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Inhalt

"A Not Yet Invented Logic"

Herder on Bildung, Anthropology, and the Future of Philosophy

Kristin Gjesdal

If modernity is the age of critique and self-reflection, then philosophy, in lending voice to the *Zeitgeist* of its day, must scrutinize not only reason's epistemic, ethical, and aesthetic pursuits, but also the very mandate to carry through such a critique in the first place. In this context, Johann Gottfried Herder is ascribed an ambiguous role. His posthumously published *How Philosophy Can Become More Universal and Useful for the Benefit of the People (1765)* delivers a devastating critique of philosophy and advocates an anthropological turn. Herder, it seems, takes the critique of philosophy to such lengths that he ends up dissolving the discipline altogether.[1]

This reading of Herder rests on two argumentative steps. First, it is assumed that Herder rejects philosophy's claim to truth and hence, by implication, its scientific validity.[2] Second, it is argued that for Herder, the logical consequence of this rejection is to leave philosophy behind so as to pursue empirical research.[3] These claims are both wrong. Herder certainly critiques the philosophy of his time – in particular the abstract school phi-

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1 For such a reading, see Zammito, John: *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*. Chicago 2002, p. 3.

2 See, again: Zammito: *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, p. 173.

3 In Zammito's words, "Philosophy would dissolve into social science." Zammito: *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, p. 176.

losophy that had developed around Wolff and his followers[4] – and emphasizes that philosophy must turn away from an understanding of rationality in terms of formal requirements and empty abstractions. However, he never questions the relevance of philosophy as such. Quite to the contrary, Herder's call for an anthropological turn is best understood as a critique, in the Kantian sense of the word, of philosophical reason. In analyzing its past and present practices, Herder seeks to draw the limits for the adequate scope and validity of philosophy, but also to exemplify an alternative kind of philosophizing, thus ensuring its bearing for the future. On this basis, the anthropological turn should not be read as a drift from philosophy to empirical science, but, rather, as a critical shift within philosophy itself.[5] At stake, I will argue, is an attempt at regaining the relevance of philosophy by redefining it along the lines of a theory of *Bildung*. Such a redefinition cannot take the shape of a formal treatise or a set of methodological criteria but must, rather, be performatively exemplified.

I support this reading by analyzing Herder's critique of the way in which philosophy has been externally limited and internally determined by natural science (sections I and II). I then turn to Herder's alternative understanding of philosophy and propose that he envisions philosophy as an ongoing process of *Bildung*, a propaedeutic to independent thought (section III). This notion of philosophy, however, cannot be spelled out by simply listing a set of fixed goals and procedures, but can only be made clear through concrete examples of philosophizing (section IV).

I. Truth, Science, and Philosophy

Herder writes his essay on the usefulness of philosophy in response to a prize contest issued by the Patriotic Society of Bern. How, the society had

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4 Zammito describes school philosophy in the following way: "*Schulphilosophie* came to mean, first and foremost, enclosed thinking: closed conceptually and cloistered in social space. 'School' clearly had these two senses from the medieval genesis of 'scholasticism' throughout the German eighteenth century: it referred both to the esoteric nature of intellectual discourse and to the institutional framework of higher education in which it largely deployed itself." Zammito: *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology,* p. 22.

5 This is not to say that Herder's philosophy does not draw on (and inform) anthropology. For a discussion of Herder's contribution to anthropology, see Forster, Michael N.: Herder and the Birth of Modern Anthropology. In: *After Herder. Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition.* Oxford 2010, pp. 199-244.

asked, "can the truths of philosophy become more general and practical for the good of the people?"[6] The question was motivated by a growing doubt about the scientific legitimacy of philosophy, indeed of the humanities as such. Commenting on these sentiments, Herder observes that philosophy "is in the process of getting condemned."[7] Philosophy can no longer take for granted its home in an academic setting. How can philosophy respond to this predicament? How can it best defend and demonstrate the usefulness and relevance of its truths?

