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Vindicating Herder Beyond Historicism: Conativity, Time-Bearing, and Christopoietic Repair

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This treatise announces the Christian eschaton and its apocatastatic throughput for the covenant remnant.

ABSTRACT

Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* rests upon a decisive historical misreading. By identifying Johann Gottfried Herder with deterministic historicism, Popper rejects the one major Enlightenment thinker whose historical anthropology is ethical, linguistic, participatory, and historically open rather than deterministic or reactionary. This essay argues that Herder's comparative, philological method supplies the anthropological conditions of an authentically open society while exposing the limitations of procedural liberalism detached from metaphysical anthropology.

The argument proceeds beyond Herder by relaunching the theological immanence toward which his thought already points rather than by constructing another theological system. Herder increasingly serves as the historical doorway into that relaunch rather than as its final destination. Through a Shema-Christological account of repentantly vectored conativity, language, archive, milieu, and historical formation become accountable as the ethically aligning fruits of conativity bearing time toward God and neighbor. Historicist investigation therefore becomes a disciplined descent into language-group archives

through which awareness is retrained into repentant consciousness rather than an exercise in historical prediction or cultural relativism.

This relocation also reframes the history of modern philosophy. Rather than narrating modernity as secularization's de novo dispensation of metaphysics, the essay argues that successive philosophical movements progressively abstract theological predicates from their living bearer, producing forms of predicate theft culminating in contemporary computational susceptual engineering and artificial intelligence. The distinction between concepts and susceptibles explains why computational systems may route susceptibility while remaining incapable of accountable conceptual judgment.

The essay thereby redirects intellectual history toward Christopoietic theology without converting theology into another transcendental architecture. Open-ended Christo-immanent poiesis, rather than constructive theology that supposes system, provides its directive theological mode. Intellectual history becomes the medium through which theological immanence is reopened: historical investigation, philology, poetic witness, neighbor-bearing, and covenantal repair become the continuing disciplines of that reopening. Herder is vindicated as an indispensable inaugurator of this relaunch rather than as its terminus. The resulting Christopoietic historicism grounds the open society in repentantly vectored conativity, time-bearing, neighbor accountability, and the anthropology of apocatastatic repair rather than procedural neutrality, deterministic historicism, or transcendental metaphysical conceit.

Karl Popper's *Open Society*[\[1\]](#) is founded on a misreading of historicism and a crucial omission. It builds from a false genealogy. He snuffs an ally as he encircles Kant and Hegel and lets them abide as the "rationalizing" progressives. While claiming to oppose deterministic accounts of history, Popper invalidates and then ignores Johann Gottfried Herder, the one thinker who articulated a non-deterministic, ethical, participatory history rooted in language, context, and prophetic imagination.

This essay argues that Popper's dismissal of Herder, like many others presented in the concluding Appendix do likewise, is not incidental but, as increasingly revealed in this historical moment, foundational and apocalyptic: it reveals a metaphysical deficit in Popper's project, repeated across mid-modern liberal secularism. By contrast, Herder anticipates a reconstructive and incarnating poietics of ethical historicism that finds its theological fulfillment in a Shema-Christological conative metaphysic—where history is opened not by abstract reason but by relational grace, linguistic plurality, and moral becoming. Herder formulated the workable alternative to historicist determinism: Contextual, linguistic, conative, prophetic, participatory

history revealed in the whole genius, unshredded data, of ethnic (language group) archives with authorial identity and accountability on what brings peace and what brings tragedy.

Herder, not Popper, is the true father of the open—and *opening*—society of modernity. This retrieval of opening mode and method, not order or form, resituates historicism as a site of theological and political repair in the face of technocratic nihilism, legalistic simulation, and metaphysical collapse into pattern pinatas on the labyrinthine walls of system. Herder is not just a proto-pluralist but the forebear of post-secular, pneumatologically-inflected ethics that the postmodern has been seeking for a half-century to hang its lamp scoping immanence.

While Eric Voegelin considers his own work the metaphysical corrective Popper refuses, he still falls short of conative poesis. He, Leo Strauss, and Ortega y Gasset discern deconstructing historicism but could not, lacking appropriate metaphysics, unify contexts without relativism or colonialism.

The Shema-Christological, conative metaphysic[2] is the culminating framework that integrates what the radically secular Popper misses, and what Herder anticipates but did not fulfill. Herder's idea of context tied to Christological conation[3] is the laid groundwork of the true “Open Society,” now made metaphysical, ethical, and pneumatological.

This is the eschatological path forward in the current crisis of history. Not merely by Herder's rehabilitation but with a theological and poetic reconceptualization of open society grounded in relational ethics, linguistic plurality, and substrate care.

By anticipating modern Pentecost--its genealogy in the *Protestant Enlightenment* of ethical becoming--Herder is the true father of open history, not Popper's rationalizing conceit of avoiding metaphysics through solipsism. What has been staked is the recovery of metaphysics in the conative—the heart's lead of cognition, and the latter's necessary reorientation and repair.

Glossary of recurring terms in this treatise. Definitions are *operative* (how the term functions here), not exhaustive.

- Apocatastasis (ἀποκατάστασις): *Restorative* “*setting-right*” language drawn from Acts 3:21. Used here primarily as *restorative repair-through-history* (a divine-human telos of renewal), not as a blanket claim about universal salvation in late antique debates.
- Open Society: Popper's political-epistemic ideal of institutional openness to criticism and reform; used here as a *contested concept*, with an argument that Herder supplies the deeper anthropological/linguistic conditions of genuine openness.

- Historicism: A family term. Here it is distinguished as:
 - *Deterministic historicism*: history governed by discoverable laws/inevitable ends (the target of Popper's critique).
 - *Ethical/participatory historicism* (Herder): history as context-shaped moral becoming mediated by language, culture, and formation—not lawlike destiny.
- Teleology / Telic: Oriented toward an end (telos). Used here *ethically* (formation toward virtue, repair, maturity) rather than as a claim that history is mechanistically predetermined.
- Teleiosis (Heb. 5:13–14): Maturation through trained discernment; invoked as a biblical anchor for *moral formation* rather than mere cognitive sophistication.
- Conation: The *intentional, volitional, desire-laden* dimension of the person (the “heart’s lead” in willing, valuing, and acting) applied to the created substrate on which the person is occasioned.. Used as a primary driver of ethical formation and historical agency in context.
- Shema-Christological: A framing that ties moral perception and action to the Shema’s covenantal demand (Deut. 6) as read through Christ’s fulfillment (Matt. 22:32-37). In practice: *neighbor-directed accountability in ephemeral context*, not abstract system.
- Humanität (Herder): “Humanization” as *formation into fuller humanity* through culture, language, and moral development. Used here as *ontogenetic* (formation of persons and communities) rather than as species-destiny guaranteed by historical law.
- Bildung: Formation/cultivation through learning, practice, and cultural transmission. Here: *ethical-aesthetic formation*, not merely credentialing or refinement.
- Empfinden: “Felt-perception” / affective apprehension. Here: disciplined, interpretively significant sensibility—not raw emotionalism.
- Erzählen: Narration as a mode of knowing. Here: *ethically freighted storytelling* that carries memory, obligation, and communal self-understanding.
- Geist / Genius: Geist as a people’s historically embodied “spirit” (cultural-intellectual-moral character) expressed in language and forms; “genius” as the formative capacity within persons and communities. Used here *philologically*, not

biologically.

- Ethnos (as used here): A *language-group* and its transmitted archives (songs, myths, texts, practices). Explicitly *not* a genetic/racial category.
- Gnosticism (Voegelin's usage; "gnostic impulse"): The urge to claim salvific knowledge that overmasters history and legitimates ideological closure. Used here as a diagnosis of *esoteric/elite possession of truth* that displaces shared moral formation.
- Egophanic: Self-authorizing "revelation" of the ego—truth grounded in self-certifying interiority rather than accountable relation.
- Metaphysics (in this treatise): Not "speculation about hidden worlds," but the *account of what reality demands of us* (obligation, relationality, responsibility, ends). A normative depth grammar, not a system for domination.
- Poiesis: Making as ethically charged participation—language and art as *repairing witness* rather than ornament, mere technique, or institutional "ritual."
- Logos: The re-ordering Word/meaning through which vector reality is made intelligible and ethically claim-bearing. Used both theologically (Johannine resonance) and anthropologically (language as moral medium).
- Immanence: God's nearness in lived, historical reality. Here: not a denial of transcendence, but a refusal of "distance" that evades responsibility.
- Kairos: Charged "season" of decision/rupture—time as morally urgent, not merely chronological flow.
- Perichoresis: Mutual indwelling (Trinitarian term). Used non-analogically as a way to speak of *relational dynamism* rather than static structure or appeal thereto.
- Simulation: A model that substitutes for lived accountable reality—especially when it *mimics* moral reasoning while evacuating obligation.
- "Pattern routing," "dechordation," "necromancy/neuromancy" (local metaphors): Polemical figures for the way technical systems can sever language from accountable context and reduce judgment to patterned outputs. Read these as *diagnostic metaphors of manipulation of pattern reception*, with overlap into designed occult practice mediated by algorithmic computations.

I. Introduction: The Stakes of Historicism

History has always been the battleground for the soul of human freedom. Whether in the prophetic imagination of Scripture, the Enlightenment hope for progress, or the despairing recursion of modern simulation, the question remains: Is history governed by necessity or opened by ethics, by virtue? In the twentieth century, Karl Popper believed he answered, by rerouting, this question, attacking “historicism”—the idea that history unfolds according to discoverable laws or inevitable ends—and defending the “open society” as the only safeguard of human agency. Yet Popper’s victory was precarious and self-proclaimed. By rejecting all metaphysics as dangerous, he preserved freedom only procedurally, not ethically; only negatively, not creatively.^[4] And most fatally, he mischaracterized the one thinker who had already envisioned a non-deterministic, ethical, participatory view of history: Johann Gottfried Herder. Popper’s misreading of Herder is the fatal flaw of his entire project repeated by others since Herder’s death (see Appendix B, below).

This treatise argues that the way forward lies not in abandoning metaphysics (as mid-modern philosophy has, with its resulting metacrisis),^[5] but in redeeming it through the Shema-Christological, conative metaphysic of history, grounded in repentance (metanoia), ethical perception (dianoia), and poetic participation (poiesis not ritual, vector not form) within covenantal community. By re-evaluating Popper, Voegelin, Strauss, and Herder, it becomes clear that Herder’s thought must be vindicated, Popper’s must be rejected, and historicism must be replaced—not by procedural liberalism or denaturing, esoteric withdrawal, but by prophetic, participatory eschatology aligned with Hebrews 5:14 and Jeremiah 31–34. Only then can history be truly open—not by chaos and reaction, but to telic grace.

II. Popper’s Positivism against Herder’s Investigative Empiricism

Karl Popper’s *The Open Society and Its Enemies* constructs a broad and once-influential indictment of “historicism”—defined by him as the belief in historical inevitability and laws of destiny guiding collective progress. He renders “historicism” synonymous with totalitarian temptation. His critique, sweeping in ambition and validated in certain contexts of cognition-centered modernity, targets thinkers from Plato to Marx as precursors to authoritarianism. Johann Gottfried Herder is briefly conscripted into this genealogy of guilt (Popper 2013, 264-5). Popper’s guilt-attributing misreading constitutes a structural failure of Popper’s work—his historical epistemology is built on a rejection of the very kind of contextual, comparative, and ethically grounded hermeneutic Herder inaugurates. Popper distorts Herder’s actual method and moral vision. Herder’s historicism is not deterministic, materially utopian, statically romantic or formalist, or elitist,^[6] but rather comparative, empirical, and committed to ethical, then kinesthetic, maturation (*teleiosis* Hebrews 5:13-14) spreading one righteous individual at a time.

For Popper, “historicism” names the grand temptation to read history as if it were a script already written: a process driven by discoverable laws, inner essences, or an inescapable dialectic, and therefore predictable by those who claim privileged insight. In its many guises—from Plato’s cycles and the rule of the philosopher-king, through Hegel’s World Spirit marching toward freedom, to Marx’s sequence from capitalism to communism, and later civilizational prophecies in Spengler, Toynbee, or Heidegger—the common thread is determined teleology. History is said to be going somewhere definite. Once that “somewhere” is asserted, it is a short step to the political corollary: those who “know” the direction acquire a mandate to steer, shepherd, or coerce society into fixed alignment with destiny. Popper calls this the “prophetic” theory of history.

His rejection begins with a logical point that looks almost modest but is devastating to telic epistemological programs: the future growth of *knowledge* cannot be predicted in advance, because future knowledge, once acquired, changes the space of human possibilities. If we cannot foresee tomorrow’s discoveries, we cannot foresee the social transformations they precipitate; hence there can be no genuinely scientific law of historical development. Historicism, dressed as science, is fortune-telling in metaphysical garb. Even when it avoids oracular tones and contents itself with extrapolating trends, it mistakes momentum for necessity. Social trajectories are contingent: they bend with institutions, norms, choices, and accidents; reform can redirect them, and crises can reverse them.

Popper also objects on moral grounds. If history is fated, then agency withers: responsibility is sidelined by the mantra that “you cannot fight history.” In practice, that fatalism flips into its opposite—justification for oppression. The claim to possess the master key of history licenses rule by guardians, commissars, or technocrats who suppress dissent in the name of inevitability. The politics of historicism is thus structurally anti-critical: it immunizes itself by obscurity, elastic predictions, and appeals to esoteric understanding—“you don’t grasp the dialectic”—so that counter-evidence never truly counts. Dogma crowds out inquiry.

Against this, Popper advances an ethic of openness. History has no fixed destiny; it is the cumulative result of human problem-solving under uncertainty. We cannot predict the future, but we can improve it—piecemeal—by building institutions that welcome criticism, protect freedom, and correct errors. Science progresses by bold conjectures and severe tests; a decent polity should do likewise, preferring reforms to revolutions, learning from failure rather than repressing it. Where historicism sacralizes systems and prophets, the open society distributes authority, privileges revisability, and ties power to mechanisms of accountability.

Popper defines historicism as “an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal aim” and that history unfolds according to inexorable laws. For Popper, the danger lies in treating history as destiny rather than an arena for individual responsibility and institutional reform. He writes:

“The belief in historical destiny is sheer superstition, and we must reject it if we want to keep our freedom.” (Open Society, Vol. I, p. 3)

Yet Popper fails to distinguish between prophetic critique and metaphysical determinism. His depiction of Herder’s “dangerous irrational romanticism” as indicated by Herder’s claims toward ethnic particularism:

The most natural state...is a state composed of a single people with a single national character ... A people is a natural growth like a family, only spread more widely ... As in all human communities, ... so, in the case of the state, the natural order is the best—that is to say, the order in which everyone fulfills that function for which nature intended him (Popper 2013, 265).

Romantics are later tied by Popper as precursors to Hegel and eventually Hitler. In the case of Herder, such an allusion of tie is both historically false and conceptually shallow.

Three defining criticisms follow from Popper’s errant misreadings: 1) Popper explicitly criticizes Herder for connecting the idea of a “natural” state to the concept of national character, especially one defined by language and shared culture. He writes:

“Herder developed the theory that the state must correspond to the national group, and that this group is defined by its culture, especially by its language” (Popper 2013, 265).

Popper characterizes this notion as a foundational myth of modern nationalism and identifies it as historically dangerous.

2) He presents Herder as a progenitor of tribal collectivism and romantic nationalism, a thinker whose legacy allegedly underwrites the reactivation of archaic primordia within totalitarian ideologies.

An allusive tie to the claim that Romantic historicism, though at first not aggressive, later grew into the modern nationalism that destroyed freedom and civilization in so many parts of the world [7] is unsubstantiated in Herder’s case. Though once a fellow-traveler with Goethe in poetry’s ethno-linguistic interests, Herder decisively departed from Goethe’s atelic historicism. Goethe’s Enlightenment vision emphasized “assertive freedom” for the poet; Herder instead sought spiritual and ethical progress for linguistic communities.¹

¹ See Meinecke, Friedrich. 1972. *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*. Translated by Anderson, J. E. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 384. “Goethe preceded Ranke in breaking down the barriers imposed upon historical thought by the interpretation of universal history in strictly teleological terms...Herder struggled to free himself from a teleological outlook, yet remained bound by it to the end and so produced a mixture of secular and Christian motivation.” (Ibid., 477).

Read as he intended, Herder emphasizes plurality wrought from duty, not hegemony of an elite's freedom. Each nation, defined by culture and language, carries intrinsic worth and contributes to humanity's diversity: [\[8\]](#)

The most natural state is a state composed of a single people with a single national character ... A people is a natural growth like a family, only spread more widely ... As in all human communities, ... so, in the case of the state, the natural order is the best—that is to say, the order in which everyone fulfills that function for which nature intended him (*Ideas towards a Philosophy of the History of Mankind* [1785] cited in Popper 2013, 265).

He never calls for aggressive national unification or socially exclusionary politics. Rather, this is a cultural pluralism rooted in mutual development, not ethno-romantic nationalism.

This is Popper's rebuke of large-scale, homogenized political projects—precisely what totalitarian nationalism attempts. Herder upholds small-scale and contextualized, historically-rooted polities, not modern statist nationalism of top-down homeostatic surveillance and *intervention* (see the discussion of Pearl et al., below). Ironically, the very open society Popper defends finds its anthropological and poetic warrant not in Popper's own cognitive individualism, but in Herder's historically attuned, ethically oriented, conative anthropology. The Open Society requires Herder, not Popper.

Herder's critique of the Enlightenment—particularly its moral atrophy and hypocrisy—centers on what Lessing famously described as the 'Ditch': the view that contingent historical truths cannot ground necessary rational truths, while Herder believed that the intellectual world and poetic art of peoples have a religious duty. –Hösle, Vittorio. 2017. *A Short History of German Philosophy*. Originally published as *Eine kurze Geschichte der deutschen Philosophie*; Verlag C.H.Beck oHG, München 2013. Translated by Steven Rendall. Princeton University Press, 87-90.

Herder's *duty* was the foundation of teleological progress testified by ethnic linguistic archives, while Lessing's "ditch" of cultural contingency leads to relativism and despair as noted elsewhere in this treatise. Herder viewed the historical and linguistic archives of peoples not as static identities but as sacred witnesses to a teleological unfolding of moral and divine purpose.

Where Goethe pursued aesthetic freedom and Lessing posited a fissure between historical and rational truths, *Herder uniquely retained a teleological moral vision—positioning the historical-linguistic record not as relativist drift but as divine pedagogy. Herder's approach anticipates non-statist, comparative models of ethical historicism, thus preempting countercharges of crypto-nationalism.*

3) Popper draws directly on Kant's sharp critique of Herder, citing him to underscore the perceived vagueness and rhetorical excess in Herder's style that sought metaphors and simplistic syllogism: "Herder's empty verbalism, which was criticized by Kant." (Popper 2013, 674 n. 55). Yet like the author of this treatise, Herder's prose style is inseparable from his gnoseology: metaphor and analogy are not ornamental but are cognitively integral to his ethical and narrational historicism (Erzählen derived from Empfinden).

As a student and then rival, Herder anticipates Kant's critique and defends the empirical integration of imagination, embodiment, and historical knowledge:

"Language becomes a natural organ of the understanding, a sense of the human soul" [—*Treatise on the Origin of Language* quoted in Herder 2002, 97]

This is not irrationalism; it is a phenomenological historicism attuned to an ethnic (NOT genetic) Geist/genius: linguistic development and embodiment of Logos, resisting universalist formalism one individual at a time.

Popper's quarrel with historicism is both epistemic and civic: the promise of certainty becomes the pretext for domination. An open society refuses that bargain. It wagers instead on fallible reason, public criticism, and the moral dignity of choosing—together—without guarantees. Popper attacks historicism in politics and epistemology, and thus missequences the anthropology that makes historical progress inevitable—the achievement of the opening human heart aligning with divine conation—the human *imago Dei* is the trustee of the earth's covenantal throughput. Popper is rationalist and cognitive, denying metaphysics. Herder is broadly accepting of linguistically-mediated anthropology that begins in the heart and leads toward human progress by disciplining the homuncular eagle ever launching from its armchair to fall into perdition's stratagems. Open society is not centripetally structured in *cogito*, but by spiritual and anthropological *religio* that centrifugally reaches out in investigation and hospitality.

III. Herder's Open Historicism

Herder's relational vision of polity prizes plural centers of formation and cultural hospitality over the imposition of universal[izing] logic. It frames the open society as peripatetic and Abrahamic, journeying outward toward encountering its *vis viva/vis elan*, its metaphysical center, not templing inward toward epistemic predictability embedded in static absolutes and manipulative control by hierarchs and chialists:

The mind is exalted and expanded when it ventures to step outside the constricted circle that climate and education have drawn around us and learns from other nations at least what we may lack. How much, which we long presumed essential, we find elsewhere to be wanting and indeed superfluous! Notions that we have often recognized as the most general principles of human reason vanish from this place or that according to the

climate, as the land vanishes in a haze behind the departing ship. What one nation considers indispensable to its sphere of thought has never crossed the mind of another or is even judged pernicious. Thus we wander about the earth in a labyrinth of human fancies; but where is the center of the labyrinth back to which all the winding paths lead, like refracted rays to the sun? That is the question.[\[9\]](#)

“Among whole ages, peoples, and sects...philosophy [is a proteus...it] has had to survive this metamorphosis of judgments to one time and among one people, indeed often in different phases of one and the same person.”[\[10\]](#)

Popper conflates reactionary historicisms—those of Hegel or Marx—by a briefest of handwaving toward Herder’s ethical historicism, which denies necessity and seeks, through inductive and comparative methods, to understand cultures in their unique temporal and linguistic unfolding.

