

RADICAL ENLIGHTENMENT IN GERMAN LITERATURE 1771-1811

BY

ADAM D. CHAMBERS

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Carl Niekerk, Chair
Associate Professor Stephanie Hilger
Associate Professor Laurie Johnson
Associate Professor Anke Pinkert
Associate Professor Bruce Rosenstock

ABSTRACT

The Enlightenment was an intellectual and social movement that had a profound impact on the development of Western society, yet its complexity and impact on literature are not often fully understood. The values of freedom, equality, and brotherhood as well as the rise of the roles of reason, science, and tolerance are products of the European Enlightenment, but the Enlightenment has become a villain blamed for abuses against many of those same principles by many scholars. It is therefore important to understand what the Enlightenment was, and what its true legacy is. This study makes use of recent research on the Radical Enlightenment by Princeton historian Jonathan Israel and others to investigate if German literature of the late Enlightenment supports the idea that the Enlightenment is better understood as having a Radical and a Moderate side. The following works of German literature serve as primary historical evidence in considering Jonathan Israel's Radical Enlightenment hypothesis: Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, Schiller's *Die Räuber*, Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, La Roche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, and Kleist's *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*. Each work is examined for an exchange of Radical and Moderate Enlightenment ideas regarding specific philosophical issues discussed in each work such as religion, politics, nature, aristocratic privilege, and race, among other topics. This study discusses the recent hypothesis of a prominent intellectual historian, as well as scholars from other fields, while also investigating closely the discussion of important philosophical issues in German literature of a time that brought Western society many of the values it still holds today.

For Mark

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INTRODUCTION

The structure of the Enlightenment is one of the most disputed topics in intellectual history, and for good reason: whatever is decided necessarily entails a pronouncement about the periods preceding it as well as an assertion of influences exercised upon periods to follow. Much discussion has focused particularly on the question of whether or not one can speak of one, two or multiple strains of thinking in the Enlightenment. The general consensus presently seems to be that there is only one strain of “Enlightenment thought,” which stood in opposition to the conservative forces of absolute monarchy, aristocracy, and church power. Such an oversimplifying understanding of the Enlightenment does no justice to the diverse beliefs and goals of those advancing reason's role in society and is likely rooted in a trend that began with the publication of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1947 by Horkheimer and Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is pessimistic about the possibility of human emancipation and progress, and while it is not anti-Enlightenment *per se*, it stresses the difficulty the Enlightenment experiences in practicing effective critical self-reflection. It emphasizes that the ideals of the Enlightenment can become abusive if proper self-criticism is not exercised while simultaneously acknowledging the benefits the Enlightenment period brought.

Renewed discussion of the intellectual history of the Enlightenment in response to a half-century of robust criticism has been initiated in the last decade or so, of which a prime example is the *Radical Enlightenment* trilogy by the Princeton historian Jonathan Israel. Israel has received significant attention and reception in the fields of history and philosophy, but his work remains noticeably ignored in literary and cultural studies. Israel's work, as well as other scholarship on the intellectual history of the Enlightenment, should be of great concern to literary

scholars, one of whose tasks it is to trace intellectual and cultural shifts as they manifest themselves within literature.

In his books, Israel proposes that there are two major streams of thought within Enlightenment thinking: Radical and Moderate Enlightenment. Radical Enlightenment thought wholly rejects the preservation of aristocratic privilege in any form and strives for the distribution of free education to all people so that ability, and not the accident of birth, may decide fates. It also demands that reason be applied judiciously in all matters, including metaphysics, and it prizes the findings of empirical science. The application of reason and empirical science to metaphysical questions led Radical Enlightenment thinkers both to reject the question of God's existence as fundamentally unknowable (agnosticism, a term which would not be termed until Thomas Huxley in 1860) and not to possess a belief in his existence (atheism). Radical Enlightenment thinkers believed that religious belief was harmful for all members of society, and that it should ultimately be replaced by a reason-based value and belief system.

Moderate Enlightenment thought values empirical science and a democratization of the political process as well, at least to some extent, but it characteristically stops short of encouraging the application of reason to matters of faith for all portions of the population and of abolishing monarchy entirely. Voltaire, for example (whom Israel holds to be a figure of the Moderate Enlightenment), argues that religion provides a valuable service to the lower classes, which lack the sensibility to lead moral lives in the absence of divine reward and punishment. Connected to this is the Moderate Enlightenment belief in the preservation of privilege for some. Many thinkers in this strain argued for forms of constitutional monarchy, and for the necessity of class distinctions. Widespread education was promoted to varying degrees. Moderate Enlightenment thinkers sought to make society more rational without completely overthrowing

society's main sources of authority. Frederick the Great, who favored the idea of enlightened monarchy, and Kant, who criticizes the notion of complete equality in many of his writings, are examples of Moderate Enlightenment thinking. It is these differences that make Israel's division a meaningful advance in understanding the intellectual history of the Enlightenment.

Such a compelling new view of the nature of the Enlightenment, if true, would have significant influence on many aspects of culture, and certainly upon literature. German literature of the Enlightenment era, particularly the later era in the 1770s and 1780s, does indeed reflect the differences between Radical and Moderate Enlightenment in a number of works, which shows that these debates were known widely among Germany's intellectuals. Indeed, Israel provides evidence that Radical Enlightenment discussions of such works as Bekker's *De betoverde wereld* and Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* were known widely not only in the university setting, but also among the common people to the degree that it filtered down from pulpits. A large number of works of German literature reflect the penetration of the two “degrees” of Enlightenment within German society.

Israel's scholarship on the intellectual history of the Enlightenment does not, however, stand in a vacuum. Jörg Schönert describes Enlightenment research in Germany in the latter half of the 20th century with the key words “Historisierung, Politisierung und Soziologisierung,” beginning in the early 1960s with its focus changing from 1975-1985, and then changing again after 1985.¹ Schönert writes that from the early 1960s to approximately 1975 scholarship focused on portraying a unified image of the Enlightenment as one period (Schönert 41). Enlightenment research in the period from the early 1960s to 1975 was very “politicized” (Schönert 41). Schönert also writes of a “Soziologisierung der Aufklärung” (Schönert 41)

¹ Jörg Schönert, “Konstellationen und Entwicklungen germanistischen Forschung,” der *Aufklärungsforschung in Deutschland*, ed. Holger Dainat and Wilhelm Vosskamp. Heidelberg, Germany; Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999: 39-48.

beginning in the mid-1960s and proceeding in part from the reception of the writings of Jürgen Habermas. As with the aforementioned politicized research, the sociologized research particularly focused on “jene Momente der Modernität, die bis in die Gegenwart weiterwirken”.² The period from 1975-1985 is, according to Schönert, defined by the “theoretische Begründung” and “methodologische Reflexion literaturgeschichtlicher Forschungen” (Schönert 42). Wilhelm Voßkamp’s studies into the connection between literary and societal history are an example of this focus.

Concerning the period following the focus on the unity, politicization, methodology, and periodicity of the Enlightenment, Schönert writes:

Fortschreitend und mit wachsender Intensität seit Mitte der achtziger Jahre setzt sich in dieser Forschungsrichtung eine kulturhistorische Diversifizierung durch; unterschiedliche Gegenstände und Problemkonstellationen werden mit divergierenden Verfahren bearbeitet; sie reichen von psychohistorischen Konzepten bis hin zu den ‘gender studies’. (Schönert 41)

Corresponding to the rise of multicultural and postmodern approaches to scholarship gaining speed in the mid-1980s, the Enlightenment was studied from a variety of perspectives and using many methodologies, and less focus was placed on the articulation of a unifying purpose, effect, or role of the Enlightenment. The mid-1980s also saw an increased focus on historicizing Enlightenment research, which was a change from the more ideological focus in the mid-1960s (Schönert 45).

Schönert’s account stretches from 1965 to 1999, the year his book was published, at the latest. Shortly thereafter, a new phase in Enlightenment research was begun with the publication of Jonathan Israel’s *Radical Enlightenment* in 2001. Jonathan Israel was not the first to use the term “Radical Enlightenment,” although his trilogy is the most substantial and identifiable

² Wilhelm Voßkamp, “Probleme und Aufgaben einer sozialgeschichtlichen orientierten Literaturgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts,” *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert als Epoche*, ed. Bernhard Fabian and Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann. Nendeln, 1978: 53-69.

contribution to the term as a talking point on the historiography and reception of the Enlightenment. Notably, Margaret Jacob's 1981 *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* was a significant contribution to Enlightenment reception in the later 20th century. In the preface to the 2nd edition of her work, Jacob compares her work to Israel's, the publication of which had brought new attention to hers:

New life has been breathed into the thesis that this book put forward first in 1981... In 2001 Jonathan Israel in *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford University Press) confirmed and expanded the thesis but did so from a very different and largely idealist methodology. He sees Descartes and Spinoza as progenitors of the crisis that threatened orthodoxy; I see them as part of the story that must be understood contextually.³

Jacob understands her work to be descriptive and Israel's work to be idealist. Israel's work is frequently criticized as an idealist, reductive work presenting a pantheon of good guys and bad guys that harkens back to a time of inferior methodologies in the field of history: some examples of criticism include Jeffrey Collins's review in 2010 the *Times Literary Supplement* *Spinoza's Machines*, in which he calls Israel's work "absurd...implausible"⁴, and Susan James's review *Life in the Shadow of Spinoza* in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* in 2001, in which she writes that Israel "press[es] his central claim far too hard...he squeezes his findings into a philosophical straitjacket that distorts and oversimplifies their shape."⁵ Jacob agrees with Israel's central thesis about a Radical and Moderate Enlightenment, but she disagrees with his particular stress on the importance of 17th-century Dutch philosophers, and Spinoza specifically.

I believe it is not as implausible as many critics suggest that an individual man, Spinoza, could be significantly responsible for the spread of Radical Enlightenment ideas. Individuals and

³ Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 1981, 2nd edition. Lafayette, Louisiana; Cornerstone Book Publishers, 2006: vi.

⁴ Jeffrey Collins, "Spinoza's Machines," *Times Literary Supplement*, London; News International, 26 Feb 2010.

⁵ Susan James, "Life in the Shadow of Spinoza," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, No. 1518. Oxford; Oxford University Press, 22 Dec 2001: 31-32.

their legacy can and have had profound impacts on human history, even if their ideas had been articulated before or were primarily brought to effect by others: one thinks of religious figures such as Jesus of Nazareth, Mohammed, or Buddha, or historical figures such as Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, or Mao. Had another person stood in the place of those figures, social, intellectual, and political history might look very different today. Many critics praise Israel's erudition but dismiss as absurd his unreserved argument that Spinoza played a central role in the spread of Radical Enlightenment ideas, but I believe that if the erudition and scholarship is present, an evidentiary burden lies on other scholars to disprove the specific points Israel makes rather than on Israel to disprove the notion that, on principle, one man cannot have such a great effect. Furthermore, it is precisely the presence of so much scholarship that makes the impulse driving Israel's project a descriptive rather than prescriptive one: Israel presents an argument from evidence and he does not dismiss the possibility that Spinoza and his legacy could have had out of preconceptions about what should be considered possible.

After considering where the Enlightenment came from and why it spread, one may investigate what goals it had. Pütz sees the Enlightenment as primarily having ethical and political goals:

Zu den Mitteln der Aufklärung gehören bezeichnenderweise nicht in erster Linie intellektuelle Fähigkeiten wie Urteilsvermögen, Scharfsinn, usw., sondern Aktivierungen des menschlichen Willens. Aufklärung entstammt und dient nicht bloß theoretischer Einsicht, sondern praktischer Entschlußkraft; ihr Antrieb ist nicht die Logik, sondern die Ethik.⁶

Pütz's formulation suggests that the Enlightenment's "source" (*entstammt*) and "means" (*Mittel*) are a combination of "activations of human will", "practical initiative", and "theoretical insight", i.e. a combination of political/ethical goals and philosophical/theoretical principles wherein the

⁶ Peter Pütz, *Die Deutsche Aufklärung*, 4th edition. Darmstadt, Germany; Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991: 28.

political/ethical goals are the “driving” (*Antrieb*) and “defining” (*bezeichnenderweise*) force.

Pütz’s view stands in contrast to the one famously articulated by Kant in the opening of his essay

Was ist Aufklärung?:

Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschliebung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung.⁷

Kant’s view stresses that the independent exercise of human reason and understanding (*Verstand*) define Enlightenment, and his essay does not stress partisan political or ethical goals as much as the necessity of efficiency and openness in governance. Kant still argues that a person’s “immaturity” (*Unmündigkeit*) is his/her own “fault” (*selbstverschuldet*) if he/she lacks the “resolution of courage” (*Entschliebung des Mutes*) to enlighten himself/herself.

Pütz notes that Kant’s view of Enlightenment stresses that individuals should avoid being “determined by others” (*Fremdbestimmung*), whereby the ideal of individual autonomy is implicitly elevated to an ethical goal. Still, Pütz sees Kant’s vision as giving philosophy the guiding role; Pütz believes the Enlightenment to have prioritized ethical goals (Pütz 33). I disagree with neither Pütz nor Kant, and do not believe that it is necessary or possible to disentangle the primacy of the roles of theoretical concepts and ethical goals when speaking of a social and intellectual phenomenon like the Enlightenment. Ultimately, the Enlightenment’s purpose, like any other purpose, must have a source definable in terms of human agents and human interests. The reform of abstract principles in the Enlightenment serves the purpose of ultimately, if indirectly, improving human lives and societies, and there is no good way to

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Was ist Aufklärung?* Berlinische Monatsschrift, Dezember-Heft 1784, Berlin, 1784: 481-494.

separate the two when speaking of the broader purpose. Pütz and Kant both recognize that the Enlightenment's project was both ethical and theoretical.

In this dissertation, I will investigate how significant an influence Radical Enlightenment thinking had exercised on German literature by the time just prior to the French Revolution, 1789, and I will then use a post-Enlightenment work to demonstrate how things looked when the dust had settled. I will do this by examining five prominent canonical texts for each of which a monumental body of research exists, but which nevertheless contain much evidence of intellectual developments that have not been analyzed for the interplay of Radical and Moderate ideas. I will look at *Nathan der Weise* (Lessing), *Die Räuber* (Schiller), *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (Goethe), *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (La Roche), and *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (Kleist), and I will elucidate the Radical Enlightenment discourse present in each of these texts and explain how these uncovered elements figure into the overall message of the text. I will explore the influences on the authors with respect to the philosophical issues at hand and the text by examining the source material for the work as well as any other information relevant to the text's conception. Lastly, after investigating the Radical Enlightenment discourse and the significance it has for the text, I will assess the implications this has for the structure of thinking in the Enlightenment. My study examines the degree to which German literature of the 18th Century serves to reveal the complex nature of the Enlightenment discourses, and namely the significant points of difference that constitute Moderate vs. Radical Enlightenment as described by Jonathan Israel.

The texts mentioned above (*Nathan der Weise*, *Die Räuber*, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, *Fräulein von Sternheim*, *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*) were selected because they thematize different aspects of Enlightenment thinking. They were also chosen because they are

written by five different authors, each with his/her own repertoire, style of writing, separate influences, and purposes. I will now lay out here some of the content of the selected works that will be subjected to analysis, and I will provide an outline for that analysis.

Nathan der Weise (1779) by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing thematizes inter-religious tolerance, critique of religion, and the necessity of reason in very explicit terms. The discussion of inter-religious tolerance plays a prominent role in the play, and it is of particular critical interest since the notion of tolerance it presents has been the subject of much criticism recently. I will investigate whether Lessing stresses a Radical, Moderate, or Counter-Enlightenment understanding of tolerance. Furthermore, much discussion of issues pertinent to philosophy of religion is present in the text. I will investigate if *Nathan* presents a doctrine of tolerance that was acceptable to the Christian religious authorities at that time, if it presents a kind of reformed Christianity, if it argues for a non-traditional form of Christianity, or if its message is ultimately irreligious.

In addition to a wide sampling of religious critique, *Nathan* contains discussion of knowability (with the Ring Parable, and elsewhere) in matters of faith, which is a key epistemological point with which Hume, Locke and Descartes concern themselves (although all three make special pleas for their differing sorts of religious faith they nonetheless maintain), and to which Kant dedicates his *Critique of Pure Reason*. I will examine content of the discussion of religious epistemology, and whether the arguments presented reflect Jonathan Israel's theory.

Including *Nathan der Weise* in this dissertation will be significant in a number of ways: *Nathan* is a canonical text that has been heavily researched, and work has been done on it essaying its points of religious criticism. Many of these analyses, however, do not read *Nathan* in light of recent scholarship on the intellectual history of the Enlightenment, which

demonstrates the complex undercurrents of the discussions at that time. Furthermore, much scholarship on *Nathan*, including very recent scholarship, portrays the main purpose of *Nathan* to be its discussion of tolerance, and even then, the scholarship often criticizes *Nathan*, and by extension, the Enlightenment, for offering an outdated, Eurocentric view that declines to encourage embracing diversity. I will investigate the degree to which criticisms of the Enlightenment doctrine of tolerance as Eurocentric hold up when compared to *Nathan*. Lastly, I will examine the influences on this text and determine if they support the Moderate vs. Radical Enlightenment distinction made by Israel.

Die Räuber (1781) by Friedrich Schiller is a play in which the political debates of the 18th Century are reflected in myriad ways. Concerning politics, Israel describes the primary distinction between Radical and Moderate Enlightenment as a focus on complete equality and republicanism for the former and a desire to preserve aristocracy, privilege, and enlightened monarchy for the latter. The two positions are well exemplified by two quotes: “Et des boyaux du dernier prêtre / Serrons le cou du dernier roi”⁸ (“Let us strangle the last king with the entrails of the last priest”) by the Radical Diderot, and “les autres ne méritent pas que l'on les éclaire”⁹ by the Moderate Voltaire (“les autres” refers to nine-tenths of mankind). Radical thought, such as the sort supported by Thomas Paine, sought the immediate implementation of democratic government, while Moderate thought, such as that espoused by Hume and Burke, favored making series of small changes in the existing edifice without risking “derangement in the only scenes with which we are acquainted.”¹⁰ Atheism, Unitarianism and Socinianism accompanied Radical thought, while Deism, Providentialism and even some kinds of theism usually co-existed with Moderate thinking. Radical thought followed from Spinoza's one-substance doctrine, while

⁸Voltaire Cited In Jean-Francois de La Harpe, *Cours de Littérature Ancienne et Moderne*, vol. 3. Paris,1840: 415.

⁹Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 2010: 6.

¹⁰ Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, Edinburgh, 1742: 1; 317.

Moderate thought followed from Descartes' two-substance dualism. These associations are logical: if people are imbued with immaterial spirits (two-substance theory, or Cartesian dualism) and are subject to God's will, and if everything occurs in accordance with providence, then iron-clad class differences are divinely ordained and to be preserved. If mind and body are merely two separate manifestations of the same substance, then there is no room for a God, or, indeed, anything supernatural at all. One-substance theory seems to create a universe in which human beings are in no fundamental way (as far as their inherent composition is concerned) different from animals. The only ones who can create and bestow meaning to human beings and human actions are the humans themselves, whereby meaning and responsibility become a part of the "closed system" of individual human minds and human society. One-substance theory is often associated with materialism, which is also often associated with determinism.

I will investigate *Räuber's* comments on the political issues of the Enlightenment, and I will examine the play for Jonathan Israel's Counter-Enlightenment/Moderate Enlightenment/Radical Enlightenment paradigm, the parts of which correspond respectively to absolutism/mixed monarchy/representative democracy. I will consider the political views of each character in the play; I will focus on Der Alte Moor, Franz von Moor, and Karl von Moor, but I will also consider side figures such as Spiegelberg, the servant Daniel, and Amalia. I will consider the philosophical beliefs underlying each character's politics, whether these underlying beliefs concern religion, theory of mind, or any other philosophical question.

Die Räuber is included in this dissertation because, although it has been heavily analyzed and received over the centuries, it is in dire need of an interpretation for the Radical Enlightenment thinking that it contains which considers more recent evidence of different types of Enlightenment thought. Schiller is known to have become more conservative after seeing the

terrors of the French Revolution, and *Die Räuber* provides an excellent opportunity to see Schiller earlier in his life. Its style of handling Enlightenment topics is far subtler than Lessing's in *Nathan*, but the allegory is strong and runs throughout the work. It is furthermore very possible and important to underscore the nature of Enlightenment debate as it is intricately woven into this text.

Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774; 1787) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe has long been widely acknowledged as a radical text, and it is a work that has a very unique perspective to provide on the intellectual debates of the Enlightenment as received by Germany's Classical titan. I will examine *Werther* primarily for its discussion of philosophy of nature and theory of mind, i.e. monism/dualism. *Werther's* format as an epistolary novel offers the reader thought more directly (than assessing actions), and this format is exploited on more than one occasion to provide a monologue of one system of thought or another. I will examine all of the aspects of Werther's suicide, including the metaphysical assumptions informing his choice to take his life. Aside from the plot, *Werther* is also of interest due to its style as an epistolary novel, which allows more direct insight into Werther's thinking and contains a different style of interaction on Enlightenment topics.

Werther is included in this dissertation because it is generally considered the archetype of Sturm und Drang even though it belongs at least as much to the genre of Enlightenment literature. I will examine the role of affect in *Werther*, and I will explore some differences between the 1774 and 1787 versions; specifically, I will look into Goethe's own study of Spinoza, and the changes in his own views on nature between the two versions of *Werther*, as well as changes in Goethe's views as he grew older.

Werther is a text that is so radical that it becomes apparent many of the more Moderate Enlightenment values were sufficiently established for it to be necessary to be overtly radical to catch attention. Goethe softened his tone in the second edition, and it is has been commonly maintained that he did so of his own free will as a response to the turmoil in France; it is, however, possible that he only did so as Counter-Enlightenment and Moderate Enlightenment thinking put pressure on him to ally himself with the safety of the existing order at a time when it seemed the whole world could be put upon its head due to the untested speculations of some radical philosophers. Both versions of the text will be analyzed in the dissertation for their bearing on the intellectual discussions occurring at the time. I will also investigate the relationship between subject and object in *Werther*.

Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim (1771), written by Sophie von La Roche (née Gutermann) and edited by Christoph Martin Wieland, is the longest of the works in this dissertation. *Sternheim* is an epistolary novel comprised of both lengthy dialogues and philosophical monologues. *Sternheim* contains discussion of the legitimacy of the political and social power of the nobility. *Sternheim* also undermines religion, which represented the most frequently touted form of support of the legitimacy of the nobility. La Roche also touches on the topic of economic reform at a few points early in the novel. I will examine the structure of *Sternheim*'s discussion of nobility for its relatedness to Enlightenment intellectual history.

Radical Enlightenment thinkers regarded the system of ranks, and the aristocracy more specifically, as the greatest single obstacle to an egalitarian, efficient, and fair society. Noble rank and the undeserved deference to it needed to be replaced, according to Radical Enlightenment and some Moderate Enlightenment thinkers, by a system valuing only merit, as measured by use-value to society, and equal opportunity (so that the accident of birth does not

unduly effect any individual from developing his/her talents). Radicals actively worked to undermine the essentialist, religious justifications of the nobility so that the common people could challenge the existing system fearing only for their lives, not for their afterlives.

I will examine the significance of gender for *Sternheim*. I will comment on the significance of the book being written by a woman, written about a female protagonist, and possibly also written for a female readership. I will discuss the problematic term *Frauenliteratur*, and whether, after my analysis, I think it should be applied to *Sternheim*. I will look into secondary literature trends on *Sternheim*, particularly to see if analyses are overwhelmingly focusing on gender. I believe *Sternheim* is a text that touches on nearly every significant philosophical question, and I will look into all philosophical issues that I encounter.

Die Verlobung in St. Domingo (1811; post-Enlightenment) by Heinrich von Kleist is short in length but very long on topics reflecting the intellectual climate of the time of its writing. It deals with other cultures, alterity, and even race in a more direct way than is seen in *Nathan*; all of these issues were major debating points among philosophers working within what can be called “Enlightenment thinking.” The idea of radical equality between races and sexes runs throughout *Verlobung*, and it is an idea of the Radical Enlightenment. The Moderate Enlightenment, by contrast, believed not only in inequality within a society (economic, racial, sexual), but also in inequality between cultures. Israel points out that many Radicals, and Diderot in particular, received frequent criticism from Moderate thinkers for being too quick to praise non-Christian cultures, like that of Japan, and for arguing for a universal ethical sense. Hume and Montesquieu's moral relativism on the issue of equality was the source of fierce criticism from Diderot and Helvétius (Israel, 2011, 191). I will examine the manner in which *Verlobung* treats existing racial, sexual, and economic inequalities.

Verlobung was written much later than the other works analyzed in this dissertation, after the French Revolution and during the flourishing of Classicism and Early Romanticism, both styles that seem to reach back to and idealize pre-Enlightenment times and societies. Furthermore, *Verlobung*'s style is different from the other works as function of its textual genre: as a work of prose as opposed to a play or an epistolary novel, the author is able to interweave descriptions of the scene, and commentary can exist in forms other than human speech. Kleist takes advantage of this to weave a short, but poignant tale that can be read literally and allegorically on several levels. I will examine how *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* presents intergroup tolerance. I will examine the racial politics of the interactions between Gustav, Toni, Babekan, and Congo Hoango. I will examine the circumstances of Toni's death and compare my conclusions with those in secondary literature.

Verlobung emphasizes a topic that was of great concern to Radical Enlightenment thinkers, namely "the quest for perpetual peace" (as Israel titles the fourth chapter of *A Revolution of the Mind*). Peace has to be sought at the level of countries as well as at the level of ethnic groups, races, and individuals, and all of these aspects play a role in the conflicts and conflict resolutions in *Verlobung*. The issues of guilt and reconciliation are prominent in *Verlobung*. The topics touched on in this work are wide-ranging enough that it can serve as a general take on Enlightenment thought at a time when the French Revolution had taken place and had been analyzed by the intellectuals of the time, and this situates *Verlobung* such that it can speak with some finality on the matter. Lastly, given that race is still a hot button topic in Western European and American society, I will examine the way secondary literature treats race as it appears in *Verlobung*.

In conclusion, my investigation of five texts of the late and early post-Enlightenment period in Germany will test whether Jonathan Israel's Radical Enlightenment theory is confirmed in a sampling of the literary evidence. More broadly, my dissertation will probe the intellectual sources of several of the most prominent German authors; their intellectual sources will be assessed not only for their relative radicality and conservativeness (compared to Enlightenment discourse in other nations and areas), but also for their national origin. In examining this, I will discover aspects of the origin of the Enlightenment in Germany, and I will investigate the degree to which Jonathan Israel's theory of a pan-European Enlightenment divided along ideological rather than national lines holds up. I will specifically look into the way Radical, Moderate, and Counter-Enlightenment ideas are represented within the structure of the literary texts and the "lesson," if any, that can be drawn from this.

My dissertation will, from a the perspective of a scholar in literary studies, weigh in on the methodological question in history, philosophy, and sociology of the degree to which institutional and cultural change is attributable to ideas and/or material grievances. Furthermore, I will discuss noteworthy and representative secondary literature on each of the five literary texts. I will introduce and examine writings on intellectual history and philosophers in some places, and compare them to Jonathan Israel's theory. In some instances, I will introduce scholarly writings from other academic disciplines for additional context to my investigation. My investigation, however, will never stray far from tracing Israel's system in German literature, and thereby also testing the accuracy of his system. I hope that my study will enrich scholarly understanding of both the literary works themselves and the intellectual history of the Enlightenment.

NATHAN DER WEISE, LESSING
CHAPTER 1

I. Introduction – Jonathan Israel on Enlightenment Doctrines of Tolerance

Lessing's 1779 work *Nathan der Weise* is commonly touted as the quintessential manifesto of the Enlightenment's doctrine of tolerance. The same claim is made with affection by its proponents and with remonstrance by its detractors. From this discussion one is led to believe that Enlightenment thinking on tolerance is a largely monolithic entity, but this is a mistake. Within both of the major camps, pro-Enlightenment universalists and postmodern-leaning relativists, insufficient attention is paid to the subtlety, variation and debate that existed within the overarching movement of the Enlightenment.

Jonathan Israel's *Radical Enlightenment, Enlightenment Contested, A Revolution of the Mind*, and *Democratic Enlightenment* provide a highly nuanced framework that resolves many of the conflicts and confusions of all theoretical inclinations endemic to *Nathan* scholarship. Israel writes in *Enlightenment Contested* that there are three principal doctrines of tolerance in Enlightenment tradition: 1) Locke's tolerance of some variance among Protestant sects; 2) Bayle's freedom of conscience, and; 3) Spinoza's liberty of thought and expression.¹¹ While most scholars closer to the pro-Enlightenment universalist camp present defenses of the Spinozist and Baylean tolerance, detractors often highlight and attack the narrow-minded aspects of Lockean tolerance. In so doing, detractors should understand themselves to be critiquing the Moderate, and most decidedly not the Radical, Enlightenment.

Lockean tolerance is primarily concerned with facilitating understanding between sects of Protestantism existing in England and northern Western Europe at that time, and it argues that all men accepting the self-evident truth of divine Christian revelation are united in their striving to

¹¹ Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006: 135-163.

attain (and maintain) salvation, a goal which supersedes the authority of the state and for the achievement of which tolerance is appropriate. Locke equivocated about tolerance of Catholics, ignored the question of tolerance of Muslims, permitted the tolerance of Jews insofar as it was understood that it was the duty of Christians to convert them, and wholly rejected the idea of tolerance of atheists, agnostics and indifferentists. Israel writes:

Locke's theory of tolerance, then, is overwhelmingly concerned with freedom of worship, theological debate, and religious practice, insofar as these are an extension of freedom of conscience, rather than with freedom of thought, debate, and of the press more broadly, or indeed for that matter freedom of lifestyle; indeed, Lockean toleration expressly denies liberty of thought to those who reject divine revelation – and, still more, freedom of behaviour to those who embrace a moral code divergent from that decreed for men by revelation. (Israel, 2006, 139)

Lockean tolerance, then, is an easy target for criticism, and designating it “Enlightenment tolerance” is an error of oversimplification. Lockean tolerance is conservative even by the standards of the Moderate Enlightenment; it takes a pragmatic step away from the rigid, murderous denominational dogmatism that had led in recent memory to the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), recognizing that Protestants killing Protestants is quite senseless, but it stops far short of the Radical Enlightenment insight that freedom of thought, expression and conscience are the best ideas.

In keeping with the Moderate tradition, Locke seeks to maintain arbitrary privilege, and his minor concessions to differing views seem to be motivated by the economic practicality of a peaceful and stable society. While one should not belittle the significance of any concession of tolerance, Lockean tolerance seems still to lie rather close in spirit to the Church's Counter-Enlightenment core, which only permits any liberty because it has been made to do so. Israel writes:

Only radicals embraced *le tolérantisme*, then, as did Morelly, in 1751, with the added admonition that it should be regarded as an essentially political rather than

theological construct, something which has to be imposed, against their wishes, on the churches and sustained by secular authority. For every church or sect in Europe which in his time endorsed toleration, he contended, would speak very differently were they not obliged by present circumstances to embrace that principle. (Israel, 2006, 153)

Locke is a part of that “secular authority” to the extent to which he is a figure of the Moderate Enlightenment: he is opposed to the wholesale imposition upon all of society of one denomination’s understanding of religious duty, while at the same time rejecting those who work outside of the Protestant framework he is privileging. Conflating Lockean tolerance with Enlightenment tolerance is a misunderstanding that amounts to the construction of a straw man.

Baylean and Spinozist tolerance are significantly different from Lockean tolerance in that they argue for the necessity of freedom of thought on the basis of a materialist epistemology. Bayle’s writing on tolerance takes a satirical fideist stance, arguing that the impossibility of discerning the true faith was the intellectual foundation for the necessity of freedom of conscience (Israel, 2006, 149). Spinoza’s argument for freedom of thought and publication is similarly based on a monist metaphysics that rejects the idea of absolute knowledge because it denies the existence of any “absolute.” The realization of the impossibility, or absurdity, of absolute knowledge comprises a difference between Radical (Spinoza, Bayle) and Moderate (Locke) Enlightenment thinkers.

While, as mentioned above, some *Nathan*-detractors attack Enlightenment tolerance by isolating the easy target of Locke, others attack the Baylean, Spinozist doctrine of the Radical Enlightenment. Criticism of the Radical Enlightenment doctrine of tolerance will receive attention in the analysis to follow, as it is the Radical version that is upheld by a large number of scholars.

An example of what I believe is a reductive reading of tolerance theories in the Enlightenment can be found in Willi Goetschel's article "Lessing and the Jews" from the 2005 *Lessing Companion*.¹² Goetschel repeatedly refers to "the Enlightenment notion of tolerance," and his interpretation is best summarized with the following quote: "Rather than calling for tolerance as the problem's solution, he argues, the play presents tolerance as the problem that needs to be resolved." (Goetschel, 2005, 203)

I believe Goetschel does not qualify clearly from the outset what he understands "the Enlightenment notion of tolerance" to be. After his criticism of "the Enlightenment notion of tolerance" has already begun, his definition of it reveals itself negatively in a few passages:

Second, the philosophical message suggests that this play champions freedom of religion for all, including the Jews and other non-Christians, a claim pointing far beyond the traditional reach of tolerance...As a consequence, no truth claim can any longer receive any legitimation from metaphysics or any other form of reason that is not based on a praxis accessible to all human beings. This is one step further than what the Enlightenment claim for tolerance would imply. For this move disallows the assumption that still informs the Enlightenment notion of tolerance that there is such a thing as the truth of religious tradition and that it is attainable by humans. (Goetschel, 2005, 201)

Goetschel views "the Enlightenment notion of tolerance" to be one which maintains a belief that absolute truth not only exists, but is attainable by humans, and that it can receive legitimation from metaphysics, as well as a notion which does not champion freedom of religion for all. This view of tolerance is so regressive that I believe it is incorrect even to designate it Lockean. Perhaps Goetschel designates Lockean tolerance "the Enlightenment notion of tolerance" because he views it as having realized itself in practice in government. I believe this is a conflation of the strand that emerged victorious in practice with the entirety of doctrines asserting themselves in theory, which is similar in principle to arguing that after much debate

¹² Willi Goetschel, "Lessing and the Jews," *A Companion to the Works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*. Rochester, NY; Camden House, 2005: 185-204.

among five political parties in the Netherlands on some issue, say immigration, the version that emerges victorious and codifies itself in law is hence “the Dutch policy on immigration.” It remains accurate that it is the version that was able to assume that label in practice, and realize its theory in the real world, but this does nothing to establish theoretically the discourse and discussion that co-existed with it. Hence, designating Lockean tolerance as “Enlightenment tolerance” is true as pertains to legal codification, but Goetschel’s discussion of this matter is not concerned with potential differing Enlightenment notions of tolerance, which I consider to be very important.

In reality, as elucidated above, Enlightenment thinking on tolerance varied greatly. I disagree with Goetschel’s suggestion that Enlightenment tolerance posits that an absolute truth can exist and that humans can attain. It seems to me that Goetschel’s definition of Enlightenment tolerance is that version which realized itself in practice, and hence any view that does not conform to the version that succeeded legally under this banner is relegated to some group other than “Enlightenment tolerance” by necessity.

It is clear that Spinozist and Baylean tolerance were based upon the idea that absolute truth does not exist and that all knowledge is contingent, as explained above. It is also rather dubious to assert that even Lockean tolerance presumed an absolute truth exists and is knowable to mankind. Locke’s tolerance established Protestant Christianity as the norm from which unacceptable deviance was punished, but part of what makes his thinking justly Moderate rather than Counter-Enlightenment is his attempt, however questionable, to validate the dominant narrative on reasoned grounds.

It was, after all, Locke who authored the work *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), which argues that all people possess a reasoning capacity which they can use to ascertain

personally the truth of Christian belief. Locke also says that faith “be nothing else but an assent founded on the highest reason,” and argues that the number of witnesses to the events of the Gospels is indisputable evidence of its truth.¹³ Locke firmly aligned himself with those known as the *rationaux*, a group of thinkers whose defining feature is their attempt to establish (Christian) religion as a product of reasoned thinking as well their assertion that faith and reason are not at odds. Pierre Bayle most explicitly opposed the *rationaux*, although their thinking is also clearly opposed by that of such thinkers as Spinoza and Diderot (Israel, 2006, 67-68). Israel writes:

For the *rationaux* and their Lockean allies the rationality of faith was the crux on which the whole of this immense controversy hinged. No one, they held, should confuse ‘faith’ with credulity. In their view, having a correct understanding of faith, as something based on reason rather than authority, was, in the words of Élie Saurin, ‘le fondement de toutes les vérités’...At the heart of the *rationaux*’s great project was the notion of ‘rational’ belief, the doctrine that ‘reason’ proves the truth of Christianity, and can be shown to be fully consonant with that particular religion, showing it to be evidently the best and most rational basis for human morality and the political order. (Israel, 2006, 68)

Furthermore, Locke was a firm supporter of Newtonianism/physico-theology, a school of thinking led by Isaac Newton and Colin MacLaurin. Newtonianism/physico-theology is tantamount to the Argument from Design, i.e. the assertion that the universe’s complexity and orderliness must be the product of intelligent design (Israel, 2006, 202). Newton’s (and Locke’s) belief that *more geometrico* proved, rather than disproved, the existence of God further demonstrates Locke’s belief that he was situating his arguments for the truth of Christianity within reason. A certain coherence exists within his argumentation as well if one ignores the sometimes breathtaking circular reasoning employed by the *rationaux* and the physico-theologians to establish their points:

¹³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P.H. Nidditch. Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1975: 166.

The proof that space is ‘eternal in duration and immutable in nature’, for Newton, lay in the fact that ‘if ever space had not existed, God at that time would have been nowhere’, a notion no less ‘repugnant to reason’, he argued, than the notion that God’s ubiquity somehow arose in time, or that he created his own ubiquity. (Israel, 2006, 207)

The sort of argumentation showcases *rationaux* thinking about what constitutes a reasoned paradigm (space is eternal in duration and immutable in nature because if that were not true, God would not exist, therefore space is eternal in duration and immutable in nature and God exists), but still, it retains the pretense of reason unlike the ideologues Counter-Enlightenment who simply continued to assert the absolute truth of revelation. Locke also asserted that the truth of Christianity is shown by *consensus gentium*, i.e. that because people are capable of reasoning, and a large majority of people believe in Christianity, Christianity is true (Israel, 2006, 71). Consensus theories of truth are highly suspect in nearly any context, but Locke is nonetheless situating himself within the paradigm of reasoned argumentation rather than simply asserting the absolute truth and unquestionability of his positions, as the Catholic church did.

Given this, the claim that the Enlightenment notion of tolerance posits absolute truth seems false even for Lockean tolerance; Locke would argue that the truth of Christianity proceeds from reason in a bottom-up fashion, and its truth is not established as a premise explicitly in his argumentation. Even if it is ridiculous to assert that Christianity proceeds from reason, the matter of concern here is not the validity of Locke’s conclusions but rather his espoused methodology.

Second, Goetschel’s claim that “Enlightenment tolerance” does not promote freedom of religion for all is another error of oversimplification stemming from his initial error. He refers to toleration of Jews and other non-Christians as “beyond the reach of traditional tolerance.” Here, again, he is referring to Lockean, Moderate Enlightenment tolerance, and not Bayle’s freedom of

conscience or Spinoza's freedom of thought. This is then supplemented by the claim that "this move disallows the assumption that still informs the Enlightenment notion of tolerance that there is such a thing as the truth of religious tradition and that it is attainable by humans" (Goetschel, 2005, 201). Again, Goetschel, aspects of whose thinking are representative of much scholarship on the issue of "tolerance" in the Enlightenment, seems to be conflating all Enlightenment thinking into one easily assailable monolith, and furthermore, I disagree with his judgment that Locke's thinking presupposes an absolute truth. This discussion of the adequacy of the notion of tolerance will be addressed again later in this chapter.

II. Radical Materialist Epistemology and Tolerance in *Nathan*

Nathan der Weise, being commonly upheld as a prime exemplar of the Enlightenment doctrine of tolerance, is an interpretive battleground for the status of modernity as a whole to this day. The modern-day debate, however, no longer centers around the epistemology itself, as nearly all mainstream scholars are now working within the boundaries of a materialist epistemology; rather, the debate centers around what conclusions can be drawn from an anti-absolutist epistemology.

The Ring Parable allegorically establishes a materialist epistemology. A father possesses a valuable ring, and he is told to give it to the son he values most regardless of birth, rank or any other external factor. He decides he does not wish to do this, foreseeing the conflict that would follow, and he has a craftsman make two others indistinguishable from it. He then gives the three rings to his sons, not knowing which is the real one, and dies. It then becomes necessary for the designated son to claim his inheritance, and a judge asks the heir to step forward with the ring. Each of the three sons does so. The judge recounts that the true ring will supposedly make its owner feel special, as if he is privy to special knowledge and care. Each son then truthfully

claims that his ring makes him feel this way. The end of the parable centers on a judge who makes pronouncements about the predicament of the three sons. Furthermore, the judge acknowledges his own inability to ascertain which ring is the true one, and considering that the judge represents metaphorically a person of boundless wisdom and omniscience in the parable, one can surmise that his statements amount to a demolition of the concept of absolute truth. All three religions (and all religions, for that matter) are therefore declared untrue by their own standards of truth. Religious truth claims, it is understood, are not understood as contingent truths within a paradigm of epistemic relativism, and this is what makes the Ring Parable a radical proclamation. The parable is resolved when the judge orders the sons to disperse, and to acknowledge that they should learn to live with their inability to distinguish between the rings.¹⁴

Another radical aspect of the Ring Parable is the embedded assumption in the judge's verdict that truth is subjective rather than objective. It is subjective in the sense that truth is a concept used by subjects to impose order and coherence on their world, i.e. on their objects. This is contrary to the traditional religious concept of truth, which is that truth has objective existence, including existence independent of subject, whereby truth becomes something almost scientific like the heat of the sun or the hardness of a rock rather than something created, maintained and defended by subjects. The judge is clearly not working from the premise that truth is something that must be established and defended as a human value judgment, and this aspect of the parable is yet another attack on "absolute truth." Saladin's shocked response mirrors the likely response of most people at a claim with such sweeping implications for the traditional understanding of a fundamental philosophical question (knowledge, truth): "Gott! Gott!" (Lessing, 560)

¹⁴ G.E. Lessing, *Nathan der Weise*, ed. Klaus Bohnen and Arno Schilson. Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993: 555-560.

The Ring Parable as presented in *Nathan* elucidates the nuanced position of the Radical Enlightenment on interreligious tolerance, and it is important to analyze it carefully to avoid glossing over its subtlety. Jonathan Israel regards Spinoza as the principal originator of the Radical Enlightenment views on various issues, and one of these views is seen in his anti-absolutist epistemology, which overthrows all pretensions to absolute knowledge. Furthermore, Spinoza's, and then later the Radical Enlightenment's, epistemology is significantly different from that of Locke and other Moderate Enlightenment figures in that it stresses the historical, contingent, and constructed nature of all knowledge. A logical consequence of this, and a further distinguishing factor, is the interdependency of ontology and epistemology that must exist within such a system. While this interdependency makes Spinoza's view of knowledge transparently circular, this does not constitute a fatal flaw in his metaphysical framework, but rather resolves the fatally incorrect assumptions underlying traditional metaphysics by dismissing the ahistorical nature of metaphysics-discourse theretofore as the actual problem. On this point Willi Goetschel writes in his book *Spinoza's Modernity: Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Heine*:

Spinoza thus moves away from the empirical approach of, for instance, Bacon, whose inductive method lacks an epistemological meta-reflection and whose fixation on the imperative to stock up data mortgages the empiricist agenda with metaphysical baggage. Likewise, Spinoza distances himself from a Cartesian philosophy of mind, whose exclusive privileging of a rationalist constructivism betrays an equally problematic metaphysical option. What in Spinoza is often taken for just another obsolete rationalist attempt at constructivism is to be understood as Spinoza's careful navigating between the problems that Cartesian, Baconian, and Hobbesian epistemological theories present... The circular movement of the epistemological argument highlights that any theory of knowledge rests, in the final analysis, on a larger philosophical conception of the nature of things from which the epistemological argument cannot be detached.¹⁵

Goetschel highlights here the critical differences between Spinozist epistemology and that of Descartes, Bacon and Hobbes, who he claims rejected all of Spinoza's foundational points. It is

¹⁵ Willi Goetschel, *Spinoza's Modernity: Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Heine*, Madison, WI; University of Wisconsin Press; 2004: 38-39.

notable that Descartes, Bacon and Hobbes comprise different intellectual strains whose principles coincide with other Moderate Enlightenment views, and this is logical for the following reason: if knowledge exists as an essence prior to human experience that can only be discovered by the senses, as a dualistic empiricist like Bacon would have it, or if knowledge is constructed in an overarching, logical, deductive system as a dualistic rationalist like Descartes would have it, then it is not only possible for an absolute truth to exist that is waiting to be discovered, it is *necessary* for it to exist. Essentialist epistemologies open the playing field for claims to absolute knowledge, and by extension, to power, in fields of inquiry where nothing even approaching objective certainty can exist, and they coincided with the views of Moderate Enlightenment figures because of the ironclad intellectual justification they provided for it. In Spinozist and Radical Enlightenment epistemology it is intellectually indefensible to instrumentalize knowledge that is purely historical and contingent to produce knowledge-claims purporting to be absolute.

The Radical Enlightenment epistemology, while varying among theorists, is united by its emphasis of the historical and constructed nature of knowledge as well as by its complete rejection of any claims to absolute knowledge; the Moderate Enlightenment epistemology varies significantly from theorist to theorist, but is united by its continued maintenance of ahistorical knowledge divorced from its ontology. Israel's distinction between Radical and Moderate Enlightenment substantiates itself on the issues of epistemology, ontology, and metaphysics.

Some scholars have taken anti-absolutist epistemology to necessitate a refusal to make value judgments about systems of belief, and a consequence of this refusal is that one must esteem all value systems as equally legitimate, but such a refusal is not justified. In the Ring

Parable scene in *Nathan*, this valuing difference is explicitly present in the judge's pronouncement on how people should act in an absolute-free world:

NATHAN: Und also; fuhr der Richter fort, wenn ihr
 Nicht meinen Rat, statt meines Spruches, wollt:
 Geht nur! – Mein Rat ist aber der: ihr nehmt
 Die Sache völlig wie sie liegt. Hat von
 Euch jeder seinen Ring von seinem Vater:
 So glaube jeder sicher seinen Ring
 Den echten. – Möglich; daß der Vater nun
 Die Tyrannei des Einen Rings nicht länger
 In seinem Hause dulden wollen! -- Und gewiß;
 Daß er euch alle drei geliebt, und gleich
 Geliebt: indem er zwei nicht drücken mögen,
 Um einen zu begünstigen. – Wohlan!
 Es eifre jeder seiner unbestochnen
 Von Vorurteilen freien Liebe nach!
 Es strebe von euch jeder um die Wette,
 Die Kraft des Steins in seinem Ring' an Tag
 Zu legen! komme dieser Kraft mit Sanftmut,
 Mit herzlicher Verträglichkeit, mit Wohltun,
 Mit innigster Ergebenheit in Gott,
 Zu Hülf! (Lessing 559)

The judge in the Parable is establishing that no religion can prove itself true as well as that it would not be good if one of them could. Most notable, and often overlooked, about this passage is the positive value system the judge suggests the religions subordinate themselves to.

Verträglichkeit, *Wohltun* and *Sanftmut* [tolerance, beneficence, and meekness] are proposed as the values that the religions should employ when engaging one another, and a value binding them, *Ergebenheit in Gott* [devotion to God], is invoked as a universal framework within which their discourse can act.

It is very important to note that the Ring Parable and *Nathan der Weise* more broadly do not state that *all* knowledge possesses an equal claim to validity, or as Spinoza would say, adequacy. Within the Ring Parable, Nathan describes the foundation upon which religious knowledge is constructed:

SALADIN: Die Ringe! Spiele nicht mit mir! Ich dünkte, dass die Religionen, die ich dir genannt, doch wohl zu unterscheiden wären. Bis auf die Kleidung; bis auf Speis und Trank!