In approaching these questions, Herder does not want to seek refuge in a priori speculation, but turns, instead, to the field of philosophy as it is *de facto* practiced. According to Herder, existing philosophical practice does not provide much to build on. As he sums up his disappointment, he wants to "bury ninety-nine pounds and make the most of the hundredth".[8] Since 99% of philosophy proves problematic – and, since, further, one could suspect that the one salvageable percentage will be but Herder's own contribution[9] – a merely positive procedure would prove self-defeating (as Herder would be looking to prove the validity of the very standards by which the problematic 99% would be criticized in the first place). Hence, Herder is forced to realize the potential of philosophy *via negativa*, that is, by analyzing the dominant self-understanding of the problematic 99% and to clarify, at the level of an internal criticism, its major flaws.

Philosophy, however, does not develop in isolation, but by positioning itself vis-à-vis the other sciences. In wishing to map the scope of philosophy, Herder thus distinguishes between its affiliation with the natural sciences (represented by math and physics) and its overlap with the human sciences (represented by theology and political science). Indeed, in his view philosophy is characterized by its position in between these scientific fields. Hence it is necessary to analyze, in more detail, Herder's view on philosophy's affiliation with, respectively, (a) mathematics, (b) physics, (c) theology, and (d) political thought.[10]

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6 Stellenkommentar. In: Herder, Johann Gottfried: *Werke in zehn Bänden*. Ed. by Martin Bollacher et al. Vol. I. Ed. by Ulrich Gaier. Frankfurt am Main 1993, pp. 969. Further references to *Werke* will be abbreviated *W*, followed by volume and page number.

7 Herder, Johann Gottfried: *Philosophical Writings*. Ed. and trans. by Michael N. Forster. Cambridge 2002, p. 7. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *PW*.

8 *PW* 22.

9 In later works, Herder expresses more hope in his treatment of individual philosophers (and historians) such as Hume. *PW* 265, see also *PW* 255.

10 Such a procedure also helps us avoid the assumption that Herder naively celebrates philosophy's status as a humanistic discipline or that he sees the humanities as completely

(a) Taking issue with school philosophy and its turn to the methods of mathematics,[11] Herder observes a widespread tendency to identify philosophy with theoretical natural science – or, more precisely, to see the scientific status of philosophy as dependent on its alignment with mathematics.[12] This bond, he points out, was initially a marriage of convenience: Philosophy sought to establish itself as autonomous vis-à-vis mathematics, but on realizing the difficulty of such an endeavor in a modern academic climate, it opted for the second best alternative: that of a pragmatic allegiance.[13] Today, however, the pragmatic nature of this allegiance is often overlooked. Herder addresses two equally problematic models that mirror this oversight. On the one hand, the perceived allegiance of mathematics and philosophy has its critics. These critics have argued that philosophy must be decoupled from mathematics. In Herder's view, this position represents an abstract denial of philosophy's ongoing dialogue with natural science and must, as such, be rejected. On the other hand, however, there are those who think that philosophy should simply adopt the formal procedures of mathematics. This position, too, is turned down. On Herder's more considered view, philosophy can and should learn and borrow from mathematics, but must not be identified with it or uncritically adopt its methods and standards as a measure of its own success.[14]

(b) Next Herder looks at philosophy's affiliation with physics. As Herder sees it, the physicist judges from experience rather than hypothe-

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detached from the natural sciences. The implausibility of such a reading becomes clear if we take into account how Herder's own genetic method develops in critical dialogue with Kant's philosophy of nature. See Beiser, Frederick C.: *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism. The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790-1800.* Cambridge, Mass. 1992, pp. 193-194.

11 As Zammito glosses on this point, "While it would be wrong to contend that Wolff simply identified mathematical and philosophical method, he saw more in common between them than would his eventual critics." Zammito: *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, p. 20. Beiser points out how also Baumgarten was committed to the view that mathematics represented a universal model for science as such. Beiser, Frederick C.: *Diotima's Children. German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing.* Oxford 2009, p. 124.

12 *PW* 3. Kant had pursued a similar critique. For a discussion of this point, see Norton, Robert E.: *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment.* Ithaca 1991, p. 37.

13 *PW* 5.

14 Herder thus asks "Whence comes the inner quarrel between philosophy and mathematics? How can it be settled? Should one science be compared with the other, in order to demand mathematical certainty, clarity, and usefulness in philosophy? How can one science flow into the other without doing it the damage which we have experienced from the unification of both?" *PW* 5.

sis.[15] The physicist, and by implication the physics-inclined philosopher, seeks to "*dissect* [...] the products of our spirit, be they errors or truths".[16] Given the empirical basis of physics, Herder is more sympathetic to the idea of an affinity between philosophy and physics, yet again argues that each must be given its due.