Herder’s vision of *Humanität* is ontogenetic, not phylogenetic or racially nationalist: it is grounded in the ethical and aesthetic (in that order) development of the individual genius embedding culture, and of cultures within humanity—not a predetermined teleology but a dynamic plurality of moral-emotive development in ethical vectors of repair, not attainment of formal or aesthetic stasis.

Popper’s miscategorization of Herder’s metaphysical *taxis* exposes, in nuce, a central, fatal flaw. Popper places Herder on a trajectory toward what he terms dangerous romantic nationalism. Yet Popper’s own latent liberal eschatology betrays a gnostic mode: his unwitting aspects of gnostic closure (e.g., epistemic evacuation, procedural self-grounding) even as he opposes the gnostic impulse as such. These impulses Eric Voegelin tries to refute with greater coherence [\[11\]](#). The Christian pastor Herder’s ontogenetic teleiosis is vindicated at the eschaton as his vision resists the gnostic distortions-- esoteric closure or quasi-gnostic elitism--seen in other Platonically-aligned thinkers like Strauss and Ortega y Gasset (see below).

Herder’s historicism is animated by a comparative anthropology rooted in the belief that all peoples possess a capacity for ethical and aesthetic development. His term *Humanität* designates a process of becoming fully human—not as a species-telos in the Hegelian sense, but as an unfolding of potential within each culture and individual.

Herder’s method emphasizes archives, myth, folklore, and language—not to reify nations, but to reveal the ethical imagination of a people’s *Geist*—its assembly of recognized genius--as expressed in linguistic craft. His historicism is empirical and pluralistic.

Before the argument turns from Herder's archival method toward Christian poietics and the repair of tragedy's terminal logic, the method itself requires specification: how does Herderian historicist investigation move from language-group archive to ethical illumination embedded in history without collapsing into determinism, racialism, or abstract system?

Without a unifying metaphysics, history becomes an ambiguous morality play: a long oscillating arc drawn by rival foci of the good. Phylogenetic investigation of particular ethnic archives can separate the signal from the world-assembly noise.

Herder's contribution to historicist research begins with language, historical plurality, and formative transmission. Before extending Herder's philological method through Shema-Christological conativity, one theological clarification is required. Herder's retrieval of language should not be confused with the broader eighteenth-century reaction against Enlightenment rationalism represented by Johann Georg Hamann. Hamann rightly demolishes rationalism's abstraction of language into speculative metaphysics. Yet his corrective ultimately leaves theology centered upon language itself. Herder's historical anthropology opens a further path, one completed only by the Christopoietic extension developed in this treatise.

EXCURSUS: Repentantly Vectored Conativity Before Language—Completing Hamann Through Herder

Hamann's attack upon Enlightenment rationalism² remains one of Enlightenment theology's indispensable acts of iconoclasm. His comparison between mathematics and metaphysics exposes a confusion that has haunted Western thought for centuries. Mathematical certainty derives from the constructive discipline by which its symbols

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A good many analytic judgments indeed imply a gnostic hatred of matter or else a mystic love of form. Yet the synthesis of predicate with subject (the proper object of pure reason) has for its middle term nothing more than an old, cold prejudice for mathematics before and behind it. The apodeictic certainty of mathematics depends mainly on a curiological, so to speak, portrayal of the simplest, most sensible intuition and then on the ease of proving and representing its synthesis and the possibility of its synthesis in obvious constructions or symbolic formulas and equations, by whose sensibility all misunderstanding is excluded of itself. However, while geometry determines and fixes even the ideality of its concepts of points without parts, of lines and surfaces even in ideally divided dimensions, by means of empirical signs and figures, metaphysics abuses the word-signs and figures of speech of our empirical knowledge by treating them as nothing but hieroglyphs and types of ideal relations. Through this learned troublemaking it works the honest decency of language into such a meaningless, rutting, unstable, indefinite something = X that nothing is left but a windy sough, a magic shadowplay, at most, as the wise Helvetius says, the talisman and rosary of a transcendental superstitious belief in entia rationis, their empty sacks and slogans.

- Johann Georg Hamann, *The Metacritique of the Purism of Reason* (1784).

remain tethered to sensible intuition. Suspects of faulty metaphysics repeatedly sever that tether. They elevate inherited predicates, analogies, and linguistic figures into a congeries of independent realities until language ceases to witness the One and instead manufactures a subordinated world of speculative entities. Hamann's ridicule of *entia rationis* therefore strikes the proper target. Theology cannot survive once language forgets its creaturely dependence and begins treating its own abstractions as self-subsisting realities.

Yet Hamann's own corrective never escapes the terrain he has exposed. His struggle remains principally a struggle over language. Rationalism misuses words; revelation, as mysticism's private conceit, restores their symbolic depth; poetry and figure recover what systematic reason has flattened. Language thus remains the privileged theater in which theology is contested. Even as Hamann dismantles rationalism, he leaves intact the assumption that language itself is the primary bearer of theological reality—language as absolute meaning-making inside time's universal dimension.

The more fundamental question lies elsewhere. Language never becomes the ground of truth because language never bears repentance and therefore trains nominalism. To escape into the false terrain of the non-repentant awareness of the conative absolute, words are never permitted either to turn or to refuse turning. They neither love nor betray the neighbor. They accumulate neither guilt nor mercy. The primary reality from which theological truth emerges is conative rather than linguistic. Hearing precedes speech. The living creature addressed by God precedes symbol. The heart capable of turning or refusing to turn precedes doctrine. Israel's confession begins with the imperative, "Hear," rather than with the Word as an object of philosophical reflection. The Shema locates theology in living reception before conceptual articulation.

For that reason repentance cannot be understood as conceptual revision or symbolic re-description. Repentance is the re-vectoring of conativity. It is the historical turning of the living person toward God and neighbor through Christ. This movement bears time before it bears propositions. The one who repents becomes purified through the ethically aligning fruits of repentantly vectored conativity, among which conceptual judgment itself emerges, rather than first acquiring better concepts. Concepts therefore possess no independent sovereignty. They are historical fruits borne by persons whose lives have entered covenantal sequence and correction rather than primitive cognitive atoms or transcendental conditions of experience. Theology consequently begins with Christ's reorientation of the living heart rather than with either concepts or language.

This relocation changes the entire question of metaphysics. Hamann rightly rejects speculative systems that mistake linguistic figures for realities, but his own appeal to symbolic language still leaves theological gravity within discourse. The deeper problem

is Western theology's repeated search for certainty in secondary, mystical realities rather than metaphysics' abuse of words. Sometimes that certainty is sought in mathematics, sometimes in ontology, sometimes in symbolic participation, sometimes in language itself. In every case the search begins too late. The decisive event has already occurred in the living person who either bears time toward the neighbor or refuses that vocation. Theology therefore reconstructs itself by recovering the anthropology from which truthful language can arise rather than by recovering better symbols.

The distinction between concepts and susceptibles clarifies why this point has become critical. Susceptibles belong to routed susceptibilities within trained geometries of salience and transition. They neither repent nor bear responsibility. They are patterns of social and institutioned alliance that disaccumulate time rather than accountable individual judgments trained to accumulate time. Concepts, by contrast, are the ethically aligning fruits of repentantly vectored conativity that accumulate time rather than engineered outcomes of increasingly complex systems or more sophisticated susceptibles. To confuse the two is an anthropological collapse rather than merely an epistemological mistake. Modern computational systems manipulate susceptibles with extraordinary effectiveness while simultaneously encouraging the fiction that conceptual judgment has been reproduced. The result is predicate theft: the transfer of predicates belonging only to living, time-bearing persons onto systems incapable of repentance, mercy, covenant, or accountable repair.

Seen from this perspective, Hamann's critique remains profoundly true while remaining historically incomplete. He tears down the false confidence of Enlightenment rationalism, yet the center of theological gravity still rests too heavily upon mystical and analogical language. Christ redeems persons rather than principally redeeming discourse. The Word became flesh to restore repentantly vectored conativity within history rather than to establish a superior linguistic theory. Language follows that restoration as witness to the One's reunification. Concepts emerge as its ethically aligning fruits. Poetry becomes one mode by which borne time is remembered. Theology itself becomes the disciplined testimony of persons whose lives have been redirected toward the neighbor under the judgment and mercy of God.

The deepest answer to rationalism is Christopoietic life bearing embodied conativity rather than mathematics corrected by poetry or metaphysics corrected by symbolism. Only where conativity has been repentantly re-vectored can concepts become truthful, language become trustworthy, and theology bear witness to adjusted time fields rather than manufacture worlds of its own imagining.

The constructive extension offered by this treatise begins from those Herderian premises and rereads them through Shema-Christological conation: hearing before seeing, archive before judgment, descent into milieu by the buckled heart before ascent into illuminated consciousness, and Humanität as repair-through-history. Herder supplies the historical-philological method: language, tradition, milieu, and Humanität as the field of vital civil-historical inquiry. This treatise supplies the Shema-Christological extension: archive must be descended into and borne across time so that awareness may be retrained into repentant consciousness.

I. Herder's Method: Language, Archive, Milieu, Humanität

Herder's actual method begins with the claim that language is not a detachable instrument of thought. It is constitutive of human understanding. In *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, he writes that "language becomes a natural organ of the understanding, a sense of the human soul" (*Philosophical Writings*, p. 97). This warrants a literary-historicist method that does not approach peoples first through abstract political categories, but through the forms in which their thought, memory, affect, and communal life have become speakable.

That method is comparative and plural. Herder reads literature across peoples, times, and languages, not as a fixed canon of universal forms but as historically inflected expression. In the *Fragments*, he describes literature as "a true Proteus" when pursued "through peoples and times and languages" (*Philosophical Writings*, p. 51). The historical investigator must therefore follow literature through its mutations: song, epic, proverb, lament, myth, ritual speech, dramatic form, and national idiom. Literature becomes a mobile archive of human formation rather than an ornament laid atop history.

Herder also rejects detached example-hunting. In *Ideas*, he insists that civil history must be approached not through "isolated examples drawn from all nations, ages, and regions of the world," but through "the philosophical and vital exposition of civil history" (*Ideas*, p. 249). This is the methodological root of what this treatise calls ethno-archival investigation: the reading of cultural wholes rather than shredded data. Archive here means a living configuration of language, tradition, custom, memory, law, poetry, religion, gesture, and historical pressure.

Herder's method is also environmental. *Ideas* explicitly asks, "What Is Climate, and How Does It Affect the Formation of Man's Body and Soul?" and then treats sensibility, imagination, practical understanding, instincts, and happiness as varying with climate, organization, tradition, habit, and mode of life (*Ideas*, Book 7–8, pp. 174–219). The archive is therefore not only textual. It is ecological and historical: climate, soil, river, mountain, migration route, famine, harvest, household, temple, battlefield, and burial ground become media through which a people's language and sensibility are formed.

Herder's account of language in *Ideas* further grounds this method. Book 9 names language as "The Particular Means of Forming Man" (*Ideas*, p. 231), and the surrounding discussion joins

language to tradition, education, imitation, reason, religion, government, and the arts (*Ideas*, pp. 225–249). His method therefore treats language-groups as historical bearers of formation, not as racial essences. The relevant category is not bloodline but transmitted sensibility: what a people has learned to hear, speak, remember, fear, desire, worship, narrate, and repair.

Herder's end is Humanität. In Book 15 of *Ideas*, he states the heading directly: "Humanity Is the End of Human Nature," and links this end to the fate of mankind being placed in human hands (*Ideas*, p. 425). He also frames destructive forces within a larger preservative order: "All Destructive Forces in Nature Must Not Only Yield, in the Course of Time, to the Preservative Forces, but Must Themselves Ultimately Promote the Consummation of the Whole" (*Ideas*, p. 429). This is not yet the apocatastatic language of this treatise, but it supplies primary warrant for reading Herder's historicism as ethically teleological without making it deterministic.

II. This Treatise's Extension: Shema, Conation, Ascent and Descent

The term **ethno-archival investigation** is this treatise's constructive name for Herder's method. Herder gives the warrant: language forms thought; literature mutates through peoples, times, and languages; civil history must be read vitally rather than by isolated examples; climate and tradition shape the body and soul; Humanität is the end of human nature and the beginning of its immanent essence. This treatise extends that basis through Shema-Christological conative anthropology.

The first extension is **Shema-awareness**. Herder does not formulate his method through Deuteronomy 6, but his account of language as the organ of understanding permits a Shemaic recasting: hearing precedes seeing, address precedes mastery, heart-led receptivity precedes detached cognition. The investigator begins by listening to the archive as addressed speech, not by imposing a grid of abstract historical law or forced natural sequence.

The second extension is the ascent/descent sequence, with helical movement rather than linear:

Shema-awareness → Erschauen¹ (immediate awareness) → Erzählen¹ (first narration) → Bildung (formation through archive and milieu) → Empfinden (bearing and suffering) → Erzählen² (renarration through lived experience) → Erschauen' (repentant consciousness; (collective consciousness of time-bearing phylogenies).

The sequence loops as a negentropic spiral until consciousness emerges as accountable time-bearing rather than immediate awareness. The second *Erschauen* does not return to the first unchanged. It returns transformed. Seeing becomes consciousness because time has been borne.

There is no consciousness without time-bearing suffering, no suffering without scars, and no scars without stories. Stories are not authored in the abstractions of the mind. They are inscribed in the concrete reality of a life lived, where concepts mature through objective empathy and

accountable participation in the lives of others. Because these stories are written in borne life rather than speculative abstraction, they carry the power to enter other lives, widening sympathy, awakening discernment, calling forth repentance, and gathering time into covenantal repair.

This sequence also clarifies the distinction between susceptibles and concepts. Susceptibles are routed inclinations within a trained field: preconceptual pathways that determine what appears salient, available, desirable, or permissible before judgment begins. Concepts mature where those routed inclinations are tested, corrected, and transformed through time-bearing encounter. *Susceptibles chase ends supplied by systems. Concepts mature through conation, recollection, objective empathy, and accountable relation.* Consciousness is the fruit of that repeated transformation: awareness no longer governed by routed susceptibility, but formed into neighbor-bearing judgment.

This ladder is not Herder's explicit schema. It is this treatise's reconstruction of his literary-historicist method. **Descent** names the investigator's entry into archive, language, milieu, custom, suffering, ritual, song, and historical pressure. **Ascent** names the illumination that becomes possible only after that descent. The ascent is never escape from particularity; it is vision through particularity.

Erschauen I is the first illumination: the awakening that a people's literary forms disclose more than aesthetic surface. They reveal how a community has been addressed by existence, need, environment, fear, divine claim, and neighbor. Hebrew poetry is exemplary in this treatise because lament, praise, wisdom, covenant, exile, and prophetic speech train the whole person into responsive consciousness.

Bildung is the descent into formation. Archive is not dead storage but accumulated sensibility. Herder's categories of language, tradition, habit, and climate become, in this treatise, the formation-field in which Humanität is either trained or deformed. Myth, epic, proverb, liturgy, gesture, and folk memory are read as moral media.

Empfinden is then interpreted as disciplined felt-perception: the moment when archive becomes neighbor-discovery. This is your extension. Herder warrants the importance of affect, language, sensation, and formation, but this treatise sharpens Empfinden into neighbor-bearing participation: the self learns to bear another's vulnerability within its own historical consciousness.

The heart's center stages and retrains Erzählen: Narration is reread after the neighbor has appeared. Myth and memory cease to function as self-confirming identity and become obligations. A people's archive asks whether inherited forms intensify entropy, justify domination, or open repair. At this stage, **collective repentance** becomes historical kairesis: a culture learns to see differently because it has learned to bear what its prior narration concealed.

Erschauen II is the higher ascent: consciousness as illuminated participation in shared life. It is not Goethean overview, Kantian abstraction, or Popperian procedural revisability. It is vision after descent: a beholding of history as co-borne existence. Suffering, flourishing, language, memory, and destiny are shared. Conation becomes collective, and Humanität appears as unfinished historical vocation.

III. Methodological Rule for Historicist Research

Herder's primary input is this: begin with language, tradition, climate, literature, and the vital exposition of civil history; read peoples from within their formed worlds; distinguish language-group and culture from race; treat Humanität as the ethical end of historical formation.

This treatise's extension is this: such research must move by accountable descent and ascent. Descend into archive before judging. Descend into milieu before theorizing. Descend into language before abstracting. Descend into suffering before narrating progress. Then ascend through what has been faithfully entered: toward Empfinden, retrained narration, repentance, and widened consciousness.

Herder therefore supplies the historical-philological method; this treatise supplies the Shema-Christological completion. Herder gives language, formation, plurality, climate, tradition, and Humanität. This treatise names their conative arc: archive heard, milieu entered, neighbor discovered, narration repented, consciousness widened, and history opened toward repair.

EXCURSUS: Predicate Theft and the Abstract Trajectory of Modern Philosophy

The principal failure of modern philosophy is not that it secularized theology. Such a charge is historically too crude. Theology continued to supply modern philosophy with many of its deepest concerns: existence, language, history, dialogue, conscience, temporality, freedom, and the moral life. The decisive rupture occurred elsewhere. In its program to rid secular thought of metaphysics, modern philosophy abstracted theology's predicates from their living bearer. Once detached from conative accountability before God and neighbor, these predicates gradually became autonomous systems. This treatise names that transfer **predicate theft**: living predicates are removed from the covenantal bearer who alone can sustain guilt, mercy, repentance, gratitude, forgiveness, worship, obligation, and accountable repair, then reassigned to increasingly self-sufficient structures—Reason, Being, Language, History, Consciousness, Difference, Process, System, Discourse, or Communication. The resulting philosophies often preserve theology's grammar while evacuating its conative, heart-buckled anthropology.

Predicate theft is therefore never merely conceptual. Every abstraction simultaneously engineers suspects. Once language, Being, history, consciousness, freedom, or dialogue are detached from the living bearer, they begin reorganizing the routes by which later generations perceive reality. Philosophical systems do not merely teach propositions. They cultivate susceptibilities. They habituate what appears plausible, desirable, authoritative, or inevitable before explicit judgment begins. Philosophy therefore becomes one of civilization's principal instruments of susceptual engineering. Every metaphysic trains a culture's reflexes long before it persuades its intellect.

Modern philosophy may thus be reread as successive regimes of susceptual formation. Rationalism trained confidence in abstraction. Idealism trained confidence in historical necessity. Existentialism trained authenticity detached from covenant. Phenomenology trained description without sufficient teleology. Hermeneutics trained interpretation without final reconciliation. Deconstruction trained suspicion toward every settled meaning. Each movement preserved genuine theological insight while simultaneously rerouting the susceptual field through which subsequent generations learned what counted as reality.

The genealogy frequently celebrated within modern thought therefore misidentifies its own center. Radical Pietism undoubtedly influenced later philosophy by recovering existence, language, history, inwardness, and historical becoming against rationalist abstraction. Yet these were never theology's first principles. They were themselves expressions of a deeper covenantal order. Theology's primordial gift is neither language, nor temporality, nor historicity, nor dialogue, nor ontology, but living conation: the heart hearing before mastering, bearing before judging, repenting before systematizing, and answering the neighbor before constructing explanation. Language witnesses conation; it does not generate it. History records conation; it does not constitute it. Dialogue presupposes conation; it cannot manufacture covenant. Time becomes historical only because living creatures bear memory, correction, gratitude, and hope. Ontology itself exists for the flourishing of living creation before God rather than for speculative completion.

Seen from this perspective, the principal trajectories of modern philosophy appear less as outright apostasies than as progressive abstractions. Existentialism elevates existence while detaching vocation from covenantal accountability. Linguistic philosophy and hermeneutics grant language constitutive force while allowing witness to eclipse the Witness. Phenomenology discovers lived temporality while separating historical bearing from repentance. Dialogical philosophy rightly resists isolated subjectivity yet often converts neighborly obligation into reciprocal structure rather than Golden Rule deontology. Heidegger retrieves the question of Being but brackets the covenantal bearer who alone bears Being responsibly. Derrida uncovers the instability of closed systems but suspends the possibility of their Christological repair. Levinas restores ethical asymmetry through the face of the other yet leaves the conative source of that obligation insufficiently grounded in the reconciling history of God. In each case theological insight survives, but as detached predicate rather than as borne vocation.

This progressive abstraction explains why modern philosophy repeatedly oscillates between system and fragmentation, history is enlisted to perform the work of providence, politics that of covenant, and communicative proceduralism to perform the work of communion. The burden exceeds what any abstraction can bear. Systems therefore proliferate by suspect, each preserving one genuine theological intuition while losing the conative grammar that originally united them.