NATHAN: Und nur von Seiten ihrer Gründe nicht. Denn gründen alle sich nicht auf Geschichte? Geschrieben oder überliefert? Und Geschichte muss doch wohl allein auf Treu und Glauben angenommen werden? Nicht? (Lessing 557)

Nathan identifies religious evidence as purely tradition and history-based, which places it within the realm of the theological rather than the philosophical. For Spinoza, as for the other Radical Enlightenment figures, theology and philosophy are non-overlapping magisteria (Israel, 2006, 159). A consequence of this is that the two need not conflict, but need merely be placed in their respective places; within Spinoza's system, the greatest possible freedom of thought is permitted, encompassing the public right to worship however one pleases and live according to one's own value system, religious or not. Spinoza's freedom of thought, while based on an anti-absolutist, anti-essentialist epistemology, is decidedly not ambivalent about what value system leads to the greatest possible enjoyment of personal liberties. The realization of the contingency and historicity of knowledge does not render ethical assessment of the merit of varying narratives superfluous; it rather makes the task more urgent and deserving of careful consideration than ever. Concerning the jurisdiction of theology, Israel writes of Spinoza:

He [Spinoza] begins by distinguishing carefully between toleration of worship, strictly speaking, which is one thing, and empowering religious groups to organize and extend their authority just as they wish, which he sees as something rather different. While entirely granting that everyone must possess the freedom to express their beliefs no matter what faith they profess, Spinoza simultaneously urges the need for certain restrictions on the activities of churches. (Israel, 2006, 155)

Spinoza's system consistently provides a privileged status to the "narrative of reason," and his reasons for doing so are ethical and pragmatic. First, privileging reason is beneficial to the adherents of religions, whose mutually incompatible systems would otherwise compel them to

violence; second, reason can be exercised democratically, many of its workings being confirmable, demonstrable and comprehensible to men of even very modest backgrounds.

For Israel, Diderot provides many justifications for subordinating religious maxims in the public sphere and government to reason:

It was not simply, holds Diderot, that this or that religion persecutes, or that most religions are intolerant; the difficulty, in his opinion, was that belief in God, spirits, miracles, and transcendental realities as such harms both society and the individual even where such beliefs are propagated by a church which formally renounces compulsion. This is because such doctrines are then claimed to be the holiest and most fundamental that men can conceive but are yet, at the same time by definition, incomprehensible, not demonstrable, and definable only by theologians specially trained for this purpose. Confessional faith, indeed all religion, he contends, fosters individual unhappiness and strife by persuading people that chimeras no one understands are more important than the quality and content of individuals' daily lives.¹⁶ (Israel, 2006, 161-162)

Diderot's argument establishes that theological reasoning is inferior to philosophical reasoning because it is incomprehensible while also being dominated by a select few men. For Diderot, then, private religious belief is clearly something that does violence to the human psyche, but more importantly, does violence to the stability and justice of human society by extending the conflicted, contradictory nature of religious systems onto the functioning of society.

Spinoza and other Radical Enlightenment figures stress the irrelevancy of private belief for the functioning of society at large often. Israel writes of Spinoza on this point:

Indeed, for Spinoza, whose explanation of this is surely one of the most astounding passages in his oeuvre, it matters not a whit whether one understands these doctrines theologically or philosophically: 'whether God is believed to be everywhere actually or potentially, whether he governs things freely or by natural necessity; or lays down laws as a ruler or teaches them as eternal truths' ...Neither does it matter whether one believes men should obey God from free will or by the necessity of divine decree; or finally, whether the reward of the good and punishment of the wicked is considered natural or supernatural. (Israel, 2006, 159)

¹⁶ Embedded Quote From: Denis Diderot, *Additions aux Pensées philosophiques*. Oeuvres Philosophiques. 1763; Paris; Brisset Publishing, 1990: 53-72.

The segregation of belief and action is a critical insight of the Radical Enlightenment, and it is also the central tenet of the Spinozist, Baylean, Radical Enlightenment message of tolerance in *Nathan der Weise*. The stress on public behavior as the sole criterion for ethical judgment is demonstrated at multiple specific junctures in the play, but it is most clearly exemplified by tracing Nathan's behavior all throughout the play. The first location where emphasis is placed on behavior is at the very beginning of the play, when Nathan corrects Recha's persistence that she was saved by an angel, and not a man. After inquiring into Recha and Daja's persistence that it was an angel ("NATHAN: ...Warum bemüht ihr denn noch einen Engel?" (Lessing 494)), Nathan condemns the belief that it was an angel as at worst harmful, at best useless, and then explicitly states the superiority of valuing action to valuing belief:

“NATHAN: ...Denn Gott lohnt Gutes, hier
Getan, auch hier noch. – Geh! – Begreifst du aber,
Wie viel andächtig schwärmen leichter ist, als
Gut handeln ist? wie gern der schlaffste Mensch
Andächtig schwärmt, um nur, -- ist er zuzeiten
Sich schon der Absicht deutlich nicht bewusst –
Um nur gut handeln nicht zu dürfen? (Lessing 497)

(The use of the word *Gott* should not be conceived as an attempt by Nathan to pick a theological fight, but rather to establish a universal value framework, as was commonly done by atheistic-agnostic Radical philosophers due to the familiarity of the terminology and also as an appeal to the universality of human concerns, as well as to protect themselves from persecution by using the terminology of the approved discourse.) Nathan's emphasis on the value of action over speculative thought is typical of the Radical Enlightenment, and it is logically connected with many other Radical Enlightenment positions. Because of the Radical Enlightenment's monistic metaphysics, materialist epistemology and rejection of supernatural (i.e. unreasoned) causation, it diverts all attention from otherworldly considerations and esteems that (action) which affects

material conditions. This does not mean that the Radical Enlightenment does not believe that some ways of thinking are harmful, confused, inconsistent or untrue (or Spinoza's term, "inadequate"). It means that, given the limits of human knowledge, no ethical justification for punishing thought can be produced, while it, perhaps most critically, does not eschew the ethical obligation to promote a general theoretical framework that is most conducive to certain values, which it establishes and defends. The Radical Enlightenment therefore establishes the contingency and historicity of knowledge, protects completely the freedom of thought and conscience, and at the same time urges human society to negotiate rationally a framework that allows for the greatest possible personal freedom of belief and action for all. Radical Enlightenment figures argue that secular reason is the best, most ethically sound framework toward the defined ideals of maximum individual freedom, peace and stability.

III. Atheism, Radical Enlightenment and *Nathan*

Nathan der Weise is widely considered to present an argument for deism, but its religious critique actually steps beyond this and presents arguments that agnostic atheism as the most justifiable position on religious questions. The arguments for agnosticism proceed from the materialist epistemology discussed earlier, and the arguments for atheism proceed from an ethical analysis of the consequences of belief in a providential deity. *Nathan* argues not just for tolerance, but also presents positive ethical arguments for disbelief in God, which follow from explicit religious critique seen in a few places in the text.

In this section, I will focus on the ethical arguments for atheism seen in *Nathan*. The arguments for agnosticism are covered in the discussion of materialist epistemology in the preceding section on tolerance. Lessing is known to have read Spinoza enthusiastically and to have seen himself as a disciple of the same. The *Pantheismusstreit* of the 1780s, after Lessing's

death, centered around the differences on religion that largely define the Radical-Moderate Enlightenment differences Israel describes.¹⁷ The Radical-Moderate Enlightenment differences concerning religion manifested themselves in the German context in the form of two principal camps: Leibniz-Wolffians (Moderate) and Spinozists (Radical) (Israel, 2001, 658). Leibniz-Wolffians, believing that we live in the best of all possible worlds because all that is has proceeded from God's will, upheld the existence of a providential deity, which they did by invoking the necessity of the pre-immanence of mind (rather than mind as an effect of body, like in Spinoza's system). Israel describes the stark differences between Leibniz's and Spinoza's system thus:

Only in a limited sense, argues Leibniz, introducing what was to become one of his most characteristic arguments, are those things "impossible" which God has decided not to do or produce; for in other circumstances He could have done so. This difference was, and was to remain, the pivotal point of encounter between two of the greatest systems of the Baroque era: for Spinoza, the philosopher who grasps the reality of things knows that what exists exists necessarily, and that what does not exist can not exist, whereas for Leibniz what happens could have happened differently, and whatever exists could be otherwise, had God so willed. (Israel, 2001, 510)

Given the degree to which Lessing was influenced by Spinoza, it should not surprise that Lessing injected a great deal of Spinozist, Radical Enlightenment criticism of religion into *Nathan*, which contains what are likely his boldest and clearest statements on religion. The depth of Lessing's Spinozism ran deep, which one can further see reflected in the heated nature of the *Pantheismusstreit*.

Lessing took his Spinozism even further than did his friend and Jewish-German Enlightenment figure Moses Mendelssohn. Israel writes of Mendelssohn:

Mendelssohn never gravitated as close to Spinozism as Lessing, and indeed, given his loyalty to revealed religion and Judaism, could not do so...Mendelssohn's purpose was to come to terms with Spinoza in his own mind and, following

¹⁷ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, New York; Oxford University Press, 2001: 716.

Arnold and Wolff, to some extent rehabilitate him, freeing him from the stigma of being an out and out 'atheist', while reserving his primary philosophical loyalty to the Leibnizian-Wolffian system, which he then considered the definitive answer to both British empiricism and French freethinking and the supreme manifestation of German depth and genius in philosophy. (Israel 2001, 658)

Mendelssohn, then, carried the generally moderate banner of advancing the role of reason in society for pragmatic reasons while maintaining some breathing room in which revealed religion could escape the attacks of philosophy.

Willi Goetschel discusses Leibnizianism vs. Spinozism as a principal point of difference between Mendelssohn and Lessing, and of particular dispute was Mendelssohn's assertion that Spinoza anticipated Leibniz's pre-established harmony. Goetschel summarizes Lessing's response to Mendelssohn as a clarification of the implications and strengths of Spinoza's system:

In the face of Spinoza's ontological framework, he [Lessing] argues, it seems problematic if not misleading to speak of harmony when, in fact, Spinoza's point is to conceive of body and mind as just two different aspects or forms of manifestation of the one and only Substance that, identical in itself, renders superfluous any need to postulate harmony in order to solve the problem of the connection between body and mind in Leibniz. According to Lessing, the different ontological assumptions in Leibniz require him to introduce the notion of preestablished harmony. While Leibniz's system is in need of such an additional assumption, it is one of the strengths defining the architecture of Spinoza's system that it conceives of body and mind as just two attributes of one and the same Substance, thereby obviating any need for a theory of harmony. (Goetschel 191)

It is clear from this exchange between Lessing and Mendelssohn that Mendelssohn wanted Spinoza to be a Leibniz-style Jewish Enlightenment figure, but Lessing counters that Mendelssohn is making a flagrant philosophical error regarding what logically follows from Spinoza's monism.

Israel reveals the strength of Lessing's Spinozism, and the Spinozistic/Radical Enlightenment nature of *Nathan der Weise*, in *A Revolution of the Mind*:

On hearing that Jacobi, too, had made a particular study of Spinoza's ideas and believed "hardly anybody has known him as well as I," Lessing famously retorted, "There is no other philosophy than the philosophy of Spinoza" (es gibt keine andre Philosophie, als die Philosophie des Spinoza)... Lessing, not least through his last and most famous play, *Nathan der Weise* (1779), advanced the most comprehensive toleration plea of the German Enlightenment and the only one expressly to place Muslims and Jews on the same basis of citizenship under the law as Protestants and Catholics.¹⁸

Given Lessing's professed closeness to Spinoza, it should not surprise that *Nathan der Weise* presents religious critique based on a Radical Enlightenment/Spinozist materialist epistemology as well as religious and social critique denying the existence of a God possessing will.

In the face of such clear Spinozism in Lessing's literary compositions, one may be surprised by the generally moderate tone of Lessing's theoretical writings on theology in the *Pantheismusstreit* with Pastor Goeze, as well as in many of Lessing's theological writings. In texts such as *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen* Lessing writes from a perspective that defends the Unitarian impulses in Leibniz against more traditionalistic Christian orthodoxy. Many radical impulses that appear in *Nathan* can be seen carefully hidden within the generally moderate tone of this text. In the passage that follows, Lessing defends Leibniz against the accusation of detractor Eberhard by asserting that Leibniz does not try to adapt his system to the doctrines of each party, but rather:

...er [Leibniz] suchte die herrschenden Lehrsätze aller Parteien seinem Systeme anzupassen... *Leibniz* nahm, bei seiner Untersuchung der Wahrheit, nie Rücksicht auf angenommene Meinungen; aber in der festen Überzeugung, daß keine Meinung angenommen sein könne, die nicht von einer gewissen Seite, in einem gewissen Verstande wahr sei, hatte er wohl oft die Gefälligkeit, diese Meinung so lange zu wenden und zu drehen, bis es ihm gelang, diese gewisse Seite sichtbar, diesen gewissen Verstand begreiflich zu machen.¹⁹

¹⁸ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 2010: 71.

¹⁹ G.E. Lessing, *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen, Quellen: Ausgewählte Texte aus der Geschichte der christlichen Kirche: Sechs Theologische Schriften G.E. Lessings*, ed. Wolfgang Gericke. Berlin; Evangelische Verlagsanstalt GmbH, 1985: 70.

Here one sees the apparently paradoxical gap between Lessing's Spinozism and Lessing's defense of Leibnizian optimism. Lessing views Leibniz's system as pursuing the correct critical impulse, which is the historical and constructed nature of truth as well as the necessity of all things. If one substitutes Leibniz's God for Spinoza's God (Nature), one discovers that there is little difference. If one substitutes all of Lessing's theological terminology and talk for the terminology of Spinoza, one discovers that there is little difference. When Lessing discusses "sin" and "punishment," it is simple to see the Spinozistic substitution: "sin" is behavior contrary to Spinoza's idealized state of nature, in which man experiences his greatest authenticity and freedom, and "punishment," or the "Höllenstrafen" one experiences (or deserves) are the negative consequences that will certainly come about as a result of a violation of the order of nature.

The question of why Lessing chose to present Spinozistic views within a defense of Leibniz has both philosophical and real-world pragmatic causations. Lessing's pragmatic reasons are clearest: Lessing enjoyed public esteem and earned his income as an intellectual of very high visibility - and atheism, or any non-traditional Christianity, was not a substantiated accusation his reputation could suffer. Philosophically, Lessing was fortunate enough that he could find a system to defend that contained elements he supported, whereby he could further his pragmatic ethical goals. In Leibniz there are ideas that, practically, are fairly amenable to Spinozism, and Leibnizianism corrects many of the grossest philosophical errors of Aristotelian scholasticism within Christendom and theological circles.

First, Leibniz's notion of "preestablished harmony" between the substances of mind and body is not as rigorously and irreconcilably dualistic as Descartes. Indeed, if one argues that there is a harmony between mind and body such that they can interact, in what manner are they

really separate substances at all? A similar softer position on mind-body separation has been attributed to Spinoza; some Spinoza scholars, such as Stephen Nadler, have argued that because Spinoza calls mind “the idea of the body” he is making a substance distinction and hence is, in fact, a dualist.²⁰ It seems that one can present an argument that Leibniz, in acknowledging a need for a harmony to be established, is recognizing many of the critical impulses underlying monism, and that Spinoza, in acknowledging that mind possesses agency and needs to have its status explained, recognizes many of the critical impulses underlying dualism. Lessing must have seen these fine terminological differences narrowly separating major camps of dualism/monism and Unitarianism-Deism/atheism, and he must have come to the conclusion that his purposes were best served by circumventing censure and couching his criticism within the terminology of the respective more accepted position.

Second, Leibniz’s “optimism,” whereby we are said to live in the best of all possible worlds because everything which happens, happens in accordance with God’s will but could have happened differently had God willed it so, is commonly taken to stand in contradiction to Spinoza’s argument for the necessity of all things. Indeed, Israel seems to see this as making Leibniz a sort of quintessential anti-Spinozist, and he devotes an entire chapter to the proposition that:

Leibniz emerged as the foremost and most resolute of all the antagonists of radical thought, as well as the pre-eminent architect of the mainstream, moderate Enlightenment in Germany, Scandinavia, and Russia. (Israel, 2001, 502)

This seems to be true of Leibniz’s general political aims, but his philosophical positions themselves are not as resolutely anti-Spinozist as was probably assumed by intellectuals and clergymen of the time, for reasons relating to some philosophical necessities proceeding from the Christian God as traditionally understood. After all, what is the difference between saying “all

²⁰ Stephen Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life*, Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1999.

things which exist exist necessarily” and saying “all things which exist proceed from God’s will”? Even if one adds, as Leibniz does, the technicality that “things could have been different had God willed it differently,” this does not really mean that things could have been different because God’s will must be fixed if he is actually omniscient. Indeed, it is not possible for God to have chosen differently because it is not possible for an omniscient being to make choices since decisions, by definition, require a period of uncertainty as well as a lack of complete knowledge. While this problem is generally explained away as mysterious in Christian theology, it exposes a logical inconsistency within Leibniz’s rationalized theology, as he understands it, which essentially renders his position identical to Spinoza’s. The purpose of this is not to denounce the absurdity of Leibniz-Wolffian rationalized theology, but rather to demonstrate how Lessing could justify couching his more radical commentary within a discourse that appears so reactionary on the surface; nor is the purpose to gloss over the significantly different general aims of Leibniz and Spinoza that justify Israel’s general characterization of their positions as strongly opposed, but rather to show how a non-confrontationalist like Lessing could find points of agreement and universality in most positions in order to speak to people in terms they value, and in order to build consensus.

Returning to the Lessing passage from *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen*, one can quickly see Lessing’s epistemological stance from *Nathan* and the Ring Parable in his interpretation of Leibniz. Lessing was known for being deeply skeptical of philosophical systems, and this skepticism is directly articulated (“...in der festen Überzeugung, daß keine Meinung angenommen sein könne...”). Furthermore, Lessing defends Leibniz’s system (which is, for the purposes of this defense, essentially not a system) as being superior to others in that it is

descriptive rather than normative (“...er [Leibniz] suchte die herrschenden Lehrsätze aller Parteien seinem Systeme anzupassen...”).

The descriptive nature of Leibniz’s approach sets it apart from the normative approaches of Aristotelian scholastic philosophers, and makes it worthy of championing within the public context previously mentioned. The descriptive rather than normative approach is also what defines Lessing’s epistemological points in *Nathan*. As argued elsewhere, *Nathan* argues that we can only describe knowledge and not posit absolute norms against which to measure everything, but *Nathan* also makes a plea for tolerance based on universalism despite the epistemological relativism it simultaneously advocates. Lessing furthers the more explicitly radical aims of his literary work *Nathan der Weise* in his theological writings, such as *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen*, despite his heavily religious terminology and endorsement of a thinker whose political aims greatly differed from his, and his resourcefulness in this respect reveals the universalistic ethical goals he pursued via all available intellectual routes.

With Lessing’s Spinozism and theological defenses of Leibniz contextualized, it only remains to connect these positions with the status of the adequacy of the notion of tolerance, and this connection follows from the emphasis on universalism Lessing places in each discourse. It is the universalizing tendencies extractable from Leibniz that earned Lessing’s defense, and it is the universalizing tendencies in Spinoza that makes his philosophy “the only philosophy.” Furthermore, it is the emphasis on universalism in Spinozistic and Baylean tolerance that facilitate a connection between the doctrine of tolerance espoused in *Nathan* and his theological and literary writings, as well as Lessing’s friendship and discussions with Mendelssohn. In each of these works, Lessing teases out and contextualizes those universalistic tendencies and arguments he can find in order to find common ground with varying people. What also defines

Lessing's stance on tolerance of different groups is that the universalism he defends accepts difference and advocates full freedom of thought yet does not decline to engage in criticism of worldviews within their own paradigms. What this means is that Lessing does not subordinate the limited number of things that can be known about the world, as well as the internal coherence of systems of thinking, to the altar of difference, but rather he seeks to engage systems in debate in the belief that it is possible for discussion to occur if a method of assessment can be agreed upon. Lessing (Nathan in the play) presents arguments acknowledging the inability to establish truth on grounds of absolute knowledge, and from this he argues that tolerance is necessary on ethical grounds, but he extends beyond this to present arguments that atheism is preferable to theism on ethical grounds.

As partially argued earlier, the criticism *Nathan der Weise* levels at religious practices extends far beyond the bare interreligious tolerance for which scholarship, such as Goetschel's article *Lessing and the Jews*, has frequently argued, and it rebuffs the accusations of intolerance or pseudo-tolerance made towards it by some: the work nearly reads as an allegory for many major criticisms of religion and faith made throughout the ages. Some scholars believe that, in the absence of an ability to know the *Ding-an-sich* (i.e. absolute knowledge), every person can create their own "narrative" and "truth" and therefore insulate their belief system from all rational inquiry. It is certainly possible to do this, but that does not make doing so meaningful or ethical. It is important to show how *Nathan der Weise* argues not only for tolerance, but also for relegating matters (religion) that are completely beyond the realm of any inquiry by definition entirely to the private realm. Furthermore, it is important to note that *Nathan* does not show that the impossibility of absolute knowledge means that all value systems are equal; it shows that one must turn to ethics and universal concerns as the foundation for the structure of society.

Many standard ethical arguments for atheism are presented throughout *Nathan*, and one such argument is the “Problem of Evil.” One place in which this is discussed is Act 4, Scene 7, at a point when Nathan is discussing with the cloister brother his raising of Recha:

Nathan: Doch nun kam die Vernunft allmählig wieder.
 Sie sprach mit sanfter Stimm’: “und doch ist Gott!
 Doch war auch Gottes Ratschluß das! Wohlan!
 Komm! übe, was du längst begriffen hast;
 Was sicherlich zu üben schwerer nicht,
 Als zu begreifen ist, wenn du nur willst.” (Lessing 596)

This passage seizes upon the basic premise of the main ethical argument against the existence of God, namely that if God exists and possesses supreme power over all that happens, he is responsible for all that evil that happens as well as for all the good. Ultimately, God’s supreme control over everything leads theists to a rather amoral stance on the justness of actions; as previously discussed, a notion of justice independent of God is necessary for labeling his will such for it to be a meaningful pronouncement. Nathan, then, is disavowing himself of responsibility for the consequences of his becoming Recha’s guardian.

Given Nathan’s mockery of claims concerning God’s will and divine intervention earlier in the play, it is reasonable to surmise that this comment on the justness of God’s will is not meant in a sincere manner affirming traditional Christian understanding. It is rather another example of Lessing seizing upon universal impulses within varying discourses in order to establish common ground. In this case, what seems to be Nathan’s affirmation of the traditional, morally indifferent occurrence of God’s will is actually the morally indifferent “necessity of all things” of Spinoza. Essentially, both Spinoza and traditional Christian divine will assert that everything which occurs is ultimately determined by something outside of human control, and that this inevitability serves as a standard against which to measure human goals and experiences. Within both systems a harmony with this “cosmic will” is sought after an ideal for

individuals and society. In traditional Christian doctrine the individual and society seek to be reflections and fulfillments of God's will, and within Spinoza's system the individual and society are structured in response to the nature and course of the universe. The two systems come to differing conclusions on the definition of justice, however: in Christianity, anything which is in harmony with God's will is just, whereas in Spinoza's system just is that which allows man to live authentically, which means in accordance with his determined predilections, talents and abilities. Despite this very significant difference, it is possible, and not at all surprising, that Lessing seizes upon the similarity between the two kinds of thinking and has Nathan speak with the terminology of the accepted discourse to establish premises that also underlie radical systems that diverge from the Christian thinking beyond this point.

Arguments for atheism also occur early in *Nathan*, in Act 1, Scene 2, starting with Nathan's confrontation of his adopted daughter Recha and her caretaker Daja after Recha has been saved from a burning building by an unknown figure. Recha insists that an angel saved her while Nathan is skeptical and argues that a natural explanation is more likely. Recha is upset by Nathan's rejection of a supernatural explanation, and Daja asks Nathan why he cares which way Recha thinks, to which Nathan replies with a criticism of religious behavioral proscriptions:

DAJA: Was schadets – Nathan, wenn ich sprechen darf –
 Bei alle dem, von einem Engel lieber
 Als einem Menschen sich gerettet denken?
 Fühlt man der ersten unbegreiflichen
 Ursache seiner Rettung nicht sich so
 Viel näher?
 NATHAN: Stolz! Und nichts als Stolz! Der Topf
 Von Eisen will mit einer silbern Zange
 Gern aus der Glut gehoben sein, um selbst
 Ein Topf von Silber sich zu dünken. – Pah! –
 Und was es schadet, fragst du? Was es schadet?
 Was hilft es? Dürft ich hinwieder fragen. –
 Denn dein "Sich Gott um so viel näher fühlen",
 Ist Unsinn oder Gotteslästerung. –

Allein es schadet; ja, es schadet allerdings. –
 Kommt! Hört mir zu. – Nicht wahr? Dem Wesen, das
 Dich rettete, -- es sei ein Engel oder
 Ein Mensch, -- dem möchtet ihr, und du besonders,
 Gern wieder viele große Dienste tun? –
 Nicht wahr? – Nun, einem Engel, was für Dienste,
 Für große Dienste könnt ihr dem wohl tun?
 Ihr könnt ihm danken; zu ihm seufzen, beten;
 Könnt in Entzückung über ihn zerschmelzen;
 Könnt an dem Tage seiner Feier fasten,
 Almosen spenden. – Alles nichts. – Denn mich
 Deucht immer, daß ihr selbst und euer Nächster
 Hierbei weit mehr gewinnt, als er. Er wird
 Nicht fett durch euer Fasten; wird nicht reich
 Durch eure Spenden; wird nicht herrlicher
 Durch eur Entzücken; wird nicht mächtiger
 Durch eur Vertrauen. Nicht wahr? Allein ein Mensch! (Lessing 494-495)

Nathan argues that the dedication of valuable money and resources to please a deity is an unethical notion, and the identification of a flaw in a God defined to be perfect is tantamount to a statement that that God does not exist. This is so because it produces a logical contradiction in terms within the definition of that God: a God who is defined as perfect who does something imperfect cannot exist as defined, whereby the Gods of Christianity, Islam and Judaism are implicated. Furthermore, even if the Gods of the Abrahamic religions were able to be imperfect, Nathan's argument suggests that it would be immoral to believe in and subjugate oneself to a God who makes such immoral demands. Nathan argues explicitly how the Christian God as defined in the Bible cannot exist as defined if a flaw in his behavior can be identified, and also that it would be unethical to believe in him even if the first flaw were not so. In the late 18th century, this would be more than enough to be branded an atheist, despite the technical truth that it does not establish the non-existence of any conceivable providential, anthropomorphic deity. The specific addressing of the Gods of the Abrahamic religions is an argument for practical

atheism on ethical grounds and an argument for theoretical atheism on logical (reasoned) grounds.

Theoretical atheism and practical atheism are positions that define Israel's Radical Enlightenment. Theoretical atheism is the belief that there is, in fact, no God, and that the universe is explicable entirely by natural means, whereas practical atheism is behaving and living daily as if theoretical atheism were true. Theoretical atheism encompasses such thinkers as Spinoza, Bayle and Diderot, while practical atheism covers further swaths of the Radical Enlightenment, including non-traditional Christians like Unitarians, Socinians and Collegiants (Israel, 2010, 22-28).

Furthermore, Nathan's argument establishes that belief in supernatural forces, whether within the bounds of a theistic religious system or otherwise, is superfluous and thereby unnecessary. Thinkers such as Spinoza argued that the presence or absence of belief in supernatural forces is a non sequitur to moral behavior. Goetschel writes of how Lessing came to this opinion at least partially through his study of Spinoza:

Lessing's stress on the priority of action over reasoning (*Vernünfteln*) echoes the pragmatist stand of Spinoza: "Man was created to act not to reason" ("Der Mensch ward zum Tun und nicht zum Vernünfteln erschaffen"²¹ [L 3, 683]). (Goetschel 186)

The connections between the Radical Enlightenment's position that belief and action are unconnected and the Moderate Enlightenment's position that belief and action are connected are logical, and the differences between Spinozist/Baylean and Lockean tolerance also follow logically from these connections. If certain beliefs are thought to lead inevitably to damage to society, or to constitute damage to society in and of themselves, then a doctrine such as Locke's that does not extend to tolerance to such unacceptable beliefs is appropriate. If they are

²¹ Embedded Quote From: Lessing, *Werke*, ed. Herbert G. Göpfert, vol. 3. Munich: Hanser-Verlag, 1979: 683.

unconnected, then Spinozist freedom of thought and Baylean freedom of conscience are appropriate.

Nathan's argument about the irrelevancy of belief for action is seen in his conversation with Saladin later, in Act 2, Scene 5:

TEMPELHERR: Ich muß gestehn,
Ihr wißt, wie Tempelherren denken sollten.
NATHAN: Nur Tempelherren? Sollten bloß? Und bloß
Weil es die Ordensregeln so gebieten?
Ich weiß, wie gute Menschen denken; weiß,
Daß alle Länder gute Menschen tragen. (Lessing 531-532)

In this passage, Nathan refuses to undertake action vis-à-vis the Templar simply by virtue of his formal affiliation with the group of "templars"; Nathan insists that a person's actions, and not his beliefs, can serve as the basis for judgment. Nathan's refusal explicitly invokes the unit of the "country" ("Land"), whereby one can further surmise that he does not believe nationality to be a sufficient criterion by which to judge the ethicality of a person's actions. Nathan's valuing of actions and rejection of group membership as measuring stick for ethicality is extended not just to religion in the play, but also to nationality. Although provincialism of many sorts is deeply entrenched in all human societies, it was beginning to shift to the larger, emerging entity of the nation-state in Lessing's time. This alteration in the political landscape renders Lessing's inclusion of it a timely endeavor in the combat against group-based prejudice.

Direct criticism of religion is seen in the passage in which Sittah plays chess with Saladin and speaks with him about Christians:

SITTAH: ...Du kennst die Christen nicht, willst sie nicht kennen.
Ihr Stolz ist: Christen sein; nicht Menschen. Denn
Selbst das, was, noch von ihrem Stifter her,
Mit Menschlichkeit den Aberglauben wirzt,
Das lieben sie, nicht weil es menschlich ist:
Weils Christus lehrt; weils Christus hat getan. –
Wohl ihnen, daß er ein so guter Mensch

Noch war! Wohl ihnen, daß sie seine Tugend
 Auf Treu und Glaube nehmen können! – Doch
 Was Tugend? -- Seine Tugend nicht; sein Name
 Soll überall verbreitet werden; soll
 Die Namen aller guten Menschen schänden,
 Verschlingen. Um den Namen, um den Namen
 Ist ihnen nur zu tun. (Lessing 517)

Sittah's comments are a critique of the essentialist treatment of language prevalent in Christian tradition. The specific object of her criticism is the otherworldly focus of Christianity, a topic often picked up on by Radical Enlightenment philosophical figures, although not Moderate Enlightenment figures. Christianity is argued to have a purely authority-based ethical system: actions are not good because of any ethical standard metaphysically independent of God, they are good because ethicality is determined solely by what God teaches, and not by any external, human standard. Radical Enlightenment philosophers were frequent to point out the illogical nature of this system in the context of Christian morality in both discussions of personal moral behavior and so-called Christian Natural Law. Concerning the justness of moral decrees, Israel writes of the differences between a Spinozist-Baylist conception of justice and a Pufendorffian-Barbeyracian one:

For both Leibniz and Bayle argue that if God proclaims our moral categories by his will alone, without these corresponding to universal principles which are metaphysically independent of God, then the 'voluntarist' cannot explain why God should be praised for being 'just' or benevolent. Natural Law voluntarism inevitably blurs our concept of justice also in other ways since anyone adhering to dictates of fairness and equity in accordance with Pufendorf's theory may be said to do so only because he or she fears a superior power, or sees these as God's commands, and not through awareness of their justness. Equally, such a theory can never guarantee that God's will, seen as the foundation of Natural Law, commands us to do what is, of itself, inherently and eternally just... If God has reasons other than his power over us for decreeing moral rules, and endorsing princely legislation, then there must be some independent source of moral truth. But if there is such an independent moral truth, it remains unclear why God's Will is what makes an action morally good or bad. 'Justice does not depend upon

arbitrary laws of superiors', held Leibniz, 'but on the eternal rules of wisdom and of goodness, in men as well as in God'²². (Israel, 2006, 198-199)

Sittah's criticism of Christianity's nomenclature fetish (God is good is God is good is God is good, therefore God is good...) exposes the confused combination of linguistic determinism and concept realism that flows through Christian Natural Law. Sittah's point about Christians is that they lack a meaningful concept of goodness because their concept of goodness, God's will, fails to establish why God's actions should be considered just because the standard for justness and the object whose justness is in question are identical, whereby the argument is circular and hence fallacious. Leibniz and Bayle argue that Natural Law voluntarism, or any system proclaiming goodness to be equivalent to God's will, is a basic philosophical error because the standard for judging must be independent of the judged item.

IV. Individualism, Identity and Radical Enlightenment in *Nathan*

An emphasis on individual identity and responsibility is a significant impulse of the Enlightenment, and Lessing addresses this topic at various points in *Nathan*, but particularly toward the end, when the series of revelations about the interconnectedness of the main figures is being revealed.

Tempelherr: Der Aberglaub', in dem wir aufgewachsen,
Verliert, auch wenn wir ihn erkennen, darum
Doch seine Macht nicht über uns. – Es sind
Nicht alle frei, die ihrer Ketten spotten. (Lessing 586)

The Tempelherr walks a line between social determinism and individualistic self-determination. Humans are socially determined to the extent to which their formative influences continue to exert power over them in some form, and yet a possibility for some freedom is permitted in the statement "es sind nicht alle frei". If "not all are free," it follows that at least some can be free,

²² Embedded Quote From: G.W. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, trans. E.M. Huggard, ed. A. Farrer. LaSalle, IL; Open Court Publishing, 1985: 241-43.

which in turn implies that a non-zero amount of human agency and freedom can exist in the world. The Tempelherr's purpose is not, however, to assert determinism in a manner furthering the Enlightenment's general social goals, but rather to accomplish the contrary: he wishes to maintain that Nathan is guilty of a crime of sorts against Christendom even after he and Saladin have established that Nathan seems to be a man of impeccable moral character. The Tempelherr therefore invokes determinism, a position prominent to the Radical Enlightenment of Spinoza (but not the Moderate Enlightenment of Descartes), whereby he seems to be dispassionately essaying facts that even subversive philosophes must agree with, and not furthering his own regressive, anti-Enlightenment social goals.

Concerning determinism, Israel writes of Spinoza:

Whatever has been 'determined by God to produce an effect', he argues, 'cannot render itself undetermined' (I, Prop. XXVII). From this he infers that every individual thing which is finite 'can neither exist, nor be determined, to produce an effect unless it is determined by another cause' which, also being finite and determined, must in turn be determined by another cause similarly finite and determined, and so on to infinity. Hence, it follows logically that 'in nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way' (I Prop. XXIX). Hence also the chain of necessity is infinite, and infinitely complex, and only partially knowable through human science, not because elements of the chain are conceptually beyond the reach of human reason but because science cannot empirically take account of the whole of such a sequence. (Israel, 2001, 231)

This account of Spinoza's determinism emphasizes that he maintains his strict monism while underscoring humanity's limited capacity to assess what it is that has been determined. This preserves space for a compatibilist view of human freedom, i.e. a universe in which everything is determined but wherein "freedom" can exist. Prominent compatibilist philosopher Daniel Dennett argues that treating people as if they possess freedom is very often a good predictor of

results, whereby the assumption gains scientific validity; he calls this position “the intentional stance”²³:

Here is how it works: first you decide to treat the object whose behavior is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs that agent ought to have, given its place in the world and its purpose. Then you figure out what desires it ought to have, on the same considerations, and finally you predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs. A little practical reasoning from the chosen set of beliefs and desires will in many – but not all – instances yield a decision about what the agent ought to do; that is what you predict the agent *will* do. (Dennett 17)

The intentional stance competes, of course, with many variations of free will libertarianism, as well as with other theories within behavior attribution, such as “the design stance,” and “the physical stance.” (Dennett, 16-17) Although none of these “stances” necessarily exclude one another, certain ones are emphasized as being more correct by virtue of being better explainers of behavior. For example, the physical stance can often be an unnecessary *reductio ad absurdum* of phenomena better explained at a macromolecular or system-level, while at other times it serves as a complement. Both the physical and intentional stance firmly operate within the general realm of determinism (be it “hard” or “soft” determinism), while the design stance is (and was) more likely to be adopted by religious and Moderate thinkers, such as the physico-theologians (Newton, among other) of whom Israel writes (Israel, 2006, 201). Irrespective of the heavily disputed gray areas between these stances in modern academic discussion, it seems logical to associate Dennett’s intentional stance with Spinoza’s variety of free will compatibilism (as clarified elsewhere).

Spinoza, therefore, assumes the intentional stance. Dennett argues that Spinoza emphasizes in *Ethics* that man does not know the causes of his conduct, whereby the appearance of “genuine freedom” comes about.²⁴ Israel writes further of this:

²³Daniel Dennett, *The Intentional Stance*, Cambridge, MA; MIT Press, 1987: 17.

Since nothing is contingent, men too are determined in their conduct. That men suppose themselves to be free Spinoza ascribes to their consciousness of their desires and appetites while failing to perceive ‘those causes by which they are disposed to wanting and willing, being ignorant of those causes’²⁵. (Israel, 2001, 232)

It is important to Spinoza in the intellectual climate of the 17th century to emphasize that everything, ultimately, is determined, but at the same time, the causes of behaviors are so complex, being similarly caused by other complex causes, that many of these causes cannot be ascertained with any certainty, and it continues to be logical and reliable to treat humans as if they possess some amount of freedom in their decision-making. Spinoza’s reference to humans not understanding their drives is a monistic point: because mind and body are one, the mind is not inherently outside the body (or outside of itself), and hence it cannot gain perspective on its own workings.

Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between theory of mind, i.e. Spinozism, Cartesianism and Aristotelianism, and position on free will held by the differing general ideological camps of the Enlightenment as argued by Jonathan Israel. These general correlations, as might be expected, are between Spinozism/compatibilism/Radical Enlightenment and Cartesianism/free will libertarianism/Moderate Enlightenment. Free will/determinism was a significant topic of discussion in the Enlightenment; its conclusions often served as the philosophical justification for positions on politics, theory of mind, religion and nature. Generally, for example, assertions of determinism were used to bolster democracy as a political position, as well as anti-aristocracy. The rationale is simple: if people are made into what they are by society, it becomes unethical to justify their social subordination to the aristocracy

²⁴ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics, Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. Edwin Curley, 1 vol. so far, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1985.

²⁵ Embedded Quote From: Benedict de (Baruch) Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. Edwin Curley. 1 vol. so far, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1985: 440.

because they are in no way responsible for how they are, and because no absolute or divine justification of this arbitrary condition is possible in the absence of divine justifications (which were excluded from monistic, deterministic systems, such as that of Spinoza).

Lessing also did not view determinism as bad, as evidenced by a frequently quoted passage:

Tugend und Laster so erklärt, Belohnung und Strafe hierauf eingeschränkt: was verlieren wir, wenn man uns die Freiheit abspricht? Etwas – wenn es etwas ist – was wir nicht brauchen, was wir weder zu unserer Thätigkeit hier, noch zu unserer Glückseligkeit dort brauchen. Etwas, dessen Besitz weit unruhiger und besorgter machen müßte, als das Gefühl seines Gegentheils nimmermehr machen kann. – Zwang und Notwendigkeit, nach welchen die Vorstellung des Besten wirkt, wie viel willkommener sind sie mir als kahle Vermögenheit, unter den nehmlichen Umständen bald so, bald anders handeln zu können! Ich danke dem Schöpfer, daß ich muß; das Beste muß. Wenn ich in diesen Schranken selbst so viele Fehlritte noch thue: was würde geschehen, wenn ich mir ganz allein überlassen wäre? Einer blinden Kraft überlassen wäre, die sich nach keinen Gesetzen richtet, und mich darum nicht minder dem Zufalle unterwirft, weil dieser Zufall sein Spiel in mir selbst hat.²⁶

Lessing's argument here is a pragmatic argument. He is establishing that pure free will is not as desirable a thing as is assumed because pure free will would not follow strictly determined rules, whereby the dreaded "randomness" is merely displaced from something external to man (determinism) to something internal to him (free will) with the added setback that man becomes more responsible, and hence more culpable. Via this line of argumentation, then, free will is not even desirable, which should preclude its supposed desirability injecting so much emotion into the factual discussion.

Others, such as Locke and Descartes, embody the Moderate Enlightenment/free will side of the paradigm. Although Lockean empiricism and Cartesianism are often at odds (Israel writes of "empiricism as a philosophical antidote to Cartesianism, *Malebranchisme*, and the Radical

²⁶ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Über die Freiheit*, Gotthold Ephraim Lessings sämtliche Schriften, ed. Karl Lachmann, vol. 12. Stuttgart; G.J. Göschen, 1867: 298.

Enlightenment” Israel, 2001, 479), they are both united in their opposition to Spinozism. The empiricists opposed Cartesianism often not only because of their preference for experimentation over deduction, but also because they thought excessive mechanistic thinking likely to lead toward Spinozism, with which several prominent Cartesians wrestled, even if they publicly projected certainty about the intellectual and moral shortcomings of Spinozism (Israel, 2001, 478-479). Cartesianism posits a duality of mind and body, mind being the seat of the soul and undetermined by physical laws, body being physical matter subject to physical laws.

Cartesianism occupies a middle position between the wholly undetermined universe of Aristotle and the ultimately (i.e. at a molecular level) determined universe of Spinoza, and it is clear that this middle ground permitted one to be scientifically sound via the cession of mechanism to the physical world while also in harmony with religion and traditional opinion via the preservation of a space for the mysterious workings of God. Descartes himself published several defenses of the existence of God, and prominent empiricists like Locke and Newton were also deeply concerned with preserving a space for religion, almost as if they themselves realized their position sat on a bit of a slippery slope.

Lessing walks a careful line, couching his arguments in Moderate terminology in many of his theological writings, but one can reasonably take his consistent undermining of the bedrock of many Cartesian and empiricist positions on free will and religion as implicitly presenting Spinozist positions as not subject to said criticisms, which is also consistent with Lessing’s way of presenting his arguments elsewhere. For example, in the so-called *Fragmentenstreit* with Johann Melchior Goeze, Lessing actively attacks Goeze’s positions on issues ranging from free

will to the importance of the Bible (*Buchstabe*) for the Christian tradition (*Geist*) to theodicy.²⁷

Klaus Bohnen compellingly argues that Lessing is working chiefly to avoid Lutheran orthodoxy, which is precisely what Goeze argues for, as represented in this concluding line from Bohnen:

Die “natürliche Welt” des *Nathan* wird in die “wirkliche Welt” der Patriarchen – und der Goezes – eingelagert, als Antriebskraft, Auftrag und ‘konkrete Hoffnung’. Ohne sie bliebe nur Verzweiflung, aber diese wäre für Lessing ein ebensolcher “salto morale” wie der “Sprung” in den Glauben der lutherischen Orthodoxie (Bohnen 195).

Lessing, therefore, is not explicitly discrediting religion on the whole, but rather he is discrediting any positive claims made by rationalist theologians like Goeze as they are made. What follows from this, as well as from the overarching message of *Nathan*, is that there is no way, rationally or empirically, to establish as a general truth anything akin to religious doctrine; this is why Lessing, in both his theological writings and in *Nathan*, goes to great lengths to explicate the contingency of all knowledge and truth. He need not explicitly state that such a position discredits religion because it is apparent; apparent enough that his opponents saw his work for what it is and took pains to refute him, or even censor him.

Bohnen writes of Lessing’s method of argumentation:

Steht für Goeze Wahrheitssicherung im Zeichen eines Erklärungszwangs des Unerklärlichen, so ist für Lessing die Wahrheitsfrage eine ‘Standort-bedingte’ *Erklärungsbedürftigkeit des Unaufgeklärten*. Dies ist der Impuls für seine “Fechterstreiche” in theologics, aber dies ist auch die Ursache für das Gespenstische eines Scheingefechts, in dem die unbegriffenen Prämissen sich in Sacherläuterungen verhüllen. (Bohnen 189)

Lessing’s involvement in theological disputes with Goeze and others, as well as the conclusions of the Ring Parable in *Nathan*, are simply proxy wars on the real epistemological and ethical points Lessing wishes to make. Similarly, Lessing’s points about free will and determinism also

²⁷ Klaus Bohnen, *Leidens-Bewältigungen. Der Lessing-Goeze Disput im Horizont der Hermeneutik von ‘Geist’ und ‘Buchstabe’*, ed. Heimo Reinitzer and Walter Sparn. Wiesbaden, Germany: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1989: 179-199.

fit into the general worldview that proceeds from his various writings, a world view which is best described as that of a “practical atheist.” God, divine providence, the supernatural, the afterlife and any of many other cornerstone doctrines of Christianity are regularly refuted by Lessing, which leaves them “practically useless” as concepts informing human actions in his worldview.

V. Conclusion

Nathan der Weise contains a wealth of content essaying many points about the intellectual history of the Enlightenment as described by Jonathan Israel. The topics of religion, epistemology, ethics, tolerance and identity all receive treatment in the play, and all of these topics are also of great importance to the philosophical history of the Enlightenment. Due to pragmatic concerns stemming from Lessing’s position as a public figure, his theoretical writings, where issues were discussed directly, are more moderate in tone than his literary writings, where more radical notions could be subtly embedded in allegory and moderate language. Furthermore, and most importantly for this dissertation, the major ideological lines sketched by Jonathan Israel in his *Radical Enlightenment* works are validated by an examination of the contents of these individual debates in *Nathan der Weise*.

Nathan der Weise contains discussion of tolerance, and the doctrine of tolerance advocated by the “role model” of the play, Nathan, is one closest to Spinoza’s doctrine of freedom of thought and expression. Locke’s more conservative freedom of religion (within Christendom, some restrictions applying) is also present in the play, but it is one that is advocated by the Templar, whose same position is ultimately demonstrated to be in error by the end of the play. The competing understandings of tolerance as presented by the Templar (when he speaks with Saladin about the trustworthiness of Jews, and elsewhere) and Nathan (in many places) parallels the competing Moderate Enlightenment freedom of religion of Locke and the

Radical Enlightenment freedom of thought and expression of Spinoza. In this way, Lessing endorses Spinoza's more radical notion of tolerance, and the presence of these nuanced positions is evidence of Jonathan Israel's claim that Moderate and Radical impulses competed within the general movement of the Enlightenment (rather than there being "only one Enlightenment", as Peter Gay writes²⁸).

Additionally, while *Nathan der Weise* is often considered to be primarily about tolerance, it also contains a large amount of discussion on the philosophical status of knowledge, i.e. epistemology. The most famous passage from *Nathan*, the Ring Parable, establishes the non-absolute, contingent and historical nature of knowledge (although other philosophical points proceed from it). The Parable allegorically establishes that truth is subjective, i.e. determined by factors internal to humans (whether the criteria be consensus, coherence, or any other notion of truth put forth by philosophers) rather than by factors external to humans. Furthermore, the Parable directly addresses some of the implications of truth being subjective: knowledge is historical and contingent. The theoretical and practical non-absolutist epistemology of Nathan is contrasted with the Templar's more Lockean epistemology: for the Templar, it may well be that one cannot prove the correctness of one religious sect's claims over another, but it remains true that an absolute truth exists on this question, whether this claim can be proven by faulty human senses or not. (*Nathan* addresses value and truth questions in a non-absolute manner; it does not go to extremes such as denying the objective existence of the physical universe independent of human perception and description.) Israel's Radical-Moderate distinction, then, is evidenced on the point of epistemology in *Nathan der Weise* as well.

On ethics, *Nathan* at times makes arguments that religious belief not only rests on a historical, highly tenuous knowledge claims, but that it is also harmful to society and the

²⁸ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism*, New York; Random House, 1966: 3.

believer, whereby it becomes unethical in the general thisworldly, utilitarian framework asserted elsewhere in the work. Daja, among other characters, argues against Nathan's assertion that religious belief is harmful by arguing that it can be good by providing comfort and meaning to people who would otherwise languish in the lack of absolute meaning in human behaviors (and existence itself). Daja represents the more Moderate position accommodating space for religion, or granting that it can be beneficial under circumstances, and in this manner *Nathan* evidences the Radical-Moderate distinction made by Israel. The positions on all other philosophical questions (such as tolerance and identity) can be reasonably construed as indirect arguments about what constitutes ethical behavior in various other areas.

Specifically on the topic of religion, *Nathan's* final argument is ultimately an argument both for the specific historical relationship of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, as well as for the three religions' equally inadequate knowledge claims. Nathan argues that belief in supernatural deities or supernatural systems of reward and punishment are not necessary for humans to function well on an individual or societal level (indeed, that said belief is harmful). Perhaps most markedly, the historical relationship between the Abrahamic religions is an argument for universalism: if one goes back far enough, the adherents of the Abrahamic religions are related, and if one goes back yet further, we are all related. Other points on religion are covered in great depth in the work's coverage of epistemology, ethics, tolerance and identity.

