152. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* §125 (trans. p. 181).

153. Michel Foucault, *Folie et déraison* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1961), v. This passage is not included in the English translation.

154. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1973), 269.

155. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1978), 20.

156. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1975), 195–197; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1979), 200–209.

157. For Foucault's major discussions of Kant's "What Is Enlightenment?" see his "Qu'est-ce que la critique (Critique et *Aufklärung*)," *Compte rendu de la séance du 27 Mai 1978*, *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie* 84 (1990): 35–63 (translated below, pp. 382–398); Foucault, "Un Cours Inedit," *Magazine Littéraire*, no. 207 (1984): 35–39 (translated by Colin Gordon as "Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution," *Economy and Society* 15, no. 1 [1986]: 88–96); and "What Is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, 1984), 32–50. For a discussion of the differences between these essays, see James Schmidt and Thomas E. Wartenberg, "Foucault's Enlightenment," in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault-Habermas Debate*, ed. Michael Kelly (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 283–314.

158. *The Foucault Reader*, 39–42.

159. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London, 1964), 12–13.

160. *The Foucault Reader*, 50.

161. Burke, *Reflections*, 67.

162. Hamann, letter to Christian Jacob Kraus, 18 December 1784, below, p. 147.

163. Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Walther Ziesemer and Arthur Henkel (Wiesbaden, 1956), 2:129.

164. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200–209.

165. Beethoven captured a similar ambivalence about enlightenment in Act I of *Fidelio* when the prisoners are briefly released from the dungeons. They hesitantly greet the sunlight, delight in the fresh air, and with ever-growing strength, sing of the salvation they trust will some day be theirs. But as they are carried away into an ecstatic vision of emancipation, there is a darkening of the music and one prisoner warns, "Speak softly! Hold yourselves back! We are overheard and watched." *Fidelio* I:ix.

166. Burke's lack of interest in what the philosophes might actually have written may well be only a small part of a bigger problem. As John Pocock has suggested, both Price and Burke may have been principally concerned with the events of 1789 as a point of departure for reconsidering the significance of the events of 1688. See his introduction to Burke, *Reflections*, xi–xxxvi.

167. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273.

168. See Gehard Sauder, "Aufklärung des Vorurteils—Vorurteile der Aufklärung," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 57, no. 2 (1983): 259–277, and, especially, Werner Schneiders, *Aufklärung und Vorurteilstheorie: Studien zur Geschichte der Vorurteilstheorie* (Stuttgart, 1983).

169. Interestingly, Walter Benjamin, whose work exercised an enormous influence over the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, was a good deal more explicit in acknowledging his debts to Hamann. See *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1979), 321. Horkheimer's 1959–1960 lectures on the Enlightenment are more careful in tracing the relationship between "enlightenment" understood as a process of demythologization and the Enlightenment as a historical period. See Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* 13 (Frankfurt, 1989), 570–645.

170. In this context it might be worth noting that John A. McCarthy's suggestion that Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* provides a more "judicious assessment" of the Enlightenment than that found in Horkheimer and Adorno runs the risk of both overstating the likelihood that readers would assume that the two books were in any sense trying to do the same thing, while also perhaps understating the degree to which Cassirer's classic study is itself now frequently the target of criticisms from historians at least in part because of its oversimplification of Enlightenment thought. See McCarthy, *Crossing Boundaries: A Theory and History of Essay Writing in German, 1680–1815* (Philadelphia, 1989), 70. In this light, it might be worth reconsidering the extent to which Cassirer's defense of "enlightenment" might, in part, be read as a response to Fascism rather than simply as an attempt to make historical sense of the Enlightenment.

171. For a good example of what is possible along these lines, see John A. McCarthy, "Verständigung and Dialektik: On Consensus Theory and the Dialectic of Enlightenment," in *Impure Reason: Dialectic of Enlightenment in Germany*, ed. W. Daniel Wilson and Robert C. Holub (Detroit, 1993), 13–33. See also Werner Schneiders, *Hoffnung auf Vernunft: Aufklärungsphilosophie in Deutschland* (Hamburg, 1990), 175–186.

172. Kant, "What Is Orientation in Thinking?" in *Political Writings*, 247.

173. Kant, AA V:294 (*Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar [Indianapolis, 1987], 160–161).

174. Kant, AA V:294 (*Critique of Judgment*, 162).

175. For a discussion of the relationship of this work to the *Dialectic of Enlighten-*

ment and to Habermas's subsequent critique of Horkheimer and Adorno, see Robert C. Holub, "The Enlightenment Dialectic: Jürgen Habermas's Critique of the Frankfurt School," in Wilson and Holub, *Impure Reason*, 34–86.

176. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston, 1971), 314.

177. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols., trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, 1984, 1987); and Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 43–194.