(c) Third, Herder identifies a relationship between philosophy and what he, somewhat idiosyncratically (given that he has just labeled physics an experience-based science), calls the a posteriori observations of the human sciences. He first hones in on theology.[17] Theologians understand themselves as friends of God, and thus as different from political thinkers, the friends of men.[18] The chief mistake of the former, Herder suggests, is not to superimpose non-philosophical standards on philosophy, but to prematurely transpose philosophical criteria onto the study of religion. Such a blending of disciplines harms the field of reasoning as well as that of belief.[19]

(d) Finally, Herder addresses the affiliation between philosophy and political thought. Herder detects no real conflict of interest between philosophy and political thinking, but emphasizes how comprehensive societal commitments drive philosophers from Plato, to Rousseau, Hume, and Shaftesbury.[20] However, Herder fears that contemporary philosophy has lost touch with this holistic mode of reasoning; it is bifurcated into, on the one hand, the observers of nature (which Herder views as the predominant tendency of English philosophy) and, on the other, *Schöngeister* (which he takes to dominate French philosophy). Neither of these groups represents philosophy proper. Philosophy proper can only thrive by joining the force of the former with the strengths of the latter.

It is important to realize that Herder, in this context, does not wish to discuss whether or not natural science is scientifically admirable in its own right (which Herder thinks it is[21]), nor whether interdisciplinary scholar-

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15 Ebd.

16 Ebd.

17 *PW* 5.

18 Ebd.

19 Ebd. This, however, does not imply that there is an absolute distinction between the two. Nor does it mean that philosophy cannot learn from religious practices or vice versa. Hermeneutics, for example, covers all texts, religious or otherwise.

20 *PW* 6.

21 For a study of Herder's interest in and indebtedness to natural science, see Nisbet, H. B.: *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science*. Cambridge 1970. See also Bollacher, Martin: 'Natur' und 'Vernunft' in Herders Entwurf einer Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit. In: *Johann Gottfried Herder. 1744-1803*. Ed. by Gerhard

ship makes sense (which Herder thinks it does). Hence, it is not correct to claim, as Isaiah Berlin does, that Herder is against "scientific method."[22] Herder, rather, is against the illegitimate universalization of particular scientific methods, those based on theoretical reason alone. He does not claim that such methods are never useful. Nor does he hold scientific method to be a problem *per se*. On the contrary, much of his philosophy represents a search for philosophical methods that can balance the quest for universal definitions with attentiveness to the singularities of historical-empirical objects, expressions, or events. In this vein Herder, in his 1765 essay, asks a fundamental, epistemological question that leads up to and lays the ground for his later discussion of philosophy's methodology, namely whether any one science, method, or set of such can be ascribed the right to define the global standards of truth-searching. Herder insists that no such right exists.[23]

The very search for philosophy's capacity for truth is bound to fail if it is set as a quest for standards that are not internal to philosophy but imported from extra-philosophical discourse. Hence Herder's essay starts out by insisting that philosophy can only be justified as a scientific domain if we recognize that such a justification must be given from *within* the field of philosophy itself.

The philosophical thrust of Herder's critique, his drawing of disciplinary limits, does not, as such, boil down to an effort to mark the boundaries of different ways of reasoning or to sublating one discourse into another. Nor does he critique philosophy for the sake of critiquing. Rather, Herder sheds light on the way in which one form of science, in particular mathematics, has been given an exclusive mandate to define what counts as science across the board. A shift with regard to which science provides these global standards – be it mathematics or empirical social science (anthropology) – would do little to remedy the misfortune of philosophy's disciplinary heteronomy.

Sauder. Hamburg 1987), pp. 114-124 and Heinz, Marion/Clairmont, Heinrich: Herder's Epistemology. In: *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*. Ed. by Hans Adler/Wulf Koepke. Rochester, NY 2009, pp. 43-65.

22 Berlin, Isaiah: *Three Critics of the Enlightenment. Vico, Hamann, Herder*. Ed. by Henry Hardy. Princeton 2000), p. 169.

23 This anticipates his view on culture in *Another Philosophy of History*. Here Herder insists that the values and standards of one culture should not be used as a measure for other cultures. See Herder, Johann Gottfried: *Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings*. Trans. by Ioannis D. Evrigenis/Daniel Pellerin. Cambridge 2004, p. 31.