On the topic of identity, *Nathan* argues for a focus on the autonomy of the individual, and he actively argues against drawing judgments about individuals based on their belonging to abstract "groups." This Radical position is seen in Nathan's statement that he knows all nations possess good and bad people, among other places. The Moderate position is seen, again, in the Templar's view on identity. The Templar argues with the Cloister Brother that Nathan, a Jew,

cannot be trusted to raise Recha a Christian, despite the reported experience that Nathan is a man of impeccable character. The Templar replies with the Moderate position that “people cannot escape their upbringing, even if they have rejected it”: a socially deterministic position that runs counter to the Radical emphasis on individuality and human rationality. The desire to argue that people’s positions normatively proceed from one abstraction another, be it their sex, gender, or social class, is a Moderate position that runs counter to the Radical, descriptive argument for individuality and self-determination, and in this manner *Nathan* is also able to touch on this topic that continues to be a main ideological line in the sand among academics as well as in society.

Nathan der Weise is a work of the late Enlightenment, which evidences the fact that the philosophical history of the Enlightenment was not “one Enlightenment,” but rather an interplay of Moderate and Radical elements that both sought to further the general Enlightenment banner of reason to differing degrees, and which both stood in conflict to the Counter-Enlightenment goal of preserving or expanding the role of faith in society and restricting that of reason. *Nathan der Weise* provides much evidence on various topics that shows how Jonathan Israel’s Radical-Moderate distinction is an accurate and historical correction of what the Enlightenment was and did, and this evidence takes the form of dialogue between characters that carry out real-world debates. Surely *Nathan* deserves to be reevaluated for its implications on philosophical history by the general scholarly community, and a great bounty of insights can be won by viewing the work through groundbreaking, fundamental reassessments of primary materials such as that of Jonathan Israel.

DIE RÄUBER, SCHILLER
CHAPTER 2

I. Introduction — Jonathan Israel and Enlightenment Debates on Politics

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Western civilization was in a state of political transition. This transition, assisted by other major transitions in the areas of religion, economics, science and philosophy generally, led to the creation of a large and diverse body of political literature, and this learned discourse eventually filtered down into the general population, bringing about republican states in Western Europe and in the Americas. Looking back from the present, it is easy to see the political philosophy of the Enlightenment as being split into a simple dichotomy between a philosophy in favor of monarchy and church influence in government on the one hand and a philosophy in favor of democracy and the relegation of religious matters to the private sphere on the other.

Jonathan Israel's works *Radical Enlightenment*, *Enlightenment Contested*, *A Revolution of the Mind*, and *Democratic Enlightenment* question that simple dichotomy, a dichotomy which one, by the way, quickly finds to be a more or less entrenched historiographical pattern. The most prominent recent reading of the intellectual history of the Enlightenment before Israel, Peter Gay's 1966 *The Enlightenment, Vol. 1: The Rise of Modern Paganism*, insists at its very beginning that: "There were many philosophers, but there was only one Enlightenment."²⁹ But a reading of Gay's own extensive treatment of such philosophers as Voltaire, Holbach, Rousseau and Diderot seems to impress upon the reader the significant disunity in those thinkers' writings. Gay's primary distinction between *mythic* and *critical* thinking throughout all of history does indeed put forward a new way to view the eternal gridlock between the forces of conservatism and progressivism; but it does not seem satisfactory as a primary philosophical difference when

²⁹ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism*, New York; Random House, 1966: 3.

it comes to a period so fraught with diversity as the Enlightenment (and I suspect this holds true for other periods as well). Israel's foundational deliberations add one more layer of complexity to the intellectual history of this period: he adds the distinction between Radical and Moderate Enlightenment, and he maintains the existence of an Anti-Enlightenment as a third general stream. Israel's tripartite system is doubtlessly also an imperfect reflection of a more complex reality, but if one wishes to speak systematically about anything (and there are reasons to wish to do this; one cannot possibly describe exhaustively every instance and permutation of behavior in history, and even if one could, one would have nothing but an enormous jumble of data), one can strive for a system that has the ideal balance of the simplicity and understandability of systems and the descriptiveness of a sociohistorical approach, i.e. the golden zone between a purely rationalist and a purely empiricist approach.

If one accepts Israel's approach, as I will here, the question becomes: what new distinctions is he making with respect to the political thinking of the Enlightenment? Israel makes his Moderate and Radical Enlightenment distinction again, whereby a belief in representative democracy, i.e. republicanism, corresponds to the Radical position, while a position alternately in favor of either pure democracy or mixed monarchy corresponds to the Moderate position. Pure democracy is a system of government in which all citizens directly vote on all questions that a legislative body of representatives would in a representative democracy. Furthermore, one finds a surprisingly strong positive correlation between belief in representative democracy and agnostic atheism (Radical Enlightenment), as well as between a belief in pure democracy or mixed monarchy and a reformed Christianity that should still exercise significant social and governmental influence. I will first give attention to the designation of pure democracy as Moderate, as this may seem more surprising to the reader.

There is good reason to draw a significant distinction between pure and representative democracy, as it did lead to a massive argument that is one of the clearest manifestations of disunity within the general "Enlightenment" movement: the dispute over the *Encyclopédie* between Rousseau and Diderot. Israel writes:

But in the late 1740s and during the first phase of the war of the *Encyclopédie*, down to 1752, Rousseau, shy, less articulate, and less developed intellectually than his slightly younger comrade, bottled up his steadily growing worries and doubts and let himself be swept along, in Diderot's wake, *en route*, that is, to materialism, philosophical atheism, and Spinozism. Undoubtedly, this long-bottled-up reluctance helped prepare the ground for the subsequent violent quarrel between the two men, and the sharpness of the later ideological break between Rousseau and the *encyclopédistes*, a group to which, until the early 1750s, he certainly belonged. This was also the reason Rousseau was later accused of blatant hypocrisy, and abjuring his own earlier views, in denouncing the *encyclopédistes* as 'atheistic' and their books as even more insidious and dangerous than the 'rêveries' 'des Hobbes et des Spinoza'.³⁰

Much of Rousseau's ire with the *encyclopédistes*, then, was strongly directed at their atheism and materialism, but it was not limited to this. Indeed, even some thinkers who contributed to the *Encyclopédie* but registered their disapproval of the irreligious argumentation of some articles in it, like d'Alembert (initially a co-editor until his blunderous article on "Geneva" caused him to withdraw from the endeavor entirely³¹), were dismayed by the stance on religion in the text, and the impact they perceived this irreligion having on the rest of the views stated, praising the enemies of Diderot, Bacon, Locke and Newton, and writing: "...rien ne nous est donc plus nécessaire qu'une religion révélée."³²

In the latter half of the 1750s, Rousseau became increasingly isolated socially, which was most immediately manifested in the public collapse of his friendship with Diderot; Rousseau also

³⁰ Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (Oxford University Press; Oxford, 2006) 843. Embedded Quote From: Raymond Trousson, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Paris; University of Paris Sorbonne Press, 2003: 200-1.

³¹ Philipp Blom, *A Wicked Company*, New York; Basic Books, 2010: 125.

³² Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2001: 711.

became alienated from those materialist thinkers at Holbach's and Helvétius' salons (Blom 114). It is unclear if this is because his later, anti-social thinking had already developed and compelled him to create distance between himself and his friends, if the collapse of his social world led to his anti-social philosophy, or if some interplay of personal and philosophical change was at work. Regardless, there was a consistency in the late Rousseau's life between his views on society as a whole and how he structured his personal life.

Rousseau's later philosophy, the one for which he is best known, is a philosophy that strongly rejects society as a corruptor of humanity's morals, authenticity and happiness. Rousseau supports fierce individualism, which politically favors less governance on all fronts. Furthermore, Rousseau believed that a government of elected representatives was not a true democracy, as one could not ensure that elected officials carried out the word of those they purport to represent. For this reason, Rousseau supported pure democracy, wherein citizens all individually voice their opinions on those few issues that should require any governmental consideration. I discuss Rousseau further in Chapter 3 on pages 108-112.

Diderot was essentially the anti-Rousseau. Diderot supported representative democracy, believed it was possible for man's natural rights to be preserved within the state, and was a materialist. The fallout between Diderot and Rousseau during the *encyclopédie* time is emblematic of the sharpening of tensions between Radical and Moderate Enlightenment in post-*encyclopédie*, pre-revolution France and Europe (because Diderot and Rousseau were both widely read and discussed throughout Europe, as evidenced by substantial portions of Jonathan Israel's project).

II. Politics and *Die Räuber*

Die Räuber, despite being written by a man often regarded by posterity, and particularly by the 19th Century, as a guardian of traditional Germanic values, is rife with controversial political ideas. *Die Räuber* is cleverly set up such that the behavior of the three main characters, Karl, Franz, and their father, the king, represent the three general ideological bents of the 18th Century: Radical Enlightenment, Moderate Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment respectively. Schiller was in a good position, historically and within his own life's course, to comment on these changes.

The phases of Schiller's personal life are reflected in the phases of Karl von Moor's personal life. As a young man, Schiller had been very religious, and he aspired to become a preacher. He was known to practice giving fiery sermons to his family or even in public squares, and he wrote a number of very emotionally rich religious poems.³³ One can see this time of religious fervency as equivalent to the Counter-Enlightenment, i.e. an embrace of mystery and the supernatural. Schiller's devout phase is reflected in Karl in Act Three, Scene Two, when Karl is speaking with his fellow robbers in a "Gegend an der Donau":

MOOR: Da ich noch ein Bube war – wars mein Lieblingsgedanke wie sie zu leben, zu sterben wie sie – *mit verbißnem Schmerz*. Es war ein Bubengedanke!...Es war eine Zeit wo ich nicht schlafen konnte, wenn ich mein Nachtgebet vergessen hatte - ...daß alles so glücklich ist, durch den Geist des Friedens alles so verschwistert! - die ganze Welt Eine Familie und ein Vater dort oben...*mit Wehmut*: daß ich wiederkehren dürfte in meiner Mutterleib! (Schiller 97-98)

Schiller's (and Karl's) reaction is wistfulness for the simplicity and emotional satisfaction of a world in which the absolute truth and moral dictates of Christianity hold true. But it is no more than wistfulness for lost innocence, and the impossibility and undesirability (because untrue and

³³ Rüdiger Safranski, *Friedrich Schiller oder Die Erfindung des Deutschen Idealismus*, Munich; Carl Hanser Verlag, 2004: 30-31.

untenable with education and adult consideration) of a return to it is emphasized: Karl refers to it even within his reflections as wishful thinking, his *Lieblingsgedanke*, and childish thinking, a *Bubengedanke*.

Next, Schiller attended the highly strict Karl Eugen military academy, where he eventually pursued and obtained a doctorate in medicine (after his first two dissertations were rejected by the faculty). One can see this time as an attempt to accommodate to a combination of conservative values of subservience and absolutism as the Moderate Enlightenment. And lastly, Schiller's intellectual development toward the end of his education and thereafter is like the Radical Enlightenment: Schiller implicitly endorses republican and non-traditional, deistic theological ideas in this time. Toward this end he was greatly influenced by a reform-minded young teacher named Jakob Friedrich Abel he met at the Karl Eugen military academy. Abel was filled with largely Rousseau-inspired ideas of reform pedagogy. He believed that the teacher's primary purpose is to spark curiosity and encourage students to cultivate their individual talents. He thought that: "Das Selbstdenken, nicht das bloße Memorieren sollte geübt werden." (Safranski 46) He is also responsible for exposing Schiller to literature, and later piquing his interest in philosophy and thereby enabling him to appreciate literature as a means to better understand the human condition (through philosophy) (Safranski 61). It was through Abel that Schiller was first exposed to radical ideas, such as those of Helvétius and d'Holbach, whom Abel had read alongside his traditional theological training (Safranski 45). Walter Hinderer also writes of Abel's influence on Schiller and encouragement of critical thinking, as well as the radical thinkers to which he exposed Schiller and others:

In the first paragraph of the second chapter of his dissertation³⁴, Abel, Schiller's favorite teacher, detaches himself from metaphysical prejudices and underscores the corporeality of the soul.³⁵

Abel introduced Schiller to radical ideas at an early age and in a manner encouraging free consideration of all viewpoints, which was a part of Schiller's transition to more radical ways of thinking.

Coincidentally, this is also the time in which Schiller began writing *Die Räuber*. By the beginning of his literary career, Schiller had spent a lot of time ruminating on, and at times even subscribing to, each of the ideological directions mentioned above. By virtue of this, he was in a good position to write a play about the consequences of their coming into contact, which by allegorical extension was a prediction for society and history at large. By the year of its publication, 1774, *Die Räuber* presented opinions that summarize the developed thinking of each side when the Enlightenment was nearly over.

The figures of Karl, Franz and their father have been interpreted as being more or less radical throughout *Die Räuber's* reception history, depending on the ideological goals of the times and interpreters. But how much of an idealist is Karl, and how much of a true materialist was Franz, in the sense of La Mettrie's *L'homme machine* (with which Schiller was familiar)? An analysis using Israel's *Radical Enlightenment* works may lend insights into the positions of these characters on metaphysical and political questions.

A quick analysis of the primary political actions of Franz and Karl in the play reveals that each has conflicting goals and opinions, and that explicit knowledge of the ideological motives informing their various decisions is not given to the reader. Karl, rejected by the absolutist

³⁴ Jacob Friedrich von Abel, *De phaenomenis sympathiae in corpore animali conspicuis dissertatio*, diss. Stuttgart, 1779.

³⁵ Walter Hinderer, "Schiller's Philosophical Aesthetics in Anthropological Perspective," *A Companion to the Works of Friedrich Schiller*, ed. Steven D. Martinson. Rochester, NY; Camden House, 2005: 32.

establishment he stood in line to control, becomes the leader of a band of robbers in the forests of Bohemia. Karl uses this position to redistribute wealth forcefully from the haves to the have-nots; in this process, the robbers go so far as to plunder monasteries and burn civilians in villages. In the end, the violent excesses and intrigues of his fellow robbers repulse Karl, and Karl seeks reconciliation with his father despite the strong language of the repudiation he received. Even after a fairly simple reading, Karl appears a complex character, with conflicting goals and ideals.

Franz seeks to obtain absolutist power by convincing his father to disown his first-born son, Karl, and he maintains a series of fabrications in order to achieve this goal. Franz is embittered by the system, which arbitrarily disadvantages him because he is second-born, and yet he does not consider working outside this system. Indeed, Franz states at the end of Act One, Scene One: "Das Recht wohnt beim Überwältiger, und die Schranken unserer Kraft sind unsere Gesetze."³⁶ Franz's statement of pure Social Darwinism does not seek in any way to subvert the existing rules, it affirms the framework implicitly and underwrites all activities that can be done.

Franz's "might is right" sentiment is reflected in Leibniz's optimism: everything that happens happens in accordance with God's will, and because God is perfect, everything that happens is necessary and perfect. This position, upholding that which is as right, is defining of a form of conservatism, although the universalistic language in which Leibniz expressed it had many Moderate political aims; nonetheless, it is certainly not a position that can be called "radical," which makes Franz's political ideology moderate at best. Furthermore, Franz's practical ideology is best described as moderate; he ruthlessly does everything he can that is within the societal rules (or for which he may not be caught), but he does not abide private

³⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber: Ein Schauspiel, Friedrich Schiller Werke und Briefe*, Band 2, ed. Gerhard Kluge. Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988: 28.

religious moral prohibitions that would have forestalled nearly all of his deception of Der Alte Moor.

Still, Franz's views on religion and politics beg of a more in-depth analysis, and there is no better place to begin than Franz's monologue at the end of Act One, Scene One. At the beginning of Franz's monologue, he bemoans the injustices that nature has bestowed upon him: his not being the first and only born child, his ugliness, his being "von allen Menschensorten das Scheußliche auf einen Haufen geworfen" (Schiller 28). Prefacing this litany of complaints, however, is Franz's statement: "Ich habe große Rechte, über die Natur ungehalten zu sein, und bei meiner Ehre! ich will sie geltend machen." (Schiller 28) Franz's indignation (ungehalten sein) at nature is directed at the various genetic and social disadvantages he inherited that are beyond his control, but his statement that he will bring nature to bear (geltend machen) concerns his belief that nature implicitly gives him license to exploit the weak for his personal gain. Franz is grateful to nature that it gives him the ability to be right because of might when he says:

Nein! Nein! Ich tu ihr Unrecht. Gab sie uns doch Erfindungs-Geist mit,
setzte uns nackt und armselig ans Ufer dieses großen Ozeans Welt - Schwimme,
wer schwimmen kann, und wer zu plump ist geh unter! (Schiller 28)

Franz's belief in an *Erfindungsgeist*, an ability of some to create freely of themselves (as understood under the *Genie-Begriff* of the 18th Century), suggests strongly that he is a free will libertarian, and by extension, a Cartesian or Aristotelian on the mind/body question.

Cartesianism and free will libertarianism both posit a nebulously undetermined sphere of the mind for which no one but the person himself, the homunculus within the Cartesian theater, can be held responsible.

After writing about how Regius thought Cartesianism was not safe on the question of free will given that God creates *regulas necessarias*, which he then necessarily must follow, whereby

God is no longer free and Cartesianism becomes blasphemous³⁷, Israel writes of another problem of Cartesianism:

Nor is Descartes at all safe on the mind-body nexus. He asserts that God is the sole possible author of the mind-body junction yet has endless difficulties with this baffling proposition. Nowhere, for instance, does Descartes explain what exactly this link is and how apparent reactions and interaction between them can arise simultaneously and connectedly. (Israel, 2001, 484)

He later writes that the delicate balance between mind and body enshrined in Cartesianism naturally led many to resolve these tensions by embracing one-substance doctrine, and hence Spinozism (Israel, 2001, 484).

Free will libertarianism similarly has difficulty navigating the gray area between autonomous individuality and determinism. Daniel Dennett describes this problem in his work “Freedom Evolves” in a section entitled “If you make yourself really small, you can externalize virtually everything”:

This retreat of the Self into a walled enclave within which all the serious work of authorship has to be done parallels another retreat into the center of the brain, the various misbegotten lines of argument and reflection that lead to what I call the Cartesian Theater, the imaginary place in the center of the brain “where it all comes together” for consciousness. *There is no such place...* He [Robert Kane] wants above all for the decision to be “up to you,” but if the decision is undetermined – the defining requirement of libertarianism – it isn’t determined by you, whatever you are, because it isn’t determined by anything. Whatever you are, you can’t *influence* the undetermined event – the whole point of quantum indeterminacy is that such quantum events are not influenced by anything – so you will somehow have to *co-opt* it or *join forces* with it, putting it to use in some intimate way, an *objet trouvé* that you meaningfully incorporate into *your* decision-making in some fashion. But in order to do this, there has to be more to you than just some mathematical point; you have to *be someone*; you have to have parts – memories, plans, beliefs, and desires – that you’ve acquired along the way. And then all those casual influences from the past, from outside, come crowding back in, contaminating the workshop, preempting your creativity, usurping control of your decision-making. A serious quandary.³⁸

³⁷ Johannes Regius, *Cartesius versus Spinozismi architectus*, Franeker, 1719: 147-51.

³⁸ Daniel Dennett, *Freedom Evolves*, New York; Penguin Books, 2003: 123.

Both the two-substance doctrine of Cartesianism as well as present-day free will libertarianism regress to the boundary problem of defining the site at which free choices are made (or a soul exists unaffected by the surrounding material world), as well as how the two substances can interact. The same *reductio ad absurdum* underlies the doctrines of the Final Cause, the First Cause, and the Prime Mover. Spinoza acknowledged that a lack of Final Causes or a Prime Mover made his system circular (since he could not explain how it came into being); in fact, Spinoza viewed his system's circularity on the question of truth as a strength; any system with a fixed truth in reference to which other truth is verified is a system based on an absolute truth, which is a kind of metaphysics Spinoza and other Radicals dismissed due to its logical inconsistency. Logically, all judgment is performed using standards that are metaphysically independent of the judged object itself. Israel writes of Spinoza's acknowledgment of this circularity:

Hence also the chain of necessity is infinite, and infinitely complex, and only partially knowable through human science, not because elements of the chain are conceptually beyond the reach of human reason but because science cannot empirically take account of the whole of such a sequence. (Israel, 2001, 231)

Observation and reason show that many phenomena of the observable universe regress to chicken-egg problems, and one must accept that circles have no beginning.

Cartesianism and free will libertarianism remove responsibility from socioeconomic and sociohistorical factors that may *determine* a person more likely to think or act one way rather than another, and are ultimately a very conservative political idea: each individual is (presumably equally) the master of his/her own fate, and if (s)he fails to succeed, it is because (s)he failed to innovate and assert mastery over others. An undetermined mind wherein free will reigns is a theological desirability, because without it one must address the morally repugnant notion that man cannot choose to follow God of any sort "own" accord, he would simply be an automaton

predestined to damnation or salvation by a power-crazed God. The moral necessity of free will to maintain conservative notions of personal responsibility by each individual soul is the point at which Franz's theoretical justification for his actions overlaps with the theoretical foundation of most church (i.e. ultraconservative) doctrines, and it exposes the common ground shared by Moderate Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, and in the case of this play, Franz von Moor, with the ideologues of the Counter-Enlightenment, who were almost exclusively in the church.

Franz's Moderate Enlightenment status is cemented by his affinity with John Locke, as seen in the latter part of his statement about creative spirit: "setzte uns nackt und armselig ans Ufer dieses Ozeans Welt". The terms "naked" (nackt) and "paltry/poor" (armselig) immediately evoke Locke's *tabula rasa*. Locke's blank slate idea claims that man is born free of innate ideas, and that all of his ideas are communicated to him via teaching (the transmission of cultural knowledge) and experience (in accordance with Locke's strict belief in empiricism). Although ideas similar to *tabula rasa* were expressed as early as Aristotle and later by Thomas Aquinas, they did not catch on widely until Locke gave them expression in the second chapter ("No Innate Principles in the Mind"³⁹) of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In one very important way, this separates Locke from the misguided notion of the church that man is born innately sinful. Locke's thinking suddenly made cultural institutions drastically more responsible for their interactions with children (and, by extension, adults), and not as much could be written off to the depravity of man. In another important way, however, Locke's complete denial of "innate ideas" quickly becomes dangerous, as it immediately provides justification for all manner of social engineering and indoctrination programs. So while the Church upheld the morally reprehensible notion of man's innate sinfulness, inherited via Original Sin, Locke upheld nothing

³⁹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690, 27th edition. London, 1836: 9-21. Google Book Search.

innate, whereby man isn't really anything and becomes fully perfectable and malleable, a notion equally absurd and morally reprehensible.

Spinozism walks a more careful line between nature and nurture, although it is certainly also susceptible to misinterpretation and misappropriation for immoral ends. I explain on pages 45-48 of Chapter 1 how Spinozism's insistence that everything is "ultimately determined and necessary" is an important intellectual conclusion to acknowledge while one also should maintain the scientifically defensible position of free will compatibilism because of the reliability of the results that can be produced by assuming this stance (known and discussed as "The Intentional Stance"). Spinozism, then, qualifies as the Radical Enlightenment position (both in this line of argumentation as well as historically) because it facilitates acknowledging the roles of nature and nurture in more appropriate places and in a more appropriate balance.

Returning to Locke, an important insight about the relationship between Franz's alleged materialism and his Moderate political thought is won by considering Locke's practice of maintaining two "statuses" for every individual: spiritual and civil. As with mind and body, Locke entirely separates these two spheres, holding them to very different ethical standards. Concerning this, Jonathan Israel writes:

Locke conceives as everyone's responsibility to save his or her soul -- on the one hand, and, on the other, a person's civil status. Locke's more traditional and theological conception of "equality" was framed in such a way as to block the wider social and political role equality plays in the Spinozistic systems. He deemed individuals "spiritually" equal before Christ but not equal in civil status. Hence, Locke speaks of spiritual equality while simultaneously upholding a society of ranks, indeed even slavery...⁴⁰

Again, the spiritual world is a world in which every individual has equal rights and capabilities, but the physical, "real" world can be treated quite oppositely: "schwimme, wer schwimmen kann,

⁴⁰ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 2010: 93.

und wer zu plump ist geh unter!" Dualism provides an intellectual justification for compartmentalization (i.e. the inconsistent application of principles to serve one's own needs and justify one's own advantages and desires).

The next portion of Franz's monologue focuses on what is called Natural Law in philosophical discussions of this time period:

Wohl gibt es gemeinschaftliche Pakta, die man geschlossen hat, die Pulse des Weltzirkels zu treiben. Ehrlicher Name! -- Wahrhaftig eine reichhaltige Münze mit der sich meisterlich schachern läßt, wers versteht, sie gut auszugeben. Gewissen, -- o ja freilich! ein tüchtiger Lumpenmann, Sperlinge von Kirschbäumen wegzuschrecken! -- auch das ein gut geschriebener Wechselbrief mit dem auch der Bankrottierer zur Not noch hinauslangt.

In der Tat, sehr lobenswürdige Anstalten, die Narren im Respekt und den Pöbel unter dem Pantoffel zu halten, damit die Gescheiden es desto bequemer haben. Ohne Anstand, recht schnakische Anstalten! Kommen mir für, wie die Hecken die meine Bauren gar schlau um ihre Felder herumführen, daß ja kein Hase drüber setzt, ja beileibe kein Hase! -- Aber der gnädige Herr gibt seinem Rappen den Sporn, und galoppiert weich über der Weiland Ernte.

Armer Hase! Es ist doch eine jämmerliche Rolle, der Hase sein müssen auf dieser Welt -- Aber der gnädige Herr braucht Hasen! (Schiller 28-29)

Franz lays out much of his political *and* theological views in this extended quotation, and the references to divine providence (der gnädige Herr, which can mean “gentleman” or “dear Lord”) are of particular interest given that scholarship has widely held Franz to be a through-and-through materialist.⁴¹ It is unclear at various points in the play whether Franz wishes to mock organized religion while remaining ultimately a believer (see his conversation with Daniel and Pastor Moser in Act Five, Scene One), whether he wishes to mock organized religion and is an actual atheist (walking on our ancestor's Quote), or if he is such an amoral and inconsistent person that he invokes the authority of religion to validate his claims when it suits him and abjures it when it would forestall his desires.

⁴¹ Gert Sautermeister, “Die Räuber. Ein Schauspiel,” *Schiller Handbuch*. Stuttgart; J.B. Metzler Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2005: 24-26.

At first, one may read Franz's mockery of "Gewissen" (conscience) as that of a materialist deriding religion's negative effects, but it appears more to be an ironic defense of the necessity of religion and the church. Conscience is a "tüchtiger Lumpenmann" (an able blaggard) who is nonetheless very useful because he does the dirty work of the important, powerful people (such as "scaring sparrows from cherry trees" to ensure a strong harvest). "Conscience" is further something for which "the bankrupt man grasps when in distress", and which is also a "well written exchange letter", presumably because it exchanges advantage in natural life for rewards in an afterlife. At this point, Franz's speech still seems like it is the speech of a religious critic who means to imply that this utility of religion is an injustice to those used.

As Franz's monologue progresses, however, one gets the impression that he approves of not just a class system, but of one that he openly acknowledges to be exploitative; this is the point at which Franz no longer seems to be a foe of religion for all people, but a person who finds its existence to be socially necessary in order to uphold society, rank and morality (and primarily a morality that requires deference to political and social authority). By calling the "gemeinschaftliche Pakta" (community pacts) "lobenswürdige Anstalten" (praiseworthy institutions), Franz is by no means praising government regulation because it works toward equal social opportunity for all; he calls them praiseworthy because they keep the "Narren im Respekt" (fools in respect), i.e. they allow the poor and exploited just enough liberty and means to survive, but not enough for them to have sufficient bargaining power to take much away from the "Gescheiden" (the intelligent ones).

The comparison Franz draws at the end of his monologue between the relationship between rich and poor and farmers and rabbits brings his moral approval of this state of affairs to

clear light, albeit with a realistic understanding of the lack of security in earthly life. Franz's approval is seen in his statement that "der Herr braucht Hasen!" (the Lord needs rabbits!), even though being a rabbit is a "jämmerliche Rolle" (miserable role). The observation about the futility of building fences to keep rabbits out is Franz's acknowledgment of the Problem of Evil within the religious paradigm in which he is arguing; even though the rabbits should mind that the fence was installed to keep them in their proper place, they disregard it, causing an apparent disruption of the moral order.

There are many common theological ways of dealing with the Problem of Evil: two more common ones are that God punishes even the devout for their sins (divine retribution) or that hardships represent "trials and tribulations" a believer must withstand in order to put his faith to work and demonstrate his loyalty. It does not matter why Franz invokes the Problem of Evil, but the way it is discussed in Franz's monologue (proclaiming religion socially useful or necessary, drawing a distinction between spiritual and civil status, and in such a way as to declare colossal variation in standards of living, as Locke did) suggests that Franz's political views are closer to that of Moderate Enlightenment figures such as Locke, Montesquieu, Hume, and also, Hobbes (among others).

For Franz, security and stability of society and the status quo are important political values, and they are likewise important anchor points for many Enlightenment political philosophers. As in most cases, the stability and security of what and whom is what differentiates the often pointedly different use of these terms. It seems, however, that Moderate Enlightenment philosophers are more likely to prioritize security and stability. One example of this, as essayed by Israel, is Boulainvilliers, the late 17th and early 18th century French philosopher also known for translating Spinoza's *Ethics* and for using Spinoza's concept of

conatus (self-preservation) as a justification for aristocratic privilege despite his own assertion that all men are equal under the law (Israel, 2006, 281). Israel writes of Boulainvilliers:

Boulainvilliers, then, crucially grants that men are all naturally equal in their share 'de la raison et de l'humanité', but equally adamantly denies one can deduce anything favourable to democracy or republicanism from this, holding that only limited monarchy can effectively guarantee security and personal freedom and, even then, only when access to political offices, and the direction of the state and its armed forces, is confined to nobles.⁴² Forming large, stable monarchies, in his view, is the supreme achievement of human history and a highly complex process which advances only slowly after many prior stages of laborious experience and, as a *sine qua non*, must rest on firmly delineated forms of social hierarchy.⁴³ (Israel, 2006, 282)

Such an angle is typical of other philosophers upholding mixed monarchy and aristocracy (such as Locke, Hume, Montesquieu, and Voltaire): all men are equally capable of reason (a precept accepted by nearly all but the Counter-Enlightenment), but this world is an imperfect one, and certain measures have to be implemented to deal with the pragmatic realities that have been revealed through human history and experience. The general masses live and die in beastly ignorance and cannot be entrusted with a strong say in governance or influence in society. According to this view, even if men may be equal in principle, in practice, they are not. Boulainvilliers's example of this is the conquest of Gaul by the Franks (Israel, 2006, 283). France only enjoys any freedoms because of the superior and refined values of the *noblesse*. In this view, nobles are an effective counterbalance to absolute despotism, as both English and French history demonstrate.

Hobbes is a separate and different political theorist whose thought is best described as Moderate, and his combination of materialism and Moderate political thinking are of interest due to the general scholarly belief that Franz von Moor is a materialist. Hobbes's views on politics

⁴² Embedded Quotes From: Henri de Boulainvilliers, *Essais sur la noblesse de France contenant une dissertation sur son origine et établissement*, ed. J.F. de Tabary. "Amsterdam" [Rouen], 1732: 7.

⁴³ Embedded Quotes From: M.L.C.D.C.D.B. [Monsieur le Comte etc...Boulainvilliers], *Abrégé d'histoire universelle*, vol. 1. La Haye, 1733: 164-6.

and religion do not correspond in the way Jonathan Israel argues they generally do: Hobbes is an atheist (Radical Enlightenment) while supporting absolutism (Moderate Enlightenment or Counter-Enlightenment). Israel then argues that Hobbes's politics were regressive enough that he was unquestionably opposed to the Radical cause:

Rejection of many -- yet not all -- of Hobbes's basic positions in morality, politics, and church government is, indeed, central to the radical tradition of thought. (Israel, 2006, 227)

The "yet not all" clearly applies to Hobbes' atheistic views, an area in which many Radical philosophers confessed to have received inspiration from Hobbes. And yet consideration of Hobbes' sovereign reveals something that bears many similarities to the social functions of religious belief. The sovereign of Hobbes may encourage atheism, but he encourages atheism primarily so that he himself can become like a God whose doctrines hold absolute power over his subjects (similar to the situation in many 20th-century atheistic Socialist states, such as North Korea or Maoist China); God is not removed because the people should not have an opiate, but because the opiate needs to be switched.

Hobbes' sovereign is necessary to maintain peace and stability, and Hobbes' social construct holds that man has no natural rights when considered in the context of society and his ruler; indeed, a critical difference between (Moderate) Hobbes and (Radical) Spinoza is the status of man's natural rights once entering the social contract. In Spinoza, man never loses his natural rights, whereas in Hobbes, natural rights are entirely lost when entering the social contract. On this point, and in a manner very similar to that in Franz's Act One, Scene One monologue, Israel writes of Hobbes:

But precisely because natural equality, in his view, is dangerous, destabilizing, and to be avoided in favour of order and social hierarchy, this potential route to a purely secular and autonomous morality under the state, the path chosen by Spinoza, Bayle, and Diderot, is peremptorily blocked off by Hobbes. For he

reduces the content of natural morality, underpinning the social contract and the rule of positive law, to an absolute minimum with little applicability to political life under the state, coupling a doctrine of the indivisibility of sovereignty closely aligned with that of Bodin to the idea that 'in the act of our submission consisteth both our obligation and our liberty'. In this way, he interposes an absolute divide between ruler and ruled and unsurpassable polarity between natural right and law.⁴⁴ (Israel, 2006, 233)

What Hobbes describes here resembles the sort of social and moral order envisaged by Franz in his monologue. While in the case of Franz it is unclear if his religious beliefs are actually atheistic (it being clear that Hobbes's are), Franz, like Hobbes, upholds an aristocratic and absolutist political order that mocks and disavows religion while advocating an order that is astonishingly similar structurally. Franz's views appear firmly rooted in the Moderate Enlightenment paradigm via his dualistic framework (Locke), his defense of aristocratic privilege (Boulainvilliers, among others), and his belief in the necessity of a political order that functions very similarly to religion, even while presenting theoretical attacks on it (Hobbes).

The remainder of Franz's monologue seems more like a manifesto-style justification of his motives, means and goals in the play. Specifically, it preemptively addresses objections to his deceit of immediate family, his brother and father, but not before offering another contextualization of moral framework within which he is arguing:

Also frisch drüber hinweg! Wer nichts fürchtet ist nicht weniger mächtig als der, den alles fürchtet. Es ist itzo die Mode, Schnallen an den Beinkleidern zu tragen, womit man sie nach Belieben weiter und enger schnürt. Wir wollen uns ein Gewissen nach der neuesten Façon anmessen lassen, um es hübsch weiter aufzuschnallen wie wir zulegen. Was können wir dafür? Geht zum Schneider! (Schiller 29)

Franz's statement that "he who fears nothing is not less strong than he whom everything/everyone fears" is important for further understanding how he justifies his actions and political beliefs. Primarily, this sentiment of selective amorality (perhaps one could call it

⁴⁴ Embedded Quote From: Jean-François Kervégan, "Société civile et droit privé: entre Hobbes et Hegel," *Architectures de la raison*, ed. Moreau. Paris; Desclée de Brouwer Publishers, 1996: 145-64.

selective moral blindness) allows Franz, and by extension Moderate Enlightenment thinkers, to make the logically inconsistent leap from "in nature, all men are equal and possess an equal right to freedom" to "in practice, enforcing civil affronts to those natural rights is morally correct." From this, Franz then establishes the complete relativity of morals; namely, a conscience, or moral sense, is best created on the basis of the "neuste[n] Facon" (newest fashion). At the same time, Franz writes that "we" (him, and people who think like him) will have our clothing tailored tightly to suit the current fashion, but we will then loosen our belts as we gain weight. Franz's fashion analogy reinforces the general message of the rest of his monologue, which is that social hierarchies contrary to man's natural rights (as he himself defines them, i.e. spiritually equally by civilly not) are beneficial because they are functional and stable, and because they allow a privileged class to cow the lesser classes into obeying rules and a system that is damaging to their own best interests. The last portion of these comments, wherein he encourages others to "go to the tailor" themselves to remedy their own problems, is yet another way for Franz to advance the same arguments he makes everywhere else in his monologue.

Franz's monologue concludes with his opinions on the value of familial relations, and how he thinks those who would disapprove of his actions treat them. Although long, the remainder of this monologue will be reproduced in full due to its great importance for understanding Franz fully:

Ich habe Langes und Breites von einer sogenannten Blutliebe schwatzen gehört, das einem ordentlichen Hausmann den Kopf heiß machen könnte -- Das ist dein Bruder! -- das ist verdolmetscht; Er ist aus eben dem Ofen geschossen worden, aus dem du geschossen bist -- also sei er dir heilig! -- Merkt doch einmal diese verzwickte Konsequenz, diesen possierlichen Schluß von der Nachbarschaft der Leiber auf die Harmonie der Geister; von eben derselben Heimat zu eben derselben Empfindung; von einerlei Kost zu einerlei Neigung. Aber weiter -- es ist dein Vater! Er hat dir das Leben gegeben, du bist sein Fleisch, sein Blut -- also sei er dir heilig. Wiederum eine schlaue Konsequenz! Ich möchte doch fragen, warum hat

er an mich gemacht? doch wohl nicht gar aus Liebe zu mir, der erst ein Ich werden sollte? Hat er mich gekannt ehe er mich machte? Oder hat er mich gedacht, wie er mich machte? Oder hat er mich gewünscht, da er mich machte? Wußte er was ich werden würde? das wollt ich ihm nicht raten, sonst möcht ich ihn dafür strafen, daß er mich doch gemacht hat? Kann ichs ihm Dank wissen, daß ich ein Mann wurde? So wenig als ich ihn verklagen könnte, wenn er ein Weib aus mir gemacht hätte. Kann ich eine Liebe erkennen, die sich nicht auf Achtung gegen mein Selbst gründet? Konnte Achtung gegen mein Selbst vorhanden sein, das erst dadurch entstehen sollte, davon es die Voraussetzung sein muß? Wo steckt nun das Heilige? Etwa im Aktus selber durch den ich entstand? -- Als wenn dieser mehr wäre als viehischer Prozeß zur Stillung viehischer Begierden? Oder steckt es vielleicht im Resultat dieses Aktus, der doch nichts ist als eiserne Notwendigkeit, die man so gern wegwünschte, wenns nicht auf Unkosten von Fleisch und Blut geschehn müßte. Soll ich ihm etwa darum gute Worte geben, daß er mich liebt? das ist eine Eitelkeit von ihm, die Schoßsünde aller Künstler, die sich in ihrem Werk kokettieren, wär es auch noch so häßlich. -- Sehet also das ist die ganze Hexerei, die ihr in einen heiligen Nebel verschleiert unsre Furchtsamkeit zu mißbrauchen. Soll auch ich mich dadurch gängeln lassen wie einen Knaben?

Frisch also! mutig ans Werk! -- Ich will alles um mich her ausrotten, was mich einschränkt daß ich nicht Herr bin. Herr muß ich sein, daß ich das mit Gewalt ertrotze, wozu mir die Liebenswürdigkeit gebricht *ab*. (Schiller 29-30)

Franz's ridicule and critical dissection of "Blutliebe" (blood love) is his attack on traditional values of kinship and familial piety to which the church (the Counter-Enlightenment) as well as much of the theistic/deistic Moderate Enlightenment would be opposed. Franz still clearly remains a Moderate Enlightenment thinker while presenting an argument abhorrent to many within that framework because he is ultimately advancing the same political goals; Franz occupies the Hobbesian, religion-as-social-necessity niche of the Moderate Enlightenment for reasons already provided.

More specifically, Franz's "Blutliebe" discussion ridicules the Counter-Enlightenment's completely non-critical way of preferring "nature" to "nurture." For the Counter-Enlightenment and much of the Moderate Enlightenment, loving one's family is simply the "natural" thing to do,

not only because the Bible dictates it, but also because of a vague sort of feeling rooted in general tradition that fierce family loyalty is the right thing to do. The series of rhetorical questions Franz presents undermine the traditional way of thinking via the act of questioning itself; indeed, thoroughly questioning unexamined assumptions is a necessity of reason and the *sapere aude* (Kant's call to "dare to know") spirit of the entire Enlightenment. At the same time, however, Franz's apparent rejection of any role of nature or innateness to familial affection can represent an attack on the Radical Enlightenment tendency to acknowledge, in a manner anticipating evolution, some innate ideas.

Indeed, according to principles of the Radical Enlightenment (including those concerning preservation of self within society, among others) caring equally for those to whom one is not biologically related as for one's own family relations is at best naive, at worst actually unreasonable. After all, the only reason the individual yields any of his/her freedom in nature upon entering society is because (s)he knows that if others also do so to an equal extent, both sides will benefit from avoiding open conflict with one another. The more minor social contracts (such as within a family) an individual has, the more reason (s)he has to believe that the "rules" of the contract will not be broken; the more intertwined two entities are, the more each has to lose by breaking the terms of their contract or series of contracts. It is therefore an act of self-preservation (or *conatus*) to have a tendency to prefer family relations because of the number of other dependencies that are very likely to have come about as a result of that relationship. Making oneself dependent on people or institutions who are not reciprocally dependent is extremely risky according to Radical Enlightenment principles, and exercising caution (demonstrating a lower level of trust) is quite reasonable.

Franz's self-interestedness differs markedly from the Radical Enlightenment preservation of self within society in that he does not place value upon equality of opportunity (by means of universal education, elimination of social privilege), which leads him to dismiss the significance of societal structure ("Das Recht wohnt beim Überwältiger"). Radical Enlightenment thinkers, by contrast, greatly stressed the importance of educating the entirety of society. Many Moderate thinkers, such as Voltaire (as discussed elsewhere in this chapter at greater length), rejected universal education on grounds derived from the rightness of social privilege.

This is not to say that, according to Radical Enlightenment thinking, one should not attempt to establish expanded interdependencies so as to make human society more based upon mutual interdependency and cooperation; it is merely to state that such steps must be taken with caution, and that one has solid, reasonable grounds for calling family preference "natural." Franz's total ridicule of family relations, in contrast, is understandable, given his being disadvantaged by virtue of arbitrary birth order, but at the same time, systematic rejection of any role for nature is Lockean Moderate Enlightenment because it denies the existence of natural man (and hence does not correspond to the reality of man as a product of natural forces and evolution rather than man as a largely inexplicable, undetermined product of divine whim).

Franz's criticism of "this comical conclusion drawn from the proximity of bodies upon the harmony of spirits" (Schiller 29; my translation) is again intended to make light of the uncritical naturalizing thought patterns in traditional thinking. His series of questions about the validity of unconditional love further serve to undermine the traditional discourse on family love by suggesting that he need not be morally bound to show love and deference to a father who denied him legitimate affection as an individual simply because that father went through the "eiserne Notwendigkeit" (iron necessity) of the motions of sexual reproduction.

Franz rids himself of the requirement to love his father by ridiculing every aspect of the biological aspect of fatherhood, including the "Aktus selbst" (the act itself), and then he turns his attention more directly to his father's love for him. This he denounced as "die Schoßsünde aller Künstler, die sich in ihrem Werk kokettieren, wär es auch noch so häßlich." Franz claims that all love must be something that is freely chosen, and in making this claim he attacks the notion of "fatherly love," which follows out of a kind of necessity or helplessness on the part of the father. Franz argues that fathers and sons may be inclined to love one another, but that this love is not a true love if it is unconditional. The exposure of clearly cyclical argumentation in moral philosophy, as well as the dismissal of it, is one of the defining features of the Enlightenment.

The same sort of cyclical argumentation that Franz exposes in traditional assumptions concerning unconditional family love was exposed in discussion of Natural Law in the early 18th Century. Pufendorffian-Bayracian Natural Law theory criticized the claim of many churchmen that logic somehow reveals that there must be a universal lawgiver. They also criticized the claim of some within the Moderate Enlightenment that a universal moral lawgiver must exist in order for any conceptualization of right and wrong to exist:

For both Leibniz and Bayle argue that if God proclaims our moral categories by his will alone, without these corresponding to universal principles which are metaphysically independent of God, then the 'voluntarist' cannot explain why God should be praised for being 'just' or benevolent.⁴⁵ Natural Law voluntarism inevitably blurs our concept of justice also in other ways since anyone adhering to the dictates of fairness and equity in accordance with Pufendorf's theory may be said to do so only because he or she fears a superior power, or sees these as God's commands, and not through awareness of their justness. Equally, such a theory can never guarantee that God's will, seen as the foundation of Natural Law, commands us to do what is, of itself, inherently and eternally just. (Israel, 2006, 198)

⁴⁵ Embedded Quote From: J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1998: 252.

Israel's mentioning of Leibniz *and* Bayle agreeing is significant given the nature of his framework; specifically, Leibniz is a figure of the Moderate Enlightenment due to his political and religious goals (for reasons elucidated at greater length in Chapter 1 of this dissertation), whereas Bayle is a Radical Enlightenment figure due to his religious views, his views on tolerance, and some of his writings on politics (mostly those in *Continuation des pensées diverses*). For this analysis, the fact that both Leibniz (Moderate Enlightenment) and Bayle (Radical Enlightenment) used this same method of ridiculing arguments that fail to justify the sources of judgments underlying entire moral systems each to come to very different conclusions on the status of social and moral systems shows how *Die Räuber's* characters fit into the general mold of Enlightenment intellectual history as sketched by Israel, and this mutual confirmation is evidence of the accuracy of Israel's interpretation (Radical-Moderate-Counter Enlightenment) and of the influence of philosophy and ideas on historical changes at the time (confirming Israel's methodological point that purely sociohistorical readings are oversimplifications and consequently less accurate).

Franz's statement "Sehet also das ist die ganze Hexerei, die ihr in einen heiligen Nebel verschleiert unsre Furchtsamkeit zu mißbrauchen" seems to the modern reader a criticism of religion itself, but it is actually only a criticism of certain practices of the Catholic church as it currently existed at the time. Specifically, Moderate Enlightenment figures like Leibniz and Voltaire spoke very strongly against the Catholic church's collusion with political authorities, as well as against the church's punishment of any kind of free and individual thinking. Leibniz, Voltaire and other Moderate Enlightenment figures considered the existence of organized religion important for the social and moral order, but they disagreed strongly with much of what the church did. Indeed, the Moderate figures often produced scathing criticisms of fundamental

theological doctrines of Christianity, while simultaneously elsewhere defending the Catholic church against the aberration of atheism. It is often difficult to determine whether a Moderate Enlightenment thinker was a traditional Christian, a deist, a self-styled spiritual person or an outright atheist, and often they appear to be each of these in different writings, depending on the political and rhetorical needs of each situation. In the case of Franz, he makes many radical-sounding statements, but his actions in *Die Räuber* always follow his financial interest of usurping his brother's succession right and accelerating his father's demise. On a more abstract level, he also reinforces the institution of monarchy so that he is assured to inherit the fealty of a king's subjects.

The stances of Voltaire and Hume are prime examples of the elitist stance on religion of many in the Moderate Enlightenment. While Voltaire's image as the scourge of the Catholic church has remained intact even to this day, he spent the majority of his time financing wealthy European princes and noblemen and seeing to his reputation; the time he did devote to consideration of philosophical opinions he used to lambast materialism. Hume is also best described as belonging to the Moderate Enlightenment, and his stance on religion is a similarly moderate one. Hume's skepticism shredded traditional religion, but it did not stop there. It also shredded the notion of a coherent self by taking a philosophical skepticism on the truth-value of empirical inductions down to the level of atoms, philosophically and logically necessary, but pragmatically senseless (as Hume himself acknowledged). Philipp Blom writes of Hume: "Attacked in Britain for not being sufficiently religious, the empiricist thinker was taken to task in Paris for refusing to renounce all faith." (Blom 148) Blom then later writes that Hume was not interested in discussing religion in Holbach's salon with the French materialists Diderot, Holbach (and others) "...because he was convinced that the real challenges of philosophy lay

elsewhere." (Blom 149) Hume, then, is disinterested in disavowing religion in the terms of the strongly atheistic French materialists because he upheld a fierce skepticism that rendered *all* worldviews and belief systems equally unfounded. Blom writes that:

Hume ridiculed, somewhat unfairly perhaps, the apparently inexhaustible optimism of the friends, who continued to believe "that human Society is capable of perpetual Progress towards Perfection," despite abundant indications that such progress was extremely limited. (Blom 148-149)

Blom then adds that Diderot, Holbach and the materialist cohort in Paris thought the following of Hume:

From their vantage point, Hume wasted his energies on questions that could not serve their central purpose: to change a society and a morality -- an entire culture -- whose injustice and needless suffering they found unbearable. Hume's was, properly speaking, a philosophical project, theirs a political one. (Blom 149)

It makes sense, then, that Hume, Rousseau, Locke, and Voltaire, among other Moderate Enlightenment thinkers, criticized religion in one writing while upholding its social necessity in others, and that these same thinkers defended aristocracy, mixed monarchy, and sometimes even absolutism against the republicanism for which Radical Enlightenment thinkers passionately argued.