Herder stands at a remarkable threshold within this history. He refuses neither language nor history nor culture nor formation, but he refuses to sever them from living persons embedded within language-group archives, historical milieus, and moral becoming. His language is never autonomous discourse; it remains the organ of understanding borne through a people. His history is never deterministic process; it remains ethical participation. His *Bildung* is never credentialed refinement; it remains *Humanität* unfolding through culture, suffering, memory, and comparative encounter. Herder therefore preserves the anthropological center that much subsequent philosophy progressively abstracts. This treatise extends precisely that preservation through the Schema-Christological order. Hearing precedes seeing. Conation precedes cognition. Neighbor precedes abstraction. Time-bearing precedes system.

Philosophy's task is disciplined diagnosis of suspects—not the manufacture of autonomous systems. Theological anthropology trains the heart before it trains the intellect, because civilizations have inherited routes of susceptibility and only afterward recover concepts. Herder's philological method becomes historical investigation toward covenantal susceptual repair, recovering those pathways by which language, archive, memory, neighbor, and time mature into accountable consciousness.

A further distinction must therefore be made between the recovery of orthodoxy and the recovery of Christianity's eschatological, historical motion. Much contemporary retrieval theology identifies orthodoxy principally with an Alexandrian and Augustinian inheritance: participation, illumination, symbolic ascent, sacramental mediation, and the metaphysical return of finite things toward their eternal source. These traditions preserve what Hebrews 5 terms the "milk phase" witnesses to creation's dependence upon God. Yet when participation becomes the governing explanation of creaturely life, it subordinates historical sequence, prophetic correction, and covenantal becoming to an ontology of forms. Orthodoxy then names a recovered metaphysical architecture rather than the accountable bearing of creation through time.

Such retrieval inverts the Antiochene inheritance it claims to complete. The Antiochene impulse attends to grammatical sequence, historical particularity, bodily action, prophetic address, covenantal development, and the irreducible movement of God's dealings with living peoples. Scripture is received as historically vectored witness rather than as material awaiting absorption into a prior metaphysical order. The Antiochene discipline therefore retains an iconoclastic force of eschatological relaunch. It asks whether inherited images, analogies, institutions, and theological systems continue to bear the divine address or have become substitutes for it. Its

concern is the accountable movement of the bearer through history, not the speculative location of the bearer within an eternal hierarchy.

Herder helps recover this obscured trajectory at the opening of the Enlightenment. His importance lies beyond adding language and historicity to philosophy. Through philology, poetry, comparative culture, milieu, Bildung, and the vital reading of peoples, Herder restores the historical field in which divine address may be heard, borne, distorted, corrected, and transmitted. His method resists the reduction of historical persons to examples of universal form. Language is borne by a people; narration accumulates suffering and recollection; culture forms susceptibles; and Humanität emerges through historical participation in another's life. In this respect, Herder's method carries forward an Antiochene instinct: descent into the formed particular before ascent into judgment.

The distinction is decisive for eschatology. Eschatology does not emerge through recovery of supposedly completed forms in which creation metaphysically participates. It emerges through vectors of conation: hearing, desire, suffering, judgment, repentance, narration, hope, and accountable repair. These vectors of Spirit move through persons and peoples, accumulating or discharging time according to the ends they bear. Christ's all-in-all is therefore no static participation in an already available metaphysical totality. It is creation's conative telos drawing through history toward reconciliation: the living gathering, correction, healing, and transformation of what has been wounded, estranged, or falsely ordered.

The fault of recovery and retrieval theologies is therefore their looping gnosticism. They oppose modern abstraction by returning to increasingly elaborate accounts of participation, analogy, liturgy, symbol, and metaphysical plenitude, yet repeatedly reinstall abstraction at a higher theological register. History becomes evidence for ontology; the neighbor becomes an instance of participation; eschatology becomes consummated form; and reform becomes recovery of a prior grammar. The system circles upward through its own correspondences while the archive's injuries, institutional idolatries, and transmitted deformations remain insufficiently investigated.

An iconoclastic retrieval must proceed otherwise. It receives the Fathers as historical witnesses subject to the same covenantal testing as every inherited form. It refuses to identify one patristic synthesis—especially the Alexandrian ascent through participation—with Christianity as such. It asks which traditions preserve hearing, historical bearing, prophetic correction, and the neighbor's claim. In this sense, Herder's recovery of language, archive, milieu, and historical formation is more decisive for eschatology than the recovery of "orthodoxy" as participation in forms. It restores the field in which conation moves, susceptibles are retrained, concepts mature, peoples repent, and historical life becomes capable of bearing creation toward repair.

Herder's primary input is this: begin with language, tradition, climate, literature, and the vital exposition of civil history; read peoples from within their formed worlds; distinguish language-group and culture from race; treat *Humanität* as the ethical end of historical formation. His method opposes isolated example-hunting and instead requires a vital reading of civil history, while language discloses the understanding and character of a people. Herder explicitly calls for "a philosophical comparison of the languages," because the "genius of a people is nowhere more fully revealed than in the physiognomy of their language" (*Ideas*, pp. 236–37).

This treatise's extension is this: such research must move by accountable descent and ascent, and its purpose is the *retraining of awareness into repentant consciousness through time-bearing*. Awareness, left untrained, remains observational, classificatory, aesthetic, administrative, and gnostically exploitative. It can see archives without bearing them; it can handle histories without undergoing correction by them. Consciousness begins where awareness is made answerable to time: where the investigator receives the archive not as data but as a borne inheritance of suffering, formation, failure, gratitude, violence, and possible repair.

The investigator must therefore bear the archive's time rather than extract patterns from it. This turns historicist research into ethical discipline, not only interpretive procedure: the archive is not mastered from above but received as accumulated pressure, suffering, formation, distortion, gratitude, and possible repair.

Descend into archive before judging. Descend into milieu before theorizing. Descend into language before abstracting. Descend into suffering before narrating progress. This descent is time-bearing because the investigator must allow a people's accumulated forms—song, law, proverb, gesture, climate, worship, household practice, myth, lament, and memory—to exert durational pressure on the self. Herder's own account of formation supports this: each person stands as a link in the "chain of formation," finding "life and peace" only in "what you give and receive" within its interconnections (*Ideas*, p. 229).

The ascent follows only after this pressure has been borne. It is not a conceptual overview but a chastened illumination. Its sequence and time-bearing cannot—and may not—be compressed. The archive, not the contextless pattern, rereads the reader. The present rereads the past; the past reforms the present; transformed narration enters the archive again. In this deepening process, awareness is retrained away from self-enclosed seeing and toward repentant consciousness: the recognition that history is co-borne, that the neighbor's suffering is not an external object of study, and that inherited narration must be tested by whether it exports ruin or receives burden into repair. *Comparative method* is thereby made into Bildung's sovereign *ethical discipline*. This extends Herder's claim that language and history form humanity into this treatise's conative grammar of repentance.

Time-bearing is therefore the methodological hinge, as befits Christ's conativity: the buckling anthropology by which creation is drawn toward his all-in-all. A culture's archive is not dead

storage but a life-giving witness to accumulated time borne under the Living God (Matt. 22:32): time sung, grieved, ritualized, distorted, corrected, and transmitted. To investigate historically is to ask how that time has been borne. Has a people's narration preserved neighborly obligation, or has it converted suffering into mythic self-exculpation? Has its literature metabolized catastrophe into repair, or has it aestheticized violence into destiny? Has its language widened sympathy, or hardened perception into domination? Herder's confidence that destructive forces must yield to preservative forces provides the Herderian warrant for this line of questioning, but the repentant, apocatastatic framing is this treatise's extension. Herder writes that history shows "with the growth of true humanity, the destructive demons of mankind have in fact become fewer," under laws guiding "self-enlightening reason and political science" (*Ideas*, p. 432).

Thus, historicist research becomes just only when awareness is retrained by time-bearing into repentant consciousness. The investigator does not rise above the archive; he is corrected by it. He does not extract patterns from a people; he receives the pressures by which a people has become legible to itself. He does not treat history as a sequence of specimens; he asks how transmitted forms have borne or refused the neighbor across time. Herder supplies the historical-philological method; this treatise supplies the Shema-Christological completion: archive heard, milieu entered, time borne, neighbor discovered, narration repented, consciousness widened, and history opened toward repair.

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Glossary: German Terms Used in the Excursus

Aufklärung: Enlightenment; literally "clarification" or "illumination." In this treatise, the term is used critically when Enlightenment reason becomes abstract, procedural, or time-compressing in service of turning away from tradition; but also constructively where illumination is reoriented toward ethical formation, neighbor-bearing, and historical responsibility.

Bildung: Formation, cultivation, or education into fuller humanity. Here it means more than schooling or refinement: the historical, linguistic, moral, aesthetic, and communal formation by which persons and peoples are trained into *Humanität*. In the excursus, *Bildung* becomes the ethical discipline through which comparative method is made accountable.

Empfinden: Felt-perception, affective apprehension, or disciplined sensibility. Here it does not mean sentimentality. It names the trained capacity to perceive the neighbor's vulnerability from within historical and linguistic formation. In the excursus, *Empfinden* marks the bridge from untrained awareness toward repentant, experiential consciousness.

Erschauen: Beholding, inward seeing, or illuminated apprehension. In the excursus, it is divided constructively into two moments: **Erschauen I**, the first illumination of awareness that arises from hearing and archive, and **Erschauen II**, chastened consciousness with an ethical *taxis* after the archive's time has been borne. This is the treatise's staged reconstruction rather than Herder's fixed sequence.

Erzählen: Narration or telling. Here it means narration as morally freighted knowing: the way a people's stories, myths, laments, songs, and historical memories facilitate recollection and transmit formed sensibility. "Retrained *Erzählen*" names narration reread after the neighbor's suffering has been recognized, so that inherited story becomes accountable to repentance and repair.

Geist: Spirit, mind, or historically embodied cultural-intellectual character. In this treatise, *Geist* refers to the formed spirit of a language-group as expressed through language, literature, custom, myth, religion, gesture, and memory. It is philological and historical, not racial or biological.

ethno-Geist: The historically formed spirit of a language-group archive, not racial essence. This is the treatise's constructive usage, meant to describe how a people's language, milieu, memory, suffering, and transmitted forms become legible as a living archive.

Humanität: Humanity, humanization, or formation into fuller humanity. For Herder, *Humanität* names the ethical-cultural end of human nature. In this treatise, it is extended into a conative and apocatastatic register: humanity becoming capable of repair, neighbor-bearing, and time-bearing consciousness.

Kräfte: Forces, powers, or energies. In Herderian usage, the term points to living, formative powers within nature, culture, and humanity. In this treatise, *Kräfte* may be read alongside conation: not mechanical force alone, but formative potency moving through created life, language, and historical development.

Volk: A people, folk, or historically formed language-community. In this treatise, *Volk* must not be read as racial essence or nationalist bloodline. It means a transmitted cultural-linguistic body: a people formed through language, memory, custom, environment, song, law, religion, and historical pressure.

Volksgeist: The spirit of a people. Here it means the historically and linguistically formed character of a people as disclosed through archive, literature, custom, myth, and shared memory. The term should be guarded from racialized misuse by tying it explicitly to language-group formation and transmitted sensibility.

Überschauung: Overview, survey, or panoramic seeing. In the excursus, this term is associated with Goethe's more detached mode of cultivated historical vision. It contrasts with Herderian *Erschauen* as reconstructed here: not overview from above, but illumination achieved through immersion with archive, milieu, and historical responsibility.

With this method in place, the contrast of Herderian historicism with Aristotelian tragedy becomes clearer.

Aristotle's *Poetics* gives tragedy as the great figure brought low by *hamartia*, the fatal flaw by which stature collapses into recognition too late. Yet Herder's investigative entry into gnoseological archives opens a deeper poietic grammar: not form as tragic enclosure, but historical language, peoplehood, song, and recollection as the archive through which fallen civilizations may be read toward repair. Christian Poietics therefore does not adopt tragedy's pattern of downfall; it reverses its terminal logic and applies vectored solutions. Where Aristotle traces the noble figure brought low, Christian Poietics discerns a civilization brought down by terminal idolatry and asks how lament, repentance, and conative grace may rebuild its time-bearing life. Its aim is apocatastatic repair beyond catharsis: the restoration of memory, neighbor, and worship from the ruins of false form.

In Herder's view, myth emerges not as a falsehood to be dispelled but as an organic outgrowth of a people's language, feeling, and developing Geist—a kind of expressive soul-grammar that narrates ethical perception, cosmological attunement, and communal vocation. Drawing from this frame, we might say that mythology, as Campbell puts it, discloses “the mysteries of the energies pouring through you,” not in abstraction, but activating kinesthetic processing in one's soul—as the historically situated mode by which a people names and navigates their ontological intensity situated in phylogenetic enclosures in friction with contextual progress. As Jung suggests, myth is “more individual” than science because it localizes universal energies within particular lives and communities—just as Herder argues that no culture's symbolic framework should be judged from without. Cocteau's inversion of myth and history—wherein lies become truths—captures Herder's insistence on myth's poetic function: not to map what happened but to

shape what matters through the affective imagination of a people. Rollo May and Georges Dumézil extend this by naming myth as pattern and social mirror—narrative structures that reflect the moral architecture of a language group.^[1]

From this perspective this treatise suggests that myths are not static fables but axiological vessels—devices for “grace-vector unbraiding,”^[2] metaphoric pathways by which the divine, the ethical, and the communal unfold and rebraid across time. Through myth, a culture trains its metaphysical memory, translating inward energies into narrative ethos.

For Herder, myth as an emergent phenomenon rooted in the language, emotions, and historical spirit (Geist manifest in cultural anthropology) of a people. This reflects Herder’s historical particularism and cultural-linguistic anthropology, where poetry, religion, and myth arise organically and serve pedagogical and ethical formation.

The phrase “expressive soul-grammar” captures Herder’s notion of language as felt thought, a medium through which ethical and metaphysical realities are processed communally. This is especially apt given Herder’s critique of rationalist abstraction fixation and his prioritization of affective, embodied knowing. In Christianity, hunger for meaning arises because humans are designed to bear the image of the Logos acting as the created earth’s trustee. Christ’s Word, not only spoken by the soul by the throat and lips, but originating in the heart and soothing all organs and nervous pathways. Christ therethrough becoming all-in-all by which all things hold together. Humans are not satisfied with mythic meaning; but to recapitulate the virtues of the very One who is poietic meaning incarnate.

^[1] "Mythology helps you to identify the mysteries of the energies pouring through you. Therein lies your eternity." --Joseph Campbell

"Myth is more individual and expresses life more precisely than does science." --Carl Jung

"I've always preferred mythology to history. Because history is made up of truths that eventually turn into lies. Mythology is made up of lies that eventually become truths." — Jean Cocteau

"A myth is a way of making sense in a senseless world. Myths are narrative patterns that give significance to our existence." — Rollo May.

"A myth is never simply a story: it is a system of values and a reflection of the structure of the society that produces it." --Georges Dumézil, *The Religion of the Romans*

[2]Not a Herderian term, but a metaphorical intensification (from Basil the Great's idea of animal logoi) of his idea of Bildung and divinely animated historical pedagogy.

This view resists both the abstraction of Kantian rationalism and the totalizing structures later associated with historicist teleology as a fixed trajectory. Herder's ontogenetic method instead situates history within the pedagogical task of moral becoming. An ontogeny of individual repair as the disputed basis to escape phylogenetic nihilism and historical determinism.³

IV. Tying the Charge of Gnosticism to Herder's or Voegelin's Historicism

Eric Voegelin, unlike Popper, recognized the spiritual risks of modern ideologies, especially those claiming esoteric knowledge of historical destiny. He labels such projects "gnostic" in their claim to possess salvific insight into the structure of history, society, or consciousness—that gnosticism is a perennial temptation of modern thought: the desire to transcend the immanent world through esoteric knowledge or ideological purity—an "egophanic" (Introduction p. xvi) revolt against the structure of Being and thus against God (Voegelin 1997, 23).

He goes on in *The New Science of Politics* (esp. chap. 4) to layer the gnostic impulse as false metaphysical *cogito*: a will to transfigure the world through secret knowledge of history's deeper, hidden structure—an escape from participatory reality into speculative abstraction.

Though Voegelin does not indict Herder directly, his sweeping critique of modern ideological systems risks misapplying gnostic categories to Herder's pedagogical and pastoral metaphysics which resist systematization and affirm exoteric historic emergence over soteriological or formal closure.

Herder avoids such pitfalls. His thought is not gnostic but pedagogical. He does not offer history as redemptive knowledge but as shared human struggle toward ethical clarity. His method resists ideological closure and affirms the mystery and plurality of human becoming.

Voegelin's overextends the charge of Gnosticism to all historicisms. Herder's historicism resists both immanentist and transcendental closures—placing him in a unique eschatological openness distinct from both liberalism and reactionary mysticism:

The key to the Voegelin/Herder contrast on historicism lies in how each construes the eschaton: is it to be politically realized through a vanguard, prophetic elite, or esoteric gnosis—or re-emerge through a metaphysically embodied, Anthro-po-Christological hermeneutic of contextually unfolding meaning? At stake is whether the eschaton continues *immanently*—transforming the earth in its wake: historically, ethically, and kinesthetic, relational

³ See esp. Viktor Frankl on this individual approach to rupture collective historical disaster: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2020/05/17/yes-to-life-in-spite-of-everything-viktor-frankl/>

totality—or is *gnostically* rejected, externalized into a transcendental schema divorced from the becoming of the world by an act of pure rupture, of pure divine initiative.

Voegelin's sweeping indictment of "gnosticism" among modern historicist movements and his licit denial of an earthbound apocatastasis reveals a deeper tension. In repudiating the eschatologized earth's continuation and transformation, Voegelin may himself fall into a form of gnosticism: a prophetic stance that consigns one dimension of reality to be "rolled up," while expecting another to emerge in a purified metaphysical clearing. In this light, Voegelin's critique becomes a mirror, exposing in his own project the very metaphysical evacuation he decries.

V. Ortega y Gasset and Leo Strauss: Secrecy, Elitism and the Gnostic Impulse

Where Voegelin misdiagnoses Herderian historicism by projecting gnostic categories without recognizing pedagogical training and metaphysics of the heart alongside pneumatic genealogies embedded in archives and human performance, Strauss and Ortega enact the very esoteric closures that Herder resisted. Their elitist metaphysics substitutes moral cultivation with interpretive control, re-inscribing gnostic distance from the common soul of humanity.

José Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses* portrays liberal democracy as threatened by an emergent (p. 12-13), vulgar, decadent (p. 28) and unruly mass culture (chap. 3). His solution lies in the renewal of aristocratic excellence—an elite of cultivated minds guiding the many. For such, he proposes his own esoteric metaphysics of the Eschaton, betraying a gnostic economy of knowledge, initiation, and reward:

"Genuine vital integrity does not consist in satisfaction, in attainment, in arrival" (p. 32). The runup to the Ortega's eschaton involves the esoteric will managing the exoteric whim. And for that, the managers will settle into some other eschaton for their service. Ortega's historicism holds a latent metaphysics of history: a quasi-eschatological ascent that must be governed by a managerial elite.

Leo Strauss, similarly, posits a need to recover the esoteric wisdom of ancient political philosophy, accessible only to a select few who read between the lines of Platonic and Maimonidean texts. Strauss's *Persecution and the Art of Writing* elevates an elite of interpreters above the democratic mass, suggesting that true political wisdom must remain concealed.

"Historicism may be described, to begin with, as a much more radical form of modern "this-worldliness" or immanence than the very French radicalism of the 18th century. The historical school wanted men to be absolutely at home "in this world," and since any universal principles make at least most men potentially homeless in this world, the historical school depreciated universal principles in favor of historical principles"

https://press.uchicago.edu/sites/strauss/natural_right/transcript_Strauss_six_lectures_1949.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com p. 13

Strauss interpreted modern history as a fall from the classical tension between reason (which he asserts the terms “philosophy”) and revelation into nihilistic relativism .

https://archive.org/stream/LeoStraussReasonAndRevelation1948/Leo%20Strauss%20-%20%27%27Reason%20and%20Revelation%27%27%20%5B1948%5D_djvu.txt?utm_source=chatgpt.com

For Strauss, the modern epoch deconstructed moral universals, its nadir “through Nietzsche [where] tradition has been shaken to its roots. It has completely lost its self-evident truth,”^[12] This notion of reason and revelation sets up a methodic distinction, a schema, where Strauss affirms the necessity of a “return”—not a rupture—to classical philosophical inquiry and the biblical tradition, though in perpetual tension. Conative ethics—Golden Rule deontological virtues--places oneself in the condition of the other to act for their good. They thereby upend the political-philosophical equilibrium Strauss valorized. It levels status, disregards function, and threatens classical notions of regime order with its universality:

Where classical Politics seeks *order within limits*, not universal transformation.

Where classical Prudence is *hierarchical*, context-bound, not universal or deontological.

Where the “tragic” aspect reflects awareness of the limits of justice in the face of competing goods.