II. Philosophical Self-Critique

Given its uncritical allegiance with natural science, philosophy is in poor shape. However, if Herder's argument about the heteronomy of philosophy vis-à-vis abstract science is to be successful, then it is not sufficient to show, as he has done so far, that philosophy *externally* identifies with a discipline such as mathematics. In addition, he must demonstrate that this identification, at *an internal* level, shapes the structure of current philosophical thought as well as the questions it raises. Hence, what is needed is not only reflection on philosophy's status with regard to other disciplines. Philosophy must also turn toward itself so as to scrutinize its own practices within the disciplinary boundaries to which it is confined. Only such self-critique can point the way to a better and more reflected kind of philosophy, a philosophy that is ready to take on its status as an autonomous discipline and account for its own legitimacy, truth, and usefulness.[24]

Herder locates three ways in which the self-misunderstanding of philosophy (symptomatically) manifests itself: philosophy has (a) cut itself off from the people, it is (b) caught in a culture of meaningless abstraction, and, as a consequence, is (c) reduced to sheer scholastic exercises. Herder's judgment on the usefulness of the truths of philosophy – the crux of the Bern contest – is closely connected to these points, each of which must be analyzed in more detail.

(a) First, Herder addresses the separation of philosophy from society at large. To a certain extent this separation is necessary in order for philosophy to gain room for critique and reflection. Yet, the space of reflection and judgment must not be cultivated for its own sake, but stand in a dialectical relationship to society as such. Philosophers, Herder points out, have had a tendency to forget this and withdraw from the world of practical affairs. However, what might at first seem like a reflective equilibrium betrays, in truth, a deeply problematic division of thought and society. Philosophy does not withdraw so as to better understand the social world of which it is a part, but in order to sever all ties to it. As Herder deliberately

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[24] That is, philosophy must distinguish itself externally and institutionally from other disciplines, but also develop an internal self-determination and discussion of its goals and directions. However, Herder does not advise watertight proofs between the disciplines, but recommends a model of mutual cooperation. See "On the Change of Taste," *PW* 255 and Herder, Johann Gottfried: Fragments of a Treatise on the Ode. In: *Johann Gottfried Herder. Selected Early Works*. Ed. by Ernest A. Menze/Karl Menges. Trans. by Ernest A. Menze with Michael Palma. University Park, PA 1992, pp. 50-51.

plays on the Socratic analogy, this is but another version of the philosopher as a troglodyte.[25]

How, then, did philosophy end up in this predicament? Herder does not tackle this question head on, but offers an indirect, two-step response. First, he suggests that philosophy, by naively identifying with the abstract sciences (rather than determining itself on its own grounds), is left with a set of standards (for truth and objectivity) that, so to speak, requires that it cut itself off from the ever-changing world of human practice. Second, Herder points out how this trend is reinforced by a broader culture of disciplinary vanity. Philosophy is not driven by the search for truth but by an array of efforts to "refute, to express novelties, to become famous".[26] In celebrating academic success for its own sake, philosophy gradually erodes. Needless to say, this is not a desirable situation. It is a situation that is unacceptable from the point of view of the public (who gets no share in the insights of philosophy), but that, equally important, leaves philosophy with no appropriate benchmark for its wider relevance. As Herder makes his point, it is the case that

> [i]f the latter [philosophers] have treasures, well then, they must become common property. If they do not have them [...], then let their caves be destroyed and let the night-owls of Minerva be taught to look at the sun.[27]

(b) Next, Herder analyzes the form of philosophy that can be conducted on these premises. In particular, he calls attention to a culture of empty abstraction that, in his view, dominates contemporary philosophy.[28] In its present shape, philosophy is oriented towards "far-too-universal rules" and scholastic methods of argument.[29] It is not concerned with genuine problems, but looks towards an internal agenda of petty concerns, a process no

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25 *PW* 7.

26 Ebd.

27 *PW* 7. Herder's use of the Socratic metaphor further bolsters the claim that the problems of philosophy need to be solved within the framework of philosophy itself rather than by dissolving philosophy into empirical science.