Returning to Moderate Enlightenment philosophers, their "flexibility" suggests opportunism of the sort seen in Franz. With all knowledge equally unfounded and all meta-narratives and notions of progress impossible, a certain room is freed up for Franz, and for thinkers like Hume and Locke, to argue for man's total equality in some respects while not in others, and to reject criticism that their arguments were inconsistent or unethical; Hume and Locke were free to defend a political system that privileges them, while at the same time they could argue for reforms in other areas, and all the while this opportunistic cherry-picking of principles is unassailable by critics (who could only criticize by naively positing other "dogma").

III. Karl von Moor and Radical Enlightenment

Karl Moor, contrary to his more pragmatic-minded brother Franz, is a very radical figure. Karl makes many statements that sound like mottos of the French Revolution. When speaking with Spiegelberg (Act One, Scene Two), and then Roller, Schweizer, Grimm and the other soon-to-be robbers, Karl positions himself vis-à-vis individual freedom and the limits of the social contract:

Das Gesetz hat zum Schneckengang verdorben, was Adlerflug geworden wäre.
Das Gesetz hat noch keinen großen Mann gebildet, aber die Freiheit brütet
Kolosse und Extremitäten aus. (Schiller 32)

Karl is not advocating anarchy, but rather laying the groundwork for an argument that governments should err on the side of freedom (instead of on the side of law and regulation). In the climate of 18th-century politics, this ideology served a very different purpose against a very different foe than it does today. The sort of law and regulation against which Karl is arguing is that of Hobbes's *Leviathan* and that of the absolute monarchs of the 18th century; these were monarchs who mismanaged the economies of their states, suppressed opposition and freedom of speech, discouraged education, disregarded public health and had little interest in a meritocratic society based on equal opportunity.

Later, Karl offers the philosophical justification for establishing a band of robbers in the forests of Bohemia:

Siehe, da fällt's wie der Star von meinen Augen! was für ein Tor ich war, daß ich
ins Keficht zurückwollte! – Mein Geist dürstet nach Taten, mein Atem nach
Freiheit, -- Mörder, Räuber! – mit diesem Wort war das Gesetz unter meine Füße
gerollt – Menschen haben Menschheit vor mir verborgen, da ich an Menschheit
appellierte, weg dann von mir Sympathie und menschliche Schonung! (Schiller
45)

At this point, Karl has decided to turn his back on reconciliation with his family and society in favor of pursuing his political goals. Karl's justification for behaving outside the framework of

law is that he considers the contract of non-violence and law-abiding to have been broken by those to whose humanity he appealed in vain. He is unwilling to hold up one end of a bargain if the other side is not holding up the other. Karl's statement that "sympathy and humane sparing" will no longer enter into his considerations amounts to a proclamation of the necessity of revolution to achieve real change and a more ethical society. Where reason is no longer a guarantor of justice, action must intervene.

Karl's points rest on his philosophical preferences on questions of man's natural rights. As stated earlier while discussing Franz (see pages 69-70), Spinoza held that man's natural rights remain fully intact upon entering society, whereas Hobbes believed that they were wholly relinquished. It is not enough, however, to ascertain that Karl finds society to be unjust because man's natural rights are violated, and then to reason that his illegal behavior logically follows. One must investigate the philosophical origins of Karl's ethical judgment: why is violating the law a lesser evil than the affronts to natural rights codified in and enforced by the system propagating that law?

Karl's radicalism, his privileging of ethics over procedure and tradition, amounts to a focused ethical realism wherein the ends justify the means. His means necessarily entail a subversion of the existing system of justice, which is deemed sufficiently unethical to necessitate radical action. Herein lie the philosophical origins of the revolutionary impulse, which Karl initially embraces and espouses to his fellows and Spiegelberg (Schiller 32).

Karl is not, however, a simple-minded radical, and his eventual repudiation of the crimes of the robbers, and specifically of Spiegelberg, underscores the difficulty of identifying the point at which violation of the law creates injustices greater than those enshrined in and reinforced by

that same law. Karl's criticism of extreme radicalism is seen in his lament of his attempts "die Welt durch Gewalt zu verschönern." (Schiller 159)

The Radical Enlightenment, too, acknowledges the complexity of the ethical ambiguities that arise when an unjust political system is challenged by its governed. Jonathan Israel writes of d'Holbach on this topic:

Where men's fundamental rights are systematically violated it is always justified for the citizenry to revolt. This is only one of numerous passages where d'Holbach and Diderot offer a qualified but clear justification for mass armed resistance to tyrannical government where initiated by responsible leaders.⁴⁶ The *Histoire philosophique* and its spin-off publications, stiffened by Diderot and several of his disciples, had no doubts on this score: "never will tyrants freely consent to the extirpation of servitude and to bring them to this point, it will be necessary either to ruin or exterminate them."⁴⁷ (Israel, 2010, 85-86)

Much qualification is needed to parse the conditions in which armed revolt is justified, but that complexity is appropriate when approaching fundamental philosophical questions like which systems of government are legitimate. Israel makes clear that Diderot and d'Holbach consider armed revolt to be, in principle, an ethical way of pursuing a more just society, but there are conditions and acknowledged ambiguities that must be explored first. The first ambiguity lies in the phrase "responsible leaders," and the second ambiguity lies in the phrase "tyrannical government."

Concerning what constitutes responsible leadership of an armed revolution, one can reasonably induce from the statements of Radical Enlightenment thinkers on other topics that such leaders would be educated, informed by the enlightened interests of those they represent, and possessing a clear plan to establish a representative democracy that strives to preserve man's natural rights to the greatest degree possible within the state. Israel begins setting up this

⁴⁶Embedded Quote From: Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach, *La politique naturelle*, Paris, 1773: 30.

⁴⁷ Embedded Quote From: Guillaume-Thomas-François (Abbé), *Esprit de Guillaume – Thomas Raynal: recueil également nécessaire à ceux qui commandent & à ceux qui obéissent*, Paris, 1782: 129.

argument when discussing the anti-Rousseauist, anti-pure democracy stance of Radical Enlightenment thinkers. Here, Israel explains how Radical Enlightenment thinkers justified arguing that legislative bodies should be comprised of representatives rather than the entire populace of a nation (as it is in a pure democracy):

D’Holbach and Diderot, furthermore, denied that their model [representative democracy] entailed any diminution of individual liberty when compared with Rousseau’s model. Sovereign in appearance, in reality the common people in a direct democracy are the slaves of “perverse demagogues” who know how to manipulate them and flatter them. In direct democracy the people often have no real conception of what liberty is and their rule can be harsher than that of the worst tyrant. Liberty without reason, held d’Holbach, is of scant value in itself; consequently, the “history of most republics,” he admonished, “continually conjures up the gruesome picture of nations bathed in their own blood by anarchy.”⁴⁸ (Israel, 2010, 64)

One charge against pure democracy, then, is that giving equal voice and authority to all people, regardless of their level of education, actually leads to anarchy, and that such a climate would quickly breed demagogues to provide direction to the masses. Holbach and Diderot’s accusation implies that they believe representative democracy mitigates the influence of demagogues on the governing process. Representatives, who are ideally educated and informed, act as a filter preventing the sudden and extreme fluctuations in public opinion. Although Israel acknowledges that Diderot’s view that only “more educated representatives will be elected” sounds too naïve to the 21st-century Westerner (Israel, 2010, 66), Diderot’s writings elsewhere about the Radical reform program suggest that the public will become more likely to choose educated representatives as the public itself becomes more educated. Indeed, education, interchangeably referred to as “enlightenment,” is the central goal of the Enlightenment, and all manner of benefits are proposed to proceed from this ultimate goal. More proximate goals, such as the establishment of the most just political system, should be realized as ignorance and credulity (the

⁴⁸ Embedded Quote From: Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d’Holbach, *La politique naturelle*, Paris, 1773: 275.

ultimate sources of woe) are ameliorated. Holbach's formulation "liberty without reason" is very likely synonymous with "liberty without education," whereby the necessity of widespread education for a healthily functioning and just democracy is underscored.

For many thinkers within the Moderate Enlightenment spectrum, universal education and universal enlightenment are considered foremost an impossibility, and second most an undesirability. Voltaire, for example, seeks a rational reorganization of social institutions and government only insofar as these correct inefficiencies that further the position of the clergy and damage that of the aristocracy. Education should serve the role of making the lower classes into more useful workers; it should not level all social distinctions or make the lower classes question their social position (Israel, 2011, 650-656).

Furthermore, social privilege and aristocracy are crudely naturalized or uncritically defended as indispensable and unquestionable traditional social orders. The naturalization of social privilege follows the same line of reasoning in Voltaire's thinking as his defense of the fixity of species does (another position held by the large majority of Moderate Enlightenment thinkers, while many Radical Enlightenment thinkers adhered to early forms of "evolutionism" or "transformism" in line with their rejection of teleologies). Concerning Voltaire's fierce opposition to evolutionistic thinking on nature and the internality of motion to matter, Israel devotes attention to Voltaire's opposition to Buffon:

Foremost among their [Buffon's and Boulanger's] critics was Voltaire who obdurately refused to accept either that seas had covered the whole earth or that land-based species could have begun in the oceans, and most of all that species have become extinct. (Israel, 2006, 748)

Even though Buffon proposed no mechanism or system for biogenesis, biological evolution or geological transformation, Voltaire clearly recognizes Buffon's rejection of teleology, and even more importantly, of essentialism. For Voltaire and other Moderates, essentialism is an integral

element of both defenses of aristocracy and fixity of species, and yet it is also dangerous to their position as it can be invoked to legitimate any aspect of the status quo, and hence undermine any reform program. Israel (as well as Voltaire's contemporary critics) argues that this inconsistent invocation of uncritical essentialism in one place and rational dissection in another is a natural product of the inconsistency of Cartesianism itself, and evidence of the quality of Spinozism (Israel, 2010, 217-219).

The other ambiguity arising in Diderot's statements in the *Histoire philosophique*, namely what constitutes "tyrannical government" (against which armed revolt by responsible leaders is justified), is explained in very clear terms in many of the political writings of the same Radical thinkers. Because in Spinoza man's natural right is preserved upon entering society (unlike in Hobbes, where it is entirely relinquished), a degree of self-determination, or the consent of the governed, is necessary in order for political power to be legitimate (Israel, 2001, 271). Absolute monarchy, or even mixed monarchy with representation only of the aristocracy, is an unjustified suppression of man's natural rights and hence tyrannical. The fact that any form of mixed monarchy or absolute rule is labeled tyrannical under the Radical Enlightenment banner emphasizes how radical the Radical Enlightenment program truly was.

Furthermore, contrasting Spinoza's and Rousseau's thinking on the state of nature and the primacy of universal equality underscores again what forms of government are considered "tyrannical" by the Radical Enlightenment. Israel writes on this topic:

While in Rousseau's notion of the progressive moral degeneration of mankind from the moment civil society established itself diverges markedly from Spinoza's claim that human nature is always the same and that there is no virtue before civil society, there remains a strong unifying thread in that, for both philosophers, the pristine equality of the state of nature is our ultimate guide and criterion, not just in determining the character and legitimacy of any society's political arrangements but also in shaping the common good, 'volonté générale', or Spinoza's *mens una*, which alone can ensure stability and political salvation.

Without the supreme criterion of equality, the general will would indeed be meaningless. (Israel, 2001, 274)

Although this passage underscores the commonalities between Spinoza's and Rousseau's positions (the idea of a "general will" and of the importance of equality), it also highlights their different thinking about human nature. Rousseau is highly pessimistic about the possibility of social institutions reflecting the supreme justice of the state of nature, while Spinoza is less dismissive of the prospect of a civilized society approximating the equality of the state of nature.

The emphasis on the value of equality is important in qualifying Rousseau's remarks about the state of nature being "pristine" and otherwise desirable. For both Spinoza and Rousseau, calling the state of nature a state of equality is meant to emphasize how the social distinctions existing within societies are both socially constructed and, at the very least, creating and reinforcing injustices. The institution-free state of nature is defined to be equal, and equality is defined to be the state of nature: a circularity of which both the Moderate and Radical Enlightenment seemed to be aware, and which serves as the central value to be upheld. While Radical Enlightenment thinkers overwhelmingly maintain that man's natural right is preserved upon the creation of society, and furthermore that a close approximation of it is attainable (hence the necessity of fundamental political change), Moderate Enlightenment thinkers split into two camps: those who view equality within society to be unattainable and hence fruitless to pursue, like Rousseau, and those who naturalize social differences (such as Locke) and hence positively believe they should be maintained.

With the conditions under which armed revolt is justified clarified in the context of man's natural right, the state of nature, and the social contract for Spinoza, Holbach, Diderot, Rousseau and Voltaire, it is necessary to clarify why Karl later rejects Spiegelberg's incitements to further violence. Karl's rejection of Spiegelberg's calls to further criminal activity in part has to do with

the difference in the two men's motives. Razmann, when speaking with Spiegelberg, remarks the following about Karl:

...ich sage dir, der Ruf unsers Hauptmanns hat auch schon ehrliche Kerl in Versuchung geführt...Sans Spaß! Und sie schämen sich nicht unter ihm zu dienen. Er mordet nicht um des Raubes willen wie wir – nach dem Geld schien er nicht mehr zu fragen, so bald ers vollauf haben konnte, und selbst sein Drittel an der Beute, das ihn von Rechtswegen trifft, verschenkt er an Waisenkinder, oder läßt damit arme Jungen von Hoffnung studieren. (Schiller 74)

This is the first place in the text where the political and ethical motivations underlying Karl's participation in the band of robbers is underscored. Implicit in Razmann's observation is not only that the other robbers quickly ask for their portion of the booty, but that it also serves as their primary and most visceral motive. Furthermore, the political causes Razmann mentions are social causes: providing education and opportunity for the economically and socially disadvantaged (financing the studies of promising but poor young men, and providing for the basic needs of orphans). These social motivations focusing not only on equality but equal opportunity correspond more closely to Radical Enlightenment goals than to Moderate Enlightenment goals, given that many Moderate thinkers saw many social and economic distinctions as just and desirable (at least to some degree).

Soon after Razmann describes Karl's virtues to Spiegelberg, Schufferle returns and begins telling Karl and the others the story of how they saved Roller by burning down the town in which he was held. Karl hears of the valuables stolen from the church and the large fires that were started and he disapproves, saying "Roller, du bist teuer bezahlt" (Schiller 81) with a "very serious" tone. Schufferle then discusses looking into a burning building and seeing a child:

SCHUFTERLE: ...Ein Kind wars noch frisch und gesund, das lag auf dem Boden unterm Tisch, und der Tisch wollte eben angehn, -- Armes Tiergen! sagt' ich, du verfrierst ja hier, und warfs in die Flamme –

MOOR: Wirklich, Schufterle? – Und diese Flamme brenne in deinem Busen, bis die Ewigkeit grau wird! – Fort Ungeheuer! Laß dich nimmer unter meiner Bande sehen! (Schiller 82)

Karl makes clear that there is a distinction between guilty parties and innocents, and he strongly condemns violence against innocents. While this seems a fairly established moral point to modern-day ears, it served specific purposes in the 18th century: first, this condemnation presupposes the modern-day Western notion of the individual as the sole party capable of culpability, whereby the notion of the indivisible, autonomous individual is also bolstered; second, and also connected to the first point, it condemns retributive violence between social groups.

It is therefore necessary for Karl to establish clear boundaries defining whom it is acceptable to consider an acceptable target of politically motivated crime as well as who must be spared in order to differentiate his actions from those of political leaders of previous times. The example of a baby highlights the innocence of many victims of retributive violence. It also places emphasis upon the precariousness of using violence to achieve political goals, as it can be difficult to separate emotional, animalistic violence from carefully considered intellectual force.

Karl further repudiates indiscriminate violence to achieve political goals when he dissociates himself from the other robbers near the end of the play.

Räuber Moor: Halt – noch ein Wort eh wir weiter gehn – Merket auf ihr schadenfrohe Schergen meines barbarischen Winks – Ich höre von diesem Nun an auf euer Hauptmann zu sein – Mit Scham und Grauen leg ich hier diesen blutigen Stab nieder worunter zu freveln ihr euch berechtiget wähntet – und mit Werken der Finsternis dies himmlische Licht zu besudeln – Gehet hin zur Rechten und Linken – Wir wollen ewig niemals gemeine Sache machen. (Schiller 159)

The terms Karl uses to denounce the obedience of the robbers is similar to the language used by Radical Enlightenment philosophers when polemicizing against monarchism. First, his reference to his followers as “henchmen” (*Schergen*) is clearly pejorative, as it hearkens to the clan-

centrism of the Feudal era, which both Moderate and Radical Enlightenment thinkers derided as barbarism. Second, he criticizes the willingness of his followers to feel justified in behaving criminally because of his staff's authority. One aspect of monarchy with which Radical Enlightenment thinkers found fault was the personal moral and social responsibility of which being beholden to authority absolved the common person. In other words, Karl is criticizing the robbers for lacking the moral fortitude to question his decisions; their attitude towards authority and personal responsibility for their actions are the problem. Lastly, Karl's statement that those with whom he is breaking can "go to the left or the right" (*zur Rechten und zur Linken*) indicates that he is indifferent to the specific political goals (although this should not be understood as referring to left/right in contemporary political discourse) and outcomes that those with such an attitude toward authority may pursue; his primary complaint is their entire way of thinking about solving such problems, which contains self-defeating elements and could not be advocated as a problem-solving method for disagreeing citizens in rational discourse. Karl wants society to resolve systemic problems, not play political games to achieve surface-level policy goals.

Karl's rejection of violence is clarified further later:

O über mich Narren, der ich wähnete die Welt durch Greuel zu verschönern, und die Gesetze durch Gesetzlosigkeit aufrecht zu halten. Ich nannte es Rache und Recht. (Schiller 159)

Karl's position at the end of the play is that violence is antithetical to achieving peace and that those seeking drastic change should never choose it proactively. Violence, in and of itself, never beautifies (*verschönern*) the world, but rather always introduces atrocities (*Greuel*) into it.

Karl's lament that he sought "to uphold laws through lawlessness" (*Gesetze durch Gesetzlosigkeit aufrecht zu halten*) emphasizes the importance of ethical rigor in one's

methodology: peace is not achieved through violence, lawfulness is not achieved through lawlessness.

Karl's position at the end of the play is also not one of unconditional pacifism; indeed, holding any position "unconditionally" is *per se* offensive to reason. Karl's mentioning of revenge (*Rache*) reveals further nuance in his thinking on justifications for violence:

R. MOOR: ...Ich mate mich an, o Vorsicht die Scharten deines Schwerts auszuwetzen und deine Parteilichkeiten gut zu machen – aber – O eitle Kinderei – da steh ich am Rand eines entsetzlichen Lebens, und erfahre nun mit Zhnlappern und Heulen, da zwei Menschen wie ich den ganzen Bau der sittlichen Welt zu Grund richten wrden. (Schiller 159-160)

Here, Karl denounces both violence and revenge as "vain childishness" (*eitle Kinderei*), which is akin to calling them unenlightened as well as unethical. Immediately thereafter, he provides his reasoning behind this: that such a position is unsustainable because if one operated by it, the world would descend into a spiral of never-ending vendettas and retribution, everyone killing and punishing righteously for her/his own ideology. The singling out of revenge as a justification for violence is important because the lines between self-defense, revenge and "pre-emptive violence" are easily blurred, particularly in the minds of the recently wronged. Self-defense, being the least morally ambiguous form of violence, is particularly commonly named the motivation for acts of violence; in this way, attacks can be recast as defenses (of self, of nation, of honor, of a way of life, etc.).

Importantly, the difficulties of assessing when violence is, in fact, an act of self-defense do not lead Karl to err on the side of caution by categorically rejecting any sort of violence; this is seen in Karl's preparedness to defend himself and his troop against the Father (*Pater*) in the woods (Schiller 85-91). Karl engages the Father in rational (yet cynical) dialogue, and asserts his troop's ability to defend itself without menacing further attacks. The timing at which this

occurs in the text is also important: Karl had recently denounced Spiegelberg's violence mongering as well as Schufferle's killing of an infant he finds in a house in the village the robbers are pillaging. While Karl had clearly previously led his men to commit unprovoked acts of violence, he had already come to reject that strategy by the time he asserted his right to self-defense to the Father.

IV. Secondary Literature: Schiller's Enlightenment

Götz-Lothar Darsow, in his book *Friedrich Schiller*, discusses the Enlightenment philosophical thinking embodied in Franz and Karl von Moor:

Will sich aber – wie Franz Moor – ein vorgeblich radikal vernünftiges Denken nach dem Vorbild des naturwissenschaftlichen Experiments die Welt unterwerfen, so kann es das nur um den Preis der Verdrängung alles dessen, was sein Anderes ist als abgründige Seele, als Traum, Wahnsinn und Lust: ein Stück *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Die anderen, die dunklen, die irrationalen Seiten aber lassen sich nicht auf Dauer wegsperren: Schiller hat es in seinem *Versuch über den Zusammenhang* deutlich gemacht und unzweideutig an Franz Moor demonstriert.⁴⁹

Darsow mentions several themes pertaining to Enlightenment philosophical discourse that must be treated very carefully to do justice to the diversity of purposes and values held by thinkers of the time: radically reasoned thinking, suppression and dismissal of the "Other," *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, and the psychoanalytically loaded terms "soul, dream, madness, and desire."

Darsow suggests that Karl represents the Other, which Franz seeks to de-legitimate by branding it unreasonable, or, more psychoanalytically, as the product of the fear-driven hysteria of an id-dominated ego (Darsow 28-30).

Mit dem Auftauchen des verdrängten Anderen gibt der Dichter seinem monströsen Ungeheuer zugleich das vorher verschwundene Menschenantlitz wieder. (Darsow 28)

⁴⁹ Götz-Lothar Darsow, *Friedrich Schiller*, Stuttgart; Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2000: 28.

In other words, Franz's hyper-rational, philosophical systematizing is belied by the anthropological reality of the Other he seeks to subordinate. Dismissal of the Other and excessive systematizing of the sort Darsow accuses Franz is typically mentioned as a flaw of Enlightenment thinking, but this, again, is an error of lumping all Enlightenment-era thinkers into a single mass and attributing the motives of the conservative lot to all aspects and generations of the Enlightenment movement. French materialists, Scottish "Common Sense" thinkers, Anglophone Newtonians, Dutch Spinozists and Germanic Leibniz-Wolffians all clearly belong to very different strands of the legacy of the Enlightenment, and yet Darsow refers glibly to "the Enlightenment" with no indication of an appreciation of the complexity of this movement, let alone an understanding that many thinkers of that era, namely the Radical group, would have abhorred Franz's leveling of difference and dismissal of the Other.

Furthermore, Darsow's privileging of Franz as the Self that disrespects difference (*Abgründe...eben gemacht*) shows his critical concern with defaming the Enlightenment as the problem, when *Die Räuber* provides equal insight into the thinking and actions of both Karl and Franz. *Die Räuber* can also be read as a pro-Enlightenment text essaying the necessity of combining the secular humanist values (i.e. freedom, liberty and brotherhood) that define the Radical Enlightenment agenda with the rigorous application of reason to all aspects of life and society, rather than a fiercely selfish or class and hierarchy-driven value system combined with reason.

V. Conclusion

Karl's changing opinions parallel the defining impulses of various stages of the French Revolution, and his final statements can be read as a diagnosis of the French Revolution's wrong turns. Schiller may have already been nervous about the dangers and potential excesses of

sudden and radical upheaval, and *Die Räuber* ultimately parallels the varying focus of Schiller himself: initially, he emphasizes the need for a radically different system prioritizing different political and moral values; subsequently, he cautions against seeing all means as justifying these ends, and urges methodological purity and the prioritization of non-violent, rational engagement with ideological foes. Karl (like Schiller) initially holds traditional political and religious opinions, which parallels pre-Revolution France; he later forcefully seeks to realize his political goals by targeting representatives of the old order, i.e. landowners and churches, which parallels the Reign of Terror; subsequently, the campaign of force turns into a more general, less directed form of depravity against the population, as was seen particularly in Robespierre's worst years in the 1790s; and finally, he advocates a more cautious, dialogue-based approach, which is what revolutionary France did not implement and which exacerbated many decades of political and social turmoil.

DIE LEIDEN DES JUNGEN WERTHERS, GOETHE
CHAPTER 3

I. Introduction – Israel and Enlightenment Debate on Nature – Virtue, Freedom, Childhood and Adulthood

The state of nature plays a foundational role in debates on virtue. Jonathan Israel writes of Spinoza:

While Spinoza identifies ‘virtue’ with ‘power’, which is decidedly not how others conceive of virtue, his strange usage becomes closer to what is generally signified with his insistence on human ‘virtue’ being anchored in ‘reason’. Since the mind’s greatest ‘good’, its greatest ‘virtue’, is to know God, that is, to grasp the reality of things rationally, man’s essence, his striving or power, best conserves his existence when adjusted to the inevitable laws of Nature, resulting in a rational ordering of one’s life, which, by definition, will be ‘virtuous’.⁵⁰

While Spinoza uses words like “virtue,” “God,” and “good,” he is redefining them away from the otherworldly focus of religion toward a secular, pre-utilitarian focus. As is often the case, Spinoza uses religious terminology to express his views so as to maintain plausible deniability if accused of atheism, and more immediately, to get his work past censors. Israel refers explicitly to Spinoza’s use of virtue as “strange,” and, indeed, his usage of this and other terms is a sort of “revaluation of all values,” explicitly intended to represent an alternative positive system of morality. Spinoza’s emphasis on the primacy of pursuing one’s own “earthly” advantage and survival stands in contrast to Christianity’s focus on pursuing the salvation of one’s own soul by living in a way advantageous to God. In the absence of an unquestionable divine lawgiver, Spinoza posits that, given the “inevitable laws of Nature,” the best, or most “virtuous,” way to live is to acknowledge that nature and attempt to realize one’s “natural rights.”

⁵⁰ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, New York; Oxford University Press, 2001: 259-260.

One must also consider Spinoza's views on freedom to understand better what these "inevitable laws of Nature" are, and how best to live in accordance with them. Israel further writes:

A 'free man', maintains Spinoza, is 'one who lives according to the dictates of reason alone' and 'is not led by fear but desires good directly, that is, acts, lives and conserves his being, from the foundations of seeking his own advantage'.⁵¹ (Israel, 2001, 260)

Being "free," then, is good because it results from following the dictates of reason. The dictates of reason entail living in accordance with the state of nature. Living in accordance with the state of nature requires one to seek one's own advantage, and seeking one's own advantage requires one to pursue being free and reasonable. The values and goals Spinoza posits are a circular form of argumentation, and his critics accused him of this, but he was well aware that all value systems are circular in the absence of an absolute truth (which was discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation at greater length, in the context of Natural Law debates). Spinoza's argument essentially amounts to stating that it is good to pursue one's advantage in "earthly" life, to recognize the restraints imposed by nature, and that one's advantage in "earthly" life is realized by forming civil societies and striving for harmony with one's fellow man. Spinoza specifically mentions democracy as the political system best facilitating a realization of the state of nature (Israel, 2001, 273).

Goethe studied Spinoza extensively before and after the publication of *Werther*, and he discussed Spinoza's works with Herder, who exerted a strong influence on Goethe in the years before *Werther*'s publication.⁵² Goethe writes of Spinoza's profound influence on him in his

⁵¹ Embedded Quote From: Benedict de Spinoza, *Opera, The Collected Works*, ed. Edwin Curley, vol. 1. Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1985: 586.

⁵² Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2011: 698-99.

autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (in which Goethe discusses his life up until he left for Weimar in 1775):

Dieser Geist, der so entschieden auf mich wirkte, und der auf meine ganze Denkweise so großen Einfluß haben sollte, war Spinoza.⁵³

By the time of Goethe's *Italian Journey*, i.e. one year before the publication of the second version of *Werther* in 1787, Goethe was deeply enamored of Spinoza:

Much engrossed at the same time in working out his botanical theory, Goethe withdrew somewhat into his shell during the weeks he was finishing the piece, avoiding Roman high society: 'the fashion of this world passeth away', he reminded himself, adding that 'my only desire is to follow Spinoza's teaching and concern myself with what is everlasting so as to win eternity for my soul'. These were weeks in which Goethe enthusiastically renewed his commitment to Herder's approach and to the idea that the greatest art, man's greatest masterpieces, are created 'in obedience to the same law as the masterpieces of Nature. Before them, all that is arbitrary and imaginary collapses: there is Necessity, there is God'.⁵⁴ (Israel, 2011, 748)

By 1786, Goethe had been extensively engaging with Spinoza's writings and clearly viewed them as part of the only "cogent system," just like Lessing (Israel, 2011, 689). There is evidence that Goethe, primarily through Herder, had been exposed to some aspects of Spinozism, but Goethe's and Herder's primary engagement probably did not begin until around 1777, and very definitely was occurring in the mid-1780s (Israel, 2011, 698). Goethe uses religious terminology in *Italienische Reise* in describing his appreciation of Spinoza and love of nature, but the 1787 version of *Werther*, of course, is the less radical of the two versions. Goethe was fascinated by Spinoza's ideas in metaphysics, but he was no political revolutionary, particularly not in the late 1780s in the shadow of the French Revolution (Israel, 2011, 749). Jacobi, Lessing's sparring partner in the *Pantheismusstreit* (or *Spinozastreit*), met in private with Goethe and Herder in

⁵³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit*, ed. XX, vol. X, Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, YearXXXX: XX

⁵⁴ Embedded Quote From: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey* [1786-8], trans. W.H. Auden and E. Mayer. Harmondsworth, England; Penguin Publishing, 1970: 377, 385, 401.

1784 in Weimar to discuss his fears about Spinozism penetrating German society, and to his chagrin, both Herder and Goethe stated that they “could no more believe in a personal, transcendental God...than could Lessing.” (Israel, 2011, 698) Nonetheless, Goethe and Herder both argued that they did not conceive of Spinoza as an atheist (Israel, 2011, 698). Neither Goethe nor Herder were thinking about Spinoza using the standard of an anthropomorphic, providential, Christian God, frustrating Jacobi’s attempts to find allies for his fight against Spinozism and Lessing.

Thinking on human nature plays heavily into Werther’s contemplations, and even in the first version of *Werther* one can see the traces of Spinozism to which Goethe had been exposed:

Und ich habe, mein Lieber! wieder bey diesem kleinen Geschäfte gefunden: daß Mißverständnisse und Trägheit vielleicht mehr Irrungen in der Welt machen, als List und Bosheit nicht thun. Wenigstens sind die beyden letztern gewiß seltner.⁵⁵

Early in the work, Werther expresses his belief that malice and ill-will do not account for many of the society’s woes. Werther’s consideration of the motives of other people makes implicit assumptions that humans tend to be “good,” or at least do not do harm to others out of *Schadenfreude* or mindless instinctive aggression. This point is significant because it establishes from the very beginning of the work that Werther is not thinking within a Christian religious framework, in spite of occasional religious references in the text. Within a Christian framework, error (*Irrungen*) would be caused by a failure to observe the moral proclamations of religion, by actions counter to God’s will. *Werther* also suggests that humans are essentially amoral beings whose natural behaviors cannot be described as either moral or immoral, but rather indifferent to morality (amoral), a point with which both Christian apologists and Moderates with a strong commitment to complete free will libertarianism would take issue. The radicalism of *Die Leiden*

⁵⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, ed. Waltraud Wiethölter, vol. 8. Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994: 12.

des jungen Werthers is apparent from the beginning of the work, and it increases as the work goes on. Werther initially expresses Rousseauist, Moderate ideas about nature, and his remarks become more Radical as the work progresses.

Some of the sentiments Werther expresses at the beginning of the novel are reminiscent specifically of some of Rousseau's writings, particularly Rousseau's belief in the superiority of the patriarchal family:

Wenn ich da sizze, so lebt die patriarchalische Idee so lebhaft um mich, wie sie alle [sic] die Altväter am Brunnen Bekanntschaft machen und freyen, und wie um die Brunnen und Quellen wohlthätige Geister schweben. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 16)

Werther's reference to the "patriarchalische Idee" brings to mind, among other things, the endorsement of patriarchy and traditional gender roles seen in Rousseau's *Émile*:

Quand la famille est vivante et animée, les soins domestiques font la plus chère occupation de la femme et le plus doux amusement du mari. Ainsi de ce seul abus corrigé résulteroit bientôt une réforme générale, bientôt la nature auroit repris tous ses droits. Qu'une fois les femmes redeviennent meres, bientôt les hommes redeviendroient pères et maris.
Discours superflus! l'ennui même des plaisirs du monde ne ramène jamais à ceux-là. Les femmes ont cessé d'être meres; elles ne seront plus; elles ne veulent plus l'être.⁵⁶

[When the family is alive and animated, domestic care is woman's most precious occupation and man's sweetest amusement. Thus this single abuse resulted in a general reform that soon took over all of nature's rights. If, one day, women again became mothers, men would become fathers and husbands again. How hopeless! Boredom with the pleasures of the world will never bring us back to that state of affairs. Women have stopped being mothers; they will not be mothers anymore; they do not want to be mothers anymore. (My translation)]

Given the date of the publication of the first version of *Werther* (1774), many readers would have likely thought of *Émile*, which was one of the most popularly read books of the 18th century; the reference to a fountain (*Brunnen*) provides further evidence that Werther's behavior evokes Rousseau given the affinity between fountains, Rome, and the classical patriarchal

⁵⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'Éducation*, Paris, 1762, Nouvelle Édition. Garnier Frères; Paris, 1866: 17. Google Book Search.

family. At this stage in *Werther*, Werther is debating Rousseauist ideas about nature, education, empiricism, and experiential learning.

Rousseau is known to have advised his students against reading books. Rousseau's aversion to book-learning is evident in passages from *Émile* such as the following:

En ôtant ainsi tous les devoirs des enfants, j'ôte les instrumens de leur plus grande misère, savoir les livres. La lecture est le fléau de l'enfance, et presque la seule occupation qu'on lui sait donner.⁵⁷ [By removing all of children's homework I remove the instruments of their greatest misery, knowing (reading) books. Reading books is the scourge of childhood, and almost the only activity one knows to give them. (My translation)]

The vehemence of Rousseau's rejection of book-learning is a reaction to the rigidity of aristocratic and bourgeois childhood education at Rousseau's time. In the 18th century, education was highly prescriptive, and children's time was often filled with forms of imposed learning, whether this be reading books or cultivating Greek, Latin, or the piano. Traditional 18th-century education did not emphasize the development of independent thinking, and it almost wholly neglected the legitimacy of experiential learning in childhood development. Given such a rigid education climate, it is understandable that Rousseau reached for the opposite pole and encouraged discovery-based individual learning. Nevertheless, Rousseau's reaction against books is an overreaction: book-learning plays a pivotal role in childhood development when introduced appropriately and alongside a developing capacity to reason, and, according to the Radical Enlightenment, the knowledge obtained from books and formal education is critical for the health of a democratic society (Israel, 2006, 566-568). Rousseau's ideas are still "radical" in many ways, and for this reason Werther's contemplation of Rousseauist notions is best seen as a progression towards increasingly radical ideas about nature that by the end of the work manifests itself as an atheistic materialism.

⁵⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'Éducation*, Paris, 1762, Nouvelle Édition. Garnier Frères; Paris, 1866: 106. Google Book Search.

Werther further discusses nature in an early letter:

Du fragst, ob Du mir meine Bücher schicken sollst? Lieber, ich bitte dich um Gottes willen, laß mir sie vom Hals. Ich will nicht mehr gelehret, ermuntert, angefeuret seyn, braust dieses Herz doch genug aus sich selbst, ich brauche Wiegenesang, und den hab ich in seiner Fülle gefunden in meinem Homer. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 16)

Here, too, Werther's sentiments are more similar to Rousseau than Diderot or Holbach. Werther rejects being sent his books passionately, and makes reference to one author: Homer. Homer is a main symbol of Greek antiquity, and Radical Enlightenment thinkers were explicitly opposed to the tradition of deference to and blind admiration of all things ancient. Werther's reference to Homer in addition to his stated need of "cradle singing" (*Wiegenesang*), unquestionably positions Werther in the early part of the novel within Rousseau's Moderate Enlightenment.

Werther's embrace of the nature-loving pure empiricism of Rousseau at the beginning of *Werther* followed by a view of nature defined more by monism and materialist metaphysics ironically inversely parallels Goethe's own views on nature (Goethe's views on nature are elucidated at greater length in section III of this chapter, using Tantillo's work *The Will to Create*). Goethe was more Radical in younger life, particularly at the time when he wrote the first version of *Werther* and before the French Revolution, and he became increasingly opposed to all abstract thought in older age.

Werther writes of children:

Daß die Kinder nicht wissen, warum sie wollen, darinn sind alle hochgelahrte Schul- und Hofmeister einig. Daß aber auch Erwachsene, gleich Kindern, auf diesem Erdboden herumtaumeln, gleichwie jene nicht wissen, woher sie kommen und wohin sie gehen, eben so wenig nach wahren Zwecken handeln, eben so durch Biskuit und Kuchen und Birkenreiser regiert werden, das will niemand gern glauben, und mich dünkt, man kann's mit Händen greifen. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 24)

Here Werther seizes upon a key insight of Rousseau: the lack of a metaphysical difference between adults and children. Adults, like children, are motivated by immediate self-interest rather than “true purposes.”

Philipp Blom writes of Rousseau’s idealization of children (in *Émile*), who are guided by “spirit” and uncorrupted by book learning:

Always fascinated by childhood development (unless, it must be added, it occurred in his own house), Rousseau based much of his moral thought on observing children and extrapolating from their growth to arrive at principles he believed to be true for all humankind. We have all been children, he appears to argue, and this shared experience is the truest teacher of who we are. In early life, Rousseau writes, a child is neither good nor wicked. Like an animal it is simply amoral, acting on impulses and needs, loving those who are good to it, and possessed by a healthy, life-preserving self-love.⁵⁸

Rousseau’s thinking is different from that of the French materialists in that he endorses a childlike attitude for the entirety of human life, seeking to minimize the role of reason in adulthood, whereas the Holbach clique with which he feuded valued many aspects of a child’s approach (such as curiosity and open-mindedness), but deemed such a mentality inadequate for grown adults, as children are also impulsive, gullible and ignorant. This criticism of childhood (i.e. of the emulation of a child’s mind) is also evident in Radical thinkers’ emphasis on reason as a faculty, i.e. a way of thinking, that is universal to all mankind and which develops in childhood. It makes good sense, then, that Radical Enlightenment philosophers, who stress the universality of the capacity to reason in all (adult) humans, would abstain from idolizing a state, childhood, in which humanity’s capacity to reason is not fully developed (for biological reasons relating to brain development, primarily). This is not to say there are not some positive things about childhood (some of which also carry over into adulthood) recognized both by Rousseau and by Radical Enlightenment thinkers. Blom writes on this topic:

⁵⁸ Philipp Blom, *A Wicked Company*, New York; Basic Books, 2010: 202.

In early life, Rousseau writes, a child is neither good nor wicked. Like an animal it is simply amoral, acting on impulses and needs, loving those who are good to it, and possessed by a healthy, life-preserving self-love. Then puberty strikes. An adolescent notices changes in his body, new strength, new desires. He is confused (the development is described from the male perspective), he looks around himself to compare his development with that of his peers, and he seeks to gain advantage and distinction to impress girls. Comparison engenders value judgments and competitiveness; it twists a child's healthy self-love (*amour de soi*) into a narcissistic, egotistical love, or *amour propre*. The latter spawns inequality, personal property, and hatred – the moral ruin of society. (Blom 202-203)

The aspect of childhood on which both Rousseau and Radical Enlightenment thinkers agree is the amorality of children, and it is likely that they would agree that society is capable of encouraging forms of competition that are detrimental to both individuals and society at large. It seems unlikely, however, that Radical Enlightenment thinkers would accept Rousseau's formulation that the moral ruin of society originates in a process of comparison rooted in each individual's natural biological development within society. Spinoza, for example, worked specifically against contractual theories of society, instead arguing that social and political structures be brought into harmony with human nature; this approach avoids founding a political system on the premise that natural human behaviors are anti-social and in need of being restrained. (This topic is discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.)

It is also unsurprising that a Moderate Enlightenment thinker of the more mythical sort (by which I mean “tending to embrace mystery”), like Rousseau (as opposed to a skepticism-based Moderate such as Hume), might endorse childhood over adulthood given his belief in the detrimental impact of reason on the well-being of society. If reason and intellectual development offer nothing positive to individuals or society, it is logical to reject them in favor of childhood: in this regard, Rousseau's thinking is very similar to Christian thought, in that the faith and minds of children are idealized (Matthew 18:3 and Luke 18:16, the texts of which are cited on

page 119) and reason as well as healthy adult behaviors within society are viewed as a corruption to be discarded in favor of the “paradise lost” of simple child-like faith and obedience.

Concerning the relationship between reason and nature, Werther says:

Das bestärkte mich in meinem Vorsatze, mich künftig allein an die Natur zu halten. Sie allein ist unendlich reich, und sie allein bildet den großen Künstler. Man kann zum Vortheile der Regeln viel sagen, ohngefähr was man zum Lobe der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft sagen kann. Ein Mensch, der sich nach ihnen bildet, wird nie etwas abgeschmacktes und schlechtes hervor bringen, wie einer, der sich durch Gesezze und Wohlstand modeln läßt, nie ein unerträglicher Nachbar, nie ein merkwürdiger Bösewicht werden kann; dagegen wird aber auch alle Regel, man rede was man wolle, das wahre Gefühl von Natur und den wahren Ausdruck derselben zerstören! (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 28)

Werther’s formulation posits a dichotomy between “nature” (*Natur*) and “rules” (*Regeln*), both of which are terms that can and do have very different meanings for many people. One way to interpret nature versus rules is as descriptive versus prescriptive thinking. Because human modes of thinking about nature exist separately from nature’s functioning, it is “truer” to the functioning of nature to proceed from observation to systematizing. Unless systems are based upon observation, they force observation into pre-conceived forms of rationality, or teleological systems of thought.

Werther’s complaint that “rules destroy the true feeling and expression of nature” is a complex one when viewed in the Radical-Moderate Enlightenment paradigm of Jonathan Israel. On the one hand, the Radical Enlightenment heavily values empirical data. On the other hand, the Radical Enlightenment rejects teleologies. Werther’s heavy emphasis on nature itself, or on observation, could be read, when taken out of the context of the rest of the novel, as a kind of radical form of Lockean empiricism, rejecting all systematizing completely. However, when Werther’s comment about nature and rules is viewed in the broader context of both Locke’s

entire system of thinking (including his physico-theology) and the broader context of Werther's other remarks, it seems most logical to read Werther's comment as Spinozist.

Spinoza's system, unlike very strong forms of empiricism or rationalism, occupies a middle ground in that it is highly systematic, but also in that his system stresses observation and begins by evidencing ontological and metaphysical categories that many other systematizers were more apt simply to posit. As will be explained in greater detail later in this chapter, Spinoza's system is in many regards similar in structure to evolutionary theory in that it is strictly materialistic and is essentially guided by a kind of universal theory upon which very many aspects of nature and the human experience can be based, and which, importantly, accords with observation. Spinoza's system, therefore, is focused on observation and systematizing.

Additionally, Werther's comment that "rules, like bourgeois society, will not bring forth indecent or bad things" but will still never build "den großen Künstler" is very reminiscent of a comment made by Karl in *Die Räuber*:

Das Gesetz hat zum Schneckengang verdorben, was Adlerflug geworden wäre.
Das Gesetz hat noch keinen großen Mann gebildet, aber die Freiheit brütet
Kolosse und Extremitäten aus. (Schiller 32)

In *Die Räuber*, Karl does not argue that laws are inherently immoral or that those who follow them are bad: *au contraire*, Karl declares those who follow the rules to be at best decent, orderly people, and at worst, uncreative, unremarkable people. Werther specifically mentions that the rules result in the positive aspects of bourgeois society, primarily orderliness and security, but that it will not build a "great artist," or in the case of Karl in *Die Räuber*, "extremities and colossi."

II. Younger Goethe on Nature and Older Goethe on Nature

Astrida Orle Tantilillo, in her work *The Will To Create* (2004), writes extensively on Goethe's thinking on nature, and throughout she attributes thinking to Goethe that is very Rousseauist. One of her theses is that Goethe rejected the notion of the necessity of all things, a point essential for Spinozism. In her conclusion, Tantilillo writes of Goethe:

If one examines his notion of the type apart from his analysis of evolving animal forms, one could argue, on the one hand, that he is a Platonic idealist, wedded to static forms. On the other hand, his characterization of nature's will closely resembles a Lucretian one, in which both organic and inorganic entities may at any given moment depart from a regular course. Goethe, however, differs from Lucretius in the important respect that Goethe does not view nature as simply spontaneous and random, but rather as possessing the ability to direct its will.⁵⁹

That Tantilillo creates a dichotomy between "spontaneous/random" and "ability to direct will" is revealing, and one must consider to what extent spontaneity in nature and will directedness of nature are related to determinism/necessity and "free will". Spontaneity and directedness must logically stand in some relation to determinism and free will, and Tantilillo here suggests that they occupy opposite ends of a paradigm. It is, however, possible to view aspects of nature as governed to some degree by (partially) randomized events, while the broader functioning of nature remains wholly determined. This is, in fact, the view held by modern physicists, chemists and other natural scientists, who view quantum events as random but events above the sub-atomic level as determined; Tantilillo's privileging of a postmodern perspective in the categories created throughout her analysis (Tantilillo 188-194) reveals her bias, and more importantly, explains why she attempts to situate Goethe between postmodern views and Moderate Enlightenment views, completely surpassing the Radical Enlightenment in her considerations.

Throughout Tantilillo's work, she portrays Goethe as viewing nature as a cultural construct. At one point in the conclusion, Tantilillo writes: "Goethe did not equate nature with

⁵⁹ Astrida Orle Tantilillo, *The Will To Create*, Pittsburgh, PA; University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002: 192.

necessity.” (Tantillo 189) Tantillo’s statement directly implies that Goethe is not a Spinozist, as Israel writes of Spinoza’s system:

Hence, it follows logically that ‘in nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way’ (I Prop. XXIX).⁶⁰ Hence also the chain of necessity is infinite, and infinitely complex, and only partially knowable through human science, not because elements of the chain are conceptually beyond the reach of human reason but because science cannot empirically take account of the whole of such a sequence. (Israel, 2001, 231)

It is important to note that Spinoza’s system claims that human science cannot grasp the entirety of the natural world, not that nature itself possesses no real existence and/or is a cultural construct. Tantillo acknowledges that Goethe did not deny the real existence of nature:

However, while his notions of truth and hierarchy are not static (as were those of Aristotle and Plato), he (unlike many philosophers and theorists today) still maintains the existence of both... However, unlike many postmoderns he [Goethe] believed that nature is not simply a cultural construct (although certain categories within it may be), but has its own independent and qualitative existence. (Tantillo 191-192)

If Goethe’s views are not like Plato’s and Aristotle’s, or essentialized privileging of “ideal forms,” then they are not like those of pre-Moderns or Moderate Enlightenment thinkers. If Goethe does not argue that all of nature is a cultural construct, then his views differ from those of postmoderns. Tantillo calls the in-between position Goethe occupies as naturally leading to confusion (Tantillo 192), but she strongly emphasizes those views of his that are postmodern (so much that she repeatedly makes extra mention that he is not quite a postmodern), but Goethe’s belief in a nature with real existence that contains some culturally constructed categories places him much closer to the views on nature of the Radical Enlightenment.

Goethe’s emphasis in *Die Farbenlehre* on the fallibility of the senses and the “will” of nature is better understood within the polemical context in which he conceived it. Specifically,

⁶⁰ Embedded Quote From: Benedict de (Baruch) Spinoza, *Ethics*, The Collected Works of Spinoza, ed. Edwin Curley. 1 vol. so far, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1985: 435.

Goethe was assailing the empiricism of Newton and Locke, which he saw as insufficiently open-minded to grasp new effects of nature, whereby new discoveries could be made, dogmatism could be avoided (allowing for greater revising and review within the scientific community), and a more philosophically and epistemologically sound theory could be realized in scientific practice.