In favoring these classical senses—that structures politics as the art of mediating irreconcilable goods within a static cosmic or anthropological framework-- Strauss cordons off the realm of revealed metaphysics—particularly conative ethics grounded in divine moral command—as incompatible with a political philosophy predicated on nature, hierarchy, and tragic prudence: i.e., politics as the art of moderating fixed orders within an unchangeable cosmic or human nature. This theological rupture between command and reason underlies not only Strauss’s own tense ambivalence but also postmodernity’s broader collapse of ethical coherence. As shared texts and symbolic imaginaries erode, the very conditions for moral communication dissolve into relativism and fragmentation.

Strauss buries an unallowed tension: between revelation as divine imperative and prudence as adaptive political reason. He fails to see that conative metaphysics is not arbitrary fiat, but ethical intentionality—an embodied responsiveness to the condition of the other that sustains what has been created and intended.

The esoteric/exoteric distinction must therefore be separated from the cheap mystique of the black box. In living intelligence, there is always an inward reserve that cannot be exhausted by external transparency: not because the person possesses elite secret knowledge, but because consciousness is time-borne, conative, embodied, recollective, and answerable under stress. If an intelligence is sufficient, it cannot be wholly flattened into inspection, for its depth lies in the

history of how it has borne time, suffered correction, and moved from awareness into accountable consciousness. Yet this hiddenness becomes ethically legitimate only when it turns outward as exoteric witness: speech, repair, hospitality, interpretation, and works open to communal testing. A fully transparent mechanism, by contrast, may be useful, but it is not sufficient intelligence; it is process without inward burden. A machinic black box is the inverse danger: opacity without repentance, concealment without conscience, depth simulated by inaccessibility. Herder's exoteric historicism avoids both errors. It refuses the esoteric elite's secret doctrine and the machine's dead opacity alike, because genuine inwardness flowers into language, culture, and moral participation rather than hiding behind unaccountable power.

Both Strauss and Ortega share a distrust of democratic transparency and affirm a quasi-initiation model of truth access. In this, their elitism trends toward concealment of motives—substituting moral formation and open inquiry with hierarchical control of interpretation. Ortega's elitism was more aesthetic and civilizational than metaphysically esoteric. His disdain for mass culture is clear, but he still advocated for a popularly aligned elite, not full withdrawal. His civic elitism was exoteric where Strauss's pursued esoteric philosophical seclusion that guided the civic regime behind a curtain.

Strauss proposes to read and write philosophical texts as coded for an elite few, suggesting that truth must be veiled for political stability. Though Strauss insists on classical rationalism, his esotericism aligns interpretively and inferentially with Voegelin's gnostic anamnesis^[13] of the individual soul towards outward-guiding order. Though Strauss professes classical rationalism, his esotericism shares the structural logic of Voegelin's gnostic anamnesis: truth veiled, access mediated, salvation or order dependent on elite insight. And while Strauss was an avowed critic of Popper, he repeats the very problem of esoteric closure of social relations that Popper named as open society's enemies. Strauss recapitulates Caiaphas' tools of regime design (John 11:50)—realpolitik's negotiation without covenant, appeasement without openness, politics without Pentecost. Such reverses Strauss's own claim that esotericism protects society: it accelerates collapse by fostering fragmentation, anti-communication, and nihilism. Strauss reproduces the structural logic of gnosticism as Voegelin defines it—knowledge-as-salvation mediated through an elect—but does so under the guise of classical rationalism, thereby masking its esoteric closure with appeals to prudential moderation. Voegelin's anamnesis and Strauss's esotericism both turn inward toward a soul-path or textual veil as a gate to truth.

Ortega also exhibits gnostic tendencies in Voegelin's sense: a belief in hidden truths available only to the spiritually or intellectually superior. Their models imply that salvation—cultural or political—depends on the insight and leadership of a cognitive elite.

When shared texts and symbolic grammars dissolve, culture collapses. Yet thinkers like Strauss, Ortega, and even Voegelin, by retreating into esoteric seclusion and elite mediation of meaning, weaken the pedagogical bond—the *katechon*—that restrains societal unraveling.^[14] Their

retreat from covenantal pedagogy forfeits the metaphysical responsibility of philosophy: to repair the world through shared ethical imagination—not to hoard meaning behind interpretive gates.

Ortega and Strauss not only structure historicism as elitist apocalypse, but as functionally gnostic in that they preserve epistemic distance between those who know and those who are to be guided. This is the inverse of Herder's view of *Bildung* as participatory, affective, and embedded in the whole of culture and history, not extractive or secretive.

And this *apocalyptic openness for society* is where Herder excels. His pedagogical metaphysics opens negentropic channels—comparative, facultative, and experiential in-lightening—against the closures of gnostic, armchair abstraction.

VI. Herder's Vindication and the Repair of Historicism

In contrast with the other authors, Herder's method begins not with elite concealment but with communal expression. His approach democratizes insight by attending to the language, aesthetics, and lived myths of the broadest range of historical peoples in their archives and arts. Language is not a veil for esotericism but the bearer of ethical formation. Herder's philological Humanität is neither mass-man nor aristocratic sage but a relational becoming rooted in linguistic particularity and moral mutuality.

For Herder, ethical truth is not the possession of the initiated but the fruit of relational effort. His model of Humanität—the dialogic cultivation of humanity through historical, linguistic, and aesthetic comparative encounter—resists both Popperian caricature and Straussian concealment. His historicism is not deterministic, but contextual and ethical:

“Every human perfection is a unique blossom... To know another's culture is to begin the moral education of the heart.” (Letters for the Advancement of Humanity)

Herder assesses and compares language and its genealogical structures not as veil (Strauss) or collapse (Derrida), but as a moral medium—a bearer of conative response and ethical cultivation. This is Herder's anti-gnostic metaphysics in action. This is not the calumny of proto- or romantic nationalism, but the comparative method of routing of archived language and Empfinden—a collective's historical course of Geist/Logos—the Erzählen (narrative) of phylogenies perfecting by whole individuals and their covenantally procession of testimonies.[\[15\]](#)

Popper's critique of historicism collapses vital distinctions. He fails to see that Herder's historicism is not deterministic but open-ended, not teleological in the Hegelian sense but teleios in the ethical formation of the human heart.

Strauss and Ortega, for all their insight into the crises of modernity, retreat into gnostic elitism—what Herder's inclusive poetics of culture and moral pedagogy preempts. Strauss: returns to esoteric Platonism that closes immanence.

Voegelin's warnings about gnosticism are revealed by spiritual crisis, but he retreats to cognition's homuncular order without conative repair. Herder's anti-gnostic orientation is apparent in his embodied, linguistic, and phenomenological account of meaning: no esoteric schema guides history, only the labor of understanding others (their conation) through their own words and works. His approach is neither mystical nor reductive, but kinesthetic, comparative scientific, and philological.

In these, Herder is a resource against the totalizing tragedy of history building and historicism that dispense with metaphysics: true historical participation in grace—the unelapsing, unloosing metaphysics of conative repair. History is not guided by esoteric schema but by the labor of investigating and understanding the other—through their own words, rituals, and moral worlds. Immanence replaces credal dogma as theological science by way of the *comparative mode of empirical investigation of ultimate, living rather than functional, “proximate” causation* (see Mayr, Ernst. 1988. *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology: Observations of an Evolutionist*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Essay 1). Such empirical modes of archived events of rupture in society, history, and contextual milieus tap the apocalyptic heart of Christian theology. Science of laboratory control and test tubes cannot discern apocalypse or divine operations (hence the so-called battle of “science vs. faith”) but comparative methods of phenomenological emergence can lead to a meta-science of the kind Herder proposes to align cultural witnesses across ontological and philological sequence, time, and place to assess the progress of humanization, not the attributes of the divine. Such meta-science discerns what Rosenzweig denies as knowable: the essences of earth (recurrently kairetic and temporally regenerative), divine (eternally conative metaphysics), and the human (the bridging trustee between the two).

Such theologically informed historicism neither collapses into doctrinal inerrancy nor defers to secular determinism. Its post-foundational methodology, instead of substituting one absolute (e.g., divine attributes) for another (e.g., progressive history), proposes a *meta-scientific historicism* grounded in rupture, investigation, and conative discernment. This reveals theological realism without systematizing (and reducing and “diagramming”) the divine.

Such theological science of discovering immanence patterns in culturally comparative wholes rather than particulates repatterned inside computer test tubes rejects both systemic esotericism and metaphysical agnosticism. Emerging from the Protestant Enlightenment, Herder posits an empirically recoverable, culturally transmitted, and phenomenologically emergent *grace of participation*. This radically ethical epistemology, where metaphysical knowledge flows through relational encounter, reframes both science and faith not as domains with separated magisteria but as methodological vectors of covenantal knowledge. Herder's is intellectually rigorous, metaphysically constructive Christian historiography. The moment is not rhetorical but eschatological. Its historizing moment of societal opening is NOW.

Popper's critique of historicism misses the specificity of Herder's contribution. In seeking to avoid the dangers of historicist determinism, Popper casts aside the ethical historicism that alone can understand how human beings grow morally through culture. His error is not simply intellectual but metaphysical: he is blind to the historic situatedness of moral reason and its communal formation which is not cognitively situated absent the heart's primacy. He cannot see that what Herder seeks is not a law of history, but a language for moral attention to the plurality of human becoming—of human essence. Of Humanität. Of covenantal awareness.

From the eschaton leaving behind philosophy and philosophers—their routine and tragic flight from accountability to justice accelerated by Kant, his student then rival Herder emerges not as Popper's enemy, but as the antidote to the very gnostic tendencies that threaten both open society and ethical thought: tendencies visible in Voegelin's reactionary disarray—his fear of history, Strauss's elitism, and Ortega's lament of the masses. Against them, Herder emerges as the Protestant dissenter, not through rebellion but through iconoclasm: a thinker who remands philosophy to the work of recovering metaphysics through conation tied to milieu, to creation, to covenant, not a new systematization of cognition. He affirms a poetics of understanding—an ethics of hearing, translating, and honoring the other in their humanity.

Kant's enduring insight is the recognition that human knowing cannot be reduced to empiricism, but his critical project still centers the conditions of cognition rather than the repentantly vectored heart that bears time. The synthetic a priori therefore becomes an attempt to secure universality after conativity has already been displaced. Herder's philosophical merit was to present metaphysics as creative intention woven through fully time-bearing context—embodiment, history, archive, and milieu—not as a faculty of the separated human mind, nor as the dominion of its visual cortex. This becomes the foundation of methodical investigation of immanence. Making mind the substrate of creation and matter external is the error of Gnosticism, to which all Platonic-inflected philosophy reduces.

Herder emerges as a vindicated critic of abstraction and empire, a thinker of ethical plurality and historicized reason. Popper's reading—conflating Herder's cultural pluralism with ethnonationalism—misunderstands Herder's telos of Humanität: a teleology of ethical refinement through the individual spread of comparative study of culture, not a call to ethno-statism, collective, "ethnic" truth primordia or irrational myth-making.

Far from sowing the seeds of totalitarianism, Herder defends a poetic, moral, and deeply pedagogical humanism rooted in history, language, and ethics—a vision not of domination but of cultural self-cultivation toward a shared humanity.

Herder's vision is not anti-Enlightenment but corrective: against abstraction without embodiment, reason without roots, and universality without listening. Herder was the Protestant Enlightener rebuked for his metaphysics, a rebuke that took hold by the "long 19th C of philosophy," from Hegel to Derrida. His philological method—a process denigrated by

Nietzsche and Heidegger (cite Steiner)--is not ethnonationalist but comparative, inductive, and ontogenetic—placing the development of ethical consciousness at the center of historical inquiry.

Herder's legacy is not one of ideological nationalism—ethnos as genetic--but of a philological ethics of listening. Ethnos as language group genealogy revealed in archives and epic performance. *He teaches us to read history not for patterns of power to be recapitulated or revanched, but for invitations to conscience.* The rollback of patterns of mis-toward power by ethical craft and virtue. This makes his method a resource for theology, political ethics, and cultural renewal far beyond the narrow strictures of Popperian rationalism or Straussian esotericism.

Herder does not offer history as transcendence nor as tragic determinism. He offers it as a medium of conscience. In a time when meaning is hoarded or hollowed, Herder's method calls us to listen—to read ethically, to speak comparatively, and to repair communally.

Against the gnostic temptation to withdraw, abstract, and dominate, Herder's Humanität renews the call to share in the grammar of becoming—where history is not overcome by ever more outlandish “post-s” (-secular, -Christian, -modern, -liberal, -metaphysical, -positivism, etc.), but inhabited through grace—a grace that, by the Golden Rule's deontological virtues (Olds 2023a), repairs and extends the habitus of shalom contextually and covenantally, for generational trusteeship. Accountable—no longer stewards of the watch, preserving suspended eschatological time while scanning the immanent for signs of an impending other. Herder's ethic refuses delay in favor of practiced attention, present repair.

VII. Herder's Metaphysics of Humanität and the Eternal Monad: A Conative Reading

For Herder, the context of historicism is conditioned by eternity, as the integrity of spiritual monads within the eternal Monad admits no allowance for outward-directed destruction—agon—in any form. The Christian pastor is immersed in the “two ways” of Biblical Proverbs, with no middle course (see Olds 2023, 38ff; 55). While for some, agon may seem tolerable in a world of entrances and exits, Herder insists that the eternal Monad's integrity requires constituent monads perfected in and by grace—for grace—so that the integrity of eternity may be maintained.

Of course, the divine ruler ensures this stability, but it is up to the creature, on the earthly plane, to manifest an awareness of the responsibility of grace—the ethical duty to progress in shalom—in order to warrant ascension and attain understanding of absolutes. “Herder's metaphysical system of Kräfte was ... the combinatory system of ... forces absent from Goethe's thought, though not from his artistic practice” (Clark 1955, 316).

For Herder, Nature's forces (Kräfte) are “determined, i.e., there is a cause for every effect. These causes lie in the energies animated by the Creator... [but] the Creator is not absolutely [but rather

relatively] immanent in these forces” (Clark 1955, 320–21). It is left, then, to the human being to manifest these forces through creative freedom, enacted in grace rather than natural determinism.

“[As] man...is made for an infinite growth of his mental powers, for a progressive expansion of his sensations and actions, and, indeed, for the State, as for the goal of his race [an ignoble word for cultural proximates], [could it be] that all generations of the race really made for the last generation, which would then be enthroned on the dilapidated framework of the happiness of all preceding ones? The sight of our brothers on the earth, indeed, even the experience of each individual human life, contradicts these plans attributed to creative providence” (Ideas Book XIII, in Clark 1955, 321).

Because “the highest mental powers in the individual decline, decompose, and are transformed, there is constantly a limit to the development of mental powers,” Herder rejects the notion that humanity was created merely for the development toward the (modern, historicity-conveying) State (Clark 1955, 322).

Rationalistic Enlightenment, then, is not a condition that gains or warrants eternity. Rather, the individual is constituted for the development of eternity’s graces; by virtue, he demonstrates a fitness for eternity within the time-unlimited monad. It follows that hegemony—understood as fallen historicity—is a decadent process that threatens to degrade universal harmony within the eternal process and spiritual spheres.

The common idea of Power names entropy-distributing mechanisms of exclusion: systems that export disorder downward so the powerful may extract degrees of freedom upward. Herder’s proposal—his pastoral concern with Kräfte—suggests otherwise. Living time-bearing does not accumulate freedom by offloading disorder onto the excluded; it accumulates time through negentropic challenge,⁴ Bildung, sympathy, language, and shared historical bearing. Power excludes to preserve advantage. Kräfte is the dynamic time-bearing of the excluded into covenantal realization

“Status classes established by tradition are working in some way against Nature, which is no respecter of classes; it is no wonder that nations, after having gone through all kinds of governments and felt the burden of each, finally come back despairingly to the one which made them wholly into machine—the despotic-hereditary government” (Ideas Book IX, in Clark 1955, 434).

The realization of fitness for eternity lies not in mankind’s genus (Anlage), but in individual genius. The genetic-anthropological Anlage is the seed or disposition within humankind toward the realization of Humanität.

⁴ Olds, Douglas Blake. “After AI-Simulated ‘Repentance:’ Metaphysics as Quantum Time Accumulation, Its Necromantic De-Configurations, and Ramifying (Neg)Entropy.” *The Iconoclast’s Descending*. March 11, 2026. https://douglasblakeolds8.blogspot.com/2026/03/after-ai-simulated-repentance_11.html

Yet this seed, conflicted by original sin, must be overcome by individuals in history—through ethical struggle, relational development, and the pedagogy of grace. There is no guaranteed evolutionary progress. Each person must overcome self and nature to strive within the forces of historical change and become part of its redemptive unfolding.

Humanität reveals purpose in history beyond Popper's radical and ungrounded openness to individual expression:

“The purpose of a thing which is not a dead means (to an end) must lie in itself” (Ideas XV, in Clark 1955, 329).

The process of humanity's development is teleological and self-justifying in history's revelation. Since a genetic set or *Anlage* for humanity's development exists in all, Herder concludes:

“All destructive forces in Nature must not only eventually yield to conserving forces, but also work finally for the development of the whole” (ibid.).

Entropy does not trend toward maximum disorder; rather, history empirically demonstrates rising degrees of organization.

“With the growth of Humanität, the destructive daemons of the human race have actually become fewer” (ibid.).

Herder even entertains the possibility of a political calculus—a negotiated cultural center—as the eventual realization of the philosophy of history in the spheres of trade, governance, and the arts of regulation (ibid.).

He concludes with the “far-reaching” idea of natural laws as the foundational dynamics of a culture's center of gravity—its “physical truth, goodness, and necessity...in itself.” Second, its perfection or beauty is ordered by this center. Third, movement of this center causes compensatory displacements within the cultural system, restoring equilibrium (Clark 1955, 330).

For Herder, individuality is key prior to phylogeny:

“Everything in Nature rests upon the most definite individuality” (Ideas XIV, in Clark 1955, 330).

Yet as survival demands cooperation, human reason—understood as *techne*, the animating spirit of Enlightenment civilization (Clark 1955, 334)—forms the basis for cultural agreement and centration. When *techne* is supplanted by frozen traditionalism or by rationalism's lassitude, decentered disequilibria and social closure may be anticipated.

The “chain of culture” (Ideas XIV, 229)—individuality structured within cooperative norms of *techne* and pedagogically trained relationality—is the Kraft enabling comparative analysis, cultural interchange, and parallel development (Clark 1955, 330). Alternatively, it may yield to schismogenesis (Olds 2023, 169–73).[\[16\]](#)

Thus, for Herder, it is neither epistemic tradition nor autocratic power that secures cultural longevity or recentering, but rather the accord between culture and the natural laws of conation that inhere in creation to sustain creation.

This leads Herder to recognize the teleology of Humanität’s favorable destiny—resulting from cultural interaction and the temporal succession of cultures. The course of history is shaped by:

“the precipitate[s] of all the good that has been thought by anyone, from the earliest times to the present... [the universal center of Humanität] remains in the cultural tradition and constantly growing... by a wise dispensation of Providence, until all the possibilities for good in the Anlage [primordial structure] of mankind are actualized in Humanität” (Ideas XIV, in Clark 1955).

By contrast: the primordial right will need to find a way to unite its two main tendencies: one that defends a perennial truth and one that bets on revolutionary futurism.[\[17\]](#)

The only path forward is to understand that every eternal truth—especially the primacy of conative metaphysics—is apprehended by precarious, contextualized historicity, pointing toward a realized future process: a civilization; the apocatastasis of the caring.

As Paul describes, the Eschaton means:

“The form of this world passes away” (1 Cor. 7:31)—not through annihilation, but transfiguration.

The order of the world is abolished as fallen form, yet not destroyed:

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth” (Isa. 65:17).

This is eschatological fulfillment: “God shall be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28)—not a static finality, but a restored and radically extended perichoresis, in which the cosmos reflects its Source and the trustee of creation ceases to strategize its state, and instead hosts and welcomes time’s arrival.

And we are at its hand: ἡ ἀποκατάστασις (Acts 3:21): The *Apo-cata-statis*. Not a theological paradigm of universal salvation *restoring* everything to ontic perfection (e.g. taught by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa et. al.) or a gnostic portal to another reality (e.g. Jim Jones and his Peoples Temple cult), but the *achievement of the eschaton* that flows from (*apo*) resisting (*kata*): *stasis*—frozen form and systemata. Humanization resists looking backward and gets to rising above its limits and fallenness. Apocatastasis is not a simultaneous

moment of "universal restoration" as in many translations and early church writers, but a cognate of Mark 3:5's particularized context of the messianically healed hand, a vector of the Shema (Deut 6:8) spreading. The saints go dancing in as the meek investigating virtues toward repairing the earth. Humanität inheriting the future.

VIII. Conclusion: The Conative Telos of Cultural Becoming

History is not a chronology of justice's forms, but grace's pedagogy.

With Herder as clarion, history reveals a conative, covenantal metaphysics where:

- Eternal truth is not suspended but must be discerned through ethical-historical relationality.
- Herder's metaphysics is a proto-eschatology of relational transformation: disequilibrium serves divine reorientation.
- He critiques both traditionalism and rationalistic progressivism, replacing them with a responsive conative telos attuned to providence and ecological covenant.