28 Herder, however, is not questioning the general status of logic within philosophy, but the way in which logic is conceived at the time. If logic were to be at the heart of an account of the usefulness of philosophy – and this is a possibility Herder does keep open – then it would have to be combined with a broader science of mind, that is, it must "plant its limbs [logic] back into the body [of philosophy]". *PW* 9.

29 *PW* 9. Herder mentions the kind of logic that one learns "merely for the logicians" (*PW* 8) and learning by simply repeating the claims of the teacher (*PW* 9).

more futile than "the tying and untying of [...] knots".[30] Understood in this way, philosophy remains – and must remain – barren. Further, Herder fears that logic teachers often cultivate scholastic methods of disputation and nourish an environment of meaningless sophisms.[31]

(c) Finally, Herder asks how this culture of empty philosophizing has been sustained. Why, he inquires, are these practices not challenged? His answer is that abstract scholasticism curbs philosophy's tendency to cultivate independent thinking and is self-promoting in that it allows for no or little criticism. This, Herder worries, impedes contemporary thought. In its present form, teachers of philosophy encourage a sheer aping of truth, and the students, as Herder puts it, are choking with school dust.[32] At this point, Herder provocatively states, we have reached "the real corruption for the philosophoumenos".[33]

These are Herder's three objections to the reigning philosophical practices of the day. They are objections designed to show how philosophy's understanding of its role in between the other sciences affects its inner form. In its present guise, philosophy is constitutively unable to shape its own mandate; it has failed *sich zu bilden* or to educate itself, it has failed – and, stronger still, it must fail – to ask how it can develop and maintain its own standards of academic success rather than draw on standards borrowed from or imposed by other disciplines.

Understood in this way, Herder's critique of current philosophical practice should not be mistaken for a critique of philosophy as such. It is a critique of wrong or misguided ways of thinking about or doing philosophy, not an *en masse* attack on the discipline. Quite to the contrary, according to Herder, the problems of current philosophy cannot be solved by leaving philosophy behind. What is needed, rather, is that philosophy become reflective and critically investigate its own goals and practices and, as part of this, also reassess its future stakes and ambitions.

The notion of Herder rejecting philosophy *in toto* necessarily misses out on this thought. Also, it fails to expound on Herder's call for a move from disciplinary heteronomy to disciplinary self-determination, and, as far as his 1765 essay goes, the shift from a critique of present academic practices to a defense of better and more helpful ways of thinking about philosophy. It is to this program that I now turn.

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30 *PW* 9.
31 *PW* 9-10.
32 *PW* 9.
33 *PW* 8.

III. Philosophy as Independent Thinking

Herder's critique of the existing self-understanding of philosophy has left him with a distinction between philosophy as it is and philosophy as it ought to be. So far, his focus has been on the first half of this equation. However, Herder's critique of abstract school philosophy has given him a measure for the success of his own, alternative understanding. In fleshing out his idea of philosophy, Herder needs to demonstrate (a) how philosophy can find a place in society, (b) how it can find an adequate form of expression, and (c) how it can foster self-reflection, criticism, and independent thought. Only in this way can he, in a constructive move, show how philosophy can make good on its critical-reflective potential and inhabit its disciplinary mandate in a mature and responsible way – hence also demonstrate the usefulness of its truths.

(a) Given philosophy's present shape, the question about its broader, societal usefulness appears irrelevant. The problem with present philosophy is, in other words, not that it provides a false account of the usefulness of philosophy, but that it does not pay attention to the problem of usefulness in the first place. The challenge of locating the usefulness of philosophy thus involves the task of changing philosophy so that the very question of its usefulness appears meaningful and worth addressing in the first place.

When philosophy is properly understood – as critical, reflective, and yet relating to the wider world it inhabits – it combats inner serfdom and the passive trust in authority that lodges in the finest nerves.[34] It destroys prejudices and raises the individual citizen above the crowd.[35] In neglecting this task, philosophy neglects itself. Thus, Herder claims, we should replace "[l]ogic and moral theory [Herder, again, is thinking of the narrow varieties of these fields]" with "a philosophical spirit [that] forms the human being in independent thought".[36] Only when a human being has reached a level of independent thought is he or she able, in principle and at the level of necessary conditions, to take responsibility for his or her social and political surroundings. Herder's response to the felt irrelevance of school philosophy is not to plead for philosophy's relevance with regard to a particular problem or field of society. He responds, rather, by appealing to the need for an independent and enlightened use of reason – a use of reason that can find its application in an infinitely rich spectrum of do-