III. Goethe, *Werther*, Perception and Knowledge of Causes in Nature

Furthermore, it is misleading to speak of Goethe as possessing only one view of nature, given the ease of discerning more radical tones in his earlier writings. Arthur Zajonc writes in his essay *Goethe and the Science of His Time* (1998) that:

Goethe recognized two periods in his relationship to nature: one during the decade prior to 1780, until his thirty-first year, and the second taking him through the next fifty years to his death. Each stage, he said, had its own special character.⁶¹

A bit later, Zajonc specifically mentions the time in which *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* was written as being emblematic of Goethe's pre-1780 views on nature. To demonstrate this more clearly, he cites from the English version of *Goethe's Allgemeine Naturlehre* to exemplify this phase, which in the original reads:

Natur! Wir sind von ihr umgeben und umschlungen – unvermögend aus ihr herauszutreten, und unvermögend tiefer in sie hinein zu kommen. Ungebeten und ungewarnt nimmt sie uns in den Kreislauf ihres Tanzes auf und treibt sich mit uns fort, bis wir ermüdet sind und ihrem Arme entfallen.⁶²

This statement from Goethe's early life emphasizes the tragic nature of existence. Furthermore, this statement implies that nature does not exist for humanity, but rather that nature exists in spite of humanity. While this sentiment stands in stark contrast to the view of the church, it also

⁶¹ Arthur Zajonc, *Goethe and the Science of His Time, Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature*, ed. David Seamon and Arthur Zajonc. New York; State University of New York Press, 1998: 20.

⁶² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Allgemeine Naturlehre*, Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, vol. 25, 1989: 11.

suggests determinism. Additionally, it is a departure from the arguments from design frequently employed by the English physico-theologists surrounding Newton, Locke and Bacon (and those who carried their banner further, such as Voltaire). Zajonc then characterizes the post-1780 period of Goethe's life:

As we cross into the eighties of the eighteenth century, however, Goethe's dynamic phase matured toward a more practical and intellectual, if no less intense, interest in nature, that radiated into and so infected the rest of the Weimar court that Friedrich von Schiller, who visited Weimar when Goethe was in Italy, would lament. (Zajonc 21)

Zajonc's choice to preface Goethe's later phase is rife with bias. Goethe's earlier phase is merely "dynamic," while his later phase is "mature," "practical," "intellectual," and "infectious".

It seems apparent that Goethe's focus in his thinking on nature turned to a heavy emphasis on observation and real interaction with studied objects and a rejection of pure hypothetico-deductive approaches to science, but this does not mean he finds the hypothetico-deductive or Newtonian approach totally in error. On this topic, Zajonc writes:

Yet, it would be a great error to imagine that the Romantics, particularly Goethe, opposed science. The problem was not with science as such but with the specific kind of science then practiced. The task, therefore, was one of transformation, not rejection. Science was to be widened in scope; it was to reach deeper and higher. (Zajonc 18)

Of central importance to Goethe's view of scientific methodology is to admit the validity and necessity of human interpretation (i.e. qualitative data) to scientific experience. This admission is necessary to uphold principles of skeptical inquiry and to remain philosophically consistent (by acknowledging the impossibility of absolute knowledge and the inevitability of quantitative data being sieved through imperfect human senses and reasoning). Werther emphasizes this early in *Die Leiden*:

Daß das Leben des Menschen nur ein Traum sey, ist manchem schon so vorgekommen, und auch mit mir zieht dieses Gefühl immer herum. Wenn ich die

Einschränkung so ansehe, in welche die thätigen und forschenden Kräfte des Menschen eingesperrt sind, wenn ich sehe, wie alle Würksamkeit dahinaus läuft, sich die Befriedigung von Bedürfnissen zu verschaffen, die wieder keinen Zweck haben, als unsere arme Existenz zu verlängern, und dann, daß alle Beruhigung über gewisse Punkte des Nachforschens nur eine träumende Resignation ist, da man sich die Wände, zwischen denen man gefangen sitzt, mit bunten Gestalten und lichten Aussichten bemalt. Das alles, Wilhelm, macht mich stumm. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 22)

Werther establishes that man is limited in his ability to grasp what one might call “things-in-themselves”, and that any attempt to assert complete certainty (something *gewiss*) is a “dreaming resignation.” However, Goethe does not mean to belittle perception (indeed, *Die Farbenlehre* emphasizes what human perception has to add to scientific endeavors), but rather to correct the abuses of some scholars at that time who were overly certain of their methods, or in error about the truth-status of the knowledge they could acquire by their methods. Werther’s reference to prison walls that are imaginatively painted may be an allusion to Plato’s “walls of a cave” metaphor about the imperfection of human senses, and although Werther does not advocate a Platonic approach to nature, he may intend to emphasize it due to its complete opposition to the Newtonian approach.⁶³

IV. Knowledge of Nature, Children, and Speculative Thought

Werther emphasizes man’s knowledge about nature further. Werther’s primary comment about children, which was also referenced earlier in this chapter, emphasizes the lack of essential difference between adults and children:

Daß die Kinder nicht wissen, warum sie wollen, darinn sind alle hochgelahrte Schul- und Hofmeister einig. Daß aber auch Erwachsene, gleich Kindern, auf diesem Erdboden herumtaumeln, gleichwie jene nicht wissen, woher sie kommen und wohin sie gehen, eben so wenig nach wahren Zwekken handeln, eben so durch Biskuit und Kuchen und Birkenreiser regiert werden, das will niemand gern glauben, und mich dünkt, man kann’s mit Händen greifen. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 24)

⁶³ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, ed. John Llewelyn Davies and David James Vaughn, London; MacMillan and Co., 1908: xxv. Google Book Search.

This passage, part of the same letter as the “träumende Resignation” comment, further accentuates humanity’s inability to grasp final causes about its origins and motivations. Werther’s comment speaks not only to the limits of perception and the contingency and historicity of all knowledge, but also to man’s position within nature as an intentional agent formed by biological and social forces beyond his/her understanding. Spinoza writes of this ungraspable chain of necessity in terms of free will, in Part Two, Proposition 48 of his *Ethics*:

There is in the mind no absolute, i.e. no free, will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause, which is again determined by another, and that again by another, and so on to infinity.⁶⁴

Jonathan Israel argues that, because Spinoza argues elsewhere that mind is the extension of the body and that the two are one (for example, Part 2, Propositions 18 and 28), one can conclude: “Thus nature determines the mind in the same way it does physical things.” (Israel, 2001, 235) If the mind is determined and an extension of the body, then, it stands to reason (if one accepts Spinoza’s monism) that nature has not only determined man’s body, but also his mind. Nature, one way or the other, must produce effects that immediately bear upon the functioning of the human mind and upon human reasoning, whereby the human mind becomes incapable of getting outside of this cycle to observe the phenomena at work as an objective third party. Israel further cites Spinoza’s line of reasoning on this matter, stating:

Nor indeed can the human mind perceive any external body as it actually exists, except through its ideas of the impressions of its own body. This leads to the key doctrine that the ‘ideas of the affections of the human body, in so far as they are related only to the human mind, are not clear and distinct, but confused’ (II, Prop. XXVIII). Incorrect or false ideas, consequently, are no less based on reality than correct ideas but flow from the inadequate, mutilated and confused nature of our sense perceptions. (Israel, 2001, 234)

⁶⁴ Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. and trans. G.H.R. Parkinson, Oxford Philosophical Texts. New York; Oxford University Press, 2000: 155.

Werther's statements about man's own inability to reflect absolutely on other objects or the process within himself/herself are fully consistent with Spinoza's statements on necessity and nature in his *Ethics*. Spinoza's ethics argues that it is methodologically impossible for man to gain perspective on his experience from the outside, and he also establishes no age or conditions under which perspective could be gained. It is implied that man and child alike are incapable of absolutely understanding their drives, which is the same point Werther makes.

Furthermore, the topic of children and adults serves as an analogy for discussing the position of man within nature frequently:

Und nun, mein Bester, sie, die unsers gleichen sind, die wir als unsere Muster ansehen sollten; behandeln wir als Unterthanen. Sie sollen keinen Willen haben! – Haben wir denn keinen? und wo liegt das Vorrecht? – Weil wir älter sind und gescheuter? -- Guter Gott von deinem Himmel, alte Kinder siehst du, und junge Kinder und nichts weiter, und an welchen du mehr Freude hast, das hat dein Sohn schon lange verkündigt. Aber sie glauben an ihn und hören ihn nicht, das ist auch was alt's, und bilden ihre Kinder nach sich und – Adieu, Wilhelm, ich mag darüber nicht weiter radotiren. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 60)

Here again Werther reinforces the similar position in which adults and children find themselves, which serves a twofold purpose: first, it de-essentializes the difference between adults and children (which will later undermine the essentialized differences between humans and animals); second, it privileges childhood as the life-phase in which to assess what “Natural Man” is (as Rousseau also did), i.e. man unencumbered (or less encumbered) by the strictures of society.

Werther then points out that the Biblical God professes to prefer the mindset of children (Matthew 18:3: “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”⁶⁵ Luke 18:16: “But Jesus called them to *Him* and said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the

⁶⁵ *Bible, New King James Version*, Matthew 18:3, BibleGateway.com.

kingdom of God.”⁶⁶), i.e. a value Christians should share; Werther portrays the disparity between professed values and revealed values as hypocritical. Werther concludes this letter to Wilhelm by bemoaning that they also inculcate their children with these beliefs, whereby the cycle persists and significant social change becomes more difficult to achieve. Lastly, the emphasis on all of mankind being children, whether young or old, can be seen as a Spinozist point about the universality of human nature, i.e. that all humans are driven by natural drives and are amoral agents behaving gratefully and lovingly to those who are kind to them and cautiously and defensively to those who have been unkind.

Goethe’s thinking on nature is heavily focused on observation over abstract philosophizing. Werther encounters a young mother while walking, and he idealizes her focus on observation and experience (both of which Goethe also valued highly, according to the Schiller letter cited above):

Ich sage dir, mein Schatz, wenn meine Sinnen gar nicht mehr halten wollen, so linderts all den Tumult, der Anblick eines solchen Geschöpfs, das in der glücklichen Gelassenheit so den engen Kreis seines Daseyns ausgeht, von einem Tag zum andern sich durchhilft, die Blätter abfallen sieht, und nichts dabey denkt, als daß der Winter kömmt. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 32)

Werther’s observation here, when contrasted with his previous statement about the “Bestimmung des Menschen” shows two sides of the same thinking: the previous quote stresses that humanity is determined to busy itself with various tasks to avoid thinking about philosophical questions, while the second stresses that same thing while idealizing it as a genuine, innocent and simple approach.

⁶⁶ *Bible, New King James Version*, Luke 18:16, BibleGateway.com.

Dietrich von Engelhardt contrasts Goethe's stance on speculative thinking on nature to that of Schelling⁶⁷, and cites a letter from Goethe to Schiller from 1802:

Ich würde ihn öfters sehen, wenn ich nicht noch auf poetische Momente hoffte, und die Philosophie zerstört bei mir die Poesie und das wohl deshalb, weil sie mich ins Objekt treibt. Indem ich mich nie rein spekulativ verhalten kann, sondern gleich zu jedem Satze eine Anschauung suchen muß und deshalb gleich in die Natur hinaus fliehe.⁶⁸

The impossibility of interaction between subject and object is further emphasized in a letter to Schiller from 1798:

Mir will immer dünken daß wenn die eine Partei von außen hinein den Geist niemals erreichen kann, die andere von innen heraus wohl schwerlich zu den Körpern gelangen wird, und daß man also immer wohl tut in dem philosophischen Naturverstande zu bleiben und von seiner ungetrennten Existenz den besten möglichen Gebrauch zu machen, bis die Philosophen einmal übereinkommen wie das was sie nun einmal getrennt haben wieder zu vereinigen sein möchte.⁶⁹

Werther establishes that man is limited in his ability to grasp what one might call “things-in-themselves,” and that any attempt to assert complete certainty (to be *gewiss*) is a “dreaming resignation.” However, Goethe does not mean to belittle perception (indeed, *Die Farbenlehre* emphasizes what human perception has to add to scientific endeavors), but rather to correct the abuses of some scholars at that time who were overly certain of their methods, or in error about the truth-status of the knowledge they could acquire by these. When discussing Spinoza's views on men's ability to grasp “fundamental truths,” Israel writes, citing Spinoza:

But because the things men imagine vary and conflict, it is by no means surprising, Spinoza notes in passing, ‘that we find so many controversies to have arisen among men, and that they have finally given rise to scepticism’. ‘We see, therefore, that all the notions by which ordinary people are accustomed to explain

⁶⁷ Dietrich von Engelhardt, “Natur und Geist, Evolution und Geschichte. Goethe in seiner Beziehung zur romantischen Naturforschung und metaphysischen Naturphilosophie,” *Goethe und die Verzeitlichung der Natur*, ed. Peter Matussek. München; Verlag C.H. Beck, 1998: 62.

⁶⁸ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *An Friedrich Schiller*, 19 February 1802, *Goethe: Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 25 Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1998.

⁶⁹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *An Friedrich Schiller*, 6 January 1798, *Goethe: Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 24. Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1998: 477.

nature are only modes of imagining and do not indicate the nature of anything, only the constitution of the imagination.⁷⁰ (Israel, 2001, 233)

Spinoza's argument here was of greatest concern to religious thinkers, whose methodology was implicitly under fire, but it is also Werther's reference to prison walls that are imaginatively painted that may be an allusion to Plato's "walls of a cave" metaphor about the imperfection of human senses, and although Werther does not advocate a Platonic approach to nature, he may intend to emphasize it due to its complete opposition to the Newtonian approach.

Wenn Du fragst, wie die Leute hier sind? muß ich Dir sagen: wie überall! Es ist ein einförmig Ding um's Menschengeschlecht. Die meisten verarbeiten den größten Theil der Zeit, um zu leben, und das Bisgen, das ihnen von Freyheit übrig bleibt, ängstigt sie so, daß sie alle Mittel aufsuchen, um's los zu werden. O Bestimmung des Menschen! (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 20)

This passage from the beginning of *Werther* concerning man's fear of freedom is reminiscent of 20th-century existentialism in its characterization of man's relationship with freedom, and it sets the tone for much of the rest of the work. Werther's use of the term "Freyheit" is not meant in the same sense as in free will/determinism debates, but rather refers to free time in which people can ponder their existence and reflect on their choices. Reflection of this sort disquiets people because they cannot find any answers (as Werther states shortly later in the work), so they avoid it by busying themselves with menial tasks. Werther does not state that escapism of this sort is a bad thing, but rather implies that it is universal and determined: "ein einförmig Ding um's Menschengeschlecht" that is the "Bestimmung" of humanity.

V. *Werther*, Mental Illness, Depression and Suicide

Werther carries further his point that humans are, to a significant degree, determined by social and inherited factors when speaking with Albert about suicide (about which Albert had stated "der blosse Gedanke erregt mir Widerwillen" (Goethe, Fassung A, 94):

⁷⁰ Embedded Quote From: Benedict de Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, ed. Edwin Curley. Vol. 1; Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1998: 445-446.

Das ist ganz was anders, versetzte Albert, weil ein Mensch, den seine Leidenschaften hinreißen, alle Besinnungskraft verliert, und als ein Trunkener, als ein Wahnsinniger angesehen wird. – Ach ihr vernünftigen Leute! rief ich lächelnd aus. Leidenschaft! Trunkenheit! Wahnsinn! Ihr steht so gelassen, so ohne Theilnehmung da, ihr sittlichen Menschen, scheltet den Trinker, verabscheuet den Unsinnigen, geht vorbei wie der Priester, und dankt Gott wie der Pharisäer, daß er euch nicht gemacht hat, wie einen von diesen. Ich bin mehr als einmal trunken gewesen, und meine Leidenschaften waren nie weit vom Wahnsinne, und beydes reut mich nicht, denn ich habe in meinem Maasse begreifen lernen: Wie man alle ausserordentliche Menschen, die etwas grosses, etwas unmöglich scheinendes wirkten, von jeher für Trunkene und Wahnsinnige ausschreien mußte. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 94-96)

The determined nature of human behavior is cast against the tendency of society to create rigid normativities. Werther deplores Albert's assumption that a person from a different background, of dissimilar temperament, and displaying different emotions is less moral and reasonable.

Werther emphasizes that many who accomplish extraordinary things are often driven by varying motives and therefore may seem odd. Indeed, it is often passionate people and unstable people who become geniuses given that one must challenge the entire existing edifice of knowledge and convention if one is going to come up with something truly different, or if one is going to produce a great work of art. The Radical Enlightenment stresses the need to encourage the development of the reasoning capacity, but it also stresses the importance of descriptive learning and teaching. According to the Radical Enlightenment, one must approach all things descriptively, i.e. with an open mind. Such an open approach allows people to seek information that interests them and pertains to their natural talents; it also allows them to accept because they rationally assent to it. This inductive approach allows genius to develop wherever there is potential for it.

Werther continues his discussion of mental health with Albert, emphasizing through examples and rational arguments the similarities between physical and mental ailments. Werther prefaces an example of a girl who commits suicide:

Nun mein Lieber, laß uns das auf den Geist anwenden. Sieh den Menschen an in seiner Eingeschränktheit, wie Eindrücke auf ihn wirken, Ideen sich bey ihm fest seetzen, bis endlich eine wachsende Leidenschaft ihn aller ruhigen Sinneskraft beraubt, und ihn zu Grunde richtet. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 98)

Werther mentions that ideas “anchor” (*fest seetzen*) themselves in man’s mind, which he means is an aspect of human nature that is not “freely chosen.” The collection of ideas that a person has is environmentally controlled, Werther’s assertions imply, which, of course, represents a radical departure from dualistic, Cartesian modes of considering the substance-relatedness of body and mind. If body and mind are comprised of the same, material, determined substance, then illnesses of the mind should be viewed in the same way as illnesses of the body: neither chosen nor rejected, merely amoral states of being.

Albert, Werther’s partner in this conversation, declares this example too general and abstract, whereupon Werther tells a story of an innocent young girl who falls in love, is abandoned by the object of her affection, and then commits suicide while in the deepest throes of despair. Werther’s characterization of the girl evokes sympathy and emphasizes her seeking of simple pleasures. Werther concludes the story thus:

Die Natur findet keinen Ausweg aus dem Labyrinth der verworrenen und widersprechenden Kräfte, und der Mensch muß sterben. Wehe dem, der zusehen und sagen könnte: Die Thörinn! hätte sie gewartet, hätte sie die Zeit wirken lassen, es würde sich die Verzweiflung schon gelegt, es würde sich ein anderer sie zu trösten schon vorgefunden haben.

Das ist eben, als wenn einer sagte: der Thor! stirbt am Fieber! hätte er gewartet, bis sich seine Kräfte erhohlt, seine Säfte verbessert, der Tumult seines Blutes gelegt hätten, alles wäre gut gegangen, und er lebte bis auf den heutigen Tag! (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 102, 104)

Werther reinforces his claim that it is just as impossible to will oneself out of a mental illness as it is to will oneself out of a physical illness. Werther’s work, like that of Enlightenment philosophers of monism, is to undermine the privileging of the mind.

Werther's de-privileging of the mind also performs the Radical Enlightenment work of deconstructing teleologies in human nature. Much teleological thinking about human nature is based upon the assumption that the human mind is fundamentally different from the human body, and that the human mind is the highest and best expression of humanness. Werther and the monists of the Radical Enlightenment discard the assumption that mind and body are separate and the mind deserving of preference. It becomes clear that Werther thinks of the human in a more holistic way: as a combination of mind, body, and experiences, with all of these factors equally and inextricably a part of an individual.

Werther had ruminated on man's search for meaning very early in the work, before he was beset by depression at his inability to realize a relationship with Lotte. In the context of walking around his hometown village and speaking with the normal residents and their daily activities, Werther writes:

Ich gestehe dir gern, denn ich weis [sic], was du mir hierauf sagen möchtest, daß diejenige die glücklichsten sind, die gleich den Kindern in Tag hinein leben, ihre Puppe herum schleppen, aus und anziehen, und mit großem Respekte um die Schublade herum schleichen, wo Mama das Zuckerbrod hinein verschlossen hat, und wenn sie das gewünschte endlich erhaschen, es mit vollen Bakken verzehren, und rufen: Mehr! das sind glückliche Geschöpfe! Auch denen ists wohl, die ihren Lumpenbeschäftigungen, oder wohl gar ihren Leidenschaften prächtige Titel geben, und sie dem Menschengeschlechte als Riesenoperationen zu dessen Heil und Wohlfahrt anschreiben. Wohl dem, der so seyn kann! Wer aber in seiner Demuth erkennt, wo das alles hinausläuft, der so sieht, wie artig jeder Bürger, dem's wohl ist, sein Gärtchen zum Paradiese zuzustutzen weis, und wie unverdrossen dann doch auch der Unglückliche unter der Bürde seinen Weg fortkeicht [sic] und alle gleich interessiert sind, das Licht dieser Sonne noch eine Minute länger zu sehn, ja! Der ist still und bildet auch seine Welt aus sich selbst, und ist auch glücklich, weil er ein Mensch ist. Und dann, so eingeschränkt er ist, hält er doch immer im Herzen das süsse Gefühl von Freyheit, und daß er diesen Kerker verlassen kann, wann er will. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 24)

It is significant that Werther writes of suicide in this way at a time when he is emotionally stable. If Werther only spoke of suicide in this way after he has suffered significant setbacks and/or is

depressed, Goethe's presentation of the subject matter would be quite different philosophically: it would have been introduced as a train of thought that can be produced by depression or mental illness. Presented within the context of Werther's positive and life-affirming experiences returning to his hometown, Werther's presentation of suicide as an option, without attaching strongly worded remonstrations, places his ruminations firmly within a secular context. Other than Werther's statement that a man can "leave this dungeon when he wants" (*daß er diesen Kerker verlassen kann, wann er will*), he references the person who knows, in his humility, "where all this is leading" (*wo das alles hinausläuft*) as well as the man astute enough to "make his little garden into a paradise" (*sein Gärtchen zum Paradiese zuzustutzen*).

Werther uses religious terminology, "garden" and "paradise", in revealing his secular framework: in Biblical terms, gardens are on Earth and during mortal life (such as the Garden of Eden) while paradise is in heaven and during the afterlife. Werther's suggestion that the man who knows to make his little garden (i.e. his short life on Earth) into a paradise is a pointed jab at the otherworldly, ascetic focus of Christianity and an argument in favor of viewing mortal human life as an end in itself, which is a decidedly naturalistic/materialistic view. Furthermore, the comparison between earthly life and a garden evokes the end of Voltaire's *Candide* ("il faut cultiver notre jardin"⁷¹), which I interpret as a plea to build a society wherein everyone has the means and the freedoms to live out his or her earthly life (i.e. cultivate his or her garden) without being bothered or impeded upon by others. Werther's allusion to "where all this is leading" is also a naturalistic/materialistic point, suggesting that it all leads nowhere, and hence that a this-worldly focus is the only sensible approach. More so than other quotes in the early part of *Werther*, this quote emphasizes the secular, radical nature of Werther's thinking on nature.

⁷¹ Voltaire, *Candide and other Philosophical Tales*, 1759, ed. Morris Bishop. New York; Charles Scribner's Sons Publishing, 1957: 134.

Heather Sullivan writes of Werther's suicide:

The novel's conclusion, with this turn away from the delirious urge to sink into nature's "flux" as if it were a separate outside force, and the brutal rupture of Werther's body with a shot to the head, presents a Goethean moment of insight where the protagonist's deluded visions of immersion meet their demise. This bodily rupture parallels the textual rupture occurring when the editor ends Werther's epistolary monologue with his own and other voices. In emphasizing these two ruptures, I read Werther's suicide not just as the reaction to frustrated love and confused social ambition, or as the breakdown of the modern, middle-class subject with creative impulses, but rather as the annihilation of the narrative form that claims unmediated immersion into "nature." Werther's dangerous quest thus ends violently with the ruptures of monologue and body, yet the space thereby opened up offers an alternative possibility for nature texts.⁷²

Sullivan provides an intriguing insight into the implications Werther's suicide has for the attainability of immersion within nature. Werther strives to become one with nature just as the reader strives to understand Werther's story; in both cases, a subject is trying to understand an object, and in both cases the subject only experiences the object in a mediated fashion (for Werther, through his senses as his body is separate from nature; for the reader, through Werther's tale) but is unable to experience the object unmediated. Werther's suicide represents a rupture of both Werther's existence as a subject separate from nature and the reader's existence as a subject separate from Werther's tale. In the former the subject ceases to exist and in the latter the object ceases to exist. Werther's suicide therefore can be read as an allegory of the intractability of the subject-object problem. The impossibility of directly experiencing the world received its most famous expression in the Enlightenment in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, wherein he argues that humans, bound by their senses, reside within the phenomenal sphere of mediated experience and are unable to know "things-in-themselves," i.e. experience the noumenal sphere.

⁷² Heather Sullivan, "The Dangerous Quest for Nature Narratives in Goethe's Werther: A Reading of the Ruptured Monologue and the Ruptured Body," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Summer 2007, Reno, NV; University of Nevada, Reno, 2007: 2.

Critique of religion also finds its way allegorically into *Werther*, which further clarifies

Werther's statements on suicide and reinforces his materialism:

Vater, den ich nicht kenne! Vater, der sonst meine ganze Seele füllte, und nun sein Angesicht von mir gewendet hat! Rufe mich zu dir! Schweige nicht länger! Dein Schweigen wird diese durstende Seele nicht aufhalten – Und würde ein Mensch, ein Vater zürnen können, dem sein unvermuthet rückkehrender Sohn um den Hals fiele und rief: Ich bin wieder da mein Vater. Zürne nicht, daß ich die Wanderschaft abbreche, die ich nach deinem Willen länger aushalten sollte. Die Welt ist überall einerley, auf Müh und Arbeit, Lohn und Freude; aber was soll mir das? mir ist nur wohl wo du bist, und vor deinem Angesichte will ich leiden und geniessen – Und du, lieber himmlischer Vater, solltest ihn von dir weisen?
(Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 190)

Although Werther's plea uses religious terminology, it is clear that he is referring to Spinoza's God, i.e. nature, while simultaneously attacking the supposed perfection of a god who would create beings made up in such a way as to suffer greatly, and placed into a world rife with injustices to maximize that suffering. Werther's entreaty to the "Vater" not to be angry because he is ending his journey earlier than he naturally would ("Zürne nicht, daß ich die Wanderschaft abbreche, die ich nach deinem Willen länger aushalten sollte"), is an attempt to reconcile a violation of the self-preservation drive, *conatus* (whereby all beings seek to avoid pain and preserve their life as long as possible) with the insight that it is possible for a person's life to be more marked by suffering than pleasure, whereby the principle reason for existing, pleasure, becomes unattainable. Werther's comments amount to a lament at the injustice, toil, absurdity and frivolousness of life in a completely amoral universe. Simultaneously, Werther's insight that the world lacks *telos* is deeply liberating; humans are free to determine the course of their lives without having to submit to any absolute truths. While freedom brings anxiety, as noted by Kierkegaard and the atheist existentialists of the second half of the 20th century, it is vastly preferable to the alternative, and human metaphysical freedom is vastly undercelebrated.

VI. *Werther*, Monism and Determinism

Jonathan Israel asserts the relationship between belief in monism and other “Radical” beliefs in his work *A Revolution of the Mind*. Israel states:

Beyond a certain level there were and could be only two Enlightenments – moderate (two-substance) Enlightenment, on the one hand, postulating a balance between reason and tradition and broadly supporting the status quo, and, on the other, Radical (one-substance) Enlightenment conflating body and mind into one, reducing God and nature to the same thing, excluding all miracles and spirits separate from bodies, and invoking reason as the sole guide in human life, jettisoning tradition. (Israel, 2010, 19)

Ultimately, it is the logical interrelatedness of monism to determinism and dualism to free will libertarianism that creates the connection to system-overthrowing Radical thought and tradition-preserving Moderate thought respectively.

Israel documents debates about monism/dualism and free will/determinism as seen in specific debates between philosophers, one example of which is a dispute an anonymous author, commonly believed to be the Dutch Huguenot Jean-Frédéric Bernard (according to Israel), and ‘s-Gravesande, a Dutch philosopher who repudiated Descartes and sought rather a middle ground between the “self-contradictory views of Descartes” and “Spinozism”:

‘Il me semble, Monsieur’, he [presumably Bernard] continued, that your distinction between physical necessity and moral necessity is a wholly unreal one which consists ‘seulement en paroles, n’y ayant au fond aucune difference réelle’⁷³...Philosophically, ‘s-Gravesande was on a path very different from that he professed to be taking: if outside causes work on us no less effectively, and in the same way, as one body impacts on another, and if we are moved by desires and inclinations unaware of this causation, are not ‘véritablement et en effets tels que l’homme de Spinoza?’⁷⁴ (Israel, 2006, 219)

Bernard’s criticism is that attempts to disambiguate mind and body are purposeless and largely semantic in nature, given that the cause (influence from the outside world) and effect

⁷³ Embedded Quote From: Jean-Frédéric Bernard, *Lettre à Monsieur G.J. ‘s-Gravesande professeur en philosophie à Leide, sur son Introduction à la philosophie*, Amsterdam, 1736: 10-11.

⁷⁴ Embedded Quote From: Jean-Frédéric Bernard, *Lettre à Monsieur G.J. ‘s-Gravesande professeur en philosophie à Leide, sur son Introduction à la philosophie*, Amsterdam, 1736: 18.

(disorder/ailment) are identical in both mental and physical matters. It requires more explanation to differentiate the two than to treat them as one, which also suggests the two should be treated the same, philosophically speaking. Essentially, Bernard prods ‘s-Gravesande and others to abandon all preconceptions about body and mind being ontologically distinct if no demonstrable differences exist in their causes, effects or manifestations.

Jonathan Israel also discusses the importance of mind-body substance theory for ethics, and specifically the question of the foundations of political equality:

Where, for Descartes, human minds are equal because they are intrinsically separate from bodies and equally capable of reason and, for Locke, because each soul is equally valid and potentially redeemable through spiritual striving, in van den Enden, Spinoza, Mandeville, and Diderot, with their one-substance monism, there is an altogether neater conjunction of instinct, appetite, will, and mind. Whether men act rationally or irrationally, whether they are primitive or sophisticated, ignorant or knowledgeable, ultimately makes no difference. Man’s motivation is always the same and men’s wills always equivalent. Whether a given mind has clear and distinct ideas, or is confused, it ‘endeavours’, as Spinoza expresses the point in proposition ix of part iii of the *Ethics*, ‘to persist in its own being over an indefinite period of time and is conscious of this *conatus*’.⁷⁵ (Israel, 2006, 560)

Israel declares Spinoza and others’ egalitarianism “an altogether neater conjunction” because it takes into account both aspects of human personhood, mind and body, rather than merely addressing the mind as a factor determining a person’s spiritual and civil status, as did Descartes and Locke. A weakness in Locke’s thinking is its extreme consequentialism: all minds are equal not because of some attribute of their constitution in any instant, but because of how their status can be changed (damned vs. saved). Descartes’s reasoning is also weakened by its use of negative attributes: minds are equal because of what they are not: bodies. The strength of the Spinozist argument is its simplicity (fewer ontological categories) and its use of positive arguments. The Spinozist argument avoids making common-sense style distinctions between

⁷⁵ Embedded Quote From: Benedict de Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt, vol. 3. Heidelberg: Carl-Winters-Verlag, 1925: 147.

substances and proceeds in a bottom-up fashion, which focuses on the means by which bodies are influenced by their environment, namely by the forces of a deterministic physics and universe, and then extrapolates this evidence from the micro-molecular level to the macro-molecular level of human nature and behavior.

Jonathan Israel further contextualizes mind-body debates as they occurred in the so-called “Nature of God Controversy” (1710-1720):

Bernoulli had argued – like Geulincx and Malebranche – that the soul cannot ‘operate on the body’ or cause it to move, maintaining that there is neither ‘commercium neque nexum’ (traffic nor connection) between the two. Moreover, again like Geulincx and Malebranche, he also held that the two function together as a simultaneous unity. This perplexing paradox served as Hulsius’ point of attack. For what in practice, he demanded, is the difference between Descartes’ inexplicable union of body and Spinoza’s godless conflation of body and soul into a single *substantia intelligens*, unifying extension and mind? (Israel, 2001, 438)

Hulsius, who assumes the Spinozist side in this debate, antagonizes the mind-body distinction drawn by his opponents as mere semantic play, which corresponds to no meaningful ontological distinction, and hence, pursuant to Occam’s Razor, should be eliminated from considerations for the sake of simplicity. Dualists were committed to a separation of soul and body, because if it were otherwise and the soul were a part of the body, then it must also be determined, and if it is also determined, it is unclear to what extent people can be held responsible for their sins, which furthermore calls God’s perfection as understood at that time into question. Conflation of mind and extension (body) also leveled many other distinctions upheld by the church, such as the difference between humanity and animals, men and women, adults and children, and believers and heathens. Furthermore, monism’s focus on the material, natural, deterministic and historical nature of all things undermined nearly everything that theology used to support its claims: spirituality, supernaturalism, free will and ahistorical decrees, seen in the claims to timelessness and divine inspiration of religious texts.

It is therefore of great significance that Werther emphasizes the unity of body and mind, and the explicitness with which he does this constitutes the most radical impulse of the novel. The foundation Werther establishes earlier in the work about mind-body substance theory later underlies other radical points he makes about ethics and religion, and also supplements an understanding of his strong emotions for Lotte.

VII. *Werther*, Affect, and Political Theory

Werther's focus on emotions, which supposedly are dismissed as "irrational" by many Enlightenment thinkers, is sometimes considered a reaction against the Enlightenment. Indeed, the Enlightenment is commonly characterized as cold, characterized by an overly rationalized thinking that glosses over or openly dismisses subjectivity, and is not true to the sentimental affective aspects of human experience. While this may hold true for some philosophers, it does not for several prominent Radical Enlightenment thinkers, who included "affect" as an ultimately completely rational facet of human experience that must be accounted for in any ethical or political system.

Affect is pivotal to Spinoza's entire philosophical system, and specifically to his political thinking, writes Willi Goetschel in *Spinoza's Modernity*:

The opening word of the *Political Treatise* – "affects" – names the grounds on which Spinoza's political theory is based. Rather than power, force, state, laws, rights, or government, the crux of political life consists for Spinoza in what undergirds all these concepts and what determines human behavior: the affects. To the degree that they not only represent manifestations of inner life but function as the motor for human motivations, the affects drive behavior, attitudes and actions.⁷⁶

Goetschel sees Spinoza's emphasis on affect as a naturalization of political theory, as well as the beginning of an articulation of a political system. Goetschel further describes Spinoza's political system as "non-contractual", whereby it is differentiated from the systems of Hobbes and

⁷⁶ Willi Goetschel, *Spinoza's Modernity*, Madison, WI; University of Wisconsin Press, 2004: 67.

Machiavelli. Goetschel argues that Hobbes' and Machiavelli's contractual political systems are ultimately teleological because they proceed backwards from a consequence, or effect, toward a cause.

Spinoza's view of affect is that it is a natural, even evolutionary product of human nature itself. Because humans are natural products of natural causes, entirely comprised of one material substance, and driven foremost by a self-preservation drive (*conatus*), all ways of thinking about humanity should be built upon and consistent with this insight about the functioning of human motivation and desire. Spinoza's integration of *conatus* into his political system does not place blame upon flaws in human nature for the non-functioning of what would otherwise be the most ideal political systems, but rather suggests that proposing a political system the primary ideal of which is *not* to maximize the ability of the majority of humans to lead lives that are authentic to their nature is itself either non-sensical or misanthropic. Furthermore, teleological political systems must entail an attempt to impose a top-down morality onto human nature much in the way that the Abrahamic religions do, an act criticized by Spinoza and other Radical thinkers in various places for its ahistorical evidentiary standards.

Goetschel further elucidates Spinoza's thinking on the role of affectivity for political theory:

Together with the right=might equation, the emphasis on the role of affectivity provides the platform for arguing that natural power – that is, natural rights (“*naturalis potential sive jus*”) – are not to be understood as grounded in the rationality of human nature but, instead, in whatever drive determines people to act and preserve their existence...But whereas Spinoza maintains that conventionally understood forms of rationality play no role for a theoretically consistent definition of natural rights, he comprehends the nonrational side of human nature quite differently from Machiavelli and Hobbes. For Spinoza, human desire is firmly tied to the instinct of self-preservation. But this instinct does not imply irrational behavior. The theory of affects allows Spinoza to distinguish his view from one that casts human nature in terms of the opposition between rational and irrational. (Goetschel 70)

Spinoza rejects that the criterion of rationality/irrationality is relevant to questions of human nature, and this, again, is rooted in his monistic metaphysics and determinism. That which exists in nature or as an immediate product of it, whether this be physical nature itself or human nature, is neither rational nor irrational, right nor wrong; it simply, amorally, indifferently exists (according to Spinoza, and as will be seen later, other Radical thinkers). Where Hobbes and Machiavelli define natural human behaviors that undermine their ideal state as irrational, Spinoza defines ideal states that undermine natural human behaviors as unethical (or “irrational”, because doomed to failure because contrary to human nature).

Goetschel further explains the originality of Spinoza’s system:

Only after Spinoza has established affectivity as the material base for human action does he proceed to address the dialectics of reason. He describes reason as the tenuous, negotiated balance achieved between antagonistic affects. Liberated from its rationalist Cartesian framework and its underpinnings, reason no longer appears as an invariable given of human nature but rather as the product of affectual countercurrents. Constituting itself in the process of working through the claims and counterclaims produced by the clashing of opposing affects, reason emerges as the culminating moment in the balancing of the affectual economy – as a regulative idea, as it were. This view does away with the kind of foundational fantasies otherwise predominant in classic seventeenth-century political theory. It serves as a safeguard against theories that want to reduce human actions to a preconceived form of rationality, theories whose view on social and political regimes runs counter to a critical concept of rationality. Replacing voluntaristic free will with a psychodynamic theory of affects, Spinoza opens up the way for a dynamic understanding of human interaction. (Goetschel 72)

Goetschel’s explanation further explains the foundation of Spinoza’s political order as what, for the contemporary reader, may best be described as an account most reminiscent of evolutionary psychology. Spinoza’s theory on the role of affect functions in part because it reclaims the term from critics who place it firmly within the undetermined, dualistic mind; Spinoza’s decision to do this is unsurprising given his all-leveling monism and materialism. If the mind is thinking

matter, and matter is determined, then all human actions, rigorously philosophically speaking, must be the product of natural causes, which themselves also must be determined. Even if (or though) a philosopher assumes a position of compatibilism on free will, (s)he must remain committed to natural explanations and not assume a supernatural explanation is needed, or even condemn it to the realm of the unknowable, or worse yet, judge it irrational. Affect, then, needed a consistent, materialist, monistic re-interpretation, which Spinoza provided within the general context of the articulation of a political order. Because Spinoza posits *conatus*, or self-preservation, as the ultimate foundational principle in the frame of which all human behavior can be understood, he resembles the Darwinian explanations of later centuries, and his entire system is extrapolated from what is essentially a universal equation.

“The best way to organize a state is easily discovered by considering the purpose of civil order, which is nothing other than peace and security of life”⁷⁷...But what follows is an argument that no state will last unless it is founded on principles that guarantee peace and security. (Goetschel 76-77)

Goetschel introduces Spinoza’s concepts of *potentia* and *potestas* by providing discussion of the reason for the existence of civil states. *Potentia* refers to the “unrestricted entirety providing ultimate legitimation” (Goetschel 78), i.e. the entire human population. *Potestas* refers to the power as immediately exercised, whether by representatives, monarchs, councils or whatever other form of government may arise. The primary concern of Spinoza as political theorist is to determine in what relationship *potentia* and *potestas* should stand in his system. A difficult act of balancing between peace/security and civil rights arises, whereby it becomes appropriate to consider the relationship between natural rights and civil rights. Goetschel writes on this point:

The distinction between *potestas* and *potentia* suggests that if civil rights are grounded in natural rights the latter provide the foundation for the legitimation of civil rights and cannot therefore be replaced by them. For key notions like peace,

⁷⁷ Embedded Quote From: Benedict de (Baruch) Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis; Hackett, 1995: 61.

security, law, obedience and citizenship (*civitas*) this means that the juxtaposition of civil versus natural rights no longer implies the possibility of natural rights' being overwritten by civil rights. (Goetschel 77)

Goetschel emphasizes Spinoza's bottom-up, secular approach by explaining how Spinoza derives civil rights from natural rights. The purpose of requiring civil rights to be grounded on something is to defer to a standard of justification that *is* (nature) rather than something that *should be* (morality), whereby the "moralistic fallacy" (arguing that because something should be, it is) is avoided. Such a grounding in nature not only avoids the inevitable teleological pitfalls lurking in absolute proclamations of value, but it also circumvents the task of producing and defending a complex moral system in favor of deferring to bringing laws and conventions into harmony with that which simply exists. Defining what is "natural" is a complex scientific and philosophical task in itself, of course, yet seeking to base politics and ethics on something, which, in the absence of religion, is metaphysically closest to superseding the limits of human experience, ultimately produces an ethical system that avoids proclaiming arbitrary moral values to be followed absolutely. By doing this, Spinoza's system avoids simply arbitrarily proclaiming civil rights such as "equality, brotherhood and freedom" without attempting to root this in anything inherent to the human condition; indeed, simply asserting that civil rights must be upheld absolutely is philosophically on the same level of justification as the Ten Commandments, an epistemological standard Spinoza specifically sought to overthrow with all of his works (including *Ethics*, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, and *On the Improvement of the Understanding*). Emphasizing the secondary status of civil rights to natural rights was a common feature of thinkers of the Radical Enlightenment, such as Spinoza, Bayle, Diderot, d'Holbach and Helvétius, while Moderate Enlightenment thinkers such as Hume, Locke, Newton, Bacon, Voltaire, and Rousseau frequently discounted notions of Natural Rights entirely

in favor of a set of Civil Rights as a set of values beyond which no regress is possible or should be undertaken.

While working as a secretary in Italy after getting away from Wahlheim and Lotte, Werther deplores the society of ranks:

Und das glänzende Elend die Langeweile [sic] unter dem garstigen Volke das sich hier neben einander sieht. Die Rangsucht unter ihnen, wie sie nur wachen und aufpassen, einander ein Schrittgen abzugewinnen, die elendesten erbärmlichsten Leidenschaften, ganz ohne Rökgen!...Zwar ich merke täglich mehr, mein Lieber, wie thöricht man ist andre nach sich zu berechnen. Und weil ich so viel mit mir selbst zu thun habe, und dieses Herz und Sinn so stürmisch ist, ach ich lasse gern die andern ihres Pfads gehen, wenn sie mich nur auch könnten gehn lassen. Was mich am meisten nekt, [sic] sind die fatalen bürgerlichen Verhältnisse. Zwar weis ich so gut als einer, wie nöthig der Unterschied der Stände ist, wie viel Vortheile er mir selbst verschafft, nur soll er mir eben grad im Wege stehn, wo ich noch ein wenig Freude, einen Schimmer von Glück auf dieser Erde geniessen könnte. (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 130)

Werther is abhorred by the gap between rich and poor as much as he is by the petty competitiveness of rich and poor alike. From disgust at the society of ranks and the competitiveness it engenders, Werther quickly moves to a relative indifference (“ach ich lasse gern die andern ihres Pfads gehen, wenn sie mich nur auch könnten gehn lassen”). Werther then reveals that “the others” are not leaving him alone, because he is in fact prevented from pursuing Fräulein von B., a woman who reminds him of Lotte whom he has just met, because she is a noblewoman.

Werther’s comment that he understands how necessary the differences in rank are is unconvincing; it is particularly unconvincing when one considers that he immediately follows his overture to social hierarchy with an acknowledgment of the personal gain the system brings him. Werther then identifies the system of rank as impeding directly upon his life by preventing a potential courtship of Fräulein von B. “Other people,” i.e. outside forces, again dash Werther’s hopes for companionship” in this case in the form of the social hierarchy, shredding his

“Schimmer von Glück auf dieser Erde.” Werther’s disgust is deepened when he encounters Fräulein von B. in the company of her family and she speaks to him formally. Although Fräulein von B. apologizes to Werther later, Werther is sufficiently disgusted with her personally (“hohl sie der Teufel!” Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 142) and with a society that encourages socially discriminatory behavior such as hers that he fleetingly contemplates suicide: “. . .ich möchte mir eine Ader öffnen [sic], die mir die ewige Freyheit schaffte.” (Goethe, *Werther*, Fassung A, 146)

Werther’s comments about politics, society, and social structure are most consistent with a Spinozist Radical critique of hierarchy. Werther’s excoriation of the competitiveness of society rests on the idea that it is irrational for a society to be based upon mutually destructive competition rather than mutually beneficial cooperation. The gap between rich and poor that Werther bemoans is sufficiently large that it threatens Natural Rights, which Spinoza argues to be the most important task of the state. Within Germany and Italy (the countries Werther visits), some lack food and shelter in ways that threaten their existence while others live in extraordinary (and often inherited) excess. Werther’s observations of the socioeconomic differences visible within village life provide evidence of a fundamental ill in the organization of German and Italian society.

VIII. Conclusion

Die Leiden des jungen Werthers occupies a unique position between the literary streams known as Enlightenment and *Sturm und Drang*, and the position *Werther* occupies reveals assumptions and associations underlying the periodization. Romanticism is generally considered a reaction against the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment being an era in which emotions and intuitions were banished in favor of a mechanistic, calculating rationality that was considered untrue to the human experience and negative. The Enlightenment, however, is a more complex

intellectual movement than has been commonly acknowledged in the scholarship, as evidenced by Jonathan Israel's *Radical Enlightenment* trilogy, and it is therefore appropriate to reassess the traditional action-reaction relationship posited to exist between Enlightenment and Romantic literature, and furthermore, the way "Enlightenment literature" is understood.

An examination of these questions using Goethe's *Werther* shows many of the more "humane" impulses of romanticism are compatible with Spinozistic and other Radical Enlightenment views. Werther's views are materialistic and naturalistic, based on a one-substance theory mind and a compatibilist form of determinism. Werther views humans as amoral creatures who, similar to animals, are kind to those who show kindness to them, and he further believes that this state of affairs extends into adulthood. Werther nowhere argues for a need for a belief in mystery in order for human emotion to be counted a legitimate product of human cognition and reasoning.

Werther's views on nature have implications for political theory. Werther's statements about the need for individuals and society to bring their understanding of what should be into accordance with what simply exists is a rebuke of the social contract theories favored by such thinkers as Rousseau and Hobbes, and an embrace of the affect-based, non-contractual political theory of Spinoza, as is argued in Willi Goetschel's *Spinoza's Modernity*. Werther proposes that all thinking, and institutions by extension, be brought into accordance with the way that humans naturally are; his ideas are opposed to the contract theory idea that humans can, should or do relinquish their natural rights when entering into society. Spinoza's political theory argues that institutions should be restructured until they are in harmony with human nature, as government should exist for the benefit of the people and not for the benefit of the institutions themselves or the government itself.

Lastly, Werther's views on nature are also reflected in his musings on suicide and comments about depression and mental illness. Werther's discussion of death is filled with both positive and negative evidence for his materialism: positive evidence in his purely naturalistic discussion of the functioning of the human mind as driven by affect (rooted in *conatus*, the biological self-preservation instinct); negative evidence in his glaring omission of overtures to religion (natural or revealed), Judgment Day, or an afterlife of any kind. Werther presents life and death as free of absolute consequences, and his presentation of suicide as an escape for those whose life is unbearable torment without hope of amelioration is radically non-judgmental. Werther's non-judgmental discussion of suicide proceeds from his naturalistic understanding of mental illness: Werther regards mental illness as ultimately caused by natural forces in a manner analogous to physical illness, and hence neither ethically nor intellectually attributable to the personal will of the ill individual. *Werther* emphasizes the autonomy and self-determining capacity of individuals, which is an empowering, if often anxiety-inducing product of a nature without *telos*.

GESCHICHTE DES FRÄULEINS VON STERNHEIM, LA ROCHE
CHAPTER 4

I. Radical Enlightenment, Nobility, and Religion

The French Revolution was revolutionary not only because it marked the culmination of anti-monarchy sentiment, unmistakably represented by the guillotining of King Louis XVI, but also because it marked a change in attitude toward the nobility, who were dispossessed and executed in significant numbers during Robespierre's Reign of Terror. The attitude-shift toward the nobility extended far beyond the paranoid bloodletting of *La Terreur*; it rested upon a multi-faceted philosophical invective that had been undermining and ridiculing the supposed foundations of nobility throughout the entire 18th century. Jonathan Israel's distinction between Radical Enlightenment and Moderate Enlightenment holds true on the question of nobility with fewer exceptions than any other topic (religion, politics, nature, race, etc.) mentioned in this dissertation: Radical Enlightenment thinkers excoriated the concept of nobility as an utterly indefensible chimera, a sort of argument from authority resting on several other arguments from authority and hence even less founded than those beneath it; Moderate Enlightenment thinkers overwhelmingly defended some form of nobility, generally the traditional form (comprised of hereditary landed gentry, clergy and officials of the judiciary), and often tailored their positions on other issues to bolster their arguments for the necessity of the nobility.