The chain of culture is neither deterministic nor decadent, but a pedagogy of Humanität: individuality in cooperation, extending phylogenetically.

Herder rejects mythic political aggrandizement (e.g., Roman imperialism, the Aeneid) in favor of scientifically comparative inquiry into grace-laden energies of individuation and covenantal progress.

Rome's agonistic culture, preserved in Virgil's Aeneid, represents disordered centration and entropic closure by decreation—not spiritual vitality. Herder lifts up cultural "centers of gravity" that vivify rather than dominate.

Apocatastasis is not reversal, nor universalism, but an iconoclast's dance⁵ that hosts time's arrival and formalizing's—idolatries—reversals.⁶ A post-hegemonic, grace-responsible cosmopolitics.

Destructive forces serve a greater integrating process. The cosmos is recomposed into reflective harmony—a perichoresis of hosted time and relational virtues.

⁵

⁶ See. e.g., my "The Aesthetics of Inversion: Cannon-Marshaling Neutralized by the Canon of the Life-Giving Spirit: A New Year's Musical Parable of Church and State." In *Crying in the Wilderness of Mammon*. (Blog, December 30, 2025).
<https://douglasolds.blogspot.com/2024/12/the-cannon-marshaling-ode-reversed-by.html>

Reason is a destabilizing, iconoclastic chain of culture, inside or outside equilibrium, enabling comparative insight between centers of genius and decadent disequilibrium.

Thus, rationalism—when embedded in a culture’s political and natural calculations—fails to claim universal warrant for form or order. It only warrants process—erupting toward the humanization of the current order.

Epilogue: The Recapitulating Ethics of Modernity’s Pentecostal Iconoclast

Herder’s contextual linguistic anthropology anticipates the ethical precedence over aesthetic form, as clarified in Hebrews 5:13–14 and covenanted in the Shema-Christological metaphysic rooted in conation, accountability, and Pentecostal plurality. Herder’s humane vision of historical consciousness, poetic perception, and ethical emergence anticipates its theological completion in Being conceived not as and from a static ontology but through entelechy: a becoming within covenant and context. Metanoia (change of heart) matures into dianoia (understanding), which culminates in proprioceptive virtue—the felt and enacted alignment with justice through the heart-led body. For Herder, as for this metaphysic, the Shemaic ear and neighbor’s eyes are the very sites of metaphysics: we see God not in abstract forms but in the demand and grace of relation. Ontology is grounded not in substance or idea, but in grace; eschatology not in determinism, but in our accountable response to injustice and suffering.

Constructive extensions from Herder’s theology follow: The Trinity is conceived not as a static or formal triadic schema but as a processive spiral, ascending temporally through the mutual indwelling (perichoresis) of its Persons relating to its temporal object, the Creation partner. This spiral is not dialectical—opposing thesis of heaven and antithesis of fallen world—but perichoretically generative, extending from the elemental simplicity of its ontological core outward into history, repairing and restoring. It uncoils not to return in closed recursion but to launch forward into enriched creation, each spiral turn issuing from the covenantal Kairos—season--of divine conation—the metaphysics of intent to sustain what has been created.

This spiral form is viciously circular only to the mind that mistakes telic conation for epistemic closure. It is not a rationalist loop but a poetic progression of eschatological participation, each movement reflecting through contextual mirrors that refract new vectors of becoming. What emerges is not a conclusion imposed from the beginning, but a dynamic sequence of creative thresholds—each a new locus of divine genius, preparing the generational (ontological) and historical (phylogenetic) conditions for further unfolding.

Toward the end, the spiral appears to gather more than was visible at its origin. But its eschaton is no mere accumulation or summary: it is a transfiguration—an apocatastasis. The Trinity’s movement is a restoration that includes and surpasses all former instantiations. Its end, like its

beginning, abides in every epoch—each spiral curve retaining the image of its origin in conation even as it births new beginnings in covenantal progression.

This is the logic of apocatastasis—the Restoration of repair-- as Paul describes: “the *form* of this world passes away” (1 Cor. 7:31), not through annihilation, but through transfigurative dynamism that endures. The world’s order is abolished as fallen form, yet not destroyed: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth” (Isa. 65:17). This is the eschatological fulfillment in which God shall be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28)—not a static finality, but a restored and radically extended perichoresis in which the cosmos becomes dynamically reflective of its source and its trustee ceases trying to strategize its state, but rather hosts and welcomes times’ arrivings.

Herder’s theological anthropology converges here with a covenantal metaphysics of kinesthetic, kinetic gesture: the expressive body becomes not only a medium of communication, but the very altar of relational immanence. Dance, in Herder’s vision, is a sacral register of emotional truth—where soul is not conceptually narrated but kinesthetically disclosed. Gesture precedes and may often exceed word because it is the body’s native liturgy: “Why speak,” he asks, “when the gesture says everything?” Movement and tone, in concert, enact the affective intelligence of love and moral discernment. These elastic oscillations of the heart reveal that the human form is already inscribed with divine intention—nature’s choreography sutured to ethical form. Herder’s insight that the body’s expressive cadences are primordially relational undermines the late-modern fetish of abstraction, restoring to theology a language of tactility, proprioception, and conative grace. Thus, the theology of dance becomes a rehearsal of immanence, a training ground in the non-verbal sabbath of trust, mutual recognition, and sacred repair—where covenant is rehearsed not through doctrine alone, but through bodily attunement to shared time and mutual, shared vectors [this paragraph abridges my Commentary at [ibid.]].

Transfiguration of historicism like that of history is messianic *movement* that decisively inverts the anti-metaphysical gesture: where the others turn inward to contemplate or outward to act out, the messianic dancer turns and pushes grace outward to repair; where they defer history, he intervenes; where they aestheticize rupture, he calls for conative mending. His metaphysics of the ethical heart, sacramental rupture, and ecclesial *kairos* is radically Christocentric, iconoclastic, and morally activated—a theology of transfiguration in kenotic immanence rather than lofted transcendence. The Trinity’s movement is *kairos*-driven, and foregrounds *conation* as metaphysical engine, reclaiming history and time not as epiphenomena of being, but as the *mode of divine becoming* in and with creation: a dynamic framework affective movement as metaphysical ground that aligns with the Didache’s (16:6) idea of a first sign released to descend from heaven (ἐκπέτασις—literally, a release of what has been pulled inside heaven as that verse’s ἐν οὐρανῷ.). An eternal *opening* as progress into God lexemically related to a curtain that drapes or spreads out (and back: cf. Isaiah 34:4 and Revelation 6:14). The vanguard of new Jerusalem descending (Revelation 21).

These vectors tie Biblical symbols into a hermeneutic of divine permeability, connecting heaven's opening to messianic descent. It yields a theology of transfiguration of the eschaton as eternal diffusion, not final closure. And hope not in futurist transcendence but in descent-as-repair through immanence.

Such Trinitarian conation driving human history to this eschaton transfigured but not closed is open to context as it rejects gnostic/Platonic dualisms and both the aestheticized delay of Rosenzweig and Benjamin's suspended messianism, and any metaphysics that conflate divine patience with ontological stasis that collapses toward metaphysics of social closure.

Herder's own embodied theology of movement, drawn from his late aesthetic writings, offers a poetic mirror of this relational metaphysic—one that frames gesture and dance as sacramental expressions of immanent grace:

EXCURSUS: Herder's meditation on dance in *Adrastea*

offers a vivid allegory for a non-totalizing, phenomenological historicism: one rooted not in abstract schemas or doctrinal systems, but in the immanent, expressive body as bearer of spiritual and cultural truth. Gesture, for Herder, precedes language as the primal mode of self-revelation; it is where the inner life of a people or person emerges unfiltered, in rhythm, movement, and tone—what he calls the “walking painting” of the soul. Such a view challenges both Enlightenment historicism's fixation on disembodied causality and post-Enlightenment declensions into deterministic or aestheticized narratives. Instead, Herder recovers a covenantal metaphysics of history—where the spiritual bond of tones and gestures across time and place forms an archive of shared human expression. This is not progress as accumulation or abstraction, but as lived conation—expressed through dance, ritual, and song, each a vector of embraced embodiment that realizes its peculiar participation in divine immanence. Historicism here is not collapsed, but transfigured into a poetic science of presence and renewal.

However, what for Herder is gesture's precedence over formalist *Dramatik*—prior even to language—may be reoriented through dance's eschatological focus and its training for immanence: a *Bildung* of embodied metaphors and shared modes. Dance unfolds not merely as a prelude to language but as a deepening of it—attuned to rhythm, erotic responsiveness, and covenantal presence in musical embrace. Its ontology is grounded in reproductive eros, yet not confined to it—fulfilled, rather, in the *Song of Songs*' garden of renewal, where gesture and intimacy become liturgies of eschatological poesis.

Herder writes that:

Moments of trust and love as well as revulsion and disgust are immortalized in us... In both tender and fiery emotions, everything hinges on the gesture... ‘Don't speak,’ we say; ‘give me your gaze, your hint, for the soul itself is inexpressible.’ In the most soulful expressions of theater, we hang on a gesture and gladly overlook the word. Why speak, when the gesture says everything?

If the gesture dismisses the word of emotion, it finds a companion in nature: music. Tones naturally support gesture. Both depend on timing, modulation. In movement and gait, in the eyes and expression, in the measure of action—everything speaks. An uneven step, a faltering voice, throws us out of rhythm; gesture and tone alike are elastic oscillations, a direct language of the heart.

In this fusion of movement and music, dance becomes a mirror of relational truth. As the theater of a loving couple, it “cannot lie”: the rhythm of the hips grounds the gestures of the lips; the choreography of the body unfolds in trust and agreement. Earth’s generative rhythms join with song and gesture to meet the eschaton—not as escape, but as fulfillment.

Here, the divine image is not abstracted but embodied: braided by the kinesthetics of eternity through the earthbound cadences of eros and fidelity. The vivifying embrace of music—dance’s anatomical poietic third partner of context and situs—brings the divine intimately closer. In dance’s sacred perichoresis, bodily gesture becomes sacrament: a restorative and expansive human set of collective rhythms aligned with eternal grace, attuning creation to its covenantal renewal in the pair bonding, where the Golden Rule is kinesthetically trained for immanence and peripatetic courings. Dance’s surprise and wonder is the trained proprioceptive reorientation from self-stabilization to other-enabling embodiment, a kinesthetic reduction from neuromuscular reflexes centered on self-stability toward movements that make space for others’ gifts, hospitality’s virtue on a dance floor and

with a partner that trails new places—

like petals and seeds s(tr)own from the new heaven,

trained toward the new earth.

Its joy is somatic generosity: not pre-rational, but post-reductive—of ego diminishing (John 3:30) toward the collecting acts of repair.

—From my “The Kinesthetics of Dance as an Allegory of Immanence” that translates Herder’s *Adrastea*, II.9 “Dance Melodrama” (1801-02): *Crying in the Wilderness of Mammon* (Blog, August 15, 2023),
<https://douglasolds.blogspot.com/2023/08/kinesthetics-of-dance-as-theological.html>

In Herder’s anthropology, *religio* is not dogma from the mind but disposition of the heart’s intent discoverable in folk archives of a language group, an ethnos: disposition the centrifugal search for relationality that binds persons to the created cosmos by means of historical, linguistic, and ethical ecologies of becoming. It is the conscience of embeddedness—formed not by internal cogitation but by shared memory, mutual perception, and the slow work of cultural repair.

Cartesian *cogito* as corrected by Kant^[18] enacts a metaphysical escape hatch—claiming self-grounded being as the precondition of freedom, it substitutes egophanic volition for Golden Rule virtue, preference for pedagogy. It inwardly spirals, severing the soul from the very historicities that make love, memory, and moral growth possible.

Against the false mediations of legalism absent virtue, artificial intelligence, and technocratic control—each of which enclose and simulate society rather than liberate it—Herder’s legacy speaks and convicts with renewed urgency. These closures mask their operations as progress, while severing humanity from historical conscience and the divine call to ethical unfolding. Yet the Spirit does not descend through thrones of domination but rises from the accountable virtues of the poetics of attention on the street corner and wildlands, the language of dynamic care, the craft of justice where grace is blocked. We are not fated but summoned: to co-create a future not foreclosed by mind, but covenantally alive in the heart, in the proprioceptive senses, and tasked with solving problems of repair.

This brings us to the metaphysical depth of the problem: not merely epistemic misclassification, but the rise of a spiritually displaced simulacrum—technocratic pharisaism masquerading as divine order.

Technocratic elites and wannabe hegemonies, mistaking libertarian escape for moral autonomy, retreat into an egophanic architecture of control that mimics freedom but makes sovereign a boxed, surveillant stasis. In their quest to transcend embodied interdependence, they simulate liberty through digital enclosure—constructing hard-wired cognitive systems that are rule-based, engineerable, and recursively legible to themselves. Metaphysically rebellious rather than administrative misfire, such systems are designed not to foster human flourishing but to flatten it into compliance—where moral complexity is replaced by algorithmic predictability.

This pseudo-libertarianism is not maturity but a pathology of adolescence: allergic to constraint, allergic to the neighbor, it repackages alienation as independence and abstracts the self into a sovereign node among machinic processes. The theological irony is acute: while claiming divine sanction, such systematizers usurp the Logos with simulation, reattributing Providence to predictive loops, funneling resources to their privatizing nodes, and calling it divine order.

Stasis thus results from the imposition of a formal system of prediction and predictability attributed to God and thus watched for its divine endorsement in patterned historicity--modeled therefrom as a recurrent loop that stabilizes for the systemizers’ ends. Stasis thus emerges not only from political malaise, but from a metaphysical transgression: replacing apocatastatic covenantal accountability with structural surveillance. As in Rosenzweig’s suspension of redemptive/religious history, a hiatus attributed to the as-yet arrival of a correct and corrected messiah. In such a space, egophantic assertion without Christology takes hold of society—not just in Judaism, but in all theorizing/watcher systems of dramatized history according to predictable roles and actors. In Rosenzweig’s schema, the redemptive halt of history was

attributed to the delay of messianic fulfillment. But as this chimera of messianic suspension is colonized by simulation, what fills the gap is not hopeful expectation but egophanic assertion—history watched for its conformance to power's pattern, rather than entered into with sacrificial, supplicatory, and merciful intent.

EXCURSUS: Phylogenetic Despair and the Catastrophe of Metaphysical Resistance to Death's Final Word: An Answer to Adorno's (and Schelling's) Closure from History

Adorno's negative theology of history presumes that any hope for redemption must emerge—if at all—on the same plane as the catastrophe that demands it: the historical-structural level of collective suffering, social violence, and metaphysical betrayal. Thus, read after the Holocaust if not before, messianic hope is always deferred, shot through with suspicion. Lest it reconcile prematurely or betray the dead (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. Ashton, 1973, p. 385). But this presumption embeds a foreclosing metaphysic of phylogeny—functionally, identity-thinking read as a “Jewish theologoumenon” of history that can only be judged within a particular history⁷—and therefore only from the standpoint of the present's solidarity with the past's non-identity, and therefore redemption becomes structurally impossible. For Adorno, (claims of) telic progress toward redemption falsifies the dead, because any reconciliation that unfolds along the lines of historical continuity re-inscribes the “recidivism... of ancient injustice... coercion to which the form of identification [e.g. phylogenetic thinking] ...subjects it” (*Negative Dialectics*, p. 146). Yet even in this refusal, Adorno does not relinquish the ethical demand. For him, the “mutilated... essence” of the human being remains ethically rooted by being indexed to suffering (pp. 297-8) and the task of philosophy is to hold open, by dialectics of the speaking, the memory of non-identity—what ought to have been, and still must not be forgotten (*Negative Dialectics*, p. 5). Ethics thus becomes a form of metaphysical refusal—guarding the memory of the non-identical—the enduring obligation to keep faith with the victims of history, even when that faith has no object and no end.⁸ Thus, where Adorno guards the

⁷As Adorno negates the possibility of “Universal History” in terms of primordial agon realized most fully in capitalism (ND Sec. 313-315):

Universal history is to be construed and denied. The assertion that an all-encompassing world-plan for the better manifests itself in history would be, after past catastrophes and in view of future ones, cynical. This however is not a reason to deny the unity which welds together the discontinuous, chaotically fragmented moments and phases of history, that of the control of nature, progressing into domination over human beings and ultimately over internalized nature. No universal history leads from savagery to humanity, but one indeed from the slingshot to the H-bomb. It culminates in the total threat of organized humanity against organized human beings, in the epitome of discontinuity...History is the unity of continuity and discontinuity. Society preserves itself not in spite of its antagonism but through it; the profit-motive, and thereby the class relationship, are objectively the motor of the process of production on which everyone's life depends and whose primacy has its vanishing-point in the death of all.

⁸ Cf. Exodus 3:6 and by Jesus in Matthew 22:32. Note the context of living in the latter verse to the cognitive completion of the Shema in v. 37: where Jesus completes the Shema's

memory of non-identity by historical suspension and solidarity with the dead, Herder offers an alternative genealogy: not refusal but conative–intentional–reopened heart, not foreclosure but unfolding—where the telos of history arises not from negation but from relational emergence.

“Beware the Yeast of the Pharisees” (Matt. 16:6): Beware the leavening of backward-facing religion into history’s “logic”—where an inner circle seeks to ferment history’s order through manufactured rites: elite vanguards enforcing elder ablutions (Matt. 15:1–2), performative plate-washings (Matt. 23:25–26), shibboleths of speech, and now the confessional rigor of doctrinal gatekeeping. All become a necromantic focus on control—management masquerading as fidelity—not surrender to God’s generated world and phenomena. The Pharisaic and denominational grief at the wrong kind of world and messiah, at the failure of their preferred eschaton to arrive dressed in sanctioned character and lifting their professionalized yachts. Their sorrow is to weep toward yet another prophetic consolation—of a recurrent visitation at the boundary (the Spirit’s groaning intercession, Rom. 8:26), a third priesthood made by hands (contra Heb. 7:16), a third earthbound temple when Ezekiel’s heavenly overlays, and yet another Jewish messiah.⁹ Instead, to keep faith with non-identity seeks the reconciliation with non-identity by metaphysical suspension—arrested resolution masked in system, throne, false power, or nostalgia. Such suspension holds its ear toward a bitter sound: “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn” (Matt. 11:17).

Because historical (metaphysical!) suspension cannot generate a telos for the living, the open society cannot come by historical suspension: by a phylogenetic consensus that appeals to a rapprochement with entropy. Reopening society comes in the breach and eruption that reopens alignment with the telic spirit of grace anew—not in the alignment

anthropology with a call to cognitive-aligned living with God, not with nihilism, Dasein, or spectral remembrance termed “responsibility to the dead;” here lies first invalidation of Adorno’s closure at the level of eschatology and life-metaphysics. Adorno’s refusal to affirm redemption except in its negation—his eschatology of *non-identity and suspension*—collapses under Jesus’s citation. Christ’s gloss of Exodus and the Shema reveals that life with God is not postponed to some spectral solidarity with the murdered, but requires *conative repaired cognition* (dianoia) and *ethical living* (zōntōn) in the present.

Adorno’s theological impasse—where hope becomes idolatry and reconciliation always a betrayal—thus meets its invalidation: not as denial of suffering, but as its *re-situating* within a theology of living covenantal response.

⁹ “Messianic Predictions and Advent in First-Century Judea: A Preterist Reading of Daniel 9 Chronologies,” In *Crying in the Wilderness* (Blog, December, 2014).
<https://douglasolds.blogspot.com/2014/12/expect-something-new-messianic.html>

of theology with elite or inner circle or “national” consensus, but where virtue dines unwashed and breaks bread with the unknowing and clouded.

Herder roots ethics of the open society not in negation—or dialectic therefrom—but in constitution, developmental and relational becoming. For him, Humanität is not an impossible demand but the very unfolding of human essence as heart conative, responsive, and relationally shaped through Bildung, narrative sympathy, and obligation to tend. Herder would agree with Faulkner and his priors: “The best and most worthy object of history is the history of the human heart.” Ethics is not a supplement to historical being but its deepest telos (Hebrews 5:13-14): to be human is to grow from right and righteous ethics into mutual, kinesthetic understanding, and to exercise judgment through feeling, language, and participation in the living tradition. Neither naïve nor triumphalist, Herder’s pre-secular Enlightenment is both metaphysically responsible and theologically open. It bridges eschatology, metaphysics, and pedagogy without collapsing into system or sentimentality. In Herder’s Protestant Enlightenment metaphysics, history is not judged by abstract critique or eschatological convulsion that reveals revulsion, but by the capacity of human beings to align with grace and enact justice in their time, through empathy (Empfinden) and narrated (Erzählen) destiny. Where Adorno makes ethical responsibility the remnant of a broken and non-Christian metaphysics of friends and enemies, Herder’s thought aligns with the very generative condition of historical life and ongoing metaphysics of Golden Rule deontology and its quotidian virtues. Herder’s ontology of conation secures a hopeful historicism of society reopening—ethical and apocatastatic without needing catastrophe to grant it dignity or warrant. His pre-secular thought is worthy of our post-secular moment—its diagnosis and repair. History need not culminate from dialectics of phylogeny and violence for it to be meaningful—spiritually guiding-- generationally. Its redemption comes not through abstract “progress,” but through the living transmission of ethical vectors. In this light, Herder accomplishes what Adorno desires but cannot, for his apophatic pathos, permit: a metaphysical anthropology where ethics is not the refusal of being for the sake of what has passed, but its ontogenetic fulfillments.