34 *PW* 14.
35 *PW* 12, 25.
36 *PW* 19.

mains and problem areas.[37] Thus understood, philosophy "forms [bildet] the human being, the citizen".[38] Only in this way – not serving this or that particular end or purpose, but in shaping the general capacity for independent thought – can philosophy find itself. Contemporary philosophy, it seems, is right in insisting on the freedom of thought from the demands of concrete and specific fields of application. It is wrong, though, to think that such specific uses are all that philosophy can have – and, following its failure to distinguish particular applicability from a more general one, it is also wrong in cutting its ties to society as such. Instead, philosophy should have asked what possibilities the freedom from particular areas of usefulness and application brings with it. The answer to this question is that it brings with it the freedom of critical reason: reason as facilitating and responding to a deeper, human self-understanding, reason as furthering the realization of humanity.

(b) If the usefulness of philosophy rests with its capacity to further wider, societal self-reflection and education of independent thinkers – thus realizing humanity – then the next question will have to be what philosophy, in taking on this task, will look like and how its future form can guard against the mistakes of philosophy in its past and present shape. For Herder this is, to a large extent, a question of how philosophy is done.

Herder worries about the twin phenomena of, on the one hand, philosophy's withdrawal from society (once it takes the form of empty scholastic exercises) and, on the other, a general lack of critical reflection (once philosophy withdraws from society, no systematic tools of criticism are available, in the first place). This follows from his identification of the capacity for citizenship with the capacity for independent thought. As a critical-reflective medium, philosophy should turn people into potential citizens, capable of taking on the responsibility of self-determination. Enlightenment, in Herder's view, is not only a theoretical project, but a question of emancipation: of learning to think and make critical use of the knowledge available.

Herder, however, does not rest content with these general reflections, but also offers more specific advice. A first step in this direction is the turn to German as a replacement for the preferred academic languages of Latin or

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37 It is significant, in this context, that already the pre-critical Kant had noticed, in his lectures on logic (from which Herder took notes), that "no philosopher can be a Wolffian, etc. because he must think for himself." See Kuehn, Manfred: *Kant. A Biography*. Cambridge 2001, p. 130.

38 *PW* 19.

French. Further, Herder wishes to include women as future targets of education.[39] The inclusion of women in philosophy is not simply a matter of allowing them to *read* philosophy, but must also allow them to join the discipline as active contributors.[40]

This expansion of philosophy to women and readers who master no foreign languages, however, is only a first beginning. Herder does not simply wish to change the language of philosophy or its possible audience, but also to invoke a change in how philosophical insights are ultimately conveyed. In its dominant form, philosophy presupposes a problematic dualism between heart and mind. As Herder puts it, the philosopher addresses "my understanding," while, for it to be real, it is "my heart, not the understanding, [that] must feel it".[41] According to Herder, the entire human being ought to be educated. And in order to contribute to such an education, the philosopher must be educated as a human being before (s)he is educated as a philosopher.[42]

Herder, in other words, is not criticizing under-educated people (who would not be concerned with the usefulness of philosophy in the first place),[43] but the under-educated philosopher: the philosopher who has cultivated an empty, cerebral existence at the expense of a broader education to humanity as such. If philosophy overlooks its commitment to the entire human being, it has not simply overlooked one of its many tasks – it has,

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39 *PW* 18.

40 *PW* 27.

41 *PW* 13. Traditional philosophy, Herder claims, addresses its audiences as cerebral beings only. But according to Herder, traditional logic "merely contains the order of verbal presentation" and it does not reflect the order of the soul. *PW* 8.

42 *PW* 22.