Many philosophers were nobles themselves, some of them visiting and partaking in pan-European court culture and enjoying the patronage of heads of state; many nobles were receptive to reform-minded criticism which did not seriously threaten their position of social and economic dominance but were terrified of the all-leveling egalitarianism of the sort espoused by the *encyclopédistes*, and, of course, the revolutionary pamphlets.⁷⁸ Thinkers such as Locke⁷⁹,

⁷⁸ Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2011: 763.

Voltaire⁸⁰, and Rousseau (Israel, 2011, 105-107), for example, received widespread support for their respective systems, which, although different from one another, all ultimately upheld the existence of God and providence as well as the divinely installed nobility.

Radical Enlightenment philosophers were not able to maintain as high a public profile due to their irritating the powers-that-be; many Radical *philosophes* not only bit the hands that fed them, they also spat in them. Still, some Radical *philosophes* maintained relations with heads of state, although these relationships were strained and short-lived. Diderot, for example, famously maintained correspondence with, and even very notably visited, Catherine the Great of Russia, although he was quickly alienated by the yawning chasm separating the rhetoric in her letters and practice at her court.⁸¹ More typically of the treatment of Radical *philosophes* by rulers, Diderot saw his chef d'oeuvre, the *Encyclopédie*, banned, and his and his family's safety endangered regularly (Blom 37).

The system of noble privilege lay at the foundation of the *ancien régime* and as such was the issue of earthly human organization of the most pragmatic concern to philosophers; the question of noble privilege, which to a significant degree subsumes the question of democracy (direct or representative) versus monarchy (mixed, absolute and/or enlightened). Because religion, nature and politics were used to uphold nobility, Jonathan Israel emphasizes the primacy of the nobility question in the rhetoric just before the revolution, and specifically in the summer of 1788:

The legitimacy of the existing order had in the past always been both effectively and plausibly upheld by appealing to law, history, and tradition and to divine will. The *anti-philosophes*, here as so often, put their finger on the underlying issue in dispute. Inequality of condition and status and the mutual dependence of men,

⁷⁹ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2001: 356.

⁸⁰ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 2010: 210.

⁸¹ Philipp Blom, *A Wicked Company: The Forgotten Radicalism of the European Enlightenment*, Philadelphia, PA; Basic Books, 2010: 261-266.

held Chaudon, is ‘un dessein marqué de la Providence, un ordre légitime auquel tout home doit se soumettre’⁸² [a design marked out by providence to which all men should submit]. One either acknowledged the validity of the existing social order or one stood out as an obdurate rebel against it. In Christian theology, as in matters of faith, in spiritual status, the *anti-philosophes* reminded readers, that men are equal, not in worldly condition. Christian *philosophes* firmly acknowledged this; deists and the irreligious might acknowledge it too. Only those proclaiming a universal egalitarianism sought to overturn it, something impossible without a novel metaphysics to back it up. Here was a dimension of reality that no pragmatism or middle of the road position could evade. Philosophy either acquiesced or rebelled, splitting the Enlightenment fundamentally. (Israel, 2011, 766-767)

The existing order, then, is an inequality of ranks, which is primarily upheld by organized religion. The reminder of the *anti-philosophes* that Christian doctrine provides all an “equal” chance at salvation, i.e. spiritual equal opportunity, while underwriting a very large inequality of rank of opportunity in earthly life is an idea most popularized by Locke. Locke’s equality-in-the-afterlife, inequality-in-life argument was not only the foundation for his doctrine of tolerance (which excluded atheists, Muslims and Jews and equivocated about Catholics and other non-Protestant Christian sects) but also for his arguments for the necessity of a society of ranks.⁸³ Lockean tolerance was discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

Furthermore, Israel emphasizes the importance of the Radical Enlightenment call to relegate religion entirely to the private sphere when he speaks of the “novel metaphysics” needed to overthrow the divinely ordained nobility. It is no coincidence, then, that the Radical *philosophes* were overwhelmingly agnostic atheists or non-providential deists who rejected the Bible as the mythology and the *historical* document of a Bronze Age desert people, and consequently also categorically dismissed the interpretations thereof proffered by men empowered by other men to interpret it. With the religious justification for nobility removed, the

⁸² Embedded Quote From: Dom Louis Mayeul Chaudon, *Dictionnaire anti-philosophique*, vol. 1, Amsterdam, 1772: 324.

⁸³ Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006: 138-141.

justification through “nature” also quickly collapses given that the Christian interpretation of “nature” boils down to it being a physical manifestation of God’s will (as discussed in the 3rd chapter of this dissertation). The simultaneous ridiculing of the closely interrelated concepts of nobility and the Judeo-Christian God by the Radical *philosophes* provided the lion’s share of the intellectual justification for the democratic revolutions of Western Europe and the Americas.

Undermining the nobility was a task with which figures in the very early stages of the Enlightenment (i.e. pre-1720) were concerned, and Jonathan Israel devotes attention to the attempts by various philosophers to argue that no lineage test should be required in meting out government, military or other jobs. Israel writes of Frederik van Leenhof (1647-1712), a theologian from Zeeland who studied at Utrecht and Leiden and who wrote an influential work called *Hemel op Aarde* (Heaven on Earth) that was published in 1703:

Leenhof sees no justification for aristocratic attempts to monopolize political office, or exclude the humbly born from high positions if they possess the right qualities of intellect, ‘for history teaches that from the most humble background have come princes, kings and popes who have surpassed their predecessors.’⁸⁴ Thus, reverence for, and equality before, the law must be elevated above all other forms of submission and deference, whether to monarchs, rank, tradition, or clergy.⁸⁵

It is essential that Leenhof emphasizes both reverence for the law *and* equality before the law; in fact, the combination of these two comprises a defining feature of the Enlightenment. Laws existed in societies in varying forms stretching back at least to Hammurabi’s Code in the Middle East in the 2nd millennium B.C.E.⁸⁶ What separates many pre-Enlightenment legal codes from the legal codes desired by Radical Enlightenment thinkers is the Radical Enlightenment’s

⁸⁴ Frederik van Leenhof, *De prediker van den wijzen en magtigen konink Salomon*, Zwolle, 1700: 243-4.

⁸⁵ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2001: 410.

⁸⁶ C.H.W. Johns, Introduction, *The Oldest Code of Laws in the World: The Code of Laws Promulgated by Hammurabi, King of Babylon: B.C. 2285-2242*, by Hammurabi, trans. C.H.W. Johns, Edinburgh; T&T Clark, 1911: v-xii. Google Book Search.

rejection of any legitimacy to legal or metaphysical distinction between socioeconomic and cultural classes and their insistence upon the application of the same laws to all people.

Another early philosopher concerned with nobility, Simon Tyssot de Patot (1655-1738), wrote a “Spinozistic novel” in 1720 entitled *La Vie, les aventures et le voyage de Groenland du Reverend Père Cordelier Pierre de Mésange*, in which lost travelers from Europe encounter a long-isolated colony of people living in Greenland and worshipping Spinoza’s “God as Nature” and having nothing like nobility and rank as in Europe. Jonathan Israel characterizes Tyssot de Patot’s portrayal thus:

Equally, there is no justifiable basis for monarchy, nobility, or hierarchy, all of which predominate in Europe only because of the people’s ignorance, credulousness, and proneness to systematic deception. In reality, humbly born men are no less capable of leadership than those nobly born, and various examples are given... This novel, like its predecessor, is fiercely anticlerical and anti-Christian. But the ultimate goal is not just to sweep aside revealed religion and ecclesiastical power but, in the realm of fantasy at least, construct an entirely new society from which monarchy, nobility, and hierarchy are excluded, along with institutionalized inequality of the sexes, and in which the well-being of man comes to be based instead on philosophy, enlightenment, equality, virtue, and justice. (Israel, 2001, 598)

Israel’s analysis stresses that the novel’s anti-Christian focus does not serve the ultimate goal of simply removing religion from society because religion itself is the biggest woe afflicting European, but rather to undermine religion as a primary justifier of “monarchy, nobility, and hierarchy”. In *Sternheim*, existing ideas about nobility itself are directly attacked.

Discussion of religion in *Sternheim* contains many references to the reasonableness and ethicality of Christianity, but the manner in which this reasonableness and ethicality are discussed is decidedly focused on its decrees to help the poor, be generous and forgiving, and, in short, the edicts of social responsibility to other human beings contained within the New Testament. This is seen in Colonel Sternheim’s speech about preachers who are primarily

concerned with instilling fear in their congregations that is cited on the next page of this chapter, although it is also mentioned here:

Ich habe mich gründlich von der Güte und dem Nutzen der großen Wahrheiten unsrer Religion überzeugt; aber die wenige Wirkung, die ihr Vortrag auf die Herzen der größten Anzahl der Zuhörer macht, gab mir eher einen Zweifel in die Lehrart, als den Gedanken ein, daß das menschliche Herz durchaus so sehr zum Bösen geneigt sei, als manche glauben. (La Roche 41-42)

Colonel Sternheim's on the "goodness and usefulness of the great truths of our religion" inverts the typical order of justification within Christianity by positing that Christianity's teachings can be judged "good" and "useful" by standards that are metaphysically distinct from God himself (Israel, 2006, 198-199). The manner in which Sternheim argues for Christianity's goodness and usefulness, as well as his pleas elsewhere in the same monologue for *Menschlichkeit* ("humaneness" or "humanity"), reveals that he judges things by their utility to maintaining and improving the status of man as well as that, philosophically, he acknowledges that "goodness" and "usefulness" must have a secular, non-divine, and possibly innate source. Secular grounding of "goodness" remained a point of contention between Spinozists and some Cartesians and Voetian-Aristotelian theologians as well as Natural Law proponents well through the 1740s.⁸⁷

Additionally, Colonel Sternheim states that he has "fundamentally convinced" himself of the great truths of "our religion", a point which aligns in rhetoric with the views of the so-called physico-theologists. Physico-theologists acknowledged the primacy of reason as a criterion to establish the truth or non-truth of propositions, but they held that reason manifestly demonstrated the truth of revealed religion. Newton was the primary intellectual father of physico-theology, which originated in England, and Descartes in France made a similar plea for the reasonableness of Christianity. Physico-theologists sought to divest the materialists of their self-proclaimed monopoly on reasonable opinions:

⁸⁷ Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006: 194-200.

Claiming Sir Issac's [sic] science as the best way to demonstrate divine providence, Newtonians built a highly integrated physic-theological system encompassing not only science, religion, and philosophy but also history, chronology, Bible criticism, and moral theory which became vastly influential throughout eighteenth-century Europe and America, enabling them to speak of the 'materialists', as Clarke puts it, as the 'great enemies of the mathematical principles of philosophy'. (Israel, 2006, 203)

"Science to demonstrate divine providence" is the best way to describe physico-theology, and the wording used by Colonel Sternheim with Sophie evokes physico-theology, which was a long established school of thought at the time in which *Sternheim* is set. *Sternheim* was written by Sophie von La Roche and published in 1771 under the auspices of Wieland and the novel is set in the later Enlightenment; Newton established physico-theology and was corresponding about his ideas for a new system already in the 1690s, and this system was very influential by the 1710s (Israel, 2006, 204). By the 1750s, Newtonian physico-theology became a dominant force in Eastern Europe and Russia as well:

In this way Newton built a scientific and intellectual empire, or 'espèce de monarchie universelle' as Voltaire dubbed it, its innate superiority, comprehensiveness, scorn for continental systems, and essential 'Britishness' all alike contributing to generate its special mystique... (Israel, 2006, 204) ⁸⁸

Newton's system had caused a dramatic shift in strategy among the Moderate mainstream and within universities, and physico-theological "Arguments From Design" had become progressive yet respectable ways to balance an acceptance of a determined physical universe and a belief in an undetermined mind and a providential God. Physico-theology and Cartesianism, which has been discussed elsewhere in this dissertation, are systems whose conclusions are in political and philosophical harmony: Cartesianism addresses the mind-body problem, while physico-theology addresses everything else, ranging from questions of the natural sciences to the social fields of history and philosophy/religion.

⁸⁸ Embedded Quote From: François-Marie Arouet Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques* (1773), ed. R. Naves. Paris; Garnier Publishing, 1988: 123.

When Colonel Sternheim states that he has “fundamentally convinced” himself “of the great truths of our religion”, he is clearly situating himself within the well known, moderate, and socially acceptable and intellectually respected discourse of “Enlightened Christianity” and physico-theology, or within Jonathan Israel’s framework, Moderate Enlightenment. However, in the same breath in which Colonel Sternheim implies that the standards for “good” and “useful” are metaphysically independent of God, he also questions the doctrine of the Original Sin and the innate depravity of man.

Yet Sternheim’s avowal of reasonable Christianity is situated alongside social and political beliefs that lean toward Radical Enlightenment political views:

Ich setze dieses nicht allein darin, Güte und Gerechtigkeit auszuüben, sondern auch in der Untersuchung: ob nicht die Umstände meiner Untertanen in andrer Austeilung der Güter, in Besorgung der Schulen, des Feldbaues und der Viehzucht zu verbessern seien? Ich habe mir von allen diesen Teilen einige Kenntnis erworben; denn in dem glücklichen Mittelstande der menschlichen Gesellschaft, worin ich geboren wurde, sieht man die Anbauung des Geistes, und die Ausübung der meisten Tugenden nicht nur als Pflicht, sondern auch als den Grund unsers Wohlergehns an. (La Roche 39)

The principle according to which Colonel Sternheim organizes his estate is not only one economic efficiency, but also humane treatment and conditions of labor. It is important that Sternheim mentions that his structuring of his estate is not designed in this way out of a sense of obligation to be charitable; he perceives economic gain for both upper and lower classes through a more even distribution of wealth and property:

Moreover, since inherited wealth and inequality extended far beyond the purely economic sphere, the growing rift over free-market economics tended to infuse and exacerbate the whole of the wider argument about privilege, social structure, and rank. It is useless to strive for the moral improvement of men and society, insisted Diderot, Helvétius, and d’Holbach, as long as the material interests and prejudices of the strongest are organized in such a way as to pervert both morality and society, as d’Holbach put it.⁸⁹ The radical enlighteners considered ruinous

⁸⁹ Embedded Quote From: Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d’Holbach, *Essai sur les préjugés: Ou de l’influence des opinions sur les moeurs & sur le bonheur des hommes*, Paris, 1770: 130-131, 136.

socially, morally, politically and culturally the hereditary principle as applied to land, high offices, wealth, and rank.⁹⁰

Colonel Sternheim organizes his estate in a way that in accordance with the ideals of a socially conscious free-market economy, namely a purely meritocratic and equal opportunity economy in which all are educated to perform the work for which they possess a natural predisposition and desire and are compensated fairly for their work (and certainly compensated sufficiently that their motivation to continue working is not one of fear, but of fulfillment and satisfaction). Sternheim, who in this instance is the strongest within the society of his estate, wholly lacks the prejudices of the noble class lamented by Diderot, Helvétius, and d'Holbach, whereby it becomes possible for structural reform to occur in a top-down fashion within his microcosm of society, which, with the unwillingness of hereditary nobility to share power, education, and opportunity, was not possible in the macrocosm of European society. Sternheim's way of structuring his estate improves his life and the lives of his subordinates through a combination of economic reform and social justice. The purpose of Sternheim's organization is not, importantly, to amass the greatest material wealth possible, however distributed; the purpose is to guarantee certain material conditions, which facilitates greater personal happiness for all.

Furthermore, Sternheim's statement that he sees the "advancement of intellect" "not only as duty, but as the reason for our [the middle-class's] well-being" is a pointed jab at the nobility. Sternheim implies that the nobility not only pursues virtue for the wrong reasons, but that their virtue is inferior to that of the middle class in ways that are objectively demonstrated by the rise of the middle class in recent centuries (historically, particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries). Sternheim's criticism of the nobility is in concert with Enlightenment-era critique of the nobility as a class of people living on the accomplishments of their forebears who did not contribute to

⁹⁰ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 2010: 94-95.

society's good and efficient functioning. Furthermore, many nobles originally acquired their status by taking from others, or otherwise forcefully acquiring power and prestige.

II. Radical Enlightenment, Education, and Meritocracy

Concerning the source of hereditary rule and power, Jonathan Israel summarizes Thomas Paine's three stages of human governments as laid out in his work *Rights of Man* thus:

First, mankind evolved from the "government of priestcraft" in remote times to states based on "the uncivilized principle of governments founded in conquest" in more recent eras, a system in which aristocracy is the essential element and the whole edifice rests on schemes "to govern mankind by force and fraud, as if they were all knaves and fools."⁹¹ (Israel, 2010, 33-34)

Paine's third stage is a government operated with the consent of and for the common good of everyone in it. The aristocracy and nobility, then, did not attain their power through courtly manners, efficient business and resource management or any utility to the wider societies they rule; they attained it in the ugliest of ways, by brute force, as the animals do. They do not maintain their power through the rational, educated, and informed consent of those they govern, but rather by institutionalizing supposedly divinely ordained class differences to ensure that only birth, and not utility-based merit can obtain power. The aristocracy exercises mental and psychological violence on its subjects in order to maintain these lies and preserve their power, just as they exercised physical violence to seize power in the first place. Their position was obtained through violence and is maintained through violence; Thomas Paine bemoans this style of government as brutish and uncivilized.

From the earliest stages of the Enlightenment in the 1660s to the late hour of the *Encyclopédie* and the distribution and discussion thereof, identifying clergy and nobility as

⁹¹ Embedded Quotes From: Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, ed. E. Foner. 1790; repr. New York; Library of America, 1985: 69-70, 83.

having obtained their power wrongfully and preserving it brutally and unjustifiably formed a beginning critical impulse of broader philosophical systems:

Radical writers despised the clergy and their privileges; but they were equally hostile to the principle of aristocracy. Exactly the same unremitting demolition of status as Meyer performs on the ecclesiastical estate was wrought by Spinoza, van den Enden, Koerbagh, and Mandeville, besides Knutzen, the *Symbolum*, Radicati, Vico, Wachter, von Hatzfeld, Edelmann, Meslier, Morelly, Mably, and other French writers, on the nobility. Meslier, like Morelly later, claims the forefathers of those who in his day ‘font tant de bruit et tant de cas de leur noblesse’ were actually nothing but cruel and bloody oppressors, brutal robbers, tyrants, and murderers. It was thus a blatant abuse and ‘injustice manifeste’ to seek to establish on such a ridiculously flimsy basis and pretext ‘une si étrange et si odieuse disproportion entre les différens états et conditions des hommes’ as existed in his day in France. Aristocracy and the consequent gap between noblemen and those over whom they tyrannize is inherently unjust, holds Meslier, being ‘nullement fondée sur le mérite des uns, ni sur le démerite des autres’ and thoroughly odious because, in those society designated nobles, institutionalized inequality chiefly inspires arrogance, ambition, and conceit which in turn only engenders envy, hatred, feuding, and vengeance.⁹² (Israel, 2006, 563-564)

From the early Dutch radicals to the French materialists later, Radical Enlightenment thinkers rejected the existence of hereditary nobility as, in Jonathan Israel’s words, “a ridiculously flimsy basis and pretext” for the appallingly enormous differences in the lot of different people within the same society. Furthermore, the arbitrary nature of the difference makes it yet more unjustified. The fact that benefits garnered by virtue of the accident of birth was so widely identified as arbitrary similarly rests on the conviction that the advantages enjoyed by nobles were undeserved. Additionally, although the word is not used explicitly, the concept of merit articulated by the Radical philosophers was necessarily interwoven with a program to provide equal opportunity. Without an opportunity to gain education, skills, or other forms of utility to society, it is impossible to order a society according to the true realized merit-potential of all its members; the arbitrariness of birth and nobility would continue to exercise fundamentally unjust influence on the process. Inequality of opportunity amounts to (institutionalized inequality),

⁹² Embedded Quote: Jean Meslier, *Le Testament*, ed. R. Charles. 3 vols., Amsterdam, 1864 [1729]: 173, 178, 169.

which “only engenders envy, hatred, feuding, and vengeance”. An egalitarian, meritocratic society, then, should seek to reward and encourage behaviors that benefit the wellbeing of all of society, whether these behaviors be demand-driven efficient commerce and innovation, social or education services, or teaching and researching for the aid of current and future generations. It is only through violence that such an extraordinarily arbitrary and unfair system as that of 17th and pre-revolutionary 18th-century Europe could persist.

It follows that education for all is identified by Radical Enlightenment thinkers as critical to the establishment of a meritocratic, egalitarian, democratic society. Israel writes of the Dutch philosopher Franciscus van den Enden, whose *Vrije Politieke Stellingen en Consideratien van Staat* (1665) extensively thematized the role of education in improving the lot of humanity:

Convinced that a new kind of education, weaning the common people away from prejudices encouraging credulity and inequality, would strengthen liberty, toleration, and democracy, in particular by exposing and discrediting the deceit of priestcraft, kingship, and aristocracy, van den Enden proclaims equality an inestimable truth and precious social reality ever vulnerable to being obscured and subverted by imposture and deception. (Israel, 2006, 569)

For van den Enden, the problem was not that no education was at work at all; it was that the wrong people controlled it. The people can neither consent to nor reject their government if they lack an ability to understand their situation (basic education), gather independent information (freedom of the press), and choose rationally among options, with a basic understanding of the theoretical justifications underlying what they choose to support (humanistic education). Van den Enden, who was a Dutch contemporary of Spinoza, emphasized education as the single most necessary step to reforming society on the eve of the Enlightenment.

Jonathan Israel describes the opinions of Pierre Bayle, who wrote of education after van den Enden but still in the early Enlightenment era:

Bayle, always fascinated by the question of how a notion contradicting the most elementary rules of natural reason can be believed by almost everyone in a particular group, offers a cultural explanation, maintaining that credulity, superstition, and defiance of the rules of reason stem principally from traditional structures of education. Conventional education, he argues, easily erases awareness of the fundamental laws of reason which means also, the two being so closely linked, that it readily obliterates all foundations of equity and justice, substituting the most monstrous injustice in the name of peoples, religions, rulers, or groups provided this is supported with mysterious terminology and theological explanations. (Israel, 2006, 569)

In his *Commentaire philosophique sur les paroles de Jésus-Christ* (1686), Bayle spells out what defines “traditional structures of education”, namely a list of incomprehensible doctrines and edicts, which are upheld by “mysterious terminology and “theological explanations”⁹³ Bayle’s explanation introduces the concept of “natural reason”, and if the schools at the behest of the priestcraft are contravening natural reason, then what the people are being taught must be “unnatural”. Bayle means to imply precisely this with his charge of “unnaturalness”: the in-born ability of people to grasp fundamental concepts of justice and reason is actively perverted by the priestcraft, who work to keep the people in beastly ignorance and who reactivate the people’s fear of damnation and social consequences by alluding to theological absurdities which they have conditioned the people to be unable to assess for themselves. Bayle argues that education must be removed from the hands of the clergy if any progress on questions of equality, justice and human rights are to be made.

Adriaen Koerbagh, another Dutch contemporary of Spinoza, emphasized esteem for nobility stemming not only from wrongly structured education of the poor, but also education of the nobles themselves. He emphasizes this particularly in his 1668 work *Een Bloemhof van Allerley Lieflijkheyd sonder Verdriet* (A Flower Garden of All Manner of Loveliness Without Sadness). Jonathan Israel discusses Koerbagh’s criticism of nobility therein thus:

⁹³ Embedded Source: Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique sur les paroles de Jésus-Christ*, ‘*Contrains-les d’entrer*’, ed. Jean-Michel Gros. 1686; n.p. [Paris] 1992: 345.

The project to delegitimize aristocracy follows directly from the idea of basic equality adopted at the outset by radical thought in the 1660s. Who is ‘noble and who ignoble’ asserts Koerbagh in his *Bloemhof* of 1668, is a matter requiring careful consideration. For most men, it would appear, have dimly unsound and incorrect notions on this point. In his opinion, the ‘ignoble’ is merely he who is unlearned and lacks understanding even if incontestably descended ‘from the greatest king’: by contrast, ‘edel is hy die wijs en geleerd is alwaar da thy vande de armste bedelaar voortgekomen was’ [noble is he who is wise and learned even if he is descended from the poorest beggar]. Aristocratic birth, he suggests, in reality counts for nothing, the assumption being that noble birth is something very fine and legitimate being just a popular superstition.⁹⁴ (Israel, 2006, 564)

Koerbagh, who, along with Spinoza, is one of the Dutch originators of the Radical Enlightenment, asserts that ignorance and non-existent or bad education are the causes of the persistence of aristocracy. Koerbagh seeks to redefine the distinctions “noble” and “ignoble” by associating them with knowledge, skill, and accomplishment. The dismissal of birth itself as a meaningful criterion of value, whether value to the community at large or intrinsic value as reflecting some real difference or performative capacity, is a foundational point upon which Koerbagh, as well as other Radical Enlightenment thinkers, base many of their other opinions. As mentioned earlier, criticizing the corrupt structure of organized religion in the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as arguing for the factual non-existence of a god, providential or not, benevolent or malevolent, aided the delegitimization of the aristocracy, although the aristocracy was also extensively criticized in wholly non-religious ways.

Later in the Enlightenment, d’Alembert, originally Diderot’s main editor and co-author of the *Encyclopédie* before abandoning the project after controversy over the Geneva article threatened his personal livelihood, wrote of the corruption of the nobility through their own education:

The education of young nobles, being restricted to mere externals, doubtless equipped them ‘à imposer au peuple’, as he puts it, ‘mais non pas à juger les

⁹⁴ Embedded Source: Adriaen Koerbagh, *Een Bloemhof van Allerley Lieflijkheyd sonder Verdriet*, Amsterdam, 1688: 346.

hommes'. Regrettably, it was the custom in France continually to remind young *seigneurs* of the illustriousness of their names, and glory of their birth, thereby fostering an entrenched, institutionalized arrogance harmful to society instead of inspiring in them 'des motifs plus reels et plus nobles' and, in particular, reminding them 'sans cesse que les autres hommes sont leurs égaux par l'intention de la nature'.⁹⁵ (Israel, 2006, 565)

Every aspect of the educational system, that of the poor as well as that of the privileged, maintained the terrible status quo, wherein the overwhelming majority of humanity lived in appalling ignorance, servility and poverty, while a small elite lived in lavish excess. In a system wherein even those at the top are not properly educated to assess if their social position is just, almost no one is questioning or rationally assenting to the state of affairs. It is necessary, then, that the aristocracy receive an enlightened education that teaches them critical thought *and* exposes them to multiple philosophies of society so that they can become more conscious of the true nature of their governance, power, and ascendancy.

D'Alembert and Diderot also argued that the culture of servility and flattery that existed in court and noble circles further cemented inequality, as it reaffirmed notions of "virtue" and "nobility" that were arbitrary, and furthermore inflated the sense of self-worth of the nobility. Constantly receiving wholly undeserved compliments and deferential overtures to their value led many nobles to believe that the lower classes rationally assented to their privileged positions. On this point, Israel writes:

Many nobles, he [d'Alembert] complains, scarcely suspect that there exist numerous commoners who far surpass them in judgment, expertise, experience, and talent [d'Alembert, *Mélanges*, 100-1]. The falsity and speciousness of aristocratic culture seemed to d'Alembert nowhere more evident than in discussions about literature. Lamentably, most writers and poets in France had been thoroughly schooled in the arts of servility and flattery. This d'Alembert conceives as a vicious form of social corruption stemming from a brutally imposed but completely false conception of noble worth... In this way, a literary

⁹⁵ Embedded Quote: J. Le Rond d'Alembert, *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire et de philosophie*, 5 vols. Amsterdam, 1770: 100.

culture evolves which nourishes the very prejudice and imposture on which the false status and power of aristocracy rest...” (Israel, 2006, 565-566)

The culture of flattery supplemented the formal education of the nobility, further convincing them of the rightness of their station. The flatterers themselves begin to believe their own lies, which affirms the arbitrary differences in the ranks of people. Radical Enlightenment philosophers from Koerbagh, van den Enden and Spinoza to Bayle and Meslier, all the way to the *encyclopédistes* Diderot and d’Alembert argued that the social compulsion to compliment certain people for their superiority and merit when superiority and merit had not been demonstrated led to a complete perversion of truth and falsehood, noble and ignoble, and merit and uselessness.

III. Criticism of Nobility and *Sternheim*

Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim is filled with criticism of nobility, often arising within dialogue:

Es wäre mir lieber durch meine Gesinnungen den Beweis zu geben, daß ich von edeldenkenden Seelen abstamme, als wenn ein schöner Name allein die Erinnerung gäbe, daß ich aus einem ehemals edeln Blute entsprossen sei.⁹⁶

Fräulein von Sternheim’s misgivings about her integration into courtly life stem foremost from her discomfort with the nobility’s disregard for merit and the esteem afforded factors beyond individual control. Nobility of birth is particularly abhorrent to Sternheim, who, whenever forced to acknowledge it as a factor in her treatment of others, despairs of her ability to maintain a courtly life.

Sophie Sternheim is concerned throughout the novel with a shift to a meritocratic standard for good and bad rather than a hereditary test. She also emphasizes shifts from purely

⁹⁶ Sophie von La Roche, *Das Fräulein von Sternheim*, Stuttgart; Reclam, 1997: 108.

tradition and authority-based standards toward thought and conscience-based standards and ultimately to action-based standards. Sternheim advocates these shifts broadly in religion, politics and social and individual ethics, as does her husband. After Sophie has agreed to marry her brother's friend, Colonel Sternheim produces a lengthy monologue in which he tells his new wife of his views on various topics:

Wenn *mein Pfarrer* nur mit dem guten Bezeugen der *letzten* Lebensstage seiner Pfarrkinder zufrieden ist, so werde *ich* sehr unzufrieden mit *ihm* sein. Und wenn er die Besserung der Gemüter nur durch sogenannte *Gesetz- und Strafpredigten* erhalten will, ohne den Verstand zu öffnen und zu überzeugen, so wird er auch nicht mein Pfarrer sein. – Wenn er aufmerksamer auf den Fleiß im Kirchengehen ist als auf die Handlungen des täglichen Lebens; so werde ich ihn für keinen wahren Menschenfreund und für keinen guten Seelsorger halten. (La Roche 43)

Here, Colonel Sternheim, and Fräulein von Sternheim also, given that she agrees with his monologue at its conclusion, emphasizes the importance of deed-based Christianity that proceeds from a rational understanding of the rightness of its doctrines and a desire to do good for good's own sake. Sternheim explicitly disavows identity-based Christianity unconcerned with improvement of men's earthly lives and society, as well as a Christianity that seeks to exercise and maintain a position of power over subjects through the brutalizing combination of ignorance (not encouraging or enabling individual rational assent) and fear ("Gesetz- und Strafpredigten").

Colonel Sternheim's opposition to a legalistic form of religion privileges not only social cohesion and justice in a human's material, mortal life, but it also implicitly privileges humanity over God. God and religion in Sternheim's argument are, at an implicit level, tools to improve society and the material conditions of people. For example, his reference to a preacher being able to be both a "friend of man" ("Menschenfreund") and a "caretaker of souls" ("Seelsorger") gives primacy to the former. His manner of privileging the "activities of daily life"

(“Handlungen des täglichen Lebens”) over “diligence in churchgoing” (“Fleiß im Kirchengehen”) further stresses material, daily conditions over spiritual and religious concerns.

Furthermore, Sternheim’s radical points are introduced to the reader gradually at first, making concessions to both Moderate and Anti-Enlightenment positions, but Sternheim’s discourse becomes more vocally Radical. The following passage stems from the beginning of the novel, when a possible marriage between Sophie and Colonel Sternheim is being discussed among Colonel Sternheim, Sophie’s mother, Sophie’s brother (Colonel Sternheim’s friend), and Sophie’s sister (Charlotte). Sophie’s father responds to Sophie’s mother’s visible trepidation at the sudden suggestion of interclass matrimony:

“Teure Frau Mutter! alle Ihre Bedenklichkeiten sind gegründet. Der Adel soll durch adeliche Verbindungen fortgeführt werden. Aber die Tugenden des Sternheim sind die Grundlagen aller großen Familien gewesen. Man hatte nicht unrecht zu denken, daß große Eigenschaften der Seele bei Töchtern und Söhnen erblich sein könnten, und daß also jeder Vater für einen edlen Sohn eine edle Tochter suchen sollte. Auch wollt’ ich der Einführung der *Heiraten außer Stand* nicht gerne das Wort reden. Aber hier ist ein besonderer Fall; ein Fall, der sehr selten erscheinen wird: Sternheims Verdienste, mit dem Charakter eines wirklichen Obersten, der schon als adelich anzusehen ist, rechtfertigen die Hoffnung, die ich ihm gemacht habe.” (La Roche 32-33)

At first glance, this quote makes Sophie’s father appear anything but Radical, but his statements should be evaluated with regard to the timing and context of their appearance in the novel.

Colonel Sternheim is introduced as a young middle-class man concerned with maintaining social norms pertaining to class intermarriage and class status generally. By acknowledging the legitimacy of Sophie’s mother’s noble norms, and affirming the rightness of the fundamental distinction drawn between the nobility and the lower classes, Sophie’s brother (the Baron) ingratiates his friend to Sophie’s mother, congratulating her on belonging to an inherently superior class of people. Through this imitation of the courtly practice of mutual complimenting, flattery and deferential ingratiation of the subordinate party to Sophie’s mother, the Baron

assuages concerns that the union would bring dishonor to their noble family, whereby it becomes easier to envision Colonel Sternheim as a noble. Sternheim appears to assent to the traditional views about the ascendancy of the nobility. It is noteworthy, however, that the Baron neither invokes divine sanction of hereditary nobility nor enumerates the pragmatic, secular concerns bearing out the necessity of the nobility.

Charlotte, on the other hand, is the most concerned about the proposed bond between Colonel Sternheim and Sophie, her older sister. Charlotte perceives a potential marriage of Sophie to a non-noble as lowering the family status and endangering her own chance of marrying a noble:

“Ich habe Ihre Ausnahme schon gehört, die Sie für den edelmütigen Mann machen. Andre Familien werden auch Ausnahmen haben, wenn ihr Sohn Charlotten zur Gemahlin haben wollte...Freilich muß die jüngere Schwester böse sein, wenn sie sich nicht zum Schuldenabtrag will gebrauchen lassen!” (La Roche 33-34)

Charlotte is disinterested in questioning traditional thinking on class structure; her discourse is situated firmly within the existing normative paradigm. Charlotte’s manner of speaking about interclass marriage is very rigid; it posits categories of noble and non-noble as static categories and accommodates no upward mobility. Charlotte is strongly rebuked by her brother, the Baron for her indifference to virtue and rapid, self-concerned dismissal of Colonel Sternheim:

“Charlotte, rede nicht mehr...Die Sachen meines Hauses gehen dich nichts mehr an. Dein Herz entehrt die Ahnen, auf deren Namen du stolz bist! O wie klein würde die Anzahl des Adels werden, wenn sich nur die dazu rechnen dürfen, die ihre Ansprüche durch die Tugenden der edeln Seele des Stifters ihres Hauses beweisen könnten!” (La Roche 34)

Baron von Sternheim, whose opinions seemed conservative in his conversation with his wife only moments earlier, reveals that he considers the majority of nobles undeserving of that title. The Baron presents a new standard for what is “noble” or “good,” a standard that will be carried

further by Colonel Sternheim and Sophie herself. The Baron's reference to "the virtues of the noble soul of the originator of their house" ("die Tugenden der edeln Seele des Stifters ihres Hauses") is a reference not only to the actual originator of any respective noble house, but rather also to the currently living nobles themselves, given that it is earlier posited in *Sternheim* that "große Eigenschaften der Seele bei Töchtern und Söhnen erblich sein könnten" (La Roche 32), as well as the use of this hereditary argument in the historical justification for the ascendancy of the nobility provided by thinkers such as Locke. On the surface of the Baron's statement lies the assertion that the majority of nobles are not only not noble themselves, but also descend from equally ignoble ancestors. The Baron's statement advances the idea that virtue itself, the presence of which in a person is attested by non-spiritual actions, should stipulate nobility. For this reason, his comment that Charlotte's "heart dishonors the ancestors of whose name she is proud" (*entehrt die Ahnen, auf deren Namen du stolz bist*) is particularly biting, as it indicts not only Charlotte's character, but also signifies that she thinks her ancestors thought and acted similarly.

Sophie criticizes the nobility when, after the funeral of the family patriarch, i.e. Colonel Sternheim, she withdraws from courtly company to avoid having to give and receive false compliments:

Ich sagte zu mir: Eine Erziehung, welche falsche Ideen gibt, das Beispiel, so sie ernährt, die Verbundenheit wie andere zu leben, haben diese Personen von ihrem eignen Charakter und von der natürlichen sittlichen Bestimmung, wozu wir da sind, abgeführt: Ich betrachte sie als Leute, auf die eine Familienkränklichkeit fortgepflanzt ist; ich will liebevoll mit ihnen umgehen, aber nicht vertraut, weil ich mich der Sorge, mit ihrer Seuche angesteckt zu werden, nicht enthalten kann. (La Roche 67-68)

Sophie argues here that noble norms and ideas are so perversely removed from the values they profess to embody that she sees nobility as a hereditary disease that is also infectious. She

designates the behavior of many nobles “unnatural” and a deviation from their “moral appointment” (*sittliche Bestimmung*), which is nurtured by the example of their elders, given that subsequent generations seek the approval of former generations, both for social approval and to facilitate a transfer of power eventually. Sophie’s terminology is unquestionably derisive and is directed at nobles as a class, not as individuals, although Sophie does not eschew all contact with nobles; she assesses them on an individual basis, and seeks out closer acquaintanceship with those whose merits and values more closely align with her own.

Sophie von La Roche’s ability to place such radically anti-nobility statements into the mouth of a female protagonist with whom the reader is clearly led to empathize throughout the story is a sign of the lateness of the hour in which *Sternheim* was written. Sophie von La Roche was a part of the *Bürgertum* (bourgeoisie) herself, daughter of an illegitimate son of a count, while Christoph Martin Wieland, a very significant Enlightenment-era writer in his own right as well as a friend to La Roche who corresponded with her for decades, was the son of a pastor who had many noble patrons. Despite the social positions of La Roche and Wieland, as well as La Roche’s being a woman (the writing of literature being a presumptuous activity for women categorically at this time), La Roche was able to present such criticisms in explicit terms, and for them to be able to drive a significant portion of the novel’s plot is a sign of the times.

Although Sophie von Sternheim provides the Radical Enlightenment critique of nobility within the novel, she provides the Moderate Enlightenment views as well. Sophie tells her Radical views to her family and closest friends; she espouses the epitome of Lockean Moderate Enlightenment thinking on nobility to Frau T* in a letter filled with advice on how to educate children:

Gott habe zwei Gattungen Glückseligkeit für uns bestimmt, wovon die erste *ewig* für unsre Seele verheißen ist, und deren wir uns durch die Tugend würdig machen

müssen. Die zwote geht unser Leben auf dieser Erde an. Diese können wir durch Klugheit und Kenntnisse erhalten. Reden Sie Ihnen von der Ordnung, die Gott unter den Menschen durch die *Verschiedenheit der Stände* eingesetzt hat. Zeigen Sie Ihnen die *Höhere* und *Reichere*, aber auch die *Ärmere* und *Niedrigere* als *Sie* sind. Reden Sie von den Vorteilen und Lasten, die jede Klasse hat, und lenken Sie alsdenn ihre [sic] Kinder zu einer ehrerbietigen Zufriedenheit mit ihrem Schöpfer, der sie durch die Eltern, die er ihnen gab, zu einem gewissen Stande bestimmte...(La Roche 163)

Frau T* is a noblewoman who is impoverished by mismanagement of her estate and her social relations. She has six children, and a once-wealthy husband, Herr Rat (councilman) T*, but the family not only squanders its wealth, it also abuses the charity of family and friends, until Herr Rat T* is stripped of his position and the family loses everything. Sophie makes the acquaintance of Frau T* earlier in *Sternheim* on the street, and takes it upon herself to resolve her problems by educating her in the “proper way of thinking” (*richtige Denkungsart*). Sophie’s statement here stands in stark contrast to the opinions of Colonel Sternheim on the moral and physical equality of all people. Her statement to Frau T* aligns very well with John Locke’s opinions regarding the separateness of civil and spiritual status:

Since ‘every man has an immortal soul, capable of eternal happiness or misery; whose happiness depends on his believing and doing those things in this life which are necessary to the obtaining of God’s favour, and are prescribed by God to that end’, it plainly follows that dutifulness in this regard ‘is the highest obligation that lies upon mankind’. This is why, when discussing slavery, Locke, relying on the quasi-substantial dualism pivotal to his philosophical system, held that black slaves should be free to attend the church of their choice ‘but yet no slave shall hereby be exempted from that civil dominion his master hath over him’⁹⁷. (Israel, 2006, 139)

Locke condoned the existence of social rank, even slavery, and he had Biblical support for this position (see the slave-master verses in the New Testament: Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22, 1 Peter 2:18), which he and many other Moderate Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment figures regularly referenced. Although there are other Bible verses stressing the equality of men,

⁹⁷ Embedded Quotes From: John Locke, *Political Writings*, ed. David Wootton. London; Clarendon Press, 1993: 421.

the lack of an explicit injunction against slavery and hereditary rank led many like Locke to interpret divine intent on civil and spiritual status to be different. Precisely this is the position Sophie Sternheim articulates to Frau T*; Sophie also provides gender-specific behavior advice:

Von diesem Begriffe machen Sie die Anwendung, daß Ihre Söhne durch den Stand des Herrn Rat T* in den ersten Rang der Privatpersonen gehören...Der Ursprung des Adels wäre kein besonderes Geschenk der Vorsicht, sondern die Belohnung der zum Nutzen des Vaterlandes ausgeübten vorzüglichen Tugenden und Talente gewesen. Der Reichtum sei die Frucht des unermüdeten Fleißes und der Geschicklichkeit...Ihren Töchtern sollen Sie sagen, daß sie neben den Tugenden der Religion auch die Eigenschaften edelgesinnter liebenswürdiger Frauenzimmer besitzen müssen, und daß sie dieses ohne großen Reichtum werden und bleiben könnten. (La Roche 163-164)

Sophie's advice on "the source of nobility" as well as her gender advice has a vague conservative sound to it, but it also, through its vagueness, leaves room for less conservative interpretations.

Sophie's statement that "the source of nobility is no special gift of prudence, but rather the reward for the exercise of virtues and talents useful to the fatherland" establishes again, as earlier in the novel, a sense of merit based upon use-value to all of society, irrespective of class.

Radical Enlightenment thinkers and most Moderate Enlightenment thinkers shared Sophie's point on merit, while many Counter-Enlightenment figures maintained that the metaphysical distinction, divinely ordained, between nobleman and common man, sufficed as merit in itself.

Sophie's advice for raising girls is very vague; they must possess, aside from the "virtues of religion", the "traits of noble-minded, loveable women", which can be achieved and maintained "without great wealth". By referring merely to noble-minded, loveable women, Sternheim is

invoking tradition; she expects her reader to have knowledge about what is considered "edelgesinnt" and "liebenswürdig" for women. Furthermore, even if Sternheim does intend more conservative meanings with her vague language, it is possible that she is only doing so as a way to provide Frau T* with a way to succeed within the currently existing system. Sternheim's

statements to Frau T* are then a statement of an idealized nobility; she states that the nobility possesses the following noble traits for good reason, but the reader, having read her earlier complaints about the falseness of noble culture, which in the text is treated in many cases like a hereditary disease, suspects that Sternheim thinks most nobility do not actively embody the virtue and merit they really should if their position of privilege is to be considered deserved.

In *Ich bin mehr Herz als Kopf: Sophie von La Roche, ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, editor Michael Maurer writes in the introduction of the unique moment in history La Roche occupies:

Die Öffnung der ständischen Welt gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts und der Abbau ihrer Strukturen brachten mit der neuen Freiheit neue Probleme und forderten neue Lösungen. Die Emanzipation des Bürgertums aus der feudalen Gesellschaft und die Emanzipation der Frau innerhalb des Bürgertums sind zwei der historischen Umwälzungen gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts. Und das ist zugleich der Punkt, an dem Sophie von La Roche steht. Bürgerlicher Herkunft, erreichte sie mit ihrem Mann eine der höchsten Positionen, die für Bürgerliche möglich war. Ihre Wirksamkeit richtete sich auf das Bürgertum; sie trug zur Selbstdefinition des Bürgers durch Bildung bei und zur Selbstfindung des Bürgers in einer neu definierten Humanität. Dieses Ideal einer durch Bildung erreichbaren höheren Humanität des Bürgers wurde für sie virulent, indem sie es auf die Stellung der Frau anwandte.⁹⁸

Maurer argues that La Roche's work contributed to building the concept of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, or the bourgeoisie empowered and equipped for social and economic advancement by their pursuit and attainment of increasing amounts of education. In the latter half of the 18th century, the social and economic role of the middle class was, as Maurer points out, in the midst of a process of change that was made possible by free-market economic reforms and a growing rejection of noble and hereditary claims to social pre-eminence. As a result of this turmoil, the middle class found itself in an identity crisis; the old value system, which had been created and maintained by the upper class, was the only existing moral guide of which many

⁹⁸ Sophie von La Roche, *Ich bin mehr Herz als Kopf: Sophie von La Roche, ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, ed. Michael Maurer. München; Verlag C.H. Beck, 1983: 9-10.

knew, but it was plainly irreconcilable with the redefinition of virtue as being associated with actions rather than professed sentiments.

Another scholar writes:

The empowering sense of self-control resulting in ever growing self-confidence paired with a growing de-emphasis on the elements of providence evident in the movement of Sensibility (*Empfindsamkeit*) represent the basis for the *Sternheim* narrative. It is the foundation upon which La Roche unfolds her unique view of a woman's coming-of-age. Promoting the novel's success is the constitution of its protagonist *Fräulein von Sternheim*. The author stresses throughout the narrative the protagonist's character as one that crosses the boundaries of national character. She is an outspoken, goal-driven individual, as well as a modest, unselfish example of sensible (*empfindsam*) femininity. The heroine's reliance on merit, a character trait reportedly derived from her German-born father, the son of an academic ennobled not through blood-line but through education, who purchased rather than inherited his estate, is paired with her sensibility associated with the English aristocratic heritage of her mother. Much like the novel speaks to uncertainties arising from power struggles between the classes, the characteristics of the heroine build on conceptional shifts in gender ideologies and perceptions of national character.⁹⁹

Hyner stresses various aspects of *Sophie Sternheim* as a bourgeois character, and specifically a bourgeois woman, seeking and obtaining individual betterment in a time when both the role of the bourgeoisie and its women, and women more generally, were changing. The "de-emphasis on the role of providence" coupled with an "empowering sense of self-control" leading to "growing self-confidence" accord well with the driving force of the protagonist's actions, her "reliance on merit".

IV. *Sternheim*, *Empfindsamkeit*, and *Wieland*

⁹⁹ Bernadette H. Hyner, *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim: Explorations of a Woman's Terra Incognita*, *Monatshefte*, vol. 96. Summer 2004. Madison, WI; University of Wisconsin Press, 2004: 186.

Das Leben des Fräuleins von Sternheim, published in 1771, was written in and is set in the last waning moments of the Empfindsamkeit (Sensibility) movement in literature and art.¹⁰⁰ Empfindsamkeit enjoyed its heyday between approximately 1750 and 1780. *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, which was initially published in 1774, is considered by some scholars to be a significant work of Empfindsamkeit. 1790 is a frequently used date for the end of Empfindsamkeit. Empfindsamkeit was largely a literary trend frequently, although not always, driven by religiously motivated compassion; various emotions, compassion often being foremost among them, were the formative traits of the individual as a moral being. Empfindsamkeit also placed emphasis on individual experience, whereby it stood in stark distinction to the Era of Absolutism, which preceded it.