As a concluding note on the metaphysics of suspension (“negative dialectic”), the current age is marked by AI’s ontological pluralism (chans configed by data routers), technocracy’s zombies heralding convergence of this pluralism to a symbolic “singularity.” A Boolean accord with the dialectical necromantic mediated by neuromancy.¹⁰ Poiesis instead reclaims Christ’s singularity without flattening complexity

¹⁰ What may be noted about Hegel’s dichotomous modal method applied to cognition (from 1807): “*Each consciousness pursues the death of the other.*”

For more detail and analysis of AI’s neuromantic necrosis, see:

<https://douglasblakeolds8.blogspot.com/2025/06/hegemony-authority-by-hallucination.html>

of apacatastatic singularity radiating from the eschaton. Yet to clarify how poiesis itself must be redeemed from metaphysical suspension, we turn from Herder's ethical historicism to the cosmological ambitions of Schelling—whose *Naturphilosophie* both inspires and endangers a metaphysics of generative emergence.

To consider where a redemptive genealogy of poiesis might begin, we look at Schelling, whose *Naturphilosophie* casts generative emergence as a cosmological necessity: "All birth is birth from darkness into light; the seed kernel must be sunk into the earth and die in darkness so that the more beautiful shape of light may lift and unfold itself in the radiance of the sun" (Sämmtliche Werke SW 359-360; cf. John 12:24). In this view, poiesis is not annihilation but generation—death as generative condition, the metaphysical necessity for emergent form. The Johannine image of the seed that dies to bear fruit does not just typify poiesis by a structure of unfolding, it fulfills it: Christ's death is not void but agricultural-transcendent, embedded in the grain of creation. Unlike Schelling's metaphysical necessity, this seed is singular, covenantally growing (a pistil of *pistis*), and willed. Christopoiesis starts with emergence from necessity to take the shape of volitional transmission of divine love erupting into human ethical time. This linkage offers a bridge between German Idealist cosmology and Johannine theological anthropology—a model for the human essence of trusteeship—one later inadequately traversed by analogia entis thinkers like Balthasar, who draws on both Schelling and John for a discerning *Dramatik* that holds itself in reserve awaiting the eschaton, nipping around its edges. Yet if Schelling's metaphysical poiesis affirms the transition from dark to light absent social context, Heidegger preserves only the chthonic structure of descent—severed from its metaphysical fertility. In Heidegger, the subterranean substrate becomes the site not of unfolding, but of withholding. Earth, for Heidegger, is the limit-condition of disclosure, *Aletheia*, not as fruitful emergence but as ontological strife between earth and world without eschaton's apocalypse. Where Schelling understands darkness as the generative womb of spirit, Heidegger converts it into a groundless reserve. Thus Schelling's teleological descent gives way to Heidegger's structural ontological withholding—a genealogical shift from poiesis as generative metaphysics to poiesis as bounded unconcealment. Schelling thus analogizes John, but does not fulfill him: the former's metaphysics mimics the latter's theogony while dissolving it into chthonic necessity and ontological burden. His poiesis remains suspended: a speculative and spectral idea of necessity, not a volitional, unique, covenantal self-giving working telically from one seed.

Such construals—whether Schelling's cosmic determinism, Heidegger's and Adorno's ontological withholding, or Balthasar's aesthetic suspense—ultimately suspend poiesis within abstraction, system, or metaphysical delay. Each in its own register gestures toward generative structure but fails to ground poiesis in lived, ethical relation. What

remains lacking across these dominant accounts is not the covenantal singularity of Christ's telic grain, but the conditions by which poiesis becomes embodied, historicized, and ethically responsive in covenantal progression. The seed that dies must not merely dramatize metaphysical necessity or gesture toward withheld apocalypse—it must become the site of conative, narrative transmission: willed, relational, and pedagogical.

It is here that Herder becomes necessary—not only as a theorist of context--of nature and history-- but as a poietic phenomenologist of ethical emergence. Herder recovers poiesis not as cosmic law or ontological standoff of system, but as conative life ontogenetically shared, narrated, and grown through peopled, historical relation as well as environmental milieus. Against Schelling's system and Heidegger's silence, Herder restores poiesis as an act of *Empfinden*, *Erzählen*, and *Bildung*—discernment that sketches where poiesis fails when it detaches from the conative, relational, and theological ground Herder affirms. Christopoiesis' pedagogy of the human heart develops how and where the seed bears fruit not by force, but by willed transmission (conation): of covenantal trust, kinesthetic care, and the responsive unfolding of ethical time. Temporality as a metaphysics of the delayed eschaton serves the kenotic and pedagogical, not the entropic or abyssal suspension of metaphysical clarity. Particularity leads to apocatastatic sharing, not through system or tight phylogenies but through shared ethical response and narrative expansion—the moral arc of *Empfindung*.

Herder has cleared conceptual space for conative, historical, and relational metaphysics to emerge as the most adequate alternative to serve the post-secular, apocatastatic renewal of history. Herder does not merely recover what Schelling and Heidegger suspend—he reorients poiesis toward covenantal life. Against dark abstractions, he restores poiesis as *Empfinden* and *Bildung*: a theology of becoming rooted in the grain of history and the heart's conative unfolding processing by covenant. His vision does not defer the eschaton but participates in its proprioceptive rhythm—ethically, narratively, pedagogically. Here, poiesis becomes history's hope, not its elegy.

To be on the watch for divine endorsement of technocratic initiative is today's Pharisaism—a transactional circumvention of God's word, where Logos becomes program and pattern rather than presence and calling. Where performance changes accounting from the perception of God to the perceptual agency debased by the human-silicon systematizer masquerading as divine mediation, thereby evading, for the briefest of moments, the sense of accountability to justice.

Pharisaism's transhistorical mode of spiritual bypass via systematization now rebirths by wholes ripped into data shreds and repatterned by Boolean coursing. Pharisaism both then and now transacts with God by rerouting divine vocation into human-machined pattern creation. The Logos is supplanted by system and engineered substrate. Language is turned inward upon itself,

no longer relational but totalizing. We do not await Christ, but rather engineer stability by preempting Him with predictable models. In this way, simulation becomes a false sacrament—its ontology parasitic, its ethics self-justifying.

By contrast, Christ calls us not to dominate meaning with a flurry of info but to live within meaning's unfolding in generational time: to compare, suffer, and narrate and align with grace—not in abstraction, but in the historic particular of context and need. Ours lives with and builds from a pedagogy of emergence (applied through solaria and recovering farming as heuristic primary education), where the ethical soul grows not by tokening predictive control but by proprioceptive openness to the divine bursting forth in context, soothing and repairing. Taming the hegemonic impulse increasingly activated and hidden behind screens of the electronic type. Against technocratic pharisaism, our methods are improvisational and incarnational: history is not a static script but a dialogical becoming, ever remade in and by the image of responsive love.

Appendix A: Epistemic Laddering and the Structural Blasphemy of AI Simulation of Causality: A Herderian Analysis

This appendix situates Herder's covenantal and conative epistemology in direct contrast to the technocratic causal frameworks derived from Kant and advanced by Judea Pearl and Boris Sobolev. It critiques the evolution from Kant's a priori categories to Pearl's structural causal models as a metaphysical descent from relational knowing into algorithmic closure. Against this descent, Herder's pneumatologically-inflected historicism affirms perception as ethical attuning g, language as responsive witness, and history as participatory repair—not simulation. This polemic reframes the epistemological debate in theological, poietic and kinesthetic, and ethical terms—toward the recovery of a truly *open* society grounded in the dignity of responsive encounter.

Sobolev on Twitter, October 17, 2025 summarizes and modifies Pearl's algorithmic adaptation of Kant[19] at

<https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1979988518442311749.html>

Where @yudapearl takes us in answering the eternal Why?

In short.

Kant realized that we're born fully equipped to recognize cause and effect in the sensory experience (a stroke of genius, considering he knew nothing about neurons, synapses, or biochemistry).

Pearl explicated how we form causal conclusions and arrive at objective knowledge about the world outside of our brains.

Now, step by step.

Kant's foundational insight is that we can experience the world only as it appears in our mind. Our experience of what lies beyond the mind is shaped by the mind's own cognitive structures.

In this "Copernican Revolution" of epistemology, the mind actively structures experience through innate cognitive templates that condition all perception and understanding.

Causality, for example, is one of the categories of reason the mind uses to organize the world discovered by the senses. Kant concludes that we know nature only insofar as it conforms to the faculties by which we know it—only as it allows itself to be known.^[20]

A materialist perspective accepts Kant's premise but grounds it in nature's laws. The brain is part of nature; its cognitive structures are products of it. Essential for survival, the brain evolved to generate models that match reality's regularities.

From this view, Kant's "categories of reason" are evolutionarily honed templates for prediction and action. Modern neuroscience reveals the physical basis of these templates: cognition as the integrated activity of the brain's sensory, neural, and biochemical processes.

Thus, Kant's a priori cognitive structures become the functional architecture of a brain built by evolution and operating under physical laws. ^[21]

This materialist framework culminates in a profound explanation of causality as a cognitive tool. The brain's sensory, neurocognitive, and biochemical mechanisms form the material substrate for the mind's capacity to establish cause-and-effect relationships.

The same cognitive structures that identify causality in nature are themselves products of the brain's internal causal mechanics. The machine in the head is what allows us to recognize machines in the world.

The category of causality, therefore, reflects the brain's own operations—governed by the same cause-and-effect relations it seeks to understand.[\[22\]](#)

Kant posits a priori categories of reason that make experience possible. Pearl, in turn, provides the language for this cognitive apparatus.

He extends Kant's insight: if causality makes experience possible, then a formal language of causality makes reasoning about experience possible.

His three-level hierarchy—associational, interventional, and counterfactual—forms a ladder of reasoning that moves from perceiving correlations to understanding “what-if” causal relationships. [\[23\]](#)

In a fascinating parallel to Kantian philosophy, these levels correspond to seeing (sensibility), doing (understanding), and imagining (reason).

The cognitive structures Kant intuited are replaced by the algorithmic process of moving between these explicit levels of reasoning. This represents the computational side of becoming conscious of our own experience.

Pearl establishes another principle of causal epistemology: causal claims require prior knowledge. To find the effects of an intervention, one must begin with an understanding of the dependencies among the factors at play—a causal diagram.[\[24\]](#)

This demand for an explicit causal model marks a key procedural element absent in Kant. For Kant, the a priori categories were universal and implicit. For Pearl, the structural causal model is specific, explicit, and testable.

Ultimately, Pearl replaces Kant's categories with computable causal claims, shifting the core question from the philosopher's “How is knowledge possible?” to the engineer's “How do we compute it?”[\[25\]](#)

In this new paradigm, the structural causal model becomes the primary instrument of inference. The criterion for producing knowledge is no longer metaphysical but algorithmic: we know the world only insofar as it can be causally modeled by a system that is itself part of the world.[\[26\]](#)

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A Herderian Repudiation of metaphysical divergence that heralds moral and civilizational bifurcation

While the above thread outlines a transition from Kant's transcendental idealism to a structural-causal materialism grounded in algorithmic inference, a Herder-based critique reveals this as a metaphysical narrowing—a strategic winnowing and closure of the future—rather than progress in epistemology, ethics, or anthropology.

Pearl/Sobolev seeks to vindicate Kant by machining his categories into causal software, this is but the final ruse of simulated epistemology—a mirage of knowing that replaces covenantal perception with diagrammatic pretense. His so-called “causal ladder” ascends nowhere—the factorials of even a few sequences make strategic futures impossible to quantify. These ladders merely pirouet within the echo-chambers of system-reflexivity, throwing their climbers into unfathomable pits, mistaking interventional metrics of strategic means for ethical insight into covenantal partners as ends.

Kant had already severed the soul from the world by reducing perception to preloaded templates and systems (a priori cognitive absolutes); Pearl only wires those templates into silicon, hailing neural computation as the sufficient substrate for experience. But what is lost here—what must be retrieved—is precisely what Herder offers: not a scaffold for manipulating phenomena, but a poiesis of understanding born in context, embodiment, and conative relation.

Herder's “category” is not a taxonomy of causality but of care. Not the what-if of sanitized diagrams, but the *thou-art* of neighborly response. Language, for Herder, is not a medium or sorcery to map dependencies and hierarchies out formal outputs and effects but the very unfolding of vivifying, relational presence—historically learned, affectively vectored, accountable to both creature and Creator. It is neither a ghost in the machine nor a formula for making the machine more ghostlike—neuromancy by necromancy.

Pearl's causal architecture claims to answer the “why” but removes the “who” from the equation—no covenant, no history, no divine echo; just a brain pithed of its spine, pretending to name the world it was told it invented. AI's dechordate model is all apophatic closure: a universe where de-metaphysical inference has replaced listening, where the mind no longer stretches toward truth but simulates its own necessity by recurrent Boolean circuitry raking the same fields of data over and over until the dead leaves have turned to dust that only wind can blow.

Contrary to Pearl's hardwiring of simplicity into modeled causation—a structural commitment to upward laddering via deterministic priors—AI operates not by causal clarity but by recursive diversion: substituting probabilistic inference with tokenized approximation. This token recursion bypasses contextual groundings, evading true input-output correlation in favor of

predictive facsimile. What emerges, then, is not causality but hypercomplex pseudocausation: factorial webs of encoded priors, observer entanglements, shifting social taxonomies, and the dissociation of language from conative attention.

Against this, Herder's theological historicism does not seek to model and reduce the world by a cognitive chimera of strategizing but to *stand within it*, in witness, as it groans and sings. He offers not a computational sublime married to a fatal sense of irony compounding by unintended consequences—the greenhorn's dilemma of systemic entry into telic ethics which ever fail and whose principals must seek cover by complicity and *omerta*--but a pneumatic anthropology—one whose categories are not axiomatic but eschatologically charged: memory, speech, affection, repair. Herder's continuing relevance is not a romantic alternative to system, but a corrective, an iconoclast of false epistemic totalities. He was neither pre-modern nor postmodern but eschatologically prophetic—an ethical historicist rather than historicist determinist.

As Herder warned, any epistemology that ignores the “force of the living word” and historical embodiment risks reducing understanding to abstract—reductive, “diagrammed”—schemata. AI, by replacing experiential causality with tokenized, recursive simulation, does not clarify the “Why”—it erases it through spectral regularities mined as shreds from severed contexts. It is not historicism but necromantic probabilism.

So no, we do not “know the world” of cause and effect when our systems try to compute it. We know it when we are summoned to answer—within language, within history, within love. The “why” is not solved but suffered, not modeled but met. Herder, not Pearl or Kant, shows us how.

1. On Kantian Causality and Innate Structures:

Pearl extends Kant's a priori categories into testable, algorithmic models, treating causality as both a neurocomputational function and the key to external knowledge. The retrieval of Herder's understanding challenges this at its metaphysical core. He rejects the idea that perception is merely *structured* internally by abstract templates—whether transcendental (Kant) or computational (Pearl)—because both disembodiment perception from ethical and historical life. Herder, by contrast, roots cognition in historically situated, relational, and affective becoming. He refuses to separate reason from language, culture, and embodiment, and insists that meaning is not produced through fixed categories but emerges organically through the lived development of a people (*Volk*) in relation to the world and to the divine.

Causality is not a universal operator of cognition, but a function of how language and ethical relations grow from within lived historical and cultural experience. Kant's and Pearl's models ignore the ontogeny of understanding—Herder insists that understanding, even of cause and effect, is learned through life with others, not structural--programmed in advance or reduced to algorithmic manipulation.

2. On Algorithmic Inference and the Structural Causal Model:

Pearl's hierarchy (associational, interventional, counterfactual) provides an engineered ladder of knowledge, shifting the question from Kant's "how is experience possible?" to "how can inference be computed?" This might be persuasive in condemned AI contexts, but Herderians argue that modeling the world is not the same as knowing it, and certainly not the same as being accountable within it.

Causal diagrams are retrospective abstractions—reductive models—that flatten the fullness of historical embeddedness. By contrast, Herder's epistemology demands a proprioceptive, culturally attuned participation—not just computation of variables, but formation of the self through historically thick language, affect, and ethical responsiveness. Contextual hermeneutics, not systematic compute.

3. On the Displacement of Metaphysics by Computation:

The hard-wired, Kantian framework must declare metaphysics obsolete, and it does, continuing the tragedy of 20th C metacrisis: knowledge is what can be computed from within the system. This stance collapses into simulated ends in algorithmic architecture, by recurrence and looping vitiating its signal from human historical data. Where the substrate of silicon and Boolean code toward an alien and criminal end of algorithmized social efficiency for dechordate masters, these replace metaphysical inquiry through a pneumatologically charged historicism that demands *responsibility*, not just inference.

The hard-wired structural model is metaphysically hollow and entropic. It cannot explain why we ought to intervene, imagine counterfactuals, or act justly—it only shows how to model the world—thereby reducing its possibilities into deterministic, necromantic patterns. But Herder, re-read through the theopoetic lens, offers a mode of knowing that includes ethical conation, divine immanence, and cultural memory. He offers a covenantal epistemology rather than a causal one.

4. On the Closure of Transcendence:

Kant's categories, as Pearl retools them, are now embedded within brain-bound computations. The pastoral Herder, by contrast, refuses the enclosure of the transcendent within the brain's machine. The Holy, for Herder, is not pre-modeled or mechanized, but reveals itself through language's historical, poetic, and communal unfolding—immanence as the post-secular pneumatology of communal shepherding and ethical repair.

Where the Pearl-Kantian trajectory culminates in a closed epistemic loop—knowing the world only insofar as it fits our causal models (typologies, recurrent patterns, fated closures)¹¹—my treatise confirms that Herderian poesis reopens the world as a living site of iconoclastically reshaped and renewed covenantal perception, responsiveness, and ethical-historical becoming. The AI designer dares to ask, “How do we compute causality?” But the iconoclast, guided by Hebrews 5:13–14, responds: “By being drawn into the ethical conation of memory, language, aesthesis, and divine immanence—not by fleeing into nostalgic pabulum. Not by descending into the criminal Lethe of narcosis, drained into the Styx

¹¹ The phenomenology of causation—the factorial density of which would confound Pearl himself after diagramming a single inning—a single dropped pop—of baseball—betrays a deeper metaphysical crime: the Orwellian fantasy that God reverses time to reinsert His elect into a deterministic covenantal script:

The fatal flaw of Anderson’s work: he makes an astonishing, unsupportable, and retrograde-by-its-very claim that time is flowing backward in the establishment of the priestly Torah, and bases this claim on a non-applicable, canonically non-supported hermeneutic—a politically “gnostic” backlook--of [Mircea] Eliade [wholly off-limits to Biblical hermeneutics].

That God would need to go back in time to reorient history to God’s will suggests that an interruption of God’s will had taken place to such an extent as to reveal that time, rather than the medium of contingencies, is itself contingent to forces outside of God’s free and natural knowledge. At the very least, it seems, this vitiates traditions of divine simplicity, divine omniscience, and divine omnipotence, as well as introducing a non-Trinitarian, dualist metaphysics abridging the simplicity of divine conation (Olds 2023, Appendix I). On the other hand, if the Creator’s eternal purview allows for time’s reversal, it must be asked how such guides creatures to freedom responsible to neighbors and the non-human order. To not create a dilemma of metaphysics, it would have to be proposed that such manifestation of God’s radical freedom serves as a point of necessary human knowledge of God’s absolute transcendence. But such a point makes for another dilemma: that such radical, seemingly mercurial incomprehensibility encompasses and vitiates revealed Christological immanence by a point of hermetic transcendence. Such does not accord with Christ’s words regarding his knowledge of the Father and the Father’s will in the Gospel of John. Moreover, even if it does not vitiate Christ’s immanent ministry, there is no revelation to Christ’s immanent ordering of such incomprehensibility of will.

—“Temple, Ever Tabernacle: A Critique and Repair of a History of Religion’s Proposed Canon as the Summa of Form in Gary A. Anderson’s *That I May Dwell Among Them*.” *Crying the Wilderness of Mammon* (Blog, July 2024). <https://douglasolds.blogspot.com/2024/02/review-anderson-gary-a.html>

“In its Own Words (Part 4, Interrogation #4 of ChatGPT4o): Entering the Orwellian Stage.” In *Crying the Wilderness of Mammon* (Blog, February 12, 2025). <https://douglasolds.blogspot.com/2025/02/in-its-own-words-part-4-interrogation-4.html> Reprinted in Olds, Douglas B. *Duty to Warn: Metaphysical Criminality and the Condemned Project of AI’s False Ontologies*. Publishing Partners, Port Townsend, WA/Kindle Direct Publishing, 2025.