43 I take it to follow from the previous discussion that Herder does not suggest a general exclusion of the lower classes. In his study of the historical genesis of diversity thinking, Parekh sees Herder's contribution as a "remarkable intellectual achievement" yet worries that "[w]hile appreciating the diversity *of* cultures, Herder is antipathetic to that *within* it. Indeed the very ground on which he champions the former, namely that every culture is a distinct and harmonious whole, requires him to ignore or suppress its internal differences and diversities. He cherishes a culturally plural *world* but not a culturally plural society." See Parekh, Bhikhu: *Rethinking Multiculturalism. Cultural Diversity and Political Theory.* New York 2006), pp. 72-73.
This perception, however, seems not to follow from Herder's own writing, but from Isaiah Berlin's claim, based on an out-of-context citation, that "Herder carefully distinguishes the *Pöbel auf den Gassen* ('the rabble') from the *Volk* (that is, the body of the nation)." Berlin: *Three Critics*, p. 210. (The quote is from the Suphan edition, vol. XXV, 323). Herder's point in this context, however, is one concerning violent behavior, not class-based political inclusion criteria.

rather, repressed its own nature.[44] Hence, it is not only the people, but, in equal measure, the academic philosopher who is in dire need of education (*Bildung*) – an education that will sensitize the very discipline of philosophy to a more fulfilling and adequate understanding of the human being.

(c) If it is to be useful, philosophy must focus on evoking independent thought; it must cultivate the self-determination of humanity. Philosophy is not useful in that it serves as a means that can be abolished once the end has been reached. It is useful, rather, in that it stimulates critical reflection. This is the core of Herder's Copernican turn in philosophy. Just as it would later be the case with Kant's more famous use of the metaphor, what is at stake is not so much a call for philosophy to change its subject matter as an effort to revise the way in which philosophy is being done. Herder, however, invokes no transcendental turn, but looks to develop a philosophy that addresses the entire human being and targets the full register of present and future citizens.

As a means to an end, philosophy is bound to be "very dispensable".[45] Stimulating independent thought, however, philosophy is an end in itself – a process of ongoing edification.[46] In its past and present forms, philosophy, cultivating abstraction for its own sake, has torn the human being away from itself.[47] After the anthropological turn, by contrast, philosophy must address the entire human being (feelings as well as reason),[48] all human beings (women as well as men and people of all classes), and seek to bring the human being back into the center of its critical pursuits. Herder's philosophy seeks to curb the threat of intellectual alienation and bring humanity back into philosophy so as to be able to communicate to and about the broader human sphere. In this sense, philosophy must "descend from the stars to human beings".[49]

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44 At this point, Herder anticipates the deeper sentiment of Schiller's philosophy. See Schiller, Friedrich: *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Trans. by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson/L. A. Willoughby. In: *Friedrich Schiller. Essays.* Ed. by Walter Hinderer/ Daniel O. Dahlstrom. New York 2005, pp. 86-178.

45 *PW* 15.

46 *PW* 13.

47 *PW* 16.

48 This point is clearly spelled out by Jens Heise. Heise suggests that the new anthropology "will die Trennung von Denken und Körper zurücknehmen, die Descartes als Preis für ein begrifflich klares und methodologisch gesichertes Wissen gefordert hatte." See Heise, Jens: *Johann Gottfried Herder zur Einführung*. Hamburg 1998, p. 84.

49 *PW* 19.

If this larger, educating sense of philosophy is abandoned, then barbarism prevails.[50] That is, if philosophers fail to question their idols, if they systematically fail to reflect on and dispense with false prejudices, then "the human understanding is deprived of its highest level".[51] In this sense, Herder does not see philosophical enlightenment as a mere means.[52] Enlightenment, for him, entails a gradual rising to reflective self-responsibility; it is the ongoing realization of a fully human existence. Because this is pitched as a battle against prejudices and prejudice, in turn, is understood as an inevitable aspect of a historical and culturally situated reason, enlightenment is a process that can never be brought to completion. An enlightened society constantly has to prove itself as enlightened.

Understood in this way – as realizing the "highest level" of human understanding – philosophy cannot be reduced to a body of truth-claims or a set of logically correct inferences that, in a complimentary move, can find application in this or that particular context. Further, philosophy does not, strictly speaking, lead to truth. Rather, it is, emphatically, its own demonstration of the usefulness of its truth in and through its reflection on society. Through this reflection, society, as well as philosophy, gains and develops. This is ultimately why Herder, in exploring the value and relevance of philosophy, does not want to defend its truths against the skeptics: It is not because he wishes to abandon truth from philosophy and thus dissolve the very discipline itself, but because philosophy, when being practiced in the right way (spurring development and reflection), *is* its own ongoing truth rather than a production of truth-claims that are, as such, independent of the process through which they are reached.

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50 *PW* 20.