Hyner compares the confidence-driven female protagonist of *Sternheim* to the protagonist of Gellert's *Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G.*:

In contrast to placing special emphasis on divine providence, as Gellert does in *Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G.*, La Roche specifically highlights the importance of the Sternheim's characteristic predispositions such as endurance, courage, creativity, determination, and curiosity that help the protagonist to find what Nenon calls "den richtigen Weg zu einem für eine Frau angemessenen Leben." To be sure, the pretense and hostilities of the court and Derby's attempt to cover up the rape leading to the protagonist's exile are exclusively presented as man-made obstacles. (Hyner 189)

Into the vacuum left by Empfindsamkeit, La Roche articulates a protagonist, Sophie Sternheim, who models behavior for the growing *Bildungsbürgertum*. Sophie's behavior offers gender-specific advice to women through the specific interactions of Sophie with the various men in the story, most specifically with Lords Derby and Seymour; but aside from the gender politics, Sophie Sternheim's example is an example for the entire bourgeois class, including men. The

¹⁰⁰ Gerhard Sauder, "Ansichten der Empfindsamkeit im Werk Sophie von La Roches", *Ach, wie wünschte ich mir Geld genug, um eine Professor zu stiften. Sophie von La Roche im literarischen und kulturpolitischen Feld von Aufklärung und Empfindsamkeit*, ed. Gudrun Loster-Schneider and Barbara Becker-Cantarino. Tübingen, Germany; Francke Verlag, 2010: 12.

values according to which she acts (self-confidence, endurance, courage, creativity, determination, curiosity) can and do also apply to men, although the circumstances in which they will be called upon will vary widely for men and women. *Empfindsamkeit* did not only offer behavioral advice to women, but also to men.

Most scholars who have written on *Sternheim* write of the unique messages the story has for women, and its significance pioneering a female perspective in moral education, female independence, gender relations, as well as female authorship of novels. Sophie La Roche's *Sternheim* undoubtedly fulfills and exceeds at all of these gender-specific tasks, and deserves the praise and scholarly attention it has received on these points. However, few scholars have directed their attention to the non-gender aspects of the story. *Sternheim* was certainly not the first novel to propose merit, self-confidence, endurance and creativity as values for the *Bildungsbürgertum*; similarly, it was not the very first novel to propose such values for women, being indebted to Richardson's *Clarissa*. It therefore makes good sense to focus on the lessons for women, but also to acknowledge the role *Sternheim* fulfills in proposing new bourgeois values for an enlightened, reformed world.

In this vein, *Das Leben des Fräuleins von Sternheim* can be read as a work defined by an individualistic protagonist who does not allow traditional social norms to interrupt her rational, meritocratic, and ultimately secular thought. Although *Sternheim* contains, at least in rhetoric, overtures to Christian charity, particularly in the beginning, these overtures are made to a form of Christianity that differs notably from that to which many authors firmly situated within the *Empfindsamkeit* movement of the first half of the 18th century appealed. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, the Christianity to which *Sternheim* subscribes is human-centric. Although God is mentioned in *Sternheim*'s discussions of charity, the arguments presented in support of

charitableness do not allude to the source of the goodness of charity being its accordance with God's will (see *Sternheim* quotes in this chapter about *Menschenfreundlichkeit*). Sternheim's arguments about the source of the goodness of charity are not articulated in philosophical terminology within the text, but the emphasis placed on earthly justice and social harmony evokes secular arguments for the natural equality of all people more so than the moral imperative to obey a supernatural entity (La Roche 44-48).

Similarly, Sternheim does not give weight to perceived divine will in her considerations of how to respond to various social pressures. On this point, Bernadette H. Hyner further compares *Sternheim* to Gellert's *Schwedische Gräfin von G.*:

Compared to Gellert's *Schwedische Gräfin von G.*, La Roche de-emphasizes manifestations of a divine order but rather highlights the immanence of the individual and foregrounds the traveler's cognitive progression. (Hyner 196)

Hyner also compares to *Sternheim* to Richardson's *Clarissa*, noting that in the latter, the heroine dies, while in *Sternheim*, the heroine achieves an idyllic marriage to which both parties freely consent, whereby Sophie's actions throughout the novel are validated.

Hans-Joachim Maier writes of Sophie Sternheim's journey, from deception by Lord Derby to transformation into Madam Leidens to wife of Lord Seymour:

Ihr Selbstfindungsprozeß gewinnt nun eine neue Qualität. Sie hat aus ihren Erfahrungen gelernt und greift jetzt selbstbestimmt und willensstark in die Gestaltung ihres Lebens und in die Entwicklung ihrer Persönlichkeit ein. Sie wird zum Subjekt Welt, indem sie ihre Ziele, ihren Tagesablauf, ihre Grundsätze und ihr Weltbild selbst definiert. Sie stellt damit einen neuen Frauentypus vor, ein Schritt auf dem Wege zur weiblichen Emanzipation. Auch wenn Sophie ihre neue weibliche Selbstverwirklichung nur außerhalb der männlich-höfischen Gesellschaft gelingt, so dringt sie dennoch in männliche Domänen ein, indem sie einer außerhäuslichen Berufstätigkeit nachgeht.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Hans-Joachim Maier, *Zwischen Bestimmung und Autonomie: Erziehung, Bildung und Liebe im Frauenroman des 18. Jahrhunderts, Eine literatursoziologische Studie von Christian F. Gellerts Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G*** und Sophie von La Roches Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, Hildesheim, Germany; Georg Olms Verlag AG, 2001: 320.

Maier argues that Sophie Sternheim undergoes a transformation from a “sensible-naïve” (*Empfindsam-Naiven*) woman at the beginning of the story to an “independent active” (*selbstständigen aktiven*) woman at the end of the story. Sophie’s transformation is like that of women in the 18th century more generally: she moves from a more passive, naïve, emotionally driven product of *Empfindsamkeit* to a more balanced, rational, independent actor. The journey of Sophie Sternheim is a pronouncement about the inadequacy of *Empfindsamkeit* and other pre-Enlightenment philosophies to solve the problems of society, but specifically the problems of a marginalized group: women.

In the end, reason, in conjunction with the secular, Enlightenment values of individualism and equality, is what saves Sternheim. Even though the novel presents several more traditional ways of thinking about creating the life one desires, and most specifically how women can create the life they desire, these traditional ways are proven to be manifestly inadequate. This is perhaps most evident in Sophie’s transformation from Sophie Sternheim to Madam Leidens to the wife of Lord Seymour. After being raped and abandoned by Lord Derby, Sophie takes on the name Madam Leidens, which identifies her with her suffering, but it is very important that Sophie is not purified, validated, or elevated by her suffering. Sophie does not tout her having suffered as a badge of achievement, or as something inherently edifying. Sophie’s triumph resides in the principles she maintains and the actions she employs in escaping her suffering; in this way, Sophie’s tale diverges significantly from that of the Passion of Christ.

In Christianity, man possesses a sinful nature inherited from the Original Sin (*Erbsünde*, or “inherited sin”) of desiring knowledge (from the *Erkenntnisbaum*, or “tree of knowledge”) equal to that of God, i.e. desiring to understand the nature of the universe and morality as imperatives of reason rather than as arbitrary dictates of a divine entity. The evil of demanding

rational confirmation of true and false, of right and wrong, originally had to be discharged through sacrifice, and then, after the crucifixion of Christ, repentance; but even after Christ, in the “Age of Grace,” i.e. after Christ’s sacrifice in man’s stead, suffering (symbolically, through his son’s death) is still the only payment God accepts for misbehavior. It is therefore logical that suffering occupied a position of such prestige throughout Christian history as a path to purification; humans are *always* sinful, so there is *always* a need for suffering, whereby suffering becomes divine. The flagellants of the Black Plague Era and the extremes of the multi-day Passion plays of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era perhaps demonstrate the importance of suffering in Christianity the best.

Sophie repeatedly emphasizes that she sees her suffering as a product of poor, hasty decision-making that was neither necessary nor good in any way. In her first letter to Emilia as Madam Leidens, Sophie reflects:

...und ich! ich sollte fortfahren über mein selbstgewebtes Elend gegen das Verhängnis zu murren? Eigensinn und Unvorsichtigkeit hatten mich, ungeachtet meiner redlichen Tugendliebe, dem Kummer, und der Verächtlichkeit entgegengeführt; ich hatte vieles verloren, vieles gelitten; aber sollte ich deswegen das genossene Glück meiner ersten Jahre vergessen, und die vor mir liegende Gelegenheit, Gutes zu tun, mit gleichgültigem Auge betrachten, um mich allein der Empfindlichkeit meiner Eigenliebe zu überlassen? Ich kannte den ganzen Wert alles dessen, was ich verloren hatte; aber meine Krankheit und Betrachtungen zeigten mir, daß ich noch in dem wahren Besitz der wahren Güter unsers Lebens geblieben sei.
 Mein Herz ist unschuldig und rein;
 die Kenntnisse meines Geistes sind unvermindert;
 die Kräfte meiner Seele und meine guten Neigungen haben ihr Maß behalten; und ich habe noch das Vermögen, Gutes zu tun.
 Meine Erziehung hat mich gelehrt, daß *Tugend* und *Geschicklichkeit* das einzige wahre Glück, und *Gutes tun*, die einzige wahre Freude eines edlen Herzens sei; das Schicksal hat mir den Beweis davon in der Erfahrung gegeben. (Sternheim 236-237)

Sophie refers to the misery she suffered as “self-woven misery” (“selbstgewebtes Elend”), and she names her “stubbornness” (“Eigensinn”) and her “carelessness” (“Unvorsichtigkeit”) as the

causes of her “grief and contemptibility” (“Kummer und Verächtlichkeit”). The terms Sophie uses in describing her fall are contemptuous; it is clear that Sophie views her own errors in judgment to have worsened the situation.

It is also important that Sophie does not speak of her error in terms that accept guilt; if she were to do this, the novel would be reminiscent of the “rape myth” wherein women, due to their manner of being or acting, become at least partially responsible for crimes committed against them by men. Sophie’s behavior provides an example of how to respond to suffering on any scale; the example she sets applies to women specifically, given that her circumstances are uniquely female, although men can also learn from the principles guiding her actions. Sophie learns, or is confirmed in her original education that right actions and right values are the sources of true nobility, not identity and esteem received from others. Hans-Joachim Maier writes further of the lesson Sophie’s story teaches:

Sophie verkörpert auf dieser Stufe ein Frauenbild, das aufgeklärte und empfindsame Züge miteinander vereinbart. Sie ist tugendhaft, menschlich, gefühlvoll, hat ihre Leidenschaften unter Kontrolle, zeigt soziales Verantwortungsbewußtsein, sie ist aktiv und gleichzeitig vernünftig und rational, sie setzt ihre Bildung und Erziehung in ihren Berufen ein. Kurz: Herz und Kopf, Vernunft und Empfindung sind nun in idealer Weise in Sophie vereinigt. Sie hat sich zu einer aufgeklärt-empfindsamen Frau entwickelt. Und: Sie setzt sich selbst nicht mehr in Bezug zu einem Mann. (Maier 320-321)

Hans-Joachim Maier argues that Sophie at the end of the novel has combined elements of Enlightenment and *Empfindsamkeit*. I agree with Maier’s list of traits attributable to Sophie at the end of the novel, but I disagree with the potential implication of his wording that traits such as “virtuous, humane, and active” only, or even primarily, have their roots in *Empfindsamkeit*, and I also disagree that having her “passions under control” and being “rational” are not at least partially compatible with *Empfindsamkeit*. I believe Sophie integrates reformed versions of values of *Empfindsamkeit* into a framework that is firmly Enlightenment-based.

Gerhard Sauder writes of the role of *Empfindsamkeit* in *Sternheim*:

Die Radikalisierung der Empfindung bis zur Leidenschaft durch die “Radikalempfindsamen” wie Werther, Allwill und Woldemar zerstöre die Kohärenz des Diskurses und führe die Protagonisten zur Distanz gegenüber Gesellschaft und Konvention, zur Abkehr von moralischen Prinzipien. Sophie von La Roche, soviel vorweg, ist den “Radikal-empfindsamen” – trotz ihrer Freundschaft mit Goethe und Jacobi – nicht gefolgt. (Sauder 15)

Sauder’s argument about *Werther* “destroying the coherence” of *Empfindsamkeit* discourse because it leads to fundamental rejections of traditional morals and conventions is certainly true, given that *Werther* has a very naturalistic-atheistic metaphysical framework; for this reason I find it puzzling to classify *Werther* as a work of *Empfindsamkeit* at all, given that works of *Empfindsamkeit* otherwise place significant emphasis on conventional morality, norms, traditions and religion.

Sauder then cites a passage from *Sternheim* wherein Sophie specifically references *Empfindsamkeit*. Sophie Sternheim speaks of her:

... von Jugend auf genährte *Empfindsamkeit*, die nur ganz allein für meine beleidigte Eigenliebe arbeitete. Oh, wie sehr hab ich den Unterschied der Wirkungen, der *Empfindsamkeit für andere*, und der *für uns allein* kennengelernt!.
Die zweite ist billig, und allen Menschen natürlich; aber die erste allein ist edel; sie allein unterhält die Wahrscheinlichkeit des Ausdrucks, daß wir nach dem Ebenbild unsers Urhebers geschaffen sein, weil diese *Empfindsamkeit* für das Wohl und Elend unsers Nebenmenschen die Triebfeder der Wohltätigkeit ist, der einzigen Eigenschaft, welche ein zwar unvollkommnes, aber gewiß echtes Gepräge dieses göttlichen Ebenbildes mit sich führt... So lang ich für andere unempfindlich war, fehlte ich nur gegen die Vorurteile der fühllosen Seelen, und wenn es auch schien, daß meine Begriffe von Wohltätigkeit übertrieben wären, so bleiben sie doch durch das Gepräge des göttlichen Ebenbildes verehrungs- und nachahmungswürdig. Aber itzt, da ich nur für mich empfand, fehlte ich gegen den Wohlstand und gegen alle gesellschaftliche Tugenden eines guten Mädchens. (La Roche 214-215)

Sauder prefaces his citing of this passage by stating that it reveals La Roche’s awareness of the criticism of *Empfindsamkeit* as a movement, and he then adds:

Dieser Versuch der Protagonistin, ihre Empfindsamkeit als falsche “Empfindlichkeit” zu korrigieren, führt stets zum Zentrum ihrer Konzeption, der “Wohltätigkeit”. Empfindsamkeit ist nur als “Triebfeder der Wohltätigkeit” gerechtfertigt! (Sauder 20-21)

Sauder is correct to argue that Sternheim’s conception of Empfindsamkeit, as argued here, leads to a rejection of Empfindsamkeit directed towards the self and a legitimization only of Empfindsamkeit directed towards others. Sauder argues that Sternheim, at least in this passage, dismisses any form of Empfindsamkeit that is not a “driving force of charity.” This dismissal leads to an interesting curiosity: in *Sternheim*, Empfindsamkeit is rejected from both Moderate Enlightenment and Radical Enlightenment perspectives, and *both perspectives* are articulated at different places in the novel *by the same character*. It is possible that Sophie von Sternheim presents more Radical views to close friends and family but Moderate views to outsiders and in mixed company to reflect the divide in social acceptability between the Radical ideas one entertains in private and the *Salonsunfähigkeit* of these same ideas for wider society. It may also reflect a wider tension occurring in German and European society at that time between traditional religious and moral conventions and a highly emotional expression thereof and Enlightenment ideals about reasons and self-control.

Barbara Becker-Cantarino writes of the image Sophie von La Roche has after the publication of *Sternheim*, as well as after the appearance of translations into French, English, Dutch and Russian:

Nach dem Riesenerfolg ihrer *Sternheim* wurde die La Roche als Frau auf das Bild der empfindsamen, tugendhaften Weiblichkeit festgelegt, auf eine Identifikation von Autorin und Heldin, die schon der Herausgeber Wieland vorbereitet hatte... Wieland ermahnt sie, ihre originelle Art, ihre Gefühle und Ideen zu malen, zu bewahren; er warnt sie vor den empfindsamen Modewörtern, die die Damen der Gesellschaft gern aus Young, Klopstock und anderen Autoren dieser Klasse zusammenstückeln... Wieland versuchte, die schriftstellerische Leistung der La Roche mit dem gängigen Bild der bescheidenen, tugendhaften Frau zu

vereinbaren, “nützlich zu sein wünscht sie, Gutes will sie tun”, und verengte damit die Absicht und den Wert des Romans.¹⁰²

Wieland exercised significant influence over the production of *Sternheim* as well as its reception. Becker-Cantarino points out that Wieland cautioned La Roche against fashionable terms from *Empfindsamkeit*, but also wants her to present female figures that are in keeping with the “going image of the modest, virtuous woman”. Wieland did not want *Sternheim* to date itself by using the terms of a style whose days he considered numbered. Wieland’s desire for *Sternheim* to conform to the “going image of a modest, virtuous woman” reflects his discomfort with Radical ideas about the equality of the sexes. Indeed, Wieland’s relationship with Sophie von La Roche itself is a singular reflection of the paternalistic, Moderate-traditionalist view of women he had more generally. It is therefore quite possible that some of the more Moderate and conservative social points present in *Sternheim* were placed there in such terms to appease not only publishers and audiences, but more immediately her mentor Wieland, who actively provided La Roche advice about the moral content she should insert into her work.

V. Conclusion

Das Fräulein von Sternheim differs from the other works presented in this dissertation in that the Radical and Moderate Enlightenment views on the topics of nobility, gender and reason more broadly are articulated or agreed to by the same character, the protagonist Sophie von Sternheim, at differings points in the novel. The opinions Sophie expresses vary in radicalism depending on her audience. Views more closely approximating Radical Enlightenment are expressed to close friends and family while conventionalist, Moderate Enlightenment views are expressed to interlocutors at court, the impoverished Frau T*, and less trusted persons generally.

¹⁰² Barbara Becker-Cantarino, Nachwort zu *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, Stuttgart; Reclam, 1997: 391, 395, 399.

Sternheim contains extensive criticism of the nobility: it criticizes the behavior of currently living nobles, the way nobles treat and think about lower classes, the arguments nobles use to justify their privileged status and usefulness to society, the way nobles define usefulness and merit, the hypocrisy existing between nobles professed love of virtue and religion and their actions in civil society, the culture of flattery and deference to nobles existing in the middle class and artistic circles, and the education nobles receive. Additionally, *Sternheim* problematizes the education the lower classes receive, and *Sternheim* underscores the necessity of education for the fundamental improvement of society.

Sternheim provides commentary about the nature, adequacy, and morality of *Empfindsamkeit* as a movement. The verdict is that *Empfindsamkeit* is neither adequate for the existing state of affairs nor for Radical programs of reform. For the Radical view, it is too regressive and rooted in the immoral Christian adulation of suffering and mystery (i.e. non-reason). For the Moderate view (of Wieland, and some others) it is modish and overly self-indulgent.

Sternheim offers a unique exposition of the topics of nobility, education, economics, religion, and equality (specifically that of women and men) while simultaneously containing meta-commentary on the period of *Empfindsamkeit*. Much secondary literature focuses on the novels gender aspects and its having been written by a woman, which is certainly of great importance, but which may have also become reductive: *Sternheim* is rife with exposition of various social and moral topics with bearing on the concerns of both women and men.

DIE VERLOBUNG IN ST. DOMINGO, KLEIST
CHAPTER 5

I. Introduction

Perhaps the most common charge brought against the Enlightenment by contemporary scholars is that its universalism not only glosses over cultural differences, it also provides positive intellectual justification for and encouragement of the marginalization of non-European cultures that actually occurred during the first centuries of the Modern Era. There are at least two major problems with such an assessment: first, the suggestion that universalism itself in any manifestation is false and leads to injustice any more so than some manifestations of particularism can and do, and second, the factual sloppiness of claiming that “the Enlightenment,” misunderstood as more unified than it actually was, viewed non-European cultures as aberrant and inherently inferior. When viewed within the Radical Enlightenment/Moderate Enlightenment paradigm, or more specifically in this case, the universalist/particularist paradigm, more particularist, relativist, Moderate Enlightenment figures emerge as, in greater numbers, actually having or espousing views encouraging of colonialism or the exploitation of “native” labor and natural resources.

Of additional interest is the argument that Heinrich von Kleist’s writing represents a reaction against the general Enlightenment movement and the privileged role afforded to reason therein. I will argue that within *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*, reason at worst is not meaningfully thematized by Kleist, and at best informs the pronouncements on the constructedness and contingency of race and nationality emerging in the text. *Verlobung*’s arguments against racial and national hierarchy quite clearly proceed from a universalism-based

Enlightenment critique and not at all from a Romanticism-inspired particularism or adoration of mystery.

II. The Enlightenment and non-European Cultures

The relationship of the Enlightenment to other cultures has come under greatly increased scrutiny particularly since the publication in 1978 of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In a post-colonial Western world composed primarily of ethnically and culturally diverse democratic nation-states, Said's *Orientalism* led to a wave of scholarly interest in "multicultural studies." Much attention was directed to the history of intercultural interaction, and some scholars concluded that European exploitation of the non-European world found intellectual justification or even encouragement in the philosophy of the European Enlightenment. While there is no doubt that the attitude of common people and nearly all Western governments toward non-European cultures was depraved, oppressive, racist and exploitative well beyond the first half of the 20th Century, it remains important to distinguish between thinkers and movements supporting such treatment and those that did not. Not all Enlightenment-era thinkers thought reason advocated the brutal subjugation of non-Europeans; many, particularly those thinkers who elsewhere here have been identified as Radical Enlightenment thinkers, argued that reason mandates viewing all cultures as equal in the sense that they are produced by groups of humans, whose nature must be everywhere the same given the determined nature of both mind and matter. It is important to examine the thinking of individual philosophers and sub-movements if one wishes to do justice to the diversity of thinking within the intellectual culture of the Western world during the Enlightenment, or one merely perpetuates the exact issue at hand in the discussion, which is, through ignorance, believing the superiority of one's identity and moral convictions permit the "othering" and disciplining of an out-group.

A primary focal point of philosophical discussion about other cultures for the Radical and Moderate Enlightenment was the example of China (and, although less frequently specifically invoked, Japan).¹⁰³ The example of China is exceptionally good at showing how neither simple universalism nor simple particularism suffice to constitute a worldview, how both philosophies can lead to a belief in equality *and* to a system of subjugation, racism, nationalism-fueled hatred or oppression.

Depictions of China also provide an excellent example of the ability of some Radical Enlightenment philosophers, particularly the group surrounding d'Holbach's Paris salon, to acknowledge and correct errors in their pronouncements as new information came in (Israel, 2011, 568). Initially, the Holbach clique (Holbach, Helvétius, among others, although not Diderot) had praised China as a society wherein Spinozism reigned: the common people were free of the tyranny of priestcraft and the whim of hereditary aristocracy. In general, the Radicals had argued, China was the manifestation of a society free of superstition and based on reason. The 1770 and 1774 editions of the highly influential *Histoire philosophique et politique établissemens des Européens dans les Deux Indes* by the Abbé Raynal, a work Jonathan Israel esteems as the single most important text in the later Enlightenment discourse on other cultures, China was "le pays de la terre où les hommes sont les plus humains"¹⁰⁴. Radical writers had a political interest in having an alternate society prove the superiority of Radical Enlightenment values, and it seems this political interest led them to make statements about China without sufficient empirical support. Jesuit and other Christian commentators, for their part, were overly

¹⁰³ Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2011: 558-582.

¹⁰⁴ Abbé Guillaume Thomas François Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique établissemens des Européens dans les Deux Indes*, vol. 1. Amsterdam, 1770: 97.

critical and dismissive of Chinese society with the same lack of empirical data about the society they were criticizing (Israel, 2011, 569).

This position came increasingly under fire as a growing number of travel reports discredited notions of the integrity of the Chinese ruling class, revealed the type and number of superstitions held by the common people, and cast doubts of various sorts on classical Chinese culture and its heritage. Upon realizing the zealotry of their Sinophilia had been unjustified, both empirically and within their own professed philosophical systems, Helvétius and Holbach revised their positions to be critical of the same malevolent factors that they decried within Europe. Furthermore, a number of philosophers altered their overly rosy assessment of the state of Chinese society upon reconsidering the reconcilability of it with their stated universalist positions on human nature (Israel, 2011, 568-572). Indeed, many commentators, both Moderate (Hume, Smith) and Radical (Diderot, Helvétius, Holbach), began to decry China and the state of Enlightenment of its people by around the time of the 1780-edition of the *Histoire philosophique*, where it was asserted that the people of China lived in vile servitude under divinely installed hereditary monarchs, as well as that no status was afforded the individual, who was forced to yield to the power of community norms and superstitions.

Although China (and Japan and Korea to a lesser extent) were treated somewhat apart from the rest of the non-European world, the shifting views on China provide much exposition of debate within the Enlightenment on other cultures. Radical Enlightenment universalists ended up preferring positions viewing all peoples equally naturally disposed to reason, but emphasized the political and social structures' effects on individuals' capacities to realize their reasoning potential; Moderate Enlightenment thinkers varied in their thinking significantly, with relativist thinkers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau arguing frequently that non-European cultures were

superior to European cultures, while other Moderates such as the economic thinkers Smith and Turgot, the skeptics like Hume, or the Common Sense mixed monarchy proponents like Ferguson and the Newtonians often regarding non-European cultures as inferior and characterized European colonization as beneficial to non-Europeans and Europeans alike.

Nous avons remédié à des abus par des abus nouveaux; & à force d'étayer, de réformer, de pallier, nous avons mis dans nos mœurs plus de contradictions & d'absurdités, qu'il n'y en a chez les peuples les plus barbares. Voilà pourquoi, si les arts pénètrent un jour chez les Tartares & les Iroquois, ils y feront des progrès infiniment plus rapides, qu'ils n'en peuvent jamais faire dans la Russie & dans la Pologne.¹⁰⁵

Prior to this within the *Histoire*, Raynal had established one of his theses that the transmission of artistic, not economic, principles alone can improve the peoples of the world, and that societies should strive to facilitate art's spread. His suggestion here, then, that art's spread through Tartar (Asian) or Iroquois (American) society would improve those societies more than it could (or does) European society is a strong indictment of many aspects of European society and government. Philosophy lies within art, whereby Raynal is not suggesting that non-Europeans are more capable of philosophy and moral betterment, but that many non-European societies are structured in a way that allows man's universally shared capacity to reason to flourish. Israel writes of the *Histoire*:

The appalling oppression the *Histoire* holds to characterize the European presence in the Indies East and West was for the first time explained not as the innate faults of, or rapacity or cruelty inherent in, particular nations or religions, but as arising from conditions and structures of authority. (Israel, 2011, 419)

This point was particularly offensive to Counter-Enlightenment as well as a great many Moderate Enlightenment thinkers, among whom theories of religious and racial superiority often flourished (Israel, 2011, 560-564).

¹⁰⁵ Abbé Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique établissemens des Européens dans les Deux Indes*, Amsterdam, 1776: 9. *Google Book Search*.

A further point of discussion in the Enlightenment's treatment of the non-European world aside from viewing the outside world as inferior, equal or superior, is how these respective value judgments were squared with each respective philosophical system. A comparison with Rousseau's system is particularly interesting, a system explicitly privileging the primitive state of man. Israel compares Diderot and Rousseau:

It is sometimes claimed that the *Histoire philosophique*, and Diderot specifically, 'systematically' inverted conventional notions of the relation of primitive to civilized man, of *l'homme sauvage* to *l'homme policé*. But Diderot does not assert the 'superiority of savage peoples'. Rather, as he himself put it, it is the ignorance 'des sauvages qui a éclairé, en quelque sorte, les peuples policés'.¹⁰⁶ Substituting a dynamic conception of the relation of developed human societies to primitive society, or the savage state, as Rousseau's opposition between the *état social* and the *état sauvage*, Diderot in this way developed a highly original perspective while simultaneously pursuing his lifelong polemic with Rousseau. In the *Histoire* Diderot denies the savage state possesses any special moral validity for us, utopian quality, or intrinsic superiority, or that it can sensibly be judged by the philosopher preferable to the civilized state. He asserts rather the necessary and unavoidable interactive relationship between the two, and for all its inequality, problems, and vastly higher crime rates, the potential superiority of developed society for human happiness and contentment.¹⁰⁷ (Israel, 2011, 418)

Diderot's system as here described emphasizes that neither the civilized nor the primitive state inherently or necessarily leads to moral decline, regardless of the criteria by which this is assessed (individual liberty, general well-being, etc.). Rousseau's system, on the other hand, suggests that the civilized state invariably leads to ills of all sorts and that this is because it is not possible for man's natural rights to exist in any way within the state. Diderot, along with Holbach and, most notably, Spinoza, argues that man's natural rights can be preserved within the state, and that the state exists to proffer this unto greater numbers than could enjoy them outside the state.

¹⁰⁶ Embedded Quote From: Denis Diderot, *Political Writings*, trans. and ed. J.H. Mason and Robert Wokler. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992: 192-3.

¹⁰⁷ Embedded Quote From: [Petit, Émilien], *Observations sur plusieurs assertions, extradites littéralement de l'Histoire philosophique des deux Indes*, Amsterdam, 1776: 54.

III. *Verlobung*, Enlightenment, Colonialism, and Race

Die Verlobung in St. Domingo was published in 1811, a date decidedly outside the Enlightenment, but it is particularly interesting for this study because it was written in reference to a specific contemporary political issue, that of the rebellion against French colonial authority in Haiti, and in the immediate aftermath of the French and American Revolutions, as well as during the Napoleonic Wars. Furthermore, *Verlobung* is situated in the middle of a collision between the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment and the political realities of colonialism, i.e. the growing widespread ambition among peoples to establish nation-states. Industrialization, improved mobility for the middle-class, and a massive increase in popular literacy, as well as new discoveries and ideas in the natural sciences created a newly globalized and more educated world where interactivity was inevitable and isolationism much more difficult.

The first line of *Verlobung* frames the story as a matter of skin color: “zu Anfange dieses Jahrhunderts, als die Schwarzen die Weißen ermordeten...”.¹⁰⁸ The story of Congo Hoango then follows, a West African slave who, “against the custom of the land” (“gegen die Gewohnheit des Landes” [Kleist 222]), is freed and given land and a female companion by his white owner, whose life Congo had saved once on a journey from Cuba. Despite, or perhaps because of his white owner’s behavior, Congo is:

...einer der Ersten, der die Büchse ergriff, und, eingedenk der Tyrannei, die ihn seinem Vaterlande entrissen hatte, seinem Herrn die Kugel durch den Kopf jagte. (Kleist 222)

At this point, the issue of grouping by “nationality” is introduced. Displacement from one’s home and “people” is posited as an anti-humanitarian act; this in itself is not surprising, as it had long been understood that individuals’ identity is tied to locations, culture, and language, but in

¹⁰⁸ Heinrich von Kleist, *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*, ed. Klaus Müller-Salget, vol. 3. Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990: 222.

Verlobung, home identity increasingly is tied to the notion of “nationality” as the story progresses. The situation is complex: on the one hand, Congo’s owner was only in a position to “free” Congo and endow him with property because of his privileged racial status within the white-black master-slave dichotomy, he nonetheless takes extra steps to reward Congo for his individual services and merits, independent of national or racial identity (much as one white man could theoretically have rewarded another white man, or anyone else for that matter, for saving his life). On the other hand, Congo, member of a disadvantaged race and once enslaved on the basis of his race, has no qualms about killing an individual who had risked social discipline for behaving counter to the interests of his racial group in helping him.

Immediately the reader is faced with the complexity of the concepts of guilt and responsibility. Congo’s killing of his former owner is retributive violence; it is a one-time act of revenge targeting an individual who, for a time, affirmed a profoundly unjust, race-based system of violence and slavery in order to institute a race-based system of violence against whites, regardless of their individual participation in slavery (killing both planters [“Pflanzer”] and travelers [“Reisende”]) Congo’s system is a large-scale eye-for-an-eye program of violence. Indeed, he actively establishes his own version of a race-based system of violence by agitating as the leader of a band of slaves and former slaves killing any whites they encounter, even forcing unwilling blacks to take part in the slaughter:

Ja, er [Congo Hoango] forderte, in seiner unmenschlichen Rachsucht, sogar die alte Babekan mit ihrer Tochter, einer jungen fünfzehnjährigen Mestize, Namens Toni, auf, an diesem grimmigen Kriege, bei dem er sich ganz verjüngte, Anteil zu nehmen. (Kleist 223)

Congo’s compelling of “members” of his racial group to take part in retributive violence *against their will* introduces a new master-slave dichotomy into the story and renders the violence for which he is responsible clearly worse than the violence for which his former white owner is

responsible. While Kleist presents the social and historical motives that initially compelled Congo and other blacks to take arms and kill whites as proceeding from a profound systematic injustice, he still makes very clear that Congo's actions quickly moved beyond an interest in fairly remedying a systematic problem and became a non-productive campaign of bloodletting beyond the pale of rehabilitating relations between perpetrators and victims.

Ray Fleming, in his article "Race and the Different It Makes in Kleist's *Verlobung in St. Domingo*" writes:

The narrator suggests that Congo is an ingrate, a perfidious savage who returns his master's kindnesses by shooting the master and burning the master's wife and children. The narrator's subjective descriptions reveal that his sympathies are clearly with the Villeneuve family. He implies that from the implied "universal" or white perspective of Gustav and the narrator one could construct a rationale for compassion for the master... What is missing in this exposition of outrage is a counter-exposition of outrage that could only be provided by the voice and perspective of the black slave, the voice of the dispossessed Other.¹⁰⁹

I agree with Fleming's suggestion that the narrator's sympathies lie with the Villeneuve family, and the readers, who were overwhelmingly likely to be white themselves, are indeed led to sympathize with people who find themselves being hunted and killed for their membership in an oppressing class. I do not, however, agree with the conclusions he then draws. When Fleming speaks of an "implied 'universal' or white perspective" he reveals nothing other than his own bias; from the limited information provided by the narrator in the beginning, there is no cause to think the narrator is asserting his perspective as the only true or meaningful one; indeed, later in the story, the narrator provides opportunities to sympathize with the blacks. Additionally, I do not understand why Fleming argues that *Verlobung*'s narrator presents an "implied 'universal' or white perspective" and then to later assert that a counter-exposition "could only be provided by the voice and perspective of the black slave, the voice of the dispossessed Other". If the narrator

¹⁰⁹ Ray Fleming, "Race and the Difference It Makes in Kleist's *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*", *German Quarterly*, vol. 65. Summer/Autumn 1992. London; Blackwell Publishing, 1992: 312.

cannot possibly provide a real counter-perspective, then Fleming's criticism seems to amount to a complaint that the narrator's perspective is a white perspective. I believe it is possible for a narrator with a white perspective to attempt to provide a counter-exposition of the black perspective; it cannot, of course, encompass the experiential aspects of black identity and black perspective and will never be the same or as "complete" as a black perspective. Similarly, a story told from a black perspective could not possibly encompass all aspects of being a white person in Haiti being killed due to his race's oppression of blacks, but that does not mean it would be implying that black perspective is superior, universal, or anything at all. Fleming's argument about the inadequacy of the white perspective in this instance (and throughout most of the rest of the article) seems to place unfair blame on the white European narrator for inadequacies in and limitations of storytelling and knowledge themselves: all stories are told by subjects, and the subject is different from other subjects and hence can never have the exact same experiences as other subjects. The limitations of subjectivity apply to all narrators, authors, and people generally, whereby the criticism of Kleist's narrator's subjectivity becomes a banality. Most importantly, I do not see why he writes of an "implied 'universal' or white perspective" other than his assumption that the narrator holds an opinion some or many white Europeans at that time had.

Much secondary literature on *Verlobung in St. Domingo* concerns itself with Gustav's perception of the distribution and character of guilt held by the whites and blacks. It is clear from the text and the context of the situation in which Gustav finds himself, i.e. fleeing for his life from members of an identity group that want all members of his identity group to die, that he is primarily concerned with the violence being committed against his group. Many critics are concerned with emphasizing the subjectivity of Gustav's perspective, and significantly

overemphasize the guilt of the whites at the expense of neglecting to engage critically the profound terror of the systematic killing of whites in Haiti or the killing of “enemies of the Revolution” 1793-1784 by France’s Revolutionary Tribunal. P. Horn, for example, in his article “Hatte Kleist Rassenvorurteile,” writes:

Es ist denn auch nicht Kleist, sondern Gustav, der nicht imstande ist, die Freiheitsberaubung der Schwarzen als eine allgemeine Schuld der Europäer zu begreifen, an der jeder Teil hat, der daraus Nutzen zieht. Es ist bezeichnend, wie Gustav einerseits das “allgemeine Verhältnis” der Sklaverei nicht in Schutz nimmt, es aber doch als etwas geschichtlich Gewordenes einfach hinnimmt, andererseits den Grund der Empörung in “vielfachen und tadelnswerten Mißhandlungen” sieht, deren sich nur einzelne, schlechte Mitglieder der weißen Herrensicht schuldig gemacht haben...und [Gustav] sieht in ihrer Rache nur eine grausige Unmenschlichkeit, nicht die unausbleibliche Reaktion auf ein Verbrechen gegen die Menschenwürde, dessen sich alle Weißen schuldig gemacht haben.¹¹⁰

It seems to me that too many assumptions are being made about Gustav simply due to his race. It seems a stretch to me to argue that: 1) Gustav is incapable of understanding black slavery as a collective guilt of whites; 2) he simply accepts slavery as a product of history for which no one should be punished; 3) he thinks only individual, bad members of the white race are responsible, and; 4) he sees only gruesome inhumanity in the black’s violence against whites rather than an inevitable reaction to crimes against human dignity of which all whites are guilty. It is quite possible that Gustav (or Kleist, although that is a complex question of authorial intent that will not be engaged here) has a very nuanced position on all these questions. The collective slaughter of an entire race *is* an inhuman act of barbarism regardless of what that people has done; their act can also simultaneously be an act of inhuman barbarism. Two wrongs do not make a right in this case; the blacks do not have to execute all whites systematically; there are alternatives to genocide in this case. Many Enlightenment thinkers, particularly Radical Enlightenment

¹¹⁰ P. Horn, “Hatte Kleist Rassenvorurteile? Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Literatur zur *Verlobung in St. Domingo*”, *Monatshefte*, vol. 67. Summer 1975. Madison, WI; University of Wisconsin Press, 1975: 122.

thinkers, and landowning, educated Europeans (i.e. the class to which Gustav belongs) did indeed view slavery as a terrible injustice while also being horrified by the killings of whites in Haiti and the killing of “enemies of the Revolution” during the Reign of Terror. Perhaps Gustav has considered the nuances and interplay of collective guilt and individual autonomy and the proper way to restructure a fundamentally unjust political order but he is more interested in the black killing because he is fleeing for his life. There is no indication in the text that Gustav is “incapable” of grasping these complexities, especially when his behavior throughout the text (as will continue to be evidenced throughout this chapter) does not give cause to believe that he is likely to have particular opinions.

In a further ironic twist, Congo’s decision to have the “mestizo” Toni use her lighter skin tone to lull white travelers into a false sense of security until Congo’s troupe could arrive to execute them highlights the constructed nature of the identity-category race. Toni is described as a mestizo, which refers to a person of general mixed racial heritage in this context. The use of “mestizo” is also in part due to the uncertainty of Babekan’s (Toni’s mother’s) racial heritage. Babekan (Kleist 223) is a mulatto (a person of mixed racial parentage) and therefore may be partially native American, and Toni’s father, Monsieur Bertrand, is a wealthy white merchant from Marseille (Kleist 231). (Monsieur Bertrand had denounced his paternity before a French court to ensure he would be able to marry a wealthy young French bride.) “Mestizo” as applied to Toni, then, refers to her status as being of mixed black and white parentage. Because Toni’s racial ancestry is mixed and one of her parents was already of mixed racial ancestry, she is categorized a mestizo. Yet despite Toni being partially white, Congo Hoango at no point throughout *Verlobung* considers her to be white, or as not possessing black racial identity and owing full allegiance to the black community in a white-black racial struggle.

Furthermore, Babekan's skin appears lighter, or at least sallower, than might be expected for a mulatto due to tuberculosis she suffered following a court-ordered whipping after losing a paternity lawsuit to Monsieur Bertrand (Kleist 231). As with Toni, though, Babekan's skin color, while being a defining racial difference, does not undermine her status as a member of the black race, even though that same skin color is used to deceive whites that she may be a part of or sympathetic to the whites in Haiti. The reason Kleist refers to Congo's forcing "even Babekan and Toni" (*sogar*; see quote above) to "participate" (*teilnehmen*) in this "grim war" as "inhumane vengefulness" (*unmenschliche Rachsucht*) could be that it is improper to force women to engage in killing, or the mentioning of the two women's participation in close proximity to a description of their race could be a suggestion that their mixed race makes their involvement with either side a matter that must contain identity politics extending beyond the mere percentage to which they are black.

IV. Kames, Kant, Buffon, and Herder on Race

Within the Enlightenment discourses on race as an identity category founded in science, theology, or some combination of the two, the question of the biological and spiritual status of the differing "races" of humans was vigorously debated. Jonathan Israel specifically discusses a pioneer of the Common Sense approach, Henry Home, or Lord Kames, as advocating the view that not all races of men were of the same species, contrary to the assertions of the *encyclopédistes* and thinkers like Buffon:

Attacking Buffon for his 'very artificial rule for ascertaining the different species of animals', namely that any two animals that mate, producing issue [sic] that can also procreate, 'are of the same species', Kames firmly rejected his 'holding all men to be of one race or species', simply because a man and a woman 'however

different in size, shape, in complexion, can procreate together without end'.¹¹¹
(Israel, 2011, 250)

In an era before Darwin, DNA or modern study of biology, zoology or embryology, categories such as “species” (which, even within modern evolutionary biology, is a very fluid concept, given that every reproductively viable individual ever born is born to parents of the same species and can only produce reproductively viable children with an opposite-sex member of the same species; this forms an unbroken chain that reveals the constructedness of race as a sort of “mile marker” of change within a kind), “race”, and “kind” were very difficult to anchor to empirical and well understood data about populations of living things. Philosophers grounded their categories on the developing natural sciences or theology, or some carefully crafted mixture of the two, which rendered much of the discussion about differing races and types ontologically very sloppy and beholden to the political, economic, or theological interests of the analyst.

Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* (appearing 1749-1789 in 36 volumes) proceeded with an empirical methodology intending to consider only natural phenomena and observations, at no point imputing divine intention or providence onto biological matters, realizing the separation of theology from science so desired by Radical Enlightenment thinkers and the *encyclopédistes*.

Countering Buffon’s, Diderot’s, and d’Holbach’s view ‘that men are of one race or species,’ Kames held ‘that there are different races of men fitted by nature for different climates.’ [Kames, *Six Sketches*, 23] This he combined with a theory of racial degeneracy operative wherever races are transplanted to what he considered the wrong climatic and geographical milieu, one of his most notable doctrines... The degeneracy of whites in the Indies Kames took to be a proof of the God-given, providential character of racial difference (as of all fundamental characteristics): God had created different races of men to accommodate the variety of the world’s climates and conditions. This left many outside Europe innately inferior physically and intellectually and provided a splendid justification for European colonial empires in the tropics, though he does not say so explicitly. What his schema does not justify, though, are systems of imperial subordination in temperate climes such as that of North America. (Israel, 2011, 251)

¹¹¹ Embedded Quotes From: Lord Henry Home Kames, *Six Sketches on the History of Man*, Philadelphia, 1776: 7-8.

Racial degeneracy theories and other outgrowths of some forms of “climate theory” in the Enlightenment were used to lend an air of scientific legitimacy to theories of racial hierarchy for which some philosophers, such as Kames and Kant, argued: a new kind of legitimacy the attainment of which was increasingly sought by thinkers desiring harmony between empirical science and revealed religion. Some variants of climate theory posit an original white race from which the other races deviated, while others posit different races for different climates, with the climate of Europe predisposing the whites there to industriousness and intellectual and cultural advancement. Kames does suggest that the non-white races can improve themselves with social progress and by moving to or being placed into environments requiring hard work and the exercise of judgment and prudence, but he does not argue that they could equal the white male (Israel, 2011, 252).

Radical Enlightenment thinkers argued for the oneness of mankind, stating “all men are of one race or species” (Israel, 2011, 251). This position was most explicitly articulated within natural history by Buffon, but also maintained clearly by Diderot, Holbach and the *encyclopédistes*. Israel paraphrases Kames’ views on race, which some called “particularly benign”:

Races as differently constituted creations help explain the simultaneous universality and yet disparate character of human progress. (Israel, 2011, 252)

Kames’ views have a “separate-but-equal” logic to them wherein the varying levels of progress among different races is attributed to natural causes beyond the control of the groups themselves rather than to social and environmental factors: if the non-white races are not as advanced, it is not their fault, as they were placed by a providential God into climates not conducive to intellectual or cultural advancement. Completely contrary to Rousseau, Kames maintained that European society and climate alone had led to the cultivation of taste and refinement:

‘Moral sense is born with us’, he argued, as also is ‘taste’. Both are key fields of sensibility but ‘require much cultivation’: ‘among savages’, he asserts, revealing both his anti-Rousseauism and distinctly negative view of primitive men, ‘the moral sense is faint and obscure; and taste still more so...’ (Israel, 2011, 251; Embedded Quotes From Kames, *Six Sketches*, 121)

By “us,” Kames is referring to white European society. Kames, a representative of the Common Sense school, differs from Rousseau on race in a manner consistent with other variances between Rousseauist Moderate thinking and Common Sense/Newtonian/Humean Moderate thinking, lending further credence to Jonathan Israel’s distinction between relativist Moderates like Rousseau and Montesquieu and other Moderate Enlightenment schools of thought.

A great deal of additional debate about race took place during and as a consequence of the *Pantheismusstreit*, which occurred most immediately between Lessing and Jacobi but which also preoccupied Kant, Kant’s followers and Kant’s detractors in the 1770s and 1780s. Kant was a vigorous opponent of Spinozistic hylozoism, and exerted great effort in combating naturalism and monism. The term hylozoism denotes a belief that all matter is alive in some way, but it differs from animism in that animism is focused on spirits permeating all things and imbuing them with a life force. Spinoza’s views were hylozoistic as a consequence of his monism: if mind and matter are one substance, and “life” is traditionally understood to refer to mind, then all matter should be equally subject to any *élan vital* existing in the universe. Spinoza’s hylozoism served more to emphasize his monism than anything else, a fact realized by Kant, leading to his criticism of the concept in his *Metaphysical Principles of Natural Science*. While many thinkers before and since Spinoza have used hylozoism to present a non-mechanistic universe, Spinoza’s natural hylozoism integrates into a larger naturalistic view of the universe, blurring lines between living and dead substance in ways that made many thinkers uncomfortable. One of his most

frequent sparring partners in this was Herder, who had written openly against Kant's biological and anthropological thinking. Israel summarizes Kant's basic system thus:

For Kant, the crucial issue was how to ground a scientific biology while retaining key strands of teleology and providential design. He proceeded by rejecting polygenism and reverting to Buffon's starting point, namely that all mankind constitutes a single species, but replaced the radical *philosophes'* notion of racial differentiation as inessential mutation mechanistically driven through climate and circumstances with an explicitly teleological conception of racial sub-categories deemed permanent and irreversible. Postulating four basic races of humanity, Whites, Blacks, Hindustanic, and Kalmuck, outwardly distinguished by skin colour, he ruled that these could not be considered products of mere chance or mechanistic laws alone but must be thought of as pre-formed by providence, all humans containing certain seeds [Keime] or natural predispositions that developed or were arrested under the stimulus of climatic and other conditions.¹¹² (Israel, 2011, 738)

Kant's racial thinking differs significantly from Kames' thinking in that Kant postulates monogenism, as opposed to Kames' polygenism, but the status of racial difference for Kant is far more static. Within Kant's system, betterment for non-white races is much less possible. "Once racial character emerged, it was fixed, contended Kant, and there could be no further evolutionary change caused by different climatic or other conditions." (Israel, 2011, 738) By "character," Israel elucidates, Kant means not only physical signs of race such as skin color, but also predispositions such as laziness, intelligence, etc. It makes good sense, then, that Kant's racial thinking was very frequently employed to defend both colonial empire and the general subjugation of non-white races. What binds both monogenetic racial thinkers like Kant and polygenetic racial thinkers like Kames is their presenting first an argument that racial difference is, to some degree, biologically determined, and then secondly, importing this supposedly empirical scientific knowledge into a theological system that could be supported by religious authorities.

¹¹² Immanuel Kant, "On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy," 1788, *Race*, ed. R. Bernasconi. Oxford; Blackwell Publishing, 2001: 37-56.