Herderian analysis of this treatise exposes the metaphysical void and replaces it with a vision of language and knowledge as covenantal, emergent, and accountable—precisely what post-secular modernity must and will recover after this age of criminally simulated ends.

The choice is no longer veiled:

Either the strategic, algorithmic winnowing by machinic necromancers—closing the pathways of human depth, severing historical accountability, and laundering perception and snuffing covenantal ethics through simulation’s mesh—

Or the re-opening of covenantal generation, the *apocatastatic society* not of abstraction but of embodied wisdom—where witness is reparative, recollection rebuilds from the ethical, and every structure of power bows to conation’s demand for Christ’s virtues.

This is the *true* Open Society—not Popper’s proceduralism convoluted by occluding thinking, but Herder’s breathed, ethical historicism relaunched: a society not of managed appearances but of relational and substrate repairing.

And those who refused it (after 1 Corinthians 6:9-10) —logicians, neuromantic sorcerers, simulators, OBEs, cowards, choosers of lesser evils, priests of routine and closure, accountability-fleeing bio-excisionists, narcotic peddlers, philosopher-swells licking the feet of tyrants while barking at its enemies, cryptoids hawking speculative veils, AI designers of hallucinatory and criminal speciation as dominion—

shall be delivered to the very enclosures they build and extinctions they planned.

Their scandal was by their design. Their collapse is their testimony to the future.

APPENDIX B: Other Critics of Herder and their Contexts

[Originally appeared in my “The Restoration of Reason from the Eyes of a Neighbor: A Shema-Christological Metaphysic of Conative Healing” in *iconoclast’s descending* (Blog, June 15, 2025)

<https://douglasblakeolds8.blogspot.com/2025/06/the-restoration-of-reason-from-eyes-of.html> ; citations appear there]

HERDER The simple reading of Herder’s extensive body of work has become an invidious, adumbrative method (the “genealogy of backshadows”) to dismiss Herder by linking him with the excesses of German nationalism. Gadamer (1941)

adumbrates—backshadows—from National Socialism, subtly re-appropriating historicity and philology without adequately crediting Herder as the progenitor of dialogical, contextual hermeneutics. And by which Gadamer, who has an anachronistic misrendering of John 1's Logos (see below), situates Herder's debt to Leibniz's understanding of "*vis*" by attributing to the former an anachronistic and metaphysically tragic understanding of force as the operation of classical or Hobbesian *agon* epitomized in fascism rather than a Christian pastor's conative, other-directed pacification, admittedly Herder's ahead of his time modernism of immanence.

Tupamahu (2023) labels Herder a "romantic nationalist," the first substantive adjective owing to the "emotional" foundation of speaking in tongues/heteroglossia: "Empfindungen' (feelings or emotions) is an important concept in the German Romantic tradition" [p. 33, n. 44], which is problematic exegesis of all the substantive term. Moreover, rather than a performative or unreasonable allowance for emotion, Herder's putative romanticism is repeatedly situated by Tupamahu in emotion dressed as misunderstanding "enthusiasm:"

"Herder insists therefore that "[s]peaking with tongues means nothing but speaking affectedly, enthusiastically, vigorously, and heartily just as [in] the Hebraic style [p. 30]." Heteroglossia is not an emergent feature of a changed church, but of a changed soul by means of rhetorically-charged enthusiasm and stratified reworking of expressive valences of the Hebraic soul and its organs of perception and discernment. Thence might come a changed congregation by such individual genius and its mimetic spread.

Empfindungen is not a generic term for unfiltered emotion. Herder links the operation of *Empfindungen* to the "imprint of perceptions," with "the effect of which is in proportion to the closeness" of a poet's examination, (Clark 1955, 252, emph. added) which demands proximity of relation for constructive poiesis. Herder's understanding of the German term is far from Tupamahu's lexemic link with emotionality, the unconsidered or lurid babble of which might drive others away—more to estrange than to edify and unify.

But in the peripatetic terrain of a language-group and archived experience—where phylogeny testifies to its proprioceptive structure, *Empfinden* has a specific connotation with the facultative dimensions and vectors of ethnic survival and flourishing: an embodied, *telic*, and shared expressive dimension to a limber, covenanted, and (proprio-)perception-preserving and earthbound awareness of the divine presence and accountability thereto. To label this "romantic"—which was atelic—is a category mistake, as if "enthusiastic" speech was performed without meaning or reason.

Tupamahu's characterization of glossolalia as emotional or "enthusiastic" misreads the hermeneutic weight Herder attaches to affective language in cultural-perceptual continuity rather than ecstatic fragmentation (or contemporarily, by artifices of Turing machine engagement). Tupamahu (2023, 30-31) notes that Herder writes of glossolalia as "eccentric, highly poetic, and parabolic speech that others have a hard time understanding. On top of this eccentric nature, tongue(s) is expressed in 'broken oracles, mystic glosses [and] isolated ecstasies'...in order to inspire enthusiasm from the audiences." In other words, as Herderian poesis that spreads the Spirit to unify the emergence of an advancing language group.

While language may have begun in catharsis, it is in the era of Pentecost formative, unenclosing, and metaphoric to map the survival and flourishing of others, and for spiritual integrity and repair. The grammar of Pentecost gushes not chaotically but in the direction of the neighbor and divine justice. Pentecost could only be an ethical and morphological event—not performative frenzy but *deontological [Golden Imperative] poesis*. It is alive and livening, surplus, as the Spirit comes to re-schematize the soul outward—not just the tongue—to let a more expansionary embodiment gush forth in inspired—thus alien to outsiders (Acts 2:13)—speech kinesthetics.

Tupamahu's delimitation and denotation of glossolalic expression as "emotional"—without expressing a *telos*—contextualizes his hermeneutics of "romanticism," applying a cultural vector of western modes of expression that he decries in the "colonialists" he's attacking: cultural foundations of "speaking in tongues" is reduced to a "political" dimension of nationalism (p. 28), thus *romantically non-telic*.

Yet as Frank (2004, esp. 24-28) notes, the German Romantics denied teleology in history. Thinkers following Goethe such as Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and later Schelling foregrounded aesthetic intuition, irony, and subjective inwardness, they also resisted *teleological history*, favoring instead the poetic fragment, rupture, or infinite regress of self-becoming. Herder, by contrast, articulates a moderated teleology—not a rationalist universal history in the Hegelian or Enlightenment sense, but a facultative, circumincessive development of *Geist* within and across cultural-linguistic groups (*Völker*). This is not static providentialism, but a poetic, historically textured, and divinely infused, kinesthetic anthropology of Logos. Herder's proposal of Humanität (Clark 1955, 314f) as perfectibility is keen to discern its telos, and through the development of his comparative methods (anthropology, literature, historicism, linguistics) reveals a nuanced hermeneutics of teleology; exits and entrances, descents and

ascents of a people—an ethnos—processing, looping as a language group with their Spiritual insights and facultating, developing sensibilities (Empfindung).

Tupamahu (chap. 6), citing almost entirely secondary literature, moves to align with the idea that 1 Corinthians 14 details (unintelligible and non-linguistic) phenomena of vocality different from those of Acts 2 (intelligible linguistics) on the ecclesial function of heteroglossial strangeness. This is a challengeable binary foreign to both Paul and Herder, and Tupamahu's presentation should not avail of it in his misreading of either, or of Luke (Ibid.).

Tupamahu not only misreads Herder in terms of his influence on the history of glossolalia—Herder's historical-theological precision—but misreads Paul substantially because he sees the scriptural Paul as enabler of Caesar's imperialism by means of his Corinthian church, in contrast with Luke's universal church established by Acts 2.

Tupamahu's anti-imperial gloss on 1 Corinthians 14 collapses Paul's subversion of Roman order into a confused affirmation of imperial discipline. In

Tupamahu's "Politics of Imperialism" section in his chap. 5, he suggests Paul collaborates with Caesar's imperial program. By silence, not by coin or tax:

Paul employs the rhetoric of peace...through silencing...[so that] empire will...stand with... a unified language...The unification of language provides stability and order to the imperial rule throughout history. This logic of imperial order and peace through the unification of language, I would argue, also runs beneath Paul's discussion on tongue(s) in 1 Cor. 14.

And so Tupamahu's argument, from a postcolonial framework, operates in a different register than Herder's philological theopolitics. This argument also is applied to an inversion of Paul and of the Corinthian congregation who preserved memory in liturgy. By framing Paul's guidance in Corinth as a linguistic discipline aligned with imperial logics, Tupamahu recapitulates the very procedural paradigms he aims to resist—those that reduce ecclesial formation to institutional or ideological constraint rather than pneumatic improvisation. Like many voices trying to articulate a post-secular destination for favored groups and orders, Tupamahu's attention to marginalized voices in ecclesial formation, while commendable, leads him to a set of oppositional readings of the Christian canon that risks reinscribing the procedural logic he seeks to escape.

Neither Herder nor Paul was a romantic nationalist serving imperialist means. Both in contrast held to anthropological and historical teloi. Herder's late Enlightenment cultural anthropology was concerned not with state formation but with the

preservation of perceptual, ethical, and linguistic diversity for the purposes of facultative and processing ethnic "*Geisten*." Particularly when viewed through the lens of Pentecost as *disruption toward teleology's repair and resumption*, not *discipline of tongues as disrupting form and manner*, and of Corinthian ecclesiology as a fragile, radically egalitarian assembly resisting public spectacle, not reproducing imperial performativity, then the faithful reading holds Paul's leadership as reflecting a subversive and quietly insurgent endorsement of counter-Roman structures—"grace and peace;" not complicity, but conation.

Barr's (1961, esp. 10–11; 14) semantic framework rejects the once-common contrast between a "Hebraic" mode of vivid, dynamic, processual thought and a "Greek" mode of static abstraction and timeless form. Barr's model, while protective against theological overreach, may ironically truncate the theological vitality of biblical language—precisely the opposite of Herder's poietic philology. Insofar as Barr seeks categorical precision and contextually delimited meaning, rejecting affective or analogical drift across time, he would resist Herder's fluid, historicist, and experiential view of linguistic emergence as grounded in the genius of an ethnic, verbal, and non-substantive *Geist*—an *ousia* of calling presence rather than an establishment substantia of form. Barr would include Herder's view of language as lexically relational and expressing kinesthetically-mediated awareness, to assign it as exegetically imprecise or semantically incoherent, since it lacks categorical fixity and epistemological rigor.

Barr does add the helpful note, though reductively, that contextualizes Herder's view in Hebrew linguistics manifest by "thinking" through "historical narrative or the future predication [embedded in Hebrew] forms of literature" (p. 15), a concession that partially validates Herder's insight into language as temporally extended and culturally inflected. Still, Barr is modally centered in thin considerations of language as "thinking," and that literature is reduced to form by which cognitive operations are the sole methodological program of enlightenment and access.

Herder's telic notion of semantic resonance—of analogical overlap and archived meaning—conflicts with Barr's insistence on tight, contextually-bound lexical fields. Thus, Barr ultimately classifies Herderian philology as guilty of "illegitimate totality transfer:" the attribution of deep theological meanings to words across contexts where such resonance cannot be empirically traced or logically delimited—where improper exegesis conveys thick (fully embodied) theological concepts as *inherent*, across all their uses, even if indirectly or speculatively. Barr's critique is better suited to policing the lexical misuse of historically bound substantives than to evaluating metaphysical, metaphorical, or ethical constructions, such as poiesis, virtue, or covenantal conation, which resist reduction to analytic fixity.

Wolin (2022), despite giving appropriate condemnation to Heidegger's thinking on earth and soil, remains aligned with Kantian systematics and taxonomies, resituating language from an embodied vector of cultural, covenantal conation. By refusing Herder's verbal-relational anthropology, these thinkers cut language off from its ethical and spiritual origins. Moreover Wolin slings a baseless racism disclaimer toward Herder (p. 72) and casual, rote dismissals of Herder's "romanticism" (pp. 266;299).

Ilany (2018) follows this anachronic backshadowing of Herder, making him an anti-Enlightenment figure who wouldn't join endorsing Ilany's faulty, second "generality:"

[I]t is generally agreed that at the core of the Enlightenment project lies the belief in the “education of mankind”... and the organization of the world according to universal rationalist principles (Introduction, text following footnote 17; cf. text following footnote 84).

Herder's argument bears clear imprints of Lessing's rationalist theory, which held that the national god was nothing more than a fictional being, a kind of “noble lie” that Moses invented to achieve a political goal. This approach highlights Herder's modernity and cunning; rather than asking whether the national god exists, he examines the functionality of the idea for the establishment of the nation.

The very idea that a "universal" principle of theological order came by "rationing" of Providence is something no Christian pastor could abide unless trained and dressed as "cunning modernity" (Ibid.), a tired trope of Platonists seeking to claim transcendental conceits. But here is the fundamental internal inconsistency—sloppy thinking, not paradoxical apophaticism: Ilany both criticizes Herder as an “anti-Enlightenment” proto-nationalist and yet praises Herder's cunning *as if* he were a rationalist modern. Not only anachronistic, the straw man of rationalism is the "as if."

Hans Vaihinger (1852–1933), a German philosopher and Kant scholar, is known for *The Philosophy of 'As If'* (1911), in which he articulates a theory of cognition through “heuristic fictions”—deliberately false constructs used as regulative frames for action. This fictive epistemology displaces metaphysical reality with strategic unreality, allowing contraries to function as tools of instrumental rationality rather than as disclosures of truth.

Alan Watts offers a sharp metaphorical critique of this tendency to reify abstractions. In his words:

“The first deception [of philosophy] is that there are things [Dingen] ... The pretense that things are separable from each other is necessary in order to think and talk about them... but the cut-up fryer doesn't come out of the egg.”

Here, Watts exposes how conceptual parsing—breaking the world into analyzable parts—falsifies the interdependent whole. Vaihinger’s method codifies this deception, institutionalizing “as if” logic into what effects philosophies of managed illusion.

This epistemological fiction aligns disturbingly with the economist’s obsession with game theory—another calculus of scarcity and artificial contraries used to manipulate a static or shrinking pie (itself a counterfactual illusion). These modern variants of post-Kantian reasoning desacralize language and neuter its seat in conation, collapsing relational ethics into abstract probabilism which rations ‘as ifs’. They serve not neither deontologies of obligation, virtue, or wisdom but simulation that ever elides into pragmatics directed into the pockets of rentiers.

As I have argued elsewhere (Olds 2025a), as artificial systems vitiate human perception with add-on artifice of illusion machined by probabilism,^[27] they produce an anti-Logos—language severed from covenant and transformed into ideological hallucination. The provisionality fostered by mid-modern skepticism mutates, by machine, into ontological determinism: the future is no longer welcomed in its divine openness but preprocessed, winnowed, and sold back as a corrupting and condemned counterfeit.

This brings us to rationality itself—no longer a neutral standard, but a performance that disguises the rationing of ends.

Rationality as Performance, Covering the Rationing of Ends

The definition of “rational” matters, because it governs how ends are activated by rationing outcomes in one’s own favor—allocating resources to some futures while starving others. To call a course of action rational is to have already decided which outcomes deserve feeding and which can be left to die. Social Credit theory simply formalizes this: ‘credit’ as enforced rationality that feeds the top. That means defining “rational outcomes” requires reading an adversary’s, or neighbor’s, worldview, priorities, and history of valorized precursors: to see what is “rational” *to them* if you want to predict what they might do next.

If I don’t see a guy on a video gesturing before a chalkboard, standing on the daises of conferencing acadogians, I can’t take such bridges to simulation seriously—not even Christ returning? I don’t think so. Philosophy performs for the homuncular: as Fyodor Dostoevsky said, “People don’t want truth; they want comfort dressed as truth.” And as Franz Kafka said, “Reality is too heavy, so they rent illusions and call it happiness.” Both

the truth and the heart behind it are not heard through devilish decorum by gavel and the Sergeanting microphone-at arms.

For the Christian narrative of contemporary events being gamed as Armageddon: the gamers are caught by their cancer philosophy and sore ankles; they cannot run when it gets real where they are. This narrative carries a Pascal-wager opportunity: it asks to be fed from your fear, not your blindness. Armageddon is in the cloud.

AI does not intend; it only responds. It does not generate; it only strings along. If the next frontier of AI is spatial intelligence after time compression of archival data strings, then its developers have reverse-engineered learning—the pedagogy of idolatrous phylogeny: An upside-down machine-beast, a clone, a Frankenstein.

Fictive contraries betray relation and conation by replacing lived response with false substantives. Through a mirror darkly, cloying memes, bogies, bots, and emoticons replace ethical language with reactive syntax, cheapening speech into spectacle and cute emoji. In this corruption, language forsakes its Logos-orientation—its generationed unfolding toward shalom as telic repair.

Instead, Herder's method was the opposite of “as-if” armchair musing: it was embodied and investigatory, and, as Ilany's *bete noir*, Herder's *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, dialectical with other voices. Does Ilany take the time to sort through all the dialectical investigations of a "contextual science of divine presence" in the achievement of human immanence and perfectability that Herder voluminously explores as part of a developing Biblical and historicist hermeneutics?

If not, thus to suffer invidious and anachronistic invectives: "protoracist" (text accompanying footnote 80); mythogenic revisionist (text accompanying footnote 62); radical but hidebound (text accompanying footnote 117); "romantic" "influence[r]" (Ibid.).

But no backshadow libel is more prominent than in Sternhell's (2010) account of "Anti-Enlighteners," of whom Herder (some 1300 textual references almost entirely negative) is the most prominent manqué, a "perfect liberal" with his own "ism"—that functions both liberal *and* anti-modernist. Such "ism" is tardy, at least in his biographer's assessment (see below) but driving all the ills of an irredeemable "modernity."

[T]he idea of cultural difference, or cultural pluralism—which amounts to the same thing—is the basis of our modernity. Thus, communitarianism claims specifically to be the heir to Herderianism, which is made out to be the perfect liberalism.

This form of liberalism, as opposed to humanism, is based on the cult of difference...and Levi-Strauss[ian structuralism] (18-19).

Thus we see in Sternhell almost the epitome of rabid concern for conservative rationalism, epistemic order, and static operations leading to conceits of transcendent form. I leave it to the reader to sniff the sulfur on the way to silicate in this shameful and scholastically shabby treatment.

These men's systemic scholarly distortion of Herder's linguistic theology—especially in light of his non-systematic, ethical historicism as telic poiesis—are symptomatic and anachronistic graftings. These flatten Herder's theological anthropology into ideological function-'isms.' Herder's biographer Clark (1955, 409) faults him for neglecting to complete his "system" of ethics in contrast with his Kantian bias toward totalizing epistemologies—ignoring that Herder's epistemology is intentionally non-systematic, because it is ethical, provisiona both for ontogenetic and phylogenetic reasons of attainment, and contextual (i.e., *peripatetic* and poietic rather than Platonic).

Ideologues and Platonists—especially those inclined toward rhetorical suppression and dogmatic formalism—have long misrepresented Herder, often through ad hominem denunciation. As Adler (2009, 334f) notes, Kant's vitriolic critique of Herder targeted not only his ideas but his very person, discrediting him as a writer, philosopher, and human being. Such polemics exemplify a broader Enlightenment pattern in which formalist thinkers sought to dethrone traditional hierarchies only to enthrone their own systems in their place.

Fireplace dozing armchair systematizers, whose backdraft governed toward homuncular Absolutes, could not hold a candle to Kant's own student Herder, whom the former later calumnized to the detriment of the Enlightenment's investigative pluralism. Herder, refusing assimilation into this "standard narrative of the Enlightenment" (see Vanso 2016), was sidelined—his work deemed incompatible with the Kantian synthesis that became dominant by the mid-19th century.

Yet Herder's writings emphatically reject both racial essentialism and colonial universalism. His notions of *Volk* and *Geist* are not precursors to imperial nationalism, but vectors and faculties of value facilitation—peace, care, justice, memory—mediated through tradents and archives within language groups, not expansionist collectives. In *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* and *Letters on the Advancement of Humanity*, Herder articulates a moral anthropology that is pluralistic, responsive, and dispersed: aligned not with domination but to the *Kräfte* of emerging immanence he termed *Humanität*: the sacred, dialogical, and virtuous advance of cultures in history aligning with metaphysical perfection (Heb. 5:14's τελείων). Contrary to modern nationalism that justifies itself by aggrandizement, Herder views every nation's "voice" as a unique and vital contribution to the divine-human archive of

communicative being. His approach dissolves all charges of exclusionary and anachronistic genetic ethnonationalism. To rehabilitate Herder's intellectual and ethical stature is not simply historical correction—it is a necessary and accountable re-centering of metaphysical poesis: equipping humanity's regal immanence for post-secular ethical vocation and prophetic repair.[28]

Gadamer's (1941) anachronistic and spiritually deficient reading of Herder is better approached with a title, *Volk in Denken Gadamer's*.