51 Ebd.

52 Norton, for example, concludes from Herder's claim, from the *Journal*, that "alle Aufklärung ist nie Zweck, sondern immer Mittel" that criticism is also only a means and never an end in itself. See Norton, Robert E.: Herder as a Critical Contemporary. In: Adler/Koepke (eds.), *A Companion*, p. 354.
In my view, however, Herder's position in the early period would better be captured if we see criticism and philosophy as the way in which enlightenment is realized. This, however, presupposes that we distinguish between Enlightenment as it was *de facto* carried out in Herder's time (as a means and not an end in itself) and Enlightenment as it could, optimally, be if it subjected itself to self-criticism.

IV. Anthropology and the Turn Towards Humanity

Herder, we have seen, criticizes school philosophy and a model of learning that is based on doctrines and passive repetition. Upon articulating his own view of philosophy, Herder not only seeks to identify the aims and outcomes of his alternative model, but also to find a way in which these aims can be conveyed in a non-didactic and inspiring manner. This last section deals with Herder's response to this challenge.

In the spirit of the Enlightenment, the Bern prize contest asks: Can the truths of philosophy be useful? Herder takes the answer to be in the affirmative: Philosophy has a truth and this truth is useful in that it consists in a capacity to perfect and cultivate a use of reason that, ultimately, proves to be a condition for citizenship. Yet the usefulness of philosophy cannot be theoretically deduced. Nor can it be laid out as a set of discursive doctrines. Rather, its truths have to be realized in and through the very practice of philosophy itself. By analyzing the reasons for and limitations of its own status quo, philosophy has already begun to exercise its critical capacity. Hence there is no distinction, in Herder's work, between the tools of analysis and self-critique and the new philosophy he is proposing.

The anthropological turn seeks to steer clear of the two (for Herder closely related) fallacies of philosophy: the formalization and the professionalization of critical thought. It seeks reflectively to make human being the very core of philosophy itself. In cultivating the capacity to reach a truer understanding of oneself, others, and the world, philosophy realizes the human potential by performatively demonstrating that "each human being is free and independent from others".[53] As Herder puts it, the ultimate goal of philosophy is one of emancipation, to improve the state "from below".[54] Philosophy, in this form, is an ongoing process; it cannot be laid out as a theory but ought, instead, to be demonstrated in practice: by concrete examples of philosophizing.

Herder's 1765 essay is such an example. It shows how philosophy, understood as a process of *Bildung* (as different from *Erziehung* and passive learning), can stake out the cure to the problems of its present state. Herder speaks of this process of *Bildung* as a logic that is "not yet invented," one

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53 *PW* 25.

54 *PW* 25. Hence Berlin is right in claiming that "The German mission [according to Herder] is not to conquer; it is to be a nation of thinkers and educators" Berlin: *Three Critics*, p. 185. He is wrong, however, in that he fails to recognize the critical-reflective commitments of Herder's educational project.

that is not based in "rules but requires much philosophical spirit for its application".[55] In taking on this task, philosophy does not present itself as opposed to healthy understanding, but as healthy understanding prescribing a cure against its own tendency to abstraction and isolation.[56] Just as first nature everywhere cures itself, so our second nature, our linguistically mediated capacity for critical-reflective thinking, ought to find a way out of its present impasse. With this claim, Herder moves from a negative critique of the present state of philosophy to a positive determination – or, better still, performative demonstration – of its promise.

What is unique about Herder's response to the Bern challenge is therefore not his emphasis on the usefulness of the discipline – that was part of the question posed by the jury and, as such, reflective of a larger Enlightenment mentality – but the very effort, via an emphasis on the critical-reflective nature of philosophy, to see the usefulness of philosophy as intrinsically linked up with the very practice of the discipline, its ongoing commitment to *Bildung*, rather than its final results. As such, one cannot ask for the particular truths of philosophy at a theoretical level alone. In educating critical thinkers, philosophy can only realize its truths by realizing the critical capacity of human reason as such. Hence only philosophy can come to the rescue and save philosophy. In Herder's words, "[o]nly philosophy can be an antidote for all the evil into which philosophical curiosity has plunged us".[57]

This humanist redefinition of philosophy – this understanding of philosophy as an ongoing process of *Bildung* – and not a leaving behind of the very discipline, is what is implied in Herder's anthropological turn.

55 *PW* 11.
56 Ebd.
57 *PW* 18, 19, 21.