Herder's system was an alternative to Kant's, and the two debated racial and intercultural theory vigorously:

Herder in the second part of his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, which appeared in August 1785, further developed his theory of cultural relativism while firmly upholding the idea of a universal, single morality and, as part of this, rejecting the notion of race as a system of ranks. (Israel, 2011, 739)

In this regard, Herder's system particularly challenged Kant's argument in favor of pre-existing seeds placed into humans and making various biological determinations concerning race and morality, an idea Kant had found in Haller and Bonnet's *Considérations sur les corps organisés* of 1758-62 (Israel, 2011, 739). Between Herder and Kant Israel's Radical Enlightenment/Moderate Enlightenment distinction holds true yet again: Kant, whose other opinions clearly place him within the Moderate camp, clearly introduces racial hierarchies and discriminatory particularism, which co-exist with and support his views on politics (mixed monarchy), theory of mind (dualism, which his transcendental idealism ultimately boils down to), and religion (whatever the state-sponsored Christianity of his royal patrons happened to be). Kant's commitment to uphold established religion made much of his idealism little more than a gigantic, flagrant teleological system:

A central feature of Kant's vision was his conviction that 'we have sufficient cause for judging man to be, not merely like all organized beings a *natural purpose*, but also the *ultimate purpose* of nature here on earth, in reference to whom all other natural things constitute a system of goals according to fundamental propositions of reason'. (Israel, 2011, 736)

Kant's use of the word "ultimate" is an open declaration that his vision is a prescriptive, teleological one, not a descriptive, empirical one. From this deductive final truth, he proceeds backwards, choosing whatever "evidence" will support the only conclusion he is politically and morally willing to permit.

Herder, for his part, expressed opinions on race, politics, religion and theory of mind that align with the Radical Enlightenment, including the *encyclopédistes*, Diderot, Holbach, Helvétius, and others (Israel, 2011, 133, 303, 308-9). Herder expresses support for materialism, monism, anti-colonialism¹¹³, and the universal humanity of human races and ethnicities (Israel, 2011, 739), all positions that are in agreement with Radical Enlightenment ideas of the time. Georg Forster, the German polymath who sailed the world with James T. Cook and wrote on topics ranging from botany to anthropology to Tahitian and other islander cultures, similarly argued against Kant's system and in favor of a culturally informed universalism that acknowledged difference but stressed that human nature is universal, although Forster did except the black race as different, a single weakness in an otherwise strong anti-colonial, universalist vision (Israel, 2011, 739).

Within *Verlobung in St. Domingo*, Babekan articulates a view of race and other cultures very similar to Herder's acknowledgment of difference within a broader system that is definitively universalist:

“Ja, diese rasende Erbitterung,” heuchelte die Alte. “Ist es nicht, als ob die Hände eines Körpers, oder die Zähne eines Mundes gegen einander wüten wollen, weil das Eine Glied nicht geschaffen ist, wie das andere? Was kann ich, deren Vater aus St. Jago, von der Insel Cuba war, für den Schimmer von Licht, der auf meinem Antlitz, wenn es Tag wird, erdämmert? Und was kann meine Tochter, die in Europa empfangen und geboren ist, dafür, daß der volle Tag jenes Weltteils von dem ihrigen widerscheint?” (Kleist 227-228)

It is difficult to tell if Babekan makes these Radical Enlightenment, universalist claims in order to lure Gustav into a false sense of security, or if she is expressing her true feelings that would be considered unacceptable by Congo's people. The issue of Babekan's true opinions is further shrouded in uncertainty by her later determination to undermine Toni's designs to facilitate Gustav and the Strömli family's escape, as well as by her determination to be seen as the person

¹¹³ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 2010: 15.

responsible for the capture of Gustav to curry favor with Congo. Either social pressure forces her to betray her true egalitarian opinions, as expressed in her “the hands of one body” statement, in order to protect herself, or her “the hands of one body” statement is a trick.

The “frenzied animosity” (*rasende Erbitterung*) of which Babekan speaks specifically is that of the blacks in Haiti, led by Congo Hoango, in seeking out and quickly executing any whites they find; it also applies to the white enslavement of the blacks, which is also the hand of one body striking another hand of the same body. Babekan’s reference to “the hands of one body, the teeth of one mouth raging against each other” within the context of Haitian blacks and white colonizers means that she thinks they are equally a part of humanity. Her suggested causation for the raging (“because one part is not created like the other”) is an explicit acknowledgement of difference within the body parts. Babekan’s statement acknowledges and simultaneously trivializes the difference for rhetorical effect. Knowledge of difference and its significance is hereby expressed, but the emphasis is placed on universalism.

It is also significant that Babekan suggests that the different races are comparable to different hands or different teeth and not any two different body parts at random. Were the body parts chosen at random, a relative utility and hierarchy might be assessed to them (for example, “the hand and the fingers of one body”), but if the races are two hands or two teeth, they perform the same function, and although they will be slightly different, the differences are primarily cosmetic and do not bear on the primary function of the body part. The dynamic between universalism and particularism or difference as expressed metaphorically by Babekan is that of the Radical Enlightenment very clearly: it matches with Herder’s, Forster’s and Holbach’s views rather closely and is very distant from the views of Kant or Kames.

Later when Babekan is speaking with Gustav, the white foreigner whom she had just provided shelter, she references the preconception (although not as a “preconception” or “stereotype”, of course) held by her racial community, the Haitian blacks, toward Europeans:

“was bedeutet der Degen, den ihr so schlagfertig unter eurem Arme tragt? ... Wir haben euch,” setzte sie [Babekan] hinzu, indem sie sich die Brille aufdrückte, “mit Gefahr unseres Lebens eine Zuflucht in unserm Hause gestattet; seid ihr herein gekommen, um diese Wohltat, nach der Sitte eurer Landsleute, mit Verräterei zu vergelten?” (Kleist 226)

Babekan’s reference to “the custom of your people” is spoken defensively and rhetorically, although Babekan’s act of inviting Gustav inside, even if she does so with the intent to hand him over to Congo Hoango (which, as discussed above, she may not desire to do but may be compelled to do by Congo). Babekan’s statement represents an acknowledgment of individual difference within groups, as well as the impact that group membership (i.e. cultural identity) can have on the views of the individual. While Babekan knows Gustav comes from a group whose behavior towards her group has been systematically discriminatory and exploitative, she does not (in her statements in the text, at least) hold Gustav responsible for these acts, but she still exercises caution in dealing with him.

Acknowledging both individuality and group membership continues in Babekan’s admonition to Toni after Toni asks why Gustav was initially cautious about accepting their hospitality:

“...mein Kind, der Gebrannte scheut, nach dem Sprichwort, das Feuer. Der Herr würde töricht gehandelt haben, wenn er sich früher in das Haus hineingewagt hätte, als bis er sich von dem Volksstamm, zu welchem seine Bewohner gehören, überzeugt hatte.” (Kleist 230)

Gustav believes that the black Haitians were nearly all hostile to European whites, and that their hostility was manifesting itself in campaigns of violence. Babekan explains to Toni that Gustav’s caution is understandable in light of events on the island at that time.

Babekan's reference to "Volksstamm" is of particular interest for both its implications for racial theory and the burgeoning concept of nationalism. As far as race is concerned, Babekan's implication that Gustav was convinced that she and Toni were a part of a "Volksstamm" highlights the constructed nature of race, specifically the fact that persons of mixed racial heritage (something which became more common in the age of European colonialism due to increased interaction between racial groups) do not clearly belong to any group. Very notably, Babekan nowhere explicitly acknowledges belonging to either the black or white races (Toni's declaration "ich bin eine Weiße" is explained later in this chapter); Babekan's statement here refers to Gustav's convictions: he must convince himself that his interlocutors belong to the same racial group. Babekan does not broach the question whether he does belong to the same group. Gustav himself, however, states his perceptions of Toni and Babekan's race openly:

Euch, versetzte der Fremde, nachdem er sich ein wenig besonnen hatte: euch kann ich mich anvertrauen; aus der Farbe eures Gesichts schimmert mir ein Strahl von der meinigen entgegen. (Kleist 227)

It is notable that Gustav does not say that they are the same race as him *or* that they are black. He acknowledges that they occupy a middle ground where they can possibly be trusted.

Further complicating racial identity and perception thereof is Babekan's claim that Congo Hoango believes Babekan and Toni do not possess the racial purity necessary to belong to the race of blacks in normal times, but that their partial biological blackness can be exploited to entrap whites, although Babekan's statement may again be a trick to lull Gustav into a false sense of security. Congo's use of Babekan and Toni is highly opportunistic and it is revealed in this statement Babekan makes to Gustav:

"...und nichts wünscht er mehr, als die Rache der Schwarzen über uns weiße und kreolische Halbhunde, wie er uns nennt, hereinhetzen zu können, teils um unserer überhaupt, die wir seine Wildheit gegen die Weißen tadeln, los zu werden, teils,

um das kleine Eigentum, das wir hinterlassen würden, in Besitz zu nehmen.”
(Kleist 228-229)

It is possible that Babekan is speaking with the intent to deceive Gustav about her true intent, but her statement nonetheless expresses universalism and is a complaint that echoes the Radical Enlightenment. Regardless of whether she means it sincerely, Radical Enlightenment ideals of racial equality are presented here.

The uncertainty of racial categories is enshrined in the first Haitian Constitution of 1805, which was written after the final abandonment of the island by Napoleon’s troops November 19, 1803, and the proclamation of the Haitian Republic on January 1, 1804. Barbara Gribnitz writes in (originally her dissertation) *Schwarzes Mädchen, weißer Fremder: Studien zur Konstruktion von Kleists Erzählung Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (2002):

Die erste Verfassung Haitis von 1805 kennzeichnete alle Staatsbürger mit der Bezeichnung “Noir”, diese allerdings schloß – unabhängig von der Hautfarbe – Mulatten, naturalisierte Weiße und weiße Frauen, die mit Haitianern verheiratet waren, ein.¹¹⁴

By declaring nearly everyone on the island “black”, racial hierarchy was removed to a significant degree and the primary attribute of identity and status was, unlike nearly any place in the European-colonized world, not race. The reference to “naturalized” (*naturalisiert*) whites is footnoted by Gribnitz:

Bei den naturalisierten Weißen handelte es sich um Polen, die als Söldner der französischen Invasionsarmee, und um Deutsche, die im 18. Jahrhundert aus Kanada nach Saint-Domingue gekommen waren. (Gribnitz 160)

The standard for “naturalized whites” was intended to exclude white Europeans from obtaining citizenship; still, the fact that this excludes white Europeans is not primarily a racial issue in this case, but more a *nationalism* issue. Although nationalism is an identity construct at least as

¹¹⁴ Barbara Gribnitz, *Schwarzes Mädchen, weißer Fremder: Studien zur Konstruktion von Kleists Erzählung Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*, *Epistemata: Würzburger Wissenschaftliche Schriften, Reihe Literaturwissenschaft*, vol. 408. Würzburg, Germany; Königshausen & Neumann, 2002: 160.

fraught as race, it rests in this case on immediate history, separating an outgroup of whites who enslaved and, most importantly, very recently battled the former slaves.

Concerning the European whites as portrayed within *Verlobung*, Toni, after being informed by Gustav that all whites were being executed wherever they were found, requests clarification for this violence from Gustav:

Toni fragte: wodurch sich denn die Weißen daselbst so verhaßt gemacht hätten? – Der Fremde erwiderte betroffen: durch das allgemeine Verhältnis, das sie, als Herren der Insel, zu den Schwarzen hatten, und das ich, die Wahrheit zu gestehen, mich nicht unterfangen will, in Schutz zu nehmen; das aber schon seit vielen Jahrhunderten auf diese Weise bestand!...(Kleist 232)

Gustav's reply introduces the complex concept of collective guilt; he acknowledges that collective treatment of blacks by whites is not defensible, but he also deplores the collective response of blacks, summarily executing whites irrespective of their position on or involvement in his community's collective mistreatment of blacks. Gustav does, however, argue that at least one of the manifestations of the virulence with which blacks eliminated whites was out of proportion to the collective crimes of the whites: the story of a young black girl, sick with yellow fever, who lures a white man into her bed and infects him with her disease:

...nach dem Gefühl seiner Seele, keine Tyrannei, die die Weißen je verübt, einen Verrat, so niederträchtig und abscheulich, rechtfertigen könnte. (Kleist 234)

Here Gustav introduces the notion of something like “rules of war,” whereby deception of this sort subverts values more important than any of the outstanding racial grievances.

Gustav also mentions that the blacks were caught up in a whirlwind of discontent inspired by *philosophisme*; he speaks of “...der Wahnsinn der Freiheit, der alle diese Pflanzungen ergriffen hat...”(Kleist 233). Similar sentiments were expressed by whites in Haiti at the time. Gribnitz quotes Malouet, a Frenchman who had lived in Haiti once:

...was kümmern mich euere philosophische Grundsätze und die Reinheit eurer Theorie, wenn diese Metaphysik von Cannibalen ins Werk gesetzt, ein Todes-Urtheil für mich wird, mich von meinem Heerde vertreibt und von allem entblößt.¹¹⁵

Von Malouet's comment strongly echoes Kames' and others' racial degeneracy theory; that European metaphysics cannot be practiced by cannibal or barbarians because metaphysics are the realm of Europeans and cannot be universally proscribed for all peoples. Malouet's statement also gets at the root of the violent abuses of the French Revolution, changes initially motivated by Radical Enlightenment ideas: how is philosophy improving lives and society generally if it leads to the immediate widespread forced loss of life? Frequent and senseless wars were, after all, among the single greatest problems Enlightenment was supposed to overcome, according to the radical *philosophes* themselves. Gribnitz characterizes the response of many conservative Europeans to the Haitian Revolution by citing and explaining a letter from another former white inhabitant of Haiti:

Zwar gäbe es in der Kolonie Mißstände, doch das rechtfertige keinesfalls die schrecklichen Grausamkeiten der schwarzen "Barbaren" und "Bestien", die detailliert beschrieben wurden. Verantwortlich für diese Massaker seien die französischen "Philosophen", allen voran die Amis des Noirs, "die Glieder jenes schwarzen Clubs, welche die ganze Welt gern in eine freye Einöde umschaffen möchten, und schon das gute Mutterland mit Blut und Elend so schrecklich besudelt haben"¹¹⁶. Die die Französische Revolution rhetorisch begleitende Forderung nach allgemeiner Freiheit und damit nach Abschaffung der Sklaverei wurde also als Ursache des Sklavenaufstandes angesehen, betont durch die narrative Gegenüberstellung von quasi paradiesischen Zuständen vor dem Sklavenaufstand und den Greuelthaten während der Kämpfe, denn nur zur Vernunft erzogene Menschen wüßten mit der Freiheit umzugehen. (Gribnitz 161)

¹¹⁵ Von Malouet, *Untersuchung der Frage: Was dürfte das Resultat der französischen Revolution, des Krieges den sie nach sich gezogen, und des Friedens der demselben ein Ende machen wird, für die Colonien in America seyn? Von Malouet, Deputirten von St. Domingo, Frankreich im Jahr 1797; aus den Briefen deutscher Männer in Paris; mit Belegen*, ed. Johann Friedrich Reichardt. Altona, 1797: 121-148.

¹¹⁶ La Borde, *Umständliche Nachricht von dem Aufstande, den Verheerungen und den verübten Grausamkeiten der Neger auf der Insel St Domingo aus den Briefen des Herrn La Borde, eines Pflanzers daselbst an Herrn Bürnier, Schiff- und Handelsherrn in Havre* (Leipzig, 1792), cited in: Karin Schüller, *Die deutsche Rezeption haitianischer Geschichte in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts: ein Beitrag zum deutschen Bild vom Schwarzen*, Cologne; Böhlau Verlag, 1992: 95.

For many mainstream and conservative white European observers, the long-term exploitation of blacks was deemed a lesser crime, and the virulence and scale of the violence directed against the whites was seen as the blind rage of ignorant people who did not know what they were fighting for or what was good for them. A European paternalistic treatment of blacks sits on the surface of these comments, much as it sits on the surface of Kames' and Kant's thinking on the topic. This is not to say Radical Enlightenment thinkers such as Herder and Forster would approve the sort of violence seen in Haiti, or in the French Revolution for that matter. It merely reveals the tension inherent in fundamental political change: if change occurs quickly, it is difficult not to carry out excesses against the individuals who are presently in power of a corrupt system they inherited from other, arguably guiltier establishers of the unjust order. If change is not brought about violently, it is brought about gradually, and asking the grossly disadvantaged to wait for eventual justice is a rather foggy kind of political philosophy that also seems inadequate. These difficult issues come to be a fundamental problem of the French Revolution for Radical philosophers.

The story of Gustav's lost fiancée (Kleist 237-238), Mariane Congreve, adds another dimension to Gustav's opinions on violent revolution both via the similarity of the mass executions of the Reign of Terror and those of General Dessalines, the Haitian revolutionary and first president of Haiti under the 1801 constitution whom Congo Hoango is intended to represent (Gribnitz 166). Within France, Gustav was to be executed presumably due to his economic and social status as nobility, i.e. an enemy of the Revolution, but his fiancée dies in his stead. Within Haiti, he finds himself part of another class being summarily executed, the whites. In both places, Gustav is persecuted for being a member of a group responsible for long-term systematic injustices against the disadvantaged group.

Notably, Gustav's discussion of the turmoil in France does not involve any acknowledgment of long-term injustices perpetrated by his class against lower classes. He refers to the executioners as "unmenschlich," "rasende Verfolger," and "furchtbar." Gustav's discussion of Haiti, however, entails discussion of "tadelnswürdige Mißhandlungen" by the whites. Ray Fleming, in his article "Race and the Difference It Makes in Kleists *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*" argues that the term "Mißhandlungen" implies that there is a proper "Handlung", or treatment, of slaves, and that "Mißhandlung" is a term only capable of internally criticizing slavery, not in suggesting systematic injustice with slavery itself:

"Mißhandlungen" implies that there is a *proper* treatment for slaves *as* slaves. Such terminology does not confront the reality of oppression; rather, in its indifference to the institution of slavery, it points itself in the direction of conceivable reform. Speaking from his own ethical tradition, Gustav's term "Mißhandlungen" linguistically implies that the treatment of slaves needs to be *corrected* if one, i.e., the historical subject who is white, is to realize the normative or appropriate behavior. (Fleming 312)

I agree with Fleming's point that Gustav's language ("tadelnswürdige Mißhandlungen") is a gross understatement of the horrendous abuses and injustices engendered in New World African slavery; I also think he is correct to suggest that the context in which Gustav mentions slavery suggests that he, at least at this moment and in these statements, is indifferent to the ethicality of the institution of slavery. I disagree, however, with Fleming's suggestion that "Mißhandlung" necessarily suggests there is a proper form of slavery; it seems clearer to me that Gustav is not interested in discussing the ethicality of the institution of slavery, and it seems very possible that "Mißhandlung" refers to the entire institution of slavery, and not just the way it was practiced in Haiti prior to the rebellion. It seems to me that Fleming ascribes opinions to Gustav simply due to his position as a white European noble. The situation in which Gustav makes the utterance would suggest otherwise: he is in the home of two (at least partially) black persons who could, as

far as he knows, easily bring about his death, making it less likely he would openly condone slavery in their presence.

V. Secondary Literature and *Verlobung*

Hans Jakob Werlen's article "Seduction and Betrayal: Race and Gender in Kleist's *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*" similarly attributes all sorts of opinions and intentions to Kleist and the character Gustav in ways that lack textual support.¹¹⁷ He begins his analysis thus:

The introductory setting, related with the seeming objectivity of historical narration, soon reveals itself as the account of a strongly conservative narrator who interjects his moral observations into the descriptions. This immediate moralization of the narrative serves a twofold purpose. First of all, it attempts to control and to make intelligible the depicted events which, in the narrator's view, are characterized by illogical and inhuman actions perpetrated by the Blacks. Secondly, it establishes a binary system of order which juxtaposes White and Black in terms of good and evil. The narrator's view thus mirrors the historical attitudes of the white colonists, who would rather die than share their rights with what they describe as the "degenerated race" on the island. (Werlen 460)

Werlen's analysis begins by labeling and attacking Kleist's narrator ("strongly conservative narrator") and accusing him of literary misconduct ("interjects his moral observations into the descriptions"). I do not believe Werlen's suggestion that the narrator views the Blacks' behavior as illogical and inhuman is supported by the text.

It is true that some of Werlen's charges leveled against the Enlightenment apply to *some* portions of the Moderate Enlightenment (Kant's and Kames' degeneracy theories are consistent with it, for example); but they do not at all apply to the Radical Enlightenment, which, I have argued throughout this dissertation, is the intellectual stream most responsible for the egalitarianism and democratic republicanism that swept through Western Europe and North America in the latter half of the 18th century; furthermore, these charges do not even apply to many parts of the *Moderate* Enlightenment. Jonathan Israel's Radical Enlightenment trilogy as

¹¹⁷ Hans Jakob Werlen, "Seduction and Betrayal: Race and Gender in Kleist's *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*", *Monatshefte*, vol. 84, Winter 1992. Madison, WI; University of Wisconsin Press, 1992: 461.

well as *A Revolution of the Mind* present a challenge to these historiographical trends that literary scholars must address. Choosing the aspects of the Enlightenment that seem the most regressive nowadays and then conflating them with the entire diverse movement spanning several nations and generations is better avoided.

I do not believe Kleist's narrator makes suggestions of any kind that the Blacks' behavior is illogical; his narrator does call it inhuman, which, whether one considers "historical memory" or not, the wholesale slaughter of a people invariably is. *Verlobung* is rife with adjectives denouncing the behavior of the Blacks, which some who have written analyses of the role of race in *Verlobung* list as evidence of the narrowness and exploitative nature of the "white European Enlightenment view" (which is frequently posited as a monolithic bogeyman). I think that *Verlobung* is written in such a way that white readers can recognize themselves in the misbehavior of the blacks; rather than merely providing a list of white misbehaviors, as a philosopher might do in a treatise, Kleist's narrator holds a mirror up to whites so they may gain perspective on their own behavior by seeing it in others.

Werlen also writes, concerning Congo's killing of his master:

The gratitude expected of Congo Hoango by the narrator reflects a particular self-understanding of European colonialism: the father-child relationship between white masters and black slaves. Disregarding affects and historical memory, this domestication of oppression is depicted as futile in Kleist's text. From the narrator's perspective, Congo Hoango's actions remove him and his followers from the human community. (Werlen 461)

I believe that Werlen's analysis lacks nuance in this spot and assumes too much about Kleist's narrator due to his narrator's race. Common criticisms made against white authors of the Enlightenment-era by postcolonial theorists are listed, and it is claimed that they are also at work in Kleist's text. I do not believe there is textual support for such an assertion here. Specifically, the claim that "Congo Hoango's actions remove him and his followers from the human

community” is a very serious charge, and it does not hold up to comparison with the language Kleist’s narrator uses in the text:

...und doch konnten alle diese Beweise von Dankbarkeit Hrn. Villeneuve vor der Wut dieses grimmigen Menschen nicht schützen. (Kleist 222)

In the same sentence as the description of Herr Villeneuve’s treatment of Congo, Kleist’s narrator refers to Congo as a “human” (*Mensch*), whereby Congo and his followers are explicitly *included* in the party of humanity. At no point does Kleist’s narrator use any terminology suggesting he thinks Congo and his followers are lesser moral beings because they are black; he does, however, very clearly use adjectives in association with their indiscriminate killing that suggest he thinks their behavior is inhuman. I disagree with Werlen’s suggestion that Kleist’s narrator creates a binary good-evil (white-black) racial dichotomy from the very beginning; rather, Kleist’s narrator is stressing individual behavior and that individuals can be good or bad (or *grimmig*, as is the case with Congo Hoango).

Academic discussion of texts such as *Verlobung*, which clearly contain a racial element, would greatly benefit from a larger amount of analysis that is willing to consider roles race can play in a text other than exposing the ubiquity of white oppression; many analyses with a postcolonial bent to them make a very large number of claims based on text passages that are very ambiguous (claiming that although the racial bias is not explicit, we can assume it is there because it has correlated historically with the author’s socioeconomic background and personal racial identity; this, ironically, is a classic error of effacing difference through over-rationalization) or lacking entirely (i.e. a series of thoughts are attributed to an author or character that is textually absent or evidenced to the contrary but ignored, as with the suggestion about Congo and his followers’ humanity). It is reasonable to read *Verlobung*, within its context as a European-authored post-Enlightenment text about the non-European world, as using race, a

form of difference, to reveal the underlying and more salient universalism binding diverse groups of people.

Very specifically, the failure of postcolonial-influenced race readings like Werlen's is revealed in his consternation about the end of *Verlobung*:

Kleist's novella ends with a monumental lie. In the ethereal heights of the Swiss Alps, a monument of mourning produces for the narrator a mnemonic image that joins the two main protagonists of the story in the emblem of the betrothed couple. Remembering the dead in their familial and familiar roles of "cousin Gustav" and "faithful Toni," the text abstracts the couple from their previous historical-political and racial embeddedness in the contemporary events of the Haitian revolution. In the end, Kleist's story erases its own central issues of race, sexuality, and culture. While the mutilated bodies of Toni and Gustav remain in revolution-torn Haiti, Strömli's Alpine memorial, removed from the contingency of history, represses their forced posthumous reconciliation and only preserves the memory of their union. (Werlen 469)

I believe Werlen struggles to reconcile the end of the story with the rest of his reading of *Verlobung* (as a text defined by the white protagonist's establishment of a hierarchy of human-inhuman/good-evil corresponding to white-black, and in Gustav's attempt to render Toni human by trying to make her white) because of the starkness of the contrast between Gustav's killing of Toni and the respectfulness of the scene of their resting place. Gustav's error is an error of rashly identifying Toni with a group sworn to his and his group's destruction instead of keeping in mind her individual identity independent of her group. Werlen comments on the reasoning behind Gustav's killing Toni:

But while Gustav recognizes in Mariane's gesture only faithful love, Toni's racial background prevents him from seeing the identical sacrifice in the quadroon's deed...Turning into the treacherous black woman of Gustav's story, she loses the attributes of the white bride, faithfulness and purity. (Werlen 468)

Werlen also writes of Toni's transformation from "adored bride to mutilated whore", a transformation, he contends, hinges solely on Toni switching from being "white" before the supposed betrayal to "black" thereafter. Werlen is correct in asserting that Toni's racial

background plays a role in Gustav's misdeed against her, but the evidence he marshals in support of this correct conclusion is based on the suggestion that Gustav considers Toni deserving of death not because she betrayed him to his demise while being a *person*, but because she betrayed him to his demise while being *black*, something Werlen suggests Gustav (as well as the narrator of Kleist's novella) considers a sign of fundamental moral inferiority.

Several analysts claim that Gustav tries to render Toni "good" or "human" by emphasizing her "whiteness," which is a misunderstanding of the role race plays in the scenes in question. After Toni has led the Strömli family to subdue Congo Hoango's forces, Babekan curses Toni as a "Niederträchtige und Verräterin".

Toni antwortete: "ich habe euch nicht verraten, ich bin eine Weiße, und dem Jüngling, den ihr gefangen haltet, verlobt; ich gehöre zu dem Geschlecht derer, mit denen ihr im offenen Kriege liegt, und werde vor Gott [sic], daß ich mich auf ihre Seite stellte, zu verantworten wissen." (Kleist 256)

Toni's statement "ich bin eine Weiße" can be taken to mean many things. First, it may be a statement of pure racial math: Toni, being a "quadroon," or person who is the child of a white person and a mulatto, and hence exactly 25% black and 75% white, is genealogically more white than black, and could therefore identify as white. Second, it may be a declaration of identification with the cause of the whites vis-à-vis the marauding blacks, i.e. Toni may be declaring that she is sympathetic to the cause of the whites, or at least opposed to the wholesale slaughter of them being perpetrated by some of the blacks. After all, Toni previously referenced a longtime resentment of being compelled to deceive white passersby to their demise:

"Beim Licht der Sonne," sagte die Tochter, indem sie wild aufstand, "du hast sehr Unrecht, mich an diese Greuelthaten zu erinnern! Die Unmenschlichkeiten, an denen ihr mich Teil zu nehmen zwingt, empörten längst mein innerstes Gefühl..." (Kleist 241)

Toni's declaration that being "forced to participate in atrocities" "long outraged her innermost feelings" (my translation), it is apparent that Toni finds the group-based killings unjustified and very likely sympathizes with the whites, i.e. the victims of the group-based killings.

The matter of Toni's sympathies could be integrated into an analysis seeking to define *Verlobung* around Gustav's attempts to transform Toni from black whore into pure, white, Mariane (his fiancée who sacrificed herself for him in France), doing so, however, seems to me to collapse for the same reason that that entire reading collapses: it fails to provide motive for Toni's behavior. Why would Toni, who previously mentioned having long been abhorred by being forced to partake in the wholesale slaughter of whites (by deceiving them with her lighter skin (Kleist 223) possess such a meta-awareness of Gustav's supposed attempts to efface her blackness that she would make such a proclamation? Why would Kleist, an author whose writing is rife with subtlety, ripe language and vivid descriptions, spoon-feed the audience through his narrator a philosophical lesson about whites "othering" blacks in this way? It is more in keeping with the pace of the story and style of writing for Toni's statement to symbolize her opposition to the cause of the blacks present in the scene, who were engaged in a campaign of slaughtering whites. Despite some claims that *Verlobung's* primary impulse is Gustav's attempt to transform Toni from black whore to pure white bride Mariane, this fails to pass muster when viewed with the course of the narration. Toni becomes worthy of being Gustav's wife because she is willing to stand by his side despite outside pressures to betray him by her social group and society generally, which is the same sacrifice that his beloved Mariane Congreve made and for which she is so esteemed by Gustav. *Verlobung*, then, is not primarily, or even remotely, about Gustav attempting to make Toni white, but rather it is meant as a cautionary tale

urging recognition of all people equally and *universally* human with disregard to their race (and also with disregard to their gender, although that is not the critical concern of this chapter).

Sander Gilman, in his article “The Aesthetics of Blackness in Heinrich von Kleist’s ‘Die Verlobung in St. Domingo’”¹¹⁸ analyzes primary accounts of interactions between former slaves and former masters in revolutionary Haiti:

Die größte unter allen auf der Ebene liegenden Zuckerplantagen gehörte dem Herrn Gallifet zu, und war ungefähr acht englische Meilen von der Capstadt entfernt. Die Negersklaven, welche zu derselben gehörten, wurden auf eine so liberale menschenfreundliche Art behandelt, und genossen so große Wohlthaten vor andern ihres Gleichen, daß die Weissen geringern Standes, wenn sie einen vom Schicksal begünstigten Menschen charakterisiren wollten, sich des sprüchwörtlichen Ausdrucks bedienten: Il est heureux comme un negre de Gallifet. . . Herr Odeluc, der bey dieser Pflanzung als Sachwalter oder Agent angestellt, und zugleich Mitglied der allgemeinen Colonialversammlung war, glaubte von der Treue und Unterwürfigkeit der dazu gehörigen Negern so gewiß versichert zu seyn, daß er den Entschluß faßte, sich dahin zu begeben, und diese Leute zu ermuntern, daß sie den Rebellen sich widersetzen sollten; . . . Demzufolge machte er sich auf den Weg; als er aber der Pflanzung sich nahte, sah er zu seinem eben so großen Erstaunen als Leidwesen, daß jene Negern sämmtlich die Waffen ergriffen hatten und zu den Rebellen übergegangen waren. *Statt der Fahne bedienten sie sich* (wem schaudert nicht vor der Grausamkeit dieser Unmenschen!) *des Leichnams eines weissen Kindes, welches sie erst kurz vorher an einen Pfahl gespießt hatten.*¹¹⁹

Gilman, although he expresses more reserve than many other authors on this topic, nonetheless sees this passage’s reference to *Unmenschen* (sub-humans) as evidencing what he later asserts is “Gustav’s historically determined dichotomy in which white=good and black=evil” (Gilman 669). Without further information from Mr. Edwards, there is not enough information here to conclude that he thinks all blacks are sub-humans; it seems much more reasonable and text-

¹¹⁸ Sander L. Gilman, “The Aesthetics of Blackness in Heinrich von Kleist’s ‘Die Verlobung in St. Domingo’”, *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 90. Baltimore, Maryland; John Hopkins University Press, 1975: 662.

¹¹⁹ Bryan Edwards, *Geschichte des Revolutionskriegs in Sanct Domingo* (Leipzig; Dykische Buchhandlung, 1798) 100-101. Sander Gilman states in a footnote that he selects the Bryan Edwards account of events in Haiti not at random, but because it “reflects the same political bias as the essay by Louis de Sevelinges in the December, 1810 issue of the *Mercure de France* which was translated by Kleist for the *Berliner Abendblätter* under the title “Über den Zustand der Schwarzen in Amerika.” Cf. Helmut Sembdner, *Die Berliner Abendblätter Heinrich von Kleists, ihre Quellen und ihre Redaktion. Schriften der Kleist-Gesellschaft 19*, Berlin; Weidmann, 1939: 152-153.”

immanent to claim that it suggests he finds people who impale children on spears sub-human, an act that, even if occurring with some frequency among humans, is clearly violent, unethical and “inhuman.” Gilman, in his analysis of this first-hand passage from Edwards, argues further that Edwards’ dichotomy of white=good, black=evil is “historically determined.” If Edwards’ hatred of blacks is “historically determined,” which attitudes and/or actions of blacks towards whites are “historically determined,” and what implications do such evidentiary standards have for the Haitian blacks? I disagree with Gilman’s invocation of historical determination here: if it is determined, after all, then it is unavoidable, whereby holding people to account becomes ethically questionable.

My point in emphasizing this is to stress that invoking “historical determinism” of the very unbending sort Gilman suggests here seems to me to undermine the point he is trying to make; there is more immediate cause to suggest the mutilation of children is the primary criterion of sub-humanism, and not merely black skin color. Herr Odeluc experiences shock and dismay (*Erstaunen und Leidwesen*) upon seeing this scene. If he truly thought blacks were evil, he would have more likely seen such an action as an unavoidable product of their deviousness; instead, he is horrified that any *person* could perform such an action (hence the reference to *Unmenschen*). The contexts in which *Mensch* and *Unmensch* are used in both *Verlobung* and the Edwards account cited by Gilman indicate that blacks generally are considered to be people by these authors; it is indiscriminate acts of violence that are decried as *unmenschlich*, or sub-human/inhuman. The emphasis on actual acts independent of the racial identity of the agents is a decidedly Radical Enlightenment aspect of Kleist’s text. By viewing both the whites and the blacks in the text as individual agents within groups who engage in varying acts that are either good (*menschlich*) or bad (*unmenschlich*), Kleist’s text escapes the obsession with anti-

Enlightenment group identitarianism, collective/community guilt, and historical determinacy that most modern scholars who have read the text for race actively reinforce rather than disassembling.

Many theorists seek to apply theories about race stemming from the latter half of the 20th-century to texts like Kleist's to further draw out attention to the manifest immorality of white Europeans in their treatment of non-Europeans; the mere application of this theory is inappropriate, as such theories are the product of contemporary political concerns, tailored to bolster certain contemporary political views and remedy contemporary problems. Many authors inject a myriad of prejudices about the functioning of race in society from the latter half of the 20th-century; these authors also often project 20th-century assumptions about the thinking of people in the 18th-century onto people from the 18th-century (i.e. "this is how white European males thought, period"), and they often do so without textual support (hence the invocation of things such as "historical determinacy" [i.e. this person probably thought this, having come from this culture] rather than giving primacy to the theoretical and intellectual heritage of the 18th and 19th centuries).

VI. Conclusion

Kleist, writing in a period after the Enlightenment, and known to have engaged extensively with Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers, is more likely to have written from a perspective informed theoretically by the Enlightenment and historically by the French and Haitian Revolutions. While Kleist himself may have had more conservative views on race and colonialism, his text *Verlobung* does not reveal these claims. In the text itself, the reader is confronted with a barrage of pleas for individualism borne of the Radical Enlightenment; pleas to

look beyond race as determining good and evil and to avoid the endless cycle of wars that were also borne of sectarian resentments.

Verlobung provides the historical contexts of group-killings in *La Terreur* in France and group killings in the Haitian Revolution, whereby both bourgeois whites (Gustav) and Haitian blacks find themselves in the position of the oppressor and the oppressed. Furthermore, the racially diverse group of main characters demonstrates that members of all races are individuals who can be either good or bad, and that one must base law upon individualism and treat others in consideration of their individualism. At the same time, *Verlobung* does not gloss over the sociohistorical context; sociohistorical context is presented and set against concerns for individualism. *Verlobung* is a plea for historically and culturally literate individualism.

CONCLUSION

Many scholars consider German literature of the Enlightenment to be a decidedly staid, conservative propping up of the existing order. Leibniz, Wolff, Kant and Frederick the Great are symbols of German support of Enlightened despotism, Christianity, hereditary nobility, and dualism of mind and matter; their ideas are unquestionably non-egalitarian and undemocratic, although still progressive compared to the Counter-Enlightenment of the Church and *ancien régime* establishment. While an emphasis on the conservative elements within the German Enlightenment is justified when viewing German thinkers exclusively, it fails to pass muster when examined under the lens of the diverse, pan-European Enlightenment which Jonathan Israel evidences to have, in fact, existed. Aside from overlooking Radical German thinkers like Thomasius, the view of the Enlightenment in Germany as predominantly moderate falters on outdated and unjustified historiographical trends of understanding the Enlightenment as a single movement manifesting itself with only slight variations in each nation (à la Peter Gay) rather than as a large, Europe-wide debate between Radical Enlightenment, Moderate Enlightenment, and Counter-Enlightenment. It no longer makes sense to seek the intellectual sources of the Enlightenment in Germany solely in German thinkers; one must acknowledge that Dutch, French, British, Scottish, and even to some degree Spanish and Italian thinkers were read, known, and discussed within German intellectual culture.

In my dissertation, I read German literature of the late Enlightenment era in the context of Jonathan Israel's theories of a pan-European, multifaceted Enlightenment. I have found that when German literature of the late Enlightenment period is viewed within the broader intellectual culture of Western Europe at that time, a debate emerges between Radical Enlightenment - many of the sources of which are found in the 17th-century Netherlands and

mid-18th-century France - and Moderate Enlightenment, primarily, although not exclusively, of English, Scottish, and German origin. I used five works of German literature of the late Enlightenment to examine whether Israel's re-interpretation of the intellectual history of the Enlightenment held true within Germany: Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, Schiller's *Die Räuber*, Goethe's *Leiden des jungen Werthers*, La Roche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, and Kleist's *Verlobung in St. Domingo*. I examined these works with a focus on a few key philosophical questions: monism/dualism, tolerance, free will/determinism, theism/atheism, mixed monarchy/representative democracy/pure democracy, race (individualism vs difference-effacing group identity), and nobility/equal opportunity meritocracy. Upon completing my study, I conclude that Jonathan Israel's basic argument holds true: positions on each of the aforementioned philosophical questions tend to be held in tandem with others, leading to the existence of three schools of thought (Radical, Moderate, and Counter-Enlightenment).

Israel's system is not a perfect predictor, and the views on the aforementioned philosophical issues do not always add up to a coherent system. Like any theory, Jonathan Israel's schematics cannot account for all variance because, like any theory, he can only offer a fundamentally simplifying device. However, it is by any objective measure a *good* system in that it accurately predicts outcomes (correlation in stances on key philosophical issues) in a strong majority of thinkers, and it is certainly a system *superior to* other systems and interpretations. On the one hand, Israel's system outperforms the purely sociohistorical readings of the Enlightenment that have dominated the field of history since approximately the 1950s by providing a reason for the specific goals of the Enlightenment; the sociohistorical method, while absolutely necessary to understand any historical change truly and fully, is completely incapable of explaining why the peasants of France called out for *liberté, égalité, et*

fraternité as opposed to any other three values. On the other hand, Israel's system outperforms interpretations of the Enlightenment combining intellectual history and sociohistorical evidence by providing a more detailed system incorporating more differences while remaining simple and accurate; the superiority of Israel's work becomes apparent when comparing his work with, for instance, Peter Gay's 1966 *The Enlightenment, Vol. 1: The Rise of Modern Paganism*. Israel's system has a superior balance of the sociohistorical and intellectual history methodologies, as well as a better intellectual history system due to the breadth of his survey and the detail of his system. Israel paints with brushstrokes broad enough that one can see a meaningful, cohesive painting without being so far away from the painting that no detail is visible, nor so close to the painting that one only sees meaningless splashes of paint. His system provides the advantages of a deductive system, enabling an understanding of broader developments and events without succumbing to the pitfalls of a purely inductive approach, wherein one is mired in pure data with no sense of interrelatedness and origin, of cause and effect. My dissertation has shown also that the historical truth-content of his assertions holds up when tested against the evidence of literature. Had I read the five works of the late Enlightenment I chose in this dissertation using Peter Gay or any of many sociohistorical readings of the Enlightenment, my interpretation would have been reductive by being alternatively either overly deductive or overly descriptive.

I analyzed Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* primarily for the portrayal of tolerance and religion. I found that Nathan's views on tolerance accord best with Spinoza's freedom of thought and Bayle's freedom of conscience, both tolerance systems extending to all sects of all religions as well as to atheists. Varying characters (Saladin, the Templar) express Lockean notions of tolerance; Locke's tolerance extended to differing sects of Protestants while dismissing Catholics, Muslims, Jews, and atheists. Nathan counters such comments with a

Spinozistic emphasis on the unity of mankind and the senselessness of discrimination. *Nathan der Weise* also questions the epistemological foundations of religion in the form of the Ring Parable, the moral of which is that the truth of religions is unknowable because they are all equally based on unverifiable evidence, and furthermore are believed true because they are received in childhood from a trusted source. I also argued that the Ring Parable suggests that agnostic atheism is the only philosophically reasonable metaphysical belief system, and that the very concept of an anthropomorphic deity is incomprehensible and absurd. *Nathan der Weise* stresses the unity and equality of all mankind, a fundamental point of the Radical Enlightenment, and from the realization of unity follows Spinoza's freedom of thought, which judges only actions legitimate objects of outside criticism and stresses the ethical necessity of treating the individual as autonomous. Furthermore, *Nathan der Weise* ridicules revealed religion on epistemological grounds, and promotes a guarded, universalist, and humanitarian secularism in its stead. *Nathan der Weise* reflects the tensions between Radical Enlightenment and Moderate Enlightenment very clearly on the issues of tolerance and religion.

I examined Schiller's *Die Räuber* primarily for its political discourse, although some discussion of religion and nature arose necessarily since both of these lie at the root of and frequently are invoked as justifications for political beliefs. The three members of the Moor family, Der Alte Moor, Franz von Moor, and Karl von Moor engage in actions and make statements neatly corresponding to Counter-Enlightenment, Moderate Enlightenment, and Radical Enlightenment respectively. Der Alte Moor, although ailing, deceived, and hapless, represents Counter-Enlightenment by virtue of his position as a hereditary absolute monarch who shows no interest in altering the existing order. Franz's monologues early in *Die Räuber* represent Moderate Enlightenment of a Voltairean sort: humans are born with Locke's blank

slate ("[Gott] setzte uns nackt und armselig ans Ufer dieses Ozeans Welt" Schiller 28), society needs a large lower class ("...Aber der gnädige Herr braucht Hasen" Schiller 29), the people need religion, and the people should not be enlightened ("les autres ne méritent pas que l'on les éclaire"¹²⁰). Franz is a ruthless and cynical opportunist who only seeks a few alterations, in the existing system, casting off the worst inefficiencies. Karl represents Radical Enlightenment through his emphasis on a fundamental restructuring of society along egalitarian, individualistic-yet-socially-just lines. Karl perceives the need to effect this change from outside the system. When Karl's band of robbers begins burning and killing, Karl dissociates himself from the group, which has perpetrated the same excesses that would come in the Reign of Terror of Robespierre. *Die Räuber* evidences the existence of a complex, multi-faceted political discourse, versions of which can be found before, during, and after the French Revolution, from *ancien régime* loyalists to tweak-the-façade Moderates to Radical egalitarianistic proponents of representative democracy to Radicals who let the need for fundamental and sweeping change lead them to kill entire classes of people, grossly subverting their own proclaimed first principles.

I examined Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* for its commentary on nature. I argued that *Werther* argues for a form of free will compatibilism, a position endorsed by Spinoza and the Radical Enlightenment generally. A consequence of Werther's free will compatibilism is the message about mental illness and suicide that the work presents: mental illness is explicitly compared to physical illness. Mental illness is neither chosen nor controlled by the afflicted party, just like physical illness, and given that mind and matter are one substance (monism), it only makes sense that mind is also determined, and its owner is subjected to the same outside

¹²⁰ Voltaire Cited In La Harpe, Jean-Francois de. *Cours de Littérature Ancienne et Moderne*. Vol. 3. Paris, 1840.

influences and inherited problems as the owner of a physical body. *Werther* also de-essentializes differences between men and women and adults and children, stressing the complete unity of humanity. *Werther* also contains much discussion on the degree to which nature can be understood as a system or as a list of discreet and unconnected facts. The systematizability of nature is reflected in the transformation of Goethe's own views on nature; Goethe became completely opposed to all systems later in life, while admitting some deductive reasoning about nature as a younger man. Furthermore, the earlier version of *Werther* is more radical than the later edition, which was released just prior to the French Revolution. *Werther* is filled with fascinating discussion of nature and the human mind as a product of nature, and the philosophical presumptions of Werther himself accord with those of the Radical Enlightenment.

I analyzed *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* for its commentary on a number of philosophical issues key to the Enlightenment, but its pronouncements on the nobility stood out the most. *Sternheim* differs notably in its presentation of Radical and Moderate Enlightenment views in that the same character, the protagonist Sophie, represents both. Sophie presents or supports Radical Enlightenment views when speaking with people very close to her, while offering Moderate Enlightenment views when speaking to others. *Sternheim* undermines the religious justifications of hereditary nobility while also stressing the need for equal opportunity meritocracy, an alteration in the curriculum of aristocrats' education, and an end to the culture of flattery of aristocrats. *Sternheim* comments on economic efficiency, proposing that workers be fairly compensated and provided with basic social and education needs; each worker is treated with dignity and encouraged to pursue and supported in pursuing his or her natural talents. Gender commentary is also present in *Sternheim*: Sophie presents Moderate ideas about the appropriate gender roles for boys and girls when writing to an impoverished noblewoman she

supports as an act of charity, but Sophie's own life is defined more by a refusal to be cowed on the grounds of her gender. Sophie makes her own choices at the time of her choosing, and is not pushed around by men. Although some of her choices are in line with traditional gender norms for females, it is of great importance that Sophie makes such choices of her own will. *Sternheim* follows the Radical-Moderate Enlightenment divide closely, and it evidences the existence of the Radical-Moderate distinction yet further.

The final piece I examined is Kleist's *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*. *Verlobung*, published after the Enlightenment (1811), during the Napoleonic Wars, and in reference to specific political concerns (the Haitian rebellion and the French occupation of German territories), is filled with commentary on race. I believe *Verlobung* stresses the primacy of individualism and the harm that comes from establishing group membership and identity as a standard for culpability; in this way, *Verlobung* echoes the first chapter of this dissertation about *Nathan der Weise*, which contains a similar plea for punishing or rewarding only actions and never thoughts, convictions, or identity. Radical Enlightenment statements about the unity of mankind are heard both from Gustav, Toni, and Babekan, although Babekan may be making the statements as a trick to keep Gustav in the house until Congo Hoango can arrive to execute him. The differing racial makeups of the characters involved leads to the presence of racial diversity and its questioning in the novel. The racial diversity of the characters in *Verlobung* is important because it underscores the novel's message concerning the problem of using race and group identity as traits that establish guilt or innocence. My analysis emphasizes that the majority of scholars who write about *Verlobung* overlooks precisely this message; most secondary literature imputes intentions and attributes to each of the characters in *Verlobung* based *only on their race*, and worse yet, in a vacuum of textual evidence or in the face of textual evidence explicitly to the

contrary. *Verlobung*'s treatment in secondary literature further evidences that its message of individuality has not gotten through, and that much scholarship still greatly loses objectivity when contemporary controversial political topics such as race are present in a text. Kleist's *Verlobung* also compares the group-based killing in Haiti to the group-based killings in France during *la Terreur*, whereby the stress on individualism is yet further reinforced. As a work published after the Enlightenment, *Verlobung* sheds an interesting light on the continual interplay of Radical and Moderate Enlightenment ideas after the French Revolution.

In conclusion, Radical, Moderate, and Counter-Enlightenment ideas were known and discussed in the culture of the Enlightenment in Germany. German literature of the late Enlightenment period represents primary evidence in support of the historical truth underlying Jonathan Israel's re-interpretation of the intellectual history of the Enlightenment as presented in his Radical Enlightenment trilogy. But the work is not done here: armed with an improved understanding of the Enlightenment and aided by historians enriching our understanding of historical developments using the revitalized method of intellectual history, literary scholars can continue to improve our understanding of our intellectual cultural heritage not just of the Enlightenment, but of other periods in history as well.

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