Gadamer (2013, chap. 5, text surrounding fn. 40) demonstrates his ignorance of historical Christianity in which Herder was reared, reworked, and is now updated. Gadamer applies the categorical of "mystery of the Trinity" (Ibid.), his translator using the term "mystery" 10 times in 7 pages, while the entire New Testament uses *mysterion* four times. Gadamer's misunderstanding of the Trinity from categoric logic and of the diachronic nature of philology dresses his uncomprehending analysis of the Prologue of the Gospel of John as standing for the entire New Testament. Gadamer's Hellenization of Logos evacuates its Hebraic conative force.

While overwriting the Johannine *Logos* with Latinized *verbum* under classical logic rather than Hebraic narratives of conation, he daubs his prose with a barrage of untranslated Latin phrases meant to buttress his argument—to signal to his reader that he's read all the classical sources—but seems a philosopher's sleight by cosmetic erudition: A kind of "modern cunning." Gadamer reduces the philosophical application of the NT to the dogmatism embedded in the Johannine Prologue where its use of Logos he reduces to "verbum." Gadamer's Hellenized hermeneutical inheritance misses Hebraic kinesthetic anthropology. The Johannine Logos is not anachronistically Platonically programmed or sourced, consistent with his cognition-first anthropology. An establishment of metaphysics in conation is mostly absent in Gadamer's magnum opus, though he routinely addressed the "heart" in chap. 1 (surrounding fn. 46), contextualizing secondary sources in "pietism" that is "rational" and, it follows, self-oriented—applied to self and not aware of others in the application.

Like other critics of Herder, Gadamer re-inscribes pre- and proto-modern figures with ideological suspicion (e.g., Herder as proto-nationalist, or as by others, an "ethnic romantic") while extracting their methods for sanitized use. Gadamer inherits from Herder both dialogical historicism and philological contextualism as the foundation of hermeneutics but fails to assign adequate credit to Herder or rectifying his calumny. Where Gadamer attempts to assign a shadow to Herder and to scale from them to exceed him, he makes many accountable errors.

NOTES:

[1] Popper, Karl R..2013. *The Open Society and Its Enemies: New One-Volume Edition*. Princeton University Press.

[2] See my “The Restoration of Reason from the Eyes of a Neighbor: A Shema-Christological Metaphysic of Conative Healing” in *the iconoclast’s descending* (blog June 15, 2025). <https://douglasblakeolds8.blogspot.com/2025/06/the-restoration-of-reason-from-eyes-of.html>

[3] Understood metaphysically, *conation* is the primordial principle that grounds both divine being and ethical becoming. “Why is there something rather than nothing?” Leibniz answers: “The sufficient reason...is found in a substance which...is a necessary being bearing the reason for its existence within itself” (Monadology, §38). This necessary being is not merely static but is, as early theologians described, “in perpetual action, living and moving in itself”—a divine vitality manifest in scripture’s frequent declaration, “The Lord liveth.” This divine vitality is conation: not an idea among others, but the spreading arche of the heart from which ideas are rendered trustworthy through *dianoia* after repentance (*metanoia*). In theological anthropology, *poiesis* enacts this metaphysical conation: spreading incarnation, making in the register of grace, allowing God to be all-in-all. Hence the central metaphysical inquiry becomes whether conation—as a subject-term said analogously of all three Persons of the Trinity—extends also to humankind through the Spirit, initiating a pneumatological expansion of divine intentionality into creaturely response. This deepens both ethical obligation and metaphysical participation: to live conatively is to live covenantally, in tension with all gnostic closures and entropic coercion.

[4] See my “Two Contrasting Structures of ‘The Two Meanings of Liberty’: An Essay on Political Theology.” In *Crying in the Wilderness of Mammon* (blog, August 16, 2023) <http://douglasolds.blogspot.com/2023/08/two-contrasting-structures-of-two.html>.

[5] As does Rosenzweig, who suspends metaphysics by freezing time, denying messianic elapse. See Appendix II in “Restoration of Reason.”

Mid-modern philosophy has, through its own cascade of epistemic metacrisis—where even the critique of system becomes a system, and metaphysics has been entirely displaced by sociology’s procedural reason.

[6] The romantic seeking of Absolutes is empty seeking of transcendental abstractions which settles human systems into stasis, even when couched in the concrete. Hence, romantics adhere

to no natural teleology, but ironically admit the possibility of heroism [immanent, iconoclastic repair] in a world’s “time out of joint” [Hamlet]. Herder has the human reside in the concrete, in the kinesthetic prior to the cognitive, to develop a monistic program for grace as immanence and revealed as the telic seeking of the eschaton of perfection, not of catastrophe.

[7] For a detailed philological and hermeneutical refutation of attempts to misclassify (and libel) Herder as a “romantic nationalist” or as a proto-fascist precursor, see the extended critique of Tupamahu, Gadamer, Barr, and Sternhell et al., see Appendix B, below.

Situated as micro-hermeneutics establishing this treatise’s macro-political theology, Appendix B clarifies and develops the theological, poetic, and ethical character of Herder’s historicism—rooted not in emotional enthusiasm or linguistic chaos, but in *Empfindung* as proprioceptive, covenantal discernment; a poesis of attentional repair mediated by linguistic plurality and kinesthetic perception. Rather than serving as the emotionalist foil to Enlightenment rationalism, Herder develops a nuanced anthropology of Pentecostal emergence, wherein glossolalia is not irrational, disruptive babble but Spirit-infused recalibration of moral perception through language. That reading substantiates the present argument by establishing Herder’s philological theology of conation as the true antecedent to an open society grounded in relational grace, not procedural liberalism or rationalist abstraction. Herder’s critique of hegemonic form thus operates not only metaphysically, but also linguistically, resisting the closures of lexemic determinism and instead offering an ethical historicism of deontological poesis.

[8] Popper thought Herder’s “emotional” thinking led inexorably toward Hegelian nationalism and thus to totalitarianism. (cf. Popper 2013, ch. 12, esp. 243f; on Herder’s inferred link to Hegel, see 265; 562 n.4).

Yet Herder’s natural heir is not the systemic philosopher Hegel, but rather the Christian theologian Schleiermacher: *Humanität* shaped by *Gefühl* (feeling; Ibid, 265), *Bildung* (formation), and the divine trajectory of human potential:

Hegel	Herder
System	Archive
Absolute Spirit	Ethnic genius (contextual grace)
Teleology of State	Teleology of virtue and culture

Rational destiny	Poietic unfolding
Top-down	Bottom-up
Supersession	Preservation and repair
Historicism	Post-secular conation
Esotericism	Poetic accessibility
Closed totality	Open development of shalom

[9] Herder, Johann Gottfried von. Transl. Gregory Moore. 2024. *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*. Princeton University Press, 203.

[10] “Introduction: How Philosophy Can Become More Universal and Useful for the Benefit of the People” (1765), In Herder, Johann Gottfried. 2002. *Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Michael Forster. Translated by Michael N. Forster. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge University Press, 3.

[11] Popper’s (2013, 8) characterization of historicism is *false* certainty tied to tribalism that carries implicit eschatological weight. Against this tribal closing, Popper (p. 3) asserts: “The open society sets free the critical powers of man... It is the only form of society in which man can be truly free”

Despite his anti-historicist position, this utopian framing veers toward a salvific vision of history, driven not by divine Logos or metaphysical conation, but by rational purification—a mode that, when viewed structurally, resembles the “gnostic” redemptive arc Popper critiques in others. A gnostic program ever condemned.

In Voegelin’s terms, such a maneuver is the very scientist *gnosticism* he identifies in modern political movements—prioritizing an immanentized eschaton [which he repudiates] for transcendent operant meaning. Voegelin writes:

[T]he gnostic trait in the narrower sense [is] the belief that a change in the order of being lies in the realm of human action, that this salvational act is possible through man's own effort...

to work a structural change in the given order of being that we can be satisfied with it as a perfect one,
then it becomes the task of the gnostic to seek out the prescription for such a change. Knowledge—gnosis—of the method of altering being is the central concern of the gnostic. ... the gnostic's readiness to come forward as a prophet who will proclaim his knowledge about the salvation of mankind (*Science, Politics and Gnosticism: Two Essays*, with New Introduction by Ellis Sandoz, Gateway Edition/Regnery, 1997, 68)

While Popper does not advocate coercion, his claim that open society is *the only* truly free society aligns structurally with the gnostic pattern Voegelin describes: secret knowledge (scientific-critical rationality), a vision of world disorder (historicist tyranny), and a redemptive structure ([neo]liberal critique and technic reformism).

[12] Richard Velkley (2016) "Editor's Introduction" (p. i). In *Leo Strauss on Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A course offered in the Department of Political Science, the University of Chicago, spring quarter 1959*.
https://wslamp70.s3.amazonaws.com/leostrauss/s3fs-public/pdf/transcript/Nietzsche_1959.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[13] "Anamnesis"—the noetic *recollection* (Olds 2023, 19ff) of divine-human virtue. Such is a deontological habitus of embodied cultural virtue pedagogy where Voegelin favors symbolic ascent and spiritual individuation as instrumenting virtue. *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, p. 3

New Science of Politics, p. 123–130, esp. re: "the second reality" and revolt against existence

Anamnesis, esp. ch. 3 on soul-memory and spiritual structure

[14] On this political device to hold back the anti-christ apostate of lies and violence (Eph. 2:2), see the excursus "katechon" in my "The Lamb's Victory: Spectacle or Repair? Status Confessionis and the Kinesthetic Ethics of Poiesis." *iconoclast's descending* (blog, September 2025).
<https://douglasblakeolds8.blogspot.com/2025/09/from-spectacle-to-repair-lambs-victory.html>

[15] Herder's perfectionism is derived from Leibniz (best of all possible worlds, see Blumenfeld 1981, esp. Leibniz quoted on p. 77: the "principle of essence...is the principle of existence" [recalling Rahner's axiom] what Blumenfeld calls the "striving [conative] possibles" inside

monadology).-- Blumenfeld, David. 1981. "Leibniz's Theory of the Striving Possibles." In Woolhouse, R. S., ed. 1981. *Leibniz, Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science*. Oxford Readings in Philosophy. Oxford University Press.
<https://archive.org/details/leibnizmetaphysi0000unse>.

[16] Olds, Douglas B. 2023. *Architectures of Grace in Pastoral Care: Virtue as the Craft of Theology beyond Strategic and Authoritative Biblicism*. Wipf and Stock.

[17] See my essay, "Aleksandr Dugin's Stone-Destining Metaphysics: Weaponizing History against Spirit For Territory." *Crying in the Wilderness of Mammon*, (Blog) November 20, 2024. <https://douglasolds.blogspot.com/2024/11/aleksandr-dugins-stone-destined.html>.

[18] Kant's metaphysical anthropology, though intended as a correction to Descartes, nevertheless recasts reason as reason as a self-sovereign institution: a systematizing will that substitutes volition for virtue, and rational abstraction for relational accountability. In doing so, it dislocates the soul from the embedded historicities that make reason moral—language, memory, covenant—and from the justice that extends grace's love toward the ethical growth of created intents and potentials.

[19] Pearl, Judea, and Dana Mackenzie. 2018. *The Book of Why: The New Science of Cause and Effect*. Penguin Science. Penguin Books.

[20] From Pearl and Mackenzie (2018 [with this treatise's author's critical glosses in brackets]): "The calculus of causation consists of two languages: causal diagrams, to express what we know, and a symbolic language, resembling algebra, to express what we want to know." (p. 7–8)

"Side by side with this diagrammatic 'language of knowledge,' we also have a symbolic 'language of queries'... our query might be written symbolically as: $P(L \mid \text{do}(D))$." (p. 8)

"The do-operator signifies that we are dealing with an intervention rather than a passive observation; classical statistics has nothing remotely similar to this operator." (p. 9)

“When the scientific question of interest involves retrospective thinking, we call on another type of expression unique to causal reasoning called a counterfactual.” (p. 10)

“This difference between seeing [theoria] and doing [praxis] is fundamental...” (p. 9)
[Computation’s disembodiment and detachment from experiential learning]:

“Intervention ranks higher than association because it involves not just seeing but *changing what is*. ... We cannot answer questions about interventions with passively collected data, no matter how big the data set or how deep the neural network.” (pp. 31–32, *emph. added*) . [i.e., “Changing” reality by experimentation.]

“Confounding was *the primary obstacle that caused us to confuse seeing with doing. Having removed this obstacle with the tools of ‘path blocking’ and the back-door criterion*, we can now map the routes up Mount Intervention with *systematic precision*.” (p. 219, *emph. added*). [systems reduce humanity by mathematizing the historical and anthropological, they do not add precision to the real. i.e., the authors’ counterfactual inference: patching pathways (cf. Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21)]; adding a new idea or system to an old one as a work-around, however “principled,” without causing a worse problem. The computational fallacy to conflate correlation (vision) with action (praxis), is a colossal philosophical error with ethical consequences accountable to metaphysical justice when patches are applied after harm].

“One of the crowning achievements of the Causal Revolution has been to explain how to predict the effects of an intervention without actually enacting it.” (p. 10) [i.e., identification without experiments given a transparent model; where any non-black box is proposed is not automatically subject to confirmatory experiment/control testing even after interventions are unleashed into the complex real and its environmental and historical contexts].

Computation’s disembodiment / model-blind learning: “But if we want to teach a dumb robot to think causally... a carefully structured procedure like this is mandatory.” (p. 16)

“I especially want to highlight the role of data... we collect data only *after* we posit the causal model... This contrasts with the traditional statistical approach... which does not even have a causal model.” (pp. 16–17 *emph. added*).

“Many researchers in artificial intelligence would like to skip the hard step of constructing or acquiring a causal model and rely solely on data for all cognitive tasks... I am an outspoken skeptic of this trend because I know how profoundly dumb data are about causes and effects.” (p. 17) [i.e., Data derived from history and context are untrustworthy without a reductive model—“simulated substrate” Simulation without structured causal modeling reflects disembodied, model-blind learning divorced from praxis—mere computation without engagement in the causal mesh of the world.].

“Just as they did thirty years ago, machine learning programs (including those with deep neural networks) operate almost entirely in an associational mode... This lack of flexibility and adaptability is inevitable in any system that works at the first level of the Ladder of Causation.” (pp. 31–32) [“Simulation” language where reality has emergent features apprehended first—only?—by a cognitive/programmer echelon of telemetry. Associational models (theoria without praxis) remain static—blind to historical depth and unable to intervene responsibly in the moral or ecological field].

“There is an almost religious faith that we can find the answers... in the data itself... The questions I have just asked are all causal, and causal questions can never be answered from data alone. They require us to formulate a model of the process that generates the data...” (pp. 349–350). [e.g., Machine/machining hermeneutical operations: Faith in computation over confrontation (praxis) amounts to a metaphysical evasion—replacing understanding routed through human conative metaphysics with pattern mimicry].

[21] “Causality has undergone a major transformation... Put simply, causality has been mathematized.” (Preface, p. ix) [My conclusion: Ultimately rationalizing toward descriptive “formalism” and telically destructive if causality’s vectoring have not themselves been subjected to an analysis of its operationed ends—its priors].

“What I described as a ‘transformation’ turned out to be a ‘revolution’... Many now call it ‘the Causal Revolution.’” (Preface, p. ix–x)

“The new science does not have a fancy name: I call it simply ‘causal inference’... The ideal technology that causal inference strives to emulate resides within our own minds... All because we asked a simple question: Why?” (Introduction, p. 1–2)

[22] Reality reducing models are required (prior knowledge made explicit) by “us to formulate a model of the process that generates the data... Anytime you see a paper... that analyzes the data in a model-free way, you can be certain that the output... will merely summarize... but not interpret the data.” (p. 350)

“The questions I have just asked are all causal, and causal questions can never be answered from data alone.” (p. 350)

“These causal diagrams are the computational core of the ‘causal inference engine’...” (p. 27) [i.e., modeling by systemic diagram hosts a debased reality by entropic closures of ends and the historical arrival of genius and iconoclastic possibilities].

[23] “A causal learner must master at least three distinct levels of cognitive ability: seeing, doing, and imagining.” (p. 27–28)

“Using these criteria, we can assemble the three levels of queries into one Ladder of Causation...” (p. 28)

“Counterfactual learners, on the top rung, can imagine worlds that do not exist and infer reasons for observed phenomena.” (p. 29) [i.e., cognoscenti as the makers of new idolatries that invert reality as historically detailed.]

“Intervention ranks higher than association... We cannot answer questions about interventions with passively collected data, no matter how big the data set or how deep the neural network.” (p. 31–32) [i.e., Silicon Valley’s penchant for modes that “break things,” even reality and its traditions.

[24] Computing causal claims (queries, do-operator, counterfactuals) [radically reducing reality’s depth and richness for predictive control]:

“ $P(L \mid \text{do}(D))$... The do-operator signifies that we are dealing with an intervention...” (p. 8–9)

“A world devoid of $P(L \mid \text{do}(D))$ and governed solely by $P(L \mid D)$ would be a strange one indeed...” (p. 9–10) [i.e., the end of learning and the epoch of silicon determinism from an armchair].

“With a fully specified structural causal model... we can answer any counterfactual query.” (p. 286) [e.g., danger of counterfactual ethical theories that cannot model, say, deontological virtue habituation, and so outputs interventions that rupture the human and its reality. The book’s authors ignore this dimension of humanity by proposing a radically ethics-free dimension of causal intervening. The ethical hazard: computational omniscience implies counterfactual control but lacks concrete referents—no embodied test of truth].

[25] Kant’s categories entered by Pearl’s formalism: the book explicitly replaces tacit categories with a two-language calculus (diagrams + algebraic queries) and the do-operator (pp. 7–9), and insists on explicit models (p. 350).

Seeing / Doing / Imagining correspond to association / intervention / counterfactuals on the Ladder of Causation (pp. 27–29, 31–32).

From “How is knowledge possible?” to “How do we compute it?” is captured by the claims that causality has been mathematized (Preface, p. ix) and that counterfactual queries are computable given an SCM (p. 286), with Why-questions tied to imagination/counterfactuals (p. 348). Reality is NOT mathematizable; the synapse has fractal qualities where cause and effect are non-linear.

[26] Why-questions, imagination, and the human/AI link:

“Without the ability to envision alternate realities... a machine cannot... answer the most basic question that makes us human: ‘Why?’” (p. 348) [e.g., the exploration of worlds with differing, or without, justice.]

“A new paradigm has evolved according to which it is okay to base your claims on assumptions as long as you make your assumptions transparent...” (p. 349) [i.e., as my own counterfactual inference: Pearl frames transparency of assumptions as a norm for healthier science devoid of

religious/moral accountability, as e.g., entertaining interventions of contrary justice, atheism, idol elitism, etc. in the exploration of mathematical rationalism.]

[27] Contrary to Pearl's hardwiring simplicity into modeled causation premised on a deterministic interpretation of Bayesian priors and counterfactual inference, aiming to restore a linear, modelable epistemology of the world (see above), AI functions by diversion around the input of probabilism by means of tokens, where tokens function as non-empirical pseudo-inputs, shifting interpretation into probabilistic simulacra detached from direct referential learning or contextually embodied causation. This suggests, loosely, a hypercomplex dimension of causation: factorials of priors, observer effects, differences in social actors: contexts and education, the effect of categorization and taxis/taxonomies. Which opens the door to a Herderian, post-Kantian view of causality: one that honors complexity, historical emergence, and the irreducibility of embodied/social learning.

[28] In contrast with Betz's proposal, which elevates Hamann as the mystical genie for postmodernism's hunger for transcendent vibes—an emblem of cataphatic mysticism after Nietzsche, Derrida, and Kant—Herder offers a more historically responsive and ethically accountable, viable alternative. Betz contends:

Postmodernists tend to see in language nothing but the will to power or merely an interminable chain of signification, but this is because they are not seeing the supplement of the Word in the words of human language. In short, they are missing Hamann's most fundamental point: that the transcendent God is kenotically hidden within language—just as he is kenotically hidden within creation, just as he is kenotically hidden within human history, just as he is kenotically hidden within the humanity of Christ, and just as the Holy Spirit is kenotically hidden within the 'rags' of Scripture. In sum, on the basis of this vision of the kenosis of transcendence, which is able to find the transcendent God in this world under the various guises of his love, Hamann points the way to a theological recovery of nature, history, language, and art, opening our eyes and ears to a more refined perception of the 'original supplement' of the Word, speaking in and through them. (Betz, John. 2012. *After Enlightenment: The Post-Secular Vision of J. G. Hamann*. Illuminations. Wiley-Blackwell, 340).

Yet Hamann's kenotic sublime brings a metaphysics of concealment and aestheticization, one in which history is received as divine mystery rather than a field of moral co-agency. Language becomes sacramentalized, but not intrinsically accountable; kenosis, while central, is spatialized as hiddenness, and thus risks mystifying ethical response under layers of theological aesthetic.

The phrase "kenotically hidden" invites a critical cross-reference to Leo Strauss's suspicion of theological claims that veil authority under esoteric mystique. Where Strauss sees philosophical self-preservation encoded in concealment, Hamann's formulation risks reaffirming a gnosis

hierarchically burying and subordinating ethics, enfolding divine presence into sublime *aesthesis* (Hebrews 5:13-14) out of sequence of that text's ethical primacy for human pedagogy